

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



chicago jewish historical society

FORMERLY SOCIETY NEWS  
volume xiii, no.4, Summer, 1990

# CHICAGO JEWISH *History*

## How Unhappy Migrants to Chicago Established a Colony in Palestine

*Dissident Local Zionists of Achoosa Movement Began Doomed Venture in Galilee in 1915*

By Bernard I. Sandler

**E**ast-European Jews who came to America with the great immigration of 1880-1924 were determined to become "Americanized" in order to enhance their families' advancement in their newly adopted country. Their success is a matter of record. Yet among them was a small minority who felt that *Golus* (exile) life in America endangered their survival as Jews. Consequently they came forward with ideas and plans which led to the establishment of companies for American colonization and settlement of Palestine by Jews from the United States.

These groups were not recognized by the Zionist movement in America (Federation of American Zionists/Zionist Organization of America) which called principally upon the Jews of America to help in the upbuilding of Palestine for their unfortunate and oppressed brethren of Europe who were in need of a refuge. American Zionists had declared time and again that this humanitarian effort was not inconsistent with their allegiance to the United States government. American Jewish settlement in Palestine was not part of American Zionist ideology. American Zionists were willing to belong to *Am Yisrael* but not to *Eretz Yisrael*, to the people of Israel but not to the land of Israel.

### *Zionism Not Very Popular*

In the early years of this century, few American Jews heeded the humanitarian call to aid their persecuted brethren establish themselves in *Eretz Yisrael*—the Zionist movement was a small unstable movement whose "Shekel" collection was pitifully small and whose chief problem was finding ways and means for meeting the trifling expenses of its operations. Most Jewish immigrants were preoccupied with the matter of their own Americanization and were adapting themselves to their new environment by learning English (not Hebrew), seeking employment and obtain-

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## Summer Tours Off To Good Start; New Tour Set for Aug. 19

**T**he Society's summer tour season got off to its usual great start with a sold-out half-day tour of Chicago's old Jewish neighborhoods on July 1. The tour was led by Dr. Irving Cutler, well-known historian of Chicago Jewry.

According to longtime Tours Chairman Leah Axelrod, the three tours are once again proving to be an irresistible way to spend a Sunday, and she expects the two all-day tours scheduled for July 22 and August 19 to fill up rapidly as well.

The July 22 tour will focus on the

*continued on page 10*

While most Jewish immigrants in America found life somewhat hard in the "Golden Medina," few thought of leaving it. But most of those few would not think of returning to Europe: they wanted to go to Palestine, to *Eretz Yisrael*. Some Chicagoans in this group actually acted upon their feelings by becoming part of the Achoosa movement. The sad experiences of a Chicago group who founded a colony in Palestine in the early years of the century are recounted by Bernard Sandler. Dr. Sandler is on the faculty of Technion in Haifa, Israel.

*Chicago Jewish History* is interested in hearing from any readers who know the names of Chicago members of the Achoosa movement.

# President's Message

## Society Article Unites "Lost" Family Members

*Another Successful  
Year Completed*

When exploring local Jewish history, one comes across the most unusual coincidences. Last year I researched and wrote an article for our Society quarterly on Samuel "Nails" Morton, who lived in Chicago in the early part of this century. I called Nails and the article "A Golem of Chicago" because Nails, despite his reputation as a gambler and bootlegger, was also renowned for his defense of Jews on the old West Side who were threatened by Polish and Irish gangs. I wrote in the article that among Nails' friends was Davey Miller, who would soon become a famous fight referee and "defender" of Jews in his own right.

Last year when in New York, I showed a draft of my article to Jacob D. Zeldes, an attorney from Connecticut whom I met quite accidentally at breakfast one morning. Mr. Zeldes was also interested in Jewish history and mentioned that he had written an article on Uriah Levy, a Jewish naval hero and Commander of the U.S. Mediterranean Fleet in the early 1800's, who was an ancestor of Mrs. Zeldes. Hearing this, I of course had to send him a copy of the article on my Jewish "hero," Nails Morton.

A few days later I received a letter from Mr. Zeldes asking me if it was possible that the Davey Miller I mentioned in the Nails story could have been the father of Zeldes' cousin, a Sylvan Miller who lived in Munster, Indiana. In his letter Zeldes mentioned that Sylvan's mother had divorced his father, a Miller from Chicago, after a brief marriage and the birth of a son in the early 1900's. She had then returned to Peoria where her family lived. He thought that Sylvan's father had been in the "fight business" like the Davey Miller referred to in my article. Sylvan had lost all contact with his father's family.

After I received the letter, I spoke with a man who I knew had done a great deal of research on the life of Davey Miller. He informed Zeldes that Davey Miller could not have been Sylvan's father because of an age disparity. Zeldes quickly answered and



President  
Walter Roth

stated that he had now discovered, after talking to Sylvan, that Sylvan's father was Al Miller, an older brother of Davey.

Zeldes also told Sylvan to call my informant to find out if he knew anything about members of the family still in Chicago. Sylvan learned from him that Sylvia Miller Friedman, a daughter of Davey Miller, was still alive and that she might well be his first cousin. Indeed, the similarity of first names might well be due to their being named after the same common relative. Sylvan Miller then called Sylvia Friedman, who remembered that she did have a cousin named Sylvan who had disappeared a long time ago.

Sylvan and Sylvia arranged for a meeting in the lobby of the Water Tower Building, and both of them have described to me their emotional reunion. Despite the fact that they did not know each other, they were able to recognize each other immediately. They greeted each other as long lost family members and talked for many hours. They now meet almost on a weekly basis.

I have since taken an oral history of Sylvan Miller in which he recounted for me the truly enthralling tale of his life. After his mother divorced his father, he grew up in Peoria without ever becoming part of the Miller clan that lived in Chicago. In any event, Sylvan and his cousin Sylvia were finally reunited because of an article about Nails Morton published in this journal.

