

MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY



*Midwestern recruits of Jewish Legion
marching in Detroit en route to Palestine, 1917*



***Jews of Houghton-Hancock; Early Zionism & Sen. Vandenberg;
Public Schools Named for Jews; Franklin Exhibit; Fisher's 90th!***

Volume 38

November 1998, Cheshvan 5759

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MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY is published by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Correspondence concerning editorial matters should be sent to the Editor, J.H.S., 6600 W. Maple Rd., W. Bloomfield, MI 48322. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors. MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY is available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Articles in this journal are indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and in *America: History & Life*.

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MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

אשר ישאלון בניכם מחר את אבותם... יהושע ד:כא

When your children shall ask their parents in time to come...

Joshua 4:21

Volume 38

1998

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The Jews of Houghton-Hancock and Their Synagogue

by Rochelle Berger Elstein

There is a venerable history of Jewish merchants writing detailed accounts of their travels, focusing on the conditions of their fellow Jews in cities large and small. The most famous of them is Benjamin of Tudela, a Spaniard of the twelfth century who encountered Jews everywhere he supposedly traveled.¹ His volume of descriptive letters on Jewish occupations, intellectual life, and relations with the wider world has been translated into virtually every western European language. One of Benjamin's more recent successors, a journalist traveling through Michigan in 1851, wrote of his amazement in finding "Israelites" in villages as small as Ipsilanti [sic], Kalamazoo, and Marshall.² This writer did not, however, describe their situations and limited himself to the southern part of the state

If this unnamed observer had visited the northern part of the state, he would not have encountered many "Israelites" at this date. Settled Jewish communities were established only in the 1880s, although even a century earlier some Jewish settlers did conduct business as fur traders in the upper part of Michigan.

The life and career of Ezekiel Solomon, one of Michigan's earliest Jews who had come to the area of Michilimackinac in 1761, anticipated the salient features of Jewish life in the Midwest in the late nineteenth century.³ Solomon was a member of the Mackinac Company, believed to be the first department store operation in the Midwest. By 1900, many department stores in small towns were owned by Jews who usually had begun as peddlers.

At mid-century, Jewish peddlers, many of whom had come from southern German villages, could be found traveling throughout New England. A generation later, the newcomers were attracted to the upper Midwest.

Historians of immigration describe the push-pull of economic hardship and political discrimination in Germany, coupled with political equality, financial opportunity, and religious freedom in the United States. One peddler who moved to Chicago in 1847 described his experiences in a very moving diary, telling of his hard labor, inability to perform religious obligations, and great loneliness.⁴ The diarist, Abraham Kohn, eventually became a wholesaler of men's clothing and was a founder of Chicago's first synagogue. He was unusually successful in many spheres, as were many of the Jews who settled in Michigan later in the century.

There are similarities between Abraham Kohn's saga and that of Jacob Gartner who came to the United States in 1884, accompanied by his 14-year-old son Isidore.

THE JEWS OF HOUGHTON-HANCOCK



Jacob Gartner

With a pack on his back, he walked the dusty or snowy Michigan roads until he had saved enough to settle down in Hancock. In 1886, he opened his first department store, moving to larger quarters in 1895. Three years later, Gartner was elected president of Hancock's newly-established Congregation of Israel.⁵

The Copper Country

Located in the far northwest of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the business of the Keweenaw Peninsula, first explored for its minerals in 1841 by Dr. Douglass Houghton, was copper. The town of Houghton was named in memory of him after his premature death at the age of 36. The Quincy Mine opened there in 1846, capitalized by investors from Detroit and Marshall. By the Civil War, 3000 people lived and worked in and around the three-mine complex. The merger of the Calumet and the Hecla companies in 1871 provided stiff competition, and, in vying for workers, the mining companies built housing. Calumet & Hecla even provided a hospital, schools, a library, a bathhouse, and free land for churches.⁶ But miners' families also needed consumer goods: clothing, shoes, housewares, and toys. Peddlers provided these goods and were themselves the distribution network.

Jewish Peddlers Settle in Houghton-Hancock

Jewish peddlers settled down under a variety of circumstances, like the one whose horse dropped dead, instantly making him a permanent resident of northern Michigan's Traverse City.⁷ A common pattern was that family members sent for siblings and parents and, in chain migration, Jews from the same village settled together in the same American towns and cities. Michigan, both in the upper and lower peninsulas, was no exception to these patterns.

There was an established pattern, too, to the evolution of a Jewish community: first, a cemetery was established and a minyan began meeting in people's homes or rented halls. Second came a proper synagogue building, along with the formation of a Sunday school and a ladies club. But before there could be a Jewish community in Hancock, there had to be a Hancock.

Named for John Hancock, the village of Hancock was platted on the north shore of Portage Lake in 1851 by the agent of the Quincy Mining Company. The first building was a general store opened by Douglass Houghton's assistant Christopher Douglas. The town grew rapidly—a hardware store, pharmacy, banks, churches, saloons, and boardinghouses, mostly wooden structures were erected. An early store was built by Jews from northern Wisconsin - Aaron, Sam, and Henry Leopold - who unfortunately vanished from the area's history before the fire of 1869. That fire was

even more destructive than the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Three-quarters of Hancock's buildings were destroyed. Rebuilt in more durable materials, Hancock was incorporated in 1875 and remained a flourishing entity only for as long as the demand for copper remained high.⁸

Establishing a Jewish Congregation, 1889

The Jewish population of Houghton-Hancock increased substantially during the last quarter of the century as the economy of the area grew, driven by a market for copper that increased with the spread of electric power. Jews from Poland, Russia and Lithuania arrived between 1890 and 1910 in the Upper Peninsula, and served the mining communities in the same way that they did in small cities and towns across America: as clothing and shoe merchants;

furriers, tailors and dry cleaners; as jewelers and junk dealers. One Jew, Harry Benedict, was an engineer in charge of one of



Temple Jacob; Hancock, Michigan

the smelters for a mining company. Dr. Frederick Hirschman, an early graduate of the Detroit College of Medicine and from a Temple Beth El family in Detroit, had served as the much beloved physician to various mining companies as well as ministering to the people of the Upper Peninsula until his death in 1886 at the young age of 38. Clusters of Jewish families also could be found in neighboring towns, like Calumet, Laurium, and Lake Linden which held separate services and established their own cemetery. But only Houghton-Hancock had a sufficient number of Jewish families to sustain a minyan and to build a synagogue.

Establishing a congregation in 1889 was an act of faith and optimism that proved to be successful. By 1912, however, there was a declining demand for copper; erecting a synagogue at that time was probably naive. Yet the Congregation of Israel was fitfully successful from the time it was formed, and Temple Jacob still has services today, albeit on a reduced schedule. Even between 1898 and 1909 when it was incorporated, it functioned intermittently. Still the founders—Jacob Gartner, Henry Pimstein, Henry Feldman, J. Gottliebson, and J. Green—persevered. Although there were approximately one hundred Jewish families in the Copper Country in 1910, it was a daunting task to raise \$10,000 for a building. A site on Front Street had been purchased from the Quincy Mining Company for \$900 at the intersection of two busy roads (US 41 and Michigan 26) at the lift bridge connecting Hancock with Houghton. Building committee chairman, A.L. Levy, began the fund-raising campaign with no guarantee that it would succeed.⁹

Choosing An Architect

The Jewish community, or at least the men who led the congregation, had expectations about how the building should look, and, to that end, they engaged an out-of-state architect, probably Henry L. Ottenheimer of Chicago. Perhaps the cachet of a big city practitioner influenced their selection, distance lending enchantment.¹⁰ Or they may simply have wanted a Jewish architect, and Chicago was probably the closest source. While Albert Kahn was beginning to make his mark as an architect in Detroit, it was as a factory designer. Temple Beth El (1902) on which he had worked was attributed to George D. Mason in whose office Kahn was an apprentice.¹¹ Ten years later Kahn was building for Detroit manufacturers, notably Henry Ford.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, Chicago architects had acquired an international reputation, among them Louis Sullivan and his partner Dankmar Adler, the son of a rabbi. They were the designers, between 1883 and 1895, of the Auditorium complex (Chicago), the Wainwright building (St. Louis), and the Guaranty building (Buffalo). Their firm also built and remodeled Chicago synagogues, and it served as an incubator of young talent, such as Frank Lloyd Wright.

In the absence of specific documentation, it is a safe guess that the architect of Temple Jacob was Henry L. Ottenheimer, who also had trained in the offices of Adler and Sullivan. Born in Chicago in 1868, he spent several years with Adler and Sullivan, preparing drawings for the Chicago Auditorium, an opera house, a hotel, and an office building complex, which at the time was the country's most costly and ambitious project. Ottenheimer also worked on Adler and Sullivan's Standard Club, a Romanesque building housing the leisure pursuits of the German-Jewish elite, and on the remodeling of Temple Sinai. After leaving Adler and Sullivan, he continued his architectural education, spending three years in Paris and returning in 1892. His first partner was Henry Schlacks, also a Chicago native, and also a product of the Adler and Sullivan drafting room. After parting with Schlacks in 1896, Ottenheimer organized the company of Ottenheimer, Stern and Reichert, where he designed residences, apartment houses, and factories.¹² Dubbed "the dainty designer of beautiful homes,"¹³ Ottenheimer produced many houses with a charming baroque exuberance, largely for German-Jewish businessmen and exclusively on Chicago's near south side.

Ottenheimer in Houghton

The period of peak demand for copper coincided with Ottenheimer's opening an office in Houghton, which was announced in an advertisement in the *Daily Mining Gazette* of October 9, 1899. He immediately attracted some of the largest commissions in the Copper Country and designed Houghton's Shelden-Dee block, a three-story building with stores and offices, built of sandstone and said to be influenced by the work of Louis Sullivan. Adler and Sullivan's former engineer, Paul Mueller, supervised the construction of the Shelden-Dee block for Otthenheimer.¹⁴ Its copper cornice foreshadowed Temple Jacob's copper dome and makes the Ottenheimer attribution even more likely.

The Douglass House Hotel (1899/1900) was another Ottenheimer-Mueller collaboration. Built of pressed brick with terra cotta trim, the four-story hotel at 517 Sheldon (US 41) was intended to provide first-class accommodations for businessmen traveling through the Copper Country. Ottenheimer also designed houses for some of the well-to-do. By the time he closed his office and returned to Chicago around 1900, he left behind ample evidence of his architectural expertise. Because of the small sizes of the towns, he also would have met all the important businessmen and community leaders of Houghton and Hancock. Furthermore, it is possible that Ottenheimer, a member of Chicago's ultra-Reform Sinai Congregation, might have attended Congregation of Israel services during his stays in Hancock.

The Architecture of Temple Jacob

Clearly Temple Jacob was designed by an architect, and Ottenheimer remains the best candidate. While the identity of the architect cannot be definitively established, the contractor, who also built Hancock's high school, is known to be a local man, Archie Verville. The handsome and sophisticated building,¹⁵ square in plan and built of brick on a foundation of Jacobsville sandstone, stands on a small rise and is therefore visible from both sides of the river. The door surround is a Tudor arch bearing the inscription "Adat Yisrael" (Congregation of Israel), the original name of the organization. Flanking the entrance is "zipper brickwork", marking the whole as the product of a skilled architect. Above the arch is a pediment and above that is a hipped roof with gables. The building is crowned with an octagonal cupola supporting a copper dome, a visible symbol of the desire of the local Jews to be part of the Copper Country.

The interior of the building, called in the *Evening Copper Journal* "modern in every respect," is very much a plan of the 1890s, with the kitchen and social hall downstairs and the sanctuary and balcony above.

The sanctuary is simple and Georgian in feeling, if not in detailing. The *aron kodesh* [torah cabinet] is pedimented like the facade, but its corners terminate in volutes, and atop the structure are Lions of Judah flanking the tablets of the law. The *bimah* [stage] and *aron* are at the east end of the sanctuary, which, combined with a balcony on the west wall, indicate an Orthodox congregation in which women sat upstairs and worshipers faced to the east. The wooden pews are simple and dignified;



Interior of Temple Jacob

large arched colored glass memorial windows are on the side and rear walls. Two small arched memorial windows are on the east wall to either side of the *aron kodesh*, and two square memorial windows flank the large one behind the balcony. The hexagonal recess in the center of the ceiling is the base of the cupola and the copper dome above it. The *ner tamid* [eternal light] matches the central chandelier, making the sanctuary

a harmonious whole. To echo Michigan's state motto, if you seek a pleasant synagogue, look about you.

