

Bangor Hebrew School

Fortieth Anniversary

1907 - 1947



Bangor Hebrew Community Center

October 2, 1947

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

October the second

Nineteen hundred and forty-seven

18 Tishri 5708



LISS MEMORIAL BUILDING

BANGOR HEBREW SCHOOL

Bangor, Maine

DEDICATION



IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF THEIR SACRIFICES AND COURAGEOUS DEVOTION TO THEIR COUNTRY, THESE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY EXERCISES AND THIS RECORD THEREOF ARE DEDICATED TO THE YOUTH OF OUR COMMUNITY WHO SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE WAR WHICH BEGAN ON THE DAY OF INFAMY, DECEMBER 7, 1941, AND WAS VICTORIOUSLY CONCLUDED WITH THE SURRENDER OF JAPAN ON SEPTEMBER 2, 1945

HENRY H. SEGAL

PRESIDENT

GUESTS OF HONOR



Hon. Horace Hildreth

Governor of Maine

Dr. Stephen S. Wise

Free Synagogue, New York

Dr. Henry Knowlton

Chairman City Council

Horace Estey

City Manager

Dr. Harry Trust

President Bangor Theological Seminary

Roland Carpenter

Superintendent of Schools

Philip Lown

President Maine Jewish Council

James White

Member Bangor City Council

John O'Connell, Jr.

Bangor Daily News

Hendric Burns

Bangor Daily Commercial

Dr. Arthur Hauck

President University of Maine

Dr. Alexander Kohanski

Executive Director, Maine Jewish Council

Felix Ranlett

Librarian Bangor Public Library

Rev. T. Pappas

Greek Orthodox Church



HON. HORACE HILDRETH

Governor
State of Maine



DR. STEPHEN S. WISE

Rabbi

Free Synagogue, New York City

THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE



HENRY H. SEGAL

GENERAL CHAIRMAN

A. M. RUDMAN

SIDNEY SCHIRO

SHIRLEY BERGER

ABRAHAM STERN

A. B. FRIEDMAN

HARRY RABEN

MYER SEGAL

JOSEPH EMPLE

LAWRENCE SLON

MAX KOMINSKY

MRS. SIDNEY SCHIRO

MRS. SAM LIEBERMAN

MRS. LAWRENCE CUTLER

HISTORICAL NOTE

MRS. LAWRENCE SLON

PUBLICITY

SOUVENIR BOOKLET

MRS. LAWRENCE CUTLER

HENRY H. SEGAL

PROGRAM of EXERCISES

A. M. RUDMAN, Chairman

INVOCATION
RABBI DAVID BERENT
Lewiston, Maine

NATIONAL ANTHEM

GREETINGS
HENRY H. SEGAL, President

HON. HORACE HILDRETH
Governor of the State of Maine

DEDICATION OF HOLY SCROLL

Donors: Mr. and Mrs. Israel Cutler

Acceptance: Harvey Leavitt, Pres. Junior Congregation

Dedication Prayer: Dr. Stephen S. Wise

Cantor: Ezekiel Baruch

DR. STEPHEN S. WISE
"Jewish Problems in a Christian World"

HATIKVOH

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

It is with a feeling of joy and gratification that I join the Jewish community of Bangor in celebrating the fortieth anniversary of its Hebrew School. I am indeed privileged to be associated with a community which holds its Hebrew School as close to its heart as does the Bangor community. This is as it should be, for, after all, our very future as Jews depends upon the measure of importance we attach to our educational institutions.

As a newcomer to this community, I regret that I cannot share in the laurels of your past achievements. I am, however, fully aware of my responsibility to the present and future generations of Bangor's Jewish children. I am also aware of the fact that I have assumed this responsibility at a most tragic and crucial period in our history; a period which has witnessed the destruction of the great centers of Jewish culture in Europe, the entire burden of keeping alive our cultural and religious heritage having been placed squarely upon the shoulders of American Jewry.

In view of this, our school can no longer be content with a minimum program of Jewish studies. Rather, we must intensify our curriculum in order to carry on the rich cultural traditions which our martyred brethren kept alive throughout the ages.

Because we can no longer depend on European centers to supply our spiritual leaders as we have, in a large measure, done in the past, we must make our community spiritually self-sufficient: we must train our own leaders, educators and communal workers.

Jewish learning has always been associated with sacrifice; the Torah has always been regarded as a burden; but Jews have always carried this burden with a love and devotion which have merited for them the honorary name of "The People of the Book". We must instill within the hearts of our children the same love and devotion, that same willingness to carry the burden of Jewish learning proudly and joyfully.

The successful achievement of our new goals will, more than ever, require the wholehearted cooperation of the school, the home, the synagogue and community center. Because of your proud record of the past forty years, I feel sure that those of us who are actively engaged in the field of Jewish education will not be alone in our efforts to meet this historical challenge, but that through the harmonious efforts of the entire community the Eternal Light shall be kept burning more brightly than ever.

