

**THE HISTORY OF
THE JACKSONVILLE JEWISH CENTER**

1901 to 1960

By

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IN APPRECIATION

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THE BEGINNINGS THROUGH THE THIRTIES

Although the Jacksonville Jewish Center began its formal existence as an Orthodox congregation on December 5, 1901, the circumstances which led to its formation occurred in the 1860s. The formation of the congregation was directly due to the huge numbers of persecuted and degraded Jews emigrating from eastern Europe to the United States. The first waves of immigration came from the ghettos in Russian Poland, from the Baltic communities, from the Ukraine, and from Byelo Russia in 1863 with the enactment of oppressive measures by Czar Nicholas I. Circumstances worsened in 1881 with the assassination of Czar Alexander II by revolutionaries which led to orchestrated anti-Jewish programs. The infamous "May Laws" in 1882 reduced the Jews to further poverty, hopelessness, and dependency on charity for subsistence. These drastic changes led to a huge increase in the number of immigrants in the 1880s, and the number soared with many more arriving in the 1890s.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the fate of the Jews in neighboring eastern European countries was infected by similar perils. In Hapsburg (Polish) Galicia, as in Russia itself, the economic system no longer afforded Jews an opportunity to subsist by working the soil and at the same time they were excluded from participating in the incipient industrial revolution. They were reduced to abject poverty and hopelessness. In Romania, the government launched its own anti-Jewish legal restrictions. In the midst of a nation-wide famine, physical assaults on Jews broke out in the cities of Bucharest, Jassy, and Arad. Jews frantically departed Romania. The now wide-spread waves of persecution and violence throughout eastern Europe pushed emigration to new heights.

Most of the eastern European Jews entered the United States by way of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and other ports of entry in the Northeast. Most of these immigrants remained in the areas near the ports where they entered, forming in the process large urban ghettos of their own. When the effort to maintain their subsistence became difficult, some voluntarily chose or were persuaded to migrate to other communities in the South and West in an effort to make themselves self-sustaining. It was this secondary migration that brought the earliest eastern European immigrants to Jacksonville.

An early immigrant from eastern Europe to Jacksonville was Harry Goldman from Pushalot, a village near the city of Ponevez in Lithuania. He arrived in Jacksonville in 1887 at the age of twenty-four, after having first lived in Philadelphia. He was first a peddler, but in 1894 he obtained a position as an inspector with the city health department. Although he was not a founder of the congregation, having moved to Atlanta prior to the event, he was one of the leaders in the purchase in 1905 of both the cemetery and the site for the proposed synagogue building. Another early settler in Jacksonville was Elias H. Pilton, who arrived in Jacksonville before 1888. One of the first Romanian Jews to appear in the City Directory was David Rippa in 1892. In the same year the names of the Ossinsky brothers, Alex and Morris, appear. The Ossinskys were from Vilna in Lithuania. Others who arrived prior to 1893 were Philip Ossinsky, Louis Rosenstein, Max Frank, and Abraham Hirsch. There were probably a few more.

By the middle of the 1890s, there were five Orthodox Jewish families in Jacksonville who believed that an Orthodox congregation could be organized. At first the group met together for services on the High Holy Days. When the numbers increased, services were held in the hall of the Masonic Temple located at the corner of Broad and Forsyth streets.

To understand this drive to create a new synagogue when there was already in existence in Jacksonville a well-organized one led by an ordained rabbi and supported by an affluent community, one must examine the religious and social life then available to this group of immigrants. The Jacksonville Jewish community which dates back to the 1850s consisted up to 1890 almost entirely of German and Prussian born Jews and their offspring. The first attempt to organize in 1867 created a group committed to the Ashkenazic Orthodox discipline with a number of the individual members personally observant of the principles of Orthodox Judaism. The report of the organizing meeting stated: "the object of the assemblage is to be the organization of a society for the worship of the only true God - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - after the peculiar faith and manner of his ancient people, the Jews." The early effort failed. There were not enough Jews to support financially a synagogue. In 1882, the congregation acting as "Israelites of Florida" and not as "Jews" as they did in 1867, named itself "Temple Ahaveth Chesed" and received a corporate charter. Shortly thereafter, the adherence of the congregation to Orthodox principles gave way to the winds of the rising Reform theology and innovations.

In 1886 the congregation officially sanctioned radical changes in its synagogue services and practices. The changes were all part of the effort to be more compatible with the American culture. In order to achieve such purpose, the congregation believed that they had to ensure that Jewish worship looked no different in form than that of their Christian neighbors. This followed the drive of the individual members to Americanize themselves even if it were to be at the expense of their religious convictions.

By 1892, the synagogue officially abandoned the practice of men wearing head coverings and taleisim at services. English was now freely substituted for Hebrew, creating a service in English punctuated with Hebrew. All references to the nationalistic yearnings of the Jewish people for return to Zion were omitted from the prayer book. Dietary laws were no longer observed. The congregation was now in opposition to all tenets of traditional Orthodox Judaism. Certainly the group of intensely religious Orthodox Jews immigrating to Jacksonville in the 1890s could not be expected to have their religious needs met by affiliating with the Reform Temple as it then existed. Only the creation of a new Orthodox synagogue could meet their needs.

Another factor in the decision to build their own synagogue was the need to provide for their cultural and social needs as well as their religious demands. Substantial differences existed between the Reform German Jewish community and the eastern European immigrants. The newly arrived immigrants were mostly poor; their main language of communication was Yiddish; they were Orthodox in their religious life; and they were strongly Zionist. On the other hand, the German Jews spoke English and to some extent held on to the use of the German language; they were economically secure

and in many cases rather affluent; they followed a radically modified form of Jewish worship; they were integrated into the business, civic, and cultural life of the general community; and they had become anti-Zionist in their outlook.

Not only were the differences between the two groups pronounced, but the strong stand of Reform Judaism in America up to the 1890s in opposing immigration of eastern European Jews to this country had created an emotional reaction on the part of the eastern European Jews. The term, "Deutsch Yahudim," was spoken of with disdain and even animosity. This reaction was not without some basis since the German Jewish community in America had opposed Jewish immigration in the 1860-1890 period. Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, leader of the Reform movement, urged, "let those who do not possess a useful trade stay in Europe for we have enough beggars and humbug-seeking vagabonds here." Another time, he observed: "We are Americans and they are not. We are Israelites of the nineteenth century in a free country, and they gnaw the bones of the past centuries. The good reputation of Judaism must naturally suffer materially which must without fail lower our social status."

The German Jewish community in Jacksonville generally endorsed these feelings. The members of the Temple Ahaveth Chesed had become leading merchants and artisans in the city and were rapidly assimilating into the general culture. An indication of the extent to which the members of that community had established status was the election of several to political and civic positions in the city. The thought of losing these gains because of the expected negative reaction of the general community to the influx of eastern European Jews to Jacksonville prevented a positive acceptance of these immigrants to the community.

Assimilation of the immigrants into the existing German Jewish community seemed an impossible solution. Only the creation of a new Orthodox synagogue could meet their needs. Meanwhile, a continuing influx of Orthodox Jews increased the number of families to approximately forty by 1901, when a new Orthodox congregation was legally incorporated. A proposed charter of incorporation filed in the Circuit Court on November 2, 1901, was approved by Judge R. M. Call on December 5, 1901. The original name as it appears in the charter was "The Hebrew Orthodox Congregation B'Nai Israel." The name was later shortened to Congregation B'Nai Israel.

The strong sense of loyalty to their religious convictions is revealed in the language of the charter when they named the entity and declared that the object of the congregation was "to hold and conduct religious services according to the Hebrew form of worship" and that the "qualification of the members of said congregation shall be good moral standing and Hebrew or Jewish nationality." Their statements in the charter defined the reasons that a new synagogue was needed to accommodate their religious aspirations, their commitments to the peoplehood of Israel, and their nationalistic hopes for a restored Zion.

The incorporators listed in the charter were Max Frank, Samuel Controvitz, E. H. Pilton, Morris Wexler, A. Hirsch, Alex Ossinsky, and Louis Rosenstein. The first officers

as named in the charter were Max Frank, president; Samuel Controvitz, vice-president; Louis Rosenstein, secretary; Alex Ossinsky, treasurer; and Elias H. Pilton, Morris Wexler, and A. Hirsch, trustees. The incorporators were a mixture of immigrants from several countries including Russia, Romania, and the Baltic countries.

Other presentations of the origin of the synagogue suggest that the founders of the synagogue were all immigrants from Pushalot, Lithuania. There were, however, no Pushaloters among the original organizers although there were some in the original membership. Most of the Pushaloters came later. In 1911 a Pushaloter Relief Society was organized. There were few Pushaloters other than Harry Goldman in the leadership of the congregation until the 1920s.

The first priorities of the newly formed congregation were to make available facilities for providing kosher meats and supplies and to secure a mohel (a qualified person to perform circumcisions). Synagogue functions were secondary since there were some skilled lay persons on hand who could lead services. The need for an ordained English speaking rabbi was not an immediate need. In the European community from which the immigrants came, rabbis were not needed for each congregation, but a "Rav"(highly educated ordained scholar) was usually available for the larger community or the area at large. In filling their priority needs, the congregation was fortunate in being able to engage Rev. Benjamin Safer in 1902 as cantor, baal koreah (Torah reader), and teacher. In addition to his synagogue functions, he was also able to serve as a mohel and as shochet. In the latter role, and with the financial assistance of the congregation, Rev. Safer established a kosher meat market.

Although the Hebrew School was organized as a separate institution, it was founded at the same time that the congregation came into existence and by the same leaders. In the early period of its development it was known as the Jacksonville Hebrew School. Its early history was that of a typical European "cheder" with the Rev. Safer as the teacher instructing in his own home or in the homes of members with assistance from some of the members of the congregation.

By 1905 with more immigration from Russia, Romania, Poland, other areas of eastern and central Europe and even England, the membership had increased to 75 families. With the increase in numbers and the emergence of a common religious bonding came the problems of how to create the needed infrastructure for a congregation. The obvious needs were for an Orthodox cemetery, a synagogue building, and school facilities.

On July 10, 1905, the congregation purchased from the Jacksonville Cemetery Association a parcel of land, approximately two acres, located on Winona Road (now known as the Old Cemetery) for the sum of \$1,000 with a down payment of \$300 and the balance financed by the seller. Family plots consisting of eight graves were sold to the members of the congregation for \$16.

At the same time, the congregation took the first step towards the erection of a suitable edifice to house its religious and educational activities by purchasing on July 24,

1905, a lot, 105 feet by 105 feet, at the corner of Jefferson and Duval streets in Lavilla, an area which had once been considered a fashionable residential section. The site was selected because most of the members lived close by and many of the congregants' businesses were also located in the area. It is reported that when the lot was purchased, the congregation had a total of \$50 on hand to apply to the purchase price. Consequently portions of the lot were sold to Harry Goldman, a member of the congregation, reducing the size of the lot to 70 feet by 70 feet. The campaign to raise the \$25,000 needed for construction began soon after the purchase of the land and the planning for the construction began immediately. Much financial help came from other Jews and non-Jews in the community as well as Jews outside of Jacksonville. The Weinkle brothers of Savannah donated a carload of lumber. One of the brothers, M. J. Weinkle, later moved to Jacksonville and became a member of the congregation.

The building committee consisted of Elias H. Pilton, chairman; Max Frank, vice-chairman; Frank Bandel, treasurer; Lionel D. Joel, secretary; and Isaac Davis, David Davis, Harry Glickstein, Judah Joel, Louis Winkler, Morris Wexler, Abraham Hirsch, and Alex Ossinsky. When the cornerstone was laid on September 6, 1908, the members of the building committee enclosed a statement, signed in Hebrew by all members of the committee which concluded with the words:

With great pleasure, through diligent work by the Building Committee and the members of our society, have now succeeded in building this synagogue. Today we have the honor of laying the cornerstone to the First Orthodox Synagogue in Jacksonville. (Underlining in original manuscript.)

The building was completed and dedicated in 1909. The officers of the congregation at the time of the dedication were: Isaac Davis, president; Harry Glickstein, vice-president; M. R. Glickstein, treasurer; and M. Bandel, secretary. Even at that time, priority was given to the necessity for the provision of adequate school facilities for the education of the children, this being as important as the need for worship facilities. The lower floor was devoted entirely to school purposes, and was divided into three classrooms and a larger room for assembly purposes. The main floor served as the sanctuary proper with a gallery reserved for women.

With the new building facilities available, the Jacksonville Hebrew School, which in reality was never independent, became a direct responsibility of the synagogue even though the school continued to be known as the "Jacksonville Hebrew School." It was also referred to as the "Talmud Torah." The congregation expanded its educational program by bringing in additional teachers. The earliest teachers remembered by members of the congregation were Messrs. Rosenberg, Sinai, and Silverstein, and a Mrs. Reznick. Hebrew School at this time consisted of one-hour sessions, held daily, Monday through Thursday, in the afternoons after attendance in the public schools. The goals were limited to the acquisition of the ability to read Hebrew (which took priority), the acquisition of some Hebrew vocabulary, familiarity with some prayers and synagogue skills, and knowledge of the Sabbath and holidays.

Following the completion of the synagogue building, the congregation began to reach a degree of stability due in part to the improved financial position of many of its members. Within a decade after the dedication of the new building, the congregation was, however, confronted with a new threatening trend among its membership. Some of its most important members who had been successful in business were being drawn into the urge to become Americanized -- the same urge which had led the Reform congregation in Jacksonville in the 1880s to make modifications to and deviations from its original Orthodox commitment. Some of these of B'Nai Israel members were original founders of the congregation and major participants in the building of the synagogue building, and were among those who had proclaimed at the ground breaking ceremonies their joy in laying the cornerstone for the "First Orthodox Synagogue in Jacksonville."

Their zeal for Orthodoxy gave way to the desire to be more a part of the American culture. The obvious conclusion was that they could more readily become part of the American mainstream by being part of the Reform community. Their improved financial status made them more socially acceptable to members of the Reform community. They enrolled their children in the Temple Sunday School, a step in their quest for acceptance. Some individuals then changed their membership to the Temple. Others remained members of B'Nai Israel while enrolling their children in the Temple Sunday School. In some cases they remained active in the leadership of B'Nai Israel and in the Daughters of Israel. From those who remained some were leaders in the development of the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Some of the women of B'Nai Israel, who had shown their Zionist loyalties by reactivating Hadassah in 1925 still enrolled their children in the Temple Sunday School even though its teachings were influenced by the anti-Zionist position of the Reform movement. The loss of members to Reform Judaism represented only a minority in the overall membership, and did not deter the growth of the congregation since other immigrants committed to Orthodoxy continued to arrive in Jacksonville in the first two and a half decades of the 1900s. The movement to Reform even by a minority, however, influenced the counter moves of the congregation culminating in the dramatic actions taken in 1926.

The growth of the eastern European immigration in the early 1900s swelled the size of the existing community. This continued influx created a need for facilities to provide for the social and cultural needs of the growing congregation, needs which were not being met by the existing institutions. A group of young Jewish men, almost all of whom were members of B'Nai Israel created a new organization, the Young Men's Hebrew Association ("Y.M.H.A"). A building was erected in 1914, providing an auditorium with a balcony (also used as a gym and basketball court), a meeting room, office, and showers and lockers in the basement. Its program offered athletic, social, and cultural activities for the community. Its program was supported almost entirely by members of B'Nai Israel, very few members of the Reform community participating. The building was located across the street from the B'Nai Israel synagogue and became the social hub for the Orthodox community. Many of the affairs of the synagogue were held in the Y.M.H.A. building. The leadership of the Y.M.H.A. came almost entirely from B'Nai Israel. Henry Hertzberg, the executive secretary of the Y.M.H.A., also served as

recording secretary and financial secretary of B'Nai Israel, and was a prime mover in the evolution of the synagogue into the Jacksonville Jewish Center.

In April 1917, America entered World War I and a number of members of the Orthodox community enlisted in the Armed Services. A large army encampment known as Camp Johnson was established where the Naval Air Station is now located. On weekends, Jewish soldiers found a warm, hospitable community in Jacksonville who ministered to their religious, social, and personal needs. The location of the Y.M.H.A. and the B'Nai Israel synagogue created excellent facilities for the staging of activities for the servicemen. Temple Ahavath Chesed also provided its facilities for religious services on Friday evening and social events on Saturday evening. Some of the servicemen who came to Camp Johnson from other cities settled in Jacksonville after the war and became members of the synagogue.

The congregation's first ordained rabbi, Dr. Salo Stein, arrived in 1919. It was at this time that late Friday evening services and mid-week evening lectures were instituted in developing a more complete program for the synagogue. It was during Rabbi Stein's tenure that the educational effort was expanded to include a Sunday Religious School program. The teachers were volunteers and were mostly adult children of the original immigrants. Troop 14, Boy Scouts of America, was organized by the congregation on February 1, 1919. Rabbi C. H. Press succeeded Dr. Stein in 1921 and remained for a period of two years.

Except for the presidencies of Max Frank, its first president, H. Hammernan and Isaac Davis, the leadership of the congregation in the early years was centered in the presidency of Elias H. Pilton, a dominant leader in the formation of the congregation, and in its early growth. He was one of the founders in 1901, and served as the chairman of the building committee which was responsible for the construction in 1908 of the synagogue building. He led the congregation from 1910 until 1923 .

An important development was the organization by Rabbi Press of the Daughters of Israel in April 1922, as the ladies auxiliary of the congregation. The organization, which later became known as the Center Sisterhood, was led by Mrs. Harry Finkelstein, its first president. It immediately dedicated itself to the attainment of the success of the Hebrew and Sunday Religious Schools, taking responsibility for their maintenance. In addition to its role in supporting Jewish education, the organization aided the congregation financially and assisted in the various social and philanthropic activities of the congregation.

David Moscovitz became president of the congregation in 1923, succeeding Elias H. Pilton who was designated as honorary president. Other officers taking over in the 1923 change of administration were: Mendel Bucholtz, vice-president; Henry Hertenberg, recording and financial secretary; and Judah Joel, treasurer. Trustees were: David Singer, chairman, Nathan Paul, and Morris Baker.

During the period from the date that the B'Nai Israel Congregation purchased its cemetery property in 1905, through the early 1920s, the maintenance of the cemetery became a burden, and the condition of the property steadily deteriorated, to the point that the cemetery committee of the congregation saw the need of the Evergreen Cemetery Association to take over the ownership and maintenance of the cemetery. The cemetery was deeded to the Evergreen Cemetery Association in November 1923. The congregation paid the Association \$1,500 to build a brick wall along the front of the cemetery and to make other improvements. In turn, the Association set aside the cemetery conveyed to it and four additional acres for the exclusive use of the congregation.

