

Look to the rock from which you were hewn
הביטו אל-צור חצבתם



chicago jewish historical society society news

VOLUME XI, NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER, 1987

SEPTEMBER 20 MEETING FEATURES TALK ON STRAW HAT SHUL

Dr. Vishny To Discuss Anshe Sholom At B'nai Zion Congregation

The colorful story of one of Chicago's oldest East-European congregations will be the subject of the September 20 meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Dr. Michele Vishny has titled her speech "Anshe Sholom, Chicago: A Congregation Founded on a Straw Hat."

The meeting, which will be held at Congregation B'nai Zion, 6759 North Greenview Avenue, will begin with a social hour and tour of the B'nai Zion building at 1:00 p.m. The program beginning at 2:00 p.m. will also include a short presentation by Edward Bernstein, 16, whose exhibit on his grandfather Sam Lesner won a grand prize at this year's Chicago Metro History Fair.

Free Bus Service Available

Free bus service, available at the Marriott Hotel at Rush and Ohio Streets, will take members to and from the meeting. Departure will be at 12:30 p.m.; return will be at 4:30 p.m. and no stops will be made along the route.

The subject of the program is today known as Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation and is located at 540 West Melrose. Dr. Vishny will trace its development from its unusual beginnings on the Near West Side of Chicago over a century ago.

B'nai Zion Plays Interesting Role

"This meeting will provide members and guests with an opportunity to learn not only about Anshe Sholom but also about our host congregation, B'nai Zion,

TOURS IN SOCIETY'S TENTH SEASON PROVE POPULAR AND SUCCESSFUL

Local and Out-of-Town Trips Are Informative, Enjoyable

The end of the summer saw the close of another successful season of summer bus tours sponsored by the Society. According to longtime tour chairman Leah Joy Axelrod, the last tour, that of the old Jewish West Side held on August 9, was a sellout as usual. The other tours were similarly well-attended.

They included two entirely new tours, one to small Jewish communities in the southwest and far south sides of the city and one to Ligonier, Indiana, site of an important rural Jewish community in the last century. An account of one new tour appears elsewhere in this issue; the other will be discussed in the next issue.

"Our thanks are due to Charles Bernstein, Dr. Irving Cutler and Mark Mandle, who served as tour leaders this year," said Mrs. Axelrod. President Norman Schwartz commented that there would have been no tours at all without the careful planning and arrangements made by Mrs. Axelrod.

Suggestions for 1988 tours will be welcomed by Mrs. Axelrod, who can be reached at 432-7003.

which is playing an unusual role in its community," said President Norman Schwartz who advised people to come early enough to tour the B'nai Zion building.

Speakers will be introduced by Pro-
[continued on next page]

SOCIETY BUS TRIP VISITS VANISHED JEWISH COMMUNITY IN LIGONIER

All-Day Tour Views Remains Of Unusual Rural Settlement

by Mark Mandle

For the second in this year's series of summer tours the Society made a pilgrimage outside Chicago to rural Indiana to visit the remnants of a once thriving Jewish community. I was unfamiliar with Ligonier, Indiana, and curious about what the tour would be like. I should have realized that if Chuck Bernstein, noted genealogist, and Joseph Levine, executive secretary of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, were in charge, it had to be good.

Our packed but very comfortable tour bus quickly traveled the 140 miles from Chicago to Ligonier. On the way we went through Amish country and saw several Amish families and wagons.

Two Families Began Jewish Settlement

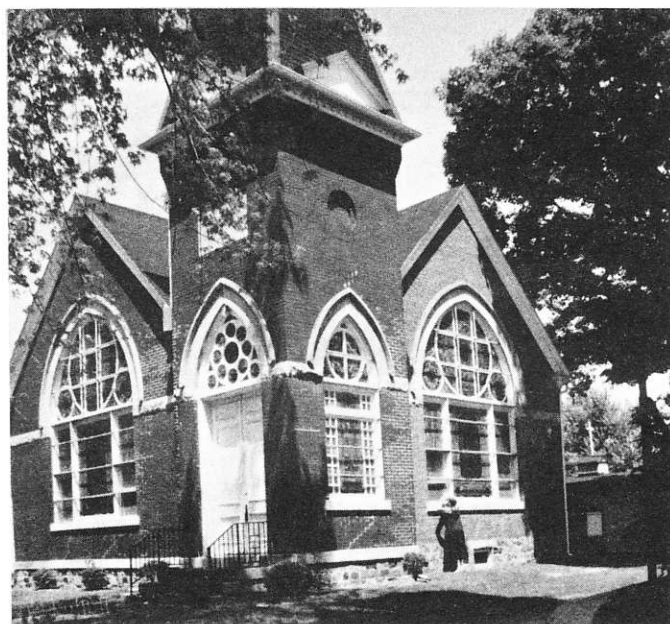
Ligonier is a small but pretty town whose population has never exceeded 2,500. We first stopped in the Jewish Room of the Ligonier Public Library, full of relics of the town's Jewish community. Mr. Levine briefly told us the Ligonier Jewish saga. It is a fascinating story of the Straus and Mier families who transformed an Indiana town into the second wealthiest small town in America in the 1890's. The families established banks, bought farmland and manufactured buggies.

