



chicago jewish history

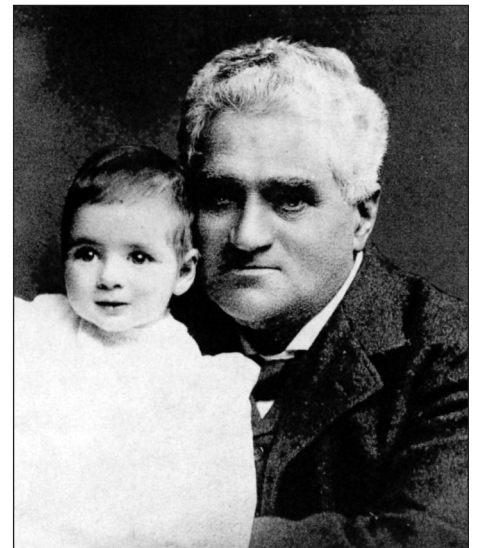
Nelson Morris and “The Yards”

BY WALTER ROTH

Stockyards and markets for the slaughter and distribution of meat developed early in colonial American history. The livestock was transported first by riverboat and later by rail to central locations in certain inland cities: first to Cincinnati, which came to be known as “Porkopolis,” and then, after the Civil War, to Chicago. By the time Chicago attained its leading status, its stockyards were controlled by three entrepreneurs: Phillip Armour, Gustavus Swift, and Nelson Morris. Of this triumvirate, one, Nelson Morris, was Jewish.

Nelson Morris was born Moritz Beisinger in the Black Forest area of Southern Germany on January 21, 1838, near a small town called Hechingen. His son Ira, in his autobiography, *Heritage from My Father*, recalls his father often mentioning the times he drove cattle through the forest at the foothills of the Swiss Alps after their feeding. Raising and trading cattle was a fairly common occupation of rural Jews in Germany.

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Nelson Morris and his infant son, Ira.
Photograph from the book, Heritage from My Father: An Autobiography, by Ira Nelson Morris, privately published in 1947 by his widow, Constance Lily (Rothschild) Morris. Ira died in 1939.



Bessie Abramowitz. *Portrait taken shortly after her immigration. (Courtesy of Philoine Fried.)*

Bessie Abramowitz Hillman and “The Amalgamated”

A POWER AMONG THEM: Bessie Abramowitz Hillman and the Making of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

By Karen Pastorello (University of Illinois Press, 288 pp. Cloth, \$42.50).

A REVIEW BY EDWARD H. MAZUR

At home in Linoveh, a little town in the Tsarist Russian province of Grodno (now Belarus), young Bas-Sheva Abramowitz overheard her parents and the local matchmaker discussing a *shidekh* (arranged marriage) for her with a butcher’s son. This was not an appealing prospect for the strong-minded sixteen-year-old girl. She had heard about the wider world from the travelers who stayed at her parents’ inn and from the tutor who schooled her and her sisters. Relatives had a boardinghouse in Chicago. She would go there—to a new life in America with its limitless possibilities.

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President's Column



Walter Roth.

MAY WAS JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH.

The idea for a national month to celebrate Jewish contributions to American history came from the Jewish Museum of Florida and South Florida Jewish community leaders. Their efforts resulted in resolutions introduced in Congress by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) and Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) urging the president to proclaim a month that would recognize the more than 350-year history of Jewish contributions to

American culture. The resolutions passed unanimously, first in the House of Representatives in December 2005 and later in the Senate in February 2006. On April 20, 2006, President George W. Bush proclaimed that May would be Jewish American Heritage Month. May 2008 is the third annual celebration. Visit the beautiful and informative website www.jewishheritage.gov for details.

On Thursday, May 8, the Chicagoland Jewish community celebrated the 60th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel at Northwestern University's McGaw Memorial Hall/ Welsh Ryan Arena. The spectacular Independence Day Gala was headlined by Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel and Israeli superstar singer David Broza.

The Society held an open meeting on Sunday afternoon, May 18, in the Feinberg Theater at Spertus. Our guest speakers were the scholars who won our Award for Essays on Chicago Jewish History: Susan Breitzer, Ph.D., and Vera Kauder Pollina, M.A. The program was coordinated by Past President Dr. Adele Hast. Our Society was proud to make a significant contribution to Jewish Heritage Month. (See a full report on the program in the Summer issue of *CJH*.)

IN MAY I CONTACTED TERESKA TORRES, THE WIDOW OF MEYER LEVIN, THE RENOWNED CHICAGO WRITER about whom I have written a number of articles in *CJH*. Tereska splits her time between France, Israel and America. I had called her to inform her that an old friend of hers and Meyer's, the acclaimed photographer Archie Lieberman, had died on March 13, 2008.

