

# **JEWS IN NEW HAVEN**

## **VOLUME X**

**EDITOR/AUTHOR**  
**DAVID S. FISCHER, M.D.**



**40<sup>th</sup> Year of Publication of Jews in New Haven**

**THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER NEW HAVEN**

*With best wishes,  
David S. Fischer*

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# **JEWS IN NEW HAVEN**

## **Volume X**

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**Editor/Author  
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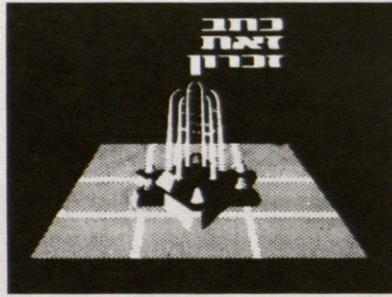
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# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER NEW HAVEN

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# Benefactors

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# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER NEW HAVEN, INC.

## Jews in New Haven-Volume X 40th Year of Publication

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Marvin Bargar, Michael Dimenstein

## Acknowledgments

This tenth volume is the latest in the forty-year history of this series. The ninth volume was published eight years ago. The delay in publication was due to the inability of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven to find an editor other than this octogenarian as well as the inability of the JHSGNH to subsidize a book with a small paying circulation. This makes it a costly per page publication. Accordingly, as with volume nine, we had to rely on the generosity of our Benefactors who contributed the money to make this volume possible. Their names are listed on the Benefactor page with thanks.

As in the eighth and ninth volumes, most of the articles were invited but the few that were not solicited have been accepted because of their merit and their timeliness. Many people worked very hard to bring this book to publication. Patricia B. Illingworth, our office manager, did outstanding work, tasks too numerous to enumerate and well above and beyond the call of duty. Marvin Bargar, as usual, was tireless in finding historical material and illustrations in the archives of the JHSGNH. Michael Dimenstein read all the articles to check for spelling, grammar, punctuation and clarity of meaning. Sharon Petshaft typed some of the articles and the list of Officers, Directors and Trustees and assisted in additional ways. Sydney Perry made many helpful suggestions and supplied some of the names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of contact people who either became authors or connected us with an author. Ina Furst Fischer read many of the articles before publication and made helpful suggestions. Bluma Katz opened the mikvah on Colony Road one afternoon to show it to me and allowed me to take photographs of the immersion pool. Rabbis David Avigdor, Herbert Brockman, Benjamin Scolnic and Scheur Wilhelm answered halachic and other questions for me, but are not responsible for any errors I made. It was a pleasure to work with Richard Kramer and Richard Behnen of Kramer Printing. Aaron Goode and Sharon Petshaft compiled the index.

David S. Fischer, M.D., Editor

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**This Volume Dedicated in Memory of**



**Barry Earl Herman, PhD (1935-2016)**

## Barry Earl Herman, PhD (1935-2016)

Barry Earl Herman was born on January 13, 1935 in Newport, Rhode Island to Louis and Helen Kravetz Herman. At the age of three Barry moved with his family to New Haven, Connecticut. He had a life-long pursuit of learning and received a Bachelor's Degree from Southern CT State University, and a Master's Degree, a Sixth Year Degree, and a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Connecticut.

He was a retired administrator from the New Haven School System, served on the Hamden Board of Education, was a professor at Southern CT State University, and a retired professor from Sacred Heart University. He was a past president of the Ethnic Heritage Center and of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven. Barry also produced and hosted the "Jewish Forum" TV program.

He authored, compiled or edited several books of the Jews in New Haven series, and it only is fitting that this edition be dedicated to a man who cherished each volume and strived to see subsequent releases grow and reach higher echelons of excellence. It's also what he aimed for in his students, his vocation, the organizations he was involved with, the countless causes and charities he contributed to, and his family.

Dr. Barry E. Herman left his family, friends, and community on August 7, 2016. One of his great-nephews, Harrison Rosenay, delivered a eulogy at his funeral, concluding "...he is everything a good person should be. He is smart, funny, generous, caring, and very considerate. He has so many great qualities about him. I am so proud to call him Uncle Barry and I love him very much."

Everyone who knew our "Uncle," Dr. Barry E. Herman, loved him very much and he will be missed by many.

He was a contributor and editor of several volumes of Jews in New Haven, and this edition, Volume X, is dedicated to him and his memory.

**From Werner and Barbara Hirsch, and the Rosenay family, Charles, Melissa, Lauren, Harry and Ian.**

## President's Message

### Dr. Robert P. Forbes

It is a pleasure and an honor to introduce Volume Ten of *Jews in New Haven*—the third volume edited and co-authored by Dr. David Fischer.

It is fitting that the JHSGNH should publish its 10th issue in its 40th year. Jewish tradition distinguishes several stages of maturity. The Jewish child reaches the age of responsibility for his or her actions at the age of 12 (for girls) and 13 (for boys). Eighteen is said to be the proper age to consider marriage, and 20 marks the beginning of full adult responsibility. But true understanding, our sages say, comes at the age of 40.

Viewed in this light, it could be said that our society has finally come of age. We have an active board, an engaged membership, the rich, comprehensive, and (thanks to archivist Marvin Bargar) accessible Harry N. Ladin Memorial Archives, strong programming, and admirable publications—of which this volume is ample testimony.

But although the JHSGNH has reached maturity, this does not mean it has become set in its ways. We have a strong presence on social media, including Facebook and Twitter. We completed a seamless transition of distributing our newsletter, *Happenings*, by email instead of post, resulting in substantial savings. And we have launched a campaign to recruit new young members—including 40 under 40.

In the 21st century, the New Haven Jewish experience, like the American, is more variegated, manifold, and diffused than ever. There is no new Legion Avenue or Oak Street. A substantial segment of our population is no longer closely tied to Jewish institutions—synagogues, clubs, philanthropic and fraternal organizations—yet they proudly identify as Jews. At the same time, our region is host to a growing number of vibrant orthodox communities, some long established, others of recent arrival, embracing a wide range of movements and traditions. All of these stories are our stories too. We want to hear them and share them. Every aspect of the experience of Jews in New Haven is of interest to us. We hope that you will find this volume, and the other work of the Jewish Historical Society, of interest to you.

# JHSGNH Hall of Fame Honorees

2003

Dr. Barry E. Herman and Sherman Kramer

2004

Morton and Sally Horwitz

Charles and Violet Ludwig

Dr. Rocco and Raffaella Orlando

2007

JHS Past Presidents

Dr. Barry E. Herman, Werner Hirsch, Judith Schiff,

Joel Wasserman, Rita Gold, Ronald Ladin,

Sue Goodman, Morton Horwitz, Albert Harary,

Dr. Gary Fleischman, Charles Ludwig

2008

Rita Gold

Albert Harary

Dr. Gary Fleischman

2010

Sydney A. Perry,

CEO of Jewish Federation of GNH

2011

Marvin Bargar,

Archivist of the Jewish Historical Society

2012

Dr. Jonathan Sarna,

Author, Educator &

Member of the original JHS board

2013

Donn Trenner,

American Jazz Pianist

2014

Rabbi James Ponet,

Howard M. Holtzmann, Jewish Chaplain at Yale

2015

Samuel Faiman

Rhoda Sachs Zahler Samuel

2016

Dr. Barry E. Herman

2017

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David S. Fischer, MD, Editor

Jews in New Haven, Volumes VIII, IX, X

Note: This page is not per se included in index.

# Preface

With Volume Ten of *Jews in New Haven (JINH)*, we celebrate the 40th year of publication of this series.

## Why is This Volume Different?

In 2009 in volume nine, page 5, I noted that “Traditionally, when Jews moved into a new area, the three things that they tried to create were a Jewish cemetery, a *minyan* that would later grow to form a synagogue, and a *mikvah* (a Jewish ritual bath).”

I also lamented on page four that, “We had hoped to include articles on the history of the *Mikvah* Society and Tower One/Tower East, but those articles were not available by press time.” Those topics are covered in this volume.

In the nine years since I edited volume nine, I thought about those omissions, and the excellent but brief and non-historical treatment of the Jewish Cemetery Association of Greater New Haven (JCAGNH) on pages 70-71 of that volume. I thought that it would be appropriate to structure this volume on the order of what a traditional Jewish group would do when moving into a new area. In 1840, a traditional orthodox group of mainly German Jews established the first Jewish *minyan* in New Haven that was later called Congregation Mishkan Israel. In 1842, they established a cemetery and incorporated the cemetery and the congregation under the newly permissive laws of the State of Connecticut. In 1849, they appropriated \$600 to study how to establish a *mikvah*.

We have structured this volume to follow that general pattern. The first article examines the history of the four earliest cemeteries established by the four earliest congregations, all Orthodox at the time, and also the cemeteries established by lodges and fraternal organizations not affiliated with synagogues. That is followed by an article on the Mishkan Israel Cemetery, the first Jewish Cemetery in New Haven, the second in New England and the 14th in the United States written by our office administrator who is the Chief Docent at the Grove Street Cemetery. She also examines the history of the Grove Street Cemetery, a non-sectarian cemetery that is a National Historic Landmark and writes about a few of the Jews who are buried there. The fourth article is an historic review of the *mikvahs* in New Haven that were established in the 19th century, about 1862 and 1890. Much of that story was in plain sight in short references in earlier volumes and was not put together in a coherent article until now.

## What Do We Mean by New Haven?

In all previous volumes, the City of New Haven was the primary focus, as the name of the series proclaims. The first editor, Jonathan D. Sarna, showed pictures of 12 synagogues that were or had been in the City of New Haven and listed 33 synagogue structures. He did not include any storefronts, homes or school minyans. Of that number, 20 represented the original building of a congregation in the City of New Haven, 11 were new buildings for congregations that either moved to a new location in New Haven or to a suburb, Mishkan Israel to Hamden and B'nai Jacob to Woodbridge. Only two were new congregations, Temple Emanuel in Orange and the Orange Synagogue Center were built after WWII.

It was not until volume seven of 1997 that *JINH*, the sponsoring organization, called itself the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven (JHSGNH). The name change simply reflected the recognition of the move of a major proportion of New Haven Jews to towns that were contiguous, touching the border of New Haven, and thus part of Greater New Haven area.

After Barry Herman congratulated me on being the editor of volume eight, he said to me privately, "Now that you are editor, you can put in whatever you want, but Milford is not really a part of Greater New Haven." I protested that for many years hundreds of New Haveners went and continued to go to Milford for the summer. They had built a summer synagogue, the Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont, that was friendly, *hamish*, Orthodox and had the ambience of an East European *shtetl shul*. Volume eight was the first to have an article on an "outsider" *shul*.

When I agreed to edit volume nine, Ruth Blumenthal, a member of the Board of Directors of JHSGNH, approached me and asked me to include a history of the Jews of the Valley and their synagogues. I told her that I would include such an "outsider" story if she or someone knowledgeable would write it. With some help and encouragement, she wrote it and we published it, the second "out of area" discussion of synagogues in a volume of *JINH*.

## What is the Greater New Haven Area?

According to their website, "The Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut (JFACT), speaks with one voice for the seven Connecticut Jewish Federations, four Jewish community centers, eight Jewish Family Services, and two Jewish nursing homes in Connecticut. JFACT is the government and community relations arm of the Jewish Federation system in the state, and lobbies for legislation that is of interest to Connecticut's Jewish community of approximately 130,000."



had no information on those that were not contiguous with New Haven. The JFGNH was able to give me a telephone number and an email address of their contact person at all of those synagogues from Wallingford to Chester. I obtained the phone number and/or email address and sometimes web addresses of Chabad synagogues from the *Jewish Spark of Greater New Haven* issues of December 2015 and April 2016.

An email was sent to the contact person at each of these institutions in August 2016. Those that failed to respond, we called and if we failed to reach a person, we left a voicemail. Each institution that failed to respond, we tried to contact a second time in September with an email and a phone call. No emails were returned as undeliverable and all phone voicemails self-identified as the number we called. We published all the articles we received as written by the author except for spelling, punctuation or grammatical mistakes.

### **Synagogues New to Jews in New Haven**

Temple Beth David, a Reform synagogue was established in Cheshire in 1968. The article by its current president documents its growth and vigor. Thirty years later, in 1998, Conservative Kol Ami was formed and flourished in Cheshire for most of its 15 years, but lost membership due to demographic changes and closed its doors from the resulting financial problems. It distributed its assets to other synagogues as recounted by a member during the entire life of the congregation.

Temple Beth Tikvah in Madison is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the building of Temple Beth Tikvah in 1977 on Durham Road in Madison. A long term member describes the struggles and successes of the congregation before and after that date. The article on Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek documents the series of Jewish congregations and synagogue buildings they occupied in Moodus, Deep River and Chester until they consolidated in Chester. The director of adult education there guides us through that remarkable journey with pictures along the way.

### **Updated Articles**

In the forty years since volume one, many of the synagogues covered have ceased to exist, and many of the survivors have changed a little or substantially. We chose to solicit updated articles on Temple Beth Shalom: Twenty Years Later by the same author. Congregation Beth Israel: The Orchard Street Shul was closed for many years and its survival in doubt. It has risen phoenix-like to become an active synagogue again as described by two of the leaders of the resurrection movement. Congregation B'nai Jacob: The Woodbridge Years 1961-2016 by its longtime historian brings

us up-to-date. The Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont/Chabad has grown from a summer congregation to a vigorous year-round synagogue and that story is clearly described by one of the two leaders of that transformation, the rebbitzen.

The Westville Synagogue is made up of the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol, the Congregation B'nai Israel (the Rose Street *shul*) and Westville Synagogue and was last profiled in volume two. We had hoped to have an update by press time, but it was not possible. With the permission of the president of the synagogue, we are using a good website history.

Mishkan Israel celebrates its history every 25 years with a major publication reviewing its progress in the recent 25 years, and providing a short review of its history since 1840. Rather than seeking a new article, we sought and received the permission of the rabbi and the author to reproduce the article reviewing Mishkan Israel 1990-2015 (without the copious references which are available in the 175th Anniversary.). Chabad at Yale has been mentioned in earlier volumes, but now that they have a beautiful new synagogue building and other facilities, we asked the rabbi to briefly review its history and function in serving the Yale community.

The remainder of this volume is also a new departure in reviewing the history of Jewish educational institutions in Greater New Haven, some special Jewish people and some additional articles of interest and these will be commented on in the Introduction to Part II.

David S. Fischer, M.D., Editor

# Jewish Cemeteries in Greater New Haven

By David S. Fischer, MD

“Traditionally, when Jews move into a new area, the three things that they tried to create were a Jewish cemetery, a *minyan* that would later grow to form a synagogue, and a *mikvah* (Jewish Ritual Bath).” *Jews in New Haven*, 9:5, 2009

The only full articles on cemeteries in this series of volumes is one on an Orthodox-Jew from Charlestown, SC who was buried in Branford, CT in 1834 in *Jews in New Haven [JINH]*, 9:85-87, 2009 and an article on the Jewish Cemetery Association of Greater New Haven (JCAGNH) in *JINH* 9:70-71, 2009.

## Mishkan Israel: The First Jewish Congregation in New Haven

Although there had been a few Jews in New Haven in the 1770s, there was no group large enough to form a *minyan* until 1840 when there were 15 to 20 Jewish families, primarily from Bavaria, Germany. They formed a *minyan*, originally in private homes and then above the store of Heller and Mandelbaum. They called their *minyan*, Shaar Sholom, the Gate of Peace (see 100 Years of Jewry in New Haven, *New Haven Register*, November 3, 1940). At the time, they were unable to form a public religious entity. Until 1818, the Congregational Church was the state’s established religion, meaning among other things, that taxes supported it. Episcopalians, Baptists and Methodists formed a new political party, the Toleration Party in 1816, determined to sever the relationship of church and state, among other reforms. They were successful in 1817, and in 1818, the Constitutional Convention affected a complete severance of church and state and recognized the complete equality of all Christian sects. Although Jews could now hold public office in Connecticut, Jewish congregations had been purposely denied full religious equality.

## The First Jewish Cemetery in New Haven

In 1842, since the *minyan* could not legally purchase land for a Jewish cemetery or synagogue, a group of Jewish individuals bought about 1.5 acres of land in Westville at Whalley Avenue and Jewell Street for \$50 (R

Osterweis, *Mishkan Israel, 1840–1860*, *JINH* 2:104-109, 1979 and D. Levy, *New Haven Jewish History* [reprint], *JINH* 2:15-17, 1979). In May 1843, a joint petition from Jewish leaders of Congregation Beth Israel of Hartford and Mishkan Israel was presented to the legislature to amend the constitution to give Jews equal rights with all Christian denominations. The judicial committee of the legislature declined to recommend a constitutional amendment, but did recommend a special act. Section 149 passed, in June 1843, specified that “Jews who may desire to unite and form religious societies, shall have the same religious powers and privileges, as are given to Christians of every denomination by the Laws of the State.” Congregation Beth Israel of Hartford and Mishkan Israel (Tabernacle of Israel) both registered almost immediately, but there is a continuing dispute as to which institution was the first synagogue in Connecticut. The property on Whalley Avenue that was purchased in 1842 was transferred to Congregation Mishkan Israel and registered as its cemetery, so there is no question that the Mishkan Israel cemetery was the first Jewish cemetery in Connecticut, the second in New England and the 14th in the United States.

### **Trouble at Mishkan Israel**

Congregation Mishkan Israel initially had precarious financial stability but grew slowly over the next three years as more Jews arrived from Germany, Poland, Russia, Holland and France. After three years, a rift developed which has been attributed to a religious divide between what was called Orthodoxy as contrasted with Reform. Actually, Reform then, both in Germany and in New Haven “did not mean a break from traditional Judaism, rather it meant a more orderly service...mostly, it was probably imitative of Christian services, and made Jews feel more comfortable, since they were, after all living in a Christian society.” (WS Hirsch, *The first minute books of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-1860*, *JINH* 6:1-33, 1993).

In addition, the Jews of non-German speaking Eastern Europe spoke Yiddish. Native Germans regarded this as a corruption of a beautiful language and a sign of an uncultured individual who was less assimilated and less affluent and of a lower social stratum. This is probably what led to the split in 1846. The “Reformers,” led by Leopold Wasserman (later called Waterman) formed Mishkan Sholom (Tabernacle of Peace) and met in the Brewster Building. The more traditional “Orthodox,” remained in Mishkan Israel. The cemetery that they had purchased earlier was split in half. The division of the cemetery was formalized by a deed written two years later and signed on March 27, 1848. “It stipulated that no fence should ever be

built between the two sections (WS Hirsch, *Ibid*).

### **Some Lost History and Some History Translated from the German**

It is regrettable that the minute book of Mishkan Israel for the period 1843-1848 was lost in a fire. The first remaining minute book, 1849-1860, was written in old German Fraktur hand written script and was translated by Werner S. Hirsch, editor of *JINH*, in volume 6, pp. 1-33, 1993. Much of the ensuing information comes from these translated minutes.

In March of 1849, Mishkan Israel hired Rev. Isaac Straus who purported to be a rabbi with *smicha*, (ordination) but whose credentials have since been questioned. The Board also voted to eventually build a synagogue with a projection of a living quarter beneath it for a rabbi, a teacher, a classroom and a *mikvah*. That same month, Leopold Waterman, President of Mishkan Scholom, offered to merge the two congregations if the cemeteries were merged, and the name Mishkan Scholom would cease to exist, stipulations to which Mishkan Israel agreed. The merger was effective on April 1, 1849.

Ten members of Mishkan Sholom joined the 23 members of Mishkan Israel. There were 26 known Jewish families living in New Haven then who were not members of Mishkan Israel nor were they part of the merger.

### **The First Synagogue Building in New Haven and the Second Cemetery**

Between 1849 and 1854, the Jewish community and Mishkan Israel both grew in numbers and prospered financially. The leaders of Mishkan Israel again considered building or buying a building for the synagogue, and started raising money to do so. In 1854, the New Orleans merchant and philanthropist, Judah Touro, died, and among other bequests, left \$ 5,000 to Congregation Mishkan Israel. With this additional money, they purchased the Third Congregational Church on Court Street for \$12,000. A relatively large sum of money was spent on refitting the interior for a synagogue. However, this new, elaborate synagogue rekindled a debate within the more "Orthodox" and more "Reform" elements of the congregation and they again split in 1856.

The new congregation was named B'nai Scholom, Sons of Peace, and this time was composed of the more "Orthodox" group. Having lost their cemetery by leaving Mishkan Scholom, they purchased property on Alling Street in Hamden in July 1856. The earliest burial there was of Isaac Selman, who died September 13, 1857; age 15 months (personal communication from Werner S. Hirsch, 2016).

Although B'nai Scholom continued to record its minutes in German and conducted its business in German, its constitution specified, "The services shall strictly follow the Polish ritual and never be changed. In 1873 they purchased a building from the Third Congregational Society on William Street and the congregation grew (WS Hirsch, *The B'nai Scholom Cornerstone*, *JINH* 5:95-113, 1988). In the 1890s, they outgrew the William Street building, bought land, and built a new and larger synagogue on Olive Street that they occupied from 1895 to 1936. As the membership aged, died and moved to other parts of the city or to the suburbs, membership dwindled and the congregation dissolved in 1936. The cemetery was maintained by the B'nai Sholom Cemetery Association as caretaker until 1965 when the cemetery was acquired by Temple Beth Sholom (personal communication from Marty Rudnick of TBS, 2016).

### **The Third Jewish Congregation and Cemetery**

B'nai Jacob was the third Jewish congregation in New Haven, and like its two predecessors, it was Orthodox. Its original membership came primarily from Russia and Poland, especially from Elizabethgrad in Russia in 1881 after the pogroms that erupted after the assassination Czar Alexander II of Russia (see BE Herman, *The History of Congregation B'nai Jacob 1882-1961*, *JINH* 8:65-72, 2005). In 1882, they formed an official congregation called B'nai Jacob, Sons of Jacob, and registered with the state. They adopted the Polish Jewish ritual (*nusach*). In 1883, they purchased half an acre of land for a cemetery from the New Haven Lodge of the Independent Order of the Free Sons of Israel, a fraternal lodge of Jewish men formed in New York in 1842. The Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven (JHSGNH) has a copy of the deed of sale. The property on Horse Cartway Street, then in New Haven, but now, with border changes, in East Haven and called Brockett Place. Gravestones of early members can still be identified there. In 1885, B'nai Jacob purchased its first synagogue building at 105 Temple Street from the Congregational Society of Temple Street Church of New Haven, an African-American Congregation.

In 1887, between 22 and 32 members seceded from B'nai Jacob and formed B'nai Abraham, Sons of Abraham. In the settlement, they received a Torah, \$ 335 in cash and 30 square yards of land in the Horse Cartway Street cemetery. Some members returned to B'nai Jacob soon thereafter, and the weakened B'nai Abraham joined Congregation Bikur Cholim (which had formed in 1883 as the fourth Orthodox minyan in New Haven, primarily of

Lithuanian Jews from Kovno) to form Bikur Cholim-B'nai Abraham. The transfer of the cemetery to Bikur Cholim-B'nai Abraham is recorded in the New Haven Land Records (volume 398, page 292). In 1888, the combined congregation purchased a lot on the corner of Factory and Oak Streets and built a stone structure at the foot of Factory Street. There were then four Jewish Orthodox congregations with four cemeteries. In 1888, the members of B'nai Jacob tired of the long trip to Brockett Place and bought land for a cemetery at the corner of Whalley Avenue and Jewell Street adjacent to the Mishkan Israel cemetery. In 1916, their remaining cemetery property on Brockett Place was given to the Hebrew Free Burial Association that already had cemetery property there that they had purchased about four decades earlier.

### **The Increasing Number of Jewish Congregations and Cemeteries**

Jonathan Sarna, then a graduate student at Yale University, was the editor of volume one of *JINH*, published in 1978. He listed a total of 33 synagogue buildings for 20 synagogue congregations from 1856 to 1971. In volume nine, we completed reviews of all those congregations that had not been previously reviewed in earlier volumes of *JINH*. We also introduced an article on the Jewish Cemetery Association of Greater New Haven (JCAGNH) by Andrew Hodes and Lisa Stanger (*JINH* 9:70-71, 2009) of more than 25 Jewish cemeteries and their associations with synagogues or lodges, etc. and with contact persons, when available. The cemeteries are listed in three major locations, Brockett Place in East Haven, Jewell Street in New Haven and Farwell Street in West Haven and a few cemeteries in other locations.

An estimate by Rabbi Eliezer Greer, Research Director of the New Haven Torah Center.org, suggested that there were 44 Jewish cemeteries in the Greater New Haven (GNH) area, (but the dimensions of the GNH area were not specified) and 15 cemeteries in the Jewell Street Complex (Internet download, TM MacMillan, January 24, 2011, Jewish Cemeteries Get New Life). The 44 include many synagogue-associated cemeteries and about a dozen Jewish cemeteries associated with lodges, fraternal orders or plain civic associations. Some of them are no longer viable entities and have been maintained by merging with or donating their assets to synagogues or other lodges or giving them to the JCAGNH. A listing of most of the Jewish cemeteries in the GNH area can be found on the Internet at: <http://shurefuneralhome.com/cemeteries/> and [http://www.newhaventorahcenter.org\\_info.asp](http://www.newhaventorahcenter.org_info.asp) and <http://www.wellerfuneralhome.com/local-cemeteries/>

## Jewish Lodge, Fraternal Order and Association Cemeteries

While small numbers of Jews came to the United States in the 18th century, by 1840, there was an estimated 18,000 (ML Cohen *JINH* 4:63-76, 1988), most from Western Europe, but increasing numbers from Eastern Europe. Initially they came for economic opportunity and to escape from anti-Semitism. By the 1880s, they came in large numbers for the aforesaid reasons, but increasingly for existential reasons—to escape pogroms and other threats of murderous groups that were encouraged by governments and churches.

As previously noted, when Mishkan Israel reunited in 1849, there were about 33 Jewish families affiliated with the synagogue and an estimated 26 Jewish families with no affiliation. Immigrants went to U.S. cities where family members or friends had already settled. Most were Orthodox Jews and formed or joined Orthodox synagogues. In fact, all Jewish congregations in New Haven were Orthodox until 1897 when Mishkan Israel moved to Orange Street and initiated mixed seating. Until then it had a *mechitzah*, and by Rabbi Herbert Brockman's standards, it was then that it morphed from Orthodox to Reform. B'nai Jacob was Orthodox from its inception in 1882 until 1921 when it accepted the ritual practices of the United Synagogues, a conservative movement and instituted mixed seating. (There are many other criteria that one may evaluate to separate the ritual differences, but that is a large discussion for another time and place).

Meanwhile, a substantial proportion of Jewish families assimilated to one degree or another to be more "American" and did not join a synagogue. Isolated in a new county with an unfamiliar language, many of them joined lodges, fraternal orders or associations, especially those that were Yiddish speaking. Many of these were essentially mutual aid societies and offered social relationships, particularly with Jews from major cities of common origins, like Vilna, now called Vilnius in Lithuania, so they joined the Vilner Lodge. Members paid dues and an additional small periodic sum to pay off the set price of a guaranteed burial site in the lodge cemetery.

In New Haven area, the lodges that have local cemeteries are: Independent Connecticut Lodge with three cemetery areas on Jewell Street, now administered by the JCAGNH; the Independent Vilner Lodge on Jewell Street and Vilner Memorial Park on Victor Street in East Haven; Warshaver Relief Society with a cemetery on Jewell Street and another one on Brockett Place in East Haven; Columbus Lodge No. 61 which took over the property of the Herzl Cemetery Association in 1927, and when it ceased all activity in 2002, transferred the cemetery ownership to Temple Beth Sholom and its

care to the JCAGNH; United Independent Lodge cemetery on Jewell Street is affiliated with the Orchard Street Shul; Farband L.Z.A. cemetery on Fitch Street was set up by the Yiddish speaking Farband cultural organization that ceased functioning in 2006 and its cemetery is now administered by the JCAGNH; Hebrew Free Burial Association of New Haven purchased its first cemetery in East Haven in 1873 and was given an adjacent cemetery in 1916 by Congregation B'nai Jacob (see RH Silverman, *JINH* 9:72-79, 2009); The Workman's Circle (Der Arbiter Ring) is an American-Jewish non-profit organization that promotes social and economic justice and provides insurance and burial assistance for its members and has a cemetery on Farwell Street in West Haven that is now administered by the JCAGNH; Independent Rambam Lodge has a cemetery at Brockett Place that is now administered by the JCAGNH; Independent Adas Israel has a cemetery on Jewell Street affiliated with Westville Synagogue and cared for by the JCAGNH; The Jewish People's Cemetery Association property is on Victor Street in East Haven in association with Westville Synagogue; Mt. Sinai Memorial Park (formerly Jacob Hyman Lodge property) is on Jewell and Onyx Streets and is now administered by the JCAGNH; United Israel cemetery on Fitch Street is affiliated with the Orchard Street Shul.

### **Example of the Evolution of a Defunct Synagogue and a Lodge Cemetery**

As of 2016, about 10 synagogues in the New Haven area that had cemeteries have ceased to exist or function and approximately an equal number of the group of lodges, fraternal orders or associations that had cemeteries have become defunct. What happened to those cemeteries and what did new Jewish congregations do about acquiring cemeteries soon after they were formed? An interesting answer is provided by Temple Beth Sholom (TBS) in Hamden.

TBS began as a Jewish Community Center (JCC) and evolved into a synagogue in 1950. Its membership was relatively young and most of its early members were already affiliated with a synagogue in New Haven. There was no immediate need for a new affiliated cemetery and the infrequent burials of members mainly in the B'nai Jacob cemetery on Jewell Street at the corner of Whalley Avenue or in the cemetery of Congregation B'nai Sholom on Alling Street in Hamden. As previously mentioned, B'nai Sholom had closed its doors in 1936. The B'nai Scholom Cemetery Association maintained its cemetery, but there were fewer and fewer burials of its members and the decreasing income made maintenance more difficult. Meanwhile, by 1965,

TBS was growing in membership and its original members were now 15 years older. It then made sense for TBS to acquire and for B'nai Scholom to give up the Alling Street cemetery. Fifty year later, TBS had filled the vast majority of the available gravesites and needed more in a new cemetery. Its solution was to purchase space in the Walnut Grove cemetery on Old Colony Road in Meriden adjacent to similar space for the Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale University. The Slifka Center was committed to providing space for the burial of cremains and non-Jewish spouses of Jewish members of the Yale University faculty, students, alumni and other members of its *minyanim*. Arrangements were made with TBS for its potential future needs. All parties were served by this understanding.

### **Jewish Funeral Laws and Customs**

A Jewish funeral is a sacred rite and should be invested with dignity and simplicity as taught by Jewish tradition. Some traditions have developed with variations in different places and among different groups of Jews. It is generally agreed that embalming, viewing and cremation are unacceptable. Routine autopsies and organ donation were viewed as a desecration of the body and avoided. In recent years, organ donation has been shown to greatly improve the life and wellbeing of many sick people and may be viewed as an example of *K'vod Ha-met* (respect for the deceased) that brings healing to the living. Thus, with certain organs or tissues it is permitted as a *mitzvah*.

For many years, the tradition of Jewish cemeteries did not allow the burial of a non-Jew in a Jewish cemetery. In some cases, the non-Jewish spouse of Jewish person would be buried outside the fence or along the fence but separated in some way (often with bushes or other foliage) from the graves of Jews. The alternative for a mixed religious couple in New Haven was burial in a non-sectarian cemetery like the Grove Street Cemetery near Yale University since it was commissioned in 1787, or since 1929 in the Beavertdale Cemetery on Fitch Street in New Haven near its border with Hamden. In the past 30 years or so as assimilation rose to nearly 50% of Jewish marriages, many Reform and some Conservative congregations are accepting the non-Jewish spouse as a member which then raises the question of appropriate burial for the member non-Jewish spouse along with the Jewish spouse on a case by case basis in consultation with the congregational rabbi (see Guide to Jewish Funeral Practice, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, downloaded at <http://www.uscj.org/JewishLivingandLearning/Lifecycle/JewishFuneralPractice/GuidetoJewishFuneralPractice.aspx>)

When cremation became more common in the general American popu-

lation in recent years, most Jewish cemeteries continued to not allow the burial of cremains. Now, some are allowing the burial of cremains, including Mishkan Israel ("The cemetery has monument, bronze plaque and cremains sections." See <http://cmihamden.org/who-we-are/cemetery/>) and the cemetery of the Slifka Center, among others.

It will be interesting to see what evolves in the coming years in Jewish religious society as the various rabbinical associations reevaluate the rules for burial practice in their individual traditions or even in a synagogue by synagogue or cemetery by cemetery decision.

Andrew Hodes, Administrative Director of JCAGNH and James M. Shure, President of the Robert E. Shure Funeral Home were generous with their time, their information and their knowledge. Later they read the draft manuscript and suggested corrections and additions. They are not responsible for any errors of commission or omission. The author takes full responsibility for what is presented here.

Additional note: In 1952, B'nai Jacob needed more gravesites and bought 22 acres of cemetery space on Wintergreen Avenue in New Haven as reported in the 1982 Centennial Edition by Rabbi Arthur Chiel and called to my attention by Rhoda Myers.

# Congregation Mishkan Israel Cemetery

By Patricia B. Illingworth

The beginning of the Mishkan Israel cemetery was conceived and the land was purchased in 1842 before the congregation could be legally formed [See Fischer Jewish Cemeteries in this Volume]. In 1843, Mishkan Israel registered with the state as a new Jewish congregation. The cemetery itself, as a distinguished burial site for the Congregation of Mishkan Israel, became the first Jewish Cemetery in the state of Connecticut, and the second in New England.

The landscaping of the cemetery is attractive and comforting. It took Ferdinand Von Beren with his own creativeness to search for a historical architectural structure for placement upon these holy and sacred grounds. The selection had to be "An Assyrian Tomb Chapel". The exclusive selection of the Assyrian style Mortuary Tomb Chapel points to its legitimate integrity as it defines the ancient geographical location of Israel in relation to the Reform movement that the Congregation of Mishkan Israel was undergoing at that time:

### Landscape architecture for the cemetery:

Walking up into the cemetery one notes the Chapel is built upon a mound indicative of Mesopotamian buildings. To the left of the structure is a fountain, indicative of an ideal "resting place" among nomadic peoples, where water is more precious than gold and lush gardens are a reward for a life well lived. In 1888, Ferdinand Von Beren, architect and Westville resident was commissioned to build an appropriate mortuary chapel building for the cemetery.

There must be an inception point to the very beginning of this mortuary structure which has to be revealed in order to keep the Jewish ideals in the forefront for the future of other Jewish generations of Westville and for all of the world to see. Rabbi David Levy saw a need to make many different reconstructions of the various religious applications within the Jewish religion, and to include their former way of life. Just to give a small comment of the Rabbi's life for further clarification of this reformation while building their new home, their new life, a burgeoning life to garner the fruits of the Jewish reform in New Haven: From, *The Jews in New Haven, VOL. III: 101-109*, the article written by Jonathan Sarna, entitled "*Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Temple Mishkan Israel*", describes Rabbi Levy

and his vibrant life in New Haven, to wit: “Rabbi David Levy (1854-1931), who succeeded Kleeberg in 1893, heralded a new era of change at Mishkan Israel. Symbolic of this change was the fact that he was the congregation’s first American born Rabbi. He was hired directly from a post at Charleston’s prestigious Temple Beth Elohim, where he served for eighteen years, beginning when he was only twenty-one years old. Though he studied at a traditional seminary, Isaac Leeser’s short-lived Maimonides College, Levy had become ‘a thorough going Reformer.’ In Beth Elohim, he opposed both separate seating and the observance of the second day of Jewish holidays. He also instituted his own prayer book, *Service of the Sanctuary*, and he included in its pages several hymns of his own composing. Some of his hymns later found inclusion in the Union Hymnal. Levy was an amateur artist... In New Haven, however, he concentrated more on cult than on culture. First, he abandoned all vestiges of German. Henceforward, vernacular prayers and sermons were delivered in English. Synagogue minutes began to be recorded in English as well. Then he revised the ritual, instituted his own prayer book, and modernized the Hebrew school. Perhaps to enshrine his spirit of innovation – but also for more practical reasons – he soon spearheaded a drive aimed at moving Mishkan Israel from Court Street to Orange Street. When the cornerstone of the new Orange Street Temple was laid, in January 1896, Levy delivered a famous historical oration, which forms the basis for much of what is known about the history of Jews in New Haven in the nineteenth century (an abbreviated revision of this oration, which first appeared in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, was reprinted in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol 2). Finally, sometime around 1900, Mishkan Israel undertook a step that had been debated for years; in instituted a Sunday Service.”

To bring forward further the point of a highly reformed Jewish Religion under the direction of Rabbi Levy, the stained glass window of Moses in this mortuary chapel points to the Reform movement in a very prodigious statement. It was while probing for further information on the historical, religious, psychological, and social issues connected within the cemetery, I contacted Rabbi Herbert Brockman as to my giving tours and lectures on this cemetery. It was the Rabbi who directed me to this Moses window in that Moses was a “man of color”. Truly this is an interesting point to be revealed. My next move was to further attain more information through Mr. Marvin Bargar, Archivist, and the Curator Mr. Werner Hirsch. I was to contact Rabbi Scolnic and this was also confirmed by Mr. Albert Harary, President of the Jewish Historical Society – at the time.

Thereupon, I did make contact with Rabbi Scolnic and he was very generous with his time and this discovery. To give credit to Rabbi Scolnic’s insight

with the reformation of Mishkan Israel Congregation under the direction of Rabbi Levy, it made perfect sense to portray Moses as a man of color because he would have been a *man of color* by all standards of the time. It is the reality of their enslaved existence in ancient Egypt which was a combination of the pagan and Jewish rite. However, while their new “Americanized” culture evolves, it is through the symbolism rendered in the stain glass where Moses once again reminds this new group of once distant past reformation of the Jewish faith/religious conviction while traveling into a new country.

The changes at Mishkan Israel define the heart and soul of Rabbi Levy and his quest to redefine and make better a way of life for the Congregation. He is responsible for the “culture” of Mishkan Israel and it has been shown through this Mortuary Chapel and the stained glass windows, and then to further define, or to be extended by the symbolism of the burials in the cemetery. The Rabbi spread a spiritual current, carrying a dynamic energy, a tide of conflicting emotions at times, a mixture of sacred and secular images of Jewish life but there was a renewal of the heart to be incorporated by all the people through his untiring work. It was his rapt view of a new and sustainable life for these people in a new land which became the warp and woof of a modern and go-ahead Congregation which is witnessed today.

It was from the establishment of the cemetery we see the Reform Jewish Society of New Haven come forward from their private worship to begin their new life in a dedicated synagogue. So it is from this point, I would like to point out those special persons who made Mishkan Israel a real possibility. These individuals are located in Mishkan Israel cemetery:

### **Let us take a walk to see some of them ...**

Enter from Jewell Street to begin at Licht Monument

1 LOCATION of: AS 102 (Right side of pathway)

Maier Zunder (1829-1901) First Jewish member of the New Haven School Board. Zunder School was located at 274 George Street.

[JINH Photo Vol 1, pg9]; see photos in Zunder article in this volume

2 LOCATION of: AY 88 (Left side of pathway- lower section)

Minna Kleeberg (1841-1878) Poetess Monument unveiled in 1884. She was the wife of Rabbi Lewis Kleeberg. Cited from the American Israelite May 30, 1884:

*“...Her name and her fame belonged to our people – let monument then, be erected by them; let it assume a national character; let it be erected by the Israelites of America to whom she was so much endeared – then will they be proud of themselves as they were of her.”* [See illustration of monument

*JINH* Vol 5, pg74]

3 LOCATION of: AZ 79 (Left side of pathway – upper section)

Michael Milander (1796-1884) First lay reader at Mishkan Israel in 1843. He was reader in 1849 when Mishkan Israel and Mishkan Sholom combined in 1849-1850 (?)

[*JINH* Photo Vol VI, pg4]

4 LOCATION of: AT 73 (Left side of pathway – lower section)

Morris (Moritz) Steinert (1831-1912) Founder of the New Haven Symphony

[History of the New Haven Symphony Orchestre 1894-1969, pg11]

5 LOCATION of: AY 60 (Left side of pathway – upper section)

Bernard Shoninger (1828-1910) B. Shoninger Organ Company (Est. 1858)

[*JINH* Vol IV, p69]

6 LOCATION of: AZ 52 (Left side of the pathway – lower section)

Max Adler (8141-1916) Strouse, Adler Co (Est. 1862), a major employer of Jews.

[*JINH* Vol IV, p69]

7 LOCATION of: AT 74 (Right side of the pathway – lower section)

Isaac Strouse (1829-1903) Strouse, Adler Co (Est. 1862)

[*JINH* Vol VII, p294]

8 LOCATION of: AZ 62 (Right side of the pathway – lower section)

Louis Sonnenberg (1876-1919) Sonnenberg Piano Co. (Est. 1850)

[Son-in-law to Bernard Shoninger and business partner.]

1A LOCATION of: AE 40 – (On crest of hill overlooking Whalley Ave.)

Hannah Waterman (c.1804-1845) Wife of Dr. Sigmund Waterman:

The first and oldest interment of a Jewish cemetery in the city of New Haven.

Hannah is the jewel in the crown.

## REFERENCES:

There are many other significant burials in the Mishkan Israel cemetery which one can explore at leisure. Many of the more famous are catalogued in Werner S. Hirsch's "Encyclopedia of New Haven Jews", available for reference at the archives of the Jewish Historical Society at 270 Fitch Street, New Haven, CT.

### **Adler, Max:**

Reference: Encyclopedia of New Haven Jews Page 11-13

Reference Manuscript Files under Adler Family and Other Businesses

**Kleeberg, Minna:**

Reference Judy A. Schiff Vol V: Minna Kleeberg: A Poet for All the World

**Milander, Michael:**

Reference Werner S. Hirsch Vol V: The Notebook of Michael Milander

**Shoninger, Bernard:**

Reference Encyclopedia of New Haven Jews Page 531-534

Reference Manuscript Files under Shoninger Family and Other Businesses

**Sonnenberg, Louis:** Louis Sonnenberg (1876-1919) Sonnenberg Piano Co. (Est. 1850) Reference Encyclopedia of New Haven Jews Page 557-558

**Steinert, Morris (Moritz)** Helen H. Roberts & Doris Cousins: A History of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra

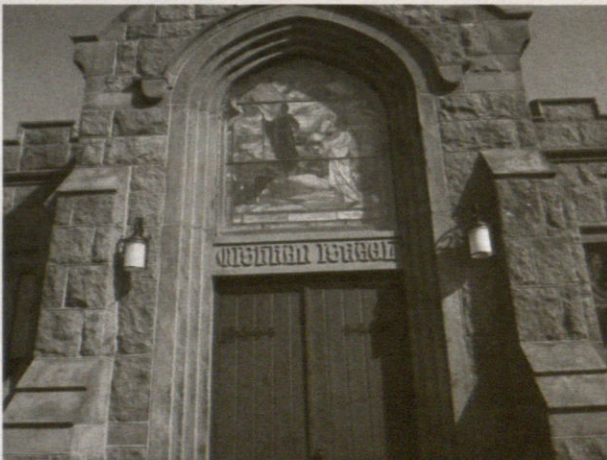
**Strouse, Isaac:**

Reference Encyclopedia of New Haven Jews Page 586-591

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**Zunder, Maier:** Reference Sandy Barnes Vol X Maier Zunder: A Leading Citizen of Nineteenth Century New Haven

[Earlier articles about Mishkan Israel have appeared in Jews in New Haven in the following citations by volume, pages, and year: 2:15-17, 1979; 2:18-21, 1979; 2:22-24, 1979; 2:104-109, 1979; 3:98--101, 1981; 3:101-106, 1981; 4:63-76, 1986; 6:1-33, 1993; 6:34-52, 1993; 6:53-67, 1993; 7:43-56, 1997; 7:129-140, 1997. An article about B'nai Scholom, which split from Mishkan Israel is at 5:95-113, 1988.]



*Moses: Man of Color, Stain Glass Window in Chapel showing Moses of Man in Color*

## Jewish Persons Buried in Grove Street Cemetery By Patricia B. Illingworth MALS

Grove Street Cemetery is recognized and registered by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service since 1997 as National Historical Landmark located in New Haven, Connecticut.

The Grove Street Cemetery is one of only 60 National Historic Landmarks in Connecticut and is the ninth such landmark in New Haven. According to the Grove Street Cemetery website materials, to wit: "In 1997 the Department of the Interior added the Grove Street Cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places. Three years later the Department declared the cemetery a National Historic Landmark, the first cemetery so designated in New England, because "this site possesses national significance in commemorating the history of the United States of America."

Specifically the cemetery "represents a mile-stone in the development of a cemetery as a distinct institution. Its monuments reflect the history of funerary art in America while its entrance gate is recognized as one of the leading examples of Egyptian Revival style in the country."



*The Dead Shall Be Raised*

The first interment was Martha Townshend with her son who had passed two years earlier. The Townshend family was a notable family in the community with many ties into trade and commerce all around the world. In approximately 1840 the headstones had to be moved into the cemetery thus discouraging any more burials on the Green. The headstones from the Green were placed with their families in the burial ground and those who did not have family plots were placed on the North and West Walls. The moving of the headstones was also to assist in the preservation of New Haven's history.

What is most significant for the cemetery overall is the notable association of people who played very important roles in the history of New Haven, in the State of Connecticut, and our nation as well, to wit: lexicographer Noah Webster (1758-1843), geographer Jedediah Morse (1761-1826), Shakespeare Critic Delia Salter Bacon (1811-1859), inventors Eli Whitney (1765-1825), Charles Goodyear (1800-1860), Chauncey Jerome (1793-1868), Founding Father Roger Sherman (1721-1793), scientist Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864),

railroad magnate Joseph Sheffield (1793-1882), Protestant preacher, Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), and one of the first biographers of George Washington, David Humphreys (1752-1818).

There were many other important persons from Yale University, such as Presidents, Officers, and distinguished Professors and well-known and leading figures on the state, local and national levels as well. Decidedly then, those persons who were so well involved with Yale wanted to remain with Yale and were buried in Grove Street.

These three noted persons are just a brief view of the Jews who have taken residence in Grove Street Cemetery:

**Rollin G Osterweis** was the City Historian of New Haven and a noted professor at Yale University for 33 years. He graduated from Yale in 1930. He continued his studies at the Yale School of Law.

Osterweis was a specialist on the American South and urban history. He was also the director of debating and public speaking at Yale. He was a faculty advisor to the Yale Political Union and a professor emeritus of history and oratory at Yale University. Then after his retirement from Yale, he served as an adjunct professor of history at the University of New Haven. He wrote "*Three Centuries of New Haven History*" and was the Historian of Congregation Mishkan Israel.

His decision to be buried in Grove Street was a simple one – he was connected to the University and to the field of education and wished to be close by. His residence is F Magnolia Street in Grove Street Cemetery.

**Laurel Fox Vlock** is another Jew in the cemetery. Laurel was an Emmy award-winning TV producer and a former PBS co-anchor. For 30 years, Laurel had distinction as a documentary producer, writer, TV director as well as a broadcast and film moderator.

While at Yale University, she was a co-founder of the *Archive of Holocaust Testimonies* which involved an original idea to have video testimonies of those Jews who survived the Holocaust. While being the founder and chairperson of Bridgeways Communications Corp, she received many awards and honors including the "Silver Hugo", the President's Medal from Southern Connecticut State University and the noted honor of the Torch of Liberty from the Anti-Defamation League. Her residence is 30 Magnolia Ave in the cemetery. (See "*Jews in New Haven*" 9:254-258 and 8:139-149)

Both Osterweis and Vlock had a Jewish spouse and raised their children to be Jewish. They were buried in the Grove Street Cemetery for the reasons already mentioned. However, with an intermarriage rate near 50%, there is an increasing number of couples who wish to be buried together and some have found that problematic in the past, as discussed in the article *Jewish*

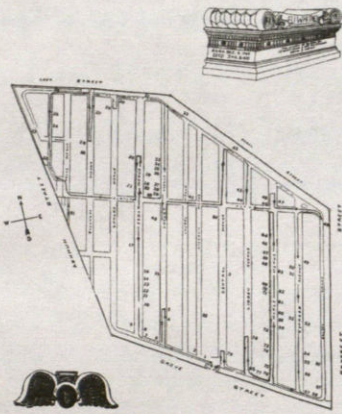
*Cemeteries in Greater New Haven*, earlier in this volume. Thirty years ago, most Jewish and Catholic cemeteries did not allow burials of members of other religions in their sacred spaces. Some of those couples chose burial in a non-sectarian cemetery like that on Grove Street. Dr. Massimo Calabresi had a similar problem with a unique solution.

**Massimo Calabresi** was born in Ferrara, Italy in 1903 and earned his M.D. degree at the University of Florence. When Mussolini came to power in Italy, Massimo joined an anti-fascist group known as “Fedele a Giustizia e Libertà – Faithful to Justice and Liberty.” When the “racial laws” in Italy, aimed primarily at Jews, went into effect in 1938, he was under suspicion. His wife Bianca, perhaps to protect her children and herself, converted to Catholicism and had her sons baptized. Her son Guido believes that his mother was very spiritual and did not find that in the Judaism of Italy where the choice was Orthodoxy or secularism with a small role for women. There was no reform or conservative alternative at that time (see *JINH* 9:270-289, 2009, especially pages 282-283). Massimo made it clear that “he was born a Jew and he would die a Jew” (see *JINH* 9:263-269, 2009, especially page 265). After living in New Haven for more than 40 years, Bianca died during a trip to Italy. Since she was no longer Jewish, he could not bury her in the Jewish cemetery in Ferrara where his family was buried and where he planned to be buried. To try to solve the problem, it was decided to bury her in the Grove Street Cemetery and when he died, to have him cremated and bury half his ashes in the Jewish cemetery in Ferrara and half at Grove Street next to his wife. Five years later that is exactly what happened. His stone in Ferrara is inscribed “Faithful to Justice and Liberty” and next to it, “Husband of Bianca Finzi-Contini Buried in New Haven.” The stone in the Grove Street Cemetery next to Bianca is inscribed, “Fedele a Giustizia e Libertà – Faithful to Justice and Liberty.” The problem was solved as planned.

With a special notation concerning the burial plots, in 1796, the cost of a plot was a mere \$5.00. Now in these times of changing religious rites, customs, and morés, and quality of life issues, the newer view on burial is cremation. For what is called a full plot, the cost is \$6,500.00. This price entitles one full coffin and 3 cremations in the same plot, or 4 cremations only. For what is called a half plot, the cost is \$3,250.00 which entitles only 2 cremations. It would appear this trend is becoming more accepted by all faiths and denominations.

In closing, I would like to take the ending notes from Henry H. Townshend and his paper *Grove Street Cemetery* read before the New Haven Colony Historical Society on 27 October 1947, to wit;

*This, however, is the story of the Grove Street Cemetery, not of those*



who are buried there. The honor roll of their names is too long and too well known to be called here. Kinsmen of the men whose praise is sung in the rich prose of Ecclesiasticus, they were "honored in their generation and were the glory of their understanding and declaring prophecies; leaders of the people by their counsels and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions...and some there be which have no memorial; who are perished, as though they had never been; and are become as though they

*hath not been forgotten.*

*With loving, tender care the Grove Street Cemetery shelters them all, famous and humble alike, we hope and pray*

*"TILL THESE ETERNAL HILLS REMOVE,  
AND SPRING ADORNS THE EARTH NO MORE"*

[Patricia Barile Illingworth is the Chief Docent of Grove Street Cemetery and is the Administrator of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven and a member of the editorial board of this volume.]

## The New Haven Mikvah, or actually, Mikva'ot By David S. Fischer, M.D.

*“Family purity and morality is the foundation of Judaism, and the Mikvah is an essential aspect of Jewish life. So important is the Mikvah to the Jewish Community, that Jewish law requires us to sell the Torahs if necessary, in order to be able to build a Mikvah.”*

Rabbi Albert Feldman

*Mikvah* (also *mikveh*, or *mikva*—all three spellings are in common use and in our quotes, we use the spelling in the original document). *Mikvah* is Hebrew for a “collection” or “gathering” (of water), a pool or bath of clear water, immersion in which renders ritually clean a person who has become unclean. The Torah specifies that a person may become ritually unclean by touching a dead body (Numbers 19:11); or a man may become impure by having a bodily emission; and a woman may become impure by menstruating or having a baby. In general, the ritual impurity lasts seven days and the individual’s impurity lasts seven days and then after specific rituals of washing, or immersion in a natural body of clear water (stream, lake or ocean) or waiting a specified time, the individual is again pure and can enter the Tabernacle (or Temple) and offer a sacrifice, the main method of worship then.