The first Straus, Frederick William, (known as F.W. Straus) came to Ligonier in 1854 because the railroad was coming through Ligonier. The Ligonier Jewish community numbered about 55 families at its height. Ligonier Jews started a synagogue in 1865 which lasted until the 1940's. Like many German-Jewish communities in the U.S., the synagogue was founded as Orthodox and became Reform in a generation.

Town Full of Jewish Relics

The tour visited the charming former synagogue, which is today a church. We saw the section of town called "Jew Town" because many Jews lived there.

One intersection with four gracious corner houses was called Piety Corner because three houses were formerly occupied



120-year-old ex-synagogue visited on Ligonier Tour

--Photo by Les Axelrod

by Jews named Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We also saw the Jewish part of the Ligonier Cemetery with two imposing mausoleums and scores of well-kept graves.

The Jews Disappear

As the Jews prospered, their children went away to college and did not return. Members of the Straus family moved to Chicago where they became prominent as bankers and financiers. Today only the relics remain. The last Jew in Ligonier died several years ago.

The tour was skillfully planned by Leah Joy Axelrod. It offered a fascinating glimpse of a once-flourishing small-town Jewish community.

September Meeting (cont'd)

[continued from page one]

gram Chairman Burt Robin. Refreshments will be supervised by Hospitality Chairman Shirley Sorokin.

Dr. Vishny Specially Qualified To Speak

Dr. Vishny is a specialist in art history and has published widely in that field. She has served as a professor, primarily at Northwestern University, but also at other area colleges and universities during the past twenty years.

It is particularly appropriate that she speak about Anshe Sholom because of her family's record of involvement and prominence in local Orthodox Jewish institutions and affairs.

FIRST ZIONIST LEADER IN CITY WAS METHODIST MINISTER

INITIATED 1890 CONFERENCE, SOUGHT A JEWISH STATE IN PALESTINE

by Walter Roth

Nearly every person dwelt upon by H. L. Meites in his monumental work, History of the Jews in Chicago, was a Jew. Yet he included a story on the Reverend William E. Blackstone, a Methodist minister who lived in Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This inclusion aroused my interest, and after research on the Reverend Blackstone, I learned that he was indeed an unusual man who played an interesting role in local Jewish history.

I learned that he had written a book called Jesus Is Coming using the literary pseudonym "W.E.B." The book had sold millions of copies since its first publication in Chicago in 1878. It is still on the evangelical best seller list, and copies are available at the Moody Bible Institute Bookshop in Chicago and at other Protestant bookstores. It has been translated into many languages, including both Hebrew and Yiddish. In Hebrew the book is called, "Hofaat Ha Mashiash Ha-Shnia," The Second Appearance of the Messiah. Blackstone had many copies of the book stored in Petra, Jordan, for use by Jews who he believed would go there at the "time of Jacob's trouble," read the book, convert to Christianity, and save themselves from destruction.

Played Seminal Role as Zionist

But Meites obviously did not include Blackstone in his book on Chicago Jews because of the Reverend's conversion activities; he did so because of Blackstone's role as an early Christian Zionist.

In 1888, Blackstone, then a resident of Oak Park, visited Palestine with his daughter Flora. He was forty-seven years of age and a well-known Chicago Methodist evangelist and missionary. Revival meetings were at their height in America, and Blackstone, while not a mass entertainer like Billy Sunday, achieved fame as a lecturer and organizer, preparing his people for the "second coming" of Christ. He was closely identified with another Chicagoan, Dwight Moody. Both Blackstone and Moody were successful businessmen who had

In 1890, before political Zionism became a gleam in the eye even of Theodore Herzl, a local Christian minister made a concerted effort to have Palestine re-created as a Jewish state. Through conferences, petitions and other tireless efforts he sought Christian and Jewish support for his Zionist ideas. In this article, Walter Roth, attorney and CJHS board member, looks into the motivation, technique and results of the efforts of Reverend William E. Blackstone.

left the business arena to live a life devoted to their religious missions.

