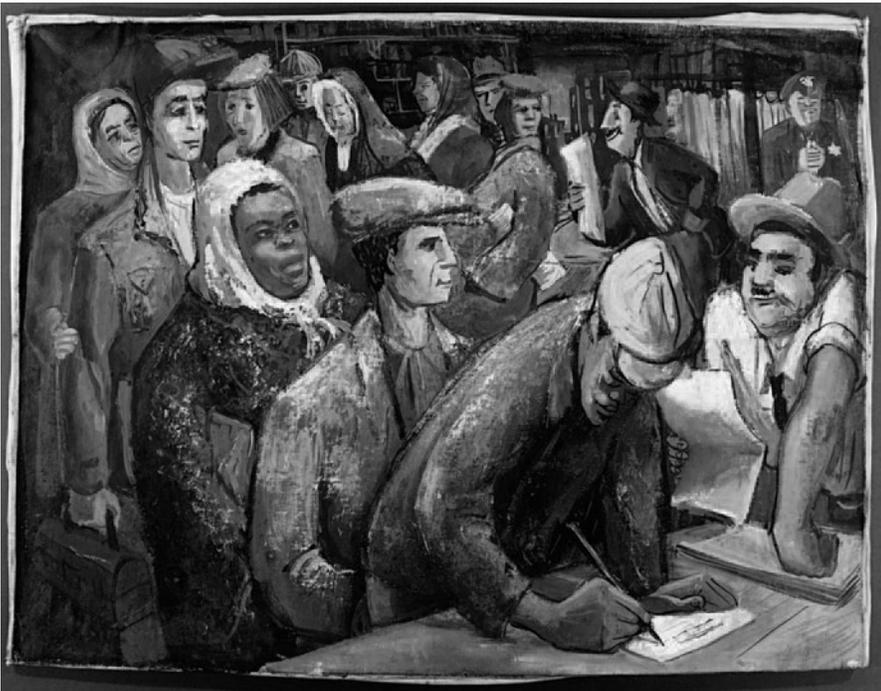




# CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

## *Unprecedented Times*



### Art, Meet Activism

Titled “42nd Ward,” this painting (left) is among the thousands of works by Chicago area artist and activist Peggy Lipschutz, who died in 2019 at 100.



Read more inside about Lipschutz (above right), her work, and her involvement in a myriad of 20th-century social and political causes.

### The CJHS in the “New Normal”

**T**he world has changed tremendously since the release of our Winter 2020 *CJH*.

Over the past three months, there have been close to 2 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other respected sources, Illinois now ranks third among the 50 states in residents who have tested positive for and/or have exhibited symptoms associated with the coronavirus.

The vast majority of the 100,000-plus cases in Illinois have been in the Chicago area, with the brunt in Cook County, where more than one in 100 people have tested positive. While communities of color have been disproportionately affected, *all*

communities—including the Jewish community—have been touched by the coronavirus.

Most Society members know someone whose parents, grandparents, siblings, children, friends, business associates, or neighbors have experienced the virus first-hand. As always, Jewish charitable organizations have stretched themselves to provide counseling, financial resources, medical support, and other pragmatic, needed assistance to help those with COVID-19 and their families. And dozens of Jewish congregations throughout the metropolitan area, many of which have suffered economically during the pandemic, have found innovative ways of keeping in touch with their members through Zoom and other social media platforms.

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## CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Dr. Rachelle Gold

Can you guess what the Civil War, Home for Jewish Friendless and Working Girls, State Street department stores, Roosevelt Road banquet halls, and *landsman-schaftn* have in common?

If you guessed that they are all significant pieces of Chicago's Jewish past, you are correct.

They are also the subjects of recent inquiries received by the Society from individuals in Chicago and beyond. They come from diverse places and from people with varied purposes, from the personal to the academic.

The Society's role as a historical resource is a cornerstone of our mission. Every inquiry gives us the opportunity to both share and expand what we know about our history. Discussion about each query takes place behind the scenes through emails, written correspondence, and conversations. A response typically involves research and consultation among experts and scholars from within and outside the Society. We mine the deep knowledge of our colleagues, and we consult publications, websites, and on-

line resources. Foremost among our sources are this journal and essential works that include *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb* by Dr. Irving Cutler and *History of the Jews of Chicago* by H. L. Meites.

In this issue, we are publishing in its entirety a question posed by one of our members, Sybil Mervis, along with the informative reply by Immediate Past President Ed Mazur. It makes fascinating reading. (See page 11.)

I want to share some of the other recent inquiries we answered. I hope you will find them as interesting as we have.

