

MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY



*1492/1992 by Elkin; Resettlement-1934; World War II;
Quiet Diplomat: Max Fisher; Cemeteries; Celebrations*

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MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

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

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

Joshua 4:21

Volume 33

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JEWES AND THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE NEW WORLD

1492/1992

by Judith Laikin Elkin

Dr. Elkin, a native Detroit, chaired the international curatorial commission and wrote the text for the national touring exhibition "Voyages to Freedom: 500 Years of Jewish Life in Latin America and the Caribbean." In commemoration of the Columbus Quincentenary, the Jewish Historical Society under a grant from Norman Allan co-sponsored this exhibit at the Jewish Community Center during the month of August, along with the JCC, the Jarkow Institute for Latin America of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, Wayne State University Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies, Amrael Remodeling, and Varig Brazilian Airlines. The Jarkow Institute sponsored development of the exhibit; Kenneth Libo of the Jewish Museum was curator. Dr. Elkin, a research historian who also directed the project "Jews and the Encounter with the New World, 1492-1992" during this past Quincentenary year, addressed the opening reception of this fascinating exhibit.



Dr. Judith Laikin Elkin

"VOYAGES TO FREEDOM: 500 YEARS OF JEWISH LIFE IN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBEAN," an exhibit marking the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary, documents the richness and diversity of the Jewish experience in the southern Americas. Jews lived for over a thousand years in the area we now call Spain and Portugal; yet they were not permitted to participate in the enterprise of the

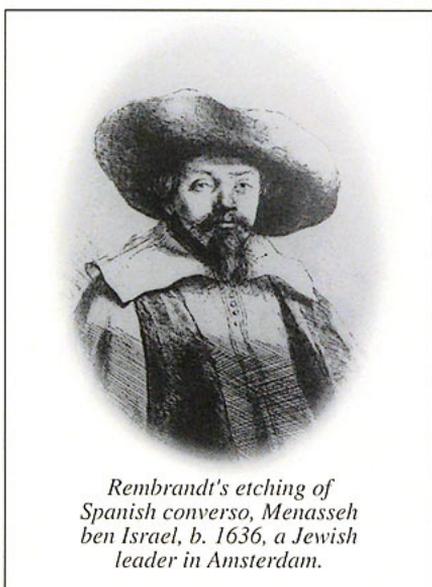
Indies. Instead, on the very date that venture was launched, Spanish Jews were exiled from their home. Five years later, Jews were forcibly converted or exiled from Portugal as well. For the ensuing 500 years, Sephardim—Jews who trace their ancestry back to Iberia, ancient Sepharad—kept Spanish culture and language alive in their homes. For them, August 3, 1492, became a day of mourning, for the date of Columbus's sailing was the very date on which they were required to leave Spain under penalty of death.

1992 is an extraordinary year because it is witnessing the thawing out of emotions and political positions that had been frozen all this time. In anticipation of the Quincentenary Year, the governments of both Spain and Portugal have renounced their ancient anti-Jewish policies and welcomed Sephardim back to their homelands. On their part, Jews are relaxing the informal but very effective "excommunication" of Spain pronounced 500 years ago. Many are visiting Iberia again; some are making their homes there. The easing of ancient animosities is vindication enough of the value of the

Columbus Quincentenary. Not because of the adventures of one Genoese sailor, but because the anniversary became the impetus for reconciliation. This reconciliation between Sepharad and the Sephardim is more than a mechanical act: it has the potential for freeing Sephardim from the burden of a tragic history, liberating their creativity which once contributed so much to both the Jewish and the Spanish-speaking world.

Many scholars, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, have been motivated by the Quincentenary year to focus their attention on the encounter from a Jewish perspective. Thus we have the added benefit that these two ethnic wings of world Jewry are learning a great deal more about one another's culture. Scholars add depth to our understanding of the present when they deepen our understanding of the past. Viewing the events of 1492 from a Jewish perspective yields insights that go beyond the limits of any one ethnic group.

For all these reasons, the Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan sponsored a yearlong series of conferences on the theme "Jews and the Encounter with the New World, 1492/1992." Throughout the Quincentenary Year, this complex period was re-examined for an understanding of the legacy it bequeathed to the New World, especially that part of it formerly ruled from Iberia. With the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Michigan Humanities Council, in cooperation with the Jewish Historical Society, the Frankel Center presented a series of public lectures, concerts and exhibits on this theme in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo.



Rembrandt's etching of Spanish converso, Menasseh ben Israel, b. 1636, a Jewish leader in Amsterdam.

Jews were an important cultural element in the Spain Columbus knew, contributing statesmen, scientists, linguists, and entrepreneurs to that nation's rise to world power. The first conference focused on Jews and Conversos in medieval Spain. Scholars of international reputation described medieval Iberian society as a mosaic of cultures, and the unique Sephardic cuisine was made available locally for tasting.

Commencing in the late fourteenth century, a series of pogroms and anti-Jewish measures pushed Jews to the margins of Spanish life. Jews in substantial numbers converted to Christianity either voluntarily or under duress. On March 31, 1492, an order of expulsion was issued against the Jews: those who did not convert

were to leave the kingdom within four months. The order split the Jews of Spain: half gave up their faith in order to retain their homeland; half gave up their homeland in order to retain their faith. Five hundred years later, the March conference dealt with the events leading up to the expulsion.

The integration of Sephardic arts into the culture of Spain was beautifully illustrated in a concert by the Waverly Consort, which was again presented by The American Artists Series.

Jewish scientists, inventors, and entrepreneurs contributed to the intellectual ferment that led to the voyages of exploration. Jewish and Moslem traditions were receptive to intellectual inquiry during a period when innovative thinking was discouraged in the rest of Europe. In the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, when the greatest scientific advances were made, Jews were sufficiently integrated into Spanish society that their findings could be adopted by Christian princes, who rewarded "their" Jews with high positions. The Catholic Kings relied on Jewish and converso advisors throughout their reign, and conversos were among the principal financial backers of Columbus. The role of Jews and conversos in the encounter was the subject of the third conference.

Columbus's numerous links with conversos gave rise to speculation that his voyages of exploration may have had a hidden agenda: that of locating a land where this threatened group could live in peace. In fact, Sephardic exiles were not allowed to settle in Spain's overseas kingdoms. The very first order sent by Queen Isabella to Nicolas de Ovando, governor of Hispaniola, prohibited the settlement of Jews and conversos in the New World. The order was to be repeated many times over the course of the next four centuries. In this way, Spain transferred to the New World her own demand for religious and political orthodoxy.

Barred from the Indies, an unknown number of conversos succeeded in settling in the New World illegally, either by disguising their ancestry or by buying a license from the Crown, perpetually in need of funds. Portugal, whose small population limited her imperial ambitions, at first encouraged New Christians to migrate to Brazil. Judaizers, however, were dealt with harshly. As "cristaos novos" they remained subject to the Inquisition; if suspected of Jewish practices they could be—and were—sent back to Lisbon for trial and punishment.

Some descendants of conversos did participate in the settlement, governance, and cultural enrichment of the New World. Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, the Muse of Mexico; Bartolome de las Casas, Apostle to the Indians; Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, who preserved what we know today of Aztec culture; Pedro Davila, the infamous conqueror of Panama, and others all had an impact on the colonies; but as Catholics, not as Jews. The legal and social context precluded the emergence of any specifically Jewish presence. The Inquisition, embodying this context, was the subject of the fourth conference, which ended with a discussion of early Jewish settlements in the New World and the challenges they faced.

By the close of the seventeenth century, Jews and Judaism had been eliminated from the Spanish and Portuguese Americas. From then on, Jews and Judaism surfaced only as negatives to the positive thrust of Spanish orthodoxy. There was no authentic Jewish presence in the New World but only the apprehension of some mysterious and subversive influence, the occasion for enforcement of religious, political, and intellectual conformity. Although some conversos succeeded in living out their lives in peace, their presence contributed more to the mythology of "the enemy within" than to the

intellectual, social, or economic development of their new homelands. This legacy was explored in the final program. It was also the starting point for the exhibition, "Voyages to Freedom."

Orthodoxy, imposed by the Inquisition as well as other organs of church and state, stamped the Spanish Indies with the requirement of religious conformity. The more flexible Portuguese policy allowed for the integration of conversos into the economic life of the Brazilian colony, though New Christians remained subject to the danger of being denounced as judaizers. Traces of crypto-Judaism are still to be found in regions formerly ruled by Spain and Portugal (including Arizona and New Mexico), not because Judaism mandates secrecy but because the practice of Judaism was suppressed.



Photo by James Grey

With Dr. Elkin, center, at opening of "Voyages to Freedom" exhibit. Left to right: Harriet Siden, chairperson, Jewish Historical Society; Shelly Nativ, Anti-Defamation League, Amrael Remodeling; Esther Tuchlaper, Adele Silver, Jewish Community Center; Gilbert Borman and Judy Cantor, J.H.S. Adele Silver and Joseph Tarica were additional featured speakers during the month-long exhibit.

The independent Latin American republics that came into existence on the ruins of empire inevitably were shaped by their experience of colonial rule. Along with other cultural traits, they inherited the notion that dissent from established belief is heretical and should not be tolerated. As a result, many myths concerning Jews and Jewish beliefs continue to circulate in the southern Americas. To date, no reassessment of

these ideas has taken place in Latin America that would be comparable to the reassessment now underway in both Spain and Portugal—perhaps because the Iberian peninsula had experience of real Jews, whereas Latin America received only the mythology.

Awareness of the Jewish dimension of the encounter enables us to penetrate more deeply into the historical significance of the year 1492. The exhibition and conferences described here explored the "negative Jewish presence" during Spanish and Portuguese rule as well as Jewish life in more recent years as it is lived within the context of its history. Heightened contact between the United States and South and Central America makes the subject timely, as does the current rapid increase in Hispanic immigration to the United States. 1992 will turn out to have been extraordinary indeed if, moved by the Columbus Quincentenary, we are able to lay the basis for a better understanding of ourselves and our relationship to the Hispanic world.

THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY OF GREATER DETROIT: A RICH HERITAGE

The first known Sephardic Jew who came to Detroit was Joseph Papo, who came in 1911 from Sarajevo, then Austria Hungary, and who headed a large family active in the local Sephardic community.¹

When Jacob Chicorel and his wife Judith came to Detroit in 1916 from Izmir, Turkey, to work at the Ford Motor Company, they brought together all the Sephardic immigrants in the city to hold the first high holy day services in their home in 1917. Thus began the movement for a spiritual and social community of Sephardic immigrants, under the original name of the "Spanish Community." The official name is now "The Sephardic Community of Greater Detroit."

Mr. Cicorel continued as the cantor and the spiritual leader of this community of Detroit until his death in 1963. High holy day services have been maintained continuously since 1917 in the Sephardic Orthodox tradition. Chicorel studied the Torah chants with Effendi Algazi, Turkey's outstanding turn of the century Hebrew cantor who during the early twenties recorded for Columbia Records in England.

Presidents who succeeded Jacob Chicorel have included Louis Papo of Sarajevo, son of Detroit's first recorded Sephardic Jew; Abe Abraham, whose Syrian family came to Detroit via China; Jerome Varon of Greece; Etta Moss; Albert Chicorel, American born son of the founder Jacob; Gilbert Senor of Greece; Sheldon Nachman; Abraham Shami of Syria; and other second generation Chicorels, David Chicorel, and the current president Shirley Chicorel Behar, wife of Marcel Behar of Egypt.

This Community traces its origins to Spain before the 1492 expulsion when the Jews of Spain and Portugal resettled in lands all around the Mediterranean, handing down their traditions for 500 years. In more recent years, Israelis and Iranian Jews arriving in our community, as well as those from Latin America, have identified with this group and its culture.

Blending Hebrew, Spanish, Arab, and Turkish roots, the Sephardic Jews have their own language of Ladino, their own customs, songs, foods, and culture, which differ from those of Jews of European Ashkenazic origins. The Greater Detroit Sephardic community is working to increase awareness and to preserve this rich heritage as a cultural legacy for themselves and for the future.

1. *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, by Joseph M. Papo, Pele Yoetz Books, San Jose, Cal; Judah Magnus Museum, Berkeley, Cal. 1907.

