



# chicago jewish history



**Moorish Palace, Midway Plaisance, World's Columbian Exposition.**

*ICHi-23581, Photo, W.C.E., 1893. Chicago Historical Society.*

## Jews on the Midway

BY WALTER ROTH

**T**he World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 was an audacious undertaking. In the words of Mayor Carter Harrison, "Chicago has chosen a star and looking upward to it, knows nothing it cannot accomplish." The great Fair brought the accomplishments of Chicago to the attention of the world—just two decades after The Great Fire had nearly destroyed the city.

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## *Save the Date! Sunday, April 22: Society's Open Meeting at Congregation Rodfei Zedek*

Spring, the season of rebirth, is the appropriate time for the Society's Open Meeting at Congregation Rodfei Zedek. The venerable synagogue, now in its 127th year, occupies a new building which it shares in part with the Hyde Park Jewish Community Center. Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School is also located on the synagogue's campus. There is a renewed and strengthened Jewish institutional presence on Chicago's South Side.

The meeting will consist of two parts:

Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel will present a program in narrative and soundbites (audio recordings) from the archives of the congregation, "Voices of Rodfei Zedek: Cherished Recordings of Outstanding Personalities and Events." The recorded voices include Rabbis Ralph Simon and Benjamin Daskal, Cantor Maurice Goldberg, and notable past presidents and leaders.

Congregation President Edward Hamburg will then conduct a tour of

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## President's Column



Walter Roth

### BEING AN ATTORNEY AND ALWAYS ON THE HUNT FOR LEGAL CASES THAT HISTORY HAS FORGOTTEN, I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED RECENTLY

when a book arrived in the mail, "The Girl with the Hat—Esther Mercy vs. Marion Talbot." The book was self-published last year by Harriet A. Reynolds Tuve. An enclosed letter stated that Mrs. Tuve was the daughter of Esther Mercy and that the book was based on hundreds of clippings about the case, from Chicago newspapers, that Esther had kept for many years. I called Mrs. Tuve, who lives in San Diego, and is 84 years of age. She told me that she had written her mother's story because she felt that an injustice had been done to her many years ago in Chicago, and she wanted the world to know about it. Mrs. Tuve has sent copies of the book to universities, Hillel houses, religious and other institutions, as well as to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

Here is a condensed account of Esther Mercy's case:

Esther Mercy's parents immigrated from Germany and settled in the South. Esther graduated from the Peabody Institute for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, where as a woman and a Jew, she faced prejudice and bias. She made her way to San Francisco, where she endured the great earthquake of 1906. Esther then came to live in Chicago with her uncle, Sigmund Kumholz. A neurologist who had studied with Sigmund Freud in Vienna, Krumholz had not been accepted to the faculty of the University of Chicago, allegedly because he was Jewish. He did become a Professor of Neurology at Northwestern University (a strange twist, because historically Northwestern has hardly been free of anti-Semitism).

Esther applied to the University of Chicago and was accepted in 1910. (A spirited woman of many talents, she had briefly been an actress in the Yiddish theater, and was also a writer and poet.)

She rented a room at a University boarding house. One day, as she entered her room with her fiancé, she discovered that valuable *aigret* (egret) plumes were missing from the elegant hat that she kept in her closet. She reported the apparent theft to her landlady, who took offense and reported the incident to Marion Talbot, the University's Dean of Women. Esther's persistent claim of theft and other verbal encounters, including an alleged slander by Dean Talbot, resulted in her expulsion from the University. Thereafter, she could not obtain admission to any other college in Chicago and also had difficulty finding employment.

Esther was angry enough to file suit against the Dean, the landlady, and others whom she felt were involved in her expulsion. A last ditch meeting with University President Judson failed to enlist his help. Esther was left to her sole recourse—a lawsuit against the University, which she filed on March 18, 1912.

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chicago jewish historical society

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### Chicago Jewish History

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## Corrections and Clarifications

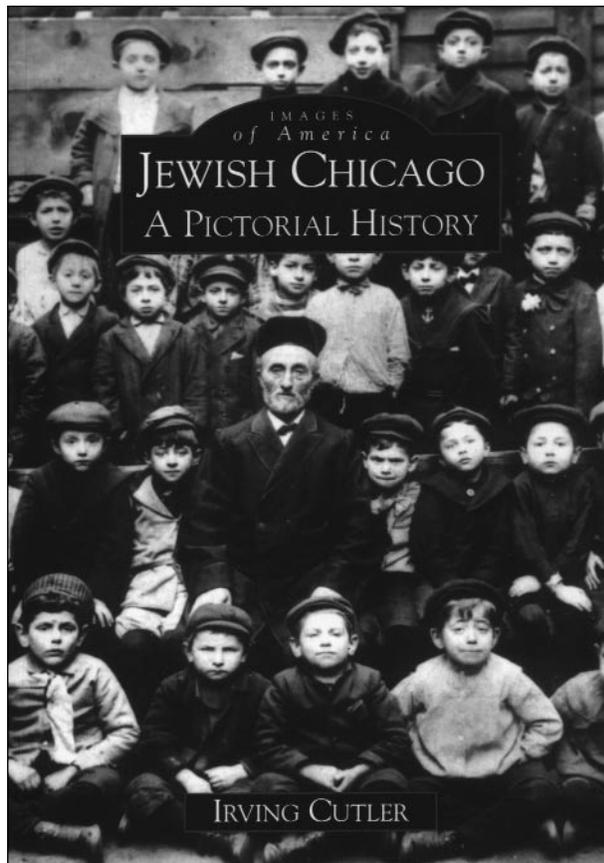
■ In our last issue, in identifying the illustrations in the Society's logo, we called the Concordia Guards a regiment. It was actually a company. Civil War authority and CJHS member Marshall Krolick faxed us this historical note:

"The most unique thing about the soldiers who fought in the Civil War was that almost all of them were volunteers. Many of these enlistments resulted from public meetings which were held in every city and town. At these assemblies politicians and prominent citizens gave speeches which fanned the flames of patriotism, and the men signed up. One such meeting was held on the night of August 13, 1862, at the Concordia Club on Dearborn Street in Chicago. However, this meeting was unlike any of the others because it was sponsored by Ramah Lodge of the B'nai B'rith. In attendance was the Jewish community of Chicago. By the end of the evening, 96 men had volunteered and \$10,000.00 had been pledged to provide a reward, or bounty as it was then called, to the enlistees.

"Nicknamed the Concordia Guards because of the meeting place, those 96 men who had enlisted that night became the only all-Jewish unit to fight in the Civil War. Officially designated as Company C of the 82nd Illinois Infantry Regiment, they would see action at the Battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Chattanooga, and in the campaign for Atlanta, Sherman's March to the Sea, and the campaign through the Carolinas."

*Marshall Krolick is a Chicago attorney. He is a respected writer and speaker on Civil War topics. On February 10, 1985, Mr. Krolick addressed an Open Meeting of CJHS.*

## New Book by Irving Cutler: Vivid View of Jewish Chicago



popular summer tour for the Society. "Jewish Chicago: A Pictorial History," softcover, 128 pp., is widely available in Chicagoland bookstores for \$18.99.