Illinois Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War. A reader's grandmother told him that her great-grandfather fought in a Jewish regiment in the Civil War. He wanted to know whether we could verify this. We told him about the Jewish community-founded Company C of the 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry. We also referred him to Board Member Eric Benjaminson, an expert on the subject, who presented on it for the Society in 2019, and to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.

Jewish-Owned State Street Department Stores. A retail professional who is a volunteer guide for an architecture society was conducting research for an upcoming tour focusing on the eminent stores of State Street. He contacted the Society about the significant role of Jewish families in retailing. Co-President Jerry Levin will assist this gentleman in exploring the Jewish dimension of this history. (Board Member Herb Eiseman presented on this topic in March 2011).

A Wedding on Roosevelt Road. A reader was examining family papers and noticed that his parents' *ketubah*, or Jewish wedding contract, stated only the Roosevelt Road address of their wedding, not the name of the location. He assumed it was a synagogue, but couldn't find one at that address. Jerry Levin was keen enough to spot the address in a photo accompanying a *CJH* article by Dr. Irving Cutler "Going Out to Eat along Jewish Lawndale's Roosevelt Road" (Spring 2019, pp. 12-13). The location was the Cafe Royale, a restaurant that hosted weddings.

Mutual Aid Society for Immigrants from Lithuania. A former Chicago resident whose ancestors were raised in this city believed that they were members of a *landsmanschaft*, a Jewish mutual aid society, for people who came from their town in Lithuania. He located some records of the *landsmanschaft*, which had another chapter in New York, and wanted to know details about his family's involvement in the group. We suggested he find the seminal reference, *Bridges to an American City: A Guide to Chicago's Landsmanschaften, 1870-1990*, by Sidney Sorkin, and that he contact other Jewish institutions with access to relevant archival records, including the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois and the Center for Jewish History in New York.

As you see, the Society has been active during the current pause in public programming. We are fortunate that interaction and learning can go on, no matter the distance. Let's stay connected and keep the dialogue going. Contact us at [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org) to comment, question, share something you have learned, or just to say hello.



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## The "New Normal"

continued from front page

Adaptive, imaginative approaches to life under COVID-19 have not been the domain of organizations alone. During the most recent Passover, many of you employed such technology to observe virtual Seders from your homes. In one predominantly Jewish neighborhood in Chicago, West Rogers Park, the holiday took a *hey mish*, low-tech turn. Thirteen homeowners posted on their front lawns one of the verses from the *Chad Gadya*, or *Who Knows One*, a song traditionally sung during the Seder, according to Chicago Jewish Historical Society Co-President Jerry Levin, who was among the participating households.

The fallout from COVID-19 is hard to quantify. Like countless nonprofits, we at the Chicago Jewish Historical Society have had to cancel public programming to ensure compliance with local and state shelter-in-place regulations, much less to make good on our aim to keep all of our members and their families safe and healthy.

But it's not just about canceled programming or the loss of jobs on local, state, and national levels or the fear of contracting the virus or even the very real feeling of cabin fever that so many of us have experienced during our time at home over the last several months.

As with all plagues and pandemics, there have been some who have looked to assign blame. While there has been some anti-Asian sentiment and violence associated with the coronavirus, with fingers pointed at China, the first country to report an outbreak of COVID-19, antisemitism has once again reared its ugly head.

Right here in Chicago, protesters with placards including images of the swastika and verbiage reading "Arbeit Macht Frei"—the words that were posted at the entrance to the Nazi death camp Auschwitz—have railed against Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker, one of the nation's two Jewish governors (the other is Colorado Governor Jared Polis), who has instituted some of the strictest stay-at-home measures in the country to bring the number of coronavirus cases down. The ADL, formerly known as the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Committee, among other groups tracking hate crimes, have already denounced these protesters.

It is unclear, as of this writing, when life as we once knew it will return to normal. Many now speak of "the new normal," but are vague about what that will look like. Will people sit down together in theaters, restaurants, trains, buses, and other public venues? Will they go to Wrigley Field and Soldier Field?



Jewish neighbors in Chicago's West Rogers Park found a safe way to observe Passover together during the shelter-in-place policy, posting individual verses from a popular festival song. photo courtesy of Jerry Levin

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## Nu? Who's New?

### The Ryder-Adams Family

**W**e continue our New Members feature with Chicagoans Turi Ryder and Scott Adams, along with their two sons, Colman Adams, 20, an incoming senior at List College, the joint undergraduate program of Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Simon Adams, 18, a senior at Lane Tech College Prep High School and an incoming freshman at the University of Toronto.