To compound the coincidences of the Miller story, a few months ago I received a call from a young man named Joseph Kraus, who had obtained my name from Sylvia Friedman, Davey Miller's daughter. Joe identified himself as a grandson of Max Miller, a younger brother of Davey Miller. He is in his early twenties, an English teacher and an aspiring writer. He is now busily researching the life of his grandfather Max and the times in which he lived. We may be able to publish some of his material in the future.

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I have taken the liberty of recounting

the above story because similar stories constantly come to our attention as we explore the past history of our people in Chicago. A portion of our monthly Board of Directors meetings is usually given over to exchanging stories that our research has disclosed. In that connection, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of our Board of Directors for their devotion to our Society during the past year. In particular, my special gratitude to Elaine Suloway for her duties as executive secretary and to her husband, Dr. Irwin Suloway, the editor of *Chicago Jewish History*. Others who performed stellar work during the year are Burt Robin, our program chairman; Leah Axelrod, coordinator of our summer tours; Dr. Irving Cutler, noted Chicago historian and one of our regular tour leaders; Sol Brandzel, chairman of our nominating committee; Elsie Orlinsky, our communications contact; and Shirley and Sidney Sorkin, our hospitality co-chairpersons. Sidney also played a special role in organizing, with chairman Janet Hagerup, our wonderful Landsmanschaften exhibit. Past President Dr. Adele Hast also had a major role in the exhibit and is now most helpful in chairing our long-range planning committee. Marian Cutler continues to serve as our membership chairman and Leah Axelrod and Charles Bernstein provided our public relations and publicity. Clare Greenberg organized, with Daniel Beederman and Janet Hagerup, our recent fascinating evening with Shelley Berman. Last, but certainly not least, the Society could hardly endure without the research and public appearances of its former president, Norman Schwartz. He and his devoted wife, Moselle, are an inspiration to all of us.

We wish you a good summer and look forward to seeing each of you in the autumn, when we expect to commence our activities with the republication of a classic volume, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, by H. L. Meites.

Walter Roth  
President

## Mourn Passing Of Betty Gerson

The Society wishes to express its condolences to Past President Norman Schwartz and his wife Moselle upon the recent loss of his sister, Elizabeth Gerson. A longtime member of the Society, Betty will also be missed by her many friends among our members.

I.J.S.□

# History of Local Jews Was Major Achievement Of H. L. Meites

## How Publisher Succeeded Against Great Odds

**T**he *History of the Jews of Chicago*, that monumental and comprehensive volume, will become available this Fall after almost a half-century during which it was virtually unobtainable. It is being republished through the efforts of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and the generosity of the author's grandchildren. Their involvement is most appropriate because the original publication of the huge book in 1924 was the personal achievement of one man, its author, compiler and printer, Hyman L. Meites.

"H.L." Meites, as he was more generally known, labored mightily for well over a decade to enlist the support, both editorial and financial, necessary for the publication of a thorough history of Jewish life and achievement in Chicago from its beginnings over three quarters of a century before. To secure this support, he had to create an organization to promote and sponsor the history.

### Formed Historical Society in 1918

The resulting organization was the Jewish Historical Society of Illinois, formally created in May, 1918 at a meeting held at Chicago Sinai Congregation. Meites was to be its secretary for almost all of its short existence. (The society, in a sense the predecessor of the present Chicago Jewish Historical Society, did relatively little besides publishing Meites' history and was apparently an early victim of the depression of the Thirties.)

That the book was written and published at all is testimony to one of Meites' greatest accomplishments, his managing to enlist the support and cooperation of both major elements of the Chicago Jewish community—the "German" Jews who had started the community and the "Russian" Jews who, though arriving later, had begun through sheer numbers to shift the balance of power. (The quotation marks are used in the previous sentence because despite the labels members of the former group included many from Bohemia and Hungary, and many of the latter came from Roumania and what is now Poland or the Baltic republics.) At that time relationships between the two groups were not always—some might say not often—smooth.

### Meites As a Publisher

Meites was a Russian Jew, born in

Odessa, who had come to the U.S. as an eleven-year-old and soon after joined his father in his print shop. He was later to go into the printing and publishing business himself with great success, creating weekly Jewish publications in English first for a rapidly Americanizing generation of immigrants and later for their children. Among these were the *Jewish Record*, the *Lawn-dale Press* and later the *Chicago Jewish Chronicle*.

Despite his background, Meites became well-known and well-regarded in the older German-Jewish community and was able to secure the support of the leaders of that group for his history of Chicago Jewry. David Hirsch, a son of Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Sinai Congregation, was eventually to serve as associate editor of Meites' history. In addition to his publishing ventures, Meites was a pioneer in the American Zionist movement and an organizer of the Chicago Hebrew Institute, which later became the Jewish People's Institute and ultimately the Jewish Community Centers.

### Unusual Publishing Procedure

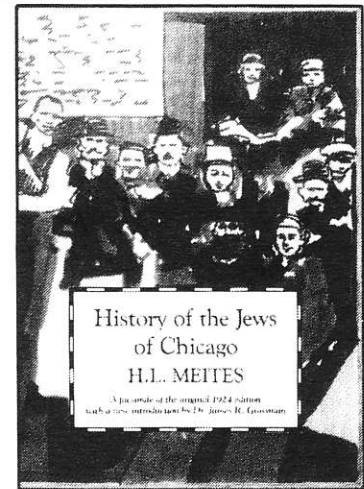
The method of publication and financing for the original Meites history might sound strange to the modern reader, but it was one commonly used for local history books both in Chicago and elsewhere during the decades before and after 1900.

Because so many individuals were to be mentioned or written extensively about in the projected volume, they were approached and asked to help underwrite costs by "subscribing" for the book before publication. There were different levels of pre-payment involved, and the format of each book ultimately delivered to the subscriber would differ in terms of binding, frontispiece and personal inscription, depending on the pre-payment made.

### Inclusion Based on Merit

The book was thus essentially printed for subscribers only, although a few copies were available for post-publication sales. It was partially due to this method of publication that copies of "Meites" got so scarce so soon.

