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Overlooked Histories:
An Ethnographic and Historical Study of the Jewish Communities of Central Pennsylvania

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ABSTRACT

For nearly two centuries, Jewish communities have existed throughout Central Pennsylvania. During the latter half of the twentieth century, however, a majority of the region's Jewish families left for opportunities elsewhere. In their wake, Central Pennsylvania's Jewish communities were reduced to a handful of residents. While permanent Jewish landmarks, such as Jewish cemeteries, and some Jewish community members remain in the area, non-Jewish residents are largely unaware of the existence of once-vibrant Jewish communities in Central Pennsylvania. No formal document or oral history exists to preserve this history. The objective of this study is to compile the history of specific Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities, including Aaronsburg, Bellefonte, Philipsburg, and State College in Centre County and Lock Haven in Clinton County, to better preserve this history and compare it with broader trends in the study of small-town American Jewish life. A forthcoming website dedicated to the Jewish history of Central Pennsylvania will also help make the region's Jewish history more accessible to community members.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

Introduction

This study developed from an interest in the Jewish history of my hometown, Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, a predominately white, Christian community located thirty minutes west of State College in Centre County. Growing up, I passed by my community's Jewish cemetery every day on my way to school, but I never questioned why I did not know anyone in my community who was Jewish. During my third year at Penn State, however, my growing interest in Jewish history made me wonder about the origins of my community's Jewish cemetery and Philipsburg's Jewish history.



Figure 1: The gates of the Sons of Israel Cemetery in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, as visible from School Street.¹

¹ Lisa Sennett, *Sons of Israel Cemetery Gate*, personal photograph, March 31, 2023.

In the spring of 2021, I conducted preliminary research about Philipsburg's Jewish history, which I discuss in chapter five. I discovered my hometown had a Jewish population as early as the mid-nineteenth century and supported a synagogue from the early to late twentieth century. As someone born after the synagogue was disbanded, I thought my age might hinder my knowledge of Philipsburg's Jewish community. My parents, however, who both grew up in Philipsburg when the Jewish community and synagogue were still active, were unaware there was ever a Jewish community in Philipsburg. Their lack of knowledge surprised me. I asked other community members about Philipsburg's Jewish history, and they had similar experiences. I found few people, except for elderly community members, knew anything about Philipsburg's Jewish history.

The lack of knowledge among Philipsburg's community members, however, is not isolated. In the spring and fall semesters of 2022, I served as the historical preservation intern with the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO). During my internship, I researched and wrote biographies for forty-nine of the individuals buried in the Jewish cemetery, Rodef Shalom, in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, which I discuss in chapter four.² When I mentioned my CCPCDO internship with Penn State staff and faculty or other community members who lived in or frequented Bellefonte, I discovered they knew about the cemetery I was researching, but they did not know it was a Jewish cemetery.

² On the cemetery's development plan from circa 1930, available at the Special Collections Library at the Pennsylvania State University, the cemetery's name is listed as the Rodef Sholem Cemetery. Brit Shalom in State College, the current caregivers of the cemetery, however, refer to the cemetery as Rodef Shalom rather than Rodef Sholem. For consistency, I will be referring to this cemetery as the Rodef Shalom Cemetery throughout the study. All of the biographies I wrote for the CCPCDO can be viewed here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Qo1yx6vbxHTHDJtSM5hT-BHIX92ig1AN?usp=share_link.

Through my early research on Jewish Philipsburg and my internship with the CCPCDO, I realized the communities of Centre and Clinton Counties are largely unaware of the region's Jewish history. Furthermore, no comprehensive history existed about these Jewish communities. Without accessible knowledge pertaining to the Jewish history of these individual communities, and the greater region, the memory of Jewish Central Pennsylvania will fade and potentially disappear with the death of older community members.

The purpose of this study is to create a document compiling the Jewish histories of select Central Pennsylvania communities, including Aaronsburg, Bellefonte, Philipsburg, and State College in Centre County and Lock Haven in Clinton County, with focus on the early settlement, community life, past and present Jewish landmarks, and biographies of important community members. I also compare the history and experiences of Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities with one another and within broader historical themes and trends found in small-town Jewish communities. The culmination of this project will be to publish my findings on a forthcoming website to make the Jewish histories of Central Pennsylvania more accessible to their respective communities.

Methodology

Communities of Interest

The term "Central Pennsylvania" refers to a wide geographic area. The region includes more Jewish communities than those addressed in this study, however, for the purposes of this study, the term "Central Pennsylvania" refers to communities located in either Centre County or Clinton County. These two counties were specifically chosen as the boundaries of "Central

Pennsylvania” in this study because they contained my communities of interest: Aaronsburg, Bellefonte, Philipsburg, and State College in Centre County and Lock Haven in Clinton County.

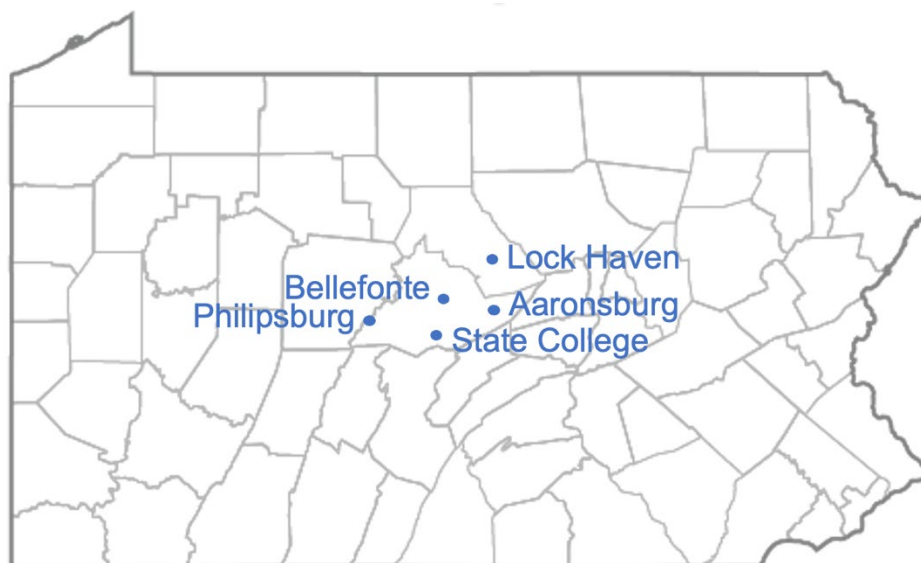


Figure 2: Map of Central Pennsylvania communities, including Aaronsburg, Bellefonte, Philipsburg, and State College in Centre County and Lock Haven in Clinton County, explored in this study.³

These five towns were selected as my communities of interest for a variety of reasons. Philipsburg, my hometown, was the inspiration for this project and my first selected community. Bellefonte and State College were chosen as my next communities of interest because of their proximity to Philipsburg. After beginning my research on Bellefonte and State College’s Jewish communities, I uncovered important links between the Jewish communities of Bellefonte, State College, and Lock Haven. I felt it was necessary to include Lock Haven in this study because its Jewish community was interlinked with and crucial to the development of Jewish communities in Bellefonte and State College. Aaronsburg, which never had a Jewish community, was selected as my fifth and final community of interest because its founding by a Jewish man, Aaron Levy,

³ *Pennsylvania County Map*, n.d., map, Printable World Map, https://www.printableworldmap.net/preview/Pennsylvania_County_Map.

in 1786 marks the earliest known Jewish historical event in Centre County. Additionally, Aaron Levy's donation of land and communion plates to Aaronsburg's first church also culminated in a significant event, the Aaronsburg Story, a celebration of Aaron Levy and religious and racial tolerance in Aaronsburg in 1949. Many of my interview participants mentioned Aaron Levy and the Aaronsburg Story when I asked them about their knowledge of Jewish Central Pennsylvania. The importance of Aaron Levy and the Aaronsburg Story within the public memory of the region's Jewish history made me decide to include the town in my study.⁴

Methods

The Jewish histories of each community are reconstructed using two different research methodologies: archival and historical research and ethnographic interviews. I gathered archival materials from the Pennsylvania Room at both the Centre County Library & Historical Museum and Clinton County Libraries, the Eberly Family Special Collections Library at the Pennsylvania State University, the American Jewish Archives, Penn State Hillel, Congregation Brit Shalom in State College, Congregation Beth Yehuda in Lock Haven, and interview participants. These materials included primary sources, such as newspaper articles, and secondary sources, such as synagogue dedication books, about Jewish Central Pennsylvania community members and their families. I also utilized online databases, such as the *Pennsylvania Newspaper Archive*, to access obituaries and newspaper articles.

⁴ I identified two other communities of interest, Huntingdon in Huntingdon County and Lewistown in Mifflin County, in my early stages of research. These two communities were initially chosen because of their proximity to my other communities of interest. Due to constraints in time and resources, however, I was unable to dedicate time to researching these communities. Huntingdon's Jewish history is briefly mentioned in chapter five because Huntingdon's synagogue, Agudath Achim, had a spike in membership in the 1990s following the breakaway of some Jewish community members from Brit Shalom in State College. For more information about Lewistown's Jewish community, see: Iris B. Sitkin and Ruth Siegel, "The Jewish Community of Lewistown, Pennsylvania, USA," JewishGen KehilaLinks, last updated January 2014, <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Lewistown/>.

I conducted one ethnographic interview in January of 2021 and an additional thirty-four interviews from February 2022 to September 2022. The interviewees included current and former Jewish residents of Central Pennsylvania, descendants of local Jewish families, and rabbis, genealogists, historians, and synagogue board members from Central Pennsylvania. The interview questions pertained to biographical information, their knowledge of the history of Jewish Central Pennsylvania and their respective community, the level of interactions they had with their Jewish community growing up and/or in adulthood, their family history in Central Pennsylvania, and their experience growing up and/or living in Central Pennsylvania.⁵ In addition to ethnographic interviews, I also used direct quotations from memoirs, largely those of deceased community members, and short stories, largely those of current community members, to encapsulate the experiences of Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania.

Research Questions

- How are Jewish individuals and/or communities remembered in Central Pennsylvania?
- How, and to what degree, are Jewish community members and Jewish landmarks (i.e., Jewish cemeteries) incorporated into the larger historical narrative of both the region and individual towns?
- How do the histories and experiences of these Jewish communities compare with general trends about small-town Jewish life?

Historiography of Jewish Central Pennsylvania Life

⁵ See an example set of interview questions in Appendix A.

While various documents about members of Central Pennsylvania's Jewish community, including immigration documents, business advertisements, deeds, and obituaries, existed prior to the 1950s, the earliest books and documents I found recording the history of specific Jewish communities and events in the region were published in the early 1950s. The earliest book I found about Jewish Central Pennsylvania is the American Jewish Historical Society's *Aaron Levy, Founder of Aaronsburg* from 1951. The book documented the life of Aaronsburg's Jewish founder, Aaron Levy, and the Aaronsburg Story, an event in 1949 celebrating Aaronsburg's founding and religious tolerance. A second book about Aaronsburg and the Aaronsburg Story, *The Aaronsburg Story*, written by Arthur H. Lewis, one of the organizers of the Aaronsburg Story event, was published in 1955. Aaronsburg, however, never had a Jewish community.

The earliest published history I found about a specific Central Pennsylvania Jewish community is the Beth Yehuda Congregation's *Dedication Book* from 1952. The book included information about the initial settlement and early history of the Jewish community of Lock Haven and others located in Clinton County. The history ended with dedication of Beth Yehuda, Lock Haven's third and final synagogue, in 1952. Benjamin Hirsh's earlier *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son: Biography of the Hirsh-Sykes Families* from 1951 served as a main source of information for the 1952 *Dedication Book*, however, Hirsh's book focused more heavily on the history of the Hirsh-Sykes families in Clinton County and Lycoming County than as a history of the Lock Haven Jewish community in general. In the 1960s, Aaron Claster's *The Jews in Clinton County: An Address Before the Historical Society* in 1967 and an unknown author's *Notes from Sam Claster* in 1968 included other early attempts at documenting the Jewish history of Clinton

County as well as the specific contributions of the Claster family to the Lock Haven Jewish community.⁶

Nathan Krauss's *History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County* in 1976, later republished in 2004 by Aaron, Lewis, & Paul with excerpts from both Beth Yehuda's 1952 *Dedication Book* and Benjamin Hirsh's 1951 *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son: Biography of the Hirsh-Sykes Families*, represented the first known published document compiling the Jewish history of Centre County. His research drew upon the information from the earlier Beth Yehuda *Dedication Book*, Hirsh's *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son: Biography of the Hirsh-Sykes Families*, and other unknown sources to document the Jewish history of the greater Central Pennsylvania region, including the communities of Lock Haven, Bellefonte, and State College. Unlike earlier works, which focused exclusively on Jewish Lock Haven, Krauss' research documented a more comprehensive history of the region's Jewish communities.

Nearly fifty years later, the number of historical documents dedicated to the Jewish history of Central Pennsylvania has increased from roughly five to eighteen. The new documents include memoirs of past and present Jewish community members, publications from Central Pennsylvania congregations, and research from both Central Pennsylvania residents and non-residents.⁷ The first known document depicting the history of Philipsburg's Jewish history

⁶ This list of early books about Jewish Central Pennsylvania excludes any dedication booklets or documents about Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities outside of my study population, such as those in Williamsport and Harrisburg.

⁷ I found the following works have been published since 1976 about Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania: Nathan Krauss and Daniel Walden's *A Brief History of the Jewish Community of Bellefonte-State College and Its Evolution into the Bellefonte-State College Jewish Community Council* from 1983; Beth Yehuda Congregation's *Anniversary Booklet* in 1988; Louis Michael's memoir *When I Remember* from 1990; Bernard Navasky's memoir *Suits to Nuts* from 1991; Abraham Lipez's memoir *Recollections of a County* from 1993; Centre County Genealogical Society's *The Cemeteries of Benner and Spring Townships, Centre County, Pennsylvania* from 1996, which includes information about the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte; Aaron, Lewis, & Paul, ed., *Early History & Biography of Jewish Families of Central Pennsylvania Cities: Lock Haven, State College, and Lewistown* from 2004, which includes excerpts from Nathan Krauss's *History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County*, Beth Yehuda's 1952 *Dedication Book*, and Benjamin Hirsh's *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*; Nadine Kofman's *50th Anniversary*:

emerged during this time, Elaine Navasky Ziff's *A History of the Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA*, written in 2015 for that year's Philipsburg Historical Foundation's annual dinner, which was focused on Philipsburg's Jewish heritage. None of these more recent documents, however, have included a comprehensive history of the region's Jewish communities. The newer publications largely focus on the experiences of community members and the history of Jewish landmarks in one specific Central Pennsylvania community, not the greater area.

Stan Lembeck and Holly Mollo, members of the Agudath Achim congregation in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, however, launched the Center for the Study of Jewish Life in Central Pennsylvania in the early 2010s to collect artifacts and oral histories from Jewish communities in Central Pennsylvania. A partnership between Agudath Achim, Juniata College, Juniata College Hillel, and the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati was formed with the organization's archives housed at Juniata College. The organization marked the first concerted efforts to compile the region's Jewish history, but it has focused more on archiving rather than producing documents about the region's Jewish history.⁸ Since no comprehensive history of the Jewish communities of Central Pennsylvania exists, the

Congregation Brit Shalom from 2006; Clinton County Genealogical Society's *The Cemeteries of Allison Township, Castanea Township, Flemington Borough and the City of Lock Haven* from 2008, which includes information about the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven; Centre County Genealogical Society's *The Cemeteries of Rush Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania* from 2010, which includes information about the Sons of Israel Cemetery in Philipsburg; Julian H. Preisler *The Synagogues of Central and Western Pennsylvania: A Visual Journey* from 2014; Elaine Navasky Ziff's *A History of the Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA* from 2015; Mimi Barash Coppersmith's memoir *Eat First, Cry Later: The Life Lessons of a First-Generation College Graduate* from 2018. This list excludes any dedication booklets and documentation exclusively about Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities outside of my study population, such as Williamsport and Harrisburg.

⁸ Toby Tabachnick, "Huntingdon Co. Center to Preserve Central PA Jewish History," *Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle*, January 25, 2012, <https://jewishchronicle.timesofisrael.com/huntingdon-co-center-to-preserve-central-pa-jewish-history/>.

purpose of this study is to create a document compiling the Jewish histories of Central Pennsylvania.

Historical Background

Jewish Immigration and Settlement in the U.S.

The first permanent Jewish settlers arrived in North America at New Amsterdam, modern-day New York City, in 1654. Predominately of Sephardic origin, they were refugees from Brazil fleeing the arrival of the Portuguese and, subsequently, the Spanish Inquisition, which expelled Jewish communities from the Iberian Peninsula and targeted lapsed Christians. Early Jewish settlers in North America lived in five major port cities, New York City, Newport, Philadelphia, Charlestown, and Savannah, and worked as merchants. The U.S. Jewish population remained relatively low until the arrival of Central European Jewish immigrants in the early and mid-1880s.⁹

Central European Jewish immigrants increased the American Jewish population from approximately 3,000 in 1820 to 250,000 in 1880. These immigrants were largely young Jewish men and women with few resources and little education escaping repressive laws and governments in Central Europe. Unlike earlier Jewish immigrants, Central European Jews migrated beyond the major cities of the Eastern seaboard and sought economic opportunities in the Mid-West, South, and West.¹⁰ These economic opportunities included peddling, or servicing rural homes and areas with goods and housewares. If successful, a peddler would make enough

⁹ American Jewish Historical Society, *American Jewish: Desk Reference* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1999), 1-2.

¹⁰ American Jewish Historical Society, *American Jewish*, 6.

profit to invest back into their business, such as purchasing a horse or wagon to carry more goods, and eventually have enough capital to open their own store.¹¹

Following the waves of Central European Jewish immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, from 1880 to 1924, more than two million Jewish immigrants arrived in the U.S. from Eastern Europe. Predominately from the Russian Empire, Jewish Eastern European immigrants were escaping pogroms, state sanctioned violence, and conscription in the army. They immigrated to the U.S. for economic and religious freedoms. Similar to earlier Central European Jewish immigrants, Jewish Eastern European immigrants were unskilled laborers and worked as peddlers or in factories. As a result, they settled in major metropolitan areas, like New York City, where they often worked as unskilled laborers, as well as in small-town communities in the Mid-West, South, and West, where they often worked first as peddlers and later as merchants. The implementation of quota-based immigration policies in 1921 and 1924, however, ended these waves of Jewish Eastern European immigrants arriving in the U.S.¹²

Previous Scholarly Work

Historiography of American Jewish History

The formal study of American Jewish history began in the mid-twentieth century. It, however, predominately focused on the history of large and midsized American cities with significant Jewish populations, like Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia. In the 1990s, some historians of American Jewish history, such as Lance Sussman and Ewa Morawska, began

¹¹ Nathan Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," in *Early History & Biography of Jewish Families of Central Pennsylvania Cities: Lock Haven, State College, and Lewistown*, ed. Aaron, Lewis, & Paul, (Self-published: Self-published, 2004), 34-35.

¹² American Jewish Historical Society, *American Jewish*, 12 and 21.

researching smaller Jewish communities, including Binghamton, New York, and Johnstown, Pennsylvania, respectively. Historian Lee Shai Weissbach, one of the pioneer researchers in small-town American Jewish history, acknowledged Sussman and Morawska's research as a shift away from large cities as the predominant focus in American Jewish history, but he argued their research populations continued to focus on large Jewish communities. He saw small-town Jewish communities, which he defined as towns with Jewish populations between 100 and 1,000 people, as underrepresented in American Jewish research.¹³

In addition to the absence of small-town Jewish communities in early American Jewish historical research, small-town Jewish histories were also absent in greater bodies of American historical and sociological research. Early twentieth century American historians and sociologists, for example, focused extensively on small-town America. These researchers, however, commonly selected their communities based on whether they considered the community to be "authentically" American, which usually resulted in communities of focus with homogeneous populations of predominately white, native-born Americans, with little to no ethnic, religious, or racial diversity.¹⁴ As a result, in the twentieth century, small-town Jewish communities were excluded from bodies of both American Jewish and American historical and sociological research.

Informally, the study of small-town Jewish history emerged independently in various Jewish communities in the twentieth century with the writing of congregational histories and local Jewish histories. Few if any of these documents, however, circulated beyond their community of origin. Paired with the lack of focus on small-town Jewish communities in greater

¹³ Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 3.

¹⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 6-7.

bodies of historical work, no comprehensive document or book focusing on the shared experiences of small-town Jewish communities emerged before the 2000s.¹⁵ Weissbach, emeritus professor of history at the University of Louisville, was one of the first researchers to focus on small-town Jewish life. He published one of the first books on the subject, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*, in 2005.¹⁶ An earlier work by Dr. Howard V. Epstein, associate professor emeritus from the University System of Georgia and chairperson of the Georgia State University Social Work department, *Jews in Small Towns: Legends and Legacies*, compiled more than 140 stories of small-town Jewish life from twenty-seven U.S. states and Canada, but the book provided no broader analysis of small-town Jewish life.¹⁷

Jewish Life in Small-Town America vs. American Cities

Weissbach's *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* and additional articles, however, analyzed small-town Jewish life for broader trends and experiences. He argued small-town Jewish life was not merely "miniature versions" of Jewish life in large American cities. He found Jews living in small towns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as more likely to be integrated into their larger community than Jews living in American cities. Weissbach theorized the primary reason for this variation was due to the greater degree of difficulty Jews in small towns faced in maintaining a strict observance of Jewish Orthodox traditions.¹⁸

¹⁵ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 3-4.

¹⁶ Shalom Berger, "Passing of Prof. Lee Shai Weissbach," *H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online*, October 2, 2022, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28655/discussions/11097917/passing-prof-lee-shai-weissbach>.

¹⁷ "Dr. Howard V. Epstein," *The Logan Daily News*, April 17, 2015, https://www.logandaily.com/obituaries/dr-howard-v-epstein/article_64179c11-7022-562c-b907-c6bb1d5ec73e.html.

¹⁸ Lee Shai Weissbach, "Religion and Secularism in America's Small-Town Jewish Communities," *Revue Française d'études Américaines*, no. 141 (2014): 96.

Economic opportunities, for example, specifically the prospect of becoming a business owner, attracted many Jewish immigrants to small towns, but the functioning of Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as the main shopping day in these communities forced Jewish merchants to work on Saturdays to maintain their livelihood. As a result, few Jewish merchants could uphold the Jewish Orthodox tradition of not working on the Sabbath.¹⁹ The small size of these Jewish communities and the need for Jewish men to work throughout the week also prevented these small Jewish communities from reaching the required *minyan*, the requirement of ten adult men to hold a religious service, for daily prayer services, and even sometimes Shabbat services, another component of Jewish Orthodox practices. The observance of *kashrut*, or kosher, Jewish dietary laws, also proved challenging in small towns. Many early Jewish immigrants in small towns formed networks to supply kosher meats to their communities, but as these early generations died out, younger generations tended to stop observing Jewish dietary laws.²⁰ Both the altering and shedding of various Jewish religious traditions in small-town America for economic and geographic purposes allowed small town Jewish community members to better integrate within their larger community than Jews living in cities.

While Weissbach found small-town Jewish communities to be more integrated into their larger community than urban Jewish communities, small-town Jewish communities continued to be othered.²¹ To lessen their reception as an “other,” Weissbach argued Jews living in small towns altered or hid certain Jewish traditions. For example, the decision to work on the Sabbath, aside from being financially beneficial, might have also been a mechanism for Jewish merchants

¹⁹ Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 98.

²⁰ Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 99.

²¹ Susan M. Chambré, review of *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*, by Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Book Council*, May 14, 2012, <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/book/jewish-life-in-small-town-america-a-history>.

to avoid what historian Hal Rothman called “the mortifying experience” of Jews having to explain the Jewish calendar to non-Jews. Instead of performing certain Shabbat activities, such as not working, which would produce a visual distinction between a community’s Jewish minority and the Christian majority, Jewish community members in small towns might have decided to not participate in certain Jewish traditions to minimize their potential othering.²²

Unlike large American cities, which allowed Jewish Americans to engage with their Jewishness in various institutions and organizations, both religious and secular, the lack of Jewish institutions in small towns also limited the ability for Jews in small towns to secularize. Weissbach argued the presence of only one Jewish “address” in small towns, usually a synagogue, forced Jews to engage with their Jewish identity within a religious context.²³ For example, the organization of Jewish groups, such as B’nai B’rith, a Jewish men’s organization, and Hadassah, a Jewish women’s organization, in small town synagogues, rather than separate, non-religious Jewish organizations, combined the functions of small town synagogues with Jewish Community Centers (JCC). This allowed synagogues to emerge as the “...central, dominant institution of small-town Jewish life.” It also limited the ability for small-town Jewish community members to find places to express their collective Jewish identities outside of a religious context.²⁴ The limitation of Jewish religious expression, both in sustaining Jewish Orthodoxy and limiting Jewish secularism in small towns, led some community members to leave their small communities in favor of cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.²⁵

²² Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 99.

²³ Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 100.

²⁴ Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 101.

²⁵ Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 102-103.

By the mid-twentieth century, many small-town Jewish communities began disappearing while Jewish life in cities remained. The decline, and in many cases, disappearance, of small-town Jewish communities during this period resulted from the emergence of chain stores, which harmed small town Jewish businesses, and the moving away of younger generations of Jews for college, many of whom ultimately decided not to return.²⁶

To Weissbach, the small-town Jewish communities who remained in small-town America differed in character from earlier small-town Jewish communities. He noted the existence of the internet and interstate highways as allowing small-town Jewish communities to be more closely connected to larger Jewish communities in other areas of the U.S. than ever before.²⁷ The Center for Small Town Jewish Life in Waterville, Maine, for example, seeks to support their local Jewish community as well as connect “...isolated Jewish communities to global Jewish resources and to building a vibrant network of connections among small-town Jewish communities in the United States, Israel, and the global Diaspora.”²⁸

Patterns of Jewish Life in Small-Town America

Aside from noting differences between Jewish life in American small towns and cities, Weissbach’s research found trends in settlement, stability and mobility, livelihood and class, family life, congregational organization, synagogue history, religious leadership, culture, and prejudice and transformation among different small-town Jewish communities.

Settlement

²⁶ Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 103.

²⁷ Weissbach, “Religion and Secularism,” 103-104.

²⁸ “About,” Center for Small Town Jewish Life, Colby College, n.d., <https://jewishlife.colby.edu/about/>.

In his research of settlement patterns, Weissbach found early Jewish immigrants, often of Central European decent, settled in areas with no established Jewish communities. Isolated from other Jews, some early Jewish settlers stopped maintaining Jewish practices. For unmarried men, this meant marrying a non-Jewish woman and more than likely raising their children as Christians.²⁹ Some early Jewish settlers, however, continued practicing Judaism. They established early Jewish organizations, such as benevolent societies, which helped care for the sick in their communities and organized Jewish burials. While early small-town Jewish communities and benevolent societies might have organized informal holiday and prayer services, formal synagogues were typically established in small American towns closer to the turn of the twentieth century by Eastern European Jewish immigrants.³⁰

The presence of a single Jew in a small American town, however, could sponsor “chain migration,” the process of entire families and social groups immigrating from the same area in their country of origin to the same area in their destination country. These early Jewish immigrants, whether Central or Eastern European, served as valuable sources of information for their families and friends about prospective employment opportunities. Some also helped fund the immigration of their family and friends.³¹ These “chain migration” patterns helped reinforce familial and communal relationships within emerging Jewish communities as community members could marry within the faith if enough Jewish community members inhabited the town or the surrounding area.³²

²⁹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 37-39.

³⁰ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 39-40.

³¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 45.

³² Lee Shai Weissbach, “Community and Subcommunity in Small-Town America, 1880-1950,” *Jewish History* 15, no. 2 (2001): 109.

Weissbach found the development of significant Jewish populations in small towns as largely the product of Eastern European Jewish immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century rather than the result of early Central European Jewish immigration in the mid-nineteenth century. The large influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, for example, increased the Jewish population of small American towns, which were often declining or had completely disappeared during this time. Eastern European Jewish populations also helped establish permanent Jewish religious and cultural organizations in these communities, such as synagogues, which seldomly emerged during the height of Central European Jewish communities in small-town America.³³ By the late 1920s, small Jewish communities outnumbered the Jewish communities in large American cities. Pennsylvania, for example, had eighty-four small town communities with more than 100 Jewish residents each.³⁴

Stability and Mobility

Weissbach found the vitality of small-town Jewish communities to often be linked with the economic success of the overall town. The available economic opportunities drawing Jewish settlers and their extended social networks to these areas tended to follow patterns of boom and bust. In times of economic success, for example, small-town Jewish communities took advantage of these successes and often increased in size. During periods of economic decline, even temporarily, these Jewish communities tended to disappear or rapidly decrease in size. These latter communities, however, could reemerge and increase in size as economic conditions improved.³⁵

³³ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 53-65.

³⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 69.

³⁵ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 49 and 87.

While most small-town Jewish communities had the consistent presence of several well-established Jewish families and lay leaders, the Jewish population of these communities were constantly influx.³⁶ The largest source of outmigration from these communities were the children of first-generation immigrants, who frequently sought economic opportunities elsewhere and moved to distant cities or larger Jewish communities nearby.³⁷ In their absence, however, Jewish immigrants and Jews from nearby communities continued to migrate to small American towns until the mid-twentieth century. The presence of new Jewish community members in these towns helped more established Jewish community members feel less isolated from centers of Jewish life in the U.S. as they continuously encountered new Jewish community members and new elements of Jewish culture. This was especially prevalent during the influx of Eastern European Jewish settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to small towns. As these new Eastern European immigrants arrived, their ideologies and culture influenced the existing Central European Jewish populations.³⁸

Livelihood and Class

According to Weissbach, Jewish communities in large American cities had more diverse economic pursuits than Jewish community members in small towns. In the early twentieth century, a highly visible Jewish working class, primarily comprised of manufacturing workers, existed in American cities. In small towns, however, Jewish community members tended to become members of the middle-class. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for example, nearly every Jewish family in small towns were engaged in business, either as a

³⁶ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 78-79.

³⁷ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 85 and 87.

³⁸ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 92-93.

retailer, wholesaler, or an artisan.³⁹ To finance their business ventures, many small-town Jewish community members began working in more “lowly” pursuits, such as collecting junk, scrap metal, paper, rags, and animal furs. These business ventures, particularly junk collecting, required little start-up investment and allowed a certain level of independence, especially in scheduling, which allowed some Orthodox community members to not work on the Sabbath.⁴⁰ Small towns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were ideal for starting and expanding one’s business because the U.S.’ population growth and increasingly segmented economy allowed small towns to emerge as important centers for trade and commerce not only in their community but also in the surrounding area.⁴¹

Jewish community members commonly engaged in selling necessities, such as clothing, dry goods, shoes, furniture, and hardware. They often catered to underserved audiences, primarily lower socioeconomic classes, because stocking lower priced items lowered the needed capital to invest in their business.⁴² According to Weissbach, small-town communities, however, often featured at least one Jewish-owned mainstream department store.⁴³ Jewish stores often bore the names of their owners, which reinforced the visibility of Jewish mercantile families in small communities. Some store names also included the city where they imported their goods to give their businesses a cosmopolitan feel and indicate their store stayed up to date with current trends and fashions.⁴⁴

³⁹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 95-96 and 117.

⁴⁰ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 109.

⁴¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 98.

⁴² Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 99.

⁴³ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 100.

⁴⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 101-102.

Weissbach predicted the Jewish population in many small-town communities comprised an estimated 2% of the total population, but their large presence in business made community members overemphasize their role within the local economy. Weissbach, for example, noted the common belief in small towns that Jews monopolized the local market for all goods and services. While he noted Jewish community members might have been overrepresented in the sale of certain goods and services, they did not monopolize all aspects of the local economy.⁴⁵ Around the turn of the twentieth century, Jewish professionals, such as lawyers, physicians, and journalists, began working in small towns. Additionally, in small college towns, Jewish faculty members appeared.⁴⁶

Family Life

The immigration of large segments of Jewish families through “chain immigration” quickly made small towns enclaves of Jewish families.⁴⁷ Weissbach found Jewish family interaction and living arrangements in small towns commonly involved family members beyond the nuclear family. These family configurations often included parents, children, and siblings, the former included widowed parents and the latter frequently included unmarried adult children and siblings.⁴⁸ In Weissbach’s study, he found no more than five non-married Jewish individuals lived on their own without another family member in 1880 and 1920.⁴⁹ Extended Jewish families in small towns sometimes included up to four generations.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 106-107.

⁴⁶ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 123.

⁴⁷ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 127.

⁴⁸ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 130-131.

⁴⁹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 130.

⁵⁰ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 130-131.

Within Jewish families in small towns, Weissbach found a “separate spheres” philosophy supported by census records where Jewish men were listed as working while their wives had no profession listed, aside from occasionally housekeeping. Weissbach predicted, however, that Jewish women were likely more involved in their husband’s businesses than existing documentation indicates. The role of Jewish women in business, however, is likely more prevalent following the death of her husband, when wives commonly took charge of the family business.⁵¹

According to Weissbach, potential marriage matches were of great concern to Jewish parents. Small pools of eligible Jewish partners limited the number of available matches in small town communities. Some young single Jews also became averse to marrying someone within their small-town Jewish community because they grew up with all the potential matches and sometimes saw them more like a sibling than a potential spouse. Jewish women, who were commonly unattached to their family’s business, had greater mobility to marry Jewish men from other communities. Small-town Jewish men, however, who were often tied to their family businesses, had less mobility to find a spouse. A desire among Jewish men to date women younger than themselves oftentimes made the pool of eligible wives even smaller. As a result, even though Jews in small towns desired marriage, some never married.⁵²

Additionally, the difficulty in finding a Jewish spouse sometimes led small-town Jewish community members, more commonly men, to marry non-Jews. In these inter-faith marriages, unlike early inter-faith marriages between Central European Jews and gentiles, Jews commonly maintained their Jewish identity, such as continuing to attend synagogue, possibly with their

⁵¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 134-135.

⁵² Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 142.

non-Jewish spouse. Weissbach theorized the support for inter-faith marriages might have arisen because there was a chance the inter-faith couple's child(ren) would be raised Jewish while their children not marrying anyone would prevent any possible Jewish children from being born, possibly threatening the small-town's Jewish community with extinction.⁵³ Weissbach estimated the inter-faith marriage rate in the Northern U.S. in 1904 as approximately 5%. Inter-faith marriage was more common, however, among Reform Central European Jews than Jews of Eastern European descent.⁵⁴

To encourage their children to marry within the faith, which was more ideal, Jewish families exposed their children to eligible Jewish partners in other towns. This included taking their children of eligible marrying age on trips to visit family in other areas, sending their children to live with out-of-town family members for a period of time, taking them on buying or other business-related trips, or organizing social gatherings with Jews from nearby communities.⁵⁵ Attending university also gave Jewish children the opportunity to meet and engage with eligible Jewish partners.⁵⁶

Congregational Organization

Unlike cities, which allowed Jewish community members to engage with Judaism and the larger Jewish community in various facets of their life, engagement between Jewish community members in small towns were often limited to the synagogue. Without Jewish congregations, Weissbach found small-town Jewish communities had difficulty maintaining their Jewish

⁵³ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 143.

⁵⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 144-145.

⁵⁵ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 146-147.

⁵⁶ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 151.

communal identity. Small Jewish communities tended to form congregations as soon as the Jewish community had enough members to maintain it.⁵⁷

Weissbach's found Eastern European Jewish immigrants overwhelming formed small-town Jewish congregations rather than earlier Central European Jews. The arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants to small towns often led to the formation of specific Jewish religious and communal institutions, such as cemeteries, free loan societies, *mikvah* (a Jewish ritual bath), and provisions to obtain kosher foods.⁵⁸ In communities with no existing Central European Jewish populations, Weissbach found congregations typically followed Orthodox traditions with no consideration for Reform practices. In communities with mixed Jewish populations, however, Orthodox Eastern European congregations attempted to incorporate elements of Reform practices to be inclusive to Central European Jews.⁵⁹

In some small-town Jewish communities, Weissbach found communal divisions persisted between communities with multiple congregations, often split between Reform and traditional Orthodox practices. Even in situations where low membership in both congregations could have promoted an effort to combine congregations, animosity between followers of Reform and Orthodox Judaism prevented the two groups from compromising and creating a single congregation.⁶⁰ Weissbach, however, found population size as a main indicator of whether Jewish communities could support more than one synagogue. In communities with smaller triple-digit populations, for example, they could only feasibly support one congregation while larger triple-digit populations could possibly support more than one. Weissbach predicted the

⁵⁷ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 157.

⁵⁸ Weissbach, "Community and Subcommunity," 109.

⁵⁹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 163-164.

⁶⁰ Weissbach, "Community and Subcommunity," 112-114.

difference between a town being able to support one or two congregations often differed by two hundred people.⁶¹

Synagogue History

Small-town Jewish community members, before the creation of formal synagogues, often met informally in the homes or stores of community leaders. Overtime, however, these informal gatherings often upgraded to rented halls and semipermanent meeting spaces. These spaces encouraged Jewish community members to create permanent spaces for their congregants to meet.⁶² Weissbach found a formal congregational space symbolized the permanence of a town's Jewish community among the town's other religious institutions.⁶³

As, oftentimes, the only Jewish space in the community, synagogues served more than just a religious function to community members. They served as spaces to support Jewish organizations, such as B'nai B'rith and Hadassah, and secular ones, like Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. Even if communities could support separate spaces to host social gatherings outside the synagogue, Weissbach argued they typically had symbiotic relationships with the community's synagogue and supported certain religious functions, such as Sunday school.⁶⁴

While many small-town Jewish synagogues were founded as Orthodox congregations, by the middle of the twentieth century, small-town Jewish congregations increasingly shifted away from Orthodox traditions. The increasing presence of ideals regarding liberalization and Americanization in small-town Jewish communities, as well as sentiments among small-town

⁶¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 175.

⁶² Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 178-179.

⁶³ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 180-181.

⁶⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 186-187 and 193.

Jewish communities to eliminate elements of Judaism that might be deemed as too “exotic” within the greater non-Jewish community, led to shifts in religious traditions from Orthodox Judaism to Reform Judaism.⁶⁵ These shifts, however, did not always lead directly to Reform Judaism. Some small-town congregations first transitioned to Conservative Judaism in the mid-twentieth century before later transitioning to Reform practices.⁶⁶

Religious Leadership

Within early small-town Jewish communities, lay leaders often fulfilled the roles of rabbis when their congregations lacked one. While Jewish religious law does not require congregations to have a rabbi, Weissbach found many small-town Jewish communities perceived their congregations as incomplete without one. Rabbis were especially important in Reform congregations, who saw rabbis as a visible Jewish leader within the town and served an important public outreach role with other religious leaders in town.⁶⁷

Weissbach found many rabbis were reluctant to settle in small-towns and served short-terms within these communities. This high turnover rate was especially prevalent because small-town Jewish communities often struggled to raise adequate funds to pay rabbis, disputes arose between rabbinical and lay leaders, and rabbis sought advancement and pursued more prestigious posts in more population areas.⁶⁸

By the beginning of the twentieth century, small-town Jewish communities increasingly turned to rabbinical schools for student rabbis. The number of available rabbinical students,

⁶⁵ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 188 and 192.

⁶⁶ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 195.

⁶⁷ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 199-200.

⁶⁸ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 209-211.

however, was limited. Weissbach found the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati the most willing to send rabbinical students to small-town Jewish communities. Without consistent religious leadership, small-town Jewish communities developed mechanisms to continue to support their religious needs. Some relied on specific laymen within the Jewish community, such as Hebrew teachers and kosher butchers, to lead their religious services or permanent rabbis located in nearby Jewish communities to lead high holidays or special events.⁶⁹

Central European and Eastern European Jewish Culture

For early Central European Jewish immigrants, Weissbach found they largely sought acculturation and entry into the middle-class upon their settlement in small-town America. While Jewish men and women in these communities created and maintained ties to both local and national Jewish organizations, they often became involved with the civic, cultural, and political affairs of the larger community, including the joining of local fraternal lodges and serving as local elected officials.⁷⁰

Central European Jewish immigrants increasingly discarded distinctive Jewish practices, such as maintaining Jewish dietary laws, working on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, and adopted Christian beliefs and practices, particularly allowing inter-faith children to be raised Christian.⁷¹ While Central European Jewish community members discarded elements of their identity making them distinctively Jewish, anti-Jewish sentiments in small-towns paired with the presence of familial and social networks linking Central European Jews to one another in these

⁶⁹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 214-216 and 219.

⁷⁰ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 221-222 and 229.

⁷¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 227-228.

communities led to persisting notions of Jewish community members constituting a distinctive and separate religious and cultural identity from non-Jewish residents.⁷²

While some parallels existed between the integration of Central European Jewish and Eastern European Jewish immigrants in small-town America, Weissbach found Eastern European Jews commonly formed their own separate cultural institutions from earlier Central European Jewish immigrants. This included, in some cases, the creation of separate congregations and burial grounds based on Orthodox traditions rather than those of Reform Judaism. It also included the development of Jewish ritual baths, *mikvah*, and a means to secure kosher meats.⁷³ The development of both these new and separate institutions allowed Eastern European Jewish community members to support their religiosity without offending "...their [own] religious standards and their cultural sensibilities."⁷⁴ Eastern European Jews were also more likely to form separate social organizations because they found it difficult to identify with Central European Jews and, oftentimes, Central European Jews also found the newer Eastern European Jewish immigrants as "uncomfortable."⁷⁵

While Central European and Eastern European Jewish community members shared similar professions, Weissbach found the use of Yiddish within Eastern European Jewish homes and communities as a way community members reinforced their distinct ethnic identity from both Central European Jews and non-Jews.⁷⁶ While Yiddish culture in small towns did not reach

⁷² Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 232.

⁷³ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 248 and 250-251.

⁷⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 249.

⁷⁵ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 152.

⁷⁶ Weissbach, "Community and Subcommunity," 110.

the heights they did in large cities, Yiddish newspapers circulated in small towns and communities often adopted it within religious services.⁷⁷

Prejudice and Transformation

According to Weissbach, the acculturation of many Central European Jewish community members into the dominant culture of small-town communities helped community members view Jews as integral members of the community's social fabric. Both Central European and Eastern European Jewish community members, however, experienced antisemitism in small-town communities. Eastern European Jews, especially, who were more likely to maintain Jewish traditional practices, felt higher degrees of prejudice. These sentiments typically stemmed from lingering anti-Jewish stereotypes, resentment toward Jewish community members because they primarily worked as middlemen in trade, and an overall perception of Jews as "different," whether they were immigrants or native-born Americans.⁷⁸ Weissbach found antisemitism as generally less pronounced in small-town communities than larger American cities, except for small town Southern communities in periods when the Ku Klux Klan was more active.⁷⁹

Weissbach found antisemitism in small town communities emerged in a variety of settings. For children, antisemitism often occurred in interactions with other students or teachers at school. For adults, "social" antisemitism often manifested in the exclusion of Jewish community members from country clubs or limited membership to a small number of "token" Jews, typically those of Central European backgrounds. More visible instances of antisemitism arose during periods of economic or social crisis and could manifest in antisemitic and racist

⁷⁷ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 267-268.

⁷⁸ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 272 and 274.

⁷⁹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 271.

language, as well as violence, in protests and strikes. Jewish immigrants also faced general xenophobic sentiments in small communities.⁸⁰ Some Jewish community members attempted to lessen antisemitism through the changing or discarding of certain religious traditions to better “blend” into the greater community.⁸¹

Extending the Study of Small-Town Jewish Life to Central Pennsylvania

The Jewish communities of Central Pennsylvania explored in this study follow similar settlement, stability and mobility, livelihood and class, family life, congregational organization, synagogue history, religious leadership, culture, and prejudice and transformation trends Weissbach synthesized about small town American Jewish life. Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities included both Central European Jewish and Eastern European Jewish communities with Central European Jewish settlers arriving in the area around 1840. They often inter-married with Christians and assimilated into the larger community. Later Eastern European Jewish immigrants, who arrived in the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, largely maintained their Jewish identities, created Jewish landmarks and institutions, such as cemeteries and synagogues, and married within the local Jewish community. The history of Aaronsburg, however, the first town in Centre County, Pennsylvania, never included a Jewish population, but was founded by a Jewish merchant and prospector from Western Pennsylvania.

Few remnants, both physical landmarks and public memory, remain in Central Pennsylvania communities to attest to the history and impact of Jewish community members in the region. Only one of the communities in this study still has an active Jewish community. This

⁸⁰ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 276-278.

⁸¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 281.

study intends to not only serve as a document dedicated to preserving the history of Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania, but to also compare the Jewish history of Central Pennsylvania with broader trends in the study of small-town Jewish life.

