

Known for their determination, their spirit and their unwillingness to be defeated the congregants of Beth Abraham immediately began planning a new site for a new shul. They located a building on York Street which was the former home of the Tifereth Israel Synagogue which was no longer in use. A few men undertook the great task of enlarging and repairing the existing structure.

The building committee (Sam Smith, Shel

David Striar, Harry Viner, Hyman Striar and Barney Striar) was able to obtain lumber and other supplies from Mr. A. Shute, owner of a lumberyard in Holden, Maine. Even though they had no money with which to buy these supplies, an agreement was made with the very generous Mr. Shute. On February 19, 1933, less than a year after fire destroyed the Carr Street Synagogue, the new shul on York Street was dedicated. The final cost was about \$15,000, which was paid in full by 1948.

Bangor Daily Commercial

Feb. 20, 1933

BEAUTIFUL NEW SYNAGOGUE OF CONGREGATION BETH ABRAHAM WAS DEDICATED ON SUNDAY

Seven Hundred Heard Eloquent Speakers at Outstanding Event For Bangor Jewry; Silver Crown, Saved Through Act of Great Heroism, Exhibited

The outstanding event on the calendar of Bangor Jewry took place Sunday night, when the beautiful new Congregation Beth Abraham Synagogue was dedicated in elaborate and impressive ceremonies before a gathering of nearly 700, which included many prominent members of the local Jewry. Rabbi Louis Levine, chief rabbi of the congregation, was the conductor at the services. The edifice, one of the most beautiful in Maine, embraces all modern improvements and is elaborately equipped. It was constructed to replace the old synagogue on Carr Street, which was destroyed by fire.

Harry Rabin, president of the congregation, opened the dedication services, after which the chair was turned over to Michael Pilot, Bangor attorney, who presided, introducing the several speakers. Other officers in the corporation are: Vice president, Sam Smith, Harry Viner, treasurer, and executive officers, David Striar, Hyman Striar and Barney Cooper. These officers who have worked tirelessly toward the erection of the new church, were at the services.

Rabbi Levine was the first speaker, telling the meaning of the synagogue to the congregation. He talked interestingly on the new edifice and impressed his listeners with its true meaning and value.

A. B. Friedman followed, tracing 30 years of Jewish life in Bangor and touching upon its highlights and accomplishments. The address was intensely interesting

to those present. The next speaker was Morris Rosen, president of Hebrew Institute, who spoke on the bond of relationship between his institution and the synagogue. He urged parents to send their children to the Institute and prepare them for the higher church. The Hebrew Institute gives primary teaching, the speaker stated, and makes ready the Jew for the synagogue; and such schooling will prove in later years of inestimable value.

Myer Segal, in an interesting address, spoke of the necessity of the older generation to liberalize their worship, conforming to the modern and reform way in order to obtain the younger groups' attention.

The concluding address was an informative talk by Principal Gillen of Hebrew Institute, who traced 2000 years of Jewish history.

One of the features of the evening was the exhibiting of a silver crown, more than 150 years old, which was brought to Bangor by the early Jewish settlers from Russia. The crown was in the old synagogue when it burned. Many members of the congregation had feared it lost, and were agreeably surprised to learn it was safe. It was shown and the story of its presence told. David Striar, the oldest member of the congregation, at the risk of his life, the story disclosed, entered the burning building on Carr Street, groped through flame and smoke to the place where he knew the crown to be and returned to the waiting throngs.

Over seven hundred people were gathered at the dedication ceremony in February 1933. Rabbi Louis Levine, chief rabbi of the congregation, conducted the first service in the new shul. Among the first officers of the synagogue were:

Harry Rabin	President
Sam Smith	Vice President
Harry Viner	Treasurer
Shel David Striar	Executive Officer
Hyman Striar	Executive Officer
Barney Cooper	Executive Officer

The synagogue on York Street was the first to be built with a modern interior arrangement. The bema was in the center of the shul, as is traditional, but the altar was placed against the wall so that the Rabbi and the Cantor could face each other during services.

By 1938, Rabbi Levine had moved to another congregation and Rabbi Charles Nathan Goldberg was installed as the new leader of Beth Abraham. He remained until 1957, when Rabbi Philip M. Weinberger was elected as the new leader. It has been said that Rabbi Weinberger was probably the first Yeshiva trained Rabbi ever hired by Beth Abraham.

Beth Abraham's presidents were known not only for their efficiency, but for their longevity in office!

