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After I had grown up and moved away, I longed for that kind of congregation, one in which everyone was my cousin or aunt or uncle, metaphorically if not literally, one in which everyone knows who is ill, who is doing well at college, who is troubled, who has great joy. I joined congregations where that kind of family wasn't present yet continued to yearn for the feeling that ought to be there. Now, however, I belong to a synagogue where I feel surrounded by family. And that's what the little oasis in the desert gave me—a sense of the need to strive for true Jewish community and a sense of Judaism's profundity as a religion. The oasis stayed green, and it grew Judaism.



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## IRENE PAULL AS JEWISH WOMAN RADICAL

by  
Laura Schere

*"The first time they called me a sheeny  
they made me a Communist,  
which was very logical, you know."<sup>1</sup>*

In this statement, made during a 1977 interview, Irene Levine Paull (1908–1981), who spent much of her life as a political organizer and writer, at once recalled the taunting of her Duluth, Minnesota, neighbors and expressed the logic of her radicalization in no uncertain terms. Paralleling a recollection by author Richard Wright that he became "a Communist because [he] was a Negro," Paull's comment vastly simplifies the relationship between her ethnicity and her participation in the Communist movement.<sup>2</sup> Paull's is a logic of recollection, one that projects onto her younger self the motivations of an older and considerably more Jewish-identified woman. But more than a projection, this quote possibly points to a Jewish motivation behind the involvement of a generation of American Jewish women in the Communist movement. The logic of this motivation is lost on most historians of the subject. This inadequate understanding is not surprising, for the rationale behind Jewish participation in the Communist Party was often twisted, and it even entailed going to great lengths to deny one's own religion. In a book accompanying a 1996 exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York City, *Too Jewish?: Challenging Traditional Identities*, the particular twist in this logic is captured in a quote of Fritz Lohner, "You deny what is Jewish in you, and that is too, too Jewish!"<sup>3</sup>

I have here pieced together a narrative of Paull's life, using her own words. The sources are interviews, her personal papers, and her stories and newspaper and magazine columns. They show a

woman who navigated among the possibilities afforded by the constraints of ethnicity, class, gender, and political milieu. From within these constraints, Paull carved out space for her own future as a socialist, a writer, and, in many ways, an oddity in her generation of Minnesota Jews. Nevertheless, Paull's story can be seen as a particularly Jewish tale; it suggests revision of the outworn concept of assimilation that has been used to describe ethnic experience and contributions to that era of American history in which she lived. Her political expression, I will argue here, fits interestingly into a trajectory of American Jewish women's radicalism.



*Left to right: Sam (unknown), sister Etta and Irene Levine, Duluth, ca. 1915.*

### BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS

Born in Duluth in 1908, Irene Levine Paull grew up in an insular community of immigrants who had come from Peryaslov, a Ukrainian shtetl.<sup>4</sup> Young Irene did not encounter non-Jews until she entered public school, where schoolmates ridiculed her immigrant clothes and teachers compared her unfavorably with those who had come to Minnesota from Northern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Her father, Maurice Levine, the first child in his family born in the United States, traded cattle. Her mother, Eva, had intermittent work sewing buttons in an overall factory. As was typical among Jewish immigrants, the tight-knit family did not engage in socialist

politics. Nonetheless, Paull recalled her mother as having been something of a rebel in her own right. While it does not seem that Eva Levine engaged in organized socialist activity, she did share in experiences and circumstances that, according to immigration and labor historians, produced a generation of radical Jewish women. Apprenticed to a tailor at age twelve, Eva had followed the tradi-

tional course of most young Jewish women who came of age in the Pale of Settlement. Jewish law mandated that women reign over the "lowly" secular sphere of the market as breadwinners; and if they were "lucky," their toil supported a scholarly husband who dwelled in the vaunted realm of the spiritual.<sup>6</sup> When the influence of the Enlightenment penetrated the ghetto walls during the nineteenth century, the contradiction between the Jewish woman's large economic responsibility and a Jewish tradition that kept her from intervening in public affairs set in motion what Israeli scholar and journalist Naomi Shepherd calls a "mainspring of rebellion" that catapulted large numbers of Jewish women into socialist and Zionist movements.

