

Building Of The Second Synagogue

Up to the period of the fire only \$700 had been paid on the original synagogue mortgage of \$2,500. After the fire, a meeting was held at the Talmud Torah building at 29 Carr St. and President Joseph Byer appointed a committee consisting of himself, Morris Rosen and Harry Cohen to settle with the insurance company. The settlement was made for \$4,000 and the balance of the mortgage on the original structure was liquidated. Soon afterward, the Center Street lot was sold and the present site on York Street was purchased for \$5,000, the latter street having been decided on as the most centrally located place for the Jewish people. The deal was consummated on May 11, 1911, by a special committee consisting of Israel Goldman, A. B. Friedman and Jonah Wallace.

Another committee was then appointed to communicate with architects on the matter of the type of building to be erected on the newly purchased lot. Mr. Morris Rosen was chairman of this committee and it was decided to construct a cement steel-reinforced building. The contract awarded to the Exports Co. of New York City was signed on Oct. 13, 1911. The work of erecting the new synagogue commenced at once.

The insurance money on the Center Street synagogue, which amounted to about \$4,000, was used as a basis for a building fund, and money also was solicited by private subscription. A sum of \$4,000 was raised in a very short period of time. Many out-of-town Hebrews contributed to this fund, the largest single contribution, \$1,000, having been made by Jacob H. Schiff. Many local businesses also contributed to the fund as well as a number of prominent citizens including the late Gov. Frederick H. Parkhurst.

The officers of the congregation during the period of construction were:

Abraham J. Berson, president
 Max Allen, vice president
 A. B. Friedman, treasurer
 Solomon Harris, secretary
 B. Kamenkovitz, first gabbai
 J. Friedman, second gabbai

Meanwhile, services were being conducted at 29 Carr St., and for the next High Holy Days, a hall on Exchange Street was engaged. Services were conducted there through 1912. On April 28, 1912, the congregation voted that all future business of the congregation would be conducted by the board of



Barnett Kamenkovitz



Simon Kominsky

directors. A committee consisting of M. L. Rosen, J. Wallace, Simon Kominsky, A. B. Friedman and Jacob M. Ross (chairman) was appointed to draw up a new constitution and bylaws. On Aug. 12, 1912, the new constitution was adopted, and on Sept. 29, 1912, in accordance with the new bylaws, a board of directors consisting of 20 members was elected to transact the business of the congregation. The following were known as "the 20":

A. J. Berson	M. L. Rosen
Moishe Brown	Johnny Richardson
Harry Cohen	David Snyder
A. B. Friedman	Hyman Epstein
Max Ginsberg	M. A. Stern
Solomon Harris	B. Kamenkovitz
Simon Kominsky	Jonah Wallace
Wolf Lipsky	Samuel E. Rudman
Jacob Ross	Nathan Koritzky
S. Broide	James Sawyer

Lack of finances still continued to be a major problem, and the congregation was forced to borrow \$500 for running expenses, Jake Ross and Wolf Lipsky extended a loan of \$200 each, while Harry Sterns contributed \$100.

The congregation selected for its sanctuary the Byzantine-Romanesque style, warm and Mediterranean in motif. The design was meant to reflect "the cradle of the Jewish people, Asia Minor." The dome for example

resembled in shape the domes of early synagogues in the Middle East. Also, in moving from its Center Street location to York Street, the congregation reflected a general population trend in the Jewish community.

It was not until the spring of 1913 that the new building stood proudly as a completed work. The total cost of the synagogue was approximately \$38,000. After the insurance money and funds raised by the subscription had been exhausted, a loan of \$10,000 was secured from the Merrill Trust Co. and the balance raised by the sale of pews to the members of the congregation.

Meanwhile the congregation lost a lawsuit instituted by Hazan Goodman. The Hazan was awarded damages in the amount of \$345.25 for a breach of contract. Morris Rosen and the board of directors had been writing frantically to every possible source which might turn up a permanent hazan-shohet for the congregation. When Hazan Liss responded to the call of the new synagogue, the members of Beth Israel proceeded with plans for an elaborate but dignified consecration of their new building.

Invitations were sent to Ohabei Shalom and to congregations in New York to attend the dedication ceremonies. The mayor of Bangor and other dignitaries of state and church were asked to join their fellow residents on the happy, solemn occasion. The date was set for March 9, 1913.

