Morris Rosenblum, president of Congregation Adath Yeshurun, 1916–17.

Becoming American: Manchester's Jewish Community

David G. Stahl

On Sunday evening, March 19, 1893, two young people, Rebecca Pines and Samuel Rosenblum, were married at Knights of Pythias Hall on Hanover Street. The occasion, probably the first Jewish wedding celebrated in Manchester, was marked by nearly a half column in the *Manchester Union* of the next day. The headlines read, "According to Mosaic Law," "Interesting ceremony in the Local Jewish Colony," and "Wedding Feast and Merry-Making Follow the Nuptials."

Although there is no indication of the reporter who wrote about the occasion, there were details enough to suggest that the event had stirred more than passing interest. "The Jewish colony in the city was very well represented, and long before the hour set for the ceremony the friends of the happy pair began to arrive at the hall." The story continued, "At 5:30 four of the gentlemen walked to the center of the room bearing a canopy which they there erected. Then acting Rabbi Axel stepped in front of the canopy and commenced a chant."[1]

The name of Peter Axel had appeared in the 1892 Manchester City Directory as Rabbi of the Jewish Synagogue at 895 Elm Street, and again the next year when the City Directory placed the Jewish Synagogue on "Central Avenue between Pine and

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1. *Manchester Union*, March 20, 1893. Manchester City Library (MCL).

Union."[2] Rebecca and Samuel Rosenblum, both recent immigrants to America from eastern Europe, became the parents of four children and established a family that represents the paradigm of the American Jewish experience. Less than twenty years later, their eldest child and only daughter, Lillian, entered Radcliffe College. She was not the first Jewish girl from Manchester to study at Radcliffe, for a cousin had preceded her.[3] Two of her brothers became dentists, one a physician, in the pattern of educational achievement that marked the emerging Jewish community.

When the Rosenblum parents celebrated their wedding day, the Jewish community of Manchester had been firmly established for little more than a decade. Earlier, a small group seems to have come and gone. In 1862, a letter from Jacob Morse appeared in "American Israelite" reporting to its readers "I take pleasure to announce to you, that we celebrated *Yom Kippur* in my house; we had some 11 members, and we recited our prayers in the very best manner; we remained all day in our room of worship, and I hope that we shall meet again in this place by another year. If we get able, we will buy a *Sefer Torah*; and by-the-by, we will have a small congregation here in Manchester, N.H."[4]

That hope was not realized and nothing more is recorded of Jews in Manchester until a man named A. Wolf is said to have settled permanently on July 14, 1880.[5] The first record of an es-

2. *Manchester City Directory*, 1893, 552, Manchester Historic Association (MHA).

3. Golde Rosenblum matriculated at Radcliffe in September, 1907, after twice attempting to achieve the minimal entrance examination score then required on admissions tests. However, she was granted a provisional admission and went on to graduate with honors in 1911. Stahl, Nancy R., taped interview, 1973, MHA.

4. *American Israelite*, Vol. 9, No. 15, 115, Oct. 17, 1862, Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, MA.

5. Adath Yeshurun Silver Anniversary booklet, 1937, MHA.

tablished synagogue was not until 1890 at 1058 Elm Street.[6] Then known as "B'nai Jeshurun" (Sons of Israel), it held services every Saturday from 8 to 10 a.m. The officers included Solomon Sullivan, president, and Morris Cohen, vice president. B'nai Jeshurun was the direct parent of the existing Congregation Adath Yeshurun; the names of Cohen and Sullivan appear regularly in the early records of the synagogue until well after the incorporation of Adath Yeshurun in 1900.[7]

By 1891, there were 21 adult working Jewish men, nine of them heads of families.[8] The synagogue membership was made up of immigrants, primarily from Lithuania, known as "Litvaks" with a few from the Ukraine, referred to as "Russische." As the congregation grew, so did the differences among its members. Common needs for social relationships drew them together but liturgical differences split them apart. In 1897, the dissenters, the Russische, decided to form their own synagogue and Congregation Anshe Sephard came into being.[9]

Even though the first official mention of Adath Yeshurun in the Manchester city records is its incorporation in 1900, there are sufficient records extant (including city directories of the 1890s) to establish an earlier date for that congregation.[10] The

6. *Manchester City Directory*, 1891, MHA.

7. Recorded in City Clerk's office, Manchester, N.H., on January 3, 1900, Book of Records of Voluntary Corporations, Vol. 4, 209. Subsequently recorded with Secretary of State at Concord on January 4, 1900. "Sullivan" may seem a strange name for a practicing Jew, but the name is an example of the adaptations made by many immigrants to a new country and a new language. Solomon Sullivan had been born "Soloveitchik" and had acquired his new name about the time he came to America. Other members of the family later changed the name to "Nightingale," a literal translation from the Russian.

8. Stahl, Nancy R. "A Brief History of the Manchester Jewry," 1976, MHA.

9. The Anshe Sephard Congregation became Temple Israel in 1959, moving from orthodoxy to conservatism (Temple Israel Dedication Book, 1959, Manchester Jewish Archive, MHA). The congregation was described in that dedication as "coming from the Ukraine, Galicia, and Poland where Sephardic prayer ritual has been observed."

10. *Manchester City Directory*, 1891, 541, MHA.

incorporation of religious organizations was permitted by a law passed in the 1899 session of the General Court, so there had been no such registration earlier.[11] Land for a cemetery was purchased on South Beech Street in 1896, replacing an earlier burial site in Bedford in which six or seven bodies had been interred.[12] The cemetery project was spurred by Morris Rosenblum, brother of Samuel and father of Golde.

The two congregations were housed in a series of buildings, all in the parts of the city of Manchester where most of the early Jewish arrivals lived. Laurel Street, Central Street, and Pine Street provided homes for the young synagogues.

A report, "Our Progress," in a celebratory synagogue dedication book of 1912[13] recounted the growth of Adath Yeshurun from the incorporation by 17 (male) members in 1900, when services were held in a single room at 97 Central Street. In 1902, a cottage was purchased at 94 Laurel Street and remodeled for the small congregation. High Holiday attendance, however, had increased so much with the flood of immigration from eastern Europe that rented quarters were necessary for *Rosh Hashonah*[14] and *Yom Kippur* (New Year's and the Day of Atonement) and Knights of Pythias Hall or Odd Fellows Hall had been utilized (with the lodge decorations removed for the Jewish services) on

11. General Court records, session of 1899.

12. *Bedford Town History*, 1903, 388. Land had been purchased in 1896 near the western boundary of Edmund Hall's land. In 1900 the land was sold to Gordon Woodbury with the proviso that the graves would remain undisturbed. An iron fence on the west side of South River Road near the Manchester line marked the site, but by the 1970s the fence had disappeared. (Nancy R. Stahl, "A Brief History of the Manchester Jewry," 1976, MHA.

13. "Grand Opening Dedication and Bazaar of the Hebrew Synagogue. Central near Maple Streets. Open March 4, 5, 6, 7" (1912), Manchester Jewish Archives, MHA.

14. The spelling of *Rosh Hashonah* is a transliteration from the Hebrew, and phonetically "Hashonah" is closer to the Ashkenazic pronunciation than "Hashanah" which is Sephardic pronunciation (the pronunciation of Hebrew used in modern Israel).

those occasions. These arrangements were hardly adequate and on one occasion the congregation was forced to vacate the hall on *Yom Kippur* to make room for a lodge meeting. That event apparently galvanized the advocates for a new synagogue building and a fund-raising campaign began.[15] Two members of the congregation (unnamed) each pledged one thousand dollars, a ball and bazaar in October 1910 raised another fifteen hundred dollars, and other pledges were secured. Construction of the Adath Yeshurun building started with the laying of the foundation in April 1911.