The Dedication Ceremonies

The laying of the cornerstone on May 30th, 1912 was reported in great detail in the Hancock Department of the *Daily Mining Gazette*. The importance of the occasion was clearly stated: "For the first time in the history of the Copper Country, a cornerstone marking the erection of a synagogue will be laid."¹⁶ Jacob Gartner had been present at the ground breaking but died before the setting of the cornerstone. His son Isidore served on the executive committee and provided the funds necessary to complete the building. As a tribute, the synagogue was named Temple Jacob and a plaque bears the Hebrew inscription: "*L'zicharon ha-nadiv Ya'akov ben Yisrael, Gartner*" [In memory of the donor, Jacob, son of Israel, Gartner].

The ceremonies, presided over by president Hugo M. Field, featured a welcome by the mayor, an address by State Senator W. Frank James, and a prayer, address, and benediction by Rabbi M. Lefkovitz from Duluth, which well may have been the nearest city with a rabbi. "The Hancock City Band render[ed] several selections" and the Ladies' Auxiliary, whose officers and trustees, including Mrs. Jacob Gartner, were recognized for their contributions. The only regret, the newspaper story concluded, was that the "man who played such an important part in giving to the Portage Lake district its synagogue did not live to see its completion."¹⁷ Rabbi Lefkovitz's inspired sermon which "held the large audience in breathless attention" was based on the book of Jonah, who confidently declared his identity as a Hebrew to the sailors whose voyage he imperiled. The lesson the rabbi drew from this book of the Prophets is "that the mission of the Hebrew race is to suffer, to offer vicarious atonement for all the peoples of the world." The Hebrews should rejoice that their race has survived martyrdom and had grown from 600,000 souls "who stood at Sinai to a large and esteemed community," indestructible so long as they remain true to the covenant.¹⁸

Adjacent to a large advertisement of Gartner's Department Store's sale of ladies coats and dresses were several columns devoted to Senator James's remarks in which he recognized the success of Jewish businessmen in the Copper Country and beyond: "We who live in the Copper Country and who know you respect all your good qualities and it is not flattery today to state that no people in the Copper Country are more respected than the Jews of Houghton County...Some of my best personal friends are of your faith."¹⁹

The dedication was unquestionably the high point of Jewish life in the Keweenaw Peninsula and the temple a source of pride to Jews and non-Jews.

Changes — In the Copper Economy and In Jewish Tradition

While the congregation's first rabbi, identified only as "Rabbi Hervish," was succeeded by "a Rabbi Kopelwitch," the congregation was prosperous enough to pay such professional salaries only briefly. A serious labor strike in 1914 imperiled the economy of the Copper Country and stimulated an exodus of Jewish and non-Jewish

families. The strike, combined with copper finds in the West, left the area not only with a reduced population but without a secure financial base.

Within the congregation itself, changes were taking place parallel to developments in big city synagogues.

Orthodoxy was impossible to sustain without continuing immigration from Europe. Even though there was a circuit-riding *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] who provided kosher meat to observant residents of the western Upper Peninsula, Temple Jacob changed from being Orthodox to become a Reform congregation in the mid-1920s. By 1925 only a handful of the older women sat in the balcony and most families opted for mixed seating. Pew rental was replaced with annual dues and open seating—first come, first served.²⁰

In the 1920s there was a small infusion of German Jews; among the most notable was Norbert Kahn. After a brief career in Marquette, he had come to Hancock, married Isidore Gartner's daughter, Jean, and entered the family business. In the 1930s, with the German Jews of Europe facing discrimination and joblessness, Kahn brought three dozen of his relatives to the United States and helped get them established. Ted Reiss settled in Hancock in 1937, married another Gartner daughter, Louise, and headed the furniture department of Gartner's Department Store.

Besides this small influx, there was very little growth between the wars; the Jewish community on the eve of World War II numbered about the same 30 families that it had in 1919, although some had left or died out and a few newcomers had arrived. While a second cemetery was consecrated in 1918, the Sunday school closed for want of a teacher. Tiny congregations, like Peniel in Calumet, have disappeared, so that today Temple Jacob serves all of the area's Jews.²¹ The inter-urban trolley and, later, automobiles, used to bring the handful of worshipers from Calumet but these people have died out or moved away.²²

Although the lack of a rabbi and trained teacher was a problem, the largest impediment to Jewish continuity was the small size of Copper Country Jewry. Intermarriage was frowned upon and therefore rare; there were not enough girls and boys to pair off permanently, although heroic efforts were made to bring them together, despite great distances. As a result of a lack of potential mates between the wars, some young Jews remained single while others moved to larger cities. Some met their Jewish mates in college, especially in the post-war period when a high percentage of Jews went to universities.

Modern Times

Temple Jacob relies on academic institutions for infusions of clergy and teachers, and even for congregants, some of whom come from nearby Michigan Technological University. Like many such congregations, it hires rabbinical students to lead High Holiday services. These students come from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and remain in Houghton-Hancock, residing with a family and conducting Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services before returning to their studies.²³ Congregants, using materials from Detroit and other large congregations, have taught Sunday

THE JEWS OF HOUGHTON-HANCOCK

school. Jewish faculty members from Michigan Tech and state employees prepare boys and girls for Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Today, the Jews of the community take pains to ensure that the synagogue is well maintained and that there are services on the High Holidays and an occasional Shabbat when there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

There are interesting resemblances between the Jewish communities of northern Michigan and the ones that Benjamin of Tudela claimed to have visited in the Mediterranean basin and the Holy Land. In Benjamin's day and ours, more Jews live in and around cities than in small towns. In the twelfth century, 2500 lived in Constantinople while a mere 20 dwelt in Amalfi, Italy. In the last decade of the twentieth century, 94,000 live in Detroit, while fewer than 50 families remain in the Copper Country.²⁴ Benjamin described the city of Ramleh as having been considerable but, by the time he visited, it only "contains about three Jews... [however] a Jewish cemetery in the vicinity extends for two miles."²⁵ In the Copper Country as well, the Jewish cemeteries are large and the number of Jewish families small.

Another interesting comparison is that in the Middle Ages Jews were not only merchants and money lenders but also a large percentage of them were concentrated in the textile industry, as dyers, fullers, weavers, and sellers of silk, wool, and other fabrics, especially in the smaller towns. In the Midwest at the turn of the century, the Jews were overwhelmingly peddlers and dry goods merchants, although in the post-World War II period, store owners' sons became accountants, attorneys, and physicians and their daughters, teachers.

Conclusion:

Today Jewish life in the Copper Country is economically comfortable but ethnically and religiously difficult because of the shrinking number of young Jews with only a small trickle of immigrants from the former Soviet Union to replenish the community. As we enter a new century, however, the historic Temple Jacob of Hancock, built as an act of faith by pioneer Jews at the turn of the century, still serves as a functioning synagogue to the new generation of Jews in this outpost Jewish community.

Dedicated to Roberta and Richard Kabn of Hancock, with gratitude for their help and hospitality

1 "He gives the number of Jews he found in each place, though in some cases the figures seem to be exaggerated." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Benjamin of Tudela," by Cecil Roth.

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 - 17 Ibid.
 - 18 *Evening Copper Journal* (31 May 1912): p. 3.
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- 19 Ibid.
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 - 24 *American Jewish Year Book 97* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1997): p.226
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Rochelle Berger Elstein has a Ph.D. in American Studies from Michigan State University (1986) where she wrote her dissertation on synagogue architecture in Michigan and the Midwest. Her descriptions of synagogues are included in The Buildings of Michigan published by Oxford University Press. Currently bibliographer at Northwestern University Library, she is working on a book on the architect Dankmar Adler; at one time a Detroit resident. A first-time contributor, she writes: "Rarely have I enjoyed a task as much..."

Zionism in Detroit Before the State:

The First Fifty Years, 1898-1948

by Aimee Ergas

“If You Will It, It is No Dream” — Theodore Herzl

The historic First Zionist Congress convened by Theodore Herzl in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, though attended by only four Americans, sparked great interest among American Jews in establishing an independent Jewish state. Detroit Jewry’s involvement in Zionism began slowly in those late decades of the 19th century, but by the end of the century visionary people in Detroit were attracted to this bold political movement. Among these visionaries was the successful Detroit businessman Max Jacob, who attended the Second Zionist Congress in Basel in 1898. Between that time and World War I, a growing number of people and organizations in Detroit joined the infant Zionist cause.

These forward-thinkers enthusiastically promoted the idea of a homeland for the Jewish people, but not without questioning from critics on many sides. Far from unanimous, the Jewish community of Detroit, like many Jewish communities, was fragmented with political, religious and personal differences on the issue of a Jewish state. Reform Jews raised the specter of potential conflicts with American patriotism; Orthodox Jews awaited a return to the Holy Land on messianic, not political, terms; while in the early days some Jewish socialists rejected the state on narrow political grounds. Nevertheless, after World War I and with the encouragement of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Detroit Jews stepped to the forefront of the Zionist movement, and with the successful founding of Israel in 1948, they took their place among the top American supporters of Israel.



Dr. Noah E. Aronstam

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel this year, this photo history presents a few highlights of Zionist activity in Detroit in the first half of this century. These “snapshots” from the historical record, while not exhaustive, demonstrate the variety of people involved in the Zionist movement, as well as the growing commitment and significance of Detroit Jews on the world Zionist scene, a commitment that continues to this day.

Detroit Zionists at the Turn of the Century

Even at the turn of the century, Detroiters were organizing around Zionist ideas. Prominent physician and community leader Dr. Noah E. Aronstam was among the earliest to promote this new idea to the local Eastern European intellectuals. He established the Young Men's Zion Association in 1903. With several other community leaders, he published a journal called *The Jewish Advance*, to "promote the advancement of paramount Jewish policies for Jewish destinies." Aronstam continued to be an active Zionist leader in Detroit for many years, including later serving as president of the Zionist Organization of Detroit.

At the same time, the Jewish socialist movement was organizing. Two years after the establishment of the early Zionist socialist group Poale Zion in New York in 1903, a branch of the organization was formed in Detroit. In 1910 the Detroit branch hosted the national convention. These socialist Zionists were committed to founding a Jewish homeland in Palestine based on principles of worker ownership of land and economic production. Other Jewish socialist groups sprang up around this time as well, including the Workmen's Circle and the Jewish National Worker's Alliance.



**Rabbi Abraham Hershman
and wife Miriam, 1909**

Rabbi Hershman Finds Zionist Organization of Detroit

Early in his career, Rabbi Abraham M. Hershman, who assumed the pulpit of Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Detroit in 1907, came to believe that Jewish identity was inseparable from the concept of a Jewish Palestine. As an ardent Zionist, he disagreed with critics who saw Zionism as a threat to being a patriotic American. In 1908 he organized the Kadimah Zionist Society, whose membership included business and professional men, and shortly thereafter founded the enduring Zionist Organization of Detroit. Through social activities, lectures, classes, and general publicity, the members under Hershman's leadership actively spread the ideas of Zionism in the Detroit community. Hershman, who also was a pioneer in establishing the

Conservative movement in 1913, continued his strong and dedicated leadership as a Zionist until his death in 1959.

Hadassah Established by Sarah & Fannie Wetsman & Miriam Hershman

With the cause of Zionism continuing to grow, activist Detroit Jewish women organized a chapter of Hadassah from an earlier study group called Daughters of Zion. The catalyst for this was Henrietta Szold, the pioneering Zionist and founder of the national Hadassah organization, whose ten-day visit to Detroit in 1916 convinced women of the need for immediate support for Palestine. Miriam Hershman,



Some early presidents of Hadassah, clockwise from bottom right: Sarah Davidson, Dora Ehrlich, Pauline Jackson, Hattie Gittleman

wife of Rabbi Hershman, was a founder of the Detroit chapter and was elected its first president.

Among the most active and prominent members were the sisters Sal Wetsman (later Davidson) and Fannie Wetsman (later Saulson), whose parents hosted Szold's visit. The Wetsman sisters' dedication to the medical and social missions of Hadassah led each to serve as president of the Detroit chapter of Hadassah, which experienced great growth and success. Sal Wetsman also served as secretary of the Zionist Organization of Detroit and as president of the four-state regional

Hadassah. Many years later, the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem was built on land purchased in 1935 and donated to Hadassah by their father, Joseph Wetsman, and by Jewish communal and civic leader David W. Simons.

