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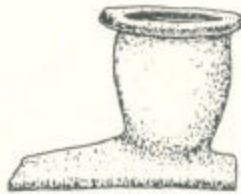


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NINETY-FIVE YEARS OF BETH HA-SHOLOM

(Continuation)

By Benjamim Hirsh

Abraham Hart

Abraham Hart was considered Williamsport's elder statesman and the spokesman for the Jewish community. The Hart family came to this city late in the nineteenth century. They started a clothing store on West Third Street which was operated for many years. When the old wooden structure was damaged by a series of floods, the brothers, Abe and Jack, rebuilt with a modern three-story brick building which was known as the Hart Building. Early in life Abe took a keen interest in all things Jewish, religious, fraternal, and civic.

Because he had a good Jewish background, he was elected vice president of the congregation with William Silverman, and moved up to the presidency when Mr. Silverman left the city in 1895. Mr. Hart served as Temple leader for a quarter of a century, giving much of himself, his time, and money to Jewish causes. It was during Mr. Hart's term of office that the new Edwin Street Temple was built, and it was he who contributed most to its progress. Old timers still recall how Mr. Hart rode through the city streets on the day of the dedication of the Temple, holding in his carriage the two Holy Torahs which he held in his home for safekeeping during the construction period.

Mr. Hart took personal interest in the religious school. He loved to take the part of the schoolmaster, often substituting for the Rabbi and frequently teaching a class. It was during his term in office that negotiations were concluded for the acquisition of the Wildwood Cemetery plot.

When Mr. Hart faced poor health, he disposed of his clothing business to enter the real estate and insurance field, opening an office on the second floor of the Hart building. Mr. Hart was an active and liberal supporter of the 1905 Chamber of Commerce industrial fund,

contributing one thousand dollars to help bring new factories here. He was a member of several Masonic bodies, taking a keen interest in the rites of the lodge.

When he became ill and unable to continue his business, he went to New York City to live with his daughter, Mrs. Theodore Trapp. At his daughter's home, on October 14, 1922, at the age of 71 years, he passed away. His body was brought to Williamsport for burial, and because of the high esteem he held and the service he rendered the congregation, the funeral services and eulogy were held in the Temple sanctuary.

Mr. Hart was highly regarded by Jews of both congregations and the Christian community. Spiritual leaders who served during his term of office included the following: Rabbis August A. Levy, Lewis Schreiber, Alexander Bassil, Herman J. Elkin, Phenoos Israeli, Morris Abele, Louis Brav, Meyer Noot, Emil Ellinger, and Carl Schorr. Harry Lauer was secretary and Samuel Ulman treasurer during much of Mr. Hart's leadership.

Fund Raising And Building Plans

Williamsport Jewry had not been accustomed to making large contributions to religious or charitable organizations. A one hundred dollar donation was considered a substantial amount. Lemuel Ulman was appointed chairman of the fund raising committee and started a campaign among the Jewish residents, enabling the congregation to start building its Temple.

Among the substantial contributors to the building fund were Moses Ulman, \$400.00; Hiram and Lemuel Ulman, \$300.00; Mrs. Clara Ulman, \$300.00; Meyer Singer and Samuel Singer, \$200.00 each; Henry Myers and Abe Myers, \$100.00 each. Other donations ranging from five dollars to seventy-five dollars

raised the total to nearly four thousand dollars. An additional \$1,000.00, which was raised by the sale of the old Synagogue site, was added to the fund. Members again provided the funds to furnish the interior, and many memorial gifts were made. Several of the major interior gifts included the engraved marble Ten Commandments over the Holy Ark by the Myers family, and the two large seven-branched candelabra were given as a gift from Rosetta Ulman. The Ulman family was also responsible for the two bronze tablets in the rear of the Sanctuary. Names of the early settlers and their families were inscribed on the colored memorial windows.

The firm of Jacob Gehron and Company were engaged as contractors for a low bid of \$5,879.19, with permission to use some of the salvaged material from the old structure. Additional amounts were spent for a furnace, carpeting, benches and pews, electric fixtures, religious prayer books, and paraphernalia. The cost of the building including all the equipment amounted to nearly ten thousand dollars, some of it financed by a mortgage loan.