Ryder, 61, a radio personality who has hosted shows across the country, is the author of the recently published account of her radio days “She Said What? (A Life on the Air)” and the host of a podcast. Adams, also 61, is a political advisor and founder of the consulting firm Green Alley Strategies. For seven years, he was the political director for the late Paul Wellstone, one of Minnesota’s four Jewish United States Senators over the last four decades. (The other three have been Al Franken, Norm Coleman, and Rudy Boschwitz.)

The Ryder-Adams family has been deeply involved in the local Jewish community since 2013, when they came east from the San Francisco Bay Area, where they had lived for many years. No matter where they have found themselves, however, all four have taken a profound interest in Jewish history, culture, and practice.

Ryder is a native of Baltimore; her family first moved to Chicago in 1964. Adams grew up in New Haven, Connecticut, and Miami, but has roots in Chicago.

*CJH:* Turi, you spent most of your school years on Chicago’s North Shore—you’re a graduate of New Trier—but your earliest years were in Chicago’s South Shore neighborhood and then in Manhattan, Kansas, where your late father, Harvard Reiter, a medical researcher and scientist, had an academic appointment. In your book, you describe the Kansas years as traumatic. There was a considerable amount of antisemitism, though your mother did her best to counter it with positive experiences. Would you describe what she did?

*TR:* My mother was the daughter of an Orthodox rabbi in New York, Henry Julius, who was the *shamas* of the Jewish Center on West 86th Street, where he also taught. She was well schooled in Jewish liturgy and was determined to find a Jewish community when we moved to Manhattan, Kansas. She actually went through the local phonebook in Manhattan and looked for Jewish-sounding surnames. Through a series of calls, she came upon a local Jewish man, originally from Texas, who said to her, “Lady, if you’re willing to teach Hebrew school, we’ll start one.” This eventually evolved into a local synagogue in Manhattan, Kansas, which exists to this day. My mother was the catalyst for all of this.



Chicagoan Mel Adams, Scott Adams’s late father, was a HUD official.

As a result of my experiences in Kansas, which included being called a Christ-killer by classmates, I decided that if and when I had children of my own, I’d make sure that I’d find a strong Jewish community in which to raise them.

*CJH:* Scott, your childhood was far different. Your father, who grew up on Chicago’s South Side, was the son of German Jews who had been raised in the Deep South and were descended from immigrants who’d come to this country around the time of the Civil War and Gold Rush. His mother, your paternal grandmother, was from the family who owned Blach’s Department Store in Birmingham, Alabama, and she had come north to attend the University of Chicago. Your father’s father was from a small town outside of Savannah, Georgia, and his family owned a dry goods store. Your mother was not Jewish—she was a Polish-American woman who grew up in rural Wisconsin.

*SA:* I did not come from a particularly Jewish-identified home. I’ve always said that my family’s religion was the Democratic Party. My parents left religion out of their marriage, and my father, Mel Adams, had an aversion to religious practice. Some of this, I think, had to do with his Southern Jewish relatives, whom he found quite racist. One of things my father, who spent his career in developing public housing and was the one-time head of Dade County (Florida) Housing and Urban Development, got out of being Jewish was the sense of social justice.

When I met Turi and decided that I wanted to go through a formal conversion process and lead an observant Jewish life, he was not particularly happy. He said that I “shouldn’t do all that crazy stuff,” like keep a kosher

home and observe Shabbat. Well, we do all of those things.

*CJH:* You do a lot more than that. Over the past seven years in Chicago, all four of you have participated in the Jewish community. Would you talk a little bit about this?

*TR:* We are involved with Mah Tovv, formerly known as the Egalitarian Minyan of Rogers Park, and Scott was the President for two years.

*SA:* Before the pandemic hit, the boys and I also served meals monthly at the Uptown Café, which is not too far from where we live. It is funded by JUF/Federation. It has been a great way of building community, and you get to know a lot of the regulars.

*TR:* We also support Jewish United Fund of Chicago, Hillel, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Mazon, and the Jewish day schools—both here and in the Bay Area—that did such a fine job educating our sons.

*CJH:* Colman, like Simon, you attended Lane Tech, a premier public high school. But both of you went to Jewish day schools before that in Chicago and Oakland. How has receiving formal Jewish educations informed your identity?



