MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

“When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come...”
— Joshua 4:21

Volume 7  November, 1966 — Cheshvan, 5727  No. 1

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Michigan Jewish History is published semi-annually by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Correspondence concerning contributors and books for review may be sent to the editor, mailing address 168 Madison Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, 48226. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.
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The Jewish Community Council
of Detroit in Retrospect*

by LAWRENCE W. CROHN

It was the years of the Great Depression. Thousands of unemployed were easily influenced to find a scapegoat for their unhappiness. The fires of discontent were being fed by Hitler across the waters. But here, right in our backyard, we had our Father Coughlin; and in Dearborn, William J. Cameron was publishing the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in the Dearborn Independent.

The Detroit Jewish community was keyed up and terribly overwrought. The existing national community relations organizations, A.D.L., the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee and others, were all active and struggling to contain the evil effects of these dangerous forces. The situation called for united action. Thus it was in the year 1936, under the promptings of Fred Butzel, Fred Peiser, and other leaders, that a new device, a Community Council, was projected for the Jews of Detroit.

What was first envisioned as a sort of over-all community relations agency, was soon converted into an organic council, comprised of all segments of the Jewish community. The moving spirit of the new organization was Cy Shetzer. He was a great leader, a man of vision and understanding, with deep Jewish loyalty. Without his efforts, the Council would have remained a mere local committee to protect Jewish rights. After much debate on the matter, the Constitution stated that the national and spiritual aspirations of the Jewish people would be guiding principles of the new organization.

The new council quickly brought order into the struggle for the easement of tensions. But now the idea of a Jewish Kehilla was projected on the scene. In order to properly safeguard the Jewish position, a concern for internal Jewish relations was conceived. Thus, in addition to a basic community relations committee, an internal relations committee was set up.

During the war years, problems arose in connection with so-called black marketing and ration coupons involving members of the Jewish community. It is an ancient tradition that the Jew must try to keep his own house in order. And this, not only for external rea-

*An address delivered at the annual meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan on June 29, 1966.
sons, but to help maintain a proper regard for the Jewish spirit in our own midst.

By the same token, a properly integrated community is expected to have a proper regard for the cultural needs of its members. Thus a culture commission was set up to provide Yiddish programs and to supervise community wide occasions, such as the Warsaw Ghetto and the Israel Independence Day annual observances. A community calendar was maintained and a program bureau was organized. And very quickly, the Jewish Community Council was recognized as representing one of the three major religious segments, and thus was entitled to a fair share of radio and television publicity.

Instead, however, of many individuals and organizations trying to attain publicity for themselves, the Council has received recognition as the official voice of the Jewish Community. The holiday observances and regular programs are all presented under the aegis of the Jewish Community Council. All segments of the community are given recognition and time for their appropriate publicity and programs. But, avoiding excessive denominationalism, the programs present to the general public a unified picture of Jewish life and thought.

All this did not come about without some strain in the community. The Jewish Welfare Federation was not ready to go along with the larger aims of the Council. Holding the purse strings, funds were available for the usual community relations activities, but withheld from the larger aims of the Council. It had been difficult to maintain some activities without financial support and community understanding. Yet, the verdict of time indicated the usefulness of these Council activities. And a new rising generation of both the Council and Federation leadership has left behind the difficulties of the past. A de-facto relationship exists, which augurs well for the future of our community.

The Community Council was organized to unify the so-called protective activities. To this end, the national agencies agreed to limit their sphere of action to out-state areas. Federation grants to these national groups have been generous. But there has always been some competition and a tendency to operate independently by these agencies. This is an on-going problem.

But, it cannot be gainsaid that the Detroit Jewish Community Council is now widely accepted by the Jews of Detroit. Of late, the
question of civil rights has impinged upon many aspects of Jewish life. Church-State problems have come to the fore. The Great Society has generated many programs that affect the relationship of Jews to the general community. We are all fortunate that the Community Council of Detroit, with its years of experience and know-how, is doing such an excellent job.

The vision of Cy Shetzer, Fred Butzel, Rabbi Leo Franklin, James Ellmann and other leaders has been amply justified. The Detroit Council is unique in America. While far from a genuine Kehilla, the Council has been given wide recognition, both within and without the Jewish community. Few will dispute the assertion that for the many people involved in the various activities, and for all Detroit Jewry, Judaism has become more meaningful.