After the destruction of the Temple and cessation of sacrifices, the rabbis set up specific rules about who needs to be immersed in a *mikvah* in order to become ritually pure if Israel was to be holy because G-d is holy and He wanted Israel to be a nation of priests and a light to the world. The rabbis initiated the tradition that Jewish women after menstruation or childbirth had to immerse themselves in a *mikvah* in order to have marital relations with their husbands. Jewish men had to immerse after a bodily emission. Typically, an Orthodox bride and groom go to a *mikvah* shortly before their wedding. The converts to Judaism in the Orthodox tradition have to go to a *mikvah* after approval of their conversion by a *Beis Din* and they emerge from it as Jewish. It is customary for Orthodox men and some Orthodox women to go to the *mikvah* shortly before Yom Kippur. Many Orthodox families immerse in a *mikvah* any new eating utensils purchased from a non-Jew, any utensils made non-kosher by mixing *milchig* with fleishig and put their utensils that have been used with *chometz* in a *mikvah* before using them for Passover.

After the diaspora began, the rabbis, based on Talmudic commentaries, suggested that a new Jewish community was obliged to secure a cemetery

and build a *mikvah* before building a synagogue because a *minyan* for prayer could be conducted in many buildings, but the requirements for a *mikvah* were very specific and the community needed to provide for family purity for its members to reproduce in a *Halahic* tradition. Here we will first try to trace the history of the construction of a *mikvah* in the New Haven area from the earliest Jewish community and what the requirements are for a *mikvah* and why we now have three *mikva'ot* in New Haven.

The information on the availability of *mikva'ot* in New Haven has been scanty. My research has included the study of all previous volumes of *Jews in New Haven (JINH)*, some synagogue archives, the archives of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven (JHSGNH), discussions with some members of the *Mikveh* Society, rabbis and knowledgeable community leaders. There is some information, but not much on the history but considerable theological material.

The Jews of New Haven formed the first public *minyan* in 1840 and became a full-fledged society with the name of Mishkan Israel in 1843 when it became permissible under Connecticut law.

### **Rabbinic Guidelines for Constructing a *Mikvah***

The Rabbinic rulings have been extensive and I am certainly not well-versed in that literature. The section on “*Mikvah*” in the *Encyclopedia Judacia*, Volume 14, 2nd Edition, as downloaded from Gale Virtual Reference Library on 22 April 2016, pages 1-12, summarizes the subject, and I am summarizing their published understanding of the essentials of the rabbinic guidelines. Only water which has not been drawn, i.e., has not been in a vessel or receptacle may be used and the minimum quantity for immersion is 40 *se'ah* (a *se'ah* is about 14.3 liters) or roughly 575 liters, or quarts. The *mikvah* is valid if it is not prefabricated, but it must be watertight. Leakage invalidates it. A natural spring water that is clean is valid for a *mikvah*, including rainwater, melted snow or ice. The water must not reach the *mikvah* through metal pipes unless they are attached to the ground. The *mikvah* is emptied from above by hand, by vacuum, or by electric power pumps. The emptying through a hole in the bottom is forbidden. Since the plug may be regarded as a “vessel” as well as giving rise to a possibility of leakage.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* article lists several acceptable layouts of the *mikvah* pools (*bors*), and each has benefits and problems and are favored or disliked by different rabbis. The three most common are:

*Zriah* (“sowed” like grain or seeds into the ground) forty *se'ah* of rainwater is gathered in a bor (pool) to which tap water is added. Since the tap

water is “sown” it is valid for immersion immediately.

*Hashoko* means to “kiss”, i.e., contact and touch. Two *bors* are built side-by-side. The one for rainwater is valid for immersion. The other is filled with tap water and is not valid for immersion. Only when the ordinary water comes in contact with the rainwater through a hole in the wall does it become valid.

*Bor Al Gabai Bor* is constructed literally, “one *bor* on top of another *bor*.” A single deep *bor* is constructed. A divider of cement is built forming an upper *bor* and a lower *bor*. The walls below the divider can project into the *bor* to support the wall and the divider cast into it. The upper *bor* becomes the *bor Hatvilah* (immersion pool). Steps are built for the user to descend and immerse the entire body. The lower *bor* contains two times forty *se'ah* or approximately 1050 liters of fluids. An opening is left in the divider large enough for a person to pass through, then it is closed with a cover panel. There are two holes the size of a handbreadth for the water in the two *bors* to be in constant contact.

### Early *Mikva'ot*

Curiously, there are no specific descriptions of a *mikvah* in the Torah and biblical archeologists have not found *mikva'ot* in the Holy Land until the first century BCE. They did find two functioning *mikva'ot* in Masada before it was over-run by the Roman Legions in the First Century of Common Era. The rabbis apparently promulgated the guidelines for the construction of the *mikvah* and some of the early rules of its use in the two centuries before the destruction of the Second (Herodian) Temple.

Recently, there have been several reports of archaeological finds of *mikva'ot* in the Second Temple period (First Century BCE). One was found in the Shephelah foothills Southeast of Jerusalem (Bible and Archaeology News, 10-13-2011; another report by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) was of a “well-preserved” ritual bath (*mikvah*) “found in Jerusalem in an underground cave at the construction site of two nursery schools and displayed on-line in a video and published 8-5-15; a third report was by the *The Jewish Press* on 7-01-15 of a “2000 year old *mikvah* found beneath a Jerusalem living room, with text and pictures. A Wikipedia article entitled “*Mikvah*” and downloaded 11-13-16 shows pictures of a *mikvah* in Speyer, Germany dating back to 1728; a medieval *mikvah* in Besalu, Spain; a medieval *mikvah* room in the old synagogue of Sporon, Hungary which dates to the 14th century and an excavated *mikvah* in Qumran (undated). *Mikva'ot* have been found in Jewish communities for the past 2,000 years.

## The History of the First *Mikvah* in New Haven

Once established as a synagogue, Mishkan Israel set up a Constitution and Bylaws and kept minutes. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed all the minute books from 1843-1848. The first minute book still in existence is that of 1849, handwritten in the old German Fraktur script and translated into English by Werner S. Hirsch, a past president of the Jewish Historical Society, co-editor of Volume Three and Five and editor of Volume Six, page 6, in which the translation may be found. Therein, we can read that in March of 1849 the Congregation passed a motion to build a new synagogue to replace their rented room. The building was to have a classroom and a *mikvah* would be added. Unfortunately, there is no evidence a synagogue was built and we have no evidence that a *mikvah* was built at that time.

In that translation, on pages 30-31, we learn that “It was also agreed by the membership to proceed with the building of a *mikvah* to cost no more than \$600. A committee... was directed to go to New York to look at a *mikvah* and to have an architect there draw-up a plan. The *mikvah* would include three sitting rooms... An estimate was to be prepared.” So far as we know, no *mikvah* was constructed at that time. We can only wonder what the women of that then Orthodox community (Mishkan Israel became reform many years later) did to observe *Niddah* (family purity) traditions.

According to Beth S. Wenger *JINH*, volume 6, pp 53-67, 1993, New Haven’s first Jewish women’s society was not officially associated with Congregation Mishkan Israel, but most of its members were. It was organized in 1853 and initially called Ahavas Achos (Sisterly Love) and later renamed “Daughters of 1853” to perform traditional Jewish duties of *Bikur Cholim*, visiting the sick, and *Levayet Hamet*, attending to the dead. “In 1862, the society used its funds to build New Haven’s first *Mikvah*.” It is likely that it was built soon after, although we don’t know whether it was a sole venture funded by the \$500. (Note: See Wenger, Beth, “*Mikveh* – Jewish Women Archives”, viewed 7-24-16 at [<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/mikveh>] for a brief but good overview of the *mikveh* with a good bibliography).

We have the minutes in German of the meeting of Ahavas Achos of August 31, 1863 when they voted \$25 to purchase land on Goffe Street for a *mikvah*. The document was obtained from the New Haven Museum and Historical Society by Patricia Illingworth and a copy is now in the archives at the JHS-GNH. The JHSGNH archive also has a copy of the Centennial Celebration minutes of Ahavas Achos held on May 24, 1953 courtesy of Mary Ann Flagg. There we find that the organization incorporated itself in 1858 and secured

a charter from the state. The minutes also reiterate the authorization of the \$500 to build the *mikvah* and the \$25 to purchase the lot on Goffe Street. Rabbi Arthur Chiel comments on the religiosity of the women of Ahavas Achos contribution of \$500 for the building of a *mikvah* on Goffe Street. (See The Connecticut Jewish Ledger, October 26, 1972). In *JINH*, Volume 4, 1986 on pg. 70, Matthew L Cohen mentions Ahavas Achos and notes, "In 1862 they gave \$500 toward building a new *mikvah*. The question remains whether they provided the \$500 alone, or whether it was in cooperation with Mishkan Israel which voted for \$600 four years earlier."

To clarify the issue, on September 19, 2016, I called Professor Beth Wenger, of the Department of History at the University of Pennsylvania and Director of the Jewish Studies Program there. She wrote the article in *JINH* 6:53-67, 1993, *Women's Equality at Mishkan Israel*. She told me that she recalled Ahavas Achos bought the property on Goffe Street and built the *mikvah* and it functioned for many years. She did not recall whether Mishkan Israel participated financially. She researched the article 26 years ago and her notes are no longer available. Whatever *mikvah* was built by Ahavas Achos it must have lasted for a long time because we have found no mention of another *mikvah* until near the turn of the century.

### **The Oak Street Mikvah**

In Volume 9 of *JINH*, page 15, it says, "mention should be made of their organization of the first *mikvah* in New Haven on Oak Street. The "their" refers to the women's organization of Congregation Bikur Cholim B'nai Abraham which had a synagogue on lower Factory Street, at the corner of Oak Street, since 1888. This is the first confirmation that we have that there was a *mikvah* on Oak Street. We know a *mikvah* was in use there because in 1979, in volume 2 of *JINH*, page 52, we are told, "He (Rabbi Hillel Froman) was instrumental in starting the first *mikvah* in the city of New Haven in what was then the Oak Street area."

We can speculate that it was probably in 1890 because we find on page 130 of Volume 2, 1979 that "in 1895, the then largest orthodox synagogue in New Haven was dedicated. It would be known as the "Rose Street Shul". Mrs. Rachel Hurwitz (known as Bobbe Rasha), a midwife and keeper of the *mikvah*, donated the first Torah to the new shul." Bobbe Rasha was the mother of Mrs. Israel Sneiderman. She was born in 1847 and died in 1920. Charles Reznikoff, wrote about the New Haven Jewish Community, in *Commentary Magazine*, pages 465-477, Nov. 1, 1947. "There on Oak Street lived Tamara die Baederka – the bathhouse woman who ran the *mikvah*, the ritual bath for women."

## The Day Street Mikvah

How long the Oak Street *mikvah* continued to function we don't know but probably to the late 1920s or early 1930s. What we do know is a piece of dramatic oral history. In 1933, at Shabbath services at the Orchard Street shul, just as the Torah was placed on the *shulchan* (reading table), Bubbe Ida Batt walked up to the *bima* and asked the congregation not to proceed until there



Day Street Mikvah

was a promise to build a *mikvah* because there was no functioning *mikvah* in New Haven at that time. The stunned Rabbi and congregants agreed to raise money to build a new *mikvah* as soon as possible. Then the service proceeded with the Torah reading. This story about his grandmother was told to me by Jay Kroopnick, whose mother was Shirley Kroopnick, a daughter of Ida Batt. Although, I knew and trusted Jay, I was skeptical. Knowing Rabbi Albert Feldman and his interest in helping raising money for a new *mikvah* in the 1970's, I called and asked him what he knew about the Day Street *mikvah*. He spontaneously told me the same remarkable story. He said he had not personally witnessed it at the Orchard Street shul in 1933, but heard from a colleague and congregants who witnessed it.

In *JINH*, Volume 6, page 18, Sara Moore Lipwich tells that her mother Bella Moore "was active" in getting the current *mikvah* started. Since Bella Moore died in 1957, it is likely the reference is to the *mikvah* of the 1930's.

The archive of the JHSGNH has a few pieces of information relative to the formation of the New Haven *Mikvah* Society Inc. including its articles of incorporation dated April 21, 1937 and a copy of the vote of its Board of Directors to purchase a lot on Day Street between George and Chapel Streets with an approximate frontage of 47 feet and a depth of 165 feet for \$2,000; of which \$500 is to be paid in cash and \$1,500 by a mortgage note payable on or before 2 years at 5% interest. The cornerstone of the brown brick building was laid in Adar 2 of 5695 equivalent to March 1935 and the *mikvah* started operations in 1937 (See Picture One). The leaders in the effort to build Day Street *Mikvah* were Bessie Trachten and Ida Batt with a large group of supporters. Their herculean efforts are commemorated on a bronze plaque in the lobby of the current *mikvah* on Hubinger Street, which also pays tribute to the leaders of the drive to build and beautify the Hubinger Street *mikvah*. Shirley and Morris Trachten and Shirley and Irving Kroopnick. The plaque



Plaque in Hubinger Street Mikvah

is correct in giving credit where credit is due except that one mistake on the plaque (See Picture Two). The reference to the Day Street *mikveh* as the first mikvah in New Haven is incorrect. To the best of our knowledge, the mikvah on 142 Day Street was the third mikvah in New Haven and operated to the general satisfaction for nearly 40 years. It was not known to them that there were two previous *mikva* 'ot. When there were complaints that it was becoming shabby and the neighborhood was developing a reputation for criminal activity, women became reluctant to use it at night. Accordingly, the New Haven *Mikvah* Society Inc (NHMSI) and its president then Shirley (Mrs. Irving) Kroopnick initiated a drive in 1975 to purchase a site for a new *mikvah* in an area where many religious Jews lived. A vigorous campaign was conducted with individual gifts ranging from \$200 to \$5,000. In a letter to the community in 1976, Rabbi Albert Feldman noted that “*family purity and morality is the foundation of Jewish life. So important is the mikvah to the Jewish community, that Jewish law requires us to sell the Torah if necessary in order to be able to build a mikvah.*” On April 18, 1977, the NHMSI purchased the property and building at 86 Hubinger Street in New Haven for \$37,500 to build the fourth New Haven *Mikvah* (See Picture Three).



Hubinger Street Mikvah

Ground breaking ceremonies were conducted on Sunday, August 28, 1977 by Rabbi Albert Feldman of Westville Synagogue and Rabbi Jacob Mendelson of Young Israel of New Haven, according to a story in the New Haven register. It goes on to relate, “The day will be especially meaningful”. Mrs. Irving Kroopnick, president of the Association (sic) said “to about 60 women expected to use it when completed in about 2 months”. Mr. Harold Hack of Torah Academy and a *Mikvah* Association Board member said, “the ritual cleansing is not to be confused with any... impurities....The real reason that the *mikvah* tradition is observed is because we believe G-d commanded it.” His wife Adele Hack is the long-time treasurer of NHMSI and has supervised the operation of the *mikvah* with many others. (Note: The Register reporter repeatedly used the word Association but the correct name as previously mentioned is the New Haven *Mikveh* Society, Inc – but the Society now uses the more common

spelling *Mikvah* on its letterhead.)

After the first appeal for a *mikvah* capital expenditure (\$37,500) for the purchase of the building was completed, there were a series of new funding raising events to raise an additional \$73,000 for initial renovations and the actual building of the two *bors* (pools) side-by-side (*Hashoko* – “kissing”). This decision initiated a huge controversy. A substantial number of Chabad Lubavitch families had worked and contributed to buy the Hubinger Street site with the understanding that it would also contain a *Bor Al Gabai Bor* (a pool on top of pool) which was the preferred configuration of the fifth Lubavitch Rebbe Sholom Dovber Schneersohn. (1892-1920).

The group making the decision for a *Hashoko* configuration defended their choice by pointing out that the Day Street *mikvah* had the same configuration and Chabad women used it for many years. In addition, they contended that the cost of building both configurations would be too expensive and further fund raising would delay the opening of the new Hubinger Street *mikvah*. The Chabad group contended that most of the rabbis in town would be happy with either configuration and therefore it should be the one their Rebbe favored. Tempers became hot and the Chabad group felt that a vocal minority was dictating the decision and unwilling to compromise. Accordingly, many Chabad women went to *mikva'ot* in Bridgeport, or Norwalk, or even Stamford, or New London while they built their own *mikvah*, *Bor Al Gabai Bor* at 16 Colony Road in New Haven. This is the fifth New Haven *mikvah*. I am told that with use, and over time, both *mikvahs* became “somewhat shabby.” But in recent years both were renovated and are now well up to standards, esthetically and religiously. I visited both *mikva'ot* in the last three months. Bluma Katz kindly opened the *mikvah* for me on Colony Road and allowed me to take pictures, including the immersion pool for this article. They are clean, attractive and have most of all the amenities that I am told women expect (See Picture 4).

It should be noted that the third active *mikvah* in New Haven is for men only. By my count it is the sixth documented *mikvah* in New Haven. It is in the 300 Norton Street building of the Rabbinical Institute of New England, a Chabad yeshiva complex but available to non-Chabad Jews as well.

## Conclusion

New Haven had its first *minyan* in 1840, its first Jewish cemetery in 1842, its' first *mikvah* in 1862, and in 1853, its first Hebrew school with a teacher able to teach in both German and English. In the early years, it was

difficult to establish a *mikvah*, but the women wanted it and did it first on Goffe Street. When the majority of Jews lived near Oak Street, a mikvah (or possibly two) appeared on Oak Street. When that was no longer available, women led the drive to build the Day Street *mikvah* and the Hubinger Street *mikvah*. Chabad built Colony Road and the men's *mikvah*.

[NOTE: This article was written by the editor of the volume because those knowledgeable of the Hubinger Street and Colony Road *mikva'ot* had little or no knowledge of the prior *mikva'ot*. Many people were kind enough to provide information for me and they are cited in the text. Others provided information on condition of anonymity, which is being respected.]



*Immersion Pool-Colony Road Mikvah*

# Temple Beth David in Cheshire, CT

By Kim Math

In the 1960's, a group of young Jewish families relocated to Cheshire, Connecticut from other areas of New England and parts south. As they began to bond over a mutual faith, tradition and vision, it became clear that a local reform synagogue was needed. Thus, Temple Beth David of Cheshire, CT was born and officially founded in 1968. As more and more families began to embrace Temple Beth David (affectionately referred to as TBD), it became clear that the decision was the correct one.

Originally, the members of the Temple Beth David community did not have a permanent place to call home. Congregants' homes were used, as were other facilities that were receptive to the group. However, it quickly became clear that a permanent home would be beneficial, and eventually the ideal location was found. A Methodist congregation was leaving a historic building for a new location, and TBD's visionary leaders jumped at the opportunity to set roots down in the heart of Cheshire. TBD finally had a permanent location at 3 Main Street.

Over the years, the physical building has grown, with an addition added in the 1980s to house a lobby, administrative offices and a social hall. In 2000, TBD proudly aligned itself with the Historic District of Cheshire. More visibly, those driving by notice the very large garden on the front lawn, The Mitzvah Garden, a congregant maintained project where all food produced is donated to local food pantries.

However, the two most recent improvements have been the installation of a new heating and air conditioning system and a major renovation of the sanctuary. Unfortunately, the timing of the collapse of the old heating system corresponded with fall/winter 2015, and for a short time TBD was without heat, eventually implementing a temporary heat source for the most occupied parts of the building. Fortunately, a mild winter, combined with quick work by the contractor made the installation process fairly painless.

The changes in the sanctuary started as a conversation about the prayer space and spiraled into the recognition that the old space could certainly be improved. At the heart of the conversation was the need to maintain the historic features of the synagogue, but find ways to change it so it truly felt like home and better embraced TBDs style of worship. Eventually, the decision was made to change the straight backed, forward facing pews to curved,

plush pews to create a more communal, comfortable feeling, incorporate a center aisle to open the space and better accommodate lifecycle events, and implement various technological features to assist in the worship experience.

The TBD community has grown, as well. Currently, TBD is over 200 families strong, and is the only synagogue in Cheshire. The religious school, run by Education Director, Jodi Harris, is a source of pride, serving over 90 students. Cynthia Bannon, the dedicated Executive Director, attends to all other administrative needs of TBD. The current lay leaders include president, Kim Math, 1st Vice President, Josh Kampf, and 2nd Vice President, Chris Shafer, but also boasts a healthy board of over 20 members.

An active Sisterhood, currently led by Kathy Krechevsky, significantly contributes to community life at TBD. Sisterhood continues to host annual dinners, sponsor student scholarships and camperships, provide social outlets for congregants, participates in Shabbat services, coordinates Shabbat *onegs* and in general, ensures the welfare of the community

TBD's Rabbinic presence has been strong, as well. During the early years, spiritual guidance came from Rabbi Steven Steinberg and Rabbi Eric Silver, and the community continued to grow and thrive. Rabbi Silver made great strides in the Cheshire community, as he sought recognition by various public agencies of the Jewish holidays and actively participated in interfaith efforts, including outreach that gave him an audience with the Pope. Upon Rabbi Eric Silver's retirement in 2008, after serving the community for over 20 years, Rabbi Josh Whinston took the reins. Affectionately known as Rabbi Josh, his new leadership brought many new programs to TBD as the community was challenged to dig deeper into what it meant to be a Jew.

Specifically, new Shabbat worship services were instituted, including an earlier family Shabbat service (the first Friday of each month), a spiritual, musical Shabbat in the round (*Ruach Chayim*) was organized, interactive Shavuot study sessions were held, and Holiday and Shabbat dinners became the norm. Attention was also paid to younger members: regular preschool story hours were instituted, a two day retreat for students in grades three through five at local Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) Camp Eisner became an annual tradition, and older students were introduced to youth study sessions with other local synagogues and the *L'Taken* program in Washington DC. Jewish camping came in to focus, and what started as one Jewish summer camper has now blossomed into a partnership with local URJ Camps, Eisner and Crane Lake. TBD was proud to send over 17 students to Jewish summer camps last year, and was once again recognized by Eisner and Crane Lake for sending over 10% of our religious school to URJ camps.

Additionally, social action became a focal point at Temple Beth David.

Since inception, the Mitzvah Garden has donated thousands of pounds of food annually to local food pantries. Mitzvah Day, a day where our community undertakes outreach in the community at large, has become an annual tradition. One of TBD's biggest commitments has been participation in Abraham's Tent, a program sponsored by Columbus House in New Haven. This program hosts approximately 12 homeless men each year during the colder winter months. As a host, Temple Beth David provides our social hall for one week every December as a shelter, and our members happily donate their time cooking, serving, and hosting these men in our halls.

Adult Education also began taking shape in many forms. Hebrew classes, men's groups, weekly Torah Study, prayer workshops were just a sampling. Larger scale events have also become noteworthy, including Artist-in-Residence and Scholars-in-Residence weekends, featuring well known Jewish thinkers and artists, including Dan Nichols, Cantor Ellen Dreskin, Rosalie Gerut and Friends, Rabbi Arthur Green, Rabbi Rami Shapiro, author Ron Balson and Dr. Ron Wolfson. TBD has also proudly sent representatives to the last three URJ biennials.

These lists are only a small representation of life at Temple Beth David. The fact that the largest committee is the Caring Community speaks volumes.

Currently, Temple Beth David is in a bit of a transition. In 2015, Rabbi Josh announced that he would be seeking a new opportunity in a larger synagogue. While saddened at this, the community wished him and his family well. TBD is currently led by interim Rabbi Ilene Bogosian as the search for our *Beshert* (meant to be) Rabbi progresses. However, the committed search committee is determined to make a choice that ensures further positive growth for Temple Beth David and the entire community. Life at TBD continues in the robust style of worship and practicing Jewish values to which it has become accustomed.

[Ms. Kim Math is President of Temple Beth David in Cheshire]



## **Kol Ami. Cheshire, Connecticut**

### **By Gerry Ganezer**

In 1998, a proposed merger between Beth El Synagogue in Waterbury and Temple B'nai Abraham in Meriden fell through. Members from both synagogues decided to form a Conservative shul of their own, Kol Ami, based in Cheshire. The first few services were held at Temple Beth David, the reform synagogue in Cheshire. Shortly thereafter, Kol Ami moved into the VFW Community Center on Rt. 70. The first Friday night service was held there on August 28, 1998. The first Rosh Hashanah service was here and Yom Kippur services were held at Chestnut Hill in Wolcott, Connecticut attended by more than 150 people.

The congregation affiliated with The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, By-Laws were adopted and officers and a Board of Directors were elected.

The mission of Kol Ami was to inspire each member through creative approaches to education, innovative worship and enlivening communal experiences. Kol Ami nurtured the desire to incorporate Jewish values and traditions into everyday life.

The first spiritual leader of Kol Ami was Andrew P. Hechtman, who later went on to attend The Academy for Jewish Religion, funded by an anonymous donor with ties to the congregation and the congregation itself. Hechtman received his smicha in 2003 and served as Rabbi until 2012.

In 2002, the growing congregation began leasing a building located at 1484 Highland Avenue in Cheshire with all of the renovations done by volunteer members. By 2009, it had grown strong enough to buy said location. It had grown steadily from its beginning of about 25 families to more than 125 families. The religious school that started with three children had grown to more than 50 children.

In March 2011, the congregation celebrated its upcoming 13th Birthday with a weekend of special events concluding with a gala Bar Mitzvah celebration attended by almost 200 people.

After 2011, the membership of the congregation began declining rather quickly. Many older congregants had died or moved away. Families gave up their membership after their children had celebrated their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Membership declined to about 50 families.

The congregation could no longer afford a full time rabbi and so it hired Rabbi Joshua Ratner part time. Rabbi Ratner served the congregation from 2012 until 2014.

In January of 2014, the congregation met and decided that the best option for the community, given the difficult financial situation, would be to close the synagogue at the end of June that year. It would allow Kol Ami to pay all of its bills and give families time to decide where they wanted to go next. Since the Woodmont synagogue had recently suffered a fire, Kol Ami decided to donate the ark, readers' table, pews, memorial boards and one of its Torahs' to them. Another Torah was given to Ezra Academy and the third one was donated to Tower One in New Haven. The bimah chairs and organ were donated to Beth El Synagogue in Southbury (now located in Woodbury).

While it only lasted 15 years, Kol Ami was a place where everyone made many wonderful friends and life long relationships were formed. It was a great community for all those involved.

Submitted by Gerry Ganezer, member during the entire life of Kol Ami, from its founding to its closing. I am now a member of Temple Beth Sholom in Hamden.

# Temple Beth Tikvah, Madison, Connecticut

By Edward Gleich, MD

The year 2017 will mark the 40th anniversary of the building of Temple Beth Tikvah on Durham Road in Madison. It was the first organized Jewish institution on the East Shore of Connecticut between New Haven and New London. A small group of courageous individuals present at the dedication in May of 1977 can look back with fond memories on the years of struggle and dedication that led to this momentous occasion. They have watched our community grow and flourish reaching a level of maturity they could not have imagined. The following is an account of our early years and subsequent history.

The "East Shore Jewish Center" was the site of the earliest coordinated Jewish presence on the "Shoreline". A building located on Svea Avenue in Branford was purchased in 1950. Friday evening services were held once a month. Religious School classes met there regularly for as many as 25 children. Due to small class sizes children of various ages were oftentimes grouped together. Rabbis for High Holidays were solicited from seminaries in New York. It took seven years for the Center members to acquire their first Torah on loan from Congregation B'nai Jacob in Woodbridge. Those present in the early years included the Chipkins, Davises, Fogelmans, Goldhamers, Hellers, Josephsons, Leshines, Spears and the Ticotskys. Faced with rising costs and a relatively static membership of thirty-five families, the members of the Center voted in 1966 to sell their building and put the assets into a trust.

After the dissolution of the "East Shore Jewish Center" many area children were transported to Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven for religious school training. Car pools were started out of necessity and bonds between families were strengthened. Shabbat services were conducted by lay leaders who transported an ark and prayer books for services. Over the next few years, with an influx of new Jewish families to the area, interest was renewed in establishing a permanent Jewish home. The Grove School in Madison was the site of an organizational meeting in 1970 that planted the seeds for a revitalized group which called itself the "Shoreline Jewish Community Organization" (SJCO). It later would become the nucleus for Temple Beth Tikvah.

In 1972 the first officers included President Richard Ottenheimer and Vice President Irma Grebel. Services were conducted at the First Congregational Church in Guilford and St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Madison. The reli-

gious school was taught by Alberta Besso and Harriet Rosen for 10 children. Once again our non-Jewish neighbors reached out to help us. Classes were held at members' homes, The Lee Academy, The Unitarian Church, Island Avenue School, The Grove School and Our Lady of Mercy Center all in Madison. Momentum began to grow as the SJCO attracted more and more new members each of whom brought with them diverse religious and cultural experiences.

This fledgeling group struggled with its identity. A reform religious orientation was acceptable to most. Considerable debate ensued over the need for a more permanent structure to house this ever-growing heterogeneous group of shoreline Jews. Some argued the cost would be prohibitive. Others believed that the closeness and intimacy of this "chavurah" would change once their wanderings came to an end. Still others felt that a building was necessary to secure a permanent foundation to gather as a community in prayer and study. The latter opinion was adopted and in May 1975 the SJCO bought a 4.5 acre parcel of land on Durham Road (RT. 79) in Madison. The major source of funding for the property came from money set aside in trust by the "East Shore Jewish Center" nine years before.

The ensuing year was one of great anticipation as "bagel and lox" breakfasts were regularly hosted at the home of Helen and Jack Davis to plan a framework for the new facility and its funding. On July 22, 1976 the general membership which now numbered 100 families voted to approve plans for our present synagogue with a total project cost not to exceed \$300,000. Following the suggestion of President Bob Jacoby, the new house of worship would be called Temple Beth Tikvah or "House of Hope". Milt Heller chaired the Building Committee. Groundbreaking commenced on September 2, 1976 and, despite an early heavy snowfall, construction continued through the winter. Our Synagogue was dedicated on May 13, 1977.

Our first full time spiritual leader was Rabbi David Wortman, *zichrono livrachah*, who left his position as principal of the religious school at Mishkan Israel in Hamden to join us in 1975. During Rabbi Wortman's tenure our congregation struggled to achieve a sense of identity and self-assurance. His scholarly manner and unflinching commitment to Jewish ideals and tradition gave our diverse membership a very definite spiritual direction, albeit some would say we were too "reform", while others would complain that services were too "orthodox". Lay cantors including Myron Gubitz and Irv Siegelman assisted with services. Rabbi Wortman was especially noted for our system of religious education and as a marvelous teacher of adults. During his tenure with us we established a long standing tradition of celebrating a Community Seder on the second night of Pesach.

Our first Temple bulletin, the Shofar, was published in 1977 thanks to edi-

tors Al Goldberg and Rena Powell. In 1978 the TBT Nursery School opened its doors for the first time under the direction of Barbara Eudowe. It fosters a Jewish curriculum and is open to all denominations. Rabbi Wortman left Temple Beth Tikvah in 1982 to become the Director of the Philadelphia Board of Rabbis.

Later in that same year, Rabbi Howard Sommer was hired as his successor. Like his predecessor Rabbi Sommer headed a religious school in his position of Associate Rabbi at Temple Emanuel in Westfield, New Jersey. Although he had no previous ties to the “Shoreline”, Rabbi Sommer quickly familiarized himself with the neighborhood. In short order, he learned the names of every child in the religious school and reached out to an ever expanding membership which now totaled 185 families and stretched from Branford in the west to Old Lyme in the east and Higganum in the north. He also continued to foster adult education classes including Hebrew and Bible study, adult Bar and Bat Mitzvah preparation, Holiday rituals, *midrash* and he helped to develop a once a year Scholar-In-Residence Program. The interfaith connections, which were so important to us in our infancy, were continued as clergy from various denominations met regularly to discuss common concerns. By Rabbi Sommer’s efforts, respect for the Jewish community was affirmed when in 1984 several Shoreline towns voted to close school on the High Holidays. The years 1982 to 1985 saw a renewed vitality for the congregation as our membership grew to 250 families. Our religious school which numbered 70 students in 1976 now was doubled in size. In an effort to meet the burgeoning demands of our growing congregation our members voted in March of 1985 to invest \$600,000 to build an addition which would add additional classrooms, a more suitable library, a youth lounge, a new Rabbi’s study and administrative offices.

In the early years Cantorial soloists from the UAHC were hired to help lead High Holiday Prayer. From 2002 to 2009 we engaged the services of Dorothy Goldberg as a part-time Cantor for the High Holidays and Shabbat services. Cantor Goldberg lifted us with her beautiful voice. She worked with the adult and youth choirs, chanted Torah and taught in the Religious School. We were also very fortunate to have a very talented congregant, Rick Calvert, assist with services and become a well-known cantorial soloist. Rick was a fixture at Friday evening services and a beloved teacher in our Religious School from 1986 until he retired from that position in 2013.

Our first Religious School Principals included Joanne Price and Alaine Lane. For a 20 year period from 1992 Marcia Geringer steered our Religious School through its growth graduating 100 students per year until her retirement in 2012.

The TBT Nursery School has been led by Director Bernadette Stak for

the past 20 years. During this time it has earned a strong reputation as an excellent program for children ages 2 years accompanied by parent/ caregivers through pre Kindergarten. Our Nursery School offers a Jewish Curriculum and is open to children of all faiths.

Rabbi Sommer continued to serve our congregation until 2008 when he left to accept a position with the Central Conference of American Rabbis. During his tenure we saw our congregation grow to 300 families. Rabbi Sommer elevated our consciousness with calls for Social Justice leading our congregation's efforts to emphasize *Tikkun Olam*.

After Rabbi Sommer's departure our synagogue family hired Rabbi Thomas Alpert as our interim rabbi. Rabbi Alpert led us through an examination of our history, purpose and identity as a community. From July 2009 through June 2012 Rabbi Claudio Kogan led our congregation sharing his rich heritage as an Argentinian born Jew.

In 2012 our Rabbinical Search Committee recommended a perfect fit for the next generation of our Temple Beth Tikvah family. Rabbi Stacey Offner is a seasoned rabbi who grew up in New York and immigrated to Minnesota where she served as the Founding Rabbi of Shir Tikvah Congregation in Minneapolis. She returned to the east coast to serve as Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism before deciding to return to congregational life. Rabbi Offner has brought us her great strengths as a spiritual leader, Jewish educator and community leader. Adult education has flourished with the addition of "Lunch and Learn" classes on Wednesdays. Topics have included Jewish Literature, Israeli Politics, the Meaning of Prayer and Adult Hebrew. In addition, she offers a regular men's spirituality class.

Rabbi Offner works closely with our Youth Group, SALTY (Shoreline Alliance for Temple Youth), which has long been affiliated with the URJ's national group NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth) and, under Rabbi Offner's direction, has also affiliated with BBYO (B'nai Brith Youth Organization) providing increased opportunities for our teenage youth. Rabbi Offner's long-time interest in Social Justice has encouraged us to continue our work with Habitat for Humanity, cooks for the Shoreline Soup Kitchen, regular food drives for local food pantries, mitzvah projects for B'nai and B'not Mitzvah, back to school "back packs" for area children and our work with IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services) in New Haven resettling immigrant families, most recently sponsoring an immigrant family fleeing war torn Syria.

One year after hiring Rabbi Offner we hired our first full time Cantor-Educator. Cantor Kevin Margolius is an extremely talented musician with a very strong background in Judaic music. Our Rabbi and Cantor are an excel-

lent Clergy Team. The combination of Rabbi Offner's warmth and culturally inclusive religious style and the music generated by Cantor Margolius has reinvigorated our Erev Shabbat worship service. Cantor Margolius has added a new spark to our adult choir. Our religious school now numbers 106 students and is thriving under Cantor Margolius's leadership. We draw students from no fewer than 10 neighboring towns. Religious School classes meet for grades K-3 on Sunday mornings; grades 4-7 meet twice a week, and grades 8 through 10 meet on Sunday mornings.

Cantor Margolius has enhanced our religious school curriculum and has brought enthusiasm to Sunday morning *Tefilah* Service for the religious school. For very young children ages 2 to kindergarten there is "Mishpachah", a Family Learning opportunity which meets on Sundays once a month. Our religious school provides a supplemental Jewish education for its students to acquire foundational Jewish knowledge, to be part of a community and to develop a sense of Jewish belonging that will serve them lifelong.

Our synagogue offers *Erev Shabbat* services each week with traditional services including traditional Torah reading alternating with more experiential services and an early Children's Service including "Tot Shabbat". On Saturday morning there is Torah study followed by services for Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations.

High Holiday services are observed for two days of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur. The congregation now uses, and loves, the new Reform *Machzor, Mishkan HaNefesh*. We have also adopted *Etz Chayim*, the new Torah Commentary published by the Conservative Movement's Rabbinical Assembly. There are worship services on the Shalosh Regalim including Yizkor. Families are encouraged to eat meals in the Sukkah during Sukkot and celebrate together on Simchas Torah. All are encouraged to dress up for the Megilah reading on Purim. We have a communal Seder on 2nd night of Pesach. Other observances include Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Haatzmaut.

Temple Beth Tikvah offers several unique opportunities for our congregants and the wider community each year: a Scholar-in-Residence Weekend, The Silidker Jewish Music Weekend and our Gamerman Jewish Movie Series in January. Our members also enjoy participation in groups such as the Men's Club, TBT Book Club and Senior's Study Group.

TBT welcomes Jews and their families from all backgrounds and denominations. In the Rabbi's words, "Walking hand in hand, we create meaning for people's lives, with Judaism as our guidepost, so everyone can feel support, growth, purpose, belonging and connectedness".

As we look forward to our next 40 years in our "House of Hope", we are

again planning a renewal project to upgrade our physical structure, accommodate our growing programs and enhance our worship services. We welcome all those who are unaffiliated and are looking for a vibrant, welcoming Jewish community. To learn more about our congregation please visit our website at [www.tbts shoreline.org](http://www.tbts shoreline.org) or call our Synagogue office at 203-245-7028.

[Dr. Edward Gleich is a Pediatrician (recently retired) and a long standing member of Temple Beth Tikvah in Madison.]



# Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek

By Ellen Nodelman

At the dawn of the 20th century, Moodus, CT, was a small farming village in southeastern Connecticut, not the sort of place where you would expect to find a fair number of Jewish residents. But at the end of the previous century, with the huge influx of Jewish immigrants, refugees really, to New York City and other urban centers, a ‘back-to-the-land’ movement, founded by a fabulously wealthy German Jewish philanthropist, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, brought Jews willing to try their hand at farming out to properties bought from Yankee farmers who had given up on cultivating the rocky soil of New England.

Moodus had its share of these aspiring farmers and some merchants who also decided to give small town living a chance. In 1905, two cousins, Frank and Bernard Shenkman, who owned the local tavern, decided it was time to make a proper Jewish organization in Moodus and created Chevra Rodfe Zedek. No official location, no building, just the organization itself. They continued, as Jews had in this country, and elsewhere, from time immemorial, to meet in each other’s houses, with the elders most proficient in Hebrew leading the services. After a few years, they decided it was time to create a dedicated place for these services. They looked for a site, found



*Old Rodfe Zedek Shul*

an old farmhouse in Moodus built before the American Revolution and, in 1915, bought it for \$300. That farmhouse became the new site for Rodfe Zedek. A place for the Torahs that had previously been held in the various residences where people had worshipped, were brought together for everyone under one roof. A place for ‘Seekers for Justice’ (“Rodfe Ze-

dek”) to put down roots, to become part of the American landscape. A place to declare that here in Connecticut, unlike the Eastern Europe that all had fled, persecution had no place, that prejudice could be overcome, that justice could be sought and won. Chevra Rodfe Zedek now had a home.

The next item of business was a cemetery, and land was purchased for that in 1918. By 1922 it was clear that, with a burgeoning Jewish population in Moodus, the little farmhouse was no longer adequate for the Chevra’s needs, so they began building a new shul on a plot of land right next door to

the little farmhouse on North Moodus Road. It wasn't fancy; with a design copied from the nearby Colchester synagogue, it resembled nothing more exotic than the traditional New England house. It cost \$4000 and was paid for, in full, within the year.

It had no basement, resting instead on stone piers, and no heating since there was no furnace, making it challenging in a cold New England winter. So before long money had to be raised for a stone foundation and for a furnace to keep the winter at bay. Once again, the familiar story: moments of triumph quickly succeeded by moments of daunting challenge. But the congregation proved — and has consistently proven ever since — to be resilient and both willing and able to take these challenges on and overcome them.

The women of what now became Congregation Rodfe Zedek proved to be a driving force in the synagogue and undertook much of the fundraising that made it possible for it to keep going. A traditional, orthodox, organization, reflecting the background and expectations of its congregants, the religious life was directed by the men of the congregation, who continued to lead services since the congregation could hardly afford its own rabbi. But the women, who had sat through services in the balcony (a structural element fairly unusual for small rural shuls such as this one) saw to the business side of everything, hiring itinerant rabbis to teach the children and preside over occasional high holiday services. As the 20s progressed, with an increased influx of Jews into the community, Congregation Rodfe Zedek continued to grow.

Across the river, in Chester and Deep River, there was a Jewish presence as well, although one not as well centralized as that in Moodus. Chicken farmers, merchants, and a few professionals met in each other's houses to worship and celebrate life events. In the 1930s, a chicken farmer named Isaac Jacobson rallied some of his acquaintances to come and worship in his house on Goose Hill Road in Chester — the birth of what was first B'nai Israel, merging later with another fledgling Jewish group to become the JCC, Jewish Community Centre, and ultimately turning into Congregation Beth Shalom.

It took the JCC years to find a place of its own for a shul, doing so in 1951 with the discovery of a building on Union Street in Deep River that had been built to be a church, had become the YMCA building but was now for sale. Like its sister across the Connecticut River, the JCC was working on a limited budget and was thus restricted in its options, but this purchase seemed eminently do-able. It went ahead with the purchase and with renovation — which, of course, took longer than at first estimated, so the new synagogue was not ready to open in early Sep-



*Union Street Synagogue in Deep River*

tember of 1951 as originally hoped, but did open, to great joy and kvelling, for the high holidays that October.

Like the Moodus Shul, the synagogue building was not necessarily distinguished but it was heimish. And it became the center of Jewish life for this widely dispersed congregations whose members came from all over the shoreline. Again, similar to the Moodus congregation, members presided over the orthodox services even in the new building, with rabbis coming in only on a temporary basis for the holidays, and bar mitzvahs and weddings, and education for the children.

There was one big tie between the two congregations, one of those rabbis, Rabbi Henry Bernstein who came to Deep River, first, as an educator and then as a part-time rabbi. He was to go to Moodus as well and for some years divided his time up between the two congregations. This was when things began to change for both places. Rabbi Bernstein, ordained in his native Germany as an orthodox rabbi had gravitated towards the conservative movement and nudged both synagogues in that direction. With the winds of change that was blowing through the country post World War II, it was not a difficult sell. Both congregations associated themselves with the United Synagogue of America, and in Moodus, the women's balcony became a thing of the past. But splitting one rabbi between two congregations became just too troublesome and in 1961 Rabbi Bernstein let the JCC know that he could no longer serve in that capacity in Deep River. The JCC was back to hiring

interim rabbis for holidays and life events.

The Jewish community continued to grow in both areas and both congregations found their rolls expanding.



*Second Rodfe Zedek Shul in Moodus*

In Moodus the talk turned to a larger, more modern synagogue, and 1968 marked the official groundbreaking for a new home for Rodfe Zedek, with Senator Abe Ribicoff wielding the ceremonial shovel. It took six years to complete, but in 1974 the new Rodfe Zedek building on Orchard Road was ready for services.

In the intervening years, talk had once again returned to sharing Rabbi Bernstein with the Deep River group, and in 1969, an agreement was reached between the two congregations. That lasted for one year, but the two congregations could simply not agree on an equitable sharing of Rabbi Bernstein's services, so once again the rabbi remained at Rodfe Zedek and the JCC looked to student rabbis, for the most part, to fill in when needed. Eventually the JCC, searching to define its role in the area ... was it to be a social center...a cultural center...an educational institution...a religious institution...decided that it needed someone to direct it and move it in the direction they had decided upon – not to be merely a community center but

to be a real synagogue. They hired a rabbi, John Nimon, the first of a series of “permanent” part time rabbis and changed the name from the Jewish Community Center to Congregation Beth Shalom (House of Peace) in 1980 with a rededication of the Union Street synagogue.

From that time the fates of the two congregations seemed to diverge – and that, ironically, was the precipitating factor that brought the two together. The Jewish influx into Moodus had stopped and most second generation Moodus-ites ended up moving away to other areas once they were grown. Rodfe Zedek’s membership declined, and after Rabbi Bernstein retired, no new rabbi was hired; instead the congregation looked to the Deep River shul’s rabbi for help when needed. Beth Shalom, under the leadership of several dynamic young rabbis, Marcia Plumb and Doug Sagal, was growing and eventually decided to affiliate with the reform movement. The little shul on Union Street was bursting at the seams, so the need for an expanded or new building was obvious. Perhaps the two congregations did have something to offer each other – a newer building in Moodus, an expanding congregation in Deep River – talks began between the two.

It took ten years and much soul searching on both sides before anything was agreed upon. In the meantime, Beth Shalom had determined that it needed a new building and the river proved to be too great a barrier for it to settle on the Moodus shul as a permanent home. Instead, it went ahead with a fund raising plan to build a new synagogue on its side of the river. In Moodus, members of Rodfe Zedek decided that they could live with a move to Beth Shalom’s facilities as long as their history and their religious artefacts could move with them. In 1998 the two synagogues officially merged in what Rabbi Doug Sagal called “The Marriage of the Century”, performed under a chuppah in the Union Street shul. And on October 1, 2001 the now renamed Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek moved into a brand new, and exciting, home on East Kings Highway, in Chester.

The new synagogue was designed by Beth Shalom congregant, artist Sol LeWitt, who had in mind a building that would fuse a number of essential elements that encapsulated the congregation that it was to shelter: intimacy, authentic ethnic flavour and local identity. He wanted it to hearken back both to the old wooden synagogues of Eastern Europe and to the simple buildings of New England. Lewitt’s design was taken in hand by architect Stephen Lloyd and the result was the building that now stands in Chester, widely celebrated and described by architectural critics as unique, beautiful, thought-provoking, and inspirational. As LeWitt had intended, the building is the result and the expression of the community, truly distinctive, rooted in Jewish thought and history, compatible with its New England location. It emblazons in its structure its deep roots in Jewish tradition and on its walls, with the words carved into the wooden beams, its commitment to Jewish teachings.

Today, Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek continues to redefine its role as a leader in the local Jewish and in the larger community as well. Its leaders, President Maxine Klein and Rabbi Marci Bellows, both of whom began their tenure this summer (2016), are following in the footsteps of those who came before them and coming up with new ways of reaching out and bringing the riches of the Jewish traditions that they treasure to an ever-more-diverse community, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Those traditions include the Friday night Shabbat services; the Saturday morning Holy Scrollers (at 9:00 each Saturday) or Torah study; an innovative religious school experience called Kivvun which intends not simply to prepare students for a bar or bat mitzvah but to inculcate in them an appreciation of ongoing Jewish learning and encourage them to integrate that learning into their lives; a monthly Lunch & Learn session with the rabbi; a variety of programs such as Music & More and Books & Bagels; its social justice activities, including involvement in soup kitchens in Chester and Deep River, the sponsorship of a refugee family settling in the area and an on-going book drive for women incarcerated in a local prison; ecumenical endeavours with other religious institutions in the area; educational ventures for adults including, an upcoming three part Introduction to Islam series, an Introduction to Judaism course, a culinary exploration of Jewish culture and history (Noshing Our Way Through Jewish History), a Mussar course, workshops and forums on current events and issues, just to mention a few.

In these, and many other, ways, CBSRZ is able to use its new and wonderful building to bring people together in many different ways, reflecting its historical tradition as both a place for people to worship and as the center for Jewish life in the area; its commitment to the pursuit of Jewish learning and tradition; its commitment to the pursuit of peace and justice embedded in its name – House of Peace; Pursuers of Justice; its commitment to using many different paths to bring people together – including music, art, literature - and its commitment to serving as a place for people to, in the words of Immediate Past President, Stephen Davis, “to search for meaning”...”to search for community”...”to search for healing”.

[Ellen Nodelman is Director of Adult Education at Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek and beginning in 1969 was Director of College Guidance at Rockland Country Day School where The Ellen Nodelman Creative Center was named in her Honor.]



*Exterior CBSRZ in Chester at Dusk*



*Interior CBSRZ in Chester*

# Temple Beth Sholom: Twenty Years Later

## By Martin Laskin, PhD

### Introduction

Often, when a Ph.D. dissertation is written, submitted, defended and then later published as a book, the case is closed. It is left to other researchers, in pursuit of their own agendas to offer their reflections, comments and criticisms. If the original work is cited it is a cause of satisfaction to the writer. Sometimes, especially in the case of an ethnographic study, a follow-up is done, years later in order to look at what changed and what stayed the same among the people and institutions originally written about.

With this in mind I would like to offer a very brief follow up to my original ethnographic study of Temple Beth Sholom (Jews in New Haven 7:27-42, 1997) that I researched as a participant observer from 1992 to 1996. Certain social aspects were central to my understanding of the dynamics of TBS in the early to mid-nineties of the last century and these aspects will be reviewed and updated.

### TBS a Pluralistic Membership

TBS has continued to be a pluralistic congregation in terms of social class, religious observance, belief, and individual choices for institutional involvement. In my original research I was struck by the great efforts expended to cater to the diverse needs of the congregants through a plethora of programming and opportunities for inclusion. This has not changed and if anything has become more elaborate and successful. Over the past twenty years the Social Action Committee has greatly widened its activities in the Jewish Community and beyond. Charity walkathons, food drives, clothing drives, packages for troops overseas especially in the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts, support for nursing home residents, and literacy tutoring are only a few of the social action volunteer group involvements that have either been started or enlarged.

The Adult Education Committee has diversified and widened its programming to include fellowship groups for speakers of Hebrew and of Yiddish. Israeli and Jewish film groups, Jewish music programs, guest speakers and study groups have been offered to congregants at what only could be described at a breathtaking pace. These programs have been coordinated with the assistance of the Men's Club and Sisterhood which have also offered a full slate of their own programming.

Much time in my original research was devoted to a description of the ways in which congregants with varying degrees of ritual knowledge were included into the worship services. Since that time many more activities have been developed which has led to a wider participation of congregants in the services. Rabbi Scolnic has encouraged many congregants to read Torah, have adult bar/bat mitzvahs or lead services for the first time. One example of this has been the '100 Yod Dash' which culminates in the presentation of a ritual 'Yod' or Torah reading pointer for those who read at least 100 Torah verses at Shabbat or Holiday services. Over the past twenty years Israel has been at the center of much thought and concern in the American Jewish Community. The overwhelming and uncritical support for Israel from the American Jewish Community can no longer be counted on as it was in the 1960s and 70s. While support for Israel is still strong among American Jews, there now exists diverse viewpoints regarding Israel's internal and external policies. TBS may be identified as a strongly 'Zionist' congregation. While Israel related issues are discussed and debated informally among the congregants as well as formally in Israel oriented programming, support for Israel's survival and security are non-negotiables at TBS. The congregation has developed an active Israel Affairs Committee which publishes an internal Israel Newsletter and offers many Israel oriented programs. Strong supporters of Israel have a home and a real comfort zone at TBS which may be more so than at other congregations. This may in part explain the increase in membership, which leads us to a consideration of the shifting local demographics since my original study.

### **Shifting Demographics**

Estimates and more formal studies have pointed to a Jewish population of between 20 and 27 thousand in the Greater New Haven area. In addition to TBS there are, or should I say were, five other Congregations affiliated with the Conservative Movement in this area. Each of these congregations has its own social culture and ambiance. Two of these congregations have closed their doors. TBS has attracted a number of these congregants who found themselves without a synagogue. In addition, TBS has drawn a number of new members from some of the existing congregations. Not that the number of switching congregants has in any way been great but often those who have switched to TBS had been active and involved members of their previous congregations.