CHAPTER 2: AARONSBURG

Overview

Unlike the other communities highlighted in this study, Aaronsburg, Pennsylvania, located in western Centre County, has never supported a Jewish community. Aaronsburg, however, was founded by Aaron Levy, a Jewish land speculator and merchant, in 1786. Named after Levy, Aaronsburg is the first town in Pennsylvania, and possibly the U.S., founded and named after someone of Jewish descent.⁸² The town's Jewish origins, however, remained largely unknown outside of Aaronsburg until 1949, over 150 years after it was founded. On October 23, 1949, the Aaronsburg community with the support of Arthur Lewis, an aid to Pennsylvania Governor James Duff, hosted the "Aaronsburg Story," a celebration of Aaronsburg's multi-faith history and Jewish founder. Addressing ongoing religious and racial tensions within the U.S., the Aaronsburg Story served as a demonstration of tolerance among rural American community members and their willingness to interact with people of different backgrounds.⁸³

More than 30,000 people from across Pennsylvania and surrounding states, including special guests like Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and Dr. Channing Tobias, chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attended. The event was memorialized in a Pennsylvania historical marker along Pennsylvania State Route 45 in Aaronsburg on October 23, 1997. An additional marker was placed in the field next to the

⁸² Bernard Postal and Lionel Koppman, *A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954): 532; Cyrus Adler and A. S. W. Rosenbach, "Levy, Aaron," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, n.d., <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9869-levy-aaron>.

⁸³ Sally Heffentreyer, "Aaronsburg Story," *Centre County Historical Society*, updated February 21, 2022, <https://centrehistory.org/article/aaronsburg-story/>; Sally Heffentreyer, "Aaron Levy," *Centre County Historical Society*, updated September 29, 2021, <https://centrehistory.org/article/aaron-levy/>.

Salem Lutheran Church, where the Aaronsburg Story took place, to mark its location.⁸⁴ The founding of Aaronsburg in 1786 marks one of the earliest known events in the Jewish history of Central Pennsylvania and the “Aaronsburg Story” is one of, if not the most, well preserved public events dedicated to the region’s Jewish history.

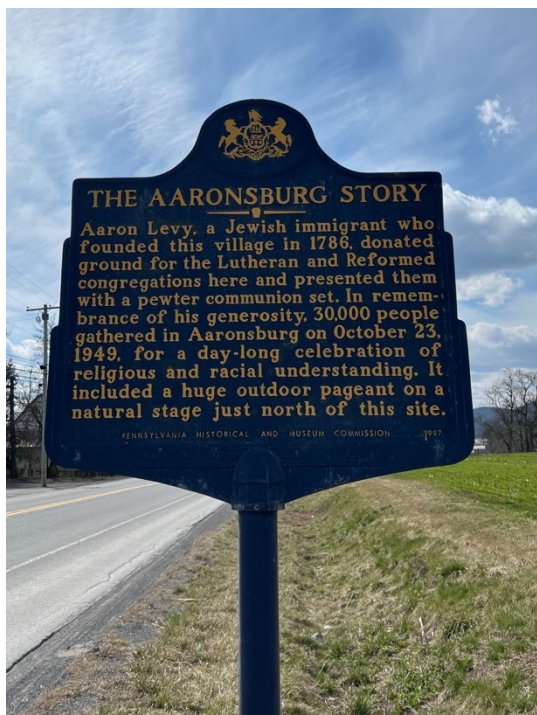


Figure 3: Two historical markers in Aaronsburg, Pennsylvania, about the Aaronsburg Story. The sign on the left is a historical marker along Pennsylvania State Route 45 on the eastern end of Aaronsburg about the Aaronsburg Story. The sign on the right is a marker next to the Aaronsburg Salem Lutheran Church on Chestnut Street, where the Aaronsburg Story took place in 1949.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ “The Aaronsburg Story Historical Marker,” *Explore PA History*, n.d., <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-29>.

⁸⁵ Casey Sennett, *Aaronsburg Historical Marker*, personal photograph, March 29, 2023; Casey Sennett, *The Aaronsburg Story Sign*, personal photograph, March 29, 2023.

Early History

Aaron Levy and the Founding of Aaronsburg

Born in 1742 in the Netherlands, Aaron Levy immigrated to the U.S. in approximately 1760. There is historical debate surrounding whether he was of Sephardic, Central European, or Eastern European Jewish descent. For example, his family's prayerbooks were based on Sephardic traditions, but several family documents were written in Yiddish, a language used by Jewish people in Central and Eastern Europe.⁸⁶

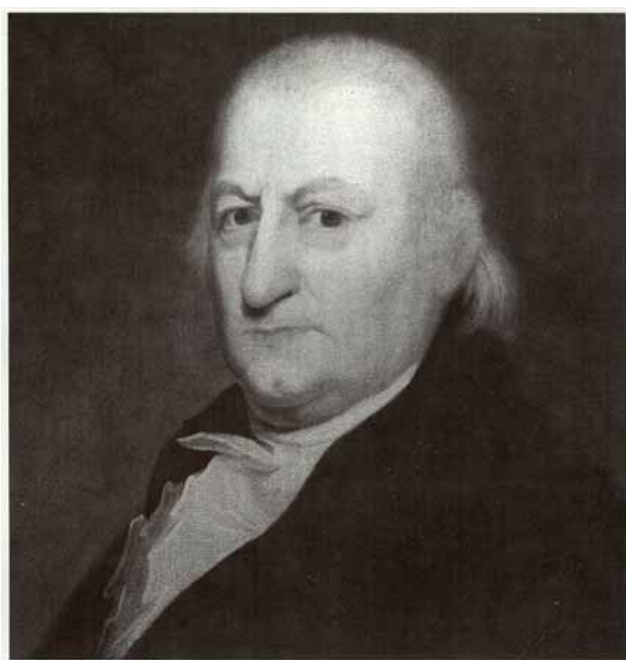


Figure 4: Aaron Levy, founder of Aaronsburg, Pennsylvania.⁸⁷

He first settled in Pennsylvania in either Philadelphia or Lancaster. As early as July 3, 1772, Levy applied to purchase land in the frontier town of Sunbury in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. Over the next few years, he owned nearly 1,000 acres of land in or near Sunbury

⁸⁶ Sidney Fish, *Aaron Levy: Founder of Aaronsburg* (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1951): 1-4; Postal and Koppman, *A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S.*, 532; Heffentreyer, "Aaron Levy."

⁸⁷ *Aaron Levy*, n.d., photograph, Centre County Historical Society, <https://centrehistory.org/article/aaron-levy/>.

and 1,300 acres in Lancaster County.⁸⁸ By the spring of 1774, Levy resided in Northumberland and worked as both a merchant and land speculator.⁸⁹ Levy and his wife, Rachel, left Northumberland around 1778 for Lancaster following the outbreak of the Revolutionary War due to fears of British-led Native American attacks against frontier communities, including Northumberland.⁹⁰

While living in Lancaster, on June 7, 1779, Levy purchased a three hundred thirty-four-and-a-half-acre lot, referred to as the White Thorn Grove, from John Weitzel of Sunbury with adject land granted to Levy from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on April 20, 1783. Located in Penns Valley in Potter Township, approximately thirty miles west of Northumberland, Levy, due to the area's navigable water and projected place on a new highway between Philadelphia and Fort Pitt, later Pittsburgh, envisioned the area as an important trading community for farmers and as the potential seat for a new county.⁹¹ From this lot, he founded a town called "Aaronsburg," reportedly called "Jewstown" in the early years after its founding.⁹² Levy used the town plans of both Sunbury and Northumberland as inspiration while designing Aaronsburg. His design included a central avenue extending north and south, named "Aaron's Square," with a central throughfare extending east and west, "Rachel's Way," named in honor of his wife.⁹³ He divided the town into 612 individual plots with certain plots set aside for schools, houses of worship "of every denomination," and cemeteries to attract settlers.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 4-6.

⁸⁹ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 9-11.

⁹⁰ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 13-14.

⁹¹ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 20-21.

⁹² Fred Kurtz, *Centennial History of Centre County: 1800-1900* (Bellefonte: Centennial Executive Committee, 1900), 27. Available at the Pennsylvania Room at the Centre County Library & Historical Museum.

⁹³ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 22-23.

⁹⁴ Postal and Koppman, *A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S.*, 533.

On May 23, 1786, Levy issued a circular informing the public of his planned town and advertised the distribution of lots through a lottery system. Each ticket cost six dollars with a yearly rent of one dollar. A resident could purchase their land, however, for twenty Spanish silver milled dollars.⁹⁵ After three hundred tickets were sold, the drawing was held in early October of 1786. Aaronsburg's town plans were registered in the Recorder's Office of Northumberland County, on October 4, 1786, making it the first town in Penns Valley. All Aaronsburg's deeds were signed by both Aaron and Rachel Levy, the latter signing in Hebrew, the only language she could write in. By 1799, thirty-two families, predominately of Scotch-Irish and Central European descent, permanently settled in Aaronsburg and a post office opened the following year. Neither Aaron Levy nor his wife ever lived in Aaronsburg.⁹⁶

While Levy had high hopes for Aaronsburg to become the county seat, in August 1800, when Centre County was formed, Bellefonte, located approximately twenty miles from Aaronsburg, was selected as the county seat. The growth of the town was also slow, and some settlers did not pay their land's rent, forcing Levy to take possession of these properties and sue them.⁹⁷ A combination of Aaron and Rachel's advancing age, the amount of time Aaron spent traveling to and from Philadelphia to address land officials and business matters, and potentially the absence of a Jewish community in Northumberland, led both the Levys to move to Philadelphia by 1796. The couple's income, however, largely depended on the revenues from their properties in Northumberland and Aaronsburg. While in Philadelphia, Levy's Central

⁹⁵ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 22-23.

⁹⁶ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 23-24.

⁹⁷ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 25-26.

Pennsylvania affairs fell to his friend, Simon Snyder of Selinsgrove, and in exchange Levy dealt with Snyder's business affairs in Philadelphia.⁹⁸

Aaron Levy died on February 23, 1815. He and Rachel, who preceded him in death on December 23, 1810, were buried at the Mikveh Israel Cemetery in Philadelphia. Aaron and Rachel had one adopted child, Simon Gratz, who served as the administrator of Aaron's estate and inherited nearly all his property.⁹⁹ At the time of Simon Gratz's death in 1839, he had sold most of the land holdings he inherited from Levy.¹⁰⁰

The Founding of the Salem Evangelical Church

On November 16, 1789, Aaron and Rachel Levy donated two plots of land, plots 167 and 168, designated as plots reserved for religious purposes in the original plan of Aaronsburg, to Jacob Stober, Jr., and Michael Mootz. Recorded in Northumberland on November 26, 1789, the land was deeded for the use of the "Members in Communion with the Church commonly called the Lutheran Church." The plots became the site of the Salem Evangelical Church, later the Salem Lutheran Church.¹⁰¹ The cornerstone of the church was laid on May 16, 1794, with Reverend Christian Espich, a neighbor of Levy and an Evangelical Lutheran preacher in Sunbury, conducting the ceremony. A scroll of the church's history was placed under the cornerstone, a copy of which the church still maintains.¹⁰²

At the church's dedication in 1799, Levy presented the congregation with a pewter communion set crafted by William Will of Philadelphia, one of the most recognizable pewterers

⁹⁸ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 33-34.

⁹⁹ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 40, 42, and 44.

¹⁰⁰ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 44-45.

¹⁰¹ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 24.

¹⁰² Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 24.

at the time. Christian community members perceived the offering as a generous gesture of goodwill and brotherhood between Christians and Jews.¹⁰³ In 1914, during the church's remodel, the congregation suggested selling Levy's gift to raise money, but the congregation chose not to because they considered the communion set historically significant.¹⁰⁴

On May 20, 1796, the Levys also granted an additional two plots, numbered 344 and 345 to Adam Harper and Frederick Henney for the use of members of the Calvinist church.¹⁰⁵ Following the death of Aaron and Rachel Levy, their adopted son, Simon, and his brother, Hyman Gratz, sold one lot, number 343, to John Nighdigh and Philips Dingis from the Presbyterian Congregation of Aaronsburg. All three churches in Aaronsburg were built on land either donated or sold from the Levy family or their descendants.¹⁰⁶

The Aaronsburg Story

Discovering the Story

Aaronsburg's Jewish founder was virtually unknown outside of Aaronsburg until the spring of 1945 when Arthur H. Lewis, a journalist and aide to Pennsylvania Governor James H. Duff, traveled through Aaronsburg on his way home in Pittsburgh.¹⁰⁷ He stopped in Aaronsburg after reading a sign on Pennsylvania State Route 45 indicating the town was founded by Aaron Levy.¹⁰⁸ Curious about the presence of a Central Pennsylvania town with a Jewish founder, Lewis asked a nearby resident, insurance salesman Albert "Al" Mingle, about the town's

¹⁰³ Robert Weible, "The Aaronsburg Story," *Pennsylvania Heritage*, 1999, <http://paheritage.wpengine.com/article/aaronsburg-story/>.

¹⁰⁴ Weible, "The Aaronsburg Story."

¹⁰⁵ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 24-25.

¹⁰⁶ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 44-45.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur H. Lewis, *The Aaronsburg Story* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1955): 14.

¹⁰⁸ Heffentreyer, "Aaron Levy."

founding. Mingle, whose great-great grandfather supposedly knew Aaron Levy, told Duff about the town's Jewish founder.¹⁰⁹



Figure 5: The welcome sign located at both the east and west side of Aaronsburg along Pennsylvania State Route 45. This is potentially the sign, or a version of it, Arthur Lewis saw while driving through Aaronsburg in 1945.¹¹⁰

Fascinated by the history, Lewis returned to Aaronsburg later in the week to learn more about Aaronsburg's history and met with Aaronsburg community members, including Reverend Shannon of the Salem Lutheran Church.¹¹¹ To Lewis, "This tiny town, its beautiful setting, its Jewish founder, its attitudes, its mores, the history of Salem Lutheran. In fact, what Aaronsburg represents is so fundamentally American that it should be told everywhere."¹¹² Lewis, with Reverend Shannon's support, wanted to host a celebration in tandem with the Salem Lutheran

¹⁰⁹ Lewis, *The Aaronsburg Story*, 22-23; Heffentreyer, "Aaron Levy."

¹¹⁰ Casey Sennett, *Aaronsburg Welcome Sign*, personal photograph, March 29, 2023.

¹¹¹ Lewis, *The Aaronsburg Story*, 22-23; Heffentreyer, "Aaron Levy."

¹¹² Lewis, *The Aaronsburg Story*, 30.

Church's one hundred and fiftieth anniversary to celebrate Aaron Levy and Aaronsburg's religious tolerance. Upon his return to Harrisburg, Lewis told his boss, Governor Duff, about the town's history and Governor Duff supported Lewis' plans to create a celebration.¹¹³



Figure 6: Reverend Shannon of the Salem Lutheran Church sitting in the Salem Lutheran Cemetery in 1949 preparing for the Aaronsburg Story. The land for both the church and cemetery were donated by Aaron Levy.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Weible, "The Aaronsburg Story."

¹¹⁴ The Pennsylvania State College, *The Land That Levy Gave*, 1949, photograph, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 01196, Photographic Vertical Files, Town and Environs Box 1, Folder: Aaronsburg.

Planning the Story

Lewis, in collaboration with Reverend Shannon, decided the celebration's main event should be a historical pageant about Aaronsburg's history. They recruited William R. Gordon, a professor of rural sociology at the then Pennsylvania State College, to write the three-hour pageant. Titled "The Issue of An Ideal: A Dramatic Ceremony Commemorating the Founding of Aaronsburg," the pageant included nearly 1,500 costumed performers. Actor Cornel Wilde agreed to narrate the pageant.¹¹⁵

In addition to the pageant, the organizers wanted several prominent speakers, including one Catholic, one Jewish, and one African American participant. These speakers included General William J. Donovan, Director of the Office of Strategic Services, now the Central Intelligence Agency, from World War II; United States Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter; and Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, Mediator of the United Nations Palestine Commission, who won a Nobel Peace Prize the following year. They later added Dan Poling, editor of the *Christian Herald*, as a speaker for Protestant representation.¹¹⁶

The event included the participation and assistance of nearly every local civic organization, such as the Kiwanis Clubs and volunteer fire companies, as well as state and national organizations, such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews and B'nai B'rith.¹¹⁷ The vice chairman of the planning committee, former Presbyterian minister J.W. Claudy, was the warden of the Western State Penitentiary in Pittsburgh at the time, and used a group of inmates to coordinate the committee's correspondences. The committee also worked to

¹¹⁵ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, vii; O.M. Ostlund, Jr. "Aaronsburg: Birthplace of an American Ideal," *Grit News Section*, July 19, 1981, 32; Weible, "The Aaronsburg Story."

¹¹⁶ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, viii-ix; Weible, "The Aaronsburg Story."

¹¹⁷ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, vii; Weible, "The Aaronsburg Story."

attract news organizations, such as local papers, like the *Centre Daily Times*, as well as national papers, such as *The New York Times*, *New York Herald-Tribune*, *Philadelphia Inquiry*, and *Boston Post*.¹¹⁸



Figure 7: Reverend Shannon of the Salem Lutheran Church (center) with S. Ward Gramley, co-chairman of the observance, (left) and A. E. Mingle, a church trustee, (right) looking over the proposed layout of the amphitheater for the Aaronsburg Story pageant. The Salem Lutheran Church is visible in the upper-left corner of the photograph.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, viii-ix; Weible, "The Aaronsburg Story."

¹¹⁹ The Pennsylvania State College, *Looking Over the Layout*, 1949, photograph, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 01196, Photographic Vertical Files, Town and Environs Box 1, Folder: Aaronsburg.

The Story

In the 1950 census record, an estimated 321 people lived in Aaronsburg.¹²⁰ Lewis anticipated an additional 5,000 people would come to Aaronsburg for the event, but on October 22, 1949, the day before the event, the number seemed unlikely. On October 22, high winds and rain swept through Aaronsburg and destroyed the stage settings, decorations, electrical wires, and tents for the event. The organizers were worried the speakers would be unable to fly into the State College airport, which had no paved runways at the time. They considered canceling the event, but community members of Aaronsburg worked throughout the night to repair the storm damage. On October 23, 1949, more than 30,000 people from Central Pennsylvania and the surrounding area joined the residents of Aaronsburg for “The Aaronsburg Story.”¹²¹



Figure 8: The Salem Lutheran Church in 1949.¹²²

¹²⁰ Lewis, *The Aaronsburg Story*, 13.

¹²¹ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, vii; Weible, “The Aaronsburg Story.”

¹²² The Pennsylvania State College, *Salem Lutheran Church, Aaronsburg*, 1949, photograph, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 01196, Photographic Vertical Files, Town and Environs Box 1, Folder: Aaronsburg.

At 8:45am, the event began with a worship service at the Salem Lutheran Church. The speakers included Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein of Rochester, New York, and Dr. Frederick Keller Stamm, a former pastor of the First Congregational Church in Chicago, Illinois. Following the service, at 10:00am, participants convened at the pageant grounds for the “Public Meeting Dedicated to Religious and Racial Understanding.” Governor Duff introduced the four keynote speakers: Poling, Frankfurter, Bunche, and Donovan.¹²³



Figure 9: Dr. Ralph Bunche giving his keynote address at the Aaronsburg Story on October 23, 1949.¹²⁴

At 11:00am, three “Brotherhood Institutes” were simultaneously held at each of Aaronsburg’s churches. The first, “Techniques of Handling Prejudice and Prejudiced People,”

¹²³ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 47.

¹²⁴ Max Kade, *Ralph Bunche Keynote Address*, 1949, photograph, The Pennsylvania State University, <https://explorepahistory.com/displayimage.php?imgId=1-2-1E0F>.

was held at the Salem Lutheran Church with Rabbi Philip D. Bookstaber of the Temple Ohev Shalom in Harrisburg, Dr. Andrew Gottschall of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Myra Blakeslee of the Division Against Discrimination, Julius Thomas of the National Urban League, and General William Donovan as the speakers. The second panel, “Religious Intolerance and American Society” was held at the Evangelical and Reformed Church with Maurice Fagan of the Fellowship Committee, Sir Muhammed Zafrulla Khan of the United Nations General Assembly, Allyn P. Robinson of the Commission on Religious Organizations, John Sullivan of the New York State Commission Against Discrimination, Rabbi D. A. Jessurun Cardozo of the Mikveh Israel Synagogue in Philadelphia, and Dr. Frederick Keller Stamm of the First Congregational Church as speakers. The third panel, “How to Assure Minority Groups Their Rights and Dignities as Americans” was held in the Evangelical United Brethren Church and included J. Harold Saks of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, Russell Bradley of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Rabbi Bernstein of Rochester, Dr. Channing H. Tobias of the NAACP, and Marjorie Penny of the Fellowship House.¹²⁵

After a lunch break, the pageant began at 2:00pm. It recounted the history of Aaronsburg, especially Aaron Levy’s communion gift and the first worship at Salem Lutheran Church. Wilde served as the narrator and was accompanied by Penn State’s Blue Band. At 5:00pm a symposium was held at the Salem Lutheran Church about “Brotherhood for Peace and Freedom.” Governor Duff, Sir Muhammed Khan, Dr. Tobias, and Dr. Abram L. Sachar, President of Brandeis University, presided over the event. Governor Duff offered closing remarks declaring the last Sunday of October as “Tolerance Day” to be observed annually in Pennsylvania.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 47-48.

¹²⁶ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, viii and 48.

The event also included an exhibited display by Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach of Philadelphia, Honorary President of the American Jewish Historical Society. The objects included Levy's Hebrew Bible, his portrait, documents, and other family memorabilia. The display also included the pewter communion set Aaron and Rachel donated to the Salem Lutheran Church at the church's dedication in 1799.¹²⁷

COMMEMORATING A TRADITION OF BROTHERHOOD AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



Left to right: Dr. Daniel A. Poling, editor of *The Christian Herald*; Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan, wartime head of Office of Strategic Services; Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, United Nations trusteeship official; Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, and Gov. James H. Duff of Pennsylvania, during the ceremonies outside the 150-year-old Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Aaronsburg. They are holding the original pewter communion service that Aaron Levy presented to the congregation.

Associated Press Wirephoto

Figure 10: The four keynote speakers, Daniel Poling, William Donovan, Ralph Bunche, and Felix Frankfurter, with Pennsylvania Governor James Duff holding pieces of the pewter communion set Aaron and Rachel Levy donated to the Salem Lutheran Church. The photo is from a *New York Times* article published on October 24, 1949, about the Aaronsburg Story.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Fish, *Aaron Levy*, vii-viii.

¹²⁸ Warren Weaver, "Town Celebrates Long Fight on Bias: Lutheran Church Helped by Jew 150 Years Ago in Aaronsburg, PA, is Hailed By 20,000," *New York Times*, Oct 24, 1949.



Figure 11: Reverend Shannon of the Salem Lutheran Church and an unknown boy with the pewter communion set

Aaron and Rachel Levy donated to the church in 1799.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ The Pennsylvania State College, *Pewter Communion Set, Aaronsburg*, 1949, photograph, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 01196, Photographic Vertical Files, Town and Environs Box 1, Folder: Aaronsburg.

Following the Aaronsburg Story

Local leaders, including Reverend Shannon, and national leaders, such as Governor Duff, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, and UN Mediator Dr. Ralph Bunche, who attended the Aaronsburg Story in 1949 were inspired by the event's discussions that they organized a continuation of the event. Reverend Shannon branded the first annual Aaronsburg Assembly, a three-day event in June of 1953, as a "sequel" to the Aaronsburg Story and "...a lesson in friendliness and brotherhood."¹³⁰ This first assembly brought together one hundred "outstanding men" in the fields of government, worship, education, work, recreation, and home together with one hundred residents of Aaronsburg and Centre County. They were tasked with exploring "...the problems, needs and possibly the solutions of the differences and forces which must be overcome to make our world a better place in which to live."¹³¹

Prior to the start of the Aaronsburg Assembly on Friday, June 19, while not officially part of the Aaronsburg Assembly events, Rabbi Philip Bernstein of Rochester, New York, Rabbi Joseph Shubow of Boston, and Rabbi David DeSola Pool of New York City, conducted a Shabbat service at the Hillel Foundation in State College. The start of the assembly on June 19 included an opening address by Pennsylvania Governor John Fine and Penn State President Milton Eisenhower. The keynote was given by Mrs. Oswald Lord, U.S. Representative to the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations. Rabbi Philip Bernstein, William Donovan, former Senator James Duff, Reverend Daniel Poling, and Dr. Channing Tobias discussed what

¹³⁰ The Aaronsburg Story, *For Release Monday, June 1, 1953*, press release, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00753, Aaronsburg Story, Inc. Records Box 5, Folder: News Release June 1, 1953.

¹³¹ The Aaronsburg Story, *Background Information on the Aaronsburg Story*, June 1, 1953, press release, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00753, Aaronsburg Story, Inc. Records Box 6, Folder: Background Story June 1, 1953.

brought them to Aaronsburg Story in 1949 and what brought them back for the assembly. The events on Saturday, June 20 included six seminars, focused on overcoming prejudice in the economy, home and community, education, religious life, recreation and communication, and government, with sixteen to seventeen distinguished panelists and an even number of Centre County residents in attendance for each. Notable participants included: Dr. Charles Thompson, the Dean of the Graduate School at Howard University; Michael Masaoka of the Japanese American Citizens League; Ronald Regan of Hollywood, California; Dr. Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Dr. Robert Weaver, of the John Hay Whitney Foundation; and Herman Long, director of the National Congress of the American Indians.¹³²

The assembly concluded on Sunday, June 20 with the religious sermons and addresses at different Centre County religious organizations. There was also a dedication service held in Aaronsburg in the afternoon, including enactments of parts of the pageant from the original Aaronsburg Story event in 1949. At the end of the pageant, congregants of the Salem Lutheran Church presented Rabbi David DeSola Pool of the Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City with a pewter Kiddush cup, to emulate the exchange between Aaron Levy and early Salem Lutheran Church congregations in 1799 with his donation of the pewter communion set. The donation of the Kiddush cup was to celebrate Shearith Israel's three hundredth anniversary.¹³³

¹³² The Aaronsburg Story, *Aaronsburg Assembly*, n.d., list, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00753, Aaronsburg Story, Inc. Records Box 1, Folder: Guest Panel Members 1953 Assembly.

¹³³ The Aaronsburg Story, *Background Information*; The Aaronsburg Story, *For Immediate Release – January 20, 1955*, press release, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00753, Aaronsburg Story, Inc. Records Box 5, Folder: News Release January 20, 1955.



Figure 12: Part of the pageant reenactment on June 20, 1953, at the Aaronsburg Assembly. Aaron Levy (on the left, played by Nathan Krauss) is holding the pewter communion set he is to give the pastor of the Salem Lutheran Church (on the right, played by Francis Stover) in their pageant scene.¹³⁴

In late January of 1955, the Aaronsburg Story committee met at the Bryn Mawr's Harcum Junior College in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to organize a new series of events, the Aaronsburg National Assemblies, aimed at spreading the mission of the Aaronsburg Story throughout the U.S. They hoped the first assembly, scheduled for October of 1955, would bring together 100,000 men and women "...of all faiths, colors, social, ethnic, and economic

¹³⁴ The Pennsylvania State College, *The Aaronsburg Assembly Communion Set Reenactment*, June 1955, photograph, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00753, Aaronsburg Story, Inc. Records Box 6, Folder: Photographs, circa 1949-1953.

backgrounds in 350 communities throughout the United States.”¹³⁵ The Pittsburgh Assembly of the Aaronburg Story held an event on September 28 and 29 in 1956 at the Hotel Penn Sheraton in Pittsburgh.¹³⁶

Broader Significance

While no Jewish community has ever existed in Aaronburg, the Jewish identity of the town’s founder has left a permanent legacy on the town. Levy’s donations of land, as well as religious objects, to Aaronburg’s churches marked an important event in the history of Aaronburg and the town’s conceptualization of religious tolerance and Jewish-Christian relations.

The memorialization of Aaronburg’s founding with the Aaronburg Story in 1949 also marked the first major public event acknowledging Central Pennsylvania’s Jewish history. While Jewish communities were located throughout Central Pennsylvania as early as the mid-nineteenth century, no formal attempts to preserve the region’s Jewish history occurred until the mid to late twentieth century. None of these later attempts to preserve the Jewish history of Central Pennsylvania, which largely included the writing of Jewish community histories and memoirs, amounted to the success of the Aaronburg Story, and its subsequent events, which brought together thousands of people throughout the U.S. to remember Aaronburg’s Jewish founder and discuss national issues, such as religious and racial tolerance, within the lens of rural American communities.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ The Aaronburg Story, *For Immediate Release*.

¹³⁶ The Aaronburg Story, *The Aaronburg Assembly*, n.d., pamphlet, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00753, Aaronburg Story, Inc. Records Box 5, Folder: Programs and Pamphlets 1949-1956.

¹³⁷ Heffentreyer, “Aaron Levy”; Heffentreyer, “Aaronburg Story.”

CHAPTER 3: LOCK HAVEN

Overview

The Jewish community of Lock Haven is the first permanent Jewish settlement in both Centre and Clinton counties. Central European Jewish immigrants first arrived in Lock Haven in the mid-nineteenth century, but they largely assimilated into the larger Christian community. The establishment of Lock Haven's Jewish community, as a result, came about with the arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, primarily from Lithuania, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One family, the Clasters, operated a dry goods store in Lock Haven and helped sponsor more than one hundred Jewish family members and friends to immigrate to the U.S. These new arrivals, who initially worked as peddlers and later established their own businesses, serviced the Central Pennsylvania region beyond Centre and Clinton Counties and helped form some of the other early Jewish communities in Central Pennsylvania, such as those in Bellefonte and State College.

Early History

The Establishment of Lock Haven

Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, is located between the west branch of the Susquehanna River and the Bald Eagle Creek. It is the ancestral home of the Lenni Lenape Indians.¹³⁸ In 1833, Jerry Church and his brother, Willard Church, purchased 200 acres of farmland from Dr. Henderson of Huntingdon and named the area "Lockhaven" in reference to the lock of the Bald Eagle Canal and the haven the area provided for river boatmen.¹³⁹ Lock Haven was incorporated as a town in

¹³⁸ Maria Boileau, *Images of America: Lock Haven* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 7.

¹³⁹ Boileau, *Images of America*, 7.

1834, recognized as a borough in 1840, and made a city in 1876. The town grew rapidly after Lock Haven became the county seat of Clinton County and the county courthouse was built in Lock Haven in 1844.¹⁴⁰

The completion of the Bald Eagle Canal in 1834 and the West Branch Boom, a device allowing logs to be floated down a river from upper tributaries, in 1849 sponsored the development of the lumber industry in the area.¹⁴¹ Lumbermen from Eastern Pennsylvania traveled to Lock Haven to purchase timber because the West Branch Boom made Lock Haven the first market for timber rafts on the west branch of the Susquehanna River. By the early 1900s, however, frequent flood damage to both log booms and the canal itself as well as the depletion of the surrounding forest caused the lumber industry to decline in Lock Haven. Other industries, such as the production of furniture, paper, firebricks, and silk, became prominent in the local economy instead.¹⁴²

Early Jewish Settlers

A permanent Lock Haven Jewish community began in the mid-nineteenth century with the arrival of Central European Jews. One of the first Jewish settlers was Simon Scott, who moved from Pottsville to Lock Haven between 1840 and 1850.¹⁴³ According to his obituary, Simon was “...one of the oldest and most respected residents of [Lock Haven]...” and within the town he served as a city councilman, director of the Lock Haven National Bank, director of the Lock Haven and Great Island Bridge Companies, and President of the Bald Eagle Boom

¹⁴⁰ Boileau, *Images of America*, 7.

¹⁴¹ Boileau, *Images of America*, 7.

¹⁴² Boileau, *Images of America*, 7.

¹⁴³ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book* (Lock Haven: Self-published, 1952), material accessed from Lee Roberts, 4; “Death of Simon Scott,” *Evening Express*, October 6, 1891.

Company.¹⁴⁴ Other early Lock Haven Central European Jews included the Simon, Lowenthal, Mussina, Weil, Hecht, Keiner, Newman, Rosenbluth, Furst, Raff, and Abrams families. Many of these early Jewish families worked as merchants and established different clothing and retail businesses in Lock Haven, such as A. Simon and Sons, the Hecht's Ladies' Shop, and Keiner's Women's Wear Store.¹⁴⁵

The Central European Jewish community in Lock Haven, however, disappeared over time as it increasingly assimilated into the larger Lock Haven, and surrounding, community.¹⁴⁶ A current Jewish resident of Lock Haven noted how the town's Central European Jewish community, unlike their later Eastern European counterparts, disappeared because they chose to marry American Christian women instead of bringing over women from their villages in Europe.¹⁴⁷ Simon Scott, for example, one of the earliest and most well-established Central European Jewish community members in Lock Haven, married a Christian woman and their children were raised Christian. While the children of his cousin, Amelia Simon, appeared to be raised Jewish, her grandchildren, including Joseph A. Simon, who served as a representative from Clinton County in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, were Christian.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, Cal Golumbic, a former Lock Haven resident, believed the disappearance of the Central European Jewish community was attributed to the desire of Central European Jewish

¹⁴⁴ "Death of Simon Scott," *Evening Express*.

¹⁴⁵ Aaron Claster, *The Jews in Clinton County: An Address Before the Historical Society*, March 13, 1967, speech, Pennsylvania Room at Annie Halenbake Ross Library, Pamphlet File, Ethnic Groups C.2., 3-4.

¹⁴⁶ Anonymous interviewee 1, interviewed via phone by author on July 8, 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Anonymous interviewee 1 interview.

¹⁴⁸ "Joseph A. Simon," Pennsylvania House of Representatives Archives, n.d., <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/BiosHistory/MemBio.cfm?ID=2281&body=H>; Anonymous interviewee 1 interview.

community members to marry based on social and economic factors rather than religious affiliation.¹⁴⁹

Evidence of Central European Jews in the Beth Yehuda cemetery in Lock Haven is also limited. One Lock Haven resident noted how many early Central European Jewish community members in Lock Haven chose to be buried in the Highland Cemetery rather than the community's Jewish cemetery. Simon Scott, for example, served as one of the incorporators of the Highland Cemetery in Lock Haven in May of 1861. He chose to be buried in the fashion of the Masonic fraternity in the Highland cemetery in 1891, where his Christian wife was later buried in 1906, instead of the Beth Yehuda Cemetery, which served the Lock Haven Jewish community and was established in 1874.¹⁵⁰

According to the December 5, 1881, edition of Lock Haven's *The Daily Journal*, Adam Gensib, his wife, and their three children recently arrived in Lock Haven as refugees from Russia. The Gensib family was reported to be one of the first Jewish families from Russia to settle in Lock Haven with the help of Lock Haven Central European Jewish families, particularly the Simon family.¹⁵¹ The Claster, Stein, Freedman, Hurwitz, Brest, Lintz, Zimmerman, and Sykes, Jewish families of Eastern European origin, arrived in Lock Haven soon after. The Jewish community of Lock Haven rapidly expanded as more Eastern European Jews, primarily men from Lithuania, arrived at the turn of the century seeking economic opportunities and religious freedoms. Most of the new arrivals sought to earn enough money to bring over their wives, children, and remaining family from Europe. Many of them were also relatives or friends from

¹⁴⁹ Edward Calvin "Cal" Golumbic, interviewed via phone by author on August 15, 2022.

¹⁵⁰ "Mrs. Simon Scott," *Lock Haven Express*, July 2, 1906; "Death of Simon Scott," *Evening Express*.

¹⁵¹ "Daily Paper of 1881 Offered Little News by Comparison with 1952: William Gensib Has Story of Family Arrival," *Lock Haven Express*, November 7, 1952; Claster, *The Jews in Clinton County*, 3.

the same area, Ponevezh in modern-day Lithuania, and helped one another bring their families to Lock Haven.¹⁵²

Jewish Peddlers and the Claster Family

For the newly arrived Eastern European Jews, their employment prospects as unskilled laborers with minimal, or nonexistent, English were limited.¹⁵³ Lock Haven's location, however, within a large lumbering area created a need for peddlers.¹⁵⁴ With few stores and bad roads in the surrounding region, Jewish peddlers provided farmers and lumbermen working in remote areas of Central Pennsylvania with needed supplies.¹⁵⁵ The settlement of Central European throughout the region also allowed Jewish peddlers to more effectively communicate in German, which shared more dialectic similarities to Yiddish, than English.¹⁵⁶

With limited carrying capacities, peddlers specialized their goods and routes based on their loyal customer base.¹⁵⁷ Peddlers generally paid for their meals and lodging with merchandise, but, if they were too far away from an established town, they would often sleep in barns or the wilderness.¹⁵⁸ Peddlers worked in harsh weather conditions and faced attacks from robbers and animals.¹⁵⁹ As Jewish peddlers became successful, they purchased wagons and horses to haul more goods until they could establish a store within their territory.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 4.

¹⁵³ Benjamin Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son: Biography of the Hirsh-Sykes Families* (Self-published: Self-published, 1951), 18.

¹⁵⁴ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 4-5.

¹⁵⁵ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 4-5.

¹⁵⁶ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 18.

¹⁵⁷ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 5.

¹⁵⁹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 18; Nathan Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," in *Early History & Biography of Jewish Families of Central Pennsylvania Cities: Lock Haven, State College, and Lewistown*, ed. Aaron, Lewis, & Paul, (Self-published: Self-published, 2004), 35.

In the early 1900s, over one hundred Jewish peddlers relied on the Cluster Wholesale House in Lock Haven for their merchandise. Harris Cluster, a Jew from Ponevezh, Lithuania, who arrived in Lock Haven in the 1880s, and later his son, Samuel, operated the store and were known among peddlers as liberal with their credit and willing to establish peddlers regardless of their financial situation.¹⁶¹ The business also provided goods to merchants. On Sundays, which in the Jewish tradition functioned as a typical day, it was not the Jewish Sabbath, both peddlers and merchants alike traveled to the home of Harris Cluster to settle accounts, purchase goods, preview future lines, and discuss business.¹⁶²

As Harris' wholesale business expanded, friends and family members from Harris' village in Lithuania, who increasingly faced persecution and pogroms, heard about his success, and sought economic opportunities in the U.S.¹⁶³ A designated angel, Harris Cluster financed the immigration of numerous relatives and non-relatives from Lithuania in exchange for the newly arrived immigrants to buy and sell merchandise from his growing wholesale business.¹⁶⁴

M. L. Cluster, Harris Cluster's brother-in-law, also employed Jewish peddlers through his wholesale tinware business in Lock Haven.¹⁶⁵ As the business became unprofitable, however, a demand for waste products encouraged M. L. to join Harris' brother, Ellis, and form the Cluster Junk Yard, which eventually became the largest junkyard in Central Pennsylvania. Through the business, Morris helped peddlers purchase horses and wagons to travel throughout Central Pennsylvania to gather various waste materials and scraps.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 5; Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 35.

¹⁶² Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 23.

¹⁶³ Jeffrey "Jeff" Krauss, interviewed via phone by author on February 4, 2022; Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 22.

¹⁶⁴ Rabbi David Ostrich, interviewed via phone by author on February 1, 2022; Anonymous interviewee 2, interviewed via phone by author on February 22, 2022; Anonymous interviewee 1 interview.

¹⁶⁵ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 24.

¹⁶⁶ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 24; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 6.

Jewish Community Overview

Religious Life



Figure 13: The home of Abraham Stein on Spring Street. In the early years of Jewish life in Lock Haven, religious and social events were held at this home.¹⁶⁷

By the early 1900s, Lock Haven served as the center of North Central Pennsylvania Jewry. Jews from Emporium, Renovo, Tyrone, Altoona, Williamsport, and other local towns traveled to Lock Haven for the high holidays. Before the establishment of a synagogue in Lock Haven in 1904, the Lock Haven Jewish community rented Smith Hall on Grove Street and later a house on Third Street for their High Holiday services.¹⁶⁸ The Jewish community would also hold regular services at the house of Abraham Stein, a peddler, on Spring Street.¹⁶⁹ As the Jewish

¹⁶⁷ *Abraham Stein Home*, n.d., photograph, in *Dedication Book* by Beth Yehuda Synagogue, 5. Lock Haven: Self-published, 1952. Material accessed from Lee Roberts.

¹⁶⁸ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

community grew and Jewish peddlers began bringing their wives from Eastern Europe to Lock Haven, the Jewish community created a *mikvah*, or ritual bath, in the backyard of the Stein home and later in the basement of the Brest home, which was located across the street from the Stein home.¹⁷⁰

As the size of the Lock Haven Jewish community continued to increase, Harris Claster, in 1903, donated a plot of land on the corner of West Clinton and Commerce Streets to the Jewish community for the purpose of building a synagogue.¹⁷¹ Construction began soon after and in September of 1904, Judge A. Mayer granted a charter to the Beth Jehuda Congregation, later known as the Beth Yehuda Congregation. The synagogue's construction finished in 1904.¹⁷²

In the following decades, the continued increase of Lock Haven's Jewish community led to a need for more space. In December of 1945, the congregation purchased the Brown home on West Main Street to serve as a Jewish community center. With the synagogue and Jewish community center located far from one another, however, the congregation purchased a plot of land on West Church Street to create a joint synagogue and community center. Construction on the new building began in 1951 and the Jewish community center dedicated the building in May of 1952.¹⁷³

The congregation maintained the synagogue's building on West Church Street until 2012. Unable to afford the building, the Beth Yehuda congregation donated the building to the Lock Haven University Foundation in the summer of 2012 in exchange for 15 years of free rent and the completion of the building's needed repairs.¹⁷⁴ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the

¹⁷⁰ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 19.

¹⁷¹ "Donated a Lot for a Synagogue," *Clinton County Times*, August 14, 1903.

¹⁷² Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

¹⁷³ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

¹⁷⁴ Lee Roberts, interviewed via phone by author on March 27, 2022.

synagogue's last in-person service was held in March of 2020. Members of the congregation are preparing for the official closing of the synagogue, which is estimated to occur in 2022.¹⁷⁵ Lock Haven, which had an estimated total population of 8,577 in 1920, had an estimated Jewish population of 200 in 1918, 125 in 1927, 360 in 1937, and 350 in 1950.¹⁷⁶

Throughout the history of the Lock Haven Jewish community, their practice of Judaism has changed. From the establishment of a religious Jewish community in Lock Haven until the late 1930s, the Jewish congregation practiced Orthodoxy. Beginning in the late 1930s, however, the congregation transitioned to Conservatism.¹⁷⁷ Around 1970s, the congregation shifted to Reform Judaism.¹⁷⁸

Social Life

In the early years of the Lock Haven Jewish community, social gatherings were held at various Jewish businesses and homes. For example, the home of Abraham Stein, which was a boarding house popular among Jewish peddlers, served as both a place of religious worship and a Jewish community space. At the Stein home, Jewish peddlers gathered, wrote letters to their family in Europe, and received a kosher meal and lodging for a low price. Harris Cluster's store also held social events, such as engagements and opportunities to arrange marriage matches.¹⁷⁹

Following the erection of the Jewish community's first synagogue on Clinton and Commerce Streets, the Jewish community established various philanthropic and social

¹⁷⁵ Roberts interview.

¹⁷⁶ Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 346.

¹⁷⁷ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 1988, booklet, Pennsylvania Room at Annie Halenbake Ross Library, Pamphlet File, Churches Lock Haven, 18.

¹⁷⁹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 5.

organizations. These organizations included the Lock Haven Federation of Jewish Charities, Beth Yehuda Sisterhood, Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, National Council of Jewish Women, and B'nai B'rith.¹⁸⁰ For Jewish children, the congregation sponsored the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO) and Brownie troops.¹⁸¹ The various Jewish community organizations hosted different religious and social events. The Beth Yehuda Sisterhood, for example, was responsible for dances, Las Vegas nights, bake sales, rummage sales, gifts to Armed Forces, Memory and Honor donations, Israel funds, and Sukkah building.¹⁸² Other Jewish community organizations sponsored holiday parties, talent shows, plays, Simchas Torah celebrations, mock weddings, and dinners.¹⁸³

One of the Jewish community's prominent events was the Yom Kippur Ball. Started in 1904, and later sponsored by the Beth Yehuda Sisterhood, the event celebrated the breaking of the fast after Yom Kippur. It attracted young Jewish men and women throughout the area and combined religious, social, and business interests. Over the years, the event was held at different locations, including the old armory on the corner of Third Street and West Main Street, the Scott building, the Simon building, the Jewish community center on West Main Street, and the synagogue on West Church Street.¹⁸⁴

Outside of the synagogue, the Jewish community's social organizations raised funds for the town. During World War II, for example, the National Council of Jewish Women organized a show at the Price Auditorium at Lock Haven University to benefit the Red Cross. Jewish

¹⁸⁰ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 15, 17-19, and 22.

¹⁸¹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 5.

¹⁸² Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 8.

¹⁸³ David Schaitkin, interviewed via phone by author on July 22, 2022; Larry Coploff, interviewed via Zoom by author on July 22, 2022; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 17-18; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 8 and 19.

¹⁸⁴ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7 and 18.

community members sold tickets door-to-door and advertised the event through the pushing of decorated baby carriages and strollers up and down the streets of Lock Haven.¹⁸⁵

By the mid-twentieth century, the establishment of Jewish communities and synagogues in surrounding Central Pennsylvania towns sponsored interactions between Lock Haven's Jewish community and other Jewish communities. One Lock Haven community member, Larry Coploff, remembered interacting with Jewish children in other towns, such as Altoona and State College, through BBYO in the 1950s and 1960s, but could not recall much interaction between non-related adults in different Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities.¹⁸⁶ Another Jewish community member recalled traveling with kids from State College's BBYO to Altoona and Johnstown. He also recalled getting "clobbered" by the Williamsport BBYO in softball, whose team featured ringers who were not even Jewish.¹⁸⁷

Within the Lock Haven Jewish community, Jews supported one another in a variety of ways. In the 1988 Beth Yehuda anniversary booklet, Abraham Lipez recalled, "One of my earliest memories that truly epitomizes the closeness of the Jewish community [in Lock Haven] revolves around the Levine family. The father of the family died suddenly, and the community gathered funds together for the widow. They bought her a small grocery store so that she could support her family. The store sold Jewish specialty foods and all the Jews in town would patronize the store."¹⁸⁸

As the congregation's membership declined over the years, however, Jewish community organizations and events have disappeared. Naomi Drezner, who joined the Lock Haven Jewish

¹⁸⁵ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 12.