Regardless of who subscribed and who did not, Meites had the integrity to produce a volume in which inclusion was due to merit and achievement, as they were measured at the time, and to produce a truly comprehensive and monumental history of local Jewry. The current reprinted version,



Draft of artwork for cover of reprinting of Meites' *History of Chicago Jews*

a facsimile of the original edition of 850 double-column, lavishly illustrated pages, contains a running chronological history, accounts of Jewish achievements in various business, professional and cultural endeavors and histories of local communal institutions and congregations.

### Biographies Prove Invaluable

Perhaps more interesting are the hundreds of biographies of both German and Russian Jews, so many of whom were relatives of modern readers.

The reprinting, expected to be available by late September, will list for \$48.95. Society members in good standing will be able to purchase copies at a discount. The press run is limited to 1,000 copies.

I.J.S.□

## New Regular, Life Members Welcome

**A**s the Society winds up its thirteenth (and a lucky one) year of service, new members continue to add to our strength.

Making a life-long commitment to the Society and its efforts is Harold Simpson, who recently became a Life Member.

Joining our numbers for the first time during the past few months were:

Shelley Berman	Ilene & Seymour Mandel
Donald Farber	Alfy Nathan
David Gleicher	Jean & Harold Schain
Sheldon Hayer	Eugene Seigel
Rose S. Levenson	Rebecca Sive
Dr. Robert H. Levin	Ethel K. Temaner
	Paul & Evelyn Weltman

Marian Cutler  
Membership Chairman□

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# An Unsettling Look at the Jewish Experience in America

*Some Unwelcome Conclusions Reached*

*In Recent Study of Jewish Success*

by Walter Roth

There are two parts to Arthur Hertzberg's book *The Jews in America—Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (Simon & Schuster, 1989). The first is a history of the Jews in America from the time that the first shipload of Jews arrived in New York in 1654. The ensuing 300 years are covered by Hertzberg in a little over 300 pages, necessitating broad strokes to cover so many years so briefly. Nevertheless, the important events are there, though obviously much of the flavor of local history is lost.

Since Hertzberg grew up and studied in the East, his history has a distinctly New York point of view. There is no space in this book, for example, for the role played by the Jews of Chicago in founding the Zionist Organization of America and the American Jewish Congress—nor for the great rabbinical figures of Chicago, such as Rabbis Felsenthal, Hirsch and Goldman. While Lessing Rosenwald, who lived in Philadelphia, is worthy of mention because of his anti-Zionist activities, his illustrious father, Julius Rosenwald, the great Chicago philanthropist, is omitted. Hertzberg's history of the Jews of America, by limitation of space alone, is therefore meant to be a tool for those interested in gaining a quick broad sweep of Jewish history in America, or possibly as background for the rest of the book.

## *Centers on Conflicts*

The second part of the book is much more detailed and comprehensive—it consists of several incisive polemics concerning the various stresses and conflicts which have beset American Jews from the beginning. These discourses are interspersed throughout the book as Hertzberg analyzes a great number of events and subjects them to his merciless scrutiny so as to reveal to the reader his perception of the underlying forces which affected the Jewish community through the years.

The first Jews to arrive in New York in 1654 were not met by Peter Stuyvesant as welcome settlers; as a matter of fact, Hertzberg tells us, local merchants fought to deport them as unwelcome competitors. Uriah Phillips Levy, the first Jewish American naval commander, was court-martialed a number of times, and anti-semitism, according to Hertzberg, played a part in the proceedings against this Jewish naval hero. Yet despite all that, Uriah Levy triumphed and today lies interred at Monticello, which he had purchased

from Thomas Jefferson's family. Over and over Hertzberg recounts the struggles of American Jews against anti-semitism, which often ended victoriously for the Jews.

In fact, the author concludes that in spite of all the aches and pains of the past, of the failure of American Jewry effectively to help their European brethren in the 1930's, the battle against anti-semitism has basically been won and is no longer a danger facing Judaism in America

## *Jew versus Jew*

The danger to American Judaism today, according to Hertzberg, comes from internal tensions. To understand these tensions, he examines the internal conflicts of the past. The conflict of the early German settlers with the original Sephardic settlers is noted, to be superseded by the more tumultuous conflict between the "poor" Eastern European Jews who poured into America in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the by then established German Jewish settlers. He puts great emphasis on this conflict, theorizing that the Russian-Polish Jewish immigrants, so impoverished at the beginning, finally won control of the leadership of the Jewish community after World War I.

In perhaps the most brilliant chapter of his book (Chapter 13) Hertzberg whets his word processor to describe how between 1914 and 1918 the "German Jews lost control of American Jewry." In this somewhat revisionist view of those tumultuous times, he casts Louis Dembitz Brandeis as leader in the role of the assimilated Kentuckian, born of Bohemian Jewish immigrants, who left the ranks of the rich "German" Jews to lead the Russian Jews out of their desert and, in the name of Zionism, to control of the American Jewish community. The great German Jewish leaders of the day, such as Jacob Schiff and Cyrus Adler, are cast as the heavies in this struggle—even going so far, according to Hertzberg, as to oppose the appointment of Brandeis to the Supreme Court of the United States because they felt that he was too radical, too controversial for the status quo sought by the German Jewish leadership.

## *Loss of Religious Roots*

According to the author, this victory of the East European Jews has had ominous implications.

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The broad outlines of American Jewish history are familiar to a great many Jews if only from religious school instruction, adult education classes or popular lectures and articles. But the author of the volume on American Jews here discussed by Society President Walter Roth is more than a bit revisionist in his look at our American past and perhaps more than a bit pessimistic as well. A thought-provoking article about a thought-provoking book.

