

chicago jewish history

WORLD WAR I AND CHICAGO'S JEWISH COMMUNITIES

BY EDWARD H. MAZUR

2014 marks the hundredth anniversary of the start of World War I. On July 28, 1914, the war broke out. Many historians consider WWI to be the end of one historical epoch and the beginning of another. Chicago Jewry was dramatically affected by the European conflict.

The war provoked a self-awareness for many ethnic groups that resulted in stirrings toward their native countries. At the onset of WWI, Chicago's German Jews rallied overwhelmingly to the side of their ancestral homeland, while Chicago's East European Jews were concerned about the fate of their co-religionists back in their hometowns and *shtetlach* while they anticipated the triumph of a civilized, cultured, and enlightened Germany over the barbaric, reactionary, and autocratic Czarist Russia.

President Woodrow Wilson asked Americans to remain neutral in thought as well as action. However, neutrality could not be promulgated by proclamation. Until 1917, neutrality in action was possible, but neutrality in thought was at best a pipe dream. In the early years of WWI, Chicago's Jewish communities were pro-Central Powers (Germany and Austria), and if not anti-Allied Powers (England, France, and Russia), they were, at best, "interested neutrals," as were many peoples of German, Irish, Austrian, Swedish, Polish, and Russian (mostly Jewish) descent who composed approximately sixty-five percent of the city's population.

Both the German Jewish and East European Jewish communities agreed that a victory for the Central Powers would bring enlightenment, emancipation, and equality to Jewish areas suffering under the yoke of Russian autocracy. Chicago's Yiddish language *Daily Jewish Courier* newspaper editorialized in October 1915: "The Jews support Germany because Russia bathes in Jewish blood...who will dare say that it is a crime for Jews to hate their torturers, their oppressors and murderers?...It is natural that Jewish sympathies should be on the side of learning and not of ignorance."

German propagandists and leading German Jewish figures exploited these feelings. Louis W. Hammerling, director of the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers, an advertising agency for the foreign language press, reached out to Jewish religious leaders. By the summer of 1915, his publication, *The American Leader*, was sent to more than 600 American rabbis. The primary message in each issue was that Germany and Austria would deliver the Jews from Russian barbarism.

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Young Richard Tucker.

Richard Tucker Music Foundation.

Richard Tucker in Chicago

BY SARAH G. GOLDEN

The renowned operatic tenor Richard Tucker (1913-1975) began his professional career in Chicago and maintained close ties with Chicago's Jewish community throughout his lifetime. Born in Brooklyn to Romanian-Jewish parents Israel (Sam) and Fannie Ticker, young Richard Tucker, then Rubin "Ruby" Ticker, sang alto in the choir at the Tifereth Israel synagogue from age six until age thirteen.

Under the instruction of Cantor Samuel Weisser, Tucker developed a passion for singing. By the latter half of the 1930s, Tucker was performing at bar mitzvahs and weddings while earning a living as a fur salesman.

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President's Column



Edward H. Mazur.

AS WE WELCOME THE YEAR 5775, we are pleased to note that our Society has increased its membership, aided by our online dues payment procedure via our website—easy to access and to use. Our open meetings had increased attendance, and our bus tours to the Jewish West Side, South Shore, and Southwest Michigan/Indiana attracted more than one hundred and twenty participants. These activities and *Chicago Jewish History* offered new information and insights, even to our most knowledgeable members, friends,

and the public. *Todah rabah* to Program Chair Jerry Levin and Tour Chair Leah Axelrod for their planning and organization, and to Irv Cutler, Herb Eiseman, and Mark Mandle for their expert guiding. The Society was fortunate to have Sarah Golden, an intelligent and talented Lawrence University student, as a summer intern. Sarah researched and wrote the excellent article “Richard Tucker in Chicago” that appears in this issue of *CJH*. We profited greatly by having Sarah as a colleague and wish her success in her studies.

Although my primary emphasis as an historian is American urban, political, and ethnic history, I have a keen interest in World War I and its meanings for Jews. (See the feature article beginning on the front page; my family's involvement will be told in a future article).

From the beginning, American Jews were involved in the humanitarian side of the conflict. They aided the Jews in Ottoman-controlled Palestine and aided the destitute and brutalized in war-torn Europe. Once the USA entered the war, more than 200,000 Jews put on uniforms. For the first time, Jews fought in significant numbers for the American armed forces, and their religious needs were considered. WWI institutionalized the Jewish chaplaincy.

Post-WWI, the financial and institutional centers of world Jewry shifted to the USA. American Jews emerged from WWI as major philanthropists. The most important legacy of the war was the uniting of the many strands of Jewry to a single issue—helping their *landsleyt* in Europe and Palestine. This was exemplified by the creation of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The establishment of the “Joint” also brought about the final period of German Jewish dominance of communal institutions in the USA. During the war, the German Jewish elite shared leadership and responsibility with Eastern Europeans and even socialists. By the end of 1915, the “Joint” had raised one-and-a-half-million dollars (about thirty-five-million in 2014 dollars) and distributed nine hundred tons of food and medicine. Raising money and sending aid to their hometowns was a formative experience for many American Jews.

On behalf of the officers and board of directors of the CJHS, I wish you, each and every one of our members, and your families and friends, *Shanah tovah*—A Happy, Healthy, and Meaningful 5775. ❖



chicago jewish historical society

2014

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Chicago Jewish History

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Send all submissions to Editor: electronically to e-mail address or via standard mail to street address. If manuscript is sent via standard mail, enclose SASE.

Reminder — CJHS Fall 2014 Open Meetings — Save the Dates!

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

2:00 p.m.

Temple Beth Israel

3601 West Dempster Street, Skokie

Nathan Harpaz

Director, Koehnline Museum of Art,
Oakton Community College

“Chicago 1937—A Gift to Biro-Bidjan: From Despair to New Hope”

In 1937, a group of Chicago area artists created a portfolio of woodcuts as a fundraising project for Biro-Bidjan, the Jewish autonomous region in the USSR. These 14 artists were also active in the WPA.

The woodcuts variously reflect the past and the present, oppression and optimism.

A PowerPoint presentation based on original research by Dr. Harpaz.



Mitchell Siporin (1910-1976), Worker's Family, from the portfolio *A Gift to Biro-Bidjan, 1937*. Woodcut, 8 x 9 5/8 in. Collection of Oakton Community College, Gift of Karol Verson.

Each program followed is by a social hour with kosher pastries.
General admission \$10 per person. CJHS members
and members of the host congregations Free.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19

2:00 p.m.

Kehilath Chovevei Zion

9220 North Crawford Avenue, Skokie

Peri Arnold

Professor, Department of Political Science,
University of Notre Dame

“What Bonded North Lawndale’s Jews to the Democratic Machine? Exploring Jacob Arvey’s Leadership in Chicago’s 24th Ward”

Professor Arnold grew up in North Lawndale, hearing tales of the impregnable Democratic Party machine. His lecture reports his recent research on Jake Arvey, inspired to an extent by those tales.



**Former President Harry S. Truman with
Jacob and Edith Arvey.** November 28, 1953.
Covenant Club photo by Lawrence-Phillips Studios.
Courtesy of Spertus Institute.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7

2:00 p.m.

Beth Hillel Congregation B'nai Emunah
3220 Big Tree Lane, Wilmette

“The CJHS Salutes Jewish War Veterans”

Details to come.

CALLING ALL AUTHORS: LIST YOUR PUBLICATIONS IN THE FALL 2014 ISSUE OF CJH

If you are an active member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society (dues paid through 2014), we will list your book, film, or music in the upcoming Fall issue of our quarterly. Let us know: title, publisher, number of pages and illustrations, (running time for films and music), and where available. These days, publications come in a variety of formats at various prices from online vendors and bookstores, so we will not list prices.

