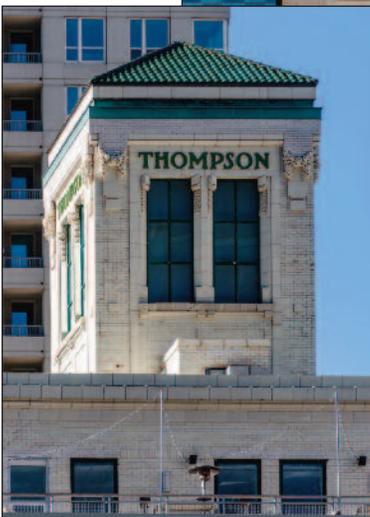




CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

40th Anniversary Celebration Review & Program Preview

Julia Bachrach: “Chicago’s Jewish Architects: A Legacy of Modernism” Sunday, March 11 — Save the Date!



Julia S. Bachrach.
Photo by Robert Knapp.

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society invites you to a presentation by historian, author, and preservation planning consultant Julia Bachrach Sunday, March 11, 2018, 2:00 p.m. Temple Beth Israel 3601 Dempster Street, Skokie
A social hour with kosher pastries will follow the program.

General admission \$10 per person at the door. CJHS members and TBI members free.
Program details on Page 3

Pictured (from the top):
Adler & Sullivan's Auditorium Building.
Alfred S. Alschuler's Thompson Building.
Loewenberg & Loewenberg's
3550 North Lake Shore Drive.
Photos by Eric Allix Rogers.

CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Dr. Rachelle Gold.

CJHS and the Illinois Bicentennial – Get Involved!

I want to thank the many members and guests whose presence made the Society's 40th anniversary celebration on December 3rd, 2017, an exciting and uplifting event (see report on pages 8 and 9). As our own special anniversary passes, for the people of our region another arrives. This year the State of Illinois celebrates its bicentennial on December 3, the date in 1818 when the Illinois constitution was approved and Illinois entered the United States as the 21st state.

Throughout 2018, "The Illinois Bicentennial will celebrate all that is great in Illinois: our history, our people, and our communities" (Illinois Bicentennial website, www.illinois200.com). Now is an occasion for Chicago Jewish historians to explore and acknowledge the contributions of Jews who lived beyond our local borders.

"Jews can be found in the early development of each community throughout the state," states Leah Axelrod, a CJHS founding member, longtime board member, and tour chairman. Leah speaks with knowledge and authority, as she is also the current president of the Illinois State Historical Society.

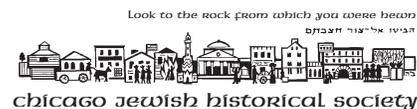
I asked Leah how CJHS members and *Chicago Jewish History* readers could participate in the bicentennial. She made a splendid suggestion – that those who have Illinois family roots in towns outside the Chicago area submit a few sentences about their family history. These submissions will be compiled and published in a future issue of our journal.

To inspire you to think and write about your larger Illinois family history, I am profiling two adventurous Jewish pioneers who were prominent figures in the early history of Illinois, John Jacob Hays and Abraham Jonas.

John Jacob Hays (1766-1836) was the first recorded Jewish resident of Illinois, settling in Cahokia in 1793. A New York native with distinguished ancestry, he was the grandson of Solomon Hays, who arrived in New York from Holland in 1720 along with his five brothers and their families. Among John Hays' family ancestors and contemporaries were members of Shearith Israel (The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, the oldest congregation in the US, founded in 1654) and Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia (the oldest continuous synagogue in the US). Others included a soldier with George Washington in the French and Indian War, a chief of police in New York City, and a prominent ophthalmologist who was a founder of the American Medical Association.

Before moving to Cahokia, Hays worked as a trader in the Northwest Territory in the employ of a Canadian trading company. At the time, Illinois was part of the Northwest Territory, and Cahokia (on the Mississippi across from present-day St. Louis) was one of the oldest settlements in Illinois country and a major urban center in the most populous area of Illinois. He came to Cahokia to work as a trading agent for a different company, then

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2018

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Chicago Jewish History

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Send submissions to Editor, electronically (preferred) or via standard mail. Enclose SASE.

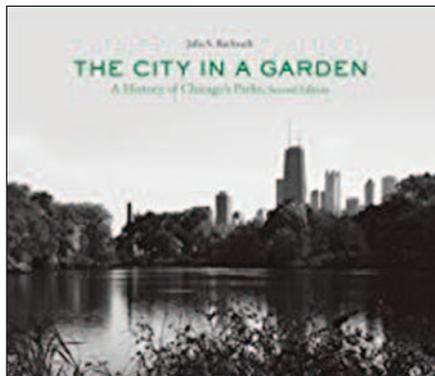
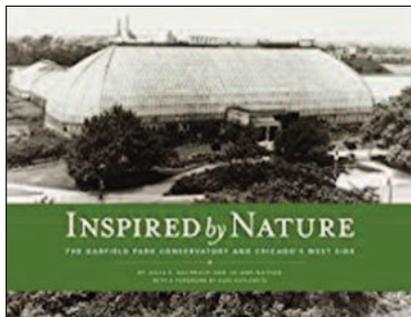
Julia Bachrach: “Chicago’s Jewish Architects: A Legacy of Modernism”

Sunday, March 11, 2:00 p.m. Temple Beth Israel, 3601 Dempster Street, Skokie

Continued from the Front Page

Birthplace of the skyscraper, Chicago played an important role in the development of architectural Modernism. This great legacy includes the contributions of many Jewish architects, some now famous and others who have long been overlooked. In this presentation Julia Bachrach will highlight the work of Chicago Jewish architects from the 1890s through the 1970s.

Architects and firms including Dankmar Adler, Alfred S. Alschuler, Walter W. Ahlschlager, Ernest Grunsfeld Jr., Emanuel V. Buchsbaum, Oman & Lilienthal, Dubin & Dubin, and Loewenberg & Loewenberg will be featured.



Julia S. Bachrach is a historian, author, and preservation planning consultant. Her books include *The City in a Garden: A History of Chicago's Parks* and *Inspired by Nature: The Garfield Park Conservatory and Chicago's West Side*. She contributed to the *AIA Guide to Chicago Architecture* and *Art Deco Chicago: Making Modern America* (forthcoming).