Harry Rabin guided the congregation until 1938. William Viner assumed the reins from 1938-1941. Harry Cohen was then elected, and served until 1948.

From 1948 until 1969, Louis Rolnick was president. His tenure saw a rebirth of interest in the synagogue with many young families participating in the weekly and holiday services. He was also instrumental in the hiring of Rabbi Henry Isaacs in 1960.

After Louis Rolnick's decision that twenty-one years in office was enough, Dr. Irwin Pasternak was installed. His interest and leadership prevailed until 1979. In that year Samuel Nyer assumed the presidency and is still in office.



Past presidents Louis Rolnick and Dr. Irwin Pasternak watch as President Sam Nyer presents a meritorious scroll to Past President and former Chief Gabbi, Harry Cohen (far left) September, 1979. Absent: Past President William Viner.

In 1960 Rabbi Henry Isaacs was installed as the new Rabbi of Beth Abraham, and for over twenty years, has been its spiritual leader. He has seen the synagogue change from a house of worship where chickens were heard squawking during services; where the men would often leave him "davening" alone because it was time for Kiddush; where brass spittoons sat next to every "shtenda" ... to a place of warmth and beauty unimagined when first he came to Bangor from Loring Air Force Base in Limestone, Maine.

With his arrival in the community Beth Abraham Synagogue took on a new spirit. Women, along with small children, began to appear at Saturday morning services. The sermons, now given in English, were the only moments when one could find some quiet. At that point, the Rebbitzin took all the little ones down to the vestry while the Rabbi addressed the congregation on the portion of the week. "Candy men" appeared out of nowhere, feeding the children sweets, and as a result, Shabbos morning attendance increased. Davening took on different melodies, and even the children were invited to lead the congregation in the closing prayers.

In 1969, after Dr. Irwin Pasternak became president, some of the men decided to establish a men's club whose function was to raise money for the shul. Annual raffles were started, as well as other fund raisers, and shortly afterward, they took over the management of the Shabbos kiddish. In 1964-65, headed by Roz Isaacs, a committee of the Sisterhood met to raise funds to refurbish and redecorate the Sanctuary. After much work, many meetings and lots of labor, the Sisterhood celebrated its 25th Jubilee Anniversary in the newly appointed sanctuary in the spring of 1965.

As a result of youthful leadership and a growth in young membership, the Beth Abraham Players was formed in the fall of 1972. Consisting of Beth Abraham members and friends of Beth Abraham, "Shalom, Shalom," an original musical written by Norma Berg, opened at the JCC in November of 1971. This production was such an outstanding success, it was followed by many other productions, originals as well as legitimate theatre.

THE BETH ABRAHAM SISTERHOOD

Presents

The Beth Abraham Players

in

SHALOM - SHALOM!

by

Norma Berg

A Musical Comedy in Three Acts

November 22nd and 23rd, 1971

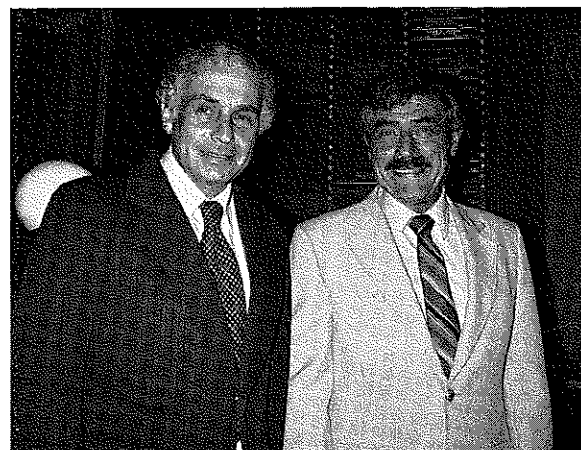
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
BANGOR, MAINE

In 1975, the Shul was bustling. Membership had grown, the sanctuary had been redone, the membership was involved in theater, and the Shul needed a project. It was decided to concentrate on the vestry, and as a result, the basement was gutted, enlarged, redecorated, and rededicated in the Spring of 1976.

In 1979, it was thought that it would be economically and aesthetically wise to insulate and side the building. It was because of this decision that the physical plant changed appearance drastically. White vinyl siding and black shutters were applied, a small garden gracing the entry was planted, in memory of Pat Viner and suddenly Beth Abraham Synagogue stood tall and proud. The following year, the City of Bangor redesigned the neighborhood, and we acquired the land from our building to Essex Street. At this same time, the Sisterhood contracted to put in a new kitchen. Thus for the first time in 50 years, Beth Abraham Synagogue was the proud owner of truly modern conveniences including a dishwasher! History, however, does not stop with new additions. It is a continuing process.

