



# chicago jewish history

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John Marshall High School, 3250 West Adams Street, c. 1950. *Marshall Review*.

## *Sunday, June 4—Save the Date! Four Speakers to Reminisce about Jewish Life at Marshall High School*

“The Jews of Marshall High School” will be the subject of the next open meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, on Sunday, June 4, at the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, 3003 West Touhy Avenue, Chicago. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m. following a social hour and refreshments at 1:00 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public. For information call the Society office at (312) 663-5634.

This meeting marks the second in a series of “high school reunions” held by the Society to commemorate the Jewish contributions to various Chicago high schools when their communities were mainly Jewish. (Roosevelt High in Albany Park was our first subject.)

Four notable alumni will reminisce about life at Marshall from the late 1930s to the late 1950s:

- **Seymour H. Persky**, a member of the Marshall class of June 1940, is a lawyer, real estate developer, patron of the arts, philanthropist and Jewish community leader. He will discuss the period of the late 1930s and early 1940s. After serving with the U.S. Air Force in World War II, Mr. Persky received his A.A. *magna cum laude* from City College, a B.A. from Roosevelt University, and a J.D. from the DePaul University College of Law. Mr. Persky is a longtime member of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

*continued on page 3*

## President's Column



Walter Roth

### ALEX KOTLOWITZ AND ED SADLOWSKI.

Kotlowitz is a Jewish reporter and essayist who was born in New York City and relocated to Chicago almost twenty years ago. He is best known for his prize-winning first book, *There are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America* (1991), chronicling two years in the lives of two boys struggling to survive in Chicago's grim Henry Horner Homes, a public housing project.

His second book, *The Other Side of the River: A Story of Two Towns, a Death and America's Dilemma* (1998), deals with two southwest Michigan towns that are separated by the St. Joseph River—Benton Harbor is predominantly black and impoverished. St. Joseph is mostly white and prosperous. When a black teenage boy from Benton Harbor is found dead in the river, all the tensions and misperceptions of the two communities come to the surface.

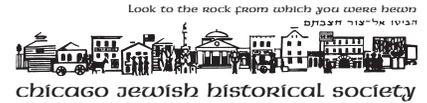
*Never A City So Real: A Walk in Chicago* (2004) is Kotlowitz's collection of stories about the neighborhoods of his adopted hometown. He has sought out local people who are struggling to come to terms with their lives as outsiders in the city's power structure.

I was particularly interested in one of the stories, "Oil Can Eddie," about Edward Sadlowski, a steelworker who was known to me from his work in the union movement. In my role as an attorney, I had met Ed years ago when we were on opposite sides of labor negotiations involving a client of mine.

"Oil Can Eddie" was the nickname he was given, when, as a young man in the steel mill, his job was oiling machines (easy work compared to the terrible heat and danger of the blast furnace). He rose quickly in the union and ran for president of the Steelworkers International in 1976, gaining over 40% of the vote. Since then, the American steel industry has been decimated, and Ed has retired. The Southeast Side of Chicago, Ed's lifelong home, is filled with deserted mills and unemployed steelworkers.

For years, he has organized and spoken at the annual commemorations of the "Memorial Day Massacre" of 1938 at Republic Steel. After he retired, Ed taught Labor History for a number of years at an Indiana University extension. He told me that one of the texts he used in his class was Meyer Levin's novel *Citizens*, about the lives of the strikers. Ed, who is very well-read, was also acquainted with other books by Levin, which, of course, found favor in my eyes. Sadlowski now conducts labor history bus tours for young workers. Kotlowitz went along on one and presents an insightful report.

I want to thank my friend, Dr. Irving Cutler, the well-known geographer, historian and founding Board member of our Society, for recommending *Never A City So Real* to me. I urge our members to read the book and to sign up for Irv's "South Side Jewish Roots" Bus Tour on Sunday afternoon, August 20. Don't delay—his tour is sure to sell out. See the enclosed flyer for details. ❖



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### Chicago Jewish History

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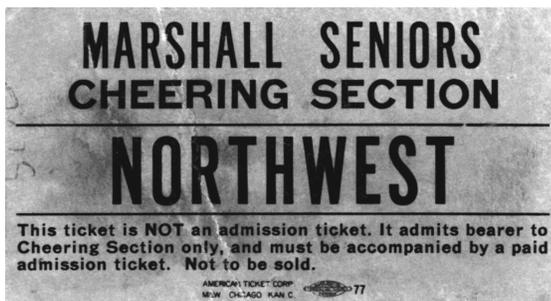
Burt Robin, Walter Roth, Norman Schwartz, and Milton Shulman

*Send all submissions to:*

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## June 4 Meeting *continued from page 1*

- **Izzie Acker**, class of January 1942, is a retired businessman residing in suburban Morton Grove. He was a member of the famed Marshall Juniors (height: five feet, eight inches and under) basketball team that won ninety-eight straight games in the early 1940s. He will share memories of the late 1930s and early 1940s.
- **Irv Bemoras**, class of January 1949, will discuss his and Marshall's glory days in the late 1940s. He led the Marshall Seniors (height: over five feet, eight inches) to the City of Chicago High School Senior Basketball Championship and a trip downstate to the "Sweet Sixteen" state championship tournament in 1948. The pride of the Chicago Jewish community, Mr. Bemoras was later a star basketball player for the University of Illinois, and also played briefly in the National Basketball Association. He received a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Illinois. He is an insurance broker and resides in Buffalo Grove.
- **Ronnie Orzoff Robbins**, class of June 1950, was feature editor of the *Marshall News*. She earned a B.A. from Roosevelt University and a J.D. from the DePaul University College of Law. The first woman in her Marshall class to go to law school directly out of high school and college without an intervening career, Mrs. Robbins practiced law for many years with her late husband, Laurence. She will conclude the trip down memory lane with recollections of the last years of a significant Jewish presence at Marshall, and the subsequent exodus of the Jewish community from the West Side during the late 1950s. She resides in Highland Park. ❖



**Ticket, Chicago High School Basketball Championship Game, International Amphitheater, 1948.**  
Public League Champion Marshall Seniors defeated Catholic League Champion St. Patrick Seniors.