Everything was there to make the dedication day an auspicious one. At this period in American life, few events were looked upon more favorably than the sanctification of a house of worship, and one to be consecrated by "those ancient people of the Lord" had added attraction. The people of Bangor, looking forward to a day of interest and excitement, had pride in the fact that such an event was part of their community life. Admission to the synagogue was by invitation only, and by the time the congregation finished the afternoon prayers, every one of the seats downstairs and in the gallery was filled. As part of the impressive dedication ceremony, the key to the synagogue was presented to Mayor Charles Mullen, the city's chief executive at that time.

Morris Rosen, chairman of the Building Committee, presented this speech at the dedication in 1913:

I feel that I have been greatly honored by having been given the responsibility of the chairmanship of the committee that was assigned the duty of building our new synagogue. It has been a great task, and how all the members of my committee and I have discharged our duties only the congregation can judge.

I am very grateful to the members of my committee who unselfishly gave of their time and advice in connection with this project. Many, many hours were

DAILY COMMERCIAL, JUNE 26, 1911

PLANS ARE ACCEPTED FOR THE NEW TEMPLE

Plans for the new temple of Beth Israel Congregation were accepted Mon. afternoon and the contract for the erection of the building signed by three members of the building committee, Morris L. Rosen, Harry Cohen, and J. A. Byer. The new edifice is to be thoroughly fireproof, of re-inforced concrete, under the Lewen system and the architecture of the art naveau style. Henry L. Lewen consulting engineer of the Lewen Company, drew the plan. The height of the building from the ground to the top of the dome will be 52 feet, the height from the ground to the ceiling being 35 feet and from the ceiling to the top of the dome 17 feet. The dome is somewhat of the minaret style with twisting columns, and according to the architect is something absolutely new in this country. The entire building is to be re-inforced concrete, including the dome, floor, stairs and balconies, so that it will be thoroughly fireproof.

The new synagogue is to be ready for occupancy by September, 1912, and it is hoped to complete the outside work before cold weather sets in this year. It is expected that the total cost will be in the neighborhood of \$25,000.00.

The front of the building will consist of a large door of the arched type and at both sides will be two Greek Corinthian columns. There will be ornamental features to be added, including artistic windows.

In the basement of the new temple a school room is to be fitted up with accommodations for from 275 to 300 pupils, where the children will learn Hebrew and the religious traditions of their fathers. In the basement there will also be toilets of the latest and most approved pattern, for both sexes.

A commodious ladies' balcony for use in worship is to be fitted out on both sides of the new synagogue and this will be reached by two stairways going up the front walls, just after one enters the main room, and on both sides.

The ground floor, which will be one large chamber, is to be 50 by 70 feet, so that there will be ample room for the members of the congregation. In the rear of the temple is to be a raised platform, elevated 18 inches from the floor proper on which will rest the ark.

The building as already announced in the Commercial, is to be erected on York Street, between Essex and Adams Street, on the site formerly occupied by Mrs. Mary A. Hayes' residence.

BANGOR DAILY NEWS, AUG. 14, 1912

SCHIFF MEMORIAL IN BETH ISRAEL

Jacob H. Schiff, the noted New York financier, is in Bangor to attend memorial services for his father at the Congregational Beth Israel synagogue on York Street. He was present at services in the synagogue Tuesday night and after attending services this morning will leave for his summer home in Bar Harbor. Mr. Schiff arrived here from Bar Harbor on Tuesday afternoon and was met by M. L. Rosen, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Congregation Beth Israel who accompanied Mr. Schiff in Samuel Cummings automobile, the latter driving to the Bangor House where the visitor stays during his visit in Bangor. A. B. Friedman and James Sawyer, members of the board of directors, were also at the station.

For the first time the new synagogue was used on Tuesday night. While not yet completed, temporary arrangements were made in the edifice out of courtesy to the distinguished communicant and prayer was held there at 7 o'clock. Tuesday was the anniversary of the death of Mr. Schiff's father and following his usual custom, Mr. Schiff went to the nearest synagogue to offer up prayers. This time, Mr. Schiff was staying at his summer home in Bar Harbor and consequently came to Bangor. The last time he attended memorial services in Bangor was in 1909.