¹⁸⁶ Coploff interview.

¹⁸⁷ Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

¹⁸⁸ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 15.

community in the 1990s, recalled watching male members of the Jewish community in her early years having fun making latkes in the synagogue's kitchen. She noted decreased membership in the congregation has forced members to host potlucks instead of cooking as a congregation.¹⁸⁹ By the early 2000s, the congregation only supported *onegs* (casual gatherings on Friday nights after the first Shabbat meal) and infrequent dinners for congregants.¹⁹⁰

Professional Endeavors

Members of the Lock Haven Jewish community have served the larger Lock Haven and surrounding towns in a variety of professional capacities. Early Central European Jewish settlers in the mid-nineteenth, such as Simon Scott and Amelia Simon, worked as merchants in clothing, groceries, and wholesale liquor as well as being involved in the operation of the community's streetcar lines and bank.¹⁹¹ Jewish Eastern European settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century began their careers as peddlers, but many later worked as merchants or in the scrap metal, recycling, and lumber supply industries.¹⁹²

In terms of merchants, members of the Jewish community owned and operated a men's clothing store, the Hurwitz Store, and four ladies clothing stores: the Hecht's Ladies' Shop, which later became Grossman's, Smart Shop, Lubell's, and Luria's Women's Clothing Store.¹⁹³ Larry Coploff, who grew up in Lock Haven in the 1950s and 1960s, noted how no one in Lock

¹⁸⁹ Naomi Drezner, interviewed via phone by author on August 12, 2022.

¹⁹⁰ Paul Washington, interviewed via phone by author on July 14, 2022.

¹⁹¹ Claster, *The Jews in Clinton County*, 3.

¹⁹² Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

¹⁹³ Boileau, *Images of America*, 22; Claster, *The Jews in Clinton County*, 3-4; Schaitkin interview; Coploff interview.

Haven could buy ladies clothing on the high holidays because all the ladies clothing businesses in the town were Jewish owned businesses.¹⁹⁴

Jewish community members also operated the army supply store Jerry's, Stein's Furniture Store, Snowiss Fur Company, Zimmerman Bros., the Roxie Movie Theater, the restaurant Henry's on Main Street, Fromm's Dry Cleaning, the appliance store Janet's, a jewelry store, and a car dealership.¹⁹⁵ In addition to Morris and Ellis Claster's junkyard, Benjamin Hoberman created Hoberman Salvage Company, which the Balis family later became partners in, and Ellis and Jacob Hodes owned the scrap metal and structural steel business, Hodes Brothers, later known as Hodes Industries.¹⁹⁶

By the 1950s and 1960s, Jewish community members also worked in real estate as well as lawyers, dentists, doctors, teachers, and within the local government.¹⁹⁷ Larry Coploff recalled Dr. Edward Hoberman, who was known to have delivered "...practically all the babies [in Lock Haven] growing up."¹⁹⁸ In terms of local politics, Joe Simon served as a representative from Clinton County in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1929 to 1938, Abraham H. Lipez served as president judge of Clinton County from 1952 to 1974, and Alfred Hoberman, who served as a city council member in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Coploff interview; Schaitkin interview.

¹⁹⁵ Boileau, *Images of America*, 22; Claster, *The Jews in Clinton County*, 3-4; David Schaitkin interview; Larry Coploff interview; JoAnne Hoberman, interviewed via phone by author on July 27, 2022; "Roxie Theater," *Cinema Treasures*, n.d.,

<http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/276#:~:text=Built%20in%201924%20by%20George,Stiefel%20Brothers%20Roxie%20Theater%20Circuit>; "Clinton County Throughout the Years: 1900-1999," *The Express*, January 14, 2000, 5a.

¹⁹⁶ "Hobermans Offer Five-Acre Plot to City as Municipal Park Site," *The Express*, February 4, 1938; "Ellis H. Hodes," *Find a Grave*, n.d., <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/99960116/ellis-h-hodes>.

¹⁹⁷ Coploff interview; Hoberman interview.

¹⁹⁸ Coploff interview.

¹⁹⁹ "Clinton County Throughout the Year: 1900-1999," *The Express*, 17a; Susan Bossert Hannegan and Jean Simmons May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time* (Self-published: Self-published, 1989), 270; "Lock Haven's Flood Protection System Marks 25th Anniversary," *The Record Online*, October 14, 2019, <http://therecord-online.com/site/archives/54901>; Joseph A. Simon, "Pennsylvania House of Representatives Archives; Anonymous interviewee 1 interview.

Throughout the history of the Lock Haven Jewish community, Jews have served the town of Lock Haven as board members or trustees of the Ross Library, Lock Haven Trust Co., the Lock Haven Hospital, and other community organizations. Early members of the Lock Haven Jewish community, such as Edward Hecht, include some of the charter members of the Rotary Club and Lock Haven Elks.²⁰⁰ One Jewish community member, Benjamin Hoberman, gifted a piece of land to the town, later known as Hoberman Park, which houses a Little League baseball field, tennis court, and playground.²⁰¹

Interaction with the Larger Lock Haven Community

The experience of living in Lock Haven has varied for Jewish community members over the years. One former Jewish community member compared their experience growing up in Lock Haven in the 1950s and 1960s as a Norman Rockwell painting. They said, “It was simple.”²⁰² Similarly, another Jewish community member, David Schaitkin, recalled, “Growing up as a Jew in Lock Haven...was a good thing...I loved the country and I had good friends.”²⁰³ In 1988, Jay Claster wrote, “[The] Lock Haven [Jewish community] has always been a community that has cared deeply for their own interests as well as the interests of the larger community. Although we all knew we were Jews, we did not exclude ourselves from the outside community in which we lived and worked. I feel privileged to be part of such a caring and close knit community.”²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 35.

²⁰¹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 28 and 35.

²⁰² Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

²⁰³ Schaitkin interview.

²⁰⁴ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 9.

One former Lock Haven Jewish community member, Stan Balis, wrote, however, in 2020, “My high school graduating class had the most Jewish kids ever, seven out of 367. And, in my little town, everyone knew who was Jewish. There were no African American or other minority group members among my fellow graduates. Thus, I had the opportunity to experience what it feels like to be the ‘other’... One year, the sukkah, a temporary structure erected outside of the synagogue for the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, was torn down; in subsequent years, it had to be put up inside the synagogue instead... We endured the occasional anti-Semitic jokes, and of course, we would hear how someone had ‘jewed down the price’ to get an especially good deal on some purchase.”²⁰⁵

Another former Lock Haven Jewish community member, Cal Golumbic wrote, “...whatever the case, everyone in my hometown [Lock Haven] was at least conscious of the difference...between Christians and Jews...and whether you were one or the other....and to realize that it worked better to be the former, rather than the latter. You might not be able to get into the Clinton Country Club, for example, if you were the latter...unless, of course, you were someone really special...like, maybe, a judge, or something.” He further explained, “...[I] become just like everyone else...by, among other things, going to church with my mother every Sunday morning...the fact was that my grandfather was still an Orthodox Jew, or, at least, once was, and some people in the town just could not get past that fact...or over it, if you prefer it stated that

²⁰⁵ Stan Balis, “Locked Out: the Lessons I Learned More than 50 Years Ago in Small-Town Pennsylvania Remain Relevant,” *Americans United*, August 28, 2020, <https://www.au.org/the-latest/church-and-state/articles/locked-out-the-lessons-i-learned-more/#>.

way. And for probably the same unstated reasons...unfortunately... I couldn't, either; no matter what...I was my grandfather's grandson...Jewish and all!"²⁰⁶

Throughout the years, numerous Jewish community members remembered hearing remarks about their Jewish identifies. Larry Coploff recalled children in school making comments about him getting off school for both Christian and Jewish holidays.²⁰⁷ David Schatkin does not remember being bullied in school for his Jewish identify, per say, but remembers, "...walking through the hall in the cafeteria and some kid threw pennies at me." David remembers his daughter, however, being bullied in school for being Jewish. His daughter had "...a class with this guy [in high school] ...He walked up to her and says, 'Are you Jewish?' She said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Yeah, my father hates Jews. I hate Jews.'"²⁰⁸ Lock Haven Jewish community member Jo Anne Hoberman remembered hearing about some children being bothered in school because they were Jewish but does not remember her children experiencing anything similar.²⁰⁹

When asked about his experience growing up in Lock Haven, David Schatkin commented, "There was definitely antisemitism here, and still is, but not openly." He recalled, "A number of years ago, someone broke into a hotel/restaurant being renovated and...spraypainted some stuff, Nazi symbols and 'Kill the Jews.' [The police] caught the kids who did it, [they were] young kids."²¹⁰ Another Lock Haven Jewish community member felt antisemitism was less of an issue in Clinton County compared to Williamsport in Lycoming

²⁰⁶ Edward Calvin "Cal" Golumbic, "Chapter CXXXVIII: Huldah, Eddie and Me: Reflections; The Determination of my Educationally Challenged Jewish Forbearers Had a Profound Effect on my Life, Despite their Uncomfortable Religious and Other Difference," In unpublished memoir, 786-787.

²⁰⁷ Coploff interview.

²⁰⁸ Schaitkin interview.

²⁰⁹ Hoberman interview.

²¹⁰ Schaitkin interview.

County. He acknowledged how respected the Jewish community of Lock Haven has been historically and the different positions, such as judges and politicians, as well as different Jewish community organizations, such as the bank board and Ross Club, Jews have held in the town compared to the Jewish community in Williamsport.²¹¹

Paul Washington, who moved to Lock Haven with his family in 2006, noted his wife, a professor at Lock Haven University, served as the advisor for LHU's brief Hillel chapter. He recalled a few Jewish students around 2010 wanted to create a sense of community for Jewish students on campus, so they sought to establish a Hillel. Paul noted, however, after the initial group of Jewish students graduated, a combination of Jewish students at LHU not identifying as Jewish and antisemitic incidents led to the dissolving of Hillel and the invisibility of the existing Jewish community on campus. Paul and his wife have hosted Jewish students at their home for meals over the years, but he noted it is not the same as having an established Jewish community. When current Jewish LHU students seek out a Jewish community, Paul's wife recommends them to Penn State Hillel.²¹²

Jewish Landmarks

Beth Yehuda Cemetery (1874-Present)

The Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven was founded on July 1, 1874, when the Hebrew Cemetery Association of Lock Haven purchased a plot of land in the Fifth Ward of Lock Haven from the executors of the Estate of Philip M. Price, J. Hervey Barton and Philip M. Price

²¹¹ Anonymous interviewee 1 interview.

²¹² Washington interview.

for the purpose of creating a cemetery.²¹³ The congregation selected this plot because it was adjacent to an earlier Central European Jewish cemetery. The Central European Jewish cemetery was eventually incorporated into the Beth Yehuda cemetery when Ben Hoberman purchased the cemetery for the congregation.²¹⁴ The Old Lock Haven and Highland cemeteries also include the graves of some early Jewish settlers.²¹⁵

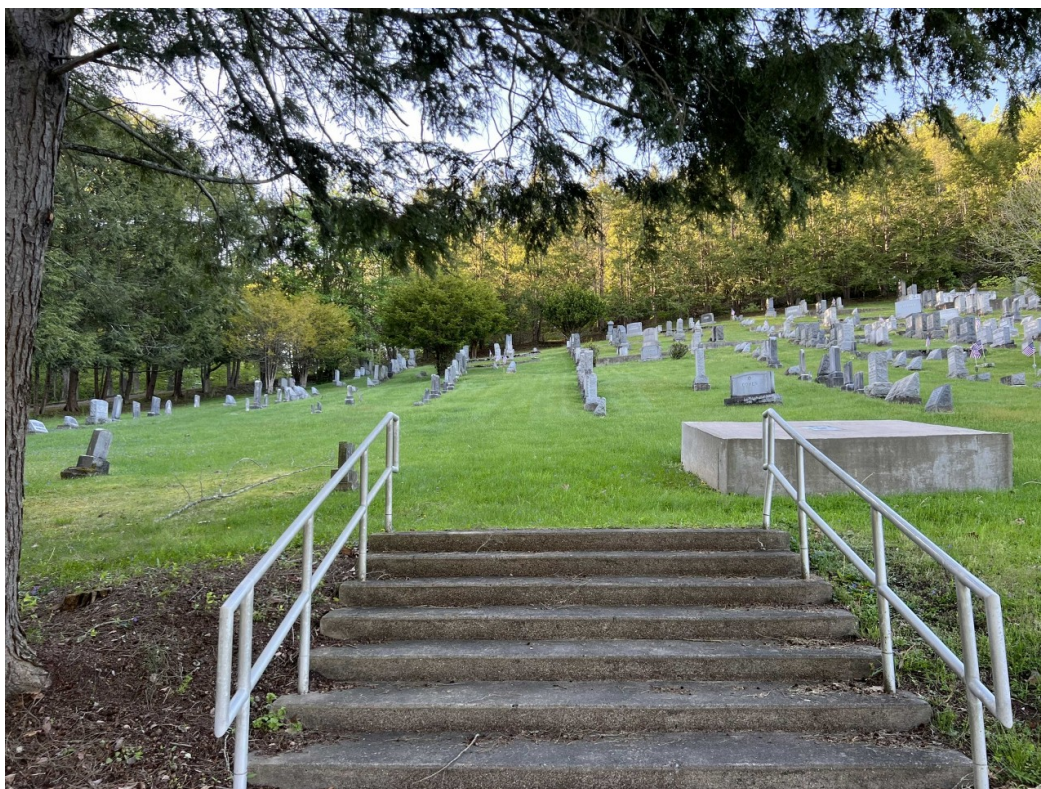


Figure 14: Entrance to the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven.²¹⁶

²¹³ Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, “Cemetery Management Agreement,” May 25, 2012, 18, material accessed from Lee Robert.

²¹⁴ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 16; Julian H. Preisler, *The Synagogues of Central and Western Pennsylvania: A Visual History* (Stroud: Fronthill Media, 2014), 30.

²¹⁵ Clinton County Genealogical Society, *The Cemeteries of Allison Township, Castanea Township, Flemington Borough, and the City of Lock Haven, Clinton County, Pennsylvania* (Lock Haven: Clinton County Genealogical Society, 2008), 69.

²¹⁶ Casey Sennett, *Beth Yehuda Cemetery*, personal photograph, May 17, 2022.

The Beth Yehuda cemetery expanded over time as members of the congregation purchased adjoining plots of land for the congregation. For example, on December 20, 1899, Morris Claster, Harry Claster, Nathan Sil, and Max Furia purchased an adjoining plot for \$40 from the “Preston Retreat” of the City of Philadelphia. On May 15, 1911, Harris Claster, Morris Claster, and Ellis Claster also purchased another adjoining plot of land for \$112.50 from George W. Dice and Katherine I. Dice.²¹⁷

Throughout the years, different cemetery committees served to ensure the perpetual maintenance of the cemetery. On May 5, 1933, Benjamin Snowiss, Jacob Hodes, Ellis Hoberman, Monroe Hurwitz, and Myer Klevansky officially incorporated the Beth Yehuda Cemetery Association.²¹⁸ While chairman of the cemetery committee, Ben Snowiss, along with his son, Alvin, sought to modernize the cemetery. The Snowisses targeted the removal of certain Orthodox customs, such as throwing dirt.²¹⁹

According to the association’s burial requirements, anyone can be buried in the cemetery if “...[one] professes to be of the Jewish Faith and the family agrees to the Cemetery regulations. Any person who is not Jewish, but is the child, spouse, grandchild of a person (not necessarily Jewish) who has a lot in the Cemetery may be buried on the lot of the deceased relative.”²²⁰

In May of 2012, with only a small Jewish population remaining in Lock Haven, the Beth Yehuda Cemetery Association sought to make an agreement with the Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania to perpetually maintain the cemetery and manage the remaining cemetery funds.²²¹ In 2022, the cemetery’s deed was signed over to the foundation

²¹⁷ Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, “Cemetery Management Agreement,” 18.

²¹⁸ Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, “Cemetery Management Agreement,” 18-19.

²¹⁹ Anonymous interviewee 1 interview.

²²⁰ Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, “Cemetery Management Agreement,” 28.

²²¹ Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, “Cemetery Management Agreement,” 1-2 and 30.

and the Jewish Community of Central Pennsylvania Lock Haven Beth Yehuda Cemetery Fund was established at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania to maintain the cemetery.²²²

While the Beth Yehuda cemetery is located in Lock Haven, the cemetery includes the graves of Jews from surrounding Jewish communities, such as Bellefonte and State College, because of the limited number of Jewish cemeteries in the region.²²³ Beth Yehuda includes approximately 450 graves with the oldest dating to 1874.²²⁴ The cemetery also includes the burial locations of scrolls damaged in the flood of 1936, prayer books damaged in the flood of 1972, and religious artifacts from 1999 to 2001.



Figure 15: Stones in the Beth Yehuda Cemetery dedicated to the destroyed scrolls and prayer books in the 1936 (left) and 1972 (right) floods.²²⁵

²²² Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, “The Jewish Community of Central Pennsylvania Lock Haven Beth Yehuda Cemetery Fund of The Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, Inc.,” March 7, 2022, material accessed from Lee Robert, 1; Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania, “Cemetery Management Agreement,” 1.

²²³ Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

²²⁴ Paul Washington interview.

²²⁵ Casey Sennett, *Flood of 1936 Stone*, personal photograph, May 17, 2022; Casey Sennett, *Flood of 1972 Stone*, personal photograph, May 17, 2022.

Synagogues

Clinton and Commerce Street Synagogue (1904-1952)

In August of 1903, Harris Claster donated a plot of land on the corner of Commerce Street and Clinton Street to the Jewish community of Lock Haven for the purpose of building the congregation's first synagogue.²²⁶ Local Jewish peddlers donated money to construct the synagogue, which cost between \$2,500 and \$3,500. Large individual donations ranged anywhere from \$75 to \$100.²²⁷ The synagogue was built in 1904.²²⁸

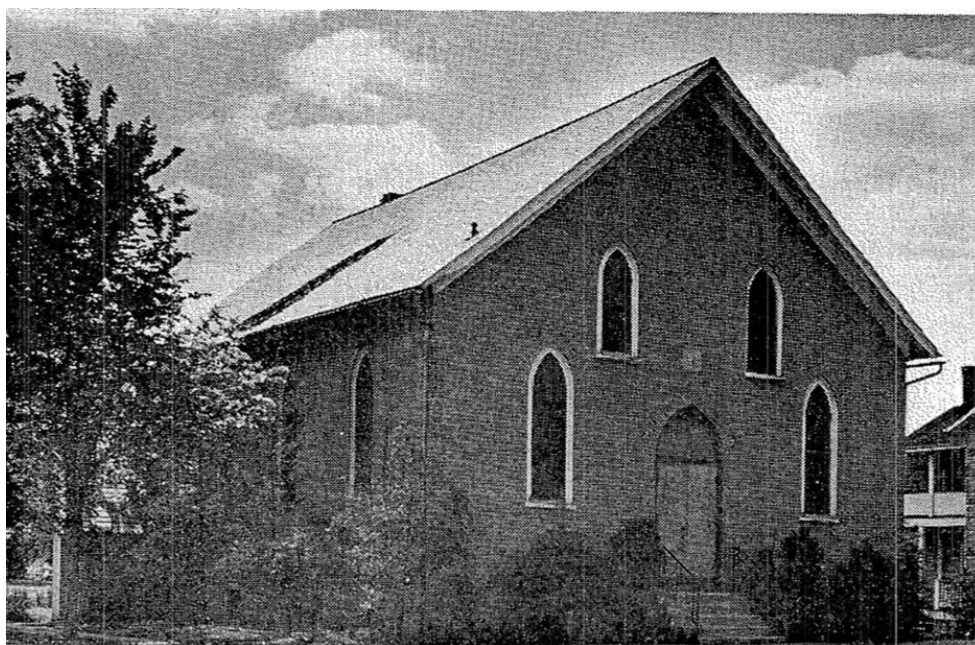


Figure 16: The Original Beth Yehuda synagogue in Lock Haven on Clinton and Commerce Streets.²²⁹

²²⁶ "Donated a Lot for a Synagogue," *Clinton County Times*.

²²⁷ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

²²⁸ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 6; "Local Jewish Background Told to Historical Society," *Lock Haven Express*, November 21, 1951; Abraham Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge* (Lock Haven: Nuttall Editions, 1993), 15.

²²⁹ *Clinton and Commerce Streets Synagogue*, n.d., photograph, in *Dedication Book* by Beth Yehuda Synagogue, 6. Lock Haven: Self-published, 1952. Material accessed from Lee Roberts.

When Harris Claster purchased the plot of land for the synagogue, a home already existed on the property. The house was moved to the back of the property to allow for a synagogue to be built in front of it.²³⁰ The house became known as Melgood's house after the home's inhabitants, Joseph Melgood and his wife, Chaye Sykes Melgood. Joseph was a learned Hebrew scholar and Shamus of the Lock Haven Jewish community. He spoke eight languages and served as a court interpreter in the Clinton County Court for individuals who needed a translator.²³¹

In his memoir, Abraham Lipez, who grew up in Lock Haven in the 1910s, described the synagogue as, "...a solid brick structure that consisted of one large room with a high ceiling. The walls were painted white over plaster with a bema, or platform at the far end, back of which was an ark that contained the Torah. The bema was raised about two feet above the floor and enclosed by pickets...There were two sets of stairs approaching to the left and right that led onto the platform. There were pews on each side of the passageway, which led to the bema, seating several hundred people. There was a balcony for women, who were not allowed to be seated with men in accordance with the Orthodox tradition that prevailed in the Jewish community in the early years. In front of the bema was a small table where the leader of the services on the less important occasions could conduct services."²³²

The synagogue's first board of directors included: Harris Claster, Isaac Lintz, Ellis Claster, Nathan Shapiro, Morris L. Claster, Moses Mamolen, and Jacob Shapiro.²³³ A descendant of one of the first board of director members noted how their great-grandfather, as well as others in his generation, "Were as devoted as business people were and saw getting together at

²³⁰ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

²³¹ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 72.

²³² Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 15.

²³³ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

synagogue as a social occasion to see [those] who they might not see during the week in the outlying areas.”²³⁴

In the early years of the synagogue, no ordained rabbi served the Jewish community. Yale Mamolen served as the first religious leader with Rabbi Israel Jaffee and Rabbi Rosembloom serving as the second and third, respectively.²³⁵ Additionally, Lester Hirsh, Isaac Sykes, and Mordecai Hurwitz served the religious needs of the congregation, such as conducting services during the Sabbath and on high holidays.²³⁶ Later ordained rabbis who served the congregation included: Whitten, Schlufstein, Samuel Wainger, Kline, David Friedman, Mauskauff, Max Leader, Eric Greenbaum, Wertheim, Morris Shapiro, and Fred Susman.²³⁷

According to Abraham Lipez, “Services were held every Friday night and were sparsely attended. The Saturday morning services consisted mostly of older members since Saturday was the busiest business day of the week, and the storekeepers could not attend. On the Jewish holidays, however, especially Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the synagogue was filled, for not only did the local Jews close their places of business, but many came to worship from surrounding small towns, none of which had synagogues or rabbis.”²³⁸

Early congregants generally hired Hebrew teachers, referred to as a Rebbe, who were recent Eastern European immigrants with prior training from a Yeshiva.²³⁹ The congregation’s Hebrew teachers included: Klevansky, Snowiss, Jones, Couvissor, Hurwitz, and Fromm.²⁴⁰ Abraham Lipez recalled his Hebrew classes were held “...in the basement of the synagogue,

²³⁴ Anonymous interviewee 3, interviewed via Zoom by author, July 20, 2022.

²³⁵ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 25.

²³⁶ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 25.

²³⁷ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 25; Washington interview.

²³⁸ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 15-16.

²³⁹ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 14.

²⁴⁰ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

which was dark and dingy and starkly furnished with a few tables and some chairs. It was a dreary place, damp and uninviting, and after a few years was supplanted by a room in a house next to the synagogue where the sexton lived. Some years later the Hebrew School (called a Cheder in Yiddish) was established, and private individual instruction by the Rebbe replaced the classes in preparing boys for their bar mitzvah.”²⁴¹

From the opening of the synagogue in 1904 to the late 1930s, the founding members of the congregation led the synagogue. Beginning in the late 1930s, however, younger congregants began to lead the synagogue and gradually shifted the synagogue from strict Orthodoxy to Conservatism.²⁴² Abraham Lipez recalled services in the early years were conducted entirely in Hebrew with later services including English translations.²⁴³

Regarding synagogue decorum, Abraham Lipez recalled, “While there was much merriment, all was not always serene and peaceful. By some unwritten rule, the wealthier members of the congregation sat at or near the front of the synagogue, with the wealthiest (the Clusters) sitting on the benches against the front wall facing the congregation. Poorer members sat further back. Arguments arose from time to time, often relating to the granting of honors based on the importance of the readings from the Torah, which were auctioned off to raise money for the synagogue expenses. Disputes arose over who made the highest bid or over business deals that were not consummated, and tempers flared, requiring the intervention of rugged members of the congregation. Occasionally, loud arguments would break out among the

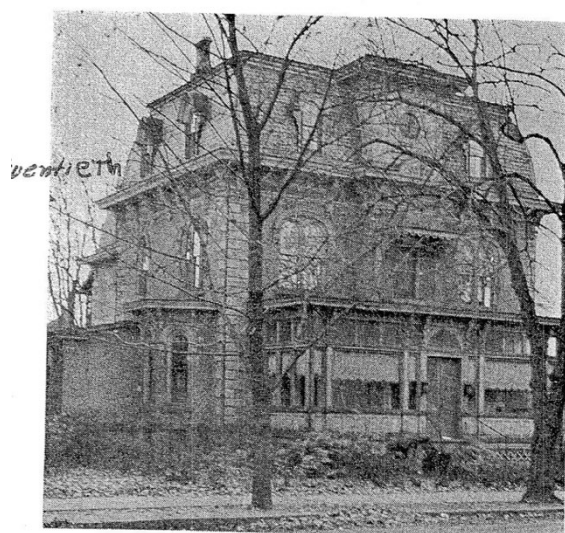
²⁴¹ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 14.

²⁴² Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7.

²⁴³ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 17.

women sitting in the gallery. Immediately, the elders of the congregation would start pounding their prayer books against the pews, loudly demanding that the women be still.”²⁴⁴

On March 17, 1936, the St. Patrick’s Day flood devastated Lock Haven and the Beth Yehuda synagogue. A mix of rain and rapidly melting snow caused the flood, which accumulated in nearly ten feet, or two stories, of water on Main Street.²⁴⁵ The synagogue was heavily flooded, and water breeched the ark. The congregation’s damaged Torahs scrolls were buried in the Beth Yehuda Cemetery. Due to extensive damage to the building, the synagogue was closed for repairs until the late summer.²⁴⁶



Community Center

Building on West Main Street—purchased December 1945 to be used as a Community Center.

Figure 17: Photo of Lock Haven’s Jewish Community Center on West Main Street. This building was used from 1945 to 1952, when the new Beth Yehuda synagogue on Church Street opened.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 16.

²⁴⁵ Boileau, *Images of America*, 72.

²⁴⁶ Washington interview.

²⁴⁷ *Lock Haven Jewish Community Center*, n.d., photograph, Lock Haven, in *Dedication Book* by Beth Yehuda Synagogue, 7. Lock Haven: Self-published, 1952. Material accessed from Lee Roberts.

According to Beth Yehuda Synagogue's 1953 Dedication Book, "The seeds were sown for the building of our new Beth Yehuda Synagogue and Center many years ago when we realized our little schul...had become inadequate to the needs of our expanding Jewish community."²⁴⁸ The congregation's desire for a new synagogue originated in the early 1930s, but the Great Depression and World War II delayed the building project. In 1945, however, the congregation purchased the Brown home on West Main Street to use as a Jewish community center and Hebrew School.²⁴⁹ The distance between the synagogue and community center, however, frustrated congregants began discussing the creation of a new building to house both the synagogue and community center.²⁵⁰

In 1950, the congregation purchased a plot of land at 320 West Church Street, across from the Lock Haven High School, for the purpose of constructing a joint synagogue and community center. Thomas Hamberger was chosen as the architect with Irvin and Kuntz as the contractors.²⁵¹ While the congregation celebrated the dedication of the new synagogue in May of 1952, the congregation began using the new building's social hall, located at the back of the building, for social purposes on January 1, 1952. The new synagogue's social hall also served as a place of worship for the Lock Haven Jewish community before the official dedication of the new synagogue.²⁵² The building of the original synagogue on the corner of Clinton Street and Commerce Street still exists, but the building has been renovated into apartments.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 8.

²⁴⁹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 8-9.

²⁵⁰ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 9.

²⁵¹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7 and 9.

²⁵² "Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams," *Lock Haven Express*, May 24, 1952, 6.

²⁵³ Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

West Church Street Synagogue (1952-2022)

The congregation's president, Aaron "Orie" Claster, and the Building Committee, comprised of Ben Snowiss, Dave Henry, and Ellis Hoberman, led the building effort for the new Beth Yehuda synagogue.²⁵⁴ Fundraising for the synagogue included both the Jewish and non-Jewish community of Lock Haven. For example, in January of 1952, the Beth Yehuda Sisterhood sponsored a Barn Dance at City Hall for the entire Lock Haven community with the proceeds benefiting the Synagogue Building Fund.²⁵⁵



Figure 18: Two newspaper clippings, one from the groundbreaking (left) and one from the dedication (right) of the new Beth Yehuda synagogue on Church Street.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 9.

²⁵⁵ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 8.

²⁵⁶ *Groundbreaking*, 1951, photograph, Lock Haven, in "Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams," *Lock Haven Express*, May 24, 1952, 2; *Removing Torah*, 1952, photograph, Lock Haven, in "Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams," *Lock Haven Express*, May 24, 1952, 2.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new synagogue took place on Easter Sunday, March 21, 1951. The attendees included Rabbi Fred Susman, the congregation's president, Aaron "Orie" Claster, the oldest member of the congregation, Noah Zimmerman, 90, and the youngest congregant, Robert Cohen, 13, who celebrated his bar mitzvah with 400 guests the previous day.²⁵⁷ The congregation dedicated the synagogue on May 25, 1952.²⁵⁸ Festivities included the placing of the cornerstone, a ribbon cutting, contractor Theodore R. Irvin presenting the building's keys, a Torah procession, and lighting the eternal light.²⁵⁹ The Torah bearers were A. B. Bernstein, D. Lewis Cohen, Samuel W. Claster, all former presidents of the Congregation.²⁶⁰

Due to limited space, only congregates and special guests were invited for the dedication ceremony, but the entire Lock Haven community was invited to an Open House and musical program in the synagogue in the evening.²⁶¹ Attendees included the Rabbi Emanuel Kramer of the Congregation Ohev Sholom in Williamsport, Mayor Charles E. Herr, Judge Henry Hipple, and Reverend Dr. Alfred J. Thomas.²⁶² According to the *Lock Haven Express*, at the time of the synagogue's dedication, the congregation included 80 Jewish families.²⁶³

The completed building included a sanctuary, social hall, commercial kitchen, and two classrooms, used for Sunday school and Hebrew school.²⁶⁴ Controversy arose in the congregation, however, regarding whether the synagogue's kitchen would keep kosher. In the synagogue's 1988 anniversary booklet, Dr. Edward Hoberman recalled, "Lock Haven...really

²⁵⁷ "Chilly Easter Is Welcomed by Worshipers," *Lock Haven Express*, March 26, 1951.

²⁵⁸ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 7 and 8.

²⁵⁹ "Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams," *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁶⁰ "New Synagogue Dedicated in Sacred Rituals," *Lock Haven Express*, May 24, 1952.

²⁶¹ "New Synagogue Dedicated in Sacred Rituals," *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁶² Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 10 and 25; "New Synagogue Dedicated in Sacred Rituals," *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁶³ "Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams," *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁶⁴ Schaitkin interview; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 5.

became a “melting plot” of different types of Jews. Initially many of the families kept Kosher.

There was a dispute, when we were building the [new] Synagogue, as to whether we would have a Kosher kitchen. I felt like Solomon trying to attempt a decision to please everyone.”²⁶⁵

According to Lock Haven Jewish community member JoAnne Hoberman, the congregation chose to maintain a kosher kitchen in the synagogue, at least in the early years of the building.²⁶⁶

Congregant and building committee member, Dave Henry, who owned the restaurant Henry’s on Main Street, designed the kitchen and was responsible, along with Ethel Hoberman, to prepare meals at Jewish community gatherings.²⁶⁷

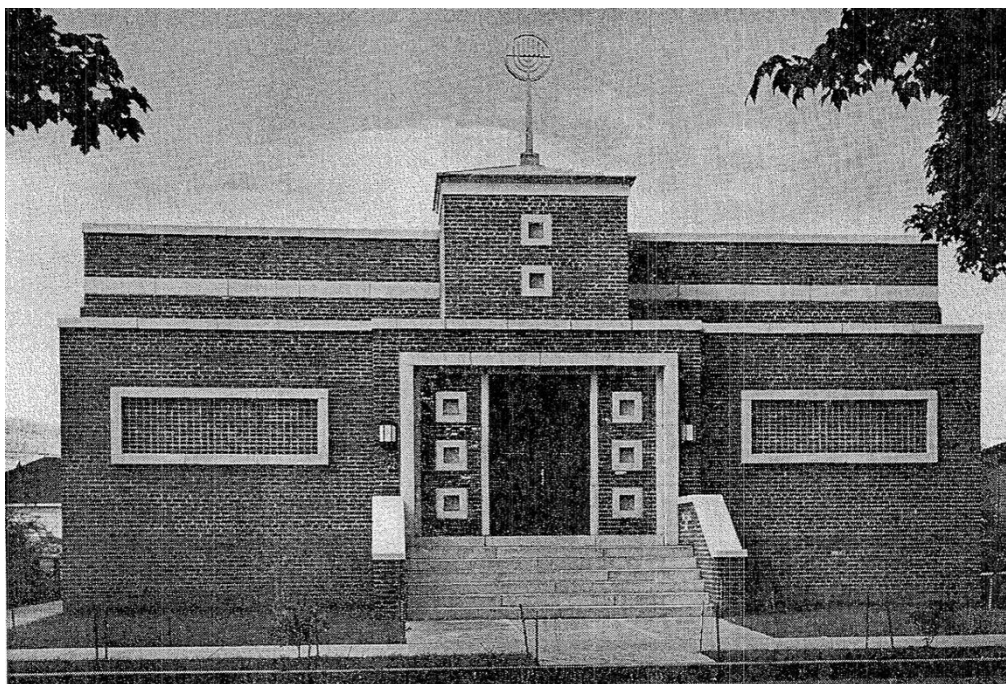


Figure 19: The Beth Yehuda synagogue on Church Street in 1952.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 12.

²⁶⁶ Hoberman interview.

²⁶⁷ Hoberman interview; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 10-12.

²⁶⁸ *Beth Yehuda Synagogue on Church Street*, 1952, photograph, Lock Haven, in *Dedication Book* by Beth Yehuda Synagogue, cover. Lock Haven: Self-published, 1952. Material accessed from Lee Roberts.

A. Raymond Katz, a Jewish American ecclesiastical artist who designed murals and stained-glass windows in the chapel of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York City, designed various elements within and outside the Beth Yehuda synagogue. Within the sanctuary, Katz designed the three stained-glass doors of the *Aron Kodesh*, or Torah ark. The Beth Yehuda *Aron Kodesh* is one of the first in the country to feature stained-glass doors. The doors feature various motifs, including the tree of life.²⁶⁹ Katz also designed the menorahs on the bimah and is believed to have been involved in the designing of the wood carvings on the front of the bimah lecterns and the mosaics on the outside of the building.²⁷⁰



Figure 20: The *Aron Kodesh*, or Torah ark, in the Beth Yehuda synagogue. Designed by A. Raymond Katz.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Washington interview; Paul Washington, “Beth Yehuda’s *Aron Kodesh*: The Doors of the Ark,” 2020, material accessed from Paul Washington.

²⁷⁰ Washington interview; Washington, “Beth Yehuda’s *Aron Kodesh*.”

²⁷¹ Casey Sennett, *Beth Yehuda’s Ark*, personal photograph, May 17, 2022.

On the doors of the synagogue, three carved wood panels on each door depict the six days of creation. Mosaics on both sides of the doors also represent the six major holy days of the Jewish year. A long mosaic on the left side of the door represents the Sabbath and the long mosaic panel on the right represent the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁷² Located on the cupola is a seven-branch candelabra, representing the seven days of creation.²⁷³



Figure 21: The outside of the Beth Yehuda synagogue on Church Street in Lock Haven. Some of the outside mosaics and woodwork are visible.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Hannegan and May, *Clinton County*, 133.

²⁷³ “Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams,” *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁷⁴ Casey Sennett, *Beth Yehuda Synagogue*, personal photograph, May 17, 2022.

The Beth Yehuda synagogue was the first place of worship in Lock Haven to include individual seating.²⁷⁵ The *Lock Haven Express* reported, “Sitting in these pews differs from sitting in any other pew in town. Each person has an individual seat in red upholstery, comfortable as a theatre seat.”²⁷⁶ The synagogue included 176 fixed seats with a maximum capacity of 218 people.²⁷⁷ The social hall could seat 240 people.²⁷⁸ In the new building, the first bar mitzvah was of Alfred Hoberman, which occurred when the building was not complete.²⁷⁹ The congregation’s first confirmation took place in 1952. Led by Rabbi Susman, the ceremony confirmed Linda Claster, Carol Claster, and Nan Zimmerman.²⁸⁰



Figure 22: Inside the Beth Yehuda synagogue on Church Street in Lock Haven. The bimah is visible as well as the synagogue’s individual seating.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ Washington interview.

²⁷⁶ “Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams,” *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁷⁷ “Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams,” *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁷⁸ “Synagogue Is Complete Realization of Beth Yehuda Congregation Dreams,” *Lock Haven Express*.

²⁷⁹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 12.

²⁸⁰ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 7.

²⁸¹ Casey Sennett, *Inside the Beth Yehuda Synagogue*, personal photograph, May 17, 2022.

One Jewish community member dubbed the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s as a “golden era” of the Jewish community of Lock Haven. They noted the three decades saw growth within the population of the Jewish community, which helped support a full-time rabbi and synagogue.²⁸² At the time, the congregation also provided the congregation’s rabbi with a home about two and half blocks from the synagogue, on West Fourth Street.²⁸³ Several Jewish community members recalled in the 1950s and 1960s the congregation’s need to add folding chairs to the sanctuary to accommodate everyone during services.²⁸⁴ Joe Klevansky remembered, “Much of our life revolved around Synagogue and our religion...All of us young boys, were required to go to Shabbat morning services. If you didn’t show up, you could pretty much count on Jake Zimmerman knocking on your door to bring you down to Shul. After services the older men in the group use to take us down to Henry’s for breakfast.”²⁸⁵

Over time, the Lock Haven Jewish community increasingly struggled to secure a full-time rabbi. A former Lock Haven Jewish community member recalled how one of the congregation’s last rabbis, Rabbi Ralph Glixman, who served the community from approximately 1958 to 1966, “...was so dedicated to the community and our education... [he must have] sensed the community would not have rabbis coming after he was gone and wanted to train the kids how to lead services.”²⁸⁶ Another Jewish community member, Larry Coploff, recalled studying under Rabbi Glixman, “...who was strict, directive, and disciplined. We were at the Synagogue at least five times a week for different classes, and then he would call us up on

²⁸² Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

²⁸³ Schaitkin interview.

²⁸⁴ Anonymous interviewee 3 interview; Coploff interview; Schitkin interview; Drezner interview.

²⁸⁵ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 14.

²⁸⁶ Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

the phone every night so he could hear us practice out portions.”²⁸⁷ Due to the more rigorous training the cohort received, students of Rabbi Glixman’s were able to fill in for services when the congregation was unable to obtain a rabbi.²⁸⁸

After Rabbi Glixman, Rabbi Silver and Rabbi Troister served the Lock Haven Jewish community.²⁸⁹ Around 1970, the congregation became affiliated with the Reform Movement.²⁹⁰ In early December of 1972, Rabbi Henry Schwartz, Lock Haven’s last full-time rabbi, retired. For his replacement, the congregation chose to share Rabbi David Schwartz with the Temple Beth Ha-Shalom in Williamsport rather than attempting to support a rabbi full-time.²⁹¹ In the summer of 1979, however, the Beth Yehuda congregation fired Rabbi Schwartz because he did not like working with children and the congregation had several children who needed trained for their bar and bat mitzvah.²⁹² The firing of Rabbi Schwartz led to a falling out between the two congregations and instead of sharing another rabbi with the Temple Beth Ha-Shalom congregation, the Beth Yehuda congregation chose to bring in student rabbis from the Hebrew Union College in New York. In August of 1979, the first student rabbi, Rabbi Steven Abrams, began serving the congregation, a trend which continued until 2020.²⁹³ One student rabbi included, Rabbi Sarah Messinger, one of the first female rabbis of Beth Yehuda, who served the congregation for more than five years and married Rabbi Jeffrey Eisenstat, a rabbi at Brit Shalom in State College.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁷ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 10.

²⁸⁸ Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

²⁸⁹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 18.

²⁹⁰ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 18.

²⁹¹ Washington interview.

²⁹² Washington interview; Roberts interview.

²⁹³ Washington interview.

²⁹⁴ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 3; Hoberman interview; “Who We Are,” *JEWEL: Jewish Educational Wisdom, Experience, and Leadership*, <http://www.jewelconsulting.net/who-we-are.html>.

The congregation's membership continued to decline in the 1980s as younger Jewish community members left Lock Haven to seek educational and professional opportunities elsewhere and older Jewish community members died.²⁹⁵ As a result, the number of times the congregation could afford for a student rabbi to visit the synagogue per year decreased. At first, student rabbis served the congregation a few times a month, but it later dwindled to two times a month in only the fall and spring.²⁹⁶ The absence of a permanent rabbi led to the congregation relying on Brit Shalom in State College for Sunday School. For some families, especially those in mixed marriages, the distance between State College and Lock Haven led to their children not attending Sunday School and, in some cases, being raised Christian rather than Jewish.²⁹⁷ By the 2000s, however, student rabbis hosted Friday afternoon classes, called Learns, for the Lock Haven Jewish community. Held in the social hall of the synagogue, the topics of the class varied, including Hebrew instruction, Jewish history, and modern Israel.²⁹⁸

Throughout the years, when congregants died without a rabbi present, Marvin Hurwitz, the President of Temple Beth Ha-Shalom in Williamsport, led the funerary rites.²⁹⁹ By 1988, the Beth Yehuda congregation had an estimated 47 families.³⁰⁰ Ruth and Ellis Hoberman, in 1988, noted, "Although the congregation has grown smaller it still remains a committed and loving group of people who are deeply connected with their Judaism."³⁰¹

Due to continued declines in membership and inadequate funding to complete necessary building repairs, in the summer of 2012, the congregation donated the synagogue's building to

²⁹⁵ Anonymous interviewee 2 interview.

²⁹⁶ Schaitkin interview.

²⁹⁷ Coploff interview.

²⁹⁸ Drezner interview.

²⁹⁹ Robert interview.

³⁰⁰ Hannegan and May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time*, 133.

³⁰¹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 11.

the Lock Haven University Foundation in exchange for 15 years of free rent and the completion of the building's needed repairs.³⁰² The building was also donated with the intent of the building becoming the Beth Yehuda Inter-faith Center at the university.³⁰³ While the Beth Yehuda congregation has maintained use of the sanctuary, under the university's ownership, the social hall served as a non-sectarian Church for about 4 years and later became the home of the Lock Haven University Haven Cupboard, a food pantry for Lock Haven University students, in 2019.³⁰⁴



Figure 23: The social rooms of the Beth Yehuda synagogue currently serve as Lock Haven University's food pantry, Lock Haven University Cupboard.³⁰⁵

³⁰² Roberts interview.

³⁰³ Washington interview.

³⁰⁴ Roberts interview; Washington interview.

³⁰⁵ Casey Sennett, *Lock Haven University Cupboard*, personal photograph, May 17, 2022.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the synagogue's last in-person service was held in March of 2020. The congregation, however, continued virtual meetings until the student rabbi's contract expired.³⁰⁶ Since the elapse of the student rabbi's contract, the congregation has celebrated one baby naming and one bat mitzvah within the sanctuary.³⁰⁷ In 2022, the Jewish community of Lock Haven was estimated to be 15 people, including non-Jewish members of the synagogue, with approximately 10 people belonging to the synagogue.³⁰⁸ Of those members, none are under the age of 50.³⁰⁹

The Beth Yehuda congregation anticipates closing the synagogue in 2022.³¹⁰ Of the three Torahs from the congregation, one was sold to an Orthodox man starting a congregation in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. The second was donated to a woman in Portland, Oregon, whose mother was from Lock Haven, and prepares non-affiliated kids for their bar mitzvah.³¹¹ As of May 2022, the third and final Torah remains in the ark and will eventually be given to the Jewish Legacy Foundation.³¹²

Jewish Community Member Profiles

Simon Scott (1815-1891)

Born on May 2, 1815, in Rodelheim, Germany, Simon lived in Henley Green, England, until he immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 19. After arriving in the U.S., he lived in Philadelphia, Hazelton, Pottsville, Pine Creek, and Dunnstown before settling in Lock Haven in

³⁰⁶ Washington interview.

