



chicago jewish historical society

chicago jewish history

Sunday, June 19—Save the Date! CJHS Program on Pioneer Chicago Jewish Family, the Greenebaums

History of the Jews of Chicago



Elias Greenebaum
(1822-1919)



Michael Greenebaum
(1824-1894)



Henry Greenebaum
(1833-1914)

“The Greenebaums: Memoirs of a Pioneer Chicago Jewish Family” will be the subject of the next open meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society on Sunday, June 19. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m., after a social hour and refreshments at 1:00 p.m., at North Shore Congregation Israel (NSCI), 1185 Sheridan Road, Glencoe, Illinois. Admission is free and open to the public.

Robert J. Greenebaum, Joan Greenebaum Adler, and James E. Greenebaum, II, all fifth-generation Chicagoans who now reside in suburban Highland Park, will reminisce about their family, whose members began immigrating to Chicago in the 1840s and 1850s.

They distinguished themselves in Jewish and general community service, business and the professions, and were among the founders of many organizations, including Chicago Sinai Congregation.

The featured talks will be preceded by a brief history of North Shore Congregation Israel given by Daniel R. Swett, a longtime member of NSCI, who has been working on a video history of the congregation.

For further information phone the CJHS office at (312) 663-5634. ♦

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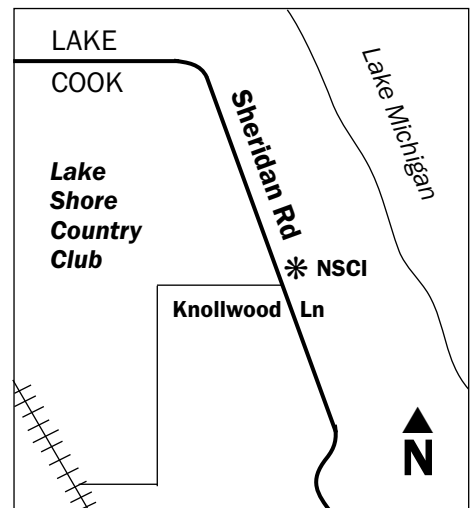
Meites Page 441
and Saul Bellow

Labor Union Activist
Mollie West

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Chicago Woman’s Aid

Nahmod Lecture at
SVAJ: The March on
Skokie Controversy

From the Archives:
Emanuel Congregation
Cemetery Book



NSCI, 1185 Sheridan Road, Glencoe.

TWO SUMMER TOURS: “Catskills of the Midwest” and “Chicago Jewish Roots”

President's Column



Walter Roth

ABNER JOSEPH ("AB") MIKVA HAS BEEN MY FRIEND FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS.

I met him in 1950 when we were both students at the University of Chicago Law School. Ab was a year ahead of me. By the time I arrived there, he was already a star student—an editor of the *Law Review*, and deeply involved in the politics of the university and the nation. Left versus right, liberal versus conservative—politics was the extra-curricular activity that engrossed many of us, and Ab was always the leader—on the “right” side, of course.

He was extremely helpful to me in the writing of one of my *Law Review* articles dealing with the judicial abuse of the rights of certain unions, whose access to the courts for the protection of their assets had been denied.

After graduating *cum laude* from the Law School in 1951, Ab became a clerk for United States Supreme Court Justice Sherman Minton, a former Democratic senator from Indiana, who had been appointed to the Court in 1949 by President Truman. Ab then joined a law firm which was primarily engaged in labor law; the senior partner was Arthur Goldberg, who would be named to the Supreme Court by President Kennedy.

After I completed my clerkship for U.S. District Court Judge for the Northern District of Indiana Luther M. Swygert, I visited Ab at his law office to ask about a job. He advised to me to accept a position with D’Ancona & Pflaum, a small, prestigious law firm consisting almost entirely of University of Chicago Law School graduates.

By 1956 Ab was heavily engaged in politics and had won election as a Democrat from Chicago’s Hyde Park area to the Illinois House of Representatives. He soon made his mark as an independent, incurring the wrath of Mayor Richard J. Daley, the National Rifle Association, and other powerful interests. Ab served five consecutive terms. During this period I saw him often. My wife Chaya and I purchased a summer home in Michiana where Ab and his wife Zoe also had a house. He was an avid tennis player, and the four of us often played spirited doubles matches.

Ab left the state legislature to run successfully for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he would represent his South Side district for five terms, continuing his reform-minded independence. Then a legislative remap destroyed his traditional base of support, and the Daley Machine slated a different Democratic candidate in the 8th Congressional District.

In 1972, Ab ran for office again, for a Congressional seat from a newly mapped North Suburban district in which he had recently established residence. Running as a Democrat in a Republican enclave, he was defeated. He then joined D’Ancona & Pflaum, in which I had become a partner. Ab was with our firm for two years,

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Chicago Jewish History

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

CJH WINTER 2005:

Five Chicago Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War.

First, our headline was erroneous. One of the five soldiers, Theodore Hirsch, was not a Chicagoan. Second, Helen Sclair, Chicago's authoritative "Cemetery Lady," tells us that the Confederate POWs who died at Camp Douglas were buried in the City Cemetery, north of North Avenue at Clark Street. As the result of a law suit in 1865, that cemetery was closed, and the soldiers' remains were reinterred in Oak Woods Cemetery, at 1035 East 67th Street.

Report: February 9 Newberry/CJHS Program.

The publication dates of two of Meyer Levin's books were incorrect. *The Fanatic*, a novel, appeared in 1964; *The Obsession*, a memoir about about his dramatization of the Anne Frank diary, appeared in 1973.

Announcement: April 3 Nahmod Lecture.

Lewis Saltzman, past president of Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob Synagogue, presented a brief history of SVAJ before Prof. Nahmod's talk. In our announcement, "past" was omitted from Mr. Saltzman's title.