## Tuesday Evening, June 27 *Peter Ascoli to Speak on His Biography of Julius Rosenwald at the Newberry Library*

Historian Peter M. Ascoli will speak at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, on Tuesday, June 27 at 6:00 p.m. in a "Meet the Author" program co-sponsored by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Admission is free and no reservation is required.

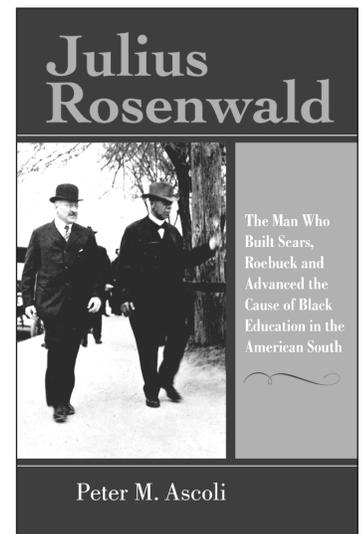
Chicago's Julius Rosenwald was one of the richest men in America in the 1920s, but few people today, other than the older members of the Jewish and African-American communities, know the story of his far-reaching philanthropy.

This may be due in part to the fact that he created a major American foundation to expend its resources in thirty years—to go out of business in 1948—rather than to perpetuate itself and the memory of its founder. (The name of the museum in Chicago's Jackson Park that was originally incorporated as the Rosenwald Museum

was later changed to the Museum of Science and Industry—at the insistence of Julius Rosenwald.)

With this new biography, Rosenwald's grandson, historian Peter Ascoli, recovers his grandfather's life and legacy, and tells his grandfather's story with professional skill as well as with insights that only an insider with access to intimate family records and memories could have. Peter M. Ascoli is on the faculty of Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. He is a member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and is one of the narrators in our video, *The Romance of a People—100 Years of Jewish History in Chicago, 1833–1933*. ❖

*Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South* (Indiana University Press) will be available for purchase from the Newberry Library's A.C. McClurg Bookstore. A book signing will follow the talk.



**Cover of *Julius Rosenwald: Rosenwald walking with Booker T. Washington***

# Ernest Byfield: The Pump Room and The Pageant

BY WALTER ROTH

Recently I had the pleasure of dining at the Pump Room in the Ambassador East Hotel, 1301 North State Parkway. Across from the Pump Room is a sitting area bearing the name “Ernest Byfield Room.” My visit reminded me of research material I had gathered some years ago from Byfield’s family and from the many newspaper and magazine articles and the book that had been written about him. I think his contributions (and those of his father) to Chicago in the hotel and entertainment fields are worth remembering.

In his book *Sabers and Suites—The Story of Chicago’s Ambassador East* (1983), Rick Kogan writes: “Ernest Byfield was born in Chicago shortly after midnight on November 3, 1889. He died at 6:20 a.m. on February 10, 1950. It was Friday. A heart attack.” Chicago newspapers told of Byfield’s death on their front pages, and published long and generous articles. There was a graveside funeral service at Rosehill Cemetery. Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, who had celebrated their wedding at the Pump Room, were at the funeral, as was the Mayor of Chicago, Martin Kennelly. There was no rabbi reading Jewish prayers; friends and family members gave the eulogies.

Ernest (“Ernie”) Byfield was descended from innkeepers in a small town near Budapest, Hungary. His father, Joseph, came to Chicago in 1867 when he was 14 years old. (He anglicized the family name of Beifeld to Byfield.) Joseph obtained a job in a State Street dry goods store owned by Marshall Field and Levi Z. Leiter. Joseph was said to be a “human calculator” in bookkeeping and soon was an important figure in the business, which ultimately became Marshall Field & Company. During the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, Joseph made a deep impression on Field and Leiter by helping them move their goods out of the path of the fire, which destroyed their store.

Joseph and his brother then decided to go into business on their own. Through the help of a speculator, they took on some of the operation of the White City amusement park at 62nd Street and South Parkway (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive). It was fashioned after the successful Midway at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, with a huge Ferris wheel.

Joseph was really interested in getting back into the family business, innkeeping, and purchased the Sherman House, at Clark and Randolph in 1902 for \$200,000. It was a bargain. He had obtained a location

in the heart of Chicago’s downtown and a great historic site. In 1837, Francis C. Sherman, a three-time mayor of Chicago and father of the Civil War general, opened the City Hotel on that site. It was renamed the Sherman House in 1844; Abraham Lincoln stayed there in 1847. The second Sherman, built in 1861, was rebuilt in 1871 after the Great Fire. Joseph Byfield rebuilt the main structure in 1911 and expanded it in 1925.

The Sherman House was demolished in 1980 to be replaced by the James R. Thompson Center, a mixed use government and commercial building, promoted by, and named for, a living former Governor of Illinois. A plaque in the lobby reads: “This marks the site in Illinois on which a hotel has been continuously maintained.” (The architecturally bold new building is sometimes referred to as the “Hotel Thompson.”)

Ernie is quoted as saying he was first offered a job to work at the Sherman when he was seventeen years of age after attending the Armour Institute and Cornell College. Like his father, Ernie was a “mathematical wizard,” but he soon tired of devoting all his time to keeping track of the hotel’s complicated currency details stemming from its rooms, bars, and restaurants. In due course he set out to widen his horizons and “learn the thousand things that a hotelman should know.”

Joseph Byfield died in September, 1926. Ernie, together with his confidant, Frank West Bering, assumed management of the Sherman. They also obtained control of the Ambassador, an old residential hotel located on Chicago’s Gold Coast, at the corner of State Parkway and Goethe Street. Byfield and his partner also became interested in a piece of vacant property to the east of the Ambassador, and they soon took steps to acquire this lot and commissioned the construction of the Ambassador East Hotel. The two hotels became prestigious places of residence as well as stopover sites for famous travelers. There was also a large restaurant, later to be called the Pump Room. The two Ambassadors, East and West, were connected by an underground tunnel, with tobacco and barber shops and other amenities.