In 1924, at the insistence of the Daughters of Israel, Rabbi Arthur Ginzler was elected rabbi with the responsibility of supervising the daily Hebrew School and the Sunday Religious School and directing the religious activities of the congregation. With the resignation of Rabbi Ginzler in 1925 to occupy the pulpit of the synagogue in St. Augustine, the congregation found itself once again without rabbinical leadership.

In the early part of 1925, the congregation opened a branch for its school in a dwelling located at Fourth and Pearl streets, but this was discontinued in the summer of 1926 with the impending construction of the new home of the congregation at Third and Silver streets. Bus service was offered at the time for students living at a distance from the downtown location.

It was at this time that the congregation began to realize that it was facing a very critical point in the course of its development. The children of the earlier members had now reached adulthood and indications were that their lives were not always influenced by the traditional values of their parents. The educational facilities for the younger children were inadequate having still not progressed beyond the typical "cheder" stage. The federal legislation reducing immigration from eastern Europe was depriving the congregation of new sources of members and the vitality to be gained from such immigration needed for the continuation of the traditional Jewish way of life. The Lavilla area itself was in the process of change and was beginning to suffer an erosion in the quality of the neighborhood. Members were now moving from the area to Springfield and to Riverside. The action of some members to enroll their children in the Temple Sunday School continued and with it some loss of parents as members.

Some of the congregation's young leaders realized that if these developments continued and if no steps were taken to make changes in the current educational and religious approaches to Jewish life, the congregation might not be able to guarantee the future of traditional Jewish life in Jacksonville. Abe Newman, one of the new young leaders, spearheaded an effort to find solutions. The effort led to the organization of the younger members into the Hebrew Junior League. The organization was formed February 18, 1926, with the purpose of emphasizing the spiritual and cultural needs of the congregation. Over a hundred young men and women became affiliated. At the first meeting Harry Gendzier was elected president. As part of its program late Friday evening services were conducted by the members of the League.

The League also turned its attention to the synagogue's Scouting program. The League, together with the Daughters of Israel, supported the effort of Marcella Richardson in organizing a Girl Scout Troop named "Violet Troop No. 4" on June 6, 1926. The Boy Scout Troop 14, led by Alfred Stein, as scoutmaster, continued to offer the only program for boys sponsored by the congregation.

It was largely through the activities of the League that the congregation realized the need for stronger rabbinical leadership. The appeal of Harry Gendzier played a key role in bringing Dr. Samuel Benjamin to the congregation as rabbi. One of the most significant changes in the history of the congregation took place on April 1, 1926, when Rabbi Benjamin, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, was elected rabbi with the recommendation of Dr. Cyrus Adler, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Benjamin represented the American educated type of rabbi, holding a degree from Brown University, a degree of Doctor of Jurisprudence from New York University, and ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He had previously served as rabbi of the Anshe Emes Congregation in Cleveland where he reorganized the congregation into a synagogue center known as the Cleveland Jewish Center, which at that time was the largest institution of its kind in the country.

Rabbi Benjamin had resigned his rabbinic position in Cleveland to go to Palestine in June 1923, where he played a prominent role in the civic, economic, and political life of the country. Upon his return from Palestine in 1926, Dr. Benjamin toured the South raising funds on behalf of the Jerusalem Synagogue Center Fund. While in Jacksonville he had been urged by members of the congregation to become the rabbi of the then Orthodox congregation.

With the arrival of Rabbi Benjamin in 1926, a tremendous change took place in the life of the congregation. He was not only an extremely capable executive, an excellent educator, a respected scholar, but he was also a dynamic and persuasive speaker. Since he was capable of occupying the pulpit of a larger and more affluent synagogue, there is little doubt that he accepted the Jacksonville position as a challenge. On the one hand there was a challenge to take a small struggling Orthodox synagogue and to develop it into a solid Conservative congregation. More inviting perhaps was the challenge to develop a united vibrant Jewish community center in Jacksonville as he had done in Cleveland.

His first achievement was converting of B'Nai Israel into a well-organized operation with adequate personnel. His next accomplishment was the recruiting of the top leadership in the community and securing a commitment of financial support by the most economically capable persons in the traditional community. Shortly after his arrival, the mode of worship was changed to a more Conservative pattern and mixed seating was introduced. Cantor Aaron Edgar was added to the staff, giving the congregation its first complete professional staff. Although there was some opposition to the changes by the more Orthodox elements in the synagogue, there was no split in the congregation. The reason a split did not occur was the policy of the synagogue to serve the needs of those who were seeking changes in the religious program along the line of Conservative Judaism while still trying to meet the needs of the Orthodox group. The only change perhaps was

the moving of a previous small Orthodox group which had been conducting services since 1923 in the home of Jacob Safer at 149 West Third Street into the 4th and Pearl streets facility formerly occupied by B'Nai Israel as a school. This group later became a separate congregation, but after a short period of existence, it merged back into the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Most of the members of this group had remained members of B'Nai Israel and the Jacksonville Jewish Center even while being members of the separate group.

In addition to the changes in religious practices, other changes were forthcoming. The budget of the congregation tripled, and the financial operations were placed on a sound basis. A well-organized, successful campaign which was launched in August 1926, to enroll new members, resulted in the membership reaching 200. The Hebrew School and Sunday Religious School were reorganized with Joseph Schenkerman, a capable and professionally trained principal, being engaged to lead the school. The Hebrew School increased its enrollment to 125 pupils, all of whom were attending classes on a daily basis. A curriculum was adopted patterned after those followed by the more progressive Hebrew schools at that time, and classes were arranged in an organized sequence. There were three grade levels, plus a bar mitzvah class for the boys, when the school was reorganized.

At the time that these changes were beginning to take place, the officers of the congregation were David Moscovitz, president; Mendel Bucholtz, vice-president; Judah Joel, treasurer; Hyem Kramer, secretary; and Paul Newman, Max Rubin, and Moses Feldman, trustees. There was an active Board of Education with Joseph Witten, as chairman, and J. H. Slott, as secretary. The other members of the Board of Education were Jacob Lapinsky, Rev. Benjamin Safer, Rev. Mathis Becker, Max Rubin, Louis Richardson, Dr. J. T. Wilensky, M. J. Weinkle, and Harry Finklestein. Rev. Mathis Becker had come to Jacksonville from Savannah in 1924 to fill the role of shochet for a second kosher market. He was named by the congregation as one of the two recognized reverends of the congregation, the other being Rev. Safer. The term "reverend" was a designation given by the congregation to those acting as functionaries of the synagogue. There were other functionaries recognized by the congregation. J. B. Menkes was recognized in 1912 and A. H. Zeligsohn in 1914 as functionaries of the synagogue at times when Rev. Safer was not officially engaged by the congregation for synagogue functions.

The cemetery committee at that time consisted of Chairman David Davis and members Max Rubin, E. H. Pilton, Louis Bucholtz, and Neal Finkelstein. Henry Herzenberg acted as "Gabai" of the Chevra Kadisha. Other members of the Chevra Kadisha were Rev. B. Safer, S. Cantor, D. Rippa, Harry Klein, S. Ghelerter, and Rev. M. Becker.

The Daughters of Israel continued to be extremely important in the work of the congregation and with the revitalization process sparked by the election of Rabbi Benjamin, the leadership of the organization was revamped in April 1926, with Mrs. Harry Finklestein, the first president, once again assuming the presidency. She had the support of an outstanding group of women. The members of the executive board in addition to Mrs. Finkelstein were: Mrs. Louis Bucholtz, vice president; Mrs. Max Rubin, second vice president; Mrs. M. Sager, treasurer; and Mrs. C. Kass, corresponding and financial

secretary. The chairs of committees were: Mrs. Max Rubin, religious; Mrs. J. Goldstein, membership; Mrs. J. T. Wilensky, house; Mrs. L. D. Joel, entertainment; Miss Ethel Joel, social service; Mrs. David Davis, cooperation with other organizations; Mrs. Samuel Bono, flowers; Mrs. M. Hirsch, Sunday School; Mrs. M. Witten, synagogue service; Mrs. M. Chanin, bylaws; Mrs. L. Moscovitz, publicity; and Mesdames Neal Finkelstein, M. Sablow, Lazar Klepper, Sam Bucholtz, S. Davis, H. Stillman, Jennie Goldstein, Henry Herzenberg, A. Hoffenberg, Max Ehrlich, P. Newman, Moses Feldman, I. Kramer, A. Nabin, and Miss Reba Wilensky. An analysis of the individuals on the board reveals that one-third of them while dedicating themselves to the work of the organization in supporting the educational activities of the synagogue were still enrolling their own children in the Temple school.

The dynamism of Rabbi Benjamin was felt immediately by the community. Within a month after being elected, he launched an intensive campaign to create a Jewish community center whose basic objective was the "creation of a spiritual home for the entire Jewish community which would be capable of keeping the Jewish people alive and creative in the Diaspora." The independence of the proposed center was emphasized by the Rabbi's statement that "the Jacksonville Jewish Center is not to be the institution of any particular congregation, group or society. It is to represent the entire Jewish community on the broad principle of a living American Judaism."

The Rabbi's call for a Jewish center was propelled by his conviction that Jewish education in Jacksonville was still deplorable, that the two existing congregations had failed to kindle the fire of religion or the right enthusiasm for Jewish living, and that the Y.M.H.A., as it then existed, had no cultural or educational activities of Jewish content. The call was made to the entire community on May 23, 1926, to join in the undertaking to create an institution designed primarily to revitalize positive Jewish living in Jacksonville. He sincerely had hoped for and expected the cooperation of the Reform Temple, the Y.M.H.A., and all other Jewish organizations in the community in this effort

The Y.M.H.A. early joined in the effort and was willing to be replaced by such a positive and Jewishly oriented community center. The response of the Reform community was less enthusiastic. The campaign proceeded, however, with great zeal. A site for the new center was selected at the northwest corner of Third and Silver streets, facing Springfield Park and on June 20, 1926, Louis Bucholtz, on behalf of the still unorganized center, secured an option to purchase the property. With the backing of the organizing group, who were confident of success, the purchase was closed in Bucholtz's name on July 8, 1926.

In August 1926, a publication, entitled "Jacksonville Jewish Year Book and Community Center Souvenir Journal" was circulated in the community in an effort to state the case for the construction of a Jewish Community Center in Jacksonville. Although the Year Book emphasized the independence of the proposed Jewish center from the B'Nai Israel Congregation, a disproportionate amount of coverage was devoted to the history of the congregation, its educational program, cemetery, and activities in general. In fact

B'Nai Israel was listed first under the heading, "Jewish organizations in Jacksonville." The source of much of the early history of the congregation is found in this publication.

A campaign to raise \$250,000 in funds to make the proposed center a reality was launched on November 29, 1926, and continued through December. The response to the campaign from the leadership of the Reform Temple and from some of the other elements in the community indicated that there would be no strong community-wide support for a center whose primary emphasis would be on the development of an intensified program for Jewish living in Jacksonville. Although the lack of positive religious and cultural programs in the existing organizations was a known fact, the negative response from the parts of the community not identified with B'Nai Israel was a disappointment. This disappointment led to the somewhat vigorous criticism directed from the B'Nai Israel pulpit towards the leadership of the Reform congregation and certain secularist elements in the community for their failure to participate. This frustration had much to do with the opinion that began to form within the B'Nai Israel leaders that the strengthening and revitalization of positive Jewish living in Jacksonville would have to come primarily from their own congregation and not from the community at large.

Notwithstanding the reality beginning to emerge, it was still clear that the project to build a community center had to continue since the membership of B'Nai Israel was solid in its support and since the property had already been purchased. The leadership therefore proceeded to secure the issuance on January 27, 1927, of a charter for the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Although there was disappointment in the lack of unified support from the community, the charter continued to show at least outwardly the intention of the leadership to persevere in its effort toward the creation of an independent institution unaffiliated with any synagogue. The charter defined the purposes of the organization to be the operation of "a Jewish Community Center in Jacksonville, Florida for the religious, social, physical, cultural, educational and recreational needs of the Jewish people." Nowhere in the charter is the statement made that its purpose was to operate a synagogue. The generality of the 1927 charter is in direct contrast to the 1901 charter which stated "the general nature of the object of the corporation was to hold and conduct religious services according to the Hebrew form of worship; to erect and maintain a synagogue."

The sincerity of the Center leadership for the new institution to be independent and to remain apart from B'Nai Israel is reflected in the action of the synagogue in retaining its separate identity and in continuing its own enhanced religious and educational programs. New officers took over the leadership of the congregation with Jacob Lapinsky, president; Joseph Witten, vice-president; J. H. Slott, secretary; and Judah Joel, treasurer.

Contrary to the language of the charter, the make-up of the leadership named in the charter confirmed the failure of the organizers to attract any leadership in the community other than that which came from the B'Nai Israel congregation. Outside of several leaders of the Y.M.H.A. who were also members of the congregation, all of the other named leaders were members of B'Nai Israel. Harry Finkelstein, finance chairman of B'Nai Israel, became the president of the new organization. Lionel D. Joel, who had been

active in the construction of the original B'Nai Israel synagogue, became first vice-president. Max Rubin, a trustee of B'Nai Israel, became second vice-president and emerged as the dynamic leader of the new effort. Joseph Witten, Jacob Lapinsky, David Moscovitz, Paul Newman, and Moses Feldman, previous leaders of B'Nai Israel, were included on the Board. Y.M.H.A. leaders, Harry Katz, Harry Sachs, and Henry Hertenberg, all members of B'Nai Israel, were included in the group. Newcomers to the leadership were Louis Bucholtz, Herman Bloom, Philip Bork, S. D. Kramer, Al Richardson, Louis Moscovitz, Max Rothstein, N. Herman Shorstein, and Jac Rosenberg, all members of B'Nai Israel. No persons identified with the Reform Temple appeared in the named leadership.

After the organization of the Jacksonville Jewish Center and the election of officers, the Third and Silver streets property was transferred to the Center by Louis Bucholtz on January 31, 1927. The effort then shifted to the problem of defining the scope of the facilities to be included in the new structure and to the more difficult task of developing a plan for paying the cost of the construction. Since the total amount of cash raised from the campaign was probably less than \$75,000, out of which had to come the cost of the land, the conclusion was obvious. Even utilizing the maximum mortgage financing, the cost of the building would have to be scaled down to no more than \$100,000. Even this amount, however, could not be funded without tapping into whatever assets B'Nai Israel could make available. Since only a small portion of the funds were coming from sources other than B'Nai Israel, a possible merger of the congregation with the Jacksonville Jewish Center could not result in the loss of very much financial support. Furthermore, those interested in the positive Jewish aspects of the movement would continue to support a merged program. The decision to merge would require the conversion of the proposed community center into a synagogue center, but this could be accomplished by including a synagogue facility in the new building. This change in plans would come at the expense of the deferral of some of the planned recreational and athletic facilities to a later date. This move, of course, would not satisfy the followers of the Y.M.H.A. and others who were expecting an independent institution with complete recreational and athletic facilities.

The merger was not difficult to effect because of the relationship that already existed between the B'Nai Israel congregation and the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Although in its beginning B'Nai Israel was ostensibly separate, its leadership was heavily involved in the leadership of the newly created Jacksonville Jewish Center. The congregation's spiritual leader, Rabbi Benjamin, was also the executive leader of the new institution. The president of the congregation, Jacob Lapinsky, was a member of the Center board and the vice-president of the congregation, Joseph Witten, was treasurer of the Center. Harry Finkelstein, chairman of the congregation's finance committee, was president of the Center and all the other members of the congregation's finance committee were members of the Center. The leadership of both institutions were the same and they were acting as a coordinated and consolidated single unit. The majority of the members of B'Nai Israel favored the merger, and there was little dissatisfaction among the membership over the move to merge. Even though the change in plans was no doubt a most decisive event in re-defining the character of the congregation, the membership remained united.

It seemed that economic events were moving rapidly, creating some apprehension that conditions might worsen especially since the business conditions in South Florida had been deteriorating since September 1926. The declining economic situation was spreading to the rest of the state, and there was concern about collecting the pledges already received. Notwithstanding these dire possibilities, the decision was made to move ahead. Once the reduced and re-directed plans were completed, concrete steps were taken. Ground was broken on June 5, 1927. A contract was entered into with S. S. Jacobs Co. for the construction of the improvements and a mortgage securing the Jacobs' firm for \$12,500 was executed on August 1, 1927. B'Nai Israel congregation, on August 30, 1927, mortgaged its Duval and Jefferson streets property for \$18,500, and on September 15, 1927, the Jacksonville Jewish Center obtained a construction mortgage for \$40,000. The cornerstone was laid on September 18, 1927. The B'Nai Israel congregation conveyed on October 3, 1927, the synagogue property located at Duval and Jefferson streets and the cash from the mortgage proceeds to the Jacksonville Jewish Center, effecting for all purposes a merger of the two organizations.

In December 1927, the new building on Third and Silver streets became available for use by the congregation. Chanukah was celebrated by the school on December 25, 1927. On January 8, 1928, the first part of the dedication took place in the afternoon with a procession carrying the Holy Scrolls from Duval and Jefferson streets to the Ark in the new synagogue. The traditional presentation of the key from Lionel D. Joel, chairman of the event, to Harry Finklestein, Center president, took place at this event. Greetings from the local Temple and from Congregation B'Nai B'rith Jacob in Savannah were delivered along with greetings from eight local Jewish organizations. The dedication service was led by Cantor Edgar and Rabbi Benjamin. That evening a dedication banquet featured an address by Florida Governor John W. Martin. Of historical interest is the identity of the persons making remarks at the dinner. Harry Gendzier, a former president of the Hebrew Junior League and one of the early leaders in the movement for changes in the congregation, returned from Tampa to join in the program as one of the speakers. David Kaufman and Abraham Aronovitz, former members of the congregation who had moved to Miami, also spoke. The six members of the Temple in Jacksonville who spoke, all of whom were attorneys, were Samuel Bucholtz, J. M. Glickstein, H. Reinstine, Louis J. Joel, M. Sabel, and Morton Sack.

In the program of dedication, Rabbi Benjamin again stressed that the goal of the new edifice would fail if it did not have the spirit of Judaism within it. Although the character of the institution was now that of a synagogue center, the Rabbi continued to appeal for the support of the entire Jewish community. He still promised a second unit to house the physical and athletic facilities.

The dedication was designed to enthuse the congregation as to the benefits and pleasures to be derived from the facilities. Described in detail were the new sanctuary with its balcony on the second floor; the auditorium; an adjoining kitchen; a daily prayer room; and an office on the first floor. The rear portion of the second and third floors was devoted to classrooms. Despite the efforts to make the dedication an occasion for rejoicing over the completion of the much needed facilities, the auditorium was only half

filled for the event, according to remarks made by Harry Gendzier at the 1951 dedication of the new activities building. There were indications of disappointment on the part of some who were expecting a complete community center. There were also rumors that the Rabbi and some staff members were leaving. Uneasiness was felt as to the financial future of the congregation in meeting the payments on the mortgage while attempting to meet ordinary operational expenses.

