The Jews of Wilkes-Barre

JEWISH LIFE IN THE WYOMING VALLEY

CIRCA 1925

- Synagogue and/or Congregation
- Other Jewish Institution (inset)
- Jewish Cemetery
- Jewish Section of Other Cemetery

0 MILES 5

NANCY C. ANDERSON
CARTOGRAPHER

To Tunkhannock
HARVEYS LAKE
DALLAS TWP
DALLAS
SHAVERTOWN
TRUCKSVILLE
LUZERNE
SWOYERSVILLE
FORTY FORT
WEST WYOMING
WYOMING
EXETER
WEST PITTSTON
PITTSTON
DURYEA
AVOCA
DUPONT
YATESVILLE
LAFLIN
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER
LACKAWANNA RIVER
To Scranton
LAUREL LINE TROLLEY
MIDVALE
PLAINS
HUDSON
MINERS MILLS
PLAINS TWP
PARSONS
LARKSVILLE
EDWARDSVILLE
KINGSTON
PLYMOUTH
BRESLAU
BUTTONWOOD
WILKES-BARRE
(inset below)
LAUREL RUN
ASHLEY
HANOVER TWP
NANTICOKE
SUGAR NOTCH
WARRIOR RUN
MOUNTAINTOP
GLEN LYON
SHICKSHINNY
MOCANAQUA
BACK MOUNTAIN
THE CONNECTICUT POCONOS

WILKES-BARRE

KIRBY PARK
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER
Darling St.
LAUREL LINE TROLLEY
PUBLIC SQUARE
Temple Israel
YM and YWHA
Temple B'nai B'rith
Anshe Emes
Workmen's Circle
Ohav Zedek
Holche Yosher
Anshe Sfard
Talmud Torah
B'nai Jacob

The Jews of Wilkes-Barre

150 Years (1845 - 1995)
in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania

Edited by
Marjorie Levin

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF WYOMING VALLEY
1999

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The Jews of Wilkes-Barre

A Message from the Chairman

The history of the Jewish community of the Wyoming Valley is a rich and inspiring saga. This book is a prized collection of information about generations of people whose lives have shaped our present community. Their struggles and hardships, their tragedies and triumphs are carefully and accurately documented in this tribute to our community's cultural and religious heritage. The unabridged manuscripts and tapes from which the book was drawn will be available in the archives of the Jewish Community Center as a resource for the future.

It has long been a dream of mine to create a permanent history of our Jewish community. This book was conceived in the firm belief that pride in our past should inspire us to fulfill our responsibility as caretakers of the present and future, ensuring continuation of the communal and religious traditions that are our legacy.

Completing this book required four years and utilized the combined efforts of hundreds of people whose community pride was evidenced in their direct involvement in every aspect of the undertaking—from planning, organizing, and fund-raising to interviewing, researching, and writing. All of those involved have displayed excitement, enthusiasm, energy, and exceptional resourcefulness and talent.

I would like to extend a special acknowledgment to the members of the 150th anniversary executive committee—Tom Bigler, Robert Capin, Lawrence Newman, Arnold Rifkin, the Honorable Max Rosenn, Irwin Sagenkahn, and Community Executive Director Don Cooper—whose guidance and support greatly facilitated completion of this book. Without their commitment and leadership, this task would not have come to fruition. Also, gratitude is extended to the following for their efforts in making this book possible:

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Thank you to all of the writers, historians, supporters, and friends.

This book was truly a community effort. My sincere hope is that it is cherished and enjoyed by all who read it.

CONNIE ROTH

Chairman, 150th Anniversary Committees
Jewish Community Center of Wyoming Valley

The Jewish Community Center of Wyoming Valley is grateful to the following, whose generosity helped make this volume possible.

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Preface

The Jews of Wilkes-Barre is the first comprehensive history of the Wyoming Valley Jewish community. Written for both general and scholarly audiences, the book aims to record the community's history from 1845 to 1995, and to locate that history on the landscape of the larger American Jewish experience. The book also hopes to demonstrate the unique character of the community.

Appropriately, the book is in every way a product of community character.

Seeking to mark the community's 150th anniversary in a meaningful way, Connie Roth brought the idea of writing a history to Ann Lipton of the Jewish Community Center; the two soon involved others in discussion and the idea was adopted. Until now, with one exception, the community's only historical accounts had been contained in brief summaries written for institutional fund-raising publications. Whereas few of those publications survived the 1972 flood, the more detailed *Temple B'nai B'rith, A Chronological History 1845-1987* had never been widely distributed. As the sesquicentennial approached, plans were made to redress the situation. The JCC, the heart of Jewish communal life since the 1870s, would publish a definitive history, and it would sponsor, as well, such companion efforts as an oral history project and an exhibit at the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

Planning for the book was entrusted to an executive committee chaired by Roth and composed of Tom Bigler, Robert Capin, Lawrence Newman, Arnold Rifkin, Judge Max Rosenn, and Irwin Sagenkahn, with Lipton, succeeded by Don Cooper, representing the JCC. To expedite research for the book, Judge Rosenn suggested that community volunteers undertake the research and writing under the direction of a professional editor. A nine-member writers committee was assembled as proposals for the editorship were invited. When I became editor in January 1995, the concept of community participation became integral to the book's mission; more than 60 volunteers, most of them untrained as writers or historians, submitted original manuscripts for the book.

But yet another vital element was in place before even I was aware of the

project: Robert S. Aben, owner of Unigraphic Color Corporation, had offered to print the book as his gift to the community. This generosity—which involved not only printing services and paper, but photographic work and page composition as well—made the making of a book an attainable goal, and inspired all that followed. Aben made every resource of his firm available to the production of the book, requiring only that the book's contents be of the highest quality.

The quality of the book is a direct result of the wisdom of the executive committee, who allowed me editorial independence while serving as adviser and sounding board for myriad questions of policy. In recognition of the book's import to the current community, for instance, the chronological boundaries sometimes have stretched to the present. Such cities as Scranton and Hazleton, actually located outside the book's geographic purview, occasionally have been drawn into the main discussion. The book includes, perhaps, more family and business names and histories than might ordinarily appear in a work of this kind, but fewer than some might desire; it is hoped that readers will recognize the implicit parallels to their individual experiences, and be inspired to develop personal historical accounts. Though lists of all kinds have been avoided, in the main, those lists that were compiled in the course of research will be preserved, along with all original manuscripts, in the permanent JCC archives.

The Jews of Wilkes-Barre is organized as a combination chronological and thematic presentation. Following the introductory chapter, which discusses the overriding themes that focus the book, most chapters cover a specific time period during which thematic patterns evolved. Two chapters are organized around topics. One deals with the enduring Jewish institutions and their leaders. The other is a gallery of Wyoming Valley Jews in the arts and media. Biographies of community notables are sprinkled throughout the text.

This volume could not have developed as an authoritative work of scholarship without the consistent support and encouragement of the executive committee—many of whom fulfilled multiple functions in the making of the book. As Arnold Rifkin and Connie Roth spearheaded fund-raising and Rifkin served as committee liaison to the printer, Lawrence Newman was liaison to the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society and source for some of the rarer photographic images contained in

the book. Tom Bigler, a primary author whose profiles of media personalities represent some of the book's most interesting reading, was himself a reader: he agreed to read the entire manuscript before it was sent to the printer. Robert Capin was a contributing writer, as was Judge Rosenn; the latter also read major portions of the manuscript.

Words cannot convey the extent of my gratitude to Judge Rosenn and to Nathan Kuss for their guidance throughout the project. From providing information to suggesting avenues for research to critiquing the writing, both gave unstintingly of their time, knowledge, and lifetime recollections. The most prolific contributing writer, Kuss also read the entire manuscript, and was always willing to answer questions and resolve apparent contradictions. Rosenn and Kuss, both central actors in the book as well as contributors to it, are prime examples of *The Jews of Wilkes-Barre* as a product of community character.

For their scholarship, teamwork, and commitment to the project, the primary authors of *The Jews of Wilkes-Barre* won my enduring respect. Tom Bigler, Alfred S. Groh, Eric C. Levin, Joseph Salsburg, Sheldon Spear, and Paul J. Zbiek—each a professional writer, educator, and/or historian—contributed extraordinary work. Spear and Zbiek also served as manuscript readers; Levin read the entire manuscript. I am deeply saddened that Joseph Salsburg did not live to see his work published, and deeply privileged to have known him, worked with him, and enjoyed his abiding sense of irony. His wit and intelligence pervade our text on the arts, which he co-wrote with Al Groh.

The work of many contributing writers has been integrated into various chapters; though their work is not always signed, it invariably enriches the text. My thanks to Neil Amdur, Herman Aqua, David Barras, Madge Benovitz, Christopher Breiseth, Robert Capin, Ruth Chariton, William Cherkes, Albert Danoff, Esther Davidowitz, Bettijane Eisenpreis, Gloria Fierverker, Celia Freed, Ruth Freistat, Esther Golub, Barry Greenspon, Joel Harrison, Emmanuel Winters Horowitz, Rabbi Michael Joseph, Nancy Judd, Mary Ann Kierans, Nathan I. Kuss, Phyllis Landau, Iris Levy, Edna Lichtig, Edward Lidz, Jack Meeks, Nancy Messinger, Barbara Meyer, Rabbi James Michaels, Rivian Minkoff, June Nelson, Sandy Padwe, Harold Rosenn, Max Rosenn, Miriam Ross, Lester Saidman, Joseph J. Savitz, Jonathan Schiffman, Albert Schiowitz, Harriet Segal, Sarah Shaffer, Fay Simon, David Smith, Marvin Smith, Evelyn Sondheim, Marcy Stein, Sue

Strassman, Lillian Thalenfeld, Sanford Ungar, Irwin Weinberg, Gladys Weisberger, Marvin Williams, and Frances Wilson. Sarah Shaffer, who wrote about her Miners Mills hometown, passed away in 1997; she was enthusiastic about the book, as indeed she was about all things good for the community, which remembers her as a lady and a doer.

Aiding some of the writers with research or clerical services were Thelma Bosch, Sally Connor, Elaine Cooper, Muriel Jacob, Samuel Rosenberg, and Marcia Rosenthal, and JCC staff members Ruth Cohen, Marie Moses, Susan Potisek, and Gail Wachtel. Joseph Bellucci and Susan Pritchard of Wilkes University provided computer services; Joseph Salsburg also provided technological advice. Elaine Cooper and Carl Handman assisted in photographic research, as did Jesse Teitelbaum of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society. Dozens of people contributed materials, photographs, and artifacts for use in the book, as well as in the gala exhibit organized by Lawrence Newman and Rivian Minkoff; all contributions, even if they ultimately could not be used, are most gratefully acknowledged.

I would like particularly to thank members of the Long and Davidson families for the extensive interviews and access to family documents they allowed me. Bettijane Eisenpreis, Kenneth Stern, Craig and Martin Davidson, Betty Braun, and Helen Siegel were exceptionally generous.

Special thanks are extended also to Frank Mankiewicz, who contributed photographs never before published of his father Herman, uncle Joseph, and grandfather Franz. *The Jews of Wilkes-Barre* is honored to be the first book to display the wonderful character studies that so enhance our gallery chapter.

The bibliography lists nearly 200 people who were interviewed or submitted questionnaires as part of the oral history project undertaken in tandem with this book. I am thankful for access to all the materials, and wish especially to compliment Larry Amdur, who chaired the oral history project, and James Merryman and Thomas Baldino of Wilkes University, who helped develop the questionnaires. Additionally, a number of people spent many hours conducting interviews for the project and this book. Thanks to Robert Capin, Gloria Fierverker, Leah Hakohen, Margery Harris, Carolyn Kaufer, Phyllis Landau, Eric Levin, Ann Lipton, Vivian Mason, Rivian Minkoff, Connie Roth, Perry Shertz, Fay Simon, Ann Smith, Sheldon Spear, Sue Strassman, and Frances Wilson.

The artistry of Nancy Anderson and Nina Davidowitz has added

immeasurably to the beauty and usefulness of the book. Anderson developed custom maps, accurate to the last detail, of the Wyoming Valley and of Wilkes-Barre's Heights. Davidowitz designed the dust jacket and logo for the book.

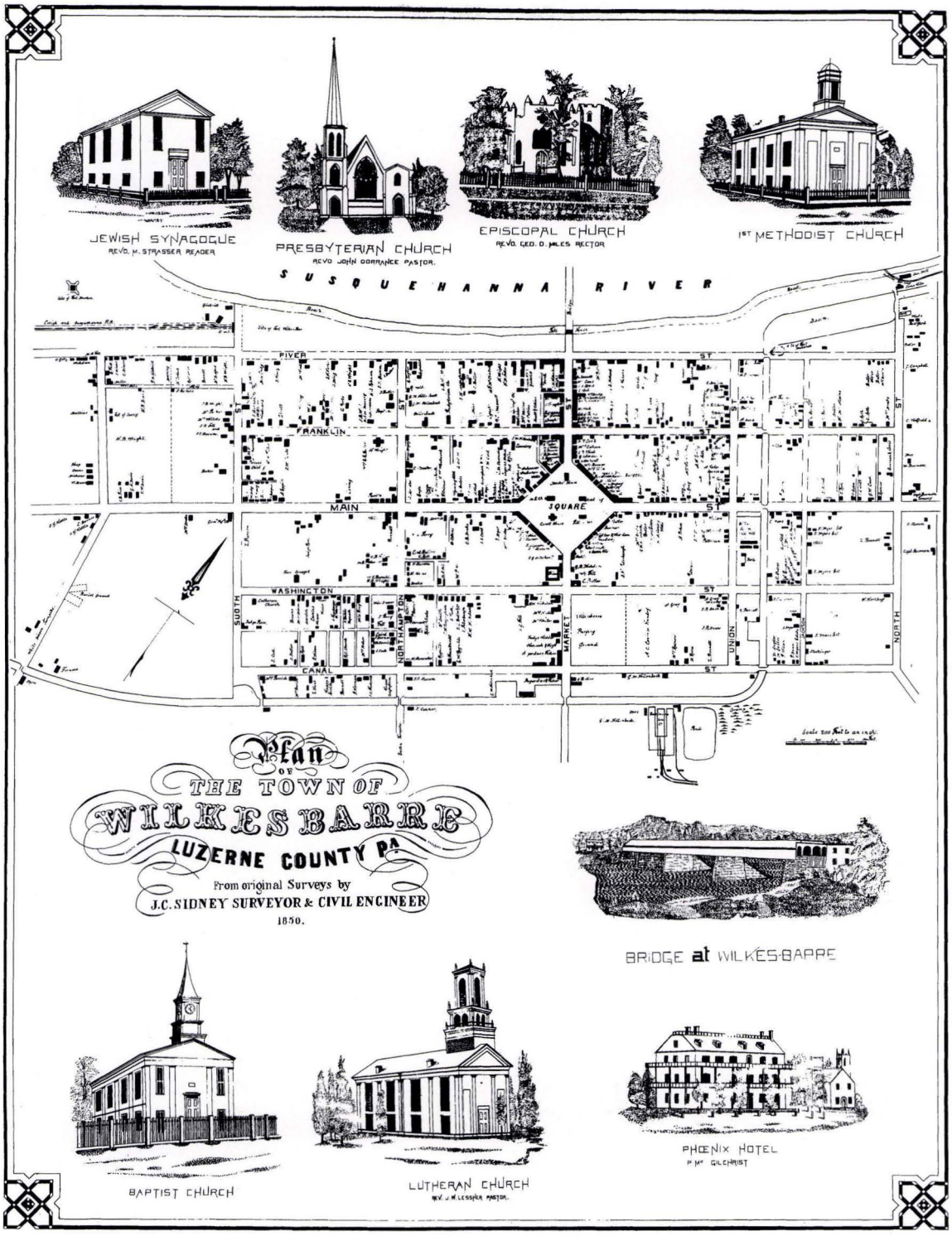
Robert Aben said his contribution is small compared with that of his father, Eugene Abenmoha, whose story is told in these pages. Yet the donation of printing services for a book of this sort is no small matter. We are grateful to Bob Aben and to the entire staff of Unigraphic, most particularly Robert G. Hess, who painstakingly and professionally executed the book's design.

There are many more people to thank—Lynn Gonchar, for marketing advice; the many members of the JCC historic and cultural committees, for their help; Mazie Greenwald, for the unrestricted use of her groundbreaking work on Temple B'nai B'rith.

To those whose names I may have inadvertently omitted, I apologize sincerely; this book is truly the creation of many.

Finally, with love, I thank my family, whose unflagging devotion has been my strength and joy. My husband Eric Levin has been my working partner and confidant in this venture as in all others. My sons Daniel Levin, Noah Eisner, and Kenneth Eisner, and my sister Leah Hakohen, have listened faithfully, read critically, advised wisely, and been there, always.

MARJORIE LEVIN



The Jews of Wyoming Valley: Paradigm and Paradox

Overleaf: 1850 map of Wilkes-Barre.
Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

MARJORIE LEVIN

The Jews of Wyoming Valley: Paradigm and Paradox

The organized Jewish community of the Wyoming Valley, dating from the formation of Congregation B'nai B'rith in Wilkes-Barre in 1845, began nearly two centuries after the first Jews settled in North America. Yet Wilkes-Barre's Jewish community is one of the oldest on the continent. Its history parallels nearly all of American Jewish history, exemplifying patterns, themes, and trends that have shaped American Jewish life as a whole. A microcosm of American Jewish history on the one hand, the story of the Jews of Wilkes-Barre diverges significantly from the norm on the other. The differences, as much a product of life in northeastern Pennsylvania as of the character of northeastern Pennsylvanians, make the story extraordinary. But it is the blending of parallels and differences—the paradigm and paradox of Wyoming Valley Jewry—that makes the story unique.

In 1654, twenty-three Jews from Brazil—Portuguese Marranos, or "secret Jews"—arrived in New York, then New Amsterdam, and faced down Peter Stuyvesant for the right to settle and practice Judaism. This first Jewish settlement in North America would be the only such settlement until the next century, when Jewish communities were established in Savannah, Newport, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Richmond by Spanish and Portuguese Jews driven from the Old World to the New by the Spanish Inquisition. The first wave of Jewish immigration to the United States, which brought about four or five thousand Sephardi Jews to North America, passed the Wyoming Valley by, as it did most American communities. Our story begins with the second wave, which brought tens of thousands of German Jews to America, and some of them to Wilkes-Barre.

It is possible that Wyoming Valley's Jewish history begins even before the first documented Jewish transient in 1835, or the first permanent German Jewish settlers in 1836. In *The Jews: Story of a People,* author Howard Fast refers to manuscript notes in which women escaping the 1778 Wyoming Massacre

describe their two-day flight ending at a Jewish fur trade store, where they were fed and nursed by Jews. Though no further information is given, one has to wonder how far the women could have traveled in those days, how far from the Wyoming, Pennsylvania massacre site the Jewish store could have been.

We may never be able to pinpoint the location of a single Jewish business operating during Revolutionary times, but we are able to place Wilkes-Barre on the timeline of organized Jewish communities in America. By 1843, when there were sufficient Jews in the Wyoming Valley to establish a burial society, and then a congregation, there were fewer than 20 Jewish communities in all of America. Most of the country was yet divided into territories rather than states when an 1854 list of Jewish institutions named 64 organized Jewish communities in America and Canada; Wilkes-Barre is seventeenth oldest.*

One can only guess at the reasons the first German Jewish families chose to settle in the Wyoming Valley. German Jewish immigrants often began to earn their way in America as peddlers and, traveling with their goods from the large port cities where both immigrants and wares originated, some may simply have found Wilkes-Barre congenial. They may also have found the borough—Wilkes-Barre was not officially a city until 1871—situated as it was (and is) in a green valley along a river, reminiscent of home. Members of the Long family, the first family, both literally and figuratively, of Jewish Wilkes-Barre, recently visited their ancestral home in Pretzfeld, Bavaria. The house of Koppel Eisig—or Koppel "Der Lange," reputed to be the tallest man among the community's Jews—has been standing for nearly three centuries, since the early 1700s. The surrounding countryside, according to Koppel Long's great-great-great-grandson David Long, "looks like Wilkes-Barre."

Founding B'nai B'rith as a congregation worshiping according to Orthodox tradition—the only Jewish denomination, of course, until the gradual rise of Reform Judaism through the nineteenth century and the Conservative movement in the twentieth—the small band of German Jews, numbering 22 or 30 men, built a synagogue on South Washington Street in 1849. The same year, the same street became the site of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Although First Methodist Church was also built that year on North Franklin Street, the

*The List of Jewish Institutions appeared in *A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years,* by J. J. Lyons and Abraham de Sola, Montreal, and was basis for a map printed in Solomon Grayzel's *A History of the Jews.* The Jewish communities organized prior to Wilkes-Barre in 1845 were the six Sephardi communities named above, followed by Cincinnati, Baltimore, New Orleans, Albany, Montreal, Louisville, Mobile, Cleveland, Boston, and St. Louis. Easton, Pennsylvania, was dated "before 1850."

German Jews and German Lutherans were then the most recent additions to Wilkes-Barre's religious portrait.

First worshiping together in Wilkes-Barre's first church, Old Ship Zion (conceived in 1791 and completed on Public Square in 1811), the Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Episcopalians gradually built separate churches. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church (1824) and First Presbyterian Church (1833, reorganized from Congregationalist in 1829) were built on South Franklin Street, and First Baptist Church (1847) was built on West Northampton Street. Irish Catholics had founded St. Mary's of the Immaculate Conception Church, initially located on Canal Street, in 1842.

The churches, and the synagogue, illustrate the pattern of settlement in Wyoming Valley since the first colonists to survive Indian massacres and a Connecticut-Pennsylvania tug of war laid down roots in 1769: Connecticut Yankees and Scots-Irish, then Irish and German Christians—and then the small band of Jews, together with thousands more English, Irish, Germans, and the Welsh for whom the Valley would become a favored American home.

The number of churches would multiply again and again as Wyoming Valley's ethnic mix became ever more varied, spurred by the growth of the coal industry and the canal and railroad systems developed to serve it. Many of the Irish and German Christians who had come to build the North Branch Canal (1828-34) remained in the Valley, where they were joined by the first immigrants to work the mines, and then by more and more immigrants from every area of eastern and southern Europe as the demand for coal increased in step with the massive migration from Europe in the 1880s. There were jobs to be had, both skilled and unskilled, in the mines and in mining support, and there was a niche for those who could provide household goods and services for the mining families.

As the twentieth century began, more than two dozen languages were spoken in the coal regions, by then home to Polish, Italian, Slovak, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Hungarian, Lebanese, Syrian, Greek, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, and Tyrolian immigrants. The Eastern European Jewish component of that vast immigrant group displaced the German Jews as the Valley's dominant Jewish population, and eventually added 19 Jewish congregations to the community's religious portrait.

Congregation B'nai B'rith had in 1859 sent representatives to a New York meeting that explored forming a union of American Jewish congregations, but the congregation, then just beginning its gradual transition to Reform, did not

join the movement's umbrella organization, Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, 1873), until 1892. Still, the synagogue is the 24th oldest on UAHC books. Accepting April 5, 1845 as the founding date, B'nai B'rith was established right after Shaaray Tefila in New York, and one day before New York's Temple Emanu-El. Given such venerable neighbors on the timeline, students of American synagogues will appreciate the prominence of Temple B'nai B'rith in the historic context of American Reform Judaism.

As we recognize the longevity of the Jewish community of Wyoming Valley, we see that local Jewish settlement mirrors Jewish settlement patterns in the United States, minus only the Spanish-Portuguese Colonial element. Wyoming Valley has, as few American communities of any size do, representation from every major Jewish immigrant group from the early Germans to the Eastern Europeans (the third, and final, great wave of Jewish immigration to America) to the more recent influx of emigrants from the former Soviet Union. Everywhere Jews settled, they formed, or joined, congregations for worship. Everywhere they settled, they were greatly outnumbered by people of other religious faiths.

Wyoming Valley's Jewish history is distinctive not just because it began so early, in terms both of American Jewish history and Wyoming Valley ethnic history. The timing was crucial, certainly, as was the size of the general population when the first Jews came. The German Jews were able to cement cordial relations and to distinguish themselves among a relatively small populace who valued, from the beginning, loyalty to religion and family, a strong work ethic, and commitment to education and community. Significantly, Jews were integrated into local leadership and social structures from the beginning.

When the Eastern European Jews arrived, settling away from the pressures, prejudices, and population mass of the big cities—and the snobbery of larger groups of earlier arriving Spanish-Portuguese and German Jews—they were able, in the Valley, to follow in the footsteps of the Germans. Not participants in the coal mining industry, Jews escaped the resentment fellow ethnic immigrants harbored for the owners and managers of the mines, as well as the ethnic tensions among the disparate groups of miners.

The absence of significant antisemitism distinguishes the local Jewish experience from that of both large and small American cities, and particularly from cities of comparable size with a comparably heterogeneous, historically explosive, ethnic mix. Acts of vandalism in the early 1990s, in common with occasional incidents of the past, stand out as exceptions that prove the rule. Also

unlike the Jewish experience in similarly small cities, Jews in Wilkes-Barre have never been peripheral to the general community's development.

Historians of the American Jewish experience have observed that when Jews are perceived as among the builders of a city, as in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and San Francisco, later Jewish arrivals are accepted more easily. The observation holds true in Wyoming Valley. The German Jews quickly adapted to American life and, helping to establish the area's commercial base, achieved positions of influence that helped pave the way for the next influx of Jews.

The timing of the German Jews' arrival was propitious. In place to participate in the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy, they served the growing population primarily as merchants. As the anthracite industry grew, stores owned by such Jews as the interrelated Long and Coons families became Wilkes-Barre's equivalent of Macy's and Gimbel's. The merchants themselves became Wyoming Valley's "Our Crowd," participating in the region's cultural, educational, social, and economic development through service on commerce, school, and charitable boards, and membership in fraternal groups.

By the time Jews were arriving in Wyoming Valley from pogrom-scarred eastern Europe, the second generation of German Jews had grown to adulthood. Continuing to build Temple B'nai B'rith and the earliest Jewish benevolent groups, and beginning to develop the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), the children of the first immigrants increasingly entered the professions, adding a new dimension to Jewish influence in the Valley. As Joseph D. Coons and future Judge Seligman J. Strauss were admitted to the bar in the 1870s, Isaac E. Long began his career in local journalism, sensitizing the populace to Jewish issues at a particularly useful time. Dr. Charles Long would soon open his medical practice while his wife, the formidable Fannie Sax Long, would help found multiple social welfare and arts organizations, and mentor the development of the YMHA as a center for culture and acculturation.

Predictably, the German Jews were embarrassed by the new Jewish immigrants arriving in Wyoming Valley between the late 1860s and the 1920s. The Eastern Europeans were poor, uncivilized by American standards, and they spoke no English, but a polyglot of European languages, especially Yiddish, a German-based dialect that the Germans saw as a corruption of their language. The new immigrants were a painful reminder of the German Jews' own beginnings in America, and their very presence threatened the carefully cultivated social position of the earlier Jews. Besides, the new immigrants weren't German.

The pecking order is an old, and continuing, story among Jews. Sephardim consider themselves of higher pedigree than Ashkenazim who, in turn, divide themselves into further social classifications.* The Germans rank themselves first among Ashkenazim. They may not have wished to rub elbows with the Eastern Europeans, their social "inferiors," but they did. People like Nashville-bred Fannie Sax Long, interestingly enough Sephardi on her mother's side and German on her father's, developed YMHA Americanization programs, gave instruction in domestic niceties, and made sure the new immigrants had food, clothes, and basic health care.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Europeans, settling in large numbers in Wilkes-Barre's Heights section and in smaller numbers in the coal towns along the Susquehanna River, formed their own Orthodox congregations, usually with immigrants from the same European hometown, and their own educational, social welfare, and ritual support systems. They became peddlers and craftsmen. They opened hundreds of little shops and several great stores. They learned the language of America while utilizing the many languages of Europe to socialize among themselves, and to conduct business with the staggering variety of immigrant groups among their clientele. They learned American manners and customs and, in the early 1920s, some of them broke away from Orthodoxy to found Temple Israel, one of the new Conservative synagogues then forming all over America.

As all Wyoming Valley Jews moved up the socio-economic ladder, they joined forces in YMHA activities, in the development of philanthropic structures, on behalf of Zionism, and on behalf of the American community; everyone was at one point or another on the assimilation continuum. Like the German Jews before them, second-generation Eastern Europeans entered the professions and they, too, began to be part of the Valley's power structure.

Until the 1930s, antisemitism in Wyoming Valley was virtually unknown. Even after immigration to America was cut off and immigrants were blamed country-wide for all society's ills, local antisemitism was mild. Anti-Jewish expression continued to be negligible, on a relative scale, through the Depression in the U. S. and the rise of the Nazis abroad. Even during World War II, when antisemitism increased nationally, there was little evidence of a local upswing.

*Sephardim are Jews from Spain, Portugal, and the Middle East. Ashkenazim are Jews from central and eastern Europe.

To be sure, there were minor incidents. To be sure, there was social exclusion. But in researching contemporary materials, and conducting exhaustive candid interviews of people who lived through those years in city and outskirts alike, one recognizes the incidents as isolated, individual acts, and the exclusionary practices as power- rather than prejudice-based.

Historian Dr. Paul Zbiek theorized that the former Protestant "anthracite aristocracy," having lost control of the dominant industry, "sought control of the local business and social structure in order to maintain their elite position." Jews represented the most serious challenge to that position, and thus apparently they were, in this period, kept out of gentlemen's clubs where business was transacted over cocktails and starched table linen. But Luzerne County did not tolerate hatemongers, nor did it house the Pocono hotels once notorious for barring minorities. And no Valley college or private preparatory school has ever restricted admission to any religious or ethnic group.

In 1959, when Jews were still barred from membership in Wilkes-Barre's prestigious Westmoreland Club (which Jews may have helped found), *The Status Seekers* appeared. Author Vance Packard, quoting an official of the American Jewish Committee, placed Wilkes-Barre at the top of a list of American communities "where Jews and Gentiles have established excellent relations."*

Wyoming Valley had been too friendly toward its Jews for too long for anti-semitism to take serious hold. From the time members of Wilkes-Barre's five Christian churches contributed to the construction of Temple B'nai B'rith's first building—on condition that the structure be built to last—there had been a tradition of mutual respect and assistance among Jews and Gentiles. The tradition endured through the years when Jews, most of them proprietors of small stores, performed a real service for the miners by providing alternatives to high-priced company stores and allowing payment to slide during strikes, mine closings, and work lulls.

Judge Max Rosenn recalled the coal strikes of the 1920s, when his parents had a grocery store in the Midvale section of Plains. The miners couldn't pay, so the Rosenns carried them on credit, taking in no income themselves. For years afterward, even when the store closed and the Rosenns moved to Kingston, the miners came to pay off their bills, which amounted to thousands

*In the order named, Wilkes-Barre, Cincinnati, Portland (Oregon), San Francisco, Norfolk, St. Paul, and Seattle were cited as particular examples of communities in which social parity prevailed.

of dollars. The story is universal in the coal towns, through all the hard times: kindness extended, kindness repaid, in loyalty above all.

Wyoming Valley people have a long memory for kindness. Witness the unsolicited testimony of 75-year-old Anna Kalonick, a Catholic Slovak miner's daughter, whose letter and Rosh Hashana greetings to a stranger—the present author—were occasioned by a newspaper story about the writing of this book:

> *I was born and raised and lived my entire life in north Wilkes-Barre, the Miners Mills section, where many wonderful Jewish people lived and had businesses. My parents were immigrants from Austria-Hungary, [from an area which] later became Czechoslovakia. . . . My father came to Miners Mills before 1900 and my mother arrived in 1920. . . . Our people, those who came from eastern Europe, many nationalities, found that some of the Jews came from the same villages in Europe, and what a surprise to find they spoke their languages. . . . They all became friendly, and got along so well as they had something in common, being persecuted in Europe and coming to America for a better life. [They] had great respect for one another.*
>
> *My earliest personal recollection of the Jewish people was seeing them come to their synagogue on Grant Street, now known as St. Clair Street. I was seven years old then. Later as I went shopping with my mom I became acquainted with the local storekeepers. . . . Joe Wruble used to get down to the wholesale at 4:00 a.m. to get the best [groceries] for his customers. He didn't really have to do that. If someone needed to buy "on credit" to be paid in two weeks on payday, Joe would give their children a free bag of assorted candy. How nice to have someone care about the neighborhood people. I recall during the war when butter was rationed among other things, if my mom wasn't at the store the day it came in, he would send his delivery man special to bring it to the house to be sure she got it. He did not die a wealthy man but in wealth of goodness that was never forgotten. . . .*
>
> *The Thalenfeld parents spoke Slovak and treated us as friends or relatives. There seemed to be a close bond and understanding of where they came from and why. When the winter coats came in [to the Thalenfelds' clothing store], just to give you an idea of their kindness, my mother would want to purchase coats for one or two of us at a time (there were four children). Mrs. Thalenfeld would insist she choose coats for all of us when there was a first selection, and tell her she can pay later for the others. They were the friendliest people, sharing stories of their several daughters. . . .*
>
> *There was a peddler named Jack who supplied us with the lovely fabrics used in dressmaking. My mom became a professional dressmaker during the*

Depression to supplement the income of dad's coal miner's pay when there wasn't steady work.

My dear mom died ten years ago. She would be happy to know I have finally expressed good wishes to the Jewish people for their holidays as she often asked me to send a message through the local papers extending her best wishes to all the good people I have described. . . .

The ellipses in the extract above are filled with many more names—the merchants not only of Miners Mills, but of downtown Wilkes-Barre and the Heights as well. The feeling is the same—honest, uncomplicated friendship among neighbors who appreciate what they have in common, respect differences, and honor and carry forward a history of good relations.

Even on the Heights, the closest approximation of a Jewish "ghetto" among local areas of first settlement, the Jews were not ghettoized. They lived cheek by jowl with thousands of other immigrants, in a spirit of give and take. Non-Jews were customers at the plethora of kosher bakeries, delicatessens, and butcher shops. Non-Jews were familiar with the Jewish Sabbath and festivals and rites of passage. Non-Jews on the Heights, poor to begin with, like the Heights' Jews, struggled through the Depression alongside them and, when news of war came, they were not likely to put much stock in mean-spirited talk of a "Jewish war."

As all of Wyoming Valley sent children and spouses to war, and the economy rebounded with the urgent need for coal and defense materiel, local life followed American patterns, taking on, of course, special meaning for Jews and other groups whose European counterparts were Hitler's particular targets. After the war, too, as education and housing stock boomed, and Jews continued to move out of the areas of first settlement—though never, in the Valley, wholly forsaking the central city, and not, before 1972, moving far from the city—Wyoming Valley Jewish life mirrored American Jewish life. Then the bottom dropped out of the local economy.

The end of coal mining, dating, effectively, from the Knox Coal Company mine disaster of 1959, may have been, as seen from present perspective, the best thing that ever happened to Wyoming Valley. Absentee owners exploited both natural resources and people, and had no commitment to the community. But the loss of the dominant industry could have been the end of the community. Again, Jews played an important role in economic transition. Joining with Gentiles as leaders in reindustrialization planning, Jews also were promi-

nent in several manufacturing industries—apparel, shoes, silk, and cigars—that helped sustain and rebuild the economy.

And therein lie more variations from the American Jewish norm. Jews in Wyoming Valley were the factory owners and managers, but not the factory laborers. Just as men of other ethnic groups had worked in the mines, miners' wives and mothers and daughters worked in the factories. Jewish employers paid attention to the labor movement to the extent it affected their businesses. Otherwise, notwithstanding national Jewish labor leadership, and the fact that a Jewish woman, Min Matheson, was the single most powerful force in unionizing the local garment industry, the movement had little import for local Jews.

The Jewish proletariat class and its leftist voice are nearly absent from Wyoming Valley's historic profile. Though there was a small Workmen's Circle, there have never been many political radicals, Jewish or otherwise. Wyoming Valley is not fertile ground for extremism.

Along mainstream political lines, the Jewish profile locally yields to familiar American Jewish affiliations: Until the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Wyoming Valley Jews were traditionally Republican; since then, they have been predominantly Democrats. For Valley Jews, uninterested, for the most part, in elective office for themselves, political alliances have been more pragmatic than philosophic, focusing on the most effective routes to address social issues. Though local Jews tend to unite on matters affecting Israel, there is no such thing as a "Jewish vote" in a group at once small and intensely, individually, independent.

For local Jews, associations forged in state and national political circles paid off mightily when the devastating flood of 1972 threatened to destroy a community 200 years in the making. Max Rosenn, Secretary of Public Welfare under two Pennsylvania governors and appointed to the federal bench by President Nixon in 1970, could call on powerful friends to get the attention—and the legislation enabling massive federal financial aid—that Wyoming Valley needed. Again forming a Jewish-Gentile leadership coalition—the Flood Recovery Task Force headed by Judge Rosenn—the community came back, "better than ever," in a way that made some rank the flood over the end of coal as the best thing to happen to the Valley.

And the spirit of ethnic cooperation, nurtured for so many years, carried forward through the rebuilding and the post-flood era.

The Jewish community formed its own Flood Emergency Committee, providing for individual financial and psychological help and the restoration of

Jewish institutions. The story, detailed in print for the first time in this volume, is one that involves Jewish communities from one coast of the country to the other, as Wilkes-Barre appealed to American Jewry for help, and American Jewry answered. The story is about the principle of Jews' responsibility for one another, and the principle's evolution in the context of organized American Judaism. The story is also about leadership, another aspect of Wyoming Valley Jewry distinctive not just for its quality, but for its continuity.

The lay leadership, epitomized during the flood by such people as Max Rosenn and Eugene Roth, has consistently provided not a few years but a lifetime of volunteer service. The many men and women who have built the community have led Valley Jewry through multiple eras of Valley history, carrying forth one generation's work to the next, responding to and effecting change.

The longevity of the professional leadership has been nothing short of remarkable. Rabbi Marcus Salzman served 35 years; Rabbi Isadore Davidson, 43 years; Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff, 47 years; Rabbi Abraham Barras, 31 years; Rabbi Arnold Shevlin, 22 years. The role of the clergy in shaping interfaith relations has been as crucial as their role in shaping Jewish life, whose axis for Jews of all religious affiliations has always been the Jewish Community Center (JCC)*.

Officials at the New York City headquarters of North American Jewish Community Centers chuckled when asked if Louis Smith's 52-year tenure as executive director of the JCC constituted a record. "You have a lot of stability up there in Pennsylvania," one of the officials said. Sure enough, Smith's service as full-time director was longer than that of his counterparts in Easton, Allentown, and Harrisburg, all of whom served many years.

Lou Smith was the focal figure, as the JCC was the focus, of Jewish communal life from the time most immigrants came to the Valley through the Valley's rebirth after its last and worst flood. He grew up in the community, and he grew up with the community. He was charismatic, influential, full of ideas. He knew how to rally people to a cause or program he believed in. Aided by Julia Lieberman—who devoted 44 years, herself, to the JCC and its camp—he developed the Center into a thriving cultural, social, and athletic venue, and into a force for goodwill in the general community.

There are additional distinguishing aspects of the Wyoming Valley Jewish community. For one, all the synagogues, the Center, and the Hebrew day

*The YMHA changed its name to the Jewish Community Center of Wyoming Valley in 1947.

school are still clustered in downtown Wilkes-Barre and the immediately adjacent towns, notably Kingston, evidence that the Jewish populace has not dispersed to the same extent as Jews of other communities. Jewish flight to the far suburbs also occurred later than the norm, in response, at first, to the 1972 flood, which caused many to leave the flood plain if they stayed in the area at all. The Jewish institutions remained in the flood plain, along with many Jewish residences. In central Wilkes-Barre, the JCC and two synagogues remain in an area anchored by two colleges, whose presence has assured the continued safety and beauty of the downtown.

Outmigration is not just a Jewish problem, and it doesn't trace only to the flood. It is a long-term problem in the Valley, which has gained and then lost people all along—as industries vanished, as factories closed, as opportunities for employment shrank. Since the 1950s, Jewish young people have been leaving the area for college and jobs. Although many might wish to raise their own children in the wholesome environment in which they were raised, they rarely have been able to come back. Unless they can carry on family businesses, or pursue careers in medicine, law, or precious few other fields, they must go elsewhere to build their lives. Post-1972 in-migration of professionals in health care and high technology has offset the "brain drain," Jewish and non-Jewish, to some degree. But the Valley is still losing population, and the population that remains is growing older. The Jewish population today is less than half the size it once was.*

And yet this same population, comprising very few strictly observant Jews, maintains an Orthodox day school, a range of ritual supports, and three Orthodox synagogues.

As Eugene Roth said of one Orthodox rabbi, "It is a lot easier to be an adherent, observant Jew in a community of adherent, observant Jews. But those communities don't need the Rabbi Pernikoffs, or the role models that his wife and children have been. It is the small towns like Wilkes-Barre all over the country that need the Rabbi Pernikoffs."

Sophie Pernikoff acknowledged the problems of living as an Orthodox Jew in an area lacking a substantial Orthodox base. She and her husband, the rabbi, had to send all their children to out-of-town yeshivas for high school. Socially, it is difficult for both children and adults. Yet the few observant families sup-

* Statistics of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) illustrate a steady decline. Counting more than 7,300 Jews in the Wyoming Valley in 1927, AJC figures were 5,062 in 1953; 4,735 in 1972; 4,300 in 1979; 3,500 in 1990; and 3,200 in 1995.

port one another and the entire community of Jews. The commitment of the observant Orthodox is reciprocated by the larger Jewish population, who return their respect, and not only support but participate in Orthodox institutions.

A final, felicitous distinction of the Wyoming Valley Jewish community is its contribution to America of men and women of outstanding achievement in many and varied fields. The Jews of Wilkes-Barre have produced such national luminaries as Max Rosenn and Jesse Choper in law, David Rutstein and Harry Reich in medicine, Mendy Rudolph in sports, Sandy Padwe in journalism, Barbara Weisberger in dance, and Louis Weitzenkorn in theater. Add to the list—which is only a sampling—brothers Herman and Joseph Mankiewicz, whose place in film history forever will rank them among the creative superstars, and the influence of the local Jewish community assumes a proportion far beyond its size.

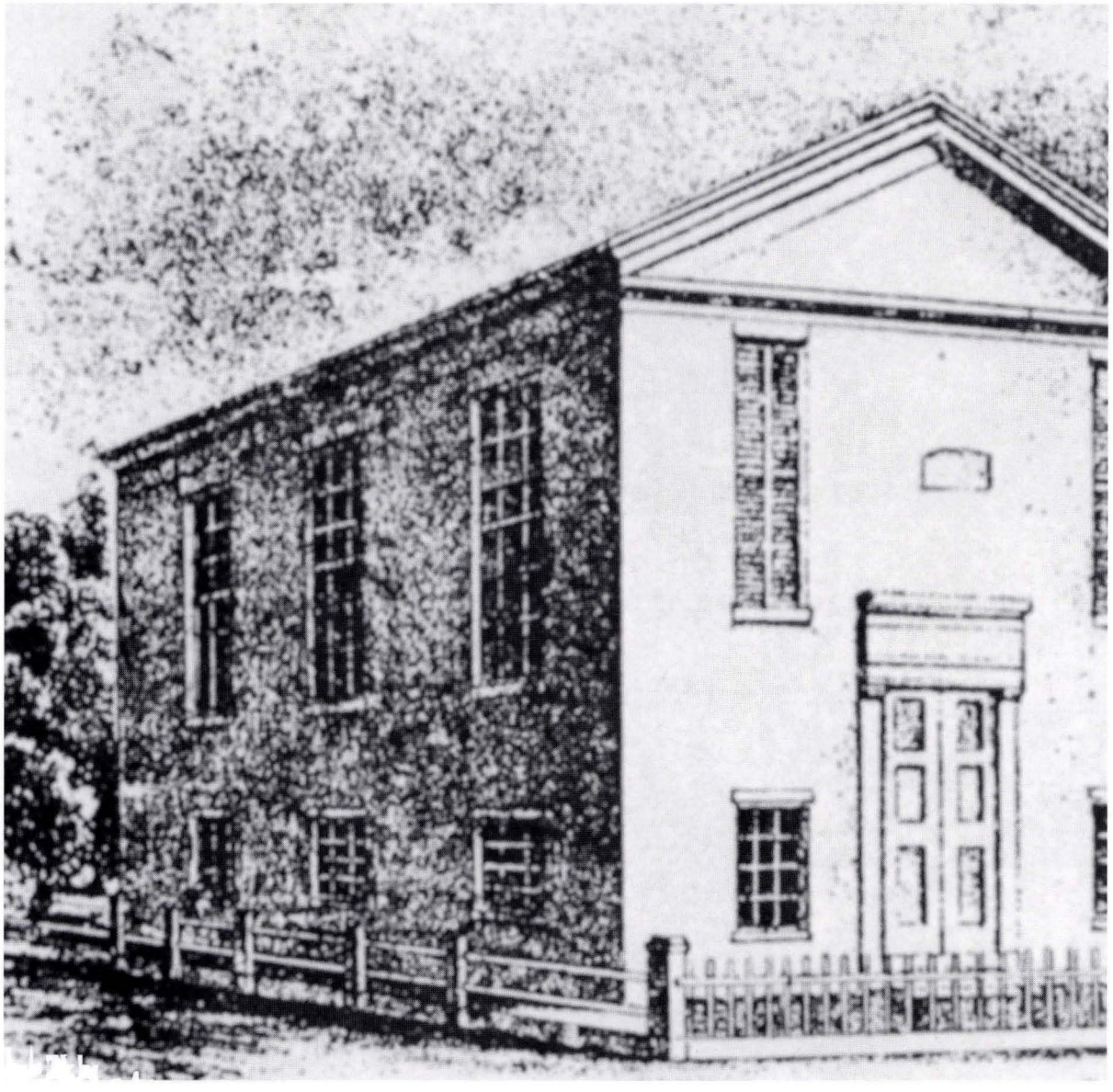
Multiply the number of examples in the sampling over and over again, and add the following annotation to the final figure: Though most of the Valley's many Jewish achievers have gone elsewhere to make their mark, all the living celebrities profiled in this book eagerly shared their memories of and love for the place that gave them their start. As for deceased celebrities, their descendants who never lived in Wilkes-Barre invariably had been schooled in the Valley's attraction; instant access, and an instant bond, earned by the Valley and its people, were assured.

There is yet one member of the Long family living in Wyoming Valley. Descendants of other original German and Eastern European immigrants still live in Wyoming Valley. Those with deep roots in the community have made a definitive statement about the meaning of home. In-migrants who have lived in the community for considerable time but whose roots are elsewhere also have made statements. These can be surprising.

A woman who grew up in Chicago, surrounded by Jews, said, "I developed Jewish pride in the Valley." Echoing her sentiment without hearing it, a man wrote, "I believe I have a greater sense of Jewish identity in the Wyoming Valley than I had living in New York City, where it was taken for granted because of the huge size of the Jewish population."

Newcomers to the Valley's Jewish community have described contradictory and simultaneous feelings: at once they are part of a tight-knit family, and outsiders looking in.

After 150 years, the Jewish community of Wyoming Valley continues to elude easy categorization, except as paradigm and paradox, which it likely will remain.



Wyoming Valley's First Jews: The German Connection

Overleaf: Engraving of first Temple B'nai B'rith building,
South Washington Street, Wilkes-Barre, 1849.
Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

SHELDON SPEAR

Wyoming Valley's First Jews:
The German Connection

When the first Jews settled in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, Wilkes-Barre was essentially an agricultural market town not far removed from a frontier village. Although anthracite mining was already under way, the traditional farming and handicraft economy of antebellum America still prevailed. Newspapers commonly provided subscribers with agricultural advice and accepted payment in produce. Travel was tortuously slow, whether by stagecoach over unpaved roads or the more comfortable canal boat, providing service as of 1837 at an average speed of four miles an hour. Population, according to the Census of l840, was 1,718.

That census could not have included Moses Libien, a Jew from the French province of Alsace, who had by then left Wilkes-Barre. The first Jew whose presence is documented in the records of Temple B'nai B'rith, Libien arrived in 1835 and left in 1838. There may have been a few other transients before the arrival, beginning in 1836, of the first permanent Jewish settlers.

Synagogue records show that a Hirsch Koch arrived in Wilkes-Barre in 1836; his daughter Hanna is thought to have been the first Jewish child born in Wilkes-Barre. Like-named Hannah Koch, possibly of the same family, arrived from Bavaria in 1836, and in 1840 married Bavaria-born Joseph Coons, who began his Wilkes-Barre business in 1839. Martin Long, native of Pretzfeld, Bavaria, arrived in 1837, followed in 1839 by his brother Marx. A handful of other German Jews soon joined this small group in Wilkes-Barre.

German Jews, mainly from the kingdom of Bavaria and other southwestern German states of pre-unified Germany, were a small part of the massive migration of 1830-60 from northern and western Europe to the United States. Population growth, crop failures, the disastrous economic depression of the 1840s—and the unsuccessful liberal revolutions of 1848-9—spurred the exodus from Europe, where German Jews, facing the same economic difficulties as their non-Jewish neighbors, also suffered legally-sanctioned discrimination. When Bavaria, for instance, first gained a Jewish population through Napoleon's annexation of part of Franconia, laws were passed restricting where

Jews could live. At the time of Martin Long's departure from Pretzfeld in the Franconia section, the laws allowed only one child in a Jewish family to inherit, register to do business, and marry; thus all the brothers but the eldest, Hirsh*, came to the United States. Other discriminatory practices restricted the German Jews' right to practice a craft and to marry freely. In general, they had little formal education and were traditional in their religious outlook.

The German Jewish immigrants, whose families had been small town and village shopkeepers, artisans, horse and cattle dealers, and other agricultural traders in Europe, often began their American work lives as peddlers. Martin Long may have peddled his wares out of New York or Philadelphia and, finding Wilkes-Barre to his liking, decided to stay. His siblings—Marx, half-brother Simon, and half-sisters Fanny, Helena, and Jeanette—would soon join him. By the early 1840s, Martin Long, Marx Long, Joseph Coons, John Constine, Solomon Schloss, Simon Mann, Louis Schwartz, Henry Pfeifer, Samuel Koch, Isaac Koch, Daniel Levy, Raphael Herter, and A. Frolich, with their immediate families, were living in Wilkes-Barre.

Wilkes-Barre's Jews began to organize in 1843 with the creation of a burial society composed of most of the above, plus Moses Rosenbaum, Loeb Heimer, Herz Lowenstein, and A. Lederer. Initiating the process of acquiring land for a cemetery off the present Darling Street, the society paid $12.50 per week until the purchase was complete. In 1845 they formed a congregation, called B'nai B'rith ("sons of the covenant"). Private homes or rented rooms housed the first services, but by 1849 a sturdy whitewashed brick synagogue on South Washington Street had been built and dedicated in services conducted by B'nai B'rith's minister, the Rev. Moses Strasser.

The dedication service of August 31, 1849, which attracted considerable notice in the local press, was distinguished by "a handsome *Sepher*" (Torah scroll), given to the synagogue by Bernhard Meyers (father of Mrs. Martin Long and David Meyers), who had arrived from Bavaria the night before the ceremonies, and by participation of two of the most prominent Jewish clerics of the day. In attendance were the Rev. Isaac Leeser, *hazan* of Mikveh Israel, the Sephardi congregation in Philadelphia, and the Rev. Samuel M. Isaacs, *hazan* of Shaaray Tefila in New York.

The pre-eminent Jewish leader in America from 1830 through the Civil

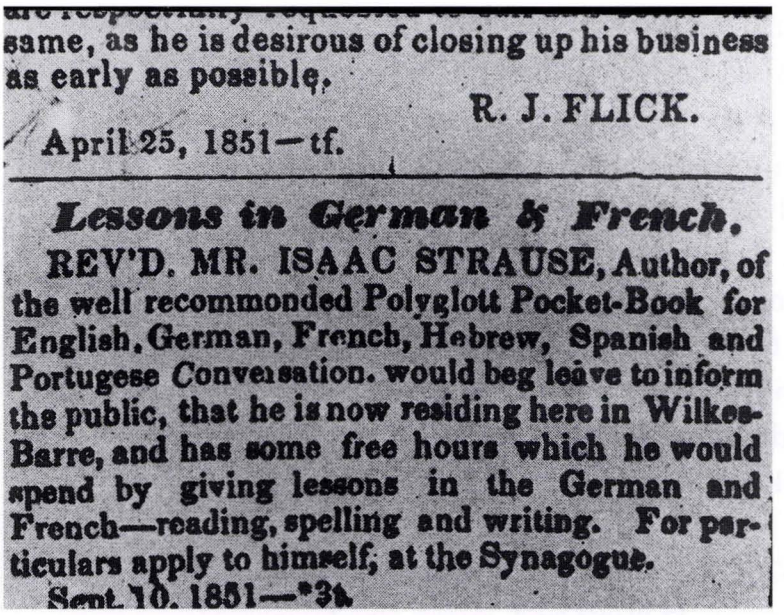
* A century later, Wilkes-Barre's Long family, descendants of Martin's brother Simon, would rescue Hirsh's descendants from Germany on the eve of World War II.

War, Leeser (1806-68), a native of Germany who came to Richmond, Virginia in 1824 and to Philadelphia in 1829, revised the King James translation of the Bible (1845), wrote English translations of the Sephardi (1837) and Ashkenazi (1848) prayer books, and published *The Occident* (1843-68), the first important English-language Jewish periodical in the country. A traditionalist and spokesman for Jewish unity, he fostered the development of Jewish education in America, from introducing the sermon in English as a weekly feature of synagogue services, to preparing materials for the first successful Jewish Sunday school established by Rebecca Gratz in 1838. He guided formation of the Hebrew Education Society (1851), the first Jewish Publication Society (American Jewish Publication Society, 1845), and the first rabbinical school (Maimonides College, 1867-73).

The Rev. Samuel Myer Isaacs (1804-78) delivered the consecration sermon at B'nai B'rith's dedication service. Born in Holland and raised largely in England, Isaacs was the first rabbi invited by an American synagogue to deliver regular sermons in English. He came to New York in 1839 to serve as *hazan* of B'nai Jeshurun, leaving that congregation when a faction separated to found Shaaray Tefila, which he served from 1846 until 1877. An exponent of traditional Judaism, he regularly contributed to the Jewish press and, in 1857, founded the *Jewish Messenger* with his sons. He helped found Jews Hospital (1852, renamed Mt. Sinai Hospital in 1866), and was active in efforts to help Jews in Palestine. Though not of Leeser's stature, Isaacs was closely associated with both Leeser and the Rev. Dr. Sabato Morais, who would succeed Leeser at Mikveh Israel in 1851 and become, in 1886, the founding president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Reporting on B'nai B'rith's dedication in *The Occident,* Leeser emphasized that Christian residents of Wilkes-Barre had contributed about $1,000 to the synagogue building fund, on condition that original plans for a "frame building" be changed in favor of "a more substantial structure." Individuals donated sums ranging from one to 25 dollars, or the equivalent in lumber, grain, and other commodities. Among the Christian contributors were members of Wyoming Valley's oldest families—Beaumont, Bennett, Bowman, Butler, Conyngham, McClintock, Reynolds, Shoemaker, and the future Congressman Hendrick B. Wright. They belonged to the five Christian churches in Wilkes-Barre, which by 1850 had seen its population increase to 2,723.

There were only 37 established synagogues in all of the United States by 1850. All but three were Orthodox, including B'nai B'rith, where Hebrew was


same, as he is desirous of closing up his business as early as possible.

R. J. FLICK.

April 25, 1851—tf.

Lessons in German & French.

REV'D. MR. ISAAC STRAUSE, Author, of the well recommended Polyglott Pocket-Book for English, German, French, Hebrew, Spanish and Portugese Conversation. would beg leave to inform the public, that he is now residing here in Wilkes-Barre, and has some free hours which he would spend by giving lessons in the German and French—reading, spelling and writing. For particulars apply to himself, at the Synagogue.

Sept. 10. 1851—*3t.

Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

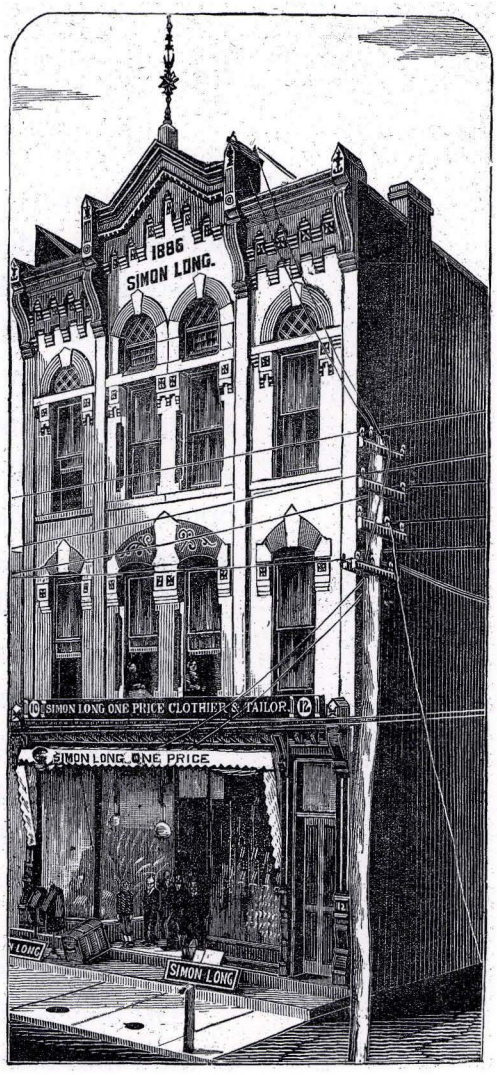
the language of the service, German, often, the language of the sermon. Women sat separately, in the balcony.

Because there was a shortage of ordained rabbis in the U. S., the religious leader of B'nai B'rith, as elsewhere, was actually a *hazan* (defined as cantor, in current Ashkenazi usage, but at that time—and to this day, in Sephardi congregations—embracing the functions of rabbi, cantor, and Torah reader) who served also as teacher, *mohel* (circumciser for ritual circumcision, or *brit milah*), and *shohet* (ritual slaughterer of animals as required by the dietary laws—*kashrut*—governing kosher food). A Cantor Mauss officiated from 1848-9, followed by the Rev. Moses Strasser (1849-51), who officiated at the synagogue's first wedding, of Helena Long and David Coons, in September 1849. The Rev. Isaac Strouse served from 1851-3. It is fair to assume that their salaries were niggardly. Strasser, apparently seeking to supplement his income, placed a newspaper advertisement offering guitar lessons, and Strouse was a tutor of French and German. The Rev. Herman Rubin, whose first wife was Jeanette Long, served from 1853 to 1882, during which time the synagogue was incorporated (1857). Later in that 29-year span, the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) would be formed, and the first of the immigrants from eastern Europe would arrive in Wilkes-Barre.

The charming memoir by Edith Brower, "Little Old Wilkes-Barre As I Knew It," contains a few vivid images of Wilkes-Barre's Jewish community in the 1850s and l860s. Brower (1848-1931), a writer, teacher, and civic reformer, grew up a strict Presbyterian, deeply knowledgeable about the Old Testament as well as the New, and inherently curious about the Jewish people. As a young girl, she visited the B'nai B'rith synagogue on the High Holy Days, finding a "permeating charm" in the ancient liturgy, and she encountered Jews as neighbors. She knew the brothers Seligman and Bernard Burgunder, butchers who lived opposite her on Northampton Street, and the Simon Longs, with their many offspring, around the corner on South Washington Street. Yet it was the Orthodoxy of Wilkes-Barre's Jews that seems to have most intrigued her:

"Terribly scrupulous were those strict followers of the Levitical law. Old Mrs. Silverbach once said mournfully to my grandmother: 'Your religion is so easy, ours so hard.' I can recall going into Mr. Silverbach's little grocery shop, a short way up the street, at meal time, and seeing his boys run for their hats, for they might not eat with uncovered heads."

The German Jewish immigrants adhered to their piety as the peddlers, demonstrating rapid economic progress, began opening shops on Public Square, advertising that their stores would be closed from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. Newspaper notices reflect the Jewish presence as early as 1840, with an advertisement for Martin Long's "New Fancy Dry Goods and Jewelry Store." Marx Long (1817-1909), Martin's partner for several years, opened his own grocery store on the Square; it operated at the same site from 1850 to 1911, Marx himself remaining active in the business into his eighties. Simon Long (1827-1902), who had arrived in Wilkes-Barre in 1846, worked briefly for his brothers before opening his own clothing establishment; the last of his several stores was built in 1886 and expanded in 1890. Joseph Coons, too, founded a long-lived clothing emporium, and Abraham Strauss, defining himself as a merchant tailor, sold "ready-made clothes." The mercantile appraisement list for 1850 notes these Jewish merchants, as well as H. Lowenstein, D. Mayer, I. Langfeld, J. Constine, L. Ullman, Moses Rosenbaum, Solomon Kramer, H. Ansbacher, and David Mordecai.



Simon Long Store.
Taken from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, The Progressive City, July 1889.

Relations between the Valley's first Jewish families and their Christian neighbors appear to have been excellent from the start. Christians had helped Congregation B'nai B'rith meet synagogue construction costs, and the Jewish community would respond generously on behalf of the families of mine workers killed at Avondale in 1869. A brief piece in the *Wilkes-Barre Advocate* of September 5, 1849 described the borough's Jews as "generally peaceable, law abiding and industrious citizens," while other articles explained the significance of Jewish holidays such as Passover and Rosh Hashana.

For their own part, Jews were quick to integrate themselves into the life of the general community. Abraham Strauss served on the Wilkes-Barre School Board, and fel-

low merchant Isaac Livingston held office as Treasurer of Luzerne County. Marx Long helped organize Wilkes-Barre's volunteer fire department in 1859 and served as a fireman for ten years, later serving on the boards of the Central Poor District and the United Charities (later renamed Family Service Association of Wyoming Valley) and as vice president of the Home for Friendless Children. Martin Long, initiated in 1844 into Wilkes-Barre Lodge No. 61, Free and Accepted Masons, the oldest Masonic lodge in Wyoming Valley, was soon followed by Joseph Coons, John Constine, David Coons, Simon Long, David Meyer, Morris Strouse, and David Mordecai. Constine became treasurer in 1848 and Mordecai was elected Worshipful Master in 1863. Constine and Henry Ansbacher were officers and charter members of the Hoffnung Lodge, No. 424, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, organized in 1851.

The activities of John Constine illustrate the early German Jews' assimilation into American society. Not long after his arrival in 1839 from Bavaria, Constine opened a grocery store on Public Square, opposite the county courthouse. He soon Americanized his name from Emanuel Constein, became a citizen by 1844, and served at least seven years in the local militia unit, the Wyoming Yeagers, which had been formed and trained by Joseph Coons. Active in his lodges, Constine followed the lead of native-born businessmen by investing in the Philadelphia and Wilkes-Barre Telegraph Company when it was incorporated in 1849. He expressed himself politically by joining the Republican Party in 1854, the year it was founded, and by participating in the surreptitious activities of the "Underground Railroad," a network of abolitionists who helped fugitive slaves escape to Canada. In the latter capacity, he opposed the area's heavily anti-abolitionist sentiment (but reflected the majority American Jewish view).

Wyoming Valley Jews participated in the Civil War, both as combatants and on the home front. Joseph Coons became a captain in the Pennsylvania militia and, before impaired vision forced his return home, led his company as far as Harrisburg during the scare of a rebel invasion of the state in 1862. Herman Cohen, a German Jewish immigrant working for his uncle Henry Cohen in Pittston, joined the 6th New York Volunteers. His four years of service included the campaigns of the Gulf, Pensacola, and New Orleans under General Benjamin Butler. Abraham Frauenthal, David Davidsburg, and Isaac E. Long were other Wyoming Valley enlistees.

The only verifiable Jewish Civil War fatality was Lewis Constine, a member of the 143rd Pennsylvania Infantry and a son of John and Fanny Constine. He

died in Virginia after the amputation of an accidentally wounded leg. Only 18 at the time of his death in May 1863, Lewis Constine had been a popular newsboy. A friend of his parents, Congressman Hendrick B. Wright, who also lost his soldier son (to typhoid), delivered the eulogy at the Jewish cemetery. Infection and disease killed as many men during the Civil War as enemy fire.*

Marx Long, circa 1897.

In July 1861 grocer Marx Long promised his customers that, the war notwithstanding, he would continue to supply them with fresh fish daily. Whether or not he kept his pledge cannot be determined, but Long was clearly an important figure on the home front. The state appointed him sutler, or provisioner, of the 143rd Infantry, which was under the command of Edmund L. Dana, a successful lawyer and later judge. The 143rd, recruited almost exclusively in Luzerne County, was the only militia unit to be wholly trained and equipped for combat at a site within the county; Camp Luzerne, located at the foot of the mountain, on both sides of today's Kelly Street in the present borough of Luzerne, opened on July 29, 1862. Long kept the recruits well supplied with provisions, and when the 143rd broke camp in November 1862 he accompanied the unit all the way to Washington, D. C. Regimental officers thanked him for all of his endeavors by giving him a gold-handled cane, a standard 19th-century gift signifying affection and respect.

Charity work was another facet of Long's contribution to the war effort. In May 1864, for example, he raised $112, then not a paltry sum, at the Hillside Soldiers' Aid Society's festival in Plymouth Township. The money benefited sick and wounded soldiers.

By the end of the Civil War in 1865, Congregation B'nai B'rith had begun to forsake Orthodoxy for Reform Judaism. This change may have been due, in part, to David Einhorn's visit to Wilkes-Barre in 1860. Rabbi Einhorn, who was born and educated in Bavaria, was the author of the new Reform prayer book, which the congregation adopted, and the leader of the radical wing of the Reform movement, which had, as early as 1845 at a rabbinical conference in Germany, approved the use of the organ, mixed seating, and the use of the vernacular in synagogue services. The second B'nai B'rith synagogue, built on the site of the first in 1880-81, appropriately became a "temple," and services

* Information on two area Jews who may have died at the infamous Confederate military prison at Andersonville, Georgia could not be verified.

included a choir, an organ, and uncovered heads for male worshipers.

Both the laying of the temple's cornerstone in August 1880 and the dedication of the completed building in April 1881 drew overwhelmingly positive commentary from Wilkes-Barre newspapers. The *Daily Union Leader* of April 8, 1881 described the new edifice as one with "all modern conveniences and beautifully finished both outside and in." Membership of B'nai B'rith had grown from 40 in the 1840s to 56 in 1880, necessitating a larger building. Again, as in 1849, contributions from non-Jews helped defray some of the construction costs.

Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago, a leading radical Reform rabbi, a founder of and teacher at the University of Chicago, and a son-in-law of David Einhorn, officiated at this dedication service. Among other innovations, he advocated Sunday Sabbath services and a continuing Christian-Jewish dialogue. It may have been discomfort with such newfangled notions, or simply 29 years in his post, which led Herman Rubin to retire in 1882 as spiritual leader of B'nai B'rith. His successor was Dr. David Stern, a 28-year-old native of Manchester, England, who came to Wilkes-Barre from Natchez, Mississippi.

The second Temple B'nai B'rith building, South Washington Street, Wilkes-Barre, 1881.
Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

Dr. Stern was a reformer of the same ilk as Hirsch and Einhorn, only more so. For a time, evidently, he was able to persuade his new flock to adopt Sunday services. But Stern's views soon went far beyond radical Reform Judaism. It became known that he had accepted the idea of Jesus as the Messiah and considered converting to the Episcopal Church. This heresy was too much for any self-respecting Jewish congregation, and in 1885 Stern was dismissed.

Stern was a brilliant but deeply troubled man. On April 24, 1885 he committed suicide by taking an overdose of laudanum, a readily available form of opium, in his Wyoming Valley Hotel room. Despite the manner of Stern's death and the controversial character of his rabbinate, his former congregation allowed him to be buried in the B'nai B'rith Cemetery which only recently (1883) had been moved from Darling Street to Hanover Township.

Meanwhile, "little old Wilkes-Barre" had changed. The coal industry had begun to dominate the area and, by 1875, the region encompassing Wyoming Valley was shipping more than half the state's anthracite. The burgeoning econo-

my enabled many of the pioneering German Jewish shopkeepers to become merchant princes. Among these were Marx and Simon Long (Martin, divorced from his wife, had died in 1864), and their first cousins, brothers Isaac and Jonas Long, who had also come to the United States from Bavaria. Isaac and Jonas Long spent only 1848-50 in Wilkes-Barre before moving to Philadelphia with their family, but returned to develop enduring businesses.

Jonas and Pauline Long. *Courtesy Kenneth L. Stern and Jean Ross.*

Jonas Long (1830-84), president of Temple B'nai B'rith at the time of the dedication of the second building in 1881, opened a department store on the Square in 1860. According to his great-grandson Kenneth L. Stern, Jonas's wife, the former Pauline Mayer, was "the power behind the throne" as far as business was concerned. When her children came home from working in the store, she would ask what the day's receipts had been—and they would tell her, in code, presumably so the maid would not understand. After her husband's death and until her sons were old enough to assume the responsibility, Pauline Long directed the business, which became under her management one of the largest in the state outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.*

Isaac Long. *Taken from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, The Progressive City, July 1889.*

Isaac Long (1834-98) opened a small store in Wilkes-Barre in 1873. Though the original business had only two employees, by the early 1890s he had established a department store occupying three floors of the Welles Building on Public Square. He invested some of his profits in local businesses such as the Electric Light Company, the People's Bank, the North Wilkes-Barre Lace Company, and the Hotel Sterling Company. In April 1884 he was one of 14 petitioners, along with coreligionists S. L. Ansbacher and E. Constine, for a charter to organize the Wilkes-Barre Board of Trade (renamed the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce in

*"Possessed of unusual business acumen for a woman," according to her death notice in the *Scranton Times,* Pauline Long was said to have directed the business at a crucial period in its growth. The *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* noted that on November 20, 1910, the "community lost two of its most prominent residents," Mrs. Jonas Long and Henry M. Hoyt, son of Wilkes-Barre's only Pennsylvania governor.

Jonas Long Store.
Taken from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, The Progressive City, July 1889.

1911). Fellow businessmen, who felt the same esteem for him as they did for his cousins, elected him president (and E. [John] Constine a trustee) of the original organization.

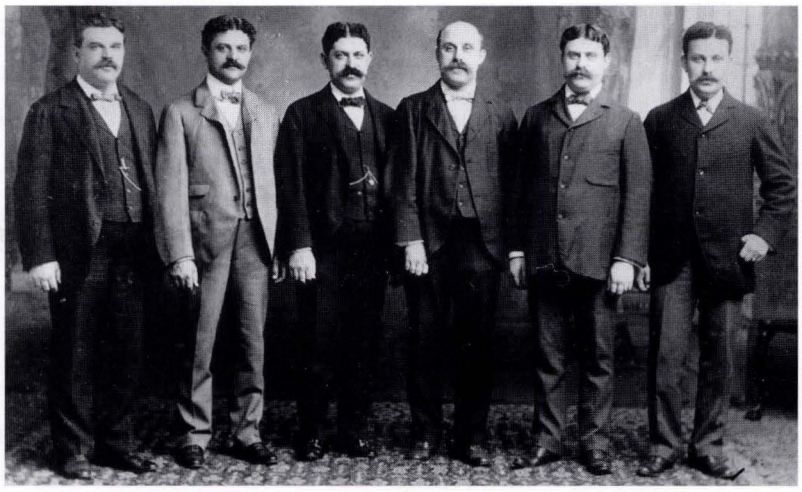
Besides the Longs, first generation German Jewish merchants included members of the Coons, Constine, Ansbacher, Frauenthal, Hirsch, and Strauss families. Most of the families became related by marriage in that generation. Their sons usually entered the family business too; relatively few of them attained higher educations. Isidor Coons, son of Joseph D. Coons, described the circumstances of his father's generation: "Families were large, and in conformity with the customs of the time, sons were expected to help their fathers in business as promptly as they were assumed to have enough fundamental education which, in many instances, did not contemplate their finishing high school."

Joseph S. Coons, Isidor's older cousin (and husband of Simon Long's daughter Hannah), entered his father Joseph Coons's business as a partner in 1884. Joseph S. Coons and Company, as the firm was subsequently called, operated one of the most elaborate and attractive department stores on Public Square, on the corner of East Market Street. The stores of Simon and Jonas Long became, respectively, Simon Long's Sons and Jonas Long's Sons. Simon's sons Col. Isaac S. Long (remembered for his illuminated walking stick and the white horse he rode through town), Cosmar Phillador (Gus) Long, and later, Millard Fillmore Long*, were active in Simon Long's Sons, as was Louis Schloss, the husband of Simon's daughter Rose. The store, which occupied a huge building on South Main Street, would remain family-owned until its failure in the Depression.

The children of Simon Long. From left, first row: Lena Long Ulman, Rosa Long Schloss, Isaac S. Long, Millard Fillmore Long, Hannah Long Coons. From left, top row: Dr. Charles Long, Edith Long Schwartz, Cosmar P. Long, Caroline L. Ulman.
Courtesy Bettijane Eisenpreis.

*Long family naming practices have been so consistent as to confuse the historian. The family tree shows six sons called "Isaac," all cousins, born between 1834 and 1861. Presumably the name honors the original Koppel Eisig, born in Pretzfeld in 1731, and his son Eisig, father of Hirsh, Caroline, Martin, Marx, Fanny, Helena, Simon, and Jeanette. Similarly, the names "Simon," "Millard," "Caroline," and "Charles" are repeated, most to the present generation. Cosmar's middle name was a variation of the maiden name, Pilidor, of his grandmother Hannah (Eisig's second wife). And, according to stories told to his granddaughter Bettijane Long Eisenpreis, the first Millard Fillmore Long himself took the middle name so that it would appear that he was named for the president.

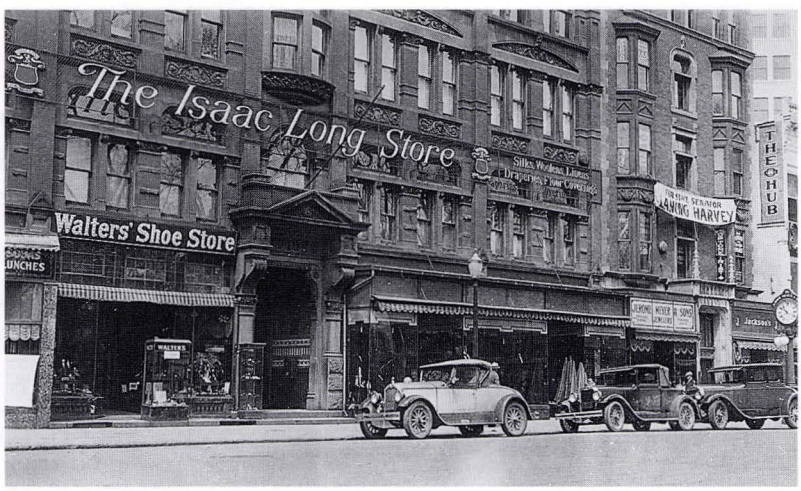
Charles Jonas Long, eldest son of Jonas Long, ran Jonas Long's Sons (at the site that would later house Pomeroy's and Public Square Commons) in partnership with his younger brothers Bernard and Edward. C. J. Long had not only a secondary education, from Wyoming Seminary (as did his cousins Isaac S. and Cosmar P.), but a degree from Yale, and was an excellent public speaker with a passion for literature. Another brother, Arthur, a graduate of Lehigh University, directed the family's Scranton store from its inception in 1897 and was also active in the Republican party.



Jonas Long's sons, from left: Charles, Louis, Bernard, Arthur, Edward, and Harry. *Courtesy Kenneth L. Stern.*

Although the stores of the related Long and Coons families specialized to an extent—the Coons store was a discount operation, Isaac Long's sold ladies' wear, Simon Long's department store focused on clothing and shoes, and Jonas Long's was a full department store—apparently, in the second generation, there was some feuding between the families of Jonas Long's Sons and the Isaac Long Store. As a child, Aline B. Long, daughter of Bernard and Clare and granddaughter of Jonas, was not permitted to enter the store bearing great-uncle Isaac's name. It was Clare who finally put an end to that prohibition.

Unlike Jonas, Isaac Long had no sons, but his daughter Sarah's marriage to Harry F. Stern, the proprietor of a Philadelphia printing house, assured continued family leadership of the Isaac Long Store. Stern became senior partner in his father-in-law's Wilkes-Barre business, which later was run by the third generation of Isaac's family, Harry's son Julius Long Stern. (The latter, whose bucolic estate would become the site of the present Jewish Community Center Day Camps, was the last of the family to run the store, although the Isaac Long name was retained after the store's sale to Wanamaker's and until its closing after the 1972 flood.) Another of Isaac Long's daughters, Ella, married Charles Gimbel of the Philadelphia-based department store firm.

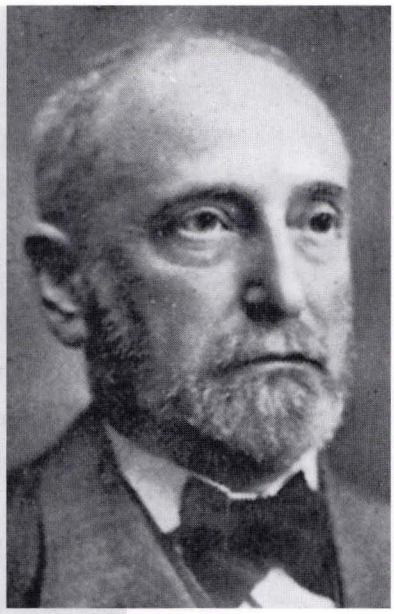


The Isaac Long Store. Neighboring Jewish-owned stores were Jerome Meyer Jewelers and The Hub. *Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*

Although marriages with individuals of similar background from other cities were not unusual for Wilkes-Barre's Jewish elite, for the most part they married each other. Thus, Isidor Coons's grandmothers were Fanny and Helena Long, sisters of Simon and half-sisters of Martin and Marx. Fanny married John Constine and Helena married David Coons. A generation later Ella Constine, daughter of John and Fanny Constine, married Joseph D. Coons, son of David and Helena Coons.

Joseph D. Coons (1852-1930) did not follow his father into the family business. Though not college-educated, he "read law" in accord with the apprentice system in the offices of (later Judge) Stanley Woodward, and was admitted to the bar in 1874. Probably the first Jewish attorney in the Wyoming Valley, Coons practiced his profession successfully for more than 50 years, also serving as an officer of the Wilkes-Barre Law and Library Association and as editor (1902-23) of the *Luzerne Legal Register.* He was a president of Temple B'nai B'rith, a trustee of the Children's Home, and active in the B'nai B'rith Lodge, which he served as district president. He may have been among the founders of the Malt Club (1873, incorporated under the name "Westmoreland Club" in 1889); a photograph taken September 21, 1900 of "some of the early members of the club, including several of the founding fathers," identifies Coons, along with such men as Henry A. Fuller, A. A. Sterling, Eugene B. Beaumont, Abram Hoyt, George Shoemaker, Stanley Woodward, Henry W. Palmer, G. M. Reynolds, H. Harrison Harvey, William L. Conyngham, Thomas Graeme, R. Bruce Ricketts, and George R. Wright. Also pictured is Coons's contemporary and coreligionist Seligman J. Strauss, who was admitted to the bar one year later than Coons, becoming the second Jewish lawyer and the first Jewish Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County.

Seligman Joseph Strauss, born on August 19, 1852, the eldest of eight children of German immigrants Abraham Strauss and Emilie (Bodenheimer), earned A.B. and B.S. degrees in 1872, and the M.A. in 1875, all from the College of the City of New York. To his bachelor's degrees in the liberal arts, he added competency certificates in French, German, and Spanish. He read law in Wilkes-Barre with future District Attorney and Congressman Henry W. Palmer, and was admitted to the Luzerne County Bar on September 6, 1875. His marriage on June 8, 1892 to Miriam Weiss of Honesdale produced two daughters and a son.



Seligman J. Strauss. *Taken from Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce Journal, October 1911.*

Strauss was a devout and knowledgeable Jew. At age 28, he delivered the keynote address at the laying of the cornerstone of Temple B'nai B'rith in 1880 and, with Joseph D. Coons, he wrote *A Historical Chronicle of the Congregation* (1881) to mark the dedication of the new building. He introduced speakers at the YMHA and was himself a popular lecturer at Jewish and non-Jewish venues. Lauded in the press for "the magic of his well chosen words" and known for his broad range and moral message, Strauss could discuss John Whittier's poetry as a means for educating Americans about the horrors of slavery or, listing the components of a thorough education, cite traditional academic disciplines as well as fidelity to Judeo-Christian morality. His 1898 talk on education at the Wilkes-Barre YMCA contained a plea by an immigrant's son not to surrender to the anti-immigrant hysteria of the day.

Strauss, described in a local newspaper as "one of the leaders in whatever was most worthwhile," served on the Wilkes-Barre School Board (1889-95) and on the boards of Wilkes-Barre City Hospital (founded in 1872 and renamed Wilkes-Barre General Hospital in 1925), the United Charities, the Civil Service Reform Association, and the Wilkes-Barre Deposit and Savings Bank. He was active in the Society for the Care of Jewish Orphans and Friendless Children and in the Wilkes-Barre B'nai B'rith Lodge, the philanthropic fraternal group that had been organized in 1870 and today bears his name. (Strauss's uncle, Henry Ansbacher, was one of the charter members of the local lodge, whose initial membership was drawn largely from Temple B'nai B'rith, and of the first B'nai B'rith Order, founded in New York in 1843.) When Strauss chaired the YMHA Building Fund Committee in 1914, his associates deemed him "father of the (YMHA) movement."

A reputation for thoroughness of research and clarity of presentation had earned Strauss a high degree of professional respect, culminating in his November 1911 election, as a Democrat, to a 10-year term on the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas. His decisions from the bench reflected knowledge, wisdom, and wit. In February, 1914, for example, he overruled as "archaic and ludicrous" the 1705 act prohibiting Sunday arrests except for serious felonies. And on April 22, 1916, he upheld a

magistrate's decision to fine four young men charged with disorderly conduct in connection with the long and bitter Wyoming Valley streetcar strike. "Everybody who is part of the mob is legally guilty of what the mob does," he said—reducing the fines because the offenders had no previous criminal records. On July 14, 1916, Strauss surcharged the Hanover Township school directors $12,837 for excessive expenditures, speculating that such behavior could be understood only as the result of "incompetency, imbecility, and supine indifference."

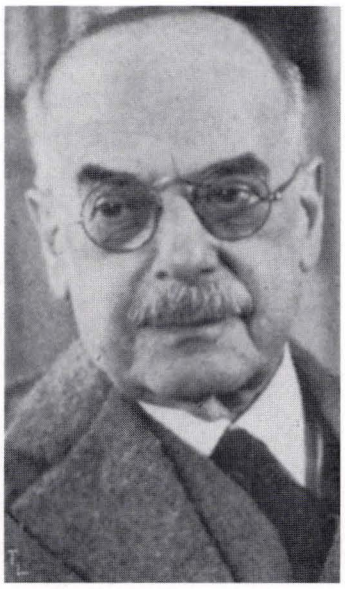
During World War I, Strauss supported both the war effort and fund-raising on behalf of the masses of impoverished European Jews. He made patriotic speeches on platforms he shared with such other prominent citizens as Judge Henry Fuller and Father John Curran. On December 2, 1917, Jewish residents of Wilkes-Barre responded to Judge Strauss's initiative to raise money in support of welfare work among American Jewish servicemen. From 1914, he spearheaded fund-raising drives for Europe's suffering Jews; a mass meeting in 1918 raised $14,000 of a $25,000 goal on the spot, with Strauss generously increasing his own contribution.

Announcing that poor health precluded further judicial service, Strauss retired when his term expired in January 1922. In December 1925 the Wilkes-Barre School Board named the reconstructed Central School Building in his honor, but Strauss was too ill to attend the ceremony. He died on May 3, 1926, leaving behind one of the highest reputations ever earned by a Jew in the Wyoming Valley.

Several other sons of the Jewish pioneers ventured beyond the world of business. Leo W. Long, son of Marx, ran the grocery founded by his father until 1910. He then became an impresario who brought such outstanding classical musicians as violinist Fritz Kreisler to the Irem Temple. His older brother, Isaac E. Long, better known as Ike or Uncle Ike, was a journalist regarded by his colleagues as the "dean of the newspaper profession in northeastern Pennsylvania." Ike Long worked for the *Wilkes-Barre Record* from the 1870s until his death in 1916. He was elected secretary of the Prison Board in 1910.

Charles Long, a son of Simon Long, was one of the Wyoming Valley's most

respected medical doctors for over 50 years. In addition to his private practice he was, at various times, a police surgeon, a physician for the Central Poor District and the Home for Friendless Children, and a Wilkes-Barre school director. In 1896, he became the first Jewish president of the Luzerne County Medical Society. Dr. Long, the first Jewish physician in Wilkes-Barre, would be the first of generations of Long doctors, all named Charles with the exception of the first Charles's younger son, Dr. Julian Long. (Julian's older brother was Dr. Charles Francis Long.)



Dr. Charles Long. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1937, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

Augustus Constine, John's son, was Chief of the Wilkes-Barre Volunteer Fire Department until his retirement in 1898. Moses H. Burgunder, whose father Bernard was a butcher, was one of the original applicants for a charter for the Wilkes-Barre Theatre Company; he managed the Grand Opera House and the Nesbitt Theatre until his premature death, from typhoid, in 1900. And in New York, George Lederer, son of tanner Marx Lederer, produced hit Broadway musicals while another Wilkes-Barrean, Dr. Henry W. Frauenthal, founded the Hospital for Joint Diseases.

Wyoming Valley's version of "Our Crowd" was never a closed caste; it easily accommodated certain newcomers, even some of different descent. Thus Charles Finberg, who settled in Wilkes-Barre in the early 1890s to establish a clothing shop on South Main Street, served as president of the YMHA, as did Charles A. Blumenthal, a native of Bangor, Maine, who had come to the area as a "commercial traveler" (traveling salesman) and stayed to open a haberdashery on West Market Street. Max Rosenbluth, a wholesale liquor dealer born in New York City, and shoe retailer Isidore Blatner, from Albany, New York, also won easy acceptance from Wilkes-Barre's mercantile elite. Felix T. Levy, a South Main Street carpet merchant who had grown up in Scranton, held community leadership positions in the 1890s. The brothers Max and George Galland, who employed hundreds of people in their women's underwear factory on the corner of South Washington and South Streets, had been born in Prussian Poland, yet both would marry into families of Bavarian descent. Max Galland would marry Rozelle Frank Burgunder, widow of Moses, and George Galland would wed Minnie Strauss, the daughter of Abraham and the sister of Seligman J.

Charles Finberg & Co., Public Square, Wilkes-Barre, 1891. *Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*

In a special March 18, 1914 "Suffrage Day" edition of the *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader,* Judge S. J. Strauss, former United Mine Workers' President John Mitchell, businessman and lawyer Franck G. Darte, Civil War hero R. Bruce Ricketts, and others endorsed women's suffrage. It is likely that Minnie Strauss Galland, one of the most active and eloquent of the Wyoming Valley suffragists, solicited her brother's statement.

Minnie Strauss, the eldest Strauss sister, was born in Wilkes-Barre in 1858, educated in the city's public schools, and graduated from Wyoming Seminary. She and her husband George Galland were parents of three sons.

Mrs. Galland, an early member of the Women's Civic Club founded by Edith Brower in 1895 as the Town Improvement Society, had by 1914 earned a reputation, in the words of the *Wilkes-Barre Record,* as "one of the most brilliant leaders in the city's social welfare work." With Fannie Sax Long, she had launched the Visiting Nurses Association, which sent nurses to the homes of the poor, distributed free milk, and inoculated children against diphtheria. She was active in the United Charities, the Children's Service Center, Mothers' Assistance, and the Society for the Care of Jewish Orphans and Friendless Children. But her most publicly visible work was in the women's suffrage movement.

The mere mention that Galland was the chief speaker was sufficient to attract a crowd to a suffragist gathering. In an eloquent 1914 address, she demanded the vote, not only for women who were the intellectual equals of men, but for millions of working women who "cannot directly influence the legislation to which they are subject."

Privately, Galland may have been a "a conservative lady" whose moral sense was offended by the wearing of nail polish. But she is best remembered for her public image as one of the leading social and political reform advocates of her time. Minnie Strauss Galland died on January 17, 1944.

Abram S. Galland, son of George and Minnie Galland, would become president of Temple B'nai B'rith in 1940, as would Felix T. Levy in the 1920s, but the lay leadership of the congregation until the dismissal of Dr. David Stern is a listing of some of the earliest Jewish Wilkes-Barreans—Martin Long, Joseph Coons, John Constine, and Jonas Long. The latter was president through Stern's tenure and that of his successor, Dr. Victor Rundbacken, who ushered in an era of calm. A well-educated man capable of lecturing on topics as diverse

as medieval Judaism and the abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher, Rundbacken assumed the pulpit in 1885.

In March 1888, Temple B'nai B'rith's sisterhood, the oldest of the congregation's auxiliary groups, was organized as the Ladies' Auxiliary of the YMHA. A benevolent society like the earlier Francesca Society (1856), of which Caroline Burgunder was an officer, and the Jewish Benevolent Society (1858), the YMHA group functioned even when the YMHA was dormant, mostly helping the poor, in part as a cooperating member of the United Charities. As we shall see, the Reform Jews were not alone for long in their charitable efforts, but many of the original Ladies' Auxiliary members would also participate in the Society for the Care of Jewish Orphans and Friendless Children, founded in 1906 and, in practice if not in name, a Reform-affiliated body. Seligman J. Strauss and Joseph D. Coons were president and vice president, respectively, and Mrs. Isaac S. Long, Mrs. Charles Long (Fannie Sax Long), and Mrs. George Galland (Minnie Strauss Galland) were on the board. Hannah Bloch Salzman was also a board member; her husband, Marcus Salzman, superintendent of the organization, had by that time become rabbi of Temple B'nai B'rith.

When Dr. Rundbacken resigned as rabbi in 1891, the congregation authorized correspondence with Isaac Meyer Wise "to secure the services of a student or graduate of the Hebrew Union College" (HUC), then in existence only since 1875. President Simon Long welcomed the new rabbi, Israel Joseph, who was, at the time, one of the 25 or fewer graduates of HUC in America. Thus began Temple B'nai B'rith's continuing association with HUC, the first American rabbinical seminary to survive, and with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, all organized by Bohemian immigrant I. M. Wise, who came to the United States in 1846 and gradually became the leader of American Reform Judaism. Rabbi Joseph instituted late Friday evening services before leaving in 1895 to accept a position in Montgomery, Alabama.

Twenty-six year old Rabbi Marcus Salzman, another graduate of Hebrew Union College, came to B'nai B'rith in 1896 from a pulpit in Charleston, West Virginia. He soon married Hannah Bloch, a young woman from a notable Valley family, earned a Ph.D. from Columbia, and served as the congregation's rabbi until 1931, and emeritus thereafter, residing in the community until his 1948 death.

Rabbi Salzman's tenure, the longest in Temple B'nai B'rith's history, spanned the terms of synagogue presidents Simon Long, Samuel Hirsch,

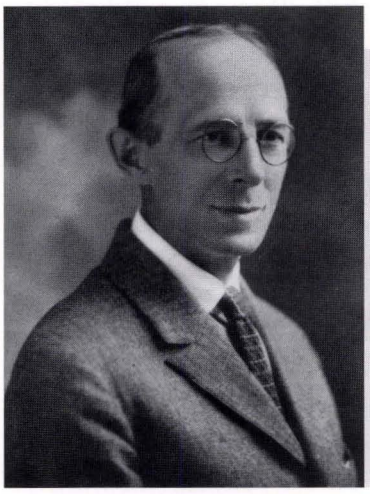
Rabbi Marcus Salzman and confirmation class, circa 1900.

Joseph D. Coons, Bernard Long, Isaac S. Long, Millard F. Long, Felix T. Levy, Martin Freeman, and Julius Long Stern. It was a time of growth and change for the synagogue and of cultural and social blossoming in the larger Jewish community.

The B'nai B'rith building underwent renovations in 1896, and in 1897 the new Union Prayer Book was adopted. The Sunday school, which welcomed all Jewish children in the community, functioned increasingly to acculturate immigrants newly arrived from eastern Europe. As the years passed, the sisterhood joined the state federation, and the brotherhood was formed. And, for many years, Rabbi Salzman acted as "roving rabbi" to many of the area's smaller communities, in which he helped organize Jewish Sunday schools.

Rabbi Salzman was an effective sermonizer. In March 1896, for example, he wondered aloud why the Christian world, so outraged over Turkey's persecution of its Armenian population, was more tolerant of officially-sanctioned antisemitism in Russia. He had the courage, moreover, during a May 1902 memorial service attended by Civil and Spanish-American War veterans, to praise the man of peace as a worthier hero than the military man. In 1901, on the fifth anniversary of Rabbi Salzman's appointment, members of his congregation presented him with a "purse," crediting him with increased religious school attendance (from 80 to 200 in five years), a branch school at Pittston, an industrial (vocational) school, and a young men's literary circle.

Louis Frank. *Taken from Harvey-Smith History of Wilkes-Barre, Vol. V.*



Louis Frank, a Temple B'nai B'rith member who served in the Spanish-American War from its inception in 1898, was the only Wyoming Valley resident to remain in service to May 1901, taking part in the Cuban campaigns and accompanying future President Theodore Roosevelt, at the latter's request, to the Philippines.

Born in Wilkes-Barre on January 1, 1875, Frank was the son of Bernard Frank, a grocer in Plymouth and Wilkes-Barre, and Lena Neiman Frank, a native of Sweden; his parents had emigrat-

ed from Austria-Hungary to the United States in 1870. Louis Frank was graduated from Wilkes-Barre High School and later from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, but he began his practical education in pharmacy at age 16 as an employee of Lincoln Street druggist Dr. Hugh P. McAniff.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898, Frank enlisted in the 9th Regiment of the Pennsylvania National Guard. Given the Regular Army's shortage of medical personnel, those with related skills were much in demand. Frank drew training camp duty as a hospital steward, but after the occupation of Cuba he became chief clerk to the U. S. Army Surgeon of the Matanzas District and sanitary inspector for the city of Matanzas. In November 1899 Frank embarked for the Philippines, where his health care skills were put to use by U. S. forces engaged in suppressing pro-independence guerrillas.

Frank left the Army in May 1901 after more than three years of service. With a partner, A. J. Barber, he soon acquired control of seven drug stores in Luzerne County. He gave up the partnership in 1920 to organize the Pennsylvania Wholesale Drug Company of Wilkes-Barre, which grew into the largest wholesale drug house in northeastern Pennsylvania.

On June 21, 1911 Frank married Guitell L. Harris, the daughter of Albert Harris, a pioneer Jewish resident of Scranton. This union produced one child, Rosalie. Business success allowed the Franks to live well at 313 South River Street, one of the oldest houses in Wilkes-Barre, and Louis Frank was able to provide pharmaceutical training and employment for his younger brothers Isaac and Abraham. Success also gave him the freedom to devote much of his time to public service.

Frank served nearly 16 years on the Wilkes-Barre School Board; he was board president in 1919 and again in 1928. His skillful leadership of the finance committee enabled the school district to spend almost $4 million on new buildings during the 1920s without incurring major debt. Frank's other civic responsibilities included the Wyoming Valley Recreation and Playground Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society. As president of the East Market Street Business Men's Association, he led the 1914-15 drive to beautify and improve the busy retail street, which the Chamber of Commerce identified as "one of the most, if not the most, important thoroughfares in the city."

Louis Frank's love of local history, combined with his interest in edu-

cation, led him to write *The Story of Wyoming Valley for Children* (1930). A short, well-illustrated work, with review questions at the end of each chapter, the book was used, in Frank's day, to instruct sixth and seventh grade students. It remains one of the few books to deal with Wyoming Valley history from a child's perspective.

