

History of Congregation Ohev Shalom

Introduction

How can we ever know all the sources of the stream of life running through the decades of our history - now rushing, now delaying, now diverted - at last flowing freely and gathering strength, a strength we today name Congregation Ohev Shalom?

Where did we come from? How have we arrived at this particular moment in our history, when we declare ourselves - our pride and our strength - with the presence of a new synagogue?

Certainly our strength is the strength of Judaism itself, and our pride is in accomplishments which are the fruition of years of love and labor. We are destined, therefore, to discover the history of our particular Jewish ancestors - how they lived as Jews and how they reacted to their community and their times.

And so these pages attempt to recount lives and events, to recall a community, to research the past. History in the truest sense must include the story of the daily lives of the people themselves. There has not been time for this, although someday it should be done; but for now this is only a record of the official life of our congregation.

Many names may be omitted, names which of course belong here, but the mention of which would make the text overly long. It is hoped that this biography of Ohev Shalom will be read by every member of the congregation, and that it will increase their desire to perpetuate the ideals for which our synagogue has stood throughout these many years.

Beginnings

Even before the dark years of Revolutionary history, years marked by the retreats of Americans from British blows at Brandywine, years when weary armies trailed through the village of Chester, our Jewish ancestors came to know this place. They were peddlers, probably, travellers and traders from Philadelphia, New York, Rhode Island, and elsewhere. They opened their bundles and packs to the settlers, rested overnight at the inns, and remembered Chester as a fair country with rich land and a growing population.

In those Colonial days specific references to Jews in Chester are found in a list of "tydable" (taxable) persons at Upland, Pennsylvania, among whom were two Jews named Hendrick Jacobs and Ephraim Herman.

We know of no other Jews living in Chester for many years. However, by the first half of the nineteenth century, in the nearby city of Philadelphia, our people had already formed three

congregations. The Jewish population, living east of Broad Street and south of Spring Garden Street, were known mostly to one another. The majority had come from Germany, with a small percentage from Central Europe. There were also many descendants of the early Spanish-Portuguese settlers.

The city of Philadelphia was a stronghold of Orthodoxy, under the direction of Rabbi Isaac Leeser of the Mikveh Israel Congregation. Congregation Rodeph Sholom, then an Orthodox synagogue, was established about 1802 by the Jews from Germany; and Congregation Beth Israel was established in 1840, largely by settlers of Polish origin.

In 1847 the Jewish population of the United States was around 50,000. But none of these people had as yet permanently settled in Chester. Then, in 1848, another influx of Jews to this country was generated by disturbances on the continent of Europe. A few years later, when the question of Negro freedom was being argued, Jews were even more actively seeking their own freedom from persecution.

The earliest recorded permanent Jewish settlers in Chester arrived after the Civil War. They were the Brandeis family and the Turk family. The Brandeis family arrived sometime prior to 1859, since the first Directory of the Borough of Chester published in that year lists: "Brandeis, H., Clothier - Market above James." ("James" was Third Street.) The Turk family probably came during the 1880's. For many years the Brandeis family ran a dress shop at the site where Stotter's now stands. Later, they owned a leather shop at the corner of Fourth and Market Streets. They lived on Welsh Street, at the corner of Fourth, and their house was long a landmark for many of their generation. The Turk family was also in the retail business.

The problems of these first families were many. Aside from the ever constant problem of earning a daily living in a strange place, they had the problem of maintaining their Jewish heritage. There was no organized Jewish congregation in their immediate community, and so they belonged to synagogues in the city of Philadelphia. The Brandeises were members of Rodeph Sholom, and when the last of the males of the Brandeis family died, Rabbi Louis Wolsey of Rodeph Sholom, by then a Reform Congregation, came to Chester to preach the eulogy.

In 1880 there were 230,000 Jews in the United States. The few Jews living in Chester at that time were all of Germanic origin, and so it was natural that they affiliated themselves with the more liberal synagogues which had been mostly founded by the German Jews. The Germans had brought with them the idea of Reform Judaism which was born in their homeland in the early part of the nineteenth century. By the second half of the century these ideals were becoming firmly implanted in the minds of the congregants.

Liberal or not, the Chester Jewish families kept kosher households. The problem of procuring meat slaughtered according to ritual was a pressing one and caused considerable anxiety, since meat had to be brought all the way from Philadelphia.

At the same time that these early families were adjusting to life in the United States, upheavals in Europe were making it increasingly difficult for Jews to remain there. In the 1870's and 1880's, laws and pogroms were directed against the Russian Jews, and anti-Semitic agitation in Germany was high. Before the end of the century, Jews by the thousands crossed the Atlantic in an unparalleled exodus from central and eastern Europe to the shores of America.

It was inevitable that little by little, the Chester Jewish community should increase in size. Some families drifted here from Philadelphia, others settled directly here upon arrival from Europe. Now came the Gotchalk family, Kasrel Goodman, Avrum W. Wolson, Sam Wolson, Isaac Sapovits, Louis Sapovits, Lawrence Blumberg, Max Blumberg, and Thomas Rosenblatt. They were peddlers and small businessmen, and they became the backbone of Jewish communal life in Chester.

By 1890 the group was large enough to feel the desire for its own place to worship. In the year 1891 the first Jewish congregation, B'nai Israel, was organized. Legally, the name of the group was the Congregation of Israel, and it was chartered by the Court of Common Pleas of Delaware County on June 5, 1903. This group held services in a small house on Reaney Street, in South Chester.

B'nai Israel was an Orthodox congregation, and its constitution was written in Yiddish. For many years the minutes of all its meetings were kept in Yiddish, probably because this older generation could not read or write English. A. W. Wolson was president of the congregation; Samuel Wolson, Samuel D. Levy, Lawrence Blumberg, Samuel Friedkin, and Louis Stein were charter members.

Around the turn of the century, the congregation moved to a lodge room which was then on the second floor of a building located at Third and Kerlin Streets. There was no ordained rabbi or cantor in Chester at this time. Reverend A. B. Cohen acted as religious leader and guide, as he was well versed in Jewish law. He also taught the children. To conduct the services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, a cantor came from New York or Baltimore. Rabbi A. B. Leventhal, dean of Philadelphia rabbis, was the moderator in all problems of a religious nature.

In those early days of our community, Jewish education was of primary concern. To supplement the teaching of Reverend Cohen, there were melamdin (private teachers) who went from house to house to instruct the children. They remained part of the system of religious education for many years.

By 1903 the community had grown quite sizable. The small lodge room was not large enough to hold all the worshippers. It was decided to raise enough money to finance the purchase of a property, upon which a new synagogue could be built. The group selected a Building Committee, headed by A. W. Wolson, Samuel Bloom, Louis Sapovits, and Reverend Cohen. This was the first of many projects directed by A. W. Wolson, and for many years afterward he was to guide the development of our community.

