



# chicago jewish history



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## *Save the Date! Sunday, February 9: CJHS to Present Program on the Shomrim Society of Illinois*

Our next open meeting will feature Lt. Bruce Rottner of the Chicago Police Department, who will discuss the history of the Shomrim, a society of Jewish law enforcement officers throughout the Midwest but primarily in the Chicagoland area. Lt. Rottner, who has served as president of the Illinois Shomrim, has been an officer of the Chicago Police Department for thirty years, and has received many awards for his work, including 228 letters of commendation. He is one of only nine inspectors in the CPD.

Rabbi Moshe Wolf, chaplain of the Chicago Police Department, will also participate in the program. Rabbi Wolf, who also serves the Chicago Fire Department, will be remembered as an impressive speaker in our May 2002 program at the Chicago Fire Academy. (See related article on page 15.)

The program will begin at 2:00 p.m., after a social hour and refreshments at 1:00 p.m., at Temple Sholom, 3480 North Lake Shore Drive. Invite your friends! Admission is free and open to the public.



**First Display Case, CJHS 25th Anniversary Exhibit, Spertus Institute.**

*Photograph by David Rigg.*

## President's Column



Walter Roth

*This column is adapted from the welcoming remarks made by Walter Roth on November 24, 2002 in Bederman Hall of Spertus Institute, at the opening program of the Society's 25th anniversary exhibit.*

### OUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS UNIQUE

in its mission—bringing to light and preserving the history of the Jewish community of Chicago. I am grateful to the Society for giving me the opportunity to learn and write about many persons and events that are part of that history.

I would like to thank President Howard Sulkin and the entire staff of Spertus Institute for their wonderful assistance in mounting our 25th anniversary exhibit. In particular, I would like to thank co-curator Joy Kingsolver, archivist and director of the Chicago Jewish Archives at Spertus, as well as Sheila Cronin, principal designer of the exhibit, and her staff. Thanks to Director and Past President Adele Hast of our own organization, who has done a magnificent job as program chair and exhibit co-curator.

I would like to thank all of the directors and members of CJHS who have helped in the development of our programs.

First, let me single out Roberta Bernstein, Irwin Suloway, Joe Kraus, and Bev Chubat, who have served as editors of our quarterly journal, *Chicago Jewish History*.

Next, I would like to mention Charles Bernstein and Burt Robin, who have served as CJHS program chairs—planning, publicizing, and presenting interesting bi-monthly meetings, open to the public at no charge, for the past 25 years. (It was Chuck who pushed me into becoming an active member of the Society, when he cornered me one day in 1979 and suggested that I chair a program on the settlement of German-Jewish refugees in Hyde Park in the 1930s. The result was a challenging program about which the Society published a booklet, which is on display in our exhibit.)

Leah Axelrod deserves a great deal of credit for planning and guiding the Society's popular summer tours of Jewish historical sites. Herman Draznin has been the Society's devoted accountant and treasurer for many years, and we thank him.

CJHS conducts an active oral history project. Over 300 tapes and transcripts have been deposited by the Society in the Chicago Jewish Archives and are available for study by scholars and laypersons. Thanks to Sid Sorkin who headed our oral history committee, and Sue Weiler, who currently fills that role.

Various members of our board have served as recording secretary. Clare Greenberg has performed that job for us in the past, and Carolyn Eastwood is our current secretary. I thank both of them for their services. Our executive secretary, Eve Levin, is a volunteer who has done a wonderful job for us over the years in maintaining our office in the Spertus building, and we are very grateful to her.

*continued on page 15*



chicago jewish historical society

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### Chicago Jewish History

*Chicago Jewish History* is published quarterly by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society at 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60605. (312)663-5634. Single copies \$2.00 postpaid. Successor to *Society News*.

Please send submissions to the editor, Bev Chubat, at 415 West Fullerton Parkway, #1102, Chicago, Illinois 60614-2842. E-mail: Bevchub@aol.com

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## October Meeting & Program: “Seymour Simon Looks Back”

When retired Illinois Supreme Court Justice Seymour F. Simon reminisced about his distinguished career in public service, he had an attentive audience of CJHS members and friends. Justice Simon was our guest speaker on Sunday, October 6, at Temple Shalom.

Before he spoke there was a brief Annual Meeting and election of members of the Board of Directors of the Society. (Officers of the Society are elected for a two year term by the Board of Directors.) Re-elected for a three year term ending in 2005 are Leah Axelrod, Harold T. Berc, Dr. Irving Cutler, Bea Kraus, and Dr. N. Sue Weiler. Newly elected for a three year term are Dr. Rachelle Gold, Roslyn Lettvin, and Michael Lorge.

Sid Sorkin, the Society's resident expert on the history of Chicago area movie theaters, asked our guest speaker about his work as an attorney for Chicago movie exhibitors.



**Seymour Simon.**

*Photograph by Charles Bernstein.*

Justice Simon replied that his involvement with the film industry began on the national level.

After he was graduated from Northwestern Law School, young Seymour Simon went to work in the Antitrust Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. His first boss was Milton Katz, a brilliant man,

*continued on page 4*

## *A New Site for George Washington, Robert Morris, and Haym Salomon*

The monument dedicated to “this great triumvirate of patriots” is temporarily missing from the Chicago scene. It stood in Heald Square, at East Wacker Drive and Wabash, for sixty years, but when the Wacker Drive reconstruction project began, it was removed and put in storage by the City.

Wacker Drive reopened just before Thanksgiving. To improve traffic flow, Heald Square has been reduced to a wedge-shaped median.

City officials have announced a projected new location for the monument, on a large limestone terrace to be built next spring, designed to “flow” down from Wacker to the Chicago River's edge.

