

Delaware County

Founded in 1827, Muncie, the county seat of Delaware County, grew slowly until the discovery of natural gas in 1886, when an economic boom ensued and the population increased from a few thousand inhabitants to tens of thousands. By the early twentieth century, depletion of the natural gas slowed growth, but Muncie's central location, industrial capacity, and large workforce helped it to remain viable throughout the next century with various industries. Besides Ball canning jars and Ball State University, Muncie may be best known as "Middletown," the typical American city that sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd studied and reported upon in the 1920s and 30s in an effort to understand life in middle America.

Jews were a small, but significant element in the story of Muncie's development. Jews were present in Muncie at least as early as the 1850s, when brothers Lipman and Henry Marks opened a dry goods store in Muncie. The Jewish population of Muncie, even at its height, never exceeded 200 people.¹ With an extremely small population, it was impossible for the Jewish community to support more than one temple, let alone a kosher butcher. Nevertheless, their impact and influence on the greater community as a whole was disproportionately greater than their numbers. By the turn of the century, Jewish entrepreneurs operated a large proportion of downtown businesses.

The German born Jewish settlers owned businesses in many of the same types of industries as Jews in other Indiana towns - clothing stores, tailors, merchants, junk and scrap dealers, and liquor and cigar stores. The second wave of Eastern European Jewish immigrants were equally, and in some cases more successful than their German counterparts. Some of the second generation German and eastern European Jews also went into business, while others became pharmacists, lawyers, doctors, teachers, or civil servants.

Among Muncie's prominent businessmen was Victor E. Silverburg. Silverburg was involved in a number of enterprises. He was a pharmacist, owning two local drug stores, was vice president of a cigar

¹ Whitney H. Gordon, "Jews and Gentiles in Middletown- 1961," *American Jewish Archives*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Apr. 1966, 41.

company, and president of the Machine Electric Supply Company which provided machine and electrical work, house wiring, sold electric and combination (gas) light fixtures, and sold automobiles. Victor died in 1910.²

His father, Heiman Silverburg, was a merchant tailor in Muncie for many years. His sisters Nora S. and Rose S. were both teachers, and his brother, Adolphe C., became an attorney. Adolphe C. Silverberg practiced law in Muncie for over forty years, from the 1880s -1920s, also serving as vice president of Muncie Savings and Loan, and president of Temple Beth-El.³

The Planks were also significant members of Muncie's business community, having operated a number of successful enterprises from the 1930s- 1960s. Plank Brothers salvage and auto parts business was principal among these operations. One brother in particular, Burle Plank and his wife Sylvia were significant for their contributions to Muncie's Jewish community. They were active in Temple Beth-El and served in various leadership and service positions within the congregation. Among many tasks, Sylvia Plank wrote about the history of Muncie Jews and Burle served as congregation president. Burle also helped organize the Jewish Welfare Fund and was co-founder of Green Hills Country Club.⁴

Charles Indorf was a successful Jewish businessman who owned a pawnshop and clothing store; he also served as manager for the Muncie Loan Company. Indorf was active in Temple Beth-El congregation and served as its president.

Harry D. Pazol was the founder of a family jewelry business that is still in operation after more than 80 years in downtown Muncie. His sons, Herbert and Morton Pazol succeeded him and ran the business from the 1950s- 1970s. The Pazol family has been active in the community and involved in Temple Beth-El.⁵

² Shonfield, 32; *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1909-10*, Muncie, Indiana: Chas. Emerson, 1909, 508, 662.

³ Shonfield, 33-34. *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1897-98*, Muncie, Indiana: Emerson & Dark Publishing Co., 1897, 553; *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1915-16*, Muncie, Indiana: Chas. Emerson, 1915, 661; *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1925-26*, Cincinnati: The Williams Directory Co, 1925, 552.

⁴ Rottenberg, 63, 93.

⁵ *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1921-22*, Muncie, Indiana: Emerson Directory Company, 1921, 569; R. L. Polk & Co, *Polk's Muncie City Directory, 1964*, R.L. Polk & Co., 1964, 436.