Rabbi Judah Levin Organizes the Religious Zionist Mizrachi

Although many Orthodox rabbis early in the century opposed Zionism as being contrary to messianic ideas, Rabbi Judah Levin became an important supporter of the movement. Levin, who had come to Detroit as rabbi of Shaarey Zedek just before the turn of the century, was one of the founders of the Mizrachi Zionist Organization of America and convened one of the first national meetings of this Orthodox group in Detroit. An important and respected leader in the Detroit Jewish community and the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Detroit, his influence garnered support for Zionism in the Orthodox community. Furthermore, contrary to earlier traditional Orthodox views, he encouraged the use of Hebrew, not only for study of religious texts, but as



Rabbi Judah Levin with early Zionist Mizrachi march on Brush Street

an everyday language for use in the future Jewish state. Levin's personal correspondence in Hebrew with his sons is preserved in the Jewish Community Archives.

Detroiters Serve in Jewish Legion in World War I

World War I brought major advances to the cause of Zionism around the globe and in Detroit.

Many Detroit Jews served in the American armed forces in the "Great War" and had their worldview changed forever. Furthermore, more than twenty Detroiters put their Zionist beliefs into action by joining the Jewish Legion, established by the



Sergeant Norman Cottler (center) with fellow members of the Jewish Legion, including Meyer Levin (left)

British government in 1917. The Legion was a unique military unit, the first Jewish military unit since the fall of Judea. Britain guaranteed this group of Jewish men that it would be sent to fight with British forces in Palestine in the battle against Germany and Turkey. The establishment of the Legion was an important boost to the growing commitment to Jewish nationalism among Jews of many backgrounds. Approximately 5,000 soldiers, mostly from North America and the British Empire, fought to liberate Palestine from Turkish rule and guard the peace after the Turks' defeat.

Among the Detroiters were Joseph Sandweiss, the first to sign up at the recruiting office on Hastings Street in the Jewish neighborhood, as well as Gershon Avrunin, Abe Weintrobe, and Hyman Bookstein. In the meantime, Detroit Jewish women formed a Red Magen David nursing group that included Fannie Seltzer and Chana Weintrobe (Michlin) to aid the Legion volunteers, who had gathered from many locations in Detroit before going to Canada for training and then on to Palestine.

Captain Isadore Levin Drafts Charter for Palestine

The Balfour Declaration in 1917, issued in the midst of the Great War, had raised the idea of a Jewish homeland to a major issue of the day and gave new impetus to those in Detroit and elsewhere who were interested in Zionism. The declaration of the British government's acquiescence to "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," which came in the form of a letter from Lord Balfour to Lord Lionel Rothschild, president of the British Zionist Organization, provided a huge boost to the Zionist cause. Within a few years, this idea of a Palestine homeland was affirmed by the League of Nations and by the United States Congress.

Consequently, following World War I in 1919, the Zionist Organization of America sent a delegation to the peace conference in Versailles, France, including a young Detroit lawyer, Captain Isadore Levin, who had been on active duty with the U.S. Army at the front in France. Levin, son of Rabbi Judah Levin and a law partner of the Butzels, served as legal advisor to this delegation at the invitation of Felix Frankfurter. Working with Chaim Weizmann, he drafted a constitutional framework for a future government in Palestine, “the fundamental charter...to be enacted upon receiving Palestine.” After completing the charter, the mandate, Levin spent time in Jerusalem. His letters published in the Detroit press garnered enthusiastic new support for the cause of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.



Captain Isadore Levin, World War I

Journalist Philip Slomovitz Promotes Zionism

The Zionist cause among Detroit Jews gained an important and long-time supporter when the young, pro-Zionist journalist Philip Slomovitz joined the staff of the *Detroit News* around 1919 and later served in editorial positions with the *Jewish Pictorial* and the *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*. Born in Russia only a few months before the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Slomovitz was a committed Zionist by the time he joined the *News* and remained so for the rest of his long and illustrious life. He began his journalism career in 1916 as night editor of the student newspaper at the University of Michigan. On coming to Detroit, he connected with Rabbi Hershman and the Zionist organizations to become their most prominent promoter and became an early organizer of the Habonim Youth Group, a seedbed of future leaders of the Detroit Jewish community. By 1929, Slomovitz had identified U.S. Senator Arthur Vandenberg as a strong supporter of the cause of a Jewish homeland. (His interactions with Vandenberg are described elsewhere in this journal.)

Over the years, Slomovitz often was at odds with anti-Zionist forces, especially in the Reform movement. By the time he established the *Jewish News* in 1942, he was committed to using the Jewish press to educate the community about the importance of Zionism. He became recognized nationally and internationally as a major proponent for efforts on behalf of Jewry, Zionism, and eventually the State of Israel.

David Brown Invited to Opening of Hebrew University

David A. Brown was invited along with other top leaders of world Jewry to the opening of Hebrew University in Jerusalem on Mt. Scopus in April 1925. Brown, one of the most prominent and colorful persons in the Detroit community from the time of the Great War until the late 1920s, was a high-profile fundraiser, instrumental in making the Detroit Jewish community visible on the national scene. He was involved with relief efforts for Jews in the Soviet Union and was appointed by President Herbert Hoover to chair the China Famine Relief Fund. Many Detroiters were enthusiastic supporters of Hebrew University, Technion, and other educational insti-

The Opening Ceremony of The Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, 1925. David Brown shown in enlargement and in painting. The Rt. Hon., the Earl of Balfour is delivering the address.



tutions forming in Palestine. Brown's legacy in Jewish fundraising in Detroit lasted for many years after his departure for New York in 1929.

Schaver & Labor Zionists Generate Enthusiastic Support

Much activity in support of Palestine was centered around the Labor Zionists through Histadrut, a worldwide organization of labor groups committed to a socialist Palestine. Histadrut was important in founding kibbutzim, factories, and schools in Palestine. In Detroit, supporters of Histadrut included Morris Schaver along with other prosperous businessmen. Schaver's successful company that he founded in 1923, the Central Overall and Supply Co., allowed him to reinforce his devotion to Zionism with generous financial support for Palestine. He was a tireless worker for Zionism and became one of the most influential leaders of the movement in Detroit and the United States throughout the 1930s and 1940s.



Morris L. Schaver

He served as a Poale Zion representative to the World Zionist Congress in Zurich in 1937 and 1946. With the establishment of Israel, Schaver's support continued through investments in the new state, support of cultural and educational programs, and through his company supplying the first uniforms for the Israeli army.

The 1920s had also seen the rise of women's groups in the Labor Zionist movement. The Detroit branch of Pioneer Women was established in 1925 and launched into a strong program of local activities and support for the Zionist cause. As the 1930s progressed and the war clouds gathered, the activities of Pioneer Women and also Hadassah broadened to encompass major relief efforts for Palestine and later for the survivors of the European war.

Rabbi Fram Widens the Zionist Camp

During the 30s, just when European Jews needed the opportunity to immigrate to Palestine more than ever, when Jewish lives could have been saved from the Nazi death camps, the British government reneged on the promises of the Balfour Declaration. Instead, Britain issued the White Paper that sharply limited immigration to Palestine.

The impact of these crises for European Jewry steadily increased the growth of many Zionist groups whose activities continued to expand. A long succession of prominent Detroiters served as presidents of the Zionist Organization of Detroit, which later became the Metropolitan Detroit Chapter of the Zionist Organization of America. Notable among them was Rabbi Leon Fram, known for his leadership and intense dedication to Zionism. Originally the assistant rabbi at Temple Beth El, Fram established a new Reform congregation, Temple Israel, revealing the politics of Zionism in the Detroit community – the open division between the pro- and the anti-Zionists. Fram was strongly committed to the Zionist cause, not then the mainstream

Some early presidents of Zionist Organization of Detroit



Moe Erlich



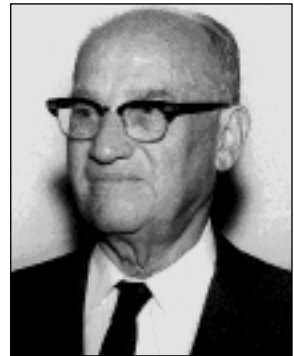
Philip Slomovitz
1928-1929



Lawrence Crohn
1937-1940



Rabbi Morris Adler
1940-1942



Judge James L. Elimann
1942-1944



Rabbi Leon Fram
1944-1946

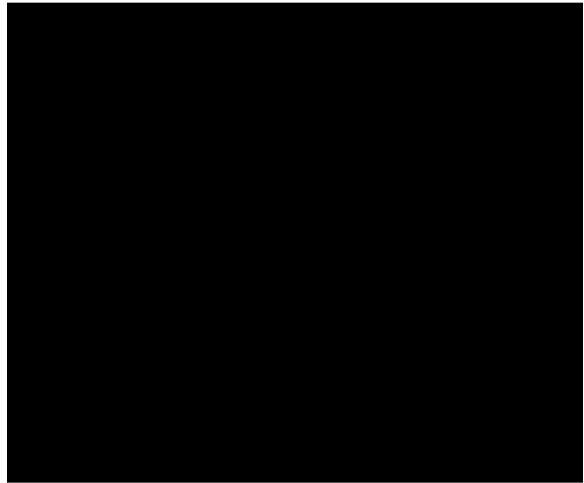


Morris Jacobs
1946-1949

view among Reform leadership, and he criticized the apathy and opposition of Reform Jews to the idea of a Jewish state. His writings, particularly his essay on “Reform Judaism and Zionism,” were influential nationwide in bringing the Reform movement into the Zionist camp.

Zionism Gains Momentum During WWII and Post-War

By the time the United States entered World War II, Zionism was already well established and well supported among a segment of the Detroit Jewish community. The Executive Director of the Zionist Organization of America was the highly regarded Detroit, Simon Shetzer, who in 1942 called Detroit a “model Zionist community.” The war was a catalyst that brought more of the community into the fold. Many congregations, among them the Conservative Shaarey Zedek,



Jewish National Fund Certificate

Courtesy Archives of Congregation Shaarey Zedek

urged their members to join Zionist organizations. The mayor of Detroit, Edward Jeffries, declared a Jewish National Fund Sabbath in 1942 to show his support for the cause of Palestine. Calls for unity in the face of the grave needs overseas were constant. Schoolchildren collected pennies to plant trees in Palestine, while the Allied Jewish Campaign and War Chest in Detroit increased their fundraising each year.



Sol Dann

As soon as the war ended in 1945, the fate of Palestine loomed large on the horizon. Detroiters were prominent in many aspects of the final approach to the establishment of Israel in 1948. A Detroit attorney, Sol Dann, a life-long dedicated Zionist, was involved with the United Nations committee that wrote and presented the legal brief to establish the legality of Israel.

An almost-forgotten chapter in the participation of Detroiters during the pre-State days was their role in an underground international network for supplying materiel and arms for the inevitable defense of Palestine that began in 1947. As described in Louis Slater’s book, *The Pledge*, many Detroiters were among the American Jews instrumental in collecting “souvenir guns,” machinery, and trucks—an estimated \$10 million worth from Detroit alone over approximately five years—in an effort to support the Jewish homeland. Detroit businessman Louis Berry donated an office in the David Stott Building to house the “Material for Palestine” organization, which was staffed by the Marshall Lodge of B’nai Brith.



Courtesy Harold Berry

Louis Berry and Joseph Holtzman on UJA plane *Hope*

Berry and active community leader Joseph Holtzman were among a group of 45 American Jewish leaders who spent four weeks in early 1948 visiting displaced persons camps in Europe and surveying the work of the Jewish pioneers in Palestine. Their mission was to study the rehabilitation needs of displaced Jews and the requirements of the Jewish community in Palestine in terms of immigration, building, and settlement. On their return, they were able to virtually ignite the Jewish community on behalf of the statehood of Israel.

At Last — 1948, the State of Israel!

The establishment of Israel in May 1948 was celebrated in Michigan as joyously as anywhere in the world. Long-time, committed Zionists and those not-so-committed knew that this was an important turning point for world Jewry. There was a new focal point, not to be ignored, for political, economic, religious, and philanthropic efforts. Clearly, Michigan Jews, prominent in all of these efforts for the fifty years since 1948, had played dynamic roles that helped to realize the dream of a Jewish homeland in the half century from the Congress at Basel to an independent Israel.



Aimee Ergas is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Farmington Hills, Michigan. She is the author of Artists: From Michelangelo to Maya Lin, an encyclopedia of artists' biographies for middle-school students.

The Editor and the Senator: “A Zionist Home in Palestine”

by Alan Kandel

World War II would begin just three and a half months later with the Nazi Blitzkrieg invasion of Poland. In May of 1939 Hitler had been Chancellor of Germany for six years. The Nazis were forcing Jews out of their homes and into ghettos. “Kristallnacht” had alarmed the world about the desperate situation for Jews in Europe, and despite a policy of “appeasement,” Hitler had already seized Czechoslovakia.