On September 3, 1904, the new Sanctuary was opened to the public with appropriate dedication ceremonies. Much planning had preceded the formal dedication, many invitations were sent to prominent persons in the city and nearby communities. The dedication committee included Lemuel Ulman, Charles Goldenberg, and Samuel E. Ulman. The building committee was composed of Samuel Singer, Harry A. Jacobs, Julius Ulman, Harry B. Pechter, Henry Goldenberg, and Abe Myers. The Gazette and Bulletin on September 4, 1904, carried the following account of the dedication ceremony: "The dedication of the new Temple of the Hebrew Congregation of Williamsport occurred on Friday evening, September 3, 1904, at seven-thirty, with Dr. Marvin Nathan of New York City as the principal speaker." The paper commented that, "Dr. Nathan's address was one of the most able discourses ever delivered in a

Williamsport church." Rabbi Baisell, representing the congregation, conducted the services and introduced the speakers. The building was designed by architect Meade B. Ritter.

Delegations of Jewish people were on hand from Lock Haven, Milton, Sunbury, Danville, Bloomsburg, and Jersey Shore. The paper also reported that, "The Williamsport clergy were represented by members from each church, two of whom were on the pulpit and spoke for their denominations. Representing the city was the Hon. Mayor John F. Laedlein, who spoke eloquently, congratulating the congregation on its new church building and welcoming it as a worthy addition to the spiritual life of the city." Miss Hazel B. Jacobs, a religious school pupil and daughter of Harry Jacobs, presented the keys to president Hart, who responded with appropriate remarks. Mr. Rosco Huff was in charge of the musical program, while solos were rendered by Trevette Moffett, Miss Blanche Bubb, and Miss Minnie Swartz.

The next twenty years went by without major changes or additions. Religious services were held in the Temple Sanctuary and the social events took place in the Y. M. S. and L. club rooms in the Ulman Opera House building on Market Square. During the early 1900's, many East European Jews migrated to Central Pennsylvania and some settled here. They brought with them old country traditions and cultures, and they found it difficult to accept the Reform Judaism or to assimilate with the established community. They formed their own religious congregation and adopted their own social life, creating an apartheid situation which separated the two Jewish groups.

Congregation Beth Ha-Sholom continued in its course of providing liberal Judaism and attracting new members to its roster. Abraham Hart continued as Temple leader and called upon the new members to take a more active role in the congregation. Benjamin Hirsh replaced Samuel E. Ulman as

treasurer, and Nathan Brozman was elected secretary. Max A. Jaffe, Jack L. Brozman, and Max Brown were elected as new Trustees.

A major Temple expansion was made possible in 1923, when funds were made available to the congregation from the Rosetta Ulman estate. Henry Myers and Max Lindheimer prevailed upon Abraham Erlanger, the Ulman estate executor, to include Temple Beth Ha-Sholom in the distribution of the funds, and over twenty thousand dollars became available to build a Community Center as a memorial to Miss Rosetta Ulman. The brick building adjoining the Temple on Center Street, previously purchased by Mrs. Hannah Rosenbaum, was presented to the congregation. This building was remodeled and enlarged to house the Community Center and the religious school.

Henry Myers

The City of Williamsport and the Jewish community mourned the loss of one of its illustrious sons on May 18, 1933, when Henry Myers died at the age of 63. Mr. Myers lived most of his adult life in Williamsport and took an active part in all phases of civic, religious, and community affairs. On May 19, 1933, the Gazette and Bulletin carried the following editorial: "The death of Henry Myers removed one of Williamsport's best and most substantial citizens. He was a man of strictest integrity, and the extensive business of which he was head was built on the principles of fair and upright dealing. His word was as good as his bond. He was deeply interested in civic affairs and was a liberal contributor, both in time and money, to everything designed for the advancement of the city of his adoption and the welfare of its people. Broad minded, friendly, and charitable, Mr. Myers enjoyed the highest esteem of the entire community."