The officers and board members of the Center at the time of the dedication were: Harry Finkelstein, president; Lionel D. Joel and Max Rubin, vice-presidents; Joseph Witten, treasurer; and Dr. Samuel Benjamin, secretary. The board of directors were: Herman H. Bloom, Philip Bork, Louis Bucholtz, Henry Herzenberg, Moses Feldman, Harry Katz, S. D. Kramer, Jacob Lapinsky, David Moscovitz, Louis Moscovitz, Paul Newman, Al Richardson, Harry Sacks, Samuel Schwartz, and N. H. Shorstein.

Rabbi Benjamin left the congregation within a few months after the dedication. He had accepted the B'Nai Israel pulpit because of a vision that he could create a Jewish community center which would be the center for vibrant Jewish living in Jacksonville. He was unable to accomplish this goal and instead succeeded in converting a small Orthodox congregation into a Conservative synagogue center. In the course of his work, he had accumulated some enemies and had left some divisiveness in the community. The congregation was reconciled to the fact that the Rabbi was too capable and talented to remain as an active pastoral rabbi of a small congregation in the South. Whatever might be the opinions of some, the conclusion must be that if he had not come to Jacksonville, B'Nai Israel might not have made a move at that time or at any time, especially in view of the oncoming national depression. Certainly the seeds would not have been sown for the thriving Conservative synagogue center which evolved some twenty years later.

Shenkman, the principal of the school, also resigned after the dedication. The Hebrew School continued to operate with a staff composed of Cantor Edgar, Dr. A. Bryan, A. Hammer, and Naomi Becker. The Sunday Religious School staff were volunteers who were responsible for a school consisting of a kindergarten and nine grades. The ninth grade was the Confirmation class. Most remembered of the volunteer Sunday Religious School staff was Gertrude Wilensky, who taught the Confirmation class for more than twelve years and who became a legend in the congregation's history. A first Confirmation of nine girls was held in 1928.

Even after Sabbath and holiday services began in the new building, services continued to be held at the Duval and Jefferson streets synagogue which was referred to as the "downtown branch" with Rev. Safer conducting the services. The financial obligations carried over from the construction of the new building were not resolved until the finalization of a permanent mortgage with Penn Mutual Life Insurance Co. in December 1928, almost a year after the dedication.

At the first election of officers and board members after the move to the new building, considerable changes in personnel confirmed important changes in direction. Harry Finklestein remained as president, but Max Rubin became first vice-president and

continued as the dominant leader of the congregation. The members representing the Y.M.H.A.'s interest were no longer on the board, and some ten new members were added, along with four representatives from the Daughters of Israel. The officers and board members in 1929 were: Harry Finkelstein, president; Max Rubin, first vice-president; Louis Bucholtz, second vice-president; Joseph Witten, treasurer; Lionel D. Joel, secretary, and Samuel Schwartz, auditor. Members of the board of directors were: Herman Bloom, Mesod J. Bono, Philip Bork, Meyer Dayan, Moses Feldman, Jacob Fleet, Louis S. Joel, Charles M. Kass, Solomon D. Kramer, Jacob Lapinsky, David Moscovitz, Abe Newman, Nathan Paul, Jack Proctor, Simon Selber, Abe E. Selber, Jacob T. Wilensky, Mrs. Samuel Bono, Mrs. Jacob Lapinsky, Mrs. Charles M. Kass, and Mrs. Max Rubin.

Early in 1929, the congregation engaged Dr. Harry Cohen as its rabbi. Dr. Cohen, the holder of a Ph.D. degree, was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary, and was recognized as one of the outstanding scholars in the rabbinate. In 1929 the Hebrew School staff was headed by Rabbi Cohen. The other members were Cantor Edgar, Dr. A. Bryan, and Naomi Becker. Efforts were made during the short tenure of Dr. Cohen to raise the standards of the schools by creating an advance class in the study of Mishna as well as creating a high school department, consisting of 21 post-Bar Mitzvah and post-Confirmation students. The Sunday Religious School program continued under the direction of Rabbi Cohen.

With the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, the financial condition of the congregation became critical, affecting all aspects of the program. At the end of the year 1930, the congregation had lost the services of both its rabbi and cantor and the program began to deteriorate. No longer could the congregation afford a full staff and instead was forced by its financial circumstances to fill the positions formerly held by a rabbi and a cantor with one person, Cantor Alexander Weisel. The two-year period from 1930 to 1932 represented a most difficult period in the history of the congregation, due both to the deepening effects of the economic crisis and the absence of adequate spiritual leadership. After the departure of Rabbi Cohen, the educational program reverted to the status experienced in the 1920s with the Hebrew School staff consisting only of Cantor Weisel, Naomi Becker, and Dr. A. Bryan.

The religious services held in the old synagogue building at Duval and Jefferson streets were discontinued in 1930 when Rev. Safer moved to Springfield. The Orthodox services on the High Holy Days were now held in the auditorium of the new building with Rev. Safer in charge. Separate seating arrangements for men and women were provided for the auditorium services, and the sermon was delivered in Yiddish by Rev. Safer. The main Conservative services were held at the same time in the sanctuary. The congregation was fortunate in the engagement of Rev. Joseph Robins in September 1931, as ritual director in which role he supervised the administrative duties of all religious services. The successful daily minyan was attributable to his indefatigable efforts in assuring the presence of a minyan at all daily services. Among his duties was the maintenance of Yahrtzeit dates according to the Jewish calendar. He also assisted in leading the Orthodox service in the auditorium on the High Holy Days by conducting the Shacharis service. He also conducted the Musaf service in the years that Rev. Safer was living in Orlando. In

addition to these duties, he assumed the responsibility for training all Bar Mitzvah candidates as well as assisting students and adults in acquiring the skills needed for leading traditional services.

The membership decreased during this period. A discouraging trend at the time was the defection of some of the more loyal supporters to the Reform Temple because of the movement of some families to the Riverside section of the city, where the Reform Temple was offering its educational programs. Because of the depression, the decrease in financial support created severe difficulties in managing the normal budgetary needs while attempting to meet the mortgage payments which had now become a critical problem. Leading the congregation during this difficult period was Max Rubin who became president in 1930 and served through 1937. A tremendous debt of gratitude never given in his lifetime is due Max Rubin for guiding the congregation through this difficult period, enabling it to continue its programs despite the specific burden of managing delinquent mortgage payments and deferred payments of salaries. The person who filled the role of finance chairman during the administration of Max Rubin, and especially during the depression years, was Benjamin Baker, who not only supervised all expenditures but was also able to keep the flow of funds available. Payment of dues on a regular committed basis was not the policy at this time. The cash flow of a good portion of the needed funds depended on a system of day-to-day solicitation of funds by personal visitations to members' homes and businesses.

The first upturn in the morale of the congregation came in 1932 when the congregation engaged as its spiritual leader, Rabbi Morris D. Margolis, who had been only recently ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary. Rabbi Margolis was a graduate of Wayne University in Detroit and Columbia University. He was also trained in the skills needed to fulfill the duties of cantor. He was also qualified as an educator capable of administering the synagogue schools. With the election of Rabbi Margolis, the program of the synagogue entered into a period of resumed growth in its religious, cultural, and social activities. The financial capabilities of the congregation, however, were still very limited. Rabbi Margolis acted not only as rabbi but performed the duties of cantor, principal of the schools, and a teacher in the classroom as well. The other teachers in the Hebrew School during the 1932-34 period were Naomi Becker and Rev. J. Robin, who prepared students for Bar Mitzvah. An important innovation introduced by Rabbi Margolis was the formation of a junior congregation composed of students of the Hebrew School, who held their own services on the Sabbath and holidays. The students elected their own leaders and personally lead all services. The Sunday Religious School was reorganized, and its enrollment which had increased to 168 students, was divided into ten classes and was staffed by volunteer teachers. In 1934-35, S. E. Cherniak and Mrs. Margolis, wife of the Rabbi, were added to the Hebrew staff. The level of the Hebrew School program during the early 1930s, however, did not reach levels achieved in the 1926-28 expansion period.

Despite the financial problems, the congregation's religious efforts continued to provide a full program, featuring the daily minyan and late Friday evening services, in addition to Sabbath and festival early evening and morning services. Although designated

as a Conservative congregation in its religious identification, the only non-Orthodox deviations were mixed seating and late Friday evening services. These late Friday evening services were not actual services but were programs of Zmirot, readings in English, and a sermon by the Rabbi or a talk by non-clergy persons. A decided improvement in the presentation of the religious services was the creation of a male choir featured in the Conservative services on the High Holy Days. A mixed choir of male and female voices performed at the late Friday evening services. The Orthodox service with segregated seating continued to be offered on the High Holy Days in the auditorium. These services were conducted by Rev. Safer from 1930 to 1933. After returning from Orlando in 1936, Rev. Safer resumed leadership of these Orthodox services in the auditorium and continued to lead them through 1949. The difficulty of attempting to serve both the Orthodox element and the younger members of the congregation who favored the introduction of Conservative patterns of worship presented an on-going problem for the congregation in the period of the 1930s.

Because of the emergence of anti-Jewish activities in Germany and throughout Europe a deeper sense of loyalty and interest in the Jewish community world-wide emerged, causing some of the focus of the congregation to be directed to responding to the persecution of Jews and their poverty in post-war Europe. The position of the congregation as the center of the pro-Zionist activities in the community also occupied the attention of the synagogue. Much of its program was being directed to these external concerns.

The officers of the congregation in 1934 were: Harry Finkelstein, honorary president; Max Rubin, president; David Moscovitz, first vice-president; Benjamin Baker, second vice-president; Max Rose, treasurer; J. Wilensky, secretary; and Joseph Hackel, auditor. Members of the board of directors were: Philip Bork, Louis Bucholtz, S. D. Kramer, M. C. Kass, Morris Lasris, J. Lapinsky, Oscar Magezis, S. Mizrahi, Max Mirkis, S. Selber, Fred Soforenko, M. Sheinbaum, Joseph Witten, Dr. J. T. Wilensky, Morris Wolfson, Mrs. A. Sager, Mrs. Max Rubin, and Mrs. Ida Feldman. The associate directors were: Jacob Becker, Abe Newman, Sidney Stern, Dr. Sam Witten, and B. Weingast.

Because of a combination of factors, the membership of the congregation in 1934 had decreased to 171 from its high of 200 in 1926. There was, however, during the 1930s the emergence of new leadership from among the younger generation, who were returning to the community following the conclusion of their college careers.

The financial capabilities were still very limited. By 1935 some of the financial pressure had been relieved by the refinancing of the mortgage, the payment of which had reached a point of actual concern that the new building might be lost because of failure to meet mortgage payments. The successful refinancing of the mortgage was due to the efforts of Max Rubin, president of the congregation. This achievement was critical to the survival of the congregation.

In addition to financial concerns, the congregation was still feeling the effects of the strained relations in the community from the stresses and animosities which accompanied the evolution of the old B'Nai Israel congregation into the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Rabbi Margolis took the leadership in improving relationships between the Reform Temple and the Center by joining with Rabbi Kaplan in holding annual joint services where each congregation joined the other in their late Friday evening services twice a year. In 1935 he joined with Rabbi Kaplan in forming the Jacksonville Jewish Community Council for the purpose of unifying Jewish charitable appeals and programs on a community-wide basis. Rabbi Margolis served as secretary its first three years. The Council was the original community fund raising organization from which the present Jewish Federation evolved. To the non-Jewish community the Rabbi became a symbol of a modern scholarly Jewish leader who was respected for his role as a traditionalist in his religious practices, who was a Zionist in his support of the nationalist movement, and who was also a loyalist to American ideals. Beginning in 1935 he conducted a regular radio program, which commanded a large listening audience. One of the most difficult of the tasks facing the Rabbi was the friction between the Orthodox and Conservative elements in his own congregation, with the Orthodox opposing any changes and the Conservative demanding movement. This situation was not solved until the creation of the Orthodox Etz Chaim Congregation in 1947.

Following the refinancing of the mortgage debt in 1935, the efforts of the leadership was directed to the re-acquisition of the cemetery which it had relinquished to Evergreen Cemetery in 1923. Through the efforts of Max Rubin who had taken over the chairmanship of the cemetery committee from David Davis, the Evergreen Cemetery Association was approached on the basis that because of religious principles, it was necessary that the cemetery should be owned by the synagogue. The reaction of the Evergreen Cemetery Association was cooperative and understanding. It proceeded to reconvey the cemetery property to the Center recognizing it as the successor to the B'Nai Israel congregation who had conveyed the property in 1923. The cemetery was in a very poor condition when it was returned to the Center and much rehabilitation was necessary. Through the efforts of Simon Selber, an extensive program of restoration took place, transforming the grounds into a relatively beautiful park compared to its previous condition.

In 1935, Max Rubin promoted the publication of a year book reflecting a review of activities of the current year, lists of membership of the Center and affiliated organizations, summaries of activities of other community organizations, and the Hebrew calendar for the ensuing 1935-1936 year. The book was edited by Rabbi Margolis. There had been a similar publication in 1926, but it was entitled "Jacksonville Jewish Year Book and Community Center Souvenir Journal," but its purpose was to promote a Jewish Community Center. In 1929, a small version of an annual report was published and in 1934, another small version was published prior to a Purim Ball as part of the promotion. It was, however, the 1935-36 Year Book that began an extended chain of annual publications produced continually for more than sixty years. Hyman Selber joined the project with the 1936-37 edition as business and advertising manager in which capacity he remained for more than fifty years. His constant supervision and endless energies were

greatly responsible for the success of the project throughout its history. In addition to forming an excellent record of the history of the synagogue, the Year Book has produced a steady flow of earnings, all of which has gone to the support of the Center program. During the 1935-36 period, the membership increased for the first time since 1926 with the membership reaching 259. The membership remained the same through the 1937-38 period.

During these periods, improvements were beginning to become evident in some areas but the educational program because of lack of budgetary funds continued on the same limited basis, the staff consisting of the Rabbi, one additional teacher, and Rev. J. Robin. The school population remained during the 1935-37 period at the level of 80 to 85 students in the Hebrew School and 160 in the Sunday Religious School. During this period the staff included Rabbi Margolis, Rev. J. Robin, Rose Soloff (1935-36), and Nisson Jacobson (1936-37).

An important addition to the administrative staff occurred in 1936 with the appointment of Miriam Spitz, as secretary to the Rabbi, in which capacity she also served as secretary for the congregation. She remained in this position for twenty years, during which time she served under three rabbis and eight presidents and was a symbol of continuity binding the transitional periods of change.

The Center began in the late 1930s to make several approaches towards fulfilling its role as a synagogue center, by sponsoring a Jewish Cultural League which cut across synagogue lines. The Center promoted a limited athletic program consisting mainly of a diamond ball league open to the community. In November 1937, at a meeting called by Rabbi Margolis, a Jewish Men's Club was organized for the purpose of sponsoring cultural, social, and athletic activities for its members and the community at large. It sponsored athletic competition in organizing a diamond ball league and declared its intention to raise funds for the creation of a recreational unit.

In January 1938, David Moscovitz became president and served for two years. By this time, the membership of the congregation had increased to 272. In 1938, Cub Pack 14 was organized with Joe Becker as its first cubmaster. The need for this expansion of the Scouting program was confirmed when 19 youngsters joined the Pack in its initial year. Meanwhile Boy Scout Troop 14 continued to prosper under the leadership of Abe Diamond and Leo Michaelson as Scoutmasters. Girl Scout Troop 2, successor to the original Troop 4, continued to be active under leadership supplied by the Sisterhood, its sponsor. The only youth program, directly sponsored by the Center was the Scouting program, but the congregation benefited from its close association with the Young Judean program sponsored by Hadassah. The membership in the four Young Judean clubs came almost exclusively from the students enrolled in the Center's schools. A chapter of the AZA movement sponsored by B'Nai B'rith was organized on February 28, 1937, with a membership comprised almost entirely of Center youth. The Center developed a close relationship with the new organization. The Center fulfilled the needs of its youth by making available its facilities and in furnishing them opportunities for participation in Center events.

In the 1938-39 school year, the staff of the Hebrew School was increased by the addition of one teacher. The staff now consisted of Rabbi Margolis, Morris Nimovitz, J. S. Gallinger, and Rev. J. Robin. There was an increase in enrollment in the Hebrew School, bringing the number up to 90. The school was still operating on a daily basis. Bus transportation was offered for students residing in the Riverside area. The Sunday Religious School, whose enrollment had increased to 200, offered twelve grades. Its staff of eleven teachers was headed by Philip Selber as principal.

One of the most memorable experiences of the community was the presentation under the direction of Rabbi Margolis in 1939 of an operetta entitled, "The Wedding," which was based on Jewish folk songs. To make the production the artistic and cultural achievement that it became, the Rabbi utilized the energies of all Jewish groups in the community and secured the cooperation of the WPS (federal) professional group. The operetta was staged on March 12, 1939, at the Scottish Rite Temple to a very large and enthusiastic audience. The 1939 Year Book describes the operetta as "a dramatic and musical event which may rightly be considered the most elaborate and most beautiful ever given in Jacksonville by the Jewish community." Rabbi Margolis wrote several original melodies for the operetta, trained the large choir, and directed the entire production. A string ensemble of members of the Florida Symphony Orchestra provided the music for the production. Two performances were given before a combined audience of 850.

In this period of the late 1930s, the Jewish situation world-wide continued to become worse directing much more of the congregation's efforts towards the program of rescuing fellow Jews from the impending Holocaust. The task of securing affidavits of support to enable individuals to immigrate to the United States was headed by Mrs. Margolis, the wife of the Rabbi. Many refugees from Germany and other areas in Europe were able to come to the United States because of her heroic efforts in preparing and securing necessary affidavits and other paper work required in securing immigration visas. Following the crisis in Germany in November 1938, prayer and protest meetings were held by the congregation and with the issuance of the infamous White Papers by the British government, more protest meetings were held by the congregation.

As a result of the persecution, many Jews were successful in immigrating to the United States. Some of these immigrants arrived in Jacksonville and were successfully integrated into the community. A number became members of the Center and immediately became an important part of the congregation.

THE FORTIES

With the election of Abe Newman as president of the congregation in January 1940, a new era began. In the period of the 1930s which can properly be referred to as the "Max Rubin Era," the leadership had saved the congregation from financial disaster and had brought a degree of stability to the religious and educational life of the congregation with the engagement of Rabbi Margolis in 1932. The numerical size of the membership, which had decreased in the early 1930s, began to show a gradual slight growth towards the end of the period.