It appears that for some time now the Jewish population of the Greater New Haven Area has been moving towards the east (the Shoreline area) and north, the Hamden, Cheshire, North Haven Towns. Originally, the New Haven Jewish population which consisted of first generation immigrants and their

children, together with a heavy influx of out of town Jewish professionals moved west, especially to Woodbridge, Orange, Bethany and the Westville area of New Haven. The Jewish center of community influence was concentrated in these more affluent areas. This would explain why the Regional JCC/Federation is located in Woodbridge, rather than in the somewhat more middle class and less affluent areas to the North of New Haven, particularly Hamden, Cheshire and North Haven. Over the last few years it appears that the Jewish population of Woodbridge is slowly being replaced with professionals from the Asian/American community. Continued high real estate prices in Woodbridge have perhaps made Hamden a more desirable location for young Jewish families. This demographic shift may also explain in part the growth in membership at TBS. The Temple has a talented and hardworking core of leadership volunteers. This is not a small core of volunteers and leaders but a large and diverse group from a variety of occupations and social statuses. It is to this subject that we now turn.

### **Occupational and Social Class Structure at Temple Beth Sholom**

As background to my original study of Temple Beth Sholom I took a look at the social class structure of the Jewish community in the Greater New Haven Area. I was particularly interested as to the occupational backgrounds of those in volunteer leadership positions. Although I did not attempt a detailed survey it became apparent both in anecdotal reality and common perception that attorneys and physicians played a major role in community affairs. One example here will be illustrative. A major function of the Jewish Federation is fund raising. Within the fund raising apparatus there exists two groups which are restricted to givers from specific occupations. One group is the Maimonides Affinity Group and the other the Cardozo Affinity Group. These two groups are restricted to physicians and attorneys respectively. There also exists a Young Leadership and a Women's Division but the two aforementioned affinity groups, (Maimonides and Cardozo) are the only ones based upon occupational status. It is assumed that spouses of physicians and attorneys may also be admitted to or at least play auxiliary roles in these groups. As far as I can determine being a nurse, (RN or CNA,) emergency medical technician, phlebotomist, respiratory therapist, pharmacist or medical secretary does not qualify one for admission to the medical society. The status of nurse practitioner may be somewhat borderline. Dentists and certainly dental hygienists do not qualify. Oral surgeons may be exceptions. Being a paralegal is not sufficient grounds for admission to the legal society.

Yale University, located in New Haven is the most prestigious and well known institute of higher learning in the area. A large number of the faculty and researchers at Yale are at least by ethnic background Jewish. There are other colleges and universities in the area such as Southern Connecticut State University, Quinnipiac University, University of New Haven, Alber-

tus Magnus and a few more just outside the immediate area. Yale plays a powerful and conspicuous role in the social life of many different ethnic and religious communities in the New Haven area; the Jewish community is no exception. For many years there has been close educational and cultural planning between the Jewish Community and Yale. The connection between the other universities and the larger Jewish community has been somewhat less close and less cultivated. TBS has quite a few members with faculty affiliations at these other universities and only a small number with similar affiliations at Yale.

TBS continues to provide an egalitarian meeting place and closely knit community for members coming from a wide range of occupations, social classes and community affiliations. I believe that this is a great social strength and an explanation as to the Temple's success and continued growth. Here at TBS there is no one prestige or status group that dominates or controls the business or the culture of the institution. If anything, prestige and status derive from involvement in the activities of the Temple and not from any form of social class status. This can be exemplified by the Shabbat morning Kiddush /luncheon following services.

### **Shabbat Morning Kiddush**

At the time of my original study of TBS, Shabbat morning Kiddush following the services consisted of challah, grape juice and perhaps some herring or cookies. Congregants would consume these bits of food while standing and conversing and then after a short time leave for home. A number of years ago a 'Kiddush club' was organized to provide a light lunch for the worshippers. This culinary shift had definite social implications for the Temple. 'Chicken and egg' questions by their very nature are not easily or definitively answered. Was the luncheon Kiddush instituted in response to a desire of congregants to expand their socializing with each other, or did the change in the meal plan somewhat unintentionally encourage the enhanced socializing to take place? At any rate congregants now stay for a good hour to an hour and a half after service, sit at round tables, converse, and increase the social solidarity of the Temple members. There are some groups who usually but not always sit at the same tables. Seating arrangement are generally fluid and change from week to week. Social class or occupational prestige do not appear to play a role in where people choose to sit. There are no name cards for seating, neither formally or informally. Outside the social hall three plaques of names are displayed listing past Temple Presidents, Sisterhood Presidents and Presidents of the Men's Club. In studying the names of these Temple leaders I saw that they had come from a wide variety of occupations. Doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers, social workers, small business owners, nurses, dentists, administrative assistants, blue collar workers and

professors; no one professional or occupational group has predominated. There is a place at the congregational table for everyone.

### **The Rabbi**

In an ethnographic sociological study, it is common procedure not to name the subjects observed; or a least to use pseudonyms. I felt however that it was necessary to make an exception in the case of the congregational Rabbi; his role in the social workings of the congregation is central to an understanding of its social dynamics. Rabbi Benjamin Scolnic, who has been the religious leader of TBS for more than three decades is also a scholar in his own right. He has published numerous books and articles on academic and clergy related topics. One of his most remarkable achievements as the Rabbi at TBS has been his ability to hold together such a diverse congregation and make it function as a united, purposeful group. This has been done through his leadership as teacher, personal counselor, spiritual guide and unifier. An example of his can be taken from his weekly Sabbath sermons to the congregation. The years from 1996 until the present have been tumultuous and historic, both for America and the State of Israel. Especially when it comes to American politics the congregation expresses a wide spectrum of often strongly held beliefs. In his sermons the Rabbi has been able in a most nonpartisan fashion emphasize the Jewish values that encompass these beliefs when based upon good intentions and sincerity.

### **In Conclusion**

Much more could be written about TBS over the last twenty years. The achievements in the educational programming for children from pre-school into the teenage years would merit an article in itself. Suffice it to say that TBS continues to be a growing, successful, exemplary Conservative Jewish Congregation and Community in the Greater New Haven Area.

[Martin Laskin, PhD is Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Program in Judaic Studies, Southern Connecticut State University.]



# Congregation Beth Israel The Orchard Street Shul

By Lee Liberman and Roslyn Croog

Congregation Beth Israel also known as The Orchard Street Shul, has recently experienced a rebirth. The Orchard Street Shul from its founding in 1913, enjoyed much activity in the Legion Avenue neighborhood, which was the hub of Jewish commerce and activity. Luckily, the Shul was just on the outskirts of the Jewish neighborhood which was obliterated for a 1960's New Haven Urban Renewal Project that scattered residents and closed businesses. Attendance at the Shul for Shabbos and holiday services diminished before actually coming to a close in the early 1990's. Although the lights remained lit, the building fell into disrepair.

There was serious consideration about selling the Shul. Luckily, however, Lee Liberman was at the forefront of a campaign to preserve and restore the Shul's physical building and maintain its position as a vibrant link within the Greater New Haven Jewish Community. In 2008, a new Board of Directors was established, fund-raising campaign began, and plans were in the making to resurrect the Shul to its former splendor.

In October of 2008, Cherry Hill Construction and the Sachs family donated their services and demolished an abandoned structure on the property next door to the Shul, and paved a parking lot. The new lot was able to generate some income for the Shul and was the first step toward its revival.

Construction Manager Bob Spear (retired) supervised the project, working with contractor Don Ellis. The Shul got a new roof. The bricks were repointed. The outside staircase was replaced. New floors were installed and most of the walls were painted and re-stenciled.

Concerns about preserving the historical integrity, however, provided that some of the original stenciling and some of the original paint remain on the walls. The original coal furnace, since converted to oil, was now replaced with a new gas furnace. Air conditioning was installed for the first time - no more shvitsing.

In addition to Cherry Hill's parking lot repaving, generous monetary donations were received - James Shure (building entrance side doors), Evelyn Maze (women's section doors), Barry Vine (chairs for the social hall, furnishings, food, and whatever else was needed at a moment's notice); Gary Ross (Bimah cover and Torah Ark curtain) and Betsy Henly-Cohn (new floor tiles). The Trachten family donated new kitchen cabinets, and Avi Peretz do-

nated the kitchen counters. Dr. Ed & Linda Pinn donated the new American and Israeli Flags. Sydney Perry was extremely helpful in getting financial help from the Jewish Federation. These were the first of many donations and contributions to the preservation of The Orchard Street Shul. Further generous gifts provided for the three original magnificent chandeliers in the Sanctuary to be removed, rewired, and cleaned one crystal at a time and then reinstalled to their original splendor.

In addition to the generous financial support of the community, the Jewish community, the New Haven community and others around the globe concerned with preserving the history of The Orchard Street Shul in New Haven, CT, we are grateful for the generous work of numerous volunteers, professionals and lay-people, who have offered their expert assistance and advice. A very special thank you to Rabbi Sheya Hecht, Rabbi Mendy and Dina Hecht, Barry Vine, Jimmy Shure, Lil and Lee Liberman, Bob Spear, Sherman Jacobson z"l, Roz Croog, Beverly Bergstein z"l, Mitzi and Marvin Bargar, Barry Herman z"l, Wayne Chorney, Mark Shiffrin, Seth Pauker, Bruce Spiwack, and the Benjamin Family for their never-ending energy, tenacity, time and expertise in bringing the Shul to where it is today.

On Rosh Hashanah 2010, the Shul held its first High Holiday services in close to two decades. Although the Shul was still in severe disrepair, a group of dedicated individuals helped make the holidays inspirational. Shabbos services resumed once a month and very quickly increased to every Shabbos.

On May 22, 2011, Lag B'Omer, a Gala Retro-Bar Mitzvah celebration was held with 38 men called to Bimah to reminisce and relate their Bar Mitzvah experiences at The Orchard Street Shul of long ago. These remembrances are captured in a booklet commemorating the event. This began a new tradition of being called to the Bimah by anyone wanting to remember and share his Bar Mitzvah anniversary.

The dream of our Shul's restoration was now a reality. Membership dues were increased for the first time in years from \$80 to \$100. Original members who had since moved away maintained their membership, noting fond memories of growing up in the Shul. Children and grandchildren of original and subsequent members wanted to be included as supporters of the Shul. Membership grew to 136, which included members in Connecticut, Florida, California, New York, New Hampshire, Nebraska, Washington D.C, Minnesota, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Virginia, Maine, Colorado and Arizona. In May 2014, a Gala Anniversary celebrating 100 Years and Beyond, took place. The Mayor of New Haven, Toni Harp, was honored. Shul President Lee and Lily Liberman received the Community Service Award; and Herbert B. Croog received the Lifetime

### Accomplishment Award.

The Shul is honored to have Rabbi Mendy Hecht as its religious, spiritual and educational leader. Continuing along in the Shul's historical and inspirational path, Rabbi Mendy Hecht is the grandson of Rabbi Dr. Maurice Y. Hecht z"l who served as Rabbi of the Shul from 1948 to 1992. In the interim, between the passing of Rabbi Dr. Maurice Y. Hecht z"l and the restoration of The Orchard Street Shul, it was Rabbi Sheya Hecht who took charge of conducting services and opening the Shul doors for worshipers and visitors. Rabbi Sheya Hecht is the link between our original and current rabbis. He is the son of Rabbi Dr. Maurice Y. Hecht z"l and the father of Rabbi Mendy Hecht.

In addition to leading Shabbos and Holiday services. Rabbi Mendy Hecht now conducts a Tuesday evening study group, "The Timeless Text of the Torah: How to Apply It to Our Daily Life". This group meets in Memory of Ezra Schwartz z"l an 18-year-old Yeshiva student from Massachusetts who was shot and killed while delivering food packages to Israeli soldiers on November 19, 2015.

A Friday evening "Sushi and Shots" is held the first Friday night of the month and every Shabbos after Services, there is a delicious kiddush enjoyed by all the Congregants. The Annual Passover Community Seder event began in 2015 with an overflowing attendance. Musical performances, movies, lectures and other events have been held in the Sanctuary, which is especially known for its superb acoustics. Since its renovation and re-establishment, The Shul enjoys a devoted Board of Directors. The leadership and guidance have been proudly performed by former presidents Lee Liberman, Reuven Russell, and Ari Caroline. Current President of The Orchard Street Shul is Judith Shanok Janette.

The National Register of Historic Places includes The Orchard Street Shul in New Haven, CT; and in 2012, Congregation Beth Israel of The Orchard Shul received a restoration grant from The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.

It is important to preserve and remember The Orchard Street Shul as a tribute to those immigrant families determined to make a place for themselves in their New World - continuing their religious traditions while installing themselves in a new society. Their inspirational experience continues as an ever-lasting lesson today because of those who believe in the importance of remembering.

[Note: An exterior view of the Orchard Street Shul can be seen on the front page of Volume IX of "*Jews in New Haven*" Pg i.]

[Earlier history appeared in *Jews in New Haven* 7:9-11, 1997; 7:11-20, 1997 with illustrations 5:89, 1988 and 7:10, 1997.]

[Lee Liberman, a member since 1947, led the effort to restore and revitalize The Orchard Street Shul, returning it to its place of prominence in New Haven. Mr. Liberman, while also dedicated to American Friends of Magen David Adom, Westville Synagogue, and other organizations, answered the call for a strong leader to preserve the last structure remaining from the Oak Street/Legion Avenue era. He, and his wife Lily, worked tirelessly to bring the Shul back to life. Under his presidency, the Shul was reborn, and continues to thrive as a vital link in the Greater New Haven Jewish Community.]

[Roslyn Z. Croog grew up in New Haven, CT, a daughter of Belle and Herbert Croog, and granddaughter of Fannie and Louis Croog who were among the founders of Congregation Beth Israel. Ms. Croog served as Treasurer of The Orchard Street Shul as she worked closely with Lil and Lee Liberman and others to revitalize and re-establish the Shul as the important historical landmark it is today.]



*Congregation Beth Israel  
The Orchard Street Shul*

# Congregation B'nai Jacob: The Woodbridge Years 1961 – 2016

## By Rhoda Gorenberg

Congregation B'nai Jacob was the third synagogue in New Haven. It was formed largely by a group of Russian and Polish Jews who came primarily from Elsavetgrad in 1881 to escape from the pogroms in Russia. In April 1882, they created a Jewish congregation and called it B'nai Jacob. Then they drew up a constitution and Bylaws, which, among other things, provided that the "Congregation shall worship according to the Polish Jewish ritual." This was essentially an Orthodox nusach (ritual). Although Congregation Mishkan Israel, established in 1840 was originally Orthodox, it gradually moved to become German Reform. In 1855, a part of the original group broke off as B'nai Scholom to continue with the original German Orthodox nusach. Both of these groups spoke mainly German and their sermons were in German. Although the Yiddish speaking Russians and Poles were welcome, they wanted what was familiar and comfortable for them and that is what they created for themselves.

By 1885, they purchased a structure on Temple Street and occupied it until 1912 (see an exterior picture in *Jews in New Haven [JINH]* volume 1, page 23, [1:23]). In 1912 they built a new structure on George Street that was occupied until 1961 and an exterior of that is depicted in *JINH* 1:27, and 8:69. An interior view of the front is in *JINH* on 4:5, a picture of the Bima is on 6:68, an interior view of the back of the sanctuary on 6:74, and of some of the stained glass windows on 5:88. Articles on aspects of their history in that period may be found in *JINH* 2:41-48 (Bane Stock, "Father of B'nai Jacob"); *JINH* 4:2-5 (In Memory of Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel); in *JINH* 6:69-86 (B'nai Jacob in the Interwar Period: An Immigrant Synagogue's Move toward Conservative Judaism). An overall history from 1882 to 1961 is presented in *JINH* 8:65-72. There is a picture of the May 10, 1959 groundbreaking for the new Woodbridge structure on Rimmon Road in *JINH* 2:43, 1979.

By 1946 B'nai Jacob was clearly outgrowing space in the George Street synagogue. Overflow High Holiday services were moved to the Westville Masonic Temple at 949 Whalley Avenue. In 1953, under the leadership of Rabbi Joseph Tabachnik, permission was obtained from Yale University to hold Yom Kippur services in Woolsey Hall. By 1960, Rosh Hashanah services were also held there.

As early as 1950 plans were projected for a new, larger synagogue on the Boulevard and Dyer Street. The entire city block was purchased for \$43,000. By an unprecedented written ballot, 70% of the congregants favored this site. After reconsideration the land was sold in 1953. Urban redevelopment in New

Haven made it necessary that B'nai Jacob leave George Street and build a new facility. By 1957 the decision had been made to move to Rimmon Road in Woodridge. Just as the 90 members of B'nai Jacob had the foresight to build for 750 in 1912, our members in the 1950's projected the future westward movement of the Jewish population. At that time the membership consisted of approximately 950 families.

The building fund, composed of a large committee, was headed by Harry Barnett. The leaders involved in the actual construction were John J. Fox, then president of the congregation, Maurice Bailey and Max Teitelman, building committee co-chairmen, and Gilbert Banever in charge of the artwork. The building was delayed for a year by three events. The first was the change of the zoning regulation in Woodbridge, which made it necessary to appear before several boards before approval was given. The steel industry strike of 1959 held up the delivery of materials for several months. Finally, the untimely death of the architect Fritz Nathan came before many of the interior designs had been determined. The work was completed by the architect, Bertan L. Bassuk.

Edie Goodmaster wrote the following: "I was working as private secretary to Maurice Bailey, owner of the Shubert Theater. Mr. Bailey had agreed to co-chair the building committee. Soon there was a large committee and meetings were held every week. Mr. Bailey would dictate the minutes to me the next day. Carbon copies had to be sent to the various committee members. Max Teitelman, a building contractor, gave of his time and expertise freely. Gil Banever, an artist, was a consultant for materials, colors, and artwork, including the menorah, eternal lights and the windows. Also on call was Bernie Burge, an interior decorator. John Fox was also an expert on buildings. Everything done required the full approval of everyone involved. Harry Barnett was on the job 24/7. He was the prime mover in fund raising. A building brochure reads "Goal \$750,000 – Raised \$763,000. Rabbi Tabachnik and Cantor Sudock played active roles, as did Sisterhood President Bea Horowitz, and many others. It was an exciting three years. When I took a ride to Woodbridge I was awestruck. I thought I had never seen anything as beautiful."

The dedication took place on the weekend of June 16-18, 1961. The Sanctuary was dedicated at the Friday evening service, and the Hebrew School on Saturday morning. Dr. Max Arzt, Vice Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, was the principle speaker. A magnificent banquet and dance were held on Saturday night. A community ceremony and cornerstone dedication were held on Sunday with Rabbi Gerson D. Cohen, Chancellor of the Seminary as speaker. In the dedication book, John Fox wrote the following words that still apply as we enter our 135th year. "Let us carry into the future the same idealism and vision that actuated the small group of men and women who founded this institution, and guided by the traditions of the

past, the needs of the present, and the promise of the future, we can insure the survival of our great Jewish heritage.”

In 1982 the celebration of B'nai Jacob's centennial included several exhibits, an art and essay contest sponsored by the religious school, a Bike-A-Thon, the publication of a centennial volume which raised \$40,000, and the B'nai Jacob Players production of "The Diary of Anne Frank". The logo and motto were designed by Larry Hoffman. The celebration culminated in a weekend of special events and a gala ball. Speakers were former rabbis of B'nai Jacob, Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz and Rabbi Joseph Tabachnik, and our own Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel.

In 2005 a complete renovation of the sanctuary took place. In 2009 the chapel windows were rededicated and the brick walkway of names was installed.

The synagogue has been greatly beautified by the artistry of Jeanette Kuvin Oren. She designed and executed the Torah covers in the sanctuary and the chapel. Her Tree of Life tapestry hangs in the front hall. The coat of many colors she designed for the B'nai Jacob production of Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, remains on display next to the school office.

Joseph Tabachnik became Rabbi of B'nai Jacob in 1953. Woolsey Hall was used for Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur services making it possible for 2400 people to attend. Rabbi Tabachnik organized a Sunday Bible study class and the Post Confirmation Class. He served during the move from George Street to Rimmon Road in Woodbridge.

In 1962 Dr. Arthur A. Chiel was named Rabbi. A prolific writer and intellect, Rabbi Chiel challenged us with his sermons. His articles appeared in numerous periodicals. The Megillat Hanukkah and the Guide to Sidrot and Haftorot have become classics. An expert in Early American Jewry and Ezra Stiles at Yale, he documented our local history with his column in the Jewish Ledger entitled Looking Back. He helped found Ezra Academy and was the keynote speaker at the rededication of Touro Synagogue.

In 1983, following Rabbi Chiel's sudden and untimely death, Michael Menitoff became Rabbi. He was the first rabbi appointed to the seven member Connecticut State Ethics Commission. In 1991, Rabbi Menitoff officiated at the Jewish wedding ceremony of 28 Soviet immigrant couples previously married in civil ceremonies in Russia. The festivities, held at B'nai Jacob, included a gala reception.

Rabbi Richard L. Eisenberg became our Rabbi in 1994. Rabbi Eisenberg visited the "snow birds" in Florida in 2004. It has become an annual event. He enjoyed teaching and music, and participated in several B'nai Jacob Players productions. Rabbi Eisenberg has been active in the Rabbinical Assembly, having served on the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards. In this capacity he created the standard Triennial Cycle for Torah Reading in the Conservative Movement. He was president of the Connecticut Valley Region

of the Rabbinical Assembly and chairman of the Social Action Committee. He also served two years on the Ethics Committee nationally followed by two years as its chairman. He was a member of The Connecticut Board of the ADL. A new Torah book *Etz Hayim* was introduced in 2003. Rabbi Eisenberg left B'nai Jacob in order to begin a new career counseling families dealing with substance abuse.

Rabbi Joel M Levenson became the 10th rabbi of B'nai Jacob in 2008. He served during our 125th year celebration. Rabbi Levenson introduced "B'nai Jacob Reads". During his tenure the chapel windows were rededicated and the brick walkway was installed. B'nai Jacob instituted the annual Mitzvah Day with a variety of synagogue and community projects. A new High Holiday prayer book *Machzor Lev Shalem* was introduced.

In 2013 Rabbi Rona Shapiro became spiritual leader and the first woman rabbi of B'nai Jacob. She introduced *Shabbat Schmooze*, a social hour before the Friday night service, and *Bread and Torah*, a class that explores the weekly Torah reading prior to the Shabbat morning service. She and cantorial student Malachai Kanfer lead *Shir Hadash*, a musical family Shabbat morning service. Rabbi Shapiro has continued B'nai Jacob Reads for the past two years. She recently introduced to the congregation a new prayer book *Siddur Lev Shalem*.

We gratefully recognize our interim rabbis, Rabbi Alan Lovins, Rabbi Herbert Weinberg and Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins.

Here at B'nai Jacob we continue to have a full Torah reading on Shabbat. This is possible because of our talented lay members. It follows in the tradition begun by Myrna Zaret, who read Torah for 30 years, and who also trained readers for the future. Some of our many outstanding readers are Dana Schwartz, Adele Messina, and Shelly Lauer.

A Torah restoration project was held on 1983 and a new Torah was commissioned in 1997.

B'nai Jacob also proudly holds daily Minyan, mornings and evenings.

Women have always played a significant role in synagogue life at B'nai Jacob. After the opening of the new George Street synagogue, the separate seating of men and women was challenged by the Ladies Aid Society, which had been founded in 1911. The women had worked very hard to raise funds for the new building and had also provided some of the furnishings. Therefore it was hard to deny them. But it would be more than 10 years before they accomplished their goal. By 1924, any woman who wanted to sit with her husband on the main floor was allowed to do so. Most of the younger women did, but many of the older women preferred to remain in the balcony.

In 1931, Rose Fox organized a women's club to support the synagogue. When B'nai Jacob moved to Woodbridge, Sisterhood had as many as 600 members. Through the years Sisterhood raised thousands of dollars, supported the religious school, and sponsored numerous lectures and study groups. It

also established a well-stocked gift shop of Judaica which continues to raise funds for synagogue projects.

In 1974 women were officially counted in the Minyan and called to the Torah. The first woman to receive an Alliyah on Yom Kippur was Norma Greene in 1973. In 1974 Edie Goodmaster was the first woman to chant the Haftorah on a Shabbat. The first full public reading of the Torah on Shabbat by a woman was accomplished by Myrna Zaret in 1978.

Rhoda Myers became the first woman Executive Director of B'nai Jacob in 1976. She had previously served as the first woman vice-president of the synagogue. In 1990 she became president of The National Association of Synagogue Administrators. Rhoda Myers was honored with a tribute service on May 8, 1992.

In 1983 Elaine Sneideman became the first woman elected president of B'nai Jacob.

In 2000, a summer series featured "The Women of B'nai Jacob".

Music is an integral part of life at B'nai Jacob. Through our congregant's enthusiastic participation in services, we have come to be known as the "singing shul". This is in large measure due to the inspiration of our cantors. During our 125 year history, we have had 7 cantors.

In 1924 Charles Sudock was appointed cantor. He was to become a legend in his time. He introduced modern music to B'nai Jacob. His magnificent voice and warm personality attracted many new members to the synagogue. He carefully guided the daily Minyan, both mornings and nights. He was a founder and president of the Cantors' Assembly. It was thrilling to hear him conduct High Holiday services in Woolsey Hall, both for the adult and children's services. He served B'nai Jacob in every aspect of synagogue life for 37 years with dignity and honor.

Cantor Herbert Feder served from 1961-1963. He established a Chorale Society open to all. Serving as director of the Junior Choir, he was especially loved by the children. Cantor Feder left in 1963 to pursue his studies in the rabbinate.

Joseph Levine served as cantor from 1964-1966. He led the Junior Choir and the Youth Chorale in singing at Mincha and Maariv services, and enhanced Shabbat services with the participation of the Youth Chorale. He led them in singing at the 19th annual convention of the Cantors' Assembly. During his tenure Cantor Levine participated in a concert held at B'nai Jacob featuring the renowned cantor David Kusevitzky.

In June of 1967 Solomon Epstein was appointed cantor. He was to serve 9 years. Under his direction our Junior Choir performed on television in 1968. Cantor Epstein had a love of theater. He directed *The Dybbuk* in 1972 and *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat* in 1973. He brought together a small group of interested actors at B'nai Jacob to form a theater group, which was to become the B'nai Jacob Players. Their first production was *Come Blow*

your Horn in 1974. Since then some of the musical productions have been *The Music Man*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Children of Eden*. The B'nai Jacob Players have entertained us, enhanced our synagogue image as well as raising large sums of money. Synonymous with the success of the B'nai Jacob Players was Ken Sperling, who directed or acted in ten productions

Cantor Irving Sobel served for three years. He organized and participated in two outstanding Cantors' Concerts held at B'nai Jacob.

In 1980 Cantor Joshua Konigsberg joined the professional staff at B'nai Jacob. A superb teacher, "Cantor Josh" was responsible for training our Bar/Bat Mitzvah students. He taught many adult education music courses. He exhibited boundless passion and enthusiasm for all he did, whether leading services or composing original music. He brought outstanding musical programs and events to our synagogue. His original compositions "A Man and his Music" and "Song for My Father", with poetry by Barry Zaret celebrated his legacy to B'nai Jacob.

In 2014 we were very fortunate to acquire the services of cantorial student Malachai Kanfer. He participates with ease in all aspects of synagogue life including conducting services, teaching, both adults and children, and planning and participating in concerts

Principal Samuel Sloan held an annual Shiriyah. He taught Passover songs in the classrooms every year. Fortunately Tzvi Rapaport adds a musical dimension to our school program.

We have had outstanding concerts here at B'nai Jacob, guest artists from Yale, the Cantors' Concerts, and the Harlem Boys Choir who appeared in 2002.

In 1952, Samuel Sloan was appointed as full time Education Director. As the school enrollment continued to grow, it was necessary to purchase a large house at 6 High Street and convert it into a school. This was done at a cost of \$100,000. And still the school grew and now used additional school-rooms in nearby Webster School on Sunday mornings. When Webster School was demolished for downtown redevelopment in the late 1950's, the city of New Haven permitted B'nai Jacob to use three rooms at Edgewood School. The B'nai Jacob Bulletin of September 1957 shows an enrollment of 513 students in the Hebrew school and 65 children in Gan Hayered. School was held on Sundays through Thursdays, with double sessions from 3:15-4:45 and 4:00-5:30. In 1960, the school moved to its present beautiful location on Rimmon Road. Under Mr. Sloan's 30-year leadership, B'nai Jacob Religious School became one of the largest and most respected schools in the Connecticut Valley Region.

In September of 1959, we accepted the five-year ruling for B'nai and B'not candidates along with the three-day-a week program. Innovative memorable activities such as the Hanukkah Torch Run, the enactment of the Exodus for Passover, and the building of a model of the Mishkan, enriched our school

program under the direction of Education Director Kinneret Chiel and teacher Tzvi Rapaport. Mrs. Chiel was honored for her years of service in 1986.

The B'nai Jacob School continues to be an exciting place for our children under the creative leadership of Tzvi Rapaport and Lynn Ginzberg. Our school has been recognized nationally for its innovative programming. Lynn Ginzberg also edits *The B'nai Jacob Bulletin*, *BJ Happenings* and *Mah Nishmah*, the school bulletin. In 2002, Lynn Ginzberg introduced *The Madrichim Program* in which teenagers volunteer to help in the school and the office. It has continued to grow in numbers every year.

Through the years many of our students received their first formal Jewish education at our nursery school, *Gan Hayered*, which was started at the *George Street Synagogue* in 1948 by Rabbi Rabinowitz. Sue Shapiro became director on *Rimmon Road* in 1962. The school grew and thrived under her leadership. In 2001 she was honored for her years of service. Lana Gad became director after Sue's retirement.

The B'nai Jacob Library, founded in 1962, has been an integral part of the synagogue and the school. Serving the greater New Haven area, it houses over 10,000 volumes and has received awards for its reference services. In 2012, Rhoda Gorenberg was recognized for her 50 years of service. The library also maintains the B'nai Jacob Archives, which was set up during the 100-year celebration by Dorothy Polayes and Roz Kaye, joined later by Rita Gold.

Adult education is a very important part of synagogue life. In addition to the rabbi's classes, we offer *Lunch and Learn*, featuring speakers on Shabbat, and Sunday morning lectures.

In recent years, B'nai Jacob has seen a decline in membership due to many complex reasons including fewer families moving into Woodbridge. Yet the congregation continues to thrive because of the generosity of its members, many joining the *Chai Society* by volunteering to pay higher dues. Many members volunteer generously of their time to serve on boards and committees. The *Shem Tov* award is given annually for outstanding service to the synagogue and the community.

B'nai Jacob has a website, a Facebook page, and is able to stream services and special events to individual homes.

B'nai Jacob maintains two cemeteries located on *Whalley Avenue* in New Haven and *Wintergreen Avenue* in Hamden.

With the extraordinary spiritual leadership of our clergy, and the generous devotion of our members, B'nai Jacob looks optimistically to its 135th year and to the future.

THE PAST PRESIDENTS OF B'NAI JACOB  
THE RIMMON ROAD YEARS

1957 – 1961	John J. Fox
1961 – 1963	Harvey N. Ladin
1963 – 1965	Daniel G. Weinstein
1965 – 1967	Harold Bench
1967 – 1969	Julius Judelson
1969 – 1971	Mitchel W. Garber
1971 – 1973	Maurice Kaye
1973 – 1977	Joseph Blumberg
1977 – 1979	Morton Miller
1979 – 1981	Peter Weinstein
1981 – 1983	Robert S. Goodman
1983 - 1985	Elaine Sneideman
1985 – 1987	Alvin D. Susman
1987 – 1989	Sherman H. Krevolin
1989 – 1991	David J. Skolnick
1991 – 1993	Dr. Suzanne Stier
1993 – 1995	Richard L. Horowitz
1995 – 1997	James M. Shure
1997 – 1999	Richard A. Epstein
1999 – 2001	Barbara Wurtzel
2001 – 2003	Wayne Garrick
2003 – 2005	Stuart A. Amdur
2005 – 2007	Richard A. Epsrein
2007 – 2009	Jeanette Kuvin Oren
2009 – 2011	Dana Schwartz
2011 – 2013	Paul Schatz
2013	Steve Fleischman

[Rhoda Gorenberg was the Librarian and archivist for Congregation B'nai Jacob for 50 years. She has also served on the Board of Directors of JHSGNH.]



ת"וב

## Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont/Chabad By Chanie Wilhelm

The Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont, located just one block from the Long Island Sound, has a story spanning decades and generations. This historic white structure with stained glass windows was originally built to serve the needs of the Jews who vacationed in Woodmont—a popular summer destination. To the knowledge of historians, the earliest Jewish prayer services in the Woodmont area or in the town of Milford were held in the summer of 1920 in a private home. By 1926, sufficient funds had been collected for a synagogue building and in July, the synagogue was incorporated. By the summer of 1927, the building was completed and ready for occupancy. Services were held in July, August, and beginning of September. During the next years, the synagogue saw a gradual rise in attendees, and a social hall was built in 1947 to accommodate the Sunday Hebrew School and large crowds for High Holiday services. During the next few decades, the Jewish population in the area steadily declined, and putting together a minyan became very difficult. Things improved a bit during the 1980s, as more Jews came to Woodmont for the summer and year-round growth slowly increased. During the 1990s, the congregation weathered financial difficulties due to the decline of the building. Dr. David S. Fischer assumed the presidency in 1994, and each summer found him devotedly calling members to ensure minyanim for Shabbat. Under his able leadership, and to his credit, the synagogue was able to continue functioning through the turn of the century.

Joel Levitz became the president of the Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont in 2006. Since its founding, the synagogue had served as a summer synagogue—open for just a few weeks during the summer months, yet the last few summers had seen the congregation struggle to gather a minyan for weekend Shabbat services. President Joel Levitz along with congregant Harris Heyman felt that it would be prudent to consider bringing in a full-time rabbi and opening for year-round services in order to ensure a more viable future for the shul.

Joel Levitz met with Rabbi Sheya Hecht, regional director of Chabad of Greater New Haven, and the two discussed the possibility of having a Chabad presence in Milford which would work alongside the synagogue and boost its current operation.

The first joint event between Chabad and the Hebrew Congregation of

Woodmont was held on Simchat Torah eve in October of 2006 in the social hall. Rabbi Schneur and Chanie Wilhelm planned the event a few weeks prior, mailing out cards inviting the Jewish community to join in a Simchat Torah celebration. Around 80 people attended for an evening of dancing and singing with the Torah and dinner. By all accounts, it was a large success, and the groundwork was laid for Chabad to move to Milford.

Over that winter, meetings were held in the home of President Joel Levitz, and the board agreed to join with Chabad and hire Rabbi Schneur Wilhelm as its rabbi. It was also decided that membership fees would not be charged—all would be welcome regardless of background, affiliation, and financial ability, a tradition which continues until today.

The small wooden synagogue building, originally built as a summer synagogue, was never insulated or winterized. And for a long time, the Jewish population of Milford reflected a summer congregation, but starting in the 80s, people began winterizing their homes and living in Milford year-round. The synagogue, though, remained a summer establishment. Up until 2007, the synagogue was only open from July 4th weekend through the High Holidays, when it would be shuttered until the next year's Independence Day. In May of 2007, however, the synagogue opened its doors for the holiday of Shavuot—a first—and services continued each weekend for the next few months. Although the Wilhelms did not move to Milford until the end of June, they came each Friday afternoon to Milford for Shabbat and stayed at the home of Harris and Lois Heyman. The synagogue remained open through the High Holidays and the holiday of Sukkot, after which the weather was too cold to hold services. Services were well attended, and almost every Shabbos saw a minyan.

Chabad Jewish Center of Milford was established in June of 2007, and worked hand in hand with the synagogue, although it functioned as a separate institution. Costs relating to spring/summer services and holidays were covered by the synagogue, and events during the winter months when the synagogue was closed were sponsored by Chabad.

During that winter, the Wilhelm home served as a meeting space for the congregation once monthly. Services were held, followed by a Kiddush meal for all who attended. In this way, Milford residents would still have a place to pray, albeit intermittently, throughout the colder winter and spring months.

The Jewish Women's Circle was formed in late 2007, and the first event, a Challah baking workshop, was held in December of 2007. Since then, the Jewish Women's Circle has met regularly, several times a year, for an activity or craft, usually connected to the Jewish holidays. A Sunday morning Men's Tefillin Club was also started which met monthly for Tefillin and breakfast.

Chanukah in 2007 was held on the Milford Green, highlighting a large

ice menorah. The Mayor of Milford at the time, James Richetelli, addressed the crowd. A menorah lighting at the Westfield CT Post Mall was also held, featuring an interactive olive oil workshop, in which olive oil was made from scratch. Each year since then, celebrations were held on the Milford Green and at the Milford mall, and a menorah was placed at each location throughout the holiday, fulfilling the sages' maxim to "publicize the miracle." In 2008, the Milford Green event was the focus of media attention when it became known that the White Wolves, an anti-Semitic white supremacist group planned on demonstrating at the festival. Thank G-d, the disturbance was minimal, and the celebration went on as usual.

The Menorah celebration at the mall is different each year, featuring a different, unique menorah. A balloon Menorah, coin Menorah, Menorah formed from cans which were later donated to a shelter, and a Lego Menorah are just a few of the Menorahs built and lit at the mall over the last decade. The Chanukah celebrations at the mall and on the city green have been well-attended over the last decade and are accompanied by lively music; donuts, dreidels, and gelt are distributed to attendees.

In 2008, a first-ever Purim event was held at AMF Lanes in Milford. The Megillah was read in a side room, and then all participants enjoyed a game of bowling. Since then, the Purim celebration is an annual event (held at various venues and in later years, the synagogue), drawing a large crowd for Megillah reading and a festive meal. As soon as the weather turned warmer, after Passover, the doors of the Shul were opened once again for services on a regular basis. A Shavuot celebration was held in 2008 once again.

In the summer of 2008, an anonymous donor contributed \$5,000 to check and fix one of the synagogue's three Torahs that was in dire need of repair. It was rededicated in September of 2008, amidst a joyous celebration. A scribe from New York came to Milford to finish the Torah's final corrections. The area of Edgefield Ave. in front of the synagogue was blocked off to through-traffic, and participants danced in the streets to music, as the Torah was led, under a Chuppah, into the synagogue.

The following winter, 2009, after another successful summer season, services were once again held every few weeks in the Wilhelm home. In late 2009, a commercial building located about 2 miles from the synagogue was available for rent, and Chabad of Milford covered the rental costs and opened it for services. The larger space enabled a larger attendance and most importantly, Shabbat services on a weekly basis. It was a milestone in the synagogue's history, for from then on, until today, services were held every single week, without a break.

The next winter, congregant Joyce Saltman generously offered her home

for services for the months she would be away in Florida, enabling the congregation to save on the very large expenses that renting a commercial space entailed. That continued for 2 winters (2011 and 2012) until the social hall was re-opened and winterized.

JLI (Jewish Learning Institute) adult educational classes were introduced in 2011, and have been widely welcomed. In 2013, the Rosh Chodesh Society's monthly classes for women debuted in Milford. Lecturers are brought 2-3 times per year. Social events, such as Jewish comedians, art shows, and other entertainment are held regularly. Friday night Shabbat dinners for the community began in 2008 and are held periodically.

The first Passover Seder for the Milford Jewish community was held in March, 2010, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Milford with over 60 participants. The next year was a Jewish leap year and Passover fell out towards the end of April, resulting in weather warm enough for the Seder to be held at the synagogue. The next year's Seder was also held at the synagogue, but the year after that (after the fire, March 2013) the Seder was held at a different venue, the Surf Village Clubhouse. By the next year, 2014, the social hall was ready and the Seder was held there. The Seder continues to draw a large crowd, with community members and visitors enjoying the shared celebration of the Holiday of Freedom.

In November of 2011, a small group of members formed the Bagel Beach Historical Association, and a website was set up, [www.BagelBeach.com](http://www.BagelBeach.com), in an effort to collect memories and stories of Jewish Woodmont. Many were interviewed and others submitted their own stories, which were all posted on the website. The goal of the association is to document the rich Jewish connection to Woodmont and to preserve the memories of the previous generations.

On Sunday morning, October 14, 2012, a few days after the Simchat Torah celebrations were held, a fire broke out in the synagogue building. There was no one in the building at the time, and it was a neighbor who called the fire department upon seeing the smoke billowing from the building. By the time the firefighters had put out the fire, the fire had raged throughout the wooden structure, causing severe damage to the building and destroying its contents.



The Torahs were salvaged by the firefighters (although they both sustained damage and had to be repaired) but everything else in the building was completely ruined. It was later determined by the fire department that the cause of the fire was electrical, which was a relief to many who had feared it was arson. The

*Result of Fire*

immediate response by the congregation was that the synagogue would be rebuilt. Newspaper articles covering the fire almost all include a quote by Rabbi Wilhelm that the congregation was resilient and would rebuild. The ensuing weeks were busy with dealing with the aftermath of the fire, and a high priority was given to removing all of the prayer books and Chumashim, which according to Jewish law, needed to be buried. A burial service was held just a few days after the fire on Wednesday, October 17. Mr. James Shure of Robert E. Shure Funeral Home generously provided a plot for the sacred items.

For years before the fire, there was talk of winterizing and possibly restructuring the existing building, and the congregation had retained the services of Jay Alpert Architects, AIA, to draw initial plans for a restructuring of the building so that it would reflect a year-round building; after the fire, plans began in earnest. At a board meeting, it was decided that first to be renovated would be the social hall, so that year-round events could be held there, without needing to resort to alternate venues as the congregation had done for so long. The renovated social hall would also serve as the synagogue meeting space until the synagogue would be rebuilt. Subsequent phases would be 1) an extension to the social hall which would include a commercial kitchen, office space and library; 2) a lobby connecting the social hall with the synagogue which would also house a mini museum documenting the history of “Bagel Beach”; and 3) the synagogue building.

In February of 2013, just 4 months after the fire, the congregation hired Olympus Construction to begin the social hall renovations, which would include a heating/cooling system, insulation, completely redesigned interior, new flooring, etc. Joyce Saltman and Sol Hitzig pledged \$100,000 towards the social hall, and it was renamed “The Joyce & Sol Happiness Hall.” Despite much skepticism that it could be finished in time, the new social hall was complete just in time for Rosh Hashanah, which fell out that year on Sept. 4.



*Model of HCW/Chabad Renovation*

Throughout the next two years, funds were raised to continue the next phase of the project, the social hall extension. In order to complete that phase, much excavation and sitework needed to be done, which included construction of a retaining wall to prevent the

water damage that had so negatively impacted the previous social hall building and worn away the floor's supports. Work continued, albeit slowly, as funds

were raised. The synagogue was the recipient of a grant award of \$50,000 from the Jewish Federation, and an anonymous donor pledged \$150,000. Richard and Debra Epstein dedicated the library for \$54,000, and another anonymous donor came forward to dedicate the kitchen for \$65,000. Many other individuals contributed generously to cover the monumental costs of construction.

In June of 2014, the Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont was the recipient of an Aron Kodesh (ark) and Bimah (Torah reading Table) from Congregation Kol Ami in Cheshire which had closed.

In the fall of 2014, Chabad Jewish Center of Milford and the Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont joined together, forming one organization. The synagogue board voted unanimously for the merger, and the synagogue was now called Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont/Chabad or Chabad/HCW.

In the summer of 2016, a gala dinner was held in celebration of the shul's 90th year, honoring the past and current presidents and their wives. The day of the gala, June 6, 2016, was proclaimed as "Chabad of Milford-Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont Day" by Mayor Ben Blake, and a certificate of the proclamation was presented by the mayor. A major goal of the dinner was to raise funds for the remaining expenses of Phase II and future phases. Over \$130,000 was raised that evening, and work commenced; at this point (December 2016) the social hall extension is just about complete.

Services are currently held every Shabbat morning and holidays. Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat services are held on the first and third Friday of each month. Shabbat services are attended by about 40-50 people, with summer weekends often drawing crowds of 60 or more. Ongoing classes, social events, Shabbat dinners, holiday programs, and lectures make the synagogue a year-round center for Jewish life and activity. The synagogue has a website [www.JewishMilford.com](http://www.JewishMilford.com) and Facebook page, [www.Facebook/hcwchabad](http://www.Facebook/hcwchabad), which are updated regularly with upcoming events and community news.

[Chanie Wilhelm is the co-director of Chabad of Milford-Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont.]

[There have been two previous articles which appeared in *Jews in New Haven*, Vol. 8: "Woodmont & Bagel Beach," and "The Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont," both by David S. Fischer, M.D.]

## Our History Westville Synagogue Excepted from Website

Sixty years in the making, The Westville Synagogue continues to evolve and grow, serving the needs of the Orthodox and larger New Haven Jewish community. In the Spring of 1952, Charles Albom, Arthur Slutsky and Herbert Batt dreamed of having a synagogue in Westville. A small group began davening in a private home with a Torah borrowed from the Young Israel of New Haven. In 1953, 75 people attended High Holiday services at the Davis Street School. In January 1954, a group met to discuss the idea of establishing an Orthodox shul in Westville; a small house on West Prospect Street was purchased and services were held just before Pesach.

When the synagogue decided later in 1954 that it was time to hire a rabbi, Rabbi Albert Feldman was selected—though he was clearly told that the shul had no money to pay his first paycheck! Rabbi Feldman was formally installed as rabbi on February 21, 1955. He instituted a daily minyan and devoted members picked up and dropped off others to assure the minyan's success. Services were held in the "house" from 1954-1958, until the auditorium (completed on the site of the former "house"), was completed in the fall of 1958.

In these early years, the Mr. & Mrs. Club offered year-round events for couples, and "Jewelites" offered comprehensive programming to the senior members of the community. The Men's Club sponsored breakfasts with guest speakers each month with an impressive lineup of speakers. And the Sisterhood, for decades under the leadership of Rebbetzin Estelle Feldman, held social activities, art auctions and other fundraisers, and social action events which quickly became well-known throughout the community. People came from all over to participate in the Sisterhood-sponsored fashion shows, and the donor dinners were consistently well-attended events. The Sisterhood also carefully prepared holiday educational materials to share with families who may have been unfamiliar with certain Jewish holidays and practices.

Rebbetzin Feldman's commitment to Jewish religious practice and to inclusiveness have been apparent in many ways. In the past it was the practice of Israel Bonds Women's Division to host a non-kosher luncheon. Through much hard work and sensitive diplomacy, Mrs. Feldman was able to suggest a kosher Israel Bonds luncheon, hosted at the Westville Synagogue.

At the conclusion of Yom Kippur services, attended by 1,200 worshippers, members returned home to breakfast, returned to the shul one hour later, Yom Kippur pledges in hand, for a night of dancing. In those days, Orthodox synagogues regularly sponsored dances, and the Westville Synagogue had a

rich history, always large, haimesh community events and large fundraisers for the shul. And Bingo nights, held every Tuesday for more than twenty years, brought in more than \$250,000 by the early 1970s and allowed the shul to pay off its mortgage.

In an age when Orthodox children did not have the option to attend day schools, the children of the Westville Synagogue walked as a group from the Davis Street School. When Rabbi Feldman wasn't teaching five classes himself, he was cleaning the classrooms and helping "keep order" from his hallway "shmira" station.

Under Rabbi Feldman's leadership, the shul continued to grow through the 1960's and 1970's. On February 28, 1962, Beit Hamedrosh Hagodol—Westville Synagogue was formed when The Westville Synagogue and Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol formally merged. A larger sanctuary was completed in April, 1964. In 1965, the Westville Shul demonstrated its love and commitment to Rabbi Feldman by granting him lifetime tenure.

The synagogue's long "official" name can be traced to March 26, 1974, when the synagogue merged yet again—this time with Congregation B'nai Israel, affectionately known as the "Rose Street Shul." The Synagogue then became known as Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol B'nai Israel – The Westville Synagogue.

In 2004, Rabbi Wesley Kalmar and Rebbetzin Dr. Jessica Kalmar joined the Westville community. The Westville community will always remember Rabbi Kalmar's special davening during Yom Kippur services, his funny voices during the Purim megillah reading, the anecdotes at the start of each Shabbat sermon, the 100 times singing *mashiv haruach umorid hageshem* during the hakafot on Simchat Torah, and so much more.

In 2010, the Westville Synagogue community continued its journey, under the energetic leadership of Rabbi Fred Hyman and Rebbetzin Tova Hyman. We are very proud of the dedication of our older members, who often serve as the backbone for our daily and Shabbat minyanim. We are touched by Rabbi Hyman's kindness, greeting each member of the congregation by name, even after just a week in the community. One of his first "innovations" was requesting that, after an aliyah, each person come up to him to receive a handshake and yasher koach from the rabbi! We are encouraged by the "pitch in" spirit of our members of all ages who daven and leyn each week, help prepare beautiful Shabbat kiddushes, erect the sukkah, assemble Purim baskets, attend the Westville University adult education programs, open their homes to everyone from Yachad Shabbaton participants to visiting Israeli professors, and come together to raise needed funds for the shul. The voices of so many young children in the hallways of the shul on Shabbat and holidays mornings

are a sure sign that Westville has a strong future, as a committed, Modern Orthodox synagogue.

It is not our job to complete the work, but neither are we free to desist from it!

### **About the Westville Synagogue**

The Westville Synagogue is a warm and welcoming Modern Orthodox synagogue located in the heart of Westville, a couple of miles west of downtown New Haven and Yale University.

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[A previous history appeared in the Jews in New Haven 2:126-132, 1979, entitled Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol, B'nai Israel, The Westville Synagogue with five illustrations.]

# Mishkan Israel Updated 1990-2015

## By Shari Rabin

### Introduction

The most famous man to grace the *bima* at Mishkan Israel once said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it *bends towards justice*.” Martin Luther King Jr.’s hopeful prophecy about the workings of history, six years after he spoke at Mishkan Israel, has in many ways been born out in the activities of its members over the last 175 years. From a small group of mostly German Jews to a diverse community welcoming people of multiple races, faiths, and sexual orientations. From being immigrants to aiding immigrants, first Russian Jews, later Soviet Jews and non-Jews from war-torn lands. From Ahavot Achim to the Sisterhood to the Brotherhood of Men and Women. From the Civil War to World Wars and the War in Vietnam to the War on Terror. From a single room in New Haven to a spacious temple in Hamden to the World Wide Web. Even as it faced new contexts and challenges, Mishkan Israel worked to bend its local and global communities toward justice.

The years since 1990 have marked an exciting new phase of this history. Under the leadership of Rabbi Herbert Brockman, the congregation has stayed true to its core values while expressing them in new ways. In the introduction to her magisterial history Beth Wenger noted that Mishkan Israel’s founders would not have recognized their congregation in 1990. While this is still largely true in 2015, the re-introduction of traditional practices means that more of its worship and activities would be familiar to them. They would also recognize the close-knit community open to change, although they might be surprised to learn that this has led Mishkan Israel toward classical Reform and then away from it, back, in some ways, to the congregation’s roots. The arc of the moral universe may bend toward justice, but the path that it takes there can certainly have some surprising twists and turns. As Mishkan Israel moves toward its third century, it is up to its leaders and members to decide how best to get there next.

In 1990 Mishkan Israel marked its 150th anniversary by commissioning a comprehensive history entitled *Congregation and Community: The Evolution of Jewish Life at Congregation Mishkan Israel*. In that volume, historian Beth Wenger described “interfaith programs, political activism, and community involvement” as the core of Mishkan Israel’s activities from 1840 to 1990. In the twenty-five years to follow this would continue to be the case as, under the leadership of Rabbi Herbert Brockman, many of the rhythms of life at Mishkan Israel remained regular. Friday nights in the sanctuary, marked

by hopeful prayers and inspiring sermons. Sundays at the Temple filled with enthusiastic, if sometimes rowdy, religious school students. A calendar studied with social events, guest speakers, interfaith activities, and social justice advocacy, all opportunities to meet friends and improve the world. Mishkan Israel has continued to foster community and an ethical orientation among its members, as it has for decades, even as it has been transformed in ways that were already evident in 1990 and in some ways that would have been yet unthinkable.

