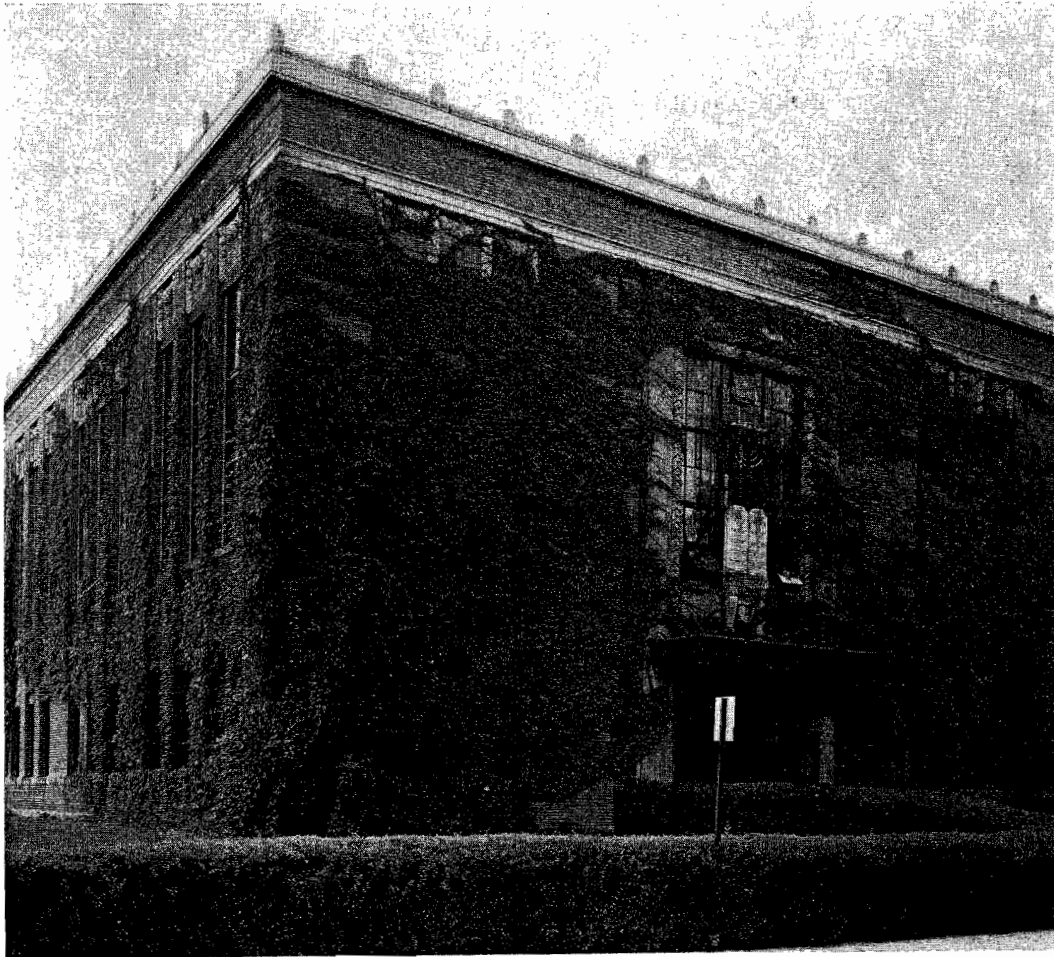


In Retrospect

A HISTORY OF BETH-EL ZEDECK

Our Former Temple



1925-1958

OUR HISTORY

World War I brought an end to the tremendous wave of immigration of European Jewry to America. For over 35 years, tens of thousands of Jews had poured into these shores. In the three and one-half decades, adjustments had been made socially and economically. Spiritual changes, likewise, were effected.

Communities large and small contained within them groups of men and women who were seeking to integrate their Jewish heritage — the past — with the way of life of a throbbing, pulsating democratic America.