The election of Abe Newman was a significant event in the history of the congregation. His ascendancy to the presidency represented a basic change in the philosophy and approach of leadership to the administration of the synagogue's program. It also marked the beginning of a long period of continuous dynamic leadership which would lead to the synagogue's development into one of the premier Conservative congregations in America.

Although Newman had not been a member of the board since 1934, he had been a leader in the past, having been the organizer in 1926 of a group of young members of the congregation into the Hebrew Junior League. This organization became the motivating force behind the moves that would ultimately transform the immigrant-oriented Orthodox congregation into the contemporary Jacksonville Jewish Center. Along with the election of Newman came the return to the synagogue leadership of Harry Gendzier, another of the 1926 young leaders who, as president of the Hebrew Junior League, had played a major role in bringing about the engagement in 1926 of Dr. Benjamin as rabbi of the B'Nai Israel congregation. He had been absent from a leadership role since 1926. The Newman term continued for four years through 1943 and was followed by the three-year term of Gendzier which extended until February 1947. An integral part of the success of the new leadership was the assistance and spark furnished by Philip Selber, a product of the rededicated educational programs of the 1926-29 period, who, upon his return to the community after completion of his college studies, had become involved in almost every phase of the congregation's program. As a direct result of the new leadership, the growth of the congregation in the 1940s was remarkable. The era of the 1940s can be divided into three-year periods. The first period from 1940 through 1943 could be termed the "Abe Newman Period;" the second, from 1944 through 1946, was the "Harry Gendzier Period;" and the years from 1947 through 1949 may be referred to as the "Hackel-Tofield Period."

The direction that his administration would take was well defined by Newman at the outset in his first Year Book message, in which he enumerated three goals for the congregation. They were to bring to the members a realization of the financial responsibility which they owed to the congregation; to maintain harmony among the members and within the community; and to face the necessity for raising the levels of Jewish education. Much was achieved in reaching these goals.

The first achievement was the restructuring of the financial operations by raising the level of individual membership dues and by beginning the education of the congregation to recognize their dues obligation as a continuing annual commitment. The financial operations were made subject to a budgetary system whereby the expenses were planned on an annual basis and were limited to the amount of expected revenue. Minimum annual dues was raised from \$25 to \$36, still payable by many on an annual basis although every effort was made to secure a change to quarter annual payments. These improvements could be attributed partially to the ending of the depression and to the improvement in the general economy, but even more so and to a great extent to the extraordinary efforts of Newman in personally contacting individual members for their commitments. The financial resources increased not only because of the stabilization of the financial structure but also because of a significant growth in membership in the 1940-42 period. During this period 40 new members were added to the rolls, bringing the membership up to 300.

Another accomplishment was the achievement of some degree of harmony between the divergent elements of the membership. The chief concern was how to develop a religious program that could serve the needs of the Orthodox elements at the same time that it was attempting to meet the concerns of the Conservative constituency. The program which evolved continued to provide Orthodox services in the auditorium on the High Holy Days and to permit the Sabbath and festival services to be conducted in the sanctuary on a mostly Orthodox basis while at the same time providing late Friday evening services and permitting mixed seating at all services held in the sanctuary. Again, the success of this effort in postponing, for the time being, of a split in the congregation was due to the personal influence of Newman and his efforts in balancing the differences between the divergent elements.

With the advent of war in Europe, the implementation of the military draft, and the establishment of the Naval Air Station and the Camp Blanding Army Camp in the Jacksonville area, the task of providing for the influx of Jewish servicemen to the area became a primary responsibility of the congregation. To meet this need, as well as the general needs of the youth of the community, the congregation reactivated the dormant Y.M.H.A. organization by purchasing the two-story dwelling adjacent to the synagogue building on Third Street and offering it to the Y.M.H.A. for its program. This decision was in keeping with an earlier move by the Center in the organizing in November 1937, of the Jewish Men's Club whose ultimate goal was to establish a recreational unit in Jacksonville for the entire community. The primary objective was to create a common center to meet the social and recreational needs of the Jewish community by combining the Y.M.H.A. efforts with its own program. In addition to the combined program with the Y.M.H.A., the Center served the social and religious needs of the servicemen stationed in the area by staging Saturday evening socials, by providing Sedorim at Passover time, and by providing generally for their religious needs. This expanded program resulted in the addition of a number of new members to the governing board in the 1942 elections and brought about a considerable diversification and strengthening of the leadership.

There was little progress, however, in the first two years of the Newman administration in reaching its third goal, which was to raise the educational levels. The Hebrew School staff consisted of Rabbi Margolis, as principal and teacher, and Morris Nimovitz and Naomi Abrams, as teachers. Rev. Joseph Robin continued to teach Bar Mitzvah candidates. Nimovitz's departure early in 1942 for government service created a marked reduction in staff and a resulting drop in enrollment. During the 1941-42 school year, Hebrew School classes were changed from one-hour classes held four days per week to two-hour classes held two days per week. The Sunday Religious School whose enrollment remained unchanged, was directed by Philip Selber, who acted as principal from 1938 to 1942.

Not willing to settle only for improvements in the financial operations of the congregation, a number of board members, led by some of the younger leadership and by many parents, were demanding improvements in the educational and religious programs of the synagogue. It had become obvious that the congregation could not expand its role in the community with the limited staff then in place. A temporary approach to the problem was a proposal that a person be engaged who could act as executive director of the synagogue and also fill the role of principal and teacher for the Hebrew and Sunday Religious Schools. In response to this proposal, Samuel Rosenberg was engaged in August 1942, to act as director of the schools and to fill a newly created position of executive director of Center operations. Rosenberg was well-qualified for the position. He had studied at Yeshivah Rabbi Isaac Elchanan, New York University, and Columbia University. He came to Jacksonville from Buffalo, New York, where he had been in charge of education and recreation at Temple Beth Zion for seven years.

The education system was reorganized with Rosenberg serving as principal of both the Hebrew School and the Sunday Religious School. The teachers in the Hebrew School were Rosenberg, Naomi Abrams, and Rabbi Margolis, with Rev. Joseph Robins continuing as teacher of Bar Mitzvah candidates. For the first time, a nursery program for three year olds was added to the kindergarten program and the overall nursery-kindergarten program was placed under the direction of Mrs. Samuel Rosenberg, who was assisted by Mrs. M. J. Reiser.

During Rosenberg's tenure of one year as executive director, much progress was made. A well-organized membership campaign was very successful in adding approximately 100 new members. This increase resulted in the membership reaching 440 by 1943. The financial operations were strengthened with improvements in the budgetary system, the fiscal operations, and in the day-to-day administration. Changes were made in the procedures for billing dues, so that dues were not only regularly billed on a quarterly basis, but efforts were made to educate members to make their payments promptly as billed. This improvement made the payment of dues less difficult for members and at the same time caused a more even flow of funds for the congregation.

Another accomplishment that occurred during the Rosenberg year was the successful effort to clear the Center of its mortgage indebtedness, an accomplishment due again to the almost single-handed personal effort of the president, Abe Newman. The

support of Morris Wolfson and S. D. Kramer, who initiated the move, contributed to the success of the campaign. The mortgage was satisfied on January 10, 1943.

Unfortunately Rosenberg resigned after only one year creating the need for securing personnel who could continue the reorganization of the schools. Dr. Morris Bar Am was engaged as principal and instructor in the Hebrew School and as principal of the Sunday Religious School. During the year, however, Dr. Bar Am proved to be unable to discharge the duties of the position, causing Rabbi Margolis to resume the supervision of the Hebrew School, whose staff then consisted of the Rabbi, Naomi Abrams, Natalie Alpert, and Rev. Joseph Robins. The nursery-kindergarten, whose enrollment had reached 40, was under the direction of Tillie Reiser.

Because of the increased activities experienced from the use of its facilities in the combined program with the Y.M.H.A., the leadership realized the possibilities for the intensification of its own overall program. In the latter part of 1943 there were initiated informal discussions of the need for the expansion of the Center's program to include additional social and recreational activities. Also included in the informal studies was the determination of the need for additional building facilities which would be needed to accommodate the expanded programming and the growth in membership.

Upon the election of Harry Gendzier in February 1944, as president, momentum increased for the initiation of efforts to expand the Center's existing programs and to implement new ones to enable it to operate as a synagogue center. In his annual message in September 1944, Gendzier stated that "probably the greatest step forward taken by the Center was the decision of the board of directors to initiate a "Y" program, whose facilities will not be confined to the Center membership alone, but will extend to all who wish to take advantage of them. This far-reaching move should result in a real Center, whose activities will do much to enhance both the usefulness and the prestige of the institution."

To implement the new program, Dr. Harry O. H. Levine was engaged as executive director. He would also direct the programs of the schools. His selection, however, was not successful, and Dr. Levine resigned during the year. Notwithstanding, the efforts to expand the program and to bring more persons into the leadership of the congregation continued.

The departure of Rosenberg after a very successful year added to the momentum for a change in the spiritual leadership. The group moving for the change, lead by Philip Selber, first vice-president, argued that the type of progress made under Rosenberg could not be continued unless a change was made in the spiritual leadership. The position of the group was that the congregation was at the brink of the opportunity to become an outstanding synagogue by expanding its staff and programs and that this would require increasing funds for such expansion and for the furnishing of additional building facilities. It was predicted that with this expansion there would come a major increase in membership. It was the group's argument that the fulfillment of such projections could not be achieved under Rabbi Margolis. It was conceded that Rabbi Margolis was an excellent

spiritual leader for the 1930s since he was capable of performing in so many different capacities, but he lacked the vision necessary to lead the congregation to its hoped for destiny. When Gendzier became president, he realized that a decision had to be reached on the issue if the unity of the board and the congregation as a whole were to be maintained. Because of his strong leadership, he was able to lead the board members in reaching a consensus opinion out of which came an agreement satisfactory to the board, following which Rabbi Margolis resigned in October 1944.

Notwithstanding the failure of Dr. Levine's appointment and the existence of a vacancy in the pulpit following the resignation of Rabbi Margolis, the year 1944-45 proved to be one of the most productive years in the congregation's history. As one of the positive benefits resulting from the war, the stationing at Camp Blanding of Carl Alpert, a well-known Zionist journalist and leader, made available to the Center the services of his wife, Natalie Alpert. She not only became an instructor in the Hebrew School but also acted as its principal. She taught in the Sunday Religious School and provided inspirational leadership in the junior congregation. In addition, she inaugurated a Summer Day Camp program enrolling some 60 enthusiastic campers in the program. The Year Book published in September 1945, made this appraisal of her impact on the congregation:

Without the considerable expenditures of energy made by Mrs. Alpert during the year, the success of the Junior Congregation, the increase in the Hebrew School enrollment, and the outstanding success of the Day Camp in its first year would not have occurred.

The instructors in the Hebrew School in addition to Natalie Alpert were Naomi Abrams, Gertrude Meyerhoff, and Rev. J. Robin. The Sunday Religious School staff of fourteen teachers was headed by Philip Selber as principal.

The year also witnessed the formation in April 1945, of the Center's Men's Club under the presidency of Nat Shorstein. In response to the leadership of Gendzier, the elections held in January 1945, resulted in a number of new members joining the Center board, many of whom were to become valuable leaders in the ensuing years. The membership rolls of the congregation increased to more than 500 by the end of the 1944-45 year. Some of the growth was attributable to the growth of the Jewish population in Jacksonville. The war and the transformation of Jacksonville into a military and industrial center brought new residents to the city. The Center's extensive system of schools became a very important inducement for the involvement of non-members in the Center's program. When the children of the unaffiliated came of age and their future Jewish education became important, the availability of a good school offered by the Center helped determine the selection of the synagogue for membership. The expansion of the Center's educational program to include nursery and kindergarten programs, and the development of a bus system for students of all ages, proved important in adding members.

The participation of the Center in the joint program with the Y.M.H.A. had attracted new members because of the Center's announced dedication to the synagogue

center format. Another important aid in securing such healthy increases in membership was the development of a system of graduated dues where the amount of dues to be paid by the member was based on the member's financial ability and the degree of involvement in the Center's program. This approach enabled the congregation to attract and keep members, and it was also efficient in producing sufficient revenue to finance the ever-increasing cost of the programs.

The program for the recruiting of new members was now well organized. There was a continuous effort to secure accurate information on newcomers, newly created families, and generally non-affiliated persons. This was followed by personal contacts. Campaigns for new members were most successful when conducted prior to the High Holy Days. Names of new members were published both in the Center bulletin and in the Year Book. The congregation had learned well the art of building a strong membership. The graduated dues concept also made possible the success of an intensive campaign in 1945 to re-evaluate the dues commitments of the individual members and laid the foundation for future financial stability.

A long period of negotiations for the acquisition of additional land for expansion of the cemetery facilities ended in 1945 with the purchase of an eleven-acre tract adjacent to the Evergreen Cemetery which would later be known as the Center Memorial Park (entry from 43rd Street). Plans for the development of the park began shortly thereafter.

Notwithstanding all of the activity in the 1944-45 year, the most important event occurred in December 1944, when Benjamin Setzer, the founder of one of the leading grocery chains in the city, announced an initial contribution of \$10,000 towards the creation of a building fund to supply much needed improvements to the physical facilities. This move was immediately followed with the appointment of a committee consisting of Abe Newman as chairman and Morris Wolfson, Ben Setzer, Joe Becker, Joseph Hackel, Harry Gendzier, and Philip Selber to study the building facilities needs and the direction to be taken by the congregation in its future development. Following the report of the committee, the board of directors in March 1945, overwhelmingly approved the recommendation of the committee that the congregation "continue its program established in 1926 to create a complete synagogue center catering to the religious, educational, cultural, social, and recreational needs of the Jewish community."

The next step taken was to define in general terms the additional building facilities that were needed. The enumeration of facilities would have to include not only those which would satisfy the pressing deficiencies already obvious but also those that would be required to meet the new goals and objectives of the congregation as a synagogue center. The almost certain growth expected in membership, and especially the certain expansion anticipated in the child population, had to be factored into the study. After months of research and planning, the results of the study were published in the September, 1945, Year Book. Among the items recommended were: (1) a main sanctuary capable of seating 1,500 worshipers and a chapel for daily services several times larger than the current facility; (2) an auditorium capable of seating at least 750 and equipped to serve at least 600 at a seated banquet; (3) educational facilities to provide for the needs of a

Sunday Religious School of 300 to 400 students, a Hebrew School of 100 to 150, a daily kindergarten of from 50 to 75 children and a Day Camp of 100 to 150 campers; (4) athletic and recreational facilities, including a fully-equipped gymnasium, a swimming pool, and all other items needed for a complete athletic and recreational program; (5) facilities needed for general organizational uses; and (6) facilities such as executive offices, rest rooms, ample storage space, etc. The outline of needed facilities seemed extensive at the time but in the light of the future expansion which actually took place, the enumeration was quite minimal. The study in 1945, however, postponed making a decision at that time as to whether the then present site at Third and Silver streets should be utilized or whether a new site should be sought for locating the expanded facilities. Following the March 1945, board meeting, solicitation of contributions from major donors continued and preparations were made for a campaign to be held in the fall of the year. The campaign produced approximately \$75,000 in pledges signaling the enthusiastic support of the membership for the undertaking.

Another indication of the developing maturity of the congregation was its ability to continue the religious activities of the congregation without interruption despite the vacancy existing in the pulpit. Chaplains in the military service in the area, rabbis from neighboring communities, and rabbinical students from the Jewish Theological Seminary all assisted in providing their services, especially in the maintenance of the late Friday evening services, and in the performance of needed pastoral services. The availability of these volunteered services enabled the congregation to mark the death of President Roosevelt with memorial services held in April 1945, and to observe VE-Day with services held May 13, 1945.

Because of the absence of a rabbi, the leadership was faced with a challenge not only to fill the position but to make an important decision as to the religious direction to which it would commit itself. Before selecting a rabbi, the congregation would have to decide whether it would follow the Conservative Judaism movement in its religious orientation, or whether it would remain open to the possibility of reverting to an Orthodox identification. In the course of reaching a decision, invitations for interviews were extended to outstanding Orthodox rabbis as well as to candidates recommended by the Rabbinical Assembly, the organization composed primarily of Conservative rabbis ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary. After months of interviews and deliberations, the decision was reached to align the congregation with the national Conservative movement and to restrict the selection of rabbis to members of the Rabbinical Assembly. Accordingly, the congregation invited Rabbi David H. Panitz, an ordained graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary, to assume its pulpit in September 1945. Rabbi Panitz, a native of Baltimore, was a graduate of John Hopkins University, where he received his masters degree. He came to Jacksonville from Syracuse where he had occupied the pulpit of the Adath Yeshurun Congregation. At the same time and for the first time since 1930, the congregation engaged a cantor in the person of Cantor Harry Bettman.

The remainder of the Gendzier period was concerned with efforts to intensify the development of the synagogue center program which had become the congregation's top

priority. Despite the holding of a survey to determine the need of the community at large for a central organization, the Center's commitment to its restated aspirations remained constant. Its position was reconfirmed by President Gendzier, in his statement in the September, 1946, Year Book that "regardless of what community program might come into being, we of the Jewish Center are firmly resolved to achieve and develop the finest possible program for the building of a knowing, proud and positive Jewish Youth."

The first building fund drive held during the 1945-46 year produced \$75,000 in pledges and created the impetus for the decision to launch a campaign intended to double the amount already raised. One of the critical questions which had to be resolved was whether to add to the facility then existing at Third and Silver streets or to build a new facility at a new site. The decision was made at a fall meeting in 1945 when the board adopted a resolution that "all future expansion be undertaken at the existing location." The decision was based on the conclusions that (1) the possession of the necessary land at its present site obviated the necessity of using a considerable amount of the limited funds just for acquiring a new site; (2) by remaining at the present site, all of the current facilities could be utilized thus eliminating the need for their duplication; and (3) the location at that time was still considered as being centrally situated. Much thought was given to the possible relocation on the Southside, but the combined pressure of the membership explosion, the beginning of the baby boom and the pressing immediate need for additional facilities dictated expansion without delay and this could only be accomplished at the current location.

With the advantage of hindsight, the decision was a prudent one since it placed the congregation in an advantageous position of being prepared to meet the expanding needs of the 1950s and the 1960s. Furthermore, had the Southside location then under consideration been acquired, it would be some seven miles north of the present location in Mandarin and outside of the residential areas being accommodated by the present facilities. In the light of the later developments, the statement in the September, 1946, Year Book was rather prophetic when it concluded that "building in Riverside or Southside today might be as much out of line with conditions twenty years hence as a building program in the central part of Springfield would have been some twenty years ago."

