

Marion County History

Indianapolis, the county seat for Marion County, also serves as the State Capitol. The city has been a transportation hub since the 1850s.¹ While not the earliest settlement of Jews in Indiana, Indianapolis would become the center of the Jewish population in the state. The first Jews to the city came in 1849. The evolution of the Jewish community in Indianapolis was typical of the happenings statewide, with the first wave of immigrants being German Jews. Many of these Jews were peddlers, who took advantage of the blossoming city. From peddler, they were able to purchase small stores, growing eventually to some of the largest retailers in the state. Like the rest of the state, the Jews dominated the clothing and tailoring businesses. In 1860, 56% of the clothing businesses were owned by Jews.

By the late 1860s, Eastern Europeans began moving into the city. What made Indianapolis unique was the ethnic diversity that allowed for many of the ethnic communities to found their own synagogues. In 1870, the Polish immigrants formed a prayer group that became Sharah Tefella. In 1884, the Hungarians organized Congregation Ohev Zedeck, and by 1889 the Russian community founded Knesses Israel. In 1906, a small group of Sephardic Jews settled in the city. Originally from Turkish Macedonia, they spoke Ladino, not Yiddish. These newest immigrants founded Congregation Sephard of Monastir in 1913.

The Jews moving here prospered, although the German Jews with a greater willingness to assimilate, succeeded at a faster rate than their peers. Like the rest of the state, most of the Jews business owners fell into very distinct categories: peddlers (which led to dry good stores), tailors (which led to department stores and clothing stores), grocers, and scrap dealers.

In the early days of settlement, most moved into the area just south of downtown Indianapolis. This south side neighborhood prospered and developed into a community. The city directories for Indianapolis show that the near south side contained most of the Jewish residents, the institutions, and organizations related to Jewish life. Those community resources found in this area on the south side included the National Jewish Post (newspaper), Abraham Lodge, I.O.O.B. No.58, Esther Lodge, I.O.O.B. No.323, and the Tree of Life Mutual Benefit Society. The Communal Building, built in 1914, later became the Jewish Community Center.

The community held adult classes (citizenship), kindergarten, and some social activities (these activities/programs headed up by the National Council of Jewish Women). The South Side Hebrew Ladies Charity Organization established a shelter house at 907 Maple Street; in 1906 they moved to a larger place at 808 South Illinois and in 1920 moved to 835 Union Street and also started taking care of the elderly. In 1908 the Jewish Federation sent transients to the “Friendly Inn” or “Wood Yard,” shelters established by the Indianapolis Benevolent Society in 1880. Later the Morris house became a part of the Jewish Federation with programs for immigrants and serving as a center for social and educational facilities (library of Yiddish books, meeting rooms, kindergarten).

In 1918 land and buildings near the White River in Broad Ripple (a neighborhood in Marion County) were used as a summer camp (Camp Ida Wineman), but was eventually abandoned when they moved to Laurel Halls Stock Farm Company in Zionsville (Boone County); Big Eagle Camp, as it became known, was sold to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Education was very important to the immigrants and by 1863 the German Jews established the first school. Over the next several decades a variety of schools were organized on the south side. Some of the schools

were associated with an ethnic group, while others were affiliated with synagogues. In 1896 Chevrah Tamud Torah (school) was organized and in 1907 Congregation Sharah Tefilla had a school. But, a lack of support for each individual school led to the establishment of the United Hebrew Schools, which opened Hebrew Academy in 1971. For a more detailed look at Jewish education in Indianapolis, look at the Masters in Public History thesis *Jewish Education in Indianapolis through 1985* by Lindsey Barton Mintz.

The Indianapolis Jewish Federation was established in 1905 as a way to centralize fundraising of Jewish organizations. In Indianapolis, “as in other cities, Jews of German heritage controlled the Federation, although Eastern European immigrants were the main recipients of services.”² In 1939, the Indianapolis Jewish Federation organized a series of lectures to inform the public about the problems in Nazi Germany. By 1947, this committee became the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), with the goal of promoting interfaith activities. The JCRC still exists today as a voice of the Jewish community in Indiana.

The Spokesman Company was founded by Gabriel Cohen in 1932; currently it publishes three newspapers, including the *Jewish Post and Opinion*.