Copy deadline is October 20. *If your work was listed last year, rest assured it will be listed again in Fall 2014.*

Send details via e-mail to info@chicagojewishhistory.org or via standard mail to

Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803, Chicago, IL 60605-1901

Richard Tucker in Chicago

Continued from front page

Tucker married Sara Perelmuth on February 11, 1936. His union with Sara, the younger sister of rising opera star, Jacob Perelmuth (Jan Peerce) served as an incredibly useful connection in the early days of his singing career. Sara's mother unabashedly secured Tucker's radio debut, unbeknownst to him, on New York's WEVD Jewish Daily Forward Hour in July 1937 by boasting that she was the mother of Jan Peerce. Having tasted fame, Tucker, like Jan Peerce, chose to Americanize his name. Although he had made the transition from Ticker to Tucker in his youth, he elected to change his first name from Rubin to Richard in order to further his operatic career.

While serving as cantor for Temple Adath Israel in the Bronx, Tucker began taking voice lessons with opera legend Paul Althouse. In December 1942, Tucker auditioned for the Metropolitan Opera in their program, Auditions of the Air, against the advice of Althouse. Much to his dismay, Tucker was eliminated from the competition. By August 1943, Tucker had accepted a position as cantor at the Brooklyn Jewish Center.

The following February, he appeared as Rodolfo in *La Boheme* on the WGN radio program, Chicago Theater of the Air. Broadcast nationally, this was a tremendous opportunity for Tucker. In large part due to his increased visibility, Tucker was asked to audition once again for the Metropolitan Opera in Spring 1944. Tucker's efforts proved a success and he signed a contract immediately. Despite his busy schedule with the Met, Tucker continued to make appearances on the Chicago Theater of the Air program for several years. Larry Wolters of the *Chicago Tribune* obtained a statement from Richard Tucker in 1953 regarding his appreciation for the program:

"I owe WGN so much I could never repay the debt of gratitude. The Chicago Theater of the Air opened the door to me to the wide world of music—particularly opera. They gave me my big opportunity."

As Tucker's career blossomed on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House, he began touring, within the United States and abroad. From the late 1940s through the early 1970s, Tucker made many appearances at Chicago's Orchestra Hall, the Civic Opera House, and Ravinia.

While in town, Tucker began to make connections within the Chicago Jewish community. In November 1946, Tucker appeared at the Anshe Emet Forum along with violinist Mischa Elman, writer Maurice Samuel, and Dr. James G. Heller. In May 1947, Tucker performed with the Jewish People's Choral Society in their presentation of Handel's *Judas Maccabeas* at Orchestra Hall. He returned in March 1949 to perform with baritone Moishe Oysher and violinist David Moll at the Civic Opera House in honor of Joseph Hyman's 30th anniversary as a cantor's representative and manager.

In September 1949, Richard Tucker made his first of several appearances as visiting cantor for the High Holiday services at the Austro-Galician Congregation, located at 1357 North California Avenue.

Adrienne Stern, daughter of Louis "Lou" Ehrlich who served as vice president of the Austro-Galician Congregation, has fond memories of Tucker and describes him as a "charming" and "delightful" man. When Richard Tucker visited the congregation, people "flocked" to hear him sing.

Stern explains that the congregation had originally been Orthodox, with the women seated upstairs in the balcony, but when Richard Tucker began to appear as cantor, the women "rebelled." They wanted to sit on the ground level among the men. Both men and women were paying twenty-five dollars for a ticket, and the women felt that it would not be fair for them to be seated in a separate section. It was also around this time that the prayer books, *siddurim*, transitioned to include both Hebrew and English. Though Rabbi Moses Eichenstein was always very traditional, he learned to accommodate to the needs of the congregation.



Signing the cantorial contract with Richard Tucker, Austro-Galician Congregation, 1952. From left: Lou Ehrlich, Sam Wolf, Isadore Wald, Rabbi Eichenstein, Cantor Tucker, Isador Schey, and behind him, Lou Gleicher.



On the bima at the Austro-Galician Congregation, 1952. Far left: Vice President Lou Ehrlich; center, Cantor Richard Tucker and Rabbi Moses Eichenstein. Far right: President Eddie Shedloff. Photos on these pages courtesy of Adrienne Stern.

“Little by little,” Stern explains, the congregation became “more modernized” and it “started when Richard Tucker became our cantor.”

Over the years, Lou and Rose Ehrlich and their family had the pleasure of developing a close relationship with the Tuckers. Both the Ehrlich and Tucker families kept kosher, which made the Ehrlichs’ home a convenient place to have a meal. A Tucker visit to the Ehrlichs’ apartment also allowed their neighbors to enjoy the “magnificent” voice of Richard Tucker. Stern describes one such occasion:

“We lived in an apartment building that was side by side with another apartment building. Our neighbors asked my mother to leave the windows open so that when he made *Kiddush* they could hear it. He and his wife, Sara, and the three boys—he had three sons—they all came, they had dinner at our home, and everybody was able to hear him make *Kiddush*. It was really a delight.”

Stern remembers how “down to earth” the Tucker family was, in spite of Richard Tucker’s tremendous success, and praises them as “lovely people.” Richard Tucker and Lou Ehrlich “called each other on the holidays—even after he wasn’t our cantor any longer.”

The Tucker and Ehrlich families “just seemed to hit it off” and “remained friends through the years.” The Tucker family’s personal relationship with the Ehrlichs speaks volumes of their overall kindness and normalcy in the face of fame. “They were just plain folk,” she explains. Although Tucker did not return as cantor for



Rose Ehrlich, c. 1952.

the Austro-Galician Congregation after 1953, he maintained close ties with the Ehrlichs and Rabbi Moses Eichenstein, even returning to Chicago for a special concert in honor of the rabbi’s retirement. When Lou Ehrlich passed away in March 1974, Sara Tucker sent Mrs. Ehrlich “a beautiful handwritten letter.”

Following a concert at Orchestra Hall in April 1955, Claudia Cassidy writes in the *Chicago Tribune* that Tucker “used to sound like a cantor someone had coaxed into the opera house,” but now, he “sounds like a tenor in pursuit of Rubini, the idolized Italian tenor of the early 19th century.”

Tucker explains that he “was the first cantor to make this transition,” and as historian Jeffrey Shandler writes, Tucker made this transition while maintaining his “visibility as a Jewish performer” and “readily acknowledging in interviews the role that Jewishness played in his professional as well as personal life.”

Tucker continued to perform in Chicago throughout the 1950s, appearing at Soldier Field at the 27th Annual Chicagoland Music Festival in August 1956, as well as in Lyric Opera productions of *La Gioconda* in November 1957 and *Simon Boccanegra* in October 1959

Continued on page 6

Richard Tucker *Continued from page 5*

at the Civic Opera House. He also remained dedicated to the Jewish community, participating in a concert at the Civic Opera House in honor of “the 12th anniversary of the State of Israel” in May 1960 and serving as cantor during the High Holy Days from 1962-1974 for the Park Synagogue, Shaare Shalom, in the Grand Ballroom of the Sheraton-Chicago hotel.

Established in 1961, the Park Synagogue, led by Rabbi Alvin I. Kleinerman, served “Jews of all traditions of Judaism.” In its 1974 newspaper ad for High Holy Days services, the congregation’s permanent sanctuary is listed as the 16th floor, 505 North Michigan Avenue.

Tucker appeared with the Lyric Opera many times during the first half of the 1960s in roles such as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* in 1960, the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* in 1962, the title role in *Don Carlo* in 1964, and Mario Cavaradossi in *Tosca* in 1964.

In June 1965, Tucker was a soloist during the opening week of Ravinia’s Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts. In December 1968, he performed at the Auditorium Theater as part of a recital benefitting the Hillel Torah North Suburban Day school in Skokie.

He also performed with Robert Merrill at the Auditorium Theater in May 1973, inspiring Linda Winer of the *Chicago Tribune* to proclaim that, in the midst of the global energy crisis, America “can always

hitch itself up to the lungs of Richard Tucker and Robert Merrill.”

Tucker’s concert with Martina Arroyo at Ravinia in August 1974 served as his last operatic performance in Chicago, with his appearance as cantor for the High Holy Day services of the Park Synagogue in September 1974 marking his final Chicago appearance.

