

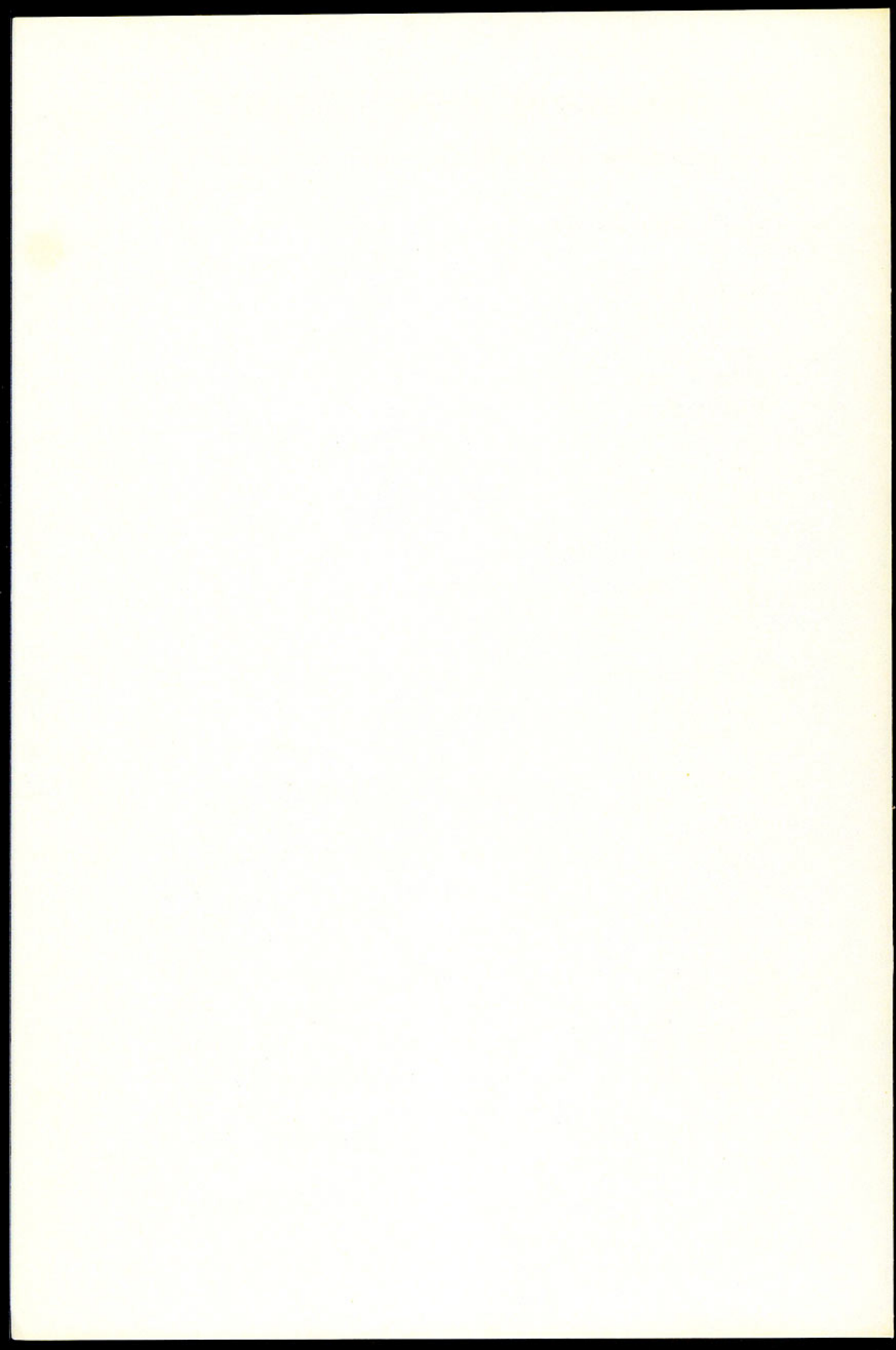
MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

JULY, 1977

TAMMUZ, 5737



**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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HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF PONTIAC, MICHIGAN BY ABE LAPIDES

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION—*The growth and progress of the Pontiac Jewish Community provide a memorable chapter of accomplishment in Michigan Jewish history. During its years of communal development Pontiac has experienced and survived many anxious and disturbing periods, which at times threatened its very communal unity.*

Many citizens of Michigan will recall the despair of the Pontiac Jewish community during the 1930's and 1940's when it strove to overcome the painful and disturbing anti-Jewish atmosphere of that period. Pontiac at that time was the very center of the anti-semitic activities in Michigan of the "Ku Klux Klan" and the infamous "Black Legion." Tensions within its own community were also distressing, brought about by the activities of its own anti-Zionist Rabbi Elmer Berger, who while serving as the first rabbi of its Temple Beth Jacob, became the pioneering influence and spokesman of the anti-Zionist national organization, the "American Council for Judaism." All of this occurred at a time when Father Charles Coughlin, located in Pontiac's backyard, was inciting national radio audiences with expressions of hate and anti-semitism.

The historical resume that follows was compiled by Abe Lapidés, a member of the Pontiac community during that volatile period and for the past 50 years an active participant in its communal and business life.



Abe Lapidés

Mr. Lapidés is the founder and president of the Osmun chain of men's clothing stores—a venture in which he has been engaged for the last half century.

Mr. Lapidés served as president of Pontiac's Temple Beth Jacob. He has served as well as president of the Pontiac Jewish Welfare Federation and chairman of its annual drives. He has also occupied many leadership positions in the community at large, including Pontiac's Community Chest.

A charter member of the Boys' Clubs of America, Mr. Lapidés received its coveted "Father of the Year" award in 1947.

George M. Stutz

The statement has been made, "It is men who make history, and not the other way around." And in the history of the Jewish community of Pontiac, Michigan—its men, its women, its rabbinical leaders—this adage has again proven to be true; for since the early years of the first World War, when Jews in any appreciable numbers first came to reside in Pontiac, the men and women who contributed to its growth did so with a full consciousness of their commitments—not only to their religion, their traditions, their houses of worship and their faith, but also with recognition of their responsibilities to a growing and vital community in this mid-western city. The sacred obligations which devolved on their generation, and on the generations to follow, sank deep into their hearts, and they applied themselves diligently to that which was presented to them, making their Jewishness a fountainhead from which poured their pulsing energies into the mainstream of community life.

To relate the history of Pontiac's Jewish growth is to start back in 1915, when a small group of approximately 20 Jewish families came together for religious worship only on the High Holy Days, and on impromptu occasions like Yahrzeiten, with "minyanim" meeting in private homes.