2. Mrs. Shirley Behar, Albert Chicorel, and Mrs. Louis Papo (Mary) have provided the above information, compiled by the Michigan Jewish History editor.

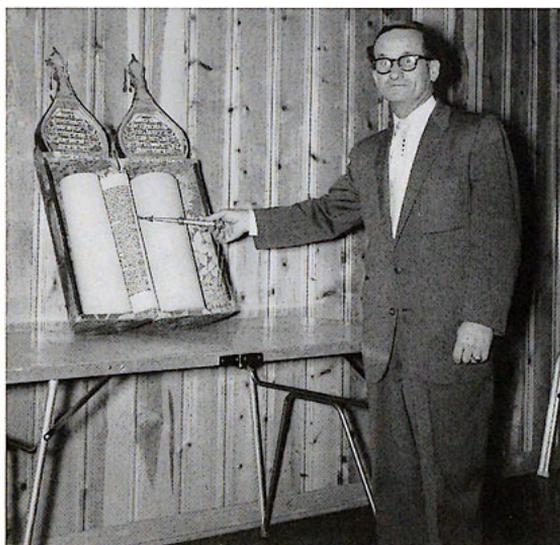
SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY



The Jewish Historical Society sponsored an evening of Sephardic music and culture featuring Shirley Behar, with dessert by cateress Annabel Cohen. Mrs. Behar is shown here in her traditional Turkish costume, wearing her grandmother's jewelry featuring a gold coin on her forehead.



Jacob Chicorel, with his governess, little cousin, and his brother Salvatore, dressed in Purim costumes around the turn of the century. Izmir, Turkey.



Past president Louis Papo, 1961, with 1900 Torah and casing from Iraq, obtained for the Detroit community by the World Sephardi Federation in London.



Fourth of July parade on Woodward Avenue, Detroit, 1937. Jacob and Judith Louza Chicorel, with their children Raphael and three year old Shirley.

SEPHARDIC TREATS

by Annabel Cohen

Growing up in Michigan with South American parents distinguished me from my friends and neighbors, especially when it came to foods. Even though my parents were born and raised in Brazil, many of the foods my mother prepared for my family often were not South American at all, but Sephardic. Olives, olive oil, eggplant and spices were frequently ingredients for appetizers and main courses. Honey, nuts and lemon juice accented desserts.

Among the most famous recipes was that for little savory or sweet turnovers. My paternal grandmother, of Turkish descent, taught my mother whose family was from Poland, to make *Borekas* for her only son. My mother obliged and has handed the tradition down to her three daughters. I offer this recipe for two types of *Borekas*. Please note that I've given the sweet *Borekas* a Michigan twist by adding dried cherries to the filling.

BOREKAS

1 lb. flour	Glaze (below)
3/4 cups peanut or vegetable oil	Egg Yolks
1/2 to 3/4 cup hot water	Oil

In a medium bowl, place flour, oil and half the water. Use your hands or a wooden spoon to mix the dough. Add remaining water and mix until moist; the dough is ready when it pulls away from the sides of the bowl. (Dust your hands with flour to remove the sticky dough from them). Cover the dough with a towel and let it rest at room temperature for one half hour.

Dust your hands with flour. Pinch off a teaspoon of pastry and, with your fingers, flatten it into a round about 2 inches in diameter. Combine filling ingredients and mix well. Drizzle a little butter over filling. Place a teaspoon of filling into the center and fold pastry into a half moon. Seal the edges with a fork. Brush oil on a cookie sheet. Place the *borekas* on it (not touching). Brush egg yolks to glaze the tops of the *borekas* with filling 1. Use apricot preserves glaze for filling 2, heating the preserves in the microwave for 1 minute. Bake at 400° until golden (about 25 minutes). Serve hot or at room temperature.

Filling 1:

8 ounces cottage cheese
4 ounces grated kaseri cheese
2 ounces crumbled Feta Cheese
(preferably Bulgarian)
1 large baking potato - peeled, boiled
and mashed well
3 eggs
2 cloves chopped garlic
a handful of chopped parsley
Salt and pepper to taste

Filling 2:

3 ounces ground walnuts
2 tablespoons dried Michigan cherries
Grated zest of 1 small orange
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
2 tbs.. sugar
melted butter



Annabel Cohn is a local caterer and lectures on Sephardic foods.

SEFERIM/BOOKS

WHERE THEY LIE

by *Mel Young*, University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD, 20706, 297 pages, 1991. \$37.50 hardcover, \$17.00 paperback.

The full title of this book is: "WHERE THEY LIE: The story of the Jewish Soldiers of the North and South whose deaths—(killed, mortally wounded or died of disease or other causes) occurred during The Civil War, 1861-1865: Someone Should Say Kaddish."

Since 1951, when Bertram W. Korn first published his major work, American Jewry and the Civil War, very little study has been done concerning the participation of the Jews in America's War Between the States. Apart from works, such as Irving Katz' booklet on Michigan Jewry, put together as part of the Civil War Centennial, there remains a great paucity of material, both primary and secondary, for the researcher studying this period of history from the Jewish point of view.

Mr. Young, a graduate of West Point and a CPA residing in Chattanooga, Tennessee, became intrigued by the idea of Jews volunteering to fight for America, North and South, at a time when the ancestors of most of today's American Jews were trying to figure out creative means of avoiding conscription into the Tsar's or the Kaiser's armies. This book is the result of his many years of research. It contains stories of heroism, tragedy, irony (Jew facing fellow Jew on the battlefield), and rabid anti-Semitism. The most notorious example was General Grant's infamous "General Orders #11", issued on the first day of Chanukah, 1862, expelling all the Jews "as a class", from the military department under his command. An appeal was made to President Lincoln, and the expulsion order was revoked within three weeks.

Nor are the ladies neglected. Mrs. Eugenia Levy Phillips, the wife of Congressman Phillip Phillips of South Carolina, was a close friend of "Rebel Rose" Greenhow, and her accomplice in spying for the Confederacy. Mrs. Phillips was arrested in New Orleans for laughing out loud at the funeral procession of a Federal officer and for this heinous offense was incarcerated for six months on Ship Island, a military prison.

One most poignant episode is a series of letters written by 17-year-old David Zehden to his parents in Germany, describing how he was recruited as a soldier after failing to find any other kind of work upon his arrival in America. After being wounded at the Battle of Fair Oaks, young David had his leg amputated at a military hospital, then was evacuated to another hospital in Philadelphia. He was cared for by a kind Jewish family who brought him kosher food, and, when he died of his wounds, had him buried in the cemetery of the Sefardic congregation Mikveh Israel, according to Jewish law.

Where They Lie is an indispensable researcher's tool, and a "must" for the library of anyone who is interested in Jewish American history, or is a Civil War "Buff". And if you think that your family came here before the great mass migration of the 1880's, you might even find your ancestor's name.

Reviewed by: L.M. Berkowitz

Lynn M. Berkowitz is a historian specializing in American Jewish life at the time of the Civil War. A first time contributor, she is the author of A Land That Eats Its People.

SEFERIM/BOOKS

QUIET DIPLOMAT: A BIOGRAPHY OF MAX FISHER.

by Peter Golden, Cornwall Books, N.Y., London, Toronto, 477 pages, 1992. \$24.50.

Until Max Fisher entered the political scene, Jews who immersed themselves in politics did so as political power brokers like most non-Jews, as Republicans or Democrats. Fisher explicitly connected his involvement to his Jewishness: he became a Republican supporter, at least in part, to gain influence for Jews so that they did not find themselves dependent on the Democratic Party alone and consequently without influence in Republican administrations. He revolutionized Jewish participation in national and local politics; politicized the Jewish community by defining the boundaries of its relationship to the presidency and to American politics in general. Prime Minister Menachem Begin introduced Max Fisher to President Carter in 1979 as "the most important member of your country's Jewish community," and more than one observer has dubbed him "the dean of American Jewry."



Max Fisher

Quiet Diplomat makes Fisher's extraordinary status abundantly clear as journalist Peter Golden documents his affiliations with presidents and countless leading figures in American and international politics. The photographs alone reveal Fisher's impact: he appears with every president from Eisenhower to Bush, with Henry Ford II, Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, Israeli Prime Ministers from Ben Gurion to Yitzhak Shamir and with Yitzhak Rabin when Rabin was Israeli ambassador to the U.S. in 1970.

Golden documents Fisher's life as a kind of Jewish American odyssey: from Eastern European roots to business success, from estrangement and alienation to acceptance as

In Detroit and in America he built bridges, coalitions; he strove for and effected Jewish unity wherever he could.

an American role model, from small town privacy to international acclaim. Beginning with strained relations between Max and his father, Golden suggests

that Fisher's character traits formed in his early years, a result of a mixture of forces. As a Jew in Salem, Ohio, and then a poor young man at Ohio State, Fisher experienced circumstances of isolation which contributed to molding his formative attitudes. His reactions to his parents, especially to his father's persistent criticism, shaped his disposition as well. Fisher's mother exerted a more beneficent impact, endowing him with a sense of responsibility for philanthropy, especially toward Jews. As a result of this ensemble, Fisher developed as an introverted, quiet, determined and resolute American—a John Wayne of business who drew upon a pioneer spirit that stretched from White Russia to America. One of Golden's chapter's is entitled "In Pursuit of

Horatio Alger.”

There are glimpses into the private life of the man and his family through extensive use of interviews with Fisher as well as with a host of figures ranging from his children to Richard Nixon and Yitzhak Shamir. It should not surprise readers that such a full plate as Fisher prepared for himself—business tycoon, chairman of local, national and international charities both Jewish and non-Jewish, political player in Republican and Democratic politics—left little time for his family. That, of course, took its toll, often dissociating Fisher from his children and wife.



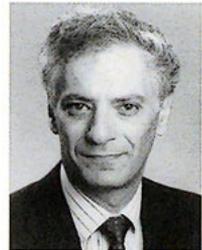
Max Fisher, Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin and President Richard Nixon, Oval Office, 1970.

It remains a constant theme of concern in the book. Yet his personal life, despite excerpts from his confidential diaries, oddly remains a mystery.

What he did not always accomplish within his family, Fisher managed to achieve in public life. In Detroit and in America he built bridges, coalitions; he strove for and effected Jewish unity wherever he could, whether working with the Detroit Jewish Federation, bringing in as many constituencies as possible and mediating disputes, or with the UJA in which he revolutionized fund-raising and increased the engagement of Jews who had never participated before. Fisher not only became a campaigner, the campaigner, for Israel, but Golden points out that he also became central to Detroit non-Jewish economic, social and cultural life. Readers of this work will find it accessible, full of private more than historical sorts of information and tales of behind the scenes politicking. There is no Yiddish Rosebud here, but no Jewish American has been more involved with American politics at the highest levels and changed the shape of organized Jewish life than Citizen Max.

Reviewed by Dr. Sidney Bolkosky

Sidney Bolkosky is Professor of History at the U of M-Dearborn. He is the author of Life Unworthy of Life: A Holocaust Curriculum; and Harmony and Dissonance: Voices of Jewish Identity in Detroit, 1914-1967, along with other articles and books.



Sidney Bolkosky

SEFERIM/BOOKS

REMEMBERING HASTINGS STREET

by Louis Surowitz, published by author, 1992, 136 pages, available at local bookstores, \$11.95

Imagine finishing a hearty holiday dinner at some family gathering and then retiring to the living room to listen to a kindly grandfather's good-humored stories about growing up in the Jewish community in Detroit in the 1920's. That is what Louis Surowitz's Remembering Hastings Street is all about.

This often charming self-published memoir rambles from anecdotal tales of the peddler's life (Surowitz's father) to detailed descriptions of rather unusual street games played by little Louis and his pals. Along the way, younger readers will pick up interesting information about being Jewish in Detroit after World War I, while older readers' eyes will mist over as they think of the penny candy at Tankus's store or riding the bumper cars at the Winter Garden.

Surowitz owned Surwins at Northland and Eastland, and is now a banker in Nashua, New Hampshire (what's a Hastings Street boy doing there?) He wrote this book primarily for his children and grandchildren. Those who do not know the Surowitzes may find the emphasis on his parents, siblings, and extended family a bit too personal.

Moreover, the author remembers mostly the good times he experienced in an apparently loving and well-integrated family. Others who lived on Hastings Street were not always that fortunate, of course.