After services Tuesday night, Mr. Schiff was taken in the auto back to the Bangor House by Mr. Rosen and Mr. Cummings and this morning at 7 o'clock will be present at a larger service in the synagogue. Mr. Schiff in his auto ride through the city commented upon the big fire of April, 1911 and was interested in the progress that had been made in rebuilding.

unstintingly devoted by them, often at great personal sacrifice, in order that we might secure the best results obtainable. Not only did they give of their time and personal effort, but also each contributed to the fund making the project possible. They are all truly leaders of our congregation, and I am sure that their leadership and their accomplishments will be most inspirational to future generations.

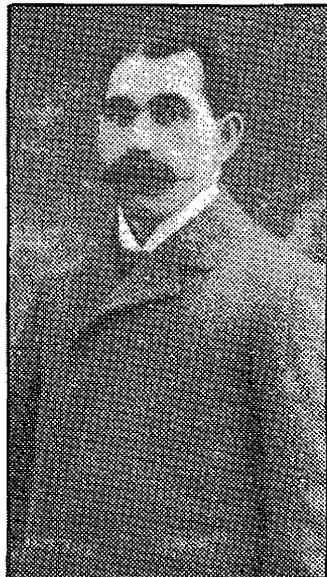
I am also most grateful to Mr. Lewen, the fine architect who designed our synagogue and whose mastery is expressed throughout the building. He is an outstanding leader in his chosen field of architecture, and I can well understand the heights of acclaim accorded him both the United States and Europe.

I am most grateful to the congregation for the support it has given me and my committee in this great undertaking. Were it not for its continued support and encouragement, the successful conclusion of this portion of the project would not have been possible. I say "this portion of the project" most advisedly since I have never ceased to have in mind the remainder of the project comprising the Talmud Torah. The same congregational spirit and devotion which brought us to this point will, I am sure, make the completion possible in the very near future.

Few congregations have been blessed with the opportunity of building a new synagogue. I know of no congregation of our size that has executed that opportunity with as much credit to itself as has the Congregation Beth Israel. It has been a rich experience and we have all gained from it in many ways. For not only have we built a beautiful place of worship, but what is more important, we have at the same time built up a spiritual force that will be felt in our daily lives for many years to come. This force will be felt not only within our own congregation but will radiate to all with whom we come into contact.

In this day of the dedication of our new synagogue let us not rest with the complacency of a task accomplished, but rather let us dedicate ourselves in this beautiful new edifice to an even higher peak of religious concept and attainment under the unity of God.

A. J. Berson, recording secretary of the board elected Oct. 6, 1912, had this to say about the service:



Morris L. Rosen

I have never witnessed a more impressive or solemn ceremony or one more calculated to elevate the mind to religious exercises. Rabbi Shoet was assisted in the service by Hazan Liss. Rabbi Shoet, a venerable, learned and pious man, gave great effect to the solemnity. The doors were opened by Morris Rosen and the blessing pronounced at the entrance — the procession entered with the rabbi and hazan followed by the gabbaim carrying the Holy Scrolls — they advanced to the bimah where the hazan chanted the appointed psalms. The board of directors in slow and solemn manner preceded the Sefer Torahs in their circuit around the area of the building between the bimah and the Ark.

Berson said, "I have no hope of conveying by description any idea of this ceremony — you should have seen the whole spectacle — the beautiful Oren Kodesh thrown wide open to receive the Holy Scrolls, with their rich crimson mantles fringed with gold — the Ner Tamid suspended in front with its little constant light like a watchman at his post — and with the humble yet dignified figure of the venerable rabbi as he conducted the procession in its seven circuits and then deposited the Torahs — after which the hazan recited with an effect amounting almost to eloquence the impressive prayers — the whole audience was most profoundly attentive and although a few were happy as to understand the language, even those who did not were enraptured by the proceedings."

If Mr. Berson was so deeply moved by what he saw that he could not hope to express his feelings, he was not alone in his sense of inadequacy. Three different accounts, all struggling to express the solemnity of the event, were featured in the newspapers. Both newspapers considered the consecration of such importance that it devoted one article to a description of the ceremony, and another to the architectural design of the synagogue. It was observed —

The chanting was of a very devotional cast, and interested us much at the time; but this interest has since been greatly increased by hearing that much of it is so very ancient that the date of its origin cannot be ascertained, while its antiquity is fully verified by the fact that it is used in almost all the synagogues throughout the world.