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Because the mass of the East European immigration consisted of poor and uneducated people, their rabbis and intellectuals having by and large remained in Europe, the East European Jewish immigrants were not interested in carrying forward the intellectual and religious studies of their forefathers. This assertion, obviously controversial, leads Hertzberg to further conclusions. Since these "poor" immigrants had lost their religious and intellectual roots, they turned to other values in order to preserve their Judaism. These values have differed through the years and Hertzberg is merciless in bringing his analytical mind to bear on them, and he often questions the motives of Jewish leadership.

He analyzes the East European immigrants in New York as they moved in one or two generations from the Lower East Side to the intellectual left-wing groups of the Thirties and then massively to the mushrooming suburbs. Hertzberg sees all these movements as attempts by Jews to assimilate into the mainstream American culture. He sees the Jewish involvement with the black civil rights movement largely as an attempt by Jews and Jewish organizations to be in leadership roles in a struggle that would also enable Jews to climb the social ladder of American culture. With such an observation, the "prophetic" nature of the Jewish commitment for the rights of blacks is largely dismissed. In support of his observation, he is quick to point out the change in the position of Jewish organizations once Jewish leadership was threatened in New York by blacks seeking control over schools and community organizations.

#### *Criticizes Leaders, Aims*

Hertzberg is particularly critical in his comments concerning Jewish organizational life. Because of their non-intellectual East European immigrant background, Hertzberg contends that Jewish "leaders" today tend to be bland, not interested in religious or intellectual pursuits, with lay leaders being chosen because "they were likable and moderate," and with the real power being in the hands of professional bureaucrats.

According to Hertzberg, mainstream Jewish organizations all have the same program—fighting anti-semitism and raising funds for Israel. And since the battle against anti-semitism has largely been won in America and as America is no longer clearly a Christian-dominated society, he turns to the culminating inquiry in his book: What is Jewishness to the "unbelieving," that is, non-Orthodox Jews? His answer: The glory of Israel. Hertzberg, by the way, seems to have an affection for Orthodox Jews as the true believers, yet he quickly notes that Orthodoxy is clearly not acceptable for the majority of American Jews. The "glory of Israel" is a non-solution for American Jewry as far as Hertzberg is concerned. Since

American Jews have rejected Aliyah (emigration to Israel), he reasons that American Jews cannot sustain themselves merely by fund-raising for Israel.

#### *Outlook Not Good*

He concludes his discourse with a rather dour picture of American Jewry's future. He writes that one of three marriages today of U.S. Jews is to a non-Jewish spouse. Jews, he writes, cannot bank on "ethnicity" and fund-raising to preserve their past heritage. "The need for and the possibility of a spiritual revival are clear. If it does not happen, American Jewish history will soon end, and become part of American memory as a whole."

What are the ingredients of this spiritual force? Hertzberg does not elaborate. Perhaps that is the content of his next book. He hints at the contributions of the great Yeshivot of Eastern Europe, of the power of the Talmud and Jewish books. Years ago when I went to college, a friend of mine spoke of a "third force" that would save American Jewry. Perhaps Hertzberg is looking for this force now.

Hertzberg, born in Poland in 1921, was brought to the United States in 1926. He grew up in Baltimore and became a scholar on the American scene. His previous books include *The Zionist Idea* (1959), an anthology about the intellectual history of Zionism; and *French Enlightenment and the Jews* (1968), which traces the roots of modern anti-semitism to the French Enlightenment.

His present book will not endear him to the mainstream American Jewish organizations. Once a leader in these organizations, Hertzberg has now retreated from all of them and spends his time teaching, researching and writing.

One suspects that in his "retreat," Hertzberg is well aware that many of his assertions are provocative to a fault. How can one denigrate the entire immigration from Russia at the turn of the century without considering the great Jewish writers and thinkers that these immigrants produced one or two generations later? His contempt for the German Jews is even greater. The contribution of the German Jews to America receives little attention. The great Jewish financiers, for example, are of no importance to him. Every act of charity and every good deed of the German Jews is suspect; all is done to impress the American Christian world and to grease the social ascent.

Many American Jews will not agree with Hertzberg's reasoning or interpretation of events. Yet no one can question his intellectual prowess. His book deserves attention for the challenges he hurls at the Jewish community. Perhaps Hertzberg feels that the only way he can catch the attention of his fellow Jews is to deliver a series of verbal jabs to the body politic in the hope that it will pay attention to this dedicated and angry man. □

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# Chicagoan's Doomed Colony

*continued from first page*

ing suitable living quarters for their families.

Once these immigrants started to support their families, often by working ten to fourteen hours a day six days a week, they had neither time nor money to give to Zionism. In such an atmosphere Zionism was considered by many of the newcomers as some sort of foreign ideology contrary to Americanism, liable to jeopardize their status as American citizens; consequently they were indifferent to it and only a minority of Jews were affiliated with the Zionist movement in America. This was the case in Chicago as elsewhere.

## *Some Were Unhappy in U.S.*

But in Chicago as elsewhere a very small but determined number of immigrants felt that America was not a place where Jews could survive culturally and religiously. For them the earlier American Jewish experience seemed to indicate inevitable total assimilation and eventual disappearance. They formed the nucleus of the *Achooza* movement (1904-1934) which grew out of dissatisfaction with the "limited" and (to them) too slow Zionism of the American Zionist organizations.

The *Achooza* program called for the systematic acquisition of land in Palestine by purchase and the active settlement of American Jewish immigrants on that land. The movement inspired the establishment of *Achooza* Land and Development Companies in Jewish communities across the U.S.

Investor members of those companies were entitled to an *achooza* (estate) in an American colony to be established in Palestine. Thus the members saw America merely as a temporary home while they established the means to relocate in *Eretz Yisrael*.

## *How Achooza Reached America*

At the outset of the twentieth century, efforts for American Palestinian colonization continued through the relentless efforts of Simon Goldman, an Englishman who had settled in the Golan Heights colony of B'nei Yehuda and then in 1904 emigrated to America because of hardships. Goldman settled in St. Louis, Missouri, where he and his brother were engaged in business and where he propounded the idea of forming plantation companies in America for the acquisition of land in Palestine and the establishment of *Achooza* colonies for the members. Simon Goldman was to become the founding father of the *Achooza* movement in America.