Mr. Myers started in the clothing business with Mr. Edward Hecht of Lock Haven, and from there he graduated to his own business when, with his brothers Abe and Morris, he founded the Myers Brothers Clothing Co. in 1897. A few years later, they ventured in a larger community when they opened a store in Williamsport. It achieved the reputation as one of the city's better stores. The brick building on West Third Street still carries the family name of Myers Brothers. His greatest interest and satisfaction was his service to his people and to the community which he adopted.

He was active in the affairs of Temple Beth Ha-Sholom for a quarter of a century, serving in various capacities and as its president for eight years. Even when his health was ailing, he often would hold board meetings in his own apartment on West Fourth Street. During Mr. Myers' leadership in the congregation funds became available from the Rosetta Ulman estate, from which the community center was built. Mr. Myers devoted much time and effort to the completion of this project, and the building became the headquarters for much of Jewry's social, educational, and fraternal life.

During and after World War I, Mr. Myers took a leading part in the fund raising drives for the Jewish relief and war refugees. With Ben Hirsh, Harry Stern, Jack Brozman, and Harry Pechter, they launched an active campaign for funds, resulting in raising a substantial amount and exceeding the assigned quota for the community by many thousands of dollars, setting a new standard of giving for this city. A third generation of the Myers, L. Clifford is following in the family tradition. His father Abe, and grandfather C. L. Myers, were active Temple members during the earlier years. Clifford, an able accountant, is a Temple officer, has audited its books and prepared the budget for many years. Harry Schwab was Temple secretary during this period.

The Mantinband Era

At the annual meeting in March of 1921, Jack L. Brozman, a local merchant, became president of the congregation. His brother Nathan served as secretary. In 1923 Henry Myers was called upon to assume Temple leadership and to engage a new Rabbi for the congregation.

Rabbi Charles Mantinband, a scholarly and talented religious leader, brought his family from Poughkeepsie, N. Y. and continued to serve the congregation for sixteen years, longer than any spiritual leader ever served the Temple. Rabbi Mantinband became interested in many cultural and civic programs. He succeeded in a large measure in bringing about friendly relations with the city's clergy and rendered an important service in all programs of interfaith activity. Of the many activities conducted by him, which spotlighted the civic-mindedness of the congregation, was the Temple sponsored public debate in 1932 between the famous anti-religious criminal lawyer Clarence Darrow and the Rabbi. The question debated was "Is Religion Necessary?" He helped organize the Community Concert Organization and served as chaplain in area penal institutions. Many of our present-day members attended his Sunday School classes and were confirmed by him. In 1941, with the outbreak of the second World War, he asked the congregation for a leave of absence to serve as chaplain with the Jewish Welfare Board. Rabbi Mantinband and his family have visited this community many times, speaking at various functions and renewing old friendships.

During the depression years of the 1930's, the congregation faced many difficult situations, among them a shrinkage in income and the expense of renovation caused by the 1936 flood. The Sisterhood graciously undertook the responsibility of repairing the Community Center. The congregation faced extensive repair bills to the classrooms, heating units, etc. Rabbi Mantinband cooperated by accepting a reduction in his salary

in order to help balance the budget. In 1937 the Sisterhood also established the TBL Fund in memory of Mrs. Max (Teresa B.) Lindheimer, their beloved first president. This fund, active at present, was set up to provide tuition and books to aid worthy Jewish college students.

When Henry Myers became ill and was not able to continue as Temple president, he was succeeded by Max Phillips, Charles Mink, Max E. Lindheimer, Julius Ulman, Samuel Gittleman, and David Lockspeiser. Each sponsored some major events and innovations. Each served the congregation faithfully during his term of office. Not only were our Temple members generous in their contributions to Temple and other Jewish needs, On May 16, 1922, Jacob Brown, with his wife Sarah, deeded to the City of Williamsport a 22 acre tract of land in memory of his brother Max M. Brown. This land, officially known as the Max M. Brown Memorial Park, is known to all Williamsporters as Memorial Park, and is the city's major recreational area.