Thirty families, living between Hayes Street and Tenth and Madison Streets, were solicited. We do not know how much money was raised, but it was enough to purchase ground at Third and Lloyd Streets and to start building.

In the fall of 1903, between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the cornerstone of the new synagogue was laid by Samuel Bloom. The building was completed in 1904, and dedicated in time for Passover services. At this time the congregation, which was still orthodox, consisted of about 35 families.

Two hundred men could be seated on the main floor of the sanctuary, and the balcony had places for 70 women. Classrooms for children were located in the basement.

The new freedom and success of the Jew in America now resulted in many activities. As important as the synagogue was, Jewish life was not bounded by it. No doubt the fact that the Jewish community now owned property and a building, the fact that they were gaining in their business life, the fact that their children were receiving both religious and public school education, must have inspired them to increase the Jewish scope of their lives.

The birth of Zionism echoed around the world, and the necessity of a Jewish homeland in Palestine was felt strongly by those who had so recently fled in despair from Europe. In 1905 the Chester Zionist District was organized. Samuel Spilker was president, and Abe Dorfman and Samuel Levin were important members. The purpose of the organization was to work for the Zionist cause and to encourage the Jewish culture and ideals. Members were required to pay 10 cents per month dues.

In 1905 the Ladies' Sheltering and Aid Society was also organized. They described themselves as ". . . chiefly devoted to the help and care of those of our race who are in need, also taking care of the Jewish stranger who may find himself within our midst: giving food, lodging, and money in order that he might reach his destination . . ." The Society owned its own Hebrew Sheltering Home at 38 West Mary Street.

The desire for friendship and fraternity resulted in the formation of Ahavas Israel, a social and beneficial lodge, which was a local branch of the National Ahavas Israel. It had 50 members. In 1910, when the national order dissolved, the Chester lodge immediately reorganized and became affiliated with the national B'rith Sholom Lodge. It served as an active branch for nine years. By 1919, however, the national assessments were too heavy for the group, so they withdrew and became an independent organization, adopting the name of Agudath Israel. This lodge disbanded in 1935 when other programs took over its purposes. One of the lasting contributions of this lodge to our community was its establishment of Brookhaven Cemetery and the giving of this land to Ohev Shalom Synagogue as a burial place for the Jews of Chester.

Caring for the Jewish dead was always a primary concern of our forefathers. It was logical, therefore, that as early as 1890 Chester Jewry organized a volunteer group of local people called

the Cemetery Association of Chester, Ahavas Israel. The group included Max Blumberg, Kasrel Goodman, Samuel Lax and Samuel D. Levy. This organization was succeeded by a group called the Chevra Kadisha. They not only prepared the body for burial and handled funeral arrangements, but they maintained constant attendance at the cemetery and kept a record book so that memorial services were held yearly. Mr. and Mrs. Moses Levy donated sufficient ground in the cemetery to bury those who died penniless.

In 1910 the lodge group purchased ground at the Brookhaven site. In 1925 the Chevra Kadisha raised \$5,500 for the building of the brick chapel at the cemetery, under the leadership of Lawrence Blumberg, Barnett Goodman, Isaac Sapovits and Hyman Cholodofsky. It was not until 1930 that Reisman Funeral Directors was contacted to handle burials. At that time the rate was \$75.00, which covered all arrangements. In 1940, Joseph Warowitz purchased an adjoining plot of ground and donated it to the congregation.

By the end of the twentieth century's first decade, the Jewish community had expanded in size and activity. It had raised money for and built a synagogue. It had fraternal and charitable organizations. It had a cemetery. It made provision for education of the young.

It is interesting to note that anti-Semitism had already become a problem. Whereas in the 1880's Jewish persons could happily spend their summers in popular resorts such as Cape May, by the 1890's they were being excluded from hotels, clubs and neighborhoods in Cape May and many other places. As a consequence, they formed their own Jewish resorts - such as Long Branch, Atlantic City, and Asbury Park, in the years between 1891 and 1896.

The ensuing years in our history were to witness even greater growth and the establishment of the foundation of Jewish communal life as we know it today.

Period of Growth

In 1911 the Young Men's Hebrew Association was organized in Chester, and offered both a cultural and social program, and a meeting place for Jews. The group first met in a building at Fourth and Market Streets. Soon it moved its headquarters to the second floor of James' Storage House at Fifth Street and Edgmont Avenue, and finally it moved again to rooms above Frank Berman's store at Sixth Street and Edgmont Avenue.

In 1913 the Chester Hospital wished to replace their horse-and-buggy ambulance for one driven by a motor. The Y.M.H.A. successfully raised the money for this purchase. And it was in that same year that the group, at a meeting held in Solomon Knopf's bakery shop, organized the first Chester Hebrew Charity Ball.

The Ball took place in the Chester Armory at Eighth and Sproul Streets, and it was open to the public. To it came all the civic and business leaders of the community. The armory took on the aspect of a magnificent garden, as it was decorated with palms and multi-hued flowers. The men

wore formal dress, but they were outshone by the beautiful gowns worn by the women - gowns of every color and fabric, some with long trains, all embellished in grand style. The highlight of the evening was the Grand March led by the most worthy and popular leaders of the community. That first year Mr. and Mrs. Raphael Kaplan headed the line, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Berman. They marched for one hour and ten minutes around the Armory. Leading the march was a coveted honor, and year after year the importance of the Ball grew in the eyes of the Jewish community, and the Christian community as well. It was this Hebrew Charity Ball which became, in later years, the Ohev Shalom Congregational Ball.

The community was obviously prospering. If Jewish women could travel to New York to purchase ball gowns, Chester businessmen must have been participating in the astonishing rise of prosperity noted in the Wall Street Journals of 1915. Our nation was, of course, profiting from the war abroad, but all too soon it was to become engaged in that same war. In the meantime, those who prospered did not forget those who were in need.

Charity had always been basic to the Jewish tradition. It is written in the Torah that in ancient Israel farmers were to leave a corner of their field for the poor. In America as well, from the days of the first Jewish settlers of the New Amsterdam community in 1654, the Jews earned a reputation for taking care of their own.

The Ladies' Aid Society had already been formed, and the Ball was held to raise money for charity. In 1916, A. W. Wolson organized Chester's first Federation of Hebrew Charities, a branch of the national organization. The Federation simplified the complicated system of giving which had developed among Jewry in the United States. Previously, Russian Jews and German Jews each had drives for their own people; there were also drives for numerous other causes. Now the Jews correlated all giving into one united effort.

In January 1917 the United States entered World War I. While the world was being made safe for democracy in the "war to end war," 56 Jewish men from Chester served in the armed forces. None of them died in action or service, but Myer J. Freed and Myer Pressman were decorated with the Purple Heart. An interesting sidelight is the influx of young Jewish boys to Chester who, like the non-Jews involved, were allowed by the Government to work at Sun Ship Yard in lieu of being called into the service. Many of these boys boarded in the homes of Chester's Jews.

