



CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

Merchants, Artists, Athletes, Social Activists, and a Shul



Harvey Choldin

*University of Illinois Emeritus Professor of Sociology
Member of the Society of Architectural Historians*

Chicago's Jewish Architects: Three Memorable Modernists

Ezra Gordon / John Macsai / Milton Schwartz

Sunday, October 14 2:00 p.m.

Emanuel Congregation, 5959 North Sheridan Road, Chicago

A social hour with kosher pastries will follow the program

General admission \$10 per person at the door. CJHS members and Emanuel members Free.

In the decades before World War II there was a minuscule number of Jewish architects. Architecture resembled other high-level professions that discriminated against Jews. Chicago had a couple of well-known architects, Alfred Alschuler and Dankmar Adler, both German Jews. There was also a handful of immigrants or sons of immigrants who had small practices. Major architecture schools, with the exception of the University of Illinois, excluded Jews.

The decade of the 1950s represented a turning point as Jews born in the 1920s became architects. Three young men who excelled were Milton Schwartz, Ezra Gordon, and John Macsai. Each one entered the profession via a different pathway.

Milton and Ezra were born in Chicago. Milton began learning about construction as a boy, observing his father, a heating contractor, working on construction projects. Ezra was a devoted Zionist and wanted to learn architecture so that he would have a useful skill-set when he made aliyah (although he never did move to Israel). In World War II, Ezra served in the U.S. Army

in Europe. Afterwards, he was educated with the financial support of the G.I. Bill of Rights. Both Milton and Ezra studied at the University of Illinois.

John was born in Budapest, where he studied architecture. He was captured by the Nazis when they took that city in 1944. At the time of Liberation, a year later, he was a prisoner in Mauthausen concentration camp. He came to the U.S. on a Hillel Foundation scholarship and made his way into the architecture profession. All three of these men had successful careers, and their buildings can be seen throughout the Chicago area. Harvey's talk will honor their lives and their work.

See Page 12 for a Preview of Our Fall Book Issue — A Scholar Reviews a Classic: Malka Z. Simkovich on *The Jews of Chicago from Shtetl to Suburb* by Irving Cutler.

CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Dr. Rachelle Gold.

Jewish Store Owners and Jewish Life in Small Towns, Multi-Generation Family Businesses, and Local Department Stores

In contemporary times, these once normative features of American and Jewish life are becoming rare. But they are not extinct. Fortunately, there are still establishments that embody the experience of our immigrant ancestors who, from humble beginnings, built successful retail businesses that stayed in the family through the generations. On a recent visit to Spring Green in southwest Wisconsin, I was happy to discover one of these places, 102-year-old Nina's Department & Variety Store. To my further delight, Chicago plays a role in the story of the store.

Many of you may have visited Spring Green, known for Taliesin (the estate of Frank Lloyd Wright), American Players Theatre, and the beautiful bucolic landscape.

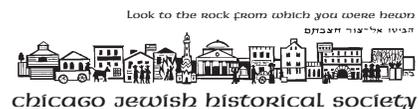
These attractions were certainly worthwhile, but what made my visit truly memorable was finding Nina's Department & Variety Store, learning about its history, and meeting the owners, Joel and Judy Swartz Marcus.



**Nina's Department & Variety Store,
143 East Jefferson Street, Spring Green, Wisconsin.** Photo by Rachelle Gold.

The store's origin is a familiar one for Jews who immigrated in the decades before 1920, and it will resonate with many Chicagoans. Joel's great grandfather, Harris Marcus, arrived from Russia in 1884, passing through New York and Chicago before finding his place with a storeowner cousin in Columbus, Wisconsin. The cousin had no work for Marcus in the store, but set him up as a traveling peddler to farm families in the Wisconsin River Valley. The cousin was careful to assign a territory that did not threaten the livelihood of peddlers in nearby territories, so as to avoid violating Jewish

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is published quarterly by the CJHS at 610 S. Michigan Ave., Room 803, Chicago, IL 60605-1901. Phone (312) 663-5634. info@chicagojewishhistory.org. Successor to *Society News*. Single copies \$4.00 postpaid.

Editor/Designer Beverly Chubak

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

EVENTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership
 610 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago
 (312) 322-1700

Todros Geller **STRANGE WORLDS**

September 6, 2018 – January 6, 2019

Todros Geller (1889-1949) was fondly known as the “Dean of Chicago Jewish Artists,” but he was much more than that. His work directly addressed the social, political, and artistic concerns of his time, many of which still challenge us today. The exhibition draws primarily from Spertus Institute’s collection, which includes extensive Geller holdings. More than 30 works will be on view, the majority for the first time, along with archival material.

The exhibition is organized by *Ionit Behar*, Spertus Institute Curator of Collections, and *Susan Weininger*, Roosevelt University Professor Emerita of Art History.

Opening Reception

September 6, 2018 / 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Free. Reservations appreciated. www.spertus.edu

Gallery Talk

November 4, 2018 / 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

With Ionit Behar and Susan Weininger

Free. Reservations appreciated. www.spertus.edu

Between the World Wars:

Jewish and African American Art in Chicago

November 20, 2018 / 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Panel discussion with exhibition curator Susan Weininger, arts advocate John Corbett, and Art Institute Curator Sarah Kelly Oehler

\$8 – \$18. Purchase tickets online. www.spertus.edu

Segregation and Integration in Chicago Art

December 13, 2018 / 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Discussion with historian Deborah Dash Moore and journalist Maudlyn Ihejirika

\$8 – \$18. Purchase tickets online. www.spertus.edu



Todros Geller, *The Dance*, 1928, oil on canvas, 17 x 20 in.
 Spertus Institute, Chicago.



Todros Geller, *South of Chicago*, 1937, woodcut, 8 x 10 in.
 Spertus Institute, Chicago.

Through September 14, 2018

Sculpting a Chicago Artist: Richard Hunt and his Teachers *Nelli Bar and Egon Weiner*

Koehnline Museum of Art, Oakton Community College, 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines

CJHS members... YASHER KOACH!

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



2018 Greater Chicago Jewish Festival, St. Paul Woods, Morton Grove, IL., Sunday, June 10.

A rainy day. **Co-presidents Jerry Levin** and **Dr. Rachele Gold** (at left) did a great job organizing and hosting the Society's booth at the biennial festival. Jerry did the heavy lifting—toting and securing the displays. **Frances Archer** (at right), **Joan Pomaranc**, and **Janet Iltis** volunteered as well. Our History Portrait Quiz challenged visitors to identify ten great Jewish Chicagoans.

