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# Origin and Early History of the United Hebrew Congregation of St. Louis, 1841-1859, The First Jewish Congregation in St. Louis

Donald Irving Makovsky

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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
Department of History

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ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE UNITED  
HEBREW CONGREGATION OF ST. LOUIS,  
1841 - 1859

THE FIRST JEWISH CONGREGATION IN ST. LOUIS

by

Donald Irving Makovsky

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A dissertation presented to the  
Graduate Board of Washington  
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## CHAPTER I

### ST. LOUIS AT THE FOUNDING OF THE UNITED HEBREW 1 CONGREGATION IN 1841

The problem of the Jewish people throughout the ages has been that of survival and of keeping their own identity among other peoples of the earth. The United Hebrew Congregation of St. Louis is the result of one group's efforts to keep the Jewish faith despite the hardships of frontier community life. The fact that it survived its meager beginnings of twelve men in 1841 to boast today the largest membership of any Jewish synagogue in the St. Louis area is a credit to the congregation. This thesis will describe in detail a very important portion of its early, colorful history, from the organization of the synagogue in 1841 until the achievement of its first dream--the construction of its own house of worship in 1859.

Yet, these facts only whet one's curiosity to determine what religious facilities were available to the members so that they could keep their faith, and to what degree they did so. The Jews' efforts to accomplish the latter is difficult to determine, since this matter presents a problem encountered throughout the thesis, namely, the absence of sufficient early records of early St. Louis Jewry. The chief sources of information for this thesis were the manuscript congregational minute

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1 This thesis was prepared under the direction of Dr. Ralph P. Bieber. The author and Dr. Bieber located manuscript records in the basement of the United Hebrew Congregation. Without this material this thesis could not have been written.

books and cemetery reports, as well as local newspapers.

In order to understand the founding of the United Hebrew Congregation, one must describe the environment into which it was born. It is therefore necessary to describe St. Louis--its founding and its various aspects--as it existed before and in 1841.

St. Louis was founded on February 15, 1764, by Pierre Laclède Ligu<sup>2</sup>est of the commercial firm of Maxent, Laclède & Company. In 1762 this firm obtained from Governor Kerlerec, the French Governor-General of Louisiana, a charter insuring it of exclusive control of the fur trade with the Indians on the Missouri River and with other tribes as far north as the river St. Peter. The company immediately took steps to avail itself of the valuable privileges of its charter. Laclède Ligu<sup>2</sup>est, as he invariably signed his name, was the youngest member of the firm, and to him was assigned the task of selecting a site for a trading post in Upper Louisiana. Nature had specially fitted him for this service. He was endowed with the attributes of bravery, sagacity, and love of adventure, all of which were prerequisites for success in such a pioneer venture.<sup>3</sup>

On August 3, 1763, Laclède left New Orleans on his voyage up the Mississippi River, and spent the winter at Fort Chartres on the east side of this river, twenty miles

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2 Scharf, History of Saint Louis City and County, I, 67.

3 Ibid., 63-64.

above St. Genevieve. While resting at this point he learned that by the Peace of Paris of 1763, France had ceded all the country east of the Mississippi River to Great Britain. The reaction to this information was such that many of the life-long inhabitants decided to leave the Fort Chartres area rather than become English subjects. This response suggested to Laclède the idea of laying out a village around his contemplated trading post, and inducing them to come over to the west side of the river and settle around him.<sup>4</sup>

The site of St. Louis, which Laclède selected in December, 1763, had many advantages. High and in a setting conducive to physical well-being, it possessed the two-fold excellence of fitness for healthful residence and matchless facilities for commercial exchange. Thus, due to its physical superiority, Laclède had few doubts over his final selection of St. Louis as the spot to advance his enterprises.<sup>5</sup>

Upon Laclède's return to the site which he had selected, he found young Auguste Chouteau and about thirty men whom Laclède had dispatched to this point to lay out the village and establish a trading post. Chouteau and his men had arrived there on February 15, 1764. Yet work was not begun in earnest until Laclède returned there early in April, 1764.<sup>6</sup> Under the illusion that the vast domain

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4 Ibid., 64.

5 Ibid., 65.

6 Ibid., 66-67.

lying west of the Mississippi was still a French possession, Laclède named the post after King Louis IX or Saint Louis, since he was the patron saint of the present French King, Louis XV.<sup>7</sup> Yet unknown to the new St. Louisans, by secret treaty of 1762, France had ceded to Spain all her territory west of the Mississippi; however, in 1800, Spain, in the treaty of San Ildefonso, returned the province of Louisiana to the French Republic. The latter transferring this territory to the United States at New Orleans late in 1803. However, it was not till March 9, 1804, that the United States officially took charge of the upper part of Louisiana at St. Louis.<sup>8</sup>

The settlers of St. Louis found the proposed site situated on the west side of the Mississippi River in latitude  $38^{\circ} 37'$  and longitude  $90^{\circ} 15'$ ,<sup>9</sup> lying eighteen miles below the junction of the dark Missouri with the clear Mississippi. In relation to other spots, the St. Louis of 1841 was nearly two hundred miles from the mouth of the Ohio and roughly twelve hundred miles from New Orleans.<sup>10</sup>

The area on which the town was situated lay along the river in nearly the shape of a semicircle.<sup>11</sup> Located on an elevated shore in a healthy position, the ground

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 264-265.

<sup>9</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas and Wild, The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated in a Series of Views, June, 1841, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. iv.

rose gradually from the water for half a mile,<sup>12</sup> in two benches to nearly the height of eighty feet above the level of the river. From Fourth Street, or the top of the last bench, the country back extended many miles in a prairie. Within the town limits the ground was well adapted for compact building.<sup>13</sup> Limestone composed the substratum of the soil, and was easily quarried in large quantities for building purposes. Nearly all the warehouses which fronted toward the river were erected of this material, their cellars having supplied the stone for their super-structures. Some of the quarries were so deep that many of the stores on Main Street, second block west from the river running north and south, had three stories underground, dug out from the solid rock.<sup>14</sup> Beyond the city limits the country presented numerous unrivaled sites for residences, many being so situated as to command a full view of the city and river.<sup>15</sup>

The St. Louis of 1841 was divided into north, central, and south St. Louis, with several suburban additions extending out from the city limits bearing the name of the persons who planned them.<sup>16</sup> The city's boundaries can best be described by the charter of 1839 as amended by the act of February 15, 1841, enacted by that year's State Legislature, which defined the limits

12 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 8.

13 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. iv.

14 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 8-9.

15 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. ix.

16 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 9.



of St. Louis as follows:

All that district of country contained within the following limits to wit: beginning at a point in the main channel of the Mississippi River, due east to the southeast corner of St. George [as the southern extremity];<sup>17</sup> thence due west to the west line of second Carondelet Avenue [the western boundary];<sup>18</sup> thence, north with the said west line of said avenue, to the north line of Chouteau avenue;<sup>19</sup> thence, northwardly, in a direct line to the mouth of stony creek;<sup>20</sup> above the present north line of the city of St. Louis; thence, due east to the middle of the main channel of the Mississippi river; thence, southwardly, with the middle of the main channel of the Mississippi river, to the place of the beginning.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the city was irregularly shaped, extending five miles along the river and about a mile and a half westward at its most distant point in the form of an irregular pentagon, with its five angles extending out in the following manner: one to the northern extremity; one to the southern point; and three westward. Dividing the Mississippi for nearly a mile, in front of the upper part of the city, was Bloody Island, appropriately so called, having been the theater

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17 This point is approximately one half block south of the present St. George Street, between 2700 and 2800 South. Mayer, History of St. Louis, 1837-1847, p. 3, MS., AM. thesis, Washington University.

18 This point is slightly south of the present intersection of Thirteenth and Wyoming streets. Ibid.

19 Second Carondelet Avenue, the west boundary, followed the line of the present Thirteenth Street to the point where Thirteenth Street runs into Eighteenth Street, and continued along Eighteenth Street. Ibid.

20 From the intersection of Eighteenth Street and Chouteau Avenue the line followed Eighteenth Street to its present terminus, and thence continued due north to Second and Buchanan streets. The line from that point to the river follows the line of the present Dock Street. Ibid.

21 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xli.

of a number of duels. <sup>22</sup> The surrounding suburbs incorporated within the city by this act were: St. George and Soulard's Addition, and most of Judge Lucas' grounds; Christy's Addition; Mrs. Biddle's and Labaumes Additions; and a part of Judge Kerr's land. The Daily Missouri Republican, commenting on this proposed charter, on January 4, 1841, stated:

We have received a copy of the new charter for St. Louis introduced into the Legislature a few days since. We have barely had time to give it a hasty perusal, and upon the whole, think it not quite as exceptionable, considering the source it came from, as we had expected.<sup>23</sup>

The increased area necessitated the division of the city into five wards, <sup>24</sup> or an addition of one more than the previous years' total. The wards generally extended east and west from the Mississippi River to the western limits of the city. <sup>25</sup> The first ward embraced all south of the line commencing at the mouth of the creek; thence up the creek to the intersection of Rutgers Street; thence west with Rutgers Street to the western line of the city. The second ward included all the area lying between the afore-said creek and Rutgers Street, and Elm Street extending west to the west line of the city. The third ward contained all ground between Elm and Pine streets. The area between Pine and Laurel streets and Washington Avenue composed the fourth ward. The new fifth ward embraced

<sup>22</sup> Thomas and Wild, *op. cit.*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, January 4, 1841.

<sup>24</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xii.

<sup>25</sup> Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years

all within the city limits, lying north of Laurel Street and Washington Avenue.<sup>26</sup> As can be seen by the addition of the extra ward in the above mentioned geographic area, the growth of the city had been rapid, especially toward the north. Due to the extension of the city limits, St. Louis in 1841 had increased its incorporated boundaries to include 630 acres<sup>27</sup> or 4.78 square miles.<sup>28</sup>

As might be expected, the expansion of St. Louis in 1841 was made necessary by the rapidly increasing population. The slowly growing community had just under a thousand inhabitants in 1804, the fortieth year of its existence, yet in a little over twenty-five years, the population had increased by five times, reaching a total of 4,977 people in 1830. It increased 231 percent to 16,469 in 1840;<sup>29</sup> and in 1841 jumped to 19,063, including only the old limits, and 30,000 including the other areas where no census was taken.<sup>30</sup> In relation to the other cities of the Mississippi valley, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Louisville and Pittsburgh, St. Louis ranked fifth both in 1830 and 1840, although growing at a more rapid rate than any other large western city.<sup>31</sup>

Nationally, St. Louis was ranked twentieth by the census of 1840, being larger at this time than Detroit,

26 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xii.

27 Snow, History of the Development of Missouri, II, 318.

28 Mayer, op. cit., 4.

29 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1019.

30 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. vi.

31 Mayer, op. cit., 4.

Cleveland, and Chicago, which latter city was not among eighty-eight of the most populous cities in the United States. Yet St. Louis was far behind New York City's leading total of 312,710,<sup>32</sup> a figure which was roughly only 71,000 smaller than the country's fifteenth most populous state - Missouri.<sup>33</sup> The latter, therefore, was ranked in the middle of the thirty states of the United States which had a total population of slightly over seventeen million in 1840.<sup>34</sup>

St. Louis was just beginning to increase its size. The next ten years witnessed a grezt improvement; in 1850 the city totaled 77,860 people, jumping to eighth position nationally.<sup>35</sup> This increase came chiefly from two sources. The one stream consisted of United States citizens from the eastern states. These people came to St. Louis for several reasons. Some were drawn by report of excellent business opportunities; others were coming to join friends already settled here; and still others started for the West and had gotten no farther than St. Louis.

The second stream of emigrants consisted of people from various European countries. It would seem that the foreign born source of newcomers to the city was larger, for in 1850 more than half the population was

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<sup>32</sup> DeBow, Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, p. 111.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 665.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 111.

St. Louis was not of native birth. The aforementioned official census for that year was 77,860, of which about 40,000 were foreign born and about 36,000 were native born; and many of the members of the latter group were themselves the children of alien born parents.<sup>36</sup> The Missouri Republican of March 28, 1840, contained this account of the rush of immigrants to St. Louis:

Standing on the levee and observing the crowds of people who are flocking to St. Louis by every boat, from all direction[s], but particularly by the Ohio and southern boats, one might imagine that the world and his family were coming here. We have never witnessed such crowds of people as now were coming here. We have never witnessed such crowds of people as now throng our streets. Every boat brings a hundred or two. The hotels, boarding houses & c. (etc.) are crowded to excess. Many country merchants are here laying in their supplies, but the greater portion appears to be from more distant parts of the Union; some seeking employment, some looking for a situation, and some hunting after what is not so easy to be found, their debtors. The pressure of the times in either quarters has induced many to come west in the hope of bettering their condition, and if a tenth part of the immense throng now pouring into this city stay, our population will be augmented several thousands this season.<sup>37</sup>

The German element was the most prominent immigrant group during this period. The Irish shared this majority role to a lesser extent, but many other nations were also represented among the foreign born. A study of the report of the poorhouse for the period from January, 1840, to June, 1841, revealed the cosmopolitan nature of the city's

<sup>36</sup> Mayer, *op. cit.*, 4-6.

<sup>37</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, March 28, 1840.

population. The shelter contained people from Ireland, Germany, England, France, Canada, Switzerland, Poland, Prussia, Mexico, Nova Scotia, Scotland, Wales, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Madeira, Austria, Norway, and Sweden, in approximately that order of frequency. While no figures were available concerning the religious beliefs of these people, the Catholic faith was represented in large numbers. In fact, by February, 1849, 20,000 Catholics resided in St. Louis.<sup>38</sup> This was a considerable amount when it is remembered that in 1850 the city's population totaled over 77,700.<sup>39</sup> Jews were at the opposite end, as only forty or fifty resided in St. Louis in 1841.<sup>40</sup> This figure did increase to six or seven hundred by 1853, but the Israelites were still a distinct minority.<sup>41</sup>

The 19,000 cosmopolitan inhabitants of St. Louis in 1841 resided in a city which could be described as divided into two distinct sections: (1) the old French portion of town; and (2) the more modern American section.<sup>42</sup> Charles Dickens, the famous English writer, recorded his impression of this phenomena on his visit to St. Louis in April, 1842:<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Mayer, *op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, February 3, 1849.

<sup>40</sup> DeBow, *op. cit.*, iii.

<sup>41</sup> Leaser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

<sup>42</sup> St. Louis Intelligencer, December 17, 1853.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, Factors in the Growth of Saint Louis From 1840-1860, p. 6, MS., AM. thesis, Washington University.

In the old French portion of the town, the thoroughfares are narrow and crooked, and some of the houses are very quaint and picturesque; being built of wood, with tumble-down galleries before the windows, approachable by stairs or rather ladders from the street. There are queer little barber shops and drinking houses too, in this quarter; and an abundance of crazy old tenements with blinking casements, such as may be seen in Flanders. Some of these ancient habitations, with high garrett gable-windows perking into the roofs, have a kind of French shrug about them; and, being lop-sided with age, appear to hold their head askew, besides, as if they were grimacing in astonishment at the American improvements.

It is hardly necessary to say, that these consist of wharfs and warehouses, and new buildings in all directions; and of a great many vast plans which are still 'progressing.' Already, however, some very good houses, broad streets, and marble-fronted shops, have gone so far ahead as to be in a state of completion; and the town bids fair in a few years to improve considerably; though it is not likely even to vie, in point of elegance or beauty, with Cincinnati.<sup>44</sup>

The French section generated an antiquated air, such as would be seen in a European city. This portion generally pervaded the southern half of the city. The more modern or American section of the city was growing rapidly and new buildings were erected yearly. Father De Smet wrote in 1838 that St. Louis remained emphatically a "little French city," but stated that the lower and central portions of it were "destined to become the most costly and beautiful portions. There are but few of those endless rectilinear avenues cutting each other into broad squares

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<sup>44</sup> Dickens, American Notes and Pictures from Italy, 151-152.

of lofty granite blocks, so characteristic of the older cities of the North and East."<sup>45</sup>

The streets of the city ran parallel to the river; and there were also a number that ran east and west,<sup>46</sup> intersecting each other at right angles. These streets divided the area into blocks or squares, generally three hundred feet on each front. They were well paved or macademized in the center, having sidewalks of brick. However, here and there on the old streets some French mansion or other building obtruded upon the sidewalk.<sup>47</sup> Most of the older streets of St. Louis near the river, in addition to some of those running at right angles with the river, were somewhat narrow and crowded, having been built by the early French settlers.<sup>48</sup> Another fault was the lack of space left between the town and the river. This fact was much lamented in an article which appeared in an 1811 edition of the Louisiana Gazette. This St. Louis paper pointed out that "for the sake of health, business and the pleasure of promenade there should have been no encroachment on the margin of the noble stream."<sup>49</sup>

The levee, or Front Street, was filled on the upper or west side by substantially built business houses. The street then gradually sloped eastward, a distance of about

<sup>45</sup> As quoted in Williams, op. cit., 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. iv.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 9.

<sup>48</sup> Skillman, The Western Metropolis; or St. Louis in 1846, p. 58.

<sup>49</sup> As quoted in St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. iv.



one hundred and fifty feet to the river. The levee was paved and at all seasons presented a very busy scene.<sup>50</sup>

Front, or Water, Street was irregularly built, and contained a row of stone stores, generally of three or four stories above the cellar. Here and there a "low shanty kind of building" intervened where liquors and other commodities were sold retail.<sup>51</sup> Many of the stores on Front Street were constructed of a species of limestone dug out of the ground floor.<sup>52</sup> The City Hall was located along Front Street, above the old Market, and contained rooms for the city officers and a court room. The Market included stalls for the butchers' game and other products.<sup>53</sup> Evidently this must have occupied much space along Front Street, since in 1841 there were fifty-one butchers supplying St. Louisans with meat.<sup>54</sup> By 1837 heavy business operations were driving the retail dealers back from Front to Main or First streets. This caused an increase in the value of property in the back streets.<sup>55</sup>

Main Street was a thoroughfare of a different character, as in it were found the auxiliary occupations to commerce. This street was narrow, and bore evident marks

<sup>50</sup> Skillman, *op. cit.*, iv.

<sup>51</sup> As taken from a Traveler's remarks in 1845 and quoted in St. Louis Business Directory for 1847, p. 99.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> "A Few St. Louis, Missouri Recollections of the Past Seventy Years," pp. 3-4, St. Louis Reminiscences Envelope, Missouri Historical Society (Hereinafter, the Missouri Historical Society will be referred to as MHS.)

<sup>54</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xi.

<sup>55</sup> Keemie, St. Louis Directory For the Years 1838-9, p. v.

of being that part of the town first built. Yet there was a great inequality in the appearance of the buildings; some of them were adapted to the advances made in general wealth, population, and capital, while others remained in their "incipient state" as they might have been supposed to be under the ancient French or Spanish dynasty.<sup>56</sup> Second Street displayed a very mixed accessory distributive character of the third degree, for in it were found some private dwelling houses, manufacturers, fruiterers, metal workers, locksmiths, and artisans. Third Street contained some ground not yet appropriated to good buildings or to any for that matter. However, the City Hotel, with a fine lawn for a lounge, fronted on this avenue, as did the future site of the new market.<sup>57</sup>

In 1841 Fourth Street was apparently just beginning to be constructed, since the Daily Missouri Republican reported on August 16, 1843, that soon three blocks, from St. Charles to Pine, would be completed along this street, with many of the structures serving as stores.<sup>58</sup> It soon blossomed into a beautiful promenade. In fact, Fourth Street was lauded in 1845 for "its width and consequent free air, the neatness and freshness of its buildings, and .... their architectural superiority [which] may be justly

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<sup>56</sup> As taken from a traveler's remarks in 1845 and quoted in St. Louis Business Directory for 1847, p. 101.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 101, 103.

<sup>58</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 16, 1843.

styled the Bond Street, old style, and Broadway, New York, new style, of St. Louis."<sup>59</sup> It was a very pleasant fairway, broad and straight, containing such buildings as the Courthouse and Planter's House Hotel. By 1846 Fourth and Market streets were the principal streets for retail trade. Market Street, running at right angles with the river, had become quite a thoroughfare, and was a good business street. These were the principal business streets of St. Louis. The streets both east and west of Fourth were mostly occupied by dwellings and workshops,<sup>60</sup> and, compared with the older streets in the lower part of the city, these newer avenues were broad and spacious.<sup>61</sup> In 1845, Fifth Street was incomplete in development, although six or seven places for religious worship were available, constructed on the corners of various streets.

While St. Louis was gradually growing westward, one unique feature of its expansion stood out. This concerned the matter of settlement. Contrary to the general custom predominant in the settlement of the West, the northern part of the city was comparatively neglected by the masses, as the greatest number of the population decided to reside in the southern portion of the city, and thus Frenchtown<sup>62</sup> resulted.

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<sup>59</sup> As taken from a traveler's remarks in 1847 and quoted in St. Louis Business Directory for 1845, p. 53.

<sup>60</sup> Skillman, op. cit., 58.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 9.

<sup>62</sup> As taken from a traveler's remarks in 1845 and quoted in the St. Louis Business Directory for 1847, pp. 103, 105.

A description of St. Louis in this early time cannot leave out mention of two famous features: the Mounds and Chouteau's Pond. In 1837 a contemporary reporter enumerated upwards of one hundred mounds within seven miles of the city, with an altitude of from ten to sixty feet, and a circumference of about as many yards. The first group of ten mounds originally located near the heart of the city had already been destroyed, and a second group of four or five to the north were to be destroyed soon for the construction of a street. A third group of mounds was situated a few hundred yards above the second, and consisted of a dozen eminences.<sup>63</sup> It is probable that by 1841 these mounds were already removed. Wild, writing in June, 1841, only mentioned that "in the northern part of the city are several large ancient mounds."<sup>64</sup> Undoubtedly, one of the archeological remains that Wild was referring to was the Big Mound, which was thirty feet high and one hundred and fifty feet wide. It was located six hundred yards above the original position of the aforementioned third group of mounds,<sup>65</sup> standing in beautiful symmetry.<sup>66</sup> The Big Mound was situated on the northeast corner of Mound and Broadway until 1869, when it was razed. It was among the most remarkable archeological remains in the United States,<sup>67</sup> claiming to be of aboriginal

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63 Mayer, op. cit., 13.

64 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 13.

65 Mayer, op. cit., 13.

66 Wyman, "Some Reminiscences of Old St. Louis,"

p. 15, St. Louis Reminiscences Envelope, MHS.

67 Scharf, op. cit., I, 95-96.

origin. From this Big Mound, parallel with the river, a row of smaller mounds stretched away to the northwest for several miles along the bluffs. In 1837 the comment was made on the shocking indifference that the people of St. Louis manifested toward these great heritages of past history.<sup>69</sup> Yet, regardless of this, it became a prominent landmark for all the surrounding country, and every picture of old St. Louis showed it as a leading feature, giving St. Louis its name as the "Mound City."<sup>70</sup>

The other landmark of the period which should be briefly mentioned is Chouteau's Pond, a beautiful sheet of water lying on the southwest borders of the city.<sup>71</sup> Auguste Chouteau, one of the original settlers of St. Louis, expanded Chouteau's Mill Pond to the dimensions of a small lake. The main body of the pond was about one-half mile long by three hundred yards across at its widest point. Eighth Street was at its easterly limits and Eleventh, its western limits, at about Spruce Street. However, the irregular shaped pond extended from its northernmost point at Market Street, between Ninth and Tenth, in a southwesterly direction to about Papin Street at its junction with Twelfth. The pond combined pleasure with utility. Besides its industrial services, it was the favorite spot for social and sports gatherings, picnics, and swimming.<sup>72</sup> A boating club

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68 Wyman, loc. cit., 15.

69 Mayer, op. cit., 13-14.

70 Wyman, loc. cit., 15.

71 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 15.

72 Scharf, op. cit., I, 159.

navigated on its waters in an elegant barge, as did fishermen and sportsmen in yawls and skiffs.<sup>73</sup> Indians who remained in St. Louis for a week or more also used its banks as a camping site.<sup>74</sup> It might be added that its moonlit shore was the favorite spot for young lovers.<sup>75</sup>

Other feature spots in the St. Louis locale were the United States Arsenal located in the southern limits of the city and an extensive cave a short distance below the latter. The village of Carondelet, nicknamed Vide Poche, was situated just five miles south of the city, and six miles farther south was Jefferson Barracks, the headquarters of General Atkinson and his troops.<sup>76</sup>

St. Louis and the surrounding settlements were not exactly situated alone in a wilderness, for even in 1841 there were several towns in the vicinity along both the Missouri and Illinois sides of the Mississippi River. In Missouri, there were Bellefontaine, Florissant, Manchester and St. Charles. On the Illinois side of the river were Cahokia, Illinoistown, Brooklyn, Belleville, and Alton. The distance to the farthest of these towns did not exceed twenty miles.<sup>77</sup>

Transportation to the aforementioned towns and other points across the Mississippi River was accomplished

73 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 13.

74 Hastings, "Recollections of Old St. Louis in the Forties," p. 1, St. Louis Reminiscences Envelope, MHS.

75 Scharf, op. cit., I, 159.

76 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 13.

77 Ibid.

by steam ferryboats between this city and Illinoistown.  
 Yet, transportation inside the city was very limited. An  
 attempt had been made in March, 1838, by a Mr. Belcher,  
 to establish an omnibus line. The latter had a capacity  
 of twelve people; however, it did not receive the patronage  
 it deserved, and operations soon were suspended. The only  
 alternative was to use your own horse, buggy, or feet.

However, land travel to or from St. Louis was of a  
 more superior nature. An organized daily transportation  
 service existed, consisting of a stage line, the United  
 States Mail Stage Line, carrying mail and passengers from  
 St. Louis every day at 2 P.M. The line boasted that it  
 would travel "positively through" to Louisville in two days  
 and nineteen hours "including stoppages." Of course, the  
 passengers had to change and take the Louisville stage at  
 Vincennes, which would be reached thirty-two hours after  
 leaving St. Louis. The stage charged various fees for trans-  
 porting the mail. For instance, the cost of delivering  
 letters was progressively rated according to the distance,  
 the price ranging from six to fifty cents, while the cost of  
 newspapers was much lower at one to two cents. Needless to  
 say, this was the only form of public land transportation  
 available as railroads had not yet extended as far west

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78 Ibid., 11.

79 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1205.

80 Missouri Argus, August 15, 1838.

81 Ibid., September 3, 1838.

82 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1205.

83 Daily Missouri Republican, October 4, 1841.

84 Ibid.

85 Peoples Organ, September 6, 1842.

as St. Louis.

Water transportation was the most popular form of communication to or from St. Louis, with steamboats visiting the city daily, utilizing the four rivers: (1) The Upper and Lower Mississippi; (2) the Missouri; (3) the Illinois, and (4) the Ohio. These vessels, stopping off at ports along the way, created a great competition amongst themselves for passengers and commerce. It was not unusual to see a ship's passengers listed in a newspaper advertisement attesting to the hospitality aboard a particular steamboat, attended by a certain captain. The only guide to their rate of speed was the following: In May, 1841, the steamer Missouri arrived from New Orleans in four days and twenty-three hours from port to port, being the quickest trip that had ever been recorded.

Wild credited the rapid growth and prosperity of St. Louis to the power of steam, which had advanced civilization and refinement. Beginning with the first steamboat to arrive here, the General Pike, in 1817, an important era in St. Louis history began, which gave an impetus to the city's growth. "Certainly no interior town possesses superior commercial facilities," boasted the St. Louis Directory for 1842. The evidence to support this statement was obvious to the casual observer. The city's strategic

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<sup>86</sup> Thomas and Wild, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Shepherd, The Early History of St. Louis and Missouri From the First Exploration by White Men in 1673 to 1843, p. 158.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas and Wild, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>89</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. vi.



location could be demonstrated by the undeniable fact that, due to the depth of the water, the boats which could be profitably employed in the lower trade, could not ordinarily extend their trips beyond St. Louis. In the same manner, boats employed on the upper rivers, being smaller, could not be so profitably employed in the southern trade. The result of this was to make St. Louis the great shipping point for the imports and exports of the vast territories lying north and west of her, and a considerable portion of the country south and east. This feeling of optimism was not a lone example of public pride, but was the general feeling which pervaded the visitors and travelers who viewed St. Louis during this period. Their fervor knew no bounds. In 1842 the St. Louis Directory, compiled from January 1, 1841 to January 1, 1842, expressed an enthusiastic prediction typical of the time:

She (St. Louis) may, with propriety, be said to be the commercial mart for all the country from the mouth of the Ohio north, and from Lake Michigan, west. A glance at the map will show that there are few, if any cities, in the world possessing equal facilities with this, or similarly situated in the heart of so large and fertile a tract of country - a country possessing a soil and climate and agricultural facilities sufficient to supply the whole Union with bread stuffs and meats - with mines, the richness and inexhaustible amount of whose ores are not equalled in the world - with coal, water power, and other facilities, for any and every species of manufactories. Surrounded by all these elements, with a navigation reaching from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico and from the base of the Rocky Mountains to the Alleghenies, it requires neither the spirit of prophecy nor a stretch of credulity to believe that the day must come when St. Louis

will be the most populous and largest inland town on the continent.<sup>90</sup>

Yet, this directory admitted that the commerce of St. Louis was in its infancy, as the country around the city was just beginning to develop its resources. Nevertheless, the author of this 1842 publication stated that the trade "at present is of immense magnitude."<sup>91</sup> St. Louis citizens could look for convincing proof of this statement at the fact that the exports and imports of the city during 1841 exceeded \$30,000,000; and 1,928 steamboats arrived at the port with an aggregate tonnage of 262,681 tons,<sup>92</sup> a decided improvement over 1840.<sup>93</sup> Much produce was also carried south by flatboats and keelboats.

Some of the exports were tobacco, whiskey, wheat, oats, castor oil, rope, butter, beeswax, furs, fruit, tallow, lead, port, and onions.<sup>94</sup> In exchange, St. Louis was supplied produce for its own sustenance from three sources: (1) The fertile American bottoms in Illinois (via steam ferryboats plying between the city and Illinois town;<sup>95</sup> (2) the farm crops brought into the local market by country folk (who then used the remuneration to purchase merchandise in the city);<sup>96</sup> and (3) the venison and smaller game procured in

90 Ibid., vi-vii.

91 Ibid., vii.

92 Ibid.

93 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1, p. vi.

94 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, pp. vii-viii.

95 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 11.

96 Daily Evening Gazette, September 21, 1840.

the vicinity in great quantities (which were consequently sold at low prices).<sup>97</sup>

There were also doctors, lawyers, merchants, tailors, lithographic printers, grocers, druggists, and wholesalers in dry goods, among other occupations in St. Louis.<sup>98</sup> Yet by 1841 a budding local manufacturing business began to thrive. Wild commented in June, 1841, that nearly every month brought a newly established manufactory.<sup>99</sup> The following are a few of the industries commenced in this city, each of which may be said to have been in its embryo stages, stove, grate, tin and copper factories; castor oil, bale rope, boots and shoes, saddle harness and trunk manufactories; carriage and cabinet makers; hatters, tobacco and cigar, lead pipe, linseed oil, and glass cutting establishments; gristmills and sawmills; fancy soap, artificial flowers, pottery and stoneware factories; patent scales and balance, jewelry and silver plate; and a hosiery firm. At this early date, the leading industry was that of boots and shoes.

A successful future was predicted by the directory of 1842<sup>100</sup> for the first two boat yards which were new and prominent additions to St. Louis. They had already built several boats by the end of 1841. Previously, of the eighty-six steamboats locally owned in 1841,<sup>101</sup> the majority

97 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 11.

98 Daily Missouri Republican, October 4, 1841.

99 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 11.

100 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, pp.

ix-xi.

101 Ibid., vii.

of them had been manufactured in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. Thus, St. Louis was entering the competition with its sister river cities. A floating dock, in charge of repairing and rebuilding boats, was established in 1841. It became a quick success, as most of the boats in the western waters came to the local port for their fixings. An added factor were the facilities available for docking the boats. This improvement was of more value here than anywhere in the inland area of the United States, as the water in the Mississippi River was always sufficient for each boat to arrive and depart safely.<sup>103</sup> At any rate, the levee always presented a busy scene since there were sometimes thirty steamboats in the port at one time.<sup>104</sup> These aforementioned items were the main industries in St. Louis in 1841. With this good start toward manufacturing greatness, it is interesting to note the St. Louis New Era's comment of November 9, 1841, that St. Louis was behind Cincinnati and Louisville in the race for manufactures.<sup>105</sup> This was one race St. Louis was intensely desirous of winning, since it was felt in one quarter that the achievement of victory could guarantee the pre-eminence of the city. The Daily Missouri Republican of August 16, 1843, promoted this belief:

All that is necessary now to complete success of St. Louis over every point in this great valley is the establishment of manufactures;

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102 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 13.

103 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xi.

104 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., p. 13.

105 St. Louis New Era, November 9, 1841.

and Eastern capitalists will soon see the vast advantages she possesses from her situation and resources, for profitable investment in this branch of trade.<sup>106</sup>

In 1838 The Board of Trade was set up in St. Louis to systematize the manner of doing business. However, by 1841, there was as yet no hall where business could be discussed. Thus a confused situation existed which caused sellers to hunt all over town for a buyer, as there was no place for the two to meet a competitor. Also there was no city weigher, no city inspectors, and no well-defined or reliable standards or grades.<sup>107</sup>

Local business had yet another difficulty. The city had been affected by the panic of 1837 and the resulting depression. By the spring of 1838 the merchants were complaining that the shortage of currency was handicapping their business. This situation caused the Daily Missouri Republican on April 20, 1838, to report that not one-tenth of the business done in 1837 would be done in 1838.<sup>108</sup> By 1840 business had decreased noticeably, and many firms had been forced out of business. Yet, in comparison with other cities, St. Louis escaped with little damage. As Elihu Shepherd, a contemporary resident, stated, while the financial crash of 1837 hurt most people, few mercantile firms failed, as one merchant sustained another.<sup>109</sup> On

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106 Daily Missouri Republican, August 16, 1843.

107 "A Few St. Louis, Missouri Recollections of the Past Seventy Years," p. 7, St. Louis Reminiscences Envelope, MHS.

108 Mayer, *op. cit.*, 81-82.

109 Ibid., 87-88.

December 31, 1841, the Daily Missouri Republican summed up the business situation by mentioning the difficulties and tightness of the money available. There was, however, a high rate of exchange in local business circles. Thus, by the end of 1841, the effects of the panic were still evident.<sup>110</sup>

Interest rates in St. Louis were ten percent per annum on all debts after maturity until paid.<sup>111</sup> This was among the highest in the country. In New York five percent was normal. Returns on investments were unusually high also.<sup>112</sup> This financial crisis did not seriously affect the one bank in St. Louis, the Bank of the State of Missouri, which had a capital of \$5,000,000,<sup>113</sup> or the nine insurance companies existing in 1841.<sup>114</sup> Many of the latter were engaged in a partial banking business, and at all times, especially so during the cautious policy of the State Bank of Missouri, kept a large portion of money in circulation. This kept business from stagnation and infused vitality; and, in many instances,<sup>115</sup> preserved some departments of trade from total cessation.

This confusion in the field of finance was not relegated to chaos in the business world, for there was actual privation among the poorer and middle classes.

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110 Daily Missouri Republican, December 31, 1841.

111 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 1.

112 Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 326.

113 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 12.

114 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 111.

115 Edwards, Edwards' Great West and the Commercial Metropolis, 372.

During this period, prices were not unusually low. An immigrant would be sadly disillusioned if he thought he could live inexpensively in St. Louis. Usually the prices on commodities fluctuated more with the seasons than from year to year. Because of the different conditions of supply and demand, the cost of these items in comparison with each other was very different than it is today. Manufactured articles, such as clothes, were especially expensive. Eggs sold for eight cents a dozen, and milk for six and one-half cents a quart.<sup>116</sup> The Merchant's Coffee House Restaurant offered the purchaser a month's ticket at nine dollars for a thirty-day period, three meals a day.<sup>117</sup> In the transportation field, the stage rates to Alton and Springfield were announced as reduced to \$1.50 and \$5.00 respectively.<sup>118</sup> It is not known what the price of fuel was in St. Louis at the time, but it probably was not too highly priced, as an excellent quality of bituminous coal was plentiful in the area. In fact, it was boasted that the city never would have a scarcity of this article, as it had an "inconceivable" amount of this raw material.<sup>119</sup> This factor aided the growth of industry in St. Louis.<sup>120</sup>

One item manufactured extensively in 1841 was bricks, for 28,000,000 of them were then produced. They were put to use immediately, as 384 of the city's 561 permanent

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116 Forster, *op. cit.*, 326.

117 Daily Evening Gazette, October 16, 1841.

118 Ibid., October 28, 1841.

119 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. viii.

120 Ibid.

buildings erected in 1841 were brick dwellings. A little over one hundred were frame, and the rest were composed of stone and brick.<sup>121</sup> They had all the "modern improvements" of the day, and many would have compared in size and architecture with the best in the Atlantic cities.<sup>122</sup> In fact, so impressed was the Mayor of St. Louis in 1842 with the city's progress that he said St. Louis was already regarded as the "New York of the West" and would some day probably be the seat of the government.<sup>123</sup>

Yet, by current standards, the growing city of St. Louis had few conveniences in 1841. It did have a water system of unknown effectiveness in operation. The water was supplied from the Mississippi, and forced by steam to a reservoir on the top of the ancient mound in the northern part of the city, whence it was conveyed by iron pipes into all streets.<sup>124</sup> However, the streets of St. Louis were not well cared for. There was no adequate sewer system. For example, in July, 1841, the citizens on Pine Street, between Main and Second, begged to have the stagnant water removed. The stench was unbearable; and while the streets were sprinkled every day to allay the dust, the gutters remained in their "putrid state from one street to the other."<sup>125</sup> The wet season which lasted one-third of the

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121 Ibid.

122 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 9.

123 Williams, op. cit., 5.

124 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 9.

125 Williams, op. cit., 6-7.



year in 1849, did not help matters any. Another was the  
 126  
 poorly lighted city streets. By early January, 1840, the  
 127  
 St. Louis Gas Light Company was in operation, and soon there-  
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 after an appeal was made for some light to appear on the dark  
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 St. Louis streets. However, it was not until 1847 that the  
 130  
 city celebrated the completion of the gas light system.

In the meantime, with coal oil or petroleum then unknown,  
 the commonest form of illumination prior to the introduction  
 of gas was sperm oil, burned in lamps with circular burners.  
 Candles, sperm, or tallow, were also largely used, as well  
 as a "dangerous fluid called camphene." However, some gas  
 131  
 and oil lamps began to appear during 1841. One result of  
 132  
 this introduction of gas was the killing of many trees which  
 lined the streets. Fine trees bordered nearly every street,  
 at least those not in the business section. For instance,  
 on Fourth Street, locust trees were the favorite, while  
 maple trees predominated on Fifth Street. But progress  
 also brought imperfect piping, which caused the gas to  
 escape and reach the roots of the trees. Thus, the bounti-  
 133  
 ful supply of trees soon disappeared.

Another fault of the streets was the lack of street  
 134  
 names on the corners. While it is true that Charles

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127 Williams, op. cit., 6.

128 Daily Missouri Republican, January 2, 1841.

129 Ibid., March 9, 1840.

130 Williams, op. cit., 8.

131 Wyman, loc. cit., 13.

132 St. Louis New Era, May 29, 1841.

133 Wyman, loc. cit., 13.

134 Harold, "What I Don't Like About St. Louis,"  
 p. 1, St. Louis Reminiscences Envelope, MHS.

Keemle had published a city directory for 1840-1, and statisticians were busy preparing another one, these were not always entirely accurate. They were the compilation of the occupation and location of as many residents as could be gathered, or who were home at the time these statisticians arrived. At any rate, even with the address at hand, the stranger would have encountered difficult times indeed on the poorly drained, semi-darkened, undesignated streets of St. Louis.

It was not an uncommon sight to see both non-citizens as well as citizens promenading along the city streets. Besides travelers, groups of Indians with many feathers and much red and yellow paint, wandered through the streets in their characteristic garb of blankets, leggings, and moccasins.<sup>135</sup> They usually stopped off at the paint stores in town.<sup>136</sup> According to Henry P. Wyman's reminiscences of the 1840's and 1850's, these American aborigines were "great beggars, and boldly invaded the kitchens seeking gifts of food."<sup>137</sup> Often Indian boys put on an exhibition for idle watchers of their accuracy with the bow and arrow on Fourth Street. Frequently they attempted to knock the coins out of the shingles stuck in a curbstone by the interested onlookers.<sup>138</sup> The marksman took all. Sometimes the American Indians remained for a week or more, camping, as mentioned

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<sup>135</sup> Wyman, loc. cit., 12-13.

<sup>136</sup> Hastings, loc. cit., 1.

<sup>137</sup> Wyman, loc. cit., 13.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

earlier, on the shores of Chouteau's Pond. Since Missouri was a slave state during this period, it was a customary sight to see Negro slaves being auctioned on Fourth Street on the steps along the east side of the Courthouse. In fact, Wyman recalls two slave pens existing on Locust Street between Third and Fourth, and the other on Fifth and Myrtle.<sup>140</sup> However, it might be added that a small number of free Negroes lived in St. Louis. In 1844, Negroes numbering 5,185, of which 673 were free, made up fifteen percent of the population. There was a strong anti-abolitionist sentiment in St. Louis. Yet, as long as the Negro recognized the fact of his slavery, he generally had no trouble, and was regarded with toleration, and, sometimes, even with love by the white citizenry.<sup>141</sup>

The laboring class of this time worked long and hard, usually from sunrise to sunset prior to May, 1840. It was then that a mass meeting of journeymen was held in the city protesting the long hours. The sequel was that the ten-hour system was adopted.<sup>142</sup> A perusal of the newspapers of the period has revealed to this author several things about St. Louisans and their feelings. Frequently, the laborer went to work about 8 A.M., went back home for his lunch and supper, and returned home about 8 P.M. He had better not relax by smoking on the public street, as this was

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139 Hastings, loc. cit., 13.

140 Wyman, loc. cit., 13-14.

141 Mayer, op. cit., 207-208.

142 Shepherd, op. cit., 152-153.

considered loathsome by society. Women generally stayed at home; yet it was interesting to note that in the late 1840's a news item told of a certain coffee shop which hired waitresses who performed as admirably as the usual men waiters. Seldom did women venture out at night unescorted. The general feeling was that woman's place was at home, and once she mixed with the evil morals of the business world, she lost the exalted position she had held. This same argument was extended to the political field. Most St. Louis dailies felt that a woman should definitely stay out of politics, leaving voting and office holding to the males. However, women did attend the theater in fair numbers, and, of course, the local balls. It was the fashion to arrive late; so it was after nine o'clock before an immense number would jam the hall where the dance was held. It was also the custom for women to consume very little when they ate in public, although men had no such limitation. Frederick Gerstaecker, a German traveler visiting St. Louis in 1837 remarked that a lady staying at the local inn usually retired to her room after dinner, where she could nibble to her heart's content, and satisfy the lingering hunger. Upon leaving the city, Gerstaecker even encountered a segregated boat

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143 St. Louis New Era, September 7, 1842.

144 Darby, Personal Recollections, 333.

145 Gerstaecker, Streif- und Jagdzuege Durch Die Vereinigten Staaten Nordamerikas, 92, as translated by B. Neugarten.

with a portion of the floating palace set aside for single  
 women.<sup>146</sup> It was on these public occasions, and especially  
 at home, that the local newspapers reminded women not to  
 be naggers, but always to be graceful, chaste, smiling,  
 and to remain in good health. To accomplish the latter,  
 according to the 1842 comment by the newly formed People's  
 Organ, women were urged to shed their big bonnets, a few  
 of the multitudinous skirts which they always wore, the  
 bustle, tight lacing, and the hooped skirt (which caused a  
 woman to take up the entire sidewalk when she promenaded).<sup>147</sup>  
 "Don't be a slave to fashion as it is unhealthful," was the  
 theme of many of their pointed articles. This paper carried  
 its campaign even further by encouraging a group to poke  
 fun at unwholesome women's dress--the Anti-Bustle Society.  
 This was not the first group formed of such a nature, since  
 the belle of 1835 who dressed in mammoth sleeves, a long,  
 shapeless dress, and corsets, also drew attention at that  
 time with the organization of an Anti-Corset Society.<sup>148</sup>  
 In other words, the hour glass figure was considered in poor  
 taste as well as unhealthy.<sup>149</sup> However, this was not to  
 cause women to go to the other extreme and wear trousers,  
 since this was considered the "worse evil of all" and neces-  
 sitated a fine.<sup>150</sup> This stringent conduct was imposed upon  
 women because they were considered life's blessed creatures

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<sup>146</sup> Gerstaëcker, Gesammelte Schriften, 130, as  
 translated by B. Neugarten.

<sup>147</sup> Peoples Organ, September 9, 1842.

<sup>148</sup> Daily Evening Herald and Commercial Advertiser,

August 15, 1835.

<sup>149</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, October 8, 1856.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., August 24, 1839.

in contrast to men, as evidenced by the comment of the Daily Evening Gazette in November, 1838: "The other sex is a brute--a reptile, that crawls prone in the dust, in comparison to woman."<sup>151</sup> Also the female gender was respected since she was touted as the molder and instructor of her children's conduct and values. For this reason women's education was encouraged as even more necessary than learning was for men.

The only comment on young children was that they should attend school. However, the children were strongly rebuked in the mid-1850's for juvenile delinquency, and, since the cause of it was difficult to determine, dire results were predicted for this new generation.

The morality of the adult citizenry was not free from evil. Drunkedness, wife beating, stealing, dishonest business dealing, and, at times, murder, were all common crimes which were deplored. Particularly corrupt was "Battle Row", the city's slum section located at the north end of the levee. Gambling and crooked activities of all sorts disturbed the peace of that area. Also local laws banning prostitution and duelling still needed to be enforced by the elected marshal.<sup>152</sup>

While women were not enfranchised as yet, the year 1841 was a memorable one for many male St. Louisans. In that year an act was passed by the State Legislature

<sup>151</sup> Daily Evening Gazette, November 6, 1838.

<sup>152</sup> Mayer, op. cit., 199-200.

abolishing property qualifications for voters and municipal officers. <sup>153</sup> The citizens annually elected a government organized under a mayor, a recorder, auditor, city engineer, and a city marshal. <sup>154</sup> Each voter elected his ward representative to the two legislative houses in the City Council: (1) The Board of Aldermen, composed of ten members -- two representatives from each ward; and (2) the Board of Delegates, consisting of fifteen men, each ward having three delegates. The City Marshal had two deputies and a City Guard to carry out law enforcement. <sup>155</sup> The City Guard had only recently been organized in 1839 as an outgrowth of the old City Watch under City Ordinance Number 174. The Mayor was to appoint sixteen men, four from each ward, by and with the consent of the Board of Delegates. They were to be under the supervision of the aforementioned City Marshal, who received a salary of \$900 per year. He picked two men from the deputies to serve as his lieutenants at a salary of \$600 per year apiece. The deputies were each paid \$500 per year, on a monthly basis. This same ordinance required the deputies to be between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five, with no interest whatsoever in any tavern or coffee house. Their tour of duty was from 9:00 P.M. until daylight between October 1 and April 1 and from 10:00 P.M. until daylight between April 2 and September 30. While they were on duty they

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<sup>153</sup> Shepherd, *op. cit.*, 155; Daily Missouri Republican, January 4, 1841.

<sup>154</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, January 4, 1841.

<sup>155</sup> Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 9.

were required to carry a rattle and a four-foot hickory staff which had a crook at one end, and a steel point at the other end. Guards had the right to call upon any citizen for aid. Should the citizen refuse, he was subject to a fine of \$50. Sentry boxes were erected, from which they were to proclaim the hours of the night as indicated by the clock in the tower of the old Cathedral. In 1843, Revised Ordinances were passed which provided for the formation of a secret police under the supervision of the mayor. The new group lasted only a short time. Also, by 1843, the city police force was increased to include a captain, three lieutenants and twenty-eight privates.<sup>156</sup> Apparently this guard was filled by political appointment, as it was frequently criticized and praised by the partisan local newspapers, depending upon which party was in power.

There certainly was enough activity to keep the law enforcement department busy. The Daily Missouri Republican of May 29, 1841, generally warned of the spread of crime in St. Louis.<sup>157</sup> It pinpointed its fear in October of the same year, alerting everyone to the fact that pick-pockets were infesting the city.<sup>158</sup> The depository for the evildoers was the city jail on Front Street.<sup>159</sup> The city obviously suffered from another sore. Stragglers and loafers had become a problem. The latter were jolted

<sup>156</sup> Mayer, *op. cit.*, 31-33.

<sup>157</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, May 29, 1841.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., October 11, 1841.

<sup>159</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 24.



when they read on Monday morning, October 4, 1841, that  
 the city workhouse was fully erected and open for business,<sup>160</sup>  
 being located at the intersection of Park Avenue with the  
 western boundary of the city. The Republican warned:<sup>161</sup> "It  
 is time for loafers to look out .... and those graceless  
 vagabonds who can't pay for loafing, will hereafter have<sup>162</sup>  
 to work for it."

Justice was available in the person of the newly  
 expanded St. Louis judicial system, which included five  
 courts: the County Court, the Circuit Court, the Criminal  
 Court, the Probate Court, and the Court of Common Pleas.<sup>163</sup>  
 The latter was the newest, having been established by<sup>164</sup>  
 the State Legislature in January, 1841.

The city also had the protection of three volunteer<sup>165</sup>  
 military companies and seven volunteer fire fighting units.<sup>166</sup>  
 There was no civic paid fire department at this time.

In case of any disaster, the local populace could  
 be treated at the St. Louis Dispensary on the corner of  
 Fourth and Pine,<sup>167</sup> and also at the City Hospital, at the  
 corner of Fourth and Spruce.<sup>168</sup> The health of the city was  
 generally good and free of epidemics of note. Children  
 under five had the highest mortality, the chief killer

160 Daily Missouri Republican, October 4, 1841.

161 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xii.

162 Daily Missouri Republican, October 4, 1841.

163 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. iv.

164 Shepherd, op. cit., 157.

165 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. v.

166 Simpson, "Reminiscences of Early St. Louis,"

p. 5, St. Louis Reminiscences Envelope, NMS.

167 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. viii.

168 Ibid., p. 129.

being cholera infantum. For some reason, male infants died in far greater numbers than female. The main causes of death in the city were: Bilious fever, consumption, convulsion, and dysentery. The summer months were the most unhealthy times of the year, and contained the highest death rate.<sup>169</sup> The city's unwanted children were cared for by two orphan asylums operated by the Catholic and Protestant women, respectively, one for each sex.<sup>170</sup> Twenty literary, social, and benevolent societies existed, which aided many in distress. Among these were three temperance societies and various religious and masonic orders.<sup>171</sup>

Meanwhile, the educational opportunities in St. Louis were flourishing. There were several private male and female seminaries, as well as three public schools. The latter were erected and supported by a public fund. The city could also boast of several institutions of higher learning. These were St. Louis University, a Catholic institution, and Kemper College, an Episcopalian sponsored school. Each had a large number of students, and each sponsored a medical school.<sup>172</sup> However, these private colleges were soon to have a rival, although not in St. Louis--the University of Missouri, which held its first classes in 1841.<sup>173</sup>

However, St. Louis had several things to improve

169 Mayer, op. cit., 203-204.

170 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xii.

171 Ibid., x.

172 Snow., xi-xii.

173 Snow, op. cit., I, 27.

upon. There was still much illiteracy prevalent throughout the state. One in seventeen whites in Missouri could not read or write. St. Louis' figures weren't available.<sup>174</sup> Also teachers' salaries were very low. The Daily Missouri Republican criticized this, as well as the inequality in pay between the sexes: Men received \$800 per annum for the same kind of work women did at \$400 per year. Teachers definitely needed a raise, stated this paper, as this salary was "certainly too small to induce good teachers to come among us."<sup>175</sup>

St. Louis had other ways to disseminate knowledge; that is, she had an ample number of newspapers. The majority of these papers had four pages and were generally about the same size as today's dailies, and perhaps a trifle wider. The Daily Missouri Republican was the leader, supporting the newly-formed Whig party with principles of a conservative nature. It was violently pro-slavery, as were the overwhelming majority of newspapers in St. Louis at the time. During the 1840 political campaign, President Van Buren's sanity was doubted by the Republican, when the paper reported that he suggested that Negroes be allowed to vote and offer testimony as an equal in Federal court.<sup>176</sup> The Republican was further incensed in July, 1842, over the publicity accorded the activities of a local Negro temperance

174 Daily Missouri Republican, January 14, 1842.

175 Ibid., January 26, 1842.

176 Ibid., July 10, 1840.

177 Ibid., July 3, 1840.

society by two other local papers. The editors felt it a dangerous precedent, which, if continued, would augur misfortune for the future St. Louis community. Thus they published the following stinging renunciation of the incident, and inadvertently, further publicized it.

A practice seems to be growing up with our City papers which deserves the reprehension of the community. Last week the [Peoples] Organ contained a notice, published in the usual form of such things, that the "African Temperance Society" would celebrate the Fourth of July in the vicinity of our city; and on Tuesday or Wednesday last, both the Organ and Bulletin published an account of the "doings" of the darkies at the said celebration. Now this is going too far - this is recognizing our very slaves as a part of this community - it is making them in fact a portion of the people - elevating them to a degree of consideration not to be tolerated in a slave state.

What next: Why, we shall shortly have Negro processions along our streets - military companies, with their banners and their bands, emulating the ceremonies of the white population of the land. This ought not to be. The public will not permit it, nor will they tolerate those newspapers that are thus prostituted to the service of Negroes, bond or free.

It is understood that on the Fourth there was a celebration back of town, by the City Watch. They must have been in the vicinity of the "African" celebration and it would have well become them to have broken up the proceedings of the sable patriots, and scattered their assembly.<sup>178</sup>

Other "platforms" of the Republican were the following: To support the momentarily popular Temperance movement; to encourage education for women; to encourage the state of matrimony while denouncing bachelorhood; to publish fiction stories teaching one to honor their parents and all people;

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<sup>178</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, July 8, 1842.

to maintain chastity; to rest on the Sabbath; to write with overtones of anti-British, anti-monarchical, and pro-republican feelings; and, as practically every other paper of the period practiced, to defend vociferously its favorite political party.

It was not an uncommon thing to see a person's or a group's nationality mentioned in a news article, with the German and Irish being those most commonly seen. A Negro was always mentioned as such, or denoted many times by a sarcastic imitation of his accent within the article. Usually a person would not be identified by his religion, although on occasion a name might be followed by the word "Jew," the only religion occasionally denoted by the papers at that time.

The daily newspapers appeared every day except Sunday, for it was considered unthinkable to do work of any kind on this rest day. However, eventually, the Republican broke this religious barrier. They had stoutly maintained in the late 1830's that the Monday morning edition was actually printed on Sunday evening, and thus commented that it would be better to publish a Sunday paper than one the following day. Yet, their plea failed; however, in 1848 the Daily Missouri Republican broke tradition, and issued the first Sunday edition in St. Louis history. Henceforth, a newspaper was published seven days a week.

The St. Louis dailies of 1841 usually contained four

pages, the first of which was devoted exclusively to advertisements of businessmen, insurance companies, lawyers, and doctors. The latter profession was sometimes occupied by an individual of various abilities as seen by the following announcement in the local German newspaper, Anzeiger des Westens:

SPANISH LEECHES

A new shipment of....best Spanish Leeches received.... [for] cupping, letting of veins....[Am also proficient at] extracting of teeth and all that belongs to the field of surgery. Furthermore I recommend my barbershop and hair cutting business where each one of my valued customers will be served to his complete satisfaction. Orders received at....well-known barbershop and at Post Office on Second [Street].

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Ph Ewald

The second page was relegated to auctions, sales, rent notices, news items, marriages, deaths, steamboat arrivals and departures, commodities arriving at port, local notices of a social and religious nature and announcements concerning the Chamber of Commerce officers and committees. Whatever space was left was devoted to advertisements of the type presented on page one. Pages three and four contained various notices of auctions, items for rent or sale, and the availability of certain merchandise at local stores. In many cases the advertisements were left in for months at a time. Sometimes the announcement of a bookstore embellished the page. One set of books, James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales, was available at this date. However, book reviews were the

exception and not the rule. In order to add some variety to the news section, several jokes or humourously written news articles would appear. For instance, the Daily Missouri Republican wrote: "A German physician has published a medical tract in which he maintains that ladies of weak nerves should not be permitted to sleep alone. It is said the book is in great demand."<sup>180</sup>

From this aforementioned material it can be gathered that news items took up hardly one-fourth of the paper in 1841. Of this, national interest predominated, with local news a poor second. However, considering the period, there was a surprisingly large amount of foreign news. The national news was gleaned mostly from the columns of exchange papers, which were frequently sent to St. Louis by steamboats when the roads were too muddy. One must remember that there was not as yet any telegraph service.<sup>181</sup> The reporting of foreign news from Europe and Asia was either by a letter to the editor of an individual's travels or a reprint from an eastern paper.

Reporting was generally very detailed and the facts were generally accurate. Pseudonyms were seen frequently at the end of a letter to the editor. Extreme partisan criticism was the order of the day, sometimes even involv-

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<sup>180</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, October 4, 1841.

<sup>181</sup> Simpson, op. cit., 5.

ing local papers whose political beliefs were the opposite. By the middle of 1841, there were eight newspapers printed and distributed in St. Louis. Two were weeklies, one devoted to agriculture, and the other a German weekly which espoused Democratic principles. The six dailies, the majority of which were morning papers, were divided as follows: Three pro-Whig, one Democratic, one for the new Native American cause, and one daily which called itself neutral.<sup>182</sup> In some cases the party aided the paper favorable to its cause through finances and patronage, such as a local office or the much desired right to carry the notice of letters left wanting at the post office, located on the corner of Second and Chestnut.<sup>183</sup>

Elihu Shepherd commented on the year 1841: "No year had witnessed so many changes as this at that time, and each day seemed to promise some extraordinary event to fill the streets with news bearers and willing hearers of the latest wonders."<sup>184</sup> A resume of some of these events which St. Louisans read and discussed during that year were the following: In January, 1841, the State Legislature established the Court of Common Pleas in St. Louis County; on February 23, 1841, the St. Louis Medical School first

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<sup>182</sup> Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 11.

<sup>183</sup> St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 109

<sup>184</sup> Shepherd, op. cit., 158



conferred degrees on its students; and in March, 1841, the Pennant announced that a new party had been formed in the United States under the name of the Native American Party or "Know Nothing" Party, as it was called by its opponents. Its platform rejected foreigners as members, and was against further immigration to this country. The Whigs of St. Louis were elated over the inauguration of President William Harrison on March 4, 1841, the first Whig elected to that high office; and their joy continued as they elected John D. Daggett as Mayor. Their joy abated greatly as the news arrived on April 13, 1841, that President Harrison had died on April 4, nine days previously. He was the first chief executive to die in office; so Vice-President John Tyler, who eventually did not follow the Whig platform, succeeded Harrison. At the time, the nine-day period of communication was considered a rapid movement of news.<sup>185</sup> In July, 1841, four Negroes were hanged for murder before an estimated crowd of 20,000 to 35,000 on Bloody Island. The event was on everyone's lips. Unfortunately, stated the Missouri Republican, women<sup>186</sup> were also included in the large crowd.

Business was steady, but not very brisk, as many people were waiting for Congress to follow the Whig proposal to create a national bank to stimulate commercial

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 157-158

<sup>186</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, July 10, 1841

action. However, President Tyler brought the anger of the Whigs upon him, and the applause of the Democrats, as he vetoed the Bank bill.<sup>187</sup> St. Louis Whigs angrily greeted this move by hanging President Tyler in effigy in front of the courthouse on the night of August 25, 1841.<sup>188</sup> Meanwhile, President Tyler, obviously worried over the McLeod case, then in progress, warned that the United States would give no aid to Canada in its fight against Great Britain, as we were at peace with the latter. Furthermore, the United States government would not be responsible, nor would it interfere, if American citizens were captured by Great Britain.<sup>189</sup>

Besides newspapers, other diversionary activities were available. For those who enjoyed reading, there were books available. While no public library existed, the St. Louis Lyceum Library was in operation; also, the various schools possessed libraries.<sup>190</sup> For those legally minded, the St. Louis Law Library existed to serve the lawyers who joined the library association. In 1838 only a little more than half of the less than forty lawyers in town joined.<sup>191</sup> Yet, St. Louis was just emerging from her frontier state in this period, and this fact was reflected in her cultural life.

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187 Shepherd, op. cit., 158  
 188 Daily Missouri Republican, August 28, 1841  
 189 Ibid., October 4, 1841  
 190 Mayer, op. cit., 178-179.  
 191 Ibid., 181

The local citizenry concentrated on the material things in life, and activity of an aesthetic nature lagged behind. True, a certain amount of community organizations were in operation by 1841. The Franklin Society and the St. Louis Lyceum were established to promote intellectual improvement by sponsoring lectures, debates, and discussions to stimulate the mind. Unfortunately, only a limited number of persons participated.<sup>192</sup>

Concerning the arts, drama was one of the leading amusements in the city. The St. Louis Theater had a double feature every night, with the plays changing frequently. It was the custom to give a benefit for the actor or actress on his or her last performance if he or she was thought deserving. Mrs. Farran had such a night on October 4, 1841. She participated in two plays for the evening, "Clari, the Maid of Milan," by John Howard Payne, and "Cherry and Fair Star, or the Children of Cyprus." It was not until the early 1850's that the benches in the theater were replaced with more comfortable seats fitted with backs. The doors opened for the performance at seven in the evening, and curtain time was at 7:30. Prices were announced in October, 1841, by the theater proprietors as reduced to 50¢ box and pit, and 25¢ for a gallery seat for a top dramatic performance.<sup>193</sup> The St. Louis Theater was considered in one

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 163-165.

<sup>193</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, October 4, 1841.

quarter as one of the finest for dramatic purposes in the Mississippi valley.<sup>194</sup> Located on the corner of Third and Olive streets, fronting 73 feet on the west side of the street by 160 feet in depth, the theater was beautifully constructed. Its exterior architecture was of the Grecian Ionic order, while the interior was Grecian Corinthian.<sup>195</sup> Yet, after a promising start in 1837,<sup>196</sup> drama soon declined here as elsewhere in the country.

Other cultural activities were art, literature, and classical music. Of the first two, there was little original work,<sup>197</sup> although the love of music was increasing.<sup>198</sup> Many affairs were held in the Concert Hall, a spacious building with a splendid salon appropriated to the musical entertainments and dancing assemblies. Five or six of the large local hotels also were available sites for such recreation, as well as rooming facilities. The four-story Planter's House Hotel extending 300 feet along the front of an entire city square, and the newest addition to local hospitality accommodations, was completed in April, 1841. According to Wild, a contemporary reporter and possibly a slightly biased one as well, the local hotels and boarding houses were "hardly excelled anywhere."<sup>199</sup>

More numerous than hotels or any local eating es-

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194 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 11  
 195 Ibid., 23  
 196 Ibid., 25  
 197 Mayer, op. cit., 187  
 198 Ibid., 174-175  
 199 Thomas and Wild, op. cit., 11.

establishments were the taverns and grog houses.<sup>200</sup> Other amusements included all that went with a trip to Chouteau's Pond-- swimming, picnicking, boating, etc. However, St. Louis' feeling for propriety forced one restriction: A ten-dollar fine was to be levied if anyone was caught swimming or bathing in the river or any public pond without clothes between daylight and 8 P.M.<sup>201</sup> Proper dress on such occasions, or the use of the City Bath on Third between Market and Walnut,<sup>202</sup> were the only salvation. A bath cost 25¢, or \$8.00 for a season ticket.<sup>203</sup>

Another spot of interest was the privately owned Museum. It contained, besides a variety of curiosities, a collection of rare Indian antiquities and fossil remains.<sup>204</sup> Circuses and dioramas also frequently were available to St. Louisans.<sup>205</sup> Occasionally, a unique diversion visited the city. Such was the case on Saturday, August 14, 1841, when a Mr. Hobart arranged and piloted the first balloon ascension in St. Louis history, exciting a good portion of the populace.<sup>206</sup>

Many local festivals accompanied by a parade were in frequent evidence in early St. Louis and were also the source of much enjoyment. For example, the anniversaries

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200 Mayer, *op. cit.*, 214  
 201 Daily Missouri Republican, June 8, 1841.  
 202 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 24.  
 203 Peoples Organ, May 28, 1842.  
 204 Thomas and Wild, *op. cit.*, 11.  
 205 Mayer, *op. cit.*, 188-189.  
 206 Daily Missouri Republican, August 16, 1841.

of the battle of New Orleans on January 8, Washington's birthday on February 22, St. Patrick's Day on March 17, and July 4th, Independence Day, were usually celebrated by various St. Louis volunteer military and fire companies, who participated in sponsoring balls and parades.<sup>207</sup> It appears that Christmas and New Years' observances were quiet. Business advertisements did not change for the approaching festivals, and few, if any, reminded the populace to buy gifts for the holy day or any holidays. However, these winter holidays were the season for visiting and entertaining; especially was this so on New Years day. On this occasion, the emphasis was on the daylight hours on January 1, which was commemorated by day long open houses, visiting, etc.<sup>208</sup> The Fourth of July in contrast, had several parading groups, the main one being the procession of professors and students of St. Louis University, who finally adjourned to the Concert Hall for the customary pronouncement of the Declaration of Independence and an oration. The festivity was completed with a closing prayer in the Cathedral.<sup>209</sup> Yet one thing was lacking in early St. Louis, and that was a public park. However, land for one was obtained by Mayor Darby in Dec-

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207 Hastings, *loc. cit.*, 2-3.

208 Franciscus, "When New Year's Call Was Real Function," p. 1, Early St. Louis Envelope, MHS.

209 Daily Missouri Republican, July 5, 1841.

ember, 1840. For those wishing to leave the routine  
of city life for a day out-of-town, there were, at cer-  
tain times, barbecues and excursions on the Mississippi,  
or, for sport lovers, horse-racing. The latter took  
place on Manchester Road about three and one half miles  
from St. Louis, with five-day meetings in May and October.  
Hunting and fishing were also quite a favorite with the  
local citizenry. Occasional boxing activity considered  
an evil at this time, an infrequent foot race, and a  
gymnasium for physical exercise, completed the agenda  
of available sporting activity in the area. Whether the  
local populace participated to any great extent is un-  
known; however, in 1855 American women were generally  
rebuked for their lack of exercise.

The St. Louis Chamber of Commerce of 1841, which  
would not have been at a loss for words in supporting the  
city's commerce and benevolent institutions, now could add  
its leisure hour activities to its listing of the city's  
advantages. Yet part of the non-working hours of some St.

210 This park site stretched from Twelfth Street  
on the east to Fourteenth Street on the west, and from  
Clark Street on the south to Market Street on the north.  
Darby, *op. cit.*

211 Bates, "St. Louis Past, Present, and Future",  
p. 6, St. Louis Reminiscences Envelope, MHS.

212 Mayer, *op. cit.*, 190.

213 Daily Missouri Republican, November 9, 1841.

214 Mayer, *op. cit.*, 190.

215 Daily Missouri Republican, October 8, 1856.

216 Mayer, *op. cit.*, 190-191.

217 Daily Missouri Republican, February 12, 1855.

218 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 1.

Louisians were spent in prayer at the sixteen Christian churches organized in St. Louis prior to organization of The United Hebrew Congregation. According to the St. Louis Directory for the Year 1842, these included the following churches: three Catholic, two Presbyterian, three Episcopalian, two Methodist, one Baptist, one Associate Reformed Presbyterian, one Unitarian, one German Lutheran, and two African. Thus eight different religious faiths had organized themselves for worship by the fall of 1841.<sup>219</sup>

If death occurred, religious and civic burial was available, as several of these churches, as well as the city, possessed five cemeteries organized by 1841. These burial grounds were operated by the Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Christ (Episcopal) churches, and the City of St. Louis.<sup>220</sup> Although not listed in the local papers of 1841, a Jewish cemetery also probably existed by this year.<sup>221</sup> This matter will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three.

It is interesting to note, if only for comparison's sake, the order of establishment of the various faiths prior to the Jewish attempt in the fall of 1841. King Louis XIV of France asserted in the code of 1724 for regulating

219 Ibid., xi.

220 Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1841.

221 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, St. Louis, 1842, p. 2



the province of Louisiana: "We prohibit any other religious rites other than those of the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church."<sup>222</sup> This pronouncement assured St. Louis that its first religious settlers would be of the Roman Catholic faith. It is said that when Pierre LaCledé landed, Father Meurin, stationed in the Illinois Country, canoed across the river, and held mass in the forest.<sup>223</sup> It was sometime soon after the arrival of LaCledé and his companions that the Catholics erected the first church in St. Louis. Proof of this was the notation made by Father Gibault, the Reverend Meurin's successor, who recorded on June 24, 1770, at the feast of St. John, the Baptist, that he blessed the "church built of wood."<sup>224</sup>

The Baptists were the first Protestant religious group to settle and worship here, arriving in St. Louis at a very early time.<sup>225</sup> This was the result of the policy of the Spanish Commandant Trudeau, who was in power at the turn of the nineteenth century. Scharf describes him as a liberal man, who tended to be lenient in his prosecution of non-believers if they outwardly professed the Catholic faith. He answered one Baptist who requested to hold religious meetings at his own house that such a project was against the law, and therefore, could not be granted.

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222 Scharf, *op. cit.*, I, 51.

223 *Ibid.*, II, 1638.

224 *Ibid.*, 1649.

225 *Ibid.*, 1671.

That is, I mean,...you must not put a bell on your house and call it a church, nor suffer anybody to christen your children except the parish priest, but if your friends choose to meet at your house, to sing, pray, and talk about religion, you will not be molested, provided you continue, as of course you are, 'a good Catholic.' 226

While there may have been Baptist meetings in St. Louis, there is no record of this until 1817. Soon after this date, in February, 1818, the First Baptist Church was organized, and building began on the first Protestant Church in St. Louis.<sup>227</sup>

The other Protestant groups followed in rapid succession. The Presbyterian faith, while not here prior to the Baptists, organized for worship several months earlier, in November, 1817. Thus, they were the first local Protestant faith to organize a congregation.<sup>228</sup> Christ Church became the first Episcopal Church when it organized in 1819,<sup>229</sup> while the Methodists first formed a religious society in 1820.<sup>230</sup> Fourteen years elapsed before the next church was organized in the city; this was the earliest German Protestant organization established, the German Evangelical Church of the Holy Ghost.<sup>231</sup> Shortly thereafter, in January, 1835, the first regular Unitarian

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226 Ibid., 1670.  
 227 Ibid., 1671.  
 228 Ibid., 1698-1699.  
 229 Ibid., 1713-1714, 1717.  
 230 Ibid., 1684.  
 231 Ibid., 1731.

worship in the city commenced.<sup>232</sup> In the early part of 1839, one hundred and eighty Lutherans arrived in St. Louis on the steamboat "Selma,"<sup>233</sup> fleeing from religious persecution in Saxony.<sup>234</sup> In the same year they organized the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the basement of the Episcopalian Christ Church.<sup>235</sup> This was apparently one of the earliest known examples of brotherhood practiced in St. Louis among the churches.

The last religious society established during the period, although not mentioned in the 1842 Directory, was the Bethel Association or Bethel Church in June, 1841.<sup>236</sup> This was an interdenominational religious society founded to serve the transient population, boatmen and watermen, brought to St. Louis by the Mississippi River traffic.<sup>237</sup> The only church not discussed was the African Church. There were two of these Negro religious groups active in 1841: The African Baptist Church located in St. Louis at an early date, as well as an African Methodist Church.<sup>238</sup> These were the only two African churches referred to in the 1842 Directory.

Religion, like the other activities of the city,

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232 Ibid., 1729

233 Forster, op. cit., 224-225; Daily Missouri Republican, February 20, 1839.

234 Daily Missouri Republican, January 30, 1839.

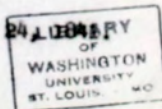
235 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1735.

236 Ibid., 1740.

237 Forster, op. cit., 306-307.

238 St. Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. xi.

was first experiencing the growth that had made civic pride  
so confident of the future of St. Louis. <sup>239</sup> It was at this  
state of events that the Israelites of the city decided  
on establishing a Jewish congregation in this frontier  
community.



## CHAPTER II

### JEWISH BELIEFS AND HISTORY IN AMERICA

UNTIL 1841

To understand the establishment and early history of a Jewish congregation in St. Louis in its proper perspective, it is necessary to make a statement of the Jewish religious beliefs and traditions, and the Israelite venture in the United States until 1841.

At the time of the congregation's organization in 1841, traditional Judaism--literal interpretation of God's laws--was the only concept accepted by all the Jewish synagogues in the United States of which we have record, with the exception of one organized body of worshippers. Thus, Abraham, according to Biblical account, was the first Jew and therefore the Father of Judaism. He was the first person to conceive of the idea of one eternal God, a God who was in the beginning the sole Creator of the Universe, and who continually remains as our Father, our King, our Judge, and our Redeemer to all men in all generations. Abraham followed these tenets and others; then handed them down to his son, Isaac; and hence to the latter's son, Jacob, and the other patriarchs of Judaism. Very important in this handing down of faith was the belief that the Land of Israel was given to Abraham and his future generations as an inheritance from the Almighty. Any other lands that the Jewish people might dwell in were to be considered as a "galut" or exile.

From the time of Abraham it became inherent in the

Jew to be charitable and to provide the necessities of life for his family. One of these necessities is the circumcision of each new born male child by a ritual circumciser, known as a "mohel." The latter is not a doctor of medicine, but rather one who has been taught this practice by another in his profession. In order to prove his capability, the mohel must pass exacting examinations. By the traditional law, no one other than this mohel may do the actual circumcision which takes place eight days after the birth of the boy,<sup>1</sup> and at which time the boy receives his Hebrew name. This ceremony, called in Hebrew a "bris," signifies a covenant placed between him and God. In the case of a baby girl, the parents are allowed to name her as soon as they wish, giving her as well a Hebrew name.

When a male child reaches the age of thirteen, he participates in the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, of which the very word "Bar Mitzvah," son of a commandment, denotes the occasion as a time that a boy takes responsibility for all his actions--both deeds and demerits. Prior to this time, his father accepted responsibility; however, now the boy is considered a full fledged Jew in Israel. A girl is personally responsible for her duties at the age of twelve.

The next important duty for a young man and woman is marriage. In Israel marriage is regarded as a Divine institution under whose shadow alone there can be true reverence of the dignity and sacredness of life. Marriage is a primary religious duty. He who has no wife, say the

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1 Gen. 17:12.

Rabbis, lives without comfort, help, joy, and atonement. Many chapters in the Bible are devoted to the human ideal of "Holiness of Home,"<sup>2</sup> an ideal that became one of the distinguishing features of the Jewish people. However, the Bible warns that marriage within one's faith is imperative "lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they go astray after their gods."<sup>3</sup>

Once a young couple are united in marriage, the Torah, the holy scroll containing Jewish law, becomes a still greater guide to a happy and sanctified life. For example, all food at their table should be "kosher," that is food that is ritually clean. An Israelite may eat eggs, all dairy foods, fresh fruits, vegetables, but only select fish and meat. The fish must have fins and scales,<sup>4</sup> The meat must come from choice parts of animals which must be both split-hoofed and cud chewing, such as the cow. All other animals, however, such as the pig and horse, are prohibited for Jews to eat.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, meat must be prepared by a male slaughterer, or "shochet." This Israelite must be able to pass an examination conducted by a learned Rabbi on both his ability to slaughter and knowledge of the methods and rules governing the killing of the animal. Non-Jewish law differs from the traditional Hebrew method of slaughtering

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2 Lev. 17:1-30; Gen. 24:58.

3 Exod. 34:15.

4 Lev. 11:9.

5 Lev. 11:3.

in that the latter claims instantaneous death with pain reduced to the barest minimum.<sup>6</sup> Thus, only a licensed shochet may perform this important task. His is a vital function for the Jewish community, since without him they would be unable to have "kosher" (correct) meat at their table.

Another important rule concerning the eating of food is the fundamental statute of traditional Judaism, which states that the milk and meat of the mother cow must not in any way be mixed.<sup>7</sup> This means that once the meat is ritually butchered, the Israelite must take care not to mix it or eat it with any dairy products. In other words, the two foods were not to be eaten together at the same meal. For this reason, the two sets of dishes and utensils were the result; one for meat and the other for dairy products. Of course, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and fish could accompany either dinner. The traditional laws concerning food are known as the laws of "kashrus," which state that a Jew may only eat kosher, or ritually adhered to, foods.

The Jewish community not only required a mohel and a shochet, but also emphasized the importance of teachers, who were required to instruct the children in Hebrew as soon as they were of school age of the stories and ideals of the Old Testament. "And these words which I (referring

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6 Deut. 14:21.

7 Ibid., 14:21.



to God) command thee this day shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children," is one of the basic tenets of Judaism,<sup>8</sup> The young Israelites learned that a Jew regards the holy scroll, or Torah, as a set of laws handed down by the Almighty to Moses on Mount Sinai. All together 613 commandments were given; however, the Ten Commandments alone were written on two stone tablets as the foundation of Jewish law. The rest of the Old Testament was revealed to Moses, who passed it on to generations by word of mouth. Several centuries later, this oral law was written down on holy scrolls by men divinely inspired and guided. A group of scholars called the Tanaeem saw a need to codify the laws of the Torah in topical form. This six volume work was the Mishnah. Still further simplification was needed in the form of interpretation of the laws of the Mishnah, and so another tremendous task was assumed by a group of holy scholars called the Amoraem, who neither added to nor subtracted from the Torah, but explained and interpreted the commandments. This final work was called the Gemora. In 1567 a compilation of all these laws of orthodox or traditional Judaism was codified in a shortened form called the Shulchan Aruch, meaning "The Prepared Table." The man responsible for this work was Joseph Karo.<sup>9</sup>

The basic beliefs encompassed in all these works

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8 Ibid., 6:6-7.

9 Zelig, A History of Jewish Life in Modern Times,

that stem from the Torah are the following (in extremely brief form): First, that there is only one God and no other; second, that God revealed himself only in the Old Testament; next, that the Messiah has not yet come, and when he does all Jews will ascend to the Holy land of Israel living in a social, ethical, political, and religious utopia; and finally, the belief in life after death, which corresponds to the manner in which the departed one conducted himself in this world.

Continuing with the daily laws required of a Jew, is the prescribed method of burial. If misfortune strikes the Jewish home, and an Israelite has breathed his last, a funeral is held the very next day. If this day is Saturday, the funeral ceremony is held over until Sunday, when the burial takes place. Ten Jewish males above the age of thirteen gather for this ceremony. It is in this way that frequently a Jewish prayer service was begun, and a congregation came to life, ironical as it may seem. The gathering together for prayer of ten male Jews above the age of thirteen was called a "minyan." Without at least ten such males, no Jewish prayer service could be conducted. The Jew of course may pray individually, but the reading of the Torah, necessary for practically all prayer services, cannot be performed. Why must a minyan contain at least ten males? The answer is found in the book of Genesis 18:31. When God threatened to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham remonstrated, and

finally won his plea to save the two towns if there were found ten righteous men who were believers in the one God. Thus ten became the minimum number required to conduct a prayer meeting or minyan.<sup>10</sup> The traditional Jew prays three times a day, morning, afternoon, and evening. However, the Sabbath and holy day service has two morning services instead of one.

The Jewish Sabbath and holy days are special religious occasions in the life of the Israelite. The Sabbath begins at sundown of Friday evening, and lasts until the following sundown on Saturday evening.<sup>11</sup> The Jews consider this day as the seventh day of the week, and the time when God rested after the six days of creation. Thus, the traditional belief is that no labor of any kind should be performed and a day of physical rest for spiritual pursuits should ensue. The holy day also commences at the same time on practically any day of the week. It is enjoyed in the same traditional fashion as the Sabbath.

On the various Jewish holidays the minyan met again. Especially important were the two days of Rosh Hashonah, or the Jewish New Year, beginning on the first day of the Jewish month of Tishrei, when Jews ask God's forgiveness for all their sins.<sup>12</sup> On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which follows ten days after the first day of Rosh Hashonah, the Jews have their last chance to repent before their fate

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10 Gen. 18:31.  
 11 Ibid., 2:2.  
 12 Lev. 23:27.

is sealed for the coming year.<sup>13</sup> Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur are of such importance that they are known as the High Holy Days. They occur in the fall of the year, and are considered the most solemn and holiest days of the year. Therefore, the minyan, if it could not meet any other time, frequently made an extra effort or special arrangements to meet at this time. Thus this was the occasion also for the organization of a permanent congregation. Five days after Yom Kippur the holiday of Succoth was commemorated. This is the Jewish harvest festival, and it lasts for eight days.<sup>14</sup> In the spring, the Jews celebrated the eight days of Pesach, or Passover, which reminded them of the Israelite exodus from Egypt.<sup>15</sup> On this occasion it is the custom of the Jews to eat only unleavened bread, or Matzah, which must be baked specially for the holiday. Exact care is taken, preparing special food free from leavening agents, while using separate dishes during the period. The holiday of Shavuoth is celebrated seven weeks after Passover.<sup>16</sup> It usually occurs about the beginning of June, and is of special import because it was the time when Moses received the Ten Commandments. These then are the principal Jewish holidays derived directly from the Five Books of Moses.

Reference has been made many times that the Jews gathered for prayer. Thus, it is necessary to explain

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13 Ibid., 23:27.

14 Ibid., 23:34.

15 Ibid., 23:6.

16 Ibid., 23:15.

the nature of the place where praying is done. From the time of King Solomon until Roman occupation of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Jews had made pilgrimages three times a year to Jerusalem, the site of the First and Second Holy Temples. After the final destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., and the dispersal of the Jews in the diaspora, the institution of individual synagogues in different communities sprang up. The synagogue is a Jewish assembly meeting for the purpose of performing religious rites. A synagogue also denotes any building where the Jews (Israelites or Hebrews) met for worship. The word is seldom used to describe any religion but the Jewish faith.<sup>17</sup> (In the course of this thesis Jews will be referred to interchangeably as Israelites or Hebrews; however, each term refers to the children of Israel). The synagogue may be established whenever ten Jews feel the need for it. No dispensation from a higher authority is necessary. Independent action is the rule.

While any room or building may be a proper place for a synagogue, it may not be considered such unless certain requirements are met. The location must possess at least one Holy Scripture, or Torah, which is placed in the required Holy Ark, or "Aaron Kodesh," and a mezuzah, the latter to be discussed later.<sup>18</sup> Originating from the

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<sup>17</sup> The Austin [Texas] Daily Statesman, September 24, 1876, as photostated on the cover of Diamond Jubilee Anniversary (of Temple Beth Israel in Austin, Texas, 1876-1951).

<sup>18</sup> Hertzog and Zabrowski, Life With the People, 51.

tabernacles built by the Jews in the wilderness, the Holy Ark is any oblong receptacle opening several feet from the floor with two doors, usually covered by a beautifully decorated curtain. Many times the Holy Ark is topped by a tablet representing the Ten Commandments, held by two lions, one on each side, representing the strength of Judah.

Traditional Jews believe that the ark must face east, showing the yearning of the people for their return to Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple. Sometimes a synagogue in a rented room, building, or lot location is so situated that an eastern facing for prayer is impossible; hence, it is permissible to pray in whatever direction the Aaron Kodesh must face. Above the Ark hangs the Everlasting Light or Ner Tamid. This light, according to the Bible, is to glow at all times.<sup>20</sup> Usually oil was used for this purpose.

The Mezuzah was the second necessary item for a synagogue. It is an oblong metal container of any size, and was placed on the doorpost of the main entrance of the synagogue. Within it was contained the most holy daily prayer--the Shema Yisroel (Hear oh Israel).

The following two laws also show the strong ties that the synagogue had with the Temple of Solomon, from which it originated. First, the Holy Torah was to be read from a position located in the center of the synagogue

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19 Exod. 25:10.

20 Ibid., 27:20.

called a "bimah" or elevation. Second, in order to encourage wholehearted concentration on the prayers, women and men were seated separately--women in the balcony and men on the lower floor, or a proper partition would be effected if all were seated on one floor.

Only males were required to wear the prayer shawl, or tallis, while praying;<sup>21</sup> however, both men and married women were required by custom to wear a hat in the synagogue out of respect. Proper decorum was expected, and prayer, based on many hundreds of years of work by pious rabbis, was followed in the holy language of Hebrew so as to "provide a further strong link with a past which it was hoped to reproduce in a more glorious future."<sup>22</sup> Thus, from the preceding laws of the synagogue, and others not mentioned here, grew up many customs through the ages concerning the conduct of the synagogue.

The main concern from now on will be with the growing customs in American Jewry until the mid-nineteenth century. In each synagogue there were usually four paid religious positions open. The rabbi, although a recognized, ordained, spiritual leader, trained in theology and legal traditions, was not a necessary person in the formation of a minyan, as any learned lay member could lead the service. The majority of early traditional synagogues had no rabbi, and still services were conducted and a

<sup>21</sup> Num. 15:38.