They wanted a synagogue of which they could be proud, but would nonetheless contain the hallowed precepts of their forebears. They wanted a Temple of God in which they would feel at home and would equally satisfy the needs of their children.

In Indianapolis, such a group was formed. Because of changing social and economic conditions and residential relocation, the group felt the time was ripe to create a new synagogue. It did not perhaps sense precisely what it sought, but it did know that it wanted something to give meaning to its religion and its way of life.

The history of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck is really a 35-year development drama that falls into three fairly distinct periods.

The first, which took place from 1923 to 1933, may be called the formative period, when the congregation began its search for a synthesis of tradition and change.

The second, from 1933 to 1946, encompassed an era of maintaining a spark of hope despite the setbacks of the depression and World War II.

And the third, from 1946 to the present, is the realization of this development in the liberalization of the congregation's philosophy and orientation.

The First Period

The history of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck actually begins in the fall of 1915, when Alexander Cohen gathered together a small group living in the vicinity of 16th and Illinois Streets for the purpose of holding services on the High Holy Days.

In 1916, a location at 21st and Talbot Streets was rented. A Yiddish-speaking rabbi-cantor was engaged. In 1920, the group, with Joseph A. Borinstein as president, grew to such an extent it was forced to seek new quarters, and a hall at 30th and Illinois Streets was rented.

Rabbi Bienenfeld was elected the first rabbi of the congregation in 1922. During the same year, the Beth-El Sisterhood was organized under the guidance of Mrs. Louis Sagalowsky, who became its first president. Through her efforts and those of other sisterhood officers, the Beth-El Sunday School came into existence at this time. The sisterhood assumed the responsibility of providing books and materials and transporting and

instructing the children. Head of the Sunday School for many years was Mrs. Julius Witoff.

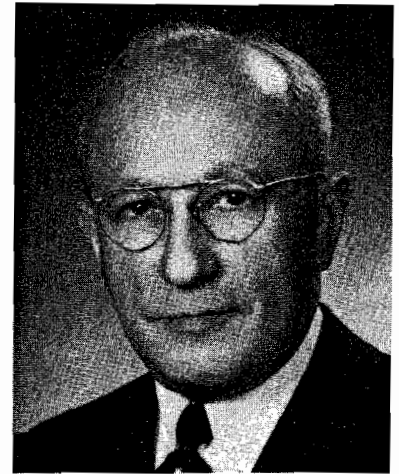
After four years of service, Mrs. Sagalowsky was succeeded in the presidency in 1926 by Mrs. Joseph Blieden, Mrs. Isaac Marks, and Mrs. Harry Cohen, each of whom served for but a short time.

Louis Sakowitz became the young congregation's first president, with Herman T. Cohen as vice-president.

The lot at 34th and Ruckle Streets was selected and purchased in the summer of 1923. Despite the objections of neighbors, the congregation's new building was opened for use in 1925.

Rabbi Isadore Goodman was named spiritual leader in the fall of 1925, with Jack A. Goodman as congregational president. During this entire formative period and throughout the many years that followed, Jack Goodman was a tower of strength to the congregation. For a decade he was its president and bore the burden of its many problems.

Rabbi Milton Steinberg was named to lead the congregation in November, 1927, while still a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. He assumed his full duties in the summer of 1928.



J. A. GOODMAN

Rabbi Steinberg brought with him Cantor Myro Glass, who served the congregation for 28 years. Cantor Glass, well-versed in the knowledge of Hebrew and Hebrew song, introduced joy and beauty into the congregation's services and into the lives of its members.

The memory of Milton Steinberg lives on with those who knew him. Long before he joined the ranks of the departed he was a living legend in our community. His charming personality, facile pen, magnificent sermons and, above all, the humble, saintly character that was his, remain enshrined in the hearts of the members of this congregation. In truth, with him began the history of Conservative Judaism in Indianapolis. His vision, his teachings, his dynamic personality made it inevitable that Congregation Beth-El Zedeck would have the full opportunity to live and grow.