Reuther Archives of Labor & Urban Affairs,
Wayne State University

Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg

On May 19, 1939, United States Senator from Michigan Arthur H. Vandenberg sent the following Western Union telegram to Jewish Chronicle Editor Philip Slomovitz:

I believe today more than ever in the Zionist home in Palestine. As a member of the original Christian Pro-Palestine Committee I thought I saw a great vision. It is clearer than ever today and the inhumanity of man makes it more logical and more essential than ever. I emphatically favor every cooperation that America can give to the ...culmination of this promised Jewish homeland. The Balfour assurances should not default. The Jews of the world took them in good faith and have invested heart and fortune in them. They have a right to every international cooperation in behalf of this Jewish homeland. Count upon my interest to the limit. Senator A. H. Vandenberg

This wire was a crucial link in the chain that bound Slomovitz, the editor, and Republican Senator Vandenberg together from 1929 to 1951 in their concerns about a Jewish homeland.

The Philip Slomovitz Collection housed at the Reuther Library at Wayne State University documents these several decades of interactions during these historic years, and serves as an invaluable resource not only for this article but also for other biographers of Senator Vandenberg.¹

Senator Vandenberg Early Favors a Jewish Homeland

Slomovitz first met Vandenberg in 1929, the year after he came to the Senate, when the Senator addressed the Brotherhood of Temple Beth El. At that early moment, Slomovitz saw in Vandenberg a figure destined to rise to power and leadership in the United States Senate and, significantly, a warm friend of the Jewish people and a supporter of the concept of a Jewish State.

Arthur H. Vandenberg grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he became editor and publisher of the *Grand Rapids Herald*. Appointed to the Senate in 1928, and winning his first election that year, he served for 23 years. As early as 1929, according to Slomovitz, Vandenberg was staking out positions in behalf of Jewish rights in Palestine. After a mass rally to protest outrages in Palestine, the Senator informed Slomovitz of his willingness to present a resolution to the Senate and expressed himself as “greatly interested in urging protection of Americans in Palestine.” He later noted that the British government had the Palestine situation under control and was providing the needed protection. In 1930, however, Vandenberg wrote a confidential memo to Slomovitz expressing concern that the British government, following a pronouncement by Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield, had under consideration abandoning the Balfour Declaration. In one of his columns, Slomovitz quoted Vandenberg’s declaration that:

The ideal is too powerful and too sound to be shattered by transient difficulties...I emphatically favor every cooperation that America can give to the culmination of this promised Jewish homeland.

The years 1930-1939 were fateful for European Jewish communities as Nazidom held sway. In America, the Zionist movement was gathering strength and momentum while Vandenberg’s role increased when he became National Co-Chairman of the American - Christian Palestine Committee as well as a member of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In 1936, Slomovitz sought the Senator’s support for a Zionist petition to Secretary of State Cordell Hull in behalf of the situation in Palestine. Vandenberg wrote back:

I did not sign the public petition to Secretary Hull in this connection because I did not think it would be appropriate for me (as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee)... I preferred to communicate personally and confidentially with the Secretary of State. This was done.

I completely share the viewpoint expressed in the public appeal. I have made this entirely plain in quarters where it counts at Washington...(I correspond with gentlemen in New York and Washington representing your cause ...and they were completely satisfied with my attitude.)

Vandenberg Abandons Isolationism During World War II

On the eve of the war in 1939, when Vandenberg sent the telegram of support for a Jewish homeland to Slomovitz, the Senator was still an outspoken isolationist. Described as the most influential isolationist in the Senate², Vandenberg said he sought an honorable peace while defending the 1937 Neutrality Act³. “I propose to

be wholly neutral until American sovereignty is challenged — and then I propose to be wholly unneutral.”⁴ Clearly, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, two years later on December 7, 1941, shattered Vandenberg’s vision, and he moved from isolationism to internationalism, a champion of America’s role at the center of a new world order.⁵ In his new role as an internationalist, in the midst of the war the Senator was appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the San Francisco Conference on International Organizations that eventually led to the formulation of the United Nations Charter.

In a “Dear Phil” letter in August 1943, Vandenberg again stated his support for a Jewish National Home in Palestine. He expressed concern, however, at the prospect of an armed revolt and urged the Zionist movement to be in close touch with the State Department. In even stronger language, Vandenberg, as a leader of the American-Palestine Christian Committee, wrote to Slomovitz endorsing the 26th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration saying, “unspeakable outrages which the murderous Axis tyranny has inflicted upon innocent Jewish victims demonstrate not only the need but the justice in speeding this great enterprise to its maximum development.” Consequently, Slomovitz wrote Vandenberg in 1943 urging a meeting on the introduction of a Joint Resolution on the Palestine question to reaffirm America’s stand on a Jewish homeland. But, with the war still raging, the Senator replied that he felt it unwise to press for such a Resolution with language seeking “unlimited colonization in Palestine.” Such a statement, he said, might jeopardize the American military position in North Africa and not serve the best interests of the Palestine movement.

Since the Resolution faced opposition from the President and the State Department, Vandenberg sought changes from Zionist leader Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver and the Palestine Committee to eliminate language that “might have particularly inflamed the Arab and the Moslem world.” Then, expressing a measure of concern about the meaning of the term Jewish Commonwealth, Vandenberg reported to Slomovitz about a new Resolution passed in 1945 that avoided that term.

As the war ended, Vandenberg, who as an internationalist had been appointed by the late President Roosevelt, took pride in the key role he had played in gaining adoption of the Human Rights amendments into the United Nations Charter. Interviewed by Slomovitz, the Senator said, “At long last we have a formula for the mobilization of world conscience. These decisions will have tremendous influence on the next century. It is the greatest thing that has happened to your people.”

Discussion over Palestine’s Postwar Crises

After the war there was an immediate crisis when the British blocked immigration into Palestine for the survivors of the concentration camps. Late in 1945, Slomovitz wrote Vandenberg about British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax who had insisted that the Balfour Declaration was satisfied in that Britain never promised to establish a Jewish State, only a Jewish National Home. Slomovitz stated that “demands must be made that the British must tell the civilized world whether it is humane for outsiders

to say to a Jewish National Home that the house is closed to Jews. What, after all, does make a place Jewish and National and a Home?"

In 1946 Slomovitz asked whether the Senator had met with David Ben Gurion in Washington. Vandenberg wrote that he had discussed with Ben Gurion the concept of statehood and had asked whether it would be a viable state. Ben Gurion had responded that if a proper plan is backed strongly by Britain and the United States, it would be acceptable to most of the Arab states.

By 1947 Slomovitz had sensed a growing opportunity to achieve a permanent Palestine solution. He urged Vandenberg, through his role as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to bring the issue forcibly to the attention of President Harry Truman. Vandenberg reported to Slomovitz on another meeting with Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver and other Zionist leaders. He saw the British Empire crumbling, calling for major strategic decisions in the Middle East. He said that we must take care to avoid a "holy war" but stressed that the partition idea is important. He went on to say, "Thank heaven the Stern Gang did not reach London ... Terrorist reprisals are calculated only to make it more difficult (if not impossible) for those of us still striving to find a suitable formula for Palestine." By October 1947 serious discussions were taking place on partition, but Vandenberg expressed concern about imposition by armed forces.

In 1948 Slomovitz and Vandenberg exchanged correspondence on the issue of lifting the arms embargo and providing Jews in Palestine the means to defend themselves. Vandenberg urged United Nations action, rather than unilateral action by the United States. He wrote Slomovitz in May on the urgent need to get a military truce, saying that the next few days were crucial. By then, the Senator was endorsing partition as a solution to the Homeland question. On May 14 President Truman endorsed the new State of Israel.

Republicans Welcome an Independent Israel, 1948

The Republican National Committee was scheduled to meet in June. At first, it was deemed advisable to keep the Palestine/Israel question out of politics, but Vandenberg urged a strongly-worded statement which was adopted: "We welcome Israel into the family of Nations and take pride that the Republican Party was the first to call for the establishment of a free and independent Jewish Commonwealth." However, the efforts of Vandenberg were not universally acclaimed by every facet in the American Zionist movement. In his book *The United States and the Jewish State Movement*, historian Joseph B. Schechtman felt that the Senator's support of Zionism could not always be counted on.

In a "Purely Commentary" column in the Jewish News, Slomovitz wrote:

In its entirety, the Vandenberg story vis-a-vis Zionism and Israel was not always rosy. There were times when we were impatient about his attitudes...his hesitancy in acting in our behalf was due to pressure from the White House and the State and War Departments.

On the other hand, Slomovitz continued:

When President Truman gave speedy recognition to the Jewish State, Vandenberg was the first to commend it as the logical and proper step to take.

Slomovitz Pays Tribute to Vandenberg as Friend of Zionism

Senator Vandenberg died in 1951. Slomovitz, paying tribute to his memory, wrote:

The good acts of Senator Vandenberg were multiplied a thousand times by his kindly intercessions. He was, indeed, a conservative Republican, especially from the Democrats' point of view. But when he was faced with issues that called for human considerations he rose above party politics.

In all the years that we conferred with him he never — not once — showed the slightest interest in this commentator's political preferences. We were concerned with grave matters involving the security of the Jewish people and we stuck to this point.

On this score he was unselfish and always honorable. If only for this reason alone — which is one of many — we honor his memory as we honored and respected him in his lifetime.

Slomovitz concluded, "For fifteen years it was our duty, at times on an hour's notice, to go to Washington to consult on Zionist matters. As early as 1943, Vandenberg was in the front ranks of the friends of Zionism — I had brought him into the movement and he was with us."

1: The Philip Slomovitz Collection archived by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan in the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives, Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit.

2: H. Meijer, *Michigan Historical Review*, Fall 1990.

3: Vandenberg speech, Grand Rapids, 1939.

4: H. Meijer, *Michigan Historical Review*, Fall 1990.

5: C. David Tomkins, *Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, the Evolution of a Modern Republican*, 1970.



Alan Kandel was a crucial member of the four-person team of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan that archived the seventy years of the Philip Slomovitz Collection. An invaluable resource for biographers of Vandenberg and scholars of that historic era, this extensive archival collection was utilized by Kandel for this article. Kandel serves on the Federation Archives and Exhibit committees, as well as the Exhibit committee of the Jewish Community Council.

A Community Honor

Michigan Public Schools Named for Leading Jewish Citizens

by Shirlee Rose Iden

Nine public schools in Michigan carry the names of Jewish men, honored for their generosity of spirit and dedication to their community and the nation. Five of these schools are in Detroit, three in its suburbs—Oak Park, Southfield, West Bloomfield—and one outstate in Saginaw.



**Rabbi
Morris Adler**

Morris Adler Elementary School, Southfield. This school is named for Southfield's Congregation Shaarey Zedek's rabbi, who was beloved by his congregants and esteemed worldwide for his scholarship and moral leadership. Accompanied by his wife Goldie and daughter Shulamith, Rabbi Morris Adler came as Assistant Rabbi to the Detroit synagogue from Temple Emanu-el in Buffalo in 1938 when the country was still suffering the effects of the depression. Soon Europe was aflame, world Jewry was faced with the signs of the impending Holocaust, and the grim reality of war was brought home to America at Pearl Harbor. Along with some 379 families of Shaarey Zedek who saw their husbands, fathers, and sons off to war, Rabbi Adler enlisted as an army chaplain in December 1943. Rabbi Adler became the first Jewish chaplain to serve in Japan and to walk the atomic-bomb ravaged city of Hiroshima. He held services in many venues, on shipboard and in hospitals, and his sermons were broadcast over Radio Tokyo after the close of the war.

On his return to his Detroit pulpit, he was elected Chief Rabbi, later to be voted lifetime tenure at Shaarey Zedek. Bolstered by his enthusiasm, the congregation moved to Southfield in 1962. There he continued innovative programs to build Jewish identity and to work for social justice. He was actively involved as a Zionist leader, serving as president of the local chapter. Widely sought after for his wise counsel, he served on the UAW Ethics Board under Walter Reuther, and on the ethics panel of Governor George Romney.

Adler was fatally wounded on February 12, 1966 by an alienated young congregant, and died a month later on March 11, an event of national proportions. Ironically, Rabbi Adler's last sermon that fateful Sabbath morning touched on Abraham Lincoln, another martyr to unreasoning rage.

The Morris Adler Elementary School was built on Filmore Road near Evergreen the year of his death, a community tribute to this teacher, scholar and spiritual pathfinder.

