



includes correction of  
print edition

# chicago jewish history

## Our 2010 Summer Bus Tours: From the Down-to-Earth to the Imaginary



**Independence Boulevard  
Seventh Day Adventist Church  
(formerly Anshe Sholom Synagogue).**

*Photograph by Robert Packer.*

The Society's first bus tour of the summer will take place on Sunday, July 11. Dr. Irving Cutler will expertly guide you through "Chicago's Jewish West Side"—the Lawndale, Garfield Park, and Austin neighborhoods that were the vibrant center of Jewish cultural life for about half a century, containing over 40% of the city's Jewish population. There will be a number of stops, including the Garfield Park Conservatory, and a visit inside a former historic synagogue. See the enclosed flyer/registration form or our website for details.



**Above: Sandra Holubow, *City Core*, 2010.**

*Acrylic painting on canvas, 36" wide x 24" high.*

**Left: Judith Joseph, *Prosperity Amulet*, 2010.**

*Acrylic painting on canvas, 36" wide x 48" high.*

On Sunday, August 15, artist and educator Judith Joseph will be our guide. Three stops: first, the studio of painter Sandra Holubow, to see work in progress; next, the Art Institute of Chicago, to view works by world-famous Jewish artists in the museum's collection; then to the ARC Gallery to see a special installation of Judith Joseph's art. See the enclosed flyer/registration form or our website for details.

## "Unknown Artist" Identified as One of Our Best Known



**David Bekker (1897-1956)**

**A** beautiful little book, *The Stained Glass Windows at Temple Sholom*, by Norman D. Schwartz and Rolf Achilles, was published by the Temple in 2001.

Introduced by a brief history of the congregation, the book pictures and describes the sets of windows which "narrate scenes of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Jewish people as well as their greatest kings and greatest prophets."

*continued on page 8*

## President's Column



Walter Roth

### HISTORIANS AND CURRENT EVENTS.

While we are a historical society, remembering the past, it often becomes important to pay heed to current problems in light of what we have learned in our past.

Immigration laws and their fairness certainly are of great concern to the Jewish community. In that connection, I recently received a communication from our neighbor in the Spertus Institute

Building, the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs (JCUA). It is an article from their online publication, *JCUA News*.

The headline is "JCUA and Other Jewish Leaders at Forefront of Protest Against Arizona's 'National Disgrace'." The article reports that over three hundred protesters gathered at a prayer vigil on Monday evening, April 26, in front of the suburban Broadview Detention Center. The protest occurred in front of the facility while deportees were being taken away in a van as Broadview police and media watched. Twenty-four protesters were arrested, among them JCUA's Jane Ramsay and Rabbi Joshua Slater.

We join the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs in calling the new Arizona law a national disgrace. Arizona's enactment of a law superseding existing federal law, with the right of police to arrest "suspicious" persons without any provocation, is contrary to our sense of justice. We agree with the slogan on the sign carried by the JCUA protesters, "Social Justice: If Not Now, When?" ❖



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## The CJHS Limited Edition Ceramic Mug



A thank-you gift in appreciation of your paid membership in the Chicago Jewish Historical Society for the year 2010, this eleven ounce ceramic mug is decorated with the Society's handsome logo, designed by the artist Rose Ann Chasman Z<sup>L</sup>, depicting historical sites and symbols of Jewish Chicago.

Ivory mug with logo in brown. Renew or join today!

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### Chicago Jewish History

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### Send all submissions to:

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**Fradle Pomerantz Freidenreich**  
Photo by Jan Lisa Huttner

## ***Report: Sunday, May 2 at Temple Beth Israel— Capacity Crowd at Co-Sponsored Meeting Heard Author Discuss Her New Book***

On Sunday afternoon, May 2, in the sanctuary at Temple Beth Israel, 3601 West Dempster Street, Skokie, the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and the Chicago YIVO Society presented a program featuring educator Fradle Pomerantz Freidenreich in a discussion of her new book, *Passionate Pioneers: The Story of Yiddish Secular Education in North America, 1910-1960*.

Dr. Adele Hast, a past president of the CJHS and a board member of both organizations, chaired the meeting and introduced our guest speaker.

Freidenreich, in her research, found that over a fifty-year period at the beginning of the last century, about a thousand Yiddish cultural schools were established in the USA and Canada, along with about thirty-nine summer camps, founded by Eastern European immigrants, and sponsored by a wide range of organizations. The schools and camps comprised a vibrant, multi-faceted educational movement with lasting significance, often overlooked by historians. Before beginning her talk, Freidenreich invited the audience to join in a sing-along to one of the Yiddish songs on the CD that comes with the book. Former *shule* students and *kemper* were enveloped in a

warm nostalgia that lasted throughout the program and the social hour that followed.

Thanks to Ernie Smolen, treasurer of the Chicago YIVO Society and an active member of the CJHS, for engaging the audio-visual technician and ordering the refreshments. Thanks to Jerry Levin, CJHS board member and program committee chair, for handling the book orders and CD distribution. (As *Passionate Pioneers* was not yet printed at the time of the program, a CD was given to anyone who placed a prepaid order for a book.)

## ***Report: Sunday, March 21— Dale Lind Recalled Highlights of His Long, Varied Musical Career***

A nostalgic audience of Society members and friends gathered in the social hall at Temple Sholom of Chicago, 3480 North Lake Shore Drive, to hear Dale Lind reminisce about the Lind family of cantors (father Joshua; sons Murray, Dale, and Phil). We were regaled with anecdotes from his autobiography, *Applaudience—Born to Sing!* and listened to his recorded voice in sacred music and popular songs on his CD (same title as the book).



**Cantor Dale Lind**

**Correction** *CJH Winter 2010, The "Jewish Geography" Travel Page (page 7):* Our report on Herb Eiseman's four weeks in Israel as a Sar-El volunteer incorrectly stated that Pam Lazarus, a former Chicagoan, was the founder of Sar-El. She is the Program Coordinator, not the founder.

General Aharon Davidi of the Israel Defense Forces inspired the founding during the 1982 Lebanon War. When Golan Heights settlers could not harvest their crops because so many workers had been called up for military reserve duty, Davidi sent a recruitment team to the United States, and hundreds of Americans arrived in Israel to offer their volunteer labor.