Nathan H. Fish

Principal Bangor Hebrew School



Bangor Hebrew School Staff

Nathan Fish, Principal, Marcia Fish, Sol Brown

BOARD of DIRECTORS in 1907

JOSEPH BYER

PRESIDENT

MORRIS GOLDEN

SECRETARY

PHILIP HILLSON

TREASURER

* MAX COHEN

* MORRIS ROSEN

* SIMON KOMINSKY

* NATHAN GINSBERG

* MOSES BROWN

* HARRY COHEN

* HYMAN EPSTEIN

* DAVID SNYDER

* ISRAEL RATCHKOVSKY

ROBERT COOPER

• DECEASED

THE FOUNDERS



* Joseph Byer
President



* Philip Hillson
Treasurer



* Morris Golden
Secretary

* Deceased



Robert Cooper
Director
Sole Survivor of the Founders



Phil Lown

GREETINGS

From

Philip W. Lown

President, Maine Jewish Council

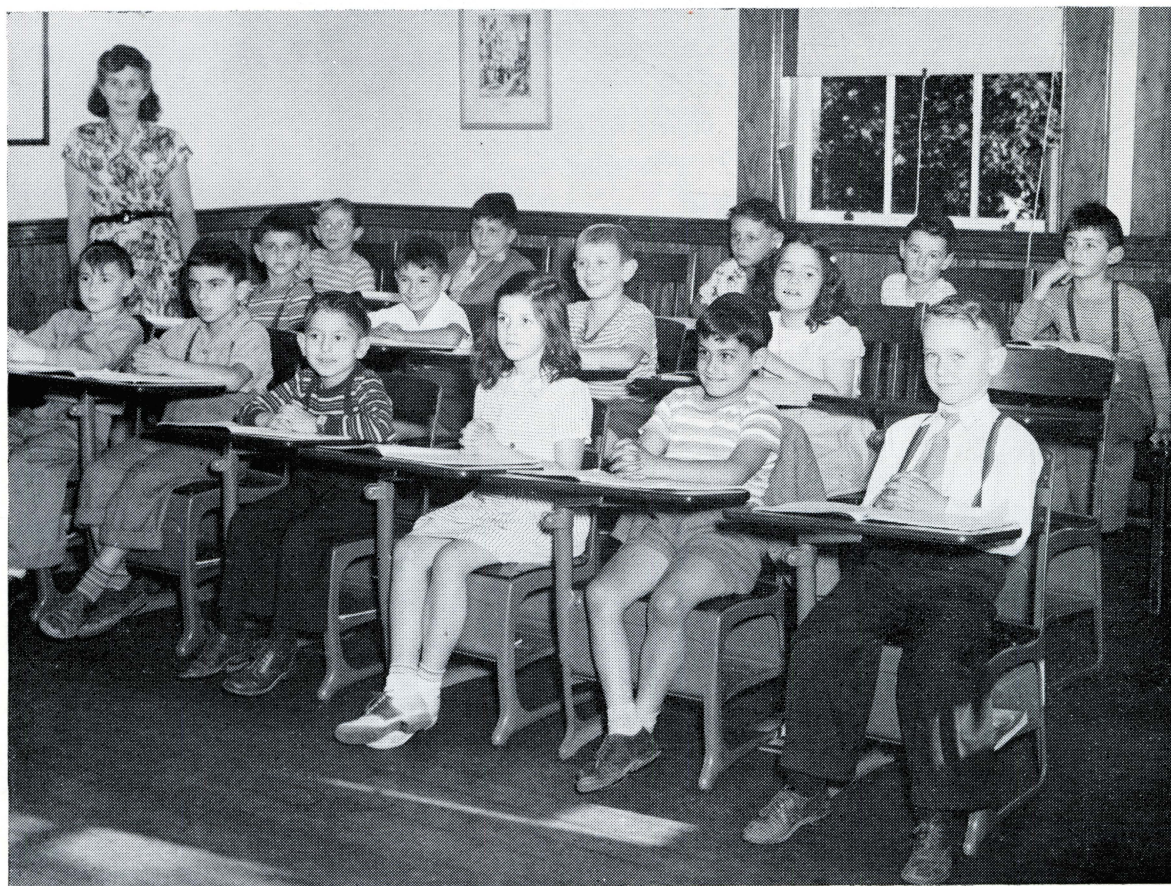
It is my pleasure and privilege to greet the Bangor Hebrew School on the occasion of its fortieth anniversary celebration. It is a celebration in which all Jews of Maine proudly join, for the advancement of Jewish education in one community in this state is the concern of all of us in the rest of the state.

The community of Bangor has always been aware of its mutual relationship with the other communities in Maine. While it has built its own educational institutions with much care and devotion, it has also sought, through its active participation in the Maine Jewish Council, to help develop educational facilities in other areas in Maine. The Council's endeavors to bring Jewish education to the small towns and rural sections in this state and to coordinate the educational programs of all our communities, has met with the warm support of Bangor Jewry.

On this occasion of your celebration, it is fitting that we all renew our common efforts to strengthen our Jewish educational institutions throughout the state.

