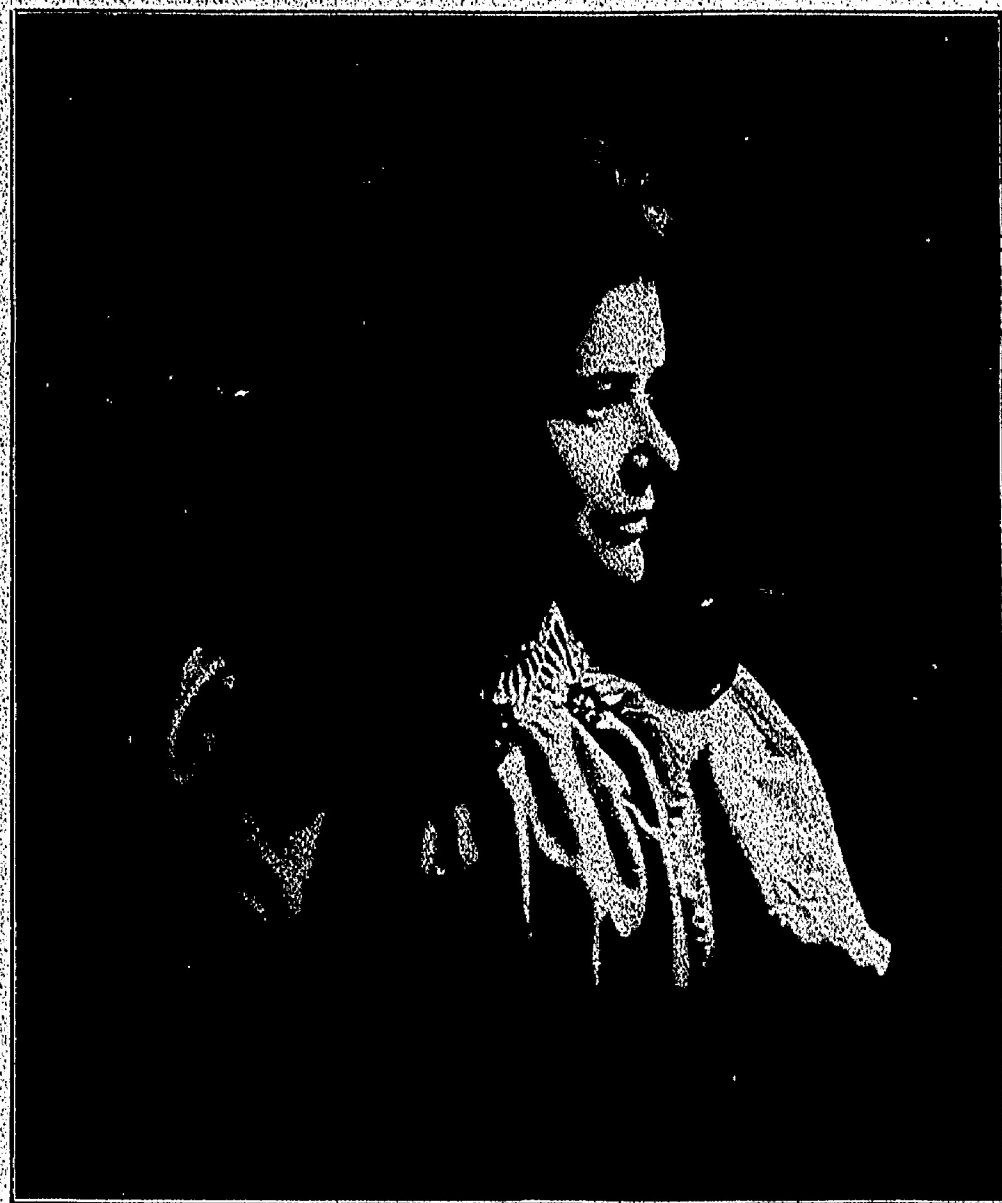
