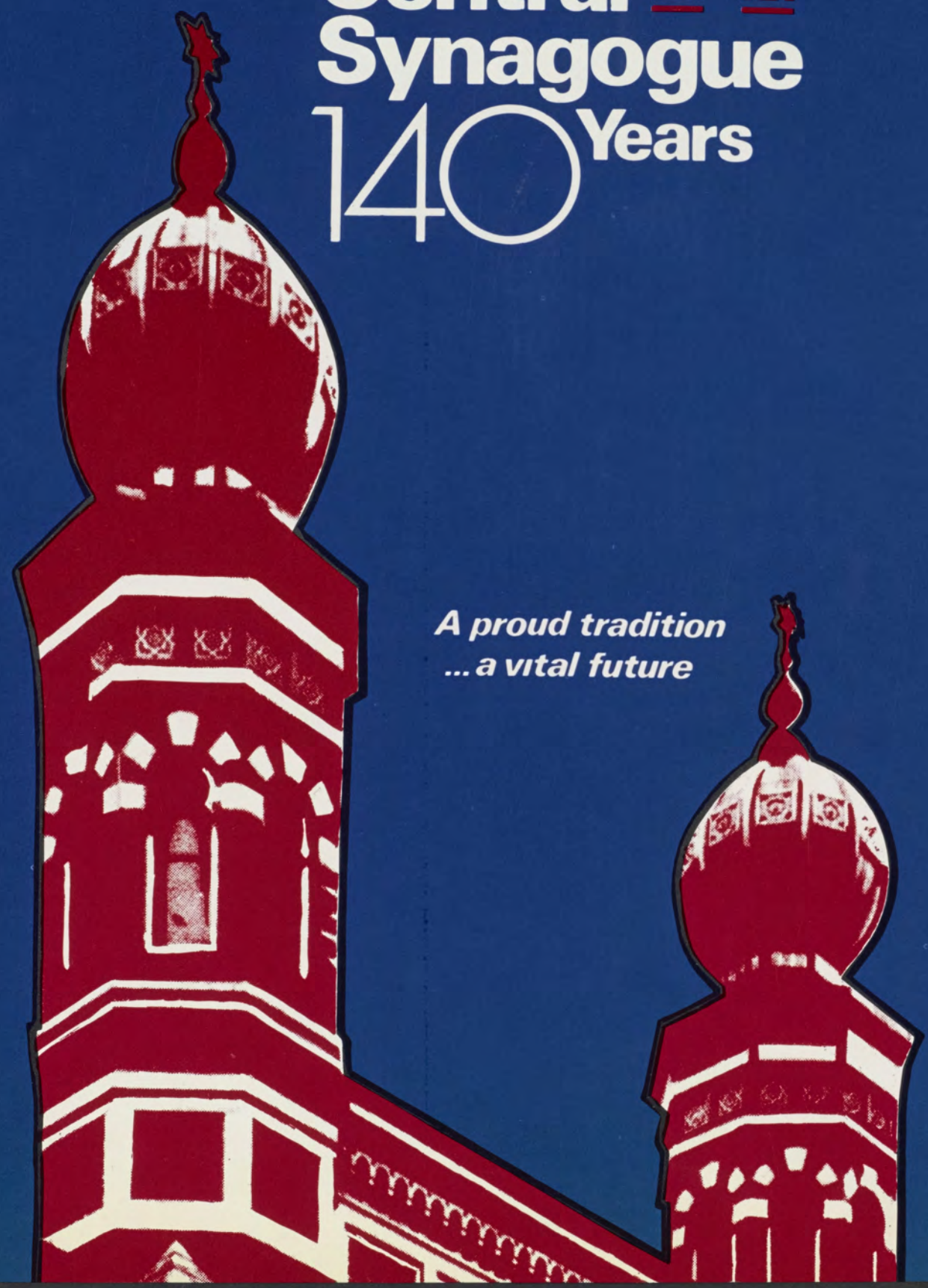


Central 
Synagogue
140 Years

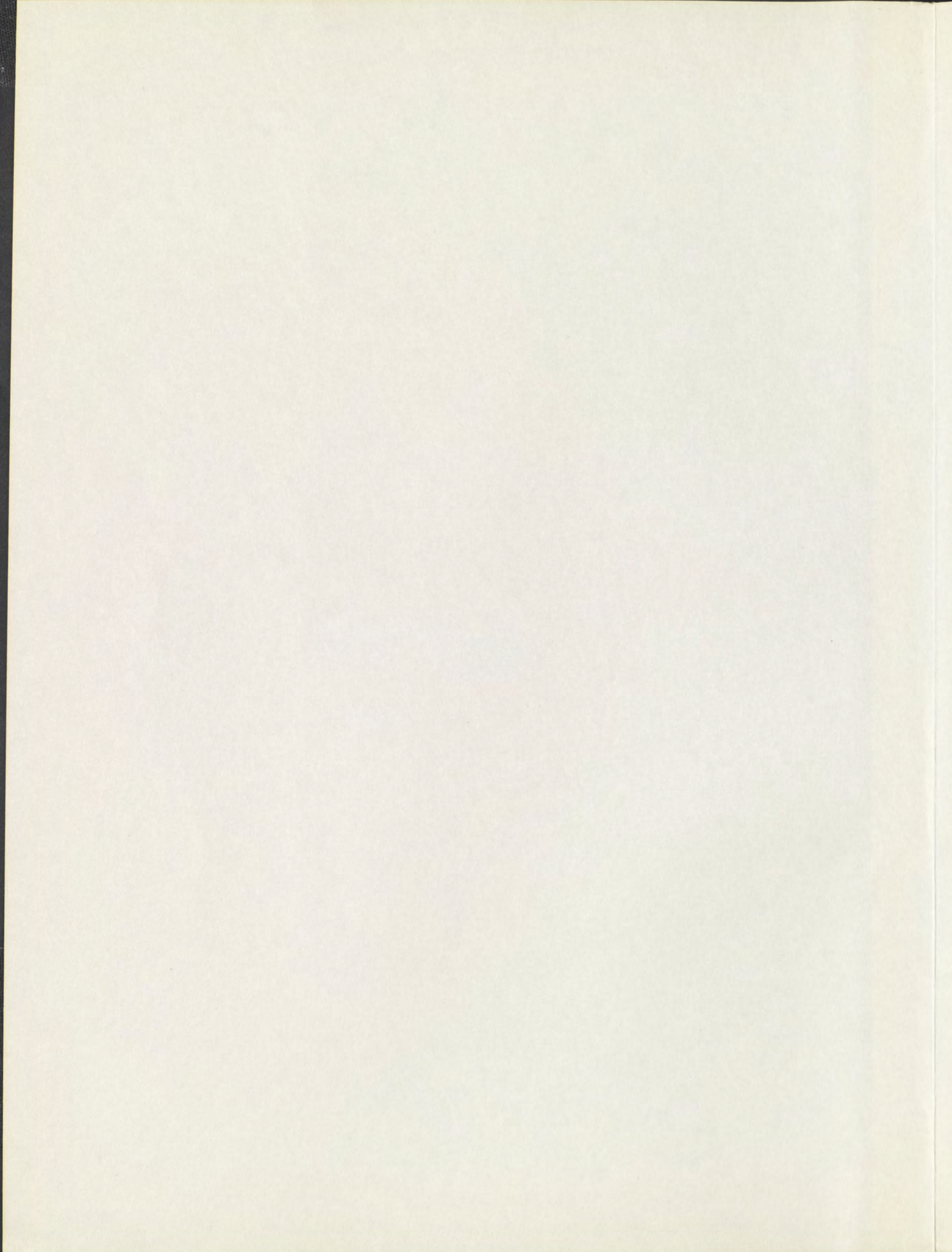


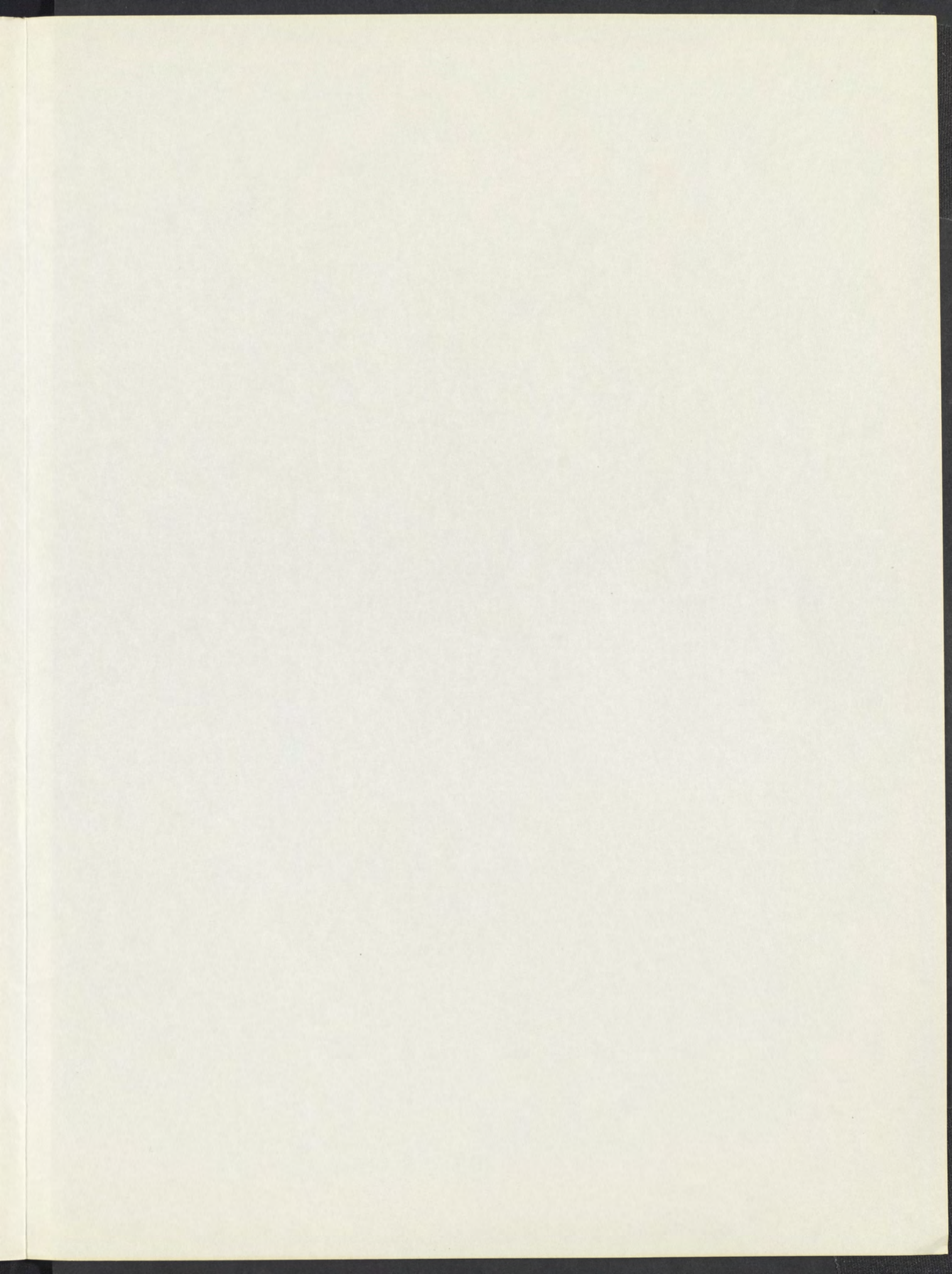
*A proud tradition
...a vital future*

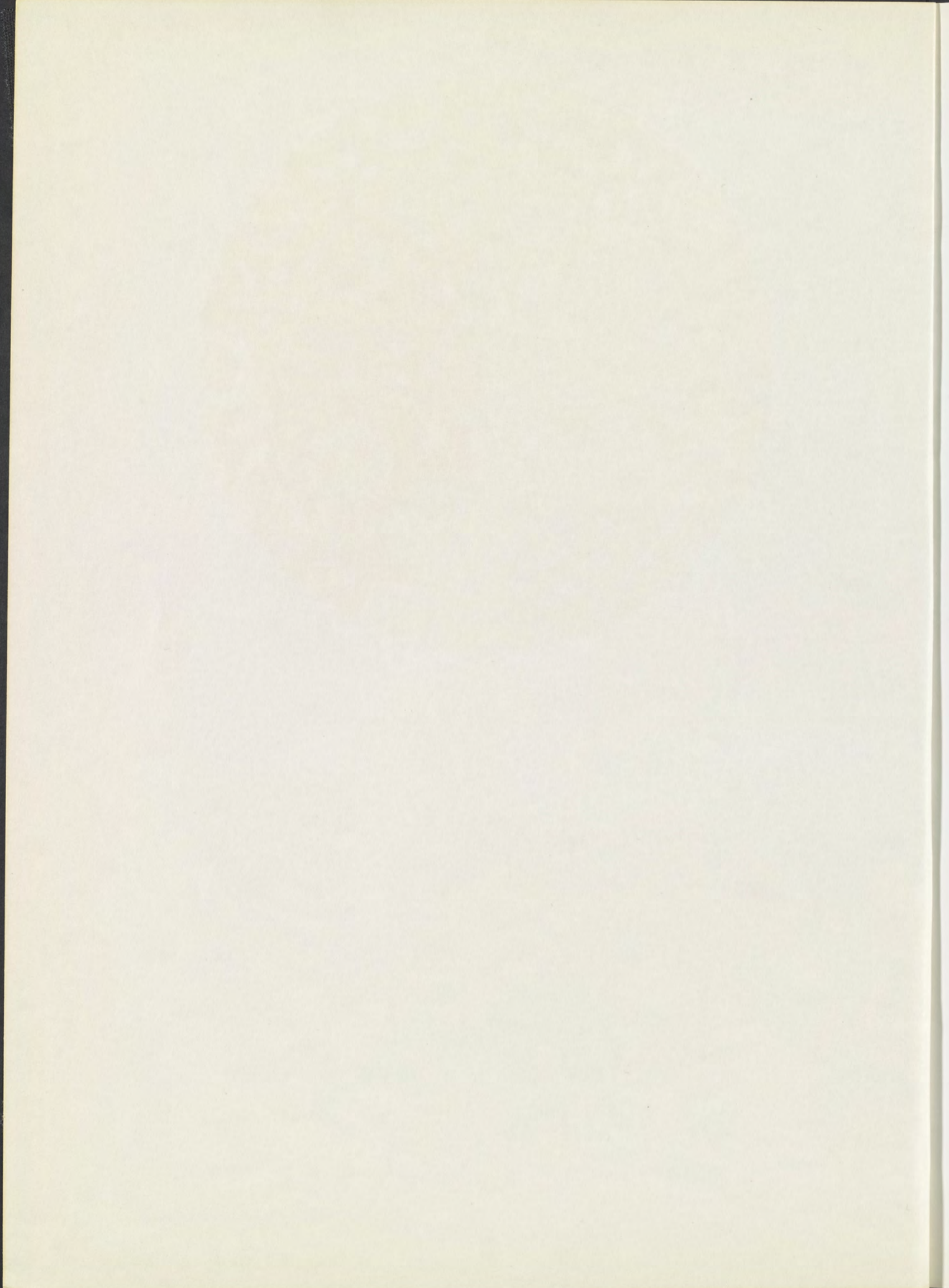


In affectionate memory of
HARRY N. ABRAMS
who has given so liberally
of himself and his time
to Central Synagogue.











ROSE WINDOW — Central Synagogue

FOREWORD

THIS IS THE STORY of Central Synagogue, which is not just a beautiful Historic Landmark but a congregation reverent of its past, actively involved with the present and looking forward in a very positive way to its future.

Our history begins one hundred and forty years ago when a handful of Jews banded together to form Congregation Shaar Hashomayim, which later joined with Congregation Ahawath Chesed to become, in time, the great institution of which we are all a part.

The dedication and foresight of those earliest congregants survive, and today Central Synagogue is a thriving religious community of almost twelve hundred families. As we pause to review our illustrious past, we continue our commitment to the present, and as did our far-sighted forebears, we look toward an ever-expanding promising future.

It is in this context that we present this history of our congregation.

Stella F. Fuld, Editor
(MRS. STANLEY H. FULD)

Janet Stone, Assistant Editor
(MRS. J. JACQUES STONE)

Mildred Ross, Assistant Editor
(MRS. MATTHEW H. ROSS)

Februar den 16^{ten} 1846.

Zur Folge des Leppfleißes bei letzter Anwesenheit, fanden sich