³⁰⁷ Washington interview.

³⁰⁸ Roberts interview.

³⁰⁹ Anonymous interviewee interview 1.

³¹⁰ Roberts interview.

³¹¹ Roberts interview

³¹² Lee Roberts Interview

1850. While in Hazelton, he married Julia Anna Horn, a Christian woman. Julia and Simon had two sons, Jacob and Lewis Scott, and one adoptive daughter, Sadie Scott Pearson.³¹³

Simon operated a general merchandise store, Scott & Co., later Scott Bros, with his two sons. Through the business, they also acquired and managed real estate. The Scott mansion, located at 210 East Main Street, and constructed in 1854, was purchased by the Elks after the death of Simon's wife.³¹⁴ According to his obituary, "Mr. Simon Scott, one of the oldest and most respected residents of this city...has been an honored resident of Lock Haven and one of its most active and prominent business men, filling many places of honor and trust with the same energy and business foresight as was shown in the conduct of his private affairs."³¹⁵ Simon served as director of Lock Haven National Bank, director of the Lock Haven and Great Island Bridge Companies, President of the Bald Eagle Boom Company, and one term as councilman.³¹⁶

Simon Scott died on October 6, 1891, in his sleep. He was buried in the Highland Cemetery, where his wife was later buried in 1906, in the fashion of the Masonic fraternity. In his will, he left money to both the "Jewish Foster Home" of Philadelphia and the Jewish Hospital of Philadelphia.³¹⁷

Amelia Hecht Simon (1805-1879)

Amelia Hecht Simon was born in Bebenhausen, Grand Duchy of Hesse Darmstadt, Germany in August of 1805. She married Abraham Hirsh in 1831 and they had seven children.

³¹³ "Mrs. Simon Scott," *Lock Haven Express*; Death of Simon Scott," *Evening Express*; "Sarah 'Sadie' Scott Pearson," *Find A Grave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/114153707/sarah-pearson>.

³¹⁴ "Jacob Scott, Prominent Citizen, Passes Away," *Lock Haven Express*, June 11, 1921; Hannegan and May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time*, 204-207.

³¹⁵ "Death of Simon Scott," *Evening Express*.

³¹⁶ "Death of Simon Scott," *Evening Express*.

³¹⁷ "Mrs. Simon Scott," *Lock Haven Express*; "Death of Simon Scott," *Evening Express*.

Following her husband's death in 1850, Amelia and six of her children immigrated to the U.S. in 1853. They settled in Lock Haven because her cousin, Simon Scott, previously brought over and employed her oldest son, Joseph. Three of her children, Joseph, Isidor, and Matilda, died within four weeks of one another in 1854.³¹⁸

After arriving in Lock Haven, Amelia opened a grocery business, A. Simon and Sons and later Simon Bros., in 1855, which she expanded into a wholesale food distribution firm with her sons, Herman, Sigmund, Victor, Louis.³¹⁹ Additionally, Sigmund opened a clothing business, and the Simon Building on East Main Street was built in 1883 to house both businesses. Amelia is considered the first businesswoman in Lock Haven.³²⁰

She died in Lock Haven on June 4, 1879, and was buried in the Highland Cemetery in Lock Haven.³²¹ Her grandson, Joseph A. Simon, served as a representative from Clinton County in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1929 to 1938.³²²

Claster Family

Harris Claster (1861-1941)

Harris (Hirshe) Claster was born in October of 1861 in Ponevezh, Lithuania, near Kovno. He immigrated to the U.S. with his younger brother, Isaac, in September of 1883.³²³ Harris and Isaac followed their older brothers, Joseph and Henry, who immigrated to Harrisburg,

³¹⁸ "Clinton County Landmark Calendar," *Annie Halenbake Ross Public Library*, 1983, historical calendar, Pennsylvania Room at Annie Halenbake Ross Library; "Lock Haven's First Woman in Business," *Lock Haven Express*, January 28, 1994; "Death of a Venerable Old Lady," *Clinton Democrat*, June 5, 1879.

³¹⁹ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 4.

³²⁰ "Amelia Hecht Simon," *Find a Grave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/88888664/amelia-simon>.

³²¹ "Amelia Hecht Simon," *Find a Grave*.

³²² "Joseph A. Simon," *Pennsylvania House of Representatives Archives*; Anonymous interviewee 1 interview.

³²³ "Harris Claster," *Geni*, last updated April 27, 2022, <https://www.geni.com/people/Harris-Claster/6000000009265158290?through=60000000026996847936>; Sidney H. Closter, "Where Once We Walked," speech, Claster family Reunion, 1972, material accessed from Julie Mamolen Bleicher.

Pennsylvania, in the early 1880s.³²⁴ Harris became a naturalized U.S. citizen on May 19, 1888.³²⁵



Figure 24: Photo of Harris Claster. He helped more than one hundred Jews immigrate to Lock Haven and the surrounding area.³²⁶

Harrisburg to Lock Haven. He settled in Lock Haven by the mid-1880s and peddled dry goods and clothing to the surrounding area.³²⁷ As the population of Lock Haven grew and demands for his services increased, he opened Claster Wholesale House.³²⁸ Through his business, he purchased large quantities of goods, such as clothing and home furnishings, and sold them to peddlers and smaller stores.³²⁹

³²⁴ Marilyn Claster Nissenson, interviewed via phone by author, July 26, 2022.

³²⁵ "Harris Claster," *Geni*.

³²⁶ *Harris Claster*, n.d., photograph, Lock Haven, in *Dedication Book* by Beth Yehuda Synagogue, 40. Lock Haven: Self-published, 1952. Material accessed from Lee Roberts.

³²⁷ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 22.

³²⁸ Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 22.

³²⁹ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 35-36; Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 22.

Harris financed the immigration of numerous relatives and non-relatives from Lithuania, who increasingly faced persecution and pogroms, in exchange for the newly arrived immigrants to work as peddlers for him and manage Claster stores, which opened through Central Pennsylvania and West Virginia. By the early 1900s, more than one hundred Jewish peddlers relied on Harris's store for their merchandise, and he supplied goods to stores in Bellefonte, Bloomsburg, Danville, Grampian, Huntingdon, Jersey Shore, Renovo, Sinnemahoning, Snowshoe, and State College, Pennsylvania, and Elkins and Durbin, West Virginia.³³⁰

He married Rosa Shapiro of Lock Haven in December of 1887, and they had nine children: Samuel, Lester, Joel, Lilian, Mildred, and Herbert Claster and Gertrude Claster Meyer, Blanche Claster Levine, and Ida Claster Meyer.³³¹ The family lived in a house at 34 Clinton Street, where he operated his original peddler supply store. As his business expanded, however, he moved his business to a larger space on Bellefonte Avenue and then a three-story building on Main Street, the current home of the Lock Haven Express. He also purchased a mansion on Fairview Street, where he and his family lived for nearly 25 years.³³² Harris closed his wholesale clothing business, later called Harris Claster and Son, in June of 1926 and relocated his family and business to New York City. He died in New York City at the age of 81 on December 8, 1941.³³³

Ellis Claster (1873-1951)

³³⁰ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 35-36; Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 22.

³³¹ "Harris Claster," *Geni*.

³³² Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 23.

³³³ "Well-Known Business Discontinued," *Clinton County Times*, June 11, 1926; "Harris Claster, 81 Died in New York," *Lock Haven Express*, December 9, 1941.

Ellis Claster was born in 1873 in Ponevezh, Lithuania. He immigrated to the U.S. in September of 1886 and settled with his brother, Harris, in Lock Haven.³³⁴ In 1901, Ellis operated a hides, skins, and tallows business, E & M. L. Claster, with his brother-in-law, Morris Claster, at 5 West Clinton Street.³³⁵ In September of the same year, he married Bella Bennett of Pittsburgh. Bella and Ellis had three children: Kermit Claster, Sylvia Claster Bachrach, and Marjorie Claster Wolinsky.³³⁶ Ellis became a naturalized U.S. citizen on October 2, 1894.³³⁷

Around 1890, Ellis became involved in the junk business in Lock Haven. He owned and operated the Claster Junk Yard, later Claster Iron & Scrap Company, the largest scrapyard in Central Pennsylvania, with Morris Claster until the early 1930s, when Ellis moved to New York City.³³⁸ After leaving Lock Haven, Ellis was associated with the Breakstone Cheese Company in New York, but his declining health forced him to retire. He died at the age of 78 in New York on September 24, 1951, and was buried in the Mt. Lebanon Cemetery.³³⁹

Morris Lester Claster (1862-1936)

Morris (Moses) Lester Claster, or M. L. Claster, was born in September of 1862 in Ponevezh, Lithuania. He left his wife, Jole, or Julia, and their daughter, Amelia, in Lithuania when he immigrated to the U.S. in March of 1889.³⁴⁰ Morris arrived in Lock Haven and worked

³³⁴ "Ellis Claster," *Geni*, last updated December 24, 2015, <https://www.geni.com/people/Ellis-Claster/6000000009265030621?through=6000000009264841635>.

³³⁵ *Directory of Lock Haven, PA* (Harrisburg: Alfred G. Wormser & Co., 1901), 37 and 166.

³³⁶ "Ellis Claster," *Geni*.

³³⁷ "Ellis Claster," *Geni*.

³³⁸ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 4; Bert Claster, "Notes from Sam Claster," unpublished, January 16, 1968, 2-3, material accessed from Julie Mamolen Bleicher; "Ellis Claster Dies, 78 Years Old," *Lock Haven Express*, September 25, 1951; Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 4.

³³⁹ "Ellis Claster Dies, 78 Years Old," *Lock Haven Express*.

³⁴⁰ "Morris Lester Claster," *Geni*, last updated April 27, 2022, <https://www.geni.com/people/Morris-Claster/6000000009259274953>.

as a peddler for Julia's brother, Harris, in Snow Shoe, Karthaus, Clearfield, Philipsburg, and Frenchville.³⁴¹ In the early 1890s, Morris stopped peddling and became involved in the wholesale tin business. He employed Jewish peddlers, such as Abraham Stein, but the business soon became unprofitable. Instead, an increasing demand for waste products led Morris to join his brother-in-law, Ellis Claster, in the junk business and together they operated the Claster Junk Yard.³⁴²



Figure 25: Photo of Morris Claster. He founded a building supply company that expanded to more than ten locations in Central Pennsylvania. The company operated until 1997, when it was sold to YBC (Your Building Center).³⁴³

By 1893, Morris earned enough money to bring his wife and daughter to Lock Haven.³⁴⁴

In the U.S., Julia and Morris had five children: Samuel, Benjamin, Aaron "Orie," and Isadore

³⁴¹ Claster, "Notes from Sam Claster," 1 and 20.

³⁴² Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 4; Claster, "Notes from Sam Claster," 2-3; "Ellis Claster Dies, 78 Years Old," *Lock Haven Express*; Hirsh, *Eldest Son of an Eldest Son*, 24; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book*, 6.

³⁴³ *Morris Claster*, n.d., photograph, *Geni*, <https://www.geni.com/people/Morris-Claster/6000000009259274953>.

³⁴⁴ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 38; "Morris Lester Claster," *Geni*.

“Izzy” Claster, and Sara Claster Mamolen. After Julia died in 1920, Morris remarried a widow, Sara Herr Kalin.³⁴⁵ Sara had one child, Melvin Kalin, from her previous marriage and Morris and Sara had two sons: Paul and Morton Claster.³⁴⁶

In 1901, Morris, who handled hides and pelts with his father in Lithuania, operated a hides, skins, and tallows business, E & M. L. Claster, with Ellis.³⁴⁷ That same year, Morris started Morris L. Claster Coal & Feed Company after purchasing the Lock Haven coal yard, which consisted of a coal yard and a grinding and mixing mill, from his neighbor, Walter Agar.³⁴⁸ While Morris’ business initially focused on coal, the 1902 Anthracite Coal Strike in Scranton led to him diversifying his business to include the milling of feed and flour.³⁴⁹ An important trademark of the business was the grey Belgian draft horses used to deliver coal to customers.³⁵⁰

Around 1910, the visibility of different building projects, such as new homes and sheds, in the area attracted Morris’ interest to roofing and lumber.³⁵¹ In 1968, Samuel, one of Morris sons, recalled the difficulty his father encountered when getting into the business of wholesale lumber, “We started [the business] with it [rough lumber] but we couldn’t buy because they [wholesale dealers] would turn right around and sell to the farmer at the same price –and cheaper

³⁴⁵ “Julia Claster,” *Geni*, last updated April 28, 2022, <https://www.geni.com/people/Julia-Claster/6000000009264841635?through=6000000009259274953>; “Morris Lester Claster,” *Geni*.

³⁴⁶ “Sara Kalin/Claster,” *Geni*, last updated April 9, 2012, <https://www.geni.com/people/Sara-Kalin-Claster/6000000016180557671?through=6000000009259274953>.

³⁴⁷ Alfred G. Wormser & Co., *Directory of Lock Haven, PA*, 37 and 166; Krauss, “History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County,” 1.

³⁴⁸ Hannegan and May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time*, 234; Krauss, “History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County,” 38; Claster, “Notes from Sam Claster,” 3.

³⁴⁹ Claster, “Notes from Sam Claster,” 4; “The 1902 Anthracite Coal Strike (Scranton) Historical Marker,” *Explore PA History*, n.d., <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-B7>.

³⁵⁰ Krauss, “History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County,” 1.

³⁵¹ Claster, “Notes from Sam Claster,” 5.

sometime[s]. That is what made it so hard. But then we had an awful battle to get people to take surfaced lumber.”³⁵²

By 1921, however, the business sold a variety of building materials, such as prefabricated structural steel, cement blocks, and lumber.³⁵³ In 1928, the business, then called M.L. Claster and Sons, purchased the Bellefonte Lumber Company in Bellefonte.³⁵⁴ Morris’ son, Isadore, moved to Bellefonte and managed the yard.³⁵⁵ In the 1930s, the business functioned as a building supply and lumberyard and became the primarily lumber dealer in the area after serving as the supplier of the Civilian Conservation Corps in five counties.³⁵⁶

Morris died at the age of 74 at his home on West Bald Eagle Street in Lock Haven on April 24, 1936, following two heart attacks. At the time of his death, the company operated in Lock Haven, Bellefonte, and Tyrone. Aside from his business, Morris was a member of the Masons and Elks.³⁵⁷ Due to the Flood of 1936, which closed the Beth Yehuda synagogue for several months in 1936, Morris’ funeral services were held at his home, not the synagogue, with Rabbi David Friedman officiating. He was buried at the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven.³⁵⁸

Aaron “Orie” Claster (1901-1977) and Miriam Herr Claster (1901-1989)

³⁵² Claster, “Notes from Sam Claster,” 6.

³⁵³ Krauss, “History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County,” 38; Hannegan and May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time*, 234.

³⁵⁴ Bellefonte Borough, *Bellefonte Industries: Sucker Stick Factory* (Bellefonte: Bellefonte Borough, 2006), <https://bellefonte.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/suckerstickfactory.pdf>.

³⁵⁵ Krauss, “History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County,” 2; Nissenson interview.

³⁵⁶ Hannegan and May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time*, 234.

³⁵⁷ “Morris L. Claster Dies at Age of 74,” *Lock Haven Express*, April 24, 1936.

³⁵⁸ “Morris L. Claster Dies at Age of 74,” *Lock Haven Express*; Washington interview.

Aaron “Orie” Claster, the son of Morris and Julia Claster, was born on September 6, 1901, in Lock Haven.³⁵⁹ He got his nickname, “Orie,” as a child because he frequently rode on his father’s coal delivery wagons with a man named Orie and he became known as “Little Orie.” Orie, however, officially began working for the family lumber business in the 1920s.³⁶⁰ After Morris Claster died in 1936, the ownership of the business passed to Morris and Julia’s four sons: Samuel, Benjamin, Orie, and Isadore.³⁶¹

In 1947, following the closing of the Pennsylvania Match Company in Bellefonte, M. L. Claster & Sons purchased the match company’s building at 367 Phoenix Avenue in Bellefonte and moved their General Offices and storage there. The company occupied the building until the business was sold to YBC, Your Building Center, in 1997.³⁶² During the 1950s, the company expanded to nearly 10 stores, including locations in Sunbury, Philipsburg, and State College. Orie and Isadore also bought out their two older brothers, Samuel and Benjamin. When Isadore retired from the company in 1962, Orie became the sole owner of the business, then called Claster Lumber Co.³⁶³ Orie became chairman of the board in October of 1973 when his son, Jay, assumed the role of president and CEO.³⁶⁴ At the time of his death in 1977, the business had expanded to 12 stores.³⁶⁵

Orie married Miriam Herr on January 19, 1930, and they had two children: Jay Claster and Linda Claster Hochman.³⁶⁶ Born on March 4, 1901, in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, Miriam

³⁵⁹ “Aaron (Orie) Claster,” *Geni*, last updated July 7, 2010, <https://www.geni.com/people/Aaron-Orie/6000000009264883730?through=6000000009259274953>.

³⁶⁰ “Morris L. Claster Dies at Age of 74,” *Lock Haven Express*.

³⁶¹ Nissenson interview.

³⁶² Nissenson interview; “Pennsylvania Match Company,” *Roadtrippers*, n.d., <https://maps.roadtrippers.com/us/bellefonte-pa/points-of-interest/pennsylvania-match-company>.

³⁶³ Nissenson interview.

³⁶⁴ “Deaths and Funeral Rites Wednesday for A.H. ‘Orie’ Claster,” *The Express*, January 25, 1977.

³⁶⁵ “Deaths and Funeral Rites Wednesday for A.H. ‘Orie’ Claster,” *The Express*.

³⁶⁶ “Deaths and Funeral Rites Wednesday for A.H. ‘Orie’ Claster,” *The Express*.

moved to Lock Haven in 1928 after marrying Orie. A talented pianist, she majored in piano at the Combs Conservatory of Music in Philadelphia and, after graduating, played piano to accompany silent movies, and served as a pianist for traveling bands and orchestras.³⁶⁷

Both Orie and Miriam were highly involved in the town of Lock Haven. Orie served as president of the Hospital Board of Trustees from 1962-1971, director of the YMCA, director of the Lock Haven Area Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Governor's Committee on Comprehensive Health Planning, and was appointed as a board member of the Clinton County Foundation. In 1972, the Rotary Club of Lock Haven named him the first "Citizen of the Year."³⁶⁸ Within the Jewish community, Orie served as president of the Lock Haven Lodge of B'nai B'rith and president of the Beth Yehuda congregation for several years.³⁶⁹

Miriam played the organ for various churches in the area and served as an accompanist for local dance studios, musicals, plays, and recitals. In March of 1989, she was honored by the Lock Haven chapter of the American Association of University Women for her lifetime achievements. Miriam was also known to drive around deliveries of soup and other items at all hours of the day.³⁷⁰ Miriam would also play the electric organ for high holidays services.³⁷¹

Orie Claster died on January 24, 1977, at the age of 75 and Miriam Claster died on June 2, 1989, at the age of 88. Both Orie and Miriam were buried at the Beth Yehuda cemetery in Lock Haven.³⁷²

³⁶⁷ "Miriam H. Claster, 88, Talented Pianist," *The Express*, June 3, 1989.

³⁶⁸ "Deaths and Funeral Rites Wednesday for A.H. 'Orie' Claster," *The Express*.

³⁶⁹ "Deaths and Funeral Rites Wednesday for A.H. 'Orie' Claster," *The Express*; "Miriam H. Claster, 88, Talented Pianist," *The Express*.

³⁷⁰ "Miriam H. Claster, 88, Talented Pianist," *The Express*; Anonymous interviewee 3 interview.

³⁷¹ "Deaths and Funeral Rites Wednesday for A.H. 'Orie' Claster," *The Express*; "Miriam H. Claster, 88, Talented Pianist," *The Express*.

³⁷² "Deaths and Funeral Rites Wednesday for A.H. 'Orie' Claster," *The Express*; "Miriam H. Claster, 88, Talented Pianist," *The Express*.

Abraham Lipez (1903-1994)

Abraham Lipez was born on December 19, 1903, in Russia to Max Lipez and Ellen Padolsky Lipez.³⁷³ Abraham's father immigrated to the U.S in 1905 after deserting the Russian army. Max settled in Lock Haven at the home of his brother-in-law, Abe Padolsky, who worked for Harris Claster and married one of Harris' cousins. Max began working as a peddler with credit from Harris Claster.³⁷⁴ Abraham, his mother, and his younger sister, Ida, remained in Russia for about a year until his father and grandparents raised enough money to fund their immigration.³⁷⁵

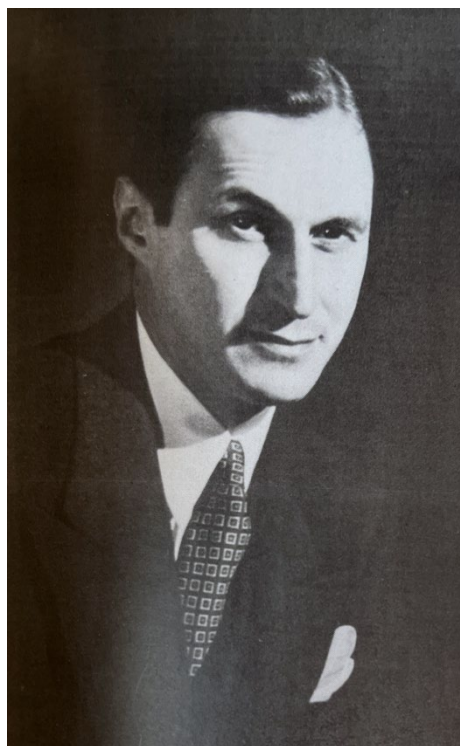


Figure 26: Photo of Judge Abraham Lipez at the age of 39. He served as a judge in Clinton County from 1952 to 1974, a judge in Centre County beginning in 1957, and as a judge on the Superior Court of Pennsylvania from 1978 to 1986.³⁷⁶

³⁷³ "Abraham H. Lipez," *Find a Grave*, n.d., <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/103274878/abraham-h-lipez>.

³⁷⁴ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 2.

³⁷⁵ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 1-2.

³⁷⁶ *Judge Abraham Lipez*, 1942, photograph, in *Recollections of a County Judge* by Abraham Lipez, 125. Lock Haven: Nuttall Editions, 1993.

After working as a peddler for several years, Max opened a clothing and notions store in front of the family home on Bellefonte Avenue. Max later opened a shoe store near Main Street and a branch store in Clearfield.³⁷⁷ By the end of World War I, Max owned two stores in Lock Haven, a ladies clothing and shoe store and a men's clothing and furnishings store. Abraham began working at the store around the age of 10.³⁷⁸

Abraham graduated from Lock Haven High School in 1921, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in 1925, and University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1929.³⁷⁹ He passed the bar in 1929 and began practicing law in Lock Haven in 1931.³⁸⁰ Abraham H. Lipez served as a judge in Clinton County from 1952 to 1974, a judge in Centre County beginning in 1957, and as a judge on the Superior Court of Pennsylvania from 1978 to 1986.³⁸¹

Abraham married Bee Mayerson in 1928 and they had two children: Joy and Kermit Lipez.³⁸² He died on September 15, 1994, in Portland, Maine. He was buried in the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven. He was a member of the Lock Haven Elks, Odd Fellows lodges, Lafayette Lodge, Jaffa Shrine, and B'nai B'rith.³⁸³

Hoberman Family

Benjamin Hoberman (1878-1951)

Benjamin Hoberman was born January 10, 1878, in Minsk, Russia, to Edward and Zelda Hoberman. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1904 and settled in New York City. He began working

³⁷⁷ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 9-10.

³⁷⁸ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 10, 12, and 22.

³⁷⁹ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 41, 63, and 79.

³⁸⁰ Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 83 and 79.

³⁸¹ Hannegan and May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time*, 270; Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 220-224; "Longtime Judge Abraham H. Lipez Dead at Age of 90," *Lock Haven Express*, September 16, 1994.

³⁸² Lipez, *Recollections of a County Judge*, 77, 93, and 121.

³⁸³ "Longtime Judge Abraham H. Lipez Dead at Age of 90," *Lock Haven Express*.

as a peddler and made several trips between New York City and Pittsburgh, where he met Molly Zimmerman of Lock Haven.³⁸⁴ He married Molly Zimmerman in 1906. They had four children: Ellis Hoberman, Dr. Edward Hoberman, Blanche Hoberman Crane, and Minnie Hoberman Balis.³⁸⁵

Benjamin built a home on East Park Street with a small store at the front and a scrap yard in the back. He closed the store following 1936 flood and focused on the salvage business, later Hoberman Salvage Company. The company eventually moved from their backyard to the Clinton Plaza. He retired from the business in 1946 and his son, Ellis, and son-in-law, Nathan Balis, continued to operate it.³⁸⁶

In 1950, Benjamin, along with his son, Ellis, donated five acres of land to the city of Lock Haven for the purpose of constructing a park. He felt, "...young boys and girls deserved a better place for creation than that which they now have and that he realized the problem of raising a family in a city which lacks such things."³⁸⁷ The land, which formerly served as a city dump site, was filled in and Hoberman Park was created. The park is one of the largest in Lock Haven and includes little league fields, playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, and a skatepark. The city of Lock Haven is currently undergoing a three-phase project to further develop and improve the park. The improvements are estimated to be done by the spring of 2024.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Lock Haven Sequential, Inc., *The Sesquicentennial Book, Lock Haven, Pennsylvanian, 1833-1983* (Lock Haven: Lock Haven Sequential, Inc., 1983), 28.

³⁸⁵ "Ben Hoberman, Who Gave Park, dies in Hospital," *Lock Haven Express*, December 10, 1951; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 12.

³⁸⁶ "Ben Hoberman," *Lock Haven Express*; Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Anniversary Book*, 12; Lock Haven Sequential, Inc., *The Sesquicentennial Book*, 28.

³⁸⁷ "Hobermans Offer Five-Acre Plot to City as Municipal Park Site," *The Express*.

³⁸⁸ "Hoberman Park," *City of Lock Haven, Pennsylvania*, n.d., <https://lockhavenpa.civilspace.io/en/projects/hoberman-park>; "Hobermans Offer Five-Acre Plot to City as Municipal Park Site." *The Express*.

Benjamin died on December 9, 1951, at the Lock Haven Hospital and was buried in the Beth Yehuda Cemetery. He was a member of the Lafayette Lodge, a member of the Elks, the Loyal Order of Moose, B'nai B'rith, and the Citizens Hose Co.³⁸⁹

Edward Hoberman (1907-2000)

Dr. Edward Hoberman was born on December 9, 1907, in Lock Haven to Benjamin Hoberman and Molly Zimmerman Hoberman. He graduated from Lock Haven High School in 1926, Dickinson College as a pre-med major in 1930, and received his medical degree from the Jefferson Medical College in 1934. After graduating, he completed an internship at Mercy Hospital in Altoona and obtained his surgical certificate at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. In 1936, he joined the staff of the Lock Haven Hospital, where he later served as chief of surgery. He also worked as the physician for the Lock Haven High School football team, which he played on in high school, from 1940 to the 1950s.³⁹⁰

He was married to Ethel Rosner for approximately twenty-eight years before she died in 1967. They had five children together: Alfred "Al" Hoberman, Sonia Hoberman Hoffman, Barbara Hoberman, Susan Hoberman Doberstein, and Shelah Hoberman Lubner. He married Ethel Miller in November of 1968.

He died on June 6, 2000, in the Lock Haven Hospital and was buried in the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven. He was a member of the Loyal Order of the Moose of Lock Haven, the BPO Elks of Lock Haven, the LaFayette Lodge, the Coudersport Consistory, the Jaffa Shrine of

³⁸⁹ "Ben Hoberman," *Lock Haven Express*.

³⁹⁰ Unknown author, "Edward Hoberman Biography," n.d., biography, Pennsylvania Room at Annie Halenbake Ross Library, Pamphlet File, Biographies: Hoberman, Dr. Edward, 2; "Dr. Edward Hoberman, Beloved Local Doctor," *The Express*, June 7, 2000.

Altoona, and the Dickinson and Jefferson alumni associations. He also served on the Clinton County Medical Society Board, president of the board of trustees of the Lock Haven University, board member of the Community Nursing Services of Clinton County Inc., and president of the Lock Haven Kiwanis Club. His obituary notes that, “He will always be remembered in the community as the baby doctor and local sports doctor.”³⁹¹

Albert “Al” Hoberman (1940-2001)

Albert “Al” Hoberman was the son of Dr. Edward Hoberman and Ethel Rosner Hoberman. He was married to Jo Anne Hoberman. He taught chemistry at Lock Haven University for thirty-four years. For three decades, he was also involved in Lock Haven politics. He was part of the city’s Redevelopment Authority following the Agnes Flood of 1972 and he served sixteen years, four four-year terms, on Lock Haven’s City Council from 1980 to 1996. He was one of the advocates of controversial dike-levee projects proposed in the early 1980s to protect the city from future flooding.³⁹²

His death notice in the *Lock Haven Express* noted, “Reporters at The Express who covered city politics have sometimes disagreed with Hoberman’s decisions, but have never questioned his integrity or his commitment to the city.” Al died in the summer of 2001 at the Lock Haven Hospital.³⁹³

³⁹¹ Unknown author, “Edward Hoberman Biography,” 1-2; “Dr. Edward Hoberman, Beloved Local Doctor,” *The Express*.

³⁹² “Community Leader Al Hoberman Dead at 61,” *The Express*, June 6, 2001.

³⁹³ “Community Leader Al Hoberman Dead at 61,” *The Express*.

Broader Significance

The Jewish community of Lock Haven was the first permanent Jewish community in both Centre and Clinton counties and served as the center of Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. The movement of Jewish peddlers, mainly supported by Harris Claster and his dry goods business in Lock Haven, led to the eventual establishment of Jewish businesses and communities throughout the region, such as those in Bellefonte and State College, which will be explored in the next chapter. The Lock Haven Jewish community provided social, religious, and economic support for Jews living in these newer and smaller towns that generally lacked formal Jewish religious institutions, such as a synagogues or cemeteries, and social organizations.

CHAPTER 4: BELLEFONTE AND STATE COLLEGE

Overview

As Jewish peddlers from Lock Haven traveled throughout Central Pennsylvania to sell their wares, their success led them to establish a permanent storefront. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Bellefonte, the county seat of Centre County, was a political and economic hub in Central Pennsylvania. Although a Central European Jewish community existed in Bellefonte prior to the arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a lack of monetary and communal support prevented formal Jewish religious institutions, such as a synagogue, from developing in Bellefonte. The town once contained two Jewish cemeteries, however, they were almost exclusively used by Bellefonte's Central European Jewish community while the Eastern European Jewish community predominately used the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven.

By the early to mid-twentieth century, the increasing prosperity of the Pennsylvania State College, later the Pennsylvania State University, and the decreases in industry in Bellefonte led to State College overtaking Bellefonte as Centre County, and the greater region's, political and economic center. During this time, Bellefonte's Jewish community increasingly invested in real estate and opened businesses in State College, ultimately moving from Bellefonte to State College. Unlike in Bellefonte, formal Jewish religious institutions developed in State College, first in the form of Penn State Hillel, which was shared with Penn State students, and later in the form of an independent synagogue for the Bellefonte and State College Jewish community. Few Jewish families remain in Bellefonte, but the continued prosperity of State College and Penn State helps State College's Jewish community continue to grow.

History of Bellefonte

The Establishment of Bellefonte

Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, is located in the Nittany Valley approximately two and a half miles from the geographic center of Pennsylvania. James Dunlop and his son-in-law, James Harris, founded the town in 1795. Agriculture, ironmaking, and limestone quarrying attracted early settlers and it quickly grew to the largest town in the region. As the economic, industrial, and political center of the area, it became the seat of Centre County.³⁹⁴ Bellefonte has produced five Pennsylvania governors, including Andrew Curtin, James Addams Beaver, Daniel Hartman Hastings, and two governors for other states, Kansas and California.³⁹⁵

By the mid to late-nineteenth century, Bellefonte's wealth architecturally transformed the town with the increasing adornment of multistory Victorian public buildings and private homes, many of which still exist today.³⁹⁶ In the early to mid-1900s, however, the rising prominence of the Pennsylvania State College, later the Pennsylvania State University, located about twelve miles south of Bellefonte in State College shifted the economic and industrial center of Centre County from Bellefonte to State College.³⁹⁷

Early Jewish Settlers

Similar to Lock Haven, the first Jewish settlers in Bellefonte were of Central European origin, including the Baum, Fauble, and Loeb families, and arrived in the mid-nineteenth

³⁹⁴ "Bellefonte," *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development*, n.d., <https://www.visitpa.com/region/alleghenies/bellefonte>; Marsha Ann Tate and Earl Houser, *Images of America: Bellefonte* (Charlestown: Arcadia Publishing, 2022), 7.

³⁹⁵ Tate and Houser, *Images of America*, 7 and 19.

³⁹⁶ Tate and Houser, *Images of America*, 7.

³⁹⁷ Tate and Houser, *Images of America*, 7.

century. Early Jewish families also included French Jews, such as the Lyon family.³⁹⁸ Some of these early Jewish settlers initially settled in Lock Haven prior to moving to Bellefonte, such as the Newman family, while others migrated from other areas of the state, such as Philadelphia or Danville, and either moved to Bellefonte for economic opportunities or at the insistence of prior Bellefonte Jewish residents.



Figure 27: Photo of businessman Martin Faule and his wife, Jacobena “Bena” Loeb Faule. A Central European Jewish immigrant, Martin began working as a peddler in Centre County before eventually establishing his own clothing businesses.³⁹⁹

According to the obituary of leading Jewish businessman Martin Faule in the *Democratic Watchman* and the *Centre Democrat* in 1910, for example, Faule moved to Bellefonte around 1863 from another part of Pennsylvania at the instance of Bellefonte Jewish

³⁹⁸ Janice Shapiro, interviewed in person by author, February 10, 2022.

³⁹⁹ *Martin and Jacobena Faule*, n.d., photograph. Photograph from Justin Houser.

resident Abraham Baum. Fauble worked with Baum as a peddler in Centre County and the surrounding area for several years before working as a clerk for S. and A. Loeb, his brother-in-law's business, in Bellefonte.⁴⁰⁰ Based on Fauble and Baum's early employment, some early Bellefonte Jewish settlers also worked as peddlers before opening their own business, such as livery, butchering, or the sale of dry goods and clothing.

On May 3, 1875, Adolph Sternberg took office as the first Jewish mayor, known as chief burgess at the time, of Bellefonte. He served as mayor for one term and within weeks of taking office, on May 18, 1875, established the borough's police department.⁴⁰¹ In a *Centre Daily Times* article from January 1, 1995, local historian Hugh Manchester debated whether Adolph was the first Jewish mayor in Pennsylvania, and the greater U.S., or if the honor should be bestowed upon David Lowenberg, who was elected as president of the town council of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1874. Unsure if David's role as president of Bloomsburg's town council was equivalent to the role as mayor since Pennsylvania legislators never passed a law equating the two while in 1966 all chief burgesses in Pennsylvania were equated to mayors, Manchester named Adolph as one of the first, if not the first, Jewish mayors in the United States.⁴⁰² Four years after Sternberg took office as mayor, at least seven Jewish businesses were open in Bellefonte, including: S. & A. Loeb, Joseph Bros. & Co., J. Newman, Jr., J. H. Bauland, Lyon & Co., H. D. Goldman, and J. Guggenheimer & Co.⁴⁰³ The election of a second Jewish mayor in Bellefonte, Stan Goldman, did not occur until 2000.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ Casey Sennett, "Martin Fauble Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dXY_YkP5p1VnoqmlPsQLP5zn0wjRDEbH/view?usp=share_link.

⁴⁰¹ "Police," *Borough of Historic Bellefonte*, n.d., <https://bellefonte.net/departments/police/>.

⁴⁰² Hugh Manchester, "Great Romance Recalled," *Centre Daily Times*, March 19, 1994. Material accessed from Justin Houser.

⁴⁰³ "Ad Section," *Centre Democrat*, September 18, 1879.

⁴⁰⁴ Nadine Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary: Celebrating a Half Century," *Congregation Brit Shalom*, May 7, 2006, 31.

The only Jewish landmarks in Bellefonte emerged during this period of early Jewish settlement. The Jewish community of Bellefonte never had its own synagogue, but the community supported two Jewish cemeteries. The first, located between two houses on the southside of East Logan Street, was the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery. Created in 1857 by Anselem Loeb, the cemetery remained in use until approximately 1912.⁴⁰⁵ The cemetery co-existed with the second Jewish cemetery, the Rodef Shalom Cemetery, located at 938 West Water Street, from approximately 1875 to 1912. It is unclear whether the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery functioned as a Jewish community cemetery or was a family plot for the Loeb family, who purchased the land for the cemetery and are the only confirmed people to be buried in it. The Rodef Shalom Cemetery is still an active cemetery. It contains fifty burials with the two most recent being a mother and daughter buried in 1990 and 2019, respectively. Most of the burials, however, took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁴⁰⁶

Eastern European Jewish Immigrants and Jewish Communal Relations

By the late nineteenth century, Eastern European Jews began immigrating to Bellefonte from Lock Haven and other parts of Pennsylvania. Many worked as peddlers for Harris Claster or collected scrap materials for the Claster junkyard in Lock Haven.⁴⁰⁷ Max Kalin, for example, a nephew of Harris Claster from Lithuania, began peddling in Centre County in 1904 and was headquartered at the Hotel State College. In 1914, he opened a shoe store in Bellefonte.

⁴⁰⁵ Hugh Manchester, "East Logan Street Site of Original Jewish Burial Ground in Bellefonte," *Centre Democrat*, circa 1960s. Material accessed from Justin Houser.

⁴⁰⁶ Justin Houser, interviewed in person by author, February 12, 2022; Casey Sennett, "Rose Spiro Siemientek Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1flyyeD9Fw98ob66JgQWEWc7gPRHjZP_f/view?usp=share_link.

⁴⁰⁷ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 29.

Additionally, Walter Cohen, a London-born brother-in-law of Harris Claster, moved from Clearfield, Pennsylvania, to Bellefonte in 1911 to manage Harris' clothing store, which he bought in 1914 and renamed Cohen's Dress Shop.⁴⁰⁸ The store later became Krauss Corrective Appeal for Women after his son-in-law, Nathan Krauss took over the business.⁴⁰⁹ Charles Schlow, a Ukrainian-born Jewish immigrant, also moved to Bellefonte in 1919 from Philadelphia to purchase a ladies clothing store.⁴¹⁰ Isadore Claster, the son of Morris Claster also moved to Bellefonte in 1926 to open a Claster's store.⁴¹¹

Eastern European Jewish immigrants, who were predominately Orthodox, differed religiously from the existing Central European Jewish community, who were largely Reform.⁴¹² Since Bellefonte never had a synagogue, it is unclear if, and where, Central European Jewish community members attended religious services. According to local historian, Justin Houser, however, the Bellefonte Jewish community brought in rabbis from Williamsport or Altoona for high holidays.⁴¹³ Eastern European Jewish immigrants, however, attended services at the Beth Yehuda synagogue in Lock Haven, which practiced Orthodox traditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and this trend largely continued until the establishment of a synagogue in State College.⁴¹⁴

According to an article in the *Democratic Watchman* on December 3, 1915, however, a Jewish Sunday school opened over the Claster's Store in Bellefonte for all Jewish children of

⁴⁰⁸ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 30.

⁴⁰⁹ Krauss, Jeffrey "Jeff," interviewed via phone by author, February 4, 2022.

⁴¹⁰ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 30.

⁴¹¹ Nathan Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," in *Early History & Biography of Jewish Families of Central Pennsylvania Cities: Lock Haven, State College, and Lewistown*, ed. Aaron, Lewis, & Paul, (Self-published: Self-published, 2004), 43.

⁴¹² Houser interview.

⁴¹³ Houser interview.

⁴¹⁴ Janice Shapiro, interviewed in person by author, February 10, 2022.

Bellefonte and the surrounding area. Stated to be the first Jewish Sunday school in Bellefonte, the class, approximately fourteen children, were taught by Mrs. Jacob Finkle in the former room of Harry Cohen's music and victrola department.⁴¹⁵ The following year, in June of 1916, a *Democratic Watchman* article noted Freda Baum, a Jewish Bellefonte resident, threw a lawn party for the scholars and teachers at the school.⁴¹⁶

The difference between the religious practices of Central and Eastern European Jewish community members also led to the founding of separate burial grounds for both Jewish communities. Eastern European Jewish immigrants largely chose to be buried at the existing Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven rather than the two Jewish cemeteries, East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery and Rodef Shalom Cemetery, in Bellefonte. According to a current Jewish Bellefonte community member, the Jewish cemeteries in Bellefonte were considered too reform for Eastern European Jewish immigrants and the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven was considered too Orthodox for Central European Jewish community members. As a result, both Jewish communities selected to be buried separately in their preferred religious tradition.⁴¹⁷

According to Jewish Bellefonte community member Jeff Krauss, the Jewish Bellefonte community was historically of Central European Jewish heritage. Similar to Lock Haven, however, many early Central European Jewish families, such as the Faubles, married Christians and abandoned their Jewish identity. Others, such as the Loeb family, remained Jewish, but moved to more urban areas like Philadelphia, New York, and Long Island.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ "A Jewish Sunday school has been organized..." *Democratic Watchman*, December 3, 1915.

⁴¹⁶ "Miss Freda Baum was hostess..." *Democratic Watchman*, June 16, 1916.

⁴¹⁷ Shapiro interview.

⁴¹⁸ Houser interview.

Bellefonte Jewish Landmarks

East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery (1857-1912)

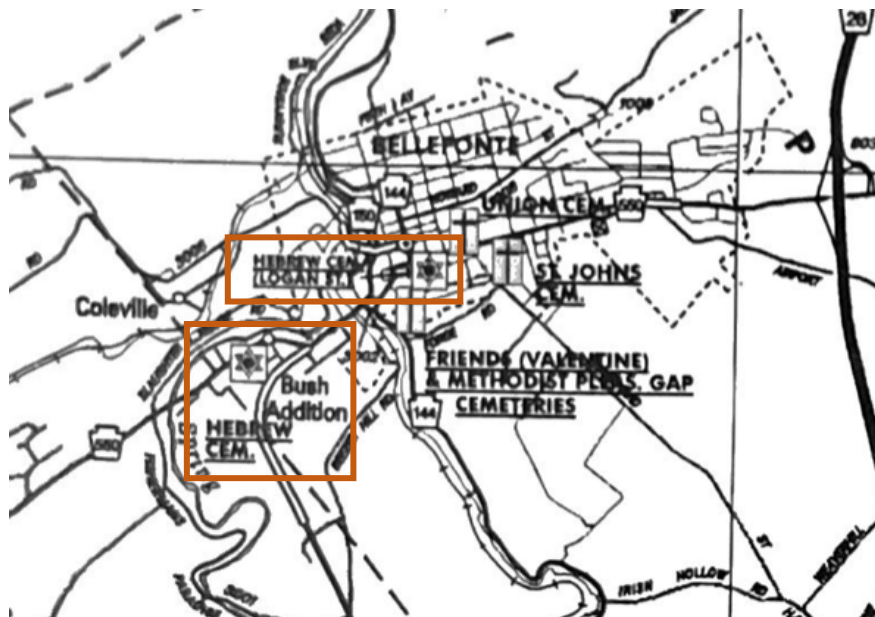


Figure 28: The location of both Jewish cemeteries in Bellefonte.⁴¹⁹

The first Jewish cemetery in Bellefonte was located between two houses on the southside of East Logan Street, behind the St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church. The plot measured 89 feet by 89 feet and existed from approximately 1857 to 1912. Individuals, however, were more than likely only buried there between 1857 and 1875. According to the late Centre County historian Hugh Manchester, East Logan Street used to be known as “Cemetery Hill” because both the old Catholic and Jewish cemeteries were located there.⁴²⁰ According to Justin Houser, scans from an 1858 map of Bellefonte do not show Logan Street extending past Allegheny

⁴¹⁹ *Bellefonte Jewish Cemeteries Map*, 1996, map, in *The Cemeteries of Benner and Spring Townships, Centre County, Pennsylvania* by Centre County Genealogical Society. State College: Centre County Genealogical Society, 1996.

⁴²⁰ Manchester, “East Logan Street Site of Original Jewish Burial Ground in Bellefonte.”