A COMMUNITY HONOR

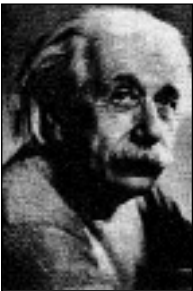


Fred M. Butzel Junior High School, Detroit. Fred M. Butzel, born in Detroit in 1877, was acknowledged not only as the “Dean of Michigan Jewry” by the *Jewish News* but indeed as “Detroit’s most valuable citizen” in the *Detroit Free Press*. Without wife or children, he made the community his family.

Chairman of the Board of the United Jewish Charities, Butzel’s visionary action led the way to the formation of the Jewish Welfare Federation in 1926. He chaired its Executive Committee and during the crucial postwar year of 1947 served as chair of the Allied Jewish Campaign. With deep understanding of the needs of the various groups, he frequently served as the liaison between the different Jewish constituencies as well as between Jews and non-Jews, resolving conflicts in creative ways that satisfied all parties. Particularly interested in the needs of children and the needy, he was a vital resource to social service agencies throughout the city. Unusual for an American-born Jew, he was an active supporter of Zionism even in its early years and later chaired the Resettlement Service which aided Jewish refugees.

At the turn of the century, he was one of the founders of the Boy Scouts in Detroit and helped organize the Ford Republic, later named the Boy’s Republic, which he served for many years as president. Actively professionally engaged in his law firm of Butzel, Levin and Winston, his commitment to improving life in Detroit led him to leadership in the Detroit Community Chest and the Red Cross, and indicative of his long-time concern with the Black community was his strong support of the Urban League. After his death at the age of seventy-one in 1948, at his request his home at 299 Mack was deeded to the Parkside Hospital as a home for nurses of all races who worked at the four neighboring Detroit hospitals.

A practical man, one of the founders of the Detroit Motorbus Company which brought the first busses to the streets of Detroit, he was also a talented musician who enjoyed opening his home to numerous musical groups. In 1960, a dozen years after his death, the junior high school in the Van Dyke area was dedicated in the name of Fred Butzel — a role model for youth as a distinguished jurist, sincere humanitarian and generous philanthropist interested in all the people.



Albert Einstein School, Oak Park. Albert Einstein (1879-1955), one of the giant figures of the 20th century whose name is synonymous with his theory of relativity, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1922. Born in Germany in 1879, he lived in Switzerland during the 1920’s. He first visited the United States in 1921 to gain support for the Zionist movement, and he became an American citizen in 1940, having emigrated to the USA in 1933. Finally at home for the remainder of his life at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, he continued his seminal work in physics and the quantum theory. His often quoted letter to President Roosevelt, in which he explained the potential world disaster if Germany would be first to develop the atomic bomb, was crucial to the for-

mation of the Manhattan Project and the subsequent development of the atom bomb. Less well known, however, were his strenuous efforts to help the refugees arriving in the United States from Nazi Germany.

In 1958, the Oak Park School District dedicated the Albert Einstein Elementary School, in recognition of his monumental contributions to the physical sciences and his passionate interest in social justice.



Rabbi B. Benedict Glazer

B. Benedict Glazer School, Detroit. Rabbi B. Benedict Glazer of Temple Beth El, although a native Texan who lived here only a decade, entered into life in Detroit with an enthusiasm which soon won him widespread respect and warm regard. Rabbi Morris Adler said of his colleague, “He was electric with life.” After serving at congregations in Pittsburgh and New York, Glazer was brought to Detroit in 1941 to succeed Rabbi Franklin. The son of a rabbi, he received his ordination at Hebrew Union College (1926) and was awarded a doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh (1938). In Detroit, he and his wife Ada increased their family with two children, Stephanie and Mark Jonathan. His congregation also grew, from 900 to almost 1600 families.

Strongly committed to democratic ideals, Glazer became active with the Jewish Community Council, a representative mass organization dependent on grass roots support. Soon after bringing his family here, upon being turned away from northern Michigan resorts because of anti-Semitic policies, he began a one-man speaking and writing campaign to effect a change which came to the attention of then Governor Harry Kelly. As a result, Michigan became the first state in the union to ban discriminatory literature in hotels and restaurants. In addition, Glazer was a strong advocate of care for the mentally ill, and a fighter for fair employment practices and non-discrimination in housing projects. Particularly noteworthy, in 1947 before the Civil Rights movement became a major national issue, Rabbi Glazer was cited as one of the seven citizens in Detroit who contributed most to the advancement of Negro welfare.

His untimely death in 1952 at the age of 49 stunned his near and extended community of friends. The B. Benedict Glazer Elementary School at 2001 LaBelle near Oakman Boulevard and Linwood, in a modest tree-lined Detroit neighborhood, was dedicated in 1967. His colleague Rabbi Leon Fram recognized that Glazer’s “outgoing character anticipated what we now call the ecumenic movement... His name on a public school will radiate into our city as a symbol of the American promise of equality, freedom, and brotherhood.”

Samuel Gompers School, Detroit. Achieving a worldwide reputation, for more than four decades Samuel Gompers (1850-1924) was an icon among American labor leaders at a time when the United States was bitterly hostile to organized labor.

Gompers, born in London, England, was reaching Bar Mitzvah age when he emigrated to New York in 1863. He fol-



Samuel Gompers

A COMMUNITY HONOR

lowed his father into the trade of cigar making and by 1872 became a naturalized citizen. In his mid-thirties, Gompers took the national organization of cigar makers from the Knights of Labor in 1886 and led them into the new American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.), over which he then presided every year but one until 1924. In order to make unionism respectable, he encouraged binding, written trade agreements. He kept his union politically neutral as long as he could, holding that labor must direct all its energy to gaining its economic goals, and that national labor organizations must be strong, with primacy over both local unions and international affiliations. His commitment to the working man and the labor movement was paramount to Gompers.

Hence, it is most appropriate that this school located at 20601 W. Davison Avenue and dedicated to educate the children of the working class in Detroit, a city synonymous with industrial and trade unionism, should bear the name of Samuel Gompers.

Seymour Gretchko School, West Bloomfield.

Superintendent of the West Bloomfield Schools for the past sixteen years, Dr. Seymour Gretchko has achieved the possibly unique distinction of having a public school named for him not only during his lifetime but while still actively employed in the district. Dr. Gretchko, born in New York, relocated in Detroit for a career in elementary and secondary education, serving in several capacities: teacher, counselor, principal, and regional superintendent. He earned all his degrees including his doctorate in education at Wayne State University, and has served in leadership positions on many significant regional and national educational committees.

Responding to one of the major issues of our day, Gretchko was instrumental in creating the widely endorsed 10 “American Values for American Schools” which stresses character development and an understanding of multiculturalism. Receiving national exposure in the *New York Times* (10/23/1996), the values education in the West Bloomfield schools is described as “transcending religious beliefs and (being) the foundation for an orderly and civil society...partly as an alternative to efforts ...to put prayer and religious values back into schools.”

The goals of harmony between the 6000 students and staff appear to be a working reality in the West Bloomfield School District headed by Gretchko, where Arab, Christian, Jewish and more than a dozen other ethnic groups speaking at least forty languages live, study and grow together. The district has been recognized by being awarded the distinction “National Exemplary Schools.” Currently, Gretchko is concerned about serious challenges that would provide movement toward elitism and separatism in education, rather than the understanding and empathy he feels are vital to living together in the global village.

Naming him the “ultimate superintendent,” the West Bloomfield School District dedicated the Seymour Gretchko Elementary School in 1995, “to honor a man who



Eccentric Newspapers, Bill Hansen

**Dr. Seymour
Gretchko with Sarah
& Brian Smith and
Andrew Gretchko**

believes that all children can be successful learners...and who in the course of a decade has prepared the students and district for the next century.”

For more on Dr. Gretchko, see the survey of Jewish school superintendents in Michigan Jewish History 1997.



**Max P.
Heavenrich, Sr.**

Max Heavenrich School, Saginaw. Max P. Heavenrich (1882-1953) was a native son of Saginaw, the city he called home, leaving it only temporarily to earn a degree in civil engineering at the University of Michigan and to spend three years in surveying, engineering, and construction in Detroit and Canada. Early in his career he had managed the Saginaw clothing business his father and uncles founded in 1886, was active in real estate and in a retail merchant credit bureau, and became a director of the Second National Bank.

Max Lilienthal, an important figure in the Reform movement, was but one of the many Jewish dignitaries who on visits to Saginaw were welcomed into the home of Max and Elinor (née Enggass, of Detroit) and the four Heavenrich children. A prominent worker in and for the community, he helped establish scholarship funds, was a leader in community charities, deeply interested himself in youth activities, and served on the boards of the Hoyt Library Trustees and the Saginaw Public Library Commission.

Eight years after his death, Max Heavenrich’s civic contributions to the people of Saginaw were acknowledged in naming and dedicating the school in his honor.



**Judge Harry B.
Keidan**

Harry B. Keidan School, Detroit. Judge Keidan (1882-1943), wrote a Detroit journalist, was a fair-minded, clear-thinking man whose stiff sentences to criminals were at variance with the warmth and humanity of his heart. “Keidan was a judge in whose hands the institutions of society were safe,” the reporter wrote.

Following his graduation from The Detroit College of Law (1904) and admission to the Bar, Keidan entered private practice. In 1912, he was appointed assistant, and five years later chief assistant prosecuting attorney for Wayne County. Appointed to the bench in 1920, he drafted the statute which resulted in the complete reorganization of Detroit Recorder’s Court, and was a leading force in the establishment of the Psychopathic Clinic and reform in the Probation Department. Appointed in 1927 by Governor Fred W. Green to the Wayne County Circuit Court and earning a reputation for his expertise in conciliation in labor and civic disputes, as well as for probation work, he won re-election three times.

Along with his friends Fred Butzel and Julian Krolik, he was a leading figure in the Jewish Welfare Federation and its predecessor, the United Jewish Charities. A longtime officer of Congregation Shaarey Zedek and active with the United Hebrew Schools, he was a traditionally observant Jew, who was known to walk to the courthouse from his Chicago Boulevard home if he were needed on the Sabbath. He participated actively on the Executive Board of the Detroit Area Council, Boy Scouts of

A COMMUNITY HONOR

America; the Detroit Board of Commerce; and the Goodwill Industries. Not the least among the tributes paid to Judge Keidan were the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws awarded by Wayne State University and the memorializing in his name of a city playground, a B'nai B'rith Lodge, and a Hillel chapter.

The Harry B. Keidan Elementary School was dedicated in 1963 on Collingwood and Petoskey adjacent to the Jewish Home for the Aged, as described in the Detroit Free Press, to honor this “jurist par excellence...a man of great heart and mind,” a role model for youth who was “devoted to Judaism and the American ideal.”



Julian H. Krolik

Julian H. Krolik Elementary School, Detroit. While a student at the University of Michigan, Julian Krolik organized a fund to help those who had suffered in the Kishineff pogrom. This gratuitous act marked out the path of community service he was to follow throughout his life. A native Detroiter born in 1886 to parents who themselves were active community leaders here, he married Golda Ginsburg Mayer and managed the wholesale Krolik Dry Goods Corporation founded by his father. But there was always time to add yet one more commitment to help those less fortunate than he was. Early on, he taught English to immigrants in the old Hannah Schloss Building on Vernor near Hastings, and while still

in his early twenties he became a member of the board of the United Jewish Charities, a position he held until his death in 1956. A leader in community movements on the local and national scene, he was active on many boards. A past president of the Jewish Welfare Federation and the North End Clinic as well as a Director of the Detroit Community Fund, he was named the first recipient of the prestigious annual Fred M. Butzel Award in 1951. Always on the side of the underdog, as one commentator noted, Krolik aligned himself with the Zionist cause long before the movement became popular. The Krolik Elementary School at 10101 Canfield in Detroit memorializes a life that kept faith with the proposition that I am my brother's keeper.

The Jewish History Society of Michigan would like to maintain a listing of public schools in the state named for Jewish individuals and, hence, welcomes being informed of any additions to those mentioned here.—The Editor

For this article, Shirlee Rose Iden researched in the archives of the Jewish Federation, Congregation Shaarey Zedek, the Burton Collection, and at the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives at the Reuther Library at Wayne State University, as well as conducting personal interviews with current school personnel. A former editor of the Southfield Eccentric, she not only has received numerous awards, but has taught history at MCCC and OCCC. This is Iden's third major survey article for Michigan Jewish History.

