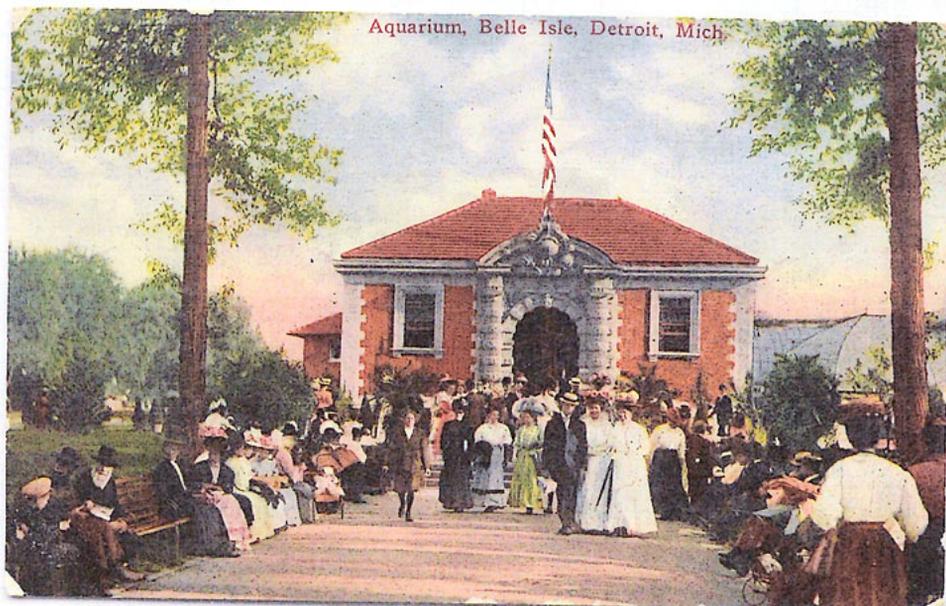


# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY



VOLUME 51 | FALL 2011 | TISHREI 5772



THE MISSION OF THE  
JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN  
IS TO EDUCATE, CELEBRATE AND PROMOTE  
AWARENESS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS  
OF THE JEWS OF MICHIGAN TO OUR STATE,  
OUR NATION AND THE WORLD.



# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

*is dedicated to the memory of Sarah and Ralph Davidson  
and Bessie and Joseph Wetsman, the parents and grandparents  
of William Davidson, of blessed memory, and Dorothy Davidson Gerson.*

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### COVER PHOTO

*Interior and exterior of the Belle Isle Aquarium. These postcards of the Belle Isle Aquarium, both dated around 1910, read: "The Aquarium on Belle Isle is one of the most interesting attractions on the island.*

*During the summer months it is visited by thousands of people daily. The Parks & Boulevards Commission spared no expense to make it the finest of its kind in the country."*

*"The Aquarium on Belle Isle is one of the most popular attractions on the Island. In it will be found all kinds of fresh and salt water fish. The Commission brings the water from the ocean for the latter."*

See The Belle Isle Aquarium, pg. 5

# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

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

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

Joshua 4:21

## THE JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

Volume 51

Fall 2011

Tishrei 5772

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THE A. ALFRED TAUBMAN HERITAGE COUNCIL (Inside Back Cover)

# EDITOR'S LETTER

Shortly after I spent far too many hours digging through computer files looking for various photographs for this journal, I heeded the advice of our 2011 Leonard N. Simons History Award recipient, Charlotte M. Dubin, and uploaded a whole bunch of photos to a nearby photography shop so they could be developed, put in acid-free storage and preserved.

So many of our electronic advances have changed our lives for the better... using text messaging and GPS technology to keep constant track of your children and grandchildren; writing and editing documents and saving every single version; keeping in touch with long lost friends on Facebook and other social media sites; watching movies on demand and making your own microwave buttered popcorn. But also, so many of our technological miracles have created modern-day problems. We seem to have less time than ever as we repeatedly check our text messages, multiple email accounts, blogs and our Facebook page(s). We lose things in a myriad of computer files and electronic storage devices. We forget to print out photos and send them to friends with a hand-written note. And we rely on microwave popcorn instead of gorging on the really-bad-for-you-buttered-movie-theater stuff.

Technology is pretty amazing, but so are some of the old-fashioned ways of doing things. Reading a book electronically is great for those on the go – but holding a volume, looking at photos, feeling the paper is a sensation we want our children to know. Looking at hundreds of vacation photos on your flat-screen television is fantastic, almost like being there, but where will those photos be in ten years? Will the technology of the photo match the technology of the viewing device?

As a historical organization, it is our job to preserve and protect our past and present history for future generations. So, that is why my local photography retailer is going to be seeing a lot of me in these next months...I'll be delivering thumbdrives and flashdrives and cd roms of photos, and getting those images printed. I'll take them to the office to neatly label the back of them, then stash them in a nice acid-free envelope with a date and title. Maybe someday someone who has taken my place will complain about having too many of these strange four by six inch objects on shiny paper, but we'll let that be their problem!

In the meantime, I'm happy to share with you these Preservation Pointers from Charlotte Dubin and the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives.

-Wendy Rose Bice

## PRESERVATION POINTERS

### **Here are a few suggestions on how you can pass your story on to the next generation:**

- Invite a high school or college student and future movie mogul to tape an interview with you (the Federation Archives can help him or her get started). Don't leave out any of the good stuff about your forebears...skeletons in the family closet are the best part!
- If you're camera shy, shock the kids and mail them a letter about yourself. That's right: mail it. Don't e-mail it because delete buttons do not respect history. Your descendants will appreciate it – maybe not now but give it a decade or two. In the meantime, you'll give the U.S. Postal Service some business.
- Digital photos: The Jewish Community Archives has an extraordinary photographic record of our community that goes back nearly a century. Those old photos have lasted, much to the relief of researchers and exhibitors who contact us. Will the thousands of discs and snapshots you stored in your computer last that long? If you don't think you'll be around to check in a hundred years, why not pick your favorites, print them on good photographic paper and stick them in an acid-free album – just in case.
- About those photos: Sure, you know who's in them today, but who will tomorrow? Guess what they'll write on the backs of those snapshots: "Name: question mark. Date: 2000 something." Don't let that happen. Identify the date, place and name of each person on the back. You'll be doing them a mitzvah.

Many of our synagogues maintain historic collections and would be interested in helping you preserve your story and artifacts. Besides the Jewish Community Archives, Temple Beth El's Leo M. Franklin Archives and Congregation Shaarey Zedek have an active archives collection.

# FEATURED ARTICLE

## THE BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM: DAVID E. HEINEMAN'S LITTLE KNOWN LEGACY

by JENNIFER BOARDMAN

*This article pays homage to Detroit statesman and philanthropist David Heineman, who first conceived the idea of a public aquarium for Detroit in the late 19th century when he was inspired by the grandeur and elegance of public parks in Europe. Detroit architect Albert Kahn designed the magnificent Beaux-Arts style Belle Isle Aquarium, which opened in 1904.*

THE Belle Isle Aquarium is commonly believed to be the work of famed Jewish architect, Albert Kahn. While it is true that Albert Kahn *designed* the beautiful Beaux-Arts style building, the creation of the Belle Isle Aquarium was the vision of none other than Detroit Jewish statesman, philanthropist, artist and historian, David Emil Heineman (1865-1935), in the late nineteenth century. The inspiration came to him when he was just a boy.

David Heineman was a man of great intelligence, talent and generosity. He became a civic leader who strived to elevate Detroit from its frontier beginnings to a city of beauty and innovation.<sup>1</sup> His many lasting contributions to Detroit, including creation



David E. Heineman brought the "Aquarium" to Belle Isle



A 1910 postcard, "Interior Aquarium, Belle Isle Michigan" shows exhibits presented as art hanging on the wall and reinforces the idea that strolling through a public cultural institution can uplift the soul.

of Detroit's flag, securing funding for the Detroit Public Library and documenting early Jewish history have been lauded in this journal on at least two prior occasions (*Michigan Jewish History*, Vol. II No. 2, 1962; Vol. 12, No. 1, 1972). However, his influence and vision to build a world-class aquarium in Detroit, at a time when only a handful of public aquariums existed in America, is little known.

## GENESIS OF A VISION FOR DETROIT

Heineman's parents, Emil and Fanny (Butzel) Heineman, were prominent Jewish citizens of Detroit in its pioneer days. Emil Heineman emigrated from Bavaria in 1851. In 1860 he married Fanny Butzel whose family also came from Bavaria. Both Emil and Fanny were very involved in the Jewish community. Fanny served as president of the Detroit Ladies Society for the Support of Hebrew Widows and Orphans, and Emil, a successful businessman and community leader, was president of the Beth El Hebrew Relief Society. He and Fanny's brother, Martin Butzel, established Heineman, Butzel & Company, a wholesale clothing business. The business was extremely profitable and allowed Emil and Fanny to provide their son with the finest education available.

David attended the private school of Professor Philo M. Patterson and the Detroit High School where he graduated in 1883 as class president.<sup>2</sup> Following graduation, Mr. and Mrs. Heineman, like many well-to-do families of the time, sent their son on a "grand tour" of Europe designed to enhance his education through exposure to European art, architecture, and culture. Ultimately this experience proved extraordinarily beneficial to the citizens of Detroit.

While traveling abroad, young David was impressed by the lovely parks, well-ordered public space, wide boulevards, monuments, and fountains that he saw in European cities. He observed that the cities were planned not only to be lovely, but also to be functional and conducive to public gatherings. He noted that in comparison there was much lacking in Detroit's urban planning and beautification.

As part of Heineman's grand tour, he visited the Anton Dohrn Zoological Station (now known as the Naples Aquarium) on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in Naples, Italy, in 1883. The aquarium made a brilliant and lasting impression upon him. At the time, the public display of aquatic life was exceedingly rare in the world. Although the display of fish collections has been documented to ancient times, such exhibits were for temporary appreciation because no means of water purification or oxygenation were known. The first sustained public exhibition of fish occurred in 1853 at the Zoological Gardens in London when the "Fish House" opened.<sup>3</sup> The Fish House relied upon inventions of the first fresh-water aquarium invented in 1841 and the first salt-water aquarium invented in 1846.<sup>4</sup>

The aquarium's forty-four tanks and three floor pools housed a large array of fresh- and salt-water species that most people had never seen before. The rich biodiversity of the Mediterranean Seas afforded visitors to the aquarium the sight of sea horses, eels, rays, colorful parrot fish, starfish and sea urchins as well as aquatic sponges and coral. Most certainly these displays were fascinating to observe, especially for Heineman, as they gave him a glimpse into the natural world that Charles Darwin had introduced.

Following the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, a new excite-



*This postcard of the completed Belle Isle Aquarium shows children observing the various aquariums of Belle Isle Aquarium. In the center a girl is looking at a turtle or alligator; around the perimeter stands a watchman. The dimly lit, shimmering domed ceiling constructed of green-glass opalite tile transports visitors to the seas.*

ment about the theory of evolution as an explanation of life phenomena rippled through the world. Based upon the theory of evolution, Anton Dohrn, a German naturalist (1840–1909), created the Zoological Station to study the basis of natural selection and to investigate the evolutionary origins of animal adaptation to the environment. At the time, the station was a unique institution because it was open to both scientists from anywhere in the world and to the public.

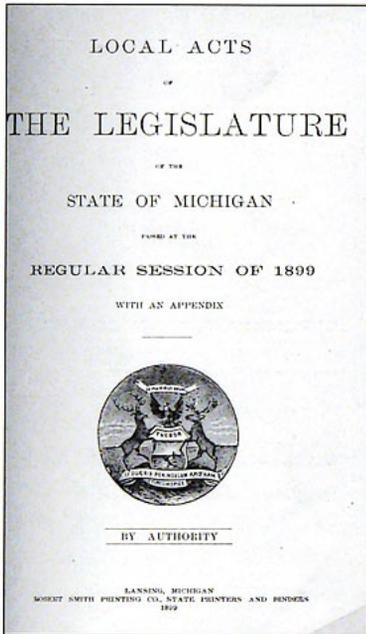
David Heineman's unique opportunity to observe and appreciate the aquatic life at the Anton Dohrn Zoological Station, its beautiful building and the scientists and citizens observing the aquatic displays, left a lasting impression that evidently remained in his mind for years. After returning to Detroit, Heineman entered the University of Michigan where he earned a degree in philosophy in 1887 and law in 1889.<sup>6</sup> He served as a Detroit city attorney from 1893 to 1896 and, in 1899, was elected state representative. It was as state representative that Heineman was finally able to act upon the observations he made during his European travels and particularly his visit to the Anton Dohrn Zoological Station.

While in office, he pursued acts of local interest for the betterment of the community, such as building parks and improving public space.<sup>7</sup> His pursuits reflected a movement that was popping up all over the country as a result of European travels similar to his own, known as the City Beautiful Movement. The movement promoted well-ordered public space, grand civic buildings, and formal parks, boulevards, horticulture, and menagerie collections as having worthwhile social benefits. These benefits included the power to uplift and to exert positive psychological effects upon the citizenry by creating wholesome recreational diversions.<sup>8</sup>

## REALIZING A VISION FOR DETROIT

Rep. David Heineman was heavily influenced by these trends, using his own travel experiences to contribute to the elevation of Detroit from its modest beginnings as a frontier town to a model of a successful, beautiful city. He blended the concepts of the benefits of European urban improvements with new scientific innovations, particularly those the Anton Dohrn Zoological Station exhibited. He became committed to building a supremely modern and beautiful aquarium and horticultural building to be located in Detroit. In 1899, he introduced a civic-minded bill to the Michigan Legislature. The legislation read:

“AN ACT to authorize the city of Detroit, through the Common Council thereof, to issue, subject to the approval of the Electors of said City, Bonds to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, for the purpose of improving Belle Isle Park in said City, by the erection thereon of a combined Aquarium and Horticultural building, and under certain conditions, of other permanent improvements.”<sup>9</sup>



*The Legislature of the State of Michigan 1899. Cover page of the book that describes Rep. Heineman's bill to fund the aquarium, and its passage.*

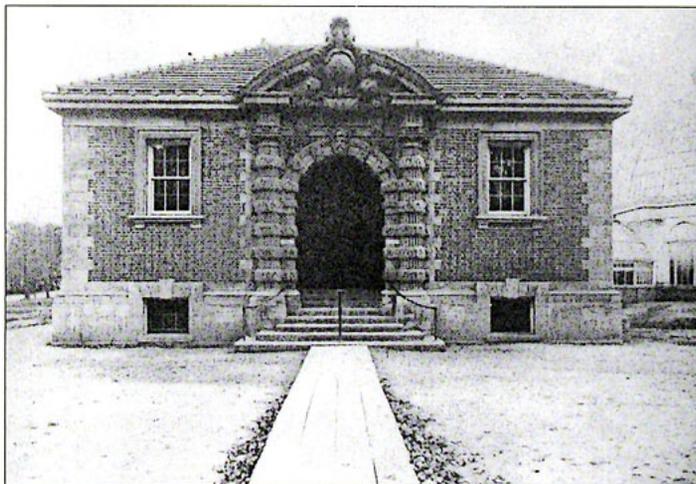
With passage of the bill, \$150,000 was allocated to design, construct and stock an aquarium and an attached horticultural building. Heineman chose Belle Isle Park as the location for the new aquarium. Design of the building was controlled by Robert E. Bolger, Commissioner of Parks and Boulevards.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Bolger, along with the Michigan chapter of the American Institute of Architects, invited professional architects to compete in the design of the building. The concept of collective collaboration of professionals in the design of public buildings was another element that grew out of the City Beautiful Movement.<sup>11</sup>

The Detroit-based architectural firm of Nettleton and Kahn won the competition.<sup>12</sup> Architect Albert Kahn had already achieved prominence for his designs of the Scripps Library and Art Gallery, Temple Beth El and many other Detroit landmarks. Like Rep. Heineman, Kahn toured Europe as a young man in the late 19th century and was influenced by the architecture and well-ordered public space that he saw and sketched.<sup>13</sup> European architecture, particularly the style taught at the French seat of learning, the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, influenced his concept of the

aquarium. Kahn designed the aquarium in the Beaux-Arts style, which consisted of a return to the classical ideals in architecture including principles of proportion, scale, and balance, heavy ornamentation of the façade and a building organized with function in mind. He also used sculptural cues outside the building to tell the visitor what to expect inside.

Construction began in 1901. The design, which resembled the Anton Dohrn Aquarium in style, featured external ornamentation consisting of a façade of round Roman

columns and an arch punctuated with hand carved seaweed, seashells, spitting fish, and a keystone of the Roman god of the sea Neptune, topped with a shell, the universal sign of welcome. Finally, a cartouche bearing the City of Detroit seal capped the façade's ornamentation. The seal stated in Latin, "It shall rise from the ashes. We hope for better things," commemorating the fire of 1805 when the city of Detroit was nearly destroyed.



*Construction photograph taken for Mason & Rice shows the building just completed without any hardscaping; only a wood plank sidewalk leads to the building.*

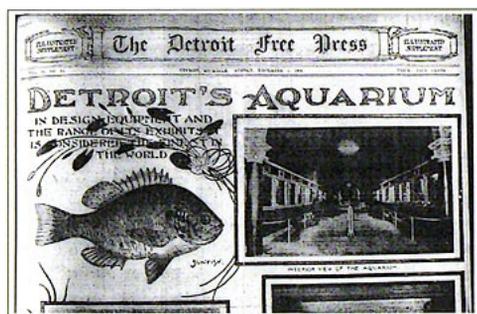
Photo courtesy of Detroit Public Library Burton Collection

With construction complete, the aquarium was stocked with fifty types of fresh water fish, six types of fresh-water crustaceans and reptiles, forty-nine types of salt-water fish and thirteen varieties of salt-water crustaceans.<sup>14</sup> On August 18, 1904, the aquarium opened to the public under the simple name "Aquarium." At the time of its completion, according to the *Detroit Free Press* December 4, 1904, "Illustrated Supplement," Detroit's aquarium was considered "in design, equipment and the range of its exhibits, the finest in the world." R. E. Bolger also declared, "[t]he aquarium is pronounced by the leading aquarists of this country to be second to none in the world."<sup>15</sup>

The Belle Isle Aquarium won many awards of the highest prestige and attracted many notable visitors. In developing an aquarium for Belle Isle Park, Heineman amalgamated multiple ideas and trends of the time. These trends included City Beautiful Movement ideals in urban planning, civic support for institutions believed to provide wholesome recreational diversions for the growing industrial workforce, interest in man's place in the world that reflected the new Darwinian concept of evolution and the fascination of maintaining live menagerie collections for study and public exhibition.

David Heineman's prescient vision of a premier aquarium for the city of Detroit afforded its citizens more than one hundred years of enjoyment and delight. In 2005, the Belle Isle Aquarium was closed. Currently Friends of Belle Isle Aquarium, a nonprofit organization, is raising funds to restore and reopen the aquarium for the enjoyment of all, just as David Heineman envisioned. In July 2011, Friends of Belle Isle Aquarium won two grants to benefit the Belle Isle Aquarium. A grant awarded by the National Trust

for Historic Preservation helped to fund the hiring of Merz & Associates, LLC, a historic architectural firm to create plans and drawings of the aquarium roof. A second grant awarded by the Michigan State Housing Authority, State Historic Preservation Office will help to fund the roof repairs. Friends of Belle Isle Aquarium will provide funds to match each grant. Repairs are scheduled to begin in April 2012. Repairing the roof is the first step in reopening the Belle Isle Aquarium.



The Detroit Free Press inserted an illustrated supplement on December 1, 1904, stating that the aquarium "in design, equipment and the range of its exhibits, it is considered the finest in the world."



A rendering of children observing one of the larger tanks at the newly opened Belle Isle Aquarium, circa 1905. On the back of the postcard, is an inscription "For dear little Martha, from her Auntie Anna."

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Paul Leak, *The History of Detroit* (New York: Lewis Publishing Co. 1912), 1207.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 1175

<sup>3</sup>Leszek Solski Wroclaw, "Public Aquariums 1853-1914 Historical Perspective," *Zoologische Garten* 75 (2006): 362.

<sup>4</sup>Albert J. Klee, *The Toy Fish – A History of Aquarium Hobby in America – The First One-Hundred Years* (Rhode Island: Finley Aquatic Books, 2003), 4, 14-15.

<sup>5</sup>Ernst Florey, "The Zoological Station at Naples and the Neuron: Personalities and Encounters in a Unique Institution," *Biological Bulletin*. 168 (June 1985): 137-152.

<sup>6</sup>Paul Leak, *The History of Detroit* (New York: Lewis Publishing Co. 1912), 1207.

<sup>7</sup>Irving I. Katz, "Detroit's Flag Designed by a Jew," *Michigan Jewish History, Journal of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan*, vol. 2, no. 2 (January 1962): 13.

<sup>8</sup>Paul Leak, *The History of Detroit* (New York: Lewis Publishing Co. 1912), 1207.

<sup>9</sup>Michigan State Legislature, *Local Acts*, no. 421, (Lansing, 1899), 231-233.

<sup>10</sup>City of Detroit Department of Parks and Boulevards, *Twelfth Annual Report of the Commissioner* (Detroit, 1901), 14.

<sup>11</sup>W. Hawkins Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit a History – A History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), 216.

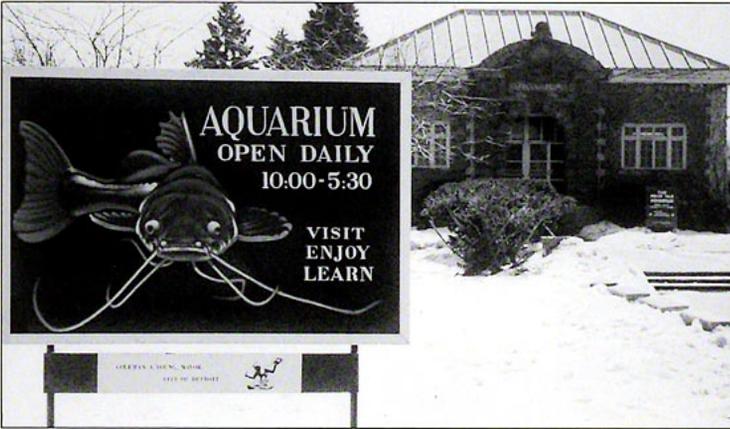
<sup>12</sup>City of Detroit Department of Parks and Boulevards, *Twelfth Annual Report of the Commissioner* (Detroit, 1901), 12.

<sup>13</sup>W. Hawkins Ferry, *The Legacy of Albert Kahn* (Detroit: DIA, 1970), 9.

<sup>14</sup>Detroit Zoological Society, *Official Catalog of the Detroit Aquarium*, (Detroit: Detroit Zoological Society, 1912).

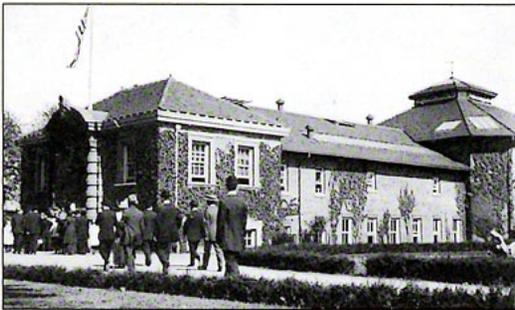
<sup>15</sup>"One of Best in the World," *The Detroit Free Press*, August 19, 1904.

\* Additional citation for Emil and Fanny Heineman and the seal of Detroit: Silas Farmer, *The History of Detroit and Michigan or The Metropolis Illustrated, a Chronological Cyclopaedia (sic) of the Past and Present*, (Detroit: Silas Farmer & Co, 1884), 629, 657, 783.



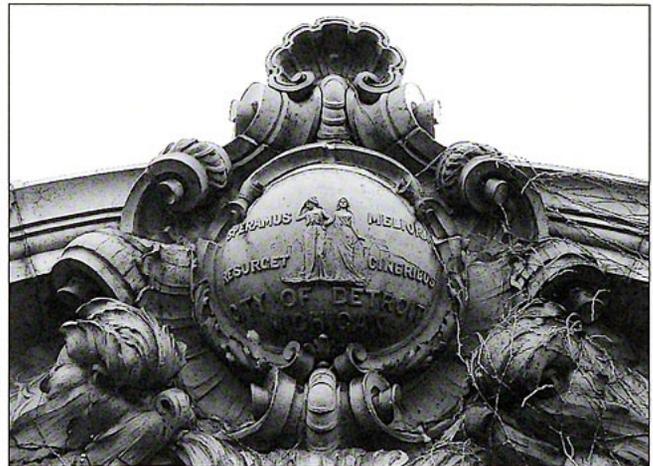
This photo shows the aquarium in the 1970s with a sign painted by Detroit Zoological Park official staff artist John Byron Siegel.

A postcard sent to Greenbay, Wisconsin



In the first year of operation, 686,905 people visited the two hundred foot long aquarium, with a daily average of 1,999.

This cartouche, which rests above the entrance and caps the facade of the Belle Isle Aquarium, depicts the City of Detroit seal that states in Latin, "It shall rise from the ashes. We hope for better things." The saying commemorates the fire of 1805 when the city was destroyed.



**Jennifer Boardman** earned her BA in English and Humanities from Michigan State University and her MA-H summa cum laude from Central Michigan University. Her thesis, "A Case Study into the Closing of the Belle Isle Aquarium in Detroit, Michigan" won the 2010 Outstanding Thesis Award. Ms. Boardman is a life member of the Belle Isle Women's Committee and the Secretary of Friends of Belle Isle Aquarium. Ms. Boardman helped to secure two generous grants from the National Trust and the State Historic Preservation Office to begin repairing the Belle Isle Aquarium.