Pre-dated Theodore Herzl

Blackstone, however, added a factor to his activities which brought him in close and welcomed contact with the Jews of Chicago and America. He became a Zionist before the rise of Jewish political Zionism and before the call by Theodore Herzl for the First Zionist Conference. His trip to Palestine in 1888 was ten years before Herzl arrived there.

Like Herzl, he saw Palestine as "a land without a people and a people without a land." He was impressed by the new Jewish settlements there and saw them as proof that great events were at hand. Like the Reverend Jerry Falwell today, he saw the return of the Jews to their land as a fulfillment of biblical prophecies and affirmation that the second coming was at hand.

Chicago Christians in Old Palestine

While in Jerusalem, Blackstone visited an old friend, Anna Spafford, who was a Christian evangelist from Chicago. Anna Spafford and her husband Horatio had suffered a great tragedy when four of their children drowned in a mid-Atlantic shipwreck, with only Anna surviving. (Horatio had not made the trip because of a last-minute business interruption.) As a result of this tragedy, Anna had a religious awakening" and soon thereafter, in 1881, the Spaffords and some Chicago friends moved to Jerusalem. Horatio died in 1887, and Anna and her friends devoted themselves to nursing, feeding and teaching the people of

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Chicago Minister Sought Palestine for Jews (cont'd)

[continued from page three]

Jerusalem.

The group lived a communal life and became known as "The American Colony." The Spaffords also purchased an old Arabian palace in the Old City, known today as the American Colony Hotel. Over the years this hotel has prospered, and today direct descendants of the original Chicago family still own it.

Organizes Conference on "Israel"

The trip to Palestine undoubtedly inspired Blackstone to be more active in Jewish affairs. In November of 1890 Blackstone organized a Chicago conference held at the First Methodist Episcopal Church at the corner of Clark and Washington Streets to discuss the "past, present and future of Israel." Three leading Jewish Reform rabbis from Chicago were among the participants: Emil G. Hirsch of Sinai Congregation; Bernhard Felsenthal, the retired Rabbi of Zion Congregation; and Joseph Stolz of Zion Congregation. The Christian participants were Protestant ministers, professors and theologians. A minister struck the theme of the conference: that there could be no doubt "about the restoration of Israel."

Rabbi Hirsch, the great humanist and leader of the Reform movement responded, however, with his belief that, "We modern Jews do not wish to be restored to Palestine....We say the country wherein we live is our Palestine, and the city wherein we dwell is our Jerusalem. We will not go back...to form again a nationality of our own...."

Rabbis Disagree at Conference

Rabbi Felsenthal, on the other hand, did not agree with Hirsch's view and openly supported a return of Jews to their homeland. Yet the Jews Felsenthal was referring to for settlement in Palestine were not American Jews, but Russian Jews who in 1890 were coming under increasing anti-Semitic attacks in the Russian Empire and were migrating to America in large numbers. All of the leaders at the conference accordingly united in their call upon the rulers of the world to help Russian Jews. However, the Jewish leaders did not respond well to the ministers' accompanying call for their conversion, which was widely regarded as a Christian theological necessity.

The conference attracted much local attention and was prominently reported in the local press. The Zionist proposal stimulated discussion in both Jewish and Gentile segments of the city. Echoing the rabbis referred to above, the debates among Chicago Jews were to continue for more than two generations.

Formulates Petition to U.S. President

For his part, Blackstone went on from this unusual conference to organize a drive for the preparation of a petition on behalf of the Jews, to be presented to Benjamin Harrison, then President of the United States. The petition, known as the Blackstone Memorial, was completed in 1891 and is set forth on a subsequent page.

It contains a clarion call for the restoration of Palestine to the Jews. It called upon the President to lend his good offices to the calling of a Congress of European powers which would give Palestine back to the Jews and thus make it possible for Russian Jews, with both Russia's and Turkey's consent to settle in Palestine. Its similarity to Herzl's writings a few years later is uncanny, yet it is unlikely that Herzl saw it before he wrote "Der Judenstaat" in 1896.

American Leaders Sign Petition

Over 413 well-known Americans signed the petition before it was presented to the president, who while expressing sympathy for the plight of Russian Jews, never referred publicly to the Memorial. Among the signatures were those of J. P. Morgan, Cyrus Field, John D. Rockefeller, the future President William McKinley, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Chicago businessmen such as Potter Palmer, Philip Armour, Emmanuel Mandel and John Shedd, well-known newspaper and book publishers, and clergymen of all faiths including Roman Catholic archbishops.

Jews Endorse His Efforts

A number of Chicago rabbis signed the Memorial though objecting to the statement that Jews were not to be farmers because by nature they were to be "sojourners." The rabbis felt that Jews could also be farmers if given the opportunity by society. Many other rabbis and Jewish laymen also

signed.

