



CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

Memorials and Celebrations

The Fourth of July Weekend, 1999: Remembering a Tragedy

KAREN KAPLAN

In Chicago twenty years ago, a series of tragic events unfolded on the Fourth of July weekend. On Friday night, July 2nd, Benjamin Nathaniel Smith, a white supremacist, raised in Wilmette, began a murderous rampage. Smith was already known to law enforcement for his affiliation with known hate groups.

The killing spree began in West Rogers Park. Knowing that the neighborhood was heavily populated by Orthodox Jews who would be walking to and from their synagogues to welcome the Sabbath, Smith made that neighborhood his first target.

At around 8:20 p.m., he opened fire from his car, injuring Hillel Goldstein, 34; Eric Yates, 31; Dean Bell, 31; Gidon Sapir, 34; Ian Hupert, 31; and Ephraim Wolfe, 15. Sapir, a visiting Israeli, later said, "I am a captain in the Israeli infantry and after spending time in Lebanon and the West Bank, I get shot in Chicago."

Hillel Goldstein gave this account: "I didn't have a clue what was happening. As it was the Fourth of July weekend, firecrackers had been going off all day...but I felt a sudden pain and realized that I was bleeding heavily. And so, on the Fourth of July, when we proudly celebrate our independence, I almost died."

Smith then drove to Skokie, where he shot and killed former Northwestern basketball coach Ricky Byrdson, an African-American, who was taking an evening walk with two of his children. An hour later, in Northbrook, Smith shot at an Asian-American couple in their car. Fortunately, they were not injured.

By Saturday night, Smith had progressed downstate, continuing his mayhem in Decatur, Springfield, and Urbana, shooting African-American pastor Stephen Anderson, Lewis N. Jordan, and Asian-American graduate student Steven Kuo, who were all injured but

survived. On Sunday morning the final victim, Won-Joon Yoon, a Korean-American graduate student, was shot and killed while leaving church services in Bloomington, Indiana. The reign of terror ended Sunday night, when, during a high-speed pursuit by police in southern Illinois, Smith turned his weapons on himself. According to the FBI, Smith had the words "Sabbath Breaker" tattooed on his chest.

The response in the Chicago Jewish community was swift and strong. Even without the use of phones and computers on Shabbos, word spread quickly. By Saturday morning, worshippers were sharing their grief and concern at their shuls. Rabbis urged congregants to contact the police if they had any information, even on Shabbos. The traditional laws governing Shabbos observance include taking immediate action when public safety is at risk, and it was urgent that there be no delay in apprehending the shooter.

By Sunday morning the Jewish Children's Bureau and Jewish Family and Community Service had mobilized and were providing counseling for victims, witnesses, and their families. Various Jewish Federation agencies offered their support to the Byrdson family. Also on Sunday a major news conference was held, addressing the shootings and their aftermath. In attendance were Rep. Jan Schakowsky, State Senator Ira Silverstein, Michael Kotzin of the Jewish Federation/JUF, Chicago Police Commander David Boggs, Israel's Consul General to the Midwest Tzipora Rimon, and many local rabbis. "We're all grieving," said Rabbi Zev Cohen of Congregation Adas Yeshurun. Added Kotzin, "We are one community, as we are one people."

Continued on Page 2

Tragedy in 1999 *Continued from Page 1*

On the following Friday evening a member of Chabad went door-to-door to the homes of Jews asking them to light Shabbos candles. Even among non-observant Jews, “the response was very enthusiastic,” said Rabbi Daniel Moscovitz, who was the regional director of Lubavitch Chabad of Illinois. Local Chabads also put extra emphasis on their Mezuzah Campaign, started by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1974. Regarding the commandment to affix a mezuzah to the doorpost of one’s home, the Torah states, “So that you will prolong your days, and the days of your children.” It is believed that mezuzahs offer protection to a home and its occupants.

On July 26th, a Dinner of Thanksgiving,* chaired by Rabbi Moscovitz, was attended by five hundred people. “We came together to thank G-d for all the miracles of that day.” Others who spoke focused on the many people who were spared during the rampage. Law enforcement officials were also thanked for their quick response and ongoing efforts to protect the community. Fifteen-year-old Ephraim Wolfe, one of the shooting victims, standing with crutches, said, “I know I was shot because of the way I looked and how I dressed.”

* I found only one reference to this dinner. If you were there or know more about it, we’d like to hear from you.

Community support wasn’t limited to the Jewish community. Ephraim Wolfe was named a 1999 Chicagoan of the Year by *Chicago* magazine for his anti-violence activism following the shootings.

In Bloomington, Indiana, two thousand people, including U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, gathered for a memorial service for Mr. Yoon. At Indiana University the Won Joon Yoon Scholarship was established and continues to be awarded to this day. The YMCA Evanston/North Shore established its annual “Race Against Hate,” now in its twentieth year, to honor the memory of Ricky Byrdsong.

One of the foundational beliefs of Judaism is in the power of not just one person, but of an entire community to spread goodness and “be a light unto the nations.” Our prayers are expressed in the first person plural “we” because we recognize that although each individual is priceless, as a community, the group is more than the sum of its parts. It took just one person to commit the heinous crimes on that weekend, but hundreds, if not thousands, replied together, “Am Yisrael Chai,” supporting each other and the greater community. It is a cry we shout together to this day, a cry of triumph over tragedy. ❖

KAREN KAPLAN *is a member of the CJHS Board of Directors and a regular contributor to our journal. She is a member of Or Torah and active in Skokie Chabad.*



Burton Robin (1926-2019).

