

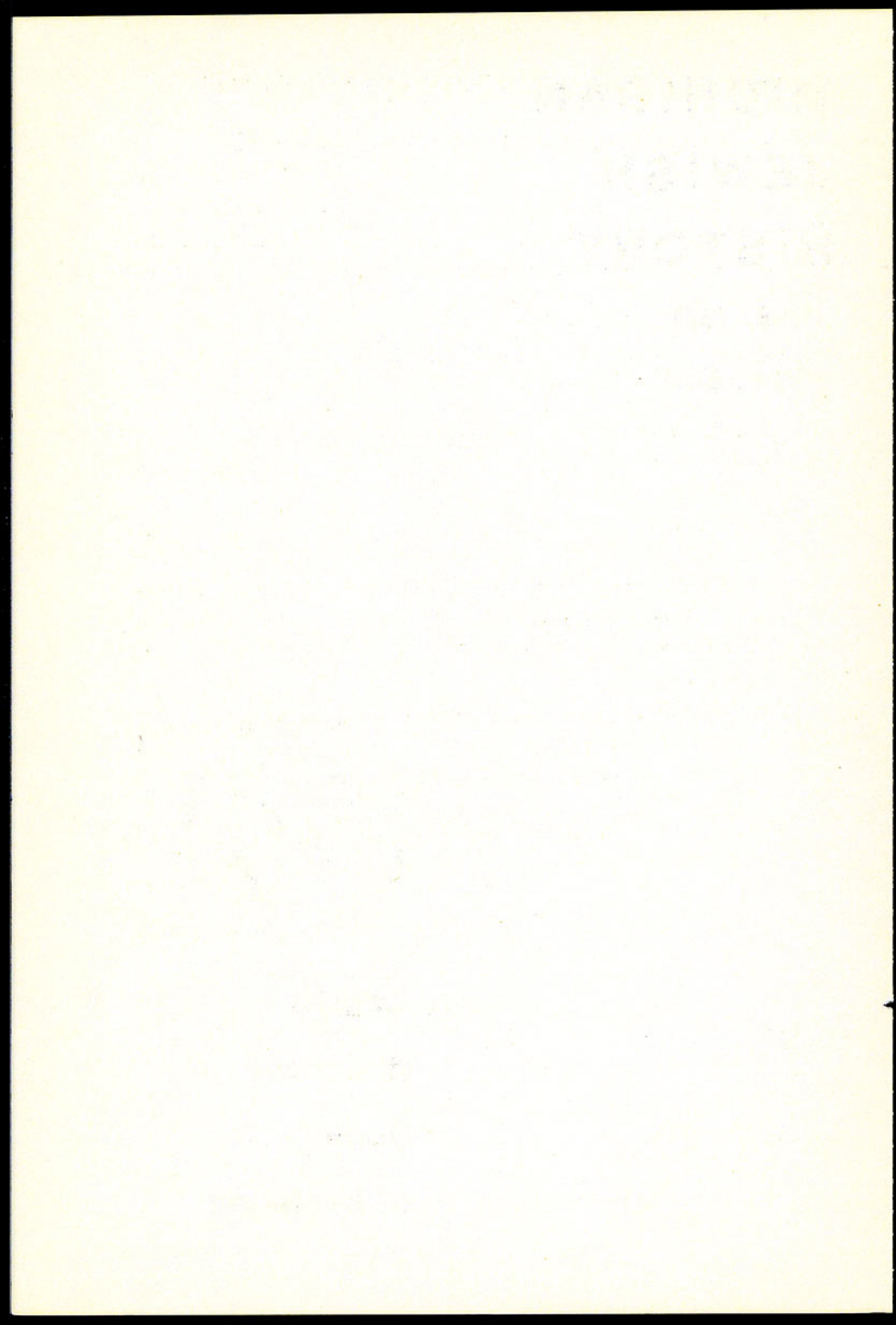
MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

JUNE, 1974

SIVAN, 5734



**Jewish
Historical
Society
of Michigan**



MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

"When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come . . ."

—Joshua 4:21

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Mailing Address — 163 Madison Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Editor's Address — 1036 David Whitney Bldg.
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Magnus Butzel

“CAUSE FOR RISHUS”;

*Magnus Butzel of Detroit
To
Meyer Samuel Isaacs of New York;
An Example of Nineteenth Century
American Jewish Insecurity*

By Robert A. Rockaway*

For most of their history, Jews have been barely tolerated residents of their adopted lands. Although they might have lived in a place for centuries they could, at any time, be declared *personas non grata* and expelled—or worse. This knowledge bred deep seated insecurities and fears within Jews.

The Jews of the United States have not been exempt from these feelings, with the immigrant generations being especially susceptible. Despite claims that America is different and that in America the Jew enjoys complete religious, civil and political equality, American Jews have displayed uncertainty with regard to their position in the general community.

One of the ways in which this was manifested in the nineteenth century was in the hesitancy to join any Jewish organization which professed to be international in scope. The fear was that such affiliation would raise the question of Jewish “loyalty” and could be used as a pretext for anti-Semitism.

The following letter was written by a Detroit, Magnus Butzel,¹ to Meyer Samuel Isaacs² of New York in 1885 and illustrates the apprehension which one American Jew felt with regard to becoming part of an international Jewish organization—in this case, the Alliance Israelite Universelle.³ The letter also gives some insight into the attitude of Butzel toward the Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. The feelings expressed in the letter are fairly representative of those held by a large number of American Jews during those years.

The final sentence of the letter, which ends with the words “Civil Service,” refers to the Pendleton Civil Service Act passed in 1883.

The letter is located in the Meyer Samuel Isaacs Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts.

*Lecturer in American Jewish History and American History,
Department of Jewish History, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Detroit, April 27, 1885

Hon. M. S. Isaacs
115 Broadway, N. Y.

Dear Sir, Your favor of 22' inst. is duly received & noted. I presume its contents, enquiring about the doings of the representatives of the Alliance, is a general form of a circular, addressed to many of such who work in the interest of that institution. The paradoxical query arises how such a letter could reach me who does not work, but I refrain from it, but refer to the fact that shortly after receipt of your request to act as representative in this city, I wrote to Mr. D. J. Greenebaum to make it an object to see you & explain personally why I could not undertake to act for the Alliance with promise of results, and regret now to be forced to confirm to same more direct to you.

I place in the foreground the extraordinary demands made upon the Jewish charity during the now vaning [sic] hard season, following two years of commercial depression, consequent pecuniary weakening of many contributors and consequent requirements of increased contributions from the few who remained strong. I have made several approaches to such parties and met with discouragement.

