



# chicago jewish history

## FIVE CHICAGO JEWISH SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

BY NORMAN D. SCHWARTZ. Edited by Marshall D. Krolick and Irwin Suloway.

Chicago's first sizeable wave of Jewish immigrants occurred following the European "Year of the Revolutions"—1848. These largely unsuccessful attempts at promoting civil rights and a semblance of democracy in European states brought a large number of dissidents to the United States—immigrants seeking the freedom denied them back home. The German-speaking states contributed the largest numbers,

among them many Jews. Chicago attracted a significant number who soon became the dominant element of the local Jewish community. Enjoying their newfound freedoms, they developed a strong patriotism they were soon to exhibit.

When the Civil War broke out in 1860, their patriotism was put to the test. Chicago's German-speaking Jews passed that test by enlisting in the Union army in numbers which were more than respectable.

Of the thousands of Chicagoans who served in the Civil War, some came home, some fell and were buried near the battlefields, and some returned to die of wounds and be buried in Oak Woods Cemetery along with Confederate prisoners of war from Chicago's Camp Douglas.

Some idea of the nature of Chicago Jews who served can be gained from the following brief profiles of five young men interred in Jewish Graceland Cemetery.

This small burial ground at 3919 North Clark Street, a half block south of Irving Park Road, was established in 1851. It is called "Jewish Graceland" to distinguish it from the large Graceland Cemetery just north of Irving Park (which was formerly named Graceland Avenue).

There is no formal monument to Civil War veterans in Jewish Graceland, and we can't be sure

other soldiers of that war aren't resting there. It is fitting that we honor this group of five Jewish immigrants—four from Germany and one from Poland—who willingly risked their lives for a country which offered rights and opportunities unavailable to Jews in their homelands.

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## President's Column



Walter Roth

### THE CENTRAL THEME OF MY PRESENTATION AT THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY

on Wednesday evening, February 9 was heroism. I discussed the heroic efforts by the writers Ben Hecht and Meyer Levin to help rescue European Jewry before, during, and after World War II. (See page 10 for a full report on the program.)

Upon reflection, I find that another theme appeared in the lives of these two authors, namely the American concept of free speech as it applied to obscenity, confidentiality, and blacklisting. Following are First Amendment issues that arose in both their lives:

In 1923, Ben Hecht lost his job with the *Chicago Daily News* because his novel *Fantazius Mallare* was considered to be obscene by the U.S. Post Office. By today's legal standards, the book would not violate the law, and would be protected by the Bill of Rights.

In 1947, Hecht's films, books, and other works were banned in the British Empire. In April of that year, in Palestine, the British Army had hanged four members of the Irgun in Akko Prison, and the Irgun had retaliated by hanging two British soldiers. In May, Hecht placed a fiercely worded ad in major newspapers lauding the Irgun's action. He was blacklisted in Hollywood, and like other shunned writers in the McCarthy era, worked under an assumed name. His First Amendment rights may have been violated by the American movie companies, but he never chose to litigate.

In 1959, Meyer Levin and his publisher, Simon & Schuster, and the movie studio, 20th Century Fox, were sued by Nathan Leopold in Illinois courts to prohibit the marketing of *Compulsion*, the book and movie based on the Loeb and Leopold murder case. Nathan Leopold's main contention was that his right to privacy was violated by Meyer Levin's work. Levin countered that the United States Constitution's guarantee of free speech protected the work.

In my book *Looking Backward: True Stories from Chicago Jewish History*, I discuss the case in detail. On April 15, 1964, Judge Thomas E. Kluczynski ruled in favor of Leopold, writing that both the book and movie "constitute a classic case of an invasion of the rights of privacy." Levin appealed and eventually won. I quote him: "...Costly and protracted, the battle provided a precedent for literary freedom." After Leopold appealed, the case eventually went before the Illinois Supreme Court, where, on May 27, 1970, Judge Daniel P. Ward issued an opinion upholding Levin's victory.

### IN 1978, THE ISSUE OF FREE SPEECH CAME TO SKOKIE.

Tensions erupted when some members of the American Nazi Party applied for a permit to march in suburban Skokie, Illinois, a community with a large Jewish population.