FEATURED  
ARTICLE

## THE JEWISH CENTER ORCHESTRA

by MARILYN SHAPIRO

*The Jewish Center Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Julius Chajes, earned national prestige for its success in attracting world-renowned figures in composition and performances, mentoring and developing young talent, bringing a new level of music appreciation to the Detroit metropolitan area and extending its influence as a first-class symphony around the world.*

IN the spring of 2010, Leonard Slatkin, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's twelfth and current conductor, enthralled the Jewish Community Center audience with a memoir of his own youth and musical influences. Living in Hollywood among a significant population of Eastern European musicians who had fled the Holocaust around the time of World War II, Slatkin credited the influence of his community, almost as much as the mentoring of his own musical parents, with his becoming a musician. The influx of immigrant musicians had enriched the public school system in Los Angeles so that the school young Slatkin attended was able to provide three choruses, two orchestras and a composer in residence. Immigrant musicians — including Slatkin's mother, a cellist, and his father, a violinist — found livelihoods in the film industry, but also participated in the enrichment of their community. Not only did these musicians perpetuate their own musical heritage, they made the pursuit of music as an occupation viable to a new generation, born in America.

Although one may not readily parallel Hollywood and the film industry of the 1930s with the Jewish Community Center of Detroit in the forties, it, too, became the focus of musical achievement for the greater Detroit community. The Jewish Community Center building on Woodward and Holbrook was the first Jewish Center in Detroit, dedicated in 1933 and enlarged in 1939. A fledgling Jewish Center Orchestra began there under the direction of Valter Poole, a violist and assistant conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Poole was given the directorship under the Works Progress Administration (WPA), designed in 1939 to offer work to the unemployed. Musicians, artists, and writers were offered employment under the Federal Arts Project, a division of the WPA, to provide art in non-federal government buildings.

Prominent Jewish philanthropists Abraham and Rose Cooper, Fred Butzel, and Cantor Jason Tickton and his wife Mimi had the foresight to bring Julius Chajes to Detroit in 1940 to take over the direction of what would become the Jewish Center Orchestra. Chajes seems to have been the pivotal figure in the orchestra's success.



*Julius Chajes came to Detroit in 1940 to conduct the Jewish Center Orchestra.*

Julius Chajes was born in 1910 in Lemberg, Galicia, now Lvov in the Ukraine. A child prodigy, he gave his first recital at nine and wrote a string quartet at thirteen. He studied with Hugo Kauder, a pupil of Franz Liszt, and won the First International Piano Competition in Vienna in 1933. He immigrated to Palestine because of Nazism and became chair of the piano department of the Tel Aviv Conservatory, assimilating "ancient and contemporary Jewish sources" into his own compositions. Chajes moved to New York in 1938, and in 1939 his composition, "Psalm 142 for chorus and organ," was performed at the World's Fair. The following year he became musical director of the Jewish Community Center of Detroit, where he would remain a leading member of Detroit's musical community for the next 45 years. One of Chajes's obituaries in 1985 claims that Chajes considered the Jewish Center Orchestra and the interest in classical music, which the orchestra fostered, to be one of his major achievements.



*Twenty years after bringing him to Detroit, Mrs. Rose Cooper (far right) joined Mayor of Detroit Louis Miriani (center) in honoring Julius Chajes (left). The Mayor proclaimed February 7, 1961 as Julius Chajes Day. The proclamation reads, in part, "Julius Chajes has contributed to the cultural development of this city, raising the Center Symphony Orchestra to a position of eminence among community orchestras in Michigan."*



The 1940-41 season's orchestra members on the stage of the Jewish Community Center, located on Meyers Road in Detroit.

### CHAJES NURTURES YOUNG TALENT AND LAUNCHES CAREERS

Under Chajes, the Jewish Center Orchestra evolved into a semi-professional ensemble made up of both adults and young performers. Many young Detroit musicians were taught and nurtured by Chajes, becoming prominent musicians themselves.

On February 2, 1947, Chajes conducted a concert for young people presented with Jerome Stashevsky, violinist; Rosalie Gross, soprano; and Betty Kowalsky on the piano. A few of these musicians had nationally recognized careers in their youth and then came back to the Detroit area to make their homes and careers. The *Detroit Jewish News* enumerated many of the highly acclaimed hometown musicians who scattered throughout the nation, heading university departments and providing wide orchestral

*Chajes derived great joy in teaching young students. Many children of Holocaust survivors became music students, as music was considered part of their therapy. The young people pictured in this 1956 photograph include: (l to r) Ronnie Walton, 16; Alan Vosko, 14; Julius Chajes; Jerry Plust, 9 and Joyce Golding, 16. Photograph by Irene Mayer.*



leadership — artists such as Ana and Ida Kavafian, Richard Luby and David Syme. Others went on to teach all across America. David Cerone became head of the string department at the Cleveland Institute of Music; Kenneth Goldsmith, violinist on the music faculty of Stanford University; Paul Schoenfield, professor of piano and composition at Toledo University; Judith Edberg head of the piano department at the University of Tampa; Rita Sloan-Gottlieb, professor of piano at the University of Washington; and Violet Toth-Viguri of the music faculty at Manatee College, Florida.

Other notable Chajes disciples included Joseph Silverstein, concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, who at 17 was the youngest member of the Detroit Symphony before going to Boston; and Joseph Gingold, piano teacher and one-time director of the Jewish Center Orchestra, who went on to be concertmaster of the Detroit Symphony and then director of the Cleveland Symphony. Daniel Majeske, concertmaster of the Cleveland Symphony and Isidore Saslov, concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony, were other disciples as was Kurt Siefer, one of Chajes's students from Vienna, who went on to Julliard and starred in opera companies in New York.

### ORCHESTRA ATTRACTS INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS

Besides nurturing new talent, Chajes and his orchestra introduced the Detroit metropolitan community to world renowned performers. The *Jewish News* of October 1943 announced that Kurt Baum, Metropolitan Opera tenor, was to make his Detroit debut at a Tuesday evening concert on November 10. On December 19, 1943, The *Detroit News* reported that Emanuel List, basso of the Metropolitan Opera would have a recital, the "4<sup>th</sup> time a noted artist has been engaged to make his Detroit debut." The article further reported that "artists accept fees that cover their expenses only" and "proceeds go toward maintenance of the Center's Music Department." In 1973, on the occasion of the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of this unique organization, articles in local newspapers chronicled the appearances, through the years of "many notable pianists, violinists, cellists, and vocalists."

Perhaps because of the uncertain situation of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra during the WWII years, the Jewish Center Orchestra became a repository of musical life for the entire city of Detroit and its surrounding communities. The Jewish Center Orchestra seemed to take up the slack, using Detroit Symphony performers along with its amateurs. The performances were highly acclaimed. *The Detroit News* in a



Among the many Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians who frequently played with the Center Orchestra were lead pianist Mischa Kottler and associate concertmaster and violinist Gordon Staples, above.

May 1957 article by music critic John Finlayson marveled that “the orchestra, conducted by Julius Chajes, was particularly responsive — everywhere on the program — causing one to marvel all over again that such a small orchestra with only a sprinkling of veterans in its ranks can produce such fine music.” Joseph Mossman, another *Detroit News* music critic, also marveled that “largely unprofessional” musicians even attempt challenging orchestral works. Yet he says “the orchestra, under Julius Chajes’ direction, made of its part far more than an accompaniment. The support of the ensemble completed a splendid artistic collaboration.” Chajes, according to Mossman, “demanded” a certain level of performance of great works and “the orchestra fulfilled his orders.” A 1954 *Detroit News* article claims that Chajes credited his success with his method of “painless auditions.” People were invited to play with the orchestra at a full rehearsal where Chajes would call for a “particularly trying number;” to weed out those who were not capable. The crossover of symphonic musicians and talented amateurs apparently was effective in creating and maintaining the quality performances cited by critics.

### AUDIENCES FOLLOW ORCHESTRA TO NEW BUILDINGS

The audience’s interest in classical music, which Chajes considered one of his major achievements, was evidenced by the subsequent renovations of each succeeding Jewish Center auditorium. Mossman, reviewing a concert, speaks of the “crowd that filled Hyman C. Broder Auditorium at the Jewish Community Center;” the second Jewish Center on Davison in Detroit. The Aaron De Roy Building on Meyers was built in 1959 with a state-of-the-art theater. Mossman reviewed its opening concert before a standing room audience of 500, praising the new theater as “beautiful, both visually and acoustically. Subtleties and nuances and tone colorings were heard from the orchestra, that had not been brought out in proper acoustical perspective in the former location,” he notes. He praises the “magnificent musicianship” of Detroit Symphony Orchestra member Mischa Mischakoff as a fitting way to inaugurate the “overture to a new brilliant era in the Center Symphony’s history.” It would seem as if the building – and especially its auditorium – were built specifically for the Jewish Center Orchestra.

The programs themselves were also acclaimed by reviewers. For example, *The Detroit News* of October 1943 reports that a series of compositions highlighting the music of Czech composers was scheduled to be performed. Canadian contralto Doris Brill and Emily Mutter Adams of the Detroit Symphony



*The Aaron De Roy Building’s opening concert featured Mischa Mischakoff (a Detroit Symphony member) performing the Overture to “The Marriage of Figaro.” Mischa Mischakoff, Mrs. Saul Rose, Mrs. David Wilkus and Julius Chajes admire Mischakoff’s violin.*

would be featured. New compositions as well as renowned standards were part of Chajes's programming. Indeed the Detroit premiere of a piece by a contemporary Swiss composer, Rolf Lieberman, was presented at a family concert in May 1958. Mossman called the piece "stunning." One of the artists singled out was Mario di Fiore on cello, also a member of the Detroit Symphony. J. Dorsey Callaghan of the *Detroit Free Press* praised a piece of traditional classical repertoire also: "The Schubert Fifth Symphony was a shining example of the result of sensitive reading of a great score." Harvey Taylor in *The Detroit Times*, October 1953 comments: "The orchestra composed of amateurs with a good hard core of Detroit Symphony players in key jobs gave a good account of itself...in Gluck's 'Iphigenia' Overture and the Haydn 'London Symphony'." And again, "The orchestra demonstrated its competence in Mendelssohn's 'Ruy Blas' overture," according to John Sweeney of *The Detroit Times*.

### MUSIC CRITICS LAUD CHAJES'S WORKS

Some say Chajes's move to Detroit curtailed his own compositional influence on music in general. His own works were, however, recognized and championed early by music critics. His String Quartet No. 2 was premiered by the "famous Rose Quartet"; Chajes, himself, "premiered his own piano concerto with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Paul Paray, in 1950. At times, his works were scheduled as part of the Jewish Center's orchestral programming. Ruth Zaromp, critic for the *Eccentric* newspapers, lamented in March 1985 that Chajes was too ill to perform a concert highlighting his own Trio in D Minor for Violin, Cello and Piano, written when he was 29. The work itself was played later "dedicated to his memory." Zaromp confessed that "one of [her] major reasons for attending these concerts was to hear Chajes's compositions" since "not many of them have been recorded – maybe more will be in the future," she reflected after Chajes's death.

Chajes's other works include a short choral work, "Song of Galilee," which incorporates instruments that capture the rhythm of the *Horah* – a traditional Jewish dance – performed in a circle at many Jewish festive occasions, and an opera, "Out of the Desert," recalling "cantorial melodies of the synagogue." He was also renowned as a writer of choral music and wrote compositions for many non-Jewish choral groups. Among his "81 compositions and arrangements...His Cantata on the 142nd Psalm," reports *Free Press* writer J. Dorsey Callaghan in 1949, "written in Vienna in 1932, had innumerable performances by Jewish and Christian choirs alike and...was cited as a fine example of modern church music." Callaghan subtitled his article "Chajes Makes Detroit a Center of Palestinian Song." Although his orchestra was based at the Jewish Center, Chajes wanted the orchestra to be ecumenical. Some of his programming, in fact, reflected his aim. *The Jewish Chronicle*, in February 1943, describes a free Brotherhood concert that would be presented in the main auditorium of the Jewish Community Center. Emily Mutter Adams, violinist with the Detroit Symphony, and Margaret Mannebach, Symphony pianist, were scheduled to perform, as well as Rose Cooper, soprano, under the direction of both Julius Chajes and Dr. Nellie Huger, director of church music in the Detroit Council of Churches. Here were all of Chajes's aims – an amalgam of professional and non-professional musicians, Jew and Christian alike.

## A LASTING AND LINGERING LEGACY

Long before the women's liberation movement, the orchestra awarded a majority of the first chair positions to women, a milestone noted in a 1958 Detroit Free Press article. The article also credits the orchestra's prestige, its increasingly important national reputation and its ability to attract world renowned figures in composition and performance.

Chajes remained on the stand, at the head of the orchestra, until shortly before his death in early 1985. In those last years, the orchestra performed at the newly built Jewish Community Center on Maple and Drake in West Bloomfield, most likely in the center's social hall, which would become known later as Handelman Hall. In March 1985, a long-scheduled concert featuring Chajes on the piano became instead a memorial to the beloved leader. Failing health had led him to ask pianist Bernard Katz to play for him and Felix Resnick to conduct. When Chajes passed away before the concert, orchestra members dedicated the program to his career.

Chajes's influence was paramount in bringing a new level of music appreciation to the entire Detroit metropolitan area and in generating a



A 1955 concert featuring Soprano Marguerite Kozenn-Chajes, the wife of Julius Chajes.



Maestro Julius Chajes led the Center Orchestra

Fourth Concert 28th Season

The Jewish Community Center  
presents

The Center Symphony Orchestra

**JULIUS CHAJES, Conductor**  
Soloists: **JOANN FREEMAN, Pianist**  
**ANNETTE CHAJES, Mezzo-Soprano**



**J. Freeman**

**Tuesday,**  
**Feb. 27, 1968**  
**8:30 p. m.**  
**Aaron DeRoy**  
**Auditorium**



**A. Chajes**

**PROGRAM**

Symphony No. 38, K 504 in D Major ..... **Mozart**  
Adagio - Allegro  
Andante  
Finale: Presto  
Piano Concerto Op. 25 in G Minor ..... **Mendelssohn**  
Molto Allegro con fuoco - Andante - attacca -  
Presto

**Intermission**

\*Prelude, Passacaglia and Fugue  
for Strings ..... **Hugo Kauder**  
\*Songs of the Shulamite ..... **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco**  
from "Song of Songs" for Voice, Flute, Harp and Strings  
"I am the Rose of Sharon"  
"The Voice of My Beloved!"  
"By Night!"  
"I Was Asleep"  
Flute Solo: **SHAUL BEN-MEIR**  
Steinway Piano

\*First performance in Detroit

Tickets: \$2.50 Center Members \$2.00

Next Concert: Tuesday, March 26, 1968  
Soloist: **MISCHA KOTTLER, Pianist,**  
in Beethoven's Concerto No. 5

widening circle of community musical participation. Although many of Chajes's musicians went out into the wider musical world, some, like the Stassons (see sidebar), stayed to give Detroit its own cadre of talent. The Jewish Center Orchestra is venerated by both those who left and those who chose to remain part of this community. The Jewish Center Orchestra was their Julliard, providing the companionship of talented, musical, like-minded colleagues, some headed for musical professions, some not. Those who had musical training and expertise, but chose non-musical professions, had the unique opportunity to be a part of creating music acclaimed by experts and the lay public alike. Those who went on to be musicians will, like Leonard Slatkin, the conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, remember the unique mentoring experiences of their home community.



*Marilyn Shapiro recently retired from Oakland University, has been a member of the Humanities Department at Lawrence Technological University, and does writing and editing, usually of academic articles.*

All photographs courtesy of Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives.

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## INTERVIEWS

Betty Kowalsky Stasson

## Fledglings Mentored by Chajes

Jerome Stashevsky (Stasson), a violin student of Chajes, became concertmaster of the Jewish Center Orchestra after serving in the army where he had been a member of the armed forces division that liberated Buchenwald (his personal report is archived at the Holocaust Memorial Center). Stashevsky, who changed his name to Stasson, had quite a distinguished career in Detroit becoming the head of the Fine Arts Department of the Detroit Public schools after performing professionally nationwide in his youth.

Jerome's wife, Betty Kowalsky Stasson, was another accomplished, homegrown musician. At the age of four and a half, Betty exhibited a zealous curiosity about the piano, leading her parents to give her piano lessons. By the age of seven, Betty was discovered to have absolute pitch, a rare and inborn talent. By the time she reached age twelve, her parents brought her to Julius Chajes for lessons. Skeptical about her as a potential artist, Chajes was convinced once he heard Betty play a Chopin waltz. She soon began taking two lessons a week from the maestro and studied with him for at least ten years, becoming his assistant when she was fifteen. Betty went on to win a competition in Vienna and began studying with Mischa Kottler of the Detroit Symphony. She also pursued a national concert career. A Lake Placid, New York, newspaper article describes a concert directed by Madame Hedwig Rosenthal, the famous pianist and instructor, introducing two pupils, one of whom, Betty Kowalsky, "ranks among the best pianists in the country." The article declares that Betty, "at 16 years of age...disclosed a perfection in technical romantic feeling." In 1949, J. Dorsey Callaghan, of *The Detroit Free Press*, called Kowalsky "one of the outstanding talents among the rising generation of pianists." The Jewish community and the Jewish Center Orchestra were pivotal in establishing a venue for this talent.



Betty Stasson



Jerome Stasson

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## FEATURED ARTICLE

# WILLARD "BILL" COHODAS: A JEWISH LEADER OF MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA

by HERBERT YOSKOWITZ

*This essay focuses on the life of Bill Cohodas, his involvement in and impact on the Jewish communities of the Upper Peninsula and his role in founding the first synagogue in the Marquette-Ishpeming area, Temple Beth Shalom. He initiated the annual Holocaust Memorial Program for Marquette University and its environs. Through his efforts, a camp for disabled children was maintained and supported. He helped initiate Jewish Youth Conclaves for the UP so that young Jewish people could meet each other. Due to his generosity and service on its Board of Governors, the Hebrew University made him an Honorary Fellow.*

AS a summer school student at the University of Michigan in 1962 and as a rabbi in Michigan since 1994, I rarely heard about the Ishpeming/Marquette Jewish community and much less about Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the land lying south of Lake Superior and north of Lake Michigan — which for many years was the homeland of the Chippewa Indians— until I was invited to write about Bill Cohodas of Ishpeming.

As I researched the topic, I learned about the exchange between Ohio and Michigan in which Michigan transferred the rights to the area of Toledo in exchange for the Upper Peninsula. Interesting, too, was that founders of towns throughout the Upper Peninsula were careful to honor the names of the Jesuit Fathers, such as Marquette, who were the first explorers of that region, and of Indian names such as Ishpeming, which is a general term in Ojibwa for any remarkable elevation, even to Heaven itself.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the Upper Peninsula, even if it is a heavenly dimension, receives little coverage because in the 1970s at least, it was "a marginal part of the state economically."<sup>2</sup> And, even though the UP encompasses about one third of Michigan's land, it "has only about six percent of the state's population."<sup>3</sup>

The Jewish communities of the UP and Jews who lead them are little known, too. The Montreal-born fur trader Ezekiel Solomon established himself in the Fort Michilimackinac in 1761! William Saulson, a Polish-born merchant, ran the successful People's Store in St. Ignace and was a very active community leader in the late 1800s. And, William Davidson, of blessed memory, former owner of the Detroit Pistons and

renowned for his philanthropy and leadership, commissioned a book about his mother's family in which mention is made of some family roots in Northern Michigan towns of Munising, Grand Marais and St. Ignace.<sup>4</sup>

The only book about an Upper Peninsula Jewish family I found is Wilbert H. Treloar's *Cohodas: The Story of a Family*, which focuses on the life of Bill's uncle and family leader, Sam Cohodas, a major contributor to Northern Michigan University, other local causes and Israel. "It is more than just coincidence that he has given a major educational gift to Jerusalem exactly matching a similar gift (\$250,000) to Northern Michigan University in Marquette."<sup>5</sup>

### WILLARD "BILL" L. COHODAS

In 1985, at age 71, Bill Cohodas fulfilled a lifelong dream. It had nothing to do with financial success or with being recognized as a leader by his peers. The dream involved being a follower, specifically to walk in the steps of the Prophet Moses. Leading a group of ten, several of whom were half his age, Bill climbed to the top of Mt. Sinai.

Filled with admiration, Bill's daughter, Lynn Stahl, recalls her father's reaction to the experience. "He said, 'It was so exciting, I had such a feeling of awe that I was completely overwhelmed. I closed my eyes a couple of times and I almost felt Moses standing next to me receiving the Ten Commandments.'"

"How many seventy-one year old men," she wonders, "who have had three quarters of their stomach removed for ulcers, major surgery done on both knees and an upper-back laminectomy, are able, willing or desirous of conquering this kind of challenge?" Bill Cohodas has spent his life overcoming challenges.



Willard and Lois Cohodas met in 1938 and were married in 1939.

[Proverbs 29 refers to the blessing a person receives when children give praises to a parent.] Bill's two daughters, Lynn Stahl and Nancy Oberman have nothing but praise for their father. He is a man, Oberman says, who lived his values while never seeking the limelight.

Bill rarely allows himself to be publicly recognized. In November 2002, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem presented Bill with an Honorary Fellowship at a Special Meeting of the Board of Governors, of which he is a member. In his acceptance speech, the honoree referred to his family and to his 40 years of active leadership in the Hebrew University. For him, Hebrew University's focus on agriculture was primary "because of our family interest in apple orchards going back 150 years starting with my great-grandparents."<sup>7</sup>

The department of Biblical Archeology was a major source of inspiration for him. Proudly, he told the Board of Governors that he has shown photographs and slides of archeological finds from Israel's digs to school groups and adults in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. He concluded his remarks with references to his wife Lois, who partnered with him in contributing to the growth and development of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and to the support of Israel. At the Hebrew University, Lois and Bill established the Lois and Willard Cohodas Archeological Research Fund and the Cohodas Family Chair in Clinical Microbiology that honors the women of the Cohodas family.

As he was about to turn 90, Bill was honored at Temple Beth Sholom in Ishpeming. On the pulpit, stood Rabbi Sam Stahl, Bill's son-in-law, who met his bride as a student rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom.

"We now honor him in the Temple, which he helped to found and lead and where he taught numerous students the fundamentals of Judaism. We honor him in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, to whose civic improvement and betterment he has contributed his time, talents, and resources."

## FROM THE BEGINNING

The second child of Harry and Lillian Cohodas, Willard was born in 1914 in Menominee, Michigan, located in the southern central part of the Upper Peninsula, where his father ran one of the city's first movie houses. When young "Billy" was two, his father, mother and older brother Arnold moved southwest to Shawano, Wisconsin, where Harry ran another of the family's five movie houses. One year later, Billy and his family moved north to Michigan's Hancock/Houghton area where Harry and Lillian opened a fruit market. Soon after, Harry and his brother Sam set up a larger retail and wholesale produce business which eventually became the nation's third largest wholesale produce company.<sup>9</sup>

Tragedy struck the Cohodas family in 1920 when Bill's mother, Lillian, died. Billy, Arnie and their younger sister Heather, nicknamed "June" for the month in 1917 in which she was born, were sent by their father to Ishpeming to live with their grandmother, aunts and uncles. They lived apart from their father for about a year. When Billy was seven, his father took him to Duluth, Minnesota, to meet Eve who would become Harry's wife and help to raise his children. The family was reunited and returned to the

Hancock-Houghton home. The terrible grief of Lillian's sudden death resulted in a very close and strong bond among the three Cohodas children, a bond that remained strong throughout their lives.

Billy became a Bar Mitzvah at Temple Jacob in Hancock and four years later, as he was about to enter the University of Michigan, he chose to honor his mother's memory in a unique way by adding the middle initial "L" for Lillian to his name.

His heartfelt intentions had one slip up — he apparently registered for school under both names. While there, he received notification that Willard L. Cohodas did not complete class requirements while Willard Cohodas did.

After completing his schooling, Bill as he was now known, returned to the Upper Peninsula where he worked in the family businesses in Houghton and later in Appleton, Wisconsin. In the spring of 1938, he and his brother Arnold traveled to Chicago to visit their sister Heather. During that visit Bill met Heather's friend at the University of Chicago, Lois Helen Wenk, who would become Bill's wife on December 25, 1939. The couple lived in Appleton, which is where Bill's first involvement in the Jewish community occurred, when Lois and he hosted a young student rabbi.

In the summer of 1942, Lois and Bill moved back to Ishpeming to be with Bill's brother Arnold and other relatives. With the arrival of their children, Lynn in 1943 and Nancy in 1945, Bill's life as a Jewish leader and later as a community leader began to emerge. First, there was the need for Lois and Bill to give their daughters a Jewish education. Later, they felt it essential to give their children and their community a strong Jewish religious identity. For that they needed a Jewishly active congregation and ultimately a synagogue building.

## LEADING THE UPPER PENINSULA COMMUNITY

In America's small Jewish communities, a congregation is the fundamental institution while the synagogue building is the physical manifestation of a Jewish presence.

The first synagogue Bill and his family attended was the Congregation of Israel synagogue, commonly called Temple Jacob in Hancock. Though the congregation was established in 1889, it was not until 1912, two years before Bill's birth, that the synagogue was built. Identifying with its cultural milieu of a mining town, the synagogue was topped with a copper dome, visibly displaying the desire of local Jews to be identified with Hancock's main product, copper. As with Temple Beth Sholom, Temple Jacob began as an Orthodox synagogue, but in the 1920s affiliated with the Reform movement.

Much of this history is told in Bill's essays written for *Michigan Jewish History*, "Early Jews in Michigan's Upper Peninsula" (Vol. 42, 2002) and "The Beginning of Temple Beth Sholom in Marquette County" (Vol. 43, 2003).

The first High Holiday service he remembers dates to the year 1920 when he and his brother and sister went to live with their grandmother after their mother died. After their father remarried, Bill remembers attending High Holiday services at Temple Jacob in Hancock and in Negaunee in the Eagle's Club building where the rabbi who led the services was "very Orthodox."

Twenty-two years later when Bill and Lois returned to Ishpeming, the Jewish



*Built in 1952, Temple Beth Sholom remains the home of Marquette's Jewish community.*

community held Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services at the Legion Club. "Students from the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary in New York led those services," he recalled. In 1952, after scores of years without a building, the synagogue's benefactors decided the time had come for a building of their own.

Like a community barn-raising, Temple Beth Sholom was built by members of the Marquette County Jewish community. They rolled up their sleeves, using their lay and professional skills to oversee and build every inch of their synagogue, which became much more than a physical presence; it was truly an object of great affection.

The spark to build the synagogue was provided by a boy by the name of Howard Cohodas, Bill and Lois's nephew. Rabbi Kenneth Bromberg, a student rabbi from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, conducted High Holiday services in 1951. On Yom Kippur, the rabbi asked the children assembled at the Legion Club if they had any questions. Young Howard spoke up asking, "Why we can't have our own Temple building?"

Here is how Lynn Stahl describes what happened after that question of a little boy was posed. "Within one year, we had our own Temple Beth Sholom...My parents became the unofficial leaders of the congregation, doing everything from leading the services when the student rabbi wasn't there to teaching religious school, writing the bulletin, escorting the student rabbi, singing in the choir and cleaning the bathrooms and kitchen!"<sup>10</sup>

Typical of the modesty of Bill and Lois Cohodas, at the dedication ceremony of Beth Sholom Temple & Community Center on June 7, 1953, neither spoke. Conducting the religious service and offering the dedication sermon was Rabbi Richard Hertz, who arrived from Temple Beth El in Detroit. Members of the Cohodas family who participated in the ceremony were Arnold Cohodas, chairman of the Temple Building Committee and Sam Cohodas, the family patriarch.

After the dedication ceremony, Bill became the defacto leader of the Jewish community in Ishpeming/Marquette and surrounding areas. Nancy remembers her Sunday religious school confirmation class, taught by her father, consisted of five students including a current prominent Detroiter, Norman Pappas, and a girl whose parents drove sixty-

five miles each way in order for her to attend Temple Beth Sholom Religious School. While Norman Pappas remembers Bill as a “very engaging, outgoing teacher who was interested in people,” his mother Sydelle Pappas remembers Bill “as a strong leader who was very strict with his students. Bill was like a resident rabbi who was there to answer questions about Judaism, about which he was very knowledgeable. In addition, he made sure that you attended Sunday evening weekly services. If you did not come, he would call you on Monday.”

When Arnold moved south to Appleton, Wisconsin, Bill became the Temple’s building director and maintenance manager. Under his leadership, Temple Beth Sholom acquired magnificent stained glass windows designed by A. Raymond Katz.

Under Bill’s strong leadership, the Jewish community of Marquette/Ishpeming began and continues to be unified with Temple Beth Sholom as its center. In an age of individualism, keeping a Jewish community together with traditionalists and liberals under the same roof was an achievement and a credit to Bill Cohodas who was a unifier.

It wasn’t just within the Jewish community that Bill’s leadership was revered. He was also highly respected throughout the Marquette community and was the natural “go-to” leader in many matters for the general community as well. In 1977, Bill rose to another challenge.

The president of Northern Michigan University came to Bill upset by the results of a school survey, which showed that 90 percent of the students had no awareness of the Holocaust. Bill jumped into action, closely working with university leadership to educate the community. In 1977, he shaped an Interfaith Holocaust Memorial Service, held at Marquette’s St. Peter Cathedral. Each year, a guest speaker who experienced the horror of the Nazi’s planned genocide of the Jews speaks to public school students, to students at Northern Michigan University and at the Holocaust Remembrance Service at the Cathedral.



*The Holocaust Memorial Service has become an annual event sponsored by the Marquette Interfaith Forum. Here (l to r) Lois Cohodas, the featured speaker Mona Golabek, Bill Cohodas and Northern Michigan University’s Professor Mohey Mowafy, PhD.*

Northern Michigan University Distinguished Professor Mohey Mowafy calls Bill "a truly dear friend and a most distinguished civil servant." He noted that his friendship with Bill "blossomed when I began working with him on arranging our annual Holocaust Memorial Service...Without his stubborn dedication to education and serving his community by committing his time, energy and funds, Marquette would have been deprived of a monumental service ... kindness and sweetness like those I have always felt from him are unquestionably the bedrock foundation for all Abrahamic faiths."

Bill's pride as a Jew and his commitments as a benefactor are matched by his generosity at Northern Michigan University, at Michigan Technological University in Hancock, at Hancock's Findlandia University where he supports the education of Finnish Lutheran ministers, and for the past 70 years, the Bay Cliff Health Camp, which serves Upper Peninsula children who suffer from physical challenges.

### STUDENT RABBIS

Recently, Rabbi William Cutter presented a copy of his book, *Midrash and Medicine*, (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2011) to his 96-year old mentor with the inscription "To Bill Cohodas, My first teacher, with Lois from the fall of 1960. With great regard, Bill Cutter." Fifty-one years after serving as student rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom in Ishpeming, Rabbi Cutter recalls his first teacher with much affection and esteem.

Rabbi Cutter is not the only rabbi who served Temple Beth Sholom either as a rabbinic student or as a student about to enter a Jewish seminary. And he's not the only one to use the terms "affection and esteem" when describing his feelings for Bill. Rabbi Joe Rapport, a native of Marquette, remembers the visits of student rabbis to Temple Beth Sholom. In particular, he recalls a meeting he had with Bill and with student Rabbi Art Menitoff to discuss his rabbinic career aspirations. Bill "listened quietly, assessing the situation, and then he asked simply if there was anything 'we could do to improve my prospects for the admissions' ... (Bill) ventured that building a new wing for the library would probably get the college's attention." The future Hebrew Union College rabbinic student declined the offer but Joe knew that "the college had made a friend in Bill along the way."

Many years later, Rabbi Rapport was visiting with Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, President of Hebrew Union College in Israel. Rabbi Gottschalk told him his day was made all the better because he had just received a major gift from an American Jewish couple. Who was that couple, Rabbi Rapport asked? It was a couple from Northern Michigan, Bill and Lois Cohodas. Rabbi Rapport beamed and shared that Bill and Lois were like grandparents. "Bill was actually the first member of my 'family' to meet my wife, just after we had become engaged during our first year at HUC in Jerusalem. Gaylin was from Boston and she quite literally couldn't find the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on a map." Even Joe's father, Professor Jim Rapport of Marquette, admits that Joe was like Bill's son.

Apparently the number of visits a student rabbi made to Ishpeming varied depending on the year and the student. In Temple Beth Sholom's annual meeting minutes of June 6, 2010, student Rabbi Jim Stoloff was to make tri-weekly visits to the temple whereas

student Rabbi P.J. Schwartz made bi-weekly visits in 2009 and 2010. Rabbi Art Nemitoff remembers his days under Bill's tutelage, conducting services every other week and spending the summer with the Congregation. In contrast, Rabbi Stephen Robbins reported that between December and March of his year at Temple Beth Sholom, he was unable to be there at all due to the challenge of weather and transportation issues.

Among the student rabbis who became closest to Bill were those who served Temple Beth Sholom in its early years. Rabbi Bill Cutter served in 1960 and 1961 and later returned to the small congregation to speak. He described Bill as the "inimitable generous, yet humble Bill Cohodas" who "led from the center...not standing out more than was necessary." The only other student rabbi who has returned to be with Bill Cohodas — in addition to his son-in-law Rabbi Sam Stahl — is Rabbi Martin Siegel, who came to Temple Beth Sholom as a 21-year-old recent graduate of Cornell University about to begin his studies at Hebrew Union College. He served Temple Beth Sholom as a student rabbi for three years. In his touching memoir, he credits Bill with enabling him "to see the variety and majesty of the Rabbinic calling, especially in a small community with a very small Jewish population hungry for the leadership and legitimacy provided by having its own rabbi." Rabbi Siegel remembers Bill arranging for him to participate in the 1959 filming of "Anatomy of a Murder," starring James Stewart and shot in locations across the Upper Peninsula. Rabbi Siegel returned to Ishpeming in 2002 to celebrate the Congregation's golden anniversary.

Student Rabbi Arnie Task served Temple Beth Sholom from September 1955 to May 1956. He and Bill set up the annual Youth Conclave bringing together Jewish teens from a number of towns across the Upper Peninsula. "Bill knew who to call and was able to get people from Iron Mountain, Iron River and other towns to come to Ishpeming ... Bill sent me a copy of the program from a later year with his handwritten comment that 'this is our third one.'" When Bill had a vision, he knew how to make it happen — no one could turn him down.

Rabbi Floyd Herman, who served as student rabbi in the congregation's early years, remembers Bill as being "the focus and strength of the congregation." Through Bill, he learned "what is so special about small town Jewry and the committed Jews who support these small and sometimes isolated communities."

It was the genius of Bill Cohodas that led to the bringing of these students to Temple Beth Sholom and his encouragement that allowed them to be innovative. He was persuasive and persistent and he knew how to connect with student rabbis who admired, liked and respected him for his sincerity, magnetism and leadership. He made sure they became connected to the community and were made to feel that they were filling a vital role. And, until he began spending winters in Longboat Key, Florida, Bill let them know that he was at their beck and call, both when they came to Ishpeming and when they returned to their rabbinic campus.

How active was Bill with student rabbis once they arrived in Ishpeming? In September 1955, 21-year-old Martin Siegel was met by Bill at the Ishpeming train station at 6:00 a.m. The tired young man, who had not yet begun his rabbinic studies, was heartily greeted by Bill with, "Welcome Rabbi Siegel!"

Bill rattled off the itinerary for the day: "I'm going to take you to Main Street to

meet many of the members of the Congregation who own stores. After that, our local newspaper, *The Mining Journal* wants to interview you. Then many of the business leaders in our community are waiting to meet you for lunch. Then we're going to show you our new synagogue, bring you to visit the Jewish prisoners at the Michigan Maximum Security Prison [mostly remnants of the Purple Gang from Detroit], arrange for a radio interview, visit some local schools to talk about the High Holy Days, and arrange for you to speak at the local Rotary Club."

Was it easy to convince student rabbis to come to Ishpeming? Not always, writes Rabbi Rapport, who was raised in Marquette. "Traveling to Ishpeming from Cincinnati was no small feat and on more than one occasion our congregation would be passed over in the lottery. There was a rumor that Ishpeming was always the last place picked. There were times Bill would step in and, somehow, there was always a student who would agree. One year there truly wasn't a single student willing to make the trips, and magically we had a JTS student flying up each month from New York."

### THE INFLUENCE OF BILL COHODAS

Bill Cohodas continues what author Judith Levin Cantor calls in her book, *The Jews of Michigan*, "the Cohodas legacy in the Upper Peninsula."

His father Harry and his uncle Sam, sons of the family patriarch Aaron Cohodas, brought respectability to the Jews of the Upper Peninsula. Rabbi Sam Stahl eulogized Harry Cohodas, his wife's grandfather, on March 21, 1970, and Sam Cohodas on April 5, 1988. The brothers, he said, had attained high standing in the Upper Peninsula, succeeding in the produce business and in setting high marks as philanthropists. Harry's sons Arnie and Bill – in particular Bill – were the first members of the family to become religious leaders. When Arnie moved to Wisconsin, Bill assumed the total leadership role in the



*The devotion of Willard "Bill" Cohodas and his wife Lois has sustained the long Jewish legacy in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.*



*Three generations of the Cohodas clan. Willard and Lois are seated on the far left.*

Jewish community of Greater Marquette. Because of Bill, young Jewish people whom he touched learned about their Jewish heritage.

Bill smiled at all that life offered. That moment at Mt. Sinai was moving and typical of him, seeing the joy of being alive and the joy of being a Jew. A Talmudic sage in his nineties was asked, "What is the Jewish law, Halahka, of aging?" He responded that Jewish law states that "It is forbidden to be old." The disciples asked: 'Rabbi, how is it possible not to become old? What is the secret?'

"If you count time by the pulse of your passion, the rhythm of your Sabbaths, the excitement of your dreams, the enthusiasm of your beliefs, the loves of your life, the old within you becomes young, the best in you strengthened, the scowl in you is turned into a smile."

The Sage in his nineties was young. By our reckoning, Willard L. Cohodas, accompanied on his life's journey by his wife Lois and by his family, remains young as he approaches his 97th birthday. We are thankful for his leadership of Michigan's Upper Peninsula Jewish community.



**Herbert A. Yoskowitz**, a rabbi of Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills, Michigan, is the editor of *The Kaddish Minyan*.  
From *Pain to Healing: Twenty Personal Stories*.

## INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED:

Lynn Stall  
Nancy Oberman  
Norman Pappas  
Sydelle Pappas  
Jim Rapport

Written and email correspondences from:

Professor Mohey Mowaty  
Lynn Stahl  
Rabbi Joe Rapport  
Rabbi Art Nemitoff  
Rabbi Stephen Robbins  
Rabbi Bill Cutter  
Rabbi Martin Siegel  
Rabbi Arnold Task  
Rabbi Floyd Herman

# HISTORICAL TIDBITS

## 1761

Ezekiel Solomon, a fur trader from Montreal became Michigan's first Jewish settler when he settled in the "Upper Country" of what would become the northern tip of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Fort Michilimackinac (source *Jews in Michigan*, Judith Cantor)

## 1861

In April, the first shots were fired in what would become the Civil War. Ninety thousand Michigan men served in the Union Army, 181 of them were Jewish soldiers. Many of those young Jewish men were brothers... 151 families sent their boys to fight for freedom.

FEATURED  
ARTICLEA LABOR OF LOVE:  
THE FLORA HOMMEL STORY

by SUSAN BROHMAN

*Flora Hommel, a native Detroiter, is the founder of the Detroit-based, non-profit organization Childbirth Without Pain Education Association, which espouses and teaches the Lamaze method of natural childbirth, which Flora learned and brought to the United States from France.*

GIVING birth to her only child Claudia, in January 1950, did more than change Flora Nadine Suhd Hommel's life. Her pain-free delivery inspired this Detroit native to transform the childbirth experience for thousands of expectant parents.

Today, we take for granted the myriad options available – from a home birth with a midwife to a hospital surrounded by the latest medical bells and whistles. However, in the 1950s, the mostly male school of American doctors preferred to sedate patients to eliminate childbirth pain, giving women little control in how their babies arrived in this world. As the founder of the Detroit-based, non-profit organization Childbirth Without Pain Education Association (CWPEA), Flora Hommel struggled to change our attitudes toward childbirth.



*Flora Suhd Hommel is credited with introducing the Lamaze method of pain-free natural childbirth to the Detroit area.*

She championed childbirth rights for more than five decades, believing that women should be able to prepare emotionally and physically for labor so the process could be a relaxed, relatively painless experience requiring little or no medication. She fought tirelessly for the rights of pregnant women and their families to give birth on their own terms.

## IN THE BEGINNING

Flora's dedication to pain-free delivery possibilities began in Paris. She was born in 1928 to Morris and Rae Albaum Suhd, who raised their daughter and son, Melvin, at Congregation B'nai David in Detroit. At age

15, Flora met a friend of her brother, Bernard Hommel, a senior at Central High School. They developed a close friendship and corresponded while he served in the World War II. In August 1946, when she was 18, the couple married. They sailed to France where he studied music, courtesy of French government scholarships and the GI Bill. Flora found odd jobs, furthered her study of French and translated and taught English. While living the bohemian lifestyle of ex-patriots in the City of Lights, Flora became pregnant.

Flora's only knowledge of childbirth came from classic novels and movies, and plenty of family stories about the pain of delivery. Her fears were furthered by a religious slant that claimed labor pain was payment for Eve's sin. "My mother told me she was 'on the table' for 18 hours with both my brother and me," Flora recounted in the handwritten manuscript she had hoped to publish. "My aunt told me how marvelous it was to be knocked out completely. So it was only natural that I sought a doctor who would knock me out," Flora wrote.

Each time she tried asking her doctor a question, she would find a tongue depressor in her mouth or some equal obstruction to communication, she wrote. Being a woman intolerant of such treatment, Flora sought an alternative. Through friends, she discovered British nurse-midwife, Mrs. McNulty, who taught prenatal classes at the American hospital. Luckily, no one told Flora that McNulty focused on natural childbirth methods.

"Had I known she was teaching natural childbirth, I would have run the other way so frightened was I," Flora recounted.

In addition to answers, Mrs. McNulty provided books, including *Revelations of Childbirth* by Grantly Dick-Read (later reissued as *Childbirth Without Fear*). The book, although not easy reading for someone without a medical background, left an impression on the expectant mother. "By the time I labored through it two or three times I was totally convinced that childbirth should be a painless experience," she wrote. "I wasn't too sure I would be in that fortunate majority, but I was going to give this method a try. What could I lose?"

She formulated a plan, waiting until the last minute to arrive at the hospital to avoid medication before delivery. It worked flawlessly, although she later admitted that giving birth in the hospital wheelchair was not part of her strategy. Later that day while hearing the painful cries of other women in labor, Flora wondered why her delivery was so much easier.

That's when she decided to dedicate her life to help other women experience pain-free childbirth as opposed to the "horrendous undignified animal-like experience that I felt these women were undergoing. From my birth experience was born a new strength. The feeling of 'I can conquer the world' was to serve me well in years to come."

She started preaching the gospel of her newfound revelation to her friends. Still, she could not understand why some women experienced a painless delivery and others did not. Then, when she heard about Dr. Fernard Lamaze's work in the Soviet Union to help women give birth without pain, Flora became determined to learn more.



July 1952, Flora, Claudia and  
Bernard Hommel

## STUDYING WITH DR. LAMAZE

By a magnificent set of circumstances, Flora made contact with a doctor at the Metal Workers' Hospital in Paris where Dr. Lamaze and his assistant, Dr. Pierre Vellay, worked.

"Perhaps because I was an American, and perhaps because the people involved in the program were so eager to spread the word, I was allowed to attend the course given by Dr. Lamaze, Dr. Vellay and the entire team," she wrote. The training involved a method called psychoprophylaxis, which translates to mind (psycho) and prevention

of pain (prophylaxis), but referred to by French women as *l'accouchement sans douleur* - Childbirth Without Pain (CWP).

Based on conditioning of the mind and changing attitudes about labor pains, Flora wrote, "I could see that this method of birth would be far more effective for more people. It could work for any woman who was interested and who would work for it."



*Dr. Pierre Vellay trained with Dr. Lamaze and helped to train Flora Hommel. The two remained friends for many years.*

In 1951, under the direction of Dr. Lamaze, Flora attended and assisted in some 40 deliveries at the Metal Workers Hospital, according to an early CWPEA brochure. Sixty years later, struggling with Alzheimer's, Flora still recalls Lamaze as "a very nice man who was very bright. I listened to everything he said and I got to learn things that were very helpful."

## BRINGING LAMAZE'S METHODS HOME

Flora's determination to help women deliver without pain did not disappear when she and Bernard returned to Detroit in 1953. While Bernard taught piano, Flora set her sights on sharing her new-found skills.

After talking to doctors, nurses and educators, Flora decided she needed medical credentials before tackling her goal. "It would be necessary to have some letters after my name," she recalled. Although she would have preferred "M.D." as two of those letters, she thought going to medical school while raising her own child on a limited income was too daunting a task. So Flora opted for a nursing degree at Wayne State University.

"It turned out to be my best advantage," Flora wrote. "I could reach more people, both professional and lay, as a nurse, than I probably would have been able to do as a doctor."

She graduated in 1958 with a B.S. degree in nursing, earning top scores on her state nursing board exams. From her home on Pierson St. in Detroit, in 1958, Flora finally began teaching Lamaze. In creating a curriculum, Flora adapted the material she learned in France to meet American education and delivery situations while keeping the essence and principles intact.

"I don't know quite how I got started, but pupils did begin coming to me. They came to my home and I held classes, encouraging husbands to come whenever possible. Most husbands did, though how much a part of it they were I am not sure," she wrote, recalling one husband who read a newspaper the whole time.

One of the first deliveries she assisted in was Marilyn Foley's eldest child in July 1958. Marilyn and Flora met in 1954 as Wayne nursing students.

"She was older than most of us and we all knew that her intentions were to start the Lamaze method here in Michigan," said Foley, who now lives in Farmington Hills, Michigan. "She was always kind of reserved and very focused on what she wanted to do."



*Flora Hommel was never short on words when it came to enlightening others about her natural birth methods.*

Although she appreciated Flora's pleasant demeanor while coaching her through her first delivery, it was rougher than expected, Foley said, explaining she needed Demerol<sup>®</sup> to relax her uterus since labor was not progressing as planned. Still, it did not deter her from trying natural childbirth again.

"She was with me during that delivery and the next," said Foley who eventually had five children using the techniques she learned from Flora. "She taught me to relax and to focus on my breathing and that all would turn out well. Everyone who went through the process was very happy with it. It certainly helped because most of us wouldn't have known what to do."

By the end of her first year, Flora had taught the Lamaze method to about 80 couples. Each time it required a battle with hospital administrators, but she often assisted the mothers as a monitrice (coach) during birth, and fought for husbands to be allowed in the delivery room.

As word of her work spread, Flora realized she needed help — an organization to promote the ideas she learned from Dr. Lamaze. In 1960, she and supporters founded Childbirth Without Pain Association, which in 1964 was officially incorporated as the non-profit Childbirth Without Pain Education Association (CWPEA). According to its bylaws, CWPEA would establish an educational institution for the instruction and



*Flora Hommel cared for patients through the "Fourth Trimester," after delivery. She is pictured here working with a new mom and her baby.*

promulgation of the psychoprophylactic or Lamaze method of painless childbirth and fund research to improve the method. As CWPEA's executive director, Flora supervised and coordinated activities to achieve CWPEA's goals such as the maintenance of quality education, in-service training of teachers and monitrices, programs and workshops.

### PERSONAL SETBACKS

In the midst of getting CWPEA off the ground, Flora separated from Bernard. And while the couple shared a deep dedication to the growing peace and civil rights movements, it wasn't enough to hold their marriage together, which ended in 1967. Bernard, who now lives with his wife Kay in Florida, still has fond memories of his first bride.

After the divorce, the self-determined Flora continued her work and studies, eventually marrying long-time Teamster union leader Jack White, who served as chairman of the Detroit-Wayne County Area Agency on Aging. The couple split in 1982 and Jack died in 1997. Flora still lovingly refers to him as her husband.



*Flora and Jack White (left) hosted an annual summer barbeque at their home. Detroit leaders such as Mayor Coleman A. Young (right) and other local celebrities attended.*

## DELIVERING SUCCESS

Flora's persistence paid off with the growth of CWPEA (also known as the Lamaze Birth Without Pain Education Association). Along with hundreds of dedicated volunteers and professionals, Flora began promoting the benefits of "prepared" childbirth. She connected with others across the country, including Marjorie Karmel, who had written *Thank you Dr. Lamaze*, detailing her birth experiences in Paris with Dr. Lamaze.

In the aftermath of a January 17, 1960, story in the women's section of the *Detroit News* detailing the experience of Mrs. Floyd Abatt of Beverly Hills, Michigan, and her success with the CWPEA classes, the calls started rolling in. Expectant parents began signing up for CWPEA childbirth classes across metro Detroit. Over the course of six sessions, women and their partners learned about pregnancy, the growth of the baby, the three stages of labor and delivery, special relaxation exercises and proper breathing techniques. Expectant parents were encouraged to eliminate unnecessary medical treatments and procedures, bring fathers and others into the birthing room and create



*Flora welcomed both mother and father in small group sessions to practice for delivery.*

homelike alternative settings.

CWPEA members worked closely with similar organizations across the nation and the world, such as the International Childbirth Education Association (ICEA). Flora also served on the National Board of the International Childbirth Education Association (1964 to 1968), often traveling throughout the country promoting the benefits of what she preferred to call "prepared childbirth." A notebook of speaking engagements from 1965 to 1967 shows that Flora spoke at area hospitals, churches and Henry Ford Community College on behalf of CWPEA.

In addition, CWPEA sponsored visits from Dr. Vellay to Detroit in 1963 and 1968, and hosted movies such as the *Triumph of Childbirth*, open houses and seminars. Childbirth With Dignity: A Shared Experience, a 1974 seminar held in Detroit featured national and local experts on how much the father should share, the changing attitudes of doctors, sexism in obstetrics and supporting teen mothers.

Over the years, CWPEA's message reached thousands of families. "She taught women they are the central actors in the birth process," commented Vicki Levin, the late wife of U.S. Representative Sander Levin, in an April 1989 *Detroit Free Press* story about CWPEA. Levin gave birth to her second child in 1960 after participating in a CWPEA class. Her sister-in-law Barbara Levin, wife of U.S. Senator Carl Levin, whose first child was born in 1963 after taking a CWPEA class, stated in the same article, "because of Flora's classes, my long labors were manageable." Each couple had three babies using the Lamaze technique.

However, no organization always runs smoothly. Claudia admits her mother was not always easy to work with. "She could be set in her ways," Claudia said, adding that people

she worked with would often say they loved Flora, but couldn't always work with her. In a handwritten letter dated November 1966, CWPEA board member Eula Hoover wrote to Flora complaining that it always seemed to be the CWPEA board versus Flora. "It is as though you panic and try to run off with the organization when you see anyone set to think rather than follow. I suppose it is too much to hope that you can become a board member rather than a matriarch. You ask that we trust you. Why not make it work both ways?"

Flora flatly countered, "I don't intend to sit back and watch my baby get run over." She stated she will continue to supervise carefully until such time that she feels her baby is ready to cross the street alone. "I created this organization, built it, nurtured it and promoted it more than anyone and anyone who doesn't realize it is either not with it or isn't getting straight information somehow," Flora proudly wrote. On a conciliatory note, Flora concluded that she enjoyed working with Eula and the other board members and wanted to continue to work together.



*A new mother and proud father welcome their new baby with Flora Hommel, the monitor or birthing coach, by their side.*

## PUSHING FORWARD

The psychoprophylaxis methods promoted by Dr. Lamaze and his successor, Dr. Vellay, ultimately became accepted practice, but that wasn't the case in the late 1950s and 1960s.

In her unpublished manuscript, Flora recounts a story of a student in the midst of labor: A nurse came into the room and asked about the woman's "labor pains." In Flora Hommel's world there was no such thing as labor pain, only contractions. Flora's well-schooled student told the nurse she was not in any pain. The nurse replied, "You might not call them pains now, but just you wait. They'll be pains later on."

"I could imagine no earthly reason why that nurse made that statement," Flora



*In 1981, Monthly Detroit Magazine profiled Flora Hommel and the Childbirth Without Pain Education Association.*



*Every year CWPEA hosted a picnic for volunteers and families. Flora is shown receiving one of many awards given to her, circa 1964.*

wrote. "What could she have accomplished? Even if her statement had been 100 percent true in all cases, what good would it have done?"

Despite the skepticism of many in the medical field, Flora persisted. One of her biggest obstacles would be getting acceptance of the husbands' participation in the birthing process. In 1975, a Detroit man shared his disappointment to Flora when a Providence Hospital doctor refused him in the delivery room. By 1980, most Detroit hospitals allowed fathers to participate, according to the 1989 *Detroit Free Press* story. In the story, Dr. Milton Goldrath, chief of gynecology at Sinai Hospital in Detroit, admitted he was among Flora's first converts. "There was a lot of opposition from some doctors, but meeting her helped convince me that the mother should be conscious during delivery and that the father should be present," Dr. Goldrath said. "She awakened many doctors and women to the concept of natural childbirth."

## BEYOND CHILDBIRTH

Flora's organization helped more than 18,000 students, trained hundreds of instructors across the nation and encouraged the creation of similar organizations. As more hospitals, clinics and community groups began holding childbirth preparation classes, CWPEA began winding down, going from 3,000 students a year in 1969 to about 600 in 1989.

As with many organizations founded in the 1950s and 1960s, the Women's Liberation Movement and the increasing numbers of women staying in the workforce after childbirth, depleted the CWPEA of volunteers. By the mid-1990s, CWPEA lost its base and dissolved as an organization.

Flora's passion to change the world, however, extends well beyond the boundaries of CWPEA. Throughout her life, she actively promoted civil and women's rights. Early in her adult years, after her return from Paris, she became active in the civil rights organization Michigan Friends of the South and followed the writings and movements of Ernest Goodman, George Crockett, John Conyers and other notable activists of the day. She marched for peace, participating in organizations such as Women's Strike for Peace,

the New Jewish Agenda and the Women's Conference of Concerns.

From 1973 to 1990, Flora served on the Detroit Health Commission and as city representative to the State of Michigan Health Commission. As a national board member of the Gray Panthers, she served on its local and national Health Task Forces to protect and improve social security, Medicare and Medicaid and campaigned for a single-payer health care system. In recognition of her dedication to keeping the Paul Robeson legacy alive, Flora's name is on the "Wall of Tolerance" sponsored by the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. Her home on Snowden Drive in northwest Detroit remains filled with posters and mementos of her activist days.

In 1994, Flora was inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame for her passionate dedication. Although CWPEA has faded into the past, the principle of giving women a greater say in their childbirth experience remains.

"My mother's work had less to do with medicine and everything to do with helping women take control of their own destiny and their lives," Claudia states.



Mother and daughter, Flora Suhd Hommel and Claudia Hommel.



**Susan Brohman** is a freelance writer who writes and edits *Congregation B'nai Moshe's* bulletin. She spent more than 20 years as a corporate communications writer and community journalist, including a stint at the *Detroit Jewish News*.

## NOTES

Much of the content for this article came from Flora Hommel in her handwritten unpublished autobiographical manuscript, written around 1975 and now part of the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University. Flora, 83, suffers from Alzheimer's Disease. While her delicate beauty continues to shine through, the disease has limited not only her memory but her verbal capacity. Today, while she knows she played an important role to many women giving birth, Flora's memory of what she accomplished has sadly dimmed despite repeated reminders from her daughter. Claudia, who tours the country as a French cabaret singer and actress, is the central source for this article. In fact, Claudia continues to tirelessly promote her mother's story so her work and philosophy about painless childbirth will not be forgotten by this or future generations.

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# FEATURED ARTICLE

## 150 YEARS OF SHAAREY ZEDEK: FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION IN FIFTEEN DECADES

by JUDY LEVIN CANTOR AND RUTHE GOLDSTEIN

*This article chronicles the growth of Conservative Congregation Shaarey Zedek, which started life in 1862 as an Orthodox congregation — having separated from the formerly Orthodox Beth El Society (established in 1850) when Beth El became a leading voice in the Reform movement. Shaarey Zedek ultimately joined the new Conservative movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, and continues to be among the foremost Conservative congregations in the country.*

IN the 1760s, one hundred years before the founding of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, fur trader Chapman Abraham — Detroit's first Jewish settler — spent seventy five days traveling by canoe in order to attend Rosh Hashanah services in his hometown of Montreal, which at the time was the closest synagogue in North America. Now that's a long journey to get to "shul"!

A century later, in 1861-1862, seventeen men organized the Shaarey Zedek Society so they and their families could continue their observance of traditional Judaism in Detroit. And now, one hundred and fifty years later, under the dynamic leadership of Rabbi Joseph Krakoff, more than 1,550 member families are celebrating the 150th anniversary of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, one of the leading Conservative synagogues in the United States.

The origins of Congregation Shaarey Zedek date back to 1850 when Isaac and Sarah Cozens opened their home to Detroit's first Jewish *minyan*. Twelve men organized the orthodox Beth El Society — orthodoxy being the sole way of practicing Judaism at the

### FOUNDERS

*Isaac Epstein, Raphael Epstein, Leopold Fink,  
Marcus Freud, Jacob Freud, Samuel Fleischman,  
Hiram Kraushaar, Ludwig Levy, Morris Levy,  
David Marx, George Morris, Louis Myers,  
Samuel Newman, Jacob Robinson, Harris Solomon,  
Isaac Warshauer, Isaac Wertheimer*

time. When Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati later visited this forty-member congregation, he encouraged the adoption of new reform practices. At that time, the seventeen men who were followers of traditional Judaism withdrew to found the "Shaarey Zedek Society," each pledging one dollar for membership.

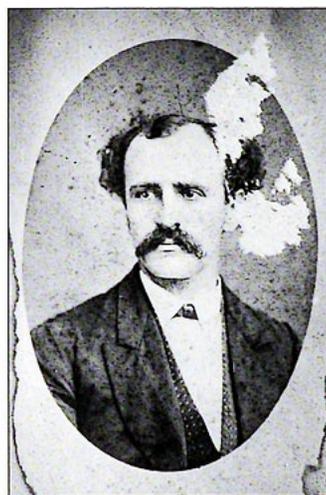
Almost immediately, the yet-to-be incorporated society purchased one-and-a-half acres of land for Beth Olem, or the Smith Street Cemetery, in Hamtramck. Isaac Wertheimer and the other trustees officially founded Shaarey Zedek in December 1862. It is interesting to note their use of Christian language in the legal document: "In the year 1862 the male persons of full age belonging to a church [sic]...in which divine worship is celebrated according to *the rite of the Jewish church* [sic]...met...in the City of Detroit in the State of Michigan for the purpose of incorporating themselves."



*Horse-drawn hearse and carriages made the long trip to Shaarey Zedek's Beth Olem Cemetery, located three miles north of the Detroit River, until 1919. Shaarey Zedek then opened the bucolic new 50-acre Clover Hill Cemetery on Fourteen Mile Road, once again "way out in the country."*

*Beth Olem today is surrounded by the General Motors Cadillac plant. In a cooperative agreement with Shaarey Zedek, GM opens the cemetery to visitors on the Sundays before Rosh Hashanah and Passover.*

*Photo courtesy of Jim Grey*



*Inspired by the anti-slavery messages of Beth El's Rabbi Leibman Adler and with strong feelings of patriotism, Simon Wertheimer, a family member of founder Isaac Wertheimer, was among the first to join the Union Army, enlisting in 1861 in Detroit's First Michigan Infantry at the very start of the Civil War.*

## THE SHAAREY ZEDEK SOCIETY MOVES TO CONGRESS AND ST. ANTOINE AND BUILDS A NEW SYNAGOGUE

In 1864, two years after incorporating, Shaarey Zedek purchased its first building from a church of "colored people," the St. Matthews Episcopal Church, at Congress and St. Antoine Streets. On the Fourth of July in 1877, they replaced this structure with a new enlarged synagogue built on the same location. Detroit's Mayor Alexander Lewis laid the cornerstone in an impressive ceremony before more than 400 guests, proudly declaring the new Shaarey Zedek synagogue to be "the first building in Michigan" erect-



Congress and St. Antoine: Built in 1877, CSZ president, Samuel Ginsburg, called the new building "one of the finest structures for an Orthodox Congregation in the United States."

ed specifically as a Jewish house of worship. Over a century later, it was discovered actually to have been the "first building in Detroit" and the "second building in Michigan" to be built specifically as a synagogue, and the records were corrected.

Having engaged a rabbi and a teacher, the growing Shaarey Zedek Society also organized a women's auxiliary, a *Bikkur Cholim* (organization to care for the ill) and a *Chevra Kadisha* Society to care for bereaved families as well as for the sick and the needy. These foundational traditions of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam* continue as part of the essential fabric of Shaarey Zedek to this day.

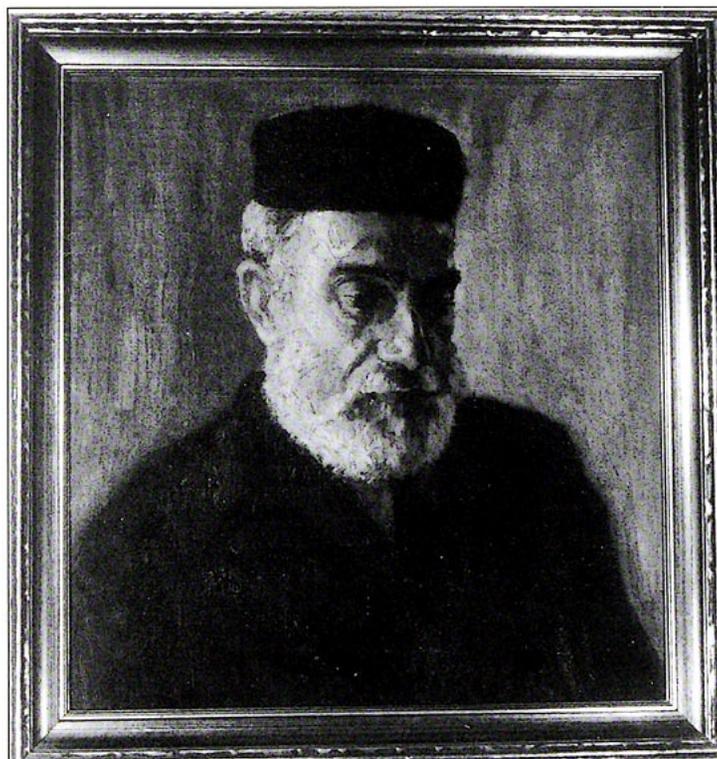
Perhaps with disagreements over religious observances and rituals, some members formed Congregation Beth Jacob in 1878 and others organized B'nai Israel in 1881. Moreover, the continuing economic panic of 1873 made it difficult for the reduced membership to contribute money for the new synagogue, which Shaarey Zedek sadly then lost. Despite the many problems, by the next decade, under the strong leadership of David W. Simons, in 1886 the Congress and St. Antoine Shaarey Zedek synagogue was rededicated, becoming a center of Detroit Jewish life for the next sixteen years. Simons would serve as president for a record twelve years, from 1908-1920. He also was elected to Detroit's first nine-man city council.

The depression of 1893-1897 brought to Shaarey Zedek's small congregation of member families some serious financial setbacks. Abba Keidan's daughter, Lillian Keidan Levin, recorded this memory in her journal: "...How bare our store looked, for it was impossible to buy stock, since merchandise had risen to four or five times its normal prices. Even if it were there, customers could not buy for they had no money. My parents struggled on."

## TZEDAKAH AND THE UNITED JEWISH CHARITIES

Beginning in 1880, thousands of Jewish immigrants fleeing oppression in Russia and Eastern Europe began arriving in Detroit, most without means of support. To help these new immigrants get a start in America, ten men, including Shaarey Zedek members Joseph Beisman, Michael Davis and Jacob Levin, met in the back of a shoe store in 1895 to form the Hebrew Free Loan Association, now more than a century old. Collecting five cents a week from members of the community, Hebrew Free Loan loaned five dollars so a man could buy a pack to peddle. In further response to the growing needs, in 1899 Shaarey Zedek's Jewish Relief Society joined with the Beth El Hebrew Relief Society to form the United Jewish Charities, electing David W. Simons as its first president. This was the origin of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

During this time Louis Bloomgarden was appointed rabbi, and under his guidance the first Sunday School was organized and the congregation engaged its first cantor, Cantor Winchell (formerly Wasserczuck). When Aaron M. Ashinsky became rabbi in 1889, the congregation had grown to seventy families. Rabbi Ashinsky's dream of a modern religious school was realized in 1898, one year after the hiring of orthodox Rabbi Judah Leib Levin.



*Rabbi Judah L. Levin, presided over the congregation during the move to the Brush and Winder synagogue.*

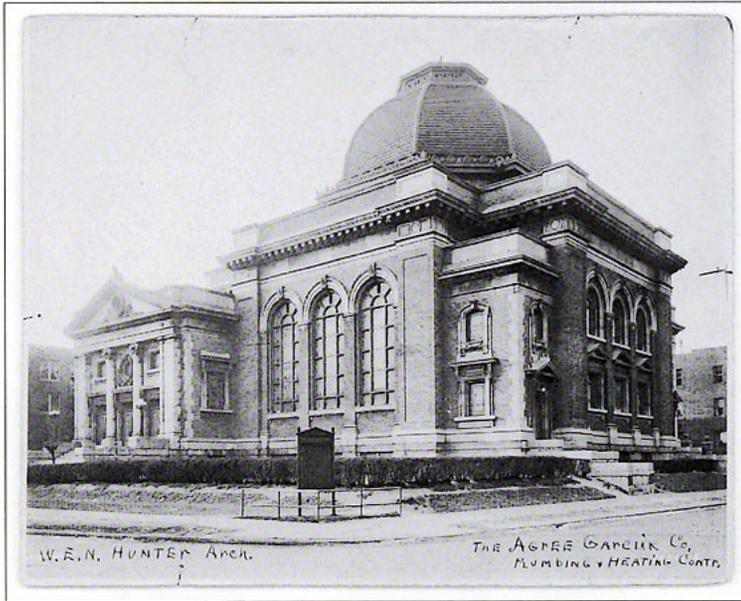
## RABBI JUDAH LEVIN AND THE MOVE TO BRUSH AND WINDER

A distinguished scholar and visionary leader, Rabbi Levin led the establishment of Detroit's first Talmud Torah, a modern religious school for the children. At the dedication, Rabbi Levin called the building "a miracle, lit by electricity...where Jewish boys can meet Jewish girls." He authored two books in Hebrew and dedicated the Yeshivah Beth Yehudah, which is named after him. Favoring a Jewish homeland in Palestine, he organized the first national Mizrahi meeting of the country's orthodox rabbis in Detroit. A brilliant mathematician, Rabbi Levin received patents in several countries for his invention of an adding/subtracting machine, which is in the collection of the Smithsonian Institute. As the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Detroit, he officiated at Shaarey Zedek as well as the neighboring Beth Jacob, B'nai Israel and Mogen Abraham congregations until his death in 1926.

The growing Jewish community of Detroit was on the move northward, and when Shaarey Zedek had an opportunity to sell its Congress and St. Antoine building, Rabbi Levin encouraged the congregation to erect a new synagogue at Brush and Winder Streets. Having donated the land, the *Ner Tamid* (eternal light) was lit by previous congregation president, Samuel Ginsburg and his son Bernard Ginsburg, father of the later Detroit leader, Golda Ginsburg Krolik. Rabbi Levin made the dedication address, while Rabbi Leo M. Franklin of Temple Beth El sent warm greetings, showing great respect between the leader of the Reform temple and Shaarey Zedek. In that era of formality, the officers wore silk top hats to services and cutaway coats and striped trousers on the High Holidays.



*Taken many years after the congregation had left the building, this photo is of Congregation Shaarey Zedek's second location, built in 1903, on Brush and Winder Streets with seating for 750.*



*Dedicated in 1915, Congregation Shaarey Zedek's Brush Street (at Willis) building was a beautiful religious temple with a Renaissance structure, an octagonal dome and seating capacity of 1,400.*

## RABBI HERSHMAN LEADS SHAAREY ZEDEK TO JOIN THE NEW CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

Eager to attract the younger generation to the new Brush and Winder synagogue, President William Saulson, the former mayor of St. Ignace, Michigan, advocated for an English speaking rabbi. The congregation hired Rabbi Abraham Hershman in 1907 — one of the first graduates of the newly established Jewish Theological Seminary — who actively served for the next four decades. Rabbi Hershman immediately established a synagogue school and organized a popular Young People's Society, as well as a Kadimah adult study group. He led the congregation to become a founding member of the United Synagogue of America and to join the newly established Conservative movement, a milestone event. He and his wife Miriam Lewin-Epstein founded the first Detroit branch of the Zionist Federation while she became the director of the new Detroit chapter of Hadassah.

Rabbi Hershman must have also taken great pleasure in the group of Jewish young men who organized a Philomathic Debating Club meeting at Shaarey Zedek. Most likely organized because these boys would have been excluded from such activities in the public schools, the club became the training ground for many of Detroit's future leading lawyers and judges, including Judge Harry B. Keidan.

Shaarey Zedek's membership continued to grow. However, as congregants began moving farther north, it became evident a new synagogue would once more be needed. Again...fund raising, building committees, dreams of a building "for generations to come." In 1913, Rabbi Hershman, Rabbi Levin, and Rabbi Franklin of Temple Beth El participated in a cornerstone laying ceremony, and construction on the splendid new Shaarey Zedek

at Brush and Willis Streets began.

When the United States joined the Allies in World War I in 1917, the Shaarey Zedek Sisterhood converted the basement into sewing rooms, preparing bandages and supplies for the Red Cross. Rabbi Hershman, calling for contributions to the Detroit Patriotic Fund, said "We must give not only as Jews but as men and as Americans." About 2,000 Michigan Jews joined the American Army, including Shaarey Zedek's Captain Julius Berman, father of Mandell Berman, and Jack Wertheimer, another generation of Shaarey Zedek's Simon Wertheimer family.

Less than a decade after the Brush and Willis synagogue opened, the Jewish population had moved north to more modern comfortable homes — towards Calvert, Chicago Boulevard and Davison. The building, conceived as a home "for generations to come," was rented to the Mt. Olive Baptist Church. Albert Kahn, who earlier had designed

two of Beth El's temples on Woodward Avenue, was engaged as the architect for a new Shaarey Zedek, a synagogue of classic Italian Renaissance style with a balcony and seating for 2,500 to 3,000, on Chicago Boulevard at Lawton. Temporary services were held on Clairmount and Twelfth Street.

The 1920s and 1930s were a time of strong anti-immigration policy and virulent anti-Semitism in Detroit as well as across the nation. Henry Ford was publishing the *Dearborn Independent* and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, while

Father Charles Coughlin was broadcasting weekly anti-Jewish radio programs. Detroit was known as "the most anti-Semitic city in America."

As a result, before breaking ground, the leadership of Shaarey Zedek had to deal with legal stumbling blocks from the Archdiocese and other associations in the neighborhood trying to prevent them from building. Several lawsuits were filed and some of the cases even proceeded to the U.S. Supreme Court. Finally, with the help of lawyers from Shaarey Zedek's own membership, all the lawsuits were overcome and the building was able to go ahead.

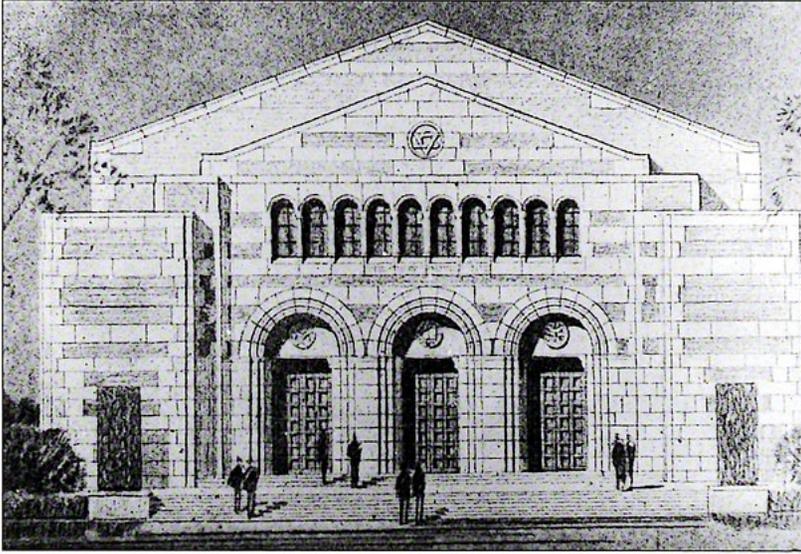
In May of 1930, two thousand people gathered for the laying of the cornerstone at the Chicago Boulevard Shaarey Zedek. Rabbi Hershman inspired the crowd, saying: "The synagogue is the cornerstone on which...the entire Jewish life has rested for some 1,800 years. We have no substitute for it."

Two years later in January 1932, the new Shaarey Zedek was dedicated by Rabbi Hershman and Rabbi Franklin of Temple Beth El, as well as by the eminent Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Dr. Louis Finkelstein. A processional march carrying the Torah scrolls into their new home marked this momentous occasion.

The year 1932 also was the time of the Great Depression. Many members struggled

*Captain Isadore Levin, son of Rabbi Judah Levin, served at the front in France under General John J. Pershing in WWI. At the close of the war, Levin was chosen by Chaim Weizmann to assist him as legal advisor to the new Zionist delegation at the League of Nations at Versailles. Levin drafted the mandate or constitutional charter for a future government for the Jewish people in Palestine.*





*A rendering of the Chicago Boulevard building, designed by Albert Kahn, which served as the home of Congregation Shaarey Zedek from 1932 to 1962. The building remains in use today as Clinton Street Greater Bethlehem Temple Church.*

to pay the \$74.40 dues fee, and salaries to the rabbi and the cantor were deferred. As the Depression worsened, an arrangement was made for contractors to accept fifty cents on the dollar. As Robert Marwil, a past president, later said: "One thing that stands to the credit of Shaarey Zedek is that every contractor who had agreed to take fifty cents on the dollar eventually was paid one hundred cents on the dollar." Shaarey Zedek had followed the Biblical instruction of Deuteronomy 24:14, respecting and always paying the workman, thus fulfilling its moral obligation even though it legally had been released from doing so.

Still, the congregation flourished with activity in its new Chicago Boulevard home. An active Men's Club and Sisterhood and also a Young People's Society, as well as an Adult Jewish School, thrived. Rabbi Hershman initiated the first consecration in 1934. The Shaarey Zedek Library was inaugurated and there were two active Boy Scout troops. The Junior Congregation, one of the first in the Conservative movement, became the "place to be" on Shabbat mornings. Led by teenagers including Mandell Berman, Leonard Baron, Avern Cohn, and Harvey Weisberg, it proved to be the training ground for future leaders of the community.

A happy crowd of 1,500 proudly celebrated the burning of the mortgage in 1944.

## RABBI ADLER COMES TO SHAAREY ZEDEK

In 1938, Rabbi Morris Adler was engaged as assistant rabbi and quickly became active not only at Shaarey Zedek but also in the greater Detroit and Michigan communities. A few short years later, after America entered World War II, Rabbi Adler enlisted as a chaplain in 1943 and was stationed in Japan, the army's first Jewish chaplain. In a letter



*In 1932, Rabbis Louis Finkelstein, Chancellor, Jewish Theological Seminary; Morris Adler and Abraham Hershman celebrate the new Shaarey Zedek on Chicago Boulevard.*

to Shaarey Zedek he explained: "My lads here drop in almost nightly to the office in the Chapel... One said: 'You are the first rabbi I ever spoke to man to man.'"

Members' sons Robert Blumberg, Mordecai Grossman, Lawrence Hertzberg and Myron Rosenthal valiantly gave their lives in the service of their country, as did more than 200 other Detroit or Michigan Jewish men. Raymond Zussman, whose memorial service was held at Shaarey Zedek, was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism in battle, the highest honor awarded by our country.

Soon after Rabbi Adler returned from military duty, Rabbi Hershman retired, having served Shaarey Zedek with great distinction for four decades and in three synagogue buildings. In his retirement, Rabbi Hershman published scholarly books, pursued his hobby of chess and was an ardent Tigers fan. He passed away in 1959.

In the meantime, the class of WWII veterans began purchasing affordable one-floor ranch homes with attached garages in Oak Park and Southfield. Recognizing that hundreds of the young people were spending long hours on the Hebrew School bus in order to reach the Chicago Boulevard building, in 1953 ground was broken for the Branch Building in Northwest Detroit. It provided weekday classroom space for the *Beth Hayaed* and Hebrew School. Yet Sunday morning instruction remained on Chicago Boulevard so that every child was familiar with his or her religious home.

In the 1950s, a group of Men's Club leadership instituted the annual Kibbutz held in Traverse City, at the summer home of Past President Leonard Sidlow. There the men studied with the rabbis for five days and culminated the week with a formal dinner. From this positive experience came the Junior Congregation Kibbutz. The teens spent three days at Camp Tamarack in study and camaraderie. In 1955, the Shaarey Zedek Day Camp was initiated, and saw children from ages three to twelve participate in summer fun as well as Jewish activities for six weeks.

Reuven Frankel joined the congregation as assistant cantor in the mid 1950s. He



*Girl Scout Davida Robinson (now Gale) presents flowers to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, at a national gathering of Sisterhoods at Masonic Temple, hosted by Shaarey Zedek Sisterhood, 1941.*

organized a youth choir and provided opportunities for the young men of the congregation to learn to read Torah and *Haftarah* (a reading from the Prophets). Many of those students still chant Torah and *Haftarah* at Shaarey Zedek today. Cantor Sidney Rube succeeded Cantor Frankel – initially as ritual director, and then as assistant cantor.

Among his community involvements, Rabbi Adler served on the UAW Public Review Board. As a friend of Walter Reuther and the UAW, he encouraged union participation in the support of Israel Bonds.