Both Rabbi Steinberg and Cantor Glass left their mark on the congregation's development during those formative years. They introduced responsive readings and new melodies which added to the dignity and decorum of the High Holy Days.

Rabbi Steinberg completely revolutionized the curriculum of the Religious School, and a definite syllabus

bus was adopted. For the first time in the history of Beth-El, a confirmation class was established. Its first confirmation service was held on Shavuot, June 16, 1929. A children's service on Yom Kippur was arranged. This was held in the afternoon during the service recess. Late Friday evening services were initiated.

Cantor Glass organized a children's choir and trained young boys to serve as hazzanim. In cooperation with Meyer Gallin of the Jewish Educational Association, he arranged for the children to conduct their own services on the Sabbath and High Holy Days.

The cantor organized an all-male choir for the High Holy Days. A mixed choir of more than 30 voices participated in the Friday Evening Services.

Mrs. Jack A. Goodman accepted office of sisterhood president in 1928, which she held for nine years.

In the latter part of 1928, Ohev Zedeck joined forces with Beth-El, bringing added strength and membership to the Temple, which was renamed Congregation Beth-El Zedeck.

The 1929 depression created many difficulties for the young congregation. It managed nonetheless to continue to grow and develop.

A men's club was organized in 1933 under the leadership of Max Plesser, and Thanksgiving "Hard Times" dances became an annual Beth-El institution.

Period of Crystalization

The period of search for new religious pathways was, for the moment, over. A third movement in Jewish religious life, Conservative Judaism, had been created and given roots. It was necessary now for ideas to crystallize and for a growing congregation to find stability. The thirteen years between 1933 and 1946 were, by and large, such a period.

Changes were made, but well within the framework of established patterns. Rabbis and lay leaders sought a process of slow development to guard the strength of their Temple.

This was a period of physical growth, and by 1946 the Temple had achieved financial stability. It was prepared to continue its progress towards the creation of an American Judaism. The intervening years had brought into the Temple many of the third-generation, who began to assume the roles of leadership in the sisterhood, the men's club and the congregation.

Rabbi Milton Steinberg was succeeded by Rabbi Elias Charry in 1933.

Only those who lived through the depression can understand the problems with which Rabbi Charry had to cope. For nine long years he labored with love in the vineyard of his congregation so that the light kindled by Milton Steinberg would not be dimmed. He served his congregation with faithfulness and sincerity. Upon his departure, hundreds of souls, young and old, missed their friend and rabbi.

Under the leadership of Jack Goodman, president of the congregation; Mrs. Jack Goodman, Sisterhood president, and Max Plesser, Men's Club president, our Temple valiantly continued its progress. David Sablosky, Dr. Leon Berger and Max Farb followed Max Plesser successively as president of the Men's Club, carrying on the work that he had begun.

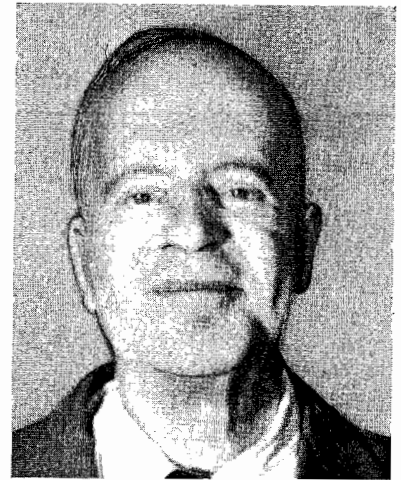
The congregation, despite the depression which was responsible for a sizeable deficit, grew in membership. A novel method was devised to assist in the liquidation of the Beth-El mortgage. Mortgage redemption fund boxes were placed in the homes of members. Cantor Glass was the first chairman of this project.

At this time, the wives of members in good standing were given the right to vote. Representatives of the Sisterhood were seated on the Temple board.