<sup>22</sup> Lehrman, Jewish Design for Living, 272.

congregation organized. The choice usually was dictated by the financial means of the individual congregation, and the fact that piety, knowledge of Jewish theology, and the ability to seek divine intervention for his fellow men were generally considered to be within the reach of every Jew and not just within the realm of the ordained. As Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, who arrived in the United States in 1846, implied, there were few qualified at that time to assume the task of rabbi,<sup>23</sup> and those in the rabbinate were treated with little respect. However, many times the orthodox congregations hired a chazan, or cantor, to lead in the chanting of the prayers. For this position, it was necessary to find a man possessing a better than average voice, with some knowledge of melody, and a man worthy to represent the congregation's prayers to the Almighty. Sometimes, the chazan was hired in a "triple threat" capacity. Besides his chanting, he was to fulfill the position of Baal Kriah, or reader of the Holy Scriptures, and likewise perform the duties of a shochet, the ritual slaughterer of meat. However, in the United States, as was already mentioned, the quantity of trained officials was very limited, and the quality of those present was in many cases not of the highest. Rabbi Wise, the founder of Reform Judaism in America, described the early chazan as:

An uneducated person, who is butcher, cantor and idler. With but few exceptions, this was the character of all who stood at the head

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23 Wise, Reminiscences, 223-224.



of the Congregations. They rendered no service worthy the name. They slaughtered animals, sang their old melodies and new street songs in the synagogues, paid no attention to the young, knew little about Judaism, and still 'less about anything else,' promoted superstition, enjoyed no one's respect, and were salaried congregational evils. They were the blocks that obstructed the path of Progress.<sup>24</sup>

Wise suggested that the congregation engage teachers and rabbis to alleviate this condition. Germany was the place to find competent men to fill these positions.<sup>25</sup>

While Wise may have appeared overly antagonistic towards these religious officials who many times performed the duties of a rabbi where none existed, there appears to be much truth in what he said. However, to rebuke all the cantors who performed just the job they were hired for, seems unfair. These men were probably not qualified to speak on theological questions, and in many cases did not pretend to do so. But Wise apparently felt angered that they should not have done their bit to improve the sad status of American Jews.

Another position available in the synagogue was that of shamas, or religious servant. He performed the menial tasks about the holy sanctuary, such as distributing and collecting prayer books, checking the physical facilities of the building, and so on. The positions of rabbi, chazan, baal kriah (reader of the Torah), and shamas could frequently be handled by two men. All the holders

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 223-224.

of these offices, of course, were to be pious Jews.

The shochet and mohel (ritual circumciser) apparently were salaried congregational positions. In all the research done on this subject, there was no mention of an organized Jewish community or of several congregations supporting one shochet; usually each synagogue made its own arrangements. Apparently there were members of the respective congregations able to perform the job, or, as was the case frequently, a slaughterer was hired by the individual congregation. Never was there any discussion concerning the hiring of an Israelite specifically for the position of mohel. Evidently, the local congregation always numbered one within its membership.

The ones who really directed the affairs of the congregation were the synagogue officers with the president or "parnass" being all powerful. Wise, having had more than one argument with a dictatorial "parnass" during his early American rabbinical career, described a typical early synagogue president as follows:

He (the parnass) ruled the quick and the dead. He was the law and the revelation, the lord and the glory, the majesty, and the spiritual guardian of the congregation. He suffered no rival; all were subject to him. This was an inheritance from olden times, brought to these shores from the small European Congregations.

A correct conception of the power and autocracy of the parnass in those days can be formed from the following occurrence: Isaac Leeser, who was the 'lumen mundi' (Light of the World) of American Jewry at that time

was not permitted to preach in his own synagogue without the permission of the parnass, because he had been elected chazan... of the Portuguese congregation, and in truth, there was once quite an uproar because Leiser preached without such permission. I formed the acquaintance of a number of autocrats of this ilk. Their demeanor was astonishingly pompous and ridiculous. These people were serious obstacles in the path of progress, because as a usual thing they were very ignorant and narrow minded.<sup>26</sup>

Thus the rabbi and other religious officials were definitely at the mercy of the chief congregation official. Besides the President, the officers usually included the Treasurer, Secretary, and Trustees.

It is significant that Wise attributed the eagerness to achieve this autocratic position as the fundamental cause of the multiplication of congregations in the cities.<sup>27</sup> Also a factor for the splitting of synagogues was the diverse national backgrounds of the members and the resulting prejudices they carried with them from their old homelands. Sometimes this caused a dispute over which prayer should be said and when. Each group, following the custom, or "minhag," it was used to, wished to have its own minhagim (customs) observed generally. So intense was the feeling among the immigrants that occasionally a fight broke out. Wise vividly mentioned such a situation occurring in New York City on Kol Midre evening, the service starting the Day of Atonement:

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 51.  
<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

One party insisted that at the close of the service the Adon Olam be sung first, and then Yigdal, while the other party insisted on the opposite.... A fight ... the escape of the parnass by a window in order to avoid threatened danger, lengthy and unprofitable altercations in place of debates--such things were not rare... everywhere.<sup>28</sup>

In a sense these people were not being petty, but were thoroughly engrossed with the rightness of their national custom and the success of this principle. Yet, Rabbi Wise's broad use of the above term "everywhere," can be questioned. His unmentioned authority for this word was his unlimited experience, travels, and acquaintances. Yet, such altercations appear to have been the exception rather than the rule implied in his reminiscences. Another cause for a break up in a congregation was the increase of the city's Jewish population and resulting movement further "out," which made walking to the synagogue extremely difficult.<sup>29</sup> Yet, the most powerful reason to secede and start a new congregation was just appearing on the scene. This was the advent of reforms in traditional Judaism.

Reform Judaism is a modification of the traditional beliefs mentioned previously. Prescribed worship was modified to fit the tastes of the individual congregations and Israelites living in a Christian America. While Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise was its leading advocate and founder,

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>29</sup> Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York 1654-1860, p. 48.

reforms were introduced before him, as early as 1824, in Charleston, South Carolina, when a temporary reform congregation was organized by Isaac Harby, who had a knowledge of previous German attempts at modification of the service. These modifications included the deletion from the traditional prayer book of any mention of the Messiah, of any return to Zion (Israel), of any reference to the resurrection of the dead, and the revival of sacrifices in the restored Temple.

The intention of breaking away from the authority of the Talmud became quite apparent.<sup>30</sup> In 1841, Charleston's Beth Elohim Congregation became the first permanent reform congregation in the United States due to the efforts of the Reverend Chazan Gustavus Poznanski, who advocated the use of an organ, forbidden by traditional Jews as a sign of mourning for the glory that once was Israel's before the Exile. He also instituted English prayers for part of the service.<sup>31</sup> Rabbi Wise continued these reforms and added several changes of his own. Since he is considered the founder of Reform Judaism in the United States, it is important to give a brief biographical sketch of Rabbi Wise.

Isaac Meyer Wise was born in Steingrub, near Cheb Eger, Bohemia, on April 3, 1819. He received a Jewish and secular education in Prague, and was ordained as a

<sup>30</sup> Simonhoff, Jewish Notables in America from 1776-1865, p. 204.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 278.

Rabbi by a Beth Din (House of Law), a Jewish Law court composed of Rabbinical scholars, which included Rabbis S. L. Rapport, S. Freund, and E. L. Toweles. Wise served as a Rabbi in Bohemia and the United States. After a brief stay in his first rabbinate in Raditz, Bohemia, Wise emigrated to the United States at the age of 27, serving until 1854 in two Albany, New York, synagogues; first at an orthodox,<sup>32</sup> and then, after a dispute there, at a new reform congregation formed by a rupture from the first synagogue.<sup>33</sup> After this he received the call to the B'nai Jeshurun congregation in Cincinnati.<sup>34</sup> There he became the first Rabbi in the United States to be honored by election for life.<sup>35</sup>

He liked to designate himself as the "American born in Bohemia." Wise was a good organizer, a writer, and a traveler of note, interested in Judaism, and preserving the rights of Jews everywhere.<sup>36</sup> He also knew many famous people, being the first Rabbi to meet a President of the United States. This, then unusual event, occurred in 1848, when he met President Polk; and thereafter visited Presidents Zachary Taylor and Fillmore between 1849 and 1852.<sup>37</sup> He was complimented by the former Secretary of

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<sup>32</sup> Kisch, In Search of Freedom, 87.

<sup>33</sup> Wise, op. cit., 165.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>35</sup> Kisch, op. cit., 87.

<sup>36</sup> Wise, op. cit., 235.

<sup>37</sup> Kisch, op. cit., 87-89.

<sup>38</sup> Wise, op. cit., 136-137.

State, Daniel Webster, which remark for some reason influenced him to refuse an appointment offered him by President Fillmore to the Library of Congress.<sup>39</sup>

Wise had a great amount of initiative, as demonstrated by the fact that many Jewish organizations were started by him. He demonstrated his writing style by editing a new prayer book entitled Minhag American for an American style service. After 1870 he founded many organizations unifying the Reform congregations in the United States, as the traditional Orthodox congregations disagreed with his ideas and did not join. These were the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873, the Hebrew Union College about 1875, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis about 1889.<sup>40</sup> While Wise was a controversial figure in the period of this thesis, it cannot be denied that he left an indelible mark in American Jewish history.

Rabbi Wise had many ideas and views on Judaism in the United States; several of his comments have been mentioned already. These were gleaned from his autobiography, or Reminiscences of I. M. Wise, which indicate his feeling of the need for a reform or change in traditional observance. This was necessary, Wise felt, since it was his understanding that prior to 1848 two-thirds of all Israelites in the United States were uneducated

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39 Ibid., 185-187.

40 Kisch, op. cit., 87-89.

and uncultured. He described traditional orthodoxy in the United States as follows:

Their Judaism consisted in a number of inherited customs and observances. The less these were understood, the holier were they considered. Everyone made things as easy and convenient as possible in practice. People did not observe the Sabbath. They ate t'refah (non-kosher meat) away from home, did not lay t'fillin (phylacteries worn by the adult male in saying his morning prayers); but at home and in the synagogue everything had to be conducted in the most orthodox fashion, i.e. in the manner in which everyone had seen in his early home.<sup>41</sup>

Wise's attitude toward orthodoxy in general, as depicted by his account, cannot be taken as true of all orthodox American Jews in this country at the time. Yet, undoubtedly, many Jews and congregations lived as Wise pictured. The reader must also bear in mind that Wise's accounts are very valuable since they are contemporary. Yet, in the same manner, written by a crusader in the course of his campaign, the written word is susceptible to the heat of current experiences and events which might make the writer less objective in his observations. This accounts for several generalizations concerning the traditional Judaism being reported by Wise in a bitter tone. This was not unusual, as many an original sponsor of change--thoroughly convinced of the same--would act like Wise under similar circumstances. His Reminiscences were written at a time when he had devoted most of his professional life to reform Judaism, and when he was confident

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<sup>41</sup> Wise, op. cit., 17.



that the reform movement was more permanently established and accepted. In the work, he demonstrated that he was a learned Jew; and capable of performing the function of an orthodox rabbi. He appeared to be a person who was very proud of the traditions of Judaism, and his place as a Jew who conscientiously was worried over its future survival in Christian America. Wise believed that changes in the orthodox service would assure Judaism's survival.

While his decision to start and preach reforms in the service was undoubtedly given an impetus by (1) his unforgettable altercation with the orthodox president of the Albany synagogue where he first served, and by (2) his subsequent excommunication by Dr. Raphael from American Judaism, due to his anti-traditional thinking, it appears that his decision was not the selfish result of these incidents. Wise honestly believed, and was convinced, that reforms were absolutely necessary if Jews were to exist as a religious group and not assimilate in Christian United States. He wished to Americanize the Jews and make good citizens of them in order to regain their self-consciousness as free born men. However, Wise asserted he had no intention to "Americanize" Judaism so that Judaism would disappear. His definition of American Judaism was:

A religion without mysteries or miracles,  
rational and self-evident, eminently human,

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42 Ibid., 223-224.

43 Ibid., 164-165.

44 Ibid., 331-332.

universal, liberal progressive, in perfect harmony with modern science, criticism, and philosophy, and in full sympathy with universal liberty, equality, justice, and charity.<sup>45</sup>

His general plan to preserve and popularize Judaism was the following:

1. To emphasize strongly the historical mission of Israel in all my speeches and writings, in order to arouse a consecrated self-consciousness.
2. To bring before the public the bright side of the Jewish character, and to leave it to the enemy to exploit our faults; thus to arouse a feeling of self respect.
3. To popularize by spoken and written words as much Jewish learning as I might possess, in order to inculcate in others respect for Jewish literature.
4. To familiarize the reading public with the brilliant periods of Jewish history in fictional form, in order to appeal by this means to the growing youth so as to awaken in them Jewish patriotism, for there could be no doubt that they would Americanize themselves...<sup>46</sup>

His appeal to youth was through an attractive beautification of the service and a lightening of the burden of ceremonial law.<sup>47</sup>

Wise's specific recommendations in 1850 brought women down from the gallery by asserting that: (1) Family pews be begun whereby men and women would sit together for the first time; and (2) girls would be admitted to a choir; heretofore the exclusive domicile of men. Wise based his reforms largely on the fact that the "Jewish woman has been treated almost as a stranger in the synagogue... excluded

<sup>45</sup> Kisch, op. cit., 88.

<sup>46</sup> Wise, op. cit., 332.

<sup>47</sup> Kisch, op. cit., 88.

from participation."<sup>48</sup> He defended his action in evading traditional practices in this manner: "American Judaism is indebted to these two reforms, which were bitterly opposed, for good music, decorum, and quiet in the house of worship, as well as for the interest and affection of our wives and daughters for the synagogue."<sup>49</sup> Yet Wise, at this time, 1850, apparently remained true to all other traditional customs and beliefs, such as the observance of the Sabbath, free from labor; the law of Kashrus--ritually correct food; and all other tenets and practices not previously designated for a change. During the period of this thesis until the start of the year 1860, he stated no more changes in this respect.

Specifically, by this latter date, the prayer service had been changed very little according to Henry Elloway, who had perused the 1861 edition of Wise's prayer book, Minhag America. Three prayers-- the Y'Kum Purkan and Pittum Haktorez prayers from the additional Sabbath morning service and the Bame Madlikin devotional from the Sabbath evening service--were only recently abolished. Otherwise, so far as the general observances or ceremonials were concerned, he, or at least his congregation, demonstrated no further changes by 1861.

Wise's congregation worshipped in the traditional manner, wearing the tallith, or prayer shawl. Confirmations

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48 Ibid., 212.

49 Ibid.

and the orthodox Bar Mitzvoths both were celebrated. By 1866 he still led Jewish holiday services in the American traditional manner, which lasted two days per holiday. Yet, one deviation appeared during this year. After noting a decline in Saturday morning attendance, he instituted the late Friday night family service while resisting any attempt to change the Jewish Sabbath morning service and Sabbath observance from Saturday to Sunday.

During the period of this thesis until the 1860's, Wise actually made few changes in the character of orthodox Judaism.<sup>50</sup> However, in overall retrospect, Rabbi Wise summed up his bold attempt to change traditional Judaism.

I saw American Judaism arise out of the grave, to go forth, to ever new triumphs; and it has not deceived me in my expectations.<sup>51</sup>

The result of the reform movement in this period is difficult to assess. It can be summed up in the words of Rabbi Sabato Morais, who stated in 1880 that Reform Judaism has "reached a point which... the near future will tell whether it is to be deemed a pinnacle or a precipice."<sup>52</sup>

Thus, what actually had begun in Germany--the breaking away from the laws of orthodox belief--had spread to the United States. The reforms mentioned were the main changes during the period under discussion in this work. Judaism

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<sup>50</sup> Illoway, The Controversial Letters and the Casuistic Decisions of the Late Rabbi Bernard Illoway Ph.D., 2.

<sup>51</sup> Kisch, op. cit., 174

<sup>52</sup> Morais, Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century, 350.

rose to the occasion also, as it demonstrated it was flexible enough to exist even though changes were made in its traditional laws. Needless to say, the reforms or changes in Judaism helped cause as much division and bad feeling between early-American Jews as any national or geographical minhag (custom) ever had done.

But before trends in Judaism can be more fully explained, a more important consideration is the early history of the Jews in America and the date of the organization of the United Hebrew Congregation in relation to it. Possibly there were several Jews in this country prior to the first Jewish settlement in 1654, but as the noted Jewish historian, Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, observed: "No Jew was ever the first Jew as there was always one there before him."<sup>53</sup>

The earliest known American permanent<sup>54</sup> settler in this case was Jacob Barsimson, who had been in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam for "the long period of two weeks."<sup>55</sup> It has been suggested with some measure of plausibility that Barsimson had been sent out by the Dutch Jewish leaders of Amsterdam to determine the possibilities of an extensive Jewish immigration to their new colony on the Hudson, New Amsterdam. With the fall of Dutch Brazil, where many Jews had resided, to the anti-semitic nation of Portugal it was imperative for the Hebrews in this

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53 Marcus, Early American Jewry, I, 24.

54 Goodman, American Overture, 76.

55 Marcus, op. cit., 24.

South American colony to find a new home.

It was in September, 1654, that twenty-three Jewish settlers of an original list of thirty-six passengers, who survived the ordeal of capture by a Spanish pirate ship and rescue by the French privateer, <sup>56</sup> Sainte Catherine, <sup>57</sup> arrived in New Amsterdam. They thus founded the first permanent Jewish settlement in America. <sup>58</sup> There are court records to substantiate the arrival of the first Jewish community in this land. These settlers had lost everything in their four-month flight from Brazil. They were described by an unfriendly clergyman of New Amsterdam as being "poor and healthy." There was no question of their poverty, as the French Captain, Jacques de la Motthes hauled them into court to pay the twenty-five guilder debt. Court records of the day give an account of the case. Even after their few belongings were sold, the debt still remained. Thus, two Jewish settlers, David Israel and Moses Ambrosious, remained in jail until the entire amount was settled. <sup>59</sup>

After the Dutch West India Company ordered the complaining Governor Peter Stuyvesant to accept the Jews,

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>57</sup> According to the most recent information the "Sainte Catherine" is the accepted ship on which the twenty-three Jews arrived. It is hoped that investigation will finally establish whether it was the "Sainte Catherine" or the "Saint Charles." As taken from footnote "Reviews of Books," in American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 137.

<sup>58</sup> Marcus, op. cit., 24-25.

<sup>59</sup> Goodman, op. cit., 76.

this initial venture was secure. By the law of February 1, 1656, the directors advised Stuyvesant that the Jews "may exercise in all quietness their religious within their houses," as long as there was no public worship. It is probable that the Jews took advantage of this. Possibly about this time the first Jewish Congregation in the new world, Shearith Israel, was organized in the private residence of some one Jew.<sup>61</sup> Hyman Grinstein in his book, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York 1654-1860, fixes the date for this first congregation as "1655(?)".<sup>62</sup> Regardless of the date of establishment, these early Jews built the first synagogue on this continent in 1729 in New York City on Mill Street.<sup>63</sup> In 1731 the congregation started a Jewish school for their children which was another "first." The first cemetery for the New Amsterdam Jewish community had been established possibly by 1656,<sup>64</sup> and most probably by 1682.<sup>65</sup> So as one can easily see, the Jewish community in America was now well on its way, having been organized in several phases of activities.

It should be mentioned here that Jews as worshippers are divided into two groups: Sephardim and Ashkenazim.

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60 Ibid., 81-83.

61 Ibid., 84.

62 Grinstein, op. cit., 472.

63 Ibid., 39.

64 Cohen and Landman (eds.), "The American Continent," The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, I, 231.

65 Kohler, "Settlement of the Jews in New York," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society (1893), p. 92.

These two terms should not, however, be construed to be ethnic ones. The former was this earliest group of Jews who entered America beginning in 1654. These Sephardic Jews were Israelites of Spanish descent. Thus, the term Sephardim is especially applied to the descendants of the exiles and refugees from the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions. Large scale migrations of Spanish Jews commenced with the massacres and persecutions of 1391, which were followed by forcible mass conversions from 1412 to 1415. Total expulsion of Spanish Jewry came on August 2, 1492, coincidentally one day prior to the beginning of explorer Christopher Columbus' initial and successful voyage to the New World. Portugal followed Spain's example by ridding its country of Jews in 1497. The exiles were joined later by numerous Marrano families who escaped from the terrors of the Inquisition. These found their way to Holland, England, and subsequently to North and South America. Wherever they settled, they insisted upon retaining their own local customs, religious tradition, and the right to form their own congregations and communal organizations. The Sephardic period in America extended from 1654 to 1840. While these Spanish-

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<sup>66</sup> Neuman and Landman (eds.), "Sephardim," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, IX, 477.

<sup>67</sup> Zelig, op. cit., 297.

<sup>68</sup> A Marrano was a Spanish Jew who professed outwardly to Christianity, but inwardly, and in secret, piously pursued Judaism.

<sup>69</sup> Neuman and Landman (eds.), op. cit., 477.



Portuguese Jews ceased to be the majority group in this country, no later than the first quarter of the eighteenth century their religious culture and synagogue discipline, which were accepted by those who followed them, were dominant in the American Jewish community until at least the third decade of the nineteenth century. It can be said that by 1840 the Sephardic period had ended, as this was the last year that Sephardic communal leadership was apparent. Although by that time individuals of the Ashkenazic or German and Polish origin constituted the vast majority of the Jews in this land, the Sephardic congregations, because of their age, wealth, and social prestige, had maintained their leadership. They played an outstanding part, acting as the vanguard to protest against the barbarities inflicted by local leaders upon innocent Jews in Damascus in 1840. However, this latter act must have exhausted them, as it was their dying gesture as a dominant community.

The German and Polish Jews were ready to take over; they belonged to the newer Ashkenazic or German group.<sup>70</sup> The Ashkenazic included the descendants of the German and French Jews who, after the Crusades and subsequent persecutions in Germany, and the expulsions from France, migrated into Prussia, Poland, and other countries of northern, central, and eastern Europe, while a large

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<sup>70</sup> Marcus, op. cit., xi-xii.

majority of Jews went to the Americas and England.

By 1840, as was already stated, the Ashkenazic Jews were in the majority in this country, living generally in German and Polish areas. Throughout the 1840's, therefore, German-Jewish congregations and societies sprang up in dozens of different communities. Their ritual, leaders, and philosophy of religious adaptation became typical in the Jewish population centers. Of the hundreds of new synagogues to rise in the next generation, only three or four adapted the Sephardic rites.

In passing, it might be worthwhile to note the differences existing between these two great divisions of Judaism. Anthropologically, the Ashkenazim differed from the Sephardim in the following respects: the Sephardim, due to inbreeding and isolation, maintained a uniform type, the salient features of which are oval faces, black or brown hair, large black or brown eyes, almond-shaped, and long and narrow heads with receding foreheads. They are also distinguished by a certain graceful appearance and the aforementioned aristocratic mien. The Ashkenazim, on the other hand, have a larger proportion of blondes, have rounder faces and heads, and are shorter.

Liturgically, the Ashkenazim pronounce Hebrew in accordance with the pronunciation of northern Palestine

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<sup>71</sup> Revel and Landman (eds.), "Ashkenaz and Ashkenazim," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, I, 542.

<sup>72</sup> Marcus, op. cit., 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., xii-xiii.

and the Babylonian Jews; the Sephardim follow the southern Palestinian pronunciation. The ritual of the Ashkenazim includes more insertions, while the Sephardic prayers are simpler. Naturally, the melodies of the Ashkenazim are more European and less Oriental than that of the Sephardim. In regard to vernacular, the Sephardim adopted the Spanish tongue while the other group developed the Yiddish tongue which survives today.<sup>74</sup> The script of the latter is usually square, while that of the former is more flowing.

The main legal differences of these two groups are reflected in the Shulhan Aruch of Joseph Karo which generally recorded Sephardic usages. At a later date, Moses Iserles in his Ramah explained the Ashkenazi practices. According to one source, the Sephardim cling more to the letter of the Talmud, and they have not completely accepted the edicts of the various Ashkenazic synods.<sup>75</sup> Yet, Marcus notes, that as a group the latter until the Eighteenth Century were the more learned, pious, and rigidly observant, although not as secularly cultured or as tutored in western social intercourse, touched by Christian culture, as their

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<sup>74</sup> Yiddish is a mixture of German, Hebrew, and the Polish languages. It resulted as German Jews migrated and settled in Poland and Eastern Europe. Here people were divided into certain social classes and each class followed its own ways and customs. Thus the Jews living together, excluded from Gentile contact, shaped their own language. As they migrated westward to the United States, the language reflected the trek, bringing new expressions from every country. Zelig, op. cit., 10.

<sup>75</sup> Revel and Landman (eds.), op. cit., 543.

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 Sephardic brethren. A major reason for the decline of the Sephardim was the high mortality rate due to unsanitary conditions in the countries in which they lived. Another reason was the great pride of the Sephardim which made them reluctant to marry Ashkenazim. Generally if such a union occurred their offspring usually preferred to become Ash-  
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 kenazim. It is hinted that this feud between the groups even continued in an early colonial New England community  
 78  
 of one hundred Jews.

As the Sephardic period was approaching its demise, more Jewish congregations were established. By the time of the American Revolution, the one Jewish community had expanded until America boasted five congregations in five different places in the following order of their establishment: New York, Newport, Rhode Island, Philadelphia, Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia.

It was not long before the Jew decided to settle permanently in the area west of the Appalachian Mountains, generally considered by early local newspaper editors as the "west." St. Louis was considered one of the few civilized western outposts.

Why did the western region interest the Jew as a permanent settlement? What problems would this migration entail? These are important questions which involve a careful analysis. First of all, the main motivation

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76 Marcus, op. cit., 14-15.

77 Revel and Landman (eds.), op. cit., 543.

78 Marcus, op. cit., 158.

which drove many Jews out west was the same that attracted other middle class people: the desire to extend their capital over new areas with the hope of bettering themselves financially. This motive included the merchant class, not the farm or laboring class, since, through past conditions over which the Jews had no control, there was not a sizable Jewish working and farm population.<sup>79</sup> The pecuniary motive also convinced peddlers, fur traders, Indian traders, real estate promoters, and adventurers<sup>80</sup> to head westward. Hence, the popular ambition of many pioneers to uncover new and free lands westward was not the stimulus for the great majority of Jews. Certainly with freedom of worship guaranteed by the United States Constitution, religion was not a motive either. Whatever the motive for the Israelite traveling west, they came as individuals and not in congregational form.

As for the difficulties that these Jews who journeyed West encountered, the answer is manifold. How to keep the Jewish dietary laws, to marry people of the same faith, and to hold services as a congregation are only a few problems that these people faced in a wilderness isolated even to non-Jews.<sup>81</sup> What was needed to combat these circumstances was a conscientious Jewish pioneer family or a small devout group of Jews. Within a generation they could

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<sup>79</sup> Schappes, A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875, p. 223.

<sup>80</sup> Lebeson, The Jewish Pioneers in America, 259.

<sup>81</sup> Schappes, op. cit., 223.

go a long way toward the accomplishment of the goal of a Jewish community. However, after a perusal of several American Jewish historical books, it has been discovered that often a long gap separated the coming of the first Jew and the organization of the first Jewish congregation. This means that the first Jewish settlers in many cases lost their religious feeling, and a new start had to be made with new faithful adherents to Israel. The lone Israelites, however, should not be entirely condemned for his assimilation. In the case of marriage there were very few available young women of the Jewish faith nearby and with travel slow and difficult, those in the East were very reluctant to come and settle at the frontier. Intermarriage was the only alternative. <sup>82</sup> For those who avoided marrying outside their religion, the problems of living a religious life were often insurmountable, when struggling to obtain the necessities of life, especially in a frontier community. Thus it took truly persevering men of much conviction to organize the new Jewish community in St. Louis, or any western city.

Joseph Jonas, who was the first Jew to live in Cincinnati, and probably the earliest Jew steadfast to his religion, to settle in the West permanently, gave his views of life in those times in the following article written to Isaac Leeser, editor of the Occident and American

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82 The Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

Jewish Advocate, American Jewry's first permanent national magazine. Dated December 25, 1843,<sup>83</sup> he first mentioned organizing a minyan and congregation in Ohio in 1819 and 1824 and adds:

Before proceeding further, permit me to make a few remarks: from the period of the arrival of the first Israelite in Cincinnati (March 8, 1817) to this date, the Israelites have been much esteemed and highly respected by their fellow citizens, and a general interchange of civilities and friendships has taken place between them. Many persons of the Nazarene faith residing from 50 to 100 miles from the city, hearing there were Jews living in Cincinnati, came into town for the special purpose of viewing and conversing with some of 'the children of Israel, the holy people of God,' as they termed us.<sup>84</sup>

It is said that about 1818, an old Quaker woman made a special trip to look at this first Jewish settler in Cincinnati. She turned him around and around and inspected him critically - "Well, thou art no different to other people," she finally said.<sup>85</sup> Whether this occurrence actually took place, has not been ascertained by the author of this thesis.

Next Jonas described the Israelites' morals:

It is already conceded to us by our neighbors that we have the fewest drunkards, vagrants, or individuals amenable to the laws, of any community, according to our numbers in this city or district of country; and we also appreciate the respect and esteem those individuals are held in, who duly conform to the principles of our religion, especially by a strict conformity to our

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83 Jonas and Schappes (eds.), op. cit., 223-244.

84 Ibid., 226.

85 Marcus (ed.), Memoirs of American Jews 1775-1865, I, 203.

holy Sabbath and festivals.

As Joseph Jonas carried his chronological account through the consecration of the first synagogue west of the Allegheny mountains on September 9, 1836, in Cincinnati, he turned to another area of interest and importance--Jewish activity in the Mississippi Valley approximately by September, 1836.

Let us now rest awhile, and view the Jewish horizon around us. - Alas! It is a bleak and dreary view; in the whole Mississippi Valley, from the Allegheny Mountains, to the city of New Orleans included, excepting Cincinnati, not a single community of Israelites described; numerous families and individuals were located in all directions; but not another attempt at union and the worship of our God appeared to be dead in their hearts.<sup>87</sup>

While Jonas viewed the Mississippi area as being barren of Jewish communal life, it certainly had not been forgotten as, at least two proposals for a Jewish settlement here were announced. As early as 1819 a most unusual plan was concocted by W. D. Robinson in a pamphlet entitled "Memoir, Addressed to Persons of the Jewish Religion in Europe, on the Subject of Emigration and Settlement in the United States of North America."<sup>88</sup> The author, who styled himself on the title page as a citizen of the United States, proposed a plan to settle a large agricultural community of poor European Jews in the area embraced by the "upper Mississippi and Missouri Territory."<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Jonas and Schappes (eds.), op. cit., 226-227.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>88</sup> Daly, The Settlement of the Jews in North America, 92.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



The brochure was published and distributed among wealthy European Jews. The proposed object was to persuade these wealthy Israelites to buy the land and sponsor this community as an aid to their poor religious brethren in Europe. The author reminded that this would do more good to improve the lot of the poor European Jew than the expending of funds in Europe to help improve their conditions there. Two large tracts of land in two sections were available "embracing the millions of acres adjacent to the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers."<sup>90</sup> It is possible, though purely conjecture, that Robinson had a location in the vicinity of St. Louis in mind for his proposed settlement,<sup>91</sup> although one view mentioned the state of Iowa as his goal.<sup>92</sup> Each Jewish immigrant was to be transported free of charge from Europe to New Orleans and then up the Mississippi River to the location of the settlement. Self-government and local initiative would be helpful aids to repaying the European benefactors on credit for the equal share of land and tools each settler was to receive. Besides this, the investors would receive the grateful thanks of the settlers as their reward. A rich scene is painted by the pamphleteer of highly successful Jewish towns adorning the banks of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, which would rapidly grow in arts, commerce, and manufacturing to a position equaling

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90 Ibid., 93,94.

91 Ibid., 93.

92 Postal and Koppman, A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S., 171.

that of agricultural regions in the United States, which regions were implied as highly successful. He concluded that "to draw a picture of all the highly important consequences which suggest themselves to my mind, on this subject I might be called a speculative enthusiast."<sup>93</sup>

"Speculative enthusiast," yes, and probably a speculator of land to boot. Since these tracts of land were for "private sale," it is highly probable that our American author had more in mind than benevolence. However, the scheme was impractical, since the Jews in the main were not artists or agriculturists, and were unacquainted with the use of the necessary tools of the trade. With this in mind, it is unlikely that they would venture to a wilderness and found an agricultural settlement. Also the European Jewish investor was not easily fooled, and the plan failed.<sup>94</sup> Although it cannot be proved, it is possible that it did succeed in opening the eye of the Jew in Europe to settlement in the West, and the Mississippi Valley in particular.

Whether the Robinson plan called attention to the area west of the Appalachians, it is not known; however, a substantial number of European German Jews were part of the German immigration which came to this country prior to 1848. This element was a lower class than the cultured and professionally educated class which came after 1848. However, Professor Faust, in his German Element in the

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<sup>93</sup> Daly, op. cit., 94.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

United States, declared that the number of German Jews in the United States had been grossly exaggerated, stating that they never exceeded two per cent of the German immigration to the United States. Franz Lieber, an authority on the subject, disagreed, and said in 1869 that German Jewish influence was increasing daily.<sup>95</sup> At any rate, between 1835 to 1839, 18,937 Germans immigrated to the United States.<sup>96</sup> According to the Daily Missouri Republican, by August, 1837, Missouri contained 30,000 Germans; only Ohio had more. Of this total, 7000 Germans lived in the City of St. Louis.<sup>97</sup> A small percentage of these newcomers were Israelites. This influx of immigrants had an effect on the character of the city. Previously, the majority of the population was French; it then gradually changed to Americans, principally from Kentucky and Virginia; and now the Germans joined the native Americans in numerical superiority.<sup>98</sup>

Frederick Gerstaecker, a traveler, who came to the United States from Germany in 1837, described his voyage on the "Constitution" from Bremen to New York. The boat was at sea sixty-four days.<sup>99</sup> He mentioned that sixty Jews were on board, including both peddlers and pretty Jewesses. Actually, women were a rarity, there being only about twenty-five women out of the one-hundred and eighteen passengers<sup>100</sup>

95 Lebeson, op. cit., 288-289.

96 Daily Missouri Republican, December 28, 1843.

97 Ibid., August 21, 1837.

98 The Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

99 Gerstaecker, Wild Sports in the Far West, 29.

100 Ibid., 10.

on board. Gerstaecker's writings are important since they give a description of the extremely crowded conditions, and the generally rough trip the Jews (among others) encountered. 102

Gerstaecker wrote:

The next morning's sun shone on many a pale long face; the sea was rough, the ship rolled and pitched fearfully, the effect was awful to look upon. I have already stated that we had a number of Jews on board, with few exceptions, from the lowest class; they were allowed by their rabbins [rabbis], at least so they avowed, to eat bacon during the voyage, and most of them had so far availed themselves of the privilege, as, if not to overload the stomach, at least to take in a very plentiful supply of the beautiful sweet bacon that was served out to us. Punishment trod on the heels of crime; there was not a corner of the ship unoccupied by a sick Israelite with a tin basin, or one despairingly leaning over the side and squaring accounts with Neptune.

H., the doctor, and myself were quite well, and not a little did we quiz the poor wretches, who were already sufficiently tormented. The following day it rained hard; the confined space, with all sufferers was almost insupportable.<sup>103</sup>

Yet the suffering was apparently worth it. The small number of these Jews who made their way to St. Louis were attracted by the prosperity of their forerunners and the civil and religious liberty evident in the United States. 104  
The Jewish population in the United States was gradually increasing. In 1818, 3000 Jews inhabited this country. Within eight years the Israelite population had doubled

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101 Ibid., 8.

102 Ibid., 10-12.

103 Ibid., 11-12.

104 The Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

as it jumped to 6000. In 1840 the American Almanac listed the Jewish population at 15,000.<sup>105</sup> Yet this country had but a very minute per cent of the four million Jews residing in the world, the two leaders being Russia and Russian Poland, and Austria.<sup>106</sup> Still the Jewish population in the United States was growing by leaps and bounds, as was witnessed by the fact that from 1840 to 1845 it had more than doubled again until it reached 35,000. The majority of American Jews resided on the east coast. The leaders in Jewish population in the early 1840's were: New York, 12,000; Philadelphia, 2,300; Baltimore, 1,800; and Charleston, 1,500.<sup>107</sup> St. Louis was far behind, having only sixty or seventy men and a few women by 1844,<sup>108</sup> and increasing to the nationally insignificant total of 600 or 700 in 1853.<sup>109</sup>

This new immigration undoubtedly was the impetus which motivated Julius Stern of Philadelphia, editor of the first German-Jewish weekly in the United States, to propose in 1843 a settlement of Jews in a territory lying west of the Mississippi River. Stern believed that if seventy thousand Jews settled in a specific western area, they would be entitled, under Federal law, to request admission into the Union as a state. Here, he advocated cooperative farming, as well as a plan of colonization which may have been

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105 Lebeson, *op. cit.*, 285.

106 Daily Missouri Republican, November 20, 1840.

107 Ibid., May 30, 1845.

108 Lesser, "Jews St. Louis," The Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

109 St. Louis Intelligencer, December 17, 1853.

patterned on the cooperative colonies which had sprung up throughout the country during the early decades of the nineteenth century, or even likened to the proposed Robinson plan to which it bore marked similarity. While Isaac Leeser, the editor and publisher of The Occident and American Jewish Advocate printed the proposal, he commented that the settlement of Jews in the growing West could be achieved without the promotion of Jewish statehood in the manner suggested by Stern. Needless to say, Leeser was correct, and the Stern plan failed.<sup>110</sup>

These two plans for Jewish settlement in the area west of the Mississippi by Robinson and Stern could not have been proposed at a much earlier date, as from 1724 to 1803 all Jews were banned from the area known as the Louisiana Territory. This was the result of the French Black Code or, Code Noire, passed in 1724. As mentioned earlier, this would only allow Roman Catholics to settle in the Louisiana Territory. The French director-general and officers commanded: "To remove from said country all the Jews who may have taken up their abode there; the departure of whom as declared enemies of the Christian name, we command within three months, including the day when these presents are published, under pain of forfeiture of their bodies and estates."<sup>111</sup> Thus the Jews were not welcome in St. Louis nor in Illinois; this was continued

<sup>110</sup> "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 59.

<sup>111</sup> Scharf, op. cit., I, 55.

when Spain took over from the French commandant. The Spanish hatred of Jews had been established at the time of the Inquisition. It was continued while Spain ruled the Louisiana Territory. It is possible that Jewish peddlers or settlers living in the United States near the Mississippi may have come to St. Louis for trade or provisions. In 1769 just such a thing indirectly occurred. A group of enterprising Philadelphia merchants, the Gratzes and Franks, whose trading ventures extended to Fort Chartres, Cahokia, and Kaskaskia on the Illinois side of the Mississippi, bartered for furs through their agents with the Indians at Ste. Genevieve and St. Louis. Thus, they successfully evaded the Code.<sup>113</sup>

While various claims have been made that Jews lived in St. Louis during this "forbidden" time, the only proof advanced was that a few recorded names had a biblical "ring" to them. But this is not acceptable proof, since frequently Christians, whites or Negroes, had names which would appear Jewish by sight. For example, a person known as Samuel Solomon lived in early St. Louis; however, he happened to be a warden in a Catholic Church among other things.<sup>114</sup> Of course, conversion, for one reason or another, or the liberalness of a certain Spanish commandant like the aforementioned Trudeau,<sup>115</sup> were methods of avoiding the ordinance.

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112 Houck, A History of Missouri From the Earliest Explorations and Settlements Until the Admission of the State into the Union, III, 201.

113 Postal and Koppman, op. cit., 268.

114 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1642.

115 Scharf, op. cit., I, 299.

Otherwise, legally, no Jew settled in St. Louis prior to March 10, 1804, when American officials assumed active control of St. Louis as part of the Louisiana Purchase Territory.  
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After this date the area was open to Jewish settlement. Before going into a discussion of this matter, it might be worth while to mention that it is not the purpose here to attempt to "definitely" prove who was or was not the first Jew in St. Louis. It is doubtful if this fact can be "definitely" established. Rather an effort will be made to present the "earliest" evidence of a Jew in St. Louis, as well as a compilation of the number of Israelites within the city until the establishment of the United Hebrew Congregation. These early St. Louis Jews will be discussed chronologically as permanent settlers, and known visitors or passers-by. It will be interesting to note the number of resident and visiting Israelites in St. Louis prior to and during 1841--the year of the founding of the United Hebrew Congregation's establishment, and note any conclusions which can be made therefrom. The words of J. R. Marcus, discussed previously, aptly cover the curiosity concerning the arrival of the first local Israelite: "The careful historian soon comes to the unfailling rule that no Jew is ever the first Jew in any town: there is always one who had been there before him."  
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116 *Ibid.*, 329.

117 *Marcus, op. cit.*, 24.



In this case, the earliest Jewish settlers in St. Louis of whom there is record were members of the Philipson family. In the period up to 1816, these were the only known Jews in the town. Three brothers, Joseph, Jacob, and Simon were the main settlers and visitors in this town, and they brought their respective families along with them. If they had so desired, a Jewish community might have taken shape at this early date. The three boys were well educated,<sup>118</sup> refined gentlemen,<sup>119</sup> but shrewd men of business, who had interest in the arts. During their lifetime they mixed with many of the important people of the time.

There is some controversy over the nativity, either Polish or German of these early Jews. However, they were probably of Polish descent,<sup>120</sup> coming to this country from Hamburg, Germany,<sup>121</sup> and settling in Philadelphia early in the century. In 1803, Simon and Jacob Philipson were partners as merchants in Philadelphia.<sup>122</sup> These two early members of the Rodeph Shalom Synagogue of Philadelphia were in the fur<sup>123</sup> and lead business. These ventures extended into the Missouri Territory.<sup>124</sup> Joseph Hertzog, prominent in

<sup>118</sup> Billon, Annals of St. Louis in its Territorial Days from 1804 to 1821, p. 229.

<sup>119</sup> Jennings, A Pioneer Merchant of St. Louis 1810-1820, p. 17.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., Stewart, Edward Warren, 482.

<sup>121</sup> Billon, op. cit., 229.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>123</sup> Wolf and Whitesman, A History of the Jews in Philadelphia, 26, as printed in the Jewish Exponent, May 20, 1955, and quoted in the [Philipson] Alphabetical Files, NIS.

<sup>124</sup> Jennings, op. cit., 15.

the mercantile circles of Philadelphia, financed the Philipson brothers in their lead and mercantile enterprise in this western outpost. At this time the territory beyond the Mississippi offered encouraging possibilities of trade and investment for the enterprising business man with vision and confidence. The Philipsons evidently were quick to realize this, for they hired Zachary Mussina, Simon's brother-in-law, as their agent in the West. These brothers were interested in the lead traffic of the Missouri mines, and Mussina in his capacity probably bought lead from the Valley brothers, Francois and Jean Baptiste, part owner of Mine La Motte, J. Smith T. at Mine a Liberty; or from Moses Austin, who since 1798 had extensive mining interests at Mine a Breton. It is not improbable that with this output Austin could offer Mussina, or the Philipsons, larger quantities of raw and manufactured materials at lower prices, than could his competitors. While Mussina was dissatisfied with his subordinate position as agent, a post that offered no opportunities for advancement, he did speak glowingly of the future of the West.

Perhaps it was a combination of these stories and their own business insight and ventures which caused these Philadelphia merchant brothers to come west. It is a known fact that the Philipsons certainly were impressed with the growing importance of St. Louis. <sup>126</sup> Another factor in their

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125 Ibid., 11.  
126 Ibid., 14-15.

early arrival was their fur business. They dealt in furs and skins described as "Missouri Beaver, shaved, in the hair and Indian Dressed Deerskins."<sup>127</sup>

However, twin problems arose: to supply the tanners in the "East" and conduct their business more efficiently between the two distant points.<sup>128</sup> While it is possible that one member of the family might have occasionally traveled west for a brief period, none settled permanently in St. Louis until the latter part of 1807. The arrival and permanent settlement of Joseph and Jacob Philipson in 1807 and 1808, respectively, while brother Simon ran the business at home in Philadelphia, indicated that someone was needed to look after the increasingly important western trade.

In September, 1807, Joseph Philipson, the youngest and best loved of his brother Simon, left Philadelphia for St. Louis. He went by way of Baltimore, where he purchased supplies from more than six different firms on long term notes (twelve months' credit) to the amount of \$10,000. He was able to pay only \$552.90 in cash on his account, so that his indebtedness was very heavy when he began business in the frontier settlement of St. Louis. This thirty-four year old Philadelphia Israelite arrived at his destination in the winter of 1807,<sup>129</sup> and successfully

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<sup>127</sup> Wolf and Whiteman, *op. cit.*, 26, as printed in the *Jewish Exponent*, May 20, 1955, and quoted in Philipson File, Director's File, NIS.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Jennings, *op. cit.*, 17.

opened up his first account on December 13 of that year. This date in his first account book is sufficient evidence that the earliest known Jew had permanently settled in St. Louis by December 13, 1807.

Joseph Philipson had yet another distinction. He was the first American merchant to establish a permanent store in St. Louis. He did well in his business venture. By December 31, 1807, Philipson already sold \$1,313.53-1/2<sup>131</sup> worth of merchandise. During 1808, his weekly volume of business ranged from \$360.17 for the week ending October 1, to \$91.14 for the week concluding December 16. That same year--1808--brother Jacob Philipson arrived and opened a store in St. Louis, leaving only brother Simon to carry on the business, and act as his brothers' agent in the East. Meanwhile, Joseph was attracting many of the early and prominent St. Louisans to his store. The names of Alexander McNair, the first Governor of the State, David De Launay, Inspector General of Militia, Madame Labadie, one of the pioneer settlers, Mrs. Piscay, who opened the first girls' school in St. Louis, the Chouteau's, August and Pierre, are all listed on the pages of his account books. These books also record that Meriwether Lewis, American Governor of the Louisiana Territory, settled his account in full on August 22, 1809, a few days before he left for Washington

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130 Joseph Philipson, Original Account Book, 1807-1809, MS., Mercantile Library, St. Louis.

131 Kirkpatrick, History of St. Louis, 1804-1816, p. 9, MS., AM. Thesis, Washington University.

on his last journey; that Frederick Bates, Secretary and often Acting Governor of Louisiana, paid four dollars for each of the two volumes of the History of Virginia; that C. B. Penrose, a member of the Board of Land Commissioners of the Louisiana Territory, purchased a silk shawl for sixteen dollars at the same counter.<sup>132</sup> Philipson also sold the following items at the following prices:

Spanish cigars	- 2¢	Coffee	- 75¢ a lb.	
Almonds	- 75¢ lb.	Butter	- 20¢ a lb.	
Umbrellas	- \$8.00	Violin	- \$6.25	133

Thus it was evident that his store contained a variety of items.

While there is no evidence that Joseph and his brother were partners, they were interested in real estate, and had acquired large holdings both in and around the city of their adoption. They were interested, too, in lead which they sent to Pittsburgh, where Simon disposed of it to the best of advantage, either in that city or farther East in New York City or Philadelphia. Their shrewd dealing and hard bargaining made them worthy competitors of the trained and experienced traders of early St. Louis. They promised sharp rivalry to a new firm from Philadelphia, as was evidenced in their first deal, when they purchased the greater part of the invoice of goods that Christian Wilt, a new St. Louis merchant, and Mussina,<sup>134</sup> who left the Philipson's employ in the spring of 1810, brought to St. Louis

<sup>132</sup> Jennings, op. cit., 34.

<sup>133</sup> Kirkpatrick, op. cit., 102.

<sup>134</sup> Jennings, op. cit., 71.

in the early spring of 1810. On September 13, 1812, Wilt wrote the following letter to his uncle, Joseph Hertzog, prominent in mercantile circles in Philadelphia and a one time partner of S. Philipson.

I hope you will have nothing more to do with the Philipsons - such scoundrels as I believe them to be deserve the contempt of all honest citizens. Mr. Bates told me yesterday he never knew such an impudent fellow as Joe [Joseph Philipson] that he even insulted him in his own office when Mr. Bates asked his meaning [and] that he saw Mr. Bates was offended he almost went to his knees to be excused & cringing like a spaniel puppy begged his pardon. - Mr. Bates says he hardly speaks to him.

Whether the strong dislike of the Philipsons was caused by the injured pride Wilt suffered in being out-smarted by the brothers, or if this was just an example of public resentment toward them, is unknown. No other evidence is available of public feeling toward them except the words of Billon, a contemporary of theirs, describing them "as educated refined gentlemen." Billon made no mention of their Jewish background. Wilt's letter of complaint might have pertained to another Philipson venture. The outbreak of the war of 1812 was the signal for St. Louis merchants to raise the prices of their goods. Goods of all kinds were scarce, both foreign and domestic, since the threat of Indian raids along the Ohio made transportation doubly

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- 135 Philipson File, Director's File, MHS.  
 136 Jennings, op. cit., 11.  
 137 Ibid., 33.  
 138 Philipson File, Director's File, MHS.  
 139 Jennings, op. cit., 34-35.  
 140 Billon, op. cit., II, 229.

dangerous. Thus most merchants, including Wilt, were short of goods and were commonly forced to turn to smuggling. One of these lawbreakers was Joseph Philipson, who, as a silent partner, joined with two well-respected St. Louis merchants, Cabanne and Chenie, in two attempts to evade the Non-Inter-course Act along the Canadian border. The first was successful; but the second was nearly disastrous, the men being caught but declared not guilty. The St. Louis people sympathized with the families of the merchants, but still thought they should be made an example of. Evidently Philipson escaped general detection, for he was never tried. It is interesting to note that the Mr. Bates, spoken of in Wilt's letter, was probably Frederick Bates. Also interesting, is the fact that the letter was written September 13, one day after the smugglers were caught.<sup>141</sup> Philipson speculated in yet another area.

Like several other merchants and miners, he took advantage of the war scarcity of lead, and current speculation,<sup>142</sup> to sell his lead at a huge profit. Joseph Philipson made several other business ventures. One of these was the ownership of a brewery. There is some controversy over whether or not he was the first brewer west of the Mississippi and pioneer in the beer industry which has since become one of St. Louis' most famous businesses. Scharf, who wrote the most reliable history of St. Louis,

<sup>141</sup> Jennings, *op. cit.*, 142-145.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

holds to the view that Joseph Philipson had this honor. He cites the recollections of Richard Dowling of the year 1817 as his proof.<sup>143</sup>

At any rate, during 1814 and 1815 two frame buildings were constructed, one of them two stories in height, on the west side of Main, in an extension north of town between Biddle and Carr Streets. It housed Philipson's and Habb's brewery; but eventually Philipson bought Habb out, and spent a large amount in improving the works and in purchasing other lands nearby. Habb was retained as his brewer, having several years experience with Jacques St. Vrain, who had a brewery at nearby Bellefontaine, Missouri.<sup>144</sup> In 1819, Habb left and went into business on his own. He died in 1850.<sup>145</sup>

The first finished product was turned out on May 25, 1816, under the name of the "St. Louis Brewery," and was noted in the local paper by the same. Beer was to cost \$11.00 per barrel and \$6.00 per half barrel wholesale, with a "\$1.00 deduction if the barrel was returned." Retail it sold for 12-1/2¢ a quart. It was brewed in a pirogue.<sup>146</sup>

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- 143 Scharf, op. cit., I, 195.  
 144 Ibid., 152.  
 145 Ibid., 192.  
 146 Ibid., 198.  
 147 Ibid., 152.  
 148 Scharf, op. cit., I, 198.  
 149 Ibid., 152.  
 150 Billon, op. cit., II, 229.  
 151 Scharf, op. cit., I, 198.  
 152 Jennings, op. cit., 191-192.  
 153 Scharf, op. cit., I, 192.  
 154 As quoted in Billon, op. cit., II, 135.  
 155 Ibid.  
 156 Billon, op. cit., II, 135.



or "dug out" which lay on the north side of one of the buildings.

Several years earlier, in 1812, Joseph Philipson had conferred with Christian Wilt on the feasibility of building a distillery in the Missouri territory. However, it was not done. Wilt later built one across the river in Illinois in 1817.<sup>158</sup>

Meanwhile, Philipson had not forgotten his former idea, and in May, 1820, he entered into a partnership with Mathew Murphy and James Nagle. The firm was known as the "St. Louis Brewery and Distillery."<sup>159</sup> Perhaps it was the earliest distillery within the city. A supply of "strong, palatable Porter" was to be on hand for the summer months.<sup>160</sup> Brewing was still done,<sup>161</sup> and the new partners continued to use the same brewery on North Main.<sup>162</sup> By 1821, John Mullanphy bought the business, and after a fire rebuilt the brewery again.<sup>163</sup> The sale caused a law case to evolve. It appeared that Philipson removed a set of rollers sent to him by his brother Simon in Philadelphia. Mullanphy brought action and won the case in the St. Louis circuit court, May term, 1826. Joseph Philipson appealed and the case went to the Missouri Supreme Court, reported as such in the latter's Reports in 1843.<sup>164</sup> However, the appeal failed.

Mr. Philipson also became one of the earliest sawmill owners in St. Louis, since by May, 1820, he possessed the St.

157 Scharf, *op. cit.*, I, 192.

158 Jennings, *op. cit.*, 192-193.

159 Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser, May 31, 1820.

160 *Ibid.*

161 *Ibid.*

162 Scharf, *op. cit.*, I, 152.

163 *Ibid.*, 192.

164 Philipson File, Director's File, MHS.

165 Louis Sawmill. The first sawmill was built about 1819, by Sul-  
 vestre Labbadie. Thus by May, 1820, Joseph Philipson was in pos-  
 session of a wide variety of enterprises, although the first St.  
 Louis Directory in 1821 listed him as only the following:

166  
 Philipson, Joseph, Merchant, 6 north Main. 167

But things were to change rapidly. Between 1820 and  
 1821 financial affairs throughout the country were almost pros-  
 trated. Soon Joseph became very much embarrassed, and was  
 compelled to part with all his St. Louis property in order  
 to meet his liabilities. Being an accomplished musician,  
 he was compelled to adopt it as a profession, and for the  
 balance of his days it was his only resource until his death. 168  
 He gave sixty piano lessons to two of his best customers, the  
 two young daughters of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., from October 10  
 to December 20, 1827. For this he received fifty dollars. 169

Both he and his brother Jacob were poor in later years.  
 One of them turned their talents to inventions. When nothing  
 was heard from Washington of the utility of one of the brothers'  
 inventions, William Preston Clark wrote to his father of the  
 inventions. He mentioned that "Mr. Philipson" was anxious to  
 hear of the success of his invention. "I hope," said Clark,  
 "he may derive some advantage from it, for he is poor indeed." 170

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- 165 Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser, May 10,  
 1820.  
 166 Scharf, *op. cit.*, I, 192.  
 167 Paxton, St. Louis Directory and Register, as  
 quoted in St. Louis Directory for the Years 1824-2, p. 270.  
 168 Billon, *op. cit.*, II, 229.  
 169 Receipt of Joseph Philipson to Pierre Chouteau, Jr.  
 St. Louis, January 1, 1828.  
 170 Chouteau Collection, MHS.

Exercising his responsibility as a citizen, Joseph Philipson was active in several local activities of some import. He served on a grand jury a year and a half after his arrival in the city, at a special term of the court of Common Pleas on August 14, 1809, with Judge Lucas presiding. The trial of John Long, Jr., who shot with a rifle and killed one George Gordon, the stepfather of Long, was a notable one, since one week later the grand jury convicted him of murder in the first degree and ordered his execution. This was the first execution in American St. Louis.

Philipson participated in another local historic project. A while after the Bank of St. Louis was established, the Missouri Bank came into existence, and was incorporated on February 1, 1817. Edwards, a St. Louis historian in the mid-nineteenth century, stated that "it will give the reader an insight of the leading citizens by giving the names of the stockholders." Of the eighty-three shareholders listed, who raised \$18,500, Joseph Philipson was among them, purchasing twenty-three shares for \$2000. Only eight stockholders bought more shares than this Jewish merchant. In 1820 Philipson was among the nine Board of Directors chosen for the new bank. Henry Von Phul, Thomas Riddick, and Thomas Harte Benton were among the eight others serving on the board. In 1820 this bank was made the depository of the United States

171 Billon, op. cit., II, 15.

172 Edwards, Edwards' Great West and Her Commercial Metropolis, 310.

173 Ibid., 310-311.

public monies for the land District of Missouri. But on the heels of this success came disaster. Like Philipson's other enterprises, the bank failed. It closed its doors and went into liquidation in the summer of 1822. This was caused by unwise speculation and the violation of the laws of banking.<sup>174</sup>

Philipson again participated in another local project of note when on December 20, 1815, he joined several other St. Louis County land owners in petitioning the General Assembly of the Missouri Territory for the erection of a courthouse and other public buildings in St. Louis on land in or adjoining St. Louis which would be purchased by a local commission. Philipson was one of the twenty-five petitioners which included A. Papin, P. Chouteau, Bernard Pratte, Cabanne, Labbadie, Manuel Lisa, Charles Gratiot, H. Von Phul, William Christy and Christian Wilt.

At Joseph Philipson's death on June 19, 1844, at the age of 71, his death notice significantly did not mention the word "Jew," and in fact, stated that he was "a member of no religious denomination."<sup>175</sup> Proof of his refusal of Judaism is the fact that he was buried in the city cemetery, instead of in the United Hebrew burial grounds then in existence.

The death of this energetic son of a Polish Jew, the earliest Israelite in St. Louis of which there is

<sup>174</sup> Billon, *op. cit.*, II, 89.

<sup>175</sup> Saint Louis Buildings Envelope, MHS.

<sup>176</sup> Daily Evening Gazette, June 21, 1844.

evidence, was recorded as follows in the Daily Evening Gazette of June 21, 1844, giving one of the few descriptions found of his character.

On Wednesday night, the 19 inst., in the 71st year of his age, Mr. Joseph Philipson, the deceased had been for nearly forty years, a resident of this city; and when formerly engaged in mercantile business, was remarkable for his energy and enterprise. His highly cultivated mind--his dignified manners--and his fine taste in letters and the arts would have adorned the most polished circles of society; but for the last twenty years, he has lived in retirement, devoted to music, and to his large and valuable collection of old paintings. He was also distinguished by his many virtues; and, although a member of no religious denomination, by the constant practice of the precepts of Christianity. He was followed to his grave in the City Cemetery, near the remains of his deceased brother, by a number of our oldest and most respective citizens.<sup>177</sup>

This highly complimentary and lengthy obituary placed Joseph Philipson among St. Louis' leading lights during his life in the city.

A possible indication of the interests, intellect, and education of this Philipson is seen in the following items left by him to be sold at auction: a piano valued at \$75; an encyclopedia of forty-six volumes; four dictionaries; four music books; four lots of music; a Bible; a French Grammar; a German Grammar; a chemistry book; a map of Europe; a volume of Faust's tragedies, and a large collection of valuable old paintings.<sup>178</sup> Thus it can be gathered that he was linguistically and artistically

177 Ibid.

178 Estate of Joseph Philipson, No. 1907, MS.

inclined, and judging from the aforementioned Bible as an indication he was not entirely devoid of religion. More will be said of the Philipson art collection later in this chapter.

Another Philipson to grace the local scene was Joseph's brother, Jacob Philipson. As stated previously, he came to St. Louis from Philadelphia shortly after his brother. Significantly differing from his brother, Joseph, Jacob Philipson showed some semblance of Judaism. As stated previously, he was a member of the Rodeph Shalom Synagogue in Philadelphia, and although he was not identified with a synagogue in St. Louis, he did leave orders for his burial to be in the United Hebrew Cemetery.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Jacob Philipson was born in 1779 and at the age of 38 came to St. Louis to advance his and his brother Simon's interest in their Philadelphia business. By November 9, 1808, he definitely was in this city, for the Missouri Gazette for that day listed the following affirmation of this fact (which was, by the way, the earliest advertisement discovered of a Jewish owned establishment in the city):

JACOB PHILIPSON

Has just received and is now opening at his new Store, opposite the Post Office,

A reasonable supply of  
 DRY GOODS,  
 AND A  
 GENERAL ASSORTMENT OF GROCERIES  
 among which  
 are

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179 Estate of Jacob Philipson, No. 5154, MS.  
 180 Daily Missouri Republican, January 11, 1858.

2 1-2 & 3 point Blankets  
 Ladies Morocco leather spangled Shoes  
 Men's & Children d do.  
 Crawley Steel  
 Madder & Turkey Red  
 Kinseed Oil  
 Tanner's do.  
 Fresh Teas - Coffee  
 Chocolate and Sugar  
 Salt Shad and Mackarel  
 One 114 gallon Still  
 one 40 do. do.  
 Writings, wrapping and letter Paper  
 Various imported Liquors  
 A few German and English Bibles, Testaments  
 Hymn Books, etc.

All of which he intends selling for CASH at reasonable prices. 181

St. Louis, November 10, 1808

It can be seen that his store contained a variety of items. However, he did not remain in this location very long. In October, 1809, he moved his store to Main Street in the heart of the business section, which area included Main Street between Spruce and Pine. By 1810 there were twelve general stores actively engaged in carrying on trade, so the name of Philipson was in evidence, 182

Jacob Philipson was located in a building "next above Mr. Chas. Gratiot's house." Evidently with more space and capital available, Philipson could now afford to expand the variety of his stock to include hardware and Queens ware. 183  
 All goods were to sell "for Cash at very reduced prices."

After carrying on business in St. Louis for a little over two years, he decided in January, 1811, for some unknown reason, to dispose of his business. The columns of

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181 Missouri Gazette, November 9, 1808.

182 Jennings, op. cit., 33.

183 Missouri Gazette, October 19, 1809.

the Louisiana Gazette of January 16 of that year carried the "for sale" notice which, interestingly enough, appeared in both English and French. The remaining stock of the store was to be sold at "very liberal terms."<sup>184</sup> The goods included "groceries, dry goods, queen's and glass ware, iron mongery, etc."<sup>185</sup> Philipson described himself as a very patient and indulgent man, and expressed the desire to collect all debts due him.<sup>186</sup> Whether this implies that financial difficulties were his is not known. Apparently a selling price could not be agreed upon, as the sale of the store was never discovered. Instead, since Jacob Philipson placed some of his goods with Mrs. Piscay on commission, he took the remainder of the assortment to Sainte Genevieve Missouri,<sup>187</sup> where he lived and continued his trade for three years. The evidence of his stay in this oldest of existing Missouri cities was the stone house which he built and resided in until 1814. It was located on the southeast corner of Second and Merchant streets, and known as the Philipson-Valle house, J.B. Valle having purchased it later. It became one of the showplaces of Sainte Genevieve.<sup>188</sup>

In the last month of 1814, when war conditions made profit impossible, he sold his entire stock and closed out

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184 Louisiana Gazette, January 16, 1811.  
 185 Ibid.  
 186 Ibid.  
 187 Jennings, op. cit., 33.  
 188 Postal and Koppman, op. cit., 268.  
 189 Ibid., 280.



the business, although in 1828 a firm known as Block and Philipson was in operation in this old town.<sup>191</sup> Whether he continued his interests in the Philipson lead business cannot be ascertained. However he did live for a time in Potosi, Missouri, where he might have had mining interests. After getting married in the southern portion of the state to Simon Block's daughter, he returned to St. Louis and resided there permanently.<sup>192</sup> Whether his merchandising career was now at an end is open to speculation, for a receipt noting the purchase of a Negro slave of the Lachanse family from the firm of Block and Philipson in Sainte Genevieve was discovered, dated July 12, 1828. Unfortunately,<sup>193</sup> the specific Philipson was not named.

Jacob soon gave up his career as a merchant and became a teacher.<sup>194</sup> Being an accomplished linguist, he gave instructions in English, German, and French. He lived for the last ten years of his life on South Third Street, and almost until the end he continued to give lessons.<sup>195</sup> Much of this time he was in financial distress. Perhaps he was the poor Philipson inventor, referred to earlier in this chapter. Similar to his brother Joseph, after the first glow of success as a merchant, he lived out the rest of his life in the shadow of poverty.

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190 Jennings, *op. cit.*, 33.

191 Block and Philipson, Receipt to Etienne, July 12, 1828, Amoureux-Bolduc Collection, MSS., MHS.

192 Billon, *op. cit.*, II, 228.

193 Amoureux-Bolduc Collection, MHS.

194 Houck, *op. cit.*, III, 192.

195 Billon, *op. cit.*, II, 228.

Jacob Philipson married the daughter of Simon Block of Cape Girardeau.<sup>197</sup> The Blocks mentioned were part of the early Missouri Jewish family to be discussed later. Thus, Jacob, while one of the few Jews in the city, did not intermarry. He had seven children, all born in Missouri.<sup>198</sup> Of these there were Philip, who died before his father, Joseph, Lavinia, (Mrs. Antonio Prietto), Esther (Mrs. Alexander Lewis), Theodore, Anna Mirree, Rosa Adelaide (Mrs. Mayer). Of their belief in Judaism, it is only known that Esther had married a Jew, and possibly her sister, Mrs. Mayer, did likewise.<sup>199</sup>

Jacob Philipson had decided that when death came he wished to be buried in the United Hebrew Cemetery. Thus, he left a notice in his will for his son-in-law, Alexander Lewis, a member of the United Hebrew Congregation, to get "money sufficient for my funeral among his followers in creed, meaning (to be) interred in their cemetery."<sup>200</sup> His appeal for fellow Jews to pay for the cost of his burial among them, indicates that he apparently was in very poor circumstances. On January 10, 1858, Jacob Philipson died at the age of seventy-nine, after residing in Missouri practically fifty years. The Daily Missouri Republican noted this fact, and stated that the funeral would be at 10 a.m. from his former home on Third Street. He was not only known in St. Louis, for a reference was made for papers

196 Estate of Jacob Philipson, No. 5154, MS.

197 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

198 Billon, *op. cit.*, II, 229.

199 Estate of Jacob Philipson, No. 5154, MS.

200 Ibid.

in Philadelphia, his first American home, Cincinnati, where his father-in-law died, and New Orleans, to publish the death item.<sup>201</sup>

His will exhibited his musical interest, listing a music book of French, German, and English songs, a violin, and a teachest. The funeral cost \$55.50, and the grave in the United Hebrew cemetery was ten dollars, which was the maximum amount charged families of members, but not the highest charge for a non-member.<sup>202</sup> Nothing was said in the testament of the attempt to collect charity for the burial of the only Philipson who was buried a Jew.<sup>203</sup>

The third and last of the brothers, Simon Philipson, had made several trips to St. Louis; however, he resided in Philadelphia until 1821.<sup>204</sup> There he continued the fur and lead business, discussed earlier, maintaining correspondence in October, 1814, with John Jacob Astor, the noted fur dealer.<sup>205</sup> S. Philipson acted also as the eastern agent for his two brothers, who continued to operate in the West. It was not until 1821, after the financial panic in which both of the brothers lost heavily, that he came to the city.<sup>206</sup> The possession of fine property in St. Louis was one of

201 Daily Missouri Republican, January 11, 1858.

202 Estate of Jacob Philipson, No. 5154, MS.

203 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation of Saint Louis State of Missouri 1842, p. 3, MS., United Hebrew Congregation.

204 Estate of Jacob Philipson, No. 5154, MS.

205 Jennings, op. cit., 34.

206 John Jacob Astor to Simon Philipson, October 19, 1814, John Jacob Astor papers, MSS., MHS.

207 Jennings, op. cit., 34.

the inducements to join his two brothers here. One of his holdings for a time was the brewery discussed earlier. Simon Philipson, who had been part owner with Joseph of the St. Louis Brewery, soon leased the land and brewery to John Mullanphy shortly after his arrival in the city. After this project, he maintained a large poultry yard for a time, and lived upon the proceeds he received from the sale of his eggs.

Simon Philipson was described by author John Drummond Stewart, who made a trip to early St. Louis, in his book Edward Warren as:

A Polish Jew, an agreeable old man, who had an old wooden house on a square plot, called in St. Louis an island, that is, a square place surrounded by streets;...He had a small barrel which he carried under his arm once in two days to a brewery to replenish with small beer; and his abode contained an assortment of old pictures, and objects, either of use or verdure, but was never swept, save when a plume of ostrich feathers was called upon to clean anything for exhibition to a rare hunter of the old and curious in these parts. He was most kind and hospitable to the extent of these commodities in which he indulged.<sup>210</sup>

As might be guessed with such a disorganized home, a woman was lacking in the household. This was the case. Simon had married the former Susanna Mussina, the sister of his former employee and later rival, Zachary Mussina.

208 Billon, op. cit., 228.

209 Bay, Missouri Supreme Court Reports, 1843, p. 442, as taken from Philipson File, Director's File, NMS.

210 Stewart, Edward Warren, 432.

211 St. Louis Enquirer, October 20, 1821.

212 Jennings, op. cit., 15.

She was an amiable, well educated, woman who bore him six children, all in Philadelphia.<sup>213</sup> However, shortly after their arrival in St. Louis, the St. Louis Enquirer of October 20, 1821, reported the death of Mrs. Philipson on Sunday, October 7, in this manner:

DIED - In this town on the 7th Mrs. Susanna Philipson, consort of Simon Philipson, late of Philadelphia.<sup>214</sup>

To all intents and purposes this was the earliest recorded death of a person with possible Jewish background in St. Louis. At the time, there was not a Jewish cemetery, nor did the unfortunate death of the woman occasion initiative to blossom forth and produce the same.

However, this was only the beginning of unhappiness in the Philipson family. For within the next twenty years many of the early Philipsons died, slowly causing the death of this prominent St. Louis family. One year after Susanna Philipson passed away, Simon's nephew Joseph Jr. died, in September, 1822.<sup>215</sup> Three of Simon Philipson's children followed their cousin to the grave some years later. Two of them were the hard, adventuresome type, typical of the times. Philip Philipson, a handsome, most promising, and well-liked boy with the desire for exploration, left his family in 1830 while "quite a youth,"<sup>216</sup> and set out to encounter the perilous journey to the Rocky Mountains. He survived the trip there,<sup>217</sup>

213 Billon, op. cit., II, 228.

214 St. Louis Enquirer, October 20, 1821.

215 Daily Missouri Republican, September 11, 1822.

216 Stewart, Edward Warren, 482.

217 Daily Missouri Republican, October 7, 1834.

but four years later on the return trip he died, when close  
 to home in Lexington, Missouri, in late September, 1834.<sup>218</sup>  
 His brother Louis, a darker, more serious, handsome lad,  
 with a tendency toward brilliancy in music, apparently  
 was instilled with his brother's love of adventure. In  
 1836, he accompanied the author, Stewart, to the West. Like  
 the late Philip, his brother, Lewis was never heard from  
 again. Tragically, he died on the trip, as he drowned in  
 Lewis' Fork.

Heartache of another nature was encountered by Simon  
 Philipson from his daughter Amanda. The latter and her  
 brother Louis were described by Stewart as the "most extra-  
 ordinary pianists I ever heard."<sup>219</sup> Unfortunately her morals  
 were of a questionable nature.<sup>220</sup> She married an accomplished  
 violinist;<sup>221</sup> however, she was evidently not adverse to living  
 a free life,<sup>222</sup> as she gave birth to a son, the "reputed father"<sup>223</sup>  
 of whom was one John Fuller. In 1844 the infant was in New  
 York City under the care of a man and his wife whose name  
 was not known.<sup>224</sup> At an unknown date, the mother, the former  
 Amanda Philipson, went to an early grave.<sup>225</sup> Simon Philipson  
 was conscious of the shortcomings of his wild daughter; so

218 Ibid.

219 Stewart, op. cit., 482.

220 Estate of Simon Philipson, No. 1666, MS.

221 Stewart, op. cit., 482.

222 Estate of Simon Philipson, No. 1666, MS.

223 Estates Envelope of Simon and Joseph Philipson,

MS., MS.

224 Ibid.

225 Stewart, op. cit., 482.

much so that he made a provision for their correction or threatened to delete her from the estate. A tract of land was set aside in Washington County, Missouri, in trust for the children of his brother, Jacob, with the remainder in trust to be held for Simon's own children, Esther and Amanda, for fifteen years. Here, he specifically stated, that after this period:

My said trustee shall deliver to my said children all the trust fund and property to be equally divided between them; provided that the course and conduct of my daughter Amanda during the whole of said period of fifteen years after my demise, shall have been correct, blameless and entirely to the satisfaction of my said trustee; otherwise, and in the contrary case, it is my will and I hereby direct, that my said daughter Amanda, shall have forfeited the portion that would have belonged to her, and that my said Trustee shall at his discretion dispose of this, her forfeited portion, either in favor of my daughter Esther, or in favor of some needy and worthy relation of mine, or in any other manner that my said Trustee may deem most fit and suitable to the then existing circumstances.<sup>226</sup>

In August, 1841, Simon Philipson passed away, having survived most of his children. He named Joseph Philipson as his executor and trustee for his two daughters, Amanda and Esther,<sup>227</sup> conspicuously omitting any reference to his brother Jacob.<sup>228</sup> When Joseph Philipson also died, Joseph Sarpy succeeded him as executor. Apparently Amanda never reformed her behavior for the amount of \$100 signed over

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<sup>226</sup> Estates Envelope of Simon and Joseph Philipson, MSS., MHS.

<sup>227</sup> Billon, *op. cit.*, 229; Daily Evening Gazette, August 25, 1841.

<sup>228</sup> Estate of Simon Philipson, No. 1666, MS.

to her was marked "disallowed." Whether Esther received the money or not is unknown. We do know that she had married U.S. Army Lieutenant Robert Emmett Clary, on March 31, 1839.<sup>230</sup> Possibly she was one of the lesser worries for the troubled father, although it is doubtful if she married within her faith and it is unlikely that this bothered her father greatly. Simon Philipson--who was known to the author Stewart as a Jew, and, besides, was an early member of a Philadelphia synagogue, as heretofore mentioned--evidently did not keep the religion in St. Louis. He made no mention of his dislike of the apparent intermarriage of his daughters, possibly because his own wife probably was a non-Jew, and he did not care to be buried in the Jewish cemetery then in existence.

Thus unlike his brother, Jacob, Simon Philipson made no provision for religious burial, and so was buried in the City Cemetery, next to his brother Joseph.<sup>231</sup>

In passing, one heritage of the Philipsons' should be noted. This was their outstanding art collection. This included 390 paintings and 100 prints, valued at \$2,851.67. Simon Philipson possessed one hundred and fifty of the paintings worth \$1000. At his death, he awarded all of this to his brother, Joseph,<sup>232</sup> who had in his possession among others a "Portrait of an English Lady" by Hans

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229 Estates Envelope of Simon and Joseph Philipson,  
MSS., MHS.  
230 Billon, *op. cit.*, II, 229.  
231 Daily Evening Gazette, June 21, 1844.  
232 Estates Envelope of Simon and Joseph Philipson,  
MSS., MHS.



Holbein worth \$200; "A Portrait" by Titian, valued at \$100; and numerous other paintings or prints by such artists as Rembrant, Hals, Da Vinci, and Raphael also were included.<sup>233</sup> The Philipson pictures were of such a caliber as to be worthy of exhibition. By 1839 the local press had noted the collection. The columns of the Daily Evening Gazette of August, 17 of that year contained notices of the Philipson oil paintings.<sup>234</sup> The fame of the collection was such that Philipson's decision to sell some of his painting in September, 1840, drew a news item of the occasion.<sup>235</sup> For some reason, Simon Philipson wished to dispose of his rare collection of ancient paintings. In November, 1840, he proposed through the Board of Delegates that the city purchase some from him. The Daily Evening Gazette predicted that the proposal would be refused.

Since the city has no authority to make such a purchase and even if it had -- it is considered as inexpedient, looking at the difficulty and expense of maintaining a gallery of paintings at the city's charge... But from the rarity and value of this collection it is certainly desirable that it should be retained in this city. It would present a good opportunity to establish a gallery, which would be creditable to the city.<sup>236</sup>

Thus, the Philipson paintings suggested the need for a suitable gallery in the city with the display of the paintings as the nucleus. This was never done as a civic

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233 Estate of Joseph Philipson, No. 1907, MS.  
 234 Daily Evening Gazette, August 17, 1839.  
 235 Ibid., September 8, 1840.  
 236 Ibid., November 13, 1840.

project. Yet after Simon Philipson's death, in 1841, the paintings were displayed. Many of the pictures were hung for exhibition in rooms rented by Joseph Philipson from Mr. James Lucas and located over the Surveyor General's office on Chestnut Street. <sup>237</sup> In 1843 the Daily Missouri Republican noted in its columns of February 3 that the "Philipson Galleries" were located at the corner of Main and Olive. <sup>238</sup> Yet, prior to his death in 1844, Joseph Philipson specified that Peter Chouteau and Sarpy, the executors of his estate, could dispose of the collection to its best advantage on either side of the Atlantic, and in the meanwhile, could also exhibit the paintings for the purpose of raising revenue. The pictures were afterwards stored in a room above the Post Office at the yearly rental of \$100; and in 1846, Sarpy, thinking this too great an expense, asked for permission to sell the paintings at a private or public sale "in this city or in the Atlantic cities." <sup>239</sup> This was accomplished, for the collection soon disappeared. <sup>240</sup> Thus this earliest art collection in the city, which would have been of greater value if preserved intact, disappeared like the prominent name of the brothers who amassed it. However, it should be noted that Simon and Joseph Philipson were the earliest known art collectors in

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237 Estate of Joseph Philipson, No. 1907, MS.  
 238 Daily Missouri Republican, February 3, 1843.  
 239 Estate of Joseph Philipson, No. 1907.  
 240 Ibid.

241  
St. Louis.

Isador Bush, a late nineteenth-century American Jewish historian, ignores the Philipson family, as local Israelites. He states: "the Block (or Bloch) family was undoubtedly the first and most numerous Jewish family that settled west of the Mississippi River."<sup>242</sup> Bush notes that it was "most difficult to obtain any reliable information in this respect;" however, a perusal of his articles on the subject in 1883 pointed out that he did uncover some information at least through interviews with a member of the Block family.<sup>243</sup> The story of the Block immigration to St. Louis bridges the gap which exists between 1816 and 1841 as concerns newcomers to the local Jewish scene.

The Block family was of Bohemian extraction, and were the first of their nationality to settle in this city, which became important for Jewish settlers from their area. It was also the only outstanding example of a Jewish family migration to America from Bohemia prior to 1848. What were the motives which stimulated the Blocks to make the initial move which others feared to pursue? Due to the absence of a precise historical account of what prompted their adventurous voyage across the ocean, their true motives were unknown. Perhaps, the circumstances in Bohemia might have prompted this move. In Bohemia, Jews bore many restrictions,

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241 Philipson File, Director's File, MHS.

242 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

243 Ibid.

244 Kisch, In Search of Freedom, 21-23.

not being allowed to own land, excluded from most trades, and denied the right to practice most professions. Thus in Bohemia the political, economic, and social status of the Jew had become as restricted as that of the Israelite of Central Europe, where after the reforms brought by the French Revolution and the long Napoleonic wars, reaction again raised its victorious head. It was a fact that most Jews could not bring themselves to leave the land where their ancestors had lived and struggled for centuries. This fact played an important role in their passive, patient, and resigned suffering, resulting in a scarcity of far-sighted and courageous individuals among the Bohemian Jews ready to brave the dangers of a voyage to a land hardly known to them in order to escape political oppression, religious intolerance, and economic hardships in their European homeland.<sup>244</sup>

The Block family was recorded in Schwihau, Bohemia,<sup>245</sup> as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. The immigrated members of the family had been educated by their pious parents in Bohemia in the strict Orthodox tradition.<sup>246</sup> It appears that Abraham Block, born in 1780,<sup>247</sup> was the pathfinder for his family, coming to America at the age of twelve. He settled and married in Virginia, a state several of the immigrant Blocks temporarily settled

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244 Kisch, In Search of Freedom, 21-23.  
 245 Ibid., 258.  
 246 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 247 Kisch, op. cit., 22.

in, and in 1823 was one of the original pioneers who moved to the Upper Red River country in Arkansas, then almost a wilderness. He settled in the village of Washington,<sup>248</sup> Arkansas.

However, Bush considered Wolf Block as the family's pathfinder. He left his home, also in Schwihau, Bohemia, to come to the young United States near the end of the eighteenth century, settling in Baltimore. He was successful there and returned to Europe to persuade his wife to come with him to the United States; but she refused, and as he insisted on returning to Baltimore, she procured a divorce.

Wolf Block did not go alone. He induced some of his younger relatives to accompany him. Two of these were Wolf's cousins, both named Simon Block. One, the father of at least two children, lived the rest of his life in Cape Girardeau. The other, Simon Block,<sup>249</sup> who had settled in Richmond, Virginia,<sup>250</sup> then lived for many years in Cincinnati.<sup>251</sup> There he became an associate of Joseph Jonas, the first Jew in Ohio, and his brother Abraham.<sup>252</sup> In Cincinnati's first synagogue, established in January, 1824,<sup>253</sup> Block's name was one of seventeen appearing on the charter incorporating

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<sup>248</sup> "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," *American Jewish Archives*, October, 1956, p. 68.

<sup>249</sup> *Jewish Tribune*, November 23, 1883.

<sup>250</sup> Jonas and Schappes (eds.), *op. cit.*, 229.

<sup>251</sup> *Jewish Tribune*, November 23, 1883.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

this synagogue, "Kol Kodesh Beneh Israel" in 1830. He was a true servant of the congregation, as attested by Joseph Jonas' comment on his death:

On the 19th of October 1832, departed this life, Simon Block, Esq., formerly of Richmond, Virginia. This venerable gentlemen had filled the office of Parnass, and volunteered for a considerable time to be our Shohet without any emolument, the congregation not being able to procure one; he was also our only Mohel [ritual circumciser] at that time. He was highly respected and lamented by the members. Being the oldest amongst us, we considered him as the father of the congregation, (peace be unto him).<sup>255</sup>

Abraham Jonas served as the administrator of his will.<sup>256</sup> As mentioned earlier, the religious Simon Block was the father-in-law of Jacob Philipson, and in his will, he left Philipson a life estate.<sup>257</sup> In August, 1838, Block's estate in Ste. Genevieve was put up for sale.<sup>258</sup> Thus, possibly it was Simon Block and Jacob Philipson who were the owners of the firm of "Block and Philipson" mentioned previously as being located in the oldest city of Missouri.<sup>259</sup> Thus the two early Jewish families who settled in St. Louis were related.

Some confusion in reporting the early arrival of the Blocks has been the result of the family's faculty for giving several individuals the same name, in addition to Bush's occasional habit of misspelling a name. For instance, he

254 Ibid., 228.

255 Ibid., 229.

256 Daily Missouri Republican, December 27, 1838.

257 Estate of Jacob Philipson, No. 5154, MS.

258 Daily Missouri Republican, August 24, 1838.

259 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

probably erred when he listed two Eliezer Blocks, one Wolf Bloch's cousin, arriving very early, and the other Wolf's brother coming later, plus one Eliezer "S." Block who was first in St. Louis in the 1830's.<sup>260</sup> Possibly it was Ezekial Block who was the early immigrant listed by Bush as cousin Eliezer. Ezekial Block was a "German Jew" from Richmond, Virginia, who came to the Upper Louisiana Territory shortly before the cession.<sup>261</sup> The "Statistical Census of the District of Cape Girardeau" dated November 1, 1803, contained the name of "Ezekial Block," and listed his holdings as nine Negro slaves, four males and five females, and two horses.<sup>262</sup> The census did not contain his production of any of the six main crops of the area.<sup>263</sup> The statistical census of New Madrid, Missouri, of 1797, listed an "Andre Block;" however, there was no mention of his religion.<sup>264</sup>

With a Block in the vicinity, it wasn't long before one member of the family made his way to St. Louis. Wolf Block, who arrived in 1816, is supposed to be the recipient of this honor.<sup>265</sup> Others of the family soon followed him to his new location. The earliest officially recorded member of the family to do this was Eliezer, or Eleazer, Block,

260 Ibid.

261 Houck, op. cit., II, 412.

262 As quoted in Ibid., 407.

263 The slaves were further divided into three undefined classifications. Block had two first-class and two second-class males in addition to four first-class and one second-class females. As taken from ibid.

264 Ibid., 396.

265 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

who was a relative of the aforementioned pioneer St. Louis  
 Block.<sup>266</sup> The former became a lawyer in Baltimore<sup>267</sup> and then  
 moved to Richmond, Virginia. From this latter point he  
 came to St. Louis between 1817 and 1818.<sup>268</sup> He has been<sup>269</sup>  
 considered the first Jewish lawyer to come to this city.<sup>270</sup>  
 He is probably the same person whose name appears in the  
 first Directory of St. Louis, published in 1821, in the  
 following manner:

Block Eleazer, attorney at law, north Church,  
 n.e. corner B.<sup>271</sup>

Then St. Louis had but two thousand inhabitants,<sup>272</sup>  
 and he, as an attorney, practiced in the court at the same  
 time with Thomas H. Benton and Edward Bates. It was generally  
 supposed that he soon adopted the Christian faith, as he had  
 married first a Lucretia Parker in Troy, Missouri, with a  
 Rev. McElroy performing the ceremony.<sup>273</sup> After her death he<sup>274</sup>  
 took a Miss Sarah Kittredge of Mount Vernon, New Hampshire,<sup>275</sup>  
 for his second wife, while attending for thirty years Dr.  
 Post's Second Presbyterian Church. His biography has a  
 strange ending, for as Bush reports in November, 1883:

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- 266 It is not clear whether E. Block was a cousin  
 or brother of Wolf Block; however he was probably the brother.  
 267 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 268 Houck, op. cit., III, 23.  
 269 Billon, op. cit., II, 163.  
 270 Houck, op. cit., III, 23.  
 271 Paxton, St. Louis Directory and Register, as re-  
 printed in the St. Louis Directory for 1854-5, p. 265.  
 272 Saint Louis Directory for the Year 1842, p. vi.  
 273 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 274 Daily Missouri Republican, May 14, 1839.  
 275 Ibid., December 16, 1856.



