

MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

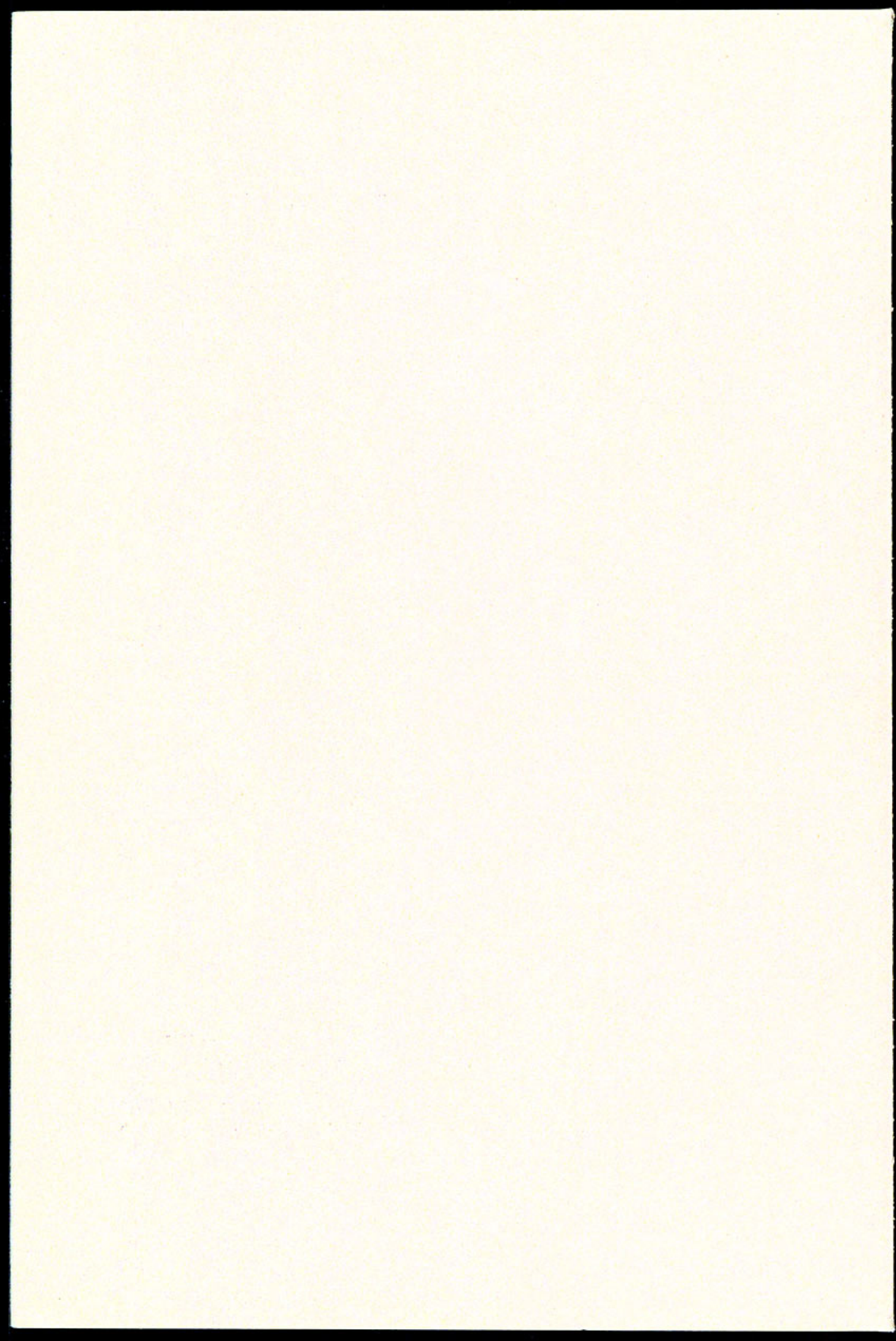
This issue of MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY completes ten consecutive years of publication. It thus represents the longest period of continuous publication among the active Jewish historical societies in the United States.



JUNE, 1970

IYAR - SIVAN, 5730

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN



MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

... אשר ישאלון בניכם בחר את אבותם ... (יהושע ד:כא)

"When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come . . ."

— Joshua 4:21

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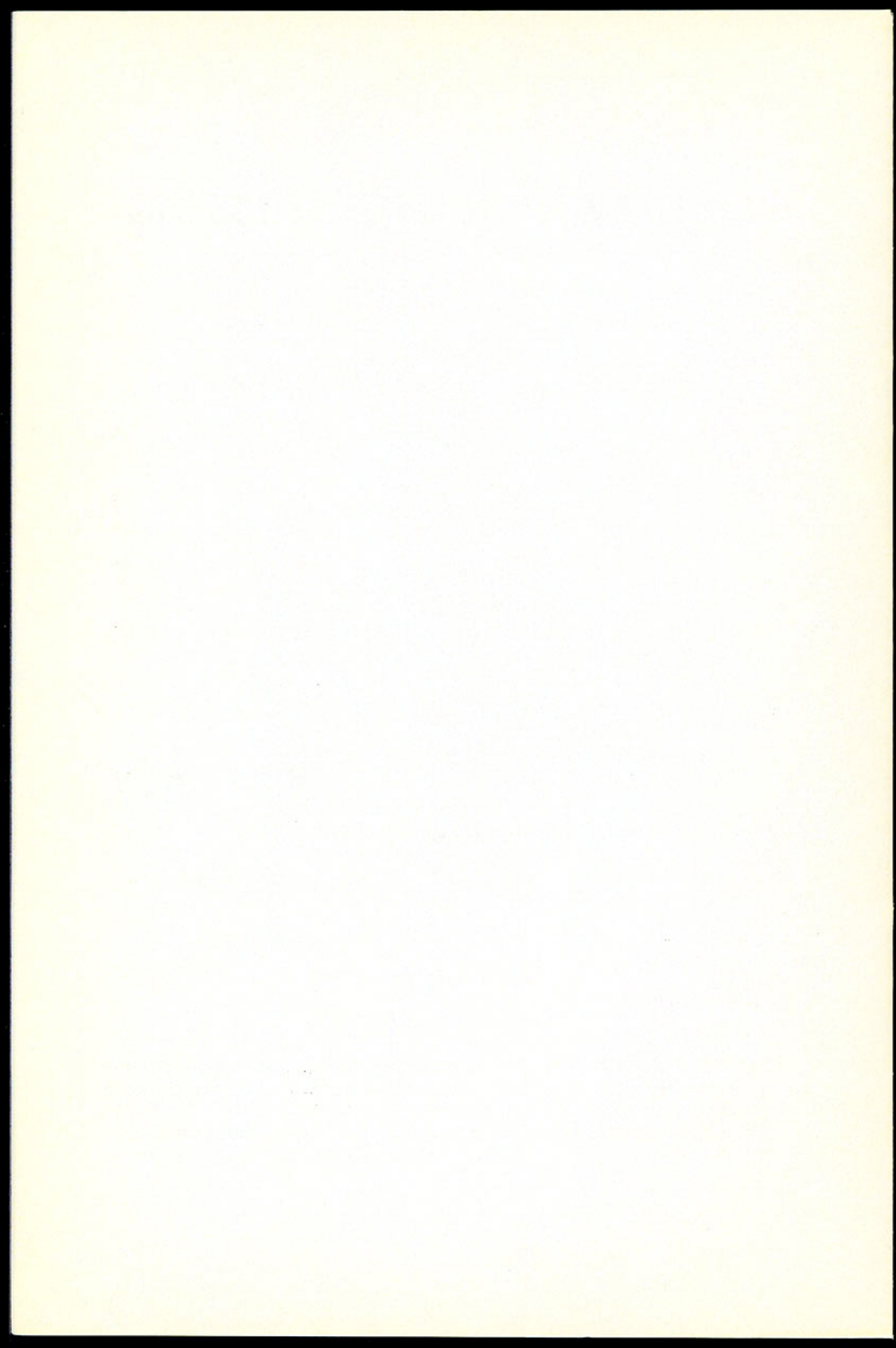
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MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY is published semi-annually by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Correspondence concerning contributions and books for review may be sent to the editor, 21721 Parklawn, Oak Park, Michigan 48237. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.





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Congratulatory Messages

I take this opportunity to offer my warmest congratulations to the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan on the tenth anniversary of *Michigan Jewish History*. It is imperative that local historical societies encourage research in important documentary sources and make their results available to all who are interested in studying the history of the Jewish component in American life. Your contribution to this effort is as welcome as it is valuable.

With all good wishes, I am,

Very cordially yours,

JACOB R. MARCUS

Director, American Jewish Archives

Please accept my most sincere congratulations. The tenth anniversary of the Michigan Jewish History Magazine is an outstanding milestone.

