



chicago jewish history

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Save the Date! *Sunday, Sept. 23:* *Open Meeting to* *Feature New* *Book by Cutler*

At the next CJHS Open Meeting on September 23, Irving Cutler will present a slide-illustrated talk about his latest book, *Jewish Chicago: A Pictorial History*.

Dr. Cutler, the retired chairman of the Geography Department at Chicago State University, is a founder and active board member of CJHS. He is also the author of *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*. He conducts a popular annual summer tour of historic Jewish Chicago for the Society.



Cheder c. 1906. Located at, or near, DeKoven and Jefferson Streets (site of the start of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871). Detail, cover illustration, *Jewish Chicago: A Pictorial History*. Photograph courtesy Irving Cutler.

The Open Meeting will be held at Bederman Hall, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, 618 South Michigan Avenue. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m., preceded at 1:00 p.m. by a social hour, with refreshments, when Dr. Cutler will autograph books. Admission is free and open to the public.

President's Column



Walter Roth

THE WEST-EASTERN DIVAN ORCHESTRA performed at Symphony Center on Tuesday evening, July 31, with Daniel Barenboim, Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducting. It had been doubtful all Spring whether this program would go on as planned, given the grave political situation prevailing in the Middle East. Barenboim, embroiled in his own controversy in Israel with his recent performance

of a work by Richard Wagner, created the Orchestra out of the West-Eastern Divan Workshop for Young Musicians, which he founded in 1999, bringing together young, gifted instrumentalists from Israel, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The music workshop was established to realize Barenboim's vision of "building bridges through music" by working with gifted young musicians from these politically conflicting countries. As Barenboim stated in his opening remarks to the concert audience, he is convinced that "music has the power to foster connections, encouraging tolerance and greater understanding between people." He remarked that he was aware that the workshop and its music might not have any political influence, and he said it was not meant to have any, but nevertheless the comradeship and associations made by the young participants in their three week workshop and culminating recitals could not help but create a friendly spirit.

In its two previous years the Workshop had been held in Weimar, Germany, with great success. This summer Maestro Barenboim brought the workshop to the United States for the first time, to our city. Some 70 young musicians, age 15 to 27, were hosted by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and housed on the Evanston campus of Northwestern University. The participants—coached by leading players of the CSO and NU Music School faculty—rehearsed, interacted, and learned to perform together.

The concert program on July 31 included Mozart's Concerto for Three Pianos in F Major, K. 242, with soloists Daniel Barenboim, Saleem Abboud-Ashkar (an Arab Israeli) and Shai Wosner (a Jewish Israeli), followed without intermission by Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony. Afterwards the audience rose en masse with thunderous applause. In response to numerous curtain calls, Barenboim led the orchestra in an encore, Rossini's Overture to "The Barber of Seville."

The audience, as far as I could tell, approved of the evening despite all the swirling violence in the Middle East. One could see that the superb young musicians played together with great enthusiasm and afterwards engaged in sociable conversations.

One evening of music does not create political peace, as Maestro Barenboim correctly stated. But for an evening, the audience experienced an uplifting feeling. In that spirit, I want to wish all of the members and friends of our Society a Happy New Year, with peace and good health to all. *Shana tova.* ❖



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Chicago Jewish History

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Women of the Book: Jewish Artists, Jewish Themes—Exhibit at Lake Cook Plaza

Society members and friends are encouraged to view this inspiring art exhibit. It will be on display Thursday, September 6 through Sunday, October 21 at Lake Cook Plaza, 405 Lake Cook Road, Suite A11, Deerfield. The free exhibit is open to the public Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 to 8:00 p.m., and Sundays, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. (Closed during the High Holidays—Tuesday, September 18 and Thursday, September 27.)

Sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), Chicago North Shore Section, the exhibit includes major sections of a national traveling show of “bookworks” (books or works inventively linked to the book’s structure) by Jewish women artists from Australia, Canada, England, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States. The exhibit is being held in cooperation with the Northern Region Jewish Community Centers.

Featuring beautiful and sometimes fragile books made from paper, fabric, photos, glass, plastic or sculpture, *Women of the Book* challenges our definition of a book, while sharing insights into Jewish women’s lives and issues. Themes include sacred texts, the Holocaust and history, family and ritual, and personal narrative.

Works by two prominent local artists, Rose Ann Chasman of Chicago (designer/illustrator of the CJHS logo) and Leah Sosewitz of Highland Park, are included in the show. For more information, check the NCJW web site: www.ncjwchi.org or phone (847) 853-8889.

Adele Hast Co-Edits Mighty Reference *Women Building Chicago 1790-1990*

Many of Chicago’s “big shoulders” belong to women! We learn this in the impressive new biographical dictionary co-edited by Rima Lunin Schultz and CJHS Past President Adele Hast.

Women have been in the forefront of social reform, education, the arts, and the sciences in our city. Famous personages such as Jane Addams, Bertha Honoré Palmer, Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett are but a few of the women whose inspiring lives are documented in *Women Building Chicago*.

Ten years of research, writing, and editing went into this remarkable volume. There are 423 individual biographies; ten percent of them are Jewish women. The majority of the biographies represent new research and are published for the first time. They expand our understanding of the significant public role played by women in Chicago’s early days, long before the passage of the 19th Amendment.

Published by Indiana University Press, the 1,088-page dictionary is enhanced by 140 black-and-white illustrations and a separate section of color reproductions of paintings and crafts by Chicago women artists.

Dr. Hast is a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a Scholar in Residence at the Newberry Library. She will discuss the book at a future CJHS Open Meeting.

WTTW-Channel 11 Rosenwald Program to Air Monday, Sept. 24

From Sears to Eternity, a show about the life and achievements of the Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, will be presented as part of the Channel 11 series “Chicago Stories.” The show will air Monday, September 24 at 7:30 p.m. and again at 11:30 p.m. (See TV listings for additional repeats.)

The half-hour program explores Rosenwald’s role in the founding of the Museum of Science and Industry; building the mail-order colossus Sears Roebuck; collaborating with Booker T. Washington to create schools for African-American children in the rural South, and much more.