The people, events, neighborhoods, and institutions that shaped and transformed our community are brought to life in the pages of Dr. Cutler's latest book, "Jewish Chicago: A Pictorial History."

About five years ago, when his book "The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb" was published, the author noted that a significant part of its appeal was its photographs.

From the hundreds of pictures he was unable to use in his previous book, he has selected 230 interesting and meaningful black and white images.

Irving Cutler is a founding member of CJHS and a board member. He guides a

### Society Video to be Shown on WTTW Channel 11: Monday, April 2, at 7:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

*The Romance of A People* will be presented as part of the "Chicago Stories" series hosted by John Callaway.  
(See TV listings for repeat showings later in the week.)

■ Also in our last issue, Gov. Sam Shapiro was said to have attended St. Victor's College. The correct name was St. Viator's. (The Viatorians closed their school around 1938 and sold the property to the Nazarene denomination. It is now Olivet Nazarene University.)

■ In the article "Living Waters," the name of Sidney Stiefel of Ottawa, Illinois was misspelled.

CJH regrets the errors.

## Society Receives Foundation Grant

The Benjamin J. Rosenthal Foundation has provided a grant of \$5,000 to CJHS. This generous contribution will help the Society to pursue its future projects. The Rosenthal Foundation was also a financial contributor to the Society's recent reprint of the program book for *The Romance of A People*.

# Jews on the Midway

*continued from Page 1*

An Act of Congress in 1890 specified that the Exposition was to provide an exhibit of arts, industries, manufactures, and the product of the soil, mine, and sea, in the city of Chicago. The nations of the world were invited to take part. A large tract of swampy land on Chicago's South Side, known as Jackson Park, was designated as the location of the Fair. Within a little more than two years, a dream city—the “White City”—had been erected on the site.

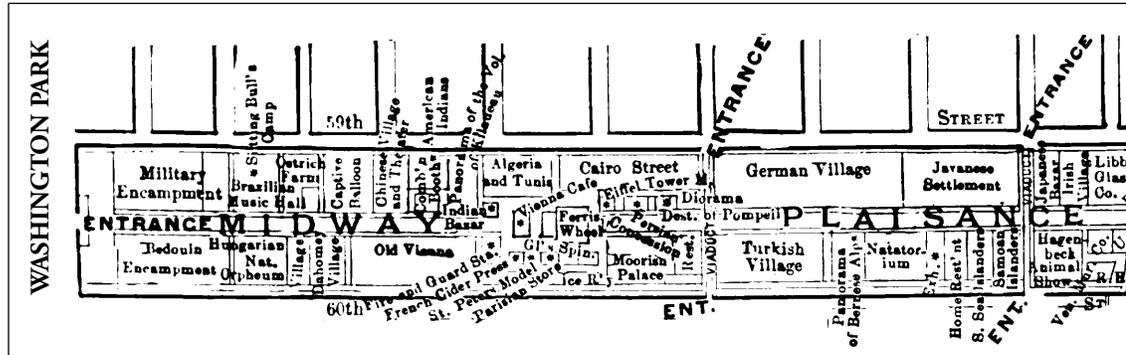
The map on these pages gives an indication of the size and scope of the Fair, but not of the ornate grandeur of the White City. Noted architects (including Dankmar Adler) and sculptors, under the direction of Daniel Burnham, had designed huge exhibition halls in a variety of elaborate European architectural styles. The white buildings shone brilliantly at night when they were illuminated by electric lights.

Chicago's mercantile elite, the department store magnates of State Street, were among the promoters of the White City. Most fair-goers were encountering, for the first time, a variety of merchandise from around the world, under one roof, beautifully displayed (with visible price tags), that they could buy from courteous sales clerks. This prepared the fair-goers to expect the same splendid shopping experience at Marshall Field's; Carson's; the Fair Store; Mandel Brothers; Rothschild & Co.; and Siegel, Cooper & Company.

But there were civic leaders who felt that beyond the display of the material achievements of man, however magnificent, “something higher and nobler is demanded by the enlightened and progressive spirit of the present age,” and they established the World's Congress Auxiliary of the World's Columbian Exposition. The Congress consisted of meetings attended by people who represented virtually the whole spectrum of human thought and endeavor. These Congresses were convened from May 15 to October 15 in the newly built Art Institute of Chicago.

The Congress on Women, chaired by Bertha Honoré Palmer, was the opening Congress. Its success was surpassed only by the last congress, the World's Parliament of Religions, where Judaism was represented in the person of Emil G. Hirsch, Chicago's leading

Reform rabbi. Hannah Greenebaum Solomon belonged to Rabbi Hirsch's Chicago Sinai Congregation and moved in the same social circles as the Gentile women organizing the Women's Congress, and she was invited to serve on the governing committee of the Parliament of Religions. Mrs. Solomon organized a Jewish Women's Congress as part of the Parliament, one result of which was the formation of what eventually would become the National Council of Jewish Women. Mrs. Solomon's colleague (and eventual rival) in this organizing effort was Sadie American.



There was another, very different, part of the Exposition that has become increasingly important for historians to study a century later—the Midway Plaisance. This poem was published in the *Chicago Daily News* at the time of the Fair:

*“Let's away to the Midway Plaisance:  
There are wisps of loveliness to behold.  
Oh, the lithe Moorish maidens with bangles of gold  
and eyes that will set you afire at a glance.  
They discount the marvelous yarns of romance  
ingeniously spun by the authors of gold;  
Why the half of the charms of that place can't be told,  
and hush, we will see the Algerian dance—  
Come boys, let's away to the Midway Plaisance.”*

The Midway Plaisance was a mile-long stretch of land connecting Washington Park with Jackson Park, where the White City was located. The Midway held a wealth of colorful commercial amusements. Its main attractions were the gigantic Ferris Wheel and a collection of villages containing the “native populations, products, food, and games of the world's population.”

Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, in her study “A Place in the World: Jews and the Holy Land of World Fairs,” writes in depth of the background of the villages along the Midway. Earlier Fairs, most recently the Paris