Burton Robin, CJHS Founding Member, Served as VP and Program Chairman

“I brought the corned beef,” Burt would say, reminiscing about the first informal gathering of the founders of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society in the Spring of 1977. In his many years of participation in the leadership of the CJHS, he brought wisdom, enthusiasm, and humor.

From 1988 until they both retired in 2010, Walter Roth and Burton Robin served as President and Vice President of the Society. Burt was Program Chairman for a number of years, he was a keen-eyed proofreader of the Society’s quarterly journal, and he continued his membership on our Board until his passing.

A native Chicagoan (and a South Side Cub fan), he was a scientist and teacher. Burt retired as Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Physical Science at Kennedy-King City College. He was deeply devoted to music, especially opera, and was producer of Opera Society programs for seniors at the Chicago Cultural Center Renaissance Court.

Burton Robin died on April 22, 2019. He is survived by his wife Suzanne Krill, sons David (Kathy) Robin, Carol Robin, Jerry (Irene Rosenthal) Robin, and Eileen (Kevin Landy) Krill, grandchildren Jeremy (Annie Valente) Robin, Melinda Robin, and Joey Landy, and great-grandson Graham Robin Valente. A funeral service was held at Congregation Rodfei Zedek, with interment in Oak Woods Cemetery. — B.C.

Skokie's Congregation Or Torah Celebrates Its Jubilee

KAREN KAPLAN



Congregation Or Torah, 3800 Dempster Street, Skokie, Illinois.

Photograph by Karen Kaplan.

In 1969, a small group of Modern Orthodox Skokie families, dedicated to the ideals of intellectual inquiry, support for the State of Israel, community outreach, and social consciousness met in the living room of Roy and Ginger Pinchot's home. With a leap of faith they decided to start a new Modern Orthodox synagogue in Skokie. They named it Congregation Or Torah.

In January, I had the pleasure of meeting with Rabbi Zvi Engel, now in his eleventh year as the rabbi of the congregation. This year marks the fiftieth year, the Jubilee Year of the synagogue, and he shared some of the high points of its history with me.

Or Torah's first official location was rented space on the second floor of 3740 West Dempster Street (now home of Religious Zionists of Chicago). Monthly rent was one-hundred-sixty dollars. Monthly dues of sixteen dollars were paid by the ten founding families.

Unlike many other congregations, Or Torah was not founded around a specific rabbi. Instead members of the shul, many of whom had smicha (rabbinical ordination), led the services. Among these founding leaders was Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Berkovits, one of the twentieth century's major Jewish theologians and a prolific author. He also served as chairman of the Jewish Studies Department of the Hebrew Theological College (HTC). Like the other leaders, he resisted attempts to make him the "official" rabbi. He was content to serve on an informal, but fully dedicated basis, until he made aliyah to Israel.

One of the strong early supporters of the shul was Chabad Rabbi Solomon Hecht. He had been sent to Chicago in 1942 by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to serve the city's Jewry. His friendship was reciprocated. When Skokie Chabad was established, Or Torah lent them a Torah to use until they could acquire one of their own.

By 1975, Or Torah had grown to fifty families and could afford a part-time paid rabbi. Rabbi Chaim Irwin Pollock was the first to hold this position, and during his tenure the congregation grew to more than two hundred families. In the mid-1980s, he and his family made aliyah. He served for twenty-five years as Rosh Machal at Michlala College for Women in Jerusalem.

In the following years, several Or Torah members assumed joint leadership. Among them was Rabbi Shalom Kohn z"l. For twenty-five years he led a Talmud class that still meets weekly and is named in his honor.

In the late 1980s Rabbi Harvey Well assumed the post of shul rabbi. Like Rabbi Berkovits and Rabbi Pollock, Rabbi Well also worked in the wider Jewish community. He was superintendent of Associated Talmud Torahs, the umbrella organization of Orthodox day schools and Hebrew schools in the Chicago area. He also served as head counselor at Camp Moshava in Wild Rose, Wisconsin, where generations of local Jewish children have spent their summers.

By this time Or Torah had outgrown its home, and the congregation bought the property across the street, a former men's clothing store, M. Hyman and Sons Big & Tall. The building was remodeled and serves as the shul to this day.

Rabbi Zvi Engel, a Montreal native, became the first full-time rabbi of Or Torah in 2008. Under his leadership the congregation now numbers more than four hundred families. As it continued to grow Or Torah added additional minyan—*in the former Poochies Hot Dogs, and a former shoe store just west of the main building.* Reflecting this growth, in 2018 Rabbi Yitzi Sprung joined the shul as Assistant Rabbi.

Or Torah continues to live its original ideals. In particular, the connection to Israel has always been a defining characteristic of the synagogue. Many of its founders, lay leaders, as well as the rabbis who have led the congregation over the decades, have made aliyah, and virtually every current member has family or friends living in Israel. As Rabbi Engel put it, "Or Torah, like many shuls around the world, is in a way, an undeclared embassy of Israel." With a strong presence at AIPAC, Stand with Us, JUF, and other pro-Israel organizations, Congregation Or Torah remains an exemplar of the Jewish spirit in action. We wish them many years of continued growth and success. ❖

CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Dr. Rachelle Gold.

Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies and the Block Museum of Art. As an extra source of pride, they happen to be associated with my alma mater, Northwestern University.

The Herskovits Library, the largest separate Africana collection in the world, was established in 1954 and is named for the founder of Northwestern University's Anthropology Department (1938) and its Program in African Studies (1948). Melville Herskovits, a renowned scholar and teacher, occupied the university's first Chair in African Studies and was largely responsible for creating the Africana collection.