The show was produced by the noted documentary film-maker Beverly Siegel, who also produced the Society’s video *Romance of a People—One Hundred Years of Jewish Life in Chicago 1833-1933*. Indeed, portions of Ms. Siegel’s Rosenwald work are drawn from the CJHS video. WTTW has also adapted *Romance* for “Chicago Stories”, and aired it a number of times.

Heller Elected to Board of Directors

The Society extends a warm welcome to Dr. David H. Heller as he joins our Board for a three-year term. Dr. Heller, president of Loop (now Harold Washington) College 1969-1980, is an active member of the Society. He has written an article for *CJH* and participated in the *Romance* program last October.

Board members Dr. Carolyn Eastwood, Clare Greenberg, Burt Robin and Dr. Milton Shulman were reelected to three-year terms.

Letters to the Editor

Chicago's *Messiah* Found...

Castine, Maine

Thanks to you and *CJH* I've finally discovered the present location of Glicenstein's famous sculpture, the *Messiah*, that had been commissioned by the Covenant Club in 1929-30. The photograph of the work (appearing in your Summer 2001 issue) was recognized by Society Board Member Seymour J. Persky as belonging to his and his wife's collection. When I contacted him, he was most gracious with information. When the Covenant Club building was sold in 1985, the Club's art collection was dispersed. All remaining works were sold at auction, and Mr. Persky bid for and won the *Messiah*; it has been in the Persky collection ever since.

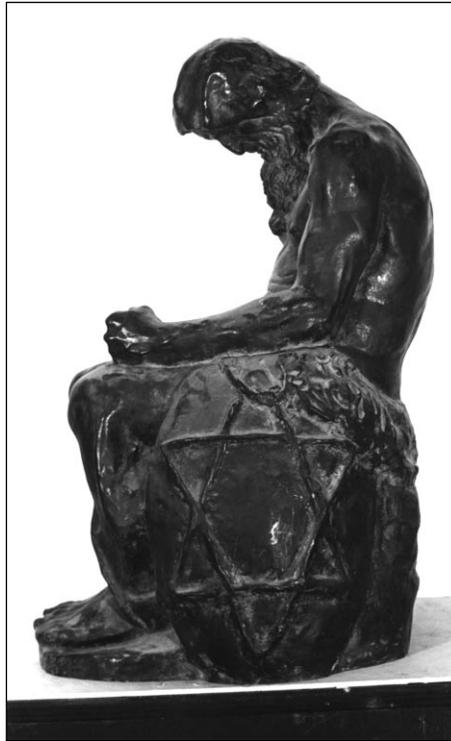
I am particularly thrilled to know that a bronze cast of this sculpture is here in the United States. As I've told you before, there are earlier casts of the *Messiah* in London, Warsaw and Jerusalem. Now that we have located the work here, we would be able to showcase it someday—with the kind permission of Seymour and Beverly Persky—in a hoped-for Glicenstein retrospective exhibit at a major American museum. The work became a symbol of Jewish hope when it was first presented in 1905, at a time of terrible pogroms in Russia, and it has continued to be revered as a Jewish icon, particularly by the Jews of Europe.

I have some background material about the creation of the Covenant Club's *Messiah* which I think will interest you. First of all, the catalyst behind the recasting of the work seems to have been Dr. Alexander M. Dushkin, who had been the President of the College of Jewish Studies when Glicenstein arrived in Chicago in 1929. In his 1975 book, *Living Bridges: Memoirs of an Educator*, he wrote: "In his temperamental pride, Glicenstein would refuse to be my guest for meals, because he could not invite me in turn. But I was able to obtain

for him a guest membership at the Covenant Club, which enabled him to have his meals and his baths there. The club also gave him a commission to sculpt another *Messiah*, a fine piece, proudly displayed by the club."

Secondly, I have a photograph of Glicenstein at the unveiling of the *Messiah* at the Covenant Club from the October 1930 B'nai B'rith Magazine, the *National Jewish Monthly*. The photo accompanies a very sympathetic article devoted to Glicenstein's art by Manuel Chapman.

Finally, just to illustrate the continuing impact of the work, here is a poem recited by Israel Zangwill, the keynote speaker at a special celebration welcoming Glicenstein to London on June 26, 1921, and attracting over one thousand enthusiastic attendees. An image of the *Messiah* was projected on a screen during the presentation. The poem (translated from the German) was written by an anonymous poet as a response to the sculpture.



Enrico Glicenstein, *Messiah*,
bronze. Collection, Israel
Museum, Jerusalem.
Photograph © Israel Museum.

*His fist is closed because his time is far.
With sunken head in grief he sits and sleeps.
Above him shines so weakly David's star,
He hears not, though his people sobs and weeps.
Yet can he never die, and when one day
He wakes and puts the Shofar to his lips,
Then shall the chains of Exile melt away
And all our sorrows vanish in eclipse.
Now, calls the people, rouse thou sleeping lion,
And lead us back to liberty and life:
And through us put an end to mankind's strife.*

Thanks again for all your help. I couldn't have done it without you and *Chicago Jewish History*.

All my best,

Charlotte Snyder Sholod

B'nai B'rith National Jewish Monthly, October 1930.

Photo caption reads: "While in Chicago recently, Enrico Glicenstein was guest of honor at a luncheon given by officers of the Covenant Club. Here he is shown, third from the left, at the unveiling of his statue, "Messiah," on that occasion." Courtesy Charlotte Snyder Sholod.



...Now, a Search For Descendants of "Jake The Barber"

Chicago, Illinois

I am writing a biography of John Factor, known in his time as Jacob Factor, or in the newspapers as "Jake The Barber." I would appreciate any information which will enable me to contact his family's descendants. I would also be interested in other information about him or his family.

Jacob Factor was a swindler who was based in Chicago from about the time of World War I to World War II. His parents were Polish Jews from Lodz who migrated to St. Louis in 1906. He moved to Chicago by 1911 when he was about 18 years of age, and married Bessie Schatz in 1911. They had a son, Jerome, who went into the insurance business and raised a family in Chicago. Bessie divorced Jake in 1918 and later married an accountant, Leo Marcus. Jake married Helen Stoddard in 1921; they divorced in 1923. He married Rella Cohen in 1925.