Incidents und Vice Pr^s, des 3 Gemeinderen so wie des G^o Dr
Dr. L. zur Anwesenheit bekehrte in Henry St. ein.
als obod. erman. unempand die Frau Heilner, Louis
Mayer, Mo. Cohen, H. Friedmann, Jonas Hacht.

G^o Dr. L. bezieht sich ab den Frau Marcus H
Moses Hart nicht möglich sey diesen Erband
das sey dieselben aber der Kommunikation
zugänglich zu empfangen.

G^o Dr. L. stellt die Kosten
der Anwesenheit bezieht
sich jetzt gefunden, und
das ist; welches beziehung
gibt.



NEW YORK-Waterfront



NEW YORK-Early 19th Century

MUCH THAT WE KNOW of Central Synagogue's past is locked safely away in a small storeroom on an upper floor of the Jonah B. Wise Community House. Here there are a few old volumes containing fragments of brittle, yellowing paper, their German script painstakingly inscribed with a quill pen. In addition, there is a priceless collection of memorabilia preserved by our historian and past president, Herbert Schwarz, and given by him to Central Synagogue.

After the downfall of Napoleon, anti-Semitism was revived in Europe, and many German Jews fled to America. As a result, the Jewish population of New York increased enormously. In 1825, fewer than 600 Jews lived in the city. By 1846 their number had grown to 12,000.

In 1839, a small group of German Jews formed the Congregation Shaar Hashomayim (Gates of Heaven). After being granted a charter, the group held regular meetings at 122 Attorney Street in the lower tip of Manhattan. Services, including marriages, circumcisions and burials, were conducted by one of the members.