Although our founders are gone, their commitment remains. Today, Beth Abraham, more than ever before, has instilled in the members a deep feeling of love and pride in Judaism, it has fostered feelings of strength and tradition, especially at a time when many Jews have assimilated and lost their identities. It has made us proud of our heritage. We look forward to the next fifty years with hope and faith that our congregation will continue to flourish.

Louise Shindler
Barbara Podolsky



*Gabbi Sheni Dr. Irwin Pasternak,
Gabbi Rishon Martin Schneider
Leaders of the Sabbath Services.*

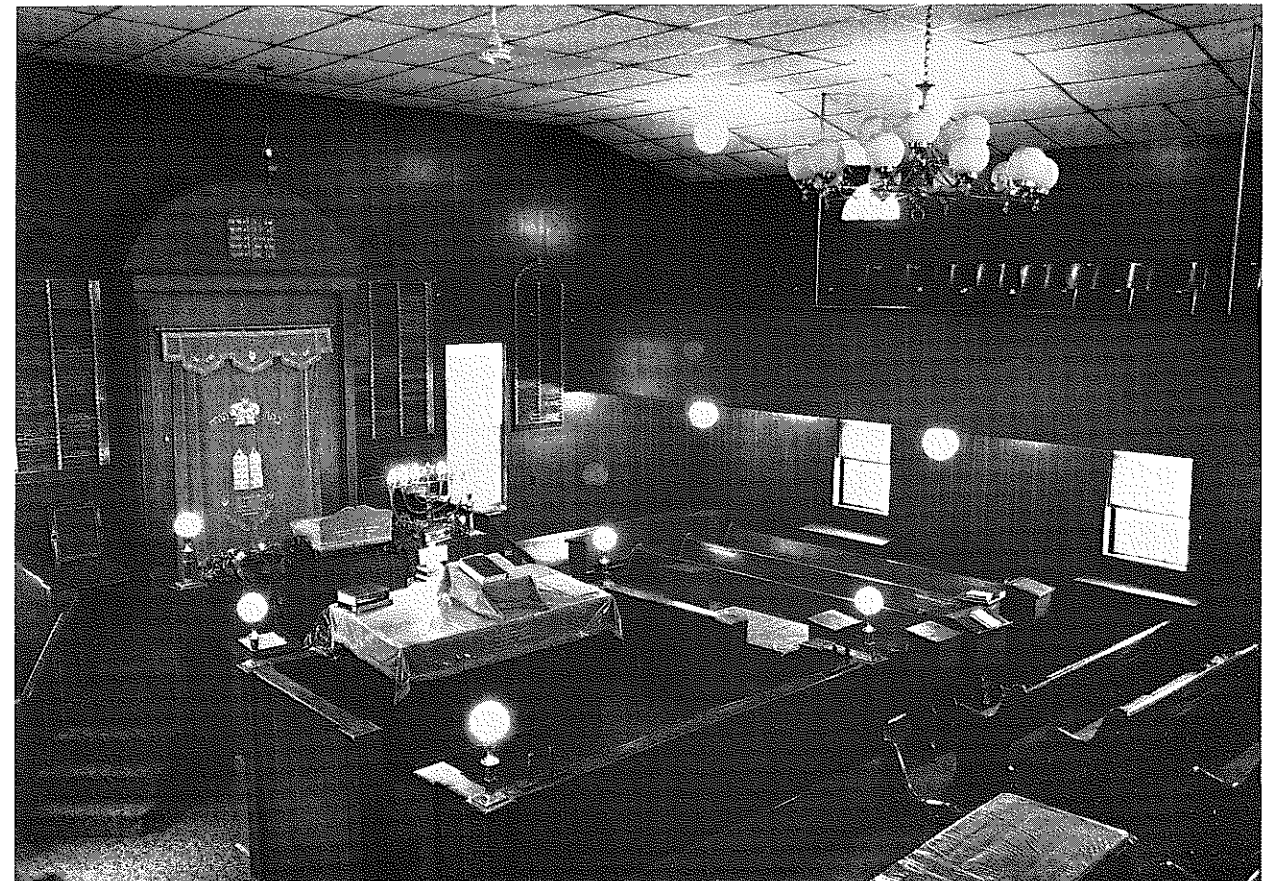


Photo by Yehuda Inbar