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Sumberg, Alfred D., et al.

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# The Manitowoc County Jewish Community

**PUBLIC LIBRARY** by: *Alfred D. Sumberg, Dora Graff,  
Jeffrey Landa and others.*  
MANITOWOC, WISCONSIN 54220

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Manitowoc County is truly cosmopolitan in its nature. It is made up of a number of different ethnic groups. In our publications we have had articles in newsletters or in monographs relating to the Germans, the Norwegians, Irish, Bohemians, Polish, those having their roots in the British Isles, in Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland. By no means least in their influence on our communities have been those of*

*Jewish descent. We are pleased to be able to bring to our readers a monograph in which is depicted the experiences these people have had as they came to us and became a part of our communities.*

*We are pleased that Mrs. Dora Graff has submitted a manuscript which we are featuring. Jeff Lando is a young student in journalism who was on our CETA staff about a year ago.*

## Some Recollections of Dora Graff

*Reed Ave.,  
Manitowoc, Wisconsin*

A sketch of the Jewish settlers in Manitowoc with a few incidents in the lives of these people is no different than that of non-Jewish immigrants. Waves of Europeans arrived in the United States because of oppression, political and religious. Husbands left their families behind, crossing the Atlantic to America. Many single young men also left for the "Golden Land" to make their home. Immigration was heavy from 1810 to 1890. Uppermost, the plans and hopes of the newcomers was to get enough money to pay for passage so that their families could join them. An early wave of Jews came from Germany. About 1860 a German

Jewish family arrived in Two Rivers to make their home. The Mann family had three sons, Henry, Joseph and Leopold. They operated a sawmill and a mercantile store. In 1886 Joseph Mann was elected mayor of Two Rivers. A library was named after this well-liked resident and it still bears the name of Joseph Mann Library.

A pioneer family from Germany named Brandies conducted a store on 9th and York Streets in the mid-1800's. From Manitowoc, they moved to Omaha, Nebraska where they established a chain of stores.

Later groups from Russia and Poland made their way to Manitowoc and Two Rivers. An exception was the Edward Harris family who came from Chicago in the late 1800's. One wonders what these people did to make a living. The Manitowoc Seating Co. and Hamilton Mfg. Co. of Two Rivers were early employers. A difficult way of the "language handicapped" was traveling by horse and wagon, buying scrap metal, etc. Others sold new clothing, driving from farm to farm over rough roads.

Many early settlers were orthodox and made every effort to observe the Sabbath. In September, 1900 the thirty residents formed a congregation. Rabbi Green became the first ordained leader at a wage of \$6.00 a week. Services were conducted in homes or rented halls, especially Saenger Hall.

Two years later the congregation purchased the old wood school house from First Norwegian Lutheran Congregation. The cost was \$100.00. It

was moved to 1221 South 13th Street. Remodeling to comply with needs of the congregation was done by two men who were employed by American Seating Company, manufacturers of church furniture. These young men, Mr. Weinstein and Mr. Feldman, built the Ark, most holy item in a synagogue, it houses the Torah and holy books.

Anshe Poele Zedek Synagogue housed the congregation for 23 years. In 1925 it was replaced with a brick structure at a cost of \$16,000.00. For some years Alfred Muchin and his committee were busy raising funds to build the new synagogue. Ed Phillips, Ed Harris, Abe Schwartz and Alfred Muchin, with Sam Golden and Dave Balkansky headed a drive which netted \$6,000.00. Mr. John Schuette contributed \$1,000.00 while other non-Jews also made liberal contributions. Fifteen years later, in 1940, the congregation completed paying its obligations. This called for a celebration, a mortgage burning and banquet held at Odd Fellows Hall on South 8th Street.

The Ed Phillips families, consisting of parents and sons Jay (and his family), brothers Louis and Henry, left Manitowoc for Wausau and Minneapolis about 1925. In Manitowoc they operated a newspaper stand and manufactured the Martha Louise line of candy. Prospering in several projects in their new location, they gave generously. Land for a Boy Scout Camp and a hospital in Minneapolis are two of their many charitable undertakings. Jay's son, Morton Phillips, is the husband of "Dear Abby" who writes a column in many newspapers. A stopover home was provided for immigrants by Mr. and Mrs. Sam Golden in their home on South 15th Street. The Goldenes arrived here in the mid-nineties, Attorney Arden Muchin and Nash Muchin are two of their grandsons who reside in Manitowoc.

Names of several young men who served in World War I are Iman Sigman, Samuel Sigman, Joe Druskin, Simon Schwartz and Myron Schwartz all from Two Rivers.

Of this group we will remember



*Mrs. Graff*



Simon Schwartz who bequeathed the Manitowoc County Counseling Center at 339 Reed Avenue to the community. Another item in his will was a scholarship of \$6,000.00 to two Lincoln graduates yearly for a four year college course.