The chief attraction of the dedication was the Lewen-designed building. One commentator regretted that the synagogue did not stand in a better location. But the Jews preferred to have their synagogues in the immediate vicinity of their homes for the convenience of daily and Sabbath worship. However, if the reporter was sorry that the building was huddled against others in a solidly built-up section of the city, he was very impressed with the beauty of the interior.

The reporter said, "The architect, Mr. Lewen, had free scope for his taste and his judgment, and the cooperation of the congregation has enabled him to display both to the best advantage." The rich, crimson velvet curtains of the ark and covering of the reader's desk, as well as the battleship linoleum which lay on the floor, were favorably commented on. "Everything is made to correspond," was the summary, "and the entire harmonious array is very pleasing."

If aesthetically the new synagogue and its dedication service were noteworthy, equally so were the civic implications of the event. Another newspaper called it a more than gratifying spectacle and editorialized:

For those who duly estimate the happy equality of our religious rights, and the prevailing harmony among our religious sects, the scene was productive of higher emotions. Among the audience and in conspicuous stations on the floor of the building, we observed several members of the Christian clergy and many other distinguished citizens, all manifesting by their presence and demeanor, that, however we may differ upon certain points, the great truth is recognized and acted upon, that we are all children of a common and Eternal Father.

The news items about the dedication ceremony were picked up by other newspapers and periodicals throughout the country, and the account of Bangor's synagogue consecration was printed in almost every large paper up and down the Atlantic seaboard.

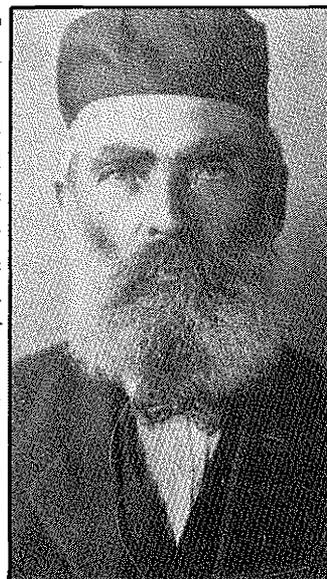
A New Era

This tangible accomplishment of Beth Israel played a consequential role in strengthening the Bangor Jewish Community. Even the shamash, Moishe Rosen, affectionately called "Feter Moishe," believed that a new era had come and requested a raise in salary because of the additional duties assigned to him. This raise, in this time of expansive optimism, was granted together with the free use of a seat in the Ark area. And finally, new rules were drawn up and publically proclaimed to govern decorum during worship; a number of these rules dealt with the behavior of the growing community of children. One such read:

Parents are requested not to bring children to the synagogue unless they are of sufficient discretion to be under their control and remain quiet in their seats; their running in and out will not on any account be suffered; and the shamash is strictly enjoined to prevent their interruption of the services.

With a new synagogue, an energetic rabbi, a growing membership, and a feeling of accomplishment, Beth Israel looked forward to constructive years ahead. Just prior to the High Holy Days in the fall of 1912 the congregation elected Rabbi Moishe Shohet to

replace Rabbi Klatchko who accepted the pulpit of a large Boston congregation. With the coming of Rabbi Shohet, a new era opened for the Jews of Bangor. He emerged as one of the leading members of the Maine rabbinate. He was the effective and tireless defender of traditional Judaism against the incursions of the new spirit of change that was taking place in some of the large cities. He was a champion of Jewish rights at home and abroad. In brief, a formless, drifting, haphazardly growing Bangor



Moishe Rosen

Jewish community was given leadership and direction and substance by Rabbi Shohet.

Many of Rabbi Shohet's sermons dealt with kashruth and Sabbath observance. After 1920 the minutes of the congregation fail to mention matters of this sort. It is not surprising, considering the extent of violation of the Sabbath, to find that attendance at services suffered as well. Both Sabbath and weekday attendances began to decline as early as 1925, and the minutes are replete with committees and panaceas to avert the crisis. Besides the Sabbath violation and non-attendance at the services in the synagogue on Sabbath and at other times, other types of non-conformity were found among the membership. Failure to observe the dietary laws was another such transgression; it was said that some Jews kept kosher homes but ate non-kosher food outside the home. But none of these practices raised a clamor in the official family as did the valid report that a few members had departed from traditional religious practice by dropping the rite of circumcision by a mohel. Those who offended in this respect were threatened with loss of all privileges in the synagogue. Once more the records fail to provide evidence that such sanctions were instituted.