Now, over twenty-five years later, "The March on Skokie Controversy" will be the subject of the program at our next CJHS open meeting on Sunday, April 3. Hope to see you there. ❖



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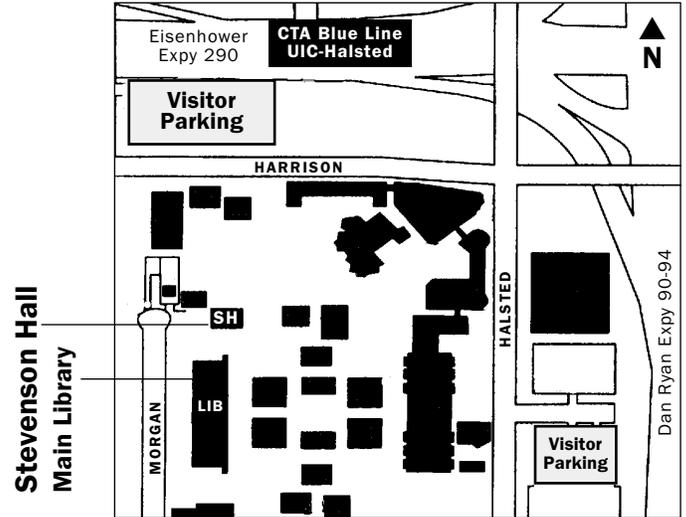
## *Tuesday Morning, March 8: Adele Hast to Speak on “Service to the Community: Chicago Woman’s Aid 1920-1960”*

The UIC Committee on Lectures and Forums will present a talk by Dr. Adele Hast on Tuesday morning, March 8, at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Stevenson Hall, Institute for the Humanities, 901 South Morgan Street. The program begins at 10:30 a.m. following coffee at 10:00 a.m. The event is co-sponsored by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Admission is free and open to the public.

Chicago Woman’s Aid was an active women’s organization for 106 years, from 1882 to 1988. Members saw themselves as a civic organization serving the larger Chicago community as well as the Jewish community. Dr. Hast’s talk will focus on several of the club’s long-range projects. CWA was active in promoting birth control; members worked in the public schools, especially in matters of health and well being. They became involved in civic reform in Chicago.

Adele Hast is scholar-in-residence at The Newberry Library, past president of CJHS, and editor, with Rima Lunin Schultz, of *Women Building Chicago, 1790-1990: A Biographical Dictionary*.

For information phone Pat Bakunas at UIC (312) 996-2742.

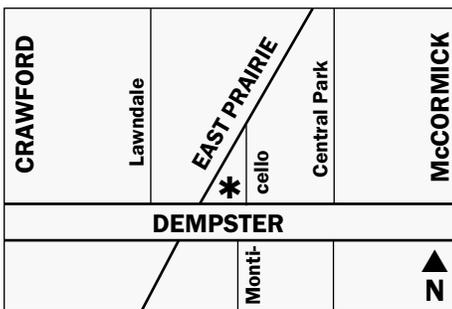


### **Visitor Parking:**

Northeast corner of Morgan and Harrison streets OR Halsted Street north of Taylor. Parking rate for 2.5 hours is \$5.25; for 2.5–3.5 hours \$6.50.

### **Public Transportation:**

Blue Line to UIC-Halsted station. Use Morgan Street exit. From downtown, #7 and #60 buses stop on Harrison at Morgan.



## **CJHS Open Meeting—Sunday, April 3: “The March on Skokie Controversy— A Twenty-Five Year First Amendment Perspective” Speaker: Sheldon H. Nahmod**

The next CJHS open meeting will be held on Sunday, April 3, at Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob Synagogue, 8825 East Prairie Road, Skokie. Sheldon H. Nahmod, Distinguished Professor of Law at Chicago-Kent College of Law, will make the featured presentation. A specialist in constitutional and civil rights law, Prof. Nahmod is the author of several books and numerous law review articles. He has argued many cases before the United States Supreme Court and the First, Seventh, and Tenth Circuit Courts of Appeal.

The featured talk will be preceded by a brief history of Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob Synagogue by its president, Lewis Saltzman.

The program will begin at 2:00 p.m. following a social hour with refreshments at 1:00 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public. Parking is available in the SVAJ lot, the adjoining public lot, and on the street. For information phone the Society office at (312) 663-5634.

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

Dr. & Mrs. Paul Arnold  
Zelda Bachrach  
Norman & Corrine Eichner  
Lynn Frackman  
Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Herman  
Mr. & Mrs. Philip Kovalsky  
Esther Mann  
The Milken Archives  
Seymour Shefsky  
Maurice & Donna Steiner  
Mr. & Mrs. Burton Zeiger

## FIVE CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

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**SIMON BOURNSTINE** (some records spelled his name Bursint or Bernstein) was born in Warsaw, Poland on June 7, 1846, although his grave marker is dated January 7, 1844. He immigrated to the United States in 1855 and was naturalized. He could read, write, and speak English.