The Memorial brought Blackstone to the attention of U.S. Jewish Zionist leaders, and he met with them often in later years. Blackstone kept up his efforts. He wrote to President Grover Cleveland in 1894 reminding him of the Memorial presented to his predecessor. In 1903, the Chicago Methodist Preachers Meeting endorsed the Blackstone Memorial, sent it to President Theodore Roosevelt and called for an "International Conference of the Powers" to meet to "consider the conditions of the Jews and their right to a home in Palestine."

His Efforts during World War I

Blackstone's wife died in 1908 and he went to China to join his son in missionary work there. In 1914 he returned to Chicago and once again took up his Zionist work. The First World War had broken out, and the Turkish Empire was in shambles. Blackstone like other saw the opportunity, and he began a drive for a new Memorial to be presented to President Wilson concerning the restoration of Jews to their homeland.

By then 75 years of age, he worked closely with American Jewish Zionist leaders, particularly Nathan Straus. The 1916 Petition like the 1891 Memorial asked the United States to call for an international conference to deal with the question of a Jewish homeland. It was adopted in 1916 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and presented to President Wilson. Such Zionist leaders as Rabbi Stephen Wise, Jacob De Haas and Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis welcomed Blackstone's efforts, consulted with him and often wrote to him.

Blackstone's impact upon President Wilson is conjectural. Whether it had an influence on the Balfour Declaration which came a year later is unknown. Some historians, however, have written that Blackstone's efforts must have had some impact upon events of the time.

His Conversion Ideas Overlooked

Blackstone moved to Los Angeles and continued his efforts for Zion. He wrote letters to presidents, but as he grew older he faded into obscurity. He died in 1935 at the age of 94. Blackstone the great British jurist, an alleged ancestor of the Reverend, and Blackstone the magician are still well known--but Blackstone the Zionist is virtually forgotten.

Blackstone is a difficult person for a Jew to evaluate. He was a staunch friend of Zion at a time when many Jewish leaders openly denounced Zionism. His efforts undoubtedly helped to prepare public opinion in America to be receptive to the idea of a Jewish homeland.

But the Jewish masses instinctively recoiled at another part of Blackstone's mission: his articulated attempts to convert Jews. Blackstone wanted to settle Jews in Palestine so that the millennium could come. But there would first have to be the "time of Jacob's trouble" in which two-thirds of all Jews would die because they would not accept the Messiah, and the remainder (estimated then at 144,000) would survive because they would accept the true faith. (Blackstone's book Jesus Is Coming was stored in Petra for those Jews would would survive.) In the meantime, and until the millennium, conversions of the Jews would continue.

The American Zionist leaders who embraced Blackstone apparently took a short-run view and accepted the benefits of Blackstone's work, little caring that in the long run Blackstone's theology offered no legitimacy to the Jewish religion nor hope for survival for its people.

A Stimulus to Local Zionists

Meites in his book took a similar viewpoint. He was willing to overlook the Reverend's conversion activities among the Jews of Chicago and to remember the good deeds of this Christian Zionist. Meites concluded: "Whatever may have been Blackstone's quixotic expectations as to the 'fulfillment of prophecy' through his efforts, his Memorial had a direct effect in the repeal by Russia of the expulsion edicts that had driven hundreds of thousands of Russian Jewish refugees to America and elsewhere. And it also started the first Zionist efforts in Chicago and in the United States."

Society Founders Get Married

The Society wants publicly to extend its best wishes to two founders of the organization upon their recent marriages. Muriel Robin, our founding president, is now Mrs. Fred Rogers of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Burt Robin, our current program chairman, was married in late spring to Susan Krill. Congratulations to all four.

--I.J.S.

CHRISTIAN'S 1891 ZIONIST PETITION TO U.S. PRESIDENT

SECURED SIGNATURES OF HUNDREDS OF AMERICA'S MOST PROMINENT MEN

The following is the text of the unusual petition prepared by the Reverend William E. Blackstone under the circumstances recounted in the previous article. It is particularly interesting because it anticipates the ideas and even the language to be incorporated in Theodore Herzl's later Der Judenstaat, which first outlined the program of Jewish political Zionism.

Memorial Presented to
President Harrison March 5th, 1891

What shall be done for the Russian Jews? It is both unwise and useless to undertake to dictate to Russia concerning her internal affairs. The Jews have lived as foreigners in her dominions for centuries, and she fully believes that they are a burden upon her resources and prejudicial to the welfare of her peasant population, and will not allow them to remain. She is determined that they must go. Hence, like the Shephardim of Spain, these Ashkenazim must emigrate. But where shall 2,000,000 of such poor people go? Europe is crowded and has no room for more peasant population. Shall they come to America? This will be a tremendous expense and require years.