I had gotten to know Archie years ago when I was writing about Meyer Levin, since the two of them had been good friends. Born in Chicago in 1926, Archie attended the School of the Art Institute and the Institute of Design at IIT. He worked first for the U.S. Navy as a combat photographer during WWII, and thereafter as a photographer for leading magazines. His pictures illustrate Meyer Levin's book, *The Story of Israel* (1966). The same year he published his own book of photographic portraits, *The Israelis*. In later life, he lived in Galena, Illinois, and concentrated on photographing a local farm family. The pictures were included in his book, *Farm Boy* (1974).

A retrospective of Archie Lieberman's work is currently being planned by Columbia College Chicago. After my call to Tereska, she was able to contact Esther, Archie's widow, and Tereska and Esther were able to rekindle their relationship and share their memories. ❖



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Editor, Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 610 S. Michigan Ave., #803, Chicago, IL 60605 or info@chicagojewishhistory.org.

Exhibition at the Chicago History Museum “Big Picture: A New View of Painting in Chicago” Continues through August 3, 2008

Be sure to see the exhibition at the Chicago History Museum (the former Chicago Historical Society). Guest curators John Corbett and Jim Dempsey have gathered an array of paintings—realistic, satirical, and fanciful depictions of our city and its colorful inhabitants from bygone days. Some works are from the museum’s vault, others are on loan. Included are works by prominent Jewish artists Aaron Bohrod, A. Raymond Katz, and Seymour Rosofsky. From the collection of CJHS Board Member Seymour H. Persky come the four murals that once graced the bar at Riccardo’s Restaurant.

1601 North Clark Street at North Avenue **www.chicagohistory.org**

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Please note these corrections to the Winter 2008 issue of *CJH*.

- **President’s Column** (page 2): The “Memorial Day Massacre” at Republic Steel occurred in 1937, not 1938.
- **Judge Samuel Alschuler of the Seventh Circuit** (pages 1, 4-5):

A Democrat *was* elected governor of Illinois in the years between John Peter Altgeld and Henry Horner. He was Edward F. Dunne, who served from February 3, 1913 to January 8, 1917. Governor Dunne had previously been elected mayor of Chicago, serving from 1905 to 1907.

We were pleased to find a recent reference to him. *The Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine*, May 25, 2008, pictures Gov. Dunne in its “Flashback” feature. He is shown in Springfield, on June 26, 1913, signing the bill granting women the right to vote for president and for some local officials. The article states: “Illinois was ahead of the pack...when it became the first state east of the Mississippi to grant women the right to vote for president—seven years before the 19th Amendment was enacted.”

- **Jews in Chicago Politics** (pages 7-15): There have been four Jewish mayoral candidates. In addition to William Singer and Bernard Epton, who were mentioned in the article, there were two others. Richard Friedman, who had served briefly as the executive director of the Better Government Association (1969-1971), was the Republican candidate who unsuccessfully opposed Mayor Richard J. Daley in 1971. Alderman Dennis H. Block of the 48th ward ran as a Republican and lost to Michael Bilandic in 1977.

The notorious “Pineapple Primary” took place in 1928, not 1926.

The Chicago Jewish vote had been Democratic at least since the 1928 presidential candidacy of Al Smith. Historians generally agree that Anton Cermak, elected mayor of Chicago in 1931, did not want to run for governor. We referred to “Big Bill” Thompson as mayor, but of course, he was the *former* mayor. In that role he campaigned viciously against Henry Horner in the gubernatorial race.

Rep. Adolph Sabath had already served many terms in Congress before Jack Arvey became a power in the Democratic Party, but Arvey did help to *re-elect* him until Sabath died on his last successful election night in 1952.

- **Hibbard Elementary School Reunion** (page 18): The contact for the Class of 1953 Reunion is Jackye *Bernstein* Sullins.

We regret the errors and ambiguities in our editing.

Welcome, New Members of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society!

Howard Cort
Rochelle Grill
Gordon Prussian
William Raffeld
Anne Rorimer
Jackye Sullins
Drs. Irving & Joan White

AN APPEAL TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY TO GET ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN OUR WORK

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Our Board is a hard-working group that meets at noon on the first Thursday of the month downtown at the Jewish Federation building, 30 South Wells Street. We welcome inquiries from our scholars and Jewish community activists.

COMMITTEES:

Use your skills and interests!