What the men in our midst lacked was a social organization. Thus in 1927 Manitowoc Bnai Brith Lodge No. 1071 received its charter with 33 members, 95% of the male Manitowoc Jewish adult population. Sam Boriss, Julius Graff and Iman Sigman were the first officers. An early project was a Boy Scout Troop with Ben Dwoskin Scoutmaster and Dave Roseff as assistant.

In a few years Hitlerism raised its ugly head. War began. Sons and brothers joined the Navy, Air Force, Army and the Merchant Marine. Ray Alpert became a lieutenant and was stationed on a Pacific Island. One of the first to leave was Nathan Swerdlow. Now retired Col. Swerdlow is residing at Beaumont, Texas. Marvin Shapiro was a prisoner of the Japanese. (He was on Corregidor or Bataan when captured by the Japanese and taken to Yokahama prison. When released 3½ years later his weight was 85 lbs.) Marvin was 17 at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. Melvin Balkansky of Manitowoc; Albert, John, Solomon Bensman of Two Rivers, Bernard Berk, Leon Berk, Marvin Boriss, Charles Alpert, Henry and Milton Friedman, Herbert and Daniel Graff, Herman Gutterman, Charles Kipen, Arden Muchin, Eugene Muchin, Pierce Richberg, Robbie Robinson, Dave Roseff, Benard Ross, Dr. Rudolph Rotter, Harlan, Lester and Rudolph Schwartz and Herman Balaban were among those in the service of our country. Retired Colonel Isaiah Sigman resides in Los Angeles.

The first Jewish wedding was June 10, 1900. Martha Stein and Abe

Schwartz were married in Turner Hall on Washington Street, the first of a number of Jewish weddings. To this family, seven sons and one daughter, Mrs. Ann Steiner, were born. One son, Meyer and the daughter, are deceased.

Harry Schwartz is Chairman of the Board of Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry which his father, Abe, headed. Son Lester, now retired, was artist in residence at Ripon College for many years.

### A Wartime Marriage

Our Jewish population increased during World War II. Families and single men arrived to take part in the submarine building program. Irving Oberstien, a navy man for a number of years, made plans to marry his Boston fiancée. Within a few weeks the ceremony took place at the synagogue. On a lovely Sunday afternoon, with the synagogue filled with sailor friends and the local residents, Rabbi Horowitz united Jean and Irving Oberstein in marriage.

### The Storm of 1924

The snow storm of April 14, 1980, was indeed a phenomenon to area residents. Going back 56 years, about the same date a much more severe storm descended quite suddenly. Mr. and Mrs. Dave Balkansky, ourselves Dora and Julius Graff, and our two-year-old daughter Paula boarded the street car for an afternoon visit with friends in Two Rivers. When we were to leave several hours later we found we were really snowed in. With no street car operating the visit extended to Thursday. Julius left on the first vehicle, a team of horses with a load of twelve men. Driving along the edge of the lake to the destination of Manitowoc became a treacherous journey. This spring storm caused much damage in the county.

Jack and Tillie Barenbaum arrived in Manitowoc from Hibbing,

Minnesota in 1926. Mr. Barenbaum was the business manager of the Herald-Times. Throughout the years both served in many areas in the community and were very supportive of the synagogue.

The local Jewish community accepted the responsibility for six families who fled from Germany in 1939 and 1940. The Manitowoc Jewish Federation and individuals looked after the needs of these exhausted, homeless people. Of this group, two families remained to make their home here — the Hugo Rose's and the Eli Abramson's. Hugo Rose had been in the German Submarine Service before he was forced to leave his native country. Until a few years ago when illness prevented him from carrying on, he was a diligent worker for Bnai Brith, Jewish Federation synagogue and wherever he was called upon to assist.

The local Jewish population has not increased in size in recent years. As the third generation of young people leave for schools of higher learning, few decide to return to make Manitowoc their permanent home.

It was destiny that in 1953 the Jewish congregation took over the Norwegian Lutheran Church, as they had the first building from the same church in 1902. The present project amounted to about \$100,000.00. Some of those who worked on acquiring the building were Iman Sigman, Bernard Balkansky, Bernard Schwartz, Meyer Schwartz, Morris Messerman, Alvin Muchin, Arden Muchin, Leon Balaban, Paul Koritzinsky and Rudolph Schwartz. This was a dream come true, a home of worship, classrooms, social hall and kitchen. D.P.Z. translated means "People who do Justice."

*Dora Graff — 83 years*

## Manitowoc Jewish Community

*by: Alfred D. Sumberg — Director,  
Wisconsin Jewish Archives*

Characteristic of the development of a large portion of Wisconsin Jewry was the growth of communal life in Manitowoc. Essentially a united Jewish community, it has not changed its character too much over the past 50 years. This does not imply that the Jews of Manitowoc have not kept up with the times; it does mean that they have been able to adjust within themselves and to integrate as a group in the general community with little difficulty.