By 1845, Shaar Hashomayim was happy to engage Rabbi Max Lilienthal and share his

services with two other German congregations, at a cost of \$1,000 a year. Rabbi Lilienthal, the second ordained rabbi to come to the new land, held the first Jewish "ministership" to be established in America.

Rabbi Lilienthal made many changes. Where there had been chaos at services—each man on his own—he introduced order. His lectures, entirely in German, were legal interpretations and commentary on religious matters. Since all services of that period were traditional, he supervised ritual slaughter and the baking of unleavened bread. His views, however, were "modern." He held confirmation exercises for both boys and girls and his congregations celebrated the 4th of July!

He projected other reforms, but the objections were too strong. When Rabbi Lilienthal left to go on to other pursuits, Congregation Shaar Hashomayim, along with the other congregations, engaged a Hazzan-Lecturer (a non-ordained rabbi), whose duties included reading of the service, the upkeep of the building and, often, religious instructions for the young.

In 1846, eighteen young men, most of whom had fled their native Bohemia, consecrated the Congregation Ahawath Chesed



Early New York Harbor



Charter of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim

ORIGINAL CHARTER FOR CONGREGATION SHAAR HASHOMAYIM 1839.
THIS CONGREGATION EVENTUALLY BECAME AHAWATH CHESED
WHICH IS NOW CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE

(Love of Mercy) in Coblenzer's Hotel at 69 Ludlow Street. These men, like those of Shaar Hashomayim, conducted their own services. Membership dues were \$1.50 a year.

The year 1848 brought still another great surge of Jewish immigration to the United States. The fledgling congregation grew and rented larger quarters on nearby Ridge Street for \$100 a year.

Once again, the growing Congregation Ahawath Chesed expanded. In 1854, the membership bought a large house on Columbia Street and ten years later purchased and remodeled a church on the corner of 4th Street and Avenue C for \$24,050. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of American Reform Judaism, was one of the main speakers at the dedication ceremony. With the acquisition of the new home came the desire for a permanent rabbinical staff. Quite naturally this congregation of recent immigrants looked to its homeland for men of the highest caliber.

In 1865, Dr. Adolph Huebsch and the Reverend Samuel Welsch arrived from Bohemia

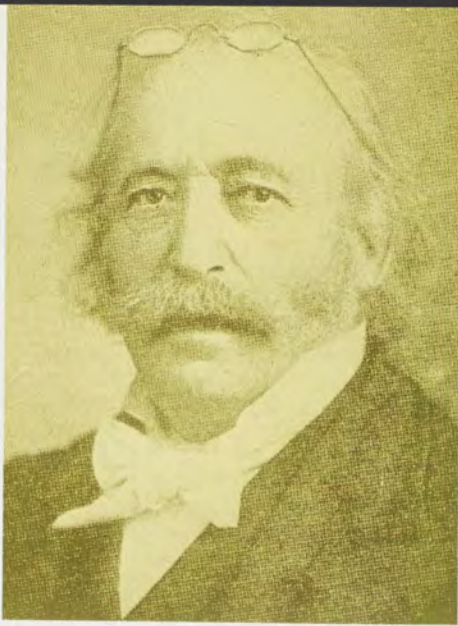
to assume their duties as rabbi and cantor. Rabbi Huebsch was liberal in his views and gradually changed the traditional orthodox services to a moderated reform ritual which, he felt, rendered the divine service more in harmony with the changed conditions and requirements of modern times. He believed that his congregation could not be truly consecrated until it became part of New York City and America.

He developed a new prayer book that was adopted by other congregations in New York and around the United States as well as by Ahawath Chesed. He established a Hebrew school attended by more than 400 children. A Young Men's Union for the study of Jewish literature was formed. Regular membership dues were instituted.

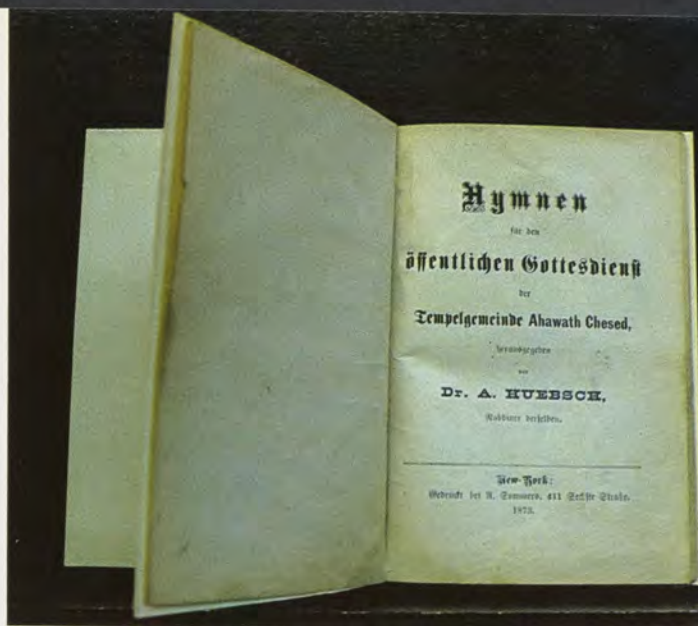
Rabbi Huebsch, while retaining a deep reverence for the past, encouraged participation in post-Civil War recovery programs and became the first in a long line of distinguished rabbis who saw the need for service to both the secular and religious communities.

NEW YORK-Mid-19th Century





Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise



Prayer Book written by Rabbi Huebsch

On April 24, 1865, a shocked congregation responded to the news of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination by holding a memorial service and issuing a proclamation that remains in the Central Synagogue archives. It reads:

Wednesday, the 19th of April, 1865 was set as the day of mourning for ABRAHAM LINCOLN, PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES

In consideration: that it has pleased the Ruler of the World, whose ways we do not understand, to call to Him

President Abraham Lincoln and in consideration: that the Congregation Ahawath Chesed wish to express our deepest Concern over the loss, which our young Nation has suffered

We resolve herewith: that in honour of the Great Dead our Synagogue shall carry for the next thirty days the Sign of Mourning.

Furthermore: We resolve that a Day be set aside, where a Mourning Service in our Synagogue shall be held to pray for the soul of His Great Dead.



THE NEW JEWISH SYNAGOGUE, CORNER OF FIFTY-FIFTH STREET AND LEXINGTON AVENUE, NEW YORK. (PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROCKWOOD.)

THE NEW SYNAGOGUE.

We give on this page an engraving of the Jewish synagogue recently erected in this city, at the corner of Fifty-fifth Street and Lexington Avenue, from designs by Mr. HENRY FERNBACH. The ground dimensions are 110 by 93 feet, with an extreme interior height of 62 feet. It is divided by pillars into bays, of which one is the organ-loft, another the choir, and the others the naves. The windows are filled with rich glass, and the east end is ornamented with a beautiful rose-window. The interior walls are profusely decorated in polychrome, applied in geometrical patterns. The style is mainly Moorish, although the arrangement is Gothic. The cost of the synagogue was about \$300,000, and it will seat 1500 persons.

CONGREGATION AHAWATH CHESED soon had a membership of 140 families out of the 40,000 Jews in New York. Finding their present quarters once again inadequate, they decided to move uptown along with the expanding population of New York City. They bought property on 55th Street and Lexington Avenue. Private houses lined the streets, and the Steinway Piano factory and Schaefer's brewery occupied nearby sites. Henry Fernbach, the first Jewish architect in the United States, was engaged to plan this second largest synagogue building in New York.

The cornerstone of Congregation Ahawath Chesed was laid December 14, 1870. Once again, Dr. Isaac Mayer Wise was the speaker.

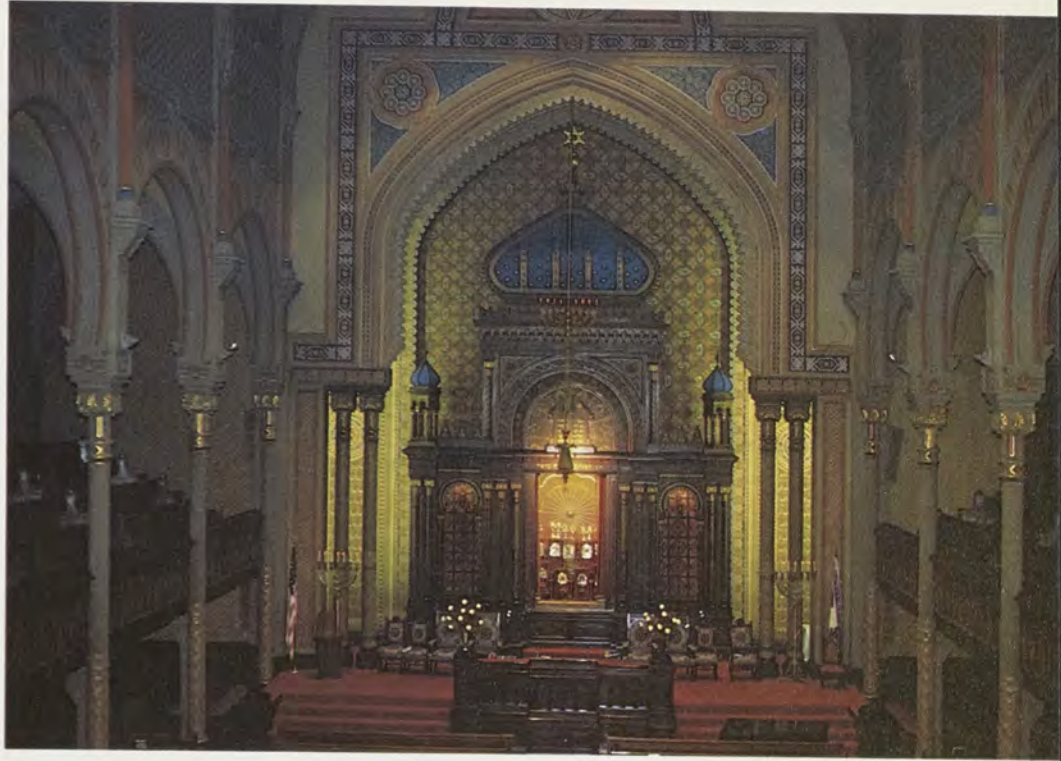
The cost of the imposing new synagogue, including the ground on which it was erected, was \$264,000.

