

to have been asking for a method of maintaining unity which would have allowed them a measure of autonomy and self-expression. Had Beth Israel accepted this plan, the Jewish community might have continued united, even when, at some time later, separate houses of worship were erected. Financial control and the administration of all necessary activities in the community would have remained centralized. We learn, however, from the minutes of Beth Israel that this compromise was not effected. The Sephardic group headed by Pinchos Striar sent its petition for a separate service to the board of directors. The request was rejected. The opposition was led by Joseph Byer and Morris Rosen. Simon Kominsky and Nathan Ginsberg were the advocates of compromise. In addition a petition signed by the majority of the Beth Israel membership, upheld the action of the board of directors in refusing to permit a separate service. The petitioners expressed their full and entire approbation of the conduct of the board, and asked them to continue to oppose any measure or proposition having a tendency to destroy the well-known and established rules and customs of the founding fathers.

The synagogue seems to have been permeated with the fear that if these newcomers were permitted a voice in determining the conduct of the congregation, they would, sooner or later, abolish the established ritual and transform the synagogue into a Sephardic place of worship. To the older members, the very existence of the Ashkenazic ritual seemed to be at stake.

Immediate and decisive action had to be taken. Beth Israel, in desperation, decided on a plan which destroyed all possibility of reconciliation between the two groups and which made secession and the consequent disruption of the Jewish community inevitable. This decision of the board of directors had as its purpose the restriction of control to the dominant Ashkenazic membership, the majority group which favored the retention of the Ashkenazic ritual. Joe Byer argued that if the admission of newcomers was restricted, or, perhaps, if they were barred from membership unless they accepted the prevailing customs, there would be little opportunity for complications to arise in connection with any future attempt to change the mode of worship.

Following this decision of the board, a group of persons waiting for the usual automatic admission to membership were informed that they must apply to the board of directors for admission and that their applications would be placed before the investigating committee at a regularly assembled meeting. At the meeting of the committee in July 1902, only two out of the nine who had applied for admission were accepted.

Compromise was no longer possible and the

“Russische” group headed by Pinchos Striar seceded, taking with them enough families to constitute a minyan of their own. Thus was Congregation Beth Abraham Anshe Sphard, the mother synagogue’s first daughter, born. The reasons which were officially advanced for this decision were: A.) a desire to permit the Sephardim to worship according to their own customs; B.) the increase of the Jewish population, which necessitated the formation of another synagogue; and C.) the distance at which many lived from the Center Street location. In a polite letter, they informed the board of directors of their intentions; they added that they would contribute a fair sum for the services of the Beth Israel shohet-mohel.



Pinchos Striar

The board did not manifest any great enthusiasm over the rift. A heated meeting indicates that the president, Harry Cohen, was instructed to advise the seceders that the services of a shohet-mohel would be provided for a fee to be determined at a meeting of representatives of both factions. The use of a Sefer Torah was offered until such time that the new synagogue could provide one of its own. Underlying these amenities was the feeling that the secession could have and should have been avoided.

Two years later, due to internal strife, Striar with a bare following returned to Beth Israel disgruntled but far from disillusioned.

In time, however, the hatchet was buried; relations between the mother synagogue and her offspring began to improve. It is difficult, indeed, to determine where to place the blame. The Beth Abraham people had suggested the separate service as a solution for the problem of mixed groups. The Beth Israel leadership had opposed the plan for fear that it would divide the united Jewish community. The motives of both sides may have been noble; by their actions, nevertheless, they destroyed the very institution both sought to save — the united Jewish community of Bangor. Seven years later the recriminations of shohetim of both Beth Israel and Beth Abraham sparked a controversy that continued unabated for a decade.

Beth Israel, however, continued to be sovereign among the Jews of Bangor.

Congregational Life

The specifically Jewish life of the Bangor community of those days was, if anything, even more saturated with poetry than was the non-Jewish. There was a simple, yet deep, faith in the God of their ancestors and the traditional ways of their people, there was that feeling for the unsolved mystery of life that always sets the imagination to work, the feeling that the pre-industrial ages possessed in abundance. And so the maggidim who would often come to town and warm up a cold Sabbath by their pictures of the horrors of hell, delivered in a sing-song fashion, or the awe that permeated the community on the eve of Yom Kippur when the women's gallery in shul would be bathed in tears, or the weeks-long preparations for the great holiday of Pesach, or the respect shown to the Rov upon whose entry into the synagogue everyone would rise, all stemmed from an honest religiosity which couldn't help but strongly affect the life of imaginative youth during the important years of spiritual growth. The second generation of Bangor Jews were brought up simultaneously in two worlds — the East-European world of religious Jewish belief and folkways and the world of American culture.

