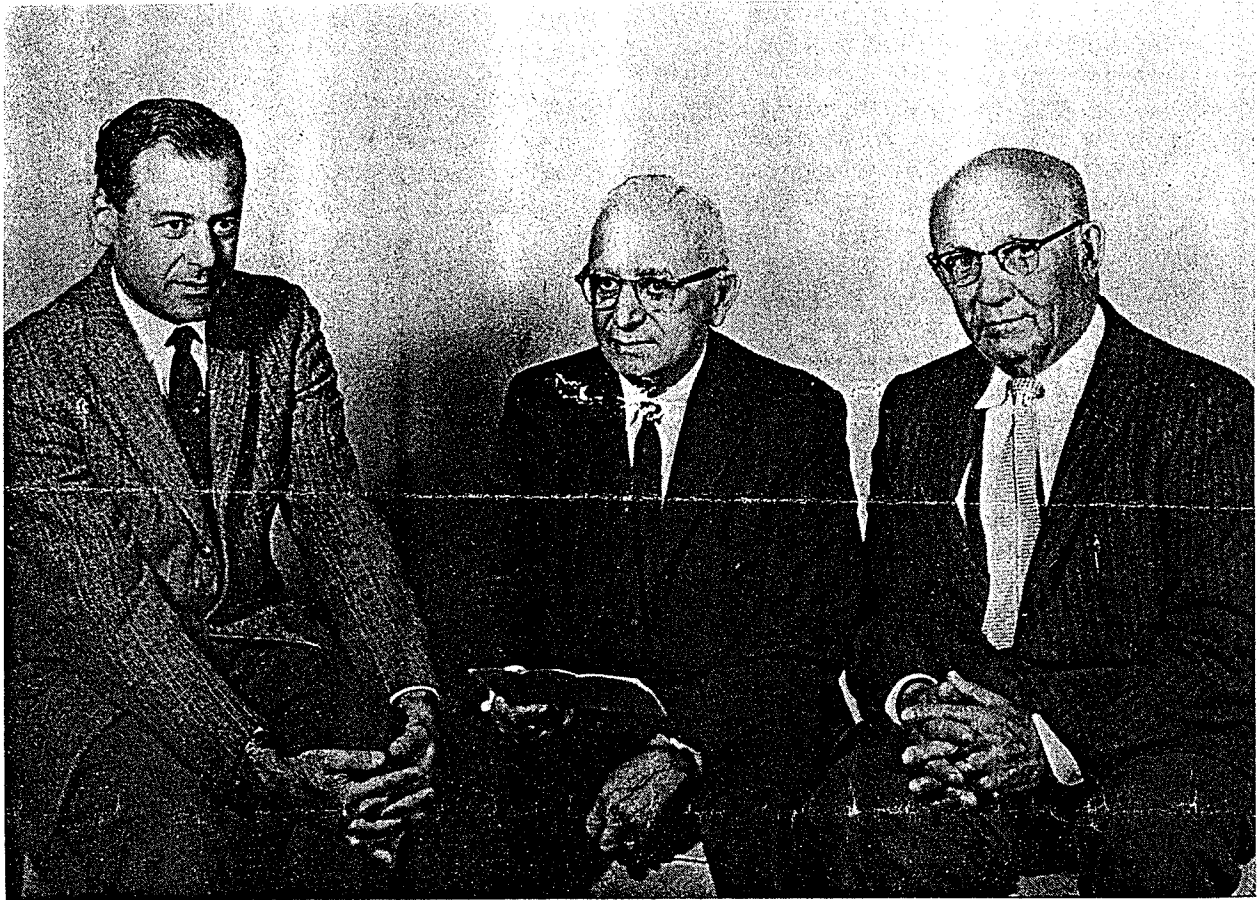


History of Temple Israel



Temple Israel's Past Presidents

Mr. Max Rovner Mr. Nathan Ekman Mr. Samuel Waisman
Not shown are Mr. William Katz and the late Samuel Fineblit

A BRIEF STORY OF "ANSHE SEPHARD"

"Anshe Sephard" as an independently organized community antedated the establishment of the Synagogue by that name. As early as in 1897 a group of Jews, hailing from the Ukraine, Galicia and Poland, where Sephardic Prayer Ritual has been observed, had organized a modest Anshe Sephard Congregation with the purpose of perpetuating their time-hallowed form of worship. Lacking housing facilities of its own the congregation held its services in rented quarters, mainly fraternal halls, which were far from being ideal for solemn worship.