The Library visit, arranged by the Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago, highlighted holdings on Jewish life in Africa. Our guide was Esmeralda Kale, the George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator and Middle East and North Africa Liaison. Ms. Kale presented a diverse sampling of print material, objects, and musical recordings to illustrate the depth and scope of the Library's Jewish collection, covering all of the African Jewish communities.

Explore the collection at
library.northwestern.edu/libraries-collections/herskovits-library/index.html

Intrigued by the subject of Africa and interested to learn more, I was eager to visit the current exhibition at the Block Museum of Art, **Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange Across Medieval Saharan Africa.** According to the Museum website, this is "the first major exhibition addressing the scope of Saharan trade and the shared history of West Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe from the eighth to sixteenth centuries."

Caravans of Gold, developed in partnership with institutions in Mali, Morocco, and Nigeria, gives the visitor an appreciation of the Sahara as a crossroads of cultures in medieval times and of West Africa's historic and worldwide importance.

The entire exhibit is magnificent, but what particularly fascinated me were several objects of Jewish interest. One is a reproduction of a detail from the *Catalan Atlas*, a set of nautical charts made by the Majorcan Jewish mapmaker Abraham Cresques (birth name Elisha son of Rabbi Abraham) and his son Jehuda, by commission in 1375 from Prince John of Aragon. The exhibited detail depicts Mansa Musa (1280-1337), the tenth emperor of Mali, considered to be one of the richest men of all time. Mansa Musa owned vast amounts of gold within his territory.

Cresques was part of a group of cartographers, comprised mainly of Jews, that was prominent in Majorca from the 13th century until the expulsion of Jews from Spain. The *Catalan Atlas* is considered the most important medieval map in the Catalan language. It has been in the French royal library (now the Bibliothèque nationale de France) since the time of King Charles V (d. 1380). His successor, King Charles VI, expelled the Jews from France in 1394.

Another display that caught my attention was a collection of delicately crafted gold pieces from 10th and 11th century Spain and Egypt/Syria, used for jewelry and decoration. These gold pieces may well have been made by Jewish artisans, as the explanatory label states, "During the medieval period, Jewish metalsmiths dominated gold working for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clients across the Mediterranean."

The delicate ornamental style was applied to other art objects crafted by Jews. An example in the exhibition is a 15th century siddur from Lisbon, illuminated with tracery penwork in gold leaf, likely obtained from West Africa. The siddur is open to the fourth chapter of Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers). The label mentions the significant role of Jewish craftsmen in art and culture in the Middle Ages.

Visit the Block Museum website for details.
www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/exhibitions/#2019

**Make sure to see the exhibition
 before it closes July 21st**



Caravans of Gold Exhibition
Block Museum
Northwestern University
15th Century Portuguese Siddur
Courtesy of the Library of
the Jewish Theological Seminary
JTSL MS 8235 fol. 186v

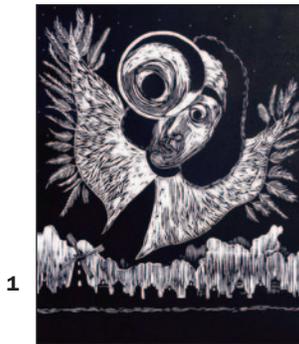
CJHS SUMMER EVENT

Over the centuries, no matter the place or time or circumstances, Jewish artists and artisans have always found ways to create, innovate, beautify, and inspire. The Chicago Jewish Historical Society plans to bring you closer to the artists in our own community.

ART EXHIBITION & DISCUSSION SUNDAY, AUGUST 18 2:00 pm

**Come and Meet Members of the
Jewish Artists Collective-Chicago
at the Cornelia Arts Building, Studio 116
1800 West Cornelia Avenue**

Judith Joseph, Managing Director of the JACC (1), will present her woodblock prints and ketubot and introduce you to four colleagues: Ellen Holtzblatt (2) will present her oil paintings. She and her husband Alan Hobscheid (3) share the studio. He will present his paintings, photographs, and digital art. Berit Engen (4) will present her woven tapestries. Carol Neiger (5) will show her paintings and monoprints. The artists will discuss their work and the Jewish art scene in Chicago today.



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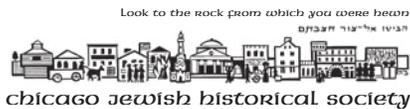


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Free to CJHS Members

**Attendance Is Limited — By Email Reservation Only
info@chicagojewishhistory.org**

The Cornelia Arts Building is located just west of the Metra tracks on Ravenswood, one block south of Addison, and two blocks east of Damen. It is a short two blocks south of the Addison CTA Brown Line train stop.



CJHS members... YASHER KOACH!

The Hebrew phrase means "More Power to You."

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Chicago Jewish History

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Board member **Leah Axelrod** has completed her two-year term as President of the Illinois State Historical Society. And what an eventful term it was. She was responsible for overseeing and coordinating plans for the Illinois Bicentennial, 1818-2018, and then bringing those plans to fruition. There were celebratory seminars, publications, exhibitions, concerts, and more. Leah suggested that the CJHS should participate by expanding our journal coverage to the whole state. We responded with our series, "Beyond Chicago: Illinois Jewish Roots."

Past President/Board member **Ed Mazur** introduced Mayor Lori Lightfoot's moderated Q&A's when she spoke at a City Club of Chicago luncheon on Tuesday, May 28th. Dr. Mazur is Chairman of the City Club.