It may be stated that a feeling seems to exist (probably very selfish) in this western community that in this new country, which is taxed so heavily for the support of the "overflow of Europe" who so largely settle here—that the establishment and maintenance [sic] of home institutions need all available funds and that Europeans & @ should attend to their own matters. Another view seems to come to light desiring most sincerely the "*denationalization* of the Jew"—reform [sic] Jews believe that if they believe anything, and there is an aversion to belong to an "Alliance Israelite *Universelle*" using the word in its liberal sense, in which signification it may (has) given cause for *Rishus* [malice]. I confess personally that I know that the work, the aims and the results of the Alliance refute any such charge, yet the misfortune of many noble institutions are that ignorance & prejudice seizes on appearances and makes propaganda among willing masses—whether to avoid appearances or boldly live down aspersions is yet a debatable question.

I dislike to have Detroit represented by just one name—writer is mentally enrolled with you, and if it is possible (why not) to select some better, more enthusiastic worker here, I would gladly turn over to him the documents—with such *successor* it would make *two* (2) here and probably success be better asured [sic]. As a good Republican “I will not embarrass the administration—I place my resignation in your hands and will remain in office until my successor is appointed.” Civil Service.

With personal regards, truly & @

Magnus Butzel

1. Magnus Butzel (1830-1900) was born in Bavaria and came to the United States in 1852 and to Detroit in 1861. He was a partner with his brother, Martin, in the clothing business, and his brother-in-law, Emil H. Heineman, a member of the Detroit Board of Education, president of the Detroit Public Library Commission, one of the first directors of the Detroit Board of Commerce, and a leader in the Michigan Republican Party.
2. Meyer Samuel Isaacs (1841-1904), eldest son of Rabbi Samuel Myer Isaacs, was a New York lawyer and community leader. He served as judge on the City Court and lectured at New York University Law School. He was one of the founders of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859) and the Hebrew Free School Association (1864) and he helped organize the United Hebrew Charities of New York (1873). In addition to his charitable work, he was editor of the *Jewish Messenger*.
3. The Alliance Israelite Universelle was the first modern international Jewish organization. It was founded in Paris in 1860 as a consequence of ideological and political events in the national and international spheres in the second half of the nineteenth century, and was committed to the defense of Jewish rights throughout the world.



Harry T. Madison

HARRY T. MADISON,

*Past National Commander
of the Jewish War Veterans
of the United States*

by Abraham S. Rogoff, M.D.

Michigan Jews have contributed much to the development and welfare not only of American Jewry but also of the entire people of the United States. One such individual is Harry Madison who has made for himself a significant place in the history of the Jews of Michigan and of America.

Harry Madison, a native Detroit, is the only Jewish War Veteran from Michigan who attained the distinguished position of National Commander. He devoted a lifetime of service to our country, as a soldier in WW I, and as a leader in the Jewish War Veterans organization, promoting and defending the interests and the rights, not only of the Jewish War Veterans, but also of the vital interests of the Jewish people at home and abroad.

Harry Madison is a mild mannered gentleman. He speaks softly but with great persuasion. Using the prestige of his office as National Commander, he exerted great influence with our presidents, cabinet officers, congressmen and military commanders of the highest rank, on behalf of the Jewish people everywhere. Although, officially, he represented the J.W.V., when pleading the Jewish cause, he states that he spoke in behalf of millions of Jews.

Harry Madison was born in Detroit on the 23rd of August, 1901. He was the youngest of four brothers. He also had three sisters. His father died when Harry was six years old. It was up to Harry, aided by his brothers—mostly his oldest brother, Charles, now a famous writer and author—to make his own way in life. He attended the Bishop School, a school where many of Detroit's elder notables of today got their primary education.

He attended Northern High School of Detroit, but when America entered the first World War in 1917, Harry left school and enlisted in the army. He was only sixteen, but even at sixteen, the spirit of patriotism directed him to heed his country's call to serve. He served with distinction.

After the war, he went back to Northern High School and obtained his diploma, after which he enrolled in the University of Detroit. While attending college, he worked at odd jobs to help support himself and the rest of the family. This, however, seemed to be too much. He had to leave college and go to work full time. He continued his education at night at Detroit Junior College—the beginning of what is now Wayne State University.

Later on, he went into business for himself and was successful. In 1924, he married Tillie Babcock, the daughter of a well known Jewish family in Detroit. The Madisons have two sons, David and Marshall. Marshall is now president of Temple Israel in Detroit.

A second call to serve his country came to Harry Madison in the late thirties. This was the time when Hitler Nazism was spreading its tentacles into the social and political life of America. The German Bund was holding inflammatory antisemitic rallies all over America, preaching hate and annihilation of the Jew, according to Hitler's "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem". Harry Madison's righteous indignation was aroused. He couldn't sit back in silence and let all the insults and threats to the very existence of the Jewish people go unchallenged. Yet, as a single Jew, what could he do?

It was then, specifically in 1938, that he joined the Jewish War Veterans, the oldest active war veteran's organization in the United States. He joined the Silverman Post, 135. As a veteran and as a Jew, he found a means to actively defend the Jews and to fight for their rights. In a militant, but legal way, the J.W.V., under his leadership, offered an effective challenge to the American Nazis at their public meetings and rallies.

Harry Madison became very active in the Silverman Post. He soon rose to the office of Post Vice-Commander and Commander. In 1941, he was elected Junior Vice-Commander of the Department of Michigan and Commander in 1944. In 1948, he rose to be Regional Commander, serving seventeen states in this capacity. In 1952, he was elected to the National Executive Committee of the Jewish War Veterans of America. His work in the J.W.V. on the national level was so productive that it gained for him national recognition and, in 1953, he was elected National Commander, a rare and singular honor. This also made him a life member of the National Executive Committee of the Jewish War Veterans. Both as National Commander and as a member of the National Executive Committee, Harry Madison served with distinction and credit to the J.W.V. and to the Jewish people, here and abroad.

He was largely instrumental in moving the National Shrine of the Jewish War Veterans from New York to Washington, and housing it in a beautiful building which is a credit to all American Jewry.

He was also a member of the National Personnel Committee for Jewish War Veterans. During the Korean War, Harry, together with commanders of seven major Veterans' Organizations, traveled to the Pacific Theatre. They had interviews with the highest Field Commanders of our armed forces and with the men in the field, championing the cause and the interests of all G.I.'s and any special needs of the Jews in uniform.

During the critical years, 1947 and 1948, when the establishment of the State of Israel was being debated in the U.N., the J.W.V. organization, with Harry Madison, then Regional Commander, in the fore-front, exerted great political pressure on American Statesmen in favor of Partition. They were successful in fact to get the support of the then U. S. Senator from Michigan, Homer Ferguson. The Jewish War Veterans also had an influence on the late President Harry S. Truman.

During the Israeli War of Independence, Harry Madison led the J.W.V. in getting and shipping war material to Israel. During the Eisenhower administration, the J.W.V. dealt directly with the assistant Secretary of State on behalf of Israel.

With all his activities in the J.W.V., Harry Madison continued to maintain his interest and active participation in local Jewish affairs in Metropolitan Detroit. He has been a member of the board of the Jewish Welfare Federation for the last thirty years. He was on the Boards of the J.C.C. and Jewish Vocational Guidance. He has been a member of "Hanna Schloss Old Timers", and was president of that organization several years ago. He is a past master of the Masonic Craftsmen's Lodge. Among the ranks of the Jewish War Veterans, he is looked up to with the utmost respect. He is a champion of Americanism in the highest sense and of Jewish rights all over the world.

