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LEST WE FORGET

By Elizabeth Kaibel

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Only 40 years ago Minneapolis was called the anti-Semitic capital of the United States. Jews were barred not only from many social organizations but from such service groups as Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions and Toastmasters. It's a dark chapter that the city has almost — but not quite — erased.

BY ELIZABETH KAIBEL

The scene that greeted Rabbi Max Shapiro when he arrived at Temple Israel on a sunny morning last fall was gut wrenching, the ugliest he'd witnessed in almost 30 years in Minneapolis.

Anti-Semitic and profane slogans and symbols peppered the synagogue. The outside walls had been spray painted in eight places, some of them 10 feet above the ground. The huge, scrawled letters were easily visible to Hennepin Avenue motorists. Their message was equally clear: "HITLER'S CRAZY KIDS!" and a swastika covered a column near the front entrance.

Myriad emotions flooded Shapiro's mind. "I was sickened," he recalls. "I was angry. I felt I was a failure as a rabbi and a civic leader — that such a thing could happen in Minneapolis. And I felt a great sadness, because it seemed as if the entire city had been defaced, not just one building."

Morton Ryweck, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Coun-

The defacing of Temple Israel on Oct. 9, 1984, was one of the ugliest anti-Semitic incidents in the temple's 107-year history. But it wasn't an isolated one.

cil/Anti-Defamation League of Minnesota and the Dakotas, reacted just as vehemently. The location and extent of the defacings, he told a local reporter, revealed premeditation and planning not usually associated with acts of vandalism. "This is hard-core bigotry," he said. "You can't laugh it off as the work of people who don't know what they're doing."

Response from the community was instantaneous. Within hours after the defacings were discovered, clergy from both Minneapolis and St. Paul were on the phone to Shapiro, expressing their outrage and offering help. The Minnesota Council of Churches and the Twin Cities Human Rights Coalition denounced the vandalism and organized cleanup efforts. The Bridge for Runaway Youth a block away from the synagogue immediately dispatched a crew to sand the walls and paint over the graffiti. Local media reported and editorialized.

It was the worst anti-Semitic incident in the 107-year history of Temple Israel, the 10th largest Reform synagogue in North America, but it was not an isolated one. Last year, Ryweck's ADL office investigated 15 cases of vandalism and 14 complaints of assault, threats and harassment directed against Minnesota Jews. It is likely that other attacks went unreported. Last February, vandals struck Beth El synagogue in St. Louis Park, spray painting anti-Semitic phrases and gluing cotton balls on several walls. In 1984, Minnesota ranked second only to Illinois in anti-Semitic incidents reported in the Midwest.

Of course, no major metropolitan area in the United States is free of such signs of religious or racial prejudice. Anti-Semitic incidents regularly remind Jews of the horrors of Nazi Germany, "the sickness that lurks below the surface," as Shapiro puts it. But in the Twin Cities, such episodes recall more than that. The history of Minneapolis, whose population is now less than 3 percent Jewish, is blackened by years of social and institutional repression of Jews. The city was labeled "the capital of anti-Semitism of the United States" by national journalist Carey McWilliams fewer than four decades ago. And it is still home to many Jews who, having been victims of prejudice and discrimination during the 1930s and '40s, might view the Temple Israel incident literally as handwriting on the wall.

On the whole, however, local Jewish leaders agree that anti-Semitic activity is waning in Minnesota. But, they hasten to add, the commission of even one act of bigotry – in a city once labeled the national capital of anti-Semitism and in a world that witnessed the murder of six million Jews during World War II – is cause for concern. "We can never stop being vigilant," Ryweck says. Rabbi Bernard Raskas of St. Paul's Temple of Aaron puts it this way: "Sure, Jews are paranoid about anti-Semitism; we've got a lot to be paranoid about. Hatred has killed many more than six million of our brothers and sisters. When you get hit by a car enough times, you tend to be careful."

Nonetheless, the very people who recoiled so publicly from the Temple Israel incident now seem to regard it as a momentary digression in the slow but steady decline of anti-Semitic incidents in the Twin Cities during the past decade. (Ryweck says the defacing was almost certainly the work of disturbed adolescents; police had several neighborhood troublemakers under surveillance, but made no arrests.) "The whole episode came to a conclusion very quickly," Shapiro, who retired as Temple Israel's head rabbi in June, says now. "I've almost forgotten it." As for the immediate response from local organizations and the clergy, "it was reassuring, but not surprising. This community is as good as, if not better than, any community in the country when it comes to Christian-Jewish relations."

Business leader Burton Joseph, vice-chairman of Josco Crown International (until recently I.S. Joseph Co.) and a past national ADL chairman, agrees. "Minneapolis is an absolutely extraordinary city for Jews today – it's unrecognizable from its former self," he says. "I'll put it very simply: We have no problem with

J. Scott Lawrence

When Howard and Ruth Brin tried to buy a house in 1946, they were told Jews weren't welcome in the neighborhood.

anti-Semitism here."

In St. Paul, where Raskas has served as a rabbi for 35 years, anti-Semitism is "almost at its lowest ebb ever, though there are outbreaks now and then," he says. "I expect it to decline even further in the future, as our efforts to educate and increase our contacts with the Christian community bear fruit." He applauds the ADL for its vigilance and outreach programs, the mayors of both cities for appointing human-rights commissions that "have really done the job," and the community's Christian leadership, which is "increasingly sensitive to Jews' feelings and needs."

Many prominent Jews echo Shapiro and Raskas's praise of local clergy. Through their participation in organizations like the Human Rights Coalition and Council of Churches, Christian leaders have sponsored pulpit exchanges, ecumenical services, teachers' workshops, and interfaith dialogues and lobbying efforts. They have helped staff the ADL's publicity booth at the Minnesota State Fair. And, perhaps most important and symbolic of all, they have responded swiftly and sympathetically to incidents such as that at Temple Israel.

Though such responses now seem to be the norm in the Twin Cities, until recently many anti-Semitic acts were committed in a vacuum of apparent community indifference and/or ignorance. Just five years ago, sidewalks outside six churches in the St. Paul suburb of Oakdale were stamped with Stars of David and slogans like "Sign of Satan" and "Communism is Jewish." When Ryweck wrote to the ministers of the churches involved, he received no response. "Their silence was deafening and disappointing," he says. Since the defacing occurred on Halloween, the pastors probably considered them pranks. "But to the Jewish community, anti-Semitic expressions and acts are never considered pranks," Ryweck says. "We recognize the underlying hatred they represent."

Nor have the lessons of the past been lost on Ryweck and other Jewish leaders. The chant of the Holocaust survivors – "never forget, never forget" – also sums up the attitude of the local Jewish community toward 20th-century Twin Cities history.

The story of how Minneapolis came to be called the national capital of anti-Semitism and then evolved into a model community for Jewish-Christian relations is not only instructive: it is fascinating. Equally fascinating is the story of St. Paul, which historically has been much more hospitable to Jews and never shared the notorious distinction accorded what McWilliams called its "curious twin."

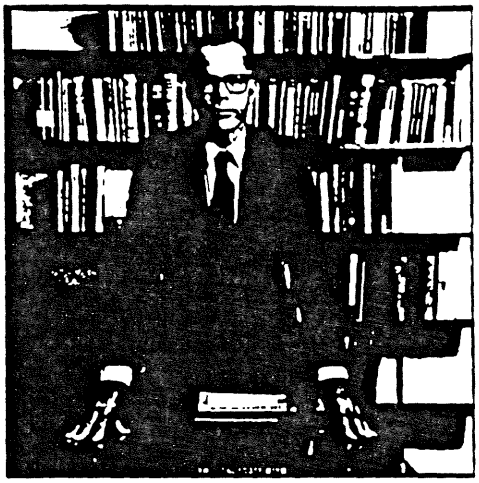
Minnesota's first Jewish immigrants came from Germany and settled in St. Paul around 1850. Even before Minnesota became a state in 1858, the capital city supported a well-integrated community of Jews, many of them downtown dry-goods merchants. By contrast, Jews did not start arriving in Minneapolis in large numbers until the 1880s. They came primarily from Russia and Eastern Europe, driven from their homes by religious persecution.

While St. Paul was settled heavily by Catholics – themselves prime targets of discrimination – Minneapolis was populated largely by German and Scandinavian Lutherans, who not only encountered prejudice less frequently but also had had little contact with Jews in the Old World. Further, St. Paul's Jewish community grew and prospered along with the city, whereas by the time Jews arrived in Minneapolis it was already a thriving metropolis with long-established "first families" dominating commerce and industry.

Fed by unemployment, housing shortages, political unrest and uncontrolled population growth, discrimination against immigrant groups was widespread throughout the United States by the turn of the century. Jews responded by founding the Anti-Defamation League in 1913 "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people" and "to secure justice and fair treat-

'We have no problem with anti-Semitism here.'
—Burton Joseph

'We can never stop being vigilant.'
—Morton Ryweck



ment to all citizens alike." The organization grew quickly; today it has 30 regional offices that monitor anti-Semitic activity and conduct educational programs in every state.

By the 1920s, Minneapolis Jews had settled in a virtual ghetto on the Near North Side. Albert Gordon, rabbi of Adath Jeshurun Congregation from 1930 to 1946, describes their situation in *Jews in Transition*: "The immigrant Jews of the North Side did not readily adjust themselves to the practices and manners of their non-Jewish neighbors. They strictly maintained their religious customs and some even clung tenaciously to the garb that had characterized them in their East European communities." Gordon quotes an early resident as saying that Jews "were afraid to walk anywhere above Fifth Street North. There was a lot of beard pulling and name calling. The children . . . would very often tip over the apple carts or wagons of the Jewish peddlers." In 1922, Maurice Lefkovits wrote in the *American Jewish World*, a weekly Twin Cities newspaper published since 1912, "Minneapolis Jewry enjoys the painful distinction of being the lowest-esteemed community in the land so far as the non-Jewish population of the city is concerned."

A lifelong Minneapolis resident and prominent member of the Jewish community, Howard Brin recalls "innumerable fist fights and name-calling incidents" when he attended Kenwood Elementary School in the late 1920s. He and other students were called "kikes" and "Christ killers" and frequently were beaten up on the way home from school.