Jake pulled off massive stock swindles in London during the 1920s and fled across the Atlantic in 1930 one step ahead of a British arrest warrant. He escaped extradition by staging his so-called "kidnapping" for which Roger Touhy, the last Irish ganglord in Chicago was convicted. This eliminated the Chicago Crime Syndicate's remaining obstacle to control of the city's rackets, and in gratitude they

and their politician colleagues persuaded President Franklin Roosevelt's administration to undercut the extradition treaty with Britain and the Supreme Court's decision to extradite Jake to London.

His luck ran out in 1942 when a Federal Court sentenced him for fraud. After his parole in 1949, he moved to Los Angeles where his half-brother Max Factor (of the cosmetics company) and several siblings lived. Jake went "respectable" as the front-man for the Chicago and Cleveland Crime Syndicate's control of the Stardust Casino in Las Vegas. In 1962, President John Kennedy gave him a pardon from his Federal conviction to save Jake from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service's deportation proceedings. He died in Los Angeles in 1984 at the age of 92, a multi-millionaire; Tom Bradley, Mayor of Los Angeles, and Edmund "Pat" Brown, former Governor of California, honored him at the funeral.

Nathan Kantrowitz

Nathan Kantrowitz is a member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. He is the author of Close Control: Managing a Maximum Security Prison, The Story of Warden Ragen's Stateville Penitentiary.
Mr. Kantrowicz can be reached at (773) 878-5032 or at kant1@rcnchicago.com.

Peter Bergson, the Irgun, and Chicago

BY WALTER ROTH

Peter Bergson (Hillel Kook) died on August 18, 2001 at his home in Kfar Shmaryahu, Israel. During World War II he campaigned for the formation of a Jewish army and the rescue of the Jews of Europe. He came to the United States in 1940 and often traveled to Chicago in pursuit of his goals. His greatest achievement in Chicago was his support and financing of the pageant *We Shall Never Die*, performed at the Chicago Stadium in 1943.

Bergson was born in Lithuania in 1915. At the age of ten his family fled to Palestine, where his uncle Avraham Yitzhak Kook was the country's first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi. Young Bergson soon became part of a faction called the Irgun, that in 1931 seceded from the Haganah (the Jewish Agency's defense organization). Dissatisfied with the Haganah's way of responding to attacks by the Arabs and to the repressive policies of the British Mandate, the Irgun was determined to offer a more militant answer. It marked the beginning of a long tortuous internal conflict between the Irgun (allied with a new political party called the Revisionists) and the Haganah (whose leaders, David Ben Gurion and others, headed the powerful Labor parties).

At the beginning of World War II, the Irgun was considered the military arm of the Revisionists, with Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky as its leader. In 1939 Jabotinsky came to the United States to publicize his idea for the formation of a Jewish army in Palestine to fight alongside the British forces against the Nazis. Bergson and several others joined Jabotinsky in New York in 1940. When Jabotinsky died suddenly of a heart attack, it fell to Bergson to lead the Irgun's campaign in America.

Bergson opened a small office in New York for his group and began to make contacts. His main argument was that a 200,000-strong Jewish army of volunteers from Palestine, Europe and the United States could help stop the German army under General Rommel in North Africa. He stated that Jews, motivated to avenge their murdered brethren in Europe, would follow in the footsteps of the Jewish Legion which had fought in World War I. The British were opposed to such an idea as it would endanger their relationship with the Arabs. With no budget, Bergson set up his propaganda campaign for his Jewish army.

He enlisted Ben Hecht, the noted journalist,

novelist and playwright to join his group. Hecht, who had previously distanced himself from Jewish organizational life, had been aroused by the Nazi onslaught and had written a number of articles calling America's attention to the horror occurring in Europe. Bergson also brought his message effectively to Washington D.C., where a number of legislators lent him their support. He also received the support of Adlai Stevenson of Chicago who was then Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Frank Knox.

In Chicago he also received financial support from Ernest Byfield, an influential Jewish businessman not otherwise identified with Zionist causes. A full-page newspaper advertisement headlined "Jews Fight for 'The Right to Fight,'" sponsored by the Bergson group, appeared in the *Chicago Sun* on January 18, 1942. But the efforts to raise money and gain support for pressure on the British aroused the antagonism of other groups. The mainstream Zionist organizations denounced Bergson's Jewish Army Committee as Irgunists and Revisionists—terms which for them were synonymous with "terrorists" and "fascists." By the end of 1942, the Bergson group had made no progress with its efforts to force the British to organize a Jewish army.

News was now emerging that two million Jews had been massacred by the Nazis in Europe and millions more were threatened with destruction. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, president of the American Jewish Congress, publicly confirmed the news and met with President Roosevelt to call for action by the United States government. A National Day of Mourning was held on December 2, 1942. The Bergson group, like other Jewish organizations, sought out new courses of action. The Bergson group hit on the idea of a pageant to present the plight of the Jews to the American public. The idea of a Jewish army was now set aside; instead there would be a dramatic call for the rescue of the remnants of European Jewry.

Ben Hecht was commissioned to write the pageant and Bergson was to finance and produce it. Hecht wanted a unified Jewish community to sponsor the pageant—but it was not to be. The political divisions among the organizations were too wide; for example, the American Jewish Committee would have nothing to do with the venture. (Hecht had envisioned the community cooperation which had made *The Romance of A People* such a success ten years earlier. The Bergson

group, no doubt, had studied the success of *The Romance*, first produced in Chicago on July 3, 1933. A press release for the new pageant, *We Shall Never Die*, cited *The Romance* as an example of the effectiveness of pageants in general.) To make matters worse, as the date for the first public performance approached, Rabbi Wise became increasingly hostile.

Although the pageant was already in rehearsal, Wise demanded its cancellation. He announced that a week before the pageant's scheduled staging on March 10, 1943 in New York's Madison Square Garden, his organizations would present an anti-Nazi rally, entitled *Stop Hitler Now*, at the same location. The American Jewish Congress and other Jewish organizations did indeed stage their event on March 1, but it did not have the effect of decreasing ticket sales for the Hecht-Bergson production. Contrary to Rabbi Wise's intent, Governor Dewey of New York declared March 9, 1943 an official day of mourning, and *We Shall Never Die* was performed as scheduled on March 10. Due to the massive demand for tickets, a second performance was added on the same night.