Why not give Palestine back to them again? According to God's distribution of nations it is their home--an inalienable possession from which they were expelled by force. Under their cultivation it was a remarkably fruitful land, sustaining millions of Israelites, who industriously tilled its hillsides and valleys. They were agriculturists and producers as well as a nation of great commercial importance--the center of civilization and religion.

Why shall not the powers which under the treaty of Berlin, in 1878, gave Bulgaria to the Bulgarians and Servia to the Servians now give Palestine back to the Jews? These provinces, as well as Roumania, Montenegro, and Greece, were wrested from the Turks and given to their natural owners. Does not Palestine rightfully belong to the Jews? It is said that rains are increasing and there are many evidences that the land is recovering its ancient fertility. If they could have autonomy in government, the Jews of the world would rally to transport and establish their suffering brethren in their time-honored habitation. For over seventeen centuries they have patiently waited for such a privileged opportunity. They have not become agriculturists elsewhere because they believed they were mere sojourners in the various nations, and were yet to return to Palestine and till their own land. Whatever vested rights, by possession, may have accrued to Turkey can be easily compensated, possibly by the Jews assuming an equitable

portion of the national debt.

We believe this is an appropriate time for all nations, and especially the Christian nations of Europe, to show kindness to Israel. A million of exiles, by their terrible sufferings, are piteously appealing to our sympathy, justice, and humanity. Let us now restore to them the land of which they were so cruelly despoiled by our Roman ancestors.

To this end we respectfully petition His Excellency Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States, and the Honorable James G. Blaine, Secretary of State, to use their good offices and influence with the Governments of their Imperial Majesties--

Alexander III, Czar of Russia;

Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Empress of India;

William II, Emperor of Germany;

Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austro-Hungary;

Abdul Hamid II, Sultan of Turkey;

His Royal Majesty Humbert, King of Italy;

Her Royal Majesty Marie Christiana, Queen Regent of Spain; and the the Government of the Republic of France and with the Governments of Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, Roumania, Servia, Bulgaria, and Greece, to secure the holding, at an early date, of an international conference to consider the condition of the Israelites and their claims to Palestine as their ancient home, and to promote, in all other just and proper ways, the alleviation of their suffering condition.

[There followed the signatures of 413 prominent Americans, chiefly Gentiles.]

Sol Brandzel Chosen by Mayor To Head City Board of Ethics

Yet another honor combined with major responsibility has come to Society founder, board member and former officer Sol Brandzel. He has been appointed chairman of the City of Chicago Board of Ethics by Mayor Harold Washington.

The newly created board is charged with enforcement of a recently passed ethics ordinance designed to monitor the ethical behavior of both appointed and elected city officials.

A longtime civic and labor leader in Chicago, Mr. Brandzel has previously served as a member of the city colleges governing board as well as member and president of the Chicago Board of Education. He is also a past president of the Chicago division of the American Jewish Congress.

A BOY GROWS UP AT THE MARKS NATHAN ORPHAN HOME

MEMOIR RECOUNTS HOW LOVING CARE HELPED CHILDREN OVERCOME ADVERSITY

by Sol Berman

as told to Anne Berman

I was born December 18, 1904, when Chicago was still reeling from the shock of the Iroquois Theatre fire. The famous Dr. Joseph B. DeLee brought me into this world. I was born on Chicago's West Side in an area which was considered a middle-class neighborhood. We lived on Hastings Street, a beautiful, tree-lined, shady street populated by Italian, German and Jewish families. I remember a very friendly street where neighbor greeted neighbor in passing.

An old-time German band often came to play on the corner, and we were given a penny to offer to the leader in the hope that we would hear more music. We used to follow the band for blocks. I recall an old German who used to sit on his front stairs and smoke his two-foot-long German pipe, which he let me hold if I promised to be careful. I always hoped that some day I would be the proud owner of a pipe like that.

My father was in the construction business with my uncle as a partner. I was the oldest of three children, two boys and a girl. My sister was a very thin, sickly child who required constant care to keep her well. My mother fed her malted milk tablets, which were very popular in the early 1900's, in the hope that it would put some weight on her. Mother bought these tablets by the dozens, but my sister always remained thin.

My brother was a sturdy blond who was forever getting lost and then being found in the neighborhood police station with an ice cream cone in his hand. I really believed he enjoyed being lost in order to collect sweets from the police.