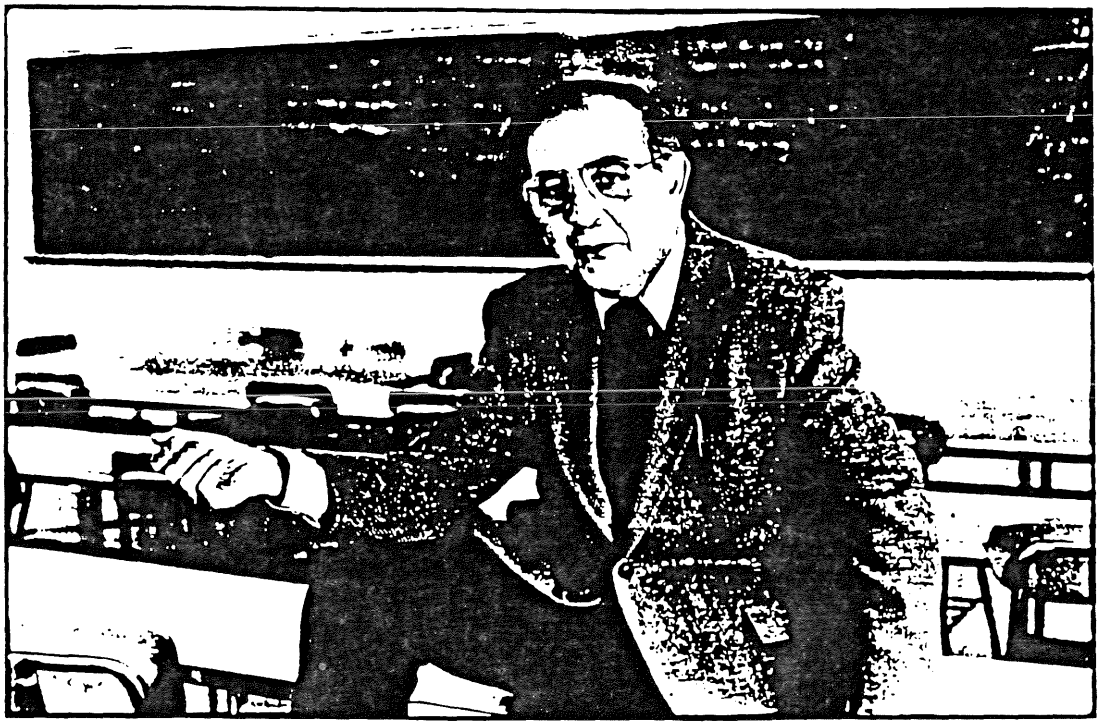
The situation worsened during the 1930s and early 1940s as the Nazi party rose to power in Germany and para-Nazism gained a stronghold in the United States. Every American city — including St. Paul — manifested more than a few forms of anti-Semitism: attacks and threats against Jews; vandalism of homes and synagogues; the dissemination of hate literature; pro-Nazi speeches, sermons, broadcasts and rallies; and discrimination against Jews in housing, employment, education and politics. Minneapolis manifested them all.

Father Charles Coughlin's anti-Semitic newspaper *Social Justice*, for example, attracted wide local readership. In 1935 Elizabeth Dilling, a national fascist spokeswoman, delivered a series of addresses at the First Baptist Church in downtown Minneapolis lambasting "Jews in the Red Network." The church's minister, the Rev. William Bell Riley, took up the battle cry, as did the Rev. Luke Rader and other fundamentalist preachers in pulpits all over town. William Dudley Pelley, leader of a national Nazi organization called the Silver Shirts, also came to Minneapolis, leaving goose-stepping "storm troopers" and incendiary pamphlets in his wake. (In 1937 a young *Minneapolis Journal* reporter, Eric Sevareid, attended local Silver Shirts meetings incognito, then wrote a series of articles ridiculing them.)

Brin recalls that during the late 1930s there was a student offshoot of a national Nazi organization at West High School. Its members "used to come to school in brown shirts," he says. "They put knives in their boots and carried billy sticks and brass knuckles."

Linking Jews to the "communist menace" was a commonly used local propaganda device. In 1938, when Republican Harold Stassen ran against Farmer-Laborite Gov. Elmer Benson, the Stassen campaign distributed a pamphlet headlined "Are They Communists or Are They Catspaws?" The text accused Benson of running a "Jew-controlled state capitol" and listed every Jew who had served under him and former Gov. Floyd B. Olson. The campaign also distributed a cartoon depicting Benson on a donkey burdened by a trio of stereotypical Semitic-featured riders and captioned "The Three 'Jehu' Drivers." Whether it was because of this propaganda or for other reasons, Benson and the Farmer-Laborites lost the election.

In 1943, correspondent Selden C. Menefee wrote in the magazine *The Nation*, "I found almost no evidence of anti-



Images of the Holocaust shocked Americans after World War II. 'They learned instantly that there is no such thing as benign racism.' —Hyman Berman

By 1961 the situation had improved so dramatically that Minneapolis did something that even New York City, which has a larger Jewish population than Israel, did not accomplish until 1974: It elected a Jewish mayor.

Semitism in the Northwest and West Central states. *Except in Minneapolis* no one considered it a serious problem" (emphasis added). In *Assignment U.S.A.* Menefee quotes a Minneapolis man on local anti-Semitism during the 1940s: "It's so strong that people of all groups I have met make the most blatant statements against Jews with the calm assumption that they are merely stating facts with which anyone could agree."

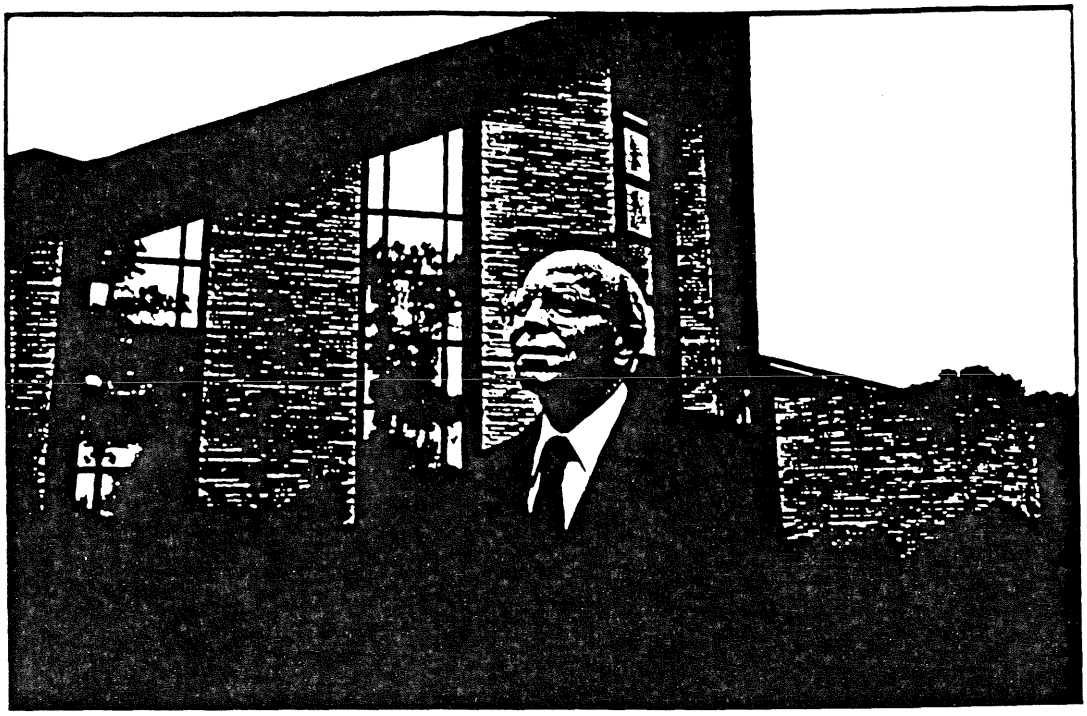
Indeed, during World War II Minneapolis was the only major American city in which Jews could not join such service organizations as Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions and Toastmasters. The Minneapolis branch of the Automobile Association of America was the only one in the country to bar Jews. (Ironically, not only did the St. Paul AAA accept Jewish members, it had a Jewish president during the 1940s.) Jews could not belong to the Minneapolis Board of Realtors. They could not join the Minneapolis Athletic Club, the Minikahda Club and most other social organizations. Private hospitals in Minneapolis prohibited Jewish doctors from obtaining residencies. (In direct response to this practice, Jay Phillips and other Jewish business leaders started a fund drive in 1945 that resulted in the building of Mount Sinai Hospital in 1948.) Resorts advertised in local newspapers that they catered to "gentiles only." And several department-store chains, including Montgomery Ward, refused to interview Jewish job applicants.

Discrimination against Minneapolis Jews also was rampant in less overt, more insidious forms. Hyman Berman, a history professor at the University of Minnesota, says that the university had "informal quotas" that discriminated in particular against potential Jewish faculty members. Whereas in other American cities Jews frequently entered the social and political mainstream via public-school teaching, in 1948 there were only nine Jewish elementary-school teachers, four Jewish high-school teachers and one Jewish principal in Minneapolis. "There may not have been a written discriminatory policy," Berman says, "but the low numbers were definitely unusual."

In housing, too, Jews encountered problems. Gordon writes of walking the streets of Minneapolis and being told repeatedly, "We don't rent to Jews." In 1946, Brin, fresh out of the army, and his wife, Ruth, made an offer on a south-Minneapolis home a few blocks from their synagogue. The wife of the couple who owned the house refused to sell to them, protesting that it was in Incarnation parish ("which was crazy," Brin says, "because every house in Minneapolis is in some parish") and that "her friends and neighbors would really object if she sold to Jews." The Brins' real-estate agent "really tore into her. 'This is a disgrace,' he said. 'This man is still in uniform.' But she stuck to her ground." The couple eventually bought a home in St. Louis Park.

At the same time the Brins were house-hunting, McWilliams, a well-known national journalist and lecturer, was researching the article that was to blow the lid off the city's ugly secret. "Minneapolis: The Curious Twin" appeared in *Common Ground* magazine in the fall of 1946. McWilliams devoted five pages to analyzing the history of the Twin Cities' Jewish community and describing the discrimination he found in Minneapolis. "In almost every walk of life," he wrote, "'an iron curtain' separates Jews from non-Jews in Minneapolis. . . . [I]t seems to have always existed. . . . [T]he Jewish community of Minneapolis constitutes a depressed element in the population and the powers-that-be obviously intend, if possible, to maintain this status." This "deep-seated and widespread pattern" did not exist, he found, in St. Paul.

Whether McWilliams was justified in singling out Minneapolis is, in retrospect, debatable. Although the situation for Jews in Minneapolis during the 1940s was deplorable, Ryweck says, "there were certainly other American cities where anti-Semitism was also a major problem." It would likewise be presumptuous to credit McWilliams with in-



Today, Jews and Christians work together to educate the community.

'Sure, Jews are paranoid about anti-Semitism; we've got a lot to be paranoid about. . . . When you get hit by a car enough times, you tend to be careful.'
—Rabbi Bernard Raskas

itiating the city's eventual about-face in the area of Christian-Jewish relations. Berman says that just as it took many years and a confluence of factors to create such a flagrantly anti-Semitic environment, so it did to destroy it.

Still, there is no denying the immediate and indelible impact of McWilliams' words. (Even in 1985, almost 40 years after it was published, you hear constant reference to the *Common Ground* article in the Jewish community.) The *Minneapolis Star Journal* published a long excerpt from the story in October 1946, prompting numerous letters to the editor. Many prominent Twin Citians, still reeling from news films of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps, expressed disbelief and outrage at McWilliams' description. Officials of the Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the American Lutheran Church organized educational programs. Local synagogues set up task forces and pulpit exchanges.