Alissa Tanzar Zeffren spoke at the NILI "Yarchei Kallah" annual women's learning conference, Sunday, July 15. The title of her talk was "Memory and Song in Tanach." NILI is the women's division of the Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Kollel <https://www.torahchicago.org/nili-mission.html>.

Irv Cutler was interviewed by Jason Marck of WBEZ Radio. They traveled the many Chicago neighborhoods where Irv has guided tours. There will be a radio piece on WBEZ and an accompanying interactive web element.

Leni Weil received the Selfhelp Home Lifetime Achievement Award on May 6. Leni accepted the award and delivered remarks at the Annual Celebrating the Arts Event at The Standard Club. Leni Weil has been a force of nature at The Selfhelp Home for more than 60 years, first as a volunteer teaching English to other refugees like herself, and later as a member of the Board of Trustees and its treasurer.

Jacob Kaplan is one of the authors of *Logan Square* (Arcadia Publishing, Images of America Series). The newly released book surveys the Chicago neighborhood through archival photographs and informative captions. Jacob and **Patrick Steffes** expertly guided the CJHS August 19 bus tour through the streets of Albany Park and Rogers Park.

Matthew Nickerson is finishing a private history of the family of Abraham Kohn, one of the first Jewish settlers in Chicago.

Kohn's mother is said to have been the inspiration for the founding of the city's first synagogue, KAM. Dila Kohn refused to eat treyf food. Tradition has it that her sons decided to form a congregation so they could hire a shochet and supply their mother with kosher meat.

Abraham Kohn, his brother, and other men founded KAM in 1847. (They had secured the services of the Rev. Ignatz Kunreuther, a shochet, for both the pulpit and the shchita.)

Kohn, a clothing business owner, is remembered today because of two creations: one lost, one preserved.

He gave President-elect Abraham Lincoln a framed US flag—or a picture of one—with verses from the Book of Joshua written on the white stripes. The Joshua Flag gave him a measure of renown, but now it is lost. Kohn also left a diary, now online, of his immigration from Bavaria and first year as a peddler in New England, before he came to Chicago (Google "abraham kohn diary"). The diary, which paints a vivid portrait of a peddler's life in the 1840s, voices Kohn's initial disappointment with America, whose republic he thinks will collapse.

One of Kohn's daughters, Hannah, married shoe mogul Morris Selz, himself a founder of Congregation Sinai. One of their great-grandsons, a living Chicagoan, commissioned Nickerson to write a history of the family, which begins with a chapter on the fascinating life of Abraham Kohn.

Matt Nickerson writes family histories for a living. His website is privatehistorian.net.

A Return to The Crown of Zion

DR. EDWARD H. MAZUR

On Saturday, October 29, 1955, my bar mitzvah was celebrated at Congregation Atereth Zion (Crown of Zion), 1132 North Spaulding Avenue, in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago. On Sunday, July 1, 2018, I returned there for the first time in more than sixty years.

My family's origins are in Bialystok, Poland. My father, David Mazur, came to the United States in the aftermath of World War I. For a short time he lived in Paterson, New Jersey, and worked in a bloomer factory there.* During a slow period in that industry, he was laid off, so he joined his older married sister, Sarah Kaplan, in Chicago. The Kaplans lived at 2628 West Chicago Avenue in a third floor apartment.

With relatives Nathan and Minnie Miller, they had established a business, the American Rug and Carpet Cleaning Company (pretty neat name for a company owned and operated by immigrants!). They were active in the Workmen's Circle and so was David. He worked for them for several years. Then, for decades, he was employed by Oriole Cleaners, a wholesale dry-cleaning company at Chicago Avenue and Pulaski. He was a silk spotter, treating ladies' garments and fancy items. Today he would write "chemical engineer" in his resumé.

After he had become an American citizen, David Mazur returned to Bialystok to visit his mother and sisters. There he met and married Rena Kleinbort, and he brought her to Chicago. He subsequently brought her father, Jacob Kleinbort, a jeweler, and her brother Norman to West Division Street. The rest of the family that remained in Europe perished in the Holocaust.

I was born to Rena and David Mazur in Lutheran Deaconess Hospital at Division and Leavitt Streets on October 13, 1942. For my first fourteen years we lived at 913 North Francisco Street in a twelve-unit court building, in the second floor rear apartment. I attended Lafayette Elementary School (the Nobel Prize-winning author Saul Bellow was also a graduate).

My mother's side of the family leaned toward Orthodox/Conservative Jewish practice, while my father was more of a Socialist leftie. My zayde Jacob loved being a macher in a shul, so we worshipped at a small synagogue, Meor Chayim, in the 900 block of North

*Alexander Hamilton founded Paterson as the industrial capital of a new nation, and in 1794 its first mill started making calico. Over the decades, Paterson was variously called the Silk City and the Cotton City, so it was a likely place for manufacturing women's long, voluminous underpants.

Rockwell Street, where he could be important. The synagogue had no Hebrew school, so at the age of eight I was enrolled in the Yavneh Talmud Torah on the southwest corner of Rockwell and Hirsch Streets, directly across from the Von Humboldt Public School.

As I approached my eleventh birthday, my parents joined Congregation Atereth Zion. The North Spaulding Avenue location was a block west of Kedzie Avenue and Humboldt Park. According to my family, if you lived west of the park you were much better off economically than those of us who lived east of Kedzie.

The members of Atereth Zion probably davened in a storefront or in someone's home on Division Street, then the "Roaring Twenties" brought a middle class synagogue building boom.

On June 3, 1928, the *Chicago Tribune* announced: "The Atereth Zion congregation is erecting a synagogue at 1130-36 North Spaulding Avenue, west of Humboldt Park to cost \$150,000."

The article mentions that the structure would contain "classrooms, meeting halls, a vestry room, and an auditorium with a capacity of 1,100 seats." The architect was Edward Steinborn and the general contractor was C. Rasmussen.

According to *Chicago's Forgotten Synagogues* by Robert A. Packer (Arcadia Publishing, Images of America, 2007), the first spiritual leader of Atereth Zion was Rabbi Marbodetsky. The last two rabbis of the shul were Nathan Gordon and Elliott Finkel. Atereth Zion served the community as a traditional and conservative synagogue until the early 1960s when it was sold to a Christian group and became a Pentecostal Church.