The war did not stop the advance of the Jewish community life.

On March 27, 1917, the women formed a Chester branch of the National Council of Jewish Women. Mrs. Benjamin (Blanche) Marker, Mrs. Harry (Fanny) Baron, and Mrs. Charles (Tillie) Shapero were officers of the group. The annual dues per member was \$4.00.

The women immediately decided to reorganize the system of religious education in Chester. The giving of lessons by a Hebrew teacher in the child's home had often proven unsatisfactory. The children were most fluent in English, but the teachers were men who remained virtual strangers to

the new tongue. In 1913, a Sunday School had been organized in addition to weekday Hebrew classes; English was the language of instruction in the Sunday School. Now the women organized this Hebrew and Sunday School program on a larger scale. They also financed the first free formal Sunday School offered to all the Jewish children. The teachers at this time were members of the community. The National Council of Jewish Women also paid for and supervised an Americanization class.

Even the Jewish youth in Chester started to form organizations. In 1919, Young Judea, a Zionist organization, was started by Ann Baylin, Nellie Baylin, Leah Bloom, Rebecca Greenberg, Anne Stein, Irene Goodman, Jenny Dranov and Anna Frank. Later, in 1925, Junior Hadassah was organized with Miss Sarah Levy as the first president. Two years after that the Senior Hadassah came into being when Mrs. S. D. Levy called a meeting at her home for this purpose.

By now, B'nai Israel was no longer the only Jewish congregation in Chester. Congregation B'nai Aaron received a charter from the Court of Common Pleas of Delaware County on April 3, 1915. In 1920, however, the two congregations merged and on March 29 of that year the court again granted a charter, this time to Congregation Ohev Shalom, which name means "Lover of Peace."

Shortly thereafter, a splinter group comprised of members from both B'nai Israel and B'nai Aaron, formed Congregation Mispallelim . Throughout the years, many persons have paid dues to help support both congregations, and there has been participation by members of both congregations in joint community activities.

In the meantime, the Y.M.H.A. was thriving and they were in desperate need of larger headquarters. As a result of numerous meetings, a drive to raise funds for a new building was underway. The group raised \$35,000 and purchased the Black Mansion, at Fourth and Madison Streets, in 1920. This building was meant to serve only as a community center. It was in this building, during May 1922, that the Simon Wolf Lodge of B'nai B'rith was organized with Archie Levy as president and with a membership numbering 19 men.

The growth of Jewish life in Chester is our immediate concern; but in order to truly recall the flavor of our history, we must remember that our growth paralleled the growth of Jewish communities elsewhere in the United States. The years between 1921 and 1923 may have been called the "age of normalcy" in United States history, but they were years of excitement and confusion for Jews. In 1920, there were 3,200,000 vastly disorganized Jews in the United States. Each town and city with a Jewish population had its own synagogue, methods of religious instruction, and fund-raising - its own standards for everything. During this time hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants were searching for homes and jobs. The scene was one of chaos.

The need for organization of the Jewish community, good religious schools led by American-born teachers, and American-born rabbis - these things were imperative if Jewry was to flourish in

America. Fortunately, there were men with vision who understood these problems and solved them.

Not only were there general problems of organization, but the three different groupings within American Judaism - Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform - were by now strongly established. Isaac Mayer Wise had emerged as leader of the Reform movement and in 1873 he had established the Hebrew Union College and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In 1896 the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Yeshiva, a college for training Orthodox rabbis, was organized in New York City, and in 1898 the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations was established. In 1902, Solomon Schechter became president of the Jewish Theological Seminary; and later, he founded the United Synagogue of America, the organization of Conservative congregations; he also set up the Teacher's Institute, appointing Mordecai M. Kaplan as its dean. In time, these schools produced English-speaking and Jewishly competent men and women, capable of taking the place of teachers from the Old World. All these events, which are only barely suggested here, were to have great repercussions upon Congregation Ohev Shalom.

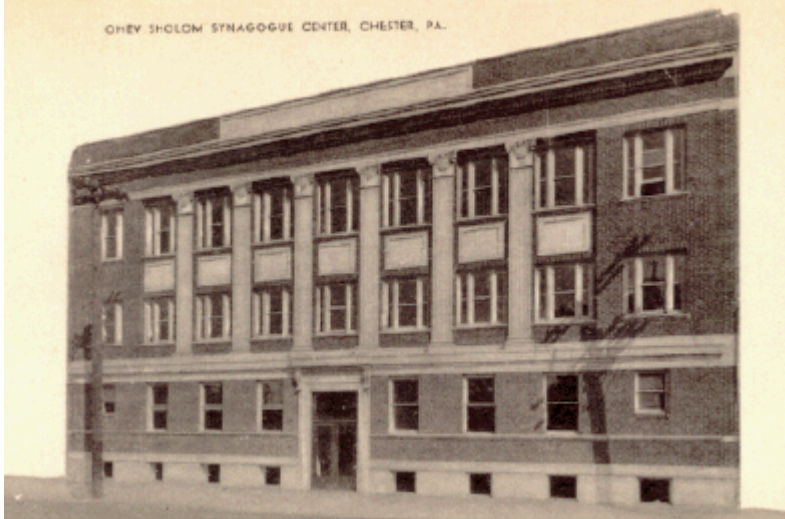
Chester's first taste of Conservative Judaism came in 1920 when a group of young people felt a need for their own service. The Y.M.H.A., which had been organized as a community center only, now became the scene of religious worship during the High Holy Days of that year. Rabbi Morris Goodblatt, a student from the Jewish Theological Seminary, conducted the service and, for the first time, the worshippers heard a sermon in English. In 1923, Rabbi Dr. Harry Cohen arrived in Chester. He served as Rabbi and Principal of the Hebrew School, which was then located in a building at Third and Penn Streets.

These were the years of the "roaring twenties," a joy ride in an "era of wonderful nonsense," when the "flaming youth" revolted against the puritanical standards of the pre-war era. Fundamentally, the American scene remained sober, and the average American was hard-working and serious. Impressive strides were made in the fields of education, religion, and science. But anti-Jewish feeling, which had been small in the years prior to World War I, now steadily increased; post-war conditions gave the unscrupulous an opportunity to capitalize on their selfish sentiments.

Caught in the fervor of post-war expansion, and motivated further by the anti-Semitism of the time, the Jews in Chester looked critically at their Jewish community. They were beginning to realize the necessity of maintaining the synagogue as a focal point in their lives, and they now felt that a single structure encompassing educational, religious and social activities was essential.

There were, after all, three separate buildings serving the Jewish community of Chester. The Ohev Shalom Synagogue was at Third and Lloyd Streets, the Y.M.H.A. was at Fourth and Madison Streets, and the religious school was at Third and Penn Streets. It is easy to imagine the difficulties arising because of this spread of location.