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

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Lincolnwood, IL

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James Miller
Lemont, IL

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Lincolnwood, IL

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Chicago, IL

Lawrence & Naomi Yablong
Chicago, IL

Thanks to our loyal, supportive friends who renewed their memberships for 2018 or became Life Members

Election of Members to Our Board of Directors

At a very brief CJHS open meeting on Sunday, March 11, before Julia Bachrach's presentation, an election will be held for membership to a three-year term on our Board. The nominees are:

CJHS Tour Chairman **LEAH JOY AXELROD** is the newly elected President of the Illinois State Historical Society. Leah has resided in Highland Park since 1957. Her lifelong interest in history led her to become a founding member of the Highland Park Historical Society and the CJHS. In addition, she has been a member of the Historic Preservation Commission of Highland Park and is now a citizen advisor for that commission. She serves on the Board of the Chicago Area Women's History Conference. In 1975, Leah became affiliated with My Kind of Town Tours & Events, and she has been president since 1979. She is a member of the Chicago Tour Professionals Association (CTPA). A Milwaukee native, she earned a B.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin. Leah and her husband Les have six children and four grandchildren.

DR. IRVING CUTLER is a founding member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and has also served as president of the Geographic Society of Chicago. After serving as a U.S. naval officer in World War II, he went on to receive a Masters Degree in Social Science from the University of Chicago and a Ph.D. in Urban Geography from Northwestern. He served on the faculty of Chicago State University for 24 years, 10 as chairman of the Geography Department. He has also taught at DePaul University. He has been a consultant to a number of government agencies and is the author of numerous articles and eight books, including two award-winners, *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent* and *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*. Dr. Cutler has participated in radio and television programs and video documentaries and has given many bus and boat tours and talks on various aspects of Chicago, including Jewish Chicago.

ELISE GINSPARG is a member of the CJHS Board, where she currently serves on the Program Committee. She graduated from Loyola University Chicago with a B.A. in Education and earned a Master's in Audiology from Northwestern. Since retiring from teaching in the Chicago Public Schools, she has been a lecturer and book reviewer, concentrating on Jewish life in cities around the world. She contributes travel articles to our journal. She was a speaker on the panel discussing Hyde Park High School and its Jewish community at a Society open meeting. Elise selects the presenters and coordinates the annual "Night of Knowledge" program at Congregation Yehuda Moshe in Lincolnwood.

DR. RACHELLE GOLD is a proud third generation Chicagoan. Her attraction to history is a legacy from her father Jacob, a history lover by choice and a businessman by necessity. Her family followed the familiar Chicago Jewish migration from the Near West Side to West Rogers Park, where she happily resides after detours East and North. Rachelle is a graduate of Northwestern University. She earned a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from The Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers University. She maintains a private practice in the treatment of adults. Jewish study and community involvement are longstanding passions. She volunteers her psychological services for the ARK. On the CJHS Board since the early 2000's, Rachelle is pleased to share the presidency with Jerry Levin and excited about working to ensure the Society's vitality for the future.

Current CJHS Board member **JACOB M. KAPLAN** is a historian with a particular interest in Chicago's overlooked built environment. He is a co-founder and editor at Forgotten Chicago (forgottenchicago.com), a group set up to conduct research, write articles, and conduct tours and lectures focused on the City's overlooked history and architecture. He co-authored the recently released *Images of America: Avondale and Chicago's Polish Village* (Arcadia) on the overlooked history of a Northwest Side neighborhood. He is currently working on a book on Logan Square. Jacob is vice-president of Preservation Chicago and serves on the board of the Northwest Chicago Historical Society. Besides his history pursuits, Jacob Kaplan is Executive Director of the Cook County Democratic Party.

After retiring from the financial services industry in 2011, **KAREN KAPLAN** actively volunteers with numerous Jewish organizations in the community. Karen works two days a week for the Spiritual Care Departments of Skokie Hospital and Evanston Hospital. She is active with AMIT and received their 2016 Bessie Gotsfeld Award for her many years of service to the organization. A member of Skokie Chabad, she is their Volunteer Coordinator for holiday visits to nursing homes, rehab facilities, and hospitals. She also represents Chabad at the annual Skokie Culture Fest, and serves on their Legacy Committee. Karen Kaplan has a double major degree from UIC in Mathematics and Philosophy. She loves Jewish learning and participates in many classes. She lives in Evanston.

CJHS members... YASHER KOACH!

To all our activists, achievers, and honorees... the Hebrew phrase means "More Power to You"



The American Jewish Historical Society committee tasked with selecting the best article in the 2017 volume of the journal *American Jewish History* has chosen to award its Wasserman Prize to two articles. One is by Jonathan D. Sarna and **CJHS Board Member Zev Eleff**, "The Immigration Clause that Transformed Orthodox Judaism in the United States," July, 2017: pp. 357-376. Sarna and Eleff examine the implications of a provision in the 1921 Emergency Quota Act that allowed a number of professions, including clergy, to enter the United States under the quota. The American rabbinate, therefore, remained disproportionately "foreign born," long after Jews were forbidden entry, and the Orthodox rabbinate was the primary beneficiary of the exception.

Zev's article, "The Jewish Center, Herman Wouk, and the Origin of Orthodox Triumphalism" appears in *A Century at the Center: Orthodox Judaism and The Jewish Center*, ed. Zev Eleff (Toby Press, 2018). His writings can be found online at *Jewish Action: The Magazine of the Orthodox Union* (issuu.com) and *The Lehrhaus* (thelehrhaus.com). Dr. Eleff is the Chief Academic Officer at the Hebrew Theological College (HTC) in Skokie. The CJHS is honored to publish his articles in our journal and present his lectures.



We direct our readers to two recent articles by **Malka Simkovich** at thelehrhaus.com. "A Love Letter to the Woman of Valor (November 9, 2017), and "In Every Generation They Rose Up Against Us: How We Keep Getting Hanukkah Wrong" (December 14, 2017).

Dr. Simkovich is the author of *The Making of Jewish Universalism: From Exile to Alexandria* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). Her next book is *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Stories and Scriptures That Shaped Early Judaism* (JPS, September 2018). She is the Crown-Ryan Chair of Jewish Studies and director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies program at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.