The Depression Period

The Committee of One Hundred was seeking new industries for Williamsport and were successful in bringing many plants to the city. Among them were Jewish industrialists who became active members of Beth Ha-Sholom, serving in official capacity and as presidents. They included shoe manufacturers William Green and Leo Goodkind; textiles, Herman Trichon and Harry Goldberg; furniture, Nathan Greenberg; and jewelry merchant Lewis Salabes.

It was during this period that a truly outstanding woman of Israel, Mrs. Lewis (Sarah K.) Salabes, emerged to make a remarkable contribution to the Temple as well as to the total Williamsport community. She was one of the originators of the Inter-Faith meetings which are still a major event on our yearly Temple calendar. Her efforts in this area are today memorialized through

the Sarah K. Salabes Inter-Faith Award, which is given each year to a local high school student who has demonstrated his oratorical proficiency on that subject. She was one of the few women who was able to operate a Jewish Braille typewriter, and organized a Sisterhood Braille class. After her death, four volumes for children on the Reform Jewish Movement were donated to the Jewish Braille Institute. Copies of these books are now found in libraries throughout the world as well as in the Library of Congress. Mrs. Salabes was a charter member of the Lycoming Council of Girl Scouts and was active in establishing Camp Lycogis. The Sarah K. Salabes chapter of B'nai B'rith Girls has been named in her memory. She was also the president of the Temple Sisterhood in the early 1940's.

As the nation slowly emerged from the desperate conditions caused by the depression, the Temple membership rebounded to the prospect of more prosperous times with a rousing social event. Sparked by the dynamic leadership of William Green, who was elected president in 1945, plans were set in motion for the gala 80th Anniversary Celebration which was held during the weekend of April 26-28, 1946. Features of the event were a banquet held at the Lycoming Hotel with Rabbis Stephen Wise and Charles Mantinband as speakers, and the publication of the Temple's first historical journal, which had been compiled by Ben Hirsh who tirelessly searched out all available Temple records to gather the necessary material.

The 1940's and 1950's also marked a period during which many rabbis served as spiritual leaders of Beth Ha-Sholom. Rabbi Mantinband was followed by Rabbis Aaron Kammerling, Bertrand Pollins, Maurice Galpert, Henry Leon Schwartz, Ephraim Einhorn, and Frederic Solomon.

During the Harry Goldberg administration a parsonage for the Rabbi was erected on Union Avenue. Funds for the project came from endowments provided by Miss Tillie Strasburger and

Mrs. Ella Lauer. A new organ was installed during this period of office, which was a gift from the Samuel Wilson estate as a memorial to his parents, Frank and Elizabeth Wilson. David Lockspeiser undertook the remodeling of the basement of the Temple into modern and attractive classrooms. Mr. Lockspeiser was instrumental in organizing a committee which gave a testimonial banquet to honor Ben Hirsh for his many years of service to the congregation. The affair was held at the Lycoming Hotel on June 14, 1953, attended by 300 guests.

A New Generation of Leaders

The 1950's saw a new group of Jewish men take an active part in the congregation and assume leadership of the Temple. Until this period most of the Temple leaders were merchants, but now industrial and professional men undertook positions of responsibility in the congregation.

In 1953 Harry Blum, a textile manufacturer, was elected president of Beth Ha-Sholom. During his term of office many outstanding social and religious functions were held. Among these was a testimonial dinner at the Lycoming Hotel honoring four former presidents of the congregation -- Samuel Gittleman, Leo Goodkind, Harry Goldberg, and David Lockspeiser.

With Temple expenses mounting and Rabbis' salaries rising, it was necessary to obtain more income and Mr. Blum negotiated a new dues scale calling for \$120 minimum family membership.

Dr. Herman Finkelstein, chairman of the Federation of Jewish Charities and a busy doctor, assumed the presidency of Temple in 1955. During his period of office the Temple observed its Ninetieth Anniversary with a highly successful program and banquet. Harry Blum served as toastmaster for the affair, and speakers included former Rabbi Charles Mantinband and Dr. Jona B. Wise. Once again Ben Hirsh edited and wrote a Dedication Journal.

Brotherhood Formed

The need for an active men's organization became more and more evident, and under the direction of Louis Hirsh and Harry Blum a Temple Brotherhood was formed. Louis Hirsh became the first president of Brotherhood.