### **Rabbi Herbert Brockman**

Rabbi Herbert Brockman has continued the legacy of his predecessor, Rabbi Robert E. Goldberg, who passed away in 1995, by encouraging concern for social justice, although motivated more explicitly by a deep investment in traditional Jewish sources. Among the most urgent causes he championed in the early 1990s was the resettling of Jews in the United States following the fall of the Soviet Union. This was, he argued in the congregational bulletin at the time, “the largest [Exodus], save for the original one.” Mishkan Israel had supported Russian Jewish immigrants around the turn of the nineteenth century and they were to do so again at the end of twentieth. Members sponsored seven families, finding them apartments and jobs and introducing them to Jewish life in America. Two families, the Braylyans and the Gluzbergs, thanked the congregation in 1990: One family member said; “From the first moment of our arrival you [were] with us. You surrounded us at the New York airport with smiles and greetings and we realized that we were not lonely in our new country... You returned [to] us pride of being Jews.” Mishkan Israel became so proficient at this work that it published a primer on how to sponsor a Russian family and subsequently helped a Bosnian Muslim family to resettle in 1993 and an Iraqi family in 2013.

Mishkan Israel’s attention to and concern for the United States’ role in the broader world was manifested in diverse and sometimes controversial ways. Rabbi Brockman has proven to be a committed Zionist, encouraging congregants to buy Israel bonds and travel to the Jewish state. In 1990 he led forty-two congregants on a ten-day trip to Israel in honor of the congregation’s sesquicentennial. During the trip, the group donated a Torah scroll to the Reform settlement Mizpeh Har Halutz that could be used for future Mishkan Israel *b’nai mitzvah*. Even as he supported the state of Israel, Rabbi Brockman has been an outspoken advocate for religious pluralism and for dialogue with Palestinians. In 1993 he faced criticism for inviting the deputy permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN, Dr. Riyad Mansour, to speak at the temple.

At the time he insisted “We must confront the claims of the Palestinians head on....Now is the time to take risks for peace.”

Rabbi Brockman has also encouraged the congregation to enrich the local community through interfaith activism and service. In 1990, after a conversation with Meir Lakein and Becky Sunshine, then graduate students at Yale, Rabbi Brockman helped establish a community garden on the land behind the synagogue. The Peah Project, as it was called, is inspired by biblical demands to leave the corners of fields for the poor, widows and strangers to gather. Mishkan Israel families began learning the relevant laws and, along with partners from the community, worked in the garden, growing vegetables for the soup kitchens in New Haven. In 1991 their work was acknowledged with the Irving J. Fain Certificate for Social Justice Programming from the Union of American Hebrew Congregation (UAHC, and after 2003 the Union for Reform Judaism, or URJ). Still in operation today, the Peah Project donates a ton of vegetables to soup kitchens every year. It epitomizes Rabbi Brockman’s belief that “Our Jewish ethical system **compels** us to be **concerned** with the plight of the poor and homeless and to **do** something to improve their lot.” Through the Peah Project and a range of other endeavors, Mishkan Israel members entered the 1990s studying, gardening, and improving the larger community as Jews.

## 1990-2000

On the morning of Tuesday, October 26, 1993, staff and members driving to Mishkan Israel were confronted by three eight-foot swastikas and an anti-Semitic slogan that had been spray-painted on the side of the synagogue. Even as Jews in Connecticut and elsewhere achieved unprecedented acceptance and success by the late twentieth century, there continued to be such isolated cases of anti-Semitic vandalism. This was most prominently highlighted in a 1987 US Supreme Court case involving synagogue vandalism, *Shaare Tefila Congregation vs. Cobb*, in which it was decided that Jews could claim racial discrimination. Mishkan Israel itself had experienced vandalism at the congregational cemetery before, but this was new and frightening, part of an outbreak of such graffiti throughout the state. In the aftermath of the attack, counselors from the Yale Child Study Center were brought in to help families cope with the incident and local faith communities and politicians quickly reached out to support the congregation. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro told the *Hartford Courant* at the time, “These acts are deplorable because they are intended to evoke a painful and horrific chapter in the history of the Jewish people.” New security measures were undertaken at the synagogue to protect against

future attacks, including motion detectors, an upgrade on the alarm system, and placing a layer of protective glass outside of the stained glass windows.

This act of hatred, while troubling, nevertheless could not dampen the dynamism that was taking place inside the Ridge Road building. In 1990 then congregational president Dr. Jerome M. Serling noted the increasing diversity within Mishkan Israel, as well as the challenges that it posed:

We have members of families who have been with us many years and who follow classic reform patterns of observance. We have members from orthodoxy and from conservative backgrounds. We have many Jews-by-choice and mixed marriages. There is wide diversity in age groups. Also, members come from all parts of the country. Even the geographic diversity in the Greater New Haven community can be a problem - for example, it makes it harder for youngsters to get together socially.

This diversification continued steadily, as the congregation also included more members of color, gays and lesbians, disabled and elderly congregants, and divorced families. Most visible was the increasing presence of interfaith families. In 1990 the National Jewish Population Survey reported an intermarriage rate of fifty-two percent, fueling considerable national concern about the fate of American Jewry. In its aftermath, the Reform movement and other Jewish communities wavered between inclusion and boundary-making. At Mishkan Israel, Rabbi Brockman declined to perform interfaith marriages, but insisted at the 1992 Annual Meeting: "Every effort should be made to draw such families back to Judaism." The congregation created an Outreach Committee in 1994 and implemented a "Stepping Stones" program for children of unaffiliated interfaith families.

The leadership of Mishkan Israel worked steadily to better serve its changing population, in part by embracing technological advances. In 1992, a committee first requested donations of computer equipment "to better communicate with [Mishkan Israel's] members, teach its students and manage its business functions." The congregation installed accounting software, began accepting credit card payments over the phone, and gradually purchased more computers for use by employees and religious school students. In the late 1990s Mishkan Israel got its first website, hosted through the UAHC, which featured directions to the synagogue, maps for visitors, and a list of internal phone extensions. These innovations were implemented by its newly hired Administrator, Jennifer Levin-Tavares, who continues to serve as the Executive Director of Mishkan Israel. Around this time, the congregation's membership peaked at 720 families and close to 300 religious school students. Nonetheless, like many other liberal Jewish congregations, Mishkan Israel faced significant financial challenges. Nearly half of all members received

dues abatements, income from educational tenants was not always stable, and the congregation struggled to pay its dues to the UAHC.

Board members responded to these challenges by working to build up the congregational endowment, hiring investment advisors, undertaking fundraisers, and steadily increasing dues. There were also ongoing problems with the three-decades-old synagogue building. In 1999, through the efforts of a capital campaign, \$2 million was raised to undertake a limited number of repairs on the building, including an update of the lounge and library. The congregation took a step toward stabilizing its income the following year, when the Mishkan Israel Nursery School was founded to provide much needed early childhood education options and to attract younger families to the congregation. After a decade of growth and change, Mishkan Israel began the year 2000, like the rest of the nation, bracing for the possibility of devastating computer malfunctions. Members were offered tips for Y2K preparation. The social action committee checked on vulnerable or concerned members after the New Year. Mishkan Israel began the new millennium embracing new developments, technological and otherwise, but also adapting to face the new challenges that came with them.

### **Changing Religious Tides**

In the years following its 150th anniversary, Mishkan Israel continued to mark its history in various ways. Among other efforts, the congregation continued its relationship with its previous building on Audubon Street in New Haven, which had been sold to the city in 1965. In 1997 the congregation celebrated the building's centenary and its tenant, the ACES/Educational Center for the Arts. At the same time, there were concerns that the building's historic stained glass windows would be ruined in the course of proposed renovations. By 2001 Mishkan Israel was able to negotiate with the city of New Haven to remove, photograph, catalogue, and store the windows in the Ridge Road building for the benefit of the congregation. Some of the windows were restored and incorporated into the building as ark doors, sanctuary entry doors, and a memorial plaque, bringing Mishkan Israel's history directly into its everyday life.

The newly installed windows looked out on forms of congregational worship very different from what had been known on Audubon Street. In 1995 Mishkan Israel had adopted the gender-sensitive *Gates of Prayer* sid-dur in the hopes that "men and women in our congregation will experience a broader understanding of the qualities of the divine that is more inclusive of all people and all worshippers." The organ and professional choir were

increasingly limited to the high holidays, changing the texture of regular worship and preserving these musical forms for special occasions. As Cantor Jonathan Gordon explained in 1997, “The use of guitar, the congregational choir, the guitar ensemble, and the new prayer book (with its emphasis on ease in congregational singing)” were all intended to encourage intimacy, passion, and immediacy rather than “stentorian tones descending upon a worshipfully awed congregation.”

These moves toward greater inclusivity and involvement were part of a larger ideological shift away from the “Classical Reform” that had guided the congregation since the last decades of the nineteenth century. Focused on English-language worship and ethical monotheism, classical Reform eschewed many traditional elements of Jewish life, including head coverings (*kippot*) and prayer shawls (*tallitot*). By the close of the twentieth century, however, these and other traditions were being re-introduced at Mishkan Israel through the efforts of Rabbi Brockman, the ritual committee, and other interested laypeople. At least initially, not everyone was pleased. Rabbi Brockman remembers that when he introduced *hakafot*, dancing with the Torah during the holiday of Simchat Torah, some congregants turned their backs, declaring it a pagan ritual. He acknowledged in 1999, “I have heard from congregants over the years about a sense of ‘loss,’ of ‘alienation’ from the ways of classical Reform.”

Changes continued apace, however. Bar and bat mitzvah, which had previously been subordinated to the Confirmation ceremony, became increasingly central to the lives of congregants. Young people now undertook social justice projects as part of the rite of passage and more adults, including both Jews-by-choice and born Jews, undertook adult *b'nai mitzvah* training. Many others took classes in traditional topics like Hasidism, Hebrew, and the Talmud. These developments were encouraged by Rabbi Brockman, whom the board of trustees unanimously granted tenure in 1997. In subsequent years, they affirmed his continued leadership and influence on the congregation by twice raising the mandatory age of retirement. In 1998 Cantor Gordon left the congregation, and in the years to come Rabbi Brockman worked with nine different interns, cantors, and rabbi-educators. Together they would ensure that an increasingly diverse congregation found meaning in a Jewish life that was traditional but progressive, text-based, but flexible.

### **Mishkan Israel in a New Millennium**

September 11, 2001 represented a profound spiritual challenge for Mishkan Israel. The terror attacks in Manhattan – only 85 miles away – directly

affected many congregants, and soon after congregational president Roberta Friedman recalled that “Our healing and prayer service, our Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur services - all were filled to overflowing with congregants and members of our community who joined together in grief and fear, seeking comfort and caring.” At the 2002 annual meeting Rabbi Brockman described the year as “the most challenging he has had.” During the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, two Mishkan Israel members were among the fallen soldiers: Captain Benjamin Sklaver, 32 years-old and engaged to be married, was killed by a suicide bomber in Afghanistan in 2009, and Private First Class Eric Soufrine, 20 years-old, was killed by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan in 2011.

Following the terror attacks, the congregation not only mourned, but also strengthened its security measures, consulting with officials from the town of Hamden, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Anti-Defamation League, and the UAHC. Friedman wrote at the time, “our world has changed and we must accept our new reality.” A Security Committee was formed in April, 2002, and soon after, a security assessment was raised to cover various upgrades to the building’s safety features. This led to the closing of office doors, lockdown drills, security cameras, High Holiday tickets assigned to specific people, and a more visible police presence at the synagogue. Even as Mishkan Israel members were acutely aware of their own security and of America’s wars in the Middle East, the ongoing conflict in Israel also weighed on their minds. In response to the second Palestinian intifada, between 2001 and 2004 religious school students raised money for a Magen David Adom ambulance, which was described “as a way to support Israel in a non-belligerent way,” reflecting the ambivalence of many toward Israeli policy. This did not abate as the 2006 war in Lebanon and continuing tensions in Gaza and the West Bank kept Israel in the news and in congregational conversations.

In this context of war and strife, Mishkan Israel members became even more interested in spirituality as a source of comfort and inspiration. Already in the late 1990s the congregation, like many others in the Reform movement, had begun reciting the *Misheberach* prayer by influential Jewish musician Debbie Friedman, but in the 2000s congregants sought more opportunities for personal reflection and creative worship. An ad hoc committee was formed to create a meditation garden and members participated in a meditation service during Yom Kippur, which congregant Gina Novick described as, “a change of pace from the rhythm of the main services [that allows] me to reconnect with others in the midst of an otherwise somber day.” Congregant spirituality was often expressed in traditional Jewish forms. In the mid-2000s, for example, a *hevra kadisha* was established to facilitate the tradition of *shem-*

*irah*, watching over the bodies of the Jewish dead. Around the same time, a group of congregants that had been meeting for Saturday morning bible study established an independent, participatory *minyan*, expanding congregational worship beyond Friday nights and *b'nai mitzvah*. Congregants engaged these programs to varying degrees, finding comfort and satisfaction in a flexible relationship to ritual and tradition.

The new millennium was marked by devastating warfare and enhanced spirituality, but also by an intensification of social and technological changes. Even as many in the larger Reform movement and in American Jewry proved ambivalent, at Mishkan Israel the inclusion of homosexuals, interfaith couples, and women was relatively uncontroversial. Rabbi Brockman had been an early supporter of AIDS sufferers in the Jewish community and gave a sermon on "Homosexuality and Judaism's Challenges and Opportunities" as early as 1992, just two years after the Central Conference of American Rabbis affirmed "that heterosexuality is the only appropriate Jewish choice for fulfilling one's covenantal obligations." By 2000, however, the Reform movement had affirmed rabbinic ordination and marriage for gay Jews, and Mishkan Israel seamlessly followed suit. In the early 2000s Rabbi Brockman testified at the Connecticut general assembly in support of marriage equality, and performed his first same-sex wedding in the Temple sanctuary even before gay marriage was legalized in the state in 2008.

Mishkan Israel further acknowledged the changing demography of American Jews by reconfiguring membership dues, adding categories for single parents, for those under age 35, and for students and youths. The participation of interfaith families also continued to grow. In 1989 just over one in five new members had been interfaith families and in 2003, when the congregation began tracking relevant data, 20% of all members were in an interfaith family while 5% were Jews by choice. Within a decade, the percentage of interfaith families at Mishkan Israel had increased by half and the percentage of converts to Judaism had doubled. By 2005, almost half of all children in the religious school came from two-religion homes. Separate programming for interfaith families disappeared as they became comfortable and accepted and were mainstreamed within the congregation. A parallel development occurred with women. In the early 1990s the Sisterhood had been phased out, and in 2004 the Brotherhood welcomed women as members. This was an uncommon organizational development among American synagogues, but Mishkan Israel members saw it as a way to "bring our organization into the 21st century and better reflect the needs and feelings of Temple members."

Even as Mishkan Israel included a greater diversity of people, its membership sank to a low of 556 families in the aftermath of 2008 global financial

crisis. In the years that followed, the Board of Trustees made a concentrated effort to closely control expenses and by 2014 it was slowly returning to financial health, aided by rebounding membership, which rose up to 590 families. The continued expansion of the Internet helped Mishkan Israel to better communicate with these members, first through a Yahoo group e-newsletter and later through email bulletins and a Facebook page. On Rosh Hashannah of 2014 services were live streamed on the Internet for the first time.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Brockman has continued to provide the congregation and the community with steady moral and spiritual leadership, deepening its commitments to social justice and interfaith activities. He opposed the U.S. wars in the Middle East and, on Israel, continued to vocally support a two-state solution and oppose the growing Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Among other endeavors, beginning in 2010, he invited New Haven's Interfaith Cooperative Ministries to join Mishkan Israel's long-time annual Martin Luther King, Jr. commemorative service. The next year, upon the celebration of his 25th anniversary at the congregation, a *New Haven Register* article declared him "Everybody's Rabbi." Imam Abdul Hasan told the *New Haven Register* that Rabbi Brockman is "always trying to make peace between [Jews and Muslims]," while Rev. William Goettler said, "[Rabbi Brockman] been really effective in inviting people not only into conversation but into action." Rabbi Brockman has served on the boards of numerous community organizations, is a lecturer at Yale Divinity School and a fellow at Yale's Morse College, and in 2014 he received an honorary doctorate from Albertus Magnus College. Today, Arthur Giglio, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary, serves alongside him as cantor.

## Conclusion

Mishkan Israel of 2015 is more inclusive than it was in 1990 and more engaged with elements of traditional Judaism. The classical Reform of its past has been replaced by a new Reform that creatively incorporates older forms and new innovations in meaningful ways. The congregation has been shaped by the advent of the Internet, the age of terror, and global economic crisis. And yet it has continued to be guided by concern for social justice, interfaith activism, and historical memory. It certainly helps that around half of the congregation has belonged for twenty-five years or more. It remains true, as president Jerome Serling argued in 1990, that the "pessimism" about American Jewish life found elsewhere "is not reflected here." By the early 2000s, Mishkan Israel crafted a mission statement declaring its purpose as "sustain[ing] a belief in God and the Torah" and "improv[ing] our local and

global society” through “worship, study, inspiration, support and assembly.” In various measures and in a variety of ways, these principles have guided Mishkan Israel for much of its history and continue to do so today. And, of course, the congregation has been celebrating its 175th anniversary, again turning to the past to understand its multi-faceted and hopeful present and future.

[Shari Rabin wrote this history while finishing her PhD in religious studies at Yale University. Since 2015, she is assistant professor of Jewish studies and associate director of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston. She is a historian of modern Judaism and American religions, specializing in the nineteenth century.]

[Extended Bio on Shari Rabin or any original Mishkan Israel Publications at Jewish Historical Society]

[Earlier articles about Mishkan Israel have appeared in *Jews in New Haven* in the following citations by volume, pages, and year: 2:15-17, 1979; 2:18-21, 1979; 2:22-24, 1979; 2:104-109, 1979; 3:98--101, 1981; 3:101-106, 1981; 4:63-76, 1986; 6:1-33, 1993; 6:34-52, 1993; 6:53-67, 1993; 7:43-56, 1997; 7:129-140, 1997. An article about B’nai Sholom, which split from Mishkan Israel is at 5:95-113, 1988.]



*Mishkan Israel on Ridge Road, Hamden*

## **Chabad at Yale**

### **By Rabbi Shua Rosenstein**

Chabad at Yale was started in September of 2003 by two rabbinical students Shua Rosenstein and Nachman Abend by the initiative of Rabbi Shmully Hecht of the Chai Society at Yale (currently Shabtai). Beginning in the Taft apartment 3M, they organized Shabbat and holiday dinners, and Jewish study events for Jewish students on the Yale campus.

The events became quite popular, attracting many Jewish students who hadn't been involved in Yale Jewish life. It was a small intimate setting and it quickly became known for its good food, deep and stimulating conversation, and engaging study. At the first Shabbat dinner there were two students in attendance, and when the fall semester concluded, each event attracted more than 40 students.

In 2005 after long outgrowing the space in the Taft and with both Rabbinical students newly ordained and married, Rabbi Hecht raised funds for the purchase and renovation of 37 Edgewood Ave, a small house adjacent to the Yale campus, and invited Rabbi Shua and Sara Rosenstein to permanently move to New Haven and serve as the Rabbi and directors for Chabad at Yale.

Rabbi Shua and Sara Rosenstein continued to expand the Chabad activities on Edgewood Ave, often hosting more than 100 students at Shabbat and holiday events. Chabad became known as a "home away from home" for Jewish students from all backgrounds, many of whom are still involved as alumni.

In 2011, having outgrown the house on Edgewood, Chabad at Yale purchased 36 Lynwood Place; at the time the home for the Yale swim team. With the support of several major benefactors including Norman L. Bender '67 and Brad W. Berger '77, Chabad launched a \$6,000,000 capital campaign to renovate and expand the "Alice L. Bender Chabad House - Berger Family Building".

On October 6th of 2013, more than 350 students, alumni, faculty and local and state dignitaries, including Yale President Peter Salovey and Connecticut Governor Dan Malloy, Chabad at Yale dedicated its new 11,500 square foot home. The Chabad house now features a library, study hall, and synagogue, dining hall, kitchen, student lounge, guest suites and office space.

Hundreds of students and faculty have found, and continue to find, their Jewish home at Chabad at Yale. Due to its physical expansion, Chabad has been able to expand its array of programs and activities, often hosting visiting lecturers, Israeli leaders and international thinkers.

For many Yale alumni, the very idea of a thriving Chabad house serving

Yale University is astonishing. In their days at Yale, Jewish life and practice came with much difficulty, both socially and religiously. As noted Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz (YLS '62) said, students in his time went to Ivy League schools to run away from religion, not to embrace it. Yet the Yale of today has changed in many ways, embracing religious and cultural diversity, allowing organizations like Chabad to thrive on it's campus.



# Introduction to Part II of Volume X

## By David S. Fischer, M.D.

In the preface to this volume, I tried to make clear that new Jewish communities try to create, in this order, a *minyan*, a cemetery, a *mikvah*, a synagogue and then a religious school. In spite of the great emphasis on learning and Torah learning in particular, there is very little in the first nine volumes of *Jews in New Haven* in regard to formal Jewish education. In this volume, we plan to correct that by reviewing early efforts at education by individual synagogues then more formal education in Jewish day schools. That will be followed by a section in which we profile Jewish people in the various ways that they have contributed to New Haven, Connecticut or the U.S. Some of these people were born in New Haven, others came to New Haven and spent as little as four years here or more than fifty years here, but their contributions were significant. A few individuals whom we wished to profile declined the invitation at this time. The final section will be described as Places, Remembrances, and Programs.

### Jewish Education

When Mishkan Israel moved into its first synagogue building in 1856, it set up a school that year for its members' children and accepted children of non-members for a fee where instruction would be given in German, English and Hebrew (see *JINH* 6:26, 1993). We know that B'nai Scholom had a synagogue building in 1873 and a large Hebrew school sometime between 1873 and 1890 (see *JINH* 5:95, 1988). Bikur Cholim B'nai Abraham opened its synagogue in 1888 and had a frame house that was used as a school or cheder in 1891. B'nai Israel (The Rose Street Shul) opened its synagogue in 1895, and "over the years the synagogue maintained a religious school," although the specific year the school started is not known to us (see *JINH* 2:130, 1979).

To my surprise, Sheveth Achim B'nai Lubavitch, which opened its synagogue in 1900, never had a school or *cheder*. According to Eli Zimmerman, as told to Morton Horwitz (see *JINH* 4:39-50, 1988, page 48), "In New Haven, there was no organized Jewish school system; no *cheder*, no *yeshivas*, no day schools, not anything in those years before World War I. It was everyone for himself with different rebbes coming over to teach whomever they could catch or could get to listen to them." Most Jewish youngsters like Sam Dimenstein, who had his *bar mitzvah* in 1934 at Sheveth Achim (see

JINH 7:251-263, 1997, page 258) reported, “. . . I waxed triumphant with my chanting of the *Haftorah*. To reach this point of success had been quite a chore, considering the unprofessional teaching by the *melamdim* (learned teachers) of the day.”

Many of the later synagogues set up some sort of Jewish school, if only to prepare a boy for his *bar mitzvah*. Girls were rarely encouraged to attend Hebrew schools but were instructed by their mothers or grandmothers in their three *mitzvot*, light Sabbath and holiday candles, baking challah (and cutting off and burning the end piece), and in their teens, the laws of Niddah (ritual purity).

The synagogues that had Hebrew schools some time in their history (other than those cited already), according to the archives of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven, were: B'nai Jacob, Keser Israel, Beth Israel, Westville, Congregation Sinai, Temple Beth Sholom, Temple Emanuel, Or Shalom, Ahavas Sholom (now defunct), Young Israel (now defunct), Mogen David (Bradley Street Shul) (now defunct). The synagogue that never had a Hebrew school was Adas B'nai Jeshurun (defunct). I do not know whether Tefereth Adas Israel (defunct), Shara Torah (defunct), or Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol (defunct) did or did not have a Hebrew school.

In 1917, Rabbi Judah Heschel Levenberg came to New Haven and found the town lacking in basic institutions of Jewish education. He struggled to open a first class yeshiva and in August 1923, he succeeded in opening the *Yeshiva of New Haven*. It expanded and blossomed until 1929 when difficult economic times (the Great Depression) caused it to close and move to Cleveland, Ohio (see JINH 8:171-179, 2005), where it prospered for a time and retained the name *Yeshiva of New Haven* in Cleveland.

### **Jewish Education Institutions in New Haven**

The Jewish educational institutions that were not part of a synagogue are listed in approximate chronological order. Unlike the section on synagogues where we asked a lay person, not a rabbi, to write the article, we asked the Headmaster, principal or a senior officer of the school to write these articles.

The earliest Jewish school in this category in New Haven was the Orthodox Hebrew Day School, founded in 1944 by Rabbi Maurice I. Hecht and fully opened in 1946. In 1965, a girls' high school was added and called Beis Chana Academy (BCA).

Ezra Academy, a Solomon Shechter conservative day school, was opened in 1966 in New Haven and moved to larger quarters in Woodbridge in 1969 on the campus of B'nai Jacob. Yeshiva Gedola Rabbinical Institute of New

England was founded in 1976. Its leaders were invited to prepare an article for this volume. After many months of waiting, I finally wrote the article with the help that I cite in the first paragraph. When it was completed, it was submitted to the Rosh Yeshiva and others, and with some corrections, was approved for publication.

Torah Academy of New Haven was founded in 1976 and closed in 1988 for lack of sufficient funding. I searched in vain for anyone in the New Haven area to write about it, although the JHSGNH archives had a good trove of documents which I reviewed, but no author willing to use them. Fortunately, Sydney Perry told me that one of the founding rabbis was in Monsey, NY. We contacted him, sent copies of some of the archival material, and he sent us a splendid article.

The Yeshiva of New Haven started as the Gan School in 1977 and grew to establish the Yeshiva of New Haven High School for Boys and the Tikvah High School for girls.

The Slifka Center for Jewish life at Yale was opened in 1995 to provide a location for Jewish students that would include kosher meals, a Jewish library, a small and a large Beth Midrash. The latter also serves as a lecture hall for the very frequent lectures, symposia and other educational activities that elevate Jewish learning to a new level. While it is not a yeshiva, it is a major Jewish educational institution. While it is not a synagogue *per se*, it has five active *minyanim* and three full-time rabbis, all of them relatively new to the institution. Their website is also new so they suggested we use it with their approval. (Note: An earlier article on Slifka Center appeared in *JINH* 8:150-160, 2005)

The Hebrew High School of New England (HHNE) is a collaboration between parents in New Haven, Hartford and Springfield, MA which opened for students in 1996. It just happens to be physically located in Bloomfield across the street from the West Hartford JCC. New Haven students drive there and are a significant proportion of their classes.

The Jewish High School of Connecticut (JHSC) was founded in New Haven in 2008 to increase teen interest in Jewish community and continuity. It opened its doors in 2010 in Bridgeport, and moved to the New Haven JCC in 2012 for more classroom and physical education space. In 2014, it moved to a Science and Technology building in Stamford. The winter 2017 issue of *Shalom New Haven* has an article on JHSC and its math program.

A review of the Jewish Federation's Department of Jewish Education, which was rejuvenated in 1988, is included in *JINH* 8:100-132, 2005, especially pages 104-111 which also discusses MAKOM and Talmud Torah Meyuchad.

## People

In Volume Nine, we listed people in alphabetic order of their family name. In this volume, they are listed in the order of receipt of the first draft of the authors' article, with a few exceptions. Earlier I indicated whom we regarded as Jews in New Haven. The first person profiled is the well-known Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, the first (Orthodox) Jew to be nominated for the Vice Presidency by a major political party. Although born in Stamford, CT, Lieberman spent a large part of his life living in New Haven.

The second article is about Jonathan Daniel Sarna who was editor of Volume One in this series. Although he resided in New Haven for only four years, he set the pattern for the subsequent nine volumes. His monumental book, *American Judaism: A History*, was excerpted in *JINH* 8:1-7, 2005 and was welcomed "as the most authoritative – and the most readable – synthesis of 350 years of the history of American Judaism" (Peter Novick). Sarna set the pattern for most of the subsequent articles in this series.

I did not want to have those who contributed their talents and hard work to the JHSGNH to be honored after their deaths, as happened in dedications or memorials to Harvey N. Ladin, a founder and first president of JHSGNH and the editor of Volume Four of *JINH* who died before much of the book was completed. Renee Kra, his assistant editor, completed the book and then became the editor of that volume and co-edited Volume Five with Werner Hirsch. Volume Four also had a memorial to Rabbi Arthur Chiel, a co-founder of the JHSGNH and a prolific writer on Jewish history. Similarly, Volume Eight was dedicated to Sherman Kramer and Volume Nine to Herbert D. Setlow, two outstanding presidents of the JHSGNH and general community leaders. To avoid that oversight, we profiled Barry E. Herman and Werner Hirsch, past editors of several volumes of *JINH* in Volume Nine while they were still alive. Sadly, Barry E. Herman died shortly after we started work on this volume and it is dedicated to him.

The next four articles profile outstanding leaders and workers in the JHSGNH who also played major roles in the production of *JINH* and in the greater society.

Albert Harary was a president of the JHSGNH on two separate occasions and was distinguished in a variety of other leadership positions, notably at Temple Beth Sholom, in industry and in leading a variety of charities, including the Alzheimer Association.

Marvin Bargar has been an outstanding archivist for JHSGNH for 17 years and made it possible to retrieve much of the history recorded in Volumes Eight, Nine and Ten.

Rhoda Sachs Zahler Samuel was a president of JHSGNH, introduced the video interview to record living history and to form the basis for several articles in Volume Nine and one in this volume. She did major work in New Haven's City Plan Department and recently she collaborated with the Ethnic Heritage Center to produce a series of publications called *Walk New Haven: Cultural Heritage Tours*.

Judith Ann Schiff was a co-founder of the JHSGNH, Director of the Archives, a prolific historical writer on Jews in New Haven and all aspects of the history of Yale University, where she is Chief Research Archivist of the Yale University Library, and in 2012, she was appointed the New Haven City Historian. The reproduction of her keynote address at the 40th anniversary of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven: 1976-2016, is a gem which many members urged us to reproduce so they could reread it and treasure it.

President Richard Levin was the first Jewish President of Yale University. He is noted for his outstanding leadership of the university as well as his crucial role in bringing Yale University and the City of New Haven to work together for their mutual benefit.

President Peter Salovey is the second Jewish President of Yale. He demonstrated his skill in leadership by defusing a variety of problems that could have become crisis situations. He comes from a distinguished rabbinic tradition of several generations and sometimes cites and sometimes employs Talmudic wisdom to solve modern problems.

Sydney Perry was an outstanding Director of the Department of Jewish Education and went on to become a very successful CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven (JFGNH) and the Jewish Community Center (JCC) when it merged with the JFGNH. She has been honored by most Jewish organizations locally and many nationally. When she retired, the testimonial event on April 10, 2016 was entitled "Celebrate Sydney!" and had to be moved from the JCC to B'nai Jacob to accommodate the overflow of reservations. We include a tribute to Sydney Perry by the main speaker of that event, Rabbi Benjamin Scolnic, and a reproduction of the *Shalom New Haven* article written by Jeanette Brodeur its then editor indicating why the community was honoring her and how she deserved it.

The article on Maier Zunder (1829-1901) is one of the only two in this volume that were unsolicited. It is also unique in being an update of an individual who was profiled in article one in Volume One in 1978. It is also a scholarly update of an outstanding Jewish leader for whom a New Haven school was named. The author, Sandy Barnes, is a great, great granddaughter of Maier Zunder. We have not reproduced any of the 17 footnotes nor most

of the pictures which can be obtained on request from the JHSGNH or from the author at [sandy@dsbarnes.com](mailto:sandy@dsbarnes.com).

In Volume Nine, we included an article on Jews in Medicine in New Haven. We had intended to have similar articles on lawyers, dentists, insurance professionals and accountants. We were unsuccessful in finding a professional in any of these areas to write such an article. Norman Rashba, CPA agreed to provide the information if I would write the article on accountants as a co-author (and not a ghost-writer).

In 2004, a committee of seven members of the JHSGNH compiled a list of "Prominent Jewish Americans with New Haven Connections." They had pictures of some of those listed. The ten posters sold for \$10.00 each and some are no longer available. We have listed the contents of all those posters as they were published (except for correcting a few misspellings and incorrect titles). Some of these people have already been the subject of articles in *JINH* and some in this volume, and others may be profiled or cited in future volumes of this series.

### **Places, Remembrances and Programs**

In Volume Nine we lamented the absence of an article on Tower One and Tower East. Here it is by Linda Kantor, one of the leaders of that development who then went on to a leadership role in making it possible to fund and build Casa Otonal for the city's Hispanic population. One of the buildings was named Casa Linda by the grateful residents as their complex grew in size and service to the community.

We have several articles about the founding, growth, expansion and success of the Jewish Home for the Aged. In this volume we examine the changes in demographics, financial support and other factors that led to the closing of the institution.

Daniel (Danny) G. Fischer, M.D. survived both Auschwitz-Birkenau and Dachau. It was my privilege to accompany him and his wife, Elaine, and a cousin as Danny revisited Auschwitz-Birkenau and reminisced as he pointed out areas where he was confined.

*People Forget . . . New Haven Remembers* is a documentary co-produced by Doris Zelinsky and Fay Sheppard, both children of Holocaust survivors, and President and Board Member, respectively, of Greater New Haven Holocaust Memory, Inc. which commissioned the documentary by film maker, Elena Neuman Lefkowitz. It tells the story of the first U.S. Holocaust monument on public land and interviews four New Haven survivors each of whom tells his or her personal story of survival.

The Harold Grinspoon Foundation's Life and Legacy Program is described in some detail as helping Jewish charities secure legacy commitments and helping them to develop lifetime support. The JHSGNH received matching funds for two consecutive years of legacy drives. The article in this volume on the Hebrew High School of New England indicates that it received major donations from the Grinspoon Foundation.

The second unsolicited article in this volume is "Fire Strikes JCC of Greater New Haven." We never thought it would happen, but it did. Fortunately, the institution had fire drills before the event and everyone was evacuated without injury. This is history in the making and we appreciate receiving the article shortly before publication.

Traditionally, when a *Haftorah* foretells punishment or sad future events, the rabbis always found a few sentences to place at the end to follow the doom and gloom with an uplifting message. We have tried to follow the example. After an article on Auschwitz-Birkenau, on remembering the Holocaust, on the difficulty of raising funds for Jewish charities, and a fire at our JCC, we end the volume with two uplifting stories of the huge success of Camp Gan Israel of Greater New Haven and the Barry Vine Send a Kid to Camp Scholarship Fund that helps defray the costs of the JCC summer camp for children.

## **Southern Connecticut Hebrew Academy (formerly New Haven Hebrew Day School) By Rabbi Sheya Hecht**

In 1946, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, sent Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok (Maurice) Hecht to New Haven, charged with a mission: to create a day school for the Jewish community in New Haven. The dream had its humble beginning with an initial enrollment of four students, ranging from ages six to ten, in the dining room of a private home. From that nucleus of four eager students grew the *Yeshivat Achei Temimim Lubavitch*-New Haven Hebrew Day School. There were no cameras to record that historic occasion when Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Hecht began to stir the imagination and probe the emerging intellect of his first pupils.

It may have been an inauspicious beginning of the New Haven Hebrew Day School, but it represented at the time a great challenge to the Rabbi and those dedicated lay leaders who backed his efforts to create a citadel for religious and secular learning. They were confident that the future was with them and that the community would eventually recognize that the perpetuation of Judaism could easily be ensured with the development and growth of the Hebrew Day School.

Within two years of its founding, Rabbi Hecht, together with his wife Rivka, purchased a home at 49 Dwight Street to accommodate the growing student body, which now numbered 120 children. Children came from the cities of New Haven and Bridgeport, as well as farms in what was then rural Connecticut, traveling for over an hour to learn Chumash and Talmud in the mornings and secular studies in the afternoon.

The enrollment continued to grow and the school moved once again to 7 Dwight Street, the former home of the Jewish Community Center. The Hechts also rented additional classroom space in Beth Hamedrash Shul on George Street. The school was housed for over 15 years in the Old JCC building, and had an annual enrollment of some 250 students from nursery to eighth grade. It had five classrooms, each seating from 30 to 50 pupils, a lounge/library, an assembly room, and a gymnasium/auditorium. Although it was somewhat limited by its physical size, the school nevertheless began to earn a reputation for fulfilling the ideals of a well-rounded education.

Rabbi Hecht once said the predominant educational purpose of the school "is to develop children of a caliber for the better colleges and institutes of higher Jewish learning, Yeshivas, etc., through an educational stress on the

classical subjects and the three R's." In the arithmetic classes, first graders were doing addition and subtraction, and third graders were able to grasp long division. In reading and writing, by the time the students were in second grade, they had mastered an extensive vocabulary, learned how to utilize proper punctuation in their writing, and exceeded the reading levels their public school counterparts were reaching. While students were excelling in reading, writing, and math, the rest of the secular subjects began to fill out as well. In 1966, New Haven Hebrew Day School held its first Science Fair. The winners went on to become an Attorney, a University Professor and Academic Dean, a Musician, and an Inventor.

Judaic studies were as rigorous as secular studies. New Haven Hebrew Day School fulfilled the original mission Rabbi Hecht was sent to achieve. Students acquired an extensive knowledge of Torah, history, language, and literature. Hebrew, one of the most difficult languages in the world, was taught from the nursery level on. By the time pupils reached eighth grade, they were able to read the Talmud with ease.

During the 1960's, the Day School was impacted by New Haven Mayor Richard C. Lee's plan to revitalize downtown with the construction of the Oak Street Connector. With relocation being a necessity, the school purchased a parcel of land in Orange, CT, four miles west of the school's Dwight Street location. The groundbreaking ceremony was held in 1969, and in 1970, New Haven Hebrew Day School officially moved to its new \$1.3 million campus at 261 Derby Avenue. The new school, designed by famed architect Charles H. Brewer, housed the nursery through eighth grade school, as well as Beth Chana Academy High School for Girls, which had been founded in 1964. The following years brought continued growth; the school expanded its physical education department to include basketball games with other schools in the area, and the first Jewish Girl Scouts group was formed for female students. In the 1980's, computers were introduced, as well as art and music programs. The Preschool was expanded to included toddlers.

As Beth Chana Academy High School for Girls continued to grow, Rabbi Hecht saw fit to include a high school for boys. In 1972, the Boys Torah High School of Connecticut opened in the Orange campus; however it did not find a permanent home there. It found a new home elsewhere in Greater New Haven.

Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Hecht passed away on 27 Tevet 5752, (January 3, 1992) at which time his son, Rabbi Sheya Hecht, took over as Headmaster. With his guidance, a board of trustees to help steer the school was formed. An innovative science program and revised approach to language arts were integrated into the secular studies curriculum. *Middot* and *Share-a-Smile*

programs were begun, which highlight the significance of good character and the importance of giving. Courses that emphasized Jewish history were established to enable students to develop a strong identity with our Holy Land. A fine arts curriculum was added, and continues to offer the students an opportunity for creative expression, as well as a well-structured physical education program that addresses students' fitness. The campus that opened in 1970 now includes twenty classrooms, a science laboratory, full-sized gymnasium, library, state-of-the art computer lab, auditorium/sanctuary, cafeteria with two separate meat and dairy kitchens, athletic field, and two outdoor playgrounds.

By the early 2000's, the school's reputation for excellence had spread; families from Orange, Woodbridge, Bridgeport, Fairfield, Waterbury, Wallingford, West Hartford, and Stamford began sending their children. In March 2005, to better reflect its regional nature, New Haven Hebrew Day School changed its name to Southern Connecticut Hebrew Academy. The tiny school that began with four students studying Torah at a dining room table in 1946 has blossomed into a thriving institute of learning. Our alumni are filling leadership roles around the world, while at the same time sharing their love of Torah and ensuring the future of Judaism.

Today, over 270 children are educated each day at the Orange campus. The three divisions of our school - the Preschool division, led by Mrs. Raizy Kaplan, the Kindergarten through 8th Grade Day School, under the direction of Principal Dini Druk, and Beth Chana Academy High School for Girls, led by Principal Bluma Hecht, have grown to be amongst the most highly sought after Jewish educational institutions in New England.



*Southern Connecticut Hebrew Academy  
261 Derby Ave Orange, CT 06477*

# Beth Chana Academy High School for Girls

By Bluma Hecht

In 1964, nearly twenty years after New Haven Hebrew Day School welcomed its first four students, Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Hecht realized that the Jewish girls in Connecticut needed a local high school in which they could continue their Judaic education, and at the same time, academically prepare the college-bound. Beth Chana Academy High School for Girls, the very first school to be named in memory of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson's mother, Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson, was established to provide a first class Jewish and secular education for young Jewish women. Five students in their sophomore year of high school matriculated in September 1964, and would go on to be the first graduating class in June 1967. When New Haven Hebrew Day School relocated to Orange, CT, Beth Chana Academy High School for Girls moved with it.

The purpose and goal of Beth Chana Academy (BCA) is to develop students who will be imbued with a sense of commitment and loyalty to the principles and tenets of Judaism. Students of Beth Chana have the best of both worlds; the ability to attain excellence in scholastic achievement, Judaic and secular studies, and the development of the utmost intellectual fulfillment. In addition, our young ladies are challenged to live their lives according to the highest standards of morality, personal behavior, and *midos tovot*.

BCA offers a four-year college preparatory course of studies including advanced studies in *Chumash*, *Navi*, *Halacha*, and *Chassidut*, as well as American and world literature, global history, trigonometry, calculus, chemistry, and physics. BCA also offers electives in Spanish language, forensic science, computer programming, graphic design, Holocaust studies, and others. Towards the end of senior year, graduating students travel to Poland and Prague to gain a deeper historical and emotional prospective of the Shoah. This trip is a transformative event for these young women.

As Beth Chana Academy's reputation for excellence spread, boarding students were accepted from neighboring states including Massachusetts and New York, as well as farther away, from Colorado, Great Britain, and Israel. Interdisciplinary projects were added to the curriculum. Utilizing Jewish history, Hebrew and English language, writing, literature, music, fine arts, and theater, students write and stage original musical theater productions each spring. Beth Chana Academy students have made their presence

known throughout Greater New Haven with *Chesed* and outreach activities that take them to Tower One/Tower East Senior Living community, Willows Rehabilitation Center, helping mothers with young children in their homes, and with Chabad events.

With enrollment continuing to grow, the need for a separate building for Beth Chana Academy arose. In 2015, a satellite building with four classrooms, a meeting lounge, and offices for the BCA faculty and administration was added to the Orange campus. The school is poised for future growth and development to accommodate the increasing numbers of students to seeking to enroll.

Mrs. Bluma Hecht is the Principal of Beth Chana Academy High School for Girls

# **Ezra Academy – The Solomon Schechter Day School of New Haven**

## **By Melanie Waynik**

Ezra Academy first opened in 1966 as the Schechter Academy of New Haven under the auspices of the Conservative Jewish rabbis and laity of New Haven, Connecticut. Eleven students were enrolled, with three teachers on staff. It was housed at Congregation Beth El on Harrison Street in New Haven, before moving to Congregation B'nai Jacob in 1969 and being renamed Ezra Academy. The school was founded with the goals of offering “an integrated Secular and Judaic educational program utilizing the most effective recent techniques,” and to “teach their children the Jewish traditions in a way which was positive, creative, and fully integrated with the wider cultural life of our world.”

By 1971, Ezra had become the first Jewish day school in the country to implement an open classroom curriculum, and graduated its first class of five students from the sixth grade. Ezra Academy reinstated scheduled classes and added a structured art program in 1973. A middle school was first established in 1977 when Ezra added its first seventh grade class. Its first class of five students were graduated from the eighth grade the following year. In 1981, Ezra Academy became a regional Schechter school for the Southern Connecticut area, and students from Bridgeport, Trumbull, and Fairfield began attending classes. At the 1984 Annual Convention of United Synagogue of America, Ezra was cited for excellence in secular and Judaic studies amongst Solomon Schechter Day Schools.

In response to the dramatic increase in enrollment, the construction of Ezra Academy's new multi-purpose facility was announced, adding an 11,000 square foot addition including a gym/lunchroom, science lab, music room, and additional classrooms. Students and teachers moved into the spacious new facility in 1989.

In 1999, Ezra Academy received recognition from the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools for its “dedication to academic excellence through an integrated approach of secular and Judaic studies within a nurturing environment.”

Today, Ezra Academy has a student body of approximately 90 students from over 20 towns throughout the Southern Connecticut area, with a faculty and staff of 35.

Ezra continues to emphasize a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) focused education, making use of modern tools like iPads, Smartboards, and laptops in the classroom.

What distinguishes Ezra Academy from other schools is its, community bound together by Jewish values and traditions, commitment to the State of Israel, to the practice of *Gemilut Chasadim* (acts of loving kindness) and *Tikkum Olam* (repairing the world), and by its communal commitment to a rich and rigorous education that encompasses both secular and the Judaic.

Today Ezra stresses an individual approach to learning. Children are seen as distinct and special, each with particular strengths and unique potentials. Ezra's small class sizes and individualized approach to education recognizes and facilitates the needs of each student. Ezra teachers are passionate, committed and caring professionals, who guide each student in exploring their assets and fulfilling their promise.

For fifty years Ezra Academy has provided children and their families with a warm and caring community, in a supportive and nurturing environment. We offer a setting that allows students to realize their full potential both academically and spiritually, guided by a keen sense of morality, integrity and ethics.

[Melanie Waynik is Head of Ezra Academy and has a Doctorate in Education from the Teachers College of Columbia University]

# **The Yeshiva Gedolah Rabbinical Institute of New England**

**By David S. Fischer, MD**

This article is based on information placed on the internet by Yeshiva Gedolah Rabbinical Institute of New England and interviews with Rachel Deitsch Sandman and Rabbi Binyamin Katz, both of whom were generous with their time.

The Yeshiva Gedolah Rabbinical Institute of New England (YGRINE) began in New Haven in 1976 in the home of Reb Dovid and Sora Deitsch who then lived on West Park Avenue in New Haven.

The story of the Deitsch family and the development of the Yeshiva Gedolah is fascinating. Reb Dovid Deitsch was born in Poland in 1913 and he and Sora came to the United States from Poland via Czechoslovakia, Austria, France and then to the U.S. in 1950. They settled in Norwalk, CT because Dovid Deitsch had family in the city. Dovid was initially employed by these relatives who owned a garment business.

In 1953, Dovid founded the Deitsch Plastic Company, Inc. The company is based in West Haven, CT. It manufactures man-made leather, and non-woven substrates. It laminates different substrates to PVC vinyl and other synthetic films and produces hi-visibility and fire resistant protective garments and products for the furniture, automotive, apparel, and health care industries. Upon founding their business the Deitsch family moved to New Haven and resided at West Park Ave., where their children grew-up. They later moved to Colony Road.

Rachel Deitsch Sandman told me that her parents set up Yeshiva Gedolah in 1976 based on a verbal communication from Rabbi Binyamin Katz. Rabbi Katz had met in Brooklyn with the 7th Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994) and with Rabbi S. Gurary, the brother-in-law of the Rebbe. Rabbi Gurary supervises educational institutions for Chabad, and with the The Rebbe was happy with the development of the New Haven Hebrew Day School. It was established in 1946 at the direction of the 6th Rebbe, Yoseph Yitzchak Schneerson (1880-1950) and directed by Rabbi Maurice (Moshe) Y. Hecht. It had a large number of elementary school students and a somewhat smaller number in the high school. The Rebbe wanted to provide additional options for high school graduates to attend Yeshiva Gedolah and pursue rabbinic studies programs leading to ordination in cities outside of New York City or other such large locations. He suggested to Rabbi Katz that he transmit that

message to Dovid Deitsch immediately. Rabbi Katz commented that Deitsch accepted the message, “did not ask why, when, where, or how.” He was a true “soldier of the Rebbe”. He understood that the Rebbe wanted a Yeshiva Gedolah established in New Haven and wanted it done quickly.

Under Deitsch sponsorship the Yeshiva Gedolah accepted 10 post high school boys, ages 18-20. Initially the students dormed in the West Park Avenue Deitsch house while they attended classes set up by Chabad in the basement of Congregation Beth Israel – The Orchard Street synagogue. According to Rabbi Katz, the Lubavitch Board of Rabbis in Crown Heights, at the urging of Rabbi M. Mentlick and with the approval of Rabbi Guray, selected as the first Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Yosef Heller, who is now Rov and Rosh Kolel in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

As the classes increased in size, Dovid and Sora Deitsch purchased a building for the *Beis Medrash* at 300 Norton Street from a Jewish family for about \$50,000. Rabbi Katz pointed out that Rabbi Zalman Morazov devoted a great deal of effort and skill to lovingly constructing the first men’s mikvah in New Haven that is built as a *Bor Al Gebai Bor*, with the immersion pool above the rainwater pool. He also noted that Rabbi Baruch Shalom Kahan labored to establish a strictly kosher kitchen to provide tasty and healthy meals for the *bachurim* (students).

Over time, nearby buildings for student dormitories have been acquired. In recent years the Yeshiva has greatly expanded its programs and now has 150 students, ages 14-20 in grades 9 through post high school, who come from New Haven, New York, other cities throughout the United States, and overseas.

The *Mesivta program* was founded in 2005-5765 with an entering class of 20 students for grades 9 through 11 and ages 14-17. Word of its excellent program spread rapidly and the demand for more classes grew considerably. In 2009-5769, the Zal Program started for better students in their later teens. Reb Dovid Deitsch passed away in 2001. The entire Yeshiva program complex was named in his memory: Yeshiva Beis Dovid Shlomo.

In 2007, Young Israel at 292 Norton Street sold their building to the Yeshiva Gedolah Rabbinical Institute. After some modifications, the basement is now used as a dining facility and for classrooms and a *minyán* room for prayers for the students. Congregation Lubavitch uses the main sanctuary on the first floor for daily, Shabbat and holiday services. The outside of the building remains largely unchanged compared to the picture of Young Israel in volume 8, page 75. The name Young Israel has been removed and *Yeshiva Beis Dovid Shlomo* in Hebrew replaces it. The footprint of the YGRINE has grown over the years. Now as one walks from Whalley Avenue down Norton Street after the parking lot of the medical building, one encounters two houses

that serve as dormitory rooms for the boys, starting at 280 Norton Street, then the former Young Israel synagogue at 292 Norton Street, then Rabbi Levitin's house 294-296 Norton Street where he lives and helps assist the Russian Jews who have come to New Haven. The original building at 300 Norton Street, houses some classrooms, dorm rooms, and as mentioned, the men's *mikvah*.

Rabbi Yitzchok Kalmenson is now *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Yeshiva Gedolah and Rabbi Yosef Lustig is the Principle/Menahel. The other academic staff include: Rabbi Schneur Roth, *Magid Shiur*; Rabbi Gershon Borenstein, *Magid Shiur*; Rabbi Schneur Zalman Kessler, *Magid Shiur*; Rabbi Mendel Wilhelm, *Magid Shiur* and *Menahel of the Zal*; Rabbi Eliyahu Bogart, *Mashpia*; Rabbi Yonathan Reinitz *Mashpia*; Rabbi Mayer Chaim Posner, *Magid Shiur*; Rabbi Manis Okonouv, food service director; and Rabbi Sruly Baitelman, Administrator. In past years the Yeshiva Gedolah was directed by Jacob Pinson and Yosef Sandman, sons-in-law of Dovid Deitsch. It is currently led by Yosef Deitsch and Mendel Deitsch, grandsons of Dovid Deitsch.

The Congregation Lubavitch has grown and prospered over the years. Its *minyanim* are reliably held three times a day with more than enough men to assure a *minyán*. Weekend services are filled to near overflowing. Further, the recent increase in the number of *bachurim* enrolled in various Yeshiva programs is stressing the available space and new facilities are being sought. This is an unmitigated success story.



292 Norton Street, Yeshiva Beis Dovid Shlomo,  
Formerly Young Isreal



300 Norton Street, Yeshiva Gedolah,  
Original and Current Main Building

# Torah Academy of New Haven

## By Rabbi Nosson Fromowitz

The Torah Academy of New Haven was created in 1976 to serve the Jewish population of the Greater New Haven Community and other New England communities that lacked the student population to support their own Yeshiva High School. It was started through the generosity of one of the great philanthropic individuals of the last generation, Mr. Zev Wolfson A”H. He had a dream of starting regional high schools around the country to increase Jewish awareness and observance. He was a very pious and sincere person who also had the means to carry out his dream of fostering Jewish education throughout the United States. Mr. Wolfson turned to Torah Umesorah, the leading Orthodox Day School organization in the country representing over 600 Jewish Day Schools, to assist him in carrying out his mission. Torah Umesorah identified communities where a Yeshiva High School could take hold, flourish, and build the next generation of leaders for the Jewish communities around the country.