Photo by Alex Nitkin, Pioneer Press.

We hope you were able to catch **Sandra Holubow's** exhibition, **THE FIRST TWO HUNDRED YEARS: A Celebration of the Illinois Bicentennial**, through February 27 at Lincolnwood's Village Hall Art Gallery, 6900 North Lincoln Avenue. The artist has been traveling our State gathering inspiration and information for this Bicentennial tribute. A lifelong Illinois resident, her paintings and collages focus on places and people who have contributed to Illinois' development and growth. Aware of how time and nature dynamically impact our rural and urban communities, Holubow wants to capture these sights before they evolve, vanish, and are forgotten.

From May 11 to July 5, Holubow and portrait artist Julia Oehmke will be exhibiting in the Renaissance Gallery of the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, celebrating the places and the people who through the years have brought fame to Illinois.

Save the Date! There will be a reception for the artists on Thursday, May 24, from 4 to 6 p.m.

MEET THE AUTHOR. Errol Magidson will make a presentation and sign his book, *Chicago's Only Castle: The History of Givins' Irish Castle and its Keepers* at the The Newberry Library, April 11, 6 pm–7:30 pm. Ruggles Hall, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago. Magidson's book regales its reader with the history of a treasure buried on Chicago's far Southwest Side of which few people beyond the neighborhood seem to be aware. Free and open to the public. Registration required at www.newberry.org or (312) 943-9090.

Continued on Page 7

Sweaters From Vienna to Chicago

BY GEORGE ROSENBAUM

In Vienna in 1897, when my mother, Grete, was born, almost every girl learned to knit and sew. This was true of my mother. Nearly all sweaters were knit by hand at home or purchased from clothing stores. And Grete had another talent, petit point embroidery.

This was an era of lace—tablecloths, doilies, and even some blouses. The reigning lace capital was Belgium, but Czech lace, though less renowned, was every bit its equal. Grete's parents had a wholesale lace business. They had emigrated to Vienna from Czech Moravia and opened a wholesale business selling Czech lace. My grandmother, Julie Brand, was the driving force of this business. She was probably a role model who gave courage to my stage-struck mother to finance her music lessons by selling petit point opera bags and coasters for glass ashtrays when her father, Joseph Brand, declined to pay for this instruction.



An example of petit point embroidery.
Internet image.

My mother was 16 years old when this transpired. Within a year or two, having learned to source petit point—a skilled, hand produced, cottage industry—she evolved to sourcing hand knit sweaters and specified their designs. The production of hand knit sweaters was swift compared to petit point, a meticulous fine art.

The Grete Brand label was carried on each sweater, and the originality of her designs gained recognition of her name in Vienna and throughout Europe. I don't know if the label was publicized other than in store windows and displays. I think her sweaters were very appealing, and they became known by word of mouth.

Exports from Vienna to the United States were not uncommon at the time, and Viennese hand knits were prized by high end stores. Marshall Field's and Saks Fifth Avenue sold the Grete Brand sweaters. Thus her name got to the US well before she did herself.

When the Nazis occupied Vienna the business operated by Grete and her husband Gustav Rosenbaum closed. Our family of three—I was born in 1930—emigrated from Vienna to Chicago after Kristallnacht, when synagogues and Jewish property were destroyed.

Arriving in Chicago with a small sum of money rescued by a Swiss friend, the family was determined to begin again. Grete soon contacted the stores that carried her label, but no one claimed to know her.

Shocked but not discouraged, she and Gustav founded the Vienna Art Knitting Mill. It opened in 1939, beginning in a one room loft at 115 South Market Street, a Chicago apparel manufacturing hub. Now Grete would design machine knit sweaters. But nothing could move forward without a knitting machine and a knitter. That knitter was Sam Birnbaum, who joined the firm shortly after it was founded and purchased its first knitting machine.

Now enabled to produce her designs, Grete brought samples to Chicago stores. Slowly, orders materialized and were produced by Sam's hard work on the knitting machine. Grete, who was assembling the knit goods into sweaters, hired an assistant. Gustav and Grete worked many hours each week to get the firm off the ground. As an eight-year-old left largely on my own, I learned English and made American friends.

Slowly the family was able to sustain itself from the modest income of the firm. It gradually grew into a twenty-five-person firm manufacturing ladies' sweaters.

When the war began in December 1941, Vienna Art Knitting Mill was securely established producing sweaters for a wide array of Chicago retailers. Its quota of wool, now in short supply and rationed by the government, enabled the enterprise to grow. I was now 12 years old and began to work in the firm on Saturdays. A contract to knit mufflers for our soldiers helped to assure wool supplies and the firm's growth. I fondly remember brushing those mufflers as they came off the knitting machine, to give them extra warmth.



WWII American GI wearing a wool knit muffer.
Internet image.

There was also a shortage of manufacturers' reps as men went to war. At age 14 and quite tall, I became the firm's rep, selling Vienna Art sweaters to Chicago retailers, traveling by streetcar and bus to stores all over the city. It was not difficult to make sales owing to the wartime shortage.



1940's Sloppy Joe sweater.
Internet image.

By this time, the firm was producing a popular sweater called the Sloppy Joe. Teenage girls and their mothers wanted to wear them. The firm prospered as a major Chicago supplier of this popular sweater. When the war ended Vienna Art invested heavily in automatic knitting machines to produce Sloppy Joe cardigans.

But almost overnight, as the postwar era began, the Sloppy Joe died, replaced by fine knit women's pullover sweaters

that could not be produced on the equipment that Vienna Art invested in. Not long afterwards, our automatic knitting machines costing thousands of dollars were auctioned off for hundreds. Vienna Art Knitting Mill closed in 1948.

Apparel manufacturing in Chicago also largely died following the war. Even Market Street, one block east of Wacker Drive, the home of many of Chicago's apparel manufacturers, disappeared as it was absorbed into the expansion of Wacker Drive. So Grete and Gustav were destined to begin yet again.

They opened a women's and children's shop in South Shore—Brant's—at 1942 East 79th Street at

South Jeffery Avenue, which Grete continued to operate for many years after Gustav's death in 1950.

For Grete Brand, her life's path came full circle as she reached her late 70's, after Brant's closed in the wake of massive social change in South Shore.