Changes in religious attitudes allowed for shifts in the structure and make-up of the Jewish community. In the Orthodox community, one lived near the temple so that the family could walk to services. With the rise of the Reform movement, which lifted this rule, individuals could move into more prosperous neighborhoods. In these instances their neighbors would have economic commonality, if not religious affiliation. In Indianapolis, this meant moving north of the center of the city (known as the Circle).



The near southside of Indianapolis became the neighborhood for the Jewish community from the 1850s until the 1960s. Homes, businesses, synagogues, and social service agencies were located in this area. Today, because of urban sprawl, the construction of I-70, and other factors, very little is left of the built environment. Most streets look like South Meridian (above), with vacant lots and a small spattering of historic structures. Or, all structures are gone because of the interstate development like South Capitol Avenue (below).



As the community moved north, so did their institutions. The Indianapolis Club building (23rd and Meridian) was purchased in 1925 for the Kirshbaum Community Center; the noted Indianapolis architecture firm Vonnegut, Bohn and Mueller remodeled it. The building was razed in 1950. The home for the elderly, in 1938, moved to 356 North Central; in 1964, this institution moved to the far north side to the “Hoover Road” area and opened as Hooverwood. Also in the “Hoover Road” area is the Bureau of Jewish Education, all the synagogues, and the Jewish Community Center. With the move north, there is some residential concentration around the synagogues, but is by “no means comparable to the earlier situation.”⁵

The Congregations and Businesses of Indianapolis

Indianapolis had at least four congregations in the late 1800s and early 1900s. By the 1940s, this number had increased to over eight. By 1856, there were enough families living in the city that fourteen men approved the constitution and by-laws of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (IHC). The IHC would become the Reform synagogue for the city. The congregation met in temporary quarters for at least two years, until they could acquire a room in the Judah Block, where they remained for ten years. In 1868, they moved to the Market Street site, where they worshiped until 1899; at that time, they sold the Market Street temple to Ohev Zedeck, the Hungarian shul (a small congregation).



A postcard rendition of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation at 10th and Delaware. The building no longer stands.

Ohev Zedeck was formed in 1884 by Hungarian immigrants, renting storefronts for worship. In 1899, they were able to purchase the Market Street temple from the IHC. Ohev Zedeck occupied this building until 1927, when the congregation merged with Congregation Beth El (formed in 1915). The vacant Market Street Temple was demolished in 1933 for a parking lot. The Hungarian Jews also established a Hungarian Jewish School, a benevolent society, and the First Hungarian Society.



Location of the first synagogue for the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation in downtown Indianapolis (Marion County) Later the temple was used by Ohev Zedeck Congregation. The building was demolished in 1933. This Indiana Historical Bureau marker commemorates the location.

Sharah Tefilla was founded by Polish immigrants in 1870. Originally called the polische shul, this was the first of the southside shuls (small synagogue). The group met in rented rooms. Around 1877, they changed their name to Chevro Bene Jacob; in 1882, the name was changed to Sharah Tefilla. At this time, they also purchased a permanent building on South Meridian Street. In 1910, they moved into a new building designed by George Bedell, a well-known Indianapolis architect.

Knesses Israel was founded in 1889 by a group of Russian immigrants. This Orthodox synagogue was also known as the russische shul. By 1893, they built a new temple; in 1923, they moved out of this facility and built another structure. For many years, Sharah Tefilla and Knesses Israel shared rabbis.

While there were three Orthodox congregations, they remained small. Ethnic differences prevented any organizations which benefited the entire Jewish community (schools, burial societies, etc) from prospering. In 1903 the United Hebrew Congregation was formed with the hopes of overcoming the ethnic differences that divided the Orthodox community. Also known as the Union shul, they dedicated their building in 1904. It became the largest and most influential of the many Orthodox synagogues on the south side of Indianapolis. It boasted the city's first Talmud Torah (school), as well as the city's first Jewish Women's group. The Central Hebrew Congregation was founded in 1923 by a group of Orthodox Jews who had moved north of the Circle. Its first location was on Central Avenue, at 21st Street. By 1957, Central Hebrew merged with United Hebrew; during the merger, the congregation was known briefly as the United Central Hebrew Congregation. They moved into buildings at 34th and Ruckle Streets and changed the name to B'nai Torah. In 1965, they acquired land on the far north side of Indianapolis and moved in 1967. It is the largest Orthodox Congregation in the state. In 1969, a new mikveh adjoined the B'nai Torah. Today it is the largest Orthodox Congregation in the state.⁴



B'nai Torah temple in Indianapolis (Marion County) from 1957 - 1967.