The new synagogue, or *shul*,[16] on Central Street, a frame building painted light brown and trimmed in a darker shade, housed a large hall for religious services, with the *bimah* or dais on the south wall; (traditionally, the congregation was supposed to face east toward Jerusalem, but the building site was oriented north and south, obviating the preferred siting). A women's balcony ringed three sides of the men's seating, overhanging several rows of the pews on west, east and north sides. At the rear of the *bimah* was the Ark, a large cabinet which housed the scrolls of the Torah; the rest of the *bimah* held a large reading desk facing the Ark and a smaller lectern in the front facing the congregation as well as several chairs for officers of the congregation.[17] Amber stained-glass windows produced a sense of seclusion in the sanctuary, for the neighboring houses, especially on the west side of the synagogue, stood close by. The lower level of the building had a vestry (which doubled as meeting space

15. Interestingly, a history of Temple Israel, successor to the Anshe Sephard Synagogue, tells a similar story of the congregation having been forced to vacate the rented lodge hall on *Yom Kippur* to make way for a lodge meeting. Temple Israel Dedication booklet, 1959, MHA.

16. The Yiddish term "shul" (rhymes with "full") derives from the Greek *schola* through the German *schule* and was the commonly used word for the synagogue in eastern Europe and in America. It served as a meeting place, religious center, study room, and social center for the Jewish community.

17. Author's personal recollection.

Congregation Adath Yeshurun, Central Street, built in 1911, as seen in 1992.

and was used for weekday services when the small number of attendees ruled out heating of the main sanctuary). In addition, there were two classrooms for the *cheder*[18] or religious school, a large kitchen where women of the congregation traditionally prepared food for ceremonial meals, and a long shed in the rear of the building. In the 1930s, a *sukkah* with a removable roof was added on the east side to provide for services during the fall harvest festival of *Sukkot*, or Tabernacles. The shed in the rear of the building, alongside an alleyway which still runs from Maple to Beech Streets, provided a space where the rabbi, who also served as *schochet* or ritual slaughterer, performed *kosher*

18. *Cheder* is the Hebrew word for "room" and is commonly used to refer either to the classes for religious instruction or to the rooms where the classes were held. See Leo Rosten, *The Joys of Yiddish* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

(according to ritual) slaughtering of poultry for members of the community.[19]

In the 1930s there was a major renovation of the sanctuary, highlighted by the painting of white clouds in a blue sky in the half-domed arch above the *bimah*. In the large sanctuary, there was room for perhaps 500 people, but the space was crowded only for the high holidays in the fall and occasionally on a *Shabbat* (Saturday) morning when a youth celebrated his attaining *bar mitzvah*. In orthodox Jewish tradition, a boy becomes a *bar mitzvah* (literally, *son of commandment*) by reaching the age of thirteen. At that age, he is considered an adult for purposes of ritual, and the occasion is marked by his taking part in the regular service. There was, and is, a sense of community in the festivities, as the thirteen-year-old participates in the services for the first time, reads the *Torah* blessings, and chants the appropriate *Haftorah* (section from the prophets or Psalms read as a pendant to the *Torah* portion of the week). Reform and increasingly conservative congregations now include young women in this tradition as *bat mitzvah* (daughter of commandment).

After the service, family and friends gathered in the vestry below the sanctuary for lunch. The *kosher* kitchen adjacent to the vestry was a cheerful place, where many hands made light work and where eagle eyes made certain that no one violated the rules of *kashruth*.[20] Undoubtedly, caterers were employed on occasion, but the celebrations had about them a home-made, family feeling.

The special dietary requirements of the Jewish community and observance of the Sabbath on Saturday rather than on Sunday sometimes strained relations with their neighbors. The *Manchester Union* reported in 1896 under a headline, "Officious

19. Older members of Manchester's Jewish community recall occasions when their teacher, Rabbi Abraham Hefterman, interrupted the Hebrew class to go out to the back of the building to kill a chicken for a member of the congregation.

20. The dietary observances of Jewish tradition require separate utensils for meat and for dairy foods and no mixing of the two is allowed. Only ritually slaughtered meat and poultry are permitted, and no shellfish or pork products are acceptable.

Policeman" that David Pike, the orthodox butcher, had been ordered on several occasions to cease his meat-cutting activity at midnight on Saturday so that he would not violate the Sunday blue laws. Despite Pike's explanation that he could not begin his weekend work until after dark on Saturday without violating his own Sabbath, the policeman persisted until a delegation approached the police department and explained the dilemma. The *Union*'s reporter met with the delegates and reported they had said "Saturday evening he (Pike) goes to work but it is no joke to dress meat for 400 people or more and it requires about seven hours. No complaint is made by the neighbors. . . . Our folks are very much aroused about the matter . . . We are an orderly people . . . and we feel this little permission is our due." The permission undoubtedly was granted by Chief of Police Healy, for his comment in the newspaper article was that he had "no doubt that . . . the Jewish butcher might find it possible to arrange for working an hour or two in the dark of Sunday morning, considering that the local Jewish people cannot have meat for Sunday unless Mr. Pike is granted this permission."[21]

An awareness of the needs of the less fortunate members of the congregation had early created a special role for the women. The Ladies' Aid and Benevolent Association of Adath Yeshurun came into being in 1910 as did the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Association of Anshe Sephard. In time, both groups took on the name of "Sisterhood" of their respective congregations.[22] Women brought their homemaking skills together in the synagogue structure, organizing fund-raising activities, rummage sales, bazaars and social and cultural affairs, and also devoting themselves to helping those among the community who were less fortunate. Money, food and clothing went from the women's group to anyone in the community who was in need. The assistance was absolutely confidential. Only two or three of the women knew who the recipients of assistance were, and in each case a

21. The *Manchester Union*, September 1, 1896, MCL.

22. Stahl, N. R., *Brief History*, MHA.

quiet investigation had been made so that the circumstances were verified. To this day, the Manchester Jewish Federation maintains a welfare fund for those in need and grants are made from it on a careful but informal basis. Through the time of World War II, needy Jewish itinerants who appeared in Manchester were provided with a kosher meal, a night's lodging, and often a small cash grant to carry them to the next town.[23]

Dozens of women served as leaders over the years. Among them were Sadie Flaxman, daughter of immigrants from Lithuania, who was born in New York, finished high school in Hartford, Connecticut, and subsequently became a social worker (with on-the-job training) in the Connecticut Children's Bureau, the pioneering state children's agency. In 1925, she came to Manchester as the wife of Samuel Stahl, a local dentist whom she had met at a YM/YWHA[24] convention. She embarked on a career of community work. Sisterhood, Hadassah, the Jewish Community Center and a variety of non-Jewish organizations all benefited from her astute grasp of institutions and their community functions. Years later, Jewish women like Ethel Greenspan, herself an outstanding community leader, recalled how she had been introduced to community responsibilities by Sadie Stahl.

