

Fact and Opinion

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Jewish Cemeteries in the Old West Preserved

Sonora—Mokelumne Hill—Jackson—Placerville—Grass Valley. Names that certainly do not spontaneously evoke thoughts of Jewish settlement. But Jews are buried in those old gold rush towns, where they were interred a century ago. And since 1964 the Jewish cemeteries in those once brawling centers have been restored and maintained by a special Jewish commission, aided by synagogue youth groups all over northern California.

In that year, the Commission for the Preservation of Pioneer Jewish Cemeteries and Landmarks became the title holder to some of the cemeteries. The commission is a public trust of the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum of Berkeley. The commission said that Jews came to the gold rush as merchants in the early 1850s and sold food, clothing and mining equipment to prospectors and other members of the community.

Last September 13, the old Jewish cemetery in the town of Grass Valley was rededicated. It was established in 1856 by the Shaare Zedek Hebrew Benevolent Society, a local charitable group. In later years, the cemetery was maintained by members of Gerizim Lodge 143 of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith but that lodge went out of existence in 1907 and the cemetery site became neglected. Vandals made away with several gravestones.

The most recent restoration at the Grass Valley cemetery was a thorough cleaning of the burial grounds by members of the youth group of Temple Isaiah of Lafayette, Calif., and the repair of damaged gravestones and erecting of

a permanent fence by a local contractor. Rededication ceremonies have been conducted in Placerville, Nevada City and Sonora. The commission plans to acquire legal title to the Jewish cemeteries in Mokelumne Hill, Calif., and Virginia City, Nevada, in the near future.

Synagogues Without Ghettos

The caption on this item is the title of a study conducted by the Center for Research on the Acts of Man of the University of Pennsylvania. It was commissioned in 1969 by Har Zion Temple, Philadelphia's largest Conservative congregation, which wanted advice on whether or not to abandon its present location and move to a suburban site. The conclusion of the study, made public last summer, was that such a move "is not at present indicated." While the specific advice has no wider applicability, of course, some of the general observations in the report are of broad interest.

Its principal author, Dr. Samuel Z. Klausner, director of the research center, wrote:

"The wave of the future involves the dissolution of the ghetto, the diffusion of the Jewish population over a larger and larger area . . . the time is past when a synagogue may conceive of itself as serving a restricted residential community. The present Har Zion site has survived with its community for some 40 years, before having to re-evaluate its situation. No cluster of Jews which is now forming can anticipate having that much permanency."

The Jewish ghetto in American cities such as Philadelphia has been in the process of "physical" dissolution over the past 50 years, he continued, the most common pattern of dissolution being the spinning off of small Jewish satellite

areas from a large ghetto-type area. Subsequently these satellites tend to spin off other clusters of small satellites. The area in which Har Zion exists (Wynnefield-Lower Merion) is such a community presently spinning off smaller satellites, Dr. Klausner contended; therefore he recommended that the synagogue concentrate on drawing its membership from a broader geographical area rather than attempt to move to an area to which some of its members indicate an intention of moving.

Studies of the attitudes of the Jewish residents of the general areas served by the Temple were regarded as important by Dr. Klausner as he formulated his recommendations.

He found that changes had been caused by the suburbanization of the Jewish community, assimilation into the larger culture of the American society, and the secularization of religion for Jewish people. The changing occupational structure as well as the dissolution of the ghetto have destroyed the geographic base for the Jewish community and have changed the meaning of the synagogue for its members, he wrote. The emergence of a wealthy industrial and commercial elite, in his view, has had as a consequence the transformation of communal institutions such as synagogues in accord with the concepts to which that elite attributes their business success. This success is based, Dr. Klausner observed, on organizational skill as well as entrepreneurial and planning ability; and this has led to the financial strength of many synagogues and enlargement of their services to their members. At the same time a group of Jewish professional people in medicine, law and related fields emerged to share this leadership, he noted; and he regards these two groups as more likely to maintain the consciousness of Jewish identity than are the salaried professionals

among the Jewish community and executive and managerial classes who tend to be more mobile and have less contact with other Jews.