The first community of Jewish settlers in Manitowoc came in the 1890's. Twenty years before, however, individual Jews had settled there. Early records indicate that in 1868, Jonas E. Brandeis and Moses Teweles

lived in Manitowoc. Brandeis sold "clothing, notions, liquors, wholesale and retail," and Teweles had a grocery store on Washington Street, at the southwest corner on 9th street. Both later left Manitowoc, Brandeis and his family for Omaha in 1881, and Teweles for Milwaukee, where he died on January 3, 1896. There is no indication of what particular role these two families played in the Manitowoc community.

In 1894, the Joe Sklute family represented the only Jews in Manitowoc. About the same time, J. Balkansky lived in Manitowoc, Two Rivers and later Sheboygan. The following year began the migration of more Jewish families into the

community. Fleeing the hardships of Europe, these people came to America, according to the *Manitowoc Herald-Times* to "establish life in a strange land but one which promised freedom." Some of them stopped off for a short time along the way but eventually they reached their goal, Manitowoc. Most of the early members of the community came the long distance from the Atlantic seaboard primarily because they had relatives in Manitowoc. Others found Manitowoc a pleasant place in which to settle. The means of making a living was a good reason also. Some were employed by the Manitowoc Seating Co. and a few worked for the Hamilton Manufacturing Company in Two Rivers. Others were engaged profitably in peddling, scrap collecting, and small business. Few were to be found as laborers in the shipyard. The theory persists,





*Congregation Anshe Poale Zedek erected this brick building in 1925, replacing a wooden structure on same site. Brick building, above, was sold in 1953 to the Seventh Day Adventists.*

however, that the presence of the shipyard added substantially to the economic wealth of the general community, which attracted Jews and non-Jews alike to Manitowoc. Some of the early Jewish settlers did not remain in Manitowoc. For reasons of family unity or economic well-being, they moved to Minneapolis, Milwaukee or Chicago. But in view of a balanced ratio between emigration and immigration, the Manitowoc Jewish community has remained fairly static over the last 25 years.

Primary in the establishment of any Jewish community in America was the organization of a synagogue. After meeting informally for religious services during the last five years of the 19th Century, the Anshe Poale Zadik Congregation was organized in February and incorporated in March of 1900. The names of those incorporating the congregation indicate a group dedicated to build a strong congregation and community. These included: I. Green, Max Stein, Morris Green, Joe Sklute, Morris Davidson, I. Phillips, Joe Lipschultz, M. Phillips. I. Shapiro, B. Shomey, Simon Sallcavit, A. Schwartz, Sam Golden and David Balkansky. Beginning with a charter group of approximately 25 members, the congregation, based on Orthodox tradition, grew in strength and numbers. Early in its career it set down regulations (e.g. dues 25¢ a month) and hired Rabbi Samuel David Cohen as the community's first schochet. In 1902, the congregation purchased a school house from the First Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church and moved it to South 13th Street. In 1925, the wooden frame shule was replaced by a brick building. In 1953, the twenty-three year old site was sold to a Seventh Day Adventist group and two lots on the corner of North 8th and State Streets were purchased. On this site stands an impressive synagogue, dedicated on September 19, 1954.

Early in its career, the Manitowoc Jewish community faced problems common to all Jewish communities that size. Immigrants arrived continuously from Europe and the East. Aid to them in terms of adjustment, housing, and general advice was not institutionalized; instead it was extended on an informal basis by charitable families to relatives, landmen, and unknown co-religionists. It was only in 1928, that the Manitowoc Jewish Federation, dedicated to raising money for all sorts of charitable needs, was organized under the presidency of David Balkansky. The Federation has served to fill both the local needs and to make the community part of an American and world Jewry. Education, maintenance of Kashruth and other ritual practices, and social life were of tremendous importance in Manitowoc. The first two were combined in 1925 when Rev. Bernard Horowitz undertook to act as Hebrew teacher and religious leader. Marriages, circumcisions, and ritual slaughters were performed under his direction.

## **A History of the Manitowoc County Jewish Community**

*by Jeffrey Lauda, Two Rivers*

The immigration of Jewish settlers to the Manitowoc-Two Rivers area coincides with their European non-Jewish counterparts. Both shared common reasons for leaving the "Old Country" and then coming to America. "Economics were bad; oppression of minority groups common, persecution for religious or political differences not unusual."

The earliest wave of immigrants to the Wisconsin area was in the 1860s. At this period in time we find the Mann Brothers, Joseph, Henry, and Leopold in Two Rivers, and two families, the Jonas E. Brandeis family and the Moses Teweles family, living in Manitowoc.

The Manns operated a sawmill and a mercantile store in Two Rivers. Later, in 1886, Joseph Mann was elected mayor of Two Rivers. The city has since then memorialized this man by naming their public library the Joseph Mann Library.

Mr. Brandeis kept a store in Manitowoc at 9th and York where he sold clothing, notions, liquors, wholesale and retail.

Mr. Teweles had a grocery store on Washington Street at the corner on 9th Street.

Both later left the area, Brandeis and his family for Omaha, Nebraska and Teweles family left for Milwaukee.