The Pageant then moved to Washington D.C. and Philadelphia; it was performed at the Chicago Stadium on May 19, 1943, with Sydney Lumet in a starring role. But an extensive campaign was organized against the Pageant and the Bergsonites in Chicago. Hostility had been generated toward them by a full page advertisement inserted by the Bergsonites in national newspapers, responding affirmatively to a deal that the Nazi government appeared to be offering, to release thousands of Jews in exchange for a great sum of money. The supposed Nazi deal was characterized as a fraud by other Zionist organizations.

I was fortunate enough to meet Peter Bergson. It was at his home in Israel at Pesach-time in 1993. My daughter-in-law, Kate, had become a good friend of Bergson's daughter, Rebecca Kook, and we were invited for an afternoon with Bergson, his wife and daughter. He was in his late 70s by then, and suffering from Parkinson's Disease, but his memory was good. When he learned that I was an attorney, he wanted to talk to me about his experience with U.S. Congressional hearings in 1944, of which I had not previously known.

As I recall his story (and subsequent research confirms), after the bitterness generated by the pageant and the newspaper ads, the Bergson group also ran ads and wrote articles attacking the results of the Bermuda Conference held in the summer of 1943. The Conference had been called by the United States to see

what steps could be taken to provide a haven for Jewish refugees (preferably by other countries). Nothing came of the conference. Senator Scott Lucas of Illinois and Congressman Sol Bloom of New York, who were U.S. representatives to the Conference, took umbrage at the Bergson attack. [Rep. Sol Bloom was the "Music Man"—the 1893 Columbian Exposition entrepreneur about whom I wrote in the Summer 2000 *CJH*.]

Rabbi Wise and Dr. Nahum Goldmann of the Jewish Agency also led bitter attacks against Bergson. Bergson believed that Wise and Goldmann, with the above legislators, were instrumental in calling a Congressional hearing to investigate his activities. He felt that the FBI was investigating him and tapping his phone lines. According to Goldmann, Rabbi Wise "regarded Bergson equally as great an enemy of the Jews as Hitler for the reason that his activities could only lead to increased anti-Semitism."

According to Bergson, his organization deserved credit for action finally being taken by the Roosevelt administration in organizing the War Refugee Board which helped to rescue some Jews later in 1944. But Bergson believed that Wise and Goldman did everything in their power to hinder his efforts. Nothing, apparently, came of the Congressional hearings. Public pressure (that Bergson said he organized) forced the Committee to drop its efforts to deport him as an unregistered alien. Three volumes of records of the hearings were on his library shelves.

After the end of the War and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Bergson returned and was elected to the first Knesset (Parliament). But he was opposed to many of the policies of the new State, and in 1951 he came back to the United States, where he became a businessman. This career was successful but not without controversy. In 1970 he returned to Israel.

To Peter Bergson's admirers his struggle in America during World War II was a heroic attempt to assist European Jewry in a desperate period. To others his actions only served to create bitter divisions within World Jewry. The Irgun and its successors in Israel continue to this day the internal political conflict with the successors to Ben-Gurion's Labor party, even as the country as a whole is embattled.

Two weeks after his death, Peter Bergson's daughter gave birth to a son, whom she named Hillel after his grandfather. ❖

WALTER ROTH is president of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. He has written extensively for *CJH* about leading Zionists and their connection to Chicago.

REPRINT This article was first published in the October, 1985 issue of *Society News* (predecessor of *CJH*). We are pleased to reprint the piece in light of the recent discovery of Mizenberg funeral cortege photographs.

MEMENTOS OF LOCAL JEWISH HERO DONATED TO ARCHIVES BY FAMILY Death of Sammy Mizenberg Is Recalled by Memorabilia

A particularly colorful incident in local Jewish history has been recalled by the recent addition to the Chicago Jewish Archives of important memorabilia concerning the death of Private Sammy Mizenberg. The memorabilia were donated to the archives by his nephew, Melvin G. Trager of Glenview.

Sammy Mizenberg, a young Marine from Chicago's Jewish West side, had the misfortune to be the first American killed in 1914 when, in an undeclared war with Mexico, U.S. troops captured Vera Cruz. The willingness of this young immigrant to volunteer, fight and die heroically for his newly adopted country captured the heart of the Chicago gentile "establishment," who regarded his sacrifice as proof of the loyalty of the nation's newly arrived "huddled masses" and the success of "Americanization" as it was then taking place.

Facts Enriched by Memorabilia

The story of young Mizenberg's heroism, his family, his elaborate funeral and the wide coverage in the news and editorial columns has been told before, most recently in an article by Sidney Sorkin in the *Society News* of February, 1982. Indeed, the *Chicago Tribune* had earlier presented a composite of clippings on the incident to the Chicago Jewish Archives.

Those archives have, however, been significantly enriched by Mr. Trager's recent gift, which includes the photograph reproduced on this page, a photograph of his mother and his brother and sister with the flag from his coffin, the engraved metal name plate from his coffin, his Marine hat and a sympathy card from President Woodrow Wilson.

Sympathy Letter Quotes Lincoln

Also included among other memorabilia was a personal letter of sympathy from the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels. Historians will be interested to learn that in his letter Daniels quotes Lincoln's famous letter to Mrs. Bixby, who lost five sons in the Civil War.

Sammy Mizenberg (the name was sometimes misspelled "Meisenberg" in contemporary accounts)



Private Sammy Mizenberg, Chicago Jewish Archives.

had enlisted in the Marines under the name Samuel Marten. His death at age 21 was a source of great pride as well as grief to the Jewish West side because, as a *Tribune* editorial of the time said, "Chicago is taking proper pride in the Jewish lad, Samuel Mizenberg, who...in the brief spell of time he had in the new world, acquired not only the language and outward characteristics of an American but also high American ideals."

Nephew Seeks Awards Information

Through the years many assertions were made concerning posthumous awards given to Private Mizenberg but little is known for certain. Mr. Trager is currently seeking a review of military records to clear up confusion as to what awards were actually given to his uncle.

Other family members who contributed items presented by Mr. Trager include his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Trager of Streamwood and Dr. and Mrs. Irving Ohren of Saratoga, California...