As a teenager in Vienna, gifted with a beautiful voice, she had wanted to become an opera singer. But as I wrote, she was thwarted by her conservative father, and then became absorbed in business.

Music returned to her life at age 80. She resumed piano lessons after a nearly seventy year hiatus. Her teacher was a Ph.D. candidate in The University of Chicago Department of Music who Grete tutored in German in exchange for lessons. She continued to play the piano until her death at 91.

Sam Birnbaum

Sam Birnbaum's know-how as a knitter began at age 12 when he was apprenticed to a knit shop in Warsaw, Poland. Dismissed for violating the Yom Kippur fast, he made his way to America. Persuaded to go West he headed for San Francisco. Discouraged by the work opportunities there he turned back to the Midwest a week before the devastating earthquake of 1907.

Sam was to stay in Chicago for the rest of his long life. His career as a knitter thrived at the Vienna Art Knitting Mill where he became production head. Soon after the firm closed he ended his knit goods career. Some years after Gustav Rosenbaum's death, Sam became the companion of the widowed Grete Brand. Sam continued in robust health until his death at the ripe old age of 101. ❖

GEORGE ROSENBAUM is a CJHS member who live in Evanston, Illinois. He is the author of three books: *Need to Know: Story of a Company, Leo J. Shapiro & Associates* (2015); *To Life: Poems of Gustav Rosenbaum, 1940-1948* (2016); and *Stories and Musings* (2017). They are all available at www.amazon.com.

YASHER KOACH! *Continued from Page 5*

Michael Traison hosted "Lunch with Zohar Segev of the University of Haifa," on Thursday, December 14, 2017, at the Standard Club. Professor Segev discussed his book, *The World Jewish Congress During the Holocaust: Between Activism and Restraint* (New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History: De Gruyter Oldenbourg). Drawing on hitherto neglected archival materials, Segev sheds new light on the policy of the WJC during the Holocaust. Contrary to popular belief, he shows that there was an impressive system of previously unknown rescue efforts. The efforts of the WJC are put in the context of the serious difficulties facing the American Jewish community and its representative institutions during and after the war, as they tried to act as an ethnic minority within American society.

President Emeritus Walter Roth

has published his seventh book, *Willard Motley: A Creative Client*. In the mid-1950s, as a young lawyer with the firm D'Ancona & Pflaum, Walter Roth handled some legal work for the writer, best known for the book *Knock on Any Door*. Roth would come to know Motley's family, which includes the painter Archibald Motley. Roth reflects on his memories as well as the new stories he learned through Willard Motley's published diaries.

Report on the CJHS Gala 40th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, December 3, 2017

Congregation Adas Yeshurun Anshe Kanases Israel
3050 West Touhy Avenue, Chicago

On a rare winter afternoon in Chicago—warm and sunny without a hint of snow—the following message from our co-presidents was distributed to the friendly crowd of almost three hundred people who filled the synagogue sanctuary in West Rogers Park.

Dear Friends,

We are delighted and honored that you are joining the gala celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Since our founding after the US Bicentennial, our mission has been the discovery, preservation, and sharing of the remarkable history of Jewish life in Chicago. Through the Society's many initiatives — public programs, the quarterly journal *Chicago Jewish History*, publications, website, awards, oral histories, tours, and exhibits — we have enhanced the knowledge and appreciation of our community's past. We know you agree that a robust grasp of the past is the link to a vital future.

Our celebration today salutes both the past and the future. After highlighting the people and activities instrumental in the Society's accomplishments, we are thrilled to present the preview screening of the new documentary by filmmaker Beverly Siegel.... The gala will conclude with exhibits and a gourmet buffet.

The Officers and Directors of the Society wish to express our profound gratitude for the support of our members. It is our members' devotion that enables our work. We encourage other friends who are here today to become members.

Enjoy the celebration!

Dr. Rachele Gold & Jerry Levin

Co-Presidents

Program

Welcome by Janet Iltis
40th Anniversary Committee Chair

Introduction of the 40th Anniversary Committee
Dr. Irving Cutler, Elise Ginsparg,
Dr. Rachele Gold, Joy Kingsolver,
Jerry Levin, Joan Pomaranc,
Patti Ray, Muriel Rogers, Alissa Zeffren

Introduction of Board Members
Overview of the Society's Accomplishments
Co-Presidents' Remarks

Dialogues

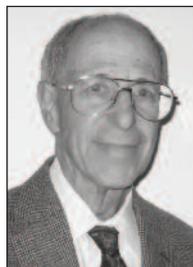
Dr. Rachele Gold and Muriel Rogers
Dr. Edward Mazur and Beverly Chubat
Alissa Zeffren and Dr. Irving Cutler
Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff and Jacob Kaplan

Introduction of Beverly Siegel
Premiere Screening of Video Documentary

*Chicago's Once and
Future Jewish Neighborhood*

Q & A

Join us for refreshments
and to view exhibits of our work
over the last four decades.



The Society Presidents

Top row from left to right:
Founding President Muriel Rogers
(1977-1980, 1981-1982)
Dr. Adele Hast (1980-1981)
Rachel Heimovics (1982-1984)
Norman D. Schwartz z"l (1984-1988)

Bottom row from left to right:
President Emeritus Walter Roth (1988-2010)
Dr. Edward H. Mazur (2010-2016)
Acting President Jerold Levin (2016)
Co-President Jerold Levin (2017-)
Co-President Dr. Rachele Gold (2017-)



Top row left to right: Chair Janet Iltis offers an overview of the Society's accomplishments; Dr. Rachelle Gold and Muriel Rogers discuss the presidency; Bev Chubot and Dr. Edward Mazur discuss the Society's publications. Bottom row left to right: Alissa Zeffren and our audience hear Dr. Irving Cutler reminisce about the tours he has conducted; historians Jacob Kaplan and Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff discuss the Society's bright future.

Photos on this page by Anne Evans.



Above and below: Beverly Siegel introduces her documentary.

The steady progression of Jews

moving into West Rogers Park that began in the late 1930's, intensified in the '40s, and exploded in the '50s, culminated in the '60s in a Golden Age of upward mobility centered on Devon Avenue, which was studded from Western to Kedzie with trendy, upscale shops and mega-popular restaurants and delis.