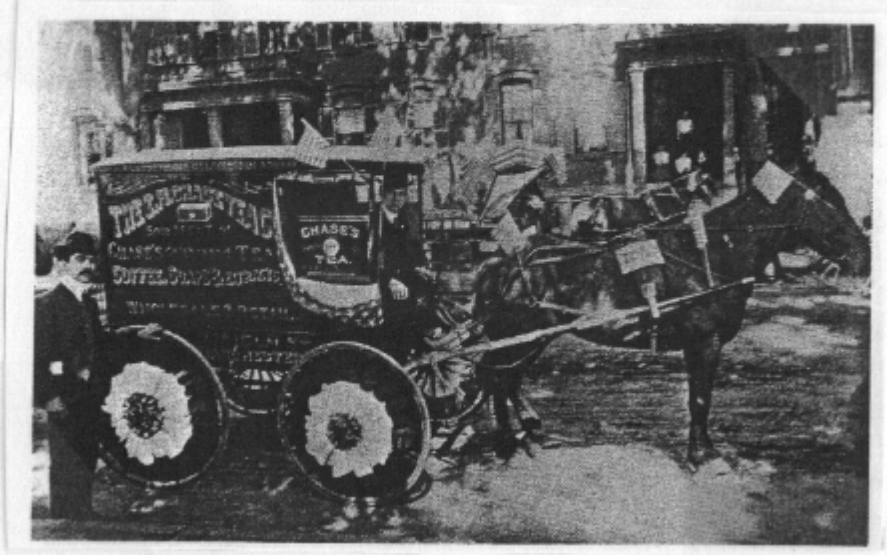
The congregation usually struggled financially and carrying the mortgage which had been necessary to complete the building in 1911 was a heavy burden. During the twenties and thirties Adath Yeshurun was barely able to meet its financial needs. Few in the Jewish community had much money, and the affairs of the congregation reflected its members' problems. When the mortgage was finally burned in 1931, the congregation voted never to borrow money for a synagogue building again.[25]

The Jewish community was not different from the general population of Manchester. The city suffered from the decline

23. Ibid.

24. Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association, c.f. below.

25. Brodie, I. A., *Historic Outline of Manchester Jews*, in 25th anniversary publication, 1936, MHA.



The E.M. Chase Tea Company, Manchester, New Hampshire

of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company and extra money for any purpose was hard to come by. During those days, two mainstays of Congregation Adath Yeshurun had been Edward M. Chase and Abraham Machinist. Both downtown merchants, they had begun their careers late in the 19th century and by the time of World War I had become financially successful. The two were undoubtedly the strongest financial supporters of the congregation, and some of their debates became legendary as each strove to challenge the other to increase his donations. On *Kol Nidrei* night, when the entire congregation gathered at dusk in the Central Street *shul*, fundraising was carried on. Arthur Davis, resident caretaker of the YM/YWHA building on Hanover Street, sat with pencil and pad of paper in the back of the sanctuary and recorded the pledges. A non-Jew and so permitted to wield his pencil on the high holidays, he wrote down the sums promised by the assembled members of Adath Yeshurun.[26]

26. Author's recollection.

Edward M. Chase, Manchester, New Hampshire

Chase had come to Manchester in the 1880s, begun a tea and coffee business which he transformed into a furniture store, and started the real estate holdings which made him a power in the community. He was gifted with imagination and a keen sense of social responsibility. Shortly after World War I, Chase established the Chase Family Home Association with an initial contribution of $50,000 and embarked on a program of building houses for working people. He made the houses available for a weekly payment of $7.50 and guaranteed that these houses would become the property of the occupants after a period of 15 years. In 1931, seven years after the program was established, Chase was able to announce that almost all loans were being paid off on schedule despite the depressed economic conditions in Manchester.[27] The main eligibility requirement for residents

27. The initial contribution was augmented by another $65,000 raised mostly through local banking circles. *Manchester Union*, February 24, 1931. In

Abraham and Esther Machinist, Manchester, New Hampshire, late 1930s.

was that the houses were available to "(enable) men who are members of religious organizations and their families to establish homes of their own."[28] By the mid-thirties, the experiment had been so successful and so much of the original cost repaid that Chase bought a farm on Mammoth Road in East Manchester and redid the experiment, building a group of brick houses and selling them on similar terms. Both groups of houses still stand today in 1996, testimony to the far-sighted social vision of E.M. Chase.

Machinist, too, strove to benefit the community. A man who had progressed from peddler to merchant, he reached out from

addition to the housing project, Mr. Chase also donated $200,000 in 1928 to establish a scholarship fund in his native Lithuania for the education of Jewish children. Grants were made at elementary, high school, and university levels.

28. *Manchester Union*, Ibid.

Nathan Ekman and family, Manchester, New Hampshire.

his dry goods store on Hanover Street to solve the problems that disturbed the life of his co-religionists. In the late 1930s he took on as a special project the unification of the two Jewish cemeteries, separated by a fence down the middle. He objected strenuously to the perennial cemetery arguments that festered between the two congregations from 1918 when Anshe Sephard had bought land adjoining the Adath Yeshurun cemetery for its own burial ground. The fence was a visible sign of the division between the two congregations and a barrier to effective cooperation. After several years of effort, Abe Machinist negotiated an agreement with Nathan Ekman of Congregation Anshe Sephard to establish a single cemetery and the fence came

down. Machinist donated the gates for the newly unified cemetery and would later finance their restoration in the 1960s as well. Milton Machinist recalls that his father and Ekman marked the occasion by exchanging the fountain pens with which they had signed the document. The two men emphasized the permanence of the cemetery merger by purchasing family burial plots on both sides of the erstwhile dividing line. Machinist's action is now memorialized in the broad family headstone which straddles the old fence line, assuring that never again will a fence be erected to separate Manchester's Jewish dead.[29]

In 1948, a long-felt need for a chapel at the cemetery was fulfilled with a small building erected by joint efforts of the two congregations and named in memory of the five young Jewish men of the Manchester community who died in World War II. That building was constructed on the old dividing line, with a roadway passing to either side of the building. The administration of the cemetery is still controlled cooperatively, lots being sold separately and the maintenance costs of the area being shared.

Another major force in the congregation between 1920 and the late 1940s was I.A. Brodie, familiarly known to all in the community by his last name alone, without prefix. As keeper of the congregational records, he was the final arbiter of historical disputes, a lover of a good argument, and a formidable opponent in debate. More of a secular than a religiously observant Jew, Brodie was a learned man with a pragmatic spirit. On one occasion, visiting the cemetery with the committee and discussing the proper size for a grave, he stretched himself out on the ground at full length, had his companions hammer a peg in to the ground at his head and foot, and, arising, declared, "This will suit me fine!"

29. Personal conversation with Milton Machinist. The younger Machinist became a community leader in his own right, and in 1954 was named to the board of the Amoskeag Savings Bank. He and Saul Greenspan at Merchants National Bank were the first Jewish persons on local bank boards.