Most important, however, Minneapolis's mayor of one year, Hubert H. Humphrey, responded with characteristic zeal. The man who was to electrify the 1948 national Democratic convention with his plea for the adoption of a civil-rights plank became a fervid and outspoken opponent of anti-Semitism in Minnesota. He set up the Mayor's Council on Human Relations, charging it to uncover any type of discrimination against any minority and recommending ways to eradicate it. During the next three years the city passed numerous ordinances outlawing anti-Semitic acts and forbidding discrimination in employment and housing. In 1947, it created the Fair Employment Practices Commission, which was to play a vital role in breaking down barriers to Jewish advancement in business and the professions. (That year, for example, the mayor's council found that 44 percent of Minneapolis Jews worked in clerical or sales positions and 42 percent as craftsmen, factory employees and laborers; only 6 percent were business managers and executives and 1.5 percent professionals. By 1971, a similar study found that 90 percent of the city's Jews held professional, managerial or clerical jobs, while fewer than 10 percent worked as craftsmen, factory employees and laborers.) The city's FEPC became a model for the state's, which was created in the early 1950s.

But Humphrey's legal and political attack on discrimination wasn't the only factor responsible for the slow erosion of anti-Semitism both in Minneapolis and throughout the country. Berman identifies four other key contributors:

First, he says, "the American public was inundated with images of the Holocaust. People recoiled; they learned instantly that there is no such thing as benign racism." Second, the escalation of the Cold War helped indirectly because "as we learned that Jews were being discriminated against in the Soviet Union, they became less identified with communism." Third, the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 changed the perceptions of many Christian evangelicals, who Berman says studies indicated were among the most strongly anti-Semitic. Many fundamentalists, he says, "saw Israel as a frontline state in the war against communism. And some regarded the establishment of Israel as a first step toward the Second Coming." Finally, the aggressively ecumenical activities of the World Council of Churches, Vatican II and other religious bodies during the 1950s and 1960s "led to an increased consciousness" of the bitter fruits of bigotry.

And so, slowly but irreversibly, the tide turned. Doors opened, barriers crumbled, quotas vanished. Hate-mongering preachers and organizations fell into disrepute. In the two decades following World War II Jews moved into Minneapolis neighborhoods and suburbs where once they had been unwelcome. They became Realtors and bankers, practiced law and medicine, taught school, joined labor unions and climbed the corporate ladder in numbers vastly disproportionate to their representation

in the population. By 1961 the situation had improved so dramatically that Minneapolis did something that even New York City, which has a larger Jewish population than Israel, did not accomplish until 1974: It elected a Jewish mayor.

Arthur Naftalin, who served as mayor for eight years, says his religion "was never an overt campaign issue. There was one candidate in my first primary who said some borderline anti-Semitic things, but nobody paid any attention to him." As mayor, Naftalin "occasionally received a piece of hate mail, or got a phone call from someone saying I was a kike or a Christ killer. It's always upsetting to encounter people like that – they're so hostile and mean, and they convey a sense of threat. But I never thought they represented a major segment of the community." By virtue of their offices, Naftalin and business leader Phillips, then president of the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, became the first Jews awarded honorary memberships in the Minneapolis Club. Today there is no private club or organization in the Twin Cities with an exclusionary clause in its constitution.

(Married to a gentile, Naftalin has never been very active in or strongly identified with the Twin Cities Jewish community. A more significant political victory was Rudy Boschwitz's election to the U.S. Senate from Minnesota in 1978. Boschwitz's involvement in Jewish and pro-Israel causes is long-standing and highly visible. His quick ascent in state politics is even more remarkable because, as a Republican, he cannot take for granted the support of the Twin Cities' traditionally Democratic Jewish community.)

By 1965, then, Minneapolis had almost filled in the "foxholes of anti-Semitism" that McWilliams described in 1946. In the two decades since, local Jewish and Christian organizations have concentrated on working together to educate and enlighten the community.

Christians and Jews alike have seen acts of anti-Semitic vandalism as an affront and have acted together to eradicate them. In 1978, for example, vandals spray painted slogans and swastikas on the brick walls of Mount Zion Temple in St. Paul, Minnesota's oldest (1856) Jewish congregation. Within hours of the desecration, "a man I'd never met before, a Christian, came to see me," Rabbi Leigh Lerner says. "He said he was shocked, and asked if he could organize a short service condemning the vandalism and symbolically eradicating the swastikas." A group of 35 clergy and laity attended the ceremony a few days later. Lerner also received $2,000 in unsolicited contributions to help remove the graffiti from the walls.

Much of the credit for such cooperation goes to the ADL, which compiles data on and issues an annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents, including vandalism, bombings, threats and arson. It also attempts to educate the public on such subjects as church-state separation, black-Jewish and Arab-Israeli relations, the plight of Soviet Jewry, the Holocaust and immigrant history. Joseph says the league is "enormously effective" in formulating public opinion on such issues. During his tenure as national chairman from 1976 to 1980, for example, the ADL successfully lobbied for legislation forbidding U.S. companies from complying with the Arab boycott of firms that did business with Israel. Joseph still serves on ADL's national commission, as does his wife, Geri, former U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands; Boschwitz; and Jacob Javits, Max Kampelman, Abraham Ribicoff and a host of other national political and business leaders.

In recent years the ADL's reports consistently have shown that more than 80 percent of those apprehended for anti-Semitic activities are teenagers. It's tempting, of course, to dismiss such adolescents as disturbed, delinquent or simply bored. But where are they picking up their attitudes?

Oscar Hammerstein II answered the question in 1949 in *South Pacific*: "You've got to be taught to hate and fear,/You've got to be taught from year to year,/It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,/You've got to be carefully taught." Ryweck answers it in 1985: "Teenagers pick up their attitudes from the culture – from peer groups and parents. Their acts are simply overt expressions of anti-Semitism that still exists." Sociologists, in fact, have labeled anti-Semitism "the classic prejudice" because of its persistence throughout history in so many forms. Ryweck adds that Jews and blacks are traditional scapegoats: "At least in certain communities, there's still sanction for teenagers to call someone a 'kike' or a 'nigger.'"

Of course, the ADL's audits are not the only or even necessarily the most accurate barometer of anti-Semitism in the United States. Bigotry also manifests itself in the activities of paramilitary and hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Posse Comitatus, Christian Research and Aryan Nations. Several such organizations, including Liberty Lobby and the Institute for Historical Review, distribute materials claiming that the Holocaust never happened. Last July a California court awarded $90,000 to an Auschwitz survivor who contended he suffered emotional distress after the institute failed to pay him a $50,000 reward it offered to anyone who could prove Jews were gassed by the Nazis.

Last July also saw publication in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* of a nationally syndicated cartoon by Patrick Oliphant that numerous readers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, labeled "blatantly anti-Semitic." The cartoon, a comment on the medical profession's response to Medicare-fee guidelines, depicts a man being hauled from the wreckage of his fancy car into a paddy wagon. "Dr. Finklestein was last seen being dragged from his car to a waiting government van," the caption reads. "Authorities say that he is probably being forced to treat Medicare patients for a fixed fee. . . ." In a letter to the editor, Ryweck accused the cartoonist of "offensive religious stereotyping" and scapegoating.

Local Jewish leaders also express concern over recent Supreme Court decisions involving church-state separation, as well as the movement to bring back prayer in public schools. Berman says that reintroducing school prayers would be "an entering wedge to the establishment of a second-class citizenship," while Lerner says his congregants complain about church-state violations more frequently than about overt anti-Semitic incidents. They're concerned, he says, that if you set up a crèche in city hall, you're creating an environment that's less hospitable to minority religions.

Raskas says the outbreak of any type of anti-Semitic activity prompts phone calls from frightened congregants, "particularly the Holocaust survivors. 'Rabbi,' they say, 'it's starting all over again.' And I say, 'No, it's not. Calm down. There are just a few kooks out there.'"

Despite the efforts of the ADL and others to educate the public, there undoubtedly are many gentiles who would echo Raskas's response. The Twin Cities Jewish community, they feel, is inordinately preoccupied with and sensitive toward anti-Semitism, which is, after all, on the wane. The fact remains, however – to echo Raskas's words again – that Jews have a lot to be paranoid about. Furthermore, a community's response to what Ryweck calls "the cancer of anti-Semitism" is a litmus test of its moral development.

Nathan Perlmutter, the ADL's national director, puts it simply: "The vandalizing of one religious institution or one home because of the religion or race of the occupants is one too many." Though Minneapolis has come a long way from its widespread anti-Semitism of the 1940s, it – along with St. Paul and every other major city in the country – still has a way to go. □

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Common Ground

MINNEAPOLIS: THE CURIOUS TWIN

CAREY McWILLIAMS

THE REAL circuit rider of our times, a lecturer picks up some curious impressions on his one-night stands across the country. It would be more accurate, perhaps, to say that he collects "questions" rather than impressions on these arduous junkets. From lecture trips made in the last four years, I have stored up a number of queries of a sociological character. While these queries are based upon admittedly superficial impressions, nevertheless some of them possess, in my opinion, sufficient validity to warrant further investigation. The fresh curiosity of the uninitiated overnight visitor may compensate to some extent for lack of specific information and data. I have jotted down these notes, therefore, not in any dogmatic spirit, but rather to record an impression in the hope that, by doing so, I may stimulate a real answer from those who have the full facts. My question is: how is one to account for the divergent anti-Semitic patterns to be found in the twin cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis?

While the contrast is not of the black-and-white variety, the pattern of anti-Semitism is much more pronounced in Minneapolis than in St. Paul. One might even say, with a measure of justification, that Minneapolis is the capitol of anti-Semitism in the United States. In almost every walk of life, "an iron curtain" separates Jews from non-Jews in Minneapolis. Nor is this "iron curtain" a matter of recent origin; on the contrary, it seems to have always existed. So far as I know, Minneapolis is the only city in America in which Jews are, as a matter of practice and custom, ineligible for membership in the service clubs. In fact, Jews have never been accepted into membership in the local Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, or Toastmasters organizations. The same anti-Semitic bar, however, does not prevail in St. Paul. Even the Automobile Club in Minneapolis refuses to accept Jews as members. Mr. Hugh Craig, secretary of the club, recently declined to accept the application of a well-known and highly respected rabbi. So far as I know, there is not another automobile club in America which pursues a similar policy. At a recent meeting of the national realty boards, the Minneapolis delegation made much of the fact that Jews are not eligible for membership on the local realty board.

Years ago, a few Jews were accepted, as life members, in the Minneapolis Athletic Club. But the board of the club, contrary to a long established practice, has of recent years refused to recognize the transfer of these memberships to the sons of deceased members and has stated that it will not accept further Jewish applications. Many concerns in Minneapolis, notably some of the chain stores and Montgomery, Ward & Company, pursue a general policy of not interviewing Jewish applicants. Jews have experienced considerable difficulty in buying residential property in Minneapolis. I was informed by Mr. Douglas Hall, one of the leaders of the CIO in Minneapolis, that anti-Semitism has been a rather serious problem in the local trade unions.