Ernie also turned his attention to the College Inn, a club in the Sherman. The name had come from the Byfields’ belief that the “nightclub was inextricably tied up with Heidelberg collegians drinking beer....” It was here that Ernie began to host celebrities. He made it a

gathering place for stars such as George M. Cohan, Ethel Barrymore, Billie Burke and the Dolly Sisters. He employed jazz musicians instead of the customary string ensemble. He conceived new entertainment for the club, such as an ice show. He later turned the College Inn into the Panther Club, with jungle décor and waiters in "leopard skin" jackets serving tropical drinks but the Panther Club apparently was not profitable.

The Great Depression severely affected the hotel industry, and the Sherman group, which included the Ambassador hotels, went through bankruptcy proceeding in the 1930s, from which Ernie soon emerged still owning the three hotels.

In October, 1938, after recovering from his monetary troubles, Ernie opened the Pump Room with his usual flair for publicity. The restaurant was named after the room in historic Bath, England, where fashionable people gathered to "take the waters."

The "waters" at Chicago's Pump Room were more likely to be alcoholic. Rick Kogan writes: "At his Pump Room, the celebrities got the best tables. The Social Register and Blue Book people, with a few notable and wealthy exceptions, took what was left. And through the power of Byfield's personality and his uncanny sense of self-promotion, stars soon became more concerned with their Byfield rating than their fan mail." The most desired booth was located to the right of the entrance. The famous actress Gertrude Lawrence, then starring at the Harris Theater, was said to have been the first celebrity to have dined in Booth One.

The meals and services at the Pump Room were legendary. Dishes brandished on flaming swords were the most spectacular. Jack Benny was reported to have said: "They'll serve anything on a flaming sword except the check." Hundreds of framed photographs of celebrities covered the walls outside the restaurant, and still do today. The Pump Room reached the height of its fame in the 1940s. Irv Kupcinec began writing his column for the *Chicago Sun-Times* in 1943, and he and his wife Essie often dined at the Pump Room to gather celebrity news items. In later life they installed a replica of Booth One in their apartment where they could reminisce about rubbing shoulders with the stars whose names appeared in bold-face type in "Kup's Column."

**F**riends of Ernie have been quoted as saying that his public energy and humor masked "considerable frustrations and insecurities." His first wife was the Chicago socialite and golf champion, Gladys Rosenthal. Her father, Benjamin J. Rosenthal, was the founder of the Chicago Mail Order Company (later known as Aldens), and a man of considerable wealth. Two sons

were born of this marriage, Hugh and Ernest, Jr. Gladys Rosenthal's golf prowess was a considerable achievement for a woman in those days, and a Jewish woman, to boot. Ernie often referred to himself as "The Squaw Man of Golf." Gladys and Ernie were divorced in 1928.

He then wed a beautiful socialite, Kathryn (Kitty) Priest Rand. She soon divorced him, even though Ernie told the media that they had an "ideal marriage." They had one child, a daughter Jean. His third wife, who survived him, was Adele Sharpe Thomas, a beauty salon owner thirty years his junior. His estate was estimated at \$300,000. His will, as filed by Herbert Lautman, an attorney with the Sonnenschein law firm, left one-third of his estate to his wife and the balance in trust for his three children.

With respect to his life as a Jew, little is now remembered. Of his three wives, only the first was Jewish. However, research has turned up an interesting article concerning his Jewish identity, published in the *Sentinel* on February 23, 1950: "Friend Writes Epitaph to Late Ernie Byfield," by Leo Ellis, who was a manager of the Sherman Hotel.

"We have lost a great friend, Mr. Ernest Byfield. I do not believe that many people knew the part he played in helping the cause of many charitable organizations. During the war years, Mr. Byfield was always ready to extend his services for any good cause. Many a time Mr. Byfield, as Chairman, and I, as Co-Chairman, have filled the Chicago Stadium with thousands of people, the proceeds of these affairs going to many Jewish charities. I was closely associated with him in all these undertakings, and know there was no man who gave of his efforts more freely in spite of the heavy schedules of his regular business.

"During the war years we both worked on Bond drives, for the Red Cross, Servicemen's centers, and many other efforts for which we received citations from the Navy, Civilian Defense, the Red Cross and others.

"In 1943, when Ben Hecht, Billy Rose, Moss Hart and Kurt Weil approached Mr. Byfield to help with the Palestinian problems, he unhesitatingly plunged into the organization of a gigantic Pageant which was staged in the Chicago Stadium. He was elected as Chairman of this Pageant and this writer as Co-Chairman. He did a Herculean job, but was satisfied when he saw the climax of all his work at the Chicago

*continued on page 6*

## Ernest Byfield *continued from page 5*

Stadium where over 20,000 people had gathered.

“As late as October of 1949, when I approached him to help the Denver Sanatorium for tubercular patients in holding a dinner in our Hotel Sherman, he immediately telephoned George Jessel and persuaded him to be Master of Ceremonies at this affair.

“His good-heartedness and complete devotion to charitable causes made him one of the greatest men I have ever known.”

The October 23, 1966 *Chicago Tribune* Sunday Magazine section carried a feature article: “Why are They Doing This to Ernie Byfield?” It recounted his life and his accomplishments as the “perfect hotelman.” The article notes that “All trains met Ernie Byfield...the distinguished guests who stopped off in Chicago made the Pump Room their first port of call.”

The *Tribune* article describes the ceremony held at the Pump Room to honor Ernie’s memory, where a bust of Byfield clad as Beau Nash was dedicated. [Richard “Beau” Nash (1674-1762), was Master of Ceremonies at Bath, which he turned from a sleepy spa catering to sick people into the favorite resort of Britain’s rich and those aspiring to wealth. He was a self-invented character, a celebrated dandy and leader of fashion.] The article concludes: “Byfield is gone from the scene, but the glittering Pump Room goes on...George Jessel, when he learned that his lifelong friend had died of a heart attack (remarked), “It couldn’t have been a heart attack...Ernie Byfield gave his heart to his friends many years ago.”

Ben Hecht was a good friend of Byfield and often stopped at the Pump Room to visit. Undoubtedly, it was Hecht, who had written the script for the Pageant “We Will Never Die” (referred to in the Ellis epitaph) who convinced Byfield to be the Chairman of the Pageant and engage in the other Zionist activities of the Bergson Group during World War II. There are chapters on Ben Hecht, the pageants, and Peter Bergson in a book which I authored, *Looking Backward—True Stories from Chicago’s Jewish Past* (Academy Chicago Publishers, 2002; paperback edition 2005).