Michigan Scholars Shed New Light On Ancient Dura-Europos Synagogue

by Bernard Goldman

Editors Note: Prof. Bernard Goldman wrote his doctoral dissertation under University of Michigan archaeology professor, the late Clark Hopkins, and has continued to research the Dura synagogue for the past fifty years. His colleague, Dr. Joseph Gutmann, local rabbi and Wayne State University art history professor, has also researched, published and lectured widely on this unique synagogue. Prof. Goldman, the former chair of the Art History department at Wayne State University as well as the former director of the Wayne State University Press, is a valued member of our editorial committee. Michigan Jewish History is privileged to publish this short review of this significant study of international interest that has been conducted by art historians from Michigan.

No matter how much they differ in age, size, or relative opulence, the synagogues and temples of Michigan —Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform— are alike in the absence of figural decoration in the sanctuary. The walls may be clad in anything, from rich marble to lowly brick, but they are never covered with painted biblical settings, neither with murals depicting the crucial episodes in Israel's long history nor with portraits of its heroes, its patriarchs and prophets. While our Christian brethren had always brilliantly illuminated their church and cathedral walls with the scenes and saints of their triumphant past, why do we Jews remain abstemious?

Surely the question is ingenuous. Any youngster who has studied for her or his Bat or Bar Mitzvah knows the answer: Tradition! Painted pictures, graven images are not permitted. Authority? Read Exodus 20:4, Leviticus 26.1, Deuteronomy 5.8. So stern has been adherence to the injunction that it has even been supposed that Jews could not appreciate visual imagery; they were, as if in compensation, the People of the Book, of the Word. Thus, they were commanded from the beginning, and so it is held today.

But in fact the prohibition has not always prevailed. Archaeologists have recovered in ancient Jewish tombs and prayer halls likenesses “of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.” Their very numbers and variety —carved on sarcophagi, painted on catacomb walls, picked out in colorful mosaics carpeting synagogue floors— surely indicate they should not be considered as anomalies, deviations from an inflexible, all-encompassing rule against figural representation.

DURA-EUROPOS SYNAGOGUE

These discoveries have forced us to reevaluate the Jewish attitude towards sacred imagery in earlier times and, hence, the insight they may provide into the fabric of Jewish beliefs and culture in the early centuries of the Common Era. But a single, still unique painted synagogue found over 60 years ago continues to astonish.

It seemed reasonable to suppose that if Jewish communities in Israel over a thousand years ago decorated their synagogue floors with figural images—as at Beit Alfa, Sepphoris, or Hammam Lif—they also must have painted them on their walls. Yet no painted Jewish sanctuary had ever been found, confirmation that the injunction against painted images would not be violated, certainly not in the hall set apart from all others for holy service. Or so it seemed until Clark Hopkins, then at Yale University and later to become professor of classical archaeology at the University of Michigan, discovered an unsuspected chapter in Jewish history.

The Dig at Dura-Europos

In 1932 Hopkins was directing excavations for Yale University and the French Academy in the small city of Dura-Europos in the hinterland of Syria, built overlooking the middle Euphrates River. Dura had been forcibly taken by the Persians some 1700 years ago, depopulated, and left to be buried under the desert sands, a lost ruin until the archaeologists came to exhume its buildings.

One of Hopkin's workmen walking along an embankment chanced to spot a piece of plaster carrying traces of paint embedded in the earth. The odds against fragile paintings being preserved in a ruined city, open to desert storms and blistering sun for centuries, are so great that no archaeologist would ignore even the least of clues that such a treasure might possibly lie buried under his or her feet. Hopkins rightly suspected the colored fragment could mark the broken top edge of a building hidden deep inside the embankment. He had his workers follow along the line of the possible wall suggested by the plaster, and in so doing they traced the outline of a large rectangular hall. They began digging out the room, removing the earth almost but not quite to the face of the interior walls. The last layer of soil fell away after it had been undercut, exposing amazingly well-preserved paintings, their colors still bright and fresh. Hopkins was faced not only with the challenge of disengaging the hall, but also with saving the extremely fragile floor-to-ceiling murals that began to show signs of fading as the sunlight hit them. The murals, divided into three rows of rectangular panels, contained various dramatic scenes peopled with dozens upon dozens of figures.



Samuel anointing David

These were not the first paintings to be discovered at Dura. Small sections of painted plaster still clung to the brick walls of various temples dedicated to Syrian and

Hellenic gods found in previous seasons of digging. It was therefore assumed that this must be another such temple, fortunately in much better condition and with more extensive and complete paintings. A tall niche appeared in the center of one wall; it was presumed that no doubt it had once held a statue, the cult image. But suddenly the dig assumed a graver, indeed an astonishing, dimension. Hopkins and his colleagues could hardly believe their eyes as the last bits of dirt were brushed away from a painted panel high on the wall.

Found: The Earliest Synagogue with Pictures

A priestly-looking figure, imposing in a red cloak, stared out at them. On one side two smaller figures played flutes with a sacrificial animal at their feet, on the other side stood a small temple structure behind a large seven-branched candelabrum. And there, next to the priest's head, clearly written in Greek letters, was the name Aaron! This was no temple dedicated to Syrian and Hellenic gods. The archaeologists had found the earliest standing synagogue containing the earliest known series of Jewish pictures with biblical themes. Nothing like this synagogue had ever been seen before, and still today it remains without parallel.



**The High Priest Aaron beside the sanctuary, with the menorah, temple musicians and sacrificial animal.
Field photograph 1932: M. Le Palud.**

Quickly the niche assumed to be for a “pagan” statue was identified as a Torah ark. Not only was another menorah in the panel above it, but also the sacrifice of Isaac. Next to the ark a statuesque figure (prophet? patriarch?) read from a scroll. As the clearing progressed down to floor level where benches were built against the wall, other easily recognizable scenes came to light. One long panel contained the infant Moses being rescued from a floating box by a nude girl (Pharaoh’s daughter or one of her handmaidens?), and the babe now carried ashore by two women (perhaps the mother and sister of Moses?). In another large panel, Moses, now grown to manhood, parts the sea for the Israelites to pass through, and then closes the waves over their Egyptian pursuers. Further on, Hopkins recognized Elijah reviving the widow’s infant, while yet another panel showed Samuel anointing David. Unfortunately, we do not have all the paintings that once covered the hall. Perhaps a third of the original murals were lost because over the long centuries those sections of walls not covered by earth had weathered away.

Paintings at Dura-Europos Provoke New Questions

As one can imagine, a great deal of scholarly ink has been spilled over the Dura synagogue and its paintings by cultural and art historians, biblical scholars, and theologians. How are the murals to be reconciled with the biblical injunctions against

images? What was the nature of the Jewish community that built this synagogue in the 3rd century C.E.? Where did these Jews come from: Persia, Babylonia, Israel? Was it a renegade Jewish group that commissioned paintings, outside of a “normative Judaism?” Who was the painter: Jew or gentile, Syrian or Persian? Did the painter invent the various scenes or had he copied other Jewish art works of whose existence we are entirely ignorant? What are the implications of the artist having chosen to depict only these events out of all of the Jewish past and then place them in this sequence on the walls? What do the murals tell us about the hopes and fears, the aspirations and beliefs, of 3rd-century Judaism in the Diaspora? Was the Dura synagogue unique, or does it point to a tradition for painted synagogues that is otherwise lost to us? What did the panels mean to the community of some 60 families that gathered in the prayer hall? Are the murals a key to the order and substance of the services that were held in the sanctuary?



**Figure reading
from a scroll**

Every answer to the problems inherent in this unique monument only raises a host of new questions. But the singular importance of the paintings lies in the light they may shed on an otherwise dimly lit period in the history of Judaism. While today the paintings are hardly a secret to scholars in the field — even *Time* magazine over twenty years ago reproduced several of the paintings in full color — popular awareness of their existence is surprisingly limited.

Clark Hopkins died May 21, 1976, but a strong Michigan connection with the Dura synagogue remains today as the research he initiated is continued.

Murals Moved to Damascus

Where are the murals today? As soon as Hopkins sent news of the discovery back to Yale, he was told that the paintings must be allotted to the University at the season’s end, when the division of finds between the school and the Syrian authorities would be made. But the Syrians were planning a new museum in Damascus and, having first choice, retained this showcase monument to be rebuilt in the museum as one of its centerpieces. Thus, if you want to see the Jewish paintings that were carefully removed from the walls at Dura by a Yale archaeological architect and set up in a reconstruction of the sanctuary in Damascus, a gratuity will encourage one of the museum guards to unlock the door to the room and take you in. May you take photographs of the murals? No! Unfortunately, it is not permitted.

For further reading on this subject:

Bernard Goldman, editor of *The Discovery of Dura-Europos* by Clark Hopkins, Yale University Press, 1979.

Joseph Gutmann, editor of *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-evaluation (1932-1992)*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1992.

Searching for a Rabbi:

The Records of the Committee on Pulpit Vacancy of Temple Beth El, 1898-1899

by Heidi S. Christein

In a letter written on “Office of the Secretary” stationery dated October 2, 1898 a committee of eighteen members of Congregation Beth El in Detroit met and recorded their deliberations concerning their rabbi’s resignation. Dr. Grossman, the congregation’s leader since 1884, had expressed his desire to resign so that he might assume the pulpit of a temple in Cincinnati. Samuel Heavenrich put forth the following resolution:

In as much as Rev. Louis Grossman has been called to one of the largest and influential congregations in the United States to fill its pulpit there, and as a mark of our appreciation in which we hold Dr. Grossman, and to further his welfare in which we have the deepest interest, we recommend to the members of Congregation Beth El that Dr. Grossman be released from all obligations which may bind him to this congregation.

Mr. Heavenrich’s resolution was adopted without a dissenting vote.

On October 19, 1898 a letter addressed “To the Honorable the Committee on Pulpit Vacancy of Congregation Beth El” began as follows: “The undersigned appointed by your honorable body as a sub-committee to prepare a schedule of rules upon the basis of which the services of a Rabbi is to be secured for Congregation Beth El, beg leave to report that we have given the matter our most careful consideration at a meeting held this evening and present the following for your adoption.” What the sub-committee presented were suggestions as to how the search for the new Rabbi be conducted, and a list of credentials “as to the Rabbi’s fitness, the principal points of which shall be

Moral standing in present and previous Congregations and Communities
Time of experience and where
Ability as Reader, Preacher and Lecturer
Ability to successfully superindent [sic] and conduct Sabbath School
Ability to direct and supervise choir
Mental, physical and moral qualifications”

The Search Begins

These requirements were adopted and the Committee began to contact prospective rabbis. Among the early candidates was a gentleman from Paducah, Kentucky. On November 4, 1898 Adolph Freund wrote to the “Paducah Rabbi” as he became known in the Committee’s correspondence.

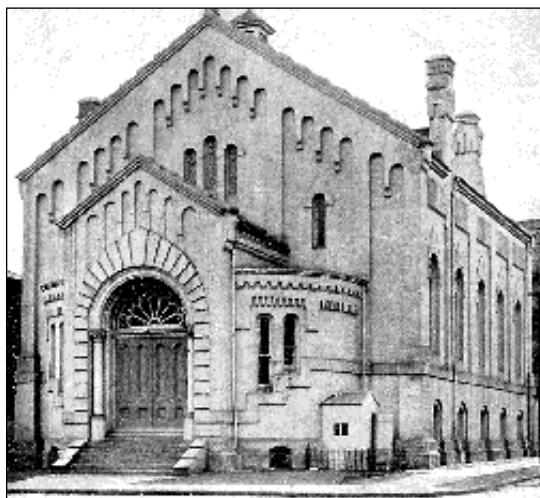
SEARCHING FOR A RABBI

I have had some correspondence with my friend E. Roberts Esq. of Chicago and incidentally he mentions your name and I am free to say pays you the most flattering tribute....

I do not write this letter in an official capacity...As a preliminary to official correspondence, I would request some information from you and principally whether you could be induced to become a candidate for the vacant position.

Mr. Freund went on to inquire if the Paducah Rabbi was “married or single” what his experience as a “preacher and teacher” was, and if he could supply “a sort of autobiography.”

“I might add,” Mr. Freund continued, “that we have a splendid congregation—reform—comprising about 140 members. The field for an active and popular minister is a fertile one....The salary to be paid is \$2500 or possibly \$3000...Dr. Grossman received for several years \$3500 but the congregation is neither able nor willing to do so at present.”



Temple Beth El, 1867-1903, formerly a Baptist church

Before receiving a reply from the Rabbi, Mr. Freund received a letter from a friend who was in the whiskey business in Louisville, Kentucky.