The Americanization of Jewishness was summed up by Dr. Klausner in the comment that "Friday night Judaism parallels Sunday morning Protestantism." Where the Americanization is most pronounced, he noted, families join a synagogue less for its organizational attributes than for its function as a community social center. "Fewer observances are maintained in the home while the synagogue is attended more frequently. The preferred orientation is Reform . . . and in all cases the rabbi is expected to be a personal counselor. All of these add up to the Americanization of Jewishness—a situation in which religion has moved out of the family and is entrusted to a formal organization," Dr. Klausner said.

Vital Jewish Archives Being Lost

There are in the United States six major repositories of archives of American Jewish organizations. Although among them they have millions of items of archival material, all the collections are fragmentary. Much basic information about American Jewish life, past and present, is being lost or accidentally destroyed. And there is no current effort under Jewish communal auspices to assure the systematic collection of such material.

These are among the conclusions of a survey sponsored by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, as a consequence of which a new Jewish Archives Council was created.

The survey report pointed out that while there is a great deal of material in the six archival agencies, neither its quality nor quantity could be properly evaluated because "there is no accurate

inventory, information regarding the scope of materials available on particular subjects is insufficient and there is no systematic effort to determine what pertinent subjects are not being covered." Material on the activities of Jews in American political life in the early years of this country abounds in the archival collections, but, the report says, there is currently no effort to collect systematically information on the far more prevalent and significant twentieth century political activity of American Jews.

The six archival agencies were found to be greatly handicapped by lack of proper housing and equipment. Three of the agencies were described as having small and inadequate quarters. Only three have microfilm cameras and readers and only one has a microfilm reader-printer. None has adequate staff. The six together have 23 employees, four of them part-time.

Chicago Plan for Elderly Has Unique Aspects

Approaches to housing and care of the aging in what may well be a uniquely comprehensive program are projected in a plan developed in two years of research and planning by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

Primary aim of the plan is to help aged Jews to remain in their neighborhoods and whenever possible in their homes as independent functioning individuals.

Under the plan, elderly persons will have access to many existing programs and some new ones to be instituted, as supplementary resources to those they can command on their own.

A central coordinating and planning organization will exercise general direction over all services to the aged. Area service centers to be established in neighborhoods will include employment ser-

vice, local transportation, housing service, health services, and education and training programs. Through the area centers, elderly Jews will be able to obtain emergency help, home-maker and shopping assistance, telephone reassurance, home meal service, health screening and in-home health services, job counseling and actual employment as service center staff.

A variety of types of housing are contemplated. Leased apartments in privately owned buildings and quarters in specially-designed apartment houses will be provided at realistic rentals. The specially-designed facilities will accommodate two "households" to a unit, each "household" comprising about twelve persons, with enough household and—when needed—personal aides to meet the needs of the residents without undermining their independence. The health service area of the program will provide housing of a more specialized kind for persons requiring short-term care and rehabilitation, from which they can be moved back into the community rather than being institutionalized. Long-term in-patient care also will be provided within a nursing facility for those unable to care for themselves, even with help, in their own homes or the other special housing.

Pupils Enchanted with Plays with a Moral

Ninety Jewish women have organized and presented 200 performances of original playlets combining entertainment and anti-bias messages to more than 70,000 enthusiastically receptive pupils in Minneapolis public and parochial schools during the past three school years.

The "Masketeers" troupe, organized by the Minneapolis section of the National Council of Jewish Women, has

provided for many of the pupils their first taste of live drama. The idea for the program was developed when the section learned that the city's elementary schools needed enrichment programs for their assemblies but had no money for that purpose. It was presented to the local school superintendent in the summer of 1967 and gained his prompt approval.

A typical drama is "The Stranger's Crown," performed by NCJW members done up in purple body paint and purple wigs. The play depicts a kingdom of purple people visited by a pale-skinned girl sent to the kingdom by a musical magician. The visitor wins a singing contest. On being unmasked, the winner turns out to be a different color—un-purple. Frightened by the difference, the purple people mistreat the visitor until she persuades them to understand that "if everyone was the same, it would be like looking at yourself in a mirror all the time."