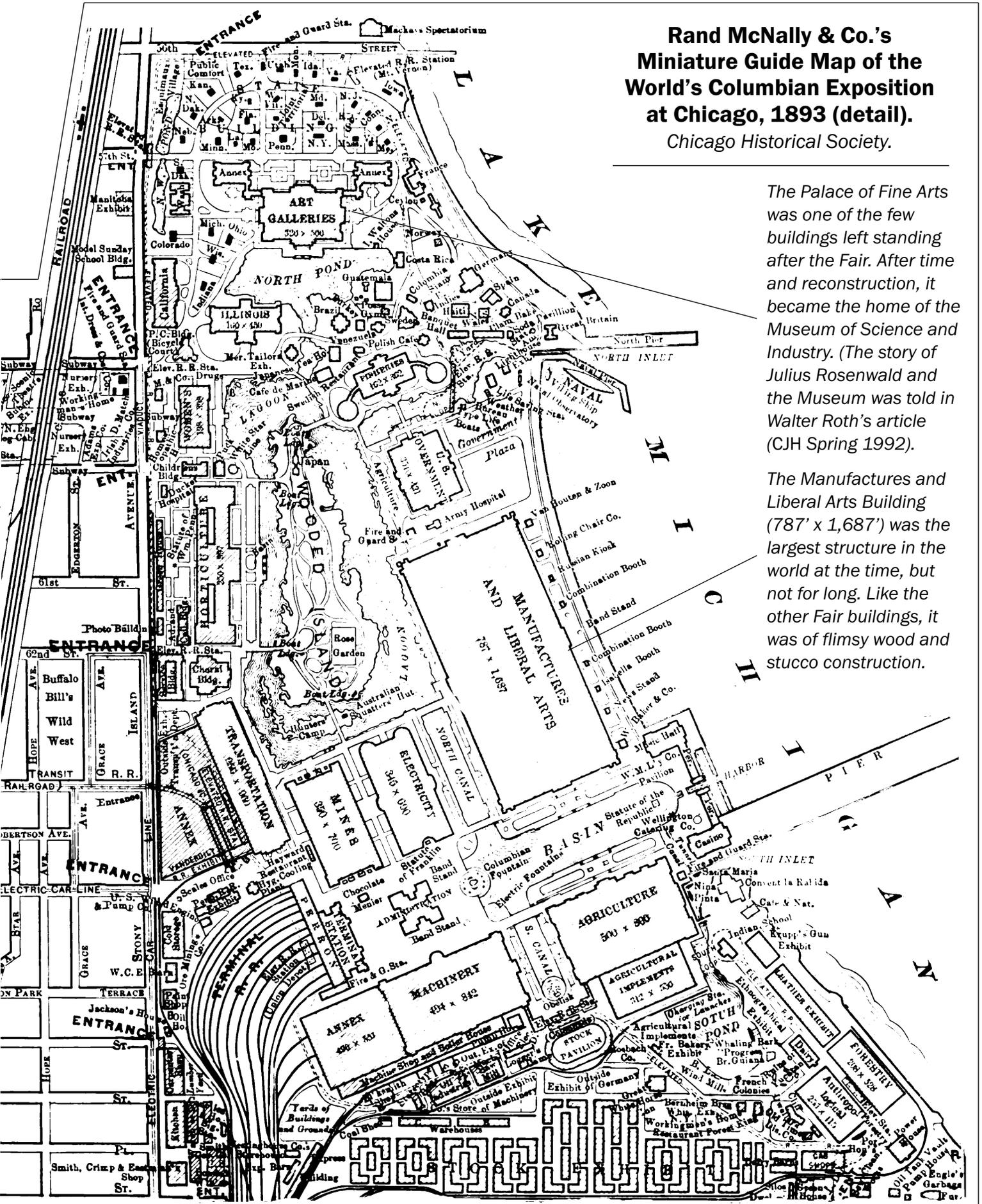
*continued on page 6*

### Rand McNally & Co.'s Miniature Guide Map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, 1893 (detail).

Chicago Historical Society.

The Palace of Fine Arts was one of the few buildings left standing after the Fair. After time and reconstruction, it became the home of the Museum of Science and Industry. (The story of Julius Rosenwald and the Museum was told in Walter Roth's article (CJH Spring 1992).

The Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building (787' x 1,687') was the largest structure in the world at the time, but not for long. Like the other Fair buildings, it was of flimsy wood and stucco construction.



## Jews on the Midway *continued from Page 4*



### AN ALGERIAN DANCER.

*Halftone, from "Part Two, Chicago Times Portfolio of Midway Types, 1893."*

*Chicago Historical Society.*

*Text under picture:*

"The dancing girls of the theaters on the Midway always attracted large crowds. One of the finest displays of the terpsichorian art was in the Algerian theater, where the above artist was an eminent type of her race. While most of the Algerians were dark colored, the men especially, this woman was white. Her dancing was of the kind performed by most of the Orientals, and included the *danse du ventre*."

International Exposition of 1889, had included foreign and, especially, exotic French colonial entertainers, but the Chicago Exposition Midway of 1893 was meant to have a more serious ethnological and anthropological purpose.

A Harvard University professor of ethnology, Frederic C. Putnam, was appointed to organize exhibits of historical and cultural interest on the Midway, and he retained Cyrus Adler, a Jewish scholar at Harvard and the Smithsonian Institution, as a consultant.

**P**rofessor Putnam's plan for the Midway was to construct ethnic villages showing the evolution of mankind—beginning in Africa and culminating in Europe, with the Near and Far East arranged between them. (A Jewish village had never been contemplated. Adler and others believed Jews to be members of an acculturated religion with no particular homeland.)

To Putnam, Jews were a race, while Adler strove to present Judaism as a religion, as one of the groups that lived in Biblical lands. He believed that "everything which makes for the higher life in modern man derived directly from a few groups of people that lived about the Mediterranean, and that knowledge of this civilization is essential to an understanding of the higher history of human thought." Adler clashed with those scholars who believed that Western civilization was derived largely from Aryan sources.

Under Professor Putnam, the planning and construction of the Midway exhibits was poorly organized and fell behind schedule. Sol Bloom, a 22-year-old Jew born in Pekin, Illinois, (and later a

publisher of popular music and a long-time New York Congressman), replaced the professor as manager of Midway concessions.

Despite his youth, Sol Bloom had had years of experience in theatrical management in San Francisco. He had visited the 1889 Paris International Exposition and had negotiated a contract to exhibit the Algerian Village, the most exotic and spectacular of the French colonial attractions, in America. He brought this troupe of performers to Chicago. Bloom writes in his autobiography of the unruliness of some of the Algerians as they waited for the Fair to open. He claims to have employed members of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (encamped near the I.C. railroad tracks) to round up the wandering artists.

In our Year-End 2000 issue we reprinted an article sent to us by Harvey M. Karlen, "Yom Kippur on the Midway" by Isidor Lewi, published in 1901. The article points out that about four-fifths of the population of the Midway's Turkish Village were Jews. Lewi movingly depicts the scene of their quiet High Holy Day observance. (Strangely, Sol Bloom makes no mention of any Jews on the Midway—other than himself.)

**T**he Exposition hired Jewish translators and guides to explain the Oriental Villages to visitors. Robert Levi, the manager of the Turkish Village, who had brought many Jews from that country to work at the Fair, also employed some Jewish Chicagoans, passing them off as Turks. There was a report in the *Chicago Tribune* of a controversy that arose when these midwesterners refused to wear oriental costumes, "including gorgeous bloomers."

Some of the Jews may have owed their jobs to Cyrus Adler, who had been appointed Commissioner of the Chicago Exposition to Turkey, Palestine, and Morocco. Since Palestine was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in 1893, and since many Jews lived in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, it is fair to assume that performers and workers from Palestine were present. Their costumes and looks made it easy for them to pass as “Mohammedans.”