Simon Adams, left, with brother Colman and parents, Turi Ryder and Scott Adams  
photo by Linda Matlow

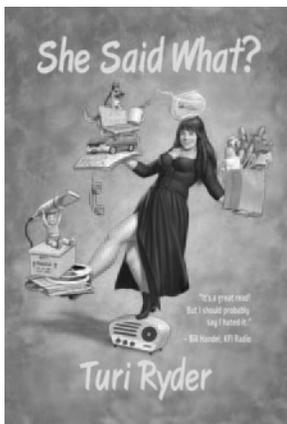
*CA:* I'm very grateful for the education, which has made me more interested in Jewish history and open to Jewish studies. At Columbia, I'm a political science and economics major; at JTS, I am majoring in Jewish history. I'm involved in Columbia/Barnard Hillel. Before college, I participated in the Diller Teen Fellows program through JUF that focused on Jewish identity, leadership, and social justice. During summers, I attended Camp Ramah in Ojai, California, and I've also been a lifeguard at the camp in Wheeling, Illinois.

*Simon Adams:* I did a program through JUF called "Write on for Israel" that trained us to counter the BDS (boycott, divest, and sanction) movement that has become very popular on a lot of college campuses and to advocate more effectively for Israel. As a part of the program, I went to Israel, where I encountered a diversity of communities and had an opportunity to hear a diversity of voices, including those of *Haaretz* editors.

*CJH:* Turi, you have noted that something your mother said to you when you were quite young left a deep impression on you in relation to your Jewishness. Will you recount that?

*TR:* We were still living in South Shore then, and she said, "If you're ever in trouble in the neighborhood, just find a home with a mezuzah on the door. The people there will help you."

Of course, later on, I developed a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish community, but the lesson I absorbed then was that we Jews are part of a larger family. It was imprinted on me that their history was my history—and that we are here to help each other.



The cover of Turi Ryder's book

## Wanderlust Leads to Thoughts of Chagall's *Four Seasons*

KAREN KAPLAN

As I write this, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Confined to our homes, we daydream about the outdoor spots we'll visit when we are set free again. Lincoln Park Zoo? Michigan Avenue? Wrigley Field? Chicago holds countless delights for the senses. One of them is of particular interest to Jews: *Les Quatre Saisons*—or *The Four Seasons*—mosaic by Marc Chagall at Exelon Plaza (Chase Tower) on Monroe Street in downtown Chicago. Here is its story.

Marc Chagall was born in 1887 in Vitebsk, Belarus, near the Russian border, home to a substantial Jewish Hasidic population, including Chagall's family. The artist's Jewish upbringing and his childhood surroundings would be depicted in his art throughout his life. After studying in St. Petersburg and Paris, he became a French citizen in 1937.

The artist we revere today did not begin his Chicago legacy in glowing terms. In 1926, Eleanor Jewett, art critic for the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote, "The great majority of the so-called modern painters of today (a lot of them spawned in the backwaters of Europe), deserve straitjackets rather than frames. As for Chagall," she continued, "drop the veil from your eyes and see." She called him "a young degenerate" and his work "a medley of absurdities."

Fortunately, as time passed, Jewett's opinions were overruled by other critics, as well as by collectors and the public. In 1933, the Art Institute of Chicago purchased "The Praying Jew." By now, even Jewett had changed her tune. In a 1945 *Tribune* review, she proclaimed, "He is a romanticist and a poet; a very pleasant pause in the tale of contemporary art."

According to many online sources, Chagall first visited Chicago in 1946. He spoke to the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. The Committee, still in existence, was founded in 1941 as an interdisciplinary doctoral program encompassing literature, philosophy, history, religion, art, politics, and society. Members have included such luminaries as the Jewish novelist and playwright Saul Bellow, a longtime Chicagoan, and T.S. Eliot, a poet considered by many to be virulently antisemitic. In his lecture before the Committee, Chagall praised the United States, where he lived during World War II; expressed his fondness for France and the great artists it had produced; and talked of his own growth as an artist.

He returned to Chicago in 1958, speaking again at the university. It was during this second visit that Chagall met the man who would be instrumental in bringing the Chagall mosaic to Chicago: William Wood Prince.

Born William Wood in 1914, Prince was a distant cousin to Frederick H. Prince, who had a controlling interest in Armour & Co. and the Chicago Union Stock Yard. As none of his own children wanted to run these businesses, Frederick adopted William, who by then was a young man and a graduate of the Groton School and Princeton University. William Wood thus became William Wood Prince. He was active on more than a dozen major corporate boards, including Commonwealth Edison, Eastern Airlines, and, most notably, First National Bank of Chicago.

Fast forward to 1973, when the new plaza at the First National Bank of Chicago (now Chase Bank) opened. The 60-story bank building was designed by C.F. Murphy Associates and Perkins & Will. The building's designers worked with landscape architects Novak, Carlson and Associates to unify the building and tri-level plaza using matching granite and design features, as well as extensive landscaping and a large fountain. The plaza served as an oasis and a site of respite for downtown workers and visitors—a place to enjoy lunch, get some fresh air, and give one's eyes a break from the relentless concrete and steel of "The City of Big Shoulders."