Richard Tucker’s untimely death on January 8, 1975 was a profoundly sad occasion for anyone who ever had the opportunity to hear him perform, whether on the radio, at the Metropolitan Opera House, at the Civic Opera House in Chicago, or as cantor. Chicago’s Rabbi Alvin I. Kleinerman of the Park Synagogue, along with two rabbis from Long Island—the Tucker family’s longtime home—and Terence Cardinal Cooke, Archbishop of New York, participated in Richard Tucker’s funeral service, which was held on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House on January 10, 1975.

Tucker was a complex man who was confident in his Jewishness and “would neither hide his faith nor allow himself to believe that the public would hold his faith against him” writes Leonard Leff. His lifelong dedication and loyalty to the Chicago Jewish community has left a lasting impact on those lucky enough to have heard him perform, particularly as cantor. For Adrienne Stern and other Chicago residents who developed a personal relationship with Tucker, his impact is even further magnified. “It was a pleasure to have known him,” says Adrienne Stern. ❖

SARAH G. GOLDEN, originally from Glenview, Illinois, is currently a senior at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, pursuing a major in history and a minor in art history. A large portion of her academic research has focused on the history of the Jewish Labor Bund, as well as women’s agency in the changing world of the shtetl.

From January to June 2014, she worked as an intern at the History Museum at the Castle in Appleton, helping to research and compile the exhibit entitled “A Stone of Hope: Black Experiences in the Fox Cities.”

Sarah is also very passionate about music and has been a violinist since the age of seven. She was a member of the New Trier High School Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, as well as the Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra.



The Austro-Galician Congregation was the first synagogue in Humboldt Park, built in 1911. It closed in 1957 when the congregation merged with Beth Israel of Peterson Park. Today it is part of Lincolnwood Jewish Congregation A.G. Beth Israel, 7117 North Crawford Avenue, Lincolnwood. The Humboldt Park building is now home to the Upper Room Pentacostal Church. *Corrected from the print edition which stated that the building was demolished.*

The Austro-Galician Congregation.

1357 North California Avenue, Chicago.

From the book *Images of America: Chicago’s Forgotten Synagogues*, by Robert A. Packer.

חזן ריטשארד טאקער
AUSTRO-GALITZIAN CONGREGATION
 MOSES EICHENSTEIN, Rabbi
 1357 N. California Phone Humbolt 6-9232

PRESENTS
RICHARD TUCKER with HERMAN TAPO & his Choir

Sept. 13—סליחות Sept. 20-21—ראש השנה
 Sept. 28—כ"ט תשרי Sept. 29—יום כיפור

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(In Yiddish) "Hazzan Richard Tucker. Slichos, Rosh Hashanah, Kol Nidre, Yom Kippur." Ad in *The Sentinel*, 1952.

CJHS President Ed Mazur recalls: "My zayde, Jacob Kleinbort, my uncle Norman Kleinbort, and my father, David Mazur, all davened at a tiny synagogue, Meor Chayim, on Rockwell Street, just south of Augusta Boulevard. On the High Holy Days when Richard Tucker was the cantor at the Austro-Galician Congregation, they would absent themselves from services, walk about six blocks, and stand on the sidewalk outside the A-G shul, and listen for a while. My zayde would exclaim, in Yiddish: "That's a beautiful singer! Like our cantor in Bialystok." Then the three of them would return to Meor Chayim. They did not attend the A-G synagogue because my zayde, who was the shul gabbai, liked to be a big fish in a small pond."

Do you have memories of Richard Tucker chanting High Holy Days services at the Austro-Galician Congregation, or, more likely, in the Grand Ballroom of the Sheraton Chicago Hotel (now the Intercontinental) under the auspices of Park Synagogue? Please send your recollections to our office in an e-mail message to info@chicagojewishhistory.org or via standard mail to the CJHS, 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803, Chicago IL 60605-1901.

Visit the website of the Richard Tucker Music Foundation
"Honoring the legacy of America's greatest tenor through support of young American opera singers." richardtucker.org

"Live from Lincoln Center: Richard Tucker at 100: An Opera Celebration" features footage from the November 17, 2013 gala at which past winners of Richard Tucker Foundation awards and many other great opera stars performed.

It is available for streaming at pbs.org.

A treasure-trove of Richard Tucker's concert and television performances can be viewed on **YouTube**. As for his recorded music, in addition to vintage albums of operas, songs, and cantorials, (precious vinyl LPs and quality CDs), individual digital selections can now be purchased online and downloaded.

Welcome, New Members of the CJHS

Vera Chatz
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Miriam Joyce
Chicago, IL

Paula Katz
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Leo J. & Roslyn L. Krupp
Family Foundation
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Marvin & Laurel Letwat
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Heidi Levin
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David & Judy Rosen
Long Grove, IL

Adrienne Singer
Chicago, IL

It is through the generosity of our members that the Society is able to accomplish its goals. Thanks to all of our members, new and continuing.

WORLD WAR I *Continued from front page*

Pronouncements came from German and Austrian Jewish notables, including the scientist, philosopher, and Zionist Max Nordau; economist Werner Sombart; philologist Ludwig Geiger; and founder of the neo-Kantian school of philosophy, Hermann Cohen. All proclaimed Germany as the hope of minority peoples against Russia. Cohen, writing in Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch's newspaper, *The Reform Advocate*, in December 1914, claimed that "all Occidental Jews are both intellectually and psychologically intimately bound up with Germany."

Chicago's Jewish newspapers and large segments of the Jewish communities cheered reports of Russian military defeats. Following a series of Central Powers' triumphs in Galicia, *The Courier* editorialized that it hoped "the liberation of Galicia can also become the beginning of the liberation of Russia."

Many Jewish leaders, secular and religious, realized that Allied control of the seas effectively isolated the Central Powers, thereby threatening starvation for their co-religionists. This was a major factor in Chicago's Jewish communities' support of the United States government's protests of British interception of American ships carrying foodstuffs, and even weaponry, considered to be contraband. By February 1915, the Central Powers were beginning to literally "starve" under the Allied blockades, and they responded by establishing a submarine zone around the British Isles.

On May 7, 1915, German submarines sank the British passenger liner *Lusitania*, with a loss of 1,198 lives, among them 128 American citizens. (In addition to its human cargo, the ship carried 4,200 cases of small-arms cartridges and other war materiel.) Chicago's Jewish newspapers, including the *Courier*, *Forward*, and *Sentinel*, editorialized that the sinking "was not a product of Germany's criminality alone, but of the criminality of war in general." They urged President Wilson to pay heed to "the psychology of the German nation which sees hundreds of thousands of its children dying in the struggle."

By August 1915, with the sinking of more liners, there was a noticeable shift in the opinions of Chicago Jewry. The concern for starvation was beginning to take a secondary position to outrage at the unrelenting torpedoing and "spiteful, senseless, and wasteful destructions of life." The more conservative segments of the American Yiddish press, a majority of rabbis, and B'nai B'rith and B'rith Abraham (the two most significant Jewish fraternal orders), urged American

preparedness. In April 1916, *The Courier* urged all Jews who "love this great free nation to forget all other interests and sympathies in relation to other lands, and to think first of America."

1916 was a Presidential election year. Chicago Jewry found much to admire in the reelection campaign of Woodrow Wilson. The USA was not at war, Wilson had vetoed the Burnett Immigration Bill that would have discriminated against all immigrants, and not only Jews. Louis Brandeis had been appointed to the nation's highest tribunal, the Supreme Court, and had encouraged the pro-Zionist Jewish Congress Movement. Chicago Jewry, despite their concerns about their European co-religionists and animosity toward Czarist Russia, abhorred the thought of direct involvement in the European conflict.

Some members of the traditionally Republican Party oriented German Jewish community, such as the civic leader Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, broke from their usual political allegiance to support Wilson, in hope of maintaining United States neutrality. Solomon stated: "I believed him to be the man who could avert the danger of our entering the continental conflagration." Julius Rosenwald and Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch did not support Wilson, but the German Jewish vote for him increased dramatically. On election day in November 1916, the Jewish vote in Chicago for the Democrat Woodrow Wilson doubled from less than twenty-six percent to almost fifty-three percent.