I. A. Brodie, Manchester, New Hampshire.

As members of Congregation Adath Yeshurun became more prosperous, they moved northward from their original settlement in the Lake Avenue area. Distances from home to *shul* grew, and with the distance came an increasing reluctance to walk to services as observant Jews were supposed to do, particularly when weather was inclement. Some members of Adath Yeshurun risked the criticism of their fellows and drove their cars on the holidays. For years, however, no one dreamt of parking in sight of the synagogue on Central Street. Both sides of Laurel Street to the north were filled with the parked cars of synagogue-goers, as were Central Street a block or so east of the synagogue and other streets nearby. Only in the early 1950s was the unwritten and often unobserved rule of walking to services openly flouted by a few congregants who argued that cars were not horses, that driving was not working; they were not going to

Rabbi and Mrs. Abraham Hefterman, Congregation Adath Yeshurun, 1930s.

park their cars on Laurel Street, they said, and began parking within view of the high stairs leading to Adath Yeshurun's front door.[30]

Symptomatic of changing attitudes among congregants was a growing dissatisfaction with the ritual of Adath Yeshurun. Initially a small group led the dissent. Several of the more affluent members of the congregation were among them, and one of the sources of their discontent was Rabbi Abraham Hefterman, spiritual leader of Congregation Adath Yeshurun since 1925. He had come then as a recent immigrant from Bessarabia, traditionally educated and initially speaking only halting English. Over the years his erudition and frequent publications had made him a well-known figure in American orthodoxy. He wrote a weekly column for the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a New York Yiddish language paper which had a wide following espe-

30. Author's recollection.

cially along the eastern seaboard. Hefterman's human interest column, featuring often thinly disguised stories from New Hampshire, brought him a large audience. His readers respected him for his common sense and insights into life's problems but he became a prophet without honor on his home grounds.[31]

His congregants cannot have been realistic in what they expected of him. Rabbi Hefterman had to preside over a difficult and often disorderly *cheder* or Hebrew school, filled with many unwilling pupils. In the twenties and thirties, this Hebrew school was a four-afternoon-a-week requirement for boys and a very few girls who were compelled to go to Hebrew classes after their day ended at public school. In addition, a Sunday school was offered at the YM and YWHA building on Hanover and Beech Streets where children from both synagogues, boys and girls, came for two hours of Bible stories, Jewish history, and group singing.[32] Besides teaching in the *cheder*, Rabbi Hefterman had a role in the Sunday school as well.

In 1938, Congregation Anshe Sephard and Congregation Adath Yeshurun agreed that neither was having much success

31. A movement to engage a "modern, English-speaking Rabbi who would understand American youth better" gained force in the Congregation. By the late 1940s most of the Congregation had been born in this country, spoke English as their native tongue, and felt they had moved beyond the immigrant origins of Adath Yeshurun. Author's recollection.

32. The Young Men's Hebrew Association originated from Jewish young men's literary societies founded in the 1840s. The first YMHA under that name was organized in Baltimore in 1854, while the first Young Women's Hebrew Association was established in New York in 1902. The YW's all eventually merged with the YM's, and became the source for the Jewish Community Center movement in the 1930s. YM-YWHA's were originally aimed exclusively at youth but eventually broadened to provide a wide spectrum of services to the Jewish community (and ultimately the non-Jewish community as well). Their programs encompassed bowling leagues, nursery schools (a whole generation of youngsters in Manchester, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, learned about Jewish customs and holidays in the Manchester Jewish Community Nursery School), senior citizens' groups, and social action and social welfare programs. *Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, Cecil Roth, Ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1966) and author's recollection.

in teaching Hebrew and religion to the younger generation. At that time, the YM and YWHA was transformed into the Jewish Community Center and, for the first time, a full-time director/teacher was engaged. The Center took on the administration of all religious education and, for a few years, results improved. Many more girls, whose Hebrew education had previously often been neglected, were enrolled in the program. The first executive director, Isaac Frank, took over the Hebrew School classes and, for the first time, Hebrew was taught as a language separate from the teaching of Hebrew as the medium of prayer. The rabbis of the two congregations, meanwhile, continued in their traditional role of preparing boys from their respective synagogues for *bar mitzvah.*

The tuition that parents paid for their children's religious education had provided part of Rabbi Hefterman's small income. He augmented it by serving as the *mohel* (ritual circumciser) for male babies born in the area and for supervising *kosher* slaughtering at Granite State Packing Company (owned by his congregant, Alex Shapiro). Ultimately, Hefterman's work at the meatpacking plant provided the Rabbi with a decent income, permitting him to own his first automobile.

Over the years, Hefterman's command of the English language grew. He was much in demand as a public speaker and was known for his often acerbic wit. He remained, however, still too much the eastern European immigrant for some members of the congregation. Although his beard gradually assumed a trimmer outline, he still wore the black velour hat and somber clothing of the orthodox. He wasn't modern enough for those whose new affluence had carried them into the mainstream of the city's life and they felt that Hefterman's sermons were critical of them and their behavior. Most attempts to prod the rabbi to "progress" were fruitless. In 1932 or 1933, the president of Adath Yeshurun, Abraham Machinist, suggested to Rabbi Hefterman that at least one of the high holiday sermons should be delivered in English rather than the traditional Yiddish. Machinist felt sure that the Rabbi had agreed and was stunned

Nathan and Esther Stahl, Taylor Street, Manchester, New Hampshire, circa 1937.

when both *Rosh Hashonah* sermons were given in Yiddish with the explanation, "I owe something to the old people."[33]

Hefterman's commitment to the older members of the congregation was real and heartfelt. One *Rosh Hashonah* afternoon in 1937, despite the afternoon heat of a dusty late summer day, the Rabbi made the long walk to Nathan Stahl's house in East Manchester where he repeated some of the prayers and sounded the *shofar* (traditional ram's horn) for the elderly man who was then too ill to leave his home for synagogue services.

As an interpreter of religious law for those who still turned

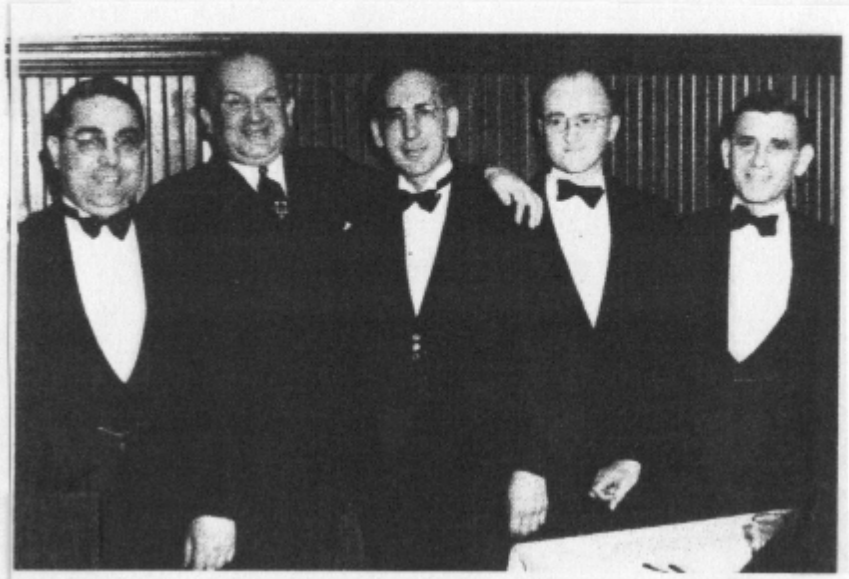
33. Milton Machinist, personal communication.

to a rabbi for advice on ritual and other matters, Hefterman was considered an expert. The Rabbi's scholarship was undisputed, although perhaps few in Manchester knew much about his writings, either in Yiddish or in English. Pressures for "someone who would relate better to the children" grew and finally a small group was formed to approach Hefterman and seek a comfortable way out of the problem. Much to their surprise, the Rabbi, with his customary good assessment of the situation, volunteered his resignation. He would not yet leave the Manchester community, nor even Adath Yeshurun, for a while, but effectively the era of the immigrant synagogue was over.