Simon enlisted as a private in the 22nd Regiment of the Ohio Volunteer Infantry on August 20, 1861, in Company C, and later transferred to Company B. Army records say he was 22, but he couldn't have been more than a teenager when he enlisted.

His regiment served at Fort Donelson, Shiloh, and Trenton, Tennessee; Corinth, Mississippi; and Little Rock, Arkansas. There are papers about him indicating that he was sick at Vicksburg, Mississippi around June 1863, with "chills and fever, resulting in rheumatism." His military discharge was dated August 28, 1865, and his record shows "distinguished service."

Simon married Taubina Rosenow in Chicago on October 28, 1890. The ceremony was conducted by Reverend Aron J. Messing, rabbi at Congregation B'nai Sholom. Simon and Taubina had one child, Charles.

(An oral history of Charles Bournstine, who died on November 13, 1989, is in the Chicago Jewish Archives, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies.)

According to various papers, including census tracts, city directories, and the death certificate, Simon worked in several trades: he was a peddler, a merchant in the periodical business, and a confectioner. His last residence was at 4110 South Wentworth Avenue. Simon Bournstine died in Chicago on April 13, 1910. The funeral home was Furth & Co. His death notice states that he was a member of Grant Post 28 of the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic).



**HERMAN BURGHEIM** was born on November 22, 1831 in Germany. He enlisted as a private in the 82nd Illinois Infantry Regiment on August 14, 1862. It was called the "Second Hecker Regiment" in honor of its first colonel, Frederick Hecker. The regiment was composed almost exclusively of German Chicagoans.

Herman's unit, Company C, was the only all-Jewish unit to fight in the Civil War. It had been raised in August 1862 as a result of a meeting held by Ramah Lodge of the B'nai B'rith at the Concordia Club on



Dearborn Street. The 82nd Illinois had an impressive history, including service at Gettysburg and in the Atlanta Campaign, including the March to the Sea.

In 1864, "he contracted inflammatory rheumatism caused by exposure and marching through swamps," but served until the war's end.

After his discharge on June 9, 1865, Herman applied for citizenship. He was naturalized on December 29, 1865 in the Circuit Court of Bureau County, Illinois. He received a disability pension for his army service. He spent much of his later years in the clothing business on Clark Street in downtown Chicago, but earlier had been in hats and caps, a tailor, an insurance agent, and even a policeman (in 1892).

His first wife was Mina Bamberg. The 1880 census lists the following children: Bertha, Rachel, Gustav, Fannie, Harry, and Carrie. Mina died in 1892, and he married Leonore Goldman on June 12, 1894. Herman Burgheim died in Chicago on June 1, 1899. The undertaker was Furth & Co.

**HERMAN J. EPHRAIM** was born in Germany on June 12, 1845. His given name was spelled in various ways: Hirman, Heiman, Hinman, and Hyman. At the age of 19, he enlisted as a private in Company H of the 23rd Infantry Illinois Volunteers on March 21, 1865.

The 23rd Illinois, popularly referred to by the misnomer "Irish Brigade," was formed by a man named Mulligan immediately upon the opening of hostilities at Fort Sumter. It was captured as a unit at Lexington, Missouri in 1861, but was later reorganized, and participated in the pursuit of Lee's army until the surrender at Appomattox Court House in April, 1865.

He was mustered out on July 24, after five months of service. He was naturalized as a citizen on October 28, 1873.

Herman Ephraim was married twice. His first wife was Lena Lavanthal, who died on October 6, 1885 in Grand Forks, North Dakota. It appears from the probate records that they had no children, and that Ephraim's mother and brothers resided in Grand Forks.

His second marriage, to Rachel (Rae) Jacobs, was performed in Chicago on February 12, 1888, by Reverend B. Cohn, minister of Congregation B'nai Sholom; the certificate was witnessed by Aron J. Messing, minister. Rae Burgheim died on October 11, 1917. Her last pension check as a veteran's widow was in the amount of twelve dollars. Herman's pension had been terminated upon his death on January 31, 1899. City directories indicate that he was in the clothing business, and also worked as a tailor.

**THEODORE HIRSCH** (listed as T. Hirsch). It was difficult to obtain much information about this man, since he was a Confederate soldier. However, the librarian at the Louisiana State Archives Library in Baton Rouge was most helpful in



documenting Hirsch's brief life in America.

Theodore Hirsch, who had been born in Germany, immigrated to the United States in the early 1860s. He settled in Clinton, Louisiana, where his older brother had established a dry goods store. There, on August 1, 1864, he enlisted for the period of the war as a private in Holmes' Light Battery, Louisiana Artillery. (Its captain, Eugene H. Holmes, died on April 9, 1865, the same day Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox.)