In 1910, Ezras Achim served some of the poorest Jews in the city. Also known as the peddler's shul, because of the occupation of most of the congregants, the congregation was the last congregation formed by Eastern Europeans.

In 1915, former leaders of Sharah Tefilla established a new congregation, Congregation Beth El. In 1928, Congregation Beth El merged with Ohev Zedeck to become Congregation Beth-El Zedeck. The two groups joined and built a building on the near north side of Indianapolis. The Conservative synagogue moved to north side in 1958. In this building, the largest congregation in the state maintains a kosher kitchen, a library, school, and offices.



Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis (Marion County). This building was constructed in 1958, with a remodel in 2002.

The first Sephardic settlers to arrive in Indianapolis were Jacob and Rachel Sarfati Toledano, from Monastir, Yugoslavia, in 1906. They opened a small men's tailoring shop on West Washington Street. Almost all of the early settlers came to them to find employment.

David A. Nahmias owned a small shoemaker's shop close to Union Station train station. His shop became the first stop for all the newly arriving Sephardim. Here, "the new arrivals were introduced to other members of the community and given helpful information pertaining to employment, living quarters, etc."⁸ Not all the Sephardic came from Yugoslavia. Regina and Louis Behar arrived from Palestine; David Eskenazi was from Salonika, Greece; Mallah Mordoh came from Salonika; and Morris and Gracia Abravaya were from Turkey.

Many Sephardic spoke Ladino instead of Yiddish. For this, and other reasons, for many years the Sephardim were not recognized as Jews by Ashkenazim Jews. The Sephardim were proud of their heritage and for many years a social rift prevailed in the Indianapolis Jewish community between the two groups. There was no intermarriage of the Sephardim and Ashkenazim Jews until 1932.

Before they had a synagogue, the Sephardic Jews used the Communal Building for religious services. They purchased a cemetery on Kelly Street in 1916. Bohor Samuel Calderon and Isaac (Avisai) Levy formed the men's burial society (Havrim) in 1921.

A social men's club was formed in 1920 under the leadership of Naphtali Eskenazi. They met first at the Communal Building, then moved to a rented room in the 800 block of South Meridian Street. Two more moves were made until they were able to purchase a two-story building at 1002 South Capital Avenue in 1930. By 1933,



In 1919, the Sephardic congregation purchased this former Lutheran church for services. This building was used until 1963.

the Sephardic community consisted of about 75 families, totaling about 350 individuals. At that time, there were 2 market stand owners, 7 wholesale fruit peddlers, 4 retail fruit peddlers, 2 secondhand dry goods dealers, 3 privately owned tailoring shops, 3 shoemakers, 2 men's furnishing shops, 1 baker, 1 grocer, 1 confectionery, and 1 dry goods store.



This building was used as the Sephardic synagogue from 1963 until 2006.

Almost 50% of the Sephardic community worked for the Kahn Tailoring Company, including some women who worked before they were married. A few others worked at the August Julian Tailoring Company on South Street. Since most of the members moved to the north side of Indianapolis by 1960, it

became necessary to find another location for their synagogue, which was closer to the majority of its members. In 1963, a committee purchased the Pleasant View Lutheran Church at the corner of 64th and Hoover Rd. The steeple was removed and extensive remodeling and additions were made to convert it to a proper place of worship for the congregation. They remained in this building until 2006, when they built a new synagogue.

Of equal importance to the Jews of Indianapolis were the burial of their dead. While each congregation owned their own cemetery, the cemeteries for all the synagogues were established side by side, just south of the neighborhood. Since many of the synagogues were too small to support a burial society, a group of Jews created a community burial society, Linat ha'zedek, in 1910. Not all groups supported this society; the Hungarian synaue never joined, but rather created their own burial society; congregants from Sharah Tefilla did not approve of the running of the organization so created their own burial society. The Separdim also created a men's and women's burial society, The Rochessim and The Rochessot in 1921.