In 1917, the women of the community met and organized "The Ladies Aid Society," a forerunner of the sisterhoods which were to be formed later. The meetings were held above the old Strand Theatre Building and later, when that building was demolished, they met in the homes of the members. The original group consisted of the following women: Mrs. Joseph Barnett, Mrs. Norman Buckner, Mrs. Morris Fine, Mrs. Benjamin Goldstein, Mrs. Henry Jacobson, Mrs. Morris Kollin, Mrs. Jacob Kovinsky, Mrs. Julian Levin, Mrs. Jay Meyer, Mrs. Sidney Netzorg, Mrs. Wm. Present, Mrs. Saul Orman, Mrs. Louis Solomon, Mrs. Murray Wolfman, and Mrs. Gabriel Rappaport. Mrs. Joseph Barnett was elected the first president. Later, in 1928, when "Sisterhood" was the more assertive recognition given to this earlier formed group, it became affiliated with National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.

Spiritually, the small group then residing in Pontiac were starved. They had no synagogue and no Sunday School, and it was not long before a nucleus of concerned Jewish residents, headed by Jacob A. Meyer, found a need for urgent and active endeavor; first, in searching out a method of offering a religious education to the Jewish boys and girls; and secondly, to fortify the Jewish position of the adults. Ultimately, they arranged to hold services at the Armory on Water Street for the High Holy Days of 1919.

This kind of informal organization was, of course, less than satisfactory, because the Jewish families saw their children growing up without an opportunity for adequate religious training. It was this concern for the

spiritual upbringing of their children that prompted several of the men to visit Rabbi Leo Franklin, of Temple Beth El in Detroit, for counsel. He offered to arrange for an extension school out of Beth El, first making it mandatory that "ten stout-hearted men" give warranty of their sincerity of purpose by joining the Detroit Temple—until such time as their own house of worship would be established.

The old witticism that where two Jews are found, three synagogues will be established, was almost an actuality; and indeed it became apparent early after the first influx of Jews into the city that the issue of which interpretation should be the prevailing one—Reform, Orthodox, or Conservative—would become a matter of debate. There were supporters of all three points of view, but there was a growing realization that, in the interim, plans must be formulated and meetings held for the purpose of establishing some formal religious organization—with divisions to be left for later. The activity of the next few years bore its fruit, when—for the sake of harmony and expediency among the Jewish residents, it was decided that the concept of a center be adopted, at least for that time. Thus, the Jewish Community of Pontiac was duly incorporated on October 19, 1923, and a property at 164 Orchard Lake Avenue was secured as the first permanent abode of combined worship. Those signing the articles of incorporation were Sidney Netzorg, Julius Levin, Jacob Meyer, Jacob Kovinsky, Saul Orman, Jacob Fink, Joseph Barnett, Louis Solomon, and Morris Fine. The dwelling, a comparatively small one in structure, was thoroughly remodeled and renovated. On Sunday afternoon, May 25, 1925, the dedication exercises were held. Mr. Joseph Barnett led the procession into the Temple with the Torah, which was reverently deposited in the Holy Ark. The key to the building was presented to the first president, Mr. Sidney Netzorg. Rabbi Leo Franklin of Detroit, and Rabbi I. L. Bril of Flint, gave the dedication addresses, to the solemn and fervent thanks of the worshippers that this had finally become an accomplishment. During these formative years, and for a long time thereafter, Dr. Franklin continued to give his guidance and support, and he is remembered as a vital force in Pontiac's early Jewish history.

It should also be noted that, prior to this incorporation, in 1920, twelve men—including the above-mentioned signers of the articles of the new center's incorporation—and also Benjamin Goldstein, Henry R. Jacobson, and Louis Klein, formed B'nai-Brith Lodge No. 820, and a loft at 25 S. Saginaw Street served as a lodge meeting hall, and also a Sunday School room for that time.

The following years were years of slow growth and maturation. Without a permanent Rabbi, the members had to develop abilities of self-government and organization which enabled them to make slow and steady

progress. In the fall of 1924, the congregation, named the Jewish Community Center, boasted 50 members. The religious school, under the direction of Jacob Meyer, reported a regular attendance of more than sixty children in 1927. The sisterhood, with venerable *Mrs. Joseph Barnett* as its first president, rapidly became increasingly more active in the support of the Sunday School, its central project. Friday night services were held regularly, with laymen and Rabbis from neighboring communities conducting the services and giving the sermons. For the High Holy Days, rabbinically trained laymen or students from the Hebrew Union College were obtained. While Friday evening services were participated in by both the Reform group and those with Orthodox leanings, the Orthodox were to hold their services downstairs, and the Reform upstairs, and this was, of course, the situation also on Rosh Hashono and Yom Kippur—an indication of what was to follow.

The very fact of the rapid development of the congregation and its activities under lay leadership, which though capable, did not completely fill the needs of the growing Jewish awareness, made the need for fulltime professional rabbinical leadership felt all the sooner, and more keenly. It was perceived that this was an imperative, not only for religious and Jewish-oriented needs, but also to make available a formal spokesman of the faith to enter into the mainstream of the life of the entire Pontiac community. The alarm-clock of history was wound up in periods of world crises, and though it proceeded to run down between times, activities and events within the community made this necessity for rabbinical leadership all the more urgent. Jewish leaders of both Reform and Orthodox leanings wanted to assure that though there was differences in their modes of religious expression, there should nevertheless be no paralysis in the matter of making themselves felt as a historic force in their ability to contribute to the city's civic and communal activities, and of serving as a viable entity in the rapid growth of Pontiac.

In 1932, therefore, Elmer Berger was elected to the pulpit and became its first spiritual leader, conducting the first Friday evening service at the end of September of that year. After the High Holy Days, the installation services for the Rabbi—Pontiac's first—were held on Sunday afternoon, October 24th, with Dr. Leo M. Franklin, Rabbi Leon Fram, and other Rabbis from Michigan playing participatory roles. It was at this time that the decision was made to change the name from "Jewish Community Center" to "Temple Beth Jacob." One of the considerations in determining this name was to do honor to Jacob Kovinsky, who had been identified with the founding of the congregation, and whose assistance was so outstanding in every phase of its development. It was at his home that a fund-raising dinner was given which raised \$5,000.00 as an initial step.

During Rabbi Berger's tenure, the pattern of rabbinic participation in civic affairs was set. The United Jewish Appeal was making its first pleas, as the ominous clouds began to gather over world Jewry. For the membership, it was a novel experience to have a permanent religious leader at the helm; to the intellectual young graduate fresh from the academic class rooms, the problems of leading a congregation were just as unfamiliar. Both congregation and Rabbi felt the pains of adjustment. The problems were augmented, doubtless, because the precise direction of the Temple had not been finally determined at this stage.

The minutes of the period record that Orthodox services were still maintained under the auspices of the Temple, and in August of 1934, a special meeting of the board was called to decide the specific nature of the coming High Holy Day services. At this meeting, it was decided that the religious orientation of the congregation would be completely Reform. Thus, tensions between the Community Center concept embracing both Reform and Orthodox, contributed greatly to the "Sturm and Drang" of Rabbi Berger's tenure, until he left in 1936 to assume new duties as Rabbi of Temple Beth El in Flint.

It was under Rabbi Berger's leadership during these four years that spread attention as a "hot-bed" of friction from opposing factions of this the Zionism vs. anti-Zionism ethic assumed controversial proportions of tremendous magnitude. This fomentation contributed further to schisms among the Jewish leaders of both persuasions, and was to make many headlines in the nation's press, with the city's Jewish community gaining wide-inflammatory issue.