The City of New Haven was chosen for this project primarily because of two outstanding individuals Rabbi Dr. Schneur Leiman, Professor of Jewish Studies, who was then teaching at Yale University and Rabbi Daniel Greer Esq. who were living in New Haven at the time. They had the vision to attempt to establish New Haven as a leading Jewish center for New England. They were both well known as sincere and capable individuals who could assist in carrying out this mission of creating a Torah center in New Haven.

In choosing the leadership to start such an institution, Mr. Wolfson turned to the Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Forest Hills, New York, headed by the great Torah scholar and educator, Rabbi Henschel Lebowitz, of blessed memory. Rabbi Lebowitz ZT”L had dedicated his life to the dissemination of Torah study and observance throughout the Jewish world. He himself had grown up in New York City and studied under his father Rabbi David Lebowitz, of blessed memory, one of the foremost students of the “Alte” (the Elder) from Slobodka, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel ZT”L. It is interesting to note that the first Yeshiva in the United States outside of New York City was started in New Haven by Rabbi Yehudah Levenberg, of blessed memory, who was also a student of the Slobodka Yeshiva under Rabbi Finkel’s ZT”L tutelage. What made the Slobodka Yeshiva unique was its emphasis on not only devotion to Torah study but on building the individual character of its students through

the study of Mussar, works reflecting the ideals of Jewish`ethics. The goal was not only to study Torah but to perfect ones character to reflect the high ideals of Torah life.

Rabbi Lebowitz Z"TL met with several lay leaders of New Haven and with the support of Mr. Zev Wolfson decided to embark on this mission of reestablishing New Haven as a Torah center to serve all of New England's Jewish youth. The plan was to start a four year intensive high school that would give its students the ability to excel in Torah study and adherence to Jewish law as well as offering a solid four year accredited secular high school education.

At that time, The Hebrew Day School located in Orange Ct. was the local Jewish day school serving boys and girls from kindergarten through eighth grade. The Gan school started as a nursery school in Torah Academy's building on Blake Street and continued there until they were able to acquire the Sherman school building as their home. My children and those of other staff members' attended the Gan school for their early primary grades. Mrs. Sarah Greer headed the school as its principal and was and still is an extraordinary educator. Both of the schools were primary grade schools going up to eighth grade. Anyone wishing to continue their Jewish education would travel to a larger city similar to New York or Baltimore where dormitory facilities were available. Not everyone was prepared to send their ninth grader away from home. Starting a Yeshiva in New Haven would enable many more children to attend a Yeshiva High School. The philosophy of Rabbi Lebowitz Z"TL was that the establishment of such an institution of intensive Jewish learning would not only effectuate a change in the knowledge and commitment to Judaism of the students but would change their parents and the fabric of the community as well.

The two Rabbis that were chosen to head this Yeshiva were myself and Rabbi Yoel Adelman who were students of Rabbi Lebowitz Z"TL and had spent many years in pursuing their Jewish studies and preparing for such a mission. This was one of several Yeshivas started at the time with the above stated purpose. Other cities that were chosen were located in Rochester, N.Y., Milwaukee, Wis., and Los Angeles, California. The knowledge that Torah Academy of New Haven was part of a greater plan to strengthen Torah learning around the United States gave its founding heads a feeling that they were embarking on a national mission to bring greater awareness of what it means to live a life of Torah to American youth. Until the 1950's

Torah education beyond the elementary school level was limited to a small number of Yeshivas in New York City or other large Jewish communities. The Jewish leaders at that time realized that to stem the tide of assimilation that was so prevalent more had to be done to educate the youth of that era.

Rabbi Yoel Adelman was to be the Rosh Hayeshiva (literally meaning head of the Yeshiva) who would be the spiritual guide of the Yeshiva in both education and in the development of the character of its students. He was the senior member of the Yeshiva staff and was greatly admired by its teachers and students. My role was to run the religious studies program of the high school as its principal and serve as an instructor of Jewish studies as well.

The school started with approximately 35 students comprising the 9th and 10th grades. There were several local students that lived at home including Bernie Rogoff, Seth Paulker, Avi Pollak but most lived in the dormitory where the boys had their sleeping quarters and all their meals were served. In order to recruit students for the fledgling school, I would visit the many day schools in the region including the day schools in West Hartford, Bridgeport, Norwich, etc. I would meet with staff and students to inform them of our mission and invite the older students to a Shabbaton (Sabbath experience) in the Torah Academy. Our goal was to inspire the youngsters to join the Yeshiva for the coming year. This effort was successful to some extent and we were able to grow our student body to approximately 60 students by the time we had a full four year high school.

Another division of the Torah Academy was its Bais Medrash program. This was set up for young men who wanted to further their Jewish education beyond high school. These students were mostly from our "mother" Yeshiva, Chofetz Chaim in Forest Hills, N.Y. where many of the students availed themselves of the environment of a "smaller" Yeshiva where they could have more one on one time with their Rabbis. This Bais Medrash program was extremely valuable to the high school students as the older boys served as role models and mentors to the younger boys. They lived in the dormitory as well, so they served as dorm counselors and generally were the ones to look out for the welfare of the younger boys.

During the school year of 1977 the high school enrollment grew as more children registered primarily, from other New England communities. That year, the Bais Medrash division grew as well and a group of older students from Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva joined us and studied for their rabbinical ordination. Rabbi Yoel Adelman gave the highest level Bais Medrash class and

it was attended by outstanding students who accomplished a great deal in their studies. Since leaving New Haven, Rabbi Adelman became the official "Masmich" (the one who tests the scholars to determine whether they have the knowledge to be ordained and receive the title "Rabbi") of Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva. Over approximately 25 years he has tested many hundreds of students who have attained ordination. These scholars have gone out throughout the United States to take positions as rabbis, educators, and headed many Jewish institutions.

By 1980 Torah Academy had a full four year high school secular department that offered all required courses for a fully recognized and accredited diploma. The Dean of general studies was Dr. Harold Hack, who was a member of the community and had a Doctorate in History from Yale. It was his role to hire outstanding teachers who would give the students the very best educational program possible. This arrangement worked out well and he was able to hire certified teachers who taught in either private or public schools in the area. The parents of the students would come to the school for parent teacher conferences and the feedback the administration received was very positive. After Dr. Hack left to teach on a college level, Mr. Marc Blosvern was hired and was equally effective in his role as Dean of secular studies. Many students pursued professional careers and became distinguished in their fields of pursuit. As an example, Dr. Richard Gewanter, a Connecticut student now living in Queens, N.Y. is a noted oncologist at the world renowned Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York.

The Torah Academy started in a rented facility at 199 Blake Street which had been a college dormitory. The facility was soon deemed to be too small so with the help of Mr. Wolfson the Yeshiva began looking to purchase a larger facility. The college dormitory building at 330 Blake was available but needed quite a bit of work to turn the first floor into a school. One day prior to the purchase, after a particularly trying period and facing a big decision regarding the purchase, I went to pray at the grave of the great Torah giant and former and only "Shtut Rav" (Chief Rabbi of the City) of New Haven who had been the Rosh Hayeshiva of the famous Yeshiva of New Haven. Looking down towards the surrounding area I see the building we were contemplating purchasing at 330 Blake Street. I felt as though he would be looking down at us and insuring our success. Sure enough we purchased and renovated the building to serve as the school.

The staff at Torah Academy expanded as its student body did to include

the following Rabbis Naftali Kalter, Elchonon Zohn, Moshe Kamin, Chaim Isaac Flink. The staff was truly outstanding from an educational standpoint and also in relating to their students, The boys in both divisions flourished under their tutelage. A special note regarding Rabbi Flink, he was legendary in his caring for the personal needs of the "Talmidim" (Yeshiva students). He served as a mother and father to the boys that were living away from home and took care of their every need. Another outstanding individual who gave his utmost to the students was the school chef, Mr. Freilich who himself had studied in Yeshiva in Europe and related very well to the students and rabbis.

In 1979 around the time of the Iranian revolution many Jews escaped Iran and came to the United States as refugees. The Torah Academy welcomed these students and gave them a home as many of the parents were still left behind in Iran. When the parents did eventually escape they came to the school and saw how well their children were cared for and integrated into the student body. Many eventually settled with their families in California but it was very satisfying to know that we were able to do our part in the resettlement of these Jewish refugees.

The major challenge the school faced was financial. Torah Academy held its yearly annual dinner with a commemorative journal to raise funds. One year the school honored Senator Joe Lieberman who was the local Connecticut State Senator for his assistance and strong interest in the success of the school. At the dinner, where I served as the M.C., I pointed out that the "Benchers" (grace after meals) that were printed especially for the occasion, had the name Senator Joe Lieberman without the word "State" as I was sure that he would eventually be a United States Senator. Little did we know that he would become one the countries most respected elected officials and run for Vice President of the United State. The dinner was a great success and helped keep the school funded for a period of time.

Torah Academy also sponsored concerts as a means of raising funds. The Diaspora Yeshiva, a seminary in Israel for young men returning to their Jewish roots, had several super star performers from their previous life as rock musicians in their group. They composed a new style of contemporary Jewish music that especially appealed to the youth and went on national tour. Torah Academy held two such concerts that were sponsored and attended by hundreds of people which turned into a financial success. Another fund raiser was an extensive mailing campaign of the first of the Artsroll Judaic books that were newly published. The popular Judaic books were sent with

a letter requesting donations for the school.

The school was able to purchase an office building on Whalley Avenue around 1981 which was to serve as a girls' high school division of Torah Academy. The school was headed by the Rosh Yeshiva's wife, Rebbetzin Tzippy Adelman, a noted Jewish educator. The building was a success financially as we were able to rent out much of the vacant space with the help of a very good friend of the school, Mr. Irving Rohinsky who located his realty firm, World Realty, in the building. The girls' division, however, turned out to be a financial drain on the finances and may have ultimately been a turning point causing the school to falter under enormous financial strain. Eventually the girls' division closed as it wasn't attracting the numbers that the boys' division was. It seems that parents weren't as willing to allow their daughters to leave home.

In June of 1982 Torah Academy suffered a major blow when the area of Blake Street suffered a huge flood after several days of torrential rains. Being at the foot of West Rock Mountain, an area newly developed where several streams had been filled in, the flood waters just kept rising. Boats were brought in to rescue residents and the area was visited by the Governor and other public officials. It was declared a Federal disaster area as many homes and businesses were destroyed. The first floor of the Yeshiva which comprised the Bais Hamedrash, school, kitchen, dining room and offices was under water. The Aron Kodesh, the holy ark, which contained the Torah scrolls was literally floated out of the building. As the waters rose, we were able to save the Torahs but everything else including a large Judaic library was destroyed. The school had to rebuild and, with the help of G-d, did so. People from around the country, after seeing scenes of the devastation in the media responded most generously.

One particular letter that came with a substantial check stands out in my mind, it was from a church having experienced its own natural disaster. The church wanted to participate in the rebuilding in the same way that they were able to rebuild because of the generosity of others. The school, having only several weeks until summer break moved to the building it had acquired on Whalley Avenue. By the beginning of the next school year the entire first floor of the building was rebuilt and classes resumed on Blake Street. It was a trying time, but we all pulled together in a manner that we accomplished what seemed, at the time, as the impossible. One particular parent Mr. Sheldon Marshak, who lived in Bethany, Ct. and owned a building supply company

in Waterbury was extremely helpful and generous. He was honored for his efforts at the annual dinner held the following year.

In 1984 at the annual high school graduation which was very well attended by parents, supporters and community members Torah Academy honored one of the original Russian “refusniks”, Joseph Mendeleovich. He spent the Shabbos with us and spoke of his faith and resilience while sitting in a Russian prison not knowing if he would ever see the light of day. It was truly unforgettable and inspiring.

In the summer of 1984, I was offered and accepted a position in Monsey, N.Y. working with the famous educator and historian Rabbi Berel Wein to oversee his high school, Shaare Torah. My years in New Haven were challenging but very rewarding as Torah Academy had produced many outstanding alumni who have made great contributions to the Jewish and secular world.

Approximately two years later, Rabbi Adelman left. The school fell on hard times financially. Rabbis Naftali Kalter and Moshe Kamin as joint Deans of the school took over its operations and the financial responsibility. The school was a success in that the students were learning in a nurturing and warm environment. The finances, however, were another story. The school was unable to establish a strong, wide base of support from the community to fund its ever increasing budget. An emergency campaign which was given the title “SOS Now – Save Our School Now” was announced in July of 1987 in the Connecticut Jewish Ledger. A committee was formed, headed by the then State Attorney General Joe Lieberman to help carry out this mission. Irving Rohinsky as chairman of the Board of Directors worked tirelessly on behalf of the school. Unfortunately all the efforts were not enough to keep the school open and it closed in 1988. The Yeshiva of New Haven started by Rabbi Daniel Greer a few years later was a renewed effort to restart a Yeshiva program in New Haven.

[Rabbi Nesson Fromowitz was one of the two founding rabbis of Torah Academy of New Haven.]

[NOTE: Reference is made to Rabbi Yehuda Levenberg and the first Yeshiva in the United States outside of New York City. See *JINH*, Vol 8: 171-179, 2005. Rabbi Yehuda Heschel Levenberg; also *JINH* Vol 8: 8-26 “Woodmont” and “Bagel Beach” especially pages 12 and 28.]

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## Yeshiva of New Haven (The Gan School)

By Sarah Greer

The Yeshiva of New Haven originally called The Gan School, was established in 1977 by a core group of parents headed by Daniel Greer, who at the time was a practicing attorney in Connecticut. Among the very first nursery class were children of: Rabbi Yoel & Tzippy Adelman, Stanley & Donna Dalnekoff, Rabbi Daniel & Sarah Greer, Dr. Harold & Adelle Hack, Fred & Ina Gross, Dr. Beryl & Chana Septimus, Alan & Chaya Spiegel. The School's first nursery teacher was Mrs. Rhona Epstein, and the first kindergarten teachers were Mrs. Robin Sadek and Mrs. Reva Fleischman. Throughout its forty year history (thus far) The Gan School has been blessed with wonderful and creative teachers too numerous to list, though mention must be made of Mrs. Leslie Nabel and Mr. Dan Greene who each have been faculty mainstays for over twenty years. The School office is powered by the steadfastness of Jean Ledbury.

During their respective lifetimes, the Yeshiva benefited enormously from the wisdom and ongoing guidance of both *Rav* Menachem Gettinger *ztz"l*, and Rabbi Amos Bunim *ztz"l*.

There were many wonderful people who gave yeoman's assistance during those early years: Doris Zelinsky, who attracted the first grant monies to The School, and her husband Ed Zelinsky, who, as Alderman, shepherded the purchase of The Roger Sherman Building from the City of New Haven; and, Attorneys Roger Frechette and Nat Lewin who defended the School when that purchase was called into question.

The lion's share of the effort from the very first parent meeting until the present was and is expended by Rabbi Daniel Greer whose vision and high standards inform the entire institution. Within a few short years of the School's founding, Daniel Greer relinquished his private law practice to work full-time at Yeshiva. Rabbi Greer organized non-profit entities, to purchase and renovate derelict housing, ensuring a stable, safe and pleasant surrounding for The School. For more than ten years, Rabbi Greer's son, Eliezer Greer, was in charge of these activities.

Sarah Greer is Principal and main Judaic Studies teacher at The Gan and has been so since the School's founding, serving in those capacities pro bono for the first sixteen years. Early in the School's history, Reuven Gallant assisted Rebbetzin Greer in the School's administration; and later on Rabbi Mordechai Biser served in that role.

Adelle Hack, was the The Gan's original parent-volunteer. After her regular workday at Yale, she functioned as treasurer/bookkeeper for The Gan from its inception, and continued volunteering with the help of her husband Harold Hack for the next thirty years. On a volunteer basis, Adelle Hack took care of the School's purchasing, directed the payroll, and supervised the School kitchens and catering. Dr. Harold Hack, for many years, volunteered to complete and present a variety of grant applications on behalf of The School.

Yeshiva of New Haven Elementary/ The Gan School offers strong foundational education in a delightfully welcoming environment. Structured with mixed-age group classes, the School's traditional education emphasizes basic skills.

Eschewing technology in the classroom and emphasizing use of actual books, chalk and blackboards, students learn much in the mode of a bygone era. Without distraction, and with small classes, and wonderful teachers, Yeshiva of New Haven elementary school is a thriving community of engaged learners whose students experience a proprietary relationship to their studies. The task which unites the school community is the acquisition of Torah knowledge and the whole-hearted celebration of *mitzvah* performance.

The core curricular subjects are text-based with emphasis on close and careful reading. At Yeshiva, students are trained to read, think, and question the material studied.

For the older children, the General Studies Program offers a full array of subjects including history, geography, literature and language, science, math, and the fine arts, with significant emphasis on writing and public speaking. Yeshiva of New Haven students have several times qualified for the state level of the Geography Bee sponsored by the National Geography Society.

Throughout the forty year history of The Gan/ Yeshiva of New Haven, a variety of programs have answered specific communal needs. Among those projects can be counted Tikvah High School for Girls and, also, Yeshiva of New Haven High School for Boys (at which Rabbi Avi Hack served as Assistant *Menahel*).

As well, the Yeshiva of New Haven sponsors a Synagogue under the aegis of Rabbi Daniel Greer, and hosts a post-graduate *Beis Midrash*. The Synagogue offers numerous adult education classes, programs, and tutorials. For about a decade, beginning in 2004, Rabbi Daniel Greer's son, Rabbi Dov Greer who was, at the time, quite involved in manifold endeavors of the larger Jewish community, led a twice-weekly night *Kollel* and taught *Daf Yomi* at the Synagogue.

The Yeshiva of New Haven Synagogue owns and dedicates a campus apartment for visitors (*hachnasos orchim* apartment) which was, for many

years, supervised and operated by Rena Greer.

Students from Yeshiva of New Haven have continued at the most competitive Yeshivas, Seminaries, and colleges including: Reb Tzvi's, Reb Dovid's, Brisk, Merkaz, Mir, Shaar Torah, Lakewood; BJJ, and Michlalah; and *L'havdil*: Barnard, Brown, Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Stern, Touro, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, Wellseley, Yale, and Yeshiva University.

Graduates have pursued a wide variety of endeavor and listed among YNH alumni one finds: teachers, rabbis, a *sofer* (Torah scribe), *mohel*, *shochet*, veterinarian, nurses, artists, writers, lawyers, health professionals, and business-people.

The Yeshiva of New Haven continues to serve the Jewish community and is privileged to walk in the footsteps of the original Yeshiva of New Haven founded in 1923 by the great revered Talmudic sage, *Rav Yehuda Heschel Levenberg*.

An article about Rabbi Judah Heschel Levenberg appears in *Jews in New Haven*, volume 8, pages 171-179 (2005).



# Slifka Center

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## History of Jewish Life at Yale

While there have been Jewish students, faculty, and administrators at Yale since the 1800s, it was not until September 10, 1995 that there was a single campus location where one might experience the living rhythms of Jewish culture. On that date, Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale was dedicated and opened its doors as a permanent home for all expressions of Jewish life – in a context that is utterly and undeniably woven into the fabric of the University.

The vision of a center for Jewish life at Yale dates back to the 1960's when, with the collapse of restrictive quotas, the numbers of Jewish students and faculty at Yale increased dramatically. Responding to an identified need, Rabbi Richard J. Israel and the Yale Hillel Board of Trustees launched a campaign that purchased two buildings on High Street: one to house the Hillel Rabbi and his family and the other to provide a home for Yale Hillel.

Yale Hillel's program offices, however, never left the dormitory basements of the Old Campus, while the basement of the Rabbi's house became Young Israel House at Yale: a kosher dining room for students. In 1973, the "Kosher Kitchen" moved to a large basement around the corner on Crown Street. Even as Jewish life at Yale emanated from three separate locations on campus, Yale Hillel and Young Israel House collaborated more extensively and Jewish religious and cultural life began to coalesce. By the mid 1980's, Friday night dinners at Crown Street had become a large weekly event attracting hundreds of students to taste the food and conviviality of Shabbat.

Academic life, however, lagged behind community life, Biblical Hebrew was reintroduced at Yale College in 1967, just one hundred years after its mandatory instruction has ceased. However, the Yale curriculum presented Judaism as an ancient precursor rather than as a living civilization. In 1981, with the leadership of figures like Professor William Hallo, Professor Geoffrey Hartman, and William Horowitz '29, Yale established a Program in Judaic Studies. University President A. Bartlett Giamatti declared the new program Yale's restoration of "the third pillar upon which the edifice of Western Civilization stands." For Yale's Jewish community, the inauguration of the Program in Judaic Studies marked an important affirmation of the intellectual, cultural and religious whole of Jewish life at Yale – but the community still lacked a physical center.

Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale was the product of an historic collaboration between dedicated Jewish alumni and their alma mater, and since 1995 has provided a home for the far-reaching community of students, teachers, alumni and friends who come together to share the fruits of Jewish life. It is a meeting ground for people of varied religious, ethnic and cultural heritage to encounter one another, and to celebrate and explore the richly nuanced manifestations of Jewish tradition.

### **About Slifka Center**

In 1995, the lexicon of the Yale campus changed forever with the opening of the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life, for the first time bringing under one roof Yale's main Jewish student programs: Hillel; The Kosher Kitchen; and Young Israel House. Overnight, "Slifka" came to describe both a place and a program, and ensured that being a Jew at Yale is celebrated. Through Slifka Center, Jewish life at Yale is woven into the natural rhythm of the campus, and harnesses the innovative thinking and intellectual rigor of the university.

Slifka Center is among the premiere campus Jewish centers in the world, with the capacity to offer programs of breadth, depth and centrality to campus life, Jewish and non-Jewish, that allows us to 'compete' successfully for our students' time and attention. We are developing future Jewish leaders, and men and women who will lead in the private sector and public spheres Jewish-ly.

### **Our Approach**

We know that successfully engaging students to ponder the great questions requires many points of entry, many avenues for life and growth. And that we must exist not just within the building but around campus and throughout the world. Therefore Slifka Center is conceived as a laboratory of Jewish exploration at, and of, Yale. We offer experiences for students to see, taste, touch, and probe old and new modes of Jewish involvement, and take up their own modes, as they begin to imagine the Jewish future they will one day help shape the lead.

### **Specifically, The Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale:**

**Supports** current and evolving forms of Jewish association, from the full spectrum of religious services, to cultural, secular, intellectual, and social programs;

**Fosters** intra-denominational relationships, experiences and micro-communities that provoke reflection upon wrestling-with, and dialoging-about

the terms of being a Jew;

**Nourishes** the body through the Lindenbaum Kosher Kitchen in Heyman Commons, where students, faculty and staff gather for meals and conversation every day;

**Tends** the soul with a robust Rabbinic staff from a variety of backgrounds who lend support to minyanim, and provide pastoral care and program leadership;

**Provokes** the mind with learning and teaching of Torah, Talmud and other texts ancient and modern;

**Enables** a multi-pronged exploration of the arts as a way into new Jewish modes of imagining the world and making ancient holidays;

**Connects** Yale students' developing social conscience and community commitments with the Jewish values of Tzedek, Tzedaka and Tikkun Olam, and exploration of inclusiveness across issues of gender and sexuality;

**Promotes** a living connection to the State of Israel;

**Maintains** a living link between Yale's Jewish student communities and Jewish Yale parents, alumni, faculty and staff on-and-off campus;

**Models** the virtues of life-long Jewish learning, living and leading.

## Our Programs

Under the leadership of our Executive Director and Senior Jewish Chaplain, Rabbi Leah Cohen, our core program offering includes:

**Religion and Spirituality** – A robust Rabbinic Team from diverse backgrounds (currently 3 full-time Rabbis), provide religious and spiritual guidance, teaching and learning and pastoral support for:

- 5 Active, student-led minyanim: Orthodox; Minyan Urim (modern Orthodox); Conservative/Egal; Reform Chavurah; Alternative/Unplugged.
- High Holiday Services co-led by students and rabbis are attended by nearly 2,000 students, faculty, staff and community members each fall;
- Hanukkah Banquet and celebrations; Multiple Passover Seders at Slifka Center and across campus serving more than 1,000 meals; additional festivals throughout the year;
- Additional direct support of Orthodox life includes expanded meal service, maintenance of the Yale Eruv and kosher supervision of Claire's Corner Copia restaurant.

**Slifka Dining** – The Lindenbaum Kosher Kitchen in Heyman Commons, Yale's official Jewish Dining Room, is central to our operations and outreach.

We are open to all seven days per week during the academic year.

- Part of Yale Dining, all meals, including Shabbat, festivals and holidays, are surcharge-free for students on meal-plan – ‘just a swipe’;
- We average 200-students/day for regular meals, 225 weekly for Shabbat dinner; 400 students for bi-weekly Bagel Brunch;
- We are increasing opportunities for free and discounted meals for non-meal plan graduate and undergraduate students, including Shabbat and holidays.

### **Arts and Culture**

- Gallery exhibits and artist talks, forums, and symposiums;
- Artists-in-Residence and visual, literary, musical, and performing arts programs;
- Art grants and arts internships;
- Lectures and talks with leading and up-and-coming Jewish voices in Bio-ethics, Jewish history, contemporary Jewish issues, politics, Israel and the Middle East;

**Social Justice** – With a foundation of Jewish teaching about Tzedek, Tzedeka and Tikkun Olam, we offer hands-on-service opportunities and learning including:

- Tzedeka Fellows work to address public health and social issues;
- Challah for Hunger bakes and sells Challah each week to support New Haven programs;
- Domestic and international Alternative Spring Break service programs;

**Israel Programming** – Supporting student groups across the political spectrum, including Yale Friends of Israel, AIPAC, J-Street programming includes formal education, dialog, advocacy, Israel travel and more:

- Campus programs include lectures, events, meetings, and meals;
- Support for student groups’ programs, leadership development and conference travel;
- Summer programs include Israel travel & research grants, Elis in Israel summer program and internship networking via Yale’s alumni network-goal is to get 100 students to Israel each summer;
- Birthright Israel will send 40 students to Israel this March.

**Slifka Classes** – Non-credit courses in Hebrew, Yiddish, Text Study, Jewish Rituals, Jewish Philosophy, Life’s Big Questions for seniors and others are offered each semester:

**Travel Opportunities** – In addition to organized trips, Slifka offers a variety of research and travel grants for students exploring Jewish themes, history, culture and Israel.

**Graduate Students** – Yale’s Jewish graduate and professional school

students are welcome at Slifka Center anytime. In addition we support targeted social programs both at Slifka and around campus, as well as discounted meal opportunities for non-meal plan students.

**Yale's Jewish Alumni Group: Eli's Mishpacha** - Slifka Center supports Mishpacha organizing and outreach, connects alumni and families to Jewish campus, life, and fosters student-alumni networking and mentorship.

# The Hebrew High School of New England

By Barbara M. Zalesch



Parents of Jewish students in southern New England who had sent their children to Jewish day schools through grade 8 were facing a dilemma. They wanted their children to continue in a Jewish day high school, but in order to do so many were sending their children to Boston, New York, Baltimore, or elsewhere. After

numerous failed attempts to extend local day school education through the high school level, a successful collaboration of the communities of West Hartford, New Haven and Springfield, MA resulted in the establishment of the HEBREW HIGH SCHOOL OF NEW ENGLAND (HHNE), which opened its doors in September 1996 to 18 pioneering students – 14 in 9th grade and 4 in Grade 10. The roster included three boys from New Haven, recent graduates of New Haven Hebrew Day School (now Southern Connecticut Hebrew Academy): Daniel Fleischman, Jonathan Weinberger and Leib Zalesch. These three pioneers remained in the school until their graduation in June 2000. By that time there were numerous New Haven students who had traveled to the West Hartford site on a daily basis.

The premise of this modern Orthodox school was to have strong secular studies combined with an extensive Judaic studies department. The secular studies were co-ed, while the Judaic studies were separated by gender, with the stipulation that both the boys and girls would have the same curriculum. As years passed and the enrollment grew, additional classes were added, including honors and advanced placement level classes in math, history and the sciences. Emphasis was placed on college enrollment and on a strong knowledge of Jewish values and learning.

Rabbi Zvi Kahn served as the first Head of School under a Board of Directors made up of members of all three communities, co-chaired by Ann Pava, then of Springfield, MA. A review of minutes for the first few years reveals that most meetings of the Board centered on the topics of fund-raising and the search for a suitable site for a permanent building. Marketing and publicity

were also often on the agenda, as was the development of a curriculum that would suit the student body. Joseph Fleischman of New Haven headed the original site search committee. This committee was charged with determining an appropriate location that was equidistant from all three founding communities, or, since it would logically be near West Hartford, it needed to be halfway between New Haven and Springfield. Fleischman and his committee members spent many hours scouring the corridor along Rt. 91, sometimes locating a promising building in Wethersfield or Southington and then taking test-drives from each town to the location in question. More than once Fleischman left his home in New Haven in the wee hours of the morning to determine how long it would take to get to the location in question during rush hour. Eventually the decision was made that the students would benefit from being within a Jewish community, so sites within the West Hartford area began to be considered.

HHNE Board members from the New Haven area have included Dr. Mark Schwartz, who served as the first Vice President, Joseph Fleischman, Steven Zalesch, Barbara Zalesch, Dr. Jay Sokolow, Dr. Henry Cohen, William Shragis, Reva Fleischman (another Vice President), Stanley Dalnekoff, Tova Hyman, Nelly Rabinowitz, Neil Cogan, Michael Schneider, Dr. Sharon Hasbani, and Amy Siev, Dr. Neil Cogan, then Dean of Quinnipiac Law School, was also a first vice president and author of our by-laws.

The school was housed in the basement of Agudas Achim Synagogue in West Hartford from its inception until its new facility opened in January 2011. This new building, located in Bloomfield across the street from the West Hartford JCC, was the culmination of extensive fund-raising efforts.

HHNE's campus features a main building with 11 state-of-the-art classrooms, three college-level science labs, a library and learning center, study and prayer space, and full-court gymnasium. The building was made possible through donations from throughout the Jewish community, with major contributions from Ann and Jeremy Pava, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Doris and Simon Konover, and the Zachs family. The campus (Pava Educational Campus) and main building (Grinspoon-Konover Building) were named in recognition of their contributions. There is also a replica of the Carriage House previously located on the property (which had been owned by the University of Hartford) – this replica houses the Louise Silverman Zachs Art and Music Center, donated by the Zachs family of West Hartford. The furnishing of the arts building was made possible by a contribution by

Joseph and Reva Fleischman of New Haven.

When Rabbi Kahn turned the reins over to Rabbi Daniel Loew in Sept. 2005, the enrollment had grown to over 60 students. Enrollment continued to grow to over 80 students before dropping back to 65-70 each year. Many students take a gap year in Israel before enrolling in college; some have served in the Israeli Armed Forces before continuing their education. Students have been accepted to respected colleges such as Yeshiva University, Brandeis, Harvard, Cornell, University of Pennsylvania, MIT, UCLA, Barnard College, University of Connecticut, Boston University, University of Michigan, New York University, Columbia and Princeton, among others.

A strong administration, faculty and staff are essential to the success of a school, particularly a new one finding its way amid the varieties of needs and interests of a diverse student body. Rabbi Kahn set the tone for a congenial atmosphere with weekly discussions. One technique was the “community rock” – sitting in a circle, those present would pass around a rock and give voice to issues of the day - whether they were personal, social, religious, or political, etc. The entire school knew they had a safe space to share thoughts and feelings and to discuss difficult topics. One could only speak when holding the rock.

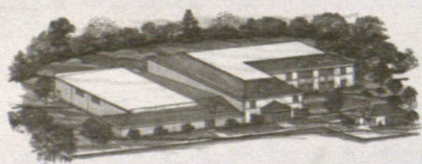
A growing school needs an expanded administration, and Edlyn Blitzer, who came on board as an English teacher, became secular principal in 2001. Upon her retirement, she was succeeded by Dr. Richard Nadel who came out of retirement to lead the school. Any group of teenagers benefits from a strong guidance department as well as a staff that appreciates the issues unique to them. Rabbi Shimmy Trencher, a West Hartford native, became a very popular Dean of Students, working on recruitment and retention as well as dealing with student issues on a day-to-day basis.

Rabbi Jeremy Bruce took over as Head of School prior to the opening of the 2014-15 school year. Whereas Rabbi Loew had spent his teen years in West Hartford and his parents still live there, Rabbi Bruce came from “across the pond.” A native of London, Rabbi Bruce was educated in London and Israel. He joined HHNE after serving as Deputy Head Teacher of King Solomon High School in London, a 900-student Jewish high school. His wide-ranging responsibilities included developing the Jewish ethos of the school, monitoring and supporting the quality of teaching for more than 100 teachers and support staff, directing the pastoral care program, and representing the school to a wide variety of communal and government institutions.

Extra-curricular activities at HHNE have included sports teams such as basketball, baseball, tennis and soccer, as well as clubs as varied as chess, drama, cooking, African Drumming, and break-dancing. Members of the community and the parent body have often stepped forward to assist with coaching teams or leading clubs, and often the students themselves have instigated some of these activities. Games and tournaments are held with area private schools, as well as with other Jewish day high schools throughout the country that have participated, along with HHNE teams, in tournaments held at Yeshiva University in New York. Publications have been on the scene since the first year, with a newspaper, Yearbook, literary magazine, and other periodicals, all student-run. Students participate in retreats and Shabbatons and many are active in their local and regional NCSY chapters. They have marched numerous times in the Israel Day parade in New York City and at rallies in Washington D.C. against the atrocities happening in Darfur and Rwanda. Students have participated in the Yeshiva University National Model United Nations and have represented the school at AIPAC and ACLU conventions, among others. They are members of the National Honor Society and have achieved National Merit Scholar status.

In Rabbi Bruce's words: At HHNE we empower our students to put their Jewish ideals into action by becoming strong advocates for themselves and for others.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** We are a community, a place of caring and respect for G-d and humanity, a place of responsibility, educational excellence and love of learning. The Hebrew High School of New England is a regional, Modern Orthodox, co-educational day school that provides college preparatory Judaic and general studies in an inclusive and supportive environment. Through our challenging program and individualized approach, we empower our students to think critically, behave ethically and embrace learning and Jewish tradition. We inspire the next generation of Jewish leaders, committed to Israel and the betterment of our world.



# **Jewish High School of Connecticut**

## **By Susan Birke Fiedler**

The Jewish High School of Connecticut, (JHSC), was founded because of the profound belief that the future of the Jewish community is through Jewish literacy. Research indicates that students who attend Jewish day school are more likely to identify themselves as Jews, be committed to Israel and participate in the Jewish community. But, American Jews are abysmally ignorant about Jewish history, texts, Hebrew language and Israel and the effect of that problem is the diminishing connection to Jewish community and Israel.

In 2008, a group of educators, community leaders and parents met in a home in New Haven to discuss the potential for a Jewish high school in the region. The group ascertained that the lack of a Jewish high school diminished interest in K-8 Jewish day school programs; limited connected Jewish families from moving to Connecticut and was a contributing factor in the lack of teen interest in Jewish community and continuity. The group thus founded the Jewish high school with the mission to engage students in learning about their Jewish heritage, building their Jewish identity and finding their own approach to personal responsibility for others.

After three years of planning the educational philosophy, collaborating with the community and raising start up funds, JHSC opened its doors in August of 2010 to 19 pioneer students. The school started in a rented space at B'nai Israel in Bridgeport. In 2012 the school moved to the JCC of Greater New Haven to accommodate the need for more classrooms and physical education space. Half the population, however, was commuting from Southern Connecticut and Westchester. In 2014, JHSC moved to a Science and Technology building in Stamford. Over the years the school had grown its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program, including winning a number of awards. The school's location in a STEM building enables and now supports the STEM needs of the school. As a regional school, students currently hail from 12 Southern Connecticut towns.

JHSC is the only pluralistic Jewish high school in Connecticut. It is a school that is committed to encouraging every student to find his or her own passion. Students have diverse opportunities to explore their interests through

lectures, seminars, mentors and community projects. Immensely popular is the Power of One program, where accomplished individuals illustrate and discuss their own passions and how these passions and skills have enabled them to make a difference in the world. Students learn relevant knowledge, critical thinking skills, and how to make responsible decisions and solve real-world problems. The approach to learning is guided by an open-minded spirit of intellectual inquiry encouraging students to challenge, ask questions, and work at their highest intellectual potential.

The curriculum provides a rigorous college preparatory program in the humanities, social and natural sciences, arts, mathematics, technology, foreign languages, physical education and the texts, traditions, history, practices and beliefs of the Jewish people. Students study and engage in a relationship with the language, culture, land and people of the State of Israel. The program emphasizes Hebrew language (modern, spoken as well as classical), striving for fluency, as Hebrew is the cornerstone of Jewish and Israeli culture. The school is deeply committed to accommodating and challenging both students who have attended Jewish day schools and those from public or independent secular schools. All levels of Hebrew and Judaic subjects are available. JHSC encourages athletic achievement and the importance of sportsmanship. Students participate in a variety of after school teams and clubs, including student council, literary magazine, moot *beit din*, art, rock ensemble and computer and media classes.

JHSC graduates attend colleges and Universities throughout North America. A number of students have chosen to go to programs in Israel after high school, including serving in the Israeli army. As one student commented “ I always knew I was Jewish, but JHSC has enabled me to fully explore what that identity means and how it informs my responsibility to the world. ”

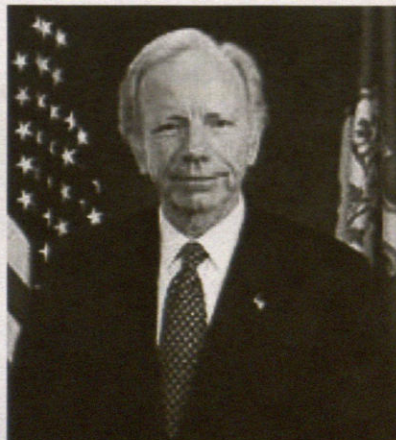
[Susan Birke Fiedler is an attorney and was an original member of the organizing committee of the Jewish High School in Connecticut.]

## Joseph I. Lieberman

By Albert Harary

Joseph Isadore Lieberman was the first Jewish American to be nominated for Vice President of the United States by a major political party. He was selected by then Senator Albert Gore, the Democratic Presidential candidate as a running mate. Lieberman was probably chosen in part because of his ethical stances and his religious views which Gore felt might inoculate the ticket against some of the issues associated with President Bill Clinton's personal sexual behavior.

His selection was highly controversial. Anti-Semitism was seldom publically voiced, but still a background problem in many sections of the country. Interestingly, many Catholics voted for the ticket in admiration of an Orthodox Jew who would not campaign on Saturdays and walked to the Senate when there was a roll call on Saturday. Most Jews enthusiastically supported Lieberman, but the Anti-Defamation League director, Abraham Foxman, criticized Lieberman for introducing religion into the public arena and into politics. Ultra-orthodox Jews were uncomfortable with a self-described Orthodox Jew who walked around with his head uncovered and a wife who dressed in short sleeves and slacks. While Orthodoxy had moved to the right, Lieberman felt comfortable as a Modern Orthodox Jew. When he lived in the Westville section of New Haven, he was a member of the Westville Synagogue and Bikur Cholim Sheveth Achim, both Modern Orthodox congregations and he sometimes attended the Shabbos Group meetings to discuss Torah and facets of its interpretation.



*Joseph I. Lieberman*

In the 2000 presidential election, Gore and Lieberman won the popular vote nationally by more than 500,000. The Jewish community voted overwhelmingly for the Gore-Lieberman ticket. However, a poor design of the ballot in heavily Jewish Palm Beach County in Florida gave Patrick Buchanan, regarded by many as an anti-Semite and unfriendly to Israel, 5,000 popular votes, more than half of which were intended for the Gore-Lieberman ticket (according to Buchanan partisans). In addition, many Florida counties used Votomatic-style punched card ballots where incompletely punched holes resulted in "hanging chads" where one or more corners were still attached. These votes were not counted. Gore demanded a hand count of those uncounted votes in Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade (all heavily Jewish counties) and Volusia County. The counting was supervised by Kathleen Harris, the Republican Commissioner of State, a strong George W. Bush supporter in a state where Jeb Bush was then governor.

The Florida Supreme Court ordered an automatic recount because the state law provided for a recount in elections so close. However, the United States Supreme Court which had five Justices appointed by Republican presidents voted by a 5:4 margin to discontinue the recount insuring the victory of the Bush-Cheney ticket by 537 votes out of the nearly 6 million votes cast in Florida. It was the only time in U.S. history that the Supreme Court has ruled on a case directly related to a presidential election. With the Florida electoral votes going to the Republicans, the Bush-Cheney ticket won 271 to 266 in the Electoral College. One other part of the "perfect storm" that defeated the Democratic ticket was the third party candidacy of Ralph Nader on the Green Party ticket that pulled many thousands of votes that would have gone to the Democrats. Many people claimed that this was a stolen election.

Joseph Isadore Lieberman was born in Stamford, Connecticut on February 24, 1942 to Marcia and Henry Lieberman, who owned a liquor store. His grandparents came from Austria-Hungary and Poland. He received his Bachelor's Degree in economics from Yale in 1964 and his law degree from the Yale Law School in 1967. After graduation, he worked at the New Haven-based law firm of Wiggin & Dana. Joe met his first wife, Betty Haas, when they both worked as summer interns in the congressional office of Senator Abraham Ribicoff. They married in 1965 and had two children, Matt and Rebecca. In 1970, Joe ran for and won a seat in the Connecticut State Senate where he served for ten years, the last six as Majority Leader. In 1980, he gave up the seat to run for the U.S. House of Representatives but lost. He and Betty were divorced in 1981. He met his second wife, Hadassah Tucker in 1982. At that time, he was running for Attorney General of Connecticut. They have a daughter Hani. Joe has a stepson, Ethan Tucker, from Hadas-

sah's previous marriage.

Lieberman served as Connecticut's Attorney General from 1983 to 1988. Lieberman became a U. S. Senator from Connecticut in 1988 when he defeated Lowell Weicker. He was the first Orthodox Jew to be elected to the Senate. He ran and won the seat again in 1994 and 2000. His decision to run for reelection to the Senate in 2000 after losing in the vice-presidential slot was criticized but like Democratic V.P. candidates Lyndon B. Johnson in 1960, Lloyd Bentsen in 1988, John Edwards in 2004 and Joe Biden in 2008, Lieberman's Senate term was due to expire during the election cycle. He decided to run for reelection to maintain his seat as Johnson, Bentsen and Biden did. Those four all won reelection to the Senate, but Johnson and Biden then gave up their Senate seats because they were also elected Vice President.

While in the Senate, Lieberman was one of those senators who helped to create the Department of Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. He became its Chairman in 2001. Lieberman was one of the Senate's strongest advocates for the war in Iraq once Bush & Cheney proposed it. He was also an outspoken supporter of the U.S.-Israel relationship. He strongly supported free trade economics while reliably voting for pro-trade union legislation. He also opposed filibustering Republican judicial appointments. He was a strong supporter of abortion rights, of the rights of gays and lesbians to adopt children, to be protected with hate-crime legislation and to serve openly in the military.

In January 2003, based on his popularity, Lieberman became a candidate for the presidency in the 2004 election. He felt that his historically hawkish stance would appeal to voters and he initially led in polls of primaries. However, his political positions failed to win support of liberal Democrats who turned out heavily in the primaries. When he detected little enthusiasm for his candidacy, he stopped his campaign.

Lieberman declared his candidacy for U. S. Senator in 2006. This time, he had to run as an independent after losing the Democratic primary to Ned Lamont. He ran as a third party candidate under the "Connecticut for Lieberman" party label. He was never a member of that party and remained a Democrat. He won that election and was listed in the official Senate records of the 110th and 111th Congresses as an "Independent Democrat," and sat as part of the Senate Democratic Caucus.

In December 2007, Lieberman endorsed Republican Senator John McCain for president in 2008, standing up to his party and going back on his stance in July 2006 when he said, "I want Democrats to be back in the majority in Washington and elect a Democratic president in 2008. Lieberman cited his agreement with McCain's stance on the War on Terrorism as the

primary reason for the endorsement. On June 5, 2008, Lieberman launched "Citizens for McCain, and was hosted on the McCain campaign website, to recruit Democratic support for John McCain's candidacy. He emphasized the group's outreach to supporters of Hillary Clinton, who was at that time expected to lose the nomination to Barack Obama. Lieberman spoke at the 2008 Republican National Convention on behalf of McCain and his running mate, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin.

Many Democrats wanted Lieberman to be stripped of his chairmanship of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security but Barack Obama privately urged Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid not to remove him from his position and the caucus voted 42 to 13 to allow Lieberman to keep his chairmanship. He chose not to run again in 2012 and retired from the Senate.

After leaving the Senate, Lieberman joined the New York City law firm of Kasowitz, Benson, Torres and Friedman as senior counsel. He is the author of seven books, *The Power Brokers* (1966), a biography of the late Democratic Party chairman, John M. Bailey; *The Scorpion and the Tarantula* (1970), a study of early efforts to control nuclear proliferation; *The Legacy* (1981), a history of Connecticut politics from 1930 to 1980; *Child Support in America* (1986), a guidebook on methods to increase the collection of child support from delinquent fathers; *In Praise of Public Life* (2000). One of them, *An Amazing Adventure* (2003) was about his run for Vice President. In 2011, he wrote *The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath* with David Klinghoffer. In his book, *Ticking Time Bomb: Counter-Terrorism Lessons from the U.S. Government's Failure to Prevent the Fort Hood Attack*, he described Australian Muslim preacher Feiz Mohammad, American-Yemeni, imam Anwar al-Awlaki, Muslim cleric Abdullah el-Faisal and Pakistani-American Samir Khan as "virtual spiritual sanctioners" who use the internet to offer religious justification for Islamist terrorism.

## Jonathan Daniel Sarna, Ph.D.

### By David S. Fischer, M.D.



Jonathan Daniel Sarna is generally regarded as one of the most outstanding historians of American Judaism. He is currently the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and was Chair of the Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program at Brandeis University. He also chairs the Academic Advisory and Editorial Board of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. He is President of the Association for Jewish Studies and Chief Historian of the National Museum of Jewish History in Philadelphia. He was Chief

Historian for *Celebrate 350*, the Jewish community's national organizing committee for commemorating the 350 anniversary of Jewish life in America. His most acclaimed book, *American Judaism: A History*, published in 2004, was a full-scale interpretive history of Jewish religious life in America and won the National Jewish Book Award for 2004 and the Publishers Weekly Best Religion Book 2004 award. He has received in addition more than 45 other awards and honors. With the permission of the publisher, Yale University Press, whose copyright was acknowledged, a seven-page excerpt of *American Judaism* was the lead article in 2005 of volume eight of *Jews in New Haven* celebrating *350 Years of Jews in America*.

Jonathan Sarna was born to Hebrew College Librarian Helen Horowitz Sarna and biblical scholar Rabbi Nahum M. Sarna, Ph.D. in Philadelphia in 1955. He was raised in New York and Newton Centre, Massachusetts. *Education*: Boston Hebrew College, Newtown Centre, B.H.L., 1974; Brandeis University, B.A., 1975, M.A., 1975; Yale University, M.A., 1976, M.Phil. 1978, Ph.D. 1979. Attended Markas HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel. Then the pioneering American Jewish historian Jacob Rader Marcus awarded him a postgraduate fellowship at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati, Ohio. The following year, he joined HUC-JIR's faculty, and he quickly rose to the rank of professor. In 1990, he moved to Brandeis University to accept the professorship and the leadership positions mentioned the first paragraph above.

While in New Haven from 1975 to 1979 working for his Ph.D., Sarna became interested in Jewish history and American history and where they intersected. Most of the historians then wrote about the Jews primarily as

an ethnic group in the crucible of assimilation with all of the other ethnic groups in America. Sarna decided it would be interesting to look at the Jews as a religious group along with all the other religious groups in America. A good place to start was by studying the Jews of a small city in the shadow of a large university, namely, New Haven.

In 1976, Sarna met Harvey Ladin, Judy Schiff and Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel and joined them as one of the founders and original officers of the Jewish Historical of New Haven, Inc. Ladin became president, Chiel was first vice-president, Judy Schiff was second vice-president, Celia Rostow was corresponding secretary, Jonathan Sarna became recording secretary, Israel Resnikoff was treasurer and Joseph D. Horowitz was asst. treasurer and was soon succeeded by Celia Lerner. There were 14 members of the Board of Directors then. When the society was ready to publish some of the information it had collected and presented as speeches at society meetings, Sarna was selected to be the editor of that first volume, published in 1978, The editorial board consisted of Jonathan D. Sarna (Chairman), Abraham A. Alderman, Arthur A. Chiel, Barry E. Herman, Werner E. Hirsch, Harvey N. Ladin and Judith A. Schiff. In addition to editing the volume, Sarna assembled a chart listing the 33 synagogue structures in greater New Haven with the names of the congregations, the years of occupancy of the structures, their addresses and whether the structure was built as a synagogue specifically for the occupying congregation or whether the structure was built for some other purpose and was acquired and modified to become a synagogue. He also collected and published 12 exterior photographs of old synagogues, 11 of which are no longer in existence and of one that has been sold and is used for other purposes. He wrote one signed original article and three signed compilations of archival material including one preliminary inventory of the society's holdings, a listing of early American Jewish newspapers and a preliminary bibliography of Jews in New Haven. For volume three, 1981, he wrote a very insightful and scholarly article entitled *Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Temple Mishkan Israel* with extensive documentation.

It is interesting to note that Sarna has written, edited or co-edited more than 30 books and over 120 articles are listed on his bibliography, but the first citation is "Jonathan Sarna, editor, *Jews in New Haven*, Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1978." In addition to his magnum opus, *American Judaism: A History*, Sarna has continued to be interested in the Jews of two individual cities with anniversaries in which he lived for some time. Both cities are larger than New Haven and quite different: *The Jews of Boston* was published in 2005, *The Jews of Cincinnati* in 1989, He also followed-up on his interest in religions and their interaction with the government as in *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience* in 1997 and *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream* which he edited in 1997.

Sarna has taught at Yale University, University of Cincinnati and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He returns to New Haven occasionally and on December 13, 1984, he gave the first Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel Memorial Lecture at the Westville Synagogue, entitled: *From New Haven Jewish History to American Jewish History*.

On Sunday morning June 3, 2012, Dr. Sarna was the honoree at the 36th annual Brunch Meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven. His keynote address was advertised as *Reflections on the Role of Jewish Historical Societies and the Jews of the Civil War*. However, since he had just published his newest book entitled *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*, he primarily discussed that topic. He assured the audience that the expulsion decree was the result of incorrect information provided to General Grant and President Abraham Lincoln forced Grant to rescind it. In addition, Sarna indicated that Grant became one of the greatest friends of Jews in American history. When he was president, he appointed more Jews than any previous president. He condemned atrocities against Jews in Europe putting human rights on the American diplomatic agenda.

Sarna is married to Ruth Langer, a professor of Jewish studies in Boston College and a Reform rabbi. She attends Reform services and Jonathan attends an Orthodox shul. They have two children, Aaron works for Google and Leah graduated from Yale College in May 2014 and is studying to be an Orthodox clergywoman at Yeshivat Maharat in New York. At the graduation Professor Sarna collapsed and had a cardiac arrest. A cardiologist happened to be passing at that moment and Sarna was taken to Yale New Haven Hospital emergency room and promptly resuscitated. He was listed as “critical” due to the cardiac arrest. He appears not to have any significant cognitive decline. The newspaper, the Forward, for which Sarna is a frequent contributor, also revealed that Sarna was a “cancer survivor” who had esophageal cancer in 1999 at age 44. He was treated with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy and had a cure. His physicians told him that his heart blockage could be traced back to the radiation treatment he had received for his cancer a decade and a half earlier.

Now, two years later (August 2016), the Forward reports that Sarna has had to slow down a bit. Five or six hours of sleep a night no longer suffices. Before he left Yale New Haven Hospital, he resumed edits on his Lincoln book, *Lincoln and the Jews: A History* by Benjamin Shapell and Jonathan Sarna, published March 2015. This fall, he plans to go to Jerusalem on sabbatical where he will be at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies working on his new book about a little-known 19th century American Jewish female writer and poet.