Philanthropist Benjamin J. Rosenthal, Ernie’s Byfield’s first father-in-law, was the subject of an article I wrote for our Society quarterly (Summer 2002). That issue, and all others published since 1999, can be found at our web site: [www.chicagojewishhistory.org](http://www.chicagojewishhistory.org). ❖

**WALTER ROTH** is president of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.



**Hotel Sherman, c. 1915.**

## White Jazz and Chicken a la King

During the 1920s, the College Inn at the Hotel Sherman became a jazz venue. The all-white band was led by Isham Jones, and the jazz tunes were performed before the all-white audiences in the refined surroundings of the College Inn. It would be many years before downtown Chicago venues welcomed Black performers and guests.

The establishment’s chef, Joe Colton, originated Chicken a la King and other dishes featuring chicken and beef broths. The mass appeal of the dishes continued to increase, leading to commercial production of College Inn® canned dishes. The popular items can be found on supermarket shelves.



If only the master promoter Ernie Byfield had lived long enough to meet Andy Warhol, it might have been the College Inn broth can rather than the Campbell soup can that became the icon of Pop Art.

As for the Mandel Brothers Pipe Club (pictured below), we have no information about this men's organization. Could it have been associated in some way with Mandel Brothers Department Store?

## Adventures in Hotel Architecture

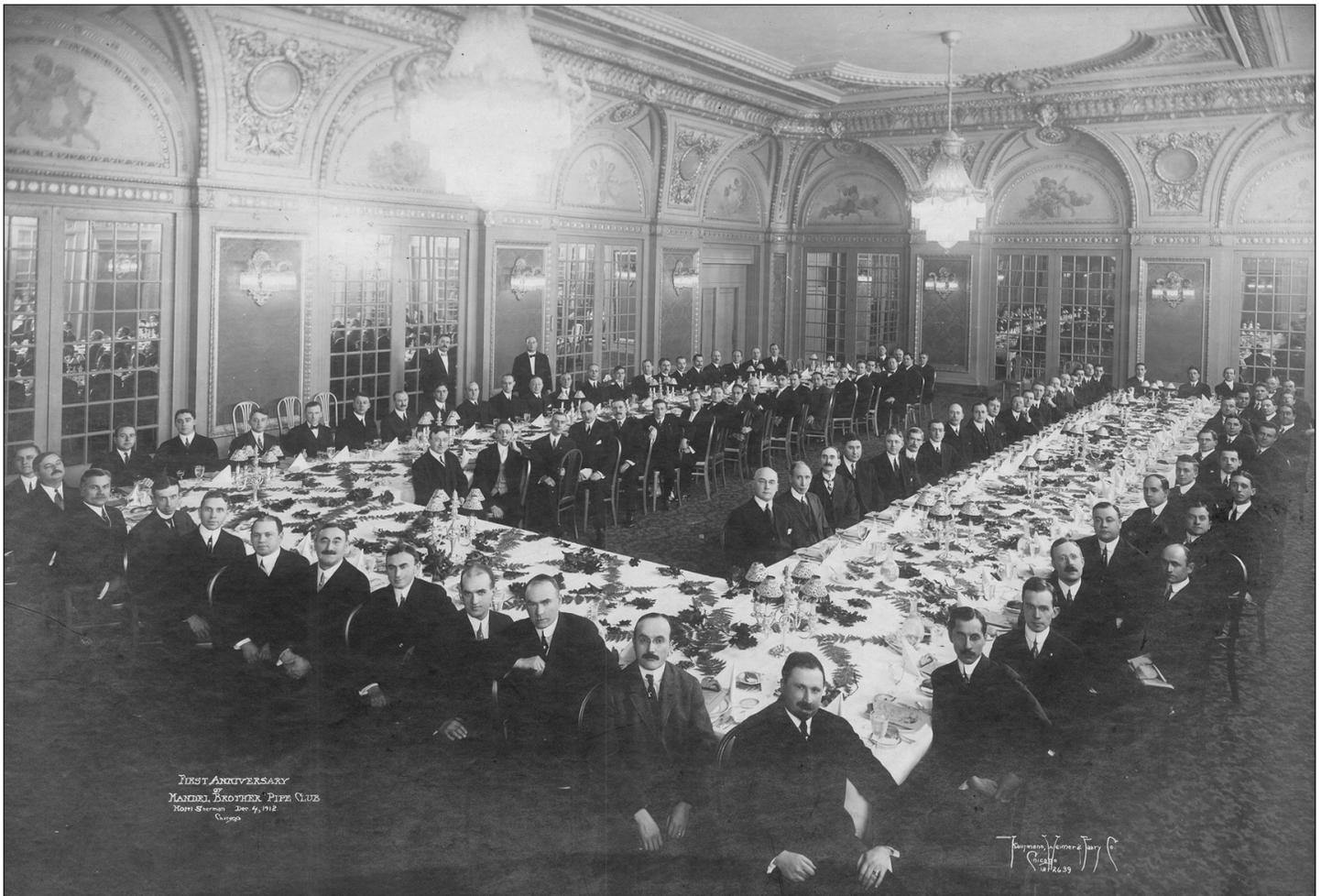
*Walter T. Stockton was the architect of Ernest Byfield's Ambassador East Hotel. Stockton was interviewed by Betty J. Blum in 1983 under the auspices of the Chicago Architects Oral History Project, the Ernest R. Graham Study Center for Architectural Drawings, Department of Architecture, The Art Institute of Chicago.*

The Ambassador East was built in 1927. Betty Blum asked Walter Stockton if it was considered a big commission. He replied that it was, and told her of the many changes that marked the project.

Byfield's original idea was for a co-op apartment building, but after buying the old Ambassador (West) Hotel, he wanted a companion hotel. He shocked the architect with this sudden change of plan, as the workmen had already begun digging holes for pilings. When repositioning the pilings, they discovered the cooling cellars of a brewery that had occupied the site.