Although Paull's mother did not resolve her contradictory experience by becoming a socialist, she was reportedly an atheist, a stance that in that milieu constituted rebellion. Additionally, the fact that she was able to read and write Yiddish, the importance of which her daughter appropriately stressed, means that she had achieved the most cherished prize of enlightenment among Jewish women—education. Immigration to America seemed to promise new opportunities. But, like most Jewish immigrants, she found no streets paved with gold: Her life of drudgery continued in Duluth. As Irene Paull relates, there her mother transmitted her atheism and longings for a better world to her daughter. She sought betterment, however, not through radical politics but in the possibility of entering the middle class.

Mrs. Levine's attitudes as a new American dovetail with the assessment by various scholars on the political outlook of Jewish women who had emigrated from Eastern Europe early in this century. Shepherd, for example, proposes that "the explosion and initiative among Jewish women was ignited [in Czarist Russia] at a particular moment in history, and was extinguished, or spent, within a few generations."<sup>7</sup> By the 1930s, Shepherd writes, American Jewish class mobility, combined with contemporaneous gender ideology, had swallowed this generation of women whole; what resulted was a Jewish replication of American gender roles, a new traditionalism. That is, middle-class American Jewish women stayed at home and performed good deeds via Jewish women's organizations. As the mainspring of rebellion loosened, Shepherd finds, Jewish women activists in America "were usually those who

had turned their back on the Jewish community altogether." These radicals joined the ranks of what historian Isaac Deutscher provocatively called "non-Jewish Jews."<sup>8</sup>

Yet Irene Paull's life of activism challenges the exclusivity with which Shepherd seals her project. Closing the book on Jewish women's activism in the 1930s with the "non-Jewish Jew" label concedes the definition of Jew to the new traditionalists. It also leaves unexamined the causes for the radical Jewish American woman's isolation from the Jewish community, not to



*A school photo of Irene, ca. 1922.*

mention the paradoxes of American 1930s radicalism in general. Taking the example of Paull as a member of this generation of "non-Jewish Jews," I hope to show that while there was a pronounced shift in the focus of Jewish women's radicalism in the United States during 1930s, that decade did not represent its final chapter.

Certainly not forced to contend with the heavily patriarchal Jewish gender roles against which her mother had rebelled in Czarist Russia, Paull had access to education as a means toward self-fulfillment and equality. Befriended by a Duluth writer, Margaret Culkin Banning, who encouraged her aspirations to become

a writer and urged her to attend college, she enrolled at Duluth's College of Saint Scholastica around 1925. There, she sought out "something I can join on campus" and read some socialist literature, which she cited as having played a role in her conversion to radicalism. While this literature held a powerful appeal, it was the limiting gender roles attached to her mother's intended legacy of class mobility that eventually sent Paull searching for a more honest way in which to lead her own life.

Paull measured herself against the generic gender conventions of the day: "How can I be a great writer," she lamented, "when I can't go anywhere like boys do and ride the rails?"<sup>9</sup> She temporarily rejected an offer of marriage from Hank Paull and made what cultural critic Paula Rabinowitz has identified as a move characteristic of 1930s middle-class women intellectuals—a feminine parallel, perhaps, to riding the rails. To her mother's dismay, Paull went slumming.<sup>10</sup> Instead of rising into the middle class, she cast her lot with the poor. She quit school and moved to Chicago, looking to "get experience of living." There, she worked at a number of jobs and became involved in labor organizing. Her mother was appalled. "I didn't send you to college so you should clean toilets," Paull recalled her saying. "Other people can picket!"