Street. He believes the area must have been under development from 1857-1861, which is around the time the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery was founded.⁴²¹

Anselem Loeb of Bellefonte, a Jewish butcher, purchased four acres of land on East Logan Street from John H. Morrison, a Bellefonte innkeeper, on October 10, 1855, for \$500. Morrison retained the northeast corner of the plot, which Loeb later purchased from him on October 8, 1857. This plot is what became the “Jewish Burial Ground.” In a deed from April 12, 1860, Julia Loeb, Anselem’s wife, gave the plot of land to her son Jacob Loeb and his heirs “...to be for an Israelitish Cemetery or place of burial for the Israelites resident [sic] in said town of Bellefonte or in the vicinity.”⁴²²

In an 1874 atlas of Bellefonte, pictured below, the Loeb’s East Logan Street property is shown as “J. Leob,” a misspelling of Loeb, and there is a house located on the property. The cemetery, however, is not visible or marked.⁴²³ Julia Loeb, who was buried in the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery on April 26, 1880, has the only known obituary that confirms someone was buried in the cemetery. In her obituary, her body was reported to have been, “...laid beside the graves of her friends who had preceded her into eternity.”⁴²⁴ Based on the transfer internment records of Anselem and Julia Loeb to the Mount Sinai cemetery in Philadelphia on April 25, 1900, from Bellefonte, Anselem was also buried in the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery.⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ Justin Houser interview.

⁴²² Justin Houser interview; Miscellaneous deeds, materials accessed by Justin Houser.

⁴²³ Justin Houser interview.

⁴²⁴ “Death of Mrs. Julia Loeb,” *Centre Democrat*, April 29, 1880.

⁴²⁵ “Death of Mrs. Julia Loeb,” *Centre Democrat*; Mount Sinai Cemetery (Philadelphia, PA), “Lot Internment Record: Anselm Loeb,” Lot Holder Col. Isaac May, Lot Number 133, Grave 3, n.d., material accessed from *Ancestry*; Mount Sinai Cemetery (Philadelphia, PA), “Lot Internment Record: Julia Loeb,” Lot Holder Col. Isaac May, Lot Number 133, Grave 4, n.d., material accessed from *Ancestry*.

founding, such as Jette Sternberg and Jacob Sternberg, or elsewhere, such as the transfer of Anselm and Julia Loeb to the Mount Sinai Cemetery in Philadelphia.

Rodef Shalom Cemetery (1875-Present)

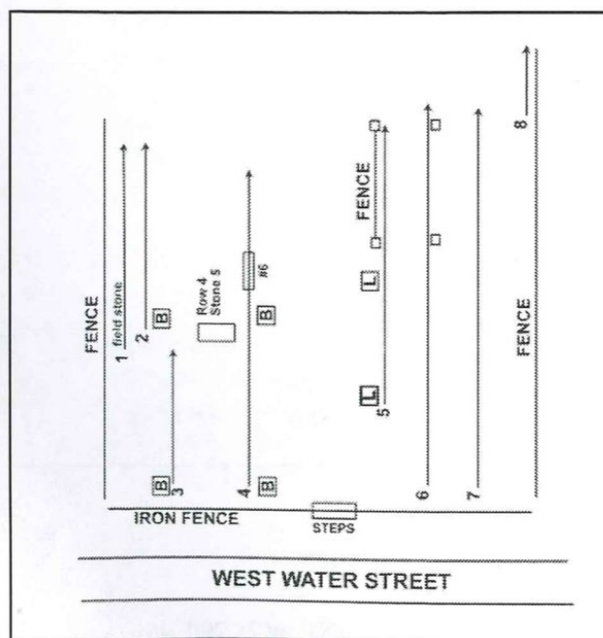


Figure 30: Layout of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery.⁴²⁸

Abraham Sussman, a Jewish merchant in Bellefonte, is considered the founder of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery, located at 938 West Water Street.⁴²⁹ On May 27, 1872, Sussman purchased a quarter acre of land, 200 feet by 70 feet, in Bush Addition in Spring Township, from D. G. Bush, a real estate businessman, and his wife, Louisa, for \$250.⁴³⁰ At this time, however,

⁴²⁸ *Rodef Shalom Cemetery Layout*, 1996, map, in *The Cemeteries of Benner and Spring Townships, Centre County, Pennsylvania* by Centre County Genealogical Society. State College: Centre County Genealogical Society, 1996.

⁴²⁹ Houser interview.

⁴³⁰ Houser interview; Centre County Government, "Deed: D. G. Bush et ux. to Abraham Sussman," May 27, 1872, *Centre County Deed Book 1-2*, Page 433, material accessed from Justin Houser.

the area was not called Bush Addition. Obituaries from individuals buried at Rodef Shalom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century commonly refer to the area as the “Jewish cemetery at Roopsburg” or the “Jewish cemetery one mile south of Bellefonte.” While the purpose of the land is not listed on the deed, it might have been purchased with the idea of creating a new Jewish cemetery.⁴³¹

On August 26, 1874, the Hebrew Cemetery Association of Bellefonte was formed, and it was confirmed by the Court on September 18, 1874, with the purpose of purchasing a Jewish cemetery and selling burial lots.⁴³² Members included Abraham Sussman, Adolph Loeb, Emil Joseph, Isaac Guggenheimer, and Simon Loeb. Together with Sigmund Joseph, they served as the associators of the cemetery.⁴³³

According to Justin Houser, an unincorporated association is not able to own land, so while the 1874 cemetery association could manage the cemetery, the association could not own any real estate. As a result, the cemetery continued to be owned by Abraham Sussman, but was managed by the cemetery association. Sussman died on May 20, 1878, at the age of 66, in Philadelphia, and was buried in the Mount Sinai Cemetery there. In his will, he left money for a Hebrew School in Bellefonte, but his estate retained ownership of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte.⁴³⁴

After Sussman's death, the cemetery continued to be managed by the volunteer association. The cemetery association became chartered as a corporation on August 7, 1894, as

⁴³¹ For reference to the “Jewish cemetery at Roopsburg,” see: “BAUM: Alfred Baum,” *Democratic Watchman* August 10, 1934; “Death’s Doings: David Schmidt,” *Democratic Watchman*, April 23, 1886.

⁴³² Houser interview; Centre County Government, “...Hebrew Cemetery Association of Bellefonte,” September 18, 1874, *Centre County Miscellaneous Book 5*, Page 80, material accessed from Justin Houser.

⁴³³ Houser interview.

⁴³⁴ Houser interview.

the Hebrew Cemetery Association Rodef Sholem of Bellefonte, with the purpose of maintaining the cemetery.⁴³⁵ The incorporators were Martin Fauble, Sigmund Joseph, Abraham Baum, Herman Holz, William Grauer, Emil Joseph, Moyer Lyons, Samuel Lewin, and Adolph Sternberg with the initial directors as Abraham Baum, Herman Holz, and Martin Fauble. Since the cemetery association was now incorporated under Pennsylvania law, it could own real estate.⁴³⁶ On September 3, 1894, the surviving executors of Abraham Sussman, Sussman's wife, Dora Sussman, now Dora Hirsh, and Henry Lehman, deeded the cemetery to the cemetery association for \$250.⁴³⁷

In the *Democratic Watchmen*, one article from April 27, 1894, pictured below, and another from May 4, 1894, described the forthcoming lecture of Dr. Joseph Krauskopf, a "distinguished Jewish Rabbi" of Philadelphia, in Garman's opera house in Bellefonte on Wednesday, May 9.⁴³⁸ The April 27, 1894 article includes, "His [Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf's] services have been secured by the Jewish residents of the town who for the first time come before the public with any charitable entertainment of their own. While it is the duty of every-one who can possibly afford it to attend the lecture, no one need think that it is being done solely for charity, for Dr. Krauskopf is a man of worldwide repute...He is one of the most forcible writers of his religion and is known as a great reformer. It is a duty which every-one owes to himself to hear such lecturers when the opportunity presents itself."⁴³⁹ The events were

⁴³⁵ Houser interview; Centre County Government, "Charter of Hebrew Cemetery Association Rodef Sholem of Bellefonte," August 7, 1894, *Centre County Miscellaneous Book 10*, Page 717, material accessed from Justin Houser.

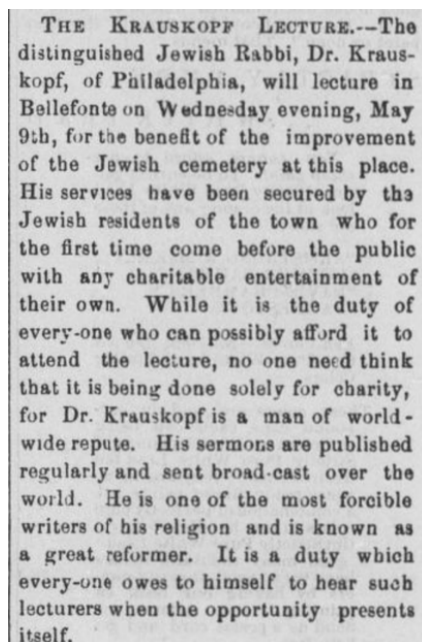
⁴³⁶ Houser interview.

⁴³⁷ Centre County Government, "Deed: Abraham Sussman's Executors to The Hebrew Cemetery Association, Charter of Hebrew Cemetery Association Rodef Sholem of Bellefonte," September 3, 1894, *Centre County Deed Book 67*, Page 464, material accessed from Justin Houser.

⁴³⁸ "The Lecture by Dr. Joseph Krauskopf..." *Democratic Watchman*, May 4, 1894; "The Krauskopf Lecture," *Democratic Watchman*, April 27, 1894.

⁴³⁹ "The Krauskopf Lecture," *Democratic Watchman*.

organized to fund the improvement of the Jewish cemetery and the cemetery's fund. The event focused on the topic of "Only a Jew" and encouraged all of Bellefonte's residents, both Jewish and non-Jewish to attend. While it does not specify what Jewish cemetery it was benefitting, the fundraiser was more than likely raising funds for the new cemetery, Rodef Shalom.⁴⁴⁰



THE KRAUSKOPF LECTURE.--The distinguished Jewish Rabbi, Dr. Krauskopf, of Philadelphia, will lecture in Bellefonte on Wednesday evening, May 9th, for the benefit of the improvement of the Jewish cemetery at this place. His services have been secured by the Jewish residents of the town who for the first time come before the public with any charitable entertainment of their own. While it is the duty of every-one who can possibly afford it to attend the lecture, no one need think that it is being done solely for charity, for Dr. Krauskopf is a man of world-wide repute. His sermons are published regularly and sent broad-cast over the world. He is one of the most forcible writers of his religion and is known as a great reformer. It is a duty which every-one owes to himself to hear such lecturers when the opportunity presents itself.

Figure 31: *Democratic Watchman* article about the Krauskopf Lecture on May 9, 1894.⁴⁴¹

Over the years, the number of people buried in Rodef Shalom has fluctuated. About half of the graves are from the mid to late-nineteenth century while the remaining half are largely from the early to mid-twentieth century. Since the 1950s, only two people, Rose Spiro Siemientek and her daughter, Gabriela Muller Hogg, have been buried in the cemetery. In the early 1900s, some individuals who left Bellefonte returned to move their family's burial plots elsewhere. In 1927, for example, H. J. Holtz of New York returned to Bellefonte to transport the

⁴⁴⁰ "The Lecture by Dr. Joseph Krauskopf..." *Democratic Watchman*; "The Krauskopf Lecture," *Democratic Watchman*.

⁴⁴¹ *The Krauskopf Lecture*, 1894, newspaper article, *Democratic Watchman*, April 27, 1894.

bodies of his grandmother, aunt, father, and several uncles from Rodef Shalom to the Temple Israel cemetery in Mount Hope, New Jersey, where his mother was buried. He had their headstones removed and shipped ahead via freight.⁴⁴²

As the original incorporators of the Hebrew Cemetery Association Rodef Sholem of Bellefonte died and no one replaced them, the cemetery fell into disrepair and the cemetery association became inactive. In 1953, the Pennsylvania State Highway Department sought ownership of properties adjacent to the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in preparation for reconstructing Buffalo Run Road. With no incorporators, there was no one authorized to sign for the cemetery's land. The Nittany Lodge of B'nai B'rith of Bellefonte and State College began researching the cemetery association to see who the last elected trustee(s) were. In the process, B'nai Brith discovered the existence of two trusts meant to maintain the cemetery. One was invested by the cemetery's associators in 1894 to a bank in Philadelphia and another was established in the Harrisburg Trust Company in 1948 by Ida Fauble Tausig of Harrisburg. After obtaining access to the trusts, the cemetery association was reactivated, and new trustees were elected.⁴⁴³

Alternatively, Nathan Krauss is attributed with "finding" the Rodef Shalom cemetery in the late 1940s, which was largely overgrown at the time. With help from the B'nai B'rith of Bellefonte and State College, Nathan researched the cemetery and in 1951, he and John Miller Jr., an attorney, found three trusts at the Philadelphia National Bank entrusted by people interned in the cemetery in the late nineteenth century. The original trusts valued approximately \$4,5000, but over time had accumulated interest between \$40,000 to \$50,000. With this money, they created the Rodef Shalom Cemetery Association to assure the perpetual care and maintenance of

⁴⁴² "H. J. Holtz left for New York..." *Democratic Watchman*, October 14, 1927.

⁴⁴³ Unknown Author, "The Jewish Cemetery," n.d., document from the Pennsylvania Room at the Centre County Library & Historical Museum.

the cemetery. Nathan Krauss, Arnold Kalin, and Robert Levy became the trustees of the association. Jeff Krauss eventually took over the management of the cemetery from his father, Nathan Krauss, and he, Arnold Kalin, and Robert Levy served on the cemetery's board. Brit Shalom in State College is now in charge of the maintenance of the cemetery and raises funds to continue the cemetery's upkeep through the Rodef Shalom Cemetery Fund.⁴⁴⁴ The cemetery remains active with the last burial being of Gabriela Muller Hogg in 2019.⁴⁴⁵



*Figure 32: Entrance to the Rodef Shalom Cemetery.*⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ Krauss interview; "History: The First 70 Years," *Brit Shalom Congregation*, n.d., <https://www.britshalomstatecollege.org/history>.

⁴⁴⁵ Krauss interview.

⁴⁴⁶ Casey Sennett, *Rodef Shalom Cemetery Entrance*, personal photograph, March 29, 2023.

At least twenty-eight of the fifty people (56%) buried in the Rodef Shalom cemetery were born outside of the U.S. Of those twenty-eight people, nineteen were born in Germany, four were born in France, two were born in Russia, one was born in Austria, one was born in Poland, and one was born in Israel. Of the nineteen people born in the U.S., nine were born in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, three were born in an unknown place in Pennsylvania, two were born in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, one was born in New York, one was born in Braddock, Pennsylvania, one was born in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, one was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and one was born in Danville, Pennsylvania. Three people were born in an unknown place, either inside or outside of the U.S. Aside from being buried in a Jewish cemetery, their religiosity is unknown.⁴⁴⁷

Not all the individuals buried at Rodef Shalom were living in Bellefonte at the time of their death. Only twenty-three of the fifty people (46%) buried in the cemetery lived in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, at the time of their death. Regarding the twenty-seven other burials, seven people lived in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, five people lived in State College, Pennsylvania, three people lived in an unknown place in Pennsylvania, three people lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, two people lived in Houtzdale, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Atlantic City, New Jersey, one person lived in Villanova, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Detroit, Michigan, one person lived in Tylersville, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Milton, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Lawrence, Pennsylvania, and one person lived in Columbus, Ohio.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ Casey Sennett, "Bellefonte Jewish Cemetery Information," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sa_ole-SyBki530GM05REidg7Xclt16v/view?usp=sharing.

⁴⁴⁸ Sennett, "Bellefonte Jewish Cemetery Information."

The cemetery includes the graves of a few larger families with a few unrelated couples and children. The largest family, the Baums, comprise eleven of the fifty graves (22%) in the cemetery. Those buried in the cemetery seemed to have been buried there for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, other family members being buried in the cemetery, such as the Baum family, or its proximity to their hometown, which lacked a Jewish cemetery, such as the Schmidt family who were from Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, which had no Jewish cemetery. Two graves of note include Henry Tarkoff, a Penn State student who died in the early 1900s after falling down an elevator shaft on campus and whose family could not afford to send his body back to Philadelphia, so he was buried in Bellefonte instead, and Jacob and Jette Sternberg, the parents of Adolph Sternberg, the first Jewish mayor of Bellefonte.⁴⁴⁹



Figure 33: Family portrait of the Baums, who have the most plots in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery. This photo, taken in July of 1890, was the largest family portrait in Bellefonte at the time.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ Sennett, "Bellefonte Jewish Cemetery Information."

⁴⁵⁰ Shaffer, *Baum Family Portrait*, July 1890, photograph, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. Photo from Tara Mianulli U'Ren, a descendant of the Baum family. According to the *Democratic Watchman* on August 1, 1890, this photo of Abraham and Mary Baum and their thirteen children was the largest family photo taken in Bellefonte.

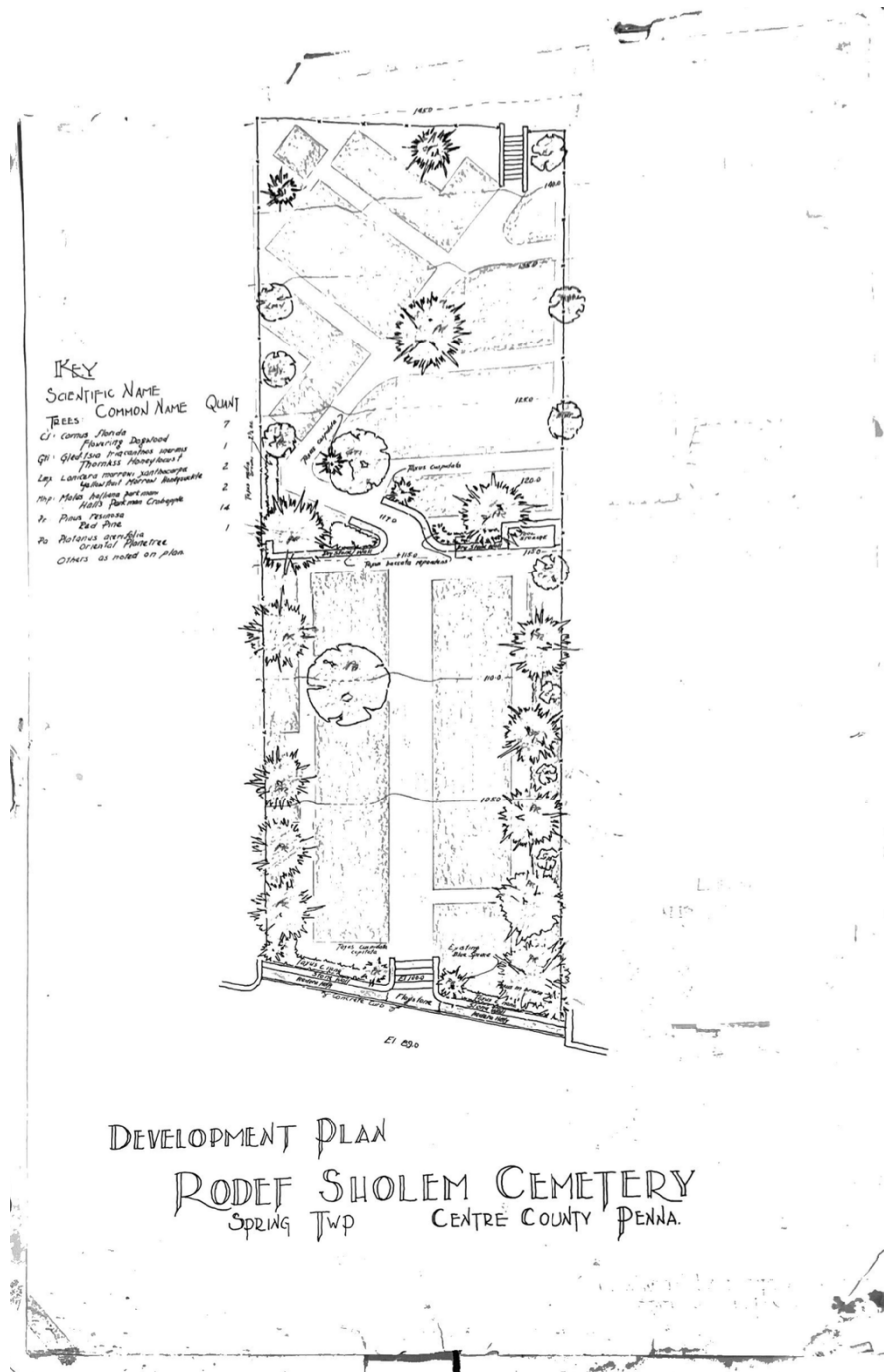


Figure 34: Design plan of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte, circa 1930.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵¹ Carl W. Wild, *Rodef Sholem Cemetery Design Plan, Spring Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania, c. 1930*, sketch. Donated by Mark Lafer on behalf of Congregation Brit Shalom in 2019 to the Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 9982, Box 1.

History of State College

The Relationship between State College and Penn State

State College, Pennsylvania, located in the Nittany Valley between Bald Eagle Mountain and Tussey Mountain near the geographic center of the state, was the ancestral home of the Shawnee and Delaware Indians. In 1784, Abraham Elder was the first European to settle in the region with additional settlers including English, German, Mennonite, French Huguenots, and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians.⁴⁵² The Pennsylvania State University, originally named the Farmers' High School of Pennsylvania, was founded in 1855 from a donation of 200 acres of land from James Irvin of Bellefonte. In the early 1880s, State College was a small town of approximately one hundred people with little to no infrastructure and public buildings.⁴⁵³ Reforms under Penn State's seventh president, George Atherton, however, increased State College's population to 600 by the mid-1890s and supported the construction of new roads and residential and fraternity housing. The Borough of State College was incorporated in 1896.⁴⁵⁴

While attendance at Penn State incrementally increased over time, the end of World War II transformed the university and State College. Due to dramatic rises in the applications the university received, Penn State enrolled 11,000 students during the 1947-48 school year. As the university struggled to house all these new students, as well as additional faculty members, both Penn State and State College grew to accommodate the influx of new people.⁴⁵⁵ The

⁴⁵² "Happy Valley," *StateCollege.com*, n.d., <https://www.statecollege.com/centre-county-areas/happy-valley/>; "State College," *Britannica*, last updated September 22, 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/place/State-College>.

⁴⁵³ "Our History," *The Pennsylvania State University*, n.d., <https://www.psu.edu/this-is-penn-state/history/>; Ishaan Anavkar, "What Came Before the Highlands?" *Highlands Civic Association*, March 15, 2022, <https://statecollegehighlands.org/what-came-before-the-highlands/>.

⁴⁵⁴ Anavkar, "What Came Before the Highlands?"

⁴⁵⁵ Michael Bezilla, *Penn State: An Illustrated History* (State College: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), <https://libraries.psu.edu/about/collections/penn-state-university-park-campus-history-collection/penn-state-illustrated-1>.

development and growth of Penn State University continues to directly correlate with similar growth and development patterns in State College today.

Early Jewish Settlers

Early Jewish settlers, particularly merchants, arrived in State College from nearby Jewish communities, such as Bellefonte and Lock Haven, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. These individuals included Morris Fromm, born in Lithuania, who peddled in Centre, Clinton, and Huntingdon Counties before opening a store in Loganton in Clinton County. In 1913, he sold his business and moved to State College to open a men's and boy's clothing store at 130 East College Avenue. Morris' name remains on the building, the "Fromm Building," at 112-118 East College Avenue. Charles Schlow also moved to State College in the early twentieth century. He moved to State College in 1929 from Bellefonte and opened the Schlow's Quality Shop and Schlow Furniture Store.⁴⁵⁶

Some of State College's earliest Jewish community members also included Penn State faculty members. Penn State's first Jewish professor, Max Kriss, was a Russian immigrant who arrived in Philadelphia in 1910. Kriss, who studied animal nutrition, graduated with his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Penn State in 1918 and 1920, respectively. He later received his PhD from Yale University in 1936.⁴⁵⁷ Dr. Teresa Cohen, the first female, and Jewish, faculty member in the Mathematics Department at Penn State began teaching at the university in 1920.⁴⁵⁸ The first influx of Jewish families to State College, however, came in the late 1930s with the increasing

⁴⁵⁶ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 30; Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 42; "Fromm Building," *Property Management, Inc.*, n.d., <https://frommbuilding.rentpmi.com/>.

⁴⁵⁷ "Max Kriss at Penn State, 1918," *Kriss Foundation*, n.d., <https://krissfoundation.org/vignettes.php?ref=Max%20Kriss>.

⁴⁵⁸ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 39.

growth of the university.⁴⁵⁹ Other early Jewish professors included: Dagobert deLevie in the German Department, 1941; Norman Davids in Mechanical Engineering, 1947; Leonard Zimmerman in Bacteriology, 1951; and Alfred Engel in Chemical Engineering, 1959.⁴⁶⁰



*Figure 35: Photo of Max Kriss, the first Jewish professor at Penn State.*⁴⁶¹

Bellefonte-State College Jewish Community Overview

Religious and Social Life

The older of the two towns, Bellefonte had fewer, at least known, formal Jewish religious organizations and institutions. Following Bellefonte's first Jewish Sunday School in 1915, Grace

⁴⁵⁹ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 36.

⁴⁶⁰ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 31-32.

⁴⁶¹ *Max Kriss*, n.d, photograph, in "Max Kriss at Penn State, 1918," *Kriss Foundation*, <https://krissfoundation.org/vignettes.php?ref=Max%20Kriss>.

Cohen Rosenblum, daughter of Bellefonte business owner Walter Cohen, revived the Sunday School in 1924 in the music room of her father's store. In Nadine Kaufman's *50th Anniversary: Congregation Brit Shalom*, Jewish community member, Stan Goldman, recalled the second floor of Sid Bernstein's department store functioned as a makeshift 'synagogue' in Bellefonte from the early 1930s to early 1940s. Stan Goldman remembered, "...[Sid would] move things to the back, so he'd have enough room for 20 people. The oldest person or the person who knew Hebrew best did the davening."⁴⁶²

Early Jewish religious organizations in State College included the Menorah Society, which began as late as 1918, and later became known as the Society for the Advancement of Judaism.⁴⁶³ The first formal Jewish religious institution began in September 1935 with the creation of the Pennsylvania State College's chapter of the Hillel Foundation. Under the initial directorship of Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Fischhoff, Penn State Hillel served the religious and social needs of both Jewish Penn State students and the local Jewish community. Rabbi Fischhoff was the acting director of Penn State Hillel for two years before Rabbi Theodore Gordon replaced him in 1937. Penn State Hillel's first permanent space was located at 133-135 Beaver Avenue, above the former Temple Market, now Green Bowl. The Hillel building, however, was not dedicated until November 9, 1939.⁴⁶⁴ The State College chapter of Avodah, a Jewish women's group, organized State College's first Jewish religious school in the inaugural Hillel building.⁴⁶⁵ Janie Shapiro, who grew up in Bellefonte in the 1940s and 1950s, recalled attending high holiday

⁴⁶² Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 36; A Jewish Sunday school has been organized..." *Democratic Watchman*.

⁴⁶³ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 40; "Rabbi Krass of New York to Speak Here Sunday," *Penn State Collegian*, February 20, 1918.

⁴⁶⁴ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 17.

⁴⁶⁵ "History: The First 70 Years," *Brit Shalom Congregation*.

services at Penn State Hillel, but her family did not go every week because they “had a whole life in Bellefonte.” She recalled Bellefonte Jewish community members continuing to meet and gather in the homes of Jewish community members in Bellefonte for different events.⁴⁶⁶

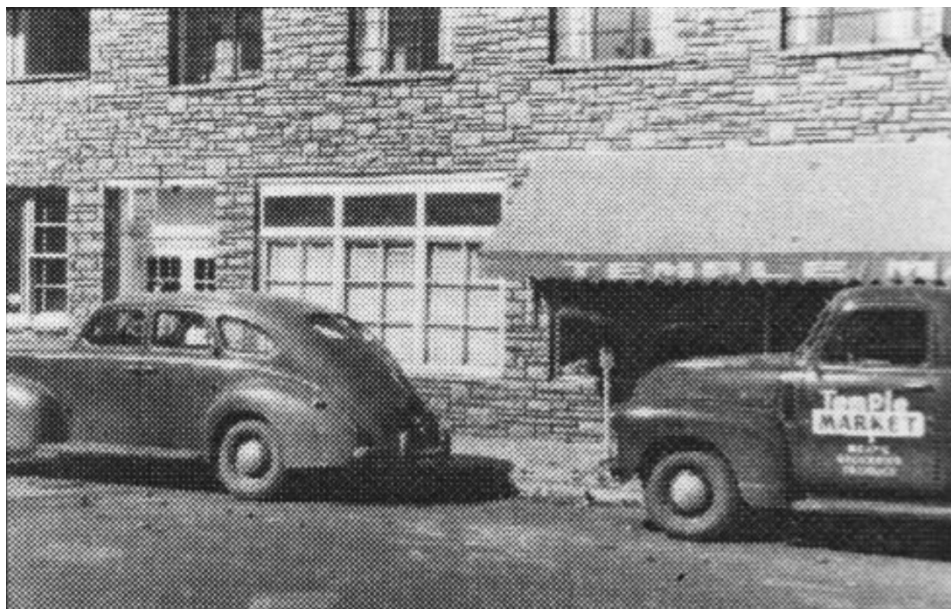


Figure 36: The first Penn State Hillel located above Temple Market on Beaver Avenue.⁴⁶⁷

Under the leadership of Rabbi Benjamin Kahn, who served Penn State Hillel from 1940 to 1959, the Hillel building moved from 133-135 Beaver Avenue to 224 Locust Lane.⁴⁶⁸ On August 22, 1949, the B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation Building Fund of Pennsylvania purchased land from the estate of Mrs. Ormelle H. Stecker of State College on Locust Lane. Combined with land donated from Charles and Bella Schlow in 1947, B’nai B’rith secured Philadelphia architect

⁴⁶⁶ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 36.

⁴⁶⁷ *Penn State Hillel Above Temple Market*, n.d., photograph, in “History: The First 70 Years,” *Congregation Brit Shalom*, <https://www.britshalomstatecollege.org/history>.

⁴⁶⁸ After leaving State College, Rabbi Benjamin Kahn served as the international director of the B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation from 1959 to 1971 as the executive vice president of B’nai B’rith from 1971 to 1976. He was awarded an honorary title of executive vice president for life and served on B’nai B’rith’s board of governors. For more information about Rabbi Benjamin Kahn, see: “Benjamin Kahn Dies,” *The Washington Post*, July 10, 2002, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2001/07/10/benjamin-kahn-dies/d57c69d6-3e83-4745-8155-c21bb7197474/>.

Louis Magaziner to renovate and expand upon the existing structure on the Locust Lane property.⁴⁶⁹ The new building included a first-floor reception area, lounge, and study, a second-floor classroom, club room, and library, and a third-floor residence, first for Hillel's rabbi, but later rented the space to Jewish students and visitors. The new building provided Penn State Hillel with more space to accommodate the area's growing Jewish population.⁴⁷⁰ The Albert M. Cohen Auditorium, for example, served as the center of the Jewish community's social activities, including a dining room and entertainment hall. The building's sanctuary included a *bimah*, alter, and ark, which contained the congregation's Torah scrolls.



Figure 37: Construction of Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane in 1952.⁴⁷¹

One of the prominent features of Penn State Hillel building on Locust Lane was a 48-foot mural, titled “The Ideals of Judaism,” designed by art-education graduate student Antonietta

⁴⁶⁹ Joel Sobel, “Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane,” *Museum of Pennsylvania Jewish History*, April 4, 2016, <https://sites.psu.edu/jewishpennsylvania/2016/04/04/penn-state-hillel-on-locust-lane/>.

⁴⁷⁰ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 17-18; Sobel, “Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane.”

⁴⁷¹ *Penn State Hillel Construction*, September 15, 1952, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01190. Photographic Vertical Files, Students, Box 71. Folder: Religion, Jewish/Hillel (b&w).

Terrazas Maluenda for her master's project under the guidance of Dr. Viktor Lowenfeld.

Dedicated on April 10, 1954, the mural featured biblical scenes, such as Rabbi Hillel being challenged by a student and Moses with the Ten Commandments, as well as scenes of Jews in the United States, including the Statue of Liberty, and Israel, including a *kibbutz*, a type of collective farm prominent among Labor Zionists in Israel.⁴⁷²



Figure 38: “The Ideals of Judaism” mural from Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane. Designed by designed by Antonietta Terrazas Maluenda.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷² Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 18; Sobel, “Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane.”

⁴⁷³ *The Ideals of Judaism*, n.d, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01190. Photographic Vertical Files, Students, Box 71. Folder: Religion, Jewish/Hillel (b&w).



Figure 39: Students leaving Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁴ *Outside of Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane*, n.d, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01190. Photographic Vertical Files, Students, Box 71. Folder: Religion, Jewish/Hillel (b&w).



Figure 40: Lighting of the Shabbath candles at Penn State Hillel.⁴⁷⁵

While Penn State Hillel served as a place of worship for both Jewish Penn State students and local Jewish community members, beginning in the 1950s, State College and Bellefonte Jewish communities debated about whether to remain with Hillel or form their own congregation. In 1957, the Jewish Community Council of the Bellefonte and State College was

⁴⁷⁵ *Lighting the Sabbath Candles*, n.d, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01190. Photographic Vertical Files, Students, Box 71. Folder: Religion, Jewish/Hillel (b&w).

formed and on October 29, 1961, after outgrowing the Hillel building, members met and decided the Jewish Community Council of the Bellefonte and State College should build their own synagogue.⁴⁷⁶ The synagogue was dedicated on February 28, 1965. Originally named the Jewish Community Center, in 1979, it was renamed to the Congregation Brit Shalom. Located on East Hamilton Avenue, the synagogue continues to serve the Bellefonte and State College community today. Following the split, however, some Jewish community members chose to remain with Hillel, some chose to attend the new synagogue, and some chose to remain with both. Dr. Teresa Cohen, for example, attended Friday night services at Hillel and attended Saturday morning ones at Brit Shalom. Dr. Cohen always sat in the same seat at Hillel, and, in the old Hillel building, a plaque was added to her chair dedicated to her and her contributions to Hillel.⁴⁷⁷

Beginning in the 1990s, after the dwindling Agudath Achim congregation in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, located 30 miles south of State College, placed an advertisement in the *Centre Daily Times* inviting any regional Jewish community members to the High Holiday services, members of the State College Jewish community, some of whom were discontent with Brit Shalom, began attending service there. Today, Agudath Achim, completed in 1930 for Huntingdon Jewish families, mainly comprises of State College families and students from Juniata Hillel. The original Jewish families of Huntingdon are almost entirely gone from the region.⁴⁷⁸

For Bellefonte and State College Jewish community members who maintained a kosher diet, their grocery shopping included many trips out of Centre County. Weis Market sold “token”

⁴⁷⁶ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 18.

⁴⁷⁷ “History: The First 70 Years,” *Brit Shalom Congregation*; Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 37.

⁴⁷⁸ “Welcome & Shalom,” *Congregation Agudath Achim of State College and Huntingdon*, n.d., <https://www.agudathachim1930.org/>.

Matzos, matzo meal, and gefilte fish in the mid-1950s, but kosher meats and Passover food required traveling to kosher butcher shops and markets in Altoona, Williamsport, Scranton, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill. After Empire Kosher Poultry, a New York-based company founded in 1938, relocated to Mifflintown in the 1960s, however, Jewish families increasingly traveled there for kosher meats. In Nadine Kaufman's *50th Anniversary: Brit Shalom*, Rodelle Weintraub recalled Stan and Charles Abramson using the Fromm laundry truck to drive to Altoona to get groceries and returned to Hillel to distribute them to congregants. After Jewish community members approached Weis Market, owned and operated out of Sunbury, Pennsylvania, by a Jewish family, if they could stock Passover food, the store agreed.⁴⁷⁹

Bellefonte also had few formal Jewish social organizations. In the late 1930s, Bellefonte Jewish community members Walter Cohen, Bernard Goldman, Nathan Kofman, and Harry Tanney founded the Bellefonte Hebrew Center for the purpose of "...fostering social, charitable and religious activities among the Jewish residents of the area," which, according to Jewish community member Stan Goldman, typically included card games and social gatherings.⁴⁸⁰ As the organization's gatherings grew beyond the capacity of Jewish community member homes, the group bought a cottage in Mingoville. Following the closing of the group in the late 1950s, the Bellefonte Hebrew Center donated its funds to the Bellefonte-State College Jewish Community Council for the building of the congregation's first ark and bimah.⁴⁸¹

In State College in 1945, B'nai B'rith established the Nittany Lodge (#1582) for men and the Avodah Chapter for women. The organization later expanded to establish B'nai B'rith Youth Organizations (BBYO): B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG) and Aleph-Zadik-Aleph Boys (AZA). In the

⁴⁷⁹ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 35.

⁴⁸⁰ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 34.

⁴⁸¹ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 34.

1970s, a Reform youth group, the State College United Federation of Temple Youth (SCUFTY) formed.⁴⁸² Other Jewish community organizations included the Jewish Community Council Women of Bellefonte and State College (JCCW), formed in 1965, and the State College Chapter of Hadassah, a women's organization, formed in 1974.⁴⁸³ According to Nadine Kaufman, however, Avodah and the JCCW dissolved by the early 1990s while Hadassah remained active.⁴⁸⁴

The congregation has hosted art auction fundraisers, see below, Purim carnivals, New Year's dances, speakers, such as politicians, authors, and singers, who commonly visited Penn State and hosted an additional event at the congregation, local history programming, and singing groups. Sponsored by Hadassah, the Food Fairs were also an annual event where Jewish community members could participate in food sales, including hot dogs and baked goods, and purchase Hannukah gifts. There were also Jewish community celebrations, such as when Brit Shalom paid off its mortgage, and mourning, such as the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh in 2018. Some events included both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of State College and Bellefonte. Ron Hodes, who grew up in Lock Haven, but later moved to State College, recalled the prominence of the Jewish Joke Festival, which began in the 1960s and served as a fundraiser for the congregation. He remembered Joe Paterno, former Penn State football coach, would tell jokes at the annual event.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 35.

⁴⁸³ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 20 and 36.

⁴⁸⁴ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 36.

⁴⁸⁵ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 22.



Figure 41: Poster advertising an art auction to raise money for the Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte-State College.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ *Art Auction Poster*, n.d., photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 09591. Daniel Walden papers: series 03: Professional, Box 6. Folder: Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte Art Auction poster.

Professional Endeavors

Members of both the Bellefonte and State College Jewish communities have worked in a variety of capacities. In the mid-nineteenth century, the professions of early Central European Jewish settlers in Bellefonte included liverymen, butchers, clerks, and merchants. Abraham Baum and his son, Alfred, for example, operated a livery business from approximately 1874 to 1909 on East Cherry Lane.⁴⁸⁷ At least two Jewish butchers, Simon Lyon and Isaac Loeb, worked in Bellefonte and were competitors. On November 17, 1865, the *Democratic Watchman* praised the butchering establishments of Simon Lyon and Edward Brown, who gave Bellefonte community members cheaper meat prices compared to their competitor, Isaac Loeb, who “...have been so long sustained and patronized by the Bellefonte public that they have come to consider themselves the autocrats of the meat market. As such, with grasping meanness, they put on the highest cent, and though the public groan, they are fools enough to pay the price.” Simon Lyon and his family moved to Philipsburg in early 1881. He was supposed to open a butcher shop there, but he died before he could in May of 1881.⁴⁸⁸ Another Jewish community member, Martin Fauble, temporarily worked as a butcher with Simon Lyon in Bellefonte in the 1860s before clerking at S. & A. Loeb, a clothing store owned by his brother-in-law, Simon Loeb, and one of his cousins, Adolph Loeb. Martin worked as a silent partner at S. & A. Loeb before establishing his own business, the Rochester Clothing House, in 1887. Martin’s business went

⁴⁸⁷ Casey Sennett, “Abraham Baum Biography,” *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PzsMaGyr6c69mEo0tzfxiZUEeAY7Rplz/view?usp=share_link.

⁴⁸⁸ Casey Sennett, “Simon Lyon Biography,” *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rE0BOT4onJKoO9THk0KBTH3O6E1ZHKJ4/view?usp=share_link; “Some time ago, Mr. Edward Brown...,” *Democratic Watchman*, November 17, 1865.

through two additional names: Fauble's and M. Fauble & Son. Following Martin's death in 1910, his son, Adolph operated the store until he retired in 1937.⁴⁸⁹

Other Central European Jewish merchants in Bellefonte included Bernard Cerf Lyon, one of the founders of Lyon & Co., a dry goods store in Bellefonte, in the 1870s, and Jacob Sternberg, the father of Adolph Sternberg, the first Jewish mayor in Bellefonte, who operated A. Sternberg & Co. beginning in the late 1860s.⁴⁹⁰ Additional Jewish owned businesses in Bellefonte in the mid to late nineteenth century included: Joseph Bros. & Co., J. Newman, Jr., J. H. Bauland, H. D. Goldman, and J. Guggenheimer & Co.⁴⁹¹

Several Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Bellefonte and State College began working as peddlers, but eventually opened their own businesses. Max Kalin, for example, a nephew of Harris Claster, worked for his uncle in State College in the early 1900s, but moved to Bellefonte by 1914, where he purchase a shoe store. He later moved to State College after he and Walter Cohen bought the State College Fye Department Store. His children opened the Kalin's Dress Shop and Arnold Kalin's Men Store in State College.⁴⁹² Max's business partner at the Fye Department Store, Walter Cohen, was born in London, and moved from Clearfield to Bellefonte in 1911. While in Bellefonte, he managed his brother-in-law, Harris Claster's, clothing store, which he later bought in 1914.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁹ Sennett, "Martin Fauble Biography."

⁴⁹⁰ Casey Sennett, "Bernard Cerf Lyon Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W8qxTZ06TSwDQHA-n18Re-uA1Kc7Ov2X/view?usp=share_link; Casey Sennett, "Jacob Sternberg Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q3FLAx1BEBHWxY5KXQ7wv0AaGHVhml8E/view?usp=share_link.

⁴⁹¹ "Ad Section," *Centre Democrat*.

⁴⁹² Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 30.

⁴⁹³ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 30.

Other Eastern European Jewish business owners included: Nathan Kofman, who moved from Lock Haven to Bellefonte in 1910 and developed a scrap, later coal, business; Morris Fromm, who opened a men's clothing and furnishings store at 130 E. College Avenue in State College in 1913; and Charles Schlow, who moved from Philadelphia to Bellefonte in 1919 after purchasing a ladies clothing store. Charles moved to State College in the 1920s and opened the Schlow Quality Shop and Schlow Furniture Store. During this time, State College's Jewish community also included Penn State professors, such as Max Kriss and Teresa Cohen.⁴⁹⁴

Simeon and Maurice Baum, second-generation Central European Jewish Americans from Bellefonte, established businesses in both Bellefonte and State College. Simeon, a permanent resident of Bellefonte, opened his clothing store, Sim the Clothier, in Bellefonte in 1900. He operated the store until his retirement in 1930. His younger brother, Maurice, worked with him and operated the Sim the Clothier store in State College from 1912 to 1920. Maurice also became involved in the theater industry in 1914, when he began leasing the Nittany Theater at 114 South Allen Street. In June of 1916, he began leasing the Pastime Theater at 116 South Allen Street. He built the Cathaum Theater, named after his wife, Catherine Baum, at 114 West College Avenue, which opened in 1926. As the proprietor of all three of State College's theater, Maurice had a monopoly on the theaters in State College until he sold his leases to Warner Bros. in 1930.⁴⁹⁵ Maurice, involved in State College real estate, also created the only boulevard in State College. The Historic District Walking Tour of the Holmes-Foster Neighborhood in State

⁴⁹⁴ Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 45; Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 30.

⁴⁹⁵ Casey Sennett, "Simeon Baum Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oYNjDU6Yri7pAqpfE1-FGV7zM769LnLK/view?usp=share_link; Casey Sennett, "Maurice Baum Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/16O2tnYNkmiCMbqrWGLAoFyeG2rgve4SY/view?usp=share_link.

College notes both the Baum Boulevard and 905 Robin Road, a home Maurice constructed, which was the largest single-family homes in the borough at the time of its construction.⁴⁹⁶



Figure 42: Cathaum Theater, built and owned by Maurice Baum, and the First National Bank Building on West College Avenue, c. 1925.⁴⁹⁷

In State College, some of the early Jewish practitioners included: Dr. L. William Nieman, who opened his dental office in the late 1930s; Dr. Harold Zipser, who ran his podiatry practice from 1939 to 1945; Dr. Benjamin L. Alexander, who practiced from 1942 to 1987; Dr. Jerry Stein, who ran his optometry practice from 1949 to 1994; and Dr. Harold Kaiser, who ran his

⁴⁹⁶ Sennett, "Maurice Baum Biography."

⁴⁹⁷ *West College Avenue, c. 1925*, photograph, in *Penn State Forever: A Photographic History of the First 150 Years* by Centre Daily Times, 46. State College: Centre Daily Times, 2004.

podiatry practice from 1945 to 1988.⁴⁹⁸ From 1945 to 1980, Jerome Weinstein, a journalism graduate from Penn State originally from Brooklyn, New York, served as editor of the *Centre Daily Times*. He began working at the paper as their sports editor a year prior to his college graduation, in 1937. According to Nadine Kaufman, Jerry helped the paper carry “...stories on every major Jewish holiday, building dedication, invited speaker, UJA appeal.”⁴⁹⁹ Other regional Jewish families and businesses included the Levine, Lipner, Petnick, and Goldman families in Bellefonte and the Hurr Men’s Clothing Store on College Avenue in State College.⁵⁰⁰

Penn State’s Jewish History

According to one local Jewish community member, unlike other U.S. universities, Penn State never implemented Jewish enrollment restrictions.⁵⁰¹ It is unknown who the first Jewish student at Penn State was, but by the early 1910s, Jewish fraternities existed at the university.⁵⁰² In 1913, for example, the Beta Chapter of Beta Sigma Rho was established at Penn State, and it was incorporated in 1920. It later became an independent fraternity, Beta Sigma Beta.⁵⁰³ In his 1990 memoir, Louis S. Michael, a 1925 Jewish graduate of Penn State from Uniontown, Pennsylvania, recalled the Beta Sigma Rho house on Pugh street as a place where he “...began to

⁴⁹⁸ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 31.