Hospitality: *Greet the attendees at our public programs and oversee refreshments.*

Publication: *Write articles and report on events for CJH.*

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Interested? Please contact the Society online:

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Nelson Morris *continued from page 1*

In 1848, the Beisinger home was destroyed by fire. The family was left penniless when their land was confiscated in the social upheaval that followed the failed Revolution of 1848 in Southern Germany. Moritz's father, intent on providing a better future for his son, managed to finance the boy's emigration, sending him to an uncle, a peddler in New England. His name was changed to Nelson Morris, and his nickname became "Nels."

Nels soon discovered his antipathy to peddling, and he ran away from his uncle's home. Trekking into Pennsylvania, he found work as a coal miner and charcoal burner. He was about 15 years of age at the time. Hearing of better opportunities in the West, he headed in that direction, working his way on a canal boat to Buffalo, New York, and from there on a vessel bound for Chicago. But the captain chose to dock in Michigan City, Indiana, forcing the boy to walk the rest of the way, approximately 65 miles, to Chicago.

Arriving here in 1853, Nelson found a job as a watchman at an old stockyard located at Cottage Grove and 30th Street, managed by John B. Sherman, who later founded the Union Stockyards and Transportation Company. The boy's wages were five dollars per month, plus room and board. At the same time, he also began to trade in cattle. He now had the opportunity to use his skills in the cattle business to accumulate wealth. (Ira explains in his book that young Nelson's drive for money was to buy back his parents' land and rebuild their home in Germany.)

When the American Civil War began in 1861, new prospects arose for the cattle trade. Nelson became closely associated with meatpacker Philip Armour. Nelson won a bid from the Federal government to deliver 20,000 cattle to destinations in cities near the battle zones. He now gained the reputation as an outstanding trader in livestock, and he acquired a slaughterhouse and butcher shop in Chicago at 31st Street at the lakefront. He continued to be an active trader for the Union Army.

At the end of the war in 1865, the stockyards were moved to a permanent location at 45th Street and Halsted. Nelson's stockyard was one of the first to be located there. That site became the location of the principal meat processing plant of Morris & Co. in Chicago. By the end of the 1880s, Morris's facilities consisted of a floor space of 60 acres, 40 buildings, and

a daily capacity of 5,000 cattle, 10,000 hogs, 6,000 sheep and 1,000 calves. Nelson also owned extensive plants in East St. Louis, Illinois; South Bend, Indiana; St. Joseph, Michigan; and Kansas City, Missouri. In addition, he had homes and offices in many countries around the world, a huge cattle ranch in Texas, and ranches in other western states.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (2004, The University of Chicago Press and The Newberry Library): "At the turn of the century, Nelson Morris & Co. had nearly 100 branches across the United States and employed over 3,700 people at the Union Stock Yards. By the time the founder died in 1907, annual sales had reached about \$100 million."

In 1863, Nelson was married to Sarah Vogel, a Chicago Jewish woman, after which he built a "simple home" at 25th Street and Indiana Avenue, where the devoted couple lived for the rest of their lives. They had three sons: Edward, Herbert, and Ira, and two daughters: Augusta (who married M.L. Rothschild), and Maude (who married M.C. Schwab).



The Indiana Ave. home of Nelson and Sarah Morris.

Photograph from All Our Lives: A Centennial History of Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center, 1881-1981. Chicago History Museum.

Despite his lack of formal education, Nelson attained important social and economic positions. He was elected a director of the First National Bank of Chicago in 1872—the first Jew elected to that Board—where he served until his death. He was also director and part owner of the Drovers Bank, which in its early years had its main business from the stockyards.

Ira's book refers to his father spending leisure time at the Standard Club. As for his membership in other Jewish organizations or participation in the religious life of the Jewish community, little is known. He is said to have been one of the founders of Sinai Congregation, but his name seems to have disappeared from the membership rolls.

In an undated letter to Ira, Nelson wrote: "You know my views of organized religion. I have no use for darkness, no fears for the hereafter. Impractical people

try to make the ignorant more ignorant and teach them to hate instead of love our government, and hate those who furnish their living.”

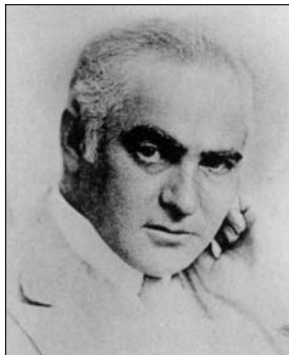
Obviously, Nelson was a conservative when it came to politics, fearful of labor unions and their threats of strikes and violence. In his personal life, he had a love for horses, and his favorite horse-drawn carriage was his means of transportation. He never drove a car for personal travel and urged his wife never to drive.

In spite of his political conservatism, toward the end of his life, in 1905, he was one of the founders of a settlement house, the Abraham Lincoln Centre, at 38th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue, which still exists at the same location.