Horse & Buggy Days

Chicago was at that time a young and beautiful thriving city. We were the proud possessors of a new buggy and horse, which my father took great pride in and groomed and exercised every day. I remember the wonderful Sunday rides the family took in our horse and buggy on Chicago's boulevard system. The city had had the foresight to build a series of parks which

Every older person has reminiscences of his early life. Rarely are they shared as widely as they deserve to be and even more rarely are they recorded. However, in the instance of the late Sol Berman, his wife Anne wrote down his recollections of an unusual childhood and has since donated them to the Chicago Jewish Archives.

Excerpted from those memoirs is this moving and heartwarming story of adversity overcome and reassurance as to the worth of one of our now vanished Jewish communal organizations.

were linked together by its world-famous boulevards. It was a happy day for us when we went riding. In those days horses and buggies outnumbered automobiles four to one.

At that time, around 1908, it was possible to ride west on Twelfth Street (now called Roosevelt Road) until we got to Western Avenue, where we were already out in the country. It was just farmland all around. We loved to stop at various farms and buy a jug of buttermilk with lumps of butter floating in it and eggs still warm from having been under the hens. Eggs sold for twelve cents a dozen and were placed in a basket or paper bag, as egg cartons were unknown. Apples and pears were sold only by the bushel, and we were allowed to pick them from the trees ourselves.

Every trip was an adventure. Stray dogs used to come and bark at our horse. My father, a very gentle man, used to snap the whip in the air so as not to hurt the dogs but to frighten them away. Our horse would rear up in fright, causing us to scream in terror. It was not uncommon for some of these dogs to have rabies, and we were afraid of our horse getting bitten. My father loved the country so much that I often wondered why he did not become a farmer, but he claimed he was a city man.

Playgrounds and Ball Parks

One day my father decided to move to Polk Street, right next door to a playground. It was one of the first playgrounds in Chicago. We played there for much of our young lives. Mother always

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Growing Up in a Chicago Jewish Orphan Home (cont'd)

[continued from page seven]

knew where to find us.

The Chicago Cubs had their ball park on Polk Street in those years. Their mascot was a baby bear, which they paraded up and down the field. That's how the team got its name. It was the time of "Tinker to Evers to Chance," and God help the visiting team who tried to steal a base. There was no way with those three on the field.

About this time Carter Harrison was Mayor of Chicago. The city fathers decided to build a new combination city hall and county building, the present building bounded by Washington Street on the south, Randolph Street on the north, Clark Street on the east and LaSalle Street on the West. It was the marvel of its time. Built of huge granite blocks, it, in later years, caused me to shiver every time I looked at it.

Tragedy Strikes Family

Construction was started in 1908, four years after I was born. My father was one of the sub-contractors on the building. One dreadful Monday my father failed to come home from the task of supervising construction on the county building. My mother was very upset. She seemed to have had a premonition that something was wrong. How right she was! She called all her children in from the playground and held them close to her. It was not long before Uncle Dave, a huge man over six feet tall, came in crying like a child. My mother called out, "Sam?" and Uncle nodded his head, "Yes, he is dead."

Father had walked out on a girder on the ninth floor of the building to inspect it, and he slipped and fell to the ground. When they picked him up he was still alive. They took him in a primitive horse-drawn ambulance to County Hospital, where he died. It had been a long, slow drive to the hospital, and the ambulance had nothing in it to ease his pain. He was only twenty-seven years old when he died, and I was the eldest of the children. I was four years old.

Burials Before Automobiles

I still can recall how a funeral was conducted in those days. The custom was for hearses to be pulled by black horses.

The family of the dead rode in black enclosed carriages, as automobiles were still very rare. Each carriage had a brass kerosene lamp mounted on each side.

Most funerals were held in the morning because of the long, slow carriage ride from the starting point to the cemetery. A big wicker basket of food was taken along since the funeral started in the morning and didn't end until late afternoon. After the funeral, refreshments were served at the cemetery or in a nearby tavern. The corner of Twelfth Street and DesPlaines Avenue was dotted with taverns and restaurants where one could get a sandwich and a glass of beer. If you bought a pitcher of beer, you could help yourself to a free lunch laid out on the bar.

Funerals for the Rich

If the deceased was from a wealthy family or was a soldier, the hearse was preceded by a military band playing the solemn beat of a funeral march. The trip to the cemetery was long and tiresome and body-wearying. When we returned home, it was from a long, exhausting, bumpy ride on a dirt road.

There was another way of conducting a funeral, but it was more costly. This was on the elevated line's special funeral car. The car was attached to a special train that had a space for the casket and seats for the mourners. The train came down to ground level before approaching DesPlaines Avenue where the various cemeteries were located. There the casket was placed in a horsedrawn hearse and the family followed on foot to the cemetery.