Historian/Geographer, and CJHS Founding Board Member Dr. Irving Cutler told me that one of Atereth Zion's most distinguished congregants was Samuel Seligman, a teacher of Latin and Spanish at Marshall High School, and a Hebrew scholar who taught at the Hebrew Theological College on Douglas Boulevard. Seligman was instrumental in establishing Hebrew as a modern language course at Marshall.

Continued on Page 6

Crown of Zion *Continued from Page 5*

In early Spring of this year, the CJHS office was contacted by Hector Garcia, an elder of the Spaulding Avenue Church of God, 1132 North Spaulding. He was seeking historical information about the synagogue, Atereth Zion, the original occupant of the building. I reached out to my CJHS colleagues, the aforementioned Dr. Irving Cutler and also Jacob Kaplan of *forgottenchicago.com*. We put our three historian yarmulkes together, and I was able to provide Elder Garcia with some of the information he was seeking.

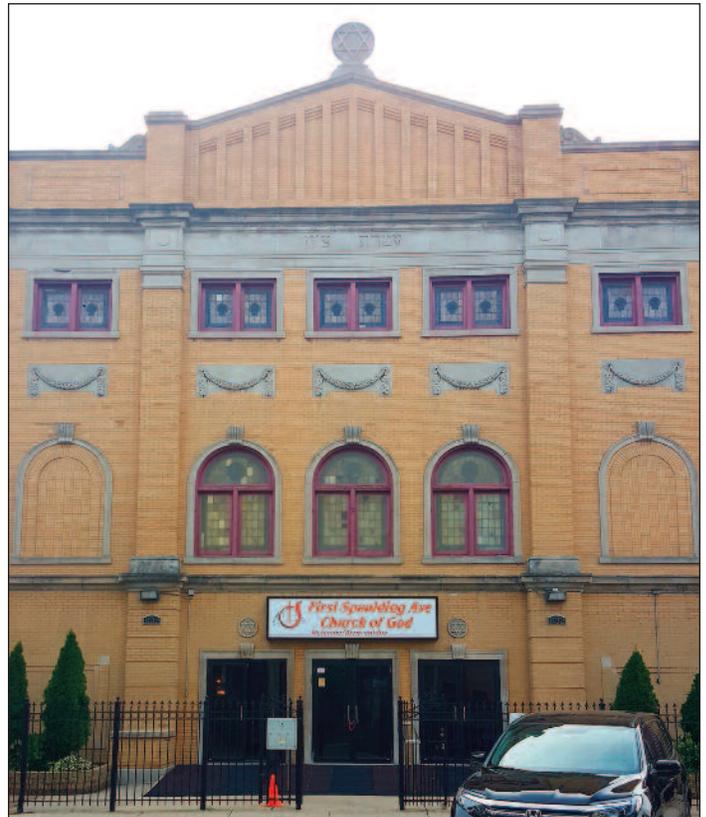
On Sunday, July 1, the church was going to hold a rededication of their mission in the updated and beautifully maintained facility, and Elder Garcia invited me to the ceremony. I told him that I would do my best to attend. My wife Myrna was driving to our cottage in Lakeside, Michigan, that weekend, so I would have to hail a taxi, hire an Uber, or ride the Number 70 Division Street bus. The last time I rode that bus I had a student ID card and probably paid a ten-cent fare. On this occasion I used my Senior transit card and rode from the Newberry Library to Spaulding and Division.

With both angst and nostalgia I began remembering the neighborhoods as the bus passed through them: “Polish Downtown” as the Division-Milwaukee-Ashland hub was known; Wicker Park; Brown and Koppel’s Restaurant; the Biltmore Theater; Roberto Clemente High School; the former Tuley High School (now the Jose De Diego Elementary Community Academy); the location of Moishe Pipic’s Vienna Hot Dog stand on the northeast corner of Division and Western; Weingart’s Variety Store; Peskin’s Fruit Market; the Vision Theater; the Workmen’s Circle School; Woolworth’s; Joe Pierce’s Delicatessen; Ruttenberg’s Delicatessen; and the Spot Restaurant.

Wistfully, I passed 2714 West Division Street, the former location of Norman’s Jewelry Store, my zayde and uncle’s business, that in my youth was flanked by Schwartz’s Corset Shop, Segal’s Shoes, and also Nate’s Barber Shop, where (it is said) horseracing bets were openly phoned in and high stakes poker games were happening in the back room at all hours.

When I stepped off the Number 70 at Spaulding I saw an empty lot on the southeast corner. This was the site of Itzkowitz’s Delicatessen, a favorite place for the Hebrew school kids and Atereth Zion congregants to grab a sandwich, a chocolate phosphate, and more. Across the street was Atereth Zion.

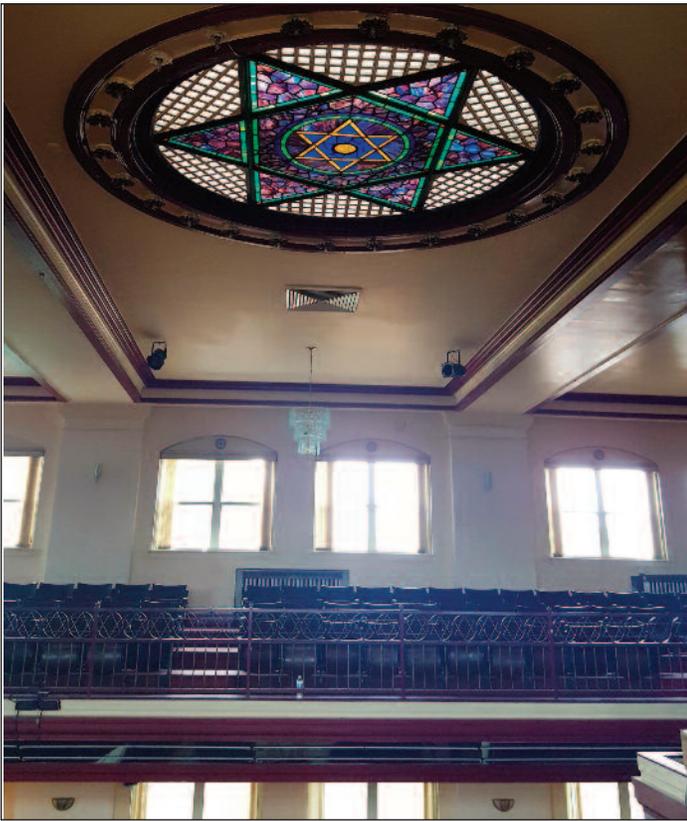
Photographs by Edward H. Mazur.