Rabbi Shohet tried to bring some order into the growing disorganization of shehita and called a meeting of the representatives of Beth Abraham, Tifereth Israel and Beth Israel and learned, to his dismay, that meat was allowed to remain for seven or eight days without washing or the removal of the kosher seals. This situation was contrary to the general agreement promulgated at a previous session. With the help of all three synagogues, Shohet attempted to persuade all of the butchers and the shohetim to accept a set of rules which he drew up. The rabbi threatened that those who



The directors in 1913 were: (front) Moishe Brown, Harry Cohen, Morris Rosen, A. J. Berson, Simon Kominsky, (middle) David Snyder, James Sawyer,

Hyman Epstein, Wolf Lipsky, M. Braidy, Max Ginsberg, (back) B. Kamenkovitz, Solomon Harris, N. Koritzky, A. B. Friedman, and Johnny Richardson.

refused to abide by the rules or to enter into agreements with the so-called Kashruth Board would have their names and actions reported to each of the three synagogues. He also threatened that those who purchased meat from disqualified butchers would be openly cited as non-kosher householders. Whether he met with any degree of success does not appear in the available information.

If the construction of the synagogue on York Street was important in the external history of the congregation, the calling of Rabbi Shohet to the spiritual leadership of the congregation was far more significant in the internal history of the congregation's religious and intellectual development. It was during Rabbi Shohet's tenure that there was a revival of the Chevra Mishnayoth and a general pursuit of learning by the laity.

The Chevra Mishnayoth of Beth Israel was a testimony to the pursuit of Jewish learning. Jews are, indeed, "The People of the Book," in accordance with the epithet Mohammed bestowed upon them as adherents of a faith based on revealed Scripture. Notwithstanding occasional lapses, they have remained "The People of the Book," faithfully guarding and

interpreting its every letter throughout the centuries and the millenia. Inevitably, however, they are also a people of scholars and students, for the very constitution of Judaism, as revealed in the Pentateuch and interpreted and elaborated by the doctors of the Talmud, makes it obligatory for every Jew to devote himself to the study of the Torah, representing the sum total of Jewish law and lore amassed by a hundred generations of scholars, thinkers, philosophers and poets.

The founding fathers of Beth Israel engaged in this intellectual pursuit, tinged with pious motives. It was their glory and their delight, their refuge and their staff in suffering — the sanctuary of the spirit where invariably they found solace for the tribulations of their tragedy-frought pariah existence.

Excellence in scholarship is the kind of success traditional Jews worship and crave more fervently than all else, with the result that study and learning are idealized as the very meaning and purpose of the good life; the badge of nobility and honor.

In the early 1920s the membership dwindled to the point where the Chevra disbanded.

BANGOR DAILY COMMERCIAL, MARCH 10, 1913

Jewish Synagogue Dedicated Sunday Afternoon With Civil and Religious Rites

The handsome new synagogue of Congregation Beth Israel, built in the heart of the Hebrew colony on York Street and vicinity, to replace the one on the congregation's former property on Center Street, destroyed in the big fire, was dedicated Sunday afternoon with impressive ceremonies, civil and religious, marking a distinct forward step in the life of the Jewish residents of Bangor.

There was a big crowd, which completely filled the new edifice on this auspicious occasion and many expressions of admiration for the attractive interior of the building and its magnificent electric illumination, were heard as the people filed in and out of the building.

The exercises began at 2 o'clock when the mayor and the directors of the synagogue, led by its officers, took their positions in the building, being followed in through the big doors by the people who had gathered to witness the ceremonies. President M. L. Rosen handed the key of the building to the mayor, who unlocked the door and the congregation took their seats.

The exercises opened with the singing of a hymn by the cantor, an orchestral selection following.

Morris L. Rosen, president of the board of directors of Congregation Beth Israel gave a most interesting historical address of the career of the congregation during its 25 years of existence, speaking graphically of the obstacles which had seemed almost insurmountable in the raising of the necessary money for building the synagogue, but now in spite of these it had at last been secured and the edifice erected and furnished, its completion only being made possible by the loyalty of its members and their generosity, aided by the generosity of many outside their circle.