Another surprise: after designing the three-hundred-room hotel as an oblong, Stockton was notified that the zoning code had been changed, and the structure would be too tall. He revised the plan, making setbacks that created a tower, yet still accommodated three hundred rooms. "Byfield promised me a case of his College Inn canned goods for saving the day....I've been waiting for it ever since." Still, Stockton considered the Ambassador East to be his most successful building.

As for the Pump Room, he originally designed the (yet unnamed) space as an old-fashioned Virginia ballroom. Samuel Marx was later commissioned to transform it into an elegant, modern restaurant. ❖



**"First Anniversary of Mandel Brothers Pipe Club. Hotel Sherman, Dec. 4, 1912. Chicago.**  
Kaufmann, Weimer & Fabry Co. Chicago 12 26 39" Collection of Ann Davis Cox, Louisville, Kentucky.

## The Doctors Beck, North Chicago Hospital...



**Carl Beck, M.D.**

*Photocopy courtesy of Sidney Blair, M.D., who correctly identified the other two photos for us.*



**Emil G. Beck, M.D.**

*These two photos are from H.L. Meites's History of the Jews of Chicago (1924). But they were misidentified. Emil's photo appeared with Joseph's entry, Joseph's photo accompanied Carl's entry, and Carl Beck's picture did not appear at all.*



**Joseph C. Beck, M.D.**

This brief article about the Doctors Beck was prompted by a phone call to the Society office from Sidney Blair, M.D., Professor Emeritus at Loyola University Medical School. He is in the process of writing a history of the Becks and their contributions to medicine in Chicago. He found that they were mentioned in Meites, but with errors (see pictures at left). Dr. Blair, a new member of CJHS, writes of his subjects:

"The Doctors Beck were prominent surgeons in Chicago in the early 1900s. They were born in Bohemia and emigrated to the United States at the turn of the last century. Carl, the oldest, was Professor of Surgical

## and The Deli Across The Street

Stop in at the Original Frances' Deli, 2552 North Clark Street ("Serving The Community Since 1938"), pick up a menu, and look at the Triple Decker Sandwiches. If you have Old West Side roots, you will find Chicago Jewish history in the names:

- THE DOUGLAS BOULEVARD
- THE "ZOOKIE THE BOOKIE"
- THE DAVEY MILLER
- THE CLARK & ARLINGTON
- THE COLLINS AVENUE
- THE SOUTH HAVEN
- THE "KING" LEVINSKY
- THE "MINSK KPINSK"
- THE FOUNTAIN BLUE
- THE LAUNDRYMAN
- THE MARKS NATHAN
- THE BARNEY ROSS

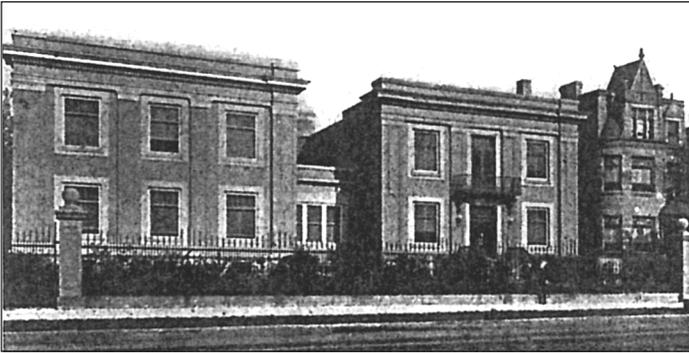
**Douglas Boulevard** was one of the main thoroughfares on the Jewish West Side. **Zookie the Bookie** was a Roosevelt Road barber with a second, more profitable, occupation. **Davey Miller** was the tough defender of the Jews of Lawndale. Miami Beach, a favorite Jewish vacation spot, is remembered with **The Collins Avenue** as well as **The Fountain Blue**, as the Fontainebleu Hotel was popularly known. **South Haven** was a Michigan resort community in the "Catskills of the Midwest."

The "**King**" **Levinsky** is a deli meat sandwich like all the others, so his full nickname—"Kingfish"—would not be appropriate. He was a Chicago prizefighter and the son of a Jewish fish peddler. **Minsk** and **Pinsk** were Russian cities from which many Jew emigrated.

**The Laundryman** refers back to the days when Knesses Israel Nusach Sfard (KINS) on Independence Boulevard was known as "the laundrymen's *shul*" because so many men in that business were congregants.

**The Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home** was located at 1550 South Albany Avenue from 1912 to 1948. The block-long, three-story building had space for three hundred boys and girls and a staff to provide for their needs. **Barney Ross** was a professional boxer, raised in Chicago, who won the lightweight, junior welterweight and welterweight titles.

**The Clark & Arlington** honors Frances' original, longtime location, 2453 North Clark Street, at Arlington, where low-priced meals were served cafeteria-style. The business was purchased in 1972 by the Gelman family. In 1988, they reopened Frances' in its current location as a sit-down deli restaurant where the Jewish-style food is deliciously caloric and the walls are covered with nostalgic photos, maps, and postcards of Old Chicago. The Gelmans do not have a West Side background; the sandwich names were recommended to them (we suggested they add **The "Nails" Morton**). Brothers Howard, Steve, and Edward Gelman run the deli with their father, Sidney, still active at age 90. ❖



**North Chicago Hospital, 2551 North Clark Street, c. 1922.**  
Photocopy courtesy of Sidney Blair, M.D.

Pathology at the University of Illinois.... Joseph was a prominent otolaryngologist and also a professor at the University of Illinois. Emil was a surgeon and pioneer in radiological techniques. They practiced in area hospitals as well as at the North Chicago Hospital, which they founded in 1906. They were among the first doctors in Chicago to practice Cooperative Medicine, using the model of the Mayo Clinic in their hospital.” ❖

### **Suggested Reading About The Sandwich Honorees:**

“A Boy Grows Up at the Marks Nathan Orphan Home.” By Sol Berman, as told to Anne Berman. Memoir excerpts recount how loving care helped children overcome adversity (*Chicago Jewish History*, September 1987). Copies available from CJHS office for \$4.00 each, including s/h.

*A Time to Remember: A History of the Jewish Community in South Haven.* By Bea Kraus (Priscilla Press, 1999). Covers the 1920s through the 1950s. Paper, \$19.95. Order from the author: [www.KrausBooks.com](http://www.KrausBooks.com).