When Louis Frank died on March 13, 1933 at the age of 58, the *Wilkes-Barre Record* mourned the loss of one of the area's most valuable citizens.

Even before Rabbi Salzman's term of office, the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) had become the social focus of the German Jewish elite, and the cultural and educational center for the entire Jewish community, which had grown in the latter part of the century as new immigrants arrived from eastern Europe. Wilkes-Barre's YMHA was already in existence by the late 1870s, renting for its functions Landmesser Hall, Loomis Hall, Concordia Hall and other facilities until securing title to its own building in 1918. Incorporated in December 1883 for the purposes of "the improvement of the mental, moral, and social condition of all who desire to become members thereof and the establishment of a library and maintenance of hall," the YMHA and the lay leadership of Congregation B'nai B'rith formed an interlocking directorate with men such as Charles J. Long and Seligman J. Strauss especially visible in both organizations. Original subscribers to the charter and officers for the first year were Louis Long (president), Alexander Schwarz (vice president), Isidore Stern (recording secretary), Felix Levy (corresponding secretary), Louis Schloss (treasurer), Ambrose B. Constine, and Isaac S. Long; the application was notarized by S. J. Strauss. The eighties, nineties, and early years of the twentieth century constitute a period of great vitality.

Nationally, YMHAs drew their initial inspiration from the Jewish literary societies of the 1840s and the YMCA movement, which originated in England but had been launched in America by the early 1850s. The first YMHA branch appeared in Baltimore in 1854. By 1900, there were one hundred branches, and the Americanization of young immigrants was one of their principal objectives. Reform Judaism strongly backed the YMHA movement, as it did almost all new American Jewish institutions or ideas.

Most impressive of all was the YMHA's lecture program, which frequently brought in Jewish scholars from metropolitan centers. Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf

of Philadelphia spoke several times in the 1890s. His topic on May 10, 1891 was the late British prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, whom Krauskopf characterized as "the greatest modern Jew," his conversion to the Church of England notwithstanding. Krauskopf returned on March 20, 1895 to discuss his visit to a Jewish agricultural training facility in Russia. On February 22, 1891 a large crowd attended a lecture by Simon Wolfe, the former U. S. Consul General in Egypt and one of the most prominent Jews in America. Wolfe spoke of his experiences in Egypt and on the persecution of the Jews in Russia. The Anglo-Jewish litterateur and Zionist, Israel Zangwill, addressed a capacity audience in the Nesbitt Theatre on November 20, 1898. He captivated his listeners with an analysis of Jewish life in the old European ghettos and their modern equivalents.

Gentiles were noticeably present at Zangwill's talk, and they were not unusual on the YMHA lecture platform itself. Professor Livingston Barber of Rutgers College impersonated characters from Dickens's *David Copperfield* in 1897, and newspaper cartoonist J. Stuart Blackton delighted an 1898 audience with charcoal sketches and humorous stories. Ten years earlier, on January 22, 1888, Wilkes-Barre's own learned and witty attorney Henry A. Fuller defended Shakespeare's Shylock, the literary embodiment of the unscrupulous Jew, as himself the victim of disastrous circumstances.

The YMHA also provided a forum in which members could gather to discuss election returns, and react emotionally to Jewish heroes and troubling issues. Dr. Charles Long, Louis Long, and Seligman J. Strauss arranged a program on December 18, 1887 in memory of the poet Emma Lazarus, only 38 at her recent death. Lazarus is best remembered as the author of the words on the base of the Statue of Liberty ("Give me your tired, your poor. . . ."), but her late-blossoming Jewish identity prompted her to translate Hebrew poetry and to write English-language poems protesting the pogroms in Russia. Antisemitism in Russia long remained the central moral concern of America's Jews. Under the leadership of S. J. Strauss and Joseph D. Coons, the Wilkes-Barre YMHA met on November 8, 1891 to protest the persecutions and to raise funds in support of Jewish emigration.

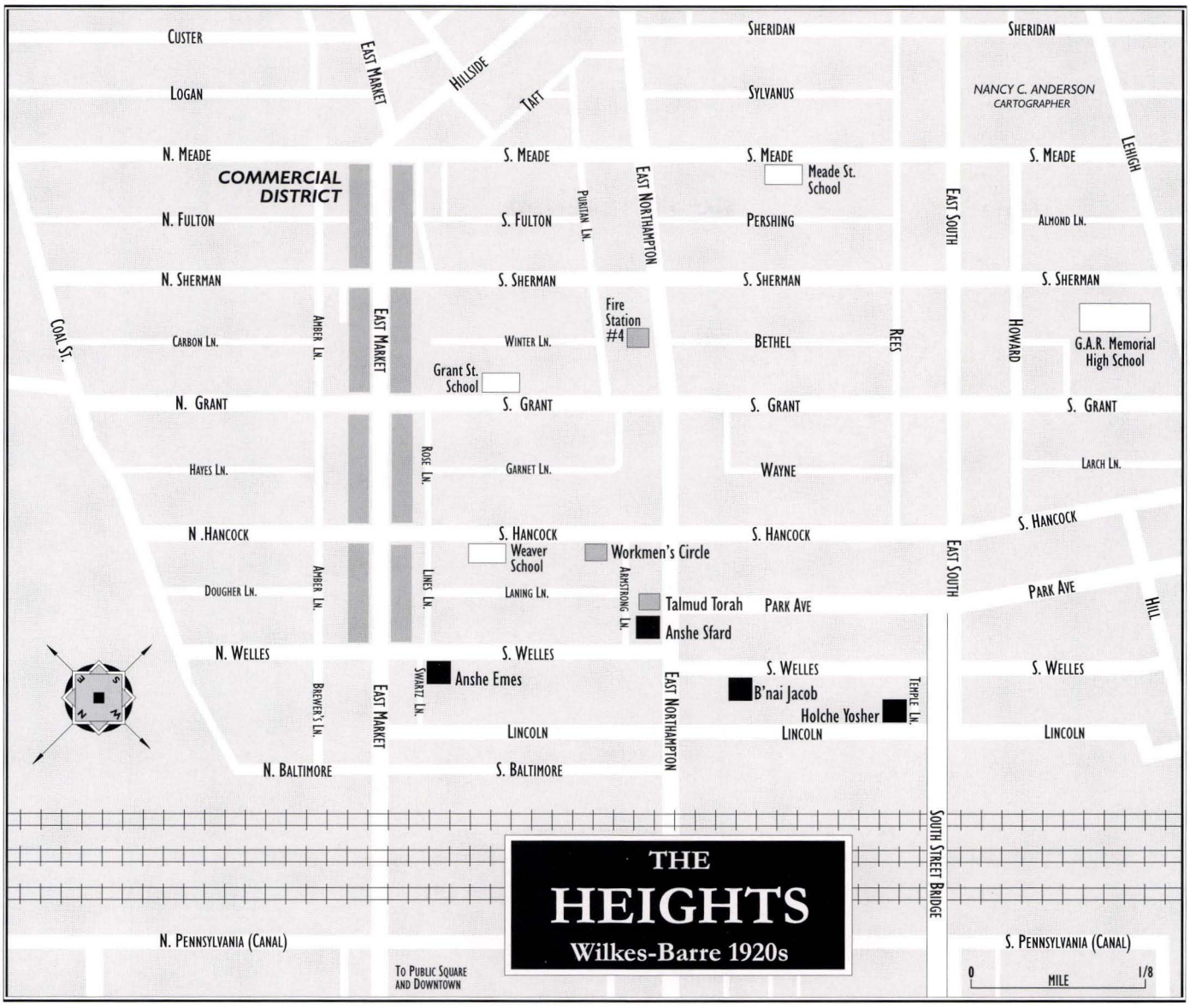
Yet for many young people, such problems were naturally less pressing than their own social lives, and for them the YMHA filled a real need. The biggest affair of the year was the New Year's Ball, or Hop, which took place in Loomis Hall on North Main Street, adjacent to the Square, and was often attended by out-of-town guests. In 1891, for instance, they came from New York City,

Philadelphia, Allentown, Baltimore, Lancaster, Pottstown, Luzerne, Hazleton, Pittston, Nanticoke, and Plymouth. Laurel and evergreen decorations enlivened "YMHA Hall," as the newspapers took to calling Loomis, along with potted tropical plants, and lavishly costumed (and chaperoned) young women. Music was provided by Samuel Oppenheim's Orchestra, which entertained at countless Valley public gatherings over many decades. Oppenheim, himself an accomplished violinist, was married to Marx Long's daughter Sallie. The Purim Ball was another annual affair. But there were other dances throughout the year, as well as picnics at Mountain Park. Located along the right-of-way of the Jersey Central Railroad between the Ashley and Laurel Run stations, the park featured magnificent vistas, picnic facilities, and amusement rides.

On October 20, 1898, shortly after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, the YMHA held a special "Military Assembly Hop." As described by a visiting reporter, the decor was certainly elaborate, if more than a little ridiculous:

> *In each corner was a tent, in front of which was a tripod, formed with guns, from the centre of which hung a pot for cooking. Underneath was a pile of kindling wood aglow with light from a red electric globe. . . .*
>
> *To add to the military effect a detail of soldiers was present from the 9th Regiment and stood guard at the entrance and at the tents. . . . The men and members of the committee all wore the stripes and ensigns of the various ranks in the military service. . . .*
>
> *The music (by Oppenheim's Orchestra) also came in for a share of praise and was composed entirely of military airs. . . .*

By the Spanish-American War, German Jewish immigrants and their progeny were no longer the only Jews in the Wyoming Valley. The first Eastern European Jews had arrived nearly 30 years before, around 1869. Deteriorating economic conditions and rising antisemitism in eastern Europe precipitated waves of Jewish immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was part of the broader "new immigration" of Southern and Eastern Europeans.



The Growing Eastern European Presence: Wilkes-Barre and The Heights

Overleaf: The Heights in the 1920s.
Map by Nancy C. Anderson.

SHELDON SPEAR

The Growing Eastern European Presence: Wilkes-Barre and the Heights

From 1870 until the 1920s, increasingly great numbers of Jews left eastern Europe for increasingly urgent reasons. Draconian civil penalties and murderous, government-inspired pogroms against the Jews in Russia and Russian Poland—along with varying degrees of economic and religious persecution and disenfranchisement in Rumania, Prussian Poland, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Austria, Hungary, Galicia, Bohemia, Moravia, Bosnia-Hercegovinia)—made emigration a matter of immediate physical survival.

The exodus began modestly enough. From 1870 to 1880 (the first pogrom occurred in 1871), about 30,000 Russian Jews emigrated, mainly to the United States but also to England, settling largely in the big cities. The trickle turned into a flood by 1881, when further pogroms swept Russia, whose Church-devised plan was to rid the empire of Jews. The pogroms, brutal army conscription regulations, and the harsh "May Laws" of 1882 caused the flight of 25,000 Russian Jews to the United States in 1881 and 1882 alone. In all, more than 500,000 Jews came to America from 1881-98, and more than double that number of new Jewish immigrants—the tempo increased in 1903-4 with the Kishinev, Homel, and Zhitomir pogroms—had arrived by 1914. Although Jewish immigrants represented only a tenth of America's new immigrants in that period, America in 1914 had a Jewish population second only to Russia's remaining Jews, and was on its way to becoming the largest Jewish community in the world. Nearly three million Jews lived in America at the outbreak of World War I, in contrast to the total 50,000 American Jews in 1850, shortly after the Wilkes-Barre Jewish story began.

Few in number in comparison with their coreligionists in the great cities, the Wyoming Valley's new Eastern European Jewish immigrants found themselves in an environment far different from the metropolitan centers. At once less densely populated, less urbanized, and more flexible socially and economically than the port cities, the Wyoming Valley could more easily absorb the immigrants and facilitate their Americanization. Still, the immigrants would have to learn the language and customs of their new country, and they would

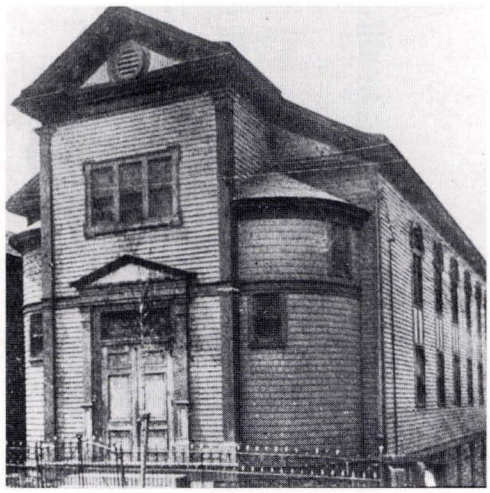
The Darling Street Cemetery today. *Photograph by Elaine Cooper.*

have to find housing. They would have to find work in a now industrialized area from which the traditional peddler had vanished, giving rise to the "huckster," the street or push-cart peddler. They would have to interact with non-Jewish immigrants arriving simultaneously, and with the older German Jewish immigrants, now prosperous and Americanized and, to be sure, somewhat condescending toward the "huddled masses" newly in their midst. They would have to deal with established institutions and develop their own.

The first Eastern European Jews arrived in Wilkes-Barre at the very onset of the third wave of Jewish immigration to the United States. In the late 1860s, a small group of Jews came to the Wyoming Valley from Lithuania, then part of the Russian empire, and Russian Poland. Mostly from the small Lithuanian town of Pren, near the Prussian border, the new immigrants were strictly Orthodox, and soon recognized that the area's only synagogue, by then Reform, could not suit them. They organized the Benai Jacov Religious Association—Congregation B'nai Jacob ("sons of Jacob")—a name, of course, derived from the biblical Jacob and not from the six sons and brothers of Jacob Salsburg among the original members. The congregation's charter, for the purpose of "Worship of God according to the rites and Ordnances of the Hebrews or Jews," was granted by Judge E. L. Dana on October 16, 1871. Named as subscribers were Joseph Saltzberg (Salsburg), Isaac Shevelovat, S. (Samuel) Rosenthal, H. Rosenthal, David Hendelson (Mendelsohn?), Isriel Ginsburg, Bant Frank, Jacob Eidulstein (Adelstein), Moses Kerbuyske, William Harris, Joseph Levinson (or Levenson), and Herman Berinstein.* In 1871, too, B'nai Jacob obtained a Sefer Torah and, at a cost of $300, purchased from Congregation B'nai B'rith a burial plot at the Darling Street Cemetery.

*Synagogue records name additional original members Simon Salsburg, Moses Jacobs, Julius Epstein, Charles Casper, B. Gottfried, David Salsburg, Israel Lipson, Harris Salsburg, Peter Bartikowski (Bartikowsky), Barney Gottlieb, Israel Mendelsohnn, Samuel Harris, and Nathan Levenson. Many of the early documents contain variant spellings of names; frequently within a single charter several different spellings are used for a name that appears to refer to one person. The parentheses after or within a name may reflect variants in the documents, or the editor's educated guess as to later spelling.

After worshiping in the home of Harris Salsburg on East Market Street (formerly the Stegmaier house) and then at the home of Moses Jacobs on Lincoln Street, the congregation used Weiss Hall, Peoples Hall, and Brady's Hall until erecting a synagogue at 133-35 South Welles Street in 1885. The original Holy Ark was hand-carved by charter member Samuel Harris. Often referred to as the *Prenner Shul,* after the Lithuanian hometown of the founders, B'nai Jacob was a sturdy, well-lit structure that would eventually serve as a place for Jewish meetings of various kinds.

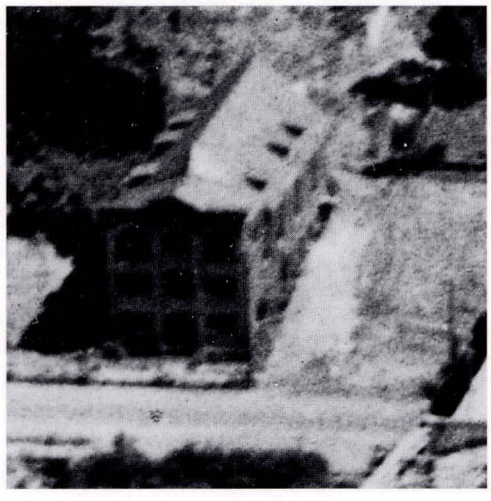


B'nai Jacob Synagogue, 1885.

Another Orthodox congregation came into existence in 1881 when immigrants from the town of Wizan or Vischan in Lithuania seceded in anger from B'nai Jacob to form Holche Yosher, or "those who walk with righteousness." The charter incorporating "the Holche Yosher Wizaner of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania," whose purpose was "the support of public worship according to the Jewish faith and . . . the maintenance of a private cemetery," was witnessed by S. J. Strauss and recorded on October 10, 1881. Named as subscribers were Solomon Rothstein, Solomon Singer, Aaron Rosenthal, Abraham (Abram) Michelowsky (Michlosky), Jacob Michelowsky (Michlosky), and Marx Rothstein (Rutstein). The rebels dedicated their new building at 198 Lincoln Street on February 4, 1887. The newspapers were soon referring to it as a Polish synagogue, possibly because Polish Jews soon comprised the bulk of its membership, but Jews nicknamed it the *Vischaner Shul* after the *shtetl* of origin.

Although B'nai Jacob and Holche Yosher were located in Wilkes-Barre's Heights section, it seems that relatively few Jews had yet settled in the area that would become, from the turn of the century until World War II, the largest Jewish enclave in the Wyoming Valley. Two memoirs recalling the Heights of the 1880s mentioned only a few Jewish-owned businesses—Pincus's Hardware Store, Harris Salsburg's General Store, Adelson's Bakery, and Freeman's Liquor Store. By the late 1880s, though, the number of Eastern European Jews in Luzerne County was approaching that of the Reform population and, after 1890, in a flow interrupted only by World War I, Eastern European Jews poured into the Heights until the restrictive immigration laws of the 1920s.

This photograph, enlarged from an aerial view of the Heights in the 1960s, shows Holche Yosher standing virtually alone, with surrounding buildings already razed during redevelopment. *Photograph by Ace Hoffman Studios. Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*



Undoubtedly Jews were drawn to the Heights by a desire to live among their own, and by the affordability of the housing, especially on the "North" streets, where accommodations were less modern, and less costly, than "South" street houses. Just as members of the German Jewish elite lived alongside non-Jews of comparable economic circumstances on such fashionable city streets as River and Franklin, Jews and Gentiles in the Heights often lived as neighbors. According to Nathan Kuss, in the Heights ". . . no single ethnic group predominated. They were all there, all mixed up. Poles were neighbors to Slovaks, to Jews, to Lithuanians, Russians, Irish, Italians, English, and Welsh—a lot of Welsh."

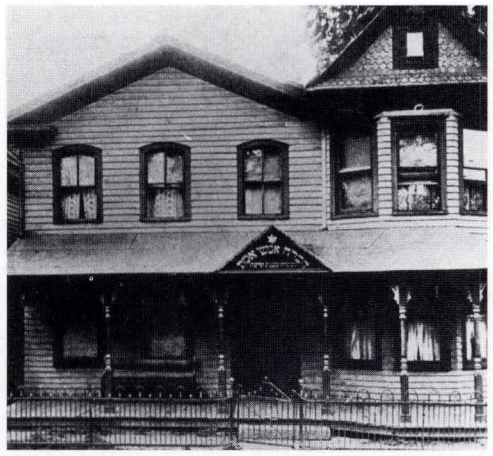
Christians living in the Heights manifested an intense particularism in founding houses of worship, and Jews were no different. They usually chose to worship together as *landsleit* (people from the same place of origin). B'nai Jacob and Holche Yosher, both formed by *landsleit* and located in the Heights, were Wilkes-Barre's only Orthodox synagogues in 1890. By 1910 there were five Orthodox *shuls,* or synagogues, in the city, all but one formed by *landsleit,* and all but one located on "the Hill," as the Heights was also called.

Chevra Ohav Zedek Anshe Ungarn ("society loving righteousness, men of Hungary") was not on the Hill. Founded by immigrants from the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary, the charter of November 19, 1892 recorded the congregation's name as "Autref Zedic Church," an obvious error corrected by amendment to the charter in June 1897. Subscribers to the 1892 charter were Max Freelander, Isaac Schoenfeldt, Nathan Schoenfeldt, M. Wasserstromp, Jacob Dattner, Frank Rutter, and M. Judkowits, who named as first trustees M. Engle, Herman Wasserstromp, and Jacob Dattner, and stated as purpose of the congregation "the public worship of Almighty God and the support of public worship according to the Hebrew Orthodox faith and practice." The first services were held in the home of Samuel Engel.

Ohav Zedek Synagogue, 1902. *Courtesy Rivian Minkoff.*

The Ohav Zedek congregation purchased title in 1893 to a parcel of land in Hanover Township for use as a cemetery, and worshiped in rented quarters until 1902, when their synagogue on Canal Street (now South Pennsylvania Avenue) was completed. Two New York City rabbis officiated at the December 28, 1902 dedication service, and Congressman Henry Palmer spoke. In 1914 Ohav Zedek, or

more popularly, the *"Ungarishe Shul"* (the Hungarian synagogue), purchased an additional plot on State Street where a *mikvah,* or ritual bath, was built.

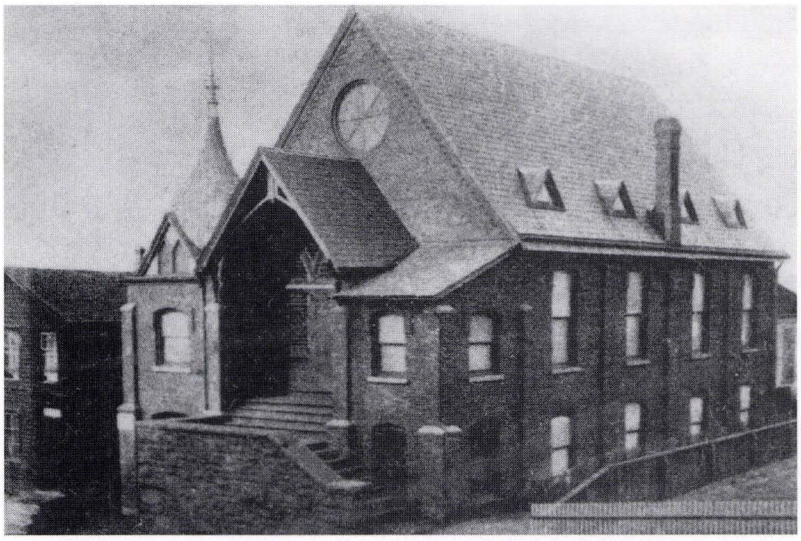


Anshe Emes Synagogue, 1909.

Five years earlier, in 1909, Jews on the Heights dedicated Anshe Emes ("men of truth") at 11-13 South Welles Street. In the charter of March 5, 1906, "Anshia Ames or the Right Peoples Society" stated as its purpose public worship and "support of benevolent, charitable and missionary undertakings." The charter subscribers, three of whom identified themselves as citizens of Pennsylvania, named Isaac Myers (Meyer), Moses Kline, David Berustein (Bernstein), and Louis Smulyn (Smulyan) as first officers, and Isaac Pikaiski (Picarsky), Jacob Hoffenstein, and M. Kinberg as first trustees. Other charter subscribers were M. D. Hoffenstein, Jacob Salsburg, Abram Salsburg, Saul Israel, Simon Adelson, Moses Levy, N. Barcurch, Abe Weinstein, M. Ziegler, Chaine Freedman, and M. D. Adelson. Anshe Emes was the first synagogue to be formed without reference to territorial kinship; congregants were from Poland, Russia, and Lithuania.

In 1910 Jews from the Carpathian Mountains region of Austria-Hungary established yet another Heights *shul,* Anshe Sfard. Although the name literally means "men of Spain," the founders were not of Spanish origin, nor was the synagogue ritual Sephardic. Misleading generic names such as "Anshe Sfard," deriving from minor changes in the prayer book adopted from the Sephardim by the Hasidim in Europe, were common in new synagogues founded by Ashkenazic immigrants. The charter for "Congregation Ohavis Ohiem Anshe Sfard," recorded July 30, 1908, stated as the congregation's purpose "the establishment of a house of worship and a religious school." Signing the charter were first officers Jacob Kaufman, David Posner, Lazarus Adler, Liber Gontz, and Abraham L. Hoffman, as well as Herman Brown and Max Kronzon. Temporarily housed in a shed at 54 North Hancock Street, Anshe Sfard eventually transformed an old church building at 222 East Northampton Street into a synagogue, and purchased a burial ground in Dallas Township.

Of the six synagogues now established in Wilkes-Barre city, Temple B'nai B'rith was by far the wealthiest single institution, but aggregate property valuations of the Orthodox synagogues exceeded the valuation of B'nai B'rith by 1915. According to that year's *Wilkes-Barre Record Almanac,* the religious functionary at Anshe Sfard was Rev. Abraham Horowitz, father of Cantor Aaron Horowitz, who would serve B'nai Jacob from 1923. Rev. Nechemiah Williams



Anshe Sfard transformed the African A.M.E. Zion Church, shown here in 1892, into a synagogue. Isadore and Benjamin Gottesman removed the church's crucifix. According to Benjamin Gottesman, the ceiling of the synagogue's sanctuary was painted to resemble the sky, with stars and clouds, and a sliver of a moon above the Ark. The moon was soon eliminated. *Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*

(sometimes known as Chemji and Charles) was *ba'al keriyah* (Torah reader), *shammash* (sexton), and *melamed* (teacher) at Anshe Emes, while Rev. Samuel Cantor of B'nai Jacob, Rev. Harry Cantor of Holche Yosher, and Rev. Louis Berger of Ohav Zedek also served then as religious functionaries. Though loyalty to the individual synagogues was frequently fierce, in 1910 all the city's Orthodox synagogues agreed on the appointment of David Ginsburg as chief rabbi.

Member of a family which, beginning in the 14th century, produced 14 generations of rabbis, David Ginsburg(h), the son of Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Ginsburg of the businessmen's synagogue of St. Petersburg, was born on March 3, 1864 in Vidz, Lithuania. At age 13, David went to Zhezmer (now Zeizmariai), Vilna Province, to study with Rabbi Yekutiel-Lieb Jessie Ellion, who headed the Rabbinical Court in Zhezmer and Dagra. David studied also with rabbis in Kovno, Grodno, and Bialystok, and was ordained at age 21, the same year he married Rabbi Ellion's daughter, Henyah Bayleh (Anna). In 1893, Rabbi Ellion's book of Talmudic commentary, *Geliyon Maharil,* was published in Warsaw, edited and with a forward by his son-in-law, Rabbi David Ginsburg. The two later collaborated on another book, *Hibat Hakodesh,* also published in Warsaw. David continued his rabbinical studies and ventured into business in Warsaw before deciding to emigrate to the United States in 1895.*

Upon his arrival in America, David Ginsburg was referred by Rabbi Jacob Joseph to the Orthodox community of Rochester, New York, where he was engaged as rabbi of congregations Beth Israel and Beth Hakneses

* Genealogical information on Rabbis Ginsburg and Davidson has been provided by Craig Davidson, whose extensive research resolved apparent contradictions. According to the 1900 census, for instance, Rabbi Ginsburg was born in 1867, leading Nechemiah Williams, quoted below, to write that the rabbi died at age 52. Craig Davidson, uncovering birth dates ranging from 1861-8, found the strongest evidence confirmed 1864. Rabbi Ginsburg did not end his surname with an "h," but later family did; references often use the later spelling. Names of places (Vidz is also referred to as Vidzy, Dagra as Dagda), people, and publications have been transliterated; we have tried to be consistent.

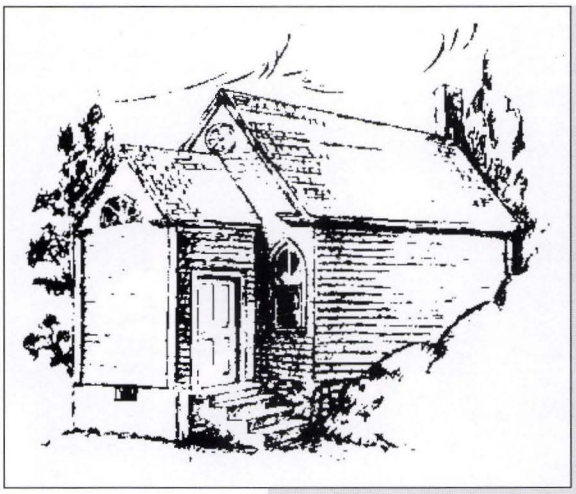
Rabbi Ginsburg is seated between his daughter Rose (left) and his wife Henya. Standing, left to right, are Ginsburg children Esther, Abraham Robert, Haskell, Alexander, and Emma. *Courtesy David Ackerman.*

Hachodesh and recognized as "the rabbi of the city" until assuming equivalent duties in Wilkes-Barre in 1911. The Rochester congregations granted Rabbi Ginsburg two months' leave in the spring of 1897, when he returned to Europe and brought his wife and two eldest children, Rose Miriam and Emma, back with him to Rochester. Rose would later wed Rabbi Isadore Davidson; Emma would marry Julius J. Ackerman. A third child, future Brigadier General Abraham Robert Ginsburgh*, remained in Europe with his maternal grandparents, coming to the United States about 1901.

In Rochester, David Ginsburg applied himself to the real estate business as well as the rabbinate, eventually giving up the former, and the Ginsburg family grew, with the birth of Alexander in 1898, Esther in 1901, and Haskell in 1902. Rabbi Ginsburg was naturalized in 1900.

In Wilkes-Barre, B'nai Jacob, as the "mother" Orthodox congregation, took the initiative in bringing Rabbi Ginsburg to the community. His tenure as the first ordained Orthodox rabbi served to strengthen Jewish communal life, to unify the congregations on the Heights, and to place *kashrut* and religious education on a more stable basis. He took an active role in the community Talmud Torah, which had been incorporated under an 1896 charter obtained by Seligman J. Strauss and was by 1897 providing after-school religious education from a wooden structure in the rear of Holche Yosher Synagogue. With the arrival of Rabbi Ginsburg, a more comprehensive program was adopted, new people became active, and plans for better quarters resulted in the 1913 purchase and remodeling of

*Abraham Robert Ginsburgh earned a bachelor's degree, *magna cum laude,* from Harvard University in 1917, enlisting in the U. S. Army the same year. He served in both World Wars, earning two master's degrees (from the Universities of Louisville and Missouri), and the LL.B. (Harvard) in the interval between them, and emerged from World War II with the rank of brigadier general. From 1936, he served in the office of the judge advocate general. An editor and author, he later became an Air Force military expert for *U. S. News and World Report,* in which capacity he was killed in 1958 while testing new military aircraft. His son Robert also became a general.



Talmud Torah, 1897.

an old home at 67 South Hancock Street. Three years later, a branch school was established at the YMHA. More than 130 children studied in the Talmud Torah between 1913 and 1920, many of them under Meyer Eskolsky, who was engaged in 1913 by Rabbi Ginsburg and remained with the school for more than 25 years.

Rabbi Ginsburg also gave new stature to Wilkes-Barre's Orthodox Jewish community outside the Wyoming Valley. He earned a reputation as a scholar of Jewish law, upon which he was consulted by communities countrywide, and was treasurer (1914) and vice president (1918) of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States.

Fluent in German, Latin, Hebrew, English, and Yiddish, and an authority on Shakespeare and *Ivanhoe,* David Ginsburg was known as a brilliant orator who would use that skill as needed outside the synagogue. He personally appealed to President Taft to cut off aid to Russia because the Czar's government would not recognize Jewish passports, and traveled to Washington to protest Poland's treatment of Jews, returning to the capital later to lobby for the use of sacramental wine during Prohibition.

Beloved in the Wilkes-Barre community, where he lived with his family at 327 East Northampton Street, Rabbi Ginsburg died of pneumonia on June 23, 1920. His memory was honored by his family, who named five grandchildren after him, and by the Orthodox community, which by 1922 had erected a new school building at 226 East Northampton Street and called it Talmud Torah Beth David. Anna Ginsburg made her home with Rabbi Isadore and Rose Ginsburg Davidson until her death on June 2, 1924.

—Marjorie Levin

Chief Rabbi Ginsburg made an indelible impression upon the community he served, as evidenced by the elaborate prose of Rev. Nechemiah Williams, who chronicled the rabbi's death in the *Wilkes-Barre Yiddish Almanac* of 1920, as translated by Miriam Weisbord:

A clear summer morning; beautiful and splendid, nature produced such a day which will ever remain a day of grief in the Jewish history of Wyoming Valley. Slowly and cautiously the strong sun appeared . . . and distributed its rays. . . .

. . . everywhere one could see . . . the very lust for life on every face. Except for one house . . . a house which had always illuminated the Jewish lives of the town itself, only this house remained encircled by dark shadows. . . . because in one of these rooms lay the Rabbi of Wilkes-Barre, beloved not only of those who were Jewish but also by the Christians of his Community—the true pillar of Judaism in the long Jewish diaspora—lay battling with death. . . .

Now the morning is gone. The sun . . . is in the very center of the sky. . . . We see a black cloud, in the very middle of high noon, trying to conceal the sun . . . .

2 p.m. The crash has come. . . . Rabbi David Ginsburg has exhaled his last breath.

David Ginsburg's funeral* on June 24, 1920 drew an estimated 6,000 people, the greatest throng of mourners in the community's history. The funeral procession was led by two mounted policemen and an honor guard of 86 Talmud Torah children. Following the casket borne by 24 pallbearers were ten rabbis representing the Federation of Jewish Orthodox Rabbis of America. The march stopped at the Talmud Torah, at the Orthodox synagogues, and finally at the YMHA, where Rabbi I. M. Davidson of Ohio delivered the eulogy for his father-in-law. The body was laid to rest at Holche Yosher cemetery, Hanover Township, where a memorial to Rabbi Ginsburg was unveiled on July 13, 1921.

* The funeral, for which Jewish businesses were closed, was arranged by representatives of the Wilkes-Barre synagogues under the leadership of Max Bartikowsky and Rabbi Gutterman of Scranton. According to the *Yiddish Almanac,* the men chosen to carry or guard the coffin were Isaac L. Pearl, Nathan Gevanthor, Louis Shainuck, Benjamin Gottlieb, Simon Adelson, Meyer Wasserstrom, Jacob Groh, Isaac Fierman, Morris Gallon, Abe Michlosky, Moishe (Moses) Klein, Samuel Shmuelewitz (Smulowitz), Jacob Bergsman, Samuel Pripstein, Shlomoh (Solomon) Singer, Joseph Ellowitz, Harry Rothstein (Rutstein), Rev. Jacob Stein, Rev. Levin, Rev. Nechemiah Williams, Phillip Klein, David Schneider, and Wolfe Harris. (The *Wilkes-Barre Record* adds the name of Samuel Slavitz.) Clergy officiating at procession sites were Rabbis Silvers, Damesek, Davidson, and Gutterman, and Reverends Williams, Stein, Lipschitz, Levin, Freed, and Prinz. Rabbi Salzman spoke at the interment, and Rabbi Weinberg and Rev. Prinz conducted last prayers. Newman Kantor was committees supervisor, Henry Feinberg was funeral marshal, and Jacob Williams and Ben Cohen provided carriages. Meyer Eskolsky, M. A. Yardon, and Maurice Williams led the Talmud Torah children. Frank Platsky, Abe Fierman, and Harris Feinberg kept watch over the synagogues. Prior to the funeral, *Chevra Kadisha* members cleansed and sat with the body.

Rabbi Isadore Davidson circa 1912.
Courtesy Craig Davidson.

Rabbi Isadore M. Davidson succeeded Rabbi Ginsburg as chief rabbi on September 7, 1920, remaining in that position until his death in 1963. In his official capacity, Rabbi Davidson served, as had his father-in-law, the five Orthodox congregations in the city of Wilkes-Barre. Yet his influence, like Rabbi Ginsburg's, extended to the general community and beyond the city. As we shall see, Eastern European Jews settling in Wyoming Valley communities outside the city had begun forming their own Orthodox congregations in the late nineteenth century; by 1924, there were more than a dozen congregations in the outlying towns. Although Rabbi Davidson's responsibilities did not relate directly to these congregations, they too accepted him as chief rabbi of the Orthodox community.

Isadore Mayer Davidson was born July 15, 1889 in Jonishki*, Lithuania, the first son and second of eight children in a rabbinical family which, with Isadore and his brother Archie, produced 11 generations of rabbis. His European-educated father, Rabbi Philip Davidson, came to the United States through Castle Garden in 1888 or 1889, followed in 1891 by his mother, Fruma (Fannie) Gittel (Sachs), who brought six-year-old Tillie and 18-month-old Isadore. The family lived initially at 40 Attorney Street on New York's Lower East Side; Isadore's younger siblings Minerva, Louis, Samuel, Charlotte, Archie, and Mildred were all born in New York.**

Rabbi Philip Davidson's children in 1946. Seated, from left, Charlotte, Tillie, Minerva, and Mildred. Standing, from left, Sam, Milton, Jessie, Isadore, Lou, and Archie.
Courtesy Craig Davidson.

Rabbi Philip Davidson succeeded Rabbi Jacob Joseph as chief rabbi of Beth Hamidrash Hagadol on New York's Norfolk Street, and was president of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis. He brought his family to Passaic, New Jersey, site of a large Yiddish-speaking community of recent Russian Jewish immigrants, in 1902. In Passaic, Philip was again chief rabbi, serving Chevra Thilim Anshay Poalim and Machzike Hadas, along with yet a third congrega-

* Rabbi Davidson's birth date is listed also as August 2, 1889; his daughter Helen recalls birthday observances near Tisha B'Av. The town of Jonishki, presently Joniskis, is also referred to as Janishok.

** Through Fruma Sachs, the family is related to Israeli statesman Abba Eban and British author/physician Oliver Sachs, grandsons of Fruma's brother Eliyahu.

tion that met in the same building. According to the 1905 New Jersey census, Philip Davidson was a naturalized citizen. He was known as a Talmudic scholar, an orator, and a writer, and was apparently revered by his congregants, who carried his casket ten miles for burial in Lodi, New Jersey following his death from pneumonia during the 1918 influenza pandemic.

Son Isadore was educated in the public schools, and was graduated from Passaic High School, entering Columbia University in 1908. At Columbia, Isadore was on the cross-country track team for at least a year. Family lore has it that his coach, who was also a coach for the Olympics, asked him to run the 100-yard dash in the Olympic trials in 1912, his graduating year. Though Isadore won some preliminary races, the finals were held on Shabbat, the Sabbath, and his father would not allow him to compete. Attending Columbia during the day, and Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (affiliated with Yeshiva University) at night, he also studied Rabbinics and Codes with his father, and was ordained at the seminary, probably in 1913.

On July 7, 1914, Isadore Davidson married Rose Ginsburg at the Welles Street synagogue in Wilkes-Barre. Most likely a marriage arranged by the couple's fathers, Rabbis Philip Davidson and David Ginsburg, the union would prove loving and lasting. The wedding was a momentous event for the Orthodox community, augmented by hundreds of guests from other cities.

The wedding ceremony was conducted by Chief Rabbi M. S. Margolies of New York, president of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, assisted by Rabbi B. L. Levinthal* of Philadelphia and nine other rabbis. Ushers were Eugene Cohen, Ben Cohen, Wolfe Harris, Samuel Sagenkamps, Sol Koploff, and E. W. Finkelstein. Max Bauman catered a large reception in Concordia Hall. After a wedding trip, the newlyweds lived in a two-story duplex above Congregation B'nai Israel in Youngstown, Ohio.

*Lithuanian-born Bernard L. Levinthal, dean of America's Orthodox rabbinate, helped found the Rabbis' Union and Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Seminary, named for his mentor, recommending Rabbi Bernard Revel as first president. His Philadelphia home became a center for Torah scholars, literati, and thousands seeking his advice or blessing. In 1939, he met with Secretary of State Cordell Hull to ask his intercession with Britain regarding the White Paper on Palestine; Hull, too, asked for Rabbi Levinthal's blessing.

Rose and Isadore Davidson are seated in this 1946 photograph. Standing (from left) are their children Howard and Betty Braun, Philip, Alfred, Helen, and Martin. *Courtesy Phyllis Rothschild.*

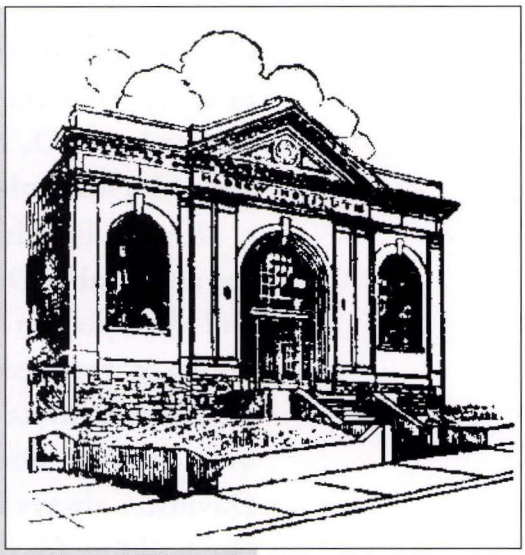
The Ohio congregation was Rabbi Davidson's first pulpit. Rabbi Ginsburg, writing on his Wilkes-Barre letterhead in 1914, was among those attesting to the qualifications of the young rabbi. According to Rabbi Davidson's son Martin, his father was the first English-speaking, American-educated Orthodox rabbi west of Pittsburgh. Martin was born in Youngstown, as were his brother Alfred and his sister Betty. The youngest Davidson children, Helen and Philip, were born in Wilkes-Barre.

In Wilkes-Barre, Chief Rabbi Davidson oversaw Orthodox ritual observance, education, and the synagogues, officiating on alternating weeks at Ohav Zedek and each of the Heights synagogues. Of the latter, only Anshe Emes had its own ordained rabbi in addition to the chief rabbi, employing several spiritual leaders from the community of new refugees until the arrival of Rabbi Israel Bencel Goldman in 1932. Ohav Zedek, too, would eventually secure its own rabbi, but Rabbi Davidson served the congregation for 29 years before the arrival of Ephraim Wolfe in 1949.

I. M. Davidson was known as a scholar, a superb orator, a tireless civic leader, a teacher, and a compassionate friend throughout the Wyoming Valley and beyond. Rabbi Solomon Gruskin of Detroit said that Rabbi Davidson was the chief influence behind his decision to enter the rabbinate. Zevulun Weisberger, who grew up in an outlying town that had a synagogue and after-school *heder* (Hebrew school) but no rabbi, wished to attend a yeshiva (a Hebrew secondary and/or post-secondary school). Rabbi Davidson took it upon himself to teach the youngster Talmud, later making arrangements for the future rabbi's attendance at Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn. Rabbi Weisberger, whose autobiographical story appeared May 1996 in *Olomeinu,* wrote to Martin Davidson that "your father . . . was responsible for my . . . becoming ordained." He wrote further that, just a few years before Rabbi Davidson's death, the two met at an Atlantic City convention. "He greeted me with an exceptionally warm

embrace and I felt that he was telling me that I had lived up to his expectations."

As of 1947, more than 20 students had pursued study at yeshiva upon completing the program at Wilkes-Barre's Talmud Torah, which Rabbi Davidson served as chairman of the Board of Education, sometime principal, and advanced teacher. Of these, four were by that time ordained as rabbis, including Solomon Gruskin, Gerson Appel, and Albert Troy. Of the female graduates at that time, Lillian Goldberg and Esther Gruskin taught in New York Talmud Torahs. That Rabbi Davidson promoted Hebrew learning for its own sake and not necessarily as preparation for the rabbinate is evidenced by the remarkable growth Talmud Torah enjoyed under his guidance.



Wilkes-Barre Institute, Talmud Torah Beth David, 1922.

Opening classes in the new East Northampton Street building in 1922 with 250 students, principal Dr. Leon Kopelowitz, and four teachers, the school soon doubled its faculty to teach 345 students. The course of study predicated enrollment at age 5 with completion after bar mitzvah, and included Talmud, Hebrew language and grammar, Torah and Prophets (in the original), Jewish history, Rashi commentary, and Jewish ethics, customs, and ceremonies. Open to all Jewish children regardless of synagogue affiliation, financial stability depended on annual memberships and contributions, together with a subsidy from the Talmud Torah Ladies Auxiliary, in addition to tuition charges. Rabbi Davidson continued his involvement in the school through its move to Kingston, where the Talmud Torah, Ohav Zedek Religious School, and Israel Ben Zion Academy (IBZA) became the United Hebrew Institute (UHI). It is not surprising that he took interest in the day school's secular curriculum as well as its Jewish studies.

A cultured and extraordinarily well-read scholar, I. M. Davidson knew Latin, loved Dickens, was an authority on Shakespeare, and was a lifelong student of the Civil War. His enduring hero was Abraham Lincoln, whom he considered a "transcendentally great man" and "the most beloved American." Writing about Lincoln in 1963, he stressed that it is not wealth, birth, or education that alone accomplish ". . . great things in this country; but it is character and truth, nobility of soul and virtue of exam-

ple that shall live for all time and that will find their echo . . . in the heart of every man that loves liberty and loves mankind." Another hero was Justice Louis D. Brandeis, who died before Rabbi Davidson could interview him for a planned article.

Known for his library, which contained the largest private collection in the area, Rabbi Davidson belonged to the Biographical Society of America and Antiquarian Bookmen Society. He collected first editions, buying books by the basket at various sales. The attic of the family home at 300 East South Street was filled with books, so many that one had to climb over piles of books to reach a selection, whose exact location Rabbi Davidson always knew. In addition, Max Roth rented an entire floor of a city building for the rabbi's books. The breadth of the rabbi's secular scholarship is evidenced in a scathing 1950 letter to the editor of the *New York Times Book Review.* Incensed at John O'Hara's characterization of Hemingway as "the outstanding author since the death of Shakespeare" and "the most important, the outstanding author out of the millions of writers who have lived since 1616," Davidson called O'Hara's review "the most blatant immature and even arrogant evaluation ever attempted by a responsible reviewer," and rather thoroughly supported his conclusion:

> *To me, a run-of-the-mill reader and layman of average intelligence and knowledge of world and classic literature, such characterization can justly apply to world figures in literature, or the writings in History and Philosophy, who have left their indelible impress and impact upon world thought and—as a corollary—human action, in their own, as well as succeeding generations. To that galaxy all will agree belong the names of (since 1616) Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Spencer, Voltaire, or if the reviewer had in mind only these men of <u>real</u> genius: Milton, Goethe, Hugo, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Ibsen, Dickens, and our own Mark Twain. . . .*
>
> *To continue, where in the name of common sense does Mr. O'Hara find his figures of "millions of writers who have lived since 1616"? What gorgeous heights of literary achievement and creativity we have attained since Shakespeare's day! Even if we count the thousands of pulp writers, radio script authors . . . ad writers . . . authors of birthday cards and telegrams . . . would-be authors who attend the Bread-Loaf writers' conference at Middlebury College; yea, and add as writers to attain that figure of "millions" . . . primary and grammar pupils . . . I still cannot*

*compute Mr. O'Hara's figure of "millions." . . . Even including England, Italy, France, Spain, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries.**

Rabbi Davidson was a civic leader in the general and Jewish community, in Wilkes-Barre and on national and international levels. In addition to the local Talmud Torah, he was active in the United Jewish Appeal, the Chamber of Commerce, and all the organizations—Community Welfare Federation, Community Chest, and United Fund—that would become the United Way of Wyoming Valley. He was local representative to the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He was a founder and officer of the local Heart Association, a member of the executive board of the organization for the mentally retarded, and an organizer of the Jewish Consumptive Aid Association of White Haven. He belonged to multiple national Jewish organizations, and he worked locally for the yeshivas in Europe. An ardent Zionist, he visited Israel three times, and was on the national board of the Mizrachi Organization, founder of Israel's Yeshiva Beth Rachel, trustee of all institutions in the old settlement of Palestine, and a founder of Young Judaea. He was chaplain of the Retreat State Hospital, the Wilkes-Barre fire and police departments, and the Veterans Hospital. Hundreds of local World War II servicemen, with whom Rabbi Davidson corresponded at their posts worldwide, were no doubt pleased when the rabbi was honored with the Wilkes-Barre Jewish War Veterans Distinguished Service Award.**

As a father and a rabbi, Davidson keenly felt the strain of wartime. With his son Martin and son-in-law Howard Braun (husband of daughter Betty) overseas, and so many local Jews serving their country, he felt that his encouraging letters and prayers—and his futile attempt to grow a victory garden in his backyard—were just not enough. Writing to his son Alfred in 1944, he noted sadly that "our little Jewish community already has seven 'Gold Star' families," and described his chance to do more:

* That Rabbi Davidson was a voracious reader was evidenced too by the material on his home reading stand. Son Philip said there were, always, a religious text, a book about Lincoln, another on the Civil War, general reading, and finally, a comic book plucked from his youngest child's room.

** It may have been a trip to Israel, and the concomitant necessity to obtain a passport, that led to Isadore's naturalization at Scranton in 1936. New Jersey census to the contrary, it appears that his father never completed the naturalization process. Thus Isadore earned citizenship papers after voting for 26 years and even serving as a juror.

. . . at long last, I have finally buckled down to learn how to drive a car. The Jewish Welfare Board wants me to give them a couple of months this summer, visiting a number of camps in the south and southwest, where there are no chaplains . . . serving the Jewish Army men spiritually, bringing whatever comfort and cheer to those maimed and crippled and mentally disturbed, who have come back from the actual combat front. Well, they insist that I learn how to drive and they will provide me with a car. . . . Can start, shift gears, stop, without a sudden jerk and jar, and already can turn around and back up. Really, I am somewhat surprised and delighted with myself—like a kid with a new toy.

As you know, I have been for two years trying, assiduously, to obtain an active chaplaincy, but being over fifty, was turned down once and again. . . . So that, this work for the JWB this summer is . . . what I have been wanting to do since Pearl Harbor. . . . I want to be with and among the boys. . . .

Rabbi Davidson's own children remember him as a loving father and grandfather (though not as a driver, a feat he would never master). His daughter Helen remembers the processions through the house, all the family holding hands and singing, welcoming Shabbat into each room. His son Martin remembers the letters he received at Harvard, with instructions to "have your Purim *Seudah* at a kosher restaurant even if it costs more," or "don't forget to go on Saturday morning to the *shul* in Cambridge—I don't care how far it is." Martin also remembers the Hanukah "care package" containing candles and a lamp, and the ones for Passover with wine, Passover sweets, matzah, and a toothbrush. Grandson Craig Davidson hit backyard pop-ups pitched by the 70-year-old rabbi; the boy had heard about the picnics and Talmud Torah outings at which his grandfather would play baseball. The rabbi would take the children fishing, too, and when his son Alfred, who wanted to box, developed tuberculosis of the knee, his father hired an ex-boxer to teach him the sport.

Rabbi Davidson had his eccentricities. He would pack a brown bag for lunch and hitchhike, for instance. Perhaps this aspect of his personality, together with his appearance and professional duties, led his nephew Al Capp (son of oldest sister Tillie Caplin) to use him as model for the character "Marryin' Sam" in the syndicated "Li'l Abner" comic strip. Though there is some controversy in the family as to whether "Marryin' Sam" was

Rabbi Davidson or his brother-in-law Rabbi George Bacarat (husband of Minnie), the behavior of the cartoon character seemed to fit Davidson. There is also suspicion that the title character was based on Martin Davidson, Capp's "country cousin" (the cartoonist grew up in New Haven). Elliott Caplin, Capp's brother and biographer, can neither confirm nor deny the Davidson family lore, and the cartoonist himself died in 1979. "Who can tell where a character comes from?" Caplin said, acknowledging that his mother, who was very close to Isadore, infused her children with Jewishness and the importance of family. In short, though we can never know for certain if the Wilkes-Barre family inhabited Dogpatch, Elliott Caplin believes that Isadore Davidson was a stronger candidate for "Marryin' Sam" than another biographer's guess—Fiorello La Guardia.

Rabbis George Bacarat, left, and Isadore Davidson. *Courtesy Craig Davidson.*

Rose Davidson, highly regarded in the community and known for her warmth and compassion, died on May 2, 1958 and was buried at the Holche Yosher Cemetery after services at the Wilkes-Barre Hebrew Institute (Talmud Torah Beth David). Rabbi Davidson later remarried, but he and the former Erna Jakobovits had only three years together before the rabbi died of an apparent heart attack while walking to Holche Yosher on October 22, 1963.

Rabbi Davidson's funeral was held at UHI. School was canceled, and the flag flew at half-mast. Many children of IBZA and the Ohav Zedek-Talmud Torah schools came an hour before the services to read *Tehilim* (Psalms) on behalf of the rabbi who had shown such devotion to them. Services were conducted by Rabbi Jerome Kerzner of Ohav Zedek and Rabbis Joseph Lookstein and Immanuel Jakobovits* of New York City, assisted by Cantors Israel Dubner, Aaron Horowitz, Moshe Rosenblatt, and David Weisz of Wilkes-Barre. Interment was in Holche Yosher

*Joseph Lookstein, a leader of the modern Orthodox movement, was then rabbi of Congregation Kehillath Jeshurun, succeeding his grandfather, Rabbi M. S. Margolies, who had officiated at the marriage of Isadore and Rose Davidson. Immanuel Jakobovits, then rabbi of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, is a nephew of Rabbi Davidson's second wife. An authority on Jewish law and medical ethics, he was appointed Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth of Nations in 1967. Currently Chief Rabbi Emeritus, he was the first rabbi to be knighted, and his elevation into the peerage was unprecedented. Lord Jakobovits, a friend of the royal family, was chief spiritual advisor to former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Cemetery. A bronze plaque memorializing Rabbi Davidson was later dedicated at the United Orthodox Synagogue, which is to this day located in the rebuilt Anshe Emes building, result of the merger of the four Heights synagogues.

—Marjorie Levin

Although some city Jews lived far from Wilkes-Barre's center—"Goose Island" in South Wilkes-Barre, for instance, was home to the Lebowitz, Jaffee, and Smith families and a stone's throw from Hanover Township—the great majority of Rabbi Davidson's (and Rabbi Ginsburg's) congregants began their Wyoming Valley lives in the Heights, a poor immigrant neighborhood across Wilkes-Barre Boulevard from Public Square. As Jewish newcomers struggled to make a living, their knowledge of the Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, and Hungarian languages, in addition to Yiddish, helped put other East European immigrants at ease.

Some of the Jewish immigrants were hucksters, using horse and wagon to peddle their wares. Isadore Gottesman, for one, had two horses and a wagon. He stabled the animals with other hucksters' horses in Lazarus's barn, across the street from Jake Cutler's blacksmith shop. The Katunas sold hay and oats from their store on Baltimore Street.

Other Jews became wholesale suppliers. Among these, Nathan Kuss* recalled M. D. Brown, M. D. Brandwene, Herman Gross, Haskell Ginsburgh and his son David, Sol Heller, Frank Klein, Abraham Rifkin, and members of the Finkelstein, Sirkin, Horowitz, Unterberger, Smulyan, Sperling, and Abelson families.

Jews clearly dominated the retail trade of the Heights, especially the establishments lining East Market Street, from Welles to Meade Streets. There were groceries, bakeries, candy stores, butcher shops, apparel shops, pharmacies, and saloons. Max Roth's saloon was located on the Heights, at 13 North Hancock Street, while Jacob Slomowitz** and Fred Katz had saloons downtown. Except for the butcher shops, Jewish-owned stores were open on Saturday out of economic necessity.

* Kuss noted that most of the people named, here and below as "artisans," worked in the Heights, but some had businesses in adjoining city areas. Space does not permit inclusion of every Jewish enterprise.

** It was Mr. Slomowitz who gave entertainer Pearl Bailey her big break. The singer never forgot her 1938 appearance at Jake's Town Tavern, then located at Pennsylvania Avenue and Northampton Street.

By the 1930s, shopping along Market Street in the Heights was an "adventure," as recalled by Frances Platsky Wilson:

Ethnicity and friendship reigned on Market Street, the lifeline of the Heights. Bars and stores filled the blocks from Welles to Meade Streets, the area that was "our territory." Shopping was not a chore—it was an adventure. The stores were more than stores. They were meeting places and dispatching depots of local news.

What a variety we had: Clemente's Shoe Repair. They could renew worn shoes. Greenstein's Drug Store not only supplied medicine but also had a soda fountain. Utz's Butcher Shop decorated outside by hanging pigs and deer that were once alive. O'Donnell's Brass Rail, Zatcoff's and Kornblatt's Bakeries, and Greenberg's Deli offered a classy bar, the best bagels, rye, and pumpernickel bread, and the notoriously delicious corned beef. Fink's Fish market sold fresh fish, which often became gefilte fish. Yes, there were many stores. Market Street was truly a market street.

Altman's Alteration and Dry Cleaning was unique. You were not given a ticket for your garments. When you came for them, Mr. Altman knew exactly where they were. Himelstein's General Store was indeed a general store. They sold an interesting variety including special underwear that couldn't be bought anywhere else. Kranson Clothes catered to the males by fitting them with proper attire. They still do, but not on Market Street. Simon Fabric Stores supplied homemakers' necessities.

At various periods there were a Chinese laundry, A. Rifkin Overalls, and Hymie Lieberman Printery, and there was the newspaper store which was owned by Balins, among others. They sold Yiddish and English newspapers.

One of our chores was to buy the Yiddish newspaper, Forverts (Forward) which is now published only in English. The price was three cents. My father, Nathan Platsky, would give us a nickel so that we could keep the change. It was generous in those days. My father was a self-educated man. His knowledge was overwhelming. I was always impressed with my father and his genre who came to America not knowing the language or the territory and made a life for themselves and their families.

South Hancock Street was a branch of Market Street. Our kosher butchers were Hafetz on the corner of Market and South Hancock and Alinikoff-Mason in the middle of the first block of South Hancock.

This was an active block. There were Baum's Men's Store, Gianella's candy and groceries store, and Strauss's, a large grocery store across the street from our house. Strauss's, which later moved to Market Street, was a forerunner of the grocery chains.

The Tischler building at Market and Hancock Streets. *Taken from Wilkes-Barre Board of Trade Journal, April 1911.*

South Hancock Street was a fun place to grow up. We children skated and bicycled, and played "hide and seek," "How Many Steps Before the King?" and "Rover, Rover, come over." We put on plays and charged two pins; I haven't any idea what we did with the pins. We made up games that kept us busy and active. We also had yards large enough to run around in. The Siegels lived up a few houses, and I loved to play there. They had an enclosed commode on their back porch. I was so jealous. At our house we had to go inside.

Mr. Siegel was a huckster. He had a wonderful carriage and horses. In the winter he put sled runners on the carriage and took us on rides in the snow. What fun!

William G. Weaver School where we went from first to sixth grade was one house away. I was very sick in my early school years. My mother Lena would bring me large glasses of orange juice or milk during recess. Mrs. Gianella sold candy and soda. My Aunt Becky Platsky made candy apples and lollipops and sold them. My mother created a business for our neighbors. Years later, I'd be embarrassed when someone would say, "I know you—your mother used to bring you glasses of milk and orange juice." But I'm no longer embarrassed. I realized what a wonderful mother I had who cared so much about me. Wisdom does come with old age, sometimes.

We used to go sledding down Market Street, too. There weren't as many cars as today, and those who did have cars didn't drive too much in the snow. We were lucky we had Mr. Siegel.

Today Market Street is just a street, without stores, without people to talk to or about. Instead there are new houses and a new school which is probably considered progress, but I wonder.

In addition to the shopkeepers, wholesalers, hucksters, and blacksmith, many Jews had come from Europe with manual skills, and others learned new trades in this country. As a result, Wilkes-Barre's Jewish population included artisans of almost every description. Nathan Kuss remembered barbers (Charles Lowenthal, Paul Kranson, Paul Fiergang, Liebmans), tailors (Kranson, Siegel, Morris Lenkofsky, Julius Savitz), electricians (Nat Popky, Charles Popky), house painters (Bernstein, Platsky, Wilson, Berman, Klugman), shoemakers (Maisel, Kaplan), tinsmiths (Newsbaum, Louis Holtzman), plumbers (George Swetlitz, Schoenfeld, Weinstock, Robbin), window cleaners (Kornblau, Louis

Emmer, Sam Mitchneck), carpenters (William Kuss, Liebman, Samuel Harris, Israel Katuna), printers (Jacob Williams, Liebermans, Jacob Sirotkin), and a stone mason (William Cohen).

Members of the Zatcoff, Feld, Rein, Tischler, Wichner, and Brauner families were bakers. Officers Swick and Dymond served the city as policemen, while Mr. Goodstein and Elick Kaplan were city firemen. There were also three bus drivers, a drayman, a coal dealer, several seamstresses, and two sisters who bred dogs.

Harry R. Hirshowitz. *Taken from Eastern Pennsylvanians, Eastern Pennsylvania Biographical Association, 1928.*

The Heights produced some "Horatio Alger" successes. Harry Hirshowitz, for one, was a "newsie," then an errand boy for Simon Long's Sons, rising to bookkeeper after night school courses. At age 28, he opened The Hub clothing store on Public Square; Ben Levi of Nanticoke was first president. Five to six thousand people attended The Hub's opening festivities on March 25, 1909. Joseph Hurwitz was born in the *shtetl* of Torczyn in Russian Poland. He settled in Wilkes-Barre in 1890, and after years of struggling acquired a jewelry store on East Market Street. Eventually he became a combination banker and broker, selling steamship tickets and real estate from an office on the Square, and later, on South Main Street. And Louis Rosenthal was a prosperous Public Square clothier, while his wife operated a boys' store at 29 South Main Street. On June 4, 1911, in a major Heights' society event, the Rosenthals married off their son and daughter in a gala double wedding in their home at 62 South Welles Street. Chief Rabbi Ginsburg performed the ceremonies.

By the second generation, many sons and daughters of Heights immigrants entered the professions. They became prominent as politicians, in the arts, and in the financial markets; they became physicians, lawyers, dentists, veterinarians, accountants, and teachers. Attorney Joseph Savitz, whose father Julius escaped from Russia about 1900, establishing himself locally as a tailor and furrier and, by the '30s, as Wilkes-Barre's first dress manufacturer, grew up on the Heights. He remembered his youth with fondness:

> *In the late '20s, my brothers and I attended almost all the grade schools in the Heights section, ranging from Weaver Grade School to Grant Street School and then off to G. A. R. Memorial High School. Classes at Weaver started at*

8:30 a.m. when a big cow bell rung by a strong youngster (my oldest brother Bob when he was in the sixth grade) signaled that everyone was to run in from the playground to classes. . . . The teachers ruled with an iron hand—or should I say with a strong ruler which found its way onto our rears or knuckles when we acted up.

After school, we would attend the Talmud Torah for two hours each day. Pre-bar mitzvah kids would participate in the Sabbath service and take turns chanting it. We became pretty good at it and by the time of our bar mitzvahs, we could easily handle the service. In fact, having learned the trope (cantillation) in class, we were able to recite the Haftorahs without prior preparation. . . . The exceptional teacher was Mr. Meyer Eskolsky who was a chain smoker but taught the Bible and Hebrew reading with a passion; he was able to crack a long stick like a whip on those students who fell asleep during classes. He awakened us to the realities of ritual and kept us concentrating on our subjects like a master puppeteer. . . . Rabbi I. M. Davidson, a significant handsome figure with a goatee, taught the young students how to celebrate the holidays. I recall his helping us write and recite speeches on occasion. . . .

For our bar mitzvahs, which occurred every couple of years for over a decade, my mother did all the baking (sponge cake and kichel), and made the chopped herring and pickled herring that became a standard feature from year to year, and my father would supply the wine and liquor for the Kiddush (the prayer and ceremony that sanctifies the Sabbath and holy days) at the synagogue (B'nai Jacob) and the family luncheon at home. . . .

Leaving grade school for G. A. R. High School was quite exciting. G. A. R. had great football teams in the late '30s. In fact, a quarterback in G. A. R.'s class of 1932 was Louis Freed of the Heights. He was not only an all-A student, but a starter for the team although he only weighed 150 pounds. Later he became a Professor of English Literature at Purdue University. Freed was one of many outstanding Jewish students at G. A. R. My cousin Sam Savitt, class of 1935, became the outstanding equestrian artist in the country. He was encouraged by his art teacher at G. A. R. to attend Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. . . .

On weekends during our teens, we socialized at the YMHA, where we learned to play basketball, and belonged to high school fraternities and social groups. We were guided by Lou Smith and Julia Lieberman, whose involvement with high school students in the Scholastic Club and at the summer camps taught us how to interact socially and in organization life. We were even taught Robert's Rules of Procedure during our adolescence and through the high school years. . . .

Children of the first generation immigrants on the Heights invariably describe childhood there in idyllic terms. Poor but happy, the families looked out for one another, and practiced *zedakah,* or charity, as a way of life. The new immigrants formed their own counterparts to German Jewish groups, founding The Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society in 1900, and the Queen Esther Society in 1902, but often help was extended unofficially. If it became known that a family needed food, a bag of potatoes might appear on their porch, the giver anonymous. Ethel Tischler Groh, whose parents owned the Tischler Bakery on Market and Hancock Streets, helped her mother Fannie distribute baskets of baked goods, eggs, and milk every Friday to the families living in the alleys, the poorer streets off Market.

There was always room for more at the dinner table, even if the guest came only because he preferred the neighbor's menu to his own. Many people churned their own buttermilk, hung cheese on a clothesline, and kept geese and chickens in their yards, eventually bringing the birds to the *shohet* at Hancock and Market. Families helped to bring other families to the United States from Europe, continuing to help them once they arrived, often supplying the children with English names. It was common for several generations of a family to live together, and sometimes the women were the sole breadwinners and parents. On the Sabbath, there would be a veritable parade to the synagogues, and on Purim the Jews would masquerade.

Non-Jews on the Heights respected Jewish traditions, and often greeted the Jewish elderly, with affection, as *bubbe* (grandma) and *zayde* (grandpa). Everyone knew everyone else, and antisemitism was virtually unknown. Marvin Williams, grandson of Rev. Nechemiah Williams, wrote about the Heights of the 1920s:

> *There was remarkably little anti-Jewish activity in Wilkes-Barre in the years I lived there. Everybody respected everybody else. My sixth-grade teacher [at Weaver], Miss Jenkins, lived with her father, a retired Welsh clergyman, who loved to sit on his back porch reading Chumash (Torah) in Hebrew with his daughter's Jewish students. It was only when I entered college [out of the area] that I became aware that Jews were not welcome in certain activities.*

The first generation immigrants continued to speak Yiddish in private, and at public affairs too, but Jews on the Heights steadily became more Americanized. Jewish women participated in parent-teacher associations, for example,

and Jewish students at Wilkes-Barre High School (now Coughlin, the only city high school until the 1920s), won prizes for rhetorical excellence. The 1914 gold medal winner, for her essay "The Effect of Success on Character," was Dorothy Kanter, who would later (as Dorothy K. Schwartz) head the Jewish Welfare Agency.

Many young Jewish men enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance extension, attending evening classes after long work days. With perseverance, they would earn the equivalent of today's associate degree in three years; few of them could afford to transfer to the Philadelphia campus to complete the bachelor's degree.

Jewish children went to the public elementary schools on Grant, Meade, and Hancock Streets, attended the Talmud Torah, and frequently worked as well. Newsboys as young as six years old hawked their papers on busy thoroughfares in order to supplement the family income. Kindergartens, which were private, were another matter. The founding of a new kindergarten was a newsworthy item, and when the (Methodist) Women's Home Missionary Society founded a kindergarten in 1918 at the Italian Mission Church on Northampton Street, the class was filled with immigrant children—Jews, Syrians, Italians, Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, and others—often unable to speak English. Among her numerous "causes," the reforming dynamo Fannie Sax Long presided over the Wyoming Valley Kindergarten Federation, a group dedicated to the establishment of kindergartens in the public schools.

Some key members of the YMHA "dream team."

Of course, poverty on the Hill did not preclude normal children's play. Girls played jacks and hop scotch, and jumped rope, while boys engaged in street games and played baseball on the fields at Coal Street. Young people got around on foot. On summer nights, they wandered down Market Street or swam in the mudholes of the future Kirby Park. A bigger adventure was the physically demanding hike up Northampton Street, all the way to Laurel Run by way of Giant's Despair.

The Valley's Jewish community pro-

duced some outstanding athletes, perhaps none better as a group than the basketball players who began to compete as a team after the opening of the YMHA facility on South Washington Street in 1918. This "dream team" included Lou and Ben Smith, Harry Baicker, Jack Dubrow, William Ganaposki, Jacob "Yock" Goldberg, Joseph ("Johnny") Silver, and Harold "Mose" Wolfe. A few Jews boxed. Moses Cohen fought under the name of "Joe Harris" until some unhappiness caused him to commit suicide by inhaling gas on May 26, 1901. His mother had suffered an earlier loss when another son, Barney, died in the Spanish-American War.

Most Jews found solace in family life and religion. Some of them derived additional comfort from the Workmen's Circle, or *Arbeiter Ring,* a fraternal order of the Jewish labor movement in the United States and Canada. Whether justified or not, a number of workingmen felt that they were being snubbed by their slightly more prosperous Heights neighbors, particularly concerning cemetery rights. Consequently, in 1907, they organized a Workmen's Circle Branch that provided them with funeral benefits and a burial plot in a section of the (non-Jewish) Mt. Greenwood Cemetery in Shavertown. Officially incorporated on September 14, 1926, Workmen's Circle Branch No. 113 stated in its charter its aim of "inculcating charity and benevolence, and assisting such of its members as may be in need or distress from funds derived from monthly dues and assessments," and named Joseph Jefferson, Sol Gutterman, Sam Lieberman, David Meyers, and David Gordon as directors or trustees. With its occasional lectures and discussion sessions in its South Hancock Street headquarters (at the old Talmud Torah building), the Workmen's Circle was a lively Yiddish-language left-wing political forum, as well as a source of low- or interest-free loans and other benefits. Samuel Cutler said that a second, English-speaking branch of the socialist-oriented organization, Workmen's Circle Branch No. 395E, was instituted in the 1930s.

Jacob Cutler, whose second wife Gussie had emigrated from Russia and had become involved with the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) through her job in a New York City sweatshop, lived upstairs in the Workmen's Circle building. With his son Eli, who became secretary of the group, he took care of the cemetery. According to Jacob's younger son Samuel, many Wilkes-Barre businesses owed their start to the Workmen's Circle, which provided the needed loans and signers for the loans. He said also that Workmen's Circle ran a school teaching Jewish culture, and that its hall was used for dances, Jewish and non-Jewish weddings, and various plays and shows.

Among the singers were the Arensons, family of future County Commissioner Ethel Arenson Price. Sonia Kosonsky Simon was among those active in theater. According to her son William, Sonia Simon, who had been on the Jewish stage in New York before her marriage, also starred in the first show in the history of the YMHA, a one-woman performance.

Heights street scene before Redevelopment. *Courtesy Lawrence Newman.*

Rise and Fall of "The Heights"
by Nathan I. Kuss

Of modest size is the Wyoming Valley, embracing about 50 square miles.

Into this small area, over a period of 100 years, came immigrants from the British Isles, Germany, Slovakia, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Hungary, Italy, France, Egypt, China, Africa, Syria, Lebanon, and other places. They came, usually, with one object, to find work.

Work was obtainable in the Wyoming Valley, in the coal mines, on the railroads, and in the numerous satellite industries that developed to satisfy the needs of the two principal employers. In time, the men, who in most cases had come over separately, sent for their families, and communities came into existence. The emerging neighborhoods tended to follow a pattern, that of settling into areas of accustomed religious affiliation.

From Georgetown (now Wilkes-Barre Township) to Luzerne, from Dupont to Nanticoke, the Valley became, and, to a great extent remains, a series of enclaves of religious worshipers, identified by churches great and small.

The experience of the Jewish immigrants was different in one important respect. They did not go into the mines*, they did not work on the railroads, they did not engage to any great extent in the construction trades. Some of them made use of their acquired manual skills or set about learning them, but most became purveyors of merchandise, first as hucksters and peddlers and finally as storekeepers. In time, every borough, township or city in the Valley had its Jewish-owned retail stores, supplying foodstuffs, furniture, clothing, housewares. Each such commercial center was small, providing business opportunities for a limited number of families.

The large majority of Jewish immigrants, those from Eastern Europe, gravitated to the Heights. A sudden, dramatic rise out of the level area of central Wilkes-Barre, the section occupies itself for a mile to reach the mountain area on the east of the city. In that stretch, the Hill is contained from Coal Street on the left to South Street on the right, passing through Market Street and Northampton Street in between. The bottom of the hill was long known as Baltimore Street, recently named Wilkes-Barre Boulevard. From there upward, proceeding on Market Street, one encountered Lincoln Street, Welles Street, Hancock Street, Grant Street, Sherman Street, Meade Street, Sheridan Street, Custer Street. Short sojourns to the right and to the left of Market revealed the interlocking alleys, residential "lanes," among them Amber Lane, Dougher Lane, Hayes Lane, Rose Lane, Laning Lane, and others. The lanes, or "alleys," were distinguished for a long time as areas of relatively inferior housing, but this has been substantially corrected over the years.

The heart of the Hill was Market Street. From Welles to Meade, four

*Ed. note: As with most rules, there are exceptions—in this case, four that we know, and probably more. Harry Karnofsky of Lithuania, the eldest of six brothers, was put on a boat to New York. Age 9, he traveled alone, in the ship's hold, wearing a name tag. A woman from his European village met the boat, and took the boy by train to Wilkes-Barre. At age 10, he was a breaker boy, and in a few years was able to send money for the next brother's passage. Eventually, they brought the entire family to the Valley, and Harry began a business buying and selling fine riding horses, brother Nathan became a state policeman, and other brothers had local retail businesses. Max L. Grossman of Plains, great-grandfather of one of today's largest local medical families, also worked in the mines. After his River Street grocery store failed, he walked across the street to the Lehigh Valley Coal Company and secured a job. Future screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz, who came to Wilkes-Barre as a child, was a prodigy at Harry Hillman Academy, passing the entrance examinations for Columbia at age 13. Too young to enter, he worked for a year in the coal mines. And Isaac Engel, long-time president of Ohav Zedek, became a breaker boy when he first arrived from Hungary.

blocks of continuous, both-sides-of-the-street stores, and saloons, and tailor shops and barber shops, bakeries and shoe repairers. Clothing stores and furniture stores. Cohen's candy store and Solomon's ice cream parlor are remembered, as are Greenberg's Delicatessen and Zatcoff's Bakery, those two attracting patrons from all over the Valley.

Not all the businesses were Jewish-owned. There was a barber shop that provided a livelihood for two Polish men, brothers. One saloon had a Jewish proprietor but all the other saloons, and they were numerous, were operated by Slovak or Irish owners. On one occasion, the hunting season brought for display to the German-owned Utz's Meat Market a large black bear, taken in the nearby woods.

But Jewish merchants dominated Market Street and the Heights. Of inestimable importance to them was the ability to converse in the languages of their customers. Many of the businesses were well known outside the Heights area. Tischler's Bakery, and its successor Wichner's Bakery, and then Zatcoff's can be said to have dominated their field for a long time. Furniture stores also attracted patrons from outside the area. Among those were stores operated by Samuel Groh, the Levy family, the Rifkins, and Abe Kaplan.

Grocery stores were numerous and included those of Mrs. Galan, Mrs. Hurwitz, Nathan Fierverker, Morris Goldstein, Louis Lisses, and others. Meat markets were the province of the Hafetz family, Meyer Lieb, the popular Mary Alinikoff, as well as William Kaufman, Warsaw's and Nat Mason. Men's and women's clothing were offered in stores large and small, owned by families remembered as the Kolniks, Fainbergs, Lubins, Karps, Simons, and the Kranson brothers.

All this business activity encouraged the formation of a neighborhood bank, and at an early date The Heights Bank was organized to serve the community.

Equally notable about the Heights was the variety and extent of talent, other than business, which was nurtured by the first generation of immigrant parents. Among those who became prominent lawyers were Joseph Savitz, Louis Shaffer, Ernest Herskovitz, Eugene Roth, Maurice Cantor, Sol Lubin, Julius Altman, and Jerome Cohen. Representing different branches of medical practice were Heights natives Dr. Max Tischler, Dr. Herman Popky, Dr. Joseph Lubin, Dr. David Lubin, Dr. Aaron Lisses, and V.M.D. William Rubin. Also, two architects, Howard Lidz and Samuel

Moskowitz, are products of the area. Moskowitz designed more than 600 structures in his career, among them the Jewish Community Center on South River Street in Wilkes-Barre, the United Hebrew Institute and Temple B'nai B'rith in Kingston, the Jewish Home in Scranton, and synagogues in Hazleton and Lancaster.

Two pharmacies served the Heights, Greenstein's Drug Store and Hanlon's Pharmacy. Morris Greenstein, an immigrant from Germany, saw his pharmacy become the first resort for those who needed medical help. James Hanlon was graduated from Wilkes-Barre High School, enrolled in what was then a two-year course at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, and came back home to become, in due course, proprietor of the drug store which he had earlier served as errand boy.

On North Welles Street, just off Market, was the large shed housing Esser's Blacksmith Shop. One could stand in the open doorway and watch the magic being performed, just a few feet away, with fire, water and iron, with hammer, anvil, tongs, and rasp.

On other occasions, on Northampton Street, a different kind of magic might be witnessed: the sudden, clamorous charge out of Fire House No. 4 of those magnificent teams of specially-trained horses. A sight not to be forgotten. An event to be witnessed only by lucky chance. No longer: Fire House No. 4 is still there, but mechanized.

Just as most of the Jewish population settled on the Heights, so also did that area become the home of large numbers of other immigrants. There had, of course, developed throughout the city enclaves of particular groups: East End became predominantly Irish, while Brookside was the center of Slovak development. South Wilkes-Barre attracted German and English settlers, while a small area around Park Avenue and Hazle Street was populated by Syrian-Lebanese immigrants. But the Heights entertained them all. On the Hill, the Polish were neighbors of the Lithuanians, Jews with Welsh, Welsh with Slovaks, Irish with Hungarians, and again Jews with each and with all. All relationships were developed and sustained without conflict. The children went to, and mixed in, the public schools on Hancock Street, on Grant Street and on Meade Street, and later, at the G. A. R. High School, erected in the 1920s.

Not that there were no differences. But the differences, for the most part, found expression in the churches and the synagogues, and these were

numerous. Of synagogues there were four. But with the movement of many families to newly developed housing in South Wilkes-Barre and in Kingston, they were merged into one, combined congregation. Of the multiplicity of churches on the Heights, as well as of their diversity, there is ample evidence in this list, which does not claim to be complete: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Assembly of God, First Primitive Methodist Church, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Grace Bible Church, St. Mary's Church of the Maternity, Puritan Congregational Church, Christian Assembly, First Welsh Presbyterian Church, First Welsh Methodist Church, St. John's Byzantine Rite Catholic Church.

One important feature of what was life on the Heights must yet be dealt with. It pertains to the Heights but it was not of the Heights. At the very bottom of the hill, on what was Baltimore Street, the Central Railroad of New Jersey, the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, the Lehigh Valley Railroad, and the Pennsylvania Railroad, separately and together, had laid railroad tracks that crossed lower Market Street and lower Northampton Street. South Street was exempt from this feature because the South Street Bridge vaulted high over all combinations of railroad tracks.

If a freight train happened to be on the tracks, moving, bound for a destination, it presented no problem, since it would be out of sight in a minute or two. But frequently, a train on the tracks would move irresolutely a few yards forward, a few yards back, switchmen using their lighted lamps to transmit signals to other switchmen somewhere down the line. Obviously, the crew was gathering together all the component sections of a train-to-be, attaching a car loaded with coal, another containing manufactured goods, still another with farm produce, all arranged in proper sequence for efficient unloading at the train's destination. The pedestrians and the drivers, many of whom needed to get to school or work, would understand the situation, and know they had to wait until the process was completed. But they would also want to get on their way, and would become impatient and, sometimes, furious. Some would even venture to climb over or crawl under the cars' couplings, a dangerous procedure. Eventually the train would move on and traffic would resume—until the next time.

That scenario was a troublesome feature of the Heights, and caused many residents to resolve that, at an appropriate time, they would take up

residence in other areas. Now, the railroad tracks are gone. There is no impediment to travel up and down Market Street.

Except that Market Street as described is no longer there.

A quarter of a century ago the Redevelopment Authority undertook to modernize the Heights. The chief feature of the program was the removal of the entire structure of Market Street. Only a few of the Heights businesses found it desirable to move to a new location. Harry Rifkin's Furniture and Zatcoff's Bakery located for a while in the South Wilkes-Barre area, while Kranson Clothes and Kaplan's Furniture permanently settled in larger quarters in the newly developed mall areas. Except for Stegmaier's Brewery, where nothing has been brewed for a long time, nothing is left of all that has been described above. In the area where all the retail activity flourished, there is now a high-rise apartment building, a large food market, and a pharmacy. And a great deal of open space.

Before redevelopment. In this circa 1960s aerial view, the Heights section is to the right of the railroad tracks; downtown Wilkes-Barre is to the left. *Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*

The Outlying Communities: Jewish Settlement in the Coal Towns

Overleaf: Lou Gross in delivery wagon in Glen Lyon, 1916.
Courtesy Sandra Himelstein.

SHELDON SPEAR

The Outlying Communities:
Jewish Settlement in the Coal Towns

At the same time that Jewish immigrants flocked to Wilkes-Barre's Heights, they came, in smaller numbers, to nearly every town of any size in Luzerne County. Often joining relatives or *landsleit* in a particular town, they lived in communities on both sides of the Susquehanna River, from Duryea and Avoca north of Wilkes-Barre, to Shickshinny and Mocanaqua south of the city. Pittston, Dupont, Exeter, and Wyoming had Jewish populations, as did Swoyersville, Luzerne, Miners Mills, Hudson, Parsons, Plains, Kingston, Edwardsville, Plymouth, Ashley, Nanticoke, and Glen Lyon. Jews lived or did business in Breslau, Forty Fort, Freeland, Harveys Lake, Hazleton, Larksville, Sugar Notch, Warrior Run, West Pittston, and West Wyoming. As early as 1906, Isaac Rosenthal operated a general store in Trucksville.

Anthracite coal mining was central to the economies of most of the towns, and the Jewish immigrants, frequently beginning as hucksters, soon opened shops that served the miners. Storekeepers and their large families usually lived above or behind their main street stores, where the children also worked when they weren't tending younger siblings or attending school. Most children finished grade school, many were graduated from high school, and the boys went to *heder* as well. Long working hours were the rule, as was the necessity of conducting much, or even most, of the stores' business on credit.

Impressed by their honesty and knowledge of Eastern European languages, Slavic mine workers sometimes turned to Jewish merchants for what amounted to banking services. Peter Roberts, a Congregationalist minister who occupied several pulpits in the anthracite region, described the essence of these banking transactions in his 1904 sociological treatise, *Anthracite Coal Communities:*

> *We have known some of these men (Jewish merchants) engaged in private banking for from ten to fifteen years, to have handled thousands of dollars annually, not a cent of which they ever lost and never were they guilty of a breach of trust with the Slavs who confided in them. One of the most prosperous of these*

sent on an average $6,000 annually in the last decade to these people's ancestral homes and in the year 1901 he had from $20,000 to $25,000 of their money in his possession. He rarely paid interest unless the depositor had to his credit several hundreds of dollars; then he paid two per cent. The men could get their money at any hour, and often after a fight on pay-night, the private banker was called up at midnight to cash the account of a fugitive. . . .

As in Wilkes-Barre, small numbers of German Jews had settled in the outlying towns a generation or more before the arrival of Jews from eastern Europe. Isaac Jacobosky, native of Posen, Germany, engaged in real estate upon arriving in the Valley; he is said to have developed the settlement of Breslau. Among other German Jews associated with the smaller towns were the Levi and Strauss families of Nanticoke, the Auerbach, Cohen, and Gompertz families of Pittston, and the Freeman, Jacobs, Levi, and Weil families of Plymouth.

Austria-born Leopold Freeman, who settled in Plymouth in 1867, brought his bride Rosa to the town when streets were yet unpaved, sidewalks were wooden, and gas and electric power were nonexistent. Even when their youngest daughter, Miriam, born in 1902, was growing up in Plymouth, outdoor plumbing was the rule, as was the practice of keeping cows for milk, and raising chickens and geese for family consumption. Miriam was the eleventh of 12 Freeman children, several of whom achieved professional status in the second generation. Alfred Freeman became an architect in New York, while Stanley and Harry Freeman remained in the Wyoming Valley, the former distinguished as the region's first Jewish surgeon, the latter as a prominent attorney who had studied in the offices of Judge S. J. Strauss. Freeman daughters Martha (Mrs. Abram Galland) and Miriam (Mrs. Julian Long) were active at Temple B'nai B'rith and in the greater Jewish and general community. Martha Galland, a Wellesley graduate on the board of United Charities and Social Agencies (later the Welfare Planning Council), was appointed by Governor Arthur James to the Luzerne County Board of Public Assistance. Miriam Long, a University of Pennsylvania graduate and 64-year volunteer at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, was president of the Wyoming Valley Kindergarten

Family of Leopold and Rosa Freeman, 1897. *Courtesy Arnold and Sandy Rifkin.*

Federation, board member of the Wilkes-Barre Blind Association, and treasurer of the first board of the Luzerne County Medical Society Auxiliary.

In Pittston, the first immigrants established a beneficial society to maintain a cemetery and aid members in time of sickness. According to the charter recorded January 26, 1875, officers of Ahavos Achim Society* of Brotherly Love were Adolph Fleischer, Simon Feldman, Levi Goodman, and Abraham Allgaier, while Henry Cohen, Gabriel David, and Simon Mendel served as trustees. Henry Cohen's nephew Herman returned from the Civil War to marry Mary Auerbach, and later served many years as court crier of the Orphan's Court. Following in his father's footsteps, Herman's son Elias was clerk to Luzerne County judges for 42 years, and was himself succeeded by son Robert, who was court administrator from 1931 to 1970.

Harry Freeman.

Philip Strauss of Nanticoke was known as "the ideal American merchant" by the late 1920s, but when he arrived in Wilkes-Barre from Austria in 1894, he was a young orphaned boy. He found work, went to night school, and saved his money. In 1909, he became manager of a Nanticoke store, and ten years later, with $10,000, he opened his own "Million Dollar Store" on Main Street.

By then, Eastern European Jews outnumbered German Jews in Nanticoke. Indeed, the Jewish population of all the small towns was almost entirely Eastern European by 1900.

Philip Strauss.
Photographs this page taken from Eastern Pennsylvanians, Eastern Pennsylvania Biographical Association, 1928.

Jews in adjacent towns naturally gravitated toward one another, using the streetcar network to frequent one another's shops or gather for social activities. Eventually, Wilkes-Barre's YMHA would become the social focus for the Jews in the towns as well as the city. For religious services, the Jews in the outlying towns formed their own Orthodox congregations as soon as they had a *minyan,* the quorum of ten male Jews required to conduct services.

The earliest recorded congregation outside Wilkes-Barre

* It appears that East European Jews continued the cemetery at 123 Broad Street, Pittston. Ahavas Achim Society of Pittston was incorporated on March 11, 1969 by Esther and Jeanette Schlosser, Saul and Shirlee (Shulman) Troy, and Rosabell Shulman Levy.

was the Ohave Tzedeck Hebrew Congregation of Plymouth. According to the charter granted by Stanley Woodward on April 2, 1889, the subscribers, three of whom had by then attained citizenship, were Max Joseph, Isack Gelb, I. J. E. Shappira, and Joseph Cim(m)et. Helen Goldstein Amdur, whose parents had come to Plymouth in the late 1800s, said the congregation did not have a full-time rabbi, and that it rented a hall for services and religious school. Ruth Schectman Freistat noted this early congregation in documenting its successor:

A Roman Catholic priest is credited with initial efforts to build B'nai Israel ("sons of Israel") on Center Avenue in Plymouth. He approached one of the pioneer Jewish families in town, and contributed $100 toward establishing a house of worship.

In 1922 or 1923, Rev. Stanislaus Drier, pastor of St. Mary's Church, strode into Alex Plessett and Son men's furnishings store on East Main Street to speak with the elder Plessett. The priest noted that Jewish religious services, children's lessons, and meetings had long been held in lofts of the Young and Ely buildings. Jews, he said, had a beautiful religion; why didn't they have their own synagogue building?

Father Drier called a meeting of prominent merchants at Wolpe's Furniture Store (now Landau's), made his own monetary contribution, and obtained an architect and surveyors from the Glen Alden Coal Co. to design the building. He served as agent for purchase of the land, and attended most subsequent meetings dealing with the synagogue's construction, actively working with Joseph Hacker of Hacker's Supermarket, Alex and Mitchell Plessett, and Meyer Wolpe.

Simon Goldstein. *Taken from Harvey-Smith History of Wilkes-Barre, Vol. VI.*

B'nai Israel Synagogue received its charter on November 28, 1924, and completed construction the same year. Signing the charter application were the congregation's first trustees Max L. Fainberg, Jacob Schectman, Jacob Barron, Jacob Hurwitz, Alex Plessett, Hyman Brand, and Abraham Brand. Rabbi Levine, who had led services in the lofts, presided at the 1925 dedication ceremonies, and Arthur James, then Luzerne County district attorney and later governor of Pennsylvania, was guest speaker. Jewish families from Plymouth, Breslau, Lyndwood, and Larksville flocked to the new Orthodox congregation.

Rabbi Jacob Hartman came from Indianapolis to lead the congregation in 1926. That same year Morris Hacker became the synagogue's first bar mitzvah. In 1927, B'nai Israel's first wed-

ding united Helen Goldstein and Nathan Meyer. Helen's family ran Golden Quality Ice Cream Company, founded (1903) by her father Simon and continued by her brother Eugene. Golden Quality's product was popular all through the Wyoming Valley and beyond.

Rabbi Hartman and his wife Eva initiated heder classes. Trudy Harris recalled that Mrs. Hartman always wore garlic around her neck, presumably to ward off illness and evil spirits. Morris Hacker said that Eva Hartman was also involved in theater. Rabbi Hartman died in 1936 and was buried in the B'nai Israel section of Temple Israel Cemetery, Swoyersville.*

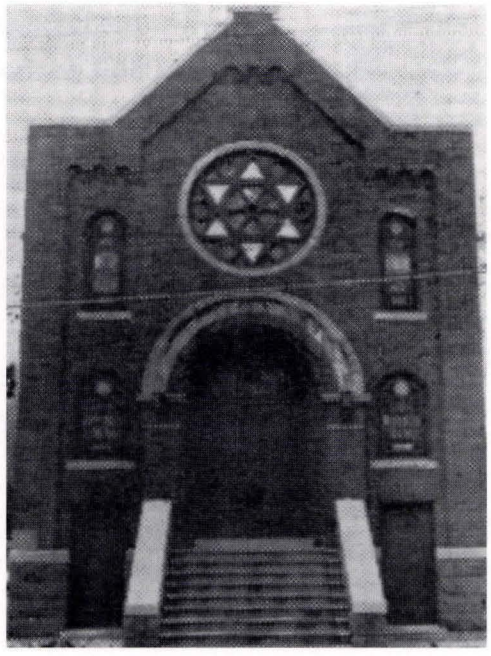
Purim festival at B'nai Israel Synagogue, circa 1926. *Courtesy Evelyn Rose Benson.*

Subsequent spiritual leaders, all of them prominent in the religious school, included Rabbis Marcus, Herzlich, Scher, Kramer, and Pernikoff.

Membership swelled to about 70 families during World War II, and portable seats were placed in the aisles to accommodate everyone. On June 2, 1946, the congregation celebrated the burning of B'nai Israel's mortgage. Rabbis A. Winokur, I. M. Davidson, and Emanuel Kramer spoke, as did Meyer Wolpe, Mitchell Plessett, synagogue president Lou Tannenbaum, and sisterhood president Mrs. Sam Friedman. A highlight of the event was a musical program by Cantor Saul Siller and the Temple Israel Choir led by Myne Shapiro Levy.

B'nai Israel Synagogue was both the religious and social focus of congregational life. Sisterhood meetings, plays, lectures, parties—and many memorable ping-pong games—all took place there. The youth had their own clubs, and participated through the synagogue in sports activities and dances.

Membership dwindled as time went by, but regular services continued until 1969 and on a smaller scale until the Agnes flood of 1972, when the synagogue was damaged and it was decided to sell the building. The building stands today, unchanged but for the doors and the owner, Plymouth Masonic Lodge 332.



B'nai Israel Synagogue. *Taken from Plymouth Pennsylvania Centennial 1866-1966.*

Twenty-six years before B'nai Israel of Plymouth was

* The 1922 formation of Temple Israel in Wilkes-Barre is discussed in the next chapter.

built, Congregation B'nai Reuben of Kingston borough received a charter "to establish a house of worship and a religious school of the teaching of the Jewish faith." Granted by Stanley Woodward on April 25, 1898, the charter was sought by Simon Stokulski, Isaac Rosenheim, Julius St(e)iner, and Israel Heimmelsteit (Himelstein) of Kingston, and Louis Sha(i)nuck of Edwardsville. First trustees were Jacob Karnofsky and Harry Rizewitz of Edwardsville. The congregation's treasurer, Isaac Rosenheim, became a Kingston councilman, according to his grandson Howard Gonchar, who also noted that Rosenheim Court, a street on the Kingston-Edwardsville border, is named for the family.

Little is known of the congregation commonly called "the Edwardsville synagogue" before 1915, when worshipers met in a building owned by Louis Shainuck. In the early 1930s, the congregation moved to the third floor of the Edwardsville Odd Fellows Hall on Main Street, sometimes still meeting in various private homes, particularly when someone was reading the *Kaddish* memorial prayer. Edna Weisberger remembered the congregation as "really an auxiliary *shul.* There was trouble getting a *minyan.* We had services on Shabbat if the men could come, but few could leave their businesses. We all belonged elsewhere, besides, mostly to Ohav Zedek." On the High Holy Days, however, there were always many people climbing the steep steps to the sanctuary, and visiting clergy would lead services and enjoy the home hospitality of Nathan and Gertrude (Weisberger) Fischer. The Edwardsville synagogue did not have a *heder.* Rather, an elderly *melamed* would instruct the children at their homes until they attended religious school at Ohav Zedek. It is difficult to pinpoint when the Edwardsville synagogue formally disbanded, but it is likely that members chose to attend Ohav Zedek's Kingston branch when it began in the early 1960s.

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the formal incorporation of congregations in Pittston, Exeter, Swoyersville, Miners Mills, Luzerne, Nanticoke, Glen Lyon, and Duryea. The first of these was "Jewish Congregation (Agudas Achim) of Pittston," which applied for a charter on November 25, 1903. Subscribers to the charter were Joseph Goldberg, Joseph Moskewitz, Harry W. Ya(o)seen, J. Freed, David Feldman, Jacob Shoestine, Farkas Engel, M. Yoseen, J. Baroff, B. Shainuck, Julius B. Freed, Mose Marcus, Jonas Schainuck, Benne Joseph, M. Lich(ter)man, Charles Wolf, H. Cooplan, Louis Schiffman, and Abe Roginsky. Gladys Weisberger supplied the rest of the Pittston story:

Pittston's first East European Jews, Abraham Roginsky and Joseph Freed and their families, arrived in 1881 and soon formed the nucleus of a traditional congregation. They began to meet for religious services in 1887, first at Freed's home, then at Jacob Shoestein's, until Agudath Achim's incorporation in 1903. By then, 25 or 30 Jewish families lived in Pittston.

With Jacob Shoestein as first president, the congregation decided to move services to the Butler Building on North Main Street. Later, the Odd Fellows and Knights of Columbus buildings on South Main Street were used for services. In 1910, Agudath Achim purchased a private home to be used as a synagogue at 60 Broad Street. Five years later, work was begun to move the house to the rear of the property and use it to accommodate visiting clergy. In front, a new, wood-sided synagogue seating 250 was opened in May, 1916.