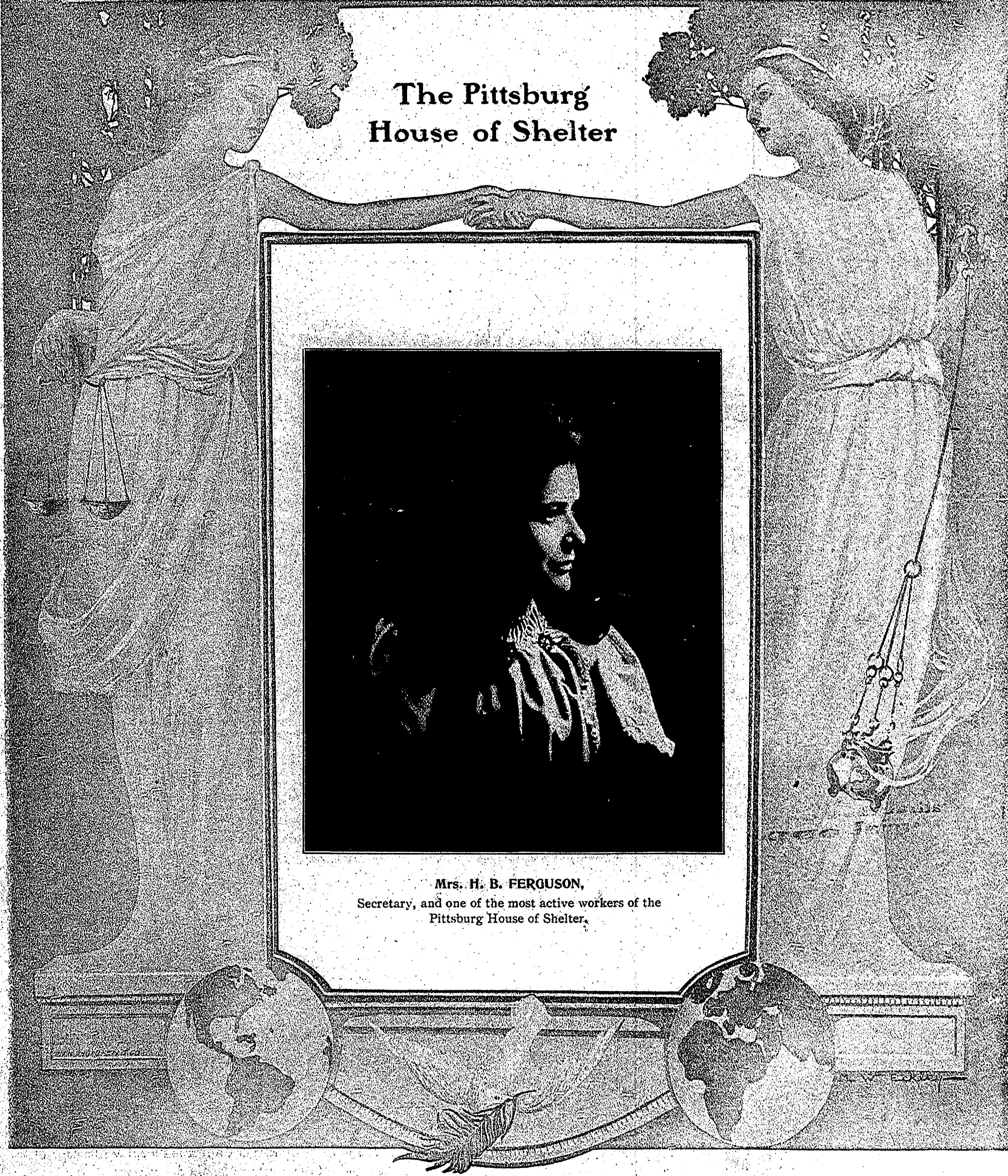