...I know very little regarding the Paducah Rabbi. Would say that I do not know the gentleman personally and, as I take you do not want me to write to Paducah for information, can only say that I have heard of him from several parties and from those I have a very good report of him. They tell me he is a nice little gentleman and of ability and in the course of time, with the proper experience, would make a very good preacher.

Finally, the Paducah Rabbi himself answered Adolph Freund’s letter. He wrote that he was 22 years old, had graduated from the Hebrew Union College the year before, and found it a great compliment to be asked to be a candidate for the Beth El vacancy. He nevertheless declined to apply. It was no matter. Other men sought the position.

Applications Arrive from Across the Country

In a letter from Bradford, Pennsylvania, Rev. Louis G. Reynolds wrote to the “President of the Hebrew Reform Congregation, Detroit.” “From some gleanings in the Jewish and secular press, I learn that the position of Rabbi in your esteemed congregation has — through the resignation of the present incumbent — become vacant

and I herewith take both the pleasure and liberty to offer my services for the vacancy.”

“I fully realize,” he proceeded “the high standard of ability and eloquence that a congregation like yours has a right to expect from its minister and were I not fully conscious of the fact that I shall be able to meet it I would not for one moment think of offering my services...”

Rabbi Reynolds went on to provide an autobiographical sketch. “I am an unmarried man 28 years old...I speak the English and German fluently and eloquently, with a purity and absence of accent such as could only be expected from a native and of which you may very easily convince yourself by extending a trial call any time you desire. I have been on the Jewish reformed pulpit for the last 7 years...I am proud to say that in both my charges I have succeeded in gaining both the sincere love and admiration of my flock by my sincere and untiring ministrations.”

He ended by writing that “I am a young man, full of the fire and enthusiasm peculiar to my age and endowed with the energy that knows no retreat from the path of duty mapped out.” While Rabbi Reynolds saw his path mapped out and leading to Detroit, Beth El chose not to extend to him the trial call he so earnestly sought.

Other letters of inquiry arrived. From New York, Rabbi Benjamin wrote a two paragraph letter in a beautiful script; the first paragraph in its entirety being, “As Dr. Grossman has resigned and I am disengaged, I have the honor to offer to your congregation my services as English preacher.” While his letter was not nearly as loquacious as Rabbi Reynolds’ had been, Rabbi Benjamin also failed to receive an invitation to visit Beth El.

Some candidates seemed to have motives other than the welfare of the congregation in Detroit in mind when they sent their letters of inquiry. One man wrote from Albany, New York: “The vacancy of your pulpit and the desirability of the place prompt me to address you. I am completing my third year in my present position. I am associate minister in my present congregation....I have been grandly treated here and am perfectly satisfied but for the fact that I am only associate and therefore hampered variously by my senior.”

The Rabbi proceeded to say that he wished to develop his “powers” unhindered by the Senior Rabbi, since “...this relationship has been disastrous everywhere.” He also needed to be assured that while he would “...welcome and prize the consideration of your body providing it come in a way that will not detract from my standing and dignity with my present congregation.”

Some men who had applied early became impatient to hear word of a decision by the committee in Detroit. “It is a considerable interval since my application,” wrote a Rabbi from Waco. “Your worthy committee must have arrived at some conclusion by this time. You can with little effort dispel my state of distressing expectancy by informing me pro or con. Should you deem me a candidate unfit intellectually to acquit myself in any reasonable way in your pulpit I shall take the wholesome information stoically and continue to vegetate in sequestered resignation.” He concluded by writing that “I hope that the thought of Texas does not urge upon you the ill-conditioned

bias that all its preachers are benighted backwoodsman sermonizing astride prancing broncos, with the persuasive oratory of ‘six shooters.’”

Not only did potential candidates write to Beth El, but friends and supporters of rabbis also sent letters to the committee. In early October 1898 Adolph Freund received a letter from a friend of his living in Evansville, Indiana, recommending a rabbi. “We have a man here for whose intellectual powers and sincerity and capacity and desire for work, I have the highest admiration. In fact, he is too big for this congregation.” The Evansville attorney went on to detail the high standing the Rabbi had gained in the community, but not within his own congregation. “While those who appreciate him most in the congregation would regret to be severed from him, yet their friendship for him is so sincere that they would like to see him in a larger and better field....Can you suggest to me the lay of the land and is there any use of his trying?...Of course you know him; Dr. Rypins.”

Rabbi Franklin Applies

At about this same time, one of the more restrained letters to arrive in Detroit came from a young man in Omaha, Nebraska, in which he offered himself as a candidate. “As may be known to you, I have occupied my present pulpit since my graduation from the Hebrew Union College in 1892—with what success I prefer that you ascertain from the members and officers of my congregation rather than from myself.” Rabbi Leo M. Franklin went on to write that “Believing that the best testimonial a man can offer is the record of his past, I can simply say, that I shall be most pleased if you see fit to inquire into my personal character and also see the nature of the work I am doing here and in Lincoln...” where he supervised a small congregation in addition to his principal duties in Omaha. Based on this and a visit to Nebraska by members of the pulpit vacancy committee, Rabbi Franklin would be invited to preach before the Detroit congregation. The list of potential candidates was being reduced.

The Beth El search process was far from smooth however. On October 17, 1898 Rabbi Franklin wrote again to Adolph Freund to

...assure you of my sincere appreciation of the kindly sentiments contained in your esteemed favor of the 13th. However, though I enter fully into the spirit of your suggestion that I make formal application to Congregation Beth El, circumstances have arisen that persuade me that it would be ill advised for me to do so. Chief among these is the fact that among those



**Rabbi Franklin and wife Hattie
in Omaha**

who desire to be heard by your congregation is my brother-in-law, Rabbi I. L. Rypins of Evansville, Ind. and between him and myself there has always existed a tacit confidence that we should not compete for the same position. Had I known of his possible candidacy when I wrote to you, I should not have done so, and now that I do know it, I feel in honor bound to withdraw.

The Pulpit Vacancy Committee now had to decide whether they preferred Dr. Rypins or Rabbi Franklin, as well as having to consider other candidates. The flurry of letters continued; opinions about the rabbis were sought from all quarters. In a letter sent to Detroit from Cleveland, Ohio, the committee received the following information,

I am aware that Dr. Wolfenstein has urged the claims of A. Simon, of Sacramento, and he may be the right man....Reynolds of Bradford is unknown; Lazerus, of Toronto, is comparatively unknown. I would consider Schonfarber the best qualified. He is a man of sterling character, zealous and a splendid worker in Baltimore. He has a lovely wife of amiable disposition, and the only thing that I cannot understand is why he resigned his charge...

The letter went on to say that "...Rabbi Franklin, of Omaha, has good qualifications and is well spoken of." The writer mentioned several other men and concluded his candidate summary with "Benjamin, of New York, will not suit your people, although I think he is a splendid gentleman."

Philip W. Frey, an attorney from Evansville, made a strong case for his friend Dr. Rypins. In an October 1898 letter, Mr. Frey described Rypins as "thirty-six years old, he is a married man, a graduate of the Cincinnati college...was born in the province of Warsaw...and while he may not be designated as a handsome man, he being rather short and very stout, he has the merit of being a clean man physically and one can readily judge him to be a devotee to soap and water." Philip Frey went on to write that Dr. Rypins had always been "...a candid, sincere, earnest, idealistic Jew...[who] believes and preaches the essence rather than the formal ritualism of our religion." He was also popular with the clergy of the city who came to the synagogue on holy days to hear him speak. In summation, Mr. Frey gave Dr. Rypins this accolade, "There is another thing much in his favor; he has an attractive brilliant little woman for his wife."

Despite the intense lobbying, the Pulpit Vacancy Committee invited only two men to speak to the Beth El membership. One of them was not Dr. Rypins. Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber of Baltimore spoke to the congregation on Saturday, November 19, 1898 and on Saturday, November 26, 1898 Rabbi Leo M. Franklin of Omaha, Nebraska would "conduct services and deliver an address. The members of congregation Beth El are cordially invited to be present," concluded the invitation.

Nine days after Rabbi Schanfarber visited Detroit, he sent a letter to Louis Blitz, the President of Beth El.

Upon my return from Detroit last week, I spoke to the manager of the paper in regard to the possibility of my giving up my editorial work, and

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they made inducements as to my remaining which would not justify my going to Detroit at the salary which Congregation Beth El is prepared to pay. I have had a long talk with my wife in regard to this matter and while I prefer pulpit work, yet we both feel that I would not be justified in making the material sacrifice. I trust you will not regard this as mercenary on my part.

Unanimous Vote for Rabbi Franklin

The Baltimore Rabbi's letter had seemingly little impact in Detroit. By the time its news became known, the congregation had voted unanimously to elect Leo M. Franklin their 11th Rabbi.

On December 10, 1898 Samuel Katz, President of Temple Israel, wrote to Louis Blitz that the Nebraska congregation had given Rabbi Franklin the release he had requested. Mr. Katz wrote that he would regret losing not only his rabbi, but also his friend.

Never in my life have I felt like singing the praises of anyone as I do in this case, but I will refrain from innumering [sic] the many good qualities of my friend, and will only add that we will lose and you will gain a man. I, as well as our congregation, feel somewhat repaid for our sacrifice in knowing that Rabbi Franklin cast his lot among people who can & will appreciate the worth of a scholar and gentleman.

Rabbi Franklin delivered his first sermon at Temple Beth El on January 27, 1899. He served as Rabbi of Temple Beth El until 1941, and as Rabbi Emeritus until his death in 1948.

Heidi S. Christein is currently archivist at the Rabbi Leo M. Franklin Archive of Temple Beth El and curator of the exhibit "Rabbi Leo M. Franklin: The Man and His Message." She received her archival training at Wayne State University and is a graduate of University of Chicago and New York University. A member of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, she is a welcome first-time contributor.



Rabbi Leo M. Franklin The Man and His Message

EXHIBIT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
THROUGH NOVEMBER
TEMPLE BETH EL

Celebrities & Celebrations



The Honorable David Hermelin, center, and wife Doreen with Vice President Al Gore at swearing in ceremony at White House.

David Hermelin appointed United States Ambassador to Norway.

In the impressive induction ceremony at the White House presided over by Vice President Gore, the new Ambassador David Hermelin said: “No one gets here alone. We are the product of all of our family, teachers, friends and counselors who have invested in us, guided us and nurtured us.” Recognized as a distinguished leader in the local and international community and recipient of the prestigious 1996 Fred M. Butzel Award of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, Hermelin also had served on the national Jewish committee of the Clinton-Gore campaign. Using his late father’s Bible, in a profoundly touching gesture acknowledging his heritage, Hermelin placed his hand on the words “Honor thy father and thy mother” when taking the oath of office.

World Salutes Max Fisher on 90th Birthday

This summer on July 15, Max Fisher marked his 90th birthday, a milestone event recognized locally, nationally and internationally. Max Fisher has helped shape the destiny of the Jewish people. In our generation, he has led in the fulfillment of the mitzvah of “Pidyon Shavuyim,” the redemption of the captives. He has become a legend in his own lifetime and is recognized as the preeminent Jewish leader of our age.

He has been the respected spokesman of American Jewry to presidents of the United States and other leaders of the government. He has similarly been the spokesman of American Jewry to the leaders of the State of Israel. He embodies a moral authority achieved by decades of exemplary service recognized everywhere.



President Ronald Reagan conferring with Max Fisher at the White House, 1981.

Jewish Community Archives

Max Fisher has embraced in his care and commitment the welfare of his city and state, his country and his people. At a time when lesser men seek to lighten their burdens, Max, with his youthful spirit, takes on new assignments and accepts new challenges. During this age of Jewish rebirth in our own time, Max has addressed and confronted the difficult and sometimes painful realities of the present, while preserving the vision of a greater tomorrow, and he has guided, nurtured and elevated our collective life. **Rabbi Irwin Groner, Senior rabbi of Congregation Shaarey Zedek.**



**Cantor Louis Klein and
J.T.S. Chancellor
Ismar Schorsch**

Jewish Theological Seminary Confers Honorary Doctor of Music on Cantor Louis Klein

Louis Klein, Cantor Emeritus of Congregation B'nai Moshe in West Bloomfield, in February was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music, honoris causa, by the Jewish Theological Seminary. Attending yeshivahs in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Belgium before the outbreak of World War II, he studied Talmud and liturgical chant. Before emigrating to the United States, he spent the war years in England. A baritone, in 1958 he was appointed as hazzan at B'nai Moshe.

His award recognizes not only his attention to the spiritual and musical needs of his congregants, but also his founding and directing of choral ensembles, his teaching of thousands of children including their preparation for their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, and his national activities with the Cantors Assembly. Cantor Louis Klein has brought honor to the cantorate and to the Jewish world.

Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives Named at Wayne State University

The Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives was named in April in honor of the late civic and Jewish leader who had a great love of Jewish history and who spearheaded support for its collection and preservation. Sponsored by the Jewish

**Distinguished Professor of History
Philip Mason; Wayne State University
President Irvin D. Reid; Joel Jacob, chair
of the Federation Archives Committee;
Mary Lou Zieve and Susanne Simons,
daughters of the late Leonard N.
Simons; and James D. Grey, president of
the Jewish Historical Society.**



Photo by Bob Benyas

Seferim/Books

Some Michigan History, and Some Jewish Values for Young Readers.

Children's books by Patricia Polacco.

When considering gift books for children or grandchildren on holidays and birthdays, don't miss the beautiful and moving picture books of Michigan-born author Patricia Polacco. Born in Lansing in 1944, Polacco spent much of her childhood in rural Michigan near Union City on the farm of her Ukrainian and Georgian grandparents. The stories she has created from her family memories, many of them with Jewish themes, are uniquely heartwarming.

The Hanukah story, **The Trees of the Dancing Goats** (1996), is quickly becoming a classic. Polacco relates the customs of a Jewish farm family in Michigan during the holiday: Babushka dipping candles, Momma polishing the menorah, and, most special, Grampa carving and painting small wooden toys. In this story, the family learns that their neighbors on the next farm have scarlet fever and are unable to make preparations for their Christmas holiday. Her family decides to take their Hanukah cheer—latkes, candles, roast chicken, and Grampa's "dancing goats"—to their neighbors. The miracle of holiday sharing that ensues will bring smiles to young and old readers. In words and colorful pictures, Polacco paints a vivid portrait of a farm family and their generosity of spirit.

Passover is an important holiday in Polacco's **Mrs. Katz and Tush** (1992). Mrs. Katz, an elderly Jewish widow, is befriended by an African-American boy from her neighborhood, who loves to hear her stories of the old country and to sample her kugel. They compare the struggles and triumphs of their cultures and cement their friendship at a Passover seder. **Tikvah Means Hope** (1994) commemorates the devastating fires in Oakland, California, which began on Sukkoth in 1992. An entire neighborhood rallies to help each other to cope and a Jewish family finds a symbol of hope in their surviving Sukkah. Probably Polacco's best-known book is **The Keeping Quilt** (1988). In spare but moving prose, she chronicles a family quilt made from the clothes of her Russian great-grandmother as it "experiences" Shabbats, birthdays, and weddings in New York, Michigan, and California through the generations.

Not all of Patricia Polacco's books have specific Jewish or Michigan content, but all cross borders and cultures with ideas about family traditions, friendships across generations and cultures, working together for community, and finding hope in despair. Her stories provide delightful ways to present these ideas to children.

Some other titles by Patricia Polacco: **Babushka's Doll** (1990), **Thundercake** (1990), **Some Birthday!** (1991), **The Bee Tree** (1993), **In Enzo's Splendid Gardens** (1997).

Reviewed by **Aimee Ergas**

THE JEWS OF LATIN AMERICA

by Dr. Judith Laikin Elkin, Revised Edition, 338 pp., by Holmes & Meier.

Almost two decades ago Dr. Judith Laikin Elkin produced what experts have called the first scholarly study of Latin American Jewry. In the first edition of her work she brilliantly covered five centuries of history, expanded in this revised edition to include the Jewish history of Latin America from 1980 to 1998. These new chapters describe the relationship between Latin American Jews and the State of Israel as well as their relationship with the non-Jewish community, making this edition a holistic and thorough work.

In the preface of her revised edition, Dr. Elkin writes on the one hand about the marginalization of the Jew and the accelerated rate of intermarriage, and on the other about their growing influential role. As she points out, conclusions are just temporal because “the history of the Jews of Latin America is a work in progress.” The author’s dynamic historical update and review are enriched by statistical data that contributes vital and reliable information for further research.

Formed between 1889 and World War I by East European Ashkenazim, the Latin American Jewish communities have evolved and become successful despite their countries’ volatile economies. This success, Elkin notes, has led to nationalistic reactions against Jews. Elkin’s findings lead her to conclude that during dictatorial governments in Latin America, Jewish survival was more the result of the secular rather than the religious Jew. In contrast to the United States, Jewish life in Latin America is scattered throughout twenty-one countries with their own societies and separate governments that have made their acculturation unique. Elkin also recognizes the unusual ties between the Jews of Latin America and Israel. Zionism helped retain their Jewish identity giving birth to the term “Israelita” as an alternative to “Judío.” However, the return of democracy to Latin American countries marked the revival of religion. Missionaries of different Jewish traditions established synagogues and schools during this period throughout Latin America.

Finally, Dr. Elkin draws a thoughtful conclusion about the complexity of the relationship between “the Jews and non-Jews.” A conflictive and complex tapestry bring these two worlds together. “Dichotomies of attraction and repulsion characterized the nature and the relationship between Jews and non-Jews.”

The Jews of Latin America is an outstanding historical and sociological compendium of the past and present of the Jews in Latin countries, and this book is an indispensable tool for those who wish to understand the life of Jewish communities in South and Central America.

Reviewed by **Rabbi Leonardo A. Bitran**. *Born and raised in Chile, Leonardo Bitran is the rabbi of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, B’nai Israel*

In Memoriam



Dr. Harry E. August: 1898 — 1998

**Pioneer in Psychiatry and
Psychoanalysis, Founder of Sinai
Hospital**

Born in 1898 in Columbus City, Indiana and coming to Detroit as an infant with his parents, Russian immigrants Isaac and Ida Ogooshevitz, Dr. Harry August's life spanned a complete century.

Dr. August graduated from University of Michigan Medical School in 1922 and started his internship in the psychiatric ward, work that caught his fascination. He continued graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. After further studies in Vienna and London, he earned the degree Doctor of Psychological Medicine, the equivalent of the present American Board of Neurology and Psychiatry.

Returning to Detroit in 1926, he began what was to be over 65 years of private practice in psychiatry. He joined the staffs of Receiving and Eloise Hospitals, began to teach at Wayne State University Medical School, and over the years served as a consultant to numerous children's and social service agencies.

Dr. August served as the chief psychiatrist at the North End Clinic, established in 1926 by the Jewish Welfare Federation as a free and low-fee outpatient clinic, both to serve the needy and to provide an opportunity for study by Jewish physicians who were discriminated against obtaining staff positions in area hospitals. A leader in the founding of Sinai Hospital in 1953, Dr. August was the individual responsible for the establishment of its independent Psychiatric Unit. He continued to teach the residents at Sinai until the age of 95.

Interested in Freudian ideas early in his practice, he consequently completed his own analysis at the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute in 1940 and, along with a few others, began the practice of psychoanalysis in the southeast Michigan area. He served as the first president of the 1953 forerunner of the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute and continued to be active until his retirement in 1978. He served as a member of the Michigan Mental Health Commission for ten years, finally resigning in protest over budget cuts that reduced the care for the mentally ill.

In 1949, August, appointed by the Surgeon General's Office as the psychiatrist in a medical team inspecting American army hospitals abroad, made his first of many visits to Israel. An early and ardent Zionist, August had been president of the Zionist

Organization of Detroit and had organized the first Balfour Ball, so that this trip to Israel reinforced his fascination with the new state.

August's father had been president of Congregation Mogen Abraham for a quarter of a century; in 1920 Harry was president of the University of Michigan Jewish student organization. For over 60 years, he and his wife Helen were members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, where his father-in-law, Isaac Shetzer, had been president. August was an active participant in the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. He was a longtime member of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, endorsing its mission of preserving and publicizing the story of the Jews in Michigan.

Blessed with great energy, Dr. Harry August was a man of passion, dedication and a great zest for his profession, for life, and for the Jewish people. He indeed made a difference in his century.



Footnotes from the Editors

By Judith Levin Cantor
and Sidney Simon



This issue, the eighth for Judy as editor, and the second for Sid, is proving especially stimulating. As is evident, the articles in this issue demanded time-consuming and extensive research by the writers – which they pursued with unflagging enthusiasm. The subjects proved fascinating to these professionals who make up the editorial committee, and we trust now will prove unique and interesting to you, our readers.

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, founded in 1959, will be marking its fortieth year — and we look forward to announcing significant projects to even further advance our mission of collecting, preserving and educating about the history of the Jews of Michigan. More and more we are finding that our work matters. Our own back issues of the journal already provide invaluable reference material that is nowhere else to be found. The Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives, and other archives recently established within our community, are providing us with photographic and primary source material that truly makes history come alive. We salute Sharon Alterman, director of the Jewish Community Archives, for her cooperative spirit in making this material available to us and we eagerly anticipate the forthcoming exhibit, “Memory and Vision,” that will mark the centennial of the United Jewish Charities, the forerunner of Federation.

As we enter the 21st century, we continue to appreciate the wisdom of the founders of the Jewish Historical Society — to preserve the story of our history here and of the immigrant generation, so that that story can be told, as we are instructed in the Book of Joshua “when your children shall ask their parents in time to come.”

Jewish Historical Society President's Report, 1997 –98

By James D. Grey

We continue to be a very active group, fulfilling our purpose as stated in our bylaws: to foster the collection, preservation and publication of all materials on the history of the Jews in Michigan; and to...spread authentic information concerning Michigan Jewish history.

Our programs, under the continuing leadership of past president Adele Staller included a visit in the early fall to the Sepporhis exhibit at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, a unique exhibit featuring an important archaeological excavation in Israel.

By popular request, we then sponsored a repeat visit to the various homes of interest to the Jewish community in the now historic Boston/Edison neighborhood. This neighborhood is now being revitalized and the homes restored by current residents.

At the annual Book Fair in November we featured popular columnist and author George Cantor, who provided insight not only to the Detroit Tigers of 1968, but also to the involved social issues of that time.

Topping previous attendance records at Borders Books, Michigan author Judith Laikin Elkin presented an informative and entertaining account of the history of the Jews of Latin America. The revised edition of this scholar's book is reviewed in this journal.

As seen in the "Celebrities and Celebrations" feature, the naming of the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives at the Reuther Library of Wayne State University was a signal community event, of which the Jewish Historical Society was proud to be a co-sponsor. We salute Sharon Alterman, the capable director.

In May we co-sponsored another blockbuster sell-out event, a lunch-and-learn with the Quarter Century Club of Federation titled "Back to the Future: New Ways of Looking at Old Things." Michigan State University Prof. Kenneth Waltzer demonstrated the CD-Rom he produced for McGraw Hill publishers which illustrates the ethnic immigration patterns of major American cities including Detroit.



Kari Grosinger of Federation; MSU Prof. Kenneth Waltzer; Judy Cantor, event chair; Harlene Appelman; Jim Grey, JHS president at "Back to the Future: New Ways of Looking at Old Things."

Photo by James Grey

MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

The Leonard N. Simons History Award was presented this year to Judith Levin Cantor by Rabbi Irwin Groner at the annual meeting in June, also a record breaking event with an attendance of well over 200.

Judy, editor and JHS past president, for many years has been active in the promotion of local Jewish history in many areas of the local and state community.

Introduced by *Jewish News* publisher Arthur Horwitz, U.S. Senator Carl Levin was the featured speaker, providing

an intimate retrospective glance at his Detroit roots and how they have affected his two decades on the "Hill."

Our own history has been enhanced with the display of the photographs of the past presidents at the Kahn JCC. Not only have our programs been outstanding. Our membership is near record levels, our finances are sound and our endowment program is proceeding successfully. With appreciation to our founders and all those who have participated to bring us to this level, we enter our 40th year with optimism for continued success in fulfilling our important mission — "zachor" — to remember.



Photo by James Grey

Judith Levin Cantor receives Leonard N. Simons History Award at Annual Meeting: l. to r. Arthur Horwitz, Judy Cantor, Senator Levin, Joan Braun, JHS president Grey.



Photo by James Grey

The Officers and Board of Directors, 1997

Seated front left to right: Adele Staller, President Jim Grey, Sarah Bell, Ida Levine, Gilbert Borman with Harry. Standing: Neal Grossman, Evy Budnitzky, Sue Shifman, Benno Levi, Michelle Goldstein, Harriet Siden, Judy Cantor, Cynthia Mandelbaum, Irwin Shaw, Marilyn Natchez, Alan Kandel, Robert Feldman, Joe Kramer, Joan Braun, Cindy Brody.

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