In 1983, Sar-El, The National Project for Volunteers for Israel, was founded. Volunteers from over thirty countries now participate in the project. Some work in IDF warehouses, as Herb did. *CJH* regrets the error.

## **Welcome, New Members of the Society**

Karen Fullett-Christensen  
*Aurora, IL*

Daniel & Wendy Kahn  
*Highland Park, IL*

Fred Karger  
*Los Angeles, CA*

Frieda Landau  
*Evanston, IL*

Gary & Elaine Raymond  
*Aurora, IL*

Mimi Rosenbush  
*Lincolnwood, IL*

Bert & Brenda Rossini  
*Winnetka, IL*

Frances M. Unger  
*Chicago, IL*

# David and Miriam Canter: Doing Right from the Left

BY WALTER ROTH

When the first African-American Mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington, was elected in 1983, he picked as one of his advisors David S. Canter, who was Jewish and (like myself) a proud Hyde Parker. Mayor Washington died in 1987, not long after his election to a second term, so Canter's professional life continued outside City Hall until his own passing in 2004. At this point, I am inserting a biographical sketch of David S. Canter as contained in the words of a resolution adopted by the Illinois House of Representatives:

## HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the members of the Illinois House of Representatives were saddened to learn of the death of David S. Canter on August 26, 2004; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Canter, a Hyde Park community resident, was heavily involved in Chicago politics, education, the newspaper business, and the practice of law; he made a career of fighting social and economic inequality wherever he saw it; and

WHEREAS, David S. Canter was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1923; his father moved the family from Boston to Russia when Mr. Canter was a child; Mr. Canter returned to Boston for high school before receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago and then earning his law degree from the John Marshall Law School; and

WHEREAS, While in school, Mr. Canter became involved in student politics and served as editor-in-chief of his high school and college newspapers; he later edited the Packinghouse Worker's Union's *Champion*, Hyde Park-Kenwood *Voices*, and former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington's "Second Term" newsletter, and with his swift pen, he also printed dozens of newspapers on behalf of Chicago politicians; and

WHEREAS, As a political activist, Mr. Canter

marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1960s, fighting for open-housing in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, David S. Canter served as an advisor to prominent Chicago politicians, including Harold Washington, Carol Moseley Braun, and Bobby Rush; he was known for his block-by-block command of voting patterns; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Canter served as former Mayor Washington's Deputy Streets and Sanitation Commissioner, an aide to former Governor Dan Walker, and an attorney for the Illinois Commerce Commission, and right up to his death, he served as an attorney for the Cook County Department of Human Rights; he was especially devoted to heading up a revamp of the Miriam G. Canter Middle School, named for his wife following her death in 1999, and served as a member of the Friends of Miriam G. Canter Middle School; and

WHEREAS, David S. Canter's passing will be deeply felt by many, especially his three children, Evan, Marc, and Anna Pincus, and his nine grandchildren...

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE...

that we mourn the passing of David S. Canter along with all who knew and loved him and extend our sincere condolences...

*On April 19, I had the pleasure of meeting David and Miriam's son Evan Canter in my law office and taping an interview with him. Following are edited excerpts.*

## The Middle School

**WR** Evan, tell me a little bit about your background. When were you born? Where did you go to school?

**EC** I was born in 1958 at Michael Reese Hospital. I went to public school, to Shoemith Elementary and then to Wirth Middle School, which is now the Miriam G. Canter Middle School, named after my mother.

**WR** Tell me about Miriam.

**EC** At the time when the new Kenwood High School building [at 5015 South Blackstone Avenue] was being built, and the old building was scheduled to be torn down, my mother organized an effort to build a feeder middle school to adjoin the new high school, so that kids from the different elementary schools could have a [racially and culturally] integrated experience with each other before they entered high school.

That effort succeeded, and the middle school was named for Louis Wirth of the University of Chicago. My mother was president of the PTA. She was always involved in the school, even after all of her kids had



graduated. And after she passed away in 1999, the principal at that time announced at her funeral service that he was going to rename the school after her. That was quite an honor and a big surprise. None of us knew about it.

My father was involved in the PTA after her death because there was quite a mess. It was difficult getting approval for this new type of school, a mandatory feeder from the elementary schools in the area. He was involved in that for a long time.

**WR** Didn't he become head of the school for a while?

**EC** No. He was head of the local school council. And he was involved after he left the council. There were challenges. There was the lopping off of the seventh and eighth grades from the Murray, Ray, and Kozminski schools, which caused quite a bit of resistance at that time.

As a matter of fact, just recently, in the last month or so, the Board of Education approved the Murray School's request to reverse that decision, so I'm not exactly sure of where that leaves the rest of the Canter School. It's been underpopulated for a while.

[The Chicago Public Schools website lists a population of 221 students at the Miriam G. Canter Middle School, World Language Magnet Cluster, 4959 South Blackstone Avenue.]

**WR** There is considerable controversy about it in the community.

**EC** Yes. The school is very important to my family. I must get in touch with the principal again to see what we can do. There are different support organizations. We have a not-for-profit group called Friends of Canter School which is now headed by Zoe Mikva.

In the Chicago Public Schools' annual "Principal for a Day" program, I've been co-principal of Canter a few times. My one claim to fame is that Michelle Obama was my co-principal once after Barack Obama was elected to the United States Senate.



**Miriam and David Canter.**  
Photograph courtesy of Evan Canter.

## Russia and England

**WR** Let's explore your father's family history. Start with your grandfather.

**EC** His name was Harry Jacob Canter. He was one of the eleven children of Simon Cantorovich. The family came to England from Russia some time in the 1880s. Harry was the first one to go to school. The family story is that his teacher told Harry that his name was too long, so it would be shortened and spelled Canter—as in *The Canterbury Tales*.

He became a printer. On ships. That is, he printed the shipboard newspapers and menus. Family legend has it that he was hired to be the printer on the maiden voyage of the Titanic in 1910, but the family had a big chicken dinner to celebrate his job, and he missed the boat.