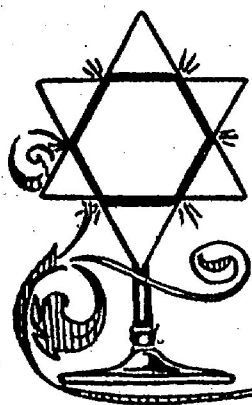
THE JEWISH CRITERION

The Pittsburg
House of Shelter

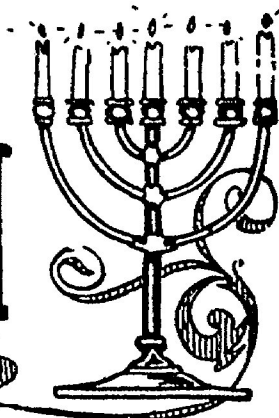


Mrs. H. B. FERGUSON,
Secretary, and one of the most active workers of the
Pittsburg House of Shelter.





THE JEWISH CRITERION



Vol. XXIII

Pittsburg, September Fourteenth, 1906

No. 14

RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE PITTSBURG HOUSE OF SHELTER.

By Mrs. H. B. Ferguson.

We have made another rent in our garments; our cantors have chanted once more the hymns for the dead, and the rabbis have pronounced the holy kadish for the victims of the Russian massacres. This much we have done for innocent victims, but what can we do for the remaining living? This is the question that we must answer. Their cry has reached our ears, and what a pitiful heart-rending one! Our sympathies are with them; our hearts go out to these poor innocent victims, yet what are we doing for these afflicted brethren of ours, or, better still, what can we do for them? After every massacre we must expect an influx of people in this country. They do not come because they know this to be a land of milk and honey, but they have no other choice. In times like this, their only motive is to save their lives, and they come to the first place that offers them a refuge. They come to us stripped of whatever little they ever possessed or could call their own. Peniless and friendless they come in a strange land, whose language they do not understand, and whose customs they cannot fathom. It is for these victims that we must do something.

The immigrant coming here of his own free will, wishing to better his situation in life, has a well-defined policy to pursue. His courage and energy move him to accomplish wonders. But far different is the case of the one that is forced to emigrate against his own will, but must flee for his life, and leave behind him his home, business, family and friends. His courage is shattered his ambition gone. He cannot so readily adapt himself to new conditions, as he was not prepared for such a change. It is this immigrant that needs our assistance.

When he comes to us under these conditions, we must at least provide some food and shelter for him, and to meet these demands the House of Shelter has been called into existence. Every inmate that comes to his home, from the professional schnorrer to the poor deserted wife, is directly or indirectly a victim of this foreign persecution. If we can stop these massacres, then we can hope to close the House of Shelter. The schnorrer of today may have been the respectable citizen of yesterday from his own home. In Russia he was per-

haps following a certain calling peculiar to the conditions and environments of that country, but when he comes here and finds himself too old to adapt himself to new conditions, he become discouraged, and charities shift him from one place to the other, and thereby think they are solving the problem. And so he is drifting around until he becomes the professional schnorrer, when, in fact, he is only a victim of circumstances. From all these victims Russia has created, the most pitiful one is the deserted wife who comes to our place of shelter. These poor victims come in most cases to us in search of their husbands, who perhaps were forced to emigrate to this country. Not being able to find a profitable living, he becomes discouraged and so absorbed in his own misery that he forgets about his wife and family, or, per-



Mrs. A. BERNSTEIN,
President.

haps, he is waiting for something better to turn up before he renews his family ties. In the meantime, the wife abandons all hope and goes out in search for the missing husband, and so she travels from one place to another, hoping to locate him. In a few instances we have been able to find the missing husbands for deserted wives that came to the home, but in the majority of instances they are forced to go further in their frantic endeavors. We have some of the most pitiful heartrending cases come to the home. In each instance we try to do our utmost by co-operating with other charitable organizations so that substantial assistance could be given the unfortunates. The Hebrew Benevolent Society has been particularly kind in assisting worthy applicants. Employment is being secured for a great many, while sums of money are frequently given, enabling the party

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either to start a living for himself, or go to another city, where he has friends or relatives who can assist him. The Hebrew Benevolent Society has also supplied our institution with coal during the winter months.