**T**he *danse du ventre*—the “belly dance”—was the sensation of the Midway. It was danced in the Egyptian Theater, located on the Cairo Street, and a popular song at the Fair was *She Never Saw the Streets of Cairo*, that incorporated the “hoochy-koochy” melody. Some of the most famous belly dancers on the Midway were Jewish—among them Nazha Kassik, a native of Beyrouth [sic], Syria and Rahlo Jammele, “a native of Jerusalem.” They performed in the theater in the Moorish Palace. Rossiter Johnson’s 1897 history of the Exposition notes that the chief Algerian dancing girl was beautiful, mysterious, and popular, “but she was less fascinating to young men visitors than Fatima, of the Persian theater, who was more lithesome, and executed the *danse du ventre* with a wild abandon that called for repression by the authorities.”

Of course, there is much more about the Midway than can be covered here. Professor Putnam did succeed in creating a large photographic exhibit on his favorite subject, “The Development of Man,” in which Jews were depicted as a racial type.

A decade later, at the St. Louis Fair of 1904, the Jews of Jerusalem were recognized in their own right, not as “Mohammedans.” But it was not until the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair that there was a Jewish Day when a great pageant, *The Romance of A People*, was staged in Soldier Field, telling the history of the Jewish people and their dream of a national homeland in Palestine. As for the Jewish “villagers” of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893—we can only speculate as to their fate. Some must have returned home to Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Some may have gone on to participate in the St. Louis Fair. Perhaps some remained in Chicago and have descendants living here. As yet we have found no record of this. ❖

**WALTER ROTH** is president of the Society. His article “Sol Bloom, the Music Man” appeared in the Summer 2000 issue of CJH. Julia Kramer addressed the April 18, 1993, meeting of the Society on the subject of Hannah Solomon and the origins of the National Council of Jewish Women. Geoff Heller’s report on Julia Kramer’s talk was published in the Summer 1993 issue of CJH.



**REBECCA MEISE ALITHENSII. (Jewess.)**

ICHi-31063, W.C.E. Portraits, 1893.

Chicago Historical Society. Text under picture:

“Though the Jews are no longer a nation and properly claim citizenship in all countries, there is no racial type that has been so persistent through so many centuries and amid such varied environment. Whether in Palestine or America, in the Tenth century before or the Nineteenth century after Christ, the Jew shows the same physical characteristics, slightly modified by his surroundings, and the same intellectual acumen and business capacity that have made him the most successful financier in the world. This handsome oriental lady was born of Jewish parents in Constantinople twenty-seven years ago; and while retaining evidences of her Jewish blood, she is in general appearance a fair type of Turkish beauty, and her dress gives an exact idea of the picturesque and gorgeous costume of that nation. Her husband, a merchant of her native city, was induced to come to the Fair by Mr. Levi... She assisted her husband in disposing of their beautiful stuffs, bric-a-brac, and many quaint curios; and the public was attracted by this beautiful woman as much as by the rare wares they sold. She speaks English quite well with a very fascinating accent, and is exceedingly polite.”

# Leopold Segedin

PAINTS HIS OWN

## Chicago

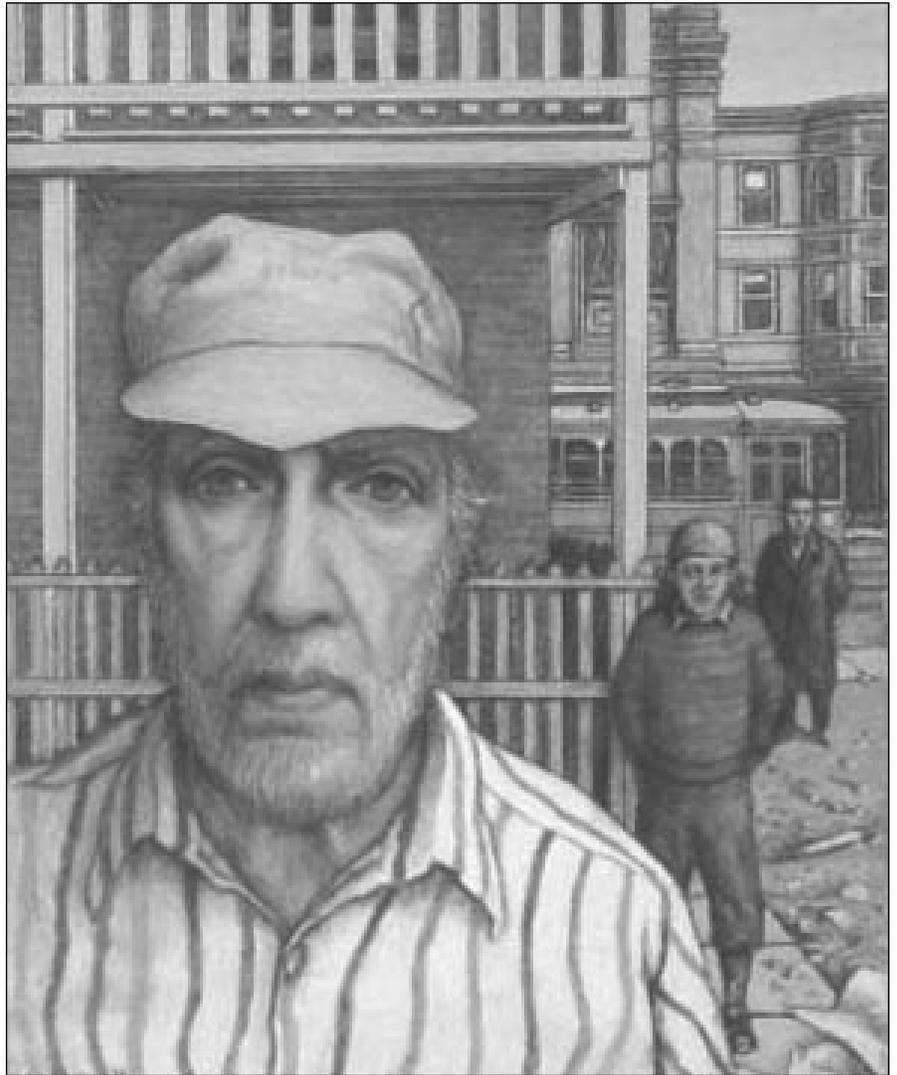
JEWISH HISTORY

Last winter at Victory Gardens Theater on Lincoln Avenue the world of painting was explored in a delightful multimedia cabaret, “Hello Dali: From the Sublime to the Surreal.”

Art masterpieces were projected on screens behind the onstage singers and musicians—images of famous works by over 40 painters and photographers. But this was not just an academic slide show. The projection screens were geometrically divided to display the images in ever-changing juxtaposition, cleverly manipulated with the use of computer graphic techniques.

Leonardo da Vinci, Artemisia Gentileschi, Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, René Magritte, Jackson Pollock, and other greats of the past—and one very alive and active Chicago artist, Leopold Segedin, were included. Segedin commented on the experience:

“In all the years I’ve been painting, I never expected to be included in such eminent company—at least not for another 50 or 100 years. Next stop, the Louvre—hanging next to the *Mona Lisa*, of course. What an ego trip!”



