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chicago jewish historical society

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society news

VOL. IV-No. 1

MARCH, 1980

NOTED HISTORIAN

RABBI MORRIS A. GUTSTEIN

OUR HONORED SPEAKER MARCH 9



Rabbi MORRIS A. GUTSTEIN, a premier Chicago Jewish historian and author of the classic study of Chicago Jewish history, A Priceless Heritage, will grace the podium of the next CJHS meeting, Sunday afternoon, March 9 at 2:00 p.m. at Spertus College of Judaica.

Always a charming, witty and erudite speaker on a broad range of topics, Rabbi Gutstein has chosen to share with us his thoughts on "A View of Chicago's East European Jewish Community in 1900."

Rabbi Gutstein has been in Chicago since 1943 when he was engaged as spiritual leader of the Humboldt Blvd. Temple. At the same time he began a professorship in American Jewish history at the College of Jewish Studies, now Spertus College of Judaica. He is best known in Chicago rabbinic circles as the rabbi of Congregation Shaare Tikvah, which he served for a quarter of a century from 1947 until his retirement in 1971. (continued on page 8)

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-program information-

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 1980

1:30 p.m. SOCIAL HOUR

2:00 p.m. RABBI GUTSTEIN

Bederman Hall, Spertus College of Judaica, 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago

ADMISSION FREE

ALL ARE WELCOME

BRING YOUR FRIENDS

For further information call our office: 663-5634

BOOK NOOK

by
Mark Mandle

Coming attraction! Be sure to catch The Ethnic Frontier Vol. 2 ed. by Holli and Jones when it comes out later this year. It includes an exciting article on the Jews of Chicago by our board member Dr. IRVING CUTLER entitled "The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburbia." This excellent article has original maps on the spread of the Jewish population in the city over the last century, and maps of Jewish institutions in Lawndale and West Rogers Park.

The Ethnic Frontier Vol. 2 is a sequel to The Ethnic Frontier Vol. 1 which had a vivid article on Jews in Chicago politics by Dr. EDWARD MAZUR who is also on the Chicago Jewish Historical Society board.

Three generations of rabbinic Graubarts are well-represented with recent additions to the bookshelf.

Rabbi JUDAH L. GRAUBART has co-authored with his wife, ALICE V. GRAUBART, Decade of Destiny; Contemporary Books, Inc., Chicago, 1978. This book does deal in part with Chicago Jewish history and will be reviewed in this column in the next issue of the Society News. A collection of interviews, memoirs, and reminiscences, Decade of Destiny paints a picture of the 1930's in America. Chicago Jewish history enters the picture through the memoirs or reminiscences of several Chicago Jews, among whom is Rabbi DAVID GRAUBART, the father of Judah and a famous and popular Chicago rabbi.

Rabbi DAVID GRAUBART has just come out with a new edition of writings of his father, published in Jerusalem: Chavalim Ba-Ne'imim, Response on the Four Parts of the Shulkan Aruk, two volumes, Hebrew, by Rabbi Judah Leib Graubart; published in a new edition by Dr. David Graubart, Jerusalem, 5738-39. While not a work on Chicago Jewish history, it is worthy of our note here because it is the latest in a long list of contributions by our distinguished member and noted Chicago historian.

MEET OUR AUTHORS MAY 4TH

Four of the Society's outstanding professional author-historians will be on hand at our next open meeting, Sunday, May 4th, to meet our members and talk about their most recent books on Chicago Jewish history and their personal experiences in writing them.

The charming, witty members of this distinguished panel (in alphabetical order, because they all deserve equal billing) will be:

IRVING CUTLER, who will speak on his major work, Chicago: Metropolitan of the Mid-Continent and his contribution to the soon-to-be published 2nd volume of The Ethnic Frontier. Dr. Cutler is chairman of the Dept. of Geography at Chicago State University.

ALICE V. & JUDAH L. GRAUBART, who will discuss the parts of their recent book on the 1930's, Decade of Destiny, which deal with Chicago Jews of the period. Rabbi Judah is a free-lance historian and writer. His wife and collaborator, Alice, is also a full-time psychologist.

EDWARD MAZUR, who will talk about his contribution to The Ethnic Frontier, Vol. 1, entitled "Jewish Chicago: From Diversity to Community." Dr. Mazur is a professor of political science in the City Colleges of Chicago.

The program will be held in Bederman Hall at Spertus College of Judaica, 618 So. Michigan Ave. at 2:00 p.m., and will be preceded by a Social Hour at 1:30. The meeting is open to the public.

