



chicago jewish history

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Sholom Schwartzbard: The Avenger

BY WALTER ROTH

On October 18, 1927, there began a trial in a courtroom of the Palace of Justice in Paris. Sholom Schwartzbard, 39 years of age, a French citizen of Russian birth, stood accused of the murder of Simon Petlura, the Ukrainian nationalist who had been the political and military leader of the short-lived independent Ukrainian republic in 1918-20.

What aroused my interest in this trial was the first chapter of a recent book, *Dreamland—Europeans and Jews in the Aftermath of the Great War*, by historian Howard M. Sachar (Knopf, 2002). The chapter is entitled “Murder Trial in Paris.” Sachar writes that after the trial Schwartzbard did not remain in France, but settled in Chicago, where he eked out a precarious livelihood contributing articles to the Yiddish press and addressing Jewish audiences.

Sholom Schwartzbard was born in 1886, in Bessarabia, part of the Russian Empire, raised in the Ukraine, and trained to be a watchmaker. He was active, apparently, with anarchist organizations, during the failed Revolt of 1905. He moved to France in 1910 and joined the Foreign Legion in 1914. With the outbreak of World War I, he fought in the French army, was wounded and

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“Nell Ziff Pekarsky: Witness to History”

Report on Our June 10 Meeting at Temple Sholom

Nell Ziff Pekarsky (1910-1998) played a pivotal role in many of the major events unfolding in Jewish life in America and Israel during the twentieth century.

The open meeting of the CJHS on Sunday, June 10, at Temple Sholom, 3480 North Lake Shore Drive, presented guest speaker Linda Lewison, an historian of outstanding Jewish women of the Midwest, who showed excerpts of the DVD made from her video-recorded oral history interviews of Nell in 1994. Program Chairman Charles B. Bernstein presided and introduced our speaker.

Nell Ziff was born to immigrant Jewish parents in Hurley, Wisconsin. She attended Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, where she joined the local chapter of Junior Hadassah, and after college, the Minneapolis chapter. In 1937, after election to regional offices and a vice-presidency, she was invited to be Junior Hadassah’s national president.

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Junior Hadassah National President Nell Ziff and Eleanor Roosevelt. Jewish Women’s Archive.

President's Column



Walter Roth

FORMER CHICAGOANS IN SANTA FE.

My wife Chaya and I recently made a long-anticipated trip to the Southwest to visit its picturesque and historic sites. Of particular interest were chances to meet with friends from Chicago now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

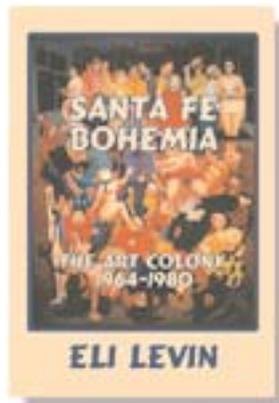
Stanley Rosebud Rosen, retired Professor of Labor and Industrial Relations at the University of Illinois, and a former director of our Society, is still active both in Chicago and New Mexico

in preserving the Jewish past. His oral history interviews are part of the video history project, "Chicago Radical Jewish Elders," which seeks to explore the relationship between Jewish and social consciousness. The videotaped interviews are housed at the Chicago Jewish Archives, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies.

We also met with Gunther Aaron, a noted sculptor who came to Chicago as a young German refugee escaping from Hitler's grasp. After a successful career in Chicago, he continues to work on creative projects in Santa Fe.

Last, but not least, we finally had the pleasure of meeting the painter Eli Levin, after communicating with him by phone and email. He was born in Glencoe, Illinois, the oldest son of Chicago novelist Meyer Levin. Eli has lived in New Mexico since 1964 and is well-known for his egg tempera and oil paintings of Santa Fe night life. He has run art galleries, written art reviews, and taught art history. He hosts artists' gatherings, a drawing group, and the Santa Fe Etching Club at his studio.

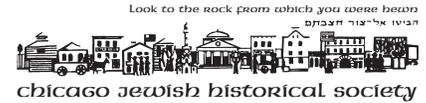
Now he has written a memoir, *SANTA FE BOHEMIA: The Art Colony, 1964-1980* (Sunstone Press, 2006), in which he chronicles Santa Fe in its turbulent years of transition from a Bohemian enclave to a cultural boomtown. As a narrative painter and vivid reporter, Eli Levin is successfully carrying on the artistic tradition of the Meyer Levin family.



OUR MOVE TO THE NEW SPERTUS BUILDING.

We are pleased to inform you that when the Spertus Institute moves into its new building at 610 South Michigan Avenue, next door to its current location, the Chicago Jewish Historical Society will be included in the move. Our office will be on the seventh floor of the new building, in close proximity to our colleagues at the Chicago Jewish Archives, with whom we will continue to work closely.

