MEET
MATILIDA RABINOWITZ:
A TITAN IN LABOR HISTORY
AND A MICHIGAN WOMAN
WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

BY DAVID ELSILA
INK DRAWINGS BY ROBBIN HENDERSON

In 1913, Matilda Rabinowitz, who later changed her name to Matilda Robbins, stood on a soap box and passionately spoke to Ford Motor Company workers about industrial unionism. Arrested and later released, Rabinowitz would go on to become one of the first women leaders in labor, and a Michigan Woman Who Made a Difference.

Matilda at her desk in Little Falls, her first strike. This drawing, by Robbin Legere Henderson, was taken from a photo in the Walter P. Reuther Library. Robbin Henderson recalls the picture hanging on a wall near Matilda's home-office desk.

On a spring day in 1913, twenty-six-year-old Matilda Rabinowitz stood before Justice L. J. Merique in Highland Park, Michigan, and declared: "I am going to speak to the motor car workers of Detroit if I rot in jail for it."

Rabinowitz, an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), was a familiar orator at Ford Motor Company's Highland Park factory, where she would passionately voice to workers her mission about industrial unionism, encouraging them to join the “great industrial band” of the I.W.W. With workers gathered around, Rabinowitz and others would literally mount soap
Matilda on Soap Box: Matilda addresses the workers at the Ford factory in Highland Park, 1913. Arrest: Taken from a photo published in the Detroit Free Press on April 29, 1913. Notice the misspelling of Matilda's surname.
Meet Matilda Rabinowitz

boxes outside the Ford plant and other auto factories. On April 28, 1913, Highland Park police arrested her while she was speaking on Manchester Street east of Woodward Avenue, next to the Ford factory.

Less than five feet tall and weighing only 112 pounds, this Jewish immigrant, whom the Detroit media described as “the young Russian beauty,” had come to America at the age of thirteen, the eldest of her four siblings (two more would be born in the U.S.). She learned English, and, in the days before sound amplification, strengthened her vocal power to speak out to workers and tell off police when they tried to stop her. Robbin Legere Henderson recalled her grandmother’s “high-pitched, very strong voice,” which Rabinowitz learned to project while acting on stage in Connecticut. When Rabinowitz died in 1963, the I.W.W. remembered her as someone who “gave a cop a bitter view of his duties” when he tried to remove her from that soap box in Detroit.”

THE I.W.W.

In 1905, delegates to a convention in Chicago founded the I.W.W., dedicated to building “one big union” in which all workers, regardless of occupation or skill level, could unite in solidarity, a contrast to the craft-based unions that described much of the U.S. labor movement.

Fiercely anti-capitalist, the I.W.W. took the class-conscious position that “the employing class and working class have nothing in common.” Rabinowitz and other I.W.W. organizers became increasingly active in Michigan in 1913 as labor troubles were happening on a number of fronts: 10,000 railroad workers were taking a strike vote, Detroit firefighters had gone to arbitration to win a raise, and the city’s kosher bakers, who served 25,000 Jewish families in Detroit, were on strike against ten bakeries to demand an eight-hour workday. Businesses and the media warned of the I.W.W.’s “gospel of destruction,” declaring “it is up to the workingmen of Detroit who value their present enviable condition to crush the first efforts of the I.W.W. to spread its hideous propaganda.”

With some 60,000 men employed at Ford, Studebaker, Packard, and other auto companies in 1913, Detroit was well on the road to becoming the nation’s
motor city. Skilled workers like metal polishers and pattern makers were represented by the craft unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, but the majority of workers had no union, and were seen by the I.W.W. as ripe for organizing.

At Ford Motor Company, most workers earned no more than $2.34 for a nine-hour workday.\(^9\) (Henry Ford would not announce his five-dollars-a-day plan until the following year.) Rabinowitz, who had been organizing for the I.W.W. in the East and South, and who could speak to workers in English, Russian, and Polish, was assigned to Detroit to help reach workers through the I.W.W.’s Automobile Workers Industrial Union Local 16. When she mounted a soap box at the Ford plant (at one such event denouncing Henry Ford as “the speed-up king”), hundreds (some estimates range up to 3,000) of workers would come out on their lunch hour to hear her and others on Manchester Street. On April 28, 1913, the union sent representatives to the Highland Park City Council to press their right to speak, but, according to the Detroit Times, they were ignored: “Police said I.W.W. workers may speak in vacant lots or other semi-public places but will not be allowed to block the streets, while the agitators claim the right of free speech is being invaded.”\(^{10}\)

Getting arrested was a nuisance, Rabinowitz felt, but was a small price to pay for trying to reach workers in what she called the “pious precinct of Highland Park.”\(^{11}\) Arrests often ended with no charges filed. “The idea was to keep us off Mr. Ford’s sacred property and away from the factory gates,” she wrote. “So they just locked us up for the night for safekeeping.”\(^{12}\)

Although she worked seven days a week for the union, she, like her contemporary activist Emma Goldman, found time for fun. One Sunday, after being released from jail on a day when the thermometer registered ninety degrees, she skipped a union function to take a ride on the Detroit River with Art, a fellow I.W.W. organizer whose hobby was repairing and painting his old boat. The river breezes were cooling, but the propeller broke and the boat had to be towed to Windsor for repairs, leaving Rabinowitz to return to Detroit by ferry.\(^{13}\)

Seven weeks after Rabinowitz was arrested in Highland Park, and after leaving town for I.W.W. speaking duties elsewhere, she returned to Detroit. The Detroit Free Press of June 21, 1913, reported that “Matilda Rabinowitz, I.W.W. worker who attracted considerable attention because of her activity in Highland Park as an open-air speaker for her organization, arrived in Detroit Friday morning from Pittsburgh to take part in the Studebaker auto employees’ strike.”\(^{14}\)
SIGHTS ON STUDEBAKER

The strike at Studebaker had erupted when a worker, Dale Schlosser, was fired for what the company said was an unexcused absence. Schlosser had spoken out on behalf of workers who wanted their weekly paychecks reinstated after the company began issuing biweekly checks, making it difficult for some workers to stretch their earnings between pay periods. On June 17, to protest Schlosser’s firing, an estimated 3,500 workers left their jobs at the company’s plant at the corner of West Jefferson Avenue and Clark Street on Detroit’s west side. Several hundred workers marched seven miles to a second Studebaker plant that occupied the old Ford Model T factory at Piquette Avenue and Brush Street in Detroit. From there, they marched to a third Studebaker factory at Franklin and St. Aubin streets, near the Detroit riverfront.

Flushed by their success in mobilizing so many workers for what became the first auto strike in U.S. history, the strikers expanded their demand for a weekly paycheck to include an eight-hour workday. By June 20, hundreds had taken their fight to the Packard Motor Car Co. plant on East Grand Boulevard, where they were attacked by seven mounted police officers and several patrolmen wielding clubs. “The police did not parley with the men, but ‘sailed in’ and in a trice the men were flying in all directions by hundreds, with at least one I.W.W. officer injured,” reported the Detroit Free Press.

Arriving back in Detroit the next day, Rabinowitz, fresh from organizing pottery workers in East Liverpool, Ohio, and from speaking engagements in Youngstown, Toledo, and Akron, plunged into the Studebaker walkout. “There were never enough organizers, and women organizers were still a novelty,” she wrote. “I was near enough to Detroit and I could mount a soap box in a pinch.” As at Ford, she faced police efforts to keep her from speaking. “Speakers were pulled off soap boxes and jailed just long enough to disrupt meetings,” she wrote; “All cases were dismissed.”

When Studebaker announced a policy to replace the biweekly paydays with a weekly “draw day” every Friday, where workers could get seventy percent of their wages and the balance later, support for the strike dwindled, and most workers returned to their jobs. Rabinowitz left Detroit shortly thereafter, and never returned. The I.W.W. auto local, she later reflected, “did not have the ability, nor even the comprehension of the magnitude of the job, to organize the masses of workers. And the speakers were not organizers with plans and discipline to help tackle the job. The strike dissipated.”

Meanwhile, at the Ford factory, three events impacted union activity: First, Henry Ford eliminated lunch-hour privileges so workers could no longer leave the plant to hear speakers; then, in January 1914, he announced a five-dollars-a-day pay plan that doubled the prevailing wage and led thousands of
workers to line up for jobs; finally, employers stepped up their anti-union activities, blacklisting potential union sympathizers from getting jobs. It would be more than twenty years before passage of the National Labor Relations Act, which guaranteed workers the right to organize unions, and before the United Auto Workers won bargaining rights and contracts at General Motors, Chrysler, and, finally, Ford.

The I.W.W. would not gain a foothold in the auto industry during those intervening years, but the agitation by Matilda Rabinowitz and other I.W.W. organizers for one big union “proved to the union movement that both skilled and unskilled workers in one industry could work together in one union to fight the boss,” asserted the I.W.W. years later.19

TAUBE GITEL
Matilda Rabinowitz’s strong-willed dedication to industrial unionism may have been forged by both her origins and her family. She was named Taube Gitel Rabinowitz20 when she was born in 1887 in Litin, a Russian Ukraine town of 10,000 where Jews made up forty-one percent of the population. “We lived on the edge of poverty,” she recalled. “Bread, potatoes, and beet soup were staple diet, all winter.”21 When she finished her elementary-school education, there was little to look forward to: Under the czarist regime, only ten percent of spaces in the gymnasia were allotted to Jews, and Jews were barred from the civil service and many professions. Many sought refuge overseas.

In 1895, when she was eight years old, her father, Jacob, a retail beer dealer, slipped out of Russia without a passport and made his way to London, where he worked in a candy factory for one pound a week, sending some money home. From London, he traveled to New York. Coming from a family of artisans, he had picked up some of the knowledge needed to get a job as a metal worker in New York. For the next four years, he saved enough money to pay half the travel costs for his wife and five children to join him, with his metalworkers’ lodge lending him the other half.

The journey for the family was difficult. The Russian government did not
want Jews emigrating. Matilda and her mother and siblings boarded a small boat in the dark of night that ferried them across the Dnieper River to Romania. From there they traveled to Amsterdam and then to Glasgow. Finally, they traveled in steerage on an old ship, the State of Nebraska, arriving in New York on December 25, 1900, where they were reunited with Jacob.

In New York, the family lived in a fifth-floor cold-water flat at Orchard and Rivington streets. When she was fourteen, Matilda got her first job, clipping threads off finished shirtwaists, working ten-hour days and half-days on Saturdays for $2.50 a week. One day she found herself hiding in the bottom of a big packing case, loosely covered with shirtwaist material. Her boss had told her to duck out of sight to avoid being found by an inspector. Lacking the necessary working papers, she risked losing her job had she been found. During the next several years, she would work in a corset factory, in a millinery shop, and as a nurse. But the memories of garment sweatshops stayed with her and inspired her activism. “[In] thousands of tenements, cellars, dingy stores, and decayed lofts in firetrap buildings worked men, women and children all day and night. In bad light, in foul air, they cut and stitched and pressed and packed, and dragged bundles and boxes and pushcarts,” she recalled.²²

**FAN THE FLAMES OF DISCONTENT**

After the family moved to Connecticut, Matilda and her brother David joined the Socialist Party, which had a strong presence in Bridgeport where the family lived for a while. It was there that she became active with the I.W.W., volunteering in the 1912 “Bread and Roses” strike of women garment workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and later that year in Little Falls, New York, where women textile workers walked out after a wage cut.

Her work in that successful strike led the I.W.W. to hire her. She and fellow I.W.W. organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn became among the first of the union’s women organizers. Rabinowitz was the union’s version of a traveling salesperson, constantly on the road to southern textile mills, to plants in Ohio and Pennsylvania, and to Detroit, whenever and wherever there were signs of labor struggles. “Fan the flames of discontent,” the I.W.W. said on the cover of its *Little Red Song Book*,²³ and that became Matilda’s calling.