I began taking photos of the front of the building, observing the words “Atereth Zion” in Hebrew, carved high on the facade. I photographed the side entrance which had led to the classrooms. Suddenly I had a mental picture of my Hebrew teacher and bar mitzvah instructor, Joseph Schachter. He would become the director of Hillel at what was the new campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago and would later make aliyah with his family.

I entered the synagogue. Everything had changed, and in some ways nothing had changed. The beautiful stained glass windows were well-maintained. Behind the pulpit the beautiful stained glass Star of David shone brightly. The synagogue’s rows of wooden pews had been replaced by individual seats. The aron kodesh and the bimah were gone. That was where I had chanted my haftorah, where I became a man in the Jewish tradition. That was where I was called Chaim Isser Ben Dovid HaLevi, and where I gave my trilingual speech—in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English—to my few relatives and many friends. That was where Rabbi Nathan Gordon presented me with my Birnbaum Prayer Book and invited me to continue my Hebrew studies.

I looked up to the balcony where the women of Atereth Zion had sat and prayed and chatted, sometimes rather loudly, so that some of the davening men would look up and say, “Sha, macht shtil.”



In the summer of 1956, my parents, my late brother Sander Leon, and I moved to West Rogers Park. There our synagogue affiliation became Congregation New Israel on Touhy Avenue (now an ultra-Orthodox school) and Congregation Ezras Israel on California (its history dates back 120 years, to my Humboldt Park area). When I was a University of Chicago graduate student, I attended Rodfei Zedek. I am now a congregant of Lake Shore Drive Synagogue on East Elm Street.

The Pentecostal Church group purchased the Atereth Zion building in the 1960s for an estimated cost of \$35-45,000. The church was founded in the early 1950s in the West Madison Street area, first at 1733 West Madison Street, and then in a building known as the Lindy Theater at 1710 West Madison Street. The original congregants were immigrants from Central and South America. Currently, the Church has approximately 350 members. Although the rededication was called for 5 p.m., the service did not begin until 5:45 (perhaps respecting the tradition of “Jewish time”).

As the ceremony reached its conclusion, one of the pastors took the microphone and asked the attendees if they liked the name Crown of Zion. They answered with shouts of approval and loud clapping. The pastor and the elders recognized my presence and thanked the CJHS for helping them to uncover part of their past and the story of the shul.



Left to right: Front of First Spaulding Avenue Church of God. The Hebrew words “Atereth Zion” are carved in the band above the square windows; Stained glass Star of David in the ceiling above the balcony of the sanctuary; Under a glowing “SHALOM” sign, Hector L. Garcia and Cecilia Martinez speak from the pulpit.

One of the senior elders and a primary pastor told the gathering that “this building, this synagogue, was a dedication to God, and it will remain forever a House of Prayer and a dedication to God.”

My trip home found me on that Division Street bus again. With each block heading east toward Lake Shore Drive, I thought of the many afternoons, Sabbaths, and holidays that I had spent at Atereth Zion. Yes, dear members and friends of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, you can go home again. ❖

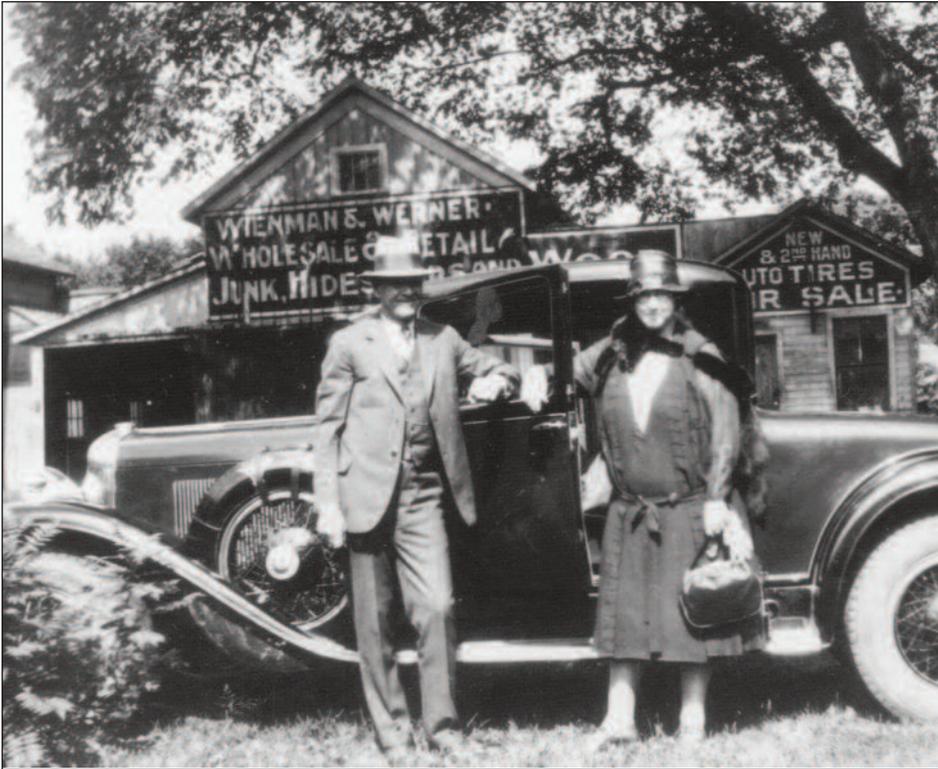
DR. EDWARD H. MAZUR *is the immediate past president of the CJHS (2010-2016). Earlier, he began serving as treasurer, and he continues in that office. Ed is Chairman of the City Club of Chicago. His Ph.D. from the University of Chicago is in Urban History and Politics, and he is an emeritus professor of the City Colleges of Chicago. Retired from the academic classroom, Ed transmits his knowledge as an active tour guide.*