In August of 1936, Rabbi Eric Friedland came to the pulpit. He seemed to sense the kind of approach which the Temple members, many of whom had come to Reform out of Orthodox backgrounds, wanted. During his tenure a number of congregational practices which were characteristic of the "new Reform" and which recognized the value of retaining many modified traditional customs within a liberal framework, were introduced; but it was obvious that this manifestation was not satisfactory to everyone.

It was logical, during these formative years, that there should develop a definite break among the Jewish population of the city, as the necessity and desire for two separate and distinct groups, one of Reform observance, and the other Orthodox in its intensity—became more and more insistent. It was soon evident among these disparate tendencies that it would be necessary for another house of worship to be instituted for the more conservative elements of Pontiac's Jewry, and this was later to become a reality. The two congregations, always harmonious in the more general aspects of the Jewish faith, made their approaches in observance a more comfortable

reality for each, and each was to build a beautiful edifice within which this was capable of accomplishment.

During the years the issue of Zionism, which had heard its first rumblings earlier, had become a matter of deep concern. In the very year that the legalized pogroms in Germany took place, the newly organized Zionist District of Pontiac had asked for and received permission to meet in Temple and Synagogue rooms. Against the background of European Jewry in its death throes, the debate on the issue of Jewish nationalism sounded its own shrill notes in Pontiac. However meaningless they may seem in the face of the fact of an Israel now established, and the tragic retrospect of six million dead, they provided a rationale for some minute congregational splintering, and some hitherto zealous contributors to the Temple's welfare made their anti-zionist feelings the basis for their withdrawal.

In the meanwhile, Pearl Harbor had slashed its way across history and the consciousness of America and the world; and in Pontiac, as well as elsewhere, the war years reflected themselves in some curtailment of congregational activity. It had its impact on Temple Beth Jacob as well; for in 1944, Rabbi Friedland was added to the roster of the armed forces, when he left for the Harvard School of Chaplains. For a brief time the congregation reverted to lay-leadership, with visiting speakers at services and volunteer administration of the religious school. Many men and women from what was later to become both Reform and Conservative groups, were busy cooperating in Red Cross, War Chest, Bond Drives, and Nurses' Aid work. In the meanwhile, the Post War Planning Committee, which had been activated in October of 1943 under the leadership of Harold Goldberg and Irving Steinman, was going ahead with plans for a building fund drive to replace quarters which were no longer adequate.

During these years, Dr. Davin Schoenberger came as a replacement as spiritual leader of Temple Beth Jacob, but his tenure was not of long duration. The next occupant of this Temple's pulpit was Rabbi Milton Rosenbaum. During his tenure, a Men's Club, which had been suggested as far back as 1938, became a reality and developed into a staunch auxiliary of the Temple family.

In the summer of 1949, Rabbi Rosenbaum was called to the pulpit in Fort Worth, Texas, and he was succeeded by Rabbi Sanford Saperstein, who soon established himself as both a spiritual and community leader. It was during his years in Pontiac that the building and dedication of the present edifice of Temple Jacob took place. The dedication, a memorable one, was held on Friday evening, June 10, 1955, at the beautiful newly-built structure on the corner of Thorpe Street and Elizabeth Lake Road. The continuing growth of its membership and the necessity for ever-increasing space for purposes of educational facilities, had led to new additions, new classrooms and wider improvements.

Keeping pace with the Reform element was the Conservative group; and theirs too was a significant dedication when their newly built synagogue was to hold its ceremonies at Congregation B'nai Israel, sister congregation to Temple Beth Jacob. It is an impressive edifice, located at 143 Oneida Road in Pontiac. Through the years, the Rabbis of Both Synagogue and Temple—those who were there from the beginning, and those who were to follow through the years up to the present time, always worked hand in hand to present Judaism to the community in its most impressive forms.

In the history of the city's Jewish development, it would indeed be remiss if recognition were not given to the distaff side. It becomes a most challenging task to infuse into the assembled records of this history the nature and spirit of those dedicated women who made such history a series of monumental accomplishments. Some of these pioneering women are still with us today, and have been stalwart leaders, and women of courage and wisdom. Early minutes of the records indicate feminine zeal for the necessary fund-raising efforts, eagerness for religious education for the children, and great generosity in helping needy families; and as early as 1927, at almost the very first moment of their visibility, the women were to receive accolades. An article published in the "Detroit Jewish Chronicle" stated: "The Jewish women of Pontiac, while a comparatively small group, are among the most active in the state. Whatever they may lack in numbers they make up in energy and enthusiasm." And so it has continued, even to this day, when membership rolls have grown to much greater proportions. And even as the numbers have grown, so too have the energies and enthusiasms of both sisterhoods kept pace with the dynamic male leadership of each group.

To put history in true and proper perspective, the names of all rabbinical and lay leaders, from the beginning to the present, should all be noted—together with the list of their many contributions and accomplishments. But limitations are of course necessary for fear of presenting an unwieldy and too lengthy document. There is always a feeling of historical inadequacy in such situations, conspicuously unworthy and unfair to worthy people. It seems expedient for the sake of brevity and cohesiveness, therefore, to have focused attention on only those earliest settlers who left traditions and an inheritance of value.

And yet, there are those in this history who have played such major roles in their unswerving loyalties and dedication to a cause as to merit recognition. Two who should be added to the few names mentioned in this narrative are Irving and Mae Steinman, who for almost 50 years had great vital impact on their Temple and on the community as a whole. And even though they did not arrive with the very first Jewish settlers, it was not long after that first influx that they moved to Pontiac and immediately

set themselves the course of giving their time and energies unstintingly and with unceasing devotion.

So, as in any history, there is space to mention merely the resumé of formation, growth and development. The pulse and heartbeat cannot be put into writing; the spirit and the soul cannot be described. But Pontiac's Jewish history records the story of men and women who lay the gifts of their labors and their substance at God's altar.

We live in a world in which religious ideals and spiritual values are under constant attack; in which the foes of Zionism and the very foundations of our faith are perpetually on the edge of an abyss, threatened by vicious and perilous forces at every tick of the clock. Yet the citadels of faith and worship have constantly been maintained by Pontiac's Jewry, and its members continue to build for the future. The very fact that this small community was the birthplace of anti-zionist venom gave strength to the solidification of its pro-zionist forces throughout the years. And now, all its Jewry directs, with diligence and unflagging attention, their injunctions to the generations yet to come, and to them they say:

“Remember the days of old;

Consider the years of many generations.

Ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee;

Thine elders, and they will tell thee.”

And hopefully, through the efforts of these generations of the future, history will decree that “the best is yet to be . . .”