Matilda gave birth to her daughter, Vita, in 1919, and made the decision to raise her as a single mother. Because she needed a steady income, she learned typing and shorthand and worked for various employers, including the American Federation of Labor, a fierce rival of the I.W.W., where she edited a small newsletter. A bank, Guaranty Trust, hired her at around the time of the Russian Revolution, thinking that her knowledge of Russian might be useful for translation needs. She maintained her membership in the Socialist Party
and worked in the I.W.W.’s defense of the Boston anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who were accused of murder and were facing the death sentence. (“She wasn’t so sure about Sacco, but she liked Vanzetti,” said granddaughter Henderson, “and Sacco didn’t like her or the I.W.W. defense lawyer Fred Moore.”) 

Sometime around 1921, the entire family changed its name from Rabinowitz to Robbins. From then on Matilda would be known as Matilda Robbins, the name she used in her byline for the articles that she frequently wrote for the I.W.W.’s newspaper, the *Industrial Worker*, until shortly before her death in January 1963. “There was a great push to be ‘Americans’ around that time,” recalled Henderson. “I don’t think it was rejecting their Jewish heritage, but it was taking a name that would sound more ‘American.’” Matilda had grown up in a Jewish community in Russia and then in the U.S., and “being exposed to traditions of Jewish dispute and debate probably influenced her a lot,” Henderson said. “Her father had been a rabbinical scholar who read both Yiddish and Hebrew,” and her mother was observant and kept a kosher home.

While Rabinowitz acknowledged her Jewish heritage, she also described herself as an internationalist. “I feel she would have said she was a pursuer of justice because she was human, not because she was Jewish,” said Henderson. “She was not a supporter of Israel, and did not think there should be a theocracy anywhere.”

In the mid-1920s, Rabinowitz moved to St. Louis, where she worked for a co-op organization, and then, with her daughter and I.W.W. counsel Fred Moore, drove to California. In the Los Angeles area, she kept up her work with the Socialist Party, editing its newsletter and serving as the branch’s executive secretary. “She was very anti-Stalinist,” Henderson said. “She really adhered to democratic socialism, but she didn’t care that much about elections; political organizing, she felt, should be done through the workplace.” Henderson remembers asking her in 1952 if she would vote for Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic candidate for president. “I’m voting for [Socialist Party candidate] Darlington Hoopes,’ she replied.” Rabinowitz described herself as a follower of Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party leader, and proudly identified herself as a Debsian.

“I HAVE KNOWN INTENSE AND TORMENTING LOVE…”

After settling in California in 1927, Matilda Robbins never moved from the state. She lived in the Los Angeles area, in Fresno, and, after her granddaughter enrolled at the University of California, in Berkeley. She enjoyed the company of university students, and she was visited by old I.W.W. veterans from time to time. She kept journals, wrote poetry, and composed
short stories. Approaching her fifty-ninth birthday, Matilda Robbins reflected on her life up to that point: “I have known intense and tormenting love and companionship and the bitterness of loss; a woman's loneliness; a mother's joy and a mother's grief. But I have not known marital advantages. Neither materially nor socially have I sought them. And because I did not seek these – had no need of them – the physical and emotional satisfaction was lost to me. I suppose that I am one of those undesirable women, from the male standpoint, who wants love and companionship and a child without the all too common enslavement of marriage. I fought a hostile, conventional world for my right to have these and I can claim modest victory.”\(^{27}\)

Matilda Robbins died on her seventy-sixth birthday, January 9, 1963, from complications of an acute lung infection. “Mother died without suffering,” wrote her daughter Vita, acknowledging the many condolences from friends. “There were two days of struggle for breath and finally a tracheotomy. This made breathing possible, but it stopped her voice, and communication became impossible. I grieve over this, especially. For, as all of you are so keenly aware, speech was my mother’s life.”\(^{28}\)

When she passed away, the I.W.W. paid tribute to her by recalling in the *Industrial Worker* the incident in Detroit fifty years earlier when she “gave a cop a bitter view of his duties when he tried unsuccessfully to order her off the soap box from which she was addressing Studebaker employees at a noon-day meeting.” For the rest of her life, the I.W.W. said, she “continued ‘telling-off’ pretentious officials, obsequious and crooked labor leaders, and all others who tried to get between workers and their revolutionary goal.” She “could spot a phony a mile away.”\(^{29}\)

In May 2017, Matilda Robbins was honored in the same city where 104 years earlier she had mounted countless soap boxes to speak to workers. At ceremonies at the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources on the Detroit riverfront, not far from one of the old Studebaker factories in the 1913 strike, Labor’s International Hall of Fame inducted her as a “feminist, fighter, writer, organizer.” Robbin Legere Henderson was present at the ceremonies, and she was surrounded by five I.W.W. members, each of whom she embraced as a comrade carrying on her grandmother’s legacy.
All images in this article are courtesy of Robbin Legere Henderson. Matilda’s life story, drawn from the extensive journals on file at Wayne State University’s Walter P. Reuther Library, will be published by Cornell University Press under the title Immigrant Girl, Radical Woman, and illustrated with 161 line drawings by her granddaughter, whose given name, Robbin, spelled with two b’s, is in memory of her grandmother Matilda Robbins.

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In 2015, JHSM began curating and collecting the biographies of Michigan’s Jewish women who helped build and shape our communities. To date, JHSM has amassed some 200 biographies, short and long, of women in business, in education, in religion, in social services, and in leadership. Our collection, which is growing by the day and is being shared on our website (www.michjewishhistory.org), includes profiles of athletes, activists, attorneys, and bobbies. With this issue of Michigan Jewish History, we begin sharing some of the more comprehensive biographies with you, our readers.
ENDNOTES

2 Soap companies shipped their product in wooden crates, before development of corrugated cardboard containers. Street speakers used upturned empty crates as handy, portable platforms; hence the term “soap box” speaker.
4 Matilda’s siblings born in Russia included David, Sam, Morris, and Minnie. Herman and Bob were born in the U.S. (all but David were anglicized from the original Jewish given names.
6 “End of Matilda’s Notebook,” Industrial Worker, undated clipping, Matilda Robbins Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Box 2, Folder 2-34.
11 “Notebook Frank Bohn,” Matilda Robbins Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University Box 1, Folder 1-35.
12 Ibid
13 Ibid
17 “My Story,” Matilda Robbins Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Box 2, Folder 2-5.
19 Autumn Gonzalez, Nicholas DeFilippis, and Donald Fallon, “Celebrating a Rich Tradition of Women in the IWW,” Industrial Worker, March 13, p. 6.
20 Some biographers have written that her given name was Tatiana, but Robbin Legere Henderson says she is listed as Taube on the manifest of the ship that brought her from Glasgow to New York.
21 “My Story,” op. cit., Box 2, Folder 2-3.
22 Ibid
23 Compiled by the I.W.W. and also known as I.W.W. Songs or Songs of the Industrial Workers of the World. The songbook, a compilation of tunes, hymns, and songs, was used to help build morale, promote solidarity, and lift the spirits of the working class.
27 “Personal Reflections, 1919-1962,” Matilda Robbins Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Box 1, Folder 1-35.
28 Letter from Vita Robbins to friends, January 1963, Matilda Robbins Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Box 2, Folder 2-32.
VIOLINIST HUGO GOTTESMANN: EXILED VIRTUOSO

by Mary Jane Doerr

The Bay View Music Festival and Conservatory is the longest continuously operating chamber music festival in the United States and is located on the shores of Little Traverse Bay near Petoskey, in Emmet County, Michigan. After escaping Nazi Germany and living and performing in New York, Hugo Gottesmann began teaching in 1942 at Bay View, ultimately coming to love this national historic landmark and performing arts center.

The moment violinist Hugo Gottesmann walked on stage, the audience fell silent.

“You didn’t dare make a sound or everyone would glare,” remarked a concertgoer who attended the Bay View Music Festival. “People came from all over to hear him and didn’t want distractions. You couldn’t go anywhere and hear a musician as good as he was.”

In Vienna, this Jewish virtuoso had been a superstar. Gottesmann was the first concertmaster and a permanent conductor of the Vienna Symphony. He
taught at the Academy of Music\textsuperscript{1} and was a conductor at Radio-Wien (RAVAG),\textsuperscript{2} Vienna’s regional radio station. The “city of music” held him in such esteem that he was asked to perform Beethoven’s Violin Concerto in D Minor for the Beethoven Centennial Celebration in 1927, and he performed it again with the Vienna Philharmonic\textsuperscript{3} on International Radio-Wien.\textsuperscript{4}

In 1970, as the city of Vienna mourned his death, he was lauded “as a gifted artist who was a decisive influence on the musical life in Vienna.”\textsuperscript{5} And yet, Herbert Neuchterlein, music critic at Indiana’s \textit{Fort Wayne News-Sentinel} and friend of Gottesmann, said that when Gottesmann came to America he never talked about Vienna, because what had happened was too painful.\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{DAS GOTTESMANN QUARTETT}

Hugo Gottesmann was born April 8, 1896. His father, Leopold, was a sales representative and his mother, Anna, was a milliner with her own store. When Hugo showed talent at an early age, his parents arranged for music lessons. He excelled and was accepted at the Academy for Music where he studied with celebrated Otakar Ševčík\textsuperscript{7} and composer Richard Stöhr.\textsuperscript{8} In 1916, he graduated at the top of his class and received the Staatspreis, the highest possible honor.

Gottesmann then joined the army and served in the 7th Artillery Regiment in World War I, and fought on the Italian front. Smart and well educated, he was promoted from private to lieutenant within a few months.\textsuperscript{9} He received three medals for bravery in combat.

After the war, Gottesmann wasted no time in returning to his music. He formed Das Gottesmann Quartett in 1918 and began touring Europe. Over the years, the young and brilliant members of this quartet were among Vienna’s finest musicians. One critic wrote that “they always bring a fresh interpretation to the classic works.”\textsuperscript{10} Gottesmann made his solo debut on April 8, 1919, with the Wiener Tonkünstler Orchester in the Konzerthaus. That orchestra merged with another to form the Vienna Symphony, and Gottesmann became its first concertmaster in 1921.\textsuperscript{11}

He was appointed to a teaching position in 1920 at the Academy for Music,\textsuperscript{12} teaching violin and chamber music, and he founded the school’s
orchestra. He was also a permanent member of the international competition committee. In 1926, though, the school denied him the title of professor, with hints of anti-Semitism. Five days later the Austrian Minister of Education reversed that decision by granting him the title of “Professor of Music,” the only time in the academy’s 200-year history that the ministry reversed the school’s recommendation.

In the meantime, Das Gottesmann Quartett was touring. In 1925, the group was featured in Vienna’s New Year’s Concert, an annual New Year’s Day morning tradition, considered among the most important classical concerts worldwide. In 1928, the quartet captured the spotlight during New York’s Schubert Festival when they performed the entire string-quartet cycle in the composer’s home. The New York Times stated, “Schubert was never more alive than today.” The Chicago Tribune reviewer called them “entrancing.”

Gottesmann’s conducting career peaked in 1932 when he conducted Beethoven’s 9th Symphony at the Konzerthaus, featuring the Vienna Symphony and the State Opera soloists and chorus. A reviewer wrote, “Gottesmann...rose to the occasion. The blessing of the moment lifted the young artist...beyond himself and he soared and strengthened his craft.” Later that year, the city celebrated the 200th anniversary of Haydn’s birth, and Gottesmann conducted the opening concert in the Hofburg Palace.

Gottesmann commanded so much respect that when Radio-Wien went on the air in October 1924, he was featured in a live broadcast three days later, the first of nearly 300 appearances between 1924 and 1934.