We look forward to the move and the possibilities it offers. I am certain the beautiful new environment will serve to inspire our Society in its programming—publications, meetings, and tours—and in our efforts to engage and increase our membership. ❖



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“Sex, Politics, Murder and Genealogy”

A Jewish woman, Dora Feldman McDonald, made headlines in 1907 when she shot and killed her young lover, Webster Guerin. At the time she was married to Chicago’s elderly political boss and gambling kingpin, Mike McDonald. Her subsequent trial and acquittal turned Dora into a notorious public figure. Mike died of a heart attack before the trial.

CJHS President and practicing lawyer Walter Roth wrote about the trial for our quarterly in an article which he included in his book, *Looking Backward: True Stories from Chicago’s Jewish Past* (Academy Chicago Publishers, 2002.) But Roth could not find any information about Dora’s later life—until he called on genealogist Mike Karsen.



Dora Feldman McDonald

Karsen presented the results of his research at the May 20 meeting of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois (JGSI), of which he is co-president, after Roth outlined the story as he knew it.

Karsen’s discovery of primary sources corrected some of the story, filled in some of the blanks, and left some ambiguities. Dora was born in Memphis, not Chicago. She and Mike were married in a Presbyterian ceremony, although newspapers reported that he had converted to Judaism. Dora did go “somewhere bright and sunny”—to California—where she married C.A. Newcomb, and later separated from him. Doris Newcomb died in 1931. Karsen visited and photographed her headstone in Hollywood Forever Cemetery. ❖

Letter to CJHS

The Young Ladies’ Club of Congregation B’nai Israel

The last time my wife Zelde and I were in Chicago, we stopped in at the Bariff Shop for Judaica at Spertus Institute and bought the monumental work by Bea Kraus and Norman D. Schwartz, *A Walk to Shul: Chicago Synagogues of Lawndale and Stops on the Way*, published by the Society. I stopped at page 82, where the authors discuss Congregation B’nai Israel, formerly at 1134 South Francisco Avenue, a shul that was, and still is, very close to my heart.

In the 1930s, the Sisterhood of Congregation Bnai Israel, most of whose members were over the age of 50, held a special meeting where they discussed how to encourage their young daughters and granddaughters to become more involved with the shul. The Sisterhood arrived at the decision to create the “Young Ladies’ Club of Congregation B’nai Israel,” where there would be interesting activities for young women in their late teens and twenties. My mother, Edith (née Pearlman), age 18, and her best friend, Hannah Slavin, joined the club. Although it was originally formed for the benefit of the offspring of congregants, it was open to any neighborhood girl who wished to participate. The concept was an instant success, and the Young Ladies’ Club grew and thrived.

As the years went by, the members of the Young Ladies’ Club chose to keep their name, although

they, themselves, were becoming middle-aged. By the time Congregation B’nai Israel sold its building in Lawndale and bought the former Weinstein funeral chapel at 3140 West Lawrence Avenue in Albany Park as its new home, the Sisterhood had dwindled to a handful of elderly women. If a woman were interested in becoming active in the shul, she would be more apt to join the more dynamic and vibrant Young Ladies’ Club.

With the exodus of Albany Park’s Jews in the 1970s-1980s, B’nai Israel was unable to avoid the fate of the neighborhood’s other shuls and had to close. By that time, all the Sisterhood members had passed away, and the average age of the Young Ladies was around 60. Rabbi Israel Karno, who had served the shul for so many years, made *aliya*.

Even though their shul no longer existed, the “young ladies” remained good friends, often seeing each other. Today, as far as we know, none of them is still with us. But many of their children—all of us over age 55—still stay in touch, keeping the legacy of Congregation B’nai Israel alive.

Paul Malevitz, Los Angeles

The writer was born in Chicago in 1949, attended Delano Elementary School and Hagro Hebrew Center Hebrew School on the West Side (about which he wrote for our last issue), moved to the North Side in 1958, and left for LA in 1961. Paul and his wife Zelde live in the Fairfax neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Schwartzbard *continued from page 1*

honorably discharged. He then went to Odessa, in the Ukraine, where revolutionary unrest was occurring.

With his experience in the French Army, he soon joined anti-Czarist organizations, though it is not clear whether these were communist or anarchist groups. Be that as it may, he became active with organizations that attempted to help Jewish communities to defend themselves from the onslaught of various armies: Ukrainian (Nationalist), Red (Soviet), and White (Rightist). It was at this time, in 1919, that a number of Schwartzbard's family members were killed in one of the pogroms allegedly initiated by Petlura.

After the Reds won the struggle for the Ukraine, Petlura fled, arriving in Paris in 1924. Schwartzbard apparently had returned there in 1920 and had established a watch repair shop. He published Yiddish poetry and was active in leftist groups, where he met the American Jewish anarchists Alexander Berkman, Mollie Steimer, Senya Flechin, and Emma Goldman.