We are proud of your effort in highlighting Jewish history, and recognize the great value of this undertaking. This magazine has been well received by libraries and historical societies throughout the United States and the World. Conscientious research of this nature does much to enrich life.

We hope that you will continue the publication of this magazine for another decade, and wish you every success.

Sincerely,

K. G. FRANK

President, Historical Society of Michigan

As president of the Detroit Historical Commission and as a member of your board — it gives me *double* pleasure to congratulate the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan on the "YUD (10th) ANNIVERSARY" of its publication, *Michigan Jewish History*.

Next to our eternal faith in God—Jewish history, with its dearest memories, has been the *most influential factor* in keeping alive Jewish life for 4,000 years. It links all of us to our people's past, as well as to its destiny.

And, finally, *Jewish history* keeps alive our philosophy of Judaism —the goal of fulfilling our appointed mission of bringing peace, justice, understanding, and equality for all people.

LEONARD N. SIMONS

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

In Commemoration of the Centennial of His Birth, 1870-1970

By PHILIP MARCUSE*

The attempt to survey the life of a man whose influence for good has been so widely felt over such a long span of time should be given to an experienced biographer. The foolhardy amateur who, nevertheless, has dared to assume this assignment admits his shortcomings ahead of his critics. But his pride in having known such a wonderful man is all the encouragement he needs, for the encyclopedic mind of Irving Katz is always ready to provide every pertinent fact in the life of Dr. Franklin and in the life of Temple Beth El.

Bear in mind that Dr. Franklin was Rabbi of Temple Beth El for 42 years, and for 7 more years, until his death, he was Rabbi Emeritus. So you can see that his tenure covers quite a bit of Detroit history.



Dr. Franklin in 1899

When he came to Detroit in 1899, the Temple was a rickety structure on the corner of Washington Boulevard and Clifford Street that had been occupied by the Congregation since 1867, and before then had seen many years' service as a Baptist church. The Congregation boasted only 136 members. The year he passed away, Beth El had over 1400 members and one of the most magnificent Temples in the country.

The quiet little city that he entered 71 years ago became a giant, exciting metropolis during his lifetime, and he became one of the most respected and influential of its citizens.

* * *

*Mr. Philip R. Marcuse is a past-president of Temple Beth El.

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

Leo Morris was born in Cambridge City, Indiana, on March 5, 1870, the only son of Michael and Rachel (Levy) Franklin. When Leo was 4, the Franklin family, which also included 3 daughters (a fourth was born later), moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. For 8 years, starting at age 14, he attended both public schools and the Hebrew Union College, graduating from both H. U. C. and the University of Cincinnati in the same year, 1892. This took some doing, for the schools were far apart, but young Leo's zeal for learning was equal to the rigors of traveling and the extra hours of studying that a double curriculum entailed. At the University of Cincinnati he was awarded the familiar Phi Beta Kappa key that adorned his vest all the years that we all knew him. And at Hebrew Union College he had an even more unique distinction; he was the *only* member of his graduating class.

Reform Judaism was still young in 1892. Rabbi Franklin was only the 28th rabbi to be graduated from the College, which was then housed in what had been a private residence. The rooms were heated by round-bellied stoves that gave out smoke with their heat. One of Rabbi Franklin's favorite stories concerned the indignation of his History professor, irascible Dr. Henry Zirndorf, who screamed, "The stove must stop smoking. It is against the rules of the College to smoke here!" These were 8 happy years for the young rabbinical scholar. At their close he was blessed by his most revered teacher, Isaac M. Wise. The founder of Reform Judaism's words to the newly-ordained rabbi, "*Become thou a blessing*," became to Leo M. Franklin a mandate.

Upon his ordination as a rabbi, Dr. Franklin was immediately invited to occupy the pulpit of the young Temple Israel, in Omaha, Nebraska. There he began to display the qualities of leadership and inspiration that made his Detroit tenure so memorable. He identified himself prominently with the civic life as well as the religious life of the community, contributed frequently to periodicals, was responsible for the unification of the Omaha Associated Jewish Charities, and was able to organize a Reform congregation in Lincoln, Nebraska. On July 15, 1896, he married Hattie Oberfelder, of Chicago, and they lived to celebrate the golden anniversary of that happy union in Detroit. Their daughter, Ruth, was born to them in Omaha.

In 1898 Beth El's beloved Rabbi Louis Grossmann was called as associate to Dr. Isaac M. Wise in Cincinnati, and Rabbi Franklin, already known as one of the most promising of the younger Reform ministers, was invited to deliver a sermon in Detroit. This was received with such approval that he was invited forthwith to lead the Beth El flock. Though the Congregation was small and the accommodations meager, Rabbi Franklin saw a greater opportunity in the larger

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

city of Detroit, and accepted the post gladly. He preached his first sermon as rabbi of Beth El at the Washington Boulevard Temple on Friday evening, January 27, 1899. It was a memorable occasion, and contemporary accounts of it mention that many attended in evening dress.

The Temple building was old and run-down. The Sunday School occupied a dark, damp basement and had equipment to match. Dr. Franklin vigorously urged the creation of a new building, and in less than 2 years the Congrégation resolved to erect a new Temple. Meanwhile Dr. Franklin was busy organizing a children's choir, a children's Sabbath Morning service, Bible classes for young people and adults, a Women's Auxiliary, a Young People's Society, the publication of a monthly Temple Bulletin. Beth El, which has droned along for 50 years, at last had a leader capable of inspiring complete congregational participation. In Detroit, as in Omaha, he convinced the Jewish population of the value of integration of its benevolences. Late in 1899 the half dozen local philanthropies were organized into the UNITED JEWISH CHARITIES at his urging. This was the forerunner of the Jewish Welfare Federation, formed in 1926, with Dr. Franklin as one of its chief proponents.

In November, 1902, Dr. Franklin persuaded liberal ministers and laymen of three faiths to organize the INTERDENOMINATIONAL THANKSGIVING SERVICE, one of the first in the country to unite Catholics, Jews and Protestants in prayer's of Thanksgiving. The successful introduction of this service, now so widely copied throughout the land, was only the beginning of Dr. Franklin's intensive efforts to promote good-will and brotherhood among all peoples. This culminated years later in his helping to found the DETROIT ROUND TABLE OF CATHOLICS, JEWS AND PROTESTANTS.

* * *

In 1903, a most beautiful Temple was completed on Woodward Avenue at Eliot Street, to the great joy of Dr. Franklin and the entire Congregation. It was the first house of worship that Beth El's Congregation had built in the 53 years of its existence, and the splendor of its altar, the beauty of its stained glass windows and the curving sweep of its mahogany pews made the auditorium a source of pride to all the members. The Sunday School building which adjoined the auditorium (now used as a theater by Wayne State University) was the last word in modern design. The classrooms were on two floors surrounding the assembly hall, and each classroom door opened to the full width of the room so that the entire school could attend assembly without leaving their classrooms. In the basement the many social activities,

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

including Sisterhood dinners, Father and Son banquets, plays, young people's dances and Boy Scout troops helped to make the Temple the center of congregational life that was the fulfillment of Dr. Franklin's dream.

It was at the new Temple that Dr. Franklin *inaugurated* what was then a revolutionary new idea, that of *unassigned seats*. Pews were always rented or sold by Jewish congregations. Families occupied the same seats for generations. And, presumably, the richest families got the best locations. Dr. Franklin felt that rich and poor should be treated equally when they worshipped in a House of God. He was undoubtedly not the first rabbi to have this idea, but he was certainly the first to put it into practice. Seven families resigned from Beth El when their vested interest in their pews was abolished, but they soon returned to the Congregation when they discovered that the overwhelming majority accepted this democratic new plan.

Today, of course, hundreds of congregations have adopted the unassigned pew system, and few remember that this originated at Temple Beth El in Detroit, the inspiration of Leo M. Franklin. Much credit must be given also to Louis Blitz, President of the Congregation at that time, his Board and Beth El's membership for accepting so readily this fine new idea.

When the new Temple was opened, services were changed from Friday nights to Sunday mornings, a practice that continued at Beth El until 1937, when services were again held on Friday nights. The expanded facilities in the new building permitted the establishment of a high school department in the Sunday School (and it was a Sunday School; classes were held Sunday mornings, before and during Temple services).

In 1904 and for several years thereafter, the new Temple auditorium was the scene of congregational forums that brought to Beth El some of America's leading thinkers and speakers at the behest of Dr. Franklin. His fame as a dynamic rabbi grew quickly, and he began to receive offers from still larger pulpits. All these flattering invitations he declined, for he and his family were very happy in Detroit. His three children, Ruth, Leo and Margaret, were growing up here. Beth El was Detroit's leading Jewish congregation and Dr. Franklin was the leading spokesman for the Jewish community. The prestige that he helped build for Beth El has continued to this day.