In 1872 the building was completed. The original gas-burning eternal light remained illuminated until it was converted to electricity in 1946 during the restoration of the synagogue.

At the death of Rabbi Huebsch in 1885, Alexander Kohut, a renowned Hungarian educator, scholar and orator, became the rabbi. He held the post until his death in 1894. Rabbi Kohut helped organize the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he taught as Professor of Talmudic methodology and served as an examiner in rabbinics at Columbia University. In 1885, Congregation



ETERNAL LIGHT-Ahawath Chesed-and Pulpit



Ahawath Chesed financially supported the publication of Rabbi Kohut's greatest work, the "Concordance," known in international scholarship as "Aruch Completum," which established his fame in American Judaism.

In 1893, Rabbi David Davidson succeeded Rabbi Kohut. Rabbi Davidson was an instructor in Talmud and exegesis at the Hebrew Union College (founded in 1875 by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise for the training of reform rabbis). Like his predecessors, Rabbi

Davidson was an educator. He established the David Davidson Institute College, served as Director of the Society for the Aid of Jewish Prisoners and taught rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

During this period, the Russian pogroms of the 1880's, which continued into the twentieth century, were forcing the emigration of East European Jews to floodtide. In 1890, 7½ million people from all corners of the world poured through Castle Garden.

Stained Glass Window

Interior of Sanctuary





Museum of the City of New York

Castle Garden

IMMIGRANTS ON INCOMING SHIPS strained for a glimpse of the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of American freedom. The statue, a gift from France, was erected on tiny Bedloes Island in New York Bay in 1886. Carved into the stone at the statue's base are the poignant words of Emma Lazarus:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless,
the tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

The struggle for existence in the New World was difficult. Acculturation, or the “melting pot,” worked slowly. Families lived in overcrowded dingy tenements on the Lower East Side, working hard for long hours and meager wages either in their homes or in sweatshops. Their values, however, remained

clear and strong. Children were given both secular and religious education. As soon as families were able, they sought better living conditions “uptown.”

One of the most significant contributions of the Jewish community in the United States is in the area of philanthropy. Charity, or “Tzedakah,” is a basic tenet and obligation of Judaism. In happiness and in sorrow, Jews give to those in need.

Early in its history, Congregation Ahawath Chesed had begun to demonstrate this kind of involvement. At a time when it was still struggling to survive, the congregation gave the greatest possible support to organized charities. In 1872, it was a leading participant in the great Hebrew Charity Fair, held in the 22nd Regiment Armory to support the Hebrew Benevolent Society—later to become the Hebrew Orphan Asylum—and Mt. Sinai Hospital, originally the Jews Hospital (Bet Holim).



"Sweat Shop"



Charity Boxes in Synagogue Lobby

ANNIVERSARIES ARE OCCASIONS when people pause to remember times past and look forward to the future. On the 50th Anniversary of Congregation Ahawath Chesed in 1896, Marcus Kohner, the president, summarized the history of the Congregation:

“ . . . the tender seed planted by a few loyal men has taken root and grown up to that majestic tree well known as Congregation Ahawath Chesed . . . ”

After lauding the beneficial influence of Rabbi Huebsch and his successor, Dr. Kohut, he concluded, “Alas, in the year 1893, May 25th, his soul [Kohut’s] winged its flight to

eternity. . . . Again was a whole congregation assembled in this place weeping over the coffin that held enshrined their great leader. Like his predecessor, Rabbi Huebsch, he was buried amid signs and scenes of sorrow and sympathy evinced by the whole Jewish community of New York in Linden Hill, the Congregation’s cemetery. . . . ”

President Kohner’s words included a plea to the younger generations not to permit the work of their elders to be in vain and to crumble, but “to let their hearts, their souls and their acts give response that will be the life, the honor, the growth and prosperity of our beloved Congregation Ahawath Chesed.”

Gates of Linden Hill Cemetery



Constitution

des Vereines

Tugendhafte Frauen

(Ladies of Virtue),

gegründet von den Frauen der Congregation Ahawath Chesed.

New York:

Druckerei des jüdischen Ballenhanfes,
187 und 189 Nr. 76. Str.,
1884.



Constitution of Ladies of Virtue

Early Sewing Group

The excerpts below were taken from a small booklet, frayed and hand-tied with faded ribbon, found in the Synagogue Archives. This was written on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Society of Righteous Women, formed as an adjunct to Congregation Ahawath Chesed in 1850.

"Few in number, themselves anxious and troubled in the battle for their own means of existence . . . they laid the foundation . . . to visit the sick, to relieve the poor, and in cases of death to remain with and to prepare the body for burial, while the members themselves made the shroud."

This last activity came about when "in a miserable attic . . . lay the body of a Jewish woman . . . who would have been buried in a pauper's grave had not the case been called to the attention of the President of Ahawath Chesed, who with the assistance of one of the women founders of the society . . . obtained the means to secure a decent burial for this poor woman."

A special tax of four cents was collected from each member whenever it became necessary to raise the sum of \$5.00 to help some worthy family.

The little pamphlet ends with, "When the Sunbeams of the Present shall have glided into the Shadows of the Past the daughters of those who, with graceful tenderness, ministered to the wants of others, will with filial love and obligation, take up the burden and with a unity of purpose, and with joy that comes from labor well performed they will go Forward and Onward with the good work and when they gather at the HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY they will celebrate a grander and greater Society of Righteous Women."

At a Special Term of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, Part II, held in the County Court House in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York on the 7th day of October, 1898.

Present Hon. John J. Freedman, Justice.

-----X
: In the Matter of the Consolidation of:
: CONGREGATION AHAWATH CHESED and :
: SHAAER HASHAMOLIM into a new religious:
: corporation to be known as CONGREGA- :
: TIAN AHAWATH CHESED SHAAR HASHOMAYIM. :
: -----X

On reading and filing the affidavit of Marcus Kohner verified October 6th, 1898, and on reading the petitions to this Court by Congregation Ahawath Chesed and Shaaer Hashamolim and the agreements thereto annexed and heretofore filed in this Court, and on motion of Maurice Rapp, attorney for the petitioners, it is

ORDERED that the order entered herein on the 19th day of August 1898 whereby the above named corporations were consolidated into a new religious corporation to be known as CONGREGATION AHAWATH CHESED SHAAR HASHOMAYIM, be and the same hereby is amended by adding at the end of paragraph marked "1" thereof the words "and the date of the first annual corporate meeting of said new corporation shall be the ninth day of April 1899". And it is further

ORDERED that the said amendment be made nunc pro tunc as of the 19th day of August 1898, and with the same force and effect as though the said words were in the original order.

*P.P.
Copy*



*Enter
J.J.F.
J.S.C.
M. J. Cohen
Clerk*



ON JUNE 20, 1898, Congregation Ahawath Chesed was consolidated with the older Congregation Shaar Hashomayim by "approval and order of the Supreme Court" and became known as Congregation Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim. The name remained until 1920 when it was changed to Central Synagogue. The combined congregation was strengthened and it thrived. Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim, like other liberal congregations throughout the country, assumed the pattern of Reform Judaism, born in Germany in the early nineteenth century. Reform Judaism was to reach its highest development in the United States. In 1878, Ahawath Chesed joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, organized in 1873 by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise as the parent body of liberal congregations.

When Dr. Isaac Moses became rabbi of Congregation Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim in 1901, about half of the Jews in America had settled in New York City. Dr. Moses adhered to the reformed ideals of Isaac Mayer Wise and was the last rabbi to use both German and English in the services. German was finally discarded at the onset of World War I. Rabbi Moses was a charter member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and wrote the basis for their Union Prayer Book issued in 1894. In 1904, he adopted this prayer book for sabbath use.

In the minutes of Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim one reads: "1903—Electric lights were installed in the Synagogue (later in the classrooms). 1904—The first subway was run from City Hall to West 145th Street. The Synagogue was asked permission to dig in front of its doors. 1905—The Congregation gave aid to Russian Hebrews through Jacob H. Schiff. 1906—The Synagogue aided victims of the San Francisco Earthquake."