William Wood Prince and his wife, Eleanor, had remained friends with Chagall since their meeting years before, and they generously offered to sponsor a mosaic mural for the plaza, in memory of Frederick Wood. As designed by Chagall, the mural would be impressive in dimensions: 70 feet long, 14 feet high, and 10 feet wide. The theme, the four seasons, would be completed in the fall of 1974.

Lino Melano, the Italian mosaic artist who would translate Chagall's design into mosaic, said, "I interpret Chagall as a musician would play the composer's music." As for the provenance of the materials, the glass would come from Venice and Paris; the marble from Italy; the granite from Norway, Belgium, and France;

and the green stone from the copper mines in Eilat, Israel.

Disaster struck in March 1973 at Melano's studio in France. A flash fire damaged not only the studio, but also some of the works in progress, including several life-size models of the mosaic panels. Fortunately, photographs of the models survived, and weeks later, after the studio was repaired, work resumed.

During the months of the mosaic's construction, excitement and anticipation continued to build. Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art and Chas. A. Stevens, a then-prominent women's department store, offered Chagall-themed jewelry for sale.



The Chagall mosaic at Chicago's Chase Tower

By June 1974, the first panel had arrived in Chicago; the remaining ones—including 128 smaller individual panels—would arrive and be installed in time for a formal unveiling on September 27. In July, Michael Tharin, Chagall's ceramicist, came to Chicago and began work on the enclosure.

Chagall, now 87, arrived in Chicago on September 15 to oversee the final touches and attend the unveiling. After seeing his work, he commented to the *Tribune* that it was "not bad!" That was quite an understatement, to say the least. On the eve of the dedication, a dinner and concert were held in his honor, presided over by Mayor Richard J. Daley and his wife, Eleanor; Mr. and Mrs. Wood Prince; and Gaylord Freeman, chairman and CEO of First National Bank, and his wife. Chagall's friend, cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, flew in from London to honor his friend with a musical performance.

At last, the long-awaited day arrived. Above the speaker's stand flew the flags of the United States and France. Mayor Daley, Freeman, and the French consul general spoke. Chagall, in typical French style, kissed Mayor Daley on the cheek, and photographers captured the moment for posterity.

*The Four Seasons* mosaic was unveiled for all to see. In the 1974 documentary about the mosaic, "The Monumental Art of Marc Chagall," the artist said, "In my mind, the four seasons represent human life, both physical and spiritual."

The mosaic, comprised of 250 different colors, portrays six scenes of Chicago in various seasons. It is replete with birds, fish, suns, flowers, street musicians, and other images suggestive of Chagall's childhood in the *shtetl*, as well as images of Chicago's urban skyline and the artist's signature floating figures. The combined effect is that of a rich tapestry, offering the viewer something new to see with each visit.

The mosaic is inspected daily for graffiti—which is, thankfully, rare—and is cleaned annually. Every five years, extensive renovation is done by art preservationists. During the 1990s, a canopy was installed to protect the artwork from the elements.

Just as Chagall represents Jewish art at its best, so does his *The Four Seasons* represent public art at its best. We are fortunate in Chicago to have so much world-class art in our parks, plazas, and other public places for all to enjoy. When the health crisis has passed and shelter-in-place regulations have been lifted, take in this mosaic when you are downtown.

**Karen Kaplan, a CJHS Board of Directors member, is a regular Journal contributor.**

## Peggy Lipschutz: The Intersection of Art and Activism

For seven decades, Peggy Lipschutz was a pivotal figure in Chicago's art world. A year before her death in 2019—and just a few months shy of her 100th birthday—the Noyes Art Center in Evanston, where she had lived for many years, celebrated her life and work with the retrospective show *Evanston Legend: The Art of Peggy Lipschutz*, curated by local documentary filmmaker Jerri Zbiral. This exhibition represented a highlight of a productive career that had included mountings of her works at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Detroit Institute of Arts, among other museums and galleries.



Painting of labor leader Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers

A prolific painter, illustrator, and cartoonist, Lipschutz was perhaps best known for her “chalk talks,” events at schools, union halls, Jewish community centers, and other public venues, where, accompanied by a folk singer—be it Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Vivien Richman, Kristen Lems, or Rebecca Armstrong—she created on-the-spot chalk drawings based on moods evoked by the music she and the audience were hearing. Her chalk talks became so widely, and wildly, popular that in 1968 they landed her and Richman a cameo performance on *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, the nationally syndicated children's public television show.