CJH FALL 2004:

Books by CJHS Authors. We listed the books by Dr. Irving Cutler, but failed to note that in the newly published *Encyclopedia of Chicago* he wrote the entry on the Jewish community.

Vera Caspary. Caspary writes in her autobiography, *The Secrets of Grown-Ups*, that her family's next door neighbors on Rhodes Avenue were Judge Barnett and his wife, the lawyer Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Our article repeated Caspary's errors. Ferdinand Barnett was a lawyer and the founder of the first black newspaper in Chicago; Ida B. Wells-Barnett was a journalist. Both of them were prominent civil rights activists.

CJH YEAR-END 2002:

Chicago Jewish Firefighters. "Leonard Shankman was a CFD battalion chief at 46th Street and Cottage Grove, and also at 61st and Western (I never could remember the battalion numbers). His death occurred in 1970 of an injury that was determined to be occupational. We are very proud of him! I found the statement about his Fire Department records being "sketchy" interesting, so I am filling in the picture. Thanks for doing the research." —*e-mail from Leonard E. Shankman, the son of Battalion Chief Shankman.*

CJH regrets the errors. Here is a reminder of the Society's e-mail address: info@chicagojewishhistory.org.

FREE—Sunday, May 22: "Maxwell Street People and Places" Trolley Tour with Carolyn Eastwood 9:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

Dr. Carolyn Eastwood, author of *Near West Side Stories*, and CJHS recording secretary, leads a tour that emphasizes the flow of immigrants through the Maxwell Street neighborhood. Visit Chicago's former port of entry, and hear the stories of the ordinary citizens who led extraordinary battles to save the neighborhood they loved.

Presented by the City of Chicago as part of the 7th Annual Great Chicago Places and Spaces celebration.

**Register Sunday only beginning at 7:30 a.m.
Chicago Architecture Foundation/ArchiCenter
Santa Fe Building Atrium
224 South Michigan Avenue at Jackson**

A WALK TO SHUL Now Available at Bookstores

Bea Kraus and Norman D. Schwartz's book, *A WALK TO SHUL: Chicago Synagogues of Lawn-dale and Stops on the Way*, a street-by-street stroll past the Jewish institutions and businesses of the old West Side neighborhood, was published in 2003 by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. The 159-page paperback is illustrated with photographs of the great synagogues and modest *shtiblekh*. Retail price \$19.95. Previously available only from the Society, it can now be purchased at:

Bariff Shop for Judaica, Spertus Institute
618 South Michigan Avenue, (312) 322-1740
Discount for CJHS members

Museum Store, Chicago Historical Society
1601 North Clark Street, (312) 642-4600

Rosenblum's World of Judaica
2906 West Devon Avenue, (773) 262-1700

Now Online:
The Encyclopedia of Chicago
<http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org>

Meyer Levin and the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937

BY WALTER ROTH

Meyer Levin's novel *The Old Bunch* was published in 1937. It recounts the lives of a group of Jewish teenagers from Chicago's West Side as they grow to adulthood. Some of the characters are idealists who become doctors and public school teachers, and become participants in the labor union turmoil of the Depression years. The book is 964 pages long, and Levin called it his "magnum opus."

Levin himself became involved in labor strife when he joined an organization called "New America." In his autobiography, *In Search* (1950), Levin refers to it as typical of a number of groups on Chicago's West Side that attracted "non-communist progressives." To him, it was an advocacy group for a "Super New Deal." Through New America, intellectuals like Levin were apparently seeking to become union organizers for the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations).

A large protest demonstration by the CIO and their sympathizers, seeking their right to organize, occurred on the afternoon of Memorial Day, May 30, 1937, in a field near the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago. What transpired that day has been recorded by the Illinois Labor History Society in a documentary video, containing uncut and uncensored film footage. An article on the ILHS web site reads:

"Ten demonstrators were killed by police bullets during the 'Little Steel Strike' of 1937. When several smaller steelmakers, including Republic Steel, refused to follow the lead of U.S. Steel ("Big Steel") by signing a union contract, a strike was called by the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) of the CIO. As a show of support, hundreds of



Chicago police attacking CIO demonstrators, South Chicago, Memorial Day, 1937.
Still from documentary film. Courtesy Illinois Labor History Society.

SWOC sympathizers from all around Chicago gathered on Memorial Day at Sam's Place, where the SWOC had its strike headquarters. After a round of speeches, the crowd began a march across the prairie toward the Republic Steel mill. They were stopped midway by a formation of Chicago police. While demonstrators in front were arguing for their right to proceed, police fired into the crowd and pursued the people as they fled. Mollie West, a Typographical Union Local 16 member and a youthful demonstrator at the time, still recalls the command addressed to her: 'Get off the field or I'll put a bullet in your back.' "

Mollie West is now executive secretary of the Illinois Labor History Society. She is Jewish and she, together with many other Jewish union members and sympathizers, had driven to the Memorial Day demonstration to show their solidarity with the steelworkers. She is now in her late eighties and still recalls the speech she made at the time on behalf of the strikers. She also recalls that a dance scheduled that night at the Jewish People's Institute on the West Side was cancelled and turned into a rally for the workers killed and wounded in what would later be called "The Memorial Day Massacre of 1937."

