

25

LEWISTON-AUBURN  
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

1950 — 1975 • 5711 — 5736

25 YEARS OF SERVICE AND ACTIVITY

In And For The

LEWISTON-AUBURN  
JEWISH COMMUNITY



25

RABBI  
NORMAN ZDANOWITZ

RABBI  
DAVID  
BERENT



# LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE

JUNE 11, 1950



1950

*Lewiston-Auburn Jewish Community Center**... Officers ...*

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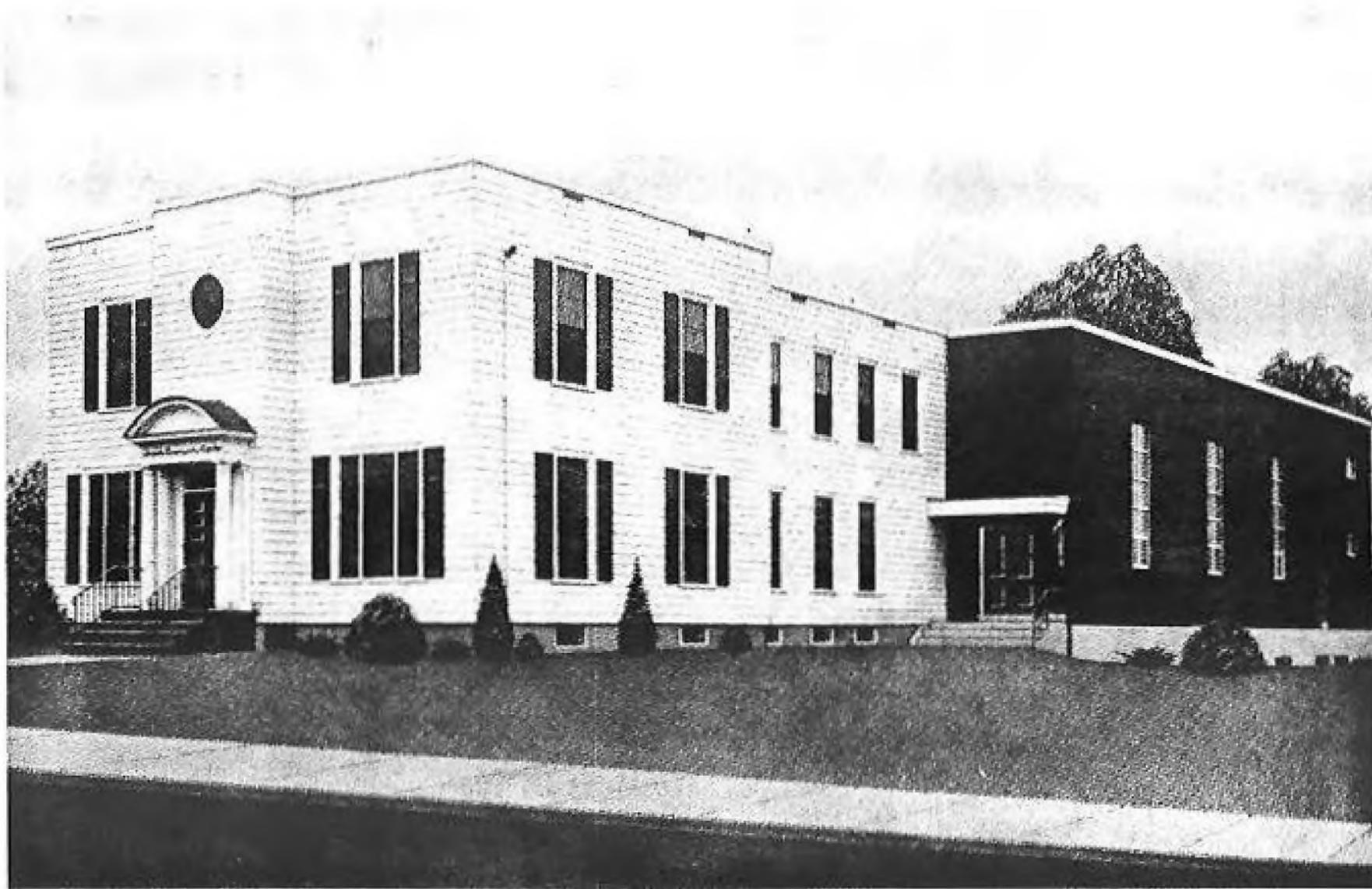
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\* Deceased