Life in America, as has been noted, was not easy for a religiously Orthodox Jew. Burial, circumcision, marriage, kosher food, services and ceremonies — all were important parts of a Jewish life that had to be planned for and worked out for each individual and each new community. There were other more recondite matters of religion too, which for want of numbers and organization were overlooked or disregarded in the early days, but which in the atmosphere of a formally constituted religious body began to assume great importance.

In Boston, Ohabei Shalom had had nearly a half century's experience, and while no organizational relationship existed between the Boston and Bangor congregations, the personal relationships of the spiritual leaders of the two groups was so close that many of the regulations which had been satisfactorily introduced by the older congregation were taken over by the younger one. The Jews of the United States did not live in a religious enclave within the larger community; they were an integral part of the total citizenry.

The observance of the Sabbath, which had been a personal matter theretofore, then became part of the synagogue discipline. Infractions of the Sabbath laws were reported to the rabbi, who in turn passed on the

news to the first gabbai. Formal charges were made in several instances and fines imposed.

The community was not only to provide a place of worship for the Jews who wanted a synagogue, but also, in the European sense, to bring all the Jews of the city under its religious jurisdiction. But, from the outset, it was realized that willingness to accept this jurisdiction was purely voluntary, and that punitive coercion was limited to a withdrawal of religious rights and privileges. On Rosh Hashana, 1905, a lengthy resolution was read to make all the Jews who attended that Holy Day service fully aware of the decisions of the congregation. The most important problem facing the congregation was lack of financial support, so it was declared that those persons who professed Judaism and received the benefits of the synagogue, such as kosher meat, the services of a mohel, and birth, marriage and burial rites under its auspices, and did not contribute to its support by failing to pay their dues and assessments:

"shall be deemed as not belonging to our chevra either in public or private nor shall they be noticed in any concerns peculiar to the Rites and Ceremonies thereof on any occasion."

This was the greatest punishment that could be meted out to a believer, for it was tied to eternity. Lack of support was, however, only part of the problem. Infrequent synagogue attendance, Sabbath-breaking, plagued the community even more. All were direct expressions of the seductively free American environment, although they were not new to Judaism.

The matter of ritual was taken very seriously in this period. It is interesting to note that there was a case of Halitzah — the release of the obligation to marry a brother's widow. On that occasion, the widow removed the ceremonial shoe from the foot of her brother-in-law, an early member of Beth Israel. The writer was somewhat intrigued by this ritual and pursued further sources to learn that it was the alternative for the levir to avoid marrying his brother's widow. Where the husband died without leaving issue it is the duty of an unmarried brother "to raise up seed for the deceased brother." The record books are barren of further information about this unusual incident, however, it was pointed out that Rabbi Seltzer conducted the "court" assisted by laymen.

Dissenters and nonconformists are bound to appear in any religious community and Beth Israel was

no exception. In the early days the founding fathers were without doubt scrupulous in religious observance. But as the community became larger religious laxity continued to crop up. It is difficult to discover the extent of dissent in the formative years for the sources are meager, but we do have reference to religious laxity and the appeal of Rabbi Seltzer to the board of directors to institute a series of fines and penalties for these offenses. The threat of non-burial, excommunication, and loss of membership were no longer effective measures in democratic America of the 20th century. Perhaps among the non-observing Jews were some who were kith and kin of members of the board of directors; one sometimes hesitates to pass sanctions against near relations.

This new-found tolerance pertained only to members of the congregation, not to its officials. There is a case on record in which a suspicion of religious laxity on the part of a teacher in the Talmud Torah of the synagogue was sufficient to call forth an investigation. The teacher was called to account for having allegedly eaten in a home where the food was considered to be in question with regard to strict kashruth enforcement. During the investigation it could not be proved that the teacher had actually eaten the questionable food; he was, therefore, acquitted and shortly after he resigned his position.