At his death (a few years ago) he declared that he never abandoned his "Emanah" (belief in Judaism) and requested to be buried at the Jewish burial ground; where Dr. Post, a celebrated Presbyterian minister, spoke the funeral-oration or prayer; a truly Jewish prayer without the least allusion to Christ or the Christian creed.<sup>276</sup>

The date of his death was never definitely found.

Many other members of the Block family and their relatives emigrated to St. Louis or its vicinity. It is very possible that many of these Bohemians residing out-state entered the city or temporarily resided here on occasion. Wolf Block's brother, Emanuel, came to the city about 1817, about the same time as Eliezer. Two more cousins of the pioneer Wolf Block, Levi and Hyman, arrived in the country and settled in Missouri. The former located at Troy, Lincoln County, Missouri; and the latter at Perryville, Perry County, Missouri; both in later years moving to St. Louis.<sup>277</sup> The 1842 directory listed Levi Block as settled in the city.<sup>278</sup> Yet, scattered as the members of this family were, they always assisted each other, and "only one" abandoned his faith entirely, asserts Bush.<sup>279</sup> This was the aforementioned Levi Block, who married a Miss Massey, of Massey Iron Works, who was a Catholic.

The size of the Block family and the apparent enthusiastic salesmanship by those who settled locally of the

<sup>276</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Saint Louis Directory For the Year 1842, p. 10.

<sup>279</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

advantages of the United States, and especially St. Louis, remain an item of wonderment. For in 1821 the sixth cousin of Wolf Block, Phineas Block, joined the roll of emigrants. He first located himself at Cape Girardeau, where he married his own cousin, a daughter of Simon Block. The newly married couple soon moved to Louisiana, Pike County, Missouri, where he lived a great many years, and became a very successful merchant. The firm of Block and McCune, owners and managers of the Northern Mississippi Steamship Company, was well-known and highly esteemed all over the Mississippi Valley. He owned also a steam flowing mill, and a commission and grocery business; and by 1838 he was President of the Upper Mississippi Insurance Company. He soon amassed quite a fortune, on which he later retired and moved to St. Louis. Yet misfortune struck Phineas Block's personal life. Phineas Block had married his cousin. However, this partnership was brought to an abrupt and terrible end, as his wife, Delia, formerly of Richmond, Virginia, died in Louisiana, Missouri, in October, 1840, at the age of 34. They had two children, a daughter Annie and a younger son, Elias. Annie Block frequently visited St. Louis, and spent most of her time there staying with her uncle, Jacob Block. She was active in society. Charles E. Pancoast, a traveler in St. Louis in May, 1841

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- 280 Ibid.  
 281 Daily Missouri Republican, February 1, 1839.  
 282 Ibid., 228.  
 283 Ibid., November 3, 1838.  
 284 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 285 Ibid., October 2, 1840.

described his happy association with her. A frequent mixer in society, he met many ladies, but said: "This girl seemed to have the power of drawing me to her more than other Ladies." <sup>286</sup> Unfortunately she charmed one outside her faith, John Leach, who married her on November 21, 1843, Reverend <sup>287</sup> W. G. Eliot, Jr. officiating.

Besides being a business and family man, Phineas Block <sup>288</sup> was described by the aforementioned traveler as a "Rabbi." He was "Spiritual Adviser of all the Hebrews for many miles <sup>289</sup> around" and also acted as their shochet. By religious law the latter must kill with one thrust of the knife, the traveler noted, or sell the meat to the Christians. "But the Rabbi never missed killing with one blow while I was <sup>290</sup> there," Pancoast recalled.

In 1830, Phineas' brother, Jacob Block, mentioned above, came to the United States. He first stayed for some time with his brother in Louisiana, Missouri; afterwards he went to his cousins in Troy, and then to St. Louis. <sup>291</sup> By 1840 he was a very wealthy man. <sup>292</sup> Possibly this was the result of his career as a merchant. He owned a store at 153 North <sup>293</sup> Main. Like his niece Annie, he also apparently intermarried. He and Catherine Adams were married by the Reverend Mr. Hatchet

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- 286 Hannum (ed.), Quaker Forty-Miner, 43.  
 287 Daily Missouri Republican, November 23, 1843.  
 288 Hannum (ed.), op. cit., 44.  
 289 Ibid.  
 290 Ibid.  
 291 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 292 Hannum (ed.), op. cit., 43.  
 293 Keemle, Saint Louis Directory for the Years

in November, 1843.

While Bush stated explicitly that only one of the Blocks gave up his Judaism, it is doubtful if the many who did intermarry could have kept their religion with any strength. Bush admits this, too. However, he excuses the intermarriage and the lessening of the ties with Orthodoxy by mentioning the lack of co-religionists for association. The difficulty in finding marriageable females, certainly, was a prime cause. This problem was discussed more fully earlier in this chapter. It is therefore not surprising to learn that the immigrant Jewish settler mostly married daughters of their non-Jewish neighbors, and that their children also intermarried. Many prominent local families of another day were connected by blood and marriage with Jewish ancestry. However, Bush asserts that the one item which caused many of the Blocks to hang on to their religion was "the deeply rooted characteristic virtue of our people... the love, the warm, faithful attachment to their family and to their people preserved them also to our faith and race."<sup>295</sup>

Starting with the mid-1830's the Block family--the chief nourisher of St. Louis Jewry--sent more strongly religious members from Bohemia to the city who were to play an important role in the formation of a Jewish community. These were Abraham Weigle and his wife (the latter a sister

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294 Daily Missouri Republican, November 18, 1843.

295 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

of Amanuel and Eliezer Block). Eliezer Block induced the couple to come. Eliezer S. Block, a brother of Phineas and Jacob, soon followed, as did his sister and her fiancée, Nathan Abeles.<sup>296</sup> Soon after them, two sisters of Eliezer S. followed. These were Esther Block, with her husband, Abraham Schwarzkopf, a shochet, and Ellen Block with her husband, Joseph Kohn.<sup>297</sup> These newcomers will be discussed in the succeeding chapters. Unofficially the Block family caused at least twenty-three Jews to emigrate to the western part of the United States, thus proving its claim to the title as the most numerous family to settle west of the Mississippi.<sup>298</sup> All except one of the family, the forerunner Abraham Block, settled for a time in Missouri. Seventeen, or more than two-thirds, of the family resided at one time or another in St. Louis. While local Jewry did not have enough die-hard religionists, it had the nucleus provided by this Bohemian family's immigration to build a Jewish community.

The rest of the Jews recorded as settled in St. Louis came in an unorganized fashion. Phineas Israel Johnson was one of the earlier Jews to settle in St. Louis. Johnson was a descendant of the famous d'Israeli family, of which Lord Beaconsfield was a member. Accompanied by his brother, David Israel Johnson, he sailed from Portsmouth, England,<sup>299</sup> and arrived in Cincinnati in December, 1818, with his

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., December 7, 1883.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., November 23, 1883.

<sup>299</sup> Markens, Hebrews in America, 107.

brother, the latter's wife, and child. David Johnson was a close friend of Joseph Jonas, and was the second Jew to arrive in Cincinnati. After sojourning a time in Brookfield, Indiana, David Johnson returned to this Ohio city, and was a religious and true Israelite who laboured hard to form and continue the first Cincinnati congregation. Many of the members were from his home town in England. Meanwhile, Phineas Johnson had gone on to Louisville, Kentucky. In 1819 he established himself in St. Louis, where he engaged in the auction business with the elder Patrick Walsh. He steadily rose in this field, serving first as a clerk and afterwards as a partner with John D. Daggett under the firm name of Walsh, Johnson, and Company. Daggett later served as an alderman in 1827, and as Mayor in 1841.

Phineas Johnson married a Christian lady, Miss Clarissa Clark of Virginia, a grandniece of Abraham Clark of New Jersey, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The couple who later resided in Louisville had a daughter, Matilda, whose tie with St. Louis was through her marriage to Solomon J. Levi.

Levi was born in 1816 and by November, 1837, at the age of twenty-one, had already paid the \$10.00 fee to secure a local merchants' license. He soon opened a clothing store,

300 Jonas and Schappes (eds.), *op. cit.*, 224-225.

301 *Ibid.*, 233.

302 Jonas and Schappes (eds.), *op. cit.*, 224-225.

303 Markens, *Hebrews in America*, 107.

304 *St. Louis Republican*, February 21, 1877.

305 *Record of St. Louis County Court*, No. 2, 1836-

and located at 50 1-2 North Front Street.<sup>306</sup> By 1840 he had joined the one block westward movement, situating himself on North First Street.<sup>307</sup> His store contained such items as ladies satin, beaver hats, and boys' clothing.<sup>308</sup> He ordered his items, as apparently most merchants did, from the East.<sup>309</sup>

It was in January, 1840, that the Daily Missouri Republican announced this twenty-four year old merchant's marriage:

Married

At Louisville, Kentucky, on the 16 inst., by the Rev. Mr. Hasie, Mr. Solomon J. LEVI of St. Louis, Missouri to Miss MATILDA, daughter of P. I. JOHNSON, Esq. of Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>310</sup>

Whether this was a Jewish marriage in every sense is unknown; however the United Hebrew minutes speak of a Jew named "Hasey," who sold Matsah (Passover cakes) for the Jewish holiday of Passover;<sup>311</sup> and the late nineteenth century American Jewish historian, Isaac Markens, described Levi as a "zealous Hebrew."<sup>312</sup> He demonstrated his Jewish ties by his work and contribution to the first Jewish cemetery.<sup>313</sup> His<sup>314</sup>

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- 1838-9, <sup>306</sup> Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years  
p. 28.  
1840-1, <sup>307</sup> Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years  
p. ix.  
<sup>308</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, October 4, 1839.  
<sup>309</sup> Ibid., October 26, 1839.  
<sup>310</sup> Ibid., January 22, 1840.  
<sup>311</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the  
United Hebrew Congregation of St. Louis State of Missouri  
1842, p. 42, MS., United Hebrew Congregation.  
<sup>312</sup> Markens, op. cit., 108.  
<sup>313</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>314</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

activity in the United Hebrew Congregation will be noted in a later chapter.

During this early period, until 1841, Levi became active in public life, shown by the fact that in 1839 he was appointed by the Missouri governor as a captain of the first volunteer militia company.<sup>315</sup> In politics he was an active Whig, serving in 1839 on the third ward vigilance committee at the polls,<sup>316</sup> to secure the election of Thornton Grimsley for Congress,<sup>317</sup> and as one of 380 Whigs on the St. Louis delegation to attend a convention at Rocheport in 1840.<sup>318</sup> His constant activity before the citizenry made him known to many people.<sup>319</sup>

The city of Philadelphia certainly made its contribution to St. Louis early Jewry. Besides the Philipsons, the Bomeislars, H. Van Beil, A. Friedlander, and S. G. Moses arrived in the city, all prior to the fall of 1841. The Bomeislars, Louis, Joseph, and Mitchell, were apparently related, but the manner was not known. They were former members of, and contributors to, the same German Congregation in Philadelphia as the Philipsons,<sup>320</sup> Rodeph Shalom. Louis Bomeisler, who had his wife with him, was a local merchant,<sup>321</sup> and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter

<sup>315</sup> Daikens, *op. cit.*, 108.

<sup>316</sup> *Daily Missouri Republican*, October 25, 1839.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, October 28, 1839.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1840.

<sup>319</sup> *St. Louis Republican*, February 21, 1877.

<sup>320</sup> *The History of Rodeph Shalom Congregation, Philadelphia, 1802-1925*, pp. 141-147.

<sup>321</sup> Keemie, *St. Louis Directory for the Years 1838-9*, p. 4.



Three. The latter, Joseph, and Mitchell Bomeisler, dealt in property in their apparent short stay in the city.<sup>322</sup>  
 For instance, Joseph Bomeisler leased some land in 1838 near the corner of Fourth and Market, very soon to be the new business area of the city as mentioned in Chapter One.<sup>323</sup>  
 H. Van Beil, another Philadelphian, was a merchant in St. Louis since 1837,<sup>325</sup> with his wife and two grown children, David and Fannie, also residing here. Van Beil's daughter married Joseph Levi in October, 1840 in St. Louis. The latter was active in the local Boone Infantry, a volunteer military group, serving as its secretary.<sup>326</sup> Alexander Friedlander, who also came from Philadelphia sometime prior to 1840,<sup>327</sup> donated four dollars to the formation of a Jewish cemetery.<sup>328</sup> Unfortunately, he and W. B. Morris got in some local difficulty in mid-October, 1840.<sup>329</sup> After this, nothing more was heard of him.<sup>330</sup>

One of the most known of the former Philadelphia Jews in St. Louis was Simon Gratz Moses, who was the first known

<sup>322</sup> General X Records, p. 438, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS., St. Louis City Hall; General E-2 Records, p. 303, *ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, November 6, 1838.

<sup>324</sup> See discussion in Chapter I.

<sup>325</sup> Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, pp. 109, 147, MS.

<sup>326</sup> General S-3 Records, p. 360, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

<sup>327</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 22, 1840.

<sup>328</sup> *ibid.*, October 5, 1840.

<sup>329</sup> *ibid.*, August 22, 1840.

<sup>330</sup> Daily Evening Gazette, September 21, 1841.

<sup>331</sup> Aeolus Family Tree, University City, Missouri.

<sup>332</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1833.

<sup>333</sup> Daily Evening Gazette, November 16, 1840.

person of Jewish descent to practice medicine in the city. Simon Gratz Moses, the son of Solomon Moses and Rachel Gratz, was born in Philadelphia on October 6, 1813.<sup>334</sup> His ancestors, who were merchants noted for their strict integrity, came to this country in the eighteenth century and settled in Pennsylvania. His father, Solomon Moses, was a Philadelphia merchant of means who gave his son a liberal education. Simon received his education at several schools. In accordance with his father's enlightened views, he received his schooling at John Sanderson's place of learning. The latter was an accomplished scholar and competent instructor. Young Moses next entered the Classic Department of the University of Pennsylvania as a sophomore, and graduated at that institution in 1832.<sup>335</sup> He also received a Master degree, but the date and subject are unknown.<sup>336</sup> He commenced the study of medicine in the fall of 1832 under the direction of Isaac Hays, M.D., of Philadelphia, editor of the American Journal of Medical Science, and graduated in 1835 at the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania. During the same year he began the practice of Medicine at Bordentown, New Jersey, where he remained until 1839. In that year, owing to the kind recommendation of the well-known Professor Nathaniel Chapman of the university, this young physician went to Europe as the private physician of Joseph Bonaparte,

<sup>334</sup> Morais, Jews of Philadelphia, 433.

<sup>335</sup> Scharf, op. cit., II, 1531.

<sup>336</sup> Morais, op. cit., 433.

eldest brother of the famous Napoleon and ex-king of Spain, who for many years had been a resident of Bordentown. His connection with Bonaparte brought Dr. Moses into contact with the most distinguished men in France, especially the famous members of his own profession, and from the adherents of the empire, particularly from the Murat family, he received many attentions.

Dr. Moses returned to Philadelphia in 1840; and in the fall of 1841 he removed to St. Louis, at the age of twenty-eight, where he established permanent residence, with but one interruption, and practiced medicine here. Here, he was active right from the start. He participated in the establishment of the first organized dispensary in 1842, and became its President. He also was the city health officer, and assisted in organizing the sewer system and other sanitary measures. Dr. S. Gratz Moses, as he signed his name, was also on the staff of the Medical Department of Kemper College, where he lectured and was assistant to the head of the department on obstetrics and women's diseases. He held the same position in the Missouri Medical College. This field was apparently his specialty, as he was one of the founders of the St. Louis Obstetrical and Gynecological Society, and was twice its president. He also assisted in establishing the Medico Chirurgical Society; and, in addition, he was a member of the St. Louis Medical Society.

Apparently, this Moses' leadership did not extend to Jewish fields. Both of his marriages were seemingly

to Christians. In 1835, Dr. Moses married Miss Mary Porter Ashe, of Wilmington, North Carolina, a daughter of Colonel Samuel P. Ashe. Ashe was a gentleman of high standing and fine culture, a planter and Revolutionary soldier, who was taken prisoner at the siege of Charleston by the British. By this marriage, there were two sons, the eldest Gratz, A. Moses, and two daughters. In 1855 he married a widow, Mrs. Marie Atchinson, nee Papin, a native of St. Louis, and a descendant of the old local French settlers. There were probably no children by this marriage.<sup>337</sup> Here was another example of an Israelite by birth, who obviously did not identify himself with the early struggle for the existence of a St. Louis Jewish community. It is interesting to note that a certain S. L. Moses was a member of the United Hebrew Congregation;<sup>338</sup> however, there is nothing to indicate any relationship between S. G. or S. L. Moses.

Of the other Jews who settled in St. Louis prior to 1841, there is just a smattering of information. There was a Jacob Silverstone, whose name was listed on the subscription paper of the Jewish cemetery in the spring of 1840.<sup>339</sup> A merchant named Maurice P. Silverburg paid for a merchant's license on June 20, 1837.<sup>340</sup> Unless a spelling

<sup>337</sup> Scharf, *op. cit.*, II, 1531.

<sup>338</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation of Saint Louis State of Missouri 1842, p. 133, MS., United Hebrew Congregation.

<sup>339</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>340</sup> Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, p. 108, MS.

mistake was made by Bush upon reading the old subscription paper, which did frequently occur, the two are not one and the same. Silverburg would just be another name; however, whose spelling alone indicated his Jewishness.

Such slender evidence as reliance on names alone could be extended to such names as Jacob Baum,<sup>341</sup> Samuel Lyons,<sup>342</sup> Henry Morris,<sup>343</sup> Frederick Myers,<sup>344</sup> William Harris,<sup>345</sup> and Conrad Katz,<sup>346</sup> all of whom were settlers who paid for licenses as grocers or merchants during 1837 and early 1838. But since no other proof was found attesting to their Jewishness, they cannot be counted among the Israelites of early St. Louis.

Another name which might be the subject of controversy was "N. Weinburger," who contributed to the cemetery fund.<sup>347</sup> Although it may be far fetched, the name written in script could have been read Weisenberger, who took out a merchant's<sup>348</sup> and grocer's license in 1837,<sup>349</sup> or a Mr. Weisenberg who owned a stable in 1839.<sup>350</sup> Again this is only a possibility, due to the poor condition of the subscription and the insufficient knowledge of the existence of N. Weinburger.

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341 Ibid., 70-71

342 Ibid.

343 Ibid., 123.

344 Ibid.

345 Ibid., 146.

346 Ibid.

347 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

348 Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, p. 124, MS.

349 Ibid., 126.

350 Daily Missouri Republican, April 17, 1839.

Another merchant who settled in St. Louis at least by 1839 was Martin Newberger, and his wife. After being fined five dollars for breaking the peace,<sup>351</sup> usually an uncommon occurrence among early Jews in St. Louis, the Daily Missouri Republican of June 17, 1839, wrote: "It appeared this happy couple were Jews, and probably a remnant of the last children of Israel and had lived and loved together a long time."<sup>352</sup> (This was the first time the word "Jew" was seen by this author with reference to a St. Louis Israelite in the local newspapers.)<sup>353</sup> Newberger was also a contributor to the Jewish cemetery fund,<sup>354</sup> so he apparently had some Jewish feeling.

Samuel Pecare, his wife, Rica, and probably their relative Jacob Pecare lived in St. Louis or its vicinity.<sup>355</sup> More will be said of them in Chapter Three.<sup>356</sup>

Abraham Myers was a merchant in St. Louis, located at 192 Main Street by 1839.<sup>357</sup> The only discernable proof that Myers was a Jew was the often referred to cemetery subscription paper which contained the name of "A. Myers."<sup>358</sup> Since no other "A. Myers" was discovered in the perusal of

351 Ibid., June 17, 1839.

352 Ibid., April 20, 1855.

353 Ibid., June 17, 1839.

354 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

355 General I-2 Records, p. 67, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.; General U-3 Records, p. 253, ibid.

356 Daily Missouri Republican, May 27, 1841.

357 Ibid., December 3, 1839.

358 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

the newspapers of the period presently under discussion, it seems possible that Abraham Myers was the Jew intended. S., or Solomon, Harris was another charitable Israelite in St. Louis at the subscription meeting in 1840.<sup>359</sup> He originally arrived from Hartford, Connecticut, and was married in St. Louis at the time of the Great Fire of 1849.<sup>360</sup>

All Jews in St. Louis did not stay permanently.<sup>361</sup>

John Meyer Levy was one of this group. He was born in 1820, the son of Eve Worms and Meyer Levy, a London chazan, or cantor. John Levy was educated in Amsterdam and Paris, and came to St. Louis in 1837. Here, he met his future wife Augusta, a girl of German descent, and they married. The couple had a child named Willie. Levy was a successful Indian trader, having gone to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and La Crosse by 1845 with his partner, Isaac Marks. In 1846 his family joined him; and they were the fifth family to settle in that city.<sup>362</sup>

By 1838, C. Weinberg was in the city and was a partner in a clothing concern.<sup>363</sup> More will be said of him in the next chapter, along with the following Jews in St. Louis prior to 1841 who will be discussed individually in Chapter Three: D. Levison, Henry Marks, Isaac Plateau, A. and S.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

<sup>361</sup> Leiser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

<sup>362</sup> Schappes, op. cit., 281.

<sup>363</sup> Keemie, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1,

Latz, A. Lyons, S. Jacks, H. H. Cohen, Jacob Emanuel, and  
 Lewis Kratzer.<sup>365</sup> Another religious Jew in St. Louis at this  
 early date was Simon Mandlebaum. He demonstrated his Jewish  
 affiliation by contributing to the Jewish cemetery sub-  
 scription list.<sup>366</sup> For a while he was in business with Jacob  
 Block, a merchant, mentioned previously.<sup>367</sup>

Joseph "Macalsak," or Massalsky, was also a con-  
 tributor to the proposed burying ground in 1840. He was an  
 auctioneer and commission merchant by trade.<sup>368</sup> Another local  
 Israelite was M. Joseph who owned some form of amusement  
 park and restaurant outside of the city limits.<sup>369</sup> He also  
 was a subscriber to the new Jewish cemetery.<sup>370</sup> Other Jews  
 residing in the city prior to the fall of 1841 were E. N.  
 Carr, M. Joseph, M. Morris, G. Levy, Cohen Phillips, I.  
 Bamberg, M. Bach, Eli Block, L. Arlburg, Moritz Block,<sup>371</sup>  
 and Alexander Lewis, the son-in-law of Jacob Philipson,  
 and "a lottery vendor" for the Masonic Lottery.<sup>372</sup>

Last of all, there were some Jews who just peddled  
 and briefly stayed in the city prior to October 3, 1841.  
 John Worm, or Worn, who obtained a grocer's license in

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- 364 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.  
 365 Daily Evening Gazette, August 26, 1839; Daily  
 Missouri Republican, August 26, 1839.  
 366 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.  
 367 Daily Missouri Republican, March 11, 1840.  
 368 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.  
 369 Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1843.  
 370 Ibid., January 5, 1841.  
 371 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.  
 372 Ibid.  
 373 Daily Missouri Republican, October 11, 1841.



August, 1837, for the ten-dollar fee apparently stayed in the city only a brief time. In September, 1846, he was mentioned in the Daily Missouri Republican as a "Jewish peddler" living in the Paul House, a local hotel,<sup>375</sup> Another peddler in the city briefly around 1840 was a man known as Isaacs. He indirectly helped start a Jewish benevolent society in St. Louis.<sup>376</sup> This event will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

A few visitors to the city were Alexander Levi, Jacob Emanuel, Jr., and Joseph Newmark. Levi was the first permanent Jewish settler in Iowa, arriving in 1833, a year after the end of the Black Hawk War with the Indians opened the region to white colonization. A Frenchman who had come up the Mississippi from New Orleans, Levi established himself at Dubuque in the very year the town was laid out. In exchange for a pair of boots, he acquired a lot on which he opened a grocery store, one of Dubuque's first businesses. When Iowa's first newspaper, the Dubuque Visitor, began publishing on May 11, 1836, Levi was among its advertisers. One of Dubuque's leading entrepreneurs, Levi helped to develop the lead mines first worked by Julien Dubuque, for whom the town is named, and was a stockholder in the Miners' Bank of Dubuque, chartered in 1836 as Iowa's pioneer banking institution. With several other foreign born residents of Iowa, Levi journeyed down the Mississippi in 1837

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374 Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, p. 109, MS.

375 Daily Missouri Republican, September 16, 1846.

376 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

to St. Louis, seat of the nearest Federal court, to take out his final citizenship papers.<sup>377</sup>

Another visitor was J. Emanuel, Jr. from Cape Girardeau, who was noted in the St. Louis Daily Evening Herald of October 21, 1835. He stayed at the Major Hopkins Hotel. Joseph Newmark came to the city on October 1, 1841, from Cincinnati.<sup>378</sup> More will be said of him in Chapters Three and Four.<sup>379</sup>

The lone Israelite discovered in the vicinity of St. Louis who definitely converted was a man with the non-Jewish name of Joseph McCormick. Yet his obituary in the November 6, 1840, edition of the Daily Missouri Republican stated that McCormick was an "Israelite in whom there was no guile." However, he was listed as a member of the Presbyterian Church in Washington County, Missouri, prior to his death.<sup>380</sup>

Jewish beliefs and American Jewish history indicate that the early religious Israelite pioneer coming to the West had a difficult job, since his religious adjustment to frontier life, especially as a traditional Jew, was practically as difficult as earning a living for his family. Even though the early St. Louis Jews came as families rather than as individuals, no known organized worship occurred between the end of 1807, when the first known Jew arrived, and the middle of 1841. The arrival of families drawn by dreams of prosperity and civil liberties accounted for most of the

377 Postal and Koppman, *op. cit.*, 172.

378 Daily Evening Herald and Commercial Advertiser, October 21, 1835.

379 Daily Missouri Republican, October 2, 1841.

380 Ibid., November 6, 1840.

known St. Louis Jewish population, until approximately 1837. The Philipsons' disinterest in Judaism accounted for much of the delay in organized worship. Yet the arrival of the Blocks, in addition to a number of individual Israelites in the middle 1830's until 1841, afforded another opportunity for congregational worship. Between 1807 and 1841, at least sixty Jewish men had resided at one time or another in the city, with about half of them settling permanently in St. Louis. However, another early nineteenth century western river city, Cincinnati, St. Louis was far behind. The former had held services within two years after the arrival of the first Jew there, and had organized a congregation within seven years after Joseph Jonas' appearance. Why the delay in St. Louis? The answer is open to conjecture. Whatever the reason, there was no evidence of a Hebrew congregation existing in St. Louis during the more than thirty years of local Jewish history discussed in this chapter, in spite of the number of local Jewish residents.

CHAPTER III  
FOUNDING AND ORGANIZATION OF THE  
UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION

1841 - 1848

With a sufficient number of Israelites in St. Louis it was not long before steps were taken to organize a Jewish community. Dr. Max Lillienthal, an early American Rabbi, described the beginning of a typical Jewish congregation in the March 30, 1849, edition of Israels Herald as follows:

Ten or twelve Jews have established themselves in a distant place in the West. The worry about providing for their daily bread, unavoidable difficulties of every beginning, prevent them from adhering strictly to religious practices. Eventually one in their midst dies and the need for a Jewish burial ground arises. The necessary funds to purchase a cemetery must be raised. The holy days of the New Year and the Day of Atonement are approaching, and since they live together they wish also to worship together during these holy hours. They procure a Sefer Torah (Scroll of the Law) and worship in a small room during these holy days. These are the beginnings of a congregation, and this is the way most of the congregations in the United States came into being.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the founding of a Jewish congregation in St. Louis, the local Israelites met-together on several occasions. Possibly it took the following incident to stir them as a unit. Louis Krafter was a grocer on Prune Avenue, between Main and Water streets, in the southern part of St. Louis. He had come to St. Louis with his partner Jacob Emmanuel from a spot near Peoria, Illinois, where he had also been engaged in the grocery business.<sup>2</sup> On Saturday night, August

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 26, 1839.

24, 1839, Krafter, who had been ill both physically and mentally, committed suicide.<sup>3</sup> The first death of a follower of Judaism in St. Louis had been brought on by his own hand. Both the morning Daily Missouri Republican and the Daily Evening Gazette noted the death in their Monday editions. The Gazette's account was as follows:

Suicide - A German Jew, named Lewis Krafter, committed suicide on Saturday last. (August 24). He, in company with a man named Emmanuel, kept a grocery on Prune street. Krafter was subject to frequent attacks of chills and fevers, and at times was partially deranged. A short time previous to his death, his partner was in conversation with him on the subject of his removal to the Hospital. Directly upon leaving him, Emmanuel heard the report of a pistol, and on returning to the room where he had left Krafter, found him in agonies of death. It appears that he placed a large horse pistol into his mouth, and discharged it. He presented a most shocking spectacle--his face being almost entirely demolished. Krafter, it is understood, has a sister and brother in Cincinnati.<sup>4</sup>

There was no mention of whether Krafter was buried here or in Cincinnati, but up to that time there was no cemetery in St. Louis exclusively for Hebrews. Perhaps the death awoke local Jewry to the need of purchasing a plot of ground for a cemetery, should misfortune strike again. At any rate, nine months later, on Sunday, May 31, 1840, a meeting of Israelites residing in St. Louis was called to raise funds to purchase a burial ground. The gathering was held at

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<sup>3</sup> Daily Evening Gazette, August 26, 1839.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the Waverly House on Main Street near the corner of Olive,<sup>5</sup> which evidently had available space, as other organizations occasionally held meetings here during the period.<sup>6</sup> Abraham Weigle presided at the meeting, and A. Myers acted as secretary.<sup>7</sup> It is not known how many Jews answered the call to attend the meeting. Yet the original subscription paper contained the names of thirty-three contributors who gave a total of \$207.00. The original subscription paper, "yellow and tattered with age,"<sup>8</sup> came into the possession of St. Louisan Isidor Bush, a mid-nineteenth century American Jewish historian, who, among other things, reported in 1883 that the paper contained the following names: A. Weigle, \$10; P. A. Myers, \$10; Nathan Abeles, \$10; C. Weinberg, \$10; Samuel Pecare, \$10; Joseph Kohn, \$10; S. Levy, \$5; E. N. Carr, \$10; M. Joseph, \$5; M. Morris, \$5; Joseph Massalsky, \$5; D. Levinson, \$10; N. Weinburger, \$5; Jacob Silverstone, \$10; Henry Marks, \$5; S. Harris, \$5; Isaac Plateau, \$5; G. Levy, \$3; A. Latz, \$10; A. Lyons, \$5; Cohen Phillips, \$3; S. Jacks, \$10; I. Bamberg, \$3; A. Friedlander, \$4; Newburger, \$5; H. H. Cohen, \$5; Jacob Block, \$5; M. Bach, \$3; Eli Block, \$3; A. Mandelbaum, \$3; A. & S. Latz, \$5; L. Arlburg, \$5; and Moritz Block, \$5.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>6</sup> Daily Pennant, October 17, 1840.

<sup>7</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, May 30, 1840.

<sup>8</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

This subscription paper was significant in several ways: 1. A large majority of the Israelites of the community supported the venture. This is apparent when the thirty-three contributors in the spring of 1840 is compared with the total of just forty or fifty Jews living in St. Louis in the late summer of 1841.<sup>10</sup> 2. This event also pointed out that local Jewry was capable of organizing together to obtain the cemetery or any religious project considered vital to fulfilling the requirements of their religion. 3. Finally, the Jewish community of St. Louis had proven it would make the monetary sacrifice to interject a religious atmosphere into their lives. This all augured well for the future.

The meeting appointed A. J. Latz, N. Abeles, and C. Weinberg as a committee to purchase a desirable lot of ground.<sup>11</sup> They soon found a plot to their liking. In less than two months, on July 24, 1840, Nathan Abeles and Casper Weinberg purchased full rights "to his heirs and assigns forever," to a plot of ground in St. Louis County, located on Pratte Avenue, from Charles and Elizabeth J. Carpenter, for the sum of two hundred dollars.<sup>12</sup> This was paid for immediately by Abeles and Weinberg.<sup>13</sup> The deed detailed the location area as the dimension of plot number six of the<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, 510.

<sup>11</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>12</sup> General(N-2) Records, p. 202, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> M Original 2 Records, 308, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

third series of lots assigned to Henry Chouteau by the Circuit Court Commissioners, to divide the mill tract of land among the legatees of Auguste Chouteau. The land was irregularly formed. It was in the shape of an upside down block letter "L" measuring roughly 211 feet by 200 feet. Its location can only be traced as being in the western part of St. Louis County on the southwest corner of Pratte Avenue, which intersected with an avenue fifty feet wide,<sup>15</sup> that Bush noted as Twenty-Sixth Street.<sup>16</sup> The cemetery was noted by a Jewish calendar published in 1854 as being within one mile of the Courthouse.<sup>17</sup> Obviously the reporter of this fact must have confused his figures of the above cemetery with a contemporary Jewish cemetery then in operation. On July 25, 1840, the deed was filed, and one month later, on August 26, it was recorded.<sup>18</sup> Possibly due to the financial panic, this land was bought by the committee for the same price in July, 1840, as it had been originally disposed of in 1836.<sup>19</sup> The consideration paid in between these dates for the plot was less than the two hundred dollar charge.<sup>20</sup> There is some controversy evidence over who actually paid for the lot. Apparently the enthusiasm of the subscribers cooled when it came to paying their pledges. The body of

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<sup>15</sup> General N-2 Records, p. 202, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Jewish Tribune*, December 7, 1883.

<sup>17</sup> Lyons and de Sola, A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years, 171

<sup>18</sup> General N-2 Records, p. 203, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

<sup>19</sup> General X Records, pp. 420-421, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> N Original 2 Records, pp. 308-309, *ibid.*



the instrument stated that Abeles and Weinberg paid the parties of the first part the consideration for the plot.<sup>21</sup> Yet a year later the newly formed United Hebrew Congregation specifically noted in Article Two of their constitution that one of the purposes of their formation was "to pay for the lot already purchased for the interment of the dead."<sup>22</sup> This statement pointed to the fact that the land purchased earlier became the first of the two cemetery locations occupied by the synagogue in its entire history; the first St. Louis Jewish cemetery thus became The United Hebrew Cemetery.

Apparently upon formation of the United Hebrew, the synagogue arranged to purchase the Pratte Avenue plot for their own. This was probably consummated sometime during the fall of 1841, prior to the first meeting in early October, when the constitution was approved.<sup>23</sup> This fact can be attested from the following notation taken from the minutes of a special meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation, May 28, 1843. The Secretary, Solomon J. Levi, was "ordered to copy the deed that the congregation held in the name of A. Weinberg and request them to sign it over in the name of the society."<sup>24</sup> Possibly N. Abeles was the other half of the word "them" written in the minutes.

<sup>21</sup> General N-2 Records, p. 202, *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 1-2, MS.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

It seems highly probable that the deed in question was the instrument to the lot on Pratte Avenue. The fact that the members, through a committee to which Abeles belonged, wished to erect a building on the cemetery grounds was undoubtedly a spur to this action. Here was obvious proof that the synagogue held the land, and they had to deal legally through Weinberg and Abeles to obtain full title. Whether the money was eventually paid to these two men or the original subscribers is not known. It might be mentioned that at least eighteen of these original subscribers became members of the congregation and twelve of them were the founders of the United Hebrew.<sup>25</sup> With such a close tie, the purchase was not difficult. Yet there is no mention of Weinberg signing over the deed. On September 27, 1843, he did make his initial and only recorded appearance at a congregational meeting; still no mention of the deed was discovered in the minutes.<sup>26</sup> But while there is no written record of the transaction, possibly Weinberg signed it at that time. At any rate, this only appearance is cause for great conjecture of this possibility; it further seems plausible by the fact that Casper Weinberg soon left town, and had nothing more to do with the congregation.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>27</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 35, MS.

<sup>28</sup> This conclusion seems probable since his name did not appear in the local publications, or directory from 1844 through 1857; nor in the United Hebrew or B'nai El Congregation minutes.

When the congregation did receive full title to the land on November 4, 1853, the United Hebrew officers, President A. J. Latz and Treasurer Joseph Kohn, purchased the plot in trust for the synagogue from Nathan Abeles and his wife Rachel. Weinberg's name was not in evidence.<sup>29</sup> This was the first time that legal records were discovered which substantiated the claim of the United Hebrew Congregation to ownership of the cemetery.

The first person to be buried in the new cemetery was one of the contributors, Samuel Pecare,<sup>30</sup> who died in the spring of 1841 in Greene County, Illinois.<sup>31</sup> The records in Greene County did not list the name "Samuel Pecare" in their death register for the period;<sup>32</sup> so apparently this charitable Jew was not buried in his home county, and thus lived long enough to reap the benefit from his own contribution. St. Louis was then like other new Jewish communities described by Dr. Lillienthal; first organizing a cemetery, then going forward and forming a congregation.<sup>33</sup>

The first "minyan", or prayer meeting, was held in an unorganized fashion.<sup>34</sup> A great controversy has evolved over the date of this first prayer meeting. This difference becomes more important when it is realized that it

29 General Part 2 T-6 Records, p. 350, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

30 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

31 Daily Missouri Republican, May 27, 1841.

32 Letter received from County Clerk, Greene County, Illinois, 1957.

33 American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 63; Interview with Rabbi Samuel Thurman of the United Hebrew Congregation, 1956.

34 A prayer meeting composed of at least ten Israelites thirteen years of age or over. See discussion Chapter Two.

was this "first" service that was the embryo for the future foundation of the United Hebrew Congregation,<sup>36</sup> and the latter in turn greatly aided the building of a religious Jewish community in St. Louis.

Isidor Bush, mentioned earlier, wrote a series of three articles entitled "Historical Sketches" of "The Jews in St. Louis" which appeared in St. Louis' one Jewish newspaper, The Jewish Tribune. In the first article, dated November 23, 1883, Bush stated the account which has been most widely accepted as the first known Jewish minyan in St. Louis, stated:

A Mr. Baumeisler (Bomeisler) who had removed to the latter city from Philadelphia, where he had been Parnass of a small Jewish Congregation, together with Eliezer S. Block and Abraham Weigel, the latter two having just commenced business in co-partnership at St. Louis, and young Nathan Abeles, succeeded with the aid of some peddlers, who were just stopping at St. Louis over the Holy-days, Rosh-Hashana (New Year) of 1836 (5596), to hold the first Jewish Prayer-meeting, (minyan), in the Mississippi Valley. They had rented a room, at "Max's Grocery and Restaurant" corner Second and Spruce Streets, which served as Temple for these few days. Baumeisler had ordered a Sepher Tora from Philadelphia and Tephiloth (Prayer-books) at his own private expense. They had no Rabbi, every member of the minyan considered himself Rabbi, and those able to do so served in rotation as readers. Nathan Abeles even acted as "Shochet," gratis, whenever his services as such were requested. Baumeisler soon moved back to Phila-

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35 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

36 Ibid., December 7, 1883.

delphia. Three members of that first Minyan in the then "far West" are still living! Eliezer S. Block, the oldest, is now 92 years; and it is both interesting and amusing to hear them relate their experiences in those early days; how they had to seek their brethren far and near to get the required number (10) for prayer-meetings or funerals. Once, by mistake or because they could not possibly find more than nine, they called in a non-Israelite with some biblical name; (an Irishman!) to make the tenth man. He joined the prayer-meeting, and ever afterwards punctually attended their divine service on all Jewish Holy-days.<sup>37</sup>

No contemporary account of the organization of a minyan appeared in any of the local papers from 1835 through 1842. Thus, this one narration, which was the only one ever written to the author's knowledge, has become accepted as a fact. Now the question arises over the accuracy of Isidor Bush's account. Before a comment is made on this question, it is necessary to look at this American Jewish historian's preparation. Possibly some critical analysis of the account can be made by a perusal of the introductory letter to the three-article series, this one being written in November, 1883:

"Editors Jewish Tribune:

At your request I hand you, herewith, the first of a series of historical sketches concerning "the Jews in St. Louis."

In doing so, permit me to say that they are written without the slightest preten-

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37 Ibid., November 23, 1883.

tion to elegance of style or literary ornamentation, without any attempt to display the role of critic or commentator, which might be expected from the historian; but simply from a desire to gather and preserve material which - already most difficult to obtain - would soon be quite inaccessible.

Nothing but the desire and the hope that some corrections and additions to such material may be thereby elicited, have induced me to consent to their publication. Should these sketches be, nevertheless, interesting to some of your readers, they must ascribe it to the subject, not to

Yours, 38  
Isidor Bush

The letter and the series point out Bush's intense interest in recording the only detailed narration available of early St. Louis Jewish history. Thus it is to his credit that he undertook the job to preserve the scanty material which the author notes, would soon be "quite inaccessible."<sup>39</sup> This implies that his main source of material for the story was the three living original minyan members. Note that he states: "It is both interesting and amusing to hear them relate their experiences in those early days."<sup>40</sup> This statement practically assures the reader of the source of the author's remarks. If not, it is extremely doubtful Bush could have found the history of the minyan's founding elsewhere. Also, it should be pointed out that;

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38 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

(1) Thorough perusal of sixty-seven months of all available St. Louis dailies between the years 1835 through 1842 uncovered no contemporary account of this Jewish New Year service; and (2) no records were kept of congregants who attended any Jewish prayer service. If by some very odd circumstance, records were kept on this very holy occasion, when writing is traditionally forbidden, Bush makes no mention of this fact, as he had done when he saw another original manuscript, of the aforementioned cemetery subscription list.<sup>41</sup> In all probability, the Jews praying together at this first minyan did not realize in a broad scope the importance of the event and so would not at this time record this novel service. Isidor Bush must have relied on the imprint of the same on the memory of the charter members. Their reminiscences, as are often the case, have a tendency toward reliability of facts, but frequent inaccuracy of dates. This matter will be discussed below.

Once the probable source is discovered, the next thing to do is to analyze the accuracy of the author. As noted in the letter recently mentioned, Bush stated: "Nothing but the desire and the hope that some corrections and additions to such material may be thereby elicited, have induced me to consent to their publication".<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., December 7, 1883.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., November 23, 1883.

In the second article, Bush repeated his previous desire for additional aid to his scanty material to rectify any errors made unknowingly. He asserted: "I take no offense at such corrections; but they ought not to be made carelessly and hastily."<sup>43</sup> With this in mind, he proceeded, prior to the second article, to upbraid a correspondent who cast a doubt on the author's accuracy. It is here that Bush asserted: "I write these historical Sketches with some care at least."<sup>44</sup> Immediately after this statement mention is made of the receipt of "interesting additions and corrections," which he would publish in the course of the sketches. But since the first article contained more than the account of the first minyan, and since no correction was ever made of this version, there is no proof the error was made here. In conclusion, it may be said that Isidor Bush compiled a fairly accurate history, although the exactness of the date of the first minyan, 1836, is open to conjecture.

To discover the date of this minyan is a difficult task; however, it is possible to pinpoint the period of years when the service was first held. One main force in the organization of the service was Bomeisler, who ordered a Sepher Torah and prayer books from Philadelphia at

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43 Ibid., December 7, 1883.

44 Ibid.



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his own expense. Thus, the date of the period of brief residence of this faithful Jew in St. Louis is of the utmost importance, since it was during his stay that the service was held. To complicate matters, there were, as mentioned earlier, three men named Bomeisler in early St.

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Louis, Joseph, Mitchill, and Louis. However, Bush indicated that the one in question was president or parnass

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of a Philadelphia congregation. This fact identifies Louis Bomeisler, who was known to have occupied the office of president of the Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia.

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The latter was in St. Louis at least for a time in 1836, as he was a party to a deed with Joseph Bomeisler.

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Yet there is no evidence that he was here in the fall of 1836 for the High Holidays (Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur).

The 1836 St. Louis directory, which was not always thorough, omits his name as one of the inhabitants, but he is listed

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in the 1838-9 edition. This insertion coincides with our knowledge that L. Bomeisler was definitely in this city,

owning land from May 2, 1836, until sometime in 1838 when he and his wife, Elizabeth, to escape financial embarrass-

ment, probably caused by the panic of 1837, returned to

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Philadelphia. Thus it can be safely said from the above

45 Ibid., November 23, 1883.

46 See discussion of Joseph Bomeisler in

Chapter Two.

47 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

48 Morals, The Jews of Philadelphia, 252.

49 General E-2 Records, p. 303, Office of Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

50 Keenle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1838-9, p. 4.

51 Daily Missouri Republican, July 20, 1847.

information that the earliest known St. Louis prayer meeting leading to the establishment of the United Hebrew Congregation occurred between 1836 and 1838. However, another angle to uncover the exact date of the founding was examined. Since the majority of the minyan was composed of peddlers and storekeepers, a search was made for their residence and license dates. Approximately four hundred pages of the records of the St. Louis County Court from 1836 to 1841 were examined by the author, as well as the St. Louis directories for these years. It was at the former court that both peddlers and storekeepers were to appear to purchase a license to sell their wares in the city. Unfortunately, the peddlers' names were not listed; so it was impossible to discover when they arrived or if they were the Jewish members of the minyan. Another unfortunate circumstance was that of the storekeepers, only grocers' names were listed regularly. It was not until the fall of 1837 that merchant license owners were included by name. Since they held same for a six-month period, it is practically impossible to discover when they began operation.<sup>52</sup> The earliest St. Louis directory to contain some of the names of the founders was the 1838-9 directory, which listed the clothing store known as "Abeles and Kohn,"<sup>53</sup> as well as A. Weigle's cloth-

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<sup>52</sup> Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, MS.

<sup>53</sup> Keenale, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

ing store.<sup>54</sup> However, one must consider: (1) The earlier directory might have overlooked them; or (2) possibly a change of occupations, where no license was required, might have occurred. Thus, neither the St. Louis County Court records nor the directories could pinpoint the exact date when the merchants came, nor when they precisely founded the synagogue.

A final attempt at a solution to this controversy possibly lays in a news item in the Daily Missouri Republican of August 24, 1837 which deserves some mention. The article suggested that licenses be refused to the many licensed peddlers who "infest St. Louis. Nine are foreigners," and they sold their goods, including "skullcaps", "the impudent fellows," only on Front Street.<sup>55</sup> From the evidence presented the following things become clear:

(1) Of the peddlers named, nine were designated as foreigners. At that time, as mentioned previously, St. Louis was a cosmopolitan city, with many French, German, and Irish newcomers.<sup>56</sup> It certainly was not unusual to see traveling merchants of foreign extraction. Therefore, it seems that the Republican hinted that these were all of one nationality - possibly meaning all of the Jewish faith; (2) That they sold their wares in the fall of 1837 only on Front Street, which was still the main business street, though

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>55</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 24, 1837.

<sup>56</sup> See discussion in Chapter One.

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in its declining stages, is interesting since this was the street that became the abode for Jewish merchants, along with Main Street, one block west.<sup>58</sup> By the end of 1838, at

least four Jewish owned stores were located on Front Street and three on nearby First Street.<sup>59</sup> It is entirely possible

that these peddlers had heard of the growing local Jewish community of merchants, and peddlers and were thereby drawn to St. Louis. No doubt, like all itinerant salesmen, they intended to start out as peddlers, and, if successful, to take permanent residence eventually and open a store at the site of their stand on Front Street. (3) The first

record of three Israelites receiving licenses to operate stores occurred between July 26 and September 20, 1837 at the time of the abovestated article: H. Van Bell, John

Worn (Worn),<sup>62</sup> and Andrew Weisenburg.<sup>63</sup> Three more made application on January 1, 1838: Grocer Henry Marks, and merchants

Solomon J. Levi and Abraham Weigle.<sup>65</sup> By the end of 1838 the definite total of six Jews had increased to ten Israelite

firms, as Samuel Pecare,<sup>67</sup> Abeles and Kohn,<sup>68</sup> Morris & Jacques

57 See description in Chapter One.

58 Keemle, *op. cit.*, 1, 4, 24, 26, 28, 49;  
Daily Missouri Republican, May 25, 1847.

59 Keemle, *op. cit.*, 1, 24, 26, 28, 49.

60 Lebeson and Eisenberg, Jews in America, A Filmstrip; Jewish Education Committee of New York.

61 Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, p. 109, MS.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 124.

64 Ibid., 162.

65 Ibid., 133.

66 Ibid., 147.

67 Ibid., 183.

68 Ibid., 206.

69 (Jacks), and Weinberg and Levison all obtained merchant  
 licenses. Weigle and Elizar Block, who were not listed,  
 70 had "just commenced business in co-partnership in St.  
 Louis" at the time of the minyan. 71 Meanwhile, it is highly  
 possible that Nathan Abeles was in St. Louis in 1837. He  
 had been married in April 1837, in Louisiana, Missouri,  
 72 to E. Block's sister. As Bush hinted, it is highly possible  
 that he had decided to settle down in one spot instead  
 of continuing his road peddling business. 73 At any  
 rate, by October, 1838, he had opened a store in St. Louis. 74  
 Thus, in summary of the above, it can be said that between  
 September, 1837, and January, 1838, there is on the scene  
 the particular men who founded the synagogue. Several of  
 the above mentioned men were at the early minyan. (4) All  
 the ten firms were located in the same general area, bound-  
 ed by Market, on the south, Front on the east, First  
 Street on the west, and Chestnut on the north. This was  
 from four to seven blocks distant from Second and Spruce,  
 75 where "Max's Grocery," or the possible location of the  
 first minyan, was. 76 (5) But most interesting of all

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69 Ibid., 227.

70 Ibid., 229.

71 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

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73 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

74 Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2,  
 1836-1841, p. 206, MS.

75 Map taken from Mayer, History of St. Louis,  
 1837-1847, MS., A. M. thesis, Washington University.

76 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

was the date of this 1837 news article in the morning Daily Missouri Republican. It was August 24,<sup>77</sup> just short of five weeks prior to Rosh Hashanah which started on the evening of September 29.<sup>78</sup> And further, it was mentioned earlier, that the minyan's success was due to "the aid of some peddlers, who were just stopping at St. Louis over the Holy-days, Rosh Hashana."<sup>79</sup> (6) Also of much import is the fact that one peddler possessed some skullcaps. This item is necessary for any traditional Jewish service. This fact, and the date of the peddler's arrival with this item, carries the aforementioned six possibilities to the following conclusion: From the above information on the minyan, it seems that the first minyan definitely took place between the years 1836 and 1838, and it may have been that 1837 was the date of the historic service.

Now that an approximate date has been established for the founding of the first Jewish service in St. Louis, the next question to be answered is who was most responsible for its founding. As was stated earlier, the chief catalyst was Louis Bomeisler, who took the initiative to order, at his own expense, the sacramental materials for the service from Philadelphia.<sup>80</sup>

Undoubtedly no Jew who resided in early St. Louis

<sup>77</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 24, 1837.

<sup>78</sup> Freund, Comparing Date Schedule For 216

Years [1784-2000], p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

enjoyed the association with so many nationally and internationally known figures as did L. Bomeisler. Probably none had the rich educational background that he did. Here was one of the most interesting personalities to grace the local Jewish scene. Rev. Sabato Morais, a mid-nineteenth century Philadelphia rabbi, discussed the difficulty encountered in determining in his book, The Jews of Philadelphia, what individual's life story was worthy of being included. This commentary led to the introduction of why Bomeisler's biography was chosen:

The standard adopted can neither be that of wealth nor of culture; it must be determined by the usefulness of the individual, or by his position in the ranks of a large following. When, however, culture is united with position, the individual's claim to public notice proves as effective as his career is of interest to large numbers. This claim is peculiarly strengthened in the case about to be cited. 81

Louis Bomeisler was born in Munich, Bavaria, Germany, on November 15, 1790. He was the son of Rebecca Heller and Nathan Loebel Bomeisler. The latter, his father, was a quartermaster-general for Bavaria in the wars of Napoleon. The young Bomeisler received a thoroughly liberal education. He was prepared for Heidelberg University by a tutor, with whom he travelled in Europe and in Asia Minor, visiting points of great interest. His studies and his travels resulted in his possessing a broad

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81 Morais, op. cit., 61, 252.

culture and the intellectual capacity so noticeable in later years. At Heidelberg University his instruction was quite thorough, and he acquired a knowledge of both ancient and modern languages. Upon leaving school, Bomeisler embarked on a short career in which he was associated with people and events well-known in the pages of history. Sometime after his fifteenth birthday, he became an aide-de-camp to one of Napoleon Bonaparte's generals, with whom he served in military campaigns, and was present at the great battles of Jena and Austerlitz. Otherwise he was interested in the political movements of the time, affecting the geographical boundaries of European countries. In 1814 he was sent to Bavaria as a member to the Congress of Vienna. In 1815, Bomeisler, then twenty-five, resided in Paris, France. Here his subsequent rise in the court circles of France was marked, and the popularity he enjoyed was recognized when on January 23, 1815, he was decorated by King Louis XVIII with the "Order of the Lily". In Paris he also joined the Free Masons.

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In the early part of 1818, Bomeisler was supercargo of a vessel bound for the United States, and it was in this country that he spent the remainder of his life. However, when he landed at Philadelphia, he had no intention of re-

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82 Ibid., 252-253.

83 Davis, The History of Rodeph Shalom Congregation of Philadelphia, 1802-1926, pp. 142-143.

84 Morais, op. cit., 253.



maining there, expecting to return on the same ship that brought him. Meanwhile he became ill with fever, and the famous physician, Dr. James Rush, attended him. Upon his recovery he found that the vessel had sailed, and through the influence of Dr. Rush, he was induced to remain in this city. This incident served to unite the two in friendship and ever thereafter they were attached to each other. <sup>85</sup> Immediately Bomeisler renewed his active life in the new land. Religion was important to his life, as is evident from the fact that in the first year of his arrival he associated himself with the Rodeph Shalom Congregation of Philadelphia, or Hebrew German Society as the synagogue was then known, donating a substantial contribution to its maintenance. In 1819 he continued his masonic affiliation by joining the Herman Lodge, Number 125. <sup>87</sup> Once resigned to the fact of his residency, Bomeisler went into the shipping business. The Philadelphia Directory and Strangers' Guide for 1820 lists, as part of the tiny, almost negligible, Jewish community: "Louis Bomeisler & Co., Merchants 125 High Street." <sup>88</sup> Nearby, the celebrated Stephen Girard had offices. Bomeisler was drawn to this well-known personage and was soon numbered among his close circle of friends. It was not long before Bomeisler's associations were ex-

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Davis, op. cit., 141-143.

<sup>87</sup> Morais, op. cit., 253.

<sup>88</sup> Davis, op. cit., 25.

tensive, numbering among the outstanding men of Philadelphia. In April, 1824, Bomeisler became even more closely attached to his new home, when this Bavarian born immigrant qualified as a citizen of the United States.

Bomeisler continued his religious activity, as stated above, joining the Rodeph Shalom Congregation when its condition was far from prosperous. He put forth steady effort and much of his time in its behalf.<sup>89</sup> At this early period in its history and for several decades thereafter, the above synagogus was strictly orthodox, observing all the rules and tenents of the traditional Jewish religion.<sup>90</sup> Bomeisler's efforts were soon recognized, for by the year 1823 he was one of the congregational leaders,<sup>91</sup> and by 1827, he became Parnass (president).<sup>92</sup> He served in this position intermittently for the next seventeen years, excepting for his sojourn in St. Louis. However, on his return, he was soon elected to the high office again. As president, he served long and well.<sup>93</sup> On April 14, 1844, he completed his various terms as an officer, having been connected with the congregation in some capacity for a period of over twenty years.<sup>94</sup> Still, however, until he died, he continued his religious efforts in many effective and indirect ways.

It should be included here that Louis Bomeisler

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89 Morais, op. cit., 253-254.

90 Davis, op. cit., 57,60.

91 Ibid., 35.

92 Ibid., 43.

93 Morais, op.cit., 254.

94 Ibid., 57.

not only believed in spiritual support of his religious endeavors, but also in financial assistance. A list of subscribers to the Rodeph Shalom Congregation from 1811 to 1841 contained the name of L. Bomeisler continually from 1818 through 1835, with the exception of two years. On every occasion that his name was present, save one, his contribution was either the largest or tied for this distinction. Usually it ranged from ten dollars in the early years to twenty-five dollars later on. Possibly the trip to St. Louis, the panic, and the resultant financial embarrassment curtailed his spending for a time during the rest of our period.<sup>95</sup> Bomeisler's benevolence extended to the United Hebrew Beneficial Society of Philadelphia, where he worked as early as 1823 as an officer,<sup>96</sup> and the Jewish Foster Home in Philadelphia.<sup>97</sup> He was also active in Jewish education, as evidenced by the fact that he was one of the first three directors appointed to operate his Philadelphia synagogue's initial Sunday School.<sup>98</sup> His own personal philosophy of education was that he believed in learning which was "pleasant" while being instructive.<sup>99</sup> Thus, he was a little ahead of his time in the latter respect.

Truly Bomeisler possessed fine qualities of heart

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-147.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>97</sup> *Morais*, *op. cit.*, 254.

<sup>98</sup> *Davis*, *op. cit.*, 55.

<sup>99</sup> *Morais*, *op. cit.*, 254.

and mind. His conversational powers, his linguistic talents, familiar as he was with seven languages; his lively manner; and his knowledge of leading questions, combined to place him in a select circle.<sup>100</sup> Besides his intellectual capacity, Bomeisler possessed certain admirable attributes. He was instinctively a gentleman, possessing courtly manners and a pleasing address, and combined with his intellect he was indeed a welcome guest among the most intelligent, winning the friendship of men of high standing.

The enviable reputation Bomeisler enjoyed among Jews and Gentiles was still further broadened by his aforementioned services in the Jewish community. For pleasure, he enjoyed socializing and a good game of chess, of which he was an accomplished player. He and his wife Elizabeth had three sons and two daughters. The youngest girl, Evelyn, exhibited by her religious and benevolent work that she had inherited many of her father's talents of mind and heart.<sup>101</sup> The importance of Louis Bomeisler has been stressed due to the effort he displayed in aiding the early St. Louis minyan. Certainly it was his initial work that gave the future United Hebrew synagogue its first impetus.

"In 1837--or it might have been 1838," Bush noted that one of the minyanim was disturbed by a mob of "anti-

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100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., 253-254.

semitic foreigners" who threw rocks into the room where the  
 Jewish service was taking place. The Masonic fraternity,  
 hearing of the outrage, offered their hall, which was locat-  
 ed at that time over a store, on the corner of Main and  
 Locust streets. However, on the advice of Rabbi Samuel  
 Davidson, from Cincinnati, whom they had just engaged as  
 reader, chazen, and shochet, they thankfully declined the  
 generous offer of the Masons, expressing the hope that it  
 would not be needed. This wish was fulfilled, as they were  
 never again molested. Bush noted that henceforth Jews were  
 accepted into masonry, and became its most faithful and de-  
 voted members. For some odd reason, none of the available  
 St. Louis newspapers of this period mentioned this news-  
 worthy event. This is the only record of this incident or  
 of a Reader-Shochet Davidson in this period. However, on  
 July 22, 1849, a Jew by this same last name was elected to  
 the same position, until February 5, 1850, when he was dis-  
 charged for malfeasance of office. The Daily Missouri Re-  
publican, St. Louis' leading daily, reported no such anti-  
 semitic outburst during the period. The minyan evidently

102 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

103 Ibid.

104 Daily Missouri Republican, March 15, 1837.

105 Ibid., October 18, 1839.

106 Reader of the Torah. See discussion in

Chapter Two.

107 Chanter of the prayers. See Chapter Two.

108 Ritual Slaughterer. See Chapter Two.

109 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

110 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of

the United Hebrew Congregation, 77-78, MS.

111 Ibid., 81

rented rooms whenever they had services, as there was no  
 record of permanent places of worship.<sup>112</sup>

As seemed to be the habit in early Jewish history where records are scarce, controversy made its appearance often. The dispute in question in this case is the date when organized worship started in St. Louis, and if this matter and the establishment of the United Hebrew Congregation were one and the same. Of this Bush stated, writing in 1883:

In 1839, the first meeting to organize a Hebrew Congregation was held at a place called the 'Oracle' [Oracle], on Locust street. Abr. Weigel was elected President; Nathan Abeles, Vice-President; H. H. Cohen, Treasurer; Sol. J. Levi, Secretary. A Committee was appointed to draft a Constitution and By-Laws for the first Hebrew Congregation of St. Louis, to be called "Achduth Israel." 113

But other information bearing on this subject must be mentioned. Two years prior to Bush's article (in 1881) the United Hebrew Congregation listed in the preamble of its new constitution that 1838 was the synagogue's starting date.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, a statistical report prepared about 1860 and sent by the United Hebrew Congregation to the Board of Delegates, where all Jewish congregations in the United States could be represented, agreed that 1839 was the date

112 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

113 Ibid.

114 Constitution and By-Laws of the United Hebrew Congregation, 5641-1881, MS.

or organization.

None of the St. Louis newspapers at any time between 1835 and 1842 referred in any way to this subject of organization. It was in this respect similar to the situation which existed concerning the cemetery and the minyan. There was one important difference: One practically contemporary account was published in January, 1845. Then, Leeser's Occident and American Jewish Advocate, published an article stating that during the summer of 1844 it had received a letter from a resident of South Carolina whose business had led him twice to St. Louis. The South Carolina resident wrote that he visited St. Louis for the first time three years previously, or 1841. His letter to Leeser in 1844 described the establishment of a Hebrew congregation in St. Louis:

On my former visit to St. Louis, three years ago [1841], I found about forty or fifty Jews, all, with four or five exceptions, men. They had no place of worship, and lived not as Jews. The holidays drawing nigh, they hired a room in which prayers were said New Year and Kippur. At my suggestion they called a meeting after the holidays, for the purpose of organizing themselves into a society, (they had previous to this a burying-ground); nearly all attended, and Mr. H. Van Beil (now of Philadelphia) was called to the chair, who briefly explained the object of the meeting.

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115 "Appendix IV, Statistical Report of Jewish Congregations of U.S. to Board of Delegates (1860-1)," Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society, 1925, p. 134.

116 Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

A committee, consisting of Messrs. H. Van Bell, J. Pecare, and H. H. Cohen, was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws for the government of the society. The following week the members again met, the constitution and by-laws, as reported by the committee, were adopted, officers were elected, and the society organized. I soon left for Charleston, and have since known nothing of the condition of the congregation until later. 117

The earliest record available in the manuscript Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, concerning the organization of that congregation, is dated October 3, 1841. It reads as follows:

At a meeting of the United Hebrew Cong. held in pursuance of notice on Sunday the 3rd Oct. 1841 at the Oracle on Locust Street. Present

A. Weigle - Abraham  
 A. Lyons - Alexander  
 S. Latz - Simon  
 S. Jacks - Samuel  
 A. Latz - Adol(ph)  
 N. Ables - Nathan  
 J. Kohn - Joseph  
 I. Flaty - Isaac  
 H. Marks - Henry  
 D. Levison- David  
 H. H. Cohen  
 E. Gustraff - Ephraim-

To Form a Constitution the articles as in the first part of this Book were read and approved and on vote of each one Separate these [sic] were unanimously adopted.

Mr. Ables proposed Mr. Weigle when it was moved by Mr. Ables and Seconded by Mr. Cohen that Mr. Weigle be elected chairman, when on the call of Ayes and Noes Mr. W. was Elected unanimously.



Proposed and carried by the call of Ayes and Noes that H. H. Cohen be Treasurer & that Messrs. Joseph Kohn, D. Levison and A. Lats (Latz) do act as Trustees.118

From all the evidence thus presented it appears highly probable that the United Hebrew Congregation, or Achduth Israel (Unity of Israel), was established in 1841, and that this was the beginning of organized worship in St. Louis. The South Carolinian's letter, combined with the first records of the congregation, is the basis for this statement.

After a perusal of volume one of Leeser's Occident and American Jewish Advocate, in addition to much other information about Leeser, the author of this thesis has no doubt of Leeser's integrity and honesty. It seems improbable that Leeser would have quoted this letter of 1844 in his article in the Occident if he had doubted the accuracy of his correspondent. Besides, this account fits in perfectly with the first record of the United Hebrew Congregation in 1841. From the aforementioned data on the organization of the congregation, an account of the founding of the United Hebrew possibly can be woven.

Actually two meetings were required to establish the United Hebrew Congregation. In the fall of 1841, with the holidays nigh, the regular minyan rented a room for the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur, Thurs-

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118 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9, MS.

day and Friday, September 16 and 17, and Saturday, September 25, respectively. <sup>120</sup> During this time the idea came up, possibly started by the aforementioned Charleston businessman, to establish a congregation. After the holidays, probably Sunday, September 26, 1841--as Sunday was the most frequent day the Jews of St. Louis, and the United Hebrew in particular, usually met--a meeting was held. Nearly all of the forty or fifty Jews in St. Louis (which was an extremely small percent of the approximately <sup>121</sup> 15,000 Israelites residing in the United States at the time) attended the meeting to discuss the subject of organization. Mr. H. Van Bell, a native of Amsterdam, Holland, and a <sup>122</sup> later president of the same Philadelphia synagogue that L. Bomeisler <sup>123</sup> presided over, was called to the chair to explain the subject of the gathering. The people were evidently in agreement on the idea of organization as well as on a name. A committee was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws. Thus, a new congregation was to be added to the list of the approximately twenty synagogues then in existence in the United States in 1841.

It is interesting to note that reminders were either personally delivered, or placed at appropriate spots, such as the courthouse and other public designated places, in-

119 Freund, op. cit., 9.

120 See discussion of High Holy Days, Chapter Two.

121 See discussion of Israelite population in the United States in Chapter Two.

122 Morais, op. cit., 411.

123 Davis, op. cit., 51.

forming the local Jewry of the important forthcoming meeting. They probably announced that the next meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation was to be held on Sunday, October 3, 1841, at the Oracle Coffee Shop, 24<sup>124</sup> Locust Street. For some reason, no advertisement was placed in any of the St. Louis newspapers, including the popular Daily Missouri Republican. Perhaps for this reason, or for some other, only twelve men attended on October 3. They were: Abraham Weigle, Alexander Lyons, Simon Latz, Samuel Jacks, Adolph Latz, Nathan Abeles, Joseph Kohn, Isaac Plateau, Henry Marks, David Levison, Hyam H. Cohen, and Ephraim Gustorf.<sup>125</sup>

For some unknown reason, H. Van Beil and J. Pecare were not present at this meeting, nor at any others. Perhaps it was at this time that Van Beil had to return to Philadelphia. Anyway, the constitution in the first part of the minute book, which the two absentee organizers had helped compose, was read and unanimously approved article by article.

The next and final item of business was the election of the new congregational officers. Nathan Abeles nominated A. Weigle, and since there were no other nominations, Abeles proposed and Hyam H. Cohen seconded the motion that Weigle be elected "chairman."<sup>126</sup> Their choice was unanimous-

<sup>124</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, May 27, 1841.

<sup>125</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, p. 9, MS.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

ly endorsed, Mr. Abraham Weigle becoming the first President of the United Hebrew Congregation. In order, the other new officers were: H. H. Cohen, treasurer; and the three trustees, Joseph Kohn, David Levison, and Adolph Latz. This concluded the business of the first recorded meeting and the first dated evidence of the existence of the United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>127</sup> The unnamed secretary who recorded this meeting appears to have been Nathan Abeles. It is unexplainable why the latter's name did not appear as an officer, but both a comparison of handwriting as he recorded later minutes, and the fact that he was the unannounced secretary at the next several recorded meetings a year later, points to the fact that Abeles was either elected or appointed the first secretary of the United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>128</sup>

It might be remembered that two of these twelve men were associated with the early minyan: A. Weigle and N. Abeles. The name of the aforementioned early worshipper, Eliezer Block, was first seen on the membership list of the United Hebrew Congregation at the second recorded meeting. Block joined this new congregation a year later, in 1842.

A brief discussion as to whether the United Hebrew

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 1, 13.

was the first Hebrew congregation organized in St. Louis is now in order. From all the records perused, it appears that it was the first synagogue organized in St. Louis. One thing is certain, no earlier written records were discovered to prove differently. Yet it is necessary to mention other items uncovered in the research on this subject and early St. Louis Jewry. One other synagogue is mentioned in the very early years of the United Hebrew: the Gates of Mercy, or Shaare Chafatz, Congregation, which was in operation definitely in January, 1843. One individual who seemingly was associated with the latter was Joseph Newmark,<sup>129</sup> who came to St. Louis on October 1, 1841, from his home in Dubuque, Iowa.<sup>130</sup> While he was a man of great ability,<sup>131</sup> it is unlikely, if he did become a resident on this early trip, that he could have organized a congregation within the two days prior to October 3. It is noteworthy that a Mr. Woolf in the middle of March, 1843, attempted to borrow a Sepher Torah from the United Hebrew in order to hold Passover services. However, the synagogue refused to lend theirs since it was evidently the only one they had, and since they needed it for their own service.<sup>132</sup> It is quite possible,<sup>133</sup>

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129 Ibid., 17.

130 Daily Missouri Republican, October 2, 1841.

131 Postal and Koppman, A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S., 172. Schappes, A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875, p. 718.

132 Schappes, op. cit., 519-520.

133 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 19, MS.

with the small Jewish population in the city, that Woolf was a member of the Gates of Mercy, as it is improbable that three synagogues could have existed at this date in early St. Louis.

One factor which might have driven future members away from the United Hebrew Congregation was Article Six of the constitution. It stated that a member to be of good moral character, must be a one year resident of Missouri or Illinois, and a contributor to the United Hebrew Congregation for this same period of one year. This article was disliked by several members and was rebuked in 1842 at the congregation's second and third meeting in August and October, respectively. It was not until seven months later in May, 1843, that the article was amended and the contributory period shortened from one year to three months.

It is significant that the next order of business at this meeting was to elect Joseph Newmark and nine others into the fold of the United Hebrew. It is worthwhile to remember that ten male Jews were all that was necessary to form a congregation. Of course, there are no actual records available to prove that these ten members, joining at once, were the cause of the breakup of the Gates of

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134 Ibid., 2.

135 Ibid., 22.

136 Ibid., 23.

137 See discussion in Chapter Two.

Mercy; it is only a very strong probability for the synagogue was never heard of again.

Some have claimed the existence of the B'nai El Congregation, organized in October, 1852, as being the oldest in the city. Their claim was based on the fact that the two sister congregations, B'nai Brith and Imanu El, which merged at the last mentioned date, organized earlier than the United Hebrew. However the B'nai El minutes prove this claim inaccurate. They list 1847 as their date of organization and Bush reiterated this fact at the cornerstone ceremony for the first B'nai El Synagogue in April, 1855.<sup>138</sup> His article in 1883, specifying the United Hebrew Congregation as the first local synagogue, reestablished this fact.<sup>139</sup> This article takes on added weight when it is recalled that Isidor Bush was one of the founders of the B'nai Brith Congregation, and one of the first trustees in 1852 and early workers in the B'nai El Congregation.<sup>140</sup>

St. Louis newspapers at first seemingly ignored the young Jewish congregation. It was not until May 31, 1843, that the words "Hebrew Congregation" were mentioned in print, as the Daily Missouri Republican included it in a list of six cemeteries reporting their deaths for the previous week ending May 29th.<sup>141</sup> To all intents and

138 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1-2, MS.

139 Daily Missouri Republican, April 13, 1855.

140 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

141 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1-2, MS.

142 Daily Missouri Republican, May 31, 1843.

purposes, this was the Jewish cemetery secured by the United Hebrew Congregation. However, it was not until October 22, 1855, that the Daily Missouri Republican actually referred to the United Hebrew Congregation as "the first to establish a place of worship in St. Louis many years ago."<sup>143</sup>

Rabbi Issac Leeser agreed with this statement. Besides the early newsletter he published in January, 1845, Leeser published other articles on the United Hebrew Congregation. In the April, 1852, edition of the Occident and American Jewish Advocate, when he referred to his talk with United Hebrew President M. Samuel on his visit in St. Louis, December, 1851, he wrote of the synagogue as the "original, or Polish congregation" which constitutionally followed the Polish customs or minhag Polin.<sup>144</sup> In July, 1854,<sup>145</sup> Leeser called the United Hebrew the "old congregation." In October, 1855, he explicitly referred in an article on St. Louis Jewry to "the United Congregation, the oldest body of Israelites in St. Louis."<sup>146</sup> Since at that time, B'nai El and United Hebrew were the only organized synagogues in the city, and since the former was mentioned later in the article, there is no question but that the aforementioned "United Congregation" was the United Hebrew

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., October 22, 1855.

<sup>144</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 55.

<sup>145</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, July, 1854, p. 230.

<sup>146</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, October, 1855, p. 369.



## Congregation.

Another bit of evidence relating to the United Hebrew's primary origin among local synagogues lay in some words in the preamble of the latter's first constitution:

We, the resident Jews of the City and County of Saint Louis, State of Missouri, are aware that in most of the cities of this Union where our brethren dwell, there are places of worship or Synagogues, erected for the purpose of worship according to their own dictates; and whereas we see daily many of our persuasion congregating to this county, our families increasing in numbers, and better to provide for our future happiness and salvation, are in hopes through this beginning to be enabled in the course of a few years to build a Synagogue to be dedicated to the most High.<sup>147</sup>

The United Hebrew may be the first Jewish congregation to be established west of the Mississippi River. The American Jewish Archives, whose purpose is "Devoted to the preservation and study of American Jewish historical records," gave much space in its October, 1956, publication to early Jewish history in tribute to the 150th anniversary of Isaac Leiser's birth.<sup>148</sup> In this edition it called the United Hebrew Congregation not only the first in St. Louis, but the "first synagogue" established "west of the Mississippi River."<sup>149</sup> It reasoned that as far as it had discovered, this western area had no congregation prior to 1841.<sup>150</sup> Too, the

<sup>147</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 1, MS.

<sup>148</sup> American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, title page.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>150</sup> Letter received from Maxwell Whiteman, Assistant to the Director of the American Jewish Archives, 1957.

United States Census for 1850 showed only one Jewish congregation in Missouri, and none west of this state.<sup>151</sup>

The motive for the establishment of this congregation was not discovered in any recorded form. However, the Preamble of the United Hebrew Constitution contains a clue. Since other cities where Jews were located had places of worship, the St. Louis Jews desired the same. With this in mind, the following was the reasoning of the Preamble: "Whereas we see daily many of our persuasion congregating to this country, our families increasing in numbers, and the better to provide for our future happiness and salvation, are in hopes through this beginning to be enabled in the course of a few years, to build a Synagogue to be dedicated to the most High. And, therefore, for the better regulation and government of our congregation, we the undersigned establish the following rules and regulations."<sup>152</sup>

Very little is known about the twelve Jews present at the first meeting. What information we do have demonstrates that they were young to middle-aged men with a background in merchandising. The next few pages will be devoted to a short history of each of the twelve until October 3, 1841.

Abraham Weigle, the first president of the United

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<sup>151</sup> DeBow, Seventh Census of the United States; 1850, p. lvii.

<sup>152</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 1, MS.

Hebrew Congregation, was born on January 31, 1803, in Bohemia.<sup>153</sup> He married one of the Block family in Petschau, Bohemia. Weigle's wife, induced by her brothers, Eliezer and Emanuel Block, who were already in St. Louis, they came to the United States and settled in St. Louis. It is not known exactly when Weigle arrived, since Bush mentioned 1834<sup>154</sup> and Weigle's obituary mentioned 1836.<sup>155</sup> However, according to Bush, he was here for the early minyan.<sup>156</sup> Records show that he obtained a merchant's license, January 1, 1838,<sup>157</sup> and the St. Louis Directory for 1838-9 listed him as owning a clothing store at 54 North Front Street.<sup>158</sup> Apparently here shortly before the minyan, he went into partnership with Eliezer S. Block, also a Bohemian, who had arrived in St. Louis shortly after Weigle,<sup>159</sup> but whose name did not appear in any St. Louis directory published prior to 1842. By 1840, Weigle had moved to 109 North First Street,<sup>160</sup> apparently joining the retailers who, since 1837, had been gradually pushed off the levee by heavy business.<sup>161</sup>

Abraham Weigle was a very religious man during

- 153 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 56, MS.  
 154 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 155 St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 1, 1888.  
 156 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 157 Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, p. 147, MS.  
 158 Keemie, *op. cit.*, p. 49.  
 159 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 160 Keemie, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1, p. 64.  
 161 See discussion in Chapter One.

this early time, and lived a life any traditional Jew would have been proud of. Bush noted that he was a "true, genuine Israelite."<sup>162</sup> He was a man well-versed in Hebrew lore, and especially in the Talmud.<sup>163</sup> Besides this, Weigle was one of the very few Jews capable of ritual circumcision. As a conscientious mohel, he had to observe all the traditional beliefs which he had learned. There was no doubt of his conscientiousness as the following incident verifies. It is said that Weigle, as probably the only mohel in this part of the Mississippi Valley, and with travel difficult, sometimes went as far as two hundred miles, without compensation, to perform the rite on a Jewish child.<sup>164</sup> He was at the early minyan and was chairman of the meeting of St. Louis Israelites to raise funds to purchase a cemetery.<sup>165</sup> At the age of thirty-eight he was elected the first president of the United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>166</sup> Evidently Weigle's wife was as firm a believer as her husband. She was raised by pious parents, since the Blocks of Bohemia educated their children in the orthodox tradition.<sup>167</sup> Thus, her background prepared her for the type of religious life which her husband led.

Very little is known of the early life of Hyam H. Cohen, who was another one of the twelve. He was of

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- 162 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 163 Jewish Voice, February 10, 1888.  
 164 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.  
 165 Ibid., December 7, 1883.  
 166 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 56, MS.  
 167 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

English nativity, possibly from Colchester, England. He  
 married an English girl, Leah Saunders of Ipswich, and  
 subsequently of London, either sometime prior to departure  
 for America or after his arrival in this country. The  
 couple had at least two daughters, the oldest one being  
 named Elizabeth. They arrived in St. Louis no later than  
 1840. Cohen, a merchant, owned a store at 47 North First  
 Street. Of his religious life, we know that he was a con-  
 tributor to the meeting of Jews in St. Louis to organize  
 a Jewish cemetery. As stated above, he was honored by  
 being elected the congregation's first Treasurer, a position  
 which was second only to the president in importance.  
 Cohen must have been in his early forties at the time.

Of all these twelve, none gave greater service to  
 the synagogue or was more universally liked than the young-

168 Information taken from letter and picture  
 of H. H. Cohen and his wife, Leah Saunders, donated to  
 the Missouri Historical Society by his granddaughter  
 Nina de Henriques of New York in 1917. H. H. Cohen  
 Collection.

169 General G-3 Records, p. 285, Office of the  
 Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

170 Information taken from a letter and picture  
 of H. H. Cohen and his wife Leah Saunders donated to the  
 Missouri Historical Society by their granddaughter Nina  
 de Henriques of New York in 1917. H. H. Cohen Collection.

171 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years  
1840-1, p. 12.

172 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

173 Cohen's age is conjectured after viewing  
 a picture of H. H. Cohen taken in 1855. H. H. Cohen  
 Collection.

174 United Hebrew Congregation Record of  
 Quarterly Meetings, 16-17, MS.

175 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, who attend-  
 ed the United Hebrew Congregation in 1878, 1957.

est of the founders, Adolph J. Latz. He was born in Posen, Germany, in 1814.<sup>176</sup> Migrating to the United States, he settled in St. Louis definitely by 1840. He became a merchant, opening up a store on 55 North Front Street.<sup>177</sup> Latz was one of five children. A bachelor, he had two brothers, one of whom was named Benjamin,<sup>178</sup> and two sisters.<sup>179</sup> There were several other Latzs in St. Louis, Simon and Louis, but their relationship to A. J. Latz has never determined.<sup>180</sup> Simon joined A. J. Latz as co-owner of a clothing store, which by this time was located at 62 North Front Street.<sup>181</sup> Adolph Latz became a successful St. Louis merchant, engaging in the fur business for a time. However, it is not known if his activity in furs occurred before the establishment of the congregation.<sup>182</sup> Religiously, Latz was a fine example of a traditional Jew. He was very pious and extremely charitable.<sup>183</sup> As evidence of this latter trait, his was the only name which occurred twice on the subscription list for the first Jewish cemetery. This was not a mistake, for one contribution was from "A. Latz, \$10," an amount which equaled eight others for the highest donation,

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- 176 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 5, 1901.  
 177 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 80, MS.  
 178 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1, p. 33.  
 179 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.  
 180 Letter received from Rabbi Latz, Joplin, Missouri, 1957.  
 181 St. Louis Directory for the Year 1842, p. 80.  
 182 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 5, 1901.  
 183 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

and the other from "A & Latz," \$5.<sup>184</sup> Thus, among the contributors, Latz donated the largest amount. At the age of twenty-seven,<sup>185</sup> he was, as previously stated, elected one of the first three trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation. The character of this young man was certainly to be admired. He was a kind, conscientious person and a "fine gentleman."<sup>187</sup> In fact, so courtly was his manner that he was known to his friends as "gentleman" Latz.<sup>188</sup> In build, he was a rather short heavy-set man and wore a short beard.<sup>189</sup>

Joseph Kohn, another of the first trustees elected at the October 3 meeting in 1841, was born in Bohemia in 1802.<sup>190</sup> There he married Ellen Block, the sister of Eliezer S. Block. He soon left the country and came to St. Louis, arriving here in 1838. He proceeded to go into partnership with Nathan Abeles, his brother-in-law.<sup>191</sup> The St. Louis Directory for the Years 1838-9 listed: "Abeles and Koghn [Kohn] clothing store, 103 1-2 n First."<sup>192</sup> This Bohemian merchant was a very active participant in the religious life of the St. Louis community, and participated in it almost immediately after he had settled here. He was a

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- 184 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.
  - 185 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 56, MS.
  - 186 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.
  - 187 Wise, Reminiscences, 295-296.
  - 188 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 5, 1901.
  - 189 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.
  - 190 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 80, MS.
  - 191 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.
  - 192 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the

charitable person, being one of the donators who contributed \$10 to the cemetery fund in May, 1840.<sup>193</sup> At the age of thirty-nine,<sup>194</sup> he was, as stated earlier, elected as a trustee at the earliest recorded meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation. More will be said of Joseph Kohn's loyal service to the United Hebrew in later chapters.

David Levison was another one of the twelve. However, only a small bit of information concerning him has been discovered. He had settled in St. Louis by 1838. Here he decided to open up a store; so with the aid of Casper Weinberg, a clothing store was begun together on 31 North Front Street.<sup>195</sup> However, the partnership for some unknown reason did not exist long, and in 1840 the directory listed only: "Levison, D. clothing store, 6n First."<sup>196</sup> The latter was one of four stores in a two-story brick building, originally built for the Bank of Missouri, and also occupied by the United States Government Sub-Treasury. Unfortunately, early in May, 1841, a large fire<sup>197</sup> destroyed or injured much of his stock.<sup>198</sup> Levison was a person who was active in religious projects. Besides donating \$10 to the cemetery fund,<sup>199</sup> he was one of the previously mentioned three individuals who was elected as a trustee of the

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193 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.

194 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 21, MS.

195 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the

Years 1838-9, p. 28.

196 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the

Years 1840-1, p. 35.

197 Daily Missouri Republican, May 3, 1841.

198 Ibid., May 4, 1841.

199 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.



United Hebrew Congregation at the October, 1841, meeting. This early recognition demonstrated that he was a responsible man with leadership ability.