In 1914, World War I brought an appalling crisis for the 6,000,000 Jews in Europe. In

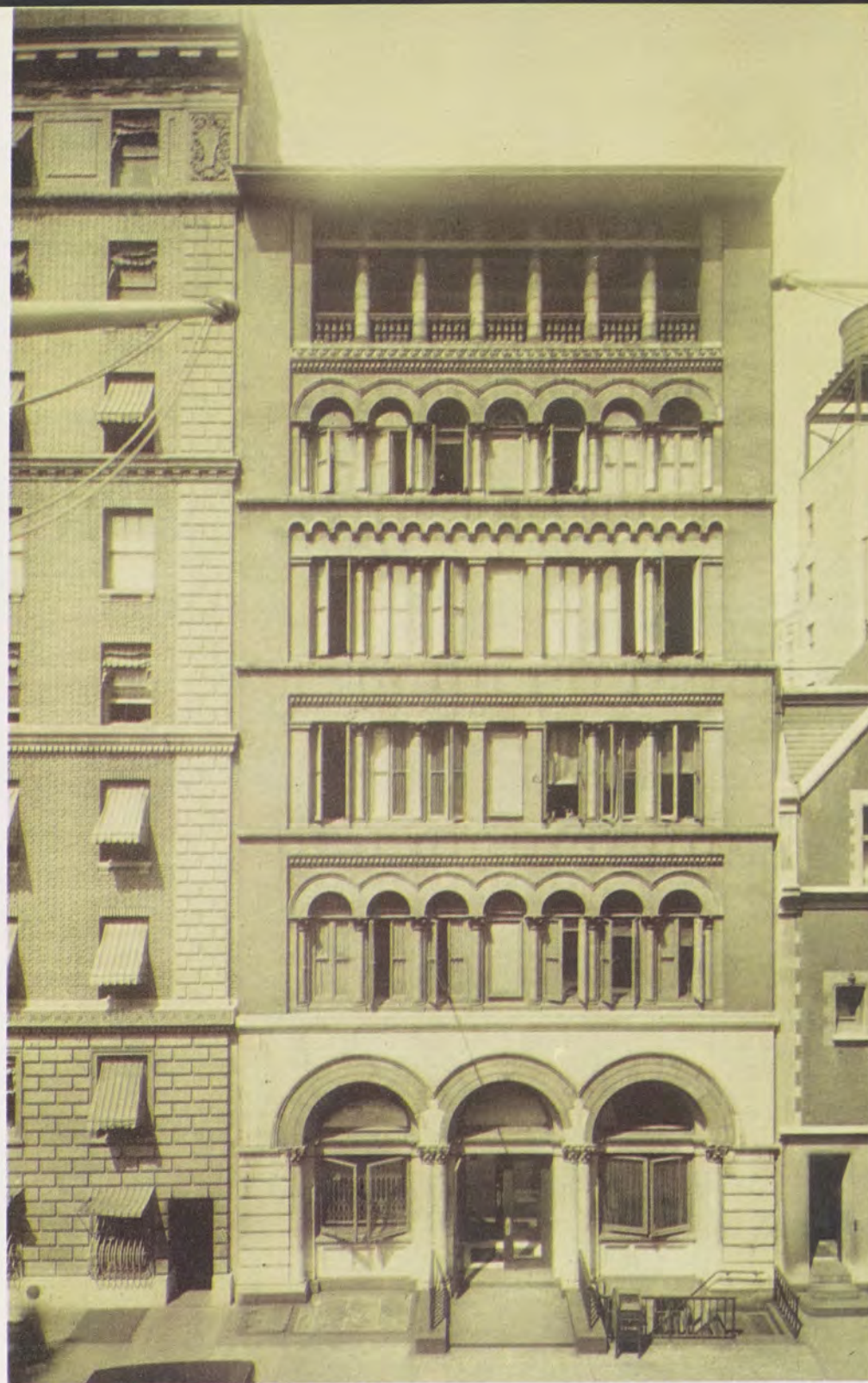
1915, several organizations in the United States united to form the Joint Distribution Committee on their behalf. Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim generously supported the work of this committee.

In 1918, Rabbi Isaac Moses retired and was succeeded by Rabbi Nathan Krass, a noted reform leader. When Rabbi Krass left the congregation in 1923, Central Synagogue went through a difficult period. Efforts were made to merge with the Free Synagogue and Stephen S. Wise became rabbi of this combined venture. A vital activist, Rabbi Wise was a leader in the organization of the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress. He served as Honorary Secretary to Theodore Herzl and was founder, leader, and finally president of the Zionist Organization of America. Just before coming to Central Synagogue, Rabbi Wise organized the Jewish Institute of Religion, which later joined with the Hebrew Union College to become Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion. He was a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and helped form the American Civil Liberties Union.

The joining of the two synagogues created many problems. Rabbi Stephen Wise left the congregation in 1925. On January 1, 1926, Jonah Bondi Wise, son of Isaac Mayer Wise (unrelated to Stephen) was installed as the sixth rabbi of Central Synagogue. Rabbi Jonah Wise brought new life to the Synagogue. He replaced the old prayer book with the new revised Union Prayer Book, he eliminated the wearing of hats and he instituted many other reforms.

In 1926, the Board of Trustees authorized the purchase of a spacious old building at 35 East 62nd Street to be used as a much-needed religious school and community house. The 300 children enrolled in the school could all attend at the same time. The building also housed the library and synagogue offices.

Under Rabbi Wise's leadership every arm of the congregation expanded its services to both the congregation and the community.



Old Community House—35 East 62nd Street



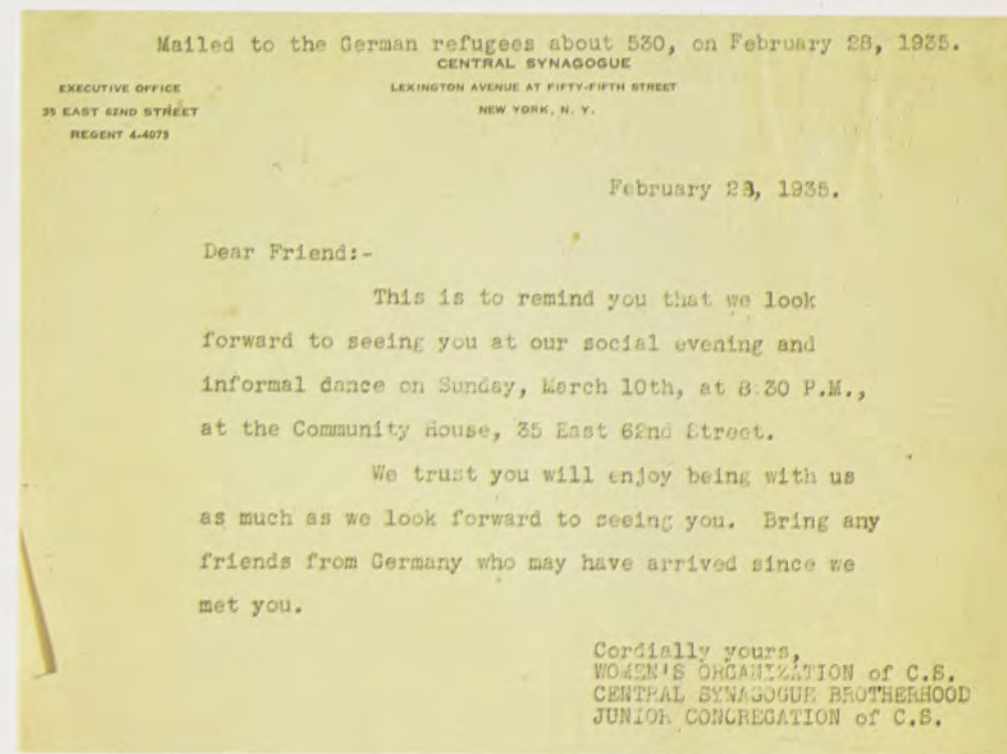
Community House Library



Community House Classroom



Brotherhood Program for Jewish Braille Institute



Invitation to Refugees

THE BROTHERHOOD OF CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE, celebrating its 50th year in 1980, was formed during the early years of Dr. Wise's tenure. Through the years, Central Synagogue Brotherhood has continuously broadened its scope. Its activities include active Boy Scout and Girl Scout programs and recreational programs for the Jewish Braille Institute. Brotherhood also provides ushers for synagogue services, participates in Project Ezra (a reach-out program for the aged) and sponsors adult education

programs. Its members have served in the leadership of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhood and its Chautauqua program.

1929 was a year to remember—the Wall Street crash and the ensuing worldwide economic depression. In this same year, the Bohemian American Israelite Congregation Beth Elohim joined Central Synagogue.

The economic depression continued into the 1930's, while in Germany, with the rise of Hitler, anti-Semitism became rampant. Rabbi

Wise dared to visit Nazi Germany in the hope of bringing aid to the Jews. He was chairman of the National Joint Distribution Committee campaign and its president for seven years. This committee later merged with the United Palestine Appeal and became the United Jewish Appeal in 1939.