Officially organized in 1937, our Community Council has come a long way. The concept of Jewish community relations has greatly expanded. Many individuals have received important experience in this field. It is hoped that other Jewish cities will follow the example set by our community.
Weinberg's Yiddish
Radio Hour
(A MEMOIR)
by HARRY WEINBERG

It was in the spring of 1930 that Detroiters heard Yiddish spoken on radio for the first time. The program was presented by Max Blatt and lasted six months. A new series was started not long after on Station WJLB by Hyman Altman and was heard at noon every Sunday. An outstanding feature of this program was the weekly summary of Jewish news announced by a young lawyer, Mendel Bernstein. Time was given for announcements concerning Jewish organizational activities, including those of Chesed Shel Emes (Hebrew Benevolent Society), Bicur Cholem, and the Folk's Kitchen.

At this same time interest was expressed by the cultural groups in Detroit for presenting a program on a high intellectual level. Shloime Bercovitz, the founder and director of Sholem Aleichem Institute, approached me with the idea. He felt that with my theatrical background in the Yiddish theater I would be well suited to conduct such a series. Thus in May, 1932, I started Weinberg's Yiddish Radio Program. I knew this was a big responsibility and devoted a great deal of thought and time to making it a success. The program was heard every Sunday morning from ten-thirty until noon.

I hired the musical director of Littman's Yiddish Theater, Samuel Solomon, with a five piece orchestra to play Jewish melodies. Isaac Finkelstein, a lawyer, gave the news of the week in Yiddish. Detroit's beloved humorist, Moishe Domby, was heard in a special weekly feature called "Mr. Chizek." Featured every week was a bright local singer, Dorothy Stollar, and the beloved Cantor Jacob Sonenklar, of Congregation Shaarey Zedek. The program was an immediate success and the letters which arrived daily gave me much encouragement.

Abraham Littman, an old friend from the theatrical world in New York with whom I was associated from 1910-1918, and then director of Littman's Yiddish Theater on Twelfth and Seward in Detroit, made arrangements with me to send the Yiddish stars from his thea-
ter to my program every Sunday. This enlivened my program and publicized the Yiddish performances. My sponsors were the leading national and local businesses of the day, including the General Motors Corporation. When the theater season closed, star attractions were brought from New York and appeared exclusively every Sunday on my program. I presented such personalities as Molly Picon and her husband Jacob Kalich, Maurice Schwartz of the Yiddish Art Theater, Aaron Lebadoff, Moishe Oysher, Samuel Goldenberg, Nellie Kessman, Ben Zion Wittler, Beckie Frank, Herman Yablacoff and his wife Bella Maisell, Mishe Fishon, Jacob Ben-Ami, Berta Gerstein, Jennie Goldstein, Misha and Lucy German, Esther Field (the Yiddishe Mama), Ludwig Zatz, Michel Mechelesko, Miriam Kressyn, and Seymour Rechtzeit. In addition there appeared one of my boyhood friends from Warsaw, Poland, who had by then achieved national fame on N.B.C. radio as David Romain of the “Goldbergs,” and as Popele Cohen on “Abie’s Irish Rose.” Another guest on our program was Menashe Skulnik, the outstanding American-Yiddish actor. He always came to Detroit with his entire Second Avenue Yiddish Theater Company, including its musical director, Joseph Rumshinsky, the dean of Yiddish composers. The whole company often participated on my radio program.

Many outstanding writers and poets were also guests whenever they were in Detroit. Such talented persons as H. Leivik, Leibele Glantz, Jacob Zarabuvel, Baruch Zuckerman, and others. Students of the United Hebrew Schools, Sholem Aleichem, and Arbiter Ring Schools were heard on Weinberg's Yiddish Hour, presenting songs and recitations. I always advocated parents giving their children a Yiddish education and often stressed that it did not matter which school they sent them to, as long as they were given a Jewish background and understanding of their heritage.