When Schwartzbard learned of Petlura's presence in Paris, he began to track him. On March 26, 1926, Schwartzbard accosted Petlura in broad daylight on a Paris street, proclaiming loudly as he fired three fatal shots: "This, for the pogroms; this for the massacres; this for the victims."

He was arrested, jailed for over a year, and then tried before a French jury. The trial lasted nine days and was widely covered by European and American newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*.

Following are the daily *Tribune* headlines and my brief summaries of the reports:

October 19, 1927—

HOW HE SLEW GENERAL TO AVENGE JEWS. Assassin's Tale of Hunt Shocks Paris Court.

Schwartzbard testifies that in the aftermath of civil war battles between the Ukrainian Nationalists (under Petlura's command), the White Army, Soviet Reds, and bandit bands in 1917-1920, tens of thousands of Jews were murdered in pogroms. His own family had suffered terribly. He left the Ukraine and went to Paris, where he learned that Petlura had fled after the Soviets defeated their rivals.

October 20, 1927—

WAVES PISTOL IN COURT TO PAINT PETLURA'S DEATH. Lawyer Throws Trial Into Turmoil by Actions. Schwartzbard asserts that Petlura was the "butcher of the Ukraine"—he shot him to "avenge the

Jewish race." Henri Torres, Schwartzbard's famous attorney, demonstrates how Petlura was shot.

October 21, 1927—

CROWD STORMS AS GENERAL'S SLAYER IS TRIED. Former Ukrainian military officers testify for the state and a number of persons, including some well known anarchists, testify on Schwartzbard's behalf and describe the nature of the pogroms that had taken place.

October 23, 1927—

LAWYERS HURL INSULTS AT TRIAL OF "AVENGER." A great deal of bellowing and personal insults are hurled at Henri Torres about his anarchist past. Torres brilliantly defends himself.

October 25, 1927—

PAINTS POGROM'S HORRORS TO SAVE AVENGER OF JEWS. Nurse Tells of Streets Littered with Dead. Grisly details are related of the thousands slain by marauding militias. Over 60,000 were said to have been slain in 1919 while Petlura was in command.

October 26, 1927—

TRIAL OF "JEWS' AVENGER" GOES TO JURY TODAY. Various witnesses testify for the defense as to the defendant's "noble" motives and the justice of his cause; among them are Albert Einstein, Sinclair Lewis, H.G. Wells, and Leon Blum (French Socialist Prime Minister).

October 27, 1927—

FRENCH JURORS FREE AVENGER OF POGROM DEAD. Crowds Cheer Slayer of Gen. Petlura. After short deliberation, the jury returns a verdict of not guilty on all counts. Crowd goes "wild" with joy while ominous threats emanate from Ukrainians. Under French law, the family of a murder victim must get an award for damages. Judge awards Petlura's family two francs—one for the wife and one for a child. Schwartzbard, his wife, and child quickly leave courtroom, and fearing death threats, go into hiding.

Professor Saul S. Friedman is the author of *Pogromchik: The Assassination of Simon Petlura—The complete, authoritative story of the Ukrainian pogroms of 1919, their architect, and their avenger* (Hart, 1976). Friedman notes that after the acquittal verdict became known, "congratulatory messages poured into Paris from every corner of the globe."

He further writes that the American Jewish press joined other Jewish (particularly Yiddish-speaking) groups in seeing the verdict "as a new willingness on the part of Gentiles to acknowledge hideous wrongs done to

Ukrainian Jews. But Jews also were eager to read into the acquittal of Schwartzbard something that was not there—a pledge that the world would never again permit the mass murder of Jews.”

There is good reason for Friedman’s opinion. The French press, particularly, denounced the verdict as a miscarriage of the law. *The New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, while fully covering the trial, published no editorial opinion at all. Similarly, many secular American Jewish organizations and periodicals seemed to ignore a discussion of the meaning of the verdict.

Fearing for his life, since there were many Ukrainians and anti-Semitic Rightist groups active in Paris, Schwartzbard was “urged by Jewish leaders” to leave France. He applied to the British for a permit to settle in Palestine. Without giving any reason, the authorities rejected his application. In the ensuing years, he made repeated applications to the British for permission to go to Palestine, but was always refused. Schwartzbard then agreed to leave for America. “His decision was symptomatic of a sickness in France.”

Nothing illustrates this better than the action of another French jury in 1939, which convicted a young Polish Jewish youth, Herschel Grynszpan, for the shooting death of Ernst von Rath, assistant secretary to the German Embassy in Paris, as revenge for the expulsion by the Germans of Grynszpan’s Polish-born parents from Germany into a “stateless limbo.” (This killing served as a convenient excuse for the infamous Nazi attacks on the Jews of Germany on November 9, 1938, the so-called “Kristallnacht.”) Despite their looming conflict with Germany, the French jailed Grynszpan for life. In 1940, after the German victory, the puppet Vichy regime handed him over to the Nazis who transported him to the East, where he was killed.