## Albert Harary, BCE, MBA David S. Fischer, MD



Albert Harary retired as Vice President of Management Services with responsibility for computers, Purchasing and Inventory, Administrative Services and Corporate Social Responsibility at United Illuminating Company in 1994, after 23 years of service there. He then served as Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association for the southern half of Connecticut for seven years. During these years and after his second retirement, he filled a multitude of executive functions and educational leadership positions at Temple Beth Sholom (TBS), at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven (JHSGNH), as well as a multitude of non-profits some of which will be named.

Al was born in Brooklyn, NY, where his two older sisters, Grace and Nina still live. His mother was from Cairo, Egypt and his father from Aleppo, Syria. He was raised in a household that spoke Arabic and French in addition to English. Thus, he was fluent in Arabic growing up and won the French medal in high school. As a child, he could differentiate between Arabic dialects from Cairo, Alexandria, Baghdad and Syria. He grew up as part of a large Sephardic Jewish Community located in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn. Instead of going to the Sephardic Hebrew School, since most of his friends were Ashkenazi Jews, he went to an Ashkenazi Hebrew School at age 9 where Yiddish was spoken. His bar mitzvah was held in a storefront Ashkenazi synagogue in which the Hebrew school was located. That may explain why he is able to run the Yiddish Group at Temple Beth Sholom, the only Sephardic Jew of whom we know that is doing so.

Secular education for Al was entirely in public schools, elementary, junior high school and high school. At the time, New York City-run colleges were free to those high school students who attained a high-enough grade-point average. Accordingly, he attended Brooklyn College for two years and then transferred to City College in Manhattan where he received his Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree. Neither he nor his parents incurred any tuition expenses for his education.

In New York, he began to work as a civil engineer and later switched to computers, working for computer manufacturers IBM and UNIVAC. He also

earned an MBA in Management from the Baruch School of City College and began work on a doctorate at the New York University Graduate School of Business. Working in Manhattan, he rose to managerial positions related to computers. He was President of the Manhattan Chapter of the Association for Systems Management. In 1971, a recruiter contacted him and told him a Connecticut electric utility was interested in his becoming its Director of Management Information Systems (MIS). He applied and was hired by United Illuminating (UI) in New Haven. At that time he was married with a two-year old daughter, Meri. The family moved to Hamden, CT.

At UI, Al worked as Director of MIS until 1977 when he was promoted to Assistant Vice President of MIS, and in 1978 to Vice President of Management Services with a number of functions in his department, as stated above, including Corporate Social Responsibility. It was in this capacity that I first met Al. In the mid-1980s, he set up a community room in the UI building on George and Temple Streets which was made available to non-profit groups that needed a place to meet and that did not wish to rent or could not afford to rent downtown-space. There, among other activities, he invited the new rabbi of TBS, Benjamin Scolnic, to give a bible class once a week at noon-time. Since my medical office was in the Temple Street Medical Building, he invited me to attend. It was a wonderful educational experience that continued for many years there until downtown-parking fees became too expensive and the bible class was moved to the Jewish Community Center in Woodbridge.

A few years later, Al invited me to give a series of four educational lectures at TBS each year for three years. There is no better way to understand a subject than to try to teach it to others. In the 1990s, Al developed a series of lectures at TBS by Joseph Devine on reading the Christian Scriptures. Devine had been a Jesuit priest for 20 years before he left the priesthood. Later, he married and had a child. As many of the Jesuits, he was very well educated. To understand the Hebrew Bible in the original, he had studied Hebrew. To better understand the Christian Bible, he had studied Greek, the original language in which it had been written. After Devine's lectures at TBS were finished, seven of us, Al Harary, Dr. Robert Fenton, Deborah Wilkenfeld, Robert Leikind, Maryann Ott, Carl Newlin and I continued to meet with Joe Devine once or twice a month, hosting at our homes. Some of us brought different translations of the bible including the King James Version, a Catholic version, a "Jews for Jesus" version, the Gideon Society version and others. The differences in the translations were striking. Then Devine would read the passages from the original Greek version and translate for us. What a learning experience. Tragically, Joe Devine died of a heart attack in June 1997 at the age of 63, much too young.

Al and I worked together again at the JHSGNH after the turn of the century. In an article about Marvin Bargar, I mention how Al and Barry Herman convinced me to edit volume 8 when Al was President of the JHSGNH in his first term. I edited volume 9 about four years later at his suggestion because so many interesting people and topics had been left out of the earlier volume. In 2016, as Al was ending his second presidency of the JHSGNH, he again induced me to edit this 10th volume. His executive and persuasive powers are remarkable.

In addition to his work at UI and the Alzheimer's Association, Al was associated with a great many other community non-profit organizations including: the Columbus House Board; the Anti-Defamation League Board; Chair of the Foundation for Gateway Community College; Chair of Friends of the Hamden Library, President of the Junior Achievement Board; the Shubert Theater's Opera Board; Creator and Executive Producer of the Shubert Radio Theater; Vice Chair of the Hamden Arts Commission; Chair of Boston University's National Advisory Council on Psychiatric Rehabilitation; Docent (tour guide) at the Yale University Art Gallery; member of the board of ARMDI (American Friends of Magen David Adom) and others.

At TBS, Al has been President of the Men's Club three times (spanning five decades) and the TBS Vice President of Membership; and TBS President. For the past 25 years he has chaired the TBS Adult Education Committee. He has been heavily involved in educational activities. He was a member of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven's Department of Jewish Education working with Sydney Perry and chaired one of the annual Taste of Honey Educational Programs as well as serving as co-chair of the year-long community program in remembrance of the 500th anniversary of the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

Al is musically inclined and plays a number of string instruments including, the mandolin, guitar, banjo, ukulele and violin. His daughter Meri plays the flute, piano, guitar and ukulele. Al is the proud grandfather of two boys, Micah and Daviel, and two girls, Shoshana and Elana. His oldest grandson, Micah, plays the baritone horn, piano, and some brass instruments and the ukulele.

Al has served on the Board of the JHSGNH for many years and as previously mentioned, he has been President on two separate occasions in this century and has served as representative of the JHSGNH on the Board of the Ethnic Heritage Center. In April 2008, he was honored at the JHSGNH Hall of Fame Dinner, a well-deserved recognition of his long and varied service to the entire New Haven Community and particularly to the Jews of New Haven for the past 45 years.

## Marvin Bargar

By David S. Fischer, MD



*Marvin and Mitzi Bargar*

Marvin Bargar has been archivist for the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven (JHSGNH) since February 2000. Although I had been a member of the JHSGNH since 1978, I did not really get to know him nor did I have any close dealings with Marvin until 2003 when circumstances made us collaborators, and since then, friends.

This happy but unforeseen relationship developed when Albert Harary and Barry E. Herman talked me into becoming editor of *Jews in New Haven*. Jonathan Sarna, then a graduate student at Yale, had edited volume 1 in 1977 and it was published in 1978 shortly before he left New Haven. The second volume was edited by Barry and published in October 1979 and Barry and Werner S. Hirsch published the third volume in July 1981. The fourth volume was scheduled to be edited by Harvey N. Ladin, the founder of the JHSGNH, but he became ill and died while it was still in its planning stage. His administrative assistant, Renee Kra, who had done some scientific editing at Yale School of Medicine, took over and became editor at Harvey's request. With some help from Werner, volume 4 was published in March 1986. Volume 5 was coedited by Werner and Renee and published in 1988. Werner edited volume 6, which was published in 1993. Finally, volume 7 was published in October 1997 with Barry as editor.

I and everyone else assumed that Barry would edit volume 8, and accordingly, I submitted two articles for publication through Al, who was then President of the JHSGNH. He invited me to have lunch with him and Barry. After we talked for some time about the problems and gratifications of editing and publishing a new volume, Barry explained that he had hoped to do a new volume but could not because he had serious medical problems that were unlikely to improve. Then he put his arm on my left shoulder and shook my right hand and said, "congratulations! You are the new editor of *Jews in*

New Haven, volume 8. Call me when you need help or advice," and he was as good as his word, and wrote three articles for volume 8.

I have belabored this history to indicate that I was a novice at editing a history and Marvin was fairly new at being an archivist, but totally new at supporting the research necessary for a new volume of Jews in New Haven. We learned together. None-the-less, he did a marvelous job of research, support and provided insights into what we needed to know and where and how to find it, not only for me, but also for some of the other authors. With a part-time student employee, Robert S. Francis, he amassed the 52-page summary of most of the New Haven area Jews who served on active duty in all branches of the military from the Revolutionary War to the Vietnam conflict and Desert Storm. Marvin also encouraged Robert to do the index. Marvin did all this in addition to his usual archival duties, including acquiring new information for the archives, answering inquiries for people searching for information for family reasons, setting up for lectures and meetings and often selling volumes of Jews in New Haven and filming the lectures, meetings and speeches.

For volume 9, Marvin was equally helpful and supportive. With Rhoda Sachs Zahler Samuel and with me, he filmed a great many interviews, some just for the archives, some for background to an article that was enhanced from the interview and it's filming. In the case of the interview with Judge Guido Calabresi, he did the entire one-hour interview in the judge's chambers that was published verbatim in 19 pages. He also followed-up with a 4-page listing of additional New Haven Jews whose service on active duty was called to our attention and had been omitted from the earlier compilation. For this volume, he is writing an article that he has researched, in addition to his usual activities, which have been indispensable, and given liberally and enthusiastically.

Marvin was born in New Haven at Grace Hospital, December 28, 1925 to George and Eva Bargar. The family lived in the Oakmere Apartments on Oak Street and soon moved to Winthrop Avenue between Scranton Street and Legion Avenue. He attended kindergarten at Barnard School and then sequentially the Scranton School, and Troup Jr. High and Hillhouse High

School, graduating with the class of 1943. At Hillhouse, he played soccer and hockey and was a member of Phi Beta Fraternity.

Shortly after graduation, Marvin entered the U.S. Army and served in the 87th Infantry Division in France, Belgium, Luxemburg and Germany. He was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge and had severe frostbite. As a result, he was hospitalized for active rehabilitation for four months before returning to active duty. He then served on occupation duty in the European Theatre for an additional year.

After being discharged from military service in June 1946, he enrolled at the Fort Trumbull Branch of the University of Connecticut, transferred to the main campus at Storrs in his junior year, and graduated in 1950 with a B.S. degree in Marketing. In 1949, he married Mitzi Fenster. They have three children: Alan, married to Karen, Arthur, and Debbie, Married to Stephen. Mitzi and Marvin have eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Most of Marvin's working career was spent at the Sargent Manufacturing Company, where he started as a Customer Service Representative and later became the Customer Service Manager. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Sargent Credit Union. After his retirement, Marvin and Mitzi did a lot of traveling. Their goal was to visit all 50 states. So far, they have been to 48.

In February 2000, Marvin became the Archivist at the JHSGNH. He says, "This is the greatest job in the world with a lot of satisfaction." He has also served as a Trustee for the historic Orchard Street Synagogue, as Vice President of the New Haven Beth Israel Cemetery Association. He is a member of B'nai B'rith and Temple Beth Sholom in Hamden, I, and everyone I know who has worked with him, has found it a pleasure to work with him because of his magnetic personality and sterling work ethic.

# Rhoda Sachs Zahler Samuel

## By Helen Rosenberg

*Personal Note from Author: Over the years Rhoda has hosted dozens of Shabbat dinners for diverse groups of friends in her Bellevue Avenue home in New Haven. At these joyous, and delicious, events, the passion that Rhoda has for Jewish culture and for community-building radiates. Her expression of these values through her work in city government and her numerous volunteer efforts have made a tangible contribution to New Haven's vitality.*



Rhoda was a young girl when she first visited New Haven in 1961, attending her father's Yale reunion with her family and staying in a dorm on the Old Campus. She remembers feeling awe-struck at the beauty of the New Haven Green and the otherworldly Gothic architecture of the Yale buildings. It wasn't until 1976 that Rhoda found her way back to New Haven and made a home for herself and her family there, after an adventurous early life took her from West Hartford to Northampton, Chicago, Berkeley and New Jersey.

Rhoda was born in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn. Her family relocated to West Hartford when she was very young, but she credits their frequent childhood visits to Brooklyn with her interest in cities and community development: "Although I grew up and went to public schools in West Hartford, I looked forward to visiting my Grandmother in Brooklyn during spring vacations. She took me to all of the exciting places - the Staten Island Ferry, Empire State Building, Radio City Music Hall, the Horn & Hardart Automat, Coney Island - and that was the start of my love of cities."

Rhoda's father, Dr. Julius Johnson Sachs, an internist who practiced in Hartford, had a strong influence on the tight-knit family. In addition to Rhoda the eldest sibling, there were her two sisters, Carolyn and Harriet; her brother, Joe; and her mother, Sylvia Glassman Sachs. "My father always said he wanted to be able to take care of patients whether or not they could afford to pay," she said. "Many of them could not, and he took care of them anyway. When we asked our father what he wanted for his birthday or for

Chanukah, he always said ‘kind deeds.’”

The importance of Tikkun Olam, making the world a better place, was also emphasized at the family’s Reform synagogue, Temple Beth Israel in West Hartford. Rhoda particularly remembers one individual there: “My senior year we had a popular Sunday morning class with Lewis Fox, who was a philanthropist and member of the Hartford Board of Education. We talked about the Ten Commandments and how they could guide us today and during our college years.”

Rhoda enrolled at Smith College in Northampton, MA, where she received a B.A., majoring in Urban Studies and Government. At Smith, Rhoda found a home at the college Hillel, inspired by Rabbi Yechiael Lander, who had arrived at Smith during Rhoda’s junior year. “I ended up as Hillel president and learned so much from Rabbi Lander and the wonderful Jewish writers,” she said. “I had dinner with Elie Wiesel and Isaac Bashevis Singer - and artists they brought to the campus. I also had wonderful Shabbat dinners at the Lander home and with Hillel friends.” Rhoda was politically active as a student, participating in anti-Vietnam War efforts with the Smith Jewish community.

Following graduation from Smith, Rhoda pursued a M.A.T. from the University of Chicago, where she continued to focus on city planning and urban education. “At the University of Chicago, as part of the Hillel Upstairs Minyan, led by Rabbis Max Ticktin and Danny Leifer, this combination of religion and social activism continued,” she said. “Members of the Upstairs Minyan drove in caravan from Chicago to Washington, D.C. to participate in a march protesting the war.”

As part of her work at the University of Chicago, Rhoda taught History at Simeon Vocational High School on the south side of Chicago. She also taught in Martinez, CA, and Somerset, N.J. After settling in New Haven in 1978, she embarked on a new phase of her public service life working at the City of New Haven’s City Plan Department. “I relocated to New Haven in 1976 because my late former husband, Raphael Zahler, had decided to attend Yale Medical School,” she explained.

Rhoda described her early work at New Haven City Hall: “My work centered on Neighborhood Planning and Development. In the early 1980s I worked with the Upper Hill Project Area Committee. Walter Brooks, who was then an Alderman and later became a State Representative, spearheaded the group to focus on two priorities: 1) getting rid of the ‘rat holes’ on Congress

Avenue that served as regional centers for drug dealers, and 2) stopping the demolition of housing as part of the Hill Renewal Plan on Arch, White and Redfield Streets and channeling federal Urban Renewal funds into housing rehabilitation and construction of new housing on cleared sites. I'm proud that we were able to accomplish both of these neighborhood goals."

One of Rhoda's greatest successes was helping the City of New Haven win a \$100 million, ten-year Empowerment Zone grant. This grant helped support urban development projects in the Dixwell, Newhallville, Fair Haven, Dwight and West Rock neighborhoods. Working with City Public Information Officer, Catherine Sullivan DeCarlo, Rhoda helped the city garner an *All America City* designation from the National Civic League in 1998. A delegation of 60 New Haveners (including a middle school marching band) flew to Mobile, Alabama to tell the judges about three innovative civic engagement initiatives that were transforming New Haven life.

These are just a few of Rhoda's notable efforts to enhance New Haven's image as a vibrant City during her 24 years working for the City of New Haven in the City Plan, Economic Development, and Community Services departments. Rhoda also helped expand the biotech industry in New Haven through collaboration with Yale University. She promoted quality child care development throughout the city. She advocated for transportation that would allow car-less city residents to reach jobs in the suburbs. Among her many roles at City Hall, she served as Acting Development Administrator, Acting Director of the City Plan Department, Acting Director of the Office of Business Development and Acting Community Services Director.

Since her retirement from City government in 2003 Rhoda has consulted for several non-profit neighborhood organizations, such as the Greater Dwight Development Corporation, the Montessori School on Edgewood Avenue, and Chapel Haven, to assist with strategic planning and obtaining grants for special projects.

Rhoda gave birth to a daughter, Joanna in 1975, and a son, Daniel, in 1978. She reflected: "I always thought that when I had children I would stay home with them through their childhood, but I had to work. I was fortunate to have work that I really enjoyed. My ex-husband Raph moved to Boston in 1980 for his internship and residency. I was able to find good child care most of the time, but it was always a juggling act, fitting in after school music lessons, soccer games and tennis matches, parent-teacher meetings, and family meals with a job that involved many evening meetings. I had very supportive

friends, child care providers, neighbors and supervisors. It did take a village!”

Rhoda found community in New Haven at Yale Hillel and the Jewish Community Center (then located on Chapel Street downtown), when she and her family first moved to the city. She had a Bat Mitzvah service at Yale Hillel when she turned 50, reading from the Torah for the first time and leading services. This had not been an option for women at her childhood synagogue. In 1994, encouraged by the prospects for peace in the Middle East, she initiated work with a team to found the Connecticut Coalition of Arabs and Jews for Peace. The group included Jews, Christians and Muslims. For several years the group met and held open programs to discuss the complexity of the issues and work to support the fragile peace process.

Eventually, she joined Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel (BEKI) on Harrison Street in New Haven and became an active member. She loved the BEKI community although she admits: “I missed the lively Shabbat discussion at Yale Hillel, led by Rabbi Jim Ponet.” After serving on the BEKI board for several years, first as Secretary and then as Vice President, she resigned so she could spend more time volunteering for other community organizations.

She related her initial encounter with the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven: “I joined the Jewish Historical Society in 2002 after I went to a program and bought a volume of their series of books, *Jews in New Haven*, that talked about one of my father’s relatives, Joe Johnson, who had had a men’s clothing store on Church Street.” Ultimately, she joined the JHS Board and served as its President from 2007 - 2010. Upon her retirement from the City in 2003, she conducted oral history interviews for the Video Archives of the JHS collection. She initiated a special project in collaboration with the Jewish Women’s Archive and the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, interviewing local Jewish women whose lives were changed by World War II. Her inspiration for the project came from the stories of local women who enlisted in the Army and Navy, worked in munitions factories, and ran family businesses while husbands and sons served in the military.

Most recently, Rhoda worked as a volunteer with the Ethnic Heritage Center to create self-guided walking tours in New Haven neighborhoods. The Ethnic Heritage Center was founded in 1988 as a collaboration of the JHS, Italian-American Historical Society of CT, CT Ukrainian-American Historical Society, CT Irish-American Historical Society, Greater New Haven African-American Historical Society. The goal of the walking-tour project is to tell the stories of the groups that were involved in the development of

each community.

“It began after a summer vacation in 2012 in Bar Harbor, Maine, when I saw signs around the town labeled ‘Museum in the Streets,’” Rhoda explained. “New Haven has such a rich history, this seemed like a good way to tell our stories. We decided that a series of “Walk New Haven” booklets, brochures and a website would give us the most flexibility and the ability to expand and add more sites. We began with a big map of the City and asked each of the five historical societies to indicate the sites that were most important to their history here. We then looked to see which areas had enough sites in close enough proximity to lend themselves to walking tours. We chose Lower Dixwell, Wooster Square, and Downtown. Then the work began, doing research to find historic pictures and using the archives to find the information about why each site is important to our histories. We had a team of about 50 volunteers working on this. The New Haven Museum, the New Haven Register and local historians Joe Taylor and Colin Caplan generously shared their historic pictures and information.” As of publication of this book, four booklets have been completed for the three initial neighborhoods.

Her deep love of music originated with her father, Dr. Julius Johnson Sachs, who played the clarinet in the Yale Marching Band as a member of the class of 1936. The first songs Rhoda heard on the record player in Stuyvesant Town in Manhattan as a child included ‘The Whiffenpoof Song’, and ‘Bulldog, Bulldog, Bow Wow Wow, Eli Yale.’ She became a founding member of the Connecticut Z’mirah Chorale, and has worked to preserve many forms of Jewish song and culture in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, and English.

Rhoda’s family has grown in recent years with the addition of husband Allen Samuel, whom she met in 2000; Allen’s son Jason (married to Katie Pfeiffer) and daughter Nicole; and three grandchildren, Joshua, Lucas and Nicolas Herrera, sons of daughter Joanna and her husband Ramon Herrera. Rhoda continues to be dedicated to family and community life. She continues to enjoy Shabbat dinners, Chanukah latkes, and Passover Seders with children, grandchildren, her extended family and friends.

## Judith Ann Schiff, Historian, Archivist and Founder Interviewed and compiled by Rhoda Sachs Zahler Samuel



When faced with New Haven historical research questions for which I cannot locate sufficient information, I call Judy Schiff. Within a few days, she emails me her answer. So when Dr. Fischer asked me to write an article about her, I called her and she sent me several bios and articles written about her. Here is one of them:

Judith Ann Schiff is the Chief Research Archivist at the Yale University Library, specializing in Yale, New Haven, and American History. In 2012 she was appointed the New Haven City Historian. She received a B.A. from Barnard College, M.A. in History from Columbia University, and M.S. in Information and Library Science from Southern CT State University. In 1976, Judith was a founding incorporator and one of the first officers of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven, serving as Second Vice President with President Harvey Ladin and Vice President Rabbi Arthur Chiel. She served as president of the society, 1983-85, and is proud to continue to serve as Director of the Society's Harvey and Eleanor Ladin Archives.

Best known to Yale alumni as the author of the "Old Yale" feature in the *Yale Alumni Magazine*, her publications include the Michelin Travel Publications' *Green Guide to Yale and New Haven*, and the chapter on the social history in *New Haven: An Illustrated History*. She is featured in online videos including *Centuries of Elm and Ivy*, *Yale in the Civil War*, *Yale Remembers World War I*, *Yale Commencement Traditions*, and *Yale Presidents Through the Years*; in the video histories of the Grove Street Cemetery and the New Haven Green; and the TV series *Mysteries at the Museum* and Ancestry.com's *Who Do You Think You Are?*

Her major field of research is the ethnic and cultural history of the Yale-New Haven community. In recognition of her work she received the Edward A. Bouchet Leadership Award in Minority Graduate Education at Yale and the Bouchet Legacy Award at Howard University. She was also honored with an Elm-Ivy Award for contributing to "increased understanding and cooperation between Yale and the City of New Haven" as a founder and consultant of

the Ethnic Heritage Center. She has served as president of the New Haven League of Women Voters and the Yale University Women's Organization; as a founder and as president of New England Archivists; and has served on the governing boards of the New Haven Museum and the Grove Street Cemetery.

Knowing of her numerous accomplishments and contributions to New Haven, Yale, and the preservation of Jewish history, I wondered what had influenced her to pursue these ventures. In a recent oral history interview I conducted with her at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven, Judy shared some clues about what influenced her to travel these paths at Yale and in New Haven so new for a Jewish woman.

Judy was born in New York in 1937, and had many family members who lived in New Haven. As a young child, she remembers family summer "visits to my father's extended family when they vacationed in Woodmont, fondly known as "Bagel Beach" including his sisters, Lillian (Mrs. Charles) Rosengarten and Dorothy (Mrs. John) Fleischner; my great-aunts Hannah Feldman, Minnie Lavine, and Sarah Berman; and my grandmother. I heard stories about my grandfather Isadore who died before I was born, a Miami Beach "pioneer" of the 1920s and 30s who owned and operated a summer store in Woodmont and was one of the founders of the Woodmont Synagogue." Judy moved to New Haven when she was three, as World War II was approaching, to have the support of the network of relatives who were there. She remembers large Sunday family dinners with dozens of relatives.

### **Memories of the Jewish Community Centers and Mishkan Israel**

Judy attended a pre-school and day camp at the old Jewish Community Center located on Dwight Street. She had swimming lessons at the Y since there was no pool at that JCC. She switched to Girl Scout Camp located in a large summer home ("a mansion") in Woodmont, along with many of her friends who preferred the outdoors for summer swimming. Most family vacations included visits to historical sites—"that's how it all started, history was in my bones. Both of my parents were interested in history and if my father made the choice, we went to Revolutionary War or Civil War battle sites, if my mother made the choice we toured historic homes."

"I think it was by the age of five that I went to JCC Day Camp, and Sunday School at Mishkan Israel, and fell under the spell of Rabbi Robert E. Goldberg and Cantor Harry Sebron—he was the first Cantor that Mishkan Israel ever had. At that time, this was unusual for a Reform Jewish Synagogue. Rabbi Goldberg told the story that a woman who was very influential said she would only permit a Cantor if he were called the Music Director.

Rabbi Goldberg said, “No, he has the traditional training of a Cantor, and will be called the traditional name or I’m leaving.” Of course, we had our first Cantor. Through Rabbi Goldberg and Cantor Sebron I learned so many things. First of all, I learned Jewish history. Every year through the time of my Confirmation, we had a new book that took us from Biblical times to the present in Jewish history. Everything Rabbi Goldberg did was a model for us.” He had participated in Freedom Rides in the South with Yale’s Reverend William Sloan Coffin, and had a program for Mishkan Israel’s high school students in his home. She remembers listening to Tom Lehrer records with the group, and a “Sunday Café” that included dancing with students our age from a local African American Church. “And then we had the summer camps at Cape Cod at the end of the summer where we mingled with Jewish kids from other parts of New England.

### Memories of New Haven Public Schools

Benton School, formerly located at the corner of Whalley Avenue and Harrison Street in Westville, where Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel stands today, was Judy’s elementary school. She said it was a very old building and remembers that the bathrooms were in the basement and had a chain to flush the toilets. She always had good teachers, which she attributes to having the Teacher’s College (now SCSU) close by in town. The student body was diverse, with Jewish, Irish, and Italian children, but everyone got along well

Judy attended Sheridan Junior High School for grades seven through nine, and again remembers excellent teachers, and harmony among the students from diverse backgrounds. Her teacher for her CORE classes of English and History was Herman Cherman who was also the Principal of the Mishkan Israel religious school.

The move from the small Sheridan Junior High to the huge Hillhouse High School with 2,000 students was difficult. The building was so large that there was hardly enough time to walk from a class on one side of the campus to a class on the other side, not to mention no time to eat lunch or talk to people! She was put in a “track” with students who had been grouped by “ability” and was with the same 30-100 students for most of her classes. During lunch she could hear the original Five Satins practicing (whose classic “In the Still of the Night” is featured in *Dirty Dancing*).

Judy mentioned that Hillhouse was the second oldest public high school in the United States. The first were Boy’s and Girl’s Latin Schools in Boston. Many of her teachers had PhD’s from Yale, since at that time Yale had a part-time program. One of the foreign language options was studying Modern

Hebrew. "So I learned prayerbook Hebrew at Miskan Israel's Wednesday afternoon Hebrew School and Modern Hebrew for two years at Hillhouse." There were sororities and fraternities at Hillhouse, and most of these formed along specific ethnic or religious lines. There were none for Jewish girls, so they joined B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG), which met and had their activities at the new Jewish Community Center on Chapel Street. She raved about the enormous new Center, an "unbelievable facility," complete with an auditorium, bowling, a pool, meeting rooms. "It was a place for the whole community. On Sundays, there would be art shows, book discussions, plays, children's activities.... There were dances for Jewish high school girls with Jewish Yale Freshmen. Everything was well chaperoned!"

### **Barnard College, Columbia University and Yale Archives**

When Judy graduated from Hillhouse, she attended Barnard College in New York City. She majored in History, with a focus on English History, and planned to become a history teacher.

Since the college school year at that time started in October and went through mid-May, she was able to supplement her financial aid with work from mid-May through September. She had a job at Eastern Industries, Inc., which was located on Broadway in New Haven, near the spot Tyco occupies today. She earned \$2 an hour, which she notes was higher than her first Yale job! Since they noticed that she likes to talk, they assigned her to the Purchase Expediting Department where she made calls to speed along purchases. she was also assigned the task of organizing the files, "where I realized that I was a born archivist."

There was strong Jewish life at Barnard College and Columbia University, where many people were taking combined degrees with the Jewish Theological Seminary. "In fact, the room where our Hillel met was the 'Schiff room', endowed by Jacob Schiff. Everyone thought I was a relative of this wealthy philanthropist, but that was not the case. I was prepared to become a History teacher, and took off a year between Barnard and Columbia to earn some money. In those days women did not expect to get scholarships. I was admitted to the Columbia Graduate School of History but I took a job in the Economics Department at Yale. It was fairly interesting, but then I heard about an opening for a grant project through what was then the New Haven Foundation, to work in manuscripts and archives, so I took myself over there to find out more about it. They said it was really a job for a graduate student, to catalog letters of New Haven families that had been coming in from trunks and attics around the City. When they heard that I was from

Barnard and had done research work using original materials, I was hired. After a year I enrolled in the Columbia Graduate School history department and worked part-time as a substitute teacher in Harlem. But I was drawn back to the Yale archives and that became my life's profession. I have been there for 55 years." She noted that the Yale Archives include the papers of noted Jews with Yale and New Haven connections, including Walter Lippmann, Max Lerner and Rose Pastor Stokes, a writer and social activist.

Judy helped get a Judaic Studies major approved at Yale in 1982. At that time, there were no Library staff assigned to the collection of Jewish materials, so she worked with the Near Eastern staff to create an exhibit of the Library's Judaica collection. They celebrated with the Jewish Historical Society by sponsoring two exhibit tour events, with the Library unexpectedly filled to capacity with many visitors from New York. She also organized a special dinner with an Israeli menu at the Yale University Commons, complete with an ice sculpture, attended by several hundred.

In the complete JHS interview, Judy also shared her memories of Mayor Richard Lee and Urban Renewal in New Haven, the turbulent May Day rally protesting the Bobby Seale trial on the New Haven Green in 1970, her publications and participation in New Haven historic moments (including opening the 1895 cornerstone of Congregation B'nai Scholem on Olive Street in New Haven), and the difficulties of being a Jewish woman at Yale in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The video may be viewed at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven. Judy's keynote talk at the May, 2016 *40th Anniversary Annual Meeting* of the Jewish Historical Society, in which she described her role in the history of the organization, may be found in the following article.

# 40th Anniversary of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven: 1976-2016

## Judith Ann Schiff, Keynote Address

It is hard to imagine today what our community would be like without the nine richly documented volumes of *Jews in New Haven*, the important collection of recorded testimony of individuals, the hundreds of community programs, and the establishment of the Ethnic Heritage Center. The Jewish Historical Society of New Haven was founded in the U.S. Bicentennial year 1976, and in its early years had a close association with the American Jewish Historical Society. Its mission to collect, preserve, and promote the Jewish History of Greater New Haven contributed to the larger history of American Jewish culture, as New Haven served as a microcosm and model for the nation.

Yet, in looking back some ask why have a Jewish Historical Society and what is the value of Jewish history? The monumental *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History* published in 2007, states that history books have generally ignored the American Jewish experience - until now; and that American Jews have profoundly shaped, and been shaped by, American culture. Yet American history texts have largely ignored the Jewish experience. This means that the primary reason to have a Jewish Historical Society is first of all **to preserve and make available the materials** that enable us to know the full story of the American experience and our national heritage. The American Jewish encyclopedia provides information on the European background and immigration of American Jews and their impact on the professions and academic disciplines, mass culture and the arts, literature and theater, labor and radical movements; Zionism, anti-Semitism, responses to the Holocaust, the branches of Judaism, and Jews' relations with other groups, including Christians, Muslims, and African Americans; the Jewish press and education, Jewish organizations, and Jews' participation in America's wars.

All of those areas are within the collecting policy of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven. The documentation of 275 years of New Haven Jewish history has been preserved in the dozens of articles published in the series *Jews in New Haven*, mainly on urban history, history in which the Jewish experience plays a significant part. Urban history is now a major interest at Yale. There is a Yale Urban History group that focuses on cities - their spaces, politics, and cultures. Years ago, I was invited to join a faculty committee planning a new undergraduate course that would also be open to

the community free of charge. Offered periodically, "New Haven and the Problem of Change in the American City" examines the rapid transformation that our city and other American cities have undergone over the past century. My contribution to the course was the Jewish history of New Haven, which was primarily in the form of articles I selected that are published in *Jews in New Haven*.

I first became aware of the larger historical importance of ethnic and religious records in the early 1970s when I attended a symposium on ethnic archives in Boston sponsored by the Society of American Archivists and the American Jewish Historical Society. The keynote speaker was Howard Zinn, known for researching and writing a new type of history – "from the bottom up." Before that time all of the formal history courses that were available to me at Barnard College and the Columbia University Graduate School were devoted exclusively to the formative roles in history played by great white primarily Anglo-Saxon men and the organizations they had founded and operated. The "new" history includes the contributions of diverse groups of men and women. There in Boston, 150 miles from home, I met for the first time, a fellow New Havener, Harvey Ladin, an accountant by profession who had been collecting records of the New Haven Jewish community for years. Through our separate affiliations, mine with the Society of American Archivists and his with the American Jewish Historical Society, the two of us were brought together.

Soon after, Harvey Ladin invited me to see the archives of Jewish organizations and individuals that he had collected, arranged, and made available for research in the New Haven Jewish Center Library and in his home. I was amazed that one individual could have salvaged and saved so many important records. When I spoke of the urgent need for the professional preservation and administration of the papers, Harvey informed me that he had been working on this crucial problem for some time. The New Haven Colony Historical Society (now the New Haven Museum) was willing to accept the records they deemed worth accessioning, but could not guarantee to pursue an active collecting policy to continue his program. And there were other considerations, such as the languages required to process the papers. Other repositories could not promise to acquire the necessary expertise.

Furthermore, to stimulate new donations and accessions, it seemed necessary to form a new organization of dedicated individuals to foster the growth of the archive and educate the community. Our deliberations led to the founding of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven in 1976. The incorporators included in addition to us, Rabbi Arthur Chiel and attorney Louis Sachs. Within a year 160 members had joined, and within three years

the membership reached 400. The society has managed to thrive over the years with dues, individual donations, occasional grants, modest allocations of the Jewish Federation, great volunteer contributions of time and expertise, and facilities provided initially by the Jewish Home for the Aged and later by Southern Connecticut State University.

The society was well endowed with a large membership, enthusiasm, and talented volunteers, but not with an abundance of financial support. We, the directors of the society, agreed that the best way to establish our legitimacy and scholarly reputation was through a publishing program. In 1978, the society published Volume I of *Jews in New Haven*, which included the first publication of photographs of all of the lost synagogue structures in New Haven. Other articles described the archival resources and oral histories in the society. These articles and those in subsequent volumes clearly demonstrated the value and usefulness of ethnic community records to the membership and the general public. In 1980, we applied for and received a substantial, two-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the processing and cataloging of the archival holdings of the society. With this grant I, as the volunteer project director and volunteer Director of Archives of the Society, was able to hire a full-time professional archivist to work under my supervision. The resulting publicity also encouraged further donations to the archives, as individuals and organization were assured that their records would be secure, well-processed, and accessible.

As mentioned, extant written documents are not the only archival records to be collected. An important part of our collecting policy is the creation of supplementary historical records through oral history recording projects and the encouragement of the writing of memoirs and scholarly studies. We have sponsored essay contests in area colleges, acquired the papers for the archives, and published the winning essays in our book series. Certainly one of our most innovative projects has been the videotaping of our meetings that has added substantially to our holdings and provides leads to acquisition of new documentation.

There are a dozen synagogues in operation in the New Haven area today reflecting the spectrum of Jewish denominations, as do the records of the defunct synagogues in the archives. Our society as a secular institution that has no affiliation with any one synagogue is all-embracing in its collecting scope in the community. Thus, it has acquired a certain functional stature as a general representative or coordinator for the Jewish community as a whole. This status was well illustrated in an event given major coverage in the *New York Times* back in 1987, when a construction crew converting a former dry-cleaning establishment into an architect's office uncovered a cornerstone which

had been obscured in a former building renovation. When they hit the 1895 cornerstone and found it hollow, they contacted the project architect, who in turn contacted the New Haven Preservation Trust. The Trust determined that the original cornerstone was part of a synagogue, B'nai Scholem, which had stood on the site from 1895-1936. After some consultation, they decided not to open the sealed copper box in the cornerstone themselves, but to entrust it to the Jewish Historical Society. Only a few scanty records of the synagogue had been preserved in the archives, and we were thrilled with the discovery of the box which had remained intact since 1895. It contained in a good state of preservation, the original constitution of the synagogue, membership lists, a tattered prayer book, ca. 1860, a calendar printed in Jerusalem in German and Hebrew, copies of all five New Haven newspapers of the day, business cards of prominent businessmen in the congregation, and as a final personal touch, a handwritten note in Yiddish by the coppersmith attesting that he had made the box. This material has been exhibited at the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford and elsewhere as part of a major exhibit on lost Connecticut synagogues.

In the 1980s, the society reached out to other ethnic historical societies in the area. After several years of fostering its organization a whole new dimension was added to the collecting of ethnic records with the establishment of the Ethnic Historical Archives Center of New Haven, or as it came to be known, the Ethnic Heritage Center, in 1988. Through the initiative and leadership of the Jewish Historical Society, a coalition was formed with the African American Historical Society, Irish Historical Society, Italian Historical Society, and the Ukrainian Historical Society. I was thrilled to be honored at that time when the New Haven Foundation Ivy Award was presented to me by Yale President Benno Schmidt and the Mayor Biagio DiLieto of New Haven in recognition of my contribution "to increased understanding and cooperation between Yale University and the City of New Haven," and as "a driving force behind one of the most exciting and ambitious projects in the city," the New Haven Ethnic Historical Archives Center.

In 1994, the efforts of the board of the Ethnic Heritage Center were rewarded when an affiliation was signed with Southern Connecticut State University. The Center publicly announced and celebrated the affiliation by holding a multi-ethnic music festival at Southern with performing groups representing all of the constituent historical societies. Through the center's affiliation with Southern, the Jewish Historical Society found a permanent home and shared use of the exhibit area.

On the website of the American Historical Association, a distinguished historian, Peter N. Stearns answers the question "Why Study History?" He

gives too many good reasons to relate here, but primarily he states: "Many institutions, businesses, communities, and social units, such as ethnic groups in the United States, use history for similar identity purposes. Merely defining the group in the present pales against the possibility of forming an identity based on a rich past. ... It should be studied to help us understand peoples and societies; to understand change and how the society we live in came to be; to see how not only "great men and women of history successfully worked through moral dilemmas, but also of more ordinary people who provide lessons in courage, diligence, or constructive protest; ... History should be studied because it is essential to individuals and to society, and because it harbors beauty."

Perhaps, the greatest satisfaction in the organization of a Jewish Historical Society is the enjoyment it provides to its volunteers, staff, and members. To me, Harvey Ladin, Werner Hirsch, Barry Herman, Rabbi Chiel, Joel Wasserman, and Miriam Schwartz, and many other early volunteers, it was not a question of why have a Jewish historical society, but why wasn't it founded earlier? In an age of mass culture, the study and enjoyment of our individualized, yet interactive ethno-religious pasts make people feel special and instill a sense of pride. In a time of declining memberships, volunteerism, and financial support for non-profit organizations, historical societies are an endangered species. The Jewish Historical Society has enriched the lives and the stature of the Jewish and the larger community for four decades. Its achievements are especially remarkable when one considers the slender threads of financial support on which it has depended. My thanks and appreciation go to the great staff and volunteers whose contributions have given us forty successful years. Happy 40th anniversary.

# Richard C. Levin, President of Yale, 1993-2013 Yale's First Jewish President

By Judith Ann Schiff



When Richard C. Levin was named president of Yale University in April 1993, the *Washington Post* stated: "He is also the first Jewish president of the exclusive university that as recently as twenty-five years ago limited the number of Jewish students." In 1961, 10.1 percent of the freshman class was Jewish. The appointment of Kingman Brewster as president in 1963 heralded a new era at Yale of equal opportunity of enrollment and employment for all. By 1967, the percentage of Jews in the freshman class had increased to twenty per cent. With the admission of women to the college in

1969 and Yale's affirmative action policies, the percentage of freshman Jews climbed to twenty-five per cent in succeeding years.

Richard Charles Levin was born in San Francisco in 1947. He entered Stanford University in 1964 where he met his future wife Jane Aries in an English class. They became engaged in their junior year and married a week after graduating in 1968. Rick as he is known, with a B.A. in history and Jane with a degree in English, then attended Oxford University for two years, missing most of the academic unrest and student strikes that took place at Yale and other American colleges. In England they earned additional Bachelor's degrees, Jane in English and Rick in politics and philosophy, and in 1970 they entered the Yale Graduate School. In 1974 he received a PhD in economics and was appointed to the Yale faculty. Jane Levin completed her PhD in English in 1975 and devoted the next fifteen years to raising their four children. He became noted for his expertise in industrial research, productivity, and organization; antitrust regulation; and technological change and intellectual property. By 1982, he was a full professor of economics and management. By the time of his appointment as president, Levin chaired the economics department and served as dean of Yale's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

At the time of Levin's inauguration in 1993, Yale faced serious financial and academic problems. President Benno Schmidt had abruptly resigned at

the end of the academic year 1991-92, after losing the administrative support of the faculty and the esteem of the student body. The Yale Corporation then appointed the distinguished history professor and former Yale College Dean Howard Lamar to serve as president for one year while the Presidential Search Committee deliberated. In addition to Levin's outstanding experience as a Yale administrator, he had served on the university budget committee and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences restructuring committee. Nationally, he was known for his professional work on technological change and organization. At the time of his selection, the *Yale Alumni Magazine* stated "Levin's combined talents as a respected scholar and a savvy economist, a shrewd administrator, and a trusted insider, are seen as just what Yale needs to lead it into the 21st century." It was also noted that Levin was the first man from west of the Mississippi to serve as president.

On May 5, 1993, the *Yale Daily News* headline on Levin's appointment proclaimed: "Levin Completes Jewish Threesome: After Years of Quotas, Yale, Harvard and Princeton Have Jewish Presidents." Levin's published comment was: "It shows how far we've come. We're a meritocracy. People with ability are judged on their ability not their backgrounds. That's something I'm very committed to preserving." The Yale American intellectual and cultural historian David Brion Davis confirmed: "The fact that four out of the eight Ivy League schools will have Jewish presidents is extraordinarily significant," referring to Dartmouth as well. [In *Student Diversity at the Big Three*, 2013, author Marcia Graham Synott noted in the section "Jewish Presidents and Administrators at the Big Three, p. 96, that Neil Leon Rudenstine is described as an Anglican/Episcopalian and that his successor Lawrence Summers could be considered Harvard's first Jewish president (2001-06).] On May 30, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the construction of the Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale, the first Yale related Jewish center on the Yale campus as arranged by President Schmidt. The Slifka Center opened in the fall of 1995.

Beyond the physical and academic rebuilding of the university campus, Yale was surrounded by the deteriorating city of New Haven. When asked by a reporter, "What will be your first action as president?" Levin answered: "Once this press conference is done, I'm going to walk over to the mayor of New Haven, who's here, and start talking about what we can do to make New Haven stronger." He also planned to publically campaign for increased federal funding for Yale and higher education to confront the poor economy and tendency toward more vocational training. In his Inaugural Address in September Levin declared: "We must help our society become what we aspire to be inside our walls - a place where human potential can be fully realized." The scope of his mission extended beyond New Haven and the United States:

“our responsibility is to educate and to lead, to shape the values of the wider world so that they, too, encourage the full realization of human potential.”

By the end of his first academic year, Levin created a new Dean of Engineering position filled by the internationally known nuclear physicist D. Allan Bromley; focused the mission of the School of Organization and Management, renaming it the School of Management; and launched the Yale Homebuyers Program, a long-term city renewal plan giving \$2,000 per year for ten years to any permanent Yale employee who buys a house in New Haven. In 1995, the revival of New Haven as a shopping destination began with a ribbon-cutting on Broadway by Mayor John DeStefano and Levin who announced, “Manhattan folks, you’ve had your day...New Haven has the best Broadway.” That fall the endowment rose to nearly \$4 billion. In 1996 Yale purchased the former Jewish Community Center on Chapel Street. Built in 1952, the architects were Weinstein and Abramowitz, with the advice of Louis Kahn. This building, damaged by fire while it sat empty for a decade, was renovated, expanded, and dedicated in 2000 as Green Hall, the new home of the School of Art.

In 1998, Levin named Bruce Alexander Yale’s first Vice President for New Haven and State Affairs. Many major urban projects were executed under his direction as a Rouse Company executive, including Baltimore’s Harborplace, Miami’s Bayside, and Boston’s Faneuil Hall Marketplace. Alexander worked closely with the Mayor and city administrators to improve all areas of community life. At the same time the university improved student financial aid with a new ten-million-dollar program to save the average financial aid student \$1,400 a year. Focusing on New Haven, Yale continued and started dozens of educational programs in the arts and sciences. In 2010, Yale became the founding and primary sponsor of the New Haven Promise, the only scholarship program of its kind in Connecticut, which provides scholarships for city residents who are graduates of New Haven public schools and selected charter schools. Students meeting certain requirements are eligible for full tuition for in-state public colleges, or up to \$2,500 annually for in-state private colleges. In the first four years of the program, Yale’s four-million-dollar annual contribution provided nearly 600 students with a Promise Scholarship.

In 2001, Yale celebrated its Tercentennial, the 300th anniversary of its founding in 1701. Through its planning and programs, the university developed its role as a leading international institution for the twenty-first century. The new Yale Center for the Study of Globalization was founded in 2000. One of the largest historic houses in New Haven, the Davies Mansion designed by Henry Austin, was restored and expanded to become its home, headed by the former president of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo. In the Tercentennial year, Levin made an official trip to China where he was welcomed “like a rock

star.” In 2002 the Yale World Fellows Program was established; and in 2009 a fifty-million-dollar gift created the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, whose primary mission is to inspire and prepare Yale students for global leadership and service. In 2005, the university unveiled a program to fund summer study and internships abroad for undergraduate financial aid recipients, the first program of its kind at a top American university; and launched Yale-in-Peking. After years of testing and planning, in 2011 Yale-NUS College was founded in Singapore. The product of a collaboration between Yale and the National University of Singapore (NUS), it “seeks to redefine liberal arts and science education for a complex, interconnected world.”

As the endowment grew, Yale was able to expand the faculty, adding 100 new full-time professors by 2010 to the 600 on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 2000. Levin also promoted science and engineering through new facilities and new initiatives; improved the art schools and museums; presided over a reorganization of the college curriculum; and increased student financial aid. Every year brought new opportunities for study at Yale, for example: changes to the undergraduate financial aid policy eliminating the expected parental contribution for families with incomes less than \$45,000; reforms that dramatically reduced the cost of a Yale College education for families making under \$200,000; and the elimination of tuition payments for students at the School of Music due to an anonymous donation of one-hundred million dollars.

During his presidency the campus was physically transformed with massive restoration projects, the addition of nineteen new buildings including a new home for the School of Management and in 2007 the purchase of the West Campus, the former Bayer Corporation quarters, 136 acres in West Haven and Orange. Nearly every Yale school and major institution has greatly improved during Levin’s administration. For example, south of the main campus and downtown New Haven, the Yale Medical School flourished. In 2003 the Anlyan Center for Medical Research and Education was dedicated, increasing research space by twenty-five percent, followed in 2007 by the Amistad Building housing the Yale Stem Cell Center and more new research programs. In 2009 the Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven opened [Joel Smilow, Yale B.A. 1954]. Levin also took on a leading role in the responsibility of higher education for sustainable development. He established the Yale Office of Sustainability in 2005 and endorsed a greenhouse gas reduction plan for the university. In 2007–2008 he convened Yale’s peer institutions nationally and internationally, to deal with climate change.

As the twentieth anniversary of his presidency approached,” Levin wrote: “I recognize that this is a natural time for a transition. We stand between the realization of many important institutional goals and another round of major

initiatives... It is a source of great satisfaction to leave Yale in much stronger condition—academically, physically, and financially—than it was when I began in 1993.” Levin left office on June 30, 2013 and was succeeded by the Yale Provost Peter Salovey, who is also Jewish. In his address to the graduating seniors of 2015 titled “Repair the World,” Salovey said, “My processor, President Richard Levin...often quoted Rabbi Tarfon, ‘It is not your responsibility to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.’ It is hard to imagine the president of a prestigious university anywhere else in the world delivering such an unabashedly proud Jewish address.”

When Rick Levin stepped down from the presidency, Jane Levin continued to teach at Yale. She became an English lecturer in 1990 and a Directed Studies instructor in 1993. In 1999, she took the position of Director of Undergraduate Studies in Directed Studies, the selective freshman humanities program in Western Civilization.

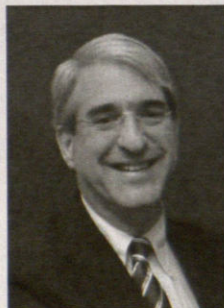
In 2013, Levin spoke proudly of his administration’s engagement in an interview in August: “New Haven is demonstrably a better place to live than it was 20 years ago,” he said, and one reason is that “we’ve made what used to be an aloof ivory tower into the leading corporate citizen of New Haven.” In March 2014, Levin became Chief Executive Officer of Coursera, a provider of online courses in partnership with leading universities and organizations. He holds honorary degrees from Harvard, Princeton, Oxford, Peking, Tokyo, and Waseda universities and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Levin published two volumes of his writings as president, *The Work of the University* in 2003, covering his first decade of service; and *The Worth of the University* in 2013. The collections of the President’s writings over twenty years form a rich summation of his dedication and contributions to university life. His words offered in 2001 to guide Yale throughout the 21st century are a fitting legacy:

“And here is the task before us: to educate thinking citizens and leaders, to preserve free inquiry and free expression, to generate new knowledge that improves health and spreads prosperity, to encourage realization of the human potential latent within our cities, and to reach out to the world to provide a foundation for mutual understanding and peace. *Hoc virtutis opus* [this is virtue’s work]. This is the work of Yale’s fourth century. When our successors gather here 100 years from now, may they look with favor on what we have accomplished.” Tercentennial Convocation Address, 2001.

## Peter Salovey, President of Yale (July 2013- )

By David S. Fischer, M.D.



Less than three months after Richard C. Levin announced that he would be stepping down as president, and after a search committee considered more than 150 candidates, Peter Salovey was selected as the new president. It was no surprise to many Yale students.

Speculation that Salovey was being considered for the Yale presidency began nearly four years before President Rick Levin's August 2012 retirement announcement. After a nationwide search in which Salovey was widely considered to be the frontrunner, the Yale Corporation announced his selection as Yale's 23rd president in November 2012. Salovey took office on July 1, 2013.

Salovey is the first Yale president since 1986 to live in the President's House, the formal residence of the university president. Salovey moved into the residence in the fall of 2014.

Salovey was born in 1958 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is the oldest child of Elaine Salovey, a registered nurse, and Ronald Salovey, a physical chemist. His paternal grandparents came from Warsaw and Jerusalem respectively; they met on a ship crossing the Atlantic.

Salovey spent his early years in New Providence, New Jersey and attended high school at Williamsville North High School in a suburb of Buffalo, New York before moving to suburban Los Angeles in 1975, when his father was appointed a professor at the University of Southern California. In 1976, he graduated co-valedictorian from Rolling Hills High School on The Palos Verdes Peninsula, California. He attended Stanford University, where he received an A.B. in psychology and an A.M. in sociology in 1980 with departmental honors and university distinction. While at Stanford, he served as a peer counselor with The Bridge Peer Counseling Center, a field about which he later co-authored a seminal textbook.