My friend Max Weiss, the former manager of the United Dairies, once suggested that I produce a half hour program in English to take the form of a comedy skit based on Jewish life. I traveled to New York and consulted with my good friend Marc Schweid, the well known writer and poet from the “Forward.” He was enthusiastic and wrote for me a script entitled “Lipovitch and Popovitch.” It dealt with two partners who operated a restaurant in New York. These were the only two characters, one of whom played the straight man and the other the comic. The radio station suggested that for one of the roles we engage the young talented actor and singer, Amos Jacobs, who was popular on the WJLB program “The Happy Hour.” When I was introduced to Amos Jacobs I was certain he was a
fine young man of Jewish background who would understand the character of the part. He was handsome, with large expressive eyes, charming and had a magnetic personality. I hired him at $5.00 for each broadcast, including two rehearsals. For thirteen weeks he came to my home to rehearse and my family, as well as myself, were certain he was Jewish. At this same time the Histadrut was being organized in Detroit. One of its most avid organizers was my long time friend, Morris L. Schaver, a landsman from Warsaw, Poland, who asked that my radio performers be presented to different groups in order to help raise funds for the Histadrut. Amos Jacobs was often included in these special appearances. It wasn't until several years later that my daughter Bette was listening to the Danny Thomas show on radio and told me that this popular comedian was the same young man who had been featured on my program “Popovitch and Lipovitch.” I fondly recalled with her that nice Jewish fellow and she then informed that Amos Jacobs was a Lebanese, raised in Toledo, Ohio.

For many years I gave my program on Saturday evenings with the help of my daughter Bette, the present Mrs. Herbert O. Schein. It was on November 29, 1947, that I received my biggest thrill. While the program was in progress I left the studio for a smoke, and as was my habit I glanced at the teletype for late news. An announcement was just coming through from Flushing, New York, where the United Nations General Assembly had passed the resolution giving Palestine to the Jewish people. It was designated that England would withdraw in May, 1948, the land then becoming Israel. There were thirty-three votes in favor, including the United States and the U.S.S.R., thirteen votes against and ten abstaining. I became so very excited with the wonderful news that tears came to my eyes. I entered the studio and signaled for the music then playing to stop. I took the mike and began to speak without a script: “Detroit Jewry—let us give each other a Mazel Tov. After two thousand years in the Diaspora, we have finally regained our own land, Eretz Israel. Jews, raise your heads proudly. From now on we will be a country like other nations in the world. Our ships with the blue and white flag will roam the seas; our airplanes will travel to all parts of the globe. Our sons and daughters will build an army to defend our borders. We will plant and sow our earth and enjoy the fruits of our labor. We will re-create a Jewish democratic land to be proud of and which will rank high among the community of nations. Dr. Hertzl’s dream has become a reality . . . .” At this point I completely broke down and my daughter took over the microphone, ending the program with the playing of “Hatikvah.”
From the spring of 1930 until 1964 Yiddish radio programs were heard in Detroit. The directors were Max Blatt and Hyman Altman, who died February 10, 1945. After his death Mrs. Altman ran the program for a short while and then turned it over to Nathan Siegel, who in turn conducted the program until 1964. He passed away December 19, 1965. I produced my program from May, 1932, to September, 1955. In the early years my wife Jennie participated and during the last eleven years my daughter Bette took a leading role in managing the program. When I retired in 1955 and moved to California, my oldest son, Robert, continued Weinberg’s Yiddish Hour on the air until September, 1958.
This study of B'nai B'rith in action consists of communications, messages and letters sent by Adolph Loeb, secretary of District Grand Lodge No. 6, I.O.B.B., and by local lodges and individual members to Michan Lodge in Kalamazoo, Michigan during the early eighties of the nineteenth century.

Such messages were undoubtedly also received by all the other Michigan B'nai B'rith lodges. These were:

Pisgah Lodge of Detroit, founded November 24, 1857.

Bay City Lodge, now known as A. B. Roman Lodge, was granted a charter August 25, 1872.

Grand Rapids Lodge, now known as Julius Houseman Lodge in honor of Michigan's first and only Jewish congressman1) and resident of Grand Rapids, was chartered on June 6, 1875.

Michan Lodge of Kalamazoo was granted a charter July 19, 1875, and the charter was suspended in 1930. Kalamazoo Lodge, which is still in existence was granted a charter October 30, 1938.

Jackson City Lodge (founding date unknown) started as David Heuman Lodge, March 14, 1917.

Peninsular Lodge of Detroit received its charter on March 4, 1877. The charter was suspended in 1930.

