



Brownsville Jewish Community



Judging by their activity and the interest they take in Jewish affairs one would imagine that Brownsville Jewry comprised five thousand rather than only two hundred and fifty families. But it is not the numbers so much as the effort that measures the value or importance of a community. And we know that this small group of Jews in Brownsville have done as much and more than many communities that are far larger and more pretentious. The first comers to Brownsville were H. and M. Levy and Joseph and Frank Goldstein. One of the earliest residents was Mr. A. Lewis, who has established himself as one of the most successful manufacturers in the Pittsburgh district as a member of the firm of Bennett, Hollander & Lewis. William Levy of the Tapol-

Brownsville he had occupied a similar position in Uniontown, Pa. He is still the aggressive leader of the congregation and as his synagogue was burned down last year he has a large program of constructive work ahead of him which will test his resourcefulness and his courage. We can scarcely believe that a community numbering so comparatively few people will undertake to carry out the ambitious plans they have prepared to erect a new synagogue that will cost probably \$45,000. If the Brownsville Jewish community "puts over" a program like that, then they surely are entitled to be considered one of the liveliest Jewish communities in Pennsylvania. Not judging by the aggressive and progressive spirit that has already been displayed by our Brownsville co-religionists no task seems to be large for them to do. The JEWISH CRITERION certainly wishes them every success and trusts that they will maintain that spirit of Jewishness and devotion to Judaism which are so essential in these days when the spirit of our faith needs to be kept burning brightly.

The president of the congregation is Mr. Benjamin Schwartz; vice president, George Ehrenprice and secretary and treasurer, Oscar Jubelirer. The trustees are Messrs. Harry Levy, M. Grossman and Abram Miller. We had occasion to mention recently that in Pittsburgh there is a disposition on the part of one of the congregations that has hitherto been considered as Orthodox to consider in the near future a modification of their form of worship so as to attract and to hold the younger generation? It may be that those in charge of Brownsville affairs may feel that in the years to come in order to hold the children to the house of Israel that some slight change may be required in order to make the young folk active and interested workers for the congregation. All this is worthy of thought. Rabbi Shapo's interest does not end with the congregation, but is broad enough to comprehend all of the Jewish interests of the community and to cross the sectarian boundaries and to assist in all worthy uplift movements of Brownsville. So with a man of such broad outlook the time may come when some special effort will be made to hold the younger people with closer bonds to the religious life of the Jews.

True to the spirit of Jewish teaching and loyal to the tradition of the people one of the first activities to engage the attention of the Brownsville folk was the formation of a Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society. Ten years ago this society was organized and its present officers are Mrs. A. Miller, president; Mrs. J. N. Cooper, vice president; Mrs. Ben Schwartz, secretary; and Mrs. Paul Gretcher, treasurer. The purpose of the society is obvious from its name. It is an aid society that reaches out its hand to the stranger within the gate as well as to those who have been residents of the community and who have suffered adversely. There is no mission of mercy to which these faithful women do not lend themselves if it is worthy of their attention.

Some four years ago a lodge of the Sons of David was organized and it immediately enlisted the support and co-operation of the Jewish men of the community. It served a double purpose of promoting the fraternal spirit of the members and was used as a means of assisting needy brethren. It is the most prominent men's organiza-

tion in the Jewish community and has done splendid work. The officers are: President, Morris Seligman; vice president, Saul Grossman; secretary, H. L. Beck; and treasurer, George Ehrenprice.