Interestingly, Henri Torres was Grynszpan’s attorney as he had been Schwartzbard’s. After the Grynszpan trial, Torres had to flee France, even though he was a native-born citizen. He came to the United States and worked here. After the War, Torres returned to France, resumed his legal career, and later served as a minister in the DeGaulle government.

Friedman, in his book, writes that Schwartzbard never “settled” in America after leaving France, though he lived in this country at different intervals, and came

to Chicago a number of times. A welcoming reception for him in New York was announced in an ad in *The New York Times* on May 21, 1934. His presence at an event in Hollywood, California, has been noted. He apparently was writing books and poetry in Yiddish about his life and about the Paris trial, and working for various Jewish organizations.

Two of his books, *In krig mit zikh aleyh* (At War with Myself, 1933) and *In’m loyf fun yorn* (In the Course of Years, 1934), were printed in Chicago by M. Ceshinsky, publisher of Yiddish books and proprietor of a Yiddish bookstore on Division Street. According to one source, publication of Schwartzbard’s books was underwritten by the Workmen’s Circle, a Jewish Socialist organization, which also sponsored many of his trips in America. There also exists correspondence from an organization called the Sholom Schwartzbard Arrangement Committee, with an office located at 3332 Potomac Avenue, Chicago.

Some of this material is available here in Chicago at the Asher Library, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. More books and writings by and about Sholom Schwartzbard can be found in New York City at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and in the Tcherikover Archives, located at that institution.

In addition to Sachar’s book, several Jewish encyclopedias cite

Chicago as the place where Schwartzbard lived. Extensive research by our Society, however, found no evidence of any permanent Schwartzbard residence in Chicago—at least under his name. In addition, it is obvious that he was not welcomed by major Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Congress and American Jewish Committee.

Local English language Jewish periodicals, such as the *Sentinel*, make no mention of any meetings held for Schwartzbard in Chicago, though they undoubtedly occurred. While here, he probably stayed in the homes of Jewish Chicagoans for periods of time. There are letters and oral testimony stating that he met with Yiddish-speaking groups in the city. Most of these letters are written in Yiddish, but a few written by Chicagoans are in English. (Texts of two of the letters can be found at the end of this article.)

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Sholom Schwartzbard.

Sentinel, February 8, 1934.

Schwartzbard

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Sholom Schwartzbard died on March 3, 1938 in Capetown, South Africa, while on a trip working for a Yiddish magazine. He was apparently buried with great reverence and honor for a life on behalf of his people. In accordance with his Will, his remains were removed to *Eretz Yisroel*—but many years later—in 1967, after the Six Day War. His grave is situated in the Heroes' Cemetery at Moshav Avihayil, a collective which is now part of the town of Netanya, Israel.

The cemetery is dedicated to the men who served in the Jewish units of the British Army during the First World War. The cemetery is also the site of the Jewish Legions Museum (*Beit Hagdudim*), which tells the stories and displays the pictures of the men interred there, several of whom were from Chicago.

The Hebrew inscription on Schwartzbard's headstone describes him as the avenger of the spilled blood of the Jews of Ukraine.

Sholom Schwartzbard is now almost forgotten. His assassination of the “butcher of the Ukraine” did, for a short time, bring to the attention of American Jewry the horror of the pogroms. He spent a great deal of his time in the 1930s warning Jews about the danger lurking in Nazi Germany and other places, and the need for Jews to learn to defend themselves. But he wrote in Yiddish and was associated with Leftists groups, and this probably kept him from being heard by the general public.

He was, however, remembered by the scholar Hannah Arendt in her book *Eichman in Jerusalem—A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Viking, 1963). She calls Schwartzbard a “hero,” who, in the absence of a Jewish State, sought to avenge the murder of his people himself. She quotes from a letter Schwartzbard wrote from prison in Paris in 1927 to his sisters in Odessa (translated from the French):

“Let it be known in the cities and the villages of Balta, Proskouro, Tzcherkass, Ouman, Jitomir...bring them this edifying message: the Jewish anger has wrought its vengeance! The blood of the assassin Petlioura (sic), who appeared in the worldly city of Paris...will be remembered for the ferocious crime...committed against the poor and abandoned Jewish people.”

Hannah Arendt's willingness to understand Schwartzbard's vengeance motive is interesting in view of her controversial treatment of the Eichman “show trial” in Jerusalem. That controversy is beyond the scope of this article, but Arendt's reflections of the Schwartzbard trial are pertinent.