In the East European Jewish immigrant neighborhoods of Maxwell Street and Lawndale on the West Side and in Humboldt Park and Wicker Park on the Northwest Side, lines of voters waiting to cast their ballots extended for almost a block in some precincts. Observers noted that all the election workers at the polls, except the Socialists, were wearing Wilson badges.

By January 31, 1917, the combination of military defeats and increasingly severe deprivations experienced by non-combatants forced the Central Powers to acts of desperation, including a campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare. Between February and April 1917, German submarines sank four unarmed American merchant ships without warning, inflicting heavy losses of life. On April 2, 1917, President Wilson delivered a war message to both houses of Congress.

On April 6, both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives voted to approve the entrance of the United States into the war.

The U.S. Declaration of War followed on the heels of Russia's March Revolution. Following the abdication of Czar Nicholas II, Chicago's Jews took to the streets—

Halsted Street and 12th Street and Division Street—marching, dancing, and proclaiming a new day in Russia. It was the Allies who were now regarded as the harbingers of democracy who would provide for universal Jewish emancipation and the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

There did remain a minority of Jewish socialists, anarchists, and radicals who continued to view the American participation in the war as an imperialist machination meant to curb the desired international socialist revolution. But *The Forward* editorialized that “there is nothing more to discuss. It is now clear where sympathies should be. Feelings dictate, reason dictates, that a victory for present-day Germany would be a threat to the Russian Revolution and dangerous for democracy in Europe.”

The issuing of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, with its promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, completed the total reversal of non-radical Jewish backing from the Central Powers to the Allies. During the 1914-1917 period, American Zionist organizational membership increased from an estimated twenty thousand to one hundred fifty thousand—drawing its support primarily from the growing East European Jewish middle class.

Generally, the upper class Jews in Chicago, primarily of German and Austrian heritage, their clergy and communal leaders, were anti-Zionist. *The Courier* proclaimed that “Wherever you find a Jew who openly opposes Zionism, you may be sure that there is a Jew who does not support America...but rather sympathizes with German junkerism and employs his attacks upon

Zionism as an indirect means of attacking the principles for which America is now fighting. They cannot openly oppose America...so they come out against the Allied plan to make a homeland for the Jewish people in the land they liberated from the dreaded Turk.”

Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Sinai Temple, the most prominent non-Orthodox Chicago Jewish civic leader, was the most notable opponent of American and Zionist nationalism. Between 1914-1917, Hirsch moved from a strong pro-Central Powers position to one of active pacifism. Even after the USA entered the war, he continued to advocate pacifism. Not until the summer of 1918, did he publicly accept the necessity of American involvement on the side of the Allies.

1918 On January 8, President Wilson delivered his famous Fourteen Points address to the U.S. Congress. He declared that the nationalities under Turkish rule should be offered an “absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.” Many Jews in Chicago and throughout the United States interpreted this as a blanket endorsement of the Zionist claim for a homeland in Palestine. However, it was not until August 31, 1918, nine months after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, and on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, that Wilson publicly endorsed the Declaration. *The Courier* initially editorialized that the peace negotiations and the resulting treaty would result in a “victory for this county and for the Jewish people.” The paper described the conflict as not only America’s war but also the Jewish people’s war. It urged Chicago Jewry to invest in Liberty Bonds and urged: “And you, Mr. Jacob, who did not give any son to America, how much have you invested in Liberty Bonds?...Pawn your pillows and buy Liberty Bonds.”

The war ended on November 11, 1918. Gradually, Chicago Jewry grew disenchanted with the expectations for a lasting peace, protection for minority rights in Europe, and a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Jews were deeply disappointed that European areas inhabited by Jews were not directly represented in the League of Nations proposals. By August 1919, after a study of the League’s proposals, the local Jewish press and numerous community leaders came to believe that the League and especially Article XIV guaranteeing the territorial integrity of all its members, was “definitely a danger to all the Jews in Eastern Europe.”

The Chicago Jewish response to WWI can be summarized as moving from pro-Central Powers, to balanced neutrality, to strong support for the Allies, to post-war disillusionment with the peace pacts and the League of Nations proposals. ❖



**“AT THE END OF THE GREAT WAR
MARCHING DOWN STATE STREET”**

History of the Jews of Chicago, Edited by H.L. Meites, 1924.

Report: CJHS Open Meeting Sunday, June 29

ALAN LESSACK: "B'NAI B'RITH, THE SECULAR SYNAGOGUE"

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society open meeting on Sunday afternoon, June 29, was held at Temple Beth Israel, 3601 West Dempster Street, Skokie. The guest speaker was Alan Lessack. As is our custom, the lecture was followed by a social hour with kosher pastries, coffee, and tea, affording our members and guests a chance to reconnect with old friends and make new ones in a congenial gathering of historians and history buffs.



Alan Lessack.

he was promoted to Vice President of Field Operations for the United States. In that capacity, he managed the staff in all the field offices and worked closely with the volunteers. He retired from B'nai B'rith in 2008 and continues to work with the organization as a consultant.

The Founders of B'nai B'rith

Mr. Lessack described the founders as twelve German Jewish immigrants who had been in the United States for less than ten years when, in 1843, they gathered in Sinsheimer's Café on New York's Lower East Side. They were all part of the Reform movement. Some belonged to the Masons or the Odd Fellows, but they felt like outsiders. They also felt unwelcome in the well-established, hundred-year-old Sephardic community.

They wanted to create a service organization to provide help not offered by the synagogue. Thus, B'nai B'rith (sons of the covenant) was born—the first secular Jewish organization in the United States, with the menorah as its symbol.

The original members' first concrete action was creating an

Alan Lessack came to the Chicago area in 1986 when he was hired by B'nai B'rith International to serve as District Director for eight states in the Midwest.

Ten years later,

insurance policy that awarded members' widows thirty dollars toward funeral expenses and a stipend of one dollar a week for the rest of their lives. Each child would also receive a stipend and, for male children, assurance that they would be taught a trade.

Some Reform rabbis of the day were members of B'nai B'rith. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati was president of District 2.

Early members held on to their German cultural roots. German-born Julius Bien, a lithographer who published many geographic and scientific works, served two terms as president, 1854-57, and again 1868-1900. He designed the B'nai B'rith charter. Mr. Lessack displayed a copy of the charter Bien designed for Chicago's Ramah Lodge. (The original burned in the Great Fire of 1871). "It doesn't look very Jewish," he commented.

1857: Chicago's Ramah Lodge

An early member of the first Chicago lodge, Ramah No. 33, was civic leader Henry Greenebaum, who decried the divisions in the Jewish community and admired the B'nai B'rith motto, "Benevolence, Brotherly Love, and Harmony." "Doctrinal or dogmatic discussions" were banished from meetings.

Although the organization took no official position on slavery and the Civil War, one-hundred-and-four members of Ramah enlisted in the Union Army (they were known as the "Concordia Guards"), and the lodge donated one hundred dollars to each volunteer.

Chicagoans and Midwesterners began to take the lead. Adolf Kraus, a law partner of Samuel Alschuler, served as president of B'nai B'rith



**Adolf Kraus.
(1850-1928)**

International for twenty years (1905-1925). Sigmund Livingston was the founder and chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Henry Monsky of

Omaha was the first Zionist president (1938-1947); Chicago's Philip Klutznick led from 1953 to 1959; Alan Jacobs of Lake Forest, Illinois, is the current president.

Mr. Lessack described many examples of humanitarian aid and service that B'nai B'rith lodges and chapters have given in times of war and natural disaster. Today, Israel is of major interest, as are concerns for Jewish communities worldwide. B'nai B'rith has built five thousand units of senior housing.

B'nai B'rith's "children"—ADL, BBYO, and Hillel—were well-nurtured and have gone their own way, as happens in any family. ❖

Present at Alan Lessack's talk were B'nai B'rith Regional President Philip Zagon, Past Regional President Robert Kaufman, and Immediate Past Regional President Shel Marcus. Thanks to Regional Staff Member Cary Wolovick for coordinating the event with CJHS Vice President and Program Chairman Jerold Levin.