A curriculum prepared by the section, dealing with the theme of each play, gives teachers and children a chance to explore the anti-bias message further in reading and discussion, in writing and social studies, art and music "and finally, in group activities." Special performances are given in advance to principals and teachers to enable them to prepare the children for the assembly presentations.

There is evidence that each performance achieves both of its goals. One pupil wrote: "My idea of the point of the play is that nobody should be judged by their face but by the contents of their hearts."

The troupe director is also the troupe playwright. She has had considerable experience as past president of a suburban community theater. Backing up the actors is a crew attending to sets, lighting, choreography, costumes and

make-up, props and similar items. All the sets and costumes are hand-made by troupe members. The program has been financed by the section's donor and thrift shop but local businesses, community and religious organizations also have helped. Rehearsals have been held in synagogues. Janitorial expense for a dress rehearsal held at a school was covered by the Minneapolis Human Relation Center. Paints, fabric and corrugated board for sets have been provided by local firms.

Toward the end of the troupe's first year, the *Minneapolis Tribune* praised the "housewives who had never acted before," and declared that the play about the "purple people" had definitely "caught on" with the school children. One school principal wrote that "in all my years of teaching and working with children, I have never seen such a response on the part of children."

Jewish Studies Materials for Public Schools and Colleges

The American Association for Jewish Education has launched a three-year program to develop materials in Jewish studies, to meet a growing readiness of high schools and colleges to institute such studies. A gift of \$1 million has been assured the AAJE to underwrite the development and preparation of the materials for the program, according to Isaac Toubin, AAJE executive vice-president.

In recent years there has been a trend toward introduction into the school curriculum of materials relating to the cultural background, ideas and aspirations of the ethnic components of American society. At the university level, many chairs in Jewish studies have been established and there has been an expansion of course offerings and an enhancement of the academic status of Jewish

social studies. This process, which started more than 20 years ago, has been accelerated by recent demands for courses in black, and other minority, histories and cultures, on both the university and secondary levels.

The AAJE program "will not seek to teach the Jewish religion and will aim to meet academic standards set by universities and school systems. The AAJE will not intrude or impose itself. It will be available to offer guidance and assistance," said AAJE President Robert H. Arnow. He said that texts and materials to be developed would accurately describe the nature of the Jewish encounter with western civilization. "We will not seek to embellish the role of the Jew, nor will materials be doctrinal or propagandistic," he added; "on the other hand, both Jews and non-Jews at last will be able to obtain a more balanced picture of western history than has heretofore been available in traditional texts and courses."

The City University of New York has been pioneering in this field. At Brooklyn College an interdisciplinary undergraduate major for Liberal Arts students was started this fall, leading to a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Judaic studies. Courses are being offered in the college of liberal arts and sciences and in the school of general studies. A similar series of offerings is being made on an interdisciplinary basis at Queens College and programs are being developed in several of the other senior and com-

munity colleges in the city university system. The State University of New York is likewise embarking on programs of Jewish studies in three of its branches at Stonybrook, Albany and Buffalo.

Herbert Berman, a member of the New York City Board of Higher Education, who is chairman of the AAJE committee guiding the Jewish studies program, described the potential of "this new approach to education" as "unparalleled in the field of Jewish education in the United States. It will be possible now to reach the entire Jewish community through these course offerings without regard to religious, cultural or community groupings. The courses should appeal, therefore, to all segments of the Jewish community and should reach unaffiliated members of the Jewish community with whom no contact has been possible through the traditional communal apparatus. Through such study programs, career opportunities will become available in many areas. Majors in Jewish studies may become academicians, teaching or doing research at the university level, and become qualified as Jewish communal workers, educators, social workers, recreation specialists and community organizers." He also said it was logical that, paralleling the development of such courses, "there should be the development of resources and supportive services in the Jewish community to deal with the many opportunities which will be opened by these courses."