MEMORABLE SHOLEM ALEICHEM RECEPTION IN DETROIT, MAY 15, 1915

*An Incident in the Cultural Life of the Detroit Jewish Community
arranged by the Detroit Progressive Literary and Dramatic Club.*

BY PHILIP J. GILBERT

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION: *We have emphasized again and again that the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan has been particularly desirous of obtaining historiographical source material and historical accounts of the numerous outstate Jewish Communities of Michigan. We have also encouraged historical accounts of the many Jewish Landsmanshaften Societies and other cultural groups that played varying roles in the historical development of the Detroit Jewish Community.*

It is therefore gratifying to publish in this issue not only a "History of the Jewish Community of Pontiac, Michigan by Abe Lapidés, but also an account of the *Detroit Progressive Literary and Dramatic Club* by Philip J. Gilbert; focusing on the event when this organization brought the famous writer, Sholem Aleichem, to Detroit.

Although this 'dramatic club' lasted only a few years (till 1917) it played a significant role in the cultural Yiddish Movement of the Detroit Jewish Community; and its individual members, even after the dissolution of the organization, stimulated the development of many other organizations whose common aim was the continued preservation of a true literary Yiddish language. Such a one was Philip J. Gilbert who died October 24, 1976 at the age of 86, about a week after presenting this article for publication. A short account of his life follows:



Philip J. Gilbert

Philip Gilbert was born near Warsaw, Poland, July 5, 1890. He came to New York in 1907 but settled in Detroit in 1914 where he lived the rest of his life. He married Eva Ashinsky in 1919.

During the earlier years of his life in Detroit he was very active in the Yiddish literary and dramatic circles of the Detroit Jewish Community and it was during his leadership of the Progressive Literary and Dramatic Club in 1915 that the event recounted in his memoir took place; as well as many other events of a similar nature involving other Yiddish personalities including Peretz, Hirshbein, Yehoash, Avrom Reizin, Samuel Niger and others.

His brother, Shlomo Gilbert was the noted Yiddish poet who died at the hands of the Nazis and Philip Gilbert wrote the story of this brother

called "My Brother Yitzchok Shlomo" which appeared in the book he published not so many years ago.

Philip J. Gilbert acted in a great many of the Yiddish dramatic productions in the early part of his life, also serving as a reader of Yiddish literary creations at many public and private functions—at such places as the Hannah Schloss Building, Schreiber's Hall, Solima Turner Hall, St. Andrew's Hall, Moose Temple and, of course, the Old Detroit Opera House, where the Sholem Aleichem event he tells about was presented.

He was active successfully in the mercantile life of the Detroit Jewish Community.

He was active on the Board of Directors of the United Hebrew Schools for over twenty years and was honored by the United Hebrew Schools in 1966 for his many years of dedicated and devoted services.

Irving I. Edgar, M.D.

In the Spring of 1915, in the late hours of the evening, a committee of the Progressive Literary and Dramatic Club, set out to inform the Jewish community of Detroit that the great writer and humorist Sholem Aleichem was coming to Detroit.

It was dark on Hastings Street. The stores were closed and very few pedestrians were on the street. We did our work by the light of the street lamps. We worked fast, for we had to cover the stretch of Hastings Street, between Canfield and Gratiot. The committee consisted of five club members. Two, served as scouts, to warn us of an oncoming Officer of the Law, one to carry a pail of paste and a brush, and the others to hang the posters in place.

The posters announced that the Progressive Literary Dramatic Club had arranged to bring the great writer and humorist Sholem Aleichem to the Detroit Opera House, on May 15. Sholem Aleichem will read some of his short stories, and the Progressive Literary Dramatic Club will stage a performance of Sholem Aleichem's "The Agenten"—"The Insurance Agents."

The following morning, a second group distributed cardboard announcements for display in store windows. The store keepers were overjoyed and promised to co-operate in every way to help us. The news spread fast! Detroit Jews were thrilled with the prospect of seeing and hearing Sholem Aleichem in person. Various organizations, Landsmonshaften, cultural and educational institutions, were busy making plans to welcome our distinguished guest.

Two weeks, however, before our event was to take place, we learned that the famous Jewish Actor Jacob Adler, was coming to Detroit to play in another Detroit Theater, the very same evening of our planned reception for Sholem Aleichem. We were shocked, worried, but nothing could be done to deter the coming of Jacob Adler. We therefore doubled our efforts and were determined to go ahead with full speed!

In the theater, we worked several days to prepare the stage for the performance. A few hours before curtain time we heard that all tickets were sold out and were now selling standing room only.

The Detroit Opera House, that evening, was filled to capacity. The theater had an air of excitement and expectation! Students from Michigan Universities were occupying the "Boxes", and banners with various slogans of welcome were draped over the brass rails. Young ladies from Junior Hadassah were in white uniforms, red Mogen David embroidered white kerchiefs on their heads. These walked through the aisles, with blue and white canisters, collecting funds for Hadassah.

When the curtain went up, the stage portrayed a typical Russian Railroad Station. Peasants in white linen clothes moving back and forth. Bearded Jews in old fashioned "Gabardines" were sitting on benches near their luggage and in the center was a long table with benches on both sides. This was the scene, and the background, for the four Insurance Agents that were to appear, one by one, to take their place at the table and enact the humorous skit, "The Agenten"—"The Insurance Agents", written by Sholem Aleichem. The participants in the play were Morris Finkel, A. Babitsh, Sam Victor, and Philip Gilbert—members of the Dramatic Section of the Club.

The play was well received and applauded. Sholem Aleichem, the Author, complimented us for a good performance, and for the splendid idea in changing the scene of action from a railroad car, as originally written, to a railroad station.

Sholem Aleichem's appearance on the stage was greeted with a standing ovation, and applause of several minutes. He read, artistically, his humorous story "A Zex'n Zechtzig"—"A Sixty Six", followed by his famous humorous story, "Berel Issac's"; a tale of an immigrant returning to the "Shtetel" from New York, telling in the market place, tall stories about the wonders of "America."

This again brought the audience to their feet, with a hilarious applause. Children from Hebrew and Yiddish Schools walked up to the stage, greeted our distinguished guest and presented him with bouquets of flowers. It was an emotional scene that overwhelmed Sholem Aleichem and all of us in the audience. It was an evening full of excitement and joy, and well remembered by all who were present.

The next day, a committee of four members of the Club, visited Sholem Aleichem at the Elkins Hotel in Mt. Clemens. We presented him with a check of \$500.00, the net proceeds of the evening. He was pleased with the amount of the check, and our visit. He wanted to see Mt. Clemens, and asked us if we would have time to go for a walk with him. Needless to say, the walk and conversation was very interesting, especially the stories he told us, sprinkled with that amusing Sholem Aleichem humor. He also made it a point to tell us that, since he came from Switzerland to New York, the reception in Detroit was the most outstanding in every respect! On our return to the Hotel, he invited us to have tea with him in the dining room and afterwards to his apartment to meet his wife, who was ill, and could not attend the reception in Detroit. He introduced us, and told his wife again, what a beautiful reception we arranged for him in Detroit.

Who were the young men and women that comprised the membership of the Progressive Literary Dramatic Club—and had the courage to undertake and underwrite such a costly reception for Sholem Aleichem? It is appropriate to review the history of the “Club” of that era.