On March 25th, *Forgotten Chicago* presented a program on Lincolnwood history to a packed house at the Lincolnwood Public Library. Presenter **Patrick Steffes** touched on the founding of the suburb and its name-change from Tessville. He focused his talk on the period starting in 1920, when development began to slowly heat up.



Board member **Alissa Zeffren** and her husband Levi were honored by NCSY Midwest (National Council of Synagogue Youth) with the Avodas Hakodesh Award in a ceremony on March 9th. The award pictures the Kotel and the Old City of Jerusalem. Levi is Director of Development at Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School.

In an article in the May issue of the *JUF News*, Executive Editor Cindy Sher describes and commends a program in which Alissa is involved:

"I was observing a world religion class in action at Loyola Academy, a private Jesuit school [in Wilmette].

With the teacher Chris Howe's blessing, this class—the most popular senior elective at the school—was taken over by student teachers for the entire period.

These teachers—representing all three primary branches of Judaism—were there as part of the "Student to Student" initiative, through which Jewish teens spend hours teaching their peers in schools with little or no Jewish population about Judaism.

The mission of the program is to break down stereotypes and combat ignorance and antisemitism before they ever have a chance to flourish. Launched by the St. Louis Jewish Community Council (JCRC) in the early

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

Members elected to a three-year term on the CJHS Board (2018-2021)
**Frances O'Cherony Archer, Janet Iltis, Joy Kingsolver, Jerold Levin
 Mark Mandel, Patti Ray, and Alissa Tanzar Zeffren**

See biographical notes in the Winter 2019 issue of our journal.

Members elected to a three-year term on the CJHS Board (2019-2022)
Sidney Amdur, Eric Benjaminson, and Rabbi Moshe Simkovich

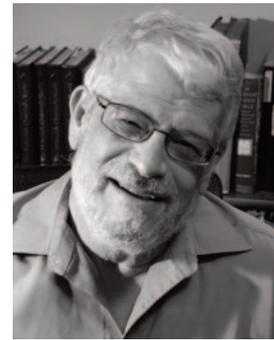


Sidney Amdur We are pleased to welcome Sid as the Society's new Treasurer as well as a member of the Board. He grew up in Rockford, Illinois, and moved to Chicago in 1968. He earned a B.A. in Accounting from the University of Illinois (UIC) and an Associate Degree from Hebrew Theological College in Skokie (HTC). Sid worked in Jewish education for twenty years, and then twenty years as an agent of the Internal Revenue Service. He became an accredited CPA in 1992. Now retired, Sid enjoys life with wife Dale, their three children, and seven grandchildren.



Eric Benjaminson is Assistant Director of Study Abroad at the University of Chicago. He was a career diplomat from 1982 to 2013 and served as the U.S. Ambassador to Gabon and to Sao Tome & Principe. Eric also served in senior positions at the Embassies in Canada, Namibia, and Burkina Faso. He then served as the Senior Advisor for Global Partnerships at the University of Oregon from 2013 to 2018. Eric has published several articles on Jewish and Soviet history;

these include his article on the Chicago Jewish community-funded Civil War "Concordia Guards" (see journal page 9). He received a B.A. in history and an M.A. with Distinction in Russian History from University of Oregon. He is married to Lara Korobova, and they have two daughters.



Rabbi Moshe Simkovich has been an educator in Yeshivot and Jewish communities in the United

States and Israel, was instrumental in the founding of a number of successful synagogues and Torah schools, and enjoys encouraging promising pedagogical ideas in the Torah world. He has studied with great Roshei Yeshiva in Israel and America since the 1970s, has degrees from The University of Chicago, and was founding Head of Stern (now Kohelet) Yeshiva High School in Philadelphia. Presently in the Chicago area, he is the Educational Consultant for the Associated Talmud Torahs, advising school administrators and promoting professional development in Chicago area yeshivot and schools.

Sunday, July 28, 6:15 p.m.
Rabbi Simkovich will speak in Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob Synagogue's Lecture Series "Jewish Thinkers in the Modern Age."

1990s, the initiative has been replicated in four other cities, including Chicago, beginning this school year. Here the program was started by Ida Crown Jewish History teacher **Alissa Zeffren** and her students, with funding from Ida Crown and a grant from the St. Louis JCRC. Zeffren had first learned of the initiative years ago from her husband, when he was a high school student in St. Louis.

"Then, last year, the idea came back around to some Ida Crown students and Zeffren at a NCSY Jewish Unity Mentoring Program conference. When asked to pick an advocacy project, the teens chose to adapt the St. Louis "Student to Student" initiative in Chicago...."

Read the article "Rays of light in the classroom" at <https://www.juf.org/news/chai.aspx?id=447520>

Two CJHS Board members brought their knowledge to a weekend of exploration. On Friday, May 3rd, **Jacob Kaplan** and **Frances O'Cherony Archer** participated in a North Side Chicago History Roundtable focusing on the neighborhoods of Albany Park, North Park, and Irving Park. On Sunday, May 5th, Frances gave a talk and led a walking tour of the grounds of the former Chicago Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium, now the site of North Park Village.

On May 29th, **Ed Mazur** brought the Society's treasured Blintzes Inn sign, our election poster for Governor Henry Horner, and our photo of boxing champion Barney Ross as a WWII U.S. Marine hero to the Wheeling Senior Center for his presentation on the history of Jewish Chicago from 1840 to 2019.