“Schwartzbard, who died in 1938, more than ten years before the proclamation of the Jewish State, was not a Zionist, and not a nationalist of any sort; but there is no doubt that he would have welcomed the State of Israel enthusiastically, for no other reason than that it would have provided a tribunal for crimes that had so often gone unpunished. His sense of justice would have been satisfied.” ❖



Sholom Schwartzbard's grave marker in the Heroes' Cemetery, Netanya, Israel.

“Barred From Toronto—

Sholom Schwartzbard, whose dramatic slaying of the notorious Ukrainian pogrom leader, General Simon Petlura, in Paris, May 25, 1926, has kept him in the public eye ever since, was prevented by the police from being given a public reception by his Jewish admirers in Toronto, when Ukrainian nationalists in the Canadian metropolis threatened violence unless the reception was called off. He organized and is president of the International Jewish Self-Defense Corps.”

—*Sentinel*, February 8, 1934

Right: This text appears above a letter, in Yiddish, announcing the establishment of a fund devoted to the publication of Sholom Schwartzbard's writings in two volumes, and the presentation of the books to him on the occasion of his visit to America. The letter is an appeal to Jewish organizations in the USA and Canada for contributions to the fund.

(Letterhead in English and Yiddish)

Sholom Schwartzbord (sic) Arrangement Committee
3332 Potomac Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Chicago Committee:

A.M. WEINBERG, Chairman
 1057 N. Sacramento Blvd.

B. YELENSKY, Sec.-Treas.
 3332 Potomac Ave.

New York Committee:

M. GAMBERG, Chairman
 80 Van Cortlandt Park, South Bronx

M. ROGERS, Secretary
 3965 Sedgwick Ave., Bronx.



ארויסגעגעבן פון שלום שווארצבארד קאמיטעט
 טיקאגע, אילל. 1934

"Sholom Schwartzbard: In'm loyf fun yorn (In the Course of Years).

Published by the Sholom Schwartzbard Committee, Chicago, Ill., 1934."

Title page art is signed in Yiddish by Todros Geller (1889-1949), illustrator, graphic designer, and teacher known as the "dean" of Chicago's Jewish artists.

(Letterhead in English
 and Yiddish)

CESHINSKY'S
PUBLISHER • BOOKSTORE
2720 Division Street, Chicago

February 15, 1934

Department of Immigration
 United States

Gentlemen:

Mr. Sholom Schwartzbard, whose publisher I am, informs me that pursuant to the agreement on which he entered the United States, his stay must terminate soon. Since we have not arranged all matters pertaining to the publication of his works, his departure at this time would be most inconvenient.

I therefore request that his stay be extended another six months, in which time we would undoubtedly complete all arrangements satisfactorily. Both Mr. Schwartzbard and myself will be grateful for any courtesy shown him.

Sincerely yours,

(Signature)

Morris Ceshinsky

“Uncle Ben” Aronin and His Family

Report on the February 11 CJHS Open Meeting at Anshe Emet

ANSHE EMET SYNAGOGUE, 3751 North Broadway, was the scene of a large family gathering and a much larger “family” reunion on Sunday afternoon, February 11, when our Society presented the program, “The Pied Piper of Chicago: ‘Uncle Ben’ Aronin and His Family,” at an open meeting.

Program Chairman Charles B. Bernstein introduced our first speaker, Senior Rabbi Michael Siegel, who offered a brief history of Anshe Emet.

The congregation was formed in 1873, on what was then Chicago’s “far” North Side. Services were held in rented quarters until 1893, when its first synagogue, at 1363 North Sedgwick Street, was dedicated.

In 1913, the congregation moved into a new synagogue—now an apartment building—on West Patterson Street, and in 1929, relocated to its current space, which originally was Temple Sholom, a Reform congregation. The Ark faces west because, “in the classical Reform Movement’s approach, the West is really Zion.”

Anshe Emet turned to the East, philosophically, upon the arrival of Conservative Rabbi Solomon Goldman, an active Zionist and head of the ZOA. He received permission for the installation of stained glass windows depicting Zionist themes and Jewish history. When the back window was vandalized by anti-Semites in 1941, it was replaced by a window picturing George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and New York harbor.

Solomon Goldman served Anshe Emet Synagogue from 1929 until his death in 1953. He was succeeded by Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, and then Rabbi Seymour J. Cohen. Upon the retirement of Rabbi Cohen in 1990, Michael Siegel became Senior Rabbi. (He has served Anshe Emet for his entire twenty-four year career.) The synagogue has been favored with notable Cantors—Moses J. Silverman, and now, Alberto Mizrahi.

“Uncle Ben” Aronin’s official title was Director of Extension Activities at the Anshe Emet Synagogue.

To open the commemorative program, Rabbi Siegel recited a warm and welcoming poem that Ben wrote about Anshe Emet that was set to music and taught to the congregation’s schoolchildren.