Although Surowitz includes a rudimentary street map along with photographs of his family members and the city, the material he presents would have been more useful to historians had he paid a bit more attention to chronology. Nevertheless, those who know him or whose family members grew up in the same neighborhood during the same era will be amused by much of Remembering Hastings Street.

Reviewed by Melvin Small

Melvin Small is Professor of History, Wayne State University, whose latest publication is Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement, Syracuse University.

THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN AMERICA – Five volumes.

Edited by Henry L. Feingold

Sponsored by the American Jewish Historical Society in its centennial year.

Published by the Johns Hopkins University Press.

The Jewish Historical Society co-sponsored this book, reviewed by its editor Henry L. Feingold, at the 1992 Book Fair.

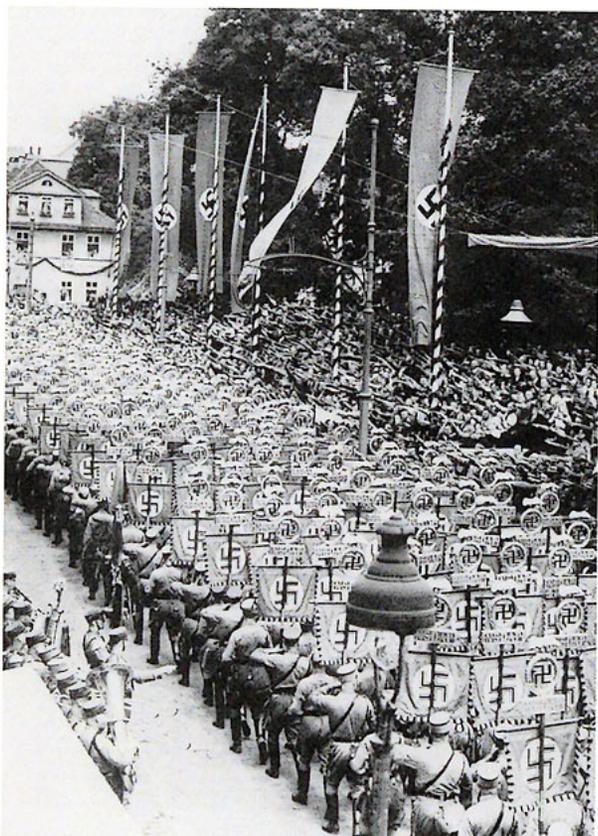
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FROM TYRANNY TO FREEDOM: RESETTLEMENT, 1934

by Benno Levi

I was eleven years old; it was the beginning of the high holiday season of 1934. For twenty months now, Hitler had been in power. What at first had been expected to be a brief interlude in the constantly changing German political scene now became to the country's Jews a daily escalation of terror. What at first had been taken as a gruesome joke by so many around us turned into a nightmare.



Courtesy: American Jewish Committee.

A Nazi Rally in the 1930's.

At Rosh Hashona services mostly young children and older members made up the congregation. All my cousins over 16 were already gone. David, Elsa, Hannah and Ernst were in Palestine; Joe, Thekla, Hermann, and little Hermann were in South Africa.

Our teacher, Lehrer Kahn, embarked with his family for New York just six months before. His farewell to our class of six students was deeply etched in my memory. It was the very first time that I saw an adult try to hide tears of anguish. The scene would always symbolize to me the end of this

beautiful little Jewish community that had grown and prospered for so many generations and where my family roots went back to at least the early 1700's.

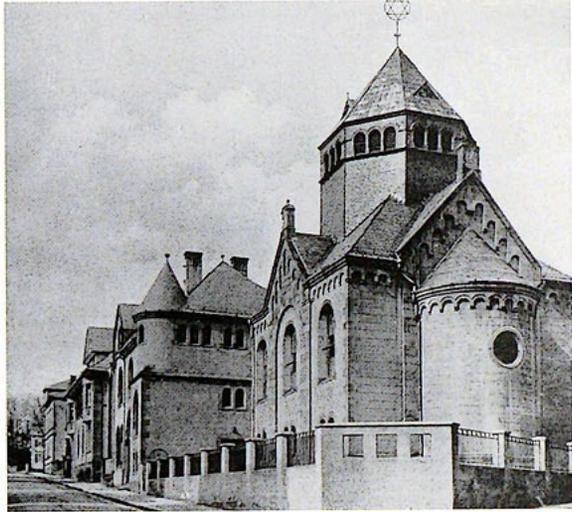
The avalanche of evil enveloped the country. The boycotts became more vicious and the songs more virulent. In school they now sang "Wenn das Judenblut from Messer spritzt dann geht's nochmal so gut." (When the Jewish blood from the knife squirts, then things will be twice as good.) One day, just after Yom Kippur, my Father met me coming home from school to warn me not to react in any way to a picture of Adolf Hitler that our gentile tenant had put outside her door on the stairway leading to our apartment.

RESETTLEMENT

The German-Jewish Children's Aid Society in America

That same day he announced to my sister Ruth, my brother Ernest and me that he had submitted our names to the German-Jewish Children's Aid Society in New York. Our community had been notified that this committee was anxious to help by placing youngsters with Jewish families in America. In November we received a letter from a cousin who had just arrived in New York with the first group under this program. His letter ignited a sense of excitement as he described the marvels of the biggest city on earth. I couldn't wait to be on my way.

There were still a few who urged my Father not to take such drastic action. "Hitler will be gone in another six months," they assured him.



The Synagogue in Alsfeld, Germany

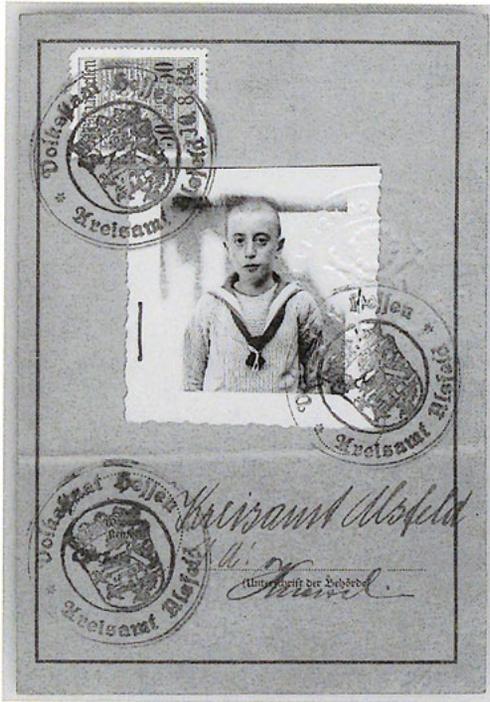
"So, when Hitler is gone the kids will come back and they will have learned to speak English and will have broadened their horizons," answered my father.

In early December we traveled to Stuttgart and were processed through the American Consulate. On the way home we stopped to say goodbye to our grandparents. We never saw them again. A week later a special delivery letter arrived confirming that on December 29th the three of us would be leaving on the S.S. New York of the Hamburg-American Line. During my last week in school we were shown a propaganda film about the vast number of "Volks Deutsche" all over the world. I was shocked to see the massed swastika flags and Nazi uniforms in Madison Square Garden in New York City. I was depressed. Was there no escape? My Father assured me that it was only propaganda and I accepted it happily.

The Exodus

As I walked down the school stairs for the last time in mid December, I made a mental note to remember this momentous occasion. I was only eleven but very much aware of everything political going on around me. My Mother and a seamstress spent the last week making all kinds of clothes for my sister, brother and me. Little did they realize that all this would be replaced shortly after our arrival with brand new American outfits. The day before we left, my best friend, Walter, came over to say goodbye. He and I were the only Jews in our class. There were tears in his eyes as we parted. We didn't see each other again until this summer (1992), when with our wives, we had a private reunion in Alsfeld.

RESETTLEMENT



Benno Levi's passport to America

And so it was, on the second day of Christmas, I returned the goodbye waves of my Mother and Tante Sarah as they stood at the big window of our apartment. My Father and my little sister, Miriam, went with us to Hamburg and on the 29th we joined a group of about twelve others that made up the second contingent of child refugees from Naziism bound for America from the port of Bremen.

On the ship, homesickness finally hit me. As I lay in the deck chair feeling very sea sick, the tower of Alsfeld, my home town, kept fading in and out of the waves and I kept seeing my parents and aunt waving to me from the upper window of our house. On New Year's Eve we had a big celebration aboard ship. Even though this was a German ship, the food was fantastic and strictly

Kosher and, for reasons that I could not comprehend, there were no signs of the Third Reich.

Coming to America

Once in New York, we were much too busy to be homesick. We were all housed as a group in the Jewish Orphanage on Amsterdam Avenue, across from Lewison Stadium. We were treated like royal guests. On our first evening, we were taken downtown by subway and shown the sights. I walked around and gaped with my mouth open—the subways, the skyscrapers, the cars, the people, the restaurants. I remember being so impressed with the word 'restaurant', just like in German. Now I knew another English word to add to 'yes' and 'no', my total vocabulary up to this point.

Now, as I look back on the names of the committee of rescuers, the German-Jewish Children's Aid Society, I recognize the elite of American Jewish philanthropists of that era: Solomon Loewenstein, Irving Lehman, Paul Felix Warburg, the Detroit representative Fred Butzel, and many other legends. During our four week stay, they arranged for us to be taken to all the exciting museums, concerts, movies, and we were invited out for dinners at the homes of these committee members. A couple of times we were picked up by my Father's cousin who lived in Washington Heights. She had immigrated with her husband in the early 1920's and they were real Americans now.

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The committee was placing our group in homes all over the United States. My Father had specified that we were to be placed in an Orthodox home. Our destination, we were told, was to be DETROIT. I had never heard of it and couldn't even pronounce it. Our trip west was delayed for a week when I was confined to the clinic with a heavy cold and fever. Finally, in the early part of February we boarded a train at the giant New York Central depot. Two other boys who had been with us on the ship were also on their way to their new families in the Midwest. Our chaperon was the same young German woman who had been with us since we left the port of Bremen. We were heading west. To me that meant Indian territory. We retired to a sleeper as we pulled out of the city late in the evening. The following morning, I nervously scanned the horizon as we travelled across the snow-covered western plains. I didn't know that it was only western Ontario and happily, I saw no hostile Indian warriors.



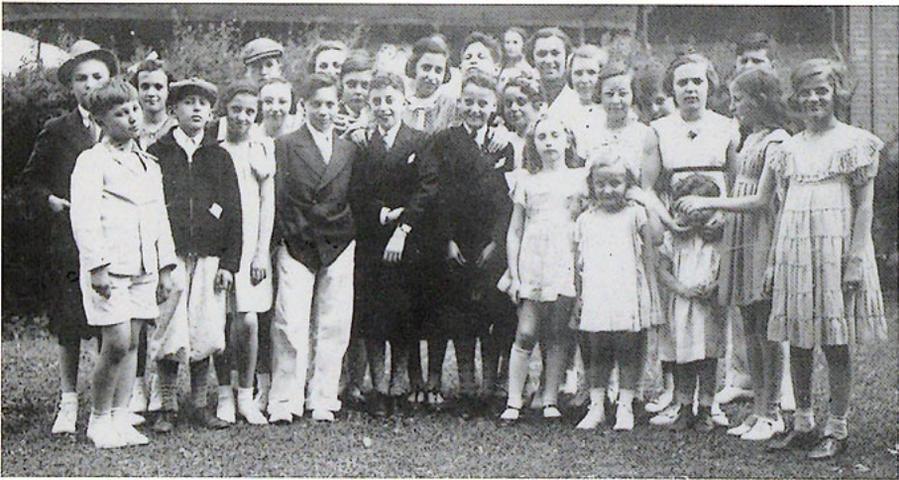
Benno, Ruth, and Ernest Levi in their new American clothes, 1935

Detroit Resettlement

We arrived in Detroit to be greeted by our new family. Ernest and I were to be with the Rosenbergs who immediately became Uncle Robert and Aunt Ella. Ruth was welcomed by the Friedmans, Aunt Ella's brother's family, Uncle Julius and Aunt Fanny. Compared to New York, I now felt that we were in a very small town. All I saw was Linwood, Dexter and vicinity. My glimpse of the big city – downtown Detroit – was yet to come. Now suddenly we were the epicenter of a very large family. We had instantly acquired dozens of cousins, aunts, uncles and even a set of grandparents. It felt strange but also very good.