## Boston, the Soviet Union, Chicago

Eventually, Harry landed in Boston—illegally, after jumping ship. There he married Anna Star (Starselski), a Russian-born dentist, and he became involved in progressive activities. We have pictures of him being arrested for leading protests. At the time of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial in 1921, he represented the Communist Party on committees organized to protest the arrest and conviction of the two anarchists. He served a one-year prison term in the Deer Island House of Correction [which may have been the model for the forbidding Massachusetts institution in Dennis Lehane's book *Shutter Island* and the subsequent movie].

Around 1930, when my father was about seven years old, the family was invited to go over to the Soviet Union, so that my grandfather could teach printing techniques to the Russians. They were translating ideological papers into English at that time. I have several volumes of translated works that he printed, including a series of Lenin's translated papers that actually have my grandfather's name in them.

**WR** And what of your father at that time?

*continued on page 6*

## The Canters *continued from page 5*

**EC** He was a schoolboy, and he learned Russian. He spoke the language fluently. He loved Russian literature, which he read in the original, and he was interested in the ideology. He encouraged me to study Russian at the University of Chicago High School.

**WR** How did the family get to Chicago?

**EC** Some time in the 1930s, my grandfather and father moved back to America, to Chicago. I don't know exactly why they came to Chicago.

My father's mother could not come back with them. She was born a Russian subject, and they would not let her out. But after several years she was allowed to come here. She passed away in the 1950s.

My grandfather eventually worked as a proofreader for newspapers, the *Chicago Daily News*, and, I think, the *Sun*, originally. That's what he did until he retired. He died in 1971, so I did not know him. He was also a union organizer [Chicago Typographical Union #16].

### The Red Scare

**WR** Was he a Communist at that point? Or had he become anti-Russian?

**EC** No, no. He was a Communist. He was involved in the Party, as was my father. And it is interesting that among the people who have survived, it is a delicate matter—involvement in the Party. To this day, if you ask someone directly, they may not answer directly, because of the effect that [the Red Scare] had on their lives. They had many friends who were hiding for years and years who lived in the community, but no one could talk about the fact that they were hiding because the FBI was after them.

My father was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in Washington, DC. He testified, but declined to answer questions, citing the Fifth Amendment.

I remember once telling my father that I would like to try to file a Freedom of Information Act request for him. And he paled. The effect on him was remarkable. So you know, when this article [by a blogger on the Internet] came out recently, saying this person was involved, and that person was involved, and that my father was a paid Soviet spy, my family's first response was, "Where was the money?" We never saw any money.

**WR** So he was never an agent of the Soviet Union?

**EC** No. As far as we know, he was someone who was always very progressive. I'm sure he was as distraught as anyone else when the truth about Stalin came out.

## The University of Chicago Law School

*David Canter received his law degree from the John Marshall Law School, but he began his law studies at the University of Chicago. He related this anecdote to his son.*

At the beginning of the school year, Robert Maynard Hutchins [U of C President, 1929-1945] addressed us, the incoming class of law students, asking those who had University of Chicago undergraduate degrees to stand against one wall and others to stand against the opposite wall. He welcomed this second group to the University of Chicago, saying, "Here is where you begin your education." Then he returned to the students who had gone to the University of Chicago and welcomed them, saying, "You already have your education. What are you doing here in the Law School?"

**EC** At some point during his long school career, my father ran afoul of Edward A. Levi, Professor of the Law School. I believe it was about my father's controversial activities as editor-in-chief of the *Maroon* and/or his Party activities. Never quite sure what the story was, but he went from there to the John Marshall Law School.

### Religion and Culture

**EC** After my father passed away I found a letter he had written to my mother before they were married. It was about the question of whether they should be married by a rabbi. This would be back in Boston [where Miriam lived]. He was against the idea, but eventually agreed to it. "It's not that I'm non-religious," he wrote, "I'm anti-religious." He held that view for many years. We were never affiliated with a synagogue. I was never Bar Mitzvah, nor was my brother. My sister had an adult Bat Mitzvah a few years ago. She is active in her synagogue in Boca Raton.

**WR** But you did go to a Jewish School.

**EC** I went to what was called the South Side School of Jewish Studies. It was a secular Sunday school, started at the YMCA on 71st Street. It was cultural—songs, bible stories, dancing, very involved in Zionism. Marc, Anna, and I each graduated from the South Side School, in the ninth grade. Anna's involvement in her synagogue is self-taught.

[Mention of the South Side School of Jewish Studies can be found in the soon-to-be-published book about Yiddish secular schools, *Passionate Pioneers*. See the report in this issue of *CJH* on the author's talk at the recent open meeting of the Society.]

I went to Cardozo Law School [The Benjamin N.

Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, New York City]. It was there that I first encountered so many Orthodox Jews. I told my mother that I saw people at the school with vanity *yarmulkes*. She said, “Well, I’ll make you one.” And she did—with the Scales of Justice stitched on it in needlepoint.

## Journalism and Politics

**EC** My father went to Wright Junior College and edited its student publication before attending the University of Chicago, where he edited the *Maroon*. He was involved with journalism for the rest of his life.

**WR** What about his collaboration with Don Rose?

**EC** In the 1960s, Don Rose and my father published a Hyde Park-Kenwood neighborhood newspaper called *Voices*. Apparently they flipped a coin to decide who would get the title of Editor-in-Chief and who would get the title of Publisher, and Don got the title of Editor. The papers would come to our house, and my brother and I and a bunch of the neighborhood kids would distribute them.

**WR** Tell me about your father’s relationship with Harold Washington.

**EC** My father knew the Mayor for many, many years, before he was involved in politics, and was key to putting together his mayoral voter registration strategy, consolidating the black vote. My father was always very involved in elections and election law.

That’s how he met most of the African American and progressive candidates on the South Side. He would review their petitions to see if they would stand up to challenge. I remember these candidates coming over to our home with petitions and piling them on our dining room table. My father would go over them line by line.

His official title in the Washington administration was Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Streets and Sanitation. He was fortunate to work indoors! He would say, “They may call me a ‘hack,’ but I don’t care what they say about me as long as they spell my name right”—because of the unusual spelling.