Many members of other unions joined the Memorial Day demonstration, including unions that were predominantly Jewish. For example, Leo Krzycki, an Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union organizer for the Chicago-Milwaukee region, spoke to the crowd, praising

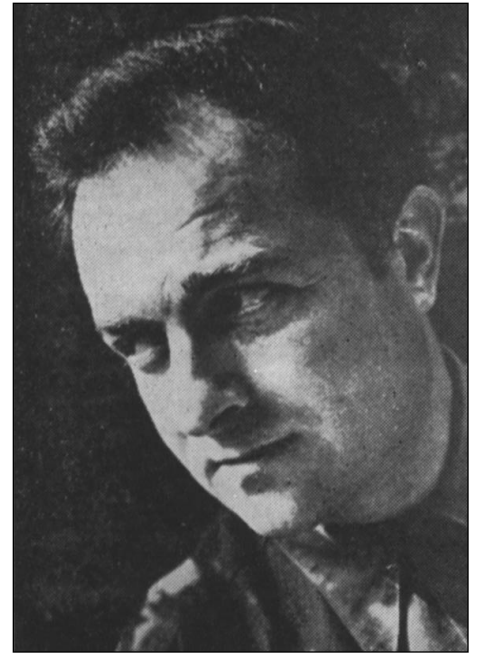
President Roosevelt and supporting the workers' right to organize.

Meyer Levin, then a free-lance reporter, witnessed all these occurrences—the speeches, the shootings, and the chaos that followed—and recorded his interviews and notes for the novel, *Citizens*, that he intended to write. He went to the hospital where he saw and photographed the ten dead and the seventy-five wounded, who included women and children.

A Senate committee chaired by Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin sent investigators to Chicago and then held meetings in Washington. While most of the Chicago press, particularly the *Chicago Tribune*, condemned the strikers as "Reds," and accused them of instigating the attack, the LaFollette Committee blamed the Republic Steel plant management and the Chicago police. Mayor Edward J. Kelly promised that no such event would ever occur again in Chicago.

Levin, in his autobiography, reports on the "Jew-bribing" and "Fascistic" reaction of the police, but took comfort in the mass rally held the following week, on June 8, at the Chicago Opera House, in support of the strikers, and as a memorial to the victims. Professor Paul Douglas of the University of Chicago chaired the rally. (Douglas would later be elected U.S. Senator from Illinois).

Levin was not yet ready to sit down to work on his Chicago labor union novel, *Citizens*. Instead he sought out another "hot" reportorial assignment, this time far away from Chicago. He approached the publisher Melvin Morris, who was establishing a new liberal magazine called *Inside*, and obtained an assignment to report on the raging Spanish Civil War. Levin went to Spain in the summer of 1937, one



Meyer Levin (1905-1981).
The Sentinel, 1961

month after the labor strike. His wife accompanied him. She became pregnant there, and a son, Eli (now an artist living in Santa Fe, New Mexico), was born.

Levin wrote about the Spanish Civil War without much probing or analysis. He simply found that the Left was losing to the Fascist forces of the Right. He was at a loss on how to explain the discord among the anarchists, communists and socialists as they were all battling the Franco forces. A few months later, he shifted his focus once again, and left Spain for Palestine—his third trip there. The riots that were engulfing Palestine, he reported, were caused by the same "Fascistic" forces that he encountered in Spain. He encountered old friends from his previous visits, people with whom he could identify.

Nevertheless, with war breaking out in Europe in September 1939, and with the birth of his son, Levin

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Meyer Levin *continued from page 5*

returned to the United States to begin writing *Citizens*. Like some of his earlier books, *Citizens* is a social realist work. Although none of his earlier novels had been commercially successful, and despite a “writer’s block” to which he alludes a number of times in his autobiography, Levin was determined to proceed.

He rented a room in Gary, Indiana, and he managed to get hired for administrative work at one of the nearby steel mills, where he could meet the workers, learn about their jobs, and question them about their lives. Most of all, he could find out about the workers’ relationship to the economic system in America. He would portray each of the ten workers killed on Memorial Day, show each man at his particular job, and follow the work of the mill from start to finish, “so that each portion of the novel furthered the other.”

Levin used testimony from the Senate hearings and his own notes to relate actual events. But, as a novelist, he also added fictional material. About a hundred pages of *Citizens* deal with the actual strike story; the rest of the book is about the lives of the slain strikers, (composites of a number of people). As in Levin’s own personal life at the time, his characters are alienated, consider themselves society’s outsiders, unable to become part of a cohesive, creative group in America.

There is only one Jewish figure in *Citizens*. He is Mitch Wilner, the idealistic young doctor who is a leading character in *The Old Bunch*. Wilner witnesses the killings that take place during the strike, and he becomes Levin’s main narrator and “mouthpiece.” Wilner gets the workers to tell their side of the class struggle. The suffering of the workers and their families is described, as is the violence and bias of the police. One of the few policemen depicted individually is the “bull cop,” a man of violence. Other officers appear to be victims of circumstance, whipped into a state of frenzy by their evil superiors. Levin, at least in this 1940 novel, sees the workers as the victims of the capitalist system. Yet he protested often, at the time, that he was not a communist. He wrote that he hated the communists for their belief in the complete control of the individual citizen.

After finishing a draft of *Citizens* in the fall of 1939, Levin went to New York to confer with his publisher, who “could see my book as a really outstanding American novel—a sort of industrial *Grapes of Wrath*—

and was prepared to launch it as such.” But the publisher had one main objection: “it concerned Mitch Wilner, the Jewish doctor who helped the strikers.” He wanted the doctor to be more typically American, perhaps of Swedish or other European descent. Levin objected; not only was Wilner a link to *The Old Bunch*, but Levin knew, as he writes in his autobiography, any doctor within labor circles would most likely be a Jew. As for being typical of the American scene: “since my book followed a set of actual events, it would be a distortion to pretend that the doctor was not a Jew.”

Levin thought about the publisher’s suggestion, had a dream about it, agonized about it, and then informed his publisher that he “could not alter the Wilner character. There had to be a world in which honesty was permissible.” So Dr. Wilner, the Jewish doctor, remained a main character in the novel, published by Viking Press in 1940, just as Levin had written it.