Dr. Harold Adelson succeeded Dr. Finkelstein as president and was immediately faced with the problem of securing a new spiritual leader as Rabbi Solomon left for Havana, Cuba. His term of office might well be called the twenty-four months of meetings, as meeting after meeting was called until Rabbi David L. Schwartz came to us after several years in Hagerstown, Md.

With the rabbinical problem settled, Dr. Adelson immediately set about planning for the remodeling and enlargement of our Temple facilities. Many plans and sites were investigated and discussed by a committee under the chairmanship of Harry Wahl, and it became evident that the properties adjacent to the Temple would provide the best solution for our growing congregation. Thus it was that during Dr. Adelson's term the adjoining buildings were purchased and the building program was put into high gear.

A Montgomery manufacturer, Selman Ginsburg, became president in 1959, and it was during his administration that Temple's long-time dream came true. Paul Stapleton was selected as architect; a successful fund raising drive was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Finkelstein and Dan Ginsburg; and plans were approved at a congregational meeting. Under the able supervision of Edwin Harris, who was in charge of construction, the beautiful addition to the Temple was completed and was dedicated on Friday, April 21, 1961, with special Sabbath Services held in the Sanctuary. Rabbi Eugene P. Lipman was guest speaker. A dedication banquet and dance, with Dr. Harold J. Adelson as toastmaster, was held on Saturday evening, April 22, 1961, in the new social hall. At this memorable event,

the guest speaker was Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Director of the Department of Inter-Faith Activities of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. A Dedication Journal was again published to honor the occasion through the efforts of Ben Hirsh.

The early months of the 1960's highlighted an event which singularly honored the Sisterhood of Temple Beth Ha-Sholom. Our Sisterhood had its humble beginning on August 21, 1869, when it was chartered as the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Association with Caroline Ulman, Caroline Myers, Clara Ulman, and Tarissa Kuhn as its prime organizers. The group later was known as the Ladies Aid Society, and eventually, in 1921, affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. In 1960 the Sisterhood was invited to serve as host for the 19th Annual Convention of the Pennsylvania Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. It was at this convention, held during the week of October 16-19, that Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof of Pittsburgh delivered the main banquet address.

Building and additions did not cease with the new dedication, and additional improvements continued to be made because of the outstanding generosity of our members. On November 3, 1961, at Sabbath services, an enlarged pulpit was dedicated to the memory of Isadora Cooper, made possible by the Isadora M. Cooper Memorial Fund. Our pulpit decor was greatly enhanced with the installation of two beautiful pulpit chairs and the redraping of the Ark with a lovely golden glow made possible through the Louis Krim Memorial Fund. Our beautiful pulpit lectern was added through monies contributed to the Harry Goldberg Golden Book and the generous assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Adler. It was through their deep interest in our Temple that new sanctuary doors were installed. Sometime after our dedication, the kindergarten room was dedicated in memory of Paula Levy through a gift made by Mrs. Nellie Watt. Our beautiful library, replete with many interesting volumes on Jewish life, was form-

ally dedicated as the Harry Wahl Memorial Library (known now as the Elizabeth and Harry Wahl Memorial Library) on Friday evening, following Sabbath services, on February 23, 1962. At this time, too, Mrs. Benjamin Jaffe presented to the Temple the synagogal art work adorning our library in memory of her beloved husband, Benjamin Jaffe. The art work represents the creativity of a local artist, Dr. Henry Mussina. As we walk into the foyer of the Temple, we notice a beautiful modernistic metal design of a Tree of Life presented by the Goodkind family in memory of Leo Goodkind. The large movie screen in our social hall was a gift of the Brotherhood, and the Sisterhood, through its TBL Fund, provided the lettering which designates the entrances to both our Temple and the Recreation Center. In addition, the beautiful Torah covers which adorn our Holy scrolls were a gift of this same fund. The beautiful Torah Crowns were presented by the Hecker family and friends in memory of Mrs. Minnie Hecker, while the Torah Shields were a contribution by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Goldberg and by Kathie, Amy, and Larry Hirsh in memory of their grandmother, Fannie Hirsh.