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CJHS KICKS OFF ARCHIVES FUND DRIVE

A gift of \$500.00 from the Chicago Jewish Historical Society was the first contribution to the Chicago Jewish Archives in its drive to match a grant of \$13,500 from the National Historical Publication and Records Commission of the U.S. National Archives. When informed by CJA Administrator RICHARD MARCUS that the CJA would have to raise matching funds in order to receive the national archives grant, the Society proudly wrote out the first check. It is hoped that in responding so quickly and enthusiastically, the Society, by this action, will make Chicagoans aware of the importance of CJA's intended project--a records search of the Jewish community in West Rogers Park--and will inspire many other Chicago individuals and institutions to contribute just as generously.

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE TRAINS NEW INTERVIEWERS

On February 10, the Oral History Committee held a training session for 20 new interviewers

The participants discussed oral history and listened to some completed tapes in the Society's files. Each trainee did an interview (on another member of the group) under the supervision of previously trained committee members. The group then discussed the collective results.

Any person interested in obtaining information about the oral history project is invited to call either of the co-chairwomen: ADELE HAST, 256-5768, or MOSELLE SCHWARTZ, 944-4444, evenings.

FEDERAL GRANT TO CHICAGO JEWISH ARCHIVES NEEDS YOUR HELP

by Richard W. Marcus
Administrator, Chicago Jewish Archives

As Chicago's Jews climbed the ladder of success through the 20th century, they continually changed neighborhoods, moving their synagogues and institutions with them. While this motion signaled the success and growth of the community, it also signaled the destruction of the communities' collective memory. As many organizations packed their belongings and moved to new quarters, or closed entirely, their written records--their archives--were thrown out or lost. The Chicago Jewish Archives (CJA) of Spertus College of Judaica is about to embark on a project to prevent future losses.

The National Historic Publication and Records Commission (NHPRC) of the U.S. National Archives has awarded the CJA a matching grant to conduct a records survey of the Jewish community in West Rogers Park. This survey will entail visiting all cooperating organizations and synagogues and recording what archives they currently have. By doing so, the CJA would be able to keep track of this material and take steps to preserve it rather than seeing it tossed in the garbage or lost. This is the first grant of its kind made in Illinois.

The CJA, however, needs your help in conducting this survey. The NHPRC in issuing this grant, challenged the CJA and the Jewish Community to match its contribution of \$13,500. By contributing to this project, you can see your contribution doubled by the Federal government. And you can help in preserving today for tomorrow. For further information, call Richard Marcus, administrator of the CJA, at 922-9012 x53.

BNEI RUVEN SEEKS HELP IN COMPILING HISTORICAL MATERIAL

CJHS member ELISE GINSPARG is searching for pictures and historical information about Congregation Bnei Ruven when it was located on Marshfield Avenue and other sites on the West Side before it moved North. She also seeks pictures and data on the Rissman and Palmer founding families and on the early rabbis of the congregation. This material will be compiled into a multimedia history to be presented at the shul's forthcoming special anniversary banquet. The 84-year-old congregation is presently located at 6350 N. Whipple.

All material will be copied and returned immediately. If you can help furnish any material or information leading to the location of such material, please contact Elise Ginsparg at 6130 N. Mozart, Chicago, IL 60659, tel. 973-7914. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

This notice can serve as a reminder to all our members that one of the services the Society performs is help to individuals and institutions in compiling historical data and memorabilia. We will also help you plan your special anniversary celebrations so that such events are properly recorded for posterity. Just call our office at 663-6634 to obtain help of any kind in your history-gathering ventures.

RE: DUES & MEMBERSHIPS

The dues renewal notices for 1980 are now being mailed to all members who joined prior to June 30, 1979. The statements will also indicate if the 1979 dues are still owed (about 100 members, according to our records, did not remit their 1979 dues).

New membership cards for 1980 will be issued upon receipt of your 1980 dues (plus overdue 1979 dues, if applicable).

If you think there is an error in your statement, please call our office at once to discuss the problem. It will be straightened out graciously and quickly.