With easy pedestrian access to the monument, viewers will at last be able to correctly identify and learn about George Washington's two sculptural companions—Robert Morris and Haym Salomon—financiers of the American Revolution. ♦



**Program Chair Charles Bernstein and Past CJH Editor Roberta Bernstein at the CJHS 25th Anniversary Exhibit. Photograph by David Rigg.**

## **Welcome to New Members of CJHS**

Mike Abrams  
Charles Arbetter  
Carol Gaebler  
Morrene Jacobson  
Mary Ann Johnson  
Rabbi Harold Karp  
Harold Krom  
Blossom Levin  
Carl Lerner  
Michael Lorge  
Ruth Myers  
Mr. & Mrs. David Zesmer

## October Meeting *continued from page 3*

who went on to become a Harvard Law School professor. Then Simon became involved in the great Hollywood antitrust case of 1938: *U.S. v. Paramount*.

The eight major movie companies (Paramount, MGM, Warner Brothers, Loew's, RKO, Fox, United Artists, and Columbia) acted as their own distributors and also owned movie theater chains. Assistant Attorney General Thurman Arnold assigned Robert Wright to prosecute the case, and Seymour Simon

worked for him. Robert Llewelyn Wright, son of the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, was a genius, according to our speaker. He won the case, but the machinations of the defendants and the outbreak of World War II delayed the final resolution until 1948, when the studio monopoly was dismantled.

A second part of the Paramount antitrust case dated back to the 1920s and early '30s, and was directly related to Chicago. Distributor/exhibitor Balaban & Katz had a stranglehold on the movie business here. The Department of Justice won the case, B&K was held in contempt, but they didn't change their business practices. Simon, in private practice in Chicago after the war, filed suits for a number of B&K's aggrieved competitors. It was inspiring to hear Justice Simon speak of the early years in his life-long pursuit of justice for the underdog. ♦

### Ann Barzel's 97th Birthday Celebration & Dance Tribute



**Ann Barzel today.\***

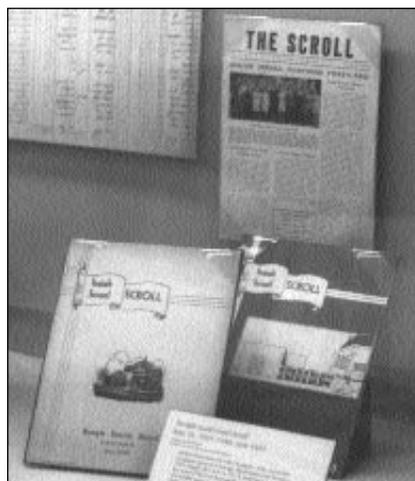
Chicago's dance community honored the venerable dance journalist and historian Ann Barzel with a gala birthday party and tribute on November 11 at the Athenaeum Theater.

Ms. Barzel's papers form an important part of the Chicago Dance Collection at Newberry Library, and proceeds earned from the Ann Barzel Birthday Celebration will support conservation and accessibility to the renowned collection.

*\*Portrait photographer will be credited in our next issue.*

Spoken tributes were offered: in person, from Lois Weisberg, Commissioner of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs, and via video from world-famous stars of dance. A program of dance tributes was presented by our city's leading companies. Included was a new work choreographed especially for Ms. Barzel.

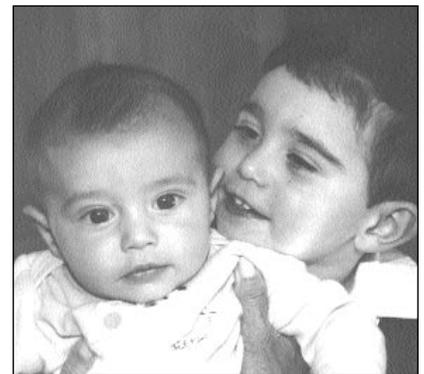
CJHS is proud to count Ann Barzel among our members. During her years of teaching in Chicago's public and Jewish religious schools, she amassed a collection of publications which she has donated to the Chicago Jewish Archives through CJHS.



**Temple Isaiah Israel, *The Scroll*. CJHS 25th Anniversary Exhibit.**

*Chicago Jewish Archives. Issues of the publication were donated by Ann Barzel via CJHS. Photograph by David Rigg.*

### Youngest Members of the Society



**Max & Richard Chaiken Kraus.**

Over a year has passed since former *CJH* editor Joe Kraus and his family left Chicago for Wilkes-Barre, PA, where Joe had accepted a faculty position in the King's College English Department.

Joe and his wife Paula Chaiken were both Society activists, and they maintain their interest—and membership—from their new home

Their two-year-old son Richie has just gained a baby brother named Max.

# Walter Roth's New Book

## LOOKING BACKWARD: True Stories from Chicago's Jewish Past. By Walter Roth.

*Chicago Jewish Historical Society and Academy Chicago Publishers; 305 pages, \$27.95.*

**Question:** Why does a photo of an Arab standing in front of the Algerian Theatre appear on the jacket of a book about Chicago Jewish history?

**Answer:** The Algerian Theatre was on the Midway of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, and the "Arab" in the foreground was probably a Jew, maybe even a Jewish Chicagoan.

The unknown story of Jewish participation in Chicago's great fair of 1893 is only one of the fascinating nuggets of history unearthed and polished by Walter Roth in the pages of *Chicago Jewish History*. Now, for the first time, the material has been collected in a single volume, chronicling events and people from the late 1800s to the end of World War II.

The essays are divided into six broad themes: "Chicago Jews and the Secular City: Movers and Shakers"; "Chicago Jews and Anti-Semitism: Tragedy Abroad, Challenges at Home"; "Chicago Jews and Zionism: Local Idealists"; "Chicago Jews and Zionism: Renowned Visitors"; "Chicago Jews and the Arts: The Page and the Stage"; and "Chicago Jews on Both Sides of the Law: Colorful Characters."