— I.J.S.

Newly Discovered Mizenberg Photographs

Carol Colby of Wilmette sent these photos to Society Past President Norman Schwartz with this note:

"I found these pictures among others in my father's photo album. Though born in Menominee, Michigan in 1893 my father and his family moved to Chicago in the early 1900s. The family lived at 1218 South Albany Avenue and so I imagine that it was from the front steps of the home that he took these pictures.

"My father, Harry Z. Perel, and his brother Bernard, were lawyers and practiced in Chicago for over 50 years. One sister graduated from the University of Chicago and another from the University of Wisconsin in 1918—remarkable for women then, I think."

There are ten Perel photographs in all (images 2³/₈" x 4") on five pages. They will be placed in the Chicago Jewish Archives, with thanks to Mrs. Colby.



Mizenberg Funeral, Procession on Albany Avenue, May 14, 1914. Photos by Harry Z. Perel.

**Mizenberg Funeral,
Procession on Albany
Avenue; Marks Nathan
Orphan Band.**
Photo by Harry Z. Perel.

IRWIN J. SULOWAY

wrote the 1985 article we have reprinted on the facing page. He is an esteemed journalist and educator. Dr. Suloway is editor emeritus of CJH and a member of the Society's advisory board.



FROM THE
CHICAGO JEWISH
archives

True Sisters: Records Reveal the Achievements of Johanna Lodge

By Joy Kingsolver

One of the first organizations for Jewish women in the city of Chicago was Johanna Lodge No. 9, United Order of True Sisters. This club kept remarkable records of its activities which detail the achievements of its early years through the 1950s. The archival records are now housed at the Chicago Jewish Archives and offer a fascinating glimpse into the life of these women.

The United Order of True Sisters had its beginnings in Immanuel Lodge, founded in 1846 for the women of Temple Emanuel in New York City. Originally intended as a forum for discussions of the arts and current issues, its rapid growth led to the founding of the national organization in 1851.

On a trip to New York in 1873 the prominent Chicagoan Henry Greenebaum became enthused over the new club. Returning home, he recruited ten members, and Johanna Lodge No. 9 was chartered on February 14, 1874, the first U.O.T.S. lodge in the Midwest. Babette Wise was the first president, and Henry Greenebaum was designated "Honorary Brother." Two more lodges were founded in Chicago: Sarah Greenebaum No. 16 (1907), and Lincoln No. 22 (1915). The three Chicago lodges often collaborated on projects and met on festive occasions.

The earliest records kept by Johanna Lodge are two cash books dating from 1874-1898. Entries in these books show that one of the first concerns of the group was to provide for its members who were widowed. The existence of the Widowfund is first documented in 1876; a donation of \$67.25 is recorded without explanation. (Minutes from these years, which might have helped explain the origins of the fund, do not exist.) From later records, however, we can see how the fund operated: whenever a member became a widow,

each lodge contributed a small amount of money per member to a fund which was divided among the widows. This was referred to as a "widowtax" by the 1930s, and the amount collected was about 1½ cents per member. At the end of each month, a letter from U.O.T.S. headquarters in New York listed the members who had been widowed, and the tax was calculated from each lodge's current membership figures.

Although in the early years Johanna Lodge was most concerned about helping its own members, it wasn't long before its mission shifted to philanthropy. Johanna Lodge is thought to have been the first lodge to take up charitable work in a substantial way. Under its second president, Johanna M. Loeb, its first charitable effort was providing clothing for 100 boys at Chanukah, 1878. That same year, money was donated to the United Hebrew Relief Association and several other charities.

In the years that followed, Johanna Lodge became well known in Chicago education circles for its projects to supplement services offered by the public schools. The Lodge founded the first free public kindergarten in Chicago, and also supported "penny lunchrooms" to serve poor neighborhoods. These services were later taken over by the Chicago Public Schools. Johanna Lodge also purchased art prints to hang on school walls, and provided equipment such as sewing machines.

Johanna Lodge played a crucial role in establishing the Bureau of Personal Service, which had originally been founded by the National Council of Jewish Women. The Bureau of Personal Service aided Russian refugees fleeing the pogroms; a workroom and a soup kitchen were established, and women who worked in them were paid in the form of



Logo, United Order of True Sisters.
Chicago Jewish Archives.

groceries and household items. Johanna Lodge, through the Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations and under the leadership of Lizzie Barbe, its third president, organized and ran the Bureau. The Associated Jewish Charities later took over this work.

Although Johanna Lodge sponsored many projects in Chicago, it was the Lodge's work with the blind which would become its hallmark, and it is the one mission which survives today.

After World War I, when an estimated 10,000 servicemen returned from the war blinded, the need for books and magazines transcribed into Braille became acute. Mrs. Antoinette Harris, a lodge member, had a family member who was blinded in the war, and she set about transforming a personal problem into a mission for the Lodge. Under the tutelage of the Chicago Public Library, which had established a "Books for the Blind" department in 1912, Johanna Lodge began its work, and by 1943 had transcribed 850,000 pages. Textbooks, music books, law books, medical reference books, novels, and history were all transcribed. The work was not limited to needs in Chicago; requests came in from all over the world and many books were in French, Spanish, and other languages. The Lodge even transcribed 40 sets of merit badge requirements for blind Girl Scouts. This work became the largest and most recognized activity of the Lodge, involving over 100 members in the early years.

Johanna Lodge underwent many changes through the years. Even its name evolved: from "Jochannah" or "Yochannah" in the first years, to "Johanna," which was officially adopted in May, 1926. The first meetings were conducted in German, but before long there was a shift toward English. The change was officially adopted in 1917, but for many years before that Johanna Lodge had been recording its minutes in English.

The U.O.T.S. was a secret organization, with passwords and secret handshakes, and a ritual which was repeated at every meeting. The passwords, handshakes and regalia were abolished in December 1951. Applicants had to be recommended by three members in good standing, and each member was limited to signing one application per year. The Lodge



Lizzie Barbe.
Chicago Jewish Archives.

met twice a month from October to April, at first in homes, then at Chicago Sinai Congregation's Emil G. Hirsch Center for many years. In 1946 this arrangement ended, and the Lodge moved to offices in the Jewish Education Building at 72 East 11th Street.