A Jewish Recreational, Cultural and Educational  
Agency Serving the Lewiston-Auburn  
Community



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## "THE FIRST 5 YEARS"

"This building is yours - - - keep it in good condition. The observance of these few rules will provide for greater enjoyment of the facilities." These few lines preface the 23 house rules of the building for the more than 200 family members. With few exceptions, the rules are the same today. Under the guidance of the new director, and various chairmen, a variety of activities for all age groups sprang up. A Sunday Hobbytown was instituted, where children from 5 to 13 could partake in arts and crafts and have fun in a variety of group activities. The response was tremendous, and by the end of 1950, 70 children were enrolled! The Center Women's League was formed with Mrs. Harry Rubinoff serving as the first president. By the time the Center was formally dedicated on March 25, 1951, the building on College St. was a beehive of activity.

Before the year ended a duplicate bridge group chaired by Arthur Woolf, was meeting at the Center and a successful 3 day antique show was held.

In May of 1952, Dan Balsam submitted his resignation and it was accepted with deep regret by the board. Dan had presided during the birth of the Center and was a contributing factor to its early success. Morris Kronenfeld of Stamford, Conn. was selected as director and he assumed his duties on Sept. 1, 1952. Mr. Kronenfeld came with an impressive background in Center and Social work and remained the Director for the next 10 years.

Many innovations started early and have remained through the years. The first New Year's Dance was held in 1951, and has continued every year except when the holiday falls on the Sabbath.

Youth activities, always a focal point in Center programming, expanded to include activities for all age groups. As soon as the Center doors were opened Saturday night socials were regularly held for High Schoolers. Burton Wilner, Sam Simonds and Min Flock were early chairmen of Youth Activities.

A Brownie and Cub Scout group were housed at the Center. Mrs. Joseph Freidman was leader of Brownie Troop No. 27, and Michael Goldman was pack-master of Scout Troop No. 169. Both groups were open to children of the entire community. Special programming for vacation periods were held including athletics, trips and inter-faith functions.

A monthly Center bulletin was instituted, and Ben Cohen acted as the first editor-in chief. The bulletins remained an integral part of Center life until 1970, when a different form of communications began.

Athletics! Izzy Shapiro and Ed Laine were the first directors of a variety of

## ARS: 1950-1955"

Center athletics. Basketball, volleyball, bowling, ping-pong. A city wide fo shooting contest sponsored by the Center was very popular in the 50's and attracted participants from the three area high schools. Two of the winners were Lee Kittredge and Ralph Noel, Jr.

In March of 1955, a city-wide ping-pong tournament was held, with many entries. Interestingly enough, there were 2 women entries. Unfortunately Renee Laine and Edith Nussinow were both eliminated in the first round.

Public affairs and educational programs abounded and included every conceivable topic. Dr. John Donovan of Bates College conducted a seminar "America at the mid Century" early in 1954. Dr. Milton Sacks of Brandeis was one of the speakers in a series of lectures on American foreign policy. These were of course, open to the public. The Androscoggin Valley Mental Health Organization, as well as other groups, held their meetings at the Center on a regular basis.

From the very beginning, the Center membership held a large group of people interested in all aspects of Theatre, and it was the most natural thing in the world for the Center Players to come into being. And what a talented group they were! Henry Frank was the first president and some of the Players included Stan Berns, Joel Goodman, Irving Bell, Morris Baker and Elinor Goldblatt. Backstage tale included Pat Schnitzer, Renee Laine and Louis Finesilver. The Center Players productions included "The Curious Savage", "Light Up the Sky" and "The Fifth Season". All were smash hits and large audiences filled the auditorium. A special March of Dimes presentation of "New Fountains" featured some of the finest teenagers including Babs Goodman Shapiro, Joel Abramson and Naomi Alpert. Under the presidency of Pat Schnitzer the group joined the State of Maine Commission of Arts and Humanity.