The Detroit Jewish Community had the good fortune to attract an element of Jewish youth of intelligence and cultural background. Detroit in 1914 and 1915 had more to offer the immigrant youth than the Sweat-Shops of the East. Industry was booming and Henry Ford’s \$5.00 a day in wages, regardless of skill, was also an attraction.

Many of these immigrants brought in their “Baggage” a higher education, others, desire for a more cultural education. Yiddish literature and drama was in its prime. A new generation of Yiddish writers and poets, called the “Yunge” appeared on the horizon, here in America, and also in Europe, many of great talent and promise. Yiddish literature and culture opened the door to the cultural treasures of American and Western cultures, also to National Jewish aspirations. “Yiddish” was the “magnet” that brought these young people together, regardless of different ideologies, for comradeship and cultural entertainment.

Schreibers Hall, on Hastings Street, was headquarters for most activities. Meetings were held every Tuesday evening. There were well attended by the general public and the Club members. The meetings were usually highlighted by book reviews, short story readings, recitations and lectures.

Occasionally the Club brought to Detroit Yiddish writers to lecture, read their poetry, their plays, and sometimes to be present when the Club performed their plays. The plays were staged in different halls in the city of Detroit.

The following writers came to Detroit by invitation of the Club: Sholem Aleichem, Yehoosh, H. Rosenblat, Abraham Reisen, Peretz Hirsbein, and others. Peretz Hirsbein came here quite often to read his plays.

The following were the most active members of the Club, and also participated in the cultural activities, and they later became prominent in various professional and business activities: Mr. A. Babitsh, Chief Engineer for General Motors Spark Plug Division, Flint, Michigan, Mr. Ely Elconin, Chief Engineer, Timkin Axle Company, Mr. Morris Finkel, Architect, Mr. Heyden, Artist, Issac Finkelstein, Attorney, Mr. Emanuel Seidler, Attorney, Mrs. Ida Seidler (Jaffy), Teacher, Mr. Moishe Dombey, Insurance Agent, Mr. David Zislin, Zislin Printing Company, Mr. Joseph Chagai, Principal of the United Hebrew Schools, and Zionist leader, Mr. Michael Michlin, Principal, United Hebrew Schools, Sam Victor, Victor Paint Company, Philip Gilbert, Yolles-Gilbert Company, Mr. M. Schneider, Ms. Anna Light, Actress, Mrs. Simon, Mr. D. Friedlander, and Mr. Azolin.



THE JEWISH PROGRESSIVE LITERARY AND DRAMATIC CLUB 1915

Top Row (left to right): 1. Markov; 2. ?; 3. Friedland; 4. ?; 5. ? 6. Heyden; 7. Philip Gilbert; 8. ?; 9. Sam Revzin.

Second Row (sitting): 1. Ida (Jaffe) Seidler; 2. ?; 3. Azolin; 4. Yehoash; 5. Eli Elconin; 6. Mrs. Simon.

Third Row (sitting on floor): 1. Davis; 2. ?; 3. Sam Victor; 4. Joseph Chagai (Hebrew teacher); 5. ?; Wierer (?).

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YEHOASH-EVENING
SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 4
— IN —
MOOSE TEMPLE, 46 CONGRESS

PROGRAM

1. Our guest Yehoash will read from his best works.
2. Cantor Haggi will sing folk songs accompanied by Miss Tille Galperin.
3. Robert Berman will play the best numbers from classical music.
4. Ms. Easton, the great pianist of Detroit, will play piano solos.
5. D. Friedland (of the Prague Lit.-Drama Club) will recite from Yehosh.
6. P. Gilbert will recite Paganini from Yehoash. Haggi will recite Olympus in Horiv.

ווארפם נים אוועק דיעזע קארד

ווייל דאס איז דער פראגראם פון דעם
פראכטפולען
יְהוֹאֵשׁ-אַבְעֵנֶד
זונטאג אב. 4-טען דושן
אין
מוזעמפּעל, 46 קאנגרעסס

פראגראם:

1. אונזער גאסט יְהוֹאֵשׁ וועט פארלעזען פון זיינע בעסטע ווערק.
2. חנו חגי וועט זינגען פאלקסלידער אקאמפאנירט ביי מיס טיליע גאלפערין.
3. ראבערטי בערמאן וועט שפילען די בעסטע קלאסישע פון קלאסישע מוזיק.
4. מיסעס יוסטין די גרעסטע פיאנאסטיקערין פון דער ראט, וועט שפילען פיאנאסאלא.
5. ד. פרידלאנד (מיטגליד פון פראג. ליט. דראמ. קלוב) וועט דעקלאמירען דעם תנאים קללה פון יְהוֹאֵשׁ.
6. גילבערטי. וועט דעקלאמירען פאגאניני פון יְהוֹאֵשׁ. חגי וועט דעקלאמירען אליספוס און חורב.

Becker Bros. & Co., 597 Hastings St.

LOUIS BRANDEIS ON DETROIT

BY ROBERT A. ROCKAWAY*

In October, 1914, two months after accepting the chairmanship of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs in the United States, Louis Brandeis paid a visit to Detroit. This visit was in conjunction with his efforts on behalf of Zionism and the beleaguered Jews of war torn Europe and Palestine.¹ While in Detroit, he wrote his brother Alfred the following letter, in which he offered some impressions of the city.

Brandeis stayed at the Hotel Fuller, and it was there he saw his first dinner floor show consisting of an orchestra, singers and dancers. Ever the moralist, Brandeis saw this performance as emulating those of ancient Pompei, Italy and Alexandria, Egypt. Of greater interest, however, is his comment that "anti-Semitism seems to have reached its American pinnacle" in Detroit. He based this observation on the restrictive practices of the Detroit Athletic Club (DAC), whose exclusionary policies dated back to the nineteenth century.²

Whether Detroit was the prime example of American anti-Semitism in 1914 is debatable. It is nevertheless significant that Brandeis should single out Detroit for this dubious honor. Either Detroit was, indeed, one of the most anti-Semitic of American cities, or Brandeis, an assimilated Jew, Harvard graduate and prominent Boston attorney, was showing his naivete regarding the status of Jews in the United States. Given Brandeis' professional and economic position and the circles amongst whom he socialized, the anti-Jewish sentiment which he was likely to be aware of and encounter was social discrimination. It is indicative of his own social position and newness to the American Jewish scene that he perceived social discrimination, at a time when Eastern European Jewish immigrants were subjected to harassment and physical abuse, as the ultimate in anti-Semitism.

The statement is prophetic, however, in the light of what was to occur in the city during the next two decades when a "pinnacle" in anti-Semitic agitation was reached. From 1921-1927, Henry Ford made Detroit a center of international anti-Semitism with his campaign in the *Dearborn Independent*, and Father Charles Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith were to do the same in the 1930's.