## THE MOVE TO BELL ROAD IN SOUTHFIELD

On April 12, 1961, 700 members attended the 100th annual meeting of the congregation, approving plans to build on a four-acre site in Southfield. The new sanctuary would seat 1,200 for Shabbat, but be expandable to 3,000 for the High Holidays. After architect Percival Goodman warned that the property was too small for the plans, the parcel was sold and the Bell Road site in Southfield was purchased. The estimated cost for the new building was five million dollars and the project was completed for seven million.



*First nursery school: Post-war parents sought a strong Jewish preschool education for their baby-boom children. Shaarey Zedek sent a team of educators to research the subject and in 1948, the Beth Haya'eled (House of Children), the congregation's first nursery school, opened.*

When Rabbi Adler officiated at the June 17, 1962 cornerstone laying, he commented, "We are building here for centuries." The last service at Chicago Boulevard was held on December 20, 1962. In attendance with his father Louis and his son Larry, Harold Berry remarked: "There was more than one pair of wet eyes as some of the elderly men were called to recite the blessings of the Torah." In the main sanctuary the Ark stood stripped of its adornment. Cantor Jacob Sonenklar, who had served the congregation lovingly during its thirty years in the Chicago Boulevard synagogue, led the procession of men carrying the Torahs up the aisle toward the main entrance. As the Cantor did so, he sang melodies from the *Hallel*. While the departure was choked with emotion, there was the feeling of rebirth and continuity.

On the occasion of the dedication of the new synagogue, President John F. Kennedy wrote to Rabbi Adler and the membership: "I am pleased to extend to you and the members of your congregation my warmest best wishes as you dedicate your new sanctuary. For more than 100 years, Congregation Shaarey Zedek has not only taught the truths which are part of the spiritual heritage of American, but it has also instructed many generations of its members in the values and ideals upon which good citizenship in a free society rest."

In its new Southfield home, Shaarey Zedek and its affiliates continued to be in the forefront of Conservative Judaism. In 1965, the Men's Club won a national award "symbolic of the vitality and renewed energy of the group." The congregation was also presented with the prestigious Solomon Schechter award for excellence in elementary and high school education from the United Synagogue of America. Shaarey Zedek won this award several times.

In 1964, in honor of Rabbi Adler's twenty five years of service, the East Social Hall was designated the Morris Adler Hall. Congregational President David Miro said: "We

dedicate this hall to Rabbi Adler in our everlasting appreciation for his devotion and service to Congregation Shaarey Zedek." Two years later, Rabbi Adler died on March 11, 1966, after being critically wounded at Shabbat Services on February 12 by a troubled young man recently released from a psychiatric hospital. The congregation mourned for one year.

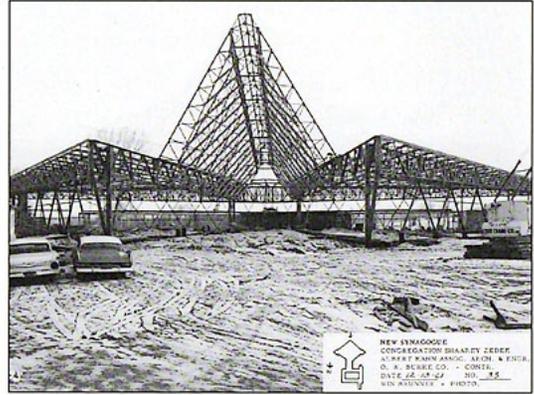
### RABBI IRWIN GRONER AND HIS TEAM INSPIRE CONTINUITY IN 1966

The then young assistant rabbi Irwin Groner stated: "Rabbi Adler had great powers of personal magnetism and the ability to articulate clearly the issues of our time with a brilliant wit and a personal dynamism." Along with his beloved colleagues Cantor Jacob Sonenklar, Assistant Cantor Sidney Rube and the charismatic young Assistant Cantor Reuven Frankel, Rabbi Groner, who was awarded status as head rabbi in 1967, rose to the challenge and with remarkable leadership was able to help the congregation heal from the tragic loss, continue with its mission and ensure its continuity for future generations.

As the congregation celebrated its 120th anniversary in 1981, Rabbi Groner was honored for his twenty-five years of service and given the status of rabbi for life. The anniversary was also celebrated with a major historical exhibit, national speakers and a



In August 1959, Rabbi Irwin Groner joined Shaarey Zedek as assistant rabbi, rising to a position of top national leadership.

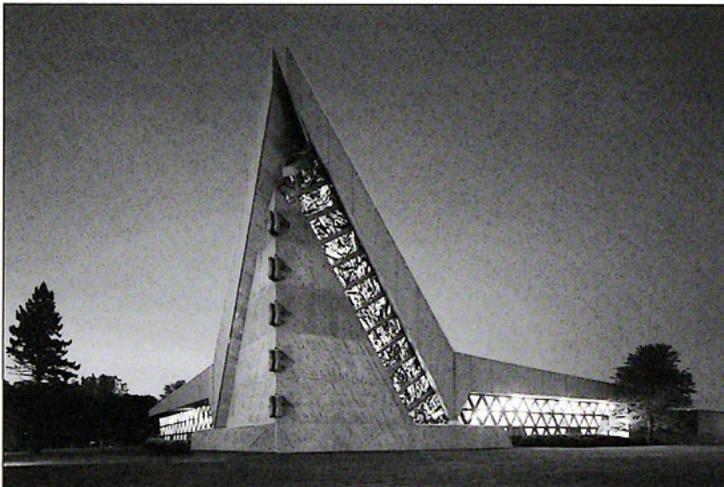


*On a cold and windy May 28, 1961, more than 1,000 members drove for what seemed like many miles from the city to participate in the momentous groundbreaking event. The inaugural event of the 100th anniversary of the congregation was held that evening in celebration not only of past history but of the promise of the future.*

gala dinner dance. The book "Congregation Shaarey Zedek: 1861-2" was published by Wayne State University Press.

Shaarey Zedek now had risen to national prominence in the Conservative movement. Rabbi Groner served with distinction as president of the Rabbinical Assembly. Cantor Chaim Najman had joined the Shaarey Zedek clergy in 1979, recreated the Youth Choir, organized a Shabbat choir of lay members and was elected international president of the Cantor's Assembly of the Conservative Movement.

The decades of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s were years of social change as the congregation charted the rough seas of the times. In 1980, girls first celebrated a Bat Mitzvah and chanted the *Haftarah* on Friday evenings; 1981 saw the first Sisterhood Shabbat where women read English parts. In the spring of 1982, girls and boys celebrated their Bar/Bat Mitzvah on Shabbat morning, although initially there was no pairing of male and female celebrations. One year later, in the spring of 1983, the Board of Trustees approved Adult



*Congregation Shaarey Zedek today. Built in 1962, on Bell Road in Southfield, architect Percival Goodman designed the building. Photo by Laszlo Regos*

Bat Mitzvah.

On Shavuot 1984, thirty-two women observed the long awaited rite: the first *aliyah* (being called to the Torah) by a female, unaccompanied by a male, observed at Sisterhood Shabbat. In 1985, the traditional consecration for 10th grade girls was changed to confirmation to include the young men as well. And, in 1998, Shaarey Zedek became fully egalitarian when the first woman conducted the entire service, both in Hebrew and English, a hard-won battle fought by a group of Sisterhood past presidents.

In 1987, after a multi-year effort by the newly established Archives, the congregation was awarded a Michigan Historical Marker naming Shaarey Zedek "An Historic Congregation in Recognition of its 125 Years in the State." Erected on the grounds of the synagogue, in part the marker's text reads: "...Since the nineteenth century, members of the congregation have played leading roles in Michigan, the nation and in world Jewry. Congregation Shaarey Zedek has worshipped in six different structures since its founding and continues to transmit its heritage from generation to generation..." On the 300th birthday of the City of Detroit in 2001, Shaarey Zedek was also honored with the Beacon Award, as 'the city's distinguished leader among the faith based institutions.'

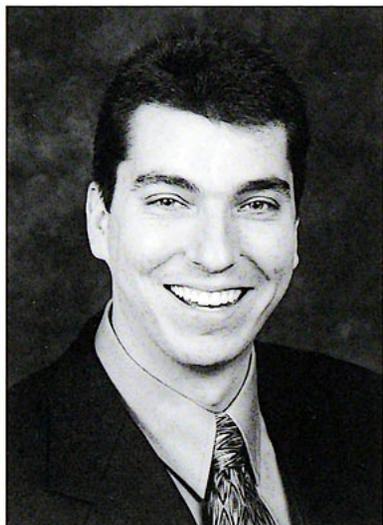
## RABBI KRAKOFF JOINS SHAAREY ZEDEK

With the vision of focusing on further outreach to young families, young marrieds, and school aged students, Rabbi Joseph H. Krakoff was hired to serve Shaarey Zedek in July, 1998. He came directly out of the Jewish Theological Seminary, as had Rabbi Hershtman nine decades earlier. Rabbi Krakoff said at that time, "I am very excited to be at Shaarey Zedek which prides itself on Torah study mixed with fun and friendship." Since then, Rabbi Krakoff has sought to make Shaarey Zedek a place that truly honors and celebrates all the generations, including the newest members.

In his first year, Rabbi Krakoff re-energized adult education as over 200 individuals became part of a year-long "Limud" learning experience. The hallmarks of his rabbin-



Rabbi Krakoff and Rabbi Aaron Starr are regular visitors to religious school classes.



*In 2010, the congregation celebrated Rabbi Krakoff's thirteenth year of leadership.*

ate to date have included preaching, teaching and modeling the joy of Jewish living, as well as personally reaching out with tenderness to those in their most difficult and trying moments. Rabbi Krakoff has also become recognized locally and nationally, sitting on many boards and having been invited twice to the White House.

In 2005, Shaarey Zedek engaged Cantor Meir Finkelstein, a cantor since his teen age years. Cantor Finkelstein has ignited the musical programming of the synagogue from his Shabbat and holiday singing of the prayers to his original concerts, including one with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra entitled "Liberation," and recordings of his own compositions. Cantor Leonard Gutman serves as the assistant cantor, conducting the daily *minyan* morning and evening services, which have set a unique record of continuity for the past 150 years.

Rabbi Aaron Starr joined Shaarey Zedek as educational director in 2009. He energizes the students, some of whom are sixth-generation members, with the challenge, "Let us recognize that one person can make a difference! - and must!" Rabbi Starr not only directs the religious school, but also oversees the Metro Detroit Conservative movement's ATID High school and has accompanied the teens to Israel on several occasions.

The mission of Shaarey Zedek centers around creating community within the greater synagogue family where the value of *l'dor v'dor*—"generation to generation"—is encouraged and celebrated. As past president William Davidson said, "Each of us is a living link between the past and future."



*The Shaarey Zedek Sisterhood has a long, rich tradition. Laura Simons, the wife of David W. Simons or D.W., as he was known, organized the Sisterhood in 1906. In addition to supporting many community needs, the women also took care of congregational needs. Present day Sisterhood members Rusty Rosman, Jacqui Elkus, Helene Cherrin (Kugel Maven Chair), Anna Himeloch, Carol Chinitz, Barbara Zweig, and Sandy Boykansky prepare kugel for an event in 2011.*

*The authors wish to express their sincere appreciation to Rabbi Joseph Krakoff for his invaluable assistance in preparing this historical overview.*

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**Judith Levin Cantor** is an accomplished historian, author, docent and fundraiser. She is a past president of the JHSM, a Leonard N. Simons History Award recipient and a member of the JHSM board of trustees for more than three decades, overseeing much of the organization's growth and prosperity. She is also the archivist for Congregation Shaarey Zedek.



**Ruth Goldstein**, right, is a retired educator from the Detroit Public Schools and Congregation Shaarey Zedek. She is a member of the board of trustees of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, a docent for the JHSM tours and a docent for the Holocaust Memorial Center. She is pictured with her mother, Bea Katzman, who was president of the Congregation Shaarey Zedek Sisterhood in 1946 when Sisterhood embarked on a scholarship program which raised \$25,000 in two years.

**Congregation Shaarey Zedek will focus on honoring the past and celebrating the future, during a year-long landmark sesquicentennial celebration. Kickoff will be on High Holiday services on Thursday, September 29, 2011.**

**Among the activities being planned are a Pewabic tile wall, video testimonials, a gallery exhibition, a yearbook, a published time line, a 150th bus tour of all the congregation's locations, a special Detroit Symphony Orchestra concert, and beautiful new custom-made Torah and Ark covers.**

# FEATURED ARTICLE

## FROM WASH TUBS TO LINENS AND UNIFORMS... MEMORIES OF JEWS IN DETROIT AND THEIR CONNECTIONS TO THE LAUNDRY AND LINEN SUPPLY INDUSTRIES

by EDIE RESNICK

*Since its emergence as a primitive industry in the early 20th century, the establishment and growth of Detroit's Jewish laundry business reads like an exciting action novel. Immigrant Jews gravitated to the hard-scrabble, back-breaking laundry business because they couldn't find work elsewhere. Competition was fierce, pay was low and unionization and labor wars became prominent issues in the industry. Today, most of the independent, Jewish-owned laundry businesses have disappeared or were sold to large regional and national companies that service a wide variety of industries.*

ANYONE born after World War II will most likely have no memory of the family laundry being done in a big copper tub perched precariously over a gas burner in the basement. The lady of the house or the housekeeper would put lye soap into a tub of boiling water, add her dirty clothes and stir it with a stout wooden stick. The clothes were lifted, then rinsed in another tub and hung on lines to dry before they were ironed by hand. If there was no place to wash the clothes or no convenient place to dry them, the bundled dirty clothes would be handed over to a laundry driver or taken to the neighborhood laundry shop.

The neighborhood milk man and laundry man have met the same fate. In most contemporary American homes and apartments, energy-efficient automatic washers and dryers are standard equipment. The "laundry business" (as opposed to dry cleaning) exists for those without those amenities as the neighborhood laundromat. At one time though, the laundry and linen supply business in the greater Detroit area was a very successful industry. While today it has all but disappeared, the stories of how it evolved and changed is one to be preserved.

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## AN EASY LIVING

Thousands of factory workers flocked to Detroit to work for Henry Ford for five dollars a day in the early part of the 20th century. Others came to find jobs in hotels, restaurants, schools and other satellite operations. With scarce housing, and long before the advent of the home washing machine, people without family took their soiled linens to the corner "Chinese" or hand laundry. A few days later, for a small fee, they picked up their cleaned and starched clothes. What they didn't know was that the friendly neighborhood launderer wasn't the one washing their things. He would send the wash to a commercial steam laundry that returned the bundles dry and ready for ironing. Most of those commercial steam laundries were owned by immigrant Jews, Italians and Greeks. According to a December 1992 *Ann Arbor News* article, in the 1880s, ninety percent of the big steam laundries in Michigan were Jewish owned.

Prior to World War I, Jews and non-Jews were leaving Europe by the thousands to escape pogroms, military service, wars and to seek a better way of life. Many came with little or no money and had few marketable skills. Detroit was a growing city in the latter part of the 19th century. Automobiles, ship building, stove and cigar companies attracted people from all over. They needed housing, food and work. Hotels, restaurants and all of the businesses necessary for survival and entertainment followed. Men often came without their wives and children, eventually saving enough to bring their families to America.

Whether it was because they couldn't speak English or because they were Jewish, many immigrants couldn't find employment or housing. Many changed their name or claimed a different religion in order to find a job. And some went to work in the larger steam laundries. It was hard, dirty work. The men had to sort dirty and wet bundles of clothes and linens and then load them into the huge washing machines. The lucky ones were hired as drivers who were paid pennies per pound for the amount of wash they collected.

One of those men was Samuel P. Baker, who came to Detroit with the dream of opening his own business. After two years of driving a horse-drawn buggy for a small laundry and earning nine dollars a week, he opened the Queen Quality Laundry Company in 1915 in Detroit. After WWII, Sam's sons, Ernst and Morton, joined the company, servicing neighborhoods, motels, hotels and hospitals. Nearly a century after Sam hoisted his first heavy bundle, the Baker family – now in its fourth generation – continues to operate the business whose 95 employees primarily service the healthcare industry.

Because little capital was required to start a neighborhood laundry, men opened shop employing their wives, sisters and children to do the finish ironing. These entrepreneurs could be their own bosses, earn more money and the work wasn't so back breaking. An early example of this appears in a 1900 Detroit directory which lists Thomas Edelson as a "laundry driver." Having moved to Detroit three years earlier, Edelson managed to purchase a horse and wagon to pick up and deliver laundry. "Lace Curtains a Specialty" was painted on the side of his wagon. Edelson's wife Rebecca and other women did the laundry work.

Early on, drivers took the huge bundles they collected to the laundry. Most of those

bundles weighed at least 50 pounds. At the same time, they delivered the clean items and collected what each customer owed. These men were paid pennies per bundle brought in, so competition for new customers was fierce. In the early 1920s, people who had already started a laundry/linen business helped newly arriving relatives by hiring them as drivers. They learned to pick up and deliver the laundry, solicit new customers and to try to take over competitors' clients by promising a few cents less per pound, faster delivery or nicer workmanship. Prices changed as often as the customers.



*A fleet of trucks stand ready to depart from General Linen in Detroit, circa 1940.*

## A DANGEROUS PROFESSION

Factories used cloths to wipe grease and solvents off parts and machinery. Those rags could be re-used if laundered, and so could the towels from beauty parlors and barber shops. It took very little money 100 years ago to establish a laundry and hire transients off the street to do the dirty work of sorting and lifting bundles of dirty or wet clothing and rags into the washers or to place the wet items on wooden racks to dry.

Sometimes the bundles contained scraps of food and other items. When boxes replaced the bundles as a means of transporting laundry, rats would get into the boxes. Periodically there would be loud shrieks from the women in the plant as the boxes would be dumped for sorting and the rats would run around the room.

Fires were a real threat because of the lint from fabrics and the residual solvents and chemicals in the water troughs. Careless workers would occasionally toss a forbidden cigarette into the water and flames would rise from one end of a trough to the other. Every now and then, spontaneous combustion from ink and solvents would occur in the washing machines, and the ensuing explosion would blow the door off a machine spewing dirty clothes, soap and hot water everywhere. Many little laundries were burned down, and those mini-entrepreneurs literally lost their shirts and ended up working for relatives as drivers.

## YOU'VE GOT AN UNCLE IN THE LAUNDRY BUSINESS

It seems that nearly everyone knew of a family who came to Detroit and started working in a laundry. Sue Shifman, who lives in West Bloomfield, relates that her mother, Anne Weinstein, together with her mother and sisters, ironed shirts in their father's laundry. Her uncles, Nathan and Charlie Weinstein, owned a steam laundry that washed the clothes. Sue never knew the name of the business.

Seymour Rowe's father, Philip Sukrow, opened a hand laundry in 1929 during the Great Depression. The family lived above the store and Sukrow continued in the business expanding to several different states until his retirement. Bill Schumer, a second generation launderer, says there were still 132 Jewish-owned laundry and linen facilities in the state in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. Today, only a handful remain.



*Detroit area launderers and their outstate counterparts gather for a meeting in 1941.*

One of the early steam laundries was Varsity Linens, which opened in 1905 in Ann Arbor. Brothers Nate and Barney Dalitz purchased the business in 1924, removed the old wooden tubs and modernized it. The tubs held 400 pounds of dirty wash (clothing), which upon its exit from the cycle weighed 1,200 pounds wet. A crane was used to lift the wet wash in order to extract the water. The Dalitz brothers serviced the local community and expanded in the 1930s by adding trucks and bringing Barney's son, Morris (Moe), into the business. Moe had been a very wild youth and hung out with the Purple Gang. His father and uncle hoped the job would help straighten him out. In those days, the Gang "borrowed" laundry trucks (during prohibition) to deliver booze to "blind pigs," as the illegal bars were called.

Once he got into the family business, Moe Dalitz learned everything about it — the chemistry, sales, repairs, etc. The company prospered when they began cleaning industrial linens. During World War II, Moe joined the Quartermaster's Corps, and when he returned he bought out his uncle's share in the business. Moe then opened a laundry



*Varsity Laundry on 4th Ave. in Ann Arbor as it stood in 1903, two decades before Nate and Barney Dalitz purchased the business.*

in Cleveland, Ohio (to avoid union restrictions in Michigan). After both his uncle and his father died in the 1960s, he sold the business to Bill Schumer of General Linen Supply. Dalitz then moved to Las Vegas, where he operated the Desert Inn, and became a highly respected and benevolent member of that community.

General Linen Supply Co. was founded by Harry Schumer, who immigrated to Detroit from Poland at age 13. As a 16-year-old, he worked for a man whose business was washing factory cloths. At the suggestion of his boss, Harry began renting out towels and aprons by hawking them on Hastings Street and other busy areas of Detroit. In 1919, Harry and his friend, Leo Gold, opened the General Linen Supply Company. When Leo died in 1927, Harry purchased his share of the business. He ran the company throughout the hard Depression years and the war – even as he went overseas to serve his adopted country – until his death in 1974.

Harry's only child, Bill, and daughter-in-law Irene Schumer, expanded the company by acquiring other linen and laundry supply companies, developing a strong and loyal executive team, and diversifying to meet changes in the needs of the community. The couple is hoping to keep General Linen & Uniform Service in the hands of the family for as long as possible. They are delighted that their daughter, Sharon Schumer Schwartz, recently joined the company management team.

During a 1970s labor strike, 5'2" Irene pushed away a picketer while trying to get into the plant. She was arrested and accused of aggravated assault, later explaining to the judge that she was trying to get to work to get customer orders completed. The judge took one look at little Irene and then at the teamster, laughed and dismissed the case. The strike was difficult but the Schumers were committed to their customers. At one point, they recruited their son's high school football teammates to come to work.



Besides being active with the Linen Association (Detroit), Harry Schumer supported many Jewish and Zionist causes. Around 1937, he was honored for his work in procuring an airplane for a Zionist training organization. (l to r) Alec Nichamin, unidentified, Charles Chidsey, vice president of Banner Linen, two pilots, Detroit Morris Schaver, owner of Central Overall and Harry Schumer (far right).



The General Linen Supply Co. family today, Irene Schumer, Sharon Schwartz and Bill Schumer in front of their office located at the Piquette Plant in Detroit.

The Teamster's Union called the school district and threatened to picket the school. That was the end of laundry work for the Oak Park High School football team. That strike lasted for 28 weeks. After it was settled, the union targeted the industrial linens suppliers who settled much faster.

Domestic Uniform Rentals, which started in the 1930s, is also one of the few remaining linen supply companies owned by Jewish Detroiters. Bruce Colton, his sister, Marilyn, and his two brothers, Ralph and Leonard, oversee the company, which provides rental and laundering of uniforms, sells dust control products, wiping cloths and other reusable textiles as well as restroom management services. Their company, like General Linen and Uniform Service, evolved from other companies that merged or sold out to them. (It is interesting to note that the two families are cousins.) "The Jewish linen business in Detroit is incestuous because almost everyone in it is related," said Bruce Colton.

Originally, small laundries were primitive affairs. David Blau remembered how his father, Joseph Blau, got started in the laundry business on the east side of Detroit. Mr. Blau was working in a factory and his wife was doing bachelors' laundry for pocket money. He decided to rent a garage behind the house next door, installed a washing machine and hired someone to help. He called it The East End Wet Wash and bought suet from Swift and Company and lye from Wyandotte Chemical to make soap. David used to go into the garage at two or three in the morning to light the huge boiler that was needed to heat the wash water before the workers showed up around six a.m.

"Imagine a large wooden barrel with a trap door in the middle of its side," described Blau. The barrel was attached to a small engine by a series of belts and pulleys to make it rotate. It also had hoses that would provide hot water or drain out the dirty water into underlying screened troughs. The large boiler young David lit each morning was needed to heat the wash water and the troughs were needed to funnel the dirty water into the sewer. As the business grew, a metal washer was built, a water extractor was added, and more people of both sexes were hired. The expansion continued with a merger and



*Long after the days of homemade tubs, mechanization allowed laundries to become more productive, and safer. Shown here, Queen Quality Laundry's folding area.*

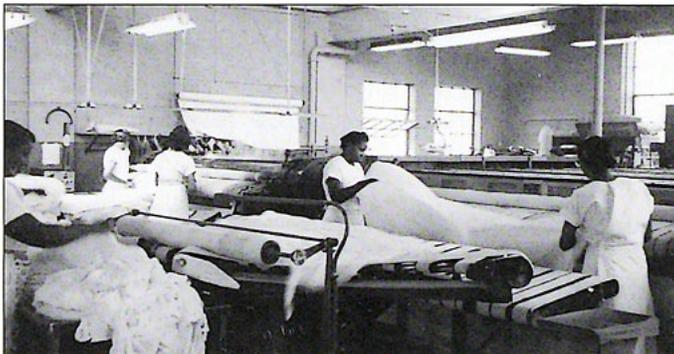
a name change to East End Family Laundry. Joseph Blau died in 1957. Two of his sons continued the business as a linen supply business for motels and nursing homes. They absorbed other smaller companies until they sold the company in 1977.

## THE CURRENT INDUSTRY

One cannot relate stories about the laundry businesses in Detroit without mentioning the name of Isaac Litwak who founded the Detroit Laundry and Linen Drivers Association in 1934 which became Teamsters Local 285 in 1936. Isaac ruled it with devotion, determination and iron will. He was on the picket lines when Purple Gang goons beat up strikers and was severely beaten himself several times. Once, when he was arrested, Jimmy Hoffa joined Litwak in jail to keep him from being beaten and killed. After twelve major strikes in 1937, the union succeeded in establishing guaranteed wages for drivers through contractual arrangements. As with many of the labor revolutions in the early 20th century, owners resisted unionization. At one time, laundry owners even hired remnants of the Purple Gang to intimidate members of the Detroit Linen Drivers' Association because the owners didn't want to give up control of the wages and working conditions in the industry.

As time passed, the laundry business became diversified. There were those that offered just the washing of overalls and clothing. Some washed only factory cloths while others specialized in linens for barber shops and beauty parlors, hotels and hospitals. Eventually, those businesses became linen supply businesses, where women could find decent employment by ironing shirts and napkins, working the machines that ironed the sheets and tablecloths or repairing items and packaging orders.