*Looking Backward: True Stories from Chicago's Jewish Past.* By Walter Roth (Academy Chicago Publishers, 2002). Profiles of Davey Miller, “Kingfish” Levinsky, “Nails” Morton, and other fascinating characters on both sides of the law. Hardcover \$27.95; paper \$16.95. At local bookstores and online.

*A Walk to Shul: Chicago Synagogues of Lawndale and Stops on the Way.* By Bea Kraus and Norman D. Schwartz (Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 2003). Paper, \$19.95. Available at the Bariff Shop for Judaica, Spertus Institute; the Museum Store, Chicago History Museum; and Rosenblum's World of Judaica.

*Barney Ross.* By Douglas Century (Schocken, 2006). How Barney Ross went from being the “Jew Kid” from the West Side to winning boxing championships, to heroic actions on Guadalcanal and covert missions to run guns to Palestine. Hardcover, \$19.95

## **Inquiry**

Dear CJHS:

For research on a book I am writing concerning my two grandfathers, I am seeking information about my paternal grandfather Edward M. Gertz, eldest brother of famed Chicago lawyer Elmer Gertz. I am the son of Edward's son Ken.

Born in 1899 in the 20th Ward, Edward Gertz was, according to all who know whereof they speak, “the biggest Jew in Chicago” of his time, 6' 4" tall, weighing 260 pounds in his prime, and who, because of his size and fists, was one of the primary protectors of fellow Jewish kids 1909-1920 (under the aegis of Davey Miller and Samuel “Nails” Morton), along with his younger brother “Crazy” Sollie Gertz. Sol met Morton when both were in the same platoon during WWI; when Morton won his battlefield commission to First Lieutenant, he appointed Uncle Sol as his First Sergeant; he later gave Sollie his first job after the war.

Edward Gertz was in the alcoholic beverage business in Chicago during Prohibition, and personally knew many of the key Italian and Irish gangsters of the time. He was not a mobster, though he looked like one. He was, rather, in the legal end of the whiskey business, as the Volstead Act contained exemptions for alcoholic beverages sold for sacramental, industrial baking, and medicinal purposes.

Before entering the liquor business, he attended Illinois Tech as an engineering student. During that time he worked as chauffeur and bodyguard for Julius Rosenwald. He also was employed as a *shtarker* for John Hertz of Yellow Cab during the Taxi Wars.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who might have any information about my Poppy, Edward M. Gertz—né Milton “Edmilt” Gershowitz—during the period 1910-1940.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stephen J. Gertz  
12532 Short Avenue  
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FROM THE  
CHICAGO JEWISH  
*archives*

# A Mysterious Douglas Park Festival

*By Joy Kingsolver*



**O**f all the different types of archival documents collected by the Chicago Jewish Archives, photographs are among the most prized. Nothing captures a moment in time, and the people who lived it, quite as well as a photograph. Ideally, of course, archivists want to have full identification of the date, place, circumstances, and people for every photograph we collect, but many times photographs arrive in the archives without this essential information. Often extensive research is required to identify photographs, and sometimes we remain stumped.

An intriguing image was discovered recently among a new group of Board of Jewish Education photographs. It captures a dramatic moment in a festival or pageant held at the Douglas Park Recreation Building (now called the Douglas Park Cultural and Community Center) in 1959. The name of the building can be seen engraved across the top. Decorative posts on the left and right read “Bikkurim Festival,” and the year is displayed on the left-hand post. The top of each post shows a bouquet of flowers. The lettering underneath each bouquet is difficult to read; the post on the left appears to say “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” but the post on the right cannot be read.

The scene is the Temple in Jerusalem, with actors portraying the priests standing on the top of the steps. The High Priest, wearing a representation of the traditional breastplate, is in the center. In the background, at the top of the steps, is the Ark whose curtain reads, in Hebrew, “Holy to the Lord,” and “Crown of Torah.” Two smaller signs in the front read “B’nai Zion” and “Ner Tamid.” Israeli and American flags are held by participants along the sides of the steps.

The use of the word “Bikkurim,” or “First Fruits,” suggests that the event was held in conjunction with the holiday of Shavuot, which is also called “Chag HaBikkurim.” In 1959, this holiday fell on June 7.

**W**e don’t know the significance of the sign reading “B’nai Zion.” The sign reading “Ner Tamid” is most likely a representation of the Eternal Light, the oil lamp that stood in the Temple. Still, this event may have drawn participation from across the Jewish community and several congregations may have taken part—including those named B’nai Zion and Ner Tamid.

There is bound to be an interesting story behind this festival, and we have high hopes that among the loyal readers of *Chicago Jewish History*, someone will remember it or be able to provide some clues that we can pursue. (And, by the way, if this story inspires you to start identifying your own photographs, remember to use an archival photo pencil, or a separate sheet of paper—but never ink!)

If you can help us identify this photograph, please contact Joy Kingsolver, Archives Director, at (312) 322-1741, or email [archives@spertus.edu](mailto:archives@spertus.edu). The Chicago Jewish Archives is a component of the Asher Library, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago IL 60605. ❖

*Special thanks to Lila Levy, Archives Assistant, and Joseph Friedman, Asher Library Cataloger, for research assistance with this article.*

## ■ ■ Special Announcement

### The New Spertus Building is Going Up!

As you read this, the first stages of construction have begun, and we are watching our new home grow day by day. This will have exciting implications for researchers using the Chicago Jewish Archives; among the improvements will be space for special collections research and larger capacity for archival holdings.

In order to prepare for this move, anticipated to take place in late 2007, the Archives will close to the public as of July 1, 2006, until the opening of the new building. During the coming year, we will focus our energies on processing and cataloging archival material; upgrading our inventories (collection guides); and digitizing photographs for a searchable image database, to be launched when the new building opens. We must also examine every collection and prepare it to be safely moved. The Asher Library will remain open as usual until we are closer to moving day.

The Archives will continue to solicit and accept new donations of papers, photographs, scrapbooks, memorabilia, and other archival material throughout this period. We apologize to our users for any inconvenience, but we look forward to being able to offer improved facilities and public service in the new Spertus building. We look forward to seeing you then!