The Brandeis family later established what would later become a well-known chain of department stores in Omaha, Nebraska.

"The first orthodox Jewish settler is

believed to have been J. Balkansky, who for a time settled in Two Rivers and Manitowoc."

Early social life revolved about the Temple and its women's auxiliary (the Charity Club) and only recently about the Bnai Brith, (1927) the Council of Jewish Women, (1930) and the Temple Sisterhood, (1951). In reality, the synagogue appears to have been the center of Jewish life.

Through the years, the community became stable and mature. As a group within itself, it appeared to be united. It developed leadership in the Phillips, Golden, Balkansky, Muchin, and Schwartz families and in such individuals as Mrs. Ed Harris, Iman Sigman, Jack Barenbaum and Hugo Rose. As a group, also, it produced talent in business, industry, law, and art. From Manitowoc, for example, came Lester Schwartz, a well-known artist, and Jacob Muchin, former Assistant National OPA Director. During World War II, thirty young men from the Jewish community served their country. General relations with non-Jewish neighbors have been good.

As a community, then, Manitowoc was a history well-worth preserving.

believed to have been J. Balkansky, who for a time settled in Two Rivers and Manitowoc."

"In 1894 the Joe Skulte family represented the only Jewish family in Manitowoc.

Then in 1895, when Czarist persecution in both Russia and Poland began, a number of Jewish families came to the United States and some came to the Manitowoc-Two Rivers area. This area offered basically two things to the immigrants; family unity and promising employment opportunities.

Some immigrants already had relatives or people who sponsored their trip living in the Manitowoc-Two Rivers area. This, in itself, was enough incentive to motivate immigrants to make the additional trip from the Eastern Seaboard to this area.

This area also provided a means for individuals to make a living. Thus Jewish workers found employment at the Manitowoc Seating Company, where church furniture was made, and also at what was then known as the Hamilton Manufacturing Company in Two Rivers. In later years, during the two world wars, some worked in the shipyards. Others established small businesses.

"Fifteen to twenty others, took one of the hardest avenues of making a living open to the "language handicapped" immigrants, and that was buying scrap metal and discarded cotton and woolen fabrics, rags... This was in the horse and buggy days with slow,



tedious rides for miles from house to house and farm to farm, many traveling 30 to 40 miles from home — a long distance at that time.”

As with other immigrants, “it took no average person to say farewell to his parents, to his brothers and sisters and other friends, to leave them, what was then “forever”. Those who ventured from Europe to the United States did so with little money, frequently borrowed from the very people they were leaving behind. Fathers and husbands left for “America” with *only* hopes of earning money to buy a passage for the wife and children later. Some realized the goal in a year or two; some never!”

Some settlers left this area for the same reasons that others came here for; family unity and economic well being. Many who left went to Minneapolis, Milwaukee, or Chicago.

But those families that did make the Manitowoc-Two Rivers area their home, (there were about 30 families in 1900), made up a very strong spiritual congregation that was on the threshold of officially establishing their own house of worship.

The congregation, after meeting informally for several months in various homes of the members, officially formed the congregation of Anshe Poale Zedek. This took place in the residence of I. Green on 10th Street, on February 18, 1900.

“On March 18, 1900, there appears in the minutes the name of Rabbi Samuel David Cohen as the first schochet. He was hired at a regular weekly wage of \$6.00 with an opportunity to increase his earnings especially from teaching children.”

“Two months after organization of Poale Zedek, April 18, 1900, a committee was appointed for the



*Martha Stein and Abe Schwartz*

purpose of buying a building. In the meantime services were held in homes, in rented halls, especially the Saenger Hall.”

“The first Jewish wedding was held on June 10, 1900 when Martha Stein and Abe Schwartz were married in Turner Hall, Washington Street. It was the first of a number of Jewish weddings.”

“Early settlers were orthodox in their ways and religion. Every effort was made to keep the Sabbath. On September 15, 1900, the Congregation agreed on the following: Quorum for meetings, 7; (For services, 10 persons as required by ritual); majority rules; dues 25¢ a month and members absent from Saturday service without cause 25¢ fine; peddlers not to work on Saturday.”

In 1902 the building committee “purchased the old wood frame from the First Lutheran Church, on the corner of North 8th Street. The cost of the building was \$100 and moving \$100. President Green purchased the lot at 1221 South 13th Street. It was remodeled to suit our needs, quite a bit of the work being done by two members of the congregation, a Mr. Feldman and Mr. Weinstein, who also worked for the former Manitowoc Seating Company, church furniture builders. Both Feldman and Weinstein built the Ark and carved the decoration. The Ark, most holy place in the synagogue, houses the Torah and other holy books, which are hand lettered on parchment. The Torah, and sometimes other scrolls, are removed on Saturdays and other days of prayer, and portions are read aloud to the assembled congregation.”

In World War I several congregation members served the country. They were Iman Sigman, Samuel Sigman, Joe Druskin, Simon Schwartz and Myron Schwartz.