The subjects include philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, dramatist Ben Hecht, femme fatale Dora Feldman, and guys with great nicknames—"Kingfish" Levinsky, "Nails" Morton, and "Wallpaper" Wolff. ❖

*CJHS Past President Rachel Heimovics, who now resides in Florida, recommended this guide:*

### FLORIDA JEWISH HERITAGE GUIDE

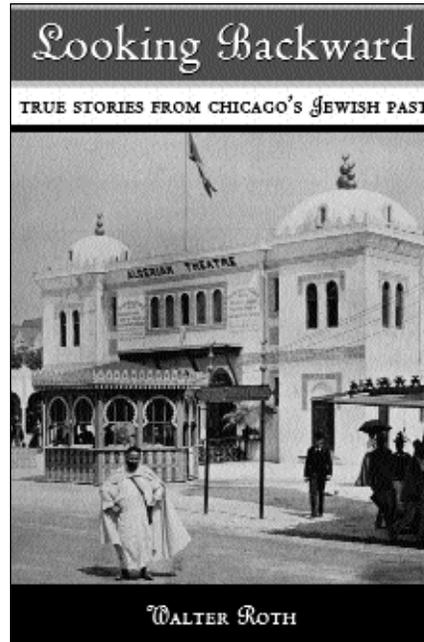
*\$8.00 each for 1 to 2 copies (no shipping charge).*

Make check payable to: Florida Department of State.

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web address: [www.flheritage.com/magazine/jht](http://www.flheritage.com/magazine/jht)  
phone (800) 847-7278 fax (850) 245-6437

This guide tells us that Jewish history in Florida can be traced back to 1763. Read about the long Jewish experience in Florida and travel the Florida Jewish Heritage Trail. *CJHS*



*Members of the Society will receive complimentary copies of Walter Roth's book by mail.*

*Walter Roth came to Chicago in 1939 as a refugee from Nazi Germany. He attended the University of Illinois where he majored in history and journalism, and was graduated summa cum laude from the University of Chicago Law School. He is a managing partner in the law firm of D'Ancona & Pflaum. Since 1988 he has been president of CJHS.*

**CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY: INDEX 1977-2002.** Compiled by Adele Hast. 2002. *Chicago Jewish Historical Society. 23 pp.* Index of the Society's quarterly journal. Reference copies can be found at Asher Library, Spertus Institute. Limited quantity available on request from CJHS office.

**SHORT SEA SAGAS.** By Harold T. Berc. 2002. *Athena Press, 190 pages, paper, \$17.95.* Unusual tales of over two hundred ships—mutinies, unusual sinkings, mystery ships sailing for years without crews, piracy, wartime disasters and phenomena of the unknown—the product of extended readings in maritime lore for over fifty years. The last chapter describes some incidents in the author's own distinguished WWII service as a US Naval officer. This is not Chicago Jewish history, nor is it an epic of Patrick O'Brian stature, but Hal Berc is a valued board member of CJHS, and he is a terrific writer and historian. Illustrated.

### Coming Soon! A WALK TO SHUL: Chicago Synagogues of Lawndale And Stops on the Way.

*By Bea Kraus with Norman D. Schwartz.* This is the eagerly awaited CJHS book about the West Side when it was a thriving Jewish neighborhood. Lavishly illustrated with photographs and maps.

## CJHS Publications

*The books listed below may be ordered directly from the Society office at (312) 663-5634.*

### **THE GERMAN-JEWISH EMIGRATION OF THE 1930s AND ITS IMPACT ON**

**CHICAGO.** By Walter Roth. Report on a symposium held at Congregation Ezra-Habonim on November 18, 1979. 1980. 24 pages, paper, \$3.00.

### **THE CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY: A Ten Year History.**

By Irwin J. Suloway. 1988. 32 pages, illustrated, paper, \$3.00.

### **THE ROMANCE OF A**

**PEOPLE.** Program book for the pageant-drama presented on Jewish Day at *A Century of Progress*, the Chicago World's Fair of 1933. 2000. 80 pages (72-page facsimile plus 8 pages of new material), paper, \$15.00.

### **SYNAGOGUES OF CHICAGO.**

Edited by Irving Cutler, Norman D. Schwartz, and Sidney Sorkin. Project supervised by Clare Greenberg. 1991. *Chicago Jewish Historical Society*. Computerized compilation of synagogue listings in Chicago city directories since 1856. Every year's complete listings; a one line summary of each congregation; its active years; street address; name of rabbi; name of president if available. Reference copies can be found at the Chicago Public Library and Asher Library at Spertus Institute.

## Books by CJHS Authors

**BRIDGES TO AN AMERICAN CITY: A Guide to Chicago's Landsmanshaften, 1870 to 1990.** By Sidney Sorkin. 1993. *Peter Lang Publishing*, 480 pages, \$68.95. A thorough study of the hundreds of service organizations, named after their Old World origins, that were a significant part of the immigrant experience.

**THE JEWS OF CHICAGO: From Shtetl to Suburb.** By Irving Cutler. 1996. *University of Illinois Press*, 315 pages, \$29.95. Vividly told history of Chicago's Jewish community. Illustrated. (Dr. Cutler's popular CJHS summer Sunday tour, "Chicago Jewish Roots," always sells out.)

**ROMANCE OF A PEOPLE: 100 Years of Jewish History in Chicago, 1833-1933 (VIDEO).** 1997. *Chicago Jewish Historical Society*, one hour, \$29.95. Distributed by *Ergo Media, Inc.*, P.O. Box 2037, Teaneck, NJ 10766.

**AN ACCIDENTAL ANARCHIST.** By Walter Roth and Joe Kraus. 1998. *Rudi Publishing*. Reissued by *Academy Chicago Publishing*, 211 pages, paper, \$16.95. The story of young Lazarus Averbuch's fatal 1908 encounter with Chicago Police Chief George Shippy. Illustrated.

**A TIME TO REMEMBER: A History of the Jewish Community in South Haven.** By Bea Kraus. 1999. *Priscilla Press*, 287 pages, paper, \$20.00. From the 1920s through the 1950s, South Haven, Michigan was the site of a thriving Jewish summer resort community. Illustrated.

**JEWISH CHICAGO: A PICTORIAL HISTORY.** By Irving Cutler. 2000. *Arcadia Publishing*, 128 pages, paper, \$18.99. A vivid snapshot of the city's Jewish community—its cultural, religious, economic, and everyday life. Includes 230 photographs and maps.

**WOMEN BUILDING CHICAGO, 1790-1990: A Biographical Dictionary.** Edited by Adele Hast and Rima Lunin Schultz. 2001. *Indiana University Press*, 1,088 pages, \$75.00. Of the over 400 individual entries in this invaluable reference, forty are Jewish women. Illustrated.

**THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS AT TEMPLE SHOLOM.** By Norman D. Schwartz and Rolf Achilles. Photographs by Rich Master. Design by Dianne Burgis. 2001. *Temple Sholom*, 20 pages, \$5.00. Full color monograph describes and documents the twelve sets of beautiful windows.

**NEAR WEST SIDE STORIES: Struggles for Community in Chicago's Maxwell Street Neighborhood.** By Carolyn Eastwood. 2002. *Lake Claremont Press*, 355 pages, paper, \$17.95. Four extraordinary "ordinary" individuals tell stories of their struggles to save their neighborhood and the century-old market that was at its core. Illustrated.

**HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF CHICAGO.** By Hyman L. Meites. 1924. Facsimile Republication with Introduction. 1990. *Chicago Jewish Historical Society*. The original 1924 edition and the 1990 facsimile are both now out of print, but copies of both can be found at the Chicago Public Library and Asher Library, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies.

## CJHS Publications

The books listed below may be ordered directly from the Society office at (312) 663-5634.

### Doris Minsky Memorial Fund Prize Winners:

*Doris Minsky was a founder, director, and officer of the Society. The Fund was established in her memory for the purpose of publishing monographs on the history of the Jews of Chicago. Submissions were judged, and cash prizes awarded, by the CJHS Publications Committee.*

#### 1. CHICAGO JEWISH STREET PEDDLERS.

By Carolyn Eastwood.

#### MEMORIES OF LAWDALE.

By Beatrice Michaels Shapiro. 1991. 103 pages, illustrated, paper, \$5.00.

#### 2. THE CHAYDER, THE YESHIVA AND I.

By Morris Springer. **MEMORIES OF THE MANOR.** By Eva Gross.

1993. 95 pages, illustrated, paper, \$5.00.

#### 3. THE CANTORS: Gifted Voices Remembered.

By Bea Kraus. 1996. 85 pages, illustrated, paper, \$5.00.

#### 4. MY FATHER, MYSELF: A Son's Memoir of His Father, Rabbi Yehudah D. Goldman, America's Oldest Practicing Rabbi.

By Rabbi Alex J. Goldman. 1997. 120 pages, illustrated, paper, \$5.00.

#### 5. THROUGH THE EYES OF THEIR CHILDREN.

By Myron H. Fox. 2001. 160 pages, illustrated, paper, \$7.50.

## The Diva & *The Dybbuk*

There have been a number of musical interpretations of S. An-ski's Yiddish play *The Dybbuk*. In 1931 George Gershwin was contracted by the Metropolitan Opera to begin composing an operatic version. He returned the money when it was learned that the musical rights to the work were already owned by Lodovico Rocca and La Scala. Rocca's *Il Dibuk* was performed in Milan in 1934.

The first North American production of Rocca's work was given in Detroit on May 6, 1936, in an English translation. Rosa Raisa portrayed Leah, the possessed heroine. This was to be the last operatic heroine Raisa would create—a girl from the same Eastern European Jewish world into which Raisa herself was born.

The next night the production was staged in Chicago's Auditorium Theater, beginning a week-long engagement, followed immediately by a week in New York at Carnegie Hall. (In this compressed run, Jeanne Palmer Soudeikine sang Leah on the alternate days.)

Charles Mintzer, the acknowledged Rosa Raisa expert, was our source for the preceding material. He has spent the last forty years lovingly and painstakingly documenting the diva's life and career. His recently published biography includes some notes about another great Jewish singer—Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt.

In March 1918, Cleofante Campanini, director of the Chicago Opera Company, heard the cantor in concert in our city. He felt that Rosenblatt's voice was of operatic quality and he envisioned a Chicago production of *La Juive* with Rosenblatt in the role of Eléazar.

Campanini wrote a letter to the



Rosa Raisa as Leah in *The Dybbuk*, 1936. Photograph courtesy of Charles Mintzer.

president of the cantor's congregation, promising that there would be no Friday night or Saturday matinee performances, he wouldn't have to shave off his beard, and "nothing would reflect in a negative way on the orthodox Jewish faith. The Jewess would be Rosa Raisa, herself a Jewess...." Rosenblatt declined this unique offer.

Raisa visited a synagogue in Brooklyn to hear "the little chazan" who had made such an impression on Campanini. Her presence caused quite a stir in the women's balcony.

When Raisa's father died in 1925, she and her husband rushed from Chicago (they were singing at Ravinia that summer) to New York for the funeral and burial in Montefiore Cemetery. Family friend Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt chanted the committal prayers at the service.

**ROSA RAISA: A Biography of a Diva with Selections from Her Memoirs.** By Charles Mintzer. 2001. *Northeastern University Press*, 342 pages, illustrated, \$30.00.

