

## REMEMBRANCES OF EAST LIVERPOOL'S EARLY JEWISH COMMUNITY

A SMALL NUMBER OF JEWISH RESIDENTS, OF EAST LIVERPOOL & WELLSVILLE, MOSTLY GERMANS AND A FEW POLISH, GATHERED TOGETHER IN OR ABOUT THE YEAR 1880 AND HELD REFORM RELIGIOUS SERVICES IN SEVERAL OF THEIR HOMES. THEN IN 1894 THEY ORGANIZED AS A CONGREGATION AND ADOPTED THE NAME "B'NAI ISRAEL." THOSE MAINLY RESPONSIBLE WERE JULIUS GOETZ, WM. ERLANGER, SR., WILLIAM ERLANGER, JR., GUSTAV BENDHEIM, ADOLPH JOSEPH, HENRY NEWMAN, MENDEL WASBUTZKY, JACOB STEIN, MESSRS. LANG & LIVINGSTON. (PRIOR TO 1880 THERE WERE SEVERAL FAMILIES OF JEWISH ORIGIN WHO RESIDED HERE FOR A SHORT TIME.)

THE FIRST TEACHER OF THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL, WHICH WAS STARTED AROUND 1904, WAS MISS FLORA MANIST, WHO WAS LIVING IN WELLSVILLE. WHILE THE EARLIEST RELIGIOUS SERVICES WERE RECORDED BEING HELD IN THE ELKS AND ODD FELLOWS HALLS, ALSO THE MOOSE HALL, I BELIEVE THAT I, AS A CHILD OF SIX, FIRST ATTENDED WHAT WE CALLED "SUNDAY SCHOOL" ON THE SECOND OR THIRD FLOOR OF THE OYSTER BUILDING, ON EAST SIXTH STREET. I ALSO FAINTLY RECALL GOING TO THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE CITIZENS NATIONAL BANK BUILDING, ON WASHINGTON ST., FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION. THE LODGE ROOMS OF THE ODD FELLOWS TEMPLE WERE THEN UTILIZED EARLY IN THE 1900'S FOR SERVICES AND SCHOOL, AND THE CONGREGATION REMAINED THERE UNTIL THE NEW TEMPLE, LOCATED ON WEST FIFTH & MONROE STREETS, WAS READY FOR OCCUPANCY IN 1922.

THE FIRST CONFIRMATION WAS HELD IN 1913 IN THE ODD FELLOWS HALL. THERE WERE FIVE CONFIRMANDS, REBECCA RICH, MOLLIE SARBIN, DOROTHY STEIN, EVA WASBUTZKY, AND JULIUS ERLANGER. WILLIAM ERLANGER, JR. WAS PRESIDENT AND GUSTAV BENDHEIM, SECRETARY (ALSO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT.) RABBI ABRAM BRILL, OF WHEELING, W. VA., WHO OCCASIONALLY CONDUCTED SERVICES AND SUPERVISED THE INSTRUCTIONS, WAS TO CONFIRM THE STUDENTS,



BUT HE BECAME ILL AND UNABLE TO FUNCTION. RABBI LEONARD WOLSEY, OF CLEVELAND, TOOK HIS PLACE IN THE PULPIT.

MOST OF THE CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY THE GIRLS, WITH ORTHODOX PARENTS ATTENDED THE REFORM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL. MR. LEON RICH, MR. MORRIS SARBIN, AND MY FATHER, CHARLES WASBUTZKY, WERE MEMBERS OF THE ORTHODOX CONGREGATION, BUT THEY CONTRIBUTED FINANCIALLY AND OTHERWISE TO THE REFORM.

THE SECOND CONFIRMATION WAS HELD IN 1916. DR. I. E. PHILO, RABBI OF THE RODEF SHOLOM TEMPLE, YOUNGSTOWN, INSTRUCTED AND CONFIRMED THE SIX STUDENTS IN THE CLASS. THEY WERE GORDON BENDHEIM, BESSIE DIAMOND, LESTER ERLANGER, JACOB SERETIN, RALPH STEIN AND RACHEL WASBUTZKY.

#### BACK TRACKING -

MEN SUCH AS LEON RUBIN, MR. BENDHEIM, JACOB JANOVITZ (JAY), BENJAMIN GREEN, GUS RICKERSBURG, HARRY MOYER, SAMUEL BREAKSTONE, MAURICE NEWMAN, SOL EPSTEIN, BERT ERLANGER, LOUIS HOFF, JACOB STEIN, ALBERT GOETZ, HARRY ALTMAN, MAURICE FREDLAND, MENDEL WASBY (Wasbutzky), WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN STARTING PLANS IN 1919 FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE. BRICKS WERE SOLD TO NON-JEWS AS WELL AS JEWS FOR \$1.00 A PIECE TO HELP FINANCE THE CONSTRUCTION. (THE BRICKS WENT INTO THE BUILDING.)

"GUS" BENDHEIM WAS LONG THE "BACK BONE" OF THE REFORM CONGREGATION. HIS DEVOTION WAS UNLIMITED. HE RARELY MISSED A SABBATH EVENING SERVICE (WHICH WERE HELD WEEKLY) OR A SUNDAY MORNING AT THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL. THIS FINE TRAIT MUST HAVE GONE INTO THE BLOOD STREAM OF HIS DAUGHTER, MILDRED, WHO SO TIRELESSLY WORKED FOR THE CONGREGATION.