Necessity and ingenuity soon brought improvements to the businesses that remained. Small companies bought out other small companies so that by 1960 only 50 or 60 Jewish companies remained. As home washers and dryers cut into their revenue after World War II, many smaller companies sold out. Another round of closures and sell-offs occurred in the 1970s, when OSHA and fire safety regulations significantly increased the cost of running a plant. The toll of the regulations, new employment laws and an ever-increasing number of homeowners owning their own equipment left many in the laundry and linen supply business struggling to survive. Those who wanted to

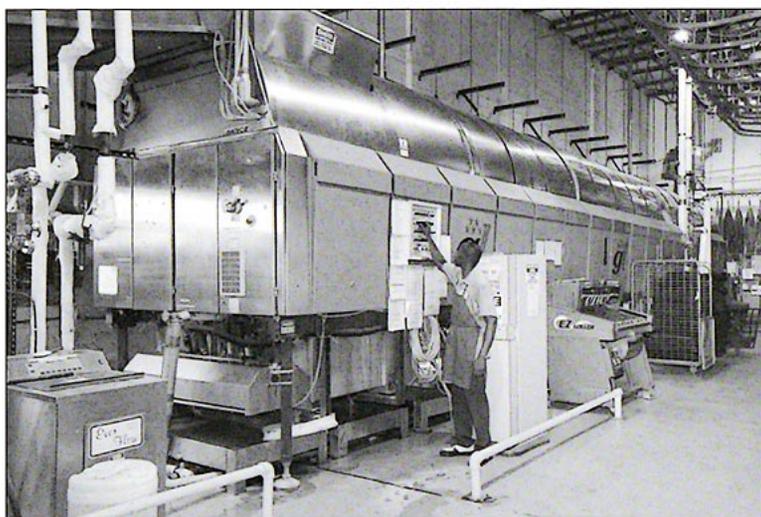


*Queen Quality Laundry's staff included both men and women.*

continue had to diversify and modernize. Long gone are the tubs of yesteryear. Today's digital equipment takes soiled linen in one end of a tunnel and spits it out the other end, cleaned, packaged and ready to be returned.

One by one, the businesses closed or sold to large regional or national companies like Cintas, Sanitas, and ARA. Second- and third-generation Jewish-owned laundry businesses were rare, as the children of so many of those early entrepreneurs moved on to their own businesses and professions.

The companies that remain sell soap dispensers, washroom services, maids' and drivers' uniforms, janitorial supplies, floor and logo mats, blankets and towels and hotel linens. Some have even gone into the manufacture of uniforms. As for Detroit's laundry business as an industry, the era is over. Still, their story represents an interesting and important period of our Michigan Jewish heritage.



*The laundry business has come a long way from horse-drawn buggies and hand-loaded machines to modern mechanized units.*

## FROM WASH TUBS TO LINENS: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Special thanks to Bruce Baker, Queen Quality Laundry and Sandy Schumer, General Linen Supply, for the use of their precious photographs.

Interviews conducted:

Bruce Baker

David Blau

Ian Cascade

Sam Cascade

Larry Cohen

Bruce Colton

Harvey Goldberg

Jerry Malin

Seymour Rowe

Irene and Bill Schumer

Sue and Burt Shifman

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Jewish Federation of Detroit Archives, Irving Laker-oral history, September 21, 2005

Special thanks to Bill and Irene Schumer for pictures, brochures, lunches and the book by Leo Litwak. It was Bill who gave me the idea for this article.

Other Detroit area Jewish men and women in the laundry business: Julius Sandler, Stuart Wish, Harold Weinstein, Bob Burke, Ian Cascade, Sam Cascade, Bernie Zemmol, Edward Levin, Norman Shulevitz, Morris Schaver, Barney Malinsky, Arnold Stone, Oscar Spilkin, Arnie Collins, Dave Rosen, Jack Friedlander, Thomas Edelman



**Edie Resnick**, one of Michigan Jewish History's regular contributors, is a member of the Advisory Board of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.

# ARCHIVED TREASURES

2011

## MSU ARCHIVES AND HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

THE University Archives at Michigan State University was founded in 1969 to manage the official records of MSU, records which had previously been kept informally by University historians. In 1970, the Historical Collections were added and represent materials that are not directly related to MSU, but serve as valuable research tools. The materials include more than 2,000 archival and manuscript collections totaling more than 5,000 cubic feet, including more than 50,000 photographs and more than a half-million negatives.

Among the many collections of interest are those of Jewish researcher Barney Rosenberg. Dr. Rosenberg was a scholar interested in many areas of science, but is best known for his discovery of cisplatin, a platinum compound with anti-cancer properties. An oral history interview of Dr. Rosenberg is available online at: <http://onthebanks.msu.edu/sohp/Object/2-D-E9/barnett-rosenberg/>.

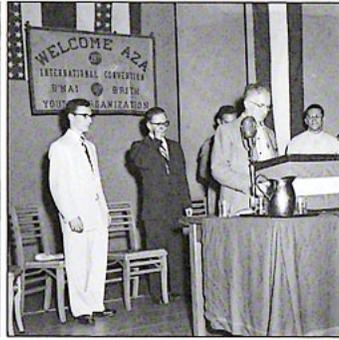
Several MSU Historical Collections relate to Jewish organizations. The Cosmopolitan Club was an early organization that welcomed all persons and was a favorite among foreign students at MSU. The Hillel Jewish Student Center records feature photographs of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation. The American-Israel Affairs Club collection features brochures and flyers about the Soviet Jewry Committee. Also of interest are the records of the Jewish Studies Program and the *MSU Jewish Voice*, a newspaper published by and for Jewish students at MSU. Relevant historical collections include the Ransom Olds papers and the Warren Family papers, which feature early 20th century photographs of Israel from when the families vacationed there.



*Ransom E. Olds, founder of the REO Motor Car Company, and his family vacationed in Palestine in 1922.*

*Mr. and Mrs. Olds stand on a hilltop with the Mount of Temptations in the background.*

*The camels are grazing along a road to the Dead Sea.*



In 1952, the International Convention of the B'nai Brith Youth Organization met at Michigan State University. Students enjoyed a combination of formal and informal activities.

The Cosmopolitan Club welcomed all races and both genders into its membership. Morris Ellman, a Russian Jew, was a member throughout his time at MSU and eventually became editor of the newsletter Cosmopolitan Student.



COSMOPOLITAN CLUB OFFICERS

President,	H. W. Hough
Secretary and Treasurer,	Alfred Hillel
Assistant Secretary and Treasurer,	H. W. Ende
Corresponding Secretary,	Y. Kawada
Editor of "Cosmopolitan Student,"	Morris Ellman

ROLL

ACTIVE MEMBERS  
H. W. Hough  
Yoshio Kawada  
Alfred Hillel  
M. Wershaw  
Avao Itano

D. L. Hagerman  
S. Liph  
M. S. Levine  
C. A. Reed  
P. K. Fu  
K. C. Luke

H. W. Ende  
L. J. Krakover  
M. S. Lowe  
L. J. Sivan  
E. C. Yates  
Leon Bishop

P. L. Menaker  
L. M. Hutchinson  
E. B. Nee  
Hoy Chan  
A. S. Huaco  
H. Gothermer

HONORARY  
Thomas Ganson  
Hon. C. L. Collingwood  
ASSOCIATE  
Herman Hensel



Hillel had its own house, which served as a home away from home for students, and where they could hold religious and social activities.



Joseph Rosen was a Russian Jew who graduated in 1908. Following his graduation he wrote a series of reports analyzing American agriculture for the benefit of Russia.



Dr. Barney Rosenberg was a prominent scientist who discovered the anti-cancer drug cisplatin.

ARCHIVED  
TREASURES

# CELEBRITIES & *Celebrations*

## FRANKEL JEWISH ACADEMY CELEBRATES ITS FIRST DECADE

On that blustery April evening in 1997, all they had was a dream. In the spirit of Theodore Herzl, the parents who met to discuss the formation of a Jewish day high school understood that if they worked to make the dream a reality, it would come to pass. Said Rob Roth, founding parent and the Academy's first president, "The challenge was to fill [an educational] vacuum and create a high school that offered Jewish teens a substantive high level of education in the context of a religious institution committed to traditional Jewish texts, beliefs and practices."

On Monday, August 28, 2000, the Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit (JAMD) opened its doors to 51 9th and 10th graders — the largest start-up school of its kind in the U.S. Rabbi Lee Buckman, Rabbi Aaron Bergman and Dr. Helene Cohen formed the initial core of professional staff as Head of School, Head of Rabbinics and Academic Dean respectively. Initially housed in the basement of the West Bloomfield JCC, JAMD quickly made its presence known on the high school educational scene.

With the school rapidly outgrowing the beloved, albeit temporary, trailers, the Board of Directors set out in the fall of 2005 to raise \$8.5 million in capital funds to build a permanent facility. The campaign was completed in the spring of 2006 and construction for the Academy's new home began. In honor of the Frankel family's ongoing generosity and their crowning gift of \$2.5 million to the Capital Campaign, the school was renamed the Jean and Samuel Frankel Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit (Frankel Jewish Academy, or FJA).

August 2007 saw another celebration as FJA moved into its state-of-the-art 50,000 square foot facility housed on the upper level of the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. In the spring of 2008, the Board of Directors hired Rabbi Eric Grossman, the school's Head of Judaic Studies since 2001, as Frankel Jewish Academy's new head of school.



Photo Left to right: Debbie Wrotslavsky, Joshua Kahn, Jessica Curhan, Stephanie Curhan, Aaron Goss, Josh Broner, Jesse Adler

Eleven years into the dream, FJA is poised to begin its second decade fully engaged in its mission — to give Jewish teens a superior Jewish and general studies education anchored in the four pillars that define the Frankel Jewish Academy's educational philosophy: open intellectual inquiry, Zionism, *Halacha* and commitment to America's founding principles.

- Debra Darvick

## CAMP TAVOR 55TH REUNION

**With** the tunes of Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan and Bon Jovi wafting through the air, more than 200 alumni of the Camp Tavor camping experience returned to Lake Kaiser for a weekend of talk, song and nostalgia. The 55th reunion of Camp Tavor — situated in Three Rivers, Michigan, halfway between Kalamazoo and Constantine — drew alumni from eighteen states, Manitoba and Ontario, and four regions in Israel.

Tavor, formerly Midwest Camp Habonim, was founded in 1956 on the site of Cooper's Lodge, a summer resort for mostly Chicago Zionists, which drew city dwellers and their families, many of them workers and small business people, from throughout the Midwest to spend time eating and resting. Tavor was part of a string of camps set up by the adult arm of the Labor Zionist movement, the Farband and Pioneer Women, but run by the young people themselves. Campers went from their summer-camp experience to Kibbutz-based "workshops" in Israel, then returned to their hometowns to work for the movement. With the decline of Zionism, especially Labor Zionism, camp enrollment that once peaked at 200+ plus campers sunk in the 1980s to less than twenty a season. Today,

enrollment is back up to 120 campers in two three-week-long sessions.

Hasia Diner, a historian who attended the camp in the late 1950s and early 1960s, noted: "The campers who came through the late 1960s had exposure to Labor Zionism and their ideology from the movement or from homes steeped in Jewish culture... There's still a kind of off-beat quality to the place. The camp has not lost one iota of its progressive orientation and that's impressive."

*Habonim* ("the builders" in Hebrew) was founded in 1935, and decades later merged with another Labor Zionist





(l to r) Jeremy Salinger, Southfield, MI; Dahlia Belinkoff of Pittsburgh; Arline Michaels and Larry Miller of Skokie, IL; and David Holtzer of Kibbutz Urim, Israel.

movement called Dror (“freedom” in Hebrew). Tavor, or in Christian circles known as Mt. Taber, is a large hill in the Galilee. The name probably was chosen for the Shabbat Hill on the camp grounds. The camp emphasizes love of Israel, progressive socialist principles and *chalutzit* (an untranslatable Hebrew word that means “pioneering,” getting back to the soil and working the land).

The reunion featured Lenny Zurakov, age ninety, one of the early leaders of Camp Tavor, who reminisced about the difficult origins of the camp. Joel Nussbaum, a Tavor alumnus and filmmaker who directed “Prom” and “Sleepover,” was joined by Jack Nusan Porter, who talked about his books *Happy Days Revisited* and *Milwaukee and Hollywood*. Other events included a *mifkad*, flag ceremony, raising both the US and Israeli flags; walking up “Shabbat Hill” to see the sunset over Corey Lake and a Shabbat dinner; and dedication of a grove of trees in honor of several Tavor alumni.

- Jack Nusan Porter, writer, editor, and social activist located in Newton, Mass.

## EMMA SCHAVER PAPERS FIND A HOME AT THE WALTER P. REUTHER LIBRARY

In April 2011, the personal papers of Emma Lazaroff Schaver were deposited at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University. An important addition to the urban collections already housed at the Library, the papers were entrusted to the archives staff by the Lubavitch Foundation of Michigan.

Emma Lazaroff Schaver (1905-2003), the fifth recipient of the JHSM’s Leonard H. Simons History Award, was a renowned concert soprano. Following studies at Julliard, she went on to sing with several opera companies, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Israeli symphonies while holding performances throughout Europe, North and South America and Israel. Born Emma Lazaroff in Russia, she moved to Detroit with her family in 1914 and from a very early age followed in her father’s footsteps as a devout Labor

Zionist. Emma married Detroit Labor Zionist leader, Morris L. Schaver, in 1924, and the two adopted a son, Isaac. Throughout her life she was wholeheartedly committed to Judaism and supporting the state of Israel, as well as to philanthropic pursuits in the cultural and educational arena. Wayne State University was just one of many area institutions to benefit from Mrs. Schaver's generosity; in 1986, the music building on campus was named in her honor.

The Schaver Papers, approximately 150 linear feet, spanning the years 1910-2000, consist of items such as correspondence, family records, diaries, speeches, concert programs, publications, song sheets, photographs, scrapbooks, audio and video recordings, memorabilia, awards and ephemera. The collection highlights Emma Schaver's personal and professional life with insights into her singing career; her involvement with post-WWII Displaced Persons (DP) camps, her attention to Jewish education, the arts and Hebrew and Yiddish culture. The collection also details her and her husband's philanthropic activities in Israel and the Detroit area and their Labor Zionist activities. Highlights



include the manuscript for her book, "We Are Here"; personal letters between Emma and Morris; signed photographs with world leaders such as President Harry S. Truman and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir; scrapbooks and original posters detailing Emma's concerts around the globe; and documentation of her time spent at the DP camps. Plans are to translate as many as possible of the records written in Hebrew and Yiddish.

Information on all of the collections housed at the Reuther Library, including related collections such as the Jewish Community Archives, can be accessed through its web site at [www.reuther.wayne.edu](http://www.reuther.wayne.edu).

- Deborah Rice, Technical Services Archivist, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

## M. JACOB & SONS CELEBRATE 125 YEARS

**M. Jacob and Sons**, the bottling and packaging company started by immigrant Max Jacob in Detroit in 1885, celebrated its 125th anniversary in October 2010 with a two day celebration beginning with a party at the Max Jacob House on the campus of Wayne State University in Detroit and ending with a gala at the Henry Ford Museum. Now in its fifth generation, the company is the major bottling distributor in the Detroit area and the oldest bottling distribution company in the U.S.

Full of ambition, a young Max Jacob came to Detroit by way of Lithuania then Baltimore and began his career by collecting empty bottles and returning them to brewer-



*Max M. Jacob, born in 1864 in Lithuania, came to America in 1882. He founded M. Jacob & Sons at the age of 21.*



*As the company celebrated its 100 anniversary, the second generation of Jacob brothers gathered for a photograph: (l to r) William, Ben, Sam and Aubrey.*

ies for reuse. Five years later, he launched M. Jacob Company, which soon developed a reputation for innovation, quality design and service. In the early 1900s, Jacob's sons William, Ben and Sam entered the business and the company updated its name to M. Jacob & Sons, adding products and services. Prohibition, in 1920, forced the company to diversify and expand its supply of bottles and soon began working with pharmaceutical, soft drink and food companies. Ben became president in 1923; his son Marty is the company's current president. Deborah Jacob and Dr. Bruce Jacob, Max's great grandchildren, are members of the board of directors and Greg Jacob, the company's marketing manager, represents the fifth generation to be actively involved in the business.

To celebrate the anniversary, Jacob family members from around the country joined those still in the area, other employees and friends for a program, which included Martin Jacob, the company president, Representative Gary Peters and Jewish Historical Society of Michigan President Arnie Collens. After touring the Max Jacob home, built in 1915-16 and one of the last surviving Italian Renaissance-style homes in the city, the group attended a dinner at the Westin Book Cadillac hotel.

-Aimee Ergas

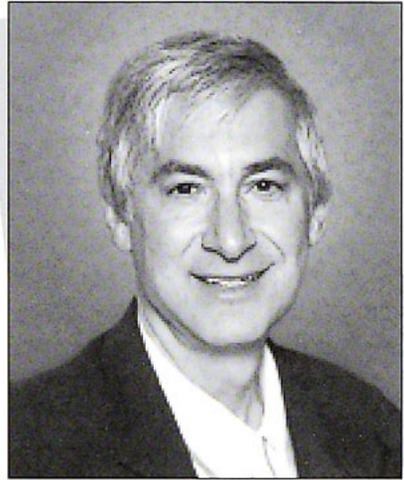
## ROBERT SKLAR, EDITOR DETROIT JEWISH NEWS RETIRES

**When** Robert A. Sklar became editor of the *Detroit Jewish News* in 1998, it was like coming home for him. With family roots firmly planted in Jewish Detroit since the 1890s and his own 25-year career in community journalism with the *Observer and Eccentric* newspapers, the job was the perfect intersection of his skills and passions.

In March 2011, in his Bar Mitzvah year at the *JN*, Bob gave up weekly deadlines and retired just shy of his sixtieth birthday to devote more time to his wife, Beth, a retired teacher, and their grown children, Elyse, Josh and his wife, Paula.

In April, he was one of three longtime local journalists honored with the Detroit Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists' Lifetime Achievement Award. He was the first community journalist to receive the award.

Sklar began his involvement in community newspapers forty-four years ago. He got his first taste of reporting on the student paper at Vernor School in northwest Detroit in the 1960s. He loved the world of people and words so much that at age fifteen he sought out a local weekly, the *Home Gazette*, and offered to write a neighborhood column. That job led him to write a Henry Ford High School column for *Detroit Suburban Newspapers*. By then, Bob was hooked on the chase of the story. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Michigan, where he



wrote for the *Michigan Daily*. For the *Observer & Eccentric*, he served in Birmingham, Rochester, Livonia and Farmington. He worked his way up from sports writer to community editor, to assistant managing editor, to Oakland County managing editor.

At the *JN*, he became a spokesman and editorial voice on both community and national issues, much as *JN* founder Philip Slomovitz was in his day. Although retired as editor, Sklar will continue to contribute opinion pieces and editorial comment.

Highlights from his tenure at the *JN*:

- Unrelenting support for Israel as the Jewish state, separate from its politics, as the Palestinians unleashed a second killing intifada and Hamas gained control of the Gaza Strip after the Israeli pullout.
- Community debate over the decision to run notices of same-sex commitment ceremonies — five years before the issue hit the national Jewish press.
- Not missing a week of publishing the *JN* when a fire in January 2002 destroyed the Jewish News building in Southfield. The paper came out only one day late.
- Launch of Teen2Teen, an inspired, innovative monthly written by and for teens

in collaboration with Federation's Stephen H. Schulman Millennium Fund. This led to a partnership on jewish@edu for college students.

- Coverage of the 2005 Federation population study of Detroit Jewry, revealing dramatic shrinkage and aging while simultaneously boasting a strong adolescent and teen base.
- The *JN's* unprecedented cross-cultural initiative, Building Community, which has linked the Metro Detroit Jewish and Chaldean communities socially, educationally and commercially.

"Serving as *JN* editor was the culmination of my long and exciting professional career that unites my loves for Judaism and journalism," Sklar said. "It came at a time of important change in the community's makeup as we became older and smaller with greater social needs, but also as we became more conscious of the value of a Jewish education for our children. I have a passion for Metro Detroit and all that it is — and could be."

- Keri Guten Cohen and David Sachs

## PHILLIP LEVINE

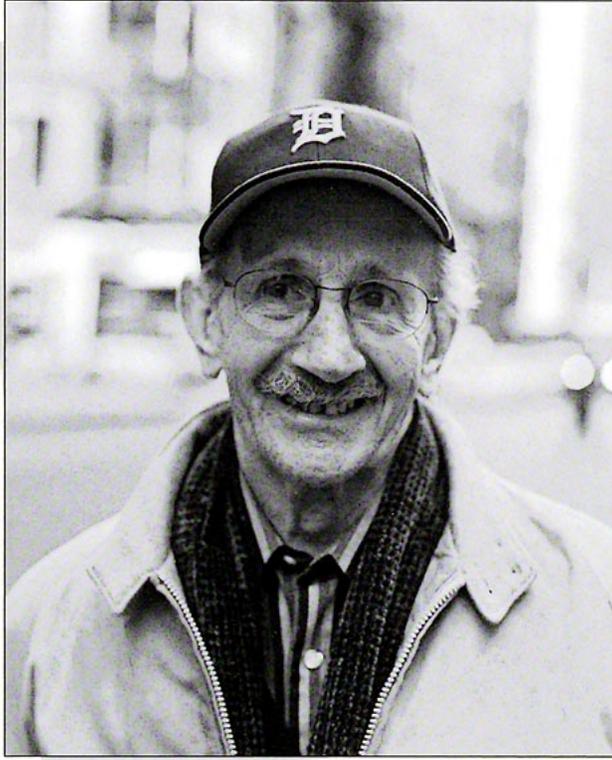
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### AMERICA'S POET LAUREATE

**He** has become, by dint of long life and artistry, America's — and Detroit's — most honored living poet. At 83, Philip Levine, who grew up on Pingree and Elmhurst and Tuxedo in Detroit and Highland Park, was, in August 2011, named the United States Poet Laureate — the eighteenth poet to be thus honored. The post carries with it prestige, a mission to encourage appreciation for poetry and a \$35,000 stipend. And although Levine has not lived in the Detroit area for decades, his deeply autobiographical poetry continues to reflect upon and describe the experiences he had as a young man toiling in factories while he attended Wayne State University.

"My father's brother had a shoe repair shop for a time on Brush Street; he'd learned the trade from his father back in Kiev," he explained in the poem "1934." "My mother's family was in junk." Levine, and his identical twin brother Edward Levine, who lives in Royal Oak, attended Roosevelt Elementary, Durfee Junior High and Central High School, where Levine was listed as "college prep" in the 1946 yearbook. "We — my twin brother Eddie and I — were bar mitzvahed — I forget where," he wrote in answer to an email query. He has lived and taught in Fresno, California, for decades.

The shop floors of a Cadillac transmission plant and Chevrolet Gear & Axle forged his respect for the working man and a sense of social justice, themes that have been mainstays of his work. His aspirations of becoming a poet evolved after discovering modern poetry at Wayne State, where "they were used to us shumps out of the city of Detroit," as he once explained in an interview.



*2011 Poet Laureate Phillip Levine*  
Photo courtesy National Library of Congress,  
Matt Valentine

Levine has long inspired and encouraged generations of Michigan writers; his steely language, gritty imagery and precise and witty phrasing make him a poet who is both accessible to readers and admired by scholars and poets. Levine's story of a working class boy who used the factory floor to claim his own authentic voice is a worthy parable for his struggling post-industrial hometown. After all, Levine's poems, written painstakingly over decades, have at last provided their persistent author with unexpected triumph.

- *Laura Berman*

# HISTORICAL TIDBITS

## 1891

The Women's Club of Temple Beth El was founded (and in 1925 merged with and became known as the National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Detroit Section).

The aims of the club, as noted in the minutes of the first meeting in March, were to "promote kindness and helpfulness in general and to elevate the mental, moral and social status of young Jewish women in particular." Monthly dues were ten cents.

## 1891

Julius Houseman passed away at the age of 59.

Houseman was the first Jewish resident of Michigan to be elected to the U.S. Congress. Born in Bavaria, Germany, Houseman left Germany seeking freedom in the United States in 1851, at age 19. In 1852, he settled in Grand Rapids, the first Jewish resident of that city, establishing the clothing company of Houseman, Alsborg & Co. The Democrat served as an alderman in Grand Rapids for eight years, served as mayor of the city twice and, in between, served in Congress.

## 1911

American Jewry succeeds in inducing Congress to abrogate the 1832 treaty with Russia because the Czarist regime would not honor an American passport carried by an American Jew.

# HISTORICAL TIDBITS

1911

**Detroiters are treated to a new burlesque theater, the Avenue. Run by a group of Jewish businessmen, the theater featured energetic dancing, saucy singing and loads of raucous fun.**

1911

**A fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory costs the lives of some 140 women. Most were Jews.**

1941

**In May, an estimated crowd of 25,000 stood at the Michigan Central Depot to welcome Dr. Chaim Weitzmann, president of the World Zionist Commission, to Detroit. Dr. Weitzmann went to City Hall where Mayor Frank Couzens welcomed the world leader with a proclamation.**

1941

**Founding members of the New Reform Jewish Congregation met at Detroit's Hotel Statler in July and adopted the name "Temple Israel" with Rabbi Leon Fram as its spiritual leader. High holiday services were held at the Detroit Institute of Arts, large enough to accommodate the 200 member families.**

# TIMELINE

A timeline of significant dates in Michigan Jewish history mentioned in this year's journal.