# Our 25th Anniversary Exhibit: Hundreds of Members



**Exhibit Curator Adele Hast,  
Past President & Exhibit Comm. Chair**



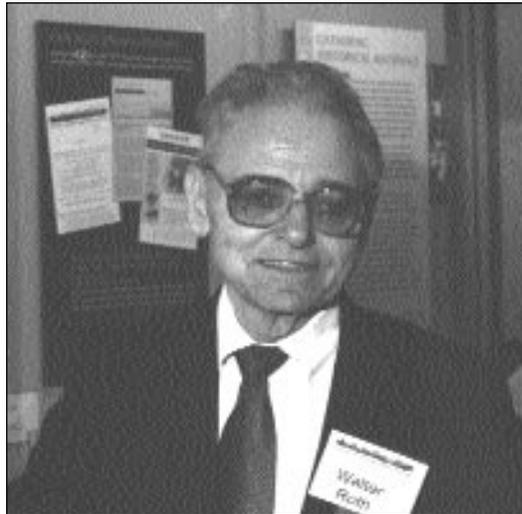
**Past President Norman Schwartz**



**Exhibit Curator Joy Kingsolver,  
Director, Chicago Jewish Archives**



**Founding President Muriel Rogers**



**President Walter Roth**



**Past President Rachel Heimovics**



**Membership Chair Clare Greenberg and Elegant Refreshments**



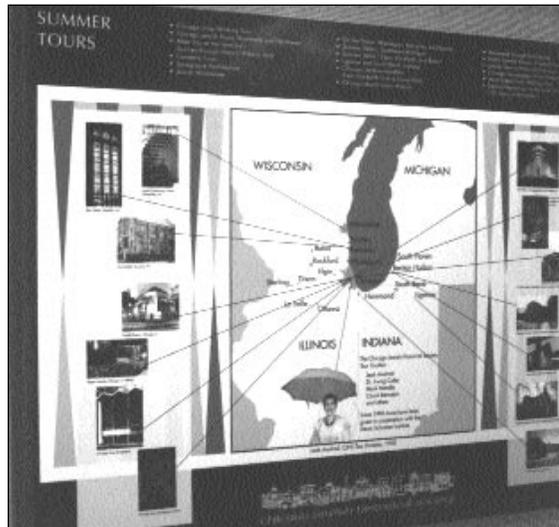
**Tours Chair Leah Axelrod**

# and Guests Attend the Opening Reception & Program

*See it now!  
Exhibition closes  
February 28*

## **The Chicago Jewish Historical Society 1977-2002: Preserving Jewish History**

*Spertus Institute of  
Jewish Studies,  
618 South Michigan  
Avenue, Chicago*



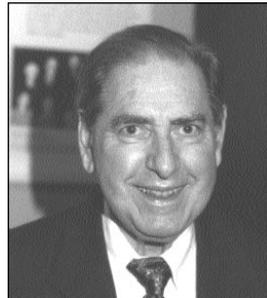
**Summer Tours Display**

Everyone looked, listened, noshed, shmoozed, and kvelled! The Society's anniversary celebration was held on Sunday afternoon, November 24. Attendees praised the exhibition's expert organizers and designers. (See *President's Column* for Walter Roth's laudatory remarks.)

Founding members of the Society were justly proud as they stopped in front of each display case to marvel at the number of achievements of CJHS over its first quarter century.

Organizers of our previous exhibitions, planners of our public programs and summer tours, editors and authors of our publications, gatherers of archival material, oral history interviewers, our officers and board of directors—some of them are pictured on these pages; all are greatly appreciated.

*Photographs by David Rigg.*



**Vice President  
Burt Robin**



**Oral History Chair  
Sue Weiler**



**Secretary  
Carolyn Eastwood**



**Treasurer  
Herman Draznin**



**Interactive Oral History Display**



**Guest Speaker June Sochen**

**A**fter the audience settled into their chairs in Bederman Hall, brief welcoming remarks were offered by President Howard Sulkin of Spertus Institute, the past presidents of CJHS and President Walter Roth. Our guest speaker was then introduced.

Cultural historian June Sochen is a professor of History and Women's Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. She spoke on "Themes in 20th Century Chicago Jewish History."

Prof. Sochen pointed out that when Jewish communities take root, no matter where, their institutions—the synagogue and the burial society—are established first.

She said that in some ways the Chicago Jewish community was unique in America at the start of the last century. Zionism flourished here, German Jews got along with their brethren from Eastern Europe, and Chicago Jewish women were leaders in the campaign for social justice.

FROM THE  
CHICAGO JEWISH  
*archives*

## Hadassah Baskin: Memories of the Covenant Club

*By Joy Kingsolver*

**T**he Covenant Club, founded in 1917 for Jews who lived or worked in downtown Chicago, was a center of social life, a refuge for businessmen, and an opportunity for their wives to be active in social and charitable projects. One of the most influential members of the Club was Samuel J. Baskin (1911-1989), an attorney who was president in 1954-56. In addition to his activities at the Club, he was president of South Shore Temple and received the Israel Bonds “Man of the Year” Award in 1962. His wife, Hadassah Baskin, born in 1910, is a very vibrant 92, and shared some of her memories of the glory days of the Club.

“Sam first joined the Covenant Club just before our daughter was born, in 1939, and from then on he made his mark at the Club. He had all sorts of ideas, and he implemented his ideas as he went along. When he got to be vice-

president, he started something that proved to be very beneficial and very interesting. [The Club] would give big dinners, but they were not particularly interesting. He said, ‘We should have something more substantial.’ He decided that it would be wise to bring [notable] people to come and speak. It would be an honor for them to come and speak to 500 or 600 people, and just say their piece—what they are doing for humankind. Some of the people who came: Eleanor Roosevelt, President Truman, Danny Newman, and more...

“We used to have an Opera Night—that was Sam’s idea—some of these great people, like Maria Callas would be invited for a free dinner—there would be several hundred people listening to them. They usually sat up on the podium with us, and they sang whatever they wanted. It was a very informal night for them. And one night Maria Callas was there. One time, when she would not perform, and everybody was performing on the dais—everybody—and we begged her, we pleaded, we applauded her, and she wouldn’t sing. Anyway, she had split her zipper, and I quickly got the secretary of the Club to bring me a needle and thread and I went up and I started sewing her zipper, and [the tenor] Giuseppe Di Stefano tore off the button from his vest, and he said, ‘OK, now sew me!’ Anyway, that loosened her up and she sang something.

“Another thing Sam was instrumental in doing at the Covenant Club was—on Friday nights, he had little pamphlets published to make Friday



**Covenant Club Passover Seder, April 1955.** Mrs. Samuel Baskin lights candles. Mr. Baskin, (Club president), Herman Berman (Past President), and a member of the choir look on. *Chicago Jewish Archives.*

nights important, so that people wouldn't stay home on Friday nights, they would come to the Covenant Club for Friday dinner. And they would have two candles on the tables, and this little prayer, and they could bring their children and grandchildren to the Club, and they celebrated Shabbat. That was something that nobody else had thought of. They continued it until it closed."

The wife of the Club president was the head of the women's group. Mrs. Baskin recalls that the president's wife was referred to as the "First Lady" of the Club, and was in charge of social events.

