

Judy Gatchell
296 Magnolia Rd.
Brunswick ME 04011
207-725-8018
gatch@suscom-maine.com

Congregation Beth Israel

BANGOR, MAINE

DIAMOND

1888-1963

JUBILEE

PRINTED FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

BY

FURBUSH-ROBERTS PRINTING CO., INC., BANGOR, MAINE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We believe we have explored every available source in compiling this short history of our Congregation. It has been our privilege to assemble from diverse corners all the Minute Books since Beth Israel was named excepting those of the 1930's, a complete set of records of the Chevra Kadisha, the Ladies' Auxiliary, and the Talmud Torah when it was solely sponsored by Congregation Beth Israel. The proceedings of the Congregation and the Chevra Kadisha were written in a fine Yiddish hand by Solomon Harris and Morris N. Golden.

Even so modest an effort as this is not possible without the aid of many willing friends. I wish first of all to express my gratitude for the information assembled by Mrs. Ann Brown, Mrs. Diane Cutler, Mrs. Rene Minsky, Mrs. Judy Rudman, Mrs. Delores Schiro, and Mrs. Marilyn Segal; for the technical advice of Mr. Morris Ollove.

Miss Olive Smythe and Mrs. Robert Wetzler of the Bangor Public Library were good enough to provide us with old pictures of Bangor and other pertinent information. For some of the photographs and information concerning old residents we are indebted to Lawrence Berson. We are grateful to Mrs. Ada Cohen Gleszer for the biography of her father, Max Cohen.

It is a happy circumstance that several of the direct descendents of the pioneers of the Congregation are still in our midst. We secured extremely valuable information from Mrs. Minnie Allen, daughter of Lemke Allen; Mr. Abraham Golden, the son of Morris N. Golden; Moses Byer, the son of Joseph Byer. Mr. A. B. Friedman and Mr. Abraham J. Berson also contributed information heretofore unrecorded. The Congregation remains in their debt.

While recognizing their assistance, I do not in any way shoulder them with responsibility for any statements or judgments in this document. That responsibility is solely mine.

Henry H. Segal
Editor

Contents

	PAGE
Acknowledgments	2
Foreword	7
Greetings	8
Introduction	22
 CHAPTER	
1 Forces Influencing Our History	25
2 The Beth Israel Founders	31
3 Building of the First Synagogue	37
4 The Formative Years	43
5 Congregational Life	48
6 "Bangor Fire" Destroys Synagogue	56
7 Building of the Second Synagogue	60
8 In War And Peace	72
9 Dedication to the Nation's Cause	80
10 The Modern Period	83
These Are The Rabbis of Beth Israel	99
Beth Israel Had Its Scholars	111
Religious Worship Enriched by Lyric Beauty	115
Past Presidents	117
Officers of the Congregation Beth Israel	120
Diamond Jubilee Committee	122
The Beth Israel Chevra Kadisha	130
Philanthropy and Social Service	134
Max Cohen, a Biography	140
Myer Segal: Religious Rebel	142
Beth Israel Sisterhood	144
Beth Israel Brotherhood	151
Tributes and Citations	154
Jewel Scroll	160
Members In Public Service	161
Members In Military Service	163



... to build a house for the name of the Lord,
... I KINGS, VIII:17



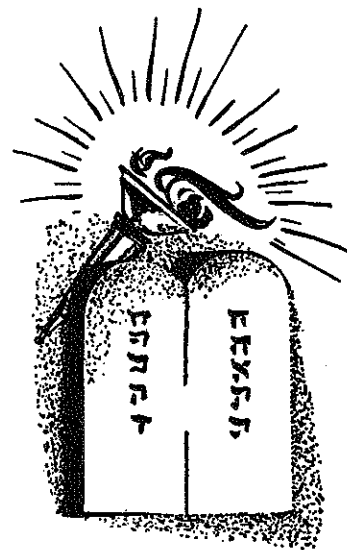
WE COMMEMORATE the spiritual life and endeavors of a small group of faithful and devoted Jews. They brought to this region of northern New England not only their meager worldly goods and their high hopes for material success, but also their spiritual heritage which they in turn were ready and eager to foster, to cherish and to hand down to their posterity. We, their descendants, physical and spiritual, have the high privilege and sacred honor to testify to the growth and development of the institution which they founded seventy-five years ago. We do this both from a sense of pride that a fine Sanctuary is now the monument to their humble beginnings and also from a sense of humility that even this monument does not suffice to testify to the debt of gratitude and love which we owe to their memory.



והלכו בגוים לאורך

And the nations shall walk in Thy light

ISAIAH 60:3



FOREWORD

Congregation Beth Israel, the oldest synagogue in the State of Maine, this year celebrates its 75th anniversary.

This is the story of Beth Israel—of the men and women 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.

In the aggregate, this chronicle is a review of the Congregation's struggles, hopes and accomplishments. It is not meant to be a distinguished historical contribution nor a detailed chronological summary of the seventy-five 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 synagogal life and whose deeds have become a part of the tradition that is Beth Israel. There are others too, and though their names are not mentioned, the satisfaction of having participated in our growth must be its own reward.

Thus we do honor to the memory of those who made this congregation possible and sustained it through the rough and the smoother years. We would also make this modest contribution to the future history of the Jews in Bangor—a rounded pebble for some future historian to use in the compilation of an authoritative chronicle. We are all the more moved to do this when we realize that the centennial year will be celebrated twenty-five years hence. The more recent history of Beth Israel will not be so extensively dealt with since it is adequately recorded in the columns of the "Beth Israel Bulletin" and in other available records. Furthermore, the developments of recent years require the mellowing of time to give them the aging indispensable to durable historic data.