*The latter half of the 19th century was a busy time for Michigan's Jewish residents. Besides working very hard to establish themselves as part of the fabric of American culture, they were also hard at work creating cohesive religious communities.*

## 19th Century

- 1850: Isaac and Sarah Cozens open their home to Detroit's first Jewish minyan, then help organize the Beth El Society.
- 1851: Emil Heineman emigrates from Bavaria to the U.S. He would go on to establish Heineman, Butzel & Company, a wholesale clothing business with his brother-in-law Martin Butzel.
- 1862: Isaac Wertheimer and sixteen other trustees officially found Shaarey Zedek so they and their families could continue their observance of traditional Judaism in Detroit.
- 1864: Shaarey Zedek purchases its first building at Congress and St. Antoine Streets. On the Fourth of July in 1877, they replaced this structure with a new enlarged synagogue built on the same location.
- 1865: Detroit Jewish statesman, philanthropist, artist and historian, David Emil Heineman (1865-1935) is born to Emil and Fanny (Butzel) Heineman.
- 1878: Congregation Beth Jacob is founded by former members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek.
- 1881: B'nai Israel is organized by former members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek.
- 1885: Twenty-one year old Max Jacob establishes M. Jacob Company, a bottle manufacturing company, which would later become M. Jacob & Sons.
- 1895: Shaarey Zedek members Joseph Beisman, Michael Davis and Jacob Levin form the Hebrew Free Loan Association to help the thousands of Jewish immigrants arriving in Detroit.
- 1899: Representative David Heineman introduces and gets passed a civic-minded bill to the Michigan Legislature to allocate \$150,000 to improve Belle Isle Park and erect an Aquarium and Horticultural building.

## 20th Century

- 1903: With seating for 750, Congregation Shaarey Zedek moves into its second location on Brush and Winder Streets.

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# TIMELINE

- August 1904:* The "Aquarium" on Belle Isle opens to the public.
- 1910:* Julius Chajes is born in Lemberg, Galicia, now Lvov in the Ukraine and would become a world-famous conductor and pianist.
- January 1911:* Hank Greenberg is born (1911-1986).
- 1912:* First established in 1889 as an Orthodox synagogue, Congregation of Israel, commonly called Temple Jacob in Hancock, builds its first building. In the 1920s, the congregation affiliates with the Reform movement.
- 1913:* Congregation Shaarey Zedek's Rabbis Hershman and Levin, joined by Rabbi Franklin of Temple Beth El, participate in a cornerstone laying ceremony as construction begins on the congregation's new Brush and Willis location.
- 1914:* Willard Cohodas is born in Menominee, Michigan, the second child of Harry and Lillian.
- 1915:* Samuel P. Baker spent two years driving a horse and buggy for a small laundry before opening The Queen Quality Laundry Company in Detroit.
- 1915:* Max Jacob builds an Italian Renaissance style home in Detroit. Today that home is on the campus of Wayne State University and is the residence of the University President.
- 1915:* Congregation Shaarey Zedek moves into its new temple with seating for 1,400.
- 1919:* Harry Schumer, who immigrated to Detroit from Poland at age 13, and his friend Leo Gold open General Linen Supply.
- 1924:* Brothers Nate and Barney Dalitz purchase Varsity Linens, which opened in 1905 in Ann Arbor.
- 1928:* Flora Suhd Hommel is born to Morris and Rae Albaum Suhd.
- 1932:* Congregation Shaarey Zedek relocates to a new building on Chicago Boulevard at Lawton, designed by Albert Kahn, the classic Italian Renaissance style building, with seating for 2,500 to 3,000, would serve as the congregation's home until 1962.
- 1933:* The Jewish Community Center building on Woodward and Holbrook opens as the first Jewish Center in Detroit. In 1939, the building is enlarged.

# TIMELINE

- 1938:* Rabbi Morris Adler joins Congregation Shaarey Zedek as assistant rabbi and quickly becomes an active leader throughout the state of Michigan. He would serve as rabbi for more than 25 years.
- 1939:* Valter Poole, a violist and assistant conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, forms the fledgling Jewish Center Orchestra.
- 1940:* Prominent Jewish philanthropists Abraham and Rose Cooper, Fred Butzel, and Cantor Jason Tickton and his wife Mimi hire Julius Chajes to conduct the Jewish Center Orchestra.
- 1945:* After serving in the war for four-and-a-half seasons, Captain Hank Greenberg returned to the Tigers on July 2. Nearly 48,000 fans came to welcome the baseball and war hero back home.
- 1947:* Detroit Tigers' owner, Walter O. Briggs, "sells" Hank Greenberg to the Pittsburgh Pirates.
- 1950:* After giving birth to her daughter, Claudia, Flora Hommel decides to dedicate her life to help other women experience pain-free childbirth. She began studying with Dr. Fernard Lamaze in 1951.
- June 1953:* After years of conducting services out of various buildings, members of Temple Beth Sholom in Marquette dedicate their own building.
- 1956:* Camp Tavor, formerly Midwest Camp Habonim, was founded in 1956 on the site of Cooper's Lodge in Three Rivers, Michigan.
- 1958:* Flora Hommel begins teaching Lamaze classes in her Detroit home.
- 1959:* The Aaron De Roy Building, the home of the Jewish Community Center, located on Meyers Avenue in Detroit, opens with a beautiful and acoustically-sound theater with seating for 500. The opening concert features Mischa Mischakoff (a Detroit Symphony member) performing the Overture to "The Marriage of Figaro."
- 1959:* Rabbi Irwin Groner joins Shaarey Zedek as Assistant Rabbi. In 1967, he is appointed head Rabbi.
- 1960:* Once numbering in the hundreds, only 50 or 60 Jewish laundry companies remained in business. Most had closed or had been sold to larger companies.
- 1960:* Flora Hommel and fellow supporters found the Childbirth Without Pain Association, officially incorporated as the non-profit Childbirth Without Pain Education Association (CWPEA) in 1964.

# TIMELINE

- 1962: More than 1,000 members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek celebrate the congregation's 100th anniversary and ground breaking ceremony for the new building located on Bell Road in Southfield.
- 1969: The University Archives at Michigan State University are founded to manage the official records of MSU.
- 1977: Willard Cohodas launches the first Interfaith Holocaust Memorial Service, held at Marquette's St. Peter Cathedral, with Northern Michigan University. The service continues to be held annually.
- 1986: Wayne State University benefits from the estate of Emma Lazaroff Schaver, the fifth recipient of the JHSM's Leonard H. Simons History Award and a renowned concert soprano. The school names the music building in her honor.
- 1998: Robert Sklar becomes editor of the *Detroit Jewish News*, a position he will hold until his retirement in March 2011.
- 21st Century
- 2000: Charlotte Dubin retires after twenty-four years on the staff of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. In 2011, Charlotte became the 21st recipient of the JHSM Leonard N. Simons History Award.
- August 2000: The Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit (JAMD) opens its doors, the largest start-up school of its kind in the U.S. and quickly makes its presence on the high school educational scene known.
- January 2002: Fire destroys the *Jewish News* building in Southfield. The paper came out that week, only one day late.
- 2005: After more than 100 years of enjoyment and delight, the Belle Isle Aquarium closes.
- 2005: The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit releases its population study of Detroit Jewry, revealing dramatic shrinkage and aging while simultaneously boasting a strong adolescent and teen base.
- 2007: Thanks to a generous gift from the Frankel family, JAMD is renamed the Jean and Samuel Frankel Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit (Frankel Jewish Academy, or FJA) and relocates to its new 50,000 square foot facility housed on the upper level of the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.
- April 2011: The personal papers of Emma Lazaroff Schaver are deposited at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University.

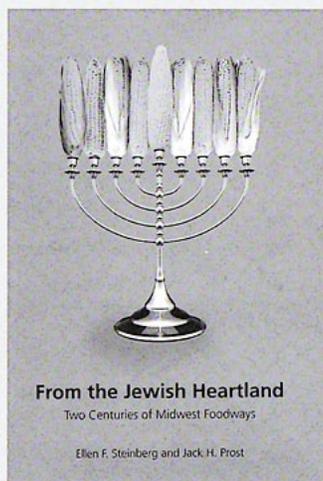
# BOOK REVIEWS

## **From the Jewish Heartland: Two Centuries of Midwest Foodways**

*By Ellen F. Steinberg and Jack H. Prost*  
University of Illinois Press, 2011

How can we not like a book that begins with...“A simple marker, erected by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, in Michilimackinac State Park, Mackinaw City, commemorates the first Jewish settler in that state: a German-Jew from Berlin named Ezekiel Solomon who landed at the northern tip of the Lower Peninsula in 1761.” Beyond the indulgence of Michigan pride, this book is a good way to get a nutritional helping of Midwestern Jewish history, through the proverbial kitchen window. If you like your history served up with generous portions of blintzes and borekas, pot roasts and pickles, chicken soup and cheesecake, this is the place to indulge.

After discussing our fur-trader friend Solomon, the authors trace the movement of Jewish farmers and peddlers to the Great Lakes and Plains States and recount the challenges families faced in trying to maintain Jewish food traditions and cultures, both kosher and non-kosher. They also tell about the Midwest bounty that the new immigrants encountered and the evolution of Jewish culinary tradition to incorporate new and abundant foods like corn, huckleberries, celery and Great Lakes fish. The impact of the Progressive Reform movement and food reform movements, like the hygiene craze (promoted by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg of Battle Creek) and the temperance movement, also impacted the way Jewish families became Americanized. The strength of this book, though, lies in the way it brings to life specific cooks through their memoirs and recipes. By focusing on women like Ruth Ginsberg Dunie, of St. Louis and downstate Illinois, and Esther Schechter, of Minneapolis, who left their records of ingredients, methods, and traditions, the reader can better understand the life of 19th and early 20th century women — who, whether rural or urban, Sephardic or Ashkenazic, raised their families in a new land. They sewed, did farm chores, planted, harvested, canned and cooked, and also prepared Sabbath and holiday meals. Over the decades, as kitchens modernized and as prepared foods became more common, Jewish cooks adapted, while maintaining



ties to the traditions they learned from their mothers and grandmothers. Especially interesting is the authors' investigations of recipes for local variations. They write: "In whatever fashion [these recipes] came into being, it represents the tradition of passing treasured recipes *l'dor v'dor* (from generation to generation) as expressions of Jewish identity, and the innovation that is so often found in Jewish cuisine."

This is really a trifecta of a book — it's a history, to be sure, but it's also a cookbook, reproducing some old recipes verbatim and updating others. You might want to try Aunt Bea's Tomato Relish, Ruth Dunie's Matzos Charlotte, or Betty Rosenthal's Sour Fish. And don't miss Annabel Cohen's Borekas, with Michigan cherries. The third use for this book might be a travel guide, which you could use to eat your way Jewishly through the Midwest. Visit Barry Levenson's Mustard Museum and Shop near Madison, Wisconsin, or Eli's Cheesecake World in Chicago.

We might quibble that *From the Jewish Heartland* doesn't include enough examples of Michigan cooking and food traditions. The Chicago-based authors concentrate mostly on the Chicago area and Plains States. But that would be a quibble. Perhaps this enjoyable Midwestern overview will inspire a history of cooking and eating in the Jewish communities of our Great Lakes State. We can start with the wild onions, squash, cherries, perch and corn that Ezekiel Solomon probably dined on.

—by Aimée Ergas

### **The Sweetness of Freedom: Stories of Immigration**

By Stephen Garr Ostrander & Martha Aladjem Bloomfield

Michigan State University Press, 392 pages

Imagine leaving everything you have ever known behind — friends, family members and all those familiar places — with the knowledge you may never see them again. Yet, many have bravely taken that journey into the unknown for the promise of a better future in Michigan. *The Sweetness of Freedom* chronicles the diverse and often difficult journeys of these amazingly determined immigrants who traveled from distant lands and found the strength to not only persevere, but thrive in this new and sometimes strange environment.

Designed as a collection of oral histories and personal artifacts, documents and photographs, and originally begun as a 2005 Michigan Historical Society project called "Movers and Seekers: Michigan Immigrants and Migrants," *The Sweetness of Freedom* reveals the troubles and triumphs immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds faced. For Jewish Michiganders, two particular stories of success stand out.

In "Where the Streets Were Paved With Gold," Seymour Padnos shares anecdotes and family photos to chronicle the daring tale of his father, Louis Padnos, who walked out of Russia when he was 13 to escape army conscription and anti-Semitism before eventually settling in Holland, Michigan. Seymour relates how his father built his scrap metal business, married Helen Kantor — herself a Polish immigrant — and the fam-

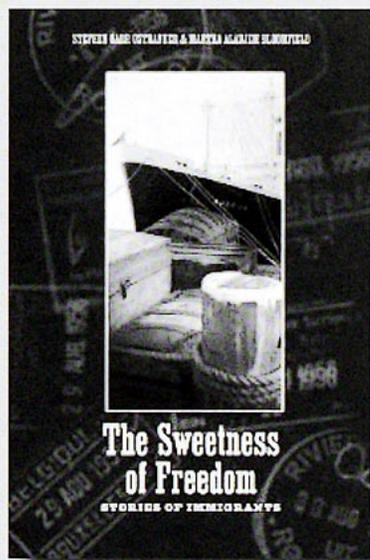
ily life he and his brother Stuart experienced. You walk away sharing Seymour's sense of pride in his father's accomplishments including how Louis continually aided those less fortunate, never forgetting how people took care of him during his own journey.

In "The Trip Became a Great Adventure," Benno Levi, a former hospital financial officer who served as JHSM treasurer for 25 years, vividly portrays his beloved German hometown of Alsfeld and the rapid deterioration of life for Jews in Nazi Germany. Levi credits his father's foresight for contacting the German-Jewish Children's Aid Society and giving his children an escape to America. After saying goodbye to grandparents they would never see again (the Levis lost more than two dozen family members to the Holocaust), 11-year-old Benno, accompanied by his brother Ernest and sister Ruth, boarded the S.S.

New York. Levi dramatically describes the adventurous sea voyage and his new life in Detroit with his adoptive family. In 1928, Levi was able to welcome the arrival of his parents and sister Miriam. Still, his most vibrant descriptions capture his U.S. army service in the Pacific. Levi, who earned both a Silver Star and Bronze Star, shares his emotional memories of war including the sadness of losing friends, his own close calls and the patriotism he felt fighting for his adopted country.

These two tales are only a taste of the many inspiring stories in *The Sweetness of Freedom*. Together they remind us of how these newcomers enriched the fabric of American life and demonstrate that if they can carve a path of triumph over hardship, then we, too, can do the same in our own lives.

-Susan Brohman



# HISTORICAL TIDBITS

1941

**Louis Brandeis (1856-1941) passed away at the age of 84. Born in Louisville, Kentucky to immigrants from Prague, he graduated from Harvard Law School at the age of 21 and quickly became a prominent Boston attorney and advocate for social and economic justice. Playing a major role in ending a massive garment workers' strike in 1912, Brandeis created a "Protocol of Peace" that led to the creation of America's first system of labor mediation and arbitration. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson nominated him to the U.S. Supreme Court, the first man of Jewish heritage to serve on the country's highest court. He served on the court until 1939.**

1961

**Congregation B'nai Moshe celebrated its 50th anniversary as did Congregation Mogen Abraham of Detroit (Orthodox, organized by Rabbi Judah L. Levin), Congregation Mishkan Israel of Detroit (Orthodox, originally started by David Horodoker Unterstutzung Verein) and Congregation Sons of Israel of Muskegon (began as an Orthodox congregation and later became Conservative).**

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS  
IN POETRY AND MEMOIR:  
THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN MICHIGAN

# Reflections

*Our* Creative Expressions section has gotten off to a wonderful start - and what a way to connect a community through the sharing of experience and perception. We thank all who submitted to this section and are looking forward to more of our readers sharing their memories.

This year, we are including two beautiful poems by Sharon Lask Munson, now living in Eugene, Oregon, and a piece by Faye Moskowitz, an author and poet who has contributed to our journal in the past. We hope that our readers will enjoy these sentimental, nostalgic and amusing pieces.

Baseball is the quintessential American sport. There have been many books written highlighting Jewish contributors to the sport. But we are pleased to include a firsthand account by Irwin Cohen on the thrill of watching Hank Greenberg at the ceremonies in which Greenberg's uniform number was retired. Irwin Cohen's memoir will thrill you with its reminder of the contributions Greenberg made both to the sport of baseball and to a progressive time in civil rights history.

We hope you are enjoying this section as much as we are enjoying reading your submissions. Again, we look forward to new submissions. E-mail submissions are preferred. Send them directly to Joy Gaines-Friedler at [caboti@yahoo.com](mailto:caboti@yahoo.com) or Wendy Bice at [wrbice@michjewishhistory.org](mailto:wrbice@michjewishhistory.org) or mail your submissions to the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, attention: Journal Editor; 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield, MI 48322. Be sure to include your contact information, including your email address and phone number in your submission. All submissions must contain reflections on or memories of Jewish life in Michigan.

With gratitude,  
Joy Gaines-Friedler  
*Editor, Creative Expressions*

# Reflections

## *Dreaming Burlingame Street*

by Sharon Lask Munson

Stepping over cracks in the sidewalk  
I land on squares stamped  
Detroit Public Works,  
see again old neighbors  
relaxing on wide front porches  
shielded from the summer sun  
by striped canvas awnings.

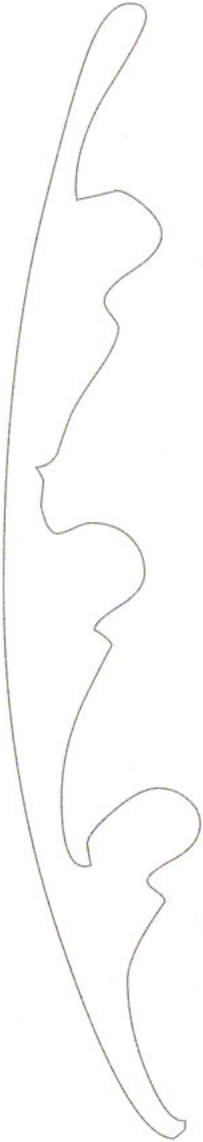
I dream of familiar two-story brick homes,  
narrow driveways, one-car garages,  
tidy rectangles of green grass.  
On the corner of Linwood  
I stop in front of the apartment building  
bordering Mr. Haney's ice cream shop.

Carole Sue's black and white terrier  
runs between parked cars.  
The 1956 blue Buick that will strike Pepper  
sits in the new car showroom  
at the dealership on Gratiot.

Michigan's dreaded elm disease is years away.  
The thick canopy of green over the street  
casts shadows as day lengthens.

Mr. Mittelman is walking  
toward me. I wave,  
no longer the timid child  
fearing his doleful moods  
his formal way of speaking

or the numbers tattooed  
on the inner side of his left forearm.



# Reflections

## *In Answer to Your Question*

by Sharon Lask Munson

The butcher Eiselman  
he placed a finger on the scale  
his index finger, and  
turned in such a way  
I shouldn't see  
and he pushed

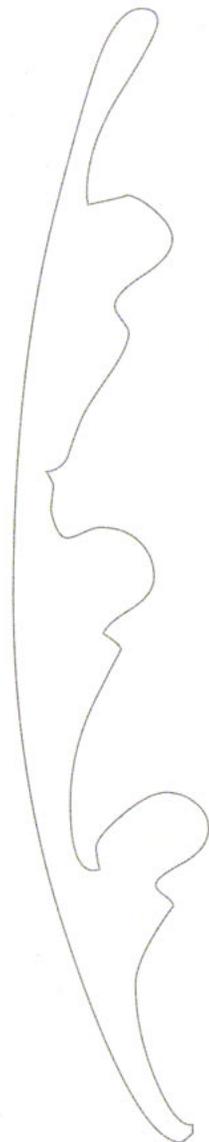
and I saw  
and I went home  
weighed the brisket  
a true accounting

and I said to your father  
Leon, would you mind  
if I shopped at A&P —  
it would be better  
and he didn't mind

and instead of walking  
two short blocks to Eiselman's  
I drove the gray DeSoto  
to the market on Davison

and, in answer to your question  
that my darling daughter  
is when I gave up Kosher.

*Sharon Lask Munson grew up in Detroit, Michigan. She attended Michigan State University and Wayne State University. After thirty years of teaching overseas and in Alaska, she is retired and lives in Eugene, Oregon. Her chapbook, Stillness Settles Down the Lane, was published in Summer, 2010, by Uttered Chaos Press. Her full-length book of poems, That Certain Blue, will be published in Autumn 2011, by Blue Light Press.*



# Reflections

## *Shana Tova 2006*

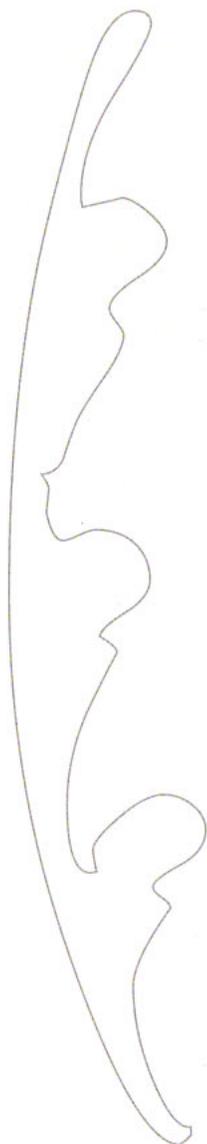
by Faye Moskowitz

Wishes for a sweet new year  
 Come by email this September.  
 Animated pomegranates dance  
 The hora to Hava Negilla.  
 I skip the service, counting my sins  
 At home on Yom Kippur.  
 The sin list grows. We break  
 The fast too early, with salmon  
 Smoked in Scotland,  
 Via Trader Joe's.

The shul on Blaine and Linwood  
 Now an A.M.E., sitting shiva  
 For Detroit. David's star,  
 A palimpsest, etched  
 Beneath the cross. Only ghosts  
 To validate the memory of loss:  
 My uncle, the rabbi haranguing  
 The somber crowd, his brothers,  
 For once not talking shop  
 Or politics, my father longing  
 For a Lucky Strike.

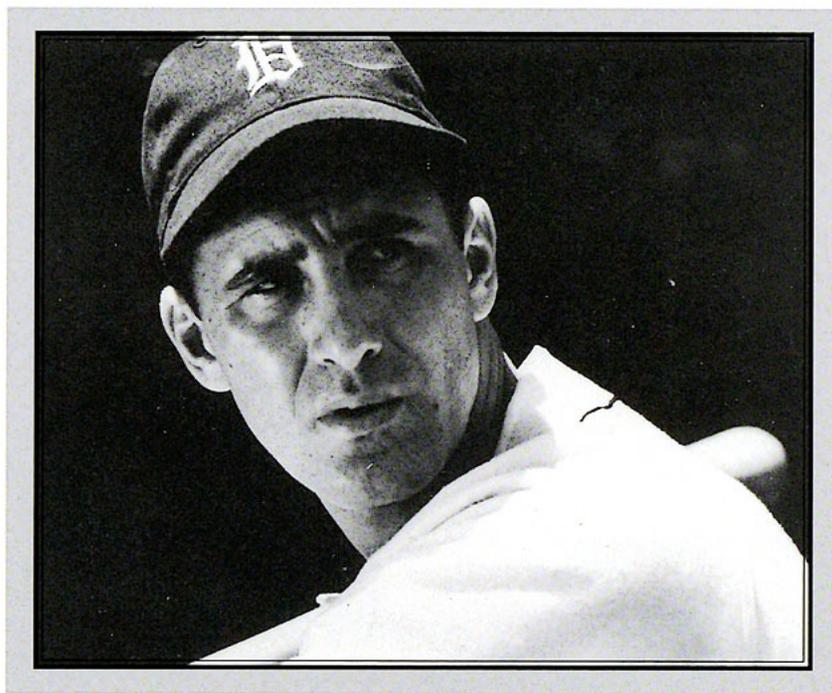
Upstairs, the women weeping  
 I, a girl among them, starving,  
 And it's only noon. My bobbe  
 In her good black hat, leans over  
 The balcony, counts her sons,  
 Rocks back and forth to pray.  
 Don't look back, Bobbe, I want  
 To say, but when she seeks  
 To check her flock behind her,  
 I have already turned my face away.

*Faye Moskowitz is an author and poet whose poems, essays and stories have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Women's Day and the Chronicle of Higher Education. Born in Detroit, Moskowitz grew up in Jackson, Michigan. Her uncle, Isaac Stollman, was the rabbi of the Blaine Shul on Blaine and Linwood Streets. She is a professor of English at the George Washington University where she teaches creative writing and Jewish American literature.*



# Reflections

## HAPPY 100TH HANK GREENBERG



*2011* marks the 100th anniversary of Hank Greenberg's birth, and also the twenty-fifth *Yahrzeit* of his death. Born January 1, 1911, Greenberg died at age seventy-five in 1986. I was in my office at Tiger Stadium when the calls of his death came in from the local papers asking for my reaction to the news. We – at the Tigers – knew he had been ailing and was suffering from cancer, but my last memory of him took place three years earlier.

In 1983, Greenberg was in town for the first time in almost twenty-five years to attend the formal ceremonies surrounding the retirement of his uniform number between games of a Sunday doubleheader. The weather was ideal, and so was my perch as an observer. I was lucky enough to be on the field as a photographer and only a few feet from the Hall of Famer as I snapped away.

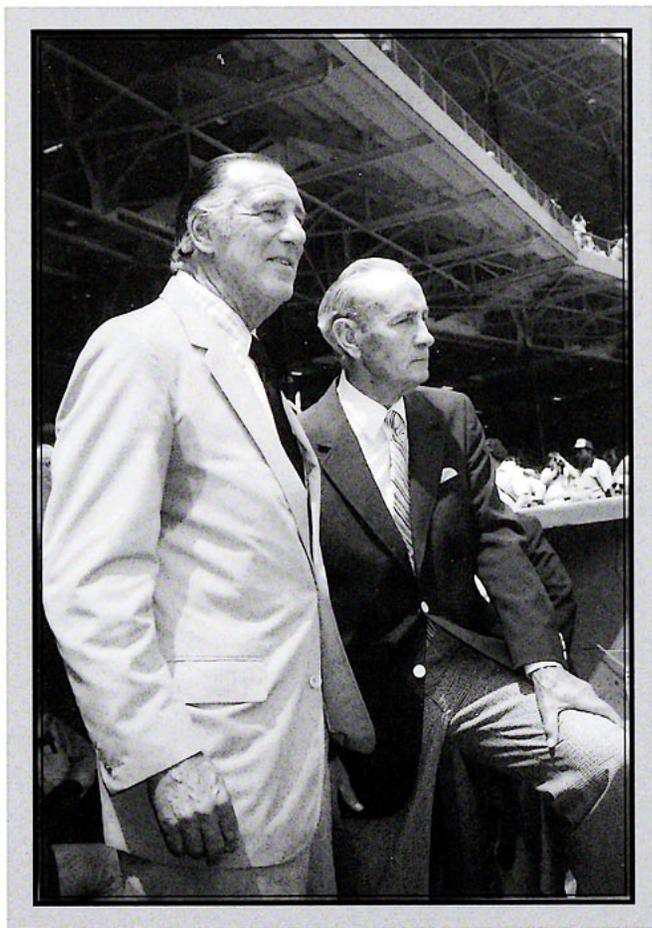
However, I was even luckier prior to the first game when I got to spend time with the charismatic Greenberg. I never saw him play, as his last year with the Tigers was in 1946 and would attend my first game four years later. Of course, I heard all about him from my American-born parents. I did see some other greats of the game, though.