Finally, my father lived according to the prophetic saying, “Do justice.” At his memorial service, Congressman Bobby Rush addressed the mourners, saying that the highest praise he could give David Canter was that there wasn’t a racist bone in his body. My father would have considered that to be very high praise. He saw people for what they were. He always believed that the working guy needed every possible break, so he worked within the union movement. Throughout his life he worked at doing justice. ❖

## Contributors to this Issue

**Bev Chubat** has been editor-designer of *Chicago Jewish History* since 1999.

**Chana Chaimovitz Kovalsky** attended the Hebrew Parochial School of Chicago, the Chicago Jewish Academy (now the Ida Crown Jewish Academy), and Wright Junior College. She was an editor of the *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, Chicago Edition. She joined the Jewish Sacred Society in 1968.

**Edward H. Mazur, Ph.D.** is the treasurer and a board member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. He is an urban historian, professor emeritus at the City Colleges of Chicago, a member of the Illinois Historical Society Advisory Board, and consultant to the International Visitors Center of Chicago.

**Walter Roth** is the president of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. He is the co-author, with Joe Kraus, of *An Accidental Anarchist*. Two collections of Mr. Roth’s articles in the Society journal have been published—*Looking Backward: True Stories of Chicago’s Jewish Past* and *Avengers and Defenders: Glimpses of Chicago’s Jewish Past*. Walter Roth is a practicing lawyer with the firm of Seyfarth Shaw LLP.

**Dan Sharon** recently retired as Senior Reference Librarian of the Asher Library, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, after thirty-seven years of service. He is a member of the board of directors of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

## Research Inquiry: Jews in South Chicago

I am researching the history of Jews in South Chicago, 1890-2000. I am seeking contact information for any descendants of the rabbis of Bikur Cholim Synagogue: Rabbis Shugan, Rubinstein, and Harrison. I am looking for pictures of businesses in the area; stories of Jewish student life at Bowen High School, 1911-1980; information on the kosher butcher, Mr. Stone; Anshe Cheltenham (later Agudath Achim); and the Cheltenham AZA.

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## David Bekker: “Unknown Artist” Identified as One of Our Best Known

*continued from the front page*

In the Bettie Port Social Hall in the Frankenstein Memorial Center of Temple Sholom there are twelve windows depicting prophets of Israel. One of them is Moses. *The Stained Glass Windows* text states:

“Although the artists and manufacturers of these windows remain unknown, we do know that they were installed in 1949 when the Frankenstein Memorial Center was paneled....”

Last year the CJHS received an e-mail from Israel, from Alex Bekker, a member of Kibbutz Yavne. He asked us if we had ever heard of his father, the artist David Bekker. Yes, we certainly remembered him as a prominent Chicago Jewish artist. The point of Alex’s inquiry was to identify his father as the designer of at least two of the prophet windows in the social hall at Temple Sholom.

As proof, Alex sent us a photocopy of a letter to his father from Rabbi Louis Binstock, on the Temple Sholom letterhead, dated October 17, 1951:

“...I wish to express my great joy and pride in your window of Moses, recently installed in our Temple.... We look forward eagerly to the remaining window which you have been delegated to fashion....”



**David Bekker,  
Moses.**

*Stained glass window,  
Temple Sholom.  
Color photograph by  
Rich Master.*



**David Bekker, Amos.**  
*Sketch. Image courtesy  
of Alex Bekker.*

Alex Bekker also sent us a photocopy of a price estimate, on his father’s studio letterhead, for two windows at Temple Sholom (no prophets named). Unfortunately, no other documentation has turned up yet.

A biographical sketch of David Bekker can be found in *Harvest of Freedom: Jewish Artists in America 1930-1980s* by Louise Dunn Yochim (1989, American References, Inc. Chicago). We have also received helpful information from his daughter, Dvora Aviezer of Petah Tikva, Israel, while Alex has furnished us with a wealth of digital images.

David Bekker was born in 1897, in Vilna, Poland, into a pious Jewish family. His father, Menachem, was an artist and a decorator, and from early childhood, David was encouraged in his artistic aspirations. The Bekker family moved to Palestine when David was fifteen. There he entered the Bezalel Art School, but in a pattern of restlessness that was to be repeated,



**David Bekker sketching a portrait, downtown Chicago.**  
*Undated photograph. Image courtesy of Alex Bekker.*



he soon set out for Paris. The outbreak of World War I stranded him in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Yochim writes that Bekker supported himself by making small wood carvings as he had learned to do at the Bezalel School. His work was seen by the engraver to the King of Romania, who eventually commissioned him to create official wood carvings for the Romanian government. He moved to Bucharest to fulfill these commissions, returned briefly to Palestine, gave Paris a try, then embarked for the United States—settling first in Boston, then Denver, then Chicago.

**H**e became an integral member of several Chicago artists' organizations, including Around the Palette (renamed a few times, now the American Jewish Artists Club). His paintings and prints on Jewish themes were regularly accepted in local and regional exhibitions.

The Cafe Royale on Roosevelt Road was a favorite meeting place for Chicago's Jewish artists, writers, philosophers, and kibbitzers, most of them Yiddish-speaking. There he met Sophie Blevitsky, who became



David Bekker, *Election Day*. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of Alex Bekker.

his wife and the mother of their three children; the eldest, Menachem is deceased. They lived in the Garfield Park neighborhood, in an apartment on Lawndale and Fifth Avenue, which offered the artist a workplace with north light and a view overlooking the park. (The

Bekkers were the last tenants to move out of the building before it was torn down to make way for the Congress Expressway.) Daughter Dvora tells us that her mother believed deeply in Bekker's genius and was the moving force behind his success as an artist. She supported him materially, as well, by operating a grocery store on Homan Avenue.

**Y**ochim describes Bekker as “a colorful and forceful person; he was humorous, uninhibited, outspoken, and unrelenting in his critical assertions... With his biting brush strokes and muted palette, he captured the humorous, scholarly, and sometimes polemical character of the Jewish people.”

David Bekker succumbed to a heart attack in 1956. Sophie died in Israel in 1985; she and the children had made *aliya* in the late 1960s.

See Bekker's painting, *Yom Kippur*, on page 13. This expressive work was recently shown in a Jerusalem museum in an exhibition on the Jews of Vilna.—*Bev Chubat*



David Bekker, *Di tsigele iz geforn handlen*. Painting, 1941.

The title is a phrase from the Yiddish lullaby, “Rozhinkes mit mandlen.”  
Collection of Jerold and Evelyn Levin. Grayscale scan of color photo.