With the exception of *Compulsion* (1956), *Citizens* was the last book Levin wrote about the American scene. He turned away from his struggle with his identity as a Jew in America, as well as from the socio-political problems of this country. His experiences as a reporter in World War II Europe, and as an early eyewitness to the horrors of the Holocaust death camps, changed the direction of his life and writing. His second wife, Tereska, was a young French survivor of the Holocaust and a Zionist. He began writing on distinctly Jewish themes and with a Zionist outlook, and made his home in Israel.

But difficulties dogged him. Controversy and litigation over his “Jewish-Zionist” dramatization of *The Diary of Anne Frank* lasted almost a decade. His most successful book, play, and movie, *Compulsion*, involved him in another ten year court battle in Illinois.

A commemoration of the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937 was held last year on Sunday, May 30. One of the speakers, Ed Sadlowski, a former district director of the Steel Workers Union, said: “We are holding this memorial because we are proud of our heritage. We want to inform our children and our children’s children, that all the gains we have made we owe to those who stood and died on the field that day.” A commemoration meeting and rally will again take place this year.

Although *Citizens* was not a commercial success for Meyer Levin, I think he would have been pleased that Ed Sadlowski, now a college teacher, uses the book in his classroom as a text on Chicago labor history. ♦

WALTER ROTH is president of CJHS.



Bernece Berkman (1911-1988). *Current News, 1937.*

Oil on board 20 x 40 inches. Collection of Jim and Randi Williams, Nashville, Tennessee.

**Republic Steel
Memorial Day 1937
Commemoration
Meeting and Rally**
SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2005
2:00 p.m.

**Memorial Hall
(USWA Local 1033)
11731 South Avenue O
Chicago, Illinois
(773) 646-4370**

From the ILHS web site:

"A memorial to the ten who died can be found at the union hall of USWA Local 1033, which now occupies the area where Sam's Place once stood, about a ten-minute drive from Pullman. From Pullman take I-94 north to the 103rd St. exit. Go east to Torrence Ave., then south to 106th. Turn left past the rotting hulk of Wisconsin Steel. Cross the Calumet River and watch for Avenue O. Turn south to 117th, and look for the flagpole."

An essay by Susan S. Weininger accompanies a full color reproduction of this painting in the book *Chicago Modern, 1893-1945: Pursuit of the New* (Terra Foundation for the Arts, Chicago, 2004): "...*Current News* was inspired by the Republic Steel strike of 1937 in South Chicago.... Berkman does not present the strike and its violence directly, but rather she frames it through the image of ordinary citizens reading about the events in the newspaper. Her style, which is reminiscent of both [Todros] Geller and [Rudolph] Weisenborn in its use of cubist and expressionist elements, enables her to suggest the oppression and rage of the ethnic working people in a forceful and convincing way..."

This book was published in conjunction with the exhibition *Chicago Modern, 1893-1945: Pursuit of the New*, organized by the Terra Museum of American Art in Chicago where it was on view from July 17—October 31, 2004, when the museum closed permanently. Some of the finest pieces from the Terra collection can now be seen at The Art Institute of Chicago in its newly enlarged galleries of American art. ❖

Visit the Illinois Labor History Society web site: www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs. (Site is sponsored by the Center for Law and Computers at Chicago-Kent College of Law.) Order online from the Labor History Bookstore:

VIDEO #201: MEMORIAL DAY MASSACRE OF 1937. Contains uncut and uncensored newsreel film. Includes discussion of events leading up to and following this tragic day. B&W. 17 minutes. \$50.00

Illinois Labor History Society
28 East Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 663-4107

INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AND FINANCE

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MOSES BENSINGER was a native of Louisville, Ky. Coming to Chicago, he built up and became president of the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co., the largest manufacturer of billiard equipment in the world. He was one of the most active supporters of Sinai Congregation, and was one of its directors for a number of years. He was also a director of the Michael Reese Hospital, and took a keen interest in various charitable institutions. He married Eleanor Brunswick, and was the father of Benjamin Bensinger, Mrs. Cora Hyman, and Mrs. Edna Fish. Moses Bensinger's kindly nature made him one of the best-liked men in Chicago, and his death, which occurred October 4, 1904, was widely mourned in the community.



ALBERT HENRY LOEB is vice-president and treasurer of Sears, Roebuck & Co., the great, nationally known mail order house. He was born in Rockford, Ill., February 18, 1868, the son of Moritz and Johanne Loeb. He was educated in the public and high schools of Chicago, and later at Johns Hopkins University, where he specialized in history and political science. Following his graduation from Johns Hopkins, Loeb taught in the public night schools of Chicago, while during the day he studied law. He was admitted to the bar of Illinois in 1889, and practiced his profession for several years as a member of the law firm of Loeb & Adler. In 1901 he left the active practice of law to become secretary of Sears, Roebuck & Co., and in 1908 he was made vice-president and treasurer of that great organization, a post he has held ever since. Loeb has been active in many avenues of communal and civic life in addition to his busy business career. His name is prominently associated with all forms of Jewish activity in Chicago, as well as with many movements having for their purpose the betterment of civic conditions, without regard to creed. Anna Bohnen became his wife in Chicago, April 26, 1894, and there are four children, Allan M., Ernest G., Richard A., and Thomas H. Loeb.



OSCAR MEYER was born in Chicago, January 12, 1876. His father, Martin Meyer, came to the United States in 1852, landing in Boston and moving to Chicago in 1865, where, as a member of the Germania Maennerchor, he sang at the bier of Abraham Lincoln. Young Meyer's playmate was a grandson of Lincoln. After completing public school, he pursued a business course and then attended Art school. In 1899, he founded the firm of Meyer Both Co., commercial art and advertising, of which he is president. During the world war, he was district chairman of the Sixth Ward Liberty Loan campaigns. He was a director of the Associated Charities and is a member of the Standard and Northmoor Country Clubs, and the Equestrian Association. He was married in Milwaukee, Wis., July 11, 1904, to Aimee Grauman, and has two children, Stanton M., and Fanny Lee.