TODAY'S HISTORY MAKERS NOTABLE DOINGS OF SOCIETY MEMBERS

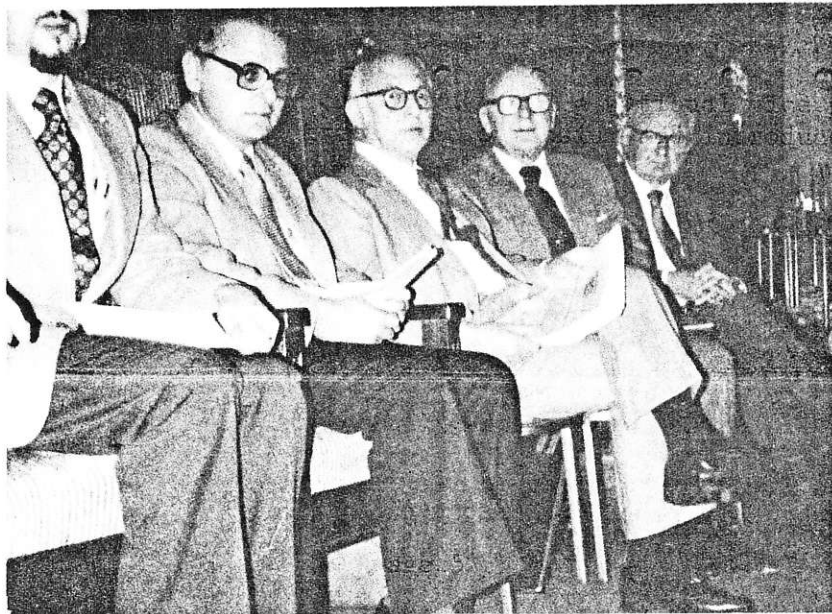
The Illinois Commission on the Status of Women has just appointed SHAINA PEARLE COHN to its Committee on Older Women & Widows. This committee deals with displaced homemakers, which is Shaina's project and for which she has organized a number of important women's volunteer organizations into the "Illinois Coalition for Displaced Homemakers."ELISE GINSPARG is in hot pursuit of all pictures and other memorabilia of Congregation Bnei Ruven that she can find in preparation for the shul's forthcoming special anniversary celebration. Of course she will turn over copies of whatever she amasses to the Chicago Jewish Archives when the project is finished. She is doing what every one of us should be doing: compiling histories of our synagogues and other institutions. Let's get going!....ELSIE ORLINSKY attended a workshop February 29 offered by the City of Chicago Office for Senior Citizens and Handicapped. The purpose of the workshop was to instruct members of organizations planning to apply for a Fiscal Year 1981 "Mini-Grant" from this office on the best ways to go about obtaining the grant. Here's hoping that the information Elsie brings back to our Society will enable us to qualify for one of these grants to use for some future project.SID SORKIN, who has spent many years researching the "Landsmanschaften" of Chicago, will share his expertise on this subject at two sessions of the Sinai Temple Sunday morning adult education spring series. His talks will be given March 9 and 16 at 9:45 a.m. at Sinai Temple, 5350 South Shore Drive. The public is invited free of charge. But don't worry if you can't make it. The Society will be presenting Sid on this topic in the near future. Watch our mail for the announcement.

New members who joined after June 30, 1979, are paid up through December 31, 1980.

SOCIETY'S GERMAN-JEWISH IMMIGRATION PROGRAM MAKES HISTORY, BREAKS ATTENDANCE RECORDS

History was made as well as reviewed when an overflow crowd of about 500 persons packed into Congregation Ezra-Habonim on Sunday, November 18, at the Society's meeting commemorating the German-Jewish immigration to Chicago of the 1930's. Entitled, "The German-Jewish Immigration of the Thirties: Its Impact on Chicago," this program was, it is believed, the first symposium in Chicago devoted to this topic. It was scheduled in mid-November to coincide with the 41st anniversary on November 9 of Crystal Night (Kristallnacht). This infamous date in Jewish history, which marked the beginning of the all-out Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe, is always solemnly commemorated by Chicago's German-Jewish community as a memorial to their lost loved ones.

The participants in the CJHS symposium were a panel of scholarly, professional and business leaders of the Chicago German-Jewish community.



HERBERT PRAUER (center), businessman and past president of Congregation Ezra, spoke about the history of the three German-Jewish congregations established by the 1930's immigrants: Ezra, Habonim, and B'nai Yehuda.

Next, Dr. ROLF WEIL (2nd from right), president of Roosevelt University and president of the Self-Help Home, spoke about the daily lives of the Hyde Park contingent of immigrants.

Finally, Dr. KURT SCHWERIN (right), Professor of Law Emeritus and retired law librarian of Northwestern University, co-chairman of the Chicago Chapter of the Leo Baeck Institute, spoke about the great achievements of this group of immigrants as they rapidly became acclimated to Chicago.