This dedicated man, so industrious and enthusiastic, produced a staggering number of innovations that constantly increased the Tem-

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

ple's vitality. His presence was noted and his influence was felt everywhere. The motor of his model T Ford seldom cooled, for he ran it night and day on Temple missions. Everyone he encountered felt better because of the warmth and kindness that he transmitted. He was the living symbol of the strength of Judaism to young people, who needed sympathy and encouragement.

In 1914, Dr. Franklin established the Jewish Student Congregation at the University of Michigan. *This was the first Jewish collegiate religious organization to be formed in this country.* It resulted in the establishment of similar congregations at leading universities, and was the forerunner of the present Hillel Foundations. Dr. Franklin drove out to Ann Arbor every week to conduct services, and once a month, rabbis from all parts of the country were brought to Ann Arbor to address the students. Inspired by the success of the Jewish Student Congregation, a great non-sectarian service was held yearly in Hill Auditorium. Practically all the city's churches closed their doors so that students, faculty and townspeople might attend these services that so happily brought understanding among the many religious groups in the university city.

Rabbi Samuel S. Meyerberg of Kansas City, who was Dr. Franklin's assistant from 1917 through 1920, wrote of his superior 26 years later: "Dr. Franklin was an indefatigable worker, frequently driving himself to the point of impairing his health. Countless calls upon his time and energy came from all sections of the community. It did not take long to discover that Dr. Franklin was ranked by Jews and non-Jews, by the press, educators and the public, as one of the most eminent of all the leaders in the spiritual and cultural life of that growing metropolis. He deserved that high opinion of the people. No man has ever more meticulously practiced the unequivocal code of rabbinical ethics nor more closely followed the religious idealism of Judaism than my patient colleague."

During World War I, Dr. Franklin took an active part in many local war effort activities, and spoke at army cantonments throughout the East. But his unstinting efforts for Beth-El continued unabated. In 1919 he organized the Men's Club. In 1920 he introduced the first yearly Congregational Seder. And by now his stature had become so great that he received the national recognition that was his due. For two successive terms he was elected President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the highest reform rabbinical office in the country.

And by now the Temple that he had inspired, the Temple that was

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

considered the most beautiful in America when it was built, had become woefully small for the huge congregation and religious school enrollment that Dr. Franklin had attracted. Because the life of Dr. Franklin and the life of Temple Beth El are inextricably intertwined, this memoir is also a record of nearly half a century of Temple progress. And before we leave the old Temple, your scribe cannot help but include such recollections of the House of God, where he was confirmed, as organist Abram Ray Tyler leaning over the organ loft with hand cupped to ear, waiting for Rabbi Franklin to finish his sermon so that he could play his closing anthems . . . and the courtly William Howland, he of the splendid mustache, providing such a solid foundation for the beautiful choir with his fine bass voice . . . gracious Setta Robinson presiding over the cozy library . . . the deafening clatter as students swarmed out of the classrooms . . . the musty smell of the Social Hall at Sunday afternoon dances . . . the penetrating voice of Assistant Rabbi Henry Berkowitz as he attempted to achieve order at a Young People's Society meeting . . . the late afternoon Spring sun streaming through the windows of Dr. Franklin's study as he instructed his confirmation class in such intimate and friendly fashion . . . the patience and enthusiasm of teachers Rose Phillips and Minna Goldschmidt . . . and above all, the quaking knees as we arose from our seats in the packed but hushed auditorium and somehow made it to the pulpit in our first long-pants suit for our little contribution to the Confirmation program.

It is hard to believe that the imposing Temple on Woodward and Gladstone is now almost 48 years old, so sparkling is the auditorium and so well-maintained are the religious school rooms and offices. But it was in 1922 that Dr. Franklin and President Isaac Gilbert welcomed the Congregation and the city to view this edifice, one of the finest and most impressive religious structures in the country. In that year, also, Dr. Franklin was given a life tenure by the Congregation.

On January 24, 1924, his Silver Anniversary with Temple Beth El was made the occasion of a city-wide celebration.

In 1931 the Franklins experienced a great personal loss when their older daughter, Ruth, passed away. The man who had brought sympathy and solace to thousands of souls, who had been similarly afflicted, was completely broken up by his personal sorrow. It was an event which made more somber the remainder of his life. Ruth's daughter, Mary Einstein, married Walter Shapero of Detroit.

As so many strong persons are able to do, Dr. Franklin buried him-

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

self in his work to conceal his sorrow. A member of the Detroit Public Library board for many years, he was elected its President in 1932. This honor was again conferred upon him in 1938, and again in 1944. There has been hardly a civic or philanthropic movement instituted in Detroit with which he was not in some way identified. And there was no problem confronting the Jewish community upon which his counsel was not sought.

In 1933, the University of Detroit conferred upon Dr. Franklin the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, an event unique in the annals of Roman Catholic colleges. And Bishop Gallagher, head of the Detroit Diocese, was an honored guest at one of the "Fellowship Nights" of the Men's Club which Dr. Franklin instituted in 1924.

Dr. Franklin was greatly in demand as a speaker on the radio as soon as this means of communication was developed. He delivered a series of lectures over the "Message of Israel" coast-to-coast program, and spoke on the "Church of the Air" on a national hook-up. His book, "The Rabbi—The Man and His Message," dealing with over 40 years of rich pulpit and pastoral experiences, was a consequence of the Alumni Lectures and Founder's Day Address that he delivered at the Hebrew Union College in 1937. In 1939, the College conferred upon him an honorary D.D. degree in recognition of his outstanding work in the rabbinate. And in 1940, Wayne State University honored him with a Doctor of Laws degree for his outstanding service in the community at large. For many years he was appointed by various governors to serve as Michigan's delegate to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. He was one of the founders of the D'Arcambal Society, which was devoted to the rehabilitation of discharged prisoners. This society developed into the renowned Ford Republic, of which Dr. Franklin was a director from its very inception.

These were hardly the limits of his interests. He also served at various times on the boards of the Fine Arts Society, the Detroit Symphony Society, the Board of Commerce, the Detroit Housing Council, the Greater Detroit Motion Picture Council, the Civic Theater Group of Detroit, the Citizens Housing and Planning Association, the Economics Club, the Detroit Historical Society and the Wrangler's Club. He was no figure-head board member for window-dressing purposes. His civic interests were amazingly wide, and he attended board meetings whenever his enormous schedule permitted.

In 1939, at the age of 69, Dr. Franklin was given a testimonial dinner celebrating his 40th anniversary as rabbi of Temple Beth El. All the affection that four generations of Detroiters felt for this dynamic

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

and loveable man was expressed at this dinner. Reverend Charles Haven Myers of the North Woodward Congregational Church spoke for the Christians. His good friend Fred Butzel, his colleagues Rabbi Hershman and Rabbi Fram, and Adam Strohm, Detroit's Librarian, eulogized him as did Morris Garvett, President of Beth El. His beloved colleague throughout his Rabbinical career, Rabbi Samuel Goldenson of Temple Emanu-El, New York, said: *"As a teacher he has fulfilled his purpose, that whatever he taught he taught with ample knowledge. As a preacher he has fulfilled his purpose, that he preached with complete sincerity. As a pastor he has fulfilled his purpose, that in their sorrow and bereavement he brought them sympathy and consolation. Here is a man who has lasted 40 years—the test of the abiding usefulness of his service and his message."*



Rabbi Franklin in 1948

Two year later, Dr. Franklin communicated to the Temple's Board of Trustees his desire to retire from the active ministry. He was made Rabbi Emeritus, and another tireless and dedicated man, B. Benedict Glazer, was elected Rabbi of Temple Beth El. For several years after

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin

his retirement, Dr. Franklin remained one of the busiest men in the community. His office continued to be the gathering place for those who needed advice and inspiration. When the Board and past presidents of the Temple honored him with a luncheon on his 75th birthday, his ringing phrases and ebullient personality caused Dr. Glazer to truly characterize him as "*75 years young.*" His last two years were, unfortunately, spent in failing health, and he passed away, at the age of 78, on August 8, 1948. His beloved wife, Hattie, survived him a scant two months.

Dr. Franklin's memory will be revered by the thousands of men, women and children whom he served in hours of joy and sorrow. As a most fitting tribute to his memory, Temple Beth El has established the Leo M. Franklin Memorial Chair in Human Relations at Wayne State University, which is made possible by the Leo M. Franklin Memorial Fund. Each year since 1950, the University has presented a lecture series known as the "Leo M. Franklin Memorial Lectures in Human Relations." The series include addresses by the memorial professor, and by four other lecturers selected by him. These lectures are then published in book form by the Wayne State University Press and made available to universities, libraries, scholars and others interested in human relations.