But Lipschutz did not live for art alone. In many interviews, as well as in Zbiral's 2008 documentary about her, *Never Turning Back: The World of Peggy Lipschutz*, Lipschutz stated unequivocally that politics—and by that, she meant left-wing politics—were as central to her being as her artwork.

Lipschutz, in fact, was a member of the Communist Party USA for many years, and her work, as deeply personal as it was, often depicted her concerns about class struggle, workers' rights, gender and racial equality, and other social and economic justice issues.

The *Chicago Tribune's* Mary Schmich, in her postmortem tribute to Lipschutz, aptly kicked off her column this way:

“I have two loves,” Peggy Lipschutz once said, “art and politics—politics being people, what happens to people.”



Self-portrait of Peggy Lipschutz

Lipschutz's loves did not develop in a vacuum. As Ruth Lipschutz, an Evanston-based clinical social worker and one of the artist's three children, noted, her mother was born in 1918 into a left-leaning household in London, England. The family of Margaret Kraft, as Peggy Lipschutz was known, was Jewish but secular. Her father, Erwin Kraft, who was in the wool business, had rebelled against the traditional religious practices of his forebears and become a publisher of an anti-fascist publication.

When the Kraft family left England for the United States in the middle to late 1930s, Ruth Lipschutz recounted, they followed a circuitous trajectory that took them to Canada, then Cuba, before settling in Brooklyn, New York, around 1938.

“There were quotas on Jews,” Ruth Lipschutz said, of her family's struggles to get into America. The fact that they were not Jews seeking to escape from the antisemitism of Central and Eastern Europe, where Hitler's sphere of influence was then rapidly expanding, was immaterial, she said. “It mattered only that they were Jews.”

Peggy Lipschutz went on to study painting at the prestigious Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and during World War II, she illustrated manuals for the U.S. Navy. After the war, she came to Chicago to work at the Abraham Lincoln School of Social Science, a progressive school geared toward African-American union workers. The



Painting of a tailor's shop

school, subsequently shut down during the McCarthy Era of the 1950s, had been founded by civil rights leader William L. Patterson, an African-American attorney who helped to organize the defense of the Scottsboro Nine, the black teenagers who had been falsely accused of raping two white women in Alabama in the early 1930s.

It was around this time that Lipschutz met her husband, Clarence Lipschutz, a Jewish Chicagoan and a social worker. Clarence went on to become a professor at the University of Illinois' Jane Addams School of Social Work, but in the earlier days of his marriage to Peggy, he was the director of Emerson House, a Hull House-like settlement house in the West Town neighborhood.

It was from a third-floor apartment at Emerson House, where the Lipschutz family settled early on, that Peggy painted, drew cartoons for labor movement publications, and illustrated songbook and record covers. And it was where she initially raised her three children—Ruth; Joan, a nurse; and David, the owner of Evanston's long-running Blind Faith Café—in a marriage that was fraught with discord and tension. The couple separated after many decades.

By the time that Peggy Lipschutz settled in Evanston, she was working regularly as an artist and political activist. An avid practitioner of yoga, to which she attributed her good health and longevity, Lipschutz continued living independently in her own home until her late 90s, when she broke her hip and opted to move into Chicago's Selfhelp Home, a Jewish-run assisted living facility in the city's Uptown neighborhood that had been founded by German Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler's Europe.

As the *Tribune's* Schmich noted in her homage to Lipschutz, and as her daughter Ruth corroborated, the artist rarely slowed down. Many days, she would leave Selfhelp and, with the assistance of her walker, glide down Sheridan Road to the Mariano's grocery store, where she would plant herself for hours, observing the human traffic and making art.

Almost to the very end of her life, daughter Ruth recalled, Peggy Lipschutz "had only two speeds: fast and asleep."

*CJH gratefully acknowledges the assistance of artist, curator, and filmmaker Jerri Zbiral, who furnished all of the images for this article.*



An anti-fascist image created by Lipschutz

## A Reconsideration of the Jewish Left

**F**riends and family agree on this fact about Peggy Lipschutz's identity: Other than the occasional Seder or Chanukah celebration, Jewish practice did not figure prominently in the artist's life. Her art and her politics were her central, defining features.

Yet as Dr. Tony Michels, the George L. Mosse Professor of American Jewish History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as one of this country's leading scholars on the outsize role that Jewish Americans have played in leftist and left-of-center politics in this country, has noted, Peggy Lipschutz was part of a large, predominantly Jewish political movement that was uniquely American. It was born

in the United States with the radicalization and unionization of Yiddish-speaking, immigrant garment workers of the late 1800s and early 1900s and continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of those refugees taking up the political mantle that their forebears had carried.