Niles North HS Students' Website "Hannah Greenebaum Solomon" Wins Chicago Jewish History Award at 2019 Metro History Fair



**Hannah Greenebaum Solomon
(1858-1942).**

On Sunday afternoon, April 28th, in the 2019 Chicago Metro History Fair Awards ceremony at the Chicago History Museum, two students from Niles North High School in Skokie were presented with this year's CJHS-sponsored Chicago Jewish History Award. Their winning project chronicles the life and achievements of an extraordinary Jewish Chicagoan. View the website at 78268148.nhd.weebly.com.



Aneena Joseph, CJHS Past President Dr. Edward H. Mazur, and Katie Maizenberg.



Berthold Loewenthal (1830-1906).

See *Chicago Jewish History*, Winter 2019.
"Berthold Loewenthal:
Banker, Civic Leader, Radical Reformer,"
by Robert A. Sideman.

We couldn't squeeze this example of nineteenth century newspaper advertising into the pages of Sideman's profile. Berthold Loewenthal as a young man was co-owner of Rock Island's first men's clothing store. *The Rock Island Argus* reprinted the quaint ad in a memorial on March 2nd, 1906.

New Goods!--Good News!
Spring And Summer Clothing.
Block & Loewenthal
At their old stand, No. 7, Illinois street,
ROCK ISLAND.

HAVE just received a choice assortment of MEN and BOY'S CLOTHING, which are in style and workmanship superior to any ready made Clothing ever before brought to this market, and will be sold at lower prices than any house west of Chicago. We have also, a complete assortment of

Gent's Furnishing Goods.
Hats, Caps and Straw Goods of every description.

Our stock is the largest and best selected in this city, and all who may favor us with a call, will find most of the articles wished for, and thus **SAVE TIME and MONEY.**

Garments made to order on short notice, in the **best style.**

Thankful for past favors, we respectfully solicit a **continuance of the same.**

BLOCK & LOEWENTHAL.
Sign of the Railroad Clothing Store, No 7, Illinois st.
Don't mistake the place.

CJHS Open Meeting Sunday, March 10 at Emanuel Congregation, Chicago

“A Regiment of Immigrants: The 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry and its Jewish Community-founded Company C during the Civil War”

Diplomat and historian Eric Benjaminson wrote an article about the 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Summer 2001. Early this year, after he had settled into his position at The University of Chicago, Eric contacted the CJHS. He offered to present an illustrated talk for us about the regiment, and particularly its Company C, founded by philanthropic Chicago Jews at a B'nai B'rith meeting at the Concordia Club on August 13, 1862.



We promptly scheduled the program. A rapt audience of more than a hundred CJHS members and friends listened to Eric's presentation and participated in the Q&A.

The men who gathered at the Concordia Club included patriots, abolitionists, and German-speaking immigrants mourning the failed revolution of 1848. Many were prosperous. It took ten thousand dollars to equip a Company. The officers of Company C were Jews because they raised the money. Lieutenant Colonel Edward S. Salomon had resigned as alderman of Chicago's sixth ward to enlist. He served bravely. After the War he was appointed Governor of Washington Territory by President Grant.

William Loeb. *Courtesy of Fran Loeb Luebke, great-granddaughter of William Loeb and first author of From Rhein-Hessen to Chicago: Loeb Footprints in Time 1765-1997.*



**Edward S. Salomon
(1836-1913).**

Captain Joseph Greenhut became an adjutant to Generals Grant and Sherman. After the War Greenhut gained fame as “The Whiskey Baron of Peoria.” Sergeant William Loeb has many distinguished descendants.

Company C was one of two Jewish-funded Union Army outfits, and the only one to see action. Of the one thousand Jews in Chicago at that time almost ten percent signed up. Probably fifty or sixty men actually served.

German-speaking immigrants were drawn to the 82nd because it was commanded by Colonel Friedrich Hecker. He was known as a “48er.” He had pleaded for rights, including Jewish rights, in Baden-Wurtemberg during the failed revolution, so Jews wanted to join “the Hecker Regiment.”

His was the only regiment that fought on both the Eastern and Western fronts. The losses in combat, and through disease and desertion were incredible.

There is a monument to the First Illinois at Gettysburg.

CJHS Open Meeting Sunday, May 19 at Temple Beth Israel, Skokie

“A.G. Becker: A Man You Would Have Liked to Know”



**Abraham Gamliel Becker
(1857-1925).**

Our guest speaker was Paul R. Judy, President and CEO of A.G. Becker & Co., Inc., and its successor organization, from 1968 to 1977. He created an online chronicle of the firm, www.agbecker.us. CJHS Program Chairman Jerry Levin engaged Mr. Judy to speak about the firm's Jewish founder, Abraham Becker, a successful investment banker who stood among the leaders of the Chicago Jewish community.

He was born in Warsaw, Ohio, to immigrant parents from Eppelsheim in the Rhineland Palatinate. His father was a coal dealer. The family moved to Chicago's West Side in 1865,

then to Hyde Park. Abraham married Kitty Friedman, and they had four children. She was the daughter of a tobacco dealer whose business burned down in the Great Fire of 1871. Banker Henry Greenebaum was a mentor to young Becker. There were frequent precipitous ups and downs in the financial world before the Federal Reserve was established. The Greenebaum bank failed in the Panic of 1877. Becker was the commercial paper dealer in the Schaffner Bank that failed in the Panic of 1893. The following year he established his own firm, determined to repay the depositors. In 1920, A.G. proposed a successful funding deal to his friend, Sears Roebuck CEO Julius Rosenwald. It put the Becker firm “on the map” nationally.