Now for a little light on the inside working of the home. The institution was formed about three years ago by the women of the "hill" district, upon the urgent appeal of Rabbi Ashinsky, who made an earnest plea at one of the meetings of the Hebrew Ladies' Hospital Aid Society that they should take a hand in this formation and maintenance of a House of Shelter. There were numerous attempts made for the last ten years to run such an institution, but it was a poor apology for one, and one difficulty after another presented itself, so that the leaders themselves did not know whether there was a House of Shelter or not. The plea of the rabbi struck home, and a temporary organization was immediately effected. Mrs. H. Oppenheimer became president, Mrs. R. Selker, vice president, Mrs. Chas. Davis, treasurer, and Mrs. H. B. Ferguson secretary. Mrs. Oppenheimer was forced to give up the office a few weeks later owing to the serious illness and subsequent death of her husband, when she was succeeded in office by Mrs. Max Tapolsky.

The first year was certainly a trying one. No one could get himself to believe that such a home could be run successfully, and the officers' patience was sorely tried. It was impossible to secure a house to do the work properly, as no one would rent his premises for such a purpose. It was also an almost impossible task to secure a janitress, as the compensation offered was not sufficient inducement to attract competent parties. While we had many applications from widows who wanted to undertake to act as janitress, the situation demanded that a man and wife should both serve. However, a house was finally secured in Chestnut street, and a

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janitress as well, so that we had arrangements to at least shelter the people. We did not make any attempt at that time to serve any meals, as the finances did not warrant it, but we always had tea on the premises. Soon the public commenced to realize that the organization was going to hold together, and the women canvassed for members very diligently, so that money commenced coming in, and efforts were at once made to provide meals as well. The president at that time, Mrs. Tapolsky, issued the admission tickets, but we found it impracticable to have a woman undertake this phase of the work. Most of the new arrivals in the city land in the Washington Street Synagogue,

(it being the largest and most centrally located place of worship) and as Mr. H. Sigel, the beadle, had in most cases, to direct them to the home, he kindly volunteered to take charge of the applicants as they first arrived in the city and to this day he continues to hand out the admission and meal tickets. Too much praise cannot be given Mr. Sigel for his efforts on behalf of the poor. People having connections can understand what it



Mrs. WILLIAM GLICK,
Vice-President.

means to be constantly hounded by poor people, at all hours of the day, each with his sad tale. He never became discouraged nor lost his faith in humanity, but continues to raise collections for worthy applicants, gets some positions, and he has always enjoyed the full co-operation of the Hebrew Benevolent Society in his work. He has also been instrumental in increasing the membership materially. In fact, all the officers of the congregation, Rabbi Ashinsky, L. S. Sablowsky, Mr. S. Grafman, are untiring in their efforts to raise money for the institution. A unique way of doing is to raise a collection for the benefit of the home on all festive occasions. The people in the midst of their festivities, are called upon to remember the homeless and friendless, and each one gives his mite, so that the sum total on an occasion of festivity is quite a factor. Where the host does not desire a collection to be taken up, he gives his personal donation in honor of the occasion. The rule of the home is to shelter each applicant three nights, but I am sorry to say, in most cases the exception proves the rule. The ruling was made so as to prevent a premium being paid on pauperism, and not give the professional schnorrers an opportunity to make of it a permanent home. Upon coming to the institution, if the applicant is found to be one that is worthy, that makes an attempt to look for work, but is unsuccessful, he is given a further ticket. You can readily understand that three days is hardly sufficient time for a penniless and friendless stranger to become self supporting, or to be placed upon his own resources. Even when he is so fortunate as to secure immediate employment, it is usually a few weeks

before any pay is drawn, and in a few instances we have had to keep the unfortunate until he drew his first pay, as no one would trust him for his board and room without payment in advance. On the other hand, if the party is found to be shiftless and one that makes no attempt to look for work, but simply throws himself on the community (and there are many such), he is sent out at the end of the three days, and frequently, I am sorry to relate, such rude and boisterous characters have infected the place that we have had to use force to eject them from the premises. Everyone is given admission that applies, as all applicants are taken to be worthy until they prove themselves otherwise. The worthy one can soon be discovered, and it would be a great wrong to reject him on account of the impostors, and, as stated before, in order not to make any mistakes, all who apply are given admission. A register is kept at the home, giving the date, name and where each applicant came from. This register is kept in Yiddish, and the secretary has another one in English. We also provide the unfortunate with a change of underwear and outer garments. He needs it in most instances. The public has been kind enough to make us donations of underwear, clothing and the like, and we try our utmost to make a judicious distribution of it. We have been handicapped owing to the fact that the house has no bathroom, but we are indebted to the Columbian Council Settlement for free baths. It is not the intention of the home to feast people. We would not if we could, as people must be made to