Faithfully yours,

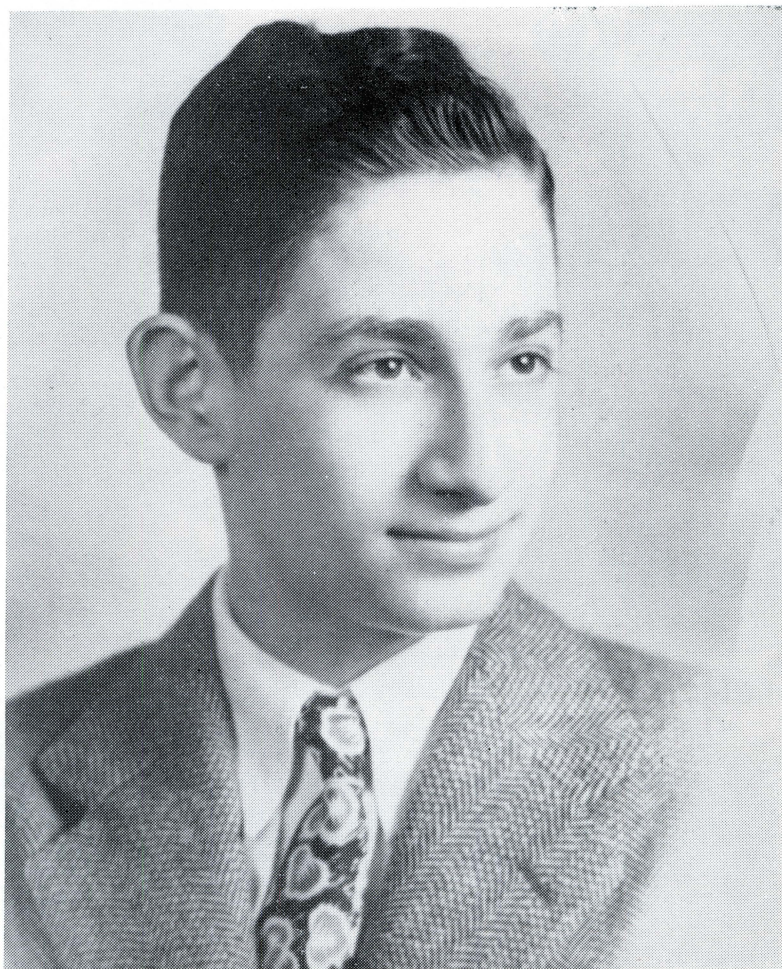
PHIL W. LOWN



Beginners Class

1947-1948

Third row: Max Allen, Maxwell Miller, Walter Rosen, Gerald Rolnick, Arnold Gordon, Mrs. Fish (instructor).
 Second row: Jerome Gotlieb, Michael Striar, Darrell Cooper, Judy Medwed.
 Front row (left to right): Stephen Bernstein, Fred Hartstone, Bernie Alpert, Eleanor Rapaport, Mark Bornstein,
 Not in picture: Donald Silver, Susan Rapaport, Jerome Fisher, Eleanor Epstein, Ruth Singer.
 Billy Cohen.



HARVEY LEAVITT

President

Junior Congregation

1946 - 1947

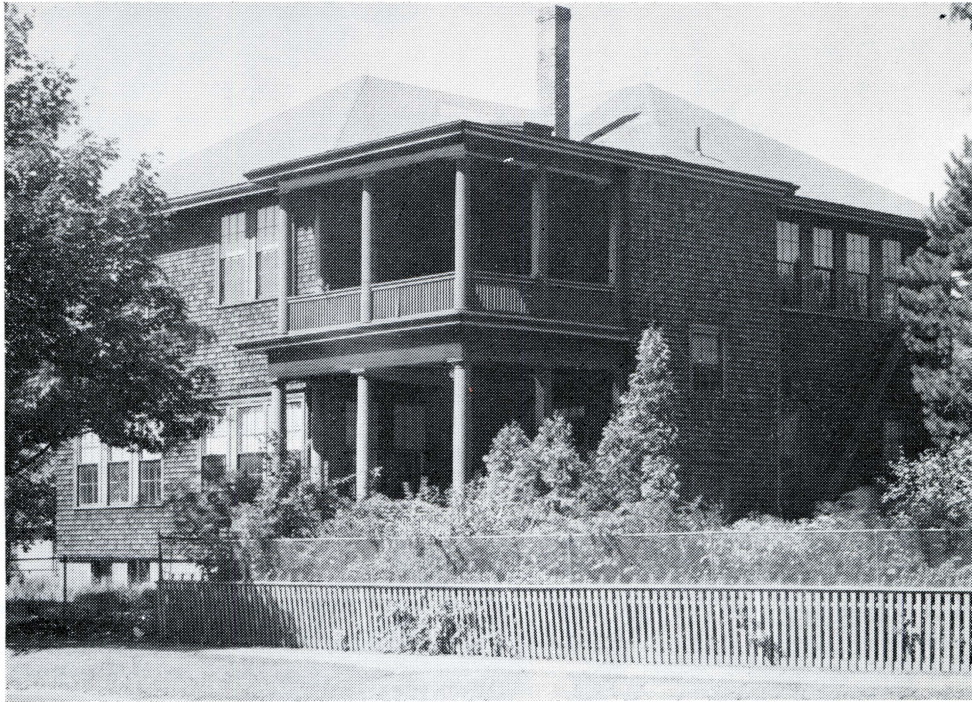


DORA LISS
In whose memory the building was given



NATHAN LISS
Donor of building





LISS MEMORIAL BUILDING

JEWISH EDUCATION AND THE COMMUNITY

By ALEXANDER S. KOHANSKI

Executive Director, Maine Jewish Council

Our Sages in the Talmud remember with great fondness the man, Yehoshua ben Gamala, who founded the elementary Hebrew School in ancient Palestine. "For, if not for him," they say, "Torah would have been forgotten in Israel." The founders of the Bangor Hebrew School will be remembered by the present generation and by generations to come with equal affection.