Hirsch was captured by Union troops at Woodville, Mississippi on October 6, 1864, after he had served for less than three months. In November, he was sent north from Vicksburg through Cairo, Illinois to

Camp Douglas, a prisoner of war camp on the South Side of Chicago (at 38th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue). He died a little over a month after arrival, on December 12, 1864.

Prisoners of war who died at Camp Douglas were generally buried in Oak Woods Cemetery (1035 East 67th Street, Chicago). However, someone recognized that Theodore Hirsch was Jewish, and he was buried in Jewish Graceland. A "Register of the Range of Adults" at the cemetery shows an entry #17: "Theodore Hirsch on Dec. 15, 1864. Prisoner Camp Douglas." There is no other entry in any other record to show the exact location of his interment, and no grave marker was found when an inventory was taken of the cemetery. He may have been buried in an unmarked grave as were his non-Jewish compatriots at Oak Woods.

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**Grave markers, Jewish Graceland. From lower left: Simon Bournstine, Herman Burgheim, Herman J. Ephraim, and Marcus M. Spiegel.**

*Photographs by Norman D. Schwartz.*

# Chicago-Born Concert Pianist Gitta Gradova: A Sensitive Memoir by Her Psychologist Son



*When the Music Stopped: Discovering My Mother*, by Thomas J. Cottle (State University of New York Press, 2004), is a book I recommend to readers of *CJH*.

Thomas Cottle is a sociologist and a clinical psychologist. He is Professor of Education at Boston University. Although he is the author of twenty-five books and hundreds of magazine articles, he delayed writing an autobiography, because in it he would have to confront, explore, and try to resolve his difficult relationship with his late mother.

**G**ertrude Weinstock was born in Chicago in 1904, the last of seven and the only American-born child of Joseph and Sophie (Sonya) Weinstock. “She took a stage name, Gitta Gradova (GRA-dova), the feminine version of the name Gradovsky her father assumed when, after leaving the rabbinate in Russia, he toured Europe and Asia, and eventually came to the United States as founder and actor of a Yiddish theater company in Chicago...”

Sophie Weinstock and the older daughters were actors in Joseph’s troupe. Gitta’s own talents for comic storytelling and mimicry were certainly home-grown.

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**From top left: Gitta, photographed on January 25, 1913, at age nine; at age 20; with Vladimir Horowitz; Nathan Milstein costumed as Hitler and Gitta as Maestro Arturo Toscanini; Dr. Maurice H. Cottle, Gitta, son Tommy, age 16, and daughter Judy, age 19. Courtesy of Thomas J. Cottle.**

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Her formal musical training in Chicago started at age six, and she was concertizing before she reached thirteen. Then her father determined that she had absorbed all the musical teaching our city had to offer, and sent her, alone, to New York City for further study. She went to live at the home of the Adlers, the “royal family” of Jewish actors. In exchange, young Luther Adler came to stay with the Weinstocks in Chicago. Through her father’s friend Sergei Prokofiev she met Sergei Rachmaninoff, who influenced her greatly. In 1923, at age nineteen, she made her New York debut at Town Hall. It was a great, career-launching success.

Gitta and Maurice Cottle were married in 1926. He was born in London, the oldest of seven children of a ne’er-do-well tailor and his wife, both from small towns in Polish Galicia. By age twelve Maurice was the breadwinner. The family immigrated to Chicago’s Humboldt Park neighborhood (the Weinstocks had settled in Lawndale). A boy violinist, intelligent and resourceful, he was to become Dr. Maurice Cottle, the eminent rhinologist at Illinois Masonic Hospital.

Young Tommy was a keen observer of the many world-famous figures who were guests in the elegant, three-story Cottle home at West 530 Hawthorne Place—from singer Marian Anderson to impresario Harry Zelzer. Dr. Cottle played the violin in amateur chamber music groups that regularly gathered there.

Gitta retired from the concert stage when her children were young. She was increasingly plagued by fear of travel, stage fright, headaches, and depression. Tom became her adversary. In this wise and generous memoir, published twenty years after her death, he at last makes peace with his mother. —*Bev Chubot*

## FIVE CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

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**MARCUS M. SPIEGEL** was born in Abenheim, Germany in 1829, the son of Rabbi Moses and Regina Spiegel. He came to America in 1849, and first settled in New York City. He moved from there to Uniontown, Ohio, and then to Chicago, where he arrived in 1853 with his wife, Caroline F. Hamlin, a non-Jew. She was converted to Judaism in the first ceremony of its kind in Chicago.