Harry T. Madison has always been a loyal American Jew. Detroit and Michigan Jewry is rightly proud of him.

HISTORY OF THE SHOLEM ALEICHEM INSTITUTE OF DETROIT, 1926-1971

by Jay Rosenshine

I

The Ideological Origins

The big wave of Jewish immigration in the first decades of the 20th century brought to America a large number of young intellectuals and workers who had taken an active part in the Socialist Nationalist and cultural movements in the Jewish communities of their native countries.

These young Jews generally opposed the religious hegemony over Jewish life and broke away from the traditions of their parents and grandparents. However, they were not engaged merely in wrecking and demolishing the old structures. They were planning and building new ones, and they were reconstructing the old ones. They dreamed and worked for a social order based on justice, equality and international brotherhood; and they had the vision and the eagerness to brighten the future of their own Jewish people.

This generation of Jewish radicals and secularists were divided in two factions. Some held tenaciously to the cosmopolitan, antinationalist idea and to a negative attitude toward the problem of Jewish survival. They sincerely believed in the immediate arrival of their messiah—the new socialist society—which would remove all inequities and solve all problems. Internationalism meant to them not co-operation and harmony between nations but the extinction of all nationalities and their ethnic and cultural differences. Any concern with the fate and welfare of the Jewish people was considered by them as an act of treason to their ideals.

There were others who synthesized their socialist ideology with Jewish nationalist aspirations, while adhering to the basic principles of the socialist philosophy. They felt the urgent need to work for the establishment of an autonomous Jewish settlement in Palestine or elsewhere and to sustain and promote Jewish cultural values wherever Jews lived.

This group of radical secularists, to which the founding fathers of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* belonged, had a deep emotional attachment to the Jewish people, were aware of their ethnic characteristics and qualities, and were eager to hold on to their Jewishness while letting go of

their religious Judaism, which they interpreted to mean the religious doctrines and rites of the Jews.

To say that these secularists completely severed their ties with the way of life of their parents and their grandparents would not be correct. Many Jewish traditional values and concepts went through a metamorphosis and took on new aspects and new forms retaining in essence their original qualities.

The longing for the fulfillment of the social revolution and the yearning for the creation of a Jewish political and cultural center in Palestine were akin to the Jews' traditional hope for redemption and for the coming of the Messiah. *The Book*, which was always the most exalted and the most glorified object in Jewish life, retained its high value among the secularist, too. The high place in the Jewish community previously held by the Talmudic scholar and Hasidic Rebbe was then occupied by the poets, novelists and thinkers, who were honored and greatly revered . . . The literary works of Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, Chaim Nachman Bialik and others were read diligently and replaced the study of the Talmud. Yiddish folk song and hasidic melodies without words were sung with the fervor and the ecstasy which emulated the devotional praying of the most pious Jew.

These were invisible links which kept the golden chain of Jewish tradition, to a certain degree, intact. The radical secularist in this country was fully aware that he was the direct heir of the '*shtetl Yiddishkeit*' though he was removed from it thousands of miles in space, and centuries, in time.

The difficult problem for the Yiddishist secularists was how to implant the new version of secular Jewishness into the coming generation, born and bred in this country; how to transmit their own Jewish awareness and their own concern for Jewish values to their children who were subjected to the pressure of the great American 'melting-pot'.

The then existing Talmud Torahs with their religious curricula and their emphasis of observances, which the secularist Jews rejected, could certainly not meet their needs and wishes. So they decided to establish for their children schools which would best reflect their ideals and would best conform to their principles—Yiddish schools created in their own image.

This was a revolutionary idea at that time and it required a great deal of conviction and enthusiasm on the part of the initiators to make this resolution a reality. Naturally, the community at large could not be ex-

pected to respond and to support this type of school. The appeal had to be confined to those circles of the Jewish community which were ideologically and psychologically prepared to make the radical change. But this faction, too, was not completely homogenous. It was divided into several political parties and cultural groups, such as the Poalei-Zion, now known as the Labor Zionists; the socialist-territorialists; pure Yiddishists; and bi-lingualists, meaning those who recognized the importance of Hebrew as well as Yiddish; and some other splinter groups.

However, under certain conditions, the party and factional loyalties of these groups were not conducive to the formation of a common ground for the operation of these new schools.

The rationale of the Yiddish Secular Schools, however, was such that they could all agree upon it. The Motto: "The Jewish child belongs to the Jewish People," was definitely acceptable to all of them. They were all concerned with Jewish survival and they were all eager to see Jewish continuity advanced and promoted by the coming generation. Of all the ethnic characteristics, Yiddish, was considered by them to be the most valuable and the most adequate medium for the transmission of Jewish culture. Yiddish literature, which was then at its bloom, was greatly esteemed and admired by the Secularists. A goal, worthwhile aiming for, was that the boy and girl should learn to read and appreciate the works of Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, Leivick, and others.

There was another more pragmatic motive for the emphasis on Yiddish in these schools! That was the wish to counteract the growing estrangement between the American born, English speaking child, and his immigrant parents, speaking Yiddish. The expectation that the child might learn to write a letter in Yiddish to his grandparents in Europe was a valid reason for favoring the Yiddish School.

Another basic element of the Yiddish secular schools was their socialist orientation. The traditional innate reaction of Jews against social injustices blended with the socialist ideology which prevailed at that time among the Yiddish masses, shaped the character of those schools. It was considered important to counter-balance the influence of the "capitalistic" American public schools with an element of socialistic indoctrination in the Yiddish schools.

Such were the ideals and such were the motives that prompted a motley group of radical nationalist Jews in the City of Detroit to organize in 1925 the *Yiddishe Folkshule Farein*, which several years later adopted the name of *The Sholem Aleichem Folks Istitute*.

II

The Early Years

The first Yiddish secular school in Detroit was established in 1915 by the *Poalei-Zion* (Labor Zionists). *The Workmen's Circle* started a Yiddish school in 1919. But by 1924-25 both of these schools were not in existence any more. On his frequent visits to Detroit as lecturer, Dr. Judah Kaufman, who at that time was connected with the *Jewish Teachers Seminary* in New York, pleaded for the establishment of a Yiddish secular school in Detroit. Through his initiative, a group of radical secularists, many of them *Poalei-Zionists*,—joined together in the fall of 1925 for the purpose of opening a Yiddish school.