That changed dramatically, and in the '70s and '80s the future of West Rogers Park's Jewish community was put to the test. Today, West Rogers Park is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city. Jews account for fewer than 50% of the population, down from 75% in its heyday, but the neighborhood, by some measures, is more Jewish than ever. The Jewish population in West

Rogers Park is growing again, and investment in homes, synagogues, day schools, and agencies continues to transform familiar streets. "*West Rogers Park: Chicago's Once and Future Jewish Neighborhood*" chronicles the Far North Side neighborhood that bears the mantle of the old West Side and introduces some of the residents, activists, and community leaders who are helping to reinvent the neighborhood for future Jewish generations.



Beverly Siegel was the executive producer-director of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society's award-winning video documentary "*Romance of a People: The First 100 Years of Jewish Life in Chicago, 1833-1933.*"

Siegel's video "*Women Unchained*" documents the experiences of modern-day agunot, or women whose husbands refuse to grant them a Jewish divorce. According to traditional Jewish law, a woman who is an aguna (from the Hebrew word meaning "chained") cannot remarry. The documentary includes illuminating interviews with leading women's rights advocates, rabbis, and experts. The film explores the state of women's rights in Judaism and details 'get-o-nomics,' the outlandish extortion schemes levied against some women.



Rolf A. Weil (1921-2017) was the longest serving president of Roosevelt University, from 1966 until his retirement in 1988. He is survived by his wife of 71 years Leni Metzger Weil, children Susan Weil and Ronald (Carla Tomaso) Weil, and two grandchildren.

To honor the memory of our distinguished member, Dr. Rolf A. Weil *z"l*, we are reprinting the text of the talk he gave at the Chicago Jewish Historical Society Symposium **“The German-Jewish Emigration in the 1930’s and Its Impact on Chicago,” Sunday, November 18, 1979, 2:30 p.m.**, at Congregation Ezra-Habonim, 2620 West Touhy Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. By 2:00 p.m. the sanctuary was packed with over 500 people.

The symposium brought together eminent representatives of the Chicago German-Jewish émigré community of the 1930’s to discuss the events and meaning of their immigration in a public forum and for a printed record.

CJHS Vice President Charles B. Bernstein introduced attorney Walter Roth, who offered remarks and introduced the featured speakers: Industrialist Herbert Prauer, Roosevelt University President Rolf A. Weil, and Northwestern University Professor Emeritus Kurt Schwerin.

The report of the symposium was published by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society in December 1980. Publications Committee Chairman Roberta L. Bernstein, Editor Curtis C. Melnick.

HISTORY OF HYDE PARK JEWRY FROM THE 1930’S

DR. ROLF A. WEIL, Roosevelt University

Introduction by Walter Roth

Dr. Rolf A. Weil was born in Pforzheim, Germany, in 1921. He came to Chicago in 1936 and settled in Hyde Park.

He received a B.A. from The University of Chicago in 1942, an M.A. in 1945, and a Ph.D. in 1950. He also was awarded the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters by the College of Jewish Studies in 1967 and the degree of L.H.D. by Loyola University in 1970.

Dr. Weil joined the faculty of Roosevelt University in 1946, was professor of finance and economics, chairman of the department of finance between 1956 and 1965, and dean of the College of Business Administration from 1957 to 1965.*

He was acting president of Roosevelt in 1965 and 1966 and has been president since 1966, overseeing the tremendous growth of that institution....

Dr. Weil also serves as president of the Selfhelp Home and is a member of the board of trustees of Beth Emet The Free Synagogue in Evanston. He is married to the former Leni Metzger, and they have two children.

**Then Roosevelt College, it was renamed Roosevelt University in 1954.*

—CJHS Editor

The assignment that was given to me was to talk to you about the history of Hyde Park Jewry as it developed as a result of the German immigration of the 1930’s. I think it is best to start out by trying to get some numbers. There were 565,000 German Jews according to the Philo Lexicon at the time that Hitler came to power. A total of 295,000 of these German Jews emigrated, and of the 295,000 that emigrated, 140,000 came to the United States. Unfortunately we don’t have any very accurate data as to how many came to Chicago. My best estimate is that of the 140,000 that came to the United States, possibly 10%, or about 14,000, may have settled in the Chicago metropolitan area. These are Germans narrowly counted. If you include the Austro-Hungarian group, it may have been anywhere from 20,000 to 25,000 people.

Between 1933 and 1935 the immigration of refugees to the South Side Hyde Park area was a mere trickle. You were told earlier in this symposium that the quota—the German quota under U.S. law—accounted for roughly 25,000 souls a year. Actually, in 1933, ’34, and ’35 that quota was never filled. That doesn’t mean that there weren’t many more people who wanted to emigrate to the United States. It simply means that the process of handing out visas was so slow, and was possibly intentionally delayed, that many people who wanted to emigrate in those early years could not do so as quickly as they wanted.

EARLY IMMIGRATION OF 1933 TO 1935

The early immigration of 1933 to 1935 into Hyde Park consisted of (1) political refugees, including many social democrats and other leftists who had to escape for political reasons; (2) young people who wanted to establish themselves in this country (they were non-Zionists by and large, since Zionists had made their plans to go to Palestine); and (3) scholars and others who had international reputations and connections, which made it possible for them to leave Germany without major economic risk.

It can also be said that in this early period the immigration was religiously quite mixed. There were probably almost as many non-Jews, but in subsequent years, the proportion of the Jewish immigrants increased very rapidly. Between 1936 and 1937 immigration increased substantially.

I remember when I entered Hyde Park High School during that period, I was only the fourth or fifth youngster enrolled at Hyde Park who had come from Germany as a refugee. About half a year later, there must have been well over a hundred children of German-Jewish immigrants. Between 1938 and 1941, the year of our involvement in World War II, the floodgates opened, and the immigration became one of very large magnitude.

Why did these immigrants settle in Hyde Park? First of all, the Jewish middle class was concentrated in Hyde Park in those days, and it was particularly true of the German-Jewish group that had come to the United States in the latter part of the 19th century. Many of the refugees tended to settle where their relatives were living. I think another reason, certainly in the early years, was the Hyde Park bastion, the University of Chicago, which attracted a number of the refugee scholars. Finally, there were three congregations that had been founded largely by German Jews: Sinai, K.A.M., and Isaiah Israel. K.A.M. and Isaiah Israel were in fact located in Hyde Park; Sinai was at that time at 46th Street and South Parkway, now King Drive, but almost all of its membership lived at that time in Hyde Park.