While the term *slumming* connotes appropriation and possibly even exploitation, the crossing of class boundaries by Paull and other young women like her took many forms. At the very least, it ensured that "the bottom dogs" would be spoken for. More significantly, in this boundary-crossing, women of middle-class origins forged genuine political alliances through hard activist work in campaigns for industrial unionization, for black civil rights, for the unemployed, and for the poor. Irene Paull took pains to distinguish her activism from reformism. In a highly stylized account of meeting she had had in 1928 with Jane Addams, Paull called into question the effects of middle-class activism by a previous generation of American women:

They had a long, circular staircase, and the old lady came down there. You know, that wonderful old woman of an old period, the period of the suffragettes and the charitable ladies who did charity for the poor. She came down and said, "What can I do for you my daughter?" I

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was nineteen. I said, "Miss Addams, I just came down from Halstead Street, and I can't bear what I'm seeing. I just can't bear it. I have to do something about it." She said, "Well, aren't you going to school?" I said, "Well I quit college. I don't think I was getting anywhere." She said, "Oh, you must go back to school, my dear, you must take a degree in social work or you can't do anything—you're helpless without that." I said, "Thank you, Miss Addams." And I went away and I said, "Social work! I had an aunt that did social work, and she used to go and peek into people's kitchen closets to see if they had oranges or if they had a chicken in their refrigerators. My mother always said, "Why can't you be a social worker like Auntie Ida?" I said, "And peek into people's refrigerators? Look, mom. I don't care what people have. Everybody has the right to have oranges. Everybody has the right to have a chicken. I'm not going to be the one to tell them they can't have. You stop bugging me, mom. That's not where I'm going."<sup>11</sup>

Taking up social work would have allowed young Irene to fit her activities in comfortably with Jewish philanthropic tradition and would have further facilitated her assimilation into the middle class.<sup>12</sup> Instead, her activism and eventual affiliation with the Communist Party marked her separation from the Jewish community, a separation that had a great deal to do with her rejection of proscribed gender roles.

A vignette from the early 1930s, a few years after she married Hank Paull, a labor lawyer, illustrates Paull's options in the Jewish world and outlines a certain trajectory of Jewish immigrant gender roles. Together, the couple had to decide whether or not Hank would defend avowed Communists in the courts. Although Irene Paull was already involved in Party activity, the couple knew that this public stand would commit them for life and marginalize them, especially within their own fast-assimilating Jewish community. Paull's choice was between two versions of patriarchy: the new Jewish traditionalist one and a capitalist one. "We don't go to temple, and I won't do what Auntie Ida did for Uncle Harry—spend her life building up his business. We don't play bridge. We

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refuse to." If he decided not to defend the Communists, she asked her husband, "What would happen to us?"<sup>13</sup>

## SECOND-GENERATION DAUGHTER

Conflict with her mother over the legacy of Jewish gender roles was at the heart of Paull's revolt as a second-generation daughter. It was in socialist politics that she found an alternative expression of the desire for the good life as well as an alternative to the new traditionalism.

The Communist Party seemed to offer an arena of activism and autonomy for women generally and, specifically, for Jewish women such as Paull, in which to pursue the feminist potential of the Jewish enlightenment begun in Russia. Though this arena was certainly not uncompromised, given the conservative gender roles of the time and the Party's marginalizing of the so-called woman question, many women were nonetheless able to navigate compromises and play active roles.

When she returned to Duluth from Chicago in 1929 and married Hank Paull, Irene accepted, to some degree, a traditionally feminine role. In a manner characteristic of women intellectuals of the day, she played this complex part with considerable irony, often working conventional constructions of femininity to her own advantage. For example, after the wedding, she went apartment hunting and found a garret with a lovely kitchen. "You should see the kitchen," she quipped. "It's perfect, just the place for a typewriter."<sup>14</sup>

Nested there, Paull deployed her typewriter in a campaign to unionize timber workers, who labored in atrocious conditions. The often brutal struggle for unionization was part of the Communist Party's organizational drive among industrial workers, waged under the banner of the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Not only its industrial nature but also the frontier aura of timber work put this campaign at the moral center of the Party's Popular Front, epitomizing its patriotic, not to mention patriarchal, aspects. Paull dramatized the Popular Front image as she covered the lumberjacks' struggle in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota in a biweekly column for the union paper *The Timber Worker*, which eventually became *Midwest Labor*, the CIO's official regional newspaper. Writing under the