The committee's Detroit member, Fred Butzel, made regular visits to see that we were adjusting to our new surroundings without trauma. We wrote to our family in Germany on a regular basis and heard from them without fail. Homesickness was

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Benno's Bar Mitzvah with his American family, the Robert Rosenbergs.

not one of our problems. Ernest and I were enrolled in Roosevelt Elementary School where we became an instant attraction as the first refugees from the Nazis. We were given special tutors who spoke German and in no time at all we were fluent in English. By early summer, when the baseball season was in full swing, we began to avidly follow the game as Hank Greenberg paced the Tigers into the World Series.



*1938 passport of Levi's parents.
(Note Swastika)*

We met no other refugees from Germany and for a long time we thought we were the only lucky ones in Detroit. Then, in the summer of 1935 I met Henry Garfinkel and his brother Arnold, who had arrived on the S.S. New York on the voyage after ours. They had been adopted by the Savages on Boston Blvd., a couple of blocks away. We became friends. There were others who followed us. Some, like Henry and Arnold, never saw their parents and siblings again. We were very fortunate, when in the summer of 1938, my parents and sister Miriam joined us in Detroit and we once again became a whole family.

Benno Levi, a graduate of Wayne University, was comptroller of Sinai Hospital and then of St. Joseph's Hospital in Mt. Clemens until his retirement in 1985. He is treasurer of the Jewish Historical Society. He and his wife Ruth have six children and eight grandchildren. He served in the U. S. Infantry in the Pacific in World War II.

DETROIT JEWS IN THE ARMED FORCES: 1941-1945

by Dr. Matthew Schwartz

Dr. Schwartz received his Ph.D. in Ancient History from Wayne State University. Among other publications, he co-authored the books Roman Letters, Wayne State University Press, 1991, and Psychology of Hope which will be published in 1993.

According to Dwight Eisenhower¹, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the American army was weaker than the Polish army had been in 1939. But like it or not, prepared or not, American was at war.



Dr. Matthew Schwartz

Almost ten thousand Detroit Jews served in the U.S. armed



Harold Shiffman

Courtesy: Jewish War Veterans.

forces during World War II. The local Jewish community was involved in every part of the war effort, on the battlefield and at home. Some families sent large numbers off to war, among them thirty-four members of the Nichamin family. Rabbis, including Rabbi Morris Adler, went off to serve as military chaplains. Women, such as Caroline and Rosalie Brown—the daughters of David A. Brown—served in the WAVES and the Red Cross. Harold Shiffman, who went down with the Arizona at Pearl Harbor, was among the war's first casualties and posthumously received the Purple Heart. After Pearl Harbor, Detroit Tiger slugger Hank Greenberg, whose first term of service ended in 1941, re-enlisted.

New recruits were usually sent for basic training to military bases in the U.S. Private Louis Thav wrote home from

Camp Forrest, Tennessee, explaining that he awakened every morning at five to put on his phylacteries and pray. Sometimes a visiting rabbi would conduct Friday night services. In Detroit, families with men at the front nervously awaited the arrival of the daily mail. One mailman would slice open official-looking envelopes on Saturday for the Orthodox Jews on his route so they would not have to wait until nightfall to open them.

There were moments of black humor and irony for those who served. Sergeant Henry Garfinkel returned to his birthplace, the town of Gladbeck, Germany, if only to attack it with machine-gun fire. Lt. Bob Shan delivered a blockbuster on Germany inscribed with a personal message from a Jewish News columnist. It read: "To Adolph from Danny Raskin. Special Delivery."

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As the war wore on, the fatalities mounted. Detroit's Jewish community, then numbering ninety thousand, was not spared. Almost two hundred Detroit Jews lost their lives, and many more were wounded.

Congressional Medal of Honor for Lt. Zussman

Many Detroit Jews were decorated for heroism, among them twenty-six-year-old Lt. Raymond Zussman. In an action in the Rhine Valley, two tanks he commanded became bogged down. He continued by himself, on foot, at first with only a carbine, then with a sub-machine gun. He killed eighteen Nazis and captured ninety-two. For his heroism, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the country's highest award, although it came posthumously. Lt. Zussman was killed in battle only days after this exploit.



Courtesy: Jewish War Veterans.

Lt. Raymond Zussman, awarded Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously.



Courtesy: Jack Schwartz - Jewish War Veterans.

Park in Hamtramck re-dedicated in memory of Lt. Zussman, by Jewish War Veterans and Hamtramck Businessmen.

Detroit Jews in Every Theater of WWII

Operation Torch brought Allied forces into North Africa in 1942. After defeating Rommel, they invaded Sicily and then Italy. Sergeant Louis Miller's patrol wiped out an enemy unit of two hundred in Italy. Air Force Lt. Seymour Vander was decorated for scoring a direct hit on a Nazi railroad installation in Italy. Pfc

Monte Levitt was part of the honor guard during President Franklin Roosevelt's stop in Casablanca in 1944. Dr. Aubrey Goldman won a medal for his work at Anzio, and his brother, Perry Goldman, was honored for his service in action in the Black Sea. Private Zalman Lopata, who had come to the U.S. from Poland in 1938, lost a leg at Anzio.

The war entered a new stage after D day on June 6, 1944. The Germans fought hard for every bit of ground. Corporal John Barsdorf, who had fled from Germany

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to the U.S. in 1937, was wounded at Normandy. Lt. Marvin Schlossberg (Sonny Eliot) was reported missing in action over Germany after a raid out of England in February 1944. Two months later he was reported a prisoner.

Some stories held particular poignancy. Flight officer Henry Morris was killed on July 17, 1944, in France. Only the previous day, his engagement had been announced in the Bulletin of Temple Beth El. Chaim Moldawsky, the son of Ben Zion Moldawsky, who often led the services at the Muirland synagogue, was killed in the crash of an Air Force plane. In November 1944 came news that a second son, Sol, had been killed in action in Italy. Sigmund Moritz escaped from Europe to America in 1940 and graduated from high school with honors in 1943. A year later he was killed in France.

The Nazis fought bitterly until the end. Sergeant Julius Hochman, a graduate of UHS, was killed in Germany. Private Joe Bale, who had been wounded once before, fell in France in February 1945. Private Seymour Salinger, a recent refugee from Lithuania, was captured by the Germans.

The War in the Pacific

The U.S. was heavily committed in the Pacific against Japan right from the beginning. The great battles of Midway and the Coral Sea were fought in 1942. The Philippines were lost early; bitter fighting for the Pacific islands soon began, and the casualty list mounted. Private Sanford Blau wrote to his family from a POW



Partial Honor Roll of servicemen in World War II. Congregation Shaarey Zadek

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camp in the Philippines. Major Max Weil, reported missing in action in May 1942, was found a year later as a Japanese prisoner. He had brought down five planes with a machine gun during the fighting at Bataan. Lieutenant Eugene Friedman fell at Leyte.

By the end of 1943, Sergeant Louis Kaminsky had flown seventy-two missions in the South Pacific. Marine Captain William J. Weinstein, who went on to become a major general in the Marines Corps Reserves, led his company in the major battles of the Pacific, including Iwo Jima, for which he was highly decorated. Ruben Iden was killed at Guadalcanal.

Private Benno Levi, who was sent by his parents in the 1930s from his German hometown to America to escape the Nazis, barely escaped the "friendly fire" of American machine guns on Guam. Levi leaped to his feet waving the flag of his infantry division until the Americans saw their mistake and flew off. For his bravery in saving his unit, he was awarded a Silver Star.

The last Detroit Jewish casualty was Ensign Eugene Mandeborg. He was officially reported missing in action the day after VJ day, in August 1945, in a battle with Japanese planes.

The heroic record of participation by the servicemen and women and those on the homefront is the source of many memorable chapters in the history of Jewish Detroit.

¹ Dwight Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe

² Emmanuel Applebaum, "Second Lieutenant Raymond Zussman," Michigan Jewish History, (March 1961), 2-9

³ Detroit Jewish News, 1942 - 1945

Portions of this manuscript were utilized in Harmony and Dissonance, Bolkosky, Wayne State University Press, 1991; See Acknowledgements, p. 10

The Jewish Historical Society pays tribute to the Jewish War Veterans and its commander, Jack Schwartz. The Michigan Jewish War Veterans maintains a Memorial to the more than two hundred Jewish servicemen in our state who lost their lives in the service of our country in World War II and later in the Korean conflict.

In the Memorial Room, photographs of each of the young fallen heroes and a magnificent Golden Book of individual biography serve as a moving and dignified remembrance of the local Jewish contribution to our country's defense. This vital chapter in the history of our people is thus preserved for future generations. The office is located at 16990 Twelve Mile Road in Southfield.

A NAVAL OFFICER ENCOUNTERS JEWS ON FOUR CONTINENTS

by Irwin Shaw

My first active duty assignment in World War II made it possible for me to meet Jews in such disparate places as Perth, Australia; Basra, Iraq; Bahia, Brazil; Paramaribo, Surinam, (Dutch Guiana); and Murmansk, Russia.

Commissioned by the Navy as Lieutenant (jg) in October 1942, I attended officer's training school at Princeton University. The Navy then decided that I, who had never fired anything more lethal than a cap-pistol, should be trained as a gunnery officer; I was assigned to the Armed Guard branch of the service.

After more training, I soon was put in charge of a 29-man Navy gun crew especially trained to man the guns on merchant vessels. In Philadelphia, we boarded the merchant ship, the S.S. Edward Preble and officially took over responsibility for its defense. As the only naval officer aboard, I had, what was grandiloquently referred to as "an independent command." This meant that I had final responsibility for my crew, but the freedom of movement which made possible the encounters described here.

First Encounter: Perth, Australia

In May 1943, our convoy left Philadelphia with a load of military supplies and equipment destined for the Russian Army in the Black Sea area and for the British Army in North Africa. Because the Germans had virtually sealed off the Mediterranean, the cargo was being shipped by way of Basra, Iraq. We sailed down the east coast of the United States and on to Panama. After traversing the Canal, the merchant ships scattered into the Pacific and traveled totally unescorted, with the hope that a significant number might be lucky enough to reach their destinations.

After sailing for a month at six knots per hour in the German submarine infested waters of the Pacific, we ran into a hurricane which drove us way off course into the Antarctic Ocean south of New Zealand. Suffering damage and losing some lifeboats, we were ordered to the port of Fremantle, Australia for a few days to make the necessary repairs.

The morning after we arrived, I took a train for the short ride to downtown Perth, whose main street looked very much like Detroit's Washington Boulevard in the 1940s. Most of the stores had large plate glass facades with their names painted in large letters. As I walked down the main street wondering if any of these stores were Jewish-owned, I looked up to see a sign: "LEVI & SONS, SILVERSMITHS."

I couldn't resist the temptation. I entered the store with the hope that I might meet one of the Levis. The store itself was magnificent, with counters and displays in front and the manufacturing operations in back. When a saleslady asked what kind of silver I was looking for, I said I wanted to know if I could see Mr. Levi. She looked at me quizzically, but then escorted me to the office while she went to find him.

In the office, staring me in the face, was a large picture of an elderly Jew with a long white beard and a yarmulke. He looked just like my "zaide". Boy, did I feel at



Lt. (jg) Irwin Shaw

home! In a few moments, a middle-aged, goateed gentleman entered the room. There was no question that he was a descendant of the man in the picture. He greeted me warmly but seemed puzzled when I told him about my desire to meet a fellow Jew in a foreign country.

"So why did you come here?" he asked. As I looked up at the picture of the old Jew on the wall, Mr. Levi's eyes followed my gaze and then he replied with a smile, "Oh, now I understand. That's my grandfather. He was Jewish, but we're Anglican."

This was my first experience with a non-Jew who could, or would, so unselfconsciously make reference to his Jewish antecedents. I wondered, too, whether Mr. Levi was aware that Mr. Hitler would consider him a Jew, his Anglican affiliation notwithstanding. Levi noted my embarrassment and graciously put me in touch with the treasurer of the local Liberal Jewish Temple.