Mrs. CHARLES DAVIS,
Treasurer.

understand that they must get work, and depend upon their own resources. We do, however, satisfy the hunger by providing the necessities of life. For breakfast we serve coffee, bread and jelly, as much as their appetites admit of. For those that happen to come in at noon, we provide a short lunch we always have on hand. In the evening a good meal is prepared by the janitress. In this connection, it may interest our readers to note the following financial report issued for the year 1905, as follows:

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PITTSBURGH, PA.

Report of Year 1905.

Income.

Balance in bank, Jan. 8, '05.....	\$ 816 51
Balance in treasury, Jan. 8, '05....	63 92
Bal. from ball acct. Feb. 27, '04....	6 00
Dues for year 1905.....	\$48.75
Cash donation.....	520 90
Board from two ex-inmates.....	11 00
Profit, picnic June 14, '05.....	379 35
Profit, ball Octobe 18, '05.....	239 02
Interest on bank deposits.....	41 41

Total receipts.....\$2 927 06

Expense

Rent to G. C. Norris & Co.....	\$ 300 00
Janitor's services.....	74 00
Dinners served on tickets.....	352 70
Special groceries not included in donations to supply the table for breakfast and supper).....	64 94
Sundries.....	292 00

Total expenses.....\$1 083 64

In Wash. Nat'l. bank.....	\$1 500 00
In Mehts. S. & T. Co.....	310 00
In treas. of society.....	33 42

Total on hand, Jan. 14, '06..\$1 843 42

\$2 927 06

The above report represents the cash transactions of the institution for the year 1905. We have received groceries, bread, etc., during the year to the value of about \$6.00, and coal from the Hebrew Benevolent Society for heating purposes. We have received many donations of clothing, underwear and shoes, which we distribute to those in the home that require it. Five hundred and ninety-three people were sheltered during the year. About 5,300 meals were served to them; 1,763 on regular tickets for meals contracted with the janitress at 20 cents each; and the balance were served free from open table run by the institution. Our motto is "Let all those who are hungry enter and eat thereof."

Mrs. H. B. Ferguson,
Secretary.

Since the issuance of this report the treasury has been augmented to the extent of \$650, making a total amount in bank at this writing of \$2,460.

The present quarters of the home is a very modest unassuming frame building located at corner Stevenson and Gibbon streets, for which \$25 a month rent is paid. We have always been handicapped in our work owing to lack of room, but with all the disadvantages we have been working under, no applicant who extended a hand was turned away, although sometimes as high as three parties have been obliged to occupy one bed. Still, in cases of worthy applicants, they were thankful for the accommodation.

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THE COLONIAL TRUST COMPANY
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Mrs. Tapolsky was succeeded in office by Mrs. S. Sir Van, who worked strenuously to build up the institution, and she, in turn, was succeeded in office by the present incumbent, Mrs. A. Bernstein, who has been untiring in her work for the home. Our worthy vice president, Mrs. R. Selker, who is always on hand to do a good turn and give a helping hand, was succeeded in office by Mrs. Wm. Glick. The offices of secretary and



MR. H. SIGEL,
One of the Prominent Workers.

treasurer have been occupied by the same parties since the organization of the home, being filled by Mrs. H. B. Ferguson and Mrs. Chas. Davis respectively. The officers are assisted in their work by a very capable Board of Directors consisting of the following ladies: Mesdames R. Selker, M. Finkelhor, R. Radin, H. Finkelpearl, L. Rosenfeld, C. Feldstein, B. Finkelhor, R. Sheinberg, K. Goldstein, D. Levison, I. Dunn, H. Oppenheim, M. Robin, J. Finkelpearl, S. Sir Van, S. Aronson and B. Sher. There are many ladies not on the board who have worked very faithfully for the home, but we cannot mention the name of each individual separately.