He was obsessed with Palestinian colonization and settlement. His pledge to Zionism stipulated that he would "continue working in face of all difficulties, resign from all other work and stick to Zionism to the

last." Goldman came out staunchly against the "Shekel Zionism" of his day and felt that "the time had arrived to do something more substantial" for Palestinian colonization by offering Jews of America "who love Palestine" direct personal involvement in the development of Palestine.

He and other proponents of the *Achooza* wanted to do something more for the Zionist movement than the collection of funds for *Eretz Yisrael*. They pointed out that the contributions collected by the Zionist organization had been meager and inconsequential. Therefore they decided to propagate their idea among Jews of the middle and working classes in America to give them a direct personal interest in *Eretz Yisrael* by having them establish their own colony there. Such an *Achooza* colony would enable them to leave the ghettos of the cities and have a healthy independent existence and a direct part in the rebirth of the Jewish people in the Holy Land.

Moreover, America for them was a place where their children were exposed to the dangers of assimilation and intermarriage and where religious observance had diminished. They felt that Palestine was the only place where their children could be raised and educated as Jews. For them America was not the promised land but a place barren of Jewishness (*Yiddishkeit*) and corrupt. The Torah and the Sabbath were neglected and debased. Thus, they were motivated to join the *Achooza* movement by their religious convictions and their interest in agricultural settlements in *Eretz Yisrael*.

## *The Achooza Plan*

The *Achooza* plan offered each of its adherents a permanent bond with the Land of his Fathers according to the Biblical command in Leviticus XXV, 10: "Ye shall return every man unto his possession." The *Achooza* plan called for:

- The organization of an *Achooza* land purchasing company and the accumulation of capital in the U.S.A. through the sale of shares whose holders would be entitled to an estate in a colony to be established by the *Achooza* company in Palestine.
- The purchase of land in Palestine by the *Achooza* company's representative and the establishment of an *Achooza* colony in Palestine.
- The preparation of the absentee members' holdings by hired Jewish Palestinian laborers, a requisite stipulation of the plan.
- The settlement of the American members on their holdings after about five or six years.

The movement inspired various groups in America from coast to coast to establish *Achooza* land and development companies.

The advent of the *Achooza* movement at this time (1908) was apparently a direct outcome of the

renewed colonization efforts and plans of the World Zionist Organization, which had established both the Palestine Bureau to direct the efforts of Jewish colonization and settlements and the Palestine Land Development Company (PLDC) to act as the central land purchasing agency and to train new settlers in the cultivation of their lands. The advocates of the Achooza idea assured investors that all Achooza colonization and settlement endeavors would be guided by a reputable body such as the Palestine Bureau.

In seeking the guidance of the Palestine Bureau the Achooza companies specified that they desired to be near some well-established urban area. The Palestine Bureau received many letters from these Achooza companies asking for assistance in the acquisition of suitable land sites for their future colonies. But for this extensive correspondence preserved by the Palestine Bureau, much of the American Achooza activity, including Chicago efforts, for colonization and settlement of Palestine would never have been known to history.

#### *The Start in St. Louis*

On October 1, 1908 at Zion Hall in St. Louis Simon Goldman established the St. Louis Hoachooza Association; two years later land was purchased in Palestine near Tiberias and the St. Louis colony of Poriya (i.e., fruitful), the first American Achooza colony in Eretz-Yisrael, was founded "to demonstrate that people with limited means (*nicht reiche leite*) could acquire a home for themselves and a livelihood in Palestine...and thereby encourage the Jewish masses to form similar societies...." Poriya progressed satisfactorily, building homes, acquiring livestock and farming implements and engaging in dairying and cultivating its almond plantations.

The same idea which had materialized in the purchase of Poriya inspired Jews in Chicago to organize themselves and establish the Chicago Achooza Palestine Land and Development Company in 1911. In the spirit of Goldman's Hoachooza, the Chicago Achooza announced that it too planned for settlement and the creation of a colony in Palestine. The Hebrew motto on the Chicago Achooza stock certificates is markedly indicative of the membership's aspirations: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come." (Isaiah, LX 1)

#### *Chicago Group Buys Land*

When the membership in the Chicago Achooza reached fifty in the beginning of 1912, the group began to correspond with the Palestine Bureau for guidance in the acquisition of land. Simon Goldman of Poriya was appointed by the Chicago Achooza as its sole representative in Palestine and together with the manager of Poriya, Eliyahu Israelite, he went out to survey suitable sites for the Chicago Achooza. Endeavoring to fulfill the Chicago Achooza's wishes, he arranged for

the purchase of Sarona (Rama) from the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA). The Chicago Achooza and the Palestine Bureau used the terms "Sarona" and "Rama" interchangeably in their correspondence. The local Arab population referred to the Hebrew "Sharona" as "Sarona." Since Sarona was situated on a flat plateau, i.e., *rama*, it was also called "Rama" by the local inhabitants.

The land site chosen was situated in the hills of the Lower Galilee, in the environs of the Poriya colony, about sixteen to eighteen kilometers west of Tiberias. The JCA agreed to sell the Chicago Achooza 4,814 *dunams* (about 1,200 acres) of the Sarona lands, and the Chicago Achooza decided to follow the same almond and olive plantation set-up as Poriya.

Sarona was ready to be settled at the end of 1913; and Simon Goldman, Eliyahu Israelite and a group of hired workers and armed *shomrim* (Jewish guards), with wagons loaded with provisions, left Poriya and began the march toward the Sarona lands. The Goldman entourage passed the *moshavot* (colonies) Beit-Gan and Yavniel, whose inhabitants joined the procession in song and dance.

#### *A Logical Place Chosen*

At Sarona Goldman delivered a speech in which he asserted that the establishment of Sarona was another great step towards the redemption of the Galilee, and those who were present were witnesses to another great event in the history of Palestinian colonization. Rivka Machanaimit, a *poelet* or worker at Poriya, describing the settlement at Sarona, wrote, "...all night I embroidered a flag for the settlement ceremony which read...'Conquerors of Sarona May Your Hands Be Strengthened, Rise and Succeed.'"