Temple Agudath Achim.
Courtesy
Dr. Daniel Weisberger.

By then, the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society of Pittston was active. From 1909 to 1948, when the Society merged with the temple sisterhood, the group raised funds for Jewish and general needs. Among the founders and leaders of the Society were Mmes. Max Connor, Max Waldman, Harry Levy, Isadore Levin, and Harry Waldman.

As the community became more Americanized, so did Temple Agudath Achim. Though available records do not say when the term "temple" was adopted, we know that English replaced Yiddish in the congregation's minutes when Aaron Klausner became secretary in 1926. Four years later, during the presidency of Nathan Connor, Rabbi Harry Katchen, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary, was engaged as the synagogue's first modern spiritual leader. From 1930 onward, only ordained rabbis served the synagogue, which had previously employed religious functionaries (among others, the patriarchal "Gott" Finkelstein) who fulfilled the duties of Hebrew teacher and shohet, and sometimes cantor and rabbi. Rabbi Katchen's tenure, from 1930-34, marked the beginning of the congregation's evolution from Orthodox to Conservative Judaism.

With Rabbi Katchen's arrival, a sisterhood was organized. Mrs. Nathan Connor was the first of many capable presidents responsible for the group's reputation as the greatest single boon to the congregation. Over the years, the ladies prepared prodigious amounts of food for countless Jewish events. They catered with style and enjoyed a special camaraderie. They raised funds through all manner of parties and events. And they joined the brotherhood in the highly anticipated "Broadway" productions, which were written, produced, directed, acted,

danced, and sung by members of the two organizations. They played to packed houses and the audiences loved every minute.

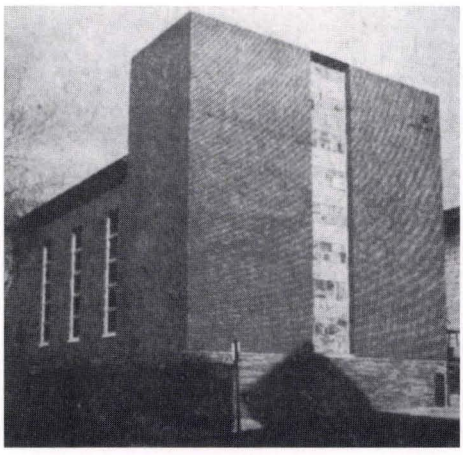
In 1940 the Anthracite Lodge of B'nai B'rith was formed in Pittston, meeting at the synagogue. Renamed the Irwin Freed Lodge in 1943 in memory of a local man killed in World War II action, the lodge was known for short business meetings followed by cards and hot dogs. Joseph Montagna, the temple's custodian, served the refreshments and was as much a part of the lodge as any member.

At a banquet on January 11, 1942, Reuben H. Levy was given the honor of burning the synagogue's mortgage, but as early as 1946, plans were made to remodel and expand the building. When serious fund-raising began in 1949, the sisterhood pledged to raise a large sum. Under the leadership of Ben and Sydelle Hyman and the building committee, construction began in 1952 and was completed in 1954.

Temple Agudath Achim now had a red brick exterior with a contemporary stained glass window, and a modern school building for Hebrew classes. The temple vestry was enlarged and redecorated, and in place of the cramped, old-fashioned kitchen, there was a spacious, professionally-equipped facility. Whereas the former sanctuary had two side balconies for women, the new one had only a small rear balcony for women who chose separate seating. In addition, the two front rows of the sanctuary were reserved for men who preferred to sit apart from the women. As the only congregation in Pittston, and serving Dupont and part of Duryea as well, Temple Agudath Achim tried to accommodate members' varying religious practices.

Most of the older synagogue members, first-generation Americans, were merchants who operated businesses on North and South Main Streets in Pittston. In many cases the stores passed to their children. But as the third-generation children opted for greater opportunities in larger cities, once-thriving businesses closed and Pittston's Jewish population dwindled. Attendance at services declined gradually, and although there was always a minyan for mourners, eventually some Temple Israel members helped maintain a quorum on the Sabbath. When the congregation could no longer afford to hire a rabbi, High Holiday services were conducted by the members with a professional cantor. Various men took turns reciting the prayers, leading responsive reading, and even delivering the sermons.

Remodeled Temple Agudath Achim.



By 1973, the Pittston congregation recognized it could not continue as a wholly independent synagogue. On September 1, after many discussions and guided by Rabbi Abraham Barras, Temple Agudath Achim became an associate member of Temple Israel. The

agreement provided that Rabbi Barras would lend assistance, whenever possible, for the needs of the Pittston synagogue, which remained an autonomous organization. Pittstonians were invited to attend and participate in religious functions (except High Holiday services) and activities at Temple Israel. Thus the groundwork was laid for the eventual merger of the two synagogues.

Dr. Jerome Newman was Agudath Achim president in early 1980 when discussions were held concerning the imminent closing of the synagogue, administration of the Pittston Jewish Cemetery in West Pittston, and financial matters. By March, an overwhelming majority had voted that the cemetery, the cemetery trust fund, and proceeds from the sale of the building would be turned over to Temple Israel. Memorial plaques were to be preserved at Temple Israel, and can be found today in the balcony area. In November, a bona fide offer of $52,000 by the Child Jesus Roman Catholic Church was received for the Agudath Achim building, with the sale completed by December 31, 1980. It was a painful time for the remaining members, about twenty families in all.

In June 1981, when Temple Agudath Achim ceased legally to exist, the Pittston congregation became officially part of Temple Israel. The new members were welcomed with great warmth. Through the years, the "Pittston Group" has participated in and contributed to all Temple Israel activities.

To the members of Temple Agudath Achim, their shul wasn't just any shul, but an ever-present force in their day-to-day and milestone-to-milestone activities. Historical facts cannot convey the heart and soul of a congregation in which everyone knew and cared about everyone else. Simchas (happy occasions) and sorrows were times of solidarity, and the congregation became an extended family.

Among "family" members who contributed mightily to their temple were Marcus Weisberger, Nathan Mann, Dr. Jerome Newman, Sidney Fischer, and Bertha Waldman. Weisberger, an Orthodox Jew and kosher butcher, was the spiritual pillar of the congregation, beloved by all. Mann, president from 1956 to 1962, led the congregation with the same intensity he gave to his business. When times were difficult, Mann insisted that "God will provide," and somehow God did, with a little help from Mann. Newman, president from 1962 to 1967 and again from 1972 until the closing of the temple, guided the congregation with dignity, intelligence, and gentle good humor. Fischer was long-time secretary, keeper of records, editor, and typist of the Temple Agudath Achim Bulletin. And Waldman stands out among the many outstanding women who were active in and officers of sisterhood. President of the Ladies Aid Society from 1939-48, she was secretary of the synagogue's cemetery committee and school board, devoted to the Pittston Visiting Nurses, and frequent hostess to visiting clergy.

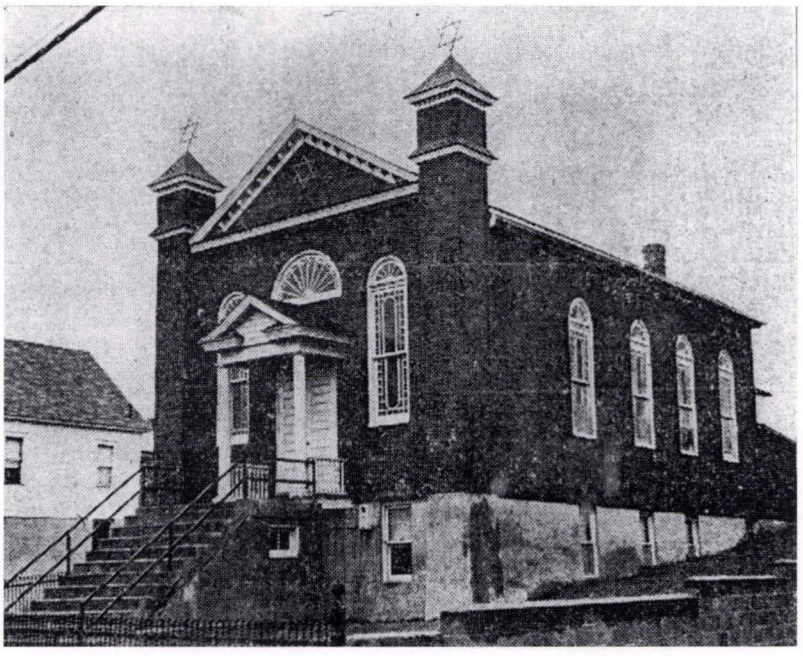
Rabbi Gabriel Maza.

Though the turnover of rabbis in Pittston was legendary, Rabbi Katchen and two of his successors are particularly memorable. Rabbi Sidney Shanken (1949-52) had a special rapport with young people, who appreciated his guidance and friendship. Rabbi Gabriel Maza (1957-63), his wife Edythe, and their two daughters became so much a part of the Pittston family that friendships continue to this day. Rabbi Maza (whose brother, comedian Jackie Mason, is also an ordained Orthodox rabbi) will be remembered for his intellect and wit, and for challenging his congregants to think, to analyze, to question, to discuss philosophical issues, and to love Judaism.

Exeter's Jewish congregation spanned nearly the same time period as Pittston's, and drew members from Pittston, West Pittston, and Duryea, as well as Exeter, Wyoming, and West Wyoming. It was the Exeter congregation that purchased the West Pittston cemetery in 1907, deeding a section to Agudath Achim in 1913. With yet another section for Duryea's Jews, the cemetery is still in use, but Exeter's synagogue, built at 1061 Wyoming Avenue in 1906, was closed in 1975 and later demolished.

The original charter, witnessed by Mose Salsburg and recorded June 27, 1905, sought incorporation of the Anshe Ahaw(v)ath Achim ("men of brotherly love") Congregation of Exeter for the purpose of "public worship according to the Faith, Doctrine, Discipline, and usages of the Jewish Faith." Subscribers were Major Kaufman, Benjamin Berkowitz, B. F. Wruble, Edward Berkowitz, I. Frankel, Henry Biederman, Joseph Schwartz, B. Kaufman, Max Gordon, and B. Friedman. Before the synagogue building was completed, the Orthodox group prayed in one another's homes and, for the High Holy Days, in Exeter's town hall.

Exeter synagogue. *Courtesy Sarah Wruble Marcus.*



Rev. Benjamin Bransdorf, a *shohet* in Galicia, Austria-Hungary,

came to Olyphant and then to Exeter, where he served as the congregation's first spiritual leader. His daughter Gussie married Joseph Kaufer in the synagogue's first wedding. And his great-granddaughter, Celia Kluger Freed, documented the history of Exeter's synagogue and Jewish community:

In the early 1900s, merchants traveling by horse and cart sold their wares on both sides of the Susquehanna River. They would take Sharps Road to the ferry to reach Port Griffith, Port Blanchard, and other towns on the east side. Though my grandfather Isador Kluger, for instance, had a small store in the front of his home in Wyoming, his sons helped sell dry goods from horse-drawn carts on the west side of the river. Homes were heated with coal stoves and kerosene lamps were used for light.

In 1914 Reuben Levy would come through Exeter with a horse and wagon filled with goodies from the Blue Ribbon Bakery. The children would wait at each corner and Mr. Levy would give them samples. The Eighth Street Bridge was built that year, and the corner of Eighth Street and Wyoming Avenue became the hub of the town. Businesses branched out. I. Kluger & Sons, for one, sold clothing; convenient parking was provided by a hitching post on the curb. All the Jewish stores closed on Friday night and opened after sundown Saturday, when the Sabbath was over.

The Jewish population thrived in Exeter, where Jewish businesses surrounded the synagogue. Among the earliest arrivals were brothers Morris, Benjamin, and Major (Meyer) Kaufman, who came from Austria-Hungary and settled in Exeter when the town was still called "Sturmerville." Major Kaufman's men's furnishings store at 1074 Wyoming Avenue is now the site of Grico's restaurant. The Kaufmans helped organize the synagogue, as did Joseph Schwartz, proprietor of a grocery store in Exeter, and B. F. Wruble, owner of a butcher shop and slaughterhouse. Schwartz and Wruble were among those who fed and housed new immigrants until they could find accommodations of their own.

The synagogue held services twice a day, and there were holiday parties. Edward Berkowitz was first synagogue president, and both Isador Kluger and lawyer Harold Wruble served as president for many years. Henry Biederman, Henry Bransdorf, and Raymond Wruble were also presidents; Raymond Wruble, succeeded by Maxwell Marcus, was caretaker of the Exeter cemetery. Reverends Bransdorf, Jacob Sicherman, Prinz, and Morris Segal led religious services.

The main sanctuary was used for the Sabbath and the High Holy Days. Reba Bransdorf Winkler said that her parents, Henry and Anna Bransdorf, opened their home in West Wyoming for Purim's Megillah reading. The basement of the synagogue was used for daily minyanim and classrooms. Ruth Kaufman

Goldstein, who began attending Exeter's heder in 1927, said that the rabbi, who was not fluent in English, spoke to her in Yiddish; at age six, she translated for the older children.

In 1918, the year of the flu epidemic, many homes in Exeter were under quarantine. Family lore has it that Rev. Bransdorf went into these homes to feed and bathe the infants whose mothers were ill.

On Rosh Hashana, our family walked to shul from Wyoming, more than a mile away. On the way back we would stop at Sarah (Kaufman) and Max Strassman's home, where we would be served honey cake and wine to fortify us for the walk home. On Yom Kippur we drove to Exeter before sundown. My mother and other women could light candles in the basement of the shul. We walked home after Kol Nidre, walked back the next day, and drove home when the Holy Day was over.

The women were active and formed a Ladies' Aid Society, precursor of today's sisterhoods. With monthly meetings and 10-cent dues, the ladies planned luncheons and parties to raise money for various projects. Among the presidents were Belle Kluger, Katye Kluger, Gussie Klein, and Sarah Marcus.

The Jewish children usually went to public grade schools in Exeter or Wyoming. In Exeter, there were many Jewish students and about a dozen Jewish teachers. Thelma Kluger Bosch, who attended (and later taught at) Wyoming High School, recalled very few Jewish classmates, but everyone, for the most part, got along. Some of the teenagers, like Bosch, became active at the YMHA, while others, perhaps daunted by the streetcar trek to Wilkes-Barre, formed neighborhood clubs as well. Ruth Goldstein and other Jewish girls met in one another's homes in Exeter, Pittston, and Wyoming. The boys played baseball behind the synagogue, according to Joseph Schwartz's grandson Harold Landau, whose eye once connected with a swinging bat.

The synagogue had 200 members at its height, and Jews played an important part in the community's politics and economy. Max Gross held office as burgess in 1902, Edward Berkowitz was council president, and Major Kaufman, Joseph Schwartz, and B. F. Wruble were councilmen. Wruble was on the council 24 years. Kaufman, according to Ruth Goldstein, was mayor of Sturmerville and namesake of several streets. Elaine Strassman Baron said that Kaufman, who was also among the first members of the Exeter school board, had a branch of the post office in the rear of his store; his petite wife Molly stood on a box to perform her duties as postmistress. Benjamin Wruble, who founded Montrose Beef, was tax collector for several terms, and George Marcus chaired Exeter's United Fund and Red Cross. Harold Wruble was the town's solicitor, and with Martin Simon helped organize the Boy Scouts in Exeter. B. Berkowitz

and Joseph Schwartz were among the organizers of Exeter's First National Bank, while Samuel Kluger made deposits for all his Exeter family in the First National Bank in Wyoming, beginning his banking career.

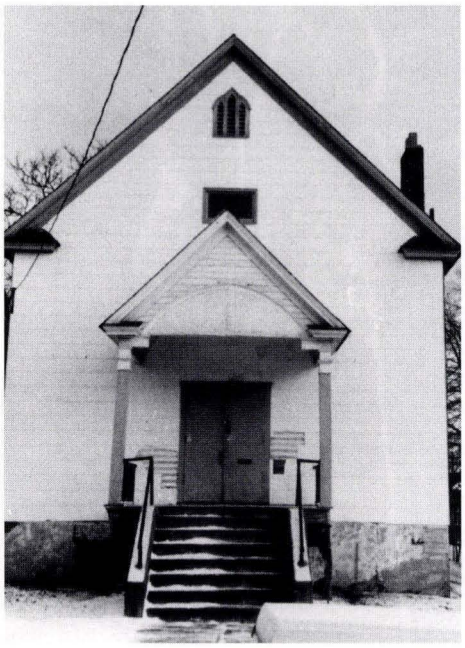
Many of Exeter's Jews became professionals. Major Kaufman's son Sam became the Valley's first Jewish dermatologist; Sam's brother Jerome attained a Yale law degree. Laparoscopic surgeon Dr. Harry Reich, son of Drs. Sidney and Sylvia Reich, traced his roots to Exeter, as did physicians Arthur Meyer and Albert Biederman, and lawyers Allan Kluger and Martin Meyer. Dr. Lawrence Wruble, who established his practice in Memphis, was a physician to Elvis Presley. Helen Miller became a nurse, and members of the Biederman, Wruble, Kaufman, Kluger, and Reich families became teachers. Other Exeter families included the Dresslers, Marks, and Baers.

In 1956 a dinner celebrated the synagogue's 50th anniversary. Synagogue officers were Raymond Wruble, Abraham Kaufman, Martin Reich, and George Marcus.

Gradually, people moved away, and the synagogue closed in 1975. Cook's Pharmacy bought the building, which was razed. The cemetery is overseen today by officers Barry Yelen, Maxwell Marcus, Shirley Yelen, Allan Strassman, Seymour Mark, and Pearl Kaufman.

Residents of the Maltby section of Swoyersville banded together to form yet another Orthodox synagogue, Ahavas Jeshurun ("love of Jeshurun," the poetic name of Israel). The charter for "Ohavis Yasheron," to establish a house of worship and a religious school, was recorded on December 4, 1907. Signing the application were first officers and trustees Sam Wrouble (Wruble), Max Rosenf(i)eld, Jacob Burnett (Burnat), Dave Hymen (Hyman), H(arry) M. Wrouble (Wruble), and R. Brownsdorfer. I. Eric Feldman said that S. M. Feldman, Emmanuel Bergmann, S. Spiegel, and possibly Morris Kleiman were also among the founders. The synagogue building at the corner of Main and Kossack Streets was dedicated in 1913. The curtain for the Holy Ark came from Europe, a gift to the synagogue from S. M. Feldman. Rabbi Markowitz was the original spiritual leader.

The Swoyersville synagogue had a *minyan* for Shabbat, and was filled on the High Holy Days, drawing congregants and their extended families from Swoyersville, and from nearby Forty Fort and Luzerne as well. I. Eric Feldman and Charles Minkoff were bar mitzvah at the *shul,* the former in 1923. Minkoff remembered a *Kiddush* of herring, *schnapps,* and pumpernickel, but said no women were present at his bar mitzvah service. He recalled the *heder,* and the



Miners Mills synagogue. *Courtesy Lawrence Newman.*

teachers who lived downstairs from the synagogue, and he said the synagogue had annual picnics in back of Wruble's grocery store. According to Minkoff, the synagogue members were nearly all businessmen with large families. The Jewish-owned businesses in Swoyersville were centered along Hughes Street, and they all closed on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Minkoff said there was a hardware store (Bergmann) in the 1930s, as well as grocery stores (Wruble, Wolf, Roth, and Reiff), clothing stores (Gantz, Friedman, and Minkoff), a tavern (Uram), an upholstery shop (Ahran), and a gas station (Markovitz). As the Jews moved out of Swoyersville, the synagogue closed. The building was sold to the Laity Dress Company in 1965.

In 1915, two further synagogues were established, one in Miners Mills, and the other in Luzerne. Sarah Thalenfeld Shaffer, in consultation with her sisters Freda Popky and Harriet Gray, wrote about Miners Mills and its synagogue, Congregation B'nai Israel Anshei Ungarn ("sons of Israel, men of Hungary"):

> *When I was growing up in the second and third decades of the century, there were numerous Jewish families living in Hudson, Miners Mills, Parsons, and Plains. Miners Mills was the hub with a population of about 3,000, including about 27 Jewish families. Its principal industries were coal mining and flour milling (Miner Hillard Milling Co.), but all the Jews were merchants with the exception of the Kaufers, who owned a saloon. Hyman Balter was the town jeweler, and there were Jewish-owned clothing, shoe, food, and candy stores.*
>
> *My maternal grandfather, Emil Feuerman, came to America in 1882 and established a grocery store in Hudson. In 1910, he retired and built a home on Main Street in Miners Mills. The following year, he built a small synagogue in Miners Mills with the assistance of my parents, Mollie and Isador Thalenfeld, and the Jews living in all four towns. Miners Mills participants included the families of Charles Felder, Samuel Kaplowitz, Louis Lang, Peter Lang, Hyman Balter, Hyman Mager, Sam Goldner, Aaron Goldner, Joseph Wruble, and Morris Laks. The Jacobs, Morris, Brader, Light, and Kaufer families of Miners Mills also assisted in the venture, as did the Hyman, Harmatz, Mittleman, and Isador Weinstein families of Hudson, the Max Brill family of Parsons, and the Kirshner, Joseph Rosenn, Sam Kaufer, Louis Weiss, and Morris Nachlis families of Plains. Emil Feuerman dedicated much time and money to the new synagogue. His name was engraved on the cornerstone.*

B'nai Israel Anshei Ungarn was chartered on March 15, 1915 for the "purpose of worship according to the faith, doctrine, creed, discipline, and usages of the Orthodox Hebrew Church." First trustees were Emil Feuerman, Isador Thalenfeld, Morris Jacobs, H. L. Harmitz, Ignatz Mittleman, Charles Felder, and L. Gelb. Also signing the charter application were J. L. Mittelman, Sam Kaplowitz, and Isador Kammer.

The 150-seat synagogue on St. Clair Street was built of white siding and had stained glass windows. Emil Feuerman purchased Torah scrolls as a gift. On the High Holy Days, a rabbi came to conduct services and usually stayed with the Thalenfelds.

When we children reached school age, my father hired a rabbi to teach us at our home three days a week. After the Talmud Torah was built, we attended classes there.

On July 30, 1956, the synagogue building was sold to the North End Civic League for $2,000. Of the proceeds from the sale, $500 each was donated to the Ohav Zedek and Temple Israel religious schools and $1,000 was given to the Wilkes-Barre Hebrew Institute. At the time of the sale, synagogue officers were Aaron Goldner, Morris Laks, Morris Nachlis, and Harry Zwass. My mother presented one of the Torah scrolls to Temple Israel, where it is used in the chapel for the daily minyan.

Ahavas Achim, Luzerne. *Courtesy Sophie Pernikoff.*

Nine months after the Miners Mills *shul* was chartered, Luzerne's Ahavas Achim ("brotherly love") was incorporated for the purpose of "public worship, according to the principles of Judaism." Recorded December 22, 1915, the charter for "Congregation Ahawis Achim of Luzerne" listed subscribers as Max Freedman, Himan Rosenberg, Adolph Dattner, Abe Weiss, Max Goodman, and George Greenwald. Land for the synagogue building at Walnut and Academy Streets was purchased for $675, and a loan secured from Luzerne Bank by Dattner and Max and Emil Freedman financed construction and furnishing. Dedication ceremonies featuring Judge S. J. Strauss and Chief Rabbi Ginsburg were held on December 25, 1916; Lena Dattner, youngest daughter of synagogue treasurer Adolph Dattner, presented the synagogue key to Cantor M. Freed of Scranton, who opened the doors with prayers and song. Nancy Cohen Judd offered further observations on the history of Ahavas Achim:

The Dattner family of Luzerne. *Courtesy Nancy Judd.*

Max Freedman, H. Rosenberg, A. Dattner, Emil Freedman, and Abe Finkelstein were the first officers of the congregation, whose charter members also included Max Speigel, Louis Miller, H. Verona, Dave Gross, Bert Robins, Charles Soloman, Sam Brauner, and Abe Weiss. The shul was built and furnished by W. F. and R. T. Rozelle, Contractors, for $3,899.50. The congregation supplemented the $2 monthly dues at the High Holidays, when honors were sold to many people who came from miles away and camped in trailers behind the shul or in the shul's basement. The family of Fannie and Adolph Dattner, who had 13 children, was the congregation's largest family. For many years Rabbi Isaac was the teacher and shohet until he was succeeded in the 1950s by Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff. Luzerne was a bustling Jewish community, with synagogue members representing many different businesses. Today, Maxwell Marcus is president of the 80-family congregation.

Just days after the dedication in Luzerne, the Jewish congregation of Nanticoke was officially incorporated. The charter for "Anshi Benay Yehuda" ("sons of Judah") was recorded on January 12, 1917, and named subscribers Charles Weissman, L. Fierman, A. Leventhal, and Abe Cohen as officers and directors. The Nanticoke story was documented by Gloria Farkas Fierverker:

> *It is clear that a significant number of Jews resided or did business in Nanticoke by the time the town was designated a borough in 1874. Most served the coal town as merchants and shopkeepers. As the country moved beyond World War I and into the "Roaring Twenties," population increased and small towns like Nanticoke began to thrive. There was now much industrial growth with dress manufacturing, sewing mills, and the arrival of the General Cigar Company. As a result, the Jewish community also grew, numbering 50 to 60 families by the early 1920s.*
>
> *Unlike many other Jewish immigrants who frequently came in groups from the same shtetl and settled in the same town, Jewish families in Nanticoke were a diverse group. Some were American-born, some were immigrants; most were merchants, some were laborers; some were strictly Orthodox, others were more liberal. Families did not cluster in a ghetto-like area, but spread into various neighborhoods.*

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, observant Jewish men had met for Sabbath and holiday services in various rented halls, but by the 1920s, the young families who had settled in Nanticoke wanted their children to have a religious education and a proper setting for religious practice. In 1922, two years before Nanticoke's incorporation as a city, Congregation Anshe B'nai Yehuda purchased a three-story double-block house at 126 South State Street for use as an Orthodox synagogue.

Leaders of the drive for a synagogue were successful, community-minded businessmen who made generous financial donations and urged others to contribute. Among the leaders were Morris Brand, Harry Cimmet, Harry Friedman, Adolf Greenbaum, Max Jackier, Adolf Leventhal, Max Teitlebaum, and Ignatz Weiss.

Harry Cimmet.
Taken from Harvey-Smith History of Wilkes-Barre, Vol. VI.

Harry Cimmet was typical of the self-made men who developed the synagogue. Born in Chicago, he was brought as a boy first to Plymouth, and then to Wilkes-Barre where, as a ten-year-old, he worked as a newsboy after school. At 16, he worked for Charles Finberg and Company in Wilkes-Barre, and later at his father Joseph's men's furnishings store in Plymouth. After a brief foray into the wholesale liquor business in Avoca, he came to Nanticoke in 1909, when he was 25, and opened his own store, which eventually became a major department store. Cimmet, who lived in Nanticoke with his wife Dora and children Sylvia, Isadore, and Harold, was a director of Miners' Trust Company, and active in civic and fraternal groups.

Another leader was Adolf Greenbaum, a manufacturer of children's dresses who had relocated from Glen Lyon to Nanticoke in 1922. After the death of his young wife, Greenbaum devoted himself to his factory and to his children Lydia (Berman) and Sheldon, with whom he would review the Torah portion every Sabbath, determined that they learn to read and understand Hebrew.

From 1922 to the 1930s new arrivals to Nanticoke's Jewish community joined the synagogue. The right side of the original house became the rabbi's home, while the left side was converted into the synagogue proper, with the men's section on the first floor and the women's in the balcony. There was a railing about three feet high at the front of the balcony, and the pews extended on an incline from the railing to the back wall. The girls liked to lean over the railing to watch the services—and boys—below.

The large basement was used as a Hebrew classroom and congregational meeting room, but most importantly it became an entertainment hall for Purim and Hanukah holiday skits, musical programs, and bar mitzvah parties. Once,

it was used for a boxing match in which, Harry Weiss said, his opponent "put out his lights." In later years United Jewish Appeal volunteers held meetings in the basement, though of course, charity had long been integral to Nanticoke's Jewish experience. Betty Wisoker Yudkovitz, for instance, recalled the day in 1936 when Jeanette Berman solicited funds for Hadassah's Youth Aliyah program. Berman spoke so fervently that Betty's mother donated the money she had diligently saved for a special purpose. "We can always save for curtains," Mrs. Wisoker said, "but the children must be saved now."

The Nanticoke congregation required a rabbi who was also a teacher and cantor. This was a large order, so rabbis rarely stayed for very long. Most of Anshe B'nai Yehuda's spiritual leaders were not ordained rabbis, but new European immigrants who had a sound Hebrew education. The first rabbi of record was Rabbi Diamond, who conducted the holiday services in the rented halls, and gave the children Hebrew lessons at their homes. The first rabbi at the new synagogue was Rabbi Louis Levine, who served in 1923 and 1924. The rabbi who is best remembered and revered was Rabbi Chiel, who filled all three roles remarkably well and lived in the State Street house from 1928 to 1935. Rabbi Chiel and his sons filled the shul with music as they chanted the psalms and prayers. Next came scholarly Rabbi Schwartz who stayed for about two years and is remembered by students as a stern disciplinarian not averse to rapping knuckles.

Most of Nanticoke's Jews, and a few families from nearby Glen Lyon, belonged to the synagogue. Several of the original founders alternated as presidents. There were no daily services, but High Holiday and Sabbath services were held regularly and every attempt was made to insure a minyan for mourners. Indeed, the obligation to gather a quorum for Kaddish was so important to grocer Ignatz Weiss, that he was known to whip off his apron, abandon his butcher block, and dash to the synagogue to make a minyan for another member's Yahrzeit (annual prayer for the dead).

For the most part the Jews in Nanticoke did not experience overt anti-semitism. Though derogatory remarks were sometimes made, and Jewish children were sometimes teased, especially around Christmas, there was no violence or vandalism. The Jews blended well into the general community. Many of the merchants, like Harry Cimmet, belonged to civic clubs and participated in such activities as the Red Cross and United Way. Several of the women, among them Hildred Cohen, Sylvia Cimmet, and Lillian Leventhal, became teachers in the public schools.

In the 1940s the synagogue became a victim of the times. The world situation, the financial pinch, and the flight of the second generation contributed to

a gradual decline. It became difficult to find rabbis willing to bring families to the small shul. For a time, yeshiva students were hired to conduct the High Holiday services, while Sabbath and memorial services were conducted by members. Some members joined larger congregations in Wilkes-Barre. Young men who had been in college were drafted and went off to war. When they returned and married, many moved out of Nanticoke even as they continued to conduct family businesses there. By 1946 boys had to travel to Wilkes-Barre for bar mitzvah lessons. In time, there were no longer sufficient men to make a minyan for the Sabbath. As members of the second generation became professionals, most of the Jewish businesses closed.

The synagogue building was closed in the late 1960s and the Torah scrolls were given to Wilkes-Barre synagogues. Joseph Leventhal, son of a synagogue founder, was congregation president in May 1974 when Isadore Cimmet, on behalf of Anshe B'nai Yehuda, turned over all remaining funds to the Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee for the purchase of Israel Bonds, the interest to be used for the upkeep of the cemetery on Lower Demunds Road, Dallas.

The synagogue building was sold and converted to apartments. Leventhal's Men's Store, in recent years the sole remaining Jewish-operated store in Nanticoke, was closed in June 1996 by owners Joseph Leventhal and Stuart Abrams.

By 1920, Duryea, too, had its own Orthodox synagogue. The charter of Keneseth Israel Congregation was recorded on April 27, and a two-story frame building on Newton Street was purchased for one dollar from the Black Diamond Hose Company No. 1 on June 1, 1920. Charter subscribers were Louis Baltimore, Samuel Lupiloff, Max Friedman, Jacob Kurlancheek, Isaac Goldstein, Jonas Klein, William Cohen, Jacob Cohen, Bernath Fishman, Harry Friedman, Israel Rapp, Max Star, Joseph Lupiloff, Harry Lupiloff, Isadore Selk, Nathan Svardloff, and Julius Baltimore. Harry Friedman was the congregation's first president, and Isaac Goldstein served as *hazan,* succeeded later by his son Samuel.

According to Samuel Goldstein's daughter Saundra Fine, the small synagogue was quaint and inspiring, and in its heyday drew sizable crowds to services. The women sat upstairs, and toward the end of the synagogue's life, rabbis, including Saundra's brother Emanuel Goldstein, were imported for the High Holidays. The synagogue closed in 1969 or 1970, another victim of Jewish migration out of the small towns, and is now a private home.

While some of Duryea's Jews also attended the synagogues in Exeter and

Jacob and Sarah Newman and family, of Dupont. *Courtesy Judi and Howard Newman.*

Pittston, they had also joined coreligionists in Avoca and Dupont for services in Avoca's Kurlancheek's Hall. And, just as the Jews of Kingston and Edwardsville used the Odd Fellows Hall for services, as many as 15 Jewish families in Ashley used Boylan's Hall, which Esther Heller Bratkowsky called a "dance hall." A rabbi or one of the men led services on the Sabbath and holidays, and members of the Heller, Saidman, Pezzner, Steinberg, Sirkin, Hurwitz, Danoff, and Trachtenberg families, among others, would make up the *minyan.* Sometimes a bar mitzvah or holiday service would be held in a private home. Ashley's Jewish businesses were closed even on Shavuot and Sukkot, according to Dr. Lester Saidman, who grew up in Carey's Patch, Ashley and in Kingston.

In Midvale, a section of Plains at the midpoint of Wyoming Valley, a permanent synagogue was established in a private home. Harold Rosenn provided the history:

Abraham Kirshner. *Dedication of New Ohav Zedek Synagogue, 1932. Courtesy Rivian Minkoff.*

The first Jewish merchant to locate in the Midvale section of Plains was Abraham Kirshner, who had emigrated from Austria to England to Wilkes-Barre, settling in Plains around the turn of the century. He established a general store on River Street, working with his sons as they grew, and with such others as my father, Joseph Rosenn, a boy fresh from Poland. Abraham's son Jacob eventually went into the liquor business, while sons Max and Wolfe worked with Kirshner Motor Parts Company, which Wolfe began in 1922. When Abraham's son Samuel returned from service in World War I, he opened a meat market next to his father's store, moving into the original store after Abraham's death in 1939. Then, they sold miners' supplies (carbide lamps, kerosene, jeans), animal feed, groceries and meats. Samuel's son Leonard took over the store upon returning from World War II, running the business in Midvale until the mines closed.

Abraham Kirshner's home, flanked on either side by the

homes of sons Samuel and Jake, was also the center of Midvale's Jewish life. The market and the kitchen were on the first floor, and bedrooms were on the second floor. But in the rear portion of the second floor, Abraham and his wife Molly established a 25 to 30-seat synagogue. Abraham Kirshner was in charge as various men conducted services every Shabbat and High Holiday. A number of bar mitzvahs were celebrated at the Kirshner synagogue, and Rev. Solomon Borer and Rev. Greenfield regularly walked from Wilkes-Barre to services in Midvale. Rev. Greenfield also came to Midvale to teach the children three nights a week.

Molly Kirshner never failed to have a Kiddush with schnapps and sponge cake following services, which were sometimes so well attended that people had to stand in the hallway. Families came from Midvale and Port Bowkley, where most had stores of one kind or another. Among the regular attendees were the families of Morris Nachlis, Max Grossman, Harry Schwarz, Abe Kaufer, Joseph Rosenn, Jacob Kirshner, Sam Kirshner, Joseph Miller, and Jacob Schwarz. Abe Kaufer, who operated a grocery store on River Street in Plains, was killed by robbers who broke into his home one Friday night about 1928 after payday in the mines. The perpetrators were subsequently sentenced to death and electrocuted.

Services were held continuously until Abraham's Kirshner's death, when the two Torah scrolls were given to Ohav Zedek, of which Abraham was an early member, and to which he brought as shammash his old friend from Europe, Rev. Gast.

Molly Kirshner.
Dedication of New Ohav Zedek Synagogue, 1932. Courtesy Rivian Minkoff.

Glen Lyon's Jewish residents were welcome at Morris Iskowitz's home for Sabbath services. Iskowitz was original treasurer of the Glen Lyon congregation and father of 12. As his oldest son Henry said, "There was a *Sefer* in the cabinet, six males in the family, and we could always get four more (to make a *minyan*) from down the street." For the High Holy Days, Glen Lyon's Jews used the meeting room of the firehouse; women sat in a little room behind the big room. The males went out of town only for *Selichot* services, when they traveled several hours to Ohav Zedek in Wilkes-Barre. Glen Lyon's congregation had been incorporated on November 14, 1917 as the Brith Abraham Society, with M. Kline, Henry Weltman, Sandor Engel, Morris Iskowitz, and Max Teitlebaum as charter subscribers, Nathan Gottlieb as first president, and Jacob Bergsman, Isador Gross, and Adolf Greenbaum among the founders.

Morris Iskowitz had come from Czechoslovakia to Nanticoke and then to

Glen Lyon. Other area Jews, like Danoff siblings Sarah, Ben, and Isadore, had come from Tolochin, Russia. Sarah and her husband Nathan Saidman settled in Ashley, where they had a grocery store. Sarah's brothers were also grocers, Ben in Buttonwood, and Isadore in Glen Lyon. Sarah's son Lester said, "The village was transported here. It was a non-musical version of *Fiddler on the Roof.*"

There were about ten Jewish families in Glen Lyon, and they all lived above their grocery or furniture stores along ten blocks of Main Street. The Iskowitz brothers, along with the Grotsky, Gross, and Teitlebaum boys, went to *heder* in the basement of a building in Glen Lyon; the rabbi-teacher, who was also a *shohet,* lived with the Iskowitzes and taught the girls at home.

Isadore Danoff's son Albert went to the Nanticoke *heder,* and later to classes in Glen Lyon. One year, he said, they went to Anshe Emes in Wilkes-Barre, but the trip required two streetcars and the walk up the hill. Albert Danoff also spent holidays in Berwick, where his grandfather was rabbi of the Orthodox synagogue. His bar mitzvah took place in Berwick as well, but unlike the older Henry Iskowitz, Danoff did not have a simple, at-home bar mitzvah party. In 1936, Danoff had a "big deal" at Wilkes-Barre's kosher restaurant, the S and B*.

Perhaps indicative of generational and economic differences, Albert Danoff and Henry Iskowitz also followed different educational paths after graduation from Newport Township High School. By 1940, Danoff's graduating year, many Jewish students left the region for college. Danoff went to Harvard, following such earlier Harvard alumni as Wilkes-Barreans Dr. David Rutstein, Marvin Williams, Martin Davidson, and Harold Williams. Iskowitz, a 1927 Newport graduate, went to the Wharton School extension at Wilkes-Barre's new Meyers High School. It was not until World War II, when two Iskowitz brothers found that their Jewish surname impeded admission to medical school, that they, and Henry, changed their name to Ibsen.

Several miles down the river from Glen Lyon, the Simon and Lustig families, and later the Stricks, lived in Mocanaqua. Abram Simon described a pleasant life in the tiny town (population 1200), though his parents died in 1929, leaving 15-year-old Abe and two younger sisters in the care of four older siblings. There was no synagogue nearby, so the family went to Holche Yosher for the holidays, staying overnight at the Holtzmans' on Lincoln Street. When the children were saying *Kaddish* for their parents, they drove to Wilkes-Barre every

*The S and B would ultimately evolve into the Woodlands Inn and Resort.

weekday, and had Shabbat *minyan* at the Racusin home in Shickshinny, where Mr. Strick read the Torah for the Racusins, Simons, Lustigs, and Kleins. Abram Simon went to public school in Mocanaqua and Shickshinny, and studied Hebrew after school in Nanticoke, taking the train and, often, a live chicken intended for the *shohet.*

Jews in Mocanaqua had mostly positive relationships with their predominantly Catholic neighbors. As a boy, Simon did yard work at the church, because doing so was neighborly. The church, in turn, offered prayers for its Jewish friends, and a Polish priest gave Hanukah treats to the Jewish children. And, when the church planned an event celebrating its 75th anniversary, Simon was asked to be toastmaster; the church would provide a kosher meal. In high school in Shickshinny, though, the principal tried, unsuccessfully, to block Abe's receipt of an award. And Sam Lustig deflected a "Christ-killer" taunt.

Some name-calling and children's fights were perhaps inevitable, especially in the towns with few Jews. The non-Jews settling in the towns were themselves immigrants, and brought the European version of antisemitism with them, often communicating long-held attitudes to their children. Joseph Rosenn, who had come from Poland to Canada and then to Midvale as a young teen, was taunted as a Jew and a "greenie." Not one to endure abuse, Rosenn beat up one or two of his tormentors. That night in 1905, a gang of "young bucks" gathered around the Kirshner store and house, demanding that Rosenn be brought out for retribution. Instead, Rosenn went to the Wilkes-Barre railroad station and made his way, ultimately, to California, where he worked as a streetcar conductor until returning to the Wyoming Valley in 1907.

Judge Max Rosenn, who told his father's story, later wrote that adult miners reflected antisemitism, often casually, in their conversations and in their selection of merchants. But the Kirshner store and its counterparts throughout the Valley rarely encountered real trouble with the miners. In Plymouth, Julius Goldstein's general store, the only Jewish-owned store in its West Main Street neighborhood, served an entirely non-Jewish clientele without incident, and a Polish Catholic cleric advised couples he married to purchase their furniture from his close friend, Max Fainberg.

In Plymouth, too, non-Jews planned and attended the April 2, 1899 funeral of a Jewish soldier. Julius B. Weil, whose father Max had a Main Street meat market, enlisted in the Army and was killed on July 1, 1898 in the Cuban cam-

paign of the Spanish-American War.* After his body was finally returned home, Plymouth held the largest funeral in its history. The arrangements committee and the honorary pall bearers were nearly all non-Jews, and members of Plymouth's municipal government turned out in force. Rabbi Salzman led religious services.

Plymouth was also the site of a mass meeting on behalf of foreign Jews. J. Q. Creveling, an attorney, was chairman of the May 27, 1903 program protesting the antisemitic outbreak that became known as the Kishinev Massacre. Most of the speakers at the meeting were, like Creveling, non-Jews. The Valley's non-Jewish community would continue to support aid to foreign Jews in the years to follow.

Jews who grew up in the small towns reported happy memories and, in common with Wilkes-Barre's Jews, were nearly unanimous in minimizing the impact of antisemitism on their childhood or adult years. Pittston Jews living among Protestants and Catholics were often close to their neighbors, and though some Jewish children in Glen Lyon may have felt isolated, Albert Danoff had mostly non-Jewish friends, and he did what they did. Henry Ibsen lived across the street from three churches in his early married years, and found everyone to be friendly. Indeed, Christian neighbors sometimes came over for Jewish food. He had no trouble with non-Jewish clients or colleagues at his Wilkes-Barre insurance job, either, with the exception of one employee who tried to discourage prospects from giving their business to "that Jew."

Minor incidents did occur in Ashley and Kingston, and Dupont's Jews had a brush with serious antisemitism. After World War I, with Polish nationalism at a high, a few people in the heavily Polish community founded a cooperative grocery store. The local Polish priest urged his parishioners to patronize this store exclusively, which, in effect, meant a boycott of the Jewish-owned stores. Eventually the situation eased, although the Catholic church had refused to put a stop to the priest's ethnocentric sales pitches.

As King's College historian Dr. Paul Zbiek pointed out, Slavic immigrants tended to stereotype Jews—who owned the stores and must therefore control the money and power. While resenting Jewish economic success, the Slavs could not help but admire it as well and, in practice, relations were usually cordial. The Slavic miners reserved their chief hatred for their bosses—the English-

*Wilkes-Barre resident Barney Cohen, who succumbed to typhoid on July 23, 1898 at a training camp in Chickamauga, Tennessee, was the only other area Jew who died in the Spanish-American War.

speaking managerial class who, in turn, kept Jews out of prestigious social clubs and the Glen Summit Springs vacation "colony."

On August 7, 1926, about 2,500 Ku Klux Klan members paraded on Wyoming Avenue in Forty Fort. The Klan had sought to hold the event in Wilkes-Barre, but were prevented by an ordinance pushed through City Council by Mayor Daniel L. Hart in 1925, the year Klan membership apparently peaked in eastern Pennsylvania. The widely-publicized parade drew a large crowd attracted by the spectacle, and though crosses were burned on a field at night, after the parade, there were no problems other than traffic congestion. The Klan in this area focused on ethnic Catholics rather than blacks—who constituted a very small part of the population—or Jews. Indeed, the head of the Ku Klux Klan lectured his son's closest friend, Forty Fort High School student Max Speizman, on the inferiority of the Catholics.

Occasionally, patent demonstrations of antisemitism occurred in the Wyoming Valley. "A thrower of vile chemicals" disturbed worshipers in Temple B'nai B'rith on September 25, 1890, for example. And historical curiosity John Jay ("Butch") McDevitt, best remembered for his 1912 New York spree financed with money he'd received to drop out of a political race, began publishing a private newsletter in 1909 and used it as an instrument of hate. *McDevitt's Scrap Book* contained commentary on local politics and theater, but the newsletter was just an excuse for McDevitt to vent his passionate antisemitism, bluntly expressed in his advertising policy: "Positively no Jew ads. accepted." Novelist Zelda Popkin inexplicably overlooked McDevitt's bigotry in her autobiography, where she portrayed him as a lovable fraud.

A Maturing Community: Wyoming Valley Jewry through the 1920s

Overleaf: Brothers Nathan, left, Jacob, and Maurice Williams pose with Dora Simner, office manager, at Penn Printery, 85 East Northampton Street, in the early 1920s. The Nesbitt Theatre (later named the Irving), whose attraction would be more accurately translated "Free Love," was located on South Main and South Streets. Poli's, on South Main between Northampton and South, featured silent movies, vaudeville acts, and a pit orchestra conducted by violinist Louis Savitt. Nathan Williams's business of wholesale grocery specialties, mostly teas and coffees, was next door to Penn Printery and behind the first location of Planters Nut and Chocolate Company, whose founder Amadeo "Petey" Obici borrowed start-up money from many local businessmen, including Nathan Williams. Marvin Williams wrote that his father accepted repayment of the loan rather than stock in the new corporation. "We calculated his $500 would have been worth just slightly less than a million dollars when Planters sold out to Fleischmann Yeast Company." Penn Printery later moved to State Street and became the largest printing establishment in Pennsylvania outside of Philadelphia, Williams said. *Courtesy Marvin Williams.*

SHELDON SPEAR

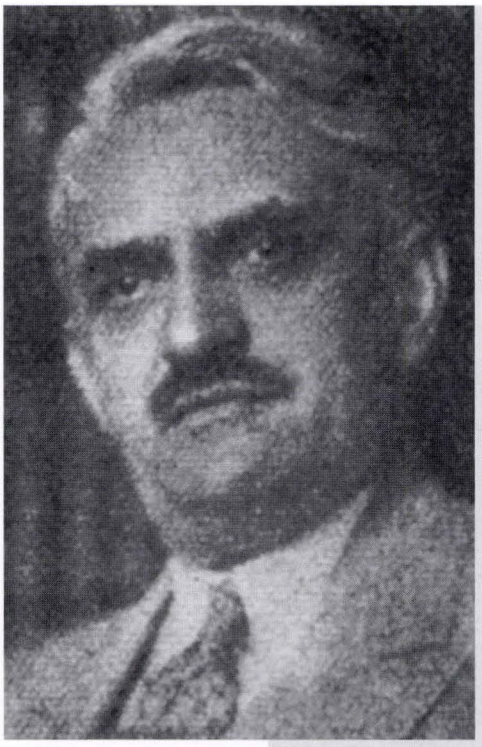
A Maturing Community:
Wyoming Valley Jewry through the 1920s

By 1930, Wyoming Valley Jews had dedicated new buildings for the YMHA and Talmud Torah, and they had founded Temple Israel as a Conservative synagogue. They had fought in World War I, joined in home front support, and confronted the Zionist and relief issues raised by the war. And they had framed nearly all the Jewish philanthropic and social welfare organizations that would, with some attrition and adjustment, endure through the century.

Now the majority in the Jewish community, Eastern Europeans took on leadership roles even as the influx of poor *landsleit* continued. Non-Jews remained supportive of Jewish causes, and Jews were participants in the larger community's cultural, welfare, and philanthropic network, also by now well in place. Incipient migration from the Heights to South Wilkes-Barre indicated a rising, if precarious, prosperity among Jewish merchants, concomitant with an increasing creative* and professional population.

A few city businessmen ventured into politics. Like coreligionists in Kingston and Exeter, Wilkes-Barre merchants Joseph K. Weitzenkorn and Maurice Ziegler were councilmen. Weitzenkorn, vice president of the Board of Trade in 1905-6, was elected to the Wilkes-Barre City Council in 1902. Ziegler served two Council terms and ran unsuccessfully for the new City Commission. In 1911 Benjamin Rifkin became Superintendent of Parks. None of these men was as controversial as Luzerne County's first Jewish district attorney, Abram Salsburg.

* Among creative talents who by 1920 had left Wyoming Valley for New York and Hollywood were famed writers Samuel Hoffenstein, Louis Weitzenkorn, Herman Mankiewicz (and his brother Joseph, then a small child), and Zelda Feinberg Popkin, all of whom are profiled in a later chapter.



Abram Salsburg. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1948, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

Born in Wilkes-Barre in 1877 to Harris and Dora Salsburg, immigrants from Pren in Lithuania, Abram Salsburg was graduated from Wilkes-Barre High School in 1895. He read law in the office of James L. Lenahan, passed the bar exam in 1897, and was admitted to practice in 1898, beginning a 50-year legal career. He married Jeanette Neuburger of Freeland in 1902.

In 1903, District Attorney Benjamin R. Jones, who had himself read law with S. J. Strauss, appointed Salsburg an assistant DA. In 1906, at age 29, Salsburg was elected district attorney, the first Jew and youngest man ever elected to the post. The first to have his office in the present courthouse, he lost the 1909 Republican primary election, and stepped down after his single, eventful term. Few DAs were as aggressive or courageous as Abe Salsburg.

Immediately upon taking office, Salsburg pledged to reform the county, targeting illegal alcohol sales and gambling. At his behest, Wilkes-Barre police arrested speakeasy proprietors on April 2, 1907, following with a summer raid of four gambling establishments on East Market Street, South State Street, and South Pennsylvania Avenue. On that July 24, police carted away 50 gamblers, along with gaming tables and roulette wheels.

It was politically risky to take on the illegal alcohol and gambling interests, more so to challenge the coal barons, and downright dangerous to antagonize the local criminal organizations known as the "Black Hand." Salsburg proceeded anyway. He proved that the coal companies and various municipalities had colluded to obtain absurdly low assessments of company lands, and the land valuation was consequently increased by $50 million. Salsburg also secured convictions of "Black Hand" criminals on assault, robbery, blackmail, extortion, and other charges. His life was threatened and local newspapers predicted his assassination, but he persisted, attracting notice and praise from the New York and Philadelphia press.

Although Salsburg never again succeeded in electoral politics—in 1927 he lost the Republican nomination for Common Pleas judge by only 461 votes—he held further public positions, serving as special counsel for the

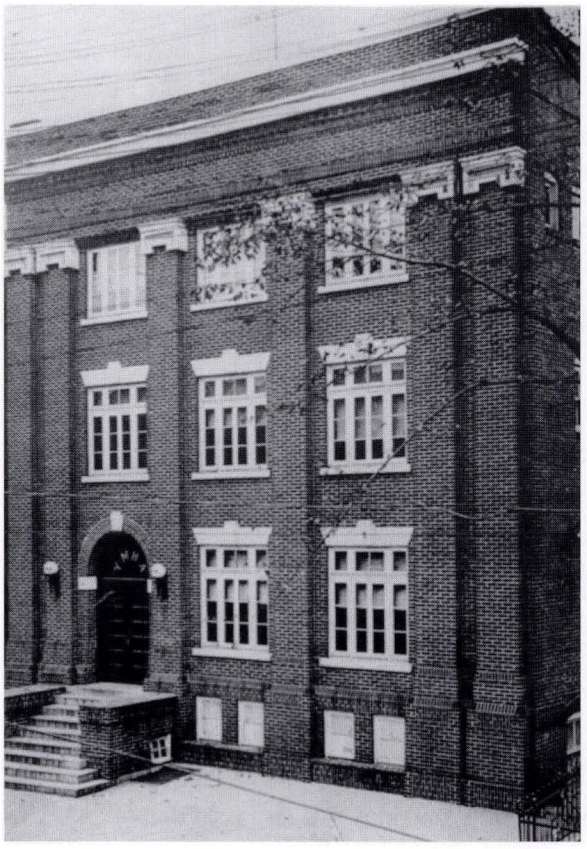
Luzerne County Prison Board in 1939 and counsel for the county treasurer in 1940. As a lawyer, he handled scores of sensational cases.

Salsburg engaged in a variety of business ventures, most notably as president of the United Furniture Manufacturers. A member of Temple B'nai B'rith and Congregation B'nai Jacob, he served the Jewish community as long-time president of the Talmud Torah. Abram Salsburg died suddenly of a heart attack on October 15, 1948 at the age of seventy-one.

For most public-spirited Jews at the century's second decade, the primary concern was the Jewish community itself, most particularly the YMHA, or "Y." Long the focus of Jewish cultural and social life, the Y had become moribund after 1905, possibly because the German leadership felt overwhelmed by the flood of Eastern European immigrants. Temple B'nai B'rith replaced the Y in hosting lectures on Jewish themes, and a social and literary group called "The Junior Maccabean Society," meeting above the Bijou Theatre, was organized in 1903 by Elfreda Heller, Ben Rifkin, and Ike Isaacs. In September 1911, a small group of young Eastern European Jews, led by William Ziegler and Abe Finkelstein, met in a room above Ziegler's barber shop on East Market Street to revive the YMHA. They soon rented the Odd Fellows Temple for meetings, and elected Charles E. Kalmutz and Bernard Rifkin president and vice president.

The renascence of the Y movement, also reflected on a national level, continued locally over the next two years. In May 1912, 700 people attended the first Y dance ever given at the Irem Temple, and that fall at the Grand Opera House, Y players put on Israel Zangwill's *The Melting Pot.* In 1913, the Y held a comic mock trial which attracted more spectators than the rented hall could accommodate. Acquisition of a permanent, modern facility became a priority.

Although a building committee was formed in 1911, the drive to raise $50,000 was really launched March 1, 1914, at a mass meeting at the Majestic Theatre. A fierce snowstorm raged outside, but every seat in the house was occupied as Rev. H. Masliansky of New York addressed the crowd in Yiddish. Attendees, among whom were such prominent Christians as Judges Henry Fuller and John M. Garman and Wilkes-Barre Mayor John Kosek, subscribed a substantial amount, to the satisfaction of building fund officers Seligman J. Strauss, Bernard Rifkin, and Joseph Hurwitz. The next year, when Eugene Cohen had succeeded Rifkin as president, the Y rented new temporary quarters at 139 South Main Street and, on the very last day of 1915, the Y purchased



YMHA, 1918.

land at 36 South Washington Street as the future site of its permanent home.

Little progress was made until 1917 when, despite U. S. involvement in World War I, the Y raised new funds to finance construction and, for the first time, elected a board. Nathaniel Jacobs and William Ziegler were the last two Y presidents before the new building was completed.

Dedication week began February 10, 1918 with a host of speakers addressing 1,200 onlookers. J. K. Weitzenkorn reviewed the project and praised building committee chair Felix T. Levy. Talmud Torah children sang. One of them, nine-year-old Sidney Berry, presented Charles Kalmutz with a commemorative gavel. Another, 11-year-old Nathan Kuss, gave a brief speech in Yiddish. On February 22, the Y held its first social function in the new facility. Admission to the dance was a dime, but men leaving for military service were the guests of honor.

For the Valley's Jewish servicemen, as indeed for most American Jews, World War I was personally devastating on a scale only later obscured by the Holocaust. American Jews, many of them recent arrivals from Eastern Europe, saw the suffering—and often, the death—of former Jewish countrymen, some of them relatives* still living in Europe's Jewish heartland, now the Eastern Front. While Germany and Austria-Hungary battled Russia, Jewish civilians,

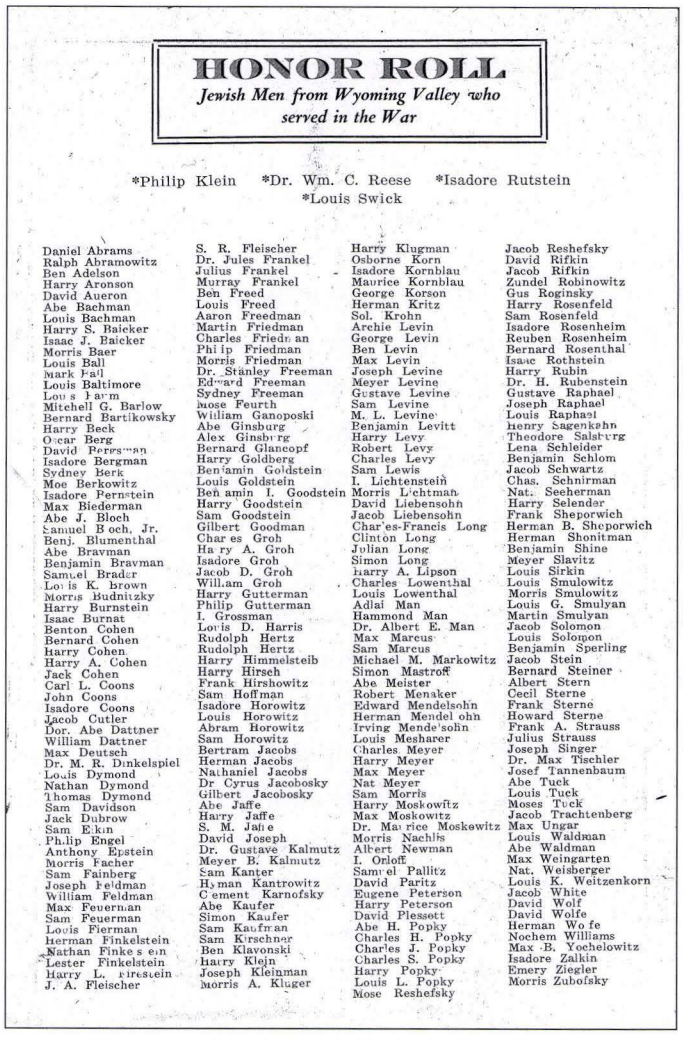
* In just one example, Heights resident Mrs. Joseph Korson, who had last heard from her family in 1914, learned that her parents, brother, uncle, and cousins had been murdered in Russia in 1919.

forced by the czarist regime to evacuate, were ravaged by hunger and disease and treated as enemies by each side. The Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent Russian Civil War prolonged the misery of millions, with Jews especially victimized by pogroms perpetrated by ultranationalist Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish factions.

Rae "Rella" Klein Roth, who came to the Valley about 1931, lost many of her family in Nazi gas chambers, and her stepson Phillip died in World War II service, but it was World War I that shaped her life. She was a child in Hungary when war "came like a hurricane. All we knew was war. Hungary was in the middle of everything." Her father, drafted into the army, returned in 1916; her mother had died and nine-year-old Rella took care of four siblings and their grandmother.

American Jews began relief work a few months after the outbreak of war. Locally, the first effort was on November 15, 1914, when residents of nearly every area town convened at B'nai Jacob Synagogue and raised $200. By January 1916, Valley Jews had raised about $7,000. In April 1918, about 2,000 people in Hampton Hall heard appeals by philanthropist Nathan Straus, who had spent millions of his own money on war relief, and Rabbi Dr. Nathan Krass. The Central Relief Committee of Luzerne County for the Jewish Sufferers appointed a special subcommittee* to canvass the county for funds.

* Represented on the subcommittee were some of the Valley's leading Jews in 1918: A. Abarbannel, Mose and Simon Adelson, Justin Bergman, Jacob Bergsman, M. Berk, E. Berkowitz, I. R. Blattner, C. Bloch, Herman Blum, Morris Brand, E. Brown, J. Burnett (Burnat), Abe and David Cantor, Lew and Max Casper, H. Cimmet, Ben Cohen, J. Cohen, Louis Cohen, Joseph S. Coons, Joseph Corner, A. Dattner, Sandor Engel, Harry Epstein, I. E. Fainberg, Max Fainberg, E. Feuerman, T. Feuerman, Harry and Nathan Finkelstein, Herman Fisher, Isaac Franklin, Max Freedman, Harry Freeman, Martin Freeman, Harry Friend, Gelb, Rabbi Ginsburg, Harry Goldberg, Mortimer Goldsmith, Julius Goldstein, J. Goldstein, Sol Gordon, N. Gottleib, B. Greenfeld, L. Greenwald, I. Gumpert, Louis Haltzel, Wolfe Harris, Eli Heller, Samuel and Sol Hirsh, H. Hirshowitz, J. Hurwitz, P. Iskowitz, William Israel, Harry Karnofsky, R. Karnofsky, M. Kaufman, J. Kluger, Hyman Landau, Henry Lazarus, I. Levinson, F. T. Levy, Louis Levy, Morris T. Levy, Edward Lewith, Cosmar P. and Millard F. Long, I. S. Long, H. Michlosky, Jacob Miller, H. Mittleman, J. Newman, I. L. Pearl, Charles Pfifferling, A. Rifkin, Louis Rosenthal, Ben Sagenkahn, Abram Salsburg, Louis Schiffman, Jonas Schlesinger, M. Schloss, L. Schwitzky, H. Seeherman, A. Simkowitz, A. Sirkin, S. and W. Smulowitz, Harry Sperling, I. Sperling, N. Springer, Henry Stern, Samuel Stone, P. Strauss, L. Thalenfeld, Leonard and R. Tintner, Joseph Tischler, Harry Waldman, J. S. Warman, I. Weiss, Benjamin and J. K. Weitzenkorn, Henry Wiseman, Max Wruble.



HONOR ROLL

Jewish Men from Wyoming Valley who served in the War

*Philip Klein *Dr. Wm. C. Reese *Isadore Rutstein
*Louis Swick

Daniel Abrams
Ralph Abramowitz
Ben Adelson
Harry Aronson
David Aueron
Abe Bachman
Louis Bachman
Harry S. Baicker
Isaac J. Baicker
Morris Baer
Louis Ball
Mark Ball
Louis Baltimore
Louis Barm
Mitchell G. Barlow
Bernard Bartikowsky
Harry Beck
Oscar Berg
David Berg man
Isadore Bergman
Sydney Berk
Moe Berkowitz
Isadore Bernstein
Max Biederman
Abe J. Bloch
Samuel Boch, Jr.
Benj. Blumenthal
Abe Brayman
Benjamin Brayman
Samuel Brader
Louis K. brown
Morris Budnitzky
Harry Burnstein
Isaac Burnat
Benton Cohen
Bernard Cohen
Harry Cohen
Harry A. Cohen
Jack Cohen
Carl L. Coons
John Coons
Isadore Coons
Jacob Cutler
Dor. Abe Dattner
William Dattner
Max Deutsch
Dr. M. R. Dinkelspiel
Louis Dymond
Nathan Dymond
Thomas Dymond
Sam Davidson
Jack Dubrow
Sam Ekin
Philip Engel
Anthony Epstein
Morris Facher
Sam Fainberg
Joseph Feldman
William Feldman
Max Feuerman
Sam Feuerman
Louis Fierman
Herman Finkelstein
Nathan Finkelstein
Lester Finkelstein
Harry L. Finkelstein
J. A. Fleischer

S. R. Fleischer
Dr. Jules Frankel
Julius Frankel
Murray Frankel
Ben Freed
Louis Freed
Aaron Freedman
Martin Friedman
Charles Friedman
Philip Friedman
Morris Friedman
Dr. Stanley Freeman
Edward Freeman
Sydney Freeman
Mose Feurth
William Ganoposki
Abe Ginsburg
Alex Ginsburg
Bernard Glancopf
Harry Goldberg
Benjamin Goldstein
Louis Goldstein
Ben amin I. Goodstein
Harry Goodstein
Sam Goodstein
Gilbert Goodman
Charles Groh
Harry A. Groh
Isadore Groh
Jacob D. Groh
William Groh
Harry Gutterman
Philip Gutterman
I. Grossman
Louis D. Harris
Rudolph Hertz
Rudolph Hertz
Harry Himmelsteib
Harry Hirsch
Frank Hirshowitz
Sam Hoffman
Isadore Horowitz
Louis Horowitz
Abram Horowitz
Sam Horowitz
Bertram Jacobs
Herman Jacobs
Nathaniel Jacobs
Dr Cyrus Jacobosky
Gilbert Jacobosky
Abe Jaffe
Harry Jaffe
S. M. Jaffe
David Joseph
Dr. Gustave Kalmutz
Meyer B. Kalmutz
Sam Kanter
Hyman Kantrowitz
Clement Karnofsky
Abe Kaufer
Simon Kaufer
Sam Kaufman
Sam Kirschner
Ben Klavonski
Harry Klein
Joseph Kleinman
Morris A. Kluger

Harry Klugman
Osborne Korn
Isadore Kornblau
Maurice Kornblau
George Korson
Herman Kritz
Sol. Krohn
Archie Levin
George Levin
Ben Levin
Max Levin
Joseph Levine
Meyer Levine
Gustave Levine
Sam Levine
M. L. Levine
Benjamin Levitt
Harry Levy
Robert Levy
Charles Levy
Sam Lewis
I. Lichtenstein
Morris Lichtman
David Liebensohn
Jacob Liebensohn
Charles-Francis Long
Clinton Long
Julian Long
Simon Long
Harry A. Lipson
Charles Lowenthal
Louis Lowenthal
Adlai Man
Hammond Man
Dr. Albert E. Man
Max Marcus
Sam Marcus
Michael M. Markowitz
Simon Mastroff
Abe Meister
Robert Menaker
Edward Mendelsohn
Herman Mendelsohn
Irving Mendelsohn
Louis Mesharer
Charles Meyer
Harry Meyer
Max Meyer
Nat Meyer
Sam Morris
Harry Moskowitz
Max Moskowitz
Dr. Maurice Moskowitz
Morris Nachlis
Albert Newman
I. Orloff
Samuel Pallitz
David Paritz
Eugene Peterson
Harry Peterson
David Plessett
Abe H. Popky
Charles H. Popky
Charles J. Popky
Charles S. Popky
Harry Popky
Louis L. Popky
Mose Reshefsky

Jacob Reshefsky
David Rifkin
Jacob Rifkin
Zundel Robinowitz
Gus Roginsky
Harry Rosenfeld
Sam Rosenfeld
Isadore Rosenheim
Reuben Rosenheim
Bernard Rosenthal
Isaac Rothstein
Harry Rubin
Dr. H. Rubenstein
Gustave Raphael
Joseph Raphael
Louis Raphael
Henry Sagenkahn
Theodore Salsburg
Lena Schleider
Benjamin Schlom
Jacob Schwartz
Chas. Schnirman
Nat. Seeherman
Harry Selender
Frank Sheporwich
Herman B. Sheporwich
Herman Shonitman
Benjamin Shine
Meyer Slavitz
Louis Sirkin
Louis Smulowitz
Morris Smulowitz
Louis G. Smulyan
Martin Smulyan
Jacob Solomon
Louis Solomon
Benjamin Sperling
Jacob Stein
Bernard Steiner
Albert Stern
Cecil Sterne
Frank Sterne
Howard Sterne
Frank A. Strauss
Julius Strauss
Joseph Singer
Dr. Max Tischler
Josef Tannenbaum
Abe Tuck
Louis Tuck
Moses Tuck
Jacob Trachtenberg
Max Ungar
Louis Waldman
Abe Waldman
Max Weingarten
Nat. Weisberger
Louis K. Weitzenkorn
Jacob White
David Wolf
David Wolfe
Herman Wolfe
Nochem Williams
Max B. Yochelowitz
Isadore Zalkin
Emery Ziegler
Morris Zubofsky

Honor Roll of World War I servicemen, as printed in the program for the YMHA Armistice Day Celebration.

The general community supported relief efforts for Jews overseas. A *Wilkes-Barre Record* editorial of February 19, 1915 expressed sympathy for the distress of Jews in Poland, and non-Jews contributed to campaigns for Jewish relief over the next few years. Most dramatically, in October 1919, calling upon "the Children of Christ to help the Sons of Abraham," Bishop Michael Hoban of the Scranton Catholic Diocese endorsed a massive relief effort for the Jews of eastern Europe.

By October 1919 Luzerne County Jews, and some Gentiles, had given or pledged $60,000 to the American Jewish relief effort. J. K. Weitzenkorn directed the drive in Luzerne, Bradford, Columbia, Schuylkill, Sullivan, and Wyoming Counties. Blum Brothers, Herman and Isadore Blum's South Main Street dress shop, publicized canvassing. The campaign continued into the fall of 1921.

Supporting the overall U. S. war effort, Valley Jews bought Liberty Bonds

and opened the new YMHA, which was also a sewing center for the Red Cross, for a Liberty Loan rally in the spring of 1918. And they sent 274 of their men—123 from Congregation B'nai Jacob alone—into military service.

At services on November 9, 1917, Temple B'nai B'rith paid tribute to congregation members Victor Charles Casper, Carl Coons, Isador Coons, John Coons, Sidney Freeman, Stanley L. Freeman, Frank Hirshowitz, Cyrus Jacobosky, Gilbert Jacobosky, Bernhard Rosenthal, Bernard Steiner, and Frank Strauss, all of whom had by then enlisted in the military. Suspended in the temple was a large service flag, the gift of Hannah Long (Mrs. Joseph S.) Coons. Her son Carl, displaying the patriotism shown by his grandfather Joseph in the Civil War, volunteered on May 22, 1917, serving with the Medical Ambulance Corps in France and Belgium until the close of the war. In July 1918, he was awarded the Divisional Citation Croix de Guerre for bravery on the battlefield. Gilbert Jacobosky, a civil engineer, was a lieutenant colonel with the U. S. Army Engineers, while his physician brother Cyrus was a captain in the Medical Corps.

Dr. Max Tischler was another volunteer. He had only recently earned his medical degree from Johns Hopkins University and was an intern at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital when he enlisted in the Medical Corps in April 1917 and was called to active duty a year later. First Lieutenant Tischler's sister, Sara, was pianist at the YMHA's Armistice Day Celebration, at which violinist Louis Savitz also played, and Rabbi Davidson, Harry Hirshowitz, Judge S. J. Strauss, and Judge-Elect William S. McLean were featured speakers. The program for the event, chaired by J. K. Weitzenkorn, listed the community's Jewish servicemen, including four who had died. Rabbi Salzman and Rev. Stein led memorial prayers for Philip Klein, Dr. William C. Reese, Isadore Rutstein, and Louis Swick.

Isadore Irving Rutstein.

Dr. Reese, who died of influenza in 1918, was a lieutenant in the Army Medical Reserve Corps. His father Abraham had joined the Confederate Army at the outbreak of the Civil War, later moving from the South to Plymouth. His mother Sarah's stepfather was early city merchant Isaac Livingston. Isadore Irving Rutstein, who had played football for Wilkes-Barre High School in 1906 under team manager David Rifkin, was a private in the Army's 72nd Division, 303rd Field Signal Corps, when he was killed in action in Belleau Wood, France, on October 16, 1918. The local Jewish War Veterans post, chartered as Irving R. Rutstein Post 212 in 1939, perpetuates his memory.

Not all the returning veterans adjusted easily to civilian life. According to Harold Rosenn, his mother Jennie saved a life and a marriage from postwar disaster. The Rosenns' Midvale neighbor George returned from service with a worldly lady he had married in Paris, and to whom he had represented himself not as a coal miner's son but as a successful businessman. As was customary, the newlyweds moved in with his parents and were given rooms in the basement as their home. The bride, in despair over her new circumstances, attempted suicide, jumping into the Susquehanna River.

A neighbor, running into the Rosenns' grocery store, told Mrs. Rosenn, who grabbed blankets, had her driver hitch the horse to the wagon, and rode to the river. The driver rescued the young woman, and Mrs. Rosenn brought her to the Rosenn home, summoning George to explain his bride's need to live in a more sophisticated city. George found a job and an apartment in New York, and left his bride with Mrs. Rosenn until, some months later, he was ready to bring her to the big city. The couple lived happily ever after.

During the war, a few area men ineligible for the U. S. draft went to Canada and Britain to be trained for the Jewish Legion of the British Army, which had been organized by the British to liberate Palestine from Turkish rule. Britain had shown support for the Zionist cause in the November 2, 1917 Balfour Declaration, which stated, "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object. . . ." Sixteen-year-old Wilkes-Barrean Ben Goodman had already joined the Legion in Canada when George Korson, a reporter for the *Record,* enlisted in Philadelphia in August 1918, returning home to recruit Harry Sare, a South Main Street furrier.

Though Jewish Legion volunteers were few, the region's support for Zionism was early and lasting, as described by Nathan Kuss:

> *Within a few years of Theodor Herzl's summons to the First World Zionist Congress in Switzerland in 1897, the appeal for creation of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine was echoed in the Wyoming Valley, where an early affiliate of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) was formed. The Balfour Declaration gave impetus to the Zionist movement, whose early local supporters included Rabbi I. M. Davidson, Harry Feinberg, Meyer Eskolsky, Aaron Weiss, Louis Smith, Louis Popky, and Ike Isaacs. David Horowitz was among the organizers of Zionist youth.*

Hitler's war against the Jews created a passionate demand for freedom of Jewish immigration to Palestine. The ZOA became the primary vehicle for advancement of this appeal in the United States, and locally almost every family supported the ZOA. With Aaron Weiss as president and Jacob Williams as membership chairman more than 900 members were enrolled in the organization.

In frequent visits to Harrisburg and Washington before the State of Israel was established, Aaron Weiss, Lou Smith, Nathan Kuss, and Isadore Goldberg were among those who met with governors and members of Congress in efforts to educate and persuade. Kuss, Goldberg, and Arnold Sullum became mid-Atlantic region presidents. Harvey Trachtenberg served professionally as Chicago region director.

It is not possible to recreate or explain the excitement, the fervor, the feeling of personal involvement, the sense of purpose that the Zionist movement aroused during those years. Wyoming Valley Jews, and many, many non-Jews, may take pride in what was accomplished.

Available records date the first meeting of local Zionists on December 27, 1903, when supporters from Wilkes-Barre, Pittston, and Scranton gathered in Wilkes-Barre to hear speakers Leah Asher and Philip Zalkin. In December 1912, Harry Levy, Hyman Walksman, Bernard Goodstein, and Jacob Troy created the Herzl Zionist Club, which met in the Boys' Industrial Association building. Drs. Albert and Isidor Kaufman were leaders of the Herzl Club, while Isidor Cohen and C. Sperling headed junior affiliate Young Judaea. Arnold Sullum, a later Young Judaean active under Mike Troy, said the group "forged a path in my life as a lifelong Zionist." Sullum is among at least two dozen area people who eventually settled with their families in Israel.

Charles Weissman. *Taken from Eastern Pennsylvanians, Eastern Pennsylvania Biographical Association, 1928.*

After the outbreak of World War I, local Zionists purchased food and other necessities for the Jews of Palestine. A gathering of December 1917 in Hampton Hall endorsed the Balfour Declaration and heard about Palestine from poet P. M. Raskin. Enthusiastic meetings continued into the early 1920s, by which time the Zionist Club, with over 200 members, had become the Zionist District of Wilkes-Barre. In 1920, Dr. Albert Kaufman, Jacob Miller, Charles Weissman, Lina Butler, J. A. Feinberg, and Hyman Walksman were district officers as Zionists sold bonds to finance Tel Aviv's construction and raised money for the

Palestine Restoration Fund and the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Rabbi I. M. Davidson initiated local "Blue Box" collection for the JNF, whose mission Nathan Kuss described:

> *In 1901 the Fifth World Zionist Congress adopted a proposal to purchase land in Palestine in the name of the Jewish people, to be kept in perpetuity, never to be sold. The land could be leased for long terms to further Jewish settlement through the development of industry, agriculture, and commerce. Land development became the JNF's primary responsibility. The results are seen throughout the country.*
>
> *Locally, Rabbi Davidson recruited teenagers to solicit nickels and dimes from downtown passersby. They used JNF "Blue Boxes," setting aside special days for the solicitations. In time, other fund-raising means were developed. The annual JNF dinner, featuring prominent figures in politics, the arts, and industry, became a regular community event. In the largest Jewish gathering for any community purpose, 775 people attended the March 1946 JNF event in honor of Rep. Daniel Flood, a consistently strong advocate of the Zionist movement.*
>
> *It is historically important that, in the United Nations judgment dividing the land between Jewish and Arab claims, JNF ownership was significant in drawing the boundaries of the future Jewish state.*
>
> *Among early JNF supporters were Drs. David Lubin and Aaron Lisses, Mrs. Max Lottman, Max and Rella Roth, Aaron Weiss, Reuben Levy, and William Cherkes. Nathan Kuss and Edward Lidz were Fund treasurers for many years, and Isadore Goldberg was the inspiration and driving force behind the annual solicitation.*

Women's Zionist organizations were also formed locally. Pioneer Women, now called Na'amat USA, the Women's Labor Zionist Organization of America, was founded nationally in 1925 to help provide social, educational, and legal services for women and children in Israel. The Wilkes-Barre club, founded* in September 1938 with Mollie Fleisher as chairman and Ida Ageloff as secretary, grew to 107 members by 1945. Fleisher, active in the club until it disbanded in 1980, was hostess to Israel's future prime minister, Golda Meir, and Isaac Hamlin of the Labor Histadrut Party when they visited the area in the 1930s and '40s.

* Founders were Hadassa Sare, Mollie Fleisher, Rose Stein, Fannie Lubin, Rebecca Stein, Yetta Chernin, Fannie Bartelstein, Dora Levin, Anna Abrams, Gussie Cutler, Bessie Schiller, Vera Smith, Ida Ageloff, Tillie Sullum, Dora Tamowitz, and Zelda Troy.

Predating Pioneer Women, the local Hadassah chapter is part of the world's largest women's Zionist organization. Evelyn Sondheim furnished information:

Leah Levy, right, accepting an award from national Hadassah. *Courtesy Iris Levy.*

Founded by Henrietta Szold in 1912, Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, has brought state-of-the-art medicine and health technology to Israel, and provided training to generations of immigrants and native Israelis, also sponsoring educational programs in the U.S. The Wilkes-Barre chapter was organized on February 6, 1924.

The 50 founding chapter members elected Mrs. E. L. Man first president. Meeting monthly at the YMHA, they raised money, often by penny luncheons, for an Infant Welfare Fund (Milk Fund) in Palestine, for the Hebrew University building fund, and for the United Palestine Appeal. The women, with the National Council of Jewish Women, also sewed infants' clothes to send to Palestine.

The chapter grew under the leadership of Tess (Mrs. Aaron) Weiss, Leah (Mrs. Reuben) Levy, and other dedicated Zionists for whom Hadassah was a way of life. Helping to build a nation, they built a local group of nearly 800 members. Almost all the area's Jewish women were active in Hadassah, and the chapter was known as one of the country's strongest, finest groups.

Evelyn Sondheim, on the national board, was a president of the eastern Pennsylvania region.

While local Jews continued relief drives for coreligionists in Palestine and Europe through the decade—breaking records in 1927*—women blended these activities with a long tradition of *zedakah* at home. The Germans' 1858 Jewish Benevolent Society had become by 1888 the Ladies' Auxiliary of the YMHA, and by 1920 Temple B'nai B'rith Sisterhood. In 1900, Eastern European women, many of them affiliated with Heights synagogues and later with Temple Israel, founded Hebrew Ladies Aid. By 1902, Queen Esther Ladies Society was formed by members of Ohav Zedek, B'nai Jacob, and women of the outlying towns.

* With 72-hour canvassing in September 1927, the Jewish community raised $180,000—$120,000 over its initial quota in a national drive for $25 million. With an additional $15,000 promised by the Wilkes-Barre Committee of the American Christian Fund for Jewish Relief, the combined pledges of $195,000 in three days broke all national records for money raised through canvassing. Led by Florence (Mrs. Cosmar P.) Long, the Women's Division pledged $25,007, also a record for women's divisions of comparable size.

Spitz's delicatessen. *Courtesy Howard Rottman.*

As the Ladies' Auxiliary had formed to help a destitute family needing a wheelchair, Queen Esther began, as the Charity Society, to aid a poor widower and his children. First president Mrs. Philip Klein, with Mrs. Harry Berkowitz, took horse and buggy from Brookside to Glen Lyon, soliciting contributions. Queen Esther, meeting at Ohav Zedek, and Hebrew Ladies Aid, meeting at the Poli Theatre, held annual balls to raise funds, picnics featuring Fannie Tischler's specialties, sales, parties, and Yiddish shows. Often, in one of the highest degrees of charity, money directed to a specific recipient did not identify the donor. Monthly dues for each group were 35 cents; Queen Esther members usually left payment at Spitz's delicatessen on Northampton Street, and Helen Meyers personally collected Hebrew Ladies Aid dues. Mrs. Jacob Schiff was next Queen Esther president, and in 1909 Rose Seeherman began her 42-year term.

Thus, together with the 1906 Organization for the Care of Jewish Orphans and Friendless Children, there were four societies dedicated to Jewish social welfare and opposed to using the Poor Boards. They functioned independently, often duplicating efforts, and had little knowledge of rehabilitation. Barbara Meyer described their evolution into the professional Jewish Family Service (JFS):

> *In 1925, Florence Ansbacher Long, a college graduate and teacher with no training in social work, established and chaired a joint monthly conference held at the YMHA. Though the four societies continued to work separately, each was represented at the conference and overlapping activities were avoided. In 1927, the conference was renamed the Philanthropy Committee, and in 1928, the Jewish Case Conference. By 1931, the Conference eliminated the orphans organization and the three remaining groups shared the casework and expenses.*
>
> *In 1933, the Jewish Case Conference was incorporated as the Jewish Welfare Agency (JWA) "to restore to self-supporting and normal life, by investigation, and necessary assistance, Jewish families and individuals in the city of Wilkes-Barre, and its immediate vicinity, that may need such help." Florence Long*

became president of JWA, and the presidents of the participating groups (Jane Oppenheim, Lillian Rifkin, and Rose Seeherman) became vice presidents. With secretaries Kate Wasserstrom and Hannah Salzman, treasurer Hattie Greenberg, a 15-member board from the constituent agencies, now auxiliaries, and an advisory committee of professional men, the Jewish welfare system became a formal part of community structure.

The JWA, organized into departments of family, child welfare, and unmarried mothers, provided financial aid and counseling, and addressed the needs of children, the elderly, and immigrants. Originally housed in Florence Long's home, the agency moved in 1934 to the Kirby Health Center, where Long became executive director, Lee Wolf was secretary and, though volunteer assistance remained crucial, the first paid caseworker was hired.

Dorothy Kanter Schwartz. *Courtesy Jewish Family Service.*

During the Depression, JWA's role expanded in proportion to clients' financial losses and associated problems. Providing supplemental aid to Jews on public relief and cash and in-kind relief to others, JWA also distributed cash and food for Jewish holidays through the auxiliaries' funds. In 1936, JWA became a member of the Community Welfare Federation, forerunner of United Way.

During World War II, many families left Europe sponsored by relatives in the Wyoming Valley. JWA helped prepare sponsorship affidavits, and volunteers helped the refugees find homes, furniture, clothing, and jobs. Maurice D. Brandwene chaired the New Americans Committee. When the immigrants later applied for naturalization, Dorothy K. Schwartz was the woman to consult.

Dorothy Kanter Schwartz joined the agency as a caseworker in 1941. A summa cum laude graduate of Bucknell University, she did graduate work at Columbia and Hunter, taught at Coughlin High, and worked for MGM in New York. After marrying and rearing sons Morton and Arthur, she accepted in 1933 a state Education Department appointment to helm a program intended to provide area adults with the tools to escape Depression-related poverty and unemployment. More than 3,000 people attended classes at the YMHA over eight years. Schwartz trained hundreds of community leaders, and helped about 1,000 people attain citizenship. She received national attention for her efforts, meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt in the White House. After the school closed, Schwartz, though untrained in social work, became a visitor for the Department of Public Assistance until joining JWA, which she served as executive director from 1952-74, while conducting Americanization classes and assisting in refugee resettlement.

Rella Roth.
Courtesy Eugene Roth.

During the '50s and '60s, the agency continued its professional work, and distributed clothing and other donated items—much of which Dorothy K. Schwartz kept in a special closet—and holiday food as needed. Queen Esther marked its golden anniversary and honored Kitty Wasserstrom for 50 years' service. Schwartz was honored by Hebrew Ladies Aid, whose meetings she had first attended as a child with her mother, a charter member. Hebrew Ladies Aid president Rose Bransdorf Shelman instituted a bandage rolling project for the Cancer Society. JWA relocated again, to the new Jewish Community Center and, when B'nai B'rith Sisterhood had to withdraw from JWA in 1956, the remaining auxiliaries supplemented United Fund allocations. The Student Aid Fund, begun in 1957 by Rella Roth, provided interest-free loans administered by JWA, the monies raised by Queen Esther under the direction of Roth, Sandra Warshal, and Helen Tischler. In 1964, Queen Esther merged with Hebrew Ladies Aid to form Queen Esther Hebrew Ladies Aid Society (QEHLAS), which remained JWA's fund-raising arm as the agency was renamed Jewish Counseling Service (JCS) in 1975 and the current Jewish Family Service (JFS).

Lil Lottman was JWA president when the flood of 1972 destroyed Jewish homes and businesses. The caseload swelled and additional caseworkers were sent to the area. Among them was Murray Daninhirsch, who became the agency's first professional social worker. Executive director of the flood-related Jewish Federation Counseling Center established in 1973, he was named in 1975 to the same post at JCS, which absorbed the flood-related entity and continued all JWA services under first president Sandra Warshal. JCS initiated sliding scale fees for those who could pay for services, and began in 1975 to resettle new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, with QEHLAS volunteers helping to teach English and acquire clothes and household goods. In 1976 Kosher Meals on Wheels was instituted.

After Daninhirsch retired in 1982, Sheldon Jeral became the new professional executive director of the agency, which was renamed Jewish Family Service of Greater Wilkes-Barre. Social workers Ann Smith and Frances Handman joined the staff. Though social work, counseling, and psychotherapy remained the core services, new programs included Jewish Family Life Education, Holocaust archives, and elderly caregiver support. JFS also provides adoption information, singles introductions, help for the unemployed, and intergenerational programming. In 1992 JFS moved to its own Northampton Street building.

Yet another organization furthering human welfare was established nationally in 1893, and locally in May 1913. The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), the oldest Jewish women's organization in America, provides programs in education, social and legislative action, and community service for children, the aging, and the disadvantaged. The group promotes women's and constitutional rights, Jewish life, and Israel. Past chapter president Nancy Messinger, assisted by Jane Messinger, provided the local chapter's history.

Wilkes-Barre's NCJW chapter, established through Temple B'nai B'rith, was organized at the home of Fannie Sax Long. The group grew to include all Jewish denominations and initiated many community services still in existence.

Articulating the chapter's initial reception and its enduring credo, first president Rozelle Burgunder Galland said, "At the birth of the section, Wilkes-Barre was hardly in sympathy with the idea of a new organization of this character. . . . [However,] splendid work is being done—without infringing on the rights of existing institutions—to round out and supply deficiencies necessary. . . . Those who need us . . . will always find us ready and willing but we want to impress upon them the importance of learning to help themselves. . . ." Focusing on helping those whom other groups missed, the chapter inspired extraordinary volunteer commitment.

By January 1939, NCJW's national office had brought over 403 European refugee children. In accord with the motto, "Give at least a penny a day that a refugee might live," chapters in the various areas of settlement took responsibility for the children's needs, from maintenance and education to home placement. The local section also assisted with citizenship papers and fees, and its "Mothers Guild" followed the cases of Jewish children brought before juvenile court.

In 1940, Council formed a Social Adjustment Committee to help with the influx of both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants. Refugees were invited to homes for conversational English groups, and to better acquaint them with the nuances of American life. Years later, still furthering the Americanization program, we created the "Reservation Exchange," which donated tickets for cultural and sports events. In 1941 the "toyary," a lending library providing toys to local children, was established in conjunction with local social service and business groups. During the war, NCJW raised funds for war bonds, crippled children, refugee camps, homeless children, and war victims. NCJW funded an orphanage for 40 children in Fontainebleau, France.

In 1949, the chapter inaugurated a program continued by the "Pink Ladies" of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital. NCJW volunteers went to patient rooms with a cart containing personal items, snacks, and a lending library. Around the same

time, NCJW formed the "Friendship Club," predecessor to Leisure Lounge. Meeting weekly at the Workmen's Circle building, seniors socialized, and Council helped with craft projects, supplied refreshments and entertainment, and provided transportation for club members living outside the Heights.

The local chapter was frequently commended for unselfish service to all needy people. Recognizing NCJW's integrity and its experience with immigrants, the U. S. government enlisted the organization's support to combat a growing menace, the white slave trade. The Wilkes-Barre chapter sent representatives to meet unaccompanied young women entering America. The new immigrants were aided for five years or until they became citizens.

NCJW had a chair at Hebrew University, and provided for U. S. education of foreign women, who would apply their learning in their homelands.

"Ship-A-Box" was part of every meeting. Loose change was collected, and the funds purchased recreation equipment and craft supplies for a boys' home in Israel.

Through the years, the chapter continuously analyzed and answered community needs. We started a series of "Mental Health Forums" that discussed the issues related to selecting hospitals. Experts offered guidance to people whose loved ones were receiving care. From these forums developed "Council House," originally a recreational and social club for discharged mental health patients and their families. Today, Council House is the Community Mental Health Center. During this time, a day camp for retarded children, in existence today, was also founded.

In our reading service for the blind, we went into homes and read recipes, instruction books, or whatever was needed. We were proud of putting blind students through college, because then many courses used books not available in Braille. We read to blind social workers who then were better able to help others.

The local Head Start was originated by Council as a preschool program offered to children in the Wilkes-Barre school districts. In addition to providing volunteer classroom aides, we collected clothing and supplies for the disadvantaged youngsters.

For our own membership, the chapter held book reviews, lectures, and panel discussions. A United Nations advisor was only one of many noted speakers.

Although NCJW is still active nationally, the local chapter disbanded by 1980, reflecting an era in which many women returned to college or joined the work force.

Many of the local women involved in the earliest Jewish service groups were also devoted to the Jewish Home. In greater Scranton, as in Wyoming Valley,

assistance to the Jewish poor, orphaned, and aged was initially supervised by independent ladies aid societies. One of these, South Side Ladies Aid Society, adopted Selma Stark's 1915 suggestion and formed the "Jewish Home for the Friendless" to care for some orphaned children. The Home was chartered in Lackawanna County on July 21, 1916 to assist and house "the Orphans and the Aged of both sexes." Soon, branches in neighboring communities were formed to recruit workers, funds, and clients. The Wilkes-Barre Branch was formed in 1917 by Mrs. Eugene Man, who served many years as president, enlisting women to help feed and clothe the children. Ruth Aqua, current branch president, has also served many terms. Following is further history of the Home and its local ties:

In 1921, the Home bought a building on Spring Street and North Main Avenue, Scranton, admitting the first resident on September 1. By January 1923, the facility housed 21 children and nine adults. Over the next 25 years, the Home's management was professionalized and its geographic reach was enlarged. In 1944, the Home moved to Harrison Avenue and ceased to house children, focusing on elderly services.

Meanwhile, in Wilkes-Barre, 19 groups meeting at the YMHA on April 30, 1933 to support joint fund-raising for Jews in Germany had by 1936 become the Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee (later the Jewish Federation and now the Jewish Community Board), whose financial help for the Home was solicited in 1948. After asking Julius Long Stern to inquire into particulars, Jewish Committee chair Nathan Kuss recommended sponsorship of the Home with the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council (Federation). A state grant, bolstered by funds raised in both cities by Kuss and Isadore Goldberg, financed the Home's expansion and modernization. A new facility with 150 beds opened at 1101 Vine Street in 1964; two floors and 28 beds were added in the 1970s, with Kuss and Goldberg again assisting in fund-raising. Kuss, an officer of the Home's board for more than 40 years, was in recent years joined by Connie Roth. Many local people have been directors, benefactors, or guests of the Home, whose present executive director is Rabbi Samuel K. Sandhaus.

The Wilkes-Barre Branch, the only auxiliary still operating outside Scranton, supported the Home through its transition to skilled nursing of the aged, its relocations, the 1961 change of name to The Jewish Home of Eastern Pennsylvania, the 1986 establishment of The Foundation for the Jewish Elderly, and the planning and fund-raising for Elan Gardens assisted living residence. In addition to annual contributions, the branch has donated special funds for major purchases, sponsored social events, and provided residents' birthday gifts.

Other Jewish charitable groups founded early in the century were the Hebrew Free Loan and Sheltering Aid Association and the Passover Fund Committee. The latter, which enabled poor Jews to buy matzah, dated locally from 1900. The former, founded in 1901, provided the homeless with shelter and small amounts of cash. Jacob L. Williams, a son of the Rev. Nechemiah Williams, was association president from 1920 to 1928. The affiliated Travellers' Aid for Itinerant Scholars provided food, a night's lodging, and cash for scholars' travels.

Another son of Rev. Williams was until 1924 the secretary and moving spirit of the Jewish Consumptive Sanitarium Association, which treated "the Jewish disease," tuberculosis, then prevalent among Eastern European Jews. According to the *Record,* Maurice Williams created "the best organization that the Valley possesses" in the association, which established a sanitarium at White Haven. He recruited a distinguished board, which included lawyers Abram and Mose Salsburg and realtor Aaron Hurwitz, and subsequently organized many branches. It was Maurice Williams who edited 1920's *Wilkes-Barre Yiddish Almanac,* which he published with brother Jacob of Penn Printery. The document, quoted earlier, was a compendium of Wyoming Valley history (taken directly from the writings of Oscar Jewell Harvey), calendar data, and facts about the Jewish community.

By the '20s, Valley Jews were also deeply involved in general community organizations, although no Jews joined the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society (1858) in its first half-century. Judge Seligman J. Strauss in 1912 became the first Jewish member, followed by Charles Jonas Long, Bertha Strauss, Julius Long Stern, and Louis Frank.* In contrast, Jewish participation in the Family Service Association began at its founding, as documented by Lillian Thalenfeld:

> *The Charity Organization Society of Wilkes-Barre, founded in 1895 with Minnie Strauss Galland among the charter members, was a nonsectarian union of nearly all area charitable groups. Among the "Co-operating Societies" was the Ladies' Auxiliary of the YMHA, formerly the Jewish Benevolent Society.*

*Lillian Thalenfeld wrote that 17 Jews and the Jewish firm Lion Brewers were members by 1938. In the 1970s, Elizabeth Silverblatt and Betty Schechter joined the board, of which Robert Capin was the first Jewish officer (1985), and Lillian Cohen the first Jewish president (1987). In June 1995, the Society and the JCC co-hosted an exhibit of 150 years of Wyoming Valley Jewish history. Exhibit chairs Lawrence Newman and Rivian Minkoff worked with Ann Lipton, Sheldon Spear, F. Charles Petrillo, and John Orlandini.

In its first year of extending organized help to the needy, 1,373 people were supplied with meals, lodging, clothing, jobs, and medical assistance. Listed by ethnic groups, clients included three "Hebrews." The next year's caseload was 2,694, including ten Hebrews. By 1900, when the organization was renamed "United Charities," 4,603 individuals and families, including 16 Hebrews, were assisted.

Members and contributors donated money and essential supplies. As early as 1894, when the largest single donation was $30, Jews contributed $2 to $10. In 1898, Hebrew Charity Workers gave $25, and the Hebrew Association contributed bread and lemons. In 1899, the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society gave $5. Among contributing businesses were Simon Long's Sons, which gave men's clothing; Isaac Long's Dry Goods Co., which supplied bed linens; Louis Tisch's store, which sent groceries; and Bernard Burgunder's butcher shop, which donated soup meat and bones.