The couple had five children: Clara, Hamlin, Hattie, Lizzie, and Moses. Marcus Spiegel was among the founders of the Hebrew Benevolent Society in Chicago, with which he was actively identified until moving to East Liberty, Ohio. There he engaged in the dry goods business.

When the Civil War broke out, he raised a company of the 67th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and was made its captain. He served through various campaigns along the Mississippi River in 1862 and 1863, until July 12, 1863, when, near Jackson, Mississippi, he was wounded in the leg by an artillery shell. He was sent home as disabled. Although compelled to use crutches, he insisted on returning to active service.

For bravery on the battlefield, Marcus Spiegel was promoted to the rank of colonel of the 120th Ohio Infantry. On May 3, 1864, while on the Red River expedition to reinforce General Banks, he was mortally wounded, and died the next day.

It is interesting that though Marcus Spiegel was in business in Ohio and raised his military company there, his widow chose to bury him in Chicago, where she lived until her death in 1901. She lies next to him in Jewish Graceland. ❖

**NORMAN D. SCHWARTZ** is past president of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. He is co-author, with Bea Kraus, of *A WALK TO SHUL: Chicago Synagogues of Lawndale and Stops on the Way*, published by the Society.

**MARSHALL D. KROLICK** is an attorney, a distinguished Civil War historian, and a member of the CJHS Board of Directors.

**IRWIN SULOWAY** is an esteemed educator, a member of the CJHS Advisory Board, and editor emeritus of Chicago Jewish History.



# FRANKIE FOSTER—DID HE REALLY MURDER JAKE LINGLE?

BY WALTER ROTH

Michael Karsen, a member of CJHS and a noted Chicago genealogist, recently sent me an article, “My uncle, the gangster,” written by his relative, Ira Eisenberg, and published in the *San Jose Mercury News* on July 4, 1993. My interest was immediately caught by the article’s opening paragraph:

“The events occurred more than six decades ago, yet my 80 year-old mother remembers them as if they happened only yesterday. She was just a teen-ager in June 1930, living on Chicago’s North Side and on her way home from school with some friends. ‘We passed a newsstand and I saw the headline,’ Mom recalls. ‘It said, “Frankie Foster Indicted For Murder.” I just left my girlfriends standing there and ran the rest of the way home.’”

“Frankie Foster was my mother’s older brother, the mysterious Uncle Frank I never knew, and about whom members of my family spoke only rarely and in cryptic terms. He had just been accused of a sensational crime, one that would expose Chicago’s corrupt underbelly and shake up the city’s power structure, the killing of *Chicago Tribune* reporter Jake Lingle.”

Over the years, our Society quarterly has carried my stories about colorful Chicago Jewish underworld characters such as Samuel “Nails” Morton and the Miller brothers. I knew of the Lingle murder and the mysteries surrounding it, but this was the first time I ever heard that Frankie Foster, a Jew, was the alleged killer. Here is what my research disclosed.

**A**lfred “Jake” Lingle was a leg man for the *Tribune*. That is, he was a street reporter who phoned his information to a rewrite man at the newspaper office, who then shaped it into a story for publication. (It was said of Lingle that he could not spell “cat”—but in those days a street reporter’s most valuable assets were his contacts and confidentiality, not his writing skills.)

While Lingle earned a respectable weekly salary of sixty-five dollars, he had a chauffeured limo, lived in a fancy apartment, and spent a great deal of money on



Jake Lingle

the ponies. Over the years he established contacts with the gangs that controlled liquor distribution, gambling, prostitution, and other illegal activities thriving here in the 1920s—with Al Capone, the boss of the South Side gang, and with “Hymie” Weiss and “Bugs” Moran, the successors to Dion O’Banion as leaders of the North Side gang. Lingle also remained close to his childhood friend, Chicago’s police chief, William P. Russell.

Since the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in 1929, when seven of Moran’s men were gunned down in a North Clark Street garage (allegedly by Capone’s men disguised as policemen), rumors had circulated about Jake Lingle—that he owed a great deal of money to Capone for his gambling losses, and that he had attempted to extort money from Moran, who wanted to reopen his Sheridan Club, a large North Side gambling establishment closed by the police in a crackdown after the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre.

Enter Frankie Foster. He had been a minor figure in Dion O’Banion’s gang, was a friend of “Nails” Morton, and now seemed to be working for Moran. In fact, it was originally thought that Foster was one of the victims of the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre, but the body identified as his turned out to be someone else.