***Attention Early Birds:  
Save the Date—  
Sunday, October 29, 2006***

***Chicago Architecture  
Foundation & Chicago Jewish  
Historical Society Program:  
“Jewish Lawndale”***

**Chicago Architecture Foundation  
224 South Michigan Avenue  
Social hour with refreshments 1:00 p.m.  
Program 2:00 p.m.  
Admission is free and open to the public.**

## *Report on May 21 Tour: Mark Mandle & Norman Schwartz Guide Genealogical Society Group Through "Jewish Graceland" Cemetery*

**F**or Jewish genealogists, "Jewish Graceland" Cemetery is a treasure of our heritage. It documents members of the earliest Jewish community that helped build Chicago.

To preserve this heritage and the lives of these pioneers, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois (JGSI) has recently completed an inventory of all of the burials here and is in the process of making them available via the Internet to the worldwide Jewish community. This service is being made possible via the website JewishGen.

In honor of the completion of this significant project, JGSI sponsored a tour of the cemetery on May 21, led by Mark Mandle and Norman Schwartz (Board member and Past President, respectively, of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society). JGSI President Mike Karsen and Membership Chair Julie Levin organized the event, and Julie took part in it.

A tour group of thirty-four persons met the guides at 2:00 p.m. at the cemetery, located at 3919 North Clark Street, a half block south of Irving Park Road.

Mark guided the group through the cemetery's history, highlighting famous inhabitants including Rabbi Aron Messing (1840-1916), who was Rabbi of B'nai Shalom (today part of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel) and his son Rabbi Abraham Messing (1873-1922). He pointed out the grave site of Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, best known as a founder of the National Council of Jewish Women.

Norman led the group to the grave markers of five Jewish soldiers in the American Civil War. One of them is a cenotaph rather than a grave marker, as Col. Marcus M. Spiegel is not actually interred in Graceland (see below, in the letter from Jean Powers Soman). The bronze grave marker of another of the veterans, Simon Bournstine, has recently been stolen. ❖

*Parts of this report were excerpted from "Remembering Historical Jewish Graceland" by Mike Karsen, Mark Mandle, and Norman Schwartz, which was posted at Chicago Jewish Community Online, May 10, 2006. To read the entire article, a comprehensive description of the JGSI Inventory Project, go to: [www.juf.org/news](http://www.juf.org/news).*

*On May 18, Norman Schwartz answered a phone call at the Society office from a descendant of Colonel Marcus M. Spiegel.*

Dear Norman,

I enjoyed speaking with you today about Chicago Jewish history. I hope you enjoy the book I am sending, *A Jewish Colonel in the Civil War*. I am the great-great-granddaughter of Colonel Marcus M. Spiegel and the co-editor of this book.

Colonel Spiegel was killed during the American Civil War. He died May 4, 1864 and was buried in a grave along the shore of the Red River in Louisiana. The family was never able to recover his body (according to letters written to his widow, Caroline Hamlin Spiegel, by the soldiers who buried him, and as mentioned in the memoirs of his daughter, Lizzie Spiegel Barbe). The beautiful monument at Hebrew Benevolent Cemetery in Chicago was placed by the family in his memory.

Another impressive monument was erected on the battlefield in Vicksburg, Mississippi by the survivors of the 120th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The name of Colonel Marcus M. Spiegel was etched into the front of this monument.

Jean Powers Soman  
Miami, Florida

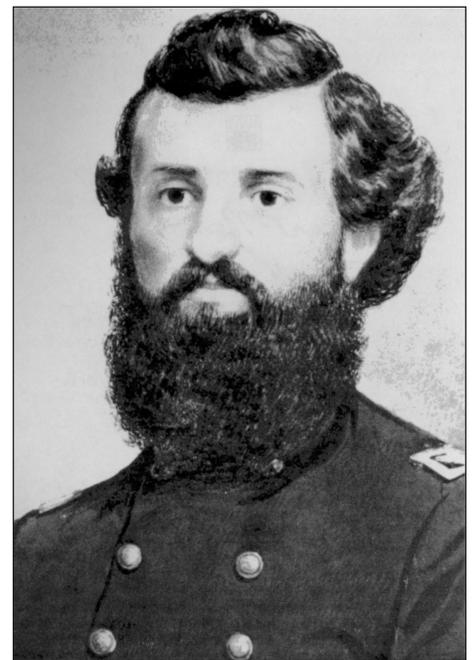


Illustration from the book,  
***A Jewish Colonel in the Civil War:  
Marcus M. Spiegel of the Ohio Volunteers.***  
Edited by Jean Powers Soman and  
Frank L. Byrne. (University of  
Nebraska Press) Paper, \$14.00.



**Architect's rendering of the future Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, Skokie, Illinois.**

## *Report on CJHS March 26 Program: "History in the Making: The New Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center"*

**“W**e have the Holocaust Museum in D.C. Do we really need a museum in Skokie?” Richard Hirschhaut, Project and Executive Director of the new Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, has been asked this question many times. He gave his answer in his talk at our Society’s open meeting on Sunday afternoon, March 26, at the current facility of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center/Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois, 4255 West Main Street, Skokie.

After the customary social hour and refreshments, Program Chair Charles B. Bernstein introduced our guest speaker. Mr. Hirschhaut has over twenty years of experience as a senior staff member of the Anti-Defamation League, most recently as the Greater Chicago/Upper Midwest Regional Director. He is a frequent consultant to law enforcement agencies, municipalities and professional associations on issues of extremism and the impact of hate crimes. Under his direction, ADL’s Chicago office created the National Youth Leadership Mission, an award-winning initiative

that brings diverse high school students to Washington, D.C., to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and meet with civil rights leaders.

Mr. Hirschhaut related the history of the Illinois Museum. It began in the aftermath of the “March on Skokie Controversy” twenty-five years ago. At that time Skokie had the largest community of Holocaust survivors in the nation, and the prospect of swastika-wearing marchers in their midst was horrifying. Something had to be done. An organization was formed in 1981, and four years later the present facility was acquired, dedicated to drawing on lessons of the past to serve future generations.