“Ben Aronin was unique in the annals of American Jewry,” Rabbi Siegel said, “a singular influence on young people.” He prepared them for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah; he was the synagogue’s resident author and also inspired others to write; he was the in-house composer of songs and pageants; he was the “congregational pied piper” and *rosh rukhanit* (spiritual leader). Ben and his wife Frieda opened their home to young people on Friday nights, and when he greeted them at the door, his face was said to be lit with *karnei or* (rays of light).



Ben Aronin (1904-1980).

Courtesy of Michael Lippitz.

SANFORD ARONIN, a Chicagoan and longtime member of the CJHS,

was the first family member to speak. His father, Shmuel, was Ben’s first cousin. Chairman Bernstein thanked Sandy for suggesting the program.

We learned that the Aronin history in the U.S.A. began in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, around 1900, when Rabbi Aryeh Leib Aronin (1849-1931) and his family arrived there from Russia. Aryeh Leib headed the Jewish community in the town for the next twenty-five years, until he moved to Palestine. At one time, Sheboygan was the largest Jewish community in Wisconsin, with 250 devout Jewish families, four shuls, and a mikva—earning it the nickname “Little Jerusalem.”

Ben and Shmuel were grandsons of Aryeh Leib. Shmuel moved his branch of the family to Mayville, Wisconsin, then called “the Pittsburgh of the Midwest,” because of its blast furnaces. He became a peddler of scrap iron. Moves to Milwaukee and Chicago followed.

FROM THE
CHICAGO JEWISH
archives

See the next (Summer: August) issue of *CJH* for Archivist Joy Kingsolver’s follow-up article on the Albany Park Auxiliary of HTC World War II Tablecloth.

Two articles by Sandy Aronin have appeared in the pages of *Chicago Jewish History*. In the Winter 2000 issue, we published his memoir, “My First Year at the Yeshiva”—about the Hebrew Theological College, when it was still located on Douglas Boulevard. In Summer 2001, we published Sandy’s article about his extensive Jewish postcard collection, and illustrated it with the handsome postcard he created in 1999 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Aryeh Leib’s birth. Sandy arranged for the card to be mailed to family members from Sheboygan, postmarked on Aryeh Leib’s birthday.

MICHAEL LIPPITZ of suburban Riverwoods spoke next. He is the grandson of Ben’s sister Blanche. He told us that Simon Aronin (a son of Aryeh Leib), his wife Rose, and their five children—among them, Ben and Blanche—settled in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, where they made a drygoods store out of their front room. As they were the only Jews in the town, they celebrated religious holidays at home. Ben and Blanche went on to college, and both attended Kent Law School. Ben became a defense lawyer and Blanche worked with him. She became a leader in national Jewish organizations.

Michael took the lead in planning the program at Anshe Emet. He provided each attendee with an informative, ten-page handout, which includes the Aronin Family Tree, the history (or mythology) of the Aronin Crest, newspaper clippings about Ben, family photographs, a list of Ben’s creative works, and song sheets with the words to his “Anshe Emet Song” and others, to use for a singalong at the end of the program.

The Aronin program handout is posted on our website. You can also find Sandy Aronin’s articles, as issues of CJH since 1999 are posted there. Go to: www.chicagojewishhistory.org

Michael showed a family video—vintage film clips of an interview with Blanche, Ben and his brother Aaron on their trip to Palestine in 1939, Ben at the 20th Zionist Congress in Paris with Rabbis Stephen S. Wise and Solomon Goldman, and Ben at Camp Maccabee (cheers from camp alumni in the audience).

SHARI ROSEN (Blanche’s daughter and Ben’s niece) told us that she had to explain to her friends that everyone’s “Uncle Ben” was her *real* uncle. She demanded that he write a note to that effect which she could show to her classmates—and then rewrite it in block letters because first graders could not read the script. Uncle Ben studied Talmud with Shari and her brother Chuck on Friday nights; “Uncle Ben” taught the Bad Boys’ Class at Anshe Emet; Linguist Ben studied Chinese.

SIMON ARONIN (Aaron’s son and Ben’s nephew), recalled that when he was a youngster living with his family in Los Angeles, Uncle Ben, Aunt Frieda, and their children would come to live with them from time to time. Ben would go to LA to conduct High Holy Days services, and also to write scripts for the movies.

NORTON WASSERMAN is the husband of Ben’s daughter Rachel. Nortie told us that Ben, an attorney, did not like the word “law”—he thought it was too grim. Instead he called his children’s spouses his “son in love” and “daughter in love.” Nortie expressed the family’s gratitude to the Anshe Emet congregation for the support and honor they gave Ben during the last years of his life, making his illness bearable.