Following the successful initial campaign in 1945-46, studies continued in an effort to finalize the essential elements of the expansion program. A description of the program accompanied by sketches prepared by Kemp Bunch and Jackson, Architects, was produced by the architectural planning committee headed by Philip Selber and Ralph Mizrahi for use in the subsequent campaign scheduled to begin towards the end of 1946.

Meanwhile, the occupancy of the pulpit by Rabbi Panitz lasted for only one year due to the inability of his family to adjust to living in a segregated southern community. During the year, however, the schools made progress under the supervision of Rabbi Panitz who acted as principal of both the Hebrew and Sunday Religious Schools. The Hebrew School staff consisted of Natalie Alpert, Harry Kollitz, Gertrude Meyerhoff, Sue Becker, and Rev. Joseph Robin.

Cantor Bettman also left in June 1946, and Abraham Marton was engaged in August to fill the position of cantor and to serve as a teacher in the Hebrew School. Cantor Marton was a native of Vienna, Austria, where he received his Jewish education and musical training. He was a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Vienna. He had served congregations in Youngstown, Baltimore, Lebanon, Pennsylvania, and Brooklyn. In the interim period following the departure of Rabbi Panitz and the engagement of Rabbi Sanders A. Tofield in 1947, the Hebrew School staff consisted of Cantor Marton, Naomi Abrams, Harry Kollitz, and Rev. Joseph Robin. The Sunday Religious School operated with Philip Selber, as principal, and the Day Camp was directed by Harry Kollitz, with the assistance of Harold Romirowsky, a rabbinical student enrolled at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

The vacancy in the pulpit continued from the summer of 1946 when Rabbi Panitz left until February 1947, when Rabbi Tofield was chosen as the spiritual leader of the congregation. Rabbi Tofield was not only a nationally-recognized scholar but also an experienced leader who possessed both a broad professional background in synagogue operations and a profound vision for the congregation's future. Rabbi Tofield was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He had studied at the Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan in New York prior to completing his undergraduate work at Tulsa University. After his ordination, he served Sinai Congregation of Hillside, New Jersey, for three years, and Congregation Adath Yeshurun of Houston, Texas, for ten years before coming to Jacksonville. He was a member of the executive committee of the Rabbinical Assembly of America and a member of its committee on Jewish law.

The chain of effective leaders continued with the election of Joseph Hackel in February 1947, to succeed Gendzier. Hackel had been a member of the board since 1933 and had held the positions of auditor, treasurer, and vice-president prior to his election as president. An important addition to the leadership came in the same election with the naming of Robert J. Gordon as treasurer. Gordon's first participation was as chairman of the Cub Pack committee, then as Boy Scout Troop committee chairman, followed by his election to the board in 1945. He had also served as chairman of the successful dues re-evaluation campaign in 1946. The election of Hackel and the engagement of Rabbi Tofield ushered in the last period of the 1940s, a period characterized by an increased capacity and resourcefulness in its leadership, armed with a definite vision for the future. The occupancy by Rabbi Tofield of the pulpit made permanent the ties of the congregation with the national Conservative Judaism movement.

With the new rabbi in place, the next step in the building of a professional staff occurred in the summer of 1947 with the appointment of Ted Gross as educational director with responsibility for the administration of all phases of the Center's educational program. Another move was made in November 1947, when Sidney Cohen was engaged as activities director to administer the recreational and athletic programs. A further step was the appointment in September 1948, of Isaac Silver as youth director. The additional personnel demonstrated to the community the ability of the congregation to produce a complete synagogue center program.

The supportive group of affiliated organizations, consisting of the Center Sisterhood (formerly the Daughters of Israel) and the Center Men's Club, was expanded with the organization in April 1948, of the Young People's League ("Y.P.L."). The membership of the new group came from the young single members of the congregation. The organizing committee was chaired by Irwin Gendzier and the first president of the organization was Morty Rosenkranz.

The expansion of the program in the 1940s was summarized by Rabbi Tofield in his statement in the 1947 Year Book that "it is quite evident that the era of experimentation and adaptation is coming to a close. The Jacksonville Jewish Center is acquiring mature stature in the galaxy of Conservative Jewish congregations in America." The membership continued to grow, and by 1950 it had reached 572. The return of servicemen to the community in the 1940s produced an explosion in marriages and in the birth rate. The "baby boom" in the congregation which began in 1945 continued to expand reaching 60 births in 1948. The dues structure which was the major source of financial support for the congregation's operations was now subject to annual review and re-evaluation. With the election of Gordon as treasurer in 1947, the cash flow problems were met by the application of sound business principles, except for the occasional temporary financing of a member's dues by the treasurer himself on a personal basis when necessary. The budget increased from \$24,000 in 1943-44 to \$60,000 in 1948-49 and minimum annual dues increased from \$25.00 in 1940 to \$60.00 in 1949.

Although the achievements of having a complete and capable staff, a financial structure on a sound basis, and a building fund well organized for the campaign ahead were noteworthy, the congregation's efforts in bringing about improvements in its religious and educational programs were even more important. Improvements were especially evident in the religious program. The religious staff was complete and consisted of Rabbi Tofield, Cantor Marton, and Rev. Benjamin Safer, who served as Hazan Sheni, Torah reader and leader of the High Holy Days Orthodox services, and Rev. Joseph Robin as sexton. Upon the resignation of Rev. Robin in 1946, Oscar Magazis assumed his duties as superintendent assisting in the religious program of the synagogue. A choral group of mixed voices was introduced in the 1947 High Holy Days services replacing the all male choir which previously assisted the cantor. The Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book of the United Synagogue and Rabbinical Assembly became the official prayer book. Changes were made in the High Holy Days Conservative services, the principal innovation being the introduction in 1947 of late services at 8:00 p.m. on the first evening of Rosh Hashanah. At the same time that important changes were being made in the main High Holy Days services in moving the congregation to a more Conservative type of service, the congregation continued to support the more traditional Orthodox services in the auditorium notwithstanding the organization in the community of the Etz Chaim synagogue, a new Orthodox congregation, whose membership was composed primarily of former Center members. An important change in the religious practices of the congregation was the introduction of the Bat Mitzvah ceremony for girls when Bryna Lee Datz and Judy Herschaft participated in the ceremony on April 9, 1948, at the late Friday evening services. This was a change that would create far-reaching effects in broadening Jewish education and in the participation of women in the services of the congregation.

With the addition of Ted Gross to the staff as educational director, considerable progress was made during the 1947-49 period. The enrollment in the Hebrew School increased from 100 students in 1946-47, to 137 in 1947-48, and to 157 in 1948-49. Gross was both principal of the Hebrew School and one of its teachers. Other members of the teaching staff were Cantor Marton, Harry Kollitz (1947), Isaac Silver (1948), and Miriam Lerner (1949). The Sunday Religious School enrollment increased from 231 in 1946-47, to 298 in 1947-48, and to 320 in 1949-50. The nursery kindergarten enrollment increased to 49. A Sunday morning minyan club for post-Bar Mitzvah boys was organized in September 1947. The program, which was lead by Cantor Marton featured a morning minyan service on Sunday morning, with participants using talesim and tfilin, followed by a breakfast, all of which concluded prior to the beginning of Sunday Religious School classes. The program was well-accepted, and by 1949 it was attracting some 45 boys on a regular basis. Students of the Hebrew School were awarded scholarships to religiously-oriented camps for the first time in 1947 when Joel Bressler and Pearl Aronovitz were sent to Camp Cejwin in Port Jervis, New Jersey. The first scholarships to Camp Ramah were awarded in 1948.

In April 1948, Dr. Azriel Eisenberg, director of the Philadelphia Council on Jewish Education and prominent educator, visited and surveyed the Center's schools on a four-day visit. In his observations and recommendations addressed to Rabbi Tofield he made these statements:

On the whole, I was greatly encouraged by what I saw. You have a fine group of children who are imbued with a positive attitude and good self-discipline. You have a good principal, who is devoted and capable. You have a professional staff in the person of your principal, your cantor as well as yourself. You have a fine foundation in your kindergarten and nursery school. You have two busses which bring the children to your school, and you have a building fund, which augurs very well for the future of the Center. Mr. Selber, Chairman of the School Committee, is not only devoted and zealous, but also intellectually and Jewishly well prepared for his important task in the community. You have a very fine group of organizations and board members, who are ambitious for the Center and the School. You have unusual opportunities to make the Jacksonville Jewish Center one of the outstanding schools in the country. You are already well on the road towards achieving this goal.

The confirmation by an outside distinguished authority on Jewish education such as Dr. Eisenberg of the efforts and outlook of those who were involved in the Jewish education program of the congregation created an impetus for the many advancements which followed. As part of the continuous drive for improving the program, Isaac Silver of Winnipeg, Canada, was added to the teaching staff for the 1948-49 school year.

At a conference on Jewish education sponsored by the southeast region for the United Synagogue of America held in Savannah in December 1948, the Center bulletin reported:

The program of the Jacksonville Jewish Center was recommended to other congregations in the region. Rabbi Bernard Segal, Executive Assistant to the President of the Seminary commented on the fine work of the Jacksonville Jewish Center, especially in the field of youth education.

From the comments of national leaders, it could be concluded that the educational program of the Center had advanced to the highest level yet experienced in Jacksonville and that a solid foundation had been laid for the intensification and expansion that was to follow.

Paralleling the improvements in the education sphere was the growth in the youth program. In 1943, Blanche Slott became chairwoman of the Girl Scout committee, sponsored by the Sisterhood, and under her leadership the program was re-invigorated. In addition to the original Troop 2, a new Troop 29 was organized in 1948 to meet in Riverside at the site of the River Garden Hebrew Home. Along with this expansion was the creation of two Brownie troops to be affiliated with the two Scout troops. The new format of four troops continued through the remainder of the 1940s. Boy Scout Troop 14, under the successive leadership of Ben Chepenik, Irvin Rothstein, and Joe Mizrahi, compiled a successful record of achievement in the 1940s. The Cub Pack under the leadership of Joe Strauss and Nathan Freidlin enjoyed active and satisfying years of accomplishments in the 1940s with an increasing membership culminating in a full pack of four dens.

The Young Judean program was placed under the supervision of the Jacksonville Zionist Youth Commission and regularly added new clubs to the program. By the end of the 1940s the number of clubs reached nine. The Center also assisted and cooperated with AZA and the Esquire Club, a Jewish boys club. All of the Center facilities were made available to all Jewish youth groups in the city, but until 1947, the Center's own interests and religious objectives were not specifically served by any of the existing groups.

In 1949, the Center turned its attention to the broadening of the youth program by examining the possibilities for developing a synagogue-oriented youth organization -- one directly sponsored and directed by the Center and encompassing its religious principles and desires. A far-reaching move in this direction resulted in the founding of the first Center-sponsored synagogue youth organization of high school students in November 1949, with Jack Eff as its first president. The organization which had been given the name, "Center Youth League" ("C.Y.L.") was later incorporated into the national United Synagogue Youth ("U.S.Y.") program when it was later founded. The founding of a synagogue-sponsored youth organization before the national movement was created was indicative of the progressive thinking and vision of the Center's leadership. The effort which was successful in spite of some opposition from the other youth movements in the community was led by Rabbi Tofield and Philip Selber.

In addition to its long historical sponsorship of its own scouting groups, the Center had always offered its facilities and programming to other youth groups in the community. The program was expanded during the 1947-49 period to provide social events for all ages

within the school system and especially to those at the high school level. A series of monthly socials for teenagers was provided. Dances were held at the Center under the joint auspices of the Center's Youth Activities Program and the individual youth groups in the community.

The appointment in 1947 of Sidney Cohen, as director of activities, was followed by the expansion of the athletic and recreation programs. The athletic facilities which were added included a lighted outdoors basketball court, a volleyball court, and an indoor exercise room located in the youth building formerly occupied by the Y.M.H.A. The program during the 1947-49 period featured an intramural basketball league of four teams and an intramural softball league of five teams. Both leagues drew teams from the entire Jewish community. In addition to the league programs, the Center was represented by its own team in the city-sponsored church basketball and diamond ball leagues. On occasions the Center's basketball team played the Savannah Jewish Education Alliance on a "home and home" basis.

Because of Rabbi Tofield's position in the national Conservative movement and his personal relationships, many of the national lay and professional leaders frequently visited and spoke at congregational events. This exposure led to the involvement of the Center's leaders in the national Conservative movement. From its position as an important congregation in the area, the Center became a moving force in the creation of the Southeastern Region of the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism. On April 11, 1948, a regional organization was formed at a conference attended by 250 persons held at the Center at which Macey Kronsberg of Charleston, South Carolina, was elected as its first president. Two of the Center's members were also elected: Joe Becker as vice-president, and Joseph Hackel as treasurer. At the annual election held in May 1950, Harry Gendzier was elected president of the region, Joseph Hackel was elected vice-president, and Philip Selber was elected to the executive board. The influence of the Center in the southeast region had become very significant.

In addition to its standing in the region, the Center's position in the national movement was demonstrated when Gendzier was elected as one of the national vice-presidents of the United Synagogue at its convention in Chicago in May 1948. Another important contribution to the national movement was the participation of Rabbi Tofield in the affairs of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, the organization of rabbis in the Conservative movement. Rabbi Tofield was a member of the executive council of the Rabbinical Assembly and served as a permanent member of its law committee, whose role was the objective adjustment of traditional Jewish law to the impact of modern conditions.

Although the 1947-49 period was noteworthy because of the remarkable growth in the overall program and the emergence of the congregation as a premier synagogue, the most important events were those connected with the realization of the building expansion undertaking. The campaign launched at the close of 1946 and continuing in 1947 enabled Gendzier, chairman of the building fund, to report at the annual meeting held January 12, 1948, that "the years 1947 and 1948 will prove vital in all Center activities by reason of the culmination of the drive in progress." To emphasize the progress which had been

made, formal announcements of large pledges that were received in 1947 were made at the meeting.

The 1947-48 year witnessed a further clarification and revision of the direction to be taken in providing for the particular needed facilities. It was now certain that an entirely new activities building would have to be constructed alongside the existing building to house a multiple purpose auditorium for use for social and athletic functions as well as for High Holy Days services. The activities building would also house administrative offices, board room-library, lounges and facilities for youth meetings and social activities. The plans being finalized also called for the remodeling of the sanctuary, the conversion of the existing auditorium into educational facilities and the ultimate construction of an additional classroom building. To meet the needs of the revised concept, additional property on Silver Street, which was adjacent to the existing sanctuary-auditorium building on Third Street was acquired and permission was obtained from the city for the relocation of the alleys separating the properties on Third Street from those on Silver Street. Although lack of adequate parking space was becoming a serious problem, no effort was made until the 1960s to acquire any property for the purpose because of the pressure to meet the demanding educational and religious needs first.

The campaign for \$250,000 launched late in 1946 came to a successful conclusion at a Victory Dinner held March 7, 1948. The event featured Rabbi Harry Halpern of the East Midwood Jewish Center, Brooklyn, as the main speaker. Sam Wolfson, a co-chairman of the campaign, concluded the solicitation held at the dinner with an assurance to those in attendance that the goal of the campaign would be oversubscribed. Following the successful conclusion of the campaign, a special subcommittee consisting of Ben Setzer, as chairman, and I. J. Eddstein, Ralph Mizrahi, Philip Selber, and Ben Yoffee, as members, was appointed on January 2, 1949, to act as the construction committee responsible both for producing plans and specifications for the building expansion, and for completing construction of the improvements. The committee retained the architectural firm of Marsh and Saxelbye to draft the working plans and specifications, and the rest of the year was devoted to making final decisions before calling for construction bids. The plans were far enough along by the end of the summer to enable them to be printed in the September, 1949, Year Book, together with a complete enumeration and description of the new facilities. Financing for the construction was completed in the fall of 1949 and bids were requested in November. On Sunday, January 8, 1950, ground breaking ceremonies were held. With the ground breaking ceremonies, a decade of growth had reached its climax and a new era of even greater expansion and intensification had begun.

The review of the decade of the 1940s cannot be closed without giving thought to the leaders that made it possible. The remarkable growth during this period can be attributed to the cooperation, sacrifice, hard labor, and zeal of many persons but it is still necessary to identify the key leadership provided by Abe Newman, Harry Gendzier, Philip Selber, Ben Setzer, and Rabbi Sanders A. Tofield.

Abe Newman developed for the first time a basis for the sound financial operation of the congregation over the years which followed. He retired the mortgage indebtedness.

He set the high ethical standards which became the norm for all future leaders. He initiated the first effort in fifteen years to raise the educational program to higher levels.

Harry Gendzier's wisdom and energy brought a new united spiritual and professional leadership to the congregation. He was the spokesman in guiding the congregation in its rededication to the synagogue center concept originally adopted by it in 1926. He inspired the congregation in recognizing the need for the expansion of its program and physical facilities and then led the effort to raise the funds to make possible their procurement. He was particularly forceful in articulating to the community the synagogue's expanded program and new direction.

Philip Selber was the chief collaborator and support for both Newman and Gendzier serving as vice-president under both presidents. He was the "detail" person in directing the "day-to-day" efforts to place the financial structure on a sound basis. He was both the visionary and the activist initiating the thinking and moves taken both in bringing about a change in the spiritual leadership and in reviving the original synagogue center concept. He was the analyst defining the facilities' needs, the chief planner working with the architects in detailing the new facilities, and the campaign director of the drive for building funds led by Gendzier. He was a driving force in the effort to improve the educational system and a constant motivator in the development of the youth program.

Ben Setzer was the financial leader who made the initial and major monetary contribution that sparked and set the standards for others in acquiring the funds both for the building needs and the day-to-day operations. When there was hesitation or doubt in taking the next step, it was always Setzer whose enthusiastic and positive challenges to action made possible the decision to move on. Without his lead, the best intentions and plans of others might never have seen the light of day.

Rabbi Tofield was the spiritual leader who was able to take all of the efforts made prior to his arrival in 1947 and to mold them into a dynamic synagogue center program religiously attuned to the principles of Conservative Judaism. Through his efforts, the religious patterns of the congregation changed; the supporting professional staff became a complete unit capable of providing for all aspects of Jewish life; and the congregation became an important part of the national Conservative Judaism movement. His leadership, experience, wisdom, and dedication furnished the stability and direction for the even greater expansion which was to take place in the 1950s.

THE FIFTIES

1. Growth and Expansion

With the completion of preparatory arrangements, including the financing of the construction, ceremonies were held January 8, 1950, marking the ground breaking for the new activities building. The event took place on the playground court which was to become part of the site of the new building. The affair, which was attended by more than 300 adults and 200 children, featured an address by Dr. Robert Gordis of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Five past presidents of the congregation participated in turning the ground. The morale of the congregation received a tremendous boost from the occasion since it marked the first affirmative move to create additional physical facilities since the completion of the existing building in 1928.