The Temple has also dedicated its splendid social hall as the FRANKLIN MEMORIAL HALL as a loving tribute to *both* Dr. Leo M. Franklin and his devoted wife, Hattie O. Franklin.

Analysis of a Discovery

By ALLEN A. WARSEN

The names of the following individuals appeared for the first time in the United States 1850 Decennial Census. This is the oldest document, as far as we know, to record the presence of these individuals in Detroit.

It is true that the U. S. Census does not record religion, and many errors have been made as regards the Jewishness of certain individuals because of their Jewish sounding names. However, the individuals who are recorded here have been proved Jewish by later documents.

* * * * *

Mark Cohen, age 29, merchant, born in Germany

Betsy Cohen, age 30, born in Germany

Simon Cohen, age 11, born in Ohio

Moses Cohen, age 10, born in Ohio

Hannah Cohen, age 8, born in New York

Caroline Cohen, age 3, born in New York

David Amberg, age 33, merchant, born in Germany

Loretta Amberg, age 29, born in Germany

Henrietta Amberg, age 9, born in Ohio

Isaac Cousin, age 45, H Doctor, born in Germany

Sarah Cousin, age 40, born in Germany

Rebecca Cousin, age 11, born in New York

Hannah Cousin, age 9, born in New York

Caroline Cousin, age 7, born in New York

Rosa Cousin, age 5, born in New York

Sally Cousin, age 3, born in New York

Rachel Pappenheimer, age 35, born in Germany

Ramhett (male) Pappenheimer, age 8 born in New York

Israel Pappenheimer, age 5, born in New York

Jacob Pappenheimer, age 3, born in New York

Barbary Bendid, age 30, born in Germany
Samuel Bendid, age 9, born in New York
Fanny Bendid, age 23, born in Germany

Jacob Friedman, age 22, merchant, born in Germany
John Friedman, age 32, merchant, born in Germany

Hanah Hersh, age 25, born in Michigan¹⁾
Matin Hersh, age (?), born in Michigan

Hannah Bendit, age 22, born in Germany

Rachel Silverman, age 25, born in Germany
Sarah Silverman, age 1, born in Michigan
Hannah Silverman, age 15, born in Germany

* * * * *

The U. S. Decennial Census of 1850 was also the earliest document on record to show the ages, places of birth and often the given names of these Detroit residents whose last names and businesses do appear in the Detroit Directories prior to the census of 1850 or at the time the census was taken. They are:

Solomon Bendid, age 30, merchant born in Germany
Samuel Bendit, age 34, merchant born in Germany
Solomon Friedman, age 25, merchant, born in Germany

Adam Hersh, age 25, cigar maker, born in Germany

L. Pappenheimer, age 39, merchant, born in Germany

Jacob Silverman, age 29, cigar maker, born in Germany

* * * * *

I am inclined to believe that the Sneolanders were Jewish as I have never heard of a Pole in Poland whose last name ended in "lander" and whose given name was Aaron. Usually Poles

gave their children either New Testament or Slavic names, but not names like Rebecca or Rachel. Should this assumption prove correct, Aaron Sneolander would have been the first Polish Jew to reside in Detroit.

The names of the Sneolanders follow:

Aaron Sneolander, age 48, grocer, born in Poland

Libby Sneolander, age 30, born in Hanover

Caroline Sneolander, age 6, born in Ohio

Alexander Sneolander, age 6, born in Ohio

Rebecca Sneolander, age 6, born in Ohio

Rachel Sneolander, age 1, born in Michigan

* * * * *

The census on which this analysis is based is evidence that a Jewish Community, though unorganized, existed in Detroit in the years immediately preceeding 1850.

1) Hannah Hersh was born in Germany. The census was wrong.

*The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El**

By DR. IRVING I. EDGAR

I

THE COZENS' HOME

While the first Minyanim¹ for religious services in Michigan were conducted by the five Weil brothers at their various homes in Ann Arbor in 1845 and for several years thereafter,² the first Jewish congregation in the State, "the Bet El Society" was not organized until September 22, 1850 by twelve recently arrived German Jewish immigrants. This was accomplished at the home of one of them, Mr. and Mrs. (Sarah) Isaacs Cozens where the first religious services in Detroit were held.³ Actual legal incorporation of the congregation did not occur till April 21, 1851; and the articles of incorporation were not recorded in the Wayne County Clerk's office until December 21, 1852.⁴

The first historiographical evidence of such an event appears in a letter in the German language by Joseph Friedman, the first secretary of the congregation, to Rabbi Isaac Leiser, of Philadelphia dated November 13, 1851 in which it definitely states that,

"Several men having moved here with their families (some-time last year, 1850), the total want of all opportunities for the religious instruction of their children was severely felt, especially as their business called them away from home most of the time. Subsequently at a meeting called among those few Yehudim residing here, twelve in number, it was resolved to call a teacher and shochet, and also to buy a piece of burying ground. The incidental expenses, though considerable, were contributed with a good deal of liberality and the above resolution carried out. The number of our members have since augmented to eighteen."

Rabbi Isaac Leiser, in his monthly publication *The Occident*, (vol. 10, p. 58, April 1852) reprinted the larger part of this letter and commented:

Our readers will see that at all events a beginning has been made; and if we review the rapid increase of American cities, it is not too much to predict that the Israelites will not over-

*The materials in this paper were made available to me through the courtesy of Irving U. Katz.

The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El

look Detroit as a place well calculated to promote their material prosperity and that hence the eighteen now there will not be left so entirely dependent on their own resources, as they now deem themselves.⁵

Where then was the first site at which this new congregation, Beth El, held religious services? Strictly speaking we have no direct historiographical evidence to positively determine this. Rabbi Leo M. Franklin in his *A History of Congregation Beth El* published in 1900 gives us the reason for this. He writes:

Through some unexplained carelessness the official records of almost half our career (the first 25 years) have been mislaid. Hence we have to depend largely for details upon the memories of our oldest settlers. Naturally enough the accounts of the beginnings have not always coincided. But we have set down only those things as facts, which have been reasonably corroborated.⁶

Unfortunately, none of the original incorporators of the "Beth El Society" were then living⁷ in 1900. Nevertheless some of their children were consulted and also others who were in a position to know. Among those who assisted in recalling important events are the "Messrs. Schloss, Heavenrich, Blitz, Butzel, Pr  ll, Labold, A. J. Franklin and Sloman and Mesdames Strauss, Friedlaender, and Silberman."⁸

Rabbi Franklin summarizes his conclusions as to the earliest beginnings of Temple Beth El as follows:

"Traditions differ as to the circumstances that led to the formation of this congregation, which in point of age takes first place among the congregations of the North-West. However a well authenticated account is to the effect that its organization was directly due to the advent from New York of a couple by the name of Isaac and Sophie Cozens . . . at the beginning of the year 1850, and at once took up their abode at a house near the corner of Congress and Antoine Streets, where a few months later the first *Minyan* held in the State of Michigan convened for worship."¹⁰

This historical account continues further,

This was early in the summer of 1850. The usual preliminary meetings were held. The usual grounds of discussion gone over . . . and on the 22nd of September of the year 1850, the "Bet El" Society, as the infant Congregation Beth El, was

The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El

named, was duly organized. Mr. Joseph Newman was elected temporary Chairman, but the regular election held shortly afterwards made Jacob Silberman the first president, and, Solomon Bendit the first-Vice-President of the new congregation. The next step in order was the selecting of a place of meeting and the election of a reader. Mr. and Mrs. Cozens willingly offered their home as a temporary place of worship to the congregation, and upon invitation, the Rev. Samuel Marcus, of New York became the first leader of the congregation.¹¹

Ten years later a second volume was published by the same Historical Committee entitled *A History of Congregation Beth El, Detroit, Michigan. From Its Fiftieth to Its Sixtieth Anniversary*, (Vol. II, 1900-1910, published by Hammond & Co., Detroit, Mich., 1910.)

In this historical account, there is a reiteration of the facts as stated previously as follows:

"Under the name of Bet El Society the Congregation was founded on September 22, 1850, the organization being held at the residence of Isaac and Sophie Cozens at the corner of Congress and Antoine Streets. The temporary chairman of the meeting was Joseph Newman, but at the regular election held shortly thereafter, Jacob Silberman was made president and Solomon Bendit, vice-president of the congregation . . .

On April 21, 1851 Bet El Society was legally incorporated, although organized the previous year which fact has given rise to some dispute among the older members of the congregation as to the exact age of the congregation. However, indisputable records are at hand to prove the correctness of this date¹² (pp.11,12).