Although Nelson traveled a great deal, visiting the Carlsbad Spa in Germany and spending the months of February and March in Santa Barbara, California, he was very attached to his home on Indiana Avenue. No mention is made anywhere of his returning to visit his parents in Hechingen or of their visiting their son in America.

Ira Nelson Morris, the youngest son of Nelson and Sarah, had steadfastly rejected the idea of working in the yards. He managed to attend Yale University for a time despite the strong objections of his domineering father, who wanted all his sons close to him, working together in the business. Ira, in his autobiography, describes in detail the slaughtering and processing of the animals, and of his revulsion at witnessing the scene. Yet he expresses “respect and admiration for the efficiency of these operations and their usefulness to the human race....I had only respect for the business, but I knew I did not belong in it.”

Ira had married Lily Rothschild



**Ira Nelson Morris
(1875-1939).**

*Illustration from his
autobiography.*

of New York in 1898, but in the the middle of their wedding trip, they were suddenly called home by the death of his brother Herbert. Ira was obliged to return to work in the management of the family business.

Nelson Morris died on August 27, 1907, in his Chicago home. Cause of death seemed to have been a condition related to “hardening of the arteries.” An obituary article in the *Chicago Tribune* states: “It was [Nelson] Morris who suggested...the name of the Abraham Lincoln Centre. He was the main support of that social work, and friends strongly approved of holding his funeral service there.” His interment

was at Rosehill Cemetery. Sarah Morris was killed in an automobile accident at Fontainebleau, France, on September 16, 1909.

Further tragedy followed for the family. Edward Morris, Sarah and Nelson’s eldest son, died in 1913. He had worked in the business since his youth and had been given control of Morris & Co. upon the death of his father. He was a defendant in a criminal antitrust suit brought by the U.S. Government against the leading Chicago meatpackers, which alleged that they had taken control of the industry by establishing a cartel. Though the government lost the case, the stress of the trial was said to have been the indirect cause of Edward’s early death.

His widow, Helen Swift Morris, whom he had married in 1871, was the daughter of Gustavus Swift, one of the stockyards’ founding triumvirate. Since she was now a principal owner of the Morris & Co. estate as well as the head of Swift & Company, she became one of the wealthiest individuals in America. She got an offer to sell Morris & Co. for \$30,000,000, but

continued on page 6



“The canning department of Morris & Co. in 1917. Wartime brought a boom in the industry and higher wages to the workers”—A Wild Kind of Boldness: The Chicago History Reader (1998). Chicago History Museum. CHS DN 69,087.

Nelson Morris *continued from page 5*

decided to keep the business for her sons Edward, Jr., and Nelson. Helen was also left with two much younger daughters, Ruth and Muriel (see following article). The sons ran the business, “with considerable help from my mother, a good businesswoman,” writes Muriel.

The Morris activities in the stockyards ceased in 1924 when the company was absorbed by Armour.



Sarah Morris Hospital for Children.

Photo from All Our Lives: A Centennial History of Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center, 1881-1981.

Ira Morris writes: “Perhaps the most gratifying tasks that I have had have been in helping with some of the details of establishing and carrying on fitting memorials to my father and mother, as arranged in their wills: The Nelson Morris Memorial Institute for Medical Research and the Sarah Morris Hospital for Children, both connected with Michael Reese Hospital of Chicago....”

Both buildings were erected in 1913, the year of Edward Morris’s tragic early death. The Nelson Morris Institute was demolished in 1966. The famous Sarah Morris Hospital, known for its comforts, came down in 1968 after 55 years of service.

Ira Morris began a career in diplomacy in 1914 when he was named Minister to Sweden by President Woodrow Wilson. In his government work he was proud to be able to serve five presidents, from Wilson to FDR. He was one of the founders of the Cliff Dwellers’ Club in Chicago and associated with prominent figures in the international art community.

As for the patriarch of the family, when Nelson Morris is remembered today it is in connection with the revelations about the Union Stockyards at the turn of the twentieth century—the grim working conditions, the low wages, and the racial strife—all so vividly described by Upton Sinclair in his book, *The Jungle*. ❖

WALTER ROTH is the president of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. He is a practicing attorney with the firm of Seyfarth Shaw LLC.

A Courageous Granddaughter of Nelson Morris

CODE NAME “MARY” — Memoirs of an American Woman in the Austrian Underground.

By Muriel Gardiner. Foreword by Anna Freud. (1983, Yale University Press).

Muriel Morris Gardiner (Buttinger) was a distinguished psychoanalyst, child psychiatrist, educator, and writer. She lived a long, eventful, productive, and rewarding life.