**LEAVING AUSTRIA**

In 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, Gottesmann was fired from his positions in Austria. One account exists of this moment, published in Der Stürmer, a then-illegal NDSAP (Nazi) publication:

...Gottesmann was let go to make room for the violinist, Wolfgang Schneiderhan. Now we know Schneiderhan plays three times better with one hand than Gottesmann with both hands. In addition he is Aryan, which makes his engagement all the more pleasant. The Viennese are happy to lose Mr. Gottesmann in the first chair of the orchestra. Appearance and creative ability of the Jew are not acceptable to the Aryan Viennese.

Gottesmann was offered guest conductorships in Rome and Sweden. He renewed his relationship with his sweetheart Lia and she followed him to Sweden.

What happened next changed the course of his life. Bishop Raymond J. Wade, of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Europe and president of the Scandinavian Theological Seminary in Gothenburg, was able to obtain U.S.
visas for the couple. Bishop Wade would later move to northern Michigan and become president of the Bay View Association, where Gottesmann would spend twenty-eight years on the music staff.

In 1936, Gottesmann was in New York performing with the NBC Symphony Orchestra when he was advised not to return to Europe. Lia stayed in Europe to secure an annulment of her marriage, then was able to join Gottesmann in 1937. They immediately married. In Vienna, Lia’s brothers became Nazis and her ex-husband reneged on their property settlement because she had married a Jew.

Members of Gottesmann’s quartet scattered. Marcel Dick, a renowned violist and composer, immigrated immediately to the U.S. when Gottesmann left. He became the principal violist of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and later of the Cleveland Orchestra.

In March of 1938, Germany annexed Austria in the Anschluss, and almost immediately began its campaign against the Jews. Jewish members of the Philharmonic were banned. The Gestapo twice arrested Gottesmann’s sister Erna, a Social Democrat. Then on Kristallnacht, November 9-10, when mobs destroyed the city’s synagogues and more than 800 Jewish businesses, Gottesmann’s mother’s hat store was among those businesses and she died of shock that night.

A few days later, Erna and her husband and daughter returned to their apartment to learn the Gestapo had been there to arrest them. They left immediately for New York, thanks to Anna’s brother Oscar, who had immigrated earlier to the U.S. and was a citizen. Hugo Gottesmann greeted his sister and her family as they arrived in New York. Their father, Leopold, who was denied passage initially because he had been born in Poland, and the U.S. Polish quota for 1938 was already filled, somehow hid for over a year, made his way to Italy, and booked passage to the U.S.

Life in New York was difficult. Gottesmann was part of the mass migration of musicians fleeing the Nazis. Noted for his ability to play without rehearsal, his concert attire was always ready. He found opportunities at Carnegie Hall, and the Metropolitan Opera House, and with the Stokowski Orchestra and the Busch Chamber Orchestra. At WQXR Radio, he formed another quartet and was hired as one of the conductors of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo for its 1942-43 North American tour. Still, he never achieved the position he had enjoyed in Europe.
BAY VIEW ASSOCIATION

One day in 1942, Gottesmann met Robert Mann (who would later found the Juilliard String Quartet). Mann was trying to fill a vacancy with the Bay View Music Festival near Petoskey, Michigan, and he offered the position to Gottesmann.29

Gottesmann quickly became a star with audiences who loved his stage presence and dazzling technique. Peter Sparling, lead dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company and a distinguished professor at the University of Michigan, remembered his style as emotional, fluent, and lyrical: “...he held his violin very close and his vibrato was loose. The sound of his violin was so sweet.”30

The Gottesmanns were initially unimpressed with their new home. Their accommodations were in a room in an old Victorian building with a double bed and no closets or chairs. The lone window didn’t open. Bathrooms were down the hall and the kitchen was downstairs – hardly comparable to their Vienna apartment near the State Opera. “We put our clothes on the floor and sat on the bed helplessly disappointed and wanting to return home,” Gottesmann wrote.31

Thankfully, Gottesmann’s Detroit cousin, who had driven them to Petoskey, stayed and gave them a tour. They saw the scenery and the beaches, and ate meals at Jesperson’s, Ernest Hemingway’s former hangout. They quickly made friends and enjoyed countless social invitations. They met Sunny Hemingway, sister of the great author and harpist with the Memphis Symphony,32 and they socialized with William Reddick, then producer of the Toscanini and Stokowski
radio program. (Reddick was also former director of Bay View Music Festival and producer of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s Ford Sunday Evening Hour.)

Gottesmann’s reputation attracted many students, including Detroiter Daniel Majeske, who later became the Cleveland Orchestra concertmaster, and Felix Resnick, who was principal second violinist with the DSO and later performed with Motown Records.

A SECOND CAREER

In 1946, celebrated German violinist Adolf Busch, who had been concertmaster for Gottesmann’s 1919 debut, invited Gottesmann to join his quartet. Adolph Busch wanted Gottesmann to play viola. Busch explained to a perplexed Gottesmann, that the way Gottesmann played the violin, he wouldn’t have any trouble. Since Gottesmann did not own a viola, Busch’s son-in-law Rudolph Serkin asked his friend, Austrian art collector Elisabeth Bondy, to lend him her Domenico Busan. So it was that, at age fifty, Gottesmann changed instruments and spent six years touring Europe, the British Isles, and South America, performing concerts and radio broadcasts and making recordings.

Formed in 1946, the Adolf Busch Quartet included Adolph’s brother, Hermann, who had been a member of Gottesmann’s quartet; Rudolf Serkin, Adolph Busch’s son-in-law; and Hugo Gottesmann on the far right. Courtesy of Max-Reger-Institut, Brüder Busch Archiv, Karlsruhe, Germany.

Recently, recordings have been re-released of this latter Busch Quartet, and reviews note the Gottesmann’s performances as “exemplary” and “fine.” In 1998, a re-issue of their 1951 Beethoven recording won the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis.

When the Busch brothers and Rudolf Serkin founded the Marlboro School of Music in 1950, Gottesmann was asked to join them. Fully committed to the
Bay View summer college program, and liking the area and his freedom to select his own repertoire and lead his own quartet, he declined. That summer, in the years after World War II and through the GI Bill of Rights, an influx of some 700 summer-school students were expected at Bay View.

In 1951, Gottesmann’s father died, and Gottesmann was diagnosed with stomach cancer. Emergency surgery at Mayo Clinic was scheduled, but Gottesmann had no health insurance. Friends raised funds for the trip, which included chartering a plane piloted by Petoskey baritone Bertram Rowe, who flew him to Minnesota. Dr. Mayo personally performed the surgery and the cancer was arrested.41

Even as he recovered from the surgery, Gottesmann began preparations for a European tour with the Busch Quartet. When they arrived in Switzerland, Adolph Busch died of a heart attack. The quartet was disbanded and forty-five concerts were canceled. It was all too much, and Gottesmann suffered what Lia called a “complete let-down.”42

The need to honor engagements in New York and the coming summer brought Gottesmann out of his despair and he began performing once more. In 1969, before a concert, Gottesmann became critically ill but insisted on performing. He collapsed after the performance and was taken to the hospital and diagnosed with cancer.43 His friend, Dr. Blum, treated him without charge at Little Traverse Hospital in Petoskey. Others paid the hospital bill. By then, Gottesmann had been living in Fort Wayne, where, after recovering, he returned just before his death on January 22, 1970.

Gottesmann’s death was mourned throughout the world, but his legacy was soon forgotten. Lia was forced to sell Gottesmann’s Carlo Ferdinando Landolfi violin to provide for her living expenses.44 The Austrian National Library has nearly 2,000 newspaper references to Gottesmann but little else. The website for Wiener Sinfonie-Orchester, where he served as concertmaster for fourteen years and as permanent conductor for six years, does not list his name. Radio-Wien has no documents of any of his nearly three hundred recordings.

But, for thousands of admiring colleagues and friends, the music and teachings of Hugo Gottesmann will live on forever.
Mary Jane Doerr has been a freelance writer for the Petoskey News-Review since 1979, and for numerous newspapers throughout Michigan and the U.S. Her first book, Bay View, An American Idea came out in 2010 and won the State History Award from the Historical Society of Michigan. She is a graduate of Michigan State University and Wayne State University. As a child she knew Hugo Gottesmann personally.

ENDNOTES

1 Hugo Gottesmann – Concert Violinist, Letter from Lia Gottesmann, Bay View Archives, Sept. 10, 1981.
2 RAVAG is the Abbreviation for Verkehrs AG.
5 “Hugo Gottesmann Gerstorben” 1970.
6 Herbert Neuchterlein. Interview with Author. Music Critics’ Association Conference, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Aug. 1996.

Researcher Jason Crouthamel mentioned the need for Jewish soldiers with the attrition of manpower. Crouthamel also mentioned Gottesmann’s education level might have led to his promotions. Email to author, Dec. 12, 2015.
12 “Hugo Gottesmann Gerstorben” This is not confirmed by the Academy of Music because of lack of records. Erwin Strouhal, Archivist, Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Wien. Email to author, Feb. 15, 2016
22 Radio-Wien Schedules.
23 Dr. F. B. “Hugo Gottesmann Goes to Court.” Der Stürmer, Vienna ed. May 26, 1934.
25 Letter from Attorney and Tax Adviser Dr. Hans Haider to Headquarters of the United States Forces in Austria. German Subsection, APO 777, US Army. April 16, 1947. Lia's marriage was annulled by verdict of the Land Court in Vienna in 1937. Prof. Hans Wagner-Schönkirch recognized at the time Lia's claim of ownership of property including a Bosendorfer grand piano, a Rast and Gasser sewing machine, an Astleitner safe, and four rugs of Smyrna, Iranian and Persian origin. The agreement was that he would have lifetime use of these assets but they were to be relinquished by his heirs upon his death. In 1947, his widow and his heirs refused to relinquish the assets stating that Lia had married a Jew in New York, which nullified the contract. Lia was required to return to Vienna to claim her belongings. It is unknown if she was successful. https://www.fold3.com/image/311265951
Downloaded Dec. 18, 2016.
Downloaded Dec. 18, 2016.
27 Susan Sariego, interview with author, April 20, 2015.
28 Aaron Copland composed "Rodeo" for the season.
29 Bay View dates to 1875 when a group of Michigan Methodists formed an association in Emmet County, on the shores of Little Traverse Bay, "for intellectual and scientific culture. " By the end of the century, Bay View had become a noted summer destination for acclaimed musicians and students of music.
30 Peter Sparling, telephone interview with author, Oct. 6, 2015.
31 Sariego, April 20, 2016.
Downloaded Dec. 18, 2016. Gottesmann was concertmaster with the Wiener Sinfonie-Orchester in 1920 under Conductor George Szell.
Downloaded Dec. 18, 2016.
37 Lemco, Gary. Audiophile Audition Classical Reissue Reviews, Aug. 12, 2014. Lemco remarked that in the 1947 recording of Brahms A minor Quartet Op 51, No.2, "the fine viola work was courtesy of Hugo Gottesmann."
38 Ibid. Lemco wrote that "Violist Gottesmann dominates the Agitato movement" in the Brahms B-flat Major Quartet 1949 recording,
39 Potter. P. 862. Potter cited the 1949 recording as a fine example of the high quality of Gottesmann's playing.
41 Lia Gottesmann, Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Crist, Aug. 24, 1951. Used courtesy of Ruth Dyer.
42 Ibid.
44 Potter. P. 1095.
THE POWER OF ART:  
MEET GAIL ROSENBLOOM KAPLAN

by Barbara Cohn

Gail Rosenbloom Kaplan is a working artist with a studio in Farmington Hills, Michigan. Her ceramics, mosaics, and sand-art sculptures have traveled the globe, but her heart is here in Michigan. She is especially passionate about community art, the power of art to heal and teach.