Jack Goodman was succeeded by Philip Greenwald. Mr. Goodman was elected honorary president. Mr. Greenwald served as president of the congregation for two years, and was succeeded by Louis Sakowitz.

Harry Freeman was elected Executive Secretary in 1936, a position which he faithfully filled for twenty years.

Mrs. J. A. Goodman, Sisterhood president, after years of devoted service, was succeeded by Mrs. Sara Rose Nides. Jerome Wachter was the Men's Club president from 1937 to



LOUIS SAKOWITZ

1939. The congregation's growth was evidenced by an increase in membership to over 300 and an enrollment in the Religious School to over 200. Pre-kindergarten and high school classes were added to our school during this year.

Expansion of the congregation's activities necessitated the purchase of the residence next door to the Temple, where additional classrooms and office space were located.

Mr. Sakowitz, who continued as Beth-El president until December, 1939, was succeeded by Abraham Goldberg, who was followed by Daniel Frisch. After serving Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Mr. Frisch moved to the National and International Zionist scenes. In 1949, he was honored by being elected National President of the Zionist Organization of America. Mr. Leo Selig became president of the Men's Club in 1939. At the same time he served as editor of the Men's Club publication, "The Clarion." He was followed by Mr. Hyman Grande. Mrs. Louis Rappaport became Sisterhood president.

Rabbi Israel Chodos became the spiritual leader of the congregation in 1942. He brought to Indianapolis the spirit of the hassid.

With music, both serious and light, he stirred the hearts of those who met him to a greater love of their Jewish heritage. A magnificent orator, with a sparkling personality, he evoked admiration as a speaker and administrator.

During the war years and immediately thereafter the Men's Club was served by Lester Engel, Julian Freeman, and Nathan Regenstreif. The sisterhood was headed by Mrs. Jacob Weiss, Mrs. I. Chodos, Mrs. Hyman Grande, and Mrs. David Granowsky. These men and women continued to give life and direction to the congregation's activities.

Mr. Robert Stolk became president of the Congregation in 1943. He directed his efforts towards setting the Congregation on a sound financial basis. The group of men that he brought into office with him became the future leaders of the Congregation.

Our music department was enhanced by the engagement of Mr. and Mrs. Janot Roskin as the first director of music and organist, respectively.

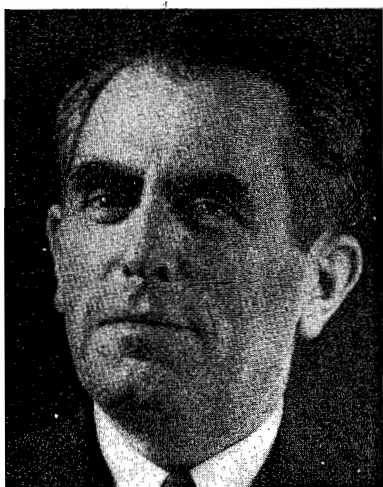
William B. Lakritz came to the Congregation as its first education director. He instituted many of the progressive practices and laid the foundation for our modern educational system. Under his aegis a confirmation department was begun with a minimum requirement of three years' work for a certificate of confirmation. Our Institute for Adult Studies was initiated in 1944.



ABRAHAM GOLDBERG



ROBERT B. STOLK



DANIEL FRISCH

It was during the term of office of Julian Freeman as president, that our present system of financing for the Temple was instituted. All fund raising from the pulpit on Holy Days was eliminated. The Kol Nidre appeal was terminated. All financing was limited to dues and sale of seats. It was during Mr. Freeman's tenure that the trend towards Reconstructionism became quite evident.

Mr. Freeman continued to play an active role in all Beth-El affairs even during those years when he was called to the presidency of the National Council of Federations and Welfare Funds.

William P. Greenfeld was elected rabbi in June of 1946.



JULIAN FREEMAN

The Third Period

The period from 1946 to the present represents the congregation's most rapid growth both physically and spiritually.