**Leopold Segedin: *Then and Then and Then*, 1997; mixed media on panel, 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 8"; courtesy the artist and Byron Roche Gallery.**

How did Segedin come to be included? Serendipity played a part. Two gifted Chicagoans, singer-composer-guitarist Michael Smith and his creative collaborator, singer Jamie O’Reilly, were in the process of devising a cabaret of “songs about paintings.” They each happened to stop in—separately—at the Byron Roche Gallery on Franklin Street in River North, and saw Leopold Segedin’s work on exhibit. Smith and O’Reilly were each impressed by the luminous, nostalgic, paintings. The title of one of the paintings, *Hey Kid*, became the title of a song. Michael Smith’s lyrics express the artist’s universal themes of loss, loneliness, and confrontation with mortality. Segedin’s paintings of a remembered Chicago became the surprise hit of “Hello Dali.”

Leo didn’t start out to be an artist. Though he always liked to draw, he was a practical kid. He wanted to be a pilot (now age 74, he flew a plane himself for the first time when he was 70). By the time he was in high

*HEY KID*. Written by Michael Smith. From *Hello Dali: From the Sublime to the Surreal*. Created and performed by Jamie O’Reilly and Michael Smith with Beau O’Reilly and Jenny Magnus. Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago 2000.

school at Crane Tech he wanted to become an engineer, and then (because the engineering field was inhospitable to Jews at that time) he turned to commercial art.

**T**hen, on a cold, snowy, December day in 1942, a family friend, the artist Arthur Polansky, appeared at the Segedin apartment on South Springfield Avenue carrying brushes, paints, easels, and canvases. He announced to Leo that they were going out to paint. Polansky took him to a second floor back porch overlooking the Garfield Park “L” tracks near Independence Blvd. and got permission from the tenants to set up their easels. They painted for hours, with Leo’s hands freezing, although he was wearing mittens. That was the first time he painted “L” tracks, brick walls, and back porches, and—off and on—he’s been painting them ever since.

He studied painting at the University of Illinois, Urbana, where he gained an MFA in 1950, and was a teaching assistant. He taught engineering drawing when he was in the Army during the Korean War.

Upon discharge Segedin returned to Chicago, and true to his practical nature, embarked on a teaching career, ultimately as an art professor at Northeastern Illinois University. But he always found time for painting, on a wide variety of themes. Over the years he has been involved in the activities of the American Jewish Artists’ Club.

In 1987, with the encouragement of Jan, his wife of 41 years, Leo retired from teaching to devote himself to painting full-time. ❖

*Leopold Segedin is represented by the Byron Roche Gallery, 750 North Franklin Street, Chicago. (312) 654-0144. See Segedin’s art in full color on the gallery website: [www.byronroche.com](http://www.byronroche.com)*



**Leopold Segedin: Recess, 1999; mixed media on panel, 12" x 16;**  
courtesy the artist and Byron Roche Gallery.

“The paintings Michael Smith is referring to in [the song] *Hey Kid!* are of the neighborhood in which I grew up—the West Side of Chicago... They are not scenes of particular places [although the painting *Recess* does portray Gregory Elementary School in 1937, and that is Marvin Goldblatt looking out at us]... Rather they are about the feel of the spaces we lived in—the streets and rooms, the back yards, the porches, and alleys—transformed by my memory.” —*Leopold Segedin*



**Leopold Segedin: Chicago Windows II, 1999; mixed media on panel, 16" x 24;**  
courtesy private collection and Byron Roche Gallery.

# 1954: An *Aida* Trio—Loren, Tebaldi, and Raisa

BY BEV CHUBAT

Remember when the World Playhouse in the Fine Arts Building was the only downtown Chicago venue for foreign films? Had you been in that movie house one evening in 1954, you would have witnessed an amazing performance featuring a trio of divas—two in the film and one in the audience.

The movie was *Aida*, an adaptation of the Verdi opera, in color, and starring the gorgeous young Sophia Loren in the title role. Her voice was dubbed by one of the greatest operatic sopranos of that time, Renata Tebaldi. And in the audience, singing along, was Chicago's legendary Jewish diva, Rosa Raisa.

Rosa and *Aida* are linked in our city's musical history. When the Chicago Civic Opera House opened in 1929, *Aida* was the inaugural production, and the star was Raisa. *Aida* had also been the company's last production at the Auditorium the season before—also starring Raisa. When Queen Marie of Roumania paid her famous visit to Chicago in 1926, her encounter with Jewish people was not just on the West Side at the Roumanian *shul*; she also spent an evening at the Auditorium, at a performance of *Aida*, starring Raisa.



**Rosa Raisa as *Aida*.**

Image courtesy Marston Records.

My friend Irwin Gold was at the World Playhouse for the *Aida* “trio,” and couldn't wait to tell me about it. Although I was a teen-age opera fan, I knew something of Raisa. I had first listened to operatic voices at home on our wind-up Victrola when I was a toddler. My parents' record collection, dating from the 1920s, included singers who had appeared in Chicago in those days—Amelita Galli-Curci, Tito Schipa, and John Charles Thomas. Rosa Raisa was represented by an off-brand (that is, not Victor) recording of the aria *Casta Diva* from *Norma*. The poorly produced record was warped and scratched by the time I heard it.

What else did I know of Madame Raisa? Only the vague disapproval voiced by my mother about some connection that Raisa and her husband, Giacomo Rimini, had had with fascist Italy. Why was this famous soprano of the past singing in a Michigan Avenue movie house? I enjoyed Irwin's amazing anecdote, but didn't investigate it any further at that time.

Only when I was researching an article about Madame Raisa for the Spring 1999 issue of *CJH* did I learn that she had maintained a studio in the Fine Arts

Building, where she taught voice after her husband's death in 1952. How could the diva have resisted going downstairs to the movie theater and performing her most popular role once again? Perhaps she “sang along” many times.

Philip P. Bregstone included Raisa in his book “Chicago and Its Jews: A Cultural History” (1933), and he offered this biographical information:

“In 1914 she came to America with Maestro Campanini, who became the Director of the Chicago Grand Opera Company. As soon as the law permitted she became a naturalized citizen and established her residence in Chicago, which city she regards as her home. She married the well-known baritone opera singer Giacomo Rimini, a native of Verona, Italy. His father, a prominent physician, was the



**Rosa Raisa as Norma.**

Image courtesy Marston Records.

president of the *Commune Israelitica* of Verona for more than 20 years.”

Rimini’s Italian-Jewish heritage may explain the presumed fascist connection. As Alexander Stille wrote in “Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism” (Summit, 1991):

“Italian fascism was in power for sixteen years before it turned anti-Semitic in 1938. Until then, Jews were as likely to be members of the Fascist Party as were other conservative-minded Italians. This singular fact altered the entire moral and existential equation for Italy’s Jews.”