In a recent interview, Michels, the son of two Chicagoans and the author of *Jewish Radicals: A Documentary History* (NYU Press, 2012) and *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Harvard University Press, 2005), said that the reasons

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## A Reconsideration of the Jewish Left

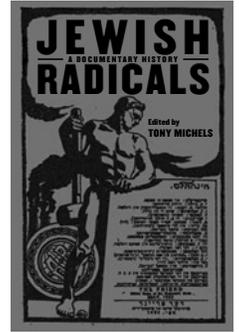
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for the disproportionate number of Jews participating in radical and leftwing organizations, including the Socialist, Communist, Liberal, and American Labor parties, were manifold.

In New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, he said, there were “a lot of Jewish revolutionaries who had come to the United States from the Russian Empire” before World War I. They were instrumental, he said, in “a surge of labor protests [in cities] where socialism had become a force,” successfully inciting those who despaired of living in tenement conditions and working under sweatshop conditions.

“There was also a leadership vacuum in the Jewish community,” Michels said. Rabbis, for a variety of reasons, did not hold the sway over their *landsmen* in the ways that Catholic priests often exerted influence over their Irish, Italian, and Polish parishioners. As a result, “leftwing leading intellectuals,” including the Jewish Leon Trotsky, “filled the void.”

It is also important to remember, Michels said, particularly with the rise of fascist movements in the 1920s and 1930s—not only in Europe, but here in the United States, with the ascendance of isolationist and nationalist voices like Father Coughlin, Henry Ford, and Charles Lindbergh—that Jews had nowhere else to go politically but left. “The American political right in the 30s was antisemitic,” Michels said.



Dr. Tony Michels, of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, is the author of several books about the Jewish left.

## My Mother, the Jailbird

### Dr. IRVING CUTLER

In one year, 1925, my immigrant parents, who lived on Washburne Avenue in the Maxwell Street area, were dealt two devastating blows.

First, my father, while being driven home by a fellow worker, was in a bad automobile accident. He had his leg broken in two places. He was taken to the Cook County Hospital, where the doctors, because they had done a poor job fixing his leg, had to operate a second time. He remained in the hospital—usually in a long room with many other men—for six months before his leg healed.

During the period that my father was incapacitated, my mother, in order to support me and my four siblings, opened a little chicken store in the basement of the building in which we lived. She was a hardworking lady, rising early to flick the chickens. She

did a fairly good business serving the immediate neighborhood, and her best customers were her *landslait*—fellow countrymen—who lived nearby.

One day, the police came into her little chicken store and arrested her. She was confined for two days at the notorious Maxwell Street Jail, situated at 943 West Maxwell Street and later featured in the Hill Street Blues television show, before her *landslait* were able to raise enough money to bail her out.

What was my mother’s crime? She didn’t have a license. As she was a greenhorn, what did she know of a license? She eventually obtained one and continued her little business until my father was able to go back to work.

A few months ago, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) gave a tour of the former jail, which now serves as the UIC Police Station. The building has been cleaned and thoroughly modernized. During the tour, I mentioned that

my mother had once been incarcerated in the jail. The tour guide became very interested and wanted to know the circumstances, which I explained.

After the tour, the guide took me downstairs to the little cell where the women, including my mother, had been confined. It was the same. Nothing had changed, save the graffiti on the stone walls, which had been removed.

The tour guide said that I could find the record of my mother’s confinement at the central police headquarters. I plan to go there one of these days.

**Author, professor emeritus, and longtime CJHS Board member Dr. Irving Cutler recently celebrated his 97th birthday.**



The author’s parents, Frieda and Zelig Cutler, circa 1950. Photo courtesy of Dr. Irving Cutler

## Member Letter

I read Karen Kaplan's story that included mention of a Jewish orphan home ("*Jewish Geography: A Daughter Recalls Her Father's Pathway Through Chicago*," Vol. 44, No. 1, Winter 2020) and wondered whether she or anyone knows something of the Jewish Home for the Friendless in Chicago. I had a cousin whose stepmother left him there around 1910, and I would appreciate knowing more about it. Sybil Mervis, member

CJHS Board member and Immediate Past Board President Dr. Ed Mazur responds: The Home for Jewish Friendless and Working Girls was founded in 1901. The founders were some of the elite women of Chicago's Jewish community, primarily of German and Austrian descent, who were involved in civic improvement movements of the Progressive Era. The group had received a grant of \$25,000—a significant sum at the time—from the estate of clothing manufacturer Bernhard Kuppenheimer. Its first president was Mrs. Emma Mandl.