I saw Ted Williams and Mickey Mantle dent those old green seats in the outfield of the old

# Reflections

ballpark many times. But they never did what Greenberg did. Neither of them ever hit fifty-eight home runs in a single season. They never drove in 183 runs in a season. In fact, they never had 170 RBI in a single season. Greenberg did that, too. Who knows what Greenberg would have accomplished if he had played in more seasons.

The war erased four-and-a-half seasons from his baseball career. During World War II, Greenberg rose to the rank of captain and served in China, India, and took part in numerous bombing missions in Japan. The war hero returned to the Tigers on July 2, 1945, where almost 48,000 fans



*This photo was taken by Irwin Cohen at Tiger Stadium. Hank Greenberg, left, is with former teammate Charley Gehringer, former second baseman, teammate and friend. The two former Detroit Tigers attended a ceremony to have their uniform numbers retired in June of 1983.*

# Reflections

welcomed him at Briggs Stadium (renamed Tiger Stadium in 1961). Greenberg responded with legendary heroics, homering in his first game since playing his last game early in the '41 season.

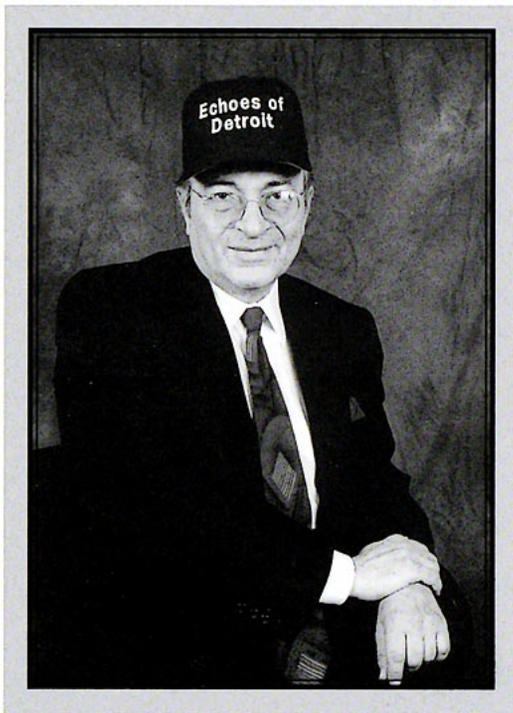
Greenberg starred for the Tigers in the remainder of the season leading the team to the World Series by hitting two home runs to help defeat the Cubs--only one year after only listening to the series on radio, while wearing a different uniform, while stationed in India. 1946 was to be his last in a Detroit uniform. Despite his 44 home runs and a respectable .277 batting average, owner Walter O. Briggs sold Greenberg to the Pittsburgh Pirates early in 1947.

While playing for Pittsburgh, Greenberg hit 25 homers for the Pirates, but retired after that season and began a front office career in Cleveland, the same year Larry Doby joined the team becoming the first black player in the American League. Greenberg brought in more black players, and it wasn't unusual for the Indians to have four in the starting lineup years before the Tigers had even one.

Greenberg went on to help many make baseball a career, but it almost didn't happen as Greenberg's parents wanted him to hit the books and not the ball.

"They wanted me to become a doctor, dentist or lawyer," Greenberg once told me. "But I wanted to be a ballplayer, which automatically characterized me as a bum. The neighbors used to say my parents had three nice children and one bum. But little did they realize that 40 years later the athletes would be the millionaires and the doctors would be the working stiffs. I was just a little ahead of my time."

-Irwin Cohen



Native Detroiter Irwin Cohen headed a national baseball publication for five years and interviewed many baseball personalities including Hank Greenberg. Cohen worked for the Detroit Tigers and sports a World Series ring. Cohen authored nine books including *"Echoes of Detroit's Jewish Communities: A History."* Cohen's latest book, *"Tiger Stadium/ Comerica Park,"* is also his autobiography and will be featured at this year's Detroit Jewish Book Fair where Cohen will be the closing speaker at the 10 Mile Jewish Center.

# JHSM

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### ARNOLD COLLENS

Last year I encouraged you, our members, to look at what the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan is doing and asked you to participate. I think you listened! Not only have our members been active participants in events, but even better, many of you invited friends who have shared their stories and now support us as new members. Thank you!

We know that the JHSM is growing and changing. Our growth has a lot to do with an organizational focus. Change is necessary for us to effectively meet our mission. We've focused on four organizational areas to support our continued community commitments: Administration; our Journal; Programming; and Entering the Electronic Age.

#### Administration

Under the leadership and vision of Aimee Ergas, our director, we again have great reason to feel good about ourselves and where JHSM is going. Under Aimee's guidance, we have continued to make changes at a measured, well-thought-out pace. This year, our board authorized the hiring of Wendy Rose Bice as associate director. Wendy's creative energy, public relations skills and organizational knowledge increase our ability to grow internally and expand community outreach. Both Wendy and Aimee are pursuing new programming and membership initiatives.

#### Journal

Thank you to Wendy and associate editor Marilyn Krainen, who are responsible for our Journal *Michigan Jewish History*, which in 2010, our 51st year, introduced two new sections: a Historical Timeline and a creative writing section called Reflections: Creative Expressions in Poetry and Memoir: The Jewish Experience in Michigan. Reflections is edited by Joy Gaines Friedler, an accomplished poet and writer. It is a pleasure to have a place in this journal for creative writers to share their Michigan memories.



*Thank you to Congregation Shaarey Zedek, celebrating its 150th anniversary, for hosting the JHSM annual meeting in May. JHSM President Arnold Collens stands with the featured speaker, Michael Rosenzweig, CEO, National Museum of American Jewish History; James Grey, former JHSM President and Arthur Horwitz, Publisher, the Detroit Jewish News. Rosenzweig's passionate story of the museum's evolution and exciting grand opening put history in perspective and brings to light our unending quest to tell and preserve our American Jewish story for everyone.*

### Programming

We are continually working to present events and programs that not only meet the needs of our current members but have an eye toward future generations. Our task is to plan, build and execute programs that help bring history to life. Based on the number of sell-out events we presented in the past year, we are certain there is a strong continued interest in our Jewish legacy.

Our bus tours reached many corners of the community. B'nai Moshe Congregation celebrated its 100-year anniversary by taking a tour of historic Jewish Detroit, including a visit to the former B'nai Moshe building at Dexter and Lawrence. Our "Four Churches That Were Once Synagogues" tour warmed many hearts as we visited these congregations, the respective neighborhoods and remembered our Jewish roots. This year we also had the honor of hosting a Fulbright Scholars day-long tour of Detroit, connecting Jews and non-Jewish associates. And, of course, our "Settlers to Citizens" bus tours continue to be an important facet of our youth and adult education. Twelve school groups embarked on this award-winning tour, many of them multigenerational, with parents and grandparents participating.



*The Four Churches That Once Were Synagogues tour participants gaze upward to the Stars of David that still adorn the ceiling of the building. Left: Tour participants stand on the front steps of the former Congregation Shaarey Zedek.*

Certainly the most "colorful" tour this past year was our inaugural "J-Cycle: A Bike Tour of Historic Jewish Detroit." The JHSM partnered with the Isaac M. Agree Downtown Synagogue and the Reconstructionist Congregation of Detroit to present the sell-out event in August. If you missed it, watch for news of the 2012 event.

The JHSM also presented new programming including the Midwest premiere of the Dustin Hoffman-narrated film, "Jews and Baseball: An American Love Story." This sell-out event, hosted by the Davidson Family at the Palace of Auburn Hills, was a memorable one as baseball fans shared their own memories.

Many of our members are avid readers, so we are always interested in presenting books of interest. Besides hosting the local authors panel at the Jewish Book Fair, we also hosted two book introductions: "The Sweetness of Freedom: Stories of Immigrants," by authors Martha Bloomfield and Stephen Ostrander; and "The Color of Law: Ernie Good-



*A tour of the Detroit Institute of Arts in March featured many pieces of Jewish themed art and art given to the museum by Jewish donors. Standing in front of The Bay by Helen Frankenthaler, are Rosalind Grand, DIA docent Fran Fine, Wendy Rose Bice, Rhoda Jonas, Phyllis Mendelson and Michael Grand.*

man, *Detroit and the Struggle for Labor and Civil Rights*," by three passionate authors and historians, Steve Babson, Dave Riddle and David Elsila. This event, held at the Birmingham Temple, also featured Ernie Goodman's sons, Bill and Richard, who fascinated the audience with family stories.

In 2011, we achieved our goal of offering programming of interest to those who do not head to warmer winter climates when we hosted a docent-led tour of art donated by Jewish donors and art with Jewish content, in cooperation with the Detroit Institute of Arts. With the trial run deemed a success by both institutions, plans are now under way for the 2012 event which will be held March 23. Mark your calendars!

One of the accomplishments of which I am most proud is the relationships we continue to build with the clergy of Detroit churches that were former synagogues. Tour participants have benefited by being invited inside the buildings that have personal meaning to them and their families, and the result is that participants tell us our tours



*Pastor Bishop Shedrick Clark, Sr. of the Clinton Street Greater Bethlehem Temple Church on Chicago and Lawton in Detroit wanted to show Senator Carl Levin how his congregation had cared for the building which once had been Congregation Shaarey Zedek, the synagogue where both Senator Levin and his brother, Sander, had become a Bar Mitzvah. The JHSM facilitated the early January meeting and co-hosted an interfaith dialogue where participants shared memories of their own experiences at the temple/church. Pictured here are Rabbi Krakoff of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, U.S. Senator Carl Levin and Pastor Shedrick Clark, Sr.*

are overwhelmingly excellent. But also, the fact that we are continuing to support these fabulous buildings demonstrates the Jewish community's commitment to our region as a whole. Preservation of the buildings that were once our home is important for us as people of faith, but also as citizens of Michigan. We look forward to further opportunities to build the ties to these congregations and buildings.



*The summer of 2010 concluded with a Windsor-Detroit Jewish History River Cruise that featured Albert Kahn's contributions on both sides of the river and membership camaraderie.*

### **The Electronic Age**

Remember carrying around a stack of index cards to complete your research project in school? Do you remember using computer punch cards? For better or worse, these data transfer methods are, depending on your point of view, gone, replaced by electronics and computers.

The JHSM has become part of the electronic age — but our challenge is to answer the communication needs of all our members. We want members to be comfortable with any form of communication and we are working to identify and expand everyone's comfort levels. Our electronic newsletters or e-blasts, are coming out monthly. We have a Facebook page, which we hope you will check out and "Like" us; and we are exploring new web opportunities including electronic payment options for membership and events. And, we will continue to send out paper announcements of events. Our Journal remains a tangible, paper-bound book, but is also available on-line one year after publication.

We are fortunate that our finances are secure enough that our focus remains on programming and our mission. To that end, I'd like to thank an anonymous donor for generously putting JHSM in the spotlight, making people aware that they have JHSM to turn to for research and information. Thank you also to the Eugene Applebaum Family Foundation and The Mandell and Madeleine Berman Foundation for their continued support. Thank you to the Alfred Taubman Foundation Challenge Grant for providing matching funds and to all of you who have supported us through the year helping us

reach our challenge commitment for year three of our five-year initiative. And, thank you to all of those who support us through membership, donations, by participating in our events and by volunteering.

I am constantly gratified by the greatly appreciated help from our officers, board members, volunteers and supporting members who come together for one purpose: to preserve and share our Jewish legacy in the state of Michigan. This coming year, with your help, we will continue to build our knowledge base with new facts and illustrate those facts with cherished stories.

In closing, I'd like to share this image from one of our private Family Tours...One of our guests was being photographed while visiting B'nai Moshe where he had been a Bar Mitzvah. Standing in the balcony, he is surrounded by family and the building's beautiful Judaica. I see him smile and a soft tear of remembrance paints over his face. As I snap this sentimental photograph, I know the Jewish Historical Society has done its job. Thank you ALL.

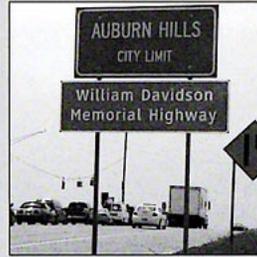
Arnold Collens  
President

Editors Martha Bloomfield (left) and Stephen Ostrander (not pictured) shared their thoughts on the collection of stories featured in their book, *The Sweetness of Freedom* at the Oak Park Jewish Community Center. JHSM board member Benno Levi (right) also told his story of leaving Germany as an eleven-year-old and his service during WWII.



Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan felt the historic marker denoting the site of the first Jewish religious service, located on their property at 600 Lafayette Ave. in Detroit, needed an update. It was refurbished and erected along with the Frederick Douglass-John Brown Meeting marker behind the building on Congress St. Our thanks to BCBS of Michigan for caring!

On May 25, 2011, Michigan governor Rick Snyder signed legislation renaming the portion of Highway M-24 that runs past the Palace of Auburn Hills in honor of William Davidson, longtime owner of the Detroit Piston President and CEO of Guardian Industries, and Guardian of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan's Heritage Council.





*Jcycle: 150 men and women (and a few teens) put on their best biking clothes and rode their bikes through the streets of Detroit at the first J-Cycle: A Bike Tour of Historic Jewish Detroit. The event, which featured nine docent-narrated tour stops along a 15-mile route, included a visit to the Piquette Plant (pictured), the site of Henry Ford's first assembly line, the old Northern High School and the Max M. Jacob House on Wayne State University's campus.*

*Presented by the Issac Agree Downtown Synagogue, the Reconstructionist Congregation of Detroit and the JHSM, the ride was a true success...as participants celebrated Michigan's Jewish history while offering their own historic contributions to the legacy of our community.*



# HISTORICAL TIDBITS

## 1971

**Hillel Day School's staff of forty presided over the laying of the cornerstone on its new building located on Middlebelt Road in Farmington Hills. Founded by Rabbi Jacob Segal (z"l), a handful of parents, educators, rabbis and lay leaders, the school opened in 1958 with twenty-nine students in two rented school rooms in Detroit.**

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

QUIET and unassuming, the voice of **Marilyn Krainen** can be heard loud and clear on the pages of *Michigan Jewish History*. Marilyn wrote last year's article on the Trenton Department store of Mulias and Ellias, a story that resonated with her own emotion and sincerity and generated many positive comments from our readers. But, Marilyn also has spent many hours and days helping the JHSM in her role as associate editor, finding numerous



grammatical errors and providing sentence clarity in a way that can only be second nature to this former writer. She has devoted time not only to the journal, but also to the organization by writing press releases, grant proposals and proclamations.

It provides much comfort to the staff and board of trustees to know that Marilyn, a trustee herself, is always only an email or a phone call away. The time she devotes to this organization is priceless and that is why the Jewish Historical Society named Marilyn Krainen the 2011 Volunteer of the Year.

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# JHS 2011

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## LEONARD N. SIMONS HISTORY AWARD

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# CHARLOTTE DUBIN

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The 2011 Leonard N. Simons History Award went to long-time JHSM advisory board member, former chair of the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives and past director of communications and associate director of marketing for the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, Charlotte Dubin.

The 21st recipient of the award, Dubin's contributions to the preservation of our community's history is notable. She not only helped establish the Federation archives, but was a fan of its namesake, Leonard Simons.

While working as a young journalist at the *Detroit Jewish News* in the mid-1960s, Dubin met "a little old lady named Lea Rubel," she explained to attendees at the JHSM annual meeting and the History Award presentation. Rubel came to the paper to file a complaint. "She was upset that there was no housing for Jewish seniors of modest means like her. She wasn't ready for a home for aged. She just wanted a safe place to live among Jewish people. And she wanted me to write about it."

Dubin wrote about the dilemma several times, but she credits Leonard Simons with the happy ending. "In his usual fashion, he fought hard for Lea and her cause, gathering support from the Jewish Federation. It took a few years and more advocates, but Jewish Federation Apartments became a reality. And the first unit went to Lea. Leonard had kept his promise to her.

"And that's why I am so honored to receive an award named for him."

Dubin began her journalism career as a Cooley High School student who wanted to follow in the footsteps of her late father, Lewis Hyams, a writer and the editor of a community newspaper. She went on to major in journalism at Wayne State University, where she was an editor on *The Daily Collegian*, and became city editor of *The Detroit Jewish News* in 1964, under the mentorship of the paper's legendary editor and publisher, Philip Slomovitz.

Dubin won the 1970 Detroit Chapter of Women in Communications' Headliner Award for her reporting on the need for independent housing for older adults in the Jewish community. But 24 years on the staff of the Jewish Federation make her equally proud. Dubin witnessed history in the making on numerous occasions. They included Federation's first Michigan Miracle Mission in 1993. That year, she received Federation's William Avrunin Fellowship, and the mission won a Gold Quill Award from the International Association of Business Communicators.

Although Dubin retired in 2000, she's hardly been idle. She's served on the advisory

board of the JHSM for many years, offering her assistance on numerous occasions to this very journal and has been a leading force in the development and growth of the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives, serving as its chair from 2005 to 2007. In 1967, she married Harold Dubin, then the associate director of the Jewish Community Council. The two shared a strong commitment to Israel, Soviet Jewry and the Detroit Jewish community. Harold passed away in 2010.

The Leonard N. Simons History Award honors an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the Jewish Historical Society's mission. Simons, who founded the advertising agency Simons Michelson Zieve in 1929, was an active leader with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and had a deep passion for the preservation of Jewish and communal history. His desire to ensure that the Jewish community of Detroit would retain a sense of pride in knowing who they are and where they came from was influential in the establishment of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.



*Charlotte Dubin*



*Simons award winners*

*James Grey, Adelle Staller, Jerry Cook (rear), Charlotte Dubin, Mary Lou Zieve, Sharon Alterman, Susie Citrin, Arnold Collens*

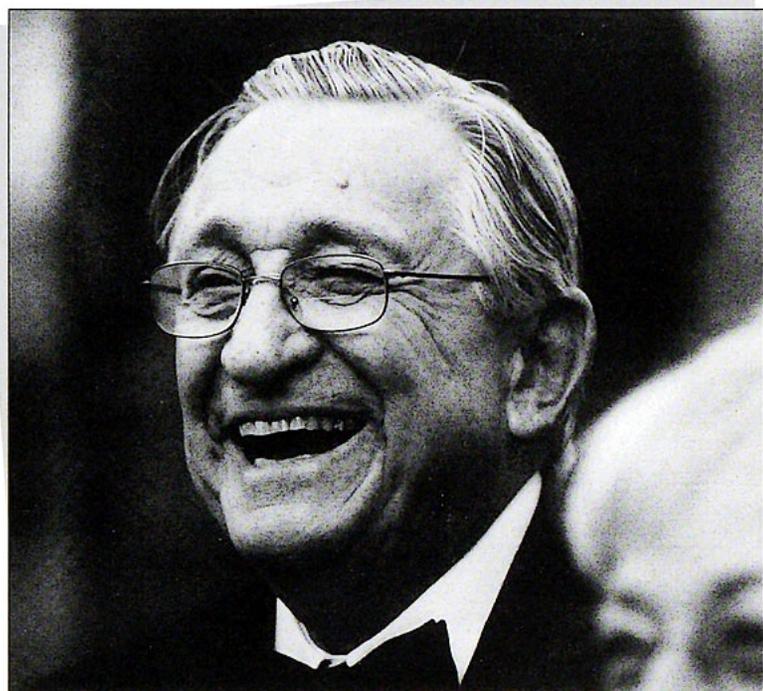
## LEONARD N. SIMONS HISTORY AWARD RECIPIENTS

- |                                               |                                |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>1991</b> Philip Slomovitz                  | <b>2002</b> Adele W. Staller   |
| <b>1992</b> Avern L. Cohn                     | <b>2003</b> Matilda Brandwine  |
| <b>1993</b> George M. Stutz                   | <b>2004</b> Susie Citrin       |
| <b>1994</b> Irwin Shaw                        | <b>2005</b> Edith L. Resnick   |
| <b>1995</b> Emma Lazaroff Schaver             | <b>2006</b> Gerald S. Cook     |
| <b>1996</b> Leslie S. Hough & Philip P. Mason | <b>2007</b> Sharon L. Alterman |
| <b>1997</b> Mary Lou Simons Zieve             | <b>2008</b> George M. Zeltzer  |
| <b>1998</b> Judith Levin Cantor               | <b>2009</b> Mandell L. Berman  |
| <b>1999</b> Michael W. Maddin                 | <b>2010</b> James D. Grey      |
| <b>2000</b> Alan D. Kandel                    | <b>2011</b> Charlotte Dubin    |
| <b>2001</b> Sidney M. Bolkosky                |                                |

# IN MEMORIAM

ALAN NATHAN

1922 – 2010



In early November 2010, the members of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan were saddened by the passing of long-time member and former officer, Alan Nathan.

As a child, Nathan was a Boy Scout. Among many attributes, the Boy Scout Law states "I will be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, [and] kind ...." Those who were privileged to know Mr. Nathan recognized these traits in their friend and colleague, who was an early supporter of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan and a long-standing member of its Board of Trustees. Mr. Nathan also served as the organization's insurance agent. He is survived by his loving wife, Ida, and their children Deborah Ann Nathan and her husband Edward Bean, and Dr. Muriel Helene Nathan. May his memory be a blessing to all who knew him.

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## 2011-2012

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*\*of blessed memory*

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*This roster is for the exclusive use of Jewish Historical Society Officers and Board Members Only*

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"WHEN YOUR CHILDREN SHALL ASK THEIR  
FATHERS IN TIME TO COME..." *Joshua 4:21*

**A legacy society that ensures our work for future generations.  
Your will can keep our story alive from generation to generation!**

**L'Dor V'Dor**

## FOUNDING MEMBERS

Bernard and Judith Levin Cantor, Charlotte Dubin, Norma Goldman, Stanley Meretsky

*The Joshua Society gratefully recognizes and honors as Charter Members those who this year make a bequest in their will to the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.\* By performing this mitzvah, your bequest for the future will be matched at this time by the A. Alfred Taubman Challenge Fund. All bequests to the JHSM in your estate will be credited for membership at the appropriate level in the JHSM Heritage Council.*

**\_\_\_ Please enroll me as a Charter Member of the Joshua Society.**

I am making a testamentary bequest in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
to the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, a Michigan non-profit corporation,  
in my will to be part of the JHSM Heritage Council Endowment or  
(specific purpose) \_\_\_\_\_.

(\*Minimum \$1000)

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# DONATION INFORMATION

## WE INVITE YOU TO SHARE OUR JOURNEY...

**The Heritage Council**, an endowment society, seeks to insure the future of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan through large gifts and bequests. The Guardian's name will appear as the endower of the journal. Trustees, Chancellors, Deans, Fellows and Collectors become life members. The Heritage Council will continue to be listed in Michigan Jewish History, which circulates to members, libraries and universities around the world.

*All donations are matched by the A. Alfred Taubman Challenge Grant*

### I hereby join the Heritage Council at the following level:

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Check enclosed for my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- I am pledging a gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to be paid over \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- I am making a testamentary bequest to the Society in my will and will forward documentation.
- Please contact me regarding the Heritage Council.

*The Society profoundly appreciates the support of the Heritage Council.*

### MEMBERSHIP

*Support the ongoing work of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Categories of membership include: \$36 Individual/Family; \$100 Corporate/Foundations; \$360 Life Member. Tribute Cards will be sent upon request for contributions received (minimum \$12).*

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## Corrections & Updated Information

We love when our readers contact us to add more information to articles we've published. Gerald A. Ahronheim, MD, contacted us regarding the 2008 article written by Carolyn Metzger, "From Junk Peddlers to Industrialists, The Gendelman and Nathan Iron and Metal Company." Dr. Ahronheim who resides in Montreal, Quebec, added this to our knowledge base:

I presume you are aware of the Glick family of Jackson. If memory serves, they started out in scrap metal and the firm was called Jackson Iron and Metal. The patriarch (at least during my Jackson childhood in the 1940's) was Lou Glick, after whom a street is named in Jackson. The firm more recently became Alro Steel, after brothers Alvin and Robert (Al and Bob) Glick, and I think it's still in existence (I rarely get back to Jackson these days). Thank you for a very interesting article.

In the correction department, we hope the Madorsky family will forgive us for misspelling their name in the article about Mt. Clemens' Beth Tephilath Moses. Marilyn Madorsky wrote to add this, "My family lived in Mt. Clemens from 1915 to 1967; owned the Riverside Hotel and Bath house later called the Clinton House or Clinton Gables."

We also owe an apology to Temple B'nai Israel of Kalamazoo. Last year, we published a beautifully written history by Raye M. Ziring, a member of the congregation that was founded in 1865. We made a few mistakes on the captions of the photos for that chapter, so we are reprinting them with correct captions.



Temple B'nai Israel South Street

Dedicated on January 19, 1875, the Temple B'nai Israel's South Street building featured a beautiful cupola on the top of the building and stained glass windows throughout.



Temple B'nai Israel Park Street

This building became the congregation's second home, dedicated on September 15, 1911. Congregation of Moses purchased the building in 1946.

# THE A. ALFRED TAUBMAN HERITAGE COUNCIL

An Endowment Fund to Insure the Future of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (as of July 1, 2011)

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan makes every attempt to account accurately for all financial contributions.  
If your name does not appear above or is incorrect, we apologize and ask that you contact our office to correct the error.

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