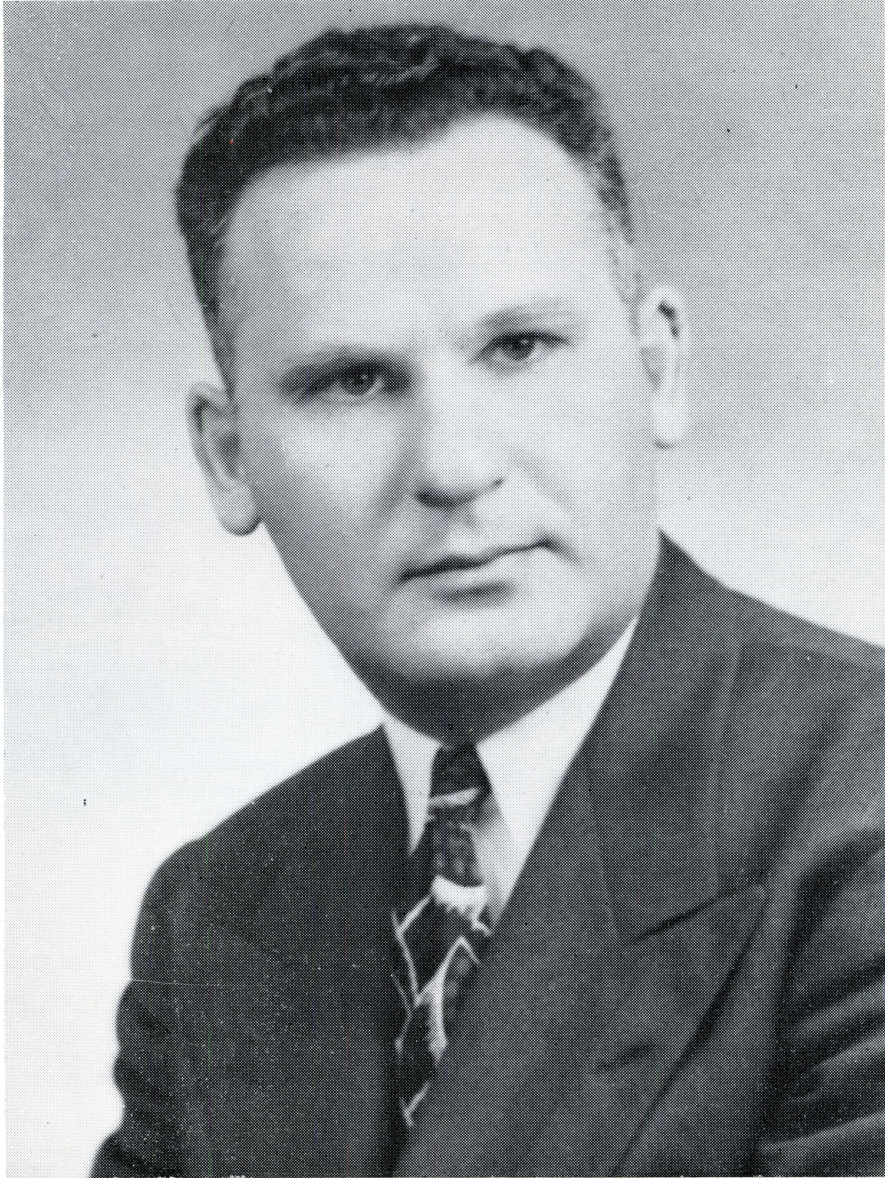
One may visualize the small Jewish community of Bangor some four or five decades ago as a pioneering settlement, struggling on the up-hill in search of economic security. While the head of the family was preoccupied in his daily toil he could hardly pay attention to the Jewish upbringing of his children. Perhaps he spent some stray moments in the evening or on a week-end to instruct his son in the rudiments of "saying ivri". If he was a little affluent he may have engaged a "house rebbe" to prepare his boy for Bar Mitzvah. As in the days of yore, before the time of Yehoshua ben Gamala, the Jewish upbringing of the young generation was in parental hands. With the establishment of the Hebrew School, this function became a community responsibility.

Communal responsibility for Jewish education means primarily that the Jewish upbringing of the young generation must be rooted in the religious, cultural and social life and needs of our people. These are the major factors of Jewish survival; they form the practical basis of Jewish education. The question is often raised as to the practical value of studying Hebrew, Jewish history, literature or other elements of the Hebrew School curriculum. The answer lies in the *aim* of Jewish education, and that is, to relate the child to the Jewish group in its historical and contemporary development, as well as in its hopes and aspirations for the future.

As an individual, unrelated to Jewish group life, one may find no practical value in Jewish studies, except perhaps as an extension of one's liberal education. Thus, one who is interested in languages may also study Hebrew as another language; one who likes history may also become interested in Jewish history, and similarly in Jewish literature. But then one sees no practical use for these subjects in everyday life. On the other hand, Jewish studies assume practical meaning only in the light of group experience, that is, in so far as the individual identifies himself with his group and shares in its communal life.

The community's responsibility is, therefore, to bring to the fore the group demand for Jewish education and to create the general atmosphere in which its importance and practical value may be recognized. But here the responsibility does not end.

In our own State of Maine, the Maine Jewish Council has launched a program of education with the same end in view, namely, to develop standards and to advance the principles and needs of Jewish education in all the communities in this state, in line with national endeavors. This program, like that of the Bureaus in large cities, is a cooperative enterprise. All our communities are to participate in it with a sense of common responsibility for the Jewish upbringing of our children in the small towns as well as in the larger cities in our state. If we accept the tenet, which has been forcefully brought to our attention by the exigencies of our time, that Jewish education is essentially a process of relating the individual to his group life, then our communities must not isolate their Hebrew Schools and other educational institutions within their own limited confines. In this respect, the responsibility of the community for Jewish education also involves the obligation on its part to join forces with other communities for the achievement of the common goal.



Dr. Alexander Kohanski

PAST PRESIDENTS



* JOSEPH BYER

* MORRIS ROSEN

A. B. FRIEDMAN

MYER MINSKY

LOUIS RAPAPORT

MICHAEL PILOT

MYER SEGAL *

MORRIS SHAFMASTER

HENRY PAUL

GEORGE GINSBERG

* DECEASED



Hebrew School Orchestra
1946-1947

Front Row: Arnold Viner, Jackie Meltzer, Stephen Podolsky, Michael Rolnick, Merrill Allen,
Barry Spitalnick, Milton Silver, Billy Miller
Back Row: Harvey Leavitt, Sheldon Hartstone, Murray Leavitt

IN MEMORIAM

Joseph S. Cooper
1884-1945



Selfless, devoted servant to the Hebrew School and Community. With love and affection, he fostered the ideals of the Hebrew School through the years.