Dues were initially \$4.00 per year. Later these were increased to \$10, paid in two installments. Membership figures are not complete for the Lodge, but from its beginning in 1874, with ten charter members, it grew to 148 in 1884. By 1927 membership had soared to 891; during World War II it hovered around 780 and then began to decline. Today, the Johanna Bureau

for the Blind and Physically Handicapped carries on some of the work begun by Johanna Lodge.

The Chicago Jewish Archives is working to preserve the now-fragile records of Johanna Lodge. A grant from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture is enabling the archives to microfilm many of the minute books of the Lodge, which will enable researchers to use the material without damaging the originals.

In addition to minutes, the collection includes many issues of the *Bulletin of Johanna Lodge* (also called the *Voice of Johanna*), the original charter, a banner, correspondence, and other items. The collection does not include photographs. The archives is mounting an effort to collect photographs, memorabilia, and personal reminiscences from any former members or descendants of members who have information about the organization. We are eager to add to our knowledge of this important Chicago Jewish women's group; please contact the archivist if you have any information or items to contribute.

Joy Kingsolver
Director, Chicago Jewish Archives
Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies
618 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago IL 60605
(312) 322-1741
archives@spertus.edu

The exhibition *Jerzy Kosinski, 1933-1991: A Literary Life* continues on display through the end of October in the sixth floor gallery at Spertus.

A Jewish Immigrant Family and the Chicago Taxi Wars in the 1920s

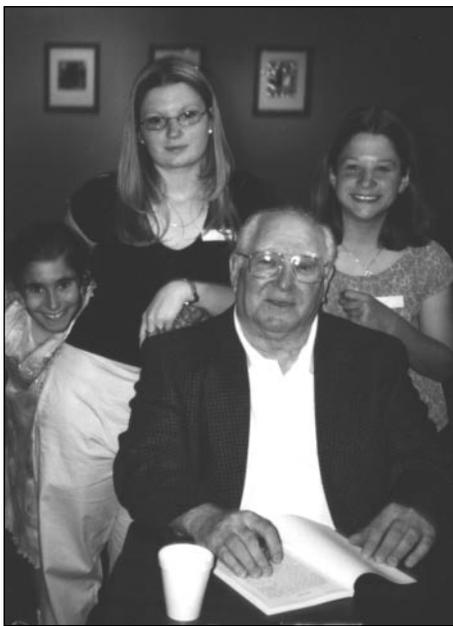
BY MYRON H. FOX

The Society's Open Meeting on Sunday, June 24 was held in Bederman Hall of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. After a review of the year's activities by President Walter Roth, and the election of members of the board of directors, Charles B. Bernstein, who chairs both the program and publication committees, introduced the featured speaker and presented him with a certificate:

"The Chicago Jewish Historical Society Awards the Doris & Joseph Minsky Memorial Prize to Myron H. Fox for his Monograph on Chicago Jewish History, Through the Eyes of Their Children."

The Society had published Mr. Fox's book (edited by Mr. Bernstein) and Society members have received copies. The audience at the Meeting listened intently to Mr. Fox's fascinating talk. Following are edited excerpts.

Through the Eyes of Their Children is an immigrant story; a Chicago story; a Jewish story. Why did I write a book? At the age of 16½ years in May of 1948, I was challenged by my geography teacher to enter an essay contest (actually, it was "enter the contest or fail the class") sponsored by United Air Lines to commemorate 30 years of Air Mail progress. I was one of five first-



Myron H. "Mike" Fox
with some of his granddaughters.
Photograph by Norman D. Schwartz.

place winners, and was bitten by the writing bug. The time between being bitten and the time I actually began writing again was 45 years. Love, marriage, four years of military service, seven children, and making a living came first. Finally, when my wife and I retired in 1993, I was able to realize my life-long dream.

Why did I write *this* book? For the answer we must go back to the late summer of 1975. While my brother Morton and I were visiting with relatives in South Bend, Indiana, my father's cousin Eva let drop a couple of surprising statements, "Your father sure had a lot of trouble when he was a young man. It was a shame he had to take a fall for those guys." Knowing my dad as well as I thought I did, I figured she had mistaken him for someone else. After all, she was talking about 50 to 60 years ago. I pushed these comments to the back of my mind where they lay dormant for the next 12 years.

In 1987, on a trip to California with my wife Frances and my sister Esther, we visited the home of my mother's cousin, Sadie. When she repeated and corroborated the statements we had heard in South Bend, I knew there was a lot more to this story. The mystery continued until 1994, when during a conversation with my oldest living cousin, Harry, I asked him point-blank, "Was my father ever in jail?" His response was, "Maybe I'll tell you and maybe I won't." After I pressed him a little harder, he decided to tell me everything he knew, and I was not prepared to hear it.

First, my father had been arrested and convicted of the murder of a Yellow Cab driver and had served some time in Stateville Prison, even though he was innocent. This was the first time my siblings and I had heard of any problem of this magnitude in all our years. The other things he told me were just a blur, as I was still recovering from the initial shock. I thought I knew my family backwards and forwards. After all, I was the *nudnik* child who always asked questions about family history. How could this secret have survived intact for so long?

The very next day, while my brain was still buzzing, my wife and I headed for the Harold Washington Library Center and the newspaper archives. Using the approximate date and general circumstances which Harry had revealed to me, we began our search. For two days we sorted through and pored over years of Chicago daily newspapers, including the *Tribune*, *Daily News*, *Herald-Examiner*, *Times*, *Jewish Forward*, and various local Jewish publications of the time. Next I began a round of interviews with my cousins. Some had vague recollections, and some remembered stories told

to them by their parents, my aunts and uncles. Seeking additional insight into the facts, I turned to my nephew, Michael Fryer, at the time a photographer for the *Chicago Tribune*, and my cousin Mitchell Kreiter, a Chicago criminal attorney. Through them I obtained valuable background documents, including copies of the Illinois Supreme Court appeal and the Illinois Pardon Board hearings.