In 1973, when Lillian Hellman’s book *Pentimento* appeared, Gardiner’s friends and acquaintances began telephoning her, saying: “You must be ‘Julia.’” Her Austrian friends, who still called her by her underground code name, would say: “Mary, you have to be ‘Julia.’”

Gardiner had read Hellman’s story and was struck by the similarities between her life and the heroine’s, but she had never met Hellman. Their only connection was a longtime friend of Gardiner’s—her family and his had shared a large house in New Jersey for over ten years, and he had many friends in the theater world.

After the film *Julia* appeared (in 1977, with Jane Fonda as Hellman and Vanessa Redgrave in the title role), Gardiner inquired at the Documentation Archives of the Austrian Resistance. Had there been any other American women deeply involved in the anti-Fascist or anti-Nazi underground? Had other resistance workers heard of another such American woman? They had all answered: “No, only ‘Mary.’”



Muriel Gardiner (1901-1985).

Photograph by Trude Fleischmann, 1934.

Instead of challenging Hellman in court, Gardiner decided to tell her own story. She was encouraged by her husband of many years, the writer Joseph Buttinger.

Young Muriel had come to Vienna seeking to be psychoanalyzed by Sigmund Freud, but he refused, referring her instead to his twenty-four-year-old associate, Ruth Mack (later Brunswick), the daughter of Chicago's Judge Julian W. Mack (see *CJH* Summer 2007). Her sessions with Dr. Brunswick lasted for three years, in both Vienna and New York.

Muriel and Joe had met and fallen in love in Vienna in the 1930s. By then she was a medical student. He was a leader of the anti-Nazi socialists. Muriel had been sympathetic to the political left since childhood, and she became involved in his work. She harbored fugitive Jews and socialists in her apartment and acted as a courier, carrying false passports (in a corset she bought especially for that purpose) to comrades across the border in Czechoslovakia, then still an independent republic.

After terrifying delays and complications, Muriel and Joe were able to leave Austria for France. There, with the help of former Premier Leon Blum, they were married and sailed for New York.

(Years earlier, Muriel had been married and divorced from a British artist, Julian Gardiner, and they had a daughter, Constance. Muriel raised Connie mostly in Vienna—with respite from the dangerous city at the fine schools and scenic vacation spots available to a wealthy American—until sending her to safety in New York, to her sister Dr. Ruth Bakwin, a pediatrician.)

When Austrian refugees began arriving in America, many in need of urgent medical care, Muriel took them to Dr. Bakwin for assistance.

Muriel pursued her psychiatric profession in New York and New Jersey, and Joe's writing gained prominence. He was able to formally adopt Connie.

Connie married Harold Harvey, a young doctor who had been a fellow student of Muriel's in Vienna. After a vacation in Europe, they were prevented from flying back to America because Connie was in the ninth month of pregnancy. So they sailed home instead—aboard the ill-fated *Andrea Doria*! They courageously leapt into the sea when they found their lifeboat to be inoperative and were picked up by a rescue ship. The Harveys eventually had six children and settled on a large working cattle ranch in Aspen, Colorado.

Today, known for her grit and determination, firm-jawed wilderness activist Connie Harvey, crowned by a head of thick, white "Morris" hair, continues to oversee the ranch and write a monthly environmental column for the *Aspen Daily News*. ❖

"Monuments Man" Seymour Pomrenze Honored



The 2007 National Humanities Medal awards ceremony. Detail from a group portrait: President Bush and Seymour J. Pomrenze, Colonel, US Army (Retired) at the White House, November 15.

Archivist Seymour J. (Sholom) Pomrenze was one of the surviving "Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Men" honored with the 2007 National Humanities Medal. The award was presented for their work following World War II in rescuing and restoring to their rightful owners millions of works of art, texts, and documents—including Torah scrolls—looted by Hitler and the Nazis from across Europe. Learn more at www.monumentsmenfoundation.org.

Pomrenze was born in Kiev in 1917, and at the age of two came to America with his mother and older brother. They settled in Chicago where his uncle was living. (This was Dr. Herman M. Pomrenze, a prominent Labor Zionist.) Seymour earned degrees from IIT and the University of Chicago, and when he joined the Army, his academic credentials and abilities took him to increasingly important postings.

He and his wife Brondell, the daughter of Chicago Rabbi David Kaganoff, lived in Washington, D.C. for the many years that he worked at the National Archives. They are now residents of Riverdale, New York. ❖



The former Brondell Kaganoff and Captain Pomrenze on their wedding day in Chicago, 1945.

Bessie Abramowitz Hillman *continued from page 1*

On December 14, 1905, Bas-Sheva (dubbed “Basche” by an immigration official) arrived at Ellis Island aboard a ship of the Holland-America Line. Although she was chaperoned by two cousins, she cautiously gave her age as twenty-one. In a matter of days she left for Chicago, where she settled in at her relatives’ boardinghouse on South Halsted Street and found work as button sewer in the city’s thriving men’s garment industry. She used her wages to sponsor the immigration of her two younger sisters.