Generally, little is known of the background and early training of the twelve; however, in the case of Nathan Abeles more information is available. An old family history of the Abeles family was located by the author of this thesis which contained some information on this large Jewish family which was well-represented in early St. Louis. From it one can surmise that Nathan Abeles certainly was well schooled in Jewish tradition. Nathan Abeles was born on the fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev, which occurred during the winter of 1805. The place of his birth probably was Petschau, Bohemia. His parents moved about quite a bit in early times, as several sons and daughters were born in the towns of Pilsen, Reshilatz, and Petschau in that order. He was the youngest son of middle-aged parents, Moses Abeles, forty-eight, and Blumele or Blanche Dattelzweig, forty-four, who had married in 1781. Theirs was a large family, as there were nine children born - seven boys and two girls. However, at least one of the brothers, Jacob, the first born, died prior to the birth of Nachman (Nathan), while another brother, twelve-year-old Emanuel, died a year afterward. Thus, only seven of the nine children lived. Besides Nathan, these were the

children in order of birth: Rachel, David, Gabriel, Susman, Ephraim, Malkeh, and Emanuel.<sup>200</sup>

Nachman, or Nathan, as he will be called henceforth, came from a religious family, since both sides of the family had a very pious background. His paternal great-grandfather was Rabbi Moses Abeles of Polkeinavia. Nathan's grandfather, Simon Abeles, lived to a ripe old age. He died in 1811 and his gravestone in Petshau, Bohemia, read: "Here lies the venerable, straight-forward, pious man, Shimon Abeles, the son of Rabbi Moses from Polkeinavia. May his soul rest in peace."<sup>201</sup>

Moses Abeles, Nathan's father, was a modest, well-learned man who did many good deeds in his community. He was mentioned by his son, Susman, as "Reb" Moses Abeles, a title which denotes in Jewish life a rabbi, or a man well versed in the Torah and all Jewish Law. The best description of this man was the following commandment he spoke to his sons: "On my tombstone do not inscribe any praise, only the date of my birth and death and my name, because a man's good deeds and knowledge speak for themselves and that can be found in one's community."<sup>202</sup> He died just before the Sabbath in 1839 and the memory he left his family speaks

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<sup>200</sup> Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

<sup>201</sup> Abeles Book of Legends, 13, MS., University City, Missouri.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

for itself. Abeles' mother, Blumele, came from a religious family also. Her father was Reb Moses Chaim Dattelzweig. Here again it is possible that Dattelzweig was a rabbi. This well-learned man evidently imparted his knowledge to his daughter for she was also known as a pious woman, virtuous, distinguished, and in possession of a good name among all. Her son Susman described her as a "godly woman."<sup>203</sup>

Of the sisters and brothers of Nathan Abeles, not very much is known. His oldest sister Rachel was born in 1784 and in 1806 she married Isaac Kohn in the city of Pilsen, Bohemia. His other sister Malkah was born during the summer of 1795, and his father "married her off" to Mayer Kohn, also in the city of Pilsen. Unfortunately she died in 1830. Of Nathan's brothers, David, born in 1787, grew up and dealt in produce and traveled a great deal. He was buried in the first United Hebrew Cemetery in 1845. Susman, born in 1791, was a good, "very righteous" person and a strong believer in God. As was the case with the first Jew, Abraham, his home was always open to strangers to eat and sleep. Susman Abeles possibly was a rabbi,

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203 Ibid.

204 Ibid., 2.

205 Ibid.

206 Ibid., 3.

207 Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

208 Ibid.

209 Abeles Book of Legends, 14, MS., University City, Missouri.

210 Ibid.

211 Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

although his son, Simon, a future United Hebrew member of whom more will be said later, never mentioned the fact in his brief description of his father in the family history book. Gabriel, born in 1789,<sup>212</sup> became a teacher.<sup>213</sup> The fourth brother, Emanuel, was born in 1798<sup>214</sup> and became a merchant.<sup>215</sup>

Since the Abeles family had such a strong religious background, it is highly probable that Nathan also was similarly trained. The young Abeles remained in Petschau, Bohemia, during the revolution of 1830 and the resultant cholera epidemic.<sup>216</sup> In the meantime, Nathan had met and fallen in love with Rachel Block, of the Bohemian family discussed earlier.<sup>217</sup> The two became engaged, and since Abeles was poor and could not afford to pay the exorbitant fees then required in Bohemia for a marriage license, the two decided to leave and travel with Eliezer S. Block to the United States. Since Rachel had a brother in Missouri, she was taken by Nathan to reside with him in Louisiana, Missouri. Since Nathan Abeles did not have the money to support his fiancée, and evidently being of an independent

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212 Abeles Book of Legends, 1, MS., University City, Missouri.

213 Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

214 Abeles Book of Legends, 1, MS., University City, Missouri.

215 Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

216 Abeles Book of Legends, 2, MS., University City, Missouri

217 See discussion in Chapter Two.

character, he spent the next year trying to secure a job.<sup>218</sup>  
 He had the ability to be a teacher and a bookkeeper;<sup>219</sup> however, he did not find a position in either of these positions. He had attempted to work as a clerk either in St. Louis or Louisville, but no openings were available. Thus with a capital of but fourteen dollars, he decided to become a merchant like his brothers, and began to peddle in the area around Louisville, Kentucky. By indefatigable industry and incredible self-denial, he increased his capital within one year to six hundred dollars. He then returned to Missouri for his bride.<sup>220</sup> In April, 1837, they were married in a civil ceremony by Justice of the Peace S. W. Finley at Louisiana, Missouri, the Pike County Recorder<sup>221</sup> containing a notice of this occurrence. According to Bush, the cost of the marriage license was twenty-five cents.<sup>222</sup> There is no record of any religious ceremony being performed, but, perhaps, it was accomplished and not recorded. Abeles soon settled in St. Louis, and by 1838<sup>223</sup> he had established his own clothing store. As mentioned previously, the latter was located on North First Street,

218 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

219 Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

220 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

221 "Pike County Marriage Record, 1818-1837," Missouri Historical Review, Vol. IX, No. 3 (April, 1915), p. 207.

222 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

223 Ibid., December 7, 1883.

and was listed in the 1838-9 directory as "Abeles and Koghn."<sup>224</sup>

Physically Nathan Abeles was a thin person about five nine, and known as a "Jewel of a person." Bush considered Abeles, like Weigle, a "true genuine Israelite."<sup>226</sup> Active in St. Louis religious life from the start, he had a hand in starting almost every St. Louis Jewish Institution. In fact a review of his religious accomplishments is like a summary of the previously written material. He was a member of the first known minyan in St. Louis; served as a Shochet gratis, whenever his services were requested;<sup>227</sup> was present in 1841 at the October 3, 1841, meeting; became the first secretary of the United Hebrew Congregation; played a very large part in the purchase of the first Jewish cemetery, served on the cemetery committee, and was co-purchaser of the lot; and played a minor part in the formation of the first Jewish benevolent society in St. Louis.<sup>228</sup> Thus it can be said beyond a doubt that Nathan Abeles played a dynamic part in the organization of the St. Louis Jewish community.

While the others of the twelve did not hold any office, they will now be described for the sake of the

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<sup>224</sup> Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1838-9, p. 11.

<sup>225</sup> Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

<sup>226</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., December 7, 1883.

important roles they played in the early history of the United Hebrew. Henry Marks was born in Prussia in 1789.<sup>229</sup> He came to this country and had settled in St. Louis by 1837. This is apparent, since he purchased a license in November, 1837, to operate a grocery store for several years.<sup>230</sup> However, he was probably not too successful at it, and must have soon given it up, for the 1840-1 Directory listed him as follows: "Marks, Henry, clerk 2n Front."<sup>231</sup> Religiously, Marks was a participant, although he does not appear to have been a leader. He contributed five dollars to the cemetery,<sup>232</sup> and was next heard from at the October 3, 1841, meeting. At that date he was fifty-two years old, which gave him the distinction of being the senior member of the twelve present at that meeting.

Founder Samuel Jacks was born in Germany in 1809.<sup>233</sup><sup>234</sup>

He had at least one brother and one sister, both of whom resided together in St. Louis. After twenty five years or so in his native country, he migrated in 1834<sup>235</sup> or in 1836<sup>236</sup>

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- 229 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 1849-1880, p. 3, MS.  
 230 Record of the St. Louis County Court No. 2, 1836-1841, p. 162, MS.  
 231 Keemis, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1, p. 36.  
 232 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.  
 233 Jewish Voice, September 6, 1888.  
 234 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 56, MS.  
 235 Jewish Voice, September 6, 1888.  
 236 St. Louis Globe-Democrat, August 30, 1888.

to St. Louis from Wreschen, near Posen, Germany. The St. Louis Directory of 1838-9 and 1840-1 contained his name, which they spelled "Jacques," and listed his profession as a tailor. Starting out in 1838 he was a partner with a Mr. Morriss. By 1840 he was able to run his own shop. In this early period he was always located on North Front Street, first at 53 1-2, and by 1840 at Number 54. Mr. Jacks became a very successful businessman and was soon able to purchase some property. Samuel Jacks was married and the father of six children, although it is not known if all were born by 1841. Jacks was a "devoted" member of the United Hebrew, a "devout Israelite, an unobtrusive gentleman, and a man respected by all," and, because of these qualities, he had many true friends. His religious feeling was demonstrated by his charitableness. The Jewish cemetery subscription paper lists "L. Jacks, \$10"; but there is no doubt that Samuel was intended, since there was no L. Jacks discovered in early St. Louis. At the time

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- 237 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1838-9, p. 24.  
 238 Ibid.  
 239 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1, p. 29.  
 240 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1838-9, p. 24.  
 241 Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1, p. 29.  
 242 Jewish Voice, September 6, 1888.  
 243 St. Louis Republic, August 30, 1888.  
 244 Jewish Voice, September 6, 1888.  
 245 Records United Hebrew Congregation 1868-1946, p. 121, MS.  
 246 Jewish Voice, September 6, 1888.  
 247 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.



of the October 3, 1841, meeting, Jacks was thirty-two years old.

Simon Latz apparently was related to Adolph J. Latz. They were probably in business together, although there were no records discovered which verified this. The conclusion of their family relationship is deduced from the 1842 directory which lists "A. and S. Latz" as clothing merchants who resided at 62 North Front Street.<sup>248</sup> Whether Simon was a religious person is not known. His name was not listed among the cemetery contributors; however, it is possible that he was not in St. Louis at the time or that the contribution by "A & L. Latz-\$5" was an error and should have included the initial "S" instead of "L".<sup>249</sup> No L. Latz appeared in the directory or the congregation's minutes up through 1842. Yet Simon Latz's name definitely did appear at the October 3, 1841 meeting. At a later date, a Louis Latz appeared in the minutes of the United Hebrew Congregation. Yet there is no indication that he was in St. Louis at this early date.

Of Isaac Fplateau little is known. While there is a "Flatow, Prussia,"<sup>250</sup> no record of I. Fplateau's birth, death, or nativity are available. At first sight his name seems to type him as of French extraction. Fplateau followed

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248 St. Louis Directory for the Year 1842, p. 80.  
 249 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.  
 250 Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 2, MS.

the same occupation as most all of the twelve did, that of merchant in early St. Louis. The directory for 1840 listed him as: "Plateau, Isaac, merchant, 36 n Front."<sup>251</sup> His religious experience as detailed by the records indicated that he contributed five dollars to the cemetery,<sup>252</sup> besides his attendance at the first recorded meeting of the synagogue.

The two remaining founders, Ephraim Gostorf and Alexander Lyons, possibly were newcomers to the city in 1841, since practically nothing is known of them. Gostorf was involved in some land deals after 1841;<sup>253</sup> nothing is known as to his whereabouts or activities prior to the opening of the United Hebrew meeting when his name first appeared. Alexander Lyons was in a similar situation. Possibly both were peddlers, just visiting for the occasion, or were just not available when the directory was put together. Lyons was listed as a tailor at 41 North First Street in the 1842 directory,<sup>254</sup> but otherwise he and Gostorf joined Simon Latz as being first introduced through the October 3, 1841, meeting.

Now in retrospect, we can make certain generalizations about the twelve. First, these twelve men all came

<sup>251</sup> Keemle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1840-1, p. 21.

<sup>252</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>253</sup> General C-4 Records, p. 306, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS. General V-4 Records, p. 207, *ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> St. Louis Directory for the Year 1842, p. 85.

from three countries: Bohemia, Germany, or England. All had migrated to this country when they were comparatively young men, according to recent standards, and established themselves as merchants. Yet, while all around them were people in this growing city who were struggling to establish themselves, and while they themselves were involved in the hard task of earning a living, each man felt a driving responsibility to build the roots and foundations of Jewish life, to establish a House of Prayer.

Like the comparatively young men who attended the United States Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, and then formulated the United States Constitution, these St. Louis Israelites now did the same thing on a much smaller scale with the United Hebrew Constitution at the meeting of October 3, 1841.<sup>255</sup> This instrument was to contain the laws and regulations which the officers would enforce. It was to be the basis for the congregational government. Thus, it would be interesting to discover what this vital document contained.

The government of the new congregation was adopted by the founders at the first meeting on October 3, 1841, in the form of the original United Hebrew Constitution. It was mainly prepared by Henry Van Bell,<sup>256</sup> with an assist from

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<sup>255</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9, MS.

<sup>256</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

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H. H. Cohen and J. Pecare. Due to the particularly important role Van Beil played, it was felt worthwhile to discuss him in some detail.

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Herman S. Van Beil was born on February 12, 1799, in Amsterdam, Holland. He came to the United States in 1817,<sup>259</sup> and settled in Philadelphia about the same time as his acquaintance, Louis Bomeisler. Here, he opened up a second hand clothing store, and was listed in the Philadelphia Directory and Stranger's Guide for 1820 as owning it.<sup>260</sup> He also was an accomplished linguist, having occupied the position of interpreter of languages in Philadelphia.<sup>261</sup> In a religious vein, Herman Van Beil was quite active. He became a contributor to, if not a member of, the German Hebrew Congregation, Rodeph Shalom, in Philadelphia in 1822.<sup>262</sup> By 1829, he had been elected secretary of this congregation at the same time Louis Bomeisler was president.<sup>263</sup> In April, 1831, Van Beil was elected president of this congregation for a term of one year succeeding L. Bomeisler.<sup>264</sup> Besides possessing executive ability, he was capable of conducting or leading services. He was chosen to do this

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<sup>257</sup> Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, 511.

<sup>258</sup> Davis, op. cit., 51. At times Herman Van Beil has been referred to as "Harmon" Van Beil, according to a letter from Maxwell Whiteman, co-author of the book, Jews in Philadelphia, and assistant to the Director of the American Jewish Archives, 1957.

<sup>259</sup> Morais, The Jews of Philadelphia, 411.

<sup>260</sup> Davis, op. cit., 26.

<sup>261</sup> Morais, op. cit., 411.

<sup>262</sup> Davis, op. cit., 144.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 51.

when a regular chazan could not be obtained.<sup>265</sup> At this time the Rodeph Shalom was strictly Orthodox, and observed all the rules and tenets of the traditional Jewish religion.<sup>266</sup> Herman Van Beil was a very charitable man. From 1822 through 1833, his donations to support the Hebrew German Society, as this synagogue was called in early times, were consistently above the average. His contributions rose gradually from \$4.00, \$6.00, to \$10.00 which placed him second to none in consistency and only second to L. Bom-<sup>267</sup> eisler in amount. Van Beil was in Philadelphia as late as November, 1834,<sup>268</sup> but apparently soon left for St. Louis.

When he arrived in the latter city is not known, but on July 26, 1837, he purchased a merchant's license for ten dollars from the St. Louis County Court.<sup>269</sup> Thus he must have entered St. Louis about this time. The 1838-9 St. Louis Directory listed him as follows: "Van Beil, H. clothing store, 171 n First."<sup>270</sup> Like many other St. Louis merchants, he ordered some of his stock from out of the city.<sup>271</sup> Herman Van Beil was married, and had his wife Klizabeth with him during his stay in St. Louis.<sup>272</sup> Two

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 141-146.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>269</sup> Record of St. Louis County Court, No. 2, 1836-1841, p. 109, MS.

<sup>270</sup> Keenle, St. Louis Directory for the Years 1838-9, p. 49.

<sup>271</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 14, 1839.

<sup>272</sup> General S-3 Records, p. 360. General S-3 Records, p. 360, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

other Van Beils in St. Louis were probably his children. One of them, David Van Beil, was a good student in literature and languages at St. Louis University. He won special awards in the Department of English for memory, and was the only winner of a first award in the elementary French department, which was presented to him at the commencement in mid-August, 1839.<sup>273</sup> At the university's eleventh commencement day, August 20, 1840, D. Van Beil again won an award; this time it was in the Department of German.<sup>274</sup>

Another namesake was Fannie Van Beil, who participated in one of the earliest Jewish marriages in St. Louis. On October 4, 1840, she was married to Joseph Levi by Justice Hyde.<sup>275</sup> No mention was made of a Jewish ceremony in the newspaper notice. Possibly, the aforementioned David and Fannie Van Beil were offspring of the H. Van Beils, since the couple did have children, and subsequently, grandchildren.<sup>276</sup>

Herman Van Beil played an instrumental part in the formation of the United Hebrew Congregation. At the age of forty-two, he was chairman of the October 3, 1841, meeting of the Israelites. Here he was placed on the constitutional committee, together with Cohen and Pecare,<sup>277</sup> and was

<sup>273</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 16, 1839.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., August 22, 1840.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., October 5, 1840.

<sup>276</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>277</sup> Leiser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and

American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 511.

mainly responsible for the document coming into being. Strangely, he never attended a recorded meeting of the congregation, possibly because he returned soon afterward to Philadelphia.<sup>278</sup>

However, Van Beil left behind the basis for the government of the United Hebrew Congregation. This original constitution, except for minor changes, was used definitely from 1841 through early 1849. In fact it was the basis for the other congregational governing documents. It was a well organized and precise document, containing some similarities to the United States Constitution's format: Preamble, sixteen articles, nine rules of order, and by-laws.<sup>279</sup> The title of the document was the "Constitution and (By Laws) of the United Hebrew Congregation Of Saint Louis."<sup>280</sup> Interestingly, the word "German" Hebrew Congregation was originally written; however, the first word "German" was crossed out and the word "united" written above it in what appears a different script.<sup>281</sup> This leads to two conclusions: (1) either the original name was to be headed by the word "German" or (2) the two names were synonymous, as was the case in the aforementioned German Hebrew Congregation, Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia, and other places in early America.<sup>282</sup> At this time, synagogues fre-

<sup>278</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>279</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 1-7, MS.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Davis, *op. cit.*, 50, 56, 66, 67, 75.

quently were designated by their minhag, or service custom,<sup>283</sup> or by the nationality of their members. However, in all the research on the subject, the United Hebrew has never been identified by the term "German." As mentioned earlier, Leiser noted it as the "Polish" congregation,<sup>284</sup> as did other St. Louisans at that time.<sup>285</sup> It is the belief of this author that Van Beil honestly made a mistake remembering his affiliation with the German Hebrew Congregation, as the Rodeph Shalom synagogue was very often called in Philadelphia.<sup>286</sup> This was not the only clue to Van Beil's authorship of this document. In Article Eleven of the document he denotes the congregation's officers as comprising a "Board of Managers."<sup>287</sup> Having perused various books, including Isaac Leiser's six hundred page volume, one edition of the Occident and American Jewish Advocate covering the period 1843-1844 with its listing of officers of the various Jewish congregations in the United States,<sup>288</sup> this term only was found with reference to the two Philadelphia synagogues,<sup>289</sup> Rodeph Shalom and Mickve Israel, who both used the name interchangeably with the words "Board of Trustees."<sup>291</sup>

283 Wise, op. cit., 71, 278

284 Leiser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, October, 1842, p. 55.

285 Bowman and Rosenthal (eds.) "Reminiscences of Samuel Bowman," The Modern View, June, 1925, p. 8.

286 Davis, op. cit., 50, 56, 66, 67, 75, 141.

287 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 5, MS.

288 Leiser, Occident and American Jewish Advocate, I, pp. 1-600.

289 Davis, op. cit., 67.

290 Ibid., 35.

291 Ibid., 55.



The latter was the definite term used at all other times to designate the United Hebrew's officers, including the minutes of the local congregation.<sup>292</sup>

The first section of the constitution was the preamble, already partly quoted:

Preamble

We, the resident Jews of the City and County of Saint Louis, State of Missouri, are aware that in most of the cities of this Union where our brethren dwell, there are places of worship or Synagogues, erected for the purpose of worship according to their own dictates; and whereas we see daily many of our persuasion congregating to this country, our families increasing in numbers, and the better to provide for our future happiness and salvation, are in hopes through this beginning to be enabled in the course of a few years, to build a Synagogue to be dedicated to the most High. And, therefore, for the better regulation and government of our congregation, we the undersigned establish the following rules and regulations.<sup>293</sup>

The tone of the paragraph suggested, as noted earlier, that the establishment of this Jewish congregation was a pioneer venture in St. Louis. It was evidently written at a time when the Jewish population was not composed of stragglers, but was beginning to grow into community status. The author of these ideas and documents emphasized the permanent quality of these citizens by stating "the resident Jews of the City and County of St. Louis, State of Missouri."<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 17, MS.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

The second section of the new constitution was devoted to the twelve articles and titled "Constitution."<sup>295</sup> Article One declared: "This Congregation shall be known under the name and title of the United Hebrew Congregation of the city of Saint Louis."<sup>296</sup> There was a blank space prior to the Synagogue's title. Maybe this empty space was left available so that the Hebrew name of the congregation "Achduth Israel" could be entered.<sup>297</sup> The latter Hebrew name, translated, is "Unity of Israel," but it was never used in the minutes at any time. Only Isidor Bush refers to it, as does the United Hebrew Constitution of 1881.<sup>298</sup><sup>299</sup>

Article Two stated the object of establishing this Congregation:

The object of establishing this congregation is to raise funds for the purpose of purchasing a site or lot for the erection and building of a place of worship for persons belonging to our persuasion; to pay for the lot already purchased for the interment of the dead, and the purchase of a few copies of the holy Pentateuch and such other books and furniture as is needful and customary, to have in all Synagogues; to bury at their demise, all persons professing Judaism, providing their estate shall pay for the funeral expenses if they are able to do so.<sup>300</sup>

Again the great desire stated in the preamble to build a synagogue is the foremost goal in mind for the congregation

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295 Ibid.

296 Ibid.

297 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

298 Ibid.

299 The Constitution and By-Laws of the United Hebrew Congregation 5641-1881, p. 1, MS.

300 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 1-2, MS.

to be a success. Not emphasized as strongly in the important preamble and opening articles, but, no less urgent, was the payment of the lot "already purchased" for the cemetery.<sup>301</sup>

While the congregation unmistakably demonstrated its interest by placing the purchase of religious books "as is needful and customary"<sup>302</sup> among the four objects or goals of the organization, it did not seem to place the same urgent stamp upon it. The fourth point unquestionably emphasized that all Jews, members and non-members, could be buried in the cemetery as long as they were able to pay the funeral expense.<sup>303</sup> However, the price varied, depending on which of the two classes the deceased belonged to, the Board of Trustees acting as the final judge of the amount charged. Article Seven was partly devoted to more fully explaining this situation. Those affiliated with the congregation, as a contributor or a member, were allowed to bury any member of their family for an amount not less than two dollars nor to exceed ten, while "strangers," apparently those not in any way associated with United Hebrew, could be charged<sup>304</sup> anywhere up to twenty-five dollars for each deceased person. The benevolence of the congregation was demonstrated by the fact that if any of the aforementioned persons were considered by the Board as financially incompetent, or if "his or

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301 Ibid., 2.

302 Ibid.

303 Ibid.

304 Ibid., 3.

their pecuniary circumstances are such as they are not able to pay, then no charges shall be made."<sup>305</sup>

The form of worship of the congregation was noted in Article Three. It was to follow the customary schedule of prayers practiced by the Polish Jewry. This was very important to the congregation as the final line indicates: "This section shall never be altered or amended under any pretence whatsoever."<sup>306</sup>

The regulations for membership in the United Hebrew Congregation were discussed in articles four to six. However, Jews were divided into three classifications: A non-member, a congregator, and a member. Any person, Jew or non-Jew, was allowed to become a contributor to the congregation, and the synagogue would reject the donation. However, if the contributor, no set amount specified, wished to become a member, he must follow the procedure detailed below:

Any male Hebrew by paying into the hands of the proper officers for that purpose elected the sum per month, specified in the by-laws, shall be considered a congregator. He shall be entitled to all honours and privileges in the Synagogue, during service, but shall have no voice at any of the general Meetings.<sup>307</sup>

Article 6 read as follows:

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305 Ibid.  
 306 Ibid., 2.  
 307 Ibid.

Any person having resided at least one year either in this State or the State of Illinois, and is known to be a man of good and moral character, may by applying for membership be elected by a majority of the members present; providing always, he shall have been a congregator at least one year. 308

The role of congregator was indeed unusual by current standards. In recent American Jewish history, any person can join a congregation who agrees to follow the Jewish faith, pay his entrance fee, and fulfill his future financial obligations. The existence of Articles Five and Six definitely made membership in the United Hebrew in the early period of a more difficult nature. Especially, the restrictive tone of Article Six certainly tested the loyalty and religious interest of the early American Israelite in this small Jewish community. It is not difficult to see why the latter article stirred up a lot of controversy and disgust in future years when the membership roll was lean.

Actually, to all intents and purposes, the congregator had all the religious advantages of membership which the regular member did. However, the former was able to attend, but not speak, or presumably, not vote at the congregation's general business meetings. It is interesting to note that the United Hebrew expected to have members from Illinois as well as Missouri. <sup>309</sup> With no congregation

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308 Ibid.  
309 Ibid.

nearby on the east bank of the Mississippi, it was natural that they should come to St. Louis. For example, Chicago, in northern Illinois first held Jewish services about 1845, and did not organize for worship until 1847,<sup>310</sup> while East St. Louis waited over forty years, until 1886, to establish a synagogue on a permanent basis.<sup>311</sup> Whether the congregation received any citizens from the state across the river is not known; however, Samuel Pecare, as mentioned earlier, was buried in the United Hebrew Cemetery after he died in Greene County, Illinois.<sup>312</sup>

Only the members had both religious and business meeting privileges, and, thus, only they could become eligible for office.<sup>313</sup> The congregation's executives and their duties were discussed in Articles Seven through Eleven. The officers were: a president, treasurer, three trustees, and a secretary. "They together, (excepting the Secretary) shall form a board of Managers, and shall hold Board Meetings at least four times in each and every year."<sup>313</sup> As mentioned previously, the term "Board of Managers" is a possible indication of Van Beil's authorship of the document. The board had several responsibilities. First of all, it was to regulate entrance fees. Although not stated

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<sup>310</sup> Postal and Koppman, A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S., 141.

<sup>311</sup> Wax and Landsman (eds.), "Saint Louis," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 315.

<sup>312</sup> See discussion at beginning of Chapter Three.

<sup>313</sup> Minute Book of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 2, MS.

as such, this amount was usually decided according to the individual's ability to pay. Another duty was the aforementioned regulation of interment fees in the United Hebrew Cemetery with those who were judged unable to pay for burial. No such provision was made for a person unable to pay membership fees.

The duties of the various officers were written in a precise, definite manner. The officers' qualifications and duties were also detailed in this same exacting way. The requirements for president of United Hebrew was that the individual must be at least thirty years of age and must have been a resident of St. Louis at least two years previous to his election. This two-year period was a feature of both the qualifications for "parnass" or president and treasurer, as contained in Articles Eight and Nine,<sup>314</sup> respectively. The fact that many Jews in early St. Louis joined the United Hebrew Congregation before they were permanently settled, and after a short time decided to leave the city,<sup>315</sup> possibly was an important factor in this clause appearing in the body of the above articles.

The duties of the president were: "He shall preside at all religious and business meetings, he shall appoint the time and place of such meetings, he shall appoint Readers, by and with the consent of the Board, shall

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>315</sup> Loewer, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 3.

countersign all orders drawn on the Treasurer by the Secretary." The conclusion can be drawn from this that the president of the United Hebrew Congregation had no more power than any president of any other organization.<sup>316</sup> He was a strong leader, but certainly was not the dictator Rabbi Wise painted as typical of early American Jewish congregations.<sup>317</sup>

The treasurer, besides the qualifications of residency mentioned above, had to give "security to the President for a reasonable amount according to the amount of property he may hold in his possession, belonging to this congregation."<sup>318</sup> The United Hebrew Treasurer was to keep a correct account of the receipts and disbursements; he was also to pay all orders drawn on him by the secretary, and attested by the president, out of the funds in his hands belonging to the congregation. At the end of his term of office, he was to hand over to the new treasurer all monies, papers, documents, books, and everything else belonging to the congregation, whereupon he was to receive a receipt from his successor, attested by the president and secretary.<sup>319</sup> The earliest remaining evidence of this effort is in the financial record of the members of the congre-

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316 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 3, MS.

317 See discussion in Chapter Two.

318 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 3, MS.

319 Ibid.



tion from 1856-1859. The treasurer was also to preside "at all meetings in the absence of the President."<sup>321</sup>

There was no vice-president, or multiplicity of vice-presidents, in the early United Hebrew Congregation, as is the case today.

The secretary had many duties, but no qualifications were specified for this office, as was done for the first two officers. His manifold duties were: to keep a correct account of all the proceedings; to keep the minutes; to take account of all offerings in the synagogue and enter them in his daybook; and to register all births, marriages, and burials which occurred in the congregation. Of the latter records, only the minutes and a smattering of early deaths were located by the author in the search for data on this thesis. As was mentioned before, it was the secretary's duty to "send summons to all members to attend meetings when ordered to do so by the constitution or President."<sup>322</sup> At the expiration of his term of office, he was to deliver to the incoming secretary "everything in his possession belonging to this congregation."<sup>323</sup>

The trustees, or the board of managers, who had been elected had the following duties: They were to hold at least four board meetings a year; they were to be a

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<sup>320</sup> Ledger of United Hebrew Congregation 1856-1859, n.p., MS., United Hebrew Congregation, St. Louis.

<sup>321</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 3-4, MS.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

standing committee of finance and place all sums over one hundred dollars, which were in the hands of the treasurer, in "some safe Institution in this City for safe Keeping."<sup>324</sup> They also had the power at any time to examine the accounts of the treasurer, and were to exhibit such accounts twice a year before the general meeting. The latter were to be held twice every year, "say one the first Sunday Chol Hamo-ade Pesach, and the other the first Sunday of Chol Hamo-ade Succoth."<sup>325</sup> This passage in Article Twelve does not define when these periods occur on the American calendar, since the Jewish calendar ran on a lunar schedule, while the American calendar is based on the Solar system. Thus the Jewish dates constantly appeared on different American dates every year. Chol Hamo-ade is traditionally the intervening period of four days between the first and last two observant days of the holiday. Sunday could not be the only day the meeting occurred, as sometimes the four-day period did not include the Christian Sabbath. Any number of special meetings could be held whenever the president deemed proper or on the written request of seven members.<sup>326</sup>

The quorum was specified in Article Thirteen as nine members for a General Meeting and three at a board meeting. While not mentioned in the constitution, the seven members who called the special meeting were supposed to be in

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324 Ibid.  
 325 Ibid.  
 326 Ibid.

attendance or they usually were fined. Otherwise, no required number of members was mentioned as a prerequisite to holding the extra meeting.<sup>327</sup>

Articles Fourteen and Fifteen continued the discussion of the congregation's officers. The latter were to be elected at the fall General Meeting, during Chol Hamo-ade Succoth. This came about two and a half weeks after the Jewish New Year. Elections were to be held "by ballot always," for a term of one year.<sup>328</sup> There was no restriction on the number of terms an officer could serve. At the resignation, death, or removal of any officer, a special election was to be held within thirty days after such event occurred.<sup>329</sup>

By the constitution's omission of specific qualifications for any officer, except the president and treasurer, great emphasis seemed to be placed on these two latter offices as compared with the remaining four. Also, the lack of a vice-president seemingly indicated that there was no conception of a large number of committees to be supervised by such an executive. Along the same line, never were special honorary positions mentioned, as they are so frequently bestowed today. Evidently hard work was the only criterion for office.

Article Fifteen concerned the benevolent function of the officers:

The officers shall have neither right nor privilege to bestow donations or give charity

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327 Ibid., 4-5.  
 328 Ibid., 5.  
 329 Ibid.

to any person whatsoever, out of the funds of this congregation until the Congregation shall be free of all incumbrances of their burial place, and a lot with a Synagogue erected thereon. This shall not interfere with the burial expenses of any poor Israelite. 330

Again the constantly recurring mention of the cemetery and "a lot with a Synagogue erected thereon" emphasized the earlier statement that these were the two main concerns of the young congregation. In spite of this unrelinquishing drive toward this goal, the constitution-makers did not lose sight of the Article Seven commitment to any poor Israelite.<sup>331</sup>

The concluding Article, Article Sixteen, concerned all of the preceding articles and provided for future additions to the United Hebrew Constitution in the following manner:<sup>332</sup>

The foregoing articles shall never be abolished, annulled or amended except at a special meeting called for that purpose, and two thirds of all the members present concurring therein. Although it shall never interfere with the making of new by-laws providing they do not infringe on the Constitution, nor the Laws of this State, nor those of the United States. 332

The document is not dictatorial in the sense that it provided for change as the future necessitated, but this was only to take place in the specified manner.<sup>334</sup> Yet, some question would arise whether this blanket statement would include the previously stated unchangeable Article Three

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330 Ibid.

331 Ibid.

332 Ibid.

333 Ibid.

334 Ibid.

which proclaimed Minhag Poland as the customary form of worship. The two articles definitely conflict in wording. More important, the concluding line in the Article proclaimed an exception to any change. That is, any change made must not contradict the laws of the United Hebrew Constitution, the state, or country. Therefore, while viewing the synagogue in particular and its unquestioned devotion to its ultimate Creator, the constitution committee did not lose sight of the house of worship in its geographic perspective and its inherent obligation to it.

The third division of the Constitution was the nine Rules of Order which contained the procedure to be observed at business meetings of the congregation.

Rule 1st

Thirty minutes after the appointed time the President shall call the meeting to order and in his absence the Treasurer shall take the chair.

Rule 2d

The Secretary shall call the roll and all delinquent members shall pay up their dues. Those who pay not up, shall not be eligible to any Office.

Rule 3d

Minutes of the preceding meeting be read.

Rule 4th

Communications read and acted upon.

Rule 5th

Members elected.

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335 See aforementioned discussion of Article Three in Chapter Three.

336 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 5, MS.

337 Ibid.

Rule 6th  
Officers elected.

Rule 7th  
Unfinished business.

Rule 8th  
Any person on the floor shall address the chair, and shall never speak more than twice on any one subject, except to explain.

Rule 9th  
The presiding Officers shall have the privilege to fine any members for misconduct at a meeting which fine shall not exceed for the first time more than one dollar, Second time three dollars and third time Five Dollars. 338

In their entirety, these rules of order were explicit and detailed to the degree of proscribing in Rule One the thirty-minute time period the presiding officer was allowed to wait before commencing or even cancelling the meeting. The second rule dictated an added qualification that an officer must possess. He must be a paid-up member or otherwise he would be ineligible for congregational responsibility. The Eighth rule, limiting the number of times a member might speak on a subject, is a touch of the unusual. Yet it unquestionably accelerated the meeting and made for fewer outbursts by any one member. The Ninth rule, specifically described the fine for misconduct while at the meeting, not leaving it to the whim of the presiding officers. The latter, in plural, were capable of exercising this delegated function. Except for an undesignated, obscure reference in Article Seven concerning any burial

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338 Ibid., 6.  
339 Ibid.  
340 Ibid., 3.

of persons only of "our persuasion" at the top of page seven, the nine Rules of Order were the last written evidence of the original congregational laws.<sup>341</sup>

As mentioned previously, the United Hebrew Constitution was read, voted upon, and unanimously adopted at the first recorded meeting of the congregation on October 3, 1841.<sup>342</sup> A public notice of some sort advertised the next meeting located by the author of this thesis; however, the St. Louis newspapers did not contain this advertisement. The meeting was held on Sunday, August 28, 1842, at the home of Joseph Kohn on Olive Street. The following members were listed as present: A. Weigle; President Adolph J. Latz, Joseph Kohn and David Levison, trustees; and E. S. Block, N. Abeles, S. Latz, E. Gustorf, and H. Marks. The object of this meeting as stated by the president was to collect the members to sign the United Hebrew Constitution, which was accordingly done.<sup>343</sup> Thus, nine members affixed their names to the document, which number constitutionally was just a quorum. However, no sooner was the instrument signed when disapproval of these original governing laws was heard. A motion was made by Abeles, and seconded by Mr. E. S. Block, to call a meeting of the members for the purpose of amending or abolishing some of the laws of the constitution, in particular Article Six. This must have been a forewarning

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341 Ibid., 7.

342 Ibid., 9.

343 Ibid., 13.

of the trouble ahead for the particular article. Yet, as  
 the first example of presidential power, Weigle never called  
 the meeting. For this he was violently censured, by the  
 usually quiet mannered A. J. Latz. Therefore for the moment  
 Article Six was not changed. In spite of the constitutional  
 problems, which will be discussed later under a different  
 heading, the original document continued in force for over  
 seven years, until early 1849.

A new feature and fourth division of the constitution  
 was yet to be added. Suggested by A. Weigle at a meeting in  
 March, 1843, at the Paul House, a New St. Louis Hotel on  
 Second and Walnut, a committee of three was appointed to  
 frame by-laws for the local congregation. One meeting later,  
 on April 23, 1843, during the intermediate days of Passover,  
 a meeting was held at Number 45 North Second Street, of  
 which the first order of business was the reading and adoption  
 of the by-laws. Toward the end of the meeting it was agreed  
 that fifty copies of the constitution be printed at the  
 congregation's expense. Unfortunately no copy of this  
 document was discovered by the author of this thesis.

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344 Ibid.

345 Ibid., 14.

346 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

347 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the  
 United Hebrew Congregation of Saint Louis State of Missouri  
 1842, p. 14.

348 Ibid., 75.

349 Ibid., 19.

350 Daily Missouri Republican, December 3, 1842.

351 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the  
 United Hebrew Congregation, 20, MS.

352 Ibid., 21.



The government of the United Hebrew Congregation was now complete. The full treatment, the first reading of the entire document, was performed at a special meeting on June 11, 1843. Yet as the new instrument was now completed there was some discontent again expressed over the constitution which was indicative of the storm career the document was to encounter. This time it was President Jacob Emanuel himself who realized the need for a change by announcing at the meeting, immediately after the reading, that he would offer a resolution to alter Article Seven.<sup>353</sup> It was not surprising that the document was rewritten after April 15, 1849.<sup>354</sup>

The last institution to be established by the local Jewish community was a benevolent organization. With the increase of the Jewish population in St. Louis, the want of better organization was felt, not only for divine service, but also for humanitarian purposes. A need was felt for requiring aid in cases of sickness and distress and for burying the dead. Previously the minyan members had made a collection among themselves whenever an Israelite wanderer needed some assistance. The following incident may be worthy of mention as characteristic, and cause of the first Jewish mutual benefit society in St. Louis, the United Hebrew Benevolent Society called "Mercy and Truth" (Chesed v' emess).<sup>355</sup>

353 Ibid., 26.

354 Ibid., 75.

355 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

It seems that a peddler named Issacs, was sick, and Joseph Kohn called upon a Dr. Rose to attend him. He further urged that minyan members aid him. Issacs recovered and continued his wanderings, but in so doing, forgot to pay Dr. Rose. The physician in turn sued Joseph Kohn, who had to pay the bill. This incident, and others of its kind, stimulated the formation of the Benevolent Society founded in St. Louis on November 6, 1842, to take care of poor, sick Israelites who might live or arrive in this city. Local Jewry composed its ranks and founder <sup>356</sup> H. H. Cohen was one of its members. <sup>357</sup> The organization was <sup>358</sup> incorporated in 1846.

Organizing at a time when the aforementioned Ashkenasic period of American Jewish history was just beginning, <sup>359</sup> and when the nation contained but twenty or so Jewish congregations, <sup>360</sup> the United Hebrew Congregation had momentarily filled the existing Jewish vacuum in St. Louis. It also did its part in establishing local religious and humanitarian groups. Thus, this congregation aided in the early development of a stable St. Louis Jewish community. Whether the United Hebrew venture would be successful could only be determined in the years ahead.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> General E-4 Records, p. 422, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

<sup>358</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, December 15, 1846.

<sup>359</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two.

<sup>360</sup> Leeser, "Sixteenth Anniversary of the Elm Street Synagogue of New York," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, July, 1843, p. 252.

CHAPTER IV  
THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED  
HEBREW CONGREGATION  
1841 - 1848

With the establishment of a Jewish community in practically all phases of activity, the United Hebrew Congregation had the opportunity to exhibit growth. However, if a serious effort was not made in this direction, there was always the chance that the result would be another temporary synagogue which would soon disintegrate when the first glow of enthusiasm faded. To begin a project demands great initiative, but to place it on a permanent foundation necessitates perseverance. In the period from the formation of the United Hebrew Congregation, or "Ahduth Israel," through 1848, the members' efforts demonstrated this latter quality. The result was that services were organized on a permanent basis; a building for a synagogue was obtained, membership activity in the congregation increased in many directions; and, as in all projects which increase in size, this religious organization's problems were multiple also. Thus, by the end of 1848, the observer could note that the synagogue was growing.

The immediate concern for the new members was a location for services. At the start, services were held only on specific holidays. For instance, in the years 1841-1842 the record affirms that prayers were said in organized fashion only on the High Holy days, Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, and possibly on the following holiday of Succoth. At the second recorded

meeting in the congregation's short history, on August 28, 1842, Nathan Abeles, David Levison, and Henry Marks were appointed to rent a "Room for Worshipping God the Ensuring Holidays."<sup>1</sup> This was the first reference of an organized service in the congregational minutes. Where this minyan was held is not known, although the two meetings between August and October, 1842, were held at the home of Joseph Kohn, located on Olive Street.<sup>2</sup> It is unfortunate in this early period that, due to the lack of information, the location of the service was unknown. A perusal was made of all the grantee deeds where a founder or a member of the synagogue room committee was listed. Yet, none of the documents contained a transaction concerning a lease on any room. Thus, no mention was made of the United Hebrew Congregation synagogue or its location. The result is that one can only hazard a guess or note the "regular" location of meetings, which in itself gives only token aid to the solution of the site of the synagogue.

Services apparently were ~~not~~ held again until Passover in the spring of 1843, after which regular worship was begun. Possibly two events spurred this Passover service. First, a new congregation known as the Gates of Mercy Congregation made known its existence in a letter written to the United Hebrew.<sup>3</sup> Next, two months later,

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1 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 13, MS.

2 Ibid., 13, 14.

3 Ibid., 17.

a Mr. Woolf wrote in a request for a Sepher Torah for the purpose of holding Passover services, which he contended he would be willing to return after the holiday. The idea that another group would come into existence due to their inaction, spurred the members to action. Immediately, David Levison proposed that "we ought to make a minyan Pesach (Passover) next ourselves." The motion was passed and the previous unemployed room committee was reactivated to rent space for that purpose. It might be mentioned that the latter committee also had the added duty to inform Mr. Woolf of the refusal of his request.

At the general meeting of April 23, 1843, it was suggested and passed that a room be rented for worshipping for a whole year. No time was wasted. The "room of Henry Marks on Second Street" was rented at the cost of sixty dollars a year, payable quarterly commencing April 23; the date the general meeting passed on the idea of a regular service. The fact that Marks was involved in the transaction was probably the reason that Adolph J. Latz replaced him on the room committee. So it appears that the availability of Mark's room and the suggestion of regular worship were known at the time of the general meeting. At any rate, a special meeting called about one month later passed on

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4 Ibid., 19.  
 5 Ibid.  
 6 Ibid., 21-22.  
 7 Ibid., 22.  
 8 Ibid., 21-22.  
 9 Ibid., 21.

the idea. Thus from May 28, 1843, onward regular worship<sup>10</sup> was no longer a dream to the congregants of United Hebrew. A committee was formed in the middle of June, 1843, to draft rules and regulations to govern the members in their conduct, and better explain the Minhag Poland, or Polish Custom, by whose law the congregation ran its service.<sup>11</sup>

On July 23, 1843, the committee of Joseph Newmark, Joseph Kohn, and Henry Harris reported rules and regulations they had drafted. The religious portion of these rules and regulations will be described in a later chapter. Suffice it to say here that they followed the strict orthodox beliefs as laid down in the Shulchan Aruch,<sup>12</sup> and as used by the B'nai Jeshurun Congregation of New York. Fines were to be assessed if any member violated the rule of silence, and had to be called to order for doing so by the presiding officer, who was probably the powerful president. Fifty cents and one dollar were the first two fines assessed for repeated misbehavior. On the third occasion, the disturbing congregant was to leave the room, and not enter again unless he could give security for his future good conduct. These regulations were to be read in the synagogue on the following three successive Sabbaths, so that every member and "stranger" present could become acquainted with them.<sup>13</sup> The rules prepared after

10 *Ibid.*, 22.

11 *Ibid.*, 26.

12 *Shulchan Aruch* is a synthesis of Orthodox beliefs. See further discussion in Chapter Two.

13 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 13, M.S.

a month's study revealed; (1) The seriousness of the congregation to have a well regulated service; (2) the pronouncement of the regulations at three consecutive Sabbaths was indicative of the inclination to hold services regularly every Saturday and not just occasionally on holidays, a point only Rabbi Leeser attests;<sup>14</sup> and (2) the inclusion of the word "stranger" definitely suggested that anyone was welcome to attend synagogue service, not only members. Thus, the renting of a room on an annual basis was stimulating increased religious observance.

The Ahduth Israel, or United Hebrew, made three special preparations for the coming holy days of 1843. First, certain Jewish males who were to lead in prayer were appointed in advance. These were Solomon and Henry Harris, Levison, Marks, E. S. Block, Newmark, and a Harry Solomon.<sup>15</sup> The latter apparently was a visitor in St. Louis and in the congregation. At any rate, there is no evidence of his ever becoming a member of the synagogue. If membership was not a qualification, the leader of prayers for the congregation was chosen from among all the male congregants. At this date the synagogue evidently could not afford a chazan, or chanter of the prayers.

Seats were sold at an auction on a Sunday, with Alexander Lewis as the auctioneer, an occupation he pursued

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<sup>14</sup> Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 511.

<sup>15</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 33, N.S.

on work days. Members got first choice. The seats were leased to each member of the congregation for one dollar. Each was to take his number according "to his standing in rotation as a member in Book."<sup>17</sup> Whatever seats were left were to be offered to strangers or non-members on the following week.<sup>18</sup> At the first recorded auction on Sunday, September 17, 1843, auctioneer Lewis sold the seats as follows:

No. 1 (Pres.)	Jacob Emanuel	\$2.00
	M. Samuels	2.00
	Joseph Massalsky	1.62
	Samuel Jacks	1.37
	H. S. Lichenstein	1.62
	Solomon Harriss	1.50
	Saul Jacobs	1.50
	E. Gustorf	1.12
	S. E. Mandlebaum	1.12
	David Levison	1.50
	Saul Levi	1.50
	Nathan Ables	1.25
	J. Mitchell	
	A. Weigle	1.25
	Moses Morris	1.50
	E. S. Block	1.25
	Joseph Newmark	1.00
	J. Harriss	
	A. Lyons	1.00
	J. Kohn	
	Sol J. Levi	
	Alex Lewis	
	Marty Steifel	1.00
	J. Plateau	1.00
	J. Marks	
	David Serf	1.00

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On the following Sunday, September 24, the balance of the seats were sold to strangers and \$50.33 was collected. This amount, larger than that recorded from member's sales

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- 16 Ibid., 34.  
 17 Ibid., 33.  
 18 Ibid.  
 19 Ibid., 34.



indicated that the majority, at least on this particular high holiday, were non-members.<sup>20</sup> Finally, a committee of two, Nathan Abeles and Joseph Kohn, were appointed to see that good order was kept in the synagogue during prayer.<sup>21</sup> Whether this custom was pursued on prior similar occasions is unknown, as there is no earlier record of Holy day planning. Nevertheless, this forethought again reveals that the synagogue was being run on a sound basis.

Conduct during the service was apparently good, due to the lack of evidence to support the contrary. However, one account has been recorded of a dispute among members in the synagogue during this early period. This was the heated complaint made in a letter by Mr. Gostorf against Joseph Newmark that he was "mistreated" by the latter during a service in the fall of 1843, and he went on to recommend a congregational fine as punishment.<sup>22</sup> However, there was no indication that any action was taken against Newmark, and one month later the letter was withdrawn.<sup>23</sup>

After rules and regulations were set up for both holiday and non-holiday services, a number of the members became inspired with the idea to select and purchase a suitable piece of ground to build a synagogue. In fact the proposal was actually passed, and the first building committee was appointed at a special meeting on December

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20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 35.

23 Ibid., 38.

24, 1843. Alexander Lewis was the main proponent of the idea. He also had three co-committee members. Saul Jacobs, Nathan Ables, and Moses Morris. It appears obvious that at this time the synagogue could not afford such an expensive venture. However, Lewis enthusiastically had his own idea how this desire could be financed. He suggested that a committee be appointed to solicit subscriptions from the different congregations in the United States to aid in the above work---a method which had been used by other congregations hopeful of building their own synagogues. This motion was defeated. Whether this action belied the uncertainty of many of the members for the success of the project is unknown. However, before the meeting adjourned a room committee, of which Lewis was a member, was organized.<sup>24</sup> Lewis' synagogue committee reported in early February, 1844, that they could secure a suitable lot on the corner of Tenth and Locust streets at the cost of forty dollars per foot. No action was taken, except the committee was discharged.<sup>25</sup> The future can best answer the implication of this move by the chair. At this time nothing further was ever said or done on this particular project. No reason was mentioned, but possibly the cost was the determining factor. Evidently the synagogue had just decided to stay where they were, since the aforementioned room committee was abolished at the very next meeting.<sup>26</sup>

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24 Ibid., 39.  
 25 Ibid., 41.  
 26 Ibid., 42.

As the congregation planned for the holiday of Passover in 1844, they were notified by Henry Marks that he would have to raise the rent of their synagogue room to \$22.50 per quarter. This was a total increase of thirty dollars a year over the first year's charge.<sup>27</sup> Rather than pay the increase on this first permanent synagogue on Second Street, where regular worship began, the United Hebrew decided to move. Again a room committee was appointed.<sup>28</sup> Whether a location was soon discovered was not stated; so it can be assumed that they continued to worship on Second Street. However, by September 8, 1844, a new synagogue committee had been appointed, which did obtain another room. The location of this new place of worship could not be ascertained by the author of this thesis. Evidently these quarters were somewhat larger; at least the price was. The room, which was originally rented for two months occupancy on the basis of \$200 a year or about \$16.50 a month,<sup>29</sup> was finally extended to a yearly basis with the option of renting the remaining ten months on the basis of \$150 per annum, \$12.50 rent a month.<sup>30</sup> The room's appearance was improved with fixtures which gave it a truly fine finish.<sup>31</sup> According to the secretary of this young congregation in a letter to Isaac Leiser, this new synagogue could hold five hundred persons.<sup>32</sup> While it appears hard to believe such a

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27 Ibid., 44.  
 28 Ibid., 45.  
 29 Ibid., 48.  
 30 Ibid., 49.  
 31 Ibid., 48.  
 32 Leiser, loc. cit., 510.

large space would be needed, it is possible the congregation was intending to stay in one spot for a time until a synagogue could be built. Thus planning for a future with a room large enough to accommodate any expanded membership, seats for the holy days in 1844, were again sold, and \$39.00 was collected, apparently from the congregation's thirty members.<sup>33</sup> Altogether, one hundred and twenty-five Jews, both from St. Louis and the vicinity, attended. Presumably due to the large attendance, the one holy scroll or Sepher Torah at their disposal became insufficient and funds were raised to purchase another.<sup>34</sup>

This second home of the United Hebrew was occupied for four years, or until September, 1848. Thus the increase in space was indeed desirable, as the Jewish population of the city and area increased, as did the membership. At the quarterly meeting in mid-September, 1847, orders were given to meet the owners and renew the past agreement.<sup>35</sup> This was to be the last year this synagogue room was to be used for the congregation. The members finally decided that the time was ripe to worship in a building of their own.

This last year in the rented room, from the fall of 1847 to the fall of 1848, the air was filled with plans of a new synagogue. Previously, a suggested purchase of the aforementioned plot of ground on Tenth and Locust in

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<sup>33</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees for the United Hebrew Congregation, 48, M.S.

<sup>34</sup> Lesser, *loc. cit.*, 510.

<sup>35</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 70, M.S.

February, 1844, had not materialized. While nothing further was said of the idea, apparently it was not given up for long. By the fall of 1844, the United Hebrew secretary wrote Isaac Leiser that enough money had been raised to purchase a piece of ground to build a synagogue on, and a committee had been appointed to seek a desirable location.<sup>36</sup> For some reason, this latest information was not indicated by the congregation's minutes. At any rate, building plans were not seriously contemplated again until the day in January after New Years, 1848. At the house of President Mark Samuel, the fifteen members present took several steps which resulted nine months later in September, 1848, in the purchase of their third permanent home and first synagogue building. Here, it was decided that a committee be appointed "to raise a subscription among the Israelites of this city for the purpose of buying a lot and building a shawl (Synagogue) thereon and also to call all the Israelites of the city together."<sup>37</sup> The make-up of the six man committee is the best evidence of the importance of this venture. It included President Mark Samuel; trustees Joseph Kohn, Judah Hart, and Joseph Mitchell; Secretary Alexander Lewis; and the only non-Board member, H. Phlato.<sup>38</sup>

Work began immediately. Within two weeks, on January 15, 1848, the following advertisement, the first one of a

<sup>36</sup> Leiser, *loc. cit.*, 510.

<sup>37</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 69, M.S.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

Jewish nature discovered in a St. Louis paper, appeared in the Saturday morning edition of the Daily Missouri Republican:

Notice - The Israelites of this city are requested to meet on Sunday, 16 inst. at 2 o'clock p.m. at No. 49 Main street over the store of J. Rothan. By order of the United Hebrew Congregation.

Jan. 15

Alexander Lewis, Sec'y <sup>39</sup>

This was the first time since the drive for the cemetery in May, 1840, that the entire Jewish community was called into session together for a religious project. Unfortunately no records were discovered of the number of Israelites in attendance or the decisions agreed upon. Evidently, the necessary number supported the proposal; yet no special congregational meetings were recorded concerning the plan. It was not until the second quarterly meeting of April 2, 1848, three months to the day, that the project was undertaken, that President Samuel appointed a committee of three to look for a lot for the synagogue. Secretary Lewis, a constant worker on the project, <sup>40</sup> Trustee Kohn, and former congregational <sup>41</sup> President Jacob Emanuel, <sup>42</sup> composed the three-man committee. Yet, for some unknown reason, the synagogue was not built at this time. Possibly this was due to one or more of several causes: (1) The congregation did not realize the great cost of the venture; (2) maybe, the desired support from the Jewish community was not forthcoming; or (3) perhaps there

<sup>39</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, January 15, 1848.

<sup>40</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 70, MS.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 70.

was not a desirable lot available. All of these reasons are purely speculation, but one thing is definite--the plan was discarded for the time being. The action of the congregation on Sunday, September 10, 1848, emphasized this fact.

The first order of business on this latter date was the motion made by M. Morriss and seconded by R. Keller that "we buy the lease of the North Baptist Church on Fifth Street between Washington avenue and Green Street."<sup>43</sup> The proposition was carried. Whereupon a committee composed of President Samuel, Secretary Lewis, and Trustee Hart were appointed to purchase the building and superintend the fixing of the new<sup>44</sup> synagogue.

The North Baptist Church, which was organized July 20,<sup>45</sup> 1842, worshipped generally in school houses until they leased a lot on August 1, 1843,<sup>47</sup> and constructed a building thereon in February, 1845.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the new synagogue building was almost four years old at the time the lease was purchased. The ability to obtain this practically new building was undoubtedly due to the financial difficulty the church encountered by late summer, 1848, forcing it to terminate its existence.<sup>49</sup> The \$250.00 yearly rent which had to be paid on a quarterly basis

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43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Daily Missouri Republican, August 1, 1842.

46 Ibid., September 24, December 10, 1842.

47 General V-3 Records, p. 302, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

48 Daily Missouri Republican, February 8, 1845.

49 Church Papers Protestant (Baptist), Missouri Historical Society.

was the main cause of the church's trouble. This latter expense, their inability to pay a pastor more than \$200 per annum, and possibly their unsuccessful appeal for a loan from the American Baptist Home Mission Society, led to the congregation's death. Yet, the main burden was the aforementioned high rent, which according to the church official, "renders them in their present feeble state, unable to pledge to their Pastor more than \$200... pr annum."

When the church decided to dissolve,<sup>50</sup> the building was sold, and the majority of its members entered the Second Baptist Church,<sup>51</sup> which was then moving into its new building on the southeast corner of Sixth and Locust.<sup>52</sup> A perusal of the minute book of the Second Baptist Church from the fall of 1848 to the fall of 1851 produced no indication of the North Baptist Church sale of its building or its congregation's subsequent extinction. However, numerous members from the young church did steadily apply for admittance to the Second Baptist Church.<sup>53</sup> However, no records of any kind concerning the North Baptist Church were available at either the Second Baptist Church or the Missouri Baptist Historical Society for further elaboration on the matter.<sup>54</sup> Thus the

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<sup>50</sup> Minutes of the Thirty-Second Anniversary of the Missouri United Baptist Association Held with the Antioch Baptist Church, St. Louis County, Missouri, August 10, 11, 12, 1849, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Minute Book of the Second Baptist Church of Saint Louis, 1848-1851, MS.

<sup>52</sup> Green, Green's St. Louis Directory for 1847, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Minute Book of the Second Baptist church of Saint Louis, 1848-1851, MS.

<sup>54</sup> Letter from the Missouri Baptist Historical Society, located at William Jewell College, Liberty Missouri, 1957.



record of the leasing of this first building for a synagogue is very scanty.

It is interesting to speculate from whom the United Hebrew purchased the lease. The North Baptist Church, if it fulfilled all its obligations, had the privilege either to give up the lease after five years, or August, 1848, or to keep it or assign their lease of the land and improvements with the lessor's consent.<sup>55</sup> However, there is no mention of the building being subleased in the synagogue's minutes or in the St. Louis deed books. Of course, many times leases or sub-leases were not officially recorded. At any rate, no record of the transaction could be located, except in the United Hebrew meeting of September 10, 1848.

The building was erected of brick,<sup>56</sup> and possibly was the only one of this material located on Fifth Street between Washington Avenue and Green Street. Fortunately, this area along Fifth was graded and paved.<sup>57</sup> Lying on the west side of Fifth closer to Green,<sup>58</sup> the synagogue rested on a lot fronting fifty-one feet and extending westwardly in depth, one hundred and twenty feet.<sup>59</sup>

The property was leased for a period of seven years<sup>60</sup>

55 General V-3 Records, p. 302, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

56 Daily Missouri Republican, September 28, 1848.

57 Ibid., February 5, 1842.

58 Loeber, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 55.

59 General V-3 Records, p. 302, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

60 Loeber, "St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, February, 1849, p. 576.

at \$350.00 annually, which was to be paid on a yearly basis with the next payment due by September, 1849.<sup>61</sup> As a comparison, five years previously, in 1843, the three representatives of the North Baptist Church agreed to a yearly rent of the lot alone for \$250.00, which had to be paid on a semi-annual basis within thirty days, or risk forfeiture. This aforementioned 1848 lease did not appear quite so strict.<sup>62</sup>

When the Ahduth Israel took over the nearly four year old edifice, they made a few alterations in both its interior and exterior to better fit the building for worship. The synagogue committee, mentioned earlier, supervised the project. In the interior it can be assumed that the synagogue followed the same pattern of design for prayer as other orthodox congregations of the period, described in Chapter Two. The building had two floors, the main floor being occupied by the men, while the women viewed the service from the gallery.<sup>63</sup> All told, the new synagogue had a seating capacity of 400.<sup>64</sup>

Aesthetically, certain improvements enhanced the quality inside of the building. The inside was painted at a cost of \$85.95. A chandelier costing \$50.00 was also added to beautify the house of worship.<sup>65</sup>

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61 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 73, MS.

62 General V-3 Records, pp. 302-303, office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

63 Daily Missouri Republican, September 28, 1848.

64 Ibid., January 1, 1851.

65 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 73, MS.

However, the most significant alterations were on the exterior. On a trip to St. Louis several years later, Rev. Lesser lamented the fact that the United Hebrew, or "Polish Congregation" as he called it, was located on the west instead of the east side of the street.<sup>66</sup> He had assumed that since the members of the congregation entered from the eastern part of the building, they must have faced west when praying. However, this was not the case at all. Upon obtaining the right to the building, the congregation spent \$400.00<sup>67</sup> to correct this error in the construction which was obviously not erected to be a synagogue. Thus, the eastern entrance was eliminated and filled in, so that the Holy Ark<sup>68</sup> containing the Torah might lie against the eastern wall. With no entrance onto the sidewalk, one was probably placed on the side of the building.

This new alteration was of great significance. Besides the fact that this modification allowed the seats in the interior to be rearranged to face the east according to traditional custom, more important, it served as an outstanding example of the sincere attempt of the United Hebrew to conform with orthodox law, in spite of the financial outlay which it could hardly afford due to the debt the congregation had incurred with the purchase and improvement of the building.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Lesser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, October, 1855, p. 55.

<sup>67</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 73, MS.

<sup>68</sup> Weekly Reveille, October 2, 1848.

<sup>69</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 73, MS.

The newly altered building undoubtedly enhanced the value of the synagogue. Thus by the United States census of June, 1850, the four hundred seat United Hebrew Congregation synagogue was valued at \$7000. In comparison with the other twelve places of worship in the Fourth Ward--the home of the new synagogue--the United Hebrew ranked last in valuation and seating capacity. Thus, in size it was not the equal of the other churches.<sup>70</sup> The synagogue was in a religious neighborhood, since of the thirty-six churches in existence in the city,<sup>71</sup> one-sixth of them were within two or three blocks. These were the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Campbellite versions of Christianity.<sup>72</sup> Thus, one-half of the churches of the Fourth Ward, in a ward which contained one-third of the city's churches, were neighbors of the United Hebrew Congregation.

Many residences were in the area of the synagogue. By 1847 statistics showed that the Fourth Ward ranked fifth of the six wards with a population of 6,354, and roughly contained one-eighth of the city's population that year of 47,833.<sup>73</sup> Its inhabitants were mainly of Irish and German descent, respectively. By June, 1850, the ward contained 1,567 families residing in 1,278 houses.<sup>74</sup> Many of the breadwinners were capitalists and artisans, as this was one of

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70 Daily Missouri Republican, January 1, 1851.

71 Ibid., October 1, 1848.

72 Ibid., August 21, 1849.

73 Ibid., March 1, 1847.

74 Ibid., January 1, 1851.

the three wards where they resided in large numbers. However, merchants predominated in greater numbers in the Fourth Ward than any other. While no religious census was available, the fact that the majority of the St. Louis Jews selected selling as their occupation,<sup>75</sup> plus the location of the synagogue in the Fourth Ward, suggest the possibility of the majority of St. Louis Israelites residing there at the time of the 1850 census.

By September 27, 1848, all was in readiness in this lone synagogue in the Fourth ward for the consecration ceremony. The Daily Missouri Republican of September 28 reported the event in this fashion:

Jewish Synagogue - Yesterday a portion of the Society of Jews in this city consecrated, with the usual and solemn ceremonies of their church, the brick building on Fifth Street, between Washington Avenue and Green street to be used as a Synagogue, the ownership of which they have acquired. We had the pleasure of being present and witnessing the ceremonies, which were conducted by the President, or principal Rabbi, assisted by other Rabbins. The main floor of the building was occupied by the males; the ladies were in the gallery. The prayers and service, were in the Hebrew language. The books of Moses on parchment, after the usual ceremonies, were duly deposited. Our ignorance of the language prevented a full understanding of all that transpired. This sect now constitutes a large and influential portion of our community, and their devotion to their church is exemplary.<sup>76</sup>

The "usual" ceremony, which the reporter did not

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<sup>75</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 57.

<sup>76</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, September 28, 1848.

understand, was the walk around the synagogue by several members while carrying the "books of Moses on parchment," or the Torah, in the bearers' arms. This parade around the interior of the building with the Torah was generally performed seven times before the Holy Scroll was deposited in the Holy Ark. This was a typical consecration ceremony.<sup>77</sup> It might be noted that, discounting notices of meetings, this was the first news article discovered which concerned itself with a Jewish synagogue event.

It was in this former church that United Hebrew spent the next decade of worship after sporadic and then regular service in rented rooms. As will be seen later, the new building caused an increase in membership.

During this early period, from 1841 to 1848, the United Hebrew membership and their participation in congregational events gradually increased in tempo. No accurate figures were available, except for a running account kept as each member joined. Generally, new membership was recorded in the congregational minutes, at least during the period under discussion.

As was mentioned previously in Chapter Three, in the discussion of the United Hebrew Constitution, certain qualifications had to be made for membership. Briefly these were that there were two plateaus--a congregator and then a member. Any Jewish male could become a

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<sup>77</sup> Ritterman, Order of Service at the Consecration of the New Synagogue, St. Louis, Missouri, Belonging to the United Congregation "Ahduth Israel."

congregator by contributing to United Hebrew a specified amount per month, as stated in the by-laws. Except for the right to voice his opinion in general meetings, he was entitled to every privilege of the congregation mentioned in the discussion of the constitution. After serving a year as congregator, the latter was eligible to become a member if he was of good character and had resided at least one year in either Missouri or Illinois. While not discussed in the constitution, a member was supposed to pay all dues and financial obligations incurred on each individual congregant as voted by the required number of members. Another prerequisite to becoming a member officially was the final act of signing the constitution.

An incident which occurred in April, 1843, revealed that a person who had resigned his membership was eligible to join again as long as he paid up any prior outstanding debts. Joseph Massalsky was the individual concerned. He had resigned his membership as he was leaving the city and did not expect to return. A change in plans occurred. Upon residing in St. Louis again, he applied by petition for his old membership. No vote was taken by the general meeting of April 23; however, they did decide to allow him to rejoin the congregation by paying his dues and arrears totaling five dollars, and, of course, by signing the constitution. The fact that he wished to become a

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78 See discussion in Chapter Three.

member "again" raises a question of the founding of the congregation, discussed previously.<sup>79</sup> To clarify any current doubt cast upon past conclusions, it should be mentioned that the strong evidence previously discussed concerning the organization of the congregation outweighs any idea concerning the date of Massalsky's membership being earlier than October, 1841.<sup>80</sup> His name appeared only once among the signers of the constitution. The only recorded time that he signed the document was on May 28, 1843,<sup>81</sup> although it is always possible that he was admitted previously and didn't sign the constitution. On occasion a person's name appeared as a member within the minutes with no prior warning.<sup>82</sup> This could have been the case this time. Probably Joseph Massalsky was the "Joseph Massalsky" Bush noted as a contributor toward the purchase of the cemetery in May, 1840.<sup>83</sup> Possibly his five-dollar donation was never paid,<sup>84</sup> and when the United Hebrew assumed the obligation to purchase the cemetery plot, they became the collector of the unpaid contributions.

It was impossible to determine accurately the exact number of members who were in the congregation at all times, since there were no notifications when members took leave of the synagogue. It was also possible that many attended

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<sup>79</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 21, MS.

<sup>80</sup> See discussion of founding of United Hebrew Congregation in Chapter Three.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>83</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.



religious worship, but did not come to the meetings, the only place where their presence could be recorded. The signers of the constitution were usually indicated in the order of their admittance, but even here there were discrepancies. However, a running account was recorded and checked by the signers of the constitution. The conclusion was that between October 8, 1841, and January 1, 1848, fifty-three to sixty Jews at one time or other signed the United Hebrew Constitution. Needless to say, at no recorded date were all members present at one time.

On October 3, 1841, twelve people were present at the first recorded meeting; however, they were not addressed with the title "member" until August 28, 1842, when nine men gathered to sign the United Hebrew Constitution. Of this latter group, only E. S. Block was not at the opening meeting. <sup>85</sup> By the middle of October, 1842, the synagogue constitution contained the names of fifteen members. Besides four of the original twelve who hadn't previously signed, two others, Moses Morris and Jacob Emanuel, were listed for the first time as members; <sup>86</sup> although, as with Block, <sup>87</sup> there was no mention of their being voted in. In fact, although this was the first recorded meeting which

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85 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9, MS.

86 Ibid., 13.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., 14, 13.

89 Ibid., 13.

listed his name as a member, Jacob Emanuel was elected president, replacing A. Weigle. Fourteen of the fifteen members were present at this third recorded meeting and second election of the congregation's officers on October 9, 1842.<sup>90</sup> Thus one year after its founding, the United Hebrew contained the names of fifteen members.

Article Six concerning "the qualification of a member"<sup>91</sup> came under fire at the second and third meetings<sup>92</sup> in the history of the congregation in August and October of 1842, respectively. At the third recorded meeting on October 9, 1842, Gentleman Adolph Latz, in particular, led the argument to censure President Weigle for not calling a meeting to abolish or amend the article as was at the August,<sup>93</sup> 1842, meeting resolved.<sup>94</sup> Yet no changes were made, and none were contemplated.

There seems to be little doubt but that Article Six threatened the existence of the congregation. For six months not one member was added to the fold. The one member who was admitted in late April, 1843, had prior affiliation with the congregation, and so did not come under Article Six a second time.<sup>95</sup> Possibly this was the point involved which caused the local Gates of Mercy congregation to complain and desire a meeting with United Hebrew "for the purpose of stating

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90 Ibid., 14.  
 91 Ibid., 2.  
 92 Ibid., 13.  
 93 Ibid., 14.  
 94 Ibid., 13.  
 95 Ibid., 21.

to them the grievances of the Community at large." What these hardships were was never discovered, as the meeting was not recorded. However, the congregator's time limit in Article Six quite possibly was the main problem.<sup>97</sup> On May 28, 1843, a special meeting was called, and for the first time all members of the United Hebrew Congregation attended. The majority of time the problem of Article Six was discussed. Two attempts to cut the one-year period to six and then three months did not secure the necessary two-thirds vote, although a majority of nine to six were for it. Trustee Abraham Weigle came to the rescue. He made the following motion:

Resolved that article six of the constitution be amended so as to read: If any person apply for membership he shall give in his name to the Board of Trustees and they shall appoint a committee to investigate the character and standing of the applicant and if in their [their] opinion found worthy, he shall be balloted for and if elected become a regular member entitled to all privileges three months after which resolution.<sup>98</sup>

Weigle's resolution satisfied all factions, and it was passed unanimously.

Immediately thereafter, ten men who were "previously contributors" to the congregation were balloted for and elected members.<sup>99</sup> Significantly Joseph Newmark, previously a possible member of the Gates of Mercy Congregation,<sup>100</sup> was

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96 Ibid., 17-18.  
 97 Ibid., 2.  
 98 Ibid., 22.  
 99 Ibid., 23.  
 100 Ibid., 17.

among the new members. Possibly many of the others were also. After this, two petitions were accepted by men applying for membership. The congregation now had 26 members, with two more desiring acceptance. However, President Jacob Emanuel saw that this increase in membership was not a desirable thing, possibly fearing that the synagogue would grow too quickly and admit undesirables. He therefore introduced a resolution which again restricted the United Hebrew roll of members, motioning that "After the cong[regation] has 30 contributing members no person shall become a regular member until he has been a contributor for 6 months."<sup>101</sup>

The reaction against Weigle's resolution easing the route to membership could be seen as Emanuel's motion was carried. Coincidentally, Weigle resigned as trustee before the meeting had ended. No reason was given for his action.<sup>102</sup> A Board of Trustees meeting on the same day, May 28, followed the important special meeting. The object was to consider the amount to be paid by the newly elected members as their initiation fee. It was decided that each member pay five dollars.<sup>103</sup> At a special meeting two weeks later it was agreed that each elected member pay an additional \$5.50 for a three-months subscription fee instead of a full year's dues. Thus, \$10.50 for initiation and subscription was the bill of each new member. At least one man, Mr. Wolf, or Woolf, mentioned previously, could not afford to pay the

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101 Ibid., 23.

102 Ibid., 23-24.

103 Ibid., 25.

membership fee. He wrote in a request desiring a membership free of charge. In return he promised to become a "servant" of the congregation. The first request of this nature was laid on the table for consideration. It was never mentioned again. Three and a half years later, on January 3, 1847, a Mr. Woolf was elected a member with no special consideration mentioned. Thus, a member who didn't pay his dues and other financial obligations was not admitted.

There appeared to be a difference between a subscription fee and annual dues. As mentioned earlier, a new member paid a subscription fee plus his initiation bill. The latter amount was not always a stable five dollars, but was a charge set by the Board of Trustees at their meeting, held as usual after the congregation meeting, apparently according to the individual's ability to pay. This generally ran from \$4.00 to \$10.75. The annual dues were fixed at three dollars a year. By July, 1843, the regular standing committee on membership, which A. Weigle had previously suggested, was in operation. This was not a permanent one, as a new committee was appointed every so often.

Members had certain privileges besides those stated

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104	<u>Ibid.</u> , 26.
105	<u>Ibid.</u> .
106	<u>Ibid.</u> , 65.
107	<u>Ibid.</u> , 27, 37, 51.
108	<u>Ibid.</u> , 51.
109	<u>Ibid.</u> , 32.
110	<u>Ibid.</u> , 28, 34.
111	<u>Ibid.</u> , 42, 66.

in the constitution. They could purchase their High Holy  
 day seats in advance of outsiders; <sup>112</sup>chant the prayers on  
 this important religious occasion; <sup>113</sup>could, along with non-  
 members, have poultry killed by the ritual slaughterer,  
 the shochet; <sup>114</sup>could buy Passover cakes or matsch; <sup>115</sup>and, as  
 an extension of the interpretation given to Article Seven  
 of the Constitution, which allowed the families of congre-  
 gators and members to be buried in the cemetery for a  
 smaller fee, the beneficent Board decided in December,  
 1843, in the "melancholy" case of the deceased Ann Roseta  
 Wolf, that the fiance of a member could also benefit from  
 the United Hebrew burial grounds. <sup>116</sup>

However, members could not retain the above privileges  
 if they did not pay up their debts. In August, 1844, Secre-  
 tary Alexander Lewis was instructed to write to those members  
 who were a year behind in dues, and determine if they still  
 wished to remain as members. <sup>117</sup>

Article Six came in for more discussion. The trend  
 toward making membership more difficult continued on the  
 upswing. In the three years of its existence, the United  
 Hebrew had admitted thirty-nine members, which more than  
 tripled the original number. Broken down to more precise

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 34. The High Holy Days are the two days  
 of Rosh Hashonah and the one day of Yom Kippur.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 48.

figures, the records prove that from the original twelve in October, 1841, there was only a modest improvement to fifteen by early October, 1842, but a 100% increase in 1843 when nineteen members were admitted, all but one after the easing of the constitutional restrictions. By December 1, 1844, the congregation had elected five more, bringing the grand total up to 38. Altogether, therefore, twenty-three new members had joined the United Hebrew Congregation since Article Six had been changed by Weigle's resolution on May 28, 1843.<sup>118</sup>

Apparently Secretary Solomon J. Levi did not like this non-selective trend, for he introduced a resolution on December 1, 1844, which would reject any applicant if he had four votes against his admittance. The rejected petitioner then would be unable to apply again.<sup>119</sup> Though the resolution failed it was the harbinger for another like, though more liberal, motion four weeks later. On December 29, 1844, Nathan Abeles' amendment, which would reject any candidate who received one-third negative ballots, was passed. Levi offered the following preamble to this motion:

Whereas Mr. J. S. Segar and Mr. Samuel Hart having been duly elected members of this Congregation on the first of December, 1844, the Secretary having given them notice of the same to call and sign the Constitution and likewise another notice to attend this regular meeting and they have failed to do so nor have they sent in any excuse asking further time of

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118 Ibid., 9, 13-50.

119 Ibid., 50.

this Congregation. Therefore be it Resolved that Messrs Segar and Hart is not considered members of this Cong[regation] until such time as they shall send in their regular petition and be duly elected.<sup>120</sup>

The motion was carried by a nine to five vote. The congregation wished its members to show some interest, at least enough to call and sign the constitution.<sup>121</sup> During the period of this paper Hart never again petitioned for membership. J. Segar and an Isaac Segar both applied in January, 1848; however, they were not accepted.<sup>122</sup> Undaunted, J. Segar proved the third time a charm when he was admitted in September, 1849.<sup>123</sup> Isaac Segar was elected a little over six months later.<sup>124</sup> These were the first and only men approved by the standing committee and elected to membership after having been previously rejected in the congregational meeting.

The Segar-Hart incident was not forgotten. This fact can be ascertained by the resolution passed at a meeting four months later, on April 27, 1845. Upon the election of three new members, it was resolved and unanimously carried that "any person hereafter elected a member of this cong[regation] [who does] not appear and pay their entrance fee within 20 days after the secty [secretary] notifies them of their election and failing so to do - they then forfeit their membership."<sup>125</sup> In some cases it is difficult

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120 Ibid., 52-53.  
 121 Ibid., 53.  
 122 Ibid., 69.  
 123 Ibid., 79.  
 124 Ibid., 84.  
 125 Ibid., 55.



to discover whether a member was refused admittance to the United Hebrew Congregation or just changed his mind before being elected. E. N. Carr, a contributor to the aforementioned early Jewish cemetery, is a good example. He submitted a request to be a member along with several others.<sup>126</sup> Even though one of the others who applied at the same time he did was elected,<sup>127</sup> Carr's name was never seen again on the congregational minutes.

While various rules were organizing membership on a strict selective and business basis, new and old members alike had a new problem to adjust to. For the first time in the United Hebrew's history, financial difficulty had necessitated an increase in dues. The \$3.00 per year payment apparently was no longer adequate to meet rising expenses. An inkling that there was difficulty could be gathered from the minutes of a late December meeting, the last one in 1844. Here M. Morris notified the congregation that he would offer an amendment for dues to be raised to \$8.00.<sup>128</sup> Four months later, on April 27, 1845, Morris, having changed his mind, turned in his resolution to increase dues from three to six dollars payable quarterly in advance,<sup>129</sup> commencing on April 15, 1845. It was unanimously adopted. This agreement lasted just short of a year. On March 8, 1846, a dues dispute arose. The claim was made that the

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126 Ibid., 53.  
 127 Ibid., 66.  
 128 Ibid., 53.  
 129 Ibid., 54.

congregation could not constitutionally charge more than \$3.00. Soon an 11 to 6 vote approved a return to the old standard. Not satisfied with this out, or, perhaps a bit sarcastically, a motion proposed a further halving of this annual assessment to \$1.50. This resolution was laid over until the next meeting.<sup>130</sup> However, its author, Abraham Newmark, offered a reconsideration of his ideas at the next meeting, April 19, 1845, and this was carried by those present. The merry-go-round was not yet over, for after this agreement, H. S. Lichtenstein suggested that yearly dues be placed at \$12.00. In spite of the opposition to an increase in dues above \$3.00, the motion received a second,<sup>131</sup> and was discussed two meetings later in January, 1847, the idea being that this amount should include all subscriptions customarily pledged in the synagogue upon being called to the Torah.<sup>132</sup> Evidently if this latter idea would have been included, quite a saving would have resulted. This can be gathered due to the fact that Alexander Lewis, a long-time opponent of an increase in dues from \$3.00, now backed the above twelve-dollar plan with the subscription stipulation. It was never brought to a vote however. Thus, except for a brief period from April, 1845, to March, 1846, the dues remained the same \$3.00 throughout the early period of the synagogue, 1841-1848.

Shortly thereafter, in January, 1849, dues were

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130 Ibid., 61-62.

131 Ibid., 63.

132 Ibid., 65.

raised by a resolution to \$10.00 a year, which included no extra charge "in case of any Death in His Family for Breaking the Ground in Our Burial Ground." <sup>133</sup> The congregational debt necessitated the change. Coincidentally, the aforementioned Alexander Lewis resigned his secretarial office immediately <sup>134</sup> after the pronouncement.

While dues were not too high, membership laws were made stricter since 1844. Of course, there were other factors, but in the next four years the congregation increased by only twenty members. Five entered the fold during 1845; none in 1846; five more increased the total in 1847; and ten became members in 1848. By the end of 1848, even though at one time or other 59 members had been admitted to the congregation during its short seven year history, <sup>135</sup> the synagogue numbered only 38 members, <sup>136</sup> eleven of whom were present at the meeting on October 3, 1841.

Since resignations of members were not announced, it was difficult to determine the total number of members at one time, unless it was specified as such. Attendance at meetings could not be a definite guide, as it was always possible that the person attended the synagogue where worshippers were not recorded. Thus it was difficult to discover the proportion of persons attending such meetings.

The meetings were of two types, congregational

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133 Ibid., 74.  
 134 Ibid., 73-74.  
 135 Ibid., 54-73.  
 136 Ibid., 73.

meetings or Board of Trustee meetings; in the latter, only the officers were represented. The former were of three types, as explained in the discussion on the constitution: Special; general or quarterly; and an adjourned meeting, which continued a matter not discussed sufficiently at the prior meeting.<sup>137</sup> While there were few meetings in the first two years, the first in October, which was the only one in 1841, and three more between August and mid-December, 1842, the number increased the next year. In 1843, the year of the big boost in membership, there were also a large number of meetings--nineteen to be exact. This was the greatest number of meetings recorded in one year during the entire period of this thesis. Eight of these were Board of Trustee meetings, which many times were not regularly recorded until 1859. In 1844 seventeen meetings were held. This was another indication that by 1844 the congregation had demonstrated its seriousness to continue in operation.<sup>138</sup>

In most cases, the congregation had good attendance at these meetings. For example, besides the first meeting up until early 1843, at least two-thirds of the members were always present.<sup>139</sup> In fact, at the important May 28 meeting of the latter year, when Article Six was altered,<sup>140</sup> fifteen congregants were in attendance. As the United

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<sup>137</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three.

<sup>138</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9-53, MS.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-37.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

Hebrew grew, it was more difficult to determine who was or was not still a member of the society. The year of the St. Louis Great Flood, 1844, produced the low level in attendance--eight persons at an adjourned meeting on August 4.<sup>141</sup> However, seldom between the years 1843 to 1845 was there ever a meeting which did not number more than ten and most were closer to twenty.<sup>142</sup> At the July 27 meeting of 1845, 26 members attended, which was the high mark for this early seven year period.<sup>143</sup> Members definitely were interested in the congregation, and the latter was not standing still. The multiple amount of meetings gave some evidence of the desire to improve its standing, as well as the work accomplished and planned for the future. The years from 1846 to 1847 were a period of less recorded meetings and far less attendance. The decline was not too bad in 1846; but it must have been a private cause of alarm during 1847, as on an average only ten members were present at the first five meetings of the year.<sup>144</sup> Only the election meeting, the sixth and last recorded meeting of the year, drew a respectable number, eighteen.<sup>145</sup> During 1848, while there were only four recorded meetings, there was a gradual improvement in attendance.<sup>146</sup> The last two meetings of that year emphasized this trend; as on September 10, 1848, when

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141 Ibid., 47.  
 142 Ibid., 16-53.  
 143 Ibid., 51.  
 144 Ibid., 60-67.  
 145 Ibid., 68.  
 146 Ibid., 69-72.

the synagogue lease purchase was announced, seventeen members were present,<sup>147</sup> and on the election meeting of October 2, when the largest crowd in two years, 21,<sup>148</sup> attended. No easy conclusions can be made about the drop in meetings from 1845 to 1848, as it is always possible some meetings were not recorded. However, this latter possibility generally was not evident on the minutes. Yet the poor attendance was indeed a mystery since local Jewry was just beginning to increase in numbers.<sup>149</sup>

The Board of Trustee meetings which were recorded from 1842 through 1844 were all very well attended. They were mentioned in the minutes in the following fashion: One in 1842; eight in 1843; and six in 1844. Four was the number constitutionally required. Thus, the congregation demonstrated the greatest activity during 1843 and 1844, when the members worked hard to make sure this pioneer Jewish venture did not fail.<sup>150</sup>

The congregation was run by the officers of the congregation who were the president, treasurer, trustees, and a secretary. All, except the secretary, were members of the Board of Trustees. During this period the officers elected to fill the position generally carried out their obligations for the period originally promised. They were

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>149</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two.

<sup>150</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9-53, MS.

compelled by certain stringent checks and rules, which were enforced against the congregation's president and treasurer, but most strongly against the latter. Prior to the second<sup>151</sup> election of the congregation in October, 1842, it was decided that a fine of five dollars be imposed upon any member who, having been elected president, either resigned or was guilty of nonfeasance of office. The fine was to be collected the same as dues. The same applied to the treasurer, except that his proposed fine was two dollars less than the president's.<sup>152</sup> On October 21, 1843, at a board meeting, the congregation's second treasurer, David Levison, gave bond and security to the sum of \$500 for the faithful performance of his duty as treasurer of the congregation. Samuel Jacks<sup>153</sup> was accepted as his security. After the treasurer presented an exposition of the congregation's standing, his correctness was doubly checked by a member's committee, usually composed of members of the Board of Trustees. Constitutionally, the treasurer could be checked upon at any time according to the whim of the Board of Trustees. He was to present his accounts at least twice a year before the congregation's general meeting.<sup>154</sup> Usually this was done only once, after which a committee was appointed to see if the report was correct. The first time this was done, in December, 1842, the three members of the board, the

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151 See discussion of officers' duties in Chapter Three.

152 Ibid., 15.

153 Ibid., 37.

154 Ibid., 4.

president and two trustees, examined his accounts. The following year, 1843, two non-office holders and a trustee performed this duty, and were appointed in the regular general meeting. In spite of these regulations, resignations still occurred on occasion; however, a treasurer was never among them.