## Dan Sharon's Book Notes

### THE GHETTO. By Louis Wirth.

With a New Introduction by Hasia R. Diner.

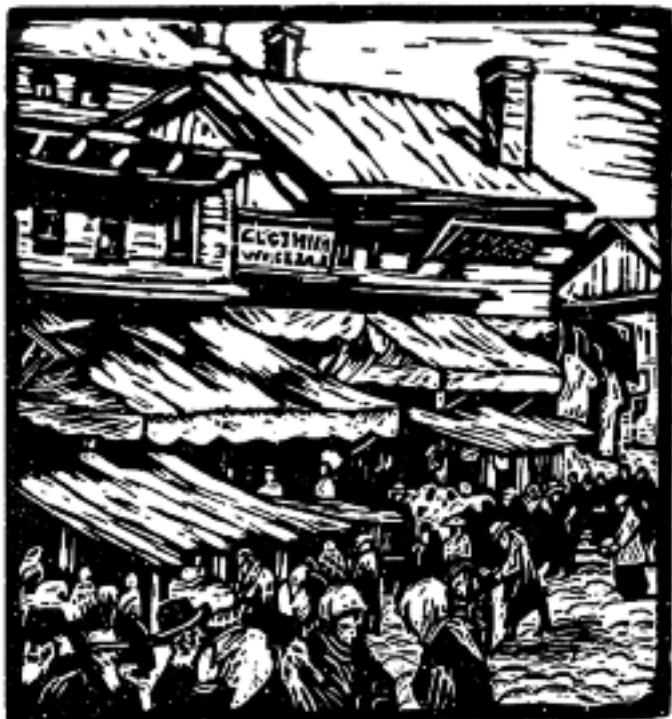
Paper, 306 pp. 1997, Transaction Publishers.

This book is a classic—one of a handful of truly important works about the Jews of Chicago.

After World War I, some University of Chicago faculty members produced pioneering studies in urban sociology. Besides *The Ghetto*, there was Frederick Thrasher's *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (1927). Thrasher comments on local Jewish street gangs as well as those of other ethnic groups.

*The Ghetto* was first published in 1928. By 1964, it had been reprinted eight times. The book is illustrated with striking woodcuts by the noted Chicago Jewish artist, Todros Geller. The latest edition has a new and very interesting introduction of over forty pages by the historian Hasia Diner. She provides us with a perceptive biographical sketch of Louis Wirth, including fascinating speculation about his Jewishness.

Louis Wirth (1897-1952) was born in the village of Gemunden, Germany, where his father was a cattle dealer. In 1911, Louis came to live with family members in Omaha, Nebraska, and graduated from high school there. He attended the University of Chicago, where he



Todros Geller, woodcut, *Maxwell Street*.

Illustration, *The Ghetto*, University of Chicago Press, 1928.

obtained his bachelor's degree in 1919, his master's in 1925, and his Ph.D. in 1926. During his undergraduate years he was employed as a social worker, where his knowledge of the Yiddish language was invaluable for interviewing Eastern European Jewish immigrants.

When *The Ghetto* (based on his doctoral thesis), was published, it was a great success. Yet Wirth was not given a faculty appointment at the University of Chicago. Dr. Diner offers evidence that his mentor, Prof. Robert Park, harbored a deep dislike of Jews. Wirth had to spend two years in *galut* on the faculty of Tulane before he was offered an assistant professorship at Chicago. He was made a full professor in 1940.

Louis Wirth became an advisor to governments on urban community relations. He held office in professional societies, edited journals, and enjoyed popularity as a public speaker. *The Ghetto* was his only book.

Wirth begins his book with a history of the ghetto in medieval Europe. The first ghetto is in Venice. In Russia, there is the Pale of Settlement (Jews confined to an entire territory). Wirth devotes a chapter to the ghetto in Frankfurt. He shows how a whole way of life develops in the ghetto, with some negative side effects.

Gradually, the scene shifts to Chicago. The struggle of impoverished Russian and Polish Jews here in the late nineteenth century is recounted, as well as the efforts of the established Jewish community in the city to help them. Wirth notes the tensions between German and East European Jews regarding philanthropy.

The ghetto in Chicago comes to center around Maxwell Street. Around 1910, it is the most densely populated district in Chicago. The religious center of the Jewish community is the synagogue. By 1926, there are forty-three Orthodox *shuls* on the Near West Side. The commercial center is the Maxwell Street Market. The odd symbiosis between Poles and Jews comes into play here. The two groups dislike each other, but Poles like shopping at Jewish outdoor stands; they are used to this from the Old Country. As Eastern European Jewish immigrants begin to better themselves, they move to Lawndale and the Northwest Side. However, in a sense, this is a return to the ghetto. When Jews become ardent Zionists, Wirth thinks it is a reaction to anti-Semitism, to the rejection by the larger, Gentile world. ❖

*The Ghetto* and *The Gang* are both available at the Asher Library, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies.



**Richard Lewis, watercolor,  
Ravisloe Clubhouse, c. 1970.**  
*Image courtesy of Peter Eckstein.*

A few months ago, the Society received an inquiry from Peter Eckstein of Ann Arbor, Michigan asking us if we had a picture of the golf champion Elaine Rosenthal Reinhardt. He was preparing to give a Power Point presentation at Ravisloe about the club's historical Jewish membership.

We referred Mr. Eckstein to the article "Mail Order and Bungalows: Philanthropist Benjamin J. Rosenthal" by Walter Roth (*CJH* Summer 2002) in which there is a sidebar about Elaine, Benjamin's daughter.

Mr. Eckstein made his presentation on May 1, 2010, a year after the 108-year-old club in south suburban Homewood became a public golf course under its new owner, Dr. Claude Gendreau, D.V.M.

Early members tended to be Jews of German origin who were residents of the Hyde Park-Kenwood neighborhood and members of Sinai Congregation.

The most important person ever to belong to Ravisloe was **Julius Rosenwald** (1862-1932), longtime head of Sears Roebuck, important philanthropist, and founder of the Museum of Science and Industry, who established thousands of "Rosenwald schools" to educate black children in the South.