### Coming to Yale

After graduating from Stanford, and then working for a year for Southgate Associates, a communications consulting firm in the Bay Area, Salovey

moved to New Haven, Connecticut in 1981 to pursue a Ph.D. in psychology. Salovey earned three degrees at Yale in Psychology: an M.S. (1983), M.Phil. (1984), and Ph.D. (1986). After completing a dissertation entitled, "The Effects of Mood and Focus of Attention on Self-Relevant Thoughts and Helping Intention," and an internship in Clinical Health Psychology at the West Haven Veterans Administration Medical Center, he graduated from Yale in 1986 and joined the Yale Department of Psychology as an assistant professor. He was tenured in 1992 and appointed full professor in 1995 and now has secondary faculty appointments in Yale's School of Management, School of Public Health and the Institution for Social and Policy Studies. He is currently the Chris Argyris Professor of Psychology.

Salovey's most significant research contributions are in the field of emotional intelligence. With John D. Mayer he defined the concept and authored several of the field's seminal papers, arguing that people have wide-ranging abilities pertaining to the identification, understanding, regulation, and use of emotion. Against earlier theories of intelligence that conceived of emotion as rival to reasoning, Salovey and Mayer contended that emotion could motivate productive outcomes when properly directed. Subsequently, he has worked to develop models and tests of emotional intelligence, such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test. Salovey's second vein of research is in health psychology, where he has applied social psychology principles to investigate the efficacy of health messaging in promoting HIV risk reduction, early cancer detection, and smoking cessation. In all, Salovey has authored or edited 13 books translated into 11 languages and published more than 350 journal articles and essays.

### **Personal Recognition, Honors and Promotions**

In recognition of his research contributions, Salovey has received the National Science Foundation Presidential Young Investigator Award, the National Cancer Institute CIS Partner in Research Award, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Excellence Award. He has received two awards for excellence in teaching at Yale, the William Clyde DeVane Medal and the Lex Hixon '63 Prize for Teaching Excellence in the Social Sciences. Other honors include honorary degrees from the University of Pretoria, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Harvard University, Tsing Hua University and election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and to the National Academy of Medicine. Salovey has played key roles in multiple Yale programs, including the Health Emotion and Behavioral Laboratory which Salovey founded and is now called the Center for Emotional Intel-

ligence, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS and the Cancer Prevention and Control Research Program.

Having served in various administrative roles within the Department of Psychology for a decade, Salovey was appointed Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in January 2003 succeeding Susan Hockfield. The following year, he replaced Richard Brodhead as Dean of Yale College. In October 2008, he succeeded Andrew Hamilton as Provost of Yale University. As Provost, Salovey oversaw major budget reductions caused by the 2008 recession, expansion of Yale's West Campus, the formation of Yale-NUS College in Singapore, reform of tenure policies for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and an overhaul of sexual misconduct grievance procedures. As President he wrestled with the problem of renaming Calhoun College, an issue about which faculty, alumni, staff, and students have expressed strong feelings for several years.

### **Policies, Problems and Solutions**

Shortly after his appointment, Salovey said, "I have always tried to break down barriers between faculty, staff and students and to get us interacting more." He preferred "to reach out to our community to develop a shared vision of what our priorities should be . . . I think it's really important to do that – not to presume that I know what they should be." (New York Times 11-9-12, Ariel Kaminer). He has applied this philosophy to many University issues and appointed committees of faculty, students and administrators to evaluate contentious issues and to make recommendations for further actions.

Another theme is accessibility: "That means figuring out ways for deserving students to wind up on this campus, but it also means a digital strategy that makes more of Yale's treasure – whether it's scholarship or pedagogy or collections available online. Moving from a collection of opportunities to a deliberate strategy for sharing the riches of Yale, the wealth of Yale." He has already initiated a process for the public to access many of the books, journals, maps and other illustrative materials on line.

The recession of 2008 resulted in the loss of substantial endowment funds. As a result, there were cutbacks in hiring and expenditures which included construction. With the recovery, President Levin was able to oversee extensive new construction (documented in the article in this issue by Judith Schiff, Richard C. Levin, President of Yale, 1993-2013) including the purchase of West Campus in West Haven. It has been left to Salovey to populate that campus with new faculty and new facilities. There are now more than 1,200 Yale employees working there.

Levin arranged the donation of a \$250 million founding gift from Charles B. Johnson '54 to jump start further fundraising to build two residential colleges which would allow the admission of about 200 additional undergraduates by 2018 and to raise the number of undergraduates from the current class of 5,400 to 6,200 eventually. It was left to Salovey to raise the additional funds, which he did by 2014. He noted, "Our college is among the smallest of our peer schools and I believe that we must expand access to undergraduate education by building two new residential colleges."

The site of the new residential colleges will be on the west side of Prospect Street between Sachem Street on the north and Canal Street on the south, forming a triangle just north of the Grove Street Cemetery. The northern of the two buildings will be Pauli Murray College, named in honor of Anna Pauline "Pauli" Murray (1910-1985), an African-American civil rights activist, women's rights activist, lawyer, Episcopal priest and author. In 1965, she became the first African-American to receive a Doctor of Juridical Science degree from the Yale Law School. The southern building will be Benjamin Franklin College in honor of one of the most distinguished of the Founding Fathers of our nation

### **A Special Family History**

It was noteworthy when Richard C. Levin was appointed the first Jewish President of Yale. What was noteworthy when Yale appointed Peter Salovey as the second Jewish President of Yale, was that he was from the very well-known Soloveitchik rabbinical family. As noted by Ahron Singer in the Yale Daily News, November 27, 2015: "At the turn of the 20th century, the Soloveitchik family fractured into three. One section of the family became leading proponents of ultra-Orthodox Jewry. They rejected modernity and formed Yeshivas in Israel and the United States which attract the sharpest minds of the ultra-Orthodox world. Another branch embraced Joseph's (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, former Dean of Yeshiva University) ideology of synthesis – balancing the traditional with the modern. A third branch of the family took a different approach. They embraced modernity and fully involved themselves in secular culture. They Americanized and changed their name – to Salovey."

On the personal level, Salovey is said to be "interpersonally warm and engaging, outgoing and affable. As a student at Stanford, he began listening to bluegrass music and learned to play the banjo. In 1990, he founded the Professors of Bluegrass with Kelly Brownell, in which he plays bass. He also served as a trustee of the International Bluegrass Music Museum and

was on the board of the Connecticut Folk Festival.

President Salovey and his wife, Marta Elisa Moret, have lived in New Haven since they arrived as graduate students and married more than 30 years ago in Orange, CT. Moret, a 1984 graduate of the Yale School of Public Health, is the president of Urban Policy Strategies, LLC, which provides program evaluation and technical assistance to community-based health organizations. Moret is also active with the Association of Yale Alumni and has served on its board of governors. She previously held positions in the Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and the Hispanic Health Council. Moret was the deputy commissioner for the Connecticut Department of Social Services from 1991 to 1994.

# A TRIBUTE TO SYDNEY PERRY

## By Rabbi Benjamin Scolnic

Can a Jewish community have a leader? With all of our divisions, religious and political, in this first part of the 21st century, can there be a single person who can unite all of the diverse factions? In this era, even support for Israel is not a given.

The Executive Director or Vice President of a Jewish Federation is expected to be a good administrator and fundraiser, but there is no expectation that he or she should be the leader of the community. And yet, in Sydney Perry, the Greater New Haven Jewish community was fortunate to have a leader who created a center, who was the hub of the wheel, who was the common denominator who transcended denominations.

As an exceedingly well-educated Jewish person who was always learning, Sydney could speak about the classical traditional texts with anyone. Her personal devout Jewish observance demonstrated her sincerity and consistency. Yet she displayed not one iota of superiority or smugness, and respected each Jewish person wherever they were on the spectrum of observance and learning. While one of her major tasks was to fundraise from the wealthier part of the community, she never saw anyone as ordinary or unimportant. She was ubiquitous at every function. She was always there when anyone called.

I was given the honor of speaking at an event to honor her upon her retirement. I looked out at the huge crowd and saw seven hundred individuals, each of whom had been touched by this one remarkable person. Every head nodded when I said that Sydney is the epitome of what Jewish tradition has always been trying to make a person into. Everyone murmured their affirmation when I said that the public and the private Sydney is the same genuine person who has no inconsistency or hypocrisy, a person of unique integrity, who has earned credibility for her words through her years of action. I looked and saw people from every aspect of the Jewish community and the caring general community.

As she used to stand in the door of Makom, greeting every teenager on every evening of the community Jewish high school program, she was the smiling face at the door of the community. In fact, she was the door into the Jewish Home for all ages. And more than anything, she strove to create Shalom Bayit, Peace in this home. More than any other person, she worked for *unity* in this *comm-unity*.

With all due respect to my honored colleagues and our wonderful lay leaders, this era in New Haven Jewish history will be remembered as the time of Sydney Perry.

# Perry Has Dedicated Her Life to Our Community All While Raising Six Children, Celebrating Shabbat

By Jeannette Brodeur

(Re-printed with permission / SHALOM NEW HAVEN  
Spring 2016 Adar/Nisan/Iyar 5776)



Former Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven CEO Sydney A. Perry's long list of accomplishments throughout her 30 years of serving the Federation is impressive, but what's even more amazing is that she did this all while raising six observant children and celebrating Shabbat with her family each week.

"Ours was a noisy, hectic household with six children," Perry, 70, reflected. "My husband was a professor and spent a lot of time with the children, which helped enormously to allow me to work. But I think the balance in our lives, the very pivot around which our family turned, was not the secular

calendar to our work obligations, but the Jewish calendar."

"Shabbat was critically important as a touchstone for us as a family," she admitted. "All week we prepared for Shabbat, for the meals, for inviting guests, for reading the weekly Torah portion, for my father coming to lunch."

Perry, who is the grandmother of 18, remembers reading an article that stressed the importance of eating dinner together as a family every night. She did her best to ensure that her family did this, particularly on Shabbat.

"The kitchen table during the week and the dining room table on Shabbat was where we touched base, shared stories, talked about values, and learned how to help one another and appreciate the family unit," Perry said.

It is not easy to balance work and family life, but Perry stressed that she and her husband were very clear about what their priorities were. "Our commitment to synagogue life and Jewish observance was paramount," she said.

"My children are a pretty competitive bunch, but they are also deeply committed to one another," she said, proudly. "The fact that we lived abroad a total of five years when they were young brought us all closer together. We traveled, learned languages, read voraciously; our years abroad were instrumental in the children's educational and personal development. And ours!"

Perry admitted that one of her greatest joys working at the Federation, first in the Department of Jewish Education and then as CEO, was that she achieved harmony in her personal, professional, spiritual, and intellectual life.

“The students I taught, the professionals I worked with, the friends I made, being part of this Jewish enterprise has provided me with a profound sense of gratitude,” she said.

Over the course of her tenure with the Federation, Perry said she is most proud of serving as principal of *MAKOM*, the community Hebrew High School, and educating more than 2,000 teens, as well as leading the largest New England contingent of the March of the Living six times, and developing programming on the shoreline.

Perry was born in New Haven and graduated from Hillhouse High School. She was in the first class of Gan HaYeled at B’nai Jacob and was confirmed at the shul on George Street and post-confirmed in their new building in Woodbridge. Growing up, Perry remembers spending a lot of time at the JCC on Chapel Street.

Perry went to Smith College where she majored in Islamic and African Studies, spent time in Tanzania, held a national defense grant in critical languages (Swahili) and did her graduate work in Islamics. “It wasn’t exactly a sure-fire path to becoming a head of the Department of Jewish Education at the Federation or CEO,” Perry said, laughing.

She taught Rabbinics and Bible at Ezra Academy and designed a unit on *Beyn Adam L’Chavero* (Interpersonal Relations) for seventh graders.

Perry served as the Director of the Department of Jewish Education for 17 years, working to improve the synagogue supplementary schools and serving as a consultant to the community on educational projects.

Under Perry’s guidance, the DJE (now known as the Center for Jewish Life and Learning) has offered extensive adult educational opportunities, developed the new adult institute, Midrasha, initiated “A Taste of Honey,” provided Israel programming for teens, spearheaded TIES, The Israel Experience Savings Program, and a special needs education program, Talmud Torah *Meyuchad*. She also developed the successful community Hebrew High School, *MAKOM*.

For many years, Perry worked as Associate Executive Director of the Federation. During that time, she supervised the Holocaust Education-Prejudice Reduction Project, Stepping Stones and the JCC Library as well as advocated for issues of Jewish continuity.

Perry then served for six years as Executive Director of the Federation. More recently, as CEO, she managed the merger six years ago between the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Center, which houses the Federation offices.

Nationally Perry has given workshops in various settings, including the General Assembly, and has acted as scholar-in-residence for several communities. She has been nominated for national awards for educational initiatives and serves on committees of the Jewish Educational Society of North America and Bureau Directors Fellowship. Perry has been awarded the Eisner Award for Community Service, the Gan School's Pillar of the Community Award, Ezra Academy's Distinguished Leader Award, Brandeis University Award and BBYO's Eiltz Chaim Award for her commitment to teens and recognition from the public school systems of New Haven and Hamden for her work in Holocaust Education and Prejudice Reduction.

In 2010, Perry honored by the New Haven Jewish Historical Society and in 2011 by the Academy for Jewish Religion in Riverdale, NY. In 2012, her home synagogue – Westville Synagogue – honored her as well. She has presided on the board of her synagogue and as President of the Mikvah Society. She has been honored with and accepted invitations to join the Board of Directors of the Forward Association, the Urban League, Booker T. Washington School, as well as the Hartford Seminary and Cycle for Unity. Last year, she received the Greater New Haven Anti-Defamation League's Torch of Liberty Award.

President of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven Stephanie Wain said Perry's retirement as CEO is a bittersweet moment. "[She] has worked tirelessly to educate our community on spiritual, national and international issues that impact the Jewish world," Wain stated. "We have been extraordinarily fortunate to have someone of Sydney's caliber in charge of the Federation," she continued. Wain said she has done a magnificent job leading the community fundraising efforts and has taught us "what giving *tzedakah* does for the soul as well as for the community."

Mark Sklarz agrees that Perry is truly a treasure to our community and is the very embodiment of *tikkun olam*. Sklarz has worked alongside Perry for many years. He is a former president of the JCC, past chair of the Jewish Community Relations Council, past chair of the Jewish Foundation and past president of the Jewish Federation.

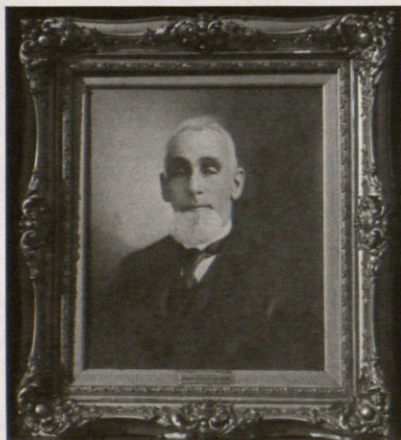
"Sydney Perry's remarkable impact on this community over the last three decades cannot be overstated," Sklarz stressed. "A brilliant scholar and gifted educator with a zealous passion for the underdog, Sydney has devoted her tireless energy and eloquent advocacy skills to demand fairness, equality and maximum opportunity for all to succeed." Sklarz said Perry's inspirational and compassionate words touch everyone she meets. "She is an extraordinary person and leader who has and will continue to make an important and valuable difference in many lives," he said. "We all have been blessed with her wisdom and guidance."

He said that throughout her life, Perry has continued to promote the strong principles and values of her parents, Lucille and the late Arnold Alderman, and has ensured that those principles and values will be perpetuated for future generations through her children and grandchildren, thus “fulfilling a cherished Jewish goal of generation to generation (*l'dor v'dvor*).” Perry remains optimistic about the future generation of Jewish youth. “As Shimon Peres once told me at a meeting in the home of Helaine and Marvin Lender, “it is quintessentially Jewish to be optimistic.” Throughout our history there has been great challenges, existential challenges, and we have persevered despite all odds.”

“Federation life is a new phenomenon,” she continued. “I don’t know if the next generation won’t create another way of being part of community but the *‘minyan,’* the community is intrinsic to Jewish life. How that will exhibit itself in the future, I cannot predict, but I believe that the creativity of the next generation will construct successful and invigorating ways for us to care for one another and fulfill our obligations as Jews.”

# Maier Zunder: A Leading Citizen of Nineteenth Century New Haven

By Sandy Barnes



## Preface

Volume I of “Jews of New Haven” opened with “Maier Zunder: New Haven’s First Jewish School Board Member” by Barry Herman. That article, informed by Maier Zunder’s granddaughter Regina Zunder Bear, included much of the basic information about Zunder’s life, family and career. This piece puts his life in perspective and emphasizes his work on the New Haven Board of Education.

## Introduction

Over a quarter million Jews from the German states immigrated to the United States in the years 1840-1880. They came to escape the unstable, oppressive, anti-Jewish restrictions in their countries as well as to take advantage of the opportunities in 19th century America. No longer bound by the crippling restrictions of European governments or the power of the state supported rabbinate, these Jews moved freely to attain full citizenship and, in many cases, affluence.

Maier Zunder described the conditions in his homeland: *Here there was freedom. There the tyrant held cruel sway. In Bavaria thirty-five and forty years ago, the alien laws were in full force and a Jew stood but little chance. It is stated for instance that if there were three Jewish shoemakers*

*in a town and a fourth came, he would not be allowed to set up in the same business, until one of the others moved away or died. So, too, unjust laws attended the holding of farms, of giving and taking in marriage, etc. And so those of the persecuted race, when they heard of the new country and its privileges made haste to emigrate.*

Maier Zunder (1829-1901), used his sharp social skills, creative financial ability and leadership acumen to make significant contributions to a thriving community in New Haven, Connecticut. Along with other Jewish immigrants from the German states he brought his considerable talents and ambition to participate fully in the life of his adopted city by building civic and mercantile institutions.

Zunder often acted as a spokesman at public and private events throughout his life, speaking publicly in both English and German. The New Haven daily press documented much of his very public life, giving us an opportunity to read his own words as reported by the press. Though he frequently appeared in leadership positions, he carefully gave others credit, and often stayed in the background. He knew what he wanted to accomplish, and he always knew how many votes he had.

Hasia Diner points out that the Jews often did well in the 19th century American economy by doing what they had already been doing (and persecuted for) in the old country, acting as middlemen, merchants or wholesalers. The primitive distribution system of American goods as well as a new preference for store-bought items played strongly into the values of self-employment and business of the Jewish emigrants. The activities repressed in Bavaria bloomed in America.

### **The Life of Maier Zunder**

Maier Zunder was born in Fuerth, Bavaria on May 24, 1829, son of Aron and Besla Zunder. Samuel, Maier's elder brother, an activist like his father and grandfather, spoke at mass meetings in Bavaria urging his compatriots to participate in the revolutionary activity of the time. After marrying Regina Rosenthal from a nearby village, Samuel immigrated to the United States in the 1840s to escape arrest.

In 1842, Maier Zunder was apprenticed in Bavaria to a printer at age 13. He arrived in New York in 1848 at age 19 with his brothers Louis and Seligman, soon found employment in a printing office and quickly became its superintendent. He joined the new B'nai B'rith organization serving as vice president of Zion Lodge #2 at age 21.

Meanwhile, his older brother, Samuel, moved from New York to New

Haven in 1850 to become Cantor and Secretary to the newly formed Mishkan Israel congregation. He had revolutionary ideas about worship, as he did with politics, triggering a number of squabbles with the congregation. In 1852, tiring of the conflict, Samuel quit his position at Mishkan Israel to start a grocery at 54 Church Street. Unfortunately, he died five months later in September 1852 at age 28, leaving his widow Regina and child Isabella. Regina asked her brother-in-law Maier to move from New York to New Haven to help run the family business. He took over the grocery and Maier and Regina soon married.

### **Maier Zunder's business**

Maier Zunder transformed his brother's small business into a very successful wholesale grocery, moving from the original location on Church Street to more spacious quarters on State Street, still within the central Nine Squares area. He prospered quickly and his business remained influential in New Haven throughout his lifetime. Maier eventually took his sons Albert and Theodore on as junior partners; the firm, then known as M. Zunder & Sons. The business supported the extended Zunder family.

In 1866, Maier Zunder, Hoadley Ives and W. J. Sizer, established the National Savings Bank of New Haven. He was named vice-president in 1872 and president in 1874. In 1894, he claimed he was the oldest serving bank president (65 years old) in the city and prided himself on never missing a meeting of the board of trustees.

### **Family**

Barry Herman in his article in "*The Jews of New Haven*", named all of Maier's children (which totaled eleven counting stepchildren). Maier and Regina had six children; four who lived until adulthood.

On November 25, 1874, Maier's wife, Regina, passed away after a lengthy illness. Before she died, Regina made her husband promise to bring her sister Mina over from Bavaria and, if he liked her, to marry her. Mina Rosenthal had three children and no husband. Zunder honored his late wife's request, arranged for her immigration and married Mina in New York City in 1879. According to a family story, Maier did not marry Mina until she learned English and took on the customs of her new country. Mina's children joined the Zunder family.

Mina remained married to Maier Zunder until his death in 1901. Their son Reginald was born in 1880.

Zunder's home on Orange Street is still standing. The original townhouse has been combined with its neighbor, 348 Orange Street. Maier's house is the right portion of the new combined commercial building.



*The Zunder family home Orange Street*

### **B'nai B'rith**

Maier Zunder founded B'nai B'rith Horeb Lodge #25 in 1856 (at age 27). The organization aimed to be social, fraternal, intellectual and service oriented. Zunder selected the founding members, choosing young men based on their social standing in the community.

He served as president for the first ten years and became active in the national organization attending central meetings for many years. In later years, he enjoyed his status as 'the old war horse' from one of 'the country lodges'.

### **Mishkan Israel**

The New Haven Jews, many from Bavaria, formed Congregation Mishkan Israel in the 1840s. The existence of the congregation attracted other Bavarian Jews (like the Zunder family) arriving from Europe. Congregation Mishkan Israel adopted the Reform ideas coming out of Germany combined with the American ethic of forming religious organizations to meet the needs of the Jews in this new world.

As Herman mentioned, Zunder served as treasurer of the congregation and board member. He was instrumental in raising the funds to build their new building in 1896 on Orange Street just a short distance from his home.

The Reform movement considered moving the main worship day from Saturday to Sunday during the time of the German migration; the idea gaining momentum after the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform. In March 1892, a front page article in the New Haven Register explored the subject quoting Maier Zunder, who supported the idea and pointed out that it would help merchants and other working men to be able to attend services.

A change of day would not affect our religion in the least. It would not make us Christians. A large share of the Jews cannot attend services on Saturday. Their business interferes ... I am heartily in favor of the change of day for our church, and wish it might be brought about in this city.

Beth Wenger, in her history of Mishkan Israel, reported that the congre-

gation did institute Sunday services but the practice only lasted a few years.

## Board of Education

Maier Zunder served on the New Haven Board of Education from 1867-1889. Every year, he prided himself on visiting every classroom. He threw himself into every aspect of the school system working hard on every Board committee. All matters were important to him, whether it be the boilers in the buildings, teacher training, textbooks, the conditions of each school building, the well-being of the teachers, the examinations for the high school, fire safety, the condition of a school piano, the state of blackboards even the frustrating topic of the regulation of graduation dresses for the young women high school graduates. Teachers and administrators often called on him to help resolve staff disputes.



*The Zunder School New Haven, CT*

Some community members had grumbled about some overcrowded schools.

*[a citizen] enquired if there were not already empty seats in the school district and if the Goffe Street School was unpopular among white children because colored children went there....*

*Mr. Zunder of Board of Education stoutly replied ... as to the Goffe street school the trouble was not regarding the color line but because the school was not in fit condition for anybody, white or black, to attend school in. Colored children needed a decent place to go to school in as much as white.*

Later he declared "the board makes no distinction with regard to color. It is not allowed to do so by the law of the state."

Maier believed the teachers needed help running their schools and advocated for the new idea of administration and principals. He also worked hard to establish 'special education,' meaning instruction in music, art and sewing. He advocated for a special German-American school so that German children could learn English.

He played a major role in the Devotional Exercise controversy in 1877-78

Herman described even more matters of importance to Maier Zunder in his earlier article.

In 1885, during a lively annual public meeting after the school election, Zunder signaled that the Board would not endorse any segregation of 'colored' children.

which attracted national attention. As a member of the powerful Committee on Schools, he sided with other Board members to remove the line from the School Manual calling for the morning sessions to open with devotional exercises as part of a move to secularize the schools. This action set up an entire year of controversy. The Catholic community sided with many of the Protestant clergy that, morally, the schools must include prayer though they could not agree on the content. A committee of clergy introduced a Manual of Protestant and Catholic exercises with great fanfare that was voted down by the Committee on Schools chaired by Maier Zunder and then by the entire Board.

The Board of Education honored him in 1895 by naming a new elementary school after him "in honor of long and faithful service of Maier Zunder on the Board of Education." He considered it a great honor and purchased pictures for the walls of all of the classrooms as his gift. Zunder School flourished for many years but, as Herman mentions, it was torn down for redevelopment in 1955.

### **Maier Zunder's death**

Maier Zunder died suddenly on June 29, 1901 at age 72. He had no prior illness and his death was unexpected.

### **Conclusion**

In his 53 years in the United States, Maier Zunder's own life paralleled the life course of many young Jewish immigrants from the German States arriving with ambition and little capital, with few Jewish institutions in place. Maier Zunder, through his own efforts, participated fully in his new community's growing commerce along with robust reformed Jewish organizations. He was able to provide a comfortable home for his family in his new country. Most of all, Maier Zunder, along with many other Jewish immigrants, saw themselves as wholly American.

Maier Zunder's talent and accomplishments in the bustling nineteenth century remain in the institutional records of the Horeb Lodge and Congregation Mishkan Israel as well as the Board of Education. Particularly, his work on the Board of Education brought the city's schools into modern times with new institutions and practices that have endured to the present day.

[This is a scholarly paper with 19 footnoted references which we are not publishing. The full article and book is located in the archives at the Jewish Historical of Greater New Haven. The author Sandy Barnes is the great-great granddaughter to Maier Zunder. Ms Barnes can be reached through her email [sandy@dsbarnes.com](mailto:sandy@dsbarnes.com). Those wishing to review the notes or to purchase the book may request the information at [JHSGNH@yahoo.com](mailto:JHSGNH@yahoo.com) or 203/392.6125.]

## **Jewish Accountants in the Greater New Haven Area, 1935 to the Present**

**By Norman Rashba, CPA and David S. Fischer, MD**

Accounting is a language as much as it is a quantitative discipline. It is often referred to as the language of business, having a grammar and syntax all its own. Accounting history can be traced back to a book called *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportioni et proportionalita*, written by the Italian mathematician, Luca Pacioli, in 1494 C.E. It recorded for the very first time the system of double-entry accounting that became popular with Italian merchants during the Renaissance. The book also included illustrations and diagrams drawn by Pacioli's friend, Leonardo Da Vinci.

In this book, Luca Pacioli described the use of journals and ledgers, and warned that a merchant should not rest until the debits equaled the credits. His ledger had accounts for assets, liabilities, capital, income and expenses. He also demonstrated year-end closing entries and proposed a trial balance be used to prove a balanced ledger. It was a best selling book, published across parts of Europe and became the basis for bookkeeping, as we know it today. Even today, the double-entry accounting method is used to record entries in books and records to be used in preparing financial statements.

Legislation, initially in Great Britain and later in the United States provided for one or more individuals to be incorporated and for corporations to be responsible for more disclosure to increase public confidence in the honesty of a business. During the 1930s there was concern that there was no standard framework for financial accounting in the United States where creative accounting—making a company look more successful than it actually was—was a problem. There were a number of high profile cases where supposedly profitable companies were able to attract additional investment only to collapse a few months later with huge debts.

In an effort to ameliorate the situation and avert federal legislation the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants set up the Committee on Accounting Procedures (CAP) in the late 1930s as a self-regulatory body and this produced a number of Accounting Research Bulletins that were in effect statements on accounting principles and procedures. These were extremely successful in eliminating a number of questionable accounting practices. However, it did not help in establishing an underlying accounting theory for

good practice. This was the situation when most of the Jewish accountants went into practice, largely as individuals, or small partnerships of two or more accountants. Almost all were men. This has changed considerably. A large number of women are now practicing accounting.

Accounting as a profession has many applications. There are specialties in accounting for different types of business. There is automobile accounting, business accounting, stock-brokerage accounting, hotel accounting, cost accounting, etc., as well as public accounting. Accounting now has opportunities for Jews in the large financial corporations that had not accepted them until recently.

In both small neighborhood businesses and giant multistate corporations, the CAP guidelines did not remedy a large number of deceptive practices that clever lawyers and accountants devised to avoid transparency and to increase the profits of those who used their services. In 1953, the CAP produced an enhanced standard framework of guidelines for financial accounting, called the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). These principles contained the structures and rules that accountants use in recording and summarizing transactions and the preparation of financial statements. While the GAAP was written for the United States it was quickly adopted—with regional modifications—across Europe. GAAP continues to be maintained and updated and is what the next group of accountants used.

The following list is of some of the Jewish accountants in the New Haven area from about 1935 until their retirement or death. All were Certified Public Accountants (CPA), except for four, who were Public Accountants (PA) and are so noted. The PA designation has since been phased out. The CPA designation is earned by passing rigorous examinations administered by the states in cooperation with State Boards of Accounting. The following group passed the their required examination:

Louis Sagal	Luciano Vitale	Daniel Weinstein
Murray Kahn	Catherine Sagal	Jack Konowitz
Ruby Braverman	Irving Korman	Ruby Moore
Sam Finer	Earl Jacobs	Irving Finsmith
Sam Glazer	Jack Zempsky, PA	Harvey Ladin, PA
Jack Caplan, PA	Oscar Kipperman, PA	

The following list is of some of the Jewish accountants in the New Haven area from about 1948 to the present year. Some have retired or died. All are CPAs

Norman Rashba	Bertram Frankenger	Martin Hamerman
Marvin Teplitsky	Edwin Schaefer	Donald Perlroth
Kenneth Harrison	Jerry Weinstein	Burton Schlossberg
George Weinstein	Marvin Weinberg	Martin Liebowitz
Edward Lemkin	Edward Konowitz	John Gordon
Alan Bailey	Zelly Goldberg	Andrew Kipperman
Linda Cohen	Robert Horton	Floyd Ozeck
Joseph Nitkin	Fred Rosen	Donald Germaine
Joel Sachs	Linda Teplitsky	

Accounting has changed for Jewish entry-level men and women. The passing on of “Mom and Pop business”—such as stores, pharmacies, service businesses, and other small business enterprises in general and the rapid growth of online retailing--has opened up opportunities in national enterprises (manufacturing, banking, insurance, etc.) that have changed the entire economy. A number of national accounting firms now handle most of accounting services for large companies, institutions, and corporations. In addition, the realization of many non-Jewish men and women that there is a decent life in the field of accounting has changed the distribution of participants in the profession. The professionalism that exists as a result of more available higher education has opened up the field to a more diversified group.

This is not the same game the Jewish participants entered in past years. The number of entrepreneurial Jews in the business of public accounting is passing away.

Note: Some of the material for this article was taken from computer websites.

[Norman Rashba is a retired CPA]

**Prominent Jewish-Americans  
With  
New Haven Connections  
Poster Collection  
Published 2004  
of  
Jewish Historical Society  
Of Greater New Haven  
270 Fitch Street  
New Haven, CT  
06515**

**NOTE:**

The names listed in this Poster Collection are **NOT** listed in the index solely by virtue of their being listed here. They will be listed in the index if cited elsewhere in this volume.

## **List of Posters**

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## “Celebrate 350” Introduction

In September 1654, a boatload of 23 impoverished Jews expelled from Recife, Brazil landed on the shores of New Amsterdam, now New York City, seeking refuge. Since that time, Jews have been an inseparable part of America's rich history and growth.

The Greater New Haven Jewish community has been part of a nationwide “Celebrate 350” anniversary of the Jewish Community in America celebrating its achievements and contributions. To highlight the achievement of American Jews, the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven, Inc. has produced this special project called “Prominent Jewish-Americans with New Haven Connections”, comprised of a series of ten pictorial posters produced by artist Alan Falk. These posters will become a permanent exhibit at the archives of the Jewish Historical Society and will be available on a loan basis for special showings at area cultural celebrations, community institutions and libraries, etc.

### CATEGORIES OF ACHIEVEMENTS:

The areas of achievements highlighted by the posters are: **New Haven Firsts; The Visual Arts; The Performing Arts; Writers, Authors and Poets; Scholars, Educators, and Scientists; Political Leaders; Civic Leaders; Sports Figures; Business & Industry.**

### QUALIFICATIONS:

To qualify, all Prominent Jewish-American candidates must have lived, worked, or have been born in the New Haven area and meet two or more of the following criteria:

1. The candidate, living or deceased, has made his or her mark on the American scene with a national contribution or contributed in some way in improving life in America.
2. The candidate has to have made a strong Jewish or community achievement locally.
3. The candidate is listed in a reference book, on the internet or in the media.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Marvin Bargar, Rosalind Berman, Alan Falk, Dr. Gary Fleischman, Rita Gold, Dr. Barry Herman, Werner Hirsch.

**JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF  
GREATER NEW HAVEN, INC:**

PRESIDENTS (Society founded in 1976)  
Harvey Ladin\*, Dr. Barry Herman\*, Werner Hirsch, Judith Schiff,  
Joel Wasserman, Sherman Kramer\*, Herbert Setlow\*, Rita Gold\*,  
Sue Goodman, Ronald Ladin, Morton Horwitz\*, Albert Harary,  
Dr. Gary Fleischman.

\*Deceased

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**DISCLAIMER:**

The Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven apologizes for any names that may have been omitted or misspelled. We also make no claim that any of the information listed on the posters is entirely accurate or complete. It is hoped that, at a later date, an updated series of posters may be produced to include omitted names and additional information

**New Haven Firsts  
New Haven's Early Jewish History**

It is believed that the first Jews in New Haven, the brothers Jacob and Solomon Pinto, settled in 1758. With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the three sons of Jacob Pinto, Solomon, Abraham and William took up arms in George Washington's Continental Army and fought with distinction. In 1783, Jacob Pinto was a signer of the petition to the Connecticut General Assembly which brought about the incorporation of New Haven as a town.

Ralph Isaacs, a prosperous lawyer, with Jewish roots was one of New

Haven's leading citizens at the end of the 18th Century. His descendants included a 19th Century governor of Connecticut and a U.S. Minister to Russia in 1847.

President Ezra Stiles of Yale College, a noted writer and speaker of classical Hebrew, recorded in his diary the arrival of an unnamed Venetian Jewish family comprised of 8 to 10 Jews in the summer of 1772 who observed the Sabbath in the traditional Jewish manner, "worshipping by themselves in a room in which there were lights and a suspended lamp." Stiles also stated that this was a private Jewish worship since the Jews were too few to constitute a synagogue minyan, so that if thereafter there should be a synagogue in New Haven, it must not be dated from this."

The first Jewish house of worship was established in 1840, founded by Jewish families from Bavaria. Soon there was a minyan (10 men) and a Congregation. Mishkan Israel was founded. It was the first Jewish congregation in Connecticut, the second in New England and the 14th synagogue established in the United States. Its first building was located on Court Street in New Haven. A \$5,000 bequest from the estate of the philanthropist Judah Touro in 1854 allowed the new congregation to purchase and refurbish a church into a synagogue. The early German Jews distinguished themselves in the community as merchants, civic leaders and professionals. Some of these families included the Adlers, Bretzfelters, Lehmans, Lauterbachs, Milanders, Ullmans, Watermans, Rothchilds, and Zunders. Michael Milander (1796-1884) was the First Reader at Cong. Mishkan Israel and the first paid Jewish religious official in New Haven.

From 1880-1920, the New Haven Jewish population grew with a great wave of Eastern European Jews from Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Romania fleeing the pogroms taking place in the Russian Empire. Over a dozen new synagogues were started during this time.

After World War II, another wave of Jewish families settled in New Haven. These people were Holocaust survivors. In the 1980's, a large number of Russian Jewish families came into the New Haven area from the Soviet Union. Today Greater New Haven's Jewish population is estimated at around 30,000 people. Greater New Haven's Jewish citizens have distinguished themselves in every field of endeavor and have enriched New Haven, the State of Connecticut and the entire United States as noted in these poster panels.

### **List of The First Structures:**

**Oldest Reform Synagogue, 1854** Mishkan Israel Court Street. Oldest synagogue in Connecticut.

**Oldest Orthodox Synagogue**, 1892 B'nai Israel Synagogue Rose Street.

**Oldest Conservative Synagogue**, 1885 Congregation B'nai Jacob Temple Street. First building to house **Jewish Home for the Aged** Davenport Avenue 1914. Original home of **Yeshiva of New Haven** Park Street.

**Holocaust Memorial**, First such memorial in the country to be built on public land. Dedicated in 1977 Edgewood Park.

### **List of the First Jews:**

**Isaac Moses** (1781-1834). Oldest burial site of practicing Jew in New Haven County and Connecticut. Buried in Branford.

**Dr. Sigmund Waterman** (1819-1899). First Jewish Instructor at Yale.

**Hannah Waterman** (d.1845). Wife of Dr. Sigmund Waterman. Oldest Jewish burial site in City of New Haven.

**Michael Milander** (1796-1884). First paid Jewish religious official. First reader at Congregation Mishkan Israel.

**Moses Greenbaum** (1835-1893). First Jewish police officer in New Haven.

**Simon Bernard Shoninger** (1851-1921). First Jewish member of the New Haven Board of Alderman.

**Maurice Steinert** (1831-1912). Founder of the New Haven Symphony.

**Rabbi Judah Levenberg** (1884-1938). Founder of the first New Haven Yeshiva.

**Dr. Lafayette B. Mendel** (1872-1935). Biochemist whose discoveries concerning the value of vitamins and protein helped establish modern concepts of nutrition. Known as "The Father of the Vitamin."

**Samuel Campner** (1887-1934). First Jewish mayor of New Haven (1917).

**Rear Admiral Edward Ellsberg** (1891-1983). Innovator and pioneer of WWII Naval rescue techniques.

**Harvey Ladin** (1913-1984). Founder and first president of The Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, Inc.

**Florence S. Wald** (b.1917). First Jewish dean, Yale School of Nursing. Founding member of Hospice, USA.

**William Horowitz** (1908-1994). First Jewish member of Yale Corporation.

**Dr. Edward Zigler** (b.1930). First Director of the Office of Child Development. Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau. Known as "The Father of Head Start."

**Jonas Gabriel** (1824-1898). First Jewish principal and teacher in New Haven.

**Rabbi Isaac Strauss** (Dates Unknown). First Rabbi in New Haven in 1849 – Congregation Mishkan Israel.

**Max Thalheimer** (1835-1908). First Jewish Councilman (from fifth ward 1866-1868).

**Isaac Strouse** (1829-1903). Inventor and first manufacturer of steel corset stays.

**Morris Goodhart** (1838-1897). First Jewish lawyer to be admitted to the bar in Connecticut.

**Henry Cohen** (or Isador Kalinsky) & Saul Wolfson (Dates Unknown). First Jewish men in Connecticut to enlist in the Civil War.

**Henry Bretzfelder** (1865-1925). First Jewish selectman (served four terms).

**Jacob Bertram Ullman** (1870-1906). Considered to be the first Jewish judge in the State of Connecticut.

**Miriam Botwinik Horowitz** (1912-1999) First Jewish woman to be City of New Haven Treasurer.

**Dr. J. Lawrence Tanenbaum** (b.1928) Founder of the first Boy Scout troop in America for mentally challenged youth.

**Joseph** (1920-2008) & **Jonathan Einhorn** (b.1948). First Jewish father and son candidates to run for Mayor of New Haven.

**Rabbi Chana Timoner** (1952-1998). First Jewish female chaplain in U.S. Army.

**Lender's Bagels** (1927). First manufacturer to develop and produce frozen bagels for mass distribution worldwide.

**Charles Rosenay & Daniel Levine** (2000). Club Kosher Tours – First in the U.S. to organize worldwide kosher vacation tours.

### The Visual Arts

**Jordan Abeshouse** painter

**Louis Kahn** architect

**Sol Lewitt** painter

**Anni Albers** textile designer

**Harold Roth** architect

**Robert Moses** planner/master builder

**Birney Lettick** illustrator

**Al Capp** cartoonist

**Paul Rand** designer

**Ben Shahn** painter/graphic artist

**Jonathan Mostow** film director  
**Edward Tobias Rosenthal** painter  
**Jeanette Kuvin Oren** tapestry artist  
**Samuel Kravitt** photographer/ filmmaker  
**Herbert S. Newman** architect  
**Howard Fussiner** painter  
**Alan Falk** artist/designer  
**Ann P. Lehman** sculptor/arts activist  
**Reyna Ulman Youngerman** painter  
**Hilda Levy** watercolorist/art teacher  
**Barry Tenin** photographer

### The Performing Arts

**Bruce Altman** Actor  
**Bailey Brothers** Movie Theatre Owners  
**Maurice Bailey** Shubert Theatre Owner  
**Harry Berman** Orchestra Conductor  
**Mark Berman** Composer/Pianist  
**Max Berman** Violinist  
**Arnold "Sonny" Berman** Musician/Band Leader  
**Saul "Sonny" Berman** Musician  
**Jerry Bock** Composer  
**Michael Bolton** Singer/Composer  
**Orrin Bolton** Singer/Composer  
**Ben Bronfin** Lyricist  
**Adrienne Cooper Klezmer** Musician  
**Melanie Chartoff** Actress  
**David Chevan** Jazz Musician  
**Diana Darrin** Actress  
**Joe Estren** Musician  
**David Fisher** Singer  
**Erick Friedman** Violinist  
**Adrienne Greenbaum** Flutis/Klezmer Musician  
**Beryl Howard** Radio Show Host  
**Bernie Leighton** Musician  
**Gary Lynes** Pianist/Composer  
**Lynne Meadows** Stage Director  
**Buddy Morrow** Musician  
**Alfred Newman** Composer  
**Lionel Newman** Composer

**Joseph Nussbaum** Composer  
**Natalie Portman** Actress  
**Michael Price** Theatrical Producer  
**Barney Rapp** Musician  
**Sidney Rhein** Musician/Orchestral Bass Player  
**William Rhein** Orchestral Bass Player  
**Joey Russell** Comedian  
**Reuven Russell** Actor/Comedian  
**Cookie Segelstein** Violinist/Klezmer Musician  
**Ben Segel** Oakdale Theatre Owner  
**Artie Shaw** Orchestra Leader/Composer  
**Nikolai Sokoloff** Orchestral Conductor  
**Siegwart Spear** Songwriter  
**Charlie Spivak** Orchestra Leader  
**Alexander Steinert** Musician  
**Arthur Troostwyk** Composer/Conductor  
**Morris Watstein** Orchestra Leader  
**Eddie Wittstein** Orchestra Leader  
**Barry Wood** Singer/Radio Show Host  
**Samuel Yaffe** Orchestral Musician

### Scholars, Educators, & Scientists

**Dr. Milton Winternitz** Dean of Yale Medical School  
**Rabbi Louis Greenberg** Author/Rabbi of B'nai Jacob  
**Dr. Lafayette Mendel** Yale Professor "Father of the Vitamin"  
**Isador Wexler** Principal/Educational Leader  
**Sydney Perry** Founder, Makom Hebrew High School-Jewish  
 Community Leader  
**Maier Zunder** First Jewish member New Haven School Board  
**Dr. Donald Cohen** Psychiatric Pioneer Yale Child Study Center  
**Dr. Richard Levin** President of Yale University  
**Dr. Gerald Saidel** Scientist Biomedical Engineering  
**Dr. Joyce Saltman** Educator/Humorist  
**Dr. Arthur Galston** Professor Emeritus of Botany Yale University  
**Dr. Barry Zaret**, Director of Cardiology Yale-New Haven Hospital  
**Dr. Robert J. Sternberg** Professor of Psychology & Education, Yale  
 University  
**Dr. Joseph Melnick** Molecular Virologist Distinguished Service Professor  
 Yale University and World Health Organization

**Matthew Nemerson** Jewish Civic Leader, President, Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce  
**Bernard Schub** Union Leader, International Ladies Garment Workers  
**Herbert Setlow** Executive Board Member, B'nai Brith International  
**James M. Shure** Philanthropic Civic Leader  
**Arthur Spiegel** Jewish Civic Leader  
**Mitchell Sviridoff** Founder, New Haven Community Progress, Inc.  
**Barry Vine** Jewish Community Leader  
**Judge Jerry Wagner** Jewish Civic Leader  
**Dr. Milton Wallack** Jewish Civic Leader  
**Barbara Cooley Wareck** Jewish Civic Leader  
**Mal Webber** Jewish Civic Leader  
**Mary Lou Winnick** Jewish Civic Leader, Town of Woodbridge Selectman

### Writers, Authors and Poets

**Paul Bass** newspaper editor/writer  
**Harold Bloom** literary critic/author  
**Jonathan Brent** author/Director Yale University Press  
**Elin Brockman** author  
**Rabbi Arthur Chiel** author/scholar-Rabbi, Congregation B'nai Jacob  
**Dr. Gary Fleischman** author  
**Peter Gay** author  
**Ruth Gay** author  
**Stanley Greenberg** political advisor/pollster  
**Linda Greenhouse** journalist  
**Henry "Hank" Greenspun** newspaper editor/author  
**Betty Goldberg** cookbook author  
**Judah Goldin** author/scholar  
**Roya Hakakian** author/poet  
**Louis Harris** pollster  
**Henry S. Harrison** author  
**Rabbi Abraham Hefterman** writer/scholar Rabbi, Bikur Cholim Sheveth Achim Synagogue  
**Werner S. Hirsch** author/researcher/historian  
**Burt Hirschfeld** author  
**Arthur Horwitz** magazine publisher  
**Harold Kelman** author  
**Minna Kleeberg** poetess  
**Richard Krevolin** playwright

**Norman Lear** television writer/producer  
**Jay Lender** animated cartoon writer/director  
**Max Lerner** newspaper editor/author  
**Donald Margulies** playwright  
**Alice Mattison** author  
**Dr. Sherwin Nuland** author  
**Dr. Dan Oren** author  
**Rollin G Osterweis** author/historian  
**Devra Renner** author  
**Dr. Jonathan Sarna** author  
**Erich Segal** author  
**Dr. Bernie Siegel** author  
**Laurel Vlock** television writer/producer  
**Edward Lewis Wallant** author  
**David Wessel** journalist/Pulitzer prize winner  
**Dr. Morris Wessel** author/medical books

### Sports Figures

**Atlas Club** Basketball Champions  
**David Beckerman** Championship Basketball Coach  
**Sam Bender** Championship Basketball Coach  
**Dr. Jacob Fischman** Wrestler & Wrestling Referee  
**Eddie Goldstone** Basketball, Baseball Coach  
**Adam Greenberg** Athletic Director, Jewish Community Center  
**Abie Grossfeld** Olympic Gymnast & Coach  
**Stu Grove** Basketball Coach  
**Edward Horwitz** Yale Basketball Team Captain  
**Syd Jaffe** Radio Sports Announcer  
**Burt Kahn** University Athletic Director  
**Louis "Kid" Kaplan** Boxing, World Champion  
**Arthur "Red" Kleinberg** Basketball Coach  
**Julie Kogon** Boxer  
**Lenny Margolis** Sports Director  
**Maurice Podoloff** Basketball, NBA Commissioner  
**Nathan Podoloff** Ice Hockey, Owner of New Haven Arena  
**Casey Russell** Ice Hockey Player  
**Izzy Winters** Yale Wrestling Coach  
**Jimmy Wolf** Basketball Hall of Famer, Tap Off Club

## Business & Industry

### **Company Israel & Sam Hershman**

**Horowitz Bros.** Dry Goods

**J. Johnson & Son** Johnson Family

**A. Kafka & Company** Cigars Adolph Kafka & Emanuel Thalheimer

**Kaysey's Restaurant** Hyman Kuritch

**Lender's Bagels** Lender Family

**Ann Taylor Stores** Paul Liebeskind

**Bic Pen Company** Robert Adler, CEO

**Botwinik Bros.** Marvin Botwinik

**Carroll Cut-Rate Stores** Benjamin/Krause/Walheimer Families

**Joseph Cohn & Sons Industrial Painting** Joel Cohn

**Coin-O-Matic Services** Leonard Gold

**Cooley Chevrolet** JJ Cooley

**Cott Soda** Cott Family

**CRN International Radio & Media Network** Barry Berman

**Drazen Lumber** Drazen Family

**Eastern Steel** Goodwin Bros

**Eder Liquor & Spirits Distributors** Eder Family

**Eli Moore** Clothing Stores

**Elmco Oil Company** Abraham Alderman & Albert Kaplan

**Feinstein Clothing Company** William Feinstein

**Fox Steel** John Fox

**Gant Shirts** Gantmacher Family

**I. Hershman Paper** Harry Lender & Sons

**Robbie Len Swimwear** Brumberger Family

**Michael's Jewelers** Irving Michael

**Lewis Osterweis & Sons** Cigars Lewis Osterweis

**Panikoff Jewelers** William L. Panikoff/H. Raphael

**Pilot Pen Corporation** Ronald Shaw, CEO

**Premier Roofing** Grodd Bros.

**J. Press Clothing Company** Jacobi Press

**Arthur M. Rosenberg** Clothing

**Savitt Jewelers** Robert Savitt

**Sero Shirts** Shapiro Family

**Setlow Work Clothes** Setlow Family

**Shartenberg's** Henry M. Shartenberg

**Shoninger Pianos** Bernard Shoninger

**J.A. Silver Jewelry Company** Jacob Silver

**Starter Sportswear** David Beckerman

**Strouse Adler Corset Company** Isaac Strouse, Max Adler  
& Isaac Ullman

**Steinert Pianos** Morris Steinert

**United Aluminum Corporation** Abe Lapidés

**Vine Manufacturing Company** Barry Vine

# Building Tower One and Tower East Leads to Casa Otonal

## By Linda S. Kantor

I was in my 20's, raising three kids and focused on the Jewish community. Co-founding the Hillel Childrens School at Yale where children received a reform/conservative education during their parents' "transition time" at Yale and then fund-raising for the Yale Jewish Appeal. At that time contacts were not shared with the Jewish Community Council; each kept private "lists". This was the mid-1960s and viewpoints were different.

Our elders who were in need of care would be at the Jewish Home for the Aged; there was no day center, no new renovations, no crafts or exercise programs, little interaction in the community. When Laurel Vlock and I went there to give a talk to the Women's Committee, we noted the old style stationery in black italic print and rows of *Yahrzeit* lights. It looked dreary. Our concerns were how to keep these elders participating in the outside world.

### Tower One

The opportunity came when we were on sabbatical for a year in Australia. A request was received from our tennis buddy, Jim Vlock, to help with the construction of Tower One. Fred became head of the Medical Committee and I was chair of Arts and Design. My first task, from Australia, for the architect Charles Moore, was to research the golden ark that had been carried across the desert. Inspired by this, Charles Moore designed an ark to hold the torahs for Tower One. The first torah housed there was scribed by the grandfather of Rose Fox (Mrs. John Fox). This new ark of wood, steel, and Plexiglas was designed with small wheels for mobility, and cherished by the elders to use for their weekly Sabbath services.

When we returned, the construction at Church Street South had just begun. Able to read blueprints and determined to be an advocate for the elderly viewpoint, I went to every job meeting as well as the Board meetings with the other founders attended by, Irving Enson, Jim Vlock, Bea Horowitz and Leonor Wexler. Soon after, the Board hired Janie Charles Holmes to be the office administrator, quickly promoting her after a few years to her long-term position as Executive Director.

I remember the discussion about what to name the building. The Board wanted a dignified name, a name not solely Jewish and a name which ex-

pressed that this housing was for everyone. Note that the building was by the Union train station, which formerly had SRO (single room only) housing for new immigrants. The Board wanted a new vibrant approach in our downtown at 18 Tower Lane.

Charles Moore was the answer, with bold colors, super graphics, waving exterior flags from the 18th floor, music, and a pool table off the lobby area. Above the dining room was the lobby, nurse's office, director's offices, the important mailroom, and 218 apartments. We enlisted resident volunteers to be at the Welcome Desk, to be Floor Monitors of the daily I'M OK signs, and to create a Residents Council. We initiated a "Tuck In Program" for a trained homemaker helper to check with fragile residents each evening. We designed menus for the evening meal so residents could "plan ahead". At dinner the men wore jackets and ladies were nicely attired. At their request, the exit hallway was decorated with silhouettes so elders didn't feel "lonely" while waiting for their visitors or rides.