The Home's mission was to serve as an emergency home for children until they could rejoin their parents or be admitted to the Jewish Home for Orphans. Secondly, it furnished living quarters for girls who had no suitable homes. Between 1901 and 1904, the Home was supported by the Baron Hirsch Women's Club, the Deborah, and other societies and individual members. In 1905, the Associated Jewish Charities, a forerunner of today's Jewish United Fund of Chicago, agreed to assist in its maintenance.

Three houses on Wells Street and Lincoln Avenue that faced Lincoln Park—today, the northern part of Old Town—were rented, remodeled, and opened for occupancy on December 18, 1904. They filled to capacity so quickly that two more adjoining houses were rented. By 1909, new quarters were established at Ellis Avenue and 52nd Street in what is today the Hyde Park neighborhood on Chicago's South Side.

The Home relieved the distress of many a little child, but it did not succeed in its mission so far as "the working girls were concerned." Working girls were a major social, economic, and cultural issue in the rapidly industrializing city of Chicago. These young women did not like to be classified as "friendless," which led to a break in the organization and the establishment of the Ruth Club, incorporated in 1907. At first considered an adjunct to the Home for Jewish Friendless and Working Girls, the Ruth Club later became an independent institution. In addition to its locations in Old Town and Hyde Park, the Home for Jewish Friendless and Working Girls in the first decades of the 20th century had a location near Division Street and Wood Street in the West Town/Humboldt Park area.

### Welcome to New Members of the Society

Drs. Jeffrey and Judy Dach  
Hollywood, FL

Dr. Eric A. Gordon  
Los Angeles, CA

Richard Hokin  
Darien, CT

William Leavitt  
Brooklyn, NY

Karen Schneider  
Bolingbrook, IL

Susan Miller Tweedy  
Chicago, IL

The Hon. George and Susan Van Dusen  
Skokie, IL

Bill and Sherry Weinstein  
Wheeling, IL

Yet another organization formed in this first decade of the 20th century was the Jewish Home Finding Society organized in 1907 and supported by upper-class Jewish men and women, including businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, of Sears, Roebuck fame, and federal judge Julian W. Mack.

The above information was gleaned entirely from *History of the Jews of Chicago* by Hyman L. Meites. The Home is also mentioned briefly in *The Jews of Chicago* by Dr. Irving Cutler, a CJHS Board member.

### The "New Normal"

continued from page 3

There are more questions than answers right now—and one question, it seems, begets two more questions. We do know this, however: The Chicago Jewish Historical Society, more than four decades strong, will continue to serve you and your family and friends, providing vital information about the Jewish experience in and around Chicago. Through our quarterly publication, through e-newsletters, through email correspondence and calls and other technologies, we are carrying on the critical enterprise of noting what was, what is, and what will be.

Thank you for being a part of the CJHS family. May you continue to be healthy and safe as we make our way through, and document, this uncharted terrain.

Look to the rock from which you were born  
הביטו אל-צור חצבתכם



chicago jewish historical society

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### Our History and Mission

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977, and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the United States Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 at an exhibition mounted at the Museum of Science and Industry by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the American Jewish Congress. Forty-three years after its founding, the Society’s unique mission

### ABOUT THE SOCIETY

continues to be the discovery, collection, and dissemination of information about the Jewish experience in the Chicago area through publications, open meetings, tours, and outreach to youth. The Society does not maintain its own archives, but seeks out written, spoken, and photographic records and artifacts and responsibly arranges for their donation to Jewish archives.

**Tribute Cards for Celebrations or Memorials** The card design features the Society’s handsome logo. Inside, our mission statement and space for your personal message. Pack of five cards & envelopes \$18.00. Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at \$5.00 per card, postage included. Mail your order and check to the CJHS, P.O. Box 597004, Chicago, IL 60659-7004. You may also order online at our website: [www.chicagojewishhistory.org](http://www.chicagojewishhistory.org).

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Pay your membership dues online via PayPal or credit card, or use the printable membership application.

Inquiries: [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org)

All issues of our Society periodical from 1977 to the present are digitized and posted on our website in pdf format. Click on the Publications tab and scroll down through the years. There is also an Index to the issues from 1977 to 2012.

**Membership** in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations, and includes:

- A subscription to the Society’s award-winning quarterly journal, *Chicago Jewish History*.
- Free admission to Society public programs. General admission is \$10 per person.
- Discounts on Society tours.
- Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1st are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership	\$1,000
Annual Dues	
Historian	500
Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron	65
Member	40
Student (with I.D.)	10



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