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# The history of the Jewish Community

of DuBois over the past 150 years  
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In reviewing the history of the Jewish Community of DuBois it tells the lives of the people which has developed in the late 1800's on. The site of DuBois was still a wilderness as late as the Civil war when Herman MacMillan with a corp of rail-road engineers in 1873

planned the low grade railroad built from Red Bank to Pittsburgh as early as 1872. In 1873 the Sabula tunnel permitted travel to Driftwood where connections could be made to Philadelphia. In 1880 the Buffalo Rochester and Pittsburgh's railroads from DuBois permitted commercial development. Irish coal-miners, Swedish loggers, Slavish Polish, Russians, Italians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Austrians and Jewish immigrants flocked to this Mountain Metropolis of DuBois where the railroads permitted travel. The first Jewish people were wholesale salesman or drummers as they were called and Pack Peddlers who later distributed goods by horse and wagon. Then they progressed to establishing stores where more merchandis could be offered. It is to be remembered that most of the shoppers were required to spend some wages at company stores where prices were

unjustly inflated while such  
 business carried some clothing  
 most did not stock a significant  
 quantity so the store managers of the  
 company stores did not object to these  
 credit customers going to DuBois on  
 Saturday night to spend what little  
 was left from the pay check.

Incidentally failure to patronize the  
 company store would result in a  
 reprimand from the superintendent in  
 his office even threatening dismissal!  
 Such was the atmosphere in which  
 a modern merchant was not only  
 a welcome asset to the community  
 but could also earn a profitable  
 livelihood. Before the organization  
 of borough government in 1881

DuBois had acquired a bad reputation  
 as a lawless place where many fights  
 occasional murders and drunken  
 brawls between miners and woodsmen  
 occurred. From the recollections of  
 reporters of the City Courier the social  
 climate was a devil may care free  
 easy way to live. In that rude setting  
 Jewish merchants established stores. Surely the  
 founder of Jewry in DuBois was Harry Lobb  
 who established a clothing and  
 furnishings shop in 1880. In a few years  
 Harry Lobb diversified his business by

buying tracts of straight pine timber that could be manufactured into shingles. In 1887 G. F. Winget made over 2 million of them for Loeb. In 1880s a Miss Schadenberg had a dress shop. Mrs. A. B. Cohen established a dry goods store, A. Dr. Frankenstein came to DuBois to fit eyes & glasses. Frank Guinberg operated a pool and billiard room, a gun shop and later a sporting goods store. He married Mary Amelia Hay daughter of the pioneer plumber of DuBois. They were the first of a considerable number of Judeo-Christian marriages proving that religious differences did not prevent life long bliss. When the downtown business district was totally devastated on June 18, 1888 by the Big Fire Harry Loeb watched \$30,000 go up in smoke. Soon afterward he and John Rumberger and John DuBois were on the emergency soliciting committee to raise funds for the rebuilding of the downtown business district and other buildings. It is of interest to note that 167 businesses and nearly 500 buildings were reduced to ashes for a total loss of one million two hundred thousand dollars. Before 1893 E. A. Fuchel, Abe Zisser, Louis Holman, Levi Locke, Joseph Bensen, Louis S. Reitz, Abram Bers and Isaac Wayne were the newcomers. These men were instrumental in organizing The Sons of Israel which history I will soon tell.

The gay nineties saw the Jewish Colony arrive and flourish. Among the Jewish businessmen who migrated here were

Henry Klewans arrived in the states from Germany, settled in Falls Creek then moved to DuBois establishing Klewans Department Store Nathan Bloom arrived from Africa via Russia was the store manager, Ben Klewans Henrys son later assumed <sup>AN</sup> interest.

Ben starred on the first varsity baseball team at DuBois High School As a veteran of World War One he was active in the American Legion and served with J. S. Gray in the War Loan drives of World War Two

He was active in many sports and civic organizations. Fred Tamler migrated from Bohemia. He opened a ladies and childrens store on Long Avenue. His son Norman later conducted the business. Norman holds a Longevity record with the board of the Du Bois library. He played violin music with many classical string ensembles

Jake Spear had a grocery store at Long and Stat streets. He was affiliated with The Merchants Wholesale Company

In the early 1920s Sam Berger operated a meat market on Long Avenue.

Jacob Golub was a butcher and meat packer on his farm in the Oklahoma section Sandy Township Yale his son resides in the community

Mr. Louis Levy butcher supplied meats in his Brady Street butcher shop.

E. A. Fischel migrated from Bohemia. He had a china business on West Long Avenue. He was secretary-treasurer of the Jackson China Company. His brother Louis had a luggage shop located on W. Long. The Fischel family had their own private orchestra from the Zither to the Piano!

Louis Steinberg came to DuBois from Germany. He purchased Greissner's Photo Studio opening his business in 1913. He was an exalted ruler of the Elks Lodge and served on the DuBois Hospital board. In 1901 Sylvester Goldsmith with Warner Baxter opened a workmans clothing store near the railroad station. Later he had a Cigar and Tobacco shop.

Early 1900's Revesand and Mrs. A. Gordon operated a Kosher butcher shop on High St. They were the parents of Mrs. E. A. Fischel and the great grandparents of Gary who now has a local business.

H. Shakespeare and Sons founded the scrap metal business later conducted by son Morris then son Frank who graduated from law school but joined the family business which is currently directed by son Howard.

In the 1920s and early 30s Isaac Freeman's fish market was located at Brady Street. Hyman Witten came to Dubois from Tyler where he had a coal mine. He opened a ladies store on Brady Street later managed by son Milton when he returned from the European theatre after World War Two.

Joe Fineberg was interested in Nickelodeons as Motion Pictures or Cinemas were first called. In 1911 he bought the Lyric Theatre and opened the Airdrome in 1914 - this was located at the old Fair grounds. Joe impersonated Charlie Chaplin and took his show on the road. He was drafted into the army in 1918 World War One. He served two wars as re-enlisted in the army World War Two. He was proud and became a member of the American Legion Post #17.

In the late 30s and early 40s the weekly newspaper "The Profile" published by Max Bloom presented stories featuring the experiences of World War Two service men and women.

The Levinson Brothers Sam and Jay operated a vulcanizing store at the corner of Washington Avenue and Brady Street. Jacob Levinson had the Ladies Bazaar Store on East Long Avenue next to the former library location.

The Kranitz brothers, Bob and Jack were in the Auto supply business in the 30s and 40s.

The Kaufman brothers Lewis, Ben and Abe had several auto supply stores

Jack son of Lewis operated the most recent one on Brady Street

The Dym brothers Ben and Joe were partners in a scrap metal business east of Liberty Boulevard - The old B + O siding.

Their uncle Emmanuel had the Studebaker Automobile Agency on South Brady Street.

The Racusin brothers opened the Home Furniture store on Long Avenue and Jued Street. One brother Osche was a prominent DuBois dentist.

Charles Sommer a leader in the synagogue, employed many area people at his Guarantee Silk Throwing Mill which was located in Reynolds Hill.

In the early 40s Joe Isenberg managed and later became owner of the DuBois Wholesale Produce Company which is still operated by Joe.

In the early 1930s Aaron Blankfeld had the jewelry store on Long Avenue. He was a 2nd degree member of the Horological Institute of America and was called into military service World War One needed by the government to assemble timers for bomb grenades and shells. He was a member of The Montgomery Post of the

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American Legion when John Centz was The Commander.  
Abel Cohen son of Pinneas Cohen was the first fatality  
killed in action World War One.

In the 1940s Julius Kahvi a refugee  
from Germany had his own shop of  
Minneographs and lithograph printing  
on Morrison Street. Dr. Kurt Oppenheimer  
also a refugee from Germany had his  
dental office on Long Avenue.

Kanter had a variety store on W Long  
Avenue also on W. Long Avenue Bill Jeffkin  
was the manager of Pennshire Clothes

In the late 40s and early 50s until  
the 80s A.C. Turner Department Store  
was founded by Bill Singer later managed  
by son Phillip. Rivkees Army and  
Navy Store was located on Brady Street

Wolfe Kass opened a variety notions  
store in the late 20s called "The New Idea  
Store". A. Hoffmanns dress shop

in the 20s & 30s later in the same  
location on Brady Street Gus Wein had  
The Det Shop. In The 20s on

Jake Brinn had a scrap metal business  
on North Main Street Buddy Clothes

was located next to the old Avenue  
Theatre in the 50s also in the 50s

Mr. Lou Levinson was the manager of the  
Arrow Furniture Store at Brady St.

The Young Mens Shop owned by  
Harry Cohen was next to the Pershing Hotel  
in the 50s on that same location was  
owned by a Hoffman Dress Shop in the 30s



In the 1930s George Kennedy owned  
 a ladies shop at West Long Avenue  
 The Town and Country Ladies Shop owned  
 by the Beglers was located at West Long Avenue  
 in The Begless recently  
 retired.

In the 30s Isadore Myers who  
 lived in Dubois was a member of the  
 business staff of the Northwest  
 Mining Exchange.

In the 40s on Joe Gushy  
 was a member of the sales staff  
 of the Dubois Brewing Company.  
 Also in the 40s on George Greenberg  
 was the manager of The Wilson  
 Wholesale Meat Packing Company  
 located at West Long Avenue.

In the 30's Abe Weiss from  
 Massachusetts managed the former  
 Silk Throwing Company located at the  
 present site of Equi Meter Number Two.

Joe Cohen from Pittsburgh lived here  
 and managed the former Emergency  
 Fiber Products Company which was  
 located at the old overhaul Building  
 in Sandy township.

Edward Levine's mens shop was near the  
 Avenue Theatre Bldg. then moved to new Bldg. nearby  
 In the late 20s + early 30s Ed Baron from Philadelphia was  
 a history teacher and basketball coach at Dubois High School  
 Louis Goodman was the vocational director in the  
 late 40s at the Dubois High School

Over the years the Jewish Community has welcomed additional residents

In the late 40's early 50's and on

Bob Roth was an engineer with the Sylvania Products Co. Nathan Miller had a ladies store. Dr. Raphael Evins, podiatrist now located <sup>IN THE DUBOIS MALL</sup> WEST LONG AVE.

In recent years Manny Gelfand opened the Auto Supply Store on Long Avenue. His son Mark is now the owner/manager of the store. Joe Rosenberg and sons David and Mark have the Toyota automobile agency located near the blinker light.

Henry Finkof now retired was a staff member of Mc Dowell Manufacturing Co. Richard Silk, a salesman for Lee Overalls Co. Drs. S. Schmitt, Dr. M. Katzen and Dr. Kaplan, affiliated with The Temple for some time.

In reviewing the history of the Jewish Community of DuBois as I did state it initially came through the foresight of small tradesmen traveling the countryside to make a living and then settle here.

As soon as a handful of Jewish folk settled they realized that man could not live by bread alone but the beginning of wisdom and the fear of the Lord. The old timers who were steeped in Judaism came to DuBois religiously minded. They gave serious thought to the command "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" Thus the handful of brethren united in a common effort developed the Jewish Community of DuBois. On November 6, 1894 the members organized under the traditional name "Sons of Israel" A charter was granted by WC Penty

cont.

November 18, 1894

the charter of certification was granted by Clearfield County Judge Cyrus Gordon entered and recorded by Bine Koozer November 26, 1894. The members now realizes that they were a religious group for the purpose of serving God and that they needed a synagogue. They first held services in private homes. Then Mr. Harry Loeb gave them a temporary place on Long Avenue. From there the congregation moved to Weber's Store room. Then the Odd Fellows Hall. Then on Washington Avenue The Whitehead Hall and the time was ripe to make a payment on Morrison Street which building was formerly occupied by The Church of The United Brethren. The deed was recorded November 28, 1911. The building committee of Henry Klewans, Abram Zibser, Solomon Finelberg, M. Cohen, Fred Tamler, N. Bloom, A. Miller, H. Shakespeare and J. Brinn decided to borrow the money and remodel the synagogue and move the building to Morrison Street and Weber Avenue where it is now located. On November 1912 the synagogue was dedicated.

Now that the synagogue was established attention was turned to another vital institution. July 9, 1919 the Sons of Israel congregation purchased land from the Dubow Land Company for a cemetery. The tract was named the Hillside Cemetery which has been approved and maintained.

The cemetery is located opposite the Catholic cemetery on South Avenue.

Now the members decided to build a Jewish Community Center on the synagogue lot on Morrison Street connected to the synagogue.

This plan was fulfilled and the mortgage was burned with a dinner dedication program February 21, 1943.

From the late 1800s on the small neighboring towns participated in synagogue services. The families included the N. Kaufmans, M. Gordons and H. Reynoldsville, The Katzers and Simions from Sykesville

At one time Jewish residents in Dubois numbered between 50 + 55 families. As years went on many moved away or passed away.

Today there are families and single persons

The synagogue maintained a goodly number of resident rabbis over the years. Now services are held with laymen participating.

A student rabbi conducts services for the High Holy Days.

Now again Going back a little in time it is interesting to tell that the small group of men, women and children were faithful to the Pledge made to Peter Stuyvesant before they were settled in New Amsterdam that they would provide for their own poor.

On June 25, 1908 the Hebrew Aid Society was formed for the purpose of philanthropy for helping the poor and needy.

In later years the Ladies Auxillary of The Sons of Israel assumed that responsibility plus the upkeep of the synagogue, the Community Rooms and the Sunday school. They maintained a room at the Maple Avenue Hospital for years which was formerly sponsored by the Hebrew Sewing Circle. In 1942 a benefit card party was held at the Community rooms for the purpose of new furnishings and a bed for the hospital room. The auxillary supported the Red Cross with a new sewing machine, baby cloths bolts and other sundries - Contributions were raised for other card parties benefiting deserving causes.

The DuBois B'nai B'rith lodge received its charter from National Headquarters in D. C. on March 22, 1936

B'nai B'rith was the first fraternal organization in the city to hold bond rallies during the World War Two Era. The lodge honored 16 of its members who served in the armed forces and also remembered men of all faiths by contributing packages and presents to count overseas men.

B'nai B'rith charities also include our public library, the YMCA, The Red Cross and the needy.

B'nai B'rith lodge sponsors an annual mens dinner originated by Max Bloom in the forties which event honors civic leaders and sports figures as speakers. The event began in the Community Rooms with 100 men in attendance and now has 370 enjoying the event.

Programs now held at the Ramada or Holiday Inns for accommodations. Proceeds go to worthy local and national causes.

In closing in this history my full appreciation to Sam King, historian. The late Reverend Nandor Martin and my husband Max Bloom.

Thank you for your  
interest and attention.

I will close with a TIME thought—

The past is history

The future is still a mystery

Today is a gift

That is why it is called

The Present