The office of president was among the offenders of the obligations promised by accepting election. Article Eight of the Constitution, discussed previously, detailing his chief duties, is quoted below:

The President shall be at least thirty years of age, and must have been a resident of Saint Louis for at least two years previous to his election; he shall preside at all religious and business meetings, he shall appoint the time and place of such meetings, he shall appoint Readers by and with the consent of the Board, shall countersign all orders drawn on the Treasurer by the Secretary.

In addition, as a presiding officer he was able to maintain order and fine members misbehaving during worship, and in a business meeting. Undoubtedly, the president was the most dominant figure among the officers. He was a very powerful person at United Hebrew, as he was at other synagogues in the country.

During the period from 1841 to 1848, United Hebrew had six presidents: Abraham Weigle, Jacob Emanuel, Hyman

155 *Ibid.*, 16.

156 *Ibid.*, 35-36.

157 *Ibid.*, 3.

158 *Ibid.*, 31.

159 *Ibid.*, 3, 63.

160 See discussion in Chapter Two.



H. Cohen, Nathan Abeles, Joseph Newmark, and Mark Samuel; Emanuel and Newmark served the longest period. Abraham Weigle was the first president of the United Hebrew Congregation, serving for one year from October 3, 1841, until October 9, 1842, and refusing to run for reelection. During his single term there was little information, as only three meetings were recorded.<sup>161</sup> It was during his tenure that the constitution was signed.<sup>162</sup> He supported this document and refused to call a meeting to abolish or amend some of the articles in the new document.<sup>163</sup>

On October 9, 1842, Jacob Emanuel was elected as the second president of the United Hebrew Congregation in a four-man election. He defeated his closest opponent, H. H. Cohen, by a majority of two votes, 7 to 5, in the first competition for the office, as Weigle previously was elected unanimously.<sup>164</sup> He presided over nineteen meetings, more than any other president during the early period, and was elected for two terms, both times on the first ballot.<sup>165</sup> Emanuel was originally from Russia. He ran away from that country to England to avoid military service, and came to the United States in 1810. He, or a namesake "Jacob Emanuel, Jr.," had been to St. Louis in 1835, but did not stay.<sup>166</sup><sup>167</sup>

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161 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9-14, MS.

162 Ibid., 13.

163 Ibid., 14.

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid., 14-40.

166 Bondi, Autobiography of August Bondi, 24.

167 Daily Evening Herald, October 21, 1835.

He soon went to a place in the vicinity of Peoria, Illinois, where he was a partner of Lewis Krafter. In 1839 he came to St. Louis with his partner,<sup>168</sup> who was the first known Israelite designated as such, to die in St. Louis,<sup>169</sup> and opened up a grocery store on Prune Street in South St. Louis.<sup>170</sup> He was sixty-five years old upon becoming president of the United Hebrew congregation.<sup>171</sup> It was during his administration, which lasted from October 9, 1842, to February 4, 1844, when he resigned, that the United Hebrew Congregation made its largest gain. The congregation doubled its membership,<sup>172</sup> although President Emanuel fought to make membership more difficult by extending time limit for contributors to six months, after the synagogue had thirty contributing members.<sup>173</sup> Also the by-laws to the constitution were approved;<sup>174</sup> the first room leased on a year's basis, suggesting regular worship was accomplished,<sup>175</sup> with rules and regulations governing the service;<sup>176</sup> plans made to erect a building on the cemetery lot;<sup>177</sup> and notably the hiring of a shochet.<sup>178</sup> On the latter subject, President Emanuel exhibited his religious feeling and more lenient construction

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168 Daily Missouri Republican, August 26, 1839.

169 See discussion in Chapter Three.

170 Daily Evening Gazette, August 26, 1839.

171 Bondi, *op. cit.*, 24.

172 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 14-40, MS.

173 Ibid., 23.

174 Ibid., 21.

175 Ibid., 22.

176 Ibid., 30-31.

177 Ibid., 26.

178 Ibid., 33. A shochet is a ritual slaughterer.

See discussion in Chapter Two.

of the United Hebrew Constitution. He spoke out for the employment of a shochet, not specifically mentioned in the constitution, by implying that such was provided for in Article Two, which said, according to the secretary's report of his speech, that it was of absolute importance to have "everything necessary in all congregations."<sup>179</sup>

He frankly said this article should be "construed so that we might employ a shochet."<sup>180</sup> A vote of the members verified his view.<sup>181</sup>

The year of the great St. Louis Flood, 1844, was the year of the "four Presidents" for this early St. Louis synagogue. When Emanuel became the first United Hebrew President to resign on February 4, 1844,<sup>182</sup> at the quarterly meeting, it seemed that he started a trend, for several short-term leaders followed. Hyman H. Cohen was elected to replace Emanuel at the same meeting.<sup>183</sup> Cohen, discussed earlier,<sup>184</sup> was serving as an officer a second time, having been elected the congregation's first treasurer.<sup>185</sup> He served practically six months, from February 4 to July 26, 1844, presiding at five meetings.<sup>186</sup>

At Cohen's first meeting, in February, 1844, the

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179 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 39, MS.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid., 40.

183 Ibid., 41.

184 See discussion of Cohen in Chapter Three.

185 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9, MS.

186 Ibid., 41-46.

previously discussed ill-fated plans to buy a lot to build  
 a synagogue were reported. Thereafter, marriage laws were  
 compiled for the congregation and Passover cakes were  
 ordered. Unfortunately Cohen's term of office was marred  
 by a tragic occurrence when his very young child died.  
 At a Board of Trustees meeting on February 26, 1844, Cohen  
 probably presiding, it was decided that he be charged \$3.00  
 for the grave, which was duly paid. On July 28 of the same  
 year, he became the second president in the young history  
 of the congregation to resign. The election for a new  
 president was delayed until the next meeting.

On August 4, 1844, Nathan Abeles, discussed in  
 Chapter Three was elected for the short period remaining  
 until the fall election. He presided at three of the four  
 meetings during his term of office. In the month and a  
 half he served, a room was rented and plans were made for  
 improving its appearance; delinquent members were written  
 to; a committee was appointed to raise money to purchase  
 a Sepher Torah (holy scroll); and a book to record the  
 charitable offerings donated in the synagogue was begun.

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187 Ibid., 41.

188 Ibid., 42-43.

189 Ibid., 43.

190 Ibid., 46.

191 See discussion of Abeles in Chapter Three.

192 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the  
 United Hebrew Congregation, 47, MS.

193 Ibid., 47-49.

194 Ibid., 48-49.

195 Ibid., 48.

It was also during this period that the unusual occurrence of a "null and void meeting" took place.

Former President Cohen issued a protest on September 18, 1844, concerning the quarterly meeting held the previous night, calling it illegal. He based his complaint on two grounds: He didn't receive a notice of the meeting and several members who attended had unlawfully voted in that they were in debt to the congregation, and had not signed the constitution. Cohen won his point, and President Abeles declared the September 17 meeting null and void.

Since a new president was selected at the "illegal" meeting, a new quarterly meeting was immediately called for the next evening, September 18, which increased attendance from 16 to 22. Here, Joseph Newmark was elected for the second time in three days to the office of president. In this period all but two of the erstwhile illegal officers retained their newly won positions.<sup>196</sup>

This meeting had another unusual feature. Contrary to the congregation's constitution it was unanimously decided at a prior meeting to hold the election meeting between the High Holy days of Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur.<sup>197</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Three in the discussion of the Constitution of the United Hebrew Congregation, during the intermediate days of Succoth was the stated time to hold the annual election.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>198</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three.

It was sometime after the High Holy Days of 1844  
 that Secretary S. J. Levi wrote a report of the United Hebrew  
 Congregations to Rabbi Isaac Leeser, the editor of The Oc-  
 cident and American Jewish Advocate,<sup>200</sup> the first effective  
 Jewish periodical in this country, established in 1843.<sup>201</sup>  
 This was printed on pages 510 and 511 in Volume Two under  
 the title, "Jews at St. Louis," and was dated January,  
 1845.<sup>202</sup> This account of Jewish religious life in St. Louis  
 was possibly the first mention of the community to appear  
 in print, for there was no other Jewish journal in the  
 United States at that time.<sup>203</sup> Besides Levi's account of the  
 congregation in the fall of 1844, Leeser also published,  
 in part, the letter from the South Carolina traveler  
 describing the congregation's formation and doings after  
 1844.<sup>204</sup>

Of Levi's more recent report of the synagogue,  
 Leeser remarked in part:

We have a letter from the secretary of that  
 congregation, in which he gives a gratifying  
 account of their progress. The name by which  
 they are known, is "The United Hebrew Congregation

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199 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the  
 United Hebrew Congregation, 47, MS.

200 Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," The Occident and  
 American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

201 Marcus, Remoires of American Jews, 1775-1865, II, 59.

202 Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," The Occident and  
 American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

203 "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West,"  
American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 61.

204 Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," The Occident and  
 American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, pp. 510-511.

of Saint Louis, Missouri."<sup>205</sup>

Upon listing Levi's report, Leeser points out:

Now let our readers call to mind that all the above is the work of but little more than three years, and they will certainly agree with the respected secretary of the congregation that there is ample cause for future hopes."<sup>206</sup>

Editor Leeser commented on the same traveler's less enthusiastic letter of the congregation's religious affairs in 1844 in the following manner:

We have shown enough... that though so much remains to be done to entitle the brethren of St. Louis to be considered a pious congregation, they have done a great deal to remove from them the stigma of indifference; and we trust that with the increase of their numbers the state of religion will also improve, and that next year's report may show them to be "keeping the Sabbath by not violating it" and setting an example in their domestic relations of being part of "a people holy to the Lord."<sup>207</sup>

This was the situation which greeted President Joseph Newmark when he assumed office in the fall of 1844. Of all the presidents of the United Hebrew Congregation during the period of this paper, probably none was as well known in American Jewry. Joseph Newmark was born in 1799 and came to the United States from West Prussia in 1824. He was trained and ordained as a Rabbi, but had never entered the rabbinate.<sup>208</sup> He lived in Somerset, Connecticut, and New York<sup>209</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 510.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 511.

<sup>208</sup> Senapes, Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875, p. 718.

<sup>209</sup> Postal and Koppman, A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U[nited] S[tates], 39.

prior to his arrival in St. Louis. The visit to the latter city was accomplished in early October, 1841, although there was no record of the time of his permanent settlement in the city until the following advertisement appeared in the fall of 1842 in the St. Louis New Era:

Clothing Cheaper Than Ever

No. 30 Main Street Lately Occupied by Mr. John J. Anderson The subscriber returns his sincere thanks to the citizens of St. Louis and its vicinity for the liberal patronage extended to him during his residence in this city; and informs them that he has removed his Clothing Store from No. 58, to No. 30 Main street, in the Store recently occupied by John J. Anderson, where he offers for sale a new and very extensive stock of

READY MADE CLOTHING

at wholesale and retail. No trouble will be spared to show his goods, and he is confident that he will be able to sell them as cheap as the cheapest. N.B.A. complete assortment of Tailors trimmings will be kept constantly on hand for sale.

212

Sept. 26

Jos. Newmark.

During the next week Newmark went on an advertising binge, placing advertisements principally in the Daily People's Organ and one in the St. Louis New Era, which were local dailies located near his store. In fact, the New Era was his next door neighbor. During this time he placed as many as three and four advertisements in one

210 Schsapes, op. cit., 718.

211 Daily Missouri Republican, October 2, 1841.

212 St. Louis New Era, October 26, 1842.

213 St. Louis New Era, October 26, 1842; Daily Peoples Organ, October 27, 31, November 5, 1842.

214 St. Louis New Era, October 26, 1842.

215 Daily Peoples Organ, October 27, 1842.

216 Ibid., November 5, 1842.



four-page daily. His serious attempt to capture the public's fancy demonstrated that he sold women's frocks and dress coats;<sup>217</sup> gentlemen's fine clothing in large quantities, and men and boys' caps.<sup>218</sup> These items came from various points, New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. Newmark let it be known that he was not in the habit of "puffin" his goods--making wild claims to get them sold.<sup>219</sup>

Joseph Newmark was married and had two sons and four daughters, Matilda, Caroline, Harriet, and Sarah. All the children apparently were born in New York.<sup>220</sup> Newmark's rabbinical training was very handy. He was capable of conducting and officiating at services, even on the High Holy Days,<sup>221</sup> when the worship was more difficult to lead. With such a religious background, it was natural that he would become active in the young St. Louis Jewish community.

By January, 1843, it appears that he was a prominent member of a local synagogue, the Gates of Mercy Congregation.<sup>222</sup> However, two months later, May 28, 1843, he entered the fold of the United Hebrew Congregation,<sup>223</sup> It was not long before Newmark's leadership ability was recognized. For three years, from October, 1843, until a comparable period in 1846, Newmark played a dominant role in congregational affairs.

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217 Ibid.

218 Ibid., October 27, 1842.

219 Ibid., November 5, 1842.

220 Schaapes, op. cit., 718.

221 Postal and Koppman, op. cit., 39.

222 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 17, MS.

223 Ibid., 23.

At the October, 1843, election, he was voted a trustee of the congregation. <sup>224</sup> A year later Newmark became the fifth person to be elected president of the United Hebrew Congregation in its three-year history. <sup>225</sup> Serving for two years, he was in office the second longest period in the congregation's young history, as he was re-elected in October, 1845. <sup>226</sup> The dues controversy during his regime was the probable cause of his voluntary resignation in March, 1846, which was <sup>227</sup> unanimously not accepted.

Long an advocate of orthodoxy, serving both as a member of the aforementioned synagogue rules committee and <sup>228</sup> on a committee to secure the first recorded shochet, Newmark constantly strove to keep the traditional observance in the synagogue. During his regime a price was set by which members or non-members could have poultry killed by the shochet; <sup>229</sup> he personally started discussion on altering the constitution so that the congregation could hire a person with the ability of a chazan (cantor) and shochet; <sup>230</sup> there was the first evidence that yiskor, the memorial services for the dead, was said, <sup>231</sup> along with the note that a daily afternoon service was conducted prior to the conclusion of a congregational meeting; <sup>232</sup> and the first mention of the

- 
- 224 Ibid., 35.  
 225 Ibid., 49.  
 226 Ibid., 58-59.  
 227 Ibid., 61-62.  
 228 Ibid., 31.  
 229 Ibid., 50.  
 230 Ibid., 56-57.  
 231 Ibid., 56.  
 232 Ibid., 62.

blowing of the Shofar or ram's horn on the High Holy Days. The latter custom was observed to commemorate God's intervention in the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham and His instruction to use a ram instead. Another religious observance was the first mention of a charitable donation by the congregation of \$36.50 to a Cleveland congregation engaged in building a synagogue. Thus Joseph Newmark's presidential period was a time of many significant traditional occurrences. Unfortunately, like president Cohen before him, his child died two months after he assumed the high office.

The passing of Newmark from high office in the congregation and soon as a member, was a real loss. The best description of his character was a comment in the Los Angeles Daily News in its discussion of Jews of the city:

We commend them (Israelites) for their commercial integrity and their studied isolation from the prevalent vices of gambling, lechery, an inebriation, for their individual and class benevolence and for their courteous demeanor. They are among our very best citizens, and the city suffers nothing in their hands. The Patriarch of the race, whose accomplished daughters have mated with our worthiest and wealthiest citizens--who is held in higher esteem? His urbanity and purity are the delicious comment and pride of the town. It would be well if our Gentile population would imitate his revered example. If such as he "had" the city of Los Angeles, it would be well with us.

The Jewish Messenger, a national Jewish paper

233 Ibid., 64.

234 Ibid., 55.

235 Ibid., 51.

236 Los Angeles, California Daily News, January 22, 1869, as quoted from Schappes, op. cit., 519-520.

published in New York City, commented on the above:

The "Patriarch" so kindly alluded to, is Mr. Joseph Newmark, formerly an honored resident of this city. If we had a few more such men living in our various cities, the Jews generally would be benefitted. Newspapers and others would then entertain better opinions concerning the Jews. 237

Mark Samuel, one of the most significant presidents of the United Hebrew Congregation, served through the remainder of the period covered in this chapter, from September 27, 1846 through October, 1848. Samuel, who continued as president after 1848, will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five. The significant items of his term of office were the evidence of the strict qualifications required of the holder of the office of shoohet;<sup>238</sup> the generally poor attendance at meetings in 1847 and only slight improvement in 1848;<sup>239</sup> renewal of the room lease in September, 1847,<sup>240</sup> and completion of the purchase of the North Baptist Church in 1848.<sup>241</sup>

During this period of virgin activity, the United Hebrew Congregation began a new project, the composition of marriage rules for prospective Jewish couples.<sup>242</sup> When the first Jewish marriage took place has been a matter of dispute.

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237 Jewish Messenger, as quoted in Schaapes, *op. cit.*, 519-520.

238 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 66, MS.

239 *Ibid.*, 65-72.

240 *Ibid.*, 67.

241 *Ibid.*, 70.

242 *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Isidor Bush stated that a St. Louis marriage took place about 1836. The persons involved were Nathan Abeles and Rachel Block. As stated previously, upon arrival in this country, Nathan Abeles had brought his fiance to live with her brother in Louisiana, Pike County, Missouri. Having earned enough money through great diligence and hard work, he soon married the girl of his choice in St. Louis for the price of twenty-five cents, the cost of the marriage license. <sup>243</sup> "Whether Eliezer S. Block or Abraham Weigel performed the marriage ceremony according to Jewish rite, or whether it was not so performed at all, is now forgotten after nearly half a century" <sup>244</sup> (1883). However, the Pike County Records in April, 1837, refuted Bush's wishful contention by stating: "Nathan Abbylyss to Rachel Block by Justice." <sup>245</sup> This couple undoubtedly was the same couple Bush mentioned. If a Jewish marriage was decided upon, there would not have been any need to come to St. Louis, since Rabbi Phineas Block was in Louisiana at the time, and could have performed the Jewish rites. However, it is always possible that a Jewish ceremony did take place and was not recorded.

The earliest record dealing with Jewish marriages was written by the United Hebrew Congregation in 1844.

<sup>243</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three.

<sup>244</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

<sup>245</sup> "Pike County Marriage Record, 1818-1837," Missouri Historical Review, Vol. IX, No. 3 (April, 1950). p. 207.

Recognizing a deficiency, this young congregation composed a system of strict rules and regulations for local marriages at the meeting of February 18, 1844. On President Hyman Cohen's suggestion, it was unanimously decided that "in case of an application to be married by any member of our persuasion, that they notify the President and the Board of Trustees at least ten days previous to the time of marriage and that a committee be appointed to enquire if the applicant of his intendment are such persons as we may recognize as belonging to our persuasion and that he shall not [procure] a license or-except from the cong[regation] and that he pay for the same not less than \$5.<sup>246</sup>" It was added unanimously that any person "undertaking to give such marriage" should record same on the books of the congregation.<sup>247</sup> Any person who did not do so was harshly dealt with in the following way:

If a member of the cong[regation] [he] shall be fined no less than Twenty Five Dollars and if the fine imposed is not paid forthwith then they shall be expelled as a member of the Congregation.<sup>248</sup>

It was not long before a couple gave the rules a chance to prove their worth. Shortly after Joseph Newmark's election victory in September, 1844, the earliest recorded Jewish marriage in St. Louis occurred. The United Hebrew Board of Trustees mentioned the happy event at a meeting on December 1,

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<sup>246</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 42-43, MS.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

1844. The Board allowed "Mr. Samuels [the shochet] \$4.00<sup>249</sup> for his services in marrying Isaac Emanuel to Mrs. Dehan. However the Daily Missouri Republican mentioned the marriage this way:

Married on Tuesday evening, December 3rd, 1844, by Justice Alphonso Wetmore, Mr. Isaac Emanuel to Anney De Haan both of this city.<sup>250</sup>

Whether the city officials did not recognize a Jewish marriage is not known, but if official sanction was not given, then Jews were married in the city prior to the Emanuel wedding in 1844 by local justices of the peace, such as the earliest one discovered concerning Joseph Levi to Fannie Van Bell on October 4, 1840.<sup>251</sup>

The first recorded Jewish marriage discovered in the St. Louis newspapers appeared nearly a year after Mr. Samuels performed the Emanuel wedding. Here, President Newmark demonstrated another of his religious skills:

#### Marriages

Married, in this city, on the 3d instant, by Joseph Newmark, Esq., according to the Mosaic law, Mr. A. NEWMARK, of St. Louis to Miss Jane, third daughter<sup>252</sup> of Mr. Michael Levy, of New York City.

A second accomplishment of the period was the improvement of the congregational cemetery. It is not known what, if anything, was done to improve the condition of the cemetery until May 28, 1843. At the special meeting held that

249 Ibid., 51.

250 Daily Missouri Republican, December 5, 1844.

251 Ibid., October 5, 1840.

252 Ibid., December 4, 1845.

day, a committee of four members, including President Emanuel, were empowered to contract for the erection of a two-story house "on the lot of the burial Ground" and likewise to purchase the proper furniture and necessary utensils. The building committee got to work immediately on the project. By June 11 of the same year they had contacted the building firm of Boyd and Purvis and an agreement was reached between the two parties whereby the firm would erect the two-story structure for \$325.00. The building committee remained in operation to oversee the construction of the building. Boyd and Purvis demonstrated their desire to do the job by the good will donation of ten dollars to the congregation which was accepted. The building was a necessary item for all Jewish cemeteries, for it was here that the corpse was washed and anointed. By December, 1843, it was in use. By the fall of 1844 the house was fully completed and the cemetery described as "well-fenced in." Apparently only then was the committee disbanded, since its job was now a fait accompli. An attempt to form another committee to look after both the synagogue and the burial ground in March, 1846, was turned down as apparently there was little need for it.

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253 Ibid., 24.

254 Ibid., 26.

255 Daily Missouri Republican, December 7, 1843.

256 Leiser, "Jews At St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

257 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 17, MS.



In September, 1843, the City Council of St. Louis passed a law which prohibited any cemetery being established within one-quarter mile of the city.<sup>258</sup> How this law would affect the United Hebrew Cemetery on 2700 Pratte avenue is unknown. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the first cemetery was, according to one source, "about one mile from the Courthouse."<sup>260</sup>

The records for the period under discussion are not available, thus only by piecing together the recorded deaths can an estimate of the burials in the period be reached. According to calculations derived from various sources, at least eight or nine Jews were buried in the United Hebrew Cemetery between 1841 and 1848. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Samuel Pecare was the first Jew to be buried in the new cemetery.<sup>261</sup> He died prior to May 27, 1841, and the cemetery was purchased in the summer of 1840.<sup>262</sup>

The year of 1843, the year of the largest increase in membership, was also the year of the largest number of deaths up to that time as three people were recorded as buried there. The week ending May 29, 1843, listed the burial in the "Hebrew Congregation" of an eighteen-year old mother who died at childbirth.<sup>263</sup> This probably was the family of Judah Hart, who lost his wife and child; and although he wasn't a member at the time, the congregation allowed him to place a fence

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- 258 Daily Missouri Republican, September 9, 1843.  
 259 Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.  
 260 Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.  
 261 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.  
 262 See discussion in Chapter Three.  
 263 Daily Missouri Republican, May 31, 1843.

around his family's grave in July, 1843. Hart reached membership status in October, 1843.

The death of Founder Henry Marks' child was made known at a Board meeting on July 21, 1843. The child was given free burial. For some reason the weekly death reports carried no mention of the burial.

Probably one of the most bizarre stories ever told is connected with the "death" of Ann Roseta Wolf, whose parents were not members, although she was betrothed to a member of the congregation. Therefore, the Board on December 6, 1843, allowed the burial free of charge, as seven dollars was taken from the charity box and given to the treasurer in order to keep the financial record straight. The Jewish custom of not keeping a dead body more than a day after death caused the following unusual occurrence to be reported in the columns of Daily Missouri Republican of December 7, 1843:

Novel Circumstance - Resuscitation - A young lady belonging to a Jewish family in this city died on Tuesday of a nervous disease, and yesterday (Wed.) her friends started with her remains for interment. According to a Jewish custom, the body was taken to the graveyard in a square box in the same covering in which the deceased person has expired, and there in a house appropriated for that purpose, the female friends of the family unrobe the body, wash it with cold water and anoint it for its last resting place. While performing this ancient custom upon the body of this supposed

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264 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 28, MS.

265 Ibid., 35.

266 Ibid., 29.

267 Ibid., 30.

inanimate corpse, a healthful warmth evaporated and evident signs of life became manifest; the fact was announced by the ladies, physicians were sent for and the sorrowful certainty of death which overshadowed the countenances of friends, gave place to a gleam of hope. On arrival of the physicians the certainty of her being alive was established, and means taken to fan the spark into health, in which we earnestly hope they will succeed.

Every person who reads this circumstance will exclaim, "How providential that she was a Jewess!" How awful would have been the reverse. This fact should caution the public against hasty burials, the body never becomes offensive nor is death certain, until that unerring sign of a purple tinge upon the belly is fully apparent, so says an eminent professor.<sup>268</sup>

This was the only account of a Jewish burial ceremony discovered during the period of work on this paper. In fact, it was possibly the first Jewish event recorded as a news item. Probably the unnamed person was the Ann Wolf mentioned as dead the day before. Yet, in October, 1845, a Mrs. Woolf, or Wolf, donated a gift, probably a Torah, to the synagogue. In return, the congregation decided to recite the Yiskor (Memorial) prayer, the prayer for the dear departed ones in the immediate family, for her daughter every Yom Kippur.<sup>269</sup> Whether this was the same girl the news item declared alive or not is unknown.

In 1844 two United Hebrew presidents, Hyman H. Cohen and Joseph Newmark, each lost a small child. They each paid three dollars for burial;<sup>270</sup> however, only Newmark's child, who

<sup>268</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, December 7, 1843.

<sup>269</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 58, MS.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 43, 51.

died of "Effusion on the brain," was listed in the Daily Missouri Republican's Abstract of Deaths for the week ending December 16, 1844.<sup>271</sup> This was significant, since it was the first time that the name "United Hebrew", designating its cemetery, appeared in print.<sup>272</sup>

From 1845 through 1847 three deaths, one each year, occurred. In 1845, David Abeles, the brother of Founder Nathan Abeles, was buried in the cemetery. According to a source quoted in the Abeles family tree records, the tombstone quoting his date of death as 1846 was one year late.<sup>273</sup>

A thirty-four year old woman died of hypertrophy uterus in 1846.<sup>274</sup> She was the lone death discovered in that year.<sup>275</sup> The ninth, and last death of the period under discussion was that of a fifty-six year old man who passed away due to intestinal ulceration.<sup>276</sup> Apparently no cemetery record book was kept, or, if such was, it was apparently lost.

These activities previously mentioned were discussed at the congregational meetings which took place at the synagogue, except during the first years, when they were held in coffee houses, hotels, or in members' homes. Significantly, all known recorded meetings were held no farther west than Second Street. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the first recorded meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation

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271 Daily Missouri Republican, December 18, 1844.

272 Ibid.

273 Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City, Missouri.

274 Daily Missouri Republican, February 18, 1846.

275 Ibid.

276 Ibid., August 25, 1847.

was held at the Oracle, which was a coffee house where liquor was sold within a retail business area. Located at 24 Locust Street near the corner of Main,<sup>277</sup> its neighbors were the St. Louis Gas and Light Company, recently organized in January, 1841, and located on the corner of Locust and Main,<sup>278</sup> and the Merchant Coffee House, a restaurant which catered to both cheap and expensive boarding.<sup>279</sup> The spot where the Oracle was located seemed to have been a place where previous businesses remained only a short while. In November, 1840,<sup>280</sup> the "Tippecanoe House" occupied the spot. When the 1840 election campaign was over, the Whig adherents left, as did their eating establishment, and John C. Brenner occupied the spot. He sold liquor, whiskey, candles, vinegar, and cigars. Yet his last advertisement at the location appeared on May 25, 1841,<sup>281</sup> two days prior to the Oracle's first discovered notice, which seemingly announced its opening. This event apparently occurred on May 27, 1841, since this was the first time its name was discovered. Its opening and unusual newspaper advertisement read in part:

The Oracle

All believers in the doctrines of heathen inspiration are invited to the Oracle, dedicated to divine Bacchus, and situated on Locust street near Main....[it will give] pure and spiritual

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- 277 St. Louis Directory for the Year 1842, p. 103.  
 278 Daily Missouri Republican, January 4, 1841.  
 279 Ibid., October 23, 1841.  
 280 Daily Pennant and Native American, October 20, 1840.  
 281 Daily Missouri Republican, May 25, 1841.

responses to all who may consult it ....

...Hasten then all ye true believers to "The Oracle." The doors of the temple will be opened and the high priest will ascend the tripod, precisely at the eleventh hour, on this twenty-seventh day of May, in the three thousand and thirty-fourth year of Bacchus the Divine. 282

This announcement was printed in two local newspapers, the Daily Missouri Republican and the St. Louis New Era.<sup>283</sup>

It ran two weeks, until June 8, 1841, when a new and similar style advertisement was inserted. Possibly the start was a good one, for the June 8 notice carried an optimistic tone: "The consultations hitherto held at the "Oracle" having resulted in the most propitious omens and satisfactory responses."<sup>284</sup> This coffee shop was used only once by the United Hebrew Congregation on Sunday, October 3, 1841,<sup>285</sup> when the congregation was organized.

The only other public place the young congregation met was the Paul House. The latter was located on the north-east corner of Second and Walnut,<sup>286</sup> opposite the Old Cathedral.<sup>287</sup> In December, 1842, it was a large commodious house, having been just recently built by Gabriel Paul, Esquire. Thus, the Paul House was new and convenient, and contained a large number of comfortable and well ventilated sleeping apartments,

282 Ibid., May 27, 1841.

283 Ibid.; St. Louis New Era, May 27, 1841.

284 Daily Missouri Republican, June 8, 1841; St. Louis New Era, June 8, 1841.

285 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9, MS.

286 Daily Missouri Republican, December 3, 1842.

287 Ibid., June 4, 1845.

public and private parlors, plus other rooms very comfortably furnished, all for moderate prices. The house also contained facilities for serving food, plus a reading room, containing the "most popular periodicals of the day."<sup>288</sup> Possibly the private parlors, among the other things, appealed to the members as they gathered to meet at the Paul House twice, at the Board of Trustees meeting on December 14, 1842,<sup>289</sup> and Sunday, March 19, 1843.<sup>290</sup> It is possible that one of the rooms could have been used as the location of some of the early prayer meetings.

The congregation also met in the early period through April, 1843, in several members' homes. Again it is possible that a minyan might have been held at Joseph Kohn's house on Olive Street, since two meetings were recorded there in 1842.<sup>291</sup> In fact it was here that the members signed the United Hebrew Constitution.<sup>292</sup> In January, 1843, a Board of Trustees meeting was held at Nathan Abeles' house.<sup>293</sup> Another spot where a meeting was held was at No. 45 North Second Street on April 23, 1843.<sup>294</sup> It is possible that this address was the location of the room rented for the Passover holidays in 1843, since at the previous meeting a committee was given permission to secure a room for Passover worship,<sup>295</sup> and the April 23 meeting

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288 Ibid., December 3, 1842.  
 289 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 16, MS.  
 290 Ibid., 19.  
 291 Ibid., 13, 14.  
 292 Ibid., 13.  
 293 Ibid., 17.  
 294 Ibid., 21.  
 295 Ibid., 19.

was the constitutionally required general meeting which was to be held during the intermediate days of Passover. Thus<sup>296</sup> it is a possibility that the room was rented for a week, for both the religious and business meeting. Except for one meeting held at President Mark Samuel's home in January, 1848,<sup>297</sup> all other meetings were held in the synagogue.

All was not a bed of roses for the United Hebrew Congregation, as a number of problems were encountered during this period of growth from 1841 through 1848. Activity breeds both success and problems, and three main difficulties taxed the desire of this synagogue to continue existence. Until the fall of 1844 the most prominent trouble spot concerned the membership, as the secretary of the synagogue listed in his letter to Isaac Leeser. This was due primarily to two factors: (1) The false prosperity the congregation enjoyed, as many Jews joined the synagogue and then left to settle permanently elsewhere; and (2) the many members who left St. Louis during the winter for the South.<sup>298</sup> Another cause, quantitatively not quite as important, was the withdrawal of several key members, like Adolph J. Latz, who resigned as trustee on July 2, 1843,<sup>299</sup> as he was leaving the city. For the many valuable services he gave in organizing

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<sup>296</sup> See discussion of United Hebrew Constitution in Chapter Three.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>298</sup> Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

<sup>299</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 28, MS.



and serving the United Hebrew Congregation, Secretary S. J. Levi was directed to write Latz a letter of thanks on behalf of the congregation. <sup>301</sup> It wasn't until October, 1847, over four years later, that the synagogue had the services again of this valuable citizen. With A. Weigle, who often missed meetings, the returning Latz was immediately put on a committee to revise the constitution and by-laws, demonstrating the high esteem in which these gentlemen were held by the congregation. <sup>302</sup>

During the period between 1841 and 1848 the United Hebrew Congregation generally incurred a steadily increasing debt. This was an understandable factor in the light of the dues controversy previously discussed, which occurred between 1846 and 1847. Since a financial record of the congregation's standing was not available, the information describing the plight of this synagogue is limited only by what can be gleaned from the congregational minutes.

The years 1841 through 1844 was a period of no great financial trouble. A small debt existed, but financial worry was not evident. The records for 1841 and 1842 were rather incomplete, for not a single disbursement was recorded, although certain expenses probably were incurred like the aforementioned room rentals for the High Holy Days' worship, <sup>303</sup> and meeting place rentals.

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300 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

301 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 28, NS.

302 Ibid., 68.

303 Ibid., 13.

Apparently the members paid equal amounts for the use of these locations for their religious and business meetings. None of the early meetings listed the collection of any dues or any amount of money during the first fifteen months of operations. Yet at the Board of Trustees meeting on December 14, 1842, the last recorded gathering of the year, the treasurer presented his accounts and a committee was appointed to examine them. No statement was recorded of the content of this report; however, nothing was mentioned which indicated financial trouble.<sup>304</sup>

In 1843 and 1844, more detail is available and a debt was recorded as such for the first time. The expenses during the period might have been the following non-recorded items: The rental of three business meeting places<sup>305</sup> and the stated intent to hold a congregational service during Passover.<sup>306</sup> The first recorded expense was the room rental from Henry Marks for \$60 on May 28, 1843.<sup>307</sup> Two other expenses that were listed during the year were the aforementioned agreement in June, 1843, to pay \$325 for the erection of a building on the cemetery grounds,<sup>308</sup> and the aforementioned charitable seven-dollar payment for the burial of Roseta Wolf.

Money coming to the congregation appeared from the

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304	<u>Ibid.</u>	16.
305	<u>Ibid.</u>	17, 19, 21.
306	<u>Ibid.</u>	19.
307	<u>Ibid.</u>	22.
308	<u>Ibid.</u>	25.

pockets of members from entrance and other fees, and even from "strangers" or non-members who paid \$50.33 for holiday seats in 1843. The members pledged \$2206.<sup>311</sup>

An unusual incident added only temporarily to the decrease in congregational funds during this period. Various bank notes circulating in local financial circles were decreasing in value; one of these was the bank notes issued by the Cairo Bank. It appears that about March, 1843, former treasurer, H. H. Cohen wished to hand over the congregational financial records and money in his possession to N. Abeles, the new treasurer, in the form of Cairo notes. He said that he collected part of his due notes in such form for the congregation, and believed that he was only liable to pay in the same amount which he received the funds. Evidently the Cairo notes had declined in worth from the time Cohen assumed the position until the end of his term, and Cohen refused to make up the difference. The members at the meeting discussed the matter, and by a 6-5 majority decided to make him pay in good money. Significantly, Treasurer Abeles, Trustees Weigle and Levison, and future treasurer Joseph Kohn voted against making Cohen pay, while President Emanuel was the only trustee to favor the winning majority.<sup>312</sup> However Cohen, having heard of the decision to

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309 Ibid., 24, 25, 27, 29, 34, 36, 37, 38.  
 310 Ibid., 34.  
 311 Ibid.  
 312 Ibid., 19.

pay the difference, decided upon a compromise. By the July meeting of the same year, Cohen announced that he would pay part of the funds in good money. Upon hearing this, Moses Morris, who had previously voted that Cohen be made to pay all, stated that he had reconsidered. He suggested that a committee be appointed to make a settlement with M. Cohen on the best terms possible. This recommendation was carried. 313  
 The committee successfully accomplished this settlement. H. H. Cohen stated that while he had received as treasurer the congregation's forty odd dollars in Cairo money which at present was worthless, he nevertheless would pay over to the committee through Treasurer Aboles the amount in specie. The committee reported this and added its own comment that it "thinks that Mr. H. H. Cohen has acted honorable to the Congregation and regret that he should have sustained any loss." 314

Thus the Cohen incident did not hurt the congregation when the final account in 1843 indicated that \$392 was expended, while \$361.59 was taken in. Part of this latter figure evidently was from the three-dollar dues demanded of each member. 315  
 The resultant deficit of \$30.41 was carried into 1844. 316

Besides various incidental expenses, the chief cause for an increase in the debt during 1844 was 317

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313	<u>Ibid.</u> , 28.
314	<u>Ibid.</u> , 31.
315	<u>Ibid.</u> , 44.
316	<u>Ibid.</u> , 54.
317	<u>Ibid.</u> , 44.

attributed to three events. The first of these was the leasing of a larger synagogue. The lease on the first permanent room for worship was not renewed when Marks notified the congregation that the rental would be increased to \$22.50 a quarter or \$90.00 a year. Thus it was decided to rent another room.<sup>318</sup> Nothing more was recorded of same. In September, 1844,<sup>319</sup> the congregation leased a large room with a capacity of five hundred with a payment for the first two months figured on a scale of \$200 a year and the remaining months on a basis of \$150 a year, plus an expenditure for improvements made in the new synagogue.<sup>321</sup> Another new and large expense was the hiring of a shochet and baal kria (reader of the Torah) beginning in September, 1844,<sup>322</sup> at a salary of \$200 a year.

The third main expenditure of the period was the purchasing of a Sepher Torah or Holy Scroll. The fact that this generally expensive item had to be financed by a special subscription among the members tends to indicate the congregation was not too well off financially at the time, August, 1844.<sup>323</sup> In fact, by the middle of September of the same year it was significantly mentioned that some members were delinquent in paying their debt to the synagogue. By December

318 Ibid., 44-45.

319 Ibid., 48.

320 Leiser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

321 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 48, MS.

322 Ibid., 47.

323 Ibid., 48.

31, 1844, the expenditures had totaled \$295.84. Under the burden of these expenditures, the congregation received aid in two new forms. First, came a weekly reimbursement of \$2.50 paid to the synagogue by the butcher from whom the United Hebrew purchased its meat.<sup>324</sup> Also a small amount from 2 1/2¢ to 5¢ was paid the congregation by members and non-members for slaughtering their kosher poultry. This special tax was to help defray the cost of the shochet.<sup>325</sup> Unfortunately, there is no record of the total monetary payment secured from this charge. However, it was not sufficient to erase the probably earlier deficit as the following financial report for the year 1844 indicated:

Expenditure for Sundries as pr receipts	\$295.84	
Cash remaining on hand	<u>245.22</u>	
Deficiency in cash	\$ 50.62	
Due by the members	\$ 67.62	
	<u>43.86</u>	
	<u>\$111.48</u>	326

As may be noted, the accounts receivable and not overspending was the decisive factor in the fifty-dollar debt. Yet, the matter had evidently not reached a crisis situation, since finances were not considered a pressing problem by the United Hebrew Secretary in his letter to Isaac Leeser in the fall of 1844. This conclusion is arrived at due to the former's lack of reference to financial need along with his statement of the other matters

324 Ibid., 49.  
 325 Ibid., 50.  
 326 Ibid., 54.

troubling the young congregation.

However, between the years 1845 and 1848, the congregation went deeper into debt. Possible evidence for this statement is the fact that beginning in January, 1845, a resolution was introduced to raise the congregation's dues. This controversy was discussed in the earlier part of this chapter. In October, 1845, a financial committee of A. Weigle, H. H. Cohen, and M. H. Flahto was appointed.<sup>328</sup> Apparently they found little financial improvement in the committee report submitted in early January, 1846,<sup>329</sup> for the major part of the next meeting of March 8, 1846, was devoted to the subject of dues.<sup>330</sup> Then, for almost all of the next year, the question of an increase in annual dues was repeatedly considered at various meetings. After the president appointed a financial committee to examine the treasurer's account in September, 1846,<sup>331</sup> the subject came up for a non-decision discussion a final time in January, 1847.<sup>332</sup> Most of the expenses of the period were apparently the same as in 1844, except that a subscription was entertained among the members to employ a shochet when the congregation's shochet, Hershwell, resigned in March, 1847.<sup>333</sup> Apparently the poultry fund had failed to raise

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<sup>327</sup> Laesser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

<sup>328</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 59, MS.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 66.

sufficient funds to support this vital religious official. Unusual disbursements recorded during this period were the charitable contribution of \$36.50 to aid in the building of a Cleveland synagogue,<sup>334</sup> the payment of \$5.00 to a Shofar blower,<sup>335</sup> and the payment of monetary inducements to the secretary. This apparently started with the \$50 gift awarded to S. J. Levi upon his resignation in March, 1846,<sup>336</sup> and in April, 1847, it was definitely recorded for the first time that a secretary, Alexander Lewis, would receive a \$25 a year salary. No new expenditure was added until the leasing of the North Baptist Church.<sup>337</sup> This, more than anything else in the seven-year period under discussion, appears to have put the congregation in dire financial straits. Now the last recorded yearly rental was more than doubled to \$350, which had to be met by September, 1849. Also, improvements totaling \$610 definitely placed the United Hebrew Congregation in debt to the tune of \$487.33 by late January, 1849.<sup>338</sup>

A financial report commencing January, 1847, and ending January, 1849, stated:

To Cash received Sundries Times	\$1085.06	
By Expenditures	1053.00	
	\$ 32.06	340

334 Ibid., 55.  
 335 Shofar is the ram's horn traditionally blown on the High Holy Days in the fall.  
 336 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 61, MS.  
 337 Ibid., 66.  
 338 Ibid., 70.  
 339 Ibid., 73.  
 340 Ibid., 72.



However, by January 1, 1849, the congregation's main fault was collecting the outstanding debts. Only \$101.24<sup>341</sup> actually remained in the treasury at this date, while a total of \$372.33 was owed by members and strangers.<sup>342</sup> The former owed \$262.68, while non-members were in debt \$102.85. Even with these assets totaling \$473.62, the congregation had bills totaling \$960.95, which were due by September, 1849. Thus, even with all outstanding debts in hand, the United Hebrew Congregation began the year 1849 with a debt of \$487.33 facing it. This factor necessitated, as a possible remedy, a large increase in the annual dues from three to ten dollars. Fortunately, a large group of potential members who, if accepted, would increase the synagogue's rolls to fifty was a point of good fortune.<sup>343</sup> The financial committee reported in this vein:

The Committee would respectfully recommend that Ten Dollars pr Annum be charged every member as the Sum of Three cannot maintain the expenses of the Same. There is 38 members and Twelve propositions [this observer actually noted thirteen new petitions for membership] and if acted upon and elected there will be Fifty members at Ten Dollars pr annum [which] will be an Income of Five Hundred dollars that With the other Contribution[s] your Committee think will Sustain the Congregation.<sup>344</sup>

As an indication of the concern over the synagogue's financial condition and better organization, the committee of S. J. Levi and Judah Hart recommended: (1) That the old

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341 Ibid., 72-73.  
 342 Ibid., 73.  
 343 Ibid., 72-83.  
 344 Ibid., 73.

and recently elected treasurer immediately settle the account so that the new treasurer could enter into bond with the congregation for his term of office, and (2) that the latter was reminded that he should not pay any money not directly drawn upon him in order that he would be able to show in his current account all the vouchers. In this way the United Hebrew hoped that the critical financial crisis occasioned by the increase in congregational activity would be solved.

A third problem of concern for the congregation was the apparent organization of two additional synagogues in St. Louis prior to 1849, and the existence of a community grievance against the Achduth Israel (United Hebrew Congregation). The earliest of these new synagogues was the Gates of Mercy Congregation, or Shaare Chefetz. While the perusal of the early newspapers did not reveal the presence of this early congregation, the United Hebrew minutes disclosed the only available evidence of their existence. At a Board of Trustees meeting on January 26, 1843, at Nathan Abeles' home, the main order of business was the discussion of this congregation. President Emanuel brought forth a letter "from a Cong[regation] calling themselves <sup>345</sup> *החברה החדשה* [Gates of Mercy]." The manner in which the secretary pro tem, Trustee A. Weigle, referred to the synagogue possibly indicated his unfamiliarity with same. Their letter stated:

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 18.

To the President and Trustees of  
United Hebrew Congregation

Gentlemen:

In pursuance of a resolution of the Congregation  
*passed* passed at a meeting held on Sunday,  
January 21, 1843 I have the honour to transmit  
to you a Copy of a resolution unanimously adopted.

Unanimously resolved that a comette [committee]  
of three be appointed to be in readiness to wait  
on a committee of the United Hebr[ew] Cong[rega-  
tion] for the purpose of stating to them the  
grievances of the Community at large.

Further resolved that the committee meet on  
Sunday January the 29th at Mr. Newmark's, No.  
30 Main St. or wherever the gentlemen think  
proper.

I have the Honor to Remain, Gentlemen,  
your ob[edient] servant,

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The Board decided that the congregation should answer same  
for further particulars. Thus the following answer was  
addressed to this new congregation:

To the Congregation of the Gates of Mercy

Gentlemen:

We have perused your letter wherein we see that  
an association which calls itself  
[Gates of Mercy] finds itself aggrieved and  
they wish to confer through a committee their  
grievances to the United Hebr[ew] Cong[rega-  
tion]. We don't know of any cause given them  
by us to that affect, but at the same time you  
may let us know your complaints and we will  
give it our attention in due time.

We are, gentlemen,  
Your ob[edient] sevts.

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This was apparently the first time that the Board had heard of the Gates of Mercy. Whether this congregation was organized in the form of a community protest against the United Hebrew is unknown. Neither is the content of the grievance available for comment, as the content of the meeting where this community problem was discussed was never discovered. Only conjecture can be made of the content of the disagreement. Perhaps, this grievance was the previously discussed strict limitation placed on membership in the United Hebrew Congregation by the aforementioned Article Six.<sup>349</sup> At any rate, with the loosening of the above article, ten new members were accepted into the latter congregation on May 28, 1843, including the aforementioned Joseph Newmark.<sup>350</sup> The Gates of Mercy was never mentioned again by name, although in March, 1843, a Mr. Woolf attempted to borrow a Torah from the Achduth Israel, or Achduth Yisroel, to hold their services for Passover.<sup>351</sup> Coincidentally or not, regular services of the United Hebrew Congregation were held shortly thereafter. Maybe the Gates of Mercy protest was against the United Hebrew's previous failure to hold regular worship. In passing, it is significant that no mention of the Gates of Mercy Congregation was evident in the aforementioned 1841 traveler's account of the formation of the United Hebrew Congregation, as printed in Isaac Leeser's article in the January, 1845 edition of the Occident and American

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<sup>349</sup> See discussion of Article Six in Chapter Three.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>352</sup>  
Jewish Advocate. Nor was anything said of the Gates of Mercy in another communique to Leeser in 1849. In the latter note, the United Hebrew Secretary made some comment on "a new German synagogue having started," but said nothing of the Gates of Mercy.  
<sup>353</sup>

Whether the Gates of Mercy in its short existence took any previous members of United Hebrew away is unknown. However, the second synagogue existing in this period, Imanu El Congregation, did contain several members formerly on the United Hebrew Congregation rolls. The founding and history of this congregation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. It was organized in 1847,<sup>354</sup> possibly because many of its members disliked the United Hebrew's strict orthodox service.<sup>355</sup> Its members were mainly of Bavarian descent. The list of founders contained the names of such persons as Hy Cohen, Joseph Rothan<sup>356</sup> who had been elected into the Achduth Israel in April, 1847, as was another listed founder of Imanu El, Louis Baumann,<sup>358</sup> whose name was first recorded as a contributor to the United Hebrew meeting in July, 1845.<sup>359</sup> The latter apparently remained a member

<sup>352</sup> Leeser "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510-511.

<sup>353</sup> As quoted in "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 65.

<sup>354</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

<sup>355</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.

<sup>356</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

<sup>357</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 58, MS.

<sup>358</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

<sup>359</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 58, MS.

of both congregations. Thus the United Hebrew Congregation evidently knew well of the presence of the two synagogues during this period; however no reaction to same by the Achduth Israel was ever recorded.

The period under discussion in this chapter, 1841 through 1848, depicted an embryo synagogue. After the slow start experienced in 1841-1842 which might indicate instability, the year 1843, with the big boost in membership, demonstrated that the united Hebrew Congregation took more definite shape. The latter year was also the occasion of organized worship and a planned system of rules and regulations governing the congregation that established it on a solid basis. Certainly the purchase of the seven year lease on the North Baptist Church in 1848 was another indication of their concrete determination and planning to make the synagogue a lasting organization.

Of course as the organization expanded so did their problems, the main ones from 1841 to 1848 being the lack of attendance, loss of membership, and the financial difficulties in the latter part of the period. These circumstances in no way detracted from the Achduth Israel's determination to continue operation, although the true success of the congregation was something which was yet to be proven.

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CHAPTER V  
EXPANSION AND GROWTH OF THE  
UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION

1848-1859

The eleven-year period covered in this chapter from 1848 until January 1, 1860, was a time when the Achduth Israel members worshipped in two buildings, one leased and the other of their own construction. With room worship at an end, the synagogue was fortunate that they could rely on experienced leadership to pilot the new fast-growing congregation. Yet a steady hand was also needed to guide the synagogue toward a full recuperation from the futile attempts at a union with all St. Louis synagogues, as well as a split from within its own ranks.

In spite of these problems, large projects were accomplished successfully. These included: The hiring of the first rabbi in St. Louis; the building of its first synagogue; the purchase of a new cemetery; and the extension of the benefit of the congregation's facilities for the use of the members of United Hebrew Congregation and the local Jewish community. In this latter respect, if in no other, the real purpose of the synagogue was fulfilled.

These were not dull years, but ones exhibiting the activity, problems, and successes of the congregation in all phases of Jewish life. The achievements of the congregation speak for themselves, and there could be little doubt as Israelites gathered in the confines of the new synagogue for

prayer that the United Hebrew, or Achduth Israel, Congregation, the originator of organized worship in St. Louis, had successfully proven its establishment was durable.

While perseverance was valuable in the improvements of the synagogue, the availability of experienced officers was also an important asset. Three men, Presidents Mark Samuel and Adolph J. Latz, and Treasurer Joseph Kohn, were members who devotedly served the congregation during this period.

Mark Samuel served as president from September, 1846,<sup>1</sup> until early October, 1852,<sup>2</sup> with the exception of the year 1850-1, when he did not choose to run.<sup>3</sup> He might have been the "Mr. Samuels" referred to in a newspaper account dated September, 1842, who was involved in an assault case near the corner of Second and Locust, and was reportedly knocked down by "an Irishman" while Samuels was leaving his home.<sup>4</sup> In mid-October, 1843, Mark Samuel was admitted as a member of the United Hebrew.<sup>5</sup> Thus, within three years, he was elected to

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1 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 64, MS.

2 Ibid., 103.

3 Ibid., 87.

4 Daily Peoples Organ, September 6, 1842.

5 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 36, MS.



the highest office in the congregation.

The main highlights of his term were his efforts and those of the congregation which led to the purchase of the lease of the North Baptist Church; the resultant growth of members; the writing of a new constitution in harmony with the laws of minhag Poland; the twin problems of a possible combination with the two other St. Louis Jewish congregations; and the long dispute over the hiring of a proper chazan and shochet. Samuel continued as a member for a time after his term was over. In private life, Samuel was a fruit store owner. He was married to the former Jeannette Levy, who died at the age of thirty-two at the height of the cholera epidemic in the middle of July, 1849, along with her mother, Mrs. Rachel Levy, as a result of ministering to the sick in the service of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society. This charitable woman left her husband with the care of their seven children.

Julius Mitchell, loyal and experienced member of the

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6 Ibid., 70.

7 Ibid., 71, 75.

8 Ibid., 94-95.

9 Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1849; Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 99-106, MS.

10 Daily Missouri Republican, June 17, 1846.

11 Ibid., July 17, 1849.

congregation, who attended meetings regularly after joining in late May, 1843,<sup>12</sup> served but one year as president, from September, 1850,<sup>13</sup> until October, 1851, when he was defeated in his bid for re-election by Mark Samuel.<sup>14</sup> Few accomplishments were recorded during the former's term. In private life, Mitchell was a merchant.<sup>15</sup>

Adolph J. Latz was the president of the congregation for the remaining period of this thesis. Having defeated Samuel in his bid for re-election on October 7, 1852,<sup>16</sup> this founder of the United Hebrew Congregation<sup>17</sup> faithfully served the latter for the longest period in the synagogue's early history. On October 7, 1860, exactly eight years since his first presidential success,<sup>18</sup> Latz retired from his high position.<sup>19</sup> During his term of service to the congregation, Latz was faced with many problems, and yet enjoyed most of the main successes of the period already discussed. His main

<sup>12</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 23, MS.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>15</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, May 25, 1855.

<sup>16</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 102-103, MS.

<sup>17</sup> See discussion of Founders in Chapter Three.

<sup>18</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 14, MS.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 16.

difficulties were: (1) of a financial nature; and (2) <sup>20</sup> the preservation of the unity of the congregation in spite of the failure of amalgamation with the B'nai El Congre-<sup>21</sup> gation, and the subsequent temporary secession of many of the United Hebrew's own members. <sup>22</sup> Yet, in each case, the congregation successfully recovered from the disappointment. However, among all the accomplishments mentioned, the successful construction of a synagogue stands out as A. J. Latz's greatest achievement during his term of office. Long an advocate of such a building, <sup>23</sup> he constantly urged the members to construct it; and his own work in that direction appears to have been his outstanding accomplishment. <sup>24</sup>

The esteem which the congregation held for this man can be attested by the following resolution passed in mid-October, 1860, one week after he retired from the office of President:

To the President and Members of the United Hebrew  
Congregation

Gentlemen:

In accordance with a resolution passed at the last meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation that a committee be appointed to draft resolutions expressing the feelings of the congregation upon the retirement of A. J. Latz from the presidential

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20 Ibid.

21 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 120, MS.

22 Ibid., 131.

23 Ibid., 110.

24 United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 16, MS.

chair, your committee therefore presents the following preamble and resolutions.

Whereas the members of the United Hebrew Cong who have been the recipients of the benefits arising from the untiring efforts of Mr. A. J. Latz for the welfare and promotion of their interests, deem it but a small token of regard to express their Sincere regret upon his vacating the Presidential chair, which has been filled by him with honor during the past 8 years now that the great effort of his mind and heart has been achieved, by witnessing us worship in a holy temple of our own after a long period of financial difficulties which had to be combated has now not only the pleasure upon his retirement to see it free from embarrassment, but the gratification of having materially aided the Erection of a handsome place of worship which is an ornament to the city and a pride to the Israelites.

Be it therefore

Resolved that this congregation will always hold in grateful remembrance the past services of Mr. A. J. Latz as President, and feel confident his advice and experience will at all times be given when the interests of the congregation require it.

Resolved: that a copy of this Preamble and resolutions be handed to Mr. A. J. Latz as a mark of their esteem and that copies be also forwarded to the Jewish Messenger, Occident and Israelite.

All of which is respectfully submitted, 25  
I. E. Woolf Chairman

This expression of gratitude was not the only honor accorded Latz at this meeting, for shortly after the reading, he was one of two men unanimously elected to serve a two-year term as the congregation's first representatives to the Board of Delegates, which was formed as a representative group from all synagogues in the United States. To say the

25 Ibid., 16-17.

26 Ibid., 17.

least, Latz was one of the outstanding members and leaders of the United Hebrew Congregation during the turbulent period from 1850 to 1860.

Joseph Kohn, discussed previously,<sup>27</sup> acted as an officer of the congregation longer than any other founder or member during the period covered by this thesis. From the time he was elected as one of the congregation's first trustees in October, 1841,<sup>28</sup> Kohn served as an officer of the congregation until 1858,<sup>29</sup> with the exception of one year (1842-1843).<sup>30</sup> He served almost thirteen of these years as congregational treasurer, commencing in the fall of 1844, with the election of President Joseph Newmark.<sup>31</sup> The remaining three years he was elected a trustee.<sup>32</sup> Yet during the period under consideration in this chapter, the treasurer's position was occupied by him and his re-election was usually automatic, many times by acclamation.<sup>33</sup> A perusal of the minutes of the period, 1841-1848, indicates his worth to the congregation. He was seldom absent; he was a frequent member of committees; and, as will be seen later in this chapter, he was one of the early members dominated with the dream of a new synagogue.

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27 See discussion of founders in Chapter Three.

28 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9, MB.

29 Ibid., 158.

30 Ibid., 15.

31 Ibid., 49.

32 Ibid., 9, 36, 68.

33 Ibid., 93, 102, 125, 135.

To a lesser extent, another founder, E. E. Cohen, lent his years of congregational experience to the building committee as one of the five men appointed to serve on this important post.<sup>34</sup>

While these experienced officers were valuable, several younger members also gave much of their time to their duties as members during the period under discussion. The efforts of these men can only be judged through the minutes of the congregation. Certainly such newer men as Adolph Isaacs, Judah Hart, Raphael Keller, S. L. Moses, and Abraham Newark<sup>35</sup> were among the dedicated United Hebrew workers during the period covered by this chapter. Of these newer members, another one, Simon Abeles, stood out. He not only was almost constantly in attendance, but was a frequent member of various committees, and served for four years as a trustee of the congregation. This was an honor in itself, as Messrs. Lutz and Kohn were constant occupants of the offices of president and treasurer respectively, during this time.

Simon Abeles was born in Petchau, Bohemia, on July 18, 1817, the son of Rachel (Eppstein) and Sussman Abeles.<sup>36</sup> The latter was an older brother of Nathan Abeles, subsequently one of the founders of the United Hebrew Congregation. Simon, or Shimon as his grandfather Moses Abeles

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>35</sup> Lesser, "St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January 1855, p. 527

<sup>36</sup> Abeles Family Tree, MS., University City.

called him,<sup>37</sup> grew up and migrated to the United States. Here, young Abeles lived ten years, working very hard; so much so, that he became worn out and weak. He then decided to return to Europe and went to Carlsbad, Bohemia,<sup>38</sup> a famous resort in Europe where many Jews went for their health.<sup>39</sup> There was a silver lining even in his illness, for, while recuperating, he met his wife-to-be,<sup>40</sup> Amelia Loewenstein. She was thirteen years Simon's junior, having been born on July 12, 1830, in Lichenstadt, the daughter of Rose and Joachim Loewenstein.<sup>41</sup> Simon and Amelia soon married, possibly before coming to the United States. By early October, 1848, Abeles was in St. Louis, as his petition for membership was presented at a quarterly meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>42</sup> In September, 1852, Mr. and Mrs. S. Abeles became the proud parents of a baby girl,<sup>43</sup> the first of their fifteen children. However, not all were born in St. Louis, for about 1859, Simon Abeles and his growing family moved to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.<sup>44</sup> Possibly this change was to better his clothing business.<sup>45</sup>

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37 Abeles Book of Legends, 2, ibid.

38 Ibid., 4.

39 Interview with Samuel Freedman, 1957.

40 Abeles Book of Legends, 4, MS., University City.

41 Abeles Family Tree, ibid.

42 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 71, MS.

43 Abeles Book of Legends, 4, MS., University City.

44 Ibid., 7.

45 Montague, St. Louis Business Directory for 1853-4, p. 1.

It was Abeles' custom to note in detail the birth of each of his children in a book, and, as was the case with a number of them, their death,<sup>46</sup> which caused him untold sorrow.<sup>47</sup> Besides his love of accuracy, and desire to keep a family history, the pages of the book demonstrated other facts about Abeles other than his knowledge of German<sup>48</sup> and Hebrew.<sup>49</sup> By nature the long-bearded Abeles was a determined man;<sup>50</sup> however, his writings disclose that he was also a very religious Jew who attended the synagogue regularly and possessed a great faith<sup>51</sup> in God<sup>52</sup> and the Torah,<sup>53</sup> both of which he studied<sup>54</sup> and revered.<sup>55</sup> He also possessed the ability to practice the art of Shechita (slaughtering). Since he was a Shechet, it was not surprising that he was religious, and interested in the welfare of the congregation.

With such a background, it was not difficult to see why the able Abeles would take an active part in the United

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46 Abeles Book of Legends, 4-5, MS., University City

47 Ibid., 16.

48 Ibid., 8.

49 Ibid., 4.

50 Interview with Mrs. Laura Isaacson, granddaughter of Simon Abeles, 1957.

51 Abeles Book of Legends, 6, MS., University City.

52 Ibid., 8.

53 Ibid., 6.

54 Ibid., 9.

55 Ibid., 6.



Hebrew Congregation. As both a member and officer<sup>56</sup> he worked in many fields of religious activity, such as his dealings with the shochet,<sup>57</sup> the ritual slaughterer, and checking the latter's Hebrew credentials;<sup>58</sup> the suggested hiring of the first rabbi in St. Louis;<sup>59</sup> the large part played in the building of the new synagogue,<sup>60</sup> being chairman of the committee which selected the new synagogue lot<sup>61</sup> and being one of the five men appointed by the president on the building committee;<sup>62</sup> and he also served on the cemetery committee.<sup>63</sup>

With experienced executives and workers, in addition to able newcomers, the United Hebrew Congregation had a good foundation to further the gains which had been made. While the experienced executives and active newcomers were an asset, the main force in the early growth of the United Hebrew was the leasing of the North Baptist Church in September, 1848,<sup>64</sup> which has been discussed previously. This

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<sup>56</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 87, 103, 115, 136, 138.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 110, 130, 133, 138.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 130, 133.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>64</sup> See discussion in Chapter Four.

incident had a twin reaction: (1) A sudden increase in membership, which was a necessity due to the usual slow rate of growth and the large turnover of individuals belonging to the United Hebrew; and (2) a new constitution to govern the society better.

The congregation's membership, which had been on little more than an even keel since 1843, suddenly increased late in 1848 and early in 1849. Of course, the unprecedented Austrian and German migration to the United States in 1848, generally containing a more professional class of Jews,<sup>65</sup> added an increased number of Israelites to St. Louis. However, there was now competition from two other local Jewish congregations which originated about the time of these new arrivals in the city.<sup>66</sup>

Yet, in spite of the competition, the synagogue had grown both in membership and worshippers. In this one year period, October, 1848-September, 1849, twenty-six new members were accepted by the United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>67</sup> Of this total, all but seven came within four months of consecration of the new synagogue. Six members were admitted in early October, 1848,<sup>68</sup> and the remaining thirteen were recorded at

65 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.

66 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

67 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 71-78, MS.

68 Ibid., 71.

the next meeting in late January, 1849. Actually the increase was even more spectacular when it is considered that six petitions for membership appeared at the September, 1848, meeting when it was decided to complete the purchase, and fifteen more requests were on hand at the October 2 meeting, just five days after the synagogue was consecrated. The figures seem even more revealing when it is recalled that only 32 names were on its membership rolls prior to September, 1848. Thus it seems evident that the purchase of the building had a great effect on the addition of members to the United Hebrew Congregation.

A comment on this sudden growth was made one year later, on November 6, 1849, by the United Hebrew Secretary, Henry Meyers, in a portion of a letter written to Isaac Leeser:

The congregation to which I belong, and to which I have the honor of being secretary, has increased so rapidly within the last twelve months (so much beyond our most sanguine expectations) that I am sure you will participate with us in our exultations. At our last holy days our synagogue was crowded to almost suffocation, not less than from five to six hundred persons being present, when but a few years ago we could but boast of fifty or sixty and it is still increasing.

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69 Ibid., 72.

70 Ibid., 70-71.

71 Ibid., 71.

72 Daily Missouri Republican, September 28, 1848.

73 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 71-73, MS.

74 As quoted in "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 65.

After this early spurt, the tempo of new members joining the rapidly growing United Hebrew declined from this peak. In fact, due to the lack of any reference in the minutes of the acceptance of new members, commencing shortly after 1850, a new member could only be recognized by his repeated appearance on the rolls of the congregation at the synagogue's meetings.

However, the progressive development of the synagogue was renewed soon. For just as the leasing of the Fifth Street church for worship was concurrent with increased membership, so the plans of building the first United Hebrew Synagogue brought similar results. Between September, 1858, and October, 1859, an unusually fine representation of believers joined the synagogue; thirty new individuals were in attendance at the meetings.<sup>75</sup> The increase can be even more appreciated when it is remembered that the congregation's entire membership was just thirty-two a decade before.

An interesting fact which the 1859 membership rolls reveal is the apparently large turnover of members. Of the twelve original young founders of the United Hebrew Congregation in 1841, only a handful remained less than twenty years later, as the period of this thesis ended in 1859. These few were Samuel Jacks, Henry Marks, and President A. J. Latz, who continued their ties with the synagogue, of

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<sup>75</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 161-173, MS.

which only the latter still took an active interest in the congregational business.<sup>76</sup> Of course, as mentioned earlier, Joseph Kohn served faithfully and consistently as treasurer of the congregation, while H. N. Cohen also was an important member up until 1858. In May of that year--the year the three founders who were the first officers of the congregation dropped out--Joseph Kohn resigned his office.<sup>77</sup> The other two who dropped out were Ryan H. Cohen, a past-president, who resigned his membership on January 20, 1858;<sup>78</sup> and Abraham Weigle, the synagogue's first president, who apparently dropped out at the same time. At least, the congregation's earliest available financial records disclosed that Weigle, who had not paid on his 1857 or 1858 balance, was written off below the September, 1858, debt as "no member."<sup>79</sup> David Levison, the fourth of the five first officers (A. J. Latz being the other), was long since absent from the recorded meetings, as was the earliest known secretary, Nathan Abeles. Apparently, Solomon J. Levi, another former secretary, had resigned prior to 1858. Yet at the January, 1858, meeting, at which H. N. Cohen handed in his resignation, a heated debate took

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76 Ibid., 175.

77 Ibid., 158.

78 Ibid., 157.

79 United Hebrew Congregation Finances, 64, MS.

place on Levi's "right of membership;" however, the latter was elected again into the fold.<sup>80</sup> Yet, during the year 1859 he did not attend any recorded meetings. In fact, only ten members of the thirty-two<sup>81</sup> who had belonged to the congregation prior to the leasing of the Fifth Street synagogue in September, 1848, still resided in the city or indicated their interest by attending recorded meetings during 1859. At the 1859 annual meeting of the congregation on October 16, which was the last recorded business gathering of the period covered by this thesis, only ten early members were assembled: President A. J. Latz, Samuel Jacks, Henry Marks, Jacob Emanuel, Judah Hart, W. Edelberg, Abraham Newark, J. E. Woolf, Louis Latz, and Raphael Keller.<sup>82</sup> They were among the sixty-one members present, which was the largest attendance at a meeting of any kind in the eighteen-year history of the congregation. This comparison demonstrates the fact that in a little more than a decade the congregation's membership had experienced a great turnover, and yet, had almost doubled. Besides the increase in local Jewish population, the presence of a permanent structure for worship appears to have been the chief inducement for the gain.

<sup>80</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 157, 158.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 71, 73.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 175.

However, the membership total, listed in 1860 as <sup>83</sup> seventy, was but a small percentage of the total local Jewish population. There is some dispute over the number of Israelites in St. Louis during this early time. It is estimated that there were 600 to 700 Jews in the city in <sup>84</sup> 1853, and therefore it is extremely unlikely that one-tenth of the total Jewish population belonged to this synagogue in 1860. <sup>85</sup> Actually the membership was slightly more, since the United Hebrew figure only counted males.

On the more impressive side, the congregation, within the space of thirteen years, 1848-1860, had almost tripled in size. However, as was characteristic of the early period, the turnover was great. While at no one time did the United Hebrew record more than seventy members during its eighteen year history, approximately one hundred and ninety members were admitted during that time. In the shorter period of seven years, until the purchase of the church lease for a synagogue, 1841-1848, the congregation numbered the aforementioned total of thirty-two, although approximately fifty-two members had been admitted into the fold at one time or another. <sup>86</sup> Thus a stable membership was even less a charac-

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<sup>83</sup> As reported in the statistical Report of Jewish Congregations of the U.S. to the American Board of Delegates and quoted in the "Appendix IV, Statistical Report of Jewish Congregations of U.S. to Board of Delegates(1860-1)" Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society, 1925, p. 134.

<sup>84</sup> Lyons and de Sola, A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years, 171.

<sup>85</sup> Benjamin, Drei Jahre in Amerika, 1859-1862, p. 110.

<sup>86</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9-170, MS.

teristic of the United Hebrew Congregation after its procurement of the 1848 building than previous to the action. Due to this pattern, the enlargement of membership increased its total to a point where it could withstand individual and collective departures from the synagogue, and also aid financially the debt-ridden congregation.

With a new building and a membership almost doubled in size,<sup>87</sup> it was almost inevitable that a new constitution be formed to provide for the new conditions that the expansion produced. Work on the second constitution in the congregation's history, and the only one in the newly leased synagogue, began almost immediately. At the regular quarterly meeting on October 2, 1848, less than a week after the consecration of the synagogue, a suggestion was made to form a new constitution to govern the congregation in the new building. A resolution was soon read, and signed by Joseph Kohn, that a seven-man committee be appointed to write this document with a new code of laws "for the future government of this congregation to include Minhagin and all laws requisite according to Minhag Poland."<sup>88</sup> Thus the new constitution was to be along the same lines as the old original document, at least as far as Polish customs were concerned. This important work was the product of four of

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 71.



the officers, Kohn, Mitchell, J. Hart, and President Samuel<sup>89</sup>, plus members A. J. Latz, W. Edelberg, and S. J. Levi.<sup>90</sup> Yet the reading of the document was put off in mid-April, 1849,<sup>91</sup> until June 17, of the same year, when the new constitution and bylaws were read aloud and passed separately, section by section.<sup>92</sup> While there was some talk of revising the bylaws one year later, in early July, 1850,<sup>93</sup> and even talk in May, 1851, of compelling the writing of an entirely new document,<sup>94</sup> there is no record to prove that this was done.

It was not until mid-January, 1853, that the dissatisfaction with the second and newest constitution was loudly voiced. The preservation of the union of the congregation was the cause of the latest need for correction. Thus it was resolved to amend the constitution and draw up a new code of bylaws. A committee of five men was appointed to perform the task, and a special meeting was called exactly two weeks hence to hear their report.<sup>95</sup> The revised

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89 Ibid., 68, 71.

90 Ibid., 71.

91 Ibid., 75.

92 Ibid., 76.

93 Ibid., 86.

94 Ibid., 91.

95 Ibid., 105-106.

constitution was read, and only after some amendments and alterations were added, did the members vote their approval. However, this was not the final step. For this revised governing document had to lay over for another three months before it came into force; and thus the laws had to be approved by the members a second time.<sup>96</sup> On April 16, 1853, the reading was repeated for the last time, and all was passed unanimously except Article 6 on Membership, which was discussed and finally overwhelmingly approved by a ten to two vote.<sup>97</sup> What this slightly disputed matter contained or how it affected the agreement on the controversial Article Six in the original document, which specific measure was altered just the previous decade,<sup>98</sup> is unknown, as this newly-revised second constitution is unavailable. The printing of these revised congregational laws was soon completed.<sup>99</sup> As evidence of the predominant nationalities in the congregation is the fact that this written instrument was printed in both the English and German languages.<sup>100</sup> The enlarged congregation

96 Ibid., 106-107.

97 Ibid., 110.

98 Discussion of Article Six in first United Hebrew Constitution in Chapter Four.

99 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 112, 113.

100 Ibid., 106-107.

now had a new and evidently satisfactory governing document which would last them without alteration throughout their residence on Fifth Street, and also for a time in their first constructed synagogue.

The period under discussion was not only one of expansion, but one of great decision--making for the United Hebrew, specifically the question of a possible merger with the other existing Jewish congregations in the city, and the succeeding problem, that of threatened secession within the congregation.

While the United Hebrew Congregation practiced the orthodox Polish rites and was the first Jewish organized synagogue in the city, several Israelites came to the city who were not attracted to it. These young Jewish immigrants were intent on their struggle for existence, and were, according to reformist, Isidor Bush, "rather repulsed than attracted" by the nature of the service, being themselves

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more inclined to reforms. Among the latter were Adolph Abeles, a nephew of founder Nathan Abeles, and his young friend Charles Taussig from Prague, who were pioneers of large and influential families in St. Louis. Young Abeles and Taussig came to St. Louis in 1842, and soon thereafter established a general store near the then southern limits of the city, at the corner of Park and Carondelet avenues, which became very popular with the people of south St. Louis,

Carondelet, and Jefferson County. For many years the store was favorably known as "Der Juden Store" (The Jew's Store).

The flood of 1844 put a damper on immigration to St. Louis. <sup>102</sup> At this time, sixty or seventy Jews resided <sup>103</sup> in the city. Yet within nine years, in 1853, this number had increased about one thousand percent, as 600 to 700 <sup>104</sup> Israelites were numbered among the more than 94,000 citizens of St. Louis. <sup>105</sup> This increase was due to the vast number of immigrants who fled from Austria and Germany due to the suppression of the 1848 revolts in those countries. <sup>106</sup> This reaction repressed at the same time the liberties won by the European Jew during the napoleonic regime in the early part of the nineteenth century. <sup>107</sup> An unprecedented immigration took place from the aforementioned countries, and a considerable portion of the newcomers settled in St. Louis. As a class these immigrants were highly educated, intelligent, and liberal in politics and religion. The Israelites among them were mostly of the same character. Consequently they were

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> A traveler quoted in Lesser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January 1845, p. 511.

<sup>104</sup> Lyons and de Sola, op. cit., 171.

<sup>105</sup> Edwards, Edwards' Tenth Annual Directory in St. Louis for 1863, p. 904.

<sup>106</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1863.

<sup>107</sup> Lebeson, Jewish Pioneers in America, 285.

rather indifferent about congregational affairs and too much occupied with the first struggle for their existence, being too eager to qualify themselves as citizens of this their new home to take an interest in anything else.

While the new Jewish immigrants might not have been too interested in religion, those that were had feelings along the line of reformed Judaism. Some of the old German residents earnestly desired to preserve Judaism among themselves and their families, but none of whom were willing to join the old, or so-called 'Polish' congregation (United Hebrew). Thus they decided to form a separate German Hebrew community, styling their synagogue the Imanu-El Congregation. The exact date of its first organization cannot be ascertained, as its books and papers were destroyed by the great St. Louis fire in 1849.<sup>108</sup> However, a list of its members and a very brief account of its history was discovered on the first page of the minutes of the B'nai El Congregation, a St. Louis congregation to be discussed later in this chapter.

This source related that the Imanu-El Congregation was organized in 1847, or the Jewish year (5607), and was made up of thirty members: Max Stettheimer, president, Levy Nathan, secretary, Alex Seuss, treasurer, M. E. Goldschmid,<sup>109</sup> Samuel Frager,<sup>110</sup> Fred Wolff, Joseph Rothan, S. Strauss,

<sup>108</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.

<sup>109</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, I, 25.

<sup>110</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.

Isaac L. Rothan, Jacob L. Long, Joseph Lehmann, Sim,  
 Louis, Hy Cohen, Moses Hirschfield, Fred Schloss, Nathan  
 Markstein, L. Baumann, Julius Ruthenberg, Aron Scheen, 111  
 112  
 Simon Obermeyer, Lewis Kinestine, Isaac Isaacs, B. Frank, 113 114  
 N. M. Reinhardt, Levy Stern, W. L. Walters, Meyer Friede, 115 116 117 118  
 B. Cohn, David Langsdorf, Samuel Haaser, Max Morgenthau,  
 119  
 and Isaac Lowman.

In addition, Bush suggests that five more men also  
 were affiliated with the new congregation: Morris Cohn, Joel  
 Eppstein, Isaac Stern, Louis Weil, and William Seligman. 120  
 The latter was one of seven brothers who came to the United  
 States from Bavaria in 1849. He operated a drygoods store  
 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1849 and in Greensboro,  
 Alabama, in the 1840's. With his famous brother, Jesse,  
 William Seligman went to California during the Gold Rush, and

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- 111 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.  
 112 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.  
 113 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.  
 114 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.  
 115 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.  
 116 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.  
 117 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.  
 118 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.  
 119 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.  
 120 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

made a fortune in the clothing business. In the 1850's, while the clothing and importing business was continued in New York, the banking house of J. & W. Seligman resulted. During the Civil War, the Seligmans advanced the Union \$1,000,000 worth of clothing on credit, and through their European banking connections they sold \$200,000,000 in bonds in Germany at a time when French and British financial institutions were unfriendly to the Union.<sup>121</sup>

Thus, at one time or other almost forty Jews belonged to this the third known Jewish congregation in St. Louis. The Gates of Mercy (Sheare Mischkanos), discussed earlier in this thesis, existed at an earlier date, 1843.<sup>122</sup> The Immanuel Congregation received its members not only from among St. Louis Germans, but from German Israelites living in the interior of Missouri, at Booneville, Brunswick, Newport, Jefferson City, and Weston, and one even from Springfield, Illinois. However, as can be seen from the date of organization, 1847, this was just the beginning of the main German immigration. Thus it is highly unlikely that the congregation ever had the aforementioned total membership at the same time. Bush asserted that the entire membership never exceeded thirty, of whom nine and later only five formed a quorum.<sup>123</sup> The decline in the membership of the

<sup>121</sup> Postal and Koppman, A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the U.S., 230.

<sup>122</sup> See discussion in Chapter Four.

<sup>123</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1863.

young synagogue was due principally to two causes: (1) Many died during the cholera epidemic during the summer of 1849; and (2) a number of members went to see the "new wonderland-<sup>124</sup> California," while several other former members, such as Seligman and Frager, went to New York. In later years they were joined by fellow Imanu-El worshippers, and the two well-known firms of Seligman & Stettheimer and Frager & Walters<sup>125</sup> resulted.

During the five-year history of the Imanu-El,<sup>126</sup> or German Congregation,<sup>127</sup> the members were not dormant. They held services on the New Year or Rosh Hashonah, and most probably on the other High Holy day, Yom Kippur, presumably in a poorly furnished room<sup>128</sup> on Fifth Street between Washington and Green over a livery stable in the rear of the firm of Samuel C. Davis and Co.<sup>129</sup> This location was in the same neighborhood as the United Hebrew Synagogue. The Imanu-El Congregation soon saw the need for acquiring a cemetery. In May, 1848, Mingo H. Goldsmith, Joseph Rothan, Isaac Isaacs, and Max Stettheimer, as Trustees for the Imanu-El Congregation,

124 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

125 Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1883.

126 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

127 Leaser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April 1852, p. 5.

128 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

129 Sale, "Jews and Judaism," in Hyde and Conard (eds.), Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis, 1126.



purchased a strip of ground 200 by 211 feet<sup>130</sup> on the south-  
 west<sup>131</sup> corner of Gratiot Street and Pratt Avenue, for which  
 they paid \$500. Of this, a square of 50 feet by 50 feet was  
 fenced off for a small graveyard, and in 1849 a Met Acher  
 (after death) house, a house necessary for all Jewish ceme-  
 teries, was built thereon at a cost of \$272. However, the  
 small congregation could not afford the outlay of so much  
 cash, and so a loan had to be raised among the members.<sup>132</sup>  
 Unfortunately they had to use their cemetery all too soon,  
 as in 1849 the cholera epidemic in St. Louis took the lives  
 of many of its young members and their families.<sup>133</sup>

Evidently by the middle of 1852 the congregation's  
finances, as well as its membership, must have dwindled.  
 For on June 7, 1852, the Imanu-El Congregation sold a part  
 of the lot, thirty-nine hundredths of an acre, on which their  
 cemetery stood, for \$800 to the Pacific Railroad Company.<sup>134</sup>

In the meantime, another local synagogue had started  
 which was called the B'nai Brith Congregation. It was  
 organized in 1849, and was formed in the southern part of  
the city.<sup>135</sup> Thus for the first time of which there is record,

130 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.

131 General I-6 Records, p. 138, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

132 Jewish Tribune, December 21, 1883.

133 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

134 General I-6 Records, p. 138, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

135 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

the Jewish community supported three Israelite congregations.

The B'nai Brith, or Bohemian-Congregation,<sup>136</sup> existed for three years and was composed of twenty-two members. These first members were: Daniel Block (first Farnase or President), Solomon Steindler, John Fleischmann, Moses Epstein, Hyman Epstein, M. Sternbach, Herman Block, Jacob and Adolph Wachtel, Joseph Katz, Adolph and Nathan Aschner, Adolph Klauber, Ludwig Schwarskopf, Julius Augstein, Joseph Levi, Moses Brummel, Ephraim Fischel, M. A. Taussig, Daniel Winkler, Bernard Singer,<sup>137</sup> Isidor Busch, and Abraham~~son~~ Steiner.<sup>138</sup> The congregation evidently made an impression on Henry Myers, the United Hebrew Congregation secretary, for on November 6, 1849, he wrote to Isaac Leeser: "There is also a new German Synagogue started,<sup>139</sup> which in a little time will become of importance."

The B'nai Brith was not a synagogue without means. Thus it succeeded in purchasing a cemetery on Gravois Road, six miles from the city. It is not known where the congre-

<sup>136</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," The Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 59.

<sup>137</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

<sup>138</sup> General S-5 Records, p. 171, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MS.

<sup>139</sup> Letter written to Isaac Leeser, published in "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 65.

gation held its services, but they were held regularly on Saturdays and holidays.<sup>140</sup> Evidence of this was the two-year lease that the treasurer, Solomon Steindler, obtained from Francis Eilers for the use of a "certain Room" on the second floor of a two-story brick building on the corner of Fulton and Lafayette streets. The rental was on the annual basis of \$72.00, payable each month within three days of the date due. By the lease the B'nai Brith was authorized the following:

To hold religious meetings and assemblages for the purpose of divine service in aid room (at all times performing) religious rites and ceremonies as are peculiar to the creed and method of worship of said congregation.<sup>141</sup>

The congregation had the further duty to keep the place and "vacant area" (whatever this was) free of any nuisance at their own expense.<sup>142</sup> On June 17, 1850, the deal was sealed. The synagogue was a small room capable of seating seventy persons, and was located in the heavily German populated First Ward in the southern part of the city.<sup>143</sup> The congregation soon demonstrated again their serious intent to continue their existence by purchasing a lot to build a synagogue on,<sup>144</sup> apparently on Jackson Street. This event probably took place sometime in

<sup>140</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

<sup>141</sup> General C-5 Records, p. 10, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MS.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, January 1, 1851.

<sup>144</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

the early part or the middle of 1850. However, in October, 1850, the congregation's trustees, Daniel Block, Abraham Steiner, and Solomon Steindler, were unable to pay the full price of the lot. Thus, the lot was returned to the trustees of Benjamin Soulard, from whom the ground was originally purchased. By the agreement, after the three notes for \$82.50 each were paid with the 6% interest charged, the congregation could realize the rest of the profit received from the forced sale at the Courthouse.<sup>145</sup>

Thus both of these two young congregations, Imanu-El and B'nai Brith, were soon struggling along with little money and a small membership to match. The time was ripe for talk of union. Remarks of this nature had arisen as early as November 19, 1851. It was on this date that an advertisement in the Daily Missouri Republican announced the fact that a meeting had been called at the United Hebrew Congregation synagogue to discuss a proposed union of all the Jewish congregations in St. Louis.<sup>146</sup> This was the first recorded mention of the subject. The discussion was continued at a meeting in early December of the same year. Abraham Newmark, a United Hebrew member, as secretary pro tem, placed the following call to the second meeting for this purpose on

<sup>145</sup> General S-5 Records, pp. 71-72, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

<sup>146</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, November 19, 1851.

Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1851, in the Daily Missouri Republican which appeared on December 5, 6, and 8, 1851.

Notice - All resident Israelites of the city of St. Louis are hereby notified that an adjourned meeting will be held at the Synagogue of the United Hebrew Congregation on Sunday, the 7th inst., at 2 o'clock, p.m. It is earnestly requested that those who take an interest in the cause will attend

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A. Newmark, Sec'y P.T.

The fact that three notices were placed in the paper as a reminder to the Jewish populace, and the tone of the advertisement, indicates the importance of the meeting. The union attempt evidently necessitated much discussion. The proposed combination was apparently given added impetus with the arrival in St. Louis later in the week--December 12, 1851, to be exact--of Reverend Isaac Leeser, editor of the Occident and American Jewish Advocate, who, it was hoped, would speak out for union. 145

Advocate, spokesman, editor, Rabbi, orator, teacher, educator, and writer, Isaac Leeser was the first to attain large scale leadership in American Jewry, although neither elected nor universally obeyed. 149 Leeser was born in Neuenkerken in the province of Westphalia, Prussia, on December 16, 1806. His parents' pious disposition early led the child to a proper understanding of his religion. He received a preliminary education and remained for some time at the college at Munster,

147 Ibid., December 5, 1851.

145 Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April 1852, p. 56.