"We would have about five luncheons a year. We celebrated different people. And once I had Herbert Biberman, a movie producer. HB was one of the ten producers who were jailed during the McCarthy era. His wife was the actress Gale Sondergaard...I had her to luncheon, she was a very good speaker, and a very free woman. I tried to get her to speak at other temples, but everyone was afraid to have her because she was very liberal, and they didn't want to touch her. Herbert Biberman later produced the film *Salt of the Earth*, that won awards in Europe [1954]. We showed the movie in our house. We had nearly a hundred people lining our stairway and looking at the movie. [The next day] a friend of ours called me and said. 'Hadassah, do you know that your husband could be put in jail, and blacklisted, and everything would be cut off from him—he would suffer greatly.' I listened to him for a long time. Then I went and told Sam, and he just smiled—and that was it. We never worried."

The Club was not just a social venue; during World War II they raised money for an ambulance and sponsored a Red Cross unit. Mrs. Baskin remembers:

"I was in charge of the Red Cross group during the war years. We [rolled] bandages, we made layettes for soldiers' babies, we did all kinds of things to help the Red Cross. We invited Eleanor Roosevelt [to speak to the Club], and she came. That was one of the first times I met her. She was a great woman —my role model. One of the women asked, after her talk, 'Mrs. Roosevelt, what could we really do to help the war effort?' And she said, 'Do just what you are doing, but do it the best way you know how.' I thought that was wonderful advice."



**Mrs. Hadassah Baskin with her collection of mementos from the Covenant Club.**

*She is holding a centerpiece used for the Club's 1954 celebration of the Tercentenary of Jews in America. Chicago Jewish Archives.*

Over the years, the role of the Covenant Club changed. Mrs. Baskin recalls that for most of its history, the Club was known as an organization for Jews from Eastern Europe. Membership declined dramatically in the 1970s.

"It used to be primarily a social club for the Russian Jews who came from Europe. The Standard Club was mostly for German Jews, because they kind of looked down on the Russian Jews. We weren't Russian, we were Hungarian, but it doesn't matter. We don't separate like that anymore.

"It closed because, well, I thought the presidents became weaker and weaker. That was one thing. They had less and less interesting happenings, and also one of the main reasons was that older people who were very dedicated members moved away to warmer climates, and the younger people moved to North Shore and outlying districts, and belonged to golf clubs...so the Covenant Club was becoming less and less important, and they were losing money in their food department.

"Sam agreed that it was time to close because they were losing money every day. They were losing thousands of dollars a week because there

*continued on page 12*

## Covenant Club *continued from page 11*

was no attendance. And Sam was then called by the president of the Standard Club to join with them, but he never did. I don't think he had need of a club anymore, because he spent so much of his time reading and studying."

Mrs. Baskin was active in ORT and Hadassah as well as the Covenant Club and Temple Am Shalom. She looked back on her role as a woman in years when roles for women were changing so much:

"I used to read about [the women's movement], but I never had time. I was the wife who provided the atmosphere for my husband because he always brought home such interesting people and he always wanted me to do things. And it wasn't like today. Today people go to the store and they buy ready-made foods. Everybody does that....Even if it's hard, you do it, because you don't want to cook!

"My husband was the leader, and I believed he was the leader, but I identified with some of these women who are still being honored today—like Gloria Steinem. Women are taking the helm, but at a cost. They have it hard, but they feel they have to do it....I've seen a lot of changes. My mother never learned to read and write English, but my father was very highly educated. My father died when I was barely 12, and I was the breadwinner for 6 children. My mother became ill when I was 18. Today, she would have been cured... I would still like to be alive 50 years from now, and see how the world looks, and see what has happened. A lot of things will be different." ❖

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

## *Presidents of the Covenant Club*

<b>Morton A. Mergentheim</b>	<i>1917-1920</i>
<b>Benjamin Samuels</b>	<i>1920-1922</i>
<b>Fred Bernstein</b>	<i>1922-1925</i>
<b>David Labowitch</b>	<i>1925-1927</i>
<b>Joseph F. Grossman</b>	<i>1927-1929</i>
<b>Benjamin I. Morris</b>	<i>1929-1931</i>
<b>Louis H. Harrison</b>	<i>1931-1934</i>
<b>Mark Levy</b>	<i>1934-1935</i>
<b>Dr. Samuel S. Hollender</b>	<i>1935-1937</i>
<b>Bernard Ruekberg</b>	<i>1937-1939</i>
<b>Harry Krinsky</b>	<i>1939-1941</i>
<b>Isadore Goldberg</b>	<i>1941-1944</i>
<b>Frank G. Marshall</b>	<i>1944-1946</i>
<b>Samuel Berke</b>	<i>1946-1948</i>
<b>Isaac Wagner</b>	<i>1948-1950</i>
<b>Joseph H. Braun</b>	<i>1950-1952</i>
<b>Judge Henry L. Burman</b>	<i>1952-1954</i>
<b>Samuel J. Baskin</b>	<i>1954-1956</i>
<b>Herman M. Berman</b>	<i>1956-1958</i>
<b>Philip H. Mitchel</b>	<i>1958-1960</i>
<b>David Jacker</b>	<i>1960-1962</i>
<b>Norman Becker</b>	<i>1962-1964</i>
<b>Solomon E. Harrison</b>	<i>1964-1966</i>
<b>Max Rittenberg</b>	<i>1966-1968</i>
<b>Elmer H. Morris</b>	<i>1968-1970</i>
<b>Judge Benjamin Nelson</b>	<i>1970-1972</i>
<b>Carl H. Borak</b>	<i>1972-1974</i>
<b>Leonard M. Server</b>	<i>1974-1976</i>
<b>Robert Lipschultz</b>	<i>1976-</i>

If any readers of *Chicago Jewish History* can help us complete our list with information on the years 1976 to 1986, please call Joy Kingsolver at (312) 322-1741. Thank you!

*The Covenant Club, 1917-1986* is an exhibition in the Gallery of Chicago Jewish History, on the 6th floor of Spertus Institute, featuring photographs and documents that preserve the memories of the Club.

Gallery hours: M-Th 9-5; Fri 9-3; Sunday 11-4:30 by request at the Library Reference Desk.

Exhibition closes February 14, 2003. For more information call Joy Kingsolver at (312) 322-1741.