The mayor was introduced and spoke briefly, then turned to President Rosen and tendered him the key of the building. Following this ceremony the orchestra played another selection and an interesting address was delivered by Dr. L. M. Pastor.

One of the touching and interesting features of the civil service here occurred when Master Arthur Lipsky stepped forward and, in behalf of the boys and girls of the congregation, presented a \$10 gold piece as their special contribution toward the building. These little folks have been accumulating this sum, penny by penny until the copper coins have become gold in their thrifty little hands. Master Lipsky's speech of presentation which showed careful preparation was as follows:

Mr. Chairman and Worthy Audience: My predecessor, the worthy Vice President of our society, has already made clear to you the goal of our strivings. I, on my part, wish to tell you of the evident accomplishments of our society.

We had noticed how our parents had, with the utmost self-denial, and to the best of their ability, contributed to the erection of this holy edifice. Wishing to follow the example thus set for us, we have saved the pennies given us to spend for candy, and watched with joy their accumulation. With impatience did we await the opportunity to show our attachments to Jewish interests.

The memorable day has at last arrived.

Mr. Chairman, the pennies have changed into a ten dollar gold piece! We beg of you to accept this trivial sum, not for its intrinsic worth, but because it carried with it the heartiest wishes for the welfare of the "Tiphereth Israel" of many true Jewish followers.

I Thank You

Following Master Lipsky came yet another representative of

the young life of the congregation in the person of Miss Rosie Berson who in behalf of the young Maccabeans delivered the following address of loyalty and assurance of support:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, you will undoubtedly wonder at my audacity to appear before you this afternoon but perhaps the fact that I stand before you as a representative of an organization will answer the wonder that has arisen in your mind. I see that when I mentioned the word organization. But nevertheless a society does exist which dares to call itself "The Young Maccabeans." The aims of this society are of vital interest to you as well as to us. Its members try to enthuse themselves that noble Hebrew spirit which animated the Maccabeans. We look upon the synagogue as our fortress and the pillar of Judaism. Our purpose is to help once more uplift the Hebrew flag without wishing in any way to detract from the greatness of, or letting it in any way affect our allegiance to, the Stars and Stripes. We hope to make ourselves deservant of the greatness of our ancestors and worthy of taking our place as standard bearers for our nation. Accept, Mr. Chairman, our heartiest wishes at this dedication, which to us means so much, and rest assured that this new synagogue will find in us true supporters when we shall be called upon, in years to come to do our share.

I Thank You

The religious ceremony came next, being invested with all the solemnity of the Jewish church. It was an eloquent demonstration of the faith of people and was participated in by the members with an earnestness that attested their loyalty. Morris Goldman and Arthur Dennis, two boys, read the ten commandments, one in Hebrew, the other in English, performing their roles most creditably.

The speaker of the day, Dr. Elias Caplan of Portland made a deep impression upon his hearers. Seldom has a more eloquent sermon been heard here. His remarks added greatly to the impressiveness of the event and the significance of the occasion was vividly set forth. The service ended with the singing of America.

The decorations of the synagogue were unusually elaborate. A handsome chandelier was noticeable, and stretched about the balcony and ceiling were electric lights, the illumination shedding radiance upon the various colored curtains, etc., below. Everything was arranged in the decorative element so that the entire scheme was particularly pleasing to the eye. It was a worthy setting for the time.

Among the contributions to the furnishings of the edifice were a tablecloth just received from N. Y., the gift of Mrs. Max Ginsburg and others and a curtain the present of the little girls of the Junior League.

On Sunday night, the day of dedication was ended with a celebration, participated in by only the members of the congregation. A banquet was served and the event was equally in keeping with the afternoon's event.

Among the prominent people in attendance were: Former Mayor John F. Woodman, Col. I. K. Stetson and Col. F. H. Parkhurst.

The erection of the synagogue was commenced in Nov., 1912 and has a capacity of 620, the balcony seating 220. The total capacity of 620 being sufficient to meet the demands of the congregation.

The officers of Congregation Beth Israel are:

M. L. Rosen, President; Wolf Lipsky, Vice President; Harry Cohen, Treasurer; A. J. Berson, Recording Secretary, these forming the officers of the board of directors.