From the very beginning, the initiators of that project intended that the aims of the *Fold-shul Geselshaft* should be more than just to sponsor a school for children. In the first letter, which had been circulated, an appeal was issued "to establish a Nationalist-Socialist Cultural Center for adults, a home for the youth and a school for children". By March of 1926 enough money had been raised by the newly organized society, so that a two-story house was purchased on Kenilworth Street near Oakland Avenue (539 Kenilworth). Two months later a school of about 100 children was opened under the direction of B. Fine (now Dr. B. Fine of Miami Beach). B. Fine stayed in Detroit only a few months, and in September of that year (1926), Moishe Haar, recommended by Dr. Judah Kaufman, and Chaim Pomeranz, were engaged as teachers for the school. The leaders of the *Folk-shul Geselshaft* were enthusiastic and ambitious and soon became engaged in opening one branch in the Fenkel Street section and another one on 12th Street. Chaim Bednowich (known now as Bendore) was added to the teachers staff. The first fund raising affair for the benefit of the new school was a bazaar, which was held in the auditorium of the *United Hebrew Schools* on Kirby Street in December, 1926.

The program of expansion required an energetic promoter and fundraiser. Besides, some of the leading members of the *Folk-shul Geselshaft*, who were anti-Zionists and ultra-Yiddishist were probably disturbed to see the school in control of Moishe Haar, Pomeranz and Bendore, who were all of the *Poalei-Zion*. So in the spring of 1927, Shloime Bercovich, who had until then been associated with the *Sholem Aleichem Institute in New York*, was engaged as director and organizer.

In April, 1927 the *Folk-shul Geselshaft* had arranged its first public gathering in Orchestra Hall with the participation of the children of the

school. Shloime Bercovich addressed the audience and made some remarks about Zionism and Hebrew, which were objectionable to a part of the audience and antagonized some of the active members of the school board. The consequence of that incident was that the organization was disrupted. The *Poalei-Zion* group broke away, took over the school on 12th Street; and Haar and Bendore left with them.

The name of the organization was then changed to the *Umpartaeshe Folk-shul Gesellschaft*, and Bercovich became its director and principal of the school on Kenilworth and its branch in the Fenkell section. The non-partisan character of the organization has been scrupulously retained through the entire years of its existence.

The major activity of the organization in the summer of 1927 was to erect an auditorium in the rear of the house on Kenilworth. This was accomplished largely by the voluntary help of members and sympathizers who solicited bricks and other building materials and who contributed their manual skills as bricklayers, carpenters and painters on Sundays and at any other time when they could spare a few of their leisure hours. When the building was completed, it became known as the *Kinder Theatre*; and it served as an assembly hall for many cultural activities.

From the very beginning the women, too, became active through their own clubs which gave moral and financial support to the organization. These clubs are known now as the *Women's Division of the Sholem*



The Building of the KINDER THEATER at 539 Kenilworth

The heavy man on the left is Boris Litwin. Just behind him and to his left is Shloime Bercovich, and next to him is Max Holtzman. The others are worker sympathizers.

Aleichem Institute. The guiding spirit and the driving force of those clubs, and later of the Women's Division, was the devoted and untiring Ida Komaroff, who unquestionably merited the title "Mother" of the Sholem Aleichem Institute. In addition to the financial aid which the Women's Clubs gave to the schools, they launched on a program of self-education. In the fall of 1926, under the guidance of Moishe Haar, the first *Women's Yiddish Reading Circle* was organized in Detroit, and it has been continually in existence for many years. It served as an example for other women's groups to follow.



Shloime Bercovich



Moishe Haar

Bercovich was a follower of John Dewey's progressive philosophy of education and he introduced into the schools many innovations. In order to give free rein to the child's initiative and imagination and to develop in him a social consciousness, the club plan was set up instead of the usual classes. The purpose of the change was to teach the child the value of self-government, self-control and regard for others. This plan, no doubt, had some merits, but it also had some shortcomings, for it was shortly abandoned in favor of the conventional class system.

Bercovich was whole-heartedly devoted to the idea that the modern Jew can express his Jewish identification through the cultural non-religious, Yiddish medium. He was a dedicated and strong-willed man, and he soon became the ambassador of "Yiddishland" in Detroit. Representatives of the then great Yiddish Empire turned to Bercovich for counsel and assistance. Luminaries of the Yiddish literary world, initiators of cultural projects in this country and emissaries of the *Yivo* and Central School

Organization in Poland, all appealed to Bercovich to give them his endorsement and his assistance in their efforts for their particular worthy causes. And so, from the very beginning, the *Folk-shul Geselshaft* did not limit its activities exclusively to the maintenance of its local Yiddish schools. Its active members, spurred by Shloime Bercovich, became involved in promoting lectures by eminent Yiddish writers, in selling books, and in the raising of funds for various cultural institutions.

The limited number of active members who remained in the *Folk-shul Geselshaft* after the *Poalei-Zion* broke away, were not strong enough and not loyal enough to form an organizational base for the maintenance of the schools. In a few years many of them disappeared from the scene. Some of them landed in the left movement, some turned to the synagogue and some just minded their own business. Realizing that he could depend on the radical Jewish "intellectual", Bercovich turned to the "*Folks-mensh*", to the ordinary Jew, and, specifically to the landsmanshaft organizations. This resulted in serving a double purpose. It involved the organizations, and, particularly, some of their more active members, in the affairs of the *Folk-shul Geselshaft*; and it simultaneously raised the cultural level of the landsmanshaft organizations.

In 1929 the *Unpartaishe Folk-shul Geselshaft* changed its name to *Sholem Aleichem Institute*, and under that name the organization has continued its existence until the present day.

The years 1928-33 were very critical years for the organization. The great depression made things even more difficult. Teachers' salaries were never paid on time; and often the delinquent teachers' salaries remained a forgotten deficit item on the financial statements of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute*. "To be or not to be" was a perennial problem. It was the first item on the agenda of the school board when it met before school opening in September. Of the 300 children attending the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* School at that time, only 75 paid a nominal tuition fee, which in most cases, had to be collected from the parents by volunteer collectors. Several attempts were made in those years to appeal to the Jewish Welfare Federation for financial assistance, but these appeals were repeatedly refused. At meetings with Federation leaders, some of them habitually referred to the Yiddish schools as the godless schools. The first token subsidy of \$1,000.00 to the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* was granted by the Federation in 1936.

Despite the financial and organizational difficulties, the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* managed not only to continue uninterruptedly the operation of its three schools on Kenilworth, Dexter and Fenkell sections, but it was engaged in many other educational and cultural activities. It had

a *Mittleshul* (High School), a youth club, and in 1931 it operated a summer camp. In addition, it organized lectures by outstanding Jewish writers, concerts and forums. It was also instrumental in arranging annual conventions of Midwest kindred organizations.

The Sholem Aleichem Institute survived those critical years and succeeded in enriching the cultural life of the Jewish community in Detroit, thanks mainly to the dedication, the resoluteness and the strong will of one man—Shloime Bercovich.

III

The Later Years

The Hebrew tribes in the early period of the *Judges* had no established form of government. They had no appointed or elected head of state. When the loosely tied tribes were confronted with an emergency and their safety was endangered, a leader arose and led them to victory. The *Sholem Aleichem Institute* too was governed in a similar manner in the first five years of its existence. But in 1931—for the first time—a set of officers was elected with Isaac Finkelstein as the first president of the Institute, and he remained in that office for about eight years. Isaac and Pauline Finkelstein have the unique distinction of being the only ones of the charter members of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* who have been uninterruptedly connected with the *Institute* for all these years and who gave to it their wholehearted support and their undivided loyalty.