But our Brownsville brethren have not limited their activities to Jewish work alone but when the call came for all Americans to enter the lists and by their patriotic response challenge the Prussians the Jews of Brownsville did their share of service for the nation. Five Jewish boys were sent from Brownsville to do their bit in the great war; and one of them went overseas and is still over there, Myer Fink. The remaining four were Charles E. Krause, David Krause, and Max Birckenfield. These boys in conjunction with the great army of their fellows have helped demonstrate that the Jews of the nation gave as they should give and only what was expected they would give when called upon them. We hope the day is at hand when we shall forever be rid of the insinuating anti-Semitic propaganda which is constantly endeavoring to cast the reflection that the Jews lack patriotism. From the heart of the Argonne forest, from every other battlefield of Europe where lie our dead comes the refutation of such a calumny. Whether in the army or the navy, whether behind the lines, in the Red Cross, the Medical Corps, or the Welfare Work the Jews have contributed even more than their proportion in relation to the population. But it is not our purpose to seek additional credit because we gave more than the others, but to seek to give to our brethren that justice to which they are entitled. So from Brownsville, as well as from every other nook, hamlet and city of the nation, went forth the brave boys who were willing, and many of them who did make the supreme sacrifice. And our heart bleeds at the thought that that Democracy for which they fought to save; this world for which they fought to make a safe place for their brethren and for all the peoples, regardless of race, religion or color, still harbors enmity and hatred; and we find in Poland our brethren being massacred by the hundreds. But we yet have faith that the wise leaders of the nations will, now that the Peace Treaty is signed, use the weight of their power and influence to put an end to the intolerable conditions prevailing in Eastern Europe. The boys who gave their lives are entitled to that end and the parents who gave their boys are entitled to that, and all the millions who sacrificed that the war might be won, are entitled to that; and we hope that the time is soon here when Israel no longer will have to mourn again and again as she has mourned all through the ages for the victims of persecution. When that condition shall have been achieved, then the world will be made a safe place for the Jew as well as for all others.

But it was not alone in sending a few boys that the Jews of Brownsville did their full duty, but in all the "behind the line" activities. Whether the call came for Red Cross Relief, or for the War Sufferers, or whether the Government called for Liberty Loan or War Stamp subscriptions our brethren in Brownsville responded with an enthusiasm that was to be expected of them. They gave of the money and of their services. They engaged in all the patriotic propaganda that had for its purpose inspiring the people to do their utmost

for their country and for their allies. On the Liberty Loan Committee we found the names of Joseph Cooper, Harry Levy, Benjamin Schwartz and Paul Gretcher. But there are others who gave liberally of their time and service. The women contributed their share too; and when the call came for help for the starving Jews in eastern Europe, all responded in proportion to their number and their means.

Brownsville Jews, while they are keen to promote the religious and philanthropic development of the community, they do not neglect the social side. They have two social clubs—The Liberty and The Century.

There can be no doubt of the sure though gradual growth of this progressive group of Jews who have shown themselves to be thoroughly



Rabbi J. Shapo

sky Company of Pittsburgh, is also another of the earlier Brownsville residents who has made good in the big city.

From all the available records the first evidence of a Jewish settlement in Brownsville was about twenty-five years ago. Starting modestly, the first comers gradually developed and began to take an important place in the commercial and civic life of the town. Men like Samuel Green, Samuel Brown, Joseph Wise, the Goldsteins, J. Trumper, H. L. Beck, Abram Miller and others have established themselves successfully among the prominent merchants and have done their share to promote the business interests of Brownsville.

As soon as there were enough Jews in the community, or at least there were enough that had sufficient confidence and the desire to organize the community, a congregation was formed known as the Ohave Israel. This was called into being some twelve years ago and the first Rabbi was Rev. J. Shapo, a scholar of no mean attainments and one who had graduated from the Vilna, Russia, Teachers' Institute and in this country he had received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the University of Oregon. So well equipped with both a sectarian and secular education and thoroughly in harmony with the spirit of modern life, Rabbi Shapo had proved to be the inspiration of the spiritual development of the community. Prior to his coming to



J. Goldstein

abreast of the problems which confront their people and their willingness to help solve them. Only when these smaller communities realize their responsibility to their people and their faith, will it be possible to achieve that Jewish solidarity which is essential to our welfare.

ROUMANIAN PREMIER BRATI- ANO CONSIDERS JEWISH QUESTION SETTLED

In Special Interview Granted to International Jewish Press Bureau's Special Correspondent in Europe, Bratiano Admits Jews Treated Unjustly in Roumania—Offers to Rectify Wrongs Wherever Possible

By Leo Wolfson
(By Our Foreign Correspondent)

Paris, June 25.—I just interviewed the Roumanian Premier Bratiano regarding the Jewish question in Roumania. The Premier stated in the beginning that he considers the Jewish question in Roumania completely settled, by the last decree issued by the Roumanian King naturalizing the native Jews, all Jewish men who served in the Roumanian Army, their widows, children, as well as children of people who reside in Roumania, (this includes those residing abroad, who have parents in Roumania).

Bratiano expressed the hope that from now on the relations between the Roumanian Jews and Gentiles would be more friendly than ever before, and