This story really starts around the turn of the 20th century with the immigration of my grandmother's brother, Fischel Dermer, to the New World. The family came from the town of Kolomea in Galicia, at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. With an encouraging letter from a friend in his pocket, Fischel made his way to South Bend where he got a job working for Studebaker (which he never left until retirement). His letters back home were always upbeat; he wrote of the opportunities afforded everyone in America. My grandparents, Max and Marion Fox, owned and operated a small bakery in the city of Chernovitz. They lived in Kolomea and commuted to work. Life was hard and business was declining. The letters from his brother-in-law convinced my grandfather to try his luck in America. He would send for his wife and children as soon as he was established.

Max arrived in the Midwest in 1910; he compared South Bend to Chicago. It was no contest; Chicago was the place. Through one of the Jewish organizations he easily found work as a baker, lived frugally, and after two years (and the help of a princely \$450 loan from the Schiff Bank on Roosevelt and Halsted) could send for his family—his wife and children, and also his wife's father and younger brother.

In the month of April, 1912, exactly one week after the disastrous sinking of the Titanic, the Fox/Dermer family was on its way to America. At one point during the voyage, at the approximate location where the Titanic had been struck by an iceberg, the captain of the vessel had his crew round up all the older children on board and bring them to the top deck. He handed out several pairs of binoculars and pointed out the same slow-moving iceberg that had doomed the mighty, unsinkable Titanic. He then sarcastically offered some words in German that my father never forgot. Translated into English: "We're not new; we're not pretty; we're not fast; but we're still sailing."

When the family had completed its exodus from Europe, one half had settled in South Bend and the other half in Chicago. They lived like all newcomers to this country—the children attended public school and

the elders sought ways to make a living. My father, Philip Fox, was 11 years old when they arrived. He had two siblings older and three younger than he. He went to school during the day and worked part-time at night.

When he was just over the age of 18, with money saved and with help from his father and mother, he and his brother Jack were able to purchase their first car. They joined the Checker Taxi Association and turned their new vehicle into a Checker cab. Philip drove days and Jack drove nights. This was the beginning of a long and convoluted career in the taxi business for my father.

At about the same time, in the small rural town of Suleitza, Romania, Chaya Frima Leibovitz, a widowed seamstress, was urging her eldest daughter, Bella, to go to America, to the city of Chicago, where her father's two brothers offered her a better life. Bella, my mother, made the crossing to these shores eight years after my father. She arrived in 1920 at the age of 15.

By the start of the '20s decade, the conflict between the taxi companies in Chicago had been escalating. Yellow Cab, the largest one, owned by John Hertz, had become very sophisticated. The drivers were called chauffeurs, wore uniforms and even bowties. Hertz considered the independent companies, especially the Checker Association, ruff-raff. The independents owned their own cabs, and according to Hertz, were completely disorganized, and pretty much ran roughshod around the city, picking up and discharging fares. They were aggressive in their approach and this irked Mr. Hertz no end; claims of stealing each other's customers usually led to fist fights and malicious damage to the vehicles.

In late 1920 John Hertz convinced his pal "Big Bill" Thompson (considered one of the most crooked, if not *the* most crooked, mayor of a major U.S. city) to have the City Council create and pass an ordinance known as the "Cab Stand Permit Law." In order for a taxicab driver in the city of Chicago to join the line in front of hotels or other designated places to pick up fares, he had to pay a fee to the city and display his permit. The only problem with this law was: if you were *not* a Yellow Cab driver, you *never* got a permit. It was obvious from the beginning that that the taxi wars

continued on page 14

CJHS Welcomes New Members

Phyllis Goldblatt

Mr. & Mrs. Marc Levin

Laurie & Milton Wakschlag

Taxi Wars *continued from page 13*

were a part of the volatile political situation in Chicago. Any attempt to build opposition to the Thompson administration was met with swift retaliation. Because they had the audacity to back Reform candidates, the Checker Association was targeted for harassment. My father and Uncle Jack were loyal Checker drivers, trying to correct this injustice. This is where they gained the reputation as the “rough boys.” Fistfights, smashed windows, brick-throwing, and even gunshots were everyday occurrences during the early months of 1921.

On the night of June 8, 1921 the world fell apart for my father. The battle began early in the evening at the cabstand in front of the Sherman Hotel. Drivers of the Yellow Cab Company and the Checker Association engaged in several altercations. The Checker drivers came out the worse for wear. Sparked by the incidents at the Sherman, other hostilities erupted around the city. Nobody was safe during these melees: not drivers, not passengers, not pedestrians. Bedlam on the Chicago streets continued through the the rest of the night and into the early hours of June 9. The violence came to an end that morning with the murder of Thomas A. Skirven, a Yellow Cab driver.

After being identified by one of the so-called witnesses as having been seen in the car from which the fatal shots had been fired, my father was arrested, without a warrant, in his home on Washburn Avenue.

He was brought to the office of Cook County State’s Attorney Robert E. Crowe. He was never taken to a police station, but was held incommunicado in that office for the next several days. He was brought in and out of a dark room, where for hours at a time he was beaten, kicked, vilified, and threatened with further violence if he did not confess. Morris Stuben, who had been arrested at the same time as my father, was subjected to the same treatment.

Neither attorney George F. Barrett nor his associate, Benjamin Samuels, who conducted the interrogations, were members of the State’s Attorney’s staff or the

Police Department. Both men were attorneys for the Yellow Cab Company, and Barrett was a former law partner of State’s Attorney Crowe.

My father was at the point of confessing to anything in order to stop the unbearable treatment. The last act of terror was administered by two aggressive police officers, Davern and Bernacchi, who kned him in the stomach, beat him about the head and kicked him in the shins, then took him before Barrett, who asked, “Do you know anything about it now?” My father answered that he did not, but would say anything that [Barrett] wanted to hear in order to end the torture. He signed his confession at 3 a.m. Later that morning he and Stuben were taken before the Grand Jury. They appeared without benefit of counsel, and only in the presence of Jury members and people from the State’s Attorney’s office. The Grand Jury handed down three indictments, all for murder.

The *habeas corpus* hearing took place the next day. Judge Wilson, disturbed by the appearance of my father and Morris, ordered a medical examination. He ruled in favor of my dad and Morris and ordered them removed from the custody of the State’s Attorney and the police. They were to be turned over to the Sheriff’s Department to await the first trial. Upon completion of the doctor’s examination, Dad was transferred to the prison hospital where he spent a considerable amount of time recovering from his injuries.