This development coincides with Rabbi William P. Greenfeld's tenure. Rabbi Greenfeld has been forceful in bringing a definitive philosophy to the congregation and in liberalizing its outlook.

The congregation's services have become more meaningful and beautiful. Women have been granted equal status in the congregation through the inauguration of the Bat Mitzvah ceremony, and the calling of women to the Torah.

There are many rabbis who are scholarly and yet for some reason seem to be somewhat aloof from their congregation. There are other rabbis who have a knack of liking people and getting along with them, yet whose knowledge of Jewish matters is only surface deep. And there are some rabbis who combine the two faculties. These are balanced spiritual leaders, faithful to the highest ideals of Judaism, yet easy enough to approach so that every family in the congregation addresses them as a friend.



EDWARD DAYAN

Such are the rare successful men in the pulpit, who are endeared to their congregation with the years. They are the men about whom you hear that their congregations love them.

Rabbi William P. Greenfeld has brought both courage and strength to Beth-El Zedeck Congregation. In fact, if any one characteristic, other than his scholarship, could be most clearly reflected, it is this courage. And the courage not only shows itself on questions which disturb the Jewish community, but also on questions related to the conduct of affairs in the general community.



JACOB SOLOTKEN

Every congregation is to some degree a reflection of the man who occupies its pulpit. That Beth-El Zedeck today shows the influence and the strength of its rabbi is beyond question.

In almost every facet of its operation, whether as a smooth-running organization — and have no doubt about it, Beth-El Zedeck is a large and complex network of workers, paid and voluntary—or as a spiritual center, with its myriad of successful groups, from the Sisterhood to the Men's Club, from the Religious School to the choir, the Beth-El family is a most active one which portrays the leadership and guiding hand of a mind and heart that is dedicated, yea consecrated.

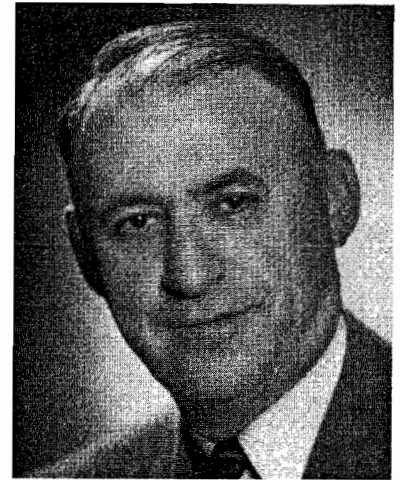
One of the first steps Rabbi Greenfeld took was to organize a ritual committee representing a cross-section of the congregation's membership under the chairmanship of Dr. Leon Berger. As a result, several changes were made in the services.

The late Friday Oneg Shabbat became a true Maariv service. In accordance with a poll of members, the organ accompaniment of cantor and choir was instituted in 1948. In January, 1948, the junior Sabbath morning service was incorporated into a family congregational service. In 1951, members of the confirmation class began giving a sidra review before the Torah reading. The Sabbath family service has drawn favorable comment from many visitors for its beauty, dignity and meaningfulness both for children and adults.

The integration of youth into the congregation's services is epitomized particularly by the confirmation service which from 1946 on was again incorporated into the first day of Shavuot service. The consecration of our children entering the first grade of our Religious School on Simhat Torah is another annual event of beauty and meaning for children and parents.

Membership of the congregation has doubled dur-

ing this period under the leadership of such congregational presidents as Julian Freeman, Jacob Solotken, Bert Sicanoff, Leo Selig, Manuel I. Leve, Nathan Regenstreif, and Sam Weinberger. Our Religious School, crowded in 1946, with over 300 children, reached approximately 550 students this past year, necessitating the use of classrooms at the Jewish Educational Building. There were increasing demands for larger and better school facilities.



BERT SICANOFF

The congregation has also succeeded in retaining its high school group through the formation of the Young Peoples League under the leadership of their presidents, Herbert Kulwin, Shirley Entin, and Jerry Newbauer. This group was succeeded by the Teen-Age League, which in 1953 became affiliated with United Synagogue Youth of the Conservative movement.