149 Simonhoff, Jewish Notables in America, 272.

acquitting himself with honor.<sup>150</sup> He had completed several tractates of the Talmud<sup>151</sup> before he received a request from his uncle, Zalma Behine, who resided in Richmond, Virginia, to come live with him in the United States. Leesser accepted the offer; and so at the age of eighteen he left his home and went to the United States, arriving in May 1824.<sup>152</sup> Though born and reared in Prussia, he cut himself off both politically and culturally from his fatherland, as he never lost sight of the fact that his homeland was unfriendly to the Jews.<sup>153</sup>

Leesser came to the United States and became completely American and thoroughly oriented to this his adopted land.<sup>153</sup> In Richmond he worked at his uncle's store, as well as taking the job of assistant to the Reverend Isaac B. Seixas in gratuitously teaching the younger portion of the Jewish community of the city. Yet he somehow found time in his scarce recreational hours to devote his evenings to literary pursuits.<sup>154</sup> The calm of his studious life was

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<sup>150</sup> Morais, Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century, 196.

<sup>151</sup> Simonhoff, op. cit., 272.

<sup>152</sup> Morais, op. cit., 196.

<sup>153</sup> Marcus, Memoirs of American Jews 1775-1865, II, 58.

<sup>154</sup> Morais, op. cit., 196.

broken <sup>155</sup> in 1828, when the London Quarterly Review published articles tending to defame the character of Jews and Judaism. The twenty-two year old Lesser decided at once to come to the defense of his fellow-believers, and he set forth a vindication in the columns of a local newspaper, <sup>156</sup> The Richmond Whig. <sup>157</sup> His articles, written in excellent English and displaying such earnestness, produced a marked impression. This demonstration of courage by Lesser in this circumstance pointed out two facts: (1) His surprising acquaintance with English after a residence of only four years in this country proved the aptitude he possessed for linguistic knowledge; and (2) the indication of the state of religious learning in the United States when the defense of Judaism had to be assumed by an obscure <sup>158</sup> young man.

This apologia launched the young immigrant as a public figure, as it attracted attention, and most probably enabled Lesser to begin a profession as a rabbi. In 1829 the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, Mikve Israel, of

<sup>155</sup> Simonhoff, op. cit., 272.

<sup>156</sup> Morais, op. cit., 196-197.

<sup>157</sup> Simonhoff, op. cit., 272.

<sup>158</sup> Morais, op. cit., 201.

Philadelphia, needed a rabbi, and offered Leeser the position.<sup>159</sup> Even some American Jewish historians state that Leeser was not offered the position of rabbi, but only that of chazan (cantor) and preacher. Nevertheless, he soon became known in the United States by the title of Reverend or Rabbi Leeser though he was not educated as a rabbi. He had some acquaintance with the numerous writings of the Sages, and his peculiarly retentive faculties<sup>160</sup> enabled him to study much in a short time. Though hesitating to enter upon such a task, he yielded to the wishes of his uncle and friends, and accepted the offer.

While serving in the synagogue, Leeser's name became famous for many achievements. Immediately he departed from the congregation's custom, and introduced the delivery of an English address and discourse to his flock. This first occurred on June 2, 1830, and was the first noted occasion that such an event had taken place. Yet, the innovation<sup>161</sup> was popular, and the English sermon soon became a regular feature of many a Sabbath morning service.<sup>162</sup> Yet, this did not indicate his readiness to begin reforms in Judaism.<sup>163</sup> While he did introduce set prayers in the vernacular,

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159 Marcus, op. cit., 58.

160 Morais, op. cit., 201.

161 Ibid., 197.

162 Marcus, op. cit., II, 58.

163 Simonhoff, op. cit., 274.



it was of paramount importance to him that Judaism be preserved in its traditional form.<sup>164</sup> In 1845 he issued his edition of the Pentateuch in Hebrew and English.<sup>165</sup> This was his greatest literary achievement. It proved a godsend to readers who could not understand the Torah in the original, and who had recourse only to the King James Authorized Version with its headnotes and overtones of Christian interpretation. Thus, Leeser filled an imperative need in all English speaking Jewish homes. In fact it was not until 1917 that a newer<sup>166</sup> translation replaced it. After this success, Leeser published a translation of the daily prayers agreeable both to German (Ashkenazic) and Portuguese (Sephardic) custom, plus a complete set of prayers for the Jewish holidays in accordance with Portuguese ritual.<sup>167</sup> A catechism was written in 1839 and his various sermons were also published. In 1841, Leeser's writings extended to the Jewish field which first brought him fame--the cause of civil liberties.<sup>168</sup>

Another spot which greatly enhanced Leeser's prestige was in the field of organization. In 1843 he began

164 Ibid., 275.

165 Worais, op. cit., 199.

166 Simonhoff, op. cit., 274.

167 Worais, op. cit., 199.

168 Worais, op. cit., 198.

the Occident and American Jewish Advocate,<sup>169</sup> a conservative  
 monthly magazine which reflected<sup>171</sup> the happenings and contro-  
 versies, the events and anxieties, and the gains and recess-  
 sions in Jewish life at home and abroad. Year after year,  
 Lesser hammered away in editorials and articles at vital  
 issues that stirred the Jewish community from within and at  
 threats posed from without. This first successful Jewish  
 periodical was also of historical value, for within its twenty-  
 six volumes it contained the records of a crucial period of  
 American and Jewish history.<sup>172</sup> Partially due to Lesser's  
 proddings, another Jewish institution was commenced in 1838  
 through the work of Rebecca Gratz, the Jewish Sunday School.<sup>173</sup>  
 This was not unusual, for Lesser's deepest interest was in the  
 field of education.<sup>174</sup> Thus, he organized a Jewish Parochial  
 school.<sup>175</sup>

Isaac Lesser's deep interest in organization led him  
 to view the need for unifying independent groups, such as the

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169 Simonhoff, op. cit., 273.

170 Morais, op. cit., 199.

171 Ibid., 198.

172 Simonhoff, op. cit., 273.

173 Ibid., 274.

174 Ibid., 275.

175 Marcus, op. cit., 58.

American Jewish community, which project failed in 1841, but succeeded in 1859; and the various charitable groups in Philadelphia placed under one central agency. Leeser also advocated Jewish hospitals that would prevent overpious nuns from baptizing dying patients to save them from Satan's embraces. Hoping to create a Jewish literature in English, he organized the first American Jewish Publication Society. He also expanded the Hebrew education society into Maimonides College in Philadelphia to train rabbis and teachers, which was the first Jewish seminary in the Western Hemisphere for that purpose.<sup>176</sup> Leeser was certainly a remarkable person, for through his pioneering work large groups of American Jews were able to be organized in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>177</sup>

Yet with all these achievements by the frail, lonely scholar, this pocked-faced bachelor's only offspring were the institutions he created. In spite of these immense accomplishments, Leeser had a marvelous memory for names and persons whom he had not seen for many years. With a quick comprehension he could perceive almost instantly the point of difficult questions. These retentive faculties enabled him to study much in a short time. As a speaker he commanded general admiration, and most of his addresses were

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176 Simonhoff, op. cit., 274-275.

177 Marcus, op. cit., 58.

delivered extempore. <sup>178</sup> These sermons probably concerned the gospel of traditional or orthodox Judaism explained in the English language and American political and civil liberties. <sup>179</sup> His indefatigable industry was his greatest asset, in the sense that otherwise he could not have done so much; and yet it was a detriment in that it caused him to be susceptible to a great many illnesses. This modest and humble <sup>180</sup> man retired from his first ministry, Mikve Israel, in <sup>181</sup> 1850, which gave him more time to do the extensive traveling he loved. By this time Leizer was recognized as the unofficial Chief Rabbi of all American Jewry. <sup>182</sup> He visited almost everywhere in this country, but particularly in the South and West, except for San Francisco and other far western towns. <sup>183</sup> Thus he arrived in St. Louis, while on such a tour of the Jewish communities, on December 12, 1851, checking in at one of the city's seven principal hotels, the City Hotel at the corner of Third and Vine. <sup>184</sup> In St. Louis he found three congregations: "The original or Polish, under

178 Morais, op. cit., 201.

179 Morais, op. cit., 59.

180 Simonhoff, op. cit., 272.

181 Morais, op. cit., 199.

182 Simonhoff, op. cit., 273.

183 Marcus, op. cit., II, 59.

184 Daily Missouri Republican, December 13, 1851.

the presidency of Mr. Mark Samuel, the German presided over by Mr. Meyer Friede, and the Bohemian under Mr. Daniel Block.<sup>185</sup> Leeser could only comment that "the Israelites of this city require a thorough reorganization."<sup>186</sup> Yet he realized the difficulty of bringing about good understanding and concerted action among people who had lately settled and come together from all parts of the world. Leeser hoped that with their removal from any influence from abroad that the good sense of the people would prevail, and help them conquer their differences and produce a spontaneous public opinion for union. In favor of doing all he could for the project, he volunteered that he would, if requested to do so, address the local Jews at the synagogue on Sunday afternoon, December 14, 1851, on the subject of uniting the three congregations. Leeser's interest was readily accepted. There were many local Israelites deeply interested in the venture also, accounting for the fact that although there was not enough time prior to the Sabbath for a public announcement and the Reverend traveler, according to his own admission, was scarcely known in person to more than ten persons in the community, more than one hundred persons braved the "fearfully" inclement weather to hear Leeser speak at the synagogue on Sunday afternoon, December 14,

<sup>185</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 56

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

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 1851, The United Hebrew Congregation was the probable site of this event as, it was mentioned previously<sup>188</sup> the only synagogue large enough to accommodate the crowd which attended.

Leeser pointed out to the remarkable assemblage in nearly an hour-long address:

The absurdity of keeping up three organizations, when the Polish, German, and Bohemian customs hardly differ except in the amount of poetical prayers to be recited on certain days which ~~prayers, if altogether omitted, would leave our worship not the less effective.~~ In all other respects, the religion not alone, but the forms are identical; and hence the evident impropriety to keep aloof from each other, by which all good works are checked, and estrangement of feelings quite uselessly kept up.<sup>189</sup>

Due to the terrible winter, Leeser remained in the city at least a week longer.<sup>190</sup> However, before leaving St. Louis, Leeser again repeated the message emphasized in his speech that in St. Louis were "elements of greatness" which could readily be developed if only they cultivate among themselves "union and mutual forbearance."<sup>191</sup> The serious-minded rabbi only hoped that his remarks would be received in the same spirit of friendship with which they

187 Ibid.

188 See discussion of Fifth Street Synagogue, Chapter Four.

189 Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 56.

190 Ibid.

191 Ibid., 57.

192  
 were given. Evidently his advice was quickly heeded, as  
 prior to his departure from the city Leeser stated that  
 there was "cause for hope" that his words had had more than  
 a "passing effect."<sup>193</sup>

At least one of the reasons for his optimism was the  
 action of the United Hebrew Congregation. Soon after Leeser's  
 Sunday afternoon sermon, this congregation called a special  
 meeting for Tuesday night, January 16, 1852. At eight o'clock  
 that night, nineteen members gathered as President Mark Samuel  
 called the meeting to order. Whether the short notice was  
 the reason for the seemingly small attendance is not known,  
 yet the recorded gathering was the second largest attendance  
 of the year. The president stated that the object of the  
 special call (as recorded in the minutes) was "to take the  
 sense of the members of the United Hebrew Congregation  
 whether they were favorable to a union with the B (B'nai  
 Brith or Bohemian) Congregation."<sup>194</sup> After some discussion by  
 the president and S. J. Levi, A. J. Latz moved and received  
 a second from Henry Marks that since a constitutional majority  
 was present a vote should be taken on the proposed union with  
 the "other Congregations."<sup>195</sup> The suggestion was received

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192 Ibid.

193 Ibid., 56.

194 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United  
 Hebrew Congregation, 94, MS.

195 Ibid., 95.

without a dissenting vote. The secretary, J. Turk, then put the following resolution before the meeting:

Resolved. That we extend the hand of fellowship and union to the two other Congregations of St. Louis and to all members of our faith for a bond of brotherhood to form one and indivisible Congregation out of all Israelites residing in St. Louis and be it further resolved that the meeting present places that confidence and reliance upon our representatives in the Committee appointed to draw up Resolution for the action of the next general meeting which enables us to dispense with all instructions and we hereby put our honor as a corporeal body into their hands and pledge ourselves to abide by any action they may think fit to adopt.<sup>196</sup>

While no specific mention was made of the adoption of this resolution, such can be assumed, as the final action of the members was an agreement to furnish "the Committee" with a copy of the minutes of this meeting.<sup>197</sup> Here, recorded for the first time, was a specific reference to the existence of the two other Jewish congregations in St. Louis and to a union of these.

Evidently the enthusiasm engendered by Lesser's espousal of the necessity of working as one waned, since the union was never consummated. For some reason, there was no mention in the United Hebrew congregational minutes of the next general meeting where the report of the results of the conference was to be announced, or why this union never occurred. Yet a union did result from the effort. This concerned the two smaller congregations, Imanu-El and B'nai

196 Ibid.

197 Ibid.



Brith. Feeling that "by themselves, they would be in no position to effect a dignified form of public worship," the members of both congregations called a general meeting on October 17, 1852 (5612).<sup>198</sup> Here, the Imanu-El (German) and B'nai Brith (Bohemian) members accepted and ratified a document of union by which it was resolved to form a "unified Israelite religious society under the name of B'nai El Congregation."<sup>199</sup> Just as the designation of the new synagogue was decided equally from the first and last names of the two combining congregations, so all movable and immovable estate of both liquidated congregations would be transferred to the newly formed congregation, and surrendered to the newly elected board of directors. The first directors elected were: H. A. Suss, Isidor Bush, D. Block, B. Singer, and S. Steindler; Secretary W. L. Walter; and Treasurer I. Lowman. Other than this, five committees were appointed with the purpose of each respectively to devise a Constitution, find a lot for a synagogue, provide for the regulation of members, collect donations, and bury the dead. The new board held its first meeting on November 7, 1852, and decided to assemble the first Sunday in every month "to advise in the interest of the congregation."<sup>200</sup> L. Schwartzkopf

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198 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 2, 95.

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

was appointed temporarily as cantor without remuneration.

On January 9 and 16, 1853, the Constitution and Bylaws of this congregation, which was to be the only other permanent synagogue in St. Louis until the end of the period of this thesis, was completed. By way of contrast with the United Hebrew, it is interesting to compare the constitutions of the two synagogues. The constitutional committee of Isidor Bush, A. Suesse, and W. L. Walters<sup>201</sup> produced a document which was not as outspoken a charter for traditional Judaism as the United Hebrew Congregation's religious laws; that is, it did not specifically endorse the laws of orthodox Judaism as did the latter's constitution.<sup>202</sup> The document strongly expressed the B'nai El Congregation's desire to preserve Judaism and gain for it the approbation and respect of all Israelites; to serve God; and to love this only Divine Being as well as their fellow man. Education was specifically stressed as highly important. The main project of the congregation indicated this fact, since immediate attention was directed to: (1) The erection of a synagogue; and (2) a school. The lesser degree of traditional observance in comparison with the United Hebrew Congregation was indicated by Articles Three and Four of the B'nai El Constitution.<sup>203</sup>

201 Ibid.

202 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 30, MS.

203 Leiser, "St. Louis, Mo." The Occident and American Jewish Advocate, May, 1853, p. 123.

3. All the laws of our religion have for their object our welfare, the consecration of our life through love for God and our fellow-men, through virtue and justice. 4. We are therefore not permitted to condemn any Israelite (a descendant of Israel) for his religious or rather irreligious views, opinions, and acts, not to mention to exclude him, so long as he does not violate the commandments of neighborly love, and desires to come to listen to the word of God.<sup>204</sup>

The large amount of freedom in the manner of worship which guaranteed the B'nai El members' lack of condemnation against any Israelites for their religious or irreligious views implied that the strict law of the holy scripture and Shulchan Aruch (synthesis of traditional beliefs) would probably not be observed by the synagogue. This implied a more reform congregation. Yet the members were expected to say their daily prayers, and this more or less traditional outlook did not hurt attendance at the Sabbath services where worshippers were numerous.

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The election of the first board of officers under these statutes took place on January 30, 1853, with William Walters elected president, while the vice-president, secretary, and treasurer were the other offices filled. One of the three trustees was Isidor Bush.<sup>206</sup> The election of October, 1853, specifically disclosed the method of electing the officers of the B'nai El Congregation. Seven trustees were

204 Ibid., 123.

205 Ibid., 123-124.

206 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 2, 88.

elected at large, who then elected the four main officers from among themselves. This differed from the United Hebrew method, where individuals were voted into all elective offices by the members at large.

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The location of the B'nai El during the first year of 1852-1853 was in various rented rooms in the southern part of St. Louis. Two little rooms at Lafayette Street near Ninth were occupied at first. Possibly this was the aforementioned Lafayette Street habitat of the B'nai Brith Congregation. However, soon the desire was expressed by some members for a more northerly situated location. Thus a room was finally rented on Fifth Street near Walnut. This too proved insufficient, and already by August, 1853, another place of worship was rented at the corner of Seventh and Lafayette. In the meantime, the synagogue lot committee had been continually on the lookout for a plot of ground with the popular qualifications--not too highly priced and centrally located. However, the one tract of land under consideration was dropped. H. D. Block, termed the "father of the Congregation B'nai Brith," was a big worker toward this goal; however, he died soon afterwards, in October, 1853.

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Financially, the synagogue had profited by the sale of the late B'nai Brith Congregation's property on Jackson

207 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 9, 13.

208 Ibid., 3.

*Location*

Street, on March 22, 1853, for \$465. In May of the same year H. Goldschmid of the old Imanu-El Congregation turned over \$500 in capital to the treasurer of the B'nai El Congregation. Evidently the B'nai Brith Cemetery on Gravois Road, although not specifically mentioned, was also included in the union.

With the funds available, the realization of the dream of building a synagogue evidently was not too far distant. At the annual meeting in October, 1853, Abraham S. Jacobs was one of the members admitted. Shortly afterwards he offered the committee a lot which pleased the board of directors. In fact the latter recommended the purchase of the lot, and on October 30, 1853, at a special meeting called specifically for this purpose, the thirty-two members present unanimously approved the proposed acquisition. The lot in question was the real estate on Sixth Street, between Cerre and Gratiot, 70 feet front by 75 feet deep to a five foot alley. The price was \$35 per front foot, \$380 cash in down payment, and \$2000 in four years at 6% interest. H. Louis Block, Isidor Bush, and Meyer Friede were nominated as trustees, and delegated to give bond for the amount owed in the Deed of Trust in order to show that the lot or its redemption should always be used for religious purposes. Subscription lists for the first synagogue, or "temple" (as the minutes refer to the proposed structure), were circulated and printed. However,

209 General P-6 Records, p. 253, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

210 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 3, MS.

by December, 1853, no plans had been drafted for the building. In fact the bylaws of the congregation stated that before the beginning of any improvement, the trustees must have available at least two-thirds of the funds necessary for its completion. In December, 1853, \$1500 was in <sup>211</sup> the congregational treasury. Thus members continued to canvass for subscription fees. Aid was sought from Jews and Christians alike. In fact, one list contained the names of Presbyterians, Baptists, Catholics, and others who combined to extend assistance, each in a moderate degree, but in toto, a large sum. This was the first recorded example of brotherhood found to which Jews were a part. According to a contemporary newspaper report, the B'nai El Congregation numbered sixty active members and thirty applicants for membership, whose national components were German and Bohemian. The six or seven hundred Jews in the city in December 1853, thus had <sup>212</sup> a worthy cause at hand.

Meanwhile, the two local Jewish congregations had some intercourse, even though they were on opposite sides of town and dissimilar in their degree of traditional observance. It is noteworthy that in mid-January, 1853, at the first recorded meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation after the B'nai El came into existence, a revised constitution and bylaws was submitted by President Latz to the members without any prior

211 Ibid.

212 St. Louis Intelligencer, December 17, 1853.

notice. The president's unusual action was explained in this manner: It was necessary to accept the document if the unity of the congregation was to be maintained. A committee was ordered to prepare the document,<sup>213</sup> and the revised document was passed at the next meeting two weeks later, as described earlier.<sup>214</sup> Fossibly one new provision in the same constitution, which was noted in October, 1864, was that according to "Article 21th Section 21th" no United Hebrew member could belong at the same time to another congregation or aid the latter either monetarily or otherwise.<sup>215</sup> The coincidence of the apparent hurriedly revised document and the establishment of B'nai El, plus the discovery of the aforementioned article, points to the possibility that one was a natural reaction to the other. It is possible that President A. J. Lutz and others feared an exodus to the now substantially organized B'nai El Congregation.

The contact between the two synagogues ranged from minor discourse to another proposal for a union. In late March, 1853, the United Hebrew requested Mr. Schwarzkopf, the cantor of B'nai El, to serve on a committee with Abraham Weigle, Simon Abeles, and S. Marks to ascertain the

<sup>213</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 105, MS.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>215</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 73, MS.

abilities of shochet candidate Hermann Kohn.

The refusal of a Mr. Pfeiffer to pay a debt of \$25.00 in entirety was the germ which caused discussion between the two synagogues to result two months later. Evidently the debtor figured he could threaten to join the B'nai El Congregation, thus avoiding the full payment of his obligation, and yet hold membership in a synagogue. The incident caused Joseph Kohn to suggest to the secretary the advisability of writing B'nai El not to accept any member of "our Congregation, and particularly Mr. Pfeiffer, unless he promises to pay all his dues and submits a certificate of resignation."<sup>217</sup>

However, the most prolonged recorded contact between these two pioneer congregations resulted from a proposed plan of union. It is unknown if the plan was just another negotiated step along the path proposed in December, 1851, by Isaac Lesser, who proclaimed the feasibility of union. Possibly Lesser's speech made an indelible imprint on the minds of the proponents of the combination. The United Hebrew had been on record previously for such a union, but the combined association had failed to materialize. However, in the early months of 1854, the plan of a union came up a second time, initiated by the young, active, B'nai El Congregation. Why such a plan was proposed at this date is unknown and only open to conjecture. Perhaps, some retained a hope that the

<sup>216</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 108, 109.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 109.





past differences could be resolved. Another interesting possibility concerned the stated need by both congregations to construct their own synagogue. In April, 1854, the United Hebrew President, A. J. Lutz, expressed the desire to build a synagogue in the area close to their Fifth Street location.<sup>218</sup> By the end of the year nothing had materialized along Lutz's proposed line. However, as heretofore mentioned, the B'nai El was already in the midst of an intensive subscription campaign to finance their proposed synagogue in the Sixth Street lot already purchased in south St. Louis. Thus, here was opportunity for each congregation to gain.

On February 12, 1854, at a quarterly meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation, a communication proposing a combination of the two St. Louis synagogues was received from the B'nai El Congregation. This was the first order of business, and a "considerable" discussion prevailed over the proposed union.<sup>219</sup> This resulted in a motion by Mr. Valentine, seconded by H. Block (who had never been identified previously with his namesake at B'nai El), which enabled President Lutz to assume the following responsibility. Through this grant of power, the latter appointed a committee of five men to draw up a set of articles which would enable the two congregations to unite upon "equitable terms."<sup>220</sup>

218 Ibid., 110.

219 Ibid., 117.

220 Ibid.

This important committee was composed of J. Valentine, T. Turk, J. Kohn, A. Newmark, A. Weigle, A. J. Lats, and H. Myers. The selection of Weigle for this urgent and weighty job was complementarily significant, since the latter was making one of his infrequent appearances at the Synagogue meetings due to the distance of his residence, and was thus excused from the fines levied on absentees residing in the city. The committee report and decision was still subject to the approval of the members. A decision was urged as quickly as possible. <sup>221</sup> On a Sunday, exactly two weeks later, February 26, 1854, thirty-one members gathered at a special meeting specifically to hear the result of the seven-man group's labors. Evidently the committee report recommended the adoption of the B'nai El proposal, for the union project was put to a vote, and carried unanimously by a vote of 29 to 0. To accomplish this strongly endorsed move, another five-man committee was appointed, who were made up principally of three ex-presidents, A. Weigle, H. E. Cohen, and J. Mitchell; and Valentine and R. Keller, two active members. As a final action at the meeting, Secretary H. Myers was instructed to inform the directors of the B'nai El Congregation of "the action of this Congregation on the subject of the union." <sup>222</sup>

221 Ibid.

222 Ibid., 118-119.

The B'nai El minutes written in a less detailed manner than the United Hebrew Congregation records disclosed only the United Hebrew's desire for the union. The Board of Directors of the south St. Louis congregation were in agreement with the neighboring congregation. However, a piece of news arrived from New Orleans which probably had much to do with preventing the merger.<sup>223</sup> This was the bequest of the late nationally known Judah Touro, one of the earliest American Jewish philanthropists, who had left the following contribution on January 6, 1854, in his will:<sup>224</sup>

51. I give and bequeath to the Hebrew Congregation  
 \* Bnai El (sic) of St. Louis Missouri three  
 Thousand dollars.<sup>225</sup>

Presumably Isidor Bush was the person responsible for obtaining the contribution.<sup>226</sup> It can be safely assumed that the members were elated by the news reported for the whole community to know in the Daily Missouri Republican on February 6, 1854.<sup>227</sup>

Thus in spite of the fact that such congregational leaders as President Singer, officers Friede, Bush, and Wolff, and ex-President Walters and Jacobs, former owner of the Sixth Street lot, were all for the union, a sufficient number of B'nai El members voted against it. The

223 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 4, MS.

224 Judah Touro's will, as quoted in Schaapes (ed.), A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654-1875, p. 333.

225 Ibid., 339.

226 Bowman and Rosenthal (ed.), "Reminiscences of Samuel Bowman," Modern View, June, 1925, p. 8.

227 Daily Missouri Republican, February 6, 1854.

board, however, did not give up. At the congregational meeting on April 16, 1854, they tried repeatedly, though in vain, to secure a favorable vote for the project. The majority of persons were for the move, as the roll call vote was very close; in fact, it was tied at 22-22, and five affirmative absentee ballots gave the consolidation proposal a majority. This was not enough, however, as a two-thirds vote was necessary. The motion was thus lost, and in the words of the B'nai El minutes, this disapproval by its members ended the opportunity "whereby the Israelite congregation of St. Louis could have soon become one of the largest in the State of the Union."<sup>228</sup> The last union attempt among the two local congregations was at an end. The independence of both synagogues was preserved. In a special meeting on May 21, 1854, the receipt of the \$3000 from the late Touro's executor, Mr. Kurscheidt of New Orleans, was announced by the board of directors, and therefore it was resolved to start building the new synagogue. This fact probably caused more new members to join; so it was not long before the need for larger quarters was apparent, as a temporary place of worship was rented on Seventh Street near Park Avenue in a place called Decker's house.<sup>229</sup>

It appears, with the acquisition of the Touro donation, many members decided that they no longer required the funds or the strength from a merger. However, the sar-

228 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 4, 88.

229 Ibid.

castic comment noted in 1855 by the recorder of the B'nai El minutes that those who criticized the newly constructed building were the same who turned down the proposed union, suggested the still divided sentiment on the matter. <sup>230</sup>

The failure of the consolidation was first recorded by United Hebrew at their regular quarterly meeting on April 23, 1854, one week after B'nai El disapproved the merger. In a token show of pride, Isidor Turk corrected the secretary's impression that the last meeting had given unanimous approval for the union. Turk asserted that he for one voted against the measure, and that it should be recorded as such. <sup>231</sup>

With the false attempts of a merger now history, the United Hebrew had to deal with a problem much closer to home--one that threatened an inglorious end to the existence of the congregation. This was the perplexing question of secession. Internal discontent within the United Hebrew Congregation from the fall of 1854 until the fall of 1855 was the cause of this disruption, which is attributed to certain members disobeying the United Hebrew Constitution, Article Four in particular. <sup>232</sup> As mentioned above, Iats, without prior notice, submitted a revised constitution,

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>231</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 120, 128.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 105.

which he dramatically stated had to be accepted if the union of the congregation was to be maintained.<sup>233</sup> However, since the old original constitution had been revised, altered, and eventually scrapped, it is not definitely known what was the cause of the trouble.

Since the reform movement was under way at this time, one source, writing fifty years after the incident, has stated that the action was the result of the United Hebrew allowing Christian singers in the congregation.<sup>234</sup> However, the faction which broke off from the synagogue has appeared to be, from the perusal of the minutes, a group less strict in traditional observance. At any rate, sometime between May 20 and October 11, 1854,<sup>235</sup> probably nearer the latter date,<sup>236</sup> a dispute of so serious a nature came to a head, and not being resolved, a minority of the members established a new synagogue<sup>237</sup> named the Adas Yeshurun Congregation.<sup>238</sup> This group grew as large as twenty-five members during its short life.

233 Ibid., 125.

234 Bienenstock, "St. Louis Jewish Institutions," American Israelite, May 28, 1908, p. 11.

235 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 123, 125, MS.

236 Leeser, "St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1855, p. 527.

237 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 131, MS.

238 Leeser, "St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1855, p. 527.

The first indication of secession trouble was on October 11, at the annual meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation, when the first order of business was a motion by J. Turk that seven members' names "be erased from the roll for acting contrary to Article 4 of the Constitution."<sup>239</sup> The twenty-three members in attendance signified their assent in sufficient numbers so that the motion was carried.<sup>240</sup> As mentioned previously, a decade later one particular constitutional passage forbade members to belong to any other synagogue besides the United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>241</sup> It is open to speculation whether these seven men fell into this category of dual allegiance. The ire of these members in attendance at the yearly meeting was such that for the first time in their young history they passed a motion designed to refuse the congregational shochet the right to kill for anyone but members, and, of course, for poor persons who had to have the written permission of the trustees. Violation of these instructions by the ritual slaughterer was tantamount to forfeiture of his contract. A butcher committee was also appointed, possibly to make sure that the restrictions would remain in force.

The officers who were to bear the burden during this eventful year were elected as follows: President A. J. Latz

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<sup>239</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 125, NE.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 73, NE.

and Treasurer Joseph Kohn, who received unanimous votes of confidence; and trustees R. Keiler, J. Valentine, and M. Samuel.<sup>242</sup> On Friday, December 8, 1854, Rabbi Leeser returned to St. Louis for a short stay registering at the Barnum Hotel,<sup>243</sup> which was located on the northeast corner of Second and Walnut (a spot once the site of the Paul House, where the United Hebrew Congregation had met several times during the first year and a half of their early history).<sup>244</sup> On Sunday, December 10, two days later, he delivered<sup>245</sup> a very eloquent speech at the United Hebrew Congregation to which all the Israelites of St. Louis were invited. The latter met the following Sunday to pass a resolution of "our humble endorsement and appreciation" of the "eminent" Rev. Leeser, who was described as a "useful ornament to the house of Israel."<sup>246</sup> This was placed in the local Daily Missouri Republican and the Jewish papers in the United States.<sup>247</sup> What the purpose of Leeser's venture and the content of his speech in the city is not known; however, if it was to dissuade the Adas Yeshurun from its path it met with failure. For on this

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>243</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, December 8, 1854.

<sup>244</sup> Saint Louis Directory for the Years 1854-5, p. 230.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., December 10, 1854.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., December 17, 1854.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.



same Sunday, December 10, 1854, Lesser reported that "a number of gentlemen" formed a constitution for the new congregation which they had "lately organized."<sup>248</sup> At this meeting they elected a president, Abraham Newmark, and the following other officers: A. S. Myers, treasurer; H. Myers, secretary, pro tem; L. Waldstein, B. Lithauer, L. M. Prince, J. Turk and B. S. Rosenthal, trustees. Of interest is the fact that with its five trustees this new congregation had more officers with its small membership than the larger mother congregation, the United Hebrew. Otherwise, all elective positions were the same.<sup>249</sup> A further indication of their activity and independence from the mother congregation was the purchase of their own cemetery, which was located in Central Township<sup>250</sup> about eight miles out of the city.<sup>251</sup> By these acts the Adas Yeshurun demonstrated and served notice that its protest could be of a prolonged nature. Whether it was the realization of this fact or some other reason, the mother congregation soon relented in April, 1855, and relaxed its harsh rule by abolishing its previous refusal to allow the shochet to kill for non-members.<sup>252</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Lesser, "St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1855, p. 527.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>250</sup> Scharf, History of Saint Louis City and County, II, 1739.

<sup>251</sup> Estimate of distance from St. Louis western boundary to the synagogue's Mt. Olive Cemetery.

<sup>252</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 128, MS.

Within five months all was harmony, and a reunion of the two congregations under the same name of the United Hebrew Congregation occurred.<sup>253</sup> What specifically caused the return was not acknowledged, except for the statement that the difference of opinion was resolved.<sup>254</sup> However, the following incidents were noted beginning with the restoration of the shochet privilege. At that same quarterly meeting of April 15, 1855, the next recorded items of business were the announcements that Orthodox Rabbi Illoway's contract would not be renewed, although this statement was never reported as passed; and the first acknowledgement that a committee should revise the prayers so as to eliminate what could be dispensed with.<sup>257</sup> Two months later discussion was begun,<sup>258</sup> and a site selected and recommended for purchase for the building of a new synagogue.<sup>259</sup> Also the fact that the Achduth Israel congregation definitely needed a new cemetery,<sup>260</sup> and naturally desired money to finance this project from a large membership,

253 Ibid., 133.

254 Ibid., 131.

255 Ibid., 128.

256 Illoway, The Controversial Letters and the Casuistic Decisions of the Late Rabbi Bernard Illoway Ph.D., 15.

257 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 128, MB.

258 Ibid., 129.

259 Ibid., 130.

260 Ibid., 127.

hardly could have been overlooked. Therefore in August, 1855, the United Hebrew swallowed its pride and initiated action which resulted in the reunion and admittance with full membership of the rebellious faction, which, according to one source, had grown to twenty-five members.<sup>261</sup> At a special meeting called on August 5, 1855, specifically to discuss the congregation's financial affairs and its adequacy to purchase a selected piece of ground, a definite move was made for reunion. Immediately after the object of the call had been discussed and a committee appointed to purchase a certain plot of land, the Adas Yeshurun Congregation problem was opened for discussion. Apparently the difference of opinion was practically dissolved. S. L. Moses offered the following preamble and resolution which was readily seconded by Simon Abeles:

Whereas....

A difference of opinion and feeling existed between a minority and the major part of the UHC which caused the said minority to withdraw, the object under which aroused this suspicion is about to be and will be removed and as it is the desire of all true loving Israelites to live and act always in a state of equanimity good fellowship and unity and, it is our purpose to ask all that is reasonable, without sacrificing dignity or pride. Be it thereupon

Resolved

That any and all the members forming the Congregation Known as Adas Yeshurun shall receive notices and summons to return to us as members receiving all benefits of such membership as those who have acquired the same by written application and initiatory fee

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261 Bienenstock, loc. cit., 11.

## Resolved

That a committee of three be appointed to ascertain from such as the whole of the members of said Cong. as will receive...said notice or summons and that a special meeting will be held by the UHC two weeks previous to the holy days to receive all those who may come in by said notice or summons.

## Resolved

That in the event the above resolutions are acceded to that all resolutions appertaining to the minority who left shall be expunged from the minutes.<sup>262</sup>

The resolutions were unanimously approved and adopted by the following twenty-one members who were present at the meeting: Abeles, Mitchell, Rozinski, Marks, Morris, Flahto, Schwartz, Isaacs, Block, Kohn, Kieler, Emanuel, Samuels, Valentine, L. M. Gumperson, Myer, L. Lats, J. Davis, Moses, and A. J. Lats, N. Gumperson.<sup>263</sup>

A copy of the request for reunion was to be sent to the Adas Yeshurun Congregation. The committee appointed to negotiate with them was composed of three officers; President Lats, Treasurer Joseph Kohn, and Secretary Moses.<sup>264</sup>

Two weeks later, on August 19, 1855, an adjourned meeting was called to announce the good news that the committee had adjusted all the differences, and a union was consummated satisfactorily to all parties. Then the resolutions of the

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<sup>262</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 130-131, MS.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

Adas Yeshurun Congregation were read and harmoniously received by all present, according to Secretary Moses, in "a true spirit of socialism."<sup>265</sup> The committee of United Hebrew officers had successfully accomplished their intended purpose, and strengthened the congregation for the growth yet to come.

This new harmony existing in the congregation was to be published in the "Jewish papers."<sup>266</sup> A further indication that all was well, was the election results voted in the presence of thirty-Eight members.<sup>267</sup> the largest recorded attendance in the history of the congregation, fifteen more<sup>268</sup> than the previous year's annual meeting. President A. J. Latz and Treasurer Kohn were re-elected by acclamation, while two of the three newly elected trustees were former officers of the Adas Yeshurun, former President Abraham Newmark and his treasurer, A. S. Myers. The latter likewise consented to act as the new United Hebrew secretary until such time as a suitable person could be found. Thereupon, whether by coincidence due to the definite need, or as a further concession to the returnees; a measure proposing five trustees was suggested and approved. A concluding note of good feeling was the members approval of a vote of

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265 Ibid., 133.

266 Ibid., 134.

267 Ibid., 135.

268 Ibid., 125.

thanks to the past year's officers who had weathered the split for their "unceasing and indefatigable exertions in endeavoring to promote the welfare of this Congregation."<sup>269</sup>

With the addition of the former members, attendance suddenly increased at meetings. Since there were few members joining during the year of secession, the consistently high attendance numbering in the thirties and forties for the next several meetings was evidence of the increased participation the settlement achieved. With the addition of more members beginning in April, 1856, <sup>the</sup> attendance rarely dropped below twenty-five the remainder of the period of this thesis, eventually achieving the aforementioned total of sixty-one members as the high mark in October, 1859.<sup>270</sup> Unconsciously, the fall, 1855, spurt was the turning point in the inducement of more consistently regular attendance. Thus a stronger, more cohesive United Hebrew was the result both of the congregation's survival from the disappointment of the two attempts at union from without, and the destructive threat of two feuding factions who united within the synagogue. The added strength was welcome as the United Hebrew faced three problems: (1) Deciding whether to find a replacement to fill the vacancy left by the congregation's first Rabbi, Bernard Illowy; (2) the financing and erection of the first United Hebrew Synagogue; and (3) the necessity of securing a new cemetery.

269 Ibid., 135-136.

270 Ibid., 133-170.

The first of these problems, the hiring of a rabbi, has never been an absolute requirement for an orthodox synagogue. The omission of such a religious leader from the United Hebrew Congregation was neither mentioned in the synagogue's constitution nor in the congregational meetings as a necessity until January 26, 1849. Even at this second congregational meeting in the new Fifth street synagogue, there was no certainty that a rabbi was desired. However, the United Hebrew minutes do record the following:

Resolved that the Secy be authorized to write to the following places and persons concerning \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. To the Rev. S. M. Isaacs, New Rev. Isaac Leeser, Philadelphia and to New Orleans. Stating to each and everyone of those persons he wrote to the...salary that our Congregation can afford...for their services.<sup>271</sup>

Nothing more was said on the subject for a time. While the above blank spaces do stir the curiosity, the secretary never explained the omission. Possibly it was related to the next order of business at this same meeting which concerned the hiring of a shochet.<sup>272</sup> However, at the regular quarterly meeting on April 23, 1854, the synagogue hinted that it was considering hiring a rabbi, and made plans to secure their object. The latter desire came about in an unusual way. The secretary of the United Hebrew stated that it

appearing that the attempts of this Congregation to form an union with the B'nai El proving unsuccessful it was thereon moved by Simon Abeles and

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271 Ibid., 74.

272 Ibid.

sec. by J. Valentine that a subscription list be formed for the purpose of gaining the services of a Talented Lecturer which was agreed to and the members present subscribed their names and amounts pr. List in hands of the Treasurer J. Kohn.<sup>273</sup>

The immediate pledge of amounts to the subscription list and the subsequent decision to approach personally the absentees for their contribution in this behalf <sup>274</sup> indicate the synagogue's earnestness to hire a religious leader as soon as possible. Two weeks later, on Sunday, May 7, 1854, twenty-eight members gathered to discuss this matter. After reaffirming their previous decision to engage the services of a "minister and lecturer" and discussing the subject further, it was decided to advertise in the Jewish journals that the congregation would pay the desired person \$1000 per year. <sup>275</sup> The president appointed a committee to compose a suitable advertisement. This notice was reported at a meeting two weeks later. The resolution accepted by the members read as follows:

Moved to issue a call in the principal American, English, and German Jewish periodicals for the acquisition of a preacher and teacher of religion, and reader for the yearly salary of 1000 that he shall be master of both the English and German language.<sup>276</sup>

One of the periodicals spreading this news was Isaac Leeser's Occident. Besides carrying the above advertisement, this

273 Ibid., 120.

274 Ibid.

275 Ibid., 121.

276 Ibid., 123.



magazine contained the following item on the synagogue's search:

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.- Here, too, light is sought for. The old congregation (Polish Minhag) desire to engage a competent preacher, at a good salary. Though the number capable for this service is very small, still we trust that the people may not long seek in vain for a proper guide. (See advertisement.)<sup>277</sup>

Rev. Dr. Bernard Illowy was one of those desiring the position. Whether he was already hired or was only here as an applicant, Rev. Illowy was in the city by August 19, 1854. The United Hebrew placed an advertisement in the Daily Missouri Republican for three successive days publicizing the appearance of the rabbi at the congregation:

Religious Notice - Rev. Dr. Illowy, from Philadelphia, will deliver, at the Synagogue, of the United Hebrew Congregation, Fifth between Green and (Washington) Morgan streets, on Saturday the 19th inst. at 8 o'clock a.m., a sermon in German; and on Sunday, the 20th inst., at 4 o'clock, p.m., a lecture in the English language. All Israelites and friends of their cause are respectfully invited to attend.

A. J. Latz,  
President of U. H. C.<sup>278</sup>

Illowy, who had been the orthodox preacher of the Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Philadelphia, fitted the linguistic qualifications the position demanded. Possibly he was brought to St. Louis primarily for a tryout, and if considered capable, he was to be hired for the High Holy days which occurred in

<sup>277</sup> Leiser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, July, 1854, p. 230.

<sup>278</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 18, 1854.

the early fall of each year. Evidently he made a sufficiently good impression, as he was chosen "preacher and school superintendent" of the Achduth Israel by October, 1854.<sup>279</sup> A perusal of the early minutes of both the United Hebrew and B'nai El Congregation disclosed that forty-year-old Bernard Illowy had become the first person selected to fill the position of rabbi in St. Louis. This was also a compliment to the growth of the United Hebrew Congregation, representing a milestone in its young history.

This first rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation was the descendant of a family distinguished for its talmudic learning and its piety. The first of whom there is record was his great-grandfather, Rabbi Phineas Illowy, who resided in Ungarish-Brod, province of Moravia, Empire of Austria. He apparently was Haus-Bobbe, or private chaplain, to the banker Emanuel Oppenheim, the son of the Court Jew Samuel Oppenheim, and in his day the foremost influential Israelite in the whole Austrian Empire. Illowy's son, Rabbi Jacob Illowy, was called from Moravia to the rabbinate of the city of Kolin, Kaurssim, the second largest congregation in the kingdom of Bohemia. As was the custom then, the occupant of the rabbinical chair also became, by virtue of his office, the presiding officer of the Beth Din,

<sup>279</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, October 1854, p. 376; Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 26, MS.

or Jewish Law Court. This grandfather of the United Hebrew Rabbi B. Illowy was a great scholar, profoundly versed in the learning of the rabbis. However, he had other honors to recommend him, as he conducted a Yeshivah, or School of Higher Learning, and wrote original voluminous elucidations and explanations of the Talmud, which, up to recent years(1914), were yet in manuscript.

The third rabbi in the Illowy family, Rabbi Jacob Judah Illowy, was the father of Bernard Illowy. Jacob Illowy, like his fathers before him, was a man well grounded in the Torah, a thorough Talmudic scholar, and moreover, was possessed of much secular learning. Though he practiced this profession only in his younger years, he was regarded as one of the most distinguished members of the Jewish community. Although not professionally a teacher, he always had a number of pupils, young men whom he instructed not only in Mishnah and Talmud (though this was the sole purpose of his having pupils), but also in some branches of secular learning, more especially mathematics and German. With such a rich Jewish heritage, it was almost inevitable that the first rabbi in St. Louis should have had little doubt of his chosen profession. Bernard Illowy was born in Kolin, Bohemia, probably in 1814, although his Austrian passport listed 1812 as the year of his birth. Illowy received a thorough education in both religious and secular subjects. He received his early religious education in the Mishna and Talmud from his father. He completed his theological studies in Pressburg, Hungary, in the famous

rabbinical school of <sup>280</sup> the world renowned sage, the Ch'sam  
 Sofer; or <sup>281</sup> by his official title, Rabbi Moses Sofer, from  
 whom he received the Hattarat Horaah degree. He pursued  
 further religious training in the rabbinical school of Padua,  
 Italy. His secular training was not neglected either, for  
 he attended the University of Budapest, Hungary, where he  
 received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. With such a  
 well-rounded education, Illowy was ready to put his training  
 to work.

Bernard Illowy's life was devoted to teaching and  
 preaching. For some years after his graduation he was engaged  
 in the former profession. One of his earlier positions was as  
 a tutor to the son of a high official in the city of Znaim.  
 The position in that city was an unusual occurrence, for, at  
 the time, and many years thereafter, no Jew was allowed to  
 have permanent residence in the city, and, in fact, merchants  
 and traders were only allowed to visit and stay three days.  
 The segregation was complete, as a Jew was licensed to keep  
 a restaurant and hotel on the outskirts of Znaim to accom-  
 modate the Jewish business men. In the same city, Illowy  
 occupied yet another position--Professor of French and  
German in the Gynnasium for young women in the upper class  
of society. Yet the thirty-one year old teacher interrupted

280 Illowy, op. cit., 12-13.

281 Flaks, Brocho L'Menachem, 25.

his work for a time, about the year 1845, when he married Katherine, the daughter of Wolf Shiff, a prominent merchant of Raudnitz, Bohemia. Due to a political complication, Illowy was precluded from filling a rabbinical position in his native land or throughout Europe. It seemed that in 1848 the Bohemians joined in the widespread revolt of that year. The force of circumstances compelled Illowy to deliver an address to the revolutionary army as it passed through his home town of Kolin on its way to the capital, Prague. Besides this political "mistake," he was also discovered in another liberal episode. Upon his return from a journey to France, his baggage was rummaged and a seal with the revolutionary inscription, "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite," was discovered. Since he was prevented from accepting a rabbinical position in his native land, he accepted a call to Cassel, Germany, as a candidate for the position of Chief Rabbi of the Principality of Hessen. The congregations of the whole electorate unanimously favored his selection, but the then Minister of the Interior, Hassenpflug (nicknamed Hassenfluch), who, according to Rabbi Illowy's son, was a "man of most reactionary tendencies whose whole aim was the reestablishment of a medieval Germany," refused to sanction his election, because of his aforementioned involvement in the Revolution of 1848.

Due to the reaction from his political venture in this Revolution, Illowy decided that life in the United States would be more inviting. He arrived in this country, and filled seven positions as a rabbi in American congregations, only two of which were held prior to his entrance into St. Louis Jewish history.<sup>283</sup> A few days after his arrival in New York, the previously discussed Dr. Isaac M. Wise, who was a countryman of Illowy's, came down from Albany, and visited with the new immigrant rabbi at the latter's boarding house. They had a long discussion lasting far into the night, on the subject of Reform and Wise's program for Reform. Their talk lasted far into the night and early morning. Wise and Illowy became fast friends, on intimate terms almost from the start. Yet Illowy engaged the greater part of his time in an active feud with the leaders of Reform, although his personal relations with them were of the pleasantest and friendliest nature.<sup>284</sup> This was largely due to the fact that in his controversies he never resorted to personalities, though, in his son's words,<sup>285</sup> "the other side was not always as considerate on this point."

Illowy accepted an appointment at the Shaare Tzedek (Gates of Righteousness) Congregation in New York. However, on February 4, 1853, he resigned his position. His next step

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283 Ibid.

284 Ibid., 28-29.

285 Ibid., 28.

was the Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Philadelphia.

Three months after leaving his New York position, Rabbi Illowy, or Illoway as his name was sometimes signed, agreed to perform the duties of superintendent and lecturer at this Philadelphia synagogue. Since these were approximately his duties at the United Hebrew Congregation, it might be interesting to note the contract Illowy signed in May, 1853; with the Rodeph Shalom Congregation:

I, the undersigned, bind myself to fulfill the following articles of agreement made between me and the O.E. German Hebrew Congregation Rodef Shalom.

First. To be every day in attendance at the school at 5 o'clock P.M. unless otherwise instructed by the President or school directors of this Congregation.

Second. To attend school every Sabbath and Holy days from two to five o'clock P.M., if not otherwise instructed by the President or School directors of this Congregation. Also on Sunday mornings, holy days excepted from nine to eleven o'clock.

Three. To keep a correct list of scholars attending and absent.

Fourth. To be at all times present in the Synagogue previous to commencement of services and to perform Services if so instructed by the Pres. of the Congregation.

Fifth. To deliver a discourse in the German language whenever requested by the Pres. of this Congregation.

Sixth. Not to perform the ceremony of marriage unless authorized by the President of this Congregation.

Seventh. I will attend to all other duties appertaining to the office of teacher.

Should I fail to perform the duties assigned to me or misconduct myself I shall be liable to suspension in accordance with art. 9, Sec 10 by laws.

In the performance of the above duties the congregation bind themselves to their part to pay to the undersigned, the sum of Three hundred dollars per annum from the day of this congregation's general election.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal,

Witness present;  
B. Greenwald

Philadelphia, May 1, 1853  
Dr. B. L. Illoway.<sup>287</sup>

While in this position Rabbi Illoway ran into some difficulty. In the early part of 1854 various rumors were circulated concerning the religious practices of Rabbi Illoway. It is amazing to learn that in April of that year, the following charges were brought against him:

1. That Dr. Illoway does not lay 'T'fillen phylacteries which must be placed upon the head and arm by the traditional Jewish male, thirteen or over, every morning except Saturday and all holy days;<sup>288</sup>
2. That on the days of his mourning for his mother, he did not say Kaddish a prayer of mourning to be repeated at all services each day.
3. That he had eaten of a goose that had not been made strictly Kosher.
4. That he had not properly observed the first day of Suceoth.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> As quoted in Davis, The History of Rodeph Shalom Congregation Philadelphia, 1802-1926, pp. 70-21.

<sup>288</sup> Phylacteries or Tefillin which every male Jew, thirteen and over, must wear on his left arm and forehead daily except the Sabbath and High Holy days.

<sup>289</sup> As quoted in Davis, op. cit., 74.



A trial was held, and conducted by the Board of Directors,  
 and witnesses were called pro and con;<sup>290</sup> and after a careful  
 investigation, the Board held that the rumors were without  
 foundation.<sup>291</sup> Dr. Illoway stated during the trial in his own  
 defense that it was the "duty of every Jew who pretends to be  
 one to lay Tefillen; and he hopes that the Board will not  
 have the least doubt that he always has fulfilled his duties."<sup>292</sup>  
 The answer satisfied the congregation to the extent that  
 Illoway was re-elected, although through a constitutional tech-  
 nicality. However, this term lasted but a short time, for on  
 June 25, 1854, he delivered his farewell sermon in German to  
 the congregation.<sup>293</sup> This was just a month after the United  
 Hebrew Congregation had, as mentioned previously, indicated  
 their desire to hire a rabbi. In the intervening period bet-  
 ween June 25 and October, 1854, Illoway accepted the United  
 Hebrew offer.<sup>294</sup> Whether the latter's aforementioned salary  
 figure of \$1000 per annum was satisfactory to both parties  
 involved is not known; however, if it was acceptable, it was  
 not equal to the \$1500 received by Isaac H. Wise in Cincin-  
 nati, who had just been the first American rabbi elected for  
 life.<sup>295</sup> The salary was also considerably below the \$2000

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290 Ibid.

291 Ibid., 151.

292 Ibid., 150.

293 Ibid., 74.

294 Illoway, op. cit., 14.

295 Wise, Reminiscences, 237.

received by Rabbi Morris J. Raphael of the B'nai Jehshurun Congregation in 1850, which was the most munificent salary received by any Jewish preacher in the country.<sup>296</sup>

Dr. Illoway was known as an eminent Talmudist and a thorough scholar. He was a strict adherent, in principles and practice, of orthodox Judaism and, according to his son, "from this he never swerved."<sup>297</sup> He preached it in the pulpit, taught it to the children in the congregational schools which he always established wherever he officiated, and championed it in a fierce polemic warfare,<sup>298</sup> extending over many years, with the leaders of the Reform movement.<sup>299</sup> He also stressed in his writings that need for strict enforcement of the biblical and rabbinical law in the United States, sometimes seeking the endorsement of a European rabbi to settle the disputes.<sup>300</sup> He had the distinction of being among his contemporaries in this country the only rabbi with both a thorough Talmudic education and a university training to stand for the cause of orthodoxy. Israel J. Benjamin, a noted German Jewish traveler in the United States from 1859 to 1862, was also impressed by Illoway's learning. The former stated that Illoway was well-versed in Hebrew, the Talmud, and Jewish literature, and thus was among the few leading learned orthodox rabbis in the

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296 Goldstein, A Century of Judaism in New York, 112.

297 Illoway, op. cit., 15.

298 Ibid.

299 Kisch, In Search of Freedom, 86.

300 Illoway, op. cit., 15.

United States who, on the whole, were far from the elite class. Dr. Raphall, to be discussed later, was also at the top of the list of orthodox rabbis. Rabbi Wise was considered one of the most educated of the rabbis heading the eight Reform congregations in the United States in or about 1860. Also Rev. Kuttner, to be discussed in Chapter Six, was complimented on his capabilities by Benjamin.<sup>301</sup>

Illoway was a powerful and fascinating speaker, as well as a convincing preacher. His ministrations were so successful that his synagogue was frequently filled to capacity on the Sabbath.<sup>302</sup> His sermons were all religious and moral lessons; he taught these lessons as they came in the Bible by rote, and did not pass over or skip a matter just because it might give offense to any member of the congregation. He demonstrated this same fearlessness of speech and sincere faith in his convictions by his persistent preaching of the necessity of religious observance, especially keeping the Sabbath.<sup>303</sup> Yet, a sprightly anecdote was frequently woven into the discourse on the Midrash with the art of the practiced orator, so that his listeners never became wearied. This can be attested by the following very unique compliment paid him by his congregation. Speaking until the sundown would bring the Holy fast day of Yom Kippur to an end, Rabbi Illoway was urged by the worshippers to continue his talk even after the fasting congre-

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301 Benjamin, op. cit., 55, 361.

302 Illoway, op. cit., 15.

303 Ibid., 20

gation noticed the nightfall.<sup>304</sup> This was a real tribute for the rabbi.

On ordinary Sabbaths he usually preached for three quarters of an hour, and not infrequently, an hour and even more. On the days when prayers were longer, twenty minutes to a half an hour was sufficient. At no time was the complaint made that he talked at too great length; on the contrary, he was not infrequently told that he was too brief. If, as occasionally happened, he preached a short sermon, his members would gather about him after the service and ask him if he were not feeling well.<sup>305</sup> Many of his English sermons and addresses were published both in the denominational and the daily press. He was an accomplished linguist; he was thoroughly versed in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and spoke fluently German, English, French, and Italian. His command of Hebrew was remarkable, and some of his polemical letters written in that language were cited as models of elegance in Hebrew composition.

He had at one time planned a large work on the ceremonies of the Jewish religion, and had mapped out the ground work. However, the duties of an orthodox rabbinate--the teaching in and supervision of the schools, and the controversies concerning Reform--left him little or no time for any-<sup>306</sup> thing else, and he was compelled to abandon the project.

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304 Ibid., 21-22.

305 Ibid., 20-21.

306 Ibid., 15-16.

Most impressive of all was his sincere and conscientious attitude, and his high regard toward the rabbinate. He believed a rabbi must possess eight qualifications to properly fill this holy office:

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1. A man filled with the knowledge of the Torah; whose fear and love of God is even greater than his learning; whose tongue knows not deceit and his lips flattery.
2. A man who shall know how to decide whatever religious questions may arise so that he can teach the children of Israel the path they must walk in, that they may not be as a flock without a shepherd.
3. A man of spotless character, elevated in purity above his fellows, who will not dare to bring strange fire into the temple of the God of Israel.
4. A man of clear and fluent speech whose evident sincerity will carry conviction to the hearts of his hearers.
5. A man who shall know how to praise for deeds well done, and how to reprove the sinner with words of loving kindness so that he may be brought back to the path of duty.
6. A man who hates gain as did Moses, loves peace as did Aaron, is as tolerant as was Hillel, and as zealous in the service of the Lord as was Phineas, the priest; who bears with love the yoke of the Torah and of the community.
7. A man who will not set up his house 'on the highest peaks nor in the lowest of valleys' (who will not be so filled with pride as to know only the rich, nor so humble as to bring disrespect upon his office, but will be accessible to all rich and poor, and have a kind word and a willing ear even for the humblest of his flock).
8. A man who knows not fear and dares to speak the truth at all times; who will also take upon

himself the higher duty, the supervision of the school and the teaching of the Torah and its commandments to the children of his flock.<sup>308</sup>

Although an observant Jew, he made no display of his piety; in fact, he had a dislike, or rather a distrust, of those who did. The Rev. and Mrs. Illowy had at least one son, Henry. The latter described his father's personality in the following manner:

He was of a most agreeable disposition, and always ready to participate in the festivities of his parishioners. He visited his members socially--he made it a point to do so--and was everywhere a most welcome guest, for he was a brilliant conversationalist and his interest in all the questions of the day, his extensive and varied reading, and his great fund of anecdote... made these visits pleasurable events. No doubt this greatly added to his influence in promoting religious life and religious observance--especially Keshruth, as many a word thus spoken in the home fell upon fruitful ground and bore good fruit.<sup>309</sup>

The kindly rabbi <sup>310</sup> was generally held in high esteem by the community at large. <sup>311</sup> Possibly one reason for this was his charitableness, as dictated by Jewish sages, to both his co-religionists and those of other faiths. <sup>312</sup>

While in St. Louis, Rabbi Illowy divided his services between the United Hebrew Congregation and the B'nai El Synagogue. However, most of his duties were with the former. His duties

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308 Ibid., 10.

309 Illowy, op. cit., 22.

310 Ibid., 23.

311 Ibid., 26.

312 Ibid., 28.

here were manifold. First of all, plans were made to establish a school under Illowy's direction.<sup>313</sup> Besides his function as a teacher, the rabbi performed marriages. One particular ceremony might be mentioned due to the poetical description of the event in the notice published in the local press:

Married

On the 26th of July, by the Rev. Mr. Illowy,  
Mr. H. Greenwood, of California, to Miss  
Louisa Block, of St. Louis.

That clergymen are Illo'ways  
Tis folly to deny,  
Their deeds of vensure or of praise  
Oft meet the public eye.  
But that marriage band like this  
Should nerves and feelings shock  
If Greenwood dares to have a kiss  
His head comes to the Block.<sup>314</sup>

Of course, Illowy preached various sermons in the congregation on both Sabbath and on holidays. One address occurred on Saturday, December 9, 1854, when Rabbi Isaac Leeser was in the city and in attendance. He reported to his readers in the Occident that "it gives us pleasure to state that the Rev. gentleman displayed therein a remarkable degree of readiness to handle the language of the country, especially if we consider the short time which elapsed since his arrival among us."<sup>315</sup>

<sup>313</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 126, MS.

<sup>314</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, July 28, 1855.

<sup>315</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January 1855, p. 527.

Three weeks later, on Sunday afternoon, December 31, 1854, he delivered a talk again at the United Hebrew Synagogue on Fifth Street at 2 P. M. on the "Maccabees."<sup>316</sup> The subject suggests the occasion was the holiday of Chanukah commemorating the efforts of the Maccabees in leading the oppressed Israelites in successfully driving out the occupation Greek forces and reestablishing freedom for the Jews in 176 B.C. Public events were an occasion for Illowy to demonstrate his oratorical habits. The Governor of Missouri had requested that May 31, 1855, be a day of Thanksgiving, fasting and prayer with no labor. The United Hebrew obeyed the message by advertising a service for the day at 4 P. M., when Dr. Illowy was to preach a sermon in German.<sup>317</sup> It appears that the latter was the prominent language of the time for a local Jewish sermon as it was used again when Dr. I. M. Wise came to St. Louis on a trip in the summer of 1855, and gave a discourse to the congregation in that tongue.<sup>318</sup> Rabbi Illowy was also a participant in a local historic event. He made a German speech at the ceremony commemorating the laying of the cornerstone of the first constructed B'nai El Synagogue in the middle of April, 1855. At the conclusion of his sermon, the cornerstone was lowered and fixed permanently upon its place.<sup>319</sup> On Friday afternoon

316 Daily Missouri Republican, December 31, 1854.

317 Ibid., May 31, 1855.

318 Wise, Reminiscences, 296.

319 Daily Missouri Republican, April 17, 1855.



September 7, during the same year, the consecration of this new synagogue was held. Again Dr. Illowy appeared and gave the "speech of the day" in German.<sup>320</sup> Thus the first rabbi in St. Louis participated in the dedication of the city's first building actually constructed as a synagogue, which Lesser's Occident described as the "first erected west of the Mississippi east of the Rocky Mountains."<sup>321</sup>

Bernard Illowy soon fell into disfavor with the United Hebrew Congregation. About the time of the B'nai El cornerstone laying ceremony, the Ahduth Israel had a quarterly meeting where a motion was made to relieve the synagogue's rabbi of his services at the expiration of his term. The minutes do not record the result of the motion, but the next order of business was to appoint a committee to revise the prayers so as to eliminate what could be dispensed with. Dr. Illowy was appointed to serve on this seven-man committee.<sup>322</sup> Whether this matter of prayers was connected with the suggestion of the rabbi's dismissal is not definitely known. However, on June 27, 1855, at the next regular meeting of the United Hebrew, things had reached a point where Rabbi Bernard Illowy handed in his resignation, which was accepted. Evidently the resignation was not effective immediately, for a letter from Illowy was received at this same meeting requesting

<sup>320</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 7, MS.

<sup>321</sup> Lesser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, October 1855, p. 369.

<sup>322</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 126, MS.

that he be allowed to read the services on the first day of Rosh Hashonah (New Year) at the B'nai El Congregation. After considerable debate, Illowy was given permission to lead the service the second day of the holiday.<sup>323</sup> However the B'nai El minutes reported that Illowy was engaged for the "holidays";<sup>324</sup> so possibly his engagement with the United Hebrew Congregation had come to an end. At any rate, his name never again appeared in the latter synagogue's available records. For some reason, Rev. Illowy's name never appeared in the local directory. It is only known that Mr. Simon Kohn, a member of the United Hebrew, presented the congregation in late January, 1855, with a bill for eight days board for B. Illowy and his family.<sup>325</sup> Thus ended the St. Louis career of the congregation's lone rabbi for the period of this thesis. While other cantors may have been employed and delivered speeches in the synagogue, none were specifically engaged as a "preacher and teacher of religion," as only Bernard Illowy had been.<sup>326</sup>

Possibly one of the reasons why the congregation did not employ a rabbi to take Illowy's place was because they were so engrossed, financially and otherwise, with the plans to erect a new synagogue like their southtown neighbor, the B'nai El Congregation had done. The plans for this project, and its completion, discussed almost from the beginning of the

323 Ibid., 129.

324 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 7, MS.

325 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 127, MS.

326 Ibid., 123.

congregation's life, took up most of the years during the latter part of the period of this thesis. It was the second problem the rejuvenated congregation had to face.

From the time of the organization of the United Hebrew Congregation in 1841 one of the prime aims foremost in the minds of the members of the society was to erect a synagogue. This dream did not come true until June, 1859. But prior to 1853 the idea was nothing more than a dream.

Starting with the original United Hebrew Constitution, references were made to the erection of a synagogue in the Preamble and Article Two of the document. The Preamble, quoted earlier, contained the phrase that they were "in hopes through this beginning to be enabled in the course of a few years, to build a Synagogue to be dedicated to the most High"<sup>327</sup> This hope was repeated more specifically in Article Two, which began in this manner: "The object of establishing this congregation is to raise funds for the purpose of purchasing a site or lot for the erection and building of a place of worship for persons belonging to our persuasion."<sup>328</sup> It is noteworthy that this aim was the first one listed, even though the payment for the cemetery then recently obtained required immediate attention.

Thus, the intent of the founders as incorporated in their laws was expressed in favor of the erection of a synagogue. Evidently nothing could be done during the early

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327 Ibid., 1.

328 Ibid., 1-2.

years; however, the above words were not forgotten. On December 24, 1843, Alexander Lewis, an earnest advocate of the idea, suggested that a committee be appointed "to select and purchase a suitable piece of ground to build a synagogue."<sup>329</sup> President Emanuel then appointed Lewis, Saul Jacobs, Nathan Abeles, and Moses Morris to the first committee organized to accomplish the purpose Lewis had proposed. However, the members rejected Lewis's proposal that subscriptions be solicited from the different congregations in the United States to aid the project. Possibly this indicated that the members were not ready to go ahead with the scheme until there was further investigation. For immediately after discussing the proposition a committee was appointed to secure a suitable room.<sup>330</sup> A month and a half later, in early February, 1844, the synagogue lot committee reported that they had attended to their duty, and were able to secure a lot on the corner of Tenth and Locust streets, for \$40 a foot. At the time, this location was near the western city limits of St. Louis. This report was received, and the committee was discharged.<sup>331</sup> Nothing more was said of the project; so apparently the lot was never purchased.

Yet in the fall of 1844, the secretary of the congregation wrote Isaac Lesser's Occident that the synagogue had a

329 Ibid., 40.

330 Ibid.

331 Ibid., 41.

lot under consideration and had enough money to purchase it.<sup>332</sup> Yet, again nothing more was said of the proposition; so by omission of any recorded action on the project, it can be assumed the plan died a natural death.

While little was done, the idea of constructing a synagogue was not entirely dismissed. For the third time in this early period, there was record of the proposition recurring. This time a more concrete plan was organized. On January 2, 1848, a meeting was called at the house of President Mark Samuel, where the problem was discussed. The fifteen members present considered a proposition to "raise a subscription among the Israelites of this city for the purpose of buying a lot and building, a Shul Synagogue thereon and also to call all the Israelites of the city together."<sup>333</sup> A committee of six was appointed, made up of President Samuel, the congregation's three trustees, J. Kohn, J. Hart, and J. Mitchell, Secretary A. Lewis, and a member, H. Flahto.<sup>334</sup> The wealth of the officers on this committee--five of the congregation's six executives being present--is an indication of the importance the congregation attached to the plan.

The group went to work at once. Apparently having decided by prior experience that they were unable to build a

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<sup>332</sup> Lesser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

<sup>333</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 169, MS.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 60.

synagogue alone, they adopted the method of the first cemetery organizers: calling all the Israelites of the city to a meeting. The gathering was set for Sunday afternoon, January 16, 1848, two weeks after the meeting at President Samuel's house. Thus on January 15, 1848, Lewis placed the following advertisement in the Saturday edition of the Daily Missouri Republican as a reminder to the local Jewry:

Notice - The Israelites of this city are requested to meet on Sunday, 16 inst. at 2 o'clock, P. M., at No. 49 Main street over the store of J. Rothman. By order of the United Hebrew Congregation.

Jan 15

Alexander Lewis, Sec'y

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Since it was thought a desecration of the Sabbath to print a Sunday paper, this was the only time the notice was carried. Whether Mr. J. Rothman owned the area above his store is not known; but he was connected with two local congregations having joined the United Hebrew in April, 1845,<sup>336</sup> and his name having been also mentioned among the founders of the Imanu-El Congregation, which was organized sometime in 1847.<sup>337</sup> Since the meeting invitation was issued to all the local Israelites, the nearby Imanu-El Congregation members apparently also being included, the notice indicated the possibility that the two congregations might have combined to erect one synagogue.

335 Daily Missouri Republican, January 15, 1848.

336 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 70, MS.

337 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 1, MS.

The importance of the gathering can be deduced from the information that the above advertisement was the first known instance that the United Hebrew Congregation had ever taken to remind their faith of a meeting. A record of the action taken at the meeting was not available. Evidently, little was promised by local Israelites, who seemed not too much interested in the plan, as it was not until the regular quarterly meeting of the United Hebrew Congregation that a committee was appointed to take action on the project. Then President Samuel appointed a three-man committee, composed of Kohn, Lewis and ex-President Jacob Emanuel, to find a lot suitable for the erection of a synagogue.<sup>338</sup> Yet for some unexplained reason the undertaking failed. Instead the congregation decided to purchase the lease of the North Baptist Church on Fifth Street.<sup>339</sup> Whether it was the evident lack of enthusiasm by local Jewry, indicated by the delay in taking any positive action on the plan, or the unavailability of an attractive site which lessened the enthusiasm for the accomplishment of the dream, the fact remains that again the early initiative for the construction of a United Hebrew synagogue did not materialize.

Another four-year period elapsed before the fourth false alarm occurred. In mid-April, 1853, after the members voted strong approval of a new constitution to preserve

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<sup>338</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 70, MS.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

harmony within the congregation, President Latz broached that perennial subject--the building of a synagogue. He discussed the proposal, suggesting that a lot be purchased for a synagogue. Thereon, a committee was appointed, which included President Latz and Treasurer Kohn, with instructions to select a site between Franklin Avenue on the north and Market Street on the south, and from Fourth and Eighth streets on the east and west respectively. <sup>340</sup> Unfortunately, almost a month and a half later, on May 29, 1853, they had to report that their efforts to discover a suitable site were futile. Upon request, the committee was discharged. <sup>341</sup> Evidently President Latz was determined that if the committee failed, he would try another method. This was the placement of an advertisement in the Daily Missouri Republican a few weeks after the last failure to publicize the congregation's desire for a lot. It read:

To Property Holders

Wanted to purchase, a lot of ground in the city of St. Louis, on east side, fifty feet front, and no less than one hundred feet deep, not farther west than tenth street, between Franklin avenue and Market Street. Apply through the Post Office.

June 11, Tues. & Fri

A. J. Latz, Pres't of  
United Hebrew Cong. <sup>342</sup>

This notice indicated the detailed nature the synagogue planning had progressed, as the necessary dimension in the purchase of

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>342</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, June 11, 1853.



the lot had now been worked out. Interestingly, the United Hebrew had also decided to extend the western boundary for a possible site two blocks farther westward to Tenth Street, the location that could have been purchased practically a decade previously. Yet, this written desire was to no avail. Again, the United Hebrew plan failed to materialize; this time apparently by lack of a suitable lot or the funds to purchase same.

Again the President had not taken no for an answer. Possibly the announcement that the B'nai El Congregation had succeeded, where United Hebrew had failed, in purchasing a lot for the erection of a synagogue, prompted Latz to take up the subject again. At the annual meeting in late October, 1853, this newly re-elected president advised the congregation that it should assemble a few hundred dollars to use for the aforementioned purpose--the purchase of a suitable lot. The meeting approved the suggestion of one of its members that it had confidence in its officers, and left the purchase of property for a synagogue in their hands.<sup>343</sup> However, like previous instances, the idea never got past the talking stage. This time the union attempt with B'nai El and the decision to use the available funds to employ the United Hebrew's first rabbi placed the hope for a synagogue in the background. There it stayed while the congregation wrestled with the previously discussed problem of disunion.

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<sup>343</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 115, 116.

Within a four-year period, beginning in June, 1855, until June, 1859, the long awaited effort to construct the first United Hebrew Congregation Synagogue was commenced and accomplished. The event that seemingly touched off this sixth attempt to achieve this goal was the notice of the meeting of June 27, 1855, of the expiration of the synagogue's lease on the Fifth Street property. After this was made known, the synagogue's financial situation was stated. The congregation evidently felt that this report justified appointing the following three-man committee to select a location to build a synagogue: Simon Abeles, Treasurer Joseph Kohn; and Secretary S. L. Moses.<sup>344</sup> During the following month they selected a lot to their liking on the east side of Sixth Street, between Locust and St. Charles streets, owned by Judge W. Beirne.<sup>345</sup>

Early in August, 1855, a special meeting was called to discuss the question of the congregation's financial competency to purchase a lot. The chairman of the committee, Simon Abeles, reported that they had found a suitable site for the erection of a synagogue, and recommended its purchase. This advice was accepted, with the amendment that the purchase be made so that the title could be investigated. Abeles, Moses Morris, Kohn, Letz, and Moses were selected to complete

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>345</sup> Scharf, op. cit., II, 1738.

the deal, and pay for the lot with the congregation's funds.<sup>346</sup> Thus the lot would be purchased by one of the committee in his own name. Immediately thereafter the title to the land was to be investigated, and if found satisfactory, would be transferred by the member or members to the congregation. On August 10, 1855, five days after the permission was given, the committee, in the name of two members and their wives, Simon and Amalia Abeles, and Moses and Rachel Morris, purchased the following Sixth Street location<sup>347</sup> from Judge George W. Bierne<sup>348</sup> for the sum of \$6,240.<sup>349</sup> The location and description of the lot was as follows:

Beginning at the Southwest corner of lot numbered 138 according to Lucas' Plot thereof, on the East side of Sixth street between St. Charles and Locust...having a front of forty eight feet on the East side of Sixth Street and the same on the West by ninety feet in depth and being the southern portion of a larger lot.<sup>351</sup>

This lot measuring forty-eight by ninety feet was just sixty-four feet from the southeast corner of Sixth and St. Charles,<sup>352</sup> and was bounded on the south by a school house.<sup>353</sup> Also it may

346 Ibid., 130.

347 Deed Book 176, p. 111, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

348 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1738.

349 Deed Book 176, p. 111, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

350 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1738.

351 Deed Book 176, pp. 110-111, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

352 United Hebrew Congregation Scrapbook.

353 Daily Missouri Republican, October 22, 1855.

be noted that the plot was practically the same size as the first set of dimensions detailed in June, 1853--50 feet by 100 feet.<sup>354</sup>

The immediate purchase, after a history of vacillation on the subject, was a good omen that the hope expressed in the constitution for the erection of a synagogue would be realized. First, the members' approval of the lot purchase was seen in the form of the "thanks" the congregation tendered to Abeles and Morris for the part they had played in securing the site.<sup>355</sup> Then positive action was taken. On the motion of Joseph Kohn, long a worker for the construction of a synagogue, a committee of twelve was appointed to obtain funds to liquidate this new debt. The committee was composed of members of both the recent Adas Yeshurun and the mother United Hebrew Congregation. Kohn had another popular idea--that a circular be printed to be sent to all congregations in the United States and Europe, probably to solicit funds. This was approved by the members, with the amendment of L. M. Frince that the public appeal be further enlarged by placing "a firm circular in the books."<sup>356</sup> Now it is not difficult to see why the congregations' officers at their last meeting, September 16, 1855, were extended a vote of thanks for their

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., June 11, 1853.

<sup>355</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 133, MS.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

"indefatigable exertions."<sup>357</sup>

The synagogue project was soon started. An appeal to the world Jewish congregations was backed up by a local appeal to people of all faiths,<sup>358</sup> similar to the one employed by the B'nai El Congregation. It was evident that the United Hebrew was serious about the plan, but lacking in the extensive amount of funds necessary to successfully complete such a project successfully, for never before had they appealed to the community for aid.<sup>359</sup> Thus within two months, commencing on October 20, 1855, the following two-week notice appeared in the Daily Missouri Republican mentioning a meeting not listed on the pages of the minutes:

At a Meeting held by the members of the UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION, on Wednesday, 17th inst. to advise on the best method of raising sufficient means to erect a Synagogue on the piece of ground lately purchased on Sixth Street, between Locust and St. Charles, their own means being insufficient; and in order to build a suitable place, which will be in every respect worthy to worship their God in, and at the same time be an ornament to the city--it was

Resolved, That donations be solicited from our Christian friends as well as from Israelites, and the following gentlemen were appointed a Committee to wait on the citizens and others, to receive contributions for the purpose:

A. J. LATZ, President United Hebrew Congregation

J. Kohn	N. Edelburg	J. Michael	S. Abeles
S. L. Moses	R. Weiler	L. H. Prince	J. Nathan
E. H. Cohen	A. Newmark	M. Lyons	J. A. Hart

A. S. MYERS, Secretary, U.H.C.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>358</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, October 20, 1855.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., October 22, 1855.

The above committee beg most respectfully to say, that they will, in a few days, do themselves the honor of waiting on their fellow citizens, when they hope to find their call will be favorably responded to.

Contributions forwarded to any of the above Committee will be thankfully received.<sup>360</sup>

The notice was placed to appeal to and attract community attention, as indicated by the prominence given to the mention of the proposed synagogue as "an ornament to the city"<sup>361</sup> would suggest. The success of this subscription effort also was graciously enhanced further by two of the local dailies, which printed articles backing the campaign which could not help but aid the United Hebrew citizens in their search for Christian and Jewish contributions. Within a week after the above advertisement was published, the Daily Missouri Republican, in a news editorial entitled "An Appeal" designed to awaken mainly the local Christian populace to the plight of<sup>362</sup> the United Hebrew Congregation, wrote the following article:

AN APPEAL--We would call the attention of our readers to a card from the United Hebrew Congregation. This is the first time that they have made such an appeal to the public. This congregation was the first to establish a place of worship in St. Louis, many years ago and they number among their members many Americans, as well as from all other nations. Their present synagogue is on Fifth street on leased grounds, which, we understand, will expire in a few months. They have bought a lot on Sixth street, next to the public school, and as they wish to make the building look like our other places of public worship, and not having suf-

360 Ibid., October 20, 1855.

361 Ibid.

362 Ibid., October 22, 1855.

ficient means of their own, they have very wisely thrown themselves on the generosity of the citizens, and we are sure they will not be disappointed, but will find the St. Louisans are never backward on such an occasion. We would here remark, that this Congregation has no connection with the one in Frechtown, which is called the Temple B'nai El. <sup>363</sup>

This was not the only article written in a manner helpful to the campaign. The Daily Missouri Democrat early in November, 1855, requested the public to help the congregation construct a building which would add to the beauty of the city. The reporter reminded the populace that local Israelites had often supported public ventures, and turn about was fair play. <sup>364</sup>

While public opinion was being guided in their favor, the congregation was certainly not free of worries. By late November, 1855, the seven-year lease on the Fifth Street synagogue expired. Thus the members requested that the board dispose of the Fifth street building. Immediately thereafter, a five-man building committee, composed of H. H. Cohen, S. Abeles, H. Keiler, A. Newark, and S. L. Moses, plus President Latz was appointed. <sup>365</sup> However, after looking over the situation, it was decided to keep the Fifth Street Synagogue for a time at least. The lease was extended for a year at \$300 per annum, with the

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Taken from the Missouri Democrat, November 5, 1855, as reprinted in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, November 5, 1955.

<sup>365</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 138, MS.

congregation having the privilege of a longer term. This was accomplished by the middle of March, 1856. Concerning the lot, Simon Abeles announced at a quarterly meeting on March 16, 1856, that an old building which had been standing thereon had been sold for \$126, which sum was "quite satisfactory" to the members present. <sup>366</sup> With this encumbrance disposed of, the congregation's officers felt the title sufficiently correct for purchase, and the members voted by at least two-thirds majority to approve this decision. On March 18, 1856, two days after the quarterly meeting, the Sixth Street lot was purchased by the officers of the United Hebrew Congregation. The deed of sale is recorded as follows:

This Deed made and entered into this twentieth day of March eighteen hundred and fifty six, by and between Simon Abeles, Amalia Abeles, his wife, and Moses Morris and Rachel Morris his wife, parties of the first part and Adolph J. Latz President, Joseph Kohn Treasurer and Abraham Newark and Raphael Keller, Angel S. Meyers, Simon Abeles and Samuel L. Moses, trustees of a certain religious association known as the United Hebrew Congregation of said City of St. Louis and their successors in office parties of the second part and the members of the said City of St. Louis parties of the third part witnesseth: that the said parties of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of two thousand and eighty dollars to them paid by the said parties of the second part the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged do by these present grant bargain and sell convey and confirm unto the said parties of the second part the following parcel of land; a certain parcel or lot of ground lying and being situate in the city of St. Louis State of Missouri and described as follows to wit: beginning at the South west corner of lot numbered one hundred and thirty eight according to Lucas' Plot thereof, on the East side of Sixth street between



thence along the East side of Sixth Street north forty eight feet (48 ft.); thence east ninety feet (90 ft); thence south forty eight (48 ft) and thence west ninety feet (90 ft) to the place of beginning said lot having a front of forty eight feet on the East side of Sixth street by ninety feet in depth and being the southern portion of a larger lot acquired by Thomas Dowler of John B.C. Lucas by deed dated the tenth day of October a.d. 1826 and the same lot acquired by George W. Beirne of Thomas Dowler and wife by deed dated the twentieth day of July A.D. 1848 and recorded in the recorder's office of St. Louis County Book N no 4 page 285 and following and the same lot conveyed by said Beirne to said parties of the first part by deed dated the tenth day of August A.D. 1855 Aug. 10, 1855 and duly recorded in said Recorder's office in Book no. 164 page 438. To have and to hold the same together with all the rights privileges immunities and appurtenances thereunto belonging unto them the said party of the second part as trustees of the said party of the third part and to their successors in office and to their assigns in trust for the use and benefit of said parties of the third part and their assigns forever. And the said party of the second part hereby accepts the trust, and agree to give the necessary attention to the same and hereby covenant that said ground shall be held by them in trust for the said parties of the third part subject to the will direction and control of said parties of the third part only to be signified by a two thirds  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote of the members of said United Hebrew Congregation had and given at a regular Church meeting, then present and voting for the same. The above conveyance is made however subject to the payment and full satisfaction of an incumbrance made by said parties of the first part in favor of George W. Beirne to wit: A Deed of trust and the notes therein mentioned and set forth; said deed of trust is dated the 10th day of August, A.D. 1855 and is duly recorded in the Recorder's office of St. Louis County in Book 164 page 439 and following, the payment of which is assumed by said grantees herein. In witness whereas we the said parties of the first and second parts have hereto set our hands and seals the day and year first above written.

	Simon Abeles	Amalie Abeles
Moses Morris	Rachel Morriss	
Adolph J. Latz	Joseph Kohn	Trustees for
A. Newmark	Naphael Keller	the United
Angel S. Myers	S.L. Moses	Hebrew
	Simon Abeles	Congregation

State of Missouri Attest John B. Evans  
County of St. Louis

Be it remembered that on this twentieth day of March eighteen hundred and fifty six before me the undersigned a Notary Public within and for the County of St. Louis aforesaid came Simon Abeles and Amalie Abeles his wife and Moses Morriss and Rachel Morriss his wife who persons whose names are subscribed to the within and foregoing instrument of writing as a party thereto and they severally acknowledge the same to be their act and deed for the purposes therein mentioned and the said Amalie Abeles and Rachel Morriss being by me first made acquainted with the contents of the within conveyance acknowledged on an examination Separate and apart from their said husbands that they executed the same and relinquished their dower in the real estate therein described freely and without compulsion or undue influence of their said husbands. In testimony whereof I have hereto set my hand and offered by notarial seat the day and year last above written.

John B. Evans, Notary Public

St. Louis Co. No. C. Keenle  
Filed and Recorded June 7th 1856 Recorder 367

This deed gave the United Hebrew Congregation full title to the lot.

However, while the congregation possessed a plot of land and possibly the good will of much of the community, they were beset by several difficult problems concerning this initial venture before the new synagogue was to be

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367 Deed Book 176, p. 111, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, MSS.

consecrated. The main one was securing sufficient funds to erect the structure, while a lesser problem was the selection of a chazan and the completion of the consecration plans.

The financial situation of the congregation had previously been a significant factor in the congregation's refusal to start such an undertaking. However, at the first meeting after the lot was purchased, a subscription campaign was organized by the members. As mentioned earlier this fund raising drive would be conducted among local Christians and Jews alike.

Possibly spurred on by the aforementioned consecration of the B'nai El Congregation in September 1855,<sup>368</sup> the subscription campaign, as mentioned earlier, began in earnest in mid-October, 1855, strengthened by the newspaper stories which effectively pointed out the aforementioned advertisement to the public at large. About the same time as this public campaign, the United Hebrew was engrossed in a discussion over means to raise funds within its own organization. One of the methods adopted was by the sale of seats in the synagogue, evidently on a permanent basis. These lifetime seats were to be sold for \$100 each, which would entitle the purchaser and his wife each to a chair. Individually, men's seats were \$75 each, and women's seats were \$50 a piece.

<sup>368</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 133, MS.

<sup>369</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 7, MS

This debt was to be paid in the following manner: Ten per cent cash and the balance in twelve monthly installments.<sup>370</sup> It should not be forgotten that the congregation also had to pay for the other expenses, such as \$300 yearly rental for its Fifth Street location<sup>371</sup> and the cost of maintaining a shoehet-chazan. While the \$126 gained from the sale of the old building on the new Sixth Street location<sup>372</sup> aided to some extent, the subscription campaign was not performing effectively. This appears evident from several occurrences. In September, 1855, a special meeting was called to devise a method "to raise some funds to erect a Synagogue."<sup>373</sup> Yet a resolution to call in the monthly instalment, apparently on the seats,<sup>374</sup> was overruled by the members. However, the strict enforcement of the congregational laws was an aid to encourage payment. This was seen at the annual meeting in the middle of October, 1856, when it was announced that those members in debt to the congregation would not be allowed to vote in the yearly elections. However, this was altered slightly to the effect that if these reluctant members pledged themselves to pay their due bill at the appointed time, their right to vote would be immediately restored.<sup>375</sup> From these two occurrences

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370 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 137, MS.