From the end of World War II (in which the Jewish community contributed its share of young men and women to the services, losing five of their number as war casualties), pressure for an "American" rabbi, one closer to the younger generation, grew.[34] At *Yizkor* (memorial)[35] services on *Yom Kippur* shortly after the end of the War, a visiting rabbi, Saul Kraft, articulated the passing of many old customs. "After what has happened to our people in Europe," he said, "we all have reason to mourn. Everyone will stay for *Yizkor*, children and all." For the first time, there was no general exodus from the sanctuary as *Yizkor* services began, when all those whose parents were still living had rushed for the exits to stand outside in the usually warm autumn air. About that time, too, men and women began to sit together on the main floor. The excuse, if one was given, was that the balcony had become unsafe. In any case, the old barriers were beginning to fall.

34. It should be noted that the pressure did not come from the younger people, but rather from the more senior members of the community, those who contributed much of the financial support and who probably felt, because of their growing importance in the general community, that the Rabbi no longer reflected their new and hard-earned status. Author's recollection.

35. The *Yizkor* (Hebrew, "He shall remember") prayers are recited in Ashkenazi (eastern European) congregations at the end of the Yom Kippur service and at the end of the services for the festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. *Yizkor* is medieval in origin and is not observed among the Sephardim, Jews descended from the community in fifteenth century Spain.



In 1937, Congregation Adath Yeshurun marked the 25th anniversary of the construction of its first permanent home. Symbolic of the growing prominence of Manchester's Jewish community, New Hampshire's then Governor, Francis P. Murphy, participated in the festivities. Left to right, J. Morton Rosenblum, committee member, Governor Murphy, Judge Lewis Goldberg of the Massachusetts Superior Court, Jacob Foster 2nd, committee member, and Morris Katz, congregational president.

There had been rumors within the community that the dissidents in the congregation were prepared to break away and form a new synagogue, one that would adhere to the reform movement in Judaism and be called a "temple." Supposedly, discussions had been held with a financially pressed Protestant congregation to rent or even buy their church, located in the north end of Manchester nearer to where the Jewish community had been migrating. Rabbi Hefterman was by then rabbi emeritus and, as Adath Yeshurun struggled with internal tension, no one could be found to fill his place. Several rabbis came and went: Sidney Riback served for a year, Ephrayin Fischoff for a few weeks, and Charles Freedman for a number of months. During Freedman's tenure, the services were changed considerably and for the first time an organ (electronic) was introduced into the

service: Carl Feldman, one of the long time members of the congregation, a talented keyboard musician, and his wife, Florence, a vocalist, began providing music for the service. The adoption of the *Union Prayer Book* of the Reform movement came at the same time, replacing the conservative Silverman prayer book.[36]

A major problem in preserving orthodox (or even conservative) practice was that few in the congregation had the kind of training in Hebrew and in religious ritual necessary for maintaining the traditional service. There was little enthusiasm, however, for totally abandoning that style of prayer. The *Union Prayer Book*, with its much greater emphasis on English readings than Hebrew, satisfied the need for a service more accessible to many of the congregants. Still, a traditional service was provided at Adath Yeshurun for a number of years, even after the adoption of Reform ritual for the major services, and the wearing of *yarmulkes* (skull caps) and *taleisim* (prayer shawls) was never abandoned.

In 1954, Samuel Umen was engaged as rabbi, beginning an often stormy tenure that was to last until 1971. Although his training had been traditional, Rabbi Umen had embraced the Reform movement by becoming a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and aligning himself with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Adath Yeshurun was obviously ready for more change, but change did not come without turmoil. The dissatisfaction with the old Central Street building led logically to pressure for a new building, a "more suitable" synagogue, incorporating new design ideas and providing seating for more people. Most of the Jewish community had moved away from the old central city neighborhood, and the few members left around Central Street were certainly not in a position to convince the rest to keep the synagogue there.

The small and tight-knit Manchester Jewish community of the early years of the twentieth century had changed with the

36. 100th anniversary book, Temple Adath Yeshurun, MHA, and author's recollection.

changing economy of the city. The gradual decline of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, plagued by the migration of textile manufacturing to the South, the growing pressures of unionism in the industry, and internal financial manipulation within the corporation itself led, in 1935, to the bankruptcy of the great mills. All over the city, people were out of work and the mill buildings were empty. The Jewish community, like the rest of the town, felt the slump. Into that climate came an influx of manufacturers, attracted by the inexpensive factory space and the available supply of labor skilled at textile and shoe trades. Many of these manufacturers were Jewish, striking out from the New York area in particular to find new sites for their businesses; they saw an opportunity to live in a part of the country which was, they believed, more pleasant and better for raising children than the big city.

These newcomers quickly became active participants in the Jewish community, and their influence was soon felt. Many had the traditional concept of social obligation and a willingness to work for and to contribute to the Jewish religious and social welfare. The list is long: the Cohen brothers, Eli, Max, and Harold, came in the 1930s with BGS Shoes; the Sidores and Blums brought Brookshire Knitting Mills (Pandora Sweaters); the Greenspans operated Waumbec Mills; B.D. and J.S. Gordon ran MKM (Massachusetts Knitting Mills) and Manchester Hosiery, respectively; the Shaer family presided at Myrna Shoe. Others like Alvin Scheer at Arms Textile, Ben Mates at Manchester Knitted Fashions (MKF), and Mack Kahn all came to Manchester to make their mark in business and in the life of the city.[37] They changed the face of the town even as they changed the nature of the Jewish community. Little by little, Manchester's Jews had become economically important. The number of Jewish-owned retail businesses grew, as did the number of Jewish health professionals, accountants, and lawyers.

The Jewish community had been permanently altered from

37. Manchester City Directory, 1938, MHA.

its once apparent insularity. There had been one and occasionally two Jewish bakeries producing rye breads with caraway seeds and hundreds of loaves of *challah* for Sabbath and holidays. For years there had been a kosher butcher (sometimes even two) and a Jewish corner grocery, Savan's market, in the Lake Avenue/Union Street area. Abraham Savan was affectionately remembered for the barrel of pickles and the hefty corned beef sandwiches on bulkie rolls that he dispensed, but the younger generation was looking farther afield. Few of the children seemed inclined to follow their parents' occupational footsteps. Savan's older son, David, for example, went on to college at Harvard and a Ph.D. in philosophy, eventually holding a professorship at the University of Toronto and earning an international reputation in the field of semiotics.[38]

Several others from the Manchester Jewish community made their intellectual mark. James Freedman, son of high school English teacher Louis Freedman and his wife, Sophie, moved from Harvard College toward a distinguished legal career, serving as law clerk to Judge Thurgood Marshall on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, but then entered academia as a professor, and later dean, at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. He became president of the University of Iowa in 1983 and Dartmouth College's fifteenth president in 1988. His high school classmate Thomas Farer, son of a Manchester dentist, was graduated from Princeton University, went on to a successful career in international affairs, and served for a time as president of the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque. In 1996 he was director of the joint program in international law and human rights at American University in Washington, D.C.

38. David Savan is remembered by a high school classmate (Central 1932) as a shy young man with thick glasses who did not speak well on his feet and, while known as very bright, did not compile an outstanding academic record in the school. However, he scored so well on the competitive entrance examination for Harvard that he was admitted with sophomore standing. (Personal communication, Eve Alter Tobin, and directory of Central High School alumni).