The young Raisa Burchstein had been rescued from the pogroms in her native Bialystok and given comfort, operatic training, and a new name in Italy. Well into the

## President’s Column

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The suit was tried in front of a jury in Chicago’s Circuit Court, Judge Henry Sterling Pomeroy presiding. The case dragged on for several weeks, to the great embarrassment of the University. Many of its faculty members were called as witnesses, notably Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, professor at the University and rabbi of Chicago Sinai Congregation. In order to counter allegations by some witnesses for Esther, Rabbi Hirsch testified that he had not encountered any anti-Semitism at the University.

To Chicago newspapers, the case was headline news. The courtroom was crowded with onlookers. At the end of trial the jury deliberated for a day and reported back a verdict in favor of Esther, with an award of \$2,500 in damages, although she had sought \$100,000.

The victory brought great joy to Esther, her family, and friends. The University sought a rehearing, which was denied. It appealed the judgment, and in 1914, the Illinois Appellate Court reversed the verdict on dubious technical grounds.

The court held that since the plaintiff (Esther Mercy) had not proven the net worth of the defendant (Marion Talbot), there could be no award of damages until this was done. For Esther, now married, the battle was over, and she did not move to retry the case. The Appellate Court decision is reported in *Esther Mercy, Appellee vs. Marion Talbot, Appellant*, 330 Ill. App. 1 (1914).

Esther continued to live in Chicago for some time after the trial and then moved to Indiana. Mrs. Tuve has sent copies of her book to the University of Chicago, but as yet has received no acknowledgement. ❖

1930s, Raisa, Rimini, and their daughter spent summers at their villa near Verona. (*Chicago Tribune* critic Claudia Cassidy would reminisce years later about being their guest at the villa after the war.)

Yes, Raisa and Rimini did sing in Berlin with a group of elite Italian opera stars in October, 1933. Her biographer Charles Mintzer calls this “impolitic,” and adds that it was “even more ironic” that Hitler, Goebbels, and Hess were present at the performance of *Tosca* in which she was the protagonist, though “probably the Nazi leaders were unaware of Raisa’s biography, and were in attendance to hear the Berlin favorite [Beniamino] Gigli.”

At home in Chicago, she was beloved for her generosity as well as her vocal artistry. The Rosa Raisa Scholarship Fund for Higher Music Education, administered by the Jewish People’s Institute from 1928 into the ’30s, aided talented young people in the Depression years. She gave concerts at the Auditorium and Orchestra Hall to benefit the Fund.

Raisa’s last public concert is said to have been in Grant Park in 1938, but we know that *unzer Rayzele* (our Rosie) sang at least once more. ❖

**BEV CHUBAT** is editor of *CJH*.

*Rosa Raisa: the Complete Recordings*, a set of 3 CDs (Marston 53001-2), can be ordered by phone (610)690-1703 or online at [www.marstonrecords.com](http://www.marstonrecords.com).

FROM THE  
CHICAGO JEWISH  
*archives*

## Preserving Literary Archives: The Jerzy Kosinski Papers

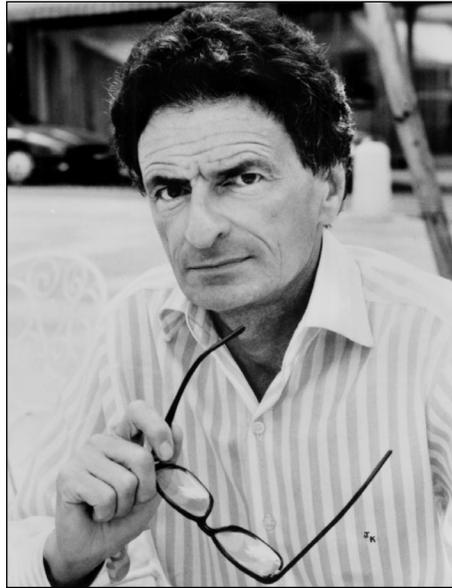
By Joy Kingsolver

Every book is the distillation of countless hours of reflection and writing; the author may travel a complex path from inspiration to publication. From an archivist's point of view, behind every book is a box of papers—letters, notes, drafts, and clippings. Studying these papers offers an intriguing look into the creative process.

Jerzy Kosinski was born in Poland in 1933 and spent the war years in hiding with his family. He came to America in 1957 and wrote “The Painted Bird,” the book for which he is best known. This was followed by “Steps,” which won the National Book Award in 1969, “Being There,” (both novel and screenplay), “Cockpit,” “Blind Date,” and other works.

He also had a long association with Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. His work was praised by Dr. Byron Sherwin in a 1981 book, “Jerzy Kosinski: Literary Alarmclock.” In 1982, during the time he was under attack by the *Village Voice* and other critics, Kosinski was awarded an honorary degree from Spertus College, and he was invited back in October of that year to receive the International Award. In 1987 he returned to participate in a forum on Abraham Joshua Heschel. In recognition of his long friendship with Dr. Sherwin and with Spertus, he bequeathed his entire literary estate to the Institute. The Jerzy Kosinski Papers arrived at the Chicago Jewish Archives in March 1996—30 banker boxes of papers and books—a wealth of historical material.

Like most authors, Jerzy Kosinski carried on a continuous correspondence with friends and colleagues in the literary field, with publishers and reviewers, and acquaintances and even with readers of his work. He kept these letters in thick files, and also made photocopies of some of his responses, so that we often have both sides of a correspondence. Many



Jerzy Kosinski c. 1982

authors receive mail from readers; Kosinski saved mail both from fans and from people who objected to his work. Those who study publishing history try to track the reception of texts among readers, but rarely do we find such an extensive record of reactions to one author's books. Students sent their literary criticism for him to read; Holocaust survivors wrote to compare their experiences with his. It was all carefully filed away.

Correspondence with publishers is important not only for understanding the author's career, but also the history of publishing and texts in a broader sense. Issues of controversy and censorship came

up early in Kosinski's career. Publishers recoiled from “The Painted Bird” because of the graphic scenes of sex and violence; in 1965 Houghton Mifflin finally agreed to publish it on the condition that it be toned down. In the Kosinski collection are letters outlining the editing changes that were required, and Kosinski's reluctant agreement; immediately regretting the decision, he asked them to release him from his contract so that the book could be published in full elsewhere. This was done, and the excised text was restored a year later in the new Pocket Books edition. The struggles Kosinski had with his editors reflect not just the difficult subjects he tackled but also the times in which he wrote, and his papers present us with the opportunity of studying his work in its historical context.

In addition to correspondence, authors generally collect newspaper clippings, magazine articles, reviews, notes, and other items that provide background material as they write. These “working files,” as they are often called, can provide clues to the author's ideas and themes as they appear in his work. Kosinski employed a clipping service to send him articles that referred to him or his work, and the collection contains many files of these, including clippings from Polish and other

European newspapers. These articles would be difficult, even impossible, to gather together again in one place. They are valuable for tracking the ups and downs of public opinion. Kosinski, for example, was anathema in his native Poland when he first began publishing. By the 1980s, however, interest in his work was growing, due in part to broader changes in Polish-Jewish relations, and "The Painted Bird" was finally published in Polish in 1989. Clippings from Polish newspapers show these swings in his reputation vividly.