Isaac Finkelstein,
First President of
Sholem Aleichem Institute



Ida Kamaroff
"Mother" of *Sholem Aleichem*

Moishe Haar was re-engaged as a teacher in 1931 and—with some interruptions—remained with the Institute until his death. His major contribution in the years 1932-1938 was his emphasis on the dramatic art, both as a Jewish cultural expression and a pedagogic medium for the training of the youngsters in the fluent use of Yiddish, and for the development of an attachment to the Jewish people. Haar organized an amateur dramatic group of about thirty young people, called the *Tealig*, which produced important literary works by prominent Jewish playwrights. The performances were rehearsed and presented to the public in the auditorium of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* at 539 Kenilworth Street. In addition, Haar organized a children's theatre group composed of talented children selected from all the Yiddish schools in Detroit, and once a year, an elaborate performance was given in the Scottish Rites Auditorium of the Masonic Temple in Detroit.

Through the initiative of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* a *United Mittle Shul* (High school) was organized in 1936, and it worked successfully for many years. The *Mittle Shul* was sponsored by a combined school committee, composed of representatives of the *Farband*, *Sholem Aleichem* and *Workmen's Circle* schools. Several attempts were made by the leadership of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* to coordinate some other activities of the Yiddish Schools but they were unsuccessful in this; but an annual Chanukah and a combined graduate ceremony of the three Yiddish schools in Detroit were instituted. For many years, the teachers of those schools met regularly every week to discuss educational problems of mutual concern. All teachers of secular schools gave their time freely as teachers and in directing the *Mittle Shul*. Later, Chaim Bendore became director of the *Mittle Shul*.

The forty-five years of the existence of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* can be divided into three periods characterized by their distinct tendencies. In the first period, from 1926 to 1938, the *Institute* adhered strictly to a rigid secularism and to ultra-Yiddishism. The years from 1939 to 1951, we may call the revisionist period, when traditional values, symbols and institutions were introduced in new forms which were in conformity with the ideas and concepts of most of the membership. And lastly, from 1952 to the present time (1971) is the period of adaptation and adjustment to the thinking habits and to the psychology of the younger generation, born and raised in this country.

Let us begin with the period of the rigid secularism. The first generation of Jewish secularists was iconoclastic and rebellious against every established form of Jewish folkways which remotely had any connection

with Jewish religion. All institutionalized forms of Jewish tradition were taboo, and were discarded completely and resolutely. The saturated *Shtetl Yiddish-keit*, from which they broke away, was sufficient to nourish them spiritually. Their breaking away from tradition was in itself an expression of their attachment to the Jewish people. Jewish traditional values for them entered through the back door of Jewish literature. At home and at school, stories and poems were read about *Sabbath*, *Yom Kippur*, the *Synagogue*, the *succah*, the *shofar*, etc.

Prejudices are not the monopoly of religious and conservative people exclusively. So-called free thinkers and radicals, too, are often chained to prejudices and set notions, which do not permit them to make revisions and changes in accordance with changing conditions and situations.

Naturally, under such prevailing attitudes, no consideration could have been given to the celebration of Jewish holidays, to public reading of the Bible, to an *Oneg Shabbath*, to *Bar Mitzvah* or even to lighting *Chanukah* candles. However, on various occasions there were discussions on whether to celebrate this or that particular holiday. A topic of discussion was also how to introduce the celebration of new Jewish holidays. Shloime Bercovich used to say that he has no need or desire for traditional Jewish holidays, that to him the coming to Detroit of Dr. Zhitlowski, or Shmaule Niger or H. Leivick was a holiday. It was customary then for someone to deliver a talk on *Passover* or *Succoth* analyzing "scientifically" the origin of the holiday and tracing it back to pagan practices. The first of May, however, which was celebrated in schools and children's assemblies and concerts, began with the singing of the Children's Internationale. No wonder, then, that many years later in a discussion about Jewish holidays, one of the early alumni of the *Sholem Aleichem* school remarked that when he attended the *Shule* he knew only of one Jewish holiday, the first of May. Only two teachers even then did not follow this line of secularist thought and did include in their program the celebrations of the holidays and a positive attitude towards them. These two were Moishe Haar and H. Bendore.

About 1938 this trend in the ideology of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* began to change. The secularists began to realize that they could not continue being a streamlet running apart from the mainstream of Jewish life, that they must, as an integral part of the Jewish community, share with other Jews in common, intellectual and emotional experiences. The starvation diet of the abstract, non-institutionalized *Yiddishkeit* was not satisfactory any more. A need was felt to accept some of the traditional practices and give them some concrete new forms. In 1939—for the first time—

(Non-Profit)
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

These Articles of Incorporation are signed and acknowledged by the incorporators for the purpose of forming a non-profit corporation under the provisions of Art. No. 287 of the Public Acts of 1945, as amended, known as the Michigan General Corporation Act, as follows:

ARTICLE I
The name of this corporation is SOLEM ALEICHEM INSTITUTE

ARTICLE II
The purpose or purposes of this corporation are as follows:
To teach children in Jewish, history and literature, and spreading of Jewish ways of art, and giving periodical lectures to the public.

ARTICLE III
The location of the corporation is Detroit Michigan
in the County of Wayne Michigan
Its office address of registered office is 3754 Rosberry Detroit Michigan

Rest of assets which said corporation promises to:

To: \$6,000.00

For: \$5,000.00

Corporation is to be managed under the following general plan: By pledge and loans of members and sympathizers, periodical publications and lectures.

ARTICLE IV
The names and places of residence, or business, of each of the incorporators and their addresses are as follows:

NAME	RESIDENCE ADDRESS	MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY
J. Rosenblum	1840 Gorman Blvd., Detroit, Michigan	
Morris Friedman	4000 Tyler Street, Detroit, Michigan	
S. Jacobson	3266 Cortland St., Detroit, Michigan	
Samuel Hochman	13255 Madison St., Detroit, Michigan	
Jack Salomon	4070 Sturtevant St., Detroit, Michigan	
Harry Blank	6720 Twelfth St., Detroit, Michigan	

The names and addresses of the first board of directors (or trustees) are as follows:

NAME	ADDRESS
Mrs. D. Rose	2726 Tunado, Detroit, Michigan
E. Dombey	3294 Waverley, Detroit, Michigan
J. Cukerman	3290 Grandale, Detroit, Michigan
S. Friedman	4000 Tyler, Detroit, Michigan
I. Cohen	3225 Gallowood, Detroit, Michigan
M. Lesser	3740 Rianton, Detroit, Michigan
Mr. & Mrs. Finkelstein	12325 Santa Rosa, Detroit, Michigan
M. Swaley	10002 Rosmandy, Detroit, Michigan
E. Kauter	9401 Cortland, Detroit, Michigan
D. Dornheim	2939 Grandale, Detroit, Michigan
I. Komopoff	18700 Woodingham Dr., Detroit, Michigan
A. S. Lemais	8718 Leslie, Detroit, Michigan
E. Swaler	5922 Leslie, Detroit, Michigan

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the incorporators have signed these Articles of Incorporation

6th day of May, A. D. 1947.