In this study some of the documents will be evaluated, others will be reproduced either for their historical value, or for providing perspective to issues and problems of today.

Thus the age-old problem "who is a Jew," which confronts Israel today and confronted B'nai B'rith almost ninety years ago, is well illustrated by the following document:

B'NAI B'RITH IN ACTION

DISTRICT GRAND LODGE No. 6, I.O.B.B.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, 210 LA SALLE ST.
Chicago, January 26, 1880

To the Officers and Members of Lodges in District No. 6, I.O.B.B.

BRETHREN:

The 12th annual Convention of this District Grand Lodge which convened in this city on Sunday, January 18th, closed its session on Tuesday evening, January 20th. All our Lodges were represented excepting Minneapolis No. 271, Minneapolis, Minn., and Peninsular No. 272, Detroit, Mich. Pending the publication of the proceedings, the following synopsis is herewith furnished:

The feature of the Convention was a matter earnestly and ably discussed at length, in secret session, and which resulted in the adoption of the following:

Resolved — That if a Candidate for membership in a Lodge, of whom it is doubtful or disputed, whether he "is a Jew or not," such Candidate shall declare in writing:

"1—That he confesses his belief in Judaism."

"2—That he does not belong to any non-Jewish Church or other non-Jewish religious organizations."

In connection with this same subject, the following resolution was subsequently adopted:

"Resolved — That the Secretary in the name and in behalf of this District Grand Lodge, request the opinion of the Rabbis hereinafter named, on the following questions:

"1—Is a Candidate, applying for admission into a Lodge, whose one parent is an Israelite and whose other parent is a Gentile, to be considered an Israelite?"

"2—If not, should such a Candidate undergo some initiatory rites, and which, in order to become an Israelite? The Rabbis to be asked shall be Dr. Isaac M. Wise, and Dr. Lillienthal of Cincinnati, Dr. Samuel Hirsch of Philadelphia, Dr. Sonneschein of St. Louis, and Dr. B. Felsenthal of Chicago. These names are proposed, in preference to the others, for the reason that
they are not only experts, but at the same time Past Presidents in Our Order."

No sooner was the convention over than Pisgah and a few other lodges raised the question again. As a result Adolph Loeb found it necessary to state on May 1, 1880: "... that it is very far from any intention of this Grand Lodge to open our doors to non-Israelites, but on the contrary, that it is our endeavor to guard against it."

* * * *

In pursing the question "Who is a Jew?" Prof. Salo W. Baron wrote: In the Emancipation era . . . the more "progressive" Jews were . . . the more likely they were to accept the judgment of their Christian neighbors in all matters, including the latter's low appreciation of Jews and Judaism. One of the first manifestations of that inferiority feeling was the avoidance . . . of the term "Jew" which had . . . become in the Christian world an objectionable term.1)

The avoidance of the term "Jew" is evident in the document just cited, where non-Jews are referred to as "non-Israelites." It is also evident in the following document of December 20, 1883:

BRETHREN IN NAME AND RACE:

About two years ago an Israelitish Congregation was organized in this city under the name "Kehillath Anshe Russia," which as the name indicates, is composed of Russian Israelites.2)

With reference to the same matter, a passage in a letter of Loeb of August 16, 1881 is rather characteristic: "... I am pleased to advise you that I attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Order held on the 24th of July, in the City of New York ... A question as to the best means of assisting able bodied Brothers, and others (Yehudim) ... was brought to the notice of the Committee . . . ."

Notice the euphemism "Yehudi" in parenthesis!

Characteristic, too, is the passage in a letter of October 13, 1879 addressed to Mishan Lodge by one of its members:

2) The document will be reproduced in a later article.
"Gentlemen & Brothers:

. . . I would like to draw your attention in regards to N. F. Whether such a man should not be expelled from the Lodge. He is trying to take the daily bread from myself & family, & is injuring my business all he can. He has not got the heart of a Yehudi, but of the meanest man living. I think a man who don't believe in God ought to be expelled from this order. He has expressed himself that there is no God. I shall leave to you, honorable brothers, whether such a man like him should belong to such an honorable order as ours. He is not worthy to be among you. I shall leave that to your honorable consideration which I hope you will decide with justice."

I am yours truly & brother I.O.B.B.