**P**re-publication drafts and corrections are essential for reconstructing the evolution of a text. Generally, drafts are called manuscripts if they are written by hand and typescripts if they are typed, although the term "manuscript" is also used to refer to the original copy, typed by the author. The terms "autograph" or "holograph" are often used to specify that the draft is in the author's handwriting. In these days of word processing, manuscripts are perhaps less likely, and the Kosinski collection contains almost none. It does, however, contain many galleys or galley proofs, which are the first version printed by the publisher. These can be as long as 27 inches, making them difficult to store, but they often contain corrections made by the author. Proofs are the next stage, the nearly-final version. Jerzy Kosinski corrected both galleys and proofs, revising over and over, to the dismay of his publishers. Tracking these changes is possible because Kosinski preserved these intermediate versions of his works.

Finally, because no two editions of a work are exactly alike, the Kosinski Papers contain an extensive collection of various editions of his works, both in English and in languages ranging from Chinese to Swedish to Hebrew. This is unusual for an archival collection; ordinarily the archives retains few published books. But the Kosinski Papers are no ordinary collection, and we have made an exception in order to keep the entire collection together and to preserve the unique evidence they offer.

The Kosinski Papers are open to members of the public for research. To use them, contact the archivist at (312) 322-1741, or [archives@spertus.edu](mailto:archives@spertus.edu). The Papers will be featured in an upcoming exhibition titled *Jerzy Kosinski, 1933-1991: A Literary Life*, beginning April 22, 2001, through the end of October, in the sixth floor gallery at Spertus. ❖

**JOY KINGSOLVER** is Director, *Chicago Jewish Archives at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies*.

## New York Archivist Seeks Chicago *Messiah*

Charlotte Snyder Sholod of New York City, (actually, she's a Chicago-born former Hyde Parker and a member of CJHS), would like our readers' help in locating the sculpture *Messiah* by Enrico Glicenstein. The work was purchased by Chicago's Covenant Club in 1930 for its collection.

She is working on a biography and catalog raisonné of the sculptures of Enrico Glicenstein (1870-1942), and she is archivist of his estate. Glicenstein was a Polish-born Jewish artist who lived in Italy, and from 1928, in the United States.

He resided in Chicago from the middle of 1929 through early 1934, and was interviewed by Meyer Zolotareff several times. Mrs. Sholod was inspired to write to us after reading the piece about Sonia Rockler's encounter with Zolly in the last issue of *CJH*, and she enclosed copies of his Glicenstein articles from the *Chicago American* with her inquiry about the *Messiah* sculpture.

The earliest article, dating from 1929, is headlined "Polish Artist Here to Mold City's Beauty," and illustrated with photos of the sculptor and his bronze bust of the "famous antarctic adventurer" Commander Richard Byrd.

While in Chicago, Glicenstein acquired another notable model. He was commissioned by the Covenant Club to create a bronze bust of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In a June, 1934, article headlined "Gave Orders to Roosevelt," Zolly writes in his usual audacious style:

"A Chicago 'chiseler' has been an honored guest of President Roosevelt at the White House. Not only that, but when he got into the White House he was privileged to order around the President... This chiseler is Professor Enrico Glicenstein, noted Jewish sculptor... Last Monday and Tuesday [the President] posed for four hours and the professor did his chiseling."

The Roosevelt bust was exhibited in the Illinois Host House at the 1934 Century of Progress, after which it was placed on display at the Covenant Club. Today the sculpture resides in the lobby of Roosevelt University.

*Messiah* sculpture sleuths: please contact *CJH* with any information you may have, and we will send it on to Mrs. Sholod.

## CJHS Visits the New Home of Historic Chicago Sinai Congregation

The Society was honored to meet and share a program at one of our city's most venerable institutions, Chicago Sinai Congregation, now in its 140th year of existence. We met on Sunday afternoon, January 14, in the congregation's beautiful new building on Chicago's Near North Side, at 15 West Delaware Place, in the cheerful, light-filled, octagon-domed, sanctuary.

James Deutelbaum, a long-time congregant who has held many important positions at Sinai, was our first speaker. His remarks were about the temple's history from 1951 to 1995.

**D**r. Louis Mann was Sinai's senior rabbi for 39 years, from 1923 to 1962. He defined the role of rabbi as that of a social and moral advocate. He condemned slums as a mockery of our claim to civilization. He challenged McCarthyism. He saw the role of the rabbi as the perpetuator of Judaism, and as an ambassador to other synagogues and to the gentile world. He criticized political corruption. Perhaps his most dramatic eulogy was delivered at the funeral of Governor Henry Horner, the Jewish governor of Illinois, who had fought the Chicago Machine. Dr. Mann accused the machine politicians (who sat sat assembled in the front row at the service in the Chicago Avenue Armory), of hastening Horner's death by their intrigues against him.

Rabbi Mann was an exponent of important social change. He was one of the founders of Planned Parenthood. In his Sunday morning sermons at Sinai, he inspired his congregants to take an active part in the temple, the Jewish community, and the community at large. Social justice, he said, was as old as the Bible.

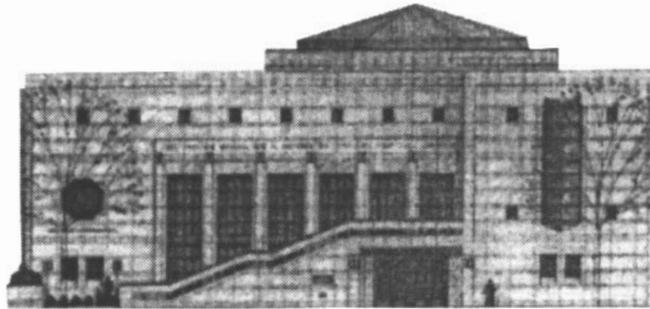
In 1950, Sinai moved from its Grand Boulevard temple to 5350 South Shore Drive, after having purchased the lakefront site in 1945. The continuity of Sinai's broad universalism was expressed in the phrase incised across the facade of the new temple, "My House Shall be Called a House of Prayer for All People."

**W**hen Samuel Karff succeeded to the Sinai pulpit in 1962, the world was very different from that of the temple's former rabbis. The Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel had profoundly changed the congregation. There was a new interest in Jewish tradition and history. Rabbi Karff responded to this by reinstating Sabbath morning services, starting many new Torah study programs, and introducing the Union Prayerbook to bring Sinai in line liturgically with the Reform Movement. In 1968, Sinai had its first bar mitzvah celebrant. He continued Sinai's historic mission with his interreligious work. He taught at the University of Chicago Divinity School as well as at Notre Dame University.

Mr. Deutelbaum calls Rabbi Karff a *rav*, a great teacher and ameliorator, whose tenure occurred during tumultuous times.

He left Sinai in 1980 to become senior rabbi at Beth Sholem in Houston, Texas, where he is now rabbi emeritus.

Philip Kranz, Sinai's next senior rabbi, had a sensitive understanding of the needs of the members. Like his predecessors, he was



**Chicago Sinai Congregation.** (Copy of architect's rendering of the new temple.) Outdoor steps evoke the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, where worshippers would enter the serene space from the courtyard below, and Levites would sing *shir hama'alot* as they ascended the steps.

active in Jewish circles and the greater community.