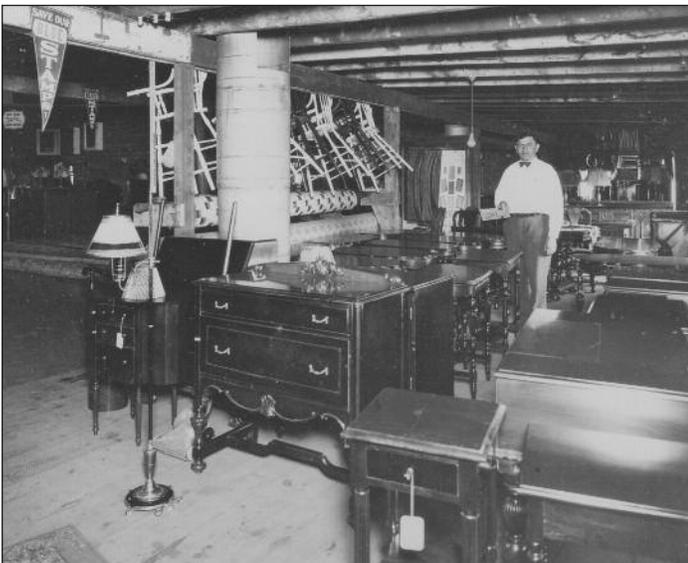
BEYOND CHICAGO: ILLINOIS JEWISH ROOTS

Fur, Furniture, and Russian Literature

THE WERNERS AND THE COOPERS IN SANDWICH, ILLINOIS



Meyer Werner and his father-in-law, B. Wienman, established a hide, fur, and wool business in Sandwich on East Church Street in 1917. They also bought and sold junk metal. Later Werner changed the business into a gas station and sold automotive parts, and his son George joined the business. *Sandwich Illinois Historical Society.*



cache of Ed's ephemera, including letters in Yiddish to his mother from Poland in the 1930s, items from his US Army service in WWII, and family photographs.

Above: Edward Cooper (1910-1993). Undated.

Left: Albert J. Cooper, Ed's father, in his store, Cooper's Furniture House, Main Street, Sandwich, Illinois. Undated. Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Donated by Carla Breunig, St. Paul, MN.

Sandwich, Illinois is located in three counties: DeKalb, Kendall, and LaSalle, but the city is not named for a tasty triple-decker.

The origin actually involves a prominent Chicagoan, "Long John" Wentworth (1815-1888), a two-term mayor of Chicago and a six-term member of the United States House of Representatives, both before and after his service as mayor.

According to historians of Sandwich, Wentworth was one of the key individuals responsible for the town getting a railroad stop, Newark Station. He was given the honor of renaming the station and the town. He chose his birthplace: Sandwich, New Hampshire.

Jews established businesses to serve the hunters, farmers, and townfolk. Starting in 1916, David Jaffe dealt in junk, fur, hides, and wool, The Werners followed.

Carla Breunig grew up in Sandwich. Edward Cooper—Jewish, born in Poland, unmarried—was a kind and generous family friend, owner of a furniture store, and for a time, her father's business partner. Ed was well-read in Russian literature and shared his knowledge with Carla, a Russian major in college. After her mother's death, she discovered and sent the CJHS a



Softball players in front of Davey Miller's Roosevelt & Kedzie Restaurant, 3216 West Roosevelt Road, Chicago. Undated. Names were written on the photo in black marker. Left to right, kneeling: F. Heidenreich, Zuckie, unidentified, Willie. Second row, hands on knees: Shorty, Beezie, Sy, Ray, Jack. Third row: Danny, Obbie, Ash, Kokie, Gardie, Bisk, Gigi, Johnny. Fourth row: Julie, Archie, Sonny, Harry, Hermy, Babe. Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Donated by Bette Zindell, Buffalo Grove.



VERY CHICAGO: 16-INCH SOFTBALL

On June 22, 1979, Chicago jewelry store owner Nathan (Sonny) Saken mailed this photograph to his friend Harold (Shorty) Lipman, enclosing this note: "I was lucky to get a negative of this picture and am sending it all the guys who are still around.... My regards from the family. See you at the next Lawson party." The guys were Sonny's fellow softball players and kibitzers at the Lawson playground in Lawndale.

Kneeling at the left is Frank Heidenreich, the legendary director of Chicago playgrounds. Next to him is Zuckerman (Zuckie the Bookie), a barber who offered extra services. The restaurant was owned by prizefight referee Davey Miller, idolized as the neighborhood shtarker. When Jews were harassed, he would lead a counterattack.

Along with the photo and the note, Mrs. Zindell donated the text of "SuperJew" (1988), a memoir/tribute to Davey by Sam Simon, transcribed by Nate Kaplan. We will publish it in a future journal. See *CJH* Spring 2003 for a profile of Sonny Saken.

Sonny Saken (1916-1994). Collection of Leonard (Babe) Saken, North Hollywood, CA.

Hilda Satt Polacheck: Writer and Social Activist

KAREN KAPLAN

Hilda Satt Polacheck did not develop the cure for a disease. She didn't discover a new planet. She didn't invent an amazing electronic gizmo. Hilda was like a lot of our parents and grandparents, a Jewish immigrant from Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. And like our ancestors, her greatness came from leaping wholeheartedly into the great American Melting Pot, and from working to make it a better place for those who came after her.

Hinda Satt (her name was later Americanized to Hilda) was born in Wloclawek, Poland, in 1882, to Louis and Dena Satt, one of 12 children, of whom only six survived to make the trip to America. Louis was a skilled artisan, a tombstone carver. The family was relatively prosperous and religiously observant. Poland was under Russian control, and Louis feared that he, and later his sons, would be forced to serve in the Czar's army. They decided to leave Poland. But where to go?

Louis read about the upcoming 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Chicago! That was the place to go, he decided. He sold his business and, as was common in those days, went ahead to get settled in the new home.

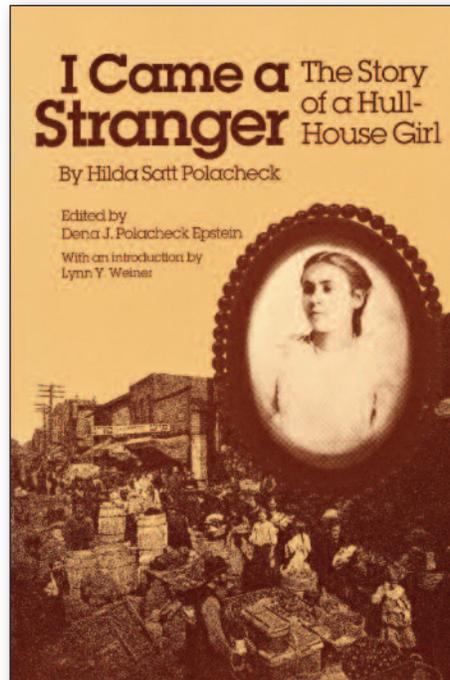
He quickly found work, and by the summer of 1892, the family was reunited and living in an apartment on Halsted Street, just a few blocks from the famous Hull-House, a place that would play a prominent role in Hilda's life.