As the tour director of the Detroit Public Library, I first met artist Gail Rosenbloom Kaplan in 2014 when she was invited to provide input on enhancements to the library’s children’s room, a plain, uninspiring, white-walled room in great need of something artistically engaging for children. Over and over, people encouraged me to consult with Kaplan, as she was considered an “experienced artist with a community vision.” Kaplan listened to the concerns, examined the room, and confidently declared that the room needed “…a community mosaic over the bookshelves made with the students from Detroit schools.” Unfamiliar with this woman of the arts, I endeavored to get to know her a bit more.

Wearing her signature blue smock, splattered with splotches of paint, sand, and clay built up over years of active use, artist Gail Rosenbloom Kaplan described her career and the evolution of her art to fifty Detroit Institute of Arts docents in her home studio in June 2017. The docents listened attentively as she discussed her philosophy about the power of art, the different mediums she has worked in, and how she managed to balance her career with her family life while working in her studio built above the garage.

Throughout that afternoon, Kaplan amazed those seasoned art lovers with photographs of clay tool boxes, glass mosaics, sand art, mezuzot, and prints.
She embodied the role of an experienced, capable, creative visionary whose work today resides in many private and public collections, from our hometown Detroit to exhibitions nationally and overseas.

THE PERSONAL FOUNDATION

Born and raised in Detroit by parents Essie and Itzie Rosenbloom, Kaplan demonstrated artistic ability at an early age. Encouraged by her aunt, Helen Kapan, a well-known art teacher in the Detroit Public Schools, Kaplan’s parents enrolled her in workshops at Cranbrook Academy of Art at age seven, and later at the Detroit Institute of Arts. As an art student at the University of Michigan in the 1970s, she interned in the photography department at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Skirball Museum at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, and The Jewish Museum in New York City. It was while working at The Jewish Museum cataloguing a collection of Jewish ceremonial art objects from Danzig, Poland, that she had a pivotal moment that shaped her lifelong interest in Jewish history, the Holocaust, and Judaic art.

The collection had been shipped to New York in 1939 for safekeeping, with a stipulation that the objects be returned to Danzig following the war. Like so many other Jewish communities, Danzig was annihilated, so the objects never returned, remaining in New York instead. Kaplan recalls holding a Torah breastplate in her hand, and trembling as she realized she was touching a magnificent holy object from a lost community.

THE PROFESSIONAL EVOLUTION

In the thirty-plus years since, Kaplan has used a variety of mediums, and has won acclaim for her works, which have been displayed nationally and internationally in venues including the U.S. embassies in Norway, Brazil, and Barbados.

Sculptures made from clay, left, are Gail Kaplan’s Tool Belt, which has been exhibited at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., and American Flag. Created after 9/11, American Flag has traveled to U.S. embassies in Barbados and Brazil as a part of the U.S. Department of State’s Art in Embassies program.
Remarkable Artists

She utilizes clay to create sculptures of everyday life. When speaking about her clay works she uses the French phrase tromp l'oeil, which means "to fool or trick the eye to make an object appear real."

Her stellar work in glass mosaics began when she collaborated with artist Dani Katsir to create community installations that adorn the walls of schools, hospitals, community centers, senior residences, and synagogues. Their most recent and ongoing project is the eight-panel Lighting Up Literacy & Learning installation for the Detroit Public Library children’s room, a project that resulted from that 2014 meeting at the Detroit Public Library. The installation provides the perfect example of Kaplan’s vision of community art.

Kaplan believes that to create community art, an artist must extend beyond the creation of the artwork and engage in a process that involves detailed research, help in fundraising, building relationships, and – critically – working directly with students, teachers, principals, and parents. For the library project, she engaged Detroit Public Schools students, most of whom do not have access to art in their curriculum. Students submitted designs based on different themes (earth, under the sea, reading, music, sports, healthy living, and transportation) and then they worked side by side with Kaplan and Katsir in cutting glass strips and gluing them to complete the mosaic. “This opportunity was exciting for the students and, at the same time, was an opportunity for the teachers to use art in their teaching of the curriculum of the themed mosaics,” said Kaplan. At the completion of each mosaic, the students, their families, and the staff were invited to a dedication at the library to celebrate their achievements.

Community art, collaborative projects between an artist and a grassroots community, is showcased at the main branch of the Detroit Public Library in the youth reading room. Kaplan worked with Detroit Public Schools students to create this mosaic which incorporates a variety of themes and media.

Another notable set of mosaics was completed in 2016 – an eighteen-panel, nature-themed glass mosaic installation at the new Children’s Hospital of Michigan - Troy. Students from eighteen schools in Oakland and Macomb counties worked together to create art centered on learning and healing. Kaplan is also involved with pediatric patients at Children’s Hospital of
Michigan, working with patients both at their bedsides and in the activity room. Each child creates his or her own unique artwork, from painted T-shirts to sand art, giving the children an opportunity to use art as a diversion and an opportunity to create.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Harkening back to her graduate experience at New York’s Jewish Museum, Kaplan’s commitment to teach the history of the Holocaust extends to the next generation. She co-created the permanent installation of the Kindertransport Memory Quilts at the Holocaust Memorial Center, Zekelman Family Campus, in Farmington Hills, Michigan. The collection was created in 1988 as a vehicle for the public to learn the stories of the largest rescue of children in World War II, when approximately 10,000 Eastern European Jewish children, kinder, were taken by train and boat to Great Britain.

Survivor Hans Weinman asked Kaplan if she could find a permanent home for these quilts. The quilts, composed of sixty-five individual squares, document the organized rescue of approximately 10,000 Jewish youth, between the ages of seven months and seventeen years, who were rescued from Eastern Europe and taken in sealed trains and boats to Great Britain.

Since the quilts were created by survivors and their families, and were not direct artifacts from the Holocaust, Kaplan saw this as an important opportunity to use “the power of art to teach about the righteous who helped save the children.” She and Weinman approached the Holocaust Memorial Center, which has a mission to not only preserve history but also to promote man’s humanity to man. Although it was a huge undertaking to design the permanent exhibit and to raise the funds for the exhibition, Kaplan succeeded, in large part by recalling the words of her friend and mentor David Hermelin z’l, who always said, “If you are passionate about your cause, you can make it happen!”

In 2010, Kaplan founded Yada Yada Yad Judaic Art, a series of art workshops designed to teach Jewish customs. Using a treasure trove of unique
beads, nuts, bolts, metal rods, and hardware, individuals can design and assemble their own yads, mezuzot, kiddush cups, candlesticks, and menorahs. Kaplan brings the workshops to students in schools and synagogues, and she also offers workshops in her studio and through her website, which features do-it-yourself kits for religious schools and synagogues around the country.

This mosaic, Rise Before the Aged & Bring Beauty To Those Who Are Wise, commissioned by Nancy and Jeff Adler in 2003 for a bar-mitzvah project, is now on display at the entrance to the Jewish Senior Life Fleischman Residence in West Bloomfield.

REFLECTION
Throughout history, art has appeared in public spaces. Public artworks created by or with professional artists provide one of the most moving ways to experience art. Art builds self-esteem, creates jobs, expresses identity, and ignites conversation. Kaplan can enhance and personalize public venues and contribute to public improvement while engaging communities in the process. Her artwork plays a powerful role to inspire, teach, heal, and bring communities together. Working with Kaplan has been a great adventure and lesson in community activism for the arts. She has a personal connection with every project, and her passion is contagious. In their unique settings, her works of art will continue to reach and influence many lives.

Barbara Madgy Cohn has a B.A. in art history, and is a registered nurse. In 2013, she created Discovery of Wonders, an art and architectural tour of the Detroit Public Library, which led to the 2017 publication of her first book, “The Detroit Public Library: An American Classic,” published by Wayne State University Press. Barbara serves on the boards of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, the DPL Friends Foundation, and American Technion Society. She is married to Sheldon and has two sons.
Founded in 1854, the Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) is one of the oldest and largest cultural institutions in the state of Michigan. In 1971 the GRPM was one of a select group of U.S. museums to receive first-round accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, and it has maintained its accredited status ever since. Once part of the Grand Rapids Public Schools, and then a department of the city of Grand Rapids for nearly a century, the GRPM’s roots in education and civic engagement run deep. The GRPM currently operates as an independent 501(c)3 organization that is supported by the citizens of Kent County.

The museum acts as a trustee of the region’s cultural and historical heritage, and its long record of innovative collecting and exhibition programs is valued by many diverse public sectors. The museum’s permanent collections include more than 250,000 artifacts and specimens in areas such as archeology, anthropology, archives, decorative arts, and local history, as well as a diverse and significant holding of natural-history specimens.

**Menorah, c. 1815**

While the provenance of this menorah is only partially known, it was likely brought to Grand Rapids by Jewish immigrants from Poland and sold to Heffner’s Jewelers of Grand Rapids. The donor bought it from Heffner’s around 1980. It is a beautiful example of its type, with seven turned candle sockets and bobeches, which screw onto arms. The arms or brackets form a single piece beneath the sockets with a pierced design of intricate flowers and flourishes surrounding silhouettes of two lions and four rams. Gift of Dora and Leonard Rosenzweig #1999.69.1
The GRPM serves thousands of researchers each year at its state-of-the-art archival facility, and digitally through its online collections database at www.grpmcollections.org. For everyone from genealogists to journalists, scientists to students, the GRPM strives to make its collections as accessible as possible, in as many formats as possible. The museum's goal is to continue to grow, shape, and share its collections so audiences can see their own history reflected in the GRPM's collections and exhibits.

Star of David Funeral Light Box, 1925
This funeral light set, used by the Arsulowicz Brothers Mortuaries in Grand Rapids, consists of a black storage suitcase, telescoping steel tripod, and large bronze light box in the shape of a heart. The box is lined with white synthetic fur, and on the front is attached a gold-painted Star of David. Deep-blue glass stones are inset around the perimeter. When lit from within, the whole box glows brightly. In memory of John A. Arsulowicz and Stanley A. Arsulowicz Sr. #2004.15.2

ARCHIVED 2017
TREASURES

Portrait Doll, Dr. Jonas Salk, c. 1965
The subject of this portrait doll, one of twenty-six portrait dolls that were part of the national B’nai Brith Women’s Dolls for Democracy program, is Jonas Edward Salk (October 28, 1914 - June 23, 1995). Salk, a Jewish-American medical researcher and virologist, was best known for his discovery and development of the first safe and effective polio vaccine in 1955. Dolls for Democracy was a program for local school and community groups; it used dolls to educate about the worth and dignity of every human being and every individual's right to full and equal opportunity to develop to full potential. Gift of the Grand Rapids Chapter of B’nai Brith Women #1995.46.6
**Doris Cole Archival Collection, 1952-1954**

The Doris Cole Archival Collection contains an assortment of photographs, invitations, and examples of yearbooks from this period, and includes eighteen party and evening dresses purchased at department stores and dress shops in downtown Grand Rapids between 1952 and 1955. The dresses were worn by Doris Cole and her sister Janice Cole to parties, dances, and other social events. The Cole family, including parents Helen and Louis Cole, were residents of Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids for many years and were members of Temple Emanuel in Grand Rapids. Louis was the owner of the Walltile Company in Grand Rapids. Janice graduated from Ottawa Hills High School in 1954, and Doris graduated from East Grand Rapids High School in 1955. Both daughters now live out of state. Gift of Janice E. Cole, Doris A. Cole, Louis and Helen Cole #2010.SS.19

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**Trade Card, Houseman and Jones Clothing Company, c. 1900**

Houseman’s was founded in 1852 by German-Jewish immigrant cousins Julius and Joseph Houseman. The extremely long-lived clothing store had a presence in downtown Grand Rapids until it closed in 1986. The store was known in its early days for its extensive selection of men’s clothing; they added women’s lines in 1927. An early partner in the business was Abraham May, who eventually opened his own clothing store, May’s, which competed with Houseman’s. Gift of Mrs. Jennie Deglopper #175846
HISTORIC NEWS OF NOTE FROM AROUND THE STATE

OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL 60TH!