PROLOGUE

This is the story of the Bangor Hebrew School — of the men who shaped its character — of the influences which patterned its destiny — of the spirit which has brought it through crises in the past and which must be trusted to preserve it in the future.

This, too, is a tale of Bangor Jewry — of its slow, painful, but continuous progress culturally, spiritually and civically — for the deeds of the Talmud Torah and its pioneers have left their impress upon the whole community and have determined, in a broad sense, the manner in which the Jews of Bangor shall live for years to come.

In the aggregate, this chronicle is a true review of the Hebrew School's hopes, struggles and accomplishments. It is not meant to be a distinguished historical contribution nor a detailed chronological summary of the forty years it covers. Instead, by selecting the more significant and human episodes in our growth, we hope to present a colorful pageant of the modest epic which is our history.

The personalities that have been interwoven are those of the men and women who, by general agreement, have been most responsible for the development of the Talmud Torah and whose deeds have become a part of the tradition that is our Hebrew School. There are others too and though their names are not mentioned, the satisfaction of having participated in our growth must be its own reward.

The Bangor Hebrew School is no one man or woman, but a fusion of all its supporters, past and present. And on this, the observance of our fortieth anniversary, the history that follows is dedicated to the Youth of our community, with the hope that it will give a few moments of pleasant reading and a warm glow of pride in the institution that has to do so much towards building for all of us a better, richer and happier life.

Henry H. Segal, President



Medal Winners of Their Respective Classes
1946-47

Front row (left to right): Ruth Sclair, Nancy Ashmond, Nuriith Fish, Joanne Kopelow, Beverly Segal, Sybil Miller.
Back row: Stephen Podolsky, Mr. Brown, Melvin Gotlieb, Mrs. Fish, Howard Silver, Harvey Leavitt, Jerry Cooper, Murray Leavitt, Sanford Gass, Sandy Podolsky, Mr. Fish.

The
FIRST 40 YEARS
of the
BANGOR HEBREW SCHOOL



A History of It's Growth
from 1907 to 1947



By
MRS. LAWRENCE CUTLER

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 1947-1948

HENRY H. SEGAL
PRESIDENT

DR. JAMES H. SIEGEL
VICE-PRESIDENT

MORRIS LEAVITT
SECRETARY

LOUIS ROLNICK
TREASURER

DAVID BRAIDY
HARRY COHEN
JOSEPH EMPLÉ
A. B. FRIEDMAN
MRS. SAMUEL GASS
MYER MINSKY
E. P. KAPROW
MAX KOMINSKY
ABRAHAM LIEBERMAN
P. E. MEDWED
MRS. GEORGE GINSBERG

JOSEPH MINTZ
HENRY PAUL
HARRY RABEN
JACK RAPAPORT
BEN SCLAIR
ABRAHAM STERN
MRS. ABE SILVER
GEORGE SILVER
MORRIS SINGER
MORRY SPITALNICK
MRS. HENRY H. SEGAL
MRS. HARRY STERN

BOARD OF EDUCATION

GEORGE GINSBERG
P. E. MEDWED
HARRY RABEN

R. E. BRILL, Chairman
E. P. KAPROW
MYER MINSKY
ABRAHAM STERN

ABRAHAM LIEBERMAN
JOSEPH MINTZ
MRS. SAMUEL RUDMAN

STAFF

NATHAN A. FISH
PRINCIPAL

SOL BROWN

MARCIA FISH

Historical Background

Three basic institutions form the foundations of an established Jewish religious community wherever in the world that community may be. These institutions are the synagogue, the burying ground, and the Hebrew School.¹ A study of the growth of those institutions in a community would give a fairly good picture of the development of the community as a whole, or conversely, a study of the community would necessarily be largely concerned with the development of those institutions.

This evening the Jewish community of Bangor is celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the founding of its Hebrew School. For forty years there has been a sufficiently cohesive group of Jews in Bangor not only to maintain such a school, but also to change the methods and physical surroundings of the school in keeping with the developments in modern educational methods as well as in relation to the community's growth and needs. It is paradoxical, perhaps, that while the Hebrew School was the last of the three institutions to be organized, it is, of those three, the institution most likely to ensure religious survival in succeeding generations.

In order to understand why the Hebrew School was the last institution established and in order better to understand its origins and development, let us briefly look into the origins and development of the settlement of Jews of which it is a part.

The first real settlement of Jews in Bangor was formally established on July 20, 1849, nearly one hundred years ago. Jews had come to America to live as early as 1654 and the first Jewish person known to have come to Maine settled here shortly after the Revolution. There may well have been isolated instances of Jews living in or around Bangor before 1849, but there were never enough to comprise a Jewish settlement. The only source of information extant today concerning the small and short-lived community of a century ago is contained in the minutes of the Congregation Ahawas Achim which was organized on July 20, 1849. The date, July 20, 1849, marks the first meeting of the group which called itself the Congregation Ahawas Achim — Congregation of Brotherly Love — and which was duly chartered by the City of Bangor. The first two meetings of the congregation were concerned with making plans for the first two essentials of communal living — the synagogue and the cemetery. The cemetery which was purchased forthwith was located on Webster Avenue, then outside the city limits. At a subsequent meeting plans were made to employ a spiritual leader, evidently one of their members well versed in religious education and trained by an orthodox teacher and rabbi. He was to act as teacher, Shochet,² Mohel,³ and prayer leader. Thus it is evident that though the community was small, provision was made to educate the young in the language and religious teachings of their people.