Lyon Brothers of Chicago: A Forgotten Jewish Wholesale Merchandise Company

Edited excerpts of a family history by **ANDREW HUNT GORDON** *great-grandson of Abraham Henry Lyon*

From the last years of the nineteenth century until the end of the first decade of the twentieth, three Jewish immigrant brothers operated a powerhouse wholesale general merchandise business in downtown Chicago. A brief reconstruction of its history is as follows:

Isaac Torofsky and his future son-in-law and probable cousin, Harris Wolf, arrived in the US from Kalvaria, Lithuania, in 1872, and settled in Chicago. Isaac became a grocer, while Harris outfitted peddlers, and later operated a notions store. By 1890, he was in business as a wholesaler and jobber, H. Wolf & Co.

Among the nine children of Isaac and Ida Turofsky were sons Abraham, David, and Mark. In 1895, a petition was filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County requesting that Abraham H. Torofsky be allowed to

change his name to Abraham H. Torofsky Lyon. His younger brothers must have followed suit. In the 1896 *Lakeside City Directory of Chicago*, David and Mark, now surnamed Lyon, are working for H. Wolf & Co.

The following year Harris Wolf retired and sold out to the Lyon brothers. The 1897 Lyon Holiday Season catalogue says "Successors to H. Wolf & Co." The store and warehouse were located in buildings at 246-252 East Madison Street and 241-249 East Monroe Street.

The business lasted at least until 1911, when they were bought out. Mark continued in business as Mark T. Lyon & Co. at least until 1912-13, while also entering the filmmaking and distribution business with David. The three brothers also owned several five-and-dime stores. According to Austin Lyon, Abraham's grandson, they apparently gained and lost several fortunes until the stock market crash of 1929. ❖

Welcome, New Members of the Society

Jay Arbetman
Oak Park, IL

Barbara Feldman
Highland Park, IL

Miriam Goldberger
Chicago, IL

Helen Goodfriend
Chicago, IL

Dr. Michael J. Greenberg
Northbrook, IL

Ari Latimer
Chicago, IL

David Nix
Tucson, AZ

Steve and Rose Novil
Evanston, IL

Sherwin and Sandra Pakin
Chicago, IL

Harry & Peggy Pascal
Winnetka, IL

Janet Tatz
Helena, MT



**H. Wolf Catalogue,
Fall 1893.**

**Lyon Brothers Catalogue,
Spring and Summer 1901.**

**Lyon Brothers Catalogue,
Back Cover n.d.**

Courtesy of Andrew Hunt Gordon.





M. Sacks Grocery & Delicatessen, 3332 West 12th Street, Chicago, Illinois, 1913.

Courtesy of Roberta, Richard, and Michael Hyman.

A Photograph from the Early Days of Jewish Lawndale

Last fall CJHS received an inquiry about this photo. Roberta Hyman wrote from Seattle that her family always thought it was taken in Cape Charles, Cheriton, or Bird's Nest, Virginia, where the family settled from Lithuania around 1900. The photograph shows Max and Ada Sacks, their son Robert, and an unknown little girl standing in front of their kosher delicatessen.

Roberta and her cousin Sandy decided to locate the store. The Cape Charles Historical Society had no record, and no streets there were long enough to have a 3332 address. Roberta's son Michael enlarged and enhanced the photo and they were able to read the posters in the window, one for the movie "Quo Vadis," and one for a swimming park in Forest Park. Something about that name reminded Roberta of Chicago, and she

sent us an email. Then Michael sent us a clipping from a 1913 Chicago directory listing the deli. Bingo!

"Quo Vadis" was produced in 1913 (an epic, almost two hours long, it was screened at the McVickers). The Forest Park Amusement Park was located on Desplaines Avenue and West Harrison Street from 1908 to 1922.

Family members continued to live in Chicago, but Max, Ada, and Robert moved back to Cape Charles. Robert died there in the 1918 flu epidemic at age 21. Brokenhearted, Max and Ada sold their Virginia store and moved to Baltimore to be with Ada's sister.

Roberta Hyman is from Baltimore. She and her husband Richard moved to Seattle twenty-two years ago at the invitation of Michael so that they could enjoy grandparenting their first grandchild. ❖

Going Out to Eat along Jewish Lawndale's Roosevelt Road

DR. IRVING CUTLER

For nearly half a century (1910-1955) the North Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's West Side had the largest Jewish community in the city's history. At its peak, the area housed more than a hundred thousand Jews, about forty percent of the metropolitan area's entire Jewish population. They were mainly of Eastern European descent, many of them having moved from the Maxwell Street area, almost three miles to the east. The area had more than seventy synagogues, all Orthodox with two exceptions.

Its main commercial thoroughfare was 12th Street, widened in 1916, and renamed Roosevelt Road in 1920. Along the street, in a little over a mile from Kedzie Avenue (3200 W) to Kolin Avenue (4332 W), one could find everything a family needed from baby furniture stores to funeral chapels.

A real estate map of the 1930s shows twenty-seven restaurants on this part of Roosevelt Road. Most were kosher or kosher style, all independently owned. No chains. Most were delicatessens, but a few restaurants served sumptuous banquet style meals. Following are some of the restaurants that I recall.

Near the western end, at Keeler Avenue (4200 W), was **Sam and Hy's Restaurant**. It later was located for many years on Dempster Street in Skokie. A couple of blocks to the east, near the Lawndale Theater, later the Rena, was **Yellin's Restaurant** at 4059. Located nearby at 3958 was the **Horwitz Restaurant**. Continuing east along Roosevelt Road, between Crawford Avenue, now Pulaski Road (4000 W) and Independence Boulevard (3800 W) were two large, busy banquet halls—**Café Royale** at 3854 and the **Blue Inn Café** at 3847, directly opposite each other. At Independence there was the **Rubenstein and Glickman Delicatessen**. Nearby at 3714 was the **Lawndale Restaurant**, which also had gambling and card games in the back.