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pseudonym Calamity Jane, she adopted a Popular Front and populist aesthetic, casting herself as a character in a pulp novel of frontier life. In her mixture of personal testament, pathos, and Communist rhetoric, Paull used conventional 1930s ideas of femininity as her leverage. In journal-like pieces with titles such as "Shooting Straight from the Shoulder: A Frank Letter to the Jacks" and "Our Sun Will Rise," Calamity Jane drew moral lessons of socialism from her everyday encounters with lumberjacks and people on the street as well as from personal and familial interactions.

Her column often took the form of letters, in which she acted as scribe, even cheerleader, for the jacks. On the letters page, lumberjacks supported her as a sister but parroted the general view that women should serve as auxiliary supporters of union activity. "If a woman is backward, she'll hold a man back."<sup>15</sup> In one column, Calamity Jane asked Duluth steel workers' wives, "What would you do with a Bigger Pay Envelope?" The women's concerns as domestic consumers, "to have her own home," "take it easy," "have another baby," and even "a permanent wave," seem to have passed Calamity Jane's muster.<sup>16</sup> Though she followed the timber workers to the front lines of their every battle, Paull strategically wielded images of subordinate, domestic femininity in her organizing efforts, perhaps adhering to the Communist Party's Popular Front rationale of appealing to the working class' supposedly conservative gender outlook.

### COMMUNIST-KIKE

Political struggle often took the form of street battle in the 1920s and 1930s. In a 1977 interview, Paull described a scene she was involved in during a 1938 timber workers' strike in Munising, Michigan. A "lynch mob" singled out her husband as "that kike that defended the Finns in the Red Flag case." Her cousin Sam Davis took on the crowd, and there they were, a few "commie Jews" against an armed mob that the night before had killed five striking lumberjacks. Paull recalled that her presence bewildered the mob, "spoiling their party." "You know," she interjected into this account, "there still is that old Puritan thing about women." She went on to remember that amid the mob she spied a young boy with a puppy and asked if she could hold it. "That I was just

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a woman. Just an ordinary woman petting a little dog. They couldn't take it." The vigilantes drove them to the edge of town, and, according to Irene, said "It's only because you've got that bitch with you that you're alive."<sup>17</sup>

As an ordinary, sisterly woman, Paull won over the jacks, but in her role as activist and as writer Calamity Jane she subverted the calm image of femininity she projected, lending to it an unmistakably militant edge. For instance, in a column entitled "Covering the Strike Front," Calamity stood up for the striking "Glass Block girls" against two stenographers badmouthing the union in the washroom, one nursing a case of "pinkeye." "After listening to them for a while," she mused, "I got to wishing I could give them black eye instead of pinkeye."<sup>18</sup> Again from the front lines, she wrote, "Well, I'm still in Michigan. So you see all the 'dangerous women' aren't in Hollywood."<sup>19</sup>

But what did this particular type of dangerous womanhood have to do with Jewish identity? As suggested, the new American Jewish traditionalism, with its limiting gender roles, underlay Paull's abandonment of this community in her activism of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s as a "non-Jewish Jew." Her relationship to that community was complex and contradictory. Although in her recollections she continually cited her identity as a Jew as integral to her radicalization, Paull was not ensconced in a culture of Jewish socialism. Influenced by her cousin Sam Davis and his cohorts, especially Alma Foley, a committed leftist and wife of Party organizer Tom Foley, Paull had entered the Communist movement by publicizing and garnering support for the Scottsboro Boys case.<sup>20</sup> The cousins' Communist activities were an embarrassment to much of their extended family.

Paull felt she was only grudgingly tolerated by the established Jewish community, like the town fool. Her entry into the left in the early 1930s can also be seen as marking something of a self-imposed exile from the Jewish community. While her Jewishness may have motivated her political activities, she seldom identified herself publicly as being Jewish. This, too, was characteristic behavior on the part of non-Jewish Jews.