The list of Jewish owned businesses in Indianapolis is extensive. These are just some of the Jewish owned businesses located on the south side or in the downtown area of Indianapolis. Most of the buildings no longer exist today.

Meat/Deli/Grocery:

- Leuchner Meat
- Shapiro's Deli (still in existence, but not in the original building)
- Solomon's Kosher Deli
- Vogel Market
- Whitlock's Grocery
- Goldstein Meat Market
- Abraham's Market
- Campbell's Grocery
- Alinkoff's Kosher Meat Market
- Henry Dobrowitz's Butcher Shop
- Louis Golas' Butcher Shop

Moses Klein's Butcher Shop
Sarah Hantma's Fish Market
Morris Greenwald's Bakery
Isaac Regenstreit and Sig Mahler Bakery
Joseph Bledstein Grocery
Louis Bryan Grocery
Samuel Bunes Grocery
Alex Dorman Grocery
Morris Glick Grocery
Louis Golas Grocery and butcher shop
Benjamin Goldstein Grocery
Fannie Goldstein Grocery
Peter Hirsch Grocery
Peretz Hirshowitz Grocery
Wolfe Hirshowitz Grocery
Aaron Iszak Grocery
Hyman Kaminsky Grocery
Abraham Kollinger Grocery
Mallah and Abrovaya Grocery
Henry F. Meyer Grocery
Herman Rabinowitz Grocery
Abraham Rothstein Grocery
Reuben Rogin Grocery
Louis Sapirie Grocery
Louis Shapiro Grocery
Meyer Silverstein Grocery
Isaac Levy Grocery (produce only)

Stores:

Efroymsen's Department Store
Block's Department Store
L. Strauss
H.P. Wasson's
Glaser Mitchel and Company
H. Rosenthal and Company
Joseph Kohn
Katzenstein and Wachtel
Start Store

The sheer number of Jews living in the city makes it virtually impossible to follow the business and housing patterns of all Jews. For this survey, we focused on the area just south of Indianapolis where the early immigration occurred, trying to locate businesses, institutions, and residences. As individuals moved out of the

“neighborhood” we focused more on the businesses and institutions. This was done to limit the scope of Marion County and to complete the survey in the time allotted possible. Additional work will be completed in future years to give a more thorough look at Marion County.

Herman Bamberger was born in Germany in 1837. He immigrated to America at the age of eighteen. Soon after he arrived, a minyan (a group of 10 men needed for communal prayer) began meeting in a small office. Bamberger was one of the founders of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation in 1856. He was president of the congregation when it moved into its building on Market Street.

Ralph Bamberger was involved in Indiana politics. Born in Indianapolis in 1872 and the son of Herman Bamberger, he attended Indiana University. After graduation, he moved to Utah, but by 1898 had returned to Indianapolis and entered into a law practice with Isadore Feibleman. Bamberger was active in B’nai B’rith (the oldest and largest Jewish service organization, founded in 1843 in New York City), being elected as the first president of the Indianapolis chapter, then was head of District Lodge Two, which encompassed eight midwestern states. He was president of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation between 1909 and 1911, and served on the board of the Jewish Welfare Fund campaign. Politically, he served a term in the Indiana Legislature.

Isidore Feibleman was a law partner at *Bamberger and Feibleman*. Established in 1898, it is the longest lasting law partnership in the state that has always retained the same name. Feibleman attended Indiana University. After graduating, he served as president of the Esther Lodge of B’nai B’rith and later served a term as president of that organization’s District Lodge, serving eight midwestern states. He was a president of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, and was active in the Jewish Welfare Federation and in the Community Fund.

Louis Borinstein was active in business, civics, Jewish organizations, his temple, and government work. Upon graduation from high school, he went to work at *A. Borinstein & Company*, a scrap iron firm started by his father. He was president of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation from 1925 – 1940, served as president of the Broadmoor Country Club, was active in B'nai B'rith, and served as president of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce.