WALTER ROTH (2nd from left), an attorney and a national vice president of the American Jewish Congress, moderated the symposium and introduced the three major speakers.

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SOCIETY MAKES IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARCHIVES

by Rabbi Judah L. Graubart

When the Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977, its members not only wanted to provide programs and information on the city's Jewish past, but they also wanted to preserve as much of the recorded substance of that past as was possible. Thus an arrangement was established with the Spertus College of Judaica Library whereby all historical materials collected by the Society would be deposited in the Chicago Jewish Archives division of the Library. And although it has been a short time since that arrangement was made, the Society has come a long way in its program of acquisition of primary source material.

One of the most interesting collections of documents that the Archives has acquired is that of the Jewish Training School. The JTS was established in 1888 because Chicago's public schools "could not adequately supply particular wants that exist among the children of our Russian co-religionists" (and) "because they and their ancestors have long been the victims of special legislation that hampered their moral and intellectual as well as their physical development." The school provided an eight year curriculum teaching the three R's, manual labor and domestic skills (e.g., machine operation for boys, sewing and cooking for girls), and, interestingly, physical education classes as well. The documents in the Jewish Training School collection--annual reports, financial statements, diplomas, class reunion dinner programs, newspaper clippings, etc.--carry the institution and its alumni right on through the early 1970's and, in so doing, provide some fascinating information about Chicago's Jewish past.

For instance, not only was the Jewish Training School one of the community's earliest efforts to help immigrant children become "Americanized" (the Russian Jewish immigration had only begun in 1881), but it was, as the school's annual report of 1892-3 points out, a product of the concern of Chicago Sinai Congregation, one of the city's oldest German-Jewish Reform synagogues. Thus, we find that the pattern of paternalism on the part of the German Jews, while working to acclimate their Russian brethren to their new land, existed not only in New York, but in Chicago as well.

Along with the Jewish Training School documents, there is a considerable amount of other material in the Archives' collection. Among the records are those of the Jewish Federation (all 117 boxes, which require Federation permission before they may be examined), the Chicago Rabbinical Association (now the Chicago Board of Rabbis), the Decalogue Society (the only exclusively Jewish lawyers' organization in the country), the American Committee for the Settlement of Jews in Birobidzhan (Chicago chapter), minute books of dozens of landsmanschaften and synagogues, as well as such items as Yiddish postcards and family scrapbooks, and of course, the recollections of a very wide range of Chicago Jews who have participated in the Society's oral history program, to be available as soon as they are transcribed.

Finally, mention should also be made of the resources which are offered by the Chicago Jewish Archives, particularly their fine collection of now out-of-print texts on local Jewish history, i.e., A Priceless Heritage by Dr. Morris A. Gutstein (the director of the Chicago Jewish Archives), Philip P. Bregstone's Chicago and its Jews and Hyman L. Meites' History of the Jews of Chicago. Copies of studies that have been made of such subjects as Chicago's Jewish population, Jewish voting patterns in the 50th ward, and aspects of Jewish communal and organizational life between 1900 and 1950 can also be found in the Archives' collection.
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METRO HISTORY FAIR WINNERS HONORED AT CJHS MEETING

by Charles B. Bernstein, Program Vice President

The accompanying photograph features the teenage participants in another first for the Society. At the meeting of January 27 entitled "A Potpourri of Chicago Jewish History," five award winners at the Chicago Metro History Fair exhibited their projects and then made presentations. The five speakers, seated from left to right in the photo, are:



ARIEL ESELEVSKY of Morton Grove. He won first place awards at the Metro History Fair; and at National History Day in Cincinnati for his genealogical study of the "Eselevsky-Raizman Family." Ariel outlined the methods used for genealogical research and how he benefited from doing the project. A native of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he reviewed the emigration from Poland and Russia to Argentina and then the movement of his branch to Chicago.

STEPHEN CAP, of Chicago. He held the audience spellbound with his dramatic description of the "Branches of My Tree: My Family's Escape from the Holocaust." He traced branches of his family from Galicia to Israel and others to Vienna, where his mother was born. The family finally arrived in America.

HILLARY ALDORT, of Evanston. She related the "Aldort-Kantoff Genealogy." The family includes her great-grandmother, who was a sister of Sholom Aleichem, and for unknown reasons settled in Oklahoma. Hillary exhibited the hair of her great-grandmother, which has been preserved for many years.