TOBY RUBOVITS, born in Hungary January 18, 1857, came to the United States in 1871, settling at once in Chicago, where he has resided ever since. He was early attracted to the printing and publication field and has specialized in fine printing, binding and engraving. He has given freely of his personal effort to the Jewish People's Institute, and the Free Employment Bureau, and is a member of Isaiah Congregation, the B'nai B'rith and Royal Arcanum, and is a Mason. He is identified with a number of clubs, and is a member of the Committee of Education of the United Typothetae of America. He was married in Chicago in 1890 to Hannah Goodkind, and is the father of three children: Arthur G., Walter I., and Richard A. Rubovits.

JULIUS HOWARD MINER was born in Lubin, Russia, May 25, 1896. He received a thorough Jewish education, after which he left for Chicago to join his father, in December, 1907. Here, after graduating from the Medill High School he entered Kent College of Law. He has been in practice since 1917, and is also president of the Guarantee Sign and Service Corporation and the Acme Sign Letter Co. He took an early interest in the work of the Jewish People's Institute, West Park No. 2, and other settlements, and was one of the organizers and officers of the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the Marks Nathan Junior Auxiliary. He is Master of Upright Lodge, No. 1101, A. F. and A. M., and active in social, fraternal and political affairs. He is unmarried.



MEYER TEITELBAUM was born in Polotzk, Lithuania, May 15, 1877. He was given a strict orthodox Jewish training in his youth and as a result all through his life he has warmly supported orthodox endeavor. He came to the United States in 1904, arriving shortly after in Chicago. Here he entered the baking business and is to-day president of the Imperial Baking Co. and interested in a number of other business enterprises. He was active in the Federated Charities and has for a number of years been a director of the Northwest and Rockwell Street Talmud Torahs, Tifereth Zion Congregation, Chicago Hias, and Gomlei Chesed shel Emeth. He was married June 25, 1902, to Rebecca Rabinovich, and has two children, Helen and Evelyn.



A Page from *History of the Jews of Chicago* by Hyman L. Meites

In researching an article about the Imperial Baking Company for a future issue of *CJH*, I turned to Meites' landmark 1924 history of our community. I found an entry on Meyer Teitelbaum, the founder of Imperial, on page 441, along with a collection of Chicago Jewish notables:

Julius Howard Miner (1896-1963), appointed by President Eisenhower to the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois in 1958; Oscar Meyer and his business partner, artist William Both, owned an ad agency and studio that served a number of Jewish clients, such as the clothing manufacturer Kuppenheimer & Company; Bensinger and Rubovits are well-respected names; the Loeb family contributed much to the community, but was also marked by a notorious crime.

Meyer Teitelbaum? He sold the bakery to his nephew and employee, Louis Dworkin. Louis brought his cousin, Abe Bellows, from Quebec to work for him. In 1924, he brought Bellows' wife and sons to Chicago, as well. The youngest son, Sol, went on to become the great writer Saul Bellow.

Today, Imperial is a fourth-generation, family-owned and operated baking business. The Dworkin family can also claim a role in the creation of Saul Bellow's distinctly Chicago-flavored literary career. —*B.C.*

MOLLIE WEST: Labor Union Activist

On April 8, 2005, Walter Roth and Norman Schwartz taped a CJHS oral history interview with Mollie West at the office of the Illinois Labor History Society, 38 East Jackson Blvd.

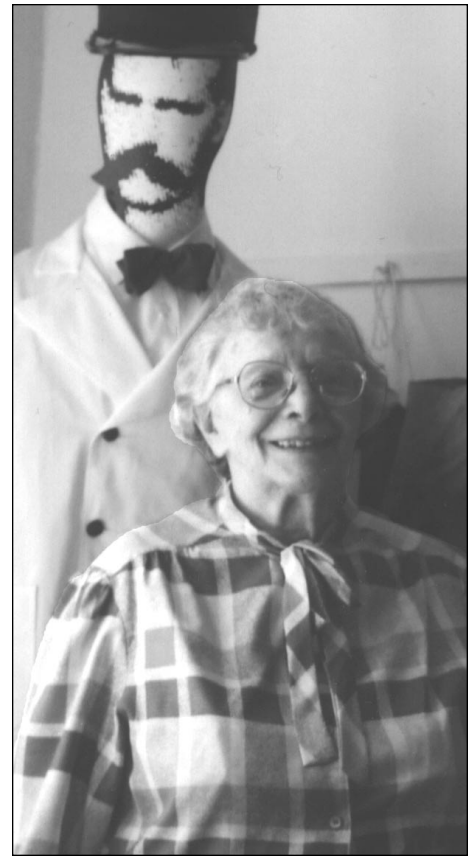
Twelve years earlier, Florence Hamlish Levinsohn interviewed her for the article, "A Radical Woman: The Life and Labors of Mollie West," featured in the April 16, 1993 issue of the Chicago Reader.

This profile is based on material from both sources.

Mollie Lieber West was born in 1916, in the little Polish town of Sokolow, to Minnie and Yosh'mendl (Harry) Sherman.

Levinson writes: "How could she have foreseen that one day she would become a lover of classical music? And travel all over the world? And adopt a child of her own who'd become a highly successful lawyer? That little Polish *shtetl* dweller...could not have imagined that she would have two husbands and several lovers and a long and passionate career as a political organizer and labor activist. Nor could she foresee that...she'd look back on it all from a comfortable Chicago high-rise...."

Mollie came to this country in



Mollie West, with mannequin, at the office of the Illinois Labor History Society, April 2005.

Photograph by Norman D. Schwartz.