The children were enrolled in the Jewish Training School, located between Jefferson and Clinton streets on what is now Roosevelt Road. Founded in 1890, and funded by the city's wealthier, established Jews, the institution provided vocational skills as well as basic academic learning to the newer and poorer immigrants from Eastern Europe.

In the summer of 1893 Louis and the family fulfilled their dream of visiting the World's Columbian Exposition. They marveled at the Ferris Wheel, the international exhibits, and the first electric lights they'd ever seen. It seemed the family was on its way to successfully building their new life.

But the following spring Louis died suddenly while at work in Waldheim Cemetery. He was 45 years old.

Dena was left with six children to raise and no marketable skills. The family moved to a smaller flat,



and Dena tried to support them by peddling small packages of tea, sugar, and other items door to door. The amount she earned wasn't enough, so when Hilda's older sister turned 14, the legal working age, she quit school and went to work in a knitting factory to augment the family's income.

Hilda had never been to Hull-House. Like many Jews then, she avoided non-Jewish institutions, afraid she wouldn't be welcome. But when an Irish neighbor girl asked Hilda to come with her to a Christmas party at Hull-House, she agreed. There Hilda found immigrants from all over the world happily interacting,

and it made a strong impression on her.

As she writes, "I became a staunch American at this party." That evening Hilda first met Jane Addams, the woman who would become her role model.

In late 1896, Hilda turned 14. She quit school and joined her sister at the factory. The hours were long, the conditions deplorable. She attended a union organizing meeting for her factory and was fired from her job the next day. Hilda would continue to be an advocate for humane labor laws for the rest of her life.

She soon found work at another factory. As with many recent immigrants, the need to make a living clashed with religious traditions, and Hilda's level of observance became a casualty of this conflict.

During the next ten years Hilda continued to go to Hull-House, taking classes in dancing, embroidery, and more. Her concern for the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged sharpened as she watched Jane Addams achieve many neighborhood improvements, such as public baths, garbage collection, and the first public playground in the city.

In 1903, Hilda attended a memorial for the Haymarket Martyrs of 1886. She never forgot Emma Goldman's speech in which she said that, just as the Passover story is retold each year, the story of Chicago's Haymarket tragedy must be remembered and retold.

Hilda took a composition class at Hull-House and discovered she had a talent for writing. Her ability was so obvious that Jane Addams arranged a free semester for her at the University of Chicago. Hilda hadn't even completed the 5th grade and was now attending a university! After this experience she began teaching evening English classes at Hull-House, using the Declaration of Independence as her textbook.

At the urging of Jane Addams, Hilda wrote a play, "The Walking Delegate," about a corrupt labor leader and an honest foreman, that was performed at Hull-House. In 1911, she also published two articles in the first issue of the Chicago Jewish periodical, the *Sentinel*, and wrote other short plays that were performed at the Chicago Hebrew Institute. She held a variety of day jobs: at a publishing house, at the Marks Nathan Orphan Home, and at the Deborah Boys Club, which was established as a residence for homeless Jewish boys between 14-18, who worked but didn't earn enough to be self-sufficient.

William (Bill) Polacheck was a young man who lived in Milwaukee and worked in his family's lighting fixtures business. His family was from Bohemia, where earlier generations had been cattle traders. On a visit to Chicago he was introduced to Hilda, and their friendship blossomed into courtship. They married in 1912 and settled in Milwaukee. Hilda was impressed by that city's politics (a Socialist mayor!) and its cleanliness.

She joined the National Council of Jewish Women, whose motto is "Justice, Justice, Shall You Pursue," a quote from Deuteronomy, and she later served as chairwoman of their Peace Committee.

Both Hilda and Bill were against war of any kind, and Hilda joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), founded by Jane Addams. Its goals were world peace and equal rights for women. The Polachecks were active in the Milwaukee Open Forum, where, as chairman of the Program Committee, Hilda brought in many famous speakers, including Bertrand Russell, Carl Sandberg, and Margaret Sanger. Inspired by Sanger, Hilda became an active advocate for birth control clinics.

Hilda had been in favor of women's suffrage since her Hull-House years, and in Milwaukee she joined the militant National Women's Party, whose policy, she writes, "was not to ask for the vote but to demand it."

She writes, "In the midst of this good life Bill died suddenly in December 1927." Two years later, the Depression wiped out her savings, and like her mother before her, she had to find a way to support her young family. Hilda and Bill had four children, Charles, Dena, Demarest, and Jessie.

Hilda moved back to Chicago after a friend found her a temporary job as a hotel manager, where she and the children would have a place to live. When that ended she worked at different places. But eventually, with no job prospects, and faced with poverty, she applied to the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and was accepted as a member of the Illinois Writers' Project. During her tenure she wrote about diverse socially relevant topics, including the typhoid fever epidemic, day nurseries, the Juvenile Court System, and many topics connected to Hull-House. She also wrote numerous one-act plays, now housed in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield.

When the WPA job ended and WWII began, she supervised a clothing collection facility for Russian War Relief. After the war, Hilda, now in her 60s, retired with the help of her children. But she continued her activism. In 1963, when she was over 80 years old, she went to Washington D.C. with two of her granddaughters to proudly march with Martin Luther King and hear him deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Hilda Polacheck died on May 18, 1967, blessed with many descendants. She embodied the best of what Jewish immigrants brought with them: a desire not only to build a better life for themselves and their families, but to extend helping hands to others. She carried within her the Jewish traits of *mishpat* (justice) and *tzedek* (righteousness), and we are all the beneficiaries of her efforts and the efforts of so many like her. ❖

Further Reading

Hilda Satt Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl*. Edited by Dena J. Polacheck Epstein. Introduction by Lynn Y. Weiner (U. of Illinois Press, 1991).

Dena J. Polacheck Epstein, "Hilda Satt Polacheck," *Women Building Chicago 1790-1990*, ed. Rima Lunin Schultz and Adele Hast (Indiana University Press, 2001).