On January 1st, 1851, the congregation acquired by purchase from Thomas Hawley and wife, one half acre of land in Hamtramck Township to be used as a cemetery (this is still owned by the congregation and is known as the Champlain Street Cemetery). The purchase price was one hundred fifty dollars, of which one half was paid in cash and the other half secured by notes payable with interest in six and twelve months respectively, and for their payment a mortgage was given on the cemetery. Both the warranty deed and mortgages are signed in behalf of the congregation by Jacob Silberman, Solomon Bendit, Sigmund Springer and Joseph Friedman.¹³

The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El

The warranty deed and mortgage mentioned above undoubtedly represents direct specific historiographical evidence of the existence of the congregation on the date mentioned (January 1, 1851). In actual fact then, this is the first historiographical evidence of the existence of Beth El since Joseph Friedman's letter (mentioned previously) was not written till November 13, 1851, and did not appear in Rabbi Leiser's, *The Occident* till April 1952.

We can deduce then from the foregoing that the first organized Jewish congregaion in Michigan did exist in 1850, that the organization did take place in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Cozens, "near the corner of Congress and St. Antoine Streets" and that the congregation did convene for purposes of worship for about two years at the home of the Cozens.

Silas Farmer in his *History of Detroit and Wayne County* (Vol. 1, 3rd edition p. 628) merely states:

The Society was organized in August 1850, incorporated on April 21, 1851 and reorganized in 1853. For the first two years they met in a private house and for the next three years over the store of Silberman and Hirsch on Jefferson.

The first religious services were led by one Marcus Cohen during that summer of 1850 until September 22, when "Rabbi Samuel Marcus of New York was engaged as the first spiritual leader at the recommendation of his friend Marcus Cohen who officiated at services up to that time.¹⁴ A photograph of this Marcus appears in the *A History of Congregation Beth El, 1850-1900* issued by the Historical Committee in 1900.¹⁵ It is most likely that this Marcus Cohen is the Max Cohn who was one of the signatories to the Incorporation papers of the congregation, since it was quite common for immigrants to the U. S. to change their names to more Americanized and perhaps shorter forms.

Historiographically we know that this Marcus Cohen was in Detroit in 1850 since his naturalization paper states¹⁶ that "on the 31st day of October in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and fifty, Marcus Cohen, a native of Bavaria exhibited a petition praying to be admitted (to) become a citizen of the United States." He did become a citizen October 31st, "in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty one . . ."

As we go further in our search we find another letter from Detroit dated June 10, 1852, that appeared in the *Occident* under "News Items" (pp. 265-266, Vol. 10, Aug. 18, 1852) which states as follows:

The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El

DETROIT, MICHIGAN — A letter from Detroit of June 10th has the following:

"Fully aware that any information concerning the progress of Judaism will give you pleasure, I take the liberty to communicate to you the present position of our Kahal. Our officers are all good and true men. Mr. Jacob Silberman is President. Mr. S. H. Bendit, Treasurer; and Mr. Joseph Friedman, Secretary. We number twenty-four members, and have rented a room for two years, and we are fitting it up for a place of worship, at an expense of about \$300, rent included. We have also a very handsome burying ground, well-fenced and ditched, all paid for. Our Shochet, Mr. B. Marcus, officiates also as Hazan and Teacher . . . I cannot omit mentioning that our worthy president spares no efforts to promote the interests of his community . . . I will, after the dedication of our place of worship, the only one in this State, give you . . . a farther account of our doings."

This letter represents the first evidence of the acquisition of a "new place of worship at an expense of about \$300, rent included, which had not yet been dedicated as of the date of this letter (June 10, 1852.) So that we can state with certainty that up to this date and perhaps for several weeks thereafter' all religious services continued at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Cozens, "near the corner of Congress and Antoine Streets."

Now where exactly is the site of this Cozens' home which for about two years was the first place of worship for the small group of "Bet El" members making up the greater part of the then Jewish Community of Detroit? Except for the vague words, "near the corner of Congress and St. Antoine Streets," mentioned before, none of the accounts of this first beginning of Temple Beth El give us any exact location. Irving I. Katz in his *The Beth El Story* does show a photograph of a house (p. 65) and captions this as

The home of Mr. & Mrs. Isaac Cozens on Congress and St. Antoine streets where the first Detroit Minyan Services were held.

The original of this photograph has been in the possession of Temple Beth El for many years and hangs on one of the walls of a conference room (at Gladstone, the present site of Beth El). However, the numerals on the right door post at the entrance of this

The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El

house indicate it to be No. 675. Unfortunately the Detroit City directories of this period (1850-52) do not list the exact address of the Cozens' home. Nevertheless, calculations¹⁷ indicate that 675 East Congress would be located much farther east, more likely near Jos. Campau Ave. or even farther than this. So that it is more probable that this home pictured in Katz's *The Beth El Story* is not their actual home, but is more likely a similar type, since such architecturally built homes were very common at that period and for many years thereafter, and in fact, can still be seen in certain old parts of the city.

To complicate matters even more, Isaac Cozens does not appear in the Detroit directories of 1850-51, nor of 1852-53, the period during which their home served as a place of religious worship. However, a study of the U. S. Census of 1850 recently conducted by Allen Warsen places the Cozens definitely in the City of Detroit and includes not only Isaac Cozen and his wife Sarah Cozen but also their children Rebecca, Hannah, Caroline, Rosa and Sally (see *Michigan Jewish History*, "An Important Discovery" Vol. 10, No. 1, Jan. 1970, pp. 4-6). No address however is given since at that time this was not done in the census or perhaps there were no numbers at that time in this part of the city. It must also be noted that the name in this census is spelled "Cousin" rather than "Cozens" which became the accepted spelling as we know it today. The reason for this can readily be understood since these German-Jewish immigrants spoke no English and the census taker spelled their names probably according to the phonetic sound of the name as he interpreted it. This was a common occurrence.

Now the 1853-54 Detroit City Directory lists Isaac Cozens as living on the north side of Congress between Rivard and Hastings Streets. At this period of course, Temple Beth El already had its first real synagogue above the Silberman and Her'sh store. The 1855-6 Detroit City Directory does not list him at all. But the 1857-58 directory lists him as living at 21 Lafayette, as does the 1859-60 city directory. Apparently these early immigrants moved to various living quarters several times. From all this it is apparent that we have no specific address of the Cozens' home.

We must then accept the fact that the closest description as to the exact location of the Cozens home where the first Minyanim in Detroit were held and where the "Bet El Society" was organized can simply be stated in the words "*near the corner of Congress and Antoine Streets,*" on the north side of the street.

The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El

Where then shall we place this site in the City of Detroit of 1970? It is definitely either in the vicinity of the northwest or the northeast corners of present Congress Street East and St. Antoine Street. If it is the northwest corner then the site is located at what is now the Entrance No. 1 to the parking garage of the new Blue Cross, Blue Shield Service Center. If it was at the northeast corner, then the original site must be on the opposite corner about 50 to 100 feet west of an historical marker, Registered Site No. 22, erected a few years ago by the Michigan Historical Commission, commemorating the meeting of John Brown of pre-Civil War fame and the Reverend William Webb in the year 1859. In terms of a numbered address at this time, it would be realistic to state that this site would fall between 569 and 609 Congress East.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Assemblies for religious worship consisting of at least ten Jewish men. Heineman, David E. "Jewish Beginnings in Michigan before 1850." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 13, New York, 1905 pp. 45-70, pp. 67-68.

2. Katz, Irving I., *The Beth El Story*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1955, pp. 51-53.

3. *A History of Congregation Beth El*, Detroit, Mich. 1850-1900, compiled and edited under the auspices of The Historical Committee, Rabbi Leo Franklin, Adolph Freund and Adolph Sloman, published by Winn and Hammond, 1900, pp. 10, H. 16. A copy is in possession of the author.

"However, a well authenticated account is to the effect that its organization was directly due to the advent from New York of a couple by the name of Isaac and Sophie Cozens. They arrived in Detroit at the beginning of the year 1850, and at once took up their abode at a house near the corner of Congress and Antoine Streets, where a few months later, the first Minyan . . . convened for worship."

4. *Ibid.* p. 19.

5. This letter is in the Leeser collection at Dropsie College, Philadelphia. The author has a photostatic copy of this letter.

6. *A History of Congregation Beth El*, Detroit, Mich. From its organization to its semi-centennial, 1850-1890, compiled and edited under the auspices of the Historical Committee, 1900. p. 10.