Karen Pastorello, the author of *A Power Among Them*, is an associate professor of history and chair of women’s studies at Tompkins Cortland Community College, Dryden, New York. She tells us in her preface that she herself is the granddaughter of a button sewer in the men’s garment industry in Rochester, New York. Antoinette Piarulle, the eldest child of Italian immigrants, was obliged to leave school to do that work, returned to it when her husband lost his job in the Depression, and went back to the shop yet again after her children were born and the family was financially secure.

Why? From early childhood, the author remembers hearing praise for “the Amalgamated” from her grandmother. Pastorello surmises that there was a feeling of autonomy for women from working outside the home, and that the camaraderie of the women in the ACWA shop was enhanced by the social and recreational opportunities available at the weekly union meetings. “The union gave a multifaceted meaning to the work my grandmother, and thousands of women like her, performed.”



Chicago Men’s Garment Workers’ Strike, October 1910. Women workers and allies picketing Hart, Schaffner, and Marx shops. Male workers who have not yet joined the strike observe from the sidelines. Bessie Abramowitz is the second person behind the woman in the white scarf. (Courtesy of Philoine Fried.)

Embarking on her doctoral work in women’s history and labor history, Pastorello decided to explore the participation of women in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. The one person synonymous with the founding of the union was Sidney Hillman. “The workers revered Sidney Hillman,” she writes, “and his death was marked by banner headlines and a funeral procession befitting a head of state.”

His wife, Bessie Abramowitz Hillman, was the only woman whose name appeared in official ACWA union papers.

With great anticipation, Pastorello began looking through Bessie’s official papers and found almost nothing—none of the usual diaries, journals, or significant correspondence. Her personal file also yielded very little—“scattered household receipts and intermittent tax records dating back to the 1920s.” But this was not totally disappointing. It showed, in Yiddish parlance, that Bessie was a *baleboste* (manager of the household) and probably a *berye* (a skillful and efficient *baleboste*), as well.

For documentation, Pastorello studied the public statements of other women in the labor movement to fill in Bessie’s private story. She interviewed her surviving friends and associates, and most valuably, Bessie’s daughter, Philoine Fried.

As she later stated forcefully on more than one occasion: “I was Bessie Abramowitz before he was Sidney Hillman.” Indeed, the Chicago Tribute Marker of Distinction (on the facing page) properly credits her with starting the garment workers’ strike of 1910-11. It took a while for the men—including Sidney—to follow. Soon, however, she was heard to say of Sidney Hillman: “I found my man!”

During the strike, Bessie was an almost constant presence on the picket lines, but she preferred to march in the middle of the strikers, not at the front. This allowed her an inconspicuous point from which to confront charging policemen, whose horses' hindquarters she could prod with a woman's essential fashion accessory of the day, earning her the nickname "Hatpin Bessie."

On January 16, 1911, Hart Schaffner & Marx shop foremen greeted Bessie, Sidney, and thousands of their fellow workers as they returned to their jobs. The HSM employees had won a clear-cut victory with the promise of substantial improvements in working conditions, a fair wage scale, and labor-management arbitration.

Following the strike, Bessie began her career as a professional labor organizer. (Her future button sewing would be done at home for her family.) Together with the women of Hull-House, she worked on behalf of many progressive issues, including women's suffrage.

Bessie and Sidney finally took time away from their union activities to be married. They publicly confirmed their engagement during the 1916 May Day parade by linking arms and leading a contingent of clothing workers through downtown Chicago. Although their wedding took place in a synagogue, Bessie did not consider herself a "religious person." Sidney, who had briefly attended the Slobodka Yeshiva in Lithuania until he was expelled for studying Russian, was apathetic toward organized religion. Following the ceremony, the couple took a walk in Stanford Park at 14th and Union Streets, and after a long talk about union business, fell asleep on a bench.

During Sidney's lifetime, Bessie worked at his side. Her own career as a labor activist spanned sixty years. She raised two daughters and lived to welcome a great-granddaughter. Unfortunately, she represents a group that until recently has been relegated to the shadows of historical investigation. Professor Pastorello's illuminating monograph will be an important corrective. ❖

DR. EDWARD H. MAZUR, *treasurer of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and member of the Board of Directors, is an urban historian, professor emeritus at City Colleges of Chicago, member of the Illinois Historical Society Advisory Board, and consultant to the International Visitors Center of Chicago.*

CHICAGO TRIBUTE Markers of Distinction

Bessie Abramowitz (1889–1970) and Sidney Hillman (1887–1946)

Labor activists



Sidney Hillman and Bessie Abramowitz Hillman were leaders in the burgeoning Chicago labor movement of the early 1900s. They helped devise the system of

collective bargaining and arbitration.