“Anshe Poale Zedek synagogue housed the congregation for 23 years. In 1925 it was replaced with a brick structure at a cost of \$16,000. For some years Secretary Alfred Muchin and his committee were busy raising funds to build a new synagogue. Ed Phillips, Ed Harris, Abe Schwartz and Alfred Muchin, with Sam Golden and Dave Balkansky headed a drive which netted \$6,000. Mr. John Schuette contributed \$1,000 and some non-Jews made liberal contributions also.”

In 1927 the Manitowoc Bnai Brith Lodge No. 1071 received its charter with 33 members, 95% of the adult male population. Sam Boriss, Julius Graff and Iman Sigman were the first officers. An early project was a Boy Scout Troop with Dave Roseff as Scoutmaster.”

Then in 1940 when the congregation completed paying its financial obligation on the brick synagogue a mortgage burning and banquet ceremony was held at the Odd Fellows Hall on South 8th Street soon after to celebrate.

When World War II broke out, sons and brothers of the congregation joined the Navy, Air Force, Army, and Merchant Marines. Ray Alpert became a lieutenant and was stationed in the Pacific. One of the first to leave was Nathan Swerdlow, now retired Col. Swerdlow, residing in Beaumont, Texas. Marvin Shapiro was a prisoner of the Japanese and he was 17 at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. Other men who served the country were: Melvin Balkansky, Albert, John and Solomon Bensman, Bernard Berk, Leon Berk, Marvin Boriss, Charles Alpert, Harry and Milton Friedman, Herbert and Daniel Graff, Herman Gutterman, Charles Kipen, Arden Muchin, Eugene Muchin, Pierce Richberg, Robbie Robinson, Dave Roseff, Bernard Ross, Dr. Rudolph Rotter, Harlan, Lester and Rudolph Schwartz and Herman Balaban. Retired Col. Isaiah resides in Los Angeles.



*Samuel Schwartz*

*One of the founders of Congregation Anshe Poale Zedek.*



*Alfred Muchin*

*Sept. 15, 1881 — Dec. 29, 1953*



# THE HISTORY OF JEWISH PEOPLE IN AMERICA

by

*Carol Spiegel, a feature writer and editor of Lincoln High School's Hi-Tower  
Flashes. This article published in Hi-Tower Flashes in 1954*

When we read American history or study it in our schools, Jews are seldom mentioned. From this, most people might conclude that the Jewish people have had little to do with the history of the United States, or that the Jews are newcomers who arrived after others had founded this nation and made it great.

Underlying facts have proven otherwise. Jews have lived in the land that is now the United States of America long before it won its freedom; they have worked for it, sacrificed for it, and loved it at every period of its history.

But they came as families or even as separate persons, not in large groups like the Pilgrims or the Cavaliers. They didn't have a whole colony of their own, like the Quakers in Pennsylvania or the Catholics in Maryland.

Therefore they are often lost to view among the individuals of many different races and religions who lived in America and helped make it what it is today.

In spite of the absence of information in publicized historical recordings. Jews have made great contributions to the growth of the U.S. There have been Jews prominent in the history of our country from the time of Columbus until the present day.

About the time of Columbus' birth, the Christian Spaniards won the final battle and drove the last remnants of the heathen Moors from Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella, the leaders of the Spanish forces, mounted a joint throne. One of their first acts was to outlaw all faiths but the Catholic one, and the Inquisition was established to carry this out.

All Jews, who had formerly flourished under the lenient Moors, were forced to either flee from Spain, thereby leaving all their possessions to the greedy Inquisition, or to turn Christian. Many Jews stayed, outwardly becoming the followers of Christ, but secretly following their own Jewish practices. The Inquisition was brutal and relentless in dealing with these secret Jews, who were called Marranos.

The first white man to set foot on American soil was Luis de Torres, a Marrano and the expedition's interpreter. Altogether, five, possibly six, Marranos accompanied Columbus on his first voyage. Among these were the Queen's official inspector, the ship's surgeon, the ship's physician, the interpreter, and two sailors.

Not only in the actual voyage, but in



*New Synagogue*



the financing and backing did the Jews aid Columbus, Luis de Santangel and Gabriel Sanchez, Marranos with a high standing at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, threw their influence behind this risky undertaking. Much has been made of Isabella's offer to pawn her jewels to finance the voyage, but Santangel was the one who actually came through. There are actual records of his loan and the king's subsequent repayment.

Because of this same Inquisition, many Jews were driven from their homes to the New World. They came in families, as mentioned before, with practically nothing but the clothes they wore. Building new homes and lives with the other settlers, they founded schools and synagogues wherever there was a large community of Jewish people.

Spanish Jews weren't the only ones coming to this new America. Jews came from every European country where they were oppressed, downtrodden. In this age of persecution, the Jews had found a haven.