Goldman maintained that Sarona was to be the retort and retaliation for the bloody murder of Yeheskel Nisanov, a *shomer*, which occurred there in 1911. Indeed, the neighboring settlers had reason to rejoice in the founding and settlement of Sarona which now was to be the center of the Jewish colonies in the Lower Galilee. Sarona, which had hitherto been inhabited by Arabs, was the only pass between Beit Gan, Yavniel, Kinneret and the Jordan Valley settlements on one side, and Sedjera and Kfar Tabor on the other. This pass was notoriously known in the Galilee as the "Dardanelles Pass" since those Jews who traversed it were molested, robbed and assaulted frequently by the Arabs.

#### *War Closes In on Colony*

Sarona, which had actually existed for less than one year, was in 1914 faced with the same hardships and financial difficulties as other settlements in Palestine. World War I had disrupted virtually all the plans of the Chicago Achooza and made it extremely difficult to send money to Sarona. Henceforth, Sarona was

to be plagued with financial distress and encumbrances which made the colony entirely dependent at times on the good will of the Palestine Bureau and caused the colony to turn again and again to the Bureau for succor. At this time Saronahad a population of thirty workers, and preparations for the planting of 1,450 *dunams* had been completed.

In 1915 Morris Kolker from the Chicago Achooza arrived in Palestine aboard a U.S. coalship to manage Saronah jointly with Mr. Israelite. Kolker was soon witness to a country whose agriculture was being sapped and waning because of pernicious locusts that had spread over the land, causing hunger to hover over the populace. He also witnessed the continued confiscations of work animals and provisions from the colonies by the Turkish gendarmes, which further added to the burdens of the settlers.

Fortunately the locusts did not infest Saronah, and Kolker was able to begin clearing one thousand *dunams* for the fall planting. Work on the plantations continued, but Kolker was able to compensate the workers with only part of their wages because of a dearth of funds. By the middle of July, 1915, Saronah was bereft of all provisions for both man and animal and turned in desperation to the Palestine Bureau to come to the rescue of the American Achoozoth, Poriya and Saronah, by granting them enough wheat for the coming winter. The U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau, having been contacted about the plight of the American Achoozoth forwarded the information to the Chicago Achooza membership, who immediately responded and dispatched two thousand dollars to the Palestine Bureau for Saronah.

#### *A Single Chicago Settler*

Morris Kolker had now been at Saronah for one year and, with Simon Goldman, had shared much of the hardship that World War I had cast upon his neophyte colony. Settlement by the American membership was not possible because of the war, and the only Chicago settler was Kolker himself. In the beginning of 1916, Kolker was encouraged to continue with the work at Saronah upon receiving funds from the Palestine Bureau. But soon Saronah was stranded with only one work horse after the Turkish authorities had taken away many of the work animals for military duty.

Nevertheless, Kolker proceeded with the plantation work and, on a daily basis, hired horses and mules for the cultivation work. Life at Saronah persisted under great duress as the colony constantly sought provisions and financial aid from the Palestine Bureau. The Bureau essentially supported and salvaged the colony with its charitable loans and assistance. The general situation in Palestine during this time was disheartening—privation, hunger and indeed death hovered over the project.

#### *Financial Problems Overwhelming*

Saronah declared an emergency crisis in February, 1917 and the management considered the leasing

of the plantations to neighboring Arab farmers. When the news of this decision reached the Vaad Hamoshavot Shel HaGalil Hatachton (Committee of Lower Galilee) and the Histadrut Hapoalim Hahaklaim (Agricultural Workers Organization), both organizations deemed such an action in bad faith to the American absentee landowners. The Vaad voted to aid Saronah at all costs by agreeing to cultivate all the plantations of the colony provided that after the war the Vaad would be reimbursed. Kolker refused to accept the Vaad's proposals, and called a halt to all cultivation work at Saronah in July, 1917 for a period of one year. In an attempt to liquidate Saronah's debts, Kolker did lease some of the colony's lands to the Circassian Arabs.

After the British conquest of Palestine, the Chicago Achooza members were advised by the Palestine Bureau to come to Saronah for the specific purpose of working and settling so that they in turn could teach future members about plantation work. The estimated twenty to twenty-five members of the Chicago Achooza planning to settle in Saronah were encouraged by the reports of the Histadrut Hapoalim and by the agronomist A. Ettinger of the Palestine Office's Department of Agriculture and Settlement, who maintained that the soil at Saronah was still suitable and arable for plantations and for the creation of a large colony.

#### *More Chicagoans Arrive*

In 1920 Leon Burman, who was appointed by the Chicago Achooza to manage Saronah, settled there with his family, a wife and two children aged five and six years. Two other families joined the Burmans: the Kaplan family with their children aged three months, four, six and eight; and the Halperins and their three-year-old daughter. With such a group of young children at Saronah, a young pioneer (*halutz*), Yitzchak Lamdan, later to become a noted Hebrew poet, was engaged by the settlers to instruct and educate the children. The American families of Saronah were also joined by two groups of young pioneers who came to settle temporarily but who aided in the development of the colony.

In the wake of this renewed enthusiasm, some Chicago Achooza members left for Palestine to examine their holdings in Saronah for a few weeks, but they returned to Chicago and reported to the membership on the adverse conditions in their colony.

#### *Disillusion and Offers To Sell*

After this report the majority of the Chicago Achooza membership gave up all further prospects of settlement and agreed to sell their holdings to the Jewish National Fund so that it could settle the land immediately with Palestinian farmers, who would join forces with the remaining interested minority of Achooza members and rebuild the colony. But the Jewish



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National Fund informed the Chicago Achooza that they were not in any position to purchase the land because they were without sufficient resources at the end of the war.