Continuing east, at Central Park Avenue (3600 W) there was **Fluky's Hot Dogs**, one of the street's most popular eating places, founded in 1929 on Maxwell and Halsted streets by Abe Drexler. Fluky's was close to the elegant Balaban and Katz Central Park Theater, air-cooled and seating more than a thousand. Across the street was the 20th Century Theater.

At Fluky's you could get one of the tastiest hot dog sandwiches in the city. The vendors would line up warm buns on their bare arms and go down the line putting

on a hot dog, mustard, tomato, pickle, and piccalilli, in addition to french fries, all for a nickel. Nearby at 3543 Roosevelt Road was **Eppes Essen Delicatessen**.

Fluky's later had a successful establishment in Rogers Park at Western and Pratt avenues. Today you can find the last existing Fluky's in the Walmart at 5630 West Touhy Avenue in suburban Niles.

Ye Olde Chocolate Shoppe at 3537 West Roosevelt Road was an ice cream parlor especially popular with the young folks for a treat after a movie.

For those who preferred to eat at home or were hosting guests, in the same block, on the south side of the street, was **Best Kosher Sausage**. Nearby, on the north side of the street, was **Lazar's Kosher Sausage**. One could shop at twelve kosher butcher shops that were strung along Roosevelt Road, in addition to the numerous groceries, produce stores, and bakeries.

Upstairs of some of the stores were apartments, offices of lawyers, doctors and dentists, and meeting halls such as the Liberty, Roosevelt, Lawndale, and Culture Center. In these halls various Jewish groups, especially vereins (organizations of immigrants from the same community in the Old Country) would meet, usually monthly, to reminisce and try to send aid to those left behind in Europe. Usually the meeting would end with a light meal that included herring, wine, and schnapps, often followed by some folk dancing.



Best Kosher Sausage Co., 3521 West Roosevelt Road, 1947.

Courtesy of Irving Cutler.

At the corner of St. Louis (3500 W) was a large upscale restaurant and banquet hall, **Silverstein's**, where at that time you could get a good corned beef sandwich for about a quarter. When Chicago's weather was warm enough, there would be soapbox orators in front of the restaurant—Zionists, socialists, communists, anarchists, and atheists giving their spiel. There was frequent heckling, and sometimes fights would break out. Once, Yeshiva students from the nearby Hebrew Theological College burned copies of the Yiddish communist newspaper, the *Freiheit*, for not protesting the Arab massacre of Jews in Palestine in 1929. It was all part of the intellectual fervor in the community.

Further east, past the Gold Theater, (one of the six movie theaters along this mile-long stretch) at Homan (3400 W) was the busy **Dave's Red Hots**, founded in 1938 and still in existence, probably under different ownership. Nearby was **Alter's Oriental Restaurant** at 3389. At the intersection of Kedzie Avenue and Roosevelt Road there was a cluster of four prominent Jewish restaurants—**Carl's** at 3211, **Gwirtz, Zweig's**, and **Joe Stein's Romanian Restaurant**. I remember that Joe Stein's was on the second floor. Occasionally there would be a strolling violinist playing Yiddish melodies.

The most popular of these four restaurants was Carl's, owned by Samuel J. Cohen. Carl's menu items attracted people from distant areas as well as executives and workers from the huge Sears Roebuck complex just a few blocks away. Carl's was similar in some ways to today's Manny's Cafeteria and Delicatessen.

Also prominent at the intersection, Davey Miller's **Roosevelt & Kedzie Restaurant** at 3216 was a pool hall-boxing gym-gambling complex. And bets could be placed at the adjacent barbershop of Zuckie the Bookie. There were four gambling facilities along Roosevelt.

The restaurants of the "Great Vest Side" were informal community centers where news, gossip, and rumors were exchanged, and where Yiddish in various accents was often spoken as it was in the rest of the area.

By the mid-1950s, the Lawndale area had undergone a population change to almost all African American. Some Jewish restaurants remained, catering to the local business people and former residents coming back for a good Jewish meal. But most of the restaurants soon closed, and a few moved to the North Side. Jewish



The Horwitz Restaurant Softball Team, 3958 West Roosevelt Road, n.d.

Courtesy of Irving Cutler.

Lawndale came to an end in 1968, in the riots after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Many of the Roosevelt Road stores were burned and destroyed, and industry and many families quickly moved out.

Lawndale became a poverty-stricken area, a gang and drug infested neighborhood with thousands of vacant lots. The population is now about a third of what it was when the community was mainly Jewish. In recent years, the city and private developers have invested in Lawndale. There are some blocks of new homes, some new schools, and community facilities. But along Roosevelt Road where there were once many Jewish-owned restaurants, there are now Subway, McDonald's, Popeyes, and Taco Bell franchises, a few small restaurants, and many empty lots. A Starbucks lasted just over a year, as did a new movie theater. Jewish Roosevelt Road exists only as a fond memory. ❖

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Courtesy of Irving Cutler.

The Illinois Bicentennial Year has passed, but the CJHS is continuing our popular Bicentennial series on communities outside our area. This is an edited reprint of a tour report published in our Year-End 2000 issue.