J. Rosenblum (J. Rosenblum)
Morris Friedman (Morris Friedman)
S. Jacobson (S. Jacobson)

Sam Hochman (Sam Hochman)
Jack Salomon (Jack Salomon)
Harry Blank (Harry Blank)

COUNTY OF MICHIGAN
COUNTY OF Wayne
On this 6th day of May, A. D. 1947, before me a Notary Public in and for said County, personally appeared: J. Rosenblum, Morris Friedman, S. Jacobson, Samuel Hochman, Jack Salomon, Harry Blank

In me known to be the persons named in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and severally acknowledged that they executed the same freely and for the intents and purposes therein mentioned.

Notary Public for Wayne County, Michigan.
My commission expires July 14, 1950

FRANCHISE FEE \$10.00
FILING FEE \$ 5.00

PORTIONS OF THE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION OF SOLEM ALEICHEM INSTITUTE

a *Seder* was arranged privately by some members of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute*. The Haggada was arranged by Moishe Haar and a few co-workers. Since then, it has been an established practice of the Institute to arrange a public *Seder* on the second night of Passover for the members and their families. Eventually other holidays were celebrated regularly, each in its appropriate form and manner. In the last fifteen years, *Rosh Hashonah* and *Yom Kipur*, too, have been celebrated with public assemblies conducted in the spirit of these holidays.

The Friday night assemblies, too, began to take on a new spirit and a new form. They were conducted in a dignified manner, with community singing, readings from the Bible, the Aggadot and modern Jewish literature. To be exact, in 1929, an attempt was made by two or three leading members to introduce a Friday night assembly in the spirit of Sabbath and in an atmosphere of decorum, but the membership rebelled then against such radical innovations.

The celebration of *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*—not in the traditional manner—but in a form made meaningful and appealing to the youngsters and to the membership of the *Sholem Aleichem Institute* was first instituted in 1946. Its pattern has been changing through the years, so that it is still in the process of formation.

The Sholem Aleichem Institute, adhering to its non-partisan policy, never was engaged directly in Zionist activities and propaganda, and in the first fifteen years of its existence the *Hatikvah* was not included in the song repertoire of its school. That hymn was added to the list of songs in 1946 by Moishe Haar. However, it is worth noticing that at least six of the alumni of the *Sholem Aleichem* school — possibly more — immigrated to Israel and made that country their home. A few of them were even instrumental in having their parents make that move.



JAY ROSENSHINE, 1892-1974:

A Eulogy

By George Zeltzer

They came from distant shores seeking a new life in a prosperous country. They worked hard, they built families, they built businesses. But more than anything else in terms of Jewish life, they brought with them baggage which was rich in Jewish tradition and Jewish learning. And they steadfastly held to that Jewish culture as they became Americans. Time takes its toll and that fountainhead of Jewish knowledge slowly is disappearing. Demographers have predicted that in the near future, the Jewish population in

the United States will consist almost entirely of native born American Jews. It is a cold fact, but it carries with it an explosive impact. How simple to explain our changing Jewish community. But that community about which we talk carried with it a creative Jewish life which will not be replaced easily, for the difference is not just in the modernity of our times, the difference is in the literacy of our times. As each of these scholars passes on, we lock up deeper and deeper the great wealth of our Yiddish and Hebrew tradition, literature, and culture. It is difficult for me to think of not having Jay Rosenshine with us. For who was there in recent times who could so easily cite a saying from the Bible, a Yiddish poem, a Hebrew writing to be used at the appropriate time. He lived in a world of books and learning. He devoted his time to further the development of our educational and cultural institutions, and from his background and great knowledge he dug deep so that he could serve and contribute to all the institutions. He was quiet and critical and sometimes too negative, but you had to know that he did this because of his positive belief in Jewish life and Jewish knowledge. He was one of the original founders of the

Sholem Aleichem Institute along with Berkovitch and Haar. He helped give it the stability and yet the flexibility to accommodate and update to the time. He could invoke the spiritual quality needed in our secular movement, because he was secure in its philosophy and yet he was at home in the religious aspect of his Judaism. Jay Rosenshine liked to sit in Schul on a holiday or on a Saturday and say that he was in Schul with all generations of Jews as they gathered under that roof. Jay Rosenshine was not an orator, nor a lecturer. He was in the nature of a private scholar. He was really only articulate when he was with a few people, but in his quiet way, people knew what he was thinking. He served his Jewish community well in many areas, but most notably as a member of the Board of the United Hebrew Schools and Midrasha, and on the Education Division of the Jewish Welfare Federation. He rarely missed a meeting. But I think the apple of his eye was a study group that was started many years ago. My wife and I went to Jay one Saturday and talked about the Sholem Aleichem Institute, and the need to develop the discipline and philosophy for Secular Jews. We decided to experiment with a Shabbot. A Shabbot of study. The study group continues to this day. Some of its original members no longer attend, but he rarely missed a session. What he loved most was the exploring and interchange between the members of the group, and the major impact that this study group had on the personal lives and their Jewish life of the individuals. Indeed, we can say we made converts and he was proud of this accomplishment. We shall miss his knowledge, his wit, his insight, his criticism, his dedication, his depth of Jewishness. His torch has fallen. There are not too many who can pick up and carry it as he did, but we are richer and fuller because he was with us. We can carry on because he left with us that inspiration for Jewish learning. We know that Jay Rosenshine will not be forgotten. His stamp on our Jewish community will remain forever.

IN MEMORIAM



Mrs. Albert A. Padover

Died February 24, 1974

*Member of the Board of Directors of
The Jewish Historical Society of
Michigan from 1964 to 1974.*



STEINBERG GRAND OPERA HOUSE, TRAVERSE CITY

JULIUS H. STEINBERG,

*Early Jewish Pioneer of
Traverse City and the
Steinberg Grand Opera House*

by Al Barnes

Editor's Note: The following material is reprinted from Al Barnes' book, *Supper in the Evening*, chapter VII, entitled "Era of the Opera House" pp. 137-144, published by Dorrance & Company, Philadelphia, Pa., 1967. See also, Stocker, Davera "When Grandfather Julius came to Michigan," *Michigan Jewish History*, vol. 6, No. 1, Nov. 1965, pp. 11-13. See also in this issue the photograph of Julius H. Steinberg and his brother Jacob with explanation by Davera Stocker, granddaughter of Julius H. Steinberg.

"In the meantime Julius Steinberg, who had arrived in Traverse City as a peddler carrying his stock in trade on his back, saw the handwriting on the theater backdrop.