In 1925 the Directors of the Y.M.H.A. made the momentous purchase of a plot of ground on Eighth Street, below Welsh, and deeded the lot to Congregation Ohev Shalom, upon its pledge that the ground would be used for the purpose of erecting a synagogue-center. This site was then a most central location for Chester Jewry.



East Eighth Street (Eighth & Welsh St.), Chester, PA
Dedicated September 18, 1927

Once again, A. W. Wolson directed the community in a huge undertaking. Mr. Wolson was chairman of the Building Committee and Archie Levy was secretary. On May 9, 1926, a Leaders Banquet was held at the Masonic Temple for the purpose of launching a campaign to raise funds for the new building. A. W. Wolson himself was the first contributor to this Building Fund, and Simon Bruner was the second. Among others on the banquet committee were Samuel Bloom, Harry Baron, Archie Levy, Frank Tollin, Joseph Silberman, Lawrence Blumberg, John Sorcuss, Nathan Plafker, Herman Rosenblatt, Mrs. Harry (Fanny) Baron, Mrs. Hyman (Rose) Rosenblatt, Mrs. Albert (Rose) Gurvitz, and Mrs. Samuel (Rae) Feinberg. Several speakers were invited, prominent among whom were Abraham Wernick, Esq., of Philadelphia, and Dr. Mordecai Soltes, of New York; John Sorcuss was toastmaster. The banquet was probably attended by every Jew in Chester, and the sum of \$75,000 was raised in a three-day campaign.

The actual cost of the building at Eighth and Welsh Streets was \$150,000. That meant a mortgage of \$50,000 and notes amounting to \$25,000.

David Levy was the architect of the building, and Jacob Goldberg was the general contractor and builder.

On September 17, 1927, the dedication program of the Ohev Shalom Synagogue Center, under the chairmanship of Harry Baron, was held. This date marked the beginning of a full week of

affairs. Rabbi Philip Alstat delivered the dedication address, and Judge McDade and Bishop Tate were also on the program. The actual dedication service was held without pews.

President A. W. Wolson wrote in the Dedication Book published at that time:

" This Ohev Shalom Community Building is a credit to our beloved city. of Chester and indicates that as citizens we are progressing with our town ... but our aim and purpose is not yet completed. This pile of bricks and mortar ... do not fulfill our needs. This building must be given LIFE to meet the cultural requirements of our people ... a righteous, Jewish atmosphere ... will prevail in this building - our Community Home ... we must have one hundred per cent co-operation of the entire Jewish population of Delaware County - we need money, but also workers."

When the building at Eighth and Welsh Streets was dedicated, the Board of Directors consisted of A. W. Wolson, president; Max Blumberg, vice president; Benjamin Kelman, recording secretary; Albert Berman, financial secretary; and Alexander E. Lessy, treasurer. Trustees were Jack Rosenblatt, Philip Schwartz, A. Chumnsky, and Jacob Warowitz.

In 1926 there had occurred a reorganization of the Chester Hebrew School. Samuel Bloom was president; Louis Stein, vice president; Dr. Nathan V. Plafker, secretary; and Harry Baylin, treasurer. Israel Stiefel, recently arrived from Palestine, was appointed Principal. This revamping of the school caused it to prosper.

From September 1926 to July 1927, the number of pupils increased from 75 to 160. The school consisted of seven classes, where the subjects were taught in accordance with the modern methods then in vogue among the leading Hebrew Schools in the country. The Sunday School, which remained under the auspices of the National Council of Jewish Women, had an enrollment of 169 pupils. Mrs. Samuel (Goldie) Bloom was the Council representative in charge of the school, and Mr. Stiefel acted as Principal of this group also.

It was during the 1926 reorganization that the Junior Congregation, the so-called Congregation "Javneh," was formed. The pupils of the higher classes of the school established two organizations - the girls' club, "Judith," devoted to the discussion and study of paramount problems in Judaism, Zionism, and the life of American Jewry; and "Hakoah Juniors," an organization mainly devoted to sports. The entire Hebrew School, still a distinct organization under the auspices of the Ohev Shalom Congregation, moved into the new synagogue-center on Eighth Street in the Fall of 1927.

Consolidation, Problems and Progress

The new building began to serve the community - a service which was to last 35 years. Influenced by the growth of the Conservative movement in the United States, and facing the demands of younger congregants who insisted upon a more liberal religious attitude, the

sanctuary was designed with three separate aisles. The right and left sections were raised balconies where women might pray separately from the men, but the middle area was for men and women. It was this middle section which grew more and more crowded, while the side areas became more and more empty. Also, in deference to the desires of the younger congregants, most of the sermons were delivered in English rather than Yiddish.

The sanctuary was on the uppermost, the third, floor. The building also housed classrooms, offices, two kitchens, as well as facilities for athletics, swimming, social affairs, and meetings.

Despite the fact that the building was officially completed in September, there were many areas still in need of attention. Therefore, in the Spring of 1928, the first Ohev Shalom Bazaar was held on the grounds adjoining the Synagogue, where the Delaware County Times Building now stands. The affair was sponsored by the newly-formed Sisterhood, which was under the presidency of Mrs. Albert Gurvitz. Mrs. Raphael (Sadie) Kaplan was chairman of the Bazaar. It ran three days and profited \$2,000. These funds paid for painting the building and installing flooring. The bazaar remained an annual event until the ground on which it was held was no longer available.

The spiritual leader of the young synagogue was Rabbi Herman Eisenberg, who was called to Chester on September 1, 1927. During the congregation's formative years, Rabbi Eisenberg was responsible for many innovations. He began to use the Union Prayer Book throughout the year and instituted a late Sabbath evening service.

The first anniversary was celebrated October 3, 1928; the first Congregational Ball was held January 9, 1929; and on February 5, 1930, the first joint Congregation and Charity Ball took place.

Sisterhood, now under the presidency of Mrs. Charles (Tillie) Shapero, was particularly active. "Goodies" were served after the children's services on Saturday mornings; rummage sales were conducted; a cultural group, which met to discuss "fine books, periodicals, and current events," was well attended. Successful monthly dances were held "to create a feeling of community spirit among the young."

The Synagogue Center was a comprehensive arena of manifold activities. With Isaac Sapovits as president and Archie Levy as vice-president, the institution had a Sunday School, Hebrew School, high school class, Confirmation class, advanced Hebrew study groups, Bar Mitzvah classes, and a library. There were Friday evening services (which included a sermon), Home Night services, and varied programs of organizational and athletic events. A Synagogue News was published through which all items of interest were publicized. A feeling of zeal and constructive co-operation seemed to emanate from Ohev Shalom at that time.

A. W. Wolson, as president of the Federation of Hebrew Charities, reported in 1930 that his organization, with the help of the Council of Jewish Women and The Ladies' Aid Society, was

providing a family in the community with a weekly subsidy. This very active group had given \$100 to deserving strangers and about \$500 to needy members of the Chester Jewish community.