Abramowitz started the historic garment workers strike [sic] of 1910-11 here at 1922 South Halsted Street, the former location of Hart, Schaffner & Marx Shop #5. She led 16 seamstresses out of the plant in protest because their piece rate was reduced. Hillman was among the city's 40,000 garment workers who joined them. The couple emerged as leaders of the United Garment Workers Union, negotiating a contract that became a model for labor-management relations.

The labor struggle spread throughout the nation and, in 1914, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America was created. At age 26, Hillman was elected its first president, an office he would hold until his death 32 years later. He and Abramowitz had relocated to New York, but they returned to Chicago to marry on May Day [sic], 1916.

Among the ACWA's innovations were the 40-hour work week, unemployment insurance, and the creation of labor-owned housing and banks (including the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago). Bessie Hillman served on the ACWA's executive board and fought for civil rights, child welfare and women's rights.

CHICAGO TRIBUTE MARKERS OF DISTINCTION commemorate notable Chicagoans by marking the places where they lived or worked. Since the program began in 1997, eighty markers have been erected. Chicago Tribute Markers of Distinction is a collaboration between the Chicago Cultural Center Foundation, the Chicago Tribune Foundation, and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. To see a location map, go to www.chicagotribute.org

The Bessie Abramowitz and Sidney Hillman Marker is located at 1922 South Halsted Street. The photograph on the marker is from a group portrait taken at the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Biennial Convention, 1916.

An Accidental Anarchist Inspired The Lazarus Project

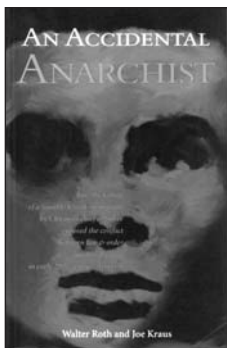
Ten years ago, a true story from Chicago's Jewish past was told in a book by Walter Roth and Joe Kraus.

The episode took place on a cold Chicago morning in March, 1908. Lazarus Averbuch, a 19-year-old Jewish immigrant, knocked on the door of Police Chief George Shippy. Minutes later, the boy lay dead, shot by Shippy himself. Why Averbuch went to the police chief's house and exactly what happened afterward is still not known. The book does not solve the mystery, rather the authors examine the many different perspectives and concerns that surrounded the investigation of Averbuch's killing.

Then as now, Walter Roth was a practicing attorney and president of the CJHS. Joe Kraus was a graduate student, instructor, and editor of our quarterly. Today, Joseph E. Kraus, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the English Department of the University of Scranton.

Aleksandar Hemon, a much honored young Chicago writer, is an immigrant from Sarajevo. The Roth & Kraus account of the Lazarus story was the starting point for his latest book, in which the writer and his best friend, photographer Velibor Bozovic (fictionalized as Brik and Rora), travel to Eastern Europe to follow Lazarus' path from Kishinev after the pogrom of 1905. Clear-eyed reporting morphs into tortured introspection.

Cathleen Schine, in *The New York Times Book Review*, calls it "a richly stark and disturbing novel."



AN ACCIDENTAL ANARCHIST: How the Killing of a Humble Jewish Immigrant by Chicago's Chief of Police Exposed the Conflict Between Law & Order and Civil Rights in Early 20th Century America.

By Walter Roth & Joe Kraus. 1998. Academy Chicago Publishers. 212 pp. Illustrated with black & white photographs. Paper, \$16.95.

THE LAZARUS PROJECT. By Aleksandar Hemon. 2008. Riverhead Books. 294 pp. Illustrated with black & white photographs. Hardcover, \$24.95.

Report on Open Meeting Robert Packer: "Chicago's Forgotten Synagogues"



Program Chairman Charles Bernstein (left) and guest speaker Robert Packer. Temple Sholom, March 30, 2008.
Photograph by Ed Mazur.

The Society presented guest speaker Robert Packer at our open meeting on Sunday afternoon, March 30, at Temple Sholom, 3480 North Lake Shore Drive.

Robb Packer is a private building and environmental inspector and also an enterprising photographer, collector, and historian of Jewish Chicago. He has written two books of photographs and anecdotes about many of Chicago's past synagogues, and they were the subject of his slide lecture.

His first book, a spiral-bound collection of his own photographs, is *Doors of Redemption: The Forgotten Synagogues of Chicago and Other Communal Buildings* (2006; BookSurge; 282 pages; \$23.99).