When this gentleman escorted me to his private club, I thought I was back at the Standard Club in Detroit! The layout, the decor, the kind of clothes the men wore, the food service - all were the same. Only their "Strahlian" English reminded me that I was not in Detroit. According to my host, most of the Jews in Perth were well established entrepreneurs although more of their offspring were going into the professions. There was also a significant increase in intermarriage.

His major concern, however, had to do with the negative impact of the small number of more recent arrivals - Jews who were fleeing from Germany, France, and eastern European countries. They worked for less money and kept their fledgling businesses open for longer hours than was the standard practice in Perth. The resentment this caused was not limited to the non-Jewish community - it was also shared by most of the Jewish "old-timers" like himself. In justification of his position, he insisted that the stories about current persecution in Germany were exaggerated just like the stories about Germany atrocities in World War I.

I thanked him for his hospitality and, with mixed emotions, took the train back to Fremantle. I found it difficult to comprehend that in 1943 there were still Jews who could not believe the reports about Nazi persecution of Jews.

Second Encounter: Basra, Iraq

Early in August 1943, we entered the Persian Gulf and a few days later docked in

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Basra. During our entire stay the temperature ranged from at least 130 degrees at mid-day down to perhaps 105 degrees at midnight! - probably the hottest inhabited city in the world - and hardly the cleanest.

I found out about a small Sephardic Jewish community and a synagogue, six miles downriver. Because of the weather, morning services were held at 5:30 a.m. On Saturday morning, I arranged for the captain's gig to take me there. When I arrived, the congregants were all on the roof where services were conducted during the summer months. It was the first time I had ever seen a "shul on a roof" or attended a Sephardic service.

Whether it was the weather or the language barrier, or both, I did not succeed in making contacts with the local community. Warnings about possible sabotage obliged me to stay close to the ship which was, at first, guarded by British Army Sikhs.

A few days later the Sikhs were replaced by a British-Jewish Brigade. Most of the guards were young Zionists who had been members of the Irgun and had actively participated in the resistance movement against Britain's policy of limiting the immigration of Jewish refugees to Palestine. Now they were in the British Army, helping in the effort to defeat Hitler. They expressed the hope that, after the war, the British would be more forthcoming - but they were not too sanguine about the possibility.

Oddly enough, the only other Jews I met in Iraq were two doctors from Detroit: Henry Siegel who headed up the American Army Hospital in Basra; and Lou Heideman, who was based across the river at Khorramshahr in Iran.

Third Encounter: Bahia, Brazil

Early in September 1943, we left Basra for the return trip home. Although we had almost entirely run out of food, we were not permitted to replenish our stock in Basra because of the fear of contamination. We were directed to sail to Cape Town, South Africa, to get resupplied. Nearing Cape Town, we again were diverted because German subs had completely blockaded the port and were lying in wait for merchant ships like ours. We were ordered to round the cape of Good Hope and cross the Atlantic - again, totally unescorted. Midway across the ocean we again received new orders, this time to go to Bahia, Brazil, where we arrived in mid-October.

Having subsisted on crackers and coffee for five weeks, most of us came down with advanced cases of beriberi. Our first interest was to get some fresh food - especially green vegetables. At the American naval base commissary, I learned that there were Jews in Bahia and decided to try and make contact with them (and maybe even get a good Jewish meal). Not knowing any Portuguese, I found it difficult to communicate. Finally in a Western Union office I found a messenger boy who figured out what I was looking for.

The young man led me down the street to a shoe repair shop that was literally a hole in the wall. The shoemaker, busy nailing on a sole, didn't look up until I asked him in Yiddish: "Iyr zeit a yid (Are you a Jew)?" He nodded and I quickly told him

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that I was eager to meet some of the Jews in the community. He apologized and explained that he was too busy and too poor to provide any hospitality, but that there were some Jews two blocks further down the street in a three-story building with an English sign on it.

At the sign: "U.S. NAVAL TAILORS - TOP DECK," I climbed the two flights of stairs and found myself in a large open loft housing about twenty sewing machines, huge bolts of material, and other related paraphernalia. I was greeted by the manager who asked, in a very broken English, what kind of uniform I wanted. I told him in Yiddish that I didn't want to buy a uniform; I just wanted to meet local Jews. He was delighted to meet someone with whom he could speak in Yiddish and welcomed me most profusely.

He explained that he was a Rumanian Jew who had been studying in Germany in the early thirties but had gone back to Rumania after the Nazis came to power. There he got married; and when the Nazi menace drew near, he and his pregnant wife migrated to Brazil, joining some relatives who had preceded them there by several years. In Bahia, he had made a living as a peddler, going into the hinterlands with bolts of cloth which he traded with the Indians for semi-precious stones, which he then sold for cash when he came back to town.

When the United States entered the war, a naval base was established in Bahia, Brazil, and the Rumanian became close friends with a Jewish sailor from Boston. The Bostonian suggested that the Rumanian open a tailor shop where the American sailors could order custom-made uniforms with their surplus income, since the overseas pay of the American sailors was much more than adequate in Brazil. The enterprise, using mostly native help, was an immediate success.

My hopes for a Jewish meal in Bahia also were soon realized. That Friday night I had dinner with the Rumanian's extended family - the kind of Shabbos meal I remembered from my childhood: the candles, the Kiddush, and the grace after the meal. What really made me feel at home was that all the adults spoke Yiddish so that I could participate in the conversations.

Fourth Encounter: Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana

We left Bahia, this time in convoy because of the increased submarine attacks on merchant vessels, and arrived in Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana (now Suriname) in early November 1943. The Navy took advantage of the opportunity to load our empty holds with bauxite for transport to the United States. When we arrived in Paramaribo, the harbor was under especially strong protection because Princess Juliana of the Netherlands was paying an official call.

While waiting for the ship to be loaded, I again took advantage of the opportunity to seek out Jews and again ran into the language problem because I knew no Dutch. However, I learned that there was a synagogue down one of Paramaribo's main streets; since it was late Friday afternoon, I decided to go there.

After mistakenly stopping at a building that turned out to be a Dutch Orthodox church (what fooled me was the Hebrew lettering on its walls!), I finally arrived at

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the synagogue which was completed surrounded by a high fence. I went through a large gate and came into a beautiful garden in front of the synagogue entrance. Since there was no one around, I proceeded to enter the synagogue itself and found myself standing on a floor of smooth white sand. As I walked toward the bimah, leaving my footprints in the sand, I heard a voice shouting at me. Though I knew no Dutch, I could tell that someone was cussing me out. The Shammus ran over and dragged me back to the entrance and then busied himself smoothing out the floor with a broom. The custom was that no one entered the synagogue until after the Rabbi had made his entrance.

Rabbi Oxstereeber was an Ashkenazic rabbi who spoke my kind of Yiddish and conducted my kind of service, albeit in "a shul with a sand floor." After the services he invited me to his home for the Shabbos meal. There I met his wife and family and again enjoyed a delightfully traditional meal. Since I knew no Dutch and they knew no English, the experience was all the more "haimisch" because we conversed only in Yiddish.

In Dutch Guiana there were two rabbis, one Ashkenazic and one Sephardic. Both received their salaries from the government. Rabbi Oxstereeber and Rabbi Cardozo, the Sephardic rabbi, had both been invited to a reception for Princess Juliana on Saturday morning, but both had declined the invitation on the ground that it was their Sabbath. Therefore, the Princess had arranged for a private reception for the two of them on Sunday morning and the rabbi had written a special poem in honor of the Princess which he would read to her when they met.

On my way to Rabbi Cardozo's home on Sunday afternoon, I passed a number of retail stores, two of which attracted my curiosity. The name painted on the window of one of them read: NAHAR & SONS. The one right next door read: RAHAN & SONS. The anagram of names was most intriguing. I knew that "nahar" in Hebrew means "river," but "rahan" meant nothing to me.

Rabbi Cardozo related that the morning session with the Princess was delightful and that the Princess was most pleased with Rabbi Oxstereeber's poem. She was also impressed by the fact that the Cardozo family had been in Holland since their expulsion from Spain over 400 years ago and that another branch of the family had produced one of the finest justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Benjamin Cardozo.

Explaining the significance to the anagram names of the two stores that I had passed on the way over, he said that this was a unique feature of Jewish life in Dutch Guiana. In the middle of the 19th century, there were a number of large Jewish-owned plantations along the Suriname River. Some of these plantation owners fathered children by their black, female slaves. While not formally acknowledging the parentage of these children, they assigned them the anagram of the master's last name.

The owners of RAHAN & SONS were indeed descendants of a Jewish family whose last name was NAHAR, the Hebrew word for river. The Rabbi said he knew of no other place in the world where such a custom had been practiced.

Fifth Encounter: Murmansk, Russia

In January 1944, I was promoted to Lieutenant (jg) and assigned to the merchant vessel, *S.S. John Woolman*. The fact that the ship's interior living quarters were being highly insulated suggested that we were heading somewhere north. Three days after we left Brooklyn harbor in convoy, I opened my sealed orders and learned that our final destination was Murmansk, Russia.

After almost a month's sailing we arrived in Loch Ewe, Scotland. From there our convoy was escorted by a British battle fleet up the coast of Norway, into the Barents Sea and then into the port of Murmansk, the only open year-round port in Russia. During the ten day trip we were under constant 24-hour attack by German U-boats and planes based in Norway. The Murmansk run was notorious for its extremely high casualty rate. Fortunately, due to improved training and weaponry, we lost only one vessel, a British destroyer.

We arrived in Murmansk early in February. The average temperature was 20 degrees below zero and daylight lasted only about two and a half hours. I reported to the American port director, Captain Samuel Frankel, who was also the United States Naval Attache and the official representative of our State Department. Frankel, a native of Chicago, was the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants and an Annapolis graduate. One of his first postings had been to Riga, Latvia, where he learned to speak fluent Russian. When the war broke out he was one of only six career officers in the entire U.S. Navy who could speak Russian. After the war, Frankel rose to the rank of admiral and ultimately became head of the Intelligence Branch of the U.S. Defense Department.

When he learned of my interest in meeting Jews, he arranged for a Russian translator on his staff to be my liaison, a Russian Jew in her mid-sixties with a Ph.D. in law from the University of Kiev. Remarkably enough, she had earned her degree and practiced law during the Czarist regime, but had become a professor under Communist rule.

The translator took me over to the local military hospital to meet the Jewish doctors there - all of whom were women. Murmansk had been and still was being heavily bombed by the Germans because it was one of the very few usable ports of entry for military supplies and equipment. Thus, at the hospital there was always a long line of people - children and oldsters who had been injured in the bombings and required follow-up treatment.

One evening, officers and men alike were invited to attend a concert at the Hall of Culture. There were three performers including two Jewish instrumentalists, both in their middle twenties who had lived all of their lives under the Communists. Because of their outstanding musical ability, the Communists exempted them from military duty in order to provide this entertainment. These men knew they were Jewish but they knew nothing about being Jewish and had never been in a synagogue in their lives. Neither of them knew any Yiddish or understood any English.

The manager of the troupe, a Jew, whom I spoke to in Yiddish, had a difficult time believing that I, an American officer, was also a Jew.

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A man in his sixties, this manager was the son of an Orthodox Jewish family in Vilna and had studied in a Yeshiva as a young child. Eventually rebelling against the Orthodox establishment and becoming Bundist, both he and his father became active in the Communist movement under the illusion that there would be no anti-Semitism under Communist rule. He acknowledged that in this respect they had, of course, been wrong.

In late February we left Murmansk and ran the same gauntlet back down the Norwegian coast to Scotland. There we were assembled in a new convoy and headed back to Boston.

Epilogue

My tour of duty in the Armed Guard ended in April 1944 when I was transferred to the West Coast for amphibious duty. The next six months were spent in intensive training in practice landings in California and Hawaii, where our squadron was preparing itself for the initial American landing on the mainland of Japan. There were, therefore, no longer any opportunities to encounter Jews in foreign countries.

The five encounters described above certainly strengthened my conviction that a common language - as Yiddish was then and Hebrew could be now - is an important unifying force for Jews everywhere. Moreover, as a naval gunnery officer delivering essential supplies to Allied armies around the world, my opportunities for meetings with Jews on four continents indeed reinforced my sense of Jewish nationhood.

Editor's Note: 60% of the 800-ship Murmansk North Atlantic convoy went down.