At that time death was a double hardship. If it was a winter funeral, everybody suffered from the severe cold. The carriages had no heat, and we had to bring along blankets for protection from the cold. Everybody huddled together in an effort to keep warm. In the summer the heat was similarly a cause for mourner discomfort.

Sent to the Orphan Home

After Father's death, Mother had to pick herself up and go to work. Her first job was at the Mandel Brothers department store in downtown Chicago. She eventually worked herself up from selling in the sub-basement to becoming a buyer for women's



The former Marks Nathan Home, new in 1909 when Sol Berman arrived.

wear. My younger brother and sister went to live with my grandparents, who were already taking care of two other half-orphaned grandchildren. Being the eldest, I was sent to an orphan home, as Grandma and Grandpa were getting too old to take care of so many children.

I was placed in the old Marks Nathan Orphan Home on Wood and Division Streets, an old frame building which would be considered a real firetrap today. About six months later the orphan home moved to Albany Avenue and Sixteenth Street.

It was a new building specially built as an orphanage. It was steam heated and had all the luxuries of a modern building. Hailed as the finest and largest orphanage of the Midwest, it contained a house of worship, a public school, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a library and a huge cement yard that was ideal for roller skating. There was also a large playground suitable for baseball games and other athletic events. It was built with funds from many Jewish individuals and organizations.

Transition to Orphan Life

Unlike storybook orphanages, the Marks Nathan Home was operated by kind and good-hearted people. When I was first brought to the home, I was quite young and very homesick. I was turned over to the care of one of the girls in the home. She like other older girls had the responsibility of caring for a group of five or six children. The home used the Big Brother and Big Sister system.

These girls and boys were responsible to supervisors in the home for our care. The girl put her arms around me, introduced herself and took me around the premises at once so I would not see my mother and grandfather leave. She did a good job of diverting my attention from their departure.

I was taken to the storeroom, where I was outfitted with new trousers, underclothing and shoes. I was told my number was thirty-six, and it was imprinted in indelible ink on all my possessions. The storeroom was equipped with large boxes of seasonal clothes for each child. We were always well dressed.

We had large separate dormitories for boys and girls. Each room had approximately thirty beds. Linens were changed twice a week or as needed. All rooms were kept clean by outside help.

Feeding the Orphans

My Big Sister, May, told me that when I heard the bell ring it was for meal time. I was to wash my hands and wait for the second bell to go into the dining room. The home, being strictly kosher, had separate kitchens for meat and dairy cooking. After school we were lined up in the dining room and each child was given a sweet roll and a glass of milk.

The head cook was a special favorite of mine, a roly-poly woman whom I loved dearly. Whenever I was hungry, which seemed a chronic condition with me, I could go

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The late Sol Berman, a "graduate" of the Marks Nathan Home.

An Orphan's Story (cont'd)

[continued from page nine]

to the kitchen door and just stand there. Sure enough, she would always come out with a huge piece of buttered bread or another sweet roll. Thinking I was her favorite, I did not know at the time that she was doing the same for all hungry younger children who came and stood at the kitchen door as I did.

All our meals started with the blessing of the bread. The superintendent of the home always led the children in the prayer before meals. Eli Trotsky was a former rabbi from England who gave up a rabbinical career to become superintendent of the orphanage.

Each table had its own Big Brother or Sister who went up to the serving table, brought back the food and served it to each child at regular dining tables. Second helpings were always there for the asking. No child ever left the table hungry.

If I did not care for a particular kind of food, I would trade it with another child who did not care for his. For instance, if I did not like my side dish of beets I would trade it with a kid who hated potatoes, under the disapproving eyes of the Big Sister, who insisted that we should eat it because it was good for us. It seemed that whatever we didn't like was good for us. Oatmeal and beets were my particular dislikes.

Lessons, Play and Discipline

After supper those children who did not have any homework were permitted to play outside in the playground until bedtime. Some nights of the week we had swimming lessons under the watchful eyes of supervisors who saw to it that nobody got hurt or got into mischief. My dormitory consisted of twenty beds under the supervision of an older boy who lulled us to

sleep by telling us hair-raising ghost stories and other weird tales. I would lie there, the blanket covering my head, shivers running up and down my spine and loving every minute of it.

Discipline was doled out with a kindly hand. When we got into mischief, we were sent to the superintendent, who told us to put out our hand. He brought a ruler smartly down on the palm of our hand. We quickly learned that if we cried loudly and jumped up and down the punishment would stop. So, whenever I was sent to be disciplined I yelled and cried loud and clear at the first slap on the palm, and the punishment would stop with a warning not to do it again.