M. H.

An objective of B'nai B'rith since its very inception has been to assist the politically and culturally disadvantaged Jews in countries of oppression, and to cooperate with the representative bodies of the Jews in Western Europe whose aims were similar. To accomplish this objective, the lodges were often asked to conduct special drives for funds.

Such a request was made by the national executive committee of B'nai B'rith in January, 1880. The request reads:

BRETHREN:—Your attention is directed to a resolution passed by the last General Convention.

That, at the regular meeting preceding the PURIM, an annual collection be made in each Lodge of the Order in aid of the ALLIANCE ISRAELITE UNIVERSELLE.

In pursuance of this resolution, we call on you to give support to the noble work of the Alliance, of ameliorating the condition of our co-religionists in the East, in the effort of securing their emancipation from oppressive and degrading laws, spreading education among them, and leading to honorable pursuits. Schools for Jewish Children have been established at various points in the Orient, in Roumania, Serbia, the European and Asiatic provinces of Turkey and in North Africa. Primary and industrial schools are contemplated at Jerusalem, and will speedily be called into existence, if the necessary means can be obtained.

1) I corrected the spelling and punctuation marks, but made no changes in the construction of sentences and vocabulary.
B'NAI B'RITH IN ACTION

The agricultural school at Jaffa and a training school at Paris, where Roumanians and others are prepared to become teachers in their native countries, are among the Institutions maintained through the foresight and zeal of the "Alliance."

A contemplation of these great and important enterprises for the elevation of those of our race who, under oppression and persecutions, even in our days, have been left behind in the developments of modern civilization, will surely awake in your hearts a general response to this appeal.

Another aim of B'nai B'rith lodges has been to assist U. S. communal institutions and by doing so to promote Judaism. The following document attests to this:

Benevolence, Brotherly Love and Harmony

* * *

BAY CITY LODGE, No. 178, I.O.B.B.

To the Officers and Members of Mishan Lodge, No. 247.

BRETHREN:

We most respectfully call your attention to the following appeal which has been unanimously adopted at our last Regular Meeting, with the approval of forwarding the same to all the Lodges in our district, for their kind consideration. As this is the first time our Lodge has called upon any of our Sister Lodges for their assistance, we hope by your careful perusal of our appeal, to merit whatever amount you deem worthy towards this noble purpose.

* * *

To all Whom it May Concern:

Bay City, Mich., June 21st, 1883

The Israelites of Bay City, comprising the membership of the Hebrew Reform Congregation, having for the past six years held their Religious Services in a Hall rented for their place of Worship, and it now being apparent, owing to the increase of membership, that the said Hall being inadequate and undesirable, it was therefore deemed necessary to procure a more suitable place of Worship and one dedicated for that cause; and with that object in view we come before the public and ask your kind assistance towards this laudable undertaking. Our membership being small in numbers, we are unable to undertake this task ourselves, and, as this being the first time that occa-
B'NAI B'RITH IN ACTION

B'NAI B'RITH IN ACTION

sion affords itself in asking donations from the citizens in
general, as well as all our co-religionists. We hope that our ap-
peal will meet with its true and just regards. The undersigned
members of the congregation have been appointed a committee
to solicit and receive all subscriptions, which will be cheer-
fully accepted.

A. HYMAN    S. KAICHEN    J. SEMPLINER

ATTEST,

J. SEMPLINER, President    J. P. GOLDMAN, Secretary

P.S. You will please forward donation to A. Hyman, Bay City,
Mich., who will receipt for same.

Mishan and the other B'nai B'rith lodges also extended financial
assistance to private individuals, especially to their own members.
The aid was usually given in response to a plea made by a lodge on
behalf of a needy member. Such a plea was made by Euphrates
Lodge of Memphis, Tenn. on Nov. 16, 1883:

EUPHRATES LODGE
No. 35, I. O. B. B.

Memphis, Tenn., Nov. 16, 1883.

BRETHREN:

A member of this Lodge has been afflicted for years with
an incurable disease, which of late has been further aggravated
by blindness, thus depriving him for the balance of his natural
life of all means to earn a support for himself and family. At
a heavy expense we have sent him to Cincinnati, in order to be
operated on his eyes. During all this time we have assisted him
to the fullest extent of our ability, but our resources are now
nearly at an end, and we are, therefore, compelled to appeal to
the sympathy of the order at large. Our records show that
this Lodge has at all times cheerfully responded to similar calls;
we, therefore, confidently hope that this, our appeal, will
meet with a generous response. Any contribution sent to the
Undersigned will be thankfully acknowledged.