In 1982, Sinai was fortunate in securing Howard Berman as its senior rabbi. He initiated interfaith seders in Hyde Park and gained prominence in community affairs, education, and scholarly editing.

**R**abbi Berman established interfaith marriages at Sinai. Mr. Deutelbaum notes that this is a very contentious subject, and that Sinai does not try to influence any other Temple in this practice. (Only 20% of Reform rabbis perform these ceremonies.) The reasoning at Sinai is that so many young people have been made to feel like pariahs by rabbis, priests, and ministers, that they have been lost to all religions. 40% of the children in Sinai's religious school are from interfaith marriages, and, interestingly, more than a few of the non-Jewish spouses have converted to Judaism.

It became clear by the mid-1980s that another move for Sinai was inevitable. The congregation's leadership determined that Sinai would continue as an urban-centered synagogue and focused its planning on finding a central location from which it could serve an increasingly far-flung city and suburban membership. After ten years, the new site was acquired. In a national competition, Lohan Associates was selected as architects. Rabbi Berman, now emeritus, was much involved in the planning and design of the new building, which would become Sinai's sixth venue.

**M**ichael P. Sternfield, Sinai's present senior rabbi, was our second speaker. He is a Hyde Park resident, married to Cantor Deborah Bard of Congregation K.A.M. Isaiah Israel. His presentation included a discussion of the congregation's life since his arrival at Sinai in 1995, a description of the features of the new building, and a guided tour.

Rabbi Sternfield is only the ninth senior rabbi in the history of Sinai, and he commented on his most significant predecessor, Emil Hirsch, in whose time Sinai was the largest Jewish congregation in the country. Hirsch felt that the essence of Judaism was to be found, not in the Torah, but in the Prophetic Writings. Today, a group of five Torahs in exquisite coordinated mantles is visible in the Ark. A tall stained glass window, entitled *b'reshit*, has an abstract Creation theme. The sanctuary, which includes a balcony, seats over 600 people. To one side, a glass "window" facing the adjacent Family Room allows young children to observe the service, but not come in.

Sinai's small chapel features an octagonal stained glass window in an abstract menorah design, which the German-born architect Dirk Lohan designed and donated as a personal gift. It is made of broken and smooth glass, symbolizing a tragic past and hopeful future. Sinai's library contains some 3,500 shelved books and display cases exhibiting artifacts from the congregation's archives. It is noteworthy that services are held at Sinai on Sunday mornings as well as Friday nights and Saturday mornings. ❖

*Thanks to Charles B. Bernstein and James Deutelbaum for allowing the use of their notes in this report. Thanks to Norman B. Schwartz for his assistance.*

### ***Program Committee Chairman Burt Robin Retires after 18 Great Years of Words and Music***

At our January 14 Open Meeting at Chicago Sinai Congregation, Charles B. Bernstein, incoming Chairman of the Program Committee, paid tribute to his predecessor and offered the Society's thanks:

"Burt Robin, our vice president, served with distinction as program chairman for about 18 years. Five programs a year for 18 years is 90 programs. He is the 'Harry Zelzer,' the impresario *par excellence*, of Chicago Jewish history! Burt asked to retire, but he is still helping with some of the behind the scenes arrangements for our meetings... Actually, I was program chairman for several years before Burt, and I was dragged out of mothballs to take the job again, so if Burt is the 'Harry Zelzer' of the CJHS, I am [its] 'Donald Rumsfeld'..."

At a meeting of the Society's Board of Directors earlier in 2000, Burt's years of dedication had been lauded, and he had been presented with a commemorative microphone.

## ***April 22 Open Meeting at Cong. Rodfei Zedek***

*continued from page 1*

the new building.

Congregation Rodfei Zedek is located at 5200 South Hyde Park Boulevard, Chicago. Parking is available in the synagogue lots. Public transportation is convenient, via the #6 Jeffrey Express CTA bus.

The program will begin at 2:00 p.m., in the sanctuary, following a reception and refreshments at 1:00 p.m. in the atrium. Admission is free and the public is welcome.

**Free bus transportation  
to the April 22 meeting will be  
BY RESERVATION ONLY.  
To make bus reservations,  
please phone Leah Axelrod at  
(847)432-7003.**

Bus pickups will be at the Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 West Touhy Avenue, at 12:15 p.m., and at the Marriott Hotel, 540 North Michigan Avenue (Rush Street entrance) at 12:45 p.m.

## ***CJHS Asks for New Applicants to Board***

The Society will be electing new members to its Board of Directors at its June meeting, and the Nominating Committee is currently considering candidates. CJHS members who wish to be active in planning the Society's work are encouraged to submit their names for consideration.

The Board meets on the first Wednesday of every month, at 6:30 p.m., in the Jewish Federation building, 1 South Franklin Street, Chicago. A kosher buffet dinner is set out in the meeting room.

Applicants are asked to phone Walter Roth at (312)602-2020 or Adele Hast at (847)256-5768.

# About the Society

## What We Are

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977 and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the American Bicentennial Celebration of 1976. Muriel Robin was the founding president. The Society has as its purpose the discovery, preservation and dissemination of information concerning the Jewish experience in the Chicago area.

## What We Do

The Society seeks out, collects and preserves appropriate written, spoken and photographic records; publishes historical information, holds public meetings at which various aspects of Chicago Jewish history are treated; mounts appropriate exhibits; and offers tours of Jewish historical sites.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Would you like to become more involved in the activities of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society? We'd love to have you! Following are the various committees on which you can serve. Contact the Society at (312)663-5634 or any of the Chairpersons listed here.

### ■ PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Do you have a great idea for a meeting topic? If you are organized and creative, friendly and outgoing, the Program Committee would welcome your help in planning and implementing our bi-monthly and annual meetings. Call Charles Bernstein (773)324-6362.

### ■ MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Society's membership continues to grow, and you could help us introduce Chicago Jewish history to even more people. Share your ideas and energy! Contact Janet Iltis (773)761-1224 or Clare Greenberg (773)725-7330.

### ■ TOUR COMMITTEE

Bring your creativity and organization to planning and promoting our popular roster of tours on Jewish history. Contact Leah Axelrod (847)432-7003.

### ■ EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Do you like to write? Are you a great proofreader? You can contribute to our quarterly publication, *Chicago Jewish History*. Contact our editor, Bev Chubat (773)525-4888.

## Membership

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations and includes a subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*, discounts on Society tours and at the Spertus Museum store, and the opportunity to learn and inform others about Chicago Jewish history and its preservation.

## Dues Structure

Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1 are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership .....	\$1000
Historian .....	500
Scholar .....	250
Sponsor .....	100
Patron or Family .....	50
Senior Family or Individual .....	35
Synagogue or Organization .....	25
Senior Individual or Student .....	20

Make checks payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and mail to our office at 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago IL 60605. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Look to the rock from which you were born  
הביטו אל-צור חצבתכם



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