Reprinted from *Society News* (predecessor of *Chicago Jewish History*), September 1983

**CHICAGOANS PLAYED INSTRUMENTAL PART IN THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF HILLEL FOUNDATIONS ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES
An International Movement Began Under Local Leadership in 1923**

BY BENJAMIN M. KAHN

Six decades in the perspective of 4,000 years of Jewish history seems but a fleeting moment in time. Yet in 60 years the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations have grown from a mere vision in 1923 to an international movement on over 400 campuses in 13 countries of the world, from a budget of a few thousand dollars to one of over \$12 million.

How and why did this phenomenon occur? For several reasons: the astronomical increase in the number of Jewish students on campus; the general acceptance of the Jewish experience by both the non-Jewish and Jewish communities; the felicitous circumstances of B'nai B'rith adoption of the Hillel program; and the right community leadership.

In all these the Chicago Jewish community has played a significant part....

Originated at the University of Illinois

American B'nai B'rith, in 1923 as it is now, was divided into districts, and Chicago was the center of District 6. Chicago was then, as it is now, the major Jewish community in the midwest, with distinguished Jewish personalities at its helm....

In 1923 there were 300 Jewish students at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Although statistics on their home towns are not available, it can be assumed, on the basis of later knowledge, that at least half came from Chicago. There was a modicum of Jewish activity on the campus: a small Menorah group existed, with occasional lectures, and a small Zionist group. The bulk of Jewish students had few Jewish contacts and little basic knowledge of Judaism. Sinai Temple, the only congregation in the community, was served on a bi-weekly basis by Benjamin Frankel, then a student at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

When he was ordained in June 1923, he decided to continue as rabbi of the congregation on a half-time basis, so long as he could function also as a rabbi for the students—the seeds for a Hillel Foundation. The groundwork had been laid earlier by three men of Champaign: Isaac Kuhn, a local businessman deeply devoted to the students [2014:

“Clothing for men of all sizes. At Jos. Kuhn & Co. we are proud to be serving Champaign/Urbana IL and the surrounding area for over a century”]; Simon Litman, the outstanding Jewish professor [pioneer marketing scholar]; and Edward Chauncey Baldwin, professor of [English] literature, and a Congregationalist teacher of Bible.

The three had for some years tried to interest others in support of programs for the students. They made contact in person and by letter with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, with Benjamin Samuels of B'nai B'rith in Chicago, and with Julius Rosenwald. Baldwin, in April of 1923, appeared before the Chicago Board of Rabbis to plead for their support for student activity at [the University of] Illinois

Rabbi Mann Secures the First Funds

It was Ben Frankel, however, who turned the tide in 1923. When his appeal to the UAHC to take over the newly named Hillel Foundation failed, he went to Rabbi Louis L. Mann, who had just come to Chicago as the rabbi of Chicago Sinai Congregation. Rabbi Mann invited a dozen men to luncheon at the Covenant Club, ten of whom were members of Sinai. They included A.G. Becker, Samuel Deutsch, a Mr. Greenebaum,* Julius Rosenwald, Charles Shaffner, Harry Stern and Leo Strauss. Before the luncheon was over, \$10,000 was raised for the Hillel Foundation's first year.

Rabbi Mann then arranged, through his father-in-law, Alfred M. Cohen of Ohio, to meet Adolph Kraus, president of the “Independent Order of B'nai Brith,” in Chicago (Cohen succeeded Kraus as president.) The executive committee of B'nai B'rith was to meet at the Standard Club on April 28, 1924, and Frankel was invited to address the group, which included Chicago's Leon L. Lewis, secretary, and Benjamin Samuels, representing District 6. Sigmund Livingston of Bloomington, already head of the new Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, also attended.

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HILLEL *Continued from page 11*

B'nai B'rith Takes Over in 1924

Frankel's address so stirred the committee that it accepted sponsorship of the Hillel Foundation, contingent upon available funds to be determined by the B'nai B'rith finance committee. The finance committee reported favorably and recommended a first-year allocation of \$25,000, to include money for a second Foundation at the University of Wisconsin. Hillel was off and running.



Rabbi Benjamin Frankel.
(1897-1927).

Hillel: The Road to Renaissance 1923-2002.

Henry Monsky of Omaha reported the action of the Executive Committee to the District 6 Convention (May 28 to June 1, 1924) and was heard by the 49 accredited delegates from the three Chicago lodges: Ramah, Adolph Kraus, and David Fish. Mr. Kraus then established a B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation Commission, which met on June 19, 1924, at the Covenant Club. Kraus became chairman; Rabbi Mann, vice chairman; Leon Lewis, secretary. The membership included Chicagoans James Becker, Judge Harry M. Fisher, Julius H. Meyer, Israel Shrimski, as well as Isaac Kuhn, Sigmund Livingston, and Rabbi Frankel.

New Foundations Follow Quickly

Within three years, new Foundations were established at Ohio State and the University of Michigan, and applications for units were coming in from all over the country.

When Rabbi Frankel died in 1927 at the early age of 30, he was succeeded as Hillel director at the

University of Illinois by Dr. Abram Sachar. When Rabbi Mann, who served as acting director from 1928 to 1933, resigned that part-time volunteer post, Dr. Sachar became Hillel's national director.

Chicago Continued to Provide Leadership

The City of Chicago continued as the nerve center of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations. For some time it was the location of the National Hillel office. Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Anshe Emet Synagogue; Dr. Philip Seman, director of the Jewish People's Institute; and Rabbi Mann were the Hillel Commission's personnel committee for many years.

Foundations were established at Northwestern University (1933) and the University of Chicago (1939), where the legendary Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky held sway from 1939 until his death in 1962. The Chicago Circle Foundation was founded in 1965. One of the Hillel Commission's outstanding chairmen from 1963 until 1969 was the distinguished Dr. Louis Gottschalk, professor of history at the University of Chicago.

Other Local Campuses Benefit

Most recently, the local B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations and the College Age Youth Services (CAYS) of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago merged, making possible services to an additional dozen campuses.

For the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, Chicago has indeed been a "wonderful town." Sixty years ago it helped give birth to Hillel. It has since nourished it and given it care and love. It will surely continue doing so in the critical times and the challenges we now face. ❖

** "a Mr. Greenebaum" at Rabbi Mann's Covenant Club fundraising luncheon may have been Moses E. Greenebaum, president of Greenebaum Bank, or Frederic C. Greenebaum, a close personal friend of Rabbi Mann. Thanks to CJHS member James Greenebaum II (Frederic's son) for suggesting these possibilities in response to our inquiry.*

RABBI BENJAMIN M. KAHN z"l died on July 4, 2001 at the age of 87. The biographical notes at the end of the original article state that he served Hillel for thirty years, including twelve years as international director of the movement. He served as executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International from 1971 to 1976. When the article was published in 1983 he was Jewish Studies director at The American University in Washington, DC. He was no stranger to Chicago. Rabbi Kahn served as an assistant rabbi at Anshe Emet in the late 1930s. He retired from B'nai B'rith in 1976, and he was then elected honorary executive vice president for life.

Reports: Three CJHS Summer Tours

SUNDAY, JUNE 22

Chicago's Jewish West Side

GUIDE: DR. IRVING CUTLER



Rev. Steve Spiller, Sr., and Dr. Irving Cutler
at the Greater Galilee Missionary Baptist Church,
the former Knesses Israel Nusach Sfard (KINS),
1308 South Independence Blvd. Photos by Rachelle Gold.

A photograph in Dr. Cutler's book, *Images of America: Chicago's Jewish West Side* (Arcadia, 2009), shows the great hazzan Yossele Rosenblatt with the choir of KINS around 1929. He chanted High Holy Days services at Knesses Israel Nusach Svard, as did other notable cantors such as Moshe Koussevitsky and Pierre Pinchik. There has been no davening there for many years, but illuminated Stars of David still decorate the sanctuary.