Isaac Cohen, one of the first Sephardim to arrive in Indianapolis, served his community by allowing immigrant families to stay in his house and collected for charities. He was born in 1883 in Monastir, coming to the United States to work in the West Virginia coal mines. Eventually he arrived in Indianapolis, where he went to work for Kahn Tailoring. He eventually opened a clothing and dry goods store on West Washington Street. Cohen was one of the founders of the Etz Chaim Sephardic Congregation. Until a rabbi arrived, he served as acting rabbi.

Gustave Efrogmson started working in a dry goods store at the age of fourteen. At eighteen, he co-founded the *Star Store* with his brother-in-law, Louis P. Wolf. From 1912 to 1930, he was the president of *H. P. Wasson & Company*, the city's largest specialty shop. In 1932, he was elected president and general manager of *Real Silk Hosiery Mills*, a manufacturing firm of hosiery, lingerie, and undergarments. During World War II, the company made parachutes for the United States government .⁶ The company was founded by Jacob Goodman, who served as president of Beth-El Zedeck and the Jewish Welfare Federation.



The H.P. Wasson & Company was housed in this art deco building in downtown Indianapolis (Marion County). The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Efroymson served as president of the Jewish Federation of Indianapolis, president of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, and was a director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. He also served as a director of the *Indiana National Bank* and the *Union Trust Company*, and organized the Indianapolis Public Welfare Association. When Efroymson died in 1946, control of the *Real Silk Hosiery Mills* passed to his



Photo of the Real Silk Hosiery Mill taken in 1930 by the Bass Photo Company. Photo: Indiana Historical Society, William Smith Library.

son, Robert. Under Robert Efroymsen's control, the company first closed its manufacturing operations in Indianapolis and Dalton, Georgia, and a short time later closed all other manufacturing operations. All the machinery was sold except that which was related to direct-to-consumer selling, and the plant, which was located at 611 N. Park was leased to a printing company. The former plant was converted into apartments in the late 1980s.

Robert himself was a successful business man and philanthropist. After attending Harvard Law School, he returned to Indianapolis to practice law. He served in World War II. When his father died, he took control of the family businesses. He converted the *Real Silk Hosiery Mills* into an investment company, which he ran until his death in 1988. Robert served on the Board of Directors for the Indianapolis Foundation, was president of the Civic Progress Association, served as president of Community Hospital, and chaired the Indianapolis Housing Authority. Along with his brother, Dr. Clarence Efroymsen, he established a private charitable foundation.

Rabbi Morris Feuerlicht served as rabbi of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation for more than forty years. Born in Hungary in 1879, he came to the United States as an infant. He graduated from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati; his first rabbinic post was in Lafayette, Indiana. In 1904 he joined IHC as associate rabbi, and 1907 he became full rabbi. He served as president of the Children's Aid Society, president of the Indiana State Conference of Charities, and a member of the State Board of Charities. He taught the essentials of Judaism to graduate ministers at Butler University School of Religion. During World War I, he served as Jewish chaplain at Fort Harrison in Indianapolis. He died in November 1959 at the age of eighty-one.

Leo Lefkovitz, a leader of the Hungarian- Jewish community in Indianapolis, was one of the first Eastern European Jews to become a lawyer. After graduating from law school in the early 1900s, he became credit manager for the *New York Store*, a local department store. After the *New York Store* folded during the depression, he opened his own law practice. Lefkovitz was very active in Congregation Ohev Zedeck, serving as both secretary and treasurer, and was a strong supporter of its Talmud Torah (an Orthodox school). After the synagogue merged with Beth El to form Beth -El Zedeck in 1927, he continued to be active, serving on the new congregation's board for more than ten years.

Isaac Levy was a Sephardic immigrant, born in 1887 in Monastir. He worked at Kahn Tailoring during the early part of this century. After leaving Kahn's, he worked at *L. Straus* (a local department store) for twenty-two years. While at *L. Straus*, he also operated his own small tailoring shop in the downtown area. He was a member of Etz Chaim Congregation, and served as its president. He was also active in the Chevra Kedisha (burial society). He died in December 1973.