Walter Roth, "Jewish Connections to the Haymarket Tragedy," *Chicago Jewish History*, Summer-Fall 2016. Original article published in June 1986; revised and expanded with new research (www.chicagojewishhistory.org/publications).

KAREN KAPLAN is a member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society Board of Directors. Her first article for our journal was "Bluesman Mike Bloomfield," which appeared in the Spring 2018 issue.

A Scholar Reviews a Classic

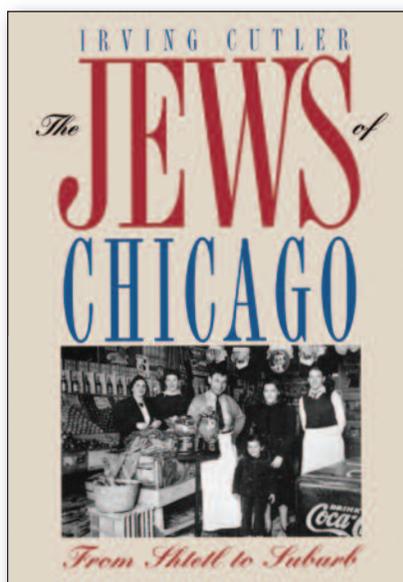
DR. MALKA Z. SIMKOVICH

Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb. 2nd edition;* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

Many Jews living in Chicago today attend synagogue services, send their children to Jewish day schools or Hebrew schools, and take advantage of the city's myriad Jewish organizations. Yet chances are that most of these Jews know little about how Chicago's remarkable network of Jewish communal life came into being. The history of Jews in Chicago, however, is almost as old as the city itself. The two hundred or so Jews living in the city in the early 1850s established a community that would increasingly grow and thrive, and would become the third largest Jewish community in the world by the 1930s. No work tells the fascinating and complex story of how Jews integrated into the fabric of Chicago life more effectively than Irving Cutler's seminal 1996 work, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*. Revised and updated in 2009, Cutler's work remains the authoritative guide to the history of Jews in Chicago.

Cutler's book is divided chronologically into five sections: The first section explores the first wave of Jewish immigration, which came primarily from German-speaking regions of Europe beginning in the 1830s. The second section focuses on the second wave of Jewish mass migration, which came primarily from eastern European regions and began in the 1880s. This highly significant phase of Jewish migration transformed the city's Jewish population from a small but significant presence to a substantial demographic that was first concentrated in the Maxwell Street area, in

what is today known as the Near West Side. The third section of Cutler's book traces the continued growth of Chicago's Jewish community through World War I and World War II, as the city became a safe harbor for thousands of refugees and Holocaust survivors. In the book's fourth section, Cutler considers how Jews contributed to



Chicago cultural life in areas such as sports, art, and commerce. The book's final section explores the current cultural and religious characters of Jewish neighborhoods throughout Chicagoland.

One of the overarching themes in Cutler's book concerns the continued growth of the Chicago Jewish community, thanks to the steady stream of Jewish immigrants who planted their roots in the city. In each section, Cutler considers how these Jews actively engaged in community organizing and building. This organizing paved the way for later immigrants to more easily

integrate into the city. Increased organizing led to increasing numbers, which in turn led to increasing diversity. By the middle of the twentieth century, Chicago boasted dozens of synagogues, Jewish schools, and Jewish community organizations that spanned the denominational gamut.

Extremely readable and yet scholarly and well-researched, Cutler supplements his study with hundreds of vivid pictures which tell fascinating stories. A picture of boys learning in the Moses Montefiore Hebrew Free School that was taken in 1903, for instance, illustrates the kind of educational services that kept immigrants in Chicago and helped families retain connections to their heritage. Another picture of children posing in boxing gear at the Chicago Hebrew Institute in 1915 likewise attests to how Jews integrated into their new cultural environment while preserving their Jewish identities.

Cutler interweaves hard data with intriguing historical details and anecdotes. Passages describing heated intra-Jewish debates regarding whether to support President Lincoln during the Civil War, for instance, or a description of how Jews in Chicago rallied to raise money for the opening of the University of Chicago, speak to Jews' commitment to take part in civic life, and give texture to the statistical information that Cutler provides regarding the Jewish community's growth.

Despite the meticulous archival research that went into writing and revising this book, it does need some updating, both in terms of its outdated maps and photographs, and its written content. A reader perusing this book today will surely smile at the author's statement in the revised 2009 preface, which laments

that “there has never been a Jewish mayor of Chicago.” Small lacunae in the book, moreover, make me hopeful that a third edition of this excellent volume will be produced. The lack of material on non-Ashkenazi Jews who emigrated to Chicago over the past forty or so years from Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Iran, and Egypt is surprising, particularly given the sizable Iranian Jewish community in the northern suburbs. An updated version could also make mention of the ways in which Jewish leaders in Chicago have been at the forefront of global Jewish-Christian relations over the past four decades.

Regardless of these omissions, Cutler’s work will no doubt remain a valuable classic for years to come. ❖

DR. MALKA Z. SIMKOVICH is the Crown-Ryan Chair of Jewish Studies and director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies program at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. She is the author of *The Making of Jewish Universalism: From Exile to Alexandria* (Rowman, 2016). Her new book, *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Scriptures and Stories That Shaped Early Judaism*, will be published by the Jewish Publication Society in November 2018.



1903:

A Greeting to Herzl from Chicago

CJHS member David Matlow of Toronto, Canada, has one of the world’s largest collections of Theodore Herzl memorabilia.