In the fall of 1965, our Temple lost one of its most outstanding members. Mrs. Harry Wahl -- Betty, as she was known to everyone -- had dedicated her life to her Temple. She was a member of the Board of Trustees and, at the time of her death, was a member of the National Board of Directors of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. Her untimely passing was a great loss both to the Temple and to the community.

Recently our caretaker's apartment was carpeted through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Hirsh; and the Rabbi's study was panelled through a contribution by Mr. William Stern. The bookcases in the study were a gift of the Sisterhood. The carpeting in both the study and the library has been contributed by the Wahl Family, while the ever-increasing number of interesting

books in the library is the result of gifts from the Sisterhood and countless individuals who have found this to be a most worthy cause to which to contribute in honor or memory of a loved one, or to remember some event of special significance.

Our Temple has also been the recipient of financial bequests from the estates of Mrs. Betty Wahl and Mr. Henry Heyman.

During this period other presentations were made to the Temple. A Megillah Scroll was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Hirsh for use at our Purim Services. An Havdolo Spice Box was presented by Dr. and Mrs. Herman Finkelstein in memory of Mrs. Finkelstein's mother. It has been used on many happy occasions, such as our Centennial Service. Our Bibles were given by Rabbi and Mrs. Charles Mantinband, and the beautiful Tribes of Israel wall clock was presented to the library by the Confirmation Class of 1961. A stained glass window in memory of Fannie and Benjamin Hirsh was also endowed through the Ben Hirsh Memorial Fund and the Hirsh family. The Selman and Daniel Ginsburg families gave our beautiful silver tea service in memory of their parents, and a most generous contribution was made to the Temple by Augusta Goldenburg. In addition, various other members have contributed prayer books, Bibles, hymnals, and other valuable gifts.

The 1960's also brought to one of our prominent Temple members a singular civic honor. Joseph Snowiss, active in Temple life as a Board member, became one of the few Jewish men to serve on the Williamsport City Council.

An area of very significant concern to the Temple has been the care of the Temple cemetery at Wildwood. This phase of Temple life has been guided by the diligent interest of William Stern. It was William Stern who graciously contributed the Temple Beth Ha-Sholom monumental marker at the Wildwood Cemetery so that the Temple's area there

could be easily discerned. He has also been most generous in his contributions toward the maintenance and improvement of our Temple facilities. Sometime following the erection of the new buildings, the Rabbi's study was dedicated in memory of Frank and Elizabeth Baer Wilson who were the beloved parents of Samuel and Hiram Wilson by the generous bequest of Samuel Wilson.

All these generous contributions and the heightened interest in Temple life were due, in no small measure, to the inspired leadership we have had from the men who served us so well as presidents during the early 60's. Each of them, Dr. Harold Adelson, Mr. Selman Ginsburg, Mr. Edwin Harris, and our incumbent president, Dr. Herman Finkelstein, have been unstinting and tireless in their efforts in behalf of our Temple.

These past few years have indeed been busy ones -- yet we have cherished every exciting moment because our goal has ever been that of personal dedication and commitment to Temple Beth Ha-Sholom. May it be so, as we stand upon the threshold of our second century of progress.

A Salute to Ben Hirsh

We, the editorial staff of this Centennial Journal, wish to pay special tribute to the memory of Ben Hirsh, who, until his death in 1964, was the Temple's official historian. In spite of his many commitments in business, civic, and political affairs, his life-long interest in his Temple was his greatest concern. He served as a religious school teacher for five years, and was not only a member of the Temple Board of Trustees, but was also treasurer, secretary, and chairman of major Temple events.

When it was decided to have a Dedication Journal to commemorate the Temple's 80th anniversary, it was Ben Hirsh who assumed the mighty task of searching through all the available records in the Temple's archives as well as in the files of the local papers. The results of his "labor of love" were the journals which marked not only the 80th, but the 90th and 95th anniversaries as well.

To this truly outstanding man, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude. Without the "ground work" that was so expertly done by Ben Hirsh, the writing of this 100th anniversary Journal would have been almost impossible to achieve.

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