1929 with her mother and brother. (Harry had emigrated from Sokolow nine years earlier.) Mollie remembers that it was her brother's poor health that kept them waiting.

The Shermans settled on the West Side of Chicago, on Trumbull Street. After winning her struggle to learn the English language, she graduated from grammar school and went on to Marshall High. There she began her lifelong devotion to classical music and political activism.

She became a member of the Marshall Symphony Orchestra and the Concert Band. Her instrument was the French horn (only because they had enough flutists). She is proud of having performed a solo, *Song of India*, at her graduation.

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CJHS Welcomes New Members

Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Herman

Holocaust Memorial
Foundation of Illinois

Patricia Stein

Richard Synchef



Chicago Woman's Aid volunteers weighing Chicago public school students, and serving them milk.
Undated. University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Library, Special Collections.

Adele Hast at UIC: "Service to the Community: Chicago Woman's Aid 1920–1960"

Chicago Woman's Aid was an active Jewish women's organization for 106 years, from 1882 to 1988. Its most influential years were 1920 to 1960. Dr. Adele Hast spoke about that period in her talk on Tuesday morning, March 8, at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Stevenson Hall, Institute for the Humanities, 701 South Morgan Street.

The women of CWA called their organization "The Aid." Membership was by recommendation, self-limited to upper middle class women. Among the founders were two familiar names in Chicago women's rights activism: Hannah Greenebaum Solomon and Sadie American. Later leaders included Jenny Gerstley, Linda Appel, Celia Klein, and Adelaide Gerstley.

CWA established a Race Relations Committee in 1924, and by the 1930s was working with the Urban League in behalf of adequate housing and fair employment for black women. The Courts and Jails Committee visited police stations, courtrooms, and prisons to get better treatment for jailed women.

CWA worked in the Chicago Public Schools, weighing the children and looking to their general well-being. Although health classes became part of the school curriculum in 1941, CWA continued to provide the children with free milk until 1955.

The Birth Control—later, Planned Parenthood—Committee was significant. Many Jewish women were given advice and products at Birth Control Clinic #5 at the JPI on Douglas Blvd. In 1940, Clinic #9 was established in Albany Park. By 1955, the Jewish community had dispersed, and the clinics were closed.

In October, 1941, deciding "it is time to look facts in the face" and fight anti-Semitism, CWA met with the ADL, but no working partnership came about.

Adele Hast is Scholar-in-residence at The Newberry Library and a past president of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Her lecture was sponsored by the UIC Library Lectures and Forums Committee, and co-sponsored by CJHS. Dr. Hast's research was done at the UIC Library, where the CWA papers are kept. ❖

Sheldon Nahmod at SVAJ: “The March on Skokie Controversy: A Twenty-Five Year First Amendment Perspective”

Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob Synagogue, 8825 East Prairie Road, Skokie, was the site of the Society’s open meeting on Sunday, April 3. Our featured speaker was Sheldon H. Nahmod, Distinguished Professor of Law, Chicago-Kent College of Law.

Prof. Nahmod is a noted authority on the First Amendment, and has argued many cases before the United States Supreme Court. He gave us a clear, scholarly perspective on a subject that can still raise emotions: “The Threatened Nazi March on Skokie: 1977-78.”

The audience received printed handouts containing the sequence of events, some fundamental features of the United States Constitution (not included here), and lessons to be learned:

1. The story begins in April, 1977: the players include Frank Collin, the Nazi Party (National Socialist Party of America), the Village of Skokie and its mayor, Albert Smith, the ACLU and its lawyer, David Goldberger, Holocaust survivors and Jews generally, and the Jewish Defense League (Rabbi Meir Kahane).
2. The twin legal responses of the Village of Skokie: it sues in the Circuit Court of Cook County to enjoin the march, and enacts ordinances to prevent the march.
3. The results in the Supreme Court of Illinois and in the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit: the Village loses on First Amendment grounds of prior restraint, symbolic speech, fighting words, hostile audience and “hate speech.”
4. The aftermath in Skokie: the march does not take place in Skokie despite the Nazis’ legal victory. [The Nazis march in Marquette Park. It is learned that Frank Collin’s father is Jewish.]
5. Why did the Village lose in the courts? It is important to understanding the First Amendment:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Prof. Nahmod’s handout concludes with these lessons:

1. The First Amendment protects those who would not protect us if given government power (e.g. Communists and Nazis).
2. There is a difference between Constitutional legality and morality.
3. Political activity and counter-speech are important.

The featured talk was preceded by a brief history of SVAJ by past president, printing company executive, and community leader Lewis Saltzman. Founded in 1956 as Skokie Valley Traditional Synagogue, the congregation met in private homes and schools until construction of its building was completed in 1966. Two other synagogues’ memberships joined: Agudath Jacob (1996) and B’nai Jacob (1999), bringing Torahs and funds and effecting a name change. ❖

Mollie West

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Mollie and her friends would gather on Roosevelt Road—she calls it “my street”—to listen to radical leftist speakers and *shpatsir* (stroll about). Her father was also on Roosevelt Road, indoors, working at Silverstein’s Restaurant.

In the Depression year of 1934, with money tight, the school board threatened to cut arts and gym programs. Mollie was one of the students who determined to respond by staging a strike. The night before the strike, while they were preparing their banners and leaflets, the organizing committee was arrested and taken to the Fillmore Street police station.

Levinsohn quotes Mollie: “Because I was the leader, I was taken to the Audy [Juvenile] Home. That was the radicalizing experience of my life. That was the one and only time in my long history of strikes, demonstrations, and so on that I was ever arrested.” She was kept at Audy overnight. Her father, an ardent Zionist and anti-Communist, refused to come and get her out. Instead, she was released to her meek, frightened mother and a neighbor.