Burman, the new manager, remonstrated and reminded the JNF that Sarona was in the center of the Jewish colonies in the Lower Galilee and was absolutely vital for the other settlements, which needed a strong Jewish colony there. If abandoned, Sarona would become another stronghold for the Arabs, endangering the neighboring colonies in the Lower Galilee. Burman also reminded the JNF that since there were still some diehard American Achooza members interested in settling in Sarona, the colony should not be scuttled.

During 1921 and 1922 the Chicago Achooza made a number of proposals to the JNF whereby it offered the fund from 500 to 1,500 *dunams* of free land, provided the fund liquidated all the debts due to the main creditor (JCA) and aid in the settlement of at least five to fifteen Palestinian families on the land, who could work with the remaining "American Achooza bourgeoisie" in the rejuvenation of Sarona. However, because of the financial difficulties that plagued the JNF, the proposals could not be accepted.

#### *A Few More Leave Chicago*

By 1923 the Chicago Achooza, whose members had doubtless been affected by the general slackening in nearly every field of business in America after World War I, decided to discontinue paying Burman his managerial salary and to hand over the administration and inventory of the colony to the remaining American settlers, the Burman, Halperin

and Kaplan families. Notwithstanding the predicament of these people, Achooza members P. Shomer and Morris Ben Amy, the president of the Chicago Achooza, came out to settle at Sarona. Ten other Chicago Achooza members followed them but settled in various urban centers throughout Palestine since they did not see any future at Sarona.

A group or *kvutza* of young pioneers from Brisk, Poland, however, decided to settle at Sarona and managed to stay on for two years. Finally, because of various hardships, the group left Sarona in 1925 and settled in Nahala. The Shomer and Kaplan families, however, remained at Sarona until 1928, when they too left the colony.

#### *Assessing the Achooza Effort*

In 1938 Sarona was resettled by a group of Jewish settlers as part of the "Tower and Stockade" colonization scheme for the "renewed settlement" of the Yishuv and exists to this day as the *moshav-ovdim* (workers' village) Sharona, in the Lower Galilee.

The trials and tribulations of the Chicago Achooza Zionists were not totally in vain since the Achooza idea succeeded in stimulating American Jews to participate in the colonization of Palestine for a quarter of a century. The towns and communities which exist today in Israel as a result of other Achooza endeavors are manifestations of the practicability of Simon Goldman's original idea. The American Achooza activities for colonization and settlement of Palestine were partial but still significant steps taken towards the growth, development and rebirth of Israel.

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## **Minsky Competition Gets Many Entries For Prize, Publication**

### *Winning Monograph Will Go to Society Members*

**T**his year's Minsky Fund monograph competition has produced a good number of manuscripts and should result in the publication in late 1990 of a monograph on local Jewish history which the Society can be proud of, according to Fund Chairman Irving Cutler. Deadline for submission of manuscripts was June 30.

Dr. Cutler and his committee of readers are currently evaluating manuscripts in order to select the entry best suited for publication by the Society. The author of the winning entry will receive an award of \$1,000 from the Minsky Fund.

#### *Monograph Free to Members*

The resulting monograph will be made available without cost to Society members in good standing at the time of publication as well as to the almost two hundred individuals who have contributed to the Minsky Fund, which was established in 1988 as a tribute and memorial to the late Doris Minsky, a Society founder and officer until her untimely death the year before. Copies will also be sold to the general public.

The manuscripts received cover a variety of aspects of local Jewish history according to Cutler, including histories of individual Jewish institutions, biographies and stories of Jewish businesses among others.

#### *Committee Selects Winner*

The difficult task of evaluating the manuscripts and choosing the one deemed most appropriate for publication at this time

is being undertaken by Cutler and his committee, which consists of Mark Mandle, Joseph Minsky (the fund founder), Norman Schwartz and Irwin Suloway. An announcement concerning the chosen manuscript is expected in the Fall.

Among the criteria used by the committee in its selection are, in addition to appropriate length, the manuscript's value as a contribution to local Jewish history, its interest to the informed but non-specialist reader, the adequacy of its content and the degree to which the writer achieved his stated purpose. Manuscripts not selected this year may be resubmitted in others years' competitions.

Contributions to the fund may still be made to the Society office. The names of all contributors will appear in the first monograph. Those of sponsors, contributors of one hundred dollars or more, will appear in every monograph published by the fund. □

# Annual Meeting, Members' Brunch Close Year

*Emanuel Congregation  
Hosts June 10 Meeting*

**E**manuel Congregation served as host for the Society's annual Members Only Brunch held on Sunday, June 10. The lavish cold meat, salads and dessert spread was arranged by Hospitality Chairman Shirley Sorkin and presided over by President Walter Roth.

At the brief annual meeting following the meal, President Roth summarized key events of the past year, including such highlights as the programs on Yiddish theatre and Dankmar Adler, the exhibit and program on *landmanshaften* and the Shelly Berman play benefit. Nine persons were elected to the Society board. (See story elsewhere in this issue.)

After the meeting, Program Chairman Burt Robin introduced the day's entertainment, singer-comedienne Nedy Silver and her piano accompanist. As usual, the brunch and its program cost were subsidized by the Society in gratitude to its loyal membership. □

## Summer Tours

*continued from page 1*

interest in *landmanshaften* generated by this year's exhibit and program devoted to that topic. Starting at the new University of Illinois-Chicago Hillel building, the tour will feature reminiscences by old timers and visits to sites, neighborhoods and cemeteries associated with *landmanshaften*. Leaders will be Sidney Sorkin and Irwin Lapping. A lunch stop will be made at the University of Illinois.