GEOGRAPHY OF HYDE PARK AREA

A few comments are in order about the geography of the Hyde Park area. Most of the German Jews moved into an area bordered by 51st Street and 55th Street and between Cottage Grove Avenue and Lake Michigan. Some lived further north at the very end of the Kenwood district, between 47th and 48th Streets, and some lived south of 55th Street, particularly those connected with the University of Chicago.

The main artery was 53rd Street, where the new arrivals shopped, strolled, and met each other. It was also referred to as the *Bachenheimer Allee* because of a refugee-owned delicatessen and grocery store owned by the Bachenheimer family. It was there on 53rd Street that you could buy your knockwurst at Bachenheimer's, your marzipan at Nachmann's, your meat at Folk's Market, or your fish at Jesselson's. There was also Weinberg's Delicatessen; and if you could afford it, you could buy your wife's dress at Young California, also on that street.

The social life in summer centered around the Point, 55th Street and the Lake. The younger crowd jumped off the rocks at 53rd Street to go swimming, the middle-aged group went to 57th Street, and the older people sat in East End Park or other little side streets in that particular area. Although most of the refugees were economically poor, they remembered their middle class backgrounds. As one man once remarked, "When I have nothing better to do, I walk over to the Shoreland Hotel. I sit in the lobby, and then I feel the way I used to." Most of them claimed to have been St. Bernards demoted to the rank of dachshund.

SOCIAL LIFE IN THE EARLY DAYS

The social life in the early days was connected with the Center of Jewish Youth, which was led, in a sense, by such people as Walter Rosenau, Fred Simon, Paul Basinger, Bill Isaac, and many others. The social life was also heavily home-centered, that is, in various people's apartments. Some of these young people organized a group that jointly leased a cottage in the Dunes originally known as Cottage No. 29 and later the "Good Hope" Cottage. Included were such people as Martin Marks, Justin Wetzler, Freddie Simon, and Klaus Helmann. There were about nineteen or twenty young people involved, and by the time one added all their various girlfriends or boyfriends, a substantial social life developed around that particular area.

Other centers of entertainment included the Piccadilly and Sherry Hotel roof gardens where there were annual dances. And there were also at least two taverns that were frequented on Lake Park Avenue. One was Schall's Deck and the other one, Morton's, which later became a very respectable restaurant. Morton's son now runs Arnie's Restaurants.

Fun had to come at reasonable prices. After people had gone to a fifteen cent or possibly twenty cent movie, whether at the Frolic Theater at 55th Street and Harper Avenue, the Harper on 52nd Street, or the Picadilly on 51st Street, you could always end up at the Hitching Post or at Ruby's for your kosher hot dog. If you had a lot of money, you could go, especially in summer, to the Palm Grove Inn, located at 55th Street and the Lake. If an ice cream cone was your limit, Cumag's on 53rd Street had the best.

For the older crowd who liked to play skat, there was a "sports" club located for a while on 55th Street and later on Lake Park Avenue.

Some of the young people, I am told, found their girlfriends at the Miriam Club, which was located

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DR. ROLF A. WEIL *Continued from Page 11*

around 60th Street and Kenwood Avenue. Many, however, had to wait in those days in the lobby until the girls appeared. Room visits were “out,” and I am not aware of any who found their way into the rooms.

As far as the very young were concerned, they went to Kozminski, Ray, or Kenwood Schools; then to the Hyde Park High School Branch on 56th Street; and finally to Hyde Park High School on 62nd Street and Stony Island Avenue. Whole groups of us would walk there from the Hyde Park neighborhood to save the seven cents carfare. Today I think most young people wouldn't walk that distance.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

I want to comment just briefly on the religious life. In the fall of 1935, the first High Holiday services for the German-Jewish group were conducted at the Emil G. Hirsch Center at 4622 South Parkway, now King Drive, which was then the home of Sinai Congregation. Rabbi Herman Schaalman, now the spiritual leader of Temple Emanuel, came and conducted the services. I believe at that time he still had some American education ahead of him in Cincinnati. In the spring of 1936 a German-Jewish *seider* was conducted at K.A.M. Temple, 50th Street and Drexel Avenue.

The Center of Jewish Youth became the Jewish Center in 1936 and was affiliated with Sinai Congregation Men's Club. Arthur Strauss (who sat on the *bima* at every service), a bachelor and an insurance man, was really the spiritual supporter of this particular venture. There were, by the time 1938 rolled around, about 1,600 members of the Jewish Center.

A key role throughout most of this period was played by Dr. Fritz Bamberger, who conducted most of the services on the High Holidays and also Friday evening services about once a month. Dr. Bamberger, who had come from Berlin where he had served the Jewish community, was also librarian at the College of Jewish Studies, and later became editor of *Coronet* magazine. A number of us, my wife Leni and I included, were married by him. Arrangements were made under the huge picture of a Petty Girl, the 1930's–40's equivalent of a *Playboy* Playmate,* in the Palmolive Building headquarters of *Esquire-Coronet*.

ORIGIN OF HABONIM CONGREGATION

In 1939, the Friday evening congregation was founded by the Reverend Siegfried Weinberg who had been

brought over by K.A.M. Temple. The musical program was under the direction of Max Janowski, who is still the musical director of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel and who had come over from Japan. Eric Glaser was president initially, followed by Dr. Fritz Koehler and Julius Steierman (who now resides at the Self-Help Home). The K.A.M. group (the Friday evening congregation as it was called) moved to 56th Street and Ellis Avenue in 1944 and became Habonim Congregation. Mr. Prauer has discussed the details of that development, so I will not go into this further. However, it is significant that in this very early period both Sinai and K.A.M. thought that you could provide space for the newcomers, give them the opportunity to have their services, and then get them to join their congregations. Their good intentions became a total failure, and both Sinai and K.A.M. gave up their efforts. The group was interested in having its own kind of service, and although the Reform congregations were founded by Germans who had come earlier, the newcomers were not quite ready for American style “Reform.”