BEYOND CHICAGO: ILLINOIS JEWISH ROOTS

Living Waters: A Tour of Jewish History in North Central Illinois

ALLEN H. MEYER

On Sunday, August 27, 2000, the Society conducted an all-day bus tour of Illinois river towns. Our guide Allen H. Meyer prepared a detailed narrative. Following are excerpts.

Mai'im chai'im—living waters—is a phrase that appears frequently in the Bible. Then, it had to do with living in arid lands, a constant need for water, even to the point that Moses struck a rock to miraculously extract water and quench the thirst of his people.

Our travels today carry us through communities where Jews settled in the nineteenth century in order to be near mai'im chai'im—river towns where they could survive in commerce by virtue of proximity to water.

The picture of the past that most of us see is our Jewish forebears settled in larger urban communities, striving to achieve the riches of the goldene medina with other immigrants pursuing similar dreams. A small group of Jews were sent out from New York, settled briefly in Schaumburg Township, Illinois, in the 1840s, to engage in farming. That attempt at settlement failed, perhaps due to a lack of living water.

However, in Sterling, Illinois, we find dairy farms flourishing under Jewish management. Immigrants like my grandfather survived (and raised four children). He was a junkyard dealer who also had a thirty-acre farm in Dixon.



Temple Sholom, 510 East 10th Street, Sterling, Illinois, 2000.



We will first visit Dixon, Sterling, and Rock Falls—all on the Rock River, which runs to Moline where it merges with the Mississippi. We will then head south to the towns of Spring Valley, LaSalle, and Ottawa, where the life force is the Illinois River, which meets the Mississippi near Alton.

The Northwestern Steel & Wire Company, owned by the Dillon family, was located in Sterling. The firm owned patents on barbed wire and manufactured “Sterling nails.” It was the presence of this important metal business that drew many Jews to open scrap metal junkyards in the area. In 1910, when the Jewish house of worship in Sterling was simply called The Synagogue, the congregants engaged Rabbi Barnett Kaplan. He served all of north central Illinois until 1919 and became known as “The Sterling Rabbi.” Today Sterling’s renovated Temple Sholom is located in what was once the Sterling Steam Bakery.

Spring Valley’s Congregation Sha’are Tzedek was built in 1910. It is now undergoing restoration. Spring Valley had once been a brawling coal-mining boomtown where broad streets were laid out for a prosperous future that didn’t materialize.

There were once many trappers in the LaSalle area. They sold mink and other pelts to furrier Moses Romanovsky, who donated the land for Temple B’nai Moshe (built in 1924). Restoration is now underway. ❖

En route to Dixon CJHS Tour Director Leah Axelrod offered historical notes on the region. The first European inhabitants were the French, whose Black Laws prohibited entry by Jews under penalty of death.

Illinois gained statehood in 1818, but it was only with the end of the Blackhawk War in 1833 and the removal of the Native Americans that settlement would begin. That year also marked the founding of Chicago.

Our visit to Dixon coincided with the dedication of the Reagan Trail from the former President's birthplace in Dixon to Eureka College, his alma mater. Our guides planned our route expertly to avoid any traffic tie-up.

We did encounter another President—Abraham Lincoln—in Dixon. A statue depicting him as a young soldier during the Blackhawk War stands on the north bank of the Rock River where Fort Dixon once stood.

In Sterling our tour group was greeted warmly at Temple Sholom by its president, Ruth Bittner; Wally and Shirley Feldman, longtime leaders of the congregation; and members of the Jakobs family, owners of the Jakobs Bros. Farms, Inc., one of the largest cattle feedlots in Illinois.

We were addressed by a young and articulate mother and teacher, Nicole Wolf-Camplin. Guest rabbis are invited to conduct services at Temple Sholom on the High Holy Days. For many years the visiting cantorial soloist has been a Chicagoan, Lori Schwaber.

We were welcomed by Roy Pollack at LaSalle's Temple B'nai Moshe. Sidney Stiefel and Boyd Palmer met us at the Ottawa Jewish Cemetery. They provided information and graciously answered our questions about its history.

Our tour concluded in Lockport with dinner at the Public Landing Restaurant in the historic Gaylord Building where we learned a bit about the Illinois & Michigan Canal, which runs from LaSalle to Joliet parallel to the Illinois River. — B.C.



Congregation Sha'are Tzedek, 231 West Erie Street, Spring Valley, Illinois, 2000.



Temple B'nai Moshe, 428 Gooding Street, LaSalle, Illinois, 2000.

Tour Photographs by Norman D. Schwartz.

Dear Readers: Tell us about Jewish life in these towns today.



**B'nai Sholom Temple,
427 North 9th Street, Quincy, Illinois, n.d.**

Courtesy of The Chicago Jewish News.

Closed: The Oldest Synagogue in Illinois

On the weekend of May 17-18, commemorative events and a ceremony of deconsecration took place in Quincy, Illinois. B'nai Sholom Temple, the oldest synagogue in Illinois in continuous existence and the second oldest west of the Alleghenies, was to be sold.

Jews settled in Quincy as early as 1832. Abraham Jonas, known as Abraham Lincoln's closest Jewish friend, lived there. The town developed into a prosperous port on the Mississippi, and by 1852 the congregation had a minyan. In 1869, construction began on the impressive Byzantine-style brick building, and it was completed the following year.

By the 1930s, the congregation had a membership of five hundred plus attendees from nearby towns in Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois. The two towers were damaged by a tornado in 1945 and not replaced. Finally, high maintenance costs for today's few members marked the end.

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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 are digitized and posted on our website in pdf format. Click on the Publications tab and scroll down through the years. There is also 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	
Historian	500
Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron	65
Member	40
Student (with I.D.)	10



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