Matters as kashruth, the general lack of Jewish education and the growing need to counteract the influence of the New World both divided the Jewish community and brought it together. From both congregations arose adjunct organizations, like mutual-aid societies. Intra-communal philanthropic groups were formed which were the pioneers of present-day institutions. Although Jewish religious life under the constant pressure of integration retrogressed somewhat, the first three decades of the 20th century witnessed the progress of Jewish organizational growth which enabled succeeding generations to build and further expand.

Another aspect of ritual law with regard to which synagogue control weakened in this period relates to the preparation and sale of kosher meat. In the earliest times, this was in the hands of synagogue authorities. Although the synagogue paid the salary of the shohet, no charge was made, at first, to the butchers for the service. In the early 1900s, the butchers began to pay a fee to the congregation. The shohet was still an employee of the congregation, however, and still under the supervision of the synagogue authorities, even though the fees of the butcher paid his salary.

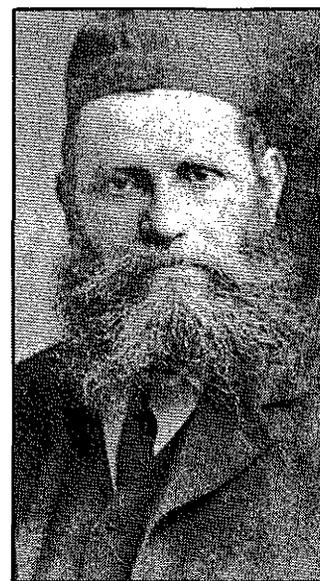
The fiscal affairs of the congregation, as conveyed in the minutes of the early years, breathe an air of order, moderation and prudence. Many months were

to elapse between the recommendation urging the purchase of new curtains and appropriation of the requisite sum of \$50. The donation of shulchen covers and chupah dress covers by the Kominsky and Wolpert families respectively added appreciably to Beth Israel's reserves of sacred linen. "Green trees" decorated the synagogue on Shavuot but the committee did not indulge this enthusiasm beyond the expenditure of \$1.

The single-entry bookkeeping of the early years (the funds in the treasury sank to a slim \$82.40 in 1899) of necessity cast the chazan-shohet office in a pallid light. Versatility rather than incandescent eloquence or erudite learning was the prime requisite for filling the roles of reader, teacher and shohet. The annual compensation to Chazan Rubinstein for the multiple role rose from a scant \$500 in 1899 to \$700 in 1901. The more imposing credentials of Rabbi Seltzer merited a more respectable salary of \$1,000 in 1903.

The Beginnings Of Education

The perpetuation of the basic values and ideals of a community through education is essential for its existence and survival. From its beginning, the Jewish people have been known as the People of the Book, because it has lavished more attention on education and study, particularly of the Sacred Scriptures, than most other nations in history. Twice daily the Orthodox Jew recites the command of teaching one's children in the most important of all prayers.



Dov Reb Yehudah Wasserman

The Talmud Torah, originally established in 1897, and the forerunner of our present community school, was founded by a group of spirited "Baale Battim." These individuals wanted more than the usual smattering of "Amerikaner" Jewish education. Classes were held in the basement of the shul until 1903 when a house was acquired on the corner of Carr and York streets for the exclusive use of a Hebrew school and the residence of the teacher.

The Hebrew Free School, as its name would indicate, reveals that there were poor people in the Jewish community, and free religious education was offered to all who could not afford to pay. We are also informed that the school had the traditional, Orthodox curriculum and that the highest subject of study was

Solomon Harris

Solomon Harris was an outstanding pioneer in this community in the field of Jewish education, combining great knowledge with ineffable charm and wit. He served as one of the teachers in the first Talmud Torah sponsored by Beth Israel in 1903. In later years he conducted his own private academy more commonly called a Hedar. He fascinated his students by his masterly art of shedding new light on biblical exegesis, and he knew how to demonstrate the eternal truth of Judaism and its immutable validity for every generation. He served faithfully for many years as secretary and sexton of the synagogue.

His lectures to his colleagues on Talmud and Bible, still remembered, kept his audience spell-bound from beginning to end. Of him it can be said that he brought the spirit of his dynamic personality into the Jewish community. He was truly a part of the founding movement and sustaining effort that nourished Beth Israel to its present status. He was a master of the enormous spiritual and religious heritage of Judaism. Because of Solomon Harris' work and his great qualities, the people of Bangor, both Jews and non-Jews held him in profound regard.