But the financial and spiritual needs were to increase drastically as the decade progressed, for the calendar pages were black with the days of 1929. The entire world felt reverberations from the dreadful crash which ushered in years of economic chaos - the years of the great depression.

A. W. Wolson's cryptic comment in his message in the 1930 Joint Charity and Congregational Ball Book, referring to an increase in demands on the Federation of Hebrew Charities, reveals the onset of this difficult period of time. It was perhaps inevitable that Ohev Shalom should falter at this critical moment.

As a result of the shortage of funds, all activities were curtailed. The pool was now closed. In order to meet even the current expenses of the building, door to door solicitation of Ohev Shalom membership was required, but many were unable to pay any dues at all. It was during these terrible years that Mrs. Philip (Anna) Schwartz, Mrs. Harry (Reba) Greenstein, Mrs. Harry (Fanny) Baron, and Mrs. Max (Bessie) Mailman fed and housed needy transients in the small Sheltering Home on Mary Street, which was still managed by The Ladies' Aid Society. Distribution of coal to those in need was handled by the active members of the Federation of Hebrew Charities: Louis Schwartz, Maurice Swimmer, and Mrs. Raphael (Sadie) Kaplan. The Council of Jewish Women provided needy persons of the community with loans for emergency purposes.

The country, as well as our community, emerged from these years sobered and serious. Ohev Shalom members, as countless others throughout our nation, lost money, real estate, businesses, and jobs. But the Synagogue was still ours.

"The Synagogue is the Jews' wealth," said Isaac Sapovits in 1934. Stirred by these words, the congregation began to re-evaluate itself. The congregants turned toward their synagogue for inspiration and fulfillment. Better days started for many when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration revitalized the economy. All Ohev Shalom's activities resumed and soon the synagogue once again became the true "center" of the Chester Jewish community.

In 1934 educational activities were increasing. Rabbi Eisenberg was now superintendent of the school, and Albert Berman was chairman of the Religious School Committee. A staff of eight teachers and two assistant teachers was employed.

On weekday evenings there was usually a meeting or social affair at the "Center." On many nights there were 30 or 40 men playing shuffleboard in the basement. This was an era of intense interest in basketball, and every Sunday evening Ohev Shalom was the scene of a hotly contested basketball game between our "Center" and the team of another community. Large crowds were drawn to these contests and to the dances which followed. The highlight of the basketball season came when our team vied with the SPHAS, at that time one of the best

professional basketball teams in Philadelphia. The Synagogue Center was enjoying a glorious age. It had truly become a "second home" for many of its members.

The congregation was also expanding its cultural activities. It was during these years that a children's choir was instituted, and the Junior Congregation re-organized. A volunteer library was begun under the direction of Rabbi Eisenberg and the volunteer management of Mrs. Samuel (Rae) Feinberg. Our women's organizations were actively participating in the affairs of the congregation. A Jewish Community Council, through which groups could clear dates for programs, was organized.

A significant event occurred in the late 1930's, when Ohev Shalom joined the United Synagogue of America. Now we were officially identified as a Conservative group. This meant, among other things, that our religious and educational work became more standardized and that our Sisterhood joined the National Women's League.

On March 15, 1935, the Chester Post #134 of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States was organized in the home of Joseph Baer. The 28 charter members elected Dr. Albert G. Federman the first Commander of the Post. The JWV serviced (and still services) all Veteran's hospitals in this area. In 1949, it established a Memorial Circle at Brookhaven Cemetery in memory of those who died in the World Wars.

Content and busy with communal and private lives, most of Chester Jewry tried to ignore the war clouds gathering over Europe. Isolationism was preferable to involvement in foreign problems. However, it is noted in the minutes of the Board of Directors of May 1938, that a letter from the Jewish War Veterans invited all synagogue members to attend a memorial service, the first in the city of Chester. The letter of invitation stated that ". . . the occasion will be used as a plea for peace." In November 1938, a letter was received from Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, regarding refugees from Germany to Poland, and expressing the urgent need for funds. Chester responded by organizing a formal appeal. In 1939, Frank Berman became the first chairman of the annual Chester United Jewish Appeal drive. (The U.J.A. had been organized on a national basis that very same year.) It was truly impossible to remain aloof from the European catastrophe.

In September 1939, the Germans invaded Poland. The Second World War had begun. There was still no immediate change in our daily life, but the impact of the war was certainly felt. In June 1940, Dr. Federman spoke at a congregational meeting. He read a resolution to the effect that all members of Ohev Shalom should attempt to counteract any "fifth column" and un-American activities in the community. The congregation voted to go on record favoring this. In addition, it offered financial aid to the "Home Defenders Division" of the Council.

When war did come, Chester Jewry responded. Sons, brothers, husbands - and some women, too - wore uniforms of the armed forces. The annual Congregational Ball was cancelled because of the national emergency and the Eighth Street Synagogue was used as the local United Service Organization (U.S.O.) headquarters. A large sign advertised that its doors were open to all men in

uniform. Many individual congregants entertained servicemen at parties and dinners. Joint Distribution Committee funds were collected to help alleviate the suffering of Jews in Europe. Our congregation participated in scrap drives, paper collections, and bond rallies. 42 women joined in a First Aid group, and the Synagogue donated two pianos to the defense home projects in McCaffery Village.

Minutes of a Board of Directors meeting on September 14, 1942, record that Hyman Stein made a motion, which was passed, giving honorary membership in the congregation to all local Jewish boys in the Armed Forces, and that all current dues be remitted on behalf of all present members in the Service. In August 1943, Frank Berman and Meyer J. Freed were appointed co-chairmen of a Synagogue bond drive.

Through restless years of anti-Semitism, depression, and the start of World War II, Rabbi Eisenberg led his congregation. Then, in 1942, after 15 years, he resigned from his pulpit at Ohev Shalom. Upon his retirement, the congregation bestowed upon him a life-time honorary membership.

Rabbi Max Forman was welcomed at a congregational meeting in September 1942. After a few months, he reported a new interest in the education of our youth and in the revival of the morning service. One of the outstanding affairs of his tenure was a communal Seder on March 25, 1943, in which 243 persons participated.

Toward the end of the world conflict, attention was drawn toward Palestine. Chester Jews exhibited tremendous interest in this problem, and reacted to suggestions for positive aid with vigor.

In 1944 a communication was received from Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, wherein members of this community were urged to write letters to their congressmen and senators in support of the Palestine Resolution passed by the Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee. In February of that same year, Rabbi Forman suggested that letters be sent to President Roosevelt asking him to openly express his opinion favoring the Wright-Compton Resolution for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Rabbi Forman left the congregation in August 1944, and Rabbi Naphtali Frishberg arrived in September of that year. This was a quiet time in our history. The war had usurped our energies.

The community seemed to be drifting without a goal. Of course, Hebrew School and Sunday School were maintained, but an air of futility was aptly expressed by a terse note in the Board of Directors' minutes for May 1944: "Sisterhood about to be disbanded for lack of co-operation from members." Nobody was willing to assume the responsibilities of leadership. A dismal sense of instability and unrest surrounded the community. The long war was coming to an end, but countless lives were lost, millions of Jews were killed, and a raging controversy over the Jewish homeland irritated everyone.