Adding to the increased enthusiasm and optimism was the election of new officers for the congregation a week after the ground breaking. At the annual meeting, January 16, 1950, Philip Selber was elected president. In seconding the nomination, past president Joseph Hackel commented that "for the first time in its history, the Jacksonville Jewish Center calls on a young man born in the city and given his religious training at the Center, to head the organization. Though young in years, Mr. Selber has grown intellectually and spiritually in the service of our synagogue."

At the meeting, Harry Gendzier, chairman of the building fund, in referring to the expansion program, commented rather prophetically that "the building will consist of much more than walls and equipment, it will confirm a traditional dynamic Judaism, and the financial obligations incurred will be met long before this generation turns the building over to the leadership of the coming generations."

The activities involving the construction of the activities building continued. The laying of the cornerstone of the activities building, was scheduled for April 25, 1950, with Rabbi Harry Halpern of the East Midwood Jewish Center, Brooklyn, New York, as the keynote speaker. Past presidents of the Sisterhood and the Men's Club participated in the ceremonies. In anticipation of the needs that would arise upon the completion of the building, the Center Sisterhood organized a beautification committee whose purpose would be furnishing and equipping the building. Evelyn Mizrahi served as chairperson and Bertha Selber as co-chair of the committee.

Even though the attention of the congregation was focused on the construction of the facility, the board in July, 1950, had recognized the necessity for air conditioning the synagogue building and making some repairs to it. A special program was created to meet these needs. The plan was to finance the program by a loan to be repaid from the proceeds of a seat assessment of \$5 per person for those attending services on the High Holy Days. The assessment which was labeled, "Air Conditioning Tax," enabled the immediate installation of air conditioning in the sanctuary. The effort was minimal but it did serve to keep the maintenance and repair of the existing building as a priority even

while the new building was underway. The estimated cost of the improvements was \$80,545.

At the annual meeting held January 15, 1951, Philip Selber and the other officers were re-elected. The new committee chairmanships named by the president reflected a move to appoint younger members of the board. Tours of the new activities building that was nearing completion were conducted. Adding to the developing momentum was the announcement by Gendzier that at a meeting at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Setzer, the sum of \$40,000 in additional funds had been pledged towards the completion of the second floor of the activities building that had been omitted in the first phase of the construction program and for the renovation of the existing synagogue building. The proposed additional work was estimated to cost between \$75,000 and \$100,000.

The enthusiasm engendered by the impending completion of the activities building was reflected in the successful efforts of the membership committee headed by Jack Becker and Burton Grossman. Non-members were urged to affiliate with the congregation since "the building will be one of the busiest social centers in the city and the pride of the Jewish community of Jacksonville."

The event-packed weekend of April 13-15, 1951, marked the dedication of the activities building. The Friday evening service preceding the dedication featured as its theme, "A Building Dedicated to Youth," with ten different youth organizations participating. The service was followed by an "open house" Oneg Shabbat in the new building. The Sabbath morning services that were conducted by the Minyan Club and the junior congregation was followed by a board of directors kiddush and luncheon honoring past presidents. On Sunday evening, April 15, 1951, the building was formally dedicated at a banquet attended by more than 600 persons. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Moshe Davis, dean of the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary. President Philip Selber used the occasion to review the plans for the completion of the second floor as a youth recreation center. He urged continued financial support for the building program that would include the rehabilitation and renovation of the synagogue building. He also reminded the congregation that, notwithstanding the financial support needed for the building program, the most important need was the increased financial support required for the on-going "day-to-day" operations of the synagogue program.

Harry Gendzier reviewed the growth of the congregation since 1925 and concluded, "whatever nobler goal than a progressive movement to make the Jacksonville Jewish Center a positive effective fortress for the perpetuation of Judaism in our community." He added that "the congregation was on the threshold of its greatest development." Gendzier could not at the time have realized that his statement would be considered in later years as an understatement in the light of the tremendous religious, educational, and social developments which were unleashed with the addition of the physical facilities of the new building.

The furnishings and equipment for the new building were presented to the synagogue at the banquet by Evelyn Mizrahi, chair of the sisterhood beautification

committee. The Center bulletin in the issue reporting the dedicatory events concluded its report with the observation that "the assemblage retired from the Auditorium with seeming reluctance to leave the scene where they had been enthralled by the beauty and grandeur of the structure and by the inspirational talks."

At the annual meeting held January 21, 1952, Philip Bork, who had been serving as financial secretary, was elected president. Bork had been one of the young leaders who in 1926 was responsible for the emergence of the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Gendzier, reporting for the building committee, reminded the congregation that until the existing synagogue building was renovated, the expansion program would continue. Philip Selber, outgoing president, reported that the membership now numbered 650 families, and he predicted another 100 families could be added in the immediate future. The growth of Jacksonville and the growth of the Jewish community which were responsible for the membership increase beginning in the mid-1940s were still continuing and were contributing to the continued increase in membership. The completion of the activities building and the development of the expanded synagogue center program were important contributors to the gain in membership. The response of the educational program to the needs of the "baby boom" was also a major factor in attracting new members.

On April 20, 1952, the youth recreation center occupying the second floor of the activities building was dedicated at a banquet attended by more than 350 persons with the main address being given by Rabbi Morris Chapman of St. Petersburg, Florida. Scarcely had the congregation been given the time to enjoy the glow of accomplishment stemming from the completion of the activities building, than it was being briefed at the banquet as to the details of the plans for renovating the exterior and interior of the synagogue building.

In his report in the September, 1952, Year Book, Bork stated, "there is only one step left towards the completion of our expansion program -- the remodeling, air conditioning and beautification of our synagogue and classrooms." In December 1953, Robert Gordon, treasurer of the building fund, solicited payment of all outstanding pledges to make possible the synagogue renovations estimated to cost \$100,000.

Considerable changes in the table of organization of the lay leadership of the congregation took place at the January 1953, annual meeting. Philip Bork declined the presidency for another year, and the nominating committee encountered difficulty in securing a successor. The problem arose because the role of the president, as chief executive officer, was demanding more responsibilities and expenditures of time than those who were called could contribute. The building expansion program, the increase in the membership, and the growing demands of the educational program, combined with the lack of professional executive assistance, made the position of president difficult to fill.

The decision was made to create the position of executive vice president and chairman of the board to be filled by a person who would have the primary responsibility for the financial aspects of the operations permitting the president to remain as the overall leader with the responsibility for the non-financial areas of operations. Robert Gordon

took on those financial responsibilities and Philip Selber was then elected president. Selber noted that he had not intended to serve again as president having previously served a two-year term, but he could not refuse to serve if asked. Gordon hoped that he would do his job so well that the congregation would have less difficulty in the future in filling the position of president. At the meeting, Gendzier announced that the plans for the synagogue building renovations had been completed and that the cost would be approximately \$100,000.

In October 1953, the contract was let for \$120,000 after omitting many items from the scope of the work. The work began in November, but even while the work was in progress, it was realized that the work previously omitted was needed. Again the call from the building fund went out and another dinner was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Setzer. The recommendation of the potential donors at the meeting was to proceed and a campaign for \$85,000 in additional pledges was launched.

Philip Selber was re-elected as president January 4, 1954. In March 1954, a contract for \$70,000 was let bringing the total cost of the project to \$190,000. The work covered by the two contracts included the waterproofing and re-finishing of all exterior walls, replacement of windows, additions to the third floor of the rear wing of the building, conversion of the auditorium into five primary classrooms, enlargement of the synagogue lobby, renovation of the interior of the sanctuary, and the seating accommodations. Also included was the air conditioning of the entire building. Still left for future action, however, were the fabrication and installation of the Ark in the sanctuary, the finishing of the enlarged sanctuary lobby and rest rooms, and the installation of an elevator to the second floor sanctuary.

The need for the funds to install the Ark and complete the remaining improvements to the synagogue building led to an innovative approach. During the Yom Kippur services in 1954, the congregation was asked to participate in a "Hai" campaign whereby each individual regardless of age or financial ability would be enrolled as a contributor by making a pledge in multiples of \$18 (the Hebrew letter, "Hai" used for the number "18" whereas the word, "Hai" also means "life"). The theme of the campaign was to enroll as many individuals as possible in a collective effort to pay the cost of installing the Ark, the only remaining item needed to complete the refurbished sanctuary. The campaign was well received, and the names of "Hai" contributors began appearing in the bulletin in large numbers.

At the annual meeting held in January 1955, Philip Selber was re-elected president. A board of trustees was established to honor and retain members of the board who had served for a number of years but who were no longer participating fully in the on-going responsibilities of leadership. The transfer of some board members to the newly created board of trustees permitted the election of additional members to the board without having to increase its size beyond the established limit of thirty persons. At the meeting, Gendzier again prodded the congregation to provide the final effort to make possible the installation of the Ark. He explained that although the "Hai" campaign had received wide support of the membership compared to all other previous fund raising efforts, an additional \$60,000

was needed to complete the planned improvements. Plans for the campaign for the funds were finalized in January 1955. Towards the end of 1955 steps were taken to let final contracts for the sanctuary work even though Robert Gordon, as treasurer of the building fund, cautioned that the funds for the project were not on hand.

At the annual meeting in January 1956, Ralph Mizrahi, who had served as vice president, became president. In November 1955, a dinner had been held to raise funds for the sanctuary renovation resulting in \$20,000 in new pledges to be paid in 1956. This was enough to convince the building fund officers to proceed, and within a few months the project became a reality with the installation of the beautiful new Ark in the sanctuary. The Ark was designed and created by Rambush and Co. of New York with the advisory assistance of Rabbi Tofield and Philip Selber, chairman of the architectural committee. Also completed at the time was the synagogue, lobbies, rest rooms, and the addition of the elevator. The new Ark was dedicated on May 2, 1956, with Dr. Simon Greenberg, vice-chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, delivering the dedication address. When the congregation moved to Mandarin, the Ark was removed and installed in the chapel of the current home of the congregation.

At the annual meeting held January 14, 1957, Ralph Mizrahi was re-elected president. Harry Gendzier, building fund chairman, reminded the congregation that much remained to be accomplished and that the unanimous opinion expressed at board meetings had been that additional classrooms were an absolute necessity which had to be provided as soon as possible. Even while the work was in progress to complete the sanctuary, the building fund leadership was actively working with the architects designing a fourteen-room classroom addition to be constructed on Silver Street adjacent to the existing synagogue building. Plans were also being completed for changes to be made in the use of the first floor of the existing synagogue building to provide a multi-purpose assembly room, a new expanded library, offices for the educational director and his staff, and a completely rehabilitated daily prayer room.

School needs had become so urgent that Harry Gendzier proposed that the board authorize the purchase of the Silver Street property immediately and to begin construction. On February 11, 1957, the board approved Gendzier's proposal and called for a campaign for a minimum of \$80,000 in additional pledges payable over two calendar years: 1958 and 1959. A successful big gifts dinner, hosted by Dr. and Mrs. Roy Sloat, initiated the campaign and was followed by other fund raising dinners. The purchase of the Silver Street property followed and a commitment was received from the Atlantic National Bank for a \$96,000 loan to finance the work. Demolition of the improvements located on the newly acquired properties was completed by the end of 1957.

Robert Gordon, as treasurer of the building fund, expressed his support for the move because the school needs were so urgent, even though he was personally uncertain of the availability of the necessary funds. In the September, 1957, Year Book, he said that "realizing the gravity of the situation, I asked to be relieved of all other responsibilities in order to reorganize and revitalize our campaign." As part of the campaign, a "Torah Light" campaign was launched at Yom Kippur services in September 1957, by an appeal

by Gendzier. He explained that wall panels would be placed in every classroom, each panel containing as many individual plaques as there were panes of glass in the windows in the classroom and members could honor their children by having a plaque dedicated in honor of each child.

At the January 1958, annual meeting, Burton I. Grossman was elected president. Although a relative newcomer to the community, Grossman had served as financial secretary and as a valued member of the building fund committee. Construction of school facilities was approved by the board on April 9, 1958. An unusual aspect of the plan was the decision to forego contracting the work with a general contractor and to depend on volunteers to contribute time in managing the construction. As a result of the decision strongly advocated by Ben Setzer, construction began without a contractor and the management of the project was assumed by Selber, who had replaced Gendzier as chairman of the building fund. Gordon continued as treasurer of the building fund and supervised the financial administration of the construction project.

Ground breaking ceremonies were held on Sunday, May 2, 1958. The ceremonies took on added significance in that this move by the congregation was taken only a week after the rear of the activities building had been bombed by vandals. Fortunately the damage was minimal. The expressions of understanding and indignation by hundred of people of all faiths was heartening. A specially designed shovel for the ground breaking was given to Ben Setzer and was used in breaking ground. Selber urged greater support of the "Torah Light" campaign.

By September, four months after construction began, some areas of the building were available for temporary use. By the end of the 1958-59 school year, all areas of the building were being utilized.

At the annual meeting in January 1959, Burton Grossman was re-elected president; Alvin Leitman became vice-president; Louis Safer, secretary; and Jack Shorstein, auditor. As work continued on the school wing, it became obvious that there were insufficient funds on hand to renovate the first floor of the sanctuary building to provide additional educational facilities. The decision on whether to proceed with the work was made at the April, 1959, board meeting when Gordon endorsed the move to proceed with the work on the basis that costs could be reduced by doing the work on the existing building while the school building expansion was in progress. It was determined that a supplemental campaign for \$60,000 in additional pledges payable in 1960 would be necessary to meet the anticipated deficit. Gordon's contribution in providing the leadership in converting pledges into actual funds was particularly commendable in that his willingness to support additional projects would mean greater personal expenditures of time and effort by him. His feelings in his role were revealed in a letter to Philip Selber in which he expressed his thoughts that he "would appreciate it very much if you would confine all your energy and enthusiasm toward fund raising and endeavor to curb your proclivity to always come up with new suggestions for spending funds which are not available. So for the present, please concentrate on putting \$60,000 in additional pledges on the books for 1960."

As a result of the action of the board, the building program was continued and the additional work on the existing building was not deleted even though sufficient funds and pledges were not available. Alvin Leitman was appointed chairman of the special campaign to raise the \$60,000 in new pledges and the initial responses were encouraging. By May 1959, over half of the new pledges had been subscribed. At the Yom Kippur services in 1959, Selber appealed to the congregation to pledge to the 1960 campaign and assured the congregation that when the construction costs had been met, the attention of the committee would be directed towards making available the equipment and furnishings needed in all of the educational facilities.

With the completion of the new facilities, the congregation now possessed one of the most complete educational plants of any congregation in the country, capable of furnishing complete classroom facilities for more than 700 students, together with adequate library facilities, administrative offices, assembly rooms, and other required facilities. In his statement in the September, 1959, Year Book, President Burton Grossman stated that "during the past year we completed the school building and the work of remodeling the synagogue building and we are now in the process of acquiring property for parking."

Although the increase in building facilities during the 1950s was an extraordinary accomplishment, the growth of the congregation's comprehensive program, and the development of a stable financial system to support it was equally remarkable.

During the 1950s the membership continued to grow, and by the end of the decade, the membership had reached 858, representing a growth of almost 300 in the period. The growth was due not only to the demographic factors and the expansion of the congregation's programs, but also to a highly organized continuous effort to bring the non-affiliated into the congregation.

An equally significant accomplishment in the 1950s was the ability of the congregation to increase and stabilize the financial support for its operations even though large sums were being raised for capital improvements. Much credit for this achievement was due to the acceptance by the membership of the "fair share" dues formula for securing the necessary revenues. This approach required a prodigious amount of personal contacts with members, but the leadership responded with the energy and the hours to make the system work. A further improvement in making membership available to more persons was the institution of billing and collection of dues on a monthly basis. This move also increased the total amount of dues received because the synagogue obligation was now placed in the same category as all other costs of living paid monthly. The change also created a more balanced flow of funds, reducing the need for financing anticipated dues.

An important factor in the development of the Center's program in the 1950s was the successful assembly and retention of a motivated professional staff. In September 1956, David Weinstein was added to the staff as an administrative assistant and later elevated to the position of administrator. Kenneth Bowden became a full-time accountant-controller and in May 1959, Robert Fischer became a member of the staff as

youth and activities director. His duties included the direction of the youth program, the athletic program, and the Day Camp.

2. Education Advances

As outstanding as were the developments in physical facilities, the stabilization of financial support, and the continuous growth in membership, the expansion and intensification of the educational program in the period was even more impressive. This included a Hebrew School for students from ages 6 through 15; a Sunday Religious School extending from kindergarten through Confirmation at age 16; a daily nursery-kindergarten; a junior congregation program divided into two age level groups; a participatory weekly prayer service for post-Bar Mitzvah boys; a variety of other supplemental programs; and a transportation system of three buses operating six days a week.

Just as the physical facilities were expanding to meet the needs of both a growing synagogue center program and an increasing number of congregants, so did the educational programs have to be expanded and improved to meet the exploding child population.

The basic requirement of the national movement for a minimum six hours per week of instruction was met by combining a four-hour Hebrew School attendance with a two-hour per week Sunday Religious School program. The six-hour program was supplemented by required attendance on the Sabbath and holidays at one of the junior congregations or at services in the main synagogue. The daily Hebrew School, which offered two afternoon sessions of two hours each per week, formed the foundation for the program. The enrollment of 137 in 1950, rose to 252 in 1959. The number of new students entering the Hebrew School program each year increased from 31 in 1951, to 63 in 1959.

Ted Gross was both educational director and principal of the Hebrew School. In addition, he was an instructor carrying the same teaching load as the other staff members. Other faculty included Cantor Marton, Norman Rosenberg (1950-1951), Sarah Grad (1952-1953), Norma Pekeris (1954-1955), Bernard Biller (1955-1956), David Weinstein (1956-1959), Raela Michaelson (1956), and Mrs. Elliott Winegard (1959). In addition, Rabbi Tofield met with the graduating class of the Hebrew School for a two-hour session each week. In 1954-55 in an effort to adjust to the different dismissal times of the public schools, two sessions of the Hebrew School were offered: one session from 2:40 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the second session from 4:10 p.m. to 6:05 p.m. When public schools changed to a "two shifts per day" program, the eighth grade in Hebrew School met from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. with a half hour intermission for dinner served by the Center food department.