Mary Wolk.
Courtesy Family Service Association.

Early board members were Marx Long, Judge S. J. Strauss, and Louis Tisch. Minnie Galland was elected to the United Charities board. Among 1915's volunteer "Lady Managers" were Mmes. Isaac Long, Bernard Levy, and Samuel Oppenheim.

On January 29, 1941, the society was renamed Family Service Association of Wyoming Valley, reflecting its professional counseling role. Elected as treasurer in 1941 was Bernard F. Burgunder, who became the first Jewish president of Family Service in 1942, re-elected in 1949. Mrs. Harry Stern 2nd became secretary.

Since Burgunder, Pauline (Mrs. Simon) Long, Morris Slater, and Pauline Friedman were president and many Jews, including nearly all area rabbis, have been board members and trustees. Among incorporators of the Trustees of Family Service in 1961 were Robert Casper, Louis Shaffer, Arthur Silverblatt, and Tess Weiss.

Dorothy Cohen.
Courtesy Family Service Association.

The agency's first Jewish executive director was Mary Wolk, wife of Temple B'nai B'rith's Rabbi Samuel Wolk. Previously associated with Baltimore's Jewish Social Service Bureau, she joined United Charities on August 29, 1934 as head of the Family Welfare Department and acting executive secretary. Noted for her dedication and high standards, she was executive director from 1934-5 and again from 1942-3.

Dorothy Cohen was executive director from 1950-75, nearly matching the 26-year record of Anna Bertels, "Matron" of the Charity Organization Society. Cohen came from positions at the University of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Jewish Social Service Bureau, and was casework supervisor for the American Red Cross and the U.S. Army during World War II. During Cohen's term in office, the agency moved to

73 West Union Street, and the Wilkes-Barre Information System, forerunner of Help Line, was created to aid victims of the 1972 flood.

In 1976, agency president Morris Slater asked Pauline Friedman to revitalize and chair Friends of Family Service, which acts as agency advocate, raising funds and educating the public. Friends' annual community education programs have focused on such issues as dying with dignity, sandwich generation stress, and alcohol abuse.

Theodora (Teddi) Berlatsky, the agency's assistant executive director from 1976, was executive director from 1986-96. She came from social work and medical social work posts at Massachusetts General Hospital, Northwestern University, and London's St. Andrews Hospital. Berlatsky guided the agency's move to 31 West Market Street and announced a new guardianship agency for incapacitated adults, a parenting workshop for public housing occupants, and expansion of Help Line, selected as a ten-county regional resources center.

Fannie Sax Long spearheaded formation of the Wilkes-Barre Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) in 1908, a time when health conditions in parts of the Valley, as on New York's Lower East Side, were especially poor among the increasing numbers of immigrants living with inadequate sanitation and a high incidence of communicable disease. As first president (1908-11), Long had the nurses trained under Lillian Wald of the Henry Street Settlement. Pauline Friedman and Mary Ann Kierans furnished information about VNA:

VNA's achievements in its first years at 616 Coal Exchange Building included distribution of free milk, free vaccinations for school children, child care instruction, and home treatment of children with diphtheria, rheumatic fever, and tuberculosis. One of the agency's "Year Round Baby Welfare Stations" was located at the Talmud Torah on South Hancock Street. The poor received free nursing; others paid 25 cents a visit or $1 for the first hour of live-in nursing. By 1915, Bertha Strauss and Mmes. Felix Levy and Bernard Long were on VNA's board.

Over the years, the agency was repeatedly renamed and restructured as it absorbed the VNAs of Kingston, Nanticoke, Pittston, and Hazleton, and Homemaker Services of Luzerne County, responded to changing community needs, and expanded to serve Wyoming and Lackawanna Counties.*

* Homemaker Services had been organized by Betsy Condron and Nathan Kuss, who persuaded the county commissioners to appropriate $10,000 for initial requirements.

In 1936, the nurses aided flood recovery, as they would in 1972, and many joined the military nursing corps in World War II. Gradually, home health aide care, social work, and physical, occupational, and speech therapy were added to VNA services.

Florence Long and Hannah Salzman joined the board at its first merger, with the West Side Visiting Nurse Association. Over the years, 25 Jewish men and women joined the board, serving lengthy terms with dedication. Shirley Klein and Pauline Friedman were overall agency presidents, and Mrs. Walter Goldstein, Edith Wagner, Rabbi Arnold Shevlin, and Stanford Weiss were officers of the management body. Madge Benovitz was instrumental in securing present administrator Mary Ann Kierans, and Pauline Friedman led formation of the auxiliary. Drs. Jacob G. Hyman and Glenn Panzer served as medical directors, and Teddi Berlatsky, Judith Null, and Dr. Karen Cooper were advisers. In 1994, VNA became an affiliate of Wyoming Valley Health Care System under CEO Ron Stern, and Dr. Bruce Saidman became medical director of VNA's new Hospice Care for the terminally ill.

VNA, Family Service, Jewish Family Service, and the Jewish Community Center are among member agencies of the United Way of Wyoming Valley, founded in 1921 when 21 organizations, including the YMHA, joined as the Community Welfare Federation to centralize, support, and promote welfare activities:

The first "Red Feather" campaign raised $258,000; major concerns were diphtheria outbreaks, equality for World War I veterans, and disaster relief. In 1940, with 200 elderly added monthly to the Old Age Assistance lists and others hurt by the commercial aftereffects of the 1936 flood, the Federation raised $375,000. The Federation split into the Welfare Planning Council and the Community War Chest in 1945 and raised $587,000. In the early 1950s, a consolidated appeal was proposed, resulting in the 1956 United Fund with 59 member agencies. In 1973, the United Fund and the Welfare Planning Council reunited to form the United Way.

Many Jewish men and women have worked on United Way and predecessor campaigns and committees. Presidents included Julius Long Stern, Bernard F. Burgunder, Louis Shaffer, Arthur Silverblatt, Eugene Goldstein, Harold Rosenn, Madge Benovitz, and Murray Ufberg. Among campaign chairs were Bernard Burgunder, Louis Shaffer, Seymour Dimond, Arthur Silverblatt, Eugene Goldstein, Charles M. Epstein Jr., Stanford Weiss, Harold Rosenn, Eugene Roth, Murray Ufberg, and Sue Kluger. Kluger was only the second woman to chair the

Rose Brader.
Courtesy
Leonard Brader.

campaign (1995), and Madge Benovitz, the sole female president (1980-1) to date, was also a trustee of the state United Way.

In 1979, United Way established the Rose Brader Community Service Award presented annually from 1980 for exceptional commitment to public service. Honoring Brader's 30 years' service as liaison between the labor movement and United Way, including her direction of courses that produced 3,000 volunteers for local agencies, the award was given to Sophie Cohen (1987) and Sandy Rifkin (1991). Lillian Cohen, Ruth Levey, Jacob Stein, Murray Ufberg, Gil August, Selma Danoff, Anna Nelson, Pauline Friedman, and Irene and Jeanette Brader were award nominees.

Among other affiliations, Rose Brader* was on the board of the Red Cross, founded locally in 1917. Over the years, Sophie Cohen and Lillian Gutterman were among active volunteers, and board members included Selma Dattner, James Wachtler, Paula Bregman, Harold Rosenn, and Nathan Kuss. Kuss and Rosenn, past chapter chairmen, were named life board members. The Jewish Community Center has long been a community blood donor location.

Although there were few Valley service, cultural, or philanthropic groups founded by or since 1930 in which Jews did not participate, yet another organization founded in the 1920s had a Jewish component. Madge Benovitz described the origin of Planned Parenthood of Northeast Pennsylvania:

> *In 1927, with neither money nor moral support, a small group of women "set out to create interest in and win support for the eventual establishment of a birth control clinic in Wilkes-Barre." Madeline Stern was treasurer of the group, which called itself the Luzerne County Birth Control League, forerunner of Planned Parenthood.*
>
> *In 1946, Ellen Stern was on the state executive committee, serving on the national board in 1956, when she and spouse Julius Long Stern attended the International Planned Parenthood Conference in India, and she was local president in 1958. Deane Berger was president in 1962 when the first evening clinic was opened; Dr. Burton S. Benovitz was medical director. In 1964, Ellen Stern, Miriam Freeman, and Tess Weiss were among 12 women honored for furthering the cause of Planned Parenthood. Over the years, dozens of Jewish peo-*

*Brader was later director of volunteers at the John Heinz Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine and recipient, with Madge Benovitz, of 1982's Distinguished Pennsylvanian Award.

ple served on the board. Gerry Weiss, June Nelson, and Sandra Warshal were particularly active.

Still more Jewish and general organizations would spark future volunteerism, but most Jews' first commitment was to the YMHA, hub of Jewish social, cultural, and organization activity from its 1918 opening. Clemence Bloch was first president of the new Y, guiding it through its closing during the influenza epidemic and, with successors J. K. Weitzenkorn, Harry Haltzel, Harry Hirshowitz, Herman Goldberg, and Mortimer Goldsmith Sr., promoting a decade's worth of programming despite periods of precarious funding.

Although dues of $4-7 for adults and 50 cents for children were modest in light of postwar inflation, not everyone paid conscientiously, reminding one Y officer of Germany's 1914 dismissal of a treaty as a mere "scrap of paper." Solicitation proceeded in a familiar manner; campaign "Captains" and "Lieutenants" holding "prospects' cards" said that "the Building's income has not kept apace with the cost of its activities and unforeseen growth." Annual adult membership dues were soon raised to $12, but financial difficulties persisted at least into 1923, prompting impassioned pleas by Cosmar P. Long, chair of the deficit committee, to "save the YMHA" and avert public "disgrace." By 1924, the Y's construction debt had been paid—there was even a small surplus—but the long coal strike of 1925-6 forced cutbacks affecting the Y's busy social calendar.

While many early Y social events revolved around World War I, general activities increased with the war's end. Cars of the electric Laurel Line left every half hour for "Jewish Gala Day" at Valley View Park in August 1919. YMHA lectures resumed. Night courses included a naturalization class taught in Yiddish, men's and women's "English Classes for Foreigners," glee clubs, gymnasium for men and boys, and "Art Novelty" for women and girls.

In 1920, Isadore Abelson succeeded William Pinsker as general secretary, equivalent to executive director. Eli Goldstein taught Yiddish and ran the religious department, and Bertha Cohen was office manager. In 1921 the YMHA officially changed its name to the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM and YWHA), though men dominated the Y, especially the sports program, which featured basketball, baseball, and tennis. Louis Smith, a Y gym assistant who became athletic director in 1923 and executive director in 1925, was a star of the men's basketball team in the 1920s glory days.

The "dream team" of the Smith brothers, Baicker, Dubrow, Ganaposki,

Goldberg, Silver, and Wolfe played almost to the decade's end, with Samuel ("Poke") and Charlie Alper eventually replacing Baicker and Wolfe. Rules for the infant sport allowed two-handed dribbling and demanded a jump-ball after every goal scored; speed and defense were more crucial than height and offense. Rules also allowed the Y team to play against collegiate, semi-pro, and even professional teams as well as other Jewish teams. Barnstorming teams proliferated.

Officially known as the YMHA Varsity, the team was a favorite of the local press, which affectionately called players the "Hebes" or "Hebbies." An intense rivalry developed between Wilkes-Barre and New York's 92nd Street YMHA; chartered Lehigh Valley Railroad trains carried hundreds of local fans to away games. Emotions also ran high for games against Scranton's Y. The Wilkes-Barre team played local pick-up college teams, and teams in Ithaca and Hoboken. In a game against the "Redskins," a semi-pro team composed entirely of American Indians, all but one over six feet tall—the Redskins' center was seven feet tall—the "Hebes" won, 49-48. Two contests with the professional Wilkes-Barre Barons resulted in a split, with the "Hebes" victorious on their home court.

Wilkes-Barre's Y team won most of its games. Local fan Joseph Bernstein informed *New York Evening Graphic* sports columnist Ed Sullivan (of later TV fame) that, as of April 1926, the YMHA Varsity had a won-lost record of 212-14. The "Hebrew champions of the east," Bernstein said, won eight city titles and three state championships. On January 23, 1928, the press reported the team's first loss in three years, to Brooklyn's Greenpoint Y; the score was 49-38.

By the 1929-30 season only Lou and Ben Smith, the "cough drop kids," remained of the dream team's outstanding players. A *Wilkes-Barre Sunday Independent* column of December 22, 1929 lamented the passing of an era:

> *Basketball fans regret the passing of these great combinations. None of the players were compensated; some turned down lucrative professional offers. They loved the game and playing for the YMHA, which may account for their unbeatable spirit and a remarkable record of victories. . . . Those old YMHA fives . . . played the game as it should be played and made up in speed and team play what they lacked in height. . . .*

Another Y team was part of the Eastern States Debating League of Hebrew Associations (1926) encompassing Wilkes-Barre, Baltimore, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Philadelphia, and Rochester. David Bransdorf, Nathan Kuss, and alternate David Rutstein represented Wilkes-Barre. They debated

such issues as United States recognition of Soviet Russia and government ownership of the coal mines. Starting uncertainly, local men were winning some debates by 1927.

Debater Nathan Kuss also enjoyed boxing in the 1926-8 Y bouts, but he didn't have the skill of Harry Liebenson, who would have made the U. S. Olympic Boxing Team at age 14 if not for his mother's opposition. Liebenson won an amateur title in 1927 and went on to fight professionally as a flyweight.

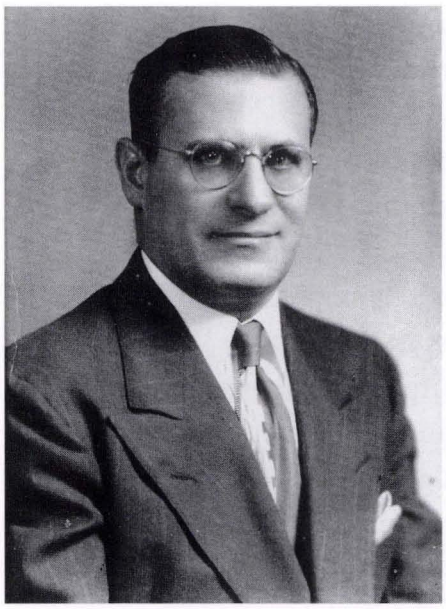
As for Y cultural programs, lectures featured such local experts as Rabbi I. M. Davidson on the Bible, *Times Leader* city editor Joseph T. Murphy on the making of a daily newspaper and, from 1931, Wyoming Seminary's Leroy Bugbee on "living history." And increasingly, the Y imported prestigious speakers. Journalists Heywood Broun and Frank R. Kent, literary giants Carl Sandburg and Louis Untermeyer, rabbis Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Stephen Wise, and ACLU president Arthur Garfield Hays were among Y lecturers from 1920-30. Dr. Jonas Lippman spoke on the Dreyfus Affair, London Judge Bernard A. Rosenblatt on the Palestine Mandate, and Dr. Della P. Wetherby on sex hygiene for mothers.

Further cultural enrichment could be found at the Y's rental library, club meetings, and Sunday night movies. At a 1922 *Kadimah* (forward or eastward) Club luncheon, Mrs. Salo Friedewald reviewed a book on women's economic independence, and Fannie Sax Long led the 94 attendees in discussion. A pianist accompanied such silent films as Clara Bow's *It;* serious fare included *Einstein's Theory of Relativity* and Serge Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible.*

Eugene L. Man. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1930, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

Dramatic and vaudeville artists played the Y too, among them New York's Maurice Schwartz Yiddish Art Theatre and English actor Victor L. Granville. In amateur productions, Y players recited their lines, and sang and danced regardless of talent. In the *YMHA Bulletin,* future "Joe Palooka" cartoonist Ham Fisher lampooned the "kosher kast" of 1922's *Wanted A Wife.* Children under 16 were not admitted to *His Wife's Mistake* in 1924. Minstrel shows were performed in blackface into the 1930s. Insurance broker Eugene L. Man directed many Y musicals, a tradition eventually assumed by his daughter, Hilda Man Hertz, followed by Julia Lieberman.

As in the 1880s and '90s, the Y of the 1920s was the center of Jewish social life. In mild weather, members danced on



Clinton Long.
Courtesy
Bettijane Eisenpreis.

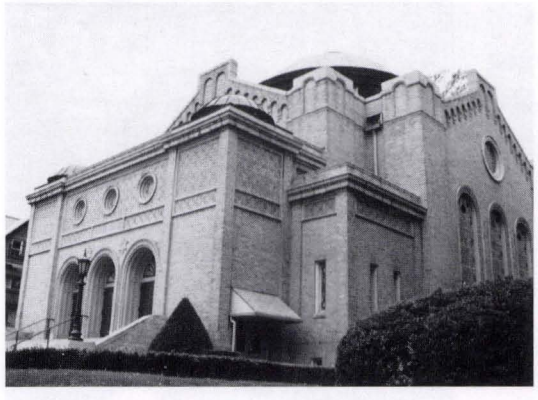
the Y's roof or at Fernbrook Park. For years there was a dance on Yom Kippur night. Formal anniversary balls were held every February to commemorate the building's opening. In July 1923, the roof of the Y was transformed into a Japanese garden, and members were invited to "enjoy a Japanese lunch, a jinrickisha ride, and Japanese dancing girls."

"Jewish Gala Day" in 1922, another reflection of the decade's exuberant spirit, was attended by more than 3,000 people. Most took the streetcar to Sans Souci Park, where Wilkes-Barre won the baseball game against Hazleton's Y. Other events were a story hour, a contest for the prettiest and fattest babies, the crowning of "Gala Day" queen Ruth Seeherman (Mendelsohn), and dancing.

Boy Scout Troop No. 32, Sigma Alpha Rho (SAR), and the Goodfellows Club were probably the liveliest YMHA all-male clubs. Clinton Long was scoutmaster from the troop's 1919 formation, with 34 boys, until 1934. SAR, a fraternity for Jewish high school boys, and the Goodfellows, a businessmen's sports club, held dances whose proceeds often purchased needed items for the Y.

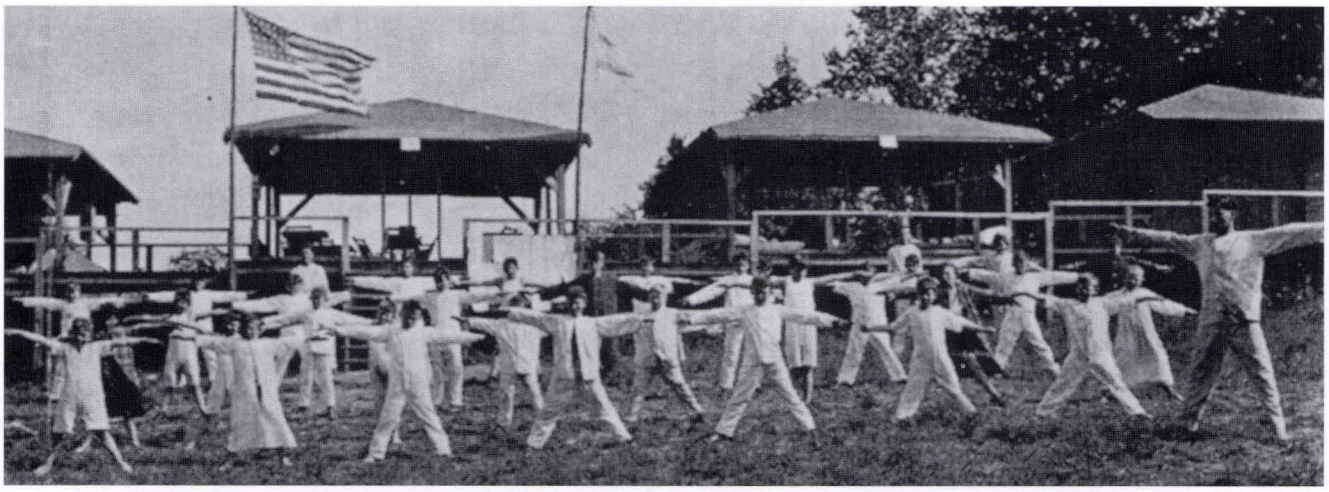
Goodfellow Charles Weissman was among local leaders who shared the national enthusiasm for children's summer camps. He was instrumental in launching the YMHA's own camp in 1924. By 1925, Camp Ahmy (YMHA reversed) was situated on Noah Raskin's Harveys Lake property. Mrs. Raskin was the camp's kosher cook, and religious services were held twice daily. Weekly fees were $15 for Y members, $20 for others. Coeducational camping was unthinkable; boys were enrolled for the first four weeks, girls for the last two.

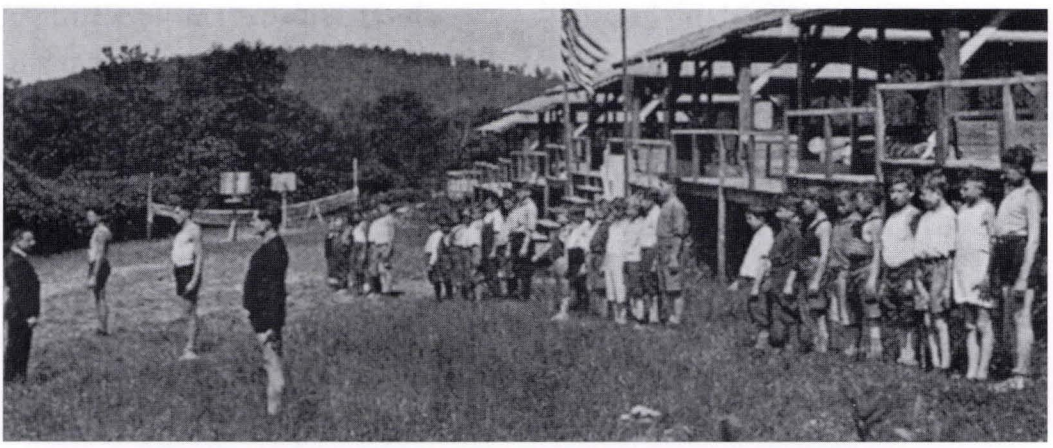
Temple Israel.



As campers discovered Harveys Lake, so did adults, some of whom had vacation homes there. Besides, the lake's attractions, including kosher restaurants at Raskin's Hotel and Solomon's Hotel (owned by sisters Solomon and Bauman of Wilkes-Barre's S and B), were only a 48-cent streetcar ride from Public Square.

Upwardly mobile Jews were also leaving the Heights for South Wilkes-Barre. Temple Israel built its synagogue nearby, as would Ohav Zedek, breaking ground for a new building in 1930. In general, Jews prospered in the retail





Camp AHMY, Harveys Lake, 1926.

and wholesale business economy, devastated by and recovered from two long anthracite work stoppages (1922 and 1925-6). In 1927, a wide variety of Jewish businesses* sponsored *The Dress Rehearsal,* a Y "minstrel farce," and another Jewish businessman, WBRE founder Louis Baltimore, was able to donate a radio to the Y in time for the 1925 World Series. Other successful Jewish business owners also supported the Y, donating goods and money, and sponsoring events.

Though Jews were chiefly employed in business, the number of Jewish professionals, especially lawyers, doctors, and teachers, seems to have increased in the 1920s, and several women became prominent. In 1922, at the U. S. District Court in Scranton, Jeanette (Mrs. Abram) Salsburg and Josephine (Mrs. Justin) Bergman were added to the formerly all-male grand jury roster. Salsburg became foreman. In 1928, lawyer and new mother Sydelle Hyman, on the motion of S. M. R. O'Hara, became the fifth woman ever admitted to the Luzerne County Bar. While working for the Salsburg firm in 1930, Hyman was admitted to practice before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Another young woman, future playwright and author Ida Trachtenberg, worked a few years as a journalist for the *New York Call* and the *New York World.* She toured Europe, reporting her experiences in the *Record.* Upon returning home, she did public relations work for Congressman John J. Casey and others.

Hollywood beckoned to a couple of Jewish "Esthers." Esther J. Cantor competed in Atlantic City's 1927 "Miss America" pageant. Though she didn't win the title, contest publicity helped her career as Hollywood actress June Clayworth. And violinist Esther Horowitz, daughter of Cantor Aaron

*The 37 sponsors were: Strand Smoke Shop (Henry Mendelsohn, prop.),"Mose" Wolfe's Delicatessen, Nelson Brothers Bedding Manufacturers & Wholesale Furniture, Bakery Shop (Morris A. Strand, prop.), Schainuck's Clothes, N. Y. Delicatessen (I. Hauss, prop.), J. Tannenbaum, Bravman Furniture, Alper-Berman Painters & Paper-Hangers, Diamond City Window Cleaning (Sam Mitchneck, prop.), Isaac Frankel & Son "Yankee Girl Coffee" Distributors, Luxury Market (Leo Ungar & Sam Weltman, prop.), Friedman's Express & Warehouse, Irving Rein's Kosher Delicatessen, Stein's Printery (William Lieberman & Louis Stein, prop.), Friedman & Weisberger Wholesale Provisions, Fashion Boot Shop (N. Shinderman, prop.), Ezra Stern Wholesale Confectionary Jobber, Shawnee Radio (Ben Gerstein, prop.), Golden Quality Ice Cream, London & Liverpool Shoe, Candyland (Sam Vilensky, prop.), B.J. Levin Hudson & Essex Dealer, Cohen & Fein Shirt Manufacturers, N.Y. Floral (O. S. Tischler, Mgr.), Bloch Bros. Insurance, N. Platsky Painter & Decorator, J. S. Rothstein Sons Wholesale Cash Grocers, S & B Kosher Restaurant (Mrs. G. Bauman, prop.), Freedman & Dattner Real Estate, Simon Adelson & Son Scrap Iron & Steel, Sperling Tobacco, Popky Engineering, Henry Shapiro Scrap Iron, Louis Levy & Son Furniture & Hardware, Spitz & Engel Kosher Delicatessen, Keystate Bakery (P. Zatcoff, prop.).

Horowitz, joined her pianist sister Sara for a time in providing mood music for MGM stars as they made silent movies. Like their father, all the Horowitz sisters, and their brother Emmanuel, were musical; Linnea made her piano debut at Carnegie Hall, Ada sang, and Emmanuel, an internationally published author, was also a concert violinist. Though Sara was living elsewhere when the Horowitzes came to Wilkes-Barre in 1923, the family's other musicians gave a concert at B'nai Jacob to introduce themselves to the community.

Few women were as engaged or influential as Fannie Sax Long, of whom a Catholic priest said, "Even the angels in Heaven tremble when [she] speaks." A founder of the local NCJW which she also served as state and national officer, a founder of VNA, an organizer with Edith Brower and Minnie Galland of the Civic Club (later called the Wyoming Valley Woman's Club), and a founder of the Drama Guild (now the Little Theatre), she was first president of the Chamber of Commerce Community Round Table and the P. T. A., and a power at the YMHA and numerous other organizations. Fannie Sax Long took Wilkes-Barre by storm upon her arrival as the wife of Dr. Charles Long.

Born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1876, Fannie Sax Long was of impeccable Jewish pedigree. Her mother's family, the Ezekiels, were of Portuguese descent; her father's were German. Raised in the South until age 15, she then moved to New York where, in 1896, she was graduated from Columbia's Teachers' College. In 1897 she married and came to Wilkes-Barre, where she reared children (Dr.) Charles Francis, (Dr.) Julian, and Alice (Goldsmith).

A classroom teacher only at Temple B'nai B'rith, where she taught domestic skills, Long was community master-teacher. She chaired the Kindergarten Federation, helped organize the city's P. T. A. and playground centers, and in 1922 founded the Valley's first Girl Scout troop, Troop Number One, at the YMHA. On the Y board, she chaired its education committee. She chaired the Women's Clubs' committee on illiteracy. She was a founder of the College (now University) Women's Club. She visited Kis-Lyn reformatory. She was named by Governor Fisher to Pennsylvania's Penal Commission, and by President Hoover to a federal study of European penal systems, a post that took the prim lady all over the world.

Fannie Sax Long. *Courtesy Sheldon Spear.*

Domestic enough to darn stockings at meetings, take Goldsmith silk remnants to prison for sewing lessons, and dress formally for the Sabbath, Long loved foreign travel. When she was over 70, Fannie took her only granddaughter, Susan Long (Kaplan), to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II; the family wondered whether Susan would return a lady or Fannie would be jitterbugging. Fannie returned the same, still frowning on discussion of a pet dog's pregnancy at the dinner table, but Susan returned better informed.

A lifetime model of civic responsibility at home, Long involved school children in her World War I campaign to plant victory gardens. Governor Pinchot named her to the Emergency Relief Board in 1932, the same year she persuaded City Council to reverse its financially motivated suspension of garbage collection. A charter member of the local League of Women Voters (1944), she attended the inaugural meeting with Tess Weiss, Pauline Long, and Mary Wolk, and the first membership meeting with Wolk, Irene Shaffer, Ceil Unterberger, Miriam Freeman, Audrey Jacobosky, and Miriam Long.*

Fannie Long gave Saturday teas featuring cultivated community people, and Sunday teas for visiting YMHA lecturers, most of whom she secured. The quality of the lecturers, and the timeliness of their topics, drew praise from the local press, which mused in 1934 that "perhaps never, in all our attempts to encourage general culture . . . , has any Wilkes-Barre committee brought one list of so many men eminent in letters and world politics."

The Einstein film screening and NCJW's Americanization classes also had Long's stamp, and in 1929, as fine arts chair of the State Women's Clubs, Long arranged a poster exhibit at the Y featuring pieces that she had collected in Europe. In 1936 Governor Earle appointed Long to a committee selecting Pennsylvania art for exhibition in New York.

For decades, Long was the YMHA's guardian angel. Two more executive directors (Alexander Ginsburg and Bertha Cohen Weiss) followed Isadore

*Other women active in the League through the years were Sarah Popky, Mrs. Maurice Kirschner, Lois Rosensweig, Rita Wolberg, Emma Cantor, Esther May Slaff, and Sydelle Hyman. Shirley Klein, Madge Benovitz, and Edna Lichtig were presidents of the local chapter. Benovitz and Barbara Casper were on the state board, and Benovitz was state president. In 1958, Fannie Long was a nominee for Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania, an honor attained by Madge Benovitz (1989), Mimi Ungar Fredman (1990), and Sue Kluger (1992).

Abelson at the Y before Lou Smith was offered the post, temporarily, in 1925. Long sensed the young athlete's administrative potential, and became his mentor, sharing her vision and teaching him leadership in frequent discussions at her home across the street from the Y. She molded a leader who, in anything but temporary capacity, would guide the Y, renamed the Jewish Community Center (JCC) in 1947, for 52 years.

Louis Smith in the early 1950s.

Long found another young talent in Julia Lieberman, and worked with her in the dramatics program, the women's group, and especially in establishing the Y camp program, which was imaginative, educational and, importantly during the Depression, inexpensive. The children, divided into "families," went to "banks" and spent "fun money" at "bakeries" and "butcher shops" of the YMHA "village." Most of these ideas were Long's.

Y employees sometimes resented Long, who was domineering and a perfectionist. And, like many Jews of Sephardic or German background, she could be patronizing to the Eastern European Jews. In the wake of Hitler, her attitude changed and she became genuinely cordial to all.

Fannie Sax Long, widowed since 1937, died of a stroke on November 16, 1959. Her daughter said, "She was either the most conservative liberal or the most liberal conservative who ever lived." Though she tended to adopt and quickly drop certain of her causes, and she did not step aside gracefully, Long was indisputably an enormous force for good in Wilkes-Barre.

Julia Lieberman is front row center in this photograph of a 1942 Scholastic Club minstrel show cast. *Courtesy Gloria Fierverker.*

Rabbi Samuel Wolk.
Courtesy
Rabbi Daniel S. Wolk.

Fannie Long also helmed the sisterhood of Temple B'nai B'rith, which marked the 80th anniversary of the first synagogue building in 1929, the year Rabbi Marcus Salzman began sharing the pulpit with Rabbi Samuel Wolk, who succeeded Salzman in 1931. Credited with unifying Jewish fundraising and known as "saintly," Wolk led the congregation through the Depression, the 1936 flood, and the unrest of World War II before accepting an Albany pulpit in 1945.

A chairman of the United Jewish Appeal (founded in its current form nationally in 1939, but initiated locally in 1934) and primary author of the history of Temple B'nai B'rith published at its March 1945 centennial, Rabbi Wolk endeared himself to Jews and non-Jews alike through his work promoting peace and unity, children's welfare, education, charity, minority rights, and interfaith and intra-faith understanding. He was the first Jew to preach at St. Stephen's Church and, with Rabbi Emeritus Salzman in the 1930s, hosted a service at Temple B'nai B'rith for honored guests, Temple Israel and Rabbi Levitsky.

By then, the Conservative synagogue had already joined Temple B'nai B'rith and First Presbyterian Church for the first Brotherhood service, and had been holding its own services for some years. In August 1922, seeking to organize a congregation that would blend traditional ritual and modern life, Meyer Abelson, Alex Blumenthal, Benjamin T. Cohen, Henry Fein, and Robert Lee Jaffee met in a South Main Street store and founded Temple Israel. Each man contributed $100 for a charter*, and each would approach 100 other families to join Temple Israel.

Rabbi Louis Levitsky.
Taken from Harvey-Smith History of Wilkes-Barre, Vol. VI.

* In addition to officers Leonard Tintner, Joel Cohen, Nathan Rosenthal, Wolfe Harris, and Herman A. Sandberg, subscribers to the charter recorded February 14, 1923 were Max Berk, Henry Shapiro, Harry Feinberg, Nat Meyer, Harry Michlosky, David Oppenheimer, David Rosenthal, H. Steinberg, Louis Cohen, Aaron Hurwitz, Harold Meyer, Louis Ellowitch, Dr. Max Tischler, Harry H. Cohen, William F. Smulyan, Joseph A. Goldman, Harry L. Haltzel, Harry Karnofsky, Samuel S. Simkowitz, J. W. Engel, Abraham Cantor, Morris Moskowitz, Harry Rosenthal, Nat Landau, Hyman Landau, S. L. Robinson, Harold Meyer, Alex Blumenthal, Harry Oppenheimer, Herman Blum, David Cantor, Jacob L. Williams, Maurice D. Brandwene, Henry Fein, Benjamin T. Cohen, Joseph Michlosky, Herman Landau, Jacob D. Groh, Harry A. Groh, Robert T. Menaker, Sam B. Hirshowitz, Sam J. Sagenkahn, Paul Frankel, Isidor Blum, Ben Cohen, Dr. Albert Kaufman, Martin V. Smulyan, A. Ehrlich, Max Hurwitz, Herman Laks, and Sol Allen.

On the advice of Jewish Theological Seminary president Dr. Cyrus Adler, Benjamin T. Cohen, Harry Feinberg, Leonard Tintner, and Nathan Rosenthal engaged Louis M. Levitsky, then in his graduating year at the Seminary, as rabbi for the approaching High Holy Days. Jacob Mason was hired as cantor, a choir was assembled, and Morris Moskowitz built an Ark to house the Torah scroll.

Interior Temple Israel.

The first service, attended by about 75 families, was held on *Selichot* night, 1922, in the Y's auditorium, which would continue to house Temple Israel's daily and Sabbath services as the congregation acted on immediate plans to erect a building. At a post-Yom Kippur banquet hosted by Alex Blumenthal, Rabbi Benjamin Tintner and United Synagogue of America executive Rabbi Samuel Cohen addressed the membership, which pledged $40,000 and purchased the John T. Lenahan estate on South River Street in December 1922.

Temple officers Leonard Tintner, Harry Feinberg, Hyman Landau, Nathan Rosenthal, and Eugene L. Man oversaw construction, and Tintner and Joel Cohen were chief officers at the synagogue's September 13, 1925 dedication. The handsome copper-domed structure with Byzantine exterior, designed by Ralph M. Herr, was easily the Valley's largest synagogue. Land for a cemetery had been acquired. A school building, erected opposite the Temple, was dedicated on September 8, 1929. Rabbi Levitsky, who later married pediatrician Dr. Anna Levy, would lead the congregation to 1940.

Three weeks after the Temple Israel School ceremonies, B'nai Jacob dedicated its redecorated synagogue. Anshe Emes had rebuilt its synagogue in 1922; dedication festivities that May 28 featured a parade through the Heights, which was packed again on June 15, 1922 for dedication of the new Talmud Torah building, deemed "a handsome contribution to the city's educational institutions."

B'nai Jacob, 1929.
Courtesy Nathan Kuss.

Hebrew Institute, Talmud Torah Beth David was impressively launched. Joseph Barondess, a former member of New York City's Board of Education and the most famous Yiddish orator of the day, was guest speaker, and Cantor Joseph Mizrochi of Budapest chanted the prayers. Wilkes-Barre Mayor Daniel L. Hart spoke briefly, as he did at almost all

Gerald Fierman contributed this photograph of his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Fierman, who turned over the first shovelful of earth at September 1921 groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Talmud Torah on East Northampton Street.

important Jewish events occurring during his tenure (1920-33). But Chief Rabbi Davidson sounded a cautionary note when he attributed increased Jewish unity in the Valley, and throughout America, to the antisemitism expressed in Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* and elsewhere.

On June 22, 1925, the Talmud Torah opened its newly constructed playground to the city. Auto parts dealer Charles Weissman, chairman of the Talmud Torah Playground Committee, was primarily responsible for the playground, which would serve about 1,000 Heights children. Still in his thirties, Weissman would devote much of his time to public service.

While Talmud Torah chairman and chief rabbi I. M. Davidson was one of the area's foremost Jewish leaders, the scholarly Nechemiah Williams was also much esteemed in the Orthodox community. Employed at Anshe Emes from 1906, a year after arriving from Poland, he apparently secured the job through his foster brother Samuel Pripstein, an earlier arrival. Williams lived with his family* above the *shul* in a parsonage arrangement, moving to 47 South Welles Street upon transferring to B'nai Jacob around 1921. He tutored many a bar mitzvah boy, taught Talmud to his grandson Marvin, was a *sofer* (scribe), and made templates for tombstone carvers. He died on September 26, 1930, a few months after his son Maurice, and was buried in the Darling Street Cemetery after a funeral nearly as large as Rabbi David Ginsburg's.

By 1930 the growth and prosperity of the "Roaring Twenties" had come to an abrupt halt. The Wall Street crash of October 1929 accelerated a general depression and ruined investors. A number of Valley Jews lost all their assets, and some, in despair, committed suicide, which was not necessarily reported as such.

Interior B'nai Jacob.

The newspapers did report the criminal behavior of some Jewish men, whose most flagrant acts

* Williams's children were Jacob, Maurice, Nathan, Bertha (Siegel), Matel (Lieberman), Anne, Lillian, and Judge Nochem Winnet. Winnet is profiled in a later chapter. Matel was mother of Julia Lieberman, Anne worked at the JCC, and Lillian was office manager at Temple Israel for 65 years. Merchant Samuel Pripstein, an ordained rabbi, was active at Holche Yosher, Ohav Zedek, and the Talmud Torah, and presided over the *Vaad Hakashrut* (committee for kashrut) for 20 years.

were violations of Prohibition and gambling laws. At least one Jewish man was jailed for bootlegging, but other bootleggers escaped detection, and Jewish merchants were among those knowingly providing malt, hops, juniper berries, wine presses, bottle caps, and gin recipes to knowing customers.

The Wyoming Valley Jewish population of 1920, at about 5,000, represented just over one percent of total county population. By 1927, Luzerne County was home to about 8,332 Jews, 5,500 of whom lived in Wilkes-Barre, where they constituted seven percent of the city's population. Another 1,000 Jews lived in Hazleton. Over 20 percent (400) of the remaining Jews lived in Kingston, with the rest distributed among the other outlying towns.*

The Wilkes-Barre YM-YWHA membership in 1930, somewhat disappointing in relation to the total Jewish population, was about 1,100—-up from just under 600 in 1925. Among the members were twins Gerald and Shirley Fierman, enrolled as babies to inspire other parents, many of whom probably could not afford to join, or worked too many hours to engage in Y activities.

Not surprisingly, the area's Jewish population still contained a sizable foreign-born element in 1930. In that year's census for the city of Wilkes-Barre, 1,162 non-natives listed Yiddish as their original language. Though more immigrants named English, Welsh, Polish, German, Italian, and Lithuanian, Yiddish speakers outnumbered those originally speaking Slovak, Arabic, Russian, and Ukrainian.

Comparing the Wyoming Valley Jewish community to 1930 with that of nearby Scranton, a community of similar size and age, we see a common historic pattern but important differences. Also a major center of anthracite coal mining, Scranton, too, had absorbed small numbers of German Jews, who became merchants, in the 1840s. Later, several thousand Eastern European Jews, mainly from Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland, arrived in Scranton and quickly founded *landsleit*-based Orthodox congregations. Unlike Wilkes-Barre's Jews, who generally did not work in heavy industry, Scranton's Jews occasionally worked in the area's iron foundries (defunct by 1900). Settling first largely in the Flats section near the Lackawanna River, a neighborhood analo-

* The remaining distribution, according to 1927 statistics of the American Jewish Committee, was: Ashley, 99; Avoca, 37; Dupont, 41; Exeter Borough, 150; Forty Fort, 36; Freeland, 85; Larksville, 35; Luzerne, 131; Miners Mills, 83; Nanticoke, 200; Parsons, 25; Pittston, 160; Plymouth, 165; Shickshinny, 12; Swoyersville, 125; West Wyoming, 18; Wyoming, 30. Avondale and Sugar Notch are noted among Pennsylvania communities having fewer than ten Jews.

gous to Wilkes-Barre's Heights, many Scranton Jews later moved to the more upscale Hill section, the residential equivalent of South Wilkes-Barre. Though it appears, pending further research, that antisemitism was more widespread and virulent in Scranton, the community's Jews, very much like Wyoming Valley Jews, were dedicated to their Jewish communal institutions, especially their YMHA.

A Gallery: Wyoming Valley Jews in the Arts and Media

Overleaf: Perhaps Wilkes-Barre's most famous exports, screenwriter-producer Herman J. Mankiewicz (left), and his brother, writer-producer-director Joseph L. Mankiewicz (right), flank their father, Franz Mankiewicz, who taught languages at Harry Hillman Academy and later became a professor at Columbia University. Photograph circa 1936. *Courtesy Frank Mankiewicz.*

TOM BIGLER, ALFRED S. GROH, JOSEPH SALSBURG

A Gallery:

Wyoming Valley Jews in the Arts and Media

In Max Wilk's *The Wit and Wisdom of Hollywood*, playwright Marc Connelly tells of a writer who submitted a movie script to MGM. Recognizing the difficulty of getting unsolicited material read, the author attached a note:

> *Don't be too hasty in tossing this story into a waste basket. You will notice that its envelope is postmarked Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Let me remind you that Wilkes-Barre breeds writers. It gave MGM Herman J. Mankiewicz, Samuel Hoffenstein, and Louis Weitzenkorn.*

The writer received the following response:

> *Thank you for your note about Wilkes-Barre. We are sending back your script, which we cannot use. We are also returning Herman J. Mankiewicz, Samuel Hoffenstein, and Louis Weitzenkorn.*

Although the unnamed writer was unsuccessful, one can hardly dispute his attempt to exploit the Wyoming Valley connection shared by so many talented Jewish writers, actors, producers, directors, and artists. Some, like "Mank," Hoffenstein, and Weitzenkorn, achieved spectacular success. All exhibited an uncommon loyalty to and nostalgia for their roots; indeed, several of today's working celebrities chose to write their own stories especially for this book. Profiled below, from "A" almost to "Z," are some of the area's sons and daughters who have contributed significantly to the arts and media.

Neil Amdur.

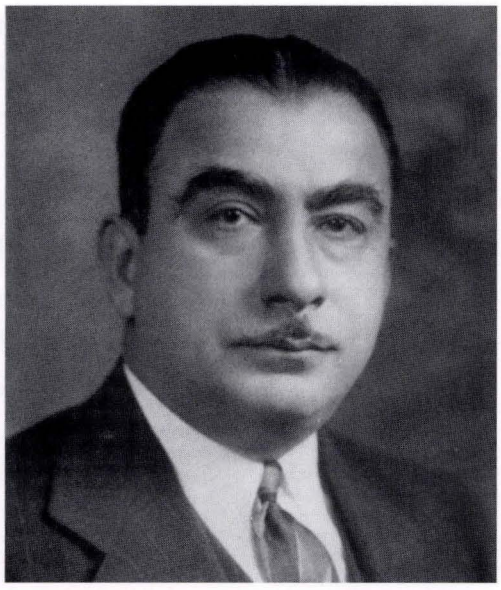
NEIL AMDUR, sports editor of *The New York Times,* was born in Wilkes-Barre to Daniel and Sara Amdur. An athlete at Plymouth High School, he was sports editor of school publications, and a stringer for the *Record* under sports editor Bob Patton. But what really jump-started his career was his WBAX radio show in his last two years of high school. Amdur wrote:

> *The show was called "Between the Goalposts," and the station billed me as the "youngest sportscaster in the country." My father purchased 30 minutes of airtime a week and sold the show to four local sponsors—Golden Quality ice cream, Richfield gas, Louis Rosenthal clothiers, and one other. I would go over each of the high school football games that week, make a prediction, and interview the players and coaches. The show generated a tremendous amount of interest—and ratings. I wrote all the scripts, Bob Whitehead was the producer, and I had a ball. I had wanted to go into sportscasting and was even runner-up in the 1955 National Junior Sportscasters Contest sponsored by the Yankees. But after I got to the University of Missouri in 1957, I found my voice tended to raspiness after long sessions, and shifted to writing.*

From Missouri, a summer internship at the *Miami Herald* became a seven-year stint that culminated in an offer from the *New York Times,* which he left—and returned to—twice. In 1975, he became a CBS sports producer, and in 1984 he became editor-in-chief of *World Tennis Magazine.* Amdur's career choice was also influenced by close friends Sandy Padwe, Joel Harrison, and Barry Greenspon, all sports lovers who became writers, and by the JCC, "a focal point in our lives."

> *Harry Rudolph taught us how to play basketball, along with the values of competition. My aunt, Julia Lieberman, was the guiding light, and all of us wanted to emulate Abe Cohen, the ultimate muscular All-Scholastic sports hero of our time.*
>
> *But the influence went deeper. Sunday softball at Kirby Park became a ritualistic bonding with my father. Even more poignant were the trips to New York with my father and his sports friends—Mort Kaufman, Eli Wasserstrom, and others—to see Babe Ruth's last appearance at Yankee Stadium and other events.*
>
> *These were the roots deeply formed in the Wyoming Valley.*

The **BALTIMORE FAMILY** founded Wyoming Valley's first radio station and first television station. Radio pioneer Louis Baltimore, a graduate of Duryea High School and Pennsylvania State College, was Harrisburg city forester, but left to pursue his passion—radio. In 1923, he moved to Wilkes-Barre and began operating Radio Station WBRE at 17 West Northampton Street.



Louis Baltimore.

Initially licensed for a 10-watt transmitter, WBRE soon increased power to 100 watts and moved to the Liberty Bank Building. By 1937, WBRE had increased power to 250 watts and was affiliated with NBC. The station moved to 62 South Franklin Street, formerly a private residence.

Louis Baltimore's son David, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate in electrical engineering, joined WBRE, filing for a television license in 1945, when applications were frozen pending resolution of technical issues postponed by World War II. Meanwhile, he oversaw the addition of WBRE-FM. With the TV freeze lifted, WBRE-TV, Channel 28, went on the air on January 1, 1953—in fewer than 90 days after getting the nod. First in the region and a national UHF pioneer, within a year WBRE-TV became the country's first million-watt TV station, soon increasing power to five million watts.

The region's first all-color TV operation and one of only 22 all-color stations nationwide, WBRE was also the first to experiment with the videotape camera and live remote telecasting, and the first to operate satellite studios.

David Baltimore.
Baltimore photographs courtesy David Baltimore.

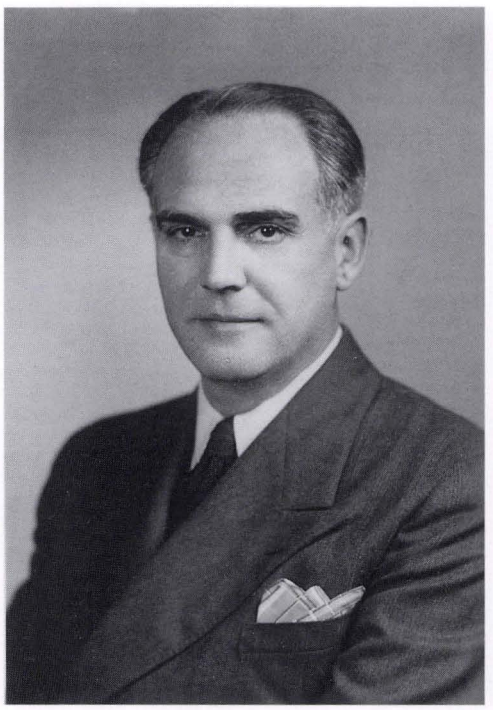
Major construction from 1957 to 1979 completed present quarters. David Baltimore guided the station's technological advancements as well as its commitment to local programming. WBRE's radio and FM station were sold in 1980; the TV facility was sold in 1984.

David and Muriel (Ball) Baltimore's sons Terry and Charles served WBRE-TV, the former as general manager, the latter as vice president of engineering. Daughter Lynn, assistant to NBC Sports Executive Producer Don Ohlmeyer Jr. in New York, worked on such major national and international events as the World Series, Super Bowls, World Cup, Wimbledon, and the Olympics. She later became vice

president of Ohlmeyer's production company in California, where she worked on prime time series and specials, one of which won four Emmy Awards. She also was producer of the Orange Bowl Parade.

Actor **MARTIN BROOKS,** born Martin Baum in Wilkes-Barre, was graduated from Meyers High School and Penn State. On Broadway, he appeared with Fredric March and Florence Eldridge in the Arthur Miller adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1950); with William Prince and Julie Harris in the original production of *I Am a Camera* (1951); and in *Burning Bright* (1950) and *Night of the Auk* (1956). On television, Brooks played Dr. Rudy Wells on *The Six Million Dollar Man.* For a time, he also conducted an acting school in Hollywood.

The **BURGUNDER FAMILY**'s contributions to theater start with Moses Burgunder (1853-1900). Son of Bavarian-born butcher Bernard Burgunder, Moses joined his father's business upon graduating from Wyoming Seminary, but was pursuing his interest in theater by age 28. At a time when all the great actors came to Wilkes-Barre, Moses managed and eventually owned the city's Music Hall, the Grand Opera House, and the Nesbitt Theatre, as well as Scranton's Lyceum and Music Academy and theaters in other cities. He also was president of Wilkes-Barre Posting Co., later renamed Wilkes-Barre Advertising Company. After his death, his wife Rozelle (Frank) sustained and expanded his investments until her death in 1958, relying on the financial advice of their son Bernard F., a graduate of the Hillman Academy and Cornell University.



Bernard F. Burgunder. *Photograph by Ace Hoffman Studios. Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*

B. F. Burgunder (1897-1986), married to Mildred (Sacks), was a founder and president of the Little Theatre, an organizer and president of the Community Chest, president of the Osterhout and Family Service Association, and chairman of the Industrial Fund. He was a scholar and musician. His passion was George Bernard Shaw. Burgunder began collecting Shaviana at Cornell, continuing throughout his life. Working with book and autograph dealers in New York and London, and with curators and scholars, he amassed a major research collection including every practice edition of Shaw's plays; first editions of Shaw's published works in three languages; rough proofs and original manuscripts; portraits;

and letters, notes, and cards. He gave the collection to Cornell on July 26, 1956, the centennial of Shaw's birth. Containing, for example, all 33 British editions of *Saint Joan* printed between 1924 and 1950, the Burgunder Collection in the Rare and Manuscript Collections of the Cornell University Library houses more than 9,500 pieces and constitutes one of the world's three finest Shaw archives.

Actress **JUNE CLAYWORTH**, born Esther Cantor, was graduated from Emerson College, beginning her career with a stock company in Scranton. After representing the region in the "Miss America" pageant, she appeared on Broadway in the 1930s in *Are You Decent?, Page Pygmalion, Torch Song* with Guy Kibbee, and *Once in a Lifetime.* She was introduced to films by Carl Laemmle Jr., who cast her in her first movie, *The Good Fairy,* in 1935. Clayworth appeared in about 20 films, including *Married Before Breakfast; Between Two Women; Live, Love, and Learn;* and *The Marriage-Go-Round.* Appearing with such stars as Maurice Chevalier, Maureen O'Hara and Cornel Wilde, she is perhaps known best for her role as the wife of Claude Rains in *The White Tower.* The 1950 adventure film, produced by Clayworth's husband Sid Rogell, followed a group of misfits who try to climb a mountain in the Swiss Alps. Clayworth died on January 1, 1993.

Photographer **MARK COHEN**, born in Wilkes-Barre in 1943, became interested in photography at age 12; his uncle, city jeweler Leonard Cohen, taught him the techniques of developing. After graduating from Forty Fort High School, Cohen attended Penn State, transferring to Wilkes College, where he received a B.A. in 1965. As a student, he exhibited his work at Penn State and at Wilkes.

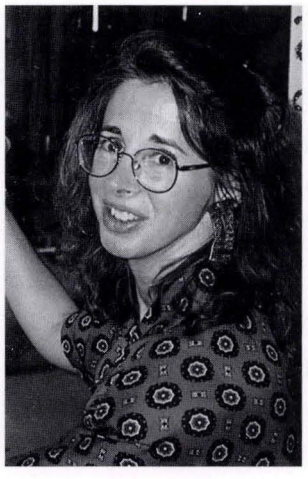
In 1967, Cohen opened a commercial photography studio in Wilkes-Barre, and in the '70s and '80s he taught photography at King's College, Wilkes College, Princeton University, Rhode Island School of Design, and Cooper Union. He has had individual exhibitions at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and Washington's Corcoran Galley of Art, among many others. Among group exhibitions were *American Photographs* (1976) in Toronto, *Other Eyes* (1976) in London, *Fotografi Oggi: gli Americani* (1973) in Turin, *10 Photographes Contemporains* (1977) in Paris, and *Twenty American Artists* (1980) in San Francisco. In the 1990s, he made several visits to Mexico, where

"Boy Twisting Shirt," 1976 photograph by Mark Cohen. *Courtesy Mark Cohen.*

he photographed the people and their way of life. In 1992, he exhibited his work at the Tamayo Museum in Mexico City in a showing of *Mexico Through Foreign Eyes.*

Mark Cohen was the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. He is recognized as one of the preeminent American artists in his field.

Leslie Danoff. *Courtesy Albert Danoff.*



Former TV producer **LESLIE DANOFF**, daughter of Albert and Selma Danoff of Kingston, worked for *CBS Morning News,* where she was a researcher and writer for Bill Moyers and Walter Cronkite, and WNET, where she was associate producer for Bill Moyers's *Journal* series. She also produced 1982's Emmy-winning "New York & Co." and "Book Banning" for WNET. Her "Unsung Heroes" won the B'nai B'rith Edward R. Murrow Television Award for 1982. Her sister Susan Danoff is a professional storyteller.

Susan Danoff. *Courtesy Albert Danoff.*

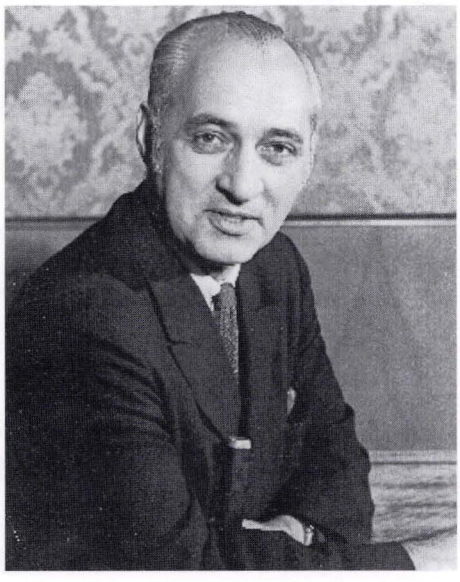
Writer **BETTIJANE EISENPREIS**, born Elizabeth Jane Long to Clinton and Carol Long of Wilkes-Barre, was educated at Wyoming Seminary, Wellesley College, and Wilkes College. Founder of her own writing business, BjLE Ink, she belongs to the American Medical Writers Association and specializes in consumer health issues. Her first book, *Coping: A Young Woman's Guide to Breast Cancer Prevention,* was published in 1996, and she is currently writing another, about scoliosis. Her articles include "A Father's Day Story" *(New York Daily News),* based on a trip to Paris with her father, and "New Hope for High-Risk Babies" *(Parents Magazine).* For 12 years, she was a columnist for *Reform Judaism.*

Bettijane Eisenpreis.

Producer **MICHAEL ELLIS** was born Mayer Ellis Abrahamson in 1917, moving from Philadelphia to Wilkes-Barre at an early age. His mother Molly operated a dress shop from the family's West South Street home. Active in the theater at Wyoming Seminary and Dartmouth College, after World War II service he continued in the theater until the 1970s. He was involved with 12 Broadway shows as actor, stage manager, or producer, and three off-Broadway shows as producer. Probably the best-known was Neil Simon's first big hit, *Come Blow Your Horn.* From 1954-65, as owner and operator of the Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pennsylvania, Ellis developed the venue into a premier regional theater. He also managed the Parker Playhouse in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Ellis earned his M.A. at Drew University (1973), where he established the annual Michael Ellis Prize for best master's thesis in English. He is a member of the Theatrical Advisory Board of the Hopkins Center of Dartmouth College. In 1975, he received Wyoming Seminary's Distinguished Service Award.

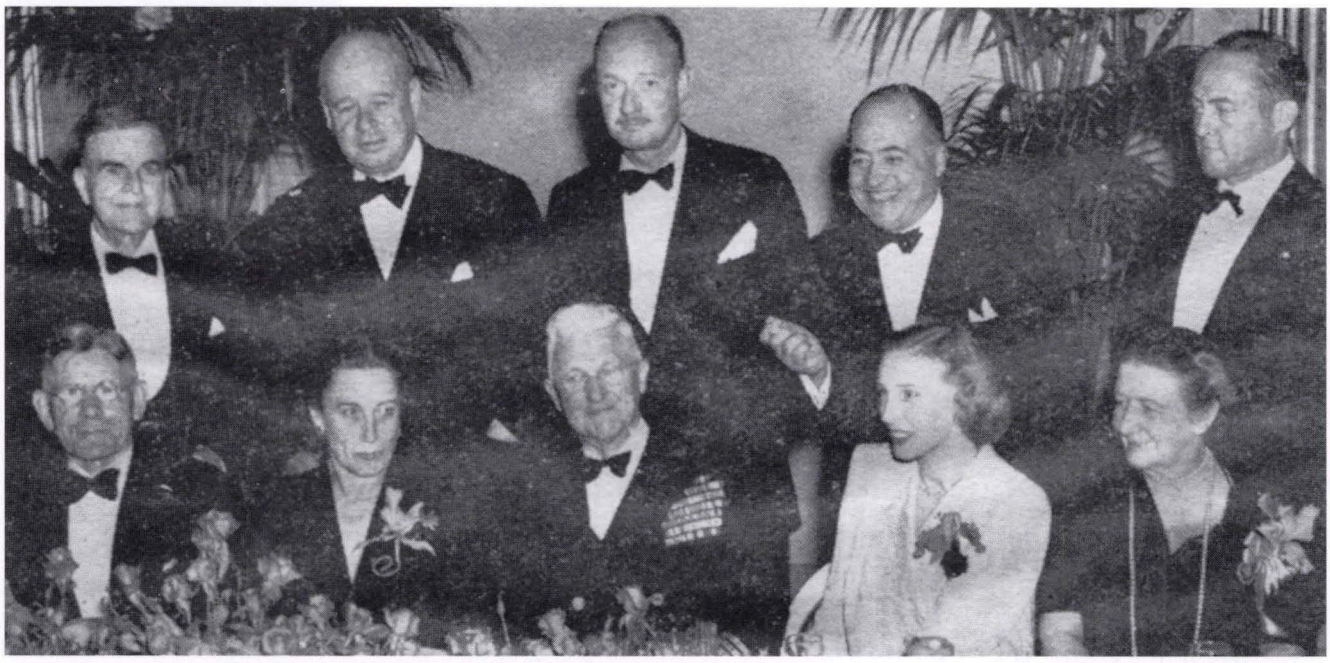
Michael Ellis. *Courtesy Wyoming Seminary.*



Film editor **NEIL FELDER**, born in 1963 to Edward and Barbara Felder of Wilkes-Barre, earned a B.A. in motion pictures at the University of Miami, where he directed a music video that aired on MTV. In Los Angeles, he became an apprentice editor for a Fox pilot, "The Outsiders." He worked on various TV movies until *The Outsiders* was picked up, to be shot at Universal Studios and edited electronically. Felder became an apprentice editor, was entered into the union, and

learned electronic editing "on the fly." Assistant editor for *The Bradys* and "Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man," he joined NBC's *Law and Order* in 1990 as an assistant editor, and became an editor in the show's fifth season.

Producer **JOEL FISCHMAN**, son of David and Ruth Fischman, worked under Al Groh at Wilkes College as a technical director, lighting and scene designer, and stage manager. He was stage and tour manager for the Pennsylvania Ballet, technical director for Trump Plaza, and is currently vice president for entertainment at Bally's in Las Vegas.

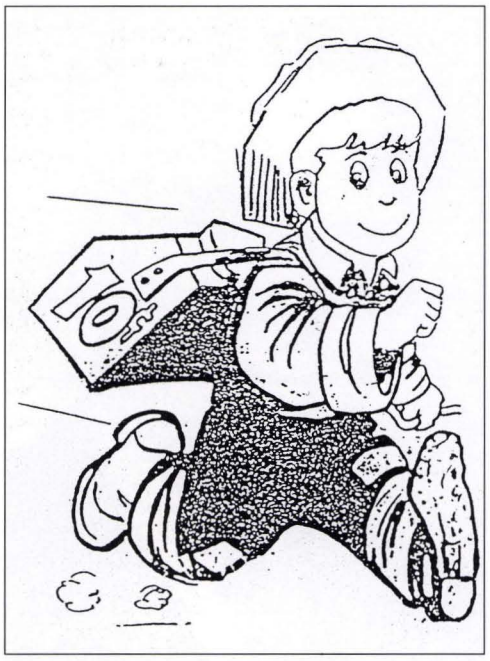


Ham Fisher was among ten nationally known Valley natives honored at the 1948 Parade of Progress dinner. Pictured are, seated, from left: former Governor Arthur James, Mildred Coughlin McNutt, Admiral Harold R. Stark, Candy Jones Conover, Sarah Atherton Bridgman. Standing, from left, are Dr. Donald Guthrie, Frank C. Walker, Paul Webb, Ham Fisher, and Burr Churchill Miller.
Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1948, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.

Cartoonist **HAMMOND EDWARD "HAM" FISHER** created the comic strip "Joe Palooka," which appeared in more than 900 newspapers nationwide by the 1960s. The strip made a specialty of fighting racial and religious intolerance.

Born in Wilkes-Barre in 1900, the son of Edward J. and Sadie (Breakstone), Fisher was a self-taught artist whose first newspaper cartoon appeared in the *Wilkes-Barre Record* shortly after his graduation from Wilkes-Barre High School in 1918. According to newspaper accounts, he operated his own printery in Wilkes-Barre's Georgetown section but went bankrupt and sold his equipment, thereafter becoming a cartoonist for the *Times-Leader.* With Norman Davis, he published a weekly newspaper, the Wilkes-Barre *Pictorial,* in the 1920s. Fisher also worked with Al Capp before leaving "Li'l Abner" for "Joe Palooka."

In 1927 Fisher went to New York, where he worked for the *New York Daily News,* and in 1930 he began to draw "Joe Palooka" for McNaught Syndicate. The title character, based on Wilkes-Barre boxer Joe Hardy, was described by Fisher as a "big, good-natured prize fighter who didn't like to fight, a defender of little guys, a gentle knight." Another character, manager "Knobby Walsh," was patterned after a Wilkes-Barre cigar store customer, and the shoeshine boy, "Little Max," was modeled after Max Bartikowsky, whose family were Fisher's South Franklin Street neighbors. Later a prominent jeweler, Bartikowsky apparently spent some pre-adolescent time as a Public Square shoeshine boy.

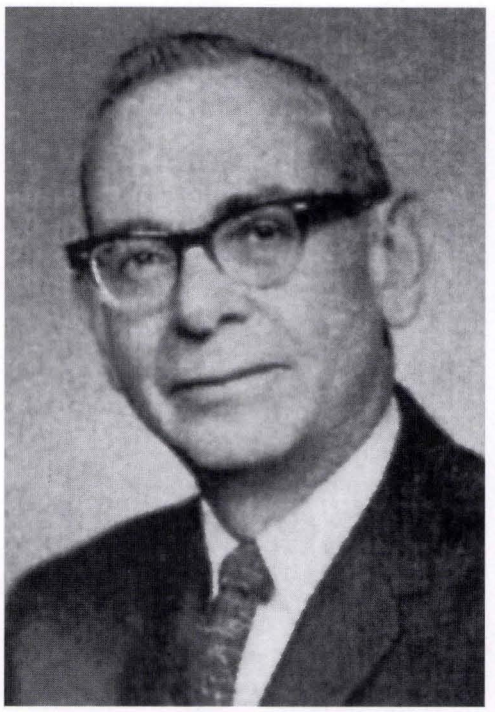


"Little Max."

Joe Palooka enlisted in the army in World War II, and the American Legion awarded Fisher a distinguished service citation for promoting Americanism and aiding the morale of the armed forces and home front. In 1949, a portion of Wilkes-Barre Mountain at the Laurel Run Road intersection was designated Mount Palooka, and a permanent 25-foot stone face of Joe Palooka was erected.

Despondent about his failing eyesight and poor health, Ham Fisher took his life in December 1955 at the studio of a friend in New York City. The strip continued until 1984, drawn by Tony DiPreta.

Mt. Joe Palooka is dedicated on April 16, 1949. Ham Fisher stands to the right of the plaque. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1949, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*



Larry Greenspon.

LARRY GREENSPON and his son **BARRY GREENSPON** made their mark in the advertising field. Larry, born in Bluefield, West Virginia in 1905, attended the University of West Virginia and was graduated in 1928 from Harvard University. He joined Armstrong Cork in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, moving to Wilkes-Barre in the early 1930s to work for Triangle Shoe Company, where he sold shoes, managed stores, and handled advertising. After his 1933 marriage to Sylvia (Corner), he formed the Greenspon Advertising Agency, which he ran until his retirement in the early 1980s. Barry Greenspon wrote about his father:

The Depression was in full swing and jobs weren't plentiful. Good jobs were even harder to come by. So he took his degree from Harvard and sold shoes. And he did a little writing on the side.

He wrote short stories for a local literary publication. I discovered a few yellowed, tattered issues in the basement of our house 30 years after he'd written the stories. And about six years before the Agnes flood swept them away.

He never mentioned that he'd taken a crack at writing fiction. But I wasn't surprised at how good the stories were. He was always a good storyteller. Combine this with a passion for words, and you've got the makings of a fine writer.

But he had to earn a living. So he took his love of words and opened an advertising agency. He didn't have much experience in the field, but it seemed like a good way to do some writing and actually make a living at it. It was.

And if you look at the hundreds of brochures and catalog pages and ads that came out of the Greenspon Advertising Agency over a 50-year span, you'll notice a clarity and precision in the writing that belies its commercial purpose.

Larry Greenspon was a terrific writer in the medium to which fate and the times had led him. But more than that, Larry Greenspon was a terrific writer.

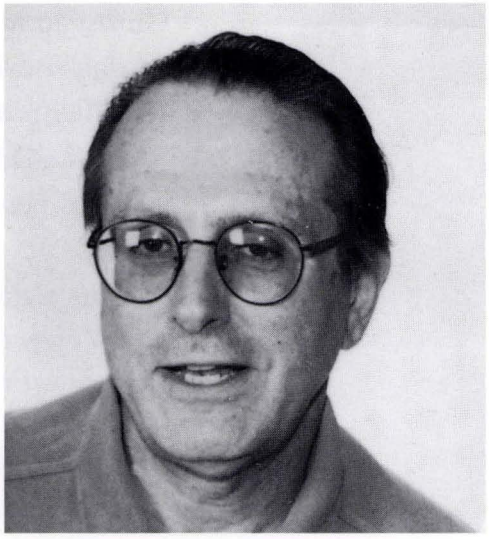
Barry Greenspon edited Wyoming Seminary's literary magazine, majored in creative writing at the University of Pennsylvania and, like his father, tried fiction before going into advertising. Writing for leading agencies "when advertising was fun," he worked with the famous in "wonderful places I never believed I'd get to."

. . . Places like Prague, where I talked with Vaclav Havel, the first Czechoslovakian president after the Velvet Revolution. The business got me to Fiji and Australia and the Orient and the Middle East. It also got me to the biggest landfill in the world, and the largest tire disposal site.

It wasn't all glamour.

I've hung out of an open helicopter over Los Angeles and driven through bumper-to-bumper traffic with Jackie Stewart, the ex-world champion formula one driver, driving as if he were still on the track.

I've watched molten lava creep down the side of a volcano on Hawaii's Big Island and discussed the attack on Pearl Harbor with the cameraman who filmed the only motion pictures of the Japanese planes over Pearl on that December 7th.



Barry Greenspon.

I've worked with professional athletes, actors and actresses, models and musicians, and hung out with some of them for a while. I've met some of the most important people in American business. I had adventures and did things I never would have done if I hadn't been able to put words and images on paper. And sometimes have them transposed to film.

There are certainly more important places to use words and images than advertising. Maybe I didn't have the stuff. But, all in all, for a lot of years, advertising, for me, was about as much fun as you could have and still get paid for it.

ABC-TV News executive **MIMI GURBST**, born in 1952 to Herbert and Evelyn Gurbst, was graduated from Wyoming Valley West High School and Brandeis University, earning a master's in journalism at New York University. Her first real job, as a reporter for New York Public Television, coincided with a city newspaper strike, prompting Gurbst to organize Channel 13's daily *Special Edition* to fill the news void. Calling on hometown friend Neil Amdur, idled at the *New York Times* sports desk by the strike, she asked him to present a daily sports news column on the show. Amdur did so well that, by the time the strike was settled, Gurbst's *Special Edition* boasted top *Times* news reporters.

After she persuaded New York Mayor Ed Koch to read the Sunday funnies on Channel 13—he was a hit—he turned the tables, inviting Gurbst to join his staff as a press secretary. Working for Koch, Gurbst really learned the city and its media.

Gurbst joined ABC-TV in 1979 as assignment editor on the overnight desk, soon moving to the day desk. Thus began a string of assignments that included her production of *Viewpoint.* Over the years, Gurbst rose from northeast bureau chief to U. S. news bureau chief and, in 1994, to the post of vice-president of network news with responsibility for worldwide bureaus.

Advertising writer **JOEL HARRISON** wrote his own story:

> *"Listen, I know you want to listen to the Phillies game, but I'm going to the store to put together some ads and I wouldn't mind some company. Whattaya say?"*
>
> *The speaker was my dad, Fred Harrison. The store was Landau's Furniture on South Main Street. I was the kid who passed up the Phillies game.*
>
> *My dad, one of the most creative people I've ever known, wrote and drew so well that he could have had a major career as an illustrator but, instead, married the boss's daughter and went into the furniture business. It was he, along with a friend's father, Larry Greenspon who ran an ad agency in Wilkes-Barre, who gave me the idea to try my luck in advertising after graduating from Wilkes.*
>
> *Years and agencies later, I have few regrets. Advertising has allowed me to grow, to travel, to experience things that most people only dream about. Through advertising I have worked with people from Henry Kissinger to Mr. Whipple. I've worked at some of the biggest and best agencies.*
>
> *I loved growing up in the Wilkes-Barre area, but I went for a laugh when writing, for an underwear client, "Up 'til now, underwear has been about as exciting as a week in Wilkes-Barre, Pa." The Record reported that the Chamber was up in arms. Someone figured the ad was the work of a former Valley resident with a twisted sense of humor—but I have no idea how they knew it was me.*
>
> *The things that made me want to go into this business happened in Wilkes-Barre. Because of that, I believe that a week in Wilkes-Barre is exciting indeed.*

Poet and screenwriter **SAMUEL HOFFENSTEIN**, born 1890 in Russia, came to Wilkes-Barre's Heights with his parents in 1894, graduating from Wilkes-Barre High School and Lafayette College. After teaching for a year at Wilkes-Barre High, he was principal of the North Main Street elementary school. A contributor to the local press, he soon left for New York, where he became drama critic at the *Sun,* for which he also wrote "The Sun Dial," a daily column of verse and comment. Working as press agent and script reader for theatrical producer A. H. Woods from 1916-27, he also wrote "The Dome" column for the *New York Tribune.*

Hoffenstein's poetry, described as "the epitome of lyrical wit," was enormously popular and has been collected in several volumes, including *Poems in Praise of Practically Nothing* (1928), *Year In, You're Out* (1930), and *Pencil in the Air,* issued after his 1947 death. Here are a few lines from the 1928 volume:

Maid of Gotham, ere we part,
Have a hospitable heart.
Since our own delights must end,
Introduce me to your friend.

Samuel Hoffenstein.

In Hollywood, where he was a celebrated wit and raconteur, Hoffenstein worked 14 years for Twentieth Century-Fox, of which experience he said, "In the movies we writers work our brains to the bone. And what do we get for it? A fortune." His screenplays for Twentieth Century-Fox, Paramount, and other major studios included *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, An American Tragedy, Sentimental Journey, Desire, The Great Waltz,* the 1943 version of *The Phantom of the Opera,* and *Laura.*

Scholar and writer **DAVID HOROWITZ**, son of Cantor Aaron and Bertha (Chazan) Horowitz, was born April 9, 1903 in Malmö, Sweden. He organized Zionist youth groups in Wilkes-Barre as a teenager, and was ad man for The Hub in the 1920s, but at this writing, he still works from his "corner of Jewishness" at the United Nations Secretariat Building, from whose Room 373 he has reported weekly since 1947. He is founder and president of United Israel World Union and editor of its *United Israel Bulletin,* which promotes an understanding of Israel and the quest for peace and world order as outlined in the Bible. He was honored in 1996 as "the oldest and longest-serving journalist at the UN." His brother, author Emmanuel Winters Horowitz, wrote:

David Horowitz is shown receiving a medal for his service on behalf of the United Nations Correspondents Association, 1996. *Courtesy David Horowitz.*

In 1927, David went to Palestine as a halutz, one of the first American pioneers. While there, he co-authored The Bible in the Hands of Its Creators, a 1,979-page interpretation of Tanakh (Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings). A correspondent of the UN since its inception, he syndicates a

column, At the UN (formerly Behind the Scenes at the UN), with World Union Press. As an investigative journalist, he has exposed Nazis and seen to their deportation. He is in personal touch with world statesmen, and his career has been the subject of media profiles internationally.

Elected president of the Foreign Press Association (1966) and the United Nations Correspondents Association (1981), he is also a Fellow of the Jewish Academy of Arts and Sciences. He describes his work in his autobiography, Thirty-three Candles.

Throughout his lifetime, David has considered Wilkes-Barre his second home and the springboard of his world work.

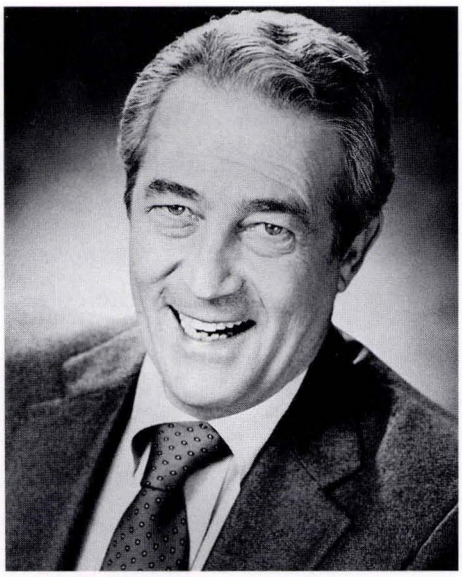
Author **EMMANUEL WINTERS HOROWITZ** was born in 1910 in Sweden, arriving in Wilkes-Barre in 1923. His short stories and humor, written under the pen name Emmanuel Winters, have been widely anthologized, appearing in *Best American Short Stories,* and published in six countries. In 1994, his best-known short story, "God's Agents Have Beards," was published in *The Jews in America: A Treasury of Art and Literature.* A classic of its genre, the story is based partially on Cantor Horowitz and the author's childhood in the family's Park Avenue home, and concerns a 10-year-old who wants to meet God in order to skip sixth grade in summer school (at Union Street School). First appearing in *Harper's Bazaar,* the story was later dramatized and performed on NBC's *The Eternal Light.*

This photograph of Emmanuel Winters Horowitz was taken about 1942 to accompany his story for *Mademoiselle* magazine. *Courtesy Emmanuel Winters Horowitz.*

Graduated with G. A. R. High School's first class (1928), he had his first piece, poetry, published in Wilkes-Barre's *Sunday Independent.* He has written fiction since graduating from Cornell, where he earned his B.A. and J.D. After World War II Army service, he earned his M.S. at the University of Scranton.

Horowitz played first violin with the Cornell Symphony, the Wilkes-Barre-Scranton Sinfonietta (under Paul Gies), and other local orchestras. With his artist wife, Marilla (Finch), he ran Winters Public Relations Agency, giving national exposure to the Giants' Despair Hill Climb, Brynfan Tyddyn Road Races, the Fine Arts Fiesta, and Wyoming Valley Oratorio Society.

Actor **JAMES KAREN** was born Jacob Karnofsky in 1923. Known as "Tinch" to his local family and childhood friends, Karen became interested in acting at the Wilkes-Barre Little Theatre when he was a teenager, and had joined New York's famed Neighborhood Playhouse by his 18th birthday. His career was interrupted by World War II Army Air Corps service.



James Karen.

On Broadway he played in Arthur Miller's adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (in which Martin Brooks had a leading role), supported Celeste Holm in *Third Best Sport,* was in *Cactus Flower* with Lauren Bacall, and served as standby to his friend Jason Robards in Eugene O'Neill's *Moon for the Misbegotten.* He has also appeared in regional theater in this country and in productions abroad.

Karen relocated to Hollywood in 1975. He has since been featured in dozens of theatrical and television films, as well as numerous television series and commercials. Among his films are *The China Syndrome* with Jack Lemmon and Jane Fonda; *Poltergeist; All the President's Men* with Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford; and *Wall Street* with Michael Douglas. Appearing with Buster Keaton on numerous television shows, he also toured with Keaton in the stage play *Merton of the Movies,* a vintage 1920s comedy by Marc Connelly and George S. Kaufman. Television viewers will remember him as the spokesman for a prominent supermarket chain in the 1970s and 1980s.

George Korson in the 1940s. *Courtesy Judith Tierney, King's College Library.*

Folklorist **GEORGE KORSON**, son of Joseph and Rose (Lipova) Korson, was born in 1899 in Bobrinetz, the Ukraine, arriving in Wilkes-Barre in 1912. Upon graduation from Wilkes-Barre High School (1917), Korson became a reporter for the *Wilkes-Barre Record,* leaving in 1918 to serve in Egypt and Palestine with the Jewish Legion of the British Army. At the end of World War I, he returned to the *Record.* After attending Columbia University, in 1924 he joined the *Pottsville Republican* where, searching in vain at the local library for a book on coal miners' folk songs, he began his lifelong study of mining folklore.

Among his many publications are *Songs and Ballads of the Anthracite Miner* (his first book), *Minstrels of the Mine Patch*

(1938), *Black Lands: the Way of Life in the Coal Fields* (1941), and *The Child's Book of Folklore* (1947). In 1946 he directed a Library of Congress field expedition through the hard coal fields of Pennsylvania, recording the songs of the anthracite miners. He edited the Library of Congress record album *Songs and Ballads of the Anthracite Miners,* and later, in 1965, *Songs and Ballads of the Bituminous Miners.* Korson died in Washington, D.C. on May 23, 1967. He left the collection of his works to King's College.

Producer **GEORGE LEDERER** was born in 1862 in Wilkes-Barre, the son of tanner Marx Lederer, a founder of Temple B'nai B'rith. Beginning his professional life as a child soprano, in 1873 Lederer joined the company of *The Naiad Queen.* By 1878, abandoning both singing and writing (short stories and drama criticism), he embarked on a career in the theater.

One of his first productions was *Princess Nicotine* with Lillian Russell. His first musical show was *The Lady Slavey* in 1893 with Marie Dressler in the cast. As late as 1920, Lederer declared that his *The Belle of New York* (1897) "has made more money than any other musical comedy in the world."

Often called the Ziegfield of his day, Lederer claimed to have originated use of the term "vaudeville" for variety performances. He was credited with evolving the pattern and many features of the modern musical comedy. He was originator of the revue, staged such successes as the original *Floradora,* and gave David Warfield his first Jewish characterization on the legitimate stage in the revue *In Gay New York.* Active in the entertainment world long past his heyday, Lederer died in New York City in October 1938.

Screenwriter, producer, and journalist **HERMAN J. MANKIEWICZ**, one of Wilkes-Barre's most prominent exports, was born in New York City in 1897 to German Jewish parents, who brought him to Wilkes-Barre in 1904. His father, Franz (Frank), educated at the University of Berlin, was editor of the German-language newspaper *Demokratischer Wächter* and taught German and French at South Wilkes-Barre's Harry Hillman Academy, a forerunner of Wyoming Seminary Lower School. Franz also organized a German club and produced plays (sometimes casting his son and fellow students Simon and Clinton Long) enjoyed by the entire local German community. Herman, a brilliant scholarship student at the Academy, was graduated at age 14, though he had passed the entrance examinations for Columbia University when he was 13. Too young to enter college, he worked a year in the coal mines as a surveyor's assistant, where his duties included "rushing the growler"—filling a tin pail with beer at the saloon—and where he learned to smoke and drink.

When the family moved to New York in 1913, Mankiewicz entered Columbia, majoring in English and German and graduating with honors in 1916. He continued as a graduate student until February 1917, when he became a cub reporter on the *Tribune* and the *American Jewish Chronicle.* After Marine service in World War I, he spent six months as director of the American Red Cross News Service in Paris. From 1920-23, he was Berlin correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York World.*

Back in New York, he was assistant drama editor for the *New York Times,* the first drama critic of *The New Yorker,* and a member of the celebrated circle of the "Algonquin Round Table"—all before the age of 30. Ben Hecht, a fellow newspaperman, playwright, and carousing character about town, suggested that "Mank" take his talents to Hollywood. He did as advised, succeeding so well that he soon wired a fellow Algonquinite, "Millions are to be grabbed out here, and your only competition is idiots. Don't let this get around." This was in 1925, the same year that Mank collaborated on a comedy, *The Good Fellow,* with George S. Kaufman. The play, a failure, was set in Wilkes-Barre.

The coming of sound to films in 1928 provided Mank with all the room he needed for his celebrated way with words, and he soon became active as a screenwriter and producer. Among his many achievements were three films for the Marx Brothers—*Monkey Business, Horse Feathers,* and *Duck Soup*—and *The Pride of the Yankees,* the screen biography of baseball great Lou Gehrig. Others included *The Enchanted Cottage, Christmas Holiday, Forsaking All Others,* and the film adaptation of George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber's *Dinner At Eight.*

His greatest achievement—arguably the greatest cultural achievement of any Wyoming Valley product—was the screenplay for the classic *Citizen Kane,* for which he won the 1941 Academy Award for best original screenplay.

The film grew out of Mankiewicz's erstwhile friendship with newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst; Mank and his wife Sara were frequent weekend guests at San Simeon, the palatial estate shared by Hearst and his mistress, movie star Marion Davies (a sister-in-law of George Lederer). Mank's original title for the script, *American,* did not resonate with the *enfant terrible,* director, and star of the film, Orson Welles. Aside from the change of title (whose final version was actually the invention of Mankiewicz's secretary), Welles made his own contributions to the final script (the amount of the contribution, debated hotly among film scholars for years, has been estimated at about 20 percent), smoothing over many of the title character's parallels to Hearst, and adding a few flourishes of his own.

But the trademark motif of the film—Kane's search for the elusive "Rosebud" (in the film a childhood sled)—had its origins in Mankiewicz's Wilkes-Barre childhood. The original Rosebud was Mankiewicz's bicycle, parked in front of the Osterhout Library, stolen and never recovered. Franz Mankiewicz, stern patriarch that he was, refused to replace the bicycle, and Herman Mankiewicz never forgot the incident.

Nor did he ever forget his Wilkes-Barre childhood, according to his biographer, Richard Meryman, who noted that Mank's next-door neighbor was Louis Weitzenkorn, and listed Hillman classmates Bernard F. Burgunder, Clinton Long, and Simon Long in the acknowledgments to *Mank: The Wit, World, and Life of Herman Mankiewicz.* Though he spent most of his life elsewhere, Mank frequently, wistfully, reminisced about life along the Susquehanna and often considered leaving Hollywood and retiring to a quiet literary life near the river.

Mankiewicz reached his peak with *Citizen Kane;* from that point his career slowly declined. Critic Pauline Kael, in a 1971 *New Yorker* article since published as a book *(Raising Kane),* attributed his downfall in part to William Randolph Hearst, who regarded the Welles film as a personal betrayal and mounted a vendetta against anyone connected with it. But Mankiewicz's own colorful, contrary personality was the major factor behind his decline. Hard-drinking, profane, scornful of his employers, by the end of the '40s he continued to be quoted for his wit but was seldom employed to use it. (Nonetheless, he had personally seen to it that dozens of relatives and others still in Germany in the 1930s were rescued and brought safely to the United States.) He died of kidney failure on March 5, 1953.

Herman J. Mankiewicz—"Mank"—mid 1930s. *Courtesy Frank Mankiewicz.*

Joseph L. Mankiewicz. The director in action in the early 1960s. *Courtesy Frank Mankiewicz.*

Writer, director, and producer **JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ** was born in Wilkes-Barre in 1909, the youngest of the three children of Franz and Johanna (Blumenau) Mankiewicz. One of Hollywood's most literate and articulate film makers, he was "the biggest firecracker ever exploded in Hollywood," according to Samuel Goldwyn. In a two-year period, 1949 to 1951, Mankiewicz won four Academy Awards for writing and directing two classic high comedies of manners, *A Letter to Three Wives* and *All About Eve.*

In 1913 young Joseph moved with the family to New York, where he was educated at Public School 64 and Stuyvesant High School. Like his brother Herman, he entered Columbia University at an early age, majoring in literature and languages. Unlike Herman, he won athletic honors in football, baseball, and basketball.

After his graduation in 1928 (again, like Herman, at age 19), he went to Berlin, where he worked in two reportorial jobs and as a translator for silent film intertitles for the German film company UFA. His brother got him a writing contract at Paramount Pictures in Hollywood the next year, and he received his first Oscar nomination for co-writing *Skippy* in 1931 while coining the phrase "my little chickadee" for W. C. Fields.

He had produced some critical successes before 1940, but that year he achieved classic status with the screen adaptation of Philip Barry's *The Philadelphia Story,* which starred Katharine Hepburn, James Stewart, and Cary Grant. Another Oscar-nominated success was *Woman of the Year,* the first film to pair Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. He produced both films for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Although he had written and produced many first-line films by 1943, it was not until he went to Twentieth Century-Fox in that year that Mankiewicz achieved his lifelong ambition to write *and* direct. His first effort as a director was the popular film *Dragonwyck.* Among his many other successes were *The Late George Apley,* which starred Ronald Colman; *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir,* with Rex Harrison and Gene Tierney; *No Way Out,* the first film to feature Sidney Poitier; *Five Fingers,* with James Mason; *People Will Talk,* with Cary Grant; *Guys and Dolls,* starring Marlon Brando and Frank Sinatra; and *Julius Caesar,* with an all-star cast. His last directorial effort was the 1972 thriller *Sleuth,* which won Oscar nominations for both its stars, Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine, as well as for Mankiewicz.

Mankiewicz's bête noire was *Cleopatra,* whose direction and screenplay he took over from director Rouben Mamoulian and a host of other writers,

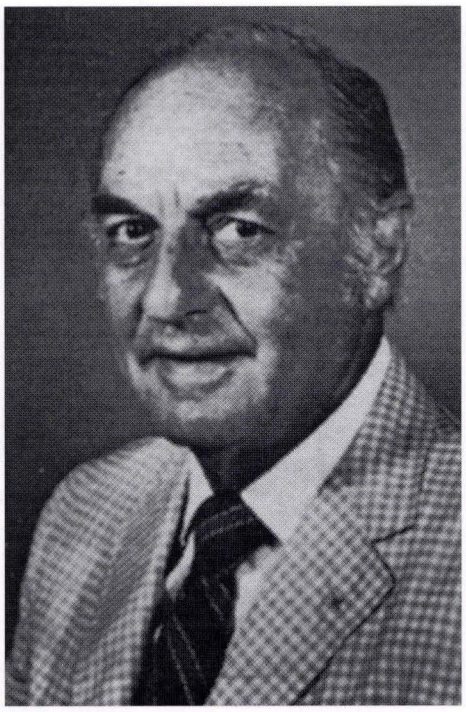
including Sidney Buchman and Nunnally Johnson. Partly because of star Elizabeth Taylor's illness and her off-stage romance with co-star Richard Burton, the studio's difficulties with the film mounted and the cost escalated to more than $40 million in 1963 dollars. Although the film eventually recouped its final cost and even made a small profit, and though Mankiewicz was paid more than $1.5 million for making it, the grim two-year experience seriously depressed him, and he made only a few movies thereafter.

Like his brother Herman, throughout his life Joseph Mankiewicz maintained a near mythical connection with his hometown—though he spent only his first five years in it. In his screenplays he made a point, whenever possible, of mentioning Wilkes-Barre (there are prominent references in *A Letter To Three Wives* and *All About Eve*) and always warmed to the subject in conversation.

Mankiewicz moved his family to Bedford, New York in 1951, keeping active in films and the theater throughout the 1970s. Famous himself as a wit, famously cantankerous as well, he avoided the problems with alcohol and irresponsibility that crippled his brother's career. His death in 1993 ended the contributions to the world of film and theater made by the two brothers, possibly the most prominent contributions made by the Wyoming Valley to the world at large.

The children and grandchildren of the Mankiewicz brothers continue the family's long involvement in the arts, journalism, and politics. Frank Mankiewicz (left), Herman and Sara Mankiewicz's younger son, and Senator Robert F. Kennedy are shown en route to Luzerne County about 1966. Mankiewicz, then Kennedy's press secretary, had previously served as director of the Peace Corps for Latin America, and later became president of National Public Radio (NPR). *Courtesy Frank Mankiewicz.*

Architect **SAMUEL Z. MOSKOWITZ** was born in 1905 to Morris and Lena (Finkel) Moskowitz of Wilkes-Barre's Heights section. Earning his B.F.A. and master's at Yale University, he spent his first nine years as a professional in New York, where he designed high-rise buildings as chief designer for a New York firm. A sole practitioner in Wilkes-Barre from 1935 on, he designed more than 600 structures in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. His principal works included community centers, television and radio studios, houses of worship, nursing homes, and industrial buildings. His "bountiful practice" locally and regionally included WBRE, the Jewish Community Center, United Hebrew Institute, Temple B'nai B'rith, Reform synagogues in Hazleton and Lancaster, the Jewish Home, and Percy Brown's. A Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, he was four-term president of the northeast Pennsylvania chapter, and president of Rotary and the Yale Alumni Association.



Samuel Z. Moskowitz.

Writer **SANFORD "SANDY" PADWE**, acting dean of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and ESPN consultant, was senior editor at *Sports Illustrated* for 12 years, deputy sports editor of the *New York Times,* and reporter for top newspapers and wire services. A Sportswriter of the Year, he has authored three books. A son of Wilkes-Barre's David and Rebecca Padwe, he wrote:

Sandy Padwe.

From the moment Scott's words in Ivanhoe jumped off the pages in ninth grade, I wanted to be a writer. I fastened onto every nuance of the novel, and every word of teacher Prof. Horace Parker at Wyoming Seminary. Those classes changed the way I looked at books. My family's set of Dickens became irresistible, the Osterhout Library became a sanctuary. A habit had begun, but reading fiction was only part of it.

Because I played sports year-round at school, it often was late afternoon when I caught the bus at Kingston Corners or got a ride to the Square. Then I usually greeted my uncle Sam Greenfield at The Beverly and

went to Harry Rudolph's tiny luncheonette on Northampton Street, across from Percy Brown's Restaurant.

The racks of newspapers were outside. The Record and Times-Leader were in the top racks, the Scranton Times and Tribune below and then came the New York and Philadelphia papers. I always bought the New York Times, and I would grab a New York Post because its basketball coverage seemed to last all year. The Herald-Tribune was another treat along with the World-Telegram.

Baseball and basketball were my passions so Rudolph's luncheonette was the place to go. Harry was president of the Eastern Basketball League in which the Barons played and he had once run the baseball Barons franchise as well. Knowing that Harry's son Mendy was the best referee in the National Basketball Association only added to the mystique and excitement of a stop at the luncheonette.

Harry had taught me how to play basketball in 1946 and 1947 at the YMCA. I can still remember the drills dribbling the ball between bowling pins. On some days at his luncheonette, Harry had time for sports talk; other days, he didn't, depending on how many people wanted one of the Hebrew National hot dogs. When Harry could talk, it seemed as if I had been transported to Madison Square Garden or Yankee Stadium.

These interludes could last ten minutes or less and then I would head to Padwe's Kiddieland. When my father locked up we would head home to the Minrose apartments across from the Wilkes Gym. I would take the papers and read every word in the sports sections, then go back to the front pages.

I went to New York with my father in the days when the Martz bus pulled into a station beneath the Dixie Hotel on West 43rd Street, across from the New York Times building. It was mesmerizing to walk past the Times, past all the delivery trucks waiting for the news to come off the gigantic machines in the street-level press room.

Could there be a better, more exciting life? As it turned out, there wasn't. I went to Penn State and studied journalism. I worked at the Times between stints as a senior editor at Sports Illustrated. That came after jobs at the AP, UPI, Newspaper Enterprise Association, the Philadelphia Inquirer and Newsday.

It has been a wonderful career. Journalism has taken me all over the world, and now to television as a consultant for ESPN. It also has taken me to the best journalism school in the world.

The trip has been fascinating, but I think back to Wilkes-Barre with great longing since my father's death in December 1993. When I closed the door to his apartment on West Ross Street for the last time, I realized that home was truly elsewhere now and that Harry Rudolph's Newsstand, Temple Israel, the JCC,

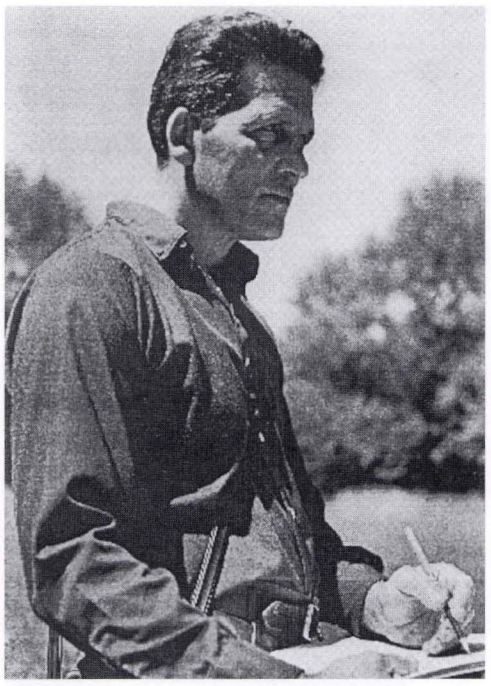
Wyoming Seminary, Artillery Park, and the West Side Armory were all part of a magical past that I can only wish for everybody.