Finally, 1945 brought V-E Day and V-J Day. Victory at last! On April 6, 1945, at a special Servicemen's Sabbath, Louis A. Bloom, commander of the Jewish War Veterans, presented to Maurice Swimmer, president of the congregation, a permanent plaque bearing an honor roll of over 300 men and women of Ohev Shalom then serving in the armed forces. Colonel Maurice Mendelson was guest speaker on this occasion, and he recalled his meeting with the local community's hero, Sergeant Jack Sugarman of Media, who had killed 132 Japanese in the Pacific Theater. A special prayer was recited for those members of the congregation who had died in the war: Al Cutler, Leonard Davis, Jack Gomberg, David Gordon, and Phillip Weiner. The entire weekend was dedicated to the servicemen. It concluded on Sunday with a large conference concerning the synagogue's responsibility toward returning veterans.

Once again the spiritual leadership of the congregation was changed. Rabbi Frishberg resigned in May 1946, and in September 1946, Rabbi Louis Grossman arrived.

Slowly, Ohev Shalom seemed to wake from its lethargy. New vigor was instilled in the religious services. An athletic director was hired in October 1946, and a full schedule of activities began. The Hospitality Room was formally opened; it provided a place for social gatherings and small dances. It was also a place where high school students could meet after classes for talk and socializing. The Reception Room was redecorated and dedicated in memory of Joseph M. Weinberg. A youth basketball team, sponsored by the Men's Club, was city champion for several years. Nathaniel Plafker led a breakfast club for post-Bar Mitzvah boys. A day camp, which met at the synagogue during the summer months, was well attended by young children.

In 1948 the decision was made for children to start Hebrew School studies at age nine, at which time they would discontinue Sunday School attendance. This step more closely aligned us with other Conservative congregational schools.

All of these activities took place while Jews the world over awaited the decision of the establishment of a Jewish state. Finally, on November 29, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine. A telegram to Mrs. Martin (Mary) Huberman, president of the Chester Chapter of Hadassah, from the national office of the organization, read: "The Jewish State is born ... ours is the honor and glory of witnessing this momentous event ... and the challenge to see that it brings new dignity and worth to Jews the world over..."

The recognition of the Jewish state gave further impetus to activities in Chester, but other factors also played an important part in the continued progress of Ohev Shalom.

The second-generation of Jews in Chester was now expressing a greater intellectual awareness of their religion. A large group of war brides had returned home and settled down to raise families. Their children's attendance at Sunday School undoubtedly increased their interest in Synagogue activities and their willingness to identify with a constructive women's group. They were determined to improve the status of Sisterhood. Numerous ideas were culled from attendance at regional Women's League meetings. Thirty-seven women enrolled in a Leadership Training

Course which served to orient all chairmen and insure the availability of future leaders. A Gift Shop was started. Torah Fund was extremely successful, and a Passover Institute was held in conjunction with the membership of Hadassah and B'nai B'rith.

Sisterhood membership grew rapidly - 32 women joining Sisterhood in 1949-50 and 40 women enrolling in 1950-51. During these years Sisterhood was led by Mrs. Joseph (Annabelle) Smith, Mrs. Benjamin (Ruth) Blank, and Mrs. Louis (Beatrice) Dallett. The women were responsible for refurbishing the classrooms in 1951, for redecorating the auditorium and stage in 1954, and for redecorating the sanctuary in 1955. (It was at this time that the balconies were eliminated from the sanctuary, a further indication of a more progressive attitude which pervaded synagogue life.)

The resurgence of Sisterhood culminated in 1955, when the Philadelphia Branch of the National Women's League cited Ohev Shalom's group as an exemplary Sisterhood organization.

In 1950, Rabbi Ira Sud was called to the pulpit of Ohev Shalom, and he began a ten-year period as religious leader of the congregation. Rabbi Sud was born in Czechoslovakia and was educated in the seminaries of that country and Germany. He also attended Dropsie College in Philadelphia. He will be remembered best, perhaps, for his work in community relations. His philosophy that Brotherhood Week should extend throughout the year did much to bridge the gaps between the non-Jewish community and the Jews. He was a warm and gentle person, and so dear to a group of congregants that they were moved to raise funds to fulfill a life-long dream of his - a trip to Israel. Rabbi Sud contributed much to enrich education in the community. He instituted a Mr. and Mrs. Club. His attitude toward Jewish learning can be remembered by this excerpt from his own words spoken during a Board of Directors meeting of June 1955: ". . . all must have warm hearts and open minds to the important changes taking place around us. The very concept of God cannot be assumed, but rather it must be taught, and we must teach Judaism in a beautiful way. We must continue to progress in the flexible traditional Jewish manner, giving all the opportunity to learn and ask questions."

With the arrival of Rabbi Sud, Ohev Shalom entered a time of intense activity and developed a new maturity in many aspects. Sisterhood's role has already been noted. It was also at this time that the community honored its older members. In 1953 all persons who had been members of the synagogue for more than 50 years, were given life memberships in Ohev Shalom. Honored in this manner have been: Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Lessy, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Savitsky, Mr. Solomon Hoffman, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Berman.

Athletics continued to play a dominant part in congregational life, and Arthur Stone took charge of the youth athletic activities. Cotillions, minstrel shows, community seders, adult education, Hebrew School, religious services - all were woven into the fiber of life of Chester Jewry.

The activities of the Sisterhood reached in all directions. The women donated a new kitchen to the synagogue. They inaugurated a "Pennies From Heaven" campaign - the funds collected to be used to dispose of the synagogue mortgage.

Adult education continued to be a primary concern. Dr. Nathan V. Plafker offered a course entitled "Comparative Religions of Humanity." Rabbi Sud instructed a course in "Jewish Traditions and Customs - Their Significance and Importance." The Oneg Shabbat became a forum for discussion of many controversial ideas.

On March 2, 1954, the Junior Congregation chapel was dedicated. A cantata entitled "Our Torah" was conducted by the Principal of the religious school, David Twersky.

This year, 1954, marked the Tercentenary of Jews in America. In February 1955 a framed scroll was given to our synagogue by the United Synagogue of America in recognition of the part Ohev Shalom had played in the history of American Judaism. A suitable celebration was planned, and tremendous interest was generated in this saga. Members of the community who attempted to research this project were stymied by a lack of adequate library facilities in the synagogue building. Their frustration proved to be the motivation behind an idea which eventually developed into our present library.

As a result of the efforts of Mrs. William (Rose) Isaacson and Rabbi Sud, the Board of Directors eventually approved the idea of creating a library, and Mrs. Isaacson was made first chairman of the Library Committee. But the Board had no funds for such a project until R. Paul Lessy generously donated both a sum of money and more than 200 volumes, creating the A. E. Lessy Memorial Library in memory of his esteemed father.