It began as a one-room school house in 1852, in what was then a sparsely populated farm town. One hundred years later, in 1957, Oak Park High School graduated its first class of seniors. When it opened, the building, which took four years to build, stood in the center of an emerging Jewish community. The graduating class numbered fewer than one hundred, six of whom had the last name of Cohen (Donald, Douglas, Herbert, Marlene, Ronald, and Sheila). A decade later, in 1968, the graduating class numbered more than 460.
HISTORIC MARKERS ARE FORTY!

On October 16, 1977, an official State of Michigan historical marker was dedicated at Congregation Beth El in Traverse City. The marker commemorates the fact that Beth El now occupies the oldest synagogue continuously used as such in Michigan. Looking much like a one-room school house, the structure was built in 1885 and has housed the congregation ever since. Although the JHSM had no direct hand in establishing the marker, JHSM members were invited to attend and participate in the dedication ceremonies.

Two weeks later, on October 30, 1977, JHSM had the pleasure of participating in the dedication of another State of Michigan historical marker, which in this case commemorated the first Jewish religious services held in the city of Detroit, in 1850. In that year, a group of German-Jewish immigrants gathered at the house of Isaac and Sarah Cozens, near the corner of Congress and St. Antoine, and formed the first minyan in the city, with services led by Marcus Cohen. That group later formed Congregation Beth El, still in existence and known as Temple Beth El. Participating in the service were leaders from JHSM, Temple Beth El, and Congregation T’chiyah, which had been formed a few years earlier by Jews living in downtown Detroit. The marker was erected on the lawn of the Blue Cross Blue Shield building on E. Congress.

Friends and fans of Jewish history gathered together in October 1977 to celebrate the dedication of a State of Michigan historic marker commemorating Detroit’s first Jewish religious services. Photo courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University.
ALPENA’S TEMPLE BETH-EL
HAS A MESSAGE FOR YOU:
WE ARE HERE!

Mark Twain once wrote, upon learning that his obituary had been printed in America while he was in London, “The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated.” So, too, was the rumor that Temple Beth-El of Alpena, Michigan, had closed its doors. Temple Beth-El is alive and thriving, with new leadership, new membership, and a soon-to-be repaired and restored 126-year-old synagogue.

The city of Alpena, like Temple Beth-El, is experiencing a kind of renaissance. New hotels and restaurants, a new health-care system established with the purchase of the hospital by the University of Michigan, new and unique curriculum offerings at Alpena Community College, the NOAA Center’s Shipwreck Museum, and the Thunder Bay Marine Sanctuary are some of the signs of growth in the area. This growth is attracting new employers and residents, some of whom have become members of Temple Beth-El.

At a Temple Beth-El board meeting in January 2017, Arthur Guren, Temple Beth-El’s former president who had served for more than thirty years, submitted his resignation. The new president, Kathleen Lutes, joined Cecile Pizer, secretary, and Gregg Resnick, treasurer, in serving congregants. Lutes reached out to every member, including former members who live out of state, and also to prospective congregants, to update them on the transition and on highlights of what was happening at the synagogue. In February 2017, a successful Greet, Meet, and Eat gathering was held, introducing the new members to “old” members, some of whom came from as far as fifty miles.

Temple Beth-El’s rich history dates to the late nineteenth century. It is believed that Julius Myers was among the early Jewish residents of Alpena,
settling in the area sometime before 1867. The successful clothier would later serve as president of Alpena’s Hebrew Benevolent Society, founded in 1875 for the purpose of “buying a burial ground.” By 1887, there were some forty-five Jewish adults who had settled in the area, finding great opportunity in the booming lumbering trade. Like Myers, some twenty other Jewish males were identified as being engaged in the clothing business or related field, either as proprietors or as clerks.

In addition to purchasing the cemetery, Alpena’s Hebrew Benevolent Society was involved with caring for the sick and supporting others in need. In early 1877, the newly elected officers – Isaac Tumim, president; Jacob Levyn, vice president; William Rosenthal, secretary; Theodore Knoch, treasurer; and Julius Myers, Casper Alpern, and David Rodman, trustees – appointed committees charged with writing a formal charter and with securing “a room” in which to hold regular meetings, primarily for prayer and worship. Interestingly, meeting minutes dated March 24, 1877, disclose that there were violent disputes during the meeting. While the nature of the disputes was not put into writing, it is suspected that the conflict resulted from a difference in religious beliefs and practices. Records show that services initially were conducted by the officers and selected members, although in 1885 a cantor was engaged for the High Holy Day services. Rabbi Hyman Buchhalter, of Detroit, relocated to Alpena and served as rabbi from 1885 to 1888.

The Hebrew Benevolent Society began to organize for a synagogue, forming a congregation known as Beth Tefelol. Once that entity formally separated from the society and acquired a corporate existence, it adopted the name Temple Beth-El. The first organizational meeting of the new congregation was held on Sunday, October 19, 1890. It was at that meeting that arrangements were made for the purchase of a frame building on the north side of Hitchcock Street in Alpena, for a purchase price of $1,100.
On February 13, 1891, the congregation successfully completed purchase negotiations for a piece of property on nearby White Street. They then moved the building to White Street², where it still stands. Thus, Temple Beth-El is one of America’s relatively few surviving nineteenth-century synagogues (another being in Traverse City). Even though the building has been remarkably well maintained, it has come as no surprise that the structure, at more than one hundred years old, is in need of serious repair.

From left to right: Temple Beth-El's sanctuary; the original foot-pump organ, donated to the temple in the 1890s, remains in a back corner of the hall; the original iron and frosted-glass Ner Tamid (Eternal Light), illuminated by a red lightbulb.

To prevent further deterioration, in spring 2017 contractors began work on the exterior. Some congregation members with building experience also contributed to the work. Due to the extreme costs of renovation and repair, the congregation sought public and private grants to aid in funding. A community-based grant of $1,000 was awarded by the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan, a grant of $7,300 was received from the Ravitz Foundation, and a gift of $1,000 came as a “good neighbor” gesture and tribute from one of the oldest congregations in Alpena, the First Congregational Church. Many in-kind donations also have helped with the expense, and further grants and in-kind donations are being pursued.

Congregation president Kathleen Lutes, working with a team of congregational leaders, has contacted historical societies and foundations in Michigan to seek grants to help with the synagogue’s restoration and repair. “We were told several times, ‘we didn’t know there was a surviving synagogue in Alpena,’ or ‘we heard that TBE was closed.’ It was a great pleasure to assure everyone that, like the Whos of Whoville yelling out to Horton, ‘We are here, we are here!’”

The interior of this historic synagogue is still largely as it was when first
established. A stained-glass window of Moses dominates the back wall of the synagogue. Because of the fragile nature of this window and of the two gorgeous stained-glass side windows (all original to the building), sheets of plexiglass were installed to protect them from weathering and damage. Several beautiful one-hundred-year-old chairs are set near the bimah. The desk that serves as the bimah is original, and so are the small study and rabbi’s quarters. Entering the shul is like taking a step back in time.

In addition to renovations, the congregation is actively attempting to document the history of the past sixty years. “We are still here, but a portion of our history is not,” said Lutes. “We are concerned about the nearly sixty years of our history, from approximately 1958 to the present, that have been unrecorded.” To help fill in that history, several long-time congregants have agreed to be interviewed.

Art Guren faithfully served as Temple Beth-El’s president from 1983 through 2017, holding together the congregation during troubled times. In 2017, this long-time Alpena resident was honored for his service to the congregation.

Yes, Temple Beth-El is very much alive and thriving, with much going on and much to look forward to. As Lutes wrote in February 2017, “Temple Beth-El has a long history of serving the Jewish community in Alpena and the surrounding area. Our goal is to continue that legacy and to be a vibrant part of our society. We sincerely welcome – and need – your participation, whether as a TBE member family or friend. We are, after all, joined in unity by our belief in the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” - By Tim Lutes

To make a tax-deductible donation toward the restoration of Temple Beth-El, checks may be sent to TBE c/o P.O. Box 55, Presque Isle, MI 49777, noting “Restoration Project” on your check.

ENDNOTES

1 An American Shettl, Robert Leyman, student rabbi, October 2, 1958, p. 10.
2 An American Shettl, Robert Leyman, p. 18.
HISTORIC TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM HEADS TO MARQUETTE

At a time when many synagogues in rural areas are closing due to declining membership, one Michigan Upper Peninsula congregation is embarking on a move to bigger and better things.

On December 26, 2016, Ishpeming’s Temple Beth Sholom announced its purchase of the former Christian Science Church in Marquette, about fifteen miles east, known locally as The Citadel. The purchase, made possible by an anonymous donation, helped the congregation to follow the eastward cross-county movement of the local Jewish community over the past sixty years.

The soon-to-be home of Temple Beth Sholom in Marquette. Photo courtesy of Shannon Ruiz.

The seeds of Temple Beth Sholom were planted and sown in the 1940s in the home of Willard Cohodas, when he began teaching a Torah-study class to five area children. Cohodas used a correspondence course offered by Rabbi Morris Adler of Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Detroit, and his study group slowly grew in number. Eventually, the students’ mothers began to meet each fall with Cohodas and a consultant from Minneapolis to write the coming year’s curriculum.
In 1951, a young Howard Cohodas, nephew of Willard, remarked that their community lacked a house of worship like those attended by his churchgoing schoolmates. The Marquette County Jewish community took this as a call to action and began planning the first shul in their seventy-five-year history.

Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company answered the call, donating a plot of land for the new temple. This land donation was a tremendous boon for the community, as their High Holiday services had been moving from place to place, fluctuating among the Eagles Club, the American Legion Hall, and other locations.

On June 29, 1952, a groundbreaking ceremony was held, bringing together 125 central Upper Peninsula Jews from Ishpeming, Marquette, Munising, and Negaunee. The dedication ceremony on June 7, 1953, included the attendance of a Catholic priest and several Protestant ministers. Two Torahs were presented – one each by the Fine and Lowenstein families as gifts to the new temple. Each Torah was more than a century old, and each had survived not only the arduous trans-Atlantic journey from Lithuania to the shores of the U.S., but also the many additional miles of travel to Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

In the absence of a regular rabbi, Willard Cohodas frequently conducted services at the shul, but the congregation also relied on student rabbis from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, who came on a monthly, bimonthly, or holiday basis. But near the time of Beth Sholom’s first High Holy Days, all student rabbis had already been assigned elsewhere, so the college suggested that the congregation contact Professor Emeritus Rabbi Abraham Cronbach. An octogenerian, Rabbi Cronbach immediately agreed to the trek up north, just months after famously eulogizing Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who had been executed by the U.S. after being convicted of committing espionage for the Soviet Union.
Beth Sholom’s partnership with Hebrew Union College continues today. Constance Arnold, past president of the temple, estimated that more than fifty rabbinical students have visited the congregation since its beginning. “They are a lively and changing part of the scene here,” she said. “More recently, some have been bringing instruments and other talents to the congregation.”

Bar- and bat-mitzvah preparations receive the highest priority of the rabbis’ time during their visits, with some continuing through video conferences and digital recordings. The Saturday-morning adult-education sessions are also popular and provide an access point for congregation members who are more interested in the texts and philosophy than in worship services.

But Ishpeming, like many other small rural cities, has suffered the migration of much of its population to larger cities. Marquette General Hospital and Northern Michigan University have been the key drivers of a migration to Marquette. According to Arnold, a member since 1979, hospital personnel have largely accounted for a membership that has stayed consistent at around thirty families, but the newfound proximity to the NMU campus is equally important. “Over the last thirty years I’ve seen a thriving Hillel and then the Jewish Student Union,” Arnold said, “but they weren’t interested in coming to events in Ishpeming. It’s been a barrier for years. Now it’ll be less of a barrier and hopefully can become a meeting place.”