The most striking aspect of anti-Semitism in Minneapolis, however, consists in

the lack of significant Jewish participation in the dominant economic activities of the city. In milling, lumbering, transportation, private utilities, banking, insurance, and, even to a degree in the field of department-store merchandising, Jews do not figure as an important element. Despite the fact that a sizable Jewish community has existed in Minneapolis for many years, Jews have not acquired an economic position comparable to that which they occupy in other cities of approximately the same size. Perhaps as a consequence of this community-wide pattern, the Jewish community in Minneapolis is highly introverted,—bound up in a maze of purely Jewish activities. While Jews participate in local civic affairs, they are seldom represented on the boards of civic organizations. That local residents, seeking to minimize this statement, should emphasize the fact that a Jew was recently selected as head of the Council of Social Agencies, merely underscores the existence of a general exclusionist policy. With the exception of an alderman elected from a predominantly Jewish district, there are no Jewish officeholders in Minneapolis (although there are approximately 20,000 Jewish residents). Political anti-Semitism came to the surface in Minneapolis in 1938 and was a definite factor in the defeat of the Farmer-Labor Party. Commenting on this situation, a local resident significantly observed: "those of us who worked closely at the capitol understand all too well that the type of Jews who were associated with Benson did a great deal in setting back all the efforts which had been made in building up respect and admiration for the race" (emphasis mine).

Certainly these impressions indicate the existence in Minneapolis of a deep-seated and widespread pattern of anti-Semitism which is not to be found, in similar detail or intensity, in St. Paul. What is behind this pattern? How account for the divergence? On a recent visit to Minneapolis, I posed these, and a number of related questions, to a group of well-informed, long-resident observers: some from the labor movement; some active in left-wing politics; a prominent local rabbi; an extremely intelligent Jewish lawyer; some prominent civic leaders; a local newspaper publisher; and some Negro residents. From their answers, I have pieced together something in the nature of a tentative hypothesis in the hope that the whole question will some day be systematically explored.

While Minneapolis has more than its share of active anti-Semites, the "iron curtain" pattern can hardly be explained in terms of their activities. The Saturday church pages of the local press are full of advertisements placed by local pulpit-thumping fundamentalists, many of whom are anti-Semitic. The Northwest Bible School, a local fundamentalist academy, has been accused of being a training school in anti-Semitism. Recently the "Mothers of Minnesota" resumed distribution of anti-Semitic documents, pamphlets, and leaflets. In W. D. Riley, William D. Herrstrom, C. O. Stadskley, Arthur Pachofsky, and the Rev. Luke Rader, Minneapolis has a coterie of anti-Semitic rabble-rousers who can always be counted upon to work up interest in and attendance for Gerald L. K. Smith's meetings in the "Truth and Liberty Temple" operated by Stadskley. But the pattern of anti-Semitism in Minneapolis long predates the activities of these men. While keeping anti-Semitism alive at the lower status levels, the Raders and Herrstroms are obviously manipulating a pattern which exists in the structure of the community itself. In part the activities of these weird prophets is to be accounted for in terms of the maxim "monkey sees, monkey does."

In the twin cities, religious and ethnic backgrounds are closely related. Catholics of Irish and German background constitute a large element in the population of St. Paul. In years past, the Catholics in St. Paul functioned within the framework of a minority psychology, that is, they knew what it was to be singled out as a minority for attack by nativistic elements. Also, the Catholics in St. Paul produced some outstanding clerical leaders who are credited with having taken an active part in opposing nativistic movements. Jews accompanied the German and Czech immigrants to St. Paul and, as early immigrants, became a part of the rapidly growing community. Most of the early Jewish immigrants to Minneapolis, on the other hand, were of Russian or Polish background. More important than the difference in nationality origin, however, is the circumstance that a sizable Jewish community existed in St. Paul twenty-five years before there was a Minneapolis. This difference in time of arrival, in relation to the growth of the two communities, in part accounts for the difference in status between the two Jewish communities.

The Scandinavian element is much more important in Minneapolis, of course, than in St. Paul, and this element is predominantly Lutheran. Without being able to verify the fact, I was told that Lutherans constitute about one-third of the church population of Minneapolis. Unlike the German and Czech immigrants to St. Paul, the Scandinavians had little experience or familiarity with Jews and no Jewish elements accompanied them to Minneapolis. The Lutherans apparently draw a sharp distinction between secular affairs and theological preoccupations. They consistently seek to keep secular affairs out of the church. Most of my informants were agreed that the Lutheran element in Minneapolis seems to be somewhat withdrawn and cloistered. For example, when Brotherhood Week is proclaimed, silence on the subject of brotherhood usually prevails in the Lutheran churches. This is not to imply that the Lutherans have an "anti" psychology (I was offered impressive evidence to the contrary). But it would seem that their tendency toward non-participation in civic affairs, as an organized group, has created a kind of vacuum which makes possible the continuance of an anti-Semitic pattern. Obviously, religious and nationality factors, closely related, have some bearing on the divergent attitude toward Jews in the twin cities; but these factors do not explain the peculiar pattern in Minneapolis.

It seemed to me that the Jewish lawyer advanced the most tenable hypothesis about anti-Semitism in Minneapolis. While Minneapolis is the younger community, it has grown much more rapidly than St. Paul. When Minneapolis first began to surge forward as a thriving center of economic activity, "people from Maine"—migrating New England Yankees of a Protestant Anglo-Saxon background—were among the early arrivals and quickly acquired a strong grasp on the major industries of the community, a grasp which they continue to maintain. I was given an impressive listing of the long-dominant "first families" who occupy the key control positions in banking, finance, milling, transportation, lumbering, merchandising, etc. With rare exceptions, the significant economic fields have remained the exclusive province of these interrelated families, as augmented, from time to time, by new recruits, new alliances, new family affiliations and relationships. Arriving on the scene at a somewhat later date, the Scandinavians came to occupy the intermediate rung on the socio-economic ladder. While they have done well in agriculture, the trades,

and the professions, and, of recent years, in politics, they have still not been able to penetrate the upper-upper social levels. On a visit to the city hall in Minneapolis, my attention was called to the portraits of the mayors of the city. From the beginning of the city to a comparatively recent date, the names of these august dignitaries were unmistakably Anglo-Saxon. Only of recent years does a Scandinavian name begin to appear and, of course, there were no Jewish names. On the other hand, Jews have occupied the position of mayor in St. Paul.

Here, then, is something like an explanation: a community in which a limited number of large-scale industries constitute the backbone of the economic life of the area; early monopolization of these industries by a single tightly affiliated element in the population; and the use, by this element, of social, economic, and, later, political anti-Semitism as a means of opposing any threat to their status, more particularly for the purpose of retaining a preferred social position. Once established at the highest levels of economic control, the pattern has sifted down and been repeated, by suggestion and imitation, at the middle class, lower class, and working class levels. Thus the attitude toward Jews in Minneapolis reflects not so much an ethnocentric group-judgment or even a judgment on individual behavior, but rather the status structure of the community itself. This is shown by reference to the contrasting situation in St. Paul, where, by reason of a combination of circumstances, a segment of the Jewish population came to occupy high rungs in the socio-economic system before this system had crystallized into its present status structure. The offensive-defensive alliance of the upper-upper elements in Minneapolis is shown in the famous Citizens Alliance which, until the great teamsters' strike in the '30s, kept Minneapolis an open-shop town. It is also shown in the attitude of James J. Hill, a great figure in the North Star Country. According to Meridel Le Sueur, Hill had "certain ideas about how a country should be settled and what nationalities should be brought over for certain functions. His agents brought over the Irish in carloads for the building of the railroads; the German and Scandinavians for farmers and small shopkeepers; the middle Europeans—the Croatians, the Slavs, the Lithuanians, and also the Finns—for the mines on the Mesabi." Essentially this same pattern repeats itself elsewhere in America, with religious-ethnic-nationality variations providing a basis for the manipulation of group differences but seldom accounting for the social stratification along these lines which has resulted.

Slight wonder, then, that the Jewish community of Minneapolis, by comparison with other urban Jewish communities of comparable size, shows evidence of social retardation. From this comparative point of view, the Jewish community of Minneapolis constitutes a depressed element in the population and the powers-that-be obviously intend, if possible, to maintain this status. On the other hand, Jews were among the first arrivals in San Francisco after 1849, and the Jewish community there, roughly comparable in size if not in length of residence, has won an extremely wide measure of social acceptance in all walks of life. In fact, the upper-upper Jewish families of San Francisco are among the first families in a community in which anti-Semitic patterns have long been virtually non-existent. That religious and ethnic differences are not in themselves a cause of group antagonism is shown by the circumstance that the Jewish communities, in cities like San Francisco and St. Paul, are relatively free from the odious social restric-

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At present the chronic anti-Semitism of Minneapolis is in a state of crisis: the area of anti-Semitic practice must, by the very nature of such practices, be expanded or it will begin to show signs of modification. For example, some of the institutions which admittedly practice anti-Semitism in Minneapolis have begun to worry about the reciprocal aspect of their relations with similar institutions in nearby St. Paul. Visiting Jews who belong to service organizations with branches in Minneapolis have become a source of considerable local embarrassment. As a consequence, some Minneapolis organizations have suggested to their St. Paul affiliates that a quota be placed on Jewish members or that Jews be altogether excluded. It is interesting to note that many of the service clubs in Minneapolis which have traditionally excluded Jews are affiliated with national organizations which have long boasted that their membership is open to all, regardless of creed. One wonders, therefore, how long it will be before these national organizations begin to exert pressure on the Minneapolis foxholes of anti-Semitism.

A close study of the comparative position of Jews in Minneapolis and St. Paul would, as I have tried to indicate, pay some real research dividends. Only a visiting lecturer would be foolhardy enough to anticipate the conclusions of such a study. For what the impression may be worth, however, I am willing to venture a few anticipations. Such a study would demonstrate, I believe, the social origin of group antagonisms. It would sharply call in question the ethnocentric explanation of such antagonisms premised upon an innate "dislike for the unlike." (See, for example, *One America*, the sourcebook edited by Messrs. Brown and Roucek, where this theory, and its misleading implications, have been carried to extreme conclusions.) It would demonstrate that stereotypes exist independently of, and have little relation to, the actual experiences of the individual. With prejudice defined "as a type of stereotype which does not coincide with the facts," our proposed study would show, as Dr. Ronald Lippitt has pointed out, that "the data which shed most light on the real nature of prejudice are to be found in analysis of *the conditions under which* these distorted stereotypes arise, persist, or are changed" (italics mine: see *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March, 1946, pp. 166-176). It would show, in short, that the tendency so noticeable today in the field of "intercultural education" to regard an abstract something called "prejudice" as a universal innate aspect of individual behavior—in much the same manner as theologians regard "original sin"—is likely to prove most misleading. As Dr. Frederic Wertham said recently, in criticizing a similar tendency noticeable among present-day psychoanalysts, "the contradictions of reality can be so detached from their social matrix that they become merely abstract and logical conflicts of a fictitious individuality in splendid isolation."

Carey McWilliams needs no introduction to CG readers or to anyone interested in American group relations. His most recent book, Southern California Country, *was published by Duell, Sloan and Pearce last spring.*

This discussion introduces what Common Ground *hopes will be a series of articles analyzing various American cities where the situation of so-called "minority groups" is either very bad or very good.*

Jewish life in Minnesota

by Bob Ehlert
Photos by David Brewster

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations ... and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.
—The Book of Genesis

The holy men of the Adath Israel Orthodox Synagogue in St. Paul have gathered to fulfill the law on a cold and gray February morning, a day when the barren, snow-covered Minnesota earth seems to taunt the Jewish calendar, which has called for the first day of spring.

