

## Elkhart County

Elkhart County was one of the first areas settled in Northern Indiana, as early as 1826. The city of Goshen serves as the county seat. While the date of the first Jewish person into the county is unclear, a congregation was meeting in the town of Goshen before 1877. Like most of the other congregations in the state, Congregation Shearith Israel started off by worshiping in individuals' homes until a first permanent building was purchased. Their first structure, built in 1859 as a Baptist church, was purchased in 1876. They then purchased land in 1877 at Oak Ridge Cemetery for the burial of the dead; the section was known as Shearith Israel Cemetery. After a permanent building and the cemetery purchase, the congregation started their Sabbath School in 1879. Around 1878, it is estimated that Goshen had about 125 Jews; this number hit an all time high in 1907 with 139 individuals, but by 1927 it was reduced to 51.<sup>2</sup> Some of the business owners included Louis Simon who owned *L. Simon Clothiers*, *Aaron Cohen Clothier*, *Bernstein's Cigars*, Jacob Frankenstein and Edward



*L. Simon Clothiers in Goshen (Elkhart County).*

Frankenstein, Harris Frankenstein, Freddie Simon, Sol Meyer; manufacturer of cigars, Abraham Kaatz, local tailor in business with Herman Goldstein, and Daniel Oppenheim. In a 1943 article concerning the death of Rabbi Harris Weinstein states that in 1943 there were fifteen Jewish families living in Goshen.<sup>1</sup>

Temple Sharis Israel had been abandoned in 1932, but Weinstein still officiated at weddings and deaths. Weinstein was born in Lithuania in 1859. He came to America in 1880, living for some time in New York and

Evansville, Indiana before moving to Goshen. He was active in the Mason's organization.

Goshen was not the only city in the county to have an active Jewish community. In Rolling Prairie, platted in 1853, was the site of Camp Moshava, established on thirteen acres by Chicago Mizrahi, a Religious Zionist Movement. The camp was used from 1939-1955. Elkhart did not have a Jewish cemetery until 1962 when Beth Shalom was established.



*Beth Shalom Cemetery in Elkhart (Elkhart County).*

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> "Layman Serving Goshen Jews for More than Fifty Years As Rabbi, Succumbs at 83," *The Jewish Post* 12 March 19143, p.1, col. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, Decline in an Age of Expansion: Disappearing Jewish Communities in the Era of Mass Migration, *American Jewish Archives Journal*, [www.huc.edu/aja/97-2.thm](http://www.huc.edu/aja/97-2.thm) (Accessed June 15, 2004).