A number of allusions in the letter merit explanation. The I.C.C. is the Interstate Commerce Commission. "Mare" is the evil spirit once thought to produce nightmares. "Bob, Son of Battle" refers to Robert LaFollette, senator from Wisconsin and progressive reformer during the Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson and Harding administrations (1906-1925). Because of his championing of reform legislation, LaFollette was referred to by journalists as "Battling Bob LaFollette." Percy Lowell was a Boston-born astronomer, businessman and writer.

The use of German by Brandeis is not surprising since his parents were of German descent (immigrating to the U.S. in 1848) and he was acquainted with German culture and had studied in Germany from 1873-1875.

The letter is located in the Brandeis collection at the University of Louisville Law School Library, reference number M4-1.

HOTEL FULLER
DETROIT, MICH.

Oct. 10/14.

Dear Al:

Ran into Carmalt and some other I.C.C. men here, of which I was glad, as it enabled me to talk over the Washington situation in advance of my going there.

Es ist nicht erfreulich. "Mare delights me not," and my appreciation of Bob, Son of Battle, grows.

At this hotel, I was introduced to the modernist stunt of having not only an orchestra at dinner and singers, but also dancers. Pompei and Alexandria are being emulated. I guess a heavy batch of adversity wouldn't hurt American morals.

By the way, anti-Semitism seems to have reached its American pinnacle here. New Athletic Club with 5000 members and no Jews need apply. Ich Konnte es Ihnen Kaum ubel nehmen, if the other 4600 were excluded also. But, as Percy Lowell said of our Athletic Club: "It is the most inclusive club in Boston."

Off for Wash. 11:55 P.M.

LOUIS

Footnotes

* Robert A. Rockaway is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Jewish History at Tel-Aviv University, Israel.

1. The best works on Brandeis and his Zionist activities are Jacob DeHaas, *Louis D. Brandeis: A Biographical Sketch* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1929); Alpheus T. Mason, *Brandeis: A Free Man's Life* (New York: Viking Press, 1946); Yonathan Shapiro, *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization, 1897-1930* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Melvin Urofsky, *A Mind of One Piece: Brandeis and American Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971).

2. In March, 1893, Herman Freund, a prominent German Jewish businessman, was rejected for membership in the DAC because he was Jewish. This event became a cause celebre and engendered an acrimonious debate on "Why is the Jew Hated" in the pages of the *Detroit Evening News* (*Detroit Evening News*, April 3, 1893, p.4; April 5, 1893, p.4; April 7, 1893, p.4; April 20, 1893, p.4). The debate eventually embroiled Detroit's most prominent rabbi, Louis Grossmann of Temple Beth El.

The restrictive policies of the DAC continued into the twentieth century and led to a number of prominent Detroit Jews refusing to set foot in the club, even when invited to do so. Fred M. Butzel, for example, declined an invitation to dine with President Woodrow Wilson at the DAC "because the luncheon was given on the premises of a club that does not accept Jews as members" (*Jewish Independent*, July 28, 1916.). For a fuller treatment of this incident see Robert Rockaway, "Anti-Semitism in an American City: Detroit, 1850-1914," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXIV (Sept., 1974), pp. 42-54.

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PHILIP SLOMOVITZ AT 80

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are honored to publish in this issue of *Michigan Jewish History* a biographical outline of Philip Slomovitz, dean of the English-Jewish Press in the United States and internationally known editor and publisher of the *Detroit Jewish News*, on the occasion of his 80th birthday. We congratulate Mr. Slomovitz and wish him many more years of health, happiness and productive journalism on behalf of Klal Yisrael.



Philip Slomovitz was born on December 5, 1896, in Russia. He was educated at the Government Russian-Jewish School (1908), the Rhodes Preparatory School in New York (1917) and at the University of Michigan. He married Anna J. Gandal in 1926. There are two sons; Gabriel born 1926, and Carmi born in 1933 and married to Sharron L. Max, 1953.

He has a grandson, Randy David, who is a third year student at Arizona State University.

Mr. Slomovitz has held many professional positions including the Editorial Department of the *Detroit News*, Editor of *Palestine Pictorial*, Editor *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, Editor *Detroit Jewish Chronicle*, Editor *Detroit Jewish News*.

He was president of the American Jewish Press Association; Vice-President Jewish Publication Society; Vice-President, Jewish Telegraphic Agency; President Zionist Organization of Detroit and National Honorary Vice-President; President of the American Jewish Congress of Detroit; President of the Jewish National Fund Council of Detroit; President Detroit Zionist Council; Vice President World Confederation of Jewish Writers; President, University of Michigan Menorah Society; National Vice-President Intercollegiate Zionist Association. He has been a Board Member: United Hebrew Schools, Hebrew Hospital Association. He has been a member of the Overseas Press Club, O.R.T., Technion, Congregation Shaarey Zedek, Sigma Delta Chi, Society of Occident and Orient.

He has been listed in *Who's Who in American Jewry* and in the *Overseas Press Club Annual*.

He has published in the *Christian Century*, *DeHaas Encyclopedia*, Universal Jewish encyclopedia, Seven Arts Feature Syndicate, Catholic Weekly Commonwealth, Syndicated Jewish Press Service, Jewish Feature Service, Detroit Free Press.

His Honors and awards have been many, including:

Myrtle Award, Detroit Chapter of Hadassah.

St. Cyprian Journalistic Award

Jewish War Veterans Award for Communal Betterment

B'Nai Brith Award

First Smolar Award for Excellence in Journalism.

American Association for Jewish Education Award.

American Jewish Tercentenary Award.

IRVING KATZ

50 YEARS AS SYNAGOGUE ADMINISTRATOR

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are honored to publish in this issue of *Michigan Jewish History* a biographical outline of Irving I Katz, the distinguished Executive Secretary of Temple Beth El and a charter member and past president of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, on the occasion of his 50th anniversary as a Synagogue Administrator and 70th birthday. A leader in our Jewish Community, Irving Katz is well known locally and nationally as a Synagogue Administrator par excellence, historian, scholar and linguist. We congratulate him most heartily on the two significant milestones in his life and wish him continued health, happiness and productive activity.



Born March 31, 1907, in Dvinsk (now Soviet Latvia)
Eldest of four sons (three of whom are residents of Israel) of Rabbi Michael and Rebecca Deutsch Katz

JEWISH EDUCATION

Hebrew Gymnasium, Riga (now Soviet Latvia)

Hebrew Teachers' Normal School, Riga

City Yeshivah, Riga

Received Smichah (Rabbinic Ordination) from Rabbis Menachem Mendel Sack, Joel Baranchik and Aryeh Leib Rosenberg

SECULAR EDUCATION

Spencerian Business College, Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland College of Western Reserve University, Cleveland

Western Reserve University Law School, Cleveland

Fellow in Temple Administration (FTA), Board of Certification for Temple Administrators, New York City

KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES

English

Hebrew

Yiddish

German

Russian

POSITION IN CLEVELAND, OHIO

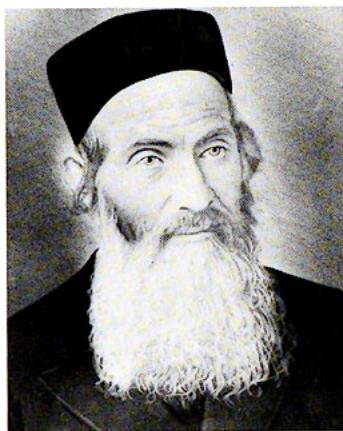
Executive Director and Educational Director of the Oheb Zedek Congregation, 1972-1936



PHOTO TAKEN IN 1910
IN DVINSK

*Left to right:
Rabbi Michael L. Katz, father of
Irving I. Katz; Irving I. Katz at the
age of 3; Rebecca Deutsch Katz,
mother of Irving I. Katz; Benjamin
Katz, brother of Irving I. Katz.*

PHOTO TAKEN IN
UTYAN, LITHUANIA
*Rabbi Isaac Shoor, Dayan (Religious
Judge) of the Jewish community of
Utyan, great-grandfather of
Irving I. Katz.*



ACTIVITIES IN CLEVELAND

Chairman, First Annual Conference of Cleveland Jewish Youth League
Vice-Chairman, Social Service and Teacher's Division, Jewish Welfare Fund Campaign

Publicity Chairman, Cleveland Council of Jewish National Fund
Vice-President, Graduate Chapter, Avukah (Student Zionist Organization)

National Publicity Director of Avukah

Charter Member of Zohar Hebrew Dramatic Studio

Took a leading part in production of Hebrew play "The Footsteps of the Messiah" presented by Zohar Hebrew Dramatic Studio in cooperation with the Bureau of Jewish Education of Cleveland

Collaborated with A. H. Friedland, noted Jewish educator, on publication of a series of Sipurim Yafim (Beautiful Stories)

Member, Hebrew Speaking Society of Cleveland and Masada Organization

POSITION IN YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

Executive Director and Educational Director of Anshe Emeth Temple, 1936-1939

ACTIVITIES IN YOUNGSTOWN

Secretary, Youngstown Council, Jewish National Fund

Member, Executive Board and Executive Committee, Youngstown District Z. O. A.

Member, Educational and Survey Commissions, Jewish Federation of Youngstown

Contributor to Youngstown Jewish Times

POSITION IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Executive Secretary, Temple Beth El, since 1939

ACTIVITIES IN DETROIT

Founder and Past President, Council of Synagogue Executive Directors of Metropolitan Detroit

Charter Board Member, Metropolitan Detroit Federation of Reform Synagogues

One of organizers, Synagogue Council of Greater Detroit

Chairman, and later Advisor, Synagogue and School Division, Allied Jewish Campaign

Board Member, Detroit Service Group of Jewish Welfare Federation

Member, Culture Commission and Community Relations Commission, Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit

Board Member, Detroit Chapter, Zionist Organization of America

Board Member, Detroit Chapter, Jewish National Fund

One of organizers, Annual Israel Bond Dinner, sponsored by the Metropolitan Detroit Federation of Reform Synagogues

Board Member, Kvutzah Ivrit (Hebrew Speaking Society of Detroit)

Editor, Temple Beth El Bulletin

Historian of Temple Beth El

Charter Member and Past President, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan
Presently Board Member

Secretary, American Jewish Tercentenary Committee of 300 and Chairman of Exhibits

Member, Committee for the Observance of Detroit's 250th Birthday

Member, Detroit Civil War Centennial Observance Commission

Member, Michigan Civil War Centennial Observance Commission

Member, Detroit Bicentennial Religious Task Force of Detroit Bicentennial Observance Commission

Charter Member, Board of Advisors, Wayne State University Press

Member, Wayne State University Commission on Progressive Studies in Religion and Urban Culture

President, Greater Detroit Metropolitan Cemetery Association

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Founder and first President, National Association of Temple Administrators (NATA); Honorary President for Life since 1948

Member, Executive Board and Administrative Committee, NATA

Editor, NATA Quarterly

Historian of NATA

Chairman, NATA Pension Fund Committee, NATA Commission on Research and Studies

Member, Board of Trustees, Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC)

Charter Member, Executive Board and Executive Committee, Great Lakes Council, UAHC

Member, UAHC Great Lakes Region Caravan (visited over 30 Reform congregations in region to advise leadership on synagogue administrative and financial problems)

Conducted administrative surveys in over 100 congregations throughout the United States

Honorary Vice-President and member of Executive Board and Executive Committee, Northeast Lakes Council, UAHC

Charter Member, Commission on Synagogue Administration, NATA-

UAHC and Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)
 Charter Member, Board of Certification for Temple Administrators,
 UAHC-CCAR-NATA

Member, National Cabinet of Reform Judaism Appeal

Member, Maintenance of Union Membership Commission, UAHC

Member, Finance and Development Commission, UAHC

Addressed National and Regional Conventions of UAHC, National Convention of National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, National Convention of CCAR, and student body of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, first Temple Administrator to be invited to speak to above.

Curator, American Jewish Historical Society. Presently member of Executive Council

BOOKS PUBLISHED

Award winning "*The Beth El Story—With A History of the Jews in Michigan Before 1850*", Wayne State University Press

Award winning "The Jewish Soldier From Michigan in the Civil War", Wayne State University Press

Award winning "History of Jewish Community Services in Detroit", Jewish Welfare Federation of Detroit

"Detroit's Jewish Heritage" in "Heritage of Faith" Detroit's Religious Communities, 1701-1976", Detroit's Religious Bicentennial Task Force of Detroit Bicentennial Observance Commission

"Successful Synagogue Administration" co-authored with Myron E. Schoen, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

"Organizational Blueprint for the Larger Brotherhood" in "The Temple Brotherhood—an Organization Manual", National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods

PAMPHLETS PUBLISHED

A Select Bibliography on Synagogue Administration, NATA and UAHC, 1943

Synagogue Administration and Finance, NATA and UAHC, 1944

The Function of the Executive Secretary in the Contemporary Synagogue, NATA and UAHC, 1951

A Survey of the Financial Structure of 188 UAHC Congregations, NATA and UAHC, 1951

Dues Increase Manual for Congregations, UAHC, 1952

Major Aspects of Synagogue Administration (lectures delivered at HUC-JIR), 1959

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

History of the Jews in Detroit, Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit

History of the Jews in Michigan, 1761-1900, Albert Karbal and Irving I. Katz

WROTE HISTORIES OF

Congregation Shaarey Zedek

Beth Abraham Synagogue (Now Beth Abraham-Hillel)

Congregation B'nai David

Yeshivath Beth Yehuda

Pisgah Lodge B'nai B'rith

Temple Emanuel, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Temple Beth Israel, Jackson, Michigan

Temple Beth El

CONTRIBUTOR OF ARTICLES ON SYNAGOGUE ADMINISTRATION AND MICHIGAN HISTORY TO

The Synagogue

Synagogue Service

Liberal Judaism

NATA Quarterly

Proceedings of NATA Conventions

The Synagogue Center

NASA Quarterly

Detroit Jewish Chronicle

Detroit Jewish News

Detroit Free Press

Detroit News

Detroit Times

Michigan Jewish History

Hed Hakvutzah (Hebrew)