After November 2, 1856, there are no minutes of these first Jews. In this connection

¹The Hebrew words *Talmud Torah* and *Cheder* are sometimes used interchangeably with Hebrew School.

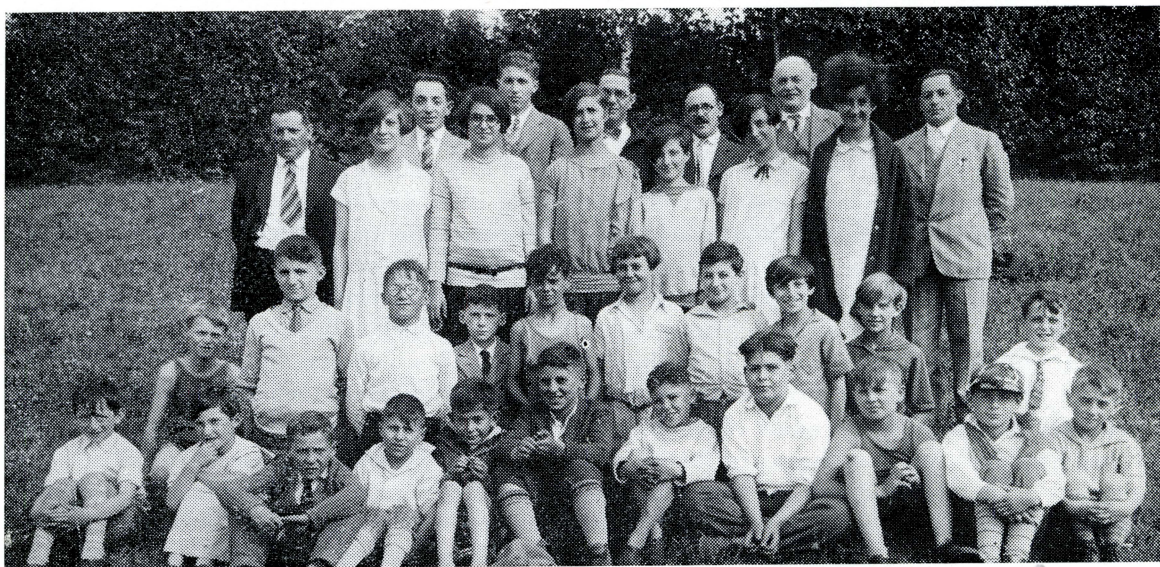
²Shochet: a man licensed to kill fowl and cattle according to Jewish law.

³Mohel: a man licensed and trained to perform circumcisions.

Article I of the Constitution of Congregation Ahawas Achim is important. This provides that "the organization cannot be dissolved so long as three members remain, and that in the event of dissolution, all property of the Congregation shall be placed in the hands of a Congregation located nearest to the City of Bangor, to be held by them in trust and for safe-keeping, until there shall again be a Congregation in Bangor." The property of Ahawas Achim was accordingly entrusted sometime after 1856 to the Congregation Ohabei Shalom in Boston.

The importance of this first Jewish community insofar as the present Jewish community is concerned is nil. No descendants of the original settlers remained nor is it likely that any ever returned to Bangor to live. It is true that the cemetery which they started remains and is still maintained and used to a very limited degree, but for the most part its origins have been forgotten and it is generally assumed that the Jewish community of Bangor was established by the Jews who came to Bangor in the 70's and remained to form the nucleus of the present community. The history of the first Jewish community in Bangor is interesting, however, because it follows so closely the pattern of organization of most Jewish communities in cities all over the world and especially in the United States. It is well to note, too, that though formal Hebrew education began in Bangor forty years ago, the first Jewish children to learn Hebrew in Bangor were taught nearly a century ago.

CLASSES ABOUT 20 YEARS AGO



Front row (left to right): Arthur Bigelson, Buddy Gass, William Cooperstein, Myer Alpert, Melvin Brown, William Saltzman, Sidney Alpert, Edwin Brown, Alex Silver, Harold Cooperstein, and Albert Rubin.
 Second row: Morris Emple, ——— Gold, Max Gass, Sidnev Ames, Albert Freedman, Jeanette Leavitt, Sally Rapaport Striar, Anna Bigelson, Robert Morris, and Phil Goos.
 Third row: Mr. Abe Segal, Marcia Allen Grodinski, Mr. Simons (teacher), Mildred Schwartz Stern, Mr. Schwartz (teacher), ——— Rachlin, Mr. Myer Minsky, Frances Gass, Mr. Louis Rapaport, Betty Smith Rolnick, Mr. Joseph Byer, Pauline Smith, and Mr. James Striar.

From 1856, the last date of any extant record of the first German Jewish settlers in Bangor, until the end of the Civil War, there is no evidence of any permanent settlement of Jews in the city. In the two decades following the close of the war, approximately five Jewish families who originated from eastern Germany made their permanent homes in Bangor. There were other families in some of the towns close by, such as Charleston, Haynesville, Ellsworth, and Newport. Their community in the days preceding the mass migration of eastern European Jews to the United States and proportionally to Bangor, we shall refer to as the second Jewish community in Bangor, though there is actually no definite terminal date of this community since it was merely absorbed and superceded by the larger community of eastern European immigrants.



Beth Israel Synagogue
Home of the Hebrew School from 1913-1920

In 1874 these people under the leadership of Mr. Julius Waterman resumed some of the community activities of the Congregation Ahawas Achim. The Torah and the records of the earlier congregation were returned from Boston and from 1874 to 1901 Ahawas Achim functioned again as the religious organization of Bangor's Jewish community, but services were held only during the Holy Days each fall. The cemetery established by the earlier group was also taken over by the second group. No attempt was ever made, however, to organize a He-

brew School. Generally speaking this second community lacked the religious vitality of the first group. They were less zealous about maintaining their Jewish religious traditions and observances. It is quite likely that whereas the earlier settlers were extremely orthodox in background, these later German Jews were people who had long been accustomed to little but token observance of religious ceremony. Many of that second group became farther and farther removed from their Jewish background and eventually some of them lost their Jewish identity completely. The fact that no provisions had been made for the education of young people in Jewish religious background was primarily a reflection of the thinking of the adult group, and was only secondarily a cause for their lack of survival as Jews.

