

Robert Clenott, Dr. George Goldberg and Abraham Breitbart.

¹⁶Active in the ladies auxiliary were Bessie Barron, Mrs. J. Bloch, Sadie Brickman, Bertha Deane, Ida Emanuel, Rose Huberman, Edith Meyers, Alice Modes, Mrs. D. Needleman, Dorothy Schwartz, Ida Snider, Bessie Tellan and Edith Tellan.

¹⁷Saul Shulman recalls that when the club learned of the impending arrival of these two leaders in Portland, en route by train to Canada, they obtained the services of a military band from one of the local forts. They then serenaded the train and its several hundred Jewish Legion volunteers during their stop-over in Portland. Finally, as a token of their affection and esteem, they lifted Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi into the air and carried them to their train where they bade them a fond farewell.

¹⁸David I. Rubinoff, Samuel Barnstone and Harry Jacobs succeeded him as president.

¹⁹Succeeding presidents of the organization included Mesdames Joseph S. Bernstein, Max W. Simonds, Abraham H. Simonds, Harry Botwick, Samuel Kates, Arnold Goodman, Morris Cox and Sidney Carnam.

Additional charter members of the organization were Dr. Cecelia Fieldman, and Mesdames Mark Levine, Goldie Davidson, Samuel Sacknoff, Abraham J. Bernstein, Elder Markson, Frank Feldman, Myer Karlin and Philip Abrahamson.

CHAPTER VIII

JEWIS IN PUBLIC LIFE TO 1924

During the first quarter of the present century, the Jews of Portland began to exhibit a keen interest in the city's political life. Jews stood for election to the City Council and several candidates were successful on more than one occasion. The promise of American life, the opportunities of political equality and the equality of political opportunities, appealed strongly to both the long established Jewish residents and newcomers. And the pride of the Jewish community in the ability of some of its members to win public office enhanced and furthered Jewish interest in public life.

One factor that enabled Jews to run successfully for office was the ward system that prevailed until 1923 when the city manager form of government was adopted. Previous to that year, Portland was governed by a mayor and City Council, the latter consisting of two bodies: the Board of Aldermen, as the upper chamber, and the Common Council, as the lower chamber. The members of both bodies were elected by the constituents in whose wards they stood for election. Ward 3, which embraced the chief Jewish residential area, sent several Jews to the City Council, until abolition of the old form of government.

It has been mentioned in a previous chapter that Samuel Rosenberg was elected to the Common Council in 1898 and was thus the first Jew to hold elective political office in Portland. In 1893 he was appointed assistant assessor of Portland. From 1904 to 1910 he was an Overseer of the Poor, serving as chairman of the Overseers of the Poor from 1907 to 1910. Rosenberg also served on the State Board of Charities and Corrections from 1919 to 1921.

Harry M. Taylor served on the Common Council in 1907 and 1908, Samuel Davis in 1909 and 1910, and Oscar Tabachnick in 1911, 1912 and 1913. Henry N. Taylor served on the Common Council in 1914 and 1915, and then was elected to the Board of Aldermen two years. He served as chairman of the Board of Aldermen for six months before resigning to enter the Navy during World War I. Edward A. Simon served on the Common Council in 1916, 1917 and 1918, and Morris Sacknoff served there in 1917

and as an Alderman in 1918 and 1919.

Samuel Davis, who served on the Board of Aldermen in 1920 and 1921, enjoyed an unusual experience as chairman in 1920. For it was during that time that Mayor Charles B. Clarke was not available for business one day. Samuel Davis was then designated as "Mayor for the day." This distinction was never forgotten by his friends.

The last Jews to serve on the Common Council were David Sivovlos in 1922, and Louis Bernstein in 1923, the final year of the old form of government.

In order to keep within certain chronological limits, we will record in a later chapter Jewish achievements in public life from the late 1920's until the present. There we will include not only references to public office but also activity in the professions, civic organizations, organized sports and economic life. At this point, however, mention should be made of Jacob H. Berman who served as the County Attorney for Cumberland County in 1916, and Israel Bernstein who served as an Overseer of the Poor in 1919 and 1920, and as a member of the School Committee from 1921 to 1923. The former is a grandson of Shiah Berman, one of the early Jewish settlers in Portland. The latter is the son of the late Abraham J. and Sarah Bernstein, who were mentioned in previous chapters on religious and philanthropic activity.

CHAPTER IX

RELIGIOUS LIFE (1920-1942)

In 1919 the dissident group which had departed from Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh obtained the old premises of Congregation Sharith Israel on Middle Street and called itself Congregation Adas Israel. When Rabbi Chaim Shohet became spiritual leader of this new congregation, Rabbi David Essrig was engaged by Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh.

Congregation Adas Israel met on Middle Street while preparations were being made for a new synagogue building. Jacob E. Rubinsky was its first president and Harry Fireman served briefly as treasurer until that post was taken over by Joseph Shur who held it for more than twenty years.¹

In 1921 the new congregation purchased a building on Congress Street and proceeded to renovate it. Before the new synagogue was ready Rabbi Chaim Shohet died and was succeeded by his son, Rabbi Moses Shohet, who had been serving in Bangor. The decision on succession was, in fact, made on the cemetery grounds shortly after interment of the elder Rabbi Shohet. As a memorial to its first rabbi, the new congregation changed its name to "Etz Chaim" (Tree of Life).

From its inception, Congregation Etz Chaim was known in Portland as the "modern *shul*", for many leaders of the defunct Modern Synagogue Society joined it and encouraged innovations. As a concession to the younger element, an English-speaking rabbi, Dr. Phineas Israeli, was engaged to serve concurrently with Rabbi Moses Shohet. Rabbi Israeli delivered English sermons and directed activities for the younger members. He introduced late Friday evening services and congregational singing.

On October 18, 1921, the Sisterhood of Etz Chaim Synagogue was organized in the home of Mrs. Elder Markson who was elected its first president. The other officers were Mrs. Samuel Davis, vice-president, Mrs. Jacob E. Rubinsky, treasurer, Mrs. Mark Levine, financial secretary, and Mrs. Harold A. Meyers, recording secretary. The sisterhood purchased the ark and the Torah scroll which was presented to the congregation by Mrs. Meyers on June 4, 1922, at ceremonies dedicating the new synagogue. It also sponsored the