Even though the number of students entering the Hebrew School had increased to more than thirty per year by 1950, the education committee was not satisfied and became aggressive in adopting as its criteria a requirement that every student receive a Hebrew

School education, as well as the "once a week" Sunday Religious School experience. The committee was aware that the acceptance of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony as a social standard was the most important tool available in securing acceptance by the parents of the requirement of a Hebrew School education as a prerequisite to being given a Bar Mitzvah date. Since the largest group resisting Hebrew School education was among the parents of girls, the congregation instituted the ceremony of Bat Mitzvah, hoping that it would increase the number of girls in the enrollment. However, the response of the parents of girls did not immediately indicate success for the program. A statement of policy announced by Joseph Mizrahi, chairman of the education committee, stated that the "new policy equalizes requirements for boys and girls toward Confirmation, and a pupil will be expected to be Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah at the age of thirteen to be eligible for Confirmation at the conclusion of the tenth grade of study." Although it would take effort to secure adherence to this policy, its announcement did much to break down the resistance of girls towards a Hebrew School education. During the year 1954-55 the number of Bat Mitzvah ceremonies was almost equal to that of the Bar Mitzvahs. For the most part, however, the number of Bat Mitzvah observances remained fewer in the 1950s compared to Bar Mitzvahs.

In order to increase the continuance of Hebrew School education after Bar and Bat Mitzvah, ceremonies marking graduation from Hebrew School at the end of the ninth grade were held during the Chanukah period. To move more students into the higher levels, mid-year promotions were instituted. The number of Hebrew School graduates increased from six in 1952, to fifteen in 1958, and twelve in each of the years 1959 and 1960. This increase, however, was not unexpected since the number of Bar and Bat Mitzvahs had numbered 48 in 1959-60. However, the skills of the Hebrew School graduates in conducting all of the services on the weekend of their graduation, including the traditional Kabbalat Shabbat service on the eve of the Sabbath, was quite impressive.

Efforts were made to lower the age of entry into the Hebrew School from the age of eight and in 1950 an effort was made to promote a three-hour per week program for children between the ages of six and eight. The Hebrew School program was characterized by the tenacity with which it held on to the number of teaching hours. When the public schools were on winter vacations or had "days off," the Hebrew School sessions were re-scheduled for morning sessions. When the Day Camp program was discontinued in 1950, the Hebrew School continued through the middle of July with sessions held in the morning. In 1954 a summer Hebrew School program for children seven to thirteen years of age was instituted. The program consisted of Hebrew classes, athletics, arts and crafts, swimming, and outings every Tuesday. In 1956, the program continued, but was once again changed to follow a Day Camp format with Ted Gross acting as director. The staff was augmented with outside athletic and recreational support. In 1957, the involvement of the Hebrew School faculty in the program was reduced with the engagement of Charles Kroloff, a rabbinical student, as director. In 1958, the Day Camp was supervised by Maurice Courson, another student rabbi.

The Hebrew School faculty had the additional responsibility for the conduct of the junior congregation program, which ultimately was administered on two age levels. The

program was directed by Gross, assisted by other staff members. A proposal to use the Center buses on the Sabbaths and the holidays to increase attendance at services drew opposition, but in May 1959, authorization was given for this bus service. The junior congregation program proved to be an effective way of translating what was taught in the classroom to application in practice. It gave the students an opportunity to develop the skills used in prayer services, and it also provided opportunities to develop the ability to lead services. The program also provided a kiddush luncheon, followed by classes with the cantor involving Bar Mitzvah preparation. Towards the end of the decade, a course in Torah reading skills was offered by Gross.

Another part of the program was the Minyan Club held each Sunday morning for post-Bar Mitzvah boys. It was directed by Cantor Marton. It reached a maximum average attendance of 82 in 1959. Cantor Marton's dedication and enthusiasm was solely responsible for the success of the program.

Another tool made available in increasing productivity was the participation of some of the students in the Camp Ramah program. The Ramah program was well received in the community. The program was described in the 1960 Year Book. Attendance in the summer Ramah program produced a core of student leaders whose spirit and enthusiasm affected the entire school population. The positive attitudes of these Ramah students not only elevated the environment of the classroom but also raised the quality of the youth leadership.

Perhaps the most far-reaching program in making the educational facilities available to all children, regardless of where they lived, was the Center bus system. The three school buses picked up children from the public schools and returned them to their homes, sometimes after dark. The buses were also used for the Center's other programs, particularly the Day Camp and the Scouting programs. Snacks were served on the buses when the children complained that they were hungry after leaving school. With the continuous spread of the Center membership to new residential areas, "feeder" pickups by individuals were worked into the overall system. The bus system became one of the most important assets of the Center in the 1960s and 1970s as it continued to expand its program from Springfield.

Although the Hebrew School represented the intensive core of the Jewish education offered by the congregation, it was the "one-day-a-week" Sunday Religious School that involved most of the children. The school continued under the direction of Ted Gross. The staff included members of the Hebrew School staff but was augmented by a group of lay non-professional teachers whose number had increased from 18 in 1951, to 33 in 1958. School enrollment grew from 320 students in 1950, to 625 in 1959. The increased enrollment created a need for recruiting and training qualified non-professionals to serve the increased number of classes. One of the by-products of the recruiting of teachers was the growth in knowledge and religious involvement by those who accepted the teaching responsibility.

The school followed an established curriculum featuring courses in Jewish history, laws and customs, knowledge of the holidays, and discussions of contemporary problems and developments in Jewish life. Achievements in class work and attendance at classes and services were recorded, and those excelling in these areas were recognized in quarterly listings in the Center bulletin.

The Sunday Religious School also afforded an opportunity for the entire child population to be assembled in one place for two hours of coordinated education. So well supported was the program that traffic problems were created at the times the children arrived and departed. The bus system was not used and transportation was provided by parents individually or in car pools. Beginning in 1957 an off duty policeman was engaged to facilitate the flow of traffic.

A satisfying aspect of the program was its ability to hold the students through the tenth grade when the Confirmation exercises were held. The numbers of students in Confirmation class grew from 13 in 1950 to 36 in 1960. In the 1958 class there were 41 confirmants. The program grew not only in numbers but also in depth and intensity. In addition to the two-hour session on Sunday mornings with Philip Selber, as instructor, the class studied with Rabbi Tofield on Sabbath mornings following attendance at services. The format of the Confirmation service held on Shavouth was also expanded in 1959 with the confirmants participating in the morning services on both days of the holiday in addition to the traditional Confirmation exercises held on the first night of the holiday.

The nursery-kindergarten department was fast growing. From an enrollment of 45 in 1949-1950, the number soared to 112 in 1957-58. In the 1952-53 school year, the staff included Tillie Reiser, Eunice Gross, Katherine Hackel, Sarah Grad, and Esther Fishler. Once the activities building was completed, the first phase of rehabilitating the existing synagogue building included the division of the first floor into five classrooms for the use of the nursery-kindergarten. At the beginning of the 1954-55 school year, five rehabilitated classrooms were ready. The staff included Tillie Reiser, Eunice Gross, Katherine Hackel, Peggy Sussman, and Norma Pekeris. The five classrooms served until 1959 when the new classroom building, containing new nursery and kindergarten rooms, was completed. At that time, the space previously occupied by the five rooms was converted into offices, library, and a multiple purpose assembly room.

Because of the success of the nursery-kindergarten program, the education committee announced in 1953 that a study was being made as to the possibility of creating a Foundation School that would cover the early grades offered in the public schools. The curriculum would be designed to coordinate the public school curriculum with courses in Judaica and Hebrew. In May 1955, the Center board agreed to subsidize a Foundation School for the year 1955-56. The school would offer a first grade program with a fee of \$10 per month. The Foundation School opened in September 1955, with a first grade enrollment of eleven students. The special staff for the school consisted of Gross, as principal, and Katherine Hackel and Clara Jaffee, as teachers. In 1956 the committee announced that another first grade program would be offered for the 1956-57 school year. The program, however, was discontinued for the 1957-58 school year. Efforts to

continue the program beyond first grade were not successful due to lack of support of the parents. A group of mothers petitioned the board to re-institute the program in the 1957-58 school year but the effort failed. Not enough parents endorsed the re-establishment of the program.

With the completion of the school wing and the remodeling of the main building in 1959, the Center possessed for the first time a complete system of educational physical facilities. There were nineteen classrooms available for daily use and four rooms in the activities building for use on Sunday mornings for junior and senior high school classes. Administrative offices were now centrally located. A multi-purpose assembly room was available. A well-maintained library was opened for the 1959-60 school year. The completion of the library came after months of work performed by a newly created library committee under the leadership and direction of Roselyn Selber.

The education committee which was very active in the development of the quickly expanded program was headed in the 1950s by Joseph Mizrahi, Jack Becker, and Dr. Nathan Schneider. Ted Gross reported in 1953 after attending a convention of the Educators Assembly that while national enrollment in religious schools had increased by fifteen per cent since 1945, the Center's schools had increased by over seventy per cent. The education committee continued to seek evaluations by outside educators, and in 1956 the survey was conducted by Dr. Martin Goldstein, educational director of Temple Emanuel, the Conservative synagogue in Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

3. *Religious Developments*

The decade of the 1950s was decisive not only because of the changes made in its religious program but also because of the increased attention given by the leadership in scrutinizing the problems facing the congregation in the effort to revitalize the adherence of its members to the tenets of traditional Judaism.

In September 1950, the Orthodox service offered in the auditorium on the High Holy Days was discontinued because many of those attending this service were now members of Etz Chayim synagogue, the newly organized Orthodox congregation. This change marked the end of the effort to serve the Orthodox community at the same time that it was proceeding to adjust its ritual observances and worship patterns along Conservative lines.

With the activities building available in 1951, High Holy Day services were held in its auditorium, accommodating some 1,250 worshipers. Children older than thirteen years were permitted to attend the main service as part of a pattern of families worshipping together. Junior congregation services beginning at 10:00 a.m. were also offered in the assembly hall and other rooms in the sanctuary building, making the total number of worshippers close to 1,400. Efforts were made to improve decorum of the congregants at services. Worshipers were discouraged from exiting and re-entering the services while important prayer services were in progress. Services were better organized and assurances were made that services on Rosh Hashanah would end between 12:30 p.m. and

1:00 p.m. The ushering staff was increased. Norman Moss became chairman of the ushering committee in 1956 and the program achieved a considerable degree of success in changing the behavior patterns of the congregation.

Other improvements in the services were made including the replacement of the Adler High Holy Day pray book with the Conservative-oriented mahzor published by Rabbi Morris Silverman. It was first used at the first High Holy Day services held in the new building in 1951. In an effort to bolster attendance at the 8:00 p.m. service on the eve of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, a reception for the congregation was hosted by the board members at the conclusion of the services. Very quickly the attendance on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur began to tax the capacity of the auditorium, and by 1957 discussions were beginning as to the possibilities for a second service and the criteria for dividing the congregation into two services.

During the 1950s considerable improvements were witnessed in the liturgical aspects of both the High Holy Day and the late Friday evening services due to the involvement of the Center Choral Society. The organization and direction of this activity was due to the efforts of Cantor Marton. In addition to its participation in the services, the group presented annual concerts in the spring of each year. Four nationally recognized cantors appeared with the group as soloists during the 1950s. The High Holy Day choir formed the core of the expanded group which had grown to 45 in number by 1960.

The congregation persevered in the maintenance of the daily minyan, despite the difficulties in obtaining the attendance of ten men. Oscar Magazis was the staff member in charge of the daily minyan upon the retirement of Rev. Joseph Robin. In 1957 a program was instituted to secure volunteers who would commit to attending a specific service each week. To the credit of the congregation, the holding of minyan services daily was achieved during the 1950s with very few lapses. Even though there was an Orthodox congregation also providing a daily minyan, the Center retained the daily service as a key identification of itself as a traditional synagogue.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Tofield, the participation of the Center in interfaith activities increased during the 1950s. After the rededication of the sanctuary and its new Ark, church groups and public school classes visited the Center to view the facilities for Jewish worship including the ritual and ceremonial objects found in the synagogue. These visits afforded opportunities for explanations by the Rabbi of the meaning and uses of the Ark, the Torah scrolls, and other religious objects. Interfaith meetings were also promoted by the Rabbi between Center groups and church groups.

Notwithstanding improvements in the religious program, it was obvious that there were no long-range programs being developed that would increase the intensity of the religious observances of the congregants. Despite the efforts being expended in the early 1950s, it was evident that much of the capacity of the leadership was being absorbed in the effort to raise capital funds and to maintain the ordinary operations and not in meeting the religious trends challenging the congregation. The acknowledgment of this imbalance led Philip Selber, at the conclusion of his term as president in January 1952, to remind the

congregation that "the greatest challenge still facing the congregation is the revitalization of religious activities." Because of the considerable intensification of the educational programs for children, there were reasons for optimism causing Selber to report "that progress was being made when more young people than older persons make up the attendance at religious services and when the young constituents of the services excel their elders in the ability to follow the Hebrew oriented liturgy."

Notwithstanding a few signs indicating some movement toward a more vibrant religious participation, attendance for Sabbath and festival morning services was minimal. This was partially due to the dominance of the late Friday evening service as the main service of the congregation. Friday evening attendance was due to the programming for this weekly event featuring a sermon by the rabbi dealing with contemporary subjects, and chanting of the liturgy by the cantor, assisted by the choir. Attendance was aided by promotional devices involving the designation of certain services to various Center organizations and affiliates. Sponsorship by youth organizations on designated Sabbaths and college homecoming services were also featured. All services were followed by receptions sponsored by the different organizations or different groups of persons. As an indication of the disparity in attendance and priority between the late Friday evening services and the Sabbath morning services, the religious committee in setting out its goals in 1957, worked for a "hard core" attendance of at least 75 persons for Sabbath morning services while hoping for 150 persons for Friday evening services. As a further indication of the neglected status of the Sabbath morning services, the times for the services were generally not included in the bulletin unless a Bar or Bat Mitzvah was scheduled. However, the times for junior congregation and youth services were noted regularly for 10:00 a.m.

Another discouraging trend that demanded attention was the smaller attendance at some of the festival holidays such as the second and seventh days of Passover, the first day of Shavouth, and the second day of Succoth. These problems were among those to which the congregation devoted its efforts in 1957, and which led to innovative programming for the observance of these days. The one trend that contributed to raising the status of the Sabbath morning services was the increase in the number of Bar and Bat Mitzvah observances. More than fifty per cent of all Sabbath morning services between September and June involved Bar Mitzvah celebrations. In 1959, the number had increased to the point that more than one Bar Mitzvah had to be scheduled on the same Sabbath. The kiddushes following services when Bar Mitzvahs were scheduled were open to all those in attendance, including large numbers of students. This was a problem, especially in the case of double Bar Mitzvahs. As a result, complaints were made about the extra costs. In meeting the problem, a plan was developed for subsidizing the extra cost by relieving the parents of any rental or service fees for the facilities used for the kiddush.

The practice of holding joint late evening services with the Reform Temple on two occasions each year was terminated in 1953. The discontinuance of the joint service was due to the reluctance of Center worshippers to give up a service with which they were familiar and comfortable for a service which was in conflict with their traditional leanings. When the number of those from the Reform Temple attending the Center services was far

less than the number of Center members attending the Temple service, the purpose of the joint service was no longer being achieved.

The renovation of the sanctuary resulted in a new pride in the sanctuary and created an increased interest in the religious activities of the synagogue. This served to restore the priority of these religious activities as the underlying foundation for all other components of the congregation's program. The call for a spiritual rededication to the traditional values of Judaism accompanying the rededication of the sanctuary furnished the impetus for renewed efforts by the religious committee. In 1957 it began an intensive study of developing trends and began to apply its energies to the areas needing attention. Notwithstanding the new sanctuary and extensive programming, increased participation in the religious life of the congregation was not immediately perceptible. However, the foundations for such a revitalization were laid during the 1950s, especially in the intensification taking place in the educational programs including the increased effectiveness of the junior congregation services. The students in the schools were much better prepared to participate in traditional Hebrew oriented services, and the youth program was heavily involved in the religious programs. The exceptional adult education program was effective in educating the parents and older generations to a better understanding of the religious concepts forming the basis of Jewish life.

In addition to developing the foundations for future intensification of the religious life of the congregation, the leadership, under the guidance of Rabbi Tofield, was developing a policy for the making of necessary changes in religious standards within the framework of Halacha (Jewish law) as interpreted by the rabbi. The position was also taken that it was necessary to establish new standards in accordance with Halachic principles when needed to meet new conditions and trends which might prove detrimental if not checked. How the congregation followed this policy in meeting new situations and trends may be best illustrated by some examples.

The High Holy Day services had become unacceptable to members of the congregants who were demanding a reverent, inspiring, and meaningful experience. The desired type of service had become difficult to achieve because of their length, especially the Rosh Hashanah service which ended close to 3:00 p.m. Changes were made in the services and especially in Rosh Hashanah morning service to have it end not later than 1:00 p.m.

To increase the number of students participating in junior congregation services on the Sabbath, the leadership was willing to resolve the question of using the buses on the Sabbath to bring children to the synagogue, knowing that the children would not have attended if they had to depend on parents bringing them. As a result, the busses were used.

When the ceremony of naming baby girls became a relatively unimportant rite for the congregants, the ceremony was changed from Monday and Thursday morning minyan services to the Sabbath morning services. The first such Sabbath morning naming service was held in 1958.

When the Confirmation service had developed into a "one night" program held on one of the evenings of Shavouth as determined on a year-to-year basis, followed by a complete absence of the confirmants from the other services of the two-day festival, the congregation changed the Confirmation service in 1959 to include all services of the Shavouth holiday by having the confirmants participate in all services.

When the social activities taking place on the weekend of the Bar Mitzvah observance and unconnected to the synagogue participation had reached the point that they were not in keeping with the religious character and significance of the Bar Mitzvah ceremonies, and where such events had become financially burdensome to the parents, the Center's board established a code of conduct limiting the nature and extent of such social activities. The effort was lauded by national leaders of the Conservative movement and their sentiments were best expressed by Dr. Albert Gordon, rabbi of Temple Emanuel, Newton Centre, Massachusetts, and former executive director of United Synagogue of America, who commented on the action taken by the congregation by saying that "it is about time that congregations began to place a greater emphasis upon the need to maintain the dignity of such celebrations in greater degree than many of them have hereto."

Because of resistance from some affluent families of the congregation who felt that their freedom of action was being limited and because of failure of other congregations to adopt similar codes, enforcement of the code was dropped in later years. The willingness of the leadership to attempt the introduction of new Halacha (although local) to the solution of detrimental trends at the time when such trends might have been blocked was an indication of the aggressive thinking that characterized the Center leadership during this period.

At the end of the decade, the foundations for a more intensive religious life had been laid only to await its flourishing in the later decades of the century. The developments in the religious activities of the congregation in the period will not be remembered for the changes made in its rituals or the intensity of its participation, but for the integrity of the congregation in its acknowledgment of the priority for a revitalization in the religious life even while it was reaching such success in its remarkable growth and expansion.