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SUNDAY, JULY 27

South Shore and Beyond

GUIDES: HERBERT EISEMAN & MARK MANDLE



Augudath Achim-Bikur Cholim.
8927 South Houston Avenue (3000 East).
Since 2004 it has been home to Christ Life Church.
Photograph by Sarah Hultmark, early 1980s.

Herb Eiseman and I guided the Chicago Jewish Historical Society "Jewish South Shore and Beyond (South Chicago, Jeffery Manor, and Roseland)." Our group was invited to enter two churches that used to be synagogues: Bikur Cholim in South Chicago and Congregation Kehilath Israel in Jeffery Manor.

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First graders, Gregory Elementary School, 3715 West Polk Street, 1940.

Our West Side tour passed near the school, now Gregory Math & Science Academy. Pictured in the third row from the bottom, third from the left, is Richard Elrod z"l. The son of a powerful West Side Jewish politician, Richard Elrod served four terms as Cook County sheriff and more than twenty-five years as a Circuit Court judge. Photo courtesy of Bev Chubat.

West Side ... from page 13

Greater Galilee M.B. Church.
Photograph by Rachel Bernkopf.

The tour bus had proceeded from the Loop to the Near West Side, where the Maxwell Street Market once flourished. Now a Sunday-only flea market on South Desplaines Street offers Latino food specialties. University Village, the UIC development, has replaced the once teeming immigrant enclave and the former ethnic neighborhoods. The West Side boulevards took us through Douglas Park and Lawndale, past former synagogues and the former JPI, past the original Sears Tower in the massive former mail order complex, Gregory Elementary School, Marshall High, and the Garfield Park Conservatory. — *B.C.*



Congregation Kehilath Israel. 99th and Yates (2400 East).
Today it is the First New Mount Olive M.B. Church.
Photograph by Sarah Hultmark, early 1980s.

South Shore and Beyond ... from page 13

Bikur Cholim, in South Chicago, lasted from 1889 to 2004. It was always an Orthodox congregation. Its Romanesque style building was erected in 1902. Henry L. Newhouse was the architect. In the early 1920s, a steam heating system replaced a potbellied stove. In 1928, the synagogue was remodeled. The stained glass windows were replaced by glass brick. In its best years, membership peaked at about five hundred families. Bikur Cholim had several rabbis. Rabbi Hirsch Harrison led the congregation for forty-six years, from 1920 to 1966.

In 1972, Bikur Cholim merged with Agudath Achim South Shore and became Agudath Achim-Bikur Cholim. This congregation merged with Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation. In 2004, Beth Shalom moved to 66th and Kedzie in the Lawn Manor neighborhood. The building was sold to Christ Life Church, which still occupies it. Pastor Emmanuel Soji Adesanya was not able to be present for our visit. Our tour group was welcomed by a member of the congregation.

Congregation Kehilath Israel (CKI) in Jeffery Manor, has a very different history than Bikur Cholim, which is in an old working class neighborhood, South Chicago, first developed in the 1850s. It had successive waves of immigrant residents, many of whom worked in the steel mills. Jeffery Manor was not developed until the post-World War II building boom. Duplexes and “ranch homes” predominated. Many residents were WWII veterans, originally from the South or West Side, and their young families.

CKI only existed from 1950 to 1971—one generation. It was a traditional synagogue and the only Jewish congregation in the Manor. It has simple architecture. The main sanctuary, dedicated in 1953, was never finished. Their longtime rabbi was Elliot Einhorn. Today the building houses the First New Mount Olive M.B. Church.

Few in our group remembered Bikur Cholim, but some had fond memories of CKI. Several former congregants had not been in the building in forty years. Tour participants included a past president, past board members, and former teenage members. It was moving to see how they responded to visiting their beloved synagogue. They engaged the senior pastor, Rev. Amos Bradford, Jr., and congregants in conversation, discussing the past and the present. Particularly moving to me was seeing the reaction of Edward Maslov, a high school chum of mine, who was bar mitzvah at CKI in 1964. The same lectern is still in place, and I almost thought Ed was going to recite his bar mitzvah speech!

Bikur Cholim existed for one-hundred-and-fifteen years, CKI for just twenty-one years, but memories of them transcend time. **Mark Mandle**

The CJHS published *Memories of the Manor*, by Eva Gross, in our Doris Minsky Memorial Fund Publication No. 2 (1993). There are six remaining copies of Gross's prize-winning memoir of life in Jeffery Manor for sale at \$5.00 each (s/h included) from our office. Send check to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803, Chicago, IL 60605-1901.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 24

Southwest Michigan

GUIDE: LEAH AXELROD

A wonderful all-day bus tour to Benton Harbor and South Haven, Michigan, and Michigan City, Indiana was offered by your CJHS. Leah Axelrod did her usual splendid job of handling all the arrangements. Mark Mandle and I were aboard with twenty-two other participants. Mark and I are both irrepressible tour mavens, and we added our comments along the way. The weather was delightful.

We visited Mary's City of David, the unique communal colony recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is an offshoot of the House of David, established in the 1920s by husband and wife Benjamin and Mary Purnell. After a scandal involving Benjamin, Mary left and established her own adjacent City. We visited the colony's museum, and then were served a vegetarian lunch.

After lunch, David Ravitch, a leader of the small Benton Harbor Jewish community, took us to Temple B'nai Sholom, where the congregation's historian, Michael Eliasson, spoke to us. We then visited the well-maintained Jewish cemetery. The congregation is in pretty good financial shape because of endowments.

Next stop, South Haven—in its Jewish glory years known as the “Catskills of the Midwest.”

On Broadway Street, on the north side of the Black River (that was the Jewish side), we were met by Barry Fidelman and Joe Ashen (originally Yashenovsky), who treated us to refreshments at the First Hebrew Congregation of South Haven. It is a beautiful synagogue,

founded in 1928 as an Orthodox shul with the mechitza on the third level. Today, there are about one-hundred-and-twenty affiliated families. Services are held on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, followed by a kiddush.

Joe Ashen, now lives in Santa Barbara, California, but still comes to South Haven in the summer. He took us on a local tour, stopping our bus where the Jewish places of interest were previously located.

As Joe spoke, I scribbled as fast as I could. Following are some names and places to share with you:

On the north side of the Black River, there was Jensen's Fishery, where smoked fish, lox, sable, bagels, and cheeses were purveyed.

Across from Jensen's was Stamler's Garage. Patner's Restaurant was nearby. Bill Patner married a Mendelson girl, of the resort family. There was the Elizabeth Hotel, owned by the Feinstein family. They also owned Dewey's. Joe Ashen and his family owned Ashen's Steak House, The Casino (where crap tables went into the ceiling when the police raided), and Bezark's Hot Dog Stand, which later became The Corner. (Ownership changed hands over the years.) The Pavilion was famous for its bingo and card games.

At Dyckman Avenue and North Shore Drive there was the Michigan Beach Hotel. Nearby were Kaplan's Cottages—eight small cottages and a larger building with rooms for rent. Next, Roseland Cottages, Glassman's and Nudelman's resorts, and the home of politician Arthur X. Elrod.

At Yashenovsky's Grand Valley Resort—strictly kosher—they even had a synagogue on the grounds. There was Sleepy Hollow (still existing) and Baron's Resort, and a bar owned by tough Jack Rubens; also Peck's Apple Farm, the Silver Beach Resort, and Mendelson's.

Not to be missed, Joe said, was Mickey's Restaurant—twelve stools and six booths, and packed into the wee hours. On the Beach Road, we saw signs for the Sherman Dairy, advertising their famous ice cream. Fidelman's Resort is currently an Orthodox Jewish summer camp.

Our South Haven visit concluded with the warm hospitality of CJHS members Marcie and Michael Feinberg at their lovely home, built on former farmland. Michael has been a resident of the area since 1942.

The Historical Association of South Haven has published a guide to forty-two resorts: *Catskills of the Midwest: The Jewish Resort Era in South Haven Driving Tour*. \$10 plus \$3.50 s/h. The delightful booklet is available online at the H.A.S.H. website, historyofsouthhaven.org.