His brother-in-law, **Max Adler** (1866-1952), founded the first modern planetarium in the Western Hemisphere after his retirement as a Sears executive. Chicago's Adler Planetarium opened in 1930.

**Elaine Rosenthal Reinhardt** (1896-1994) is spoken of by many as America's greatest woman golfer of her era. She was admitted to the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame in 1995. Her father was **Benjamin J. Rosenthal** (1867-1936), founder of the Chicago Mail Order Company, and also a real estate entrepreneur with a number of interests in the Loop. The family foundation named in his memory has provided generous grants to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

**Judge Julian W. Mack** (1866-1943), a founder of the Harvard Law Review, was the pioneering judge of the Chicago juvenile court and an ally of Justice Louis Brandeis in the American Zionist movement.



## “Eminent Ravislovians”

### *A Report on Peter Eckstein's Recent Program at Ravisloe Country Club*

**Salmon O. Levinson** (1865-1941) was a successful Chicago lawyer and founder of the movement to outlaw war, which culminated in the Kellogg Briand Pact of 1928, but had little effect in preventing World War II. **Albert D. Lasker** (1880-1952), called “the father of modern advertising,” was not a longtime member. He built his own golf course on his Lake Forest estate.

Men's clothing manufacturers **Jonas Kuppenheimer**, **Max Hart**, **Joseph Schaffner**, and **Marcus Marx** were members, as was **Meyer Kestnbaum**, who later headed Hart Schaffner & Marx. **Aleck Bauer** of Bauer & Black, **Benjamin E. Bensinger** of Brunswick-Balke-Collender, shoe manufacturers **Simon** and **Norman Florsheim**, and **Modie Spiegel** of Spiegel Home Furnishings were Ravislovians.

There was **Joseph Beifeld**, owner of the Sherman Hotel, and **Oscar Mariantal**, restaurateur and café talent broker who owned Mr. Kelly's. **Louis Eckstein** (1865-1935) owned downtown real estate, but his major activity was civic, promoting his Ravinia Opera in Highland Park. There is a monument to him at Ravinia, where the Festival continues to flourish.

**Morris Fishbein, M.D.** (1889-1976) was the powerful editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association for twenty-five years. His syndicated health

*continued on page 13*

# The Jewish Sacred Society (*Chevra Kadisha*) of Chicago

BY CHANA CHAIMOVITZ KOVALSKY

Just as *halacha* and tradition dictate the Jewish way of life, so do they dictate the Jewish way of death. From the moment a Jew is deceased until the last bit of earth is placed on the grave, Judaism requires certain ritual.

During a person's lifetime, the body is the carrier and partner of the soul. The body's holiness is compared to the Ark, which is the carrier of the Torah, according to Dr. Samson R. Weiss. Thus, when a person passes away, his or her body is treated with the reverence and dignity reserved for holy objects.

This, then, is the basis for Jewish funeral procedure which has been carried out for centuries in communities throughout the world.

The people who attend and prepare the deceased for burial are called the *chevra kadisha* (sacred society). Judaism considers the work of the *chevra kadisha* an act of faith and true loving kindness, unsurpassed for its nobility and merit.

The work of the *chevra kadisha* consists of the *tahara* (washing the body), putting on the *tachrichim* (white linen handmade shrouds), and placing the body in a plain wooden casket. All of this is done with modesty, and dignity, and great respect for the deceased.

For many years, the community relied on a few elderly men and women to do this sacred work. Then, in 1968, the Chicago community woke up and realized that soon there would be nobody to carry on once these few persons were unable to function. And so the Jewish Sacred Society of Chicago was formed.

It all began when three young men, Jerome Robinson, z"l, Dr. Binyamin Sokol, and Joe Weiss, approached the Association for Torah Advancement (now called AFTA), an organization of Orthodox men. Robinson had been doing *taharas* since 1960 with the few elderly men at the chapels. The trio told AFTA that

there was a need for more personnel to do *taharas* and perhaps the members of AFTA would be interested in forming a *chevra kadisha*.

AFTA heeded the call and set up a *chevra kadisha* committee headed by Rabbi Israel Dissen. A charter was drawn up and the group officially became the Jewish Sacred Society (now known as the JSS).

Then, three rabbis were chosen as the JSS *poskim* (rabbinic judges)—Rabbi Hirsch Meisels, Z"TZAL, Rabbi David Regensberg, Z"TZAL, and Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik, Z"TZAL.

Within several weeks, classes on *tahara* procedure had been set up, led by Rabbi Meisels. Twelve men and women attended the sessions. Shortly afterwards, the first JSS *tahara* was performed. That was in 1968, and that year three *taharas* were done.

An advertising campaign was begun in the local Jewish press to acquaint the community with the

importance of *tahara* and traditional funeral practices. Members of the JSS also spoke before numerous synagogues and Jewish organizations about the services that JSS offered.

Due to an increase in *taharas*, more men and women were needed, and several members of the JSS began seeking more volunteers. Within six weeks, the volunteer list grew to 40 people. More families were now requesting *tahara* by JSS, so under the guidance of Dr. Sokol, who was now JSS chairman, a twenty-four hour answering service was set up. By the end of 1969, sixty-five *taharas* had been performed by JSS.

In 1970, Rabbi Chaim Spring became chairman of the Society. He set up an executive committee of six men and two women to meet once a month to discuss the problems and goals of the group.



**Executive Board of the Jewish Sacred Society (*chevra kadisha*) of Chicago, 1970.**

Standing, from left: Rabbi Mordecai Goodman, Rabbi Schaye Abramowitz, Marshall Goldberg, Rabbi Irwin Giffen Z"L, Jerome Robinson Z"L.

Seated, from left: Mrs. Phyllis (Rabbi Avrum) Reifer, Mrs. Chana (Rabbi Philip) Kovalsky.

Photograph courtesy of Chana Kovalsky.