Also new this year will be the August 19 tour titled Summer Safari, which will be led by Mrs. Axelrod. That tour will explore the Jewish communities in Elgin, Rockford and Beloit and will include visits to local synagogues. A lunch will be included with the tour price of \$34.00 for members and \$39.00 for non-members. Pickup points will be at the Chicago Marriott Hotel at 8:30 AM and the Bernard Horwich JCC at 9 AM, with return scheduled for 6:30 and 6 PM respectively. Interested individuals should call Mrs. Axelrod at (708)432-7003 to see if any space is available. All reservations must be made and paid for in advance. Travel is by air conditioned bus. □



**Shelly Berman  
(right) at CJHS  
benefit with  
Norman and  
Moselle Schwartz**

## Shelly Berman Play, Benefit Both Prove Successful

**S**uccess and satisfaction as well as enjoyment marked the Society's first benefit, held Sunday evening, April 29, at the National Jewish Theater in Skokie. The entire bloc of tickets held by CJHS for a performance of Shelley Berman's play, *First Is Supper*, was sold; an enthusiastic audience took to its heart the warm and moving memoir of life on Chicago's West Side early in the century; and the intimate reception with Berman which followed the performance was both entertaining and enlightening.

The Chicago-born and -raised comedian, actor and writer shared with Society members and friends details of his youth in our city, the relationship of *First Is Supper* to his own family and experiences, and his thoughts about acting in *I'm Not Rappaport*, the long-running play in which he had just completed starring.

Particularly fascinating was his exposition of how *First Is Supper* was conceived, written and rewritten in the course of preparation for its premiere in Skokie.

During much of the preparation for that opening and its first performances, Berman was the houseguest of Society Board member Clare Greenberg, an old friend, who arranged the benefit and was largely responsible for its success. She was aided in her efforts by Daniel Beederman, Janet Hagerup and Burt Robin.

Proceeds from the sale of tickets, which were \$35.00 each, will aid the Soci-

ety in its efforts to preserve and disseminate local Jewish history.

I.J.S.□

## Board Members Chosen at Yearly Meeting

**T**wo new members were elected and seven current members were re-elected to three-year terms on the Society's board of directors at the annual brunch on June 10. Together with the continuing members, they constitute the 1990-91 governing body of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

New members of the board are Herbert Kraus, a public relations counsel; and Stanley Rosen, a professor at the University of Illinois—Chicago. They join re-elected members Leah Axelrod, Irving Cutler, Marian Cutler, Janet Hagerup, Elsie Orlinsky, Shirley Sorkin and Sidney Sorkin.

Continuing board members, whose terms expire in 1991 or 1992, are Daniel Beederman, Charles Bernstein, Sol Brandzel, Herman Draznin, Clare Greenberg, Edward Mazur, Tom Meites, Joseph Minsky, David Passman, James Rice, Burt Robin, Walter Roth, Moselle Schwartz, Milton Shulman, Elaine Suloway and Irwin Suloway. Also on the board are Past Presidents Adele Hast, Rachel Heimovics, Muriel Robin Rogers and Norman Schwartz.

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Left: Stashover Holocaust survivors (l. to r.) Ann Weinberg, Eric Reifer, Pearl Grossman, Sam Friedman and Jack Weinberg were among those videotaped.  
Below: Moderator Sol Brandzel (l.) and Ed Mazur supervised the taping (Story below)

Photos by Moselle Schwartz

## Stashover Videotape Available for Use By Organizations

Having completed its first videotaping project for its archives, the Chicago Jewish Historical Society has decided to make the resulting tape available for borrowing by various organizations desiring to use it for programming purposes, according to Sol Brandzel, who headed the project.

The tape, which runs approximately one hour, involves ten former residents of the Stashover area of intewar Poland who survived their concentration camp experiences and later became Chicago residents. Their recollections of life in Stashover, the Holocaust terror, and their later entrance into Chicago life are recorded for posterity. Mr. Brandzel, himself Stashover born but who came to the U.S. as a child early in the century, served a moderator of the discussion.

An audio cassette of the tape has also been made and it as well as the videotape will be available for use by students and scholars studying Jewish life in Poland before World War II, the Holocaust experience, and survivor integration into Chicago Jewish life.

Organizations wishing to make use of the videotape should get in touch with Mr. Brandzel at (312)738-6147 or the Society office at (312)663-5634.

Almost the entire cost of making the videotape professionally was recouped by donations from Stashovers and other individuals anxious to preserve the historical record of this particular segment of Chicago Jewry. □

## CJHS Exhibits Seen At UIC Hillel House

*Students See Maxwell Street, Landsmanschaften Photos*

Portions of two photo exhibits which have proved popular with Society members have been mounted at the new University of Illinois-Chicago Hillel Center, where the CJHS recently acquired space for Society use. One deals with Jewish Maxwell Street, the other with the role of *vereins* and *landsmanschaften*, mutual aid societies, in local Jewish immigrant life.

"We are happy to have the opportunity to inform Jewish college students of their roots in the city's Jewish history," said Society President Walter Roth. "Our new space at Hillel House makes it possible to reach out to younger Jews, many of whom are unaware of the Society and its work or of the fascinating past of our Jewish community."

The Maxwell Street photos with their explanatory text were part of a large Chicago Historical Society exhibit in 1982, in which our Society played a role. Since then the CHS has permitted the CJHS to have major portions of that exhibit on indefinite loan and to arrange for its exhibition throughout the area.

The *landsmanschaften* photos are a part of the popular exhibit at Spertus College which the Society mounted during the Fall of 1989.

The Maxwell Street photos at Hillel House were arranged by Norman Schwartz, while Sidney Sorkin is responsible for the showing of *landsmanschaft* photos.

The William and Mildred Levine



Hillel Center, which is currently open to the public as well as UIC students, is located at 929 South Morgan Street. □

## Board Members

*continued from page 10*

Society officers, President Walter Roth, Vice-President Burt Robin, Secretary Elaine Suloway and Treasurer Herman Draznin, continue in office through June, 1991.

The election took place at the annual meeting following the report of the nominating committee given by its chairman, Sol Brandzel.

The Society board of directors consists of current officers, past presidents (ex officio) and directors elected by the membership for staggered three-year terms. Officers are elected by the board from its membership for a two-year term. Current officers serve through June of 1991. □