With millions in need, the Women's Organization of Central Synagogue opened its vestry rooms five days a week to unemployed women who came "for a word of cheer and advice" or "to rest or read." Within a short

period hundreds were coming. Some were helped to secure jobs and others were referred to special organizations. The project grew and was so favorably publicized by Walter Winchell (a columnist of the period) and others that Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt met with the women's organization president and the project chairman at the home of the author Fanny Hurst to plan the opening of three more such centers in New York. In its first year of operation over 9,000 women came to the Central Synagogue Rest Room.

IN 1939, THE SYNAGOGUE and its Community House were thrown open to German Jewish families who had formed their own Congregation Habonim with Rabbi Hugo Hahn as their spiritual leader. Four years later Rabbi Hahn, a scholar still immersed in Old World ways, separated his congregation from Central Synagogue.

"The Message of Israel," a weekly radio program broadcast from Central Synagogue, was created by Rabbi Wise in 1934. The program is now produced and directed by David J. Wise (Jonah Wise's son) and is heard throughout the United States and in other parts of the world. Its timely and informative content touches on many subjects pertaining to Judaism, thus spreading greater understanding between Christian and Jew. The Message of Israel has become the medium for expression by community and religious leaders.

Through "The Message of Israel," Frederick Lechner came to Central Synagogue, serving first as soloist and musical consultant for the radio series and, in 1937, as cantor. He developed programs of traditional as well as contemporary liturgical music both for radio and for use in the synagogue. In 1939, the opening New York performance of "The Sacred Service" by the great modern composer Ernest Bloch took place at Central Synagogue.

Throughout this period and until the early 1970's, the music of Central Synagogue was further enriched by our magnificent choir under the direction of the noted composer Lazar Weiner who served as its musical director for more than 40 years.

In 1950, Cantor Lechner and the choir, under the direction of Lazar Weiner, gave the

first concert performance of "The Sacred Service" by Darius Milhaud, a twentieth century French composer.

On November 28, 1946, the first joint Thanksgiving Service was held at Central Synagogue in conjunction with Christ Church Methodist and Central Presbyterian Church.

The growth of the interfaith movement affirmed the basic unity of American society. Our rabbinate cooperated in civic work and public information, and exchange of pulpits and joint worship services continue to this day.

During this period of growth under Jonah Wise, Sisterhood further expanded its services into the community. In 1925, the Society of Righteous Women, later the Ladies of Virtue, became the Women's Organization of Central Synagogue. Many of the committees existing at that time function with the same purposes today—a testimony to the foresight of the early pioneers in Sisterhood work.

One of Sisterhood's most outstanding services to the community occurred during World War II. A program was initiated to train newly arrived refugee women as cooks and waitresses, enabling them to help support their families.

With the end of World War II, Rabbi David J. Seligson, a well-known Hebraic scholar who had occupied a pulpit in England and served as a chaplain in the Army of the United States, came to Central Synagogue as assistant to Rabbi Wise. In 1954, Rabbi Seligson became Associate Rabbi.

On February 1, 1959, just three weeks before his 78th birthday, Jonah B. Wise died. Among the many thousand messages of condolence from all over the world were these few words that aptly expressed the sorrow of all: "A giant tree has fallen in Israel."

Old Czech Torah and Mantle—(*Center Torah in Ark*)

Presented to Central Synagogue by Congregation Habonim "in gratitude for Central Synagogue's hospitality". The recently restored mantle, made of embroidered velvet and silk damask is of West European origin; its technique and design suggest it was completed before 1700. The Torah is the oldest in the Synagogue collection.



Building the Jonah B. Wise Community House

FOLLOWING RABBI WISE'S DEATH, David Seligson became rabbi of the congregation. Under his leadership the congregation undertook the construction of a new Community House, as a memorial to Jonah B. Wise.

In 1968, the new Community House on the north side of 55th Street, across from the synagogue, was dedicated at a service of thanksgiving. In the same year the Jonah B. Wise Memorial Lectureship was instituted.

For the first time, Central Synagogue's magnificent Judaica collection—comprised of the gifts of many generous congregants

and the extensive collection of the late Ethel and Morris Troper—could be properly housed and displayed. It is now on permanent view in the Stern Lobby of the Community House on the lower level of Beir Chapel.

The religious school in its new home was able to continue its expansion. The new facility enabled Sisterhood to maintain a gift shop and sponsor a bridge group to support its increasing number of activities, such as Inter-faith Neighbors, a club for seniors, recording for the blind, typing books for the partially sighted (distributed by the Jewish Braille Institute), teaching English to foreigners.



Sisterhood Gift Shop



Bridge Club

In the new Community House, Sisterhood increased its projects and activities.



Seniors Club Seder



Recording for the Blind



Toy Project



Sisterhood Board Luncheon



English in Action



Sewing Project

This little red chair, standing at the far right of the pulpit, has a special story.

When Isaac Mayer Wise was rabbi of the Plum Street Temple in Cincinnati he became a good friend of the bishop of the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul across the street. Sharing many interests, they worked together for the good of the community. Rabbi Wise's Saturday morning sermon frequently was used by the bishop at his Sunday service.

One day the bishop, in great distress, came to Rabbi Wise. His Sunday collection had disappeared! He didn't want this to become public knowledge, but he was concerned about the loss. Rabbi Wise quietly raised the money from members of his congregation. In gratitude the bishop ordered two hand-carved chairs from a monastery in Canada, and presented them to Rabbi Wise.

Jean Wise May, his daughter and twin of Jonah, inherited them. Her daughter, in turn, presented one to Central Synagogue. It was restored and recovered by members of the Wise family and several members of Sisterhood.



SISTERHOOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN INVOLVED with synagogue events, the happy ones as well as the sad. Its members help celebrate the holidays, provide flowers for the pulpit and help with sabbath festivities.

In 1968 Central Synagogue formed its first nursery school, with seven children who occupied one room and used the well-equipped roof playground. The school, now in its twelfth year, boasts six classes of two-and-a-half year olds through five-year olds. Because of its fine reputation, it draws students from the teachers' colleges to observe and learn.

Many nursery school families have become congregation families. Former nursery school children have become Bar or Bat Mitzvahs, and their parents are actively involved in congregational life.

During his term as spiritual leader of Central Synagogue, Rabbi Seligson served as president of the New York Board of Rabbis and member of the Executive Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. He continues to work with the Counselling Center of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues.



Nursery School Roof Playground and Nursery School Class

IN 1970, the Congregation celebrated the 100th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the Synagogue building. The original ceremony was reenacted and the New York Historical Society joined with the congregation in mounting an exhibit of Jewish contributions to New York.

Rabbi Seligson retired in 1972 and became Rabbi Emeritus. He was succeeded by Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman who had served as his assistant.

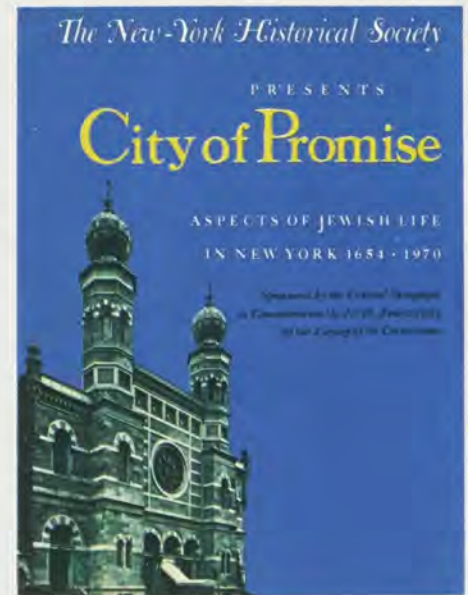
Rabbi Zimmerman epitomizes the variety of definitions of rabbi—teacher, scholar, counselor, community leader. Rabbi Zimmerman's first position of leadership in the Jewish community came at the age of 19, when he was elected president of the Aleph Zadek Aleph of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization. He takes an active role in New York City affairs, serving as a trustee of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and on the Board of the Louise Wise Adoption Agency, among many charities. In 1972, he was instrumental in Central Synagogue becoming the first synagogue to open its doors to Alcoholics Anonymous, recognizing the fact that alcoholism is a problem of national communal concern. Rabbi Zimmerman serves as a continuing consultant for this program.

Our Lexington Avenue neighbor, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, held Sunday services in our sanctuary during the construction of its new building. Rabbi Zimmerman and Pastor Ralph Peterson became not only good neighbors but also close friends and their feeling spread throughout their congregations. In 1973, a dialogue was begun between the two groups, leading to a study course taught by the minister and rabbi. True understanding has resulted in the two congregations working side by side for the good of the community.

As a Chautauqua professor, Rabbi Zimmerman has taught contemporary Jewish Thought and Rabbinic Judaism at Fordham University and now serves the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, teaching courses both in liturgy and in medieval Commentaries.

Recently, B'nai B'rith honored him with the prestigious "Sam Beber Distinguished Alumnus Award," presented each year to an outstanding person who has made significant contributions to the American community.

The cover of the album used for the exhibit at the New York Historical Society in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the synagogue building, 1970.



In 1973, after many years of dedicated service to the synagogue, Cantor Lechner retired and was succeeded a year later by Cantor Richard Botton, a singer, musician and educator, who now serves the dual roles of cantor and educational director.