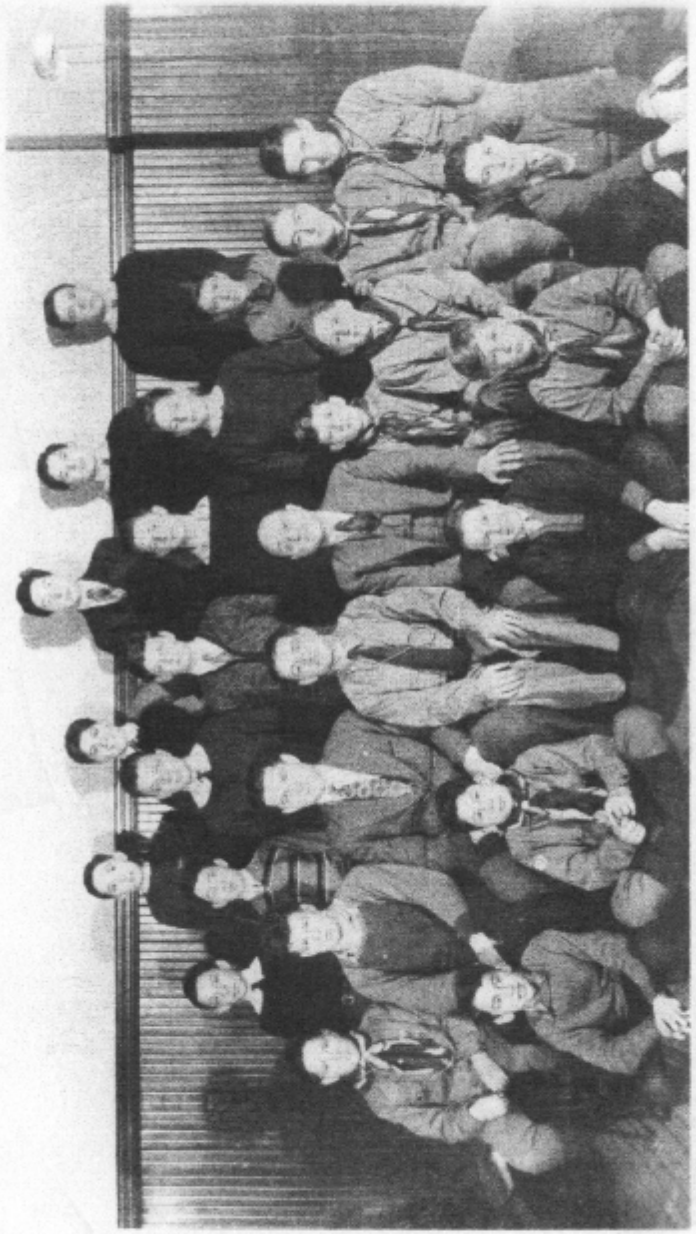
Abraham Machinist's grandson, Peter, internationally known as a scholar in Near Eastern studies and linguistics, in 1996 was the Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages at Harvard University and the Harvard Divinity School.

Not only academics drew Manchester Jewish youth away from the city to successful careers, often far removed from what their parents had done. The Revson brothers, Central High School graduates in the 1920s, invented a nail polish, made their mark in cosmetics and became the founders of the Revlon Corporation.

A photograph still cherished in 1996 by some of the older members of the community shows Boy Scout Troop 107 at a 1938 meeting in the synagogue vestry (members were drawn from both congregations). Scoutmaster Louis Schrader and his assistant, Teddy Silber, taught knot-tying, outdoor skills, and even military marching drill. The young scouts in the picture compiled, over the ensuing half century, a remarkable record of achievement, almost every one of them having earned a college degree; they went on to careers as educators, physicians, dentists, lawyers, college professors, professional musicians, and entrepreneurs.[39]

Two years after the photograph was taken, World War II raged, the United States began conscription, and the Jewish community, like the rest of Manchester, gave its sons to the service of their country. Several of the young men had joined the national guard and were called into active duty early in the war. Some enlisted in the military forces. On February 28, 1942, weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a U.S. destroyer, the *Jacob Jones*, was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine off the coast of New Jersey. A young Manchester doctor on board, Lt. (j.g.) Ben Richard Bronstein, was lost with his ship. He was the first New Hampshire naval officer to die

39. The troop was sponsored by the YMHA, but usually met in the vestry of Adath Yeshurun where there was room for troop activities and even for some marching drill, for the troop participated in all the local parades along with other scouting organizations.



Boy Scout Troop 107, 1938. Top row, L to R: Sidney Freeman, George Silberberg, Ralph Rudnick, George Resnick (dec.), Albert Alter. Second row: Ralph Isenberg, Melvin Sibulkin (dec.), Boris Ekman, Channing Eluto (dec.), Robert Perlman, Harold Firestone, Irving Streletsky. Seated: Alan Rogers, Ted Silber (dec.), Arthur Feldman, Louis Schrader (Scoutmaster, dec.), Nathan Rogers (Troop Committeeman, dec.), David Stahl, Leon Grodzins, Bertram Silver, Hyman Novak (dec.). Bottom: Robert Stahl, Robert Rosenblum, Samuel Katz, Arnold Levine, Milton Jacobson.

in the war. He and his family had been members of Congregation Anshe Sephard, and after graduation from Central High School in 1932 he had attended the University of New Hampshire (starring on the basketball team and serving as its captain) and then went on to Tufts Medical School.[40] Before hostilities ended in 1945, at least 154 young men and six young women from the Manchester Jewish community served in the armed forces, and four others besides Ben Bronstein lost their lives. The Jewish community at the time numbered perhaps 500 families.

After the war, it was decided that the synagogues should be moved north in the city toward locations more in keeping with the residential pattern which the Jewish community had adopted. A group of Adath Yeshurun members purchased a piece of property (an entire city block) across Beech Street from the Jewish Community Center between Prospect and Harrison Streets. The block was the site of a single home, the Smith house, a large Victorian frame building with a magnificent European beech tree in the yard facing Prospect Street. Several members of the Congregation, led by Morris Silver, Alex Shapiro, Abraham Machinist, Milton Machinist, Sol O Sidore, and Saul Greenspan bought the property. Their object was to erect a new synagogue on that site, handy to the Jewish Community Center which had moved from its original Hanover Street location about ten years earlier. There was talk at the time of establishing a synagogue-center complex, even of providing an orthodox chapel for the more traditional members of the community. Some attempts were made to bring together the two congregations but the effort failed, as it had in the past. Adath Yeshurun

40. Ben's older brother, Joseph Bronstein, had also attended the University of New Hampshire and after graduation became a teacher at Central High School, at age 22, the youngest the school had ever had. He was also the basketball coach and compiled an outstanding record with his teams, winning the state championship on several occasions. Joseph Bronstein later became the first principal of Manchester's Memorial High School when that school was opened. Personal recollection.

plunged into fund-raising for a new building. The president of the Congregation, Morris Sibulkin, Jr., a leading shoe manufacturer, served as chairman of the drive, and for the first time a policy was adopted by the board of directors requiring a contribution to the building fund as a condition of membership. (Despite this requirement, care was still taken to ease entry for individuals and families with lower incomes.)