His second book, *Chicago's Forgotten Synagogues* (2007; Arcadia; 127 pages; \$19.99), is a paperback in the "Images of America" series. It contains pictures gathered from many sources, including the Society's own Norman Schwartz and Irving Cutler.

After a social hour, words of welcome from President Roth, and an introduction by Chairman Bernstein, we were taken on a whirlwind pictorial tour of past synagogues, beginning with Packer's own former neighborhood *shul*, B'nai Zion of Rogers Park, the city's oldest Conservative congregation. We were reminded that B'nai Zion's first home had been a church, and that many synagogues had first been churches, just as many synagogue buildings in the city have become churches as much of the Jewish population has dispersed.

In conclusion, Packer told of his dream that funds be raised to create a Chicago Jewish history museum in Lawndale's now desolate Kehillath Jacob synagogue. ❖

ED MAZUR'S PAGES FROM THE PAST

My source for these selections is the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Microfilm Collection at the Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Library Center.

In the autumn of 1936 the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey was organized under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of Illinois. The purpose of the Survey was to translate and classify selected news articles appearing in Chicago's foreign language press from 1861 to 1938.

Financial curtailments in the WPA program ended the Survey in October 1941. The Chicago Public Library published the work in 1942. The project consists of a file of 120,000 typewritten pages from newspapers of 22 different foreign language communities in Chicago.

Yiddish is the foreign language of the Jewish press in the Survey. English language periodicals are also included, as well as the publications of charitable institutions, communal organizations, and synagogues.

TEMPLE JUDEA TEACHERS STRIKE

The Hebrew Teachers' Union declared a strike at Temple Judea, yesterday, because the President discharged a teacher, a member of the Hebrew Teachers Union, in the middle of the semester, not considering justice or human feelings.

The Union came to the conclusion to order all the daily schoolteachers, also the Sabbath schoolteachers, immediately to drop their work and not to contract with the officers of Temple Judea until they will grant the demands of the Union.

The Hebrew Teachers' Union expected more justice from a

manager of such an institution pretending reform and progressiveness. The hopes of the Union were for naught. The Temple Judea management deals with their hired teacher as the capitalists often deal with their hired workers. The public that visits the Temple should know that there is a strike there because of unfair dealing to workers.

—*Daily Jewish Forward*,
February 12, 1919.

CIGAR STORE STRIKER SHOT BY POLICEMAN; ACCUSED OF BREAKING WINDOWS

Abraham Levin, nineteen years old, one of the strikers from the United Cigar Stores, lies in the County Hospital. Two bullets wounded him when he attempted to escape from two detectives, who had arrested him and three other strikers on the charge of having broken the show windows in seventeen company stores.

The police state that Levin confessed at the hospital to the window-breaking and also gave the names of his accomplices, Isadore Goldstein, Charles Sharkin, and Raymond Kozlovsky [home addresses of the four men are given here]. The detectives arrested Levin, Goldstein and Kozlovsky as they were leaving the headquarters of the Retail Clerks Union, 166 West Washington Street. The detectives said that Levin had escaped... [They] followed, shot twice into the air, and then sent two bullets into Levin's leg. Both bullets struck the hips.

Sharkin was arrested at the Chicago Federation of Labor headquarters. The secretary of the Federation would not permit detectives to make the arrest. The detectives phoned Chief of Police

Garrity who said, "Do your duty."—*Daily Jewish Courier*, August 4, 1919.

STRIKE AT THE KOSHER STAR SAUSAGE COMPANY

Fifty butcher-workers, members of Local 484 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher-Workers of America, went out on strike yesterday at the Kosher Star Sausage Company, 1006 Maxwell Street. The reason for this strike was that the bosses cut 20% of the workers' wages.

A short time ago the bosses of Kosher Star notified their workers that they would cut 10% of their pay. The workers considered this and decided to grant the bosses this request, until times would change, and then they would demand the original wages again; but the bosses, clever business people, instead of cutting 10% from the dollar, took 10 cents from every hour, which amounts to 18 to 20% from the dollar.

This, the workers refused to accept, as it would be impossible to get along on such small pay. The Amalgamated Meat Cutters therefore declared a strike and asked all right-thinking people to help the striking butcher-workers, and buy meats and sausages from firms employing Union-labor.
—*Daily Jewish Forward*,
February 23, 1922.

KOSHER STAR SETTLES STRIKE

Fifty butcher-workers of the Kosher Star Sausage Company won their strike. The firm granted all demands... The strike lasted seven days. The workers were united. Therefore, the employers were forced to meet their demands, asserted the secretary of the local, Urinovitch. —*Daily Jewish Forward*, March 1, 1922.