Yours in B. B. L. & H.,

Endorsed,

M. ULMAN,                     H. GRONAUER,
Secretary District No. 7       Secretary

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I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Bernard Panush, President of B'nai
B'rith of Metropolitan Detroit, for making these documents available to me.

--- 15 ---
DR. ADOLPH HOCHSTEIN

Dr. Adolph Hochstein was born in Germany on March 13, 1845. His father, Moritz Hochstein, and his mother, Matilda, were also born in Germany.\(^\text{(1)}\) He obtained his medical degree at the Koenigliche Friedrich Wilhelm Universitat, Berlin, Prussia, in 1870.\(^\text{(2)}\) Soon thereafter he must have come to the United States. Whether or not he came directly to Kalamazoo, Michigan, we do not know. However, he did practice medicine in Kalamazoo for 37 years.\(^\text{(3)}\) He was supposed to have come to Kalamazoo during the Civil War, for the History of Kalamazoo County states: "During the late war came Drs. I. W. Tiske . . . J. M. Shook . . . A. Hochstein . . . These have been added to the catalogue of practitioners in Kalamazoo."\(^\text{(4)}\) The Medical History of Michigan directly states that "he came to Kalamazoo during the Civil War."\(^\text{(5)}\) It is obvious that both of these sources are in error. If Dr. Hochstein received his medical degree in 1870 in Berlin, Prussia, he could not possibly have come to Kalamazoo as a medical practitioner during the Civil War, for the War was ended before this time. Furthermore, if he practiced medicine in Kalamazoo 37 years\(^\text{(6)}\) and he died in 1913, he must have come to this city between 1870 and 1876. Actually, he first appears in the Michigan State Gazetteer of 1877 as practicing in Kalamazoo for he is listed as "Hochstein, Adolph, physician, 122 Main St."\(^\text{(7)}\) He does not appear in the 1873 Gazetteer, but he is listed in all the subsequent years of the Gazetteer at various addresses until his death, the last listing being in this directory of 1911 (p. 1118) as living at 730 S. Rose St.

R. L. Polk and Company’s Medical and Surgical Directory of the United States lists him as a practicing physician in Kalamazoo in 1886.\(^\text{(8)}\) He was a health officer for several years either for Kalamazoo County or for the city, for the 1895 Michigan Gazetteer lists him as “Hochstein, Adolph, health officer, 105 S. Rose St.”\(^\text{(9)}\)

In the Jewish Advocate of 1912 he is listed as one of the prominent "Jews of Kalamazoo."\(^\text{(10)}\) He apparently was recognized as a competent surgeon, for the Medical History of Michigan states: "One of the early operations for Ovariotomy (in May, 1878) in this state was made by Dr. J. N. Snook of Kalamazoo and reported at length in Michigan Medical News, Vol. I, p. 181. He "was assisted by those veterans of surgery, Drs. H. O. Hitchcock, Mattram, Hoch-
EARLY JEWISH PHYSICIANS OF MICHIGAN

Stein, and Ranny. When a licensing law for medical practitioners was passed in Michigan, Dr. A. Hochstein immediately applied and received his license to practice medicine in 1900.(12)

The 1909 Michigan State Gazetteer lists, in addition to Dr. Adolph Hochstein, a Clare Hochstein and an Emilia Hochstein, both teachers.(13) It is likely that these were the daughters of our Dr. Hochstein.

Dr. Adolph Hochstein was a fellow of the American Medical Association. Whether he was active in local Jewish affairs we do not know. When he died on September 12, 1913, at the age of 68, he was buried the next day in the "Hebrew Cemetery"(14) at Grand Rapids.

REFERENCES

(1) From his death certificate, a copy of which is in the author's possession.
(2) A.M.A. Directory, 1912, p. 748.
(3) Ibid.
(8) Ibid., Vol. I, p. 496.
Views from the Past

Mr. Harry Ruda stands at the entrance of his dry goods store at Hastings and Rowena Streets, Detroit (May, 1911).

Interior of the store (January, 1914)