4. *Adult Education*

Having made the decision in 1945 to affiliate nationally with the Conservative Judaism movement and having been relieved of the obligation to serve the Orthodox community which could now be served by the newly formed Orthodox congregation, the defining of the religious position of the congregation, both as to theology and practice, became a necessity for the 1950s. In the endeavor to define itself, only a meaningful adult education program could be successful in arming the congregation and its members with the knowledge and understanding needed to participate fully in the new religious horizons offered by the Conservative identification. Not only did the leadership have to become

informed but it was just as important that the knowledge level of the individual members be raised as well.

Prior to the 1950s, the synagogue's adult education program had been limited to traditional Talmud study groups lead by knowledgeable individuals, or Friday evening sermons followed by discussions, or presentations by outside lecturers from time to time. The impetus for the first major improvement in the program arose as a by-product of the decision of the southeastern region of the United Synagogue at a convention held in Savannah, Georgia, in February 1953, to explore the area of what the region might do to assist the congregations in their adult education activities. The exploratory discussion was led by Selber, who was then president of the synagogue and an officer of the region. Following the discussions, Rabbi Tofield of the Center was directed to organize on behalf of the region a series of lectures to be given by nationally recognized leaders and thinkers on the Conservative movement, the program to be made available to those congregations who wished to participate.

The first project undertaken by the region was a lecture and discussion course on the meaning of the term, "Conservative Judaism" presented in the spring of 1954. Four outstanding Conservative rabbis appeared on successive Wednesday evenings in January and February to present their views. The purpose of the series was to educate the congregants as to the basic tenets of Conservative Judaism. Those attending were exposed to such a wide range of thinking among the speakers that it was necessary to invite Dr. Max Artz, vice-chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, to present a special lecture entitled, "Faith and Law in Judaism," in which he attempted to reconcile the various views of the previous speakers. The series did much to develop a desire for further programming.

As a result of the success of the series, the adult education committee, under the chairmanship of Louis Safer, organized an Institute of Jewish Studies that presented a six-week series in the spring of 1954 offering studies in Bible, worship, and the holidays. The success of the lecture series followed by the study course had confirmed the importance of a good adult education program in developing a more Jewishly informed membership. Such a program would thereby lead the membership to a higher level of participation in the religious life of the congregation.

The emphasis on adult education led to the presentation in the spring of 1955 of a series of lectures by well-known rabbis and teachers from the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary under the title of the "Living Book Series." The program of formal study was augmented by an extensive series of informal discussions led by Rabbi Tofield in various study groups discussing "Religion and Life" meeting in members' homes. Some of the discussions were presented in Men's Club Sunday morning sessions, and in business and professional men's luncheons. The program received such a degree of acceptance that Louis Safer, chairman of the adult education committee, had good reason to state in January, that "the past year had brought the Jewish Center a step closer to the realization of an adult education program worthy of the name."

The lecture series was continued in the spring of 1956 with five well-known lecturers, and in 1958 four more lectures were presented. In the fall of 1958, the informal study group program centered around discussions lead by Rabbi Tofield in the mornings on a bi-weekly basis in the homes of individual members acting as hosts. Also added to the program was a "Sabbath Institute for Men" also held at members' homes. Because of the success of these groups and the interest shown, the committee recommended that all of the informal home study sessions would now be combined into a new program offered during the spring of 1959, featuring four regular study groups, meeting with Rabbi Tofield. Two of the groups met during morning hours and the other two met in the evenings.

The development of a comprehensive adult education program of both formal and informal studies contributed greatly to a new interest and commitment to the religious objectives of the congregation. The success of the program was a standing monument to the achievements of Rabbi Tofield in this field. Unfortunately, his terminal illness began just as the program reached the height of its success.

5. *Youth Program Excels*

One of the most satisfying achievements of the congregation in the 1950s was the development of an effective youth program to supplement its religious and education programs.

Although the congregation had since 1919 participated in the Boy Scout program and later in the Girl Scout movement, it never focused its efforts in the field of Jewish youth activities until the effort to organize its own Center Youth League ("C.Y.L.") was made in 1948. This move was successful in capturing the interest of the synagogue's teenagers. The locally organized club became an affiliate of the national United Synagogue Youth ("U.S.Y.") at a charter convention held at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in December 1951. Representing the local group was Charles Palot, its president. The local U.S.Y. group was then host to the organizing convention for the formation of the southeast region of the United Synagogue Youth with Charles Levy of the Center's chapter being elected its first president. In May 1952, the Center was awarded the Solomon Schechter Award for "outstanding achievement in youth work" at the United Synagogue convention held in Boston.

The expansion of the social and recreational facilities with the completion of the activities building and the continued increase in the number of young people combined to lift the efforts of the Center in youth programming to new heights. In 1952 upon completion of the second floor of the activities building and its dedication as a youth center, the facilities became available for use not only by Center sponsored groups, such as the U.S.Y. group, Teenagers, Major's Preteens, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, and Cub Scouts, but also by Young Judean Clubs, AZA, B'Nai B'rith Girls, and the Esquire Club. The Sisterhood undertook the establishment of a "Fund for Youth" to sponsor professional direction for the overall program.

Meanwhile the U.S.Y. program had become so successful that in November 1953, discussion began for dividing the group into two sections and in May 1954, the group was divided into U.S.Y. (C.Y.L.) consisting of tenth through twelfth graders and another group known as U.S.Y. Juniors, consisting of eighth and ninth graders (later renamed the "C.P.C. Club") in memory of Charles Palot, deceased first president of the Center's U.S.Y. group. Because of its role in the creation of the southeastern region of U.S.Y. and the continued participation of its leadership in the regional organization and the offering of its new facilities for use by the region in promoting its conventions and seminars, the Jacksonville Jewish Center became the single most valuable benefactor and provider for the entire regional youth program. This exposure of its own young people to the youth of the remainder of the region also proved to be invaluable to the Center in the enhancement of its own program.

Notwithstanding the addition of the U.S.Y. program and the availability of new facilities, the scouting program witnessed considerable growth. The Boy Scout troop continued to make strides in the increase in the number of Eagle Scouts and the Ner Tamid Award winners. The largest expansion came in the Cub Scout program when it reached a peak of 99 Cubs and parents enrolled in 1957 under the leadership of Dr. Harry Yergen. The Girl Scout program consisted of as many as four troops of Girl Scouts and Brownies during most of the 1950s. One of the important by-products of this Scouting movement was its role in producing adult leadership for all aspects of the synagogue program. Since the involvement of parents in this Scouting movement was a basic requirement, scouting afforded the first opportunity in many cases for bringing adults into leadership roles in the synagogue.

The efforts by lay persons to coordinate the Center's youth program received a considerable assist with the appointment in May 1959, of Robert Fischer, as youth and activities director. Fischer was formerly in charge of BBYO activities in the Greater Miami area and was assistant athletic director of the Miami Community Center. One of his first responsibilities was the direction of the day camp summer program which became known as Camp Yom Tov. The enrollment increased to 100 when new athletic events and competitions were added to the program. The day camp program which had been a part of the education program since 1945 now became part of the youth department.

6. *Athletic and Recreation Activities Round Out Program*

The program of athletic activities prior to the completion of the activities building included an extensive schedule of participation in Center intramural leagues in basketball and softball and entry of teams in both sports in city and church leagues. With the availability of athletic facilities in the new activities building, programs for individual participation were provided on Monday nights for men's basketball and volleyball and on Wednesday evenings for women. A men's basketball team composed of the Center's best individual players played teams in Jacksonville and the Savannah Jewish Alliance. There were efforts to make available parts of the athletic programs for the students of the afternoon Hebrew School.

The athletic and recreation programs were administered by voluntary or part-time directors until Fischer became a member of the professional staff. In the first year under his direction, men's and boys' All Star teams in basketball, a men's softball team, and a midget boys' baseball team playing in a city league were added. Although the program always remained limited in scope and never dominating in relation to the overall synagogue center program, it met the needs of the membership for their athletic and recreational participation.

7. *Affiliates - A Prime Asset*

One of the chief components of the Center's program in the 1950s was the support system furnished by the extensive network of organizations affiliated with and part of the synagogue operation. These included the Sisterhood, the Men's Club, and the Young People's League ("Y.P.L."). There also developed a group of affiliated clubs whose membership consisted primarily of married couples and whose purpose was to provide for the social needs of their members.

The Sisterhood was not merely an affiliate, it was an integral part of the synagogue operation. Representatives of the Sisterhood had always been members of the congregation's board of directors. From its earliest history it had always assumed the responsibility for the well being of the schools, but in the 1950s it expanded its program to finance a system of award incentives for all the schools. It later began the financing of several scholarships to Camp Ramah every year. When the U.S.Y. was organized, the Sisterhood furnished support in the form of grants to enable U.S.Y'ers to attend conventions and summer institutes. It sponsored the Girl Scout program and furnished its leadership.

When the decision was made for the construction of the activities building, the Sisterhood formed a beautification committee headed by Evelyn Mizrahi, as chairwoman, to supply the furnishings and equipment for the addition. The Sisterhood also supplied the furnishings for the sanctuary upon its rehabilitation and later it provided equipment for the new educational facilities as they became available. The work of the beautification committee evolved into the donors' committee which continued in assisting with the expansion programs of the synagogue over the ensuing years. The Sisterhood assumed

the responsibility for support of the Jewish Theological Seminary and conducted annual campaigns in support of the Torah Fund.

The Men's Club, whose membership had increased to almost 300 members in the period of the 1950s continued its social and athletic activities. Its monthly dinner meetings were popular with the members of the congregation. It attracted an excellent group of young men to its leadership, many of whom later became leaders of the congregation. The club undertook a program of support for the educational and religious activities of the congregation, principal of which was the sponsorship of the Minyan Club of post-Bar Mitzvah boys which held services Sunday morning followed by breakfast served by members of the club.

The Y.P.L. performed well in the early 1950s, furnishing a bridge between the young unmarried members of the congregation with the overall program. It featured a regular program of Tuesday night gatherings at the Center. These meetings were always open to servicemen stationed in the area. It performed a service in sponsoring the annual college homecoming service held during the winter break since the Y.P.L. members were generally recent graduates of colleges and universities and closest to the students. As many of the members of the group married and became involved in the general activities of the Center and in the newly formed young married couples social clubs affiliated with the Center, the organization's membership decreased in the late 1950s, and in 1958 the club ceased to operate.

The group of social clubs affiliated with and serviced by the Center increased in the 1950s. In 1951, the Couples Club was organized under the leadership of Louis Safer, its first president. In 1953 the Mr. and Mrs. Club was organized with Harold Pausman, as president, and in 1956 the Amity Club was founded by Irwin Gendzier, as president. All of these organizations were formed to meet the social needs of the members, taking advantage of the expanded building facilities of the Center in carrying out their programs of monthly dances and social events. All clubs sponsored New Year's Eve celebrations and some cultural activities. The Couples Club membership increased to 125 couples during its second year of operation. The Mr. and Mrs. Club's membership rose to 125 couples and the Amity Club's membership varied from 75 to 85 couples. At least 300 couples were able to satisfy their social needs through the activities of these clubs, these activities becoming an integral part of the Center's effort to be a complete center in the lives of its members.

8. National and Regional Prominence

One of the most important achievements of the 1950s was the large and influential role played by the congregation in the development of the southeastern region of the United Synagogue and the contributions made by the Center leadership in the growth of the national movement. The congregation played a key role in every activity in the region and served as a model for most of the congregations in the region.

Harry Gendzier, a former president of the synagogue, continued to serve as a national vice president of the United Synagogue and was twice elected as president of the region. Philip Selber served as president of the region from May 1954, through April 1957, and served on the National Council of United Synagogue beginning in 1958.

Much of the growth of the region in the 1950s could be attributed to the rabbinic and lay leadership of the Center. Until a regional office was opened, most of the direction of the organizational activity was supplied by Rabbi Tofield, as acting regional director, and Philip Selber, as president of the region. At one time in 1955, the presidents of the southeast region divisions of United Synagogue, Rabbinical Assembly, U.S.Y. and Men's Club all came from the Center.

Considerable credit should be given the congregation in the successful effort in creating the U.S.Y. youth movement. The Center's move in establishing its own teenage group prior to the development of the national movement created an impetus for the move among other congregations. The national movement was formed in 1951. The activity of the Center became even more important when it made possible the founding of the southeastern region of U.S.Y. by sponsoring the organizing convention in March 1952. Charles Levy, the first president of the region, came from the Center's U.S.Y. chapter.

Not only were the synagogue and its affiliated groups contributing lay leadership to the Conservative movement in the southeast but Rabbi Tofield organized the southeastern division of the Rabbinical Assembly and became its first president. The influence of the Center on the national scene during the 1950s was due not only to the activities of its lay leadership, but was due to the efforts of Rabbi Tofield and the recognition he received as one of the major leaders of the Rabbinical Assembly. He was recognized for his work on the committee of Jewish law and standards of the rabbinic group. He prepared many studies that were adopted by the committee and that were followed by the Conservative movement. In 1950 he delivered a study on the historic development of Jewish Sabbath observance, and in 1955 he delivered a paper at the Rabbinical Assembly meeting on the subject of "Women's Place in the Rites of the Synagogue with Special Reference to the Aliyah." Although submitted to the law committee as a minority report, the paper was adopted by the full body as the position to be followed in Conservative Judaism. In 1958 he presented a paper, "Synagogue Regulation and Policy," at the meeting of the Jewish law and standards committee. Rabbi Tofield's work in the area of Jewish research and study led to the award to him in 1953 by the Jewish Theological Seminary of the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature.

The participation of the Center in the national and regional activities of the Conservative movement was not a one-way street of contributions by the Center, but it became a two-way boulevard because of the benefits it received. It was the beneficiary of many visits to the community of national leaders and recognized scholars and lecturers. Attendance at regional and national conventions and seminars provided a constant contact with many of the most successful congregations in the nation and their programs and approaches to the problems of synagogue life. Many of the regional activities were held at the Center offering additional opportunities for participation by Center members.

The prominence and involvement of the congregation on the national scene only confirmed Rabbi Tofield's earlier evaluation of the Center's growth that it "was acquiring mature stature in the galaxy of Conservative Jewish congregations in America."

9. *Overview of the Period*

The seeds sown in the latter part of the 1940s broke into full bloom in the 1950s. The visions, ideas, and planning in the 1940s took on reality. Not only were the foundations of the congregation of the future laid in the decade of the 1950s, but it was also in this period that its character was set. It had defined itself as a strong citadel of Conservative Judaism but more importantly it had established itself as the heart and soul of traditional Judaism in Jacksonville.

With a strong blend of leadership reflecting both experience and youthful enthusiasm and guided by unusual spiritual leadership, there seemed to be no obstacle that could not be overcome. The small traditional congregation of the early 1940s trying to serve both its Orthodox and Conservative elements now became the synagogue center envisioned by the leadership in 1926 when it assumed the name of "Jacksonville Jewish Center." The efforts to attack so many problems on so many different fronts has been unequalled in the history of the congregation.

In the brief period of a decade, the congregation had grown into a vibrant synagogue center manned by a large body of loyal and knowledgeable American Jews only a generation removed from its eastern European roots. Here was a strong bastion of traditional Judaism boasting a modern building facility, an extensive system of meaningful Jewish education for some 750 children, the beginnings of a revitalized religious life with a foundation for its future intensification, an effective adult education program raising the spiritual and knowledge levels of its members, and a youth program which was a model for many other synagogues. Here was a synagogue which was the very heart of Conservative Judaism in the southeast, a synagogue which in its own actions became a model as to how standards for religious changes were to be made in accordance with Halacha, a synagogue that had met the historic challenge when confronted with it.

Much of the credit for the accomplishments of this period is attributable to the willingness of the individual members to be committed and supportive of the leadership for each new program, each new campaign, and each new demand. This positive support was in response to the further development of the dynamic core of leadership begun in the previous decade.

The period of the 1950s witnessed the unusual melding of a group of dedicated lay leaders with strong spiritual leadership offered by Rabbi Tofield. Philip Selber emerged from a support role to the top leadership to become the primary leader of the 1950s, serving as president for five of the ten years and extending his personal leadership into every aspect of the developing program. His drive to overcome obstacles and to take the synagogue to new heights was rooted in his commitment to the synagogue as the basic vehicle for the perpetuation of Judaism. In addition to his deep convictions and

recognized executive and administrative skills, he brought to the leadership the ability to inspire the congregation generally and specifically the ability to recruit others into the expanding leadership.

Harry Gendzier, as chairman of the building fund, continued during most of the period to be the spokesman for the continuing growing need for physical facilities. Gendzier was particularly effective in the role because of his strong dedication to the principles of the synagogue center approach to Jewish life dating back to 1926 when he played an important part in the redefining of the role of the synagogue. His ability to articulate the needs of the building fund and his ability to secure support from others made him an indispensable part of the leadership.

A strong addition to the leadership came in the election of Robert Gordon, first as treasurer and then as chairman of the board. His strong financial leadership came at a time when the development of the overall operational program and the construction of new building facilities depended upon the ability to assemble the financial resources to make it all possible. Gordon was not the first to advocate the rapid fire stages of expansion taking place, but he was the one person who, when a project was adopted by the congregation, gave the leadership to make available the financial means to ensure the success of the project by converting pledges and promises into hard cash "to pay bills."

The congregation was fortunate in the continued involvement of Ben Setzer in providing the leadership in the raising of the funds for capital improvements. He was always the first to announce the amount of his contribution for each campaign, and it was the standard set by him that assured the success of the campaign. Many of the critical decisions as to the needs of the congregation were made in meetings held in his home and some of the initial meetings of the campaign were likewise held in his home. Without his continued financial leadership begun in 1944, one might wonder how much of the expansion would have ever taken place.

The excellent lay leadership could not have led the congregation to the heights enjoyed at the end of the 1950s were it not for the spiritual leadership and guidance of Rabbi Sanders A. Tofield. His experience, knowledge, and understanding of the operations of the synagogue enhanced the efforts of the lay leadership. His ability to educate and train the considerable number of leaders needed in the modern synagogue was an important ingredient in the successes achieved by the congregation. He was responsible for the building of a synagogue staff capable of producing the extensive program enjoyed by the congregation. His wealth of Jewish knowledge and his standards for the operation of a synagogue played a very large part in the molding of the Center into the tremendous institution which it became. He was recognized as one of the outstanding scholars in the Conservative movement, and because of his position and the resources which he had to offer, he was able to serve as the pipeline bringing the Jewish heritage of the past into the current activities of the synagogue. Although the period of the 1950s ended with the end of the decade, it actually ended with the untimely and unfortunate death of Rabbi Tofield in June 1960.