Zelda Popkin. *Courtesy Sheldon Spear.*

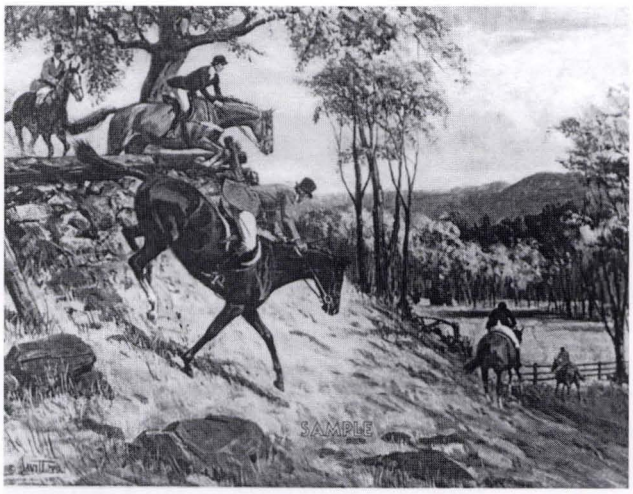
Writer **ZELDA POPKIN** (1898-1983), daughter of Harry and Anna (Glass) Feinberg, was born in Brooklyn and moved to Wilkes-Barre in 1912. She was graduated from Wilkes-Barre High School, and at age 16, she became Luzerne County's first female reporter, joining the staff of the *Times-Leader.* She went to New York in 1916, where she attended Columbia briefly, and worked for the Jewish Welfare Board. In 1919 she married Louis Popkin and joined his public relations firm, while writing magazine articles. In the late 1930s, she wrote her first full-length novel, a mystery, *Death Wears a White Gardenia.* After five more mysteries, she embraced other genres. Her later novels markedly reflected her Jewish heritage. Her courtroom drama, *A Death of Innocence,* was adapted for television. After her husband's 1943 death, Popkin worked in Jewish public relations.

As a child in the Heights, artist **SAM SAVITT** followed the milkman's wagon just to be near the horse. Valedictorian at his 1935 G. A. R. High School graduation, he enrolled in Pratt Art Institute, lacking the formal art training of his classmates. But he could draw horses, and he worked to draw horses so well that by the time he finished school he was earning a living illustrating pulp western stories. This work gave him a foundation in drawing, fundamental to his paintings.

Sam Savitt.



The country's foremost painter of horses, Savitt did portraits of the horses of William Randolph Hearst Jr., Raymond Firestone, August Busch, and Jean Kennedy Smith, among others. His works include pictorial collages of the Kentucky Derby, the Grand National Steeplechase, and the Olympics, and the color cover illustrations for 1950s comic book horses. His work has appeared in *Sports Illustrated, Boy's Life, Field and Stream,* and *Western Horseman.* Official artist of the United States Equestrian



"The Drop Jump" (1979, left) and "The Last Race of the Day" (1980), paintings by Sam Savitt.

Team, he was director of painting at the American Academy of Equine Art. He is the creator of the famous Sam Savitt Horse Charts, author-illustrator of 15 books, and illustrator of over 135 books by other authors. Savitt has taught at the Equine Artists Workshop, Scottsdale Artists School, and the American Academy of Equine Art, where he was dean.

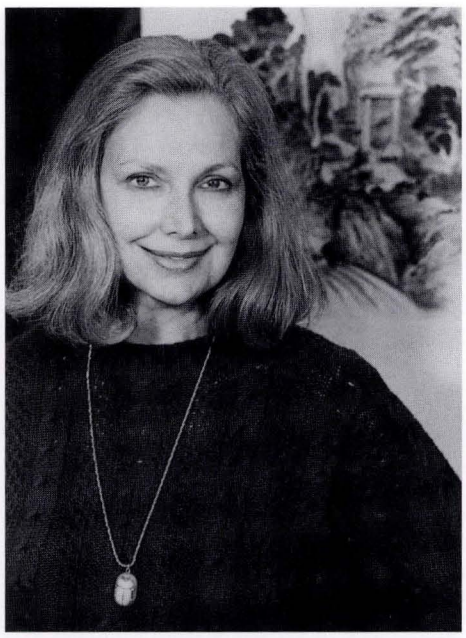
Whatever he paints, there is always a sense of movement and drama. "It is the horse in action that really fascinates me," he said. In 1995 he was recipient of the Wilkes-Barre Distinguished Service Award.

Gruen watch sculpture by Henry Schiowitz. *Photograph by Elaine Cooper.*

Sculptor **HENRY SCHIOWITZ**, born in 1955, is a 1972 graduate of Wyoming Valley West High School. The day after his graduation he handed his diploma to his parents and boarded the first plane for England and Scotland, where he visited museums to study painting and sculpture. On returning to the United States he studied briefly at Philadelphia College of Art, but "soon realized that my first approach to studying the masters was the one that best suited me." He returned to Europe, traveling to Greece, Israel, and Italy. Settling in Pietrasanta, north of Florence, from 1974-88, he also spent six months working in India.

Schiowitz's work has been exhibited throughout the world, but his first successes were in Wyoming Valley. His first one-man show was at the Hoyt Library in Kingston, with another at College Misericordia. In 1971 he was awarded first prize for his sculpture at the Wilkes-Barre Fine Arts Fiesta. His local commissioned work includes the Gruen

watch on the city's Jewelcor plaza, the restoration of the Palmer Memorial on the River Common, and the sculpture dedicated to the new science building at College Misericordia in 1988. Schiowitz has been recognized in the *New York Times* and in India's *The Hindu.*



Harriet Segal.

Novelist **HARRIET SEGAL**, born in 1931 to Dr. Albert and Madeline (Schas) Feinberg, was graduated from Wyoming Seminary in 1949. An economics major at Wellesley College, she had not yet done serious writing, apart from short stories for the Seminary magazine and a JCC club column, though she had submitted a story to *Seventeen* magazine when she was about 15. That piece was rejected, and Segal sent no further fiction for publication until submitting her first novel, *Susquehanna,* more than 30 years later.

After Wellesley, Segal worked as an actuarial trainee in Boston, a copywriter in New York, and a copywriter and newspaper columnist in San Francisco. Returning to New York in 1960, she was a magazine photography editor. In 1961 she married Dr. Sheldon Segal, a biologist, whose career took them to India. For the first time, Harriet had a job "as a real writer," writing pamphlets for the U. S. Information Agency. On her own time, she was writing stories, one of which was the beginning of a novel set in Wilkes-Barre.

In the fall of 1980, she began *Susquehanna* in earnest. "It was partly a labor of love, writing about the place where I grew up. I had always been fascinated by local history." But it was also "hard work," requiring a year's research. *Susquehanna* was finished in May of 1983, and the book was sold to Doubleday.

Though Segal feels that "every person owns a 'copyright' on his own life and no writer has the right to abuse that," scenes in her novels have been inspired by actual events and places, and the main character of *Susquehanna,* Arthur Hillman, was based loosely on her father. Some episodes in *Susquehanna* and *Catch the Wind* (1987) sprang from her life in India, and *Shadow Mountain* (1990) stemmed from stories of her mother's family in North Carolina. *The Skylark's Song* appeared in 1994, and in 1996 Segal was writing her fifth novel, *Northern Lights.*

Harriet Segal wrote, "Growing up in Wilkes-Barre was a privilege." She received Wilkes-Barre's Distinguished Service Award in 1996.

Libby Smith. *Courtesy Dr. Joseph Smith and family.*

Classical music broadcaster **LIBBY SMITH**, daughter of Meyer and Helen Leibman, grew up in the Heights, and was educated in city schools and at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Harold Cox called the public radio pioneer "one of Wyoming Valley's unsung heroines," a volunteer who stayed with WVIA long after the station went on the air in April 1973. Cox wrote that Smith aimed "to aid in the spread of good music and information about the arts."

Initially Smith spent her time cataloging and organizing music archives. On the air, she first hosted a Saturday classical musical program from Radiotelevisione Italiana. In 1977, she began a three-hour, weekday program, *From the Studio.* A WVIA institution for the next 14 years, the program covered every aspect and period of classical music, with commentaries prepared from Smith's extensive files. A unique characteristic of the program was the emphasis on vocal offerings, particularly opera. Libby Smith died in March 1993.

Pianist **LOUIS TEICHER**, born in 1924 in Wilkes-Barre, began music lessons at age four, studying with Madame Gertrude Trembay Baker. Following music critic Wesley Woodruff's advice, the family enrolled six-year-old Louis in the Juilliard School's Preparatory Division, where one of his classmates was Arthur Ferrante. Entering the Institute of Musical Art of the Juilliard School of Music at age 12, Teicher studied with eminent pianist-teacher Carl Friedberg, and was graduated at age 15. Immediately beginning postgraduate work at the Institute, he received his diploma at age 17, when he entered the Juilliard Graduate School, and at the same time started teaching at the Institute of Musical Art.

In 1948, Ferrante and Teicher started working professionally as a two-piano team. They worked in such New York clubs as the Blue Angel, the Little Club, and Spivy's, where they played their own arrangements of popular classics—Gershwin, Porter, Kern, and others. After signing with National Concert and Artists Management, they toured the U. S. and Canada.

In 1960, the duo recorded "Theme From *The Apartment,*" their first big popular success. Their next release, "Exodus," remains their most successful recording. From then on, they presented pops concerts, made hundreds of recordings—many of which sold in the millions—and appeared on many television shows. Louis Teicher retired in 1990.

Film editor and producer **STANFORD TISCHLER**, born in Wilkes-Barre in 1922, was graduated from Meyers High School and attended Bucknell University. In 1941, in California to seek a career in show business, he worked his way up from night construction clerk at Twentieth Century-Fox to assistant editor at RKO, returning to RKO after World War II Army service in the 3rd Combat Signal Photo Outfit, for which he photographed the war in Burma.

In 1947 he was a film editor for Filmmakers, a group that included Ida Lupino, Collier Young, and Joan Fontaine. He edited such features as *The Bigamist, Mad at the World, Private Hell 36,* and *The Hitchhiker.*

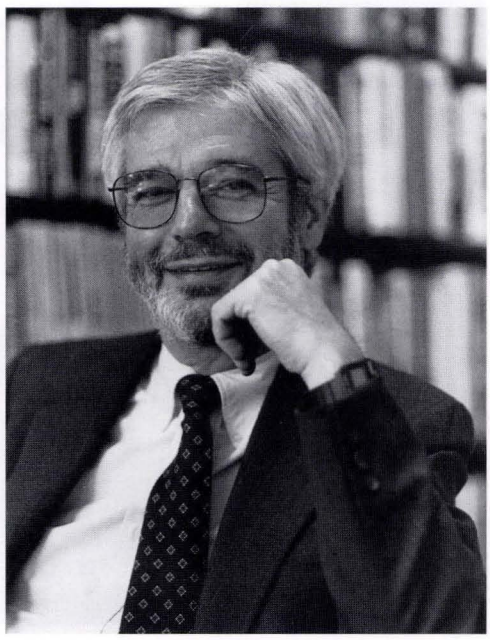
His most important work was in television. He was an editor and associate producer for Universal Studios, Twentieth Century-Fox, and Aaron Spelling Productions, among others. Among TV shows that he edited were *Wagon Train, Wells Fargo, Leave it to Beaver,* and *Bachelor Father.* For seven years he had his own production company, Tico Films.

Hired to edit the pilot of a new television series called *M*A*S*H,* he became editor and associate producer for the show's long and highly successful run.

Nominated four times, Tischler won an Emmy in 1976. He retired in 1984.

Author, editor, and former NPR host **SANFORD J. UNGAR** is dean of the School of Communication at American University. In writing about his career, he cited "the extraordinary benefits of my upbringing and the values that were passed along to me in the Wyoming Valley."

Sanford J. Ungar.



My career path was set when I became an editor of the Kingstonian in high school, following in my sister Mimi's footsteps. At Harvard, I eventually became associate managing editor of the Harvard Crimson. The Crimson made me a journalist, and brought me such opportunities as being the Harvard stringer for the Boston Globe and a summer intern, in New York and Paris, for the weekly Life.

After completing a history master's at the London School of Economics (I was originally sponsored by the Wilkes-Barre Rotary), I worked for newspapers in South Africa, later as a writer in Nairobi, and as a UPI correspondent in Paris. I covered the 1968 French worker/student revolt, which became the subject of my first book. The interludes in Africa, along with later experiences in many African countries, led to Africa: The People and Politics of an Emerging Continent (1985).

Since 1969 I've been based in Washington, except for an interval in Chicago, where I had a fellowship at the Adlai Stevenson Institute and wrote FBI: An Uncensored Look Behind the Walls. In D.C., I worked four years at the Washington Post and wrote The Papers & the Papers: An Account of the Legal and Political Battle over the Pentagon Papers, winner of the George Polk award in 1973. Later, I was Washington editor for The Atlantic, special correspondent for Chicago Public Television, and a writer for The Economist of London.

In 1977 I became managing editor of Foreign Policy and associated with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. But my monthly stint hosting a foreign policy program on National Public Radio gradually became more significant and, invited in 1980 to co-host NPR's All Things Considered, I was with the program for more than two years. I later went back to the Carnegie Endowment, finished my Africa book, and edited another, Estrangement: America and the World.

My 1995 book, Fresh Blood: The New American Immigrants, was in many respects a labor of love, beginning with my discovery of my father's birthplace in what was then known as Czechoslovakia. At American University since January 1986, I am in an ideal spot to help shape communicators of the future.

BARBARA WEISBERGER, founder of the Pennsylvania Ballet, began training in ballet at age five, and at age eight was the first child accepted at the George Balanchine School of American Ballet. She also studied with Margaret Curtis at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School, and with the Littlefield sisters, pioneers in creating the first indigenous American ballet company.

Barbara Weisberger teaching a class of the Pennsylvania Ballet, 1964. *Courtesy Barbara Weisberger.*

After graduation from Penn State, Weisberger returned to Wilkes-Barre, where she was invited to teach ballet at Hilda Man Hertz's school for children in the performing arts. In 1953, Weisberger established her own dance school and company in Wilkes-Barre. And in 1961, invited by George Balanchine to meet with New York City Ballet co-founder Lincoln Kirstein for the purpose of promoting more American professional ballet companies, she

suggested to Balanchine that Philadelphia would be fertile ground for a ballet company. Balanchine said, "Well, Barbara, my smart ballerina, *you* must do it." In 1962 she founded the School of the Pennsylvania Ballet in Philadelphia, the initial step in the formation of the Pennsylvania Ballet Company. Under her guidance for 20 years the Pennsylvania Ballet became internationally renowned.

From 1984 through 1996, Weisberger directed the Carlisle Project, a national creative center for the professional development of choreographers and dancers. Since 1997, she has focused her energies on a rebirth of the project, called the Carlisle Project Phoenix.

Barbara Weisberger's contributions to the field have been recognized with honorary doctorates from Swarthmore, Temple, Villanova, King's, and the University of New England. Other prestigious awards include Pennsylvania State University's Distinguished Alumnus, the Hazlett Award for Excellence in the Arts, and the Gimbel Philadelphia Award. She has served on the dance panel of the National Endowment for the Arts, the executive committee of the American Arts Alliance, and the board of directors of Dance/USA.

Playwright **LOUIS WEITZENKORN** was born to Joseph K. and Jennie Weitzenkorn of Wilkes-Barre in 1893. His father, a successful clothier, was one of the first presidents of the YMHA. Louis attended Harry Hillman Academy, public schools, Pennsylvania Military College at Chester, and Columbia University's Pulitzer School of Journalism. During World War I, he served in the 302nd Battalion Tank Corps.

Louis Weitzenkorn. *Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*

Beginning his newspaper career in Wilkes-Barre with the *Times-Leader,* he joined the *New York Times* in 1915. Later he worked for the *New York Call,* a Socialist paper, and as features editor in the 1920s of the *New York World.*

Weitzenkorn's hatred of sensationalist journalism was evidenced in his hit play, *Five Star Final,* which opened in New York on December 30, 1930 and portrayed journalists insensitive to the people they covered. *Five Star Final* became a 1931 film starring Edward G. Robinson.

Weitzenkorn wrote and collaborated on other plays and was successful as a Hollywood screenwriter, but he resented

creative restrictions. Returning to Wilkes-Barre after his father's 1938 death, he spent most of his time working on a book and a play at the Osterhout Library and his West River Street apartment. On February 7, 1943, he died tragically in a fire at home.

Kingston native **MARTIN YUDKOVITZ**, son of Louis and Betty (Wisoker) Yudkovitz, is president of NBC Interactive Media. The primary architect of the NBC-Microsoft Strategic Alliance, the MSNBC Cable Channel, and the MSNBC Internet Interactive News Service deals, he directs NBC business initiatives related to the Internet, interactive TV, CD-ROMs, and other new media.

Yudkovitz was editor of Wyoming Valley West High School's 1972 *Spartan* and president of Rutgers University's *Daily Targum* before earning a J.D. at Columbia University Law School, clerking at Wilkes-Barre's Rosenn, Jenkins & Greenwald, and joining a New York firm. Later affiliating with NBC's Law Department, he joined NBC Sports as senior counsel for the 1988 Seoul Olympics, after which he became first general counsel of NBC's first cable TV network, CNBC. Back at NBC Sports for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, he also assembled an Emmy-winning music video series for the games. After Barcelona, he gave up all legal work, focusing on strategic development and multimedia.

A People in Transition:
The Great Depression and the Rise of Nazism

Overleaf: Poster of 1934 Y Players production seems to foretell the coming war.

PAUL J. ZBIEK

A People in Transition:
The Great Depression and the Rise of Nazism

With the coming of the 1930s, national and international events, and the concomitant national mood, had a profound impact on Wyoming Valley Jews. Locally as nationally, the pain and disruption caused by immigration restriction, the Great Depression, and the creation of the Nazi state in Germany served as turning points for American Jewry, which would ultimately emerge stronger and more unified. Locally, despite historically amicable Jewish-Christian relations, the general population was not immune to the national trends of nativism and antisemitism; even as Jews continued to earn prominence, there was an undercurrent that at times impeded social and economic mobility.

Although the United States had instituted immigration quotas in 1921, well over 100,000 Jewish immigrants settled in the United States annually in the early 1920s. After the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 took effect in 1929, the yearly totals were reduced to approximately 10,000. The 1924 policy, the "national-origins system," was designed to preserve the original racial and ethnic composition of the country, and thus severely restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe, bringing the largest, and final, wave of Jewish immigration to a close. With the limitations on new immigration, ready access to European Jewish culture was virtually cut, hastening assimilation.

Beginning in this era, general community standards would define Jewish socio-economic success and achievement in America, while Jewish communal institutions would continue to provide cultural, educational, and religious support. Wyoming Valley Jews recognized that greater involvement in the region's power structure was important to their future, but the transition was not always smooth, especially for the more recent Eastern European immigrants who retained strong ties to the ethnic past. Conflicts between parents and children over the extent to which Americanization required breaking with tradition were common among Jews, as they were among the Valley's many other ethnic groups.

The pattern of social and economic mobility among the local Jewish popu-

lation was not as clear-cut as it seemed. By 1930, a number of Jews had gained prominence in local business, civic and political circles and indeed, though Jews comprised less than two percent of the county population, more than four percent of Harvey-Smith biographies* were about Jews. As most local Jews were engaged in business**, it would seem that all Jews had achieved middle or upper class status. Yet many were not financially secure, and negative national trends expressed locally began to erect barriers to continued Jewish progress.

As we have seen, the Jews arriving in the Valley from Germany in the nineteenth century assimilated rapidly and enjoyed cordial relations with their non-Jewish neighbors. This atmosphere prevailed generally until 1920, allowing a substantial number of Eastern European Jews to attain success, but even then subtle changes were beginning to be felt. Perceiving a deterioration in (their conception of) American values and attitudes, many Protestants and rural dwellers country-wide blamed the immigrants—the "foreigners"—and the immigrants' first-generation, American-born progeny. The Immigration Restriction Act was passed, and nativism overtook the populace as well as the government. In Luzerne County, hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan focused on the large ethnic population, most often targeting Catholics in their actions but including Jews in their rhetoric. Local Jews were pushed backward.

Though overt antisemitism was discouraged in the climate of generally positive local Jewish-Christian relations, covert antisemitism and nativism surfaced in the 1930s in the form of social exclusion. Jews apparently were denied membership in the Westmoreland Club and the Wyoming Valley Country Club, for example. Though documentation is elusive, exercise of the blackball as written into club constitutions was likely the means of restriction.*** The formation of the Fox Hill Country Club was, in part, an alternative for local Jews.

* A virtual "who's who" of the prominent in Luzerne County, the biographies appear in Volumes V and VI of *A History of Wilkes-Barre*, by Oscar Jewell Harvey and Ernest Gray Smith, published 1909-1930.

** The absence of a Jewish proletariat in Wyoming Valley contrasts sharply with the Jewish experience nationally. In 1900, sixty percent of Jewish immigrant men in the United States worked as laborers in industry. By the 1930s, socio-economic mobility reduced the figure to 16.7 percent in cities of comparable size to Wilkes-Barre, and to 35 percent in New York City.

***Though documentation is, again, elusive, many Jews claim residential restrictions as well, and the barring of Jews from major fraternal groups during this period. Private club restrictions against Jews were dropped beginning in the early 1950s through the 1960s, with the ascendance of a large college-educated, professional Jewish population. In the early 1960s, too, the Junior League of Wilkes-Barre, with only one Jewish member since the late 1940s, was deliberately opened. Since the exclusions were lifted, many Jews have been members of the clubs, some attaining the highest office and serving on admissions committees.

During the early 1930s, there was also an apparent decrease in the number of Jews with governance roles in the leading financial, civic, and professional associations, and Jews were similarly scarce in local electoral politics. In 1931, Jews held none of the 16 county row offices. The only Jewish county official was Herman J. Goldberg, an assistant district attorney. In contrast to earlier times, Jews did not hold council positions in Wilkes-Barre city, nor did they sit on Democratic or Republican party committees, and no Jew was elected to any state General Assembly positions as a representative of Luzerne County.

The relatively low profile of local Jews at this time was a function not only of non-Jewish attitudes toward Jews, but of Jews' perception of these attitudes, particularly as applied to their niche as merchants. Jews sought to protect their business position and its potential for influence. While some Jewish merchants avoided direct political involvement because they simply could not spare the time away from their businesses, others were concerned that traditional prejudices against Jews might be triggered if they took on too conspicuous a leadership role. Even though generally harmonious local relations defended against the stereotype of disproportionate Jewish financial power in America, individual Jewish businessmen were reluctant to test their acceptance in the Valley. They did not want to jeopardize already successful businesses by overextending their influence.

Then, too, unlike non-Jewish immigrants in the Valley's laboring class, Jewish businessmen did not view politics and political patronage jobs as their means of upward mobility. Business offered more opportunity for financial gain and community influence. Besides, the relatively small Jewish population precluded any strong bloc vote for a Jewish candidate. Imbued with a sense of civic duty and clearly interested in public issues, as evidenced in the YMHA's *Digest* and lecture topics during the 1930s, Jews tended to work behind the scenes rather than seek elected office. Many were actively involved in the inner workings of a campaign or a particular administration, focusing on statewide rather than local politics.

Even if Jews wished to attain leadership roles within the larger community, the "five o'clock shadow" hampered their access to the Protestant ruling elite. Although Jews and non-Jews worked together, social interaction was a different matter. Community leaders tended to transact business and cement governance relationships in the ostensibly social setting of the private clubs. The clubs excluded Jews. Though traditional prejudices fueled exclusionary practices, restrictions were also designed to keep Jews from encroaching on Protestant

exclusivity, considerably weakened since control of the coal industry had passed to railroad companies and other large absentee corporations. No longer power brokers in the dominant industry, and lacking a strong economic base, the old Protestant families—the former local "anthracite aristocracy"—sought control of the local business and social structure in order to maintain their elite position. Further, the younger, newly rich Protestant generations, lacking the history of their elders in dealing with Jews, fell prey to the prejudices of the period. Exclusivity mandates exclusion; since Jews were prominent in local business, Jews appeared to be the greatest challenge to the position of both the old families and the newly affluent. Thus Jews became the group faced with restrictions.

The dichotomous nature of local Jews' socio-economic status in the 1930s was further demonstrated in the precarious existence of small shopkeepers dubbed "poor Jews" by the Slavic coal miners who were their customers. Although individual Jews had achieved success and entry to the middle and upper classes, financial security eluded the shop owners who carried coal mining families on credit, effectively sharing the hard times. But the "poor Jews," together with all Valley Jews, would begin their upward mobility in the 1930s with a firm commitment to the next generation. During this period, nearly all young Jews were encouraged to attain higher education, a movement that would not be reversed and became the basis for many distinguished professional careers. The "poor Jews'" children became firmly entrenched in the upper middle class.

Despite evidence that, as a group, Jews in the 1930s were still in the process of socio-economic mobility, and despite the "poor Jews" designation, Slavs were among Valley residents who believed that most Jews had already achieved status and wealth. Although these misconceptions often derived from stereotypes and ignorance of the facts—including considerations that some East European Jews arrived in America with business background, and German Jews had lived in the Wyoming Valley for three generations—there were some logical reasons. The laboring Slavs, who represented about half the Valley's population, perceived that local Jews owned more businesses than Slavs did, and must certainly be richer than laborers. Slavs saw the Jewish businesses dotting the main streets of every coal town as physical proof that Jews controlled the money. The mine laborers, dealing directly with Jewish business owners rather than the true economic elite, developed an exaggerated perception of Jewish power and afflu-

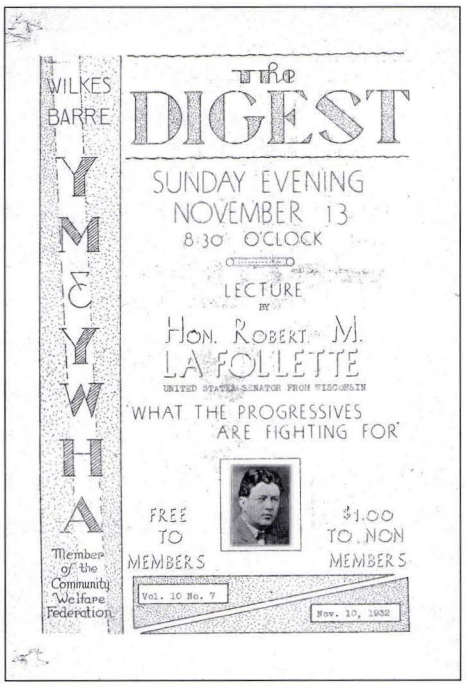
ence. In reality the financial power of a Jewish merchant rarely went beyond his own business.

As Jews' socio-economic status underwent transition in the 1930s, so did their patterns of self-identification. The end of large-scale Jewish migration to the Valley accelerated Jewish assimilation, simultaneously weakening bonds based on country of origin and strengthening group identity as a religious community. Most of the Valley's Protestant groups had already identified with their religious community and, as Jews achieved middle class status, they would follow suit. Only Catholics, most of them from southern and eastern Europe and most of them working as laborers with members of their own ethnic groups, would retain strong ethnic allegiances until after World War II. As Protestants and Jews succeeded in American business, which necessitated interaction with all ethnic groups, they distanced themselves from old ethnic bonds and differences. Jewish separations would now be largely along religious lines.*

The establishment of Conservative Judaism in the United States, and of Temple Israel locally, demonstrated the assimilation of multiple Jewish ethnic cultures. The Conservative movement was begun to create an American form of traditional Judaism. Founded to serve American Jews rather than Jews of a particular European cultural heritage, Conservative synagogues like Temple Israel sought to participate in the larger culture within the context of a redefined Judaism.

The activities of the YM and YWHA also promoted Americanized Jewish life. The basketball team was enormously popular, and many members participated in such American sports as bowling and baseball. Many lecture subjects and educational programs pertained to America in general. Speakers such as Progressive politician Sen. Robert M. LaFollette Jr., American Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas, and African-American scholar

The *Digest* announces the LaFollette lecture.



*Social scientists Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy and Marcus Lee Hansen advanced the theory of the "triple melting pot" to describe third-generation Americans. The components of the melting pot are America's three main religious groups—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish—which supplanted old ethnic and national identities as the source of commonality for Americans. Thus locally, beginning in the 1930s, the Polish or Russian Jewish American became an American Jew. E. Digby Baltzell, writing in *The Protestant Establishment* that "religious pluralism is replacing the ethnic pluralism of an earlier era," noted the effects of the triple melting pot particularly in the postwar period as third- and fourth-generation Americans migrated from urban ethnic ghettos to suburbia, and increasingly affiliated with churches and synagogues.

W.E.B. DuBois presented topics not specifically directed to a Jewish audience. As the Great Depression affected more local residents, Y publications addressed the impact of the crisis on everyone, not Jews alone. *The Digest, The Senatorial,* and *The Junior Progress* voiced Jewish concerns, but also approached events from a broad-based American perspective. Unlike the many separate newspapers and journals distributed by local Catholic ethnic groups, Jewish publications did not promote specific Jewish ethnic or religious sub-groups. Wyoming Valley Jews began to present themselves as a unified force by the 1930s. While maintaining their religious identity, more and more they saw themselves as Americans.

There were exceptions. Many older and more traditional Jews held fast to their European culture. In the Heights and the small Jewish enclaves in the coal towns, many Orthodox Jews, Americanized to the extent needed for business dealings with non-Jews, sought to minimize any further secular activity. Jewish children, in common with children of other cultural groups in the Valley, sometimes balked at their parents' Old World ways, which set them apart from their friends. While young people gravitated toward school or Y activities, parents pushed for more time at the synagogue or with family. Most families came to some type of accommodation to resolve this conflict, but some serious divisions were created, especially when a child wished to marry outside the faith.

As the Great Depression swept the Wyoming Valley, Jews owned approximately 400 businesses in the region, and relied heavily on the trade of the mine workers. With local unemployment over 30 percent and miners' purchasing power dramatically reduced, many Jewish business owners not only suffered devastating income reduction, but also risked bankruptcy and loss of their businesses. Some Jewish businesses would indeed fail; for others, recovery would be difficult and uncertain.

Historians generally point to an early onset of the Great Depression in the Wyoming Valley. Labor strife and the movement toward fuel sources other than coal had already affected the region. Many mine employees averaged only 100 days of work per year. Unemployment and underemployment, inability to meet financial obligations, and shortages of food and clothing were evident locally at least five years before the Stock Market Crash of 1929.

Yet business indicators in 1929 showed that Wilkes-Barre still enjoyed a rather vibrant economy in relation to cities of comparable size. Of 21 U. S. cities with populations between 75,000 and 100,000, Wilkes-Barre ranked first in number of stores and employees, second in number of store owners, and

fifth in net sales and total payroll. When Kingston, Nanticoke, Pittston, and Plymouth are added to Wilkes-Barre's total and compared to cities of 100,000 to 200,000 population, the conclusions are reinforced. Greater Wilkes-Barre led 49 cities in number of stores and store owners, ranking ninth in net sales, twelfth in employees, and thirteenth in payroll. Although the statistics do not show specific patterns or distribution, a great deal of money was being generated in the area, raising questions as to whether all segments of the Valley actually faced an early economic slump. Since Jews owned over 10 percent of Wilkes-Barre businesses and about five percent in the outlying regions, it is clear that many had achieved a reasonable degree of financial success before the Depression hit.

And hit it did. While national unemployment figures were approximately 25 percent, local numbers ran five to 15 percentage points higher. County relief rolls reached over 85,000. Some people performed public service in lieu of paying taxes, while delinquent taxpayers forced municipalities to borrow heavily. Teachers often worked without compensation; Pittston Township teachers experienced a 12-month pay delay. People resorted to stealing coal to heat their homes. Nearly 2,000 homeless or transients were in the region, and "Hoovervilles" and hobo camps sprang up on the outskirts of the Valley's coal towns.

Like most Americans, local Jews were slow to recognize the enormity of the Great Depression. A *Digest* editorial of January 2, 1930 noted that the Y was founded "on the crest of the wave of prosperity which swept the country." At the new decade, the Y membership was exhorted to "build upon the progress" of the past. Members were asked to continue their financial obligations, but there was no mention of economic crisis. On February 13, a *Digest* Community Fund solicitation minimized members' hardships in comparison to the truly needy: "Poor investments may cause some people to run the old car another year or cut down the amusement item in the family budget."

By 1931, however, local Jews fully appreciated the severity of the Great Depression. Beginning with a January 22 editorial that referred to the "economic disaster," the *Digest* ran articles pertaining to the Depression throughout the year. There were appeals for the Community Fund and continued financial support of the Y, warnings regarding illegitimate charities, and commentary on the Norman Thomas lecture sponsored by Workmen's Circle. A May 21 editorial offered "privilege cards" to Y activities for those members newly unable to pay dues. The funding shortfall forced the Y to abbreviate its excellent lecture series until 1934.

Local synagogues also faced hard times. Temple B'nai B'rith saw many resignations, and delinquent members often went before a finance committee to explain their inability to pay dues. Rabbi Wolk, a leader in communal efforts to aid Depression victims, was forced to dismiss the recently hired Hebrew instructor because not enough paying members signed up for classes. Wolk took it upon himself to teach those interested and, according to anecdotal evidence, insisted that part of his own salary be paid to Rabbi Emeritus Salzman.

Many people helped others, on a friendly basis, one family to another, merchants extended credit to customers, and the Queen Esther Society helped the distressed find funds. But some could not be helped. Judge Max Rosenn noted that many local Jewish businessmen became seriously despondent. Nathan Kuss recalled hearing that one prominent local Jewish investor committed suicide at the time of the crash. Kuss felt that the crash affected the older Jewish families to a greater degree because of their longer involvement with the market.

Jewish-owned businesses felt the Depression's effect. Faced with high overhead and unwilling to cut back, Simon Long's Sons department store closed its doors in 1932. A few years later, Simon Long's grandsons, Clinton and Simon, opened Long's Inc., a men's clothing store. The family recalled some difficult days, most notably election day, 1936, when receipts totaled only $8.00. The C&S Furniture Company of Wilkes-Barre was also among Depression-era business failures.

The 1931 Polk's Greater Wilkes-Barre City Directory identified 316 Jewish-owned businesses.* Of these businesses, 104, or nearly one-third, were not listed in the 1935 directory. Though it is impossible to ascertain how many of the 104 were victims of the Depression, the 1935 directory lists 292 Jewish-owned businesses. Eighty new businesses had been established during the time period, which saw a net loss of only 24 Jewish businesses. Although many local Jews may have been hit hard by the economic downturn and the business landscape had changed markedly, there was still a ready supply of entrepreneurs to challenge the effects of the Great Depression.

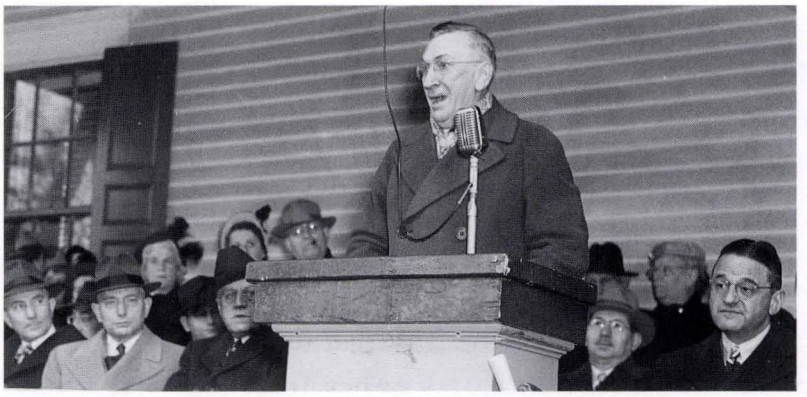
With the onset of the Great Depression, President Herbert Hoover hoped that the charitable organizations would be the mainstay in distributing assistance, and local Jewish charities were quick to respond. Wyoming Valley Jews were strong supporters of the Community Welfare Federation and other agencies, contributing over $20,000 annually. But the crash affected giving. In

*Pittston and Nanticoke area listings were not included.

1932, the Hebrew Loan Society was established to lend money without interest to small businesses hurt by the Depression. Chaired by Charles Weissman and supervised by Jacob Silverblatt, the agency made hundred of loans, saved many businesses, and incurred practically no losses to the fund. The *Digest* stressed both the need for giving and a heritage of caring for all human beings, adding in 1932 that "We dare not fail."

One shortcoming of Jewish charity was its lack of a centrally organized focus. It was not until near the end of the Great Depression, in 1939, that the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) was organized as a national central agency for Jewish charity. Nathan Kuss outlined UJA history:

> *The concept of providing material assistance to those in need is basic in Jewish tradition. "The poor you shall always have with you" the Bible warns, with the injunction that they are to be cared for. We have never departed from that obligation. The twentieth century has provided manifold opportunities to recognize areas of Jewish need. It has also witnessed unprecedented responses to the cry for help.*
>
> *The war that began in Europe in 1914 created a crisis of survival for millions of Jews. In the United States a new organization, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), was formed to deal with the emergency. Millions of dollars were raised and used to provide food, shelter, clothing, medical treatment—everything necessary to alleviate the suffering of displaced or homeless Jews in Europe, North Africa, wherever they were afflicted.*
>
> *The work went on, after the war and into the decades that followed.*
>
> *In companion efforts, another organization addressed similar needs in Palestine. The United Palestine Appeal (renamed United Israel Appeal after 1948) went beyond the common concept of charity, seeking not only to help the needy, but to enable all Jews in Palestine to become self-supporting, according to Maimonides' ideal. This was to be accomplished by building up the land.*
>
> *The JDC and its counterpart in Palestine pursued their objectives for years, separately, but in recognition of each other's worth. The funds for both groups came from voluntary offerings, but as the result of intensive efforts among the American Jewish population. In time it was realized that the fund-raising process was costly and wasteful, involving much duplication of effort. After much negotiation it was decided to approach the American Jewish public annually in a joint campaign. A division of available funds was negotiated, subject to change in accordance with circumstances. Thus the United Jewish Appeal was created in 1939.*
>
> *Although local efforts to centralize Jewish charitable giving had begun with the formation of the United Jewish Social Service Agency (1931) and the United*



Early UJA leader Reuben Levy in 1938.

Jewish Alliance of Luzerne County (1933), many different agencies were still raising funds separately when the first local UJA campaigns were conducted in 1934 and 1935.

The most effective fund-raising began when the community was organized as a united Jewish community. Sparked by Rabbi Samuel Wolk, and spearheaded by such leaders as Julius Long Stern, Reuben Levy, Aaron Weiss, Samuel Hirshowitz, Benjamin Cohen, J. K. Weitzenkorn, Jacob Silverblatt, Louis Shaffer, Nathan Kuss, and Max Rosenn, creation of the first Federation led to major annual giving. The Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee was formed in 1936. In 1939, the first community-wide effort to unite in the rescue of Europe's Jews raised $10,000.

In the next few years, as Germany's war against the Jews became unmistakable, the sums of money contributed to help the victims rose dramatically higher, and the involvement of the entire Jewish population was manifest. In the years 1944 through 1948, for example, under the leadership of campaign chairmen Jacob Raub, Jacob Isaacs, Nathan Kuss, Charles Weissman, and Aaron Weiss, UJA campaigns raised $120,000, $147,000, $297,000, $540,000 and $626,000. After 1948, campaign results began to decline until the drama and the perceived dangers of the wars against Israel by the Arab nations—especially in l956, 1967, and 1973—created a renewed sense of obligation among American Jews, including the Jews of Wyoming Valley. Campaign results in excess of one million dollars annually began to reflect this feeling.

As a member in the 1960s of the National UJA Board, Women's Division, Bernice Brandwene traveled to Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, speaking and raising money. Brandwene also went to Israel with the 28 women on the board, where they met with Israeli leaders Golda Meir and Abba Eban. Brandwene also organized a Young Leadership division in this community.

UJA Women's Division canvassers, 1948.

From the beginning, the proceeds of UJA campaigns were shared among international organizations and local agencies, including the Jewish Community Center, Jewish

In 1958, Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon was in town for the opening meeting of the UJA campaign. The Senator is at center, wearing hat. Meeting him at the Wilkes-Barre-Scranton Airport were, from left, Harold Rosenn, M. D. Brandwene, Lawrence Landau, Nathan Kuss, Ralph Brandwene, Morton Weiss, Rep. Daniel Flood, Max Roth, Herbert Gurbst, Louis Smith, Charles Weissman, Jacob Silverblatt, David Baltimore, and Aaron Weiss.

Community Board, Jewish Welfare Agency, Jewish Home, Hebrew day school, mikvah, and Vaad Hakashrut. In addition, on the basis of local judgment, UJA funds were sometimes allocated out of each campaign to such national agencies as the Anti-Defamation League, ZOA, Jewish War Veterans, American Jewish Committee, World Jewish Congress, and others.

Although President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal did not end the Depression, which peaked in the mid-1930s but endured until World War II's massive mobilization, it eased the desperation and gave hope to Valley residents. Public works projects such as the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) employed as many as 16,000. The WPA and the Public Works Administration (PWA) generated over $8 million in Luzerne County wages during the 1936 fiscal year.

Recognizing that private charities alone could not handle a crisis of the Depression's dimensions, many local Jews sympathized with the objectives of the Democrats' New Deal while remaining loyal to the Republican party. Unquestionably the dominant political force in Luzerne County, the Republican party had already won the allegiance of many Jews, especially those from the more established families, and the commitment was reinforced among Jewish businessmen who had prospered under the Republican administrations of the 1920s. Unconcerned with political patronage, these Jews felt that changing affiliations from the pro-business Republican party to the pro-labor

Democrats would be imprudent. Many prominent local Jews became identified with the moderate to liberal wing of the GOP, where they could combine the entrepreneurial spirit of the Republicans with a strong New Deal concern for the wants and needs of the workers. Some local Jews did become Democrats, either through switching parties or as first-time registrants. Thus the New Deal era created an enduring party division within the local Jewish community.*

At the Y, programming inspired by the New Deal was much in evidence. Through the Emergency Relief Educational Program of Luzerne County and under the direction of Dorothy Kanter Schwartz, the Y announced free courses in all phases of public speaking in January 1934. The following year, the Y's gymnasium facilities were opened, at no charge, to unemployed males. Though the lecture series was curtailed in 1933, several speakers appearing through 1935 detailed the progress of Roosevelt's plan, including Prof. Leroy Bugbee, James Waterman Wise, Nicholas Roosevelt, and John Strachey.

Edited by Clinton Long, the *Digest* of the early 1930s notes decreased participation in Y activities during the Depression even as it begins to report "a fresh crop of anti-semitism . . . in much of the world." Yet the Y under executive director Louis Smith and presidents Mortimer Goldsmith Sr., Benjamin I. Cohen, and Louis Shaffer continued to provide a full program of social, theatrical, and athletic events as an antidote to the very real anxieties of the times.

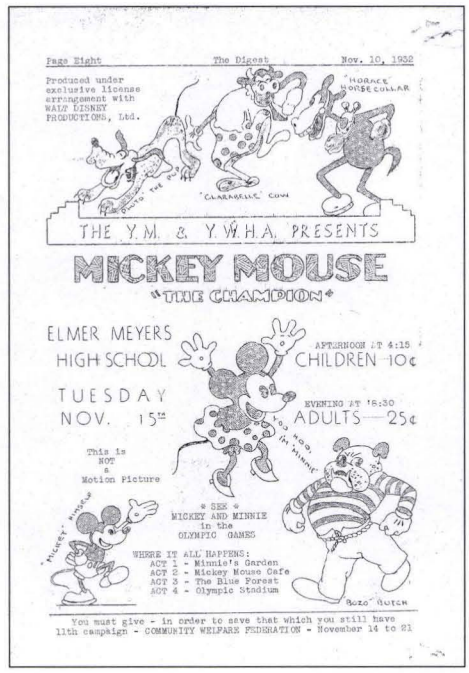
In 1931, Hanover High School teacher Julia Lieberman was hired as part-time director of women's athletics, and Ira Goldstein came to the community from Brooklyn to supervise men's sports in 1936. And though Y sports offerings included gymnastics, dance, softball, and bowling—in 1936, one of the Y's most successful bowling seasons, Cy Dorfman led the league—it was still men's varsity basketball that drew the crowds, and the reporters.

Ira Goldstein.

Record headlines of 1935 screamed "YMHA Wins Again," as Max Goldstein and Sam Salsburg led the team now coached by Lou Smith. Teams from New York and

* The absence of a large Jewish proletariat precluded any strong Jewish leftist activity in the Wyoming Valley. Walter Howard, a Bloomsburg University historian who has studied radicalism in the anthracite region, found that Slavs rather than Jews were involved with leftist organizations. In other parts of the anthracite region, some rabbis spoke against capitalism, and a small Workmen's Circle was active in Wilkes-Barre. Unlike their counterparts in other urban areas, however, most local Jews were too much a part of the capitalist system to see any benefits in Socialism or Communism.

Philadelphia came to the Wilkes-Barre Y, while the 1931 Scranton Y game was moved to the new G. A. R. High School facilities. And "every inch of space . . . was packed with humanity" for the annual contest at New York's 92nd Street Y. Centerpiece of the Y's 1938 twentieth anniversary celebration was a game between an updated "dream team" and current stars of Upsilon Lambda Phi and the Pittston synagogue. Former champs Harry Baicker, Yock Goldberg, Joseph "Johnny" Silver, and Ben and Lou Smith joined later stars Salsburg, Goldstein, Poke Alper and Hook Levy as the Old Timers—and trounced the younger athletes.



Digest announces the Mickey Mouse show.

Theatrical productions also were popular. The Y Players under the direction of Nathan Kuss presented 1935's *The Silver Cord* to a capacity audience. Kuss also directed 1934's *Men Must Fight,* a chilling prophesy of "the unspeakable horrors of the next great war" (*Digest,* April 19, 1934); posters publicizing the play asked, "If war was declared, what would you do?"

Teenagers flocked to Y fraternities and sororities, and children enjoyed scouting activities. A traveling live revue of the "Mickey Mouse Show" sponsored by the Y attracted 1,300 in 1932. The same year, the Y instituted the Home Camp, predecessor to the present Day Camps.

The Depression did not deter progress in Jewish spiritual life. In 1930, Congregation Ohav Zedek broke ground for a new synagogue on South Franklin Street in Wilkes-Barre, dedicating the building in 1932 under Rabbi Davidson and synagogue president Isaac Engel, and establishing a religious school in 1933. Rabbi Israel Bencel Goldman arrived in

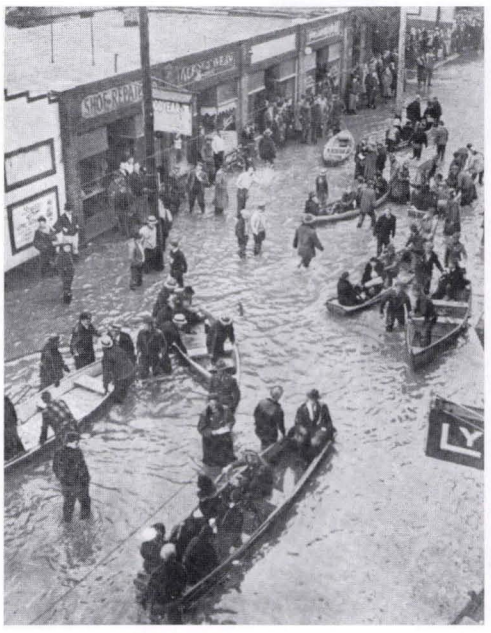
Taking part in Ohav Zedek groundbreaking ceremonies were, from left, upper photo, contractor William Schmalzreidt, architect Austin Reilly, Rev. Juda Appel, Isaac Engel, Morris Greenwald, Sandor Engel, Philip Klein, and Rabbi I. M. Davidson. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1930, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

Rabbi Israel Bencel Goldman as a young man in Europe. *Courtesy Esther Golub.*

1932 to become rabbi of Anshe Emes and a *posek* (legal interpreter) in the *Vaad Hakashrut.* At Temple B'nai B'rith, Morris Greenstein, Jacob Silverblatt, Abram Galland, and Charles Pfifferling Sr. were successive synagogue presidents as Rabbi Samuel Wolk, assuming leadership in the general community, helmed the Council of Social Agencies and the Children's Service Center and was active on other boards. At Temple Israel, Rabbi Louis M. Levitsky, together with successive presidents Leonard Tintner, Julius Bravman, and Aaron Weiss, guided the congregation through its formative years until 1940, when Rabbi Israel Kazis assumed the pulpit. And in January 1935, Samuel Rosenberg began his career as Wyoming Valley's only Jewish funeral director.*

In the midst of the Great Depression, the Wyoming Valley faced another major catastrophe—the flood of 1936. In March, heavy rains combined with melting snow caused the Susquehanna River to overflow its banks twice within a week. On March 12, the river crested at 28.85 feet, rising to a record 33.32 feet on March 19. The downtown area was flooded from the first block of North Main Street to Hazle Street. There was extensive damage in South Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, Forty Fort, Plains Township, Hanover Township, Edwardsville, Luzerne, and Plymouth. Affecting more than 9,000 homes and 40,000 residents—almost 20 percent of the flooded communities' population—the flood caused nearly $9 million in damage.

Rescue efforts on West Market Street, Kingston, in March 1936. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1936, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*



With many of their homes, businesses, and synagogues located in the flood plain, Jews were hit especially hard by the disaster. At Temple B'nai B'rith, 18 inches of water covered the basement floor, and services were suspended because that part of the city was without heat. Although the Heights was spared, many Jewish residents of the Heights had business or personal interests in the flooded area. Conservatively, it can be estimated that 100 Jewish businesses in Wilkes-Barre and on the West Side (more than 35 percent) were damaged by the flood. Of approximately 5,000 Jews living in the flooded communities, at least one-third were displaced by the rising waters. Statistical analysis indicates that local Jews suffered over one-half million dollars in losses.

* The history of the Rosenberg Funeral Chapel is detailed elsewhere in the text.

Many Jews joined community flood recovery efforts, including the Y Boy Scouts, who helped with sandbagging. The Y itself escaped the flood, becoming under president Louis Shaffer a center for assisting flood victims, who could utilize the Emergency Nursery and the free Employment Bureau.

In August 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt toured the area and witnessed the destruction. He pledged aid from Washington, which soon earmarked $3 million for flood control construction in Wilkes-Barre, Hanover Township, Kingston, and Edwardsville. Future Congressman Daniel J. Flood, a prominent local lawyer and part of the presidential motorcade, was one of the most influential area leaders during the 1936 flood control effort; he would call on his experience again in 1972. In 1937, construction began on the dike in Kirby Park.

President Roosevelt at the Lehigh Valley Railroad station in Wilkes-Barre for consultation with Red Cross officials. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1936, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

As the 1930s progressed, the attention of Jews everywhere turned toward the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. As early as March 1930, a protest meeting was scheduled at the Wilkes-Barre Y to protest the rise of antisemitism in Germany. But not all segments of the Jewish community approved the rally's timing or potential effect without the strong backing of the non-Jewish sector:

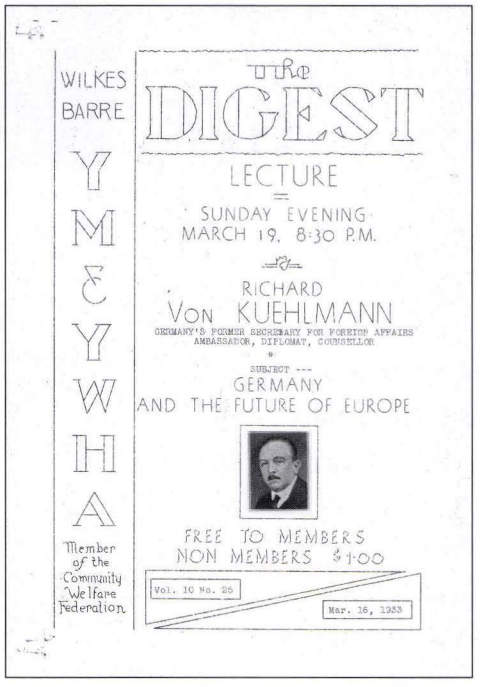
> *Resolved that it is the sense of the Trustees acting for Congregation B'nai B'rith that a formal protest by all elements of Jewish feeling in this Valley against German excesses is premature at this time. We feel that the most effective protests about the most recent outrages are . . . those coming from Gentiles and that . . . we should have the active support of the Gentile clergy. Further than this, we believe that the situation in Germany is so uncertain at the present time that there is a very great question whether such a protest now would not cause more harm and further suffering to the Jews in Germany than it would help them.*

As the situation worsened, however, the community grew united in its alarm and, increasingly, *Digest* articles and Y lectures focused on worldwide antisemitism and Hitler's growing power base in Europe. At Rosh Hashana 1932, Rabbi Wolk wrote:

> *. . . a fresh crop of anti-semitism has taken root today in much of the world. A sore-oppressed humanity, harassed by misery, poverty and economic confusion, has singled out its time-honored scapegoat. The Jew is again the tortured stepchild*

among the peoples. South America, Canada, Northern Africa, Poland, Bessarabia, Greece, Germany, are some of the places where pogroms, boycott restriction, riots, or fearful discrimination prevail against the Jewish community.

In a December 1932 speech, Dr. George Leiken, former chief governmental rabbi of the Volga region of the Soviet Union, echoed Rabbi Wolk, noting that the plight of Jews "is now more distressing than ever." The following month, on January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany.



In an ironic twist, local Jews were told in a Y lecture that war in Europe was "unthinkable." On March 19, 1933, Baron Richard von Kuehlmann, former German Secretary for Foreign Affairs, spoke on "Germany and the Future of Europe." According to Robert Casper's *Digest* review of the lecture, the diplomat expressed hopes for "a peaceful and progressive Germany in . . . a peaceful world," predicting that conflicts with France and "the problem of the Polish corridor" would be solved by diplomacy, and asserting that the rise in militarism and "thriving nationalism" in Germany were key to Hitler's plan for economic recovery. Von Kuehlmann said that Germany was the battleground of French Conservatism, Italian Fascism, and Russian Communism. Yet, in perhaps unwitting prophesy, he refused to elaborate on the fate of Jews under Hitler.

The lectures continued. In 1934, James Waterman Wise, son of Rabbi Stephen Wise, warned a Y audience of Nazi propaganda in the U. S. In 1935, refugee Dr. Kurt Rosenfeld, former Minister of Justice of Prussia, spoke of underground activity in Germany, predicting that widespread discontent would destroy the Nazi government. In 1937, Col. W. Stewart Roddie of London, lecturing on "The Maelstrom of Europe," predicted conflict between Hitler and Mussolini, and author Marvin Lowenthal, speaking on "Five Million Jews in Peril," said that "Jews are the easiest, safest and cheapest enemy in the world." In 1938, novelist and critic Dr. Ludwig Lewisohn said that Jews are the first victims of "The Crisis in Civilization," while Major James Strachey Barnes of England said that Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's negotiations with Italy would bring peace in Europe, where there would be a war "of ideas, not of arms."

As the threat from Europe loomed, antisemitism in the U. S. was spurred anew by the emergence of Nazism in conjunction with the Depression and opposition to the New Deal. Although antisemitic acts had been largely outside Wyoming Valley's experience, the community had been exposed to the Klan and to outside media. In reports titled "The International Jew," Henry Ford's weekly *Dearborn Independent,* distributed through Ford dealerships in the early 1920s, had repeated the infamous lies of the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* claiming that Jews conspired to take over the world*, and local radio carried network broadcasts of Michigan's Father Charles Coughlin's vicious anti-Jewish sermons.

With the launch of the New Deal, Roosevelt's opponents blamed American government and industry for the Depression, and in the confrontational atmosphere, professional hatemongers exploited ethnic prejudices. Local antisemitism was not expressed in violence or vandalism. As Max Rosenn** wrote, "The poison was more subtle and its effects more permanent; it made itself felt in the effort to obtain jobs, bank loans, higher education, political office, and entry into clubs, colleges, and hotels."

As Nazism emerged, antisemitic groups and literature began to flourish. The U. S. was bombarded with hate propaganda intended to create racial and ethnic divisions and neutralize America in Germany's quest for power. The propaganda, delivered by Germany and groups allied with Germany, surfaced locally.

About 1933, local people led by Abram Galland had reorganized the S. J. Strauss Lodge No. 139 of B'nai B'rith, which met at Temple B'nai B'rith. The lodge created an employment agency, directed by Mollie Liebson, to help all the jobless. Among the lodge's standing committees were the Anti-Defamation Committee, and the committees on Americanism and Vocational Guidance, which promoted Americanism and fought antisemitism in the region. Still dedicated to the preservation of civil protection rights and societal programs, the lodge supports the Hillel Foundations for Jewish campus life, Jewish communal institutions, and interfaith cooperation. The lodge's Lincoln Day Dinner honoring an "outstanding citizen who . . . has made a valuable contribution to

* *Protocols* was first concocted and circulated by the Russian secret police during 19th-century pogroms.
** From 1933 to 1967, Max Rosenn chaired the Anti-Defamation Committee of S. J. Strauss Lodge, B'nai B'rith, and the Pennsylvania Regional Advisory Board of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). He was also member of the National Commission of the Anti-Defamation League. His report on antisemitism in Wyoming Valley during this period, excerpted from a larger study, appears at chapter's end.

the fabric of community life" has been an annual event since the 1940s.*

By the late 1930s, local Jews heard constantly about the persecution in Europe. The Y, the synagogues, and local Zionists were active in disseminating information. At least one European Jew in the Valley on business received word not to return home. Many Valley residents had family and friends in Europe, some of whom were able to flee in time, some of whom were not.

Among those who escaped to the Valley before Hitler's war were the family of Hirsh (Heinrich) Long, eldest brother of early German immigrants Martin, Marx, and Simon Long. The original Simon's grandchildren's wives, Carol Hess (Mrs. Clinton) Long, Miriam Freeman (Mrs. Julian) Long, and Pauline Constine (Mrs. Simon) Long, collected the Wilkes-Barre family signatures vouching for Hirsh's grandson Paul Long and his wife Paula, their daughter Hilde Adelung and her husband Paul, the Adelungs' two children, and Hilde's sister. On Thanksgiving 1938, the local Long women met the ship from Germany, and brought their grateful European family to Wilkes-Barre. The refugees brought with them a Torah shield rescued from the Bavarian synagogue; Fannie Sax Long presented it to Temple B'nai B'rith in memory of her husband Dr. Charles Long, who had died the previous year. Every Thanksgiving since arriving in America, Hilde Adelung has called to thank each surviving Long family member.

Hilde Adelung's genealogy of the family who stayed in Europe is filled with references to those who did not survive. "Murdered by the S. S." "Died in concentration camp." "Did not like to be a Jew, did not have Jewish friends, but nonetheless in a concentration camp and died there."

There would be, of course, survivors of the Holocaust. Aaron Berkenwald and his wife, Bella and Otto Brandeis, Irene Burger, Paul Burger, Tibor (Ted) Gross, William Ferlig, Tikva Jeral, Rev. Herman Katz, Leib Knobel, Paulette Singer, Samuel Singer, Elsa Stern, Alfred Stern, Rose Szabo, Margit Varsanyi, and Isaac Werner, among others, would make their way to Wyoming Valley as others would locate elsewhere. But before—and even during—the war and

*An incomplete list of Community Service Award recipients to 1995 dates from the 1950s and includes: Rabbi Abraham Barras, Madge Benovitz, Albert Boscov, Robert Capin, William and Esther Davidowitz, Dr. Eugene Farley, Robert Fortinsky, Henry Greenwald, Shirley Klein, Sue and Allan Kluger, Nathan Kuss, Benjamin J. Levin, Monsignor Andrew McGowan, Dr. Roy Morgan, Morris Perloff, John M. Randolph Jr., Arnold and Sandy Rifkin, Harold Rosenn, Hon. Max Rosenn, Eugene and Connie Roth, Joseph Savitz, Hon. Jacob Schiffman, Nathan Schiowitz, Dorothy Kanter Schwartz, Louis Shaffer, Rabbi Arnold Shevlin, Louis Smith, Andrew J. Sordoni III, Dr. Wallace F. Stettler, and Stanford Weiss.

despite the flow of information and rumor, most American Jews could not conceive of the current or future brutality. Many expected the most recent round of antisemitism to parallel the past, while others thought reason might eventually prevail. Local Jews prepared for what they thought would be the worst.

Temple B'nai B'rith dedicates Holocaust memorial at its cemetery during the tenure of Rabbi Arnold Shevlin, who is pictured far left. Frank Eisenstein holds the Torah.

By 1945, the Irving R. Rutstein Jewish War Veterans (JWV) Post 212, chartered in 1939, would honor the memories of 20 local Jews killed in action in World War II. The following information about the post is drawn from materials provided by Samuel Greenberg, Miriam Ross, and the Hon. Paul E. Kanjorski's tribute published in the *Congressional Record* of February 7, 1990:

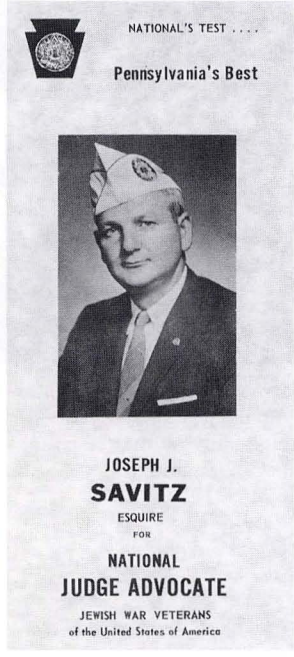
The Irving R. Rutstein JWV Post 212 is part of the JWV of the U. S., the oldest (1896) active chartered organization in the country. Twenty-two members of Post 212 have given their lives in the two World Wars and Korea.

Serving the community and its veterans, the post provides volunteers and activities for the Wilkes-Barre Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital, where it was the first allied post to feed patients on Christmas. It was the first group to support the poison control clinic and to supply and run the dental clinic at Mercy Hospital. It was the first local organization to recognize the problem of drugs and to distribute a narcotics guide to area police departments and school districts. The post created a Wilkes University scholarship fund for veterans and their children, holds an annual brotherhood program, and distributes patriotic manuals to all new area citizens.

Post 212 has been the home post to five Pennsylvania State Commanders—Joseph Savitz, Theodore Yudkovitz, Samuel Weiner, and Samuel and Martin Greenberg. Savitz served as National Judge Advocate, and Sam Greenberg was elected National Commander in 1984.

In 1985, Sam Greenberg joined executives of national veterans', military, religious, ethnic, labor, and citizens' groups in an advertising campaign protesting President Ronald Reagan's visit to Germany's Bitburg Cemetery, where members of the Waffen SS are buried among other defenders of the Third Reich. Responding to public outcry, Reagan also visited Bergen-Belsen, while Greenberg went to Perlacher Cemetery near Munich for ceremonies honoring the White

Attorney Joseph Savitz campaigns for National Judge Advocate, Jewish War Veterans.



JWV National Commander Samuel Greenberg, right, at White Rose ceremonies in Germany. Future New York City Mayor David Dinkins, then a city clerk, is standing directly behind Greenberg. *Courtesy Samuel Greenberg.*

Rose, an anti-Nazi resistance effort mounted by young German Christians during World War II.

The Ladies Auxiliary of Post 212 was formed to help those leaving for and returning from military service. First president was Sadie Rothstein, and first representative to the VA Hospital was Lena Oppenheimer. Past department president Barbara Greenberg is currently a national junior vice-president. The women hold fund-raising activities to support the VA Hospital, maintain a child welfare program, and for many years furnished the Kirby Health Center school with special hearing aids and other needed supplies for the children.

With the onset of a new decade, Wyoming Valley and the world faced a tumultuous era. The local Jewish community had survived the Great Depression and the 1936 flood while managing to educate a generation of new leaders. By decade's end they had to fight against the threat to Jewish existence.

Author Upton Close spoke at the Wilkes-Barre YMHA on November 17, 1940. His topic was "Behind the Face of Japan."

Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary holds a blood drive at the Jewish Community Center, 1964. *Courtesy Gloria Fierverker.*

Antisemitism in Greater Wilkes-Barre, 1933-1995

by

Max Rosenn

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith met the growing avalanche of bigotry and discrimination in 1930s America through the commitment of volunteers. At the time, the ADL had no professional staff besides national director Richard Gutstadt in Chicago, where the League had been founded in 1913 and then maintained its headquarters. Abraham Berkowitz, an assistant district attorney for Philadelphia County, served as volunteer regional chairman covering Pennsylvania. The Anti-Defamation Committee of the local S. J. Strauss Lodge No. 139 of B'nai B'rith of the early '30s consisted of J. K. Weitzenkorn, Ben Cohen, Samuel K. Hirshowitz, Abe Galland, and Max Rosenn.

One of the first matters before the local ADL Committee concerned Louis T. McFadden, former banker, nine-term Republican congressman representing Pennsylvania's "horseshoe district" (Bradford, Wayne, Pike, Sullivan and Wyoming Counties), and chairman of the powerful Banking and Currency Committee of the Congress. McFadden's antisemitism—especially his reiteration of Henry Ford's canards concerning Jews as "international bankers"—drew intense interest from the press and public.

McFadden lived in Towanda, about 80 miles north of Wilkes-Barre, but the Wilkes-Barre lodge was then the closest B'nai B'rith chapter. In response to National ADL's appeal for assistance, the local committee, through the offices of lodge member Reuben Levy, met with this area's Republican congressman, Kingston dentist Dr. Murray Turpin, who conferred unproductively with McFadden. The committee enlisted the support of Jewish leaders in Towanda and Sayre, who decided upon political action. Together with non-Jews of good will, they waged an intensive campaign promoting a McFadden opponent and exposing McFadden's bigotry. The campaign led to McFadden's 1934 defeat.

McFadden was probably the most prominent hatemonger in this century from Pennsylvania. He struck incalculable damage at the time to the nation and to the image and psyche of Jewry, both nationally and locally. But he did not represent Luzerne County. In the strongly ethnic communities of Wyoming Valley, once Welsh and Protestant-dominated and now

largely ethnic Catholic, Jewish political candidates have been rare. Yet, antisemitism has never been used as a political device, unless *sub silentio,* in any county or local political campaign.

The Klan, apparently inactive locally since the 1920s, surfaced again in the mid-1930s when Klansmen met on what is now the 15th hole of the Irem Temple Country Club in the Wyoming Valley borough of Dallas. Max and Tillie Rosenn witnessed a gathering of men, hooded in white gowns, in the process of burning a wooden cross. This may have been the last episode of the Klan in this area, although there have been rumors that the organization persisted locally for many years thereafter.

As the nation endeavored to shake off the Great Depression, divisive activities retarded economic recovery and national unity. With the rise of the Nazi party in the early 1930s, Germany spread hate propaganda in this country as an instrument to divide Americans, aid Germany, and withhold assistance to England and its allies. German hate articles frequently appeared in the Valley distributed by local people who had joined "Fatherland" groups.

Encouraged by the Depression and Nazism, antisemitic organizations flourished and multiplied in this country from the late 1930s. Their initial goal was to use antisemitism to deter America's entrance into World War II. Individuals spread their hate over a land beset with joblessness, poverty, and poor morale, while the German-American Bund held rallies at Madison Square Garden, and organizations like the Silver Shirts and the Christian Front sprang into prominence.

The German-American Bund and kindred organizations used antisemitism in their defense of Germany, asserting that the Nazi persecution of Jews was meant to save western civilization from the "menace of world Jewry." The antisemitic organizations, largely financed by Nazis, created a palpable atmosphere of hysteria which endured through Pearl Harbor and until the end of World War II.

Even after the revelations of the Holocaust, there remained festering pools of bigotry and prejudice in this area. Although much of the prejudice was latent, there was social stratification and even symptoms of sheer hatred.

Social discrimination, practiced primarily by fraternal and social organizations, country clubs, hotels, and schools of higher education, formed

a pervasive pattern in this country during the first half of this century. Minorities in this region felt the effect of social and employment bias.

Generally, the larger and more prominent hotels in the Pocono Mountains—situated in neighboring Wayne, Monroe, and Pike Counties—were notorious for their restrictions on the admission of Jews and other minorities. It was common knowledge, and the Anti-Defamation League and our local ADL committee confirmed by independent investigation, that these hotels prior to about 1955 would not offer accommodations to Jews. Most of the hotels were in Monroe County, whose grand juries would not indict those arrested for violation of state law relating to public accommodation. Our ADL committee ultimately turned to other branches of state government to enforce the law.

Reasoning that liquor licenses were essential to profitable hotel operations, and that the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board had the authority to revoke licenses held by those violating state law, the ADL committee called upon Pennsylvania Attorney General Herbert Cohen with evidence of violations by specific hotels. Cohen assigned Deputy Attorney General Frank Lawley to investigate. Confirming the complaint, Lawley personally informed the offending hotels that they must comply with state law with respect to admissions of guests or face revocation of their liquor licenses. The hotels quickly withdrew their restrictive policies. There is no evidence that any hotel suffered by complying with the law.

After World War II, education reached a new peak in this country. Congress passed legislation enabling every honorably discharged veteran to receive free tuition for college education. Those who could not attend or were ineligible for college or university could attend vocational schools. The education of returning veterans became a national passion.

Generally, it was expected that after the war and the Holocaust, American colleges would no longer condone the use of racial and religious standards in the admission of students, but discrimination still prevailed at many institutions, especially at engineering and medical schools. Candidates for admission to schools outside the Valley—including some of the largest and most prominent institutions—frequently faced racial or religious barriers.

Fortunately, no area colleges and universities had adopted discriminatory policies; none had resorted to quotas. Catholic-sponsored King's

College, College Misericordia, and the University of Scranton, and non-sectarian Wilkes College (later Wilkes University) freely admitted qualified Jews as students. Jews, including rabbis, served on their faculties and Boards of Trustees. The presence and policies of these institutions helped to advance the social, economic, and educational levels of the community, and to foster respect and cooperation among the ethnic groups in the Valley. They also had a favorable influence on the annual fund-raising campaigns of charitable and educational institutions in this area.

Though documentation is scant, it is generally recognized that the Westmoreland Club of Wilkes-Barre adopted restrictive policies that endured until about 1966. The discriminatory practice encouraged plant managers and banks not to employ Jews; it had political and economic overtones as well.

Following World War II, Jewish leaders played a greater role in the civic, professional, and commercial life of the community. Jewish doctors treated Jews and non-Jews with equal fidelity. Jewish lawyers represented commercial, industrial, and financial interests competently and fairly. Jews contributed generously to general as well as Jewish community causes. The leadership of the Westmoreland Club obviously saw the unreasonableness, the unfairness and self-defeating purpose of their policies, and undertook correction. Unlike similar clubs with similar practices in other communities, the Westmoreland Club reversed its restrictive policies without any confrontation by the Jewish community. Restrictions against (male) Jews were dropped in the '60s. The club had no female members until December 4, 1990, when females were offered full rights and privileges.

In the United States generally, even in locales with important Jewish-owned commercial and industrial operations, Jews were kept out of the utility and banking industries until the 1950s or '60s. It may be that the public utilities locally conformed to the pattern, but early on, we find a number of Jews on the boards of Wyoming Valley banks.

Justin Bergman, founder of Bergman's Department Store—a landmark on Wilkes-Barre's South Main Street (and later Edwardsville) from 1916—and a director of the Wilkes-Barre Deposit and Savings Bank for more than 30 years until his death in July 1960, rose to chairman of the bank board. Samuel A. Kluger became president of the First National Bank of Wyoming, and Harry Cimmet was vice-president of Miners' Trust

Company of Nanticoke. Among other early members of bank boards were Edward L. Lewith and Martin Freeman, founders of the real estate firm that bears their names, as well as Isaac Long, S. J. Strauss, Harry Hirshowitz, Lewis Lewith, Harry F. Stern, Julius Long Stern, David L. Rifkin, Henry Ulman, Harry Michlosky, Benjamin Horn, Herman J. Goldberg, and Abraham Kirshner.

Though some Jews may have been blackballed from Valley fraternal organizations during the pre-war period, the 1930 Harvey-Smith biographies are replete with notes of Jewish membership in the Masons, Elks, Rotary, Odd Fellows, Kiwanis, Moose, Eagles, and Knights of Pythias. Jews were particularly well represented in the Masonic lodges, which welcomed eligible and respected Jews to the lodges, the Shrine, and the Consistory. Among the many Jews who rose to important offices in the order was Max Rosenn, Master of Landmark Lodge No. 442 in 1941. Reuben Levy and Max Rosenn also attained honorary 33rd degrees in Scottish Rite Masonry. Dr. Max Speizman was the first Jew in the state to become a Potentate of a Shrine Temple (Irem Temple Shrine). Among others achieving distinction were Murray Sims, Worshipful Master of Lodge No. 61, Richard Levy, Worshipful Master of the King David Lodge in Kingston, and Robert Kornblau, youngest Master of a Masonic lodge (King Hiram No. 721).

Relatively speaking, the Wyoming Valley Jewish community has fared well over the years in coping with antisemitism. This is not to say that none of it exists today. It would be expecting too much in light of the seeds of hatred and bigotry, sown and cultivated over many centuries.

Wilkes-Barre awakened on the morning of January 7, 1993 to make a shocking discovery. Ohav Zedek Congregation, which had just commenced celebrating its centennial of life and religious practice, had swastikas and antisemitic verses crudely scrawled and painted across the front doors, pillars, and steps of the synagogue.

Worshipers were stunned. The bright blue and white centennial banner above the main entrance was defaced with black paint swastika symbols and the message "white power." Painted on the center of the front door were the words "No Jews" and on the right front entrance door were the letters "KKK." On the concrete block in front of the doors was the notice "Jews get out." A similar message of hate had been carefully stenciled on

the automobile of Temple Israel's Rabbi James Michaels. The police immediately investigated, but were unable to apprehend the miscreants.

Never before in the history of this community had a similar experience occurred. The general community quickly united to deplore the messages of hate and vandalism. Calling the act "callous" and "insensitive," Bishop James C. Timlin, speaking for the Catholic community, expressed his outrage and sadness "by the latest outbreak of anti-semitism" and the *Citizens' Voice* of Wilkes-Barre editorialized its shock and displeasure. Mayor Lee Namey unequivocally and publicly stated that the vandalism was not representative of the community and was nothing more than an aberration.

Except for such scattered acts of vandalism, symptoms of antisemitism in the area have disappeared. The presence locally of higher institutions of learning, the ecumenical policy of the Vatican, and an enlightened and intelligent clergy have had an enormous and favorable impact, as have good citizenship, self-interest, and basic American fairness. The divisiveness created by prejudice dilutes the common purpose, strength, and goals of a community. A free, full, harmonious, and productive life for the people of the Valley is being achieved in a climate essentially devoid of hatred and bigotry.

The War Years, 1941-1945

ERIC C. LEVIN

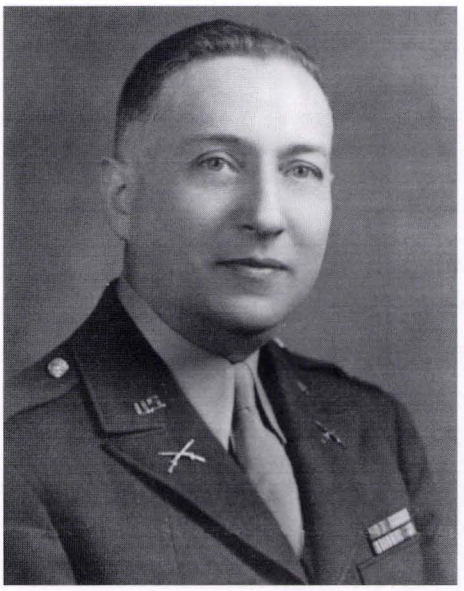
The War Years, 1941-1945

Although it was the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that thrust the United States into the Second World War, Jews in the Wyoming Valley, like Americans everywhere, had long seen the inevitability of this country's involvement. Few things were as intensely anticipated, and dreaded, as the advent of yet another worldwide conflict only two decades after the first.

The signs had been there for some time. The Nazis had come to power in Germany, ending the shaky Weimar Republic, in 1933. Adolf Hitler lost no time, and left little doubt of his intentions, in pursuing an aggressively murderous course. The Italian Fascist regime, under Mussolini, invaded Ethiopia in 1936 as a prelude to more aggression; and the newly militarized Japanese relentlessly marched through Manchuria, through China, and onward to their alliance with Hitler and Mussolini.

In the United States there were relatively few who thought that another war could be avoided. Wyoming Valley Jews, like Jews everywhere, watched in slowly growing horror as the new Nazi government promulgated one anti-Jewish ukase after another. Speakers at the YMHA began debating the consequences of Hitler's intentions in 1933; the *Digest* somberly records the grim, often first-hand reportage of various guest speakers, presciently attesting to the unique nature of Hitler's antisemitism and of the course on which Germany now seemed set. By 1938—even before Munich and Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler—there was little doubt of war, little doubt that the United States would be drawn into it, and no doubt at all that the European Jewish community was about to face a horror without parallel.

It was in 1939 that the last of the Jewish refugees were legally permitted to leave Germany and Austria. It was not easy for them to enter the United States—the Roosevelt administration never waived immigration quotas in the face of the obvious emergency—but, in the period before and during the war, almost 175,000 did enter, vouched for by American relatives guaranteeing that the refugees would not become public charges. The lucky Jewish families thus made their way to America, some settling in the Wyoming Valley, at least temporarily; others eventually made their way to various points around the country.



Col. Samuel Bloch Jr.
Courtesy
Betty Ruth Baltimore.

The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 began the Second World War in earnest and permanently changed the landscape of Europe. America, despite its official neutrality, could wait no longer to prepare. President Roosevelt declared a state of limited emergency late in 1939, and the first-ever peacetime draft began in 1940, the earliest conscripts drilling with wooden sticks instead of rifles and wearing cast-off World War I uniforms. But that would change, and soon.

In Wilkes-Barre, Major (later Col.) Samuel Bloch Jr., brother-in-law of Temple B'nai B'rith's Rabbi Emeritus Marcus Salzman, was appointed, in 1940, to command the local induction center on North Main Street. He would hold the post for the duration, supervising the entry of approximately 200,000 northeastern Pennsylvanians into the armed forces, and activating three separation centers at Indiantown Gap in 1945. Bloch had seen combat action in World War I and thereafter established Bloch Brothers insurance while remaining active in the Army Reserve. He jokingly referred to himself and several colleagues as "The Retreads"—veterans of one world war now serving in another—and helped form the Pennsylvania branch of the national Retreads organization, serving as first commander of the group in Luzerne County.

As 1940 progressed, Democrats and Republicans traded charges of, variously, "war-mongering" and "isolationism," but war was closing in. A local UJA fund-raising letter, for example, signed by Samuel Hirshowitz and sent to local homes early in 1941, refers to the destruction already wreaked by World War II and to the "millions of homeless wanderers"—mostly Jews—left in its wake. Campaign chairman Louis Shaffer, writing to the community on April 22, 1941, sternly reminded that "European Jews look *to* us for help—and the people of Wyoming Valley look *at* us to see in what measure we respond."

Meanwhile, the economy in Luzerne County in 1940 and 1941 had seen an easing of the worst effects of the Depression, but unemployment was still high, strikes were frequent—particularly in the mines—and factories often were idle.

The demographics of the Jewish community were changing, too, as the 1940s began. By 1941, hundreds of families had moved from the Heights section of Wilkes-Barre to Kingston and other communities west of the Susquehanna River, while others had moved to the semi-suburban ambiance of

South Wilkes-Barre. Membership in the Y and in Temple Israel, Temple B'nai B'rith, and Congregation Ohav Zedek increased as a result. But as the Jewish population began decreasing in the outlying areas, their individual synagogues began to suffer accordingly. As World War II dawned, the Jewish community was increasingly consolidated in Wilkes-Barre, Kingston and the West Side, and Pittston. Young people were, for the most part, American-born. They mingled easily with the young of other ethnic groups and religions, and had in common similar values and aspirations. An increasing number were not only graduating from high school but going on to college, often preparing for careers in the professions, leaving behind family stores and businesses.

But a by-now common assumption that many plans—business, personal, professional—were about to be delayed indefinitely was borne out by Pearl Harbor. December 7, 1941 was, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his declaration of war message to Congress a few days later, "a date which will live in infamy." It was also a date that was to change, in a fundamental way, life as it had been known in America—and in the Wyoming Valley.

Call-ups for the draft increased immediately, and numerous volunteers began enlisting in all the branches of the service—the Army, Army Air Forces (not a separate branch until after the war), the Navy, the Marines, and the Coast Guard. Early on men were drafted only into the Army; as the war progressed many were drafted directly into the other branches as well.

The need, of course, was great. More than 16 million—mostly men but eventually women as well—would be serving in the armed forces of the United States by the war's height, in 1944. Meanwhile, college campuses began emptying out, vocational plans were put on hold, and even high school seniors volunteered for service. By mid-1942, call-ups were proceeding for all able-bodied men under 26 years of age. Married men over 35 were not to be called until relatively late in the war.

Women's auxiliaries were created for all branches of the service, and millions of women began volunteering as nurses, file clerks, even as civilian test pilots. Others, the legendary "Rosie the Riveters," took over men's jobs in defense plants and factories, earning what the men had earned and performing just as well.

Luzerne County, which had been hit especially hard by the Depression, contributed an especially high number of men to the armed forces—more than 100,000. Various possible factors have been cited for the high percentage—a tradition of service and patriotism, still-high unemployment rates—but the

Ohav Zedek honored these parents with three and four sons in the service in 1943. From left, seated: Mr. and Mrs. M. D. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Wasserstrom, and Mr. and Mrs. Max Freedman. Standing, from left: Mrs. Minnie Lang, Mr. and Mrs. Isadore Thalenfeld, Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Schoenbrum, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kirshner, and Philip Herskowitz. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1943, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

numbers remain as a testament to the valor and resolve of the various peoples in Luzerne County, and what they saw as their duty.

The local Jewish community's numbers in the service were likewise impressive. Beginning in mid-1942, the *Digest* began noting "250 men in uniform!" By 1943 the number would more than double (the brochure for the Y's silver anniversary proudly proclaimed "530 boys in the Service"); by 1944 more than 1,000 Jews from Wyoming Valley were to be found in every theatre of war, from stateside to Europe, from the Aleutians to the South Pacific to China and Burma. Most saw combat as enlisted men, though Abraham Robert Ginsburgh and Maurice Halper rose to the rank of general. Many also saw service as Navy sailors, as Army and Navy fliers, as Marines and in the Coast Guard, and as technicians and support troops.

There were some unusual stories growing out of all this war-related activity. There were the Zatcoff brothers, Samuel and Joseph, for example, who had left G. A. R. High School to join the family business, Keystate Bakery, which had been founded by their father Paul and was then operated in the Heights by their brother Abe. Sam was drafted in January 1942 and stationed at Camp Bowie, Texas with the 10th U. S. Army Field Hospital. Joe was drafted in May, and was placed in the infantry in Fort Slocum, New York. Identical twins, they never had been apart before, and their sister Gussie determined to do something about it. She wrote directly to the commander-in-chief on September 22, 1942:

Joseph, left, and Samuel Zatcoff, on furlough at home. *Courtesy Samuel Zatcoff.*

Dear Mr. President,

. . . My brothers before entering the Army were very attached to one another, and were never separated for a single day during their civilian life. In fact, as far away as they are from one another, at the present time, they correspond very frequently carrying one another's photos treasuring them very dearly.

. . . They both received furloughs for the Jewish Holidays and . . . the farewell upon leaving for their respective Camps could not only move a human being but a heart made of stone. . . .

So you see, Mr. President, why I am writing this letter, asking you if it's humanly possible to place my twin brothers together. . . .

Her request was soon granted. By November, Joe, now stationed in Georgia, was transferred, joining Sam in Texas before the unit became the first field hospital to sail for Africa. Though the brothers were in different platoons overseas, their service together was a highly unusual exception, since the armed forces did not encourage siblings serving, and, possibly, dying together. (Sam recalled that his sister's request was granted before the five Sullivan brothers all died on a torpedoed Navy ship.)

4 BROTHERS MEET AFTER 4 YEARS

For the first time in four years, the [illegible] sons of Mr. and Mrs. Julius H. Savitz, 278 East Northampton Street, are home together. They are, left to right: Corp. Harry Savitz, Sgt. Joseph Savitz, PFC Sidney Savitz and PH M 2/c Morris Savitz.

Harry, recently discharged from the Army, has returned after four years in the service, two overseas. He served with a heavy bombardment group of the Eighth Air Force in Europe and later was transferred to the Philippines.

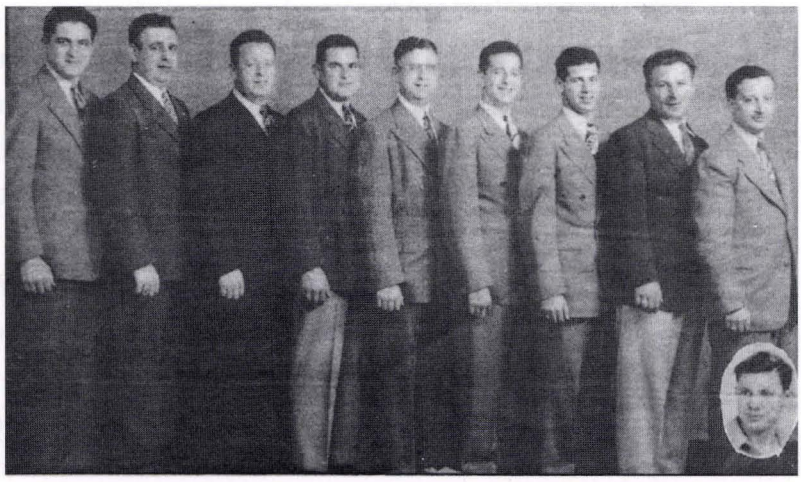
Joseph, also recently discharged, served in France with the 656th Engineer Topographic Battalion as an aerial photo-topographer. This outfit made the topographic maps for the American field armies in the European campaign.

Morris, still serving in the Navy as a Pharmacist's Mate [illegible]

In 1946, the Savitz brothers reunited at home for the first time in four years. From left, Corporal Harry Savitz, Sergeant Joseph Savitz, PFC Sidney Savitz, Pharmacist's Mate 2/c Morris Savitz.

On Welles Street in the Heights were the Savitz brothers, four of them—Joseph, Morris, Harry, and Sidney—who eventually all served in uniform all across the globe. Joseph, later a prominent attorney, recalled how letters from home were circulated round-robin among the brothers, who thus managed to keep in touch with one another as well. A clipping from the *Wilkes-Barre Record* early in 1946—when the war was safely over—shows the four brothers, all having survived, all together again and ready to resume their civilian lives (almost—Sidney, an Army flight engineer, and Morris, a Navy pharmacist's mate, were still in service).

Not to be outdone, Joseph Kaufer, also of the Heights, had seven sons and three sons-in-law serving in the Army, Army Air Force, Navy, and Marines by 1944. Sons Samuel, Henry, Raymond, Philip, Max, Robert, and Irving, and sons-in-law Meyer Korson, Max Siegel, and Benjamin Hafetz may together represent a local record for family members in the service. (An eighth son, Woodrow Kaufer, had been accepted by the Navy but was not called into service.) The ten men served overseas, in Europe and in the Pacific, and all survived.



The Kaufer family at war's end. From left, Ben Hafetz, Henry Kaufer, Sam Kaufer, Ray Kaufer, Phil Kaufer, Max Kaufer, Robert Kaufer, Max Siegel, Meyer Korson, and Irving Kaufer (inset).

Not everyone who served was so fortunate. Casualty lists were printed regularly in the local press, and anxious families learned how to scan the lists for the names of those killed in combat or lost in action, the latter designation offering some scant hope.

The printed casualty lists were often well out of date. Telegrams sent

directly from the War Department—a scene shown in dozens of films of the period—notified the families of those killed in action, two dozen of whom were Jewish servicemen from the Wyoming Valley.

But most of the Jewish GIs from the Valley, like their Christian counterparts, survived. Some, like Albert Danoff, who had postponed entering Harvard Law School when war intervened, spent time in prisoner of war camps; some, like Alvin Rothstein, repeatedly escaped capture by the enemy. And while most of the men in uniform served in combat or combat support, others, like attorneys and brothers Max and Harold Rosenn, served as law officers or in Army Intelligence.

Meanwhile, life on the home front followed certain patterns that were established early in the conflict. Rationing—of meat, coffee, sugar, shoes, clothing, rubber, gasoline, and other items—began in mid-1942 and would continue, on most items, for "the duration." Households were encouraged to grow "Victory Gardens" (fruits and vegetables) to augment available groceries. Housewives learned to do as the public service advertisement said: "Use it up . . .Wear it out. . . Make it do. . . or do without!" New cars, toasters, vacuum cleaners, and other household appliances no longer appeared, as factories retooled to produce tanks, planes, and radar equipment. Nighttime blackouts and "brownouts"—to reduce visibility from the air for possible enemy aircraft—were frequent. With most households limited to about four gallons of gas a week, driving was necessarily curtailed, and carpooling soon became popular. Wyoming Valley's extensive network of trains and trolleys would be stretched to the limit during the war (parts for repair were hard to come by), but public transportation provided young people without cars or gasoline a chance to hear the most popular big bands at Hansen's in Harveys Lake.

Neighborhood movie theatres were still the rule in the 1940s, and the mass media—movies, radio, and magazines and newspapers—provided those on the home front with entertainment, culture, and, particularly, news. Local radio stations like WBRE, WBAX, and WEJL joined with the networks—NBC, MBS, CBS, ABC—in providing information on the war on an almost continual basis.

The new and pressing needs of wartime life prompted various responses. The sometimes imperious Fannie Sax Long, chairman of the Women's Division of the Y's Army and Navy Committee, apparently thought it would be helpful to write to local women on the home front:

In these days, it may become the unaccustomed duty of every woman to transact her own or the family's business affairs; to make bank deposits; to collect rent; to provide for taxes and other financial obligations; to make investment decisions; to balance the family saving and spending or perhaps just to keep a bankbook correctly. . . .

The economy of Luzerne County benefited greatly from the war-related activity. Mines operated 24 hours a day to provide needed fuel, much of which was shipped directly to theatres of war. More than $50 million in defense contracts were awarded to Luzerne County factories by war's end, and local factories, like those nationwide, often converted to producing war materiel on contract with the War Department. Eligible hands to work in those essential war jobs were soon in short supply, banishing, at least temporarily, the problems of unemployment, underemployment, and low wages.

Jewish-owned companies saw their natures drastically altered by the exigencies of war. The A. Rifkin Company of Wilkes-Barre, founded in 1892 by Abraham Rifkin partnered with Sol Heller and Barney Friedland, had shifted focus from the manufacture of work clothing to that of bank bags with a patented zipper locking system at the time of Roosevelt's "bank holiday" in 1933. Under the ownership of Rifkin's sons David, Jacob, and William, the company now shifted focus again. As it had to a more limited extent in World War I, the Rifkin company retooled and turned to the production of uniforms for industrial clients, particularly those involved with wartime production efforts.

Liberty Throwing, a silk manufacturer established in Nanticoke in 1920 by Charles Epstein, Benjamin Levi, and Malcolm Levi, turned to producing nylon for parachutes, as did Newark Silk Company, founded in 1925 by Joseph and Esther Fortinsky and run by their son Jacob Fortinsky and son-in-law David Izenberg. Jacob's son Robert, who was in the service during World War II, said that Newark wove silk parachutes for humans, and nylon parachutes for supplies, but nylon was used for people when mills ran out of the expensive silk, most of which came from Japan.

Joseph Kellner, who had brought his dress business to the Valley from New York City in 1939, converted completely to war production. Woodbury Manufacturing Company's 11 wartime products included parachutes, apparel, sleeping bags, jungle hammocks, insect field nets, bomb parachutes, and American flags. During the war years, more than 1,100 people—including

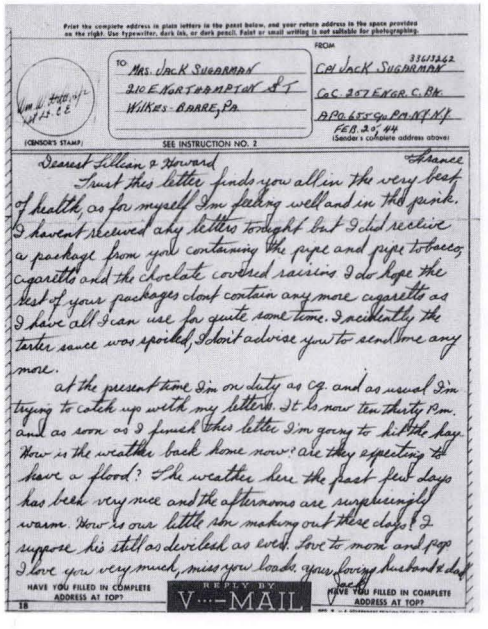
Joseph's son Emil following his Army service—were employed on a three-shift, seven-day work program.

Life on the home front in the Wyoming Valley, as elsewhere, was a constant mixture of anxiety, worry, optimism, and patriotism. Few eligible men sought to avoid service. Women often worked in war-related industries, but more often did volunteer work. Children participated in their way, memorizing the decals on the model planes, playing war games with maps showing the war's progress, following combat-oriented cartoon strips—including new GI "Joe Palooka," drawn by Valley native Ham Fisher—and stories in newspapers and comic books and radio, and waiting for letters from absent fathers and brothers.

Jewish communal life locally also reflected war-related concerns. Mass meetings and guest lecturers were scheduled at the various synagogues, and the Y, listed as an air raid shelter, canteen center, and evacuation center, provided "programs and preparation for the whole community." Newsletters and publications of the Y noted frequent speakers on war-related topics. The war even dominated mentions of activities like bowling and adult sports. The newsletter of the teenagers' Scholastic Club frequently discussed war, the course for the country, the part teens were playing to help. A letter from Executive Director Louis Smith to Y members, entitled "Do Your Part," went on to suggest meaningful home front activities: serving as air raid wardens, air spotters, and first-aiders (Red Cross instructor Julia Lieberman prepared a first aid manual); purchasing Victory stamps and bonds; participating in Red Cross Appeals, the USO Appeal, and the UJA. Other activities for the young, for adults, and for seniors—plays, fashion shows, minstrel shows—often used patriotic, war-related themes.

Home Camp brochures and catalogues from 1942 through 1945 constantly mention the need to help support the war effort—whether through buying Victory war bond stamps or helping collect scrap metal and waste paper for recycling—and stress physical fitness as a way to help contribute to the nation's morale and to its future. The Home Camp brochure for the 1942 summer season, for example, noted that its 125 campers would be boys and girls from the third through ninth grades, and that the programs would

Jack Sugarman, shown at right with his brother Harold, communicated with his family at home via V-MAIL.
Courtesy Lillian and Jack Sugarman.



Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

TO: MRS. JACK SUGARMAN
210 E. NORTHAMPTON ST.
WILKES-BARRE, PA.

FROM: CPL JACK SUGARMAN 33613242
CO. 257 ENGR. C. BN.
APO 637 % POSTMASTER
FEB. 20, 44
(Sender's complete address above)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)
SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

Dearest Lillian & Howard — Clarence

Trust this letter finds you all in the very best of health, as for myself I'm feeling well and in the pink. I haven't received any letters tonight but I did receive a package from you containing the pipe and pipe tobacco cigarettes and the chocolate covered raisins I do hope the rest of your packages don't contain any more cigarettes as I have all I can use for quite some time. Incidentally the tartar sauce was spoiled, I don't advise you to send me any more.

At the present time I'm on duty as Cq. and as usual I'm trying to catch up with my letters. It is now ten thirty P.M. and as soon as I finish this letter I'm going to hit the hay. How is the weather back home now? are they expecting to have a flood? The weather here the past few days has been very nice and the afternoons are surprisingly warm. How is our little son making out these days? I suppose his still as devilish as ever. Love to mom and pop I love you very much, miss you loads. Yours loving husband & dad

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY V···-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

stress, in addition to the usual swimming and baseball, "Democracy in Action." Programs were built around the "Four Freedoms" recently enumerated by FDR—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from fear, and freedom from want.