Irwin Shaw, a native Detroit, is a former public school and religious school teacher. He served the community as director of the Fresh Air Camp, assistant director of the Jewish Welfare Federation, and executive vice-president of the Jewish Community Center.

A LOCAL JEWISH CEMETERY INDEX: A MITZVAH IN PROCESS by Mathilde Brandwine

Mathilde (Tillie) Brandwine, a past president of Women's Division, is the 1989 Butzel Award honoree. A lifelong community leader and a creative volunteer, she now serves on the Board of Federation Apartments.

When trying to help an out-of-town relative who was doing genealogy research locate a Highland Park, Michigan member of his family, I found to my surprise that there was no local comprehensive record of Jewish burials. Here was a vitally



**Mathilde
Brandwine**

A MITZVAH IN PROCESS

important unmet need that in 1991 I set as a project for myself and other appropriate community groups to complete!

Gilbert Borman, president of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, and Pam Gordon, president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Michigan, agreed to cooperate. They, as well as local rabbis, expressed enthusiasm that such a published index not only would be a valuable historical document, but a mitzvah as well. I have also enlisted the aid of Sharon Alterman, archivist for the

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Jewish Federation, who to her surprise found the name of her great-grandfather as the first name on the first completed register, that of my own synagogue, Congregation B'nai David. She previously had not even known where he was buried, which strengthened my sense of purpose about the value of this project.

My original intention only was to cover the Detroit metropolitan tri-county area, where I was surprised to find there are 39 Jewish cemeteries! Pam Gordon, however, at this time received a directive from the national Jewish Genealogical Society to arrange to record all the Jewish burials in the state. An organizational meeting at her home and a Jewish News article produced some excellent local volunteers and several from outstate: - Alpena, the Thumb, Petoskey, and Ann Arbor. The gathering of information is now underway for this massive undertaking.

The timing of this project coincided perfectly with the age of computers. The lists of all the larger cemeteries have already been computerized; many of the smaller ones are in process. Printouts for fifteen local cemeteries are already in hand. The six cemeteries of Workmen's Circle and the eight cemeteries under the care of Hebrew Memorial will be completed soon. Temple Beth El, as well as the Jewish sections of Elmwood Cemetery on Lafayette Street and the old Woodmere Cemetery on West Fort Street, Temple Israel, and Temple Emmanuel have all been promised. Sarah and Linda Bell, of the Jewish Historical Society, will walk and record Beth Tefilo Emanuel Cemetery in Ferndale as will Allen Buch in the Westwood Cemetery in Inkster.

Judy Cantor had already been in touch with Milton Marwil to develop the history of the antique Beth Olem Cemetery, known also as the Smith Street Cemetery, now within the General Motors Cadillac plant parking lot! Under the auspices of the Jewish Historical Society, Marwil has recruited a group of eight from the Center's Institute of Retired Professionals to recreate a record of the Beth Olem burials. Their story follows.

As every odyssey has its dangers and pitfalls, so does the odyssey of this mitzvah. Essential to its completion as a computerized and published index, more manpower and funds are now needed. Having come so far, we are confident this infusion of life will soon materialize.

THE TRUE STORY OF THE CEMETERY IN THE GENERAL MOTORS PARKING LOT!

by Milton Marwil

When Mathilde Brandwine launched the Michigan cemetery project to publish a computerized record of all grave sites in Michigan, enlisting the cooperation of the Jewish Historical Society, I was recruited to collate the graves of the Beth Olem cemetery, the cemetery with the least available records. Securing other stalwart volunteers from the JCC Institute of Retired Professionals, I made the necessary arrangements to pursue this assignment with the Security at the General Motors Cadillac Motor Car plant, the current guardian of the cemetery.

How did General Motors get involved with a Jewish cemetery? How did a quiet Jewish cemetery find itself involved with the world's biggest corporation? Beth Olem is certainly unique in that General Motors is its guardian and it lies within the property of the Cadillac Motor Car plant in Hamtramck~ locally known as "Poletown."



Beth Olem Cemetery with GM in the background

The Beth Olem Cemetery had its beginning in 1862, a year after the Detroit Jewish community split on theological grounds, half accepting the new German Reform and half remaining Orthodox. The latter established Shaarey Zedek, rented a building for prayer, hired a teacher, and sought their own burial ground. Two

congregants, Sam Fleishman and Isaac Parchelsky, drove their buggy three miles from the center of population which hugged the shores of the Detroit River out into the country – to buy an acre of land for the Shaarey Zedek cemetery. Perhaps fearing that the German farmers might object to a synagogue or a graveyard, they made the purchase in their own names. Over the years, several other Jewish religious groups bought land around the original piece, giving the cemetery its present shape of a 2.2 acre oblong.

Like any good burghers seeking a burial ground, they calculated that a distance of several miles from the Jewish section of town would remain a bucolic graveyard for generations to come. By the turn of the century, however, industry was already gravitating near this area, known as Milwaukee Junction, because two main railroad lines crossed there. In 1910 Dodge Brothers built the Dodge Main Factory near the yards and spurs of the train tracks. It was natural for other automobile companies and suppliers also to locate near there. As the city expanded, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Jewish population pushed north and west, skirting by miles the industrialized Milwaukee Junction and distancing itself from its Beth Olem Cemetery.

In its earliest years, the Beth Olem or Smith Street Cemetery served the small Jewish community as the only all-Jewish memorial park in Detroit. It was a long journey by

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horse-drawn hearse to the gates where the coffin was then carried by the pallbearers to the plot. To visit a relatives grave was quite a trek by horse, later by street car, and only made briefer by the advent of the automobile. The halcyon years of being a country graveyard came to an end with the surrounding industrialization and development of housing. Hemmed in on all sides, this small urban park was enclosed and protected by a brick wall and its own sanctity.

The growing Jewish community sought new burial grounds. The little cemetery aged; fewer burials took place there. Tombstones thinned by weather toppled over or were pushed by vandals; the wall deteriorated and crumbled; a small chapel built in the 1880's fell into disrepair; animals and stranger roved the grounds. The last body was interred in 1948.

In 1966, Chrysler, the successor to Dodge Brothers, purchased two adjacent city blocks, including the one with the Beth Olem or Smith Street Cemetery, to build a parking lot for the Dodge Main plant. The cemetery was engulfed and Smith Street itself was absorbed, leaving the grounds without an entry. Chrysler consequently constructed a new 90-foot-long entrance from the next block, Clay Avenue. They also paid \$10,000 to the Jewish organizations involved in the ownership for property rights to the closed-off streets contingent with it. This money was expended on much needed repair. When Chrysler razed the surrounding properties, it left the cemetery a green island in a vast sea of a concrete parking lot.

Around 1980, General Motors acquired a parcel of land encompassing much more than the old Chrysler possession, for a Cadillac Motor assembly plant. Even Clay Avenue was swallowed up, leaving the cemetery imprisoned within the vast holdings of the auto company. GM had to deal with two owner synagogues located in another county. Halachic law and Michigan law both prohibited moving the graves of the Beth Olem Cemetery. In the General Motors Environmental Impact Statement, the name was translated as "House of Eternity," leading the writer to the droll comment: "The Eternal nature of the cemetery is well founded, since it seems destined to outlast the industrial complex which now surrounds it.

Mandell Berman worked out a three-way agreement between the City of Detroit, very anxious to win the assembly plant; General Motors, unwilling to nullify the whole project for such a minimal matter; and Shaarey Zedek, only one of the owners but assuming full responsibility. The city rebuilt the brick wall. GM constructed a quarter-mile access road from its truck gate to the cemetery gate, with an apron for visitor parking, and extended a water line to the graveyard. Shaarey Zedek assumed responsibility for grave care, sending its ground crew to tend the grass.

A nearly hundred-year-old small chapel graced the center of the graveyard, but it was on the verge of collapsing. When the insurance company threatened the loss of liability insurance on the whole cemetery unless it was torn down, it was razed in 1982.

It is believed that Beth Olem contains around eleven hundred graves since the first burial in 1868 until 1948 when the last body was interred. However, the earliest records of grave locations are no longer available. Congregation Shaarey Zedek made a count in 1975 of 733 legible names. Our present census will also show the location of tombstones even if they are illegible. Many of the stones are too weathered or broken up to be

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deciphered, and wooden markers have disappeared, which may account for the discrepancy of figures. The relatively poor early families only could afford wooden markers, only one of which remains. This is propped up on a stone, splintered at both ends, so worn that the letters look like bird feet in the sand, the wood washed pale from the elements - one sample of many similar grave markers of the past.

General Motors opens the Beth Olem Cemetery for visitations between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. on the Sunday before Passover and the Sunday before Rosh Hashonah, when, during this down time, cars can enter the truck gate and proceed directly to the cemetery gate. The old cemetery is also a highlight on the Jewish Historical Society tours of sites of Jewish Detroit, where many people have been very excited to unexpectedly find graves of relatives and early Jewish Detroiters.

In order to complete our mission for the Cemetery Index, special arrangements were made with GM Security for our eight I.R.P. volunteers to be escorted from the Truck Gate to the gates of the cemetery amidst the workday bustle of huge trucks, drivers, and security guards. Each team of two volunteers had at least one who could read the Hebrew



Left to right: Sheldon Kaplan, Maurice Shapiro, Harvey Lipsitt, Sydney Krause, Milton Marwil and Joseph Ostrovich. Not present: Louis Greenberg and Dr. Oscar Schwartz.

inscriptions, each team taking a row at a time until the twenty or so rows on each side of the cemetery were finished. Some of the surnames were familiar to a few of us; I found a great uncle and aunt whom I had known as a child. Two visits during the summer did the job; ethnic lunches at nearby Polish restaurants helped us to complete this unusual and

rewarding task.

Beth Olem Cemetery, located in Hamtramck, tucked in one corner of the 362 acre GM site, at least a quarter mile from the stacks of the main plant, sits like a walled oasis. The network of GM Security is ever-present to protect the sanctity of the tombstones. The cemetery is on General Motors property, and they have taken a benign attitude towards its welfare. In the words of one officer of the Security Department: "We are proud of our cemetery."

References:

Draft Environmental Impact Statement, City of Detroit, Oct. 15; 1900. Central Industrial Park Project, Beth Olem Cemetery, Nov. 23, 1902.

Interview: Andrew Phythian, Sup't., Clover Hill Park Cemetery, May 20, 1905.

Interview: GM Security, May 20, 1985

Milton Marwil is a past president of Congregation B'nai Moshe, Hebrew Free Loan Society, and the Zionist Organization of Detroit. Several generations of students remember his store, Marwil Books, at Wayne State University.

LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

LET'S TALK MORE OF NOBLE DEEDS
AND LESS ABOUT THE BAD ONES
AND SING ABOUT OUR HAPPY DAYS
AND NOT ABOUT THE SAD ONES.

LET'S FIND THE SUNNY SIDE OF MEN
OR BELIEVERS IN IT
A LIGHT THERE IS IN EVERY SOUL
THAT TAKES THE PAINS TO WIN IT.

THEN HERE'S TO THOSE WHOSE LOVING HEARTS
SHED LIGHT AND JOY ABOUT THEM
AND THANKS TO THEM FOR COUNTLESS GEMS
WE'D NEVER HAD KNOWN WITHOUT THEM.

YES, THIS SHOULD BE A HAPPY WORLD
TO ALL WHO MAY PARTAKE IT
THE FAULT'S OUR OWN, IF IT IS NOT
THIS LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT.

by Arthur Lipsitt, Borman Hall, Jewish Home for Aged

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In Memoriam:



Reuben Levine

1900-1992

Reuben Levine was an active member and friend of the Jewish Historical Society for over twenty-five years, serving on its Board of Directors, and a past treasurer. Coming to Detroit as a youngster, he was intimately involved in the development of the city's local Jewish history and a true advocate of the preservation of this history.

Born in Lithuania in 1900, he emigrated to the United States when he was 6. He was among the early participants in the Philomathic Debating Club, from 1916 until 1921, and applauded the recent preservation of its records by the Jewish Historical Society in the Jewish Community Archives.