A search committee considered numerous sites in Marquette prior to settling on the Citadel, which had been used for events for years before being converted into residential space. Arnold explained, “A number of people who were involved in building the synagogue in 1952 were in favor of the move, so that shows it’s about the congregation, not the building.”

On May 26, 2017, congregants of Temple Beth Sholom gathered in Ishpeming for a deconsecration service led by student rabbi Caroline Sim, who sermonized about moving the aron kodesh (the Torah ark). Once the final screw was removed from the mezuzah, the two Torahs were carried off to the Marquette synagogue, where they were greeted with a celebratory oneg.

Thus, the new home of Temple Beth Sholom, made possible by an anonymous donor, is a noted milestone in the history of the Jewish community of the Upper Peninsula. Rabbi Sam Stahl of San Antonio, Texas, nephew of Temple Beth Sholom co-founders Willard and Sylvia Cohodas, and also one of the very first student rabbis to visit from Hebrew Union College, will officiate at the new building’s dedication service sometime in the near future.

— Noah Levinson
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Telephone interviews with Constance Arnold and David Perlove by the author.

Historical Tidbits

1907: Jewish Old Folks Home on Brush at Winder in Detroit opened, providing kosher meals, socialization, and spiritual and cultural support for up to ninety residents. Thirty years later, in 1937, the Old Folks Home relocated to Petoskey in Detroit, and then in 1967 it became Jewish Home for the Aged, moving to the Borman Hall and Prentis Manor facilities in Detroit. In 2008, in collaboration with Jewish Apartments and Services, the agency became Jewish Senior Life of Metropolitan Detroit, with residential buildings at the Jewish Community Center campuses in Oak Park and West Bloomfield.

1927: November: Flint’s Temple Beth El was founded. Services were held in the Patterson Building until 1935, when a building was purchased at Liberty and E. Second Street.
DETOUR, 1967

By Michael Maddin

It was a pleasant summer evening in July. My wife Donna and I were dining at Sinbad’s Restaurant, on the Detroit River near downtown Detroit. We were watching the freighters go by, enjoying the scenery, and eating a not-particularly memorable meal. Then, at around 9:00 p.m., there was an announcement: “Everyone please finish your meal, pay your bill, and leave.” “Why?” I asked our waiter. He told us there was a “disturbance” nearby and they were closing the restaurant. “What kind of disturbance?” I asked. “Some fires have been set,” he casually replied, and the police were requesting that Sinbad’s close for the evening and urge their patrons to go directly home. We quickly complied. As we headed to our car, we saw, in the still-lit sky, smoke rising in the distance, billowing from a number of areas. This couldn't be good, we thought. Donna and I got into our car and made the short drive to our apartment in downtown Detroit.

On the radio, we heard some descriptions of incidents in the city, but, as we would later learn, nothing close to what was actually transpiring. We figured there was really nothing to be concerned about. We assumed that, whatever it was, it would soon pass.

At 3:30 in the morning our telephone rang. Who could it be? “Your unit has been called up. Report for duty at 0600.” What? Report? Why? “Report for duty and you will be advised.” I put on my uniform while Donna packed to go to her parents' house in the nearby suburb of Oak Park.
I flashed back to my final year of law school in 1964-65, when various members of my class filled out appeals to avoid being drafted and likely sent to Vietnam. I was healthy and expected to be drafted, so I thought I had better find a solution. Marriage alone did not qualify me for a deferment, and we had no children. Escaping to Canada was not an option, either. I decided to enlist in the Air National Guard. My active duty commenced immediately after I finished law school and completed the Michigan bar exam in 1965.

While I had escaped Vietnam, I was sent to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, for basic training. I had only recently met Donna, and often thought to myself, “This is no way for a nice Jewish boy just out of law school to live!” But, the letters and cookies Donna sent me made basic training much easier.

After basic, I became an active duty Airman and was committed to six years of “call to duty” service with two weeks of summer camp training each year. Little did I ever expect that in July of 1967, after I’d finished basic training, passed

*This Air National Guard aerial photo, taken in the days immediately after the 1967 events, shows two blocks of fire damage to homes. Courtesy Michael Maddin.*
the bar, and launched myself into the practice of law, my unit would be called to serve. I had never contemplated being called to duty in my own city.

Within hours of that early morning call, I was in uniform and on the streets performing National Guard duties for eight chaotic, violent, disorderly days and nights.

My unit guarded utilities, including a Detroit Edison substation. We guarded buildings, streets, passageways, and prisoners. We provided support transportation for others. And, to answer what has often been asked, “Yes — we carried M1 carbine rifles with ammunition and, yes, we knew how to use them.”

In many ways I remember this experience through the senses. I experienced perpetual darkness after sunset, as all streetlights were either shot out, burned out, or turned off. The smell of ash was mixed with the burning of electrical infrastructure and transformers. Gunfire was heard repeatedly. Prisoners were taken and, due to their sheer numbers, corralled in unconventional locations. My only injury came one night when I fell from a rooftop onto the lower rooftop of a building we had been guarding.

When those eight days and evenings were finally over, I went back to practicing law. I felt that, in many ways, life would never again be the quite the same. I was still a member of the National Guard service. Who knew what would be next?

It turned out that my Air National Guard unit would be called to duty nine months later, just after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. While we were called up for precautionary purposes, and the city remained calm, Detroit, like me, was changed forever.

Michael Maddin is the immediate past president of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. He is also a founding member and president emeritus of the law firm Maddin Hauser. A graduate of the University of Michigan and Wayne State University Law School, Michael has been married to Donna for more than fifty years, and they are the parents of four children and the grandparents of four grandchildren.
JERUSALEM, 1967

By Yehuda Amichai

On Yom Kippur in 1967, the Year of Forgetting, I put on my dark holiday clothes and walked to the Old City of Jerusalem. For a long time I stood in front of an Arab’s hole-in-the-wall shop, not far from the Damascus Gate, a shop with buttons and zippers and spools of thread in every color and snaps and buckles. A rare light and many colors, like an open Ark.

I told him in my heart that my father too had a shop like this, with thread and buttons. I explained to him in my heart about all the decades and the causes and the events, why I am now here and my father’s shop was burned there and he is buried here.

When I finished, it was time for the Closing of the Gates prayer. He too lowered the shutters and locked the gate and I returned, with all the worshipers, home.
BROKEN FENCES
REVOLT, DETROIT 1967
By Joy Gaines-Friedler

On the roof that Sunday evening
I climbed to watch the distant plume of smoke rise
To see for myself what the news was saying
about a city on fire.

The sun in July is farthest away from earth,
but it's a matter of tilt – of slant.
Stifling hot with the bleeding city
my mother yelled for me to get inside.

Safe in my suburb I heard
two voices: One, like a trimmer cutting through trees.
The other, a cry of wild flowers stomped upon too long.
Both blamed the other – imagine that.

I watched the news with my father
whose Italian friend offered to guard my father's shop.
He had a gun and a pair of sturdy boots.
Who will guard against the guards? I asked.

When the police came, the ladies playing mahj
at Northland Mall were told they should leave.
Their might for good, was good indeed
Naw, the ladies said—not until we're done.

The synagogues will turn into churches.
My father will move his shop to Livonia.
We will preen our flight feathers
and leave the city to curl like weeds
along broken fences.
TIMELINE

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

1862  February 5: The Shaarey Zedek Society purchases a parcel of land on Smith Street in Hamtramck for a cemetery. The Smith Street Cemetery would come to be known as the Beth Olem Cemetery.

1877  March 24: Minutes from the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Alpena, which was founded in 1875 for the purpose of buying a burial ground, indicate the congregation had begun the process of looking for a “room” in which to hold services and meetings.

1890  October 19: The first organizational meeting of Temple Beth-El in Alpena is held. Less than a year later, on February 13, 1891, the congregation purchases its building on White Street, a building that continues to be in use.

1908  Samuel Elkin opens a grocery store, shortly after his arrival in Mount Clemens. Soon after, he purchases a rooming house and converts it to a hotel.

1911  Beth Tephilath Moses is founded in Mount Clemens. Samuel Elkin is its first president. A short time later a building is rented on S. Walnut Street.

1912  Matilda Rabinowitz, a Russian immigrant, joins the Socialist Party and becomes an organizer with the Industrial Workers of the World.

1912  Abraham Reznick, a Russian immigrant, purchases forty acres in South Haven. Four years earlier, Sam and Anna Margolin purchased a farm in Wyoming, Michigan. The two families were among the first Jewish farmers in the area. By 1920, there would be as many as fifty Jewish families involved in farming on the west coast of Michigan.

1913  Sam Elkin moves his Mount Clemens hotel operation to larger quarters on S. Gratiot and renames it Elkin’s Hotel. In 1925, Elkin would acquire the Olympia Hotel and Bath House.

1913  April 29: Matilda Rabinowitz stands on a soap box outside Ford Motor Company’s Highland Park factory, urging workers to join “the great industrial band.” She is arrested for her actions.

1918  August 15: Troy Township approves a zoning change allowing Congregation Shaarey Zedek to establish a cemetery on Fourteen Mile Road. Zoned as a future residential development, the parcel was called Clover Hill subdivision. Clover Hill Park Cemetery would open later that year.

1919  July 10: Adolph Blumberg is the first person buried at Clover Hill Park Cemetery.

1921  Isaac Agree Synagogue opens in Detroit for minyans and Conservative-oriented worship. In recent years, the synagogue has experienced a revitalization as many Jews are relocating back to the city.

1921  Memorial Day: A cornerstone-laying dedication event is held at Clover Hill Park Cemetery for the erection of a chapel where Jewish burial practices can be followed.
TIMELINE

1922  The Hebrew Education Alliance is founded in South Haven to provide a place of worship for residents and vacationers, and as a religious school. The Alliance operates concurrently with the previously established Farmer’s Synagogue.

1926  Zlatkin’s Resort opens in South Haven. Solomon and Bessie Zlatkin had initially tried their hand at farming, but like many others, this farming experiment failed and they converted their home into a guest lodge and eventually built a resort.

1929  Samuel Elkin dies from acute bronchitis. He is buried next to his father in Beth Tephilath Moses Cemetery.

1929  July 21: Members of South Haven’s Jewish community carry the Torah from the Jewish Farmer’s Synagogue to the newly formed First Hebrew Congregation.

1933  Conducting virtuoso Hugo Gottesmann is fired from his positions in Austria. Born in 1896, Gottesmann took up violin at a young age and rose to fame as the first concertmaster and permanent conductor of the Vienna Symphony.

1942  Hugo Gottesmann is offered a conducting position with the Bay View Music Festival near Petoskey. Gottesmann would adopt Petoskey as his second home and remain with the music festival for decades.

1956  The suburban Oak Park branch of the Jewish Community Center opens. The JCC’s main branch, at Meyers and Curtis in Northwest Detroit, opened in 1960.

1957  1957: Oak Park High School celebrates its first graduating class, which numbered fewer than one hundred students.

1967  July 23: Detroit Police raid an after-hours club at the corner of 12th Street and Clairmount Avenue. Within hours the city is engulfed in a disturbance that would forever change its landscape and reputation.

1973  Mel Ravitz loses the Detroit mayoral election to Coleman A. Young. Ravitz was elected to Detroit City Council in 1962 and was considered a leading liberal voice.

1977  Congregation T’chiyah is founded by a group of Jewish Detroiters seeking a house of worship in the city. The congregation would align with Reconstructionist Judaism.

1977  October: The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan participates in the placement of two State of Michigan historic markers: one in Traverse City, commemorating the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in Michigan, and the other commemorating Detroit’s first Jewish religious services.