The German Jews came to America as part of a great mass of migrating central Europeans — Christians and Jews alike — in the period of 1815 to 1890. They came searching for the same opportunities that had brought men to this new land since the earliest Pilgrims, a chance to worship in their own way, freedom to do as they own free wills dictated. The small, harsh autocracies of the disunited German states were particularly severe against the Jews. In Bavaria, they were subject to special taxes and conscription without being allowed even the privilege of citizenship.

These immigrants were different from the high, proud Spaniards of the earlier wave. First, these Germans had been forced for years to live in ghettos, to run from the police, to wear special badges signifying that they were Jews. Education and any form of wealth was extremely hard to accumulate.

They came to America with a great thirst and respect for knowledge. Many professional Jews, leaders in their communities, are the sons of merchants who began as peddlars in the middle 1800's.

In 1881, the Czar of Russia passed the May Laws, strict persecution laws against the Jews, and touched the match to the third eruption of Jews from Europe. The openly announced program of "kill one-third of the Jews, drive one-third out of the country, and convert one-third to the Orthodox Church" drove scores of Jews from their homes.

This was not a migration of a few; this was a mass flight of a terrorized, persecuted people to the haven of America. Whole towns moved to America, rich and poor, old and young,



Mr. and Mrs. Sam Golden

the Talmud scholar and the village loafer. They brought their families, settled down to stay forever, and became citizens as soon as possible.

The German Jews had been largely liberals, antislavery Republicans. The Russian Jews, coming from a land of medievalism, had very few liberals; they were divided into extreme orthodox and flaming, radical revolutionists. Most of the Russians settled in the Eastern cities, especially New York, and became workmen.

So we see that American Jewry represents these three waves of migration; not absolutely, but intermingled. The Jews of the Russian wave have influence due to their overwhelming numbers. The German influence is perhaps equal, as they arrived here previously. The Spanish communities have largely been absorbed into the other, larger groups.

Of course, history didn't stop with Columbus and neither did the Jewish contributions to America. The founding American Revolution itself might have been lost or at least disastrously delayed had it not been for the financial genius and high patriotism of Haym Salomon. Salomon handled several hundred thousand dollars for the government. He even personally endorsed the bills of exchange of the new government, putting his own credit in danger. As a known sympathizer, required to work with the English in the capacity of interpreter, he helped many French and American prisoners to escape; many times endangering his life.

Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, was a supporter of the Jewish people. Lincoln was the close personal friend of Abraham Jonas, a Jewish merchant in Illinois. Besides presidential aides, there were Jews

actively fighting in the Union Army. Many were decorated for their courage in action.

This Jewish leadership wasn't confined to the Union, however. The great Jewish orator of that time, Judah P. Benjamin, was Secretary of State in the Confederate government, and has often been called "the brains of the Confederacy."

Ever since, the Jewish community in the U.S. has been growing. And with its growth in numbers, comes a growth in prominence and leadership. Edna Ferber and Fannie Hurst, two outstanding authors, were born Jews. Playwrights Sidney Kingsley, *Detective Story* and *Darkness at Noon*; and Clifford Odets, *Country Girl*; are two more representatives of the Jewish people.

To list more, there are Adolph S. Ochs, owner and publisher of the *New York Times*; David Belasco, pioneer in the theater; Jack Benny, Eddi Cantor, Al Jolson, Houdini, great showmen of our time; Albert Michelson, at once dreamer and practical scientist, who discovered the exact speed of light; and Albert Einstein, the refugee from Nazi dictatorship who was instrumental in overthrowing that very conspiracy.

Now we are living in a fourth stage, a stage in which the Jewish people in America are merging together, joining groups that represent them as a whole. The old, medieval prejudices are declining with the years.

Young Jewish men and women are now on an equal par with others in most of their clubs, schools, and jobs. More than ever before, they are gaining entrance to professional jobs; medicine, law, dentistry. In this America that they helped build, the Jews have finally found a friend, a protector, a home.



## Council Story

by: Clara Sigman

Paralleling the growth of our Jewish community is the growth and establishment of the Manitowoc section of the National Council of Jewish Women. Having outgrown its predecessor, the Ladies' Aid Society, the women wanted to become affiliated with an organization which is active in its service to the community, to the nation and to the world. This small group of women wanted to learn more about national and international affairs; they wanted Jewish educational facilities for their children; they wished to become part of the community in which they lived.

The first meeting was held June 30, 1930, at the home of Mrs. David Balkansky, with Mrs. Iman Sigman acting as temporary chairman. Mrs. Jack Barenbaum was elected president and Mrs. Abe Koritzinsky was chairman of the Ways and Means committee. With the passing of the years, other presidents were: Mrs. Abe Glickman, Mrs. Dave Muchin, Mrs. Julius Graff, Mrs. Jacob Muchin, Mrs. Nathan Schneck, Mrs. Jack Barenbaum, Mrs. Max Polisky, Mrs. Harry Schwartz, Mrs. Bernard B. Schwartz, Mrs. Paul Koritzinsky, Mrs. Jack Boriss, Mrs. Henry Lipschutz, Mrs. Nash Muchin and Mrs. R.O. Schwartz.