But inside the synagogue, there in the half-light provided by a corner window, the warm glow of good tidings and tradition has touched the ceremonial circle of elders. Most of them are clad in prayer shawls, their arms and foreheads bound tightly in leather straps called *tefillin*. Smiles interrupt their concentration occasionally, for this is a happy day, the day of a *bris*.

Rabbi Moshe Klein, a New York *mohel* with a reputation for precision and brevity in the rite of circumcision ("the Yankee Clipper," someone whispers), arrives and attempts to transform the joyous chaos into liturgical order.

"Shhhhhh!!!! Shhhhhh!!!" comes the kindly warning from Rabbi Asher Zeilingold, the shepherd of the 60 families of Adath Israel, one of three Orthodox congregations in the Twin Cities. "It is time for *kveter*, the bringing of the baby."

The 8-day-old son of Kourash and Soheyla' Amrami—Iranian Jews who live in Minnesota now because their war-torn homeland is no haven for the Star of David—is about to perpetuate the covenant God made with Abraham long ago.

A hush falls upon the sanctuary, silencing the women in the kitchen, the mothers and daughters in the outer circle, the prayerful elders with cocked heads, even the curious young boys. The spirit of Elijah the Prophet, for whom a chair is left vacant, seems to travel like a breeze through their hearts and souls.

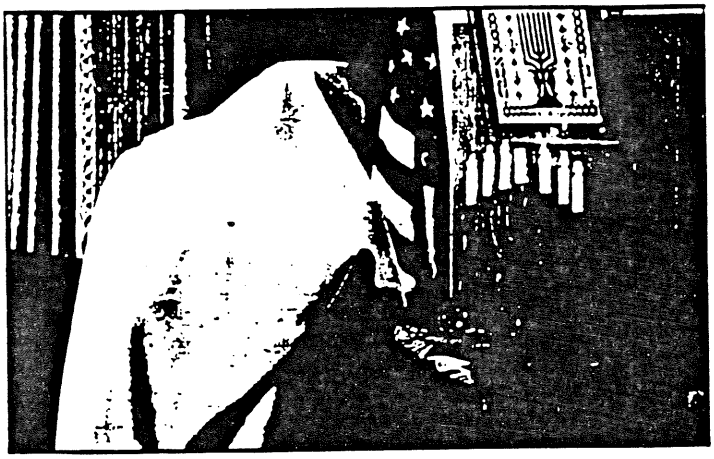
The circumcision procedure, which is swift and sure, draws blood and a whimper from the tiny bundle cradled in the arms of the *sandek*, the ritual seat of honor, which, in this case, is filled by the maternal grandfather.

When it is done, Amrami, the proud father, receives his first-born son back and reveals the child's name for the first time: *Binyomin*, or Benjamin in English. There is a drop of wine for the baby's tongue and a sip from a silver goblet for the father, symbolizing the bond.

"Just as he has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into the life of the Torah," intones Zeilingold.

"Mazel tov!" the holy men chant. "Mazel tov!"

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven....
—Genesis



There was much joy in the synagogue for baby Binyomin. Good food, strong drink and solemn blessings were in abundance at the celebration table. Hope was on the lips of all because another "seed" had taken root.

No matter that this seed will be nurtured in a place remote to the Land of Canaan. The Jews have come as strangers to many doors, in many countries, for many centuries. Not as interlopers, but as contributors, donors of an ancient way and culture that has enriched countless generations.

These United States, this place called Minnesota, has been no exception.

For about 135 years now, Jews have come to Minnesota in search of a better economic, religious or political climate. Kourash Amrami came in 1970, initially to get an education, which he completed at the University of Minnesota.

He grew to love this land, its people and, most of all, its religious freedom. And that is a good thing, for when the shah's rule was overthrown by the Ayatollah Khomeini's Muslim government, it became obvious that he and his family—Orthodox Jews for many generations—might never be able to call Iran home again.

"Since the revolution I will never be as close to Iran," says Amrami, a St. Paul resident who now runs a Persian-rug business called Amin Z in Minneapolis. "There in Iran I am not going to be safe. I feel sad when I see things going on, people getting killed there."

A brother had to flee after being threatened by a hangman's noose. Amrami's home and possessions, which he values at about "half a million dollars," are in the hands of the revolutionaries. Where the Torah was once read and strict Orthodox observance maintained, today Muslims teach

he Koran, and the militants learn war.

Amrami and his extended family ire, perhaps, the most recent wave of Jewish immigrants to the Twin Cities. They follow close behind the 1,500 Russian Jews who came to Minnesota n the 1970s and Ethiopian Jews who ıave just begun to flee their devastated ıomelands for the United States. All ıf these modern immigrants have much in common with those who ame before them.

Jewish life in Minnesota began at the beginning, when the state was still a territory, and men and women of all ethnic backgrounds settled here. On the surface it is a typical story of a people making good on the land. But what seems to separate the Jews from the nearly 50 million immigrants who have come to the United States since 1820 is their tenacious efforts to preserve their heritage—and the trouble they faced sometimes in accomplishing that goal.

About 34,000 Jews live in the North Star state today (less than 1 percent of the Jews in the United States), the majority in urban settings in the Twin Cities. And even if Minnesota is a mere twinkle in the heavens of Jewish history, it burns brightly. That is not to say Jews have always lapped milk and honey from this Land of Lakes. For that is simply not true.

Although life in Minnesota ultimately has been a triumph for most Jews, being a Minnesotan and being Jewish at the same time has proved to be a sticky proposition. Minneapolis and its suburbs, home to 22,000 Jews today, were once dubbed "the capital of anti-Semitism in the United States."

There was a time when Twin Cities Jews were denied membership in fraternal, social, athletic and auto clubs—even administrative positions in the Boy Scouts. Up until Mount Sinai Hospital was built in Minneapolis in 1948 by members of the Jewish community, Jewish doctors had difficulty

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getting jobs at hospitals.

Beginning in 1934 and continuing through 1942, Edward E. Nicholson, dean of student affairs at the University of Minnesota, kept track of "Jew agitators" on the campus. Nicholson shared his secret findings with the FBI and members of anti-Semitic groups such as the Silver Shirts, according to a 1976 article in Jewish Social Studies by Hyman Berman, a professor of history at the university.

Against these debits are some modern-day assets: In 1961 Arthur Naftalin became the first Jewish mayor of Minneapolis; in 1978 Rudy Boschwitz became the state's first Jewish U.S. senator; a guy named Bob Dylan (Robert Zimmerman), who has been many things, but has always been Jewish, will certainly be remembered; sundry others have prospered in business, the arts, politics and government and are positioned as pillars in their respective communities.

The first Jews came to Minnesota around 1850 and settled in and around St. Paul. They were mercantile-class German Jews who were lured mainly by commercial opportunities.

Many of those who followed, however, came from Eastern Europe and were "driven from their homes by religious, cultural, political, economic and social disabilities," writes Berman in a history of Jewish immigration that was included in a collection called, "They Chose Minnesota."

"They arrived speaking German, Yiddish, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Hungarian and a multiplicity of other languages," Berman writes. "Most had left self-contained Yiddish-speaking urban village communities which were breaking down under the pressures of modernization and industrialization. Many, particularly those from Eastern Europe, retained the cultural characteristics of Orthodox piety, including Old World style of dress."

Perhaps the *only* advantage the Eastern European Jews had upon arrival in Minnesota in the 1870s is that their German counterparts had preceded them and accumulated means to help with their settlement. Even before Minnesota became a state in 1858, these German Jews had meshed in the community and established a congregation in 1856 with the forming of Mount Zion Temple, which will celebrate its 130th birthday next year.

In politics of those days, men such as Jacob Jackson Noah, a lawyer, won respect—and some of the first political offices—for Jews. Noah was appointed clerk of the Dakota County District Court and was later elected the first clerk of the Minnesota Supreme Court.

In the 1870s the effects of a mass migration of Jews from Eastern Europe were beginning to be felt in St. Paul. Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Jews were busy establishing themselves as peddlers and merchants, even physicians. But because of language and culture, mainly, a sort of chasm had begun to develop between them and the German Jews. The result was the formation of another congregation, the Sons of Jacob, an Orthodox group. By 1878 a congregation had formed in Minneapolis called Shaarai Tov. It was the predecessor of today's Temple Israel.

The temples and synagogues begat social groups, burial societies and eventually Hebrew schools. And just as the congregations had begun to focus on a needling byproduct of American life—assimilation into the pioneer culture at the expense of their Jewish heritage—Minnesota Jews were confronted with an intense flow of new Jews from Eastern Europe.

Political turmoil and oppression in places such as Russia and Lithuania resulted in a tidal wave of immigrants landing on the shores of the United States in the 1880s.

"Jews were affected by inheritance laws in Russia and Lithuania, which said that only the eldest son in a Jewish family could settle in the same area as his father. That meant all the other children had to migrate, or immigrate," said Marilyn Chiat, an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota who specializes in ancient Near Eastern and Jewish studies. "Still others left because of conscription laws—compulsory military service."

It was during this time that Raleigh Liebenberg's parents fled their Lithuanian house, "a tiny hovel of a home with a dirt floor." The Edina woman, who is 94, recalls the stories her mother and father told of their exodus from Europe in 1885.

"I know that he was going to be forced to join the army, the Russian army, I think. A person could buy his way out of that, but my parents had no money," says Liebenberg, a sprightly woman whose husband, Jack, retired from a successful career in Twin Cities architecture. "So they all jumped in a wagon loaded with hay, and my mother and two babies hid in the hay.... They got out of the country this way and came over in steerage. I recall my mother saying it was a *horrible* trip. They came straight to Minnesota. And they had nothing."

Many had only the clothes on their backs and what they could carry: sabbath candles, kiddush cups and their Torahs, the holy books that defined their very purpose. For in them were the promises God made to Abraham.

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the Earth be blessed . . .

—Genesis

The Torah, like the one Rabbi Barry Cytron held, is func

Such was the case of many who arrived in Minneapolis and St. Paul in those days. They came by the dozen, by the trainload sometimes. It was a minor miracle that enough provisions could be raised to care for them. Following is an account of the arrival of 185 Yiddish-speaking immigrants as reported by the Minneapolis Tribune of July 18, 1882:

"The condition of the 185 people who were sent here, as similar parties have been sent, from Europe, to other American cities without warning, has been materially improved since Saturday. Sunday and yesterday morning they were fed by Rabbi Wechsler (of Mount Zion in St. Paul) from such means as he could personally obtain, and the scenes when they were served with food are described as shocking.