From the report we publish, you will notice that we have managed to run the institution on a sound financial basis, and also provided full and plenty for all applicants. We have always been hampered in our work by lack of room, and as no suitable home in the required district can be rented (the high prices prevailing for rents making it also prohibitive), we were obliged to purchase a home.

It therefore gives us great pleasure to announce to the public that we have just purchased a home that will answer all our requirements. It is situated at 1624 Locust street, in the heart of the city, and is splendidly adapted for all our requirements.

Now, we must appeal to the people of Pittsburgh and vicinity for aid to raise the necessary money to pay for the building. Possession will be had on or about October 1st, and it is hoped to dedicate the home free of all debt. We get in sufficient money to maintain the institution, and through the two affairs which we give every year, we clear about \$1,000. The community has shown its inter-

est in the home in numerous ways. We are daily getting voluntary offers of membership, and one has only to become thoroughly familiar with the work to feel that he wants to be actively identified with the movement. A large percentage of the membership is from the very poor of this community, to whom 10 cents weekly dues means a sacrifice, yet they want to pay. The collector who visits these people frequently told the writer that he is often embarrassed taking money from them, yet they insist on giving. This shows the hold that the institution has on the public. Another very gratifying occurrence is the occasional donations which we receive from former inmates, with many expressions of thanks and good will to the institution that sheltered them in time of need. We have had many in the home who have in the past enjoyed great prosperity, and an occasional visit to the home in the evening, when all are present, would give many an insight into the vicissitudes of life and its stern realities. Truly one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. Many pathetic scenes are witnessed by our visitors. With all our sympathy for these unfortunates, none of us would take them into our homes. We would give them a donation, possibly take them in for a meal, but it would end right there. Surely no one can question the absolute necessity for an institution of the kind. It must exist, otherwise we would be forced to take them in our homes, for would our Jewish hearts permit them being sheltered in a police station?



Mrs. S. SIRVAN,
A Former President.

Frequently we are called upon to house convalescent patients after they have been discharged from hospitals, yet are too sick to work. In that case we keep them on a special diet. At this writing, we have a young girl of 19 afflicted with the great white plague, consumption. She was brought to us by Mr. Theuman, the sociologist brought here by the Council of Jewish women. So it must be seen that during his short stay here he has had to call upon our institution for help. Until arrangements are made to send her to a sanitarium we are taking care

of her although we have no facilities for the care of such sick. The hospital she was placed in refused to keep her any longer, and where was she to stay until such arrangements were made?

The home is open to visitors at all times. We have neither visiting days nor hours, and the public is always welcome, but must make due allowance for the crowded quarters and the lack of facilities in the place we are located.



Mrs. R. SELKER,
A Former Vice-President.

The new building which we have purchased will enable us to do the work properly, being equipped with a splendid bathroom and laundry, and having large airy rooms. A meeting room will be fitted up, so that all meetings can be held at the home instead of at the synagogue, as heretofore. We feel that each one should give something to the building fund and donations of whatever amounts people feel they can spare will be thankfully received. If you are not a member, why not become one and have a voice in the running of the institution? The dues are \$5.00 a year, payable annually, semi-annually, or quarterly. We need your help, as well as active assistance. Kindly disposed people wishing to enroll as members, or desiring to make a donation to the building fund, may communicate with the secretary, Mrs. H. B. Ferguson, 1115 Bluff street.

Do you wish to show your sympathy in the work? How much will you give towards the building fund? Do it now, so the institution can be dedicated free of all debt.

If the unfortunate widows and orphans of Russian victims were Americans instead, their sufferings would be less. People of every nationality in America are fast learning to provide for their family's future. They have a bank account earning four per cent compound interest in Home Trust Co., Sixth and Wood, Pittsburgh, Pa.

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