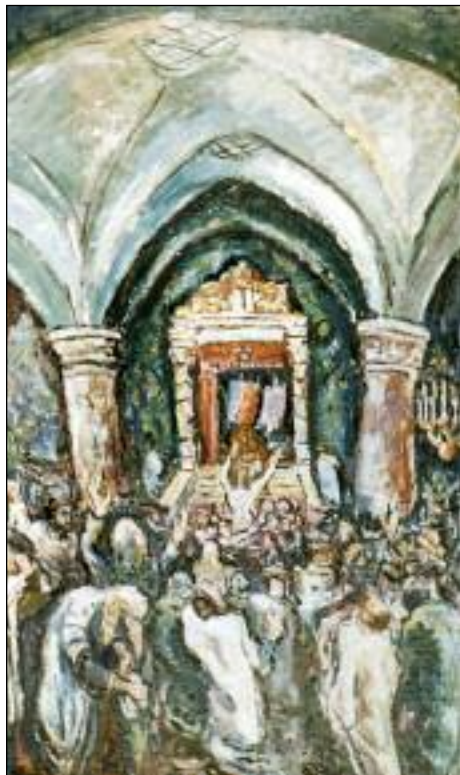
Rabbi David Mescheloff, a member of the executive, was chosen to compile a procedure for the JSS members to follow. It took many many months of untiring work, but finally, the official procedure of the JSS was published. Immediately, requests began pouring in for copies from all over the United States.

By the end of 1970, the number of *tabaras* had reached seventy-eight, somewhat of an increase from the year before, but in proportion to the number of Jewish funerals taking place in Chicago, only a small fraction.

So the JSS executive approached Seymour Mandel, then chairman of the Jewish funeral directors of Chicago, to call a meeting of the local Jewish chapels.

The meeting between the funeral directors and the JSS took place in 1971. Although several points were discussed, the highlight of the meeting was that the JSS wanted to be called in for more *tabaras*. The JSS now had seventy volunteers and could certainly handle more. At that historic meeting, the funeral directors pledged that they would begin calling the JSS for more *tabaras*. And that pledge was fulfilled. By year's end, a total of one hundred-thirty *tabaras* were done.

Author's note: The name of a deceased Jewish man is followed by the Hebrew acronym Z"l (*zecher levrocho*—may his memory be a blessing). The names of the three deceased rabbinical judges mentioned in this article are followed by Z"TZAL (*zecher tzaddik levrocho*—may the memory of the *tzaddik* be a blessing).



**David Bekker, *Ne'ila, Yom Kippur, the Great Synagogue of Vilna.***

Undated oil on canvas.

Image courtesy of Alex Bekker.

That was only the beginning. In the years to follow, the JSS averaged five to six hundred *tabaras* per year. Also, there was suddenly less embalming, less autopsy, and less public viewing, all of which are prohibited by Jewish Law. (The JSS will not perform a *tabara* if there is to be embalming, viewing, or autopsy.)

Chicago was unique in establishing the JSS because nowhere in the world did there exist a *chevra kadisha* with more than half of its members under 30 years of age. From every walk of life they came—housewives, working women, businessmen, professional people, mothers with infants, rabbis, medical students, nurses, teachers. It was unheard of. So many people, all volunteers, coming on short notice to perform perhaps the most important *mitzva* of all.

Every year, in Jewish communities throughout the world, the entire community comes together to pay tribute and honor to their *chevra kadishas*. The centuries-old tradition of the *zayin adar seudah* (the 7th of Adar banquet) is held on the eve following the birthday and *yahrzeit* (anniversary of the death) of Moses. Chicago upholds this tradition. ❖

## **Ravisloe** *continued from page 11*

column ran in 700 newspapers. **Walter L. Jacobs** (1896-1985) founded in 1918 what became the Hertz car rental company. Though he sold it to John Hertz of Yellow Cab early in 1923, he continued to run it until his retirement in 1961. **Milton Reynolds** (1892-1976) was a manufacturer and world traveler who introduced the ballpoint pen to the United States immediately after WWII. As sponsor and navigator, in 1947 he broke the record for round-the-world flight previously held by Howard Hughes. **Philip M. Klutznick** (1907-1999) was a housing official under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, and served as President Carter's Commerce Secretary. His firm, American Community Builders, created Park Forest, Illinois. His later firm, Urban Retail Properties, built Water Tower Place. He was an esteemed national and world Jewish leader.

**Charles N. Eckstein** (1906-1998) was the first recipient of the USGA Award for Voluntary Service to Golf. He was inducted into the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame in 1992. His plaque recognizes his lifelong service as an administrator, and adds... "A fine amateur player himself, Eckstein won 13 club championships at Ravisloe and served as that club's president from 1945-51." **Peter Eckstein**, his son, is an economist by profession and a historian by avocation who retired a few years ago as Research Director of the Michigan AFL-CIO. He provided *CJH* with the material for this article.—*B.C.*

## ED MAZUR'S PAGES FROM THE PAST

**M**y 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.

### **NORTHWEST SIDE JEWISH DAY NURSERY AND KINDERGARTEN**

All the necessary preparations for the opening of the kindergarten and the Jewish Day Nursery on the Northwest Side have been completed. This Sunday, June 23, at 2 p.m., the dedication of this very important Jewish institution in Chicago—of particular importance to the Northwest Side—will be celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. To the B'Not Zion Mizrochi (Daughters of Zion) belongs the credit for the tireless effort that was finally crowned with success.

The celebration will begin at exactly two o'clock at the Sabin

School. The program will begin with a prayer by Rabbi Rosenbloom, followed by the Marks Nathan Home Band, which will play "The Star-Spangled Banner"; then the president will deliver an address...followed by "Hatikvah" played by the band. Other speakers will be Rabbi Saul Silber, Dr. Albert B. Yudelson, Dr. Israel Elfenbein, Judge Hugo Pam, Judge Harry M. Fisher, Attorney Louis Rieger and others.

After the speeches the march will begin from the Sabin School on Hirsch Street to Irving Avenue, to Potomac Avenue, to Leavitt Street, to Evergreen Avenue, to Robey Street, and on Robey Street to the institution at 1441 Wicker Park Avenue.