Our final stop was at Sinai Temple in Michigan City, one-hundred-and-one-years-old. Their rabbi is Reni Dickman, the daughter of Marvin and Susie Dickman. Marvin is the treasurer of our Society.

Jewish settlement in this area dates back to the 1850s and 1860s, originally Jews from Central Europe, until the 1880s-90s, when Eastern European Jews began arriving.

In 1907, an Orthodox congregation, Adath Israel, was established. The Eternal Light hanging in the entrance to the Sinai Temple sanctuary was originally installed in Adath Israel. The Jewish cemetery is located in the center of the city and is visited often by residents.

The first Reform services were held in 1904, and by 1913 a congregation named Sinai was organized. The first services were led by students from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. The current building dates from 1953, designed

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Union Pier Memories

BY PATRICIA HANDLEY SWANSON

When I read “Return to Chickaming Township,” by Edward H. Mazur, in the Summer 2008 issue of *Chicago Jewish History*, I was astounded. I came upon his memoir in July 2014, just a few months ago, when I was “Googling” a name from my past in Union Pier, Michigan. This man, just five years older than I, spent summers in the very town where I had lived year-round. It was as though I was reading an account of my own summer life. I sent e-mails to my brothers in several cities, and they were also amazed.

I contacted the Chicago Jewish History Society with a request for them to forward my e-mail to Dr. Mazur. The next day there was a response, and I was asked to share *my* memories. My focus is a little different from his. He gave the details of the town, past and present. I am going to tell a bit more of my thoughts and feelings about those precious times of my youth.

I was born in Chicago. It was less than two years after my father returned from WWII, where he served in the European Theater, mostly France. My mother had waited for him to return, working as a bookkeeper for the Union Pacific Railroad in San Francisco. They both came from near Watertown, South Dakota. Together they traveled to Chicago to find work and a new life.

It didn’t take long before they decided to relocate. My father said they just couldn’t see raising their three children in Chicago. Union Pier, Michigan, became our new home. Of course, I don’t remember any of this. I was only four when we arrived in 1951. We lived on the east side of the railroad tracks in a neighborhood with mostly year-round residents.

We children (there were now four of us) spent many of our summer days walking to the beach. It was over a mile, but we managed by carrying our lunch in the baby buggy. Once at Miller Beach, so named for the Miller Resort at the top of the dune, we ran to the water to keep our feet from burning. It was at this beach that my world suddenly expanded, with new “summer friends.”

We dug holes, made drip-drop castles, and took swimming lessons. When summer was over, all these

friends were gone—back to Chicago and the suburbs for the new school year. Our school was in New Buffalo. There we met our other friends at the start of each school year. Most years, I did not see some “school friends” all summer. And not until my teen years did I see my summer friends in the winter, when I would travel to Chicago on the South Shore Train.

By 1953, we had moved into an area known as Gowdy Shores. It was mostly full of summer places. People filled them year after year. There I discovered that not everyone spoke English, and if they did, it was with a heavy accent. I now know that the accents were German, Russian, and Polish. Some of the people were the parents or grandparents of my playmates.

The area was heavily wooded and full of mosquitoes. It was also full of poison ivy. Every day something was making us itch. The common remedy was a dab of Ivory Soap on each spot. The closest beach had a magical place—a clay bank with spring water running from it. We dubbed it Clay Springs. Smearing clay on the itchy spots sure felt good. We would let it dry and then run into Lake Michigan to wash it off. We kids had invented a spa treatment.

In 1954, our family moved a bit farther north in Union Pier, to an area called Paradise Villa in Chickaming Township (Townline Road separated the two townships—Chickaming and New Buffalo.) It was a fenced community with cottages with flower gardens nestled under pine trees. A giant sign towered over the east entrance with “Paradise Villa” in big, bold letters. To the north of the Villa, a store and laundromat served some of the needs of the summer people who lived in the cottages. We lived in the connected house—four

kids, two adults, two bedrooms, and one bathroom. But all summer we never stayed indoors. We went to the beach every day. There were two beach areas that we could use. One of them was a walk through Paradise Villa, out the back entrance, and down a steep stairway. Here we would meet up with the others from the Villa.

Many families came to Union Pier year after year. The women and children arrived just after Decoration (now Memorial) Day and stayed until Labor Day. The men came out on the weekends. Some drove and parked their cars at the entrance to Paradise Villa.



Here I am, age four, at Miller Beach.

Others took the South Shore train to Michigan City, Indiana, and then the South Shore bus to Union Pier. Friday evenings were a boisterous time in the Villa. Beach activities, included the daily mah-jongg games, ended earlier than usual so everyone could get showered and dressed for the arrival of the men.

If it was a rainy day, not “beach weather,” all of the children got their creativity going. Since most of the cottages had large porches, we would gather under an awning and prepare a musical review. These were presented for the parents on the next nice afternoon. Two girls I remember best, Ina and Sherry Rosen, were always in these productions. A favorite number was “Ballin’ the Jack.”

These were the activities of the summer people. Weekends for my family were a bit different. My mother worked in a restaurant, called JB’s, on the way to New Buffalo. She would leave at about three in the afternoon, as she worked in the kitchen helping to prepare the Czech/Bohemian foods served there. A babysitter arrived and stayed until my father returned from his work as a truck driver. If we were lucky, he would arrive before dark so we could go back to the beach where the cool breezes and water were a welcome relief from our hot house.

On very special evenings, my father would wrap potatoes in aluminum foil at the house. Once at the beach, he would dig a fire pit, stack driftwood logs just right, and start a fire. We placed the potatoes right at the perimeter of the fire to roast. By the time they were cooked, the sun would be setting. On very clear days, we could see the John Hancock building in Chicago. Today, the skyline has many buildings visible.

Another predicable activity on Friday evenings before sunset, and again Saturday mornings, was the parade of people walking toward the synagogue just south of Townline Road. These people came from a bit further north of Paradise Villa. They lived in cottages near Ben and Dot’s store at the corner of McKinley Road and Lakeshore Road. I came to understand that these people were Orthodox Jews. For a person raised as a Catholic, I had a lot to learn. Many referred me to as “the gentile.” But learn I did.

Each summer, my education in Judaism expanded. It was also expanded by my two year-round friends. Maxine Kahn (Topper) lived just on the south side of Paradise Villa. Her cousin, Susan Kahn (Neiburger), lived at the other end of the Villa, on Lake Avenue. Back then; it was referred to as the dirt road that ran along the lake. Maxine and Susan became two of my closest friends. We still stay in contact. They are part of the shared memory club. Susan and I were Girl Scouts together. Both of our mothers were troop leaders. A yearly activity on Decoration Day was to honor those who served in WWI and WWII. We assembled at the memorial, near the post office and Novacek’s store, awaiting the New Buffalo High School band.

Maxine’s father, Samuel Kahn, was the brother of Joseph Kahn, Susan’s grandfather. They had another brother, Ruby. All three brothers owned cottages that they rented to others. From these associations, I learned that the world was much larger than Union Pier, or Chicago. These brothers were

originally from Russia. They spoke with heavy accents. Maxine’s mother, Pearl, was from Austria, but I don’t remember her having an accent. To this day, I attribute my ability to understand English spoken with any accent to this early brain training for languages.

I learned the differences between Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism. On occasion, I would accompany Maxine and her mom to the Temple in Michigan City.



Girl Scouts in front of the Union Pier Memorial. *took the photo. The tall woman in uniform is my mother. Next to her is Susan Kahn’s mother. Susan is second from right in the front row.*

To the south of the Kahn properties, there was another store—three in a row, actually—with a covered porch in front. The Schubert family ran the kosher butcher shop. Their three children also became my summer friends. When the stores closed in the fall, it was our favorite place to roller skate. The cement was much smoother than the road surface.

Just a few more houses to the south was the year-round home owned by Belle and Sol Gillman. The Gillmans ran one of the two restaurants in town, across US 12.

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SW Michigan

Continued from page 15

by the well-known Chicago architects Loeb, Schlossman & Hackl.