371 Ibid., 140.

372 Ibid., 141.

373 Ibid., 143.

374 Ibid.

375 Ibid., 145.

it can be seen that the congregation was having difficulty securing the debt owed it. By January 1857, even though the financial status of the congregation had been boosted by a \$200 contribution by the members, it was obvious that the proposed plan of paying personal subscriptions had failed. In fact, President A. J. Latz stated forthright that he wished "the members to devise some better plan to collect the subscription money, as the old plan did not seem to work well."<sup>376</sup>

This admittance of defeat did not dampen the spirits of many members. Afterwards a long debate occurred which resulted in a suggestion by Isaac Michael that every member pay off his subscription pledge in equal amounts at the following intervals of three, six, and nine months. This new plan was put to a vote, and received the unanimous endorsement of all <sup>377</sup> the twenty-five members present. <sup>378</sup>

It might be noted that the financial report issued by the synagogue accounting committee disclosed that the assets, meaning "all the real estate and movable furniture of the U.N. Congregation," were estimated "at about \$12,110."<sup>379</sup>

This indication of the valuable holdings the congregation possessed; the hiring of a new shochet and chazan for \$500 per annum; and especially the members' difficulty in

376 Ibid., 149-150.

377 Ibid., 150.

378 Ibid., 149.

379 Ibid.

raising the necessary funds for the proposed synagogue all must have been in the minds of the majority of the twenty-five United Hebrewites who assembled in early March, 1857, just two months after the adoption of the new subscription plan--as they approved Raphael Keller's motion to appoint a committee of three to observe if the "recently purchased lot on Sixth Street could be sold to advantage."<sup>380</sup> Thus, a year and a half after the project was undertaken, and hardly twelve months since the congregation had purchased the title, the dream of the new synagogue appeared again unlikely to become a reality. Yet just when all seemed lost, one of the members, Mr. Drukter, stated that the women would assist the congregation in holding a fair to raise money for the proposed synagogue. Thereupon President Latz appointed a committee of seven to act as a committee of managers for the affair: Drukter, L. M. Prince, L. Michael, R. Keller, Rosinsky, Rosenthal, and T. Turk.<sup>381</sup> The latter, with the aid of the women of the synagogue, held a successful event which netted a profit of \$313.26. At the meeting on April 12, 1857, the appreciation of the congregation was extended to the two participating groups for their work on the venture. This was the first known instance where the women of the congregation had actually organized to aid the synagogue. The support of the women, as emphasized by the successful fair, was a

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

stimulus to the United Hebrew Congregation.

At this seemingly psychological moment, President Adolph Latz posed the question whether they should or should not proceed with the building of the synagogue.<sup>382</sup> To a man, the twenty-six members present at this general meeting responded in the affirmative. From here on the building began to become a reality.

Next, a long debate over whether or not to appoint a new synagogue building committee ensued, but the majority of the members gave their endorsement to the efforts of the original building committee. An additional committee composed of Kohn, Prince, J. A. Hart, and Mr. Hayberg, was appointed at this same meeting early April, 1857, by President Latz on the right to "file warranties."<sup>383</sup>

Prior to the close of the meeting, mention was again made of the long standing problem of members who refused to turn in their subscription money.<sup>384</sup> While this worry was still a prevalent sore spot, definite action was not asserted. Plans of the building were requested and at least two firms, Hodgeman and Seaton, and Walsh and Brady, entered the competition for the right to construct the long-proposed building. A special meeting was called early in May, 1857, to discuss the two plans submitted by these firms. The members concluded that the two proposals be handed over to the building committee.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

who were instructed to check the plans, "get the specifications for same, and adopt the cheapest."<sup>385</sup> The majority of the building committee was to determine the best plan according to the above advice.<sup>386</sup> The committee evidently did not wish to use any additional funds to purchase any available space which could have been obtained from its next door neighbors. For in September, 1857, there was some question whether an additional three feet belonging to the public school, the southern neighbor of the congregation, might not be employed.<sup>387</sup> It was decided, however, to use only the original ninety by forty-eight foot plot.

The powerful building committee had the full authority to decide when construction was to begin. Possibly there was some impatience among the members,<sup>388</sup> for the committee took practically an entire year to study the various plans carefully.<sup>389</sup> In the meantime, the congregation's drive for funds within its own organization was pushed to the extent that all members were expected to contribute a \$100 donation as the desired minimum. The board of trustees was instructed by the membership to work out arrangements with those unable to pay the subscription. The congregation's effort to cut expendi-

385 Ibid., 152.

386 Ibid.

387 Ibid., 154.

388 Ibid., 156.

389 Ibid., 158.



tures was dramatized by their effort to seek relief from the city council from fixing the pavement of the new synagogue. <sup>390</sup>

Arrangements were made to lay the cornerstone on September 18, 1857, and a special meeting was called for this purpose two weeks previous to this date on September 8 of the same year. However, on the suggestion of Drukker it was decided to postpone the cornerstone laying ceremony until the mason work would be entirely ready. <sup>391</sup> This procedure was put off until sometime during the summer of 1858, and Rev. Isaac Leiser was invited to attend. <sup>392</sup>

Meanwhile, the building committee suffered the loss of an experienced hand, one who had grown with the congregation, when the resignation of founder and ex-President E. H. Cohen was announced, and accepted at a meeting in January, 1858. <sup>393</sup> Evidently this important committee dwindled to four members, as no mention was recorded of the vacancy being filled.

The eleven-month deliberation of the building committee on the best and cheapest plan for the synagogue ended about April, 1858. At the quarterly meeting on April 7 of that year, President A. J. Lutz announced to the nineteen members that he was "happy to inform the members ~~the~~ Building Committee have

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 159; "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 66.

<sup>393</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 157, 158.

given the Contract for Building the Synagogue to Mr. Joseph Hodgman."<sup>394</sup> While the written agreement is unavailable, from all the records checked Hodgman was to receive at least \$9000 for his efforts<sup>395</sup> while the erection of the synagogue was to cost \$13,000.<sup>396</sup>

Joseph Hodgman had been in the construction business at least since 1851. He had done work for the city of St. Louis previously. For instance, he did a job for the City Engineers' Office in 1851.<sup>397</sup> One of his most notable honors was his selection to build the \$12,000 wing of the City Hospital.<sup>398</sup> The completion of the wing caused the Daily Missouri Republican to state that Hodgman and his associates had produced a very fine job.<sup>399</sup> Thus, apparently the synagogue had chosen a very gifted man to build the structure.

The announcement of the awarding of the contract seemed to spur the interest of the membership, as a special meeting on May 27, 1856, attracted some thirty-three persons. Here the contract for Joseph Hodgman was read and unanimously adopted. Due to a lack of any specific reference, this can

394 Ibid., 150.

395 United Hebrew Congregation Trustees 1859-1866, p. 10, 18.

396 Benjamin, op. cit., 109.

397 Daily Missouri Republican, February 19, 1851.

398 Ibid., July 26, 1856.

399 Ibid., April 1, 1857.

be assumed as the signal for "the go ahead" on the new building, since the next order of business was a suggestion by Keiler that the now well known Rev. Isaac Leiser be invited to attend the cornerstone ceremony, which would take place when the building was begun. At any rate, those in attendance concurred with the Keiler suggestion. A committee of three men, Lyons, Drukker, and Eisner, was appointed to make the necessary arrangements. The finances of the congregation was only momentarily digressed from, and now was returned to as the president appointed a four-man financial committee. Their job was to oversee all monies and papers due to the building fund and deposit all the monies in a bank to be drawn upon only by them for the sole purpose of paying for the building of the synagogue. With all the accomplishments of this May, 1858, meeting, there was one regrettable item. For the second time in the first five months of 1858, the United Hebrew lost the services of another founder; this time it was Treasurer Joseph Kohn. He resigned his position at this late May meeting after serving the congregation--except for one term--practically fourteen consecutive years in the same office. <sup>400</sup> This fifty-six year old worker <sup>401</sup> had given more consistent service to the United Hebrew Congregation than any other founder. As a worker for a new synagogue since the early false alarms recently related, and as

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 158-159.

<sup>401</sup> Records of Mount Olive Cemetery, 21, MS.

a reliable member and officer in various capacities, the United Hebrew Congregation was sure to feel the loss of his active leadership.

By September, 1858, another charter member had resigned his membership, Abraham Weigle, the first president of the congregation.<sup>402</sup> Now just three of the twelve founders remained, and only one in a very active capacity for the congregation. Adolph J. Latz was the experienced president during this important period, while Henry Marks and Samuel Jacks, other original members,<sup>403</sup> also attended meetings on occasion. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the year 1858 saw the synagogue lose three founders.

A meeting in early January, 1859, was the last recorded appearance of Simon Abeles at a congregational meeting.<sup>404</sup> He soon moved to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.<sup>405</sup>

The loss of such experienced members could possibly weaken the congregation's effort in the very crucial time ahead. At the annual meeting on September 26, 1858, forty-eight members assembled to elect the officers which would preside at the completion of the new synagogue. Founder Adolph J. Latz was re-elected by acclamation for his sixth term as president. The other officers were Adolph Fisher,

*All members formerly  
1858-1859*

402 United Hebrew Congregation Finances, 1857-1859, MS.

403 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 175, MS.

404 Ibid., 163.

405 Abeles Book of Legends, 7, MS., University City.

Treasurer; Jacob Rosinsky, H. Lyons, Joseph Davis, Judah A. Hart, and Elias Haas as the five trustees in the respective order; <sup>406</sup> and H. S. Eisner as the secretary, who was appointed at a later date. <sup>407</sup> The annual meeting also signified that the subscription campaign was on the upswing. As the largest total contributed at one time, \$440.20, was received. <sup>408</sup> While no stated financial report was available, this undoubtedly aided the \$803.54 balance reported in mid-October, 1857. <sup>409</sup> The collection of dues, as evidenced by the twin threat of legal action and forfeiture of money already paid by a delinquent membership in January, 1859, probably had much to do with the seemingly improved financial situation. <sup>410</sup>

Yet, if things were on the upswing money-wise for the congregation, it was only for a very brief time that it could feel its prosperity, for ahead lay many projects of expenditure. The building was complete in June, 1859, but, in the meantime, the congregation had proceeded to make two exorbitant outlays of money directly and indirectly connected with the consecration service which was to cause the synagogue financial embarrassment and possible loss of all their hard

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<sup>406</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 162, MS.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 163-164.

work. These demanding expenses were the amount of money spent to secure a permanent chazan, and a large amount spent on the dedication ceremony itself.<sup>411</sup>

The first synagogue constructed by the United Hebrew Congregation was completed by early June, 1859. The new synagogue was a very beautiful building;<sup>412</sup> substantial; well-built;<sup>413</sup> elegant. It was a two-story structure in the Romanesque style, forty-two feet front and eighty feet, two inches in depth.<sup>414</sup> Thus the synagogue did not cover the entire forty-eight by ninety lot. The building was constructed of hand-made brick, usual for the time, with a rubble stone foundation wall. The stone foundation was about eighteen inches in thickness,<sup>415</sup> and extended eight feet in height before the brick material, which encompassed the rest of the building with a thirteen-inch thickness, appeared.

The slate roof was flat, extending forty and a half feet in width by seventy-nine feet in length,<sup>416</sup> and was supported by walnut joists.<sup>417</sup> Possibly the remainder of the roof was wood. On top of the roof, built up in a slant at the opposite ends in pyramid fashion, and seemingly covering only the front or western portion of the building,<sup>418</sup> was a hip roof of tin

<sup>411</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., 109-110.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>413</sup> Interview with Dr. William Swecosky, 1956.

<sup>414</sup> Scharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

<sup>415</sup> Interview with Mr. Jack Shulman, 1956.

<sup>416</sup> Aubin, A. Whipple and Co's. Insurance Map of St. Louis, Missouri, 1871.

<sup>417</sup> Interview with Mr. Jack Shulman, 1956.

<sup>418</sup> Dry, Camille, and Compton, Pictorial St. Louis Plate 21, No. 95.

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material, customary at this time. The middle of the roof was covered by a large size circular shaped skylight which also contained within its varied design, a Mogen David, the Jewish star of David.

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The building contained several outlets and only one entrance. Due to the lack of any available picture of the synagogue, it is unknown how many windows the front or western portion of the four-sided building contained. The north and south walls contained windows on each floor. The north wall contained, what appeared to be two thin windows opening onto the first floor. The second floor contained five windows--two small ones at the opposite ends of the north wall about seven feet from their respective corners of the building. The three larger windows, known as segment head windows, were of casement type, the upper portion of which was shaped in the form of an arch made of wood or possibly brick, while the lower brick portion was square-shaped. A circular window was contained within the arched portion. They measured at least eight to ten feet in height and had a hinged top sash and two hinged casement windows. Each window, opening in shutter form from within, contained attractive staincolored glass.

419 Interview with Mr. Nat Abrahams, 1956.

420 Aubin, op. cit.

421 From observation of original wall now part of Freund Jewelry Company, 420 North Sixth Street, St. Louis.

422 Interview with Mr. Jack Shulman, 1956.

423 Interview with Mr. Charles Eisenstein, former occupant of the old synagogue structure; Mr. Harry Schecter, 1957; Dr. William Swecosky, 1956.

In fact, the latter type of glass enclosed all the synagogue windows. This was usually donated in memory of a dearly departed one.<sup>424</sup> The windows generally had window sills with their exterior brick counterparts jutting out from the straight line of the wall. The southern wall was constructed in a similar way on the upper floor, except that there was only one smaller, narrow window at the southeastern end of the building. The first floor appears to have contained a similar long narrow window at the same location, as the northwestern location of the opposite wall window. However, the southern wall appears to have contained two more lower floor windows (or four in all)<sup>425</sup> than its northern counterpart. In the middle of the rear, or eastern wall, of the building, was a bay window, within which the Holy Ark, the container of the Holy Scroll was most probably situated.<sup>426</sup> On each side of this extension was a tall, narrow window with an arched top about three-fourths the size of the ark indentation, which latter space appeared to have almost extended the height of the first floor. The second floor had one, and possibly two, windows, similar in length but wider than its rear first floor variety, which lay almost immediately below their upper floor counterparts.

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<sup>424</sup> Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, who attended the first constructed United Hebrew Congregation about 1878, 1957.

<sup>425</sup> From my own observation of the building.

<sup>426</sup> Aubin, op. cit.



In the middle of the second floor rear, extending almost to the roof, was a large, circular shaped window,<sup>427</sup> which could be opened for air and was the probable location of a Hogen David, or Jewish Star.<sup>428</sup> From a view of the rear of the building, it appears possible that an opening, either a window or door (or maybe both), existed in the basement.<sup>429</sup>

The only definite entrance was the one on Sixth Street. Several steps led up to the door of the synagogue,<sup>430</sup> as the latter was set close to the street.<sup>431</sup> Upon entering the United Hebrew Congregation, the Israelite probably found two and possibly three rooms. There was a vestry room and possibly a front room on the main floor, besides the main room of worship.<sup>432</sup>

There were, it seems, inner doors to the synagogue, which opened onto an aisle that led to the altar,<sup>433</sup> or Bimah. The latter lay in the center of the synagogue, with seats for men to the right and to the left. This was the place where the Torah was read, the rabbi spoke, the cantor chanted

<sup>427</sup> From my own observation of the building.

<sup>428</sup> Interview with Mr. Jack Shulman, 1956; interview with Mr. Samuel Freedman, who attended Polish synagogues prior to his departure for America, 1956.

<sup>429</sup> From my own observation.

<sup>430</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 6, MS.

<sup>431</sup> Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

<sup>432</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1869-1868, p. 6, MS.

<sup>433</sup> St. Louis Republican, January 28, 1875.

prayers,<sup>434</sup> and couples were joined in matrimony. The Bimah, or altar, was raised above the level of the floor, as two pairs of steps, one at the left side and one at the right side of the platform, led up to it. The platform was at least ten feet wide, and maybe more.<sup>435</sup> The Aron Kodesh, or Holy Ark, was located against the middle of the east wall, and thus a distance behind the Bimah or altar.<sup>436</sup> The aisle led to some steps which preceded the approach up to the Holy Ark.<sup>437</sup> As in all traditional orthodox synagogues, the male worshippers occupied the first floor and wore hats and talesim (prayer shawls),<sup>438</sup> while the women took either of the two sets of staircases to the right and left of the outer room<sup>439</sup> to their seats in the galleries or balcony.<sup>440</sup> It may be noted that the stairway was soon carpeted.<sup>441</sup>

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434 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

435 St. Louis Republican, January 28, 1875.

436 Simonhoff, Jewish Notables in America, 339.

437 Interview with Mr. Samuel Freedman and Mr. Jack Makovsky, 1957.

438 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

439 Aubin, op. cit.

440 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

441 United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 1, MS.

The balcony located within the main synagogue room, was a trifle unusual, even by present Orthodox standards, as it not only had its customary large section against the upper story of the western wall, but it extended along the northern and southern sides of the synagogue to a point more than half way to the front of the main room.<sup>442</sup> The entire synagogue had a capacity of about nine hundred seats.<sup>443</sup> The main synagogue was lighted by gas<sup>444</sup> during the evening, and was aided in the daytime by the skylight which allowed a great deal of light to filter through the stain glass Wogen David.<sup>445</sup>

The basement contained schooling facilities, heating, toilets, and room facilities. Stairs descended on the south side of the basement into this lowest level. On the west wall was the furnace facilities. Coal was dropped through a manhole in the sidewalk right into the basement next to the furnace.<sup>446</sup> Kindling wood was also burned.<sup>447</sup> With this as a

442 Interview with Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.

443 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

444 United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 1, MS.

445 Aubin, op. cit.

446 From my own observation.

447 United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 14, MS.

base, the entire synagogue was warmed both through six  
 flues, three on each side of the building (at the two ends  
 and the middle) <sup>448</sup> and one stove <sup>449</sup> system. This was to give  
 sufficient <sup>450</sup> during the cold season; and extra stoves were  
 placed in other parts of the synagogue. <sup>451</sup> The basement con-  
 tained several school rooms, <sup>452</sup> including one large room  
 which was capable of being used for a Hebrew School. <sup>453</sup>  
Toilet facilities for men and women were available, <sup>454</sup>  
 apparently in the northwest corner and adjacent area along  
 the northern wall of the basement. In the eastern portion  
 of the basement there were three rooms, <sup>455</sup> including a kitchen,  
 for the shamos, or religious caretaker, to live. <sup>456</sup> This resi-  
 dence in the basement was the home of any shamos employed by  
 the congregation. Possibly there was a window or a door, or  
 both, in the rooms, <sup>457</sup> but there is little likelihood of a

<sup>448</sup> Aubin, op. cit.

<sup>449</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868,  
 p. 6, MS.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Scharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> From my own observation.

<sup>456</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868,  
 p. 106, MS.

<sup>457</sup> From my own observation.

back entrance here, since according to one source, "there was no rear outlet."<sup>458</sup>

The almost ten foot area in the rear of the synagogue,<sup>457</sup> or maybe even within the synagogue itself, was possibly the location of the United Hebrew mikvah, or ritualarium<sup>460</sup> in which, by traditional practice and belief, men and women must bathe in order to purify themselves at certain periods of time. If it was situated in the synagogue yard, it could easily have been like another early St. Louis ritualarium--a small one room building with water being supplied.<sup>461</sup> In March, 1860, the United Hebrew Board of Trustees inspected alterations made by the shamos in the mikvah,<sup>462</sup> and several years later even heated the building.<sup>463</sup> A ten foot high wall separated the empty area in back of the synagogue from the property to the east of the congregation.<sup>464</sup> The cost of construction of the synagogue amounted to approximately \$13,000<sup>465</sup> plus \$9000 owed the builder, Hodgman.<sup>466</sup> Thus the building had a total cost of

<sup>458</sup> Letter in the United Hebrew Congregation Scrapbook from W. Brinck to United Hebrew President Cohen, June 20, 1879.

<sup>459</sup> Aubin, op. cit.; Seharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

<sup>460</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 14, MS.

<sup>461</sup> Interview with Mr. Nathan Pearlmutter, 1957.

<sup>462</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 14, MS.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>464</sup> Aubin, op. cit.

<sup>465</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., 109.

<sup>466</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 10, MS.

about \$21,000.<sup>467</sup> On December 19, 1859, it was announced at a Monday night special meeting that the congregation had insured the new synagogue for \$11,000 in the following manner: \$6000 in the Mound City Mutual Trust Company and \$5000 in the St. Louis Mutual Trust Company for six years commencing December 9, 1859.<sup>468</sup> This certainly was a necessary expense.

St. Louis' two congregations now each had constructed their own synagogue. The first structure, the B'nai El, constructed in 1855 on Sixth and Cerre, scarcely resembled the new United Hebrew Synagogue. It was shaped in the form of an octagon, about seventy-five feet in diameter and terminated in a cupola.<sup>469</sup> Because of its unusual shape, it was called several names, including the "Pepper Box"<sup>470</sup> and "Coffee Pot."<sup>471</sup> The interior of the eight-sided synagogue contained several rooms, including the main room for worship.<sup>472</sup>

<sup>467</sup> Scharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

<sup>468</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, p. 9, MS.

<sup>469</sup> Scharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

<sup>470</sup> Letter from Mrs. Max Weil, who attended this synagogue and was graduated or confirmed from the congregation's Sunday School, 1957.

<sup>471</sup> Interview with Mrs. H. Epstein, the granddaughter of H. Kuttner who was a chasan in the B'nai El synagogue, 1957.

<sup>472</sup> B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 7, MS.

Next to the pulpit, in the main synagogue, was an organ. <sup>473</sup>

The seating capacity of the building was about three hundred, <sup>474</sup> or less than half the size of the new United Hebrew.

The cost of building the B'nai El Temple was about \$6,600. <sup>475</sup>

While this new United Hebrew Synagogue was seemingly complete, it still lacked one final action--the dedication ceremony.

The planning for this important service actually began prior to the building's completion, and constituted an added problem, the scope of which was not evidently apparent at the time.

Commencing in early January, 1859, the United Hebrew indirectly began planning for the service by their search for a chazan or cantor. The congregation placed an advertisement for a cantor in at least one of the St. Louis publications. After receiving letters from two interested parties, Dr. W. I. Cohn of Chicago and S. Brenheimer of New York, it decided to alter the previous notice to read that the cantor should be able to superintend an elementary Hebrew School. <sup>476</sup> This produced more results, for the new candidates were discussed at a meeting two months later, in March, 1859, and a conclusion

473 Ibid; Letter from Mrs. Max Weil, 1957.

474 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

475 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 5, MS.

476 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 163, MS.

was arrived at. It was decided that a Mr. Ritterman,  
 or Rittermann, should be sent for, and half his expenses  
 paid.<sup>477</sup>

Rittermann immediately answered the call and reported in time to be introduced to all the members present at a special meeting held one week later. He was asked several questions as to his ability, whereupon the meeting decided to test the quality of his voice. The candidate read a portion of a prayer. The rendition evidently was to the listeners' liking, since the members then requested Rittermann to remain in St. Louis for one week and conduct the service on Friday and Saturday, at the congregation's expense.<sup>478</sup> Rittermann apparently performed well enough to make a favorable impression on the members, for seven days later, on April 3, 1859, before a large membership attendance, Rittermann was elected chazan for three years by the overwhelming vote of 41 to 3. A committee composed to alter the form of prayer in the synagogue also assumed the function of drafting a contract for Rittermann.<sup>479</sup> Two days later the committee reported the written agreement was ready and approved, and Chazan Rittermann officially signed the

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.



paper,<sup>480</sup> which reportedly called for a salary of \$1200 a year.<sup>481</sup> In passing, it should be noted that Henry Marks was one of the five active participants on the latter committee, signifying the first notice of his reactivation<sup>482</sup> since his early work in helping to establish the United Hebrew Congregation.

Isaac, or Ignatius, Rittermann was originally a resident of Krakow, Poland. Apparently as a preparation for his career, he went to Vienna, where he studied music.<sup>483</sup> He soon came to the United States, where either in 1855<sup>484</sup> or 1856 he was elected the chazan or cantor at the B'nai Jeshurun Congregation in New York City, receiving a salary of \$1,000 a year. Here he organized and trained the synagogue's first regular choir, consisting of about eight boys and two men, which soon increased in number to total twenty-four. When Rittermann was elected, he was instructed to use as much as possible of "Sulzer's music," and to avoid too many choral repetitions.<sup>485</sup> When the choir ran out of suitable pieces, Rittermann procured various compositions both here and abroad.

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<sup>481</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., 109.

<sup>481</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 166, 168.

<sup>483</sup> Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860, p. 95.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>485</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 128.

The choir usually took part in the services on Friday nights, as well as on Sabbath mornings, dressed in special robes and caps <sup>486</sup> during the incumbency of Rabbi N. J. Raphael. <sup>487</sup> By 1859, Rittermann had lost favor and a Rev. Judah Kramer replaced him. <sup>488</sup> It was probably shortly after this that he came to the attention of the United Hebrew Congregation. Besides his ability to organize a choir and sing cantorial selections, Rittermann was capable of officiating at weddings and superintending an elementary school. Unfortunately Rittermann could not yet speak English very well, <sup>489</sup> hinting at the possibility that he had only recently come to the United States.

As mentioned above, the salary Rittermann received in St. Louis was apparently about \$1200 a year. The main reason for this outlay of money, as well as the expenses incurred in selecting him, was because he had a great deal of musical talent. <sup>490</sup>

Now that the congregation had the fine chazan it desired for their new synagogue, it went ahead on the specific

<sup>486</sup> Grinstein, op. cit., 262.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 486; Goldstein, op. cit., 128.

<sup>488</sup> Grinstein, op. cit., 95.

<sup>489</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 165, MS.

<sup>490</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., 110.

consecration plans. Forty-one members attended a special meeting at a place known as "P. Kregers" on May 11, 1859, where the first recorded mention of the plan was discussed. By this latter date the building must have been near completion, as a time for the consecration of the synagogue was set at June 17, 1859, a little over a month hence, and the second Friday after the Jewish holiday of Shavuoth (commemorating the receiving of the Torah from God). A committee of seven men; A. Newark, M. Kain, I. E. Wolff, N. Keller, A. Gershon, S. Mayer, and L. M. Gumpertson, was appointed by the president in conjunction with the board of officers to make all arrangements necessary for the consecration. <sup>491</sup> A part of these plans included the invitation to Rabbi Morris J. Raphael, one of the leading Orthodox rabbis <sup>492</sup> in the country, to dedicate the synagogue.

The Rev. Dr. Morris Jacob Raphael was born at Stockholm, Sweden, on October 3, 1798. An unusual story was the cause of the youth's pursuance of the rabbinical studies. His father, who was at that time banker to the King of Sweden, had two sons, who in the year 1803, fell dangerously ill; and the old gentleman vowed that if God would spare the life of one of his sons, he would rear him to the service of his Maker.

<sup>491</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 167-168, MS.

<sup>492</sup> Rittermann, Order of Service at the Consecration of the New Synagogue, St. Louis, Missouri Belonging to the United Congregation "Ahduth Israel," 1.

The elder son, Raphael, died, and the younger, Morris, survived, and was at once introduced to his studies. His early education was indicative of his unusual powers. In 1807 he was taken to Copenhagen, where he received his first Hebrew and secular training. At the age of his Bar Mitzvah (thirteen) he was proclaimed "Chover Socius," or "Fellow of Learned Men."<sup>493</sup> In 1812 he went to England and studied the language of the country and its literature with splendid results. Having made a tour through France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, Raphael sought a German university to continue his education at a higher level. Thus from 1821 to 1824 he continued his secular studies at the University of Giessen and later at the University of Erlangen.<sup>494</sup> There seems to be some dispute where Raphael attained his Masters and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. Some state he received them at the University of Giessen,<sup>495</sup> while another view is that the University of Erlangen awarded him the degrees.<sup>496</sup> However, there is little doubt, as seen by the breadth of his learning, that he was a man of scholarly abilities.<sup>497</sup> In 1825 he returned to England to make his home and was soon married.<sup>498</sup> The couple had six children, of whom only four survived.<sup>499</sup>

<sup>493</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 110-111.

<sup>494</sup> Morris, op. cit., 22.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 289-290.

<sup>496</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 111.

<sup>497</sup> Morris, op. cit., 290.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>499</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 111.

His public service was divided between England in the earlier stages of his life and the United States during the later period of time. He delivered a course of lectures on post-Biblical history,<sup>500</sup> and Hebrew poetry,<sup>501</sup> at Sussex Hall in London and elsewhere through the United Kingdom which was a triumph to the scholar, for he saw the most intelligent among Christians as well as among Jews attentive listeners.<sup>502</sup> During this period he had the opportunity for testing his power as a debater against the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.<sup>503</sup> After his great success on his lecture tour, Raphall embarked in a short career as a journalist. On October 3, 1834, the occasion of Raphall's thirty-sixth birthday, the first Jewish literary periodical in England, The Hebrew Review and Magazine of Rabbinical Literature, began its monthly publication under the editorial pen of Raphall.<sup>504</sup> It was devoted to Jewish learning and contained, among other things, translations of Hebrew philosophical works, including several works of Maimonides.<sup>505</sup> Much of the biblical writings was accessible only with difficulty. The periodical maintained a high standard and had a definite educational value. While it is

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500 Norais, op. cit., 288.

501 Goldstein, op. cit., 111.

502 Norais, op. cit., 288.

503 Goldstein, op. cit., 111.

504 Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1941, p. 7.

505 Goldstein, op. cit., 111.

a credit to Anglo-Jewry at the time that such a publication could appear, it is unlikely that the support received was very lavish.<sup>506</sup> After the appearance of seventy-eight numbers, the magazine was discontinued;<sup>507</sup> its end was attributed to poor support, in addition to the editor's straining health.

Besides his scholarly and original writings in the periodical, Dr. Raphall worked on a translation of eighteen treatises of the "Mishna," published jointly with the Rev. David de Sola. He also published a scholarly exposition in English of the Book of Genesis,<sup>508</sup> as well as a one-volume translation of the Pentateuch in conjunction with De Sola and I. L. Lindenthal.<sup>509</sup> The recognition of Raphall's ability (as he was the only person in England with any firsthand experience with successful Jewish journalism) was soon apparent when a meeting was called in 1840 to discuss the possibility of establishing a news periodical for English Jewry. Raphall was one of the five at the gathering. The paper was organized and co-edited by Raphall, an Ashkenazi Jew, and the aforementioned de Sola, a learned chazan, who represented the Sephardi community. Unusual was the fact that neither had been born nor raised in England, nor used English as his native tongue. However, this proposed arrangement did not materialize, presumably owing to Raphall's

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506 Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1941, p. 8.

507 Goldstein, op. cit., lll.

508 Morais, op. cit., 289.

509 Goldstein, op. cit., lll.

appointment as minister at Birmingham, England.

Entering the ministry did not hurt Raphall's efforts. He continued his literary writing in the United States, where he published a work in two volumes entitled "Post-Biblical History of the Jews," covering the period from the return to Palestine of the Babylonian captives to the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus. The magnitude of this work was enthusiastically described by the mid-nineteenth century Philadelphian, Rabbi Sabato Morais, as "a production that cannot be overrated; for it at once exhibits the author's profound knowledge of, and his strict conformity to, truth. If Dr. Raphall had not written aught else, this would have been sufficient to immortalize his name. But his indefatigable efforts for Judaism still proceed unabated."<sup>511</sup> Prior to its publication in book form, it had appeared serially in England's The Jewish Chronicle publication during the year 1855.<sup>512</sup>

He also produced other works in this country: "Devotional Exercises for the Daughters of Israel" and "The Path to Immortality."<sup>513</sup> His linguistic knowledge can be ascertained by the fact that in 1840, while acting as honorary secretary to Solomon Hirschell, the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of the Jews of Great Britain, he published in the Chief Rabbi's name a refutation of the anti-semitic Damascus affair in four

510 Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1941, pp. 9-10.

511 Morais, op. cit., 290.

512 Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1941, p. 68.

513 Morais, op. cit., 290.

languages, Hebrew, English, French, and German, and in his own name wrote a defense of Judaism against an anonymous writer in the London Times.<sup>514</sup>

The rabbinical career of Dr. Raphall, like his writing, was commenced in England and completed in the United States. It is not known whether he was fully ordained as a rabbi, the impression in one quarter being that he was a maggid, or a paid preacher, with a knowledge of Jewish law.<sup>515</sup> At any rate he was sufficiently schooled so that in 1841 he was appointed rabbi and preacher of the Birmingham (England) Hebrew Congregation, and master of the Hebrew National School there. Taking a prominent part in the erection of the latter Hebrew School, he later induced the famous nineteenth century Swedish nightingale, Jenny Lind, his countrywoman, to sing at a concert by means of which upward of 1800 pounds (\$9000) was realized, and the debt of the school entirely paid off. He remained in Birmingham for eight years, during which time his reputation as an orator and scholar spread throughout Great Britain. He became known as the foremost expounder of the Jew to the non-Jew in England, serving to remove prejudice and misunderstanding, and helping to win for the Jew the battle for equal political rights which were as yet denied him in the British Empire. He was regarded as the foremost rabbi, and received gifts even from non-Jews in recognition

<sup>514</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 111.

<sup>515</sup> Grinstein, op. cit., 82, 92.



of his discourse on the Unity of God.

In 1849 he received and accepted a call from the American congregation; B'nai Jeshurun, in New York City. On his departure from Birmingham, he received felicitations and tokens from Jews and Christians in the community. The leading citizens of Birmingham in an address presented him with a purse of one hundred sovereigns in acknowledgement of his many services to the community.

The arrival of Dr. Raphael received countrywide attention. In fact, the local Daily Missouri Republican noted his arrival in the following news item: "Among the passenger by the Sarah Sands, from Liverpool, is Dr. Raphael, the distinguished Hebrew scholar. Dr. R. is accompanied by two sons." The magnitude of the man can be better appreciated when it is realized that from 1835 until 1856 this courtesy was never extended by the Republican to the advent of any other Jewish rabbi. Upon his arrival in New York, Dr. Max Lilienthal, of Russian fame, called to pay his respects, and expressed surprise that Raphael should forsake Britain for the immature community in the New World. The rabbi replied with the Talmudic dictum: "Where there are no men, strive thou to be a man." Lilienthal immediately departed.

516 Goldstein, op. cit., 112.

517 Morais, op. cit., 289.

518 Goldstein, op. cit., 113.

519 Daily Missouri Republican, November 8, 1849.

520 Simonhoff, Jewish Notables in America, 330.

521 Ibid.

Late in December, 1859, Dr. Raphall was elected lecturer and rabbi of the U'nei Jeshurun Congregation, as well as superintendent of any school this synagogue started, at a salary of \$2000 per annum, with a clause guaranteeing \$500 to \$1000 more in case of incapacitation. This was considered the "most munificent salary received by any rabbi or preacher in the country." His appointment was received with great enthusiasm,<sup>522</sup> and under his direction the congregation became the largest synagogue in New York.<sup>523</sup>

In a short span of ten years, Rev. Dr. Raphall soon established his pre-eminence among American rabbis.<sup>524</sup> He became the first Jewish rabbi in New York to deliver lectures in English regularly on the Sabbath and at festivals.<sup>525</sup>

Certainly his mastery of English and pure diction gave him the advantage over his German reared colleagues. Besides, he carried himself with the "born-to-wealth" assurance of one whose spirit was never blighted by crushing poverty or humiliating persecutions.<sup>526</sup>

Upon his arrival in the United States he toured the larger cities, although there is no notice that St. Louis was one of them, and repeated his famed lectures. Gracious Rebecca Graetz, the famed American Jewess who started the

522 Goldstein, op. cit., 112-113.

523 Simonhoff, op. cit., 328.

524 Ibid., 327-328.

525 Goldstein, op. cit., 13.

526 Simonhoff, op. cit., 328.

Sunday School, remarked in a letter to her brother of the stimulating effect the rabbi's talks had upon her relatives and Christian clergymen. In such regard was Raphall held that his coming would be greeted as an intellectual event in many communities. <sup>527</sup> Dr. Raphall was an ardent opponent of Rabbi I. M. Wise's reform movement. Upon reading Wise's Reminiscences, one is impressed by the antagonism between two men. Probably nobody among the early American rabbis fought the infringement of Reform Judaism upon the traditional belief as violently as Rabbi Raphall, as he lectured in many cities against the new idea. <sup>528</sup> In fact, as mentioned earlier, <sup>529</sup> Raphall excommunicated Wise from orthodox Jewry. He told the leading reformer of Judaism that he was young and had a great future, but was going in the wrong direction, and would soon destroy his fine possibilities, if he continued to believe as he did. To this Wise replied: "Perhaps the old man is right." <sup>530</sup>

Raphall had yet other crusades in mind. Believing that a knowledge of the Jewish past would remove Gentile ingrained prejudices, he wrote the aforementioned post-biblical history. Everything tended to enhance his prestige. The peak of his esteem came during the administration of President James Buchanan, March 4, 1857 - March 4, 1861, when this

527 Ibid.

528 Wise, op. cit., 146.

529 Ibid., 152.

530 Ibid., 146.

Orthodox Rabbi was invited to open a morning session of the House of Representatives. Wearing a skull cap and wrapped in a tallis, Dr. Raphael prayed before the national lawmakers in Washington. He was probably the first of the Jewish faith to receive this honor. Certainly Judaism received official recognition at a time Israelites were distressed over the constant effort to insert the word Christian into the Federal Constitution, and during the period of the Know-Nothing Party who disliked newly arrived immigrants. For Raphael, it indicated that he occupied the highest place in the American rabbinate at the time Rabbi Wise, Leeser, and Lilienthal were among the prominent ones on the national Jewish scene.<sup>531</sup> His inclusion along with the latter trio and among the eight American rabbis included in Rabbi Sabato Morais' Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century published in 1882, is further evidence of his ability.<sup>532</sup> Another method by which Raphael became well-known was by traveling outside New York for consecration addresses. He dedicated synagogues in Cincinnati, Syracuse, New Haven, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Baltimore, and Charleston, besides St. Louis, indicating that he was much in demand.<sup>533</sup>

The United Hebrew Congregation thus undoubtedly secured at their own expense, one of America's greatest rabbis for

531 Simonheff, op. cit., 327-328.

532 Morais, op. cit.

533 Goldstein, op. cit., 122.

the dedication ceremony. The latter was yet to be planned; so on June 11, 1859, a meeting was called where the final arrangements were made. Final plans for the ceremony were reviewed on this June date, which was just six days prior to the event, at a special meeting held at the "meeting room of the U. H. Congregation," which probably was the new synagogue. <sup>535</sup> If so, it was the earliest known meeting held in the new building, and the first indication that the building was completed. After Rev. Rittermann gave some advice on the subject, it was decided how the consecration should be conducted. The idea of the new synagogue and its program certainly had the interest of the members, as the largest attendance in the congregation's history, forty-seven men, was present on the occasion. <sup>536</sup>

The congregation then had special program pamphlets printed for the important occasion by L. H. Frank of New York. Since these were beautifully printed in Hebrew, with English translations, and contained at least sixteen unnumbered pages, including nine leaflets, a pretty penny must have been expended on this project. The outside page was blank. The second page--the title page of the souvenir program--appeared in this manner:

534 Rittermann, op. cit., 1.

535 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 170, ME.

536 Ibid.

ORDER OF SERVICE  
AT THECONSECRATION  
OF THE

New Synagogue, St. Louis, Mo.

United Congregation

"ACHDUTH ISRAEL,"

On Friday, Sivan 15th, June 17th 5619 a.m., 1859

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Arranged and the Music composed by  
the Rev. ISAAC RITTERMANN, Minister  
to the Congregation

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Consecration Sermon (in English)  
by the Rev. MORRIS J. RAPHAEL, M.A.  
Ph.D., Rabbi-Precacher, Synagogue, Green St.,  
New York

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NEW YORK

L.H. Frank, Book and Job Printer, No. 3  
Cedar St.

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537  
1859

The introductory page written in Hebrew contained the  
statement:

Order of the Dedication of the  
Synagogue  
On Friday the 15th of the Month  
of Sivan 5619.

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With songs of praise to God and with sweet hymns which those who were present in the Congregation of God sang and praised under the leadership of the cantor Mr. Isaac Ritterman, at a time when the synagogue was completed and when they entered as one to serve the Lord in the synagogue which those assembled here founded and built by the name ACHDUTH ISRAEL founded in the year of 1846. Let all Flesh come and bow down before you O Lord.<sup>538</sup>

Concerning the above statement, it was an old custom to select a phrase from the Bible appropriate to the occasion which contained the Hebrew letters that spelled out the desired date.<sup>539</sup> In this case the date of the Jewish year indicated by the hebraic phrase was 5606 or 1846, which date does not coincide with the founding discussed previously in Chapter Three. There also was five years of written minutes proving the above year as the false founding date. Next the Hebrew text repeated the author of the English consecration sermon, Rabbi Morris J. Raphael, and described him as an "ordained rabbi."<sup>540</sup>

The content of the interesting service was described next. This special service only occurs when a new synagogue is to be consecrated. The elders of the synagogue gathered the holy scrolls of law, or Torah, and went to the door of the synagogue, where they knocked and exclaimed, "Open unto us the gates of righteousness; we will enter them and praise the Lord."<sup>541</sup> The doorkeepers immediately opened the door and

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Interview with Mr. Jacob Elbaum, 1957.

<sup>540</sup> Rittermann, op. cit., 1.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., 4.

the bearers of the Holy Scroll entered. As the procession walked into the synagogue, toward the Holy Ark in the east end of the synagogue, Cantor Rittermann and the Choir chanted: "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord, we bless ye from the house of the Lord."<sup>542</sup> As the procession progressed toward the Ark the Hebrew prayer of Ma Tovu (How Good) was chanted by Cantor Rittermann. After this prayer was concluded Rev. Rittermann pronounced in Hebrew the important benediction: "Blessed be thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has preserved our lives, and has sustained us, and brought us to enjoy this season."<sup>543</sup> The elders then proceeded to circumsambulate the synagogue seven times. During each circuit one of the following psalms was chanted by the Reader and Choir:

THE FIRST CIRCUIT	-	Psalms 122
SECOND CIRCUIT		Psalms 30
THIRD CIRCUIT		Psalms 24
FOURTH CIRCUIT		Psalms 134
FIFTH CIRCUIT		Psalms 128
SIXTH CIRCUIT		Psalms 61
SEVENTH CIRCUIT		Psalms 132 <sup>544</sup>

After the Seventh Circuit the procession ranged itself before the Holy Ark, while the Minister chanted in Hebrew: "Praise ye the name of the Lord, for His Name alone is exalted." The Choir responded: "His glory is above the earth and heavens. He will exalt the horn of His people, the praise of all those

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., 4-10.



that love him: even the children of Israel, the people that approach him. Hallelujah." <sup>545</sup> Rittermann and the choir then chanted the 29th Psalm. The Torah was then placed in the Ark by each participant, with the first in the procession in the lead. Each man then took his seat.

Next on the program was the Consecration Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Raphael. <sup>546</sup> Significantly, he spoke in English, as mentioned previously, which was a change, since generally in the past the sermon had been in the German tongue. At this point, Cantor Rittermann completed the rest of the program. He offered prayers for the welfare of the congregation, the country, and its leaders. His prayer was the following:

Good God! We this day approach thee to thank thee for all thy mercies, and we pray to thee: look down from thine holy habitation, upon this Congregation, and upon this structure, erected for thy worship. Vouchsafe to hear our prayers, and the prayers of everyone who comes into this house to pour forth his supplications before thee. Give unto them, according as thou knowest his heart. Send us, we beseech thee, thy help from thy sanctuary, extend peace and prosperity throughout our assemblies, that we may know how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity. Turn away from our boundaries all calamity, plague and sickness, violence and ruin: but let thy blessing and happiness abide with us and with the city wherein we dwell.

Fountain of mercies! Grant thy favour and peace unto this our good land, that it may flourish like a garden well watered. Let all its inhabitants cherish brotherly feelings, and every man love and aid his neighbour. And the remnant of

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545 Ibid., 12.

546 Ibid., 12-14.

thy people Israel, may they rest in safety. In thy love and thy pity, raise us and bear us as in the days of old. O, fulfil unto us Thy gracious promise through Thy servants, the prophets. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be firmly established at the head of the mountains, and exalted above the hills; and to it shall stream all the nations. And many people shall say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us of his ways, and we may walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Amen."<sup>547</sup>

Rittermann then concluded the consecration ceremony with the customary prayer to God to "bless this Commonwealth of the United States of America, our home," and also for the leaders of the United States, Missouri, and St. Louis, in that order.<sup>548</sup> It is not known how many people attended the ceremony, but, besides the religious leaders, the elders and choir, apparently none of the congregation participated in the program, but were just observers.

It is interesting at this point to compare this consecration with the dedicatory service of the first building constructed as a synagogue in St. Louis by the B'nai El Congregation.<sup>549</sup> This event occurred also on Friday, September 1, 1855. The latter congregation's minutes reported the event in the following way:

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>549</sup> Lesser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, October, 1855, p. 369.

On Friday afternoon September 7, 1855 were the consecration festivities. Everything had been prepared - the inner rooms were festively decorated with flowers and trees. The place of worship was tightly crowded. In truly solemn fashion with the sound of the organ and the beautiful singing of the choir the rolls of the holy scripture were laid into the new Ark. Considerable presents were given by the many guests present. Rev. Dr. Illoway gave the speech of the day- thereupon, after a lovely prelude played by Squire Poepping on the unfortunately bad (borrowed) organ, Mr. Hish Bush gave a sort of speech of thanks in English. The hymn of jubilation - Yigdal - concluded the festivity, which was only dimmed by the almost oppressive heat. However, in the evening a festive ball for the joyous occasion was held at Mochel's place.<sup>550</sup>

Except of the similarity of placing the Torah in the Ark, the celebration of the consecration was different in that an organ operated by a Christian was in distinct evidence throughout the B'nai El dedication. While it is not known what celebration, if any, took place after the United Hebrew ceremony in 1859, the B'nai El ball held on the Friday night of their consecration<sup>551</sup> was a desecration of the Sabbath by the traditional concept. A comparison of the two events by St. Louis' only two congregations thus afforded evidence that the B'nai El Congregation was treading the path of reform and away from orthodox belief. The United Hebrew Congregation, on the other hand, while possibly having some reforms also by this time, was still clinging to the traditional belief. This conclusion can be safely arrived

550 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 7, 28.

551 Ibid.

at since: (1) The orthodox Rev. Dr. Raphall, of New York, a noted antagonist of Reformist trends, was chosen to consecrate the synagogue rather than Rabbi Wise of nearby Cincinnati or another reform Rabbi; and (2) on Sunday, July 17, 1859, at a general meeting, the United Hebrew Congregation passed a resolution demonstrating its faith in orthodox Judaism and the "satisfactory results" it had thus far produced.<sup>552</sup>

Sometime after the consecration, Raphall, who remained over the Sabbath,<sup>553</sup> was escorted as far as Alton, Illinois, by the arrangements committee headed by Chairman Aaron Gershon, so that Raphall could take a return trip home.<sup>554</sup> This and all the arrangements for the one dedication ceremony cost the United Hebrew Congregation \$2000. Since the congregation also had to pay its highest salary thus far for a cantor, the synagogue had much to remember about the consecration of their first synagogue on June 17, 1859.<sup>555</sup> One thing was not forgotten by at least seven members of the congregation and that was the necessity of calling a special meeting to thank the participants who were responsible for the dedication of the new synagogue. The congregational gathering for that purpose was set for June 30, 1859.

<sup>552</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 173, 18B.

<sup>553</sup> Abrams, Memories, 38, as translated by Mrs. Jack Makovsky.

<sup>554</sup> Rosenthal (ed.), "United Hebrew Congregation," Modern View, December 15, 1911, p. 5.

<sup>555</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., 109.

Here it was decided to appoint a committee to draft resolutions and a vote of thanks for the building committee; the committee of arrangements; Dr. Rittermann, Dr. Raphael and his synagogue; Congregation B'nai Jeshurun of New York City; and H. E. Cohen and other donors. It is interesting to note the donation by Cohen, who had previously resigned from the building committee, certifying that this man had not forgotten his loyalty to the congregation he helped establish. An unusual feature of the meeting, although a law of the congregation, was the one-dollar fine assessed for non-attendance upon three of the required seven members who originally called the meeting and then did not put in their appearance.

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On Sunday, July 17, 1859, a general meeting was held attended by only twenty-three members. The resolutions committee drafted the following statement which was to be placed on the congregational minutes; in the Jewish periodicals, the Occident and American Jewish Advocate, American Israelite, and Jewish Messenger; and although not specified, also in the local paper, the Daily Missouri Republican:

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Whereas, This congregation has, by the blessing of God, been enabled to complete the erection of a Synagogue, and has duly consecrated the same to the Lord; and Whereas, in the progress of this pious work, this congregation has received

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556 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 171, MS.

557 Ibid., 172-173.

great assistance, support, and encouragement as well from the individual members thereof, as from friends and well-wishers in the city and throughout the United States; and, whereas, the members of this Congregation while desirous of placing on permanent and public record their grateful acknowledgement to their many munificent friends, to each of whom they say "May your award be abundant from the Lord whose worship you have promoted" - deem it a sacred duty to express their especial thanks to those to whom the Congregation is most beholden: therefore be it

Resolved, That the thanks of this Congregation are due, and respectfully tendered to the President, Vice-President, Trustees, the members of the Building Committee, and the Arrangement and Invitation Committees, who "granted their eyes no sleep and their eye-lids no slumber," until they had successfully complete the great work entrusted to them.

Resolved, That the thanks of this congregation are due, and respectfully tendered to the following gentlemen, members of this congregation, for their munificent gifts: to A. J. Lutz, for an elegant set of silver ornaments for the Sepher Torah; to Joseph Davis, Esq., for a magnificent Parocheth ornament hung on the Holy Ark covering the Torah: to Albert Fisher, Esq., for a splendid desk cover; to Henry Lyon, Esq., for a handsome pitcher and basin; to J. Nathan, Esq., for a valuable silver perpetual lamp, and to Messrs. Meyer and I. Lopitz, for a beautiful clock.

Resolved, That the thanks of this congregation are likewise due, and respectfully tendered to their friends and fellow-citizens of this and other cities, for their kind assistance and support.

Resolved, That this congregation feels pleasure in expressing its high sense for the services and abilities of their minister, the Rev. J. Ritterman, and while thanks are respectfully due and tendered to him for his efficient ministrations on the day of the consecration, they fully confide in his zeal, abilities, and pious intention.

Resolved, That strongly impressed with the great good that must result to themselves and their children, by persevering and advancing them in path of orthodox Judaism, which has already of this congregation will strive to the utmost of their ability to uphold the purity of their faith as they have received it from their own fathers.

Resolved, That these resolutions be entered on the minutes of this congregation, and be inserted in the Occident, Jewish Messenger, and Israelite.

Signed, 558  
I. Michael, Chairman

The resolutions indicated for the first time the aid given to the congregation from sources outside St. Louis.

While both the building and arrangements committees gave their untiring efforts, it seems that the building would have remained just a dream if it had not been for the determination of President Adolph J. Latz.<sup>559</sup> This was also the opinion of the members of the congregation when it included in the complimentary resolutions passed upon Latz's retirement in October, 1860, the phrase: "Now that the great effort of his mind and heart has been achieved, by witnessing us worship in a holy temple...having materially aided the erection of a handsome place of worship which is an ornament to the city and a pride to the Israelites."<sup>560</sup>

With the beautiful synagogue complete, the congregation now faced the problem of paying off the debt incurred.

558 Ibid., 173.

559 Scharf, op. cit., II, 1739.

560 United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 16, MS.

Israel J. Benjamin, a German traveler visiting St. Louis and the United Hebrew Congregation in August, 1861, remarked that the debt had been caused principally by two great expenses: (1) The unnecessary hiring of Chazan Rittermann at a high salary; and (2) the useless expenditure of approximately \$2000 for the dedication ceremony. When the traveler heard that the congregation could or would not pay even its interest on the money borrowed to pay for the new structure and thus had twice advertised in the papers to sell the synagogue to the highest bidder, <sup>561</sup> he commented on the members' useless expenditures thus: "As one most likely did not believe that the dedication of same was not so important as its maintenance." The details of how the United Hebrew Congregation avoided the impending financial crisis is part of another period in the synagogue's history, which is not covered by this thesis.

The United Hebrew Congregation opened its facilities to various organizations both within the Ahduth Israel and throughout the St. Louis Jewish community as a whole. These were the congregation's Hebrew School, <sup>562</sup> and such Jewish communal organizations as the Hebrew Charitable Society (which was organized in 1854, at the synagogue <sup>563</sup> and held its monthly

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<sup>561</sup> Benjamin, op. cit., 109.

<sup>562</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 55.

<sup>563</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, November 9, 23, 1854.



meetings there),<sup>564</sup> and the Society of Mercy and Truth (Chesed V'Emeth) which also assembled at the United Hebrew Congregation. It is possible that the Hebrew Benevolent Association might have met there on occasion. At any rate several United Hebrew members belonged to the latter society.<sup>565</sup>

During the twelve-year period discussed in this chapter, the United Hebrew Congregation had not taken any backward steps. It survived its problems and grew stronger in spite of its troubles and disillusionments. This can be seen by noting the improvements and added facilities which the Ahduth Israel made available to their members and the local Jewish community.

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564 Ibid., February 3, 1855.

565 Montague, St. Louis Business Directory for 1853-4, p. 13.

CHAPTER VI  
THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE  
UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION  
1841-1859

In attempting to discover the religious atmosphere among early St. Louis Jewry, and the United Hebrew Congregation in particular, the task is difficult, since records of each family's observance of traditional beliefs, detailed in Chapter Two, were not kept. However, much can be gleaned from the comments of travelers in the city, the congregational minutes, and the St. Louis newspapers. Together with all available facts, a story may be woven concerning the Jews' identification with their faith and their religious adherence as a group to traditional Judaism. While no all inclusive statement can be made, the religious trend during the period under consideration was one of disinclination to observe the traditional tenets until 1841. However, this was followed by a three-year period marked by a gradually stricter enforcement of religious law due to the emergence of an organized Jewish religious community. The triumph of orthodoxy within the United Hebrew Congregation was the main achievement of the period. In order to understand the type of Jewish life the United Hebrew Congregation encountered upon its establishment, it is necessary to summarize Jewish religious life about October, 1841. As mentioned above, the early St. Louis

Jews prior to 1841 did not participate in an active religious life. It is highly doubtful if many identified themselves as Jews or, if so, cared little to observe the traditional laws. Naturally the frontier conditions of the community made this matter difficult. Jewish girls were not easy to find, and, once found, hard to induce into residing in St. Louis. St. Louis' early Jewish families were case in point, as the Philippeon children and many of the Blocks married Christians and seemingly swayed from their religion.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Bush contended that only one of the entire Block family deserted the faith.<sup>3</sup> If so, several must have been anything but strong believers. From all the scattered community of Israelites residing in and near the city, in addition to those within the city, there was no record or account of any minyan or prayer meeting until 1836 or 1837.<sup>4</sup> The lack of a Jewish community in the city was evident by the remarks of Joseph Jonas, the first Jew in Cincinnati, concerning the year 1836. He stated:

Let us now rest awhile, and view the Jewish horizon around us.--Alas! it is a bleak and dreary view; in the whole Mississippi Valley, from the Alleghany Mountains, to the city of New Orleans included, excepting Cincinnati,

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1 See discussion in Chapter Two.

2 Ibid.

3 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

4 See discussion in Chapter Two.

not a single community of Israelites is to be described; numerous families and individuals were located in all directions; but not another attempt at union, and the worship of our God appeared to be dead in their hearts.<sup>5</sup>

From this comment can be seen the sad state of St. Louis Jewry in 1836.

Local Jewry also suffered prior to the first minyan through lack of religious officials or religious organizations to make a traditional life possible. Ritually correct or kosher meat was not available, since nothing indicated that a shochet resided in the city. It is always possible that some local Israelite was capable of performing this difficult function or was able to procure same from some surrounding area where a Jew lived capable of slaughtering in the Jewish manner. For instance, according to an American traveler, Phineas Block from Louisiana, Missouri, was a shochet, who came to the area about 1821.<sup>6</sup> Since there was no refrigeration at the time, it is doubtful if he could have slaughtered food for the local Jewry in the St. Louis area. It was not until 1837, when Nathan Abeles arrived, that the local Israelites had a shochet to give them ritually pure meat.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jones and Schaapes (eds.), A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875, p. 232.

<sup>6</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

<sup>7</sup> Hannum (ed.), A Quaker Forty-Miner, 42; Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

<sup>8</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two.

<sup>9</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

About 1838, according to Bush, Rabbi Samuel Davidson from Cincinnati was engaged as a reader, chazan, and shochet. <sup>10</sup> The length of his stay in the city is unknown; possibly it was just for the holy days.

With the addition of a minyan for the three High Holy Days about 1836 or 1837, a brief opportunity was afforded for community worship. <sup>11</sup> Yet an indication of the apparent disinterest in the project was the comment by Bush that on one occasion an Irishman "with some biblical name" was called "to make the tenth man." <sup>12</sup> While worship was irregular, apparently occurring only on the High Holy Days, it can be seen that attendance left much to be desired even on the most Holy Days of the Jewish year.

By early 1840 a cemetery had been provided, so that local Jewry could at least be buried according to their faith, even if they did not live in this manner. <sup>13</sup> Yet in spite of a sufficient number of Israelites in the city to carry on regular worship, and the resources seemingly available for the existence of some religious home life, such was not the case. Despite the influx of a number of conscientious Jews into the city between 1836 and 1841, <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., December 7, 1883.

<sup>11</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three.

<sup>12</sup> Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

<sup>13</sup> See discussion Chapter Two.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

producing a semblance of a Jewish community, the religious life of the small number of St. Louis Israelites left much to be desired. This conclusion can be derived from the description of local Jewry related by a South Carolina resident visiting the city in 1841 (already quoted): "I found about forty or fifty Jews, all, with four or five exceptions, men. They had no place of worship, and lived not as Jews."<sup>15</sup> It seems that this could be attributed not only to the Hebrew pioneer struggling to exist in a strange country, but the lack of a central or some organized body to take charge of the religious situation.

Thus the organization of the United Hebrew Congregation in October, 1841, was, in perspective, an important event for the local Jewish community, as well as for its members. These two groups were practically synonymous, as the members of the Achduth Israel helped contribute to the Hebrew community at large by aiding in the organization of various benevolent associations. The non-members likewise gained, as they could also take advantage of the religious services provided by the United Hebrew. The great service the United Hebrew Congregation performed was making certain religious conditions available. Whether its members and local Jewry in general took advantage of the conditions was a matter which is difficult to determine. Yet the persistent presence of these religious services would not have

<sup>15</sup> Lesser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 511.

been continuously maintained if it had been not taken advantage of by at least a portion of the members.

From 1841 until 1844 there was much improvement from the almost non-existent state of traditional observances by local Jewry. This was principally caused by the commencement of regular worship on an organized basis under strictly orthodox procedure, and the employment of the first congregational shochet. While services were suggested on the High Holy Days in the fall, 1842,<sup>16</sup> and Passover, 1843,<sup>17</sup> and probably held at that time,<sup>18</sup> regular worship was not commenced until shortly after Passover on April 23, 1843. It was on this date that the room committee arranged for the young United Hebrew Congregation a rented space on Second Street for a yearly rental of \$60. This action was approved at the special congregational meeting on May 28, 1843.<sup>19</sup> Services still had to be organized. Previously there was only one guide to the form of service, and this was the statement in Article Three of the original United Hebrew Constitution: "The Prayers shall never be performed otherwise than among the Polish Jews. This section shall never be altered or amended under any pretence whatsoever."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 13, MS.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 2.

The Polish custom of service varied according to the geographic locality the worshipper came from. For instance, one synagogue using the Polish custom in its service stood up most of the service, and allowed no singing in the service. <sup>21</sup> Since orthodoxy was the only form of Judaism then, there is little doubt that none of the traditional observances were violated by the Polish Congregation. However, it can definitely be said that it was a form of worship derived from Europe, principally used in the geographic area inhabited by the people of the sometimes existent country of Poland, which state in 1841 was not in existence. <sup>22</sup>

The need for setting down more definite rules of organized worship was felt several weeks after the congregation had approved the procurement of the Second Street room. Thus on June 11, 1843, Adolph Latz proposed that a committee of three be directed to draft rules and regulations for the synagogue. President Emanuel appointed J. Kohn, H. Harris, and J. Newark to perform this important task. <sup>23</sup> Newark, as mentioned earlier, was certainly qualified for this position as far as Hebrew knowledge and orthodox interest were concerned. <sup>24</sup> Approximately a month and a half

21 Interview with Samuel Freedman, 1957.

22 Interview with Louis I. Goodman, 1957. See discussion of Ashkenazim in Chapter Two.

23 *Ibid.*, 27.

24 See discussion in Chapter Three.



later, on July 23, 1843, the committee reported the following resolutions and four articles regulating the service:

We the committee appointed at a special meeting of the United Hebrew congregation held June 19, 1843 to draft-rules and regulations to govern the members in their conduct during divine service and likewise for the better understanding of Minhag Poland

-We the undersigned beg leave to report the following  
Whereas for the better understanding of the same in future we will be guided by the same Rules & form of worship as the Synagogue called and known by the Name B'Nay Yochoron Hebrew written בני יצורון in the City of New York;

Article 1 As it has been said that at some places they call up on the Day of Atonement more than at others we have come to a resolution to call up no more than seven including Maphter. On a week a Day should it be on the Sabbath than 8th including Maphter

Article 2 We will be guided only by the laws laid down in the שולחן ארוך Shulhan Aruch-orthodox Laws

Article 3-No person shall be allowed to read prayers for the congregation without being requested to do so by the Presiding officer nor to take upon himself any duty...without being requested to do so by the Presiding officer

Article 4th-During divine service every member and stranger shall take his seat and preserve general silence any member violating this rule when called to order by the presiding officer he or them shall be fined for the first offense 50¢ & for the 2nd-\$1.00- for the third time he or them shall be made to leave the room & not be allowed to enter again until he can give security for his future good conduct.

We the committee would recommend the above rules and regulations submitted shall be made known to members and strangers by being called out- in the Synagogue three successive Sabbaths so as every member and stranger present may become acquainted with the same. We would likewise recommend an extra officer to keep an account of the offerings in Synagogue during prayers and it shall be his duty every week to hand over to the secretary a correct account of the same.

Signed

Joseph Newmark

The whole of which is respectfully submitted

signed Joseph Kohn  
Henry Harris<sup>25</sup>

More than two-thirds of the members voted in the affirmative, approving the new synagogue laws. The report indicated many interesting facts about the United Hebrew worship. The introduction proclaimed the announced intention to regulate the service. This was to be done in conformity with the constitutional guarantee of minhag Poland. The synagogue also typed their form of worship as Ashkenazic by its pronouncement that it would follow the same rules and form of worship as the B'nai Yeshurun Congregation of New York City. The Ashkenazic form of worship had been established in this country between 1825 and 1850 due to the extensive number of Ashkenazic Jews who emigrated to this country from Europe because of:

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 30.

(1) The annulment of recently established reforms, as a reaction following the fall of Napoleon, and (2) the lifting of many restraints on immigration.<sup>28</sup> Yet the B'nai Jeshurun was the leading Ashkenazic congregation in the country and held this preeminence for some time. The letter had broken off from the only synagogue in New York,<sup>29</sup> the Sephardic Shearith Israel Congregation, in October, 1825.<sup>31</sup> Since the United Hebrew Congregation followed the ritual of New York's second congregation, and oldest Ashkenazic synagogue, it is interesting to examine the B'nai Jeshurun form of worship. The preamble to its constitution emphasized their leanings:

WHEREAS it hath pleased the God of our fore-fathers to gather some of His dispersed people in this city of New York who are taught...to praise His Holy Name....and to worship therein according to the rites, custom and usages of the German and Polish Jews.<sup>32</sup>

This B'nai Jeshurun Ashkenazic service was modeled upon the services of the Great Synagogue in London, as the majority of its members were of English origin.<sup>33</sup> The United Hebrew Congregation accepted the leadership of B'nai Jeshurun in other ways too, as the aforementioned St. Louis Hebrew

<sup>28</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two.

<sup>29</sup> Goldstein, A Century of Judaism in New York, 110.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>33</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 76.

Benevolent Society<sup>34</sup> organized in November, 1842, by United Hebrew members<sup>35</sup> called itself in Hebrew the same name as the B'nai Jeshurun affiliate, Chevra Mishivat Nefesh.<sup>36</sup> When it is recalled that Louis Bomsisler,<sup>36</sup> prominent in the organization of the first known minyan in St. Louis, and H. Van Bell, the aforementioned writer of the synagogue's constitution, were both originally long time members of the<sup>37</sup> Ashkenazic German Hebrew Rodoph Shalom Congregation of Philadelphia,<sup>38</sup> it seemed apparent that the United Hebrew Congregation had been pioneered in the Ashkenazic form, and was constitutionally intended to follow the path the aforementioned synagogue rules committee had laid for it.

Article One concerned a matter in the religious service. As a matter of custom only seven Jews would be honored by a call to the Torah during the reading of the Holy Scroll if the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) occurred on a week day while eight male Israelites would be granted the privilege if Yom Kippur came on the Sabbath. Article Two was of the utmost importance because it clearly stamped the congregation as strictly orthodox, since the Shulchan Aruch is a synthesis of only traditional beliefs.

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<sup>34</sup> Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860, p. 412.

<sup>35</sup> Jewish Tribuns, December 7, 1883.

<sup>36</sup> Lyons and de Sois, A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years, 171.

<sup>37</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three.

<sup>38</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 57.

Articles Three and Four pointed out very vividly the great authority the president of the congregation had in religious services. Only he could designate the lay leaders of the service. Yet his disciplinary powers were quite evident also. The last article demonstrated that strict order was to be observed and enforced, if need be in the synagogue. The fact that these rules and regulations were to be announced to all members and strangers present in the synagogue for three successive Sabbaths was indicative of the twin assurance that: (1) The synagogue was open to anyone--members and non-members alike; and (2) it was the first concrete evidence that the rental of the Second Street room was for at least regular Sabbath services every week and not just for holiday worship, as apparently was the case previously. An additional recommendation by the committee of a special book for offerings in the synagogue during prayers suggested the realization that money was contributed to the synagogue by each worshipper so honored by a call to the Torah.

There is not any available record to reveal whether the three traditional daily services were regularly held. The only recorded statement concerning this point was the indication on March 8, 1846, that the meeting presided over by President J. Newmark was not concluded until the second daily service, the afternoon prayers (mincha), were said.

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39 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 62, MS.

Since the congregation did not at this date employ a chazan to chant the prayers, the worship was apparently conducted by laymen with the President designating the reader for the Sabbath. <sup>40</sup> However, on the important High Holy days the Board of Trustees decided among themselves who was to be so honored. A case in point was the High Holy days in September, 1843. At a board meeting the following men were selected to read the prayers:

Rosh Hashona (New Year - 2 days)

morning service	Henry Harris - 1st Day
additional morn. serv.	Harry Solomon " "
morning	David Levison- 2nd "
additional morn. serv.	H. Marks " "

Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement

evening Kol Midre service	David Levison	
morning	H. Harris- Day of Atonement	
additional morn. serv.	H. Marks " " "	
afternoon service	S. Harriss " " "	
closing service	E.S. Block " " "	41
	Joseph Newmark	

It was to be expected that these men were religious devout Jews, as only observant Israelites were traditionally selected to lead the congregation at any time; but this was especially so on the High Holy days. Thus, while any worshipper could attend and possibly lead the Sabbath service without discrimination, apparently on the holidays only members were chosen. These lay chanters of the prayers also fulfilled this privilege on other holidays. For instance,

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 33.

on Passover, 1844. Levison, Marks, and Harris all performed again, as did Abeles.<sup>42</sup>

It is significant that all the prayer services traditionally said on holiday occasions were chanted by the United Hebrew Congregation. Also both days of the holiday were observed in the traditional manner. It was another indication of the orthodox nature of the synagogue's worship. Whether the sound of the shofar, the ram's horn blown only on the High Holy days, was heard in 1843, is unknown. No mention was made of this fact until late September, 1846, when Solomon Cohn was paid five dollars for performing this ritual function.<sup>43</sup> While no mention was ever again made of the execution of this effort, it can be safely assumed that as long as the congregation was able to secure a shofar blower, the same was accomplished yearly, since both traditional and reform observe this ritual. The congregation also observed the Yizkor service--the prayer of remembrance of departed relatives on Yom Kippur. This is known, since in October, 1845, Mrs. Woolf sent in a handsome donation apparently to induce someone in the synagogue to read this memorial prayer for her late daughter.<sup>44</sup>

Seats for the High Holy days were sold at auction, with the members having first chance to purchase these, with the strangers or non-members' opportunity to obtain

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 58.

their desired location in the synagogue a week or so afterwards. Alexander Lewis,<sup>45</sup> an auctioneer by profession,<sup>46</sup> spent a bus man's holiday at the synagogue selling the prized locations.<sup>47</sup> The disposal was according to the manner prescribed by the Board of Trustees on September 4, 1843:

Resolved that the seat shall be leased to each member of the congregation for One Dollar and that Each member shall take his number according to his standing in rotation as a member in Book and the Balance of seats shall be leased to strangers to the highest bidder.<sup>48</sup>

Actually the members' sale disclosed that the majority of seats were purchased for more than one dollar with seat, or possibly personal account, numbers listed from one to forty. The higher priced seats did not always possess the lower numbered locations.<sup>49</sup> The tickets for the seats<sup>50</sup> were undoubtedly sold to both men and women,<sup>51</sup> although this was not explicitly stated in this early period. Since the synagogue had previously agreed to let the Shulcan Aruch, or orthodox laws, govern their actions, it can be safely assumed that the men and women were properly separated for

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45 Ibid., 34.

46 Daily Missouri Republican, April 28, 1851.

47 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 34, MS.

48 Ibid., 33.

49 Ibid., 34.

50 United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, 54, MS.

51 United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 7, 28, MS.



worship. A committee of N. Abeles and Kohn were appointed in September, 1843, to see that good order was kept in the synagogue during prayer. Evidently certain rules of decorum were drafted and were not to be broken. While there was no evidence available at the time what these regulations were, a set of rules was discovered applicable in September, 1843. Perhaps the following 1863 rules--apparently for the High Holy days--were much the same as those a score of years earlier:

1. Each Seatholder to show Ticket on entering Synagogue.
2. Children under 5 years not to be admitted.
3. No Person allowed to have to change one seat for another during devine worship.
4. No Person allowed to leave the Synagogue at the close of prayer until after the choir commenced Yig'dal concluding prayer.
5. To keep conversation is strictly prohibited.
6. Children between 5 and 13 years to be shown by the Sexton.<sup>53</sup>

Children under thirteen seemingly were admitted free, but above thirteen they were charged \$2.00 a seat. These rules were printed and placed in the synagogue.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately the regulations were violated immediately. In October, 1843, E. Gustorf complained of ill treatment he received in the

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<sup>52</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 34, MS.

<sup>53</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, 54, MS.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 53.

synagogue at the hands of Joseph Newmark.<sup>55</sup> The former later withdrew his protest.<sup>56</sup> Actually only on a very rare occasion was any real disturbance noted during services. For instance, a fight broke out as the Friday evening service was concluding in August, 1849,<sup>57</sup> concerning a matter to be discussed later in this chapter; and in October, 1865, a member was rebuked for uttering language "unbecoming a member and a Gentleman at the time of worship."<sup>58</sup> Generally, through the continuous omission of any facts to the contrary, the services were orderly. Thus, the congregation strongly believed in the idea of serving God in the proper atmosphere.

Other holidays were also traditionally observed; for instance, the first and last two days of Succoth and Passover.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the traditional use of the palm branch or lulav, and the citrus fruit, the esrog, on Succoth were a part of the holiday's ritual.<sup>60</sup> The holiday of Shavuoth, the

<sup>55</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 34, MS.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>57</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1849.

<sup>58</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, 73, MS.

<sup>59</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 4, MS.

<sup>60</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, 60, MS.

time of the receiving of the Torah by Moses from God as well as the time of the festival of first fruits, was likewise observed by the Achduth Israel. Whether the synagogue was as festively decorated in the spring of 1843 as it was by the Ladies Hebrew Relief Society in the reform days of 1866 cannot be determined. Yet the decoration of the house of worship with greens is traditional observance, and so was most likely enforced in the early period.

The religious articles necessary for the service were no doubt available. At the first known minyan, Bomsisler had secured a Sepher Torah and the Sidurim or prayer books. Thus, the rudiments for the service were there. Possibly Bomsisler left these items, or another Torah was secured from Bohemia by N. Abeles, as Bush contended. At any rate by March, 1843, the congregation had but one holy scroll or Torah. Apparently this was the only one in the city of St. Louis at the time. In late August, 1844, the synagogue decided to raise money to purchase

61 See discussion of Shavuoth in Chapter Two.

62 United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, 96, MS.

63 See discussion of religious articles in Chapter Two.

64 Jewish Tribune, November 23, 1883.

65 Ibid., December 7, 1883.

66 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 19, MS.

another holy scroll. Joseph Kohn, Joseph Newmark, and  
 S. J. Levi worked on the project, and successfully accom-  
 plished their goal. Where this important religious article  
 was obtained has not been ascertained; however, in October,  
 1845, it appears that a Mrs. Woolf donated a holy scroll to  
 the congregation. The United Hebrew expressed their thanks  
 and promised to say Yiskor (memorial service) for her daughter,  
 who had died.

To aid the people in the observance of Kashruth,  
 ritually correct food, the congregation hired a shochet and  
 secured the necessary unleavened bread or Matzoh for the  
 Passover holiday. While it is possible, as Bush claimed,  
 that Nathan Abeles and then a Samuel Davidson were shoachim  
 (ritual slaughterers) prior to the organization of the United  
 Hebrew Congregation, the synagogue itself did not hire its own  
 shochet until 1844. The move toward this goal was commenced  
 on July 23, 1843, when Joseph Newmark, long a devoted and  
 pious Jew, became the first to advocate the hiring of such  
 a religious official. He submitted the following resolution:

Resolved that this congregation employ and  
 pay a shochet and pay him a regular salary  
 for his services and for defraying the same  
 expenses Each member shall pay annually Nine

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67 Ibid., 48.

68 Lesser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American  
 Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

69 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United  
 Hebrew Congregation, 58, MS.

70 See discussion of Joseph Newmark in Chapter Four.

dollars a year to the congregation instead of three.<sup>71</sup>

Although this resolution was not passed immediately and discussion of it even laid over for consideration until the next regular meeting, the congregation almost immediately hired a shochet. To aid in having kosher food until this next gathering, a Mr. Samuels offered his services as shochet. Immediately members voluntarily raised \$27.05 remuneration for his efforts:

David Serf	5.00	E. Block	\$4.30
Gumbert	1.50	J. Emanuel	4.00
Green	.38	Jos. Newmark	1.06
Lisso	.25	S.E. Mandiebaum	1.00
S. Jacks	2.37	Steifie	1.25
Saul Jacobs	2.50	Korock	.50
H. Marks	1.50		72

Several of the signers of this list were never admitted or listed on the rolls previously as members.

No mention was made of Newmark's resolution at the next regular meeting held in the middle of October, 1843.<sup>73</sup> In fact, one month later, Newmark withdrew the proposal, but gave notice that at some future meeting he would offer some amendment to the constitution.<sup>74</sup> The subject was discussed again on December 24, 1843. Newmark suggested that Articles Two and Fifteen of the original Constitution be rescinded.

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<sup>71</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 34, MS.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 38.

As mentioned during the discussion of this document, these articles emphasized as matters of first importance the payment for the burial ground, and the erection of a synagogue, as well as the burial of poor Israelites and the purchase of books and other items<sup>75</sup> "as is needful and customary to have in all synagogues."<sup>76</sup> Newark obviously felt the hiring of a shochet should have been emphasized also. In fact the original document, the final part of which was not available, contained no mention of any religious officials. A vote was taken and Newark's proposal was defeated. Then a long debate ensued on the issue. During the discussion the most telling remark was made by Jacob Emanuel, who swung congregational opinion to his interpretation of Article Two. He felt that "as it says it is needful to have everything necessary in all congregations and that the above should be construed to that we might employ a showhet."<sup>77</sup> Upon a poll of the members present, the president's opinion was sustained. The persistent Newark then offered the following solution to the problem:

Resolved that the Cong. employ a showhet for the use of the society and the election to take place next regular Quarterly meeting and

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<sup>75</sup> See discussion of United Hebrew Constitution in Chapter Three.

<sup>76</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 2, MS.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 39.

notice should be given of same so as to allow any person to submit their claims for the office.<sup>79</sup>

The resolution was carried,<sup>79</sup> and the congregation was now legally entitled to employ a shochet without resorting to voluntary subscriptions as a method of going around the constitution.

Evidently Samuels went about his job in the meantime. Yet by August, 1844, nothing further had been recorded concerning this shochet. The latter, possibly worried over his fate, wrote a letter to the congregation which was noted at the meeting of August 4, 1844. Immediately after reading his communication, a committee framed the following resolution:

Resolved that Mr. Samuels be Elected from this Cong. Shochet and Reader of the Torah. Salary of \$220 per annum and his services to commence on the next Quarterly meeting.<sup>80</sup>

Thus officially S. Samuels was elected as the first known United Hebrew Shochet and Reader of the Torah. The congregation also dealt with a specific butcher who furnished the meat for the ritual slaughterer to use.<sup>81</sup> The duties of the shochet consisted of killing meat for both members and non-members. In October, 1844, both members and non-members were to pay for each kosher chicken 2½¢ and for individual

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76 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid., 47.

81 Ibid., 49.

kosher geese and turkey 5¢. This money was used to defray the expenses of the shochet, Samuel.<sup>82</sup> Evidently he did not receive all, since at a later date, in April, 1855, a resolution was passed to allow this religious officer to keep all funds accruing from his work from members and non-members alike.<sup>83</sup> Samuel thus slaughtered for the United Hebrew Congregation and the local Jewish community. It was not indicated at the time where or when the kosher meat was prepared. However in May, 1852, the specific time the slaughtering was to occur was stated:

In the warm season say from March till December he shall kill 3 times a week and from Dec. till March twice a week, the days for killing in summer - Sunday and Tuesday and Thursday and in winter - Monday and Thursday. Should it however happen on the appointed days that all is....lacking he shall kill again next day, so that the members of the Congregation shall not lack kosher meat. The time for killing poultry in the summer to be from 6a.m.-10a.m. and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and winter 7 a.m. - 10a.m., 5p.m.-8p.m. and in case of necessity he shall kill at all times when at home.<sup>84</sup>

While these rules were not set down in 1843, these regulations probably give some indication of when the shochet slaughtered the meat during the first few years under discussion. It is important to note the spirit of the law, which stipulated in so many words that the Jewish community

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 128

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 97.



was never to lack properly prepared kosher meat. On the other hand, the butcher paid the United Hebrew for giving him the meat business. For instance, in September, 1844, the butcher agreed to pay \$2.50 per week to the congregation.<sup>85</sup>

Not only was the local Jewish community provided with Kosher meat but also Passover matzoh or unleavened bread was available. The congregation received bids on this special food, and then decided from whom to purchase. E. Block and H. Hasey (possibly Hasic) were the two contracting parties. After some deliberation the United Hebrew decided on February 18, 1844, to purchase Hasey's offer at eleven cents a pound. To be on the safe side President H. H. Cohen appointed a committee to see that the specifications of the contract for "Passover Cakes" were carried out.<sup>86</sup> Since nothing was said to the contrary, it can be assumed that like all other religious services the congregation extended to its members, local Jewry had the same opportunity to take advantage of this.

Another duty of Shochet Samuels was the performance of the marriage ceremony.<sup>87</sup> As was noted previously, every Jew was to marry within his own religion.<sup>88</sup> In fact, after a

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85 Ibid., 49.

86 Ibid., 42.

87 Ibid., 51.

88 See discussion of marriage in Chapter Four.

perusal of several books on early American Jewish history, several early American Jewish congregations, specifically the Rodeph Shalom of Philadelphia<sup>89</sup> and the several congregations of New York<sup>90</sup> among others, stipulated in their constitution that membership was to be restricted only to those Jews who married within their faith. The lack of such a clause in the United Hebrew document could have been attributed to several possibilities. As mentioned earlier, being in a wilderness Jewish marriages were difficult to come by;<sup>91</sup> and several local Jews had intermarried<sup>92</sup> and the congregation could not have existed without their membership. At any rate, while, as discussed previously, Jews might have been married in St. Louis by either a local justice or fellow Israelite,<sup>93</sup> there was no record to indicate a local Jewish marriage was performed according to tradition prior to 1844. The United Hebrew Congregation in the midst of establishing a synagogue and a Jewish community for its members and worshippers soon saw the need for remedying this fundamental problem so detrimental to the existence of Judaism. On February 18, 1844, a set of marriage rules was passed by the Board of Trustees on the suggestion of

<sup>89</sup> Davis, The History of Rodeph Shalom Congregation, Philadelphia, 1802-1926, p. 53.

<sup>90</sup> Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860, p. 379.

<sup>91</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three.

<sup>92</sup> See discussion in Chapter Three.

<sup>93</sup> See discussion in Chapter Four.

President H. E. Cohen which stated:

That in case of an application to be married by any member of our persuasion that they notify the President and the Board of Trustees at least 10 days previous to the time of marriage and that a committee be appointed to enquire if the applicant or his intended are such persons as we may recognize as belonging to our persuasion and that he pay for the same not less than \$5.... unanimously adopted. On motion of Henry Harriss and seconded by D. Levison any person undertaking to give such marriage shall not be a matter of record on the Books of the congregation and the party so transgressing, and if a member of the congregation, shall be fined no less than twenty five Dollars. If the fine imposed be not paid forthwith then they shall be expelled as a member of the Congregation. Unanimously adopted.<sup>94</sup>

The importance and sanctity with which the United Hebrew regarded the Jewish marriage was indicated by the strict penalty imposed upon any fraudulent issuance of a Jewish certificate or violation of the above rules. It is interesting to note that no provision was made for the conversion of a Christian intendant to Judaism.<sup>95</sup> The regulations

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<sup>94</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 42-43, MS.

<sup>95</sup> Conversion from another religion to Judaism is discouraged. Only is a new convert accepted after he or she realizes the duties he will have to perform. Before the ceremony of conversion is completed, the proselyte is repeatedly questioned and told how difficult such would be. If the individual still indicates his intention to become a Jew, he or she is given lessons on Judaism by a Rabbi and subsequently enters the fold. A male must be circumcised.

were soon tested, as the first known Jewish marriage in the city was recorded near the end of 1844. On December 1, 1844, at a Board of Trustees meeting, the officers recommended that Mr. Samuel be allowed four dollars "for his services in marrying Isaac Emanuel to Mrs. Dehan."<sup>96</sup>

The congregation exhibited its zeal to maintain orthodox precepts in yet another religious area prior to 1844. The United Hebrew cemetery needed improvement, and so the synagogue fenced it in, and erected a house on it in conformity with Jewish belief.<sup>97</sup> The additions were begun in late May, 1843, when a building committee was empowered to contract for the erection of the two story house on the lot, and likewise to purchase "the proper furniture and utensils."<sup>98</sup> The plan was submitted to the firm of Boyd and Farvis, who constructed the building for \$325,<sup>99</sup> a sum which was probably quite an expense for the young congregation. The structure was called a "Metacher House" and served as a chapel and mortuary.<sup>100</sup> The structure was ready by December,<sup>101</sup> 1843.

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<sup>96</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 51, MS.

<sup>97</sup> Laesser, "Jews at St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January, 1845, p. 510.

<sup>98</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 24, MS.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>100</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 78.

<sup>101</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, December 7, 1843.

Jewish law was followed concerning a Jew who had died. A perusal of local newspapers of St. Louis pointed out that like all St. Louis funerals, they were usually conducted from the residence of the deceased or a relative. After this the congregation provided carriages<sup>102</sup> which transported the body and possibly the grieving relatives and friends to the United Hebrew cemetery on the southwest corner of Pratts Avenue<sup>104</sup> and Twenty-sixth Street.<sup>105</sup> Since it is a custom not to keep a dead body more than a day, the previously stated unusual incident, stated in Chapter Four, occurred which caused an early St. Louis Jewish funeral to be reported on December 7, 1843, in the Daily Missouri Republican reporting the "death" of a Jewish girl who was revived back to life the next day, mainly due to the fact that she was washed and anointed prior to burial.<sup>106</sup> The local newspaper pointed to this incredible occurrence as an example of hasty burials.