In addition to his achievements as a singer, Cantor Botton has had many years of experience in general and Jewish education as a teacher and administrator. He received certification from the School of Education of the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion and has been a Ph.D. candidate in administration and supervision at New York University. As the educational director of the Central Synagogue Religious School, he brings his expertise as an educator and his devotion and commitment to Judaism. As cantor he has brought to the congregation a broad repertoire of traditional as well as modern liturgical music, encouraging the participation of the congregation at services.

Barry E. Kugel has been Executive Director of Central Synagogue since 1967. He had served as New Jersey area Director of the State of Israel Bond organization and as regional Director of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the same capacity. He was president of the Metropolitan Chapter of the National Association of Temple Administrators, a member of the executive board of the New York Federation of Reformed Synagogues and has written and lectured extensively on temple and cemetery administration.

With this background as administrator and with his professional experience in various areas of the Jewish community, he has expertly kept the wheels of this vast complex, many-



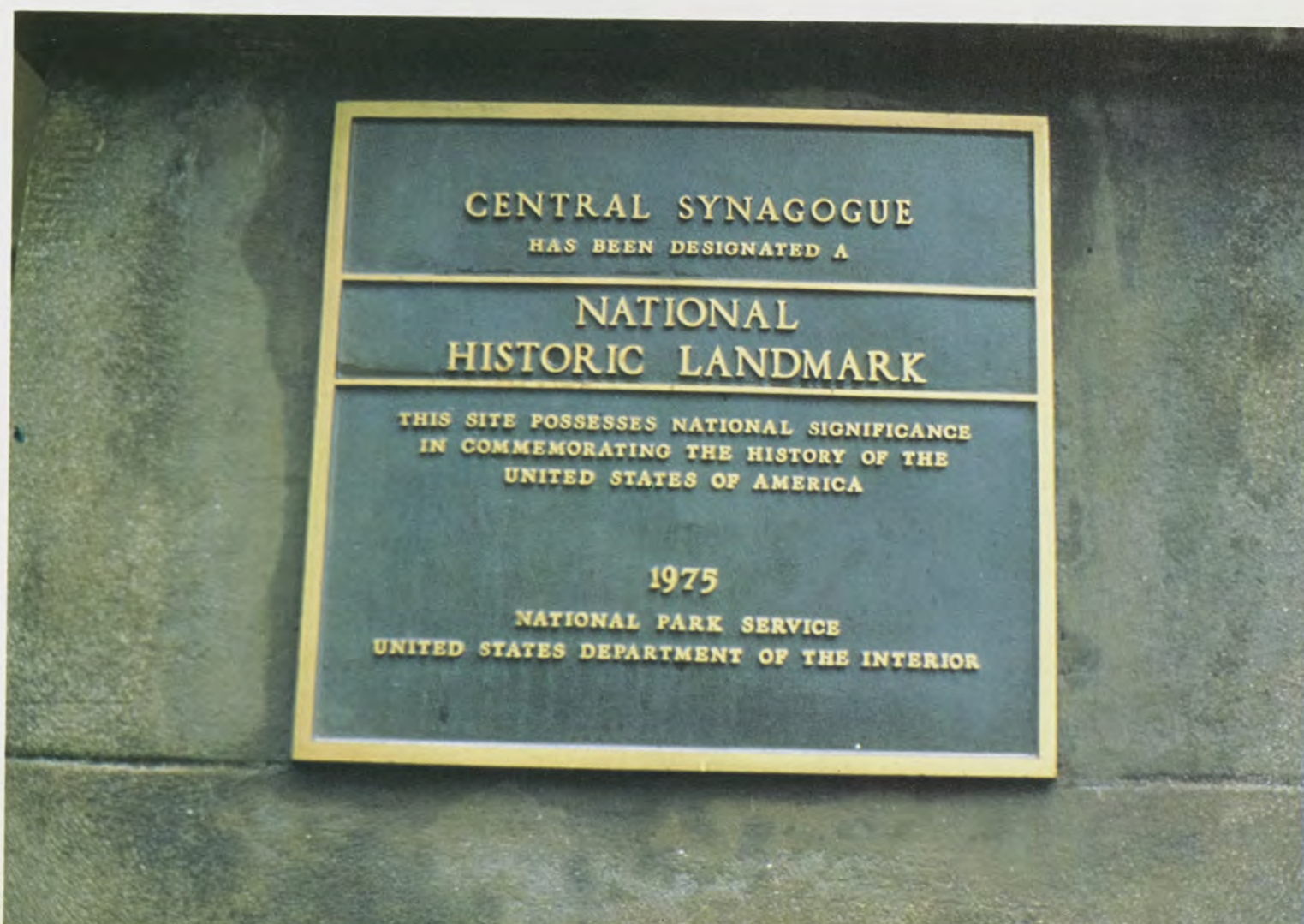
Rededication of Cornerstone Ceremony, 1970

faceted organization of Central Synagogue turning smoothly. One can always depend upon his knowledgeable and gracious attention, no matter how trivial the detail or how complicated the matter.

In 1978, Rabbi Deborah Prinz joined the rabbinical staff of the congregation, bringing to Central Synagogue not only her qualifications as spiritual leader and educator but also her special knowledge of Judaic art. While attending the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, she served as assistant curator at the Gallery of Jewish Art and Artifacts.

In this year of the 140th Anniversary of the Congregations Shaar Hashomayim and Ahawath Chesed, now known as Central Synagogue, our congregation of 1200 families continues to thrive. It is a place of study for young and old. The religious school has doubled in size during this past decade, and the Institute of Jewish Studies reaches hundreds of adults who come to increase their knowledge, and commitment to Judaism.

We are a congregation in constant transition as we move on from an illustrious past to face new challenges of the present and the future.





“REMINISCENCES”

CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE IS MOST FORTUNATE in having congregants today whose family history, spanning several generations over more than a hundred years, is deeply rooted in the synagogue's beginnings.

Today, in 1979, the descendants of these “first families” reminisce. Hilda Kantrowitz Gutman and Irma Kantrowitz Newmaier, granddaughters of Marcus Kohner, who served as President of Congregation Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim for 25 years, are devoted members of the congregation. They remember that their grandfather implored the young people to continue the good works of the older generation. In their own words:

“The Kohners, emigrants from Bohemia, lived on 60th Street at the time the present synagogue was being built. Grandpa was often late coming home and whenever that happened Grandma would send one of the children to find him. They knew where to look—at the construction site! They say he counted every brick and stone that went into that building.”

Clara Schwarzkopf Benjamin repeats the oft-told tale of how her grandfather Leopold Schwarzkopf, a handsome young man of 17,

fled Bohemia to avoid the army. It was he who, after becoming established in New York, invited a group of fellow Bohemians to his home on Lewis Street to talk about forming a synagogue. In 1846 Congregation Ahawath Chesed came into being.

Said Clara Benjamin, “My father, my brothers and I, my children and grandchildren, were all confirmed in Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim, later Central Synagogue. When I was confirmed in 1908, Dr. Moses was our rabbi. One week he preached his sermons in German and one week in English. Both he and Cantor Ginzberg were marvelous with children. It was customary for the Confirmation Class to present the cantor with a ‘purse’ filled with money.”

Edith Klauber Lissauer, a raconteur whose memories span several generations, has been a member of Central Synagogue for 73 years. Her father, Samuel Klauber, arrived from Bohemia when he was 17 to join an older brother and sister. After working first in Eastport, Maine, he and his brother formed Klauber Brothers and Company—a “beautiful and successful business” importing linen embroidery and lace.



Hildah and Samuel Klauber



Camilla and Morris Lissauer



From left to right: Dan Kops, Rose Goldsmith, Hildah and Samuel Klauber

Edith married Harry Lissauer in 1912. His family, after being the only Jews in Mt. Kisco for 25 years, moved to New York and joined Ahawath Chesed in 1897. As a young married woman, Edith was expected to join her mother in the sewing group of the Women's Organization, and so began a long and fruitful association with the synagogue. She still retains the Klauber family pew in the synagogue "next to the Dan Klops and the Max Klops" where she is joined today by her active and involved family.

Now in her 92nd year, Katherine Leffler tells about being in Dr. Moses' first Confirmation Class of 1901! Her father, Jacob Leffler, was born in New York; her mother, Wilhemina Hahn, in Bohemia. Her father ran a dry-goods store on the Upper East Side. Katherine still proudly uses her parents' handsome furniture and many personal mementos of her family. A graduate of Normal College—later to become Hunter—she recalled her long career as a "schoolmarm" in New York and her long affiliation with Central Synagogue.

Family and Central Synagogue are inter-

woven in the rich fabric of memory as Edna Weiss Goodman talks about her long, productive life. Her father, Morris Weiss, had left Bohemia at the age of eleven with his brother Henry. They were joined some time later by brother Albert. Morris's was the first Bar Mitzvah in the present Central Synagogue building in 1873. Edna was confirmed in the class of 1905. As a trustee for 37 years, Uncle Henry "watched every dollar that was spent."

After Edna Weiss's marriage to Seymour Goodman in 1914, she joined her mother, Lily Krauss Weiss, in the activities of the Women's Organization. In the early 1930's Edna became President of Sisterhood; later she was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Congregation.

There are so very many families closely tied to Central Synagogue, some for generations, some for decades. So many stories could be told—so many poignant happenings could be remembered. Our beloved synagogue, our rabbinate, our friends are all part of our lives. May we transmit to our children the spirit of faith and devotion with which we have been inspired!