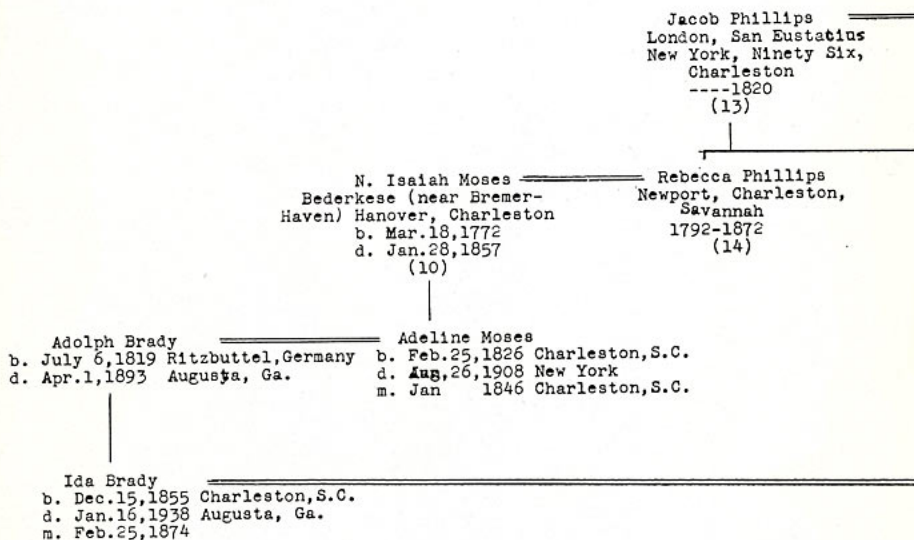
Rabbi Leo M. Franklin, Chairman
Adolph Freund
Adolph Sloman

(continued on page 26)

Asher Michael de Paul == Rebecca
 New York New York
 --1701 1653-1740
 (23) (24)
 |
 Moses Michael == Haya Hannah
 New York, (Catharina
 Curacao Hachar)
 1646-1740 Curacao,
 (25) New York
 (26)
 |
 Jochebed Michael
 New York
 (27)
 |
 Judah Mears ==
 London, New York.
 Curacao
 1692(?) - 1762
 (21)
 |
 Rebecca Mears
 New York
 (22)
 |
 Jacob Isaacks ==
 New York, Newport
 1713(?) - 1798
 (18)
 |
 Hannah Isaacks
 Newport, Martinico
 ---1798
 (18)
 |
 Esther Phillips == Isaac Hendricks
 b. Dec. 6, 1794 b. ----1770
 d. Jan. 23, 1883 d. Mar. 13, 1848
 |
 Rosina Hendricks == Abram Levy
 b. Jan. 27, 1829 b. ---- 1820
 d. Feb. 9, 1888 d. Sept. 3, 1879 Hamburg, S.G.
 |
 I. Clarence Levy
 b. Jan. 12, 1850 Hamburg, S.C.
 d. Sept. 25, 1898 Augusta, Ga.
 m. Feb. 25, 1874
 |
 Abram Levy == Fanny Koppel
 b. May 23, 1875 Charleston, S.C. b. Jan. 2, 1876
 d. Mar. 14, 1937 Augusta, Ga. d. July 10, 1954
 m. Jan. 18, 1899 " "
 |
 Lois Clarece Levy == Theodore Mark Jacobowitz
 b. Sept. 4, 1911 Augusta, Ga. b. June 26, 1907 Buffalo, N.Y.
 d. d.
 m. Oct. 6, 1940 Augusta, Ga.
 |
 Charles Alan Jacobowitz Ann Claire Jacobowitz Ellen Sue Jacobowitz
 b. Mar. 31, 1942 Detroit, Mich. b. Feb. 29, 1944 Detroit, Mich. b. Feb. 21, 1948 Detroit

Detroit Family Traces Ancestry to Earliest Jews in the United States

Shown here is the family tree of Detroiters Charles Alan, Ann
Claire and Ellen Sue Jacobowitz, children of Detroiters Theodore
and Lois Clarece (Levy) Jacobowitz.



Charles Alan
Jacobowitz



Anne Claire
Jacobowitz



Ellen Sue
Jacobowitz

Note: A part of this geneological chart is based on NOTES on the ALEX-ANDER FAMILY of SOUTH CAROLINA and GEORGIA and CONNEC-TIONS, 1651-1954, by Henry Aaron Alexander.

The Early Sites and Beginnings of Congregation Beth El

7. Jacob Silverman, Pres., Solomon Bendit, Treas., Joseph Friedman, Max Cohn, Adam Hersh, Alex Hein, Jacob Lang, Aron Joel Friedlaender, Louis Bresler and C. E. Bresler (and Leo Bresler).

8. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15.

10. Actually as indicated earlier the first **Minyanim** in Michigan were held at the various homes of the five Weil brothers in Ann Arbor, 1845. Rabbi Franklin apparently was unaware of this.

11. **A History of Congregation Beth El**, Detroit, Mich., 1900, Winn & Hammond, op. cit. p. 16.

12. pp. 11, 12.

13. *op. cit.*, p. 18.

14. Katz, Irving I., **The Beth El Story**, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

15. p. 28. A copy of this "**A History of Congregation Beth El**" as well as a volume II issued 10 years later 1900-1910 is owned by the author.

16. Owned by the author through the courtesy of Irving I. Katz.

17. See **Old and New House Numbers** compiled by the Department of Public Works published by the City of Detroit. New House numbers effective Jan. 1921. 675 Congress E. old number would become over 2400 new number.

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan congratulates its dedicated members, Mr. and Mrs. Moshe Friedman, on establishing the "Moshe and Sarah Friedman Annual Scholarship Fund" at the Jewish Teachers Seminary—Herzliah Hebrew Teachers Institute of New York.

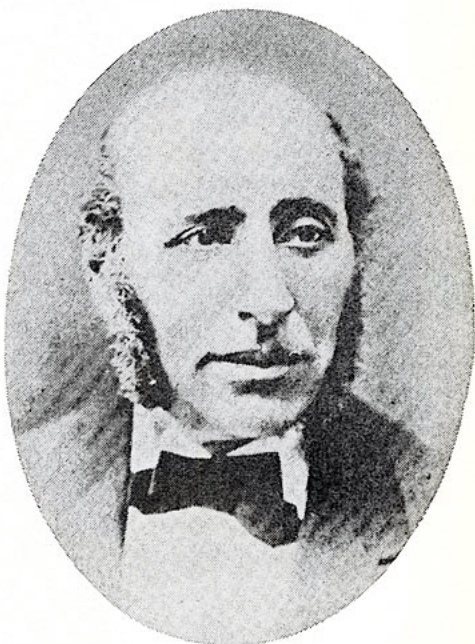
May God bless them for their devotion to Jewish culture.

Early Detroit Jews

By IRVING I. KATZ

MARCUS COHEN

Marcus Cohen was born in Bavaria in 1821 and came to the United States in the 1830's. After a residence in Cincinnati and New York he settled in Detroit in 1849. According to Magnus Butzel, in an obituary published in the Detroit Free Press of July 11, 1880, Marcus Cohen was a pioneer in religious observances. He conducted services from the time he reached Detroit and performed all the duties then devolving on a rabbi. It was largely his earnestness and example which inspired the formation of Temple Beth El, Detroit's first Jewish congregation, and his influence which brought his friend, Rev.

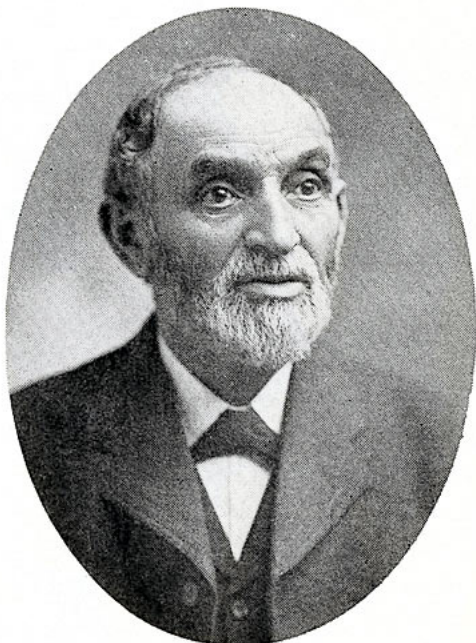


Samuel Markus of New York, to Beth El as its first rabbi. He was one of the founders of Beth El and served as its vice-president. He was also one of the charter members of Pishah Lodge B'nai B'rith and served twice as its president.

Marcus Cohen was married to Babette Hirschman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Hirschman, early pioneers of Detroit. Their children were: Simon, Moses, Herman Rice, Solomon, David, and Caroline (Mrs. Sigmund Simon).