David asks our readers for information about D.P. Pollock, the sender of this postcard from Chicago to Herzl at the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. The greeting, in German, is from the Sabbath School of Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal’s Zion Congregation, located on the West Side.
dmatlow@goodmans.ca

Welcome, New Members of the Society

Julia Bachrach
Chicago, IL

Deanne Basofin
Evanston, IL

Scott Berman
Skokie, IL

Susan Sokol Blosser
Dundee, OR

Susan S. Donahue
Oak Park, IL

Judy Fleischer
Flossmoor, IL

Carol Gildar
Highland Park, IL

Melvin & Mildred Gorelik
Highland Park, IL

Richard Hirsch
Northbrook, IL

Herb Natkin
Chicago, IL

Gerald Pam
Highland Park, IL

Jay & Maija Rothenberg
Chicago, IL

Sandra Shifrin
Chicago, IL

Researching Waldheim Jewish Cemetery

ABBY SCHMELLING

Guided by Sid Sorkin’s *Bridges to an American City, A Guide to Chicago’s Landsmanshaften, 1879-1990*, Chicago Jewish newspaper accounts, and other sources, I am researching Waldheim Jewish Cemetery in Forest Park. Waldheim is comprised of close to 300 sections, founded as individual cemeteries divided by fences and gates. However, primary source materials are minimal, with information on the establishment and maintenance of most of these sections no longer available. I am asking for anecdotal and/or historical information that will enrich my writing about this cemetery, which for me serves as an outdoor museum of Chicago Jewish history. All sources will be acknowledged in the text. abbyschmelling@gmail.com



EARLY BIRDS: MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Chicago Jewish Historical Society Open Meeting

Frances O'Cherony Archer

*Dr. Theodore Sachs:
Chicago's Champion Fighter
Against Tuberculosis*

Sunday, November 4

2:00 p.m.



This presentation will examine the work of Dr. Theodore B. Sachs and the contributions of Jewish charitable organizations to fight widespread tuberculosis in Chicago in the early 1900s. Following his graduation from the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Dr. Sachs served an internship at Michael

Reese Hospital and went on to work in the poor Jewish immigrant community in the Maxwell Street ghetto, treating patients at the West Side Dispensary (later the Mandel Clinic) at Maxwell and Morgan streets.

As a result of seeing rising numbers of TB patients at the dispensary, Dr. Sachs led a 15-year movement that culminated in the establishment of a 650-bed public health institution devoted to TB treatment and research, the Chicago Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium.

Frances O'Cherony Archer has researched the history of the Chicago Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium extensively. She conducts walking tours of its former grounds, now known as North Park Village. Frances's previous CJHS presentation was "Von Steuben High School: the Jewish Glory Days."

Kehilat Chovevei Tzion

9220 Crawford Avenue, Skokie

General admission \$10 at the door.

Members of the CJHS and KCT free.

Questions? Email info@chicagojewishhistory.org
or phone the CJHS office (312) 663-5634

Temple Chai Third Thursday Program

Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff

*Oral Histories of
Prominent Jewish
Chicagoans*

Thursday, November 15

1:00 p.m.

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society, with the support of a generous bequest, has established the Rose L. and Sidney N. Shure Chicago Jewish Oral History Library.



CJHS Board member and American Jewish historian Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff will deliver an informative and entertaining presentation illustrating the importance, methodology, and uses of oral histories. He will provide examples of the oral histories in the CJHS collection, and present audio highlights and related visuals.

Dr. Eleff is Chief Academic Officer of the Hebrew Theological College. He is the author of eight books and more than forty articles in the field of American Jewish History. In 2016, he was named one of Chicago's "36 Under 36" by the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.

Temple Chai

1670 Checker Road, Long Grove

(847) 537-1771

Questions or sending an RSVP?
Email Shelly Goldman at shellyg14.rg@gmail.com.

CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Continued from Page 2

values. Marcus at first carried his wares (notions and fabric) in a pack, then over time earned enough to buy a horse and saddlebags to expand his offerings, and later a wagon that carried a large variety of items. A similar sequence was followed by the multitudes of Jewish immigrant peddlers in Chicago, including my grandfather.

In 1893 Marcus opened his first store. After 1912 he opened branches in three other southern Wisconsin towns (each of four sons would have a store), followed in 1916 by the store in the center of Spring Green under the name Harris Marcus & Sons. (The renovated, landmarked building was erected in 1911 as a general store by another Jewish family, the Cohen brothers.)

The Spring Green store, operated by son Sam, was the only one to survive the 1930s, and in 1946 he renamed it Nina's (after his wife, Joel's grandmother). The store's existence was at a crossroads in 1978 with the death of the third-generation owner, Joel's father George. Originally intending to close the business and practice law, Joel's deep feeling for the store's history and its unique role in the community led him to change course.

Joel operates the store together with his wife Judy, whom he married in 1999. He describes her as a merchandising genius who helped him reinvent the store and "bring it into the new generation." The store did not suffer the fate of the many local businesses that closed after a Walmart opened nearby in the 1980s. During a renovation in 2002, he gave the store its current name to better describe its mission.



Joel and Judy Swartz Marcus.
Nina's Department & Variety Store,
143 East Jefferson Street, Spring Green, Wisconsin.

Photo by Rachelle Gold.

A special feature of the store is the high-quality yarn section, curated by Judy, a textile designer and author of crochet and knitting books. Judy left her native Madison to work in Chicago and was the manager of a yarn store, The Weaving Workshop, and a teacher at the Textile Arts Center (both closed) when she and Joel were introduced. She has relatives in Chicago. Joel noted that, like himself, many Marcus men found their wives in Chicago. Both his grandmother Nina and his mother (a South Sider) were Chicagoans, and he has cousins in the Chicago area. Joel recalls as a child

accompanying his parents to Chicago where his father would buy goods for the store and his mother would visit her family.

At the time, and for some years later, most of the wholesalers were Jewish, and many clothing salesmen came to the store from Chicago. Many of these suppliers went out of business and merchandise is now mostly purchased elsewhere, but Judy still buys at Chicago clothing shows several times a year. The store receives many tourists from Chicago and several Chicagoans own homes in town.

The Jewish population in Spring Green consists of 12 individuals. The Marcuses value their Jewish affiliation and host Jewish holiday meals three times a year. They are members of

Beth Israel Center in Madison. Recently a Chabad rabbi from Milwaukee, Joseph Samuels—going on the road to reach out to rural Jews—helped them affix a mezuzah to the entryway of the store.

To conclude my conversation with the Marcuses, I broached the subject of the future of the store. Without any hesitation, Joel said that he and Judy love the store and intend to keep it creative, vital, and successful. Their motivation is more than personal. "Our goal is to preserve this important part of the Jewish presence in American life." ❖

Calling All Authors! We will list your books in the Fall 2018 Issue of the Journal.

Current CJHS members only: send details to info@chicagojewishhistory.org. Deadline is October 19.

If your book was listed last year, it will be listed again. If we missed you, please remind us.

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- **Illinois Bicentennial:
 Jewish Roots in Sandwich**
- **Lawson Softball Players**
- **Hilda Satt Polacheck**

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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

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.

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.

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	
Historian	500
Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron	65
Member	40
Student (with I.D.)	10



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