**O**n the morning of June 9, 1930, Jake Lingle, a cigar in his mouth and a *Racing Form* under his arm, descended into the Randolph Street pedestrian underpass to catch an Illinois Central train to Washington Park racetrack. As he walked through the tunnel, a man who had been trailing him pulled out a revolver and shot him fatally in the head. Two persons dressed as Catholic priests stepped between the fleeing gunman and those pursuing him. Later it was said the “priests” must have been part of the murder plot.

The murder provoked sensational headlines in the *Tribune*. The paper advertised “rewards totaling \$55,725 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the slayer of Alfred Lingle.” On the day of his funeral, flags flew at half staff. Brass bands and paraders accompanied the hearse down Michigan Avenue. But it was soon revealed that great amounts of money had been found on Lingle’s body and in his safes, and that he had been receiving “favors” from underworld elements. The *Tribune* was humiliated.

The Chicago police suspected Frankie Foster of Lingle’s murder. Investigation of the ownership of the murder weapon, a 38-caliber revolver left at the scene,

was traced to a Diversey Parkway retailer who had provided the machine guns used in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The serial number on the gun, which had been partially filed off, led to Foster. He had been the purchaser of the weapon a number of years earlier. An order was issued for his arrest, but Frankie had vanished. However, he was soon picked up in Los Angeles and extradited to Chicago, where he was held.

After a hearing on the evidence, he was released. The police also arrested Ted Newberry, because he was with Foster when he purchased the murder weapon, and was involved in some of the same ventures as Frankie. Newberry was also released. Julian "Potatoes" Kaufman, one of the owners of the Sheridan Club, was arrested on the theory that he sought revenge against Lingle for his refusal to help in reopening the club. Another theory surfaced, that a St. Louis organization had, for whatever reason, plotted the murder. Throughout the summer the police arrested and released gang members.

Al Capone, who had suffered most from the post-St. Valentine's Day police crackdown, decided that somebody had to pay for the Lingle killing. Moran, Kaufman, Newberry, and the pimp Jack Zuta were Capone's first targets. (The latter three were Jewish.)

Zuta was the first to go, gunned down on August 1, 1930, at a summer resort near Delafield, Wisconsin; Newberry was killed a little while later. (Kaufman fled to New York, where he successfully ran a wire service, and was involved in gambling and prostitution. He became connected with the mob's move to the West, led by "Bugsy" Siegel and Meyer Lansky. Moran was left powerless in Chicago, and operated as a small-time thief until his natural death.)

Finally, as one source theorized, Capone, who never liked to turn a gang member over to the police, but preferred to do his own executions, turned in "the man who killed Lingle," Leo Vincent Brothers, from St. Louis. He was sentenced to 14 years, and was paroled eight years later; the sentence was light because the jury believed he was "taking the fall" for someone else.

**B**ut what of Frankie Foster? He had, by now, reportedly gone to New York, and would soon be off to Nevada. His recorded encounters with the law were infrequent after the Lingle affair. An article in the *Chicago Tribune* on April 13, 1932 was headlined "Frankie Foster Guilty of Vagrancy in California." He appears to have jumped bail on the charge, because the next day, the *Tribune* headlined: "Frankie Foster Gets Six Months and a Fine of \$500" for his new misdeed.

On April 24, 1938, the *New York Times* reported



**Frankie Foster**

that Frankie Foster had been arrested by Federal agents in Reno, Nevada for a hold-up, with an accomplice, in New York City. After a four day hearing, the Nevada judge refused to extradite Foster, and released him. The judge believed the witnesses who testified that Foster and his wife Dorothy had not left Reno "since arriving in Nevada in 1935." It appears

to have been the last time that Foster's name made the papers in connection with a crime. His family believes he spent the rest of his life working in gambling establishments in Nevada and California. He appears to have maintained contact with some relatives. He died on April 23, 1967 in North Hollywood, California.

**F**rankie's early life was fairly typical of the poor East European Jewish immigrants who flocked to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His family, named Frost, was from Romania. While other members of the family went to England, Frankie's parents came to America and settled on the West Side of Chicago. Frankie was the oldest of eight children—two boys and six girls. He was nineteen when his father died, and it fell on him to support the family. He quit school and went to work as a bookkeeper for a neighborhood food merchant. But the money he earned there was apparently insufficient to support the large family, and he joined the "business" of Dion O'Banion, who had already seen the the potential profit in the transport and sale of liquor in view of the new Prohibition laws. O'Banion's gang had a number of Jewish members.

As Eisenberg recalls in his article, and several other of Foster's nephews and nieces confirm, Frankie supported his family, and "on Friday nights would bring some of his cronies for dinner, and leave behind the money his mother and three youngest sisters required for the coming week."