Moses Rabb was born in Germany. He came to Indianapolis as a small child. Upon graduation, he worked as an independent insurance agent. Rabb was active in Zionist politics. He was one of the founders, both locally and nationally, the religious Zionist organization Mizrachi. He also served as secretary/treasurer for the seminal Federation of American Zionists. He was founder of both the United Hebrew Schools of Indianapolis (the Jewish Educational Association) and of the city's Jewish National Fund chapter. He was affiliated with both Knesses Israel Congregation and Sharah Tefilla Congregation. He was active in politics, serving at different times as both precinct committeeman and ward chairman.

Joseph Solomon was a cigar maker from London. In 1860, Indianapolis' first Jewish wedding was between Solomon and Sarah Harris. Once in Indianapolis, he became involved in the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation and also in the Masons. In 1862, Solomon opened a pawnshop.

Morris Solomon was born in London and came to Indianapolis in 1860, about the same time as his brother, Joseph. As a member of the IHC, Solomon was appointed to chair a committee to arrange for a fair, which would serve as a fundraising project for a new synagogue. Through his efforts a lot was purchased on East Market Street, and the cornerstone for the building was dedicated in 1865. He served as secretary of the temple in 1885.

Leonard Strauss (officer in Kahn Tailoring) was one of the founders of Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, as it developed from the amateur orchestra that he founded.

Leon Kahn, a tailor, was elected Indianapolis Common County in 1869. Mayer Messing (1843-1930), rabbi for the IHC for 40 years, founded the Indianapolis Humane Society.

Leopold Strauss (1844-1914) came to Indianapolis in 1864. He was a store clerk in the *Eagle Clothing Store*, which had been founded in 1853 by Jewish tailor Max Derham and German John Gramling and later purchased by Morris and Louis Greisheimer. By 1871 Strauss became a partner and in 1879 bought out the Greisheimers. In 1899 he brought in Abram L. Block from Brooklyn; at the same time, he changed the store name to *L. Strauss and Company*. Strauss was also a founder of the Indianapolis Merchant's Association.

The company became a large department store, opening branches in local malls. In 1969, the local business was purchased by an out-of-state company.



L. Struass operated in the building above from 1905 - 1946. In that year, they moved into the building on the left. Photos: Indiana Historical Society, William Smith Library.



Sarah Goodman, first female president of the Jewish Federation, helped to found the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. She was born in Austria, coming to America as an infant. She worked as a teacher in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1924 she and her husband, Jack, moved to Indianapolis. She was active in local theater, served as arts chair at the Kirshbaum Community Center (later this became the Jewish Community Center), and the Woman's Committee of the Indiana State Symphony Society. In 1956, the Indianapolis Community Chest and B'Nai B'rith named her Woman of the Year.

William H. Block lived in Kokomo, but moved to Indianapolis in 1896. He opened his first store in Indianapolis on Washington Street between Illinois and Meridian. He incorporated the *William H. Block Company* in 1907 and built a building in 1910; the building still stands. William died in 1928, when his sons took over the operations. In 1962, the business was sold to the *Allied Stores Corporation* out of New York. William was an active member of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation.



The Block's building in downtown Indianapolis (Marion County). It was used as the Blocks Department Store building until the late 1980s. Today it houses retail and apartments. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



The Kahn factory in Indianapolis (Marion County) where many Jewish immigrants worked.

The garment trade in Indiana, like that in America, attracted a large number of Jews. In Indianapolis, the largest garment manufacturer, Henry Kahn (1860-1934), founded Kahn Tailoring Company in 1903. Kahn was born in Bloomington in 1860 to immigrant parents. The family moved to Indianapolis in 1866; Kahn attended public school and went to Butler University. He opened a small tailoring shop in 1886 on East Washington Street near Meridian Street. In 1903, he founded Kahn Tailoring Company – one of the country’s largest manufacturers of men’s suits and military uniforms. There was a sales room in the Kahn Building at Meridian and Washington and a factory on Capitol Street, which still stands. Kahn was active with the Industrial Removal Office to help Jewish immigrants find employment outside of New York.