MOSES COHEN

Moses Cohen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Cohen, was born in Cincinnati in 1840 and came to Detroit with his parents in 1849. The story is told that when the men assembled in Detroit for the first Minyan in 1850 it was found that the required quorum of ten males over thirteen years of age was lacking only one person. The delicate situation was solved by Marcus Cohen by placing a Siddur (Prayer Book) in the hands of his son, Moses, then a lad of ten, and wrapping him in a Tallis (Prayer Shawl), a permissible orthodox practice in such emergencies.



Moses Cohen served as president of Pisgah Lodge B'nai B'rith and as secretary of Temple Beth El. He was married to Sarah Rosenstock and they were the parents of Jennie (Mrs. Henry E. Kent), Carrie (Mrs. Louis Musliner), Solomon R. and David R.

SIMON COHEN

Simon Cohen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Cohen, served four times as president of Pisgah Lodge B'nai B'rith and for eight years as secretary of Temple Beth El. His wife was Rosa Sittig, daughter of Judah and Marie S. Sittig, early residents of Detroit. Their children were: Solomon, Joshua and Carrie.

SIGMUND SIMON

Sigmund Simon was born in Bavaria in 1842 and came with his parents to the United States at an early age, settling in New York. In 1865, Simon came to Detroit where he became prominently iden-

Early Detroit Jews

tified with the retail millinery business. He was active in Temple Beth El, Pisgah Lodge B'nai B'rith and the Phoenix Club. He was married to Caroline Cohen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Cohen, and they were the parents of Louis, Clara, Isaac, Fanny and Marcus.

These Are the Generations of Marcus Cohen



Fifth and sixth generation descendants of Marcus Cohen. Left to right: Mrs. Richard H. Simon (Sharon L. Willis), David L., Ann E., John W. and Richard H. Simon.

Richard is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold M. Simon, grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Simon, great-grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Sig-mund Simon and great-, great-grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Cohen.

The Simon children are the great-great-great-grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Cohen.

The Richard H. Simon family is affiliated with Detroit's Temple Beth El and represents the fifth and sixth generation of Temple membership.

Seymour Leon Heller

By LAWRENCE A. RUBIN

Seymour' Leon Heller, one of northern Michigan's leading Jewish citizens, was born in Boyne City on March 3, 1919. He received his public school education there and then journeyed West to attend Curtis Wright Technical College in Glendale, California during 1937 and 1938. As was characteristic of young men in those days, he worked briefly in New Mexico, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, finally enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1942. After a tour of duty in the European Theatre, he was honorably discharged in October of 1945.



However, the most important event of his Army years was his marriage to Bertha Lublin of Detroit on December 14, 1943. He remained in Detroit for some five years following his military service, ultimately heeding the call of the North to return to Petoskey, where he formed a partnership with his father' in a scrap business which he still operates.

Mr. Heller's father was Alexander Heller, who migrated to Boyne City in 1919, where he founded a scrap metal business. His mother, nee Bessie Goldstick, was raised in this general area.

Since returning to Petoskey, Mr. Heller has been most active in civic and religious affairs. He has been a member, director, and president of Congregation B'nai Israel of Petoskey since 1950, holding the latter position since 1953.

This is the second of a series edited by Lawrence A. Rubin

Seymour Leon Heller

Until recently, being grounded in 1968 for reasons of health, he combined his love of flying with his other remunerative endeavors, and served as a flying instructor, as a private pilot for one of the area's major industries, and as a charter pilot. He also served as vice-president and general manager of the Boyne City Railroad, which he jokingly describes as "one of the shortest railroads in the State, but just as wide as any of the big ones." He is, or has been, affiliated with the Rotary Club, the Elks Club, the Bay View Country Club, the Petoskey Regional Chamber of Commerce, and is a Past Master of Durand Lodge 344, F.&A.M

Mr and Mrs. Heller have three children: Mrs. Michael Brooks of Detroit; a son, Alexander, taking his junior year of high school in Israel; and a daughter, Beverly, in the ninth grade at home.

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*Industrial Removal Work in Detroit, 1902-1914**

By DR. ROBERT ROCKAWAY

Most of those Jews who came to the United States from Eastern Europe during the years 1900 to 1914 settled on the Atlantic seaboard, New York City alone absorbing some 70 per cent. The congestion in New York presented a very serious problem both to the newcomers and to the established Jewish community, which assumed most of the burden in caring for the immigrants. The Baron de Hirsch fund, with headquarters in New York City, advocated dispersal in order to relieve the overcrowding on that city's East Side, but the net results it achieved were insignificant. A decisive step to solve this problem was taken with the creation in January, 1901, of the Industrial Removal Office (IRO). This body operated along the following lines: 1) orders for employment were obtained by traveling agents, who established connections with local Jewish organizations, especially outside of the big cities along the Atlantic seaboard; 2) the B'nai B'rith lodges set up local committees charged with procuring orders for employment; 3) a New York bureau was set up to handle requests from the traveling agents and the local committees, and to select suitable individuals among the immigrants. The initial success of the IRO aroused lively interest, and many communities pledged their cooperation. In 1903 the work was put on a solid basis. Three organizations — the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) of Paris, the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, and the Roumanian Relief Committee — undertook to secure the necessary finances.

Despite its considerable efforts, the IRO was unable to shift large numbers of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants inland. From 1901 to 1912 it sent 59,729 people from New York City to 1,474 cities and towns located in every state of the union.

The Detroit office of the IRO was established in 1902 under the auspices of the United Jewish Charities; some of the officers of the UJC were active in its operation. Relations between the home office in New York and Detroit was amiable up to 1913, and the removal work of the Detroit agents was highly respected by the national officers. By 1914, however, friction developed as the result of an increasing reluctance by the Detroit office to accept larger numbers of unskilled laborers and the growing feeling among UJC officers that Detroit was doing more than other cities in accommodating the immigrants.

Industrial Removal Work in Detroit

Approximately 4,000 people were sent to Detroit by the IRO from 1902 to 1914. Most of those were unmarried men, or men who had left their families in New York or in Europe. Since the majority of these men decided to remain in Detroit, where the married men were later joined by their families, it would not be unreasonable to estimate that the IRO was responsible for about 10,000 Jewish immigrants coming to the city by 1914. The majority of the immigrants sent to Detroit were from Russia, were young, ranging in age from twenty-one to forty, and were skilled in some trade.

The IRO operation in Detroit was well organized and efficient. Before the immigrant arrived, arrangements had usually been made for his lodging, care and employment. Once in the city the migrant could expect additional assistance in the form of loans, housing, legal and financial advice. Even while assisting the newcomers the Detroit office was haunted by the fear that they would become public charges. This was primarily because the officers of the Detroit IRO entertained misgivings about the character and capabilities of their Eastern European charges. To diminish this danger, the migrants had to meet certain criteria before they were accepted.

It was insisted that only men who were in good health be sent. The Detroit office continually refused to accept responsibility for unhealthy immigrants and sent those who had ailments or disease back to New York. The agents also stipulated that all removals sent to Detroit be skilled in a trade. If they felt that the labor market was tight or economic conditions appeared to be worsening, the Detroit agents advised New York not to send any immigrants at all. The Detroit IRO was equally adamant about admitting migrants who had no one in the city to receive them. Unless someone in Detroit was willing to accept responsibility for the immigrant once he arrived, the Detroit office refused to accept him. In all these instances the predominant concern was that the immigrants not become a burden on the city's Jewish or public charities and prove to be a source of embarrassment to the established Jewish community.

The attitude of the immigrants toward their benefactors was mixed. On the one hand they appreciated the assistance rendered to them; but this gratefulness was sometimes tinged with bitterness at the paternalistic and occasionally callous manner with which they were dealt. These feelings of ambivalence, at times flaring into open antagonism, clouded relations between Detroit's immigrant

Industrial Removal Work in Detroit

Eastern European Jews and the German Jewish directors of the city's IRO office and United Jewish Charities throughout the period 1902-1914.

FOOTNOTES

* The material in this article derives from a larger study on the history of the Jews in Detroit. The research for this study was supported by a grant from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Jewish Community Foundation of Detroit.

שמואל-בער לייקין

זכרונות פון

א פראקטישן בער חלומות

מיין לעבן און מיינע טעטיקייטן אין
דעם יידיש-געזעלשאפטלעכן לעבן
במשך איבער א האלבן יארהונדערט

Memoirs Of A Practical Dreamer

By BENJAMIN LAIKIN

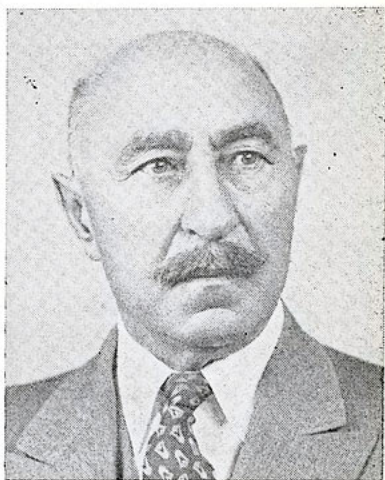
Reviewed by ALLEN A. WARSEN

In *MEMOIRS OF A PRACTICAL DREAMER* by Benjamin Laikin the life story of a man who immigrated to the United States from a small town in White Russia unfolds over a span of almost seven decades. Every event, described in memorable Yiddish, is engaging.