The embrace of internationalism was so extreme among radical Jews, especially at the peak of the Communist Party's strength, that many went out of their way to shed any vestige of ethnic iden-

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tification, believing it to be a form of "national chauvinism."<sup>21</sup> The Communist Party's Popular Front replaced all so-called national chauvinisms with a single "Twentieth-century Americanism." Tragically, and despite its heavily ethnic composition, the Party ignored urban ethnic intellectuals, not to mention women, in the grand historical narrative it had constructed. But this Popular Front grandiosity has a specific appeal to Jews. The Party's utopian vision of a victorious, ethnically diverse, and egalitarian society fulfilled Jew's abiding longing to escape anti-Semitism and enter history as equals, as active actors on the historical stage.

The Communist Party's behavior was ironic in yet another way. It overtly distanced itself from foreign-language organizations, such as Workmen's Circle, because they manifested ethnicity, while at the same time turning its energies toward organizing for racial equity. As Irene Paull put it:

We believed in pie in the sky. Somewhere out there if one walked that line straight to Utopia, all defense of national or ethnic groups would be unnecessary. On the other hand we knocked ourselves out in the struggle for Negro rights. But we, to a great extent, despised our ethnic origins.<sup>22</sup>

Paull's reflections later in her life on her work in political-defense campaigns and civil rights cases for the International Labor Defense (ILD) and the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) throw these contradictions into greater relief:

[The ILD] was a militant arm that would fight for victims of injustice, whether it was labor, whether it was the blacks. Somehow we didn't fight for Jews at all. It was a funny thing. It was so easy to forget the Jews once you became part of a great movement. See, the trouble is that so many Jews were middle class and little businessmen and everything. So it was very confused, one's feelings toward the Jews. Nevertheless, most of the leaders of the Party were Jews, too.<sup>23</sup>

Through the patriotic vision and inclusive politics of the

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Popular Front-era Communist Party, Paull found a means of entry into another kind of mainstream, one that flowed outside the capitalist system. For those second-generation American Jews who were involved in it, the Communist Party of the 1930s held out the fantasy that Jewish parochialism and Gentile anti-Semitism alike could be transcended. Jewish radicals hoped to enter the mainstream of history by throwing their lot in with the working class and with all oppressed peoples, most notably in the United States with African-Americans. While participation in the Popular Front was an Americanizing move, some Jews perceived that participation to have a Jewish logic. This perception was given voice even by a party loyalist such as author Mike Gold, who saw in abolitionist martyr John Brown a model for American Jews. Gold believed it was self-destructive for Jews to follow the path of other European-immigrant groups and become white Americans by learning to oppress blacks.<sup>24</sup> Paull, and other Jewish Communists, attempted to live out their own American dream through deep and constant engagement in civil rights work, often traveling to the South and becoming leaders in the ILD and the CRC in Minneapolis.

### FEELING LIKE A JEW

The Communist Party's definition of the radical as American and the Jewish community's predominant prescription of the Jew as capitalist combined to alienate Irene Paull from her identity as a Jew. Viewing her generation of non-Jewish Jews in isolation from the history of Jewish radicalism only serves to reinforce these formulations of Jew and of socialist. Focusing on the historical circumstances of her "confused feelings toward the Jews" places Paull's efforts as a generationally specific manifestation of Jewish radicalism.

Despite these "confused feelings," Paull later in her life identified strongly with her Jewishness. Even in her self-imposed exile, she never completely severed her ties with the traditional Jewish community. She even periodically asserted within the community the validity of her own interpretation of Jewishness. For example, she used the occasion of her son Mike's bar mitzvah as an opportunity to take the stage and proclaim communism as an expression of the ethical core of Judaism. And for three decades following her

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departure from the Party in 1956 she published short stories, most of which centered on Jewish and vaguely socialist themes, in the leftist journal *Jewish Currents*.