JANICE BENDER, of Niles. She presented a paper entitled, "Partners without a Contract," about her family's several generation involvement with Maxwell Street and how that relationship has changed.

LISA OTTENFELD, of Skokie. Lisa's beautiful slide presentation, "May They Rest in Peace: The Forgotten Cemetery," showed the desecrated Jewish cemetery in Niles. She also described recent efforts to rehabilitate the cemetery, which have met with much opposition.

Standing in the picture (l. to r.) are CHARLES B. BERNSTEIN, CJHS program vice president; ART ANDERSON, co-executive director of The Chicago Metro History Fair, who attended the meeting with his co-executive director, DAVID RUCHMAN; and CJHS president, Muriel Robin.

(Rabbi Gutstein, cont. from p. 1)

Retirement, however, did not stop Rabbi Gutstein's active participation in pulpit activities. After being named Rabbi Emeritus of Shaare Tikvah, he assumed the pulpit of Congregation Etz Chaim in Flossmoor and led the congregation in the building of a synagogue. He also became the rabbinic consultant and the chaplain of the Council for the Jewish Elderly.

In 1974 he moved on to his second post-"retirement" position: rabbi of the North Sheridan Hebrew Congregation Adath Israel. This synagogue honored him in December on the occasion of his golden anniversary in the rabbinate. The testimonial banquet, on December 16 at the Sovereign Hotel, also marked the tenth anniversary of the congregation.

Though Rabbi Gutstein has been an integral part of the Chicago rabbinic scene since 1943 and is a beloved member of the Chicago Jewish community, he had made his mark in other parts of the country before coming here. Most noteworthy was his post as rabbi of the famed Touro Synagogue in Newport, R.I., whose congregation was organized in 1658 and whose building was erected in 1763 and is now a U.S. national shrine. While serving in that historic pulpit, he became an expert on the history of the synagogue, its namesake, and the town, and authored four important books: The Touro Family in Newport, 1934; The Story of the Jews of Newport, 1936; Aaron Lopez, 1939; and Judah Touro, 1939.

Dr. Morris A. Gutstein is a lineal descendant in the tenth generation of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hassidism, and of a long line of Rabbis tracing their ancestry to the 11th century. A graduate of New York University, he was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America with a Doctor of Hebrew Letters and also earned a Ph.D. from NYU.

Dr. Gutstein, the historian, has been a frequent contributor to the publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, was one of the contributing editors of the ninth volume of the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, and wrote over two hundred articles on "Judaica" for Collier's Encyclopedia.

In Chicago, he is well known for his widely-read weekly column in the Sentinel on the Sedra of the week. He is the founder and a director of the Chicago Jewish Archives and a member of the CJHS.

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(continued from page 5)

All four panelists included in their remarks anecdotes and diverse facts about the institutions, such as the Self-Help Home and the Hevra Kadisha, that have been part of the German-Jewish life in Chicago since the arrival of the 1930's immigrants here.

Pictured at left is CHARLES B. BERNSTEIN, program vice-president of the Society, who introduced the program.

The Society News is pleased to announce that a transcript of the entire proceedings of this history-making symposium is now being prepared and will be printed as a special issue of the bulletin shortly. All paid-up members (dues statements are now being mailed out) will receive a complimentary copy.

AN INVITATION TO A SPECIAL EXHIBIT

MARCH 12TH TO APRIL 30TH



Asher Library
Spertus College of Judaica

**Doar Ivri—Hebrew Post
The Stamps of Eretz Israel**

An exhibit on the history, design and subjects
of Israel's stamps.

Katzin Rare Book Room, Asher Library
Spertus College of Judaica
618 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Illinois



ANOTHER INVITATION:

All persons interested in Chicago Jewish History are cordially invited to become members of the CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY. you are welcome to give a gift membership to an interested friend or relative. Our membership card will be sent to whom-ever you designate.

(All dues contributions are tax-deductible)

The dues categories are the following:

- \$ 5.00 Students & Senior Citizens
- 10.00 Contributing Membership
- 25.00 Sustaining Membership
- 50.00 Patron Membership
- 100.00 & us - Sponsoring Membership
- 25.00 Minimum contribution for Synagogue & Organizational Membership

To become a member, or to increase your membership contribution, send your check to: Treasurer, Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 618 So. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605.

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The Society's collection and the Chicago Jewish Archives may be examined Monday through Thursday between 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. and on Friday between 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. People wishing to do so should contact the head librarian of Spertus College of Judaica and Archives' administrator, Richard Marcus, at 922-9012.

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