After she graduated from high school in 1935, Mollie worked for a while at a factory, then was given a job with the Farm Equipment Workers of America, an early CIO union, running the office, writing and distributing printed matter, and persuading the community to support long, bitter strikes.

Mollie led the singing of union songs at the peaceful gathering early on Memorial Day, 1937, and spoke forcefully at the memorial rally for the massacre victims that evening.

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FROM THE
CHICAGO JEWISH
archives

Cemetery Book Shows History of Emanuel Congregation

By Joy Kingsolver

The Chicago Jewish Archives has received a new gift of a cemetery book from Emanuel Congregation that dates back nearly to the congregation's founding. The book was transferred to the archives in March by the congregation's Board of Trustees and is a welcome addition to our collections.

The book is divided into two sections: the first section contains an alphabetical list of the family names of plot owners. The second section is organized by plot number, and lists dues paid for the upkeep of the graves. There are handwritten entries that provide information on burials going back to the 1880s. Small sketches at the top of some of the pages show the placement of graves. Some of the entries are poignant: an entire page is devoted to listings of infant graves. This complex record is accompanied by correspondence with family members that includes references to other family members, addresses, and other details.

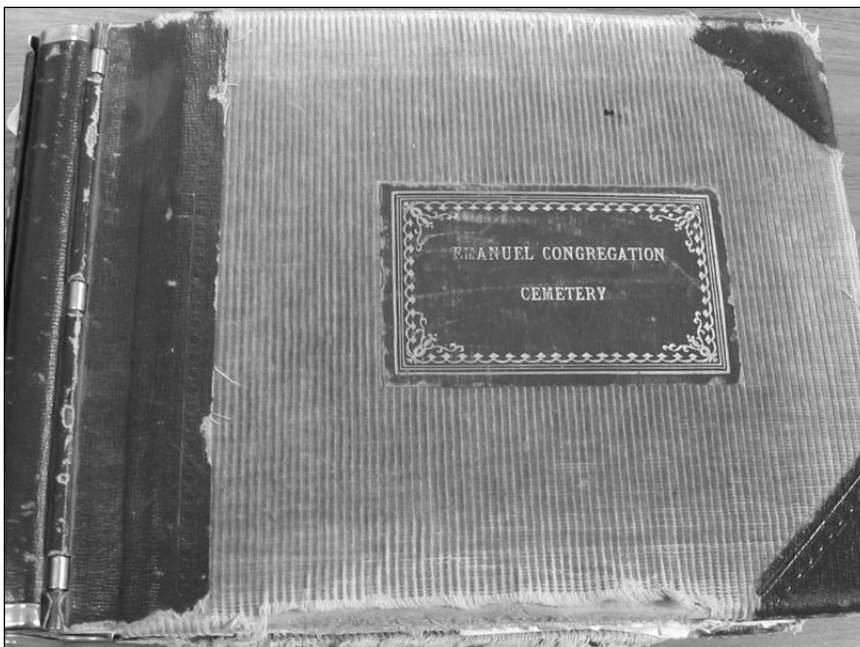
Emanuel Congregation was founded in 1880 as an Orthodox congregation and met at first in a rented room over a dry goods store on Sedgwick Street. A section of Waldheim Cemetery was purchased soon afterward. The congregation is named after Emanuel Redlich, the "Matzo Man," who would take orders for Passover matzos when he collected membership dues.

At that time congregation meetings were conducted in German. Within a few years, Orthodoxy began to give way to Reform; English replaced German by the turn of the century. Emanuel occupied a series of temporary homes, including two churches, but in 1908 finally moved into its new building on Buckingham Place. That same year, Dr. Felix A. Levy was hired as the new rabbi; a respected teacher and scholar, he stayed for forty-seven years.

In 1955 the congregation moved into its current building at 5959 North Sheridan Road, and Herman E. Schaalman became its rabbi. This beloved spiritual leader was named Rabbi for Life in 1969, and is now emeritus. Rabbi Michael Zedek is the new senior rabbi.

In Emanuel's record-keeping, too, there is a remarkable sense of continuity and community. In those early years, the records were kept by the elected secretary of the congregation. One of the first to gather burial information was Louis Sternheim, great-grandfather of Emanuel's current business manager, Judy Wodika. In the late 1920s, John Abrahamson kept the cemetery book.

Long-time member Alice Fript remembers, as a child, seeing John Abrahamson seated at a large table outside her Hebrew school classroom, making entries in the yellow corduroy-covered book. He also collected dues and made entries in a separate membership book. In 1927, the congregation hired



Emanuel Congregation's cemetery book was in continuous use since the early twentieth century. Shown here, its frayed corduroy cover and the many letters and receipts inserted between its pages.

Photograph by Joy Kingsolver.

Alice's mother, Jeannette Decker, as its first professional secretary. She stayed for twenty-seven years, lending her expertise to the effort to keep the records organized, and continued to volunteer assistance until her death in 1975. Many others have since worked on the book. In the 1990s, maintenance of cemetery records was turned over to Waldheim.

The cemetery book has been a rich source of information for genealogists. In order to make the information more accessible, the congregation hired a digitizing firm to scan each page and index the names in the book. Images of the pages can be viewed on a computer screen, and family names and dates can be searched. Emanuel Congregation continues to provide this service for family historians, and Waldheim Cemetery also has a copy of the index. For a look at the original book, researchers may call the archivist at the Chicago Jewish Archives.