After the arrest, the Grand Jury indictments, and the *habeas corpus* hearings, the matter of raising money for bail fell upon my father’s family. Max Fox, his dad, whose life had been dedicated to providing for his family, never hesitated in putting up the family home as security for the bail money. In spite of the intial shame (the great *shanda*) of the arrest, the family stood by Philip as a solid unit, ready to sacrifice and provide whatever was necessary to prove the innocence of their beloved son and brother. *End of Part One*

The conclusion to Mike Fox’s talk will appear in our next issue. If you are impatient to know the outcome, turn to the pages of your copy of Through the Eyes of Their Children—or order a book from the Society office!

Society to Reprint H.L. Meites *History of the Jews of Chicago* Would You Like to Buy a Copy?

CJHS is planning to reprint the landmark book, which chronicles the contributions made by Jews to our city from its earliest days through 1924. This invaluable reference was republished in 1990 by the Society with financial support from Thomas and Gerald Meites, grandsons of the author, and it is the

1990 edition that will be reprinted (9” x 12”; 701 pp.; members’ price \$49.95 plus s/h). It is important for CJHS to estimate our market—to gauge the number of prospective buyers among historians, librarians, archivists, genealogists, and our members and friends. Would you buy a copy? See coupon on facing page. →

CJHS Mourns Board Member Daniel N. “Danny” Greenberg



Danny Greenberg z”l

Daniel N. Greenberg, 76, died of cancer on July 13, at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

As a native Chicagoan Danny loved the city. He took great pleasure and pride in showing visitors around and was greatly intrigued by the scope of Jewish history and activity in Chicago. He

felt strongly the importance of documenting and retaining the rich history of Chicago’s Jewish community, and served as a committed member of the CJHS Board where his wife, Clare, continues to play an active role.

He is also survived by a daughter, Ruth Bernkoph; two sons, Aaron and Joseph; a sister, Jennie Gordon and five grandchildren.

The Society newsletter published two essays by Danny. The first was about Habonim, the Labor Zionist youth movement, on the occasion of its 50th year in Chicago (Winter 1986). The second was a contribution to our issue commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel (Spring 1998); this essay offered personal insights into the history, personalities and activities of the Labor Zionist Movement in Chicago.

Israel and Labor Zionism played an important role in Danny’s life. He was born into a family of activists—his parents were leading members of the Farband (Jewish National Workers’ Alliance, the Labor Zionist Fraternal Order); Poale Zion (today the Labor Zionist Alliance); and Pioneer Women (now known as Na’amat USA). His eldest sister, the late Ruth Kochansky, was one of the four Chicago delegates to the founding convention of Habonim. Danny and his older sister, Jennie Gordon, joined

Habonim in 1935, summered at Camp Tel Chai in New Buffalo, Michigan and attended meetings at “The (Labor Zionist) Institute” at 3322 West Douglas Boulevard.

After graduating from Manley High School he joined the Army. In March 1945 he was 19 years old and serving as a gunner on a tank moving across Germany when a bazooka shell nearly destroyed the vehicle. Most of the crew fled but Danny, though severely wounded, tried to rescue the driver and did save the tank from destruction. He was awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart but had to spend years in Army hospitals undergoing 30 to 40 procedures to save his legs.

Danny Greenberg graduated from Roosevelt University and received a master’s degree from the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration. He spent most of his career working for the Illinois Department of Mental Health, becoming the superintendent of Chicago Read Mental Health Center in the mid-1980s. Through the Church Federation of Chicago he counseled troubled teens.

When the State of Israel became a reality Danny became increasingly involved in Labor Zionist activities, eventually taking on a leadership role in the LZA, especially with programs for youth, that he continued for the rest of his life.

Through his wife and in-laws he developed an interest in Yiddish literature and the perpetuation of the language and culture. He became an active member of the Chicago YIVO Society and was serving as its treasurer at the time of his death.

Aaron Greenberg said of his father, “He was a hero in every literal and important sense of the word, living a life characterized by courage, sacrifice, and devotion to family, to his country, to the Jewish people and others in pain and in need of help.”

I am pleased to know that the Society is planning to reprint H.L. Meites *History of the Jews of Chicago*. Keep me posted. I would like to buy a copy.

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About the Society

What We Are

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977 and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the American Bicentennial Celebration of 1976. Muriel Robin was the founding president. The Society has as its purpose the discovery, preservation and dissemination of information concerning the Jewish experience in the Chicago area.

What We Do

The Society seeks out, collects and preserves appropriate written, spoken and photographic records; publishes historical information, holds public meetings at which various aspects of Chicago Jewish history are treated; mounts appropriate exhibits; and offers tours of Jewish historical sites.

Volunteer Opportunities

Would you like to become more involved in the activities of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society? We'd love to have you! Following are the various committees on which you can serve. Contact the Society at (312)663-5634 or any of the Chairpersons listed here.

■ PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Do you have a great idea for a meeting topic? If you are organized and creative, friendly and outgoing, the Program Committee would welcome your help in planning and implementing our bi-monthly and annual meetings. Call Charles Bernstein (773)324-6362.

■ MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Society's membership continues to grow, and you could help us introduce Chicago Jewish history to even more people. Share your ideas and energy! Contact Janet Iltis (773)761-1224 or Clare Greenberg (773)725-7330.

■ TOUR COMMITTEE

Bring your creativity and organization to planning and promoting our popular roster of tours on Jewish history. Contact Leah Axelrod (847)432-7003.

■ EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Do you like to write? Are you a great proofreader? You can contribute to our quarterly publication, *Chicago Jewish History*. Contact our editor, Bev Chubat (773)525-4888.

Membership

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations and includes a subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*, discounts on Society tours and at the Spertus Museum store, and the opportunity to learn and inform others about Chicago Jewish history and its preservation.

Dues Structure

Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1 are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership	\$1000
Historian	500
Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron or Family	50
Senior Family or Individual	35
Synagogue or Organization	25
Senior Individual or Student	20

Make checks payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and mail to our office at 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago IL 60605. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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