Much of this was little different from activities or concerns held by most Americans. From a Jewish perspective, however, both local and national activities had an added dimension. Fund-raising brochures and letters from the national UJA, beginning even before Pearl Harbor, described, in harrowing terms, the calamity about to befall the Jewish people of Europe, and the theme is repeatedly stressed in other such appeals throughout the war.

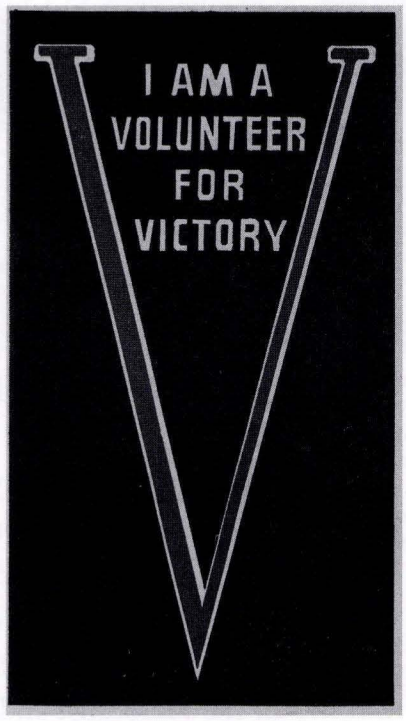
The literature still makes for chilling reading, from any point of view. It was all too evident at the time that the Nazis were about to launch an unprecedented assault on European Jews as an integral part of their war plans. Yet, the unfolding Holocaust—the campaign of deliberate genocide—still seemed unfathomable to many who wrote and edited the material. They pointed to other signs of disaster, traditional by-products of war—the homeless, the wandering, the refugees—rather than to this war's unique by-product, mass murder, the foreshadowing of which is now most clearly seen in hindsight.

These "Joe Palooka" strips ran on March 4 and March 7, 1942. *Courtesy The Times Leader.*

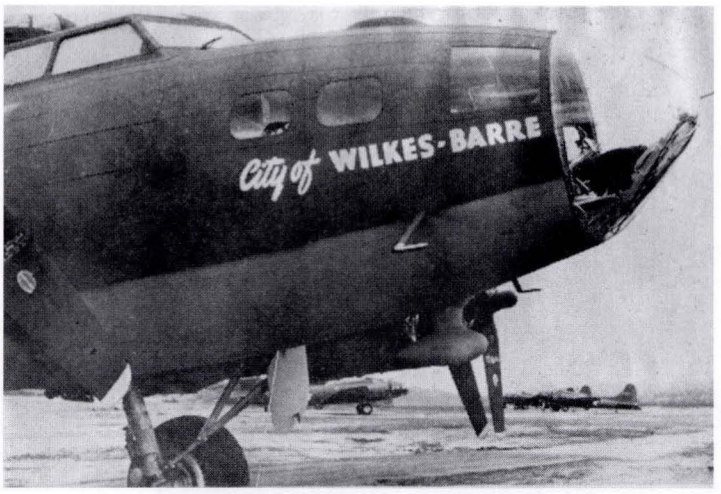
There was also a marked skittishness on the part of Jewish communal executives to over-emphasize what they felt was the Jewish aspect of the war. Charges of Jewish self-interest and of involving the country in a "Jewish war" had been leveled by several prominent bigots on the national scene before the war, and Jewish leaders were loath to reinforce any such impression, especially in their own fund-raising appeals. Thus, the public consensus soon evolved that winning the war as expeditiously as possible would also help the Jews of Europe best. That the essential point of the consensus was a valid one was hardly arguable; its inadequacy in helping lessen the slaughter was likewise inarguable.

Late in the war—in 1944—Jewish leaders, led by Rabbi Stephen Wise, began to approach Roosevelt more publicly and more aggressively, but it took a personal intervention by FDR's longtime Secretary of the Treasury, Henry J.

USA
USA



Opposite page, top: Teenagers helping to collect scrap steel for the war effort, 1943. From left, front row, Jerome Facher, Melvin Rashewsky, David Sirkin, Milton Stein; from left, back row: David Mitchneck, Joseph Gelb, Irving Lenowitz, Harold Teich, and Irving Kaufer. *Courtesy Jerome Facher.* Bottom: Scholastic Club minstrel show cast, April 6, 1941. This page, clockwise from top left: The 1942 camp brochure; a wartime YMHA fund-raising brochure; centerfold, 1944 Home Camp brochure.



This B-17 Flying Fortress was named in recognition of the $403,000 in war bonds raised by the S. J. Strauss B'nai B'rith Lodge. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1943, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

Morgenthau Jr.—scion of one of America's oldest German Jewish families and a Dutchess County neighbor of the president's—to finally obtain direct Allied intervention into the death camp machinery. More than 50,000 Hungarian Jewish lives were saved as a result. (Morgenthau also emerged a changed man, Jewishly, as a result of the experience. Lukewarm till then about his religion and its associations, Morgenthau after the war became a leading spokesman and fund raiser for the UJA, and in that guise spoke in Wilkes-Barre.)

Actually, such hypersensitivity was unnecessary. Jews, in the Wyoming Valley and throughout the country, served in numbers greatly out of proportion to their numbers in the population, and they served valiantly in all areas of combat and in every branch of the service. The extent of this accomplishment, and what it demonstrated to millions of fellow GIs, as well as the nature of the Holocaust and its confirmation of what the war was all about, were seen as two decisive elements in the dramatic decrease in antisemitism found in every area of American life following World War II.

But if antisemitism increased, for the short term, during the war nationally, there is little evidence of such activity in the Wyoming Valley. Local newspapers continued their straightforward and sympathetic coverage of events at local synagogues and at the Y, and area rabbis were frequent guest speakers at Christian pulpits and in ecumenical, interfaith services that were convened increasingly as the war progressed. The fund-raising campaigns of the Y and local UJA continued to boast such old-stock Protestant names as Butler, Burnside, Fleck, Loveland, and Collins on their letterheads; and highly visible communal leaders—induction center head and Y president Col. Samuel Bloch Jr., Temple Israel and Y president Aaron Weiss, Louis Shaffer, Jewish Committee chairman Jacob Silverblatt, and Chamber of Commerce president Reuben Levy, among others—reinforced communal perception that the Jewish community

Henry J. Morgenthau, flanked by Reuben Levy, left, and Charles Weissman, addressed the UJA campaign in 1947 at Wilkes-Barre's Hotel Sterling.

of the Wyoming Valley was a fully integrated, vital component of the whole.

Local Jews focused their concern on the progress of the war. The first full year of combat—1942—saw reverses in both the Pacific and in Europe. But by mid-1943, with almost l6 million Americans in uniform, with war production up to full speed, and with plans in full effect, the tide of the war began turning and by the time of the D-Day invasion in June 1944 talk became common, in print and elsewhere, of postwar plans and "reconversion" and "readjustment." No longer did it seem a matter of "if" but of "when."

Arthur Alinikoff, of the U.S. Army 30th Infantry, received American and European Theatre ribbons and the Purple Heart. He died at Anzio on February 23, 1944. *Courtesy Samuel Greenberg.*

Still, local rabbis found much to do to allay fears and minister to their congregants. Rabbi I. M. Davidson, the colorful and eloquent chief Orthodox rabbi, had failed to secure an overseas chaplaincy appointment, but he actively journeyed stateside from military hospital to hospital, visiting as many wounded servicemen as he could. He corresponded regularly with dozens of local Jewish GIs overseas and helped keep local families in touch and encouraged. On June 13, 1944, for example, just a week after D-Day, he wrote to his son Alfred:

> *. . . My soldiers mail is increasing day by day, and, particularly, the three or four weeks before D-Day (tho, of course, I had no idea . . . what particular day it would be). I wrote as many letters to our Wilkes-Barre boys in England, as I had heard from. . . . Among those from England, Lt. Harold Rosenn, Dr. Pearlman, Sidney Sullum, one of the Kirshners, Weisberger and a number of lads you do not know. I can readily imagine how welcome a word of encouragement and prayer must be, at this crucial moment of their lives, the actual baptism of fire, most welcome. . . .*
>
> *. . . I received, from the Post Office, after a most remarkable odyssey of three months, traveling from North Africa up the Straits of Bari to the Italian boot, then following up the poor boy from Sicily and Anzio Beach, a letter I sent Arthur Alinikoff last October. . . . The letter . . . finally caught up with him two days after he died of wounds received in action, and now, came back to me unopened, marked with red in "Deceased—Col. AJT, Commanding Officer."*
>
> *G-d grant that this great invasion, the turning point and climax of the war, be at a minimum cost of human lives. . . .*

Rabbi Israel Kazis of Temple Israel was appointed an Army chaplain in 1942, and served with distinction overseas through 1945, deciding at war's end to accept a call from another community. Associate Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman became a Navy chaplain, while Associate Rabbi Reuben Katz, Cantor Saul Siller, and synagogue president Hyman Landau helped maintain continuity for the Conservative congregation at home through the war.

Before Kazis left he was an active speaker on the home front. The *Wilkes-Barre Record* of September 9, 1942 reported on his speech before the Women's Auxiliary of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital:

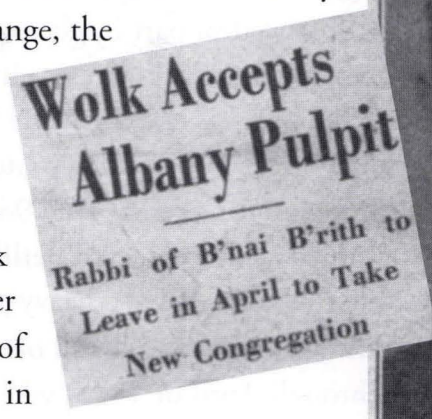
> *The importance of supporting the coming Community War Chest drive 100 per cent, assisting the USO and contributing to various foreign reliefs was emphasized by Rabbi Israel Kazis of Temple Israel. . . . Rabbi Kazis said that while we should not forget our needs at home which "the boys" are fighting to protect, it also is important that we support different foreign reliefs who without our help are apt to fall into the hands of the enemy through want and desperation.*

But it was, perhaps, Rabbi Samuel Wolk of Temple B'nai B'rith who helped provide the glue that kept the home front Jewish community together. Wolk sought, successfully, to minimize denominational differences, and worked closely with his Conservative and Orthodox colleagues. Serving together at the Y and in the community at large, Rabbis Wolk, Davidson, and Kazis encouraged the ecumenical interfaith spirit that seemed to increase locally as the war progressed and as news of it improved. Louis Smith, executive director of the Y, worked actively with the rabbis to help present united Jewish support for the war effort, and the Y was a frequent venue for religious and communal leaders of other faiths and ethnic groups who served as guest speakers.

Rabbi Samuel Wolk with Temple B'nai B'rith confirmation class, 1943 or '44. *Courtesy Carolyn Kaufer.*

It was an irony of timing, then, that as Temple B'nai B'rith proudly began celebrating its centennial in January 1945, Rabbi Wolk, who had provided such distinguished leadership since 1929, announced that he was accepting a call from a synagogue in Albany, New York, where he would serve until he retired. His

16 years in Wilkes-Barre had seen the worst of the Depression and most of World War II, and in those years, additional to his presidency of the Council of Social Agencies and the Children's Service Center, he had served on the executive committees of the Community Welfare Federation, the Social Service Exchange, the Boy Scouts, and the Red Cross. He also served on the boards of the Osterhout Library and Bucknell Junior College (now Wilkes University), and was often an arbitrator in various labor disputes. Rabbi Wolk remained at Temple B'nai B'rith until after the anniversary celebration in the spring of 1945, and was succeeded in the pulpit in August by Rabbi Newton J. Friedman.


Wolk Accepts Albany Pulpit

Rabbi of B'nai B'rith to Leave in April to Take New Congregation

Leaving City

RABBI SAMUEL WOLK

As the war went on President Roosevelt proclaimed several days of national prayer. He asked religious leaders of all faiths to lead their congregants in prayer for the success of D-Day on June 6, 1944, and followed that with a similar proclamation for Thanksgiving of 1944. A large ecumenical service was held that holiday afternoon at the Y. Presiding were Rabbis Katz, Davidson, and Wolk, as well as Cantor Saul Siller and the Temple Israel Choir, along with clergy of other faiths. Rabbis Wolk and Davidson, in particular, also were regularly invited to speak on local radio stations; newspapers frequently quoted from their sermons. Temple B'nai B'rith, Temple Israel, and Congregation Ohav Zedek suffered from diminished numbers during the war—due, of course, to the numbers of men, and women, serving elsewhere—but they survived, as did the Y, and frequently lent their premises to war-related uses like war bond rallies, Red Cross blood drives, and USO-sponsored dances for servicemen.

The spirit of optimism that prevailed in 1944—the feeling that it was all but over—also led the Y to begin its most ambitious program of building, and in December local members of the community began receiving copies of the slick new brochure that proclaimed "a new future" for what would soon be renamed the Jewish Community Center of the Wyoming Valley (JCC). With the active support of Aaron Weiss, who had in 1943 succeeded Col. Bloch as YMHA president, Hyman Landau and Henry Fein chaired the 1944 building fund campaign, working toward the acquisition of a larger, more modern structure that would fulfill the social, recreational, and educational needs of the

membership, including the returning servicemen and women, and offer the most up-to-date amenities. The campaign reflected the community's high optimism about the war's successful conclusion—a belief widely shared—as well as its energy and confidence about the postwar future. The campaign was a huge success, financed in part by the purchasing of Victory stamps (for the Seventh War Loan) and the subsequent gift of the stamps and bonds to the Y.

But the war was not over. The Nazis threw everything they had—including 14- and 15-year old recruits—into the last-ditch Battle of the Bulge offensive that, throughout December of 1944 and early January 1945, momentarily halted the Allied advance toward Berlin. The battle was finally won by the Allies by the end of January, but at a heavy price in blood and casualties. Daylight bombing raids on Berlin and the rest of Germany by the Eighth Air Force would continue through April of 1945, when the Allies finally broke through to Berlin, capturing the capital of the erstwhile 1000-Year Reich and sending Hitler and his mistress into an underground bunker and double suicide. What remained of the German High Command surrendered unconditionally shortly thereafter, and the Allied nations rejoiced at the advent of V-E (Victory in Europe) Day, May 7, 1945.

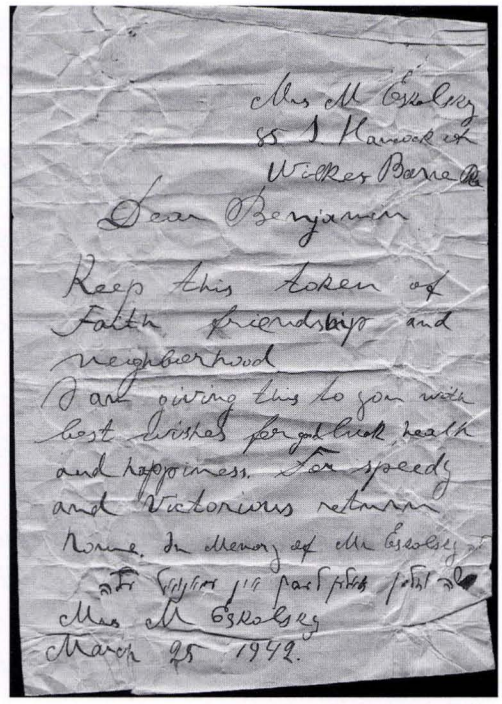
On January 1, 1945—as the Battle of the Bulge still raged—a memorial service "in tribute to 14 of our boys who have made the supreme sacrifice" was held at the Y, with Rabbis Davidson, Wolk, and Katz officiating, and Cantor Aaron Horowitz chanting memorial prayers. Ten names later would be added, combining for a total of at least 24 Jewish servicemen killed in action during the war: Arthur Alinikoff, Isadore Fierverker, Daniel G. Finkelstein, Harold P. Fortinsky, Irwin Freed, Zalman Goldberger, Morris W. Goldstein, Milford Hershkowitz, Leonard Kornblau, Morris Landau, Albert D. Loenthal, Irwin J. Pincus, Eugene Rosner, Phillip W. Roth, Robert I. Rothstein, Edward D. Silverman, Louis Smulowitz, David Sockut, Milton Spevack, Bernard Steinberger, Calvin Ungar, Harold H. Wertheimer, Arthur Wasserstrom, and Eugene Wohl.*

The Allied armies now uncovered, in country after country in formerly occupied Europe, overwhelming and graphic evidence of the Nazi Final Solution—the collective system of mass murder, torture, and degradation visited on the Jews of Europe that came to be called "The Holocaust" in later

* The Jewish community lacks a single, central casualty list for World War II. Although we have made every effort to be inclusive, and to verify the above names culled from various institutional archives, we regret errors or omissions caused by incomplete records.

years. Many victims were relatives of Jews in the Wyoming Valley. Some survivors managed to make their way, in the years ahead, to the Wyoming Valley to begin new lives. Some of them, together with returning American veterans and Europeans fortunate enough to have escaped the worst, took on leadership roles in the Jewish community, and often the community at large, in the decades following the war.

On April 12, 1945, the Commander-in-Chief, Franklin Roosevelt, who had been president since 1933 and had led the country and all of the Allies (now officially known as "the United Nations") through the war, died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage, just days before the official German surrender and the proclamation of V-E Day. Memorial services were held at the Y, as they were throughout the country. The new president, Harry Truman, picked up the reins in short order, and his decisive leadership in the Pacific—including the decision to drop atomic bombs over Nagasaki and Hiroshima—defeated the Japanese and brought the final phase of the war to a quick conclusion. The Valley celebrated with the rest of the country—and the United Nations—as V-J Day, September 2, proclaimed a permanent end to hostilities.


Mrs M Eskolsky
85 S Hancock st
Wilkes Barre Pa
Dear Benjamin
Keep this token of
Faith friendship and
neighborhood
I am giving this to you with
best wishes for good luck health
and happiness. For speedy
and victorious return
home. In Memory of Mr Eskolsky
Mrs M Eskolsky
March 25 1942.

Since entering the service in 1942, Benjamin Gottesman has kept this farewell letter, sent with a mezuzah, from Mrs. Meyer Eskolsky. *Courtesy Benjamin Gottesman.*

To a war-weary nation, V-J Day also meant the end of rationing, shortages, the lack of consumer goods, and—above all—the constant worry about casualty lists and telegrams in the night. For the men and women in uniform, it meant the end of a "job that had to be done," and reunion with home and family.

"Now that Victory has been achieved," wrote Lou Smith in a letter to the Jewish community shortly after V-J Day, "we can look forward with optimism to a lasting peace and a better world . . . a world that will soon benefit by the miracles of science and new improvements that have been perfected for better living. You can count on the Y to bring . . . all to you in this new building. . . ."

As GIs began returning to the Valley late in 1945—they would continue to do so throughout early 1946—there were grateful and emotional reunions everywhere. The upbeat mood as the postwar era dawned was summed up by the Y's own building fund advertisement that appeared in the *Digest* on December 12, 1945. Under the headline, "What He Dreamed Of In a Foxhole," with an illustration of a GI gazing raptly at the Y, the ad declared:

Their work is done . . . Thanks Be To God. . . . They're coming home, many of them to join in the planning of a new "Y."

Wyoming Valley Jewry welcomes with deepest pride and gratitude their 1000 sons and daughters. . . . home at last from far-flung battlefields. Next to home itself, it is the "Y" they dreamed of when hearts were heavy on distant invasion shores . . . they dreamed of the new building we said we were going to build.

These were the dreams that lifted their hearts . . . gay, leisurely hours to come with old friends in "Y" social halls. . . . the invigorating moments on the handball court. . . . the lure of the sparkling swimming pool. . . . the thrill of a soaring basketball and the roar of the spectators . . . the stimulation of a famed lecturer. . . . the unfolding of the eternal truths of their Hebraic heritage. . . . the eager greeting and infectious laughter of intimates in the lobby on a sun-bright Sunday afternoon. . . . a cozy table and "cokes" for two . . . a quiet library hour. . . . the mental gymnastics of an open forum. . . . the romantic interlude of dance music. . . . the pursuit of life and health and happiness amid peace and plenty at the only place on earth that spells HOME.

How It Was

They are over 70 now, most of them, some over 80. They look back on careers begun and families raised and a half century gone by and reflect on grandchildren who are more curious, often, than the children were.

They think back to that time, so distant to some, so close to others in memory, and of an impossibly cold winter in Belgium when your feet froze, slogging through the snow as you and the others waited for the replacements, and then you looked up in the sky hoping to see some friendly B-17s and took some ack-ack from some unfriendly Luftwaffe instead.

They think, some of them, back to forlorn, uncharted islands in the Pacific, islands so small no one thought to give them a name, where you battled boredom and Japanese submarines and mosquitoes as big as a B-29.

They think, some of them, of returning in an American uniform to the heart of the German fatherland that rejected and betrayed them, and of interrogating the bloated and arrogant captured Nazi officers in a Yiddish they knew the Germans would hate and yet understand at the same time, an ironic role reversal that had its own grim satisfactions.

They think, others of them, of being 19 and green and navigating the crew of a Flying Fortress in daylight bombing raids on Berlin, in scenes straight out of "Twelve O'clock High," and of returning later in those same bombers to drop packages of life-giving food to the starving people of Holland, who had been left by the fleeing Germans to eat radishes, when they could be found.

They think of being shot down in enemy territory, and of the sheer terror of being a Jewish American soldier led to a Nazi prisoner of war camp, and wondering how you would survive this particular hell, even with regular Red Cross visits and occasional mail from home.

And they think, as America marks more than a half century since the end of World War II, of having been part of what was, for most of them, the single defining event of their lives.

Few GIs boasted of their accomplishments, or talked much about the war at all, so eager were they to put it behind them and resume their old lives or start new ones. It was simply, they told themselves, a job that had needed doing, they had done what was asked of them, and in the smoking ruins of the erstwhile Thousand Year Reich and Imperial Japan lay the

earthly remains of too many of their buddies and too many innocents. So it was something to remember, but something to forget, too.

More than half a century later, as America marked the anniversaries of V-E and V-J days, it was time for those veterans from the Wyoming Valley, the Jewish ones in particular, to sort through those memories, those old scrapbooks and souvenirs, and to tell the stories firsthand.

Arnold Rifkin, navigator with the 8th Air Force in England, stands beside a B-17 Flying Fortress in 1945.
Courtesy Arnold Rifkin.

Arnold Rifkin had always wanted to fly. And he lost little time in enlisting in the Army Air Corps soon after his graduation from high school. When his less-than-perfect vision disqualified him from consideration as a pilot, he decided to train as a navigator instead, passing with honors and earning a lieutenant's commission. Soon after, he was shipped, early in 1945, to England where he was to be part of the 490th Bomb Group of the legendary Eighth Air Force and its daring daylight bombing raids on Germany, an effort that, with the invasion of Europe in June 1944, had definitively turned the tide of war and augured for an Allied victory.

Rifkin and the rest of his B-17 Flying Fortress crew, who had nicknamed themselves the "Get 'Em Yanks," flew many of these missions over Berlin in March and April of 1945, helping rain down the final blows on the Reich, but it was a mission of a far different nature—with far different cargo—that was to remain a defining moment of his life.

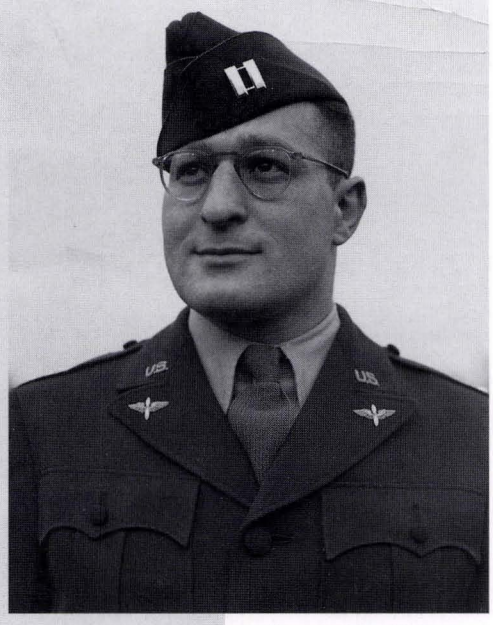
By late April the Germans had been run out of Holland, leaving behind them a bitter legacy of death and destruction and starvation, for as their parting blow the losing Nazis had burned the crops in the fields, killed remaining livestock, and—as a final coup de grâce—opened the dikes to flood what remained growing in the ground.

It had been, for the valiant people of the Netherlands, a particularly harsh winter—the "Hunger Winter" of 1944-45—and the coming of spring promised little relief, for starvation already had claimed more than 20,000 victims, almost as many as Nazi bullets. It was then that the U.S.

Eighth Air Force and the British Royal Air Force decided on a new and different kind of mission, one that dropped no bombs but packets of food—and life.

And so, from April 29 to May 8 of 1945, Eighth Air Force crews loaded their B-29s and B-17s with food packages drawn from Army field rations—canned Spam, canned vegetables, powdered eggs, biscuits, packages of cheese, breads, potatoes—as did the crews of the Royal Air Force in this new mission, which the British dubbed "Operation Manna" and the Americans, in more informal Yank fashion, called "Operation Chowhound."

Joining in Chowhound was another Jewish GI from Wilkes-Barre, Harold Rosenn, at the time stationed as an intelligence officer with the 388th Bomb Group.



Captain Harold Rosenn with the 8th Air Force in London in 1944. *Courtesy Harold Rosenn.*

In all, Manna/Chowhound, in 5,500 flights, dropped more than 12,000 tons of food over Holland through May 9, 1945, saving thousands of lives and earning the long-standing gratitude of an entire nation.

So much so that, 50 years later—in May of 1995—surviving veterans of Manna/Chowhound, including Rifkin and Rosenn and their wives, were reunited, by invitation of the Dutch government, at the Rotterdam site of those life-saving food drops. Arie P. de Jong, Colonel (retired) of the Royal Netherlands Air Force and chairman of the reunion, wrote, welcoming the veterans:

> ***. . . On behalf of the people in Western Holland who vividly remember your great achievements in 1945, I welcome you to the Netherlands. Fifty years ago you saw this country from a very low altitude and you must have noticed the happiness and emotions you caused when the badly needed food rained down from heaven. Today we welcome you to celebrate and to remember with us. . . . To celebrate the wonderful days when Lancasters, Mosquitos and Flying Fortresses roared over our heads. The days when we waved at you and you waved back. . . . The days when we knew that, together with the food, you brought us freedom, democracy and independence. . . .***

* * *

Buddy Rothstein, right, and Joe Brown served together throughout the war. Brown, who had also grown up in Wilkes-Barre, was a radio operator. They are pictured in London in 1944. *Courtesy Alvin Rothstein.*

It was a series of flukes—so characteristic of the wartime experiences of so many—that kept Alvin "Buddy" Rothstein alive, time and again, and it was another, and ironic, fluke, that enabled him to survive the war and return to the Wyoming Valley.

Twenty-one years old in January 1943, Rothstein had been graduated from E. L. Meyers High School and had attended the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business in Philadelphia when he decided to enlist in the Army Air Force. Trained as a pilot, he spent time at various stateside bases, training other flyers in handling the B-17s (Flying Fortresses) and B-29s (Liberators) that were the mainstays of the Air Force's daylight bombing missions over Germany and German-held territory. Rothstein was shipped over to England in 1944 to pilot many of those bombing missions—and to experience the first of those flukes.

While many of the missions were relatively uneventful, some—three in number—were not. Three times, over three different locations, his plane was shot at and disabled, and three times Rothstein survived water, cold, and exposure to return to action.

In March 1945, on yet another mission, this time over Poland, Rothstein's B-17 bomber, again badly disabled by enemy fire, was separated from the others in the formation, quickly lost both communication and altitude, and crash-landed in a part of Poland controlled by the Soviets, who had only recently wrested the area from Nazi occupation.

Incredibly, not one crew member was seriously injured in the crash, but after long miles of travel on foot, exhausted and bedraggled, they were met by a line of stern-looking Russian Army officers, rifles and bayonets drawn. Like the other flyers, Rothstein had been warned that the Russian Army was not always friendly and that they might well be shot instead of greeted in circumstances such as these.

Finally one officer, apparently the one in charge, approached Rothstein

and his crew. Rothstein knew not one word of Russian, but after sizing up the threatening faces and bayonets he decided to take a chance.

***"Reden Sie Yiddish?"*—do you speak Yiddish?—he asked the Russian officer, who eyed him coldly and unblinkingly for a full minute. Then, as Rothstein remembered it more than fifty years later, the grimness in the eyes began to thaw, almost imperceptibly.**

***"Bist a Yid?"*—are you a Jew?—asked the Russian, in reply.**

It was this final, and ironic, fluke, that enabled Rothstein, and his men, to survive Russian captivity, and, ultimately, the rest of the war. The Russian Jewish officer, Boris Petrovich, helped them ultimately to return to their bomb group in London, and he and Rothstein remained in touch for a while.

But it took a visit by Daniel Rothstein*—Rothstein's son—to Moscow in 1989 to finally locate the now-retired Boris Petrovich and to meet the man who had saved his father's life.

* * *

Fred Schwager was born in Würzburg, Germany in 1921, but he always regarded May of 1938, when a German ship similar to that of the "Voyage of the Damned" brought him and a brother to a new life in New York City, as his real birthday. For Fred Schwager—like so many immigrants before him, in so many different circumstances—regarded the United States with an unconditional love and gratitude that was to last his entire life.

His parents, Resi and Albert Schwager, had to wait a little longer, for it was their fate to live the actual "Voyage of the Damned," in May of 1939, aboard the St. Louis, and they wound up in Cuba—-one of the few places that would take some of the unhappy human cargo aboard the ship. Nearly three years later, in 1941, the elder Schwagers finally got the clearance to come to America and be reunited with their sons.

Fred Schwager. *Courtesy Margot and David Schwager.*

* Since 1990, Daniel Rothstein has practiced law in Russia, where he served as advisor to the Russian privatization ministry in 1992-3, organized Hebrew classes without interference from the Gorbachev government, and formed the firm of Rothstein and Shaw, P. C. in 1994.

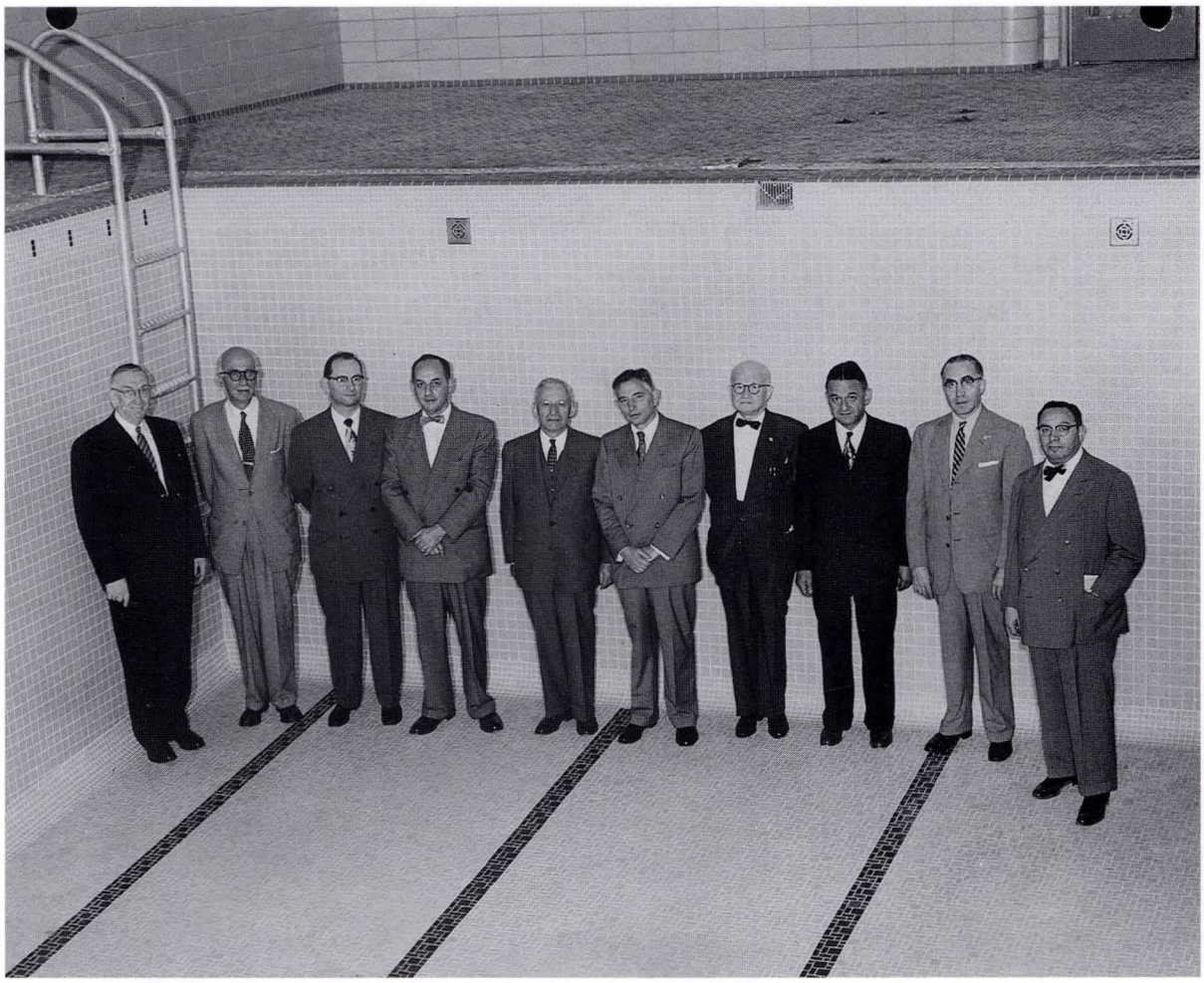
Fred Schwager quickly adapted to his new country. He learned English well enough, quickly enough, to lose almost all traces of a German accent.

Though his formal education stopped with his high school graduation in 1941 he retained for the rest of his life a strong intellectual curiosity and desire to learn.

He proudly joined the U.S. Army in 1943, becoming a staff sergeant and serving in the Quartermaster Corps in Fort Lee, Virginia. He was disappointed at not being sent overseas, but his wartime service for the country that had saved his life remained one of the defining moments of it.

Fred and Margot Schwager—he married the former Margot Neumann, herself a German refugee from the Nazis, in 1945—came to the Wyoming Valley in 1952, where he established himself in the shoe industry. But more important than any business to him was leading by example in his community. He believed a strong Jewish presence would help prevent future Holocausts, and he eventually spoke about the Holocaust to student groups. He served civic institutions. He gave of himself to his fellow citizens.

At his funeral in 1992, the plain wooden casket was enveloped in an American flag.



An Era of Gains and Losses: 1946-1972

Overleaf: The new Jewish Community Center on South River Street, Wilkes-Barre, was completed in 1955. Showing off one of its most exciting features, a swimming pool, are (from left) Reuben Levy, Ben Cohen, Nathan Kuss, Samuel Moskowitz, Morris Nelson, Aaron Weiss, Hyman Landau, Julius Long Stern, Louis Shaffer, and Louis Smith.

PAUL J. ZBIEK

An Era of Gains and Losses: 1946-1972

Wyoming Valley, like all America, had to redefine pre-war concepts of "normal life" as the postwar period began. Grieving for servicemen killed in action, shocked by the Holocaust and associated Nazi atrocities, Americans coped with the immediate need to assist Europe and its millions of displaced persons (DPs)—among them hundreds of thousands of Jews—while simultaneously re-absorbing U. S. veterans and reconverting domestic industry to a peacetime economy. World War II had profoundly changed the world and America's place in it; accommodating to the change became a herculean effort affecting every facet of American life—now lived in the shadow of the Cold War and its deadly nuclear competition.

With World War II, America had become the world's policeman, and ordinary Americans, their window on the world vastly enlarged by the new medium of television, accepted their country's international responsibility. Working to relocate the DPs, they helped resettle Europeans in America, western Europe, and the new State of Israel, mounting simultaneous efforts to free those trapped behind the "Iron Curtain" rapidly descending over Soviet-dominated eastern Europe. As China, too, became Communist, and Korea was threatened, America went to war again in 1950*, at the same time watching developments in Vietnam that would lead to yet another war. At home, Communist spies were prosecuted and Communism in America became a national obsession, exploited by Sen. Joseph McCarthy and allies in Congress.

Propelled into high technology with the introduction of computers, the American economy zigzagged, heading toward prosperity while contending with labor unrest and the need to absorb great numbers of World War II veterans into the work force. The veterans, impatient to reclaim their lives, rushed to marry and start families, find housing and jobs, and attend college under the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill of Rights).

As Wyoming Valley shared in each postwar development and trend—including the introduction of television by WBRE's Baltimore family in

* At least one local Jew, PFC Irwin (or Erwin) Shulman, died while serving in Korea.

1953—the region faced an additional hurdle: its economic base collapsed. In steep decline before World War II and dead soon after, the anthracite industry had to be replaced or the region, now subject to soaring unemployment and alarming out-migration, would not survive. Prominent among community leaders joining forces to attract new business to the area were Jewish businessmen and professionals, still working hand in hand with their Christian counterparts as even the social manifestations of antisemitism faded in reaction to the Holocaust.

In Wyoming Valley as elsewhere throughout America, Conservative Judaism emerged as the dominant Jewish religious force after the war. Rabbi Abraham D. Barras, assuming Temple Israel's pulpit in 1952, would more than triple the congregation's membership over the course of his 31-year tenure, extending female participation in the synagogue, instituting wide-ranging endowment opportunities, and building even stronger bridges to the general community.* And, as public and Catholic schools and summer camps filled to overflowing with postwar progeny, Jewish parochial schools—under Orthodox sponsorship in the Valley—provided yet another educational alternative.

Immediately after World War II, however, first priority for America's Jews was assimilating the genocide of six million European Jews, and assisting the survivors—a massive effort that involved major fund-raising and the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish national state.

From 1945 through the establishment of the State of Israel, United Jewish Appeal (UJA) drives focusing on Jewish DPs raised enormous amounts of money in large and small American communities. Locally, UJA chairman Nathan Kuss raised nearly $.3 million in 1946; in the next two years, Charles Weissman and Aaron Weiss brought the figure to more than $.5 million.

The entire Wyoming Valley community responded to the 1947 drive headed by Charles Weissman, with Reuben Levy leading outreach to the general community. The campaign, aided by powerful newspaper advertisements and editorials, detailed media coverage, generous financial and moral support from the Christian community, and a visit by national UJA chairman Henry Morgenthau, raised six percent over goal and demonstrated that the relatively small local Jewish community could mobilize substantial resources. That ability would be tested anew when Israel sought the cash to buy arms for her War of Independence.

* Rabbi Barras succeeded Rabbis Abram Winokur (1945-7) and Carl Manello (1947-51).

As Jewish DPs sought entry into Palestine, local Jews actively participated in stepped-up worldwide Zionist efforts for a Jewish homeland. The goal was in sight when, invoking the historic rights of the Jews and the November 1947 UN decision accepting the principle of independent Arab and Jewish states in Palestine, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the independent State of Israel on May 14, 1948. The next day, five regular Arab armies and numerous Arab "irregulars" invaded Israel's territory.

The fledgling Israeli forces, outnumbered and out-armed, fought for the country's life. Leading Israel's first air strike with a "motley assemblage" of planes—Czech-built variations of Nazi aircraft—was Wilkes-Barre's Lou Lenart (formerly Lenovitz), whose mission and background were described by Joseph Savitz:

> *When Lou Lenovitz arrived from Hungary in 1932, attending grade school in the Heights, he could barely speak English, but he soon caught up. Finishing G. A. R. High in 1940 and enlisting in the U. S. Marine Corps, he served six years, gaining combat experience as a fighter pilot in the South Pacific during World War II. Deeply affected by the Nazi devastation of his native Europe, he felt, as described in Leonard Slater's The Pledge, that "We had won as Americans, and lost as Jews." When the War of Independence broke out in Israel, he volunteered immediately.*
>
> *As head of a four-man Israeli Air Force (IAF), Lenart flew with South African-born Eddy Cohen and two sabras, Modi Alon and future president of Israel Ezer Weizman. All trained pilots, none had flown a Messerschmidt in combat, and Czech planes were known to be technically unreliable. But the Egyptian army, a short flight from the IAF's Tel Nof headquarters, was advancing toward Tel Aviv. On May 29, 1948, Lenart and his crew were instructed to bomb the Egyptians. Though their guns jammed and young Cohen was killed, the mission had the effect of stopping the Egyptians in their tracks, and Tel Aviv was saved.*

Fighting the well-armed Arabs with limited weapons, the Jews of Israel were nonetheless able to hold off their attackers, who asked for a month's cease-fire. As UN observers maintained relative quiet, Golda Meir came to the U. S. to appeal to America's Jews for immediate cash to buy arms in Czechoslovakia. Nathan Kuss, president of the Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee, represented the local community at Meir's New York meeting:

She said that $50 million in cash was needed at once, and urged each American Jewish community to go to the banks to borrow specific amounts of money, to be in hand within days. As Golda Meir traveled the U. S., I came home to ask that Wyoming Valley Jews send $100,000, within days.

With the skeptical blessing of our executive committee, I went to the First National Bank to ask that the full amount be loaned to the Jewish community, with no individual person required to guarantee the loan. Bank president Wallace Wakefield, who had only recently come to Wilkes-Barre from the Chase National Bank of New York, sat back in his big chair and laughed. No bank, he said, could loan such a large amount of money without an individual's guarantee. I suggested he call his friends at Chase National, who would be acquainted with the situation.

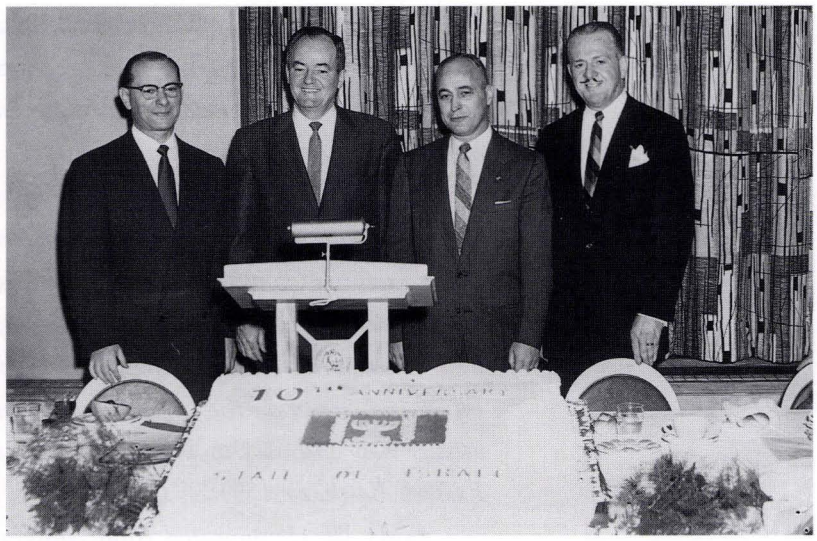
Wakefield conferred with New York, and called the next day to say he was ready to supply the money. I told him that the loan would be repaid within six months, from the proceeds of the annual Jewish campaign. Louis Smith, executive director of the YMHA, joined us at the bank, where we agreed on details. We left the bank with the check for $100,000, and shortly heard from other bank executives, who asked why we hadn't come to them. Thus the local Jewish community simultaneously answered Israel's plea and earned the confidence of the local banks.

When the war resumed, the Israelis were better equipped, and soon secured all the territory assigned them in the partition of the area. The DPs settling in Israel were joined by Jewish immigrants from all over the world, including the Moslem countries of North Africa and Asia.

Sixty-two members of one Jewish family from Casablanca, Morocco came to America from 1949-54 through the efforts of Eugene Abenmoha, who had come to the U. S. from Casablanca in 1925 and until 1947 served as maitre d' at Wilkes-Barre's Hotel Sterling. According to Abenmoha's son Robert Aben, his father was a "one-man HIAS" (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society). After years of supporting his relatives long-distance, Abenmoha brought his entire extended family to the U. S., housing them in his own home until he could place each person permanently.

Among local leaders who continued Zionist efforts to help Israel create a viable economic structure in the midst of heavy immigration and recurrent wars with the Arabs were Nathan Kuss and Aaron Weiss, profiled respectively by Sheldon Spear and Iris Levy:

Member of UJA's national cabinet, active in the Jewish National Fund (JNF), president of the regional Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), regional chair of Israel Bonds, and manager of a local Israel Investment Club, Nathan Kuss promoted investment in Israel from the 1920s onward. In the 1950s, he sponsored local meetings inviting private investment in Israeli businesses. He also lectured to students about Israel, which he visited frequently. His 1954 trip led to his 25-year weekly WILK radio program, Information about Israel.



From left, Nathan Kuss, Senator Hubert Humphrey, future Judge Max Rosenn, and Rep. Daniel Flood, at JCC celebration of Israel's 10th anniversary, 1958.

Born in Kovel, Russian Poland, in 1906 and raised in Wilkes-Barre's Heights from age two, Kuss entered Jewish community affairs when he was a boy, continuing through his 37-year career in Bundle O' Joy infant clothing, his marriages to Miriam Cohen and Miriam Kline, and into his retirement. A leader of the YMHA/Jewish Community Center (JCC), he edited the Digest with David Bransdorf (1926-8), directed the Y Players from 1933-6 and, first joining the Y's Board of Directors in 1936, chaired the Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee (1948-51) and served as JCC president (1951-5). He also taught synagogue Bible classes, spearheaded consolidation of the four Heights synagogues, and served as president of United Hebrew Institute (UHI) and vice president of the Jewish Home. Twice named S. J. Strauss Lodge "Man of the Year," he also helmed the local Red Cross, and for 17 years chaired the Governor's Committee for the Employment of the Handicapped.

Aaron Weiss.

As founder and first president of Wilkes-Barre's ZOA chapter, Aaron Weiss (1894-1987) influenced Congress through Rep. Daniel J. Flood, who sponsored the House resolution supporting the establishment of Israel. Weiss headed local Jewish campaigns in 1937 and 1948, and was recognized by Israel's Minister of Finance in 1954 for his leadership in the first Israel Independence Bond Issue. He received the local ZOA Community Service Award in 1979; Louis Smith's speech on that occasion noted Weiss's frequent Washington meetings on behalf of Israel and his financial support that extended to the JNF, Hebrew University,

the Technion, and the Weizmann Institute. Weiss and his wife Tess (Koff)—notable in her own right for her leadership of Hadassah and the Council of Jewish Women—established a Temple Israel endowment enabling community members to visit and learn about Israel.

President of the YMHA/JCC (1943-50) and of Temple Israel (1933-42), Weiss was also a leader in the general community. One of the original members of the Luzerne County Planning Commission in 1957, he was a major participant in the revitalization of the Valley after the demise of coal. He chaired the first community-wide campaign to establish the Wyoming Valley Industrial Fund and served on the Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100 organized to attract new industry to the Valley. He was a director of Mercy Hospital, First Eastern Bank, and Wilkes College.

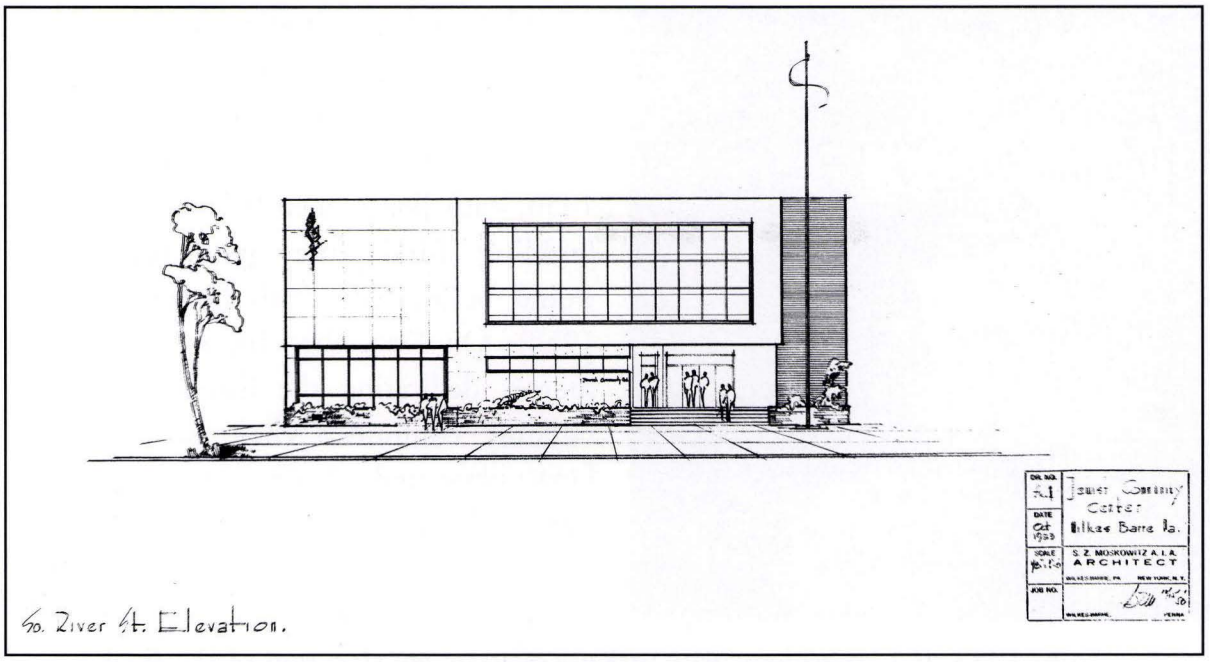
Aaron Weiss emigrated from Austria-Hungary in 1906, earned bachelor's and law degrees at the University of Pennsylvania, and served in the U. S. Navy during World War I. Moving to Wilkes-Barre in 1926, he founded Triangle Shoe Company with his older brothers Morris and Benjamin. Based in Wilkes-Barre, Triangle at its peak operated 136 shoe stores along the eastern seaboard.

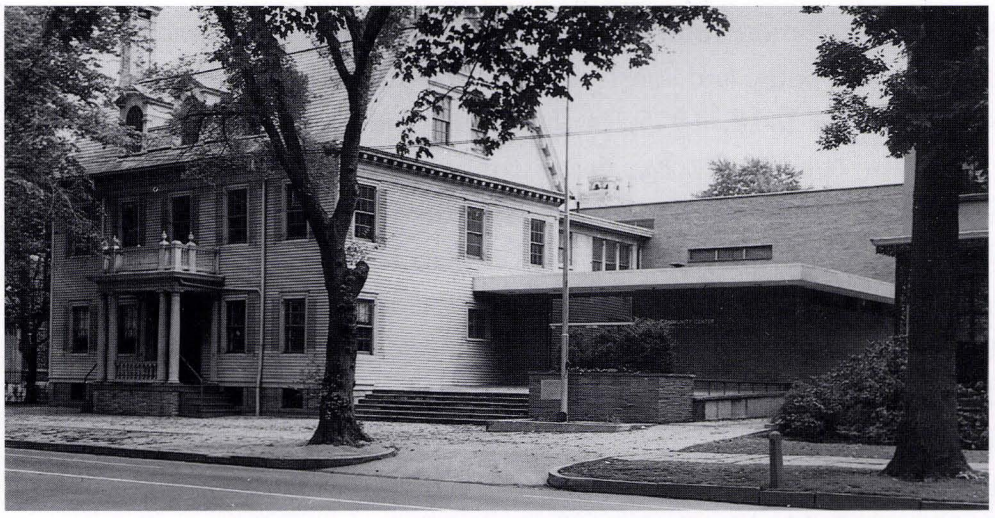
Israel's fortunes continued to inspire local Jews, whose financial support peaked during crises—$500,000 was pledged at a local rally during the Six Day War of June 1967, for instance—but at the start of the postwar period, both Aaron Weiss and Nathan Kuss were able to devote some of their considerable energies to a Jewish project at home: the new YMHA.

On November 20, 1946, Y president Weiss announced the acquisition of the Shoemaker property at 60 South River Street, Wilkes-Barre, as site for the Y's new home. On November 4, 1947, the Y changed its name to the Jewish Community Center of the Wyoming Valley (JCC). Vacating the Washington Street building (sold to the Roman Catholic Diocese for its Catholic Youth Center) in October 1948 and moving into the century-old home, the JCC engaged Samuel Z. Moskowitz and Percival Goodman as associate architects for the first phase of a three-part construction program.* The end result would be a modern building housing a bowling alley, a swimming pool, central air conditioning, meeting rooms, health club, kitchen, gymnasium, and auditorium.

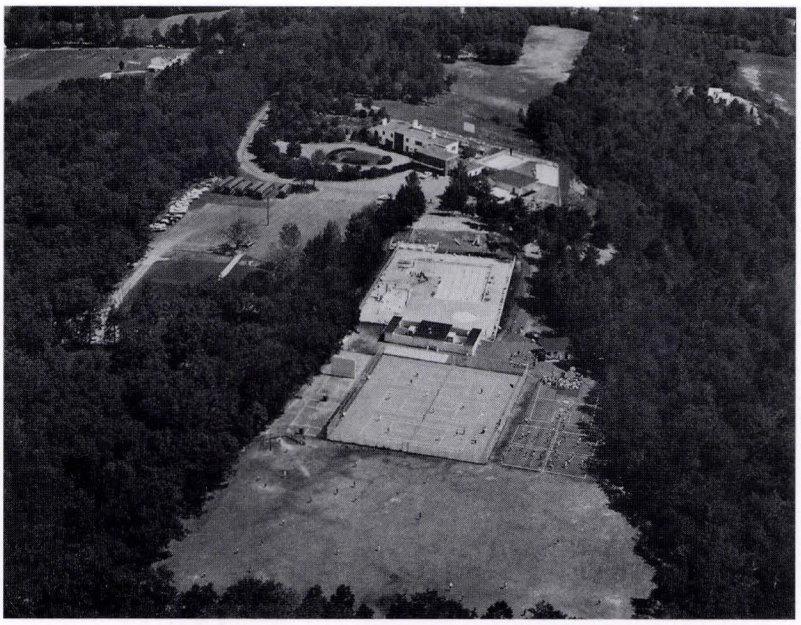
The Shoemaker home.

*Moskowitz would be sole architect for the remaining phases.





Building a new JCC. Top to bottom: Samuel Z. Moskowitz FAIA drawing, the South River Street Elevation, October 1953 *(courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society);* the completed first phase of construction, incorporating the Shoemaker home; groundbreaking ceremonies for the first (left) and final (right) construction phases.



Holiday House, Idetown, site of the JCC Day Camps.

While initial building renovations were made, JCC programs were conducted at nearby institutions. Major construction began in January 1950, with Ben Cohen heading the building fund (the gymnasium would be named in his honor in 1958). On December 16, in ceremonies dedicating the first phase, building committee chair Reuben Levy presented the structure to Aaron Weiss, who said the JCC was a "community-wide institution in which everyone will be welcome."

From 1953, JCC president Nathan Kuss oversaw construction of the final phases, which necessitated more fund-raising led by Morris Nelson, and included demolition of the old house and construction of the pool. In dedication ceremonies from December 9-18, 1955, Nathan Kuss and Louis Smith were honored by the entire community. Expansion continued under the next JCC presidents, Seymour Dimond and Morton Weiss, as the JCC bought the Julius Long Stern "Holiday House" estate in Idetown, Lehman Township. The 42-acre rural property became the permanent site for the JCC Day Camps in 1962.

The JCC continued to offer varied programming, instituting the "52 Thursdays" lectures and the Academy of Jewish Studies in 1956 and the Center for Continuing Studies in 1967. Among eminent speakers addressing JCC audiences in 1958 was scientist Arthur C. Clark, who predicted the 1969 moon landing. Debates were held on such issues as the 1963 Supreme Court ruling banning public school prayer. And the JCC began systematic outreach to the elderly and the young.

In 1956 the first Leisure Lounge program was held at the JCC. An outgrowth of the Friendship Club created by the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and meeting at the Workmen's Circle building since the late 1940s, Leisure Lounge became the focus for senior adult activities.

Responding to youth, the JCC welcomed social worker Evelyn Gurbst (who would later direct Head Start and help initiate local day care centers) as youth director in 1952. Youth forums and a coffee house were instituted and, with the local American Jewish Committee (AJC) in 1965, the JCC conduct-

ed a scientific survey of 225 teenagers' attitudes toward Jewish values. The report led Lou Smith and JCC president Ralph Brandwene's board to institute new programs of Jewish content. Social workers Seymour Hefter and Richard Rabin became, respectively, education director and program director. Many of their innovative programs were adopted by JCCs country-wide, and were detailed in the first *Jewish Catalog* (1973, JPS). In 1967, the JCC received the Council of Jewish Federations William J. Shroder Memorial Award for its programs to strengthen Jewish identity.

Among participants in a Temple Israel interfaith luncheon were, seated from left: Bernice Fine, Mary Quinn, Pauline Friedman, Helen O'Connor, Sister Sienna Finley, Muriel Baltimore. Standing, from left: Roy Morgan, Perry Shertz, Rabbi Abraham Barras, Rev. Jule Ayers, Msgr. Joseph Madden, Dr. Ellis Roberts, Judge Peter Paul Olszewski.

The JCC faced controversy in 1967. A proposal supported by Temple Israel's Rabbi Barras and Ohav Zedek's Rabbi Jerome Kerzner (successor to Rabbi Ephraim Wolfe) sought to close JCC dances to non-Jews in order to discourage inter-religious dating among teenagers. The proposal was resisted by many Jews, including Temple B'nai B'rith's Rabbi Earl S. Starr*, who thought the move alien to the spirit of Judaism. The proposal was defeated.

Even as attention was given to strengthening Jewish identification, interfaith outreach increased. As the Valley grappled with World War II's demonstration of the results of bigotry, Jewish philanthropists contributed to Christian causes, and the synagogues increased Jewish-Christian dialogue. In 1946, Temple B'nai B'rith began the Clergy Institute, an annual lecture by a Jewish scholar for clergy of all faiths. Temple B'nai B'rith and Temple Israel began participation in Church Women United's annual Interfaith Tea. Rabbi Barras regularly exchanged pulpits with the Rev. Jule Ayers of First Presbyterian Church. Rabbi Arnold Shevlin also exchanged pulpits with Christian clergy, and initiated an interfaith youth seder.

The Valley's Jewish youth, increasingly from the 1950s onward, would leave the area for college and jobs—and ultimately, for good. For many of their predecessors, higher education had not been an option before the GI Bill. Returning World War II veterans filled local institutions, which were expanded or established to accommodate them.

* Rabbi Starr (1961-9) succeeded Rabbis Albert Friedlander (1956-61), Myron Weingarten (1954-5), and Newton J. Friedman (1945-53), and was himself succeeded by Rabbi Arnold M. Shevlin (1970-92). Temple B'nai B'rith presidents from 1946-1972 were Clinton Long, Samuel Apfelbaum, Seymour Dimond, Dr. Samuel Kaufman, Robert Casper, Dr. Max Speizman, David Baltimore, Henry Greenwald, Frank Slaff, Justin Bergman Jr., Joseph Nelson, and Arnold Rifkin.

King's College opened its doors in 1946, and Bucknell University Junior College (BUJC, founded 1933) became four-year Wilkes College (now University) in 1947. Joseph J. Savitz, returning from World War II to enter BUJC, graduate with the first Wilkes College class, and continue to law school, credited the GI Bill with changing his life; he could not otherwise have attended college:

> *Following discharge in February 1946, I was eager to resume my education and entered BUJC. The student body grew from 400 to 1,200 almost overnight with the return of veterans. Wilkes provided a fine education, transition, and preparation for graduate school. We veterans, attuned to working hard and fast because the war years had taken away much of our time, were anxious to get on with our lives.*

The Jewish community and area colleges have historically enjoyed a mutually supportive relationship. Dr. Christopher N. Breiseth, president of Wilkes University, documented the experience at Wilkes, Wyoming Valley's first nonsectarian and coeducational institution:

Dr. Eugene S. Farley, helming the school from 1936, understood the Valley's religious and ethnic complexity, and helped institutionalize the ideals of equal opportunity and respect. Emblematic of his relationship with the Jewish community was his friendship with Louis Smith, and with Esther Davidowitz and Alfred Groh, who helped compile his posthumously published memoir, Essays of an Educator (1975).

Jewish leaders have served on the college's boards from the outset. The first board in 1938 included Rabbi Samuel Wolk and Julius Long Stern. Reuben Levy, joining the board in 1940, and Aaron Weiss (1956) included Wilkes in their efforts to build a new regional economy. Louis Shaffer, board chairman in 1969, helped steer the college through the end of the 36-year Farley presidency and the 1972 flood.

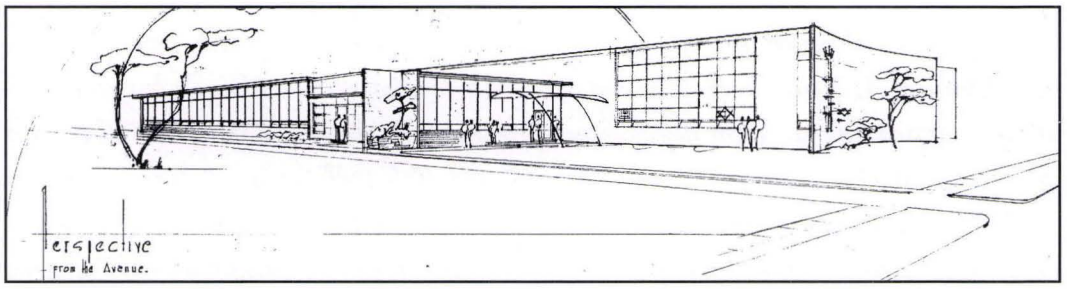
Judge Max Rosenn first became a Wilkes trustee in 1970. In 1980, to celebrate his tenth anniversary on the federal bench, his former law clerks, family, and friends established the annual Max Rosenn Lecture Series in Law and Humanities. In 1995, a John Wilkes statue was dedicated to Judge Rosenn and to Eugene Roth and Joseph Savitz. Roth and Savitz, Wilkes graduates, served as trustees and board chairmen.

Perhaps the most remarkable faculty member during the Farley years, Dr. Samuel A. Rosenberg arrived in 1948 to chair the college's largest academic department, commerce and finance. A veteran teacher who had served with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) during World War II, he played a pivotal role in the area's reindustrialization though his directorship of the Labor-Management-Citizens Committee.

Among some three dozen Jewish faculty and administrators serving Wilkes over the years were Rabbis Abraham Barras, Newton Friedman, Albert Friedlander, and James Michaels. Alfred Groh and Joseph Salsburg, among the authors of the present text, were longtime faculty members. Robert S. Capin, entering as a student in 1947, has contributed ever since as a teacher, trustee, and administrator, including service as dean of the faculty and president of the college. His students helped create the Robert S. Capin Chair in Accounting.

The local Jewish community has greatly enhanced Wilkes facilities. Reuben Levy joined with Andrew Sordoni in purchasing Barre Hall. Aaron and Tess Weiss gave us Weiss Hall. Other buildings include the Max Roth Center, Rifkin Hall, Fortinsky Hall, Capin Hall, and Schiowitz Hall. Weckesser Hall houses the Davidowitz Room and the Savitz corner. And Alfred S. Groh '41, longtime director of the Dorothy Dickson Darte Center for the Performing Arts, helped inspire Mrs. Darte's extraordinary gift.*

* Editor's note: As trustees, benefactors, faculty, and administrators, Jews have also contributed significantly to Catholic-sponsored College Misericordia and King's College, as well as nonsectarian Luzerne County Community College (LCCC) and Penn State Wilkes-Barre. Of particular note is College Misericordia's Rosenn Plaza, which honors Harold Rosenn, recipient with his wife Sallyanne of the school's first Trustee Associates award. At King's College, Rabbis Earl Starr and Arnold Shevlin taught in the theology department, and the Max Rosenn family endowed a teaching excellence award. In 1967 Ben Simon helped launch LCCC, where Professors Sheldon Spear and Mark Adelson were among original faculty members. Mimi Ungar Fredman was the first Jewish member and first female chair of the main Penn State board, whose local affiliate established a scholarship honoring former PA District Forester Manny Gordon. At Wyoming Seminary College Preparatory School, Justin Bergman Jr. became the first Jewish trustee in 1968, when Jewish student enrollment reached 22%. Rabbi Barras taught religion courses, continued today under the Saidman Endowment by Rabbi Michael Joseph, and Esther Wainstein became the first Jewish female faculty member in 1954.



Perspective of Temple B'nai B'rith, Kingston, from Wyoming Avenue. Samuel Z. Moskowitz FAIA drawing dated November 1957. *Courtesy Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.*

As the Jewish GIs received their college diplomas and sought homes of their own, they were likely to settle in Kingston or South Wilkes-Barre. Jews were continuing to leave the Heights, whose remaining Jewish families tended to be older and less affluent. The JCC Home Camp Report counted only 23 campers from the Heights in 1953, in contrast to three and four times that number from other locales, mostly Kingston and South-Wilkes-Barre. Dwindling attendance at the Heights synagogues led to the 10-year process resulting in their 1965 merger.

In the outlying communities, by 1975 only the Pittston and Luzerne synagogues remained, but Kingston had become a center of Valley Judaism. In January 1960 Temple B'nai B'rith dedicated its new, contemporary synagogue, designed by Samuel Z. Moskowitz, on Wyoming Avenue in Kingston. On March 1, 1960, Kingston also became home to UHI, encompassing the Talmud Torah, Ohav Zedek Religious School, and Israel Ben Zion Academy (IBZA), the Hebrew day school founded in 1950 as Ohav Zedek Foundation School by Rabbi Ephraim Wolfe. A new *mikvah* was erected adjacent to UHI. Also in the early '60s, under the leadership of Rabbi Jerome Kerzner and synagogue president Max Roth, Ohav Zedek formed a Sabbath *minyan* to accommodate the growing Kingston Orthodox population; in 1962, the first High Holiday services were held at UHI.

In the immediate neighborhood of UHI, the Jewish population mushroomed. Dawes Avenue, largely undeveloped riverside land until construction of a protective levee after the 1936 flood, increasingly drew Jews attracted to its suburban ambiance within walking distance of central Wilkes-Barre. The number of Jewish households on Dawes more than tripled between 1949 and 1968, while the number of Jewish households on nearby First, Second, and Third Avenues nearly doubled. About 170 Jewish families were living in the section by 1972.

Synagogue policies mirrored the Jewish community's changing demographics. Ohav Zedek had dropped its Hungarian affiliation in 1942 in recognition of a more diverse membership. In 1952, reflecting the changing role of females,

Temple Israel adopted a bat mitzvah ceremony; Barbara Lois Kluger, Sara Thalenfeld, Harriet Cimmet, and Ellen Shaffer were the first celebrants. In 1964, Kathleen Rifkin became Temple B'nai B'rith's first bat mitzvah. These young women reached their religious majority as Jewish women were taking on increasingly activist roles in the Jewish and general community.

Jewish women volunteered with various general and Jewish organizations, including Community Chest, the League of Women Voters, and a new local chapter of B'nai B'rith Women*. Professionally, Jewish women (and men) became teachers, and some pursued careers in social welfare and labor. In 1950, Dorothy Cohen began her long tenure as head of Family Service Association and in 1952, Dorothy K. Schwartz began her 22 years as head of the Jewish Welfare Agency. Around the same time, Rose Brader, former employee of Wyoming Textile Company and steward of United Textile Workers Local 956, began her 30 years' service as United Way labor representative and director of labor participation of Community Chest. And it was Min Matheson who represented the powerful International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) in this area.

Few Jewish women gained entrance, as yet, into other professions. Fewer still sought factory jobs, which provided a livelihood for thousands of non-Jewish women, many of whose husbands, fathers, and sons were coal miners now out of work.

By the 1950s, as the demand for coal plummeted and defense-related contracts expired, unemployment ran as high as 16.9 percent. Between 1940 and 1960 Luzerne County lost more than 94,500 residents, 21.4 percent of its population. Most of the outmigrants were young men in search of jobs. As the Chamber of Commerce's New Industries Committee and Industrial Development Fund (established in 1937) increased efforts to purchase potential industrial sites, the nerve center of 1950s and 1960s reindustrialization efforts—the Committee of 100—was organized in 1951, leading the way to the development of industrial parks and recruitment of tenants: manufacturing firms employing large numbers of male workers.

* Tillie Rosenn, Bertha Birnbaum, and Betty Birnbaum were among leaders of B'nai B'rith Women chapter 885, which was active from about 1958-68. Community Chest campaigns in these years were often chaired by Jewish men—Bernard Burgunder (1940, president 1944-6), Louis Shaffer (1950, president 1955-6), Seymour Dimond (1953), Arthur Silverblatt (1957, president, 1963-4), Eugene Goldstein (1964, president 1971), Charles Epstein Jr. (1969), Stanford Weiss (1971)—many of whom also chaired UJA campaigns of the period. Detailed information about organizations and leaders briefly noted here can be found in an earlier chapter, *A Maturing Community.*

Committee of 100 member Reuben Levy (1892-1979) was an outstanding builder of the region's Jewish and general community throughout the postwar years. Active in UJA and JCC drives, president of Temple Israel (1954-6), trustee and benefactor of Wilkes College, he headed the Chamber of Commerce during World War II, and led veterans' and child welfare groups while building his own business and influencing area development.

Born in Poland, Levy came to the U. S. at the turn of the century, attended local schools, and enlisted in the U. S. Army in 1917, returning from World War I to found Kingston Cake Company (often affectionately known as the Blue Ribbon Company). Kingston Cake grew from eight employees to 800 and served much of the eastern seaboard.

A champion of war veterans, Levy established trust funds for his employees serving in World War II, received the national Distinguished Service Medal of the American Legion (1947), and was recognized by General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Navy Secretary James Forrestal. He was Commander of Black Diamond Post 395 of the American Legion. Bringing a campaign of nearly 20 years to a successful conclusion, he spearheaded the 1950 establishment in Wilkes-Barre of the Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital, working with Chamber executives, Congressman Daniel J. Flood, and hundreds of area citizens.* He was also instrumental in locating the regional office of the U. S. Veterans Administration in Wilkes-Barre.

* Editor's note: Sadie Rothstein, whose son Robert had been killed during World War II Army service, was among women securing 50,000 signatures on petitions for the hospital. She went with Rep. Flood in May 1945 to present the petitions to VA chief Gen. Frank Hines. President Truman announced on September 19, 1945 that Wilkes-Barre had been chosen for the hospital from among 32 sites in Luzerne, Lackawanna and other counties; veterans' groups and citizens contributed the funds to buy the 51.5-acre site. Reuben Levy chaired groundbreaking ceremonies in April 1948, and the hospital was dedicated in December 1950, with Rabbi I. M. Davidson representing the Jewish clergy.

Assisting in the establishment of the Wilkes-Barre Scranton Airport at Avoca in 1947, he also purchased underground mineral rights to 225 acres of Kingston land, donating the rights to the town for the enduring protection of schools, churches, and public buildings from mine subsidence.

Levy served on the National Public Advisory Committee for the Area Redevelopment Administration, appointed by Secretary of Commerce Luther Hodges under the Kennedy administration. He was responsible for a study of the Susquehanna River Basin, an outgrowth of the incorporation of the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority serving 14 municipalities.

Temple Israel in 1957 dedicated its chapel to Levy and his wife Leah (Silverman), who also was involved in numerous civic causes. Writing more than 30 years after he left the community, Temple Israel's first rabbi, Dr. Louis M. Levitsky, revealed the couple's extraordinary generosity, exercised without expectation of acknowledgment, "to thank God for His kindness to us": "Each year, Reub used to send me a generous amount of money—a kind of self-imposed extra income tax—for me, in my name, to distribute to any and all needy in Wilkes-Barre. Jewish needy received it on Hanukah and Passover. Christian needy received . . . hundreds of Christmas baskets. So did all needy children who required orthopedic appurtenances. Everybody knew that [I] had the money. Nobody knew where it came from."

—Iris Levy

Opposite page, top to bottom: Reuben Levy; Blue Ribbon Cake billboard. This page, top to bottom: VA sign; the Hon. J. Harold Flannery, Levy, Rep. Daniel Flood, and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn at a June 6, 1959 dinner honoring Flood; Levy receives the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) national award for community service from JTS Chancellor Rabbi Louis Finkelstein (right), December 18, 1966. *Photographs courtesy Iris Levy.*

Meanwhile, the local economy was sustained and expanded by a variety of manufacturing industries, including silk, shoe, apparel, and cigar factories attracted to the region because of its large female work force. Charles Weissman (1888-1961) had helped bring a few such firms to the area in the '30s, continuing his efforts as he built his pioneering auto supply business, American Auto Stores, into a nationally recognized chain.

Pre-dating those firms was Hess-Goldsmith Company, the region's first silk mill, established in the nineteenth century. Owned by Leon Hess and Max and Louis Goldsmith, and later by Mortimer Goldsmith Sr. and then his son Mortimer Goldsmith Jr., the company had weaving and throwing mills in Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, and Plymouth by 1927, when Luzerne County had become America's silk center, replacing Paterson, New Jersey, scene of continuous strikes and labor disputes from about 1913.

Polish-born Joseph and Esther Fortinsky wove Georgette crepe in a Paterson loft before opening mills in Wilkes-Barre. Newark Silk Company initially manufactured silk crepes, switching to synthetics in the 1930s under the leadership of partners Jacob Fortinsky and David Izenberg. Joining the business while in high school and returning after World War II service, Robert Fortinsky left Newark Silk after his father Jacob's death in 1949. Establishing Fortune Fabrics in Swoyersville, Fortinsky first wove apparel goods, then neckties, and today focuses on commercial upholstery. David Izenberg continued as owner of Newark Silk, operating the firm with his son Jesse until 1977.

Another Jewish silk manufacturer came to the area from Kentucky. After Prohibition drove him out of the liquor business, Charles Epstein Sr. decided to learn the silk industry and build a throwing plant to supply the weaving plant of his Nanticoke-born wife's family. By 1929, Liberty Throwing Company had plants in Nanticoke and Kingston, employing as many as 400 workers to supply the whole weaving and knitting trade.

By the mid-1920s, the silk, knitting, and lace mills employed about 9,000 in the Wilkes-Barre area. With the introduction of synthetic fabrics, the industry changed, gradually moving south, where labor was cheaper and non-unionized. Liberty, owned today by Charles Epstein Jr., stayed in Kingston but, over a ten-year period beginning in 1955, changed its machinery and its work force to manufacture an entirely different product, elastic thread.

Though the area's silk industry was not primarily Jewish, the shoe industry was. Prior to World War II, Jewish-owned Columbia Slipper Co., Central Slipper, and I. Miller were operating in the region, as were M. D. Brandwene

Shoe Co., a wholesaler, and two retail chains—Aaron Weiss's Triangle Shoe and Jacob Raub's J. S. Raub. The chains had an appreciable effect on the local industry's postwar growth, particularly with Aaron Weiss on the Committee of 100 which, along with the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA, 1957), raised the capital to attract firms from New York and New England.

Barre Slipper Co. originated in Wilkes-Barre. Isadore Gonchar, whose father Hyman had established a local electric shoe repair shop around 1910, worked for M. D. Brandwene before opening his own wholesale shoe business, and in 1945, with Louis Haber from Columbia, he formed Barre Slipper. In 1956, Isadore Gonchar's son Howard began Carter Rubber Company as part of Barre.

Carter Rubber and Columbia Slipper (owned by Hyman Davidowitz and later William Davidowitz and his sons) are the only factories left of a booming, primarily Jewish* industry that spread into Wilkes-Barre, Exeter, Nanticoke, and Hazleton, and a supply industry that included laminating factories, molding and cutting machines, threads, dyes, and sewers. Though the 1972 flood hurt the industry in the Valley, the primary cause of the shoe industry's demise, locally and nationally, was overseas competition, spurred by tariff concessions of successive General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades (GATT) rounds begun around 1962.

The apparel industry, too, eventually succumbed to overseas competition, but at its height was the largest local employer after coal: as many as 16,000 Polish, Slovak, and Italian women sewed for the Jewish- and Italian-owned shops. In the late 1930s and early '40s, many manufacturers and contractors found the region ideal because of its proximity to New York, its large population of employable women, and the relative absence of union control. Prior to World War II, Charles Cherkes founded Ann-Will Garment, an early ladies' apparel contractor; other early Jewish contractors in the Valley included Louis Gutstein, Louis Carter, Joseph Engel, Joseph Kellner, Morris Brown, and Michael Schoenholtz. And Julius Savitz had opened Wilkes-Barre's first dress manufacturing plant, Paramount, in the early 1930s.

* These local Jewish-owned or managed firms were listed in the 1967 American Shoemaking Directory: Rex Shoe Co., Penn Footwear Co., Alta Products Corp., Carter Rubber Co., Central Slipper Co., Faith Shoe Co., Flair Footwear, Inc., Gamins, Inc., Heavenly Shoes, Inc., Prestige Shoe Corp., Tropical Craft Corp. Columbia and Foldes Industries were listed in Hazleton, and Golo was listed in Dunmore. There were additional firms in the region before and after 1967.

As for Jewish manufacturers of men's garments, pioneering overall manufacturer A. Rifkin Co. had stopped making clothing entirely by the late 1950s, but other firms diversified production as the need for miners' clothing declined. Peerless Shirt and Overall Co. (founded in the mid-1930s by David and Nathan Alperin and Aaron Schectman), for instance, shifted from the manufacture of miners' garments to men's dress clothing after World War II and ultimately, as Peerless Sportswear under Sidney Newman, to the contract manufacture of women's tailored clothing in the 1950s and '60s.

The ILGWU (formed 1900) had in 1922 created its Eastern Organization Department to meet the growth of the garment industry, but the overwhelming majority of Valley shops were not organized when Min and Bill Matheson were assigned the task in 1944. When they left in 1963, there were 11,000 members in 168 shops. And Min Matheson had put her life on the line for her cause.

Born to immigrant Russian Jews in Chicago, Min Matheson (1909-92) and her brother Will grew up in the labor movement, learning socialism and labor ideology from their father, Max Lurye, an activist and organizer for the Chicago Cigar Makers Union. Max would be arrested and blacklisted during the "Red scare" that swept the U. S. after the Russian Revolution, and he would be machine-gunned by the Capone mob as they tried to take over Jewish rag peddlers in 1927. Max survived that attack. His son was not so lucky. Will, organizing for ILGWU in New York during a drive against gangster control of dress sweatshops, was assassinated in 1949 by associates of Albert Anastasia of Murder, Inc.

Min Matheson, third from left, front row, leads Violet Dress strike at Pittston, 1946. *Courtesy Betty Greenberg.*

As Ed Lidz and William Cherkes wrote, "the crime syndicates invested in the garment industry because capital outlay was low, profits high." It was dangerous to picket "protected" (underworld-owned) non-union shops, but Will wouldn't back down in New York. Neither would Min, in Pittston.

By the time Min moved to Kingston, she had married labor activist Wilfred (Bill) Matheson, had daughters Mari-

anne (Kaufman) and Betty (Greenberg), learned dressmaking, been a labor activist herself in Chicago, Detroit, and Paterson, and she had chaired New York's ILGWU Local 22, one of the country's largest locals. As Bill began to organize the coal town shops, the union asked Min to help. Bill became director of education for ILGWU in eastern Pennsylvania, as Min quickly moved up from organizer to business agent and finally to ILGWU district manager for Wyoming Valley, with responsibility for the locals in Wilkes-Barre, Nanticoke, and Pittston.

A Reader's Digest REPRINT

The Lady and the Gangsters

Min Matheson's war against the underworld was no ordinary labor dispute. The underworld uses murder as a weapon. Min countered with the one thing the hoodlums couldn't cope with— women.

By Lester Velie

Perched on high heels, Min Lurye Matheson reaches only five feet three inches. Yet, where strong men feared to tread, Min waged a woman's war against the terror and force of the East's big underworld—and won.

Min Matheson is a regional manager of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) at Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Trim at 47, she has the settled look of a housewife and mother. This is deceptive, as Wilkes-Barre and neighboring towns found out. Once torn by labor turmoil, Wilkes-Barre today is a model of union-management teamwork and, says the town's mayor, Luther Kniffen, "We owe it mostly to Min."

New York's garment center owes much to Min, too. For years gangsters had kept the ILGWU out of "protected" shops in New York by cracking the skulls of union organizers. These protected employers paid substandard wages and threatened competing dress men with bankruptcy. Then as the ILGWU

Pittston was a challenge. There, gangsters controlling dress shops as fronts for illicit activities paid women little or nothing for double and triple shifts, threatening permanent poverty for the depressed Valley, and destruction of the garment industry's New York base. Many of Pittston's dress factories—and the town's politicians, police, tax assessors, and school board members—were controlled by the Russell Buffalino crime family. As Lester Velie wrote in "The Lady and the Gangsters" (*Reader's Digest,* January 1957), Min Matheson fought the underworld "with the one thing hoodlums couldn't cope with—women."

the Needlepoint

Number 39 — Issued by Wilkes-Barre - Pittston - Nanticoke District Council — November, 1967

. . . . Our Twentieth Anniversary . . . .

Overcoming the sewers' justifiable fear, Matheson organized the women, led their picket lines—sometimes with her small daughters in tow—made speeches, ignored threats and, despite pleas from superiors who didn't want "another Lurye murder," faced down the racketeers, including Buffalino himself. She told him, "I'm twice the man you'll ever be."

Matheson signed up most of the shops in her area, gaining for members decent wages and working hours, an employer-funded medical center (Tri-District Health Center, South Washington Street, established in 1948 and directed by Dr. Albert Feinberg), and numerous educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities, including a Pocono vacation spot, Unity House, and a monthly newsletter,

Min Matheson, standing left, welcomes President Harry Truman in 1952. *Courtesy Betty Greenberg.*

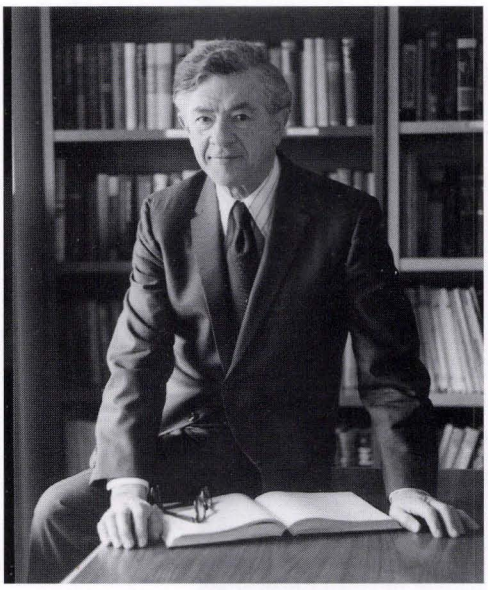
Needlepoint. **As Min Matheson developed a community for union members, she became a leading citizen of the Wyoming Valley community, joining the Committee of 100 and promoting the region's economic development with Mayor Kniffen, Rep. Flood, President Truman, and Senator John Kennedy. She became a trustee of the state's United Fund, and enlisted union support for the United Fund, Red Cross, and Democratic party.**

In 1963, Min and Bill Matheson were transferred to the Union Label Department in New York. The testimonial dinners packed with well-wishers were, in a sense, premature. The Mathesons would return in 1972, when the Agnes flood would propel Min out of her retirement from public life.

—Marjorie Levin

Among Min Matheson's programs for union members were Wilkes College classes instituted by Dr. Samuel Rosenberg and President Eugene Farley at her request. Rosenberg (1904-74) had become a major figure in the Valley's reindustrialization efforts soon after his arrival in Wilkes-Barre, assuming chairmanship of the Chamber of Commerce's Idea Committee and joining the Committee of 100, first chaired by dynamic businessman William O. Sword. Agreeing with Sword that perceived poor labor relations in the Valley threatened reindustrialization, Rosenberg organized and directed the Labor-Management-Citizens Committee (LMC, founded 1957), which offered mediation, preventive consultation, and education. At Dr. Farley's suggestion, Min Matheson nominated Rosenberg also as Deputy Impartial Chairman for the local dress industry. Successful in both capacities though not formally trained as a mediator, Rosenberg was instrumental in avoiding or settling numerous strikes and disputes.

Dr. Samuel Rosenberg. *Courtesy Charlotte Levy.*



From 1945 until the early 1990s, Jews operated more than 50 apparel factories* in Wyoming Valley, also figuring prominently in the support network. Friedman's Express, founded by Simon Friedman in the age of horse-drawn wagons, became one of the major dress carriers in the east. M. Lidz Co., established by Morris Lidz in 1926, served Pennsylvania and New York with piece goods, buttons, trim, and thread. Lidz's son Edward closed M. Lidz in 1995, just before the liquidation of Leslie Fay, once the largest local dress manufacturer with 13 factories between Pittston and Glen Lyon. With the exception of Fit-Rite Headwear, all the apparel shops are now gone, victims of cheap overseas labor.

It wasn't labor, but the Surgeon General's 1964 report, that sounded the death knell for the Valley's cigar industry, thriving since before World War II, when Consolidated Cigar, General Cigar, and American Tobacco had area plants. In 1943, Jewish-owned S. Frieder & Sons Co. relocated to Parsons, converting a silk mill for cigar production, and employing more than 500, mostly Polish women. The firm, founded by Sam Frieder in New York in 1885, had originally bought tobacco in the Philippines, where it employed thousands of female workers, but the war forced an end to Philippine operations. Edna Frieder Lichtig, granddaughter of the founder, detailed the company's move and its local history:

> *Conditions in Manila were precarious when my husband, Edwin Lichtig Jr., joined the business in 1940. We barely escaped Japanese occupation a year later, when we took the last steamer out of Manila before Pearl Harbor. Our ship was convoyed and blacked out across the Pacific. As we came into Hawaiian waters, a search light flooding the ship could only have been Japanese submarines waiting for attack.*

* Edward Lidz and William Cherkes stressed that their list of local Jewish garment contractors, manufacturers, and distributors is necessarily incomplete: Paramount, Ann-Will, Lori-Charles Sportswear, Lee Manufacturing, Greenbaum Dress, Plymouth Dress, Karen Manufacturing, Engel Enterprises (including Regina Manufacturing and Roxanne Bathing Suits), Woodbury Manufacturing, Sharmat Manufacturing, Sharon-Lee, Eastern Sportswear, Wilkes-Barre Apparel, Peerless, Fit-Rite Headwear (formerly Wilkes-Barre Cap), Blue Bell Manufacturing, Bundle O' Joy, Coronet Fashions, Del Ray Sportswear, Dora Lee Dress, Drury Clothing, Empire Dress, Ermar Manufacturing, USA Manufacturing, F & H Manufacturing, G. T. Manufacturing, Gort Girls Frocks, Joel Manufacturing, Kaplan and Koral, L. B. J. Garment, Lehigh Trouser, Leslie Fay, Mara Manufacturing, Margo Styles, King's Sportswear, Miss America Fashions, Penn State Belt, Pioneer Manufacturing, R & K Apparel, Ronnie Dress, Rosmar Manufacturing, S & S Clothing, Sharl Manufacturing, Sherm-Ette Manufacturing, Slocum Dress, Stanley Manufacturing, Steingut Dress, Stelmar Manufacturing, V. I. P. Sportswear, West Side Manufacturing, Wyoming Valley School Garment Manufacturing, Wyoming Valley Garment Manufacturing.

The Freiders had to start over. They tried manufacturing elsewhere in the U. S., but labor was expensive, working conditions poor, and the business needed more room. Looking into the Valley, where trained cigar workers were plentiful, they were encouraged by the Chamber of Commerce and its Industrial Fund, which was probably financially helpful in relocating the company. My husband, along with my father Alex, his brothers Philip, Henry, Morris, and Herbert, and Herbert's son Sam all worked for S. Frieder when it was headquartered in the Wyoming Valley.

It was a beautiful business, and the factory workers were devoted to our family. But as orders slackened and we needed to economize, the union struck. Charlie Weissman negotiated, but the unrest dragged on, and the company relocated until workers voted to leave the union. With the surgeon general's report, production was gradually curtailed. In 1977, the U. S. Tobacco Company bought S. Frieder; assets were absorbed by DES Tobacco Company, which ran concessions in Sears Roebuck stores. This company operated locally until Edwin Lichtig's death in 1992.

S. Frieder's building was bought by Metropolitan Wire Goods Corporation, which had moved its operations to the area from New York in 1957. As Louis Maslow and later his son Richard built the firm into internationally prominent InterMetro Industries, other Jews, both natives and newcomers, continued to develop a wide variety of manufacturing, retail, wholesale, and service businesses, many of which became corporate operations by the 1950s. Nelson Brothers, for instance, had furniture manufacturing factories in Wyoming and Kingston by 1952. Bartikowsky Jewelers, opening its signature showroom in Wilkes-Barre in 1948, was on its way to national prominence in the jewelry industry. Principals of these firms and many others became leaders in the Jewish and general community as business, together with the professions, continued to be the primary means of social and economic mobility for Jews.

Alex Frieder, shown in foreground, left, with Philippine President Manuel Quezon, center, and Herbert Frieder, was instrumental in the acquisition of the Marikina Hall property used to accommodate Jewish refugees from Hitler. As a friend of the president and head of the Jewish welfare group in the Philippines, Alex Frieder approached Quezon, who gave the property and provided for the immigration of 10,000 Jews. Frieder's denunciation of Hitler at the dedication pictured was picked up by the German embassy in Manila, which sent a list of the refugees to the Gestapo in Berlin. The Gestapo, in turn, sent the list to the Japanese for identification of those to be interned when Japan attacked Manila.
Courtesy Edna Lichtig.

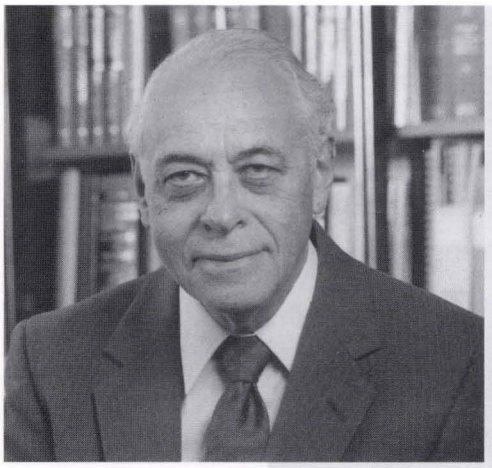
As more and more American Jews coming of age during or after World War II pursued professional careers, local Jews became corporate executives, accountants, teachers,

nurses, dentists, physicians, and lawyers. Through the 1950s and '60s, several Jewish dental practitioners led the county dental society, beginning with Dr. Daniel Gordon in 1953. Although quotas restricting Jewish admission to U. S. medical schools (after 1920 to the late '50s) and difficulties in acquiring internships and hospital privileges may have hampered some local aspiring physicians, many attended prestigious American schools, often choosing to establish their practices in the locales of their training.

Of the physicians practicing in the Valley, the legacy of the first Jewish doctor, Dr. Charles Long (1861-1937), was carried on by his son Dr. Julian Long (1899-1985), a 1925 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, who practiced internal medicine locally for 53 years and served as chief of staff at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital (WBGH). Drs. Albert Schiowitz and Lester Saidman noted pioneering local Jewish specialists Dr. Stanley Freeman (surgery), Dr. Max Tischler (obstetrics and gynecology), Drs. Abe Dattner and Joseph Klein (pediatrics), Dr. Sam Kaufman (dermatology), Dr. Herman Dattner (ENT), Dr. Sanford Sternlieb (orthopedics), Dr. Marvin Blum (cardiology), Dr. Saul Mendelssohn (nephrology), Dr. Cyrus Jacobosky (venereal disease), Dr. Philip Hertz (psychiatry), Dr. Herman Popky (radiology), Dr. Henry Friedman (gastroenterology), and Dr. David Greenwald (oncology).

One of the Valley's most beloved physicians was Dr. Albert Feinberg (1901-60), who earned his M.D. at Jefferson Medical College in 1924. Chief of medical service at Mercy Hospital, 95th president of the Luzerne County Medical Society, delegate to the state medical society, member of Wilkes-Barre and Temple Israel school boards, and Lieutenant Colonel in the U. S. Army Medical Corps during World War II, he played a leading role with Min Matheson in establishing the ILGWU Tri-District Health Center, which he served as medical director until his death. The Center maintained a free diagnostic clinic; among staff specialists were Drs. Herman Popky, Max Tischler, Milton Rosenberg, and Marvin Blum. Dr. Feinberg also directed civil defense medical services during the 1936 flood, and led the quarantine program at the Contagious Diseases Hospital during a spinal meningitis epidemic.

Dr. and Mrs. Albert Feinberg. *Courtesy Harriet Segal.*

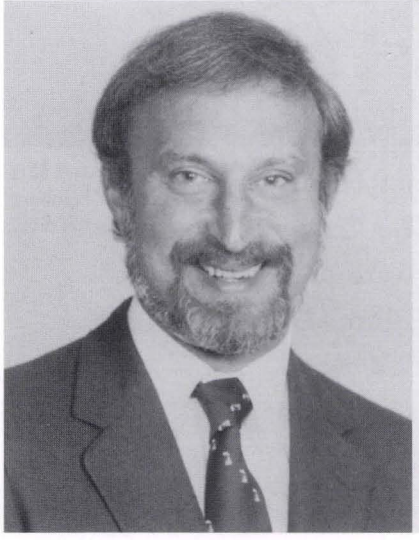


Dr. Sheldon G. Cohen.

Pittston-born Dr. Sheldon G. Cohen, educated at Wyoming Seminary, Ohio State University, and New York University (M.D. 1943), was Mercy Hospital's chief of allergy from 1951-72, concurrently maintaining a private practice and engaging in teaching and research at Wilkes College, where he earned professorships in biological research (1962) and experimental biology (1968). Cohen's first student assistant in Wilkes's acclaimed biomedical science program was future physician Leslie Wiener, now neurology chair at the University of Southern California Medical School. Dr. Cohen joined the National Institutes of Health in 1972, directing the immunology, allergic, and immunologic diseases program at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) from 1977-88, when he became scientific advisor to the director of NIAID intramural research and scholar of the National Library of Medicine. Recipient of Wyoming Seminary's Distinguished Service Award, he has written extensively on the history of the Jewish physician.

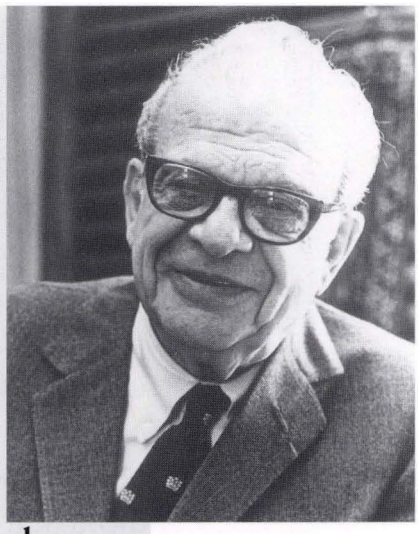
Dr. Lester Saidman, educated at Temple University and its medical school, opened his practice in Noxen in 1946. He was associate medical director for the regional ILGWU, director of the first Physician's Assistant training program in Pennsylvania, a president of WBGH medical staff, and founder of the Rural Health Corporation. Establishing the Saidman Family Endowment for Judaic studies at Wyoming Seminary in 1993, he was also instrumental in the 1972 launch of the Wilkes-Hahnemann program integrating undergraduate and medical education.

Dr. Harry Reich.



Exeter native Dr. Harry Reich was coordinator of the Wilkes-Hahnemann obstetrics and gynecology program. Educated at Wyoming Seminary, Lehigh University, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, Ireland (M.D. 1970), Reich was the first surgeon in the world to perform a laparoscopic hysterectomy. Honored for extraordinary contributions to laparoscopy, he has chaired international medical meetings, co-authored three laparoscopy texts, and written extensively in his field. The Harry Reich Skills Training Centre was opened in 1995 in the UK. Director of advanced laparoscopic surgery at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, Reich also teaches at Columbia and maintains a private practice in Kingston.