During the later years especially of the period 1874 to 1901, which we have loosely designated as the period of the second Jewish community, the third and present community was establishing its roots. The Jews from eastern Europe made up the largest and most per-



Bangor Hebrew School
1920-1938

manent settlement in Bangor and their immigration which began about 1880 reached a peak between 1890 and 1910.

The background of the eastern European Jew is familiar to all of us. The political situation in Europe, the persecution, the lack of economic and political status of Jews, and the lack of any promise of future security, were factors which contributed heavily to their migration. The adjustment demanded of this later migration of Jews was much more difficult to

make than the adjustment required of their German predecessors since they came from a society which was literally centuries behind western Europe and America. Not only was social intercourse with Gentiles impossible, but it was also denied the new immigrant by the Jews of German extraction who preceded him to America and for the same reasons. The German Jews had been accustomed to modern social and economic life and once language difficulties were overcome they found adjustment to life in America comparatively easy. The Jew who came from eastern Europe, on the other hand, had not only language difficulty to master, but also a tremendous psychological adjustment to make to a society which allowed him the privileges of first class citizenship, the opportunity of achieving economic security within the limits of his ability, and equality of educational opportunity. While the German Jews had nothing in common with their eastern European co-religionists socially, it is true that in many ways they offered sympathetically and graciously valuable assistance to the newer immigrants in their struggles to learn a living.

In the practice of their religion, the newer immigrants required more than the Congregation Ahawas Achim had to offer. Their background of living as Jews completely with no opportunity to participate in the national life of the countries in which they lived had caused them to maintain for the most part strictly orthodox lives and had never provided any incentive for changing the ancient methods of teaching their children. As the number of children in the group increased the problems they met in bridging the gap between their secular education and their religious teaching became more of a community problem. When there were few young people each family assumed the responsibility for its children's education in learning Hebrew and studying the Torah. Elder members of the community were frequently available as teachers. The existing community had no facilities for Hebrew education, as we have pointed out, and the newer members of the community of necessity had to provide their own. By the end of the nineteenth century there were enough Jews to support a synagogue which was erected on Center St. The synagogue did not immediately support a professional rabbi; therefore, the more educated men of the community acted as lay preachers and officiated when services were needed. The children continued to be taught Hebrew by private teachers until 1906 when the Beth Israel Synagogue employed a professional rabbi who also taught Hebrew.

In 1907 the first attempt was made to organize a Hebrew School on a community basis and available for all the youngsters in the town. For the first time the Talmud Torah was an autonomous institution separate from the synagogue. Little is known of the details of the circumstances leading up to the founding of the school, but it is likely that by 1907 the number of young people had grown considerably and private instruction was no longer economically feasible or expedient. Permission was granted the Jewish community by the city authorities to use the York St. School (now the Ward I polling place) after the afternoon session for Hebrew school classes. A man named Koretz was the principal of the school and Louis Richardson assisted him. The following persons comprised the school board: Joseph Byer, president; Philip Hillson, treasurer; Morris Golden, secretary; Israel Ratchkovsky, Simon Kominsky, and Robert Cooper. Robert Cooper is the only survivor of those who were instrumental in organizing the school and who still lives in Bangor. Approximately eighteen students were enrolled in 1907. Two of the students were girls. Many of the students are now familiar figures in the Jewish community, others are familiar names. Some of the boys were Jack Berson, the Koritsky boys, Sam Richardson, a Garfinkle boy, Sam Marcus, Louis Wallace, Max Snyder, the Hillson boys, Hy Galpert, Ike Cohen, Phil Kaminsky, Joe Glazier, Phil Altman, and Dave Robinson.

The salary of the principal of the Talmud Torah was \$18 a week; his assistant received \$12. These salaries were the chief expenses of the school since the city generously loaned the building at no cost to the community. It is evident, however, from Mr. Cooper's reminiscences that the community had rough times financially. Every Sunday he, together with Mr. Hillson and Mr. Ratchkovsky, made a door-to-door canvas collecting money to meet expenses. At first glance such a hand to mouth existence would seem to indicate poor planning and organization, but it is more likely that the most important reason for such financing was the inability of the interested Jews in those days to pay out any sizable amount of money at one time. A practical advantage in collecting money in this fashion was that it undoubtedly maintained more active interest in the progress of the school on the part of all contributors and it afforded the Board an opportunity to keep in close contact with the thinking of the community.

The following year the school moved to a private house on Carr St. The front part of the house was used for the school and the teacher lived in the rear. This arrangement lasted until 1913 when the Beth Israel Synagogue was completed and Hebrew classes were held in the vestry of the synagogue.