MRS. GUS RICKERSBURG, "AUNT BELL" AS SHE WAS LOVINGLY CALLED, WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED. SHE WAS PRESIDENT OF THE SISTERHOOD, A RELIGIOUS SCHOOL TEACHER, MEMBER OF THE TEMPLE CHOIR, CHAIRWOMAN FOR THE ANNUAL TURKEY DINNERS, RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING NEEDED SUPPLIES FOR THE TEMPLE KITCHEN, ETC. I RECALL WHEN JUST A "TEEN-AGER" ACCOMPANYING HER ON HER ROUNDS TO HOMES OF NON-JEWISH FAMILIES SOLICITING SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE



McCALL MAGAZINE, MONEY DERIVED THEREFROM FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CONGREGATION.

THOSE OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH ESTABLISHED THEIR CONGREGATION EARLY IN THE 1900's. IN THE BEGINNING SERVICES WERE HELD IN PEOPLES' HOMES AND HALLS, BUT I AM NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THEIR PROCEDURES. THE NAME B'NAI JACOB WAS CHOSEN, AND THE SYNAGOGUE BEARING THAT NAME WAS CONSTRUCTED ON EAST THIRD STREET ABOUT THE YEAR 1916. MEN WHO WERE PILLARS OF THAT CONGREGATION WERE ABRAHAM FISHER, MORRIS SARBIN, BENJAMIN WOLK, MEYER REICH, L. CAPLAN, CHAS. WASBUTZKY, LEON RICH, HARRY GORDON, MORRIS FINEMAN, HARVEY ARONSON, NATHAN CORNRICH, ABRAHAM SAND, JULIUS SULKES, ~~MESSRS~~, ALPERN, TURK, KATZ, MANOLOVITZ, MIDLER, BERMAN, AND OTHERS WHOSE NAMES I CANNOT REMEMBER.

DUE TO A DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF JEWISH FAMILIES IN THE COMMUNITY, WHICH COMPRISES EAST LIVERPOOL & WELLSVILLE, OHIO, MIDLAND, PENNSYLVANIA, CHESTER & NEWELL, WEST VIRGINIA, AND DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING BOTH TEMPLES, THE TRUSTEES OF THE TWO CONGREGATIONS, AFTER CONSIDERABLE STUDY AND MEETINGS, DECIDED TO MERGE IN NOVEMBER, 1962, INTO ONE CONGREGATION "BETH SHALOM" AND USE THE TEMPLE WHICH HOUSED THE REFORM CONGREGATION. (THE MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ORTHODOX BELIEF, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF THE SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION, HAD BEEN ABIDING MORE BY THE CONSERVATIVE METHOD OF RELIGION.)

DOCTOR WILLIAM Z. SULKES WAS ELECTED AS ITS FIRST PRESIDENT. THE FIRST HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICES WERE HELD IN THE YEAR 1963, AND WERE CONDUCTED BY RABBI STANLEY F. CHAYET, OF THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE (REFORM), CINCINNATI, OHIO. PRAYER BOOKS OF BOTH REFORM AND CONSERVATIVE WERE USED, WITH A CHOIR UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. & MRS. ERNEST LOWE. ALL WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION WERE ELIGIBLE AND JOINED THE TEMPLE SISTERHOOD WHICH IS AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE SISTERHOODS.



FROM THE EARLY 1900s', OVER A LONG PERIOD OF YEARS, MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY HELPED IN MAINTAINING THE REFORM CONGREGATION. ETHEL WAS MOST DEVOTED AS SHE TAUGHT RELIGIOUS SCHOOL "WEEK AFTER WEEK" AND PLAYED THE PIANO FOR THE ASSEMBLY: ALSO HELD THE OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF THE SISTERHOOD FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME THAN I CAN RECALL. I SANG IN THE TEMPLE CHOIR (OFTEN ALONE), ALMOST EVERY SABBATH EVENING FOR SOME THIRTY YEARS, TAUGHT RELIGIOUS SCHOOL, SERVED ONE TERM AS SISTERHOOD SECRETARY, AND EDITED THE TEMPLE BULLETIN DURING DOCTOR J. W. SCHOOLNIC'S PRESIDENCY. IN APPRECIATION OF MY PAST SERVICE, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF BETH SHALOM CONGREGATION, ON OCTOBER 12, 1966, MADE ME A LIFE TIME NON-DUES PAYING MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION.

MORE THAN A HALF CENTURY HAS PASSED SINCE THE HADASSAH MEETINGS WERE FIRST HELD ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF MY PARENTS RESIDENCE, 226 WEST SEVENTH STREET, MOTHER MAKING THE ROOMS AVAILABLE.

MEMBERS OF HADASSAH AND SISTERHOOD TOGETHER HERE THIS EVENING, IN THE TEMPLE WHICH WAS BUILT MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AGO, IS PROOF THAT THE BETH SHALOM CONGREGATION HAS FUNCTIONED WELL FROM ITS INCEPTION TO THE PRESENT DAY - THAT THE WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN HAVE WORKED DILIGENTLY, AND BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING THE PEOPLE OF OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY WORKING SLEEPING UNDER ONE ROOF.

Eva Wasbutzky

April 5, 1976