A number of distinguished physicians from Wyoming Valley practiced in other areas. Wilkes-Barre native David D. Rutstein (1909-86), educated at Wyoming Seminary and Harvard College and its medical school (M.D. 1934), began his internship at WBGH, returning to Boston for his residency. He worked in New York public health through World War II (when his duties included civil defense against chemical warfare), then directed the American Heart Association, where he helped to plan the first National Cardiovascular Disease Conference and to organize the Framingham Heart Study. In 1947, Dr. Rutstein became the first chair of Harvard Medical School's Department of Preventive Medicine, where he combined preventive medicine and research, finding time also to do a Boston public television medical series, write, and lead efforts to legalize distribution of birth control information in Massachusetts. Named Ridley Watts Professor of Preventive Medicine in 1966, he also helped establish the Harvard-MIT Program in Health Sciences and Technology. In 1976, he became Distinguished Physician of the VA.



Dr. David Rutstein.

Dr. Edithe Miller Levit skipped half her senior year at Kingston High School to enter BUJC, completing her B.S. in biology at the Lewisburg campus in 1946. She earned her M.D. at Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1951, and became director of medical education at Philadelphia General Hospital before joining the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) in 1961, rising to become NBME president and CEO in 1977. Retiring as NBME president (emeritus in 1986), she had helped to develop innovative evaluative methodologies, including the examinations taken by every physician licensed for U. S. practice.

Other eminent physicians include psychoanalyst Dr. Leroy P. Levitt, former dean of Chicago Medical School, and cardiologist Dr. John Kastor, chair of medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Morton K. Schwartz, Ph.D., is professor of molecular pharmacology and therapeutics at Sloan Kettering, Medical College of Cornell University.

In a footnote to local medical history, we find that Dr. Joseph Goldberger, whose anti-pellagra work is legend, spent two unhappy years (1897-9) in practice in Wilkes-Barre, where he was befriended by Dr. William Dean. *—Marjorie Levin*

Dr. Joseph Goldberger. *Courtesy Dr. Sheldon Cohen.*

Among Valley-born exports in science was one who achieved notoriety in the postwar years. In 1943, G. A. R. graduate David Bohm (1917-92) earned his Ph.D. in physics under J. Robert Oppenheimer at the University of California at Berkeley, subsequently teaching at Princeton and writing a widely-used quantum mechanics text. But his Communist politics and knowledge of atomic devices led to his 1949 investigation by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and his trial, and acquittal, on charges of contempt of Congress. Denying wrongdoing but fired from Princeton, he was unable to find another position in the U. S., and taught in Brazil, Israel, and ultimately in England. Bohm reformulated theories developed by Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, and Pauli, and was regarded by Einstein as his successor in theoretical physics. Many believe Bohmian mechanics to be the most correct explanation of quantum phenomena.

As Jews had helped establish the Veterans Hospital, Jewish lawyers would help establish Geisinger Wyoming Valley Hospital (1980) joining the Nanticoke, Pittston, and Wyoming Valley Hospitals. By that time, Rosenn, Jenkins & Greenwald, now the area's largest law firm, had been established for 32 years. Harold Rosenn detailed the firm's start on July 1, 1948:

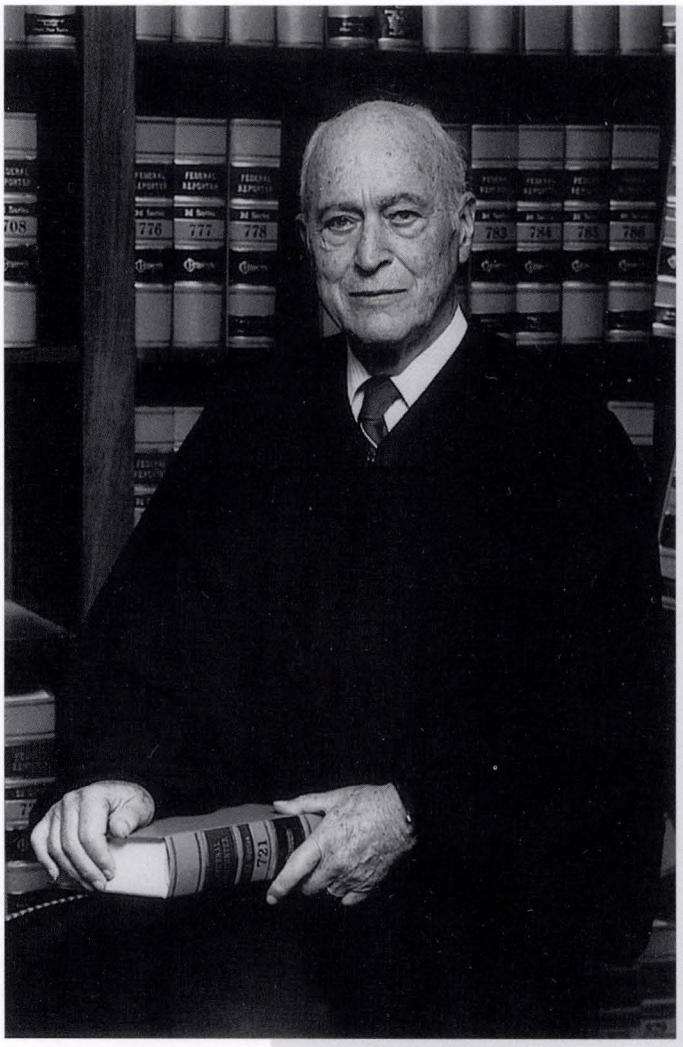
> *Max and Harold Rosenn established the firm of Rosenn & Rosenn upon returning from military service. Elmer Harris, the first associate, was soon followed by Joseph J. Savitz. On January 1, 1954, the firm became Rosenn, Jenkins & Greenwald, with original partners Max Rosenn, Mitchell Jenkins, Henry Greenwald, Harold Rosenn, and Joseph J. Savitz. Max Rosenn set the tone, emphasizing professional integrity and both pro bono and community responsibility, and the firm grew rapidly. The firm's Jewish members have helmed virtually every synagogue and Jewish and general communal organization. Of the founding partners, Max Rosenn was appointed to the U. S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals by President Nixon in 1970. Mitchell Jenkins, a former U. S. Congressman and retired Army general, died in 1977. Henry Greenwald, a brilliant scholar regarded as a "lawyer's lawyer," died in 1994. Harold Rosenn and Joseph Savitz are presently counsel to the firm, which today encompasses 45 lawyers. Eugene Roth is a senior partner; Murray Ufberg is managing partner.*

Rosenn, Jenkins & Greenwald, which represented the first time Jewish lawyers were partners in a major law firm in the Valley, was also one of the region's earliest law firms. Prior to World War II, there were only two or three law firms in the area. Most local lawyers were sole practitioners who shared

office space and expenses with other lawyers. With the development of local law firms after the war, many Jewish lawyers affiliated with the newly-formed firms, while some continued to practice alone. However they chose to manage their professional careers, Jewish lawyers followed in the tradition of their earliest local predecessors, Joseph D. Coons and Seligman J. Strauss, as exemplary volunteers in both the Jewish and general community.

In addition to his legal affiliations, Harold Rosenn of Rosenn, Jenkins & Greenwald, for example, was Commander of American Legion Post 395, president or chairman of the local United Way, Red Cross, Temple Israel, B'nai B'rith Lodge, and the Jewish Federation, trustee of College Misericordia, and director of the Chamber of Commerce and Keystone Games. Allan M. Kluger, who in 1953 joined the firm known today as Hourigan, Kluger & Quinn, was president or chairman of Temple Israel, B'nai B'rith Lodge, and the Jewish Community Relations Committee, officer of the Chamber of Commerce and the Jewish Federation, and director of the Industrial Fund, Northeast Pennsylvania Ethics Commission, United Way, JCC, and King's College. Louis Shaffer, practicing from 1931, was president or chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, the Committee of 100, United Way, UJA, the JCC, Temple Israel, and Wilkes College, co-chair of the Interfaith Brotherhood Council, and director of Family Service Association.

As reference material for this text, Albert Danoff, a founding partner in 1964 of the Winkler, Danoff and Lubin law firm, compiled biographies of some 60 Jewish lawyers—including DAs Abram Salsburg, Herman J. Goldberg, and Jerome Cohen; Pennsylvania Deputy Attorneys General Herman J. Goldberg and Richard M. Goldberg (now chief Luzerne County solicitor); and assistant DAs Harold Rosenn, Solomon Lubin, Arthur Silverblatt, Richard Goldberg, Sheila Saidman, Charles Casper, Louis Shaffer, Nathan Hyman, and Herman Shepherd. Danoff also developed a list of about 200 lawyers who were born and/or practiced in the Valley. Excerpted from his work are profiles of selected law professors and the Jewish judges (Seligman J. Strauss was discussed earlier):



Judge Max Rosenn.

Judge Max Rosenn

The United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit is based in Philadelphia, yet Senior Judge Max Rosenn has chosen to live in Kingston throughout his tenure in the highest professional office attained by any Wyoming Valley lawyer. His dedication to the community and his loyalty to family and friends dictated his decision to maintain chambers at Wilkes-Barre's federal building, now named in his honor, continue his lifetime service to the community and its institutions, and travel to Philadelphia for all Circuit Court sessions.

Born and raised in Plains, Max Rosenn (1910-) is a graduate of Cornell University (1929) and the University of Pennsylvania Law School (1932). Prior to World War II, he was special counsel to the Pennsylvania Department of Justice (1939), assistant District Attorney of Luzerne County (1941-4), and solicitor for local municipalities. Graduating from the University of Michigan's Judge Advocate General School in 1944, he served as a commissioned officer in the U. S. Army in the South Pacific during the war.

Returning to the Valley to become a founding member of Rosenn, Jenkins & Greenwald, he combined his legal practice with numerous communal and professional activities. Member and later consultant to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Criminal Procedural Rules Committee from its inception in 1959 until 1983, he was in 1966 appointed Secretary of Public Welfare for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by Governor William W. Scranton, and re-appointed by Governor Raymond P. Shafer. Secretary Rosenn, administering a department employing more than 33,000 people, had executive responsibility for the operation of state hospitals and programs for the elderly, young, blind, mentally incapacitated, and poor. He was also a member of the State Executive Board, responsible

for personnel standards and the administrative organization of the government.

On October 7, 1970, Rosenn was elevated to the bench, appointed by President Richard M. Nixon to lifetime service as Judge of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit covering Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the Virgin Islands. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals, dealing with cases on appeal from federal district courts and federal agencies, annually handles about 4,000 cases, of which fewer than ten move on to the U. S. Supreme Court.

Harold Rosenn wrote about the extraordinary support for Judge Rosenn's appointment: "When Max's name was submitted to President Nixon by the U. S. Senators from Pennsylvania, my brother received tremendous support from labor unions notwithstanding the fact that a great deal of his practice was devoted to representing management in labor negotiations. But he had established a reputation for fairness in the course of his practice, never over-reaching or taking advantage of employees. He received overwhelming support from the Teamsters Union, the ILGWU, both locally and in New York, as well as District 50 which represented many otherwise unaffiliated employees of diverse companies throughout the Wyoming Valley."

Judge Rosenn chairs the administrative fund for the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and is a director of the Court's Historical Society. On May 13, 1996, ceremonies held by Act of Congress named the federal building on South Main Street, Wilkes-Barre, the Max Rosenn United States Courthouse.

A giant in the community as well as the law, Rosenn led Wyoming Valley's Flood Recovery Task Force in 1972. He has held local, state, and national office in civic, religious, and fraternal organizations, serving as president of more than a dozen groups. He has presided over the Jewish Federation, Congregation Ohav Zedek and its school board, District 3 Grand Lodge of B'nai B'rith, S. J. Strauss Lodge, and the regional council of B'nai B'rith. A former member of the National Commission of the Anti-Defamation League and chairman of the Pennsylvania board, he was also trustee of the national B'nai B'rith Foundation and founding chairman of Camp B'nai B'rith in Starlight, Pennsylvania. He is a life member of the JCC, where he endowed the Max and Tillie Rosenn Institute of Advanced Jewish Studies, and life trustee of United Hebrew Institute.

Active in local, state, and national bar associations and the American Judicature Society, he was a founding member of the American Society of Law and Medicine and an associate editor of its journal. He has written many important decisions and law review articles, and at various times chaired the Governor's Council for Human Services and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. He was also a member of the Pennsylvania Commission on Interstate Cooperation and is an honorary Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers.

He holds honorary degrees from Dickinson Law School, King's College, and College Misericordia, and is recipient of numerous public service awards and citations, including Wyoming Seminary's Distinguished Service Award and the first Distinguished Service Award of the Wyoming Valley Interfaith Council.

Max Rosenn and his wife Tillie (Hershkowitz) raised two sons. Dr. Daniel Rosenn is a pediatric psychiatrist in Boston and Keith Rosenn, LL.B., has been a professor of law at the University of Miami School of Law since 1979.

Judge Nochem Winnet

Polish-born Nochem S. Winnet (1898-1990) was brought to New York at age seven and to Wilkes-Barre a year later. His school records showed his surname as Winitsky, which he kept though the rest of his family was known as Williams. Graduating from Wilkes-Barre High in 1916, he entered Colgate, transferring to Harvard, where he enlisted in the Officers Training Corps in October 1918, only to be mustered out the next month when World War I ended. He earned his bachelor's and law degrees at Harvard (1920 and 1923).

Armed with recommendations from his professors Roscoe Pound and Felix Frankfurter, he interviewed unsuccessfully at Philadelphia law firms until future U. S. Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts told him that his foreign-sounding name worked against him. He became Winnet, practicing independently during the 1920s, later in partnership with B. I. DeYoung, and finally associating with Fox Rothschild O'Brien & Frankel for 40 years.

In 1940, he had been Philadelphia Deputy Commissioner of Public Safety (police commissioner) for five weeks when Governor James named

him Judge of the Municipal Court. He held the position for 11 years, losing a bid for Superior Court.

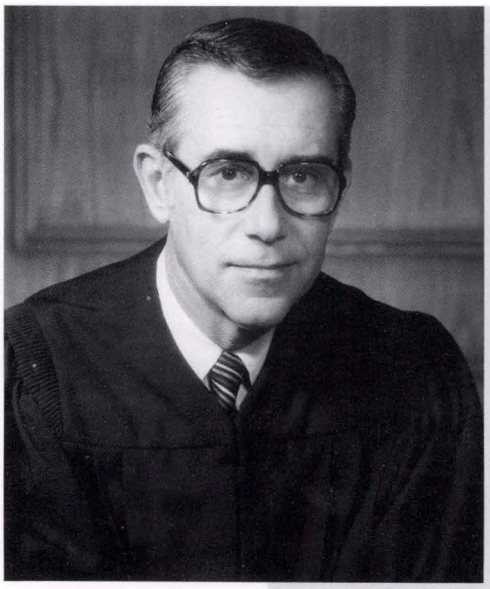
Nochem Winnet reorganized Philadelphia's juvenile court system, attracting nationwide attention. He was vice-chairman of the Crime Prevention Association and chairman of the Samuel S. Fels Fund. He held many honorary degrees and was honorary chairman of Beaver College. He was vice-chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, president of the Federation of Jewish Agencies Foundation, and a director of Dropsie College.

He was the Republican leader of bipartisan efforts to amend Philadelphia's charter, vice-chairman of the Republican Assembly of Philadelphia, and secretary of the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Consolidation. A recreation center in South Philadelphia, and sites at Pennsylvania College of Optometry and Philadelphia Community College are named in his honor.

Judge Jacob Schiffman

When Jacob Schiffman (1910-70) became a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County in 1961, he was the first Jew in the position since S. J. Strauss. Born and raised in Pittston, Schiffman was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and New York University Law School. A veteran of World War II, he returned home to practice law and became active in the Democratic party and in civic affairs. A UJA leader, he was also an early Zionist, a president and chairman of the board of trustees of Temple Israel, and president of B'nai B'rith's Irwin Freed Lodge. He was treasurer of the Jewish Federation and an officer of the JCC. He was a member of the executive committee of the local Heart Association, chaired the Heart Fund, and served as a trustee of Mercy Hospital.

Judge Jacob Schiffman.

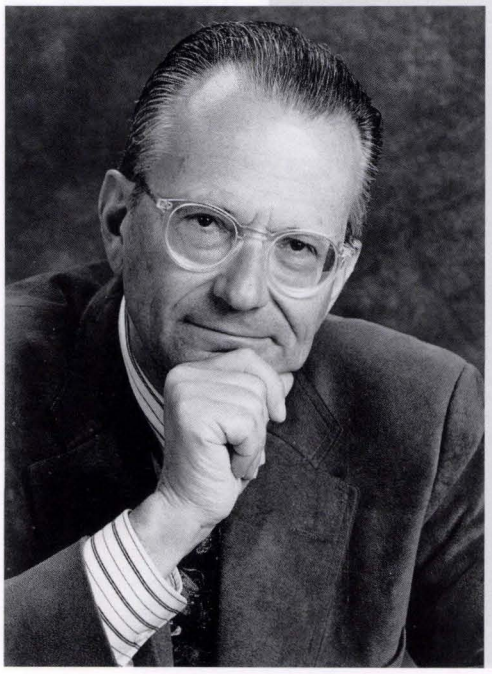


Judge Perry J. Shertz.

Judge Perry J. Shertz

Raised in the Heights section of Wilkes-Barre, Perry Shertz (1928-) grew up at B'nai Jacob synagogue and the Talmud Torah Hebrew Institute. After graduating from G. A. R. in 1946, he enlisted in the U. S. Navy, remaining on active duty until 1948, later serving with the Marines during the Korean War. He earned a B.A. at Dickinson College (1952) and a J.D. from Temple University (1957). He joined Rosenn, Jenkins & Greenwald in 1959, and was a partner from 1962 to 1980, when he was appointed to the Pennsylvania Superior Court as an Associate Judge. In 1982, he returned to his law practice, retiring in 1989.

A Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, he was a member of the Governor's AIDS Commission, the Governor's Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Advisory Commission, and the Wilkes-Barre Zoning Board, and chaired the Wilkes-Barre General Municipal Authority. He is a past president of the Wilkes-Barre Law and Library Association. Before leaving the community for Israel and Florida, Shertz was an active member of Congregation Ohav Zedek, board chairman of UHI, president of the Eastern Pennsylvania Council of B'nai B'rith, and president of the local ZOA.



Jesse H. Choper. *Photograph by Jim Block. Courtesy University of California at Berkeley.*

Jesse H. Choper

Jesse Choper (1935-) won a scholarship to Wilkes College (B.S. '57), where he was a star debater (along with future rabbi Bruce Warshal '58). At the University of Pennsylvania (LL.B. '60), he was research editor of the Law Review and taught at Wharton. After clerking for Chief Justice Earl Warren, he taught at the University of Minnesota Law School. In 1965, he joined the faculty of the School of Law of the University of California at Berkeley. Dean from 1982-92, he is now Earl Warren Professor of Public Law.

Among his books are *Judicial Review and the National Political Process: A Functional Reconsideration*

of the Role of the Supreme Court (recipient of the Order of the Coif Triennial Book Award in 1982) and *Securing Religious Liberty: Principles for Judicial Interpretation of the Religion Clauses.* He is co-author of two casebooks in his specialties, constitutional and corporation law.

He has been visiting professor at Harvard Law School and, for more than 15 years, he has been a major lecturer at U. S. Law Week's Annual Constitutional Law Conference in Washington, DC. He has delivered major named law lectures at numerous universities. A member of the executive bodies of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and the Association of American Law Schools, he was national president of the Order of the Coif (1992-5). He received an honorary doctorate from Wilkes College in 1967.

Herbert Peterfreund

Herbert Peterfreund (1913-) grew up in Glen Lyon. After graduating from Penn State (1933) and Harvard Law School (1936), he went on to Columbia, earning the LL.M. in 1942. He practiced in New York before joining the faculty of New York University Law School in 1946, becoming a full professor in 1953 and teaching there until 1978, when he became a professor at San Diego University Law School. He is author of many manuals and articles on New York practice.

Jerome Facher. *From Harvard Law Bulletin, Winter 1996. Courtesy Jerome Facher.*

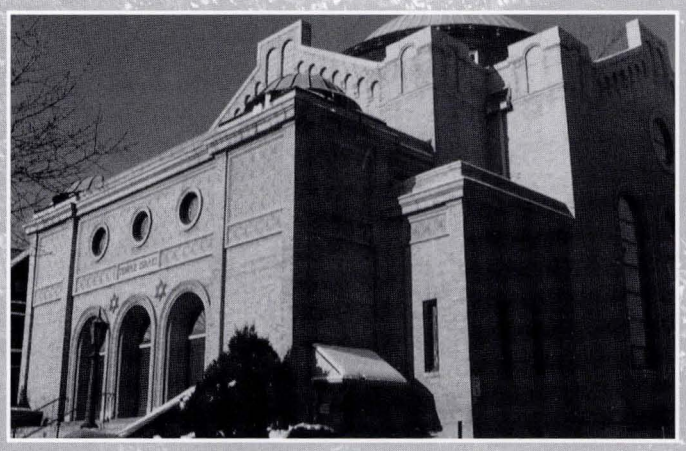
Jerome P. Facher

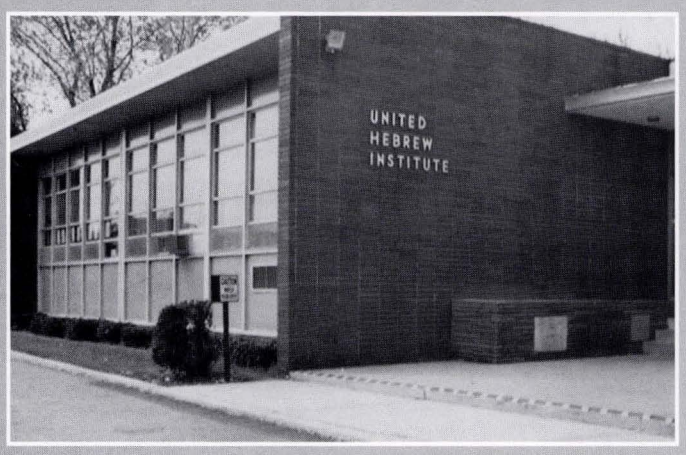
Jerome Facher (1925-) was born in Kingston, attended BUJC and Penn State (B.A., '46), and earned an LL.B. at Harvard Law School ('51), where he became an editor of the Harvard Law Review. He has served on many bench and bar committees, including the Judicial Nominating Commissions for Massachusetts and the U. S. First Circuit, and has written extensively on trial practice. Chair of litigation at Boston's Hale and Dorr, he specializes in intellectual property, complex business litigation, environmental law, and antitrust law. He lectured on trial litigation at Harvard Law School for nearly 30 years.

Facher represented Beatrice Foods in the nine-year

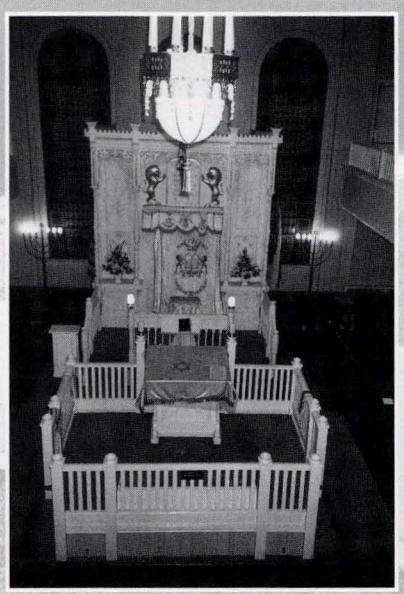
toxic tort case brought by eight Massachusetts families against W. R. Grace and Beatrice Foods. Author Jonathan Harr described the case in the 1995 book, *A Civil Action* (Random House), and Wildwood Enterprises (owned by Robert Redford and Rachel Pfeffer) purchased movie rights to the story. In the film, released in December 1998, actor Robert Duvall portrays Facher. The trial also was featured in an Arts and Entertainment *American Justice* television documentary.

—Albert Danoff,
with Harold Rosenn, Marvin Williams, Jonathan Schiffman, and Marcy Stein





Perpetuating Jewish Heritage: The Enduring Cultural and Religious Institutions



Overleaf: The Jewish cultural and religious institutions in present-day Wyoming Valley include five synagogues, the Jewish Community Center, the day school, and Rosenberg Funeral Chapel. *Background image:* the Jewish Community Center. *Building exteriors, top to bottom:* Temple Israel, Congregation Ohav Zedek, United Hebrew Institute. *Synagogue interiors, left to right:* Ahavas Achim Synagogue, United Orthodox Synagogue, Temple B'nai B'rith.

MARJORIE LEVIN

Perpetuating Jewish Heritage:
The Enduring Cultural and Religious Institutions

Today's Wyoming Valley Jewish community maintains five synagogues, a Hebrew day school and two synagogue religious schools, a funeral home, more than a dozen cemeteries, a system of ritual supports, and a Jewish Community Center (JCC) used by 80 percent of Jewish residents and many Gentile residents. All Jewish institutions remain located within a few miles' radius, in Wilkes-Barre and on the West Side, though the Jewish population, still significant in those areas, has also dispersed to the Back Mountain, Mountaintop, and Bear Creek.

Excepting Pittston's Temple Agudath Achim, which had yet to begin the process that resulted in its merger with Temple Israel, the present institutional geography was in place by the mid-1960s. Despite increasing population movement to the far suburbs after the 1972 flood, the Jewish institutions of Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, and Luzerne retained their pre-flood buildings. Though Temple Israel considered opening a branch synagogue in Kingston in the '60s, and the JCC considered relocating to Kingston in the early '90s, both institutions remain in downtown Wilkes-Barre which, unlike other urban centers of comparable size, has escaped substantial decay. No Jewish institution has proposed relocation beyond Kingston. Travel distances are short in the Valley, and there has been no compelling reason to tamper with tradition.

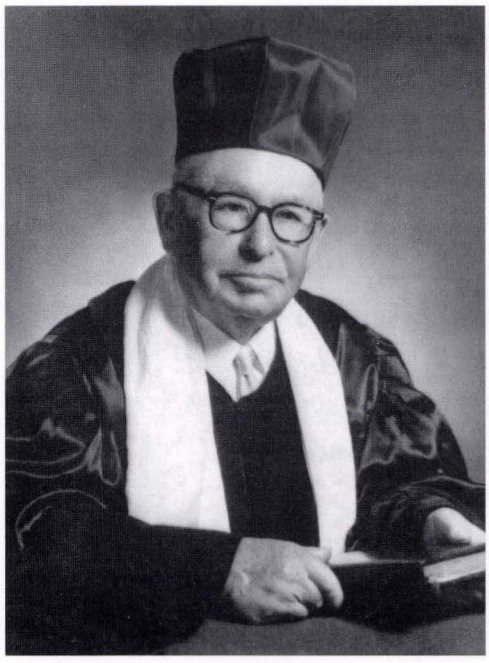
It was, indeed, tradition that delayed the merger of the four Heights synagogues. Though steady migration out of the Heights had affected attendance at the *shuls,* and gathering a quorum for daily religious services had become a serious problem by 1955, members' loyalties ran deep. Each synagogue represented a link to past generations and European roots, and to the beloved clergy who had helped to acculturate the immigrants.

Cantor Jacob Stein.
Courtesy Ruth Stein.

Rabbi Isadore M. Davidson*, presiding over all Wilkes-Barre's Orthodox synagogues as chief rabbi since the 1920 death of Rabbi David Ginsburg*, provided leadership until his death in 1963. But there were other Heights clergy and religious officials with whom local Jews forged strong bonds. Rev. Nechemiah Williams* had served both Anshe Emes and B'nai Jacob prior to 1930. Hungarian-born Cantor Jacob Stein had come to Wilkes-Barre by way of Palestine, serving Holche Yosher for 31 years until his 1947 death. He was also a *shohet* and *mohel.* Remembered for his fine voice and personal warmth, Rev. Stein was particularly beloved among local young men drafted for World War II military service; he accompanied each departing GI to the railroad station, meeting each who lived to come home.

Among other cantors serving the Heights synagogues were Rev. Jehuda Briskin of Anshe Emes and Cantor David Kline* of Anshe Sfard. Aaron Horowitz, arriving at B'nai Jacob in 1923, had the longest tenure of any area cantor. He continued as cantor through the eventual merger and until his 1971 death. Emmanuel Winters Horowitz wrote about his father:

Cantor Aaron Horowitz.
Courtesy Joseph Horowitz.



Aaron Horowitz was born Nov. 11, 1874 in Dukor, Russia, where he was educated in Torah and Talmud by his father Abraham. Gifted with a natural singing voice, he went to Minsk to study and to sing in the choir of a renowned cantor. A fellow choir member—great-grandfather of Heights-born legal scholar Jesse Choper—taught him to read and write music. In Vileika for further study, he met Bertha Chazan (1874-1958), whom he married in 1896.

Aaron became cantor of a shtetl congregation. In 1900 a visitor from Sweden heard the cantor sing, and urged him to apply for a position at a Malmö synagogue. Aaron seized the opportunity to escape Russia and, with the couple's savings of five rubles, he joined a group running the border under cover of night. Reaching Sweden, he won the job, and was joined in Malmö by his wife and two children.

In Sweden, in addition to his cantorial duties, he taught

* Rabbis Davidson and Ginsburg and Rev. Williams are profiled in detail elsewhere in the text. Cantor Kline was also a *shohet.* Mrs. Katie Bosch rented her South Welles Street garage as a ritual slaughterhouse.

himself Swedish and German, and embarked on a program of harmony, composition, violin, piano, and choral work. He became a charter member of the Malmö Philharmonic Society under Anders Hallen, conductor of the Stockholm Royal Opera. He organized the first Zionist group in Malmö. And he pursued studies in philosophy, science, and literature, as well as the famed Swedish system of physical fitness.

In Sweden 14 happy years, and grown to a family of ten, the Horowitzes set sail for America in 1914. The cantor secured a post at a synagogue in Worcester, Massachusetts, where the family lived for nine years and acquired U. S. citizenship.

The cantor's parents, preceding him to America, had settled in Wilkes-Barre, where Abraham Horowitz was employed at B'nai Jacob. When Aaron came to the city for his father's 1923 funeral, he was asked to conduct a service at the shul.

His magnificent baritone so impressed the congregation, he was invited on the spot to become the synagogue's permanent cantor. In June 1923 the family moved to Wilkes-Barre, where Cantor Horowitz served 48 years as a cantor and composer of sacred music, officiant at marriage ceremonies, a mohel, and, for a time, as a shohet. He also wrote and delivered hundreds of sermonettes at the close of Shabbat services, and wrote numerous essays on religious and secular subjects. Two of his essays were published in the Congressional Record. One, his argument against spanking children, was carried by wire services all over America. Though most of his musical and prose manuscripts were lost to the 1972 flood, after his death the family gathered the music they had, along with a copy of his autobiography and one recording, and presented the collection to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS).

On February 26, 1956, Congregation B'nai Jacob held a testimonial dinner honoring the cantor for his service to Orthodox Judaism. Planned as a modest event in the synagogue vestry, the dinner was moved to the JCC to accommodate the crowd. Among the speakers were Nathan Kuss, synagogue president Morris Lidz, past president William Rifkin, and toastmaster Joseph Savitz. Among the many tributes were wires from President Eisenhower and author Herman Wouk, and a message from Cantor Henry Rosenblatt, son of renowned Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, who wrote, "I have always considered you the true successor . . . of my late father."

Cantor Horowitz died on December 21, 1971. Locally and in New York, he was known as "dean of American cantors." He had earned the encomium. He had also earned the love of everyone who knew him.

Of all the Heights synagogues, only Anshe Emes had its own rabbis, most serving one or two years. Rabbi Israel Bencel Goldman served the *shul* 23 years, and was memorialized after his 1955 death when the Hebrew day school, founded at Ohav Zedek by his young student and friend, Rabbi Ephraim Wolfe, was renamed Israel Ben Zion Academy (IBZA). Born in Poland about 1889, Rabbi Goldman was ordained at Slabotke Yeshiva and occupied two pulpits in Europe before emigrating to the U. S., where he served Anshe Emes from 1932. Esther Goldman Golub wrote about her father:

Empathy was my father's most outstanding attribute. He made you feel that only you and your concerns existed for him. Thus his greatest influence was probably felt on an individual basis. Those who came in contact with him in study and personal sessions often came away with new insight and direction.

My father's era predated popular psychology. He had no formal education beyond the old world Lithuanian yeshivas. Yet he was receptive to everything we young people studied. Essentially a European rabbi, a Talmudic scholar for whom study of Torah was the only occupation worthy of the thinking man's limited time on earth, he believed that Torah encompassed everything in life. Thus he saw value in every form of work and study.

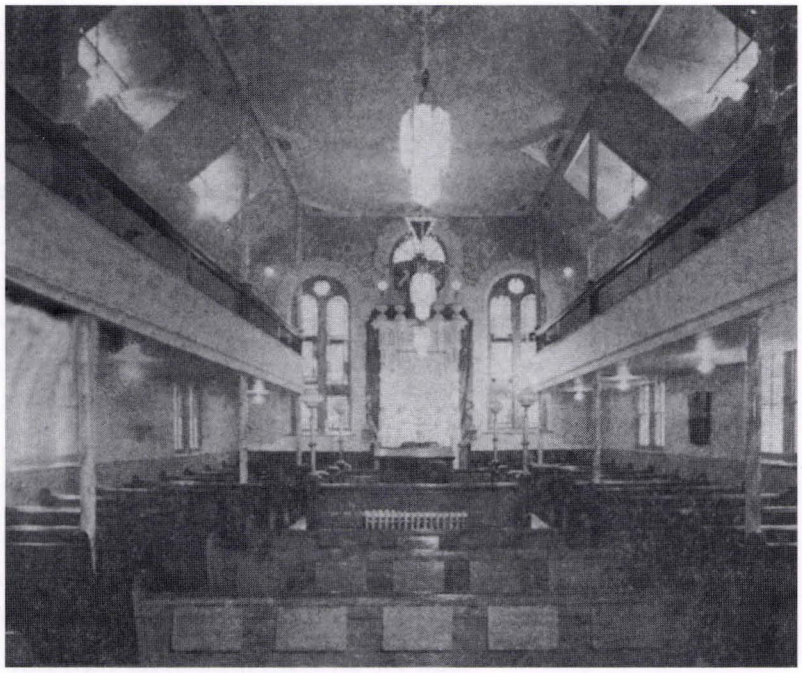
When he came to Wilkes-Barre, he hoped to spread learning and love of Torah. What he found was a depression and immigrant Jews trying to make their way in a world where even Sabbath observance seemed impossible. How could he relate to people who felt that in breaking the Sabbath laws they might just as well drop other observance too? These were people with no time for learning. My father suffered, and listened, and immersed himself in learning—almost as though he could do it for all those who wouldn't or couldn't do it for themselves.

Rabbi Israel Bencel Goldman. *Courtesy Esther Golub.*

But worse was to come with Hitler and the Holocaust. My father seemed to be in constant anguish. Only with the Allied victory, the rebirth of the Jewish state, and the establishment of new Jewish centers of learning did he find new strength and solace. He lived to see a resurgence of interest in the Hebrew language, the Bible, Jewish history, the Talmud, and observance in accordance with Jewish law.

Up until his final year's illness he taught a Talmud class to a select few who had sufficient background knowledge to follow. Today, because of schools like the Israel Ben Zion Academy, Wyoming Valley can claim many students easily able to follow the intricacies of Talmudic law and apply its teachings to their own lives.

By 1956, Anshe Emes had a membership of 75 and, having rebuilt its South Welles Street building in 1922, the newest synagogue structure on the Heights. B'nai Jacob, also on South Welles Street, marking its diamond anniversary in 1946, had 165 members in 1956, while Holche Yosher on Lincoln Street had a membership of 120, and Anshe Sfard on East Northampton Street had a membership of 62. With the exception of Anshe Sfard, all the synagogues had active sisterhood groups. Each synagogue had maintained its own cemetery, in which there was ample space. Nonetheless, as it became more difficult to recruit a *minyan,* the idea of combining the congregations took hold. Nathan Kuss, architect of the merger of the Heights synagogues, described the 10-year process:



The interior of Holche Yosher had been modernized and redecorated in 1950, with particular attention to the sanctuary, where artist Lawrence Russo utilized an elaborate 17th century motif around the Holy Ark.

The merger began with my invitation to each congregation's officers to meet on November 14, 1955. B'nai Jacob was represented by Morris Lidz, Joseph Pollack, Jacob Rifkin, and Gerald Herschenfeld; Anshe Emes by Meyer Lieb, Ben Smith, Sanford Lasman, and Sam Adelson; and Anshe Sfard by Ernest Herskovitz and Adolph Stark. Irving Rubin, Joseph Finkel, and I represented Holche Yosher.

Of primary concern was the increasing difficulty of maintaining the twice-daily minyan. After discounting a number of stopgap suggestions, we agreed to consider a merger of some or all the synagogues, and I was authorized to pursue the possibilities. I addressed each congregation's membership at September 1956 High Holiday services, explaining the problems and proposing as a solution the merger of all the synagogues into one. The reaction was emotional and unbelieving.

Here they were, in each synagogue, 200 or more strong, listening to a claim that as few as 10 men could not be counted on to attend daily services. It could not be true. But it was true, and the movement toward a merger was continued.

Numerous meetings were held. Plans were formulated and rejected, objections raised and considered. Emotions often ran high. Among those continually

Anshe Emes became United Orthodox Synagogue in 1965.

involved, in addition to the synagogues' officers, were Robert Capin, David Bransdorf, Thomas Dymond, Nathan Fierverker, Harry Fierverker, Harry Rutstein, Jack Fink, Sam Hirshowitz, Aaron Hafetz, Seymour Fendler, and Joseph Savitz. Attorneys Savitz, Ernest Herskovitz, and Edwin Sheporwich were helpful with legal questions, and Chief Rabbi I. M. Davidson was kept abreast of the unfolding process.

There were many serious concerns: Would cemetery privileges be lost or encroached on? Which synagogue building would be used and which abandoned (and all personal memories with them)? Would any one building be large enough? What would be the new dues schedule? There were fierce loyalties.

In order to answer the questions raised, I visited each synagogue and each of the four cemeteries. I noted the seating capacity of each building and judged the adequacy of other facilities. At each cemetery I counted the grave sites and measured the remaining capacity. At the Holche Yosher cemetery, for example, in use by then for some 70 years, I found that the remaining available space was greater than the occupied area. With increased migration out of the Valley, I estimated that Holche Yosher cemetery, the least extensive of the four, could be available for up to 100 years.

Discussions continued for 10 years. People were reluctant to abandon a tradition, even though a merger was the alternative to individual collapse.

In the end, outside developments forced the decision. Wilkes-Barre was one of many U. S. cities given government funds to improve or modernize areas which had fallen into disrepair. The Redevelopment Authority plan locally embraced the streets on which the B'nai Jacob and Holche Yosher Synagogues were located. Substantial sums were offered the congregations for these buildings, which were condemned.

Merger became a fact. The Anshe Sfard building, though not included in Redevelopment plans, was not suited to merger plans, and was eventually razed. All four institutions were organized into the United Orthodox Synagogue, situated in the Anshe Emes building at 13 South Welles Street, in 1965. The four individual cemeteries were maintained.

Morris Lidz is standing, second from left, in this pre-merger photograph taken at B'nai Jacob Synagogue. Orthodox clergy seated, from left, are Rabbi I. M. Davidson, Cantor Aaron Horowitz, and Rabbi Jerome Kerzner.

Cantor Horowitz of B'nai Jacob served the new synagogue, which also employed the cantors and sextons of the other defunct synagogues. By common consent, Morris Lidz became president of the merged congregation and remained in that office to the end of his life. The institution remains a viable synagogue, with a loyal membership.

By the time United Orthodox Synagogue was formed, Congregation Ohav Zedek, Wilkes-Barre's major Orthodox synagogue, had been in existence 73 years. Founded in 1892, after B'nai Jacob (1871) and Holche Yosher (1881) and before Anshe Emes (1906) and Anshe Sfard (1908), Ohav Zedek is portrayed in broad scope throughout the text. Excerpted from Rivian Minkoff's comprehensive institutional history are details of events and personalities shaping the synagogue, whose worship services have remained virtually the same for more than a century:

In March 1898, when Chevra Ohav Zedek Anshe Ungarn purchased land on Canal Street, the congregation was just over five years old and composed of recent immigrants. A letter written in Hungarian, German, and English solicited funds for construction of a synagogue building, which was completed in 1902. The first wedding ceremony at the synagogue united Mr. and Mrs. Isadore Seeherman.

Members, required then to be of Hungarian ancestry, were drawn from Wilkes-Barre and the outlying towns. Those who lived outside the city would walk to Ohav Zedek on the High Holidays. On Yom Kippur, they might see Sam Hirshowitz of The Hub in his silk top hat and cutaway morning coat.

For a time, a heder was conducted in the basement. When afternoon worship services coincided with classes, Louis (Yehuda) Fierman Sr. would come early to observe the children. Fierman would become the eighth president of the congregation, succeeding Isaac Schonfeld, Ignatz Weiss, Sandor Engel, Samuel Smulowitz, Philip Klein, Isaac Yudkovitz, and Harry Berkowitz.

There was no officiating rabbi at the synagogue until the arrival of the chief rabbis, but businessman Samuel Pripstein, an ordained rabbi, was among those who functioned as rabbi. Torah readers were Reverends Jacob Zwick, Weinstein, Seidel, Heller, Shiff, Freed, Berger, Marchbein, Levin, Greenfield, Mallick, and Juda Appel.

When a mikvah was built in 1914, Harry (Ansel) Jakubowitz and his wife became its caretakers until the duty was assumed by Rev. and Mrs. Joseph Gast. The mikvah remained at its original State Street location until 1960, when a new ritual bath, with a small adjoining home for the caretakers, was erected adjacent to United Hebrew Institute (UHI) in Kingston. Caretakers following the Gasts were Mrs. Miller, Rabbi and Mrs. Kohana, Rev. and Mrs. David Weisz and, presently, Rabbi and Mrs. Zvi Perlman. After the 1972 flood, the home was razed. The mikvah is supervised by the Vaad Hakashrut, headed by the rabbi of Ohav Zedek.

Rev. Gast, Ohav Zedek's shammash when the congregation moved to its present building, served until his death at age 93 in 1977. It was his practice to record family names in a small notebook which he always carried with him. The notebook, listing hundreds of names, was later used by Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff.

As the membership grew to more than 300 families in 1926 and Isaac "Ike" Engel had already begun his 23-year synagogue presidency, the congregation selected a lot at 242 South Franklin Street and initiated a building fund drive. Architect Austin Reilly was engaged, and Ike Engel scoured the country to find the appropriate motif for the new structure. In September 1930, Joseph Salsburg became the last bar mitzvah at the first building.

The congregation struggled to complete the building during the Great Depression. Joseph Rosenn was instrumental in making financial arrangements for construction. Philip Hershkowitz, synagogue treasurer from 1930-71, scrutinized the bills. On January 24, 1932, after parting ceremonies at the old synagogue, the new building was dedicated. Speakers were Rabbis Davidson, Gutterman, Bauer, and Salzman, and synagogue and city officials. Cantor Juda Appel led prayers.

The sisterhood, founded in 1927 by Kitty Wasserstrom and Rose Seeherman, initiated fund-raising to benefit Ohav Zedek and, later, UHI, with the move to the new building. In 1968, Regina Engel was the first recipient of sisterhood's Blanche Horowitz Memorial Award. Though the sisterhood is active today, a decline in volunteerism led 1984 president Connie Roth to continue in the post an unprecedented nine years, ensuring continuation of the group. Anita Coplan, sisterhood president in 1996, helped to develop a young leadership award; in 1997, Marcy Weinberg was the first recipient of the award, named for Rella Roth. Bertie Lenowitz was longtime sisterhood historian. Ruth Gottesman proposed today's major fund raiser, a calendar project chaired by Faye Berg.

Ohav Zedek sisterhood founder Kitty Wasserstrom is seated third from left. Regina Engel is seated second from left.

In 1933, Rev. Morris Merling was engaged as cantor, and the Ohav Zedek Religious School was established. Among teachers were Martin Goldstein, Walter Shechatovitz and Esther Goldman. Max Rosenn, first chairman of the congregation's board of education, became the first bridegroom at the new synagogue. The ceremony uniting Rosenn and Tillie Hershkowitz was performed by Rabbi Davidson.

As the U. S. entered World War II, about 150 Ohav Zedek men and

women served in the military and, soon after its 50th anniversary, the congregation legally dropped "Anshe Ungarn" from its name. At ceremonies held in January 1947, the mortgage was burned by synagogue officers Isaac Engel and Jesse Hyman.

Successive presidents following Engel were Jacob Bergsmann, Henry Smulowitz, and Wolfe Kirshner. Max Rosenn, 1947-9 president, brought order to the rituals, and services reflected the times. The major tract of cemetery land was purchased during Rosenn's term. Emanuel Bergmann and then Max Roth followed Rosenn in office.

City Rabbi Flies To Jerusalem Session

Rabbi Ephraim R. Wolf, Congregation Ohav Zedek, 331 S. River St., city, who is among 58 delegates to the World Congress of Orthodox Jews, is shown boarding an El Al Israel Airlines plane recently at New York International Airport for Jerusalem, Israel.

The Congress, the first international conclave by Orthodox Jewry in 17 years, and the fourth such congress in the organization's history, opens in Jerusalem June 29. It is sponsored by the Agudath Yisroel world organization and is the first to be held in Israel.

Rabbi Ephraim Wolfe was engaged as Ohav Zedek's first full-time rabbi in August 1949 and served until 1957. His greatest achievement was the establishment of the Valley's Hebrew day school in 1950. Endorsing the efforts of Torah Umesorah (National Society for Hebrew Day Schools, founded 1944) to build a network of Orthodox Hebrew day schools, he pursued acceptance of a local day school, meeting resistance among those who thought the concept narrow and existing religious education sufficient. Among his supporters were Rabbi I. M. Davidson, Max Roth, Joseph Engel, Nathan Kuss, and Lydia Berman. Berman visited functioning day schools and reviewed research on the movement. The school was opened, one grade at a time, as a "bicultural school," meeting at Ohav Zedek. First teacher was Muriel Hacker, who taught first grade reading readiness. Marion Weltman joined Hacker, and a nursery-kindergarten began, taught by Sophie Pernikoff and Evelyn Brauner.

Max Roth was Ohav Zedek president until his death in 1969. In 1952, he welcomed Moshe Rosenblatt, son of Cantor Levi Rosenblatt and nephew of Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, as Ohav Zedek cantor. Rosenblatt served 18 years. In 1957, Roth welcomed Rabbi Jerome Kerzner, who served 15 years. Throughout his own term, Roth provided extraordinary financial support toward retiring the congregation's debt, also chairing the building fund committee for construction of UHI.

UHI represented the combination of three schools—IBZA, Talmud Torah, and Ohav Zedek Religious School—under one roof in Kingston. Rabbi Kerzner, serving as dean of UHI, won Federation support for the day school, encouraged fund-raising by the newly-formed PTA led by Lydia Berman, and welcomed new teacher Rabbi Joseph Katz, who would later become the school's principal. It was Rabbi Kerzner who found a site behind the Freed family's Pierce Street Market for the UHI building, and named the approach "Institute Lane."

Max Roth.
Courtesy Eugene Roth.

When a minyan to accommodate Kingston members was proposed, many opposed the move as potentially divisive. Max Roth preserved the unity of the congregation, which established a branch at UHI. About 250 people attended the first High Holiday services in 1962. Alvin Schwartz was longtime chairman of the Kingston minyan; he was succeeded by Zeal Cumsky, Bernard Koenig, Ernest Freundlich, and David Smith. Freundlich, and Rabbis Mayer Pernikoff and Joseph Katz, were Torah readers. Others serving the minyan included Julius Rein, David Schoenfeld, Bernard Rockman, and Seymour Mark.

Henry Kessler was president from 1969-74. In 1972, as Rabbi Kerzner prepared to leave the community, the Valley was flooded. Before evacuating to the Heights, Jesse, Seth, and David Hefter stopped at the synagogue and moved all the Torah scrolls to the balcony. Rev. Gast, in the shul that afternoon, stayed overnight and found himself marooned. Managing to draw attention to his plight by waving his cane at a passing helicopter, he was later removed by boat to higher ground.

The flood waters had not reached the synagogue's main floor, but the lower level was full of debris and mud. Cemetery committee chairman Robert Kornblau put a clean-up crew to work, and saw to the burial of ruined sacred books. Rabbis Mayer Pernikoff and Jerome Kerzner, UHI board chairman Marvin Roth, and Sidney Yuskovitz and his son buried the affected sacred materials of Ohav Zedek and UHI.

Sidney Yuskovitz chaired the committee to restore the building. Sylvia Kessler, sisterhood president, was charged with refurbishing the kitchen and selecting furnishings. Daily worship services were held in the main sanctuary. The JCC provided office space. High Holiday services were conducted by Rabbi Herman Shulman, who became Ohav Zedek rabbi in August 1972. People who had evacuated the city returned to attend their own synagogue. Many enjoyed holiday dinners, provided by the Kornfeld family of the Treadway Inn, in the JCC auditorium.

The Kingston minyan, determined to hold services every Shabbat following the flood, used portable Arks and mehizot (partitions separating men and women). Seating was on mud-encrusted steel folding chairs.

Though contracts for the physical restoration were awarded in the early fall of 1972, the backlog of construction work delayed real progress at the main synagogue until spring 1973. In the interim, the second floor ladies' lounge served as social hall and meeting room for synagogue committees and for the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY) Tikvah chapter, a group spearheaded by

Rabbi and Mrs. Shulman. Rabbi Shulman also organized a Hebrew high school at UHI, and expanded the Vaad Hakashrut to include members of all area synagogues.*

At May 1974 rededication ceremonies, the congregation honored Eugene Roth, who had chaired the Jewish community's flood recovery efforts. The Kesslers and Hefters were also recognized, and Rabbi Shulman outlined future program plans. The following August, outgoing president Henry Kessler initiated a life membership campaign. There are about 70 Everlasting Life Members today.

Nathan Schiowitz, assuming the synagogue presidency in 1974, provided sound fiscal management at a time of change. As Rabbi Shulman left the synagogue in October 1975, Rabbi Joseph Katz served as interim rabbi until August 1976, when Rabbi Mitchell Kornspan was engaged.

Rabbi Kornspan was popular among congregants of all ages. He worked closely with Chevra Kadisha member Sydel Minkoff to strengthen the holy burial society and instruct members in Jewish law and practice. For his first Purim at Ohav Zedek, Rabbi Kornspan initiated a celebratory approach, including a costume parade and Purimshpiel (irreverent skit). Since then, Ohav Zedek has hosted similar celebrations.

Eugene Roth, who succeeded Schiowitz as president and served until 1980, implemented a host of programs, including NCSY conventions at Ohav Zedek, a welcoming committee for new Russian families, and group discussions of such timely subjects as the role of Jewish women. (In contrast to the national norm at U. S. Orthodox congregations, women were already serving on Ohav Zedek's board.)

In the latter 1970s, the membership gradually began to decline. Many college-educated young Jews left the area, and some chose to join Temple Israel. The more observant young adults, who had attended yeshivahs elsewhere, ultimately settled in areas with a larger population of observant Jews. As new programs (such as group ceremonies recognizing girls entering Jewish adulthood) were initiated at Ohav Zedek in the 1980s, more Jewish young adults joined the synagogue.

In August 1980, Rabbi Israel Kestenbaum became spiritual leader. With graduate degrees in Talmudic law, philosophy, and education, Rabbi Kestenbaum taught at the JCC and wrote extensively for Anglo-Jewish publications. He provided support and comfort to families in crisis. A member of the Martin

* Official records of the *Vaad Hakashrut* are unavailable. Rabbi Davidson addressed *kashrut* questions, and Rabbi Kerzner instituted supervision of large dinners at the S and B. Among those serving as *mashgiah* (kashrut overseer) for kosher butchers and bakeries were Julius Ackerman, Rev. Herman Katz, Helen Katz, and Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff. Today, in addition to the *mikvah,* the *Vaad Hakashrut* supervises functions at the JCC and Ramada Hotel.

Interior present Ohav Zedek Synagogue.

Luther King Committee for Social Justice, he was also chaplain at Geisinger Medical Center.

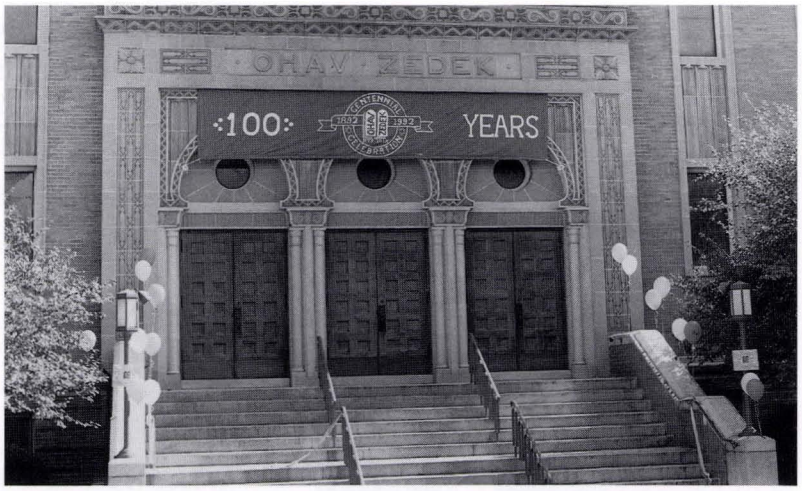
New programming, outreach, and expanded fund-raising filled the 1980s under the leadership of presidents Robert Capin, Sidney Kirshner, Murray Ufberg, and Howard Rottman, aided by former and current synagogue administrators Rose Rottman and Rena Schoenfeld. Ohav Zedek hosted the community Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Day) observance, and sponsored summer Torah study programs. Cantor David Naor brought musical beauty to the service, initiating a men's choir directed by Eric Levin. Social action programs were instituted. Rabbi Kestenbaum attended a national meeting focusing on the resettlement of Soviet Jews, and board members joined a mission to Washington on behalf of Israel.

In 1981, the congregation created its first endowment campaign, chaired by Murray Ufberg and spurred by Nathan Schiowitz's challenge gift. In 1985, Rabbi Kestenbaum led fund-raising for building renovation. Architect for the project was Carl Handman. In April 1987, another endowment campaign, and another Nathan Schiowitz challenge gift, led to a program of individual and family endowments.

On November 15, 1987, a rededication ceremony honored Nathan Schiowitz. Robert Capin, Sidney Kirshner, and Eugene Roth removed a 1930 time capsule from the cornerstone, into which Schiowitz placed present-day material.

When Rabbi Kestenbaum resigned in spring 1989, Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff made himself available to officiate until Rabbi Dr. Moshe Yeres assumed those duties in April 1990. Educated at Yeshiva University and its graduate school, Rabbi Yeres had earned his doctorate in Talmudic studies. Locally, he taught at Wilkes, King's, and the JCC. He spoke at Temple B'nai B'rith and UHI. He also served on many Jewish boards, and coded each of Ohav Zedek's Torah scrolls for central registration.

In the 1990s, led by Rabbi Yeres and successive presidents Alfred Stern, Allen Reishtein, Dr. Ian Kellman, and Steven Schonwetter, the congregation increasingly focused on issues of Jewish life beyond the Wyoming Valley. In 1991, for example, Ohav Zedek hosted a communal service led by five area rabbis to pray for peace in Israel during the Gulf War. In 1992, the board endorsed U. S. assis-



tance to Somalia and Bosnia. In 1993, the congregation raised funds to aid Iowa flood victims.

At home, severe summer rains in 1992 had caused extensive damage to Ohav Zedek's Hanover Township cemetery. Robert Kornblau and Howard Jacobs arranged for repairs to the grounds, gravestones, and to the chapel that had been donated by the Schiowitz family and designed by Samuel Moskowitz.

Throughout 1992, gala events commemorated the congregation's centennial. Chaired by Robert Gelb and Renee Mintz, the celebration featured historical presentations, celebration dinners, and a time capsule buried on synagogue grounds.

Early in 1993, when the synagogue was defaced with antisemitic messages, the entire community united against the act of intolerance, and the congregation subsequently became affiliated with the Council for Interfaith Activities (CIFA), organized in 1993 in response to antisemitic attacks on Jewish-owned property.

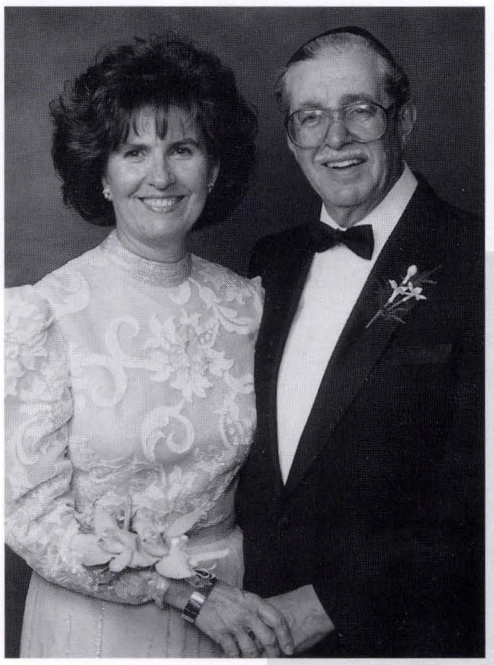
As the population of Jewish children decreased along with the nucleus of members able to conduct worship services, the congregation explored ways to attract Orthodox Jews to Wyoming Valley and instituted an outreach program for current residents. Among programs initiated were a beginners' prayer service led by Rabbi Joshua Levy, a teenagers' study program developed by Mitchell Morrison, a junior congregation led by Lois Feibus, and a klezmer band developed by Steven Schonwetter, who also chaired a committee that created special Sabbath observances.

In July 1996, the congregation honored Rabbi Yeres, who had accepted another post. Rabbi Meir Rosenberg became rabbi of Ohav Zedek on August 1, 1997.

Though never official rabbi at Ohav Zedek, Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff had fulfilled rabbinical duties at all the city's Orthodox synagogues while simultaneously serving as pulpit rabbi at Plymouth's B'nai Israel (1950-57) and Luzerne's Ahavas Achim (1957-97). At a banquet held May 18, 1997, Ohav Zedek paid tribute to Rabbi Pernikoff for his 47 years' service to the Jewish community.

Teacher, *mohel, mashgiah,* stalwart of the burial society, chaplain, visitor to the sick, supplier of kosher wines and Passover goods, Rabbi Pernikoff was

above all a friend to everyone who knew him—Jews and non-Jews of every denomination. Beloved by all, he earned the designation "community rabbi." It is ironic that the community he loved was one in which he'd never intended to stay.



Rabbi Mayer and Sophie Perkinoff. *Courtesy Sophie Perkinoff.*

When Rabbi Pernikoff was approached in 1949 to become rabbi of B'nai Israel, he had a weekend pulpit in New York and his bride Sophie was looking for work as a teacher. They had thought to settle in Brooklyn's Boro Park, a postwar magnet for Orthodox Jews. But Plymouth needed a rabbi to replace Rabbi Kramer, and there was a religious school to save. They were needed and, they thought, they would stay a few years. But they continued to be needed, and they never looked back.

Born June 17, 1925 in Cleveland, Ohio, Israel Mayer Pernikoff was graduated from the Rabbinical College of Telshe and ordained at Rabbinical Seminary of America. He met Montreal-born Sophie Glustein in New York, and the couple married in June 1949. Arriving in Plymouth in 1950, both Pernikoffs taught at B'nai Israel's *heder,* Ohav Zedek Religious School, and Talmud Torah. When Rabbi Wolfe established the day school, Sophie taught the youngest children; Mayer would soon teach third grade.

Pediatrician Joseph Klein suggested that Rabbi Pernikoff become a *mohel;* Cantor Horowitz, age 76 in 1950, was "getting up in years." Instructed in the medical aspects of circumcision by Dr. Koczyan, a local obstetrician, the rabbi studied the religious laws governing *brit milah* under Rabbi Bronstein in New York. The oldest ritual in Judaism, *brit milah* must be performed on infant boys when they are eight days old. In Scranton one Sabbath and prohibited from driving, Rabbi Pernikoff walked the 20 miles to Wilkes-Barre, where a circumcision was needed. He circumcised hundreds of boys over the years, often, in due time, tutoring the boys for their bar mitzvah services.

He joined the *Chevra Kadisha* in 1950, performing the ritual washing of the dead (*tahara,* purification) and staying with the bodies until burial (the function of watchman, or *shomer*), according to Jewish law. He was the sole night *shomer* from 1977 on. He served as shomer for any Jew, Orthodox or not, whose family so requested.

A dinner at B'nai Israel, Plymouth, circa 1952. Rabbi Perkinoff is seated second from right. *Courtesy Sophie Perkinoff.*

He served as *mashgiah* as well, overseeing *kashrut* at the S and B, the JCC, and the Ramada Hotel. He was also called, time and again, when trucks carrying freshly-slaughtered meat from Iowa to New York broke down in Pennsylvania—presenting a delay that could affect the meat's *kashrut.* The rabbi regularly traveled three hours to the truck stop in Buckhorn, Pennsylvania, in order to wash the meat within the prescribed 72 hours.

When the 1972 flood forced other rabbis out of town, Rabbi and Sophie Pernikoff, along with Seymour and Ruth Hefter, stayed at United Orthodox Synagogue, working with the Red Cross. The rabbi was also needed by the *Chevra Kadisha;* four people had just died.

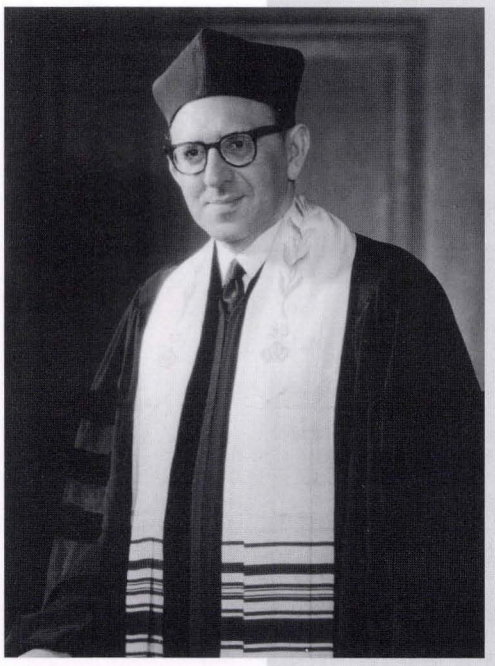
"Because you were there then, we are here now" were the words of a grateful community in November 1974, when Rabbi and Sophie Pernikoff were honored for 25 years' community service. The national Red Cross gave the rabbi a medal, William Cherkes read congratulations from Governor Shapp, Judge Max Rosenn spoke for the community, and Rabbi Abraham Barras delivered the main address.

Rabbi Pernikoff was chaplain at the Veterans (VA) Hospital, Valley Crest, and the State Correctional Institution at Chase. He visited hospitalized Jews and non-Jews, praying for them all.

And they prayed for him. Rabbi Pernikoff died on July 21, 1997, two months after Ohav Zedek's gala banquet. The funeral was held on the day of death. Though obituary notices did not appear until after the funeral, 400 people crowded into Ohav Zedek to pay their last respects. Rabbi Pernikoff was buried in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Pernikoff was a giant among the Valley's postwar Jewish clergy. Sharing like stature was Rabbi Abraham Barras of Temple Israel. Dr. David Barras wrote:

> *On July 20, 1983, my father called at 8:30 a.m. to wish me a happy 35th birthday. Four hours later he died. My mother and I called Rabbi Pernikoff to help us with arrangements. Our family, our synagogue, had lost a leader and, to quote Dan Flood, "a void [was] left that this community will never be able to fill." The funeral at Temple Israel was packed, and a mourning period was declared in the Jewish community to which Rabbi Abraham D. Barras had devoted his professional career.*



Rabbi Abraham D. Barras.

Born July 5, 1922 in Nice, France, Abraham D. Barras had a mentor in his father. Rabbi Hyman J. Barras was ordained by Israel's Chief Rabbi and held pulpits in France before settling, ultimately, in New York, where he founded a synagogue in 1936, serving as its rabbi for 40 years. Abraham Barras was educated at Columbia University and JTS, earning bachelor's degrees at both institutions in 1943. He received the Cyrus Adler Award in his senior year. In 1946, he was ordained at JTS, where he subsequently earned master's and doctorate degrees, later receiving an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. He married Sylvia Janowsky, a graduate of JTS, Hunter College, and Columbia's master's program in social work.

Rabbi Abraham Barras's first pulpits were in Monticello, New York, and Atlantic City. It was in New Jersey that Jacob Raub heard him preach. Rabbi Carl Manello had died, and Raub determined to bring Rabbi Barras to Temple Israel. Raub arranged with Louis Smith and the Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee to sponsor the rabbi as a guest speaker. Temple Israel soon engaged Rabbi Barras. He was formally installed on May 29, 1952.

Rabbi Barras was a superb orator. Over the years, his prepared texts served merely as outlines for his sermons, many of which, in different forms, were delivered to multiple organizations. His theses were always clearly elucidated and supported, with ethical and moral implications

drawn from the Torah and Jewish literature. He would end by challenging his listeners to recognize their shortcomings and take remedial measures. He was persuasive.

Sometimes his sermons were long. He said that infrequent attendees were well served by longer sermons. He defined three types of Sabbath talks: a *dvar Torah* (explanation of an issue in the Torah portion), a sermon, and a lecture. The difference between each type, he said, was 15 minutes.

His sermons had recurrent themes. One expressed his belief in a universal God who endowed man with a holiness that enabled kindness to others, hallmark of a civilized person. He also stressed the importance of identifying with Jews worldwide and with the historic struggle for Jewish survival. He preached ethical living, tolerance, charity, and personal responsibility.

His fund-raising skills were legendary. Under his guidance, Temple Israel developed Eternal Light (life) memberships and endowments. The United Jewish Appeal (UJA), United Way, and other groups benefited from his expertise. The high point of his fund-raising career was his leadership of the 1974 Israel Emergency Campaign in the wake of the October 1973 Yom Kippur War in Israel. He raised $1,600,000 on the opening night of the campaign, bringing in over $2 million by the drive's conclusion, even as the local community was recovering from effects of the 1972 flood. "Fired by his eloquence, and inspired by his leadership, we were united as never before; we were stirred as never before; we contributed as never before," wrote Lou Smith. The local success received national attention, and federations in other cities called upon Rabbi Barras to speak at their rallies.

Recipient of the S. J. Strauss Lodge Community Service Award in 1974, he was a leader in interfaith activities and active in community organizations. He spoke regularly at area churches, and took Christian clergy on Temple Israel tours to Israel. He helmed the local Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the Labor-Management-Citizens Committee, and Kiwanis. He served on the boards of the Jewish Federation, Family Service Association, and Red Cross. He taught at Wilkes College, and was chaplain at the VA Hospital. He was active with national Jewish groups. In 1965 JTS established the Barras Research Fellowship in Talmud. In 1966,

he received the National Conference of Christians and Jews' Brotherhood Award. He received national citations from Jewish National Fund (JNF), Israel Bonds, Jewish War Veterans (JWV), and ZOA.

The honors can't convey the sense of the man. Rabbi Barras was able to inspire, to bring out the best in people. He set the standard, demanded the best, and understood human strengths and frailties. He took his goals and position in the community seriously. He took himself less seriously. Those who knew him know the truth of the inscription on his headstone. It reads, "Rabbi, Teacher, Preacher, Friend."

—David I. Barras

Under Rabbi Barras, the Conservative synagogue became the Valley's largest congregation. Ruth Chariton, whose father Louis Shaffer was president of Temple Israel when Rabbi Barras began his tenure, furnished highlights of the temple's history; Phyllis Landau supplied information about the sisterhood.

*Initiating regular Sabbath services immediately after the first services on the High Holidays, 1922, Rabbi Louis Levitsky and Cantor Joseph Wolfe led worship at the YMHA until the temple building opened in 1925. By then, the membership had doubled, cemetery land had been purchased, and Lillian Williams was office manager. Leonard Tintner, whose granddaughter Jane Bartikowsky (Karnofsky) became the first child named at the temple, was first synagogue president.**

From its formation in October 1922 with Lulu Shapiro as president, the sisterhood enhanced festival celebrations and sponsored programming. Raising funds through various events, the women contributed over $5,000 to construction of the synagogue, and initiated donations benefiting the religious school, JTS, and Israel. Among fund-raising projects over the years were dances, sales, shows, and bus trips. Additional to children's activities, programs included book reviews by Sylvia Barras and Hilda Man Hertz musicals. In 1988, Esther Burnat was first recipient of the Women of Achievement Award. Former sisterhood presidents June

Hilda Man Hertz, far right, directed this Temple Israel show, "Deep in the Heart of Temple." Myne Levy, longtime choir director, is at far left.

*Successive presidents to the arrival of Rabbi Barras were Tintner, Julius Bravman, Aaron Weiss, Hyman Landau, Maurice D. Brandwene, and Louis Shaffer.

Blum and Ruth Chariton became synagogue presidents, and Karin Prince recently headed the regional branch of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

*From the beginning, the synagogue offered a host of cultural and social programs, including youth and couples groups, family outings, lectures, exhibits, and study circles. Lester Shapiro, president of Juvenile Temple Israel Boys in 1925, became the temple's first bar mitzvah. The Temple Israel volunteer choir, composed of synagogue members and led by cantors and choir directors, enhanced worship services.**

*The Temple Israel Religious School initially met weekly at the Y, moving into the synagogue in 1925. Courses were taught by Rabbi Levitsky. Benjamin I. Cohen chaired the school board, congratulating the first confirmation class in 1926. In 1929, Temple Israel acquired a neighboring building which, under the supervision of Morris Moskowitz, was renovated for a school. In 1955, an addition was built for the Allan B. Bravman auditorium. As the school grew, classes met three times weekly in split sessions, and in 1958 the temple purchased an additional property for use by Kingston students. The Kingston facility was sold in 1973.***

*In 1940, Dr. Israel J. Kazis became the synagogue's rabbi. He was soon called into military service, along with many of Temple Israel's young. Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman occupied the pulpit from 1942-3, followed by Rabbi Reuben Katz (1943-5), Rabbi Abram Winokur (1945-7), and Rabbi Dr. Carl L. Manello (1947-51). Rabbi Abraham D. Barras served the synagogue from 1952-83***, instituting bat mitzvah ceremonies for 13 year-old girls in the first year of his tenure.*

For years after the 1957 dedication of the Leah S. and Reuben H. Levy Chapel, attendees at the evening service arrived early to congregate in the back room, which was nicknamed "Jack's Bar" in honor of longtime ritual director Jacob D. Groh. For more than 20 years, Frank Lubin recruited a daily minyan,

* Successive cantors to the present were Jacob Mason, Fine, Joseph Wolfe, Semiatin, Saul Siller, David Silverman, Asher Balaban, Jacob Kleinberg, Max Shimansky, Paul Stone, Mordechai Fuchs, Aaron Griver, Gadiel Fishman, and Ahron Abraham. Myne Shapiro Levy was choir director for over 20 years. Other choir leaders were Solomon Grodner, Abram Groh, Fred Harrison, and Charlotte Klavonski.

** School principals through the years were Joseph Ravitz, Jacob Spitz, Rabbi Raphael Gold, Meir Zippor, Israel Dubner, Menachem Lehrer, Rachel Lehrer, Nancy Nelson, Bernice Rabin, Marsha Lebenson, Louis Bravman, and Marcy Stein.

***Temple presidents during Rabbi Barras's tenure were Louis Shaffer, Morris Weiss, Benjamin I. Cohen, Reuben Levy, Philip Bravman, Jacob Groh, Morris Perloff, Judge Jacob Schiffman, Nathan Hyman, Isadore Landau, Harold Rosenn, Lawrence Hollander, Allan Kluger, Herbert Rittenberg, Dr. Burton Benovitz, and June Blum. Presidents from 1984-96 were Joseph Savitz, Robert Fortinsky, Leon Greenwald, Ruth Chariton, Stephen Alinikoff, and Alan Hollander.

of which Sol Gutterman was a faithful member until his death at 101. Irving Baron succeeded Frank Lubin. Saul Troy and Harvey Rappaport succeeded Jacob Groh. Ritual committee chairmen over the years were Groh, William Rabinowitz, and Jeffrey Sirota. Head ushers were Groh, Rabinowitz, Harold "Snuffy" Smith, Troy, Rappaport, and Joseph Cutler.

Morris Troy was Torah reader in 1922, serving over 20 years. His successor, Rev. Abraham Block, was temple shammash until shortly before his January 1975 death. Rabbi Barras sometimes found it necessary to remind Rev. Block that the Torah must be read, not chanted from memory. After Rev. Block died, the Torah was read by Menachem Lehrer, later by Cantors Griver and Abraham and Yechiel Levy.

For more than 30 years until his 1977 death, 1946-8 president M. D. Brandwene sat on the bima at services and assisted during the Torah reading. The function was then fulfilled by 1964-6 president Morris Perloff until shortly before his 1991 death.

In 1966, the Eternal Light Membership program was established to provide enduring financial support for the congregation. Sarah and Louis Shaffer were the first Eternal Light members; 329 families were life members by 1995.

Ushering in the 1970s, Rabbi Barras invited Bishop J. Carroll McCormick to deliver a Friday night sermon. The bishop was the first Catholic clergyman to speak from Temple Israel's pulpit.

When the 1972 flood damaged the synagogue and school, regular services were held at the JCC, and High Holy Day services at Wilkes-Barre's Irem Temple became a tradition. Temple Israel was rededicated in a weekend of October 1973 festivities capped by the appearance of Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, chancellor emeritus of JTS. Continuing beautification efforts led to the acquisition of fine art for the temple.

In Jerusalem in 1973, Louis Shaffer holds a Torah to be given to Israeli congregation Ramat Zion. Rabbi Barras is at right.

Events of enduring significance marked the remainder of the 1970s. In 1976, Sally Connor became Temple Israel administrator, a post she holds to this day. In January 1977, following United Synagogue's resolution extending full religious participation to women, Temple Israel counted women in the minyan; Hilda Man Hertz was the first woman called up to the Torah, June Blum became synagogue president in

1982, and an annual Sabbath service conducted by sisterhood members was instituted. As sister congregation Temple Agudath Achim prepared to merge with Temple Israel, both congregations established lasting bonds with newly organized Conservative synagogues in Israel. In 1977, a testimonial dinner honored Rabbi and Mrs. Barras, who were installed as the 100th Eternal Light family. And in 1978, the synagogue created a special endowment program which continues to fund spiritual, cultural, philanthropic, educational, and interfaith projects.

When Rabbi Barras died in 1983, an entire generation grown to adulthood under his tutelage was bereft. The congregation had to seek a new leader.

The temple functioned without a resident rabbi for two years, engaging Rabbi Jacob Hurwitz for Sabbath services and Rabbi Dr. Herbert Rosenblum at the High Holidays. Rabbi Rosenblum assumed the pulpit in 1985, serving to 1988. During his tenure, the temple adopted the Siddur Sim Shalom prayer book. A scholarship program conceived by Rabbi Barras sent Hebrew high school graduates to Israel beginning in 1986. The same year, Temple Israel established a JTS fellowship in memory of Rabbi Barras. In 1987, the "Guardians of Temple Israel" major donation program conceived by Dr. David Barras was established at the synagogue.

Rabbi James R. Michaels assumed the pulpit in 1988. He was soon joined by Cantor Ahron Abraham. They presided over the first adult bat mitzvah, sanctuary and school renovations, lectures by Natan Sharansky and Abba Eban, innovative services, a revived choir, reactivation of a United Synagogue Youth (USY) chapter, introduction of a women's spirituality group, increased social action, and provision of special prayer books for new Russian-American congregants. They also oversaw 1992's anniversary celebration, planned by a committee chaired by Madge Benovitz.

Highlights of the year-long 70th anniversary celebration were a new logo created by Karen Zager, an anniversary banner created by Murray Popky, a video created by Iris Levy, recognition of five-generation temple families, and monthly events including lectures and concerts. In July, a picnic was held at Holiday House. In November, a time capsule crafted by Sam Greenberg was buried on temple grounds.

Temple Israel's first capital funds drive, chaired by Richard Goldberg,

Temple Israel's 70th anniversary committee included, from left, first row, Sally Connor, Sarah Shaffer, Fannie Goldstein, Madge Benovitz, Shirley Fortinsky, Iris Levy, Fran Kaplan; second row, Eileen Trompetter, Karin Prince, Jane Feinstein, temple president Ruth Chariton, Muriel Jacob, Murray Popky; third row, Rabbi James Michaels, Joseph Savitz, Dr. Michael Rittenberg, Harold Cimmet, Leon Greenwald.

was announced at the gala dinner at the close of the 70th year celebration. In 1995, the temple received United Synagogue's Solomon Schechter Award for its handicapped access wing, which had been funded by the campaign. The campaign also supported major renovations to the school. Murray Miller was architect for the new wing; Carl Handman was architect for the school project.

On May 3, 1959, friends of Temple B'nai B'rith witnessed the cornerstone laying ceremony at the Kingston site, later attending a gala celebration.

In 1995, when Temple B'nai B'rith marked its 150th anniversary, the religious school, probably as old as the synagogue, was the largest in temple history, with 105 students attending pre-school through ninth grade. The sisterhood, the oldest Jewish women's organization in the Valley, had been in existence since 1888. Interfaith cooperation and action for social justice had long been a way of life.

The year-long Double Diamond celebration, presided over by Rabbi Michael L. Joseph and synagogue president Robert A. Smith, mirrored elements long significant to the synagogue's life, featuring a concert of sacred music at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, the 51st annual Clergy Institute, a congregational trip to Israel, a traveling memorabilia exhibit, a timeline of the temple's history created by religious school students, tributes from former rabbis, and worship services centering on liturgical music, outreach, and the sisterhood.

Wyoming Valley's Jewish community had begun with Temple B'nai B'rith. The synagogue's development had paralleled, often defined, the community's development. The synagogue's evolution had also paralleled the evolution of American Reform Judaism, from its roots in German Jewish Orthodoxy, through its transition to Classical Reform theology and practice, to the recent re-introduction of traditional customs.

The postwar standard-bearer for Temple B'nai B'rith did not live to share in

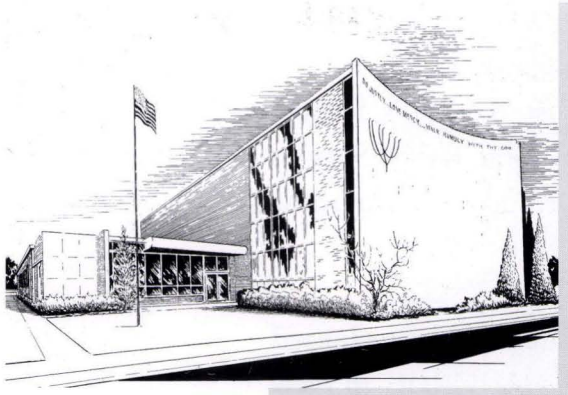
Double Diamond festivities, but his congregation and successor were keenly aware of his contributions to the temple's progress. Rabbi Arnold M. Shevlin epitomized the spirit of the temple in modern times, just as Rabbis Samuel Wolk and Marcus Salzman had exemplified times past. And Rabbi Shevlin stood shoulder to shoulder with his Conservative and Orthodox colleagues as a giant of the postwar rabbinate in Wyoming Valley.

Born in Philadelphia in 1923, Rabbi Arnold M. Shevlin was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in New York, where he earned master's and Doctor of Divinity degrees and worked in the social service department of the Free Synagogue headed by Rabbi Stephen Wise. Initially serving Connecticut congregations, he became a U.S. Army Chaplain at the outbreak of the Korean War. In 1952, he went to Danville, Virginia, where he served a synagogue that was then the only place in town where blacks and whites could meet openly. In 1958, he became associate rabbi at Philadelphia's Temple Rodeph Shalom, where he worked with Rabbi David Wice. He assumed Temple B'nai B'rith's pulpit on January 15, 1970.

Continuing to develop the thriving religious school, whose programs then encompassed nursery through 12th grade, Rabbi Shevlin initiated adult education seminars popular with the entire Jewish community. He continued the Clergy Institute and increased interfaith activities, instituting the congregation's "Doing Something Jewish for Christmas" project the year he arrived. The congregation's 125th anniversary celebration, held the same year, featured a joint dinner with St. Paul's Lutheran Church, which was also founded by Germans in 1845 and had also built its house of worship in 1849; John Henry Wills Hawkins was architect for both. At worship services in 1970, the speaker was Rabbi Daniel Wolk, son of Samuel Wolk. Daniel Wolk would speak again at the temple's rededication service after the 1972 flood.

Rabbi Arnold M. Shevlin. *Courtesy The Times Leader.*

Though services at the synagogue resumed within a few weeks of the flood, and school began on schedule in September, it took over two years to restore the building. Among those who helped restore the synagogue's holdings were the Union of American Hebrew Congregations



Temple B'nai B'rith, Kingston.

and its member synagogues, including Rabbi Shevlin's friends in Philadelphia. Cantor Harry Stanley of Rodeph Shalom provided musical materials, and the children of Congregation Keneseth Israel sent funds to replenish the library. As Rabbi Shevlin opened the synagogue to groups from the JCC, Hadassah, Nesbitt Hospital, and social service agencies, he set his sights on the future.

In 1973, Rabbi Shevlin guided the confirmation class in their plans to be confirmed at Masada. He welcomed a new organist and the temple's first woman cantor. And he brought out the new *Gates Of Prayer,* announcing that Temple B'nai B'rith was one of ten U. S. congregations chosen to conduct experimental services with the prayer book prior to its adoption by the Reform movement.

The rabbi instituted intensive teacher's training in Hebrew. He spearheaded Temple B'nai B'rith Housing for the Elderly and accreditation of the temple's 8,000-volume Baltimore Library, which became in 1982 the sole accredited Jewish library in northeastern Pennsylvania and central New York. He welcomed the synagogue's first woman president.

Recipient of the S. J. Strauss Lodge Community Service Award in 1984, Rabbi Shevlin over the years served on 17 community boards, including the Jewish Federation, Visiting Nurse Association, Family Service Association, and Rotary. He was president of the Interfaith Council, chaired Nesbitt Hospital's institutional review committee, and served on the advisory boards of three other health care institutions. He was chaplain at Dallas Correctional Institution and Retreat State Prison. He taught at King's College and lectured at other colleges.

Rabbi Shevlin became Rabbi Emeritus when illness forced him to leave Temple B'nai B'rith's pulpit in 1991. He died on May 30, 1992.

At memorial services held at the synagogue, Interim Rabbi Bernard M. Zlotowitz spoke of Rabbi Shevlin's love of Torah, of Israel, of music. He spoke of the rabbi's dignity, empathy, and wit. He noted the rabbi's encyclopedic mind. He said, "His was a ministry of personal example. He preached what he lived and what he lived he preached."

Rabbi Shevlin was a scholar in Christianity as well as Judaism. He was devoted, Tom Bigler wrote, to "strengthening what makes [each religion]

unique and yet binds them together." Irwin Weinberg wrote of the rabbi's friendships with Christian clergy, and with resident Arab- and African-Americans. The rabbi's life, Weinberg said, was "a celebration of the brotherhood of man."

Rabbi Shevlin was a citizen of the world. He loved books and art, fine clothes, good food. "For all his study, reading, and writing, the rabbi was above all a participant. He was a raconteur, a scholar, and a teacher, but above all, he was one who enjoyed life," Bigler wrote. And wherever life happened, he'd been there. "You almost could blindly stab your finger on a spinning globe," Bigler said, "and where it stopped, count on the rabbi to recommend a hotel, a restaurant, an entertainment."

All he was, he brought to Temple B'nai B'rith, and to Wyoming Valley. Tom Bigler and Irwin Weinberg were among Arnold Shevlin's closest personal friends. But, like every congregant at Temple B'nai B'rith, they called him, simply, "the Rabbi."

Rabbi Shevlin's tenure at Temple B'nai B'rith spanned the terms of synagogue presidents Joseph Nelson*, Arnold Rifkin, Alvin Rothstein, Norman Dressler, Manfred Junker, Marshall Jacobson, William Cherkes, Trudy Junker, Samuel Bosch, Howard Levinson, A. John Dimond, and Howard Newman. He worked with temple administrators Ruth Hughey, Elizabeth Patton, Miriam Ross, and Judith Rosing*. He taught a generation of children, and made enduring connections within the Jewish community, and outside it.

The history of Temple B'nai B'rith has been chronicled in detail throughout the text. Yet the school and the music require a further note.

Selecting music as its language of prayer just as surely as German, Hebrew, and English, the congregation equipped its second building on South Washington Street, Wilkes-Barre, with an organ. Professor Louis Pretorius, director of the Concordia Singing Society, was organist for opening ceremonies in 1881. Adolph Hansen, who succeeded Pretorius at Concordia and served the society 63 years, was the synagogue's organist and choir leader from 1891-1930. Both Hansen and Pretorius also were organists at St. Mary's Church. The temple's budget in 1910 showed musical expenses as the largest item after the rabbi's salary. Line items were sheet music, the professional choir, and repairs to the organ.

* Nelson also chaired building restoration after the 1972 flood. Earlier administrators were Samuel Bloch Jr., Theresa Bloch, Betty Klapper, and Lucy Green.

Interior Temple B'nai B'rith, South Washington Street. Pipes for the organ can be seen above the Ark.

In January 1931, David J. Williams became organist and choir master, and a cantor was hired in 1940. Cantor David Cantor and Mr. Williams had musical differences; Cantor Cantor resigned in 1943. The next year, when Temple B'nai B'rith found itself unable to afford a choir, Rabbi Wolk asked Temple Israel choir members Samuel L. Rosenberg, Irving Hinerfield, and Fred Harrison for help. For four months, the three men sang for five minutes at Temple B'nai B'rith on Friday nights, arriving at Temple Israel on time for its 8:15 service. Temple Israel's Rabbi Reuben Katz was none the wiser.

Clifford Balshaw, one of the region's top organists and choral directors, came to Temple B'nai B'rith in 1949 and served for 23 years. When the temple moved to Kingston, the 850-pipe Bergman Memorial Organ was installed at the synagogue, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Justin Bergman Jr., in memory of Josephine and Justin Bergman Sr. The Bergman organ and all the synagogue's music were destroyed in the 1972 flood. An electric organ is used at present.

Myron Leet was choir director and organist from 1973-97. Educated at Syracuse University and Union Theological Seminary, he had earned his bachelor's degree in music and his master's in sacred music. He also served First Presbyterian Church, Wyoming Seminary, and the Oratorio Society. Linda Kandel (Silverman), educated at Gratz and Wilkes Colleges and the HUC-JIR School of Sacred Music, also joined the temple in 1973, serving as cantor to 1984. Cantor Steven Weiss sang at Double Diamond events. Current cantor is Russian-born Boris Kazansky, a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory and HUC's School of Sacred Music. Organist is Pamela Carroll.

Religious education locally followed a traditional historic pattern. As soon as religious worship was organized for the adults, provisions were made for teaching the young. Temple B'nai B'rith's religious school played an important role at the turn of the century, when it helped to acculturate children of recent Eastern European immigrants, at the same time instructing youngsters of both German and Eastern European extraction in the tenets of Judaism.

Records of the dedication of Temple B'nai B'rith's 1849 building indicate that the basement was outfitted as a schoolroom. Though we do not know

when the school was first activated, a history published in 1880 described "a school of about 40 pupils, under the charge of Rev. Herman Rubin. The catechism, the Bible, Hebrew reading and German reading and writing are taught, together with translation of the Hebrew and German languages into English." The same year, a copy of Millard Long's confirmation address was placed in the cornerstone of the second building. A history published in 1886 counted "50 Sunday School scholars," and in 1888, the *Record* described a "Purim entertainment" for B'nai B'rith Sunday School children at the YMHA. In 1893, it was decided to admit all Jewish children to the Sunday School, without regard for temple membership.

Rabbi Myron Weingarten with 1955 Temple B'nai B'rith confirmation class, from left, Nathanel Weisler, Saralee Friedman, Nan Harrison, Barbara Hurwitz, Judith Casper, Catherine Rutstein, Ellen Rosen, A. John Dimond. *Courtesy A. John Dimond.*

Temple member Miriam Freeman Long remembered Rabbi Marcus Salzman, who began his 35-year tenure in 1896, six years before she was born. She described Sunday School classes, by then conducted only in English and centering on Bible and Jewish history. The rabbi ran the Sunday School, and taught the confirmation class. "It was a simple, beautiful education with the Ten Commandments the most important thing," she said. Rabbi Salzman also helped organize Jewish Sunday schools in Plymouth, Pittston, Edwardsville, and Hazleton.

Hazleton-born Fannie Klugman Gross, whose roots were Orthodox, grew up in the Heights, also attending Temple B'nai B'rith's Sunday School in the early years of the century. "At B'nai B'rith you learned everything, and it was all English—you understood it," she said. She stressed that the curriculum went beyond subjects of strictly Jewish interest, offering cultural training. Mrs. Charles Long taught students how to set a table, sew, knit, and crochet. These refinements were "important for people coming over from Europe," she said.

Before formation of the Talmud Torah in 1896, other Orthodox children in the Valley were taught by *melamdim* (teachers) who gave lessons in private homes for the usual weekly remuneration of one dollar. As the Talmud Talmud grew—located first behind Holche Yosher, then on South Hancock Street, and then at B'nai Jacob during construction of the East Northampton Street building—Wilkes-Barre Hebrew Institute, Talmud Torah Beth David, as it was

Talmud Torah picnic, 1920s. *Courtesy Lillian Sugarman.*

called from 1922, educated hundreds of children, some at a branch school in the Y.*

The Hebrew day school, first headed by Rabbi Ephraim Wolfe in 1950 and meeting in the mornings at Ohav Zedek, which housed its own afternoon religious school, soon moved into the Talmud Torah building. As the day school was named IBZA, the Talmud Torah and Ohav Zedek schools merged, and ground for UHI was broken in 1959. IBZA's first graduating class, completing the school's six grades, had been honored at Ohav Zedek only the year before.

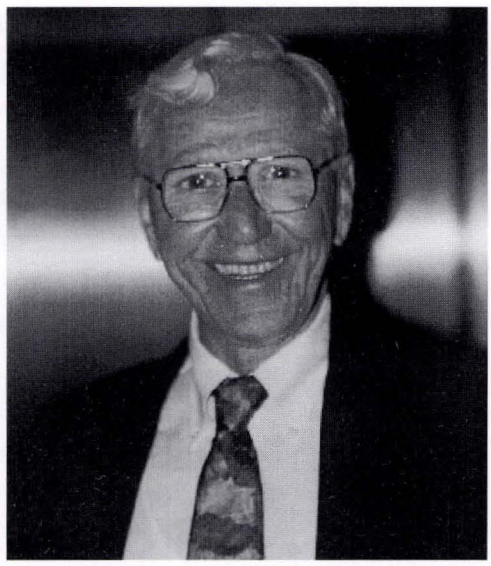
As the 1960s began, IBZA, by then in Kingston, had added two grades. The first eighth grade graduation was held at UHI in 1961. In 1969, the new Joseph Engel wing housed a science laboratory, an art room, and the Rella Roth library. The building was used for multiple events and Kingston *minyan* worship services.

IBZA student body, 1956. *Courtesy Gloria Fierverker.*

The 1972 flood damaged the building, and ruined furniture, equipment, office records, and teaching materials. As the school began classes at the JCC, volunteers from summer camps and yeshivas aided UHI restoration, which was completed in 1974. In the 1980s, UHI added special education faculty, pre-nursery and extended day programs, and offered physical education at the JCC. Sophie Pernikoff

* Talmud Torah principals were Dr. Leon Kopelowitz, Lazarus Rokeach, Julius Ackerman, Rabbi Davidson, David Lenovitz, Jacob Blachorsky, and Abraham Schochet. Regina Siegel, Rella Roth, and Lil Lottman were among many active in the Ladies Auxiliary, formed about 1910 and enduring today.

continues to inspire kindergarten children, who call her, always, "Geveret."*



Samuel L. Rosenberg.

Two institutions, the JCC and the Rosenberg Funeral Chapel, serve the entire Jewish community. Rivian Minkoff wrote about funeral director Samuel L. Rosenberg and his chapel, Wyoming Valley's only Jewish funeral home:

> *Samuel L. Rosenberg, a Scranton native and graduate of Philadelphia's Eckles College of Mortuary Science, came to Wilkes-Barre in 1935 on the advice of Jacob Williams, who recognized the need for a Jewish funeral director.*
>
> *Before his arrival, the Chevra Kadisha** performed its functions, including the sewing of shrouds, in the homes of the deceased, where funerals were normally held. The Chevra also made funeral arrangements; funeral directors handled legal papers and casket transportation. Ohav Zedek used a reconditioned panel truck as a hearse. The Heights synagogues owned a second-hand hearse under the management of the Wilkes-Barre Jewish Hearse Association, whose president was Harry Rutstein. The Chevra Kadisha owned the tahara equipment, which was stored at funeral homes. Ohav Zedek used the Mule Funeral Home, Temple Israel and the Heights shuls used McLaughlin's, and Temple B'nai B'rith used the Kniffen Funeral Home.*
>
> *Until Rosenberg opened his chapel, he brought his tahara equipment, chairs, and drapes to the homes of the deceased. People were accustomed to former pro-*

* Marvin Roth chaired UHI restoration after the flood. Current day school principal is Rabbi Joshua P. Levy; Sandra Z. Himelstein is assistant principal. Former principals included Rabbis Ephraim Wolfe, Benjamin Gonsky, Bernard Rybeck, Israel Fishweicher, Jerome Kerzner, David Schlossberg, Carl Rosenberg, Israel Axelrod, Bezalel Elezary, and Joseph Katz. In the late 1970s to early 1990s, John P. Tuthill, Dr. Deborah Smith-Mileski, and Ray Whalen were successive administrators/secular principals; Susha Alperowitz, followed by Moshe Kamensky, headed the Hebrew department. Among earlier English department heads were James Dillon and Dr. Frank C. Darte. The IBZA PTA has been active since 1955.

** Ohav Zedek, the Heights synagogues, and Temple Israel had their own burial societies. Among early *Chevra Kadisha* members were Harry Jakubowitz, Mrs. Philip Klein, Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Kirshner, Louis Fierman Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Yudkovitz, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Lang, Mrs. Louis Seeherman, Mrs. Samuel Simkowitz, and Mrs. Hyman Goldstein (Ohav Zedek); Marcus Jaffe, George Swetletz, Alter Horowitz, and Mrs. Rachel Williams (Heights); Jacob Williams, Morris Troy, and Harold and Nat Meyer (Temple Israel). Watchmen were Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff, Rev. Joseph Gast, and a group formed by Sydel Minkoff and Sylvia Koenig. Other past and present *Chevra Kadisha* members include Rose Fierverker, Claire Mellner, Lena Kranson, Ruth Freistat, Jack Geller, Bernard Mastroff, David Smith, and Allen Reishtein.

cedures, and it took time for Rosenberg to build his business, but his professionalism and empathy soon won him support. He added a new, personal dimension, becoming more involved with each family's welfare during difficult times.

In 1942, he opened the Rosenberg Funeral Chapel, originally a single home, on South River Street in Wilkes-Barre. In 1950, a chapel and rooms were added. The Chevra Kadisha now performs its services at Rosenberg's. Shrouds are purchased, and the chapel has owned a hearse since 1972. Rosenberg's wife Claire has assisted him at the chapel for many years.

In 1972, the Rosenbergs' son Alan entered the business after completing his education as a mortician. He was the first Luzerne County mortician certified to perform eye enucleations for use in transplants. After Alan Rosenberg's sudden death in July 1989, his parents established a JCC T-Ball Program in his memory.