One day my buddy Charlie and I got into an argument and were caught fighting by one of the supervisors. He quickly put an enormous pair of boxing gloves on each of us. They were like large pillows. A crowd of kids quickly gathered to cheer us on. We started fighting, but the boxing gloves were so heavy that both of us rapidly became exhausted. Neither one of us was capable of licking the other. After what seemed like a long period of time, holding each other up as we could not longer raise our arms with those massive boxing gloves, we both announced that we did not want to fight anymore. We were permitted to take the gloves off, and with our arms around each other for mutual support we walked off in tears.

Real corporal punishment was never allowed in the home. A sharp word here and there was almost always sufficient to keep us in line.

Educational Opportunities

The children of the home were given education according to their abilities and their desires. All the children of the Marks Nathan Home were graduated from Harrison High School.

It was a proud day, just before my high school graduation, when I was called into the office of the home where there was a long conference table. Around it were seated various members of different organizations. They asked me to be seated in the center of this table and their smiling, encouraging faces put me at ease.

Their spokesman asked me what I intended to do after I finished high school. I replied I was not sure. I had taken me-

chanical drawing at Harrison and had thoughts of going into drafting. I was quickly discouraged by one of the members who suggested that I take up automotive engineering. He suggested I try it for six months and if I did not like it by that time I would be given the opportunity to change to another field. I was sent to the Greer College of Automotive Engineering. I did not care for it but stuck it out for six months. Then I met with one of the members of the board and complained that I did not like the course. The equipment was old and I was not too happy with it.

Trained for a Career and Success

He asked me, "Sol, do you have any idea of what you would like to do?" I told him I would like very much to attend an electrical school as I was interested in electricity. He then suggested that I apply to Armour Institute of Technology and see if I could make the grade. Several of the boys who were attending Armour were very encouraging and full of praise for the school. I applied and passed the entrance examinations with good grades. I took to the work and was happy there. Other boys from the home who were attending Armour were taking different courses.

I was still in the home when I got my first job with an electrical engineering firm. During that year all the money I earned was put in a bank account in my name. After one year of working I was told by the home that I was now old enough and able to go out into the world and support myself. My mother was called in and was overjoyed to learn that I could come to live with her and help support her and the rest of the family.

Among the children from the Marks Nathan Orphan home who graduated from various colleges were doctors, architects and lawyers, including two who became judges. Some went into the business world and were very successful; others went into various engineering fields. All were given the opportunity of a good education, often a much better one than that of children not in the orphan home, whose parents could not afford many advantages. We in the home had opportunities provided by various organizations and private donations, and I shall always be very grateful for them.

Sons of CJHS Leaders Follow In Their Parents' Footsteps

An interest in their Jewish heritage comes naturally to the children of Charles B. and Roberta L. Bernstein, both of whom make and have made important contributions to the work of the Society. We are happy to report that that interest has been recognized by awards recently earned by their sons Edward, 16, and Louis, 12.

Edward, a sophomore at Kenwood High School, was one of six grand prize winners among 3,500 entrants in the recent Chicago Metro History Fair. He won \$500 for his exhibit on his grandfather, Sam Lesner, the son of Russian immigrants, who became celebrated as an entertainment critic for the Chicago Daily News and other publications.

Louis, a sixth-grader at Ray School, was the sole Chicago winner in a nationwide essay contest on "What the Constitution Means to Me and My Country." His prizewinning essay, which resulted in a trip to Washington, D.C., emphasized that constitutional rights are particularly precious to Jews, who have suffered for centuries in their absence.

The parents of these boys have every right to be proud of such talented "chips off the old block."

--I.J.S.

New Members Continue To Add to Society's Resources

One of the best indications of the health and attractiveness of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society are the lists of new members published in each issue of Society News. Even after ten years, we continue to grow at an encouraging rate.

We welcome the following, who have indicated their desire to be involved in the preservation of the record of our Jewish past. And we suggest that readers tell their unaffiliated friends what they are missing by not joining.

Lester Asher	Library, Jewish Theological
Associated Talmud Torahs	Seminary of America
American Jewish Congress	Mrs. M. Raffel
Congregation Or Shalom	Charlotte Reiter
of Lake County	Florence Seligman
Jennie Einhorn	Charlotte Steiner
Cecile Hennick	William Steinfeld
Mr. & Mrs. T. B. Horwich	Charles Strizak
Nathan Jaffe	Jeanette Uhlmann
Emmanuel M. Katten	George & Ilene Uhlmann
	Dr. & Mrs. Sherwyn Warren