# Jewish Clubs & Hebrew Studies at Marshall High

Among its many treasures the Chicago Jewish Archives holds some issues of the *Review*—the yearbook of John Marshall High School, 3250 West Adams Street. They date from the 1920s and 1930s, the school's Golden Age, when it flourished in the heart of a large West Side Jewish population.

In those years an issue of the *Review* was published in January and another in June. The earliest one in the archives is dated June 1926, and it is dedicated to Dr. Louis J. Block, principal emeritus and “Father of Marshall” who retired that year. Among the pictured social and special interest clubs are the JYL (Jewish Youth League) sponsored by Miss Zemon and the Hebrew Club sponsored by Mr. Seligman.

The January 1927 issue shows Mrs. Lebeson and Mr. Halushka as the new sponsors of the JYL.

The next archived *Review*, January 1930, notes the retirement of Mr. Max Batt, sponsor of the school newspaper, *The Marshall News*, and the issue is dedicated to him. There is a picture of a club called the Hadassah Buds. Mr. Halushka and Mr. Seligman remain the sponsors of the JYL and the Hebrew Club, respectively. “Due to the recent uprising against the Jews of Palestine...,” they stage a debate on “A Jewish Standing Army in Palestine.”

By June 1930 the Hadassah Buds had changed their name to “Hadassah Debs” and gained the sponsorship of Mrs. Cohen.

The June 1932 *Review* describes the Debs as “composed of Jewish girls interested in the splendid work done in Palestine....” Among the Debs’ activities that year is “...a presentation of a sparkling comedy, *The Two Goyem*. [sic]

Marshall High was, I have been told, the only Chicago Public School that ever offered Hebrew as a foreign language. It was taught by the legendary Samuel Seligman, sponsor of the Hebrew Club. The Chicago Jewish Archives has the June 1927 issue of the club’s magazine, *R’vivim* (Showers), “Volume 5, a twenty-eight page, printed, Hebrew-English magazine” intended for the Jewish community citywide.

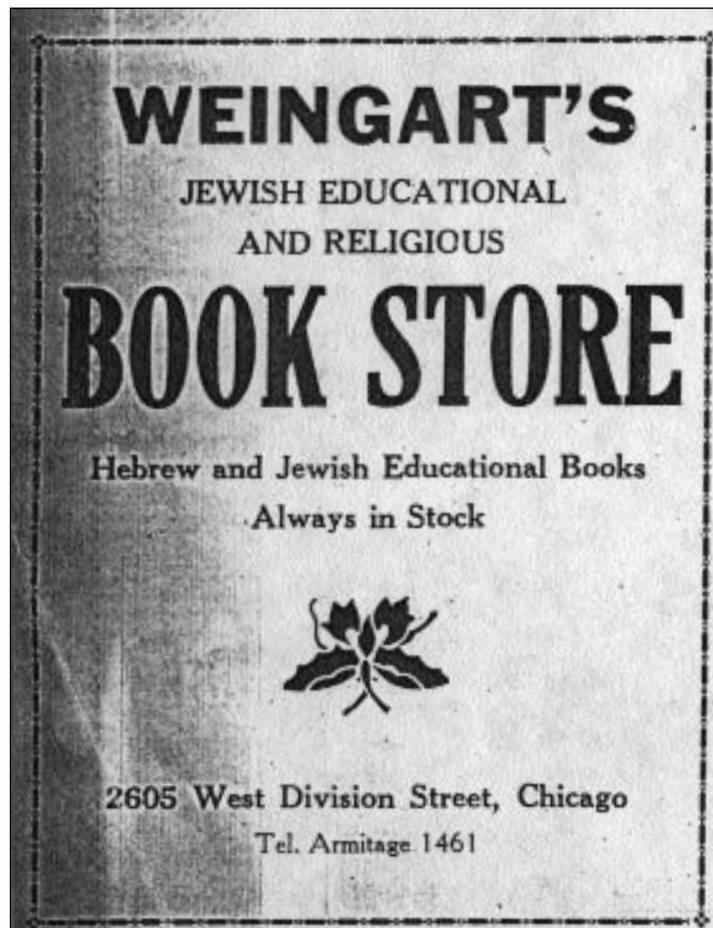
The editor was Joseph Ticktin, with Esther Elman, Sarah Manchis, Milton Goldberg, and Saul Oswianza.

Some of the news items they reported:

**“HABIMA ACTORS IN CHICAGO.** For several weeks Chicago was entertained by the...actors from Moscow...all their plays were given in Hebrew...Their performances have been well attended by Gentiles as well as Jews, and by every lover of drama. Among the plays they have presented were *The Dibuk*, *The Golem*, *Jacob’s Dream*, and *The Eternal Jew*.

**“HAKOAH IN CHICAGO AGAIN.** Tremendous interest has been aroused in the United States by the second appearance of the Hakoah Soccer Team, the all-Jewish team from Vienna, Austria....

**“NEW J.P.I. BUILDING TO OPEN IN JUNE.** The new Jewish People’s Institute building which is being erected on the corner of Douglas Boulevard and St. Louis Ave[nue] will probably open during the month of June, as it is very near completion already. The \$500,000 building will contain every imaginable means for recreation and study. Among other things there will be a gymnasium, swimming tank, library, and even a large auditorium for the convenience of Jews of the Lawndale district....”



Ad in Marshall High School Hebrew Club magazine, *R’vivim*, June 1927. Chicago Jewish Archives.

—Bev Chubot

# *The Great Leap Forward: Local Jews and the New Businesses*

BY IRWIN J. SULOWAY



**Irwin and Elaine Suloway at the CJHS  
25th Anniversary Exhibit Opening Reception.**

*Photograph by David Rigg.*

**E**arly in the last century Jewish immigrants and their sons in Chicago and elsewhere sought to go into business for themselves. Exercising an age-old entrepreneurial instinct, they opened a large number of stores of the sort with which they had earlier been associated in the form of market stalls and peddlers' wagons. Among these were food stores, tailor shops, variety stores, dry goods emporiums, and shops selling all kinds of clothing. The "rags and old iron" man became a resale and scrap dealer. Some of these enterprises flourished and became large businesses; others got along until mid-century or later, when they were generally overtaken by supermarkets, chain stores, and big-box discounters.