Cemetery books are just one source of death and burial information. Other sources include the rabbi's own records of funerals; *yahrzeit* lists and memorial books; cemetery plat maps, and synagogue bulletins. Many times these records are frustratingly scarce; some congregations have no such records at all. The cemetery book of Emanuel Congregation is a rich historical record in which the ebb and flow of generations is mirrored. ❖

Archival Exhibition

Let Them Make Me a Sanctuary: Laurence Stern's Photographs of Chicago Synagogues

May 27—August 5

**Gallery of Chicago Jewish History
Sixth Floor, Spertus Institute
618 South Michigan Avenue**

Award-winning photographer Laurence Stern traversed Chicago for several years, photographing the interiors and exteriors of local synagogues in lighting designed to show them at their best. Some of these synagogues have since closed. Last year Mr. Stern gave his entire collection of synagogue photographs to the Chicago Jewish Archives. A selection of these photographs, accompanied by artifacts, will be on display.

Gallery hours are Monday–Wednesday, 9 to 6, Thursday 9 to 7, and Friday 9 to 3. For access to the gallery on Sundays, see the reference librarian on the 5th floor. For more information, call the archivist, Joy Kingsolver, at (312) 322-1741.

President's Message *continued from page 2*

and to my great pleasure, he occupied the office next to mine. Ab was always on the phone, or meeting with a client or a prospective voter. He was always in good humor, always full of energy, and always a joy to work with. In 1974, Ab again ran for Congress from his north suburban district. This time he won—after a bitter campaign, as I recall it. He was reelected twice, in tough, close races.

He resigned from Congress in 1979, when President Carter named him to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Ab gained Congressional approval despite powerful opposition from his old nemesis, the NRA. He served with great honor for sixteen years, becoming Chief Judge in 1991. In 1994, he resigned to accept President Clinton's invitation to serve as White House Counsel. After two years in this political hot seat, Ab returned to his home, Chicago.

He is now Lecturer and Senior Director of the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic at the University of Chicago Law School. Last year, he was called on to chair a panel of inquiry into the fire at the Cook County-owned downtown office building in which three lives were lost. He is a member of CJHS.

ABNER AND ZOE MIKVA are members of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation. They have three daughters—two lawyers and a rabbi—and seven grandchildren. Ab and Zoe were honored by the Illinois Humanities Council at the organization's 30th anniversary gala on April 28, where they received the Council's 2005 Public Humanities Award, "for a partnership that is more than the sum of two distinguished careers in public service."

Abner Mikva will receive the American Bar Association's 2005 Thurgood Marshall Award on August 6, "in recognition of his outstanding commitment to the preservation and expansion of civil rights for all Americans." ❖

Mollie West *continued from page 11*

She had suffered an injury at birth that left her with a crippled leg. In 1939 she underwent an operation to relieve her aching hip, and then a second (unsuccessful) one to reduce her limp. She gained a new attitude. As she told Levinsohn: "I now thought of myself, I have a limp, other people have other things."

Mollie married Karl Lieber, a reporter for radical publications. World War II began and he joined the Signal Corps. Mollie became pregnant on one of his leaves, but lost the baby. Karl, in southern France, heard the news a month later, drove to a nearby town to phone home, and was killed in a road accident. Within a month, Mollie lost her child and husband, and was unable to bear any more children. What could she do? She went back to work.

Mollie married her second husband, Jim West, in 1948, and they adopted Steve, a baby boy, in 1952. Difficult years followed. Jim was a Communist Party organizer; he was arrested, and despite the efforts of a defense committee, he served prison time. (Although they divorced many years ago, Mollie kept the last name.)

In 1960 she found a job as a proofreader at Commerce Clearing House. She enrolled in night classes at Washburne Trade School and learned enough skills to be admitted to the Chicago Typographical Union (CTU). She fought hard for women's rights in the union.

She reconciled with her father, who had moved to Israel in his later years. She went to college, earning degrees from Mundelein Weekend College and Roosevelt University. The labor movement has honored her with awards.

Mollie was employed by the *Daily Racing Form* for almost fourteen years, until her retirement. She assured her CJHS interviewers that her proofreading skills are as good as ever!

Lawyer Steve West will come to Chicago from his home in California to accompany his proud mother to this year's commemoration of the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937. —B.C.

The CJHS oral history audiotape is at the Chicago Jewish Archives. The complete Levinsohn article can be found at the *Chicago Reader* online archive at www.chireader.com.

CJHS Seeks Memoirs of Jewish Chicagoans

Our Society quarterly, *Chicago Jewish History*, occasionally publishes memoirs of individual Chicagoans. These memoirs give us the opportunity to present history in its narrowest contours. A story you might recall from your childhood, or from some unusual situation in which you found yourself, often prompts other people's memories to flow as well.

The memoirs we seek are refined versions of the stories you may tell at family gatherings or when you and old friends get together. We encourage you to record what you remember from your first-hand experiences. Memories are most convincing when they are most personal. Much of the rest of the work we publish in *CJH* focuses on broad themes, famous individuals, and notable events. Memoirs allow us to focus on the history that most of us actually lived.

Your manuscript should be no longer than six double spaced pages, and preferably should be transmitted to us via e-mail. We attempt to comment on every memoir submitted, but are not always able to do so, and cannot guarantee publication of any work.

Be sure to include a return address and phone number with your submission. Please e-mail submissions to our editor at Bevchub@aol.com. ❖

Your
Picture

Your Name

CJHS Offers Tribute Cards for Special Occasions

The Society announces the availability of our tribute cards. These attractive cards can be used to honor someone, memorialize a loved one, thank a friend, or offer congratulations.

The cards are printed on heavy white stock folded to four by nine and a quarter inches. They bear the handsome CJHS logo on the outside. Printed inside is our mission statement, "The Chicago Jewish Historical Society, through its many programs and publications, collects, preserves, records and retells the history of the Jewish community of Chicago," and "A Gift had been made to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society by—." There is also space for a personal message if you care to add one. A package of eight cards/envelopes is \$10.00.

Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at a cost of \$5.00 per card, postage included. To order packs of eight or single cards/envelopes, call the Society office at (312) 663-5634. ❖