The house where the washing and anointing of the dead body was done was the Metacher house. This almost unbelievable happening was the first Jewish event dis-

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<sup>102</sup> See discussion of death of Jacob Philipson in Chapter Two.

<sup>103</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1866, p. 79, MS.

<sup>104</sup> Edwards, Edwards' Tenth Annual Director to the Inhabitants, Institutions, etc., in the City of St. Louis For 1868, p. 727.

<sup>105</sup> Jewish Tribune, December 7, 1843.

<sup>106</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, December 7, 1843.

covered in local newspapers. Many times on the return home from the cemetery local residents would have sport and race their carriages back home. This was mostly contrived by the competing carriage firms to demonstrate that their livery horses gave faster service than their rivals. This rose to such proportions that an accident and subsequent death occurred, which necessitated a newspaper warning and rebuke in 1847 to the local citizenry for the poor taste and manner of return from such a sorrowful event. <sup>107</sup> As mentioned previously, the dead were not forgotten, since the yizkor (memorial prayer) was said in <sup>108</sup> the synagogue.

Thus regular worship, regulations governing a traditional synagogue, strict religious marriage laws, a regularly employed shochet, and a cemetery conducted according to Jewish custom were the results of just three years of organization. The South Carolina traveler who had visited the city in 1841 returned to St. Louis in 1844 and reported to Lesser:

I found that the number of Jews here had increased to about sixty or seventy, nearly all men. They have a room in which divine service is held every Saturday. They also

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107 Daily Missouri Republican, February 8, 1848.

108 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 53, MS.

have a Shochet. But alas! the state of religion is far from being as it should.<sup>109</sup>

Leeser then commented in the Occident:

Though so much remained to be done to entitle the brethren of St. Louis to be considered a pious congregation, they have done a great deal to remove the stigma of indifference; and we trust that with the increase of their numbers the state of religion will also improve, and that next year's report may show them to be 'keeping the Sabbath by not violating it, and setting an example in their domestic relations of being part of a people holy to the Lord.'<sup>110</sup>

While the exact percentage of the Jewish settlers who observed Jewish laws and customs was unknown, it can be safely concluded from the facts and statements presented above that the United Hebrew Congregation had made much progress since its organization in 1841, when few if any religious services were provided the local Jewish community. By the fall of 1844 regular Saturday services and the employment of a shochet were continuous features of the young congregation's recovery from the previously existing vacuum.

Beginning in the middle of September, 1844, when Joseph Newmark assumed the presidency<sup>111</sup> of the congregation, until B. Illow completed his term in the rabbinate in 1855, the synagogue gradually reached its height in its demand for

<sup>109</sup> Leeser, "Jews At St. Louis," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, January 1845, p. 511.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 49, MS.

observing the orthodox Jewish law. The traditional strictness required in the performance of all religious duties was the main achievement of this period. Religious officials who were hired generally remained but a short time. Evidently the constitution was still not considered sufficiently altered to provide for the hiring of all religious officials. This seemed apparent from the tone of the recorded special meeting held on July 13, 1845. President Newmark announced that shochet and reader S. Samuels' term had nearly expired and requested that the constitution be changed or that new laws be made so that a "suitable person" could be hired in the incumbent's stead. <sup>112</sup> S. J. Levi also requested it changed so it would allow the employing of a new man who would possess, besides the qualifications of the slaughterer, the ability of a chazan. J. Newmark, Levi, Weigle, and Harris investigated the matter. <sup>113</sup> Unfortunately the committee failed to agree on a proper method to find the desired twin-duty religious official. H. S. Lichtenstein then countered with the proposal that the congregation employ a new person to perform S. Samuel's duties after the expiration of his term. It is interesting to note that the method he suggested for finding a capable person to do the job was two-fold: (1) The president should announce the vacancy in the

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.



synagogue; and (2) the secretary was to write to "the principal congregations" to procure the services of a competent man. <sup>114</sup> This was the first recorded instance where there was communication with the other congregations.

Interestingly, Leeser's newly established Occident, written to in the fall of 1844, was overlooked as a media. The salary offered the double-duty employee was set as "not to exceed \$300 a year." <sup>115</sup> A vote of twenty to three passed the Lichtenstein proposal with H. H. Cohen and the incumbent S. Samuels not voting. <sup>116</sup> However, seemingly they were unable to secure the suitable person desired, and the constitution was left unaltered; for in early January, 1846, \$29.12 was voluntarily contributed to pay Samuels for his services as shochet.

March, 1846, found the congregation in the midst of a great dues dispute, possibly indicating that there was little money available to provide for employing the desired shochet and chazan. Whether as a result of the uproarious meeting or not, Trustee S. J. Levi resigned his office and President Newmark attempted to do likewise, but the latter's <sup>117</sup> action was unanimously voted down. Samuels, after inter-

114 Ibid., 57.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid., 61-62.

minably serving the congregation for about three years, soon departed, but his apparent successor, Mr. Hershwell, did not remain long, resigning in March, 1847. Immediately a committee was formed to obtain a subscription for employing a new shoebet.<sup>118</sup> In the meantime, probably some local Israelite slaughtered the meat in the proper manner. This can be assumed, since practically all local observant Jews kept koshros--at least this was the opinion of local personalities acquainted with this early Jewish period in St. Louis.<sup>119</sup>

Not much time during Mark Samuel's regime was lost in considering a new candidate. On April 4, 1847, only one month after Hershwell resigned, the name of S. Abeles, discussed in an earlier chapter,<sup>120</sup> was mentioned as a possible new shoebet and Baal Korah (Reader of the Torah) on "condition that he go to New York and get kabala from the Rauf- (a sort of diploma signifying approval)."<sup>121</sup> It was this latter stipulation attached as a prerequisite to the acceptance of this new candidate which was the significant item, since Abeles' ability to perform the job had to be tested and approved by a New York rabbi. This was the first indication of greater

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118 Ibid., 66.

119 Interviews with four early Jewish settlers in St. Louis: Mrs. A. Spatsin, 1957; Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957; Mr. Nathan Pearlmutter, 1957, and Mrs. Samuel Russack, 1957.

120 See discussion of Simon Abeles in Chapter Five.

121 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 66, MS.

strictness in the employment of this important religious official. Whether Abeles was employed was not definitely stated.

A further demonstration of the synagogue's concern with the kosher meat situation was the decision in the middle of July, 1846, that the congregation make arrangements with another butcher unless the present one supplied them with a better quality of beef. <sup>122</sup> Besides this difficulty, on

October 10, 1847, it was apparently felt that the butcher should pay more money to the congregation than previously to help defray the cost of the shochet. At this meeting it was <sup>123</sup> likewise decided to revise the synagogue constitution.

Whether this action affected an alteration in the document to provide for the employment of religious officials is unknown; however, one week later, on October 17, 1847, M. Bergen was hired as shochet and reader of the Torah for one year at an annual salary of three hundred dollars. <sup>124</sup> He remained in the congregation's employ for only a little more than a full year. <sup>125</sup>

The office of shochet, necessary since a prime requisite of a traditional life was the availability of kosher meat slaughtered by a capable male, was a source of constant trouble to the congregation not only due to the frequent

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122 Ibid., 67.

123 Ibid., 68.

124 Ibid., 69.

125 Ibid., 76.

turnover in the office, but due to the desire to observe the traditional belief that an unqualified shochet could make the kosher product impure. Toward the end of January, 1849, the secretary wrote a letter to New Orleans, Rev. Leeser of Philadelphia, and Rev. S. M. Isaacs of New York, stating what the congregation could afford to pay a person qualified to fill two unrecorded religious offices. It was then decided that the officers of the congregation go among the non-members in the community to collect funds to defray the expense of a shochet. <sup>126</sup> Soon Bergen no longer filled this important office. Evidently, a religious officer with strict qualifications was hard to find at the time, for a Mr. Phillips, who did not possess the required certificates to prove his capability, <sup>127</sup> was unanimously employed as shochet for one year only to fill the vacancy, with the proviso that he was to go to Baltimore "there to be examined by a proper person to know whether he is capable of filling the said office according to our Laws and that he must receive his certificates for the same. His salary shall commence from this date June 17, 1849." <sup>128</sup> The "proper person" in Baltimore mentioned above to do the examining was probably the aforementioned Rabbi Rice.

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<sup>126</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 74, MS.

<sup>127</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1849.

<sup>128</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 76, MS.

In the meantime, Phillips was to officiate as reader of the Torah pro tem until a capable person was employed for the office. The salary to be paid Phillips under the dual setup was to be that of shochet at \$300 per annum, and an additional one hundred dollars a year extra during the time he acted as Reader. <sup>129</sup> However, Phillips decided that the expense of traveling was quite high, and with the cholera epidemic in St. Louis then nearing its peak, he did not go. Under these circumstances it was contended that it would be a violation of Jewish law to hire him without the testimony of the rabbi or certificates. Soon after this an Israelite named Davidson arrived from Europe. He possessed nine certificates vouching for his eligibility to the office. <sup>130</sup> By July 1, 1849, he notified the United Hebrew and they accepted his petition for the office. On July 22, 1849, a special meeting was held at the synagogue to elect a reader of the Torah and shochet. Since Davidson was the only candidate, a voice vote was taken, which disclosed that he was unanimously elected by the twenty-five members present to the dual offices for one year at a salary of "Several Hundred Dollars" per annum. <sup>131</sup>

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129 Ibid.

130 Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1849.

131 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 77-78, MS.

In the meantime President Mark Samuel, who had been in office during this period of stricter adherence to Jewish law, discovered that Phillips had commenced slaughtering in opposition to the regularly appointed official, and some of the congregation's members had partaken of the flesh slain by him which had been previously judged unclean. Samuel felt it his duty to speak against such proceedings. The following Friday evening, at the evening or maariv service, he announced the facts he had uncovered, and said that a repetition of the offense would bring an unnamed penalty upon the offending individual. This testimony caused bedlam to break loose in the Fifth Street Synagogue. The Daily Missouri Republican reported an account of the resulting confusion after Samuel concluded his righteous remarks:

Upon this commencement, a Mr. Lichenstein came forward to the altar, and made some remarks censuring the course of Mr. Samuel. About this time, another person of the same name advanced and struck a small stand, upon which the Bible was placed, so violently that it was broken down. Mr. Samuel, seeing the disturbance which had arisen, started for the door, with the intention of requesting the door-keeper to procure a watchman and whilst on his way to it, a brother of Lichenstein struck him two very severe blows on his head. The greatest confusion prevailed at the infliction of this indignity, and soon after, the meeting dispersed.<sup>132</sup>

A trial resulted from the unfortunate occurrence.

Samuel brought suit for damages for assault and battery as  
 committed in the synagogue <sup>133</sup> against Moses E. Lichtenstein. <sup>134</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1849.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., August 16, 1849.

<sup>134</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, August 10, 1849.

The trial caused a great deal of excitement among the Jews, as the room where Law Commissioner Watson conducted the hearing was crowded on the day of the trial, August 9, 1849. The lawyers for each side were John M. Eager and Britton A. Hill. Nearly the whole day was occupied in hearing the testimony and the arguments of counsel. Finally it was given to the jury, but they failed to agree, and so were discharged. A new trial was ordered for <sup>135</sup> August 15, 1849. However, cooler heads intervened, and the interested parties settled the matter out of court with the defendant paying the cost of the prosecution and the sum of twenty-five dollars into the treasury of the congregation. Lichtenstein decided this was the more advisable course to pursue so that further trouble and litigation could be avoided; thus he made the above concession. The Daily Missouri Republican reported that "all parties deprecate the whole matter" <sup>136</sup> and expressed the hope that "no such intestine troubles will ever afflict their Congregation again." <sup>137</sup>

The incident which could have done little to enhance the Jews' position in early St. Louis was seemingly not merely a dispute over a shochet's credentials. It involved a far wider area. This was the first evidence discovered

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135 Ibid., August 16, 1849.

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

of a difference of opinion among the members over the strict traditional belief as practiced by St. Louis' most orthodox synagogue, the United Hebrew Congregation. As usual, there were two parties--one contending for a strict observance of the form and ceremonials of Jewish worship, and absolute conformity to all the Jewish beliefs; and the other desiring as much license as possible, both in the matter of eating prohibited or non-kosher meat at local coffee houses and in keeping their stores and places of business open on Saturday. The Daily Missouri Republican had this comment on the split: "The one party are inclined to carry out the strict doctrines of their faith; the others are indifferent about this matter, and hence the strife which has arisen in the synagogue."<sup>138</sup> Evidently this was a victory for the predominant orthodox element since Davidson completed his contract. Yet, it pointed out the difficulty some Jews were having in living a normal Jewish life in the United States.

It would be a sad mistake if it was thought that the unfortunate outburst in the synagogue would result in speeding the United Hebrew toward Reform. The opposite was the result. A letter, mentioned in part in Chapter Five, and written on November 6, 1849, by Secretary Henry Myers to Reverend Isaac Lesser, was evidence of the trend toward stricter observance:

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., August 10, 1849.



At our last holy days, our synagogue was crowded to almost suffocation, not less than from five to six hundred persons being present, when but a few years ago we could be boast of fifty or sixty, and it is still increasing.

We have been more than fortunate in securing the valuable services of the Rev. Nathan Davidson, a gentleman qualified in an eminent degree for the offices he now fills, which is rather more than ordinary arduous, being shochet as well as hazan. Having myself been a constant attender both to the London and New York synagogues, I consider myself justified in saying that he cannot be surpassed in his style of reading, his pronunciation being most perfect and his singing clear from those additions so often made use of. You may think my dear sir, that I have over drawn my picture, but I am sure that had you been present and seen the satisfaction depicted upon the countenances of his hearers as they left the house of prayer after hearing the reverend gentleman you would agree with me that I have fell far short in my criticism.<sup>139</sup>

When it is remembered that only six or seven hundred Jews resided in St. Louis four years hence, 1853,<sup>140</sup> and that the lure of the two other synagogues, Imanu-El and B'nai Brith which followed a less traditional nature, it can be safely said that the orthodox United Hebrew Congregation still maintained the local Jewish religious leadership. The presence of the able shochet and chazan Davidson in the synagogue shortly after the synagogue quarrel was added evidence that the reformists were in the minority at the

<sup>139</sup> "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October 1956, p. 65.

<sup>140</sup> St. Louis Intelligencer, December 17, 1853.

United Hebrew Congregation. This was not strange, since the less strict local Imanu-El synagogue, discussed previously, was located nearby. <sup>141</sup> The reelection of President Mark Samuel on September 23, 1849, hardly one month after the quarrel, by the twenty-nine members present at the annual meeting was a sufficient indication in itself of the triumph of the orthodox element. <sup>142</sup>

On February 5, 1850, Nathan Davidson's employment by the congregation, which began on such a stormy note, terminated in the same manner, as the shochet was discharged for neglecting his duty. He had apparently left the congregation for an unknown period of time without either notifying the officers or procuring a proper person to replace him.

Little time was wasted in planning for a successor to the shochet and chazan. At the same meeting the members decided to dismiss Davidson, it was agreed to write to New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore to advertise the congregation's desire for a replacement at a yearly salary of \$500 a year. <sup>143</sup> On March 17, 1850, Edward Meier was interested sufficiently to submit an application for the positions of chazan and shochet. Another indication of the serious concern with which members viewed the vital position of shochet was the suggestion

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<sup>141</sup> See discussion in Chapters Four and Five.

<sup>142</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 76-79, MS.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

that Meier's services be accepted with the important qualification that "upon his producing diplomas satisfactory to the congregation in regard to his capability to act as shochet chasan for the Congregation the above mentioned Diplomas to be signed by the Shochet of Baltimore and counter signed by Mr. A. Rice of the Same city, Meier's salary to be \$500 a year to begin upon his producing satisfactory Certificates as above mentioned and the congregation further allows him six weeks from this date to produce said certificates."<sup>144</sup>

This stipulation was significant, since it pointed out the continued emphasis upon the importance of the hired official being capable in the traditional sense of the word of performing the desired religious function. On May 19, 1850, fully two months after Meier first applied, a special meeting was called to vote on the prospective shochet-chasan. Prior to this meeting, the Board of Trustees,<sup>145</sup> composed of President Samuel, Treasurer Joseph Kohn, and Trustees Judah Hart, E. H. Cohen, and Henry Harriss,<sup>146</sup> met and examined the certificates. However, they did not feel justified in accepting them, since for some reason they did not concur with the congregational agreement with Meier. Thus, the matter was referred to the May 19 special meeting, where the secretary

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 79.

read the certificates. A large majority of 25 to 5 approved the letter, with only A. Weigle, J. Emanuel, J. Segar, I. Segar, and H. Myers dissenting. Now nothing stood in the way of Meier's approval, which was accordingly accomplished at the original salary of \$500 a year payable monthly commencing on May 15, 1850.<sup>147</sup>

The new chazan had previously served at the two congregations which had played a part in the United Hebrew's history--Rodeph Shalom of Philadelphia and the B'nai Jeshurun of New York. In February, 1836, he presented recommendations and stated his request to become a reader for the Rodeph Shalom Congregation. He was engaged for one year at the salary of \$200, provided he could produce satisfactory evidence as to his ability, character, and morality. Rev. Meiers was well received by that congregation, but remained only until July, 1836, when he asked to be released for the purpose of going to New York City to become hazan in the German Synagogue B'nai Jeshurun on Elm Street, that he might be able, if acceptable to the latter congregation, to better his pecuniary condition. Meier was sent to New York with the good wishes of the Philadelphia congregation.<sup>148</sup> There he remained until 1839.<sup>149</sup> After this date, little is known

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>148</sup> Davis, op. cit., 53.

<sup>149</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., 92.

of his activities until his application for the United Hebrew Congregation position in the spring of 1850.

Edward Meier served the congregation three years, from May 15, 1850, until May 13, 1853,<sup>150</sup> which, according to the congregation's previous history with the dual religious official, was a long period of time. Due to financial difficulty several salary wrangles occurred during the years of Meier's employment. For instance, shortly after his election, Meier asked for a \$250 increase in his salary to \$750. This was turned down,<sup>151</sup> as was President Samuel's plea two months later at least to increase Meier's salary to \$600 per year.<sup>152</sup> In October, 1850, Meier made another request for an increase, which was laid on the table.<sup>153</sup> Yet, in spite of the monetary dispute, the congregation obviously was satisfied with Meier, since on May 8, 1851, the members instructed the Board of Trustees to grant E. Meier a new contract for the ensuing year.<sup>154</sup>

The matter was discussed again on January 18, 1852, when President Samuel announced that the date of expiration of Rev. Meier's contract was May 13, 1852. A discussion then followed of this situation, since three months' notice was required if the agreement was not to be renewed. The

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150 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 86-112, MS.

151 Ibid., 86.

152 Ibid., 87.

153 Ibid., 88.

154 Ibid., 91.

members finally decided to rehire the shochet for another year, provided, that he submitted an application prior to May 13, 1852.<sup>155</sup> On May 12 of the same year a quarterly meeting was held at which the chazan and shochet Meier was discussed. On a motion by Simon Abeles, a contract was drawn up detailing the various duties and their performance expected of Meier. This contract was mentioned in part above under the discussion of the shochet's duties. Generally, Meier was expected to: (1) Slaughter for the Congregation all year at certain specified times, as well as at all other occasions when necessity dictated; and (2) marry couples at the orders of the President of the United Hebrew Congregation. For the latter service he was to be paid \$3.00, or one-half of what the Congregation received from the newly married people. The contract demonstrated the Congregation's great concern for observing the traditional law of kashros or ritually correct food, since it stated that the shochet should slaughter on the appointed days,<sup>156</sup> "and in case of necessity he shall kill at all times when at home...so that<sup>157</sup> the members of the Congregation shall not lack Kosher meat."<sup>158</sup> The stipulation that the shochet should kill at home in case

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155 Ibid., 95.

156 Ibid., 97.

157 Ibid., 97-98.

158 Ibid., 97.

of necessity indicated that he slaughtered in two places with the regular one not being designated. This was the first recorded contract discovered, and the detailed duties depicted the concern the synagogue had for keeping a written record, and the importance the United Hebrew Congregation attached to having kosher food.

Besides the above stipulations in the contract, Meier undoubtedly was to chant the service at the head of the congregation, as was the customary function of a chazan. Possibly he was to aid in the collection of funds for the congregation, as he did on one occasion.<sup>159</sup> The secretary was to draw up the contract, and present it to E. Meier for his signature. If Meier accepted the written agreement under the above conditions, he was considered duly elected; however, if he did not accept all conditions, the election was to be null and void.<sup>160</sup> After perusing the contents of the agreement, Meier was evidently displeased at certain parts of the written agreement. On the morning of Sunday, July 4, 1852, the trustees held a meeting, where the entire problem was discussed. Sometime after the completion of the officers assembly, a quarterly meeting was held and twelve members attended on this Independence Day. Here, President Samuel announced the suspension of Meier from office. After some objection to the propriety of the meeting in assuming the responsibility of dismissing the shochet, an agreement was reached to bring

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 98.

the matter to a close. J. Emanuel suggested that Meier be notified to appear before the Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation at their meeting on the next day, Monday, July 5, 1852, at 4:00 P. M., and either sign the contract or be released from service. All but two agreed with this decision. <sup>161</sup> Since there was no record of this July 5 meeting and no mention was made of employing a new religious official, it can only be assumed that the reluctant Meier agreed to the specified terms. However, some members felt the need for some clarification. It appears that the trustees wished to employ Meier. Several members called a special meeting. An opponent of Meier's election, E. Meyer, stated that the petition for the meeting did not originate with him, but admitted that he had signed it. Meyer now asked that all charges against Meier be named and submitted to the meeting. President Samuel suggested reading the minutes of the Meier case to the assembly, which notes would correctly set forth his positions and justify the trustees' action. A. Newmark stated that the petitioners never impugned the actions or right of the trustees, but that he wanted to have the Rev. Meier reinstated for the sake of the latter's family. Newmark saw no reason to read the minutes. Nevertheless, the minutes were read, upon the request of Trustee E. Flahto, who wished all to know the language used by Meier in regard to the congregation and its trustees. At the conclusion of

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161 Ibid., 98-99.



this act, Simon Abeles, a pious Jew, moved that Meier be retained as shochet and chazan for the congregation until the end of his term under the conditions named by the United Hebrew. The latter would have the right to dismiss him for proved dereliction of duty. Treasurer Joseph Kohn added an amendment that the trustees retain the right to discharge him from his services. This motion was passed and a copy was forwarded to Meier. A contract was prepared for the candidate's signature. <sup>162</sup> Meier accepted and signed the contract.

Financial difficulty soon forced a solution to the Meier situation. The congregation was no longer able to pay Meier or any shochet his \$500 a year salary. Thus in late March, 1855, they asked him to take a \$200 cut in pay for the next term. When he refused, the board of trustees took the responsibility upon itself to advertise for a new chazan and shochet who would start on May 13, 1853, at \$300 per annum. At any rate, a special meeting was called to discuss this matter, on March 27, 1853. The members in attendance, feeling the financial pinch, concurred with the officers and voted their approval authorizing the lower salary for the office. Two candidates were placed before the meeting--Meier and a Hermann Kohn. Since Meier had refused a salary slash, the only candidate left was Hermann Kohn, who had agreed to the new salary figures. Accordingly, a committee was formed to ascertain if Kohn's qualifications

met the strict requirement held by the congregation. A committee of three men, A. Weigle, S. Abeles, and J. Valentine, was appointed to inquire into Kohn's credentials. Weigle and Abeles read his Hebrew credentials and Valentine perused the German testimonials or former congregations where Kohn had served in the same capacity. All three reported that the certificates were "greatly in favor" of hiring the candidate.<sup>163</sup> Thereupon Hermann Kohn was unanimously elected by the twenty-one members present to the office of shochet and chazan for one year commencing May 13, 1853, through May 13, 1854, at a salary of \$300 per annum. However, the United Hebrew further demonstrated the high regard they held for Jewish observances by conducting another investigation of Kohn. This time a committee was formed of Weigle, Abeles, S. Marks, and even Mr. Schwartzkopf of the "Bohemian" or B'nai El Congregation "to inquire into his Kohn's present abilities for the office."<sup>164</sup> Interestingly, Joseph Kohn suggested that Schwartzkopf, not being in the employ of the Polish synagogue, should be "politely requested to act in that capacity," which motion was carried.<sup>165</sup> While this was one of the few recorded examples of cooperation between the two synagogues, the United Hebrew felt the

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163 Ibid., 107.

164 Ibid., 106.

165 Ibid., 108.

occasion necessitated it. The committee checked on Kohn's talent as a shochet, and favorably reported on same at the quarterly meeting in mid-April, 1853. <sup>166</sup> Meanwhile a committee appointed at the late March, 1853, meeting to draw up a suitable contract <sup>167</sup> for E. Kohn reported at a special meeting two months later at the end of May that the job had been completed. <sup>168</sup>

The strict qualifications for shochet being set, it is interesting to note the manner which probably ensued when any candidate, in this particular case a chazan, applied for a position. For instance, the aforementioned Isaac Rittermann <sup>169</sup> attended a special meeting to seek a job on March 27, 1859. A committee escorted the candidate into the meeting. He was then introduced to all the members present. Then the synagogue president interviewed the candidate:

Are you able to organize and conduct a choir?  
 "I am."  
 Can you speak English? "Not very well but  
 will try to learn."  
 Are you able to officiate at a wedding?  
 "I am."  
 Are you able to superintend a Elementary  
 School? "I am."<sup>170</sup>

Rittermann was then asked to chant a cantorial selection

166 Ibid., 109.

167 Ibid., 108.

168 Ibid., 112.

169 See discussion in Chapter Five.

170 Ibid., 164-165.

from a prayer. Since it evidently was satisfactory, the secretary requested the candidate to remain for one week at the expense of the congregation, and chant the prayers on the following Friday and Saturday in the synagogue.<sup>171</sup> Evidently, services were not held daily. Of course the Sabbath service is much longer and difficult to chant than a daily service. Thus, his main weekly duty as a chazan would be to sing the Sabbath services.

In concluding the discussion of the United Hebrew chazan, it is worthwhile to note a contract extended by the synagogue to a Mr. Franzig to officiate as chazan for one year, October 9, 1866, to October 9, 1867. Even though it is a little later than the period covered in this thesis, the details of the agreement should prove interesting.

Contract to date for one year from October 9th 1866 to October 9, 1867. His salary to be \$1200 ... per annum payable monthly. \$2.00 ... for marriage fees and in the event of his organizing a Hebrew school, the use of the second Vestry Room is hereby granted to him free of charge. His duties shall be: to say the prayers every Sabbath and on all the holidays, to read the Torah and in case of the decease of any member of the congregation to attend the funeral. Each of the contracting parties is bound to give the other 3 months notice to quit.<sup>172</sup>

Another religious official employed during this period of a reemphasis of orthodoxy was the first congregational shammes.<sup>173</sup> The latter was a person who performed

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>172</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1868, 106, MS.

<sup>173</sup> See discussion of Shammes in Chapter Two.

various functions, such as keeping the holy place in order and offering each individual who entered the synagogue a prayer book and prayer shawl. The shammas seemingly occupied a very subservient position both in salary and stature. All the necessary menial tasks were his to perform. He apparently was to be around the synagogue at all times as an executive director of sorts. A better insight of his duties is discernible by noting the following two contracts successfully negotiated by the United Hebrew Congregation and the shammas candidate as it was recorded in the congregational minute book. On June 1, 1859, just prior to the opening of the new Sixth Street synagogue, the following agreement was completed:

The Shammas shall receive a yearly salary of \$100.00 shall have a free dwelling under the Synagogue of several rooms as shall be designated by the officers free wood Coal light Water and the usual fees pertaining to his office arising from the water arrangement evidently by the congregation's member and 5% of all his Collections for the Congregation.<sup>174</sup>

The above recorded matter contained his financial compensation, but neglected to state his duties. The following agreement though seven years later, 1866, may serve to satisfy in some degree the curiosity concerning the specific obligations of the synagogue shammas:

Contract to date for one year from Nov 1st, 1866 to Nov 1st, 1867. His salary to be \$300 pr an. (1¢) one dol for marriage fees and (21/2%)...

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<sup>174</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 169, MS.

all collections made for the congregation besides hereby granting him the use of two Rooms & a Kitchen in the basement of the synagogue as a dwelling including Gas and fuel free of charge. His duties shall be, to keep the synagogue and the entire house clean at all times. The first vestry room to be kept locked for the special use of the Board only; to keep the bathroom in good order. He shall be responsible for all the personal and other<sup>175</sup> property, which the President will deliver to him upon entering office to keep them in good Order at all times and at the expiration of his term to return the same in as good condition as he rec<sup>d</sup> received them. He shall attend divine service and make all the necessary preparations for the same, also attend the funeral of any member of the congregation. It shall be his duty to serve all notices for Board-General or special meetings, shall attend all trustee meetings and in short shall obey all the orders of the President. He shall also keep a list of all marriages, births, and deaths occurring in the congregation. At any time that the Board find him negligent in the discharge of his duties he shall pay a fine of 5.00 Dol Dollars for such first neglect & for the second he shall be discharged and his office be declared vacant.<sup>176</sup>

At least in the aforementioned new synagogue, erected in 1859, two rooms and a kitchen were set aside in the basement, for the shammas and his family. Thus, he served as a caretaker who had to live on the premises. However, most important of all, the shammas was to be a deeply religious and pious man.

Apparently with the use of the Fifth Street synagogue,

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<sup>175</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees, 1859-1863, 106, MS.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 107.

the United Hebrew needed such a man to aid them. Expansion dictated it. The first notation of the need of a shammaz by the congregation occurred at the regular general meeting on April 15, 1849. A. S. Asher, the newly elected secretary, suggested that the synagogue try to find "some fit person to be shammaz...and Collector for the Congregation,"<sup>177</sup> a person whom it was thought would be a benefit to the synagogue.<sup>178</sup> The proposed salary, which was unannounced, was to be set by the congregation.<sup>179</sup> The United Hebrew soon announced its plans to fill the position. However, at the quarterly meeting of July 1, 1849, a proposed election for the office was laid over until the next regular quarterly meeting.<sup>180</sup> Apparently the urgency of the matter was spotlighted, as three weeks later at a special meeting it was decided to accept the five petitions submitted for shammaz, and turn the matter of selection over to the Board of Trustees. The latter would appoint the one most suitable on a temporary basis until the next quarterly meeting. The following men were the candidates: Cohen Franklin, Hart Levy, Isaac Goldsmith, Harris Freiderick, and H. Marks.<sup>181</sup> It was not recorded who was the pro tem office holder. On September 23, 1849, at the annual election meeting, petitioner, Franklin

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<sup>177</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 75, 78.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

was appointed the first shammus of the United Hebrew  
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 Congregation.

Unfortunately, Franklin did not remain long. An incident suggestive of the strict orthodox line to which the synagogue adhered resulted in his dismissal. It seemed that a charge had been made against Franklin by Turk, a member of the congregation, "regarding his character as a Responsible Israelite."<sup>183</sup> President Samuel summoned Turk to testify to his accusation at the special meeting on February 5, 1850. He stated that he had seen "Mr. Franklin, the shammus, in a Barber Shop on Sabbath morning, but whether he had been shaved at that precise time or not Turk could not say."<sup>184</sup> Much discussion followed the charge that the supposedly pious shammus had committed the above transgression-- appearing on Sabbath in a place of business. Since traditional Jewish law forbade the shaving of an individual with a razor, the crime was probably greater. It was soon proposed by Judah Hart, seconded by J. Mitchell, that Franklin be discharged from the office of shammus and porger "on account of the congregation not having confidence in him as a good Israelite."<sup>185</sup> Upon being submitted to a vote, the suggestion was unanimously carried.<sup>186</sup> This was not the last mention of

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182 Ibid., 78-79.

183 Ibid., 81.

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid., 81.

186 Ibid.



shammes Franklin. Two months later the thirteen members present at the Quarterly Meeting heard a demand from Franklin for compensation for his "extra services."<sup>187</sup> After discussing the subject, it was decided that no allowance could be made for such services. Moses Meyer replaced Franklin. His pay can only be ascertained through the consideration of the bill he sent into the congregation for his labor as shammes of the United Hebrew Congregation for two months, totaling \$25.40. The trouble of employing any form of religious official for any length of time continued. After agreeing to pay Meyer, the members voted to dispense with his services for the present.<sup>188</sup> Yet the need for a new shammes was apparent. In May, 1851, Barnett Moses defeated Loewenthal for the position. The newly elected religious servant was to receive the "customary salary," which was to begin from the time he was taken on trial.<sup>189</sup> An indication of what was this "customary salary" can be ascertained from the last order of business at the annual meeting of October 7, 1852. Here Newmark moved to raise the shammes' salary from \$10 to \$12 a month. This motion was amended by Turk to read \$15 instead of \$12. The latter raise was a bit too extravagant for the economy-minded congregation, but the original<sup>190</sup> Newmark motion carried.

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187 Ibid., 84.

188 Ibid., 84.

189 Ibid., 92.

190 Ibid., 104.

The members, intent on improving the state of religion in the United Hebrew Congregation, labored toward this goal in areas other than their employment of religious officials. This can be demonstrated by the arrangements for prayer made in the Fifth Street synagogue, purchased in 1848. First of all, it definitely explained the congregation's view on the separate seating problem. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the converted church building contained both an auditorium downstairs and a balcony. In traditional style, the men occupied the lower floor, while the women sat in the projecting gallery.<sup>191</sup>

Yet, it appeared that one incident dramatized the desire of the members to observe the traditional belief. The United Hebrew had increased its indebtedness to a substantial degree by purchasing the Fifth Street Synagogue. However, one particular improvement in the building was indicative of the enthusiasm to conform to orthodoxy. Obviously attempting to observe the orthodox inclination to pray facing eastward toward Jerusalem, the financially hard pressed congregation, spending \$400 on the building<sup>192</sup> closed up the eastern entrance leading to the synagogue from Fifth Street and constructed a wall against which the Aron Kodesh or Holy Ark could be located.<sup>193</sup> Side entrances were used to

<sup>191</sup> See discussion of Fifth Street Synagogue in Chapter Four.

<sup>192</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 73, MS.

<sup>193</sup> Weekly Revelle, October 2, 1848.

replace the more easily accessible, and probably more attractive, Fifth Street entry. Since it was unnecessary, where impossible to pray eastward, great credit is due to the effort of the seven-year old congregation to observe the traditional belief.

Another indication of the religious fervor of the members, as well as an example of the large role the United Hebrew Congregation played in local Jewry, was the establishment of a ritualarium, or Mikveh, for religious and physical cleanliness. Nothing was recorded about the matter until shortly after the movement into the Fifth Street Synagogue. Toward the end of an eventful meeting on January 26, 1849, B. H. Lichtenstein proposed and B. Liverman added a second that a "Committee be appointed to investigate (1) possibility of building a Bath (Mikveh) on the school Synagogue yard and that they shall endeavor to get the sanction of the Congregation to do (2) and in what...manner they are to build (3) and how they can raise sufficient funds to do the same."<sup>194</sup> The suggestion was carried and a committee was immediately appointed consisting of B. H. Lichtenstein, J. Mitchell, John M. Myers, Henry Harris, and President Mark Samuel.<sup>195</sup> Nothing was reported on the project until November 13, 1849. On this date a special meeting was called for the purpose of arranging specific plans to erect the structure. Eight members, including S. Jacks, H. L. Lichtenstein, and

<sup>194</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 74, MS.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

J. Mitchell signed a petition to call the meeting and twenty-eight members answered the call. Specifically, S. Marks stated that the meeting was called "for the purpose of finding means for the erection of a suitable bath house (Mikveh) in accordance with the custom<sup>196</sup> of our people in large cities."<sup>197</sup> Considerable discussion followed Mark's statement.<sup>198</sup> Finally, a motion introduced by Joseph Kohn and seconded by E. Block was carried which stated that the approximate total cost of the building would be \$700. The congregation was willing to donate \$250 for the proposed building if the community raised \$450 for the project. It can be seen that St. Louis' first ritualarium was to be open both to members and local Jewry at large. This was but another indication of the United Hebrew's attempt to serve and cooperate with the St. Louis Jewish community.

President Samuel appointed Samuel Jacks, Simon Abeles, and J. Mitchell a committee to secure a draft of a suitable building and the expense of building. This committee was to report to the trustees within ten days.<sup>199</sup> Since no records were discovered of the latter meeting, it is unknown what transpired. Evidently some action was taken on the matter, for in early October, 1850, E. H. Lichtenstein, who originally proposed the project, posed an inquiry concerning

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196 Ibid., 79.

197 Ibid., 80.

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid., 80.

the "Mikveh money" to the committee investigating the treasurer's accounts.<sup>200</sup> While nothing more was recorded of the ritualarium during the period of this thesis, one is known to have been<sup>201</sup> definitely formed, since in April, 1862, the shammas asked permission to have some alterations made in the Mikveh to enable him to heat it easier. Permission was granted him, provided the "improvements did not harm the Building or interfere with the Insurance."<sup>201</sup> However, the date, the exact site, the type of construction and sponsorship of the building is unknown. It may have been similar to an early St. Louis ritualarium in the late 1870's, which had bathing facilities in only one room being located in the yard of a synagogue.<sup>202</sup> Several conclusions can be drawn from the venture. The project was thought important, but evidently not so pressing to force the congregation to go into debt to erect the building. Yet it was obviously not ignored and the United Hebrew--in a severe financial crisis during the period, 1849-1850, when the proposal was suggested--

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200 Ibid., 89.

201 United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 30, MS.

202 Interview with Mr. Nathan Pearlmutter, University City, Missouri, who described the one room ritualarium in the yard of the building housing in several rooms the Chevra Kadisha Synagogue or Seventh Street near Franklin in the late 1870's, 1957.

was still interested enough to co-sponsor the project. The fact that a ritualarium was constructed speaks well for the congregation's determination to conform to Orthodoxy.

The Mikveh suggestion was unique, since it was one religious service for which the congregation did not intend to assume full burden. Of interest also was the evidently uniform approval the project received. The original sponsor of the ritualarium was B. H. Lichtenstein, the proponent of the unlicensed shochet in the aforementioned quarrel in the Fifth Street synagogue. Depicted as representative of the less traditional element in the congregation by the Daily Missouri Republican, Lichtenstein fought persistently for the Mikveh. Besides this evidence of the general advocacy for the above project, was the aforementioned statement of its existence in 1862--a year after orthodoxy received a major setback when, on March 14, 1861, Christian choir members were first permissible in the United Hebrew service. <sup>203</sup>

While Hebrew education will be explored in greater detail later, it is interesting to note that the first known local Hebrew school was organized by the United Hebrew Congregation under Chazan Edward Meier on an after school basis by the time of Lesser's visit to the city in December, 1851. Lesser's comment on local Jewish education at that date was:

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203 United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 22, MS.

We regret to state that the Israelites of this flourishing city require a thorough reorganization, but little having as yet been done for religious instruction, except teaching a little Hebrew by the Rev. Edward Miers of the Fifth Street congregation at such hours when his other duties give him leisure and opportunity. But the necessity that something ought to be done is felt very strongly, and we really believe that as soon as the children, now mostly very young, advance a little further, when the want of training them to religious will be more apparent than it is now, something will be spontaneously done, if even till then affairs remain in their present condition.<sup>204</sup>

As a final step in the emphasis on orthodoxy, the Fifth Street synagogue was to be governed under traditional law as adapted in the original United Hebrew Constitution and Bylaws. Almost immediately after the North Baptist Church on Fifth Street was purchased, a new constitution was proposed with the intent that it include "Minhagin and all Laws requisite according to Minhag Poland."<sup>205</sup> Thus the synagogue reaffirmed its faith in the aforementioned orthodox ways for governing religious worship in agreement with the B'nai Jeshurun Congregation of New York City.

In 1854, Rabbi Bernard Illowy settled in St. Louis, and assumed the rabbinate at the United Hebrew Congregation. It can be safely asserted that if, as seems likely, his usual manner of directing a Jewish synagogue was put in operation at the time of his appointment in St. Louis until

<sup>204</sup> Leeser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, pp. 55-56.

<sup>205</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 71, MS.

he left the congregation in late 1855, very strict observance of traditional orthodoxy was insured. It is highly probable that "Taharas Hamispacha" or "purity of the family" was stressed,<sup>206</sup> implying a family adherence to all the traditional Jewish concepts. From all the early St. Louis Israelites and their living relations who were discovered and interviewed, it appears that the great majority of synagogues attending St. Louis Jews kept a kosher home, eating only the traditionally approved foods.<sup>207</sup> Thus, with all the aforementioned strict requirements the United Hebrew required of its shochet, and the emphasis placed on same, it appears possible that a majority of the members kept the dietary laws. After perusing twenty-two years of the Daily Missouri Republican and three years of other local dailies, the author of this thesis discovered that few known Israelites were found guilty of any law infractions. In fact, generally, the only law breakage discovered was the illegal opening of stores on Sunday by United Hebrew merchants. In 1855 this came to a head when Flako wrote a letter to the Republican demanding the right to do business on Sunday, since, for religious reasons, he was closed on Saturday. The Republican complimented the Jews as good citizens who caused little trouble and were not a burden

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206 Flaks (ed.), Brocho L'Mnachen, 25.

207 Interviews with Mr. Nathan Pearlmutter, 1957; Mrs. Samuel Russack, 1957; Mrs. A. Epstein, 1957; and Mrs. Jennie Kohn, 1957.



on society, as they took care of their poor and left no one dependent on the city for charity; but disagreed with Flahto and said that Jews should not desecrate the Christian Sabbath. <sup>208</sup> Thus there might have been an unknown number of United Hebrew members who kept the Jewish Sabbath holy by not laboring.

As mentioned earlier, Illowy superintended the Hebrew School at the United Hebrew Congregation. <sup>209</sup> It is probable that the school accomplished much, as Illowy held it as a matter of first importance that the children of his congregation be taught Hebrew, the Bible, and the tenets of their faith. Evidence of his sincere desire for education was the fact that where no schools for Hebrew education existed, he established them--in Syracuse, Baltimore, New Orleans, and Cincinnati, all of which remained years after his departure. Thus further evidence was available that the 1851 local Hebrew School was not a temporary venture. It is not known whether the United Hebrew shared Illowy's desire for all public school subjects to be taught, as was done in the parochial schools he established in the above four cities. In the latter cities Illowy introduced six months training for non-attenders at the congregational school, prior to the holiday of Shavuoth, to be concluded by a confirmation ceremony; but apparently this was not a feature of his stay in

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<sup>208</sup> Daily Missouri Republican, April 20, 1855.

<sup>209</sup> See discussion of Illowy in Chapter Five.

St. Louis. Bernard Illowy strongly impressed on the boys the method and importance of laying tephillin--the phylacteries wound about the left arm and forehead by traditionally religious males over thirteen as part of the morning praying.

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Illowy also saw to it that other matters of religious and communal import were observed. The examination of the shoetia (slaughterers) always had his attention. He compelled them to come to him for examination in order to demonstrate their proficiency in the laws of Shehitah and Bedikah, and to illustrate their expertness in keeping their knives in the proper condition. The shoet's sense of touch was to be perfect. He would generally test them in the following manner: First he would examine the knife as the shoet brought it; then he would send the ritual slaughterer from the room; and finally, he would place one or more nicks, fine and coarse, into the knife, call the shoet, and require him to find the nicks and then to take them out. Illowy even went so far at one time as to compel the shoetia who were more directly in his sphere of influence to pledge that they would not kill late on Friday afternoon, for meat that was to be sold on the Sabbath morning. He met with some opposition by the shoet who openly violated the ceremonial laws, and the slaughterer who from age had lost his keen sense of touch, and therefore

could not tell whether his knife was fit or not. They were not quick to surrender a livelihood, even though an honest compliance with the law demanded such.<sup>211</sup>

The use of the Mikveh was another item which St. Louis' first rabbi strictly supervised if such was in operation by the date he entered the local rabbinate. This ritualarium was inspected immediately after his assumption of office, and at intervals thereafter. He saw to it that it was kept in a perfectly sanitary condition, and that absolute cleanliness, which the character of the institution implied, was maintained. This was necessary since charges were sometimes made against the cleanliness of the Mikveh.

All these things were not easily accomplished; in fact, according to Rabbi Illowy's son, many difficulties were cast in his father's way "not by those who were rather lax in their observance, but by those very persons from whom, by their great show of piety, a most warm and zealous support could have been expected."<sup>212</sup>

The religious services within the United Hebrew synagogue were conducted in an orderly manner. The first thing Illowy did upon entering the rabbinate of a congregation was to preach to his members in no uncertain terms that all who attended divine worship remember that they were in the house of God, and the least one could do was to demean himself in

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 18.

as respectful a manner as if he were in the presence of an earthly judge, or some other high official. Illowy would have no screeching, or screaming, or shouting, each one endeavoring to make his voice heard in prayer above the other, but demanded that all pray together in unison. He also prohibited the saying of certain prayers near the end of the service. These concluding prayers were to be chanted in a proper manner, even as the most important of prayers, and no one was permitted to remove his prayer shawl or tallith, or leave his seat before the last echoes of the final prayer, Adon Olom (Lord of the Universe), died away. He saw to it that the entrance and exit from the synagogue was in a proper manner. In the school attached to the synagogue, the children were taught the importance of this as a demonstration of their fear of God, the one thing along with love of the Lord, which the Lord, according to the Torah, demanded of his people. Yet this attempt, along with the other minor regulations concerning the perfecting of a decorious, beautiful service which would keep the young within Judaism, was opposed by many. However, Illowy persevered and eventually achieved his goal.

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As previously stated, his sermons were all religious and moral lessons. He taught these lessons by rote as they came in the Bible, and did not pass over or skip this or that one because it might give offense to this or that promi-

nent member of the Congregation. He preached the Sabbath, Kashruth, Tephillin, and the moral lessons they inculcated. While he preached persistently the necessity of religious observance, he emphasized especially the Sabbath. The fervor with which he did this was demonstrated by a story told one day while attending a funeral in New Orleans, a prominent member of his congregation sitting next to him in a carriage said:

Doctor, we do really like you better and more than any other Rabbi we have ever had, and we will do all that lies in our power for you, but for Heaven's sake do not keep pounding at us the observance of the Sabbath. We know that we ought to keep Shabbos but we cannot. Preach it to us once in three or four months, and you will have done your duty and we will feel more at ease."<sup>214</sup>

As mentioned previously, he was a very pleasing speaker, usually preaching on the Sabbath from forty-five minutes to an hour. When he made a short sermon, his members would gather about him after the service and inquire of his health. Yet according to his son, who may have been slightly prejudiced: "At no time was a complaint made that he preached at too great length; on the contrary, he was not infrequently told that he had cut it too short."<sup>215</sup>

He was a convincing preacher, and his fervor and his consistency carried conviction to others, and brought back to Judaism many who had strayed far away. As an illustration,

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

in one congregation in which he entered upon his duties on the first day of the New Year there were but four or five members who kept a kosher house, and upon the festival of Sukkoth there was not a Sukkah (a traditional hut or booth in which Jews dwell eight days commemorating the temporary dwellings that they lived in during their wanderings in the desert). A year later there were over forty booths in the congregation and almost every house was strictly kosher, although in some of the wealthier families this was attended with considerable difficulty because of the Negro slaves who needed pork in one form or another. The result of this difficult situation was the construction of a separate kitchen where the cooking was done for the slaves.<sup>216</sup>

As can be imagined, the United Hebrew Congregation strictly observed the law during the one year leadership of Rabbi Illowy. In fact the latter was so busy as religious leader, teacher, and supervisor that he had little time to devote to his rabbinical duties.<sup>217</sup> As a learned talmudist,<sup>218</sup> he engaged in polemics with the Reform Rabbis Wise and Lillienthal over changes in the service which also took a great deal of his time. Illowy opposed any change in the traditional law, and thus declined an invitation to attend the Cleveland conference called by Isaac M. Wise in 1855.<sup>219</sup> Yet it is ironic that the first semblance of reform

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>217</sup> Illowy, op. cit., 45-46.

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Rev. Mordecai Goldman, Jr. Israel, 1957.

<sup>219</sup> Illowy, op. cit., 67.

came toward the end of Illowy's stay at the United Hebrew. There had been rumblings of discontent among the members prior to this. The new constitution had to be amended to preserve the union of the congregation in 1853. Evidently this was not the solution to all the intercongregational problems, for shortly after the employment of Illowy, the aforementioned secession movement occurred, resulting in the organization of the Adas Yeshurun Congregation. According to one source, this resulted from the desire of one of the two groups for Christian choir singers as part of the service. Yet no evidence was uncovered to substantiate this conclusion or furthermore to even tie the congregational trouble to worship difficulties. However, it might be added that President Adolph Letz and the other non-secessionists appeared from their various comments and voting on religious measures to be of traditional belief. On the other hand, secessionist President Abraham Newmark was instrumental seven years later, in 1861, in securing the aforementioned admittance of Christian choir singers as a regular feature of the United Hebrew service.

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Between the date of the reunion of the two groups, Rabbi Illowy was discharged and a slight change in prayers occurred. On April 15, 1855, a motion was introduced that the congregation notify Illowy that his contract would not be renewed. Although there was no evidence of the motion

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220 See discussion in Chapter Five.

passing, it is significant that the next order of business was the appointment of a six-man committee to revise the service. The six-man committee included such persons as Simon Abeles and the first President Abraham Weigle, both well-learned men, as well as former President Mark Samuel, chasan Hermann Kohn, and Rev. Illowy. Their job was to "revise the prayers so as to eliminate what can be dispensed with."<sup>221</sup> It was the first recorded attempt to change the prayer service. Evidently feeling the dissatisfaction of several members with him, Illowy submitted his resignation at the next congregational meeting. Yet his term apparently lasted through the high holidays, for he asked the congregation's permission to preach one day at B'nai El Congregation.<sup>222</sup> This latter statement is slightly confusing when it is recalled that B'nai El used an organ in its service,<sup>223</sup> which was a reformist item. However, Illowy's action might be explained in terms of the very low salary paid to St. Louis' first rabbi and the scarcity of other available positions.

While it might appear the United Hebrew would now head quickly to reform, this was not the case. Rabbi Wise, the founder of Reform Judaism, arrived in St. Louis on a speaking tour and spoke at both local synagogues about July, 1855. Wise had stated in the course of his notes that he was the

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221 Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 120, MS.

222 Ibid., 129.

223 B'nai El Congregation Minutes, 7, MS.



first to preach reform in St. Louis. As can be seen by his account of a Sabbath service at the Fifth Street synagogue, the reform movement had hardly affected the United Hebrew.

I went to the synagogue on Saturday with Friend Lutz, and found it quite well attended. The old Polish ritual was used; everything was primitive. The people cried out, sang, shook themselves, jumped and hopped about, gossiped, and abandoned the practice of paying for the privilege of going up to the Torah. Everyone had his tallith wound about his person dramatically, and moved about freely. Friend Lutz is a fine<sup>224</sup> gentleman. He hoped that the people would behave with decorum in honor of the guest; but no such thought entered their minds for a moment; hence Friend Lutz sent the shamesh among the people, but it was all in vain. The people had paid their dues as they pleased. My dear friend Lutz was subjected to still greater embarrassment, for upon my arising to preach I discovered that my reputation had preceded me, inasmuch as about twenty sacrosanct individuals left the synagogue. But this annoyed me very little, since a goodly number of men and women remained in the building. I preached a German sermon, in which I interspersed many Talmudical passages. At the end of the service I was highly complimented by the English chazan, who did not understand a word of German. I was delighted. I dined with Lutz, and in the afternoon I saw the chief sights of the city. When one sees the beautiful synagogue of this congregation today, with its choir, organ, family pews, sermon, etc. he can scarcely believe that it is the same congregation, and yet it is so. Within twenty years everything had changed wonderfully in the West.<sup>225</sup>

Wise found the United Hebrew Congregation in 1855 far from behaving as he expected a reform synagogue would.

224. Wise, Reminiscences, 295.

225. Ibid., 296.

Yet it should be mentioned that the Polish style of service required a fervent manner of prayer, which many traditional Jews observed by swaying to and fro. Undoubtedly Wise is accurate in reporting the service. Yet, his great desire for reform may have in part colored his factual account of the United Hebrew service. This is seemingly confirmed when the above quoted statement is compared with Wise's report of the reform flavored religious service at the B'nai El Congregation.

I spoke in the B'nai El synagogue on Sunday afternoon, before a very large assemblage. I explained my plans, and received much encouragement and sympathy. The B'nai El congregation had leanings toward reform, a la Prague, or rather Vienna not extreme reform. There was a desire for better conditions.<sup>226</sup>

A primitive service is not the exclusive domain of orthodoxy, as Wise hinted in his first account. Yet the scholarly Wise's contribution is a most valuable one, as his firsthand reports are of great historic importance. They lend much help in reporting as nearly as possible an accurate account of the United Hebrew service in the period of this paper, as well as the acceptance of Jewry in St. Louis by local Israelites. Both matters were depicted in an unfavorable light by the well-known rabbi:

Judaism was in a sorry plight in St. Louis<sup>227</sup>  
at that time. A number of cultured families

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226 Ibid.

227 Ibid., 294.

had severed all connection with the Jews, and were pronounced atheists, while others showed but the slightest interest in the faith. True, there were two congregations - the B'nai El, which was called the Bohemian; and the United Hebrew, which was called the Polish congregation. The German element was sparingly represented in both. The congregations were insignificant. They represented a small beginning....I was invited out a great deal, received many visits including Presidents Letz and Strauss of the United Hebrew and B'nai El Congregations, respectively, met many acquaintances among others Isidor Bush, who was still a faithful adherent to Judaism.<sup>228</sup>

In particular, Rabbi Wise's comment on the two local congregations are interesting. His description of their place in local Jewry is as gloomy as his comment on the entire local scene. Significantly, Wise said nothing of the existence of any other local congregations. Apparently the Adas Jeshurun Congregation, splinter group of the United Hebrew, had ceased to exist, as it is known that in early August, 1855, the parent synagogue had requested the secessionists to return.

While the United Hebrew Congregation seemingly was conforming to the traditional law, it apparently was the sole traditional beacon of St. Louis Jewry. B'nai El already was fast on the road away from Orthodoxy.<sup>229</sup>

The years between 1855 and 1859 indicated a continued adherence to orthodoxy with a greater emphasis on education,

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 295.

The congregational Hebrew schools seemingly evolved from a late afternoon class basis in 1851 to a fulltime parochial school in 1859. As mentioned earlier, Rev. E. Meier conducted a small Hebrew School by December, 1851, in the late afternoon when his work afforded him the opportunity to teach. <sup>230</sup> No further mention of such a school was noted until October, 1854. On October 18, 1854, a special congregational meeting was called specifically to devise means of establishing a school under Dr. Illowy's direction and to select a board of managers which would be appointed semi-annually by the members. <sup>231</sup> Thus it appears that Meier's school on a haphazard basis did not exist long. Illowy's desire for educating others was an indication that the school had succeeded during his stay at United Hebrew. However, no mention was made in the latter congregation's minutes of the type of school established; so it is not known if both secular as well as religious instruction was included.

On March 1, 1857, Rev. Henry Kuttner was elected by a 21 to 4 margin as chazan and shochet at a salary of \$500 per annum. <sup>232</sup> He also directed the synagogue school. It is apparent from the following letter that he wrote in June, 1858, to Isaac Leaser for educational material, that the

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<sup>230</sup> Leaser, "St. Louis, Missouri," Occident and American Jewish Advocate, April, 1852, p. 56.

<sup>231</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 126, MS.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 148.

school was prospering and seemingly had forty-eight children who would use the four dozen Hebrew spelling books which he ordered. The last two items of the order, The Creed (probably the 13 Principles of Faith by the 12th century religious philosopher, Maimonides), and the Ten Commandments in verse, were Leeser's publications for the Hebrew Sunday School Society, which Rebecca Gratz had founded in Philadelphia. His letter of request read as follows:

St. Louis, June 16, 1858

Rev. Isaac Leeser,  
In Philadelphia.

Honored Sir:

I received your valued communication and was glad to learn of your well-being. I am fairly well except that I occasionally have pains in the throat. Herewith you will receive \$25, and upon a receipt of it have the goodness to send me the following books:

- 4 doz. Hebrew spelling books, Moreh Derech
- 2 The Road to Faith
- 4 The Felzotto's Bible Questions
- 2 The Scripture Questions, By E. Pike, for  
beginners
- 2 The Creed, printed on a card
- 2 Ten Commandments, in verse

I have finally persuaded my trustees that religious teaching should be done in the English language....<sup>233</sup>

The fact that the other congregation probably D'nai El is building its school is due to the fact that those members who came to my services have often been taken to task by me on this account....

I also beg of you, most urgently, for six mezuzoth (mezuzot: a parchment bearing the

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<sup>233</sup> "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 66.

passages Deut. VI, 4-9; XI, 13-21 rolled into a wooden or metal case and attached to the doorpost) or even twelve, which you can add to the other package, but if they are too expensive, send only two.

I send you most friendly greetings, and have the honor to sign,

Yours devotedly,  
H. KUTTNER<sup>234</sup>

Noteworthy was Kuttner's order of mesusoth, which all Jews were to place on their doorposts. Evidently some St. Louis Israelites were following this belief. This letter also demonstrated the extra effort the congregation then was putting forth to provide religious instruction for the children of its members.

The added import attached to education is quickly seen by the congregation's advertisement for a chazan in January, 1859. It was altered to stipulate definitely that the candidates be able "to superintend an Elementary school."<sup>235</sup> In fact, as noted previously, when Isaac Rittermann was interviewed for the position, he was specifically asked about the above qualification. The above notation concerning an "elementary school" suggests the continuation of the newly found interest in Hebrew education by the members and the distinct possibility of a Jewish parochial school existing in St. Louis in 1859, sponsored by the United Hebrew Congre-

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 67

<sup>235</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 163, 168.

gation. These conclusions are borne out in an excerpt from the Board of Trustees' meeting of November 9, 1859:

- Shamos should be called in and asked the following questions. Mr. Levy being called.
- Q. Who gave you permission to put the things in this room?
- A. Mr. President A. J. Latz gave me the permission.
- Q. Have you a school?
- A. I have a school here.
- Q. Who gave you permission to have a school?
- A. Mr. Latz gave me permission to have a Hebrew School and I took the liberty of adding an English school myself.
- Q. What hours do you teach Hebrew?
- A. From 5 till 6 o'clock in the evening.<sup>236</sup>

Evidently a school was established and continued in operation as evidenced by the following information. According to the 1860-1 statistical report sent to the United States Board of Delegates,<sup>237</sup> a group which included representatives from all the American Jewish congregations, including A. J. Latz and I. E. Woolf from the United Hebrew,<sup>238</sup> the latter synagogue reported that Rev. Rittermann had a school with daily sessions for "35 pupils."<sup>239</sup> Whether the Hebrew school was strictly on an afternoon basis was not stated.

Other indications of orthodoxy after 1855, when a possible revision and elimination in prayers took place,

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<sup>236</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Trustees 1859-1868, pp. 3-5. MS.

<sup>237</sup> "Appendix IV, Statistical Report of Jewish Congregations of U.S. to Board of Delegates (1860-1)," Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society, 1925, p. 134.

<sup>238</sup> United Hebrew Congregation Record of Quarterly Meetings, 1859-1868, Appendix IV, Statistical Report of Jewish Congregations of U.S. to Board of Delegates (1860-1), Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society, 1925, p. 134.

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were apparent upon noting events concerning the new synagogue. First of all the rabbis invited to participate in both the cornerstone laying ceremony in 1858 and the consecration of the new building in 1859 were not of the Reform element. Rabbi Leeser, who was invited to the former celebration,<sup>240</sup> was one of the foremost, if not the chief, orthodox rabbi in the United States. Rabbi Raphael of New York City, who presided at the previously discussed consecration ceremony, was known for his extreme anti-reform views. Surely if the congregation had gone completely away from orthodoxy, Rabbi Wise from nearby Cincinnati, or a rabbi who agreed with his views, would have been requested to appear. The form of Judaism expounded by the rabbis selected by the United Hebrew, Leeser and Raphael, denoted the degree to which the orthodox element predominated in the congregation.

Yet the interior setting of the synagogue was an even better indication of the form of Judaism followed. As mentioned previously, separate seating existed for men and women--the males occupying the first floor and the feminine contingent the balcony. The reader's stand, or Bimah, where the Torah was read and the prayers chanted by the leader, stood on a platform in the center of the synagogue. The separate seating and a centrally located Bimah were both features of an orthodox synagogue.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> "Trail Blazers of the Trans-Mississippi West," American Jewish Archives, October, 1956, p. 66.

<sup>241</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two.



Symbolic of all forms of Judaism was the charitable character that Jews display towards aiding Israelites and others in distress. The United Hebrew emulated this ideal to a great degree. The original United Hebrew Constitution contained a foundation for the charitable belief. The concluding sentence of Article Seven concerning burial stated in part that "if his or their pecuniary circumstances are such as they are not able to pay, then no charge shall be made."<sup>242</sup> Therefore such a person as Henry Marks buried his child in the United Hebrew Cemetery at the Congregation's expense.<sup>243</sup> Also Ann Roseta Wolf, the late fiance of a member of the congregation, was buried without expense to the deceased's family, since the board ruled it a "melancholy occurrence."<sup>244</sup> This policy of allowing free burial was re-emphasized in Article Fifteen; however a restriction was placed on donations. The statement read:

The officers, shall have neither right nor privilege to bestow donations or give charity to any person whomsoever, out of the funds of this congregation until the congregation shall be free of all incumbrances of their burial place, and a lot with a Synagogue erected thereon. This shall not interfere with the burial expenses of any poor Israelite.<sup>245</sup>

Thus no private claims of charity were allowed for various individuals who requested them. Even Rev. Meier, the ex-chazan who requested funds to support his family after

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<sup>242</sup> Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the United Hebrew Congregation, 3, MS.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 5.

losing his St. Louis position, was refused.<sup>246</sup> Yet the congregation was more sympathetic toward its current employees when, in April, 1854, shoet Hermann Kohn was unable to support his family on his present salary, the congregation unanimously agreed to increase his compensation by one hundred dollars.<sup>247</sup> Also the United Hebrew paid eight days board for Rev. Illoy and his family's stay at the home of Simon Kohn.<sup>248</sup>

The United Hebrew also donated generously to sister synagogues which needed aid. In April 27, 1845, a Cleveland congregation solicited aid for the building of a synagogue. The local United Hebrew answered their plea by enclosing a draft for \$36.50.<sup>249</sup> It was almost ten years later before another request for aid was noted. Keeping its record intact on June 27, 1855, the United Hebrew looked favorably upon the request for assistance from a Keokuk, Iowa, Jew who wished to obtain funds in order to pay for the local Israelite burial ground.<sup>250</sup> The charitable efforts of the United Hebrew extended outside this country. In the late 1840's they decided to donate a certain amount each year to the poor in the "Holy Land,"<sup>251</sup> or Palestine. With the congregation as the basis

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246 Ibid., 113.

247 Ibid., 120.

248 Ibid., 127.

249 Ibid., 55.

250 Ibid., 129.

251 Ibid., 87.

and only source of Jewish services, the local Israelite community--only about one-fifth active members of the two local congregations--rallied about the synagogue instead of vice versa as today. The congregation also had dealings with the local Hebrew Benevolent Society,<sup>252</sup> in addition to several other St. Louis Jewish organizations. The members of the United Hebrew generally predominated in these groups.

Thus the United Hebrew occupied the vacancy apparent in early St. Louis Jewry, and served as the focal point about which Jewish religious activity stemmed. The period from 1844 to 1855 was a time of gradually stricter observance of traditional law, possibly culminating in the arrival of Rabbi Bernard Illowy. Even though a revision and eliminations of certain practices in the worship probably occurred, the adherence to orthodoxy, in opposition to Wise's reforms, was apparent even after 1855 until 1859. It was significant that the concluding resolution passed at the general meeting on July 17, 1859, to record the congregation's appreciation for the aid extended by many in the construction of the new Synagogue typified the religious growth of the period covered by this thesis:

Resolved, That strongly impressed with the great good that must result to themselves and their children, by persevering and advancing in the path of orthodox Judaism, which has

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252 Ibid., 55.

already produced such satisfactory results, the members of this congregation will strive to the utmost of their ability to uphold the purity of their faith as they have received it from their own fathers.<sup>253</sup>

Between 1841 and 1859 the United Hebrew Congregation proved an asset to Judaism in St. Louis, as well as to the local community. Its pioneer venture in frontier St. Louis in 1841 was commendable, considering the great difficulty it had in establishing organized Jewish customs in an area where eking out an existence was a full-time task. Traditional Jewish beliefs were understandably difficult to maintain on the frontier. Also the Jewish westward movement was meager. This was apparent from the fact that the known Jewish congregations closest to St. Louis were located at Cincinnati, possibly at Cleveland, and at New Orleans. Chicago did not have a Jewish congregation at this time. Approximately twenty Jewish congregations existed in the United States at the founding of the United Hebrew Congregation in 1841.

The various trials of the young, struggling congregation were well worth the trouble when the benefits reaped by Judaism in St. Louis are considered. The United Hebrew Congregation made Jewish services available to members and non-members alike. From 1807 to 1841, Israelites inhabited St. Louis. Almost all of them agreed that a Jewish congregation should be organized. The birth of a traditional

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253 Ibid., 173.

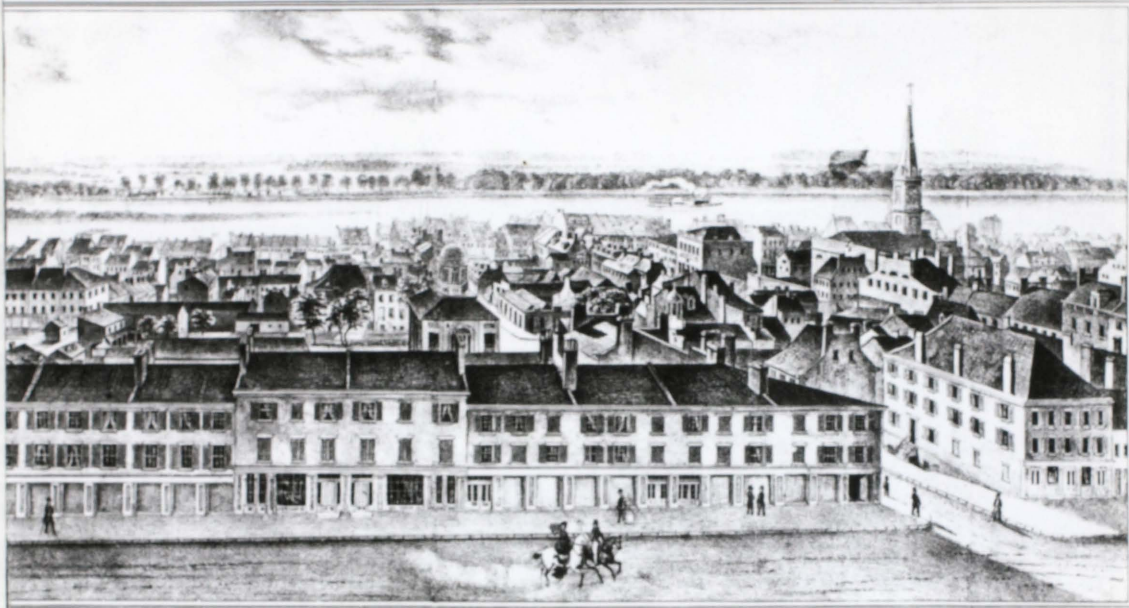
Jewish congregation had immediate results. The improvement in the Jews' religious life was noted in the testimony of the Charleston, South Carolina traveler who visited St. Louis in 1841 and 1844. Even though most St. Louis Israelites did not take an interest in the congregation, a small number did benefit from the religious services provided by the United Hebrew. Principally, these services were: The maintenance of a Jewish cemetery; the beginning of organized regular services; the employment of a shochet to slaughter kosher food; the establishment of a set of marriage laws; and the construction of a ritualarium. Great care was taken in the election of the officials who were to perform these vital religious tasks. The synagogue also made available its facilities to St. Louis Jewish organizations.

The United Hebrew Congregation made contributions to the fast growing city of St. Louis. The congregation brought the first Jewish rabbi to St. Louis. He frequently gave sermons which were open to the Israelites of the city. Another valuable contribution was making available studies in Hebrew education. The congregation, collectively or individually, supported various St. Louis efforts to obtain monetary contributions. The synagogue, completed in 1859, was an ornament to the city. In fact, the congregation spent itself into debt in order to erect a structure in which both Jews and non-Jews could take pride. The relations between the city of St. Louis and the United Hebrew Congregation were good. As an example of brotherhood, Jew and non-Jew alike

contributed to the construction of the United Hebrew's Sixth Street synagogue.

St. Louis benefited by the presence of Jews. The United Hebrew members were law abiding citizens who were active in several Jewish charitable organizations, and thus provided for their own destitute-religious followers. The latter never were a burden to the city. Many United Hebrew members owned businesses in the city--merchandising, rather than professional work, predominating. Several actively participated in civic affairs and politics, although only one was elected to public office. Both Judaism and the city of St. Louis benefited by the existence of the United Hebrew Congregation. The mere existence of the latter provided a religious atmosphere for St. Louis Jews to follow. Local Jewry took advantage of the services it provided. The Israelite community revolved around the establishment of this first Jewish congregation in St. Louis. The permanency of the congregation started by forty or fifty Jews in 1841 possibly was an inspiration for other minyanim to organize. The West, where a high regard for independent action, freedom, and equality existed, was a good environment for the growth of the United Hebrew Congregation.

EAST.



U I S    A N D    C I T Y    V I C I N I T Y .

1 Illinois Tavern

2 Baptist Church

3 Central Express House

4 Concert Hall

5 St. Louis Cathedral

St. Louis in 1841 (View from Observatory of Planters House Hotel, Fourth Street between Chestnut and Pine streets).

WISV.



145

1. Reformed Presbyterian Church 2. Congregational Church

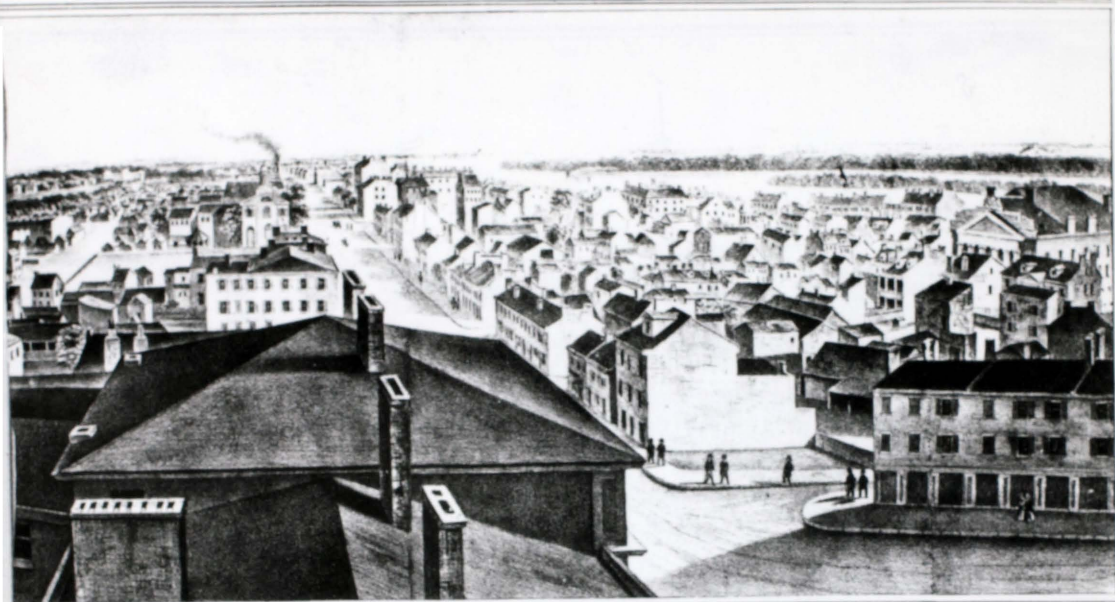
3. St. Louis University

4. Public School House

Published drawn and lithographed by S. C. Widdell, St. Louis, Mo.

St. Louis in 1841 (View from Observatory of Planters House Hotel, Fourth Street between Chesnut and Pine streets)





PANORAMA OF ST. L.

1. *Historic Church*

2. *Market*

4. *Liberty Engine House*

5. *Exchange*

6. *City Hotel*

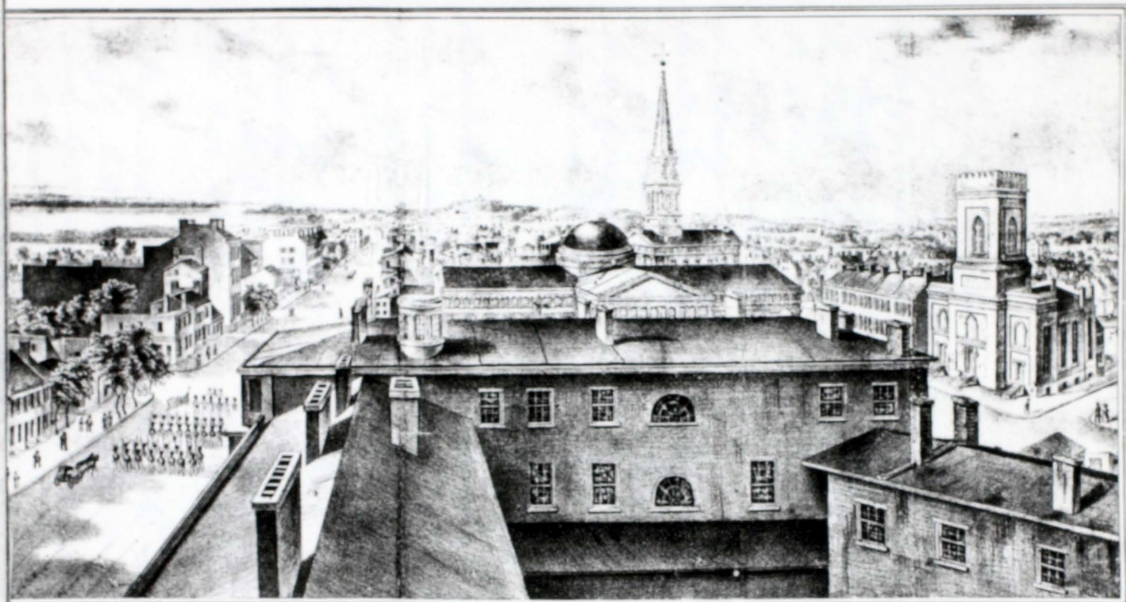
7. *St Louis Engine House*

8. *Theater & Bandy Island*

10. *Market square*

3. *First Presbyterian Church*

St. Louis in 1841 (View from Observatory of Planters House Hotel, Fourth Street between Chestnut and Pine streets).



1. Hospital

2. US Post-Office Magazine

3. Court House

4. Second Presbyterian Church

5. Medical College

6. Chestnut Lake

7. Christ Church

8. Jail

St. Louis in 1841 (View from Observatory of Planters House Hotel, Fourth Street between Chestnut and Pine streets).

543

At a meeting of the united Free Cong.  
held in pursuance of notice on Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct.  
1841 at the brick on Societ Street,

Present

A. Weigle - Abraham  
A. Lyons - Alexander  
S. Lutz - Simon  
S. Sacks - Samuel  
A. Lutz - Adal  
A. S. Able - A. S. Able  
S. Kohn - Joseph  
S. Lutz - Isaac  
A. Marks - Henry  
D. Lewison - David  
A. S. Cohen  
E. Gustraff - Ephraim

To Form a Constitution  
The articles as in the first part of this Book  
were read and approved and on Vote of each  
one separate they were unanimously adopted

A. S. Able proposed Mr. Weigle when it was  
moved by Mr. Able and seconded by Mr. Cohen  
that Mr. Weigle be elected Chairman when all  
the vote of eyes and noses Mr. W. was elected

Proposed and Carried by the Call of Eyes  
that A. S. Cohen be Treasurer -  
That Messrs Joseph Kohn, D. Lewison & A. Lutz  
do act as Trustees





ISAAC LEESER



B. ILLOWY



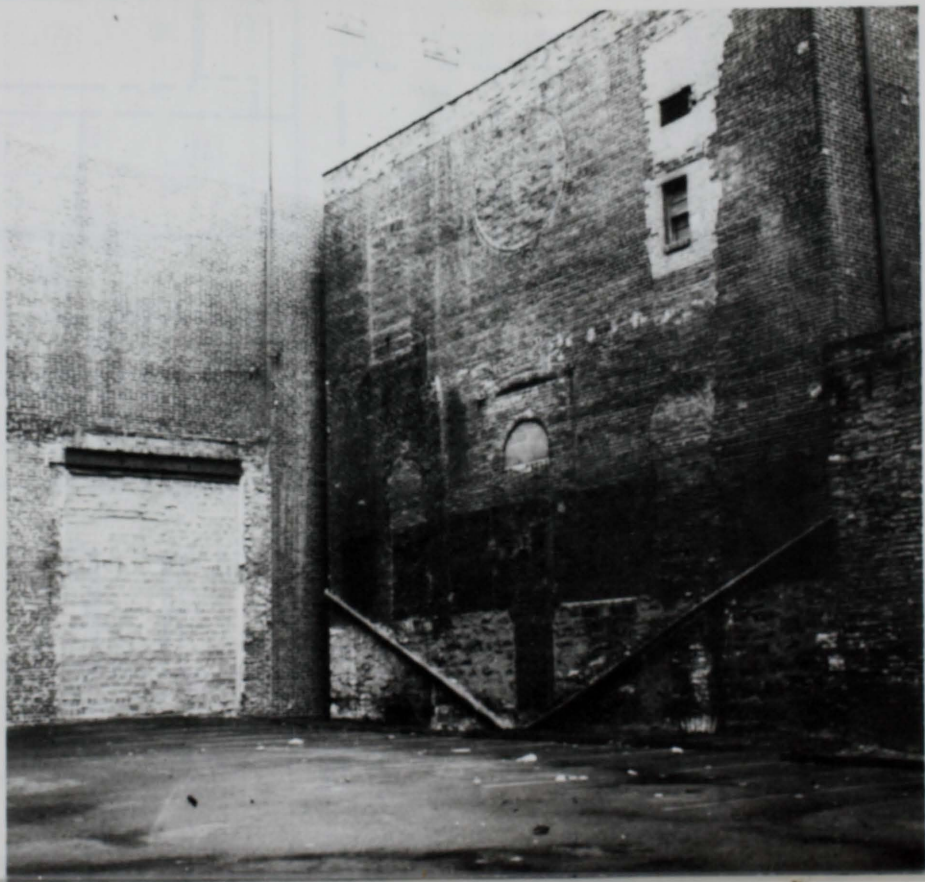
RABBI MORRIS J. RAPHALL



ISAAC MAYER WISE

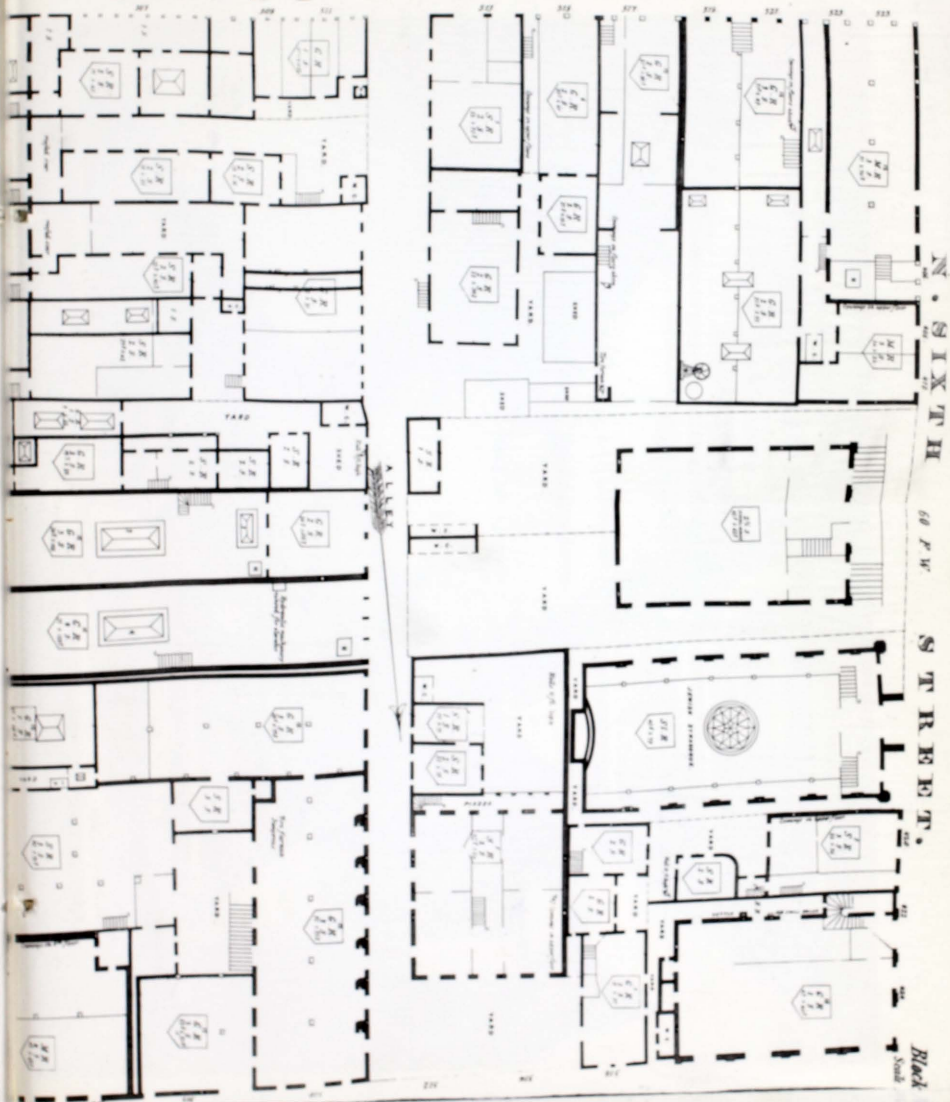


550

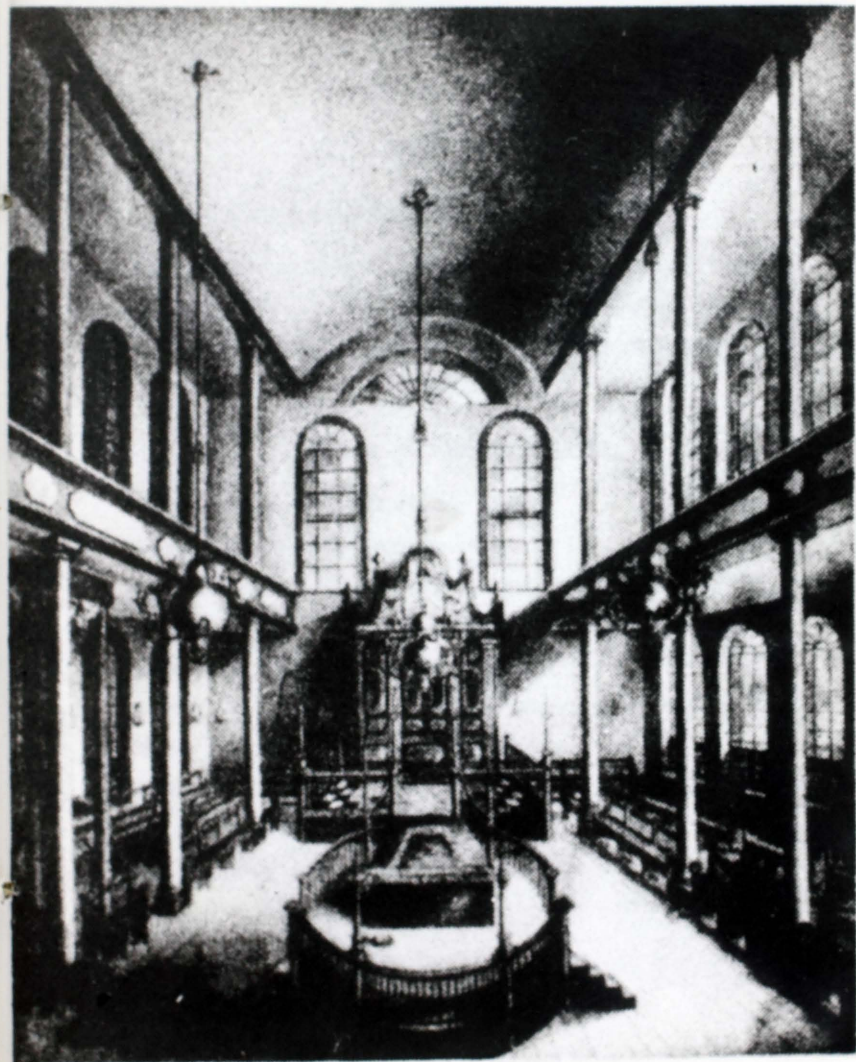


ext wall of original synagogue as it appeared in 1958

## LOUST STREET. 60 FT. SIXTH STREET.



Plan of interior of United Hebrew Congregation's Sixth Street Synagogue



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- General Part 2 T-6 Records.
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