The Cheder was the phase of Jewish life in those early years which most nearly approximated life in Europe. Since the school was set up by men who spent their youths in Europe and whose knowledge of teaching was limited to their own experience it is not in the least surprising that their first Cheder in their new environment should be patterned pretty closely after the European model. The teaching methods were those of the old country as were the teachers. The Hebrew School was the institution which clashed most violently with the American institutions with which the young second generation came in contact. To make the adjustment between their public school training and their religious education presented a very real problem. It is not uncommon to hear the men and women who were the first students in the Cheder recall their shame and embarrassment at having to go to the Talmud Torah after public school was over because they found it awkward to explain to their Gentile classmates the program and purpose of the Cheder. They learned for the most part without understanding and, therefore, the apparent schism between their European heritage and American education and standard of values became a culture conflict and served to accentuate the distinction between the Jewish youth and their Gentile neighbors. Had they been taught the purpose and value of such education in relation to their education as young Americans they might have had more respect for their teachers and been more cooperative students, to say nothing of being happier people. Behavior problems and lack of discipline were the bugaboos of the first teachers. Truancy was common and disappearances from the classrooms via the windows when the teacher's back was turned indicated the attitude of the students toward a method of teaching that was anything but dynamic. The ancient laws of the rabbis, the Talmud and the ritual that were stressed in the school not only represented typical medieval learning, but tended also to stress the rigidity and orthodoxy of the life of a pious Jew. The young students found frequent necessity to revolt against this rigidity because they could not bridge the gap between the life and thinking represented by the Hebrew School and public school and America. Crossing the ocean and settling in the United States represented a matter of a few years in the lives of the immigrant parents of these children, but centuries of progress in many ways separated the eastern European village of the late nineteenth century and Bangor, Maine, in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The visit of Jacob Schiff to Bangor in 1913 stimulated interest in the community to modernize the Cheder. Mr. Schiff emphasized to the leaders of the community that a modern Hebrew School was essential, and his suggestion led to raising enough money that year to employ a more progressive teacher.

This Hebrew School situation was further improved in 1920 when the school moved to the Hebrew Institute Hall on State St. The close physical association with the synagogue was ended and the new school more closely resembled that of a secular institution. Even more important was the hiring in 1927 of two of the first graduates of the newly established Hebrew Teachers College in Boston. Although in many respects the subject matter remained the same, there was improvement in the method of presentation. The teachers could speak English and they emphasized the history of the Jewish people as well as their religion and customs.

In 1938 the Liss Memorial Building was given to the Jewish community of Bangor to be used as a community center and Hebrew School. Teaching methods have changed radically since the early days, and the curriculum has been made much more attractive. Today the values of American Jewish life are emphasized. The students, besides learning to read Hebrew and to understand the content of what they read, are by their study of Jewish history and tradition helped to interpret and understand many seeming paradoxes which confront them as American Jews.

For the past ten years the Hebrew School has conducted a Sunday School primarily for the purpose of teaching Jewish history to the youngsters of the community who are not enrolled in the Hebrew School. Last year fifty-four children attended Hebrew School and an additional forty-three were enrolled in Sunday School.

Ideally children begin Talmud Torah at the age of seven and follow through the six-year program. Besides giving each child a reading knowledge of Hebrew, the program includes the reading and discussion of the Pentateuch and the early prophets, and carries the study of Jewish history up to modern times. Jewish customs, traditions and religious observances are also an important part of the curriculum. Not only do the children learn the significance and routine of important religious services, they have the opportunity actually to carry out and participate in the services. Sabbath services are held every Saturday morning at the school. The members of this Junior Congregation are Hebrew School students and it is they who conduct the services. An average of forty students participate weekly. The School staff in cooperation with the Community Center sponsors two dramatic clubs, one for grade school students and one for junior and senior high school students. The Young Judea Club is also an extra-curricular activity of the school as is the Bar Mitzvah Club.

Beginning this year two curriculum changes are being inaugurated. The Sunday School will be taught by the staff members with no lay assistants, and basic Hebrew will be taught along with Jewish history. The second change in curriculum will be the Junior Hebrew High School, an additional year of study for boys and girls who have passed thirteen years of age. This extra year will round out their education in Hebrew and will lead to a diploma.

The staff of the Hebrew School now consists of three persons, the principal and two assistants. Under their able guidance the curriculum is constantly being improved and expanded in accordance with advances in educational thinking and the needs and interests of

the community. The excellent attendance and enthusiastic participation of the young people in the program of the Hebrew School which is, it must be remembered, voluntary on the part of student and parents, attests to the fact that the curriculum is today truly dynamic and that it goes far towards satisfying the spiritual needs of Jewish youth today. It is gratifying to note that the registration for 1947-1948 is the largest in the history of the institution. There are 66 children in the daily classes. The beginners' class has a registration of 19 children, an all-time high. With the Sunday School and the regular classes there will be well over 100 children.



TO BE CONTINUED

This is not the end of the story. More will be written by others who will know the future importance of the Bangor Talmud Torah. This is but the end of a chapter. In an age that has made world history, the Bangor Hebrew School closes its fortieth year on the threshold of an era that is beyond ordinary comprehension. The war has left deep scars. The healing of these scars is the challenge facing us.

In this critical period, we complete our first 40-year cycle with pride in our past and hope in our future. As a religious institution, we enjoy ever-increasing numerical strength. The idea that was conceived forty years ago by a group of far-sighted individuals has blossomed into a thriving institution of more than 100 children. The star of the Bangor Hebrew School burns brightly in the firmament of religious institutions. It has risen above the vicissitudes of internal strife, economic depression and world war to emerge into 1947 in full vigor.



Hebrew School Choir

1946-47

Front row (left to right): Barry Spitalnick, Bobby Miller, Jackie Meltzer, Sheldon Hartstone, Stephen Podolsky, Michael Rolnick.

Back row: Sybil Miller, Evelyn Sclair, Charlotte Rolnick, Murray Leavitt, Ruth Pels, Mr. Fish, Harvey Leavitt, Nancy Silver, Billy Miller, Linda Gotlieb.

This program has been made possible through
the kindness and generosity of friends.

AS THE TREE IS BENT,
SO THE TREE SHALL GROW.

--- PROVERBS