While not active member of the Jewish community, Kahn did employ hundreds of newly arriving Jewish immigrants. From 1904-1918, the number of Jewish immigrants coming into New York City overwhelmed the Jewish community, as well as their resources of jobs, housing, and social services. Leaders of the Jewish



The Kahn Tailoring factory in 1907. Photo: Indiana Historical Society, William Smith Library.



One of the social events hosted by Kahn Tailoring. Photo: Indiana Historical Society, William Smith Library.

community in New York City created the Industrial Removal Office (IRO) to locate immigrants to jobs outside of the New York City area. Kahn Tailoring actively cooperated with the local IRO office. Kahn Tailoring became the single largest employer of Jewish immigrants in Indianapolis.

The company offered social services for their employees. A social welfare department provided for the needs of all employees, especially those new to the city. Social gatherings were held at the office and during lunch, a factory orchestra played music in the cafeteria.

When Henry died in 1934, his son-in-law became president. In 1954, the company merged with *Globe Tailoring* of Cincinnati, where the base of operations shifted. By 1970, no Kahn store remained in Indianapolis.

Meyer-Kiser Bank, founded by Sol S. Keiser and Sol Meyer in 1906, became one of the largest lending institutions in the state and financed some of the most important buildings in Indianapolis before closing their doors in 1931.

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*The Meyer-Kiser Bank building.
Photo: Indiana Historical Society,
William Smith Library.*

Samuel E. Rauh (1854-1935) came to Indianapolis in 1874 and established a branch of *E. Rauh and Sons* (hide and fur dealers). In 1880, he established the first fertilizer factory in the midwest; in 1884 he created the *Indianapolis Slaughtering Company*, in 1890 he opened *Moore Packing Company*, and then in 1890 began operating the *Indianapolis Desiccating Company*, the first plant organized in the country for the disposal of city garbage. In addition, he was an organizer of the *Union Trust Company*

and president of the *Belt Railroad and Stock Yards*. He donated his family home to the Marion County Public Library system; the home has since been demolished.



The Samuel Rauh house circa 1909, when it was used as a home. He donated the home to the Marion County Public Library. Photo: Indiana Historical Society, William Smith Library.



J. Solotken and Co was one of the many scrap yards owned by Jewish families in Indiana. The company moved into this old furniture factory in 1932.

J. Solotken and Co. Inc. is a scrap dealer company still in existence today. Founded in 1914 by Russian immigrant Jacob Solotken, the company moved into their current headquarters in 1932 and is still family owned and operated.⁷

Mel and Herbert Simon were born in New York. Mel was stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis while in the army. He remained in Indianapolis after his discharge. He started in the mall business, eventually creating, with his brother, *Melvin Simon and Associates*. The company has developed into one of the largest real estate development and management corporations in the country.

Today, Indianapolis still has a large Jewish population, but the historic community that once thrived on the southside of Indianapolis is all but gone. Only remnants of the community exist today including the cemeteries, a few homes, two temples, and a few pieces of the commercial districts. Some of the structures from the 1920s through the 1970s still exist, but this number continues to decline.

Footnotes

¹ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), viii.

² Carolyn Blackwell, “Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis,” *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, Bob Barrows, ed (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society,) 845.

³ <http://www.nmajh.org/exhibitions/postcards/cards/13.htm> (accessed July 15, 2004).

⁴ Congregation of B’Nai Torah, History of Congregation B’Nai Torah, www.btorah.org/History.html (accesses October 4, 2005.)

⁵ Dorothy Anne Forman, *A Study of the Jewish Communal Building of Indianapolis* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1940), 23.

⁶ J.A. and L.L. Goodman founded the Real Silk Company in 1922. The company ran knitting mill, manufacturing hosiery, lingerie, and underwear. At its height, the company averaged more than one million dozen pairs of women’s hosiery a year.

⁷ Tammy Lieber, “From Trash to Treasure,” *Indiana Business Journal* 19 April 2004, p.49., col. 1; Interview with Joseph Alpert, owner J. Solotken and Co by Jeannie Regan-Dinius in 2005.

⁸ Sylvia Nahmia Cohen, “The History of the Etz Chaim Sephardic Congregation and Community of Indianapolis, Indiana, Etz Chaim Sephardic Congregation of Indianapolis, <http://www.etzchaimindy.org/history.htm> (accessed June 29, 2005).