Sam Ringold was a clothing merchant and was considered one of Muncie's wealthiest businessmen at the turn of the century. The Ringolds were involved in Temple Beth-El and Sam served as president of the congregation.⁶

Moses Cohen was an early settler who was involved in the junk and scrap metal business. Other junk dealers include I. Levy & Co owned by Samuel Levy, Max Ziegler & Brothers junkyard, Harris and Belle Ringoldsky operated a iron. Junk, hides, furs, and pelts business in 1882, and

Martin D. Schwartz was a successful businessman and owner of Schwartz Paper Company (founded in the 1920s), took over the family business from his parents, Leo and Anna Schwartz, and his uncle, William Winick. Martin graduated from Harvard, helped develop the Harvard Center for Jewish Studies, and commissioned a Jewish oral history project that resulted in publication of several articles and the book, *Middletown Jews* by Dan Rottenberg.

Herman Marx and his wife Miriam operated several clothing stores from the 1920s – 1930s; they owned Marx Company, a men's clothing store. They also took over Sam Ringold's store (along with Dave Kallmeyer). Marx was active in Temple Beth-El and served as an officer.

Alexander L. Shonfield was a clothing merchant and was active in Temple Beth-El. He served as congregation president and wrote about Muncie's Jewish history and early Jewish settlers.⁷

Jack D. Burgauer was the founder of Muncie Typewriter Exchange in 1907. The business grew and remained in the family with his son David Burgauer taking over after his death. Meanwhile, Robert Burgauer founded Burgauer Business Machines. The business was in existence from the 1950s through the 1970s. Members of the Burgauer family were active in Temple Beth-El congregation.

Hotel Roberts was built by George D. Roberts, who made his wealth from a number of successful ventures including oil contacting and operations. He started in 1909 as a junk dealer. By the early 1920s, he was involved in oil and real estate. He owned the Bishop Block, Roberts Hotel, and the Roberts Block.

⁶ Shonfield, 33, 38.

⁷ Shonfield; 1897 Muncie city directory, 551.

Frank and Isabella Leon owned Leon & Metzger, later known as Leon's Famous. Frank is credited with helping found the local Knights of Pythias chapter, the Muncie Coral Society, and Citizens Enterprise Company, which promoted Muncie during the natural gas boom. He also hosted some of the first serves before there was a temple.

Martin and Helen Schwartz owned Schwartz Paper Company, which was founded by Martin's father Leo in the 1920s. Martin funded a Jewish oral history project, which resulted in articles and a books titled *Middletown Jews*. Martin also helped to establish the Harvard Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University. Another paper company, Muncie Paper Stock Company was owned by Samuel and Frieda Dobrow.

Raymond and Peal Shonfield were the proprietors of Shonfields, a men's clothing store. Raymond also served his community by serving as the treasurer of the local National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis. In 1955, he was instrumental in the distribution of the polio vaccine. He served on the board of directors for the Red Cross, Visiting Nurse Association, and the March of Dimes.

A significant number of clothing stores, over the years, were owned by members of Temple Beth-El. Leonard and Florence Scheuster operated the clothing store Why, Inc. (1943-1953), Herman Haas owned Kings Clothing Shop in the 1930s, Samuel and Fannie Schwartz operated Economy Shoe Store from the 1890s – 1930s, Leopold Klein operated The New Cincinnati, Morris and Fannie Shapera were the proprietors of the Victor Garment Manufacturing Company, Louis and Jeannette Shonfield owned Shonfields (clothing store) and the Chicago Salvage outlet Company, Women's Ready to Wear was owned by Melville Altschul in the 1920s, Herman Eichel operated a millinery shop in the 1910s-1920s. He also operated a house furnishings business in the early 1900s, Arthur and Amelia Wolff owned several local clothing stores from the late 1880s through the 1920s, Alexander Shonfield owned several clothing stores including the London Clothing House and Trade Place. He also wrote about Muncie Jewish history, Isaac and Ra Cohen owned the Progress shoe store and Model Clothing House.

William and Hazel Winick, along with Leo and Anna Schwartz started Schwartz Paper Company. It was a very successful business for the 1920s – 1960s.

Two jewelers in town were from Temple Beth-El, Morton and Herbert Pazol owned and operated Pazols Jewelers, while Lawson Jaffee and Morton Standt owned Lawson's Jewelers.