A retired General Motors manager, he and his late wife Goldie were founding members of Temple Israel, where they taught in the Religious School for many years. Earlier they had taught at Congregation Shaarey Zedek and at Temple Beth El. Active leaders in community affairs, they were married for over 60 years. He is survived by a son Walter, six grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and his sister Ida Levine. The Jewish Historical Society is grateful for Reuben Levine's decades of dedicated support and counsel.

In Memoriam:



Robert Steinberg
1922-1992

Robert Steinberg was buried at Clover Hill Cemetery on July 6, 1992. He died after a short illness following a heart attack at the age of 70. He was born in Detroit, grew up in Detroit and attended University of Michigan where he was a member of ZBT fraternity. He was confirmed at Temple Beth El by Rabbi Leo Franklin and bar mitzvah at Congregation Shaarey Zedek. A stock broker by profession, in both the Jewish and non-Jewish community he enjoyed a wide circle of friends, whose confidences he discreetly preserved. He participated actively in a wide variety of charitable and fund raising activities both in Detroit and nationally.

Among his civic interests, one of the most important was the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. A long time member, he was proud of the Jewish participation in the history of Michigan. He knew the old Jewish families of Detroit, where they came from and what they did in their role of creating a Jewish community. He was known for the stories he told about them and his salty sense of humor. He treasured his many friends and was often the life of the party. His friends thought Bobbie a "fun guy", but there was a serious side of his Jewishness. He was well read and knowledgeable about Jewish affairs, no doubt encouraged by his activities in the Jewish Historical Society. He is survived by a sister, a brother, three nephews and two nieces and a number of great-nephews and great-nieces as well as a host of friends.

Rabbi Richard C. Hertz

In Memoriam:



William Avrunin
1911-1992

William Avrunin had a special interest in the history of Jewish Detroit. He served on the committee for the Jewish Community Archives and was an advisor for Dr. Sidney Bolkosky's book of Detroit Jewish history, Harmony and Dissonance. Always an advocate for the preservation of local history, he was a source of great encouragement for the Jewish Historical Society.

Mr. Avrunin was recognized for his Jewish communal leadership and extensive writings on Jewish social work. He was chief executive officer of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit from 1964 to 1976, and until his death on Nov. 19, 1992 at 81, served as executive vice-president emeritus. He chaired the editorial board of the Journal of Jewish Communal Service and lectured at the University of Michigan School of Social Work and the Training Bureau of Jewish Communal Service.

An alumnus of Ohio State University, Mr. Avrunin pursued graduate studies at the School of Applied Social Sciences at Western Reserve University. His professional career began at the Jewish Board of Guardians in New York City. He subsequently served the Ft. Wayne, Indiana, Jewish Federation, Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, National Jewish Welfare Board and National Committee on Big Brother and Big Sister Service.

He is survived by his wife, Frieda; a son, Mark; a daughter, Stephanie Waldman; a sister and four grandchildren.

David Page, Detroit Federation president, and Robert Aronson, executive-vice president, said in a statement: "His abilities were acknowledged throughout the country, and a generation of Detroit Jewish leadership owes a debt of gratitude to this extraordinary teacher and role model."

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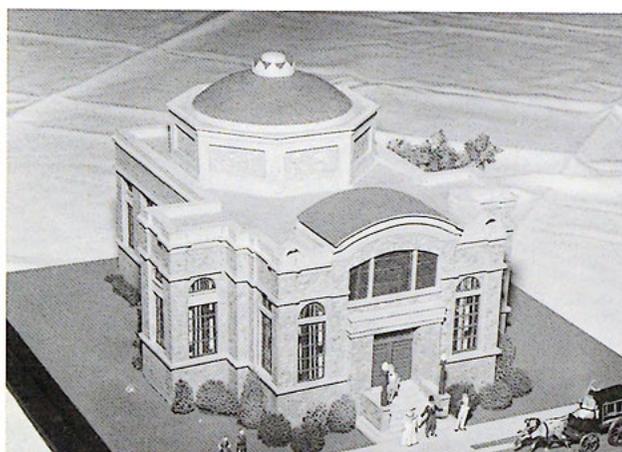
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Winder Street Synagogue

Congregation
B'nai David

100!

Jewish National Fund

90!

70 Years in Detroit



Courtesy of: Pictorial History of Israel, by Rubín and Barkai.

Early settlers in Palestine plow the land reclaimed by purchase by the Jewish National Fund.

Fresh Air Society

90!



Boys at camp at Venice Beach, with young counselor Abraham J. Levin, back left.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS!

Louis Berry
90!



Louis Berry and his family, l. to r.: Annie, Bertha, his father Hershel, Jack, Lou, Ben, Esther, and his mother Goldie.

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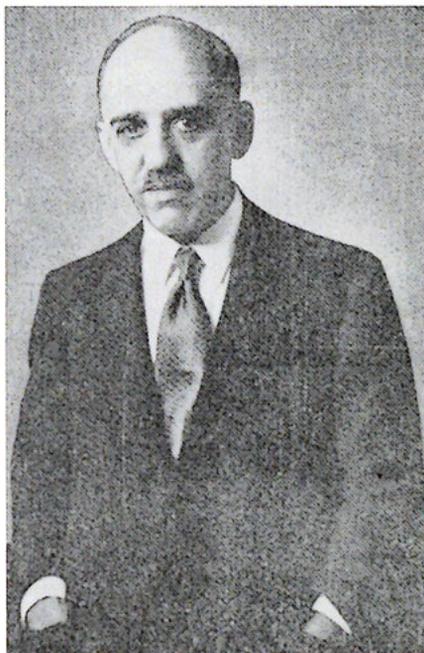
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Ten Mile Road, under construction.

DETROIT'S SOCIAL ENGINEER REMINISCES

as told to William I. Boxerman

by Fred M. Butzel (1877-1948)

Editor's note: A half century after its original publication in the March 1941 Jewish Social Service Quarterly, the first half of these memoirs was published in the 1991 journal, Michigan Jewish History. Fred Butzel, the "Dean of Michigan Jewry," in great measure was responsible for the development of the social service institutions of the Detroit Jewish and secular community. This second part of these remarkable memoirs provides insights into the work of resettlement by the Industrial Removal Office, and the 1926 formation of the Jewish Welfare Federation.



Fred M. Butzel

Industrial Removal Bureau

The Hannah Schloss Memorial Building was hardly up in the early 1900's, before Detroit, as well as other American cities, became centers of Jewish immigration. The Industrial Removal Office set up local committees in the various Jewish communities, so that each community might do its share.

First, by way of introduction: I believe it was in 1900 that a small meeting of national Jewish leaders was held in Cincinnati, which brought about the National Conference of Jewish Charities. This conference had been called in the first place to do away with the difficulties created by wandering, transient Jews who were traveling from community to community, without direction. As a result of the uprooting of the Jews in Europe, tremendous numbers of people just wandered from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast and back again. No community wanted them to settle and become local charges, so a goodly portion of the charitable funds was expended in an effort to help these people to move onward. Finally, the National Conference appointed a transportation committee which laid down rules for the various communities in the conference, and thus a stop was put to the evil. A community was permitted to give a wanderer money with which to return home, but not to travel to the next town. The communities did everything possible to verify and help establish residence.

1902 Detroit Meeting of the N.C.J.C.

When the second National Conference of Jewish Charities took place in Detroit in 1902, it went a step further and put on its feet the Industrial Removal Office. Some of the most notable figures in American Jewish life were present at the meeting, among them the silver-tongued Leo N. Levi from Galveston and Cyrus Sulzberger, a business man most active in the work of the United Hebrew Charities of New York. The meeting was held in the old Temple Beth El on Washington and Clifford.

I shall never forget that conference. The real purpose of it, namely, to give the idea of the Industrial Removal Office a good start, was not generally known. Speaker after speaker arose and vividly described the horrors of the congestion of immigrants in New York City, especially on the lower East Side. Leo M. Levi particularly touched all of us with his account of the impossible housing situation and the consequent demoralization of the entire Jewish community. He trotted out the old argument that much anti-Semitism and persecution of the Jews arose because of these crowded conditions and because the immigrants were herded together in a modern ghetto, where they had no opportunity to assimilate and become good citizens. Cyrus Sulzberger spoke and broke down in the middle of his speech, overcome by his own emotions as he pictured the teeming slum areas of the metropolis.

Finally, came the concrete proposal as a solution to these difficulties, the proposal at which the whole conference was aimed—namely, that these immigrants who came to New York City be dispersed through a central office, known as the Industrial Removal

The Russian Jews who came here furnished a large number of the iron workers in the automobile industries. Especially were they good at “wooding,” the process of binding the wood on various auto parts.

Office. Each community was to take a fixed quota of a certain number of people per month, much as communities now in 1941 try to absorb a certain number of Jewish refugees from Germany. Each community had to write and tell the IRO the types of workers that could be absorbed locally. We hoped that those who migrated in

this fashion would come to jobs that were already waiting for them. The whole movement was to be financed by the Baron de Hirsch Fund.

Rightfully or not, we in Detroit always believed that we took more than our fair share of the quota. Our people had the emotional effect of the conference from the beginning and we outdid ourselves in accepting removals, so much so, that we must have taken more per capita than other cities. Of course we had our eyes open for funds, too, and we asked for more money. We felt that there was no sense in doing the job for nothing when money was available. However, we had a constant fight on our hands with the national office, who wanted us to take the more difficult cases because we were getting more money from the Baron de Hirsch Fund. Time after time it became necessary to exchange lengthy correspondence.

Detroit's Participation in IRO

The industrial removal work here in Detroit was under the supervision of the United Jewish Charities. We employed Miss Birdie Pick, a young society woman, to head the work and she stayed with us about three years, being succeeded by Miss Blanche Hart, who remained for many years the head of the Bureau. Miss Pick did a good job, going to the factories in the city and persuading the various foremen to find jobs for our immigrants. We had been promised by the New York office that we would be sent the average of the group but we had reason to believe that they didn't always do this. The Russian Jews who came here furnished a large number of the iron workers in the automobile industries. Especially were they good at “wooding,” the process of binding

the wood on various auto parts. The percentage of competent worker's proved to be great; they were hard workers and were welcomed by the factories. Later, as machine work succeeded handicraft, most of them left the factories and entered the real estate business.

After the work of the IRO was under way, there occurred the infamous Kishinev massacres and Jews came to this country in droves. The Ford factory was by this time beginning to attract hordes of workers and the newcomers were placed quite readily.

There is an interesting sidelight on the participation of the non-Jewish population of Detroit in the work of the IRO. George P. Codd, who was then mayor of Detroit, headed a commission which raised funds for the victims of the Kishinev pogroms. A mass meeting was called and a considerable sum of money was gathered. The original intention had been to send the money directly to Russia as material aid to the sufferers, but this idea was abandoned. Instead, the money was employed more constructively. Families were brought over here, and then, making use of the facilities of the IRO, were distributed throughout the country. Loans also were made to deserving local individuals to enable them to bring their relatives to the United States.

It is impossible to say how many people we brought to Detroit. The report for the year 1912-13 showed that the industrial removal agent of the United Jewish Charities, Miriam Hart, handled 1,711 individuals through her department. I dare say there are only a few people in Detroit who know that we had an industrial removal department in the old Hannah Schloss because practically no publicity was given to the work. Most of us felt that the less said the better.

Arbitrations

The most important arbitration in which I participated was incidental to the collection for war sufferers. When big campaigns for funds were held before the formation of the Joint Distribution Committee, the American Jewish Relief Committee, representing the Orthodox Jews and the Jewish People's Relief Committee, representing the labor groups, were holding independent drives. A very officious Jew who had come from New York had stirred up a Jewish merchant on Hastings Street and induced him to make scandalous remarks reflecting on the integrity and honesty of the Jewish People's Relief Committee. This organization, consisting of numerous workingmen, had an intricate system of collections and accounting and enjoyed the devoted services of a great many people. The opportunities for graft were obvious. High Holiday services were held at one of the Hastings Street theatres. In the course of one of them, this merchant, in an address, denounced the Jewish People's Committee and its methods of collections and praised the Central Relief Committee, with its conservative methods. A libel suit was started against the person who had made these accusations. The *Yiddish gass* was split wide open, threatening a great deal of trouble.