After a short illness, the hand of death brought to a close the distinguished and fruitful career of Solomon Harris on Feb. 1, 1943. He was 76.

He was active until a short time before his demise. Even the affliction which clouded the last few months of his life could not diminish his zeal for service nor his concern for his congregation and its affairs. For Solomon Harris was of that caliber of God's ministers who throughout his years gave himself wholly to his congregation, his community and his fellow men. An entire city bowed in grief at



Solomon Harris

his passing, their sorrow shared by men in all walks of life throughout the community who had felt the warm influence of his personality, his profound wisdom that commanded the respect and esteem of all who knew him, the deep and abiding humanity of the man that brought glory upon Klal Yisrael and increasing modesty unto himself. Bangor was a small city when he came to it in 1888 and with its growth the congregation grew in stature, dominated by the great and good qualities of this man that taught our children.

But of all the honors and respect that bestowed upon him during his lifetime, none pleased Solomon Harris more than the affection and esteem of his pupils. He is remembered for his paternal affection, solicitude and guidance. There was a gentleness and sternness combined. Such was the nature of the man — modest, loyal, sympathetic. No one could escape his endearing qualities. It was only natural that the congregation revered him without reservation.

the translation of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. The children who came from "prosperous" homes and who could afford to pay also attended the Hebrew Free School.

When the Hebrew Free School was chartered in 1903, the necessary legal corporate papers were written in longhand by attorney Albert Blanchard. The minutes make special reference to the fact that "only a small fee was charged the congregation because Mr. Blanchard was a great believer in all kinds of religious education."

Increased enrollment necessitated the purchase of a building on Carr Street. The downstairs was devoted to classrooms while the upper story provided housing

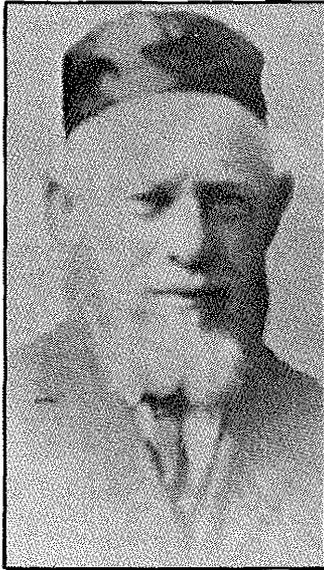
for the "Rebbe." The school was under the direct supervision of Rabbi Seltzer.

By a very happy accident, we are in possession of a most important document. It is a buckram bound ledger containing the constitution, bylaws and minutes of the Board of Education of Congregation Beth Israel. The secretary of the board, Morris N. Golden, portrays the fascinating record of the school in his splendid calligraphy.

Dov Reb Yehudah Wasserman (Bernard S. Waterman) was chosen as principal-teacher and Solomon Harris volunteered to assist. Some of the names appearing on the class rolls include: Louis Byer, Moe Byer, Max Kominsky, the Hillson boys, Sam Lipsky,

Jacob David Leavitt

To own books has always been the ambition of all cultivated gentlemen, but when setting out to settle in a new country, it is not to be expected that even the most devoted book-lover would find much cargo space at his disposal for such impractical baggage. Bibles and Talmudic tomes were in large part all that many Jewish immigrants counted as necessities.



Jacob David Leavitt

Jacob David Leavitt was indeed in this category. The writer recalls that his small study was virtually crammed with Hebrew literature of every description. It is impossible within the natural limits of this publication to do even the scantiest justice to one who was a gigantic spirit of Judaism in our community.

"Rebbe" Leavitt was richly endowed with all the gifts of mind and soul. A bit of a mystic and philosopher, he was a veritable religious genius. He would have been a noble soul even if he had not read a single book, for his fine spirit came not from his books, but from the inner welling forth of a richly

endowed soul. His personality had something ethereal about it. His large tender eyes, inscrutable and dreamy, gazing, as it were, into eternity, lent mystery to his aspect. Under the spell of his discourses one often felt that peace was returning to the tortured soul.

He is recognized as a scholar, endowed with extraordinary mental gifts. His learning, coupled with an unusually wide acquaintanceship, tempered by long experience with humankind and mellowed by the passage of years, all contributed to make him a man of exceptionally broad vision, of tolerant understanding and warm sympathies.

