

# THE FEDERATION PAGE

*News of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies*

A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY FUND



## Free Burial Association Fills Definite Need In Community

### *Aids Families Confronted with Double Emergency of Death and Indigence*

#### **Works Closely With Jewish Family Welfare Association**

**Q**UIETLY but efficiently going about its self-appointed task, the *Chevra Chesed Shel Emeth*—Hebrew Free Burial Association—has in its years of existence aided hundreds of penniless Jewish families suddenly confronted with the bewildering emergency of burying a loved one.

The work and aims of the Association remain virtually the same today as they were in 1913, when its earliest available report appeared in a year-book issued by the Jewish Federation. At that time the report pointed out:

"The *Chevra Chesed Shel Emeth* is one of the most noble and worthy causes of the Jewish Community. It exists, as its name implies, for the purpose of giving a dignified burial to those whose families are unable to provide for same.

"During the year 1913 the Association conducted fifty-three burials, free of charge and in faithful adherence to Jewish religious rites."

With the exception perhaps that its work has become more extensive, that it has met the demands of the community for more service, and that it now owns a cemetery, the Free Burial Association still stands today as it was originated—a group "for the purpose of giving a dignified burial to those families unable to provide for same" and to conduct these burials in "faithful adherence to Jewish religious rites."

Obviously, such an organization can do little in the way of actual rehabilitative work with those families whom it contacts. Unlike the other agencies of the Federation, its work is purely emergency in character. It cannot possibly, by itself, attempt to foresee the eventual situation and try to ease it or prevent it before it arises as a source of trouble. It cannot hope to come in to a home and so serve the parents or children that they may

possibly be spared a repetition of their difficulty. That, in a sense, is the job of the Jewish Family Welfare Association, with whom the Free Burial Association works closely. The Jewish Family Welfare has set up as its primary aim not only the mitigation of family crises, but prevention of such crises wherever possible.

But the work which the *Chevra Chesed Emeth* can—and does—do invariably so affects the morale of the stricken family that its trek toward once more becoming normal and independent is made much lighter.

One need only observe the Association at work in order to understand the significance and value of its efforts to the Jewish community. Each case is conducted confidentially, of course, and its details are made known only to the immediate family involved and to the agency which has referred them. An investigation is made consisting of a talk, usually with one responsible member of the family, in order to ascertain definitely whether there is a need for outside aid, but this investigation is a cursory one and usually nothing but a formality; for the Association has found that Jewish folk will resort to community aid in time of death, only as a last step.

A recent case handled by the Free Burial Association is interesting as an example of the type of service given. It arose with the death of a Jewish young man, a college student, whose family had spent whatever few dollars they owned in securing medical attention for him while he was ill. They had never resorted to charity, had always managed to make their own way independently, despite the fact that they had lost the small grocery store they owned in the Hill District. To be suddenly hit by the death of their only son was to this family the greatest grief of its experience. But the realization by the father that he was penniless, that he could not provide for his child the one last thing he felt he had to give him—a decent funeral—left him distraught. Their only living relatives were still in Europe, and no friend here was in a position to help. One friend in whom the father confided suggested that he immediately get in

touch with an officer of the Free Burial Association. The father hesitated, he didn't want his boy's funeral to be paid for through "charity." He was finally persuaded, however, to at least have a talk with a member of the Association. The friendly officer with whom he had the talk convinced him that the Association would cooperate with him in every way it could, that the proceedings would be kept absolutely confidential and that the funeral would be held just as though the father were paying for it himself.

When the father finally agreed that acceptance of the aid would be his only possible way out of the dilemma, the board of the Association immediately got to work. It contacted the synagogue of which the family were members and arranged to secure a grave for the boy on the synagogue's cemetery. Then, arrangements were made with a Jewish undertaker and the funeral was held in accordance with Jewish custom.

Probably no one but the boy's parents and the friend who recommended that he seek the aid of the Free Burial Association will ever know how the funeral was arranged.