This conversion of sorts was common among American Jewish radicals, especially some who compromised their strict internationalist perspective when it came to the formation of Israel. Even the reality of the Holocaust had not necessarily disillusioned Jewish Communists who saw the anti-fascist people's alliance and the USSR's rhetorical solution to the Jewish question as the proper response. For Paull the magnitude of anti-Semitism and its ability to fracture leftist alliances struck her most powerfully when it hit home. For her this occurred with the anti-Semitism of the McCarthy era, specifically with the trial of and campaign to execute Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. In a 1973 letter, Paull recalled more contradictory feelings toward her Jewishness than previously mentioned:

Although I ignored the Jews and their problems, nothing could kill the love and profound identification I felt for my people. When I was on the picket line in Washington, D.C., the night the Rosenbergs were murdered, it was mostly Jews and Negroes on the picket line . . . all the taunts [from counter-demonstrators] were anti-Jewish, I felt more like a Jew that day than a Marxist. Many times I have felt that way, for as Marxists we cared damn little to defend the rights of Jews. During the war also there was hardly a day that passed that I didn't find myself engaged in fighting anti-Semitism, whether it was the bus driver who announced to the riders that "It's the Jews who're bringing up the price of potatoes," or the PTA who was trying to get me out of the organization, ostensibly because I was a Red but more profoundly because they hated my Jewishness.<sup>25</sup>

The anti-Semitism that ran rampant through the Rosenberg trial and its aftermath challenged Paull's Communist-inflected Americanism and made her "feel like a Jew." As she felt compelled to claim this identity, it sent her on a collision course with the local Jewish community.

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Esteemed members of the Twin Cities Jewish community tried to convince Paull that she should cancel a meeting of the local committee to defend the Rosenbergs that was to be held at her house. (She had moved to Minneapolis in 1946 after her husband's death.) They threatened to have her fired from her job as a secretary at the University of Minnesota's Hillel House and to blacklist her throughout the Twin Cities if she did not do so.



*Irene testifying before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, (HUAC), 1963.*

Paull responded by parading her dual identity as a Jew and a radical. She tried to rouse local Jews' consciences through an editorial in the community's newspaper, the *American Jewish World*. "Who are these Philistines who warn a Jew that he must not fight for social justice?" she wrote. "How dare they defile our tradition, cancel out in a strike all that would give meaning to our centuries of suffering and persecution? Jews have fought for social justice ever since Isaiah shouted from the housetops, 'Let justice roll down like the waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.'"<sup>26</sup>

The committee's efforts at rallying support for the Rosenbergs in the Jewish community weren't very successful, and Paull was in fact blacklisted. Soon after the Rosenbergs' execution in June 1953, she left the Twin Cities to start a new life in San Francisco. Still, she felt she had had some effect; the committee had plastered the Jewish community with leaflets about the case that, Paull claimed,

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"were picked up with hesitating hands and read in kitchens and living rooms in troubled silence."<sup>27</sup>

The phenomenon of the non-Jewish Jew, in its various forms, has characterized Jewish-American radical activity from the 1930s onward. While Jews' presence in various American social movements since that decade has remained substantial, their public self-identification as Jews has been minimal. In the past few decades, groups such as the New Jewish Agenda, the Committee for Judaism and Social Justice (founded by *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner), several Jewish Middle East peace groups, and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) have begun to mount an organized challenge to the national American Jewish power structure. Part of this effort entails reclaiming the history of American Jews' participation in struggles for social justice.

A teach-in, "In *Gerangl*, In Struggle: 100 Years of Progressive Jewish History," organized by JFREJ in December 1993 in New York City for just this purpose, traced Jewish radicalism from the Bund through the labor movement, anti-fascist struggles, the civil rights movement, the New Left of the 1960s, the women's movement, and gay and lesbian politics. The seemingly endless stream of activist Jews from different generations who took the stage of Cooper Union's Great Hall to relate their experiences all understood their activism as having been part of their Jewish identity. The strangest aspect of this chronologically ordered teach-in, perplexing even to the older Jews in the audience who had lived this experience, was the aspect of the non-Jewish Jew. This paradoxical figure hovered over much of the conference and disrupted attempts to draw a continuous line tracing the history of Jewish radicalism in the United States. Instead of drawing a simple line, historians of Jewish radicalism must sort out the specific conditions in which it has been expressed. By emphasizing the influence of gender and by relating the specific experiences of Irene Paull, I hope I have contributed in some measure to this effort.