INCORPORATION OF THE HEBREW CONGREGATION AHAWAD CHESED UNDER THE ACT TO INCORPORATE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES PASSED APRIL 5TH, 1813 AND THE ACTS AMENDING THE SAME.
DATE APRIL 11TH, 1849

Know all men by these presents that at a meeting on the eleventh day of April in the evening one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine of the male persons of full age belonging to the Hebrew Congregation Ahawad Chesed opened pursuant to due notice at their usual place of meeting of said congregation Number 69 - Ludlow Street in the city of New York for the purpose of electing a number of discreet persons as officers and Trustees to take charge of the estate and property belonging to said congregation and to transact all affairs relative to the temporalities thereof, Simon Hornstein and Albert Selegman Lederer members of said congregation were in the want of Elders or Deacons thereof nominated unanimously to preside at the election then to be had to receive the votes of the qualified electors and to judge of their qualifications and to return the names of the persons who should be elected as officers and Trustees as aforesaid.

We therefore the said Simon Hornstein and Albert Selegman Lederer do certify that the notice of the above named meeting was publicly given by one of the members of said congregation at least fifteen days before said election and on two successive Saturdays, (that being the stated days on which said congregation meet for public worship) preceeding the day of election above named and the time and place and object of the meeting at the same time was.

And we further certify that at the meeting aforesaid Charles Abeles was elected President, Ignatz Stein was elected Vice-President, Israel Bluch was elected Cashier, Morris Reichman was elected first Secretary, David Leo Furth was elected second Secretary, Isaac Levy was elected first Director and Israel Weisel was elected second Director. That the said persons were by a large plurality of votes elected officers and Trustees of the Congregation agreeable with the object of the meeting and further that the said officers and Trustees were elected under the name of The officers and Trustees of The Hebrew Congregation Ahavas Chesed by which name or title they should forever be known as a body corporate.

In witness whereof we do herewith set our hands and seals the eleventh day of April one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine.

Sealed and delivered
in presence of -

Geo. Carpenter

Albert Seligman Lederer

Simon Hornstein

Inspectors
of
Elections

City & County of New York p: On this First day of May one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine before me personally appeared Albert Seligman Lederer and in the Second day of May in the same year before me personally appeared Simon Hornstein to me severally known to be the same persons described in and who executed the within Instrument and they acknowledged before me that they executed the same.

Geo. Carpenter

Recorded in the Office of the Register of the City & County of New York in Lieber No. 2 of Religious Incorporations page 15 u. on the 5th of May 1849 at 40 mins. past 2 P. M.

Examined by Wm. B. Anderson
Register

Dear Friends:

I would like to share my personal hopes with you. I see a congregation deeply anchored in a tradition of service and faith reaching out a hand of friendship and warmth to the unaffiliated who are in our community.

I see a congregation almost 150 years old, young enough in spirit to capture the changing mood and needs of our people, both young and old, engaging in honest dialogues, changing where change is needed, preserving the traditions that still retain their meaning for us.

I see a congregation which continues to feel at home in its Jewishness, a Jewishness which is neither a burden nor a source of shame or contempt, a Jewishness which is as natural as breathing. I see a congregation bold enough to reach out its hands to the community, living our concern for all people, speaking out against the injustices of our society, preparing itself in heart and spirit to assist in rebuilding and recreating the urban environment in which we live.

I see a congregation which takes its place proudly in the midst of Jewish people, suffering their pains, and experiencing their exhilarations. A congregation committed to the common destiny of all our people wherever they may live.

I see a congregation which touches the lives of all its members, which reaches into their homes and daily lives, serving as a source of guidance, inspiration and of life itself.

I see a congregation continuing to contribute to the history of our people, ever keeping the faith, ever a repository of the best of what Judaism has to offer.

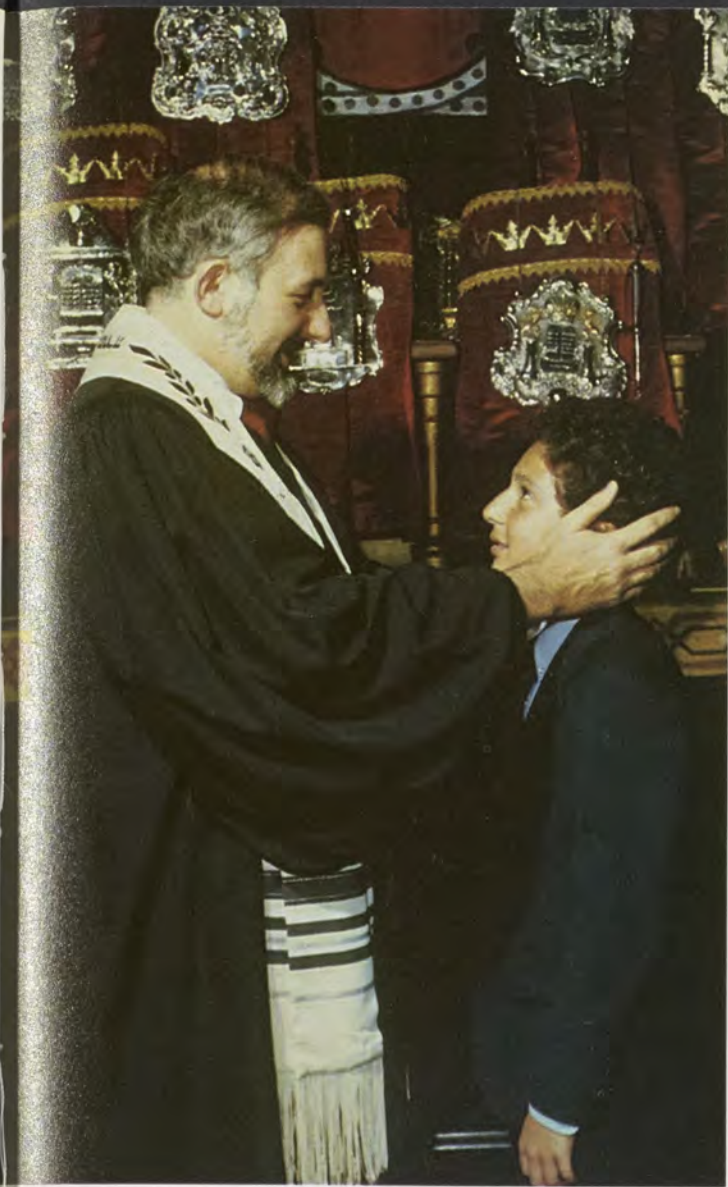
I share this with you in the hope that you will share it too, take it to your hearts. We are taught in the Ethics of the Fathers: "The task is great . . . the matter is urgent." Let us then get on with the task, ever assured of the hope and promise which is ours.

Sheldon Zimmerman

RABBI SHELDON ZIMMERMAN



Bat Mitzvah



Bar Mitzvah

Inside the Synagogue

*My steps echo around me
As I enter the silent hallway
I push the door open slowly*

*The lights are dim
The people are chanting softly
The words sing to you gently*

*You feel a presence
It fills you with warmth and love
for those around you*

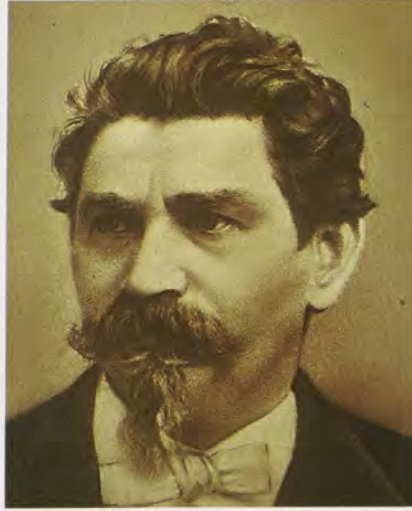
*You leave the outer world behind you
It seems meaningless
You find a world within yourself*

*The chanting stops
The light gets brighter
You leave the Synagogue with hope
and new understanding*

ROBIN WEISMAN
Class 6 October 2, 1979



Rabbi Max Lienthal 1845-1847
Rabbi of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim



Dr. Adolph Huebsch 1865-1885
Rabbi of Congregation Ahawath Chesed



Dr. Alexander Kohut 1885-1893
Rabbi of Congregation Ahawath Chesed



Dr. Isaac D. Moses 1901-1918
Rabbi of Congregation
Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim

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Dr. Sheldon Zimmerman 1972-
Rabbi of Central Synagogue

*Rabbi David Davidson 1893-1898
Rabbi of Congregation Ahawath Chesed
Photo unavailable



Dr. Nathan Krass 1918–1923
Rabbi of Congregation
Ahawath Chesed Shaar Hashomayim



Dr. Stephen S. Wise 1923–1925
Rabbi of Central Synagogue



Dr. Jonah Bondi Wise 1926–1959
Rabbi of Central Synagogue



Dr. David J. Seligson 1959–retired: 1972
Rabbi of Central Synagogue

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Rabbi Deborah Prinz
Dr. David J. Seligson, Rabbi Emeritus
Cantor Richard Botton
Cantor Frederick Lechner, Emeritus

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