The sad fact that on one Yom Kippur evening, in the very midst of the "Kol-Nid-ray" service, the entire congregation was forced to leave the hall because of an important lodge meeting that was called for that evening, served, perhaps, as the greatest stimulus towards the congregation's decision to exert every effort and mobilize the entire community for the purpose of building a permanent Synagogue of their own.

Unfortunately, the economic status of the membership did not match their enthusiasm for the holy adventure and though "Anshe Sephard Congregation" was chartered in 1900, it was not until 1915, that concrete plans were laid for the erection of a "House of God." In 1916, the Synagogue on Central St. was completed and dedicated much to the delight and thanksgiving of the entire, yet small, but ambitious congregation.

Max Bronstein and Morris Waisman, two outstanding leaders of the community, whose love for Jewish tradition and unselfish devotion to the cause of Judaism, had placed them at the very height of this undertaking, may rightfully be named the founders of "Anshe Sephard Synagogue." It was through their sacrificial efforts that the entire community had become imbued with a pioneering spirit to the extent that every contribution to the sacred cause was accompanied by a fervent prayer that the Guardian of Israel may bless the labor of the leaders of Israel.

In 1916, immediately after the Synagogue had been dedicated, three institutions of importance for the proper functioning of an organized community, were established within the spiritual province of the Synagogue. They are: A Hebrew School for the instruction of religion and precepts of Judaism to the children; A "Hebrew Ladies Aid Association," extending financial aid to the needy families of the community; and a "Chevrah Kaddishah" (Burial Society), serving with great care and loving kindness in the entire procedure of interment of the dead.

Soon there arose a need for a separate cemetery. This was purchased in 1918, through the sincere efforts of the Synagogue's founders. As the Anshe Sephard Cemetery Committee has had, since its inception, devoted workers who attended to their respective duties, all of them unthankful, with exemplary unselfishness. At present the Cemetery Committee is headed by Samuel Fineblit, with the active assistance of its treasurer, Nathan Ekman, who makes it his life ambition to beautify the grounds, to please the constituency, and to observe all accepted traditions. Deserving of special mention is the late Samuel Kramer, who, for many years served this committee faithfully.

In 1919 Morris Waisman, one of the best loved members of the community, who had immortalized himself by his energetic leadership at Anshe Sephard, passed away during the flu epidemic. As a spontaneous expression of sorrow and esteem, the mourning community at his grave during his funeral had founded the Hebrew Sheltering Aid Association" which was to bear his name. Through the years, this institution has the entire community unflinching, providing shelter, meals and monetary assistance to all transient needy that came our way.

In 1935, nearly two decades after the building of the Synagogue, the edifice was remodeled, installing an imposing "Bima" in the center of the sanctuary. The ladies Aid Association, then a very active group, under the leadership of its President, Mrs. I. Mushlin, defrayed the entire expense of the Bima construction. The event was marked by a gala celebration on April 14, of that year, with the participation of the entire Jewish Community.

As a source of great strength to the Synagogue, auguring well for its continued growth, was the founding of the "Anshe Sephard Ladies Auxiliary" by Mrs. Barnett Slovak, the aim of which organization has been to mobilize the mothers and through them the entire families, for every conceivable support of the Synagogue. Through all the years of the existence of this organization, its many activities have centered around the Synagogue welfare. At present it is a bastion of strength upon which the Synagogue depends heavily in its ramified activities.