CAMP MACCABEE, Pelican Lake, Wisconsin, was where Ben spent many summers. His official title was Head Counselor. Nortie Wasserman is an alumnus of Camp Maccabee, and he regaled us with anecdotes.

Ben was a remarkable athlete. There were no intact phone books at camp because he would display his tremendous strength by tearing them in half. (As an enlistee in the Illinois National Guard, which he had joined mainly for the opportunity to ride horses, Ben won the boxing championship of the 122nd Field Artillery.) But he was also “a mender of broken wings”—soothing homesick kids with therapeutic tennis and distracting them with responsibilities such as passing out kipot at services. When the camp train was departing Chicago for Pelican Lake, and younger siblings would cry, wanting to go along, Ben would take them aboard, calling out to the parents: “Send clothes!”

LORI LIPPITZ, founder and leader of the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, and her sister, **CANTOR RIKI LIPPITZ** (granddaughters of Blanche), concluded the program by leading the audience in singing the delightful songs written by their great-uncle Ben. ❖

**Camp Maccabee Reunion
October 26–28, 2007
Scottsdale, Arizona**

Camp Maccabee, Pelican Lake, Wisconsin, will hold a reunion for all former campers and counselors. For more information regarding the reunion and to update your contact information, please phone or email:

Judi Segal Stroud

phone: 309-269-1334

HeyJude47x@aol.com

Ferne Drachler Avery

phone: 847-542-5251

Nell Pekarsky *continued from page 1*

During Nell's presidency, from 1938 to 1941, Junior Hadassah membership grew from 20,000 to 25,000 young women, ages 18 to 30—the largest national youth organization in the United States.



Nell Pekarsky and Rabbi Daniel Leifer, speakers at the CJHS open meeting, January 26, 1986.

"Serving Jewish University Students: The Development and Operation of Hillel Foundations."

Photo by Moselle Schwartz, published in the March 1986 issue of our Society News.

Welcome, New Members of the Society!

Keith Bear
Sandra Brottman
Sam H. Dubin
Dr. Alex Feller
James J. Finn
Alan & Elaine Fox
Myron & Eve Geller
Paul Green
Rabbi Norman & Linda Lewison
Allen & Nancy Lipman
Dr. Melvin & Sally Nudelman
Allen Reich
Dr. Herbert & Shari Rosen
Michael & Madeline Rosenberg
Jerome Rosenstone
Alan Saposnik
Michael & Edna Schrank
Marshall R. Weinberg
Craig Weiss

Nell had to move from Minneapolis to New York City for this volunteer post—quite a financial challenge for a single young woman in her 20s—but through her visibility in Hadassah she became known to prominent figures in the Jewish world, and was always able to find employment. Meyer Weisgal, the indefatigable Zionist organizer, hired her to help him solicit funds for the creation of the Palestine Pavillion for the 1939 World's Fair. She was an editorial assistant to Nahum Goldman. Her last job in New York was as the assistant to Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist Movement.

Chicago became Nell's home when she married Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky in 1942. He was the Hillel Director at Northwestern University. Lewison played a DVD selection in which Nell tells of having to make "many adjustments" at NU. Maurice challenged the town's racism and the assimilated Jewish fraternities' and sororities' unwillingness to support Jewish causes.

In 1944, Rabbi Pekarsky added the directorship of Hillel at the University of Chicago to his work at Northwestern. On the DVD, Nell speaks of the origin of the U. of C.'s annual "Latke-Hamentash Debate." It was a street corner kibbitz between Maurice and Sol Tax that evolved into an informal debate between two professors (with heckling), before becoming the prestigious Mandel Hall mock-symposium it is today.

Nell talks about Rabbi Pekarsky's "Steinway Ministry." On his way to his office he would stop in at Hyde Park drugstores to find unhappy-looking students "sitting over a cup of black coffee," and he would minister to them. The Pekarskys went to Jerusalem in 1950 to establish Hillel at the Hebrew University, and returned to the University of Chicago in 1955. Maurice Pekarsky died suddenly in 1963. Nell continued to live in Hyde Park, and her home was the setting for Lewison's six hours of interviews.

To close her program, Lewison played the DVD selection in which Nell describes the World Zionist Congress in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1939, which she attends as a representative of Junior Hadassah. She witnesses the bitter, shouting confrontation between Chaim Weizmann's and David Ben-Gurion's allies over illegal immigration to Palestine, and their clasping of hands at the sad conclusion of the Congress, shortened as the war looms.

Lewison acknowledged the research assistance she received from her cousin, Mark Mandle, an information technology specialist who is a longtime member of the CJHS, and the help she received from our past president, Dr. Adele Hast. Lewison's "main support" on the project was Danny Pekarsky, Nell's son.