Sinai's most prominent rabbi was Karl Richter, who served for twenty-six years, 1950-1976. One of Sinai's Torahs was discovered after WWII in Czechoslovakia and brought to the Temple through the efforts of Rabbi Richter.

Of note is a Sunday Night Forum sponsored for many years by Sinai, and now offered jointly by the Temple and Purdue University.

The congregation has about one-hundred-and-fifteen families, a religious school with three teachers, and a dozen students ranging from pre-school to eleven-and-twelve-year-olds. Rabbi Dickman is pleased that two of Sinai's members have become rabbis.

Sinai Temple has benefitted from the generosity of many of its congregants, but two families stand out: the Ruby family (of Jaymar Ruby Sansabelt Slacks fame), and Jack and Shirley Lubeznik, for whom Michigan City's Center for the Arts is named.

Dinner for our tour group was a picnic at the Temple. Participants brought their own food and Sinai offered drinks.

Our vacationland tour was exhausting but exhilarating—a nostalgic, educational, and inspirational adventure. Thanks and *yasher koach* to everyone who planned, guided, hosted, and participated in the big day.

Edward H. Mazur

Union Pier Memories *Continued from page 17*

When my mother was in the hospital after my sister's birth in 1955, my dad took me to Belle to have her braid my very long hair. I was in second grade. Fourteen years after that, while working as a new registered nurse in Michigan City, Indiana, Belle was my patient. I walked into her room on my rounds, and found my eyes filling with tears. I was big and tall, and Belle was less than five feet tall. We hugged just as we had done so many times in the past. The Gillmans' only child was a son. He did not return from WWII. A gold star on the Memorial Wall is next to his name.



My 2nd grade picture with the braids that Mrs. Gillman did for me.

Most "summer people" didn't come to the "country" in the winter. We had the pleasures of the area all to ourselves. We still went to the beach, but it was to ride a saucer or sled down the sand dunes. We went to see the icebergs formed by the prevailing west winds. We were always cautioned not to walk out on them. Once, a man asked my mother what kind of bulldozer was used to make the icebergs. We all laughed at this query.

Eventually, two more children came along in our family. In 1964, we moved to New Buffalo.

In 1969, I came to live in Denver, Colorado. I had become a registered nurse and a women's health nurse practitioner. I met my husband while working at Rose Hospital, one supported by the Jewish community in Denver.

We married in 1975 and left for his US Air Force obligation, to RAF Lakenheath, England, in 1976. Between then and 2004, we moved in and out of Denver until we finally stayed put in a land that I adore. No humidity and, mostly, no mosquitoes. But visiting my home area still gives me a thrill.

Maxine's house was bought, sold, resold, and remodeled. My house was torn down and replaced by a nice tidy ranch house. Susan's house is still there, a prime location. When I pass the area, I can still conjure up some

quality memories of some of what made me who I am today.

As the years passed, many Chicago residents have winterized their country homes in "Harbor Country"—Grand Beach, New Buffalo, Union Pier, Lakeside, and Three Oaks. On a nice weekend, a drive of a little over an hour will get you out of the city and into a fine collection of restaurants and shops. A walk on the "singing sands," so dubbed by poet Carl Sandburg, will bring a song to your heart and a smile to your face. ❖



New Buffalo High School Reunion, 2004. Maxine Kahn Topper, standing, with me.

Interesting Inquiries

Queries about Chicago Jewish history to and from our Society office—and some answers

Sarah Hultmark's Photographs When I was packing the contents of the Society office for our move to the new Spertus building, I found a loose-leaf binder of black and white documentary photographs of former Jewish communal buildings in Chicago, stamped "Sarah Hultmark, Grand Junction, MI." Although they have the Jewish institutions' names and addresses written on the backs, in the photos most of them have church or school names. I have been scanning these fine images, publishing some in *CJH*, and crediting Hultmark, but didn't know their history—until a recent inquiry to the Spertus Institute staff revealed that the images had once been exhibited in their gallery. Then, just days ago, I was looking through the June 1983 issue of *Society News* (predecessor of *CJH*), prior to posting it in our website's publications archive, and I found this:

"Society members have until June 30 [1983] to view an important photo exhibit of former Jewish community landmarks in Chicago. The exhibit, titled 'How Goodly Were Thy Tents, O Jacob: Former Jewish Communities of Chicago,' will be at Spertus College until that date...."

"Sponsored by the Chicago Jewish Archives..., the exhibition contains over sixty photographs of buildings of former Jewish institutions *as they appear today*...."

"The photographer, Sarah Hultmark of Grand Junction, Michigan, and a former Chicagoan, had herself witnessed the demise of her own Chicago community—South Shore—and finally left in 1976...."

"Supported by an anonymous sponsor (who himself had left two formerly Jewish neighborhoods), and armed with a camera and a bodyguard, she photographed as many Jewish community buildings as she could locate. In some instances, they are now churches or school buildings. In other cases, they appear abandoned...."

"Assembling the photos was not easy, for in addition to braving the vagaries of Chicago's weather, she also had to withstand the danger that some of these neighborhoods threatened. In one case, while photographing a synagogue, her car window was shot out and her camera and purse taken from her. Ironically, her assailant had posed for a photograph before committing his crime...."

"...[Our Society] co-sponsored the reception marking the official opening of the exhibit...."

We are lucky to have a complete set of Hultmark's photos for our use, and we are proud that her daughter, Devorah Heyman, is a member of our Society. — *B.C.*

Jewish Experience in St. Charles

I am working on a history book that centers in part on St. Charles, Illinois. Anything about Jewish experience in or around St. Charles might be helpful to me. One of the things I would like to know is the extent and nature of anti-Semitism in St. Charles and the neighboring towns of Geneva and Batavia during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Brad Rockwell
1910 Edgeware Drive
Austin, Texas 78704
rrrrrockwell@yahoo.com

Maxwell Street Market Master

A now deceased neighbor of ours had been rumored to have been a "Market Maker" (in control of choice sites for the favored vendors on Maxwell Street during the vibrant period of Jewish occupancy c.1900-1935).

Allen H. Meyer

CJHS replied by mail: Mr. Meyer's neighbor may have been a Market Master, an individual employed by the City to allocate places among the various peddlers. We enclosed a copy of an excerpt on the subject from Ira Berkow's book, *Maxwell Street: Survival in a Bazaar*.

A Soccer Team from Eretz Yisroel

to: soccermavn@yahoo.com

The recent FIFA World Cup reminded me that when I was a sports-minded little girl I accompanied my uncle Isaac and cousin Harry to a soccer game where one side was a visiting team from pre-State *Eretz Yisroel*. I think the team's name was Hakoah. Can you help?

Bev Chubat, *CJH*

Going through my USSF Guides of the era (the 1949-50 Guide in particular), here's what I have: 5/11/47—Hapoel FC of Tel Aviv played Hakoah-Sparta of the local National League in Chicago. I know it's later than you thought, but given that the Israeli team was Hapoel (very similar to Hakoah) and they PLAYED Hakoah, maybe you mixed the two? The previous visit by an Israel/Palestine team was in 1936. Maccabi FC of Tel Aviv played in Chicago on Nov 15 and 22.

Stephen J. Holroyd, Esq.
Jennings Sigmond, PC
soccermavn@yahoo.com

Mr. Holroyd got it right, and I thanked him. Did any of our readers attend that 1947 match? — *B.C.*

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. A year after our 36th "double chai" year, the Society's unique

About the Society

mission 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 office, 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803. Chicago IL 60605-1901. You may also order online at our website.

Visit our website
www.chicagojewishhistory.org

All Issues of our Society periodical from 1977 to the present have been digitized and posted on our website in pdf format.

Simply click on "Publications," and scroll down through the years.

Pay Your Dues Online

Visit our website to pay dues via credit card or PayPal, or use the printable membership application to pay by check.

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

- A subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*.
- Free admission to Society public programs. General admission is \$10 per person.
- Discounts on Society tours.
- 10% discount on purchases at the elegant Spertus Shop.
- 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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