Research indicates that Frankie made his living in illegal activities—but not as a hit man for Capone or Moran. While Chicago Jews were members of gangs, they were not known to be killers for hire (at least not in Chicago). But the most important fact, of course, is that Frankie Foster was released after a hearing because there was insufficient evidence to hold him for the murder of Jake Lingle. American law holds that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. ❖



**Ben Hecht (1894-1964).**  
David S. Wyman Institute:  
souvenir folder cover;  
“Ben Hecht Way  
Street-Naming Ceremony,”  
June 29, 2004.

In his autobiography, *A Child of the Century* (1954), Ben Hecht wrote: “I have lived in other cities but have been inside only one. I knew Chicago’s thirty-two feet of intestines. Only newspapermen achieve this bug-in-a-rug citizenship.”

These sentiments caused Hecht’s widow, Rose, to donate his papers to Chicago’s Newberry Library. The large collection was recently catalogued, and it can now be more easily examined by scholars and researchers.

West Walton Street, between Dearborn and Clark, in front of The Newberry Library, was designated by the City Council as “Honorary Ben Hecht Way.” ❖

## February 9: Newberry Library/CJHS Program Looked Back at Two Heroic Writers

On Wednesday evening, February 9, elegant Ruggles Hall at The Newberry Library was filled to near-capacity, despite the windy, snowy weather outside. The hardy audience was there for CJHS President Walter Roth’s talk, “Looking Back at Two Heroic Chicago Writers: Ben Hecht and Meyer Levin.” The program began promptly at 6:00 p.m., following a social with refreshments.

Past President Adele Hast, scholar-in-residence at Newberry, introduced Mr. Roth, noting that he is a practicing attorney who has been president of CJHS since 1988, and that he has written over forty articles for our quarterly, many of them collected in his anthology, *Looking Backward: True Stories from Chicago’s Jewish Past*. Adele Hast and Bev Chubat read excerpts from the book as part of the program.

Both Ben Hecht and Meyer Levin heroically risked their considerable careers for their ideals—Hecht to combat anti-Semitism and help save the Jews of Europe, Levin to present the Holocaust not as a universal tragedy—as it was shown to be in “The Diary of Anne Frank” stage play and movie—but as a uniquely Jewish tragedy perpetrated by the Nazis.

**BEN HECHT** was born in 1894 in New York City, to Russian Jewish immigrants. The family moved to Racine, Wisconsin in 1897.

In 1910, Hecht enrolled at the University of Wisconsin—and stayed for three days. He came to Chicago and began working as a newspaperman. He married Marie Armstrong. By 1920, the editor of the *Chicago Daily News* had given him a prestigious daily column, “1001 Afternoons in Chicago.” But when his novel, *Fantazius Mallare*, was held to be obscene by the US Post Office, he was fired. He tried publishing his own paper, the *Chicago Literary Times*, but it failed.

In 1924, Hecht divorced Marie and moved to New York with his new wife, Rose Coyler. There he collaborated with his friend Charles MacArthur, a former *Chicago Tribune* reporter, in writing for the stage. Their play, “The Front Page,” produced in 1928, was a smash hit.



**Meyer Levin (1905-1981).**  
*The Sentinel: History of  
Chicago Jewry 1911-1960.*

Encouraged by writer Herman Mankiewicz, Hecht went to Hollywood. He is credited with over seventy screenplays, and is known to have contributed uncredited writing to hundreds of films.

In 1940, already battling anti-Semitism, Hecht came under the influence of Peter Bergson and the Revisionist Zionists. For them he wrote the stirring pageant, “We Will Never Die,” in 1943.

After the war, he wrote a second Zionist pageant, “A Flag is Born.” In response to a newspaper ad he wrote attacking British policy in Palestine, his films were banned in the British Empire, and he was black-listed in Hollywood.

In 1948, after the Israeli government destroyed the ship “Altalena,” in which the *Irgun* was attempting to bring arms into Israel during a cease-fire, Hecht broke with the Zionist movement. He wrote *Perfidy*, a book excoriating Israel’s leaders.

**M**MEYER LEVIN was born in 1905, in Chicago, to Jewish parents living on the Near West Side. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 1924, the same year his fellow students, Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, murdered Bobby Franks.

Levin worked for the *Chicago Daily News* that year, hoping, unsuccessfully, to follow in Hecht's footsteps. He traveled to Europe, studied art in Paris with Fernand Leger, and took his first trip to Palestine.

Back in Chicago, he resumed newspaper reporting and worked as a cultural director at the JPI. He took a second trip to Palestine, working for six months at Kibbutz Yagur. He began writing novels, many on Jewish themes. In 1933, he married Mabel Schamp.