In August 1958, Cantor Jonas Garfinkel assumed his duties at Ohev Shalom. Cantor Garfinkel was born in Poland. He had been a Yeshiva student and had attended the Warsaw Conservatory of Music. A survivor of the Second World War, he and his family arrived in the United States in 1951, whereupon he served as Cantor in Vineland, New Jersey. In 1952, Cantor Garfinkel became a member of the Cantor's Assembly of America. Within three or four weeks of his arrival in Chester, Cantor Garfinkel organized an adult choir which performed at the High Holy Day Services that year and has remained an integral part of the synagogue ever since. Soon after, he organized the Junior Choir. His music is a stirring part of our ritual, and his work with Bar and Bas Mitzvah students is an indication of his outstanding ability.

Any memory of the "Fifties" must include the three gala musical productions sponsored by the synagogue, and produced by members of our community. "Finian's Rainbow," "Wish You Were Here," and "Lady in the Dark" were excellent vehicles for many congregants to express themselves dramatically. These affairs, the progeny of earlier minstrel and talent shows, were important because they attracted the active participation which was to become the keystone of a future, and more important venture. For only with the interest of all congregants could synagogue life thrust itself forward into a heady and exciting task - the task of building a new synagogue which might better serve the ever-increasing needs of the Jewish population of Chester.

New Directions

Even in the grand, final ending to our story, an ending which hopefully is but a new beginning, we can see our actions as a reflection of the grand panorama of modern Jewish existence.

The Second World War, the loss of 6,000,000 European Jews, the frenzied fund-raising activities which ensued, the birth of the State of Israel, the move to "suburbia" after 1950 - all resulted in our vigorous re-identification with Judaism, and the synagogue. The United Synagogue of America notes that the number of Conservative congregations alone increased from 250 in 1937 to 500 by 1956, the number of affiliated families from 75,000 to 2,000,000 during this same time. It goes without saying that new congregations must create new synagogue buildings, and old congregations with larger memberships need to rebuild their houses.

In Chester our synagogue activities grew more numerous, our membership larger, our interests wider in scope. In Chester, as everywhere else, our membership moved toward the suburbs. The Eighth and Welsh Street location, so beautifully planned for use in 1927, was inconvenient and outmoded by the mid-fifties. Our elders needed to climb three flights of stairs to reach the sanctuary. Many of our children were crowded into basement classrooms. The swimming pool was closed. Space was too little, necessary repair work too great, parking for automobiles impossible. We needed a new building.

In October 1957 a small group of persons decided that they would contribute money and encourage others to contribute money in order to raise \$25,000 for the purchase of a 3 1/2 acre site for such a building on Providence and Chester Roads in Nether Providence. This was done, and in November the ground was secured and presented by Dr. Benjamin Balin to the congregation as a gift from 102 Ground Fund Donors.

Now the action was swift and decisive. M. J. Freed, long a leading citizen of the Jewish community, and a past-president of the Board of Directors of Ohev Shalom, accepted chairmanship of the Building Fund Committee. Dr. Benjamin Balin, Alex Brown, Louis Dallett, and Samuel Warwick were appointed vice-chairmen. Mrs. Benjamin (Sally) Balin, Leon Gordon, Jack Swerman, and Alan Swimmer were also on the Executive Committee. Albert Blumberg, Esq., served as legal counsel.

There was so much work to do! What an impossible task it seemed! Never before had there been such a concentration of effort on the part of so many people. Professional fund-raisers, the Milton Hood Ward organization, were hired; a brochure was printed to facilitate solicitation. The campaign was truly under way.

These were days and nights and weeks of talk and planning, of elation and disappointment. Telephone calls arranged appointments. Everyone in the community had to be visited by pairs of solicitors, and be encouraged to pledge money to be paid over a five-year period for the new Ohev Shalom. No man was permitted to solicit until he himself had pledged a sum to the new building. Campaign headquarters buzzed with excitement when an unexpected donation was pledged, and was quiet with dismay when a pledge was refused. Six nights a week, into the late

hours, enthusiastic workers described the dream of a new building to the dubious. When they failed to gain an adequate pledge, the family was revisited until the contagion of success was passed on.

The Executive Committee put in untold hours of work and effort, but they were aided by many men. Among the most active solicitors were: Jack Beck, Aaron Brown, Henry Brown, Dr. Sidney Diamond, Murray Eckell, Steven Feinberg, Marvin Freed, Samuel Friedman, Joseph Gold, Joseph Goldstein, Louis Goldstein, Dr. Joseph Ivins, Albert Knopf, Abraham Lachman, Rainer Laub, Larry Lax, Donald Levenstein, Sidney Levenstein, Dr. Simon Levin, Morris Mailman, Eugene Mark, Dr. Richard Morris, Ralph Paul, Albert Oppenheim, Dr. Frank Rosenberg, Melvin Rudman, Irving Savits, Abe Seidman, Harry Shooster, Nelson Silberman, Harold Sitkoff, Norman Snyder, Dr. Jerome Smith, Dr. Larry Starer, Maurice Swimmer, Edward Tabak, Dr. Harry Tarnoff, Samuel Tollen, Sidney Ulan, Paul Wachs, William Wolf, and Joseph Zommick. And every evening, after the last visit was made, these men would telephone and ask, "How much money was raised tonight?"

By November 1960 the original goal of \$500,000 in pledges had been exceeded by \$8,400. A huge Victory Dance was held on December 4 in our auditorium. The entire congregation was invited to rejoice at the success of the campaign. At that dance, the Building Fund Committee, realizing that even \$508,400 would not suffice for the structure Ohev Shalom required, announced a new goal of \$750,000.

The Building Fund Committee began to seriously investigate the requirements of a new synagogue building. A fact-finding group - consisting of M. J. Freed, Dr. Simon Levin, Dr. and Mrs. Balin, Rainer Laub, and Jack Swerman - was appointed. Now began the task of visiting other new synagogue buildings to determine their successes and problems and to gain new ideas. Teams of men and women, headed by captains, were named. Each person on a team had a specific area to investigate - kitchens, social halls, sanctuary, school, maintenance. Every Sunday morning for a month these groups met for a quick cup of coffee and then a ride to Philadelphia, Haddonfield, Vineland, Wilmington, in search of information. Every person in the community was inspired by the work and hours donated by these workers.

News of large pledges gave impetus when things went slowly. The Sisterhood made the largest single pledge to the new building - \$30,000. In order to raise the money for this pledge, the women decided to once again hold a Bazaar, this time on the site of the proposed new building, and named the event a Holiday Fair, because it would be held on Memorial Day. The first two fairs, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Harry (Norma) Tarnoff, Mrs. Eugene (Enid) Mark, and Mrs. Morton (Elsa) Wachs, raised close to \$10,000. Due to the progress of actual construction, the ground was not available for a fair in May of 1964, so a "Starlight Dinner" was held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Larry Starer, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Richard (Cecily) Morris, Mrs. Rainer (Isabelle) Laub, and Mrs. Jack (Esther) Swerman. Sisterhood was fulfilling its pledge.