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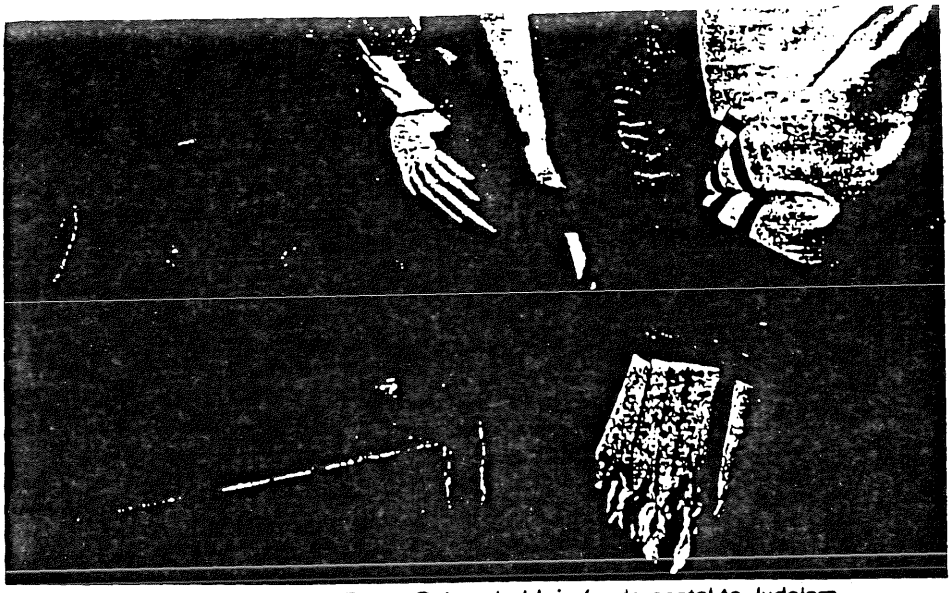

Photo by Art Heger

The Torah, like the one Rabbi Barry Cytron held, is fundamental to Judaism.

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"There was such a rush for the food, such jostling and grabbing, protesting and quarreling, as to leave the looker-on to choose only whether he should regard these people as having had all fine feeling starved out of them, or as the worst lot of selfish mendicants he had ever seen," the writer says.

" . . . But the general opinion, in which our Jewish residents are unanimous, is that these people are really destitute and when they arrived here were on the verge of starvation. . . . "

Commenting on the resolve of those who left everything to come to America, Chiat says, "When I think about the courage of these people—they must have been very desperate."

Overwhelmed by the demand for assistance, the Jewish community turned to the city, which responded in kind with money and shelter—the beginnings of cooperation from the non-

Jews continued on page 12

Jews

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Jewish community, which has continued throughout Minnesota's history. Wechsler and others at Mount Zion devised plans to homestead some of the immigrants in such places as North Dakota, but that immediate plan failed.

Many Jews eventually did homestead in the Dakotas, but few took up farming in Minnesota. Those who did not land jobs at various manufacturing concerns usually went into business for themselves. Many began as peddlers, crisscrossing the Minnesota countryside with various wares and notions that appealed to farm families and the inhabitants of small towns.

Jacob Firestone made such a living when he came to the United States in 1870, settling first in Cleveland before coming to St. Paul in 1877. "He would buy things that he knew the farmer's wife would need, put them in a satchel on his back and stay out on the road for several days at a time," says Ruth Brin of Minneapolis, granddaughter of Firestone and the daughter of Milton P. Firestone, a prominent St. Paul lawyer and civic leader of his day.

But peddling wasn't Jacob Firestone's only talent. A one-time rabbinical student, Firestone once found himself marooned in a small town (he was usually offered a bed in a hayloft when he traveled) that was expecting a new Lutheran minister. One thing led to another, and before long Firestone offered to give a sermon on a Sunday. "The story goes that he was so good the people wanted him to stay," says Brin, adding that Firestone had not made it clear that he was Jewish. "He soon left. He didn't want to explain why he couldn't stay."

Between 1880 and 1920 the Jewish population in Minnesota grew from about 1,000 to between 30,000 and 40,000, according to Berman's history. The majority of these Jews were like Jacob Firestone in that they eventually came to the Twin Cities.

In St. Paul, Jews first settled near downtown, or just west of it. As time has passed, there has been a migration westward along Summit Av. and south toward the river, and then across it to suburbs such as Mendota Heights. The Jewish population in St. Paul and its suburbs is about 9,500 today.

Jews settled in two specific neighborhoods in Minneapolis, one on the south near Franklin and Portland Avs. and the other on the North Side along Lyndale Av. Those are the days Harold Goldberg, 76, remembers so well. He can almost smell them.

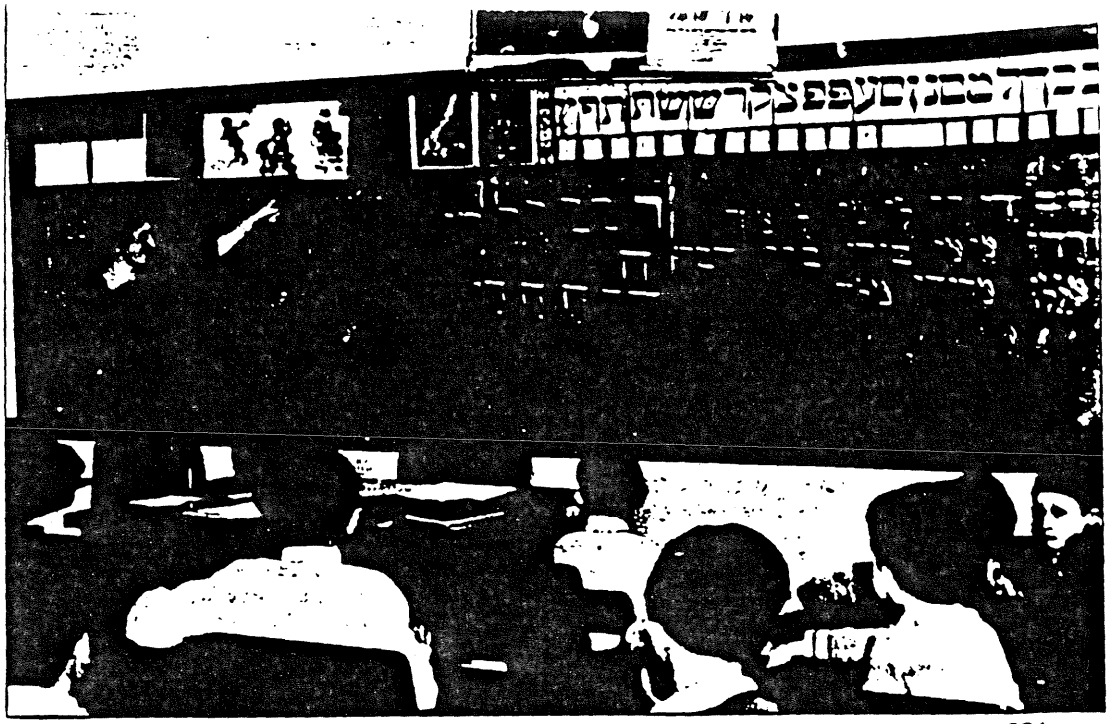
"When there was a Jewish holiday you didn't have to look at the calendar. All you had to do was smell the pleasant odors of cooking coming from all the houses, the chicken and bread," says Goldberg. Within shouting distance in the neighborhood were three first cousins—Hy, Reuben and Barney Berman—all in all representing four separate branches of the Berman family that founded Berman Bros. Buckskin Co. "It was a time and neighborhood when many of our parents spoke Yiddish, but we answered in English ... a time when the gathering place was Brochin's (grocery) at 6th and Lyndale."

Beginning in the '30s, Minneapolis Jews began a migration south and then west to the suburbs of Golden Valley and St. Louis Park—which, combined, account for about 8,500 Jews today.

But not all the Jews moved to the Twin Cities and suburbs when they came to Minnesota. Some made their way out into the hinterlands. From the Iron Range to the Dakotas, from the borders of Canada to Iowa, clutches of Jews settled in rural areas and small towns. There are a total of about 2,500 Jews living in Duluth, Rochester, Hibbing, Virginia, Brainerd and Little Falls, Minn. Many of the peddlers who roamed the back roads were able to turn their trade into small-town department stores. Here, as in the Twin Cities, the Jewish forefathers tried to keep an eye on tradition.

Jacob E. Goldenberg left Minneapolis in 1904 and came to Chisholm, Minn., where he and his family made a go of it as cigarmakers. There was a great demand for good, hand-made cigars in the boom-town saloons of the Iron Range. The Goldenbergs soon parlayed the business into a tobacco distributorship and eventually became wholesalers for everything from candy to liquor, says Minneapolis businessman Kokie Goldenberg, Jacob's son.

There were Jewish cattle merchants, gas-station owners, grocers, jewelers and street cleaners in Chisholm. And as in a lot of other small towns, the Jews there built synagogues and arranged to have teachers imported to instruct their children in Hebrew.



Minnesota Historical Society photo

The drive for learning was strong at places like the Jewish Educational Center, St. Paul, in 1931.

The desire to educate the children was present in both town and country. "Our parents wanted their children to have a better life than they had," says Goldenberg, who attended the University of Minnesota. "They didn't want us to have to do the things they did."

Howard and Ruth Brin were educated in the East, he at Harvard and she at Vassar. "The drive for us (the second and third generations in Minnesota) to get an education was extraordinarily strong," says Howard Brin, whose mother, Fanny Brin, attended the University of Minnesota in 1906.

But all the education, all the community service, all the civic-mindedness in the world has not saved Minnesota Jews from the backwash of anti-Semitism.

There were signs of it as early as the 19th century, but most of those incidents have been interpreted—even by some Jews—as simply another ethnic group "paying its dues." At the turn of the century, however, as the Jewish population in the state rose tenfold, things started to turn ugly.

Even as late as 1948, "Jews were excluded from membership in the Minneapolis Automobile Association,

Jews continued on page 14

continued from page 12

the Minneapolis Athletic Club, the Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions and similar organizations," according to Berman's history. "They could not buy homes in Minneapolis, and Jewish realtors were excluded from the local realty board."

As a boy Howard Brin was beaten up and called a "kike" on his way home from Kenwood School in Minneapolis. "I think Minneapolis was worse than St. Paul," says Ruth Brin today. "I got called names, but he (Howard Brin) got beaten up."

In the '30s a member of the Minneapolis Club extended an invitation to Arthur Brin, Howard Brin's father.

"A banker said to my father one day, 'Arthur, you're here for lunch every day anyhow, how about if they put your name up for membership?' " Howard Brin recalls. "My father said that would be fine—but only if several of his Jewish friends could join at the same time. Nothing ever became of it after that. He was not about to be a token Jew, the court Jew of the Minneapolis Club."

In 1930 Hy Berman (no relation to Prof. Hyman Berman), a Minneapolis businessman, was interested in getting into an executive administration position of the Boy Scouts of America, Region 10, in St. Paul. Feeling he was fully qualified, he never dreamed he would ultimately be turned down because he was Jewish.

"At the time I wasn't aware of anti-Semitism. But to find it first, in the Boy Scouts, that took me back," says Berman, who lives in Golden Valley now. "What happened to the brotherhood? I asked myself. It took me a while to get over that one."

Berman's cousin, Dr. Reuben Berman, was graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1932. Back then, he said, the employment situation for new Jewish doctors was like this: "St. Mary's and old Asbury (Asbury Methodist Hospital, now called Methodist Hospital) accepted Jewish doctors. There were other hospitals, which I won't name, which tolerated them. There were still other hospi-

did not accept Jewish doctors."

Minneapolis businessman-philanthropist Jay Phillips, who is Jewish, helped put an end to any discrimination against Jewish doctors when, in the late 1940s, he led a fund drive (for which he and members of his family were major contributors) to build Mount Sinai Hospital, the first "Jewish" hospital in Minneapolis, which, by the way, has always served non-Jewish patients as well.