He was a friend and teacher who always was genial, kind and cordial. Everyone was at home in his presence. In conversation with those who had known him but briefly, as well as with others whose contacts were of long duration, one sensed immediately a kinship and a knowing, ready response. In the very best sense of the word, he had the human touch.

But above all else, we know him as a man of God, a man of deep religious convictions which made themselves felt in every phase of his life. There would have been little need for "Rebbe" Leavitt by word of mouth to urge men to the love of God and of our neighbor. He did not have to preach it, he lived it. No one could escape the inspiring influence of his manly virtue. He walked among us with a simple dignity that won not only our hearts, but our deep and sincere respect. Leavitt died in 1948.

Joe Glazier, the Koritzkys, Snyder and Harry Allen. In keeping with the practice of European Jews, only boys received a Jewish education in the early days; the religious training of girls was very much neglected. The first mention of girls at the Talmud Torah was in 1913 at the completion of the present synagogue building. The present kitchen area once served as a classroom.

The management of the school and the setting of its policies attracted the care of the leading citizens of the congregation. Joseph Byer was the chairman of the board. Philip Hillson served as treasurer; Morris Golden, secretary; and Robert Cooper was a director for the entire existence of the school — his annual re-election becoming more and more in the nature of routine business.

The roll call of those who attended its monthly meetings include such names as: Simon Kominsky, Jonah Wallace, Snyder, Koritzky, Nathan Ginsberg, Richardson, Israel Goldman, Ratchkovsky and Morris Rosen.

In 1907 Beth Israel made a gift of the Talmud Torah building to the Jewish community as it became apparent that the community was growing and that Jewish education would be best served on a community basis. The same officeholders served until 1912.

The Russian Pogroms

Rabbi Seltzer became ill in October 1905, and had to spend some weeks away from his pulpit. But the troubles of the congregation were forgotten in November of that year when it, together with all members of Bangor's Jewish community, were plunged into deep sorrow by the Russian pogroms of 1905, a large scale repetition of the Kishineff pogroms of 1903. Jews all over America shared in the great mass demonstrations as reported in the local press of Dec. 5 under the headline, "Jews Bow in Grief."

It was reported that the rabbi "addressed the congregation in anger." The rabbi's anger stemmed

from the events that were taking place in Russia. The pogroms of Russia were of deep concern to the entire Bangor Jewish community. Jacob Schiff, the American Jewish leader, had wired Max Cohen to collect funds for the Russian Jews. The rarely united Jewish community joined together and appointed Rabbi Seltzer chairman of the newly created "Central Committee for the Russian Jews." As chairman he spoke for the community at every possible occasion. At one mass meeting at the synagogue the interior was dramatically "draped in black, with American flags draped conspicuously among the folds."

Many Christians sprinkled the audience, with the sympathetic press reporting that a "Jewish rabbi speaking from the pulpit and almost sobbing forth the soul cry of his down-trodden race in Russia, was the spectacle which presented itself to a large audience." At the end of his address he was recalled to the pulpit for a few more words, after which "almost sobbing, he sat down, while the audience remained fixed and immobile."

Synagogue Rivalries

Personality clashes and rivalries frequently disrupted the incipient religious organizations of the settlers in the new communities. Reflecting this condition, the early history of the religious organizations in Bangor, as in other cities, abounds in clashes, secessions, reconciliations, lawsuits and counter lawsuits. The early settlers disagreed most violently on matters of ritual, on the selection of a hazan — a cantor — or a rabbi, and on lesser administrative matters. Thus the Congregation Beth Israel, which was organized in 1888, saw itself split wide open in 1909.

Although Beth Israel became the leading spiritual center in the community, it was, for a long time, far from being a united congregation. It was made up of diverse, independent groups, often at odds with one another. More and more frequent were the quarrels that raged within the congregation. A second and more far-reaching struggle struck a new chip off "old" Beth Israel in 1909 as some of its early and vigorous leadership seceded to form still another congregation. The causes of this intra-congregational conflict were diverse in character. The serious rift which led to the formation of a new Ashkenazic synagogue was motivated by the refusal of the secessionists to conform to the rules concerning the purchase of kosher meat from the officially designated butcher.