HISTORY OF SELFH*ELP*

Let me move on to social welfare and philanthropy which started with the founding of Selfhelp, which was known as *Selbsthilfe* and later took the formal name, Selfhelp of Emigres from Central Europe, Inc. It began in 1936 in New York. Selfhelp of Chicago was founded in 1938. The objectives were best summarized in an early piece of literature which indicated the functions that Selfhelp would provide: *Arbeitshilfe*, which included vocational guidance and employment advice and referrals; *Nachbarhilfe* (neighbor's help), which included helping the sick, day care for children, and English lessons; and *Kleiderkammer*, the exchange of clothing and room rental information.

An interesting point about the German Jews of the 1930's is that they lived in a middle class neighborhood they couldn't really afford except by subletting a room; that allowed them to lead a middle class existence with a lower class income.

The first president of Selfhelp was Dr. Walter Friedlaender, a professor of social work at the University of Chicago and later at the University of California, Berkeley, who is still alive. His vice-president in the early days was Dr. James Franck, noted physicist, Nobel laureate, and formerly professor at Goettingen, followed by Professor Kessler, who later went to Yale.

Friedlaender was president from 1938 to 1942; Kessler from 1942 to 1944. Dr. Bamberger from 1944

*Added magazine name for clarity. Added 40's.

*Original and current spelling. “Self-Help” in the 1980 Report.

to 1946; and Richard Emmanuel from 1946 to 1947. Throughout much of this and the subsequent period, the name of Alfred Wolf, who served as treasurer, and his wife Jenny, who was probably one of the most energetic people in the early days, are to be remembered.

Next came the Becker era. From 1947 to 1963, Dr. William F. Becker was president of Selfhelp, and one can hardly separate his name from that of his wife, Dorothy, who is today the executive director of the Selfhelp Home and the Selfhelp Center. So the Becker family became the driving force of Selfhelp.

In 1963, after Dr. Becker's death, Frederick Aufrecht, who had been treasurer throughout much of the Becker administration, became the president. He served until 1975 when I took over as president. There were many people who were involved in the important work of Selfhelp. In addition to Alfred and Jenny Wolf, Ernest Turk, Burton Strauss, Hedy Strauss, Charlotte Aufrecht, and Leni Weil assumed major responsibilities.

The first Selfhelp Home for the Aged was built (or rather was renovated from a beautiful old mansion) in 1951, at 4951 South Drexel Avenue. It housed forty-two people. This constituted a real change in the Selfhelp mission, which had originally been concerned with the refugee population in general and then shifted its emphasis to taking care of the aged. In 1957 the Becker wing was added. In 1963, Selfhelp built the home at 908 Argyle Street; in 1974, the Selfhelp Center at 920 Argyle was built. Today there are 175 people living at the Selfhelp Home and Selfhelp Center. After the Center was built, the Home on the south side was sold.

Selfhelp had feared that there would be serious financial problems for many older people. But these problems were largely solved for the residents through the combination of restitution payments and German social security. As the Selfhelp Home and the adjacent Selfhelp Center were built for victims of Nazi persecution, most of the residents became eligible for these benefits. Unfortunately, residents from Austria and Hungary were not as well treated by their governments.

SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION INTO AMERICAN SOCIETY

I would now like to make some concluding general comments: (1) The Jewish refugees who arrived in the 1930's were integrated into American society with unprecedented speed. (2) The success of this Jewish immigrant group was largely due to a combination of Jewish tradition and an overlay of German character-

istics. These included a willingness to work very hard, even physically; a tremendous effort to save money and to invest it; and finally, an all-consuming ambition. I think that one must also say that even though this group of immigrants was economically deprived, having previously not been economically or culturally deprived, they made immense efforts to live a typical middle class existence, as sociologists would define it, in terms of what they read, in terms of what kind of entertainment they looked for, and in terms of their aspirations.

Finally, I think that the assimilation of this immigrant group into American society has proceeded so rapidly that although it has made major contributions to Jewish life in Chicago, its full identity will be lost with the first American-born generation. Unlike other Jewish immigrants of the previous periods who identified with their ancestors, the children of my contemporaries and my own children do not look upon themselves as German Jews anymore.

In conclusion, let me say that we can look back to those early years in Hyde Park with considerable nostalgia. When you move away from a period of poverty and struggle, a later perspective makes that time look like "the good old days." They weren't all that good, but we do remember them today fondly because we have overcome that period of deprivation, and we know that this wave of immigrants that Hitler would have liked to destroy has had a major and beneficial impact on American life and culture in general and particularly on the Jewish community. ❖

Announcing The Sidney N. and Rose L. Shure Chicago Jewish Oral History Library

Thanks to the Shure legacy, the Chicago Jewish Historical Society can update our existing collection of tape-recorded and transcribed oral history interviews (including a Rolf Weil 1987 interview), and we can now record new interviews with Jewish Chicagoans using state-of-the-art technology and make them widely available to scholars on an interactive website.

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 twenty-two 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.

THE JEWISH CITIZENS AND THE SMALL BALLOT

In the Third Ward, we find Alderman Milton J. Foreman running for reelection. Mr. Foreman has been one of those men who helped in the work of putting Chicago in an enviable position as an industrial center. The Jewish citizens in that ward should support him by voting for him; thus to show him that they are proud of him.

No Jewish citizen must forget to vote "YES," on the Small Ballot, for a city sanitarium for tubercular people. Jews in particular have a reason

for voting "YES" on the Small Ballot, because the majority of Jewish citizens live in densely populated districts where the dangers of tuberculosis are lurking on all sides. They ought to see that permission should be granted to the city to build such a sanitarium. It must get the vote of everybody.

As the election will take place on Tuesday, April 6, the first day of Passover, and many Jewish voters wouldn't care to write on a holiday, they should go into the polling places and request the Election Judge or Clerk to mark the ballot for them. In voting this way, everybody would know that he did his duty as a conscientious and true citizen.

The Sunday Jewish Courier,
April 4, 1909

PERSIAN JEWS IN CHICAGO IN ZIONIST GROUPS

There is a large collection of Oriental Jews in Chicago who mix very little with other Jews. This is mostly on account of the difference in language, not being able to converse with one another. The modern Zionist can be compared to Elijah the prophet, whose aim was to unite the Jews of the entire world. The leaders of Knights of Zion here in the city have arranged a meeting for the purpose of getting better acquainted with one another. Mr. M. Abrams, secretary of the Executive Committee, will be the honored speaker, in the Hebrew language. Each Chicago Zion Gate will be represented by three delegates. This meeting will be a local undertaking.... Rabbi Saul Silber of Anshe Sholom and Mr. Max Shulman will speak on the question of getting the Persian and other Jews united.