When Marilyn Chiat was in training to be a dental hy-

1961 to 1968, said that of being a Jewish candidate: "If you were gonna win, you'd win in spite of it, not because of it."

He said he felt more anti-Semitism during the years leading up to World War II than he felt later on in his political career. "During the Holocaust, now *there* were some insecure feelings," says Naftalin, now a professor with the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota. "How much of the anti-Semitism is gone? How much of it is just repressed? The Jewish community never knows."

> "How much of the anti-Semitism is gone? How much of it is just repressed? The Jewish community never knows."
>
> Arthur Naftalin,
> former mayor of Minneapolis

gienist at the University of Minnesota, she and three other Jewish female classmates were told that there was a quota on Jews, and so only two of the four could pass the training. As a result they were pitted against one another. "That's just the way it was done," she says.

Many a Jew who was born before World War II can tell a similar anti-Semitic war story. Things seemed to climax in 1946 when a journalist, Carey McWilliams, wrote in Common Ground that "one might even say, with a measure of justification, that Minneapolis is the capital of anti-Semitism."

Whether that is or ever was true remains a topic of debate. But even more debatable, perhaps, is the reason for it. To this day many believe St. Paul has been more livable for Jews than Minneapolis. Why?

Prof. Berman sees it this way: "There is a chronological reason for that. There was always a Jewish presence in St. Paul, from the very start ... plus the existence of a Catholic base. In Minneapolis, however, the Jews just suddenly appeared." This sudden appearance, so the theory goes, represented a threat to some non-Jews.

Naftalin, who served as

Naftalin, who is married to a non-Jew and has never really been active in the Jewish cultural or religious community, says Boschwitz is the real phenomenon in Jewish life in Minnesota.

"He is much more identified with the Jewish community.... (His election and reelection) is an indicator of a major change in the state's (anti-Semitic) posture. It says that it is more tolerable to vote for a Jew than a Democrat."

If anti-Semitism were to raise its ugly head again in Minnesota in a blatant manner, it would face a much stiffer, much stronger opposition than ever before. The Jewish Community Relations Council/Anti-Defamation League of Minnesota and the Dakotas is not only a list of Who's Who in the Jewish community, it is a collection of influential citizens of the Upper Midwest.

The Minnesota Jews of today are not the meek, mild and bewildered people who came to the Twin Cities by the trainload 100 years ago. Even though there are fewer Jews than blacks, Indians and Hispanics in the state, they are well-represented among the professions and on

Beyond that, the many stripes of Judaism—Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Orthodox and Hasidic—are well-represented. Upward of 95 percent of the Jewish population in the Twin Cities is enrolled in a temple or synagogue. Talmud-Torah, day schools and Jewish culture groups thrive as well.

What worries Jews here is what worries them everywhere: too much assimilation into the mainstream and, worse yet in the eyes of some, intermarriage.

"The very thing that we wanted to happen—meshing with the community and being accepted—has happened," says Harold Goldberg, the man who grew up on the North Side knowing his Jewish holidays by sight and smell. "And now what has happened? My grandson has befriended a non-Jewish girl. I don't know what will become of that."

According to a recent article in the New York Times, nearly 6 percent of all Jews married non-Jews between 1955 and 1960. Today, according to the article, half of all Jews marry non-Jews, and the Harvard Center for Population Studies has projected that, unless current trends are reversed, there may be only 10,000 identifiable Jews left in America by the year 2076.

As Russian, Ethiopian and Iranian Jews continue to trickle into this country, this state, perhaps more of them will be like Kourash Amrami, the proud father of baby Binyomin.

"The most special thing about life in this country and this state is the freedom, freedom to show your Judaism," he says, his eyes beaming during the celebration of his son's *bris*. "People are reluctant to show themselves as Jews in Iran. Here you can speak your mind."

Rabbi Zielingold and elders of the Adath Israel Orthodox Congregation of St. Paul were doing just that. They were dancing and singing, arm in arm on this holy, happy day.

"Mazel tov!" they cheered at the end. "Mazel tov!"

Bob Ehlert is a staff writer for Sunday Magazine.

JEWS IN MINNESOTA

by HYMAN BERMAN

Reprinted from *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, edited by June Drenning Holmquist and published in 1981 by the Minnesota Historical Society Press

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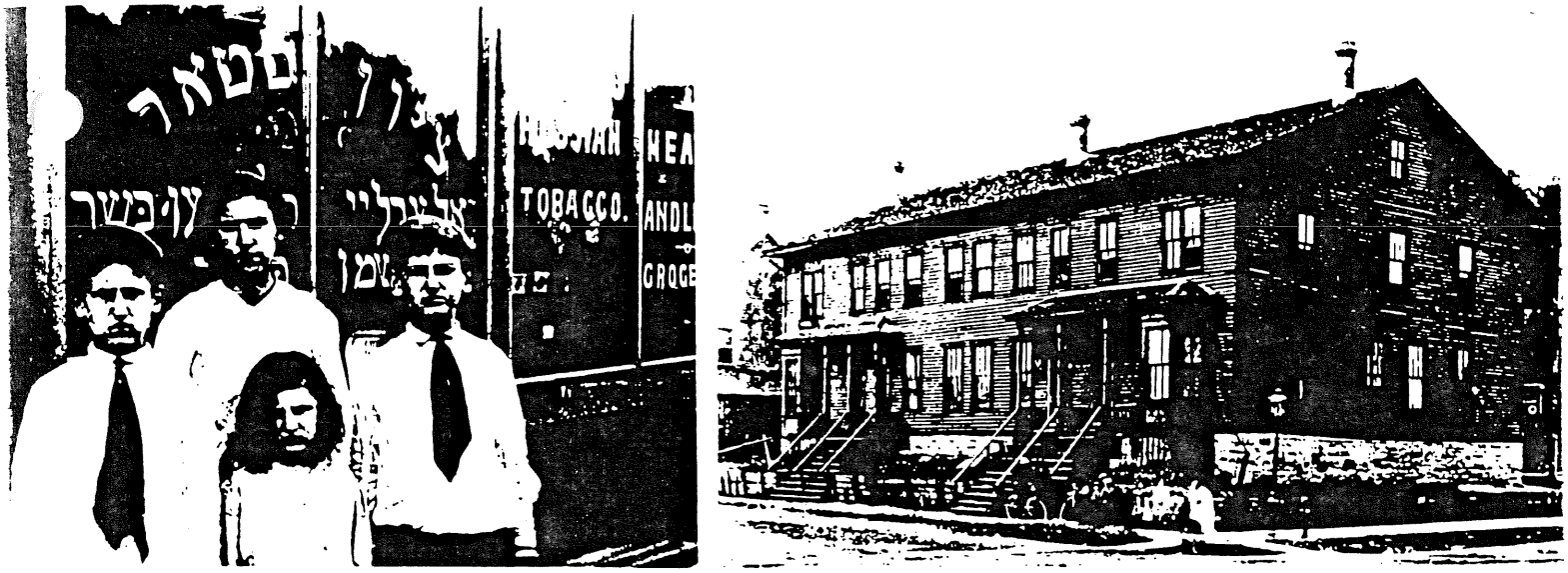
A WORD FROM THE PUBLISHER . . .

The chapter reprinted here was conceived, written, and originally published as an integral part of the landmark work entitled *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, produced in 1981 by the Minnesota Historical Society. Isolating the chapter from its original publication has both advantages and disadvantages. This reprint gives readers at a reasonable cost access to an accurate summary of an ethnic group's experience in Minnesota. It does not, however, present the information within the contexts of other ethnic groups or the broad picture of immigration history. While we recognize the individual reader's intense interest in the Minnesota story of his or her specific ethnic group, we encourage each to view and study that group within these larger contexts.

Three elements vital to the comprehensiveness of *They Chose Minnesota* provide important information that cannot be included in this reprint. First, the 14-page Introduction by editor June Drenning Holmquist reviews the history of immigration to the United States and Minnesota; explains why emigrants left their homelands and were attracted to Minnesota; traces migrants' travel routes; describes the state as a home for immigrants; and discusses immigration law, Americanization programs, and various definitions of ethnicity. Second, the Appendix on Statistics explains the numerous pitfalls and problems inherent in the statistical data incorporated into the text, tables, and maps that appear in each chapter of the book. Readers should be aware, for example, that the lack of consistency in the data obtained from federal censuses makes it virtually impossible to do comparative studies or to arrive at total population figures for some ethnic groups. Third, the Index to *They Chose Minnesota* is a tool to help readers gain a fuller understanding of the relationships among ethnic groups and of the differences and similarities in their experiences as immigrants. Readers are therefore urged to consult *They Chose Minnesota* in order to benefit from all the pertinent information that appears throughout its pages.



THE JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD in North Minneapolis about 1909. At left children stand before a kosher grocery store at 6th Avenue North and Lyndale. Nearby, Jews lived in tenementlike houses located at 6th Avenue North and 3rd Street.

ity rather than stability was the rule on the North Side. By 1915 residents were beginning to leave that district as a consequence of both economic improvement and pressures from the growing Black population there. Most of the Jews located farther north and west in the Homewood district based at North Plymouth and Penn avenues. Through World War II this area had the heaviest concentration of Jews in Minneapolis.[32]

In Duluth, where individual Jews had appeared as early as the 1870s, a range of organizations did not emerge until the city itself became a viable business center after the opening of the Mesabi Iron Range in the 1890s. The earliest arrivals, fairly Americanized Jews from the eastern United States, established businesses and bought houses in the affluent area east of Lake Avenue. Decades later the eastern European laborers settled in the city's West End, many of them renting low-cost housing between 12th and 24th avenues. Never numerous, Duluth Jews totaled at their height in the 1930s about 4,000 people (see Table 26.2). Although they exhibited the same demographic split — an older German and a newer eastern European component — the arrival of one within a decade of the other precluded the wide divisions that characterized the St. Paul and, to a lesser extent, the Minneapolis experience. By 1900 Duluth had four synagogues. Organized Jewish communities with religious, educational, philanthropic, and cultural institutions were also to be found in the range cities of Hibbing, Eveleth, Virginia, and Chisholm. Although populations on the Mesabi fluctuated with the rise and decline of the iron ore industry, Jews continued to live in these northern Minnesota cities in the 1980s.[33]

The neighborhoods reflected the economic circumstances of the residents. Eastern Europeans who continued to settle in the state in large numbers during the first 15 years of the 20th century at first lacked the capital resources to follow the patterns of the well-established earlier arrivals. Carpenters, tailors, shoe repairmen, and other craftsmen frequently set up workshops in their homes; butchers, bakers, and grocers opened small shops nearby. Butchers in particular were in demand because of the Kosher dietary laws almost universally followed by their neighbors. Some immigrants without craft skills acquired them to become "Columbus' Tailors" in the New World.[34]

Many Jews with some knowledge of trading practices learned in their eastern European villages attempted to eke out a livelihood peddling. Although neither Minneapolis nor St. Paul reproduced the pushcart jungles of New York, many hawkers of fruits, vegetables, dry goods, pins, needles, and other cheap commodities were to be found. Some who were able to purchase or hire a horse and buggy expanded their routes beyond the Jewish neighborhoods.[35]

Peddling became widespread throughout the state, and many a hawker settled down as a retail merchant in one of the smaller market towns. Morris Kaplan of Bemidji, for example, began his career that way. He opened a general store in Bemidji in 1908, built the Kaplan Glass Block in 1910, participated in the city's political and economic life, and became active in the state's Socialist party, running for Minnesota's United States Senate seat in 1934.[36]

Few if any Jewish Minnesotans were to be found in such major economic endeavors as iron mining or flour milling, but a handful became grain merchants. Others followed the paths of their New York and Boston counterparts, pioneering as proprietors and entrepreneurs in the manufacture of specialty apparel such as furs and other types of winter clothing. Banking in the state was closed to Jews, as was the lumber industry. Employment in garment and cigar factories did not become widespread until a core of Jewish employers was established in the early 1900s, thus allowing

After the outbreak of World War I in 1914, when Jews living in the battle zones between the Russian and German armies seemed to be in jeopardy, all factions of Minnesota Jewry again responded. Workers donated a day's wages to relieve the starving Russian Jewish masses, the left-wing People's Relief Committee raised funds among its Jewish adherents, and others participated in national campaigns directed by the American Jewish Committee and the Joint Distribution Committee.