*Tower One/Tower East*

We had no other facility to emulate. After visiting Philadelphia to see the only other available elder housing, we were not inspired. The five Board members and Janie Holmes would have to create this anew. On October 30, 1983, Eileen Eder created a Grand Opening Ceremony in silver, black and white design.

As our history shows, the rent-up was completed within a year, a worthy feat by real estate standards. *The Connecticut Jewish Ledger* was a great contact and informational source. My photographic skills expanded, and the weekly photos and captions describing Tower One activities in the *Ledger* and the *New Haven Register* reached the elderly and their families.

## **Tower East**

After Tower One was completed and totally occupied, it was obvious that the seniors had noticed this new environment; some were even moving back to New Haven to be nearer to their families and lifelong friends. The dining room needed expansion and a large community room would provide needed space for the activities. We applied for Housing and Urban Affairs funding and were awarded a section 202 grant to construct additional apartments and communal space. I was elected Building Chairman and the Board of Direc-

tors expanded with additional Jewish community participants.

The new building, Tower East, provided a wraparound garden, new entrance, enlarged kitchen and parking areas. At the center was the Charles Moore designed fountain with a copper rooster at the top. Later we added a special plaque dedicated to him, Charles Moore AIA, was a mensch.

### Casa Otonal Housing Corporation



*Casa Otonal at 135 Sylvan Avenue*

While completing Tower East, Jim Vlock got a call from the head of the New Haven Redevelopment Office, Bill Donohue. Bill had a close friend who wanted to provide housing for Latinos like Tower One/Tower East. Would we meet him for lunch? Jim and I arrived at the Yale Graduate Club and were met by Bill Donohue, Father Joseph Odell, and Mariana Malave. Father Joe was the priest at St. John the Evangelist Church. Mariana was a Latina elder who had been providing a small lunch at Father Joe's church on Sylvan Avenue in the Hill area. She spoke only Spanish. Their office in the nuns' parish house consisted of one small room with a freezer, a table, two chairs and a guitar. They asked us to submit an application to construct housing in "some space provided by the City on Sylvan Avenue". Not an easy task.

After meetings, controversies, negotiations and frequent comments such as "Who are these gringos?" the application for 104 Section 8 subsidized apartments was approved at the 135 Sylvan Avenue lot. Required on the front page of the document was the statement that "Jim Vlock and Linda Kantor must remain with the Project until its completion."

The Latinos wanted a Spanish architect for Casa Otonal (Autumn House). The only local person we knew was Cesar Pelli AIA, the dean of the School of Art and Architecture at Yale. With a small 2 ¼% fee and a tight budget allowed by HUD, Cesar nevertheless welcomed the offer to help the local community. His wife, Diana Balmori, provided the design for the exterior courtyard gratis. This was the first building that Cesar's office constructed in the New Haven area.

When Casa Otonal was completed, the first Latinos moved in. This was new to their cultural past; families usually had grandparents living with them and caring for their children. Now Grandma and Grandpa had their own home.

When asked by a reporter whether she was afraid to be the first person in the 6-story housing, Maria replied, “No, I always wanted a big house!”

Thirty years later I am still at Casa! The Board meetings are in English, and 52 elders have signed up for ESL classes (English as a Second Language)

### **Casa Linda and Casa Community Center**

In the last years of 1990’s the historic corner buildings of the Phillips Monument Company directly across the street from Casa posted a For Sale sign. Residents of Casa Housing were frantic when rumors that a funeral home planned to buy the site. They pictured the weekly lines of cars, hearses and mourners outside their front door and yet there was no possibility of ownership. At Thanksgiving dinner, my brother asked me what I would like to be doing in the next year. In the spirit perhaps of Thanksgiving I answered “I’d like to buy the house across the street from Casa Otonal and create a neighborhood center like the one in SW Washington DC that our mother went to as a child. ”. She was 10 or so, the eldest of 7 children of an immigrant family and lived in poverty. Her father was a kosher baker. Barney House (the neighborhood house still in existence) gave her skills, friendship and self confidence. She was important.

“So, why don’t you?” said Jerry. And I quietly did.

I bought an old Ford 150 truck and picked up workers from the “Halfway House” off Whalley Avenue. The house and larger building were filled with sketches, carbon dust, machinery, tools and paint. In the front yard was a 3-story hoist, used to move the tombstones around. I paid the workers into their “house accounts” and bought lunches and cigarettes for them!

Demolition and construction of the new Community Center the next year was done by the students of the Eli Whitney Vocational-Technical High School in Hamden. The approval by their principal, and the supervision by the heads of each department (electrical, plumbing, carpentry, masonry, roofing) produced professional results. Patricia McCann Vissepo urged us on and welcomed the coming programs for intergenerational projects. With the kids we marched in the city’parades and hung flags outside. We scraped together monies for construction from various sources and contributions. Edward Johnson AIA designed an airy modern interior and exterior; Sandra Vlock AIA provided the color scheme and professional suggestions.

At Casa Linda (named by the elders of Casa Otonal) we began afterschool programs that continued into the larger Community Center. The projects and programs seem “ordinary” in today’s world (2017) but none existed at that time, and certainly not in the Hill North neighborhoods. In the summer I car-

ried donated breads, cakes and pastry in my truck door to door. The children helped to distribute the baked goods since they “knew the neediest”. Projects in sewing, carpentry, gardening, cooking, foreign countries and architectural details of their neighborhood were made available, even education for pest control and treatments by the parents for asthma and allergies. Dominos tournaments and music were recreation with the senior men and the youth. Our corner block now had expanded into a safer place for everyone.

### **The Casa Otonal “Campus”**

The complex of Casa Otonal includes Casa Linda (the white house), Casa Community Center (barn-red large L-shaped center for leased parties and events), La Casita (thrift shop for the neighborhood, run by senior volunteers), 3 apartments (formerly the Parish house for St. John the Evangelist Church), a greenhouse (won in a national competition) and Casa Familia, (35 apartments for grandparents who are legal guardians of their grandchildren).

### **TO DATE:**

I am glad when I hear comments that the New Haven Jewish Federation helped to build the above complex. That is a lot of good will from this fast-growing Latino community. There was no financial or official contribution by the Federation, just people coming together to lend a good word or give encouragement. I am honored to have been their representative.

“To Be Is To Do” -- Myriam Mendelow

# Jewish Home for the Aged

## By Marvin Bargar

Archivist of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven

The Jewish Home for the Aged was founded in 1914 by the Sisters of Zion, a women's charitable organization starting in two houses at 165 and 169 Davenport Avenue. The JHA filled so crucial a need that the facilities had to be enlarged. In 1921, a cornerstone was laid for a new four story building which was completed in 1923. An addition to the original building was a solarium in 1934, and in 1950 a new building and modernization of the annex was dedicated. JHA had acquired several small houses on Asylum St and this land was available for the addition.

The medical staff served on a voluntary basis in the early decades. They were members of the Jewish Physicians Club organized in 1929. The first full time registered nurse on the Staff was Mrs. Kathryn Robinson in 1954. It was not until 1964 that the JHA developed a proper medical records system and a medical staff giving 24 hour coverage. In the early years of the JHA, the methods of fund raising included the collection of membership dues as well as ad books and annual balls and shows. From 1935 until 1956 an annual vaudeville show was the major fund raising event. Fees collected for Bar Mitzvah and other ceremonies performed in the JHA synagogue provided additional income.

Faced with the choice of expanding in an inner city neighborhood or building a new facility in the suburb, JHA decided to stay in New Haven. The principal reason for the staying on Davenport Ave was the proximity to Yale-New Haven Hospital and to all the doctors who use the hospital or have offices in the area. On November 24, 1974, a ground breaking ceremony was held for a new addition which would contain many new services and departments including a day care center for the elderly which cost five million dollars and was completed and to the old building in 1976. The new facility was dedicated on June 12, 1977, it was one of the most modern geriatrics centers of its kind in the state. Because of an ever-growing waiting list, in 1985 a new addition of two thirty bed units was completed. This housed the home's most physically and emotionally frail residents.

Meanwhile in 1983, there was a proposed rate cap on Title 19 (Medicaid) reimbursement rates to nursing homes threatening the Jewish Home for the Aged with a \$500,000 budget gap. In addition, the Jewish Home had an unusually high number of Title 19 recipients. Nearly 95% of the Home's

total resident population. The 95% figure points out the Home's policy of admitting patients on the basis of need, regardless of their ability to pay.

Of the annual budget of nearly 5 million, \$2,565,000 is paid in salaries annually to staff, 54% of whom are minorities. The remainder of the budget is paid to vendors, most of whom are local businesses. With all its financial problems, in October 1985, Brian Mesh was appointed President of the Home. He had been Assistant Administrator/Director of Fiscal Affairs at The Jewish Institute for Geriatric Care in New Hyde Park, NY. He was responsible for all matters pertaining to fiscal affairs such as budgets, reports to Federal and State Agencies, payroll, plant operations and security.

In 1990 with the State facing a multi-million dollar budget deficit, the Governor had limited increases for nursing home spending saving the State at least \$21 million. Because of these cut-backs in State funding, it forced the Home to lay-off 12 workers and reduce services to its residents. To cope with the recession and the State's frugality with Medicaid payments, the City of New Haven made a decision to issue up to \$8.5 million in Special Obligation bonds that would allow the Home to refinance a \$6 million mortgage and make some much needed improvements to the building. The Board of Aldermen approved the issue of the bonds that would not cost the City a penny. This refinance saved the Home \$120,000 to \$160,000 and allowed the hiring of four full-time workers. The upside of the deal for the City the chance to help assure that a steady employer stays in New Haven.

In 2007, the Home lost \$953,000, in 2008 \$830,000, and in 2009 \$845,000. In 2009, The Department of Social Services advanced the Home \$1.5 million from an emergency fund to help the Home continue to care for the long term Medicaid patients "Pending- A- Sale". The Department is to receive the money back upon sale of the Home. In 2011, a buyer was found and the Home was sold to a for-profit company. It was very sad that after 97 years the Home has fallen on such difficult times.

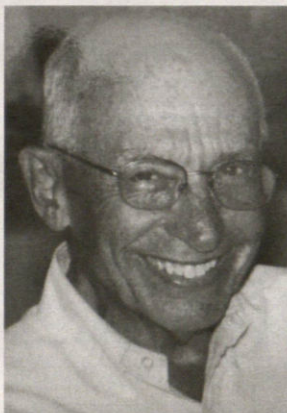
### **Credits:**

Jews in New Haven Vol V – History of the NH Jewish Home for the Aged  
by Harvey Ladin.

History of the Jewish Home – Thesis by Miriam Parker

[Jewish Home for the Aged, previously cited in *JINH* – I:7, 50, 117, 119, 153; II: 6, 9, 20, 23, 44, 55, 88, 102, 162; IV: 42, 95; VI: 138, 171, 222, 223; VII: 322, 331, 319; VIII: 100, 102, 103, 126, 171]

## To Auschwitz-Birkenau with Daniel G. Fischer, MD By David S. Fischer, MD



In May 2000, I had the privilege of traveling with Daniel (Danny) G. Fischer, his wife, Elaine, and her cousin, Allan Chasnoff, MD to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau where Danny was a prisoner in 1944. It was an incredible emotional and educational experience.

Daniel George Fischer was born October 28, 1928 in Craidorolt, Romania also called Kiralydaroc in Hungary in the region of Transylvania, east of Hungary and in western Romania. Before World War I, the area was Hungarian, after the war it was Romanian until 1940 when it became Hungarian again.

His childhood was unremarkable for the period.

As a Jewish child he had to learn Romanian, Hungarian, Yiddish and Hebrew. (The Yiddish helped him understand German and speak some simple German when necessary in difficult situations). In addition, he had to put up with the taunts of all kinds of local anti-Semites.

In March of 1944, the German army invaded Hungary (supposedly to protect it) and began intense persecution of the Jews with the help of the Hungarian Nazi Party called the "Arrow Cross." Forty days after Passover, the town's Jews were rounded up and 15-year old Danny, his 12-year old brother, Thomas, his mother, father and grandmother were loaded into an ox cart and transported the 15 miles to the railroad station. There, 90 people were crammed into a boxcar built to hold 48 and shipped to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

They arrived there on May 26, 1944, and Danny met Dr. Joseph Mengele, known as the *Malach Hamoves*, ("The Angel of Death") for the first of seven encounters. Mengele directed Danny to the left to join a forced-labor work brigade, and Tommy and his father to the right and he never saw them again.

After liberation and many difficult and dangerous adventures as he tried to get out of Europe and to the United States, Danny finally came to New Haven in 1948 for a year of high school to familiarize himself with the English language. Then he went to the University of Connecticut where he majored in biology and biochemistry, graduated in 1953 and with financial help from his Uncle Alexander Fischer, went on to the University of Vermont where he earned his MD degree. Alex Fischer had received a medical degree in France just before the outbreak of World War II, came to the United States, settled

in New Haven and opened an office as a General Practitioner. After Danny graduated medical school in 1957, he came to New Haven, had an internship at the Hospital of St. Raphael (HSR) and then joined Alex Fischer in General Practice.

I came to New Haven in 1962 and in 1967 left my full-time job at Yale Medical School to enter private practice as the first Medical Oncologist in community practice with admitting privileges at both Yale New Haven Hospital and HSR. After a few months, I began receiving notes to come to sign charts on patients of Dr. D. Fischer, but they were patients that I had never seen. It did not take long to figure out that it was the patients of Dr. Daniel Fischer.

We met and have been good friends ever since. We also had a common heritage in that my mother was born and raised in Bonffyhanged in Transylvania, very near to where Danny was born and she told similar stories of having to learn Hungarian, Romanian and Yiddish. In those days women were generally not taught to read Hebrew. She came to the U.S. in 1914 with her family. My father was born in Budapest and came to the U.S. alone in 1914, met my mother six years later, married her 1925 and I was born in 1930.

Over the years, Danny and I talked about taking a trip with our wives to Poland to visit Auschwitz and to see Budapest. Each time we discussed it, he said he was not quite ready. For several years prior to 1995, Danny felt the urge to go back to Dachau for the 50th anniversary of his liberation from that concentration camp and to thank his liberators. After much effort, he found out that the 42nd Division, also called the "Rainbow Division," (so named because in World War I it was originally made up of more than half of the nation's National Guard units with all their colors) had liberated Dachau on April 29, 1945, and that the Rainbow Division Veterans Association had scheduled a reunion in Munich, near the concentration camp since it was one of the highlights of their history.

The Rainbow Division, the Prime Minister of Bavaria and the mayors of the two towns welcomed Danny and Elaine in Munich and Dachau. He gave a speech whose theme was to "thank you Warriors who slogged your way to that terrible place. You have given me 50 more years of life...to reach manhood, to become an American, a physician, to get married and have children." After that he was made an honorary member of the Rainbow Division Veterans Association and invited to a number of their reunions in the U.S. to give talks about his experiences in the concentration camps.

In early 2000, Danny called me to let me know that he and Elaine had finally decided to go on a Tauck Tour to Poland and Hungary that would include a visit to Auschwitz in early May and invited me to join them. It was a bittersweet invitation because my late wife, Iris, had looked forward to taking

that trip, but she had died a year earlier.

The four of us, Danny, Elaine, Allan Chasnoff and me, met in Warsaw and we toured with the Tauck guide. Then in the “on your own” afternoon off, Elaine hired a private guide to show us the Jewish related sites in the city, particularly those of the Holocaust period. Among them, we visited the few remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto Wall, and the lone remaining synagogue that had been used by the Nazis to stable horses and had since been cleaned and restored as a synagogue.

We then went on to Auschwitz, which was divided by the Germans into three sections, Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II (Birkenau, with the crematoria) and Auschwitz III (Monowitz, which was primarily for housing slave labor for German industrial firms). Entering Auschwitz I, we went under the well-known sign, ARBEIT MACHT FREI (work makes you free). Danny did not see that sign in 1944 because he went directly to Birkenau. Inside the camp, we traveled the usual tourist pathways to see the red brick barracks where Jews and other prisoners were packed together like sardines on narrow shelves, with two people sharing a single, thin blanket. We noted the guard towers, the barbed wire fences (some of which had been electrified when the camp held inmates), the collections of shoes, luggage and other materials taken from those incarcerated there. Danny and the rest of us were pretty silent as we viewed these memorabilia.

When we left Auschwitz I on the tour bus, Danny approached our guide and asked if the four of us could separate from the tour group and move through Birkenau ourselves because he said, “I’ve been here before.” He did not specify when or under what circumstances the “before” had been.

We entered Birkenau on foot along the railroad track spur that traversed the entrance gate and had been specially built to unload prisoners near the gas chambers and crematoria. As we walked along the train track, we stopped periodically as Danny looked around and did some mental triangulation, and concluded, “No, this is not the spot.” We repeated this procedure at a few more places until he said, “this is the spot.” Then he explained, “This is the place that I met Dr. Joseph Mengele face-to-face for the first time.” He then related in more detail how he was separated from his father, mother, brother and grandmother whom he later found out had been gassed and incinerated that very first day. He lamented that it was a shame that we did not have a *minyán* of ten men to say *kaddish*. I said that we could say *kaddish* because we had a *minyán* of one million Jewish souls. We said *kaddish* and then we all shed copious tears.

Danny then took us to see the gas chambers, the crematoria, the barracks where he was housed (or shelved) for about five months and eating smelly

Liederkrantz as a protein source that may have kept him alive. When we returned to the bus, the tour guide asked Danny when he had previously toured the area. Danny told his story of incarceration at Birkenau in some detail, and in the area of the bus that I could see, there was not a dry eye.

Privately, Danny explained to me and Allan, that he was shipped out of Birkenau in October 1944, probably because the Russian Army was approaching and the Germans wanted to get those able to work to another concentration camp and get rid of the weak and disabled inhabitants and destroy the evidence of the gas chambers and crematoria.

(Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by Soviet forces on January 27, 1945, and interestingly, yesterday, January 28, 2017, The New York Times had a picture of a Holocaust Remembrance Parade marching under the ARBEIT MACHT FREI gate on the 72nd anniversary of that camp's liberation).

After a four day trip in a crowded box car interrupted by an Allied aerial attack on the train (but not the crematoria), Danny's group arrived at "Kaufering Lager 4", a satellite of Dachau where he contracted typhus and became very weak, but survived. After six months there, starving and barely strong enough to walk, he was transferred to Dachau itself where he finally saw the ARBEIT MACHT FREI sign similar to the one at Auschwitz I that he had not seen when he was shipped directly to Birkenau. On April 29, 1945, two weeks after his arrival at Dachau and weighing only 60 pounds, the U.S. 42nd Division, the Rainbow Division, freed Danny.

Our trip continued to Budapest, Hungary where Danny and Elaine met some family and friends while I took a taxi and found the apartment building in which my paternal grandparents lived and where my father spent the first 19 years of his life.

Reference: Fischer, DG: *From Auschwitz to Dachau: a memoir*, 2009, Shires Press.

# People Forget... New Haven Remembers

## Doris Zelinsky. Written in Jerusalem, June 2016

A Unique Story of the First U.S. Holocaust Memorial on Public Land and the Film Which Tells Its Story

In 2006, an independent community organization achieved non-profit status from the IRS to refurbish and preserve the greater New Haven area's Holocaust Memorial. Three directors, Fay Sheppard, Eric Epstein and Doris Zelinsky, created *Greater New Haven Holocaust Memory* (GNHHMemory) and initiated extensive revitalization efforts. The three lived within close proximity to the Monument on Whalley and West Park Avenues in the Westville area of New Haven.

As young New Haveners, Eric and Doris had joined thousands who gathered at the inauguration of the Memorial in 1976 and 1977. All three directors had returned for many Holocaust Remembrance Commemorations and events at the site throughout the years. As the decades passed and the survivors aged, the site showed signs of disrepair.

The three neighbors and their newly minted community organization accepted the responsibility and privilege to refurbish the physical monument and tell its story. Theirs would be a special custodial responsibility: Unbeknown to the survivors who had spearheaded and constructed the New Haven Memorial in 1976, it is the first U.S. Holocaust Memorial built on public land. As the three directors observed to one another in 2006, "the physical revitalization of the Monument and the telling of the story falls to us".

Nine years later, in 2015, *Greater New Haven Holocaust Memory* produced a documentary that showcases the newly restored Memorial and tells its story. *People Forget...New Haven Remembers* was created as the remaining survivors became increasingly few and often physically too frail to travel and share their stories in person. GNHHMemory had earlier created a museum-quality traveling exhibit that had visited the State Capitol, city halls and universities throughout Connecticut. This large exhibit was too large to install in many settings like classrooms and libraries. The new film would take its place.

November 2015: During the week of *Kristallnacht* an audience of four

hundred gathered at the Criterion Film Theater in downtown New Haven for the premier of *People Forget...New Haven Remembers*. Many in the audience paused and reflected that the Criterion theatre sits a few blocks downtown from the Shubert theatre, where early Holocaust commemorations had been held and the survivors had first envisioned the Memorial for their community.

The first showing of the film was opened by Mayor Toni Harp. She introduced the audience to the four stars of the film with whom they were about to journey, survivors Dr. Ralph Friedman, Shifra Zamkov, Chana Kuperstock and Helene Rosenberg. The fifth star they were about to visit with would be the Memorial itself, an everlasting physical touchstone left by the survivor community to remember the lives and communities they had lost and to reinforce the lessons of the Holocaust for future New Haveners.

Two of the directors of GNHHMemory, Fay and Doris, themselves the "second generation" children of survivors, briefly spoke about how the story of the Memorial and the individual stories of the four survivors are tied to them in echoes of their own families' stories.

At the close of the film, the theater was silent. Many wiped tears. Elena Lefkowitz, the documentary filmmaker who had captured this unique New Haven story on film, rose for a talkback and questions. Elena observed that the four survivors hailed from different communities in Europe and shared distinct personal stories of persecution, atrocity, loss and survival. She had worked to weave these four different threads together to present them as a single story of the shared Jewish journey of fear, destruction, cruelty, survival and memory.

These shared threads in the documentary also highlight the role of righteous non-Jews. At their peril, "upstanders", like the Haranins hid Shifra in a hayloft and righteous neighbors squeezed Dr. Friedman into a grain elevator floor space. Their humanity and help made it possible for the survivors in the film to come to America, rebuild their lives, and build in their adopted new home the first physical Memorial on public land.

*People Forget...New Haven Remembers* incorporates World War Two footage with permission of the U.S. Holocaust Museum. An original newsreel of the invasion of Poland provides a backdrop to Chana's memories as an eleven year old in 1939. Authentic pictures taken in Europe between 1939 and 1945 provide anchors to survivor recollections. Of course, the survivors themselves did not take photographs of their exact experiences.

After its premier, *People Forget...New Haven Remembers* travelled to Temple Beth Sholom in Hamden to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. The next afternoon, the film was introduced by Governor Dan Malloy at the Statewide Yom Hashoah services in the State Capitol. The film was the commemoration's "Keynoter". Before the film rolled, Senator Martin Looney rose at the podium. A young New Haven Alderman in the 1970's, Senator Looney recalled how he stood side by side with Mayor Frank Logue and then Mayoral administrative aide (and later congresswoman) Rosa Delauro, as the City's Chief Executive shook hands with the survivors and pledged to allow them to construct the Memorial on public land.

During 2016, many schools welcomed the film. Second generation Fay Sheppard and Doris Zelinsky accompanied these showings to introduce the film and provide students with talk-backs. In addition, a copy of *People Forget...New Haven Remembers* was provided to the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington at the Museum's request. There it is made available for viewing by groups and individuals.

This is New Haven's story...agony, perseverance, luck, renewal, commemoration. It is the story of how immigrant survivors knocked on a Mayor's door with a simple request: Give us the land and we will raise private donations to erect a lasting Holocaust Memorial in our newly adopted home in America.

*People Forget...New Haven Remembers* reinforces to all who watch the film the strength in community. It underscores the power of physical touchstones such as the greater New Haven Holocaust Memorial.

When the survivors who created this Memorial are no longer among the living, the physical Memorial and the 2015 documentary film will preserve their footprints in the sand.

*(See poster on the next page.)*

# PEOPLE FORGET. . .

# NEW HAVEN

# REMEMBERS

A Movie about the New Haven Holocaust Memorial

*"...to forget a Holocaust is to kill twice."* Elie Wiesel, Survivor

Sunday, November 15, 2015

Doors Open at 9:15AM/ Movie at 10:00AM

Bow Tie Criterion Cinema

86 Temple Street New Haven CT

Exact Admission \$5 Appreciated



The powerful memories of four Connecticut residents who survived the Holocaust drive our understanding of the dangers of hate. The New Haven Holocaust Memorial, the first of its

kind built on public land in America, is the fifth star of  
**PEOPLE FORGET...NEW HAVEN REMEMBERS**

Together, the survivors' memories and the New Haven Holocaust Memorial ground us in the powerful legacy of the Holocaust. We each can be an "upstander."

Our legacy is to promote tolerance and understanding and to eliminate ethnic prejudice so that the words "Never Again" are a reality.

# The Harold Grinspoon Foundation's Life & Legacy Program

## By Lisa Stanger

Real estate entrepreneur Harold Grinspoon established the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in 1993 in Springfield, Massachusetts. Harold's wife, Diane Troderman, has been his active partner in all of his philanthropic activities. They are deeply committed to charitable giving, primarily in the Jewish world. The flagship programs of the Grinspoon Foundation include PJ Library, Sifriyat Pajama in Israel, Voices & Visions, JCamp 180, and Life & Legacy.

Life & Legacy is a 4-year partnership program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation of Western Massachusetts that assists communities across North America, through partnerships with Jewish Federations and Foundations, to promote after-lifetime giving to benefit Jewish organizations and synagogues.

Through training, support and monetary incentives, Life & Legacy motivates Jewish organizations to secure legacy gifts, steward donors, and integrate legacy giving into the philanthropic culture of the Jewish community.

As of June 30, 2016, in less than 4 years, 35 communities and 12 Hillel Campus Affiliates, representing 391 organizations have secured more than 10,000 legacy commitments with almost \$500 million in estimated future gifts to Jewish communities throughout North America. More importantly, these communities are actively engaged in integrating legacy giving into their philanthropic culture, fostering camaraderie and respect among Jewish organizations, and providing generous and forward-thinking members with the opportunity to express their passion, purpose, and commitment to sustaining vital programs and services

One of the hallmarks of Harold Grinspoon's philanthropic strategy is to inspire other donors. To encourage them, he offers incentive grants to spark conversations that ultimately support Jewish institutions of all kinds. It's a method that he very successfully integrated into his Jewish camping program to help endow camps across North America.

### **The New Haven Jewish Community – Create a Jewish Legacy New Haven --Making its Mark**

Sustaining the vibrancy of any community over time takes careful thought and planning—and Jewish communities within greater New Haven are no different. Thanks to the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and their Life and Legacy program, the Jewish Foundation was able to sponsor Create a Jewish Legacy New Haven—New Haven's own Life and Legacy program. The Create a Jew-

ish Legacy New Haven initiative has blossomed into an important program for local Jewish organizations actively seeking to secure their community's long-term financial health.

Create a Jewish Legacy New Haven began in 2014 and as of December 2016, through this initiative, over 310 households have made legacy commitments and/or current endowment gifts for local Jewish organizations and synagogues with an estimated total of \$7 million. In addition, there have been more than 490 legacy conversations and 50 group presentations.

The purpose of the Create a Jewish Legacy initiative, funded by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven, is to assist local synagogues and agencies to launch successful endowment and bequest campaigns. The program provides funding, professional resources, training and mentoring to the participating organizations. In addition, over the four year program, the participating agencies will receive incentive grants totaling over \$270,000. By building the current and future endowments for our community organizations, this program will help sustain vital programs, services and institutions that advance Jewish life in New Haven.

Arlene Schiff, National Director of Life & Legacy at the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, commented, "Maintaining the vibrancy and strength of Jewish communities across the country continues to be a concern for those of us involved, whether professionally or as lay leaders. We are addressing this issue and transforming Jewish communities, by ensuring that the variety of Jewish organizations that make up the fabric of our communities are financially stable and able to meet current and emerging needs, by securing current and after-lifetime commitments that will grow endowments. Additionally, the program provides an opportunity for our Jewish organizations to work cooperatively on behalf of the entire Jewish community and for their most loyal and committed donors to support these valued institutions at a level many never thought possible."

"Over the next 30 years, an estimated \$30 trillion will be passed down from Baby Boomers and their parents to younger generations. There is tremendous potential impact for these funds on Jewish Federations, synagogues, the Jewish community, and the myriad programs and services that are supported," stated Lisa Stanger, Executive Director of the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven. "My job, the Foundation's job, is to assist community members in how they can provide for what is important to them in the community. We also serve as a resource for local professional advisors, as our agencies and synagogues."

For more information on the Create a Jewish Legacy program see [www.jewishlegacynewhaven.org](http://www.jewishlegacynewhaven.org) or contact Lisa Stanger, Esq., Director, Jewish Foundation of GNH, 203-387-2424, ext. 382, [lstanger@jewishnewhaven.org](mailto:lstanger@jewishnewhaven.org)

# Fire Strikes JCC of Greater New Haven

## By Jessica McWeeney

Around 3:30 p.m. on Dec. 5, 2016, a four-alarm fire broke out in the men's locker room sauna on the lower level of the JCC of Greater New Haven building at 360 Amity Road in Woodbridge. Around 300 children, staff and members of all ages were evacuated safely from the building.

In the weeks before the fire, the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven was in the process of evaluating safety and security procedures, and had completed several fire drills, so the staff was prepared and able to respond quickly. Initially, most people thought the alarms sounding in the building were another drill.

Staff helped evacuate the infants and children in Yeladim Early Learning Center and members who were in the building. Several people were in the pool and had to evacuate in their bathing suits.

Hoses stretched across Amity Road, which was closed for several hours while 60 firefighters from Woodbridge, Bethany, Orange and Prospect responded to the fire. Seymour firefighters assisted with coverage for those towns. Two Woodbridge firefighters were taken to the hospital for carbon monoxide poisoning after excessive smoke inhalation. They were treated and later released.

Everyone who was in the building at the time of the fire was moved to Brookdale Woodbridge, a neighboring senior living facility. Brookdale had offered their facility to the JCC in the event of an emergency. They also provided clothing for those who had been taken out of the pool, and snacks and juice for the kids. People waited inside Brookdale and helped to entertain the kids and hold babies while parents were contacted and arrived.

The fire was put out by 5 p.m., but the building continued to be filled with smoke and high carbon monoxide levels until late into the night. The Woodbridge Fire Department ruled the fire accidental.

The JCC building experienced significant water and smoke damage, with the water on the lower level measuring six to eight inches deep once the fire was put out. The smoke and soot penetrated the structure of the 106,000-square-foot building, including two miles of air ducts, which need to be completely cleaned. The recently redone basketball courts and aerobics studio were ruined.

Crews are working on-site daily to remove debris and clean out the dam-

aged building. The process of repairing and renewing the building is expected to take between six to 12 months, and is scheduled to begin in March.

The Beckerman-Lender JCC building opened in 1995, relocating from New Haven to Woodbridge. The JCC housed administrative offices, a fitness center including a pool and basketball courts, auditorium, library, preschool and afterschool, and numerous programs and services to benefit the community.

The Federation and JCC staff worked quickly to re-locate the programs and services that people in the community depend on.

The community reacted immediately upon news of the fire. JCC members and staff helped to clean, move furniture and supplies, and set up the new Yeladim school space. Yeladim obtained its license to operate within 72 hours, and was able to quickly transition to its new temporary home at Congregation B'nai Jacob in Woodbridge.

Most of the fitness equipment was damaged or destroyed. In the interim after the fire, members were able to access Woodbridge Town Fitness Center using their JCC membership, so they were not without fitness services. The new JCC Fitness Center opened on Jan. 2, 2017, at 4 Research Drive in Woodbridge, resuming fitness classes and babysitting services, along with access to cardio and weight equipment.

Sports and recreation programs were moved to Albertus Magnus College and Hopkins School in New Haven.

Federation, Foundation and JCC administrative offices moved to 1764 Litchfield Turnpike in Woodbridge.

The JCC offered a reduction in dues to members post-fire, but only a small portion chose to take advantage of the discount. Many members opted to remain at full dues.

The support from the community manifested itself through donations, volunteering and written letters. Members have shown their support through heart-felt messages shared on social media, notes left at the fitness center and written on the whiteboard in the fitness spinning studio.

One JCC member wrote: "I have realized that while I will miss the JCC facility, the important thing is being back together with all of my workout buddies. The bricks and mortar can be rebuilt (and I can't wait to see our new home down the road!), but the 'community' can't be replaced."

The fire has provided an opportunity to re-imagine the JCC building and evaluate how to best meet the needs of the community now, and in the future. Judy Alperin Diamondstein, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven said, "While change is never easy, it often brings good things if we are able to look carefully at our needs and work to address them. While we

do not have the luxury of time that would be afforded to us under different circumstances, we will do our best to work as quickly and efficiently as possible to understand the emerging needs and complexities of our Greater New Haven Jewish Community and seek input and expertise to guide us in re-imagining our physical center-piece so that it fits with that vision. All of our energy and creativity will be necessary for this next exciting chapter of our community story.”

[Jessica McWeeney is Editorial Content Manager of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven.]



*Fire Engines at JCC Dec. 5, 2016*



*Fire Damage at Lower Level of JCC*

# Camp Gan Israel of Greater New Haven – A History

## By Chanie Wilhelm

Camp Gan Israel was founded as Camp Tiferet Gan Israel in 1949, by Rabbi Dr. Moshe (Maurice) Hecht of New Haven. The New Haven Hebrew Day School had been established three years prior, in 1946, and the camp was originally founded in order to attract children to the fledgling school. This proved to be successful, and area children flocked to the camp, which was held in the same building as the newly-founded school, at 7 Dwight Street in New Haven.

Over the next few years, the camp was expanded to an 8-week program in July and August, for ages 4-12. Advertisements for the camp were placed in area newspapers and community newsletters. Ads dating back to 1950s advertise a program which included hot lunches, sports, dramatics, swimming, overnight campouts, arts & crafts, and door-to-door transportation. The price for a four-week session was \$75.00. Barry Herman, a notable New Haven figure, served as the director of the camp for several years in the 1950s, together with Dan Jannes. Sherwood Goffin, who later became famous as a cantor and accomplished Jewish musician, was also an integral part of the camp staff in the early years.

In the first decades of the camp, the campers numbered 100-120, and filled 2 school buses. Campers were taken on trips quite often, usually to a nearby beach where they'd spend the day swimming and playing ball games. Playridge Cottage in Woodmont was a popular destination, as was Hubbard Park in Meriden and Indian Well State Park in Shelton. Savin Rock Amusement Park and Lake Quassapaug (today known as Quassy Amusement Park) were also popular outings. Every Friday, the campers got together for a Shabbat program which featured Jewish songs and treats. Kosher lunches were served daily.

When the New Haven Hebrew Day School made the move to Orange in the early 1970s, the summer camp moved along with it. Now relocated to a sprawling 5-acre campus with fields, playground, and gymnasium, the camp continued to attract children from throughout the area. About 100 children attended each summer in those years. The camp provided kosher lunches and snacks, swimming instruction, nature hikes, athletics, and marketing material from the late 1970s and early 1980s promised "a unique blend of fun-filled, action-packed summer enjoyment in an atmosphere of meaningful Jewish experience." Individuals who attended camp during those years recall baking

Challah on Fridays, trips to a lake in Bethany for swimming, and a grand trip to Riverside Amusement Park in Massachusetts (now a Six Flags theme park).

The camp was now known as Camp Gan Israel (or Gan Izzy) and joined the worldwide network of Gan Israel Day Camps. (There are currently an estimated 600 Gan Israel summer camps throughout the world in existence today.)

Towards the end of the 1980s, camper numbers declined, and a new location for the camp was sought in the hope that a new setting would increase attendance. In the early 1990s, the camp was relocated to a campsite in Clinton, CT. The more rural and remote setting was an exciting change for the campers. Malka Katz directed the camp, and staff was brought in from outside Connecticut to run the camp, together with local counselors. The estimated number of campers during those years was 75. After only a few summers, the campsite experienced a fire and the camp could no longer be held there.

After the camp was relocated back to the NHHDS campus in Orange in the mid-90s, it was directed by Menachem and Miryam Piekarski of Hamden for a few years, following which Chayim and Sara Alevsky of New Haven took over the camp administration through 2003. Subsequent camp directors were Lori Pill and Perel Hodakov, and then in 2007, Schneur and Chanie Wilhelm began their current directorship. In an effort to separate the camp from the school, and establish them as two separate institutions, it was decided that it would be best to hold the camp at a different location. After a brief couple of years at the JCC in Woodbridge, the camp was relocated to Barnard Magnet School in New Haven, which has proven to be a convenient and centrally-located spot for the camp, and a location which has enabled the camp to grow.

The campus includes a spacious indoor gymnasium, air-conditioned facilities, large playing fields, and playgrounds. The camp attracts about 150 campers over the course of the summer, which is currently a six-week program. There is no minimum attendance required, so some campers attend for a week or two, while others attend for the full program.

The camp became accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA) in 2010. ACA-accreditation is an additional, optional level of accreditation, and the highest level of accreditation for camps; it means that Camp Gan Israel meets or exceeds over 300 standards for safety, program design, and operational management. Camp Gan Israel is one of less than two dozen ACA-accredited Jewish day camps nationwide.

A newly designed website debuted in 2016, along with fully interactive online registration and communication software.

CGI has three divisions: Mini Gan (ages 2-5), Junior Division (Grades 1-3)

and Sr. Division (Grades 4-6). With each new stage, children encounter age-appropriate adventures, field trips, and activities with the area's top instructors. CGI incorporates the latest trends and activities; for example, paper quilling, drumming, raingutter regatta, pinewood derby, rocketry, and 3D printing are all activities recently run at camp. A typical camp day will include swimming, archery, martial arts, yoga, sports, art, and science workshops. Jewish pride and Jewish values are encouraged. Each summer, campers join a fundraising drive for Chai Lifeline, an organization which supports seriously-ill children and their families. Over the last decade, CGI campers have collectively raised tens of thousands of dollars for this organization.

The camper group is very diverse, ranging from very Jewishly-affiliated to not-affiliated-Jewishly at all. CGI is a non-judgmental environment which caters to children of all backgrounds. All children enjoy a shared Jewish spirit through songs and activities. Time is spent each morning discussing Jewish stories, lessons, history, etc. Jewish-themed days and time-honored CGI traditions such as Shabbat parties and Challah baking round out the program. ACA inspector Carol Walsh sent the administration a note after her visit, which sums up the way many parents feel about the camp, which read, "Your work reflects the detail and care given to the children in your camp...Parents are lucky to have Gan Israel!"

*Thank you to Dreizel Kaploun, Malka Katz, Seth Leventhal, and Dena Weisman who were interviewed for this article.*



## Barry Vine Send a Kid to Camp Scholarship Fund By David S. Fischer, M.D.

For the past 65 years or more, the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of New Haven or its predecessors have operated a summer camp for children of its members, but accepts children of non-members for a higher tuition fee. In 1953, 10-year old Barry Vine was fortunate to receive a scholarship to the camp. He has never forgotten that experience.

As related in *Jews in New Haven (JINH)* 9:244-253, 2009, especially pages 245-246. "Barry also has fond memories of summers spent as a scholarship camper at the JCC. He relates that camp 'opened my world to new vistas and experiences. We traveled to Woodmont, the summer home of many Jewish families, where, as young boys, we sometimes peeked into the girls' dressing areas, only, to be scolded by our counselors. We learned camp songs, which we sang as we traveled to Wharton's Brook and Chatfield Hollow, parks where we swam and had cookouts. Each day we ate freshly cooked kosher lunches and on rainy days we went to the movies at the Whitney Theatre. We had arts and crafts classes and played many games, but most of all we developed life-long friendships with campers and counselors who became our mentors.' (Barry has been a strong supporter of camping programs and chairs the JCC Camp Scholarship Fund)"

That article is an excellent profile of one of New Haven's most civic-minded Jewish leaders and the reader is directed to it to appreciate Barry Vine. I can testify that in my experience, Barry is a real *Mensch*. His generous support of a multitude of Jewish and general charities is well known. When the JCC camp had more applicants for summer scholarships than it could afford to fund, they turned to Barry to chair the finance committee and increase fund raising.

In 2003, Barry and a group of his closer friends informally started raising funds for the JCC summer camp with some success. In 2004, they formally established the Barry Vine Send a Kid to Camp Scholarship Fund because they knew that Barry's friendships were legion and if he vouched for a charity it was worthwhile and he always "put his money where his mouth was." If he asked you to give, he was giving much more. From his 1953 experience, Barry knew how important a summer camp experience is, especially for a city kid who needs a subsidy (partial scholarship) to attend for two weeks or more. Children are accepted and subsidized (if necessary) regardless of

religion, ethnicity or skin color (we reject the term “race” as unscientific). Since then, the fund has raised close to one million dollars for scholarships.

The camp provides a unique opportunity for the children to spend time in a safe and enriching environment and to enjoy activities that enhance life experiences and friendships that begin one summer and continue to grow and evolve throughout life. In the early years, the vast majority of campers came from Jewish homes and the camp provided kosher meals. Over the years, the camp has evolved to become approximately 50% Jewish, and campers are now asked to bring their own dairy lunches, more consistent with their own ethnic diet. The camp remains Jewish-oriented, teaches Jewish songs and even has a *Havdalah* Service on Monday morning (it is the first opportunity after Shabbat since there is no camp on Saturday or Sunday).

Over the years, a variety of summer camp directors provided leadership including Lenny Margolis and Barry Herman. For about the last 20 years Debra Kirschner has been Camp Director. The JCC camp has an entering K-5 (Camp Shalom) group, an entering grade 6-9 (*Chalutzim*) group, and a CIT (counselor-in-training) group of 14+-year olds. Recently, pre-school age 4 (*Katanim*) group was established.

All activities have been at the JCC campus in Woodbridge, including the outdoor pool and swim lessons, drama stage, sports fields, music and dance, basketball, human foosball, field trips, archery, picnics, arts and crafts and four miles of hiking trails. This was made possible through the generosity of David A. Beckerman who has had a tremendous interest in summer camp programs for children.

Since the fire at the JCC in December 2016 (see article in this volume), arrangements have been made for the outdoor activities to continue at the JCC site, but indoor activities are scheduled at alternate sites. As usual, about 75 to 100 children will receive a scholarship.

To ensure continuity of support, Barry has established an endowment fund through the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven to provide a perpetual stream of money at about 4% or more from the funds in the Foundation as Barry and his associates and contributors age. Instead of enumerating some or all of the contributors, Barry suggests that we look at the annual report that lists them. Just this week (mid-February 2017), Barry was lamenting the death of Donald Perloth, CPA, a generous contributor but also a helpful advisor to a financial enterprise.

The author received substantial help and information from Barry Vine, Barbara M. Zalesch, and Lisa Stanger, but any errors or misinterpretations are the fault of the author.

## David S. Fischer, M.D., Editor of Volume X



When I edited volume eight, I listed my biography (bio) in the section of biographies of all the other authors of articles in the volume and the length of some of theirs was similar to mine. In volume nine, those authors who wished to list a brief bio did so at the end of the article they authored. Some chose not to do so, and I did not list mine at the end of any article I wrote. My bio was listed at the end of the book along with that of Barbara A. Rader, Ph.D., the assistant editor of the volume. They were written in the third person and together they filled one page.

For this volume, two people asked me if they could write an article about me just like those we have in this volume about other people. One was primarily interested in the Jewish aspects of my life and the other primarily in my career as a doctor. After deliberating at some length, I decided that the best approach would be to write my bio in the first person since I could report the two major themes of my life and give insights that a formal curriculum vitae could not.

My mother came to the U.S. as a teen-ager in 1914 from a small town in Hungary with her father, mother, an older and a younger brother. My father came to the U.S. alone in 1914 at age 20 from Budapest, Hungary, where his father was a *Shamash* (a person who assists in running a synagogue). My paternal grandparents never came to the U.S. so I never met them. My parents met in 1920 and were married in 1925. I was born in a small hospital in Brooklyn in 1930. The preceding year, my mother's older brother, David, developed a life threatening condition that required emergency surgery on his throat on a Saturday afternoon. According to my mother, the surgeon refused to operate until he was paid in advance, in cash (and banks were closed on Sundays). Early Monday morning David died from a respiratory obstruction before surgery. I was named David in his memory and on day one of my life my mother decided I would become a compassionate doctor whose goals would be excellent patient care with little concern about making a lot of money. I think I achieved both of her goals.

My father developed tuberculosis when I was two years old and was sent to a sanitarium near Saranac Lake. My mother moved in with her parents and unmarried younger brother. It was a strictly kosher house, mostly *shomer* Shabbat (they turned the lights on and off at night as needed). When my father returned, he hired a *melamed* (a Hebrew teacher) for a year to begin my education. Then I went to the local elementary school and after school went to the *cheder* of our local Orthodox synagogue.

When my grandmother died, we moved and my grandfather moved in with us. The East Midwood Jewish Center, a Conservative congregation with a synagogue, Hebrew elementary and high school was one block away. It was there that I had my *bar mitzvah* and committed to live a Conservative Jewish life. I attended Hebrew high school there in the afternoons while in the mornings I went to Midwood High School where my college advisor urged me to apply to Harvard which he judged to be the best the of the Ivy League colleges and the less well known, Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts which he judged to be the best of the Little Ivy League. I was accepted to both, but Williams offered me a full tuition scholarship and Harvard did not. I went to Williams where I did well academically and organized regular Friday evening services in the meeting room of the local Congregational Church. But there was no way to skip required Saturday morning classes.

I graduated in three years with a special scholarship from Williams that paid for three years of full tuition at Harvard Medical School. Those were years of irrational terror about communists promoted by Senator McCarthy. For the Harvard University graduation, I won a competition and was selected as the sole speaker for all the graduate schools at the Commencement Ceremonies. The speech was titled, "Freedom, Education and Security." It concluded with, "We know that a secure nation without liberty is less than worthless. A free and educated society can work out its destiny without surrendering to either unreasonable fear or blind adherence to security. Her future is protected by the devotion of free men."

After publication of my remarks in the *Boston Globe*, I received a few death threats, but left Boston to start an internship at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, then residency training at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City and at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx and a hematology fellowship at the University of Washington in Seattle.

I served as a Captain for two years at Womack Army Hospital in North Carolina as the physician in charge of the Emergency Service and the inpatient dependent medical service, While there, I authored and published three scientific (clinical) papers. Then I went to a fellowship in Pharmacology at

Yale School of Medicine (YSM) for two years and became an Assistant Professor of Pharmacology and Medicine for three years. Those five years were scientifically productive and I published 10 original papers in peer-reviewed journals, and eight abstracts or preliminary notes. So far, I have written or edited eight books on cancer, written a total of 30 peer reviewed or with co-authors, 29 reviews or book chapters and 17 abstracts or preliminary notes. Some of my publications were on ethics in cancer care and on the use of a variety of drugs, alone or in combination in the treatment of cancer.

In 1967, I had to confront the choice of whether to be a doctor who treats sick humans or a doctor who investigates disease in mice and hamsters. I decided to be a physician who treats people. This decision was prompted by several surgeons who asked me to set up a private office near but not on Yale property as the first medical oncologist in New Haven because of my qualifications. I am certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and its subspecialty Boards in Medical Oncology and Hematology. In fact, I took the examination in Medical Oncology the very first year that it was available.

Accordingly, I did go into private practice and started Hematology-Oncology, PC that ultimately grew to four physicians. I had the privilege of treating thousands of patients with cancers of many types, and I introduced the habit of asking patients if they wanted the truth about their cancer (the common practice at the time was to avoid the use of the word “cancer” and other unpleasant information and to lie in order to protect the patient from anxiety). I asked patients to bring a family member or close friend to medical visits in which these discussions would occur, and I would tell the patients the truth if they wanted to hear it.

I was a member of the group that brought the Connecticut Hospice into being and was honored with the Richard Blumenthal Patient Advocate for Life Award from the Connecticut Hospice in September 2013. I had previously received the Benedict Harris Award for House Staff Teaching, the American Cancer Society (National) Bronze medal for service and leadership, the Connecticut Division American Cancer Society Certificate of Merit, the Hospital of St. Raphael Award for teaching, service and leadership, and the Lymphoma-Leukemia first Physician Honoree Award. I also served as President of the Connecticut Division of the American Cancer Society, President of the New Haven Medical Association, and President of the Connecticut Oncology Association, Medical Consultant to the Lymphoma-Leukemia Society, and Chairman of the Public Issues and Nominating Committees of the American Society of Clinical Oncology and a reviewer for several medical journals.

Along the way, I have had the privilege of serving as President of the Staff and Chairman of the Medical Board at the Hospital of St. Raphael. At

Yale New Haven Hospital I was Chairman of the Tissue and Transfusion Committee for 17 years, a member of the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee for 35 years and the Human Investigation Committee for five years.

An automobile struck me in late 1992 while I was crossing the street and I sustained a comminuted fracture of the tibia and fibula, which were treated with an intramedullary metal rod, that was inserted incorrectly, and I developed reflex sympathetic dystrophy, which was intensely painful and made it almost impossible to walk for several months. I had to have the first rod removed four months later, and a different surgeon put in a different rod correctly. After a year of bed to chair existence, I resigned from my medical group and the others dissolved it. Several months later, Dr. Vincent DeVita, Director of the Yale Cancer Center, whom I had known for many years, heard about my situation, and invited me to help him with the Cancer Committee even though I was still getting around on crutches before I was able to get around with a cane. I accepted the invitation and have been Vice Chair of that committee since 1996 and at this writing, I still work as co-Vice Chair three days a week, overseeing the 16 tumor boards, the collection and publication of the data of the Cancer Program Annual Report and the annual Cancer Committee report to the Executive Committee of the YNH Medical Board in addition to several other responsibilities.

As early as 1999, I wrote to then Dean David Kessler and then President Richard Levin laying out the necessity for a Yale Cancer Hospital Building. In 2001, I again wrote to President Levin and suggested that if we did not improve the clinical cancer program and build a Cancer Center Building, we would likely lose the National Cancer Institute designation. I believe this was one of the determining factors that led to the building of what became the Smilow Cancer Hospital. I also started writing *The Clinical Cancer Program at Yale* in 2008 and published it in 2012 as part of the Bicentennial of YSM and it documented the history of cancer at YSM from 1942 to 2008.

In 1999 when my wife, Iris Fischer, died of heart disease, I sponsored an annual lecture in her memory in the Yale Cancer Center and an annual Scholarship Fund to finance summer research projects for Yale University Undergraduate and Graduate Students that usually involves travel to Israel.

In the Jewish community, I was President of the Medical Board of the Jewish Home for the Aged, President of Congregation Bikur Cholim Sheveth Achim (BCSA) for two years and had the privilege of celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of Bikur Cholim with a series of invited lectureships and other celebratory events. I was also a member of its Board of Directors for 30 years, President of the Hebrew Congregation of Woodmont (HCW) for 12 years, a founding member of the Slifka Center for Jewish Life

at Yale University. I hold continuing membership in those congregations and I have been a member of Temple Beth Sholom (TBS) for about 15 years. I was editor of volume eight and volume nine of *Jews in New Haven*, as well as this volume. I served on the Department of Jewish Education Board for many years.

I am now, and have been happily married to Ina Furst Fischer for 15 years and we live in the Whitney Center facility for senior citizens. We rarely eat in the facility dining room although there is always a vegetarian or fish meal on the daily dinner menu and also *a la carte* vegetable and fish choices. We try to remain kosher eating almost all of our meals in our apartment. I attend Shabbat services at nearby TBS fairly regularly when I am not invited to other synagogues to honor a friend or attend a *bar or bat mitzvah*.

I have been blessed with two happy marriages, three daughters and four grandchildren. Indeed, *Hashem* has been kind to me and I had the pleasure of attending the *bar mitzvot* of my two grandsons and the *bat mitzvot* of my two granddaughters each of whom did a splendid reading of their assigned *haftorot*. What more can one ask?

David S. Fischer, M.D.  
Clinical Professor of Medicine (Oncology)  
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