2016  Artist Gail Kaplan installs an eighteen-panel nature-themed glass mosaic at Children’s Hospital of Michigan in Detroit. Kaplan’s mosaics and sculptures can be seen throughout the community. She is especially interested in community art and using art as a means to educate others about the Holocaust.

2016  December 26: Ishpeming’s Temple Beth Sholom announces that it has purchased a building in nearby Marquette and will soon relocate. Temple Beth Sholom dates to the 1940s when Willard Cohodas began a religious school in his home.
In 1862, Abraham Lincoln observed that “we cannot escape history.” True, he had a lot on his mind at the time. But while we may not be able to avoid history, we are certainly capable of forgetting it. Sandy Hook. Ferguson. Charlottesville. What thoughts might those words conjure up fifty years from now when someone picks up this journal?

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan is dedicated to educating, celebrating, and promoting the contributions of the Jews of Michigan to our state, our nation, and the world. With each new technological advance that serves mostly to distract us, that job seems to become more difficult. How do we make turn-of-the-last-century immigration stories come alive to a ten-year-old who has been computer literate since toddlerhood? How do we engage millennials, who are rightfully preoccupied with career, relationship, and family matters? How do we make the case for relevance to any baby boomer who didn’t happen to be a history major? And how do we preserve and disseminate the wisdom of the Greatest Generation before those individuals and their wisdom are lost forever?

At JHSM, we think about questions like these all the time. Without an archive of original documents and artifacts, let alone a building in which to house them, we use every available means to further our mission. Much of 2017 was consumed with the re-imagining and relaunching of our website, www.michjewishhistory.org. Great care was taken in the construction of the website to ensure that all generations can access accurate and inspirational information about the experiences, contributions, and legacies of the Jews of Michigan. We believe that the website reflects the lively, event-driven nature of JHSM, and will engage both new audiences and existing members.

We encourage you to spend some time on the site. Wander into the two Gallery sections and explore the stories we’ve curated and made available to audiences worldwide. Don’t hesitate to explore further by clicking on the links provided in the Learn More sections. Use the digitized index to do your own research or exploration and to access every issue of our amazing journal,
Michigan Jewish History, with the click of a button.

I would be remiss if I did not also highlight our Traveling Trunk program. Targeted to fifth- and sixth-graders, last year more than 300 religious-school students and seventy-five day-school students took part. With memories of my own religious-school experience still surprisingly fresh in my mind, I attended a few of these classes. I saw children using games, activities, and an impressive, customized workbook to truly participate in the process, which culminates in a specially tailored Settlers to Citizens bus tour of historic Detroit. I’m fairly certain my own Hebrew school experience did not involve a single field trip. We were shown a film strip once, but that lesson was cut short when the bulb burned the film. Still, my observations made clear that it is possible to engage kids today despite the odds and all the distractions of life in the twenty-first century.

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to say a few words about this publication, Michigan Jewish History. We’ve come a long way since our first issue was published in 1960. Yet, like that first issue, our journal today contains a nice balance of scholarly articles and lighter slice-of-life fare. This year’s effort is no exception. Whether we call it a riot or a rebellion, the events of the summer of 1967 forever changed the city of Detroit and its suburbs. JHSM could not let the fiftieth anniversary of that summer pass without a serious exploration of the effects those events had on life in our community. We simply could not forget it.

Once again, JHSM is dedicated to using all means available in pursuit of our mission, be they old school (the journal), new school (the website), or religious school. But we need your help. Write an article or essay for inclusion in an upcoming issue of the journal. Click on the blue “Donate” button that appears at the top of each of our web pages. Help us permanently endow the Traveling Trunk program so that our kids will continue to “live” history and develop their own Jewish and Michigan identities. Attend one of our programs or events. Get involved with JHSM in any way that works for you so that we can continue to work together for our community. Since we can’t escape it, please do your part to ensure that our very special local history will never be ignored.
G. AIMEE ERGAS
RECIPIENT OF THE 2017 LEONARD N. SIMONS HISTORY AWARD

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines foot soldier as “a person likened to an infantryman especially in doing active and usually unglamorous work in support of an organization or movement.” Aimee Ergas, the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan’s 2017 Leonard N. Simons History Award recipient, most certainly fits this definition, with one notable exception: She is an infantrywoman. To the selection committee, Ergas’s unceremonious dedication to preserving and recording the stories of Michigan’s Jewish men, women, and institutions was and is remarkable, notable, and worthy of this award.

Through her writing, research, public speaking, tour creation, and exhibition work, Ergas’s contributions have added to the enrichment, preservation, and dissemination of Michigan’s Jewish history. Her contributions will have meaning and impact for generations to come.

Ergas, born in Kansas City, Missouri, attended Wellesley College, during which time she met her husband-to-be, Dr. Tor Shwayder, a native Detroiter. After receiving her master’s degree in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, she launched what became – and continues to be – an impressive career aimed at the arts and American and Jewish history, often with a focus on women.

In 1994, Ergas, who along with her husband and three children had by then re-located to the Detroit area, was recruited by Judith Levin Cantor, then editor of Michigan Jewish History. She began writing for the publication, documenting Michigan’s Jewish history. Ergas’s involvement with JHSM and the historical community intensified. In 1998 she became the journal’s editor, and she proceeded with professionalism and enthusiasm to publish a run of fascinating journals that appealed to JHSM’s membership and helped attract new members. In 2003, Ergas was retained as JHSM’s first director, a part-time position that she combined with her volunteer hours.
In that dual role, Ergas ushered in an era of sustained growth for JHSM, initiating numerous programs and leading major exhibition projects. She and several others, after meeting with William Davidson, founder of Guardian Industries, arranged for guided tours of an Israeli exhibit at the Guardian Industries corporate headquarters in Auburn Hills. The event was a leap forward for JHSM and put the organization in a position to undertake an enormous fiftieth-anniversary project, the 2009 *From Haven to Home* exhibition, which was housed at the Detroit Historical Museum. The national portion of the exhibit was created by the American Jewish Historical Society, from an original exhibit at the Library of Congress, and chronicled the American Jewish experience, focusing on America as both a “haven” and a “home.” The national story was punctuated by the exhibitions and artifacts related to the Michigan Jewish experience. Ergas led the entire effort, from fundraising to curatorial exhibition work.

Wishing to continue her education, in 2007 Ergas entered the archival administration program at Wayne State University, which led to her current position as archivist at the Walter P. Reuther Library Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs at WSU. Her projects include archiving the papers of Judge Avern Cohn and Max M. Fisher, and she oversees the collections of the Jewish Community Archives, also housed at the Reuther Library. In 2012, Ergas officially stepped down from her JHSM directorship but remains active as a volunteer advisor. In 2014, she led the initial research for JHSM’s *Michigan Women Who Made a Difference* (MWWMD) project and authored the corresponding book.

“Finding documents, clippings, and stories of women who were active in the early days of Detroit’s communal history, the founders of some of our most important agencies, and activists who became involved with powerhouses such as NCJW, has been so revealing,” Ergas said. “These papers sit in the stacks decade after decade. These stories allow us to add an important layer of understanding to the life history of our community.”

Through her work, she has uncovered stories of Jewish female war veterans, teachers, artists, and women in business. In researching the biography of Ruth Reinheimer Rothschild, Ergas also found a family connection. Rothschild, who graduated from Detroit’s Northern High School in 1941, worked for her father, who founded Drake Incorporated, a ladies’ hat and accessory business. When her father died in 1947 at age twenty-three, the young woman and her brother ran the business. Drake Incorporated eventually leased hat departments in the big department stores such as Winkelman’s and Hudson’s in Detroit, and in more than ten other states. In the 1940s, Ruth Reinheimer married Kurt Rothschild, but the marriage was short
lived. While researching the story of this successful businesswoman, Ergas recognized the Rothschild name and did some more research. She discovered that Kurt Rothschild later married again, and that couple became dear friends of Ergas’s parents, who at that time lived in Chicago. “He was like an uncle to me. But, I never knew (how would I have) that he had been previously married.”

Most recently, Ergas worked as curator for the 2016 Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Becoming American exhibition, brought to the city of Detroit by JHSM. She also serves on several professional associations, including the Michigan Archival Association and Wayne State University President’s Commission on the Status of Women, and she is a board member of the Michigan Women’s Studies Association and the Farmington/Farmington Hills Education Foundation. Ergas lives in Farmington Hills with her husband. She is the mother of three and grandmother of one grandson.

LEONARD N. SIMONS HISTORY AWARD

The prestigious Leonard N. Simons History Award, established in 1991, honors those who have made outstanding contributions to the enrichment, preservation and dissemination of Michigan Jewish history. Presented by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, the award supports the organization’s mission to educate and promote awareness of outstanding Jews of Michigan. Like previous honorees, Ergas has made important contributions to furthering the mission of JHSM and has participated in many programs and initiatives that have had far-reaching impact.

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IN MEMORIAM

MANDELL “BILL” BERMAN 1917-2016

When Mandell “Bill” Berman passed away on December 21, 2016, the Detroit and Michigan Jewish community came to a standstill. At age ninety-nine, this generous and gentle man, a man who helped to shape numerous Jewish organizations and institutions and who mentored untold numbers of young Jewish leaders, left a legacy matched by few.

The youngest of four children, Berman was born in Detroit in 1917 to Julius and Esther. Julius, a Russian immigrant, served as a U.S. soldier during WWI. Esther was born in Toledo. Early in their marriage the couple owned a small market, not far from Belle Isle, and became members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, where Berman’s grandfather, Bernard, was a member.

In an oral history taken around 2015, Berman recalled his bar mitzvah, held at Congregation Shaarey Zedek on Brush at Willis, located just a few blocks from his family’s home. “I walked with my grandfather and father to my bar mitzvah in my first suit. It probably cost eighteen dollars… I still have the book I was given that day by Rabbi Hershman. I use it for Friday night kiddush to this day.” Berman remained a member of Congregation Shaarey Zedek for his entire life, serving in multiple leadership positions, beginning with his role as head of the Junior Congregation.

Berman attended Hutchins Intermediate School and graduated with distinction from Detroit’s Central High School. He went on to earn his bachelor’s degree, magna cum laude, from Harvard University in 1940, and his MBA in
1942 from Harvard Business School. He then served his country in the Pacific during WWII as an officer in the United States Navy.

Upon his return home, Berman joined his father in the housing construction business. Soon after, he was approached by a representative of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), formed after WWI to support relief projects in Palestine and Eastern Europe for fragile communities devastated by war. After WWII, the JDC began to aid Holocaust survivors. Berman, in his words, “wanted to get involved.” He helped plan a massive Detroit-area food drive, asking area residents to fill grocery bags with food to be shipped overseas. “There were eighteen thousand homes that we designated, and I had to organize three hundred trucks and at least three to four people per truck. That amounted to at least nine hundred volunteers.” The goal, to fill a freight car with food, was met. And the seeds of how this man would become a giant in the arena of community leadership were planted.

In 1980, Mandell Berman played a pivotal role in saving the historic Beth Olem Cemetery, Congregation Shaarey Zedek’s first burial grounds established in 1862. When General Motors acquired the land to build an assembly plant, Berman negotiated an agreement between the City of Detroit, GM, and Shaarey Zedek, resulting in the construction of a brick wall protecting the cemetery and an access road to the cemetery gate. The cemetery opens twice a year for visitors, on the Sundays just before Passover and Rosh Hashanah.