There the appropriate ceremonies will be held. In addition to the beautiful Jewish program that has been prepared, arrangements have also been made to serve refreshments. — *Daily Jewish Courier*, June 20, 1918

### **CHICAGO HEBREW INSTITUTE INFANT WELFARE STATION**

The Chicago Hebrew Institute announces to its great public, the West Side Jews, that the Infant Welfare Station will be opened this coming Monday, June 24 at 11 a.m. The station will be open daily, and will be under the supervision of a competent nurse, who has had considerable experience in this field. Children from the neighborhood, under six years of age, will be weighed and measured, and those who need medical care will be properly treated. A large number of pamphlets dealing with the care of babies, will be distributed to the mothers. — *Daily Jewish Courier*, June 21, 1918

### **AUTO BANDITS HOLD UP SIXTEENTH STREET STATE BANK**

Yesterday at about one-thirty in the afternoon, a large black automobile stopped not far from the Sixteenth Street State Bank, at the corner of Sixteenth Street and St. Louis Avenue. Six bandits got out and entered the bank.

They flashed their revolvers before the eyes of the cashier, Mr. Jacob Kalish, and locked him and Miss Elsie Landover, and the four depositors into the private office of the president, Samuel Maltz. The robbers then entered the tellers' room, took \$4,500 in paper money, and made their escape. Mr. Maltz, the president, was not in the bank at the time, but his father, Mr. Nathan Maltz, a director of the bank, was locked in with the others.

The audacious robbers, in their hurry, did not even attempt to break into the vault, which was securely locked and contained several hundred thousand dollars worth of Liberty bonds and other valuable papers. Apparently, they understood the difficulty attached to trying to break open the vault, and therefore departed, saying that they had just returned from France, and "we must earn a living somehow."

The bank will not lose a cent because since its founding, it has been insured against theft. An agent from the insurance company immediately made his investigation, and we are informed that the bank will receive a check today from the insurance company for \$4,500.

It is remarkable that the robbers overlooked \$500 in silver and several thousand dollars worth of Liberty bonds which were lying on top of the desk.

This proves that they were not experienced thieves. Officials believe that they are from the neighborhood, and that they watched their chance for a long time and finally chose to act at a lunchtime when most of the employees are out. The Sixteenth Street State Bank opened as a neighborhood bank seven months ago. — *Daily Jewish Courier*, August 8, 1919

### SCANDALOUS SITUATION IN CHICAGO

Jewish Chicago is all agog, Jewish Chicago is excited. At meetings, in the synagogue, at the family table, they talk about it... I mean the talk that is going on about the sluggers who came to see Mr. T. Piser, a well-known undertaker and slugged him until he lost consciousness because he had dared to bury a dead person in Chicago [on a Sunday]. For a "crime" like that the punishment in Chicago is death, and Mr. Piser should be grateful that the sluggers didn't kill him.

A Jewish community like Chicago...has to ask the permission of sluggers in order to bury its dead! ...The Chicago Jewish community is free and independent, but slaughtering is in the hands of a union, burial is in the hands of strangers, and the Chicago Jews have only one kind of freedom—to give money.

But what do the representatives of Chicago Jewry say about this? The presidents of the one hundred Orthodox synagogues, of the hundreds of Jewish lodges, the rabbis, the social workers, the public busybodies are silent. Shhh-shhh—one must not make a scandal. [Editor's note: Sunday burial, which Jewish funeral

directors were trying to institute, was opposed by the unions of liverymen and chauffeurs. It took many years before Sunday burial was permitted by law.] — *Daily Jewish Courier*, February 28, 1922

### BONUS APPLICATIONS FOR EX-SERVICEMEN

The Civic and Citizenship Departments of the Jewish Peoples Institute, under the supervision of competent attorneys, announces that ex-servicemen will be accommodated without any charge any evening of this week in filling out applications for the bonus. Two notaries are always on hand to certify to any document without charge. A sufficient supply of applications is always on hand to serve as many as may call. The service of filling out first or second papers and general information as to citizenship is continued as usual. — *Daily Jewish Courier*, January 18, 1923

### CANTOR JOSEPH ROSENBLATT

Joseph Rosenblatt will officiate at the services this coming Sabbath at the Congregation Anshe Liebavitch (sic). If our Jewish fathers have all their wits about them, they will take their children to the synagogue to listen to the great Rosenblatt, because the melodies he sings have a definite educational value. Everybody is familiar with the legend of the converted Jew who, after living for many years as a Christian, returned to Judaism because, as the story goes, he passed a synagogue and heard a cantor singing the beautiful melodies that he had known in his youth. These melodies moved him so deeply that he became a Jew again. In this legend, the

cultural value of the melodies heard in the Jewish synagogue is tellingly revealed, and that is particularly true when they are sung by such a noted cantor as Rosenblatt. These melodies are precious because they arouse profound Jewish emotions, which become deeply rooted in the soul of a child. Therefore, if you intend to listen to Joseph Rosenblatt, don't forget to bring your children with you. — *Daily Jewish Courier*, February 8, 1923

### BRANCH OF AMERICAN "ORT" ESTABLISHED IN CHICAGO

A branch of the American ORT has been established in Chicago here of late, with the well-known inventor and social worker, Jacob M. Spitzglass, as chairman. The well-known manufacturer, I. Horwin, was elected as treasurer and I. Segalus, secretary.

The office of the Chicago branch of the ORT is located at 30 West Washington Street.

A huge campaign for membership is being planned in Chicago.... For this purpose, Dr. Leon Brahmson, president of the World ORT organization, and Dr. Henry Moskovitz, one of the leaders of the American ORT, will be here in the near future.

A ladies' branch has been established in Chicago with Mrs. Max Adler, sister of Julius Rosenwald, as chairlady.

It is expected that the Chicago branch of the ORT with their good work will be of great assistance to the declassed Jews in Russia as well as for Jews in other countries. — *Jewish Forward*, January 20, 1930 ❖

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### What We Are

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977, and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the United States Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 at an exhibition mounted at the Museum of Science and Industry. The Society has as its purpose the discovery, preservation and dissemination of information about the Jewish experience in the Chicago area.

**Tribute Cards for Celebrations or Memorials** The card design features the Society's logo, our mission statement, and space for a personal message. A pack of eight cards and envelopes is \$10.00. Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at \$5.00 per card, postage included. Order cards from the Society office (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.

**Browse Our Website** for information about our upcoming programs. Read past issues of *Chicago Jewish History*. Discover links to other Jewish sites. Use the printable membership application. We welcome your inquiries and comments. E-mail: [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org)

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

## About the Society

### 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 610 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605-1901. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.