The author was born into a low middle class family. The father operated a primitive flower mill while the mother took care of her household and the domestic animals, especially the cows.

Benjamin began his religious education when he was four. His teachers, though learned men, were not versed in modern methods of pedagogy. They taught him, however, to read Hebrew, the Bible with the Rashi commentary and the Talmud. At thirteen, Benjamin himself became a "teacher" instructing Jewish children in nearby villages. Teaching, of course, was only a temporary vocation with him.

Three years later, Benjamin left his home country and settled in



Memoirs of a Practical Dreamer

the United States. This event marked the beginning of what might be titled, "The Travels and Adventures of Benamjin IV."

(Benjamin I was Benjamin of Tudela who in the thirteenth century spanned many of the then known countries; the second was Joseph Israel Benamjin who in the nineteenth century traveled throughout the Orient and America; the third was the hero of Mendele Mocher Seforim's famous novel *The Travels and Adventures of Benjamin the Third*.)

In this chapter the author draws a dramatic picture of an immigrant from the time he departs from his native country until he reaches the United States. His experiences crossing the Russian border, waiting for the boat, and on the boat, and his first years in the new land are realistically depicted. Moreover, the author gives us an insight into the heart of a young man who suffers privations; yet craves to enrich his mind and soul culturally and spiritually. He records in detail his encounters with adversity and unfriendly friends. Such details in another setting would have been overburdening, but in this autobiography they add depth, knowledge, and understanding to a man's struggle for existence.

Characteristically enough, Benjamin's zigzag ascent was achieved through an industry hardly known and seldom heard of, but tremendously important, the waste-material industry. The author would enrich American economic history and increase our understanding of the Jewish contribution to American economy if he would describe more fully, as he once contemplated doing, the evolution of the industry which he had helped develop.

Since 1929, Mr. Laikin and his family have been Detroiters. Here, he divides his time between business and favored social, philanthropic, and cultural projects. In addition to being active in the Labor Zionist movement, he was one of the architects of the Detroit Jewish Community Council. In his book he traces the evolution of the Council, and records its weaknesses and strengths. He is critical of the Council for it's primarily concerned with civil rights problems rather than with cultural matters. Still the author admits that the Council is an important institution as it represents the Jewish community, and through its various committees such as the arbitration committee helps resolve disagreements which otherwise would have landed in courts-of-law. He is especially satisfied with the Council's work for Israel.

Needless, to say, the author espouses Zionism, and for his efforts

Memoirs of a Practical Dreamer

on behalf of Israel, a forest, the "Yaar Laikin"—the "Laikin Forest," was planted in the Holy Land. The first saplings of that forest, the late Mrs. Laikin and the author had the honor of setting in the ground.

In connection with Mr. Laikin's Zionist activities, it should be stated, that he was the creator of the Detroit Zionist Council, a pioneering project, with which all local Zionist organizations are affiliated and which served as a model for the creation of the National Zionist Emergency Council.

I'd be remiss if I did not mention that during the Second World War, Mr. Laikin worked diligently for the war cause. With equal diligence, soon after the war, he helped create a favorable climate of public opinion for the establishment of Israel.

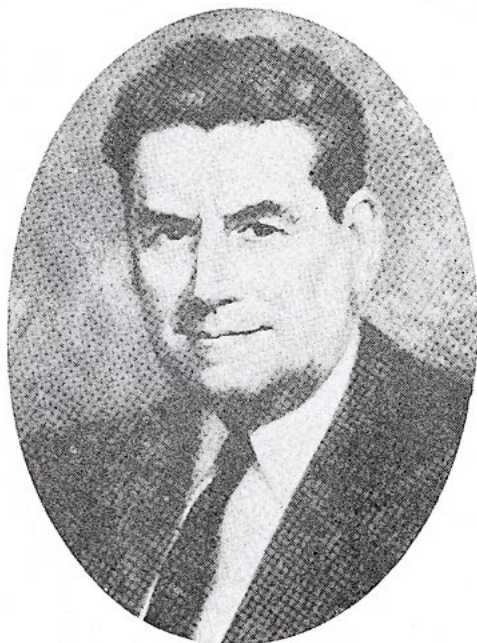
Mr. Laikin, while assisting various organizations, at the same time, does not overlook the deficiencies of certain of the Jewish social, cultural, religious and business establishments, and is very critical of certain of their actions. He is particularly critical of individuals whose actions conflict with their utterances; those who claim to be liberal and act in a most iliberal manner. He is especially antagonistic towards the Jewish Communists who in his opinion are inimical to the Jewish people. Mr. Laikin's criticism, should be emphasized, results from his concern for the welfare of the Jewish people.

Mr. Laikin writes of the upbringing and education of his four daughters, now university educated and married. It was his ambition and profound desire that they be instilled with a love for the Jewish people, their traditions and culture. He is similarly concerned that his grandchildren receive a wholesome Jewish upbringing.

The concluding chapter Mr. Laikin dedicates to his late wife who was his spouse for almost half a century.

Memoirs of a Practical Dreamer is not a continuous chronology, as it was written at different periods of the author's life. As a result, some of the events and characters described seem at times sporadic. Yet they are vivid and impressive, have good structure, unity and cohesion. The photographs, too, add a dimension to the book.

Memoirs of a Practical Dreamer should be translated into English and of course into Hebrew.



Dr. Henry D. Brown

We mourn the death of Dr. Henry D. Brown, Director of the Historical Museum of Detroit from 1946 to 1970.

Dr. Brown, born and raised in Albion, died on February 2, 1970.

Dr. Brown was a close friend of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. During the American Jewish Tercentenary Celebration, he was responsible for the award winning exhibit on Jewish life in America at the Detroit Historical Museum. Likewise, during the Civil War Centennial Observance, he helped arrange the special exhibit on the participation of Michigan Jews in the Civil War.

The Detroit Historical Museum, designed and built under Dr. Brown's leadership, will remain a lasting monument of his contributions to the people of Detroit and Michigan.

From Our History Album



Samuel David Schlusel and
His Wife, Judith

The above photograph was taken about 1908 in Galicia which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Samuel David Schlusel

From Our History Album

was born about 1840 and died about 1924. He was a scribe (Sofer). Some of the Torahs he wrote are in the Synagogues of Detroit, New York and perhaps of London, England.

He was the father of Israel Samuel Schlussel and Baruch Mordechai Schlussel who resided in Detroit for many years and were prominent in the early development of Beth Abraham Synagogue. He was also the father-in-law of Asher Itzkowitz who a founder of, and for a long time, the Superintendant of the Detroit Hebrew Memorial Society (Chesd Shel Emes). They were also the grandparents of attorney Myron Keyes, who was active in the Detroit Jewish Community for many years, and of attorneys Hyman Keyes and Charles Schlussel, Dr. Irving I. Edgar, and of cantor Aaron Edgar formerly of Detroit but now of Omaha, Nebraska. There are many grandchildren and many great grandchildren over various parts of the country.

(Persons having historic photographs or documents relating to Michigan Jewry are invited to contact the editor of *Michigan Jewish History*. All such materials will be carefully considered for publication in future issues of the journal.)

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Compiled by J. D. Hyams

Jewish Historical Society of Michigan

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan was organized on June 1, 1959, for the following main purposes:

1. To promote the study and research of Michigan Jewish history by encouraging all efforts to create a wider interest on the part of Michigan Jews in the growth and development of their many respective communities.

2. To foster the collection, preservation and publication of materials on the history of the Jews of Michigan, to which purposes the society publishes *Michigan Jewish History*, a semi-annual journal, and has established the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library as a permanent archive-depository for Michigan Jewish historical source material.

3. To encourage all projects, celebrations and other activities which tend to spread authentic information concerning Michigan Jewish history, such as the erection by the Society in conjunction with the Michigan Historical Commission, of the historical marker commemorating Michigan's first Jewish settler, at the restored Fort Michilimackinac.

4. To cooperate with national Jewish historical societies as well as with other state and regional Jewish historical groups.

Membership is open to all who have an interest in Michigan Jewish history and in supporting the goals of the organization. Income of the Society is derived from the annual dues and contributions which are deductible for income tax purposes, and are used for publishing the journal and related projects.