⁴⁹⁹ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 43.

⁵⁰⁰ Richard “Rich” Kalin, interviewed in person by author, June 17, 2022; Lewis Steinberg, interviewed via phone by author, July 1, 2022.

⁵⁰¹ Anonymous interviewee 4, interviewed via phone by author, April 5, 2022.

⁵⁰² Krauss, “History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County,” 40; Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, Greek life in the U.S. was segregated based on religion and race. Jewish students, for example, were not allowed to join Christian fraternities. As a result, Jewish fraternities emerged at universities throughout the U.S. For more information, see: Marianne R. Sanua, “Jewish College Fraternities in the United States, 1895-1968: An Overview.” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19, no. 2 (2000): 3–42. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27502544>.

⁵⁰³ “History,” *Beta Sigma Beta Fraternity*, n.d., <https://betasigmabeta.com/about/>.

learn not only the importance of homework but, with periodic dances and house parties to attend, I became attuned to the need for acquiring social graces.”⁵⁰⁴



Figure 43: The two Beta Sigma Rho houses Louis S. Michael lived in as a Penn State student. Beta Sigma Rho was one of the first Jewish fraternities at Penn State.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁴ Louis S. Michael, *When I Remember* (Self-published: Self-published, 1990), memoir, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00635, Louis S. Michael Papers Box 1, Folder: I Remember When, 27.

⁵⁰⁵ *Beta Sigma Rho Houses*, c. 1920s, photographs. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 00635, Louis S. Michael Papers Box 1, Folder: Scrapbook- Penn State University, Undated.



Figure 44: Members of the Beta Chapter of Beta Sigma Rho during the 1920-1921 academic year.⁵⁰⁶



Figure 45: Attendees of the Beta Sigma House Party in June 1921. Louis Michael's mother served as a chaperon.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ *Beta Sigma Rho Membership 1920-1921*, c.1920-1921, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 00635, Louis S. Michael Papers Box 1, Folder: Scrapbook- Penn State University, Undated.

⁵⁰⁷ *Beta Sigma Rho House Party*, June 1921, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 00635, Louis S. Michael Papers Box 1, Folder: Scrapbook- Penn State University, Undated.



Figure 46: Members of the Beta Chapter of Beta Sigma Rho during the 1922-1923 academic year.⁵⁰⁸

Other historically Jewish fraternities at Penn State included the Theta Chapter of Phi Epsilon Pi, founded at Penn State in 1914, and nationally merged with Zeta Beta Tau in 1970; the Gamma Chapter of Sigma Tau Phi, founded in 1921 at Penn State, which briefly became the independent Gamma Sigma Phi Fraternity before its national merger with Alpha Epsilon Pi in 1947, when the Pi Deuteron Chapter of Alpha Epsilon Pi was chartered at Penn State; the Sigma Chapter of Phi Sigma Delta, founded in 1927, which later merged with Phi Alpha Fraternity in 1959, and went out of existence in 1971 at Penn State; the PA-Omega Gamma Chapter of Pi Lambda Phi, which was technically the first non-sectarian fraternity in the U.S., but was chartered at Penn State in 1942 and mainly served Jewish students; the Beta Eta Chapter of Phi

⁵⁰⁸ *Beta Sigma Rho Membership 1922-1923*, c.1922-1923, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 00635, Louis S. Michael Papers Box 1, Folder: Scrapbook- Penn State University, Undated.

Sigma Sigma, a non-sectarian sorority, founded at Penn State in 1945 and predominately served Jewish students; the Alpha Psi Chapter of Zeta Beta Tau, founded in 1946 at Penn State; Mu Lambda Chapter of Sigma Alpha Mu, founded in 1949 at Penn State, and closed in 2019; and the Phi Chapter of Sigma Delta Tau, founded at Penn State in 1943.⁵⁰⁹ Before the founding of any formal Jewish religious institutions in State College, it is believed the first bar mitzvah in State College, of Joe Kriss in 1931, occurred at one of Penn State's Jewish fraternities with an out-of-town rabbi.⁵¹⁰

In 1922, Penn State mandated a policy of compulsory chapel service for all students. Jewish and Catholic students, however, were excused from the university's sponsored services if they attended chapel meetings of their own faith. Jewish students met in Sparks, the Liberal Arts building, or at Jewish fraternities for their meetings.⁵¹¹ According Nadine Kaufman, Rabbi Mantinband of Williamsport would occasionally visit campus to provide spiritual guidance to Jewish Penn State students and state-wide Jewish sisterhoods would help finance the activities of

⁵⁰⁹ "Phi Epsilon Pi," *Wikipedia*, last updated December 23, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phi_Epsilon_Pi; "Zeta Beta Tau," *Penn State Student Affairs*, n.d., <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/involvement-student-life/greek-life-penn-state/about-community/chapters-councils/interfraternity/zeta-beta-tau>; "Sigma Tau Phi," *Wikipedia*, last updated December 23, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigma_Tau_Phi; "Pi Lambda Phi," *Penn State Student Affairs*, n.d., <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/involvement-student-life/greek-life-penn-state/about-community/chapters-councils/interfraternity/pi-lambda-phi>; "List of Sigma Alpha Mu Chapters," *Wikipedia*, last updated January 31, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Sigma_Alpha_Mu_chapters; Alpha Epsilon Pi, "Pi Deuteron—The Pennsylvania State University," n.d., document, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 1385, Pennsylvania State University, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life Records: Series 5: General Box 21; Phi Sigma Delta, various letters, 1959-1971, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 1385, Pennsylvania State University, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life Records: Series 5: General Box 13; "Fraternity Revokes Charter at Penn State Following Violations of 'Every Rule that was Imposed'," *Penn Live: Patriot News*, September 17, 2019, <https://www.pennlive.com/news/2019/09/fraternity-revokes-charter-at-penn-state-following-continued-violations-of-every-rule-that-was-imposed.html>; "Sigma Delta Tau," *Penn State Student Affairs*, n.d., <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/involvement-student-life/greek-life-penn-state/about-community/chapters-councils/panhellenic/sigma-delta-tau>; "Phi Sigma Sigma," *Penn State Student Affairs*, n.d., <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/involvement-student-life/greek-life-penn-state/about-community/chapters-councils/panhellenic/phi-sigma-sigma>. Some of these organizations have been inactive, suspended, and/or re-chartered during Penn State's history. The founding dates used in this document reflect the dates of their original charters at Penn State.

⁵¹⁰ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 31.

⁵¹¹ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 36.

Jewish students. After the university ended compulsory services, the Judea Club formed on campus to promote Jewish social and religious life.⁵¹²

Since its founding in 1936, Penn State Hillel has supported Jewish life at Penn State. Janice Shapiro, who grew up in Bellefonte, but also attended Penn State, recalled being active in Hillel as a Penn State student. She remembered Hillel would host bagel brunches and Passover Seders.⁵¹³ Another Penn State alumna from the 1950s recalled each Jewish fraternity and sorority would rotate and lead different Friday night services.⁵¹⁴ Until the Faculty Senate passed a resolution in the 1960s, which forced fraternities and sororities to rewrite their Constitutions within two years to allow students of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds to join, Greek life at Penn State was religiously and racially segregated.⁵¹⁵ One alumna, who attended Penn State in the 1950s, recalled her husband, an engineering student at Penn State, wanted to join Triangle, a social engineering fraternity, but was prevented from doing so because he was Jewish.⁵¹⁶

Following the separation of the local Jewish community from Penn State Hillel in the 1960s, the organization's focus has turned exclusively to students. In the 1980s, Penn State Hillel building at Locust Lane was rapidly deteriorating. Unable to make needed repairs and improvements to the building, Penn State Hillel's building at 224 Locust Lane was condemned in 1987 and Penn State Hillel moved to the Eisenhower Chapel on Penn State's campus. Hillel's former Locust Lane property was sold by the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation on September 22, 1995, to Downtown Rental Center, Inc. of State College for \$550,000 and the building's

⁵¹² Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," 40.

⁵¹³ Shapiro interview.

⁵¹⁴ Anonymous interviewee 6 interview.

⁵¹⁵ Anonymous interviewee 5, interviewed in person by the author, November 8, 2022.

⁵¹⁶ Anonymous interviewee 6, interviewed in person by the author, February 12, 2022.

destruction began on October 25, 1995. While attempts were made to salvage the “The Ideals of Judaism” mural within the building, they failed.⁵¹⁷ The land of Hillel’s former Locust Lane building currently houses an apartment complex.⁵¹⁸

In 2003, the opening of the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center at Penn State led to Hillel moving from Eisenhower Chapel to the new shared space with other student religious and cultural organizations. In January of 2016, Penn State Hillel announced plans to build a new location in downtown State College on the corner of South Garner Street and East Beaver Avenue.⁵¹⁹ The groundbreaking for the new 16,000-square-foot space, named the Bernard and Nancy Gutterman Family Center for Jewish Life, began in 2019 with the inaugural opening hosted on September 9, 2022. In an interview about the new building, Aaron Kaufman, Executive Director of Penn State Hillel stated, “...the facility will support the group’s mission to create a pluralistic, welcoming and inclusive environment for Jewish students where they can grow intellectually, spiritually and socially.” The new location includes lounge and study spaces, shared staff and student workspace, event space, and a private terrace. In addition to the new building, Penn State Hillel still maintains office space at the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center on Penn State’s University Park campus.⁵²⁰

Aside from the various Jewish institutions at Penn State, Jewish Penn State students, faculty, and alumni have also made history at the university. In 1943, for example, Jerry Stein, while serving as a board member of Penn State Hillel, became the first Jewish person elected as president of the Penn State Christian Association. Regarding his decision to run, he stated, “I

⁵¹⁷ Joel Sobel, “Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane.”

⁵¹⁸ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 18.

⁵¹⁹ Joel Sobel, “Penn State Hillel on Locust Lane.”

⁵²⁰ “Penn State Hillel Celebrates Opening of New Building,” *Penn State News*, September 10, 2022, <https://www.psu.edu/news/campus-life/story/penn-state-hillel-celebrates-opening-new-building/>.

elected to go to the Christian association because I wanted them to know what a Jew was.”⁵²¹

Jewish faculty member Jules Heller was the founding dean of the College of Arts and Architecture in 1963 and David B. Geselowitz founded the Bioengineering program in 1971. Herschel Leibowitz, of the Psychology Department, was the first Jewish Evan Pugh Professor in 1977 with Stanley Weintraub, of the English Department, being the second in 1986. Mimi Barash Coopersmith, a 1953 alumna of Penn State, became the first female chair of the Penn State Board of Trustees in 1987.⁵²² Graham Spanier was Penn State’s first Jewish president, serving in the role from 1995 to 2011.⁵²³

State College Jewish Landmarks

Penn State Hillel (1936-Present)

Penn State Hillel, currently located downtown State College at the Bernard and Nancy Guterman Family Center for Jewish Life and on campus at the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, serves the approximately 5,000 Jewish students, including approximately 4,000 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students, at Penn State.⁵²⁴ Rabbi Rob Gleisser, Peter J. Rubinstein Senior Jewish Educator, helps “...cultivate spiritual services, rituals, and shabbat dinners” as well as build community.⁵²⁵ In addition to providing space for religious and cultural events, Hillel supports Jewish student organizations such as L’Chaim Ladies, Greek Team, Hillel Student Life Committee, Hillel Leadership Council Hillel, Hillel Exemplary Leaders Program (HELP),

⁵²¹ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 32.

⁵²² Mimi Barash Coopersmith, *Eat First, Cry Later: The Life Lessons of a First-Generation College Graduate, Penn State Alumna and Female CEO* (Self-published: Self-published, 2018), 124.

⁵²³ Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 32.

⁵²⁴ “Pennsylvania State University, University Park,” *Hillel International*, n.d., <https://www.hillel.org/college/pennsylvania-state-university-university-park/>.

⁵²⁵ Rabbi Rob Gleisser, interviewed in person by author, February 1, 2022.

Campus Engagement Fellowship (CEF), Nazun, formerly Challah for Hunger, Chicken Soup Hotline, Live for Every Victory (LEV), and Lions for Israel.⁵²⁶ Hillel also serves kosher holiday and weekly Shabbat meals and sponsors Birthright Israel Trips and Alternative Breaks.⁵²⁷



Figure 47: The Bernard and Nancy Gutterman Family Center for Jewish Life at the corner of Garner Street and Beaver Avenue during its grand opening in the fall of 2022.⁵²⁸

The Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte and State College and the Congregation Brit Shalom (1954-Present)

⁵²⁶ “Student Communities,” *Penn State Hillel*, n.d., <https://pennstatehillel.org/students/student-groups/>.

⁵²⁷ Pennsylvania State University, University Park,” *Hillel International*.

⁵²⁸ Kellen Manning, *Penn State Hillel*, September 2022, photograph, in “Penn State Hillel Celebrates Opening of new Building,” *Penn State News*, <https://www.psu.edu/news/campus-life/story/penn-state-hillel-celebrates-opening-new-building/>.

On April 25, 1954, State College and Bellefonte Jewish community members met at the Hillel Foundation on Locust Lane to discuss the formation of a Jewish Community Council to represent the needs to local Jewish community members and their families. On May 23, Charles Schlow, Sidney Friedman, Nancy Kalin, Nathan Krauss, Sylvia Stein, and Jack Brumberg were elected as the first Executive Committee. At the committee's first meeting, Charles Schlow was elected president, Cliff Nelson as vice president, Milton Krauss as treasurer, and Ruth Lipner as secretary.⁵²⁹ The Jewish Community Council of the Bellefonte and State College Area was registered under the Commonwealth's Nonprofit Corporation Law on September 24, 1957, with Harold Zipser, Milton L. Krauss, Sidney Friedman, Rodelle Weintraub, Benjamin M. Kahn, and L. W. Nieman as incorporators.⁵³⁰

The State College and Bellefonte Jewish communities, however, were divided over whether the council should officially split from Penn State Hillel. For years, residents saw the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation as their congregation's primarily cultural and religious organization as well as that for Penn State students. On October 29, 1961, however, members met and decided the council should build their own synagogue. Charles Abramson, Edward Mittleman, M. I. Claster, Charles Schlow, Nate Krauss, Sid Freidman, Is Steinberg, and Cliff Nelson formed a Building and Finance Committee with Robert Levy as the building fund treasurer. In 1964, the congregation purchased two lots on Hamilton Avenue and an additional strip of land on Hamilton Avenue was purchased in 1969, totally \$13,304.⁵³¹ As the

⁵²⁹ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 17.

⁵³⁰ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 18.

⁵³¹ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 18.

congregation built a synagogue, they continued to attend services at Penn State Hillel and contribute to the organization.⁵³²

On October 3, 1965, Sunday School began at the synagogue on Hamilton Avenue with Hebrew School beginning on October 4 with 95 Sunday School students and 25 Hebrew students.⁵³³ On February 28, 1965, the synagogue was dedicated. Divisions within the Jewish community continued to grow as some argued the council should only serve the education and social components of the Jewish community while others thought the center should also serve the religious aspects of the Jewish community.⁵³⁴ In April of 1965, however, the council obtained their first Torah, a gift from the Temple Beth Zion, Beth Israel in Philadelphia, with a *bimah* being built for Shavuoth services in June.⁵³⁵ The June 6 service, conducted by Cliff Nelson and Gary R. Dalin also held the congregation's first confirmation.⁵³⁶

At the beginning, the council hired rabbinical students to lead services one Friday a month with additional holiday services. On May 20, 1966, Hebrew Union College student Anthony D. Holz from South Africa conducted the first Friday night service.⁵³⁷ The first high holiday services for adults were held in September of 1966 by rabbinical student Roy Tanenbaum. The synagogue's second Torah came from the Kalin family in memory of Max and Miriam Kalin and the third was a gift from the Philipsburg's Sons of Israel Congregation, which closed in the 1990s. The High Holiday prayer books were gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Morris

⁵³² Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 18.

⁵³³ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 19.

⁵³⁴ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 20.

⁵³⁵ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 20 and 21.

⁵³⁶ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 20.

⁵³⁷ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 20.

Fromm. The Torah pointer from Norman and Fran Davids and the Shofar from Barna and Jake Kofman.⁵³⁸

Marshall Goldstein, president of the congregation from 1969 to 1970, suggested the congregation should hire a rabbi and Robert A. Kaufmann of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, became the congregation's first full-time rabbi.⁵³⁹ During the 1970s, various changes transformed the congregation. In 1971, for example, the Hillel Nursery School was moved from Penn State Hillel to the congregation and in 1973, full religious rights were granted to female members. "Rabbi Jeff," or Rabbi Jeff Eisenstat, succeeded Rabbi Kaufman in 1976, and served as both rabbi and Religious School director. Rabbi Eisenstat changed the congregation's affiliation to Reconstructionism and accepted Jewish community members with patrilineal descent. In the spring of 1979, the congregation decided to keep the organization's name of the Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte and State College, but to adopt a Hebrew congregation name. Brit Shalom was selected as the name.⁵⁴⁰

On September 14, 1982, a groundbreaking ceremony took place for Brit Shalom's building expansion. A new sanctuary, Youth Lounge, and larger classrooms were dedicated on December 11, 1983. During the construction, Sunday School, Hebrew School, the Purim Carnival, and some meetings took place at the University Baptist and Brethren Church. By 1985, Religious School enrollment expanded to 130. The building's entry way was later remodeled in the early 1990s.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 21.

⁵³⁹ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 21-22.

⁵⁴⁰ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 23.

⁵⁴¹ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 23-24.

Rabbi Eisenstat left in 1990 and was succeeded by student Rabbi David Stern for a year. Then Rabbi David Mivasair led the congregation until 1995, when Rabbi Jonathan Brown succeeded him until 2001. Followed by student Rabbi Daniel Bronstein, Rabbi Kennard Lipman from 2002 to 2005, when the congregation affiliated with Reform Judaism. Rabbi David Ostrich came to the congregation from Pensacola, Florida, in 2005 and continues to lead the congregation.⁵⁴²



Figure 48: Congregation Brit Shalom in State College.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² Kofman, “Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary,” 24.

⁵⁴³ *Congregation Brit Shalom*, n.d., photograph, in “Welcome,” *Brit Shalom State College*, <https://www.britshalomstatecollege.org/>.

Reflecting on the changes to State College's Jewish community over the last few decades, Mimi Barash Coopersmith, one of the youngest charter members of Brit Shalom, in her memoir *Eat First, Cry Later* wrote, "Everyone eats 'Jewish' in State College now—you can enjoy a lox and bagel at Irving's, and soon, they predict, we might have a kosher deli in the new Hillel...In 2013, the congregation completed an endowment campaign of nearly \$3 million to ensure the future of our Jewish traditions, hopefully into perpetuity. In the 1960s, we were living through a time when all of this seemed remote but possible, and we felt it was our responsibility to take the lead in building a strong and enduring Jewish community in and around State College."⁵⁴⁴

Centre County Memorial Park Cemetery (1954-Present)

The closest Jewish cemetery to State College was the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte. In 1954, Charles Schlow encouraged Jewish community members to establish a Jewish section in the Centre County Memorial Park Cemetery, formed in 1942, on the Benner Pike. In December, members of the Jewish Community Council passed a resolution to establish a "traditional Jewish" section in the cemetery. To secure it, however, the council needed eighteen Jewish families to commit to being buried at the Centre County Memorial Park. Two of the congregants who committed to being buried there were Mimi Barash Coppersmith and her first husband, Sy Barash, at the ages of 24 and 31, respectively. In her memoir, Mimi recalled how the new Jewish section was established to follow the rules of an orthodox Jewish burial. In 1984, to accommodate for the growing diversity of the State College Jewish community, a second Jewish section opened in Centre County Memorial Park and allowed for the burial of spouses

⁵⁴⁴ Coppersmith, *Eat First, Cry Later*, 41.

and children of inter-faith marriages. Shrubby separates the two Jewish sections of the cemetery.⁵⁴⁵

Chabad Penn State (2001-Present)

Founded in 2001, Chabad Penn State is led by Rabbi Nosson Meretsky and his wife, Sarah. Chabad serves both Penn State students and the State College community. For current undergraduate students, Chabad provides Birthright Israel, Chicken Soup Delivery, classes, cooking club, mezuzah bank, holiday and shabbat dinners, and the Sinai Scholars program. For Penn State Graduate students, Chabad offers similar programming through JGrads. Chabad provides additional services, such as Mommy and Me, Jewish Women's Circle, bar and bat mitzvah lessons, Torah Studies class, CTeen events, Gan Israel Day Camp, a community *mikvah* (ritual bath), and more, for State College Jewish community members.⁵⁴⁶

Interaction within the Larger Bellefonte-State College Community

Like Lock Haven, the experiences of Bellefonte and State College Jewish communities have varied over time. In 2004, on West Lamb Street in Bellefonte, the Krauss Park was dedicated to Nathan and Florence Krauss.⁵⁴⁷ In an interview with their son, Jeff Krauss, he noted how, "Having a monument in Central Pennsylvania named after a Jewish family is immense." As a child, Jeff recalled how his father was black balled from joining the local country club because

⁵⁴⁵ "Centre County Memorial Park," *Memorial Planning*, n.d., <https://www.memorialplanning.com/cemeteries/centre-county-memorial-park>; Coppersmith, *Eat First, Cry Later*; 39-40; Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary, 34.

⁵⁴⁶ Rabbi Nosson Meretsky, "18 Years Chabad of Penn State," *YouTube*, November 21, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK2hsk6dOdc>.

⁵⁴⁷ "Krauss Park," *Borough of Historic Bellefonte*, n.d., <https://bellefonte.net/departments/parks-rec/krauss-park/>.

he was Jewish. His father, who was highly respected within Bellefonte, was later admitted after other community members threatened to pull out their support from the country club if Jeff's father was not admitted. Jeff is proud to maintain his family's name because "...it is still difficult to be Jewish in a small community."⁵⁴⁸

Jeff's sister, Janice Shapiro, who grew up in Bellefonte in the 1940s, described growing up as Jewish in Bellefonte as "interesting." All her friends were not Jewish growing up, but she did not remember them having any problems because they all shared similar lives and lifestyles. She noted, however, the experience of her grandmother, who was an immigrant and lived in Bellefonte for many years prior, might have had a harder experience finding community. In school, she remembered one of her teachers made a rude comment about her Jewish identity. She told her father, who went to superintendent of the school and they "took care of it." Janice sometimes heard passing comments made about her being Jewish, and felt angry, but she recalled feeling secure enough at home and within the town that she knew the people making the remarks were "stupid."⁵⁴⁹

Marilyn Claster Nissenson, who grew up in Bellefonte in the 1940s then moved to State College at the age of 13, thought Bellefonte and State College were both, "Really nice places to grow up." She said she was not particularly religious but was aware of her Jewish identity. She noticed more Jewish families in Bellefonte than State College, and in Bellefonte, she saw the Jewish community as being able to operate within the social parameters of small-town life, "[We all] lived in the same world. There were subtle thoughts about Jews... [but I] had a strong feeling

⁵⁴⁸ Krauss interview.

⁵⁴⁹ Shapiro interview.

of comfort both because the community was a nice place to live and it never occurred to me if we felt welcome, we just were.”⁵⁵⁰

For Ron Friedman, who grew up in State College in the 1950s, he started noticing he was different from his predominately Christian peers in fifth or sixth grade. He recalled, “The discrimination was subtler and as a youngster, I was not aware of it. I remember asking my parents about whether I should participate in the Christian activities [i.e., reciting the Lord’s Prayer at school, singing Christian hymns at Boy Scouts, or singing religious-themed carols in music class at school], but they provided no guidance.” Due to the small size of State College’s early Jewish community and the absence of adult male Jewish community members, who primarily worked as merchants, for services until after the end of the business day, Friedman recalled Rabbi Kahn recruiting Jewish boys around the age of their bar mitzvah and older to fulfill the minimum number of men needed for memorial services and bris, circumcision ceremonies. He remembered, “When we were drafted to help fill out a minyan, the rabbi would know where to find us. He would drive up to the ball field in his black Chevy, honk the horn, and call the Jewish boys to attend a minyan.” As a youth, Friedman recalled dreading being pulled away from baseball or football games with his friends, but, as an adult, they became “[a] cherished memory of a time when I was part of something very special. As a youngster I was able to provide minyan service in support of that small Jewish community in our predominantly Christian town.”⁵⁵¹

Mimi Barash Coopersmith, who grew up in the Wilkes-Barre area and moved to State College for college and never left, recalled, “Anti-Semitism occasionally reared its head on and

⁵⁵⁰ Marilyn Claster Nissenson, interviewed via phone by author, July 26, 2022.

⁵⁵¹ Ronald “Ron” Friedman, “Growing Up Jewish in a Small Christian Town,” self-published, 2020. Material accessed from Ron Friedman.

off campus, but in general we all somehow managed to get along. Still, the recent painting of swastikas on the garbage containers behind a mostly Jewish fraternity, Beta Sigma Beta, reminds us that the work of community building, across our differences, is never done.”⁵⁵² Sisters Judy Lang and Ruth Zipser, who both grew up in State College in the 1950s, never recalled antisemitism in State College. They noted, however, there had been some incidents on campus, especially aimed at Jewish fraternities, but they never personally experienced antisemitism.⁵⁵³

According to a report from Jeremy Bannett, associate regional director of the Anti-Defamation League in Philadelphia, roughly seventeen antisemitic incidents occurred at Penn State from 2001 to 2018. The incidents largely targeted Penn State Hillel and Penn State Chabad. One of the most prevalent semesters of antisemitic incidents on campus was the fall semester of 1995, in which *The Daily Collegian* reported on twelve separate incidents, including the painting of swastikas and slurs in residence halls, academic buildings, and an elementary school.⁵⁵⁴

Jewish Community Member Profiles

Aaron Katz (1844-1919)

Aaron Katz, born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1844, moved to the American South as a young man to engage in business. During the American Civil War, he served in the 53rd Regiment of the North Carolina Infantry in the Confederate Army. He was eventually promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major. During the Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863, he was wounded

⁵⁵² Coppersmith, *Eat First, Cry Later*, 40.

⁵⁵³ Judy Lang and Ruth Zipser, interviewed in person together by author, April 12, 2022.

⁵⁵⁴ Lauren Fox and Varshini Chellapilla, “History of Hatred: An In-Depth Look at Anti-Semitism at Penn State,” *The Daily Collegian*, April 25, 2019, https://www.collegian.psu.edu/news/campus/history-of-hatred-an-in-depth-look-at-anti-semitism-at-penn-state/article_d20e92e4-66fb-11e9-9a70-9f61e3530631.html.

in the hip and captured by the Union Army. According to his obituary, “Though he served with the Confederate army during the war, Mr. Katz held no animosity against the people of the North.”⁵⁵⁵

After the war, he returned to the North and married Maria Lewisson of Philadelphia in 1871. They had two sons, Joseph Katz and Bill Katz. He and his family moved to Bellefonte in April of 1895, where Aaron started the Katz & Co. Globe Store, which was a dry goods and millinery store, located on Allegheny Street. Within Bellefonte, his obituary noted he was elected an honorary member of the Gregg Post. According to Nadine Kofman’s research on Jewish community members in Bellefonte, Edith Kolsky Katz, the widow of Aaron’s grandson, Alan, said “Every time there was a parade in Bellefonte, he [Aaron] wore his Army of the Confederacy uniform...He was the only one wearing a Confederate uniform.” Aaron’s son, Will, took over the Globe Store after Aaron retired in 1918 because of his failing health. Aaron died in June of 1919 and was buried in the Mount Sinai cemetery in Philadelphia.⁵⁵⁶

Jacob Marks (1857-1930)

Jacob Marks, born Marcius Podolsky in 1857 in Russia, immigrated to the U.S. around 1880. He stayed in New York with his sister until 1881 or 1882, when members of Lyon & Co., a dry goods store operated by Bernard Lyon and his two sons, Gustave and Moyer, in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, solicited him to work as a clerk for their store. Jacob never married or had any

⁵⁵⁵ J. D. Lewis, “North Carolina in the American Civil War,” *Carolana*, n.d., https://www.carolana.com/NC/Civil_War/53rd_nc_regiment.html; “KATZ,” *Democratic Watchman*, June 13, 1919.

⁵⁵⁶ KATZ,” *Democratic Watchman*; Nadine Kaufman, 30.

children. The only surviving relatives listed in his obituary were his nieces and nephews. He served in the Spanish-American War in 1898.⁵⁵⁷

Jacob worked at Lyon & Co. for approximately twenty-nine years. He retired in 1910. Additionally, he owned real estate and served as a landlord. His properties included two homes on Bishop Street, two homes on Ridge Street, one home on the corner of Ridge and Logan Streets as well as tracts of land in Rush and Spring townships as well as in Pleasant Gap and Bellefonte.⁵⁵⁸

In Bellefonte, Jacob was a member of the Bellefonte Elks and the Logan Fire Company. In 1904, 1908, 1910, and 1915, he served as an elected trustee of the Bellefonte Elks. In 1905 and 1909, he was the elected trustee of the Logan Fire Company. He was also elected as the third assistant of the Logan Fire Company in 1911 and the elected treasurer of the organization in 1909, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1925, 1926, and 1928. On March 19, 1909, the Democratic Watchman reported a fire in the Brockerhoff dining room and Jacob Marks was one of the responding volunteer firemen. On August 25, 1916, the Democratic Watchman reported Jacob Marks represented the Logan Fire Company at the annual convention of the Central Pennsylvania district Volunteer Fireman's association in Clearfield. He was also a member of the "Has-Beens" fishing club in 1910.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ Casey Sennett, "Jacob Marks Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022,

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DFfD7RUzWUDB8IHztQJpw0v75dMFZY9l/view?usp=share_link.

⁵⁵⁸ Sennett, "Jacob Marks Biography."

⁵⁵⁹ Sennett, "Jacob Marks Biography."

Jacob died at the Centre County Hospital in Bellefonte in January of 1930 from kidney trouble and other complications. His funeral was held at the Elks home on High Street, and he was buried at the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte.⁵⁶⁰

Mathilde Lyon Grauer (1858-1942)

Mathilde “Tillie” Lyon Grauer, born in France in 1858, was born to Bernard Cerf Lyon and Estelle Hanan Lyon. In 1864, she immigrated to the U.S. with her parents and five siblings, Melanie, Gustave, Moyer, Pauline, and Victorine. The Lyon family settled in Danville, Pennsylvania originally before moving to Milesburg, Pennsylvania, in the spring of 1865 and to Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, in 1870.⁵⁶¹

Mathilde married Louis J. Grauer of Baltimore, Maryland, on April 29, 1895, and they had two children: Edward Grauer and Estelle Grauer Payne. In the early 1870s, Mathilde’s father, Bernard, and her two brothers, Gustave and Moyer, established Lyon & Co., a dry goods store, in Bellefonte. The store originally opened in the Reynold’s Arcade, but in 1878, the store moved to Allegheny Street. After Bernard died in 1886, the management of Lyon & Co. passed to Moyer, who maintained it until his death in 1901. Mathilde began working in the store as early as 1896, but she and her husband managed the store after Moyer’s death. When Mathilde’s husband died on February 21, 1927, Mathilde began solely managing the store. In April of 1927, according to the *Democratic Watchman*, she sold the store because she did not feel equipped to continue running the business.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ Sennett, “Jacob Marks Biography.”

⁵⁶¹ Casey Sennett, “Mathilde Lyon Grauer Biography,” *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vJbjZCtVeEEkCn2t50mX5yh6-hbhGuc3/view?usp=share_link.

⁵⁶² Sennett, “Mathilde Lyon Grauer Biography.”

On July 15, 1927, the *Democratic Watchman* reported, “Going into the Lyon & Co store as a girl she [Mathilde] quickly became an expert saleslady and while yet quite young in years assumed the responsibility of comanager of the store. In this capacity she continued for more than a quarter of a century, or until her recent sale of the store to Harry Bernstein.” Harry Bernstein changed the name of the store to B and B Underselling Store. The *Democratic Watchman* noted, “For the first time in many years Mrs. Louis Grauer is now enjoying a life devoid of all business cared and responsibility.”⁵⁶³

Mathilde moved from Bellefonte to Philadelphia with her daughter, Estelle, around 1930. Mathilde died at Estelle’s home in Philadelphia on September 17, 1942, and her remains were transported to Bellefonte for burial at the Rodef Shalom Cemetery.⁵⁶⁴

Max Kalin (1883-1953)

Max Kalin, born in Lithuania in 1883, immigrated to the U.S. in 1898. His uncle, Harris Claster of Lock Haven sponsored his immigration in exchange for his working as a peddler for him. Max peddled in both Centre and Clinton counties. He also operated a Claster's store in State College from 1904 to 1906. In 1908, while operating a Claster's store in Durbin, West Virginia, Max married Miriam Sykes of Lock Haven, who was also originally from Lithuania. Max and Miriam had five children: Arnold Kalin, Mildred Kalin Steinberg, Caroline Kalin Nieman, Pauline Kalin Disick, and Sanford "Bill" Kalin.⁵⁶⁵

Max and his family moved to Bellefonte in 1914 after his store in Ford City, Pennsylvania, was destroyed in a flood. In Bellefonte, he operated a shoe store. With three of the

⁵⁶³ Sennett, “Mathilde Lyon Grauer Biography.”

⁵⁶⁴ Sennett, “Mathilde Lyon Grauer Biography.”

⁵⁶⁵ Casey Sennett, “Kalin and Steinberg Families Collage,” *Penn State Hillel*, July 13, 2022.

Kalin children enrolled at the Pennsylvania State College, the family moved to State College in 1928. Max purchased a storeroom at 128-130 Allen Street, where he and his family operated several businesses, including Kalin's Dress Shop and Kalin's Men Store.⁵⁶⁶

Max and Miriam were both members of the early Jewish community of State College. They belonged to the Jewish congregation in Lock Haven until the establishment of the Hillel Foundation in State College in the 1930s. They and their children were founding members of the Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte and State College and the Congregation Brit Shalom in the 1960s. In 1964, Max and Miriam's children donated a Torah in memory of their parents to Brit Shalom in State College. It is one of the congregation's three Torah scrolls.⁵⁶⁷

Charles Schlow (1886-1981)

Charles Schlow, born in Russia in 1886, immigrated to the U.S. at the age of five. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Charles worked as a schoolteacher in Philadelphia for several years before moving with his wife, Bella Silversmith Schlow, to Bellefonte in 1919. While in Bellefonte, he operated a women's clothing store on the corner of Bishop and Allegheny Streets. Charles and Bella had two children, Frank Schlow and Irma Schlow Zipser. After Bella's death, which occurred in 1957, Charles remarried Blanche Schlow, who died in 1974.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ Sennett, "Kalin and Steinberg Families Collage."

⁵⁶⁷ Sennett, "Kalin and Steinberg Families Collage."

⁵⁶⁸ Tom Shakely, "Charles and Bella Schlow," *Tom Shakely*, January 19, 2017, <https://tomshakely.com/2017/charles-and-bella-schlow/>; Casey Sennett, "Schlow and Zipser Families Collage," *Penn State Hillel*, July 13, 2022; "Campus View Apartments/Schlow Building," *The Historical Marker Database*, last updated December 28, 2019, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=134741>; Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 42.

In the 1920s, the Schlow family moved to State College, where Charles opened the Schlow's Quality Shop and Schlow Furniture Store. Schlow first opened a clothing store on Allen Street, but after a fire destroyed the block, he purchased land on College Avenue from the Metzger Company to build the Schlow Building in 1925, the current location of Irvings Bagels on East College Avenue. The building, located at 106-108 East College Avenue, included twelve-unit Campus View Apartments located above the storefront. In the 1930s, Schlow closed his dress business in Bellefonte.

The Schlow's Quality Shop, a clothing store, operated for forty-three years in the Schlow Building under the leadership of first Charles and Bella Schlow and later their daughter and son-in-law, Irma Schlow Zipser and Harold Zipser. Charles and Bella's son, Frank Schlow, operated the Schlow Furniture Store, an interior design and furniture store, first located at 320 East College Avenue, then at 129 South Atherton Street, the current location of the Graduate Hotel at on South Atherton Street, from 1937 to 1966.⁵⁶⁹

In State College, Charles served as the chairman of the Water Authority, president of the borough council, and the founder of State College's first library. The State College Community Library, opened on January 17, 1957, was originally located in a two-room storefront Charles donated on West College Avenue. That same year, Charles wife, Bella died, and he donated money in her memory to expand the building. In 1958, the library's name was changed to the Bella S. Schlow Memorial Library in memory of Bella. In 1966, the library moved to its current location at the corner of Beaver and Allen Street, the building of the former State College post office. The library's name was changed in 1967 to the Schlow Memorial Library to honor the

⁵⁶⁹ Lang and Zipser interview; Sennett, "Schlow and Zipser Families Collage"; "Campus View Apartments/Schlow Building," *The Historical Marker Database*.

entire family. After being reconstructed in 2004, discussions surrounding a new name reflecting the areas the library served was considered. Discussion amongst the descendants of the Schlow family, the State College, and other municipal leaders decided to keep the Schlow name because of concerns the library's founder might be lost. The library's new name became the Schlow Centre Region Library.⁵⁷⁰



Figure 49: The first library in State College, which Charles Schlow opened in 1957 on the first floor of this home on 222 West College Avenue.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ Sennett, "Schlow and Zipser Families Collage"; "Schlow Library," *Centre County Encyclopedia of History & Culture*, last updated August 9, 2022, <https://centrehistory.org/article/schlow-library/#:~:text=The%20library%20was%20founded%20when,locations%20and%20names%20several%20times>.

⁵⁷¹ *First State College Library*, c.1957, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01196. Photographic Vertical Files, Town and Environs, Box 20. Folder: Schlow Memorial Library (b&w).



*Figure 50: The Bella S. Schlow Memorial Library on West College Avenue.*⁵⁷²

For more than fifty-five years, Charles also served as the lay chaplain for Jewish prisoners at the State Correctional Institution at Rockview. Two of his grandchildren, Judy Lang and Ruth Zipser recalled their grandmother, Bella, would make Challah, herring, and other foods for Charles to bring to prisoners on Jewish holidays. Charles and Bella, in the early 1970s, were also allowed to bring the Jewish prisoners to their home to celebrate the high holidays and Passover.⁵⁷³ Charles was also one of the founders of the Hillel Foundation in State College and

⁵⁷² *Bella S. Schlow Memorial Library*, c.1962, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01196. Photographic Vertical Files, Town and Environs, Box 20. Folder: Schlow Memorial Library (b&w).

⁵⁷³ Land and Zipser interview.

served as the first president of the Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte and State College.⁵⁷⁴



⁵⁷⁴ Sennett, "Schlow and Zipser Families Collage."

*Figure 51: Charles Schlow on a float for State College's 75th Diamond Jubilee in 1971.*⁵⁷⁵

Dr. Teresa Cohen (1892-1992)

Dr. Teresa Cohen, born to Benjamin and Rebecca Cohen in Baltimore, Maryland, on Valentine's Day in 1892, attended the Friends School in Baltimore before earning her bachelor's degree in mathematics and physicals at Goucher College in 1912. She earned both her master's degree and Ph.D. in mathematics from Johns Hopkins University in 1915 and 1918, respectively. She taught at the Johns Hopkins summer school from 1918 to 1920 until she received a telegraph from Joseph Willard, the head of the mathematics department at Penn State, in September of 1920. Joseph, in need of a mathematics instructor for a last-minute class, heard from a colleague at Johns Hopkins, who was Dr. Cohen's uncle, about Dr. Cohen. Dr. Cohen accepted the teaching position and arrived in State College two days later.⁵⁷⁶



⁵⁷⁵ *Charles Schlow at State's 75th Anniversary*, 1971, photograph. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01196. Photographic Vertical Files, Town and Environs, Box 34. Folder: Anniversary, 75th (color), July 1971.

⁵⁷⁶ Agnes Scott College, "Teresa Cohen," *Biographies of Women Mathematicians*, last updated January 12, 2022, <https://mathwomen.agnesscott.org/women/cohen.htm>.

*Figure 52: Photo of Dr. Teresa Cohen.*⁵⁷⁷

Dr. Cohen was promoted to assistant professor in 1921, associate professor in 1939, and to full professor in 1945. She was the first female faculty member in the mathematics department at Penn State and one of the first few female university professors in the U.S. She retired in 1961 due to Penn State regulations, but she continued working with students as a free tutor for twenty-four years. Each day she walked to her office on-campus and made herself available from 9:30am to 4:30pm to students and filled in for sick colleagues, when necessary. She continued working with students until she was in an accident at the age of ninety-four and was forced to enter a nursing home in Baltimore. She died in Baltimore in 1992 at the age of one hundred. She never married or had any children.⁵⁷⁸

Dr. Cohen taught at Penn State for more than sixty-years. In 1982, the Department of Mathematics at Penn State honored her with the establishment of the Teresa Cohen Service, an award for excellent undergraduate teaching. The award is given every two years to a faculty at Penn State's main campus, University Park, and one of the university's commonwealth campuses. In 1987, the department also established the Teresa Cohen Tutorial Endowment Fund to develop an undergraduate tutoring program. The program became known as the Sperling-Cohen Program in 1991.⁵⁷⁹

Dr. Cohen was a member of the American Mathematical Society, the Mathematical Association of America, Pi Mu Epsilon, and Sigma Delta Epsilon, the national honor society for women in science. She was also a charter member of the Penn State chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.

⁵⁷⁷ *Teresa Cohen*, n.d., portrait. Available at Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Call Number 01212. Photographic Vertical Files, Portraits, A-C, Box 52. Folder: Cohen, Teresa.

⁵⁷⁸ Agnes Scott College, "Teresa Cohen."

⁵⁷⁹ Agnes Scott College, "Teresa Cohen."

At Penn State, she was honored with the Lion's Paw Medal from the Alumni Association and the Outstanding Service Award of the College of Science. Within the local Jewish community, Dr. Cohen was one of the founding members of the Hillel Foundation at Penn State. A devoted member of both Penn State Hillel and Brit Shalom, she regularly attended Friday evening services at Penn State Hillel from the 1930s until her departure from State College. A plaque was dedicated to her at the Locust Lane Hillel building in her usual seat, located in the back row on the right side.⁵⁸⁰

Nathan Krauss (1908-2001)

Nathan "Nate" Krauss, born in 1908, was the son of Benjamin and Freda Krauss, both Russian immigrants, and grew up in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvanian. He served as mayor of Bloomsburg from 1938 to 1941. While in Bloomsburg, he met Bellefonte native, and future wife, Florence Cohen. Nathan and Florence had two children: Janice Krauss Shapiro and Jeffrey Krauss. Nathan and Florence moved to Bellefonte in 1942 when Florence's father, London-born Walter Cohen, the owner of the Cohen's Dress Shop in Bellefonte, died. While unfamiliar with business, Nate had training in accounting and took over the management of the business, later changing the name of the store to Krauss's Corrective Apparel for Women.⁵⁸¹

Within the region's Jewish community, Nate served as the self-appointed "Jewish Ambassador" to Centre County Christendom. For forty-years, he was a well-known speaker at religious, service, and fraternal oriented organizations in Bellefonte, State College, and the

⁵⁸⁰ Nancy Folkenroth, "Of Logarithms, Limericks, and Longevity: Penn State's First Female Math Professor Knew the Formula for Happiness," *Town&Gown Magazine*, May 2000, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Call Number 00003, Pennsylvania State University Collection of Biographical Vertical Files: Series 1: Files A-C, Folder: Cohen, Teresa, 35; Agnes Scott College, "Teresa Cohen."

⁵⁸¹ Krauss interview; Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 41.

surrounding region. He is believed to have spoken in every church in Centre County at least once. He also wrote the first known document about Jewish life in Centre County and helped find, repair, and set up the perpetual maintenance of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte.⁵⁸²

His son, Jeff, remembered him as a highly respected member of the Bellefonte community. Nate was the first Jewish member of the Peoples National Bank Board, and his volunteer work with local health organizations led him to be awarded the Centre County Medical Society's Benjamin Rush Award in 1965. Nate and his wife also had a park, located on West Lamb Street between Dunlap and North Water Streets, named after them, the Krauss Park, for their "...significant impact on the local community."⁵⁸³

Sid Friedman (1920-2009)

Sidney "Sid" Friedman was born in Altoona, Pennsylvanian, in 1920 to Meyer and Bessie Friedman, both immigrants from Russia. He attended Penn State and graduated with a degree in journalism in 1944. To fund his college, he opened a bicycle rental agency and sandwich store on East College Avenue, the current location of The Tavern restaurant at 220 East College Avenue, as a first-year student in 1938. He met his wife, Helen Sevel Friedman, originally from Tyrone, Pennsylvania, at Penn State and they married in 1942. Sid and Helen had two sons: Ronald and Edward Friedman.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸² Krauss interview; Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 41.