The new project at Adath Yeshurun spurred activity at Anshe Sephard as well. Over the years, the same pressures for change which had driven Adath Yeshurun pressed on the more orthodox congregation, and its services had gradually changed to reflect the changing character of the membership. More and more English had been introduced into the service, and in 1959, as that congregation too made its move to a new building (even farther north in Manchester than the new Adath Yeshurun) the Congregation took a major step of leaving orthodoxy and becoming affiliated with the United Synagogue movement, the major American conservative group. Signaling the change, Anshe Sephard dropped the name adopted 60 years earlier and became Temple Israel.[41]

The committee planning for the new Adath Yeshurun building wanted an architectural design that would be recognized as a positive addition to the public buildings of Manchester. Rabbi Umen involved himself in the plans and was a driving force in the whole undertaking. So it was that the group, chaired by Joseph Foster, went to the noted New York architect, Percival Goodman, and engaged him to design a new building for Adath Yeshurun. Goodman went to work to meet the expectations and desires of the congregation. The result was a building contemporary in feel, sited well on the space available, with an outdoor patio and a sizable parking lot. The grand old European beech tree was spared and still stands in 1996 opposite the main building entrance. Goodman had planned the decoration

41. Temple Israel Dedication (commemorative booklet), November 13–15, 1959, author's collection.

of the building as well as the structure itself, and found artists Harris and Ros Barron in the Boston area to produce designs for the sanctuary adornments — the Ark curtain, Torah mantles, candelabrum, eternal light, and Hebrew letters above the Ark representing the Ten Commandments. Exterior additions included an imposing cast concrete sculpture adjacent to the west end of the building facing Beech Street.

A major fund-raising drive in 1958 produced much of the necessary money, and the project was completed and the first services held in the new building on the weekend of September 11–13, 1959. The surroundings and the finances were a far cry from 1932. The handsome building had upholstered pew seating, air conditioning, and a built-in sound system. A quarter century earlier, the entire budget of the congregation was $3,400 and annual dues had been $7.00 per family. When the new building opened, family dues were $100 per year and the budget stood at $39,955. The construction of the new building also required abandonment of the congregational policy against borrowing that had been established in 1937 upon the burning of the mortgage on the original building. A substantial part of the cost of construction was included in a bank loan. The enthusiasm for the new project, however, had swept aside the lingering reservations of a few dissidents. The congregation prospered and grew so large that seating in the new home was barely adequate for *Kol Nidrei* services.

Earlier in the 1950s, after having been designated as *rabbi emeritus* at Adath Yeshurun, Rabbi Hefterman accepted the Anshe Sephard pulpit and provided that congregation with an invigorating stimulus. As his former congregation on Central Street had looked to changing the image of the old neighborhood *shul*, so Rabbi Hefterman recognized that his new congregation a block west on Central Street also had to progress to survive. By the time Anshe Sephard's transformation to Temple Israel in new quarters had been completed, Rabbi Hefterman had moved on to an orthodox synagogue in New Haven, Connecticut, where he served into the 1970s.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Umen reached out to Manchester's Chris-

tian community, becoming a frequent visitor at church functions where he often lectured and sermonized. He encouraged joint youth activities among Adath Yeshurun's children and groups from various churches. These activities were viewed askance by some members of the congregation, now styled as "Temple" Adath Yeshurun, although legally the official name remained "Congregation" Adath Yeshurun. The growing acceptance of the Jewish community in Manchester's economic and social structure was itself evidence of the greater role the Jewish community was playing in the city. Jewish names had begun appearing on bank boards, in leadership roles in organizations traditionally closed to them, and more prominently in key positions throughout the city. The election of Samuel Green to a seat in the New Hampshire Senate (where he rose to become presiding officer) was symptomatic of the change. And when William Loeb established an "advisory board" for his Union-Leader newspapers, the names of Green, Harold Goldberg, and Louis Goldstein were prominent among the list of community activists the controversial publisher had recruited.[42]

Ensconced in their new buildings, the two congregations gave up the cooperative religious school which had prospered under the aegis of the Jewish Community Center. Adath Yeshurun developed the curriculum for the children of its own members and held classes in rooms designed for that purpose on the lower floor of the new building. Temple Israel upon occupying its new quarters opened a more traditional school on its premises. The separation continued for several years but operating two schools, neither of which had sufficient youngsters to be really viable, pointed inescapably to the need for cooperation. Therefore, in the mid-1970s, the community religious school was reinstituted. The facilities of Adath Yeshurun were more suitable, since the building had been designed with adequate classrooms. The school was located there and a community Board

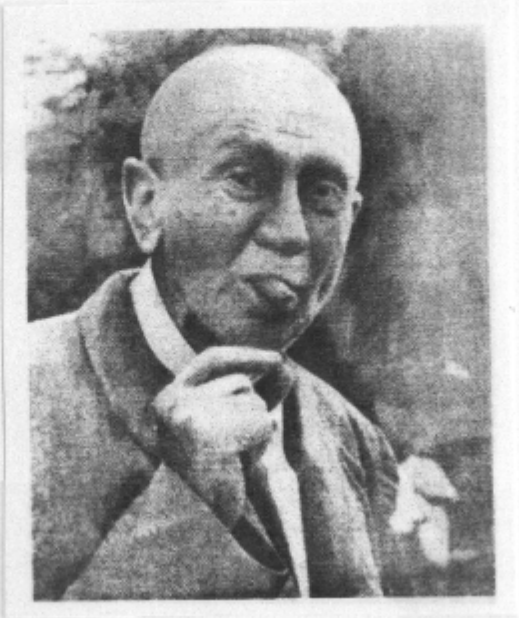
42. Union Leader Citizens' Advisory Board. First named in February 1961. *Manchester Union Leader* archives.

of Jewish Education incorporating representation from both congregations became responsible for the operation of the school. The Jewish Federation, successor to the Jewish Community Center, agreed to provide forty per cent of the budget with the balance allocated to the two congregations on a per pupil basis. The arrangement continues in 1996.

The operation of two new buildings put new burdens on the two congregations, and leaders of both hoped to build up endowment funds which might eventually produce a substantial part of the funding necessary for operating costs. There had been earlier small bequests for specific purposes such as the Joseph and Sarah Nightingale fund for the annual award for the religious school. But the first major contribution to the long-range financial health of the two congregations came from an unlikely source.

Michael Kaplan, a veteran of World War I, was born in Manchester in April, 1894, just a year after the first local wedding in the Jewish community. His family had been early members of Adath Yeshurun (his father, Solomon Kaplan, was president in 1913 and again in 1919). After serving in the Army in the first World War, Mike came back to Manchester. He worked first in a factory job, but then became a newsboy, hawking copies of the afternoon *Manchester Leader* and the evening *Boston Record* on Elm Street. In his shabby clothes and tweed cap, Mike came to synagogue services and also attended free lectures and concerts. The community kept a watchful and concerned eye on him, and more than once tried to help him out. Mike resisted all assistance. He was independent and wanted life that way.