Relief efforts during and immediately after World War I and following the Russian Revolution gave Minnesota's eastern European Jews opportunities to assume leadership positions. When alleged "undemocratic" control of international efforts by affluent Jews on the American Jewish Committee was challenged, and a more representative body known as the American Jewish Congress resulted, it was supported by large numbers of Minnesota Jews. The congress sought postwar guarantees of Jewish rights in the newly created European states. In this effort, however, it was to be disappointed.

The rise of Fascism and Nazism in the 1930s, with their threats to the very survival of European Jewry, drew mass protests from Minnesota Jews. When Hitler's government proclaimed the racist Nuremberg Laws in 1935, depriving German Jews of various rights and forbidding them to marry non-Jews, a small number of the state's Jewish leaders advised quiet diplomacy. A majority, however, opted for mass demonstrations, a boycott of German goods, and agitation for immigration of Jewish refugees from Germany to the United States.[67]

Not until 1948 were Displaced Persons permitted to enter the coun[illegible] By 1952, 269 families, consisting of about 800 people, [illegible]d in Minneapolis, 168 families (365 people) in St. [illegible] in Duluth, and a smaller number were sent [illegible]te. Since that time the Jewish pop[illegible]ined relatively stable for th[illegible]

Housing Restrictions

[illegible]and 6,000,000 Euro[illegible]azis during the 1940s [illegible]ct on American Jews. [illegible]ad not done enough to rescue [illegible] those in Minnesota resolved to re[illegible]nce to every threat to the further survival o[illegible]eople. A communal pledge that the Holocaust wou[illegible] be repeated supplied a uniting force for the diverse elements of the state's Jewish communities.[69]

As a result, Zionism gained support in Minnesota. The rise of the Zionist movement, which emphasized creating a Jewish homeland, uniting the Jewish people, and bringing about a Hebrew cultural renaissance, had attracted limited attention in the state during the decade preceding World War I. Embraced by numbers of eastern European Jews, Zionism was at first opposed by many Reform religious leaders, by Socialists, and by well-integrated German Jews, especially those in St. Paul. The leadership provided by Louis C. Brandeis, who served as a United States Supreme Court Justice from 1916 to 1939, reassured German Jews that Zionism was not the divisive expression of disloyalty to the United States that they had at first thought.[70]

After the British proclamation of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 supporting Zionist objectives and the establishment of the Palestine Mandate by the League of Nations in 1922, Minnesota Zionists worked tirelessly to assist in the building of a Jewish national presence in Palestine. Women organized Hadassah groups to provide support for the development of educational, medical, and philanthropic institutions, and the Jewish National Fund was created to raise money to purchase land. In the 1930s Labor Zionists established a training farm north of Minneapolis in Champlin to prepare potential communal farmers for life on the kibbutz, but only a small number of Minnesota Jews emigrated to Palestine. Zionism remained a minority movement in Minnesota with fewer than 2,500 members in its various organizations in 1920. It did not achieve majority status until after 1945.

Although most Minnesotans continued to be supporters from afar, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 brought forth a spontaneous celebratory demonstration as well as a massive fund drive. Arab military attacks on Israel in 1948, 1967, and 1973 resulted in extraordinary financial, political, and emotional efforts by Minnesota Jewish groups. And regularly the annual fund drives conducted by the Jewish federations in the Twin Cities raised money to support institutions in Israel. Minnesota Jews bought bonds, contributed to the Jewish National Fund, to Hadassah Hospital, to Hebrew University, and to social service agencies working to integrate Jews from Europe and from the Arab countries into the new state. Thus events accomplished a redefinition of Zionism. For most Minnesota Jews, it came to mean support for Israel's survival and identification with its aspirations through institutional ties with the Jewish homeland.[71]

In the fall of 1946 Minnesotans were disturbed to find Minneapolis described by the noted journalist Carey McWilliams as "the capital of anti-Semitism in the United States." Jews were not surprised, for they had long lived with job discrimination, housing restriction, stereotyped views, hostility, and other manifestations of anti-Jewish sentiment. Late in the 19th century anti-Semitism had found expression in *Caeser's Column*, a novel by Minnesota Populist leader Ignatius Donnelly, which characterized Jewish middlemen as social enemies. Expressions of anti-Semitism in the 20th century were heard from the pulpits of such popular Minneapolis evangelists as William Bell Riley and Luke Rader. Social discrimination was manifested by the inability of Jews to gain membership in many local groups. Jewish country clubs, like Oak Ridge in Minneapolis and Hillcrest in St. Paul, had been started in the 1920s because existing clubs were closed to them. As late as 1948 Jews were excluded from membership in the Minneapolis Automobile Association, the Minneapolis Athletic Club, the Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, and similar organizations.[72]

They could not buy homes in certain sections of Minneapolis, and Jewish realtors were excluded from the local realty board. Jewish physicians had difficulty acquiring hospital residencies, compelling the Minneapolis community to

build Mount Sinai, a Jewish hospital which opened in 1948. Nationally teaching was becoming an upward-mobility route for educated second-generation Jews, but few were employed in Minneapolis. And Jews were conspicuous by their absence as employees of major Minneapolis retail, banking, and manufacturing establishments. Similar patterns of discrimination were discernible to a lesser degree in other parts of the state.

But it was the successful use of anti-Semitism as a political weapon during the 1930s that caused Minnesota Jews to organize countermeasures. Coinciding with the rise of Nazism, countless Fascist political groups acquired recruits in the state. Particularly successful were the Silver Shirts and Father Charles Coughlin's Social Justice movement. By calling attention to the fact that some Jews were prominent supporters of Governors Floyd B. Olson and Elmer A. Benson of the Farmer-Labor party and that a number were employed by state agencies and the governor's office, these groups attempted to equate Jewishness with radicalism and Communism.[73]

Although such propaganda was not overwhelmingly successful, some elements among Minnesota's old economic and political elites employed the same tactics to discredit and defeat the Farmer-Labor administration. Anti-Semitic whispering campaigns, posters, and pamphlets were used by Ray P. Chase and one segment of the Republican party to defeat Elmer Benson's re-election efforts in the 1938 race for governor. The participation of Jewish trade unionists Sander D. Genis, Rubin Latz, and Michael L. Finkelstein in the industrial union organizing drives of the 1930s gave anti-Semites further reasons to raise funds from leading Minnesota banks and companies to end Farmer-Labor domination of the state's executive branch. Their efforts were successful. After Benson was defeated, Republicans occupied the Minnesota governorship until 1955.

In response the Minnesota Jewish Council came into being as an investigative, lobbying, and educational agency. Under the energetic leadership of Samuel L. Scheiner, its executive director during 1939–44, 1946–51, and 1953–74, the council worked openly and secretly to combat anti-Semitism. Little progress was achieved, however, until after national attention had spotlighted the Minneapolis situation. Coming so soon after the nation was repelled by the revelations of Jewish genocide in Europe, the 1946 pronouncement forced Minneapolitans to recognize that only a narrow line separated racial prejudice from genocide.[74]

Elected in 1945, Mayor Hubert H. Humphrey headed a new city administration which undertook to eliminate this blot on Minneapolis' reputation. Humphrey appointed a blue-ribbon Mayor's Council on Human Relations, which surveyed the local situation and, in the course of the years from 1946 to 1949, proposed ordinances to assure civil rights and discourage housing and job discrimination. On the state level Republican Governors Edward J. Thye and Luther W. Youngdahl sponsored measures to outlaw discrimination and participated in educational efforts to eliminate anti-Semitism. Prominent ministers joined rabbis and community leaders to prevent rabid anti-Semites like Gerald L. K. Smith, leader of the America First party, from using city-owned halls to preach his message of hate. Public educational endeavors were intensified by the Catholic archdiocese, the American Lutheran church, and other Christian bodies. Pulpit exchanges between rabbis and priests were instituted. Candidates for public office were closely questioned about their attitudes toward civil rights. The onslaught of these activities, coupled with the economic boom that followed World War II, abated many overt manifestations of anti-Semitism and discrimination.

Nevertheless Jews remained vigilant. The Minnesota Jewish Council, which evolved into the Minnesota Jewish Community Relations Council and then merged with the Anti-Defamation League of *B'nai Brith* in 1975, continued to function as an educational and lobbying body on human rights and human relations. One legacy of the earlier troubles was a continuing commitment to civil rights and the fostering of a society of opportunity for all free from discrimination. As early supporters of the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Jewish leaders regarded civil rights for all as a guarantee of human rights for Jews.[75]

These attitudes help to explain the consistently liberal voting record of Minnesota Jews since the 1930s. Before that time their allegiance had been almost evenly divided between Republican and opposition candidates, but after the advent of the New Deal, they voted overwhelmingly for Farmer-Labor and Democratic candidates. In the 1970s, however, as some successful Jews began voting their economic and social self-interest, the balance again shifted toward a more even Democratic Farmer-Labor and Independent Republican split.[76]

As they became more secure after the 1950s, Jews also ran for public office with greater frequency instead of occupying less visible staff and support positions as they had in the past. Their success at the polls, not only in legislative and local offices but also in the state-wide arena, was one measure of declining prejudice. Arthur E. Naftalin served as mayor of Minneapolis from 1961 to 1969; Lawrence D. Cohen filled that post in St. Paul from 1972 to 1976; and Rudolph E. Boschwitz became a United States senator from Minnesota in 1978.[77]

Jewish Communities in the Postwar Era

By the 1950s the early social and ethnic divisions between German and eastern European Jews in Minnesota had weakened. Communal integration had at last been achieved in part because the eastern Europeans and their descendants had attained geographic and occupational mobility, and in part because of their numerical predominance in the Twin Cities. The bastions of German-Jewish exclusiveness slowly gave way, until by the 1950s even in such old, elite institutions as Mount Zion Temple distinctions between the two groups could no longer be discerned.[78]

The change had come gradually. Until the end of World War II, poverty among eastern European Jews was endemic. Most petty traders remained at that level for their entire lives, living a hand-to-mouth existence. Fewer than 1 in 10