Ralph Levitt and Bob Koor led the group through the difficult formative years under the guidance of Mrs. Abraham Max, who served as advisor for a period of five years and was responsible for the reorganization of the youth group. The leaders were succeeded by Sandra Frazier, Howard Zukerman, Norman Goldman, Elaine Reuben, and Maury Zaft. Mmes. Joseph Albert, David Klain, Abe Goldstein, and Robert Trattner all served well as advisors to the group.

The Men's Club forum lecture series, which presented some of American Jewry's finest thinkers, was incorporated during this period into the Adult Institute.

Under the continued leadership of Emanuel Deitz, the lecture series has combined these addresses with classes in Hebrew, Jewish History, customs and ceremonies, concepts and philosophy.

Meanwhile, the Men's Club and Sisterhood paralleled the progress of the congregation. Leaders of the Men's Club



LEO SELIG

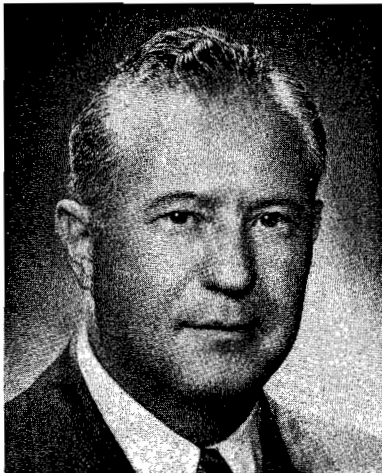
during this time have been Manuel I. Leve, Percy Simmons, Joseph Celender, Samuel Weinberger, Abe Borin, Harry Schuchman, and Philbern Levan, with Mrs. Ben Paris, Dr. Evelyn Kroot Berger, Mrs. Stanley Lev-

inson, Mrs. A. Arthur Schwartz, Mrs. Robert Congress, Mrs. Albert G. Reuben, and Mrs. David B. Klain holding the office of presidency of the Sisterhood.

Our newest arm, which started as the Young Married Group in the spring of 1956, recently became the Mr. and Mrs. Group, and is headed by its president, Gerald Kraft.

The guiding spirits behind all these activities of congregation and school have been our education directors. William Lakritz, Max German, Rabbi Max Wasser and Fred Weiser served successively until June, 1951, when Samuel Deutsch was elected educational director. Mr. Deutsch served until June, 1956.

In July, 1954, Beth-El welcomed Ephraim Bennett as associate rabbi, who remained with the congregation for but a few months and resigned to accept the pulpit in Reading, Pa. In January, 1956, Morris Feldman became the congregation's associate rabbi. During the past 2½ years, Rabbi Feldman has served the congregation well, and has won the respect and affection of the members of Beth-El Zedeck. He played a leading role in creating the Mr. and Mrs. Group and has been its guide and advisor during the entire period of its existence.



MANUEL I. LEVE

Music, too, has played a role in the congregation's development. With the sudden death of Janot Roskin in 1946, the choir was held together by the leadership first of Mrs. Roskin and then of Esther Levinson, for the High Holy Days. Walter Goldman came to Beth-El in 1948 and served as Music Director for eight years.

In 1956, Cantor Glass, who had previously been given a life contract, was elected cantor emeritus. At this time, Cantor and Mrs. Judah Goldring joined the congregation's staff. Both soon won a place for themselves in our congregation with their charm and musical abilities.

Particularly noteworthy is the growth of the children's choir to more than 25 voices and its contribution to the beauty of the Sabbath morning services.

The Music Festivals held early in 1957 and 1958 were events of importance to the culture of the community. A varied program featured a guest cantor as well as our own cantor, with selections by our choirs and Glee Club.

Finally, as we dedicate this new building, let us look into the past and see how the building came about.