In 1937 he published *The Old Bunch*, a realistic saga of first and second generation Jews from the West Side. Although the book is over nine hundred pages long, and contains many characters, it is very fast-paced. The final section is set at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. There is a fascinating description of the Jewish Day pageant, *The Romance of A People*.

World events drove Levin back to journalism. He went to Spain to cover the Civil War. In 1941 he joined the U.S. Office of War Information as a writer-director-producer. His marriage to Mabel ended in divorce.

In 1945 he became a correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and the Overseas News Agency. He was one of the first reporters to enter Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps, and he gave his horrified eyewitness account to the world.

Levin worked with the *Haganah* in bringing Jews to Palestine, and documented their efforts on film in *The Illegals* and *Voyage of the Unafraid*.

In 1948 he married Tereska Torres, daughter of sculptor Marek Szwarc, in Paris. From Tereska he first learned of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, published in French. He contacted Otto Frank, and believed that he had secured the right to adapt his daughter's story—a Jewish story—for the stage. But another treatment, with a universal message, was staged. Levin was convinced that a conspiracy existed to delete the Jewish elements of the diary. Years of costly legal battles for production rights followed, in vain.

To help cover his legal expenses, Levin conceived of writing a blockbuster novel based on the Loeb-Leopold case. This plan provoked its own lengthy court battles.

His "Jewish" version of *The Diary* was kept off the stage, even in Israel, where he settled and continued to write novels until his death in 1981, in Jerusalem. It is no wonder that two of Meyer Levin's later books were titled *The Fanatic* (1963) and *The Obsession* (1963). ❖

## CJHS Seeks Memoirs of Jewish Chicagoans

Our Society quarterly, *Chicago Jewish History*, occasionally publishes memoirs of individual Chicagoans. These memoirs give us the opportunity to present history in its narrowest contours. A story you might recall from your childhood, or from some unusual situation in which you found yourself, often prompts other people's memories to flow as well.

The memoirs we seek are refined versions of the stories you may tell at family gatherings or when you and old friends get together. We encourage you to record what you remember from your first-hand experiences. Memories are most convincing when they are most personal. Much of the rest of the work we publish in *CJH* focuses on broad themes, famous individuals, and notable events. Memoirs allow us to focus on the history that most of us actually lived.

Keep in mind that your manuscript should be no longer than six double spaced pages, and preferably should be transmitted to us via e-mail. For those of you without access to computer technology, good old paper will work just fine! We attempt to comment on every memoir submitted, but are not always able to do so, and cannot guarantee publication of any work.

Be sure to include a return address and phone number with your submission. Please e-mail submissions to our editor at **Bevchub@aol.com** or send to Bev Chubat, 415 West Fullerton Parkway, #1102, Chicago, IL 60614-2842. ❖

*Note: Our regular feature, "From The Chicago Jewish Archives" by Joy Kingsolver, will return in the spring issue.*

### AUTHOR QUERY RE: ALLAN SHERMAN

Allan Sherman, a Chicago native, became a comedy sensation in the early 1960s with the appearance of "My Son, The Folk Singer," a collection of Jewish parodies of folk songs. For a biography of Sherman, author Mark Cohen invites those who knew Sherman or Sherman's family to contact him at **cohenullen@mchispeed.net**.

Cohen wrote the liner notes to a six-CD boxed set of Sherman's complete works, to be released this winter. He is also the author of a history, *Last Century of a Sephardic Community*. Cohen's articles have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Daily News*, *Midstream*, and *Journal of Jewish Studies*.

Your  
Picture

Your Name

# 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 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 invite you to take part. Please contact any of the committee chairpersons listed here.

### ■ Membership Committee

Dr. Rachele Gold  
(773) 338-6975 and  
Mark Mandle  
(773) 929-2853, Co-Chairs

### ■ Oral History Committee

Dr. N. Sue Weiler, Chair  
(312) 922-2294

### ■ Program Committee

Charles Bernstein, Chair  
(773) 324-6362

### ■ Tour Committee

Leah Axelrod, Chair  
(847) 432-7003

## 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/Family .....	50
Individual/Senior Family .....	35
Synagogue/Organization.....	25
Senior Individual/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.

## [www.chicagojewishhistory.org](http://www.chicagojewishhistory.org)

The Society is now online! Browse our Web site for information about our upcoming programs. Read past issues of our quarterly journal.

Discover links to many interesting Jewish sites. Use the printable membership application. We welcome your inquiries and comments.

**e-mail: [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org)**

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