Incidentally, when Council celebrated its 25th anniversary its president at that time was Mrs. Arden Muchin, whose mother, Mrs. Jack Barenbaum, was president when Council was organized here in 1930.

By October, 1930, Mrs. Sam Phillips,

Mrs. Israel Axel, Mrs. Sam Boriss, Mrs. Abe Glickman, Mrs. Sam Feldman, Mrs. Sam Messerman, Mrs. Ida Sohr and Mrs. Sam Bordenstein, had joined the charter members.

For entertainment at the meeting, there was always local talent available. A perusal of the early records shows us that the program committee called on Esther Kipen for singing, and Shirley Axel and Charlotte Richberg for readings. There was a flute and banjo duet by Harry Friedman and Harley Metzger.

From its early records here we find that one of Council's first and foremost projects was the establishment of a Sunday school, and with that thought in mind, Mrs. Israel Axel was appointed Sunday school chairman, as far back as 1930. The first Purim play by our new Sunday school group was held at the Elks Club in 1932. Mrs. Sam Brenner purchased candy for the children.

An organization, dedicated to service, cannot function without funds. On Sept. 14, 1930, the first card party was held, and the earnings for that party were \$13.45. On Nov. 18, 1931, Council held its first rummage sale. Profits, \$65.84. The first bakesale, held in March, 1931, brought in \$22.83.

In February, 1931, Abe Schwartz made up an appeal to Council for money for the redecorating and repairing fund of the synagogue. As a result of Mr. Schwartz's appeal, \$100 in cash was given toward the synagogue fund, and \$200 was pledged, which according to the records, "we will pay

for when possible."

Excerpt from records of Oct. 18, 1932 meeting: "Mrs. Harris reported on the cost of building a community building. The cost was more than the Council could undertake and the matter was dropped for the time being."

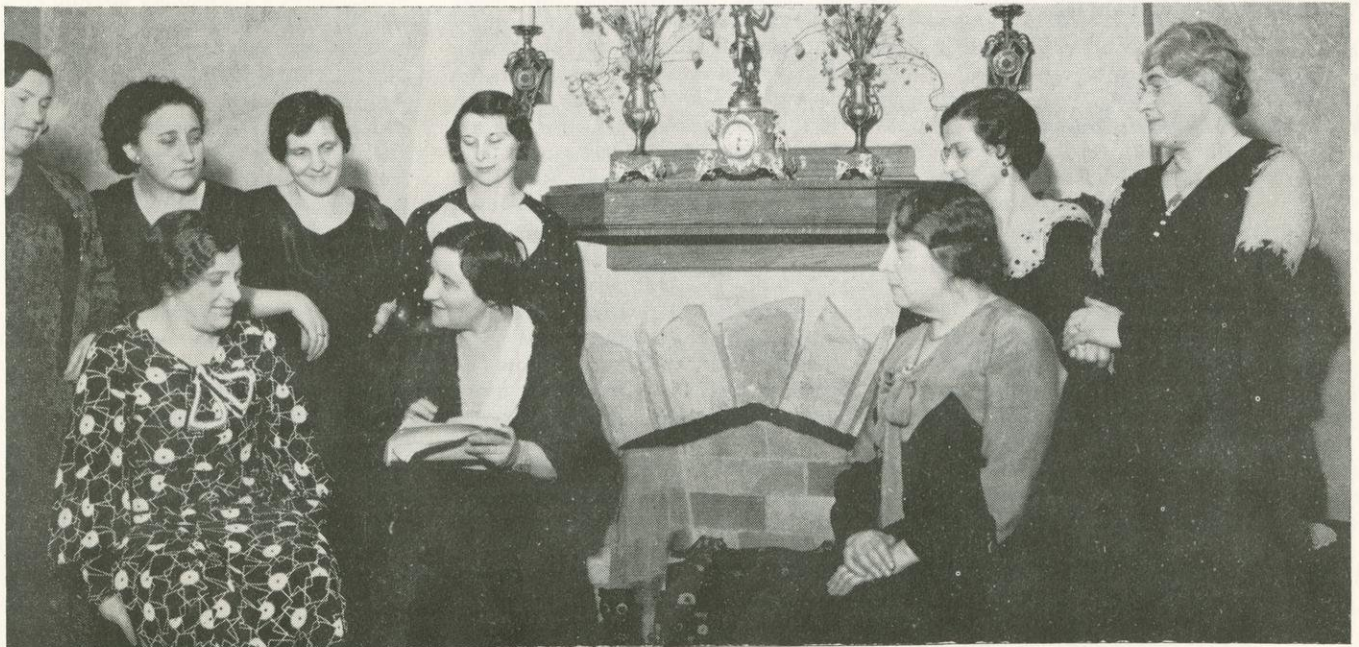
In 1937, Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Alfred Muchin, Mrs. Sam Phillips and Mrs. Sam Swerdlow were appointed members of the synagogue committee. On Jan. 5, 1938 Mrs. Harry Schwartz became a member of Council. At a meeting on February 14, 1938 Mrs. Sam Brenner volunteered to go to Sunday school to "help keep the children quiet."