The Center Women's League did more than provide the Woman's Touch. Catering was their forte, and many a luncheon or dinner for all sorts of groups within the Center was prepared by their golden hands. But they did more than cook. The League provided many spectacular city-wide programs and one of the finest early ones was a Hobby Show in January, 1954. 25 exhibits from dolls to model planes were carefully displayed in the Center gym. Several paintings by Chuck Bernard were auctioned and a candy making demonstration was held. "Nearly 300 local citizens viewed one of the finest displays of hobbies recently in the Twin Cities", was how the Lewiston Daily Sun of Jan. 15, 1954 reported. Best of all, the proceeds were donated to the March of Dimes!

## "OUR STORY: 1960-1965"

By the time the Center was preparing for its 10th anniversary, Samuel White was president. Sue Miller was named woman of the year at the 10th anniversary meeting in May, 1960, which featured an original show and dinner catered by the Women's League, of course! The Center had made an impact. Not only had the Center become "a home away from home" for the Jewish adults and children, it had made an enormous contribution to the community. It was summed up beautifully in an editorial which appeared in the April 23, 1960, Lewiston Sun.

From 1960 to 1965 the Center flourished. One of the highlights of the 1961 winter season was the American-Israeli Ball. This state-wide affair, which honored Senator Edmund Muskie, was a huge financial and social success. Other notables attending this posh affair, were the Israeli Ambassador to the U. N. and the presidents of both Bates and Colby Colleges.

Starting in 1960 and continuing through the decade was the annual Donor Dinner. Primarily a fund raising event, these affairs proved also to be the highlight of the Center social season. The dinners were magnificent and catered by the very talented gals of the Women's League. Often there was dancing and some included musical shows written and directed by three very special talented gals. Starting back in the fifties, the Center members were treated to some fine, entertaining skits, sketches and full bloomed musicals written, directed and produced by Frances Hurwitz, Sue Miller and Hannah Green. Often presented at annual meetings, these shows, which members of the Center appeared in, were eagerly anticipated and well received by the members. A Fran-Sue-Han Production insured a good turn out at any event! Their original production of the "Center Big Top" had a cast of over 30 plus all the backstage and technical help necessary for success. And what successes they were! Sue Miller, always the piano accompanist and director handled the large casts like a pro! These three ladies left a true legacy of marvelous memories.

I doubt that Edith Nussinow could have envisioned its tremendous success when, primarily through her efforts, the Center Nursery School was established in the Fall of 1961. A special Nursery School committee was formed and after a slow start the school quickly became very popular. Due to the fine teaching staff

and excellent facilities, in what was previously the B'nai B'rith room, the school, open to non-members as well as members, became one of the finest in the State. A reputation it holds to today.

In the Summer of 1962, Morris Kronenfeld left our community. It was with regret that the board and members accepted his resignation. "Moe" had served the Center and community for over 10 years and was responsible for much of the Center's success. Philip Cofman was hired, and as the 1962 Fall season commenced, he was the new Center director.

The 1963 season was highlighted in the Spring with the Orchid Ball. Dorothy Beckerman's gorgeous decorations will long be remembered. The Fall of 1963 brought perhaps the finest financial and social success of the Center's 13 years. The Bar Mitzvah Ball. This event, commemorating the Center's "coming of age", featured a dinner, dance, and a marvelous musical production by that terrific trio, Fran, Sue and Hannah. A beautiful candle lighting ceremony on a Bar Mitzvah cake climaxed the evening.

The Women's League was in full swing, and one of their projects was the running of the gift shop in the lobby. For many years Mrs. Gerald Shible was chairperson for this project, and business was brisk, generally before the Jewish holidays.

In 1964, several rooms in the building were redecorated. The wallpaper in the meeting room to the right as you enter the building was changed, but the diamond room, describing the original wall covering, will always remain - - the diamond room.

That year brought us another Center director. Leonard Nemeth began his duties in September, 1964 and remained director for the next five years. During his tenure, several very successful art shows were held at the Center, often chaired by Mr. and Mrs. Steve Passerman. Artists from Maine and across the country displayed their works, which drew large crowds and many sales. These shows usually coincided with Jewish Book Month; and while the art was masterfully displayed in the gym, the books were on sale in the "diamond room".