Why is there a photograph of Nell and Eleanor Roosevelt in this report? The story of their relationship was not part of the program, but it is recorded on the DVD. Also, Jane Feinberg-Kaplan wrote an article about her great-aunt Nell in which the Roosevelt story is included. Lewison passed out copies of this interesting article, which can be found online (see below). ❖

ED MAZUR'S PAGES FROM THE PAST

My source for these selections is the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Microfilm Collection at the Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Library Center.

In the autumn of 1936 the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey was organized under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of Illinois. The purpose of the Survey was to translate and classify selected news articles appearing in Chicago's foreign language press from 1861 to 1938.

Financial curtailments in the WPA program ended the Survey in October 1941. The Chicago Public Library published the work in 1942. The project consists of a file of 120,000 typewritten pages from newspapers of 22 different foreign language communities in Chicago.

Yiddish is the foreign language of the Jewish press in the Survey. English language periodicals are also included, as well as the publications of charitable institutions, communal organizations, and synagogues.

"TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL.

The dedication services of the new community center, which took place on April 20, were beautiful and impressive. The following rabbis participated: Joseph Stolz, Julian Gusfield, Tobias Schanfarber, Samuel S. Cohen, Samuel Schwartz, Felix A. Levy, and S. Felix Mendelsohn. Brief addresses were delivered by William Levine, Albert Falzer, and Theodore W. David.

"About three hundred guests participated in the dedication banquet given Sunday evening, April 22. The speakers of the evening were Rabbi Abram

Hirschbert of Temple Sholom and Dr. Jacob H. Kaplan of Cincinnati. A large number of donations for the building fund were announced at the banquet. Services will henceforth be held every Friday evening at 8:15 at the Community Center, Bernard and Ainslie Streets. Rabbi S. Felix Mendelsohn preaches at every service." — *Daily Jewish Courier*, April 26, 1923

"THREE JEWISH CHILDREN OF MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL WIN SCHOLARSHIPS.

The young hearts of Libby Shnitzer, Freda Jacobson, and Max Newberger beat faster yesterday when the chairman of the Scholarship Committee made known that they were the three fortunate ones to win the prizes awarded each year by Marshall High School to its three best scholars.

"Libby Shnitzer...won first prize, consisting of a memorial scholarship valued at \$150.... Her eyes sparkled with joy when all her teachers and school-chums shook her hand to congratulate her for her victory....

"Likewise felt young Max Newberger when he learned he was the winner of the second prize. Max is popular in high school for his untiring work in the Literary Club and in the Club of Science.... With modesty he received the news that he had won the second scholarship prize.

"Freda Jacobson was the third to win a prize. The news that she had won...excited her so that she could not find words to express her appreciation. Miss Jacobson's prize for good conduct and excellent work will enable her to attend the University of Chicago."

—*Forward*, May 22, 1924.

"HAKOAH AND SPARTA. The first great undertaking to raise money for the declassed Jews of Russia will be a soccer game between the Hakoah team and the Sparta team of Chicago. The game will be played on Sunday afternoon, May 12th, at Soldier Field.

"The Hakoah team consists of the original Vienna Jewish soccer players who took America by storm a few years ago when they first came here. In Chicago they were seen playing three times, and it is already three years since they last played here. In the last few months they have won every game they played in the United States and became the champion team of America.

"Now they are coming to Chicago to play a benefit game for the tool campaign for the declassed Jews of Russia. with Sparta—the champion team of Chicago and one of the strongest teams in the country. It is expected that the Jewish heroes will receive a hearty welcome from the broad Jewish masses of Chicago.

"The tickets will soon be on the market. This coming Sunday morning a conference will take place of the organizations working in connection with the tool campaign. The conference will take place at 3420 W. Roosevelt Road. The organizations that have not yet joined the tool campaign committee can do so Sunday at the conference through their officers."

— *Forward*, April 25, 1929.

DR. EDWARD H. MAZUR, a member of the CJHS Board of Directors, is an urban historian, professor emeritus at City Colleges of Chicago, and consultant to the International Visitors Center of Chicago.

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.

Tribute Cards for Celebrations/Memorials

The card design features the Society's logo, our mission statement, and space for a personal message. Purchase from the Society office at (312) 663-5634.

Remember the Society

Name the Chicago Jewish Historical Society as a beneficiary under your Last Will, Living Trust, IRA or other retirement account. Any gift to CJHS avoids all estate taxes and can be used to support any activity of our Society that you choose—publication, exhibition, public program, or research. For information please call the Society office at (312) 663-5634.

What We Do

The Society seeks out, collects and preserves written, spoken and photographic records, in close cooperation with the Chicago Jewish Archives, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. The Society 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.

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
Annual Dues:	
Historian	500
Scholar.....	250
Sponsor.....	100
Patron.....	50
Basic Membership	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 *Chicago Jewish History*.

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

e-mail: info@chicagojewishhistory.org

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



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