Steinberg had prospered, and from a meager stock in trade had expanded his business until he owned a splendid clothing and dry goods store on East Front Street in Traverse City. Without declaring his intentions to build an opera house, he announced in January, 1891, that he had purchased forty-five additional feet of property and would build a brick block building in the spring.

The new Steinberg property was the site of the village fire engine house and brought his Front Street holdings to 115 feet. The old engine house was torn down to make way for the new development.

In March, 1891, Steinberg stated that the plans for his building were about completed. For the first time he hinted that the first floor would be for his business and the two upper floors would be an opera house.

The proposed opera house, which was referred to as "The Traverse City Opera House," was, for that day, to be elegant to the last degree. It was to be steam-heated and electrically lighted.

It wasn't until May, 1891, that work actually began on the new building. The first earth was turned on Tuesday morning, the week of May 14, 1891.

Stone for the foundation arrived in July of that year and the walls were well on their way up in August. During September and October there was a delay in constructions. Julius Steinberg was a devout Hebrew and two long Jewish holidays brought work to a semi-halt. Even the Steinberg store closed.

In December the brick work was completed, the scaffolding was removed from the imposing building, and Despres and Montague were given the contract for heating.

Cost of the structure was estimated at \$60,000 and the opera house area included a stage 32 x 45 feet, proscenium 19 x 36 feet, eight dressing rooms, and the opera house was illuminated by 400 electric globes.

Then there was a lull in activity at the "finest opera house north of Chicago." It is assumed that a financial crisis reared its head in the Steinberg family. Until December of 1893 there was, so far as records go, complete inactivity. Late in 1894 Steinberg advertised a gigantic sale in

the clothing and dry goods store which he owned. Purpose, he said, was to raise \$10,000 to complete the block, including the opera house, which was to be officially called "Steinberg's Grand Opera House."

On December 11, 1894, a grand opening show was presented at the establishment when Walker Whiteside, a leading American tragedian portrayed Hamlet in that Shakespeare production.

The event was the finest social conclave ever held in Traverse City. The ladies wore their party prettiest and the gentlemen dressed in their Sunday best. Flowers were at a premium at the Traverse City Floral Company as the fair sex scrambled to secure corsages.

The cloak room received almost as much praise as the glittering theater. It was the first performance in Traverse City where the ladies and their escorts could check their hats and coats.

The walls of the opera house were tan, blue, and gold. The seats on the main floor were so installed as to be easily removed, converting the area into a dance floor. Music was furnished by the Ideal Orchestra, composed of local musicians.

The second performance given in Steinberg's Grand Opera House was Bulwer's great play "Richelieu," in which Whiteside again appeared.

Unlike the review of the first play in the City Opera House, the reviews of the first two shows in Steinberg's were effervescent to the last degree.

On December 29, 1894, Steinberg booked "New Dominion" which was produced by the Frohman Company and, again, the house was packed and the public was enthusiastic.

The consistently fine plays which were offered at Steinberg's Grand Opera House caused it to immediately surge ahead of the City Opera House in popularity. It was gay, colorful, and "big cityish."

In the spring of 1895 the Traverse City High School held its 20th annual commencement program in the establishment. A total of thirty-two students were to receive diplomas. Then the matter of "equal time" reared its pointed little head. It was decided, in all fairness, that Steinberg's Grand Opera House should play a part in the graduation program. Compromise was reached and the Baccalaureate was held in the Steinberg building. Leon Steinberg, son of Julius, was the valedictorian and the class oration was by Jerry Sullivan. Graduation ceremonies were held in the City Opera House.

Julius Steinberg was not one to miss an opportunity to keep his opera house on a paying basis. Many of his programs were printed eight pages with local advertising on every page. The feature was sandwiched in between the display announcements. In 1894-95, he featured local thespians in many support roles. Such names as Louis Morrison and Eugene Power appeared as members of the cast in several plays. Chief usher in those long-gone days was Charles Hale. D. F. Campbell was the chief electrician.

From 1900, through a span of 15 years, both opera houses in Traverse City prospered. There was a rivalry, sometimes not too friendly but certainly healthy, which brought theatrical entertainment of high quality to the booming north country.

Among the popular actors of the day was William S. Hart. He appeared at Steinberg's Grand Opera House and is reported to have made a classic remark while visiting with a local theater-goer. The occasion was when Hart stood at the back of the theater looking out over Boardman River and Grand Traverse Bay.

"It's wonderful," he said, "Suckers at the front door and suckers at the back door."

As time moved inexorably along, there came serious competition to the opera houses and the shows which made regular visits to the growing communities. The moving picture was on its way in. Where the stage show charged ten cents, twenty-five cents, fifty cents, and sometimes more, the movie houses were bringing entertainment for as little as five cents an admission.

Business waned for the grand old institution of the opera house. Attendance fell off and many of the acting and entertainment companies turned to the "tent show," which involved a three-night stand in small communities where there had been, heretofore, no facilities for stage shows.

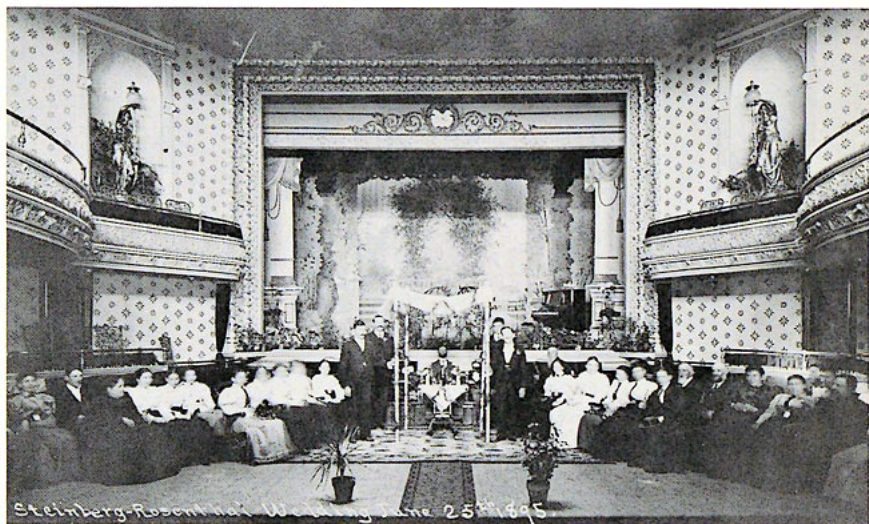
"Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Peck's Bad Boy," "East Lynn," and a score of other such plays continued to make their rounds for many years, drawing goodly attendance and being received with much acclaim.



Then it came to an end. The tent show was no more and the opera houses closed their doors.

Steinberg's beautiful place of entertainment was dismantled. Some of the seats were used in a moving picture theater and much of the interior was remodeled to accommodate business.

To some of those who remember, the City Opera House and Steinberg's Grand Opera House are as the pages of a wonderful book, read and closed, but haunting in its frequent retelling."