In his late years he had a small room in a house on Walnut Street near Lowell Street and continued to support himself on the nickels and dimes from his newspaper sales. In the worst of weather, he was out on Elm Street, dressed in warm but worn clothes (he admitted to getting most of his clothes from rummage sales, but always said he splurged on shoes, because "the feet are important"). Despite his apparent poverty, there were rumors in the city that Mike had "money." In April 1969, when "Newsboy Mike" died, a stroke victim, in the Veterans Admin-



Michael Kaplan, Manchester, New Hampshire, 1894–1969.

istration Hospital just before his 75th birthday, Manchester's Jewish Community learned, with stunned surprise, that Mike Kaplan had left his estate in equal shares to the two congregations and the Jewish Community Center. The sum was not insubstantial — about $11,000 to each beneficiary. At Adath Yeshurun, Mike's memory is perpetuated in the Michael Kaplan Fund of the Temple Endowment. The other two institutions established similar memorials.[43]

During the sixties, Rabbi Umen's ecumenical role became a matter of dispute among his congregants. Displeasure grew when members learned that he had officiated at intermarriages outside Manchester in several cities along the East Coast.[44] The

43. Author's recollection and Bob Dobens, *Manchester Union Leader*, April 3, 1969, 2.

44. Author's recollection.

growing incidence of such marriages concerned many in the congregation who believed that making intermarriage easier would only result in the loss of members to Judaism, and they pointed to the fact that most rabbis refused to officiate at such weddings (a situation which continues in 1996). Polarization of congregants resulted from the inevitable taking of sides as each new incident occurred.

As the initial enthusiasm for the new building and the revivified congregation waned, dissatisfaction with the progress of the religious school grew, and grumbling about the rabbi increased. Early in 1971, a committee of board members negotiated Samuel Umen's resignation.[45] Even then, dispute over Rabbi Umen continued. The year before, Lou Smith, Rockingham Park horse racing impresario, had left about $150,000 to Adath Yeshurun in his will. Rabbi Umen had been instrumental in encouraging the bequest, and that was cited as evidence for Umen's great efforts to care for the congregation. But the dissatisfaction, as it had in Hefterman's case, outweighed the favorable arguments. Rabbi Umen had brought before the congregation in his sermons and his preaching activities an awareness of and interest in many of the philosophical and cultural issues of the day. Adath Yeshurun's beautiful building remains the major achievement of Samuel Umen's seventeen years with the congregation. Following Rabbi Umen's resignation from the Adath Yeshurun pulpit, he assumed teaching duties at nearby Nathaniel Hawthorne College, while continuing to live in Manchester until his death in 1990.

The man who replaced Samuel Umen was Rabbi Arthur Starr. Fresh from service as an Army chaplain, the 29-year-old graduate of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati arrived in the summer of 1971. He continued the Reform practice of his predecessor but, following a growing trend among American reform congregations, returned some of the older traditions to the service. More Hebrew, the employment of a cantor to strengthen

45. Adath Yeshurun board minutes, 1971, and author's recollection.

the musical part of the service, and greater congregational participation in the rituals followed. The new Reform prayer books emphasized these changes, as did the more traditional *Torah* readings, including the restoration of the *aliyah* (the honor of being called to the *bimah* to recite the blessings before the reading from the *Torah*). No one, however, missed the old practice of auctioning the *aliyahs* during the High Holy Day services. That traditional fund-raising technique, although it led to some high-spirited bidding battles, had always seemed an intrusion on the decorum and mood of the service. By the late 1970s, Adath Yeshurun appeared comfortably established and ready for the last quarter of the twentieth century, but an unfortunate mishap brought a new and unexpected problem.

During the early hours of Sunday, June 10, 1979, following a *bar mitzvah* party the previous night, an electrical malfunction overheated some wiring and a devastating fire broke out in the sanctuary. By the time the fire department had controlled the flames, the beautiful building was half ruined. The entire *bimah* was destroyed and with it the ark and the sacred scrolls. The acrid smell of charred wood and fabric permeated the undamaged part of the building. Before the day was over, plans had been laid to restore the building to its earlier beauty and Richard Winneg, a textile manufacturer and past president of the congregation had volunteered to chair the reconstruction committee.

During the process of rebuilding, the *bimah* was redesigned and a new and larger organ was installed. The damaged *Torahs*, following traditional Jewish practice, were buried outside the west end of the building; a new ark curtain was woven from the original design, and new *Torah* covers were made. The *Menorah* and eternal light were restored to their original luster, the letters for the Ten Commandments were replaced, and new fabrics chosen. Once again, Adath Yeshurun was forced to look for temporary quarters for the high holy days, and this time the congregation moved to the gymnasium of New Hampshire College, a space amply large for the occasion but still reminiscent of the days shortly after the turn of the century when Knights

of Pythias or Odd Fellows Hall served for *Rosh Hashonah* and *Yom Kippur*.

Rabbi Starr assumed a larger role in the Manchester community as the congregation neared its centennial. He became a leader of the Manchester Ministerial Association (serving as its president) and encouraged interfaith dialogue and intergroup communications. In the mid-1980s he became the host of a weekly cable television program through which his interviews of local personalities have reached a wide audience.

In 1976 and 1977, during the tenure of Annebelle Cohen, first woman president of the congregation, one more attempt was made to unite the two Manchester synagogues. As Adath Yeshurun had restored more traditional practices in its services, so Temple Israel had liberalized, and the two groups were closer than they had been for many years. (It is worth noting that there were probably few substantive differences in the ritual when the original schism developed in 1897). Rabbi Starr played a pivotal role, and months were devoted to trying to resolve the remaining problems. In the end, another attempt at unification failed when the two congregations were unable to agree on details of a merger. Debate had swirled around issues as mundane as handling of endowment assets, as weighty as dietary observance in the synagogue kitchen, as personal as allegiances to the individual rabbis. So the division remains today, with the two congregations in buildings about a quarter of a mile apart.

Adath Yeshurun figures so heavily in this story only because it has always been the larger and more visible of the two Manchester Jewish congregations. Because of the size of its membership, the earlier modernization of its ritual, and its greater role in the general Manchester community, it has played a more salient part.

Near the end of the twentieth century, the two congregations mirror the changing character of Jewish life in America. Both congregations suffer from a decrease in the available time of volunteers to carry on the multitude of services asked of a synagogue. Both congregations suffer from the success of their members. As the Jewish community became more involved in

the broader Manchester community and less marginal, so the synagogues had less claim to the undivided interest of those members. Adath Yeshurun appeared to many in the Jewish community as more modern, more adapted to contemporary secular society. Yet many members missed the warm participatory services they were used to in traditional congregations. Even though a perennial undercurrent of discussion about possible merger can be heard, the emotional commitments to separate congregations outweigh the pressures for union. The history of Manchester's Jews is only a retelling of the story of Jewish communities in many parts of the world over many centuries. Jews came to Manchester to settle as strangers, learned the ways of the new place, and ultimately played a prominent role in the city. As immigrants, they were faced with the problem of maintaining their tradition of religious practice and the teaching of their ethical system while living a contemporary life in the society in which they found themselves.

Meshing the religious and the secular has always been difficult and there has never been consensus about the right way to do it. The divisions in the Jewish community reflect the different roads that Jews have taken to arrive at the same goal—an integrated position in American life, harmonizing their own traditions with New Hampshire life under the protection of the American Constitution.[46] Jews in America have enjoyed a sense of freedom and security that few Jewish communities elsewhere in the world have known. That very freedom makes the Jewish community concerned and fiercely protective of the rights of religious freedom and freedom of speech embodied in the American Constitution.

George Washington's letter to the synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island in 1790 continues to serve as a beacon for American Jews, delineating the claim of strangers to sanctuary in the United States. His words, two centuries later, ring with the conviction of the fathers of the American idea: "For happily, the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support. . . . May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants, while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig-tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."[47]

46. It is noteworthy that New Hampshire in 1876 became the last state to remove constitutional restrictions on political participation for Jews.

47. Morris U. Schappes, Ed. *A Documentary of the Jews in the United States, 1654–1875* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1950), 80–81.