A Ground Dedication program was held on May 30, 1961, (the date of the first Holiday Fair) under the chairmanship of Rainer Laub, then president of the congregation. Rabbi Louis Kaplan, who had just answered a call to become spiritual leader of Ohev Shalom, addressed the membership for the first time on this historic occasion.

On June 24, 1961, Percival Goodman, architect, was awarded a contract to design the building. When he submitted plans it was determined that the property adjacent to the new site should be acquired. This was done at the cost of \$42,000.

Ground-breaking ceremonies were held on June 30, 1963. Chairman of the day was William J. Wolf, who was awarded this honor in recognition of his extraordinary help to the synagogue Building Campaign. His efforts on behalf of Ohev Shalom were also recognized when he was given an honorary life-membership in the congregation. At the ground-breaking ceremonies, Pennsylvania's Governor William W. Scranton delivered the main address to a huge audience of congregants and guests.

The contract for building the synagogue was awarded to Fleming Construction Company in September 1963. The builders and the Building Committee promised that the structure would be ready for High Holy Day services in 1964. Work began, and everyone watched the edifice rise. Although the building was incomplete by late August, Mr. Fleming and the Building Fund Committee kept their promise. There were no doors on the sanctuary, wood shavings and dust were visible elsewhere, and a standby electrician was on hand. But the congregation worshipped in its new sanctuary in September 1964!

Finally, on Thursday, January 28, 1965, Ohev Shalom moved into its new home!



The Dedication Weekend of March 13-15, 1965, was attended by the largest crowd ever gathered in Delaware County for such an affair. General Chairman for the weekend, Dr. Benjamin Balin, greeted worshippers at the Sabbath service held on Friday evening, at which time the Sanctuary was dedicated. On Sabbath morning, many adults and children attended the worship service and

the School Wing dedication. Saturday evening the new Auditorium was the scene of a Dedication Ball, under the chairmanship of Dr. Jerome Smith. That Ball truly rivaled the magnificent festivities of earlier years. On Sunday morning the Cornerstone Ceremony was directed by Harry Shooster.

Sunday afternoon, March 15, the Building Dedication Service and Community Open House were held. The main address was given by Dr. Elazar Goelman, Dean of Gratz College. M. J. Freed, chairman of the Building Fund Committee, presented the keys to the new synagogue to Louis Dallett, president of the congregation. After his opening remarks, Mr. Dallett made special presentations to four persons for their tireless efforts made on behalf of the new synagogue. Those so honored were: M. J. Freed; Jack Swerman, chairman of the Architect's Committee; Alex Brown, a vice-chairman of the Building Fund Committee; and Mrs. Balin, executive secretary of the Building Fund Committee. Mrs. Balin, the only woman so honored, had given more volunteer hours than any other congregant to the fulfillment of our dream of a new Ohev Shalom.

This Sunday program, the culmination of years of work, was attended by more than 700 people. The day was a highlight in the history of Chester Jewry and Ohev Shalom.

As Ohev Shalom strives for better tomorrows in a new building at 2 Chester Road, our spiritual leader is Rabbi Louis Kaplan. Holder of Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Teacher of Hebrew diploma from Gratz College, he was ordained at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America and has done additional Jewish graduate work at Dropsie College. He came to Ohev Shalom in August 1961.

Rabbi Kaplan has proven to be a dynamic teacher and speaker, and the kind of person who can communicate with children and adults. In addition to fulfilling the varied tasks expected of a modern rabbi, he has been responsible for a number of "firsts" at Ohev Shalom: the initiation of a two-year Post Confirmation Department in our school, the first graduation exercise from which took place in June 1965; the sending of at least one student yearly to the Conservative-movement's Hebrew-speaking Camp Ramah (Louis Baer attended the camp during the summer of 1964 as our first Ramah pupil); a college-contact program, which includes the Yom Kippur afternoon open discussion in the synagogue; a very successful schedule of adult education classes on Monday nights and Wednesday mornings, plus a four-session summer discussion group; an every-issue "Rabbi's Corner" article in the Ohev Shalom Bulletin. Two other very important achievements these last few years - for which Rabbi Kaplan, Principal Twersky, our teachers, and School Committee deserve much credit - are the initiation of the three-sessions-weekly Hebrew School and that more than 75% of our Hebrew School children now remain in our school through Confirmation!

Having mentioned our Principal, David Twersky, it should be noted that he is the senior member - in terms of service at Ohev Shalom - on our professional staff. He has served our congregation in varying positions from 1951-1955 and from 1958 to the present. A graduate of Yesiva University's Teacher's Institute and Brooklyn College, he furthered his studies in Israel. Enjoying good rapport with the faculty, Mr. Twersky has successfully encouraged our teachers to continue Jewish

studies at Gratz College's in-service courses. As director of the Junior Congregation he has taught the children some very lively prayer melodies, and their singing has enhanced many a Saturday morning service. Our United Synagogue Youth group, which was formed in the fall of 1961 and whose early adviser was Mrs. Abe (Ruth) Saewitz, has been guided over the years by Mr. Twersky and Rabbi Kaplan.

Our school, which is growing in numbers and quality, lost one of its most distinguished teachers when Miss Leah Bloom - who had been honored for two successive years at the Yom Hamoreh (Teacher's Day) Sabbath - retired in June 1964.

The leadership of Rabbi Kaplan, Cantor Garfinkel, and Principal Twersky has been matched by equally strong lay leadership. Immediate past president, Rainer Laub, who was Ohev Shalom's first delegate at a national convention of the United Synagogue of America, encouraged Ohev Shalom to come more in line with national Conservative practices in our school, religious services, and in other areas of our synagogue's work. Louis Dallett, our current president, has continued this concern and has invited wide participation on all projects and committees, matching the talents of individuals to the necessary tasks at hand. He has stressed that our sanctuary must be a sanctuary for ALL people, that we must identify ourselves with the synagogue's aims and activities so that being Jewish will make a real difference in our lives. Open to everything which will help make better Jews, Ohev Shalom - under its professional and lay leadership - looks forward to new opportunities to serve the Jews of Greater Chester as a meaningful and creative house of study, worship, and fellowship.

This, then, is our history. But the bare recital of facts leaves out a great deal of the heart of our past. Facts do not reveal the record of how many tears have been shed and how much hope and encouragement have been received. Facts do not pay tribute to people molded or changed or comforted because of Ohev Shalom, to friendships enjoyed, to the love and concern of one human being for another. Facts do not tell of despair, anger, joy, song, laughter ... All these things, too, are interwoven with the dates and events of our history. And all these things will, hopefully, be part of the fabric of the future, a future which we shall try to make a re-affirmation and extension of our past.