The final type of business owners were those dry good merchants. In Muncie, this included Moses and Rosa Hene operated a dry goods store from 1880-1920. Moses and his wife Rosa were involved in Temple Beth-El Congregation and he served as congregation president.⁸ Moses and Lydia Mark owned Leon, Marks and Company.

Muncie also had a number of very successful and influential Jewish social, political and business leaders in the twentieth century. For example, Victor E. Silverburg was a police commissioner, Burle Plank and Harry Zeigler organized the Jewish Welfare Fund, and Charles Indorf was board president of Public Works Commission.⁹ In civic affairs, Silverburg served as a police commissioner at the turn of the century.¹⁰ Indorf was also president of the Board of Public Works in the 1930s.¹¹

The Jewish congregation in Muncie remained small, was predominantly Reform, and somewhat informal, meeting in the homes of members. From 1891 until the construction of Temple Beth-El in 1922, the congregation met in various halls or meeting places throughout the city, including the Delaware Lodge, R. and A.M. (at the corner of High and Main for seven years), a meeting space (at the corner of Adams and High) from 1898-1912, and a building located at 120 E. Main for ten years.¹² The construction of Beth-El Temple represented a significant achievement for Muncie's Jewish community.

Muncie's Jewish community faced both subtle and blatant anti-Semitism. Jews were not allowed to purchase real estate in Muncie's most desirable neighborhoods, and they were excluded from fraternal, business, and social organizations, including the Delaware Country Club. A number of Muncie's Jewish leaders and businessmen invested in a new country club called Green Hills. The effort was led by Burle Plank

⁸ *Ibid.* 38; *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1909-10*, Muncie, Indiana: Chas. Emerson, 1909, 397; *Emerson's* 1897, 345.

⁹ E.S. Watson, *Muncie Business Directory*, 1898, Muncie, Indiana.: The Neely Printing Co., 1898, 3; Rottenberg, 57, 93; *Emerson's Muncie Directory*, 1931-32, Cincinnati: The Williams Directory Company, 1931, 339.

¹⁰ Shonfield, 32; *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1909-10*, Muncie, Indiana: Chas. Emerson, 1909, 508, 662.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 57; *Emerson's* 1931, 339.

¹² Alexander L. Shonfield, *Preface to the History of the Jewish People and a Sketch of the Jewish Congregation in the City of Muncie, Indiana (Muncie, Ind.: n.p., 1922)*, 38.

and Morton Standt in the 1950s. Green Hills was not an exclusively Jewish golf course, having both Jewish and non-Jewish members.¹³ Discriminatory practices by a number of local institutions continued through the 1960s. Over time, Muncie's Jewish community began to fight housing and employment discrimination. Because of their relatively small number, Muncie's Jewish community worked incrementally and quietly, avoiding contentious public battles. Despite periodic eruptions of anti-Semitism, most of Muncie's Jewish community was largely accepted and financially successful in their businesses and careers. As residents invested emotionally, socially, and financially in the community, most of Muncie's Jews favored a quiet approach that would not disrupt what they perceived as a mostly satisfactory lifestyle, despite pockets of discrimination.¹⁴

While the Jewish population of Muncie has been steady, in recent years the Jewish population has been declining. Marrying outside of the faith, job and career opportunities, and lack of immigration are among some of the reasons. Lack of opportunities and migration other cities may be the greatest factor in declining communities. Industrial and manufacturing job losses in Muncie and throughout central Indiana have resulted in slow population growth and loss of population as people move away for jobs. Many of Muncie's Jewish youth leave to pursue career and social opportunities found in larger cities. Today, Muncie still maintains its one temple (Reform).

Leopold Herrman was a successful Jewish businessman and was responsible for obtaining a dedicated area of Beech Grove Cemetery to be set aside for Jewish burials.¹⁵

¹³ Dan Rottenberg, *Middletown Jews: The Tenuous Survival of An American Jewish Community*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997, 5, 63, 93; Seth Slabaugh, 20 April 1997, *Jews Not Welcomed*. The Star Press (Muncie, Indiana), F, 1, 1.

¹⁴ Gordon, 56-57.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.