Through the efforts of George Avrunin of the Arbeiter Ring, the matter was steered out of court and a board of arbitrators was appointed to try the issues. The interest of the public was so great that the hearings were held in the main office of the Hannah Schloss Memorial. The arbitrators sat at a long table, the parties and

their attorneys at separate tables, and the public, on benches. We met Sunday after Sunday and then, for convenience sake, held a few sessions in the vestry rooms of one of the orthodox synagogues. All of us sat with our hats on. The place was jammed.

We had accountants examine the books thoroughly. We were awed at how well these poor workingmen kept them. We found their accounting system to be excellent and by means of duplicate receipts we checked everything. The unanimous report of the five of us was that not the slightest trace of graft existed, that the charges were false, and that the Jewish People's Relief Committee was a fine organization. No damages were assessed, for we felt that enough poison already had circulated in the community regarding the case. We exacted a public apology which was very willingly given and the suit was dismissed. Our findings were published by the People's Committee and wide distribution greatly assisted their collections.

In only one instance was any case in which I arbitrated ever carried to court. I am sorry to say that in that particular instance the matter went to the Supreme Court where, as the case was found not arbitrable, it was reversed. With that exception, however, the findings in every arbitration in which I participated were not only signed by me but by attorneys of both parties. As a result, when the arbitration was over, not only was the case decided, but fairly good relations were restored between the parties. The chief value of the arbitration process lies in the fact that it gives the parties a chance to blow off steam and clear the lines. It is this, rather than the actual decision rendered, which is all-important. In many instances the decision itself has little or no importance.

The Detroit Hebrew Orphan Home

The Detroit Hebrew Orphan Home was formed in 1920. There were men and women on the board at first, but when they had a row the women retired and formed a Hebrew Ladies' Baby Day Nursery. Both institutions were in my neighborhood on Rowena. I still have a copy of the constitution and By-Laws of the Detroit Hebrew Orphan Home and it is worth quoting part of Article III, which says: "It is the duty of the president and officers not to allow any scandals or claims of any kind to take place, and when a member has a claim against another one, or when a member complains as to the conduct of an officer, such complaint must be written, stating fully and particularly as to the nature of the claim, which must be placed with the board. The board shall choose amongst themselves an Arbitration Committee consisting of seven members who shall have the full power to decide as to the complaint. The duties of such special committee must be fully carried out in all respects by and through the help of all the officers.

"When a member shall at any time cause a scandal publicly or in any way expose the name of this institution. either in court or in any other public place, to shame, then, such member can no longer belong to this institution and the name shall be marked as such in the records and branded as a traitor to this institution."

Raising monies for the two children's institutions was not very difficult. It was common practice to have a party at the Infants' Home and late at night, before going

home, to trot upstairs and see how nicely the children lay in their little cribs. Every woman in the society became a mother to the babies, with all the trimmings. Children were taken into the two institutions without any investigation and many parents were relieved of burdens, so that breaking up a home was a cinch.

I felt horror at the entire infant movement. Both sides received me very cordially and did the best they could to gain my good will. However I called attention to their various inefficiencies and the injustice done to the children. I got the good will and interest of some of the more intelligent women on the board who were put in charge of the institutions and its policies. At a later date the two children's homes were induced to merge.

The two children's homes consolidated when the women's board resigned and conveyed to the Detroit Hebrew Orphan Home its property and its obligations. The two children's homes were induced, even before they merged, to accept Mrs. Edith Bercovich as their investigator. She readily returned many of the children to their own homes and prevented the dumping of children into institutions, which had been taking place. Mrs. Bercovich impressed the home so well that she was invited to become director of the joint institution and her help was enlisted in drawing plans for a new structure on Burlingame. A great deal of argument took place before the present beautiful and commodious building, with a normal capacity of 50, was built.

Later, it was necessary to have a joint intake committee to allocate children. All applications for admissions were investigated by the representatives of the Jewish Child Placement Bureau, Jewish Children's Home, Jewish Welfare Federation, and the Jewish Social Service Bureau-the forerunner of the Jewish Family Service. Take my word for it, the meetings of the committee were always exciting and educational.

The Origins of the Jewish Community Center

The earliest YMHA that I remember was started in the early 1890's, quite independent of any other movement. It met in a house which was rented on the east side of Brush near Winder, but did not last very long. The equipment of the house was meager and there was no real demand for the service. I remember at various times we would invite a well-known speaker to come there and talk. We scurried around the neighborhood, while the speaker was being entertained in the front room, to beg people to come over and furnish an audience.

Early in the 1900's, however, Bernard Ginsburg organized the Fellowship Club and this was an immensely popular place. A house was rented on west Columbia, several hundred feet back from Woodward. Bowling alleys in the basement were particularly popular. On the second floor, on Sunday afternoons, a Senate met with different members representing the various states and taking up matters of moment in the nation. The institution was too exclusive for the size of the membership and their ability to pay. A few people paid the deficit for a while but it also died out.

When the National Conference of Jewish Social work met here in 1902, however, a great many of the prominent men attended a banquet given by the Fellowship Club. They were extremely impressed that night by the oration of one of our young

men for whom everyone predicted a brilliant future because of the clarity of his thought, the beauty of his diction and the earnestness of his personality. The orator in question was my good friend, Charles C. Simons, who was destined to be a state senator, circuit court commissioner, district judge, and finally, judge of the United States Court of Appeals.

Many years were to elapse before the UJC was broken up and the Jewish Centers became one of the resultant parts of Federation.

Formation of Federation

When Miss Hart had finished twenty years of service, we gave her a celebration and a purse. She had felt for a long time that she was not equal to all the tasks involved in the conduct of the UJC. She had urged that a survey be made and that we should bring to Detroit someone comparable to the heads of the various federations in the country. Mr. Leopold Wineman had provided a bequest in his will to the UJC. With the consent of the family and at the suggestion of Jacob Billikopf, who had come to Detroit for the Hart anniversary celebration, we ordered a survey of the entire situation in 1924 from Samuel Goldsmith, who was then head of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research. The medical, relief, recreational and educational phases of Detroit were quite thoroughly covered. However, it was determined to break up the UJC, to federate the constituent parts, and to take in some of the other organizations. Morris Waldman was brought to Detroit for the purpose of doing this and Miss Hart retired and went into business.

Under Waldman's direction, the relief work was organized into a separate society known as the Jewish Social Service Bureau; the recreational work was turned over to the Jewish Centers Association, the clinic was moved out to Holbrook Avenue and became the North End Clinic. It was run for a time by the Fresh Air Society but finally split off into an independent organization. The original UJC was kept alive and its ex-presidents constituted its board only for the purpose of holding title to the various pieces of property owned in the community. These organizations, together with the United Hebrew Schools, the Fresh Air Society, and the Hebrew Free Loan Association, constituted the Jewish Welfare Federation.

The First UJA Drive in Detroit

The support for the Hebrew Schools and for our various overseas and national organizations was undertaken in an annual drive called the United Jewish Appeal. The organizations which had been in the Community Fund remained there. From the beginning, Waldman was very anxious to have a hundred percent federation and was ready to make almost any compromise. In this respect his successors, Dr. John Slawson and Kurt Peiser, agreed with him. I assented to the various inclusions very reluctantly and I have always thought that we paid too high a price for what might possibly be illussory unity.

In our first UJA drive, we had invited the Palestine Appeal to join, but it found so much resistance on the part of the community, that, upon request, the Palestine Appeal graciously withdrew but easily raised its objective. Within several years it was taken into the drive without any opposition.

FOOTNOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Memoirs and pictorial memorabilia of World War II and its aftermath have begun with this issue and would be welcomed for future issues, certainly through 1995. Many aspects of Jewish participation deserve recording in this Journal, thus becoming a page of our history: - the stories of liberators of the concentration camps, of American servicemen and women coping with anti-Semitism, of experiences on various fronts, of the administration of the Displaced Persons camps. Episodes of Jewish chaplains, of policy makers, of the medical, or of the home front all add to our record and can prove of great interest. Kindly contact the editor through the Jewish Historical Society office to discuss publication ideas.

* * *

Without design, "resettlement" and good citizenship appear over and over as the underlying themes of many articles in this issue. Resettlement of the Sephardim after the expulsion of 1492 as discussed by Dr. Judith Elkin; resettlement around the turn of the century of the great numbers of immigrants from the pogroms of Russia and eastern Europe, as described by Fred Butzel; and then resettlement from Nazi Germany to America, the personal portrait by Benno Levi. Now, in our own time, resettlement of Jewish emigrants from Russia is once again one of our community's major concerns. How history does repeat itself . . . and how many lessons it can teach us.

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Jewish history has been in the making in communities all around Michigan since the 1840's. Michigan Jewish History welcomes contributions about the spirited history of Jewish people and communities throughout our state.

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Please inform the Jewish Historical Society of upcoming significant community anniversaries.

* * *

The American Jewish Historical Society, now launched into its second century, will be holding its annual conference in New York City in May of 1993. Focusing on the new Museum of Ellis Island as well as on Jews in Theatre, this promises to be a great weekend, well worth attending.

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN ANNUAL REPORT, JUNE 1992

This past year was marked by continuous progress and development of the Society. We are evolving into a dynamic service organization to our community.



Leonard N. Simons reminisces about awardee, Hon. Avern Cohn

The Historical Society, like modern Michigan Jewry, is facing the twin challenges of identity and affiliation. No longer are we just the preservers and recorders of past events; we are becoming an educational arm of the community: teachers with innovative programming and activities.

We sponsored two bus tours of old Detroit, one for those who have been in the Jewish community for some time and another for New American Jews who wanted to better understand their new home.

We held an evening of Sephardic Jewish Culture with Shirley Behar.

At the 1991 Book Fair, we jointly hosted the release of our own Dr. Sidney Bolkosky's *Harmony and Dissonance*, the second chapter of the story of the Jews of Detroit.

Our 1991 *Journal of Michigan Jewish History*, was very well received. Skillfully edited by Judy Cantor, it continues to set a high standard for local historical publications.

At the 100th meeting of the American Jewish Historical Society, we displayed "Blacks and Jews: The Michigan Experience." The exhibit attracted great attention.

At long last, we dedicated the Jewish Community Archives of Detroit, located in the Reuther Archives of Wayne State University, working in conjunction with the Jewish Federation of Detroit. A dream fulfilled. We are pleased to welcome Dr. Leslie Hough as the new director of the Reuther Archives and are grateful for the help of the esteemed Dr. Philip Mason. Sharon Alterman is the director of The Jewish Community Archives.

At our Annual meeting, following the dedication of the Archives, the Hon. Charles Levin, Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court,



Judge Avern Cohn receives Leonard N. Simons History Award from Judge Charles L. Levin and Gilbert Borman, J.H.S. President

ANNUAL REPORT

presented the second Leonard N. Simons History Award to the Hon. Avern Cohn. The society expresses its gratitude to both of these distinguished jurists, as lovers of history and leaders in the community, for making this event so memorable.



Photo by Robert Clinin

Opening of Jewish Community Archives. Mark Schlüssel, president of Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit; Sharon Alterman, Jewish Community Archives; Dr. Leslie Hough, director, Reuther Archives; Gilbert Borman, Jewish Historical Society.

Spearheaded by The Jewish Historical Society in cooperation with six other groups, *Voyages to Freedom*, a perspective on 500 years of Jewish Latin Americans, was exhibited at our Jewish Community center, Dr. Judith Elkin, author of the narrative, introduced the exhibit to our community. We are most grateful to Mr. Norman Allan for his generous contribution which enabled this to come to our community.

For all of these things to have happened, we have many people to thank. The society can do many things, but your continued support is the key. We do need memberships and contributions. Moreover, if you include us in your estate plans or make other arrangements to benefit the society, we can continue to expand and grow upon our successes for years to come.

Gilbert Borman, President



Photo by James Grey

Officers and Board; Seated: Benno Levi, Treasurer; Aimée Shwayder Ergas, Secretary; Gilbert Borman, President; Gertrude Edgar, Vice-President; Judith Cantor, Editor. Standing: James Grey, Miriam Cohen, Ben Paxton, Harriet Siden, Sarah Bell, Laura Berman, Doris Easton, Irwin Shaw.

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

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Membership, tributes, and endowments to The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, founded in 1959, support the collection, commemoration, and publication of the history of the Jews of Michigan. Michigan Jewish History is the oldest continuously published journal of local Jewish history in America.
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