⁵⁸³ Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 41; Krauss interview; "Krauss Park," *Borough of Historic Bellefonte*.

⁵⁸⁴ "Sidney Friedman Obituary," *Centre Daily Times*, April 6, 2009, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/centredaily/name/sidney-friedman-obituary?id=14915002>; Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary," 44.

While at Penn State, Sid also sold advertising for the *Centre Daily Times*. He worked as the advertising manager of *Centre Daily Times* before he was hired in 1945 as the first commercial manager of WMAJ, at the time, a new radio station in State College. In 1948, he founded Nittany Advertiser, formerly Morgan Signs and Commercial Printing, and in 1963, he sold his businesses to focus on real estate development. In 1971, he and his sons purchased the Corner Room and Hotel State College, the Cathaum Theater, and adjacent properties. In 1976 and 1982, he built the Calder Square buildings in the alley, later known as Calder Way, between Beaver Avenue and College Avenue in downtown State College. In 2003, he and his wife donated the State Theater for it to become a community arts center.⁵⁸⁵

Sid received numerous accolades for his contributions to Penn State and State College: in 1978, he received the College of the Liberal Arts Alumni Society's Service Award; in 1989, Sid received Penn State's Distinguished Alumni award, the highest honor the university bestows upon alumna or alumnus; in 1991, he was named the Renaissance Honoree, which honors an individual or couple who has greatly contributed to Penn State and State College and has deep roots within the Centre Region; and a recipient of the Borough of State College Legacy Award. He and his wife both contributed to various endowments at the university, including Pennsylvanian Centre Stage, Palmer Art Museum, Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, Hillel Foundation, and many others.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁵ "Sidney Friedman Obituary," *Centre Daily Times*; Ronald "Ron" Friedman, interview via zoom by author, February 8, 2022; Alexandra Rogers, "Sidney Friedman Park: A Small Park With a Big History," *Highlands Civil Association*, November 11, 2021, <https://statecollegehighlands.org/sidney-friedman-park-a-small-park-with-a-big-history/>.

⁵⁸⁶ Sidney Friedman Obituary," *Centre Daily Times*.

Sid died in April of 2009. Following his death, a park, the Central Parklet, between the U.S. Post Office and the Memorial Field on South Fraser Street, was renamed in August of 2009 to the Sid Friedman Park in his honor.⁵⁸⁷

Jay Claster (1931-2015)

Jay Claster, born in Lock Haven, in November of 1931 to A. H. “Orie” and Miriam Herr Claster, he was the grandson of Morris Claster, the founder of the Morris L. Claster Coal & Feed Company, later known as M. L. Claster & Sons and Claster’s Building Materials. Jay graduated from the Lock Haven High School in 1949 and from the former Carnegie Technical College in 1953 with a degree in Industrial Engineering. He served in the U.S. Army as a member of the Military Police (MP) for a couple years. Jay Claster had one child, Sandra Claster, with his first wife, Barbara Claster, and no children with his second wife, Grace Grove Claster.⁵⁸⁸

In 1955, he returned to Lock Haven and joined the family business. By 1988, Claster’s Building Materials, which he served as president of until 1993, had expanded to 270 employees across its eleven branches. The business was ranked among the top 150 lumber companies in the U.S. and had sales of \$44,000,000.00.⁵⁸⁹ In 1993, Jay retired from the company and sold the remaining branches to Your Building Center.⁵⁹⁰

Outside of his business, Jay worked as a volunteer with the American Heart Association from more than thirty years while also serving as State Board Chairman and National Vice

⁵⁸⁷ Rogers, “Sidney Friedman Park: A Small Park With a Big History.”

⁵⁸⁸ “Jay B. Claster,” *Centre Daily Times*, November 5, 2015, <https://kochfuneralhome.com/tribute/details/1104/Jay-Claster/obituary.html>.

⁵⁸⁹ Susan Bossert Hannegan and Jean Simmons May, *Clinton County: A Journey Through Time* (Self-published: Self-published, 1989), 234; “Jay B. Claster,” *Centre Daily Times*.

⁵⁹⁰ “Jay B. Claster,” *Centre Daily Times*.

President for four terms and on boards of Penn State, Geisinger, and the Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association.⁵⁹¹

Mimi Barash Coppersmith (1933-Present)

Marian "Mimi" Barash Coppersmith was born in 1933 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Penn State with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1953 and a double master's degree in Speech and Journalism. While an undergrad in 1953, Mimi met her first husband, Sy Barash. Sy was a World War II U.S. Marine Corps veteran and an advertising student at Penn State. Mimi and Sy married in 1954 and stayed in State College. They had two children: Carol and Nan Barash.⁵⁹²

Sy and Mimi began an advertising company, Barash Advertising, in the basement of their State College home in 1959. In 1960, Sy and Mimi were two of the youngest charter members of the Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte and State College. In 1966, they founded the *Town&Gown Magazine*, a publication dedicated to things to do in and around State College. Sy died from lung cancer in 1975. Mimi later re-married Senator Wallace Louis Coppersmith. He served as a member of the Pennsylvania State Senate from 1969 to 1980. He died of a heart attack in 1989.⁵⁹³ In 2008, Mimi sold Barash Media to Gazette Printers, a division of Indiana Printing & Publishing. She served as a consultant for their firm until 2021, when she decided to step down to focus on her volunteer and philanthropic work.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ "Jay B. Claster," *Centre Daily Times*.

⁵⁹² Casey Sennett, "Barash and Coppersmith Families Collage," *Penn State Hillel*, forthcoming.

⁵⁹³ Sennett, "Barash and Coppersmith Families Collage."

⁵⁹⁴ Vilma Shu, "Community Catalyst: T&G founder Mimi Barash Coppersmith is Retiring, but Her Passion for Helping Others is as Strong as Ever," *Town&Gown Magazine*, March 4, 2021, <https://www.statecollege.com/town-and-gown/community-catalyst-tg-founder-mimi-barash-coppersmith-is-retiring-but-her-passion-for-helping-others-is-as-strong-as-ever/>.

In State College, Mimi has served as president of the State College Area Chamber of Commerce, the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts, and the Renaissance Fund. Her philanthropic contributions include the American Cancer Society, Pennsylvania Pink Zone, the Girl Scouts, Centre Safe, the Youth Service Bureau, Jana Marie Foundation, Strawberry Fields, and Centre County Historical Society, as well as scholarship funds through Centre Gives and Penn State. At Penn State, Mimi was elected as the first woman chair of the Penn State Board of Trustees in 1990, which she served as for two years. She is also an Elm Member of the Mount Nittany Society, a designation of the highest level of Penn State's donors with more than \$1 million in lifetime giving.⁵⁹⁵

Broader Significance

The Jewish communities of Bellefonte and State College were combined into a single chapter because it is difficult to depict each town's Jewish history without the other. Bellefonte, the industrial and political center of Centre County for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, had an earlier Central European Jewish community than State College, but the lack of documentation and oral histories from this period makes it difficult to create a robust historical narrative about Jewish life in Bellefonte prior to the existence of a parallel Jewish community in State College.

By the early to mid-twentieth century, the increasing prosperity of the Pennsylvania State College, later the Pennsylvania State University, and the decline in industry in Bellefonte led to State College overtaking Bellefonte as Centre County, and the greater region's, political and

⁵⁹⁵ Sennett, "Barash and Coppersmith Families Collage"; Shu, "Community Catalyst."

economic center. During this time, Bellefonte's Jewish community increasingly invested in real estate and opened businesses in State College, ultimately moving from Bellefonte to State College. The growth of Penn State also attracted Jewish professionals and professors to State College from other areas. Unlike the two other Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities in this study, Lock Haven and Philipsburg, the latter Jewish community will be discussed in the next chapter, both suffered membership declines in the mid to late nineteenth century. State College's Jewish community, however, continued to grow. While the Bellefonte and State College Jewish communities were officially combined in name in 1957 as the "Jewish Community Council of Bellefonte and State College," Bellefonte's Jewish community was very small in 1957. There are only a handful of Jewish residents living in Bellefonte today.

While Lock Haven was the center of Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, State College emerged as the new center of Central Pennsylvania Jewish life in the mid-twentieth century. As Jewish congregations began to close in other Central Pennsylvania towns, such as Philipsburg in the 1990s and Clearfield in 2010, Brit Shalom in State College has begun serving as a space to hold and preserve Jewish religious artifacts, such as one of Philipsburg's Torah scrolls, and provide the region's remaining Jewish community members with a congregation in the absence of theirs.

CHAPTER 5: PHILIPSBURG

Overview

Unlike the Jewish communities of Lock Haven, Bellefonte, and State College, whose histories are intertwined, the Jewish community of Philipsburg has little overlap with these Jewish communities. The earliest Jewish community members in Philipsburg, Jews of Central European descent, arrived in the mid-nineteenth century with Eastern European Jewish immigrants arriving in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Little is known about Philipsburg's early Central European Jewish community members, but the town's Eastern European Jewish population largely immigrated from Russia to the U.S. to avoid being drafted into the Russian army. Stories within the Philipsburg Jewish community about the reason for Eastern European Jews to immigrate to Philipsburg are explain as their ancestors as traveling from New York to Pittsburgh and confusing Philipsburg with Pittsburgh and getting off on the wrong train stop.

Philipsburg, which had an estimated total population of 3,900 in 1920, had an approximate Jewish population of thirty-five in 1918, 140 in 1927, 135 in 1937, and 136 in 1950.⁵⁹⁶ According to membership forms from Elaine Navasky Ziff, a Philipsburg Jewish community member until 2015, Philipsburg had forty-three Jewish families in 1947, fifty Jewish families in 1957, five Jewish families in 2008, and two Jewish residents in 2020.⁵⁹⁷ The Jewish community of Philipsburg supported the Sons of Israel Synagogue from approximately 1918 to the 1990s.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁶ Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 346.

⁵⁹⁷ Elaine Navasky Ziff, interview via Zoom by author, January 3, 2021.

⁵⁹⁸ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

Early History

The Establishment of Philipsburg

The Philipsburg Borough is located in the Allegheny Mountains in western Centre County along the Moshannon, meaning “Black Water,” Creek. Brothers Henry and Francis Philips of Manchester, England, founded the town in 1797. The brothers belonged to a family with a worldwide import and export business, and they were both sent to the U.S. to manage their family’s affairs there, including the purchasing of land in the Pennsylvania wilderness. Henry purchased approximately 350,000 acres of land on the western slope of the Allegheny Mountains for \$173,000. The location for Philipsburg was selected for its proximity to the Moshannon Creek, the area’s elevation, which offered flood protection, and its connection to other towns through the state highway system.⁵⁹⁹

After both brothers died, their younger brother, Hardman, replaced them. Hardman began clearing the densely wooded land and dammed Cold Stream to create a millpond. He started an iron forge, foundry, and screw mill factory to provide employment for early settlers. The developing town, however, suffered from insufficient transportation. While attached to the state highway system, it was insufficient to transport bulk natural resources and Hardman struggled to transport needed goods to his store, which he relocated to Philipsburg in 1821. Paired with the death of all his young children, his inability to change the town’s “Old Mud Church” from nondenominational to a pseudo-Anglican, Episcopal branch, and his dislike of Jacksonian

⁵⁹⁹ Debra Schnarrs McGeehan and Dennis McGeehan, *Images of America: Around Philipsburg* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2016), 7; “Philipsburg Borough, Pennsylvania,” *Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*, n.d., [https://www.achp.gov/preserve-america/community/philipsburg-borough-pennsylvania#:~:text=Philipsburg%20Borough%2C%20Pennsylvania%2C%20\(population,the%20western%20slope%20of%20the](https://www.achp.gov/preserve-america/community/philipsburg-borough-pennsylvania#:~:text=Philipsburg%20Borough%2C%20Pennsylvania%2C%20(population,the%20western%20slope%20of%20the)

democracy, the prominent form of politics in the U.S. at the time, led to him selling his Pennsylvania holdings to the Hale family and returning to England.⁶⁰⁰

The region developed around the lumber and, later, coal industries. Philipsburg was added to the railway system in 1863 with the Pennsylvania Railroad's Tyrone and Clearfield Branch. New York Central's Beech Creek Branch arrived a few decades later in 1894 and competition ensued among the two railroads over domination of Philipsburg's developing mining industry. The growth of Philipsburg led to its expansion across the Moshannon Creek into Clearfield County. Chester Munson developed this area of the town, later named Chester Hill after him.⁶⁰¹ The decline of the coal industry, however, also led to a decline in the town. Following the collapse of the coal industry in the area, Lee Industries, formerly Lee Metals, provided many jobs in the town.⁶⁰²

Early Jewish Settlers

Similar to other Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities, the first Jewish settlers of Philipsburg were of Central European descent. One Central European Jewish family, the Schmidt's, came from the area of Kleinkarlbach in Southwest Germany. They arrived in Philipsburg in the 1860s. At least four of the ten siblings, David, Henry, Solomon, and Fannie, settled in Bellefonte for a couple years prior to moving to Philipsburg. At least seven of the ten siblings, David, Henry, Solomon, Fannie, Rosa, Bertha, and Colmon, settled in Philipsburg, at least for a short period of time. In Philipsburg, Henry and Solomon operated a butcher store, H.

⁶⁰⁰ McGeehan and Dennis McGeehan, *Images of America*, 7; "Philipsburg Borough, Pennsylvania," *Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*.

⁶⁰¹ McGeehan and Dennis McGeehan, *Images of America*, 7-8.

⁶⁰² McGeehan and Dennis McGeehan, *Images of America*, 8; "Philipsburg Borough, Pennsylvania," *Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*.

& S. Schmidt, and Fannie and Rosa operated a dry goods and millinery store, F. & R. Schmidt's, on Front Street.

The Schmidt family were potentially part of a greater “chain migration” from their town of origin in Germany. In Solomon Schmidt’s obituary, for example, it is noted he and Abraham Baum, a Central European Jewish immigrant who settled in Bellefonte, were childhood friends and grew up in the same town in Germany, “The Schmidt family and the Baum family lived less than three miles apart [in Germany] and Sol and Abe were boyhood chums and together almost every day. One day the young men were together, and Abe remarked in a casual way, ‘Sol, I’m leaving tomorrow for America.’ And a year or so later Sol followed and both their homes since have been in Centre County.”⁶⁰³

According to Elaine Navasky Ziff, a former Jewish community member of Philipsburg, the first Eastern European Jewish settlers arrived in Philipsburg in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many of these individuals immigrated to the U.S. to avoid being drafted into the Russian army. They often began their careers as peddlers or shopkeepers and in census records were listed as “peddlers of junk” or “rag pickers.”⁶⁰⁴ One of the earliest Eastern European Jewish families in Philipsburg was the Adelman family. The patriarch of the family, Benjamin Adelman, was born in Russia in 1861 and immigrated to the U.S. in 1880. He first appears in the 1900 census with his wife, Sarah, and their eight children. Adelman was a dry goods merchant and was one of the owners of the A. & R. Department Store. He died in 1907 at the age of 46 and has one of the earliest graves in the Sons of Israel Cemetery in Philipsburg.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ “SCHMIDT,” *Democratic Watchman*, January 26, 1917.

⁶⁰⁴ Elaine Navasky Ziff, “A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA,” *Philipsburg Historical Foundation Dinner*, October 7, 2015.

⁶⁰⁵ Ziff, “A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA.”

Elaine noted one of the prominent stories within the Jewish community regarding the reason for Eastern European Jewish settlement in Philipsburg was the confusion of “Philipsburg” with “Pittsburgh.” The immigration of Morris Stein, one of the founding members of the Sons of Israel congregation in Philipsburg, for example, was sponsored by his cousin, Adler, who lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On the train from New York City to Pittsburgh, Morris heard the conductor call, “All off for Philipsburg, Munson, and Winburne,” at the train’s stop in Tyrone. Unfamiliar with English, he confused Philipsburg with Pittsburgh and got off the train in Tyrone. Morris ended up permanently settling in Philipsburg, where his wife, Shenel, and their two oldest children later joined him.⁶⁰⁶

Jewish Community Overview

Religious Life

Little is known about the religious practices or expressions of the early Central European Jewish settlers in Philipsburg. In Solomon Schmidt’s obituary in the *Democratic Watchman*, however, he is described as someone of the “Jewish faith,” but had “...been a faithful attendant at the Lutheran church.” Solomon is buried in the Sons of Israel Cemetery in Philipsburg while three of his siblings, Fannie, Bertha, and David, are buried in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte. A fourth Schmidt, Morris, the son of Henry Schmidt, is buried in Bellefonte’s Rodef Shalom Cemetery. Due to the burial of Morris in a Jewish cemetery, both of his parents, Henry Schmidt and Amelia Strouse Schmidt, the latter of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, must have been Jewish or he was at least raised in the Jewish faith.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁶ Ziff, “A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA.”

⁶⁰⁷ “SCHMIDT,” *Democratic Watchman*.



Figure 53: A gate in front of the graves of Bertha and Fannie Schmidt in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte.⁶⁰⁸

With the immigration of Eastern European Jewish immigrants to Philipsburg, the town's Jewish community developed its first Jewish organizations. According to Justin Houser, Philipsburg's Jewish community members were buried in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery, founded in 1875, prior to the establishment of the Philipsburg's Jewish cemetery, Sons of Israel, in 1899.⁶⁰⁹ Only one Central European Jewish family from Philipsburg, the Schmidts, however, are known to be buried in Rodef Shalom. Jewish residents in Philipsburg purchased land for their own cemetery, adjoining the existing Philipsburg Cemetery, in 1897 for \$175.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Casey Sennett, *Schmidt Sisters Gate*, personal photograph, March 29, 2023.

⁶⁰⁹ Justin Houser, interviewed in person by author, February 12, 2022.

⁶¹⁰ "The Jewish residents of Philipsburg..." *Democratic Watchman*, October 15, 1897; Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

On December 1, 1912, the Independent Order of Brith Sholom, a national Jewish fraternal organization, issued the charter for the Sons of Israel congregation in Philipsburg. The twenty-six founding Jewish families in Philipsburg included: Cohen, Finberg, Garfinkle, Goldberg, Greenberg, Isenberg, Jaffe, Kaplan, Luxemberg, Marks, Markowitz, Mirbach, Novey, Press, Spillman, Sckaist, Steinberg, Stein, Steerman, and Ziff.⁶¹¹ Several of these families, including Cohen and Marks, are not listed as living in Philipsburg in the town's census records and do not have any family members with those last names buried in the Sons of Israel Cemetery. Elaine predicts these families might have left Philipsburg relatively early for economic opportunities elsewhere.⁶¹²

Early religious services were held in the Odd Fellows Building on the west side of the 200-block of Front Street. Congregation President Harry Ratowsky and Vice President Morris Stein secured a lot on Sixth Street near Spruce Street in 1918, where the community's synagogue was constructed.⁶¹³ The synagogue measured 18 by 60 feet and was visually defined by the six-point Star of David hanging on the front. The star is now located on one of the pillars inside the Sons of Israel Cemetery. Elaine remembered the synagogue's foyer, which was where the prayer books, *tallit* (prayer shawls), and *yamulkes* (skullcaps) were located, opened into the sanctuary. She recalled the sanctuary had two rows of pews with men on one side and women on the other. Two additional pews were located on the side walls where men could also sit. The bimah contained the ark, an altar, and burgundy upholstered chairs on both sides of the ark.⁶¹⁴ In the late 1940s, an adjoining building, the Jewish Community Center (JCC), was erected next to the

⁶¹¹ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶¹² Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶¹³ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶¹⁴ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

synagogue for social events. Elaine recalled the JCC contained a large social room, a kitchen, two Sunday school classrooms, a coatroom, and restrooms in the basement.⁶¹⁵

In 1938, when Bernard Navasky and his family moved to Philipsburg from New York City, he recalled in his memoir, “There was a synagogue in town, but I understood regular services were not held, but rather, it was on call for local members when memorial services for a deceased person were held. I was also informed that adjacent to the synagogue, there was a room where, according to Jewish tradition, a deceased person was prepared for burial, rather than having a local undertaker do it. In addition, for many of the orthodox families requiring kosher chicken, a rabbi from another community would kill the chicken, again according to Jewish acceptance.”⁶¹⁶ For the high holiday services in 1940, Navasky recalled the synagogue being at capacity with the congregation’s forty-five Jewish families in attendance. Congregants included those living in Philipsburg, such as Dr. Sam Stein and Charles Garfinkle, but also Jewish community members from Houtzdale, including the Eisenberg family.⁶¹⁷

The congregation’s first rabbis included Rabbi Sckaist, Rabbi Kahn, Rabbi Plotke, and Rabbi Levi. In the early 1940s, Rabbi Krickstein led the congregation for several years before retiring to Michigan. Under Rabbi Krickstein, Bernard Navasky’s son, Edward, was educated in Hebrew for his bar mitzvah. Edward’s bar mitzvah was held at the Midwood Jewish Community Center in Flatbush with the following celebration at the Brooklyn Jewish Center, where Bernard and his wife, Helen were married. The entire Philipsburg Jewish community was invited to the event.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ Ziff, “A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA.”

⁶¹⁶ Bernard Navasky, *Suits to Nuts: The Author’s Life Story about the Clothing Industry in America and the Phenomena of Psychics, Mediums and Healing Hands* (Owings Mills, MD: Watermark Press, 1991), 109.

⁶¹⁷ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 136.

⁶¹⁸ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 159.



Figure 54: Sons of Israel Synagogue in Philipsburg.⁶¹⁹

In the late 1940s, the congregation was led by Rabbi Abraham Leibtag. According to Elaine Navasky, compared to the congregation's prior rabbinical leaders, Rabbi Leibtag was more "modern" and very popular among members. He and his wife, Florence, lived in a red brick apartment attached to the former Rowland Mansion, now the Whispering Sisters Bed and Breakfast, on South Centre Street. Rabbi Leibtag was close friends with Reverend Charles Bickel of Philipsburg's Methodist Church and together they hosted the annual Brotherhood

⁶¹⁹ J. Nolan, *Sons of Israel Synagogue*, 2007, photograph, in *The Synagogues of Central and Western Pennsylvania: A Visual History* by Julian H. Preisler, 33. Stroud: Fonthill Publishing, 2014.

Week. The week consisted of events held in both the synagogue and church and culminated in a combined service. Rabbi Leibtag left the congregation a position in Akron, Ohio, in the early 1950s.⁶²⁰



Figure 55: Students at a Sunday school day camp in Black Moshannon State Park, c. 1946-1947.⁶²¹

While in high school, Elaine remembered Rabbi Milton Schlinsky served the congregation. She recalled being one of the thirteen teens who studied under him for their bar mitzvah or confirmation service. She was in the confirmation class of 1951, the only confirmation ceremony ever conducted in the Sons of Israel synagogue.⁶²² Rabbi Leiter, the congregation's next rabbi, joined the congregation in the mid-1950s. The congregation's last full-time rabbi, Rabbi Jack Goldman, led the congregation from 1957-1959.⁶²³ Elaine recalled

⁶²⁰ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶²¹ *Sunday School Students at Black Moshannon*, c. 1946-1947, photograph, in "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA" by Elaine Navasky Ziff. *Philipsburg Historical Foundation Dinner*, October 7, 2015

⁶²² Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶²³ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

Rabbi Goldman as being very Orthodox. She remembered him building a glass wall at the back of the sanctuary and made women sit behind the wall.⁶²⁴ Elaine's brother, Eddie, wanted to marry a non-Jewish woman, Dona Ruden from Philipsburg, who was willing to convert to Judaism, but Rabbi Goldman was too strict on conversion, so the family encouraged her to not go through with it. Since they were an inter-faith couple, Rabbi Goldman also refused to marry them. Instead, a Reform rabbi in Bedford agreed to marry them.⁶²⁵



Figure 56: The only confirmation class at the Sons of Israel Synagogue, 1951.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴ Ziff interview, 2021.

⁶²⁵ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 217.

⁶²⁶ *Confirmation Class*, 1951, photograph. In "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA" by Elaine Navasky Ziff.

While originally an Orthodox synagogue, the Sons of Israel congregation adopted to the changing needs and desires of the congregation. As a child, Elaine Navasky Ziff remembers no English was used in the congregation's services. By the age of 12, however, Rabbi Leibtag began incorporating English into services. Additionally, in the 1960s, the desire for wives to sit with their husbands led to the end of gender-segregated worship in the sanctuary.⁶²⁷

In the absence of full-time rabbis, the congregation continued their worship through the service of student rabbis. Elaine remembered student rabbis visiting the congregation during high holidays to hold services. Member of the congregation in the late 1950s and early 1960 offered Hebrew lessons through the services of Jacob Shore, a Penn State student from Williamsport. He was learned in Hebrew and helped prepared the congregation's young boys for their bar mitzvahs.⁶²⁸ Elaine Navasky Ziff recalled traveling three days a week to State College for her children to attend Hebrew School and other events. She also enrolled in a night class about Jewish holidays.⁶²⁹ In the early 1970s, Bernard Navasky recalled re-tiling the ceiling of the synagogue and re-paneling the walls in preparation for his grandson, Chuck's confirmation service. After the service, everyone went to the State College Country Club to celebrate. In 1977, the bar mitzvah of Bernard's grandson, Simon Ziff, was one of the last events held in the Sons of Israel synagogue in Philipsburg. He learned Hebrew in State College from Rabbi Eisenstat.⁶³⁰

The nearly forty Jewish families in Philipsburg in the 1940s shrank to less than ten Jewish families by the 1980s. Bernard Navasky attributed this disappearance decline with the development of malls in State College and Altoona, which destroyed small businesses, which

⁶²⁷ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶²⁸ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶²⁹ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶³⁰ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 258 and 332-333.

many Philipsburg Jewish community members were involved with. Around this time, he sold his outlet stores to maintain the upkeep of his factory storeroom in Philipsburg.⁶³¹ During a Penn State football game in 1987, Elaine Navasky Ziff's husband, Phil, ran into Chuck Stein, who was forming a new synagogue in Mentor, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. After learning about Philipsburg's dwindling congregation, Chuck said their congregation would appreciate anything the Sons of Israel congregation would be able to pass on to them. A few weeks later, he arrived with several friends to transport Philipsburg's ark, Eternal Light from above the bimah, the burgundy upholstered chairs from the altar, and the altar itself from the Philipsburg's synagogue.⁶³² The congregation donated their Torah to Brit Shalom in State College and the congregation holds a yearly service in honor of the Philipsburg Jewish community for the donation.⁶³³

Following the closure of the Sons of Israel synagogue, the remaining Philipsburg Jewish community began attending synagogue at either Brit Shalom in State College or Temple Beth Shalom in Clearfield. After the Temple Beth Shalom congregation in Clearfield disbanded in 2010, however, the remaining Philipsburg Jewish community members became members of Brit Shalom. Elaine Navasky Ziff and Marjorie Hurwitz, both Philipsburg Jewish community members, chose to attend services at Brit Shalom in State College following the closure of Brit Shalom. Marjorie, who is a native of Curwensville, Pennsylvania, but moved to Philipsburg after

⁶³¹ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 343.

⁶³² Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."; Rabbi David Ostrich, interviewed via phone by author, February 1, 2022.

⁶³³ Rabbi Ostrich interview.

she married, recalled not knowing many of the State College Jewish community members as time passed, but would attend High Holiday service there or with her daughter in Pittsburgh.⁶³⁴



Figure 57: The Sons of Israel Synagogue’s original ark, now located in a synagogue in Mentor, Ohio.⁶³⁵

The Sons of Israel synagogue in Philipsburg, however, continued to be used for religious purposes in the 1990s. Annette Woodside Smith, who led the Conemaugh Baptist Congregation, conducted services in the building for several years. After the congregation disbanded, however,

⁶³⁴ Marjorie Hurwitz, interviewed in person by author, March 26, 2022; Elaine Navasky Ziff, interview via FaceTime by author, May 9, 2022.

⁶³⁵ *Sons of Israel Ark*, n.d., photograph. In “A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA” by Elaine Navasky Ziff. *Philipsburg Historical Foundation Dinner*, October 7, 2015.

they deeded the building back to Philipsburg's remaining Jewish community. Eddy Navasky gave his son-in-law, Scott Taylor, the building to convert it into an apartment with the stipulation Scott donated to a Jewish organization every year.⁶³⁶ In the process, the synagogue's stained-glass windows, which honored deceased family members, were removed. It continued to function as an apartment today.⁶³⁷ After discovering the Jewish community's JCC building was built on a spring, and its foundation were actively decaying, the building was closed and removed in the late 1990s.⁶³⁸

Social Life

Elaine's family, who moved from New York City to Philipsburg around 1938, found, to her mother's surprise, "...a wonderful [Jewish] community there... [the] Stein and Jaffe [families] were closer to us than our family." She fondly remembered her parent's best friends as being like aunts and uncles. Elaine recalled that this older generation spoke Yiddish amongst themselves. Elaine, however, did not mention whether she learned Yiddish or spoke it at home with her parents.⁶³⁹

Within the Philipsburg Jewish community, they had a chapter of B'nai Brith for male Jewish community members and a sisterhood for female members. In the JCC building, Elaine recalled the sisterhood hosting dish suppers on Sunday evenings and sponsoring events for local Jewish teenagers to mingle with one another. These socials included interaction with Jewish teenagers in State College, Bellefonte, Clearfield, and Dubois. Elaine remembered meeting and

⁶³⁶ Ziff interview, 2021.

⁶³⁷ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶³⁸ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶³⁹ Ziff interview, 2021.

establishing a friendship with Janice Krauss, later Shapiro, from Bellefonte. Elaine believes Philipsburg hosted more of the local socials because they had one of the best social rooms in the region. In the 1950s, she recalled her children also being part of the BBYO, B'nai B'rith Youth Organizations, in State College. Elaine noted that younger generation of Jewish community member formed very close friendships with members of the Jewish community members in State College.⁶⁴⁰



Figure 58: B'nai B'rith Sports Banquet in 1986. Left to right: Eddie Navasky, Larry Holmes, Howard Letterman, and Bernard Navasky.⁶⁴¹

⁶⁴⁰ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶⁴¹ *B'nai B'rith Sports Banquet*, 1986, photograph. In *Suits to Nuts* by Bernard Navasky. Owings Mills, MD: Watermark Press, 1991.

In Philipsburg, the social hall also served as a meeting place for the boy scouts and the sisterhood hosted rummage sales twice a year. The local lodge of B'nai Brith hosted an annual Sports Banquet, which included guest speakers like Penn State football coach Joe Paterno, Penn State sports broadcaster Milton "Mickey" Bergstein, and Penn State Wrestling coach Rich Lorenzo. During the event, Elaine recalled, "Everyone looked forward to a meal of kosher hot dogs and corned beef sandwiches." Even after the Jewish community's decline in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the sisterhood remained active and hosted events to bring together the dwindling congregation.⁶⁴² Additionally, in town, the congregation used prominent businesses to celebrate important life events. Elaine noted, for example, many bar mitzvah celebrations, wedding receptions, and first dates were held at the Philips Hotel on Presqueisle Street.⁶⁴³

Professional Endeavors

Of the one known Central European Jewish family in Philipsburg, the Schmidts, one of the sisters, Fannie Schmidt, began working as a sales lady for I. V. Gray at his dry goods store in the Gray Building at 103 East Presqueisle Street in Philipsburg around 1878. By 1892, Fannie left her job with I. V. Gray to start a dry goods store, Fannie and Rosa Schmidt, and later F. & R. Schmidt's, with her sister, Rosa, in the Foster building, located at the Foster Block from 2-8 North Front Street in Philipsburg. Following Fannie's death in 1895, Rosa continued the business until at least 1917. Another sister, of Rosa and Fannie, Bertha clerked at the F. & R. Schmidt's store during the busy seasons.⁶⁴⁴ Additionally, one of the Schmidt brothers, Solomon,

⁶⁴² Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶⁴³ Ziff interview, 2021.

⁶⁴⁴ Casey Sennett, "Bertha Schmidt Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xah5CWoW7AfZtyE2AaCnwrid65p0V-3C/view?usp=share_link; Casey Sennett, "Fannie Schmidt Biography," *Centre County Planning and Community*

moved from Bellefonte to Philipsburg in 1862 to clerk for his brother, Samuel's store. Solomon later opened a butcher store, H. & S. Schmidt, in Philipsburg with his brother, Henry. It is unknown where either Samuel or H. & S. Schmidt was located.⁶⁴⁵



Figure 59: Advertisement for Fannie & Rosa Schmidt in Philipsburg.⁶⁴⁶

While some of the early Eastern European Jewish community members in Philipsburg began their careers as peddlers, many eventually opened permanent stores or were involved in different business ventures. Benjamin Adelman, who immigrated to the U.S. from Russia around 1880, opened the A. & R. Department Store at the corner of Front and Spruce Streets in 1903 with his brother-in-law, Harry Ratowsky. The building, commonly referred to as “A&R,” sold clothing, furniture, and other goods. Morris Stein, who immigrated from Russia around 1907, began working as a peddler, but later worked for politicians. He delivered alcohol on behalf of

Development Office, December 18, 2022,

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17RV6lNrrXLyOqUQeozjwHBCE6hBNCAFG/view?usp=share_link.

⁶⁴⁵ “SCHMIDT.” *Democratic Watchman*

⁶⁴⁶ *Fannie & Rosa Schmidt*, 1895, advertisement, *Daily Journal*, November 18, 1895.

politicians looking to secure the votes of town residents. After leaving Philipsburg in 1923 to open a butcher shop in Altoona, he returned to Philipsburg to work as a fruit store merchant.⁶⁴⁷

Morris' son, Lewis Stein, began his career as an employee at the A. & R. Department Store and later started his own company, Elliot Coal Company, which mined coal during the Second World War. The company developed new techniques and methods in strip mining, reforestation, and backfilling. It was one of the suppliers for Niagara Mohawk Power, Long Island Lighting, and PP&L. Lewis also founded the Stein Construction Company, Philipsburg Builder Supply, and the Elliot Overseas Corporation, the latter of which imported gold saris and ivory figurines to the U.S. from India.⁶⁴⁸ Lewis also was also one of the founders of the Philipsburg Association of Commerce, which brought General Cigar, Sylvania, and McGregor Manufacturing to Philipsburg to lessen the decline of the coal industry on the town's economy and employment. Lewis' brother, Samuel, attended the University of Pittsburgh through the support of Harry Ratowsky, who agreed to pay for Sam's college education if he studied dentistry and returned to Philipsburg to practice. In 1932, Sam graduated from Pitt and returned to Philipsburg, where he opened his own dental practice at the corner of Laurel and Front Streets.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁷ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶⁴⁸ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶⁴⁹ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."



Figure 60: Finberg Building at 200 North Front Street, the former location of the Finberg's Men's Store.⁶⁵⁰

Louis Finberg, a Russian immigrant who arrived in the U.S. around 1900, worked as a clothing merchant and dry goods merchant in Philipsburg. He opened a storefront at 200 North Front Street for the Finberg's Men's Store in an unknown year, where both of his sons worked as clerks. The Finberg family were also involved in the coal industry and owned several real estate properties, including his storefront on North Front Street, which still bears the name Finberg. Louis' brother, Isaac, immigrated to the U.S. in 1916. His daughter, Ann Finberg, married Jake Hurwitz of Karthaus, a town in Clearfield County, who opened the Hurwitz Furniture & Appliance Store at 18 North Front Street, the former location of Dollar General, in Philipsburg. Ann and Jake's children, Edsel and Alfred, developed the large swampland at the edge of Philipsburg into the Ames Plaza, now known as the Peeble's Plaza.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵⁰ *Finberg Building*, 2019, photograph, in "Shindig Alley to Host Reopening at New Location," *Centre Daily Times*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.centredaily.com/news/business/article237746104.html>.

⁶⁵¹ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

Members of Philipsburg's Jewish community expanded beyond the boundaries of Philipsburg. A prominent Philipsburg Jewish family, the Isenbergs, were from Houtzdale, Pennsylvania, a town located about 10 miles southwest of Philipsburg in Clearfield County. According to the Rauh Jewish Archive at the Heinz History Center, Houtzdale chartered a Jewish congregation, Sons of Israel, in April of 1874, but little is known about it.⁶⁵² Unable to support a congregation for long, the rather small Jewish community of Houtzdale began attending religious services in other towns, primarily Philipsburg or Tyrone. Isaac "Ike" Isenberg, immigrated to the U.S. from Russia in 1905 with his family, a wife and two children, joining him in 1911. He owned and operated three farms in the Brisbin area along with the Houtzdale Wholesale Produce Company and the Dubois Wholesale Produce Company in Houtzdale and Dubois, respectively. He and his sons distributed produce throughout Central Pennsylvania. Their largest clients were Penn State University's food services. The businesses operated for over 50 years until the mid-1960s.⁶⁵³ Another Jewish community member, Walter Levine, moved to Philipsburg around 1948, but operated a scrap metal business in State College. An active supporter of Penn State Athletics, he was eventually honored by Penn State for being one of the founders of the Nittany Lion Club.⁶⁵⁴

Simon Ziff, who immigrated to Philipsburg following his sister, Annie, and his son-in-law, Louis Jaffe, worked as peddler in the early twentieth century. By 1920, Simon worked as a retail merchant of dry goods and in 1930 he owned property with his brother-in-law at 210 North Front Street, where Simon operated the Ziff Economy Store. Of the Garfinkle family, second-

⁶⁵² For more information about Houtzdale's Jewish community, see: Rauh Jewish Archives at the Heinz History Center, "Houtzdale," *The Jewish Encyclopedia of Western Pennsylvanian*, n.d., <https://rauhjewisharchives.org/entry/houtzdale/>.

⁶⁵³ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶⁵⁴ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

generation American Charlie, son of Philip Garfinkle, owned and operated a ladies dress shop, the Rite Style Shop, on the 200-block on North Front Street, near the former Grattan's Pharmacy.⁶⁵⁵



Figure 61: Eddie Navasky with Sammy Davis, Jr., one of the prominent endorsers of Charles Navasky Co. & Inc.⁶⁵⁶

Bernard Navasky was the son of Charles Navasky, a clothing manufacturer in New York City. After his father was beat up due to his refusal to unionize, the family decided to relocate. Philipsburg was chosen because Bernard and Charles knew the owners of a clothing

⁶⁵⁵ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶⁵⁶ *B'nai B'rith Sports Banquet*, 1986, photograph, in *Suits to Nuts* by Bernard Navasky. Owings Mills, MD: Watermark Press, 1991.

manufacturing firm, Quaker Tex Clothes, located in Philipsburg and as the business began failing, Bernard offered to take it over.⁶⁵⁷ Located at 124 Walton Street, the former location of a candy factory, Bernard named the business the Philipsburg Sportswear Company. It later became known as the Charles Navasky Co. & Inc.⁶⁵⁸ The company employed more than 600 people at its peak and operate thirteen outlet stores in Central Pennsylvania from Allentown to Indiana, Pennsylvania. Elaine's brother, Eddy Navasky, continued the family business and with the endorsement of Sammy Davis Jr., a prominent African American singer, dancer, actor, producer, and director, the clothing company rapidly grew as a major supplier for men's ware within African American communities. Eddy remained the head of the company until his death in November of 2010. His daughters continue the business today.⁶⁵⁹

Additional Jewish-owned businesses included Morris Berger's tire company in Chester Hill, Don Bresnick's Peanut Shop on Front Street, and the Parksy family operated a clothing store between Front and Second Streets. Other Jewish businesses in Philipsburg included Hurwitz Hardware, the Betty Jay Shop, Goldberg's Ladies Shop, Selbst's Variety Store, Ester Landy's Vogue Dress Shop, and Sam's Furniture. Other notable Jewish community members included Leonard Strohl, who served as a Justice of the Peace, and Mel Neumann, who served as the manager of the General Cigar factory.⁶⁶⁰

Interaction within the Larger Philipsburg Community

⁶⁵⁷ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 93.

⁶⁵⁸ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 194.

⁶⁵⁹ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

⁶⁶⁰ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

The limited number of documents pertaining to the Philipsburg Jewish community as well as the small number of surviving Jewish community members gives narrow insight into interaction between Jewish and Christian residents in Philipsburg. Bernard Navasky in his memoir, *Suits to Nuts*, however, wrote about the discrimination of Jewish community members at the local country club. Bernard was repeatedly denied membership at the country club and said, “From my viewpoint, it appeared as a vote against any further admission of any person of Jewish faith...At the next meeting, my name along with other prospective members’ was presented for a vote and again I was blackballed. [Ruben] Jaffe became furious and said, ‘If Navasky is blackballed, then there won’t be a proposed member that can get into this club.’ I told Ruben I didn’t want to associate where I was not welcome. It took one year until peace was made. It seemed some member’s daughter applied for a job at our plant and we did not hire her. That was the upshot of the blackball. My name was again presented and my membership welcome, but I rarely visited the club unless Jaffe was with me.”⁶⁶¹

Bernard’s daughter, Elaine, remembered being called a “dirty Jew” when she was around seven to eight years old in the early 1940s. She responded to the boy that he was dirtier than her because she remembered him always being dirty. Aside from that experience, and her father and husband being repeatedly blackballed from the local County Club, she recalled few negative experiences she personally experienced while growing up in Philipsburg. She noted, however, that there were bigots in Philipsburg, and she knew of various family members who had different experiences than her.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶¹ Navasky, *Suits to Nuts*, 123-124.

⁶⁶² Ziff interview, 2021.

Her husband, for example, felt differently than her about growing up in Philipsburg. He was six years older than her and the running back of the football team. He remembered hearing “Get the Jew boy” yelled numerous times about him during games. Elaine’s sister-in-law also went to the dry cleaner’s once and the worker told her that he was surprised Jews would come there because he thought, “Youz people [Jews] threw out your clothes and bought new ones.”⁶⁶³ Elaine also remembered the hosting of Sip and Sup events, which were primarily dances held during every Christmas holiday, for Philipsburg’s upper-class Christian community members. She recalled no Jewish community members ever being invited although her father and husband were both prominent members of the town.⁶⁶⁴

Jewish Landmark

Sons of Israel Hebrew Cemetery (1899-Present)

On February 28, 1895, the Centre County Court of Common Please granted a charter to the Philipsburg Hebrew Association. The charter stated the organization’s mission as, “...[associating] themselves together for the purpose of founding a congregation to worship God according [to] the doctrine and usages of the Hebrew faith and to provide a cemetery, to be conducted without profit for the burial of those of the Hebrew faith...”⁶⁶⁵ The members, all residents of Philipsburg, included: Benjamin Adelman, S. W. Wright, Sander Gilfand, Morris Brendman, D. Abramson, Jacob Press, A. Markowitz, Gilbert Locks, Julius Davidson, Samuel Ratowsky, Jacob Snyder, John Snyder, E. Snyder, B. Zigler, B. Cramer, Chas. Zigler, Barney

⁶⁶³ Ziff, “A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA.”

⁶⁶⁴ Ziff interview, 2021.

⁶⁶⁵ Centre County Genealogical Society, *The Cemeteries of Rush Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania* (State College: Centre County Genealogical Society, 2010), 291.

Ratowsky, and Abe Robinson. The first trustees of the association were Samuel Ratowsky, Abraham Robinson, and David Abramson.⁶⁶⁶



Figure 62: The location of Sons of Israel Cemetery in Philipsburg.⁶⁶⁷

The Philipsburg Hebrew Association purchased one acre of land for \$175.00 from R. D. Showalter on June 15, 1897, for the purpose of creating a Jewish cemetery. Later named the Sons of Israel Hebrew Cemetery, it adjoins the larger Philipsburg Cemetery, in which a chain-link fence separates the two cemeteries.⁶⁶⁸ Two pillars exist at the front of the cemetery with a gate between them. Elaine Navasky Ziff believes the pillars were erected in the 1940s because the bricks used in the pillars match those used in the building of the social rooms of the

⁶⁶⁶ Centre County Genealogical Society, *The Cemeteries of Rush Township*, 291.

⁶⁶⁷ *Philipsburg Jewish Cemetery Map*, 2010, map, in *Cemeteries of Rush Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania*, by Centre County Genealogical Society. State College: Centre County Genealogical Society, 2010.

⁶⁶⁸ Ziff, "A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA."

congregation, which were built in the 1940s. The left pillar reads: “Sons of Israel Congregation.”

The right pillar reads: “Hebrew Cemetery, 1899.”⁶⁶⁹ The cemetery, which remains active, has more than 120 graves. A few of the earliest graves include infant Solomon Reuban Brandman and an unnamed infant child of Benjamin Adelman, who both died in 1899. The next oldest grave is of the teenager Olga Garfinkel, who died in 1900.⁶⁷⁰ The Philipsburg Cemetery Corporation maintains the cemetery’s upkeep.⁶⁷¹



Figure 63: The two pillars outside the Sons of Israel Cemetery in Philipsburg.⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁹Ziff, “A History of The Jewish Community of Philipsburg, PA”; Centre County Genealogical Society, *The Cemeteries of Rush Township*, 292.

⁶⁷⁰ Centre County Genealogical Society, *The Cemeteries of Rush Township*, 291-92 and 295; “Olga Garfinkel,” *Find A Grave*, n.d., <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/117264853/olga-garfinkel>.

⁶⁷¹ Centre County Genealogical Society, *The Cemeteries of Rush Township*, 291.