The need for more space was particularly evident in the school. On January 10, 1949, Jacob Solotken, president, appointed Julian Freeman as chairman of a building committee. The committee first met on

January 23, 1949. The board authorized the purchase of lots on North Meridian Street on February 4, but it was decided later that the lots were too small for our purpose and they were resold to the original owners.

The beginning of the building fund was three \$1,000 gifts by Mrs. S. J. Glyck in memory of her beloved husband, Samuel J. Glyck, in May, 1951.

After authorization by the board at the previous meeting, Leo Selig, president, presiding, the purchase of 13¾ acres of land in the Spring Mill Estates for \$27,500.00 was reported at the March 4, 1953, meeting. In the fall of 1953, arrangements were made with McGuire and Shook for drawing plans for the new building. On June 19, 1955, the ground was dedicated at a service held at the new site. On March 24, 1957, the board authorized the building committee to let contracts for the construction of the building at a cost of more than \$750,000.



NATHAN REGENSTREIF

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on June 7, 1957, with Julian Freeman, E. M. Dayan, Jacob Solotken, R. B. Stolkin, Manuel I. Leve, Nathan Regenstein, Leo Selig, Bert Sicanoff, and Rabbi Greenfeld participating. An impressive connerstone laying service was held on October 27th. Since then we have watched this dream taking shape.

The history of Beth-El would not be complete without indicating that a mere perusal of the minutes of the congregation or the most casual reading of Beth-El Speaks, or The Clarion, would find the repetition of many names. Some for one period, some for others, and some throughout the three periods. The names of Goodman and Freeman, Solotken and Stolkin, Hollander and Glick, Barnett and Ziffrin, Leve and Regenstein, Selig and Weinberger, Sicanoff and Freedman, Blatt and Rose, run through the various periods intertwined with practically all the activities of a congregation. These and countless others have made the history of Beth-El.

Many are those who have participated in the planning and in the actual building. To Julian Freeman goes the credit for chairing this herculean task. Manuel Leve, Leo Selig, and Benjamin Paller have been at his right hand. Samuel Weinberger has spent more hours on building and congregational activities than most men do in a lifetime. Milton J. Feinberg, Leo Lippman, Mrs. Aaron Glick, Jacob Solotken, Nathan Regenstein, Robert Stolkin, Saul and Harry Hochmann, William Weinstein, Louis Barnett, have all played their part in the building of our Temple. To them, as to

all our membership, goes the heartfelt thanks of our congregation.

The congregation's profoundest gratitude is owed to Rabbi William P. Greenfeld, who during these years indefatigably took a large measure of the respon-

sibility of raising the funds for the new building.

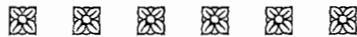
But the responsibility for the growth, development and progress of Beth-El Zedeck, in the final analysis, rests on you, the members of Indiana's most outstanding and forward-looking congregation.



May I, through this journal, express my sincere gratitude to all those who have labored so long and so arduously on the building of our new Temple. To all the chairmen of committees, to the members of those committees, to all the members of the Beth-El staff, we shall be forever grateful. It is they who have made these hectic months bearable; it is they who inspired their president to devote more time than he imagined possible to the greatest venture of our congregation.

It is good to know that working side by side has brought us all closer together and that in our joint efforts we have come to understand each other. May we all, through our service to our people and our God, be united in the bonds of brotherhood.

Samuel Weinberger
President



My thanks to all who helped in the compilation of this journal. Especially to Joseph Sofnas and Oscar Zaft, co-chairmen of the Printing and Layout Committee; Harry Schuchman, chairman of the Photo Committee, and all their committee members.

This brief history is a composite of the work of three people: Mrs. Manuel Segal wrote Part 1, Mrs. Emanuel Dietz, Part 2, and Dr. Abe Max, Part 3. The history was revised and edited by a committee consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel Cohen, Mr. Arnold Rosenzweig, Mrs. Abe Max, and Mrs. Robert Schwab.

Leo Selig Chairman
Dedication Book Committee