Such service is typical of the Association. Its own cemetery, situated in Millvale, is used only for cases in

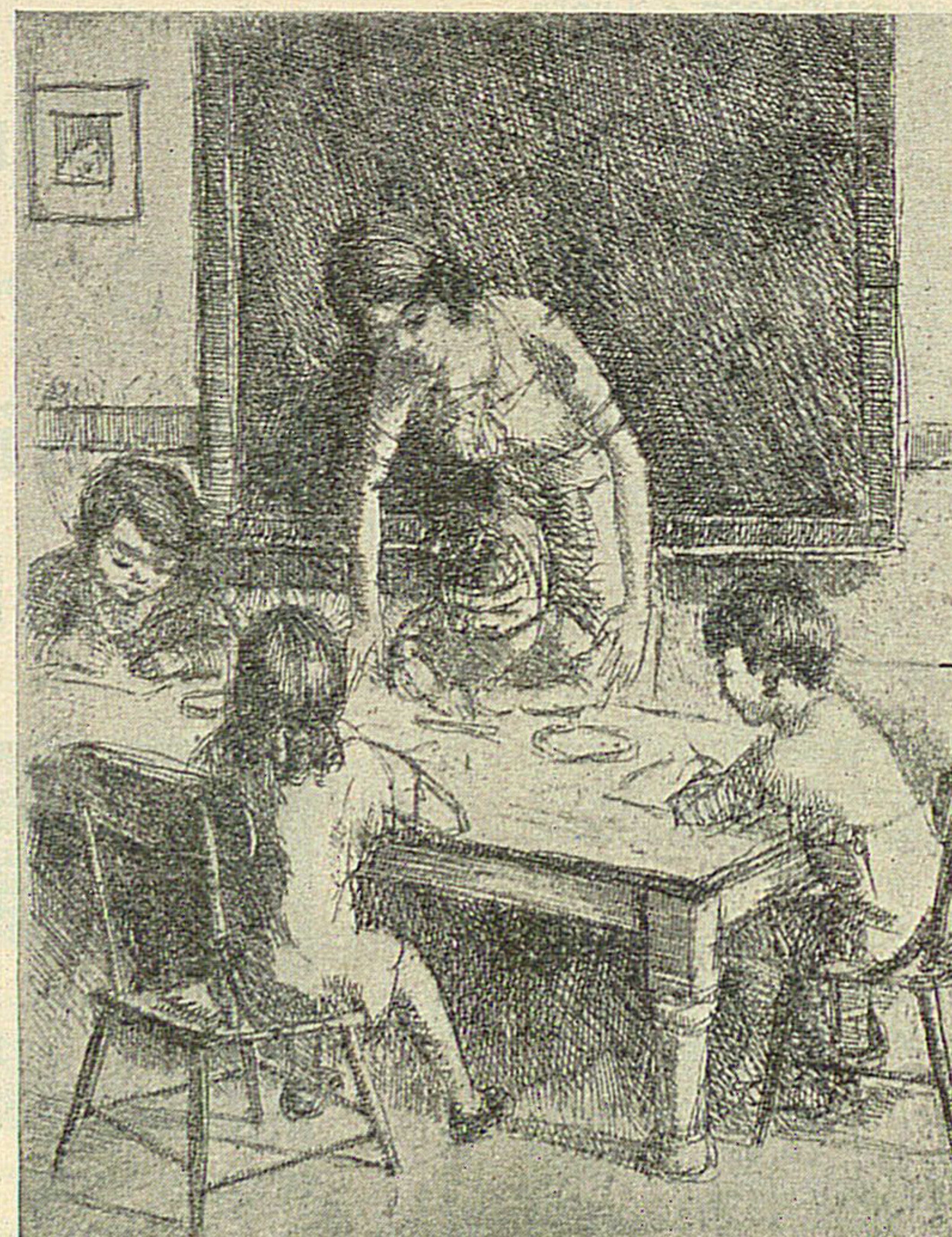
which there are no relatives, or in which the relatives do not take an interest in the deceased. Wherever possible, it attempts to secure the financial help of members of the family and of friends; but, failing that, it still provides an honorable, dignified funeral. Synagogues cooperate in furnishing burial plots for those in need, and the local Jewish undertakers provide their services at nominal cost.

Much of the incidental work of the Association is done by the Ladies Auxiliary, which endeavors to raise funds for the purchase of grave markers and for the construction of "beds" on the graves.

The officers of the Association are as follows:

Manuel Goldstein, honorary president; Barnet Turets, president; Max Bress, vice president; Morris Hostein, Gabbai; Mary Eckelman, financial secretary; Anna Schnurrer, recording secretary; Mrs. Doris Victor, treasurer.

The honorary board includes Rabbi Wolfe Leiter, Rabbi Goodman A. Rose, Mrs. Karl Sacks and Rabbi A. M. Ashinsky. The board of directors is comprised of Mrs. Harry Dunn, Joseph Feinberg, Mrs. L. Klein, Joseph Lasday, Mrs. Abe Minsky and Mrs. Z. Kramer.



Kindergarten and Play Room in the Summer Play School. Another in the series of etchings by Samuel Filner, himself a former Settlement boy, depicting life and activities at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement.