

# Where Are We Going?

## Summarizing a 1/4 Century of Shifting of Jewish Neighborhoods in Pittsburgh

The annual Yom Kippur school census released this week by Israel A. Abrams, executive director of the Hebrew Institute of Pittsburgh, is especially significant as it marks the twenty-fifth year of this method of ascertaining the Jewish population in this city.

The first Yom Kippur census to determine the number of Jewish boys and girls in the city's public schools prevented an expensive building expansion program at the old Hebrew Institute in the Hill district. In 1923 the Institute was crowded to the doors with students and the trustees tentatively decided to build additional floors. Mr. Abrams, however, was inclined to believe that there was no future for the Jewish community on the Hill and recommended the census. In 1924 the Board of Public Education agreed to furnish a list of all boys and girls absent from the public schools on the Day of Atonement. This census revealed that there were 5519 elementary and high school students classified as Jewish boys and girls in the Hill district. The census on Yom Kippur two years later revealed that this number had dropped to 4496. This tremendous decrease of more than 1,000 convinced the trustees that school building for the future was unjustified. The wisdom of this conclusion was further demonstrated by 1930 when only 2959 Jewish boys and girls were counted in Hill district schools.

### Further Decrease

Today, according to the 1949 Yom Kippur census, there are only 201 Jewish boys and girls in all high and elementary schools in the Hill. Comparison of the twenty-five year census statistics show that in 1925 there were 272 Jewish boys and girls enrolled in elementary and high public schools on the North Side. Today's census reveals that only forty reside on the North Side. In Homewood the number has dropped from 225 in 1925 to 32 this year.

The new Stanton Heights section has 159 Jewish children in the elementary school in that section. In 1924 there is no record of Jewish residents in Stanton Heights.

Squirrel Hill, of course, has boomed. There were 1011 Jewish boys and girls there in 1924. Now there are 3744 or approximately 60% of the entire public school enrollment in Pittsburgh of Jewish children. (In 1924, 66% of the whole existed in the Hill district.) Today 22% of them live in the East End, 9% in Oakland and the remaining 9% live in scattered areas such as North Side, Homewood, Hill district, Hazelwood, South Side, South Hills, Shady-side, West End, Beechview and Carrick.

Mr. Abrams finds it interesting to note that only the Wightman Public School in Squirrel Hill shows a decrease in Jewish students. There are 47 less Jewish

boys and girls attending there this year. On the contrary, during the past year, Linden School has had an increase of 43 and the Liberty Public School in Shady-side has now 18 more Jewish boys and girls enrolled since last year. The new building trend appears to be in the direction of the Linden School and in the Fifth avenue area of Shadyside toward the Liberty School. This is the first time in all the years of greater and greater enrollment of Jewish boys and girls in Squirrel Hill public schools that any school shows less students as in the case of the Wightman School.

### General Decline

In 1924 there were 9205 Jewish boys and girls enrolled in all elementary and high schools in all sections of Pittsburgh. In 1949, the latest census shows, there are 6207 enrolled, a decrease of approximately 33%. The Jewish school child population reached its lowest mark in 1946. The wartime rising birth rate, however, halted this steady downward trend over the previous 22 years and this year's enrollment of 6207 is expected to be topped in 1950.

The Hebrew Institute is especially gratified to note that despite the 33% decrease in the number of Jewish children of public school age in Pittsburgh, more of them attend daily Hebrew schools here. There were 1501 in 1924 and today 1518 attend Hebrew daily schools. This is also true of Sunday schools. In 1924, 1802 were enrolled in our Sunday schools of the city and today 1840 attend. It is important to repeat that this is true despite the fact that there are only two-thirds as many Jewish boys and girls in the public schools.

### Interesting Facts

The census produces many facts of interest to old-time Pittsburghers. For example, in 1924, there were 898 Jewish boys and girls attending Fifth Avenue High. Today, the total is 48. Many will remember the old Miller School that had 647 attending in 1924. Today there are 21. McKelvey School had 803 and today there are none. Last year McKelvey had 3 Jewish boys and girls. In 1924 Moorhead had 551 and today there are none. Taylor Alderdice had 356 Jewish students in 1928 and today has 933.

In 1924, 25% of the Jewish public school population was in high school. This rose to a peak of 33% in 1942. Today it is less than 25%.