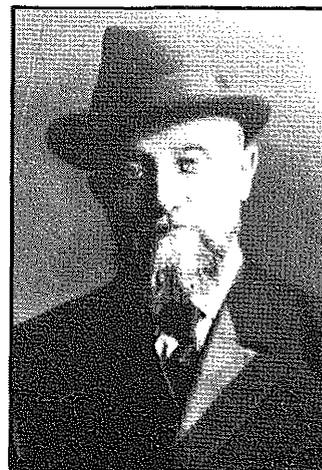
In 1909, the election of a shohet was the occasion for conflict between the board of directors and certain members of the congregation. The board was dissatisfied with the incumbent and wished to supplant him with a new candidate.



Nathan Ginsberg



Lewis Rudman



Israel Epstein

It was agreed by both factions that the man elected would not be engaged if a hard and fast contract could not be made with him, and that the candidate receiving the next highest number of votes would be considered as elected. The board took advantage of a technicality to declare that Shohet Rubinstein was elected though he did not receive the highest number of votes.

The synagogue members, who were already divided over other issues, now separated into two groups, one purchasing meat slaughtered by the temporary shohet, the other patronizing Rubinstein. The trustees thereupon requested a decision from a rabbinical authority in Boston. Nathan Ginsberg, Israel Epstein and Lewis Rudman were not to be outdone. They, too, directed

an inquiry to the same authority, and prevailed upon him to annul the synagogue ordinance on the ground that a schism had taken place at Beth Israel over this question, and that it was a matter of "conscience" to choose meats slaughtered by one man or the other. The board was now placed in an extremely uncomfortable position. They admitted that a Jew had the right to purchase meat from the shehita of any man he saw fit; they contended, however, that no man had a right to seal the meat in the manner used by Beth Israel unless he was permitted to do so by the congregation. They denied that an actual schism had occurred, but they admitted that differences of opinion existed. Attempts at reconciliation failed and barely more than a minyan organized themselves into a new congregation which they named Tifereth Israel (Glory of Israel). Thus, the second major breakdown in Jewish community life had come to pass.

The Jews of 1909 were unwittingly sowing the seeds of disunion and of the breakdown of synagogal control. For quite a while after Tifereth Israel seceded from Beth Israel, the old arrangements were still in force. The shohetim were still employed and controlled by their respective synagogues. With multiple shohetim, however, the Jewish community lost control over the vital religious practice of shehita. The situation continued to worsen throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By the early 1980s it was difficult to acquire kosher meat in the Bangor area. Bangor Jews who sought kosher meat had to purchase it in Portland or Boston, or they could place orders with Richard Zobot, owner of the Bagel Shop in Bangor.

It was clearly a quarrel precipitated by the refusal of a defeated minority to submit to the will of the majority. The immediate effect of these two secessions in the first decade of the 1900s is difficult to ascertain. The breach, however, was healed in 1933 when a handful of the recalcitrant members and their offspring rejoined Beth Israel. Until the rift of 1900 occurred there was a more or less united Jewish community in Bangor. One synagogue and one set of officials meant one mode of accepted behavior. The secession of Tifereth Israel, however, and a revolt of Toldoth Yitzchak from Beth Abraham in 1920, nearly brought about a state of anarchy in the Jewish community. Men

performed marriage ceremonies, handed down decisions on ritual law and set themselves up as supreme authorities without the sanction of the existing synagogues. The resulting disruption of the community was in essence, an outgrowth of carrying to an extreme American freedom of religion, thought and action.

The disintegration of the community was hastened by the decay of its most potent disciplinary agent. In the old Jewish communities in Europe, the Jews had a tremendously powerful weapon against dissenters which, when applied, brought erring sheep swiftly back into the fold. This was the herem, or excommunication. Its preliminary stages involved admonition and the loss of the privilege of attending services; its final stages entailed complete social ostracism and the forfeit of burial rights. No Jew, living as he did within the confines of the ghetto and having social and cultural relations only with Jews, could afford to ignore this communal ban.

In America, excommunication could not be applied. Each synagogue wished to guide its own affairs without dictation from above. Each religious group jealously guarded its rights and privileges in true American fashion.

At times the synagogues of Bangor worked together harmoniously; at other times they clashed with one another. Beth Israel and Tifereth Israel were unfriendly toward each other after the 1909 rift; with the years, the immediate resentment over the secession faded and for some time the two congregations were able to collaborate. Their amity was again disturbed by a controversy over cemetery boundaries in the early 1920s; a second estrangement followed.