No sooner was this small group of women organized when they had an awareness of the suffering and sorrow of people in many parts of the world. In January, 1931, Council sent ten dollars to a school for the blind, in Palestine.

The rise of Hitlerism in Germany and the threatened extinction of the Jewish people brought a generous response from our Council of Jewish Women. Throughout those dark and threatening years, the group sent money to the children's project fund and to the adult refugee fund.

In 1939 and in 1940 Mrs. Nash Muchin, Mrs. Alvin Muchin, Mrs. Henry Lipschutz and Mrs. Morris Messerman came to Manitowoc to become members.

Then the war years — the loved ones going into service; the women going to work at Red Cross headquarters and bandage making centers; helping out at the U.S.O. In February, 1941, money allocated for the purchase of flannel pajamas for prisoners in Canada; in January, 1942, five cartons of clothing



The above picture was taken at an afternoon meeting with Miss Cecelia Razovsky, of New York, representative of the National Council of Jewish Women, at the home of Mrs. Ed. Harris. Meeting took place in 1933.

Bottom row: Mrs. Julius Graff (at that time president of the Manitowoc section), Miss Razovsky and Mrs. Harris.

Upper row: Mrs. Sam Swerdlow, Mrs. Iman Sigman, Mrs. Abe Koritzinsky, Mrs. Bernard Balkansky, Mrs. Jack Barenbaum and Mrs. Dave Balkansky.



packed and shipped by Mrs. Leon Balaban for refugees at Ellis Island.

Throughout the almost quarter century of its existence Council has been conscious of the fact that its life is inescapably integrated into the life of the community of Manitowoc and the world, too. Its history is the history of service and participation — it has given funds to the Cancer Drive, to the Association for the Disabled, to the German Refugee Relief Fund, the Denver Hospital, the Manitowoc Jewish Federation Fund. It has given money to the Joint Distribution Committee; it has given \$3,000 to the building fund of our new synagogue, and has always helped maintain the old synagogue. Council members assisted at the Red Cross blood banks.

The history of Council: here is also the history of Jewish education for our children from its modest beginnings.

In carrying out National's program of sending school supplies to under privileged children in Israel and North Africa, the members always enjoy this project and look forward to packing the cartons.

The study groups including contemporary Jewish affairs, international relations and social legislation, are well attended. The ship-a-box project and the student exchange program, plus participation in the life of the local community all help to make Council members happier because they know they are contributing to the welfare of others, thus making the world a better place in which to live.

## Iman Sigman

Iman Sigman was the oldest of 11 children in a family that settled in Two Rivers. The family came to this country from Poland.

His father worked on the Two Rivers breakwater around 1907 and was a rag and cloth collector.

Iman started school at the age of nine and he later left school after the completion of the 6th grade.

After World War II he attended Marquette University during the day and worked for a Milwaukee paper at night.

Although he never graduated from Marquette, he was employed by several newspapers as a reporter in Gary, Indiana, as a press bureau agent in Chicago and a sports editor for the Appleton Post Crescent in the early 1920s.

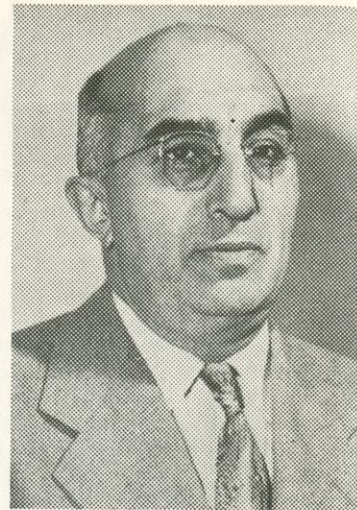
In 1922 he left Appleton and returned to Two Rivers to help his father establish a dry goods store. In 1923 he came to Manitowoc to establish a small ready to wear store at 1513 Washington Street.

He built another store in 1931 at 1422 Washington Street, dealing in ladies and childrens ready to wear clothes.

He retired in 1967 and died in 1976.

He is one of the founders of the Bnai Brith Lodge Manitowoc Chapter and was its secretary for 50 years.

An active man not only in the congregation, he was also active in the community. He was a member of the Manitowoc Chamber of Commerce and



*Iman Sigman*

also a member of the Lions Club, just to name a few of his activities in the community.

But probably the activity that he is remembered for most is the time he spent with the sick and the shutins of the community. Much of his time after retirement was spent comforting and cheering up those who were ill or could not move about.

One place that he frequently visited was the Manitowoc County Health Center, where he was very well liked by the residents because he spent so much time with them.

Those who knew Iman Sigman, knew him to be a hard working, energetic man whose kindness and generosity touched them.

## MANITOWOC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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