One evening, when Berman was around twenty-seven, he took a beautiful, “smart as hell” young woman on a date. They went to see Zero Mostel, who was performing in a local Detroit theater. For the next four years the couple dated, and, in 1950, Mandell Berman married Madeleine Brodie – his Madge. Their marriage lasted sixty-six years, until the day Berman died.
In Memoriam

Berman’s ability to listen and respond thoughtfully led to his involvement in local, national, and international organizations. He served on the boards of dozens of organizations including the Jewish Agency for Israel, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Council of Jewish Federations, and Skillman Foundation. He accumulated numerous awards including the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit’s Butzel Award, an honorary doctor of laws degree from Wayne State University, and the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan’s prestigious Leonard N. Simons History Award in 2009. In 2013, he became a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

His prescience in identifying opportunities for funding and growth was astounding, and his commitment to strong Jewish values was inspiring. Berman, who served as one of JHSM’s founding board members in 1959, became one of this organization’s first large donors, and the family foundation he established consistently supported our mission.

Ensuring access to high-quality Jewish education was one of Berman’s primary philanthropic interests. He provided funding for the development of JHSM’s Traveling Trunk religious-school education curriculum; he generously supported the University of Michigan Hillel (whose building was renamed the Mandell Berman Center in 1988), and he endowed Jewish Experiences for Families (JEFF; now renamed JFamily) at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. In 2014, he and Madge established the Berman Center for Jewish Education at Congregation Shaarey Zedek.

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan will miss this devoted and humble servant, survived by his wife Madeleine, his children Ann Berman Feld and Dr. Jon Berman, and three grandchildren.

Historical Tidbit

2007: On July 21, Rabbi Sherwin Wine (b. 1928) died in an automobile crash at the age of seventy-nine. In 1963, Wine founded the Birmingham Temple, which morphed into a Humanistic Judaism community, becoming one of the first congregations nationally to align with the Secular Humanistic Judaism movement, a non-theistic system of organized Jewish lifestyle and practice.
Marilyn Krainen 1932-2017

On May 28, 2017, the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan lost a dear friend and loyal volunteer. Marilyn Goodman Krainen, eighty-four, served as associate editor of Michigan Jewish History for nearly a decade, working side by side with Wendy Bice, mentoring her and others in the fine art of documenting history.

Krainen first joined the JHSM advisory board in 2007 and almost immediately began putting pen to paper on the society’s behalf. By then, she had built a career as a writer, initially as an instructor at Oakland University, and then as a corporate/technical writer for a national healthcare firm. She chose JHSM as a retirement project, but it quickly became a passion and new vocation.

Krainen was a careful writer, a skilled tactician and editor, and a beautiful storyteller. She could delete unnecessary adverbs as fast as quicker rapidly as a quick brown fox, and remove and add hyphens with absolute self-confidence. She considered the mission of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan to be a vital one for our community and took her role in helping to preserve the legacies of Michigan’s Jewish residents, communities, and institutions seriously. As an editor, she tirelessly worked with authors to help them hone their message, clarify their thoughts, and convey true meaning in their words. It was she who began offering short abstracts at the beginning of each feature article in this journal, a tradition that continued even as she had to take a leave from her role due to failing health, and continues in her now-permanent absence.

In 2010, Krainen chronicled the history of the Trenton community for Michigan Jewish History, sharing the story of the Ellias family, who founded Mulias and Ellias, Trenton’s long-time department store that “defined and embodied 20th century Trenton,” as she wrote in that article.

Of course, there was more to Krainen than her skill as a writer. In 1951, during the early months of the Korean War, Marilyn married her sweetheart Fred, a master electrician, in the living room of her childhood home. The wedding came sooner than planned, as Fred was about to be called for military duty. Four months later, the couple left for Camp Gordon, Georgia, for his training in the Signal Corps. A year later, he was deployed to Korea. The couple wrote to each other daily, and then – finally – in the spring of 1954, Fred
Krainen returned home. Marilyn later credited their wartime separation as being one of the reasons for their profound and lasting love for one another.

At age forty, and with three children in tow, Marilyn began her professional career. To quench her insatiable quest for learning, she enrolled in college, first at Oakland Community College and then Oakland University, where in 1980 she received her master of arts in English. She attended the Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning in 2005, and in 2011 stood on the bimah of Temple Shir Shalom in West Bloomfield and became an adult bat mitzvah. In a 2005 Detroit Jewish News article, she described her passion this way: “We can always grow, always learn, always change; so even though I did not have a Jewish education as a child, I can go forth now as an adult.”

Every JHSM volunteer brings many attributes and assets. Marilyn Krainen brought not only her love of language, but also her passion for Jewish identity, history, and culture. In 2011, when Krainen received JHSM’s Volunteer of the Year Award, she proudly stood in front of a packed house to accept the honor. But, being “up in front” was not where Krainen preferred to be. She was most at home with a red pen in hand, behind a desk or at her kitchen table, reading, writing, and thinking. Krainen is survived by her husband Fred, her children Gordon, Leslie, and Cindy, her eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

**Historical Tidbit**

**1917:** Citing Germany’s violation of its pledge to suspend submarine warfare in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean, President Woodrow Wilson, on April 2, 1917, appeared before a joint session of Congress to request a declaration of war against Germany. On April 4 and 6, 1917, the U.S. Senate and then the House voted in support of the measure to declare war on Germany. The United States officially entered the war on December 7, 1917, declaring war on the German ally Austria-Hungary.

At the time, approximately 3.2% of the U.S. population was identified as being Jewish. The total number of Jewish men who served in the armed forces of the United States numbered about 250,000, which represented about 5.73% of the total enlistment. *Michigan Jewish History*, March 1961
ESTHER KARSON SHAPIRO 1918-2016

We are all safer consumers because of Esther. We are all better citizens because of Esther. We have a more equal society because of Esther. These are the words that come to mind as I think about the legacy of Esther K. Shapiro, the “courageous crusader” who spent her life as an activist concerned with social justice, and who passed away at her Lafayette Park home in Detroit on October 14, 2016. She was ninety-eight.

Esther served our community in many roles. She was the founding director of the City of Detroit Department of Consumer Affairs, serving from 1974 to 1990. She was president of the Consumer Federation of America, and she was a board member or official of numerous other consumer organizations. Esther’s many honors included the Anti-Defamation League’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2000, and she was inducted into the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame in 2015.

In the days before the internet and social media, Esther was like a foot soldier in her activism: She worked the phones like magic, and she used her car and her feet to meet with people face-to-face throughout the state and the country. Her goal was to create a better understanding of consumer rights and consumer responsibilities, and her mantra, “read the label,” applied to everyone, whether someone about to sign a contract, or a shopper examining a can of food before purchase. She was most passionate about encouraging voters to read and learn everything they could about a politician or ballot issue before they entered the voting booth.

Many remember Esther’s voice from her weekly WWJ-AM radio show, on which she answered consumer questions and offered consumer advice beginning in 1966. Others remember her long-running weekly Detroit Free Press column, from which she resigned in 1995 when the Detroit newspaper strike began. And many remember the political gatherings hosted by Esther and her husband, Harold Shapiro. Journalists, researchers, and national consumer organizations continued to call upon Esther for advice and information throughout the rest of her life.

Esther Karson was born in Chicago where her parents, both immigrants, ran a small grocery store. She claimed to have been a shy child, a sharp
contrast to her adult forcefulness. As a young woman, Esther moved to New York City and found a clerical job at Paris Decorators. She met Hal in New York while standing among striking workers at a sweat shop, and they were married on New Year’s Day of 1940. During WWII, the couple moved to Vancouver, Washington, so that Hal could work in shipyards for the war effort, and where the couple challenged patterns of racial discrimination by inviting racially mixed groups of friends into their home. They then moved to Portland, Oregon, where their first child, daughter Andrea, was born. In 1944 the couple moved to Detroit, where Hal ran the Detroit local of the International Fur & Leather Workers Union, and where their son Mark was born. All the while, Esther was by her husband’s side organizing, first in volunteer roles, and then beginning her active consumer career traveling throughout Michigan for the Michigan Credit Union.

Many remember Esther as a forceful activist working to ensure fair employment. Others think of her work on voting and civil rights, and how she helped to elect African Americans, including Congressman John Conyers and Mayor Coleman A. Young, to prominent political positions. Esther was a founder of the Michigan Friends of the South, an informal Detroit women’s group that raised funds early and continually for the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and then for the Freedom Marchers.

I remember Esther as a neighbor, friend, and role model. She grew up with values typical of an immigrant Jewish family, honoring our heritage of social activism. But, as I remember Esther Shapiro, I think that her actions and her spirit have helped create a more equal and just society. Her words were her tools, her actions were her bullets, her target was social injustice, and she did not, and would not, ever give up.

Esther K. Shapiro, mother of two, grandmother of four, and great-grandmother of three, was predeceased by her husband Harold and son Mark. Her memory will live on through those of us who knew her, through those who have the opportunity to learn about her, and through all whose lives are made better by her work. - Harriet B. Saperstein
2016 CORRECTIONS

The editors of Michigan Jewish History make every attempt to present accurate information. We are grateful when readers contact us to point out errors or omissions.

BRICKER TUNIS FURS

JHSM’s 2016 article, “Celebrating a Century of Selling Furs to Fashionable Detroiters: Bricker-Tunis Furs” prompted a memory from long-time JHSM member, Rita Faudem. “My dad’s fur store, Phil Bricker Furs, was next to the candy store which was next to the Dexter Theatre on Burlingame and Dexter (in Detroit). The store was very fashionable, with headless mannequins in the window and a huge, stuffed brown bear on a rolling platform that my dad put in the window every morning. When he modernized the store, the new mannequins had moddish short bobs and the poor bear had gone to a better place, I hope. There were two huge walk-in safes. He also fitted the modern, free-form coffee table with mink corners after too many folks bumped their knees. He made the fur coats the old-fashioned way, starting with taking a client’s measurements, drawing sketches, sewing a canvas version of the product, and fitting it. He bought a bundle of skins, and a bolt of silk for the lining, embroidered with the name of the owner, who tried on the coat many times during the process.” Furriers ran in this family; Phil Bricker was a cousin of Jack Bricker, owner of Bricker-Tunis Furs.

MUMFORD MUSIC

From Michael Salesin, we received this wonderful reminiscence: “I had a chance to look at Vol. 56 of Michigan Jewish History. I was impressed with the book....” Salesin then adds some personal memories to Harvey Ovshinsky’s article, “Mumford Music: How I ran away....” Ovshinsky’s mother and her husband, Adolph Marks, owned the Mumford Music record store in 1965.

“My parents, Lou and Betty Salesin, opened Mumford Music on Wyoming around 1954 and sold the store in the sixties. By then, they had opened a second Mumford Music in Oak Park, which my brother ran until my folks sold the Wyoming store. My parents then moved to the Oak Park store. Most Mumford Music customers fondly remember Mumford Music as the classic example of a fifties record store and remember my folks behind the counter, and not the new owners. The customers were bobby-soxed girls dancing in the aisles awaiting appearances of the stars of the day including Jerry Lee Lewis, Rosemary Clooney, and even the Four Freshmen. These were the days before
concert venues like Pine Knob, and before music videos. Instead, artists used these public appearances to promote their latest records. Stores like my folks’ Mumford Music disappeared and were replaced by sales in grocery stores and ultimately by the internet.”

Lou Salesin, Mumford Music proprietor. Courtesy of Michael Salesin.

As always, JHSM appreciates reader feedback. Contact us at 248-432-5517 or info@michjewishhistory.org.

**Historical Tidbit**

**1947:** While in Russian government captivity, Raoul Wallenberg died of heart failure. Born in Sweden, the University of Michigan graduate became a successful architect and businessman, and the first secretary of the Swedish Legion in Budapest in 1944. Known for his diplomacy and humanitarian compassion, Wallenberg’s tireless efforts and ability to provide protective passes, saved the lives of some 100,000 Hungarian Jews. The University of Michigan hosts an annual lecture in Wallenberg’s memory.
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“When your children shall ask their parents in time to come...” Joshua 4:21

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