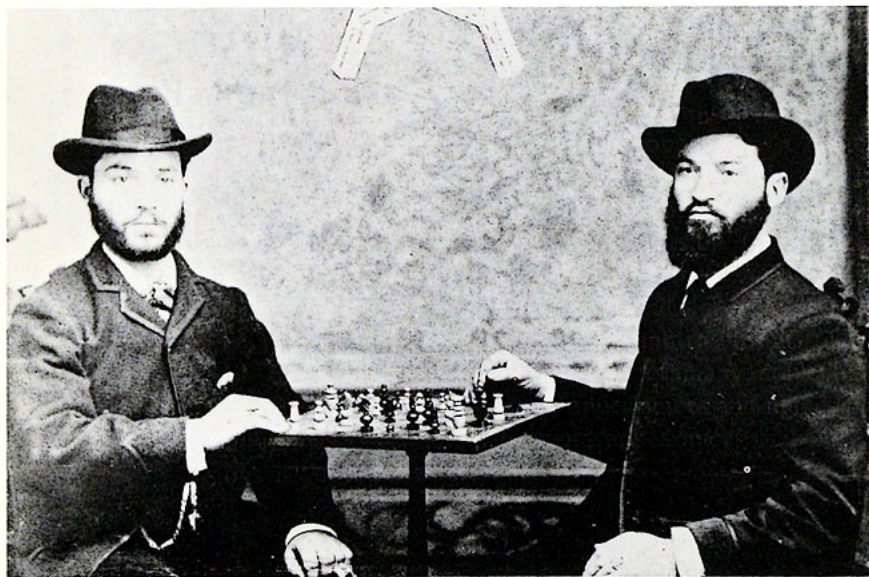
THE STAGE OF THE STEINBERG OPERA HOUSE

Showing the Steinberg-Rosenthal Wedding, June 25, 1895

JULIUS STEINBERG AND HIS BROTHER JACOB STEINBERG

by Davera Stocker

This photograph of Julius and Jacob Steinberg was taken in Detroit circa 1893. Julius left their native village of Suvalkai, Russia, in 1867. At that time his brother Jacob was five years old. They were not reunited until Jacob came to this country in 1892. Julius settled in Traverse City, Michigan, where he established his mercantile business and where he and his wife, Mary, raised their seven children: Jake, Kate, Ella, Alec, Irene, Birde and Leon. He also built a theatre in 1891, Steinberg's Grand Opera House. During the Opera House Era it was known throughout the northern Michigan area. Many later famous actors played stock there. Jacob arrived in Detroit in 1892 with his wife, Hannah, and their six children: Harry, Louis, Julius, Charles, Bess and Anna. In the next few years two more sons were added to the family, Meyer and Nathan. Jacob established his mercantile business in Delray, a suburb of Detroit. After his death in 1908 his son Louis continued the business. Most of the children of these two Michigan pioneers remained in Michigan.



"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity."

JACOB STEINBERG

JULIUS STEINBERG

Presently living in Detroit are Jacob's daughter, Anna (Mrs. Meyer L. Prentis) and his son, Meyer. Twelve of his grandchildren reside in the Detroit area: June Steinberg (Mrs. Murray Shapiro), Gerald Steinberg, Irving Steinberg, Muriel Steinberg (Mrs. William Wetsman), Beatrice Steinberg (Mrs. Harold Helper), Robert Steinberg, William Steinberg, Jewel Prentis (Mrs. Lester J. Morris), Beverly Prentis (Mrs. Beverly Straus), Barbara Prentis, (Mrs. Marvin Frenkel), Jay Foreman and Harold Foreman. Grandchildren of Julius Steinberg (Mrs. Harry Stocker), Julius Steinberg, Miriam Steinberg, and Sara Steinberg (Mrs. Lee Albert) who lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

There are one hundred and four descendants of Julius and Jacob now living in various cities, east, west, north and south in the United States, and one family in Canada.

JULIUS STEINBERG'S GRANDCHILDREN



*Davera Stocker
Daughter of
Jake Steinberg*



*Freda Rosenthal
Daughter of Kate
Steinberg Rosenthal*



*Julius Steinberg
Son of Alec Steinberg,
Son of Julius Steinberg*

*Sara Steinberg
(left) and
Miriam Steinberg
(right) daughters
of
Alec Steinberg,
with their mother
Fannie (center).*



PIONEER JACOB'S DAUGHTER AND GRANDCHILDREN
IN MICHIGAN



*Anna Steinberg Prentis, daughter of Jacob Steinberg, and her daughters,
Barbara Prentis Fenkel, Beverly Prentis Straus, Jewel Prentis Morris.*



*Mrs. Murray Shapiro
(June Steinberg)
Daughter of
Lewis Steinberg
Granddaughter of
Jacob Steinberg*



*Mrs. Harold Helper
(Beatrice Steinberg)
Daughter of
Charles Steinberg;
Granddaughter of
Jacob Steinberg*



*Muriel Steinberg
Wetsman (Mrs. William)
Daughter of
Julius Steinberg
Son of Jacob Steinberg*

PIONEER JACOB STEINBERG'S GRANDSONS IN MICHIGAN



*Harold S. Foreman
Son of Bessie Steinberg*



*Jay L. Foreman
Son of Bessie Steinberg*



*Gerald S. Steinberg
Son of Julius Steinberg*



*William Steinberg
Son of Charles Steinberg*



*Robert E. Steinberg
Son of Charles Steinberg*



*Irving Steinberg
Son of Julius Steinberg,
who was
Son of Jacob Steinberg*

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

FROM THE FIRST DISCOVERY TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY

W. H. BURTON

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

AND

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

NEW YORK

1900

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AND

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS

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Jewish Historical Society of Michigan

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan was organized on June 1, 1959, for the following main purposes:

1. To promote the study and research of Michigan Jewish history by encouraging all efforts to create a wider interest on the part of Michigan Jews in the growth and development of their many respective communities.
2. To foster the collection, preservation and publication of materials on the history of the Jews of Michigan, to which purposes the society publishes *Michigan Jewish History*, a semi-annual journal, and has established the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library as a permanent archive-depository for Michigan Jewish historical source material.
3. To encourage all projects, celebrations and other activities which tend to spread authentic information concerning Michigan Jewish history, such as the erection by the Society in conjunction with the Michigan Historical Commission, of the historical marker commemorating Michigan's first Jewish settler, at the restored Fort Michilimackinac.
4. To cooperate with national Jewish historical societies as well as with other state and regional Jewish historical groups.

Membership is open to all who have an interest in Michigan Jewish history and in supporting the goals of the organization. Income of the Society is derived entirely from the annual dues and is used for publishing the journal and related projects.

Members of the Society are invited and encouraged to submit articles, pictures, or reminiscences for future issues of the journal. Such items need not be lengthy, but should relate to the Detroit or Michigan historical scene.

Material can be sent to the Editor, 1036 David Whitney Building, Detroit, Michigan 48226.