Of no less importance for the religious and cultural welfare of Anshe Sephard is The Sunday Breakfast Club which has for the past 19 years enjoyed great popularity among all groups of local Jewry. Edifying lectures, following sumptuous breakfasts amidst happy fellowship are presented to the general public each Sunday morning between Sukkos and Passover, making the programs a relishing experience to large and varied crowds. The workers volunteering their service to this organization are too numerous to mention. The success of the function is their deserved compensation.

Outstanding in terms of achievement and fruition was the year 1948. The Synagogue was in need of a radical remodeling which would entail an expenditure, too large for the Synagogue's meager treasury. Unafraid of the seemingly heavy financial burden a Building Committee was named, consisting of Samuel Waisman, Chairman; Nathan Ekman, William Katz, Abraham Braverman and Abraham Golod and a campaign was launched with splendid results for the undertaking. The work was completed within a few months adding considerably to the attractiveness and absorptive capacity of the structure. Adath Yeshurun played host to the Anshe Sephard membership through the entire period of remodeling and was largely represented at the opening celebration of the beautiful Anshe Sephard.

In the same year a long-cherished dream of Anshe Sephard was realized in the erection of a community chapel at the joint cemeteries. The beautiful chapel, which filled a sorely felt need in the community of Manchester, was dedicated to the memory of five local young men of our faith, who paid the supreme sacrifice in World War II. They are: Max Slovak, Robert Isenberg, Zalman Rosenberg, Jack Perolman and Dr. Benjamin Bronstein. The members of the Chapel Committee whose ardent work is a matter of public record are: Abraham Machinins, General Chairman; Saul Waisman, Secretary; Nathan Ekman, Treasurer; Albert Dropkin, Maurice Mandell and Joseph Ekman.

For the last decade Anshe Sephard, always a traditional Synagogue, has become more sensitive to the needs and attitudes of its young members and their families, who are American born, and therefore, more susceptible to modern trends in synagogue worship. In order to make the service more attractive and meaningful to the English-speaking elements most prayers are read and chanted in both Hebrew and English; the sermons are delivered in English only and Special High Holiday Services have been inaugurated for the children of school age. The Synagogue also initiated late Friday evening services which hold considerable appeal to old and young alike.

In the last few years, Anshe Sephard, because of a general upsurge in religious conscientiousness and also because of its wider range of activities, has been attracting many adherents, hitherto indifferent to Synagogue activity participation.

It was this growing popularity of Anshe Sephard in the Community, as well as the unbending will of its leaders to see it go from strength to strength that prompted Anshe Sephard to embark on the ambitious program of building a new Temple, which is a symbol of architectural splendor.

Realizing that brick and mortar are only material improvements to any Temple the congregation, after a thorough self-analysis, recognized its spiritual needs in the form of a more appealing modern Judaism.

In January 1959 a Conservative Constitution was adopted and almost immediately revitalized interest and enthusiasm spread throughout the congregation. Another page in the history of Manchester Jewry had been written; Conservative Judaism was being introduced to the community for the first time in its long and glorious existence.

Since the name "Anshe Sephard" had been associated with Orthodoxy for some 45 years, it seemed logical and appropriate that its name be changed so that the fond and cherished memories it had earned through the many years of untiring Orthodox services would not be disturbed nor erased. Thus, the name "Anshe Sephard" was retired with a deep feeling of respect and nostalgia and "Temple Israel" was born.

So that it would be expertly guided through the field of Conservatism, Temple Israel immediately affiliated itself with the United Synagogue of America which is a national association of Conservative congregations in the United States and Canada.

Through its various departments and commissions, the United Synagogue of America provides its members with valuable data pertaining to program, educational administration, and other such vital information that is so necessary to maintain a successful Conservative Temple.

The fundamental goal of Temple Israel is to give the Jew of Manchester—child, youth and adult—the opportunities for religious, cultural, social and recreational stimulation and to fulfill its traditional three fold function of House of Worship, House of Study, and House of Assembly.

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