Daily Jewish Courier,
August 28, 1916

THE FORWARD IS A SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE

Here are a few words in the first issue of THE FORWARD, by the President, Mr. Jacob Penkin: "Up to now we sent our FORWARD publication from New York, but recently we decided that Chicago was also very much in need of a newspaper which was in sympathy with all labor movements and problems. We can assure our great City of Chicago that THE FORWARD publication will always serve the working classes of this great city in a true and loyal manner."

The Forward, January 1, 1919

THE POLES PREPARED THEMSELVES FOR A FIGHT IN DOUGLAS PARK

It was cheerful and lively on Twelfth Street yesterday. It was quiet in Douglas Park. The news, printed in various newspapers, that the Poles were preparing to attack the Jews in Douglas Park proved to be false. The whole thing ended differently than we expected. Douglas Park was flooded with flowers and "compassion tags" for the pogrom victims of Pinsk—but there was no pogrom on Jews in Douglas Park.

The entire day was spent by Jews, and also some Gentiles, in purchasing tags. The large crowds in Douglas Park felt certain that nothing would occur. The Poles were not so foolish as to come into a Jewish district to attack Jews when there are so many Jewish heroes who would sacrifice themselves for their race.

Daily Jewish Forward,
June 9, 1919



South Side Hebrew Congregation Reception for Eleanor Roosevelt hosted by Ivan and Lucille Himmel, 1967

Seated left and right of Mrs. Roosevelt are Harry Tarler and his wife Elfreda. Mr. Tarler was a past president of the shul. Standing left to right are Mrs. Kliers, Rabbi Kliers, unknown persons, Ethel Sarfatty (George's mother, sisterhood president at the time), Jay and Rose Mazursky, unknown woman, and Louis "Sparky" Rosenstein. Mr. Rosenstein owned an electrical supply company which is why he was called Sparky.

Photo courtesy of Ethel Sarfatty Rath.

In *CJH* Spring 2011 we printed the photo below: some South Side Hebrew Congregation *machers* at a reception for Mrs. Roosevelt at the home of Ivan and Lucille Himmel. We asked our readers to let us know the date and the occasion. George Sarfatty recently answered. It was 1967, when Mrs. Roosevelt lectured in an educational speakers series.



Photo courtesy of Paula Madansky. Her parents, Dr. Irving and Sarah Barkan, are at the top right.

CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN *Continued from page 2*

went into business for himself. In the summers he operated a farm in the fertile lands nearby. Hays served as sheriff of St. Clair County (1798-1818), and Collector of Internal Revenue for Illinois Territory by appointment of President Madison in 1814. In 1820 Hays began a US government position as Indian agent, responsible for annuity payments to the local tribes, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He moved to Fort Wayne alone and met many difficult challenges before returning in 1823 to his family and farm in Cahokia to live out his days.

Our second pioneer, **Abraham Jonas** (1801-1864), is well known for his close connection to Abraham Lincoln. The Society was fortunate to view original documents of their friendship on our 2015 tour of the exhibit "With Firmness in the Right: Lincoln and the Jews" at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield.

Born in England, Jonas came to New York as a young man, then moved on to Cincinnati and Williamstown, Kentucky, where he operated a store, served in the state legislature and became Kentucky's Grand Master of the Masons. In 1836 he moved to Adams County in Illinois (the first Jewish resident), first to Columbus, then in 1838 to Quincy, a prosperous town on the Mississippi that was larger than Chicago before the Civil War. He and his brothers ran an iron and carriage business. Jonas took up the study of law, organized and became Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge of Illinois, was elected to the state legislature, and in 1843 opened a law partnership. He was appointed postmaster of Quincy by Presidents Taylor and Fillmore, and later by Lincoln in 1861. Jonas's role in the Lincoln-Douglas debates and in Lincoln's presidential candidacy, and their continuing friendship, is well documented (see *Lincoln and the Jews: A History*, by Jonathan D. Sarna and Benjamin Shapell, St. Martin's Press, 2015).

These individuals are two outstanding examples of the Jewish contribution to Illinois life outside Chicago. Most of us cannot claim such illustrious forebears, but every life, famous or not, plays a role and is worthy of recognition.

**Please let us know about your family connections to other parts of our State for
The CJHS Illinois Bicentennial Project "Beyond Chicago: Illinois Jewish Roots"**

Email info@chicagojewishhistory.org *or write to our office* 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803, Chicago, IL 60605-1901

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Our History and Mission

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977, and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the United States Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 at an exhibition mounted at the Museum of Science and Industry by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the American Jewish Congress. Three years after celebrating our “double *chai*,” the Society’s

Tribute Cards for Celebrations or Memorials The card design features the Society’s handsome logo. Inside, our mission statement and space for your personal message. Pack of five cards & envelopes \$18.00. Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at \$5.00 per card, postage included. Mail your order and check to the CJHS office, 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803. Chicago IL 60605-1901. You may also order online at our website.

Visit our website — www.chicagojewishhistory.org

Pay your membership dues online via PayPal or credit card, or use the printable membership application.

Inquiries: info@chicagojewishhistory.org

All issues of our Society periodical from 1977 to the present have been digitized and posted on our website in pdf format. Simply click on “Publications” and scroll down through the years. There is an Index to the issues from 1977 to 2012.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

unique mission continues to be the discovery, collection, and dissemination of information about the Jewish experience in the Chicago area through publications, open meetings, tours, and outreach to youth. The Society does not maintain its own archives, but seeks out written, spoken, and photographic records and artifacts, and responsibly arranges for their donation to Jewish archives.

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations, and includes:

- A subscription to the Society’s award-winning quarterly journal, *Chicago Jewish History*.
- Free admission to Society public programs. General admission is \$10 per person.
- Discounts on Society tours.
- Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1st are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership	\$1,000
Annual Dues	
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Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron	65
Member	40
Student (with i.d.)	10



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