Over the years, Sam Rosenberg became president of the Luzerne County Funeral Directors' Association and an active participant in Jewish communal life. A member of the JCC and all local synagogues, and a past officer of ZOA, he sang in Temple Israel's choir from his first week in Wilkes-Barre until 1972, and sounded the shofar at Temple B'nai B'rith for 37 years. An accomplished musician, he has performed professionally, and is currently a clarinetist with Ohav Zedek's klezmer band.

He has kept extensive records of every person whose funeral he has supervised. No comparable information about the area's Jewish people exists. Rosenberg fields genealogical inquiries from all over the country. He also researches Hebrew names of family members for those seeking to name a baby.

The JCC has always been the community's unifying element, particularly during its heyday under the leadership of Louis Smith. The history of the JCC, founded as the YMHA in the late 1870s, runs throughout the text. Gloria Fierverker, at one time editor of the Smith-initiated *Digest* bulletin published for the past 70-plus years, highlighted programs developed in the Smith years:

YMHA basketball teams, 1919.

A member of the YMHA "dream team" that had trounced even the fabled SPHAs (South Philadelphia Hebrew Association), Lou Smith loved basketball, and he continued the basketball teams formed at the Y in 1919. The men's team's particular rivalries, with New York's 92nd Street Y and with the Scranton Y, consistently drew the fans. As the game changed,

Ira Goldstein, Y athletic chief from 1936-78, developed an intramural program with age-based leagues. In 1960, Len Brader, a community volunteer and athlete who had organized a baseball team even during World War II Army service in North Africa, began directing the "5:30 Club," then intended for basketball players over 25 years old.

The JCC's longtime bowling leagues, in a way, grew out of the early basketball fever. After Sunday home games at the Y on South Washington Street, many fans regularly used the Y's bowling facility, equipped with two lanes and duck pins. Leagues for regulation pin bowling began in 1927 or '28, at fees of 10 cents a game and a nickel tip to the pin boy—who was paid 3 cents a game and earned every penny. With 10-cent corned beef sandwiches from Spitz's or Hauss's Delicatessen, an evening's entertainment might cost 45 cents. The men held their own awards night until 1938, when all the Y teams were included in a grand event held at the Irem Temple and featuring such stars as Molly Picon and Sam Levenson. About 200 bowlers played at the Y, resuming at the new JCC in 1951. Both men's and women's teams played in Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) tournaments, winning seven championships between 1958 and 1969. The Max Tepper Award was instituted in 1946, the Julia Lieberman Award in 1977.

Softball began as a Y activity in the early '40s. There was soon an eight-team league playing Sunday double-headers at the park, and a staff of umpires, scorekeepers, and statisticians. During the war, the Y sponsored an evening of softball at Artillery Park as a benefit for the United Service Organizations (USO). The overflow crowd paid 10 cents a person to watch the all-star Y team play other local teams, and a substantial check was sent to the USO. The Sanford Schwartzbach and "Mush" Hershkowitz Memorial Plaques honored championship teams, which also won regional JWB tournaments in the 1950s and '60s.

Swimming and fitness became popular with the move to the new building. First aquatics director was Robert Sallitt; Bob Emery and Olive Dougherty directed men's and women's health programs at the Health Club launched in 1951. Other athletic activities popular in the Smith years were tennis, golf, and volleyball. But sports weren't all the Center offered.

Boy Scout Troop No. 32.

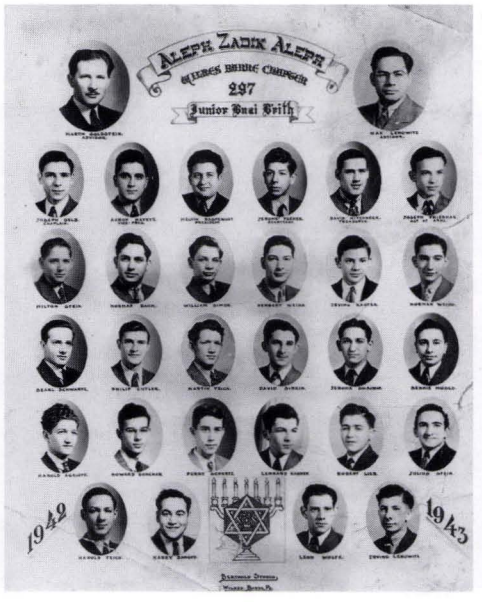
A scouting program included Boy Scout Troop No. 32, active from 1919-80. First scoutmaster was

Girl Scout Troop No. 1.

Clinton Long, who served more than 15 years. When Camp Ahmy was opened in 1925 at Harveys Lake, Long made sure all his boys could attend; he gave them jobs at his store so they could earn the camp fees. In later years troop members attended Camp Acahela in Blakeslee. JWV Post 212 assumed sponsorship of the troop in the 1950s, when scout committee chairman B. J. Levin served on the JCC board. Each year's outstanding scout received the Daniel Hinerfeld Award, established by Howard Rottman. Among many earning Eagle Scout rank were four brothers—Ira, Richard, Monte, and Loren Grossman.

The first Girl Scout troop in the Valley was organized at the YMHA in 1922 by Fannie Sax Long. Bertha Cohen Weiss was first leader of Troop No. 1. In 1924, the girls attended a Poconos summer camp, the next year attending Camp Ahmy for the last two weeks of the season. Later, the troop went to Camp Onawandah, where Sallyanne Rosenn was director and Esther Wainstein was head counselor. The troop disbanded about 1967, and was later revived, for a short time, as Troop No. 80.

About 1938, Lou Smith decided to offer debating to high school students, and put former Eastern States debater Nathan Kuss in charge of the program. Calvin Ungar, Miriam Sare, and Eva Charnow were the first student debaters. Among other participants in the program were Marilyn Goichman (Kirshner), Gloria Farkas (Fierverker), Perry Shertz, Murray Milkman, and Gloria Cimmet.



Although fraternities and sororities were not favored by Lou Smith, they were immensely popular among Jewish teenagers until the 1960s. The groups operated independently, most renting meeting rooms at the Y. Fraternities Sigma Alpha Rho (SAR), Aleph Zedek Aleph (AZA), and Upsilon Lambda Phi (ULP) conducted meetings according to Robert's Rules, planned social events, participated in inter-chapter functions, and fielded basketball teams in the Y league. Major annual affairs were ULP's Snowball Dance, SAR's New Year's Eve Gala, and AZA's Valentine Sweetheart Ball. The ULPs, who sold $75,000 in defense bonds in memory of fraternity brother Milford "Mush" Hershkowitz, held a Victory Snowball in December 1945 honoring returning World War II veterans. AZA was sponsored by the

S. J. Strauss Lodge. An unaffiliated group, the Volunteers (Vols), was made up primarily of Heights boys. Of the sororities, Chi Mu Omega was sister organization of SAR, Alpha Lambda Phi was sister to ULP, and B'nai B'rith Girls was sister to AZA. Tau Beta Sigma met at members' homes. All the sororities traveled to sister chapters and held dances, participating in later years in a JCC play competition.

Members of Tau Beta Sigma, 1947. *Courtesy Gloria Fierverker.*

As the Y's young men entered World War II, the Y gave blackout instructions, sponsored first-aid and home nursing classes, held interfaith prayer meetings and town meetings, and started a book drive for servicemen. Lou Smith began his weekly "Sincerely Yours" column in the Digest, using it initially to communicate with servicemen, excerpts of whose letters were published. The teenagers rolled bandages, and continued to present diverting Scholastic Club musicals. Julia Lieberman involved the day camp children in selling war bonds. In 1942 Julia reactivated the Serve Your Y Club (1930-7) as the Women's Service Club under first president Sophie Cohen. The women sewed blackout curtains for the Y and knitted clothes for the servicemen, later establishing a blood bank in cooperation with the Red Cross and presenting musicals and other events to benefit the Y/JCC.

The JCC of the 1950s, now in its new building, began service as a hall for private parties—Richard Goldberg's bar mitzvah dinner was the first social event to be held there—and was alive with activity. Timely programs included a Civil Rights Council, a United Nations Day celebration, and a Community Relations Institute. Evelyn Gurbst directed the Senate program for preteens and the teen Jewish Center Youth (JCY) chapter, of which Sandy Ungar was the first president. In later years Lou Smith introduced "Teen Turnaround Day," in which JCY members assumed the roles of Center staff for a day; everyone wanted to be Mr. Smith or Miss Julia.

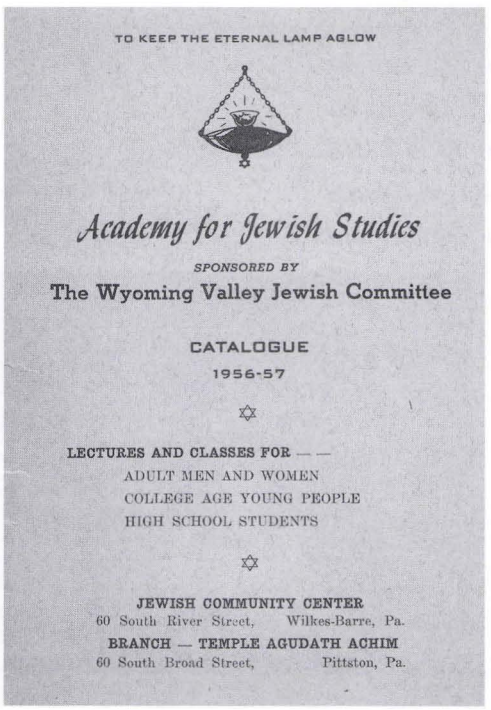
Sophie Cohen was crowned "Queen of Women's Service Club" in 1967.

The Y Players became the Drama Guild in 1951; director Joseph Salsburg involved more than 200 community members from all social and economic strata in 52 productions from 1952-69. Salsburg, who had worked professionally in theater, was a radio broadcaster in Scranton when Drama Guild presi-

Joseph Salsburg, far right, appeared in this 1954 production of *Bell, Book, and Candle.* Other actors were, from left, Fred Harrison, Dave Teig, and Dorothy Salsburg.

dent Fred Harrison approached him to direct the Guild. Initially choosing Our Town as his first production because the play required no scenery, Salsburg had to agree with lead Hy Sulkes's assertion that "I'm not a Yankee" and, using funds advanced by Lou Smith to purchase scenery, presented Moss Hart's Light Up the Sky in February 1952. The play featured Sulkes, Dorothy Salsburg, Betty Sirotkin, Murray Popky, Arlene and Harry Rothstein, Robert Berman, Gertrude Lyons, Fred Harrison, Bernard Newman, Joe Reed, Ben Moses, and Seymour Minsky.

Among other memorable Drama Guild productions were Lillian Hellman's Watch on the Rhine, a play about the anti-Nazi resistance, in which Frank Eisenstein was featured. Eisenstein, who later played Otto in The Diary of Anne Frank, had been in the U. S. on business from Prague at the time of World War II; his family advised him not to return to Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. The Drama Guild's biggest hits, both staged twice, were The World of Sholom Aleichem and The Fifth Season. Presentations of the latter, a comedy about the garment industry, coincided with the industry's prominence in the Valley. In addition to the actors, among many working behind the scenes were Jim Koff, who did carpentry and sets and acquired rights; Bernard Newman, who helped find plays of Jewish content; Sid Harris, who worked wonders with make-up; and Dorothy Salsburg and Annette Seldon, who sold season's tickets (3 plays) for $3; the shows cost $1.50 at the door.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BRANCH — TEMPLE AGUDATH ACHIM

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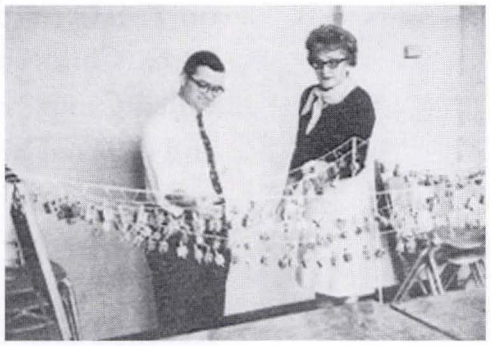
In 1956, the Academy for Jewish Studies offered classes at the JCC with a branch at Temple Agudath Achim; the community's rabbis taught such courses as Jewish ethics, Jewish literature, and Talmud. Leisure Lounge, instituted the same year and continuing to the present, brought senior citizens together to socialize and to create useful handmade items for hospital and nursing home patients. For many years. Leisure Lounge elected a Purim king and queen; Hilda Man Hertz directed musicals to entertain the Purim Court. Leisure Lounge was also one of the first groups in the country to initiate an annual Tu B'Shevat seder.

Beginning the 1960s with a reception honoring Judge Jacob Schiffman (1961) and the establishment of the day camps at Holiday House (1962), the JCC responded to the 1965 self-study with programming focused on holidays, culture, and customs. Education director Seymour Hefter instituted the running of the torch at Hanukah, a Tu B'Shevat orange sale, and instruction in making hallah and matza. He developed a shofar making class, initiated an all-night Bible "read-in" at Shavuot, and encouraged the building of sukkahs, initiating sukkah walking tours. A giant outdoor menorah crafted by Bob Sallitt was installed in 1966, the same year tallit weaving began. Program/children's director Richard Rabin was production manager of the dreidel factory, the most popular of all craft projects. Sam Weiner secured the equipment and wood, and scouts, seniors, and JCC staff completed 800 dreidels in time for Hanukah.



As the JCC instituted such new adult programs as bridge and sculpture, Julia Lieberman suggested that members be offered the chance to go to college without the pressure of exams. The Center for Continuing Studies, begun in 1967, offered a potpourri of courses, each taught by college professors and meeting twice a week for six weeks. The same year, a discussion series on Jewish life began.

On a sukkah visit, at the dreidel factory, and weaving a tallit.

In 1969, a session on drug abuse was held for high school students, the girls' swim team won a national meet, and 100 people attended the first semester of "College at the Center." In October, the JCC day camp, "outstanding in every department," was declared a fully-accredited member of the American Camping Association. In November, the JWV sponsored a children's program on Americanism. And on December 4, the JCC's 50th anniversary was marked at a dinner dance. Charles M. Nelson, JCC president, Mrs. Oscar Weissman, chair of the dinner, and Robert Fortinsky, chair of the Golden Jubilee Book, were among 380 in attendance.

In 1970, the JCC marked Israel's 22nd anniversary with a gala event, and JCY teens participated in the "Salute to Israel" parade in New York. In 1971, 600 attended a rally at the JCC on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Lectures, programs, and activities continued unabated until the flood.

Wyoming Valley's Jewish population is today, at approximately 3,200, less than half the size it was when Lou Smith began his career. The ethnic enclaves are gone, as are most institutions that served them. Lou Smith, too, is gone, as are the towering religious leaders whose stories are told in this chapter. Yet, despite the losses, despite even the disaster of 1972, the Valley still attracts young adults, some returning to their childhood home, some discovering a wholesome, safe home in which to raise their own children.

The children have returned for more than six decades to the summer camp that Julia Lieberman built. It is perhaps fitting to close with the children, who represent the community's future.

After Camp Ahmy at Harveys Lake ended in the late 1920s, there was no YMHA summer camp until Julia Lieberman created Home Camp in 1932. Children ages nine through 15 spent five weeks at the day camp, called Camp Nagila, which was held at the Y on South Washington Street, and directed by "Miss Julia." Volunteer physicians examined the children, before and during the season, and volunteer women prepared lunches. Children who finished their meals belonged to Miss Julia's exclusive "Clean-Plate Club." Poor eaters were identified in her diaries, which recorded each camper's progress, including the smallest details of personality and socialization, in separate notebooks for each summer.

In the 1940s, the growing camp moved to Twin Lakes, a site complete with pavilions and swings, ball fields, and a lake. The children, brown-bagging their lunches, were transported by bus.

The smallest children didn't go to Twin Lakes. Kindergarten children, part of the camp from 1953, met at the JCC on South River Street, where Evelyn Gurbst created K'Ton Ton, the area's first summer day camp for kindergartners. A playground was installed behind the building, and wading pools were on the roof. Gurbst and her charges explored music and art, staged weekly performances, and took field trips to local sites and events. One activity was a circus created by the children; another was their own production of *Milk and Honey.* *

As the youngest children began their second season, the oldest campers began their first season out of Camp Nagila. In 1954, the JCC Day Camps

*During JCC construction, K'Ton Ton moved to Temple Israel, also in some years utilizing UHI. In the summer of the 1972 flood, the Holiday House campsite was used for all children. K'Ton Ton moved permanently to Holiday House in 1974.

added Camp Noar, a travel camp for ninth and tenth graders. First Noar director Ira Goldstein developed new programming for the teens, most of whom were graduates of Camp Nagila, and instituted trips whose itineraries led north to Canada one season, south to Florida the next.

In 1960, the JCC acquired the Holiday House estate, which featured a house, pool, gardens, and acres of land. The JCC raised funds to create camp facilities, breaking ground for the arts and crafts building in 1960. By the summer of 1962, Holiday House was ready for campers.

The Day Camps continued to evolve. Camp Mitzvah, initiated in 1967, eased campers' transition from Nagila to Noar. First Mitzvah director Bob Sallitt led seventh- and eighth-grade campers on six-day trips, in contrast to Noar's longer adventures, and all the camps benefited from Seymour Hefter's direction of Jewish cultural programming.

In 1973, despite the institution of Mitzvah and Noar (combined today), Nagila had grown large enough for two camps. Dr. Jay Rabinowitz became director of Senior Nagila, for children entering grades four through six. Trudy Junker directed Junior Nagila for children entering first through third grades.

Kindervelt began in 1979. The camp for children ages 2 1/2 to 3 was held at the JCC, and was immediately successful. In 1985, Little Menschen, for children as young as two, opened at the JCC, later moving to UHI.

When Miss Julia retired, she was succeeded, in turn, by Ira Goldstein, Trudy Junker, and Richard Evans. Among the many longtime directors of individual camps have been Irvin Lebowitz, who inaugurated the use of sports specialists; Barbara Sugarman, K'Ton Ton's "mother hen"; Richard Rabin, who took over from Evelyn Gurbst; Mitchell Silver, at the camp from 1963; and Marsha Lebenson, director of Kindervelt and first director of Little Menschen. The JCC camp committee, chaired for many years by Evelyn Sondheim, has been crucial to the camp's success, as have the services of Joe Niezgoda, head groundskeeper at Holiday House from its acquisition until 1982.

In the years since the JCC Day Camps occupied Holiday House, there have been many physical improvements, and some special additions, among them the Tiny Tot Playland and a sculpture garden created by Sam Greenberg.

The essence of the camp has never changed. Every summer, the camp at Holiday House is filled with happy children, just as Home Camp was. The JCC Day Camps remain the realization of Miss Julia's dream.

—Sue M. Strassman

Building a Future in the Wake of a Flood:
1972-1995

Overleaf: Wyoming Avenue near Pierce Street in Kingston. The buildings adjacent to Holiday Towne House are (right to left) the Snowdon Funeral Home, the McLaughlin Funeral Home, and Temple B'nai B'rith.
Photograph by Frank Snow.
From *The Great Flood of 1972,*
by Paul W. Warnagiris and John J. Rygiel.
Courtesy John J. Rygiel.

PAUL J. ZBIEK and MARJORIE LEVIN

Building a Future in the Wake of a Flood: 1972-1995

Tropical Storm Agnes, born June 15, 1972 in Yucatan, Mexico, was rapidly moving north by the first day of summer, when heavy rainfall along the storm's path raised the Susquehanna River level to 4.72 feet in the Wyoming Valley. By June 22, though the river was still rising, flooding creeks and causing mudslides, it seemed that Agnes was headed toward the ocean. But she turned around that night, pounding Pennsylvania and the Susquehanna watershed in upstate New York with wind and rain, saving the worst of her fury for Wyoming Valley. By 10:15 p.m., with the river in the Valley at 24.80 feet, Plymouth residents were urged to evacuate, and within a day, the county's civil defense executive director, Nicholas Souchik, predicted river levels of 40 feet, well over the 37-foot levees.

Major General Frank Townend, volunteer civil defense director, appealed for volunteer sandbaggers, who responded 20,000-strong, working through the early morning hours of June 23 to raise miles of dikes. But the rain didn't stop and, first evacuating Mercy Hospital in Wilkes-Barre and Nesbitt Hospital in Kingston, Townend issued a general evacuation order at 5 a.m., calling off sandbaggers shortly before the dike in Wilkes-Barre fell at 11:14 a.m. At 1:12 p.m., the river came over the dike at Forty Fort, flooding Nanticoke, Kingston, and Wyoming.

As more than 70,000 Valley residents headed for higher ground, the river continued to rise, cresting at 40.60 feet in the early evening of Saturday, June 24. The Wyoming Valley, and its Jewish community, would use Agnes as the benchmark dating life from now on. "Before the flood" was the past, "after the flood" was the future. The present required assessing the damage, taking urgent steps to correct it, and beginning all over again.

The greatest natural disaster in the country's history to that time, Agnes flooded 48 square miles of Wyoming Valley, causing more than $1 billion in damage to utility systems, 14 miles of roads, five major bridges, three colleges and 48 schools, two hospitals, seven nursing homes, 12 libraries, 41 places of worship, and about 25,000 homes. Creating 80,000 homeless, forcing 30,000

Top: In South Wilkes-Barre, some homes are completely submerged. Aerial photograph by Sam Salinsky. Middle: The view at Charles Street and Riverside Drive after the water receded. Photograph by John Rygiel. Bottom: Main Street, Plymouth, is filled with debris and mud. Photograph by Faye Broody. From *The Great Flood of 1972,* by Paul W. Warnagiris and John J. Rygiel. *Courtesy John J. Rygiel.*

to evacuation centers, leaving 11,000 unemployed, Agnes flooded 2,728 businesses, including 150 factories and five shopping centers. Telephone service was out, curfews were imposed, travel was restricted, mail delivery was curtailed, and the National Guard was in charge. Affecting every Valley resident directly or indirectly, the flood took an enormous toll on Valley Jews, about 90 percent of whom had residences and/or businesses in the flood plain, and on Jewish institutions.

Temple B'nai B'rith, Temple Israel, Ohav Zedek, the United Hebrew Institute (UHI), the *mikvah,* Plymouth's B'nai Israel Synagogue, and the Jewish Community Center (JCC) were all severely damaged. In Kingston, UHI was under water. Temple B'nai B'rith's lower level was submerged and the water level on the first floor reached halfway up the Ark in the sanctuary. In Wilkes-Barre, Temple Israel incurred major damage to the sanctuary and school. Although Ohav Zedek's main floor was untouched, the basement level was in shambles. Plymouth's synagogue also had lower level water damage. The lower level and first floor of the JCC were inundated. Only United Orthodox Synagogue in the Heights, Temple Agudath Achim in Pittston, and Ahavas Achim Synagogue in Luzerne escaped flooding. Jewish flood recovery efforts would need a master plan and extraordinary leadership, as would recovery of the general community.

As the water receded and the stench of mud rose on June 26, Congressman Daniel J. Flood met with about 20 community leaders, including Judge Max Rosenn and Andrew J. Sordoni III, to discuss emergency measures. Rosenn was also called to a meeting of Franklin Federal bank directors concerned about mortgages on flooded properties. Increasingly convinced that a central organizing body was needed to spearhead recovery efforts, Rosenn recognized the need to marshal support from both private and governmental leaders.

Among the former, lawyer Eugene Roth and businessmen Seymour Holtzman and Frank Cusella, meeting with Wyoming National Bank president Harold Rose to discuss financial recovery, concluded that Max Rosenn must lead the rebuilding effort. On July 4, Roth and leaders of local financial institutions met in Judge Rosenn's chambers to discuss a plan of action.

The plan they evolved included suspension of flood victims' mortgage and loan payments for 90 days, restoration of equity beyond the boundaries of existing national disaster law, and relentless political pressure through direct contact with officials, public speaking, and press coverage. Judge Rosenn, a past state cabinet member appointed to the federal appeals court by President

Judge Max Rosenn, left, Rep. Dan Flood, and Senator Hugh Scott inspect the flood damage. *Courtesy Carl Romanelli.*

Nixon, was politically well connected. He immediately telephoned Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott and urged him to tour the Wyoming Valley. Senator Scott responded in two days and, accompanied by Judge Rosenn and members of his committee, inspected the flood damage. Telephoning the President at his summer residence in California after the tour, Scott enlisted Nixon's strong support.

In Washington on July 14, Judge Rosenn was among 500 people who heard White House staff propose broad legislation for flood relief, which requested a total $1.6 billion in aid, including Small Business Administration (SBA) loans at one percent interest, with the first $5,000 forgiven. Ultimately evolving into reform of the Disaster Relief Act of 1970 and supplemental legislation known as the Agnes Recovery Act of 1972, the final bills were introduced in the Senate by Republican Senators Scott and Richard Schweiker, and in the House by Rep. Dan Flood (D), a powerful member of the House Appropriations Committee, and Rep. Joseph McDade (R). President Nixon signed the bills on August 16 and 17.

The federal aid for the flood of 1972 remains the largest financial infusion from the United States government in response to a single natural disaster. Agnes had affected several states; in Wyoming Valley alone, $1.02 billion from the federal and Pennsylvania governments helped provide for debris removal, temporary housing, dike repair, unemployment assistance, and the rebuilding of schools, parks, roads, bridges, libraries, sewer systems, and more. The liberalized SBA grants and loans helped individuals rebuild their homes and businesses.

Frank Carlucci, right, with Dr. Francis Michelini. *Courtesy Ace Hoffman Studios.*

Area native Frank C. Carlucci Jr., Deputy Director of the U. S. Office of Management and Budget, had been among those speaking at the White House in July. He called for strong local leadership in the Valley. Local leaders responded, converting the temporary flood recovery com-

mittee into a permanent body. With Max Rosenn as chairman, the committee was expanded three times before the Flood Recovery Task Force (FRTF) was incorporated on August 24, 1972.

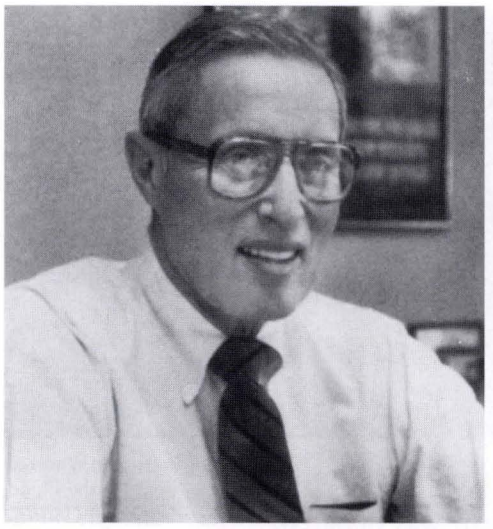
Min Matheson is seated beneath the Flood Victims Action Council "broken heart" logo. *Courtesy Betty Greenberg.*

Meanwhile, Min Matheson, who had returned to the Valley just a few months before the flood, had become a flood victim. Her retirement apartment and union records were flooded. Her daughter Betty's home was in ruins. As FRTF was being organized and relief legislation was debated, flood victims grew increasingly frustrated with the pace of site and home repair relief. Surrounded by debris, living in shelters or hotels or with relatives and friends, inadequately supplied with Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mobile homes, confused by the various construction programs, many victims welcomed Matheson's formation of a grassroots citizens' group, the Flood Victims Action Council (FVAC).

On August 7, beleaguered HUD Secretary George Romney came to Wyoming Valley, ordered by the President "to take personal charge." On the last day of his visit, Romney and Pennsylvania Governor Milton Shapp met with local officials at Wilkes-Barre's Dan Flood Elementary School. A group of flood victims were denied entrance to the session. At a post-session press conference, Matheson and FVAC members confronted Romney with shouts and placards, Shapp berated Romney for the lack of federal action, and Romney characterized Shapp's remarks as "unrealistic and demagogic." Matheson, approaching Romney with a photograph of her daughter's flooded home, shouted, "You don't give a damn if we live or die." Romney held firm that the private sector was primarily responsible for recovery, while Matheson and Shapp, arguing that neither individuals nor the state had the necessary resources, looked to the federal government. The national press reported the event, drawing attention to the victims' plight. It was an election year, and the White House could not afford to lose Pennsylvania. Romney resigned and, within days, "flood czar" Frank Carlucci arrived in the Valley to take charge on behalf of President Nixon.

Governor Milton Shapp (left) and HUD Secretary George Romney at the meeting to discuss flood relief. Photograph by Joe Walsh. From *The Great Flood of 1972,* by Paul W. Warnagiris and John J. Rygiel. *Courtesy John J. Rygiel.*

Judge Rosenn was chairman of FRTF until January 1973, when



Edward Schechter.

Andrew Sordoni III took over until the Task Force disbanded in July 1974. Rosenn established standing committees to deal with everything from transportation to human services to reopening stores, oversaw about 175 FRTF members, and lobbied for additional state and federal aid. He frequently flew to Washington to confer with leaders of Congress in negotiating the terms of disaster legislation and, once Carlucci was appointed, met with him almost weekly regarding the daily problems of implementing relief. Rosenn's accomplishments included obtaining housing for flood victims, designing flood control improvements, setting up reconstruction loans, and providing for a wide range of human services. To his regret, Rosenn and the Task Force could not accomplish one major goal for the future of the Valley: Municipal consolidation would have had an enormous impact on future economic progress.

Among FRTF leaders was transportation committee chief Edward Schechter, who would later head Wilkes-Barre's Committee for Economic Growth and help found Leadership Wilkes-Barre.* Involved with transportation improvement efforts since the late 1950s, Schechter had been chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee and representative on the Lackawanna-Luzerne Transportation Study. In the aftermath of Agnes, seeking ways to return evacuees to their homes for the clean-up, he rerouted traffic, used temporary roadways, and secured free bus transportation for victims. Once clean-up was under way, Schechter focused on improving the regional highway system, spearheading the eventual completion of the North Cross Valley Expressway linking the Back Mountain and the Wyoming Valley to Interstate Route 81.

In keeping with Valley precedent, Jewish and non-Jewish leaders worked together in flood recovery. Betty (Mrs. Edward) Schechter joined the permanent FRTF staff as assistant executive director, working with executive director Andrew Shaw. Serving on various FRTF committees were Harold Rosenn, Lawrence Hollander, Charles Epstein, Oscar Weissman, Gerry Weiss, Madge Benovitz, Lawrence Greenspon, Isadore Goldberg, Rabbi Barras, and many

* In 1981, Schechter, Madge Benovitz, and Sue Kluger were among eight community members who developed the concept of Leadership Wilkes-Barre, a formal training program for future volunteer leaders led by executive director Sue Kluger.

others. Eugene Roth, who served on FRTF's legislation and equity committee, and would later head the Chamber of Commerce, was also chairman of the Jewish community's Flood Emergency Committee.

Eugene Roth.

Evacuating his flooded home and living at the Treadway (now Woodlands) Inn, JCC president Gene Roth did not at first know that JCC executive director Louis Smith, Smith's wife Libby (Popky), and Julia Lieberman were staying with relatives in Hazleton. Because of the travel restrictions, Smith and Lieberman could not immediately return to Wilkes-Barre, but Smith's counterpart in Scranton accepted Wilkes-Barre's challenge as his own. George Joel's early efforts set in motion the master plan for the recovery of the Valley's Jewish institutions.

Scranton prepared quickly for Wyoming Valley evacuees, including some 300 Jewish families who would occupy shelters, hotels, motels, rooms, apartments, and extra floor space in the months following Agnes. Scranton's JCC became a shelter and clothing distribution center, while Scranton's synagogues mobilized volunteers and supplies, and prepared to accept additional evacuees. The Jewish Home made room for aged flood victims, and the Milton Eisner Yeshiva High School made dormitory and kitchen facilities available. Executive director of the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council for 30 years, George Joel had been longtime shelter chairman for Civil Defense and Red Cross disaster relief, and had had firsthand experience of floods in Scranton in 1936 and 1955. On Sunday, June 25, Joel ventured to Wilkes-Barre to survey the damage.

Arriving at the United Orthodox Synagogue, which had been transformed into an emergency shelter for about 100 victims, Joel met with Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff, Seymour Hefter, and synagogue leader Hyman Lisses, assuring them of Scranton's full support. The group assessed emergency needs, and Joel arranged for kosher cooked meals to be supplied and transported to Wilkes-Barre from the Scranton Hebrew Day School. Shaken at the view the Heights afforded of the flooded downtown, Joel returned to Scranton and alerted national Jewish agencies to Wilkes-Barre's massive needs.

Locating Lou Smith and Gene Roth within a few days, Joel arranged a meeting at the Treadway on July 3 with representatives of the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) and Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) and the Jewish leadership of Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Allentown, and Hazleton. At the next day's

meeting on the second floor of the JCC, the Wilkes-Barre staff developed plans to announce the opening of the day camps, produce public relations material under the direction of Isadore Goldberg, and restore the JCC.

On July 10, George Joel and Lou Smith addressed leaders of national Jewish organizations at CJF headquarters in New York. Attending the meeting, convened by Philip Bernstein, CJF executive vice president, and his staff, were representatives of the JWB, United Jewish Appeal (UJA), Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Synagogue Council of America, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, United Synagogue of America, Rabbinical Assembly, National Community Relations Advisory Council, Central Conference of American Rabbis, and CJF. Joel and Smith reported on the effects of the Agnes disaster on the Wyoming Valley Jewish community and appealed for the community's complete restoration as the responsibility of the national Jewish community. The response to this historic appeal was unreserved.

Anticipating that the larger Jewish federations would provide much of the funding and professional skill, Samuel Haber of JDC and Irving Bernstein of UJA urged that Joel and Smith make presentations to the executives of the "Big 16" federations then meeting in California. The two flew to San Diego, addressing the conference of Big City Executives on July 11. Louis Smith later wrote:

> *Noon on July 11, 1972, at the Coronado Hotel, was a historic time in American Jewish history. It was a "first" and brought forth the acceptance of the principle that the American Jewish community has a stake in the welfare of every Jewish community in the United States.*
>
> *That meeting is imbedded in my memory. I was in a state of shock. I was unshaven, poorly dressed. I had on an old shirt and slacks—all the clothes I owned [because of the flood]. My emotions got the better of me at frequent intervals as I graphically described the damages to our community, and the psychological impact on men, women and children.*

The gathering unanimously passed resolutions to offer all possible assistance, asking only for firm estimates of funds needed, beyond available disaster relief, and the kind of professional help required. CJF would disseminate the information and recommend financial allocations from each community.

As Joel and Smith returned home on July 12, Phil Bernstein went into action. Judge Nochem Winnet was appointed chairman of the national flood

committee and, within a few days, CJF sent an assessment team to the Wyoming Valley. Dr. James Young, CJF director of small and intermediate cities services, Herbert Katski, assistant executive vice chairman of JDC, and Max Perlman, planning director of the Chicago Jewish Federation, were charged with defining and organizing aid to people and institutions. (Albert Hutler would later replace Young as CJF coordinator in the Valley.) They were soon joined by Mollie Spector of Philadelphia's Jewish Family Service. As Spector organized individual casework services, Bernstein arranged for caseworkers to come to Wyoming Valley on loan from agencies in Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, and New Jersey's Essex County.

Phil Bernstein solicited contributions from member federations, and Lou Smith, George Joel, and Eugene Roth made presentations in many cities. Federations, welfare funds, and community councils—some sending more money than requested—contributed $2,250,000.*

Funds from all sources were disbursed according to priorities set by the Flood Emergency Committee executive committee, organized on July 19 as Lou Smith and the CJF team mobilized the local lay leadership. Eugene Roth was elected chairman of the executive committee, the central coordinating, planning, policy, and funding body for the total Jewish community. The committee's master plan provided for individual financial and psychological help, operation of Jewish institutions, financing institutional restoration, and funding the interest on the line of credit secured from local banks by the Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee (and signed personally by Lou Smith) on behalf of Jewish businesses.

* Federations contributing to the national flood fund were: Akron, Albany, Albuquerque, Allentown, Altoona, Atlanta, Atlantic City, Baltimore, Binghamton, Birmingham, Boston, Bridgeport, Brockton, Buffalo, Camden, Canton, Charleston (SC), Chattanooga, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Columbus (SC), Corpus Christi, Dallas, Dayton, Delaware, Denver, Des Moines, Detroit, Duluth, Easton, El Paso, Englewood, Erie, Essex County, Ft. Lauderdale, Ft. Wayne, Ft. Worth, Flint, Hartford, Hazleton, Hollywood, Holyoke, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Knoxville, Lancaster, Levittown, Little Rock, Long Beach, Long Island, Los Angeles, Louisville, Madison, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, N. W. Indiana, Nashville, New Bedford, New Britain, Newburgh, New Haven, New London, New Orleans, New York, Niagara Falls, Norristown, North Jersey, Norwalk, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Palm Beach, Passaic, Peoria, Perth Amboy, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Plainfield, Pittsburgh, Portland, Portland (ME), Raritan Valley, Reading, Rhode Island, Richmond, Rochester, Rockford, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Sarasota, Savannah, Schenectady, Scranton, Seattle, Shreveport, Sioux City, Somerville, South Bend, Southern Illinois, Springfield (MA), Stanford, St. Louis, St. Paul, St. Petersburg, Syracuse, Toledo, Trenton, Troy, Tulsa, Tucson, Union County, Utica, Waco, Washington (DC), Waterbury, Worcester, York.

Louis Shaffer, chairman, and Henry Greenwald, co-chairman, led the individual needs committee, which worked with Mollie Spector to provide counseling and financial help. From 1973, the committee also oversaw the Jewish Federation Counseling Center, which provided professional services to individuals and families under the direction of Murray Daninhirsch at the JCC.

Robert Fortinsky chaired the institutions maintenance and restoration committee, which worked with the clergy, officers, and building chairmen of the individual institutions to maintain daily operations and aid rebuilding.* With the exception of UHI, which as an educational institution received federal grant funds, all the institutions received SBA loans. Ultimately, the Wyoming Valley federation assumed repayment of the SBA loans for all the institutions, relieving them of a lengthy and crippling debt.

Charles Nelson led the business and industry committee, which made loans to businessmen before SBA loans could be finalized—and carried those businessmen who could not secure SBA loans. Meeting with community members night after night, Nelson's committee, like all the approximately 150 people connected with the Flood Emergency Committee, worked for the benefit of the entire community despite their personal flood emergencies.

Julia Lieberman focused on the children. Determined to open the JCC Day Camps and provide some sense of normal routine for the children, she decided that camp would open on July 19 despite the use of Holiday House as an evacuation center. Her list of campers, kept on the JCC's second floor, was intact, but she could not know where everyone was staying in the wake of the flood. She typed a memo to parents, had it copied, and hand-addressed envelopes to each home, hoping that people would pick up mail at the post office. She posted notices in evacuation centers and motels, and advertised in the one local newspaper that was publishing in Scranton. She secured school buses, and set up a pick-up route that stopped at shopping centers and motels. Without telephone service, she could not contact the counselor staff. She had no way of knowing how many counselors or campers might appear on that opening Wednesday.

Julia Lieberman.

Camp opened with close to 300 children and a 66-person staff, who quickly organized a schedule of activities and lunches. The Red Cross, declaring the camp a "Mass Care

*Architect Samuel Z. Moskowitz also aided institutional restoration.

Center," provided cases of canned foods, government-issue peanut butter and butter, kosher frankfurters and bolognas, and soups. Bread was secured from bakers in Hazleton and Scranton. The season, which ran to August 30, was a success, and managed to include even the three-week chaperoned trip planned for the older campers. "Miss Julia," writing with gratitude of the "warmth, understanding, and empathy" of the staff, called the summer "one of the best we have ever had. For those of us who spent our days on the camp site, it was a blessing. It was the only place in our entire valley where some semblance of normalcy prevailed."

The camp memory book for 1972 wasn't fancy, but as "Miss Julia" wrote in her greetings, at least there wasn't one girl named "Agnes" in camp that summer. *Courtesy Eugene Roth.*

With the exception of Plymouth's synagogue, B'nai Israel, whose dwindling congregation decided against reconstruction, the Jewish institutions were restored. While UHI was being rebuilt, classes began in September 1972 on the JCC's third floor. It took Ohav Zedek nearly a year to refurbish the synagogue's basement offices, chapel, and auditorium. By September 1973, reconstruction of the JCC was nearly complete; the "new" JCC featured new bowling lanes, coffee shop, TV room, lounge, locker rooms, health club, offices, President (now Smith) and Bloch Rooms, Jacobs Lounge, and a refurbished Weiss Auditorium.

Temple Israel, which had been holding regular services at the JCC and High Holiday services at the Irem Temple, completed its renovation under the direction of Lawrence Hollander and Murray Popky. The rededication in October 1973 featured a dinner dance with Governor Shapp as honored guest.

At Temple B'nai B'rith, services were initially held at the Shavertown United Methodist Church, then in private homes and, within five weeks of the flood, in the synagogue auditorium. The synagogue served as a base for volunteer flood recovery groups and held an ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve service. In September 1974, Louis Smith spoke at Temple B'nai B'rith rededication ceremonies:

> *We are here to testify that Agnes did not conquer the Jewish community of Wyoming Valley. We are rebuilding. We have a solid community. We have a strong sense of Jewish identity. We have a group feeling which was strengthened by adversity. Rising from the flood waters will be an even better Jewish community. Our religious institutions, our communal services, our Jewish community life are being established with greater unity and strength than before Agnes.*

We are proud to report that the principle of collective responsibility stood fast. For the first time in American Jewish life we, Wyoming Valley Jewry, are demonstrating the acceptance of the principle of responsibility for each other. By our action there has been created the new and broad concept that American Jewry has a stake in the welfare of every Jewish community in the United States. No longer are we separate and individual communities, but we now stand together as a whole.

Eugene Roth said that the flood of 1972 represented the "finest moment of post-World War II American Jewry" and Wyoming Valley's "finest hour." "We coalesced as a community in a way we never did before and never will again," he said. "We came *together* to reach a common goal."

Roth's sentiments are echoed repeatedly in histories of the flood. From individual heroism in rescuing people and precious possessions from the waters, to the donation of time, money, food, and clothing for victims, to the tireless and seemingly endless clean-up, the people of Wyoming Valley—and hundreds of volunteers from other communities—were there for one another. There were no distinctions as Jew and non-Jew, church and synagogue, young and old, rich and poor did what they could to alleviate suffering.

Dr. Lester Saidman, emergency room chief at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital (WBGH) in 1972, didn't return home for a week after the flood, when WBGH became an evacuation center for nursing homes and for Mercy and Nesbitt Hospitals. Sophie Pernikoff, arriving at United Orthodox Synagogue on the Sabbath of the flood, simply stayed to cook for the evacuees. She was grateful for the medical supplies donated by Rabbi Earl Starr, former rabbi of Temple B'nai B'rith. A young man from Ohio, passing through the area, called on Judge Rosenn and stayed a week helping to clean up. Strangers thrown together in trailer parks became friends. Many would not be able to return to their homes for months, even years, as the Valley struggled to come back "better than ever."

Wilkes College had rebuilt much of its physical plant by the time Robert S. Capin assumed the presidency, but there was more work to be done, and not only as a result of the flood. Capin detailed his 1974-84 tenure:

Robert Capin (right) is installed as president of Wilkes College by Joseph Savitz, chairman of the board of trustees. *Courtesy Joseph Savitz.*

Under Dr. Francis Michelini, who succeeded Dr. Farley as president of the college in 1970, much restoration was accomplished, but the school's physical facilities were not yet fully rehabilitated. Moreover, dire national projections of a decline in the number of high school graduates, combined with the need to review all academic programs and staffing, required a long-range plan of action.

Citing my financial background and academic experience, Dr. Michelini requested that I serve as Dean of Academic Affairs, in which position I gained experience with faculty and student needs, curriculum changes, and monetary issues. When Dr. Michelini accepted a new post, I was named Acting President and Dean of Academic Affairs for one very busy and interesting year, after which I was appointed to the presidency by the Board of Trustees.

My tenure was marked throughout by the necessity to control expenditures while maintaining academic standards. Operating costs were carefully monitored, resulting in an annual surplus, and personnel adjustments were made. We had to repay significant amounts of principal and interest on debt incurred as a result of the flood of 1972.

Our academic programs were evaluated internally and changes were made to better serve our students. The Health Sciences Program flourished. We graduated our first nursing class in 1976 and established a new podiatry program in cooperation with the Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine. The Wilkes-Hahnemann cooperative medical program continued to attract bright students. In 1980, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities issued a statement of reaccreditation.

The physical appearance of the campus changed significantly. The new section of Stark Learning Center, including the William B. Schaeffer Memorial Hall, was dedicated in 1975, providing space for additional classrooms, laboratories, and the Sordoni Art Gallery. Conyngham Hall was bequeathed to the College by Mrs. William Conyngham and became a student union. In 1981, the college began construction of the new William L. Evans residence hall. In addition, extensive refurbishing of existing buildings was completed, the Arnaud Marts Courtyard at the Stark Learning Center was dedicated, and Catlin and

Israeli statesman Moshe Dayan appeared at Wilkes on September 16, 1975. Pictured, from left, Robert Capin, Libby Capin, Dayan, Rep. Dan Flood, I. Eric Feldman, and Louis Smith.

Kirby Halls were listed in the State Historical Register.

During my presidency, the college achieved improved annual fund-raising and conducted two major capital campaigns. The Alpha Campaign in 1977, intended to raise $2.4 million for scholarships, endowments, and property reconstruction, was particularly demanding; in addition to my normal duties, I was campaign chairman.

In the early 1980s, the Max Rosenn Lecture Series was launched, and Wilkes celebrated its 50th Anniversary by offering educational and cultural programs for both the college and the community. The anniversary celebration culminated with a convocation dedicated to remembering our past. My wife Libby and I remain grateful for the chance to have served Wilkes during a critical period in the immediate past.

The Valley did come back better. Careful planning, citizen initiative, and the infusion of money rejuvenated the area. Public and private property were improved, creating a new physical beauty in the central city and nearby towns, and the sagging economy was revived. The mood was upbeat as recovery neared completion, but the flood did alter the Valley's demography.

Some people, including Jews, left the Valley entirely after the flood. Wilkes-Barre and Kingston saw a drop in Jewish residences and businesses. The already small Jewish population of the Heights was reduced nearly to zero when the Wilkes-Barre Redevelopment Authority renovated East Market Street in the mid-1970s. Of Jews electing to remain in the Valley, many relocated, for the first time, to the distant suburbs, and higher ground, of Dallas and Mountaintop. The relocation affected attendance at the synagogues and JCC programs.

Counterbalancing the outmigration of college-educated young Jews, the revived economy also stimulated in-migration by Jewish professionals. The area attracted new high technology businesses, which required highly-trained engineers, technicians, and scientists. The local health care industry, providing for one of the highest percentages of senior citizens in the nation, grew to become the region's leading employer; aided by post-flood government funding, the

industry expanded or built facilities and hired physicians and other health care personnel.

The Jewish institutions recovered from the flood to face the challenges of an increasingly elderly population, an increasingly secularized younger population, and a changed population pattern. The traditionally strong connections to the larger community became even more pronounced in an era of ecumenism.

In the mid-1970s, Rabbi Abraham D. Barras, with the Rev. Jule Ayers and Monsignor Joseph Madden, was a founding member of the Interfaith Council, which soon expanded to include Rabbi Arnold Shevlin, Roy E. Morgan, and Judge Peter Paul Olszewski, in addition to lay representatives from member churches and synagogues. The Council has focused on such community issues as hunger, aging, racism, medical ethics, and Holocaust education. Rabbi Barras, while guiding Temple Israel through a progressive period during which women were included in the conduct of worship services and June Libenson Blum was installed as the first female president of a local synagogue, also encouraged the establishment of endowments for interfaith projects. Leading 15 pilgrimages to Israel, he advanced understanding of Israel in the Jewish and general community. Temple Israel's Rabbi James R. Michaels (1988-97) later presided over the Interfaith Council and served on the board of the Ethics Institute, as did Rabbi Michael Joseph of Temple B'nai B'rith.

Playing a major role in ecumenical and community service even during the flood clean-up, Temple B'nai B'rith under Rabbi Arnold M. Shevlin expanded its strong interfaith program, and increased outreach to the elderly, children, college students, Jews by choice, and interfaith couples. In 1984, Trudy Junker became the congregation's first female president. In 1985, the synagogue opened Edwardsville's Temple B'nai B'rith Housing for the Elderly, which provides federally-subsidized apartments for low-income senior citizens (much like Wilkes-Barre's B'nai B'rith Apartments, sponsored by the S. J. Strauss Lodge); the congregation provides social services to residents. And in 1990, the synagogue hosted a joint 145th anniversary celebration with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Rabbi Michael Joseph has carried on Rabbi Shevlin's outreach and interfaith programs, exchanging pulpits with Christian clergy, continuing the Clergy Institute and the "Doing Something Jewish for Christmas"

Rabbi Edward Freed at United Orthodox Synagogue.

project, and encouraging Jewish volunteerism in the Council for Interfaith Activities (CIFA).*

In the 1980s, Congregation Ohav Zedek undertook its first endowment campaigns in order to increase membership, expand programs, and meet costs. Nathan Schiowitz's challenge gifts of $125,000 in 1981 and $100,000 in 1987 were more than matched by the congregation, which initiated individual and family endowments in the second campaign. New programs and study groups instituted during the tenure of Rabbi Israel Kestenbaum were expanded by his successor, Rabbi Moshe Yeres.

In the period after the flood, United Orthodox Synagogue utilized laymen, many of them yeshiva-educated, to conduct services, also engaging Rabbi Abraham Yeret for a few years. Rabbi Edward Freed, the congregation's present spiritual leader, has served since 1982. Many United Orthodox members are affiliated with Ohav Zedek as well, maintaining membership at the Heights synagogue to continue family tradition. Treasurer Julius Rein said that many members actually live outside the Valley. Longtime president Morris Lidz, who had been president of B'nai Jacob, was succeeded after his 1991 death by Irving "Mendy" Rubin to his death in 1996. Harry Fierverker is current president.

Detail of stained glass window, Ahavas Achim Synagogue. *Courtesy Sophie Pernikoff.*

Ahavas Achim in Luzerne, the smallest of the area's synagogues, has, like United Orthodox Synagogue, a loyal core membership. Rabbi Mayer Pernikoff led Sabbath and holiday worship until his death in 1997. As Nancy Cohen Judd wrote, "Rabbi Pernikoff and his wife Sophie, with their six children and many grandchildren, have been the *shul's* binding force." The Pernikoff family continues to bind the congregation, as Dr. Barry Pernikoff leads services today in his father's stead.

The JCC continued to serve as both Jewish cultural center and the springboard for Jewish involvement in local affairs. Writing in his September 13, 1973 "Sincerely Yours" Digest column, Louis Smith described the restoration of the JCC's physical plant and the 1973 camp season, which 400 campers

*Samuel Bosch is active on behalf of CIFA, founded in 1993 by a committee that included Ann Lipton, former assistant executive director of the JCC. Following Rabbi Shevlin, Rabbis Elihu Schagrin and Bernard Zlotowitz served as interim rabbis until the arrival of Rabbi Joseph in 1992.

enjoyed. He cited the return of 1958-61 senior adult director Fay Simon, who would serve from 1972 through 1991, the appointment of teen director Mitchell Silver, and the arrival of aquatic director Richard L. Evans, who is now assistant JCC director and overall camp director. In Smith's year-end report, he commended the board led by Eugene Roth*, and the entire staff, expressing particular gratitude to Julia Lieberman, who had become supervisor of the program staff.**

Richard L. Evans.

Jewish Community Center, South River Street, Wilkes-Barre.

* Roth followed Charles Nelson as JCC president, and was succeeded to 1997 by Robert Fortinsky, Larry Amdur, Richard Goldberg, Murray Ufberg, Terry Baltimore, Sue Strassman, Daniel Falkowitz, Howard Newman, Paul Lantz, Murray Miller, and Robert Greenwald.

** Other 1973 program staff were Richard Rabin and Seymour Hefter. Ira Goldstein was director of physical education and JCC Day Camp Nagila. Ivan Schonfeld was Louis Smith's assistant; the only other person to serve in that post during Smith's entire tenure was Sam Rosenthal. In 1978, Richard Evans became physical education director and Trudy Junker became camp administrator. In 1987, Evans became program director for all JCC camps. Irvin Lebowitz joined the JCC staff in 1978, becoming director of the camp's Senior Nagila and JCC basketball programs, and later sports and teen director. In 1979, William Bordow succeeded Richard Rabin as children's director, remaining in the position until 1992. Among recent program staff were program director Arje Shaw, adult director Judy Geller, children's and teen director Abby Pezzner, and membership/senior adult director Lois Gelb.

Julia Lieberman, left, was honored at her retirement by the Middle Atlantic Council of the Jewish Welfare Board. The sculpture presented by Arthur Brodkin and Hilda Friedman was inscribed, "M.A.C. Loves You."

The 1970s marked the end of an era for the JCC. In 1978, after 42 years' service as JCC physical education director, Ira Goldstein retired, preceded by the twin pillars of the JCC, Julia Lieberman and Louis Smith.

At her retirement on December 31, 1975, "Miss Julia" had served the JCC and JCC Day Camps for 44 years. An outstanding athlete with a degree in health and physical education, she came to the JCC to direct women's athletics in 1931 and, starting with the YMHA Home Camp, she created what would become the JCC Day Camps. In 1932, she became director of women's activities and eventually, program coordinator of all JCC activities. She was responsible for many of the JCC's innovative programs, including musical shows and revues, Scholastic Club, Women's Service Club, Women's Bowling Association, Senate Purim Coronation, and the Center for Continuing Studies. Her most important contribution was the day camp, through which she influenced hundreds of children whom she treated as her own. Following her death on January 7, 1997, the JCC dedicated "Miss Julia's Garden" at the Holiday House campsite. Eugene Roth paid tribute to "Miss Julia" at funeral services at the JCC:

> *For more than four decades, Miss Julia devoted her entire public being to the interests and welfare of the Jewish community of Wyoming Valley. What was most remarkable about her service was not its length, but the fact that it ranged and adjusted so greatly over the period of her stewardship. Recall that her career spanned the agonizing years of the Depression, the chaos of the Second World War, the somewhat tranquil fifties, the revolutionary sixties, and the redefining seventies—including, of course, the devastating Agnes flood of 1972 and its aftermath.*
>
> *Miss Julia's primary focus was the young people, for whom she originated Home Camp, the pre-teen Senate group, the high school Scholastic Club, and the many and varied activities that each group provided.*
>
> *Miss Julia taught generations skills they were able to employ in their adult years, including an understanding of and commitment to communal service. She taught children the creativity required for effective organizational activities, the*

conduct of meetings and social activities, the art of debate, the use of parliamentary order.

In the 1930s, we were an immigrant and generally poor Jewish community, substantially affected by the Depression. Parents were consumed with survival and not with social graces, group dynamics, or human interactions. Miss Julia understood those realities and skillfully developed programs to supplement that which was absent from the home. That sensitivity, awareness, and empathy fostered what was perhaps her most creative venture, the creation of Home Camp.

As our generations evolved, as the demographics of our community changed, and as our country moved forward, Miss Julia kept pace, despite for many years simultaneously maintaining both a full-time teaching position and a part-time position at the Y and later the Center.

Her special genius with summer camp, evolving from the bricks, concrete, and limited space of the Y on Washington Street to the wonders of Twin Lakes to the beauty and expanse of Holiday House—these were her initiatives and the heritage she leaves to future generations. These were also accomplishments recognized beyond the Wyoming Valley and replicated by Centers throughout the country.

Immediately following the Agnes flood, Miss Julia insisted that camp be conducted at Holiday House. Those of you who can recall the condition of this Valley after the flood waters receded know how totally irrational that idea must have sounded at the time. But Miss Julia's resilient response to adversity helped divert our youngsters from the daily trauma they confronted during the recovery period.

Miss Julia has been an unwavering, self-sacrificing, pre-eminent example of the truly dedicated community servant. We will always be thankful to her for having made us the very best we could be.

Julia Lieberman and the widowed Louis Smith were married on December 18, 1977, about 18 months after Smith retired as JCC executive director while continuing to head the Wyoming Valley Jewish Committee. His last day as JCC chief was May 28, 1976, fifty-two years after he had been asked by Y board member and athletic committee chairman Ben Cohen in 1925 to be "temporary" executive director, "until a more experienced and mature person could be found."

The 25-year-old athlete to whom Fannie Sax Long had been mentor became a brilliant leader capable always of living up to the maxim carved into the stone fireplace mantle at the Washington Street Y: "When a man is needed, be thou the man." From 1925 to 1976, the Y/JCC's every achievement, many

of which have been chronicled in this text, had the stamp of Lou Smith. His supply of new ideas was never-ending, his energy and enthusiasm boundless, and his ability to draw people together, matchless. Esther Davidowitz wrote about Louis Smith:

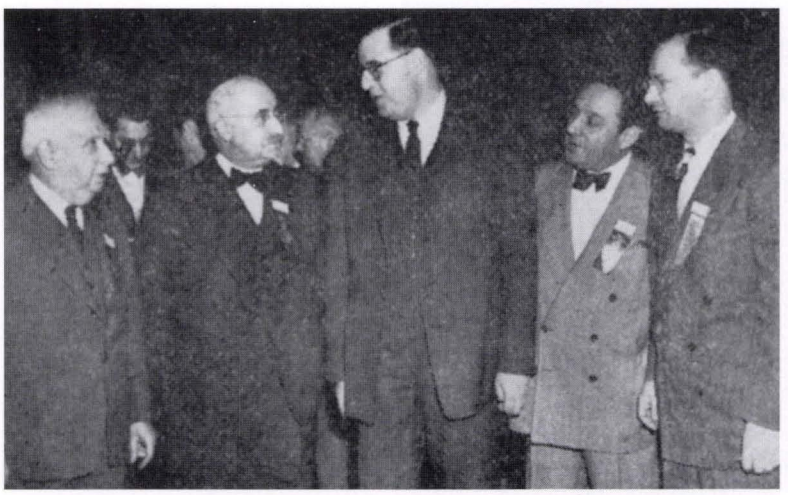
Louis Smith was the single most influential person in the development of the Wyoming Valley Jewish community. He defined our responsibilities, focused our concerns and trained us to assume duties that would improve our quality of life.

Born in Lithuania, the son of Jennie and Elick Smith, he was brought to Pittston at age three. He was graduated from Pittston High School as the only Jew in his class. His favorite sport was basketball, which he played for the YMHA team of the '20s. He also played in the professional leagues to augment his income as a civil engineering apprentice. Initially, he volunteered as a Y athletic assistant, accepting the position of athletic director in 1923, and the temporary executive directorship in 1925.

On his first day as director, Fannie Sax Long visited his office, dispelling his fears and assuring him of cooperation and help. In Smith's farewell "Sincerely Yours" column of June 10, 1976, he wrote that Mrs. Long's "faith and encouragement have been an inspiration and a guiding light throughout my entire career."

Of his early years, he wrote, "They were rough ones, not only for me, but for everyone in our community. There were some Jews already established in businesses and professions, but many like myself were getting started and ours was ranked high as a depressed community. So, in a way, we grew together."

Lou Smith worked 10 to 11 hours a day to meet the demands of both the Center and the Jewish Federation, directing them simultaneously for many years. Recruiting an outstanding lay leadership, he involved more than a thousand people as board and committee members. He wrote, "No other city can boast of finer, more loyal, and more dedicated leaders." He had a talented staff, who "have tried to keep in mind that the Center is a family enterprise."



From left, Jacob Silverblatt, Rabbi I. M. Davidson, Major Aubrey (Abba) Eban, Louis Smith, and Nathan Kuss are shown at a 1949 UJA meeting. *Taken from Wyoming Valley in 1949, Wilkes-Barre Times Leader.*

Of Julia Lieberman, Smith wrote, "On numerous occasions, I have tried to set down a division of responsibility for Julia and myself, but each time gave it up as a lost cause. I can only say that ours was a partnership of mutual

respect and loyalty with a sharing of responsibility in the growth of Center programs."

Among Lou Smith's accomplishments—additional to the construction of the JCC completed in 1956, the innovative programs, the acquisition of Holiday House, and the Shroder Award—were the inauguration of family memberships in 1933 (the year he was elected treasurer of the Pennsylvania Middle Atlantic Federation of Young Men's and Women's Hebrew Associations) and the 1957 creation of members in perpetuity. By the summer of 1958, Jack Rifkin, Max Roth, and Ben Cohen were members in perpetuity; today, 152 families have that distinction.

Louis Smith, right, and JCC president Ralph Brandwene, left, receive the Shroder Award in New York.

A national UJA scroll was presented to Smith in 1959 in appreciation of his dedicated efforts. The State of Israel Bonds Board of Governors applauded his leadership as did the National Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. Rabbi Abraham D. Barras lauded Smith's work with the Flood Emergency Committee after the Agnes flood: "No man is more deserving of the thanks, appreciation, gratitude and veneration of our entire Jewish community than Lou Smith." Louis Shaffer said, "Lou Smith was the financial savior of the Jewish community of Wyoming Valley." Because of the outstanding services rendered by the local federation to Jewish residents after the flood, the Wyoming Valley Jewish community received the Charles Goodal Award presented at the National Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds in Toronto. This honor recognized Smith's leadership, imagination, determination, and achievement in the restoration and in the maintenance of vital services in the Jewish community.

In 1973 the B'nai B'rith Lodge named Smith "Man of the Year." In 1975, Smith and UJA chairman William Cherkes were invited to join the Prime Minister Mission to Israel. In 1976, the Zionist Organization of America made Smith a life member, and the National Jewish Welfare Board's Florence G. Heller Memorial Award acknowledged Smith's distinguished professional service. Smith was only the fifth recipient ever to receive the Heller prize, which cited his professional career as enriching the breadth of professional practice and knowledge in JCC work.

Dr. James Young, left, presents a National Small Cities Institute Award to Louis Smith, in particular recognition of Smith's efforts following the Agnes flood.

Smith formed the regional organization that became known as the Middle Atlantic Region of Jewish Community Centers. He was on the board of the Ecumenical Council of Wyoming Valley, active in promoting United Way, and was a member of all the major local synagogues, Kiwanis, and local and national groups, including the Council of Jewish Federations' Small Cities Executive Committee.

At the September 1976 testimonial dinner honoring Smith on his retirement, speakers including Judge Nochem Winnet and Dr. James Young addressed 600 attendees. The Louis Smith Scholarship Fund was announced and, within a few weeks, William Davidowitz had raised almost $40,000 to provide student scholarships to Wilkes College, and an annual community scholar-in-residence program. The first recipient of the Wilkes grant, awarded during Robert Capin's college presidency, was Elizabeth Iscovitz. The first scholar-in-residence was Rabbi Dr. Dov Peretz Elkins in 1978.

Louis and Julia Smith shared relatively few years of married life before Lou's death. His funeral was held at the JCC on February 8, 1984.

Lou Smith was succeeded by Monty Pomm, Gil August, Irving Ginsberg, and P. Theodore Magram. Robert Capin served as interim executive director from the 1994 death of Ted Magram to the arrival of current community executive director Don Cooper in February 1995. From 1983-8, Robert Kessler, Allan Greene, and Marty Erann served as directors of the Jewish Federation; the JCC and federation positions were usually combined before and after that time. From 1992-5, Ann Lynn Lipton served as assistant community executive director.

Highlights of the JCC's post-Smith days include a Jewish Women's Conference (1979), a celebration of the centennial of Albert Einstein (1979), the addition of pre-school groups to the JCC Day Camps, and the first annual health fair (1980) endowed in 1985 by the Dr. David Barras family. In 1983, the JCC established a perpetual endowment in memory of Rabbi Barras; earnings from this fund and the Lidz endowment established later enable teenagers to participate in an educational experience in Israel.

Among JCC-sponsored lecturers through the 1980s were Abba Eban, Marvin Kalb, Sanford Ungar, Arthur Schlesinger, Hon. Arthur J. Goldberg, Lou Lenart, John Kenneth Galbraith, Jack Anderson, Neil Amdur, Norman Mailer, Scott Carpenter, and Elie Wiesel.

In 1981, the Mendy Rudolph Small Men's Tourney, sponsored by Joseph and Samuel Zatcoff, was instituted in memory of the legendary National Basketball Association (NBA) referee, who had followed in the footsteps of his father, Eastern Basketball League (EBL) Commissioner Harry Rudolph. The Harry Rudolph Basketball Award Dinner had been a JCC annual event since 1967, when former NBA great Dolph Schayes had joined both Rudolphs on the podium.

Two major events occurred in 1993. The April dedication of the Rifkin Resource Center marked an extension of Arnold and Sandy Rifkin's commitment to provide Judaic educational materials to the entire community. Holocaust literature is a major part of the library, which maintains on exhibit a Torah scroll rescued from a Prague warehouse. In October, the Max and Tillie Rosenn Institute of Advanced Jewish Studies was initiated to provide older high school students "access to studies that will not only give them knowledge, but also strengthen their self-respect and self-esteem."

In 1995, under the leadership of Connie Roth, the JCC launched a celebration of the Jewish community's 150th anniversary with multiple projects, including an oral history project chaired by Larry Amdur, an exhibit chaired by Lawrence Newman and Rivian Minkoff, and the present text. And in May 1997, the largest single gift in the history of the Wilkes-Barre Jewish community was announced. The Samuel L. and Claire Rosenberg Endowment of $1 million benefits the United Hebrew Institute, JCC and JCC camps, Jewish Family Service, and the religious schools of Temple Israel and Temple B'nai B'rith.

In 1992, a $2.3 million rehabilitation drive funded a parking lot with access ramp to the building, elevator, new Brader Health Club, new and handicapped-modifed restrooms, a security system, and new entry area, and improvements to utility systems, the Landau Fitness Center, Fortinsky Pool, Cohen Gymnasium, Weiss Auditorium, office and activities areas, and Holiday House. The campaign also provided Jewish Family Service (JFS) with a separate building; like most Jewish agencies, JFS had operated from the JCC its entire history.

JCC president Daniel Falkowitz (1988-90) credited Paul Lantz with originating the restoration project, implemented by efforts of a planning committee co-chaired by Lantz and Terry Baltimore. After deciding to retain the South River Street facility rather than relocate the JCC to Kingston, the JCC acquired parking space behind adjacent South River and West Northampton Street properties. The building at 71-73 West Northampton Street was purchased for JFS offices.

With zoning and legal agreements completed in 1989, fund-raising for the 69-space parking lot and other improvements was chaired by Howard Newman and boosted by challenge gifts from the Fortinsky, Baltimore, Rifkin, and Schiowitz families. Murray Miller, AIA, and Carl Handman, AIA, were architects for the project, with Miller in primary charge of JCC and Holiday House

design. Handman, who had only recently completed exterior design for the F. M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts (restored to its 1930s glory and opened in 1986), led restoration of the JFS building.

The restoration project, begun during Falkowitz's JCC presidency and Irving Ginsberg's executive directorship, was completed under JCC president Howard Newman and executive director Ted Magram. Formal rededication of the restored JCC facility was held on March 22, 1992. Paul Lantz and Murray Miller succeeded Howard Newman as JCC presidents as the Center continued to offer a wide variety of recreational, cultural, and social programs, with increased attention to the growing senior citizen population.

Leisure Lounge, embracing such activities as the Men's Club (created in the mid-1970s), day trips and vacations, birthday parties and holiday dinners, joint events with JCC seniors from nearby cities, and the recently established Senior Singles, remains highly active. For the past several years, the weekly Men's Club meetings have been followed by a current events hour led by Robert Capin; the program is popular among both men and women. The College Misericordia-sponsored Elderhostel, offering Judaic studies in response to a JCC suggestion in the mid-1980s, attracts as many as 250 senior adults from several states; the JCC hosts weekly receptions. A recent addition to JCC senior services is the government-subsidized communal meal program, offered three times a week.*

Other adult and family programs include the Monday "Munch and Midrash" series, the Greenwald and Schwager lectures, the Ufberg and Winkler concerts, Jewish Book Fair, and events at Hanukah, Passover, Yom Hashoah, and Israel Independence Day. Among special programs for children and youth, additional to the summer day camp, are the Kinderlach playschool, the School of the Arts, the Dr. Arthur Meyer Winter Day Camp, and the Learning Lab Summer School. The JCC Senate and Jewish Center Youth (JCY) involve middle and high school students in educational and social events.

At the end of his World War II tour of duty with the U. S. Army, Len Brader booked USO shows in Italy, engaging, among others, the popular Andrews Sisters. Brader is shown here with singer Patty Andrews nearly 50 years later, at the opening of Scranton's Steamtown Mall.

Irvin "Irv" Lebowitz directs multiple sports activities for all members, including the longtime JCC basketball program, which serves the youngest children in a Biddy League first introduced and directed by Harry Rudolph, to the over-50 men in the "5:30 Club" led since 1960 by Commissioner Len Brader, succeeded by Commissioner Max Bartikowsky.

* Continuing their longtime tradition of *providing* volunteer services to the community, many Jewish seniors participate in the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) established in 1972. Anne Rappaport directs the program; Bernice Rabin was formerly a director.

Although JCC sports programming remains popular, high school, college, and even professional sports have attracted local Jews increasingly through the years.

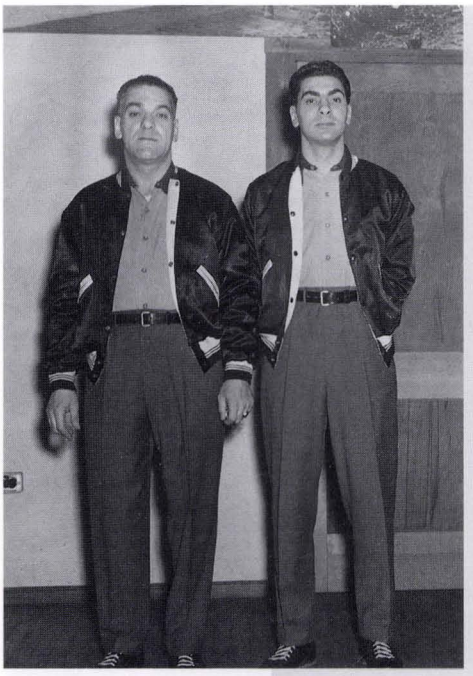
Harry Rudolph is dressed for baseball in this photograph. *Courtesy Samuel Zatcoff.*

Participation in sport is recognized by social historians as a reflection of social and economic mobility. At first the preserve of the upper class, organized sport became increasingly popular as leisure time increased and schools and ethnic clubs promoted athletics.

The first sport to become nationally popular was basketball, convenient to a largely urban population mirrored in the local 1920s Jewish community that so avidly followed the YMHA "dream team." Locally and nationally, Jews were so powerful in shaping the sport as players, coaches, and promoters that many saw basketball as a "Jewish game." A host of Jewish young men played for local high school, college, and Y/JCC teams from the '20s onward—the JCC team was perennial mid-Atlantic champions in the 1950s—and some achieved professional prominence in the sport.

For more than 20 years before his death in 1972, Harry Rudolph, referee for YMHA, college, and professional teams, was commissioner of the EBL, whose eight professional teams constituted the NBA's eastern farm club. The local EBL franchise, the Wilkes-Barre Barons, played at the 109th Field Artillery Armory from 1946-78, capturing the league championship in 1965. By 1949, Rudolph's son Marvin ("Mendy," 1926-79), a Coughlin High School graduate and YMHA player working at the family's Keystate Bakery, was officiating EBL games with his father. Harry and Mendy Rudolph were the first father-son referee team at the major league level.

Recruited by Eddie Gottlieb, former coach of the NBA's Philadelphia Warriors, Mendy Rudolph began calling NBA games in 1953, after Air Force service in the Korean War, and continued until 1975, when he was stricken with a pulmonary embolism while calling a game. From 1967-75, he was chief of staff of NBA referees, serving also as sales manager for Chicago's WGN-TV in New York, later providing basketball color commentary for CBS-TV. During his NBA career, the flamboyant referee called a record 2,113 games, including 22 successive world championship series.



Harry, left, and Mendy Rudolph, circa 1956. *Courtesy Samuel Zatcoff.*

Perhaps the finest basketball referee in history, Mendy Rudolph was inducted into the National Jewish American Hall of Fame, but has yet to be so honored by the National Basketball Hall of Fame, which has displayed his NBA-retired Number 5 jersey since 1975. Though Mendy's gambling addiction never compromised his performance as a referee, it is probably his association with gamblers that has prevented induction despite repeated nominations. His whistle and hand-written rule book—he literally wrote the *NBA Case Book*—are housed in the Jewish Museum Sports Hall of Fame in Washington, DC.

Among other figures in professional basketball were Harvey Miller, referee for the former American Basketball Association (ABA), and NBA scout Marty Blake, once general manager of ABA teams and Barons publicist.

Area Jews also made their mark in other sports. In football, Harry Goodstein (later Goodwin) played center and linebacker for Wilkes-Barre High School, continuing at the U. S. Naval Academy, where he was named All-American center in 1919, his senior year. Coughlin graduate Isadore ("Izzy") Weinstock, an All-American fullback at the University of Pittsburgh from 1932-4, played for the Pittsburgh Steelers and Philadelphia Eagles. All-Scholastic football player and district wrestling champion in Plymouth High School, Abe Cohen played end, linebacker, and center for the University of Tennessee Chattanooga before he was drafted, and cut, by the New York Giants. Cohen qualified for the U. S. Olympic Wrestling team in Rome in 1960, but chose instead to play for the Boston Patriots.

Harold Meyer was an early backer of the Wilkes-Barre Barons baseball team, playing at Artillery Park from the mid-1920s. Harry Rudolph also was involved with the team, which was the Cleveland Indians' farm club.

In wrestling, additional to Abe Cohen was his coach Sam Cohen of Forty Fort, who sent a wrestler to the Olympics at Helsinki. Joel Kislin, a G. A. R. High School star, won the National Junior College Athletic Association championship while at Luzerne County Community College in the 1970s, later achieving All-American status at Hofstra University.

In 1973, swimmer Devon Reiff was named to the U. S. Maccabiah team

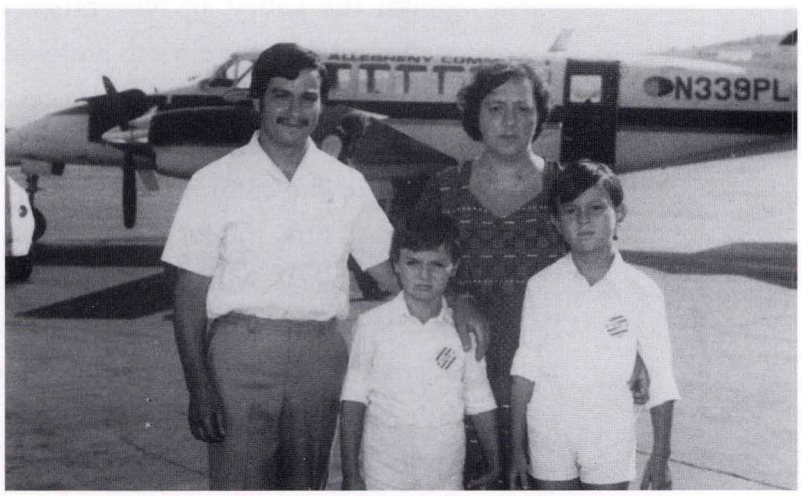
competing at Tel Aviv, where he captured two gold medals and one bronze medal. Reiff, who had begun swimming at the JCC at age nine, swam at Wyoming Seminary and was All-American at Fordham University. Among track and field stars, Barry Yelen set city records in the 1950s; in the '80s, Evan Kranson won gold and silver medals at the Maccabiah games.

All-American fencer David Micahnick, a 1955 graduate of Wyoming Seminary, was All-Ivy in epée at the University of Pennsylvania in 1959. He was a member of three U. S. Olympic fencing teams (1960, '64, and '68), coaching the team in 1992, and fenced for the U. S. Maccabiah teams in 1965, '69, '73, and '77, winning four team gold medals and an individual gold medal. He coached the Maccabiah teams in 1989 and 1993. Fencing coach at Penn since 1974, he has produced 32 All-Americans, and guided his teams to Ivy League, National Collegiate Athletic Association (N.C.A.A.), and national championships. Inducted into the Wyoming Seminary Sports Hall of Fame, he was named to the Philadelphia Chapter of the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame and Museum at its inaugural banquet in April 1997.

Among other local Jews in sports were professional bowler Rose Weinstein and boxing columnist Isadore "Mike" Bernstein. Nationally known sportswriters Sandy Padwe and Neil Amdur are profiled in the "Gallery."

A recent addition to JCC groups is the Jewish-American Russian Club formed by new Americans from the former Soviet Union and sponsored jointly by the JCC and JFS. By 1981, when Simon Becker celebrated his bar mitzvah in the Valley a year after his arrival, 17 Soviet Jewish families representing 61 individuals had been resettled in the area through the Jewish Counseling Service/JFS and the federation, in a Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) program funded by UJA. The family of Vadim and Anna Schneiderovsky in 1975 were the first Soviet Jews resettled locally. Elina Levinson, who currently operates the snack bar at the JCC, arrived

The Levinsons arrive in Wyoming Valley.



in 1979 with her husband Jacob and sons Michael and Gregory. Under the leadership of Sheldon Jeral from 1982-97, JFS arranged for housing for the new immigrants, and also helped them to secure employment, education, and English language skills.

Resettlement of Russian Jews is just one of the roles of the local federation, recently reorganized as the Jewish Community Board (JCB), an umbrella association representing JFS, UJA, the JCC, UHI, the Jewish Home, the *mikvah,* the *Vaad,* and national agencies. Both a planning and fund-raising body, the JCB is involved with leadership development, education, and outreach. The JCB also oversees the Community Relations Council (CRC), which educates the Jewish and general community on Jewish issues, participates in interfaith organizations, and monitors and responds to antisemitism.

As shown throughout this text, the incidence of antisemitism in Wyoming Valley has been slight and non-violent, but occasional outbreaks, such as several acts of vandalism perpetrated in the early 1990s, require response. The CRC, CIFA, the Interfaith Council, the Interfaith Council-S. J. Strauss Lodge program "A World of Difference" (produced by the Anti-Defamation League), and other groups and individuals, together with the media and elected officials, have reacted swiftly to condemn acts of intolerance toward any ethnic or racial group and promote acceptance of all cultures. In 1981, Selma Danoff was the first chairman of the community's annual celebration of Martin Luther King Day.

Holocaust education is a priority of both the JCC and the Interfaith Council. Additional to the annual April torch lighting in Public Square in commemoration of the six million, the JCC presents "Witness to the Holocaust," an exhibit and presentations by local survivors for high school students throughout the Valley. In November 1988, clergy of all denominations led a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht,* attracting 600 people. Expanding on the event's success, the group established Inter-Religious Encounters, an annual series of seminars exploring the various religious faiths represented in the community.

In recent years, the local Jewish community has co-sponsored a number of important projects with the Diocese of Scranton, working closely with the diocesan director of inter-religious affairs to bring together Jewish and Catholic lay leaders. In 1991 and 1992, a series of television programs now aired annually was produced by the local Catholic Television channel; co-hosted by a rabbi and a priest, the series focused on Jewish holidays. In March 1995, the diocese

and the Jewish communities of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, in conjunction with the Friedman Family Endowment of Temple Israel, co-sponsored an event celebrating the establishment of Vatican-Israel diplomatic relations. The program, centering on the 1994 Papal Concert presented at the Vatican by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in memory of Holocaust victims, was attended by Maestro Gilbert Levine.

In 1995, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and adherents of Bahai, Islam, and Hinduism participated in the Wilkes-Barre Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. The same year, representatives of the Jewish community and the Arab-American Association of Northeast Pennsylvania began exploring ways to initiate dialogue. Thus the historic pattern of cooperation continues in the Valley.

It is said that current American middle- and upper-class Jews, like the Anglo-American Protestants of the early 1900s, are in danger of losing their ethnic and cultural uniqueness. It is certainly true that many of today's Jewish professionals and business leaders do not need the economic and psychological security of a tightly-knit Jewish society to the same degree as their forbears. It is also true that maintenance of a unified Jewish community is more difficult in today's increasingly mobile and secularized society. Local Jewish institutions, through their programming, try to reinforce Jewish identity and help ensure Jewish continuity.

On an individual and family level, the future for area Jews appears to be positive. Most senior citizens are financially comfortable in retirement, while younger adult Jews pursue generally thriving careers. Jewish children can usually look forward to higher education. On a communal level, Jewish institutions must meet the difficult challenge of assuring their relevancy to Jews while maintaining tradition and competing with general community activities for Jewish attention.

The Jews of Greater Wilkes-Barre have dealt with change successfully for over a century and a half. Although the modern era has challenged the cohesiveness of the ethnic and religious community, there is ample precedent for predicting continuation of the process as the community approaches the new millennium.

MAX ROSENN

Afterword

The distinguished Rabbi Morris Adler wrote, "Man's present is the upward thrust of all his yesterdays." In a sense, the history of the Jews in the Wyoming Valley for this past century and a half is an action portrayal of this insight. Each generation, building on the foundations laid down with painful effort and struggle by those who preceded them, has acted with courage, foresight, and sacrifice to enable their children to move forward, upward, and outward.

The present generation must meet its own set of challenges in order to provide posterity with a Jewish future.

As we prepare to meet the new millennium, the steadily shrinking Wyoming Valley Jewish community finds itself in crisis. The crisis is not one of numbers alone, nor is it confined to Wyoming Valley alone. To be sure, outmigration has affected the local Jewish population. The low Jewish birth rate, intermarriage, and assimilation have affected all of American Jewry. We must now look beyond numbers to address the way to Jewish survival in a pluralistic society.

The struggle for Jews in America today is to remain Jewish. In America and in the Wyoming Valley, where Jews enjoy every privilege of a free society, Jewish continuity is a positive choice rather than a response to persecution. Yet we can learn from the darker days of Jewish history, from the repeated threats to Jewish survival culminating, in modern times, with the rise of Nazism. Throughout history, Jewish survival has depended upon the solidarity of Jews as a religious community. It may be time now for American Jews to tend to the Jewish spirit, restoring Judaism to its rightful place at the core of their lives and re-evaluating the pursuit of secularism.

As part of a revived emphasis on spirituality, we may look toward a renewal and possibly a restructuring of Jewish education. With the advent of the twentieth century, democracy, equality, and openness in the United States have had a debilitating effect on Jewish spirituality. American Jews have shifted focus from religious spirituality to secularization. In the process, they emphasized the mundane and abandoned religious and historical education. Only few American Jews today have a significant knowl-

edge of Judaism, its abiding precepts and moral philosophy, or of the fascinating history of their people and their unique contributions to Western civilization. Education can provide the intellectual process for spiritual commitment.

Although there is ample precedent for turning to Jewish education in the struggle for survival, current approaches may require revision to meet the needs and expectations of contemporary society and the various branches of American Judaism. Education may need to be focused on the adults first, for unless they have an intelligent understanding of the magnitude and richness of their heritage, much cannot be expected from their children.

Efforts to maintain the continuity of the American Jewish community will take an abundance of creativity, energy, sacrifice, and statesmanship. The local Jewish community has the leadership, the resources, and the institutional framework to rise to the challenge. We have the support and friendship of the larger community. And we have a history of one hundred and fifty years to learn from and build upon. With less emphasis on secularization, and greater emphasis on spirituality, the Wyoming Valley Jewish community will survive and prosper.

About the Authors

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ERIC C. LEVIN is a free-lance writer and editor who has published articles on a wide range of subjects for national, Philadelphia, and Wyoming Valley print media. His published work in American Jewish history focused on the Spanish-Portuguese Colonial period until the present book offered him the opportunity to write about World War II, of which he has been a lifelong student. An alumnus of Temple University's Annenberg School of Communications, he has also written, directed, and produced television commercials and programming. He received the national Telly Award for his United Way documentary, "Homecoming," which was broadcast on Wyoming Valley PBS affiliate WVIA-TV.

MARJORIE LEVIN is a free-lance editor of popular and scholarly books, and a writer known chiefly for her newspaper columns. Her award-winning column in the Wilkes-Barre *Times Leader* (1984-91) focused on life in the Wyoming Valley, whereas her "View From Here" essays in the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent* (1981-95) concentrated on aspects of Jewish life and thought. She has written columns and feature articles for other newspapers, as well as national magazines, since the 1970s, when she also served as public relations director for the Jewish Publication Society. She earned her A.B. at Bryn Mawr College, and also is an alumna of Boston's Hebrew College.

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SHELDON SPEAR, professor of history at Luzerne County Community College (LCCC), has made a specialty of local history since arriving in the community with the opening of LCCC in 1967. He is the author of *Wyoming Valley Historical Calendar, Chapters in Wyoming Valley History,* and *Wyoming Valley History Revisited.* He has also written numerous scholarly articles, and guest columns for the Wilkes-Barre *Citizens' Voice.* His LCCC Holocaust course has been offered since 1980, and he chaired the JCC Yom Hashoah Committee for 13 years. He is a frequent community speaker. He earned his B.A. at Brooklyn College, his M.A. at Syracuse University, and his Ph.D. at New York University.

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Colophon

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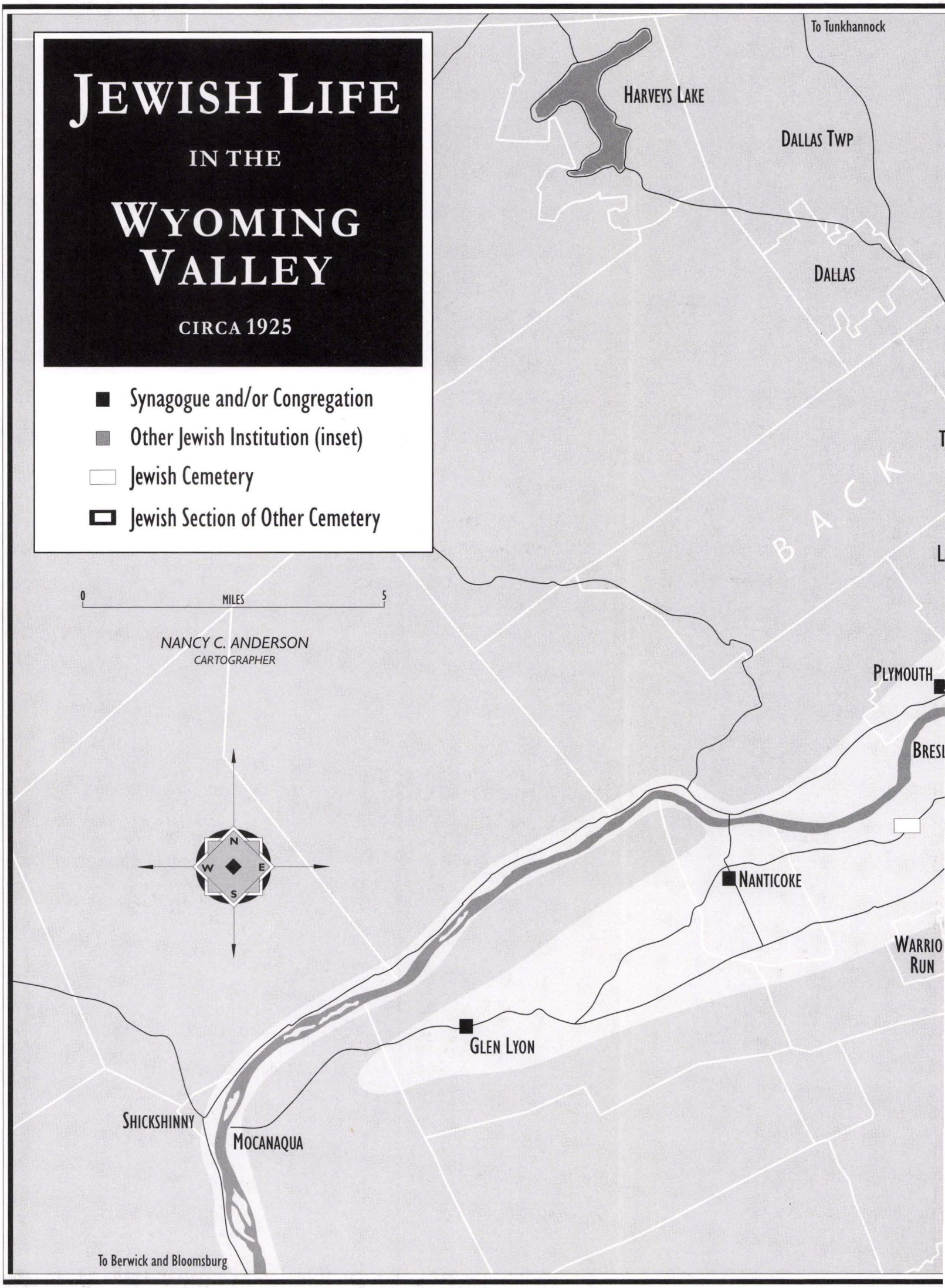
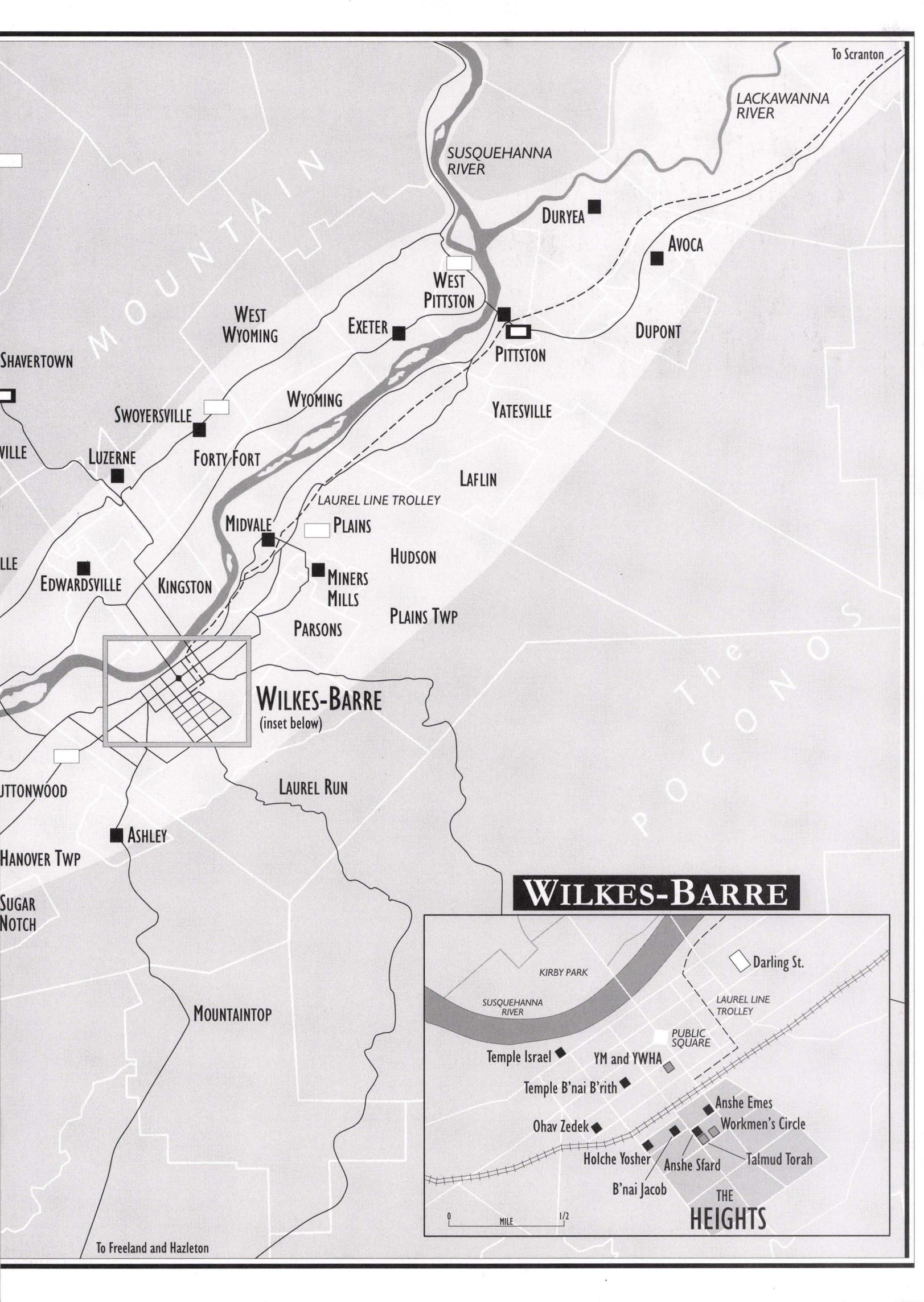

JEWISH LIFE
IN THE
WYOMING
VALLEY
CIRCA 1925
Synagogue and/or Congregation
Other Jewish Institution (inset)
Jewish Cemetery
Jewish Section of Other Cemetery
0
MILES
5
NANCY C. ANDERSON
CARTOGRAPHER
N
W
E
S
To Tunkhannock
HARVEYS LAKE
DALLAS TWP
DALLAS
BACK
PLYMOUTH
NANTICOKE
WARRIO
RUN
GLEN LYON
SHICKSHINNY
MOCANAQUA
To Berwick and Bloomsburg


To Scranton
LACKAWANNA RIVER
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER
MOUNTAIN
DURYEA
AVOCA
WEST PITTSTON
WEST WYOMING
EXETER
DUPONT
PITTSTON
SHAVERTOWN
WYOMING
YATESVILLE
SWOYERSVILLE
LUZERNE
FORTY FORT
LAFLIN
LAUREL LINE TROLLEY
MIDVALE
PLAINS
HUDSON
EDWARDSVILLE
KINGSTON
MINERS MILLS
PLAINS TWP
PARSONS
The POCONOS
WILKES-BARRE
(inset below)
LAUREL RUN
ASHLEY
HANOVER TWP
SUGAR NOTCH
MOUNTAINTOP
To Freeland and Hazleton
WILKES-BARRE
KIRBY PARK
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER
Darling St.
LAUREL LINE TROLLEY
PUBLIC SQUARE
Temple Israel
YM and YWHA
Temple B'nai B'rith
Anshe Emes
Workmen's Circle
Ohav Zedek
Holche Yosher
Anshe Sfard
Talmud Torah
B'nai Jacob
THE HEIGHTS
0
MILE
1/2

JEWISH LIFE IN THE WYOMING VALLEY

CIRCA 1925

- Synagogue and/or Congregation
- Other Jewish Institution (inset)
- Jewish Cemetery
- Jewish Section of Other Cemetery

0 MILES 5

NANCY C. ANDERSON
CARTOGRAPHER

To Tunkhannock
HARVEYS LAKE
DALLAS TWP
DALLAS
SHAVERTOWN
TRUCKSVILLE
LUZERNE
SWOYERSVILLE
FORTY FORT
WEST WYOMING
WYOMING
EXETER
WEST PITTSTON
PITTSTON
DURYEA
AVOCA
DUPONT
YATESVILLE
LAFLIN
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER
LACKAWANNA RIVER
To Scranton
LAUREL LINE TROLLEY
MIDVALE
PLAINS
HUDSON
MINERS MILLS
PLAINS TWP
PARSONS
LARKSVILLE
EDWARDSVILLE
KINGSTON
PLYMOUTH
BRESLAU
BUTTONWOOD
WILKES-BARRE
(inset below)
LAUREL RUN
ASHLEY
HANOVER TWP
NANTICOKE
SUGAR NOTCH
WARRIOR RUN
MOUNTAINTOP
GLEN LYON
SHICKSHINNY
MOCANAQUA
BACK MOUNTAIN
THE CONNECTICUT POCONOS

WILKES-BARRE

KIRBY PARK
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER
Darling St.
LAUREL LINE TROLLEY
PUBLIC SQUARE
Temple Israel
YM and YWHA
Temple B'nai B'rith
Anshe Emes
Workmen's Circle
Ohav Zedek
Holche Yosher
Anshe Sfard
Talmud Torah
B'nai Jacob