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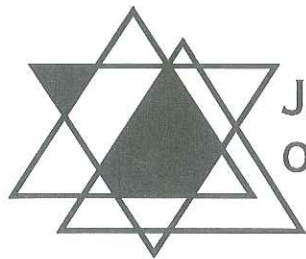
## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Irene Paull, interview by Steve Trimble and Tom O'Connell, tape recording, April 2, 1977, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.
- <sup>2</sup> Quoted in Michel Fabre, *The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright*, trans. Isabel Barzun (New York: William Morrow, 1973), 230.
- <sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Too Jewish?: Challenging Traditional Identities*, ed. Norman Kleeblatt (New York: Jewish Museum; and New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), inside front cover.
- <sup>4</sup> The *shtetl* (Yiddish for "small city") was the predominant form of settlement for Eastern European Jews in the Pale of Settlement, a large portion of the western part of the Russian empire, to which Russian Jews were confined.
- <sup>5</sup> Irene Paull, interview by Linda Stiles, tape recording, San Francisco, April 6, 1979. Tape in possession of Gayla Ellis, Midwest Villages and Voices, Minneapolis. Used by permission.
- <sup>6</sup> Marriages were typically arranged, and a Talmudic scholar was the cream of the matchmaker's crop.
- <sup>7</sup> Naomi Shepherd, *A Price below Rubies: Jewish Women as Rebels and Radicals* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993), 13.
- <sup>8</sup> The term is that of the Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher, as cited in Shepherd, *A Price below Rubies*, 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Paull, 1977 interview.
- <sup>10</sup> Paula Rabinowitz theorizes about slumming in "Margaret Bourke-White's Red Coat; or, Slumming in the Thirties," *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* (London: Verso, 1994).
- <sup>11</sup> Paull, 1979 interview.
- <sup>12</sup> Naomi Shepherd characterizes the philanthropic activities of established German Jewish immigrant women in this manner. *A Price below Rubies*, 12.
- <sup>13</sup> Paull, 1977 interview.
- <sup>14</sup> Paull, 1979 interview.



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- <sup>15</sup> Unsigned letter to the editor, *Timber Worker*, August 18, 1937.
- <sup>16</sup> Calamity Jane [pseud.], "What Would You Do with a Bigger Pay Envelope?: Duluth Steel Workers' Wives Respond," *Timber Worker*, October 1, 1937.
- <sup>17</sup> Paull, 1977 interview. Only weeks later, Hank Paull was kidnapped, brutally beaten, and left in a ditch following a similar confrontation in Michigan. This incident was covered extensively in the *Timber Worker* through July 1937.
- <sup>18</sup> Calamity Jane [pseud.], "Covering the Strike Front," *Timber Worker*, April 30, 1937.
- <sup>19</sup> Calamity Jane [pseud.], *Timber Worker*, June 18, 1937.
- <sup>20</sup> Foley, interview by author, February 23, 1994. The Communist Party was actively involved in this famous case during the early 1930s, a time of widespread concern about mob violence and "legal lynchings." In the spring of 1931 nine young African-American men were tried in Scottsboro, Alabama, on charges of having raped two white women aboard a freight car. A white mob had pulled the blacks from the train. The first trial was a travesty of justice that resulted in eight of the defendants being sentenced to death and the ninth to life imprisonment. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed the convictions in October 1932, ruling that defendants in capital cases in state courts must have adequate legal representation. The men were tried a second time, and the convictions were again overturned by the Supreme Court. A third trial resulted in sentences of life imprisonment, and eventually the men were paroled.
- <sup>21</sup> The Menorah Group's politics evolved to this extreme position. See Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 27–45.
- <sup>22</sup> Irene Paull, letter to Michael Rapp, February 15, 1973.
- <sup>23</sup> Paull, 1979 interview.
- <sup>24</sup> William Maxwell, "The Proletarian as New Negro: Mike Gold's Harlem Renaissance," in *Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture*, ed. Bill Mullen and Sherry Linkon (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 101–2.