⁶⁷² Lisa Sennett, *Left Pillar: Sons of Israel Congregation*, personal photograph, March 31, 2023; Lisa Sennett, *Right Pillar: Hebrew Cemetery 1899*, personal photograph, March 31, 2023.



Figure 64: The Star of David, which originally hung outside of the Sons of Israel Synagogue, now hangs inside the Sons of Israel Cemetery.⁶⁷³

Broader Significance

Aside from the connections between Philipsburg's known Central European Jewish family, the Schmidts, and Bellefonte as well as several of Philipsburg's Jewish community members attending synagogue at Brit Shalom in State College following the disbanding of Sons

⁶⁷³ Lisa Sennett, *Star of David*, personal photograph, March 31, 2023.

of Israel in the 1990s, there is little overlap between Philipsburg and other Central Pennsylvania Jewish communities in this study. The Jewish community of Philipsburg appeared to engage more with Clearfield County Jewish communities, like Houtzdale and Clearfield, than Jewish communities in Centre and Clinton Counties.

While Lock Haven, Bellefonte, and State College all have a dedication or anniversary book produced by their congregations and Aaronsburg has a couple books written entirely about the town's Jewish founder and the Aaronsburg Story, the most robust document about Philipsburg's Jewish history is Elaine Navasky Ziff's speech about Jewish Philipsburg from the Philipsburg's Historical Foundation dinner in 2015. This chapter has a heavy bias on the Navasky-Ziff family because the two main documents used are written by Elaine Navasky Ziff and her father, Bernard Navasky. With few Philipsburg Jewish community members remaining, only two Jews currently live in Philipsburg, and a limited number of documents about Philipsburg's Jewish history exist, I believe the Jewish history of Philipsburg is the most vulnerable of all the towns in this study to be lost.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷⁴ One prominent Philipsburg Jewish community member, Bill Jaffe, died at the beginning of this study. I was, unfortunately, unable to interview him before he passed.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Regarding my towns of interest with a Jewish population, Lock Haven, Bellefonte, State College, and Philipsburg, the overall history and individual experiences of each of these Jewish communities supported Weissbach's findings about settlement, stability and mobility, livelihood and class, family life, congregational organization, synagogue history, religious leadership, culture, and prejudice and transformation trends in his study of small-town Jewish communities. The main reason for any deviations from these trends is a lack of knowledge about life in certain Jewish communities, particularly the early Central European Jewish communities that formed in these towns, and the presence of an active Jewish community in Bellefonte-State College.

Settlement

In his findings about Jewish settlement patterns in small-town America, Weissbach primarily focused on "chain migration," or the process of entire families and social groups immigrating from the same area in their country of origin to the same area in their destination country.⁶⁷⁵ There are limitations to studying the migration patterns of Central European Jews in all my towns of interest due to missing documentation and oral histories that would indicate any primarily figures or families who either encouraged or provided the means for others from their place of origin to immigrate to the region. A few obituaries, however, indicate it is possible an inform or small-scale "chain migration" could have occurred and encouraged Central European Jewish immigration to Bellefonte. In Solomon Schmidt's obituary, for example, it stated he

⁶⁷⁵ Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 45.

‘followed’ his friend from childhood, Abraham Baum, from their hometown of Kleinkarlbach, Germany, to Bellefonte. Additionally, in the obituary of Central European Jewish businessman Martin Fauble, he moved from another part of Pennsylvania to Bellefonte at the instance of Abraham Baum, who he worked with as a peddler for several years. It is unclear if Martin and Abraham knew each other from their hometowns in Central Europe or if they met in the U.S. through different networks.⁶⁷⁶

While Abraham Baum could have served as a magnet for other Central European Jews to immigrant to Bellefonte from their hometowns in Central Europe and/or other areas of Pennsylvania, the lack of information about Bellefonte’s early Central European Jewish community makes it difficult to confirm this. The movement of both Solomon and Martin to Bellefonte could have been coincidental and not necessarily an indicator of a larger migration network being in place in Bellefonte. Additionally, the role of Abraham in these two men’s settlement in Bellefonte is unclear. He might have offered to aid both Martin and Solomon in Bellefonte, such as helping Martin establish himself as a peddler, or he might have merely suggested they come to Bellefonte with no mention of supporting them. Not knowing the intent of Abraham makes it difficult to understand if he served as an ‘angel,’ or a Jewish person who financed and organized the immigration of other Jews, within a potential “chain migration” pattern.

Regarding Eastern European Jewish immigration to Lock Haven, Bellefonte, and State College, however, documentation and oral histories does support the presence of a formal “chain migration” system from Ponevezh, Lithuania, to Lock Haven, and later the dispersal of these

⁶⁷⁶ Casey Sennett, “Martin Fauble Biography,” *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dXY_YkP5p1VnoqmlPsQLP5zn0wjRDEbH/view?usp=share_link; “SCHMIDT,” *Democratic Watchman*, January 26, 1917.

Jewish immigrants from Lock Haven to Bellefonte and State College. In Lock Haven, Harris Claster served as an anchor within the Jewish community to help finance the immigration of friends, families, and other Jewish community members from his hometown of Ponevezh. Harris, the owner of a wholesale dry goods store, provided the newly arrived immigrants with merchandise to establish themselves as peddlers in the region. He also sent some of these friends and family members, such as Max Kalin, to operate Claster stores in towns throughout Central and Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. As these peddlers expanded their merchandise and clientele, they settled in towns surrounding Lock Haven, such as Bellefonte and State College. According to various Jewish community members and documents about Jewish life in Lock Haven, Harris helped more than one hundred Eastern European Jews immigrate from Ponevezh to the Central Pennsylvania region.⁶⁷⁷

Due to a lack of documentation, the study of Philipsburg's Eastern European Jewish community did not indicate the presence of any "chain migration" patterns. This does not mean, however, that they did not exist. The documentation I used in this study could have merely excluded them or I did not notice any prominent patterns.

The role Weissbach found Eastern European Jewish immigrants played in the formation of Jewish organizations in small American towns was also supported in my study.⁶⁷⁸ All the towns with Jewish populations, Lock Haven, Bellefonte, State College, and Philipsburg, for example, had an initial Central European Jewish community, but few formal Jewish

⁶⁷⁷ Beth Yehuda Synagogue, *Dedication Book* (Lock Haven: Self-published, 1952), material accessed from Lee Roberts, 5; Nathan Krauss, "History of Early Jewish Settlers of Centre County," in *Early History & Biography of Jewish Families of Central Pennsylvania Cities: Lock Haven, State College, and Lewistown*, ed. Aaron, Lewis, & Paul, (Self-published: Self-published, 2004), 35; Nadine Kofman, "Congregation Brit Shalom 50th Anniversary: Celebrating a Half Century," *Congregation Brit Shalom*, May 7, 2006, 30.

⁶⁷⁸ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 53-65.

organizations or congregations developed before the arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Bellefonte, for example, had the only Jewish organizations I could find that were formed by Central European Jewish community members in the mid to late nineteenth century before the arrival of large waves of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. These two institutions were Jewish cemeteries, first the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery and later the Rodef Shalom Cemetery, in Bellefonte. There are some indicators early Central European Jewish immigrants in Bellefonte and the surrounding towns met informally to pray or, in the case of Solomon Schmidt, remained Jewish, but attended church services. The creation of the region's formal Jewish religious congregations, Beth Yehuda in Lock Haven, Penn State Hillel and later Brit Shalom in State College, and Sons of Israel in Philipsburg, however, were formed after the arrival of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the region. They also used Orthodox traditions, common among Eastern European Jews, rather than Reform traditions, commonly associated with Central European Jews.

Stability and Mobility

Weissbach found the economic vitality of a small town to be a strong indicator for either the presence or absence of a Jewish community.⁶⁷⁹ The history of Jewish life in Lock Haven, Bellefonte and State College, and Philipsburg all support this trend. In Lock Haven, for example, the viability of farming and the lumbering industry in the late nineteenth century drew Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the region to work as peddlers and later merchants. After the lumber boom ended and the town became less economically viable, the Jewish community began

⁶⁷⁹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 49 and 87.

migrating to other areas with more economic opportunities. Both Bellefonte and Philipsburg, which, similar to Lock Haven, supported various industries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, attracted Jewish peddlers and merchants to support their emerging and later booming economies. As these industries decreased in viability, however, much of the Jewish population in both communities left the region.

In contrast, State College had a non-existent Jewish population until the early twentieth century. State College, which has the only currently active Jewish congregation in my study, emerged later than Bellefonte, Lock Haven, and Philipsburg as an economic hub in Central Pennsylvania because of the later development of Penn State and, in tandem, State College in the early to mid-twentieth century. This economic growth drew in Jewish merchants as well as Jewish students, professors, and professionals, some of which might have come from other regional towns, such as Bellefonte and Lock Haven, whose economic viability were decreasing during this time. The continued economic viability of State College today as a college town helps support the continued presence of State College's Jewish community.

Aside from the overall economic viability of small American towns, this study also supported Weissbach's other trend regarding the movement of children and grandchildren of Jewish immigrants from small American towns to larger cities.⁶⁸⁰ In all the towns in this study, Jewish outward migration included the movement of the children of first and second-generation Americans to other areas of the country for academic and professional opportunities. While the later supports Weissbach's earlier observation of the correlation between economic viability and the presence of Jewish communities in small American towns, it is also influenced by the desire of some younger Jewish community members to attend college and become professionals rather

⁶⁸⁰ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 85 and 87.

than merchants. In my study, this is noted in the closing or selling of various Jewish businesses, such as Claster's Building Supply, because of a lack of desire among younger family members to continue the family business.

Livelihood and Class

One of the main differences Weissbach observed between Jewish communities in small-town America and large American cities was their type of employment and class status. He found Jews in small-town America working mainly as merchants or artisans and members of the middle class while he found Jews in large America employed in a mix of mercantilism and manufacturing and members of both the middle and working class.⁶⁸¹ The employment and class status of the Jewish community members in my towns of study followed a similar pattern. Jews in Lock Haven, Bellefonte, State College, and Philipsburg, for example, largely worked as merchants in clothing, dry goods, wholesale, and groceries.

Weissbach argued many Jewish community members in small towns financed their later business ventures, such as clothing, wholesale, and dry goods, by first pursuing "lowly" business, such as collecting junk, scrap metal, paper, rags, and animal furs, because they required less initial capital investment.⁶⁸² Lock Haven Jewish community member, Morris Claster, for example, worked in both the junk business and hides, skins, and tallows business with his brother-in-law, Ellis, before opening Morris L. Claster Coal & Feed Company, which later developed into a material supply company. By the early to mid-nineteenth century, however, Jewish community members increasingly became Jewish professionals, as best demonstrated in

⁶⁸¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 95-96 and 117.

⁶⁸² Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 109.

State College, with its growing number of Jewish faculty members at Penn State as well as doctors and optometrists in the twentieth century.

While Weissbach estimated the total number of Jews in small towns was approximately 2% of the total population, he found their large presence in business made town residents overemphasize their role within the local economy.⁶⁸³ Both Larry Coploff and David Schaitkin in Lock Haven noted how no one in Lock Haven could buy ladies clothing on the high holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, because all the ladies clothing businesses in the town were Jewish businesses.⁶⁸⁴ While Weissbach noted Jewish community members might have been overrepresented in the sale of certain goods, the large presence of Jews in business sometimes made non-Jewish community members believe Jews monopolized the local market for all goods and services. Since my study focused on the experiences of Jewish community members in Central Pennsylvania, not non-Jewish community members, I do not have evidence to either support or refute this claim.⁶⁸⁵

Family Life

Weissbach found the settlement of extended Jewish families through “chain migration” made small American towns enclaves of Jewish families.⁶⁸⁶ While it is difficult to determine if “chain migration” occurred amongst Central European Jewish settlers in Bellefonte, many of the Bellefonte Jewish families, including the Loeb, Newman, and Fauble families, were tightly

⁶⁸³ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 106-107.

⁶⁸⁴ Larry, Coploff, interviewed via Zoom by author, July 22, 2022; David Schaitkin, interviewed via phone by author, July 22, 2022.

⁶⁸⁵ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 106-107.

⁶⁸⁶ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 127.

interlinked through marriage. Jacobena “Bena” Fauble, the wife of Martin Fauble, for example, who was originally a Loeb, and, after their marriage, Martin began clerking at S. & A. Loeb, a clothing store owned and operated by both her brother, Simon Loeb, and her cousin, Adolph Loeb. While Martin might have been able to clerk at the store without his connection to the family, but the inter-marriage of Jewish families helped strengthen their economic and familial ties.⁶⁸⁷ Weissbach also found small-town Jewish family life and living arrangements extending beyond the nuclear family.⁶⁸⁸ Ellen Newman, the daughter of Amelia Loeb Newman, who was Bena Martin’s sister, was listed as being raised by her uncle, Simon Loeb, the brother of both Bena and Amelia. While Amelia was alive during her daughter’s death in 1874, and she and her children are listed as living with Simon in Bellefonte in the 1880 census, it is unclear why only Simon is listed as Amelia’s parents. The obituary, nevertheless, shows the connection of Jewish family life in small-town beyond the nuclear family.⁶⁸⁹

Another trend Weissbach found about Jewish family life in small town America was the importance of marriage matches.⁶⁹⁰ While no documents or oral history survives about marriage matches in the early years of small-town Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania, the presence of several Central European Jewish community members buried in Rodef Shalom with no known spouse indicates a potential lack of eligible Jewish marriage partners and/or an overall lack of desire to marry. Among the members of the Baum family interned in Rodef Shalom, for example, three of the six Baum children, Alfred Baum, Freda Baum, and Harry Baum, buried in

⁶⁸⁷ Casey Sennett, “Jacobena Loeb Fauble Biography,” *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18,

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VyFT3lJ7lHrwftTEimFKVcsTQScG_bCa/view?usp=share_link.

⁶⁸⁸ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 130-131.

⁶⁸⁹ Casey Sennett, “Ellen Newman,” *Centre County Planning and Community Development Office*, December 18, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fHmvjAGBMVAZe66cFCuzNNf_QCBvrYri/view?usp=share_link.

⁶⁹⁰ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 142.

the Rodef Shalom Cemetery did not marry. While only three of the total eleven Baum children did not marry, only four of all eleven Baum children remained in Bellefonte. Based on Weissbach's findings, these unmarried Jewish community members might have had a limited number of eligible Jewish partners in the region. Jewish women, who were commonly unattached to their family's business, had greater mobility to marry Jewish men from other towns while Jewish men, who were often tied to their family businesses, had less mobility to find a spouse.⁶⁹¹ Alfred did run the family business with his father, but it is unclear why Freda or Harry, who had seemingly more mobility, did not find spouses elsewhere.

In contrast, Weissbach found the difficulty of finding a Jewish spouse sometimes led small-town Jewish community members, primarily of Central European descent, to marry a Christian.⁶⁹² These include Simon Scott in Lock Haven and Simeon Baum in Bellefonte. It is, however, unclear to what extent either of them maintained their Jewish identities. Simeon was buried at the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte, away from both his Christian wife and child, but it is unknown how he expressed his Jewish identity in life. The obituary of Solomon Schmidt of Philipsburg, who married a Christian woman, however, gives a little insight into potential avenues for maintain one's Jewish identity. Solomon, for example, continued to maintain his Judaism, but, with no Jewish congregation in town, attended church services rather than Jewish religious services. The lack of documentation about early Jewish community life, especially the expression of Judaism, in Central Pennsylvanian limits the ability to analyze the ways Jewish identity and practices was visible in the daily life of Jewish community members.

⁶⁹¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 142.

⁶⁹² Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 143.

Congregational Organization and Synagogue History

Similar to Weissbach's findings, Jewish community life in Central Pennsylvania has mainly revolved around a single congregation and its affiliated Jewish organizations, like a Jewish Community Center or B'nai B'rith. In Lock Haven and Philipsburg, for example, both Jewish communities only ever supported one synagogue, Beth Yehuda and Sons of Israel, respectively.⁶⁹³ They also both supported a Jewish community center, located either inside or near their congregation, and various Jewish social and philanthropic organization.

In Bellefonte and State College, however, the local Jewish community has supported two congregations at different times. In the 1930s, for example, the first congregation, Penn State Hillel, served both Penn State students and local Jewish community members. In 1957, the Jewish Community Council of the Bellefonte and State College was formed to create separate events and programming for Bellefonte and State College's Jewish community, but on October 29, 1961, members of the council decided to form a separate congregation from Penn State Hillel. Some members of Bellefonte and State College's Jewish community, including Dr. Teresa Cohen, chose to attend services at both Penn State Hillel and the congregation's new synagogue, later named Brit Shalom, but other Jewish community members chose to attend either Penn State Hillel or the separate congregation. While the current Bellefonte and State College Jewish community attends Brit Shalom rather than Penn State Hillel in State College, beginning in the 1990s, some Jewish community members began attending the Agudath Achim congregation in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. Presently, Bellefonte and State College Jewish

⁶⁹³ While Lock Haven's Jewish community only ever had the Beth Yehuda Synagogue, the synagogue has been located at two different locations.

community members attend both Brit Shalom in State College and Agudath Achim in Huntingdon.

The Jewish communities in all the towns in this study, however, initially started their congregations as informal meetings at the homes and stores of Jewish community leaders. In Lock Haven, for example, the home of Abraham Stein was used to hold religious services as well as social events. Additionally, to service other religious needs, the Eastern European Jewish community of Lock Haven constructed a *mikvah*, or ritual bath, in the backyard of the Stein home and later in the basement of the Brest home. In Philipsburg, early Jewish community members held religious services in the Odd Fellows Building before a lot on Sixth Street was purchased in 1918 to build the town's synagogue.

Within these congregations, similar to Weissbach's findings, Jewish community members used them not only for religious, but also social spaces. While the existence of multiple congregations and Jewish organizations in larger cities allowed Jews in cities to be involved with congregations and Jewish organizations related to their interests. In Central Pennsylvania, however, the existence of mainly one Jewish congregation and community center per Jewish community, the latter also typically involved with the congregation, restricted the religious expression of the entire Jewish community to the general needs and attitudes of the congregation. Over time these congregations, which were typically founded with Orthodox traditions, transitioned to the traditions of Conservatism, Reform, and Reconstructionist based on the needs of the community. In Lock Haven, for example, the Beth Yehuda Synagogue became based on Orthodox traditions, but shifted to Conservatism in the 1930s and Reform in the early 1970s.

Religious Leadership

In his study, Weissbach found many rabbis were reluctant to settle in small-town Jewish congregation and tended to serve short terms in these congregation.⁶⁹⁴ While I was unable to substantiate whether changes in religious leadership in these congregations were due to the desire of rabbis to leave these small towns for larger areas, the Jewish congregation of both Lock Haven and Philipsburg grew unable to support a full-time rabbi and transitioned to rabbinical students for religious leadership. In Lock Haven, for example, in August of 1979, the first student rabbi, Rabbi Steven Abrams, began serving the Lock Haven Jewish community, a trend which continued until the congregation's last religious service in 2020. In Philipsburg, the congregation's last full-time rabbi, Rabbi Jack Goldman, led the congregation until 1959. In the absence of rabbinical leadership, they became utilized student rabbis and lay leadership within the congregation.

In the Jewish community of Bellefonte and State College, however, the continued presence of a Jewish community allows the congregation to support a full-time rabbi at Brit Shalom. The Agudath Achim Congregation, which some State College Jewish community members attend, in Huntingdon, however, prides itself on the congregation being led by lay leadership, which it has historically been.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁴ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 199-200.

⁶⁹⁵ "Our History Yesterday and Today," *Congregation Agudath Achim of State College and Huntingdon*, n.d. <https://www.agudathachim1930.org/our-history.html>.

Central European and Eastern European Jewish Culture

For early Central European Jewish immigrants, Weissbach found they largely sought acculturation and entry into the middle-class upon their settlement in small-town America.⁶⁹⁶ This included discarding some distinctive Jewish practices, such as maintaining Jewish dietary laws, working on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, and adopting Christian beliefs and practices, particularly allowing inter-faith children to be raised Christian. Among early Central European Jewish immigrants in Central Pennsylvania, I found they attempted to obtain a certain degree of acculturation, but I am unsure whether it was entirely self-motivated or not. For example, in Lock Haven, the Jewish community member, Amelia Scott, was the first female businesswoman in Lock Haven. There are several documents and articles about her involvements in Lock Haven's business world, and her descendants, but none of them acknowledge her Jewish identity or those of her children. I only uncovered she was Jewish through the Beth Yehuda Synagogue's 1952 *Dedication Book*, which identified her as Jewish, and her grave, which is in the Highlands Cemetery, not the Beth Yehuda Cemetery, but her headstone has a Hebrew inscription. It is unclear if Amelia wanted to be acculturated and actively hid her Jewish identity from the greater Lock Haven community or if her Jewish identity was intentionally left out by those remembering and memorializing her after her death.

Weissbach found Central European and Eastern European Jewish communities in the same town might form separate Jewish institutions, such as synagogues and cemeteries, based on their different religious traditions.⁶⁹⁷ In Lock Haven, for example, the Beth Yehuda Cemetery Association in Lock Haven purchased land in 1874 to establish a Jewish cemetery based on

⁶⁹⁶ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 221-222 and 229.

⁶⁹⁷ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 248 and 250-251.

Orthodox traditions. There was an existing Central European Jewish cemetery located adjacent to the plot selected for the Beth Yehuda Cemetery, but founded on Reform traditions, the Central European Jewish cemetery was not incorporated into the Beth Yehuda Cemetery until the mid-twentieth century. Additionally, in Bellefonte, the use of Reform traditions in the largely Central European Jewish cemetery, Rodef Shalom, and the earlier East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery, led to the burial of mainly Bellefonte Jewish community members of Central European descent in Rodef Shalom Bellefonte while those of Eastern European descent chose to be buried in the Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven. These developments, as noted by Weissbach, allowed Jewish community members of both Eastern European Jewish and Central European Jewish descent to support their religiosity without offending "...their [own] religious standards and their cultural sensibilities."⁶⁹⁸

Prejudice

In his study, Weissbach found antisemitism to be less pronounced in small towns than larger American cities. In all my towns of focus, however, Jewish community members recalled either experiencing antisemitism themselves or one of their children experiencing it. Weissbach found Jewish children in small towns to encounter antisemitism most often at school. In my study, several Jewish community members noted hearing antisemitic remarks from non-Jewish classmates or teachers. In Lock Haven, for example, David Schaitkin recalled his daughter had "...a class with this guy [in high school] ...He walked up to her and says, 'Are you Jewish?' She said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Yeah, my father hates Jews. I hate Jews.'"⁶⁹⁹ Janice Shapiro, a Bellefonte

⁶⁹⁸ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 249.

⁶⁹⁹ Schaitkin interview.

resident, remembered one of her teachers making a rude comment about her being Jewish. She told her father, who went to superintendent of the school and they “took care of it.” Janice also recalled hearing a few passing comments made about her being Jewish.⁷⁰⁰

For adults, Weissbach found antisemitism among adults often manifested “socially” in the exclusion of or limiting of Jewish membership to local country clubs and organizations.⁷⁰¹ In my study, several Jewish community members noted how Jewish community members were blackballed from local country clubs. Elaine Navasky Ziff in Philipsburg and Janice Shapiro in Bellefonte, for example, both recalled their fathers being blackballed from their local country club.⁷⁰² Weissbach found more visible instances of antisemitism arose in small towns during periods of economic or social crisis and could manifest in antisemitic and racist language, as well as violence, in protests and strikes.⁷⁰³ While instances of this form of antisemitism was not as prevalent in my study, in Lock Haven, David Schatkin, remembered, “A number of years ago, someone broke into a hotel/restaurant being renovated and...spraypainted some stuff, Nazi symbols and ‘Kill the Jews.’ [The police] caught the kids who did it, [they were] young kids.”⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ Janice Shapiro, interviewed in person by author, February 10, 2022.

⁷⁰¹ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 276-278.

⁷⁰² Shapiro interview; Elaine Navasky Ziff, interview via FaceTime by author, May 9, 2022.

⁷⁰³ Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 276-278.

⁷⁰⁴ Schatkin interview; I recognize that community members might not have included every antisemitic experience they have encountered and/or that they might not have felt comfortable sharing certain stories or experiences with me.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Future Research

This study is merely a start to uncovering and preserving the Jewish communities of Central Pennsylvania.⁷⁰⁵ Due to limitations in time and resources, I was unable to explore all the histories of the broader “Central Pennsylvania” region. Additional research could be dedicated to studying the Jewish communities in: Clearfield and Dubois in Clearfield County, Barnesboro and Johnstown in Cambria County, Altoona in Blair County, Huntingdon in Huntingdon County, Lewistown in Mifflin County, Williamsport in Lycoming County, Danville, Sunbury, Shamokin, and Mt. Carmel in Northumberland County, and Bloomsburg in Columbia County, to name a few. There could also be specialized research conducted on specific subsections of the region’s Jewish history, such as Jewish-owned family businesses in the broader region, like Weis Market, founded in Sunbury, or towns named after Jews, such as Frankstown and Myerstown, both supposedly named after Jewish peddlers.⁷⁰⁶

Additionally, further research could be dedicated to the Jewish communities explored in this study. Through my internship with the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office, I created biographies for all forty-nine individuals buried in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte. These biographies provided me with important information about not only Bellefonte’s Central European Jewish community, but also Central European Jewish community members in Lock Haven and Philipsburg. I, however, was not able to replicate this level of

⁷⁰⁵ Organizations dedicated to preserving the history of Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania include the Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania and the Jewish Community Legacy Project, the latter of which is also dedicated to preserving small-town Jewish communities throughout the U.S. Their efforts include working with declining Jewish communities to create funds for the perpetual maintenance of Jewish cemeteries and helping congregations disband.

⁷⁰⁶ Carolyn Lembeck and Stan Lembeck, interview in person by author, February 6, 2022.

research on the larger Beth Yehuda Cemetery in Lock Haven or the Sons of Israel Cemetery in Philipsburg. A future researcher could conduct similar research on these two Jewish cemeteries.

Due to various reasons, I was also unable to conduct research at Philipsburg's Historical Foundation. Volunteers were able to send me some newspaper articles and obituaries about Philipsburg's Jewish community members, but the inability for me to conduct in-person research restricted the number of historical records and documentation I had about Philipsburg's Jewish community. If able, future researchers could use the records and resources from the foundation to expand upon Philipsburg's Jewish history included in this study. There are also undoubtedly Jewish community members and descendants I was unable to interview for this study. Further researchers could select more Jewish, and non-Jewish, community members to interview as well as expand upon the scope of these interviews.

Overlooked Histories

One of the components of this study I struggled with the most was the title. While I brainstormed alternative titles like "Hidden Histories," "Underrepresented Histories," and "Forgotten Histories," I settled with "Overlooked Histories" because I felt it best described the preservation of Central Pennsylvania's Jewish histories. I argue these histories are "overlooked" rather than "hidden," "underrepresented," or "forgotten," because members of these towns engage, whether consciously or not, with remaining sites of these communities' Jewish history in their daily lives. I, and nearly every other graduate or current student at Philipsburg-Osceola Area High School on Philips Street, for example, passed Philipsburg's Jewish cemetery on our way to school. I remember noticing it as a high school student, but I never considered what

implications the presence a Jewish Cemetery had on the broader history of my hometown.

Philipsburg's Jewish history was not hidden to me, I merely overlooked it.

Additionally, in my research of Jewish Central Pennsylvania, I discovered a plethora of historical records and documents in local libraries and historical societies about Central Pennsylvania's Jewish history. The Pennsylvania Room at both the Centre County Library & Historical Museum and Clinton County Libraries, for example, have documents about the history of various aspects of their respective county's Jewish history, such as Jewish cemeteries and synagogues, as well as newspaper articles about Jewish community events and organizations, advertisements of Jewish businesses, and obituaries of Jewish community members. The Centre County Library & Historical Museum's exhibit also includes a collage of the Katz family, a Jewish mercantile family from Bellefonte, and one of the items on display is the store wall clock from the Katz store. The Philipsburg Historical Foundation has the remaining Memorial (*Yahrzeit*) Plaques from Philipsburg's Sons of Israel Congregation in its collection. While some Jewish Philipsburg community members removed the plaques of their deceased relatives either during or after the disbanding of the synagogue, numerous plaques remain in the possession of the foundation.



Figure 65: Jewish Central Pennsylvania artifacts in Centre County Historical Societies. Top left: wall clock from the Katz Store in Bellefonte at the Centre County Libraries & Historical Museum. Top right: Memorial (Yahrzeit) Plaques from Philipsburg's Sons of Israel Congregation at the Philipsburg Historical Foundation. Bottom: Katz collage at the Centre County Libraries and Historical Museum.⁷⁰⁷



⁷⁰⁷ Casey Sennett, *Katz Store Clock*, personal photograph, March 2, 2022; Casey Sennett, *Memorial (Yahrzeit) Plaques*, personal photograph, November 26, 2021; Casey Sennett, *Katz Collage*, personal photograph, March 2, 2022.

While Central Pennsylvania's Jewish histories are "hidden," "underrepresented," and "forgotten" in the sense that the public memory of these towns' histories largely exclude its Jewish history, sites of memory of these Jewish communities, both within the community, like Jewish cemeteries, and in community libraries and historical societies, exist. The region's Jewish history is not missing from the historical record. It is the transmission of these Jewish histories from the historical record to current generations that is severely lacking. The overlooking of these Jewish histories helps perpetuate the absence of them from the collective memory of both individual towns as well as the region.

The Importance of Preserving the Jewish History of Central Pennsylvania

The overlooking of Central Pennsylvania's Jewish history fits within the larger absence of studies dedicated to understanding and preserving small-town Jewish American life in academia. While various books, articles, and documents exist preserving the Jewish histories of individual small-town Jewish communities and regions, Weissbach's *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* was the first, and main, attempt at synthesizing the trends and experiences of small-town Jewish life. The study of American Jewish history continues to emphasize the Jewish history of metropolitan U.S. cities.

The study of small-town Jewish communities, however, is critical to understanding the broader Jewish experience in America. The disappearance of Jewish communities from small towns throughout the U.S., however, makes the study of small-town Jewish life even more important. In my study, I frequently heard from Central Pennsylvania Jewish community members that this study would have been more valuable ten to twenty years ago because the dispersal and, in many cases, death of Jewish community members have produced permanent

losses of many perspectives and valuable insight about these Jewish communities. While some of these stories are unfortunately lost, the continued lack of action to preserve small-town Jewish communities and their history will lead to greater gaps in the historical record. It might also produce the complete disappearance of Jewish histories from the public memory of some small towns forever.

In Central Pennsylvania, the Jewish community in State College, which one Jewish community member described as, "...an oasis in the desert," represents one of the last remaining centers of Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania.⁷⁰⁸ Stan Lembeck, a current State College resident, noted the evolution of Jewish Central Pennsylvania to include fewer towns over the last few decades does not necessarily need to be sad. Rather, he views the shift as an addition to the larger Jewish story of the region. He, however, emphasized the importance of recognizing and preserving these Jewish histories while they still can. Without them, Jewish Central Pennsylvania will become a lost history.⁷⁰⁹ This study is but one step to help document and preserve Jewish life in Central Pennsylvania for current and future generations.

⁷⁰⁸ Anonymous interviewee 2, interviewed via phone by author, February 22, 2022.

⁷⁰⁹ Lembeck and Lembeck interview.

APPENDIX A

Example Interview Questions

The following set of questions is a general template of what I asked Jewish community members during interviews:

1. General Information

- a. How old are you? When were you born?
- b. Where were you born?
- c. Where did you grow up?
- d. Where do you currently live?
- e. How long have/did you live in Central Pennsylvania?
- f. What is your religious affiliation?
- g. Did you attend Penn State?
 - i. If yes, have them answer the blue questions.
 - ii. If no, skip the blue questions.
- h. Did anyone in your family attend Penn State?
 - i. If yes, have them answer the green questions.
 - ii. If no, skip the green questions.
- i. What is/was your profession?
 - i. How long have/did you work there?
 - ii. Was your job located in Central Pennsylvania?
 1. If yes, where?

2. Penn State Graduate Questions

- a. What year(s) did you attend Penn State?

- b. What year(s) did you graduate from Penn State?
- c. What degree(s) did you graduate with?
- d. Before coming to Penn State, what did you know about the Jewish community or Jewish life at Penn State?
- e. Before coming to Penn State, did you plan on being involved in the Jewish community at Penn State?
 - i. If yes, how did you anticipate being involved?
 - ii. If no, why?
- f. Were you ever a member of any Jewish fraternities/sororities/student organizations while at Penn State?
 - i. If yes:
 - 1. What was the organization?
 - 2. When did you join?
 - 3. How long were you involved?
 - 4. Reason for joining?
 - 5. What was your experience like being involved?
 - ii. If no, why?
- g. While at Penn State, did you take any Hebrew or Jewish Studies courses?
 - i. If yes, what classes were they and why did you decide to take them?
 - ii. If no, why?
- h. Did you ever attend synagogue and/or a religious service during your time at Penn State?
 - i. If yes:

1. How frequently did you attend, when, and where?

2. What was your experience like there?

3. Did you ever interact with local Jewish community members?

ii. If no, why?

i. As a Penn State student, how would you have described the Jewish community at Penn State and your relationship with it?

j. As a graduate of Penn State, have you, if at all, stayed involved with the Jewish community at Penn State or in Central Pennsylvania?

i. If yes, how have you stayed involved?

3. Family Member Graduated from Penn State Questions

a. Who in your family graduated from Penn State?

b. What year(s) did they attend Penn State?

c. What year(s) did they graduate from Penn State?

d. What degree(s) did they graduate with?

e. Do you know what they knew about the Jewish community or Jewish life at Penn State prior to attending Penn State?

i. Do you know how they planned, if at all, on being involved in the Jewish community at Penn State prior to attending Penn State?

ii. Do you know if they were ever a member of any Jewish fraternities/sororities/student organizations while at Penn State?

1. If yes:

a. What was the organization?

b. When did they join?

c. How long were they involved?

d. Reason they joined?

e. Do you know what their experience was like being involved?

f. If no, why?

f. While at Penn State, do you know if they took any Hebrew or Jewish Studies courses?

i. If yes, what classes were they and do you know why they decided to take them?

g. Do you know if they ever attended synagogue and/or a religious service during their time at Penn State?

i. If yes:

1. How frequently did you attend, when, and where?

2. Do you know what their experience was like there?

3. Do you know if they ever interacted with local Jewish community members?

h. How do you think they would have described the Jewish community at Penn State?

i. After they graduated from Penn State, do you know if they stayed involved with the Jewish community at Penn State or in Central Pennsylvania?

i. If yes, how?

4. Jewish Community Life in Central Pennsylvania

- a. Do you know anything about the history of the Jewish community in [insert community name]?
 - i. If yes, what do you know?
 - ii. Do you know any resources of where to find more information about early Jewish families or the Jewish history of the region?
 - iii. Do you know anything about the [insert Jewish landmark]?
- b. If you grew up in [insert community], how would you describe the Jewish community as a child or young adult?
 - i. What events do you remember the Jewish community holding?
 - ii. Do you remember interacting with other local Jewish communities?
 - 1. If yes, where and when? How frequent were these interactions and what did they involve?
 - iii. How frequently, if at all, did you attend synagogue?
 - 1. Where did you attend synagogue at?
 - 2. What do you remember about services?
 - iv. Did you have a bar or bat mitzva?
 - 1. If yes, when and where did that take place?
 - v. What was it like growing up Jewish in [insert community]?
 - vi. What religious leaders do you remember?
 - vii. Who were the prominent Jewish community members? What professions and/or community activities were they involved in?
- c. How have you interacted with the Jewish community in [insert community] and the greater Central Pennsylvania region over the years?

- i. What have those interactions included?
- ii. What have those experiences been like?

d. Life Events

- i. Were you married in [insert] county?
 - 1. When and where did your wedding take place?
- ii. Do you have any children?
 - 1. Did they grow up in [insert community]?
 - a. If yes, what was their experience like growing up in [insert community]? How do you think their experience, if at all, differed from yours?
 - 2. Did they have a bar or bat mitzva?
 - a. If yes, when and where did that take place?
 - 3. Did they marry in the county?
 - a. When and where did their wedding take place?
- e. How would you describe the current Jewish community in [insert community]?
 - i. What have been some changes to the Jewish community of [insert community] over the years?
 - ii. Do you know any important dates, figures, or events that occurred in the community over the last few decades?
- f. As a resident of [insert community], have you ever felt excluded or unwelcome because of your Jewish identity?

5. Conclusion

- a. Is there anything else you would like to share?

- b. Do you know anyone else that might be willing to speak with me about their experience in [insert] community?
 - i. If yes, would you share my contact information with them?
- c. Would you be interested in potentially participating in a follow-up interview?

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ACADEMIC VITA

CASEY SENNETT

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University

University Park, PA

Master of Arts in Anthropology

Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology

Bachelor of Arts in History

Bachelor of Arts in Jewish Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Middle East Studies

Minors in Global and International Studies and Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies

Certificates in Museum Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Honors: Schreyer Honors College, Paterno Fellows Program, Chaiken Scholar, and Jewish Studies Student Marshal

Thesis: *Overlooked Histories: An Ethnographic and Historical Study of the Jewish Communities of Central Pennsylvania*

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

Youth Life in Egypt

December 2022-January 2023

Penn State Faculty-Led Embedded Course

Cairo, Egypt

- Introduced to the Arabic alphabet and language.
- Toured museums and historical sites related to ancient and modern Egypt and participated in cultural events, such as a Nubian and Tanoura dance show.

Race, Crime, and Justice

November 2022

Penn State Faculty-Led Embedded Course

Willemstad, Curaçao

- Collaborated with different organizations, including the Human Rights Defense Curaçao, Stichting Bijzondere Vrouw, and the University of Curaçao, to learn about domestic violence, the prison system, race relations, and the treatment of undocumented immigrants in Curaçao.
- Compared the criminal justice system and the perception of race between the U.S. and Curaçao.

Roman History and Archaeology Tour

May-June 2022

Penn State Faculty-Led Summer Study Abroad Program

Rome, Italy

- Researched and wrote a presentation on the Arch of Titus.
- Toured historical monuments and archaeological sites related to the regal, republican, and imperial eras of Ancient Rome in Rome, Pompeii, and Ostia.

Curatorial and Web Content Development Intern

June-August 2021

Jewish Cultural Historical Museum

Willemstad, Curaçao

- Collaborated with the museum's staff and local Jewish community to write the text for the museum's [website](#).
- Developed the format for the museum's first digital and rotating exhibit: *Jewish Curaçao: One Story at a Time*.

Tel Akko Archaeological Field School

June-August 2019

Penn State Faculty-Led Summer Study Abroad Program

Akko, Israel

- Learned excavation, artifact sorting, and identification methods from American and Israeli faculty members.
- Co-instructed a three-day conservation workshop with the Israeli Antiquity Authority for a dozen Israeli and Palestinian high school students.
- Taught four community members how to properly excavate and identify their finds.

France and the Holocaust

March 2019

Penn State Faculty-Led Embedded Course

Paris, France

- Toured Parisian Holocaust memorials, monuments, museums, and met with survivors to study France's involvement and remembrance of the Holocaust.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND MUSEUM STUDIES EXPERIENCE

Jewish Central Pennsylvania Oral History Intern

March 2022-Present

Penn State Hillel

State College, PA

- Interview local Jewish community members about their family's connection to Jewish Central Pennsylvania.
- Design monthly Canva collages for the Penn State Hillel building to preserve the memory of Jewish Central Pennsylvania.

Research Assistant

October 2020-Present

The Pennsylvania State University: College of the Liberal Arts

University Park, PA

- Compile literature reviews about Palestinian American identity, their concept of homeland, and the relationship between different Palestinian communities in the diaspora.
- Research Palestinian American and American Arab organizations to recruit participants for the study.

Instructor

October 2022-January 2023

The Pennsylvania State University: Department of Jewish Studies

University Park, PA

- Piloted the course, Jewish Studies 197: Jewish Life in Rural America, through the [Students Teaching Students](#) program.
- Developed weekly lectures, presentations, assignments, and discussions for the fifteen-week course.
- Organized two field trips for students to tour local Jewish community organizations and landmarks.

Historic Preservation Intern

January-December 2022

Centre County Planning and Community Development Office

Bellefonte, PA

- Researched the Jewish cemetery, Rodef Shalom, in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, using the *Pennsylvania Newspaper Archive*, *Ancestry*, *Family Search*, and archival materials from local libraries and historical societies.
- Wrote forty-nine biographies about the people buried in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery.
- Interviewed five local genealogists and community members about the Rodef Shalom Cemetery and Jewish life in Bellefonte.

Educational Volunteer

January 2021-January 2022

National Museum of the American Sailor

Great Lakes, IL

- Designed the theme, instructions, and activities for seven monthly take-home packets in Canva.
- Redesigned four existing curbside packets to create a cohesive format for their [website](#).

Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Education Initiative Researcher

August-December 2020

The Pennsylvania State University: College of Education

University Park, PA

- Researched and wrote a dozen briefs on various topics, including collaboration and resistance during the Holocaust, that will be used to develop educational materials and curriculum for Pennsylvania teachers.
- Attended weekly advisory meetings to discuss the historical aspects of my research.

Research Volunteer

May-August 2020

Jewish Capital Museum

Washington, D.C.

- Researched and wrote four biographies on different Jewish Washingtonians for an upcoming permanent exhibit.

Curatorial Affairs Intern

May-August 2020

Tennessee Holocaust Commission

Nashville, TN

- Transcribed eighty letters, telegraphs, and immigration documents between a Nashville Jewish family and their relatives in Germany from 1936-1940 and 1945.
- Researched Tennessee's Jewish community, immigration during the Holocaust, and connections between Tennesseans and the Holocaust for the development of future curatorial materials and wall text samples.
- Created eight Holocaust related lesson plans for 5th-12th grade Tennessee teachers.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate Public Speaking Center Mentor

January 2020-Present

The Pennsylvania State University: Penn State Learning

University Park, PA

- Tutor students on public speaking by helping them refine their topic, develop visual aids, and improve their delivery.

Paterno Fellows Student Advisory Board Member

January 2019-Present

*Paterno Fellows Program**University Park, PA*

- Collaborates with board members and the Director of the Paterno Fellows Program to decide the topic of our annual issues' forum, the prompt of our essay contest, and other Paterno Fellows sponsored events.
- Chosen from 360 Paterno Fellows to represent the student body.

Student Ambassador**October 2018-Present***The Pennsylvania State University: College of the Liberal Arts**University Park, PA*

- Present to 200 high school students annually at Accepted Student Panels and meet individually with a dozen donors, alumni, and prospective and accepted students to discuss my college experience.
- As President from 2020-2021, created three online panels for prospective and accepted students and an outreach program with alumni living at a local retirement home.
- As Vice President from 2019-2020, tripled club membership through marketing on social media and at college-wide events.

Professional Development Chair**January 2020-May 2022***Lion Ambassadors**University Park, PA*

- Curated weekly LinkedIn posts, developed monthly professional development workshops, and connected current Lion Ambassadors with our alumni.
- Expanded the Lion Ambassador LinkedIn page from 150 followers to 500 followers.
- Led three tours per month to prospective and accepted Penn State students and families.

Orientation Mentor**January 2019-December 2021***The Pennsylvania State University: Schreyer Honors College**University Park, PA*

- Created activities to welcome and introduce our eleven mentees to each other, the Schreyer Honors College, and Penn State.
- Welcomed 250 Schreyer Scholars and their families to Penn State each year on move-in day.

Career Enrichment Network Assistant**January 2020-November 2021***The Pennsylvania State University: College of the Liberal Arts**University Park, PA*

- Greeted visitors, managed student registration, and input data in the university's professional database.
- Developed marketing and promotional materials for career readiness and upcoming Liberal Arts events.
- Researched college and university-wide career service resources to improve the network's professional offerings.

PRESENTATIONS**An Ethnographic and Historical Study of the Jewish Communities of Central Pennsylvania****November 2022***American Anthropological Association's Annual Meeting**Seattle, WA*

- Presented a poster on my combined undergraduate and graduate thesis' preliminary findings.

Open Doors: Student Emcee**April 2022***A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence**University Park, PA*

- [Presented](#) the impact of philanthropy on my Penn State story and the results of the Open Doors component of the Pennsylvania State University's \$2.2 billion fundraising campaign with 1,400 donors, staff, and university officials.

COLLEGIATE AWARDS**Usharani and C. Channa Reddy Mission Award for Research and Achievement****Awarded May 2023**

- Honors graduating Schreyer Scholars who best exemplify the mission of the college through academic excellence, globalization, and civic engagement.

Barb Edwards Award for Outstanding Service to the Paterno Fellows Program**Awarded December 2022**

- Recognizes a Paterno Fellow for their involvement in the program.

Christopher B. Gamble Undergraduate Service to Penn State Award for 2022**Awarded April 2022**

- Recognizes an undergraduate Liberal Arts student for their involvement at the university.

The Harris and Zelma Freedman Scholarship**Awarded April 2022**

- Received first place for my paper, “Unintended Consequences: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and French Education as a Source of Communal Tension in Colonial Jewish Tunis.”

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship**Awarded December 2021**

- Scholarship program through the U.S. Department of State supporting Pell-grant recipient undergraduate students study abroad.

The President’s Freshman Award**Awarded March 2019**

- Awarded to students who maintain a 4.0 GPA during their first semester at Penn State.