Forward (Yiddish)

Detroit Historical Society Bulletin

Michigan History

Family Trails (Michigan Department of Education)

Encyclopedia Judaica

American Cemetery

Church Management

American Jewish Historical Quarterly

Guide to Jewish Detroit

Jewish Teacher

Temple Beth El Bulletin

Religious School Yearbook of Temple Beth El
 Detroit Genealogical Society Bulletin

LISTED IN

Who's Who in World Jewry
 Who's Who in American Jewry
 American Jews, Their Lives and Achievements
 The Israel Honorarium
 Who's Who in the Midwest
 Dictionary of International Biography
 Contemporary Authors

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 Council of Synagogue Executive Directors of Metropolitan Detroit
 Union of American Hebrew Congregations
 Reform Jewish Appeal
 National Association of Temple Administrators
 National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods
 The Irving I. Katz Collection on Michigan Jewish History, American
 Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio
 The Irving I. Katz Collection on Synagogue and Church Administration,
 Hebraica and Judaica, St. John's Provincial Seminary Library, Plymouth,
 Michigan

MEMBER

Temple Beth El
 National Association of Temple Administrators
 National Association of Synagogue Administrators
 National Association of Church Business Administrators
 Council of Synagogue Executive Directors of Metropolitan Detroit
 Yiddish Scientific Institute (Yivo)
 National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods
 Jewish Chatauqua Society (Life Member)
 Hannah Schloss Old Timers (Honorary Member)
 Economic Club of Detroit
 Detroit Institute of Arts
 United Hebrew Schools of Detroit

Jewish Publication Society of AMERICA
 St. John's Provincial Seminary Library
 American Jewish Historical Society
 Jewish Historical Society of Michigan
 Detroit Historical Society
 Historical Society of Michigan
 American Association for State and Local History
 Zionist Organization of America, Detroit Chapter
 Pisgah Lodge B'nai B'rith
 American Jewish Museums Association
 Greater Detroit Metropolitan Cemetery Association
 Michigan Cemetery Association
 American Cemetery Association
 National Association of Cemeteries

Family Status: Married to Gail Peres.

Children: Nina Claire (Mrs. Lawrence A. Isaac) and

Myrna (Mrs. Melvyn K. Adelman)

Grandchildren: Michael and Lisa Issac; Steven Israel and Rebecca Adelman.



PHOTO TAKEN IN 1905 IN DVINSK

Seated, left to right: Leah Shorr Katz and Rabbi Abraham Katz, grandmother and grandfather of Irving I. Katz.

Standing, second from left: Rabbi Michael L. Katz, father of Irving I. Katz.

Others in photo: Aunts, uncle and cousins of Irving I. Katz.

TRIBUTE FUND

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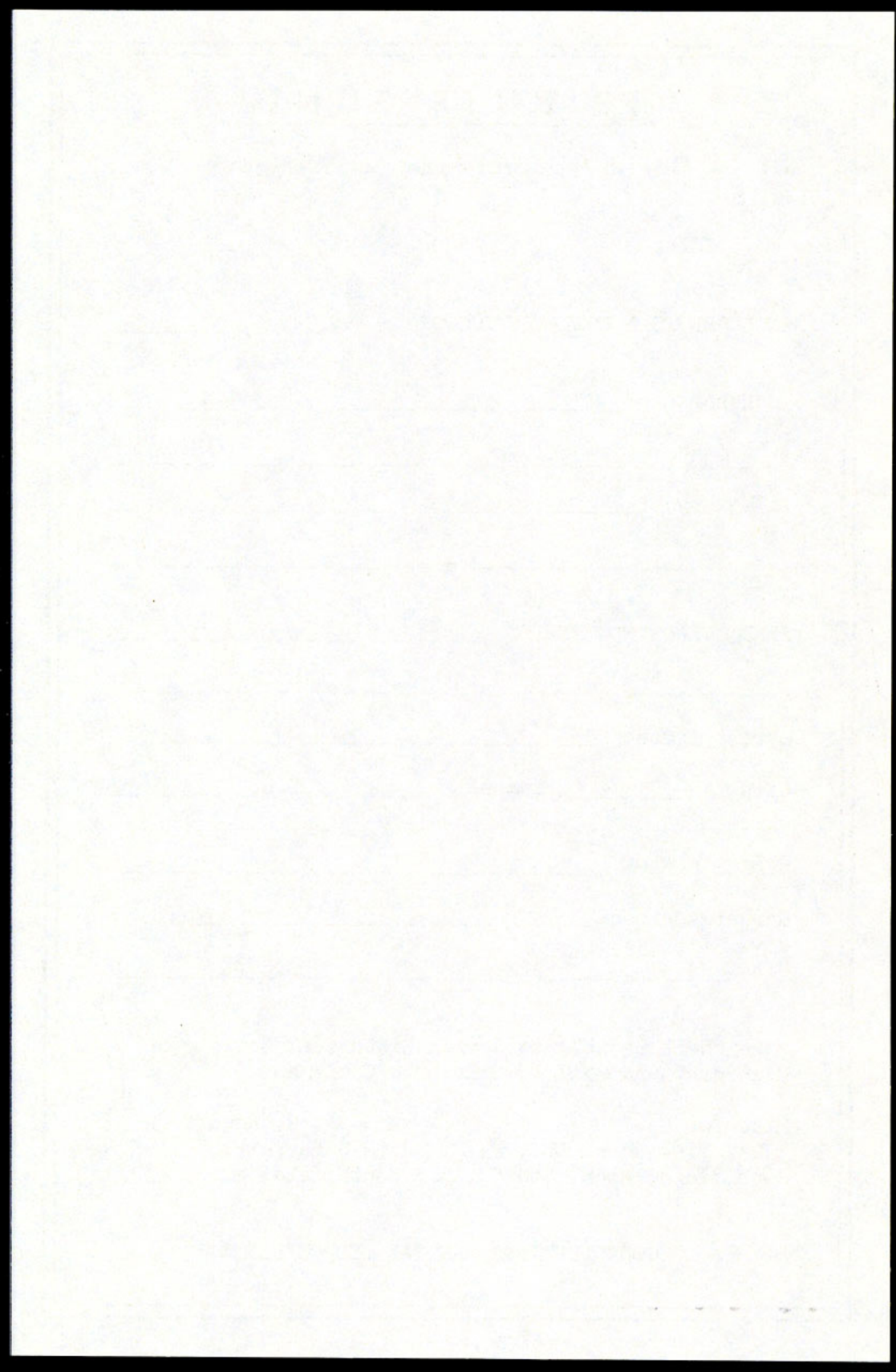
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Make check payable to Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, and mail to a Tribute Chairman:

Miss Ida Levine
23237 Providence Dr., #412
Southfield, Mich. 48075

Mrs. A. S. Rogoff
16270 Mayfair
Southfield, Mich. 48075

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE



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.

Articles appearing in this journal are indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History & Life*.