The building has two classrooms, a permanent exhibition, and offices. Tens of thousands of young people have come through, especially since 1990, when the Illinois Legislature mandated the study of a unit on the Holocaust in schools. Although the mandate is unfunded, it allowed the Foundation to publicize its work with the blessing of the Illinois Legislature.

*continued on page 14*

## New Museum *continued from page 13*

But why do we need a new Holocaust Museum in Illinois? There is Yad Vashem in Israel, and, since 1993, the museum in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Hirschhaut explained that maybe ten percent of Illinois schoolchildren visit the Washington museum. The new Illinois museum and education center will also bring in children from other Midwestern states. Although there are regional Holocaust museums in New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and Florida, there is no significant, "world class" institution in the Midwest.

Architect Stanley Tigerman, who has many notable buildings to his credit, has said that this is the project with which he wants his name to be associated. His design is two buildings conjoined at the back. The exhibition begins in the dark building on the left with pre-war Jewish life in Europe, and descends, gradually, into the horror of the Holocaust. The lighter building is

where the post-war period begins, with liberation and emigration to Palestine, Israel, and The United States.

The new museum will be constructed at 9603 Woods Drive, on the northwest corner of Golf Road and the Edens Expressway (I-94). It will face east, toward Jerusalem. There will be two cylindrical forms, similar in height and diameter to the two columns in front of Solomon's Temple. There will be a menorah formed of six permanently lit light sticks.

A newly added element is a sixty-year-old German rail car that will be placed in the cleft between the dark and light buildings. This new museum is intentionally functional. It will not be "pretty."

The entire building will be approximately 64,000 square feet. Its cost is estimated at thirty-five million dollars, with a projected budget of three and a half to four million dollars per year. Groundbreaking is scheduled to take place in June 2006—with half the required funds expected to be in hand. The opening is planned for Spring 2008. ❖

### CJHS Tribute Cards

The Society reminds our members about the availability of our tribute cards. These attractive cards can be used to honor someone, memorialize a loved one, thank a friend, or offer congratulations. The cards are printed on heavy white stock, folded to 4 x 9¼ inches.

They bear the handsome CJHS logo on the outside. Printed inside is our mission statement, "The Chicago Jewish Historical Society, through its many programs and publications, collects, preserves, records, and retells the history of the Jewish community of Chicago," and "A gift has been made to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society by \_\_\_\_\_." There is also space for a personal message if you care to add one.

A pack of eight cards and envelopes is \$10.00. Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at a cost of \$5.00 per card, postage included. To order packs of eight or single cards, call the Society office at (312) 663-5634. ❖

**Sorry! More time is needed  
to complete our long-delayed  
Chicago Jewish History  
Time Line**

### Announcement of Research Award

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society is pleased to announce an annual award for research on Chicago Jewish history done by an undergraduate or graduate student. CJHS will award \$1,000 for an outstanding paper on a topic in Chicago Jewish history.

The paper should be 25 to 40 pages in length, with documentation in endnotes. Please request "Guidelines" for endnote form, font, and style at the address below. An independent committee of experts will judge the entries. The winner will be invited to present the research at a meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. The winning essay will be considered for publication in the society's journal, *Chicago Jewish History*.

Each applicant should submit a paper and a letter of support from a faculty adviser by June 30, 2006, to:

**Adele Hast, chair  
CJHS Award Committee  
Chicago Jewish Historical Society  
618 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60605-1901**

For further information, please contact  
Adele Hast at (312) 663-5634  
or [adelehast@yahoo.com](mailto:adelehast@yahoo.com).

# CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Summer Tours 2006

### Sunday, July 23

#### “JEWISH LIFE IN THE LOOP” WALKING TOUR

**GUIDE: HERB EISEMAN**

An afternoon stroll through downtown Chicago reveals the many Jewish contributions to the cultural and commercial vitality of our city. From the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies and the next-door construction site of its future home, we will go on to philanthropic institutions and social clubs, State Street department stores and movie palaces. We will view the works of Jewish architects—from Dankmar Adler and Alfred Alschuler to Frank Gehry—who have added to the worldwide fame of Chicago’s skyline, and stop at the patriotic statue of George Washington, Robert Morris and Haym Salomon. Invite your out-of-town guests!

**1:00 pm – Meet at Spertus Institute, 618 South Michigan**

**4:30 pm – Finish at Hyatt Regency Hotel, 151 East Wacker**

\$15/Member of CJHS \$20/Nonmember

### Sunday, August 20

#### “SOUTH SIDE JEWISH ROOTS” BUS TOUR

**GUIDE: DR. IRVING CUTLER**

A noon-starting narrated bus tour traces Chicago’s Jewish settlements from their early beginnings downtown southward to Maxwell Street, Grand Boulevard, Washington Park, Kenwood, Hyde Park, South Shore, and South Chicago. The tour group will view historic Jewish religious institutions, including those with landmark status; the University of Chicago and other schools; homes of the prominent, and businesses such as the Wee Folks toy store on 79th Street (author Caryn Lazar Amster will narrate this portion of the tour). We will stop at Chicago’s oldest Jewish congregation, take a walk in a historic Jewish/Civil War cemetery, and visit the beautiful South Shore Cultural Center (closed to Jews back when it was a private country club).

**Pickups at two locations:**

**12:00 pm – Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 West Touhy**

**Return: 5:00 pm**

**12:30 pm – Marriott Hotel, 540 North Michigan (Rush Street entrance)**

**Return: 4:30 pm**

\$30/Member of CJHS \$40/Nonmember

*Join the Chicago Jewish Historical Society when making your reservation and pay members’ price. Annual membership is \$35*

**For information phone Leah Axelrod (847) 432-7003**

#### SUMMER TOURS 2006: RESERVATIONS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (Eve) \_\_\_\_\_

CJHS Member  Nonmember

**JULY 23 – Loop Walk \$15/20**

**AUGUST 20 – South Side Roots**

**Pickup Horwich JCC \$30/40**

**Pickup Marriott Hotel \$30/40**

Advance payment required.  
Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to: Chicago Jewish Historical Society  
Mail to: Leah Axelrod, 2100 Linden Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035-2516**

# 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 B. 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
Senior Family/Synagogue/ Organization/Individual .....	35

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

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)

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



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