The casual visitor to Bangor would have thought that the community was united and that harmony was its watchword. Only on the surface, however, were matters so pleasant and unruffled. In matters of real importance each synagogue was a law unto itself, and each guarded its rights from encroachments of any other group. Attempts to persuade the synagogues to collaborate on communal projects almost invariably failed. This was so because each synagogue considered itself a completely independent entity, whose interests came before those of any other synagogue or of other Jews in the community at large.

Bangor Fire Destroys Synagogue

For many years the congregation was composed almost wholly of shopkeepers, pant and sweater manufacturers, and dealers in used wares of all kinds. At first the proportion of peddlers was high. But very soon, itinerant trade led to more lucrative and respectable highways of commerce. The building of the synagogue in 1897 already gave evidence of more extensive mercantile pursuits. Largely retailers of apparel, shoes, dry goods, jewelry, there were also some tailors, grocers, and wholesalers among them. By the late 1890s many had become solidly rooted in the Yankee business community.

Max Cohen was the first to enter politics and prior to World War I was elected to the Board of Aldermen.

Congregation Beth Israel now found the wooden structure on Center Street unworthy of the aspirations of its members.

As in every religious community which had increased in size and in which more and more members had attained higher social and economic positions, a house of worship befitting the size and the status of its congregation became a matter of both pride and necessity. The little synagogue on Center Street had been big enough for the original founders. The Jews of Beth Israel now wanted an edifice which would match the respect in which they were held by their fellow citizens. The concentration of the Jewish population in the first ward also demanded a change of locale.

In 1909, Max Cohen was called back to the presidency for a second time, and his leadership and enthusiasm inspired the congregation to commit itself officially to a new synagogue building. A committee was appointed to secure an appropriate site for the new shul. Kol Nidre marked the beginning of an effort to cope with the requirements of a rapidly growing Jewish community. In his Yom Kippur appeal Cohen proclaimed, "We can feel confident that this effort will be pursued with vigor and enthusiasm till our hopes are realized and our needs met in the creation of a dignified spacious synagogue that will be a credit to the entire community."

To ensure the success of the campaign for funds for the new synagogue, letters were addressed to other congregations as well as to a few individual Jews of world-famed wealth. Even before all these generous gifts were received, the building committee had been instructed to sell the original building and commence building a new one in the "Jewish Settlement." The cost

of such an undertaking "should not be more than \$25,000."

In the early spring of 1911, the Building Committee reported, "The results achieved thus far have been most encouraging and we all feel confident that a new edifice shall be built this summer."

The deteriorating synagogue continued to need repairs. The board of directors appointed Hyman Epstein, Jonah Wallace and Arthur Allen to determine how much it would cost to put the building in condition. Before the committee could complete its study and make its recommendations to the board, the synagogue was destroyed in the great Bangor Fire of April 30, 1911.

Story Of The Catastrophe

Shortly after 4 p.m. Sunday, April 30, fire broke out in the hay shed of J. Frank Green on lower Broad Street. Cinders were carried across Kenduskeag Stream, igniting the Stetson building, occupied by the New England Telephone Co. on Exchange Street at the foot of York. From there the flames spread with irresistible force, sweeping through the city, straight toward the outskirts along Harlow, Center and French streets and Broadway.

It was the most destructive fire to strike a Maine city, save for the Portland conflagration of 1866. Two people were killed and many were injured. The property loss was estimated between \$2.5 million and \$3 million, but there was only about \$1.5 million insurance on the burned buildings. The fire burned more than 55 acres and it was not brought under control until 5 a.m. Monday. About 100 business blocks, some of them the finest in the city, were burned. Some 285 dwellings were destroyed and between 50 and 75 families, made up of nearly 300 people, lost everything.

Soon after the fire started aid was hurriedly summoned from Brewer and Old Town. Mayor Mullen then telegraphed Waterville, Augusta, Lewiston and Portland and firefighters from those cities were rushed here on special Maine Central trains. They arrived during the evening, when the fire was at its height, and their services proved indispensable. The special train brought the Portland firemen to Bangor in a little more than three hours.

Norumbega Hall where Edwin Booth once played Hamlet was destroyed. Among the first structures to go