Other local Jews, perhaps more adventurous, and certainly more farsighted, latched on to new opportunities afforded by the vast changes in living brought about by the burgeoning industrial innovations of the time. It is in these areas that Jews early carved out an impressive, often commanding presence. In some cases they actually invented their particular business.

The early years of the twentieth century saw Jews here and elsewhere virtually take over the new entertainment industry—first vaudeville, then the movies, radio, and the popular songwriting profession. Such local names as Balaban, Katz, Schoenstadt, and

Paley come immediately to mind; Sarnoff, Warner, Fox, Berlin, and Gershwin "made it" elsewhere.

Many aspects of the nascent automobile industry were hostile toward Jews, but local Jews early came to dominate the auto parts and accessories business. The Warshawsky, Maremont, Grawoig, Sherman, and Poncher families are just the first that come to mind. Another offshoot of the automobile industry was commercial car and bus transportation. Here, local Jews came aboard early and often, dominating the taxi business, car rentals, and the city bus lines. Major Chicago names were Samuels, Hertz, and Weintraub.

The triumph of electricity as *the* means of lighting and the power source for myriad appliances in the early years of the century brought about the need for all sorts of auxiliary connectors, fixtures, and basic supplies which provided yet another new business opportunity. It was eagerly grasped by the likes of Anixters, Dobkins, and Shures. Somewhat later, the names of Abt and Polk appear in the major appliance business.

Services earlier performed in the home moved into the marketplace as domestic help became scarce—and here, too, the Jews were ready. Dry cleaning shops and commercial laundry service were common during the first half of the century, with such Jewish firms as Becker and Abarbanel are only the first recalled.

Taking advantage of new opportunities did not spring forth only in Chicago and only in the twentieth century. It was done earlier by European Jews in countries which liberated Jews from the ghetto and were undergoing industrial change, notably in Germany and England. But the combination of factors mentioned above made for a renaissance in the Chicago of one hundred years ago.

The examples mentioned above merely scratch the surface of this renaissance in a random, and I hope, provocative way. It is a fascinating and important aspect of Chicago Jewish history that cries out for further study and publication. ❖

**IRWIN J. SULOWAY** is Editor Emeritus of CJH. An esteemed journalist and teacher, Dr. Suloway served as our editor from 1982 to 1992, ably assisted by his wife Elaine, typist and proofreader. Both Suloways are members of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society Advisory Board.

# Where There's Smoke...There Could Be Some Jewish Firefighters

BY HOWARD L. BRENNER

**T**he informative and entertaining talks presented at the CJHS meeting on May 5 by Carl Fox and Rabbi Moshe Wolf, on the subject of Chicago's Jewish firefighters, highlighted a phenomenon that we're all familiar with: there are practically no professions or occupations that Jewish men and women do not participate in, no matter how remote from the usual stereotypes.

To elaborate just a bit on this theme, two Jews (who were not included in Mr. Fox's presentation) attained the rank of Battalion Chief in the Chicago Fire Department.

The CFD has consisted of as many as 200 fire companies, each manned by four or five firefighters. Those companies are grouped into battalions—currently twenty-four—each commanded by a Chief.

Samuel Shonfield joined the department in 1918 and served on various companies as Fireman, Lieutenant, and Captain, until he was promoted to Battalion Chief in 1932. He was in command of the 28th Battalion, headquartered at 21st and Hamlin until his retirement in 1942.

Leonard Shankman entered the department in 1946 and served as Firefighter, Lieutenant, and Captain on several South Side companies, until his promotion to Battalion Chief in 1963. He was in charge of the 16th Battalion, at 46th and Cottage Grove. Chief Shankman died of natural causes in 1967 while still a member of the department. (These dates are estimated by people who knew Chief Shankman.

For some reason, his department records are sketchy.)

Carl Fox made mention of the Fire Museum of Greater Chicago, an organization numbering over 600 members, dedicated to memorializing the fire service in the Chicago metro area. As was made abundantly clear on 9/11/01, firefighting is a noble profession. Yet, in spite of Chicago's unique historical connection to fire, it is one of the few cities that does not have a museum commemorating the rich and honorable histories of the various fire departments in the area.

**F**or the past five years, the museum has waged a campaign to obtain a proper facility to exhibit its extensive collection of memorabilia, including seven historic fire trucks of various

sizes and types. These vehicles are currently housed in a Near North Side warehouse, while the balance of the collection (books, photos, badges, helmets, tools, etc.) is on display in an unused portion of St. Gregory's Catholic School, at 46th and Wallace. Father John McNalis, pastor of St. Gregory's Church and assistant CFD Chaplain, is a board member of the museum.

The museum board includes three Jewish members: Jeffrey Stern, Stuart Gootnick, and myself. For further information, please phone me at (847) 948-9900. ❖

**HOWARD L. BRENNER** *is a fire buff. Together with former CFD senior fire alarm operator Ken Little, he has restored vintage department vehicles. Mr. Brenner is a businessman who resides in suburban Riverwoods. He is a member of CJHS.*

## President's Column *continued from page 2*

Director and Past President Norman Schwartz has done an enormous amount of research work for our members and for the public at large. He has gained a solid reputation as a local historian who is constantly at work helping people find their Chicago Jewish roots. Our very special thanks to Norman for his diligent research, his wise counsel, and his tireless efforts in behalf of the Society.

We all miss the many members of CJHS who have passed away or are too ill to participate in our activities. We are glad that the public can see some of these founders and builders of the Society in the photographs on display in our exhibit.

I urge all CJHS members to visit the exhibit. Bring along your friends and introduce them to the many accomplishments of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society in its first quarter-century. I look forward to our golden anniversary exhibit in 2052—when the Chicago Bears play in the Super Bowl, the Cubs and Sox compete in the World Series, the Bulls top the NBA—and *moshiakh* herself is the guest speaker at our opening program. ❖

# 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! Call 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 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
Individual or Senior Family .....	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  
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