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- <sup>25</sup> Paull, letter to Rapp. She and other members of the International Labor Defense also confronted a Nazi propagandist at a church in the early 1930s, about the time Hitler came to power. Paull, 1979 interview.
- <sup>26</sup> *American Jewish World*, July 7, 1952.
- <sup>27</sup> Unpublished autobiographical notes, Irene Paull papers, in possession of Gayla Ellis, Midwest Villages and Voices, Minneapolis. Used by permission.



**JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE UPPER MIDWEST**

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

This year has been a busy one for the Jewish Historical Society, and I am enclosing a review of past activities.

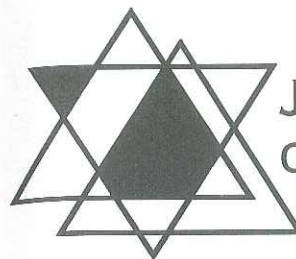
Our Annual Meeting, October 12, included installation of new officers and recognition of volunteers. The program featured storyteller Arlene Kase reading from the book *Pushcarts and Dreamers*. That same month, the Society, Mount Zion Congregation, and the Neighborhood House mounted an exhibit at Mount Zion about the settlement house and the St. Paul West Side Jewish community it served. In March, the JHSUM hosted a very successful theater party and created a different exhibit about the West Side for the Great American History Theater lobby. In March as well, author Michael Luick-Thrams spoke about his book, *Out of Hitler's Reach: The Scattergood Hostel for European Refugees, 1939-43*. For the Twin Cities Israel Independence Day celebration, April 24, we designed an exhibit, "Fifty Years of Zionism in the Upper Midwest." The JHSUM also sponsored a program, "Where Were You on May 14, 1948?," during which a panel of eight shared their experiences of that period with an audience of more than three hundred. The Society assembled two other exhibits: One for Adath Jeshurun Congregation showed photos of early congregants and their activities, while the other, related to Jewish businesses of yesteryear, was displayed at the Minneapolis Jewish Community Center. In August, the director led a bicycle tour of former Jewish sites on the North Side of Minneapolis. Two membership telethons were held this year, and more than one hundred people joined.

Beside public programming and exhibits, beside archiving and helping with research and genealogical questions, the Society is undertaking an internal review and revision of its by-laws. Indeed, it has been a busy year!

This report is sent to help you understand how your membership dollars benefit the community and why your continuing support is so necessary to the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest.

*Todah rabah!* Many thanks!

Etta Fay Orkin, President



**JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE UPPER MIDWEST**

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**1997-1998**

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 Idell Silberman  
 Norman Diamond\*  
 Theresa Berman and David Krawetz  
 Sharron Steinfeldt

\*deceased

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest was founded in 1984 in order to collect, preserve, and make available materials pertaining to Jewish history in Minnesota, the Dakotas, northern Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Since our founding, we have amassed a sizable archive containing records of organizations, institutions, and families. The materials include papers, photographs, oral and videotapes, and movie reels, as well as books and journals.

We invite you to become a member and to contribute material to the Society. Please direct correspondence to:

Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest  
Hamline University  
1536 Hewitt Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55104

651-523-2407 history@jhsum.org

## MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

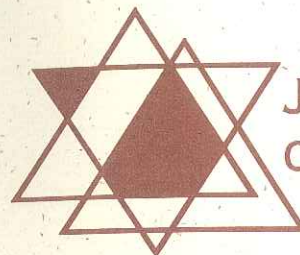
Address \_\_\_\_\_

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### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)

Benefactor	\$100	Individual	\$25
Sponsor	\$50	Student or Senior	\$15
Family	\$35	Founder (Lifetime)	\$1000

I have material to donate to the Society.  
Please call me at \_\_\_\_\_



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