Vigo County History

Terre Haute is Indiana's ninth largest city and the county seat for Vigo County. The first indication of permanent white occupation coincided with the construction of Fort Harrison in 1811,[1] while the first record of a Jew in Terre Haute is 1827 when Samuel Judah (1798-1869) of Vincennes, who purchased land in the county. He descended from a family of Spanish Jews, who traveled to Canada, then New York before coming to Indiana. Judah later served in the Indiana House of Representatives from 1827 to 1829 and from 1837 to 1841, acting as Speaker in 1840-1841. From 1829 to 1833, he was U. S. Attorney in Indiana.[2]

Farming, milling and pork processing constituted most of the economic operations the city. The National Road reached the city in 1835 and then in 1849 Wabash and Erie Canal reached the city. During this time, several Jews moved into the city; their exact date of migration is unknown, but in 1845, David Arnold, H. Moss, David Marsh, and Joseph Billingheimer purchased land to form the Terre Haute Israelite Burial Society.

The 1850 census lists at least 11 Jewish adults living in Terre Haute.[3] In 1858, a group of men came together to formalize a congregation. These leaders included N. Berlanger, Charles Springer, B. Kuppenheimer, Charles Alshuler, and Sam Mack. The group was named Terre Haute Zions Gemeinde. By 1868, a B'nai B'rith Lodge (Gan Eden Lodge #110) was founded.[4] In 1872, the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Aid Society was formed and in 1879 and the Sunday School was started.

In 1882, as an outgrowth of Zion Gemeinde, the Hebrew Congregation was organized; it met in a rented hall, where the B'Nai B'rith and Sunday School met. In 1891, the congregation dedication a synagogue, named Temple Israel. The Sewing Society, a ladies auxiliary of Temple Israel , supported the choir, raised money for

the temple, and contributed to the Terre Haute community. In 1898, the Terre Haute chapter of the National

Council of Jewish Women was formed.

As late as 1882, most of the community was composed of German Jews.[5] But by 1880, Eastern Jews started

moving into the community. By 1886, enough Orthodox Jews settled in the Terre Haute to form a second

synagogue, Congregation B'nai Abraham.   H.G. Goldberg was first president; other leaders include Meyer

Levin, Benjamin Becker, and Luis Brown. Today, the United Hebrew Congregation is a result of a merger

which took place in 1935 of the Reform Temple Israel and the Orthodox Temple B'nai Abraham.

In 1854, Philip Schloss came to Terre Haute. He owned several businesses, served in the Civil War, and

became a leader of the community (he served as a city council man, State Senator, and president of B'nai

B'rith). Bavarian born Schloss was one of the most prominent manufacturers of clothing. By 1862 he became

a partner in business with Goodman Sr. By 1867, on his own, he built one of the largest business of manufacturing

clothing in the city. In 1874 he was elected a member of the common council of the city of Terre Haute.[6]

Leopold Goodman opened his business in 1855; in 1871, he sold it to his nephew Lee Goodman and it became

The Philip Schloss home in Terre Haute (Vigo County).

Goodman and Hirschler. Lee was on the city council and overseer of the cemetery. Dr. Leo Weinstein came to Terre Haute in 1878. He served on the City Council and was one of the founders of Union Hospital. A.B. Felsenthal was born in German in 1849. He came to Terre Haute in 1870. He earned his law degree, and eventually was elected Justice of the Peace, member of B'nai B'rith. Isaac Fecheimer was president of the Temple Israel; he moved to California in 1913.

Adolph Herz founded the Terre Haute Commercial Club (the first Chamber of Commerce) in 1899. He had come to Terre Haute in 1867 as a merchant tailor. He started his own business called *Herz Bazaar,* becoming the largest specialty store in Midwest and employing 165 people. He was also director of *McKean National Bank*, trustee of the Rose Orphan home, president of the local society settlement, director of the Terre Haute Society for Organizing Charity.   Herz died in 1917.

Rebecca Torner was a teacher at Wiley High School. She helped start the first art society in town, was a charter member of the Terre Haute Women's club, a member of the first literary club, a member of the Sex Hygiene National Committee, and worked on social hygiene.

1899 Dr. Herman Bernheimer set up a medical practice. Jonas Stouse, a German born in 1844, came in 1900, serving as president of Temple Israel and opening a retail grocery store. He died in 1932.

Harry Schloss was president of Temple Israel, served as secretary of the Vigo County Democratic Society, was a City Councilman, and Trustee of the State School for Boys. His wife was president of the Terre Haute

chapters of the Council of Jewish Women and of the Fresh Air Mission, a nonsectarian organization. She was honored by the local anti-tuberculosis campaign and was involved in other community efforts.

Mrs. S. Kleeman was President of the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society The society, from its inception in 1872, responded to various financial emergencies and in numerous instances had given considerable individual assistance to many people throughout the community. Mrs. Kleeman was known to be an untiring worker in helping others.

Mrs. Mariana Mack, who came to Terre Haute in 1853 at the age of seventeen, was the first President of the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society. For a period of over forty-one years, she continued to work for the welfare of others.

Mrs. Herz Straus, who came to Terre Haute in 1868, was one of the charter members of the Benevolent Society. She became president and held this office for thirteen years. She was President of the Auxiliary Society of the Reform Synagogue. Mrs. Straus also participated in many community projects over many years and was an active member of the Board of the Local Society for Organizing Charity.

Mrs. Lee Goodman came to Terre Haute in 1876. She became president of the Sewing Society and the local section of the Council of Jewish Women. She was also involved in many secular organizations such as the, Needlework Guild and was president of one of its sections.

Mrs. Adolph Joseph was secretary to the local chapter of the National Council. In 1909, she and the local community were honored when she was chosen to serve on the National Committee of Peace and Arbitration, and the Housing Committee of the State Federation of Women's Clubs.

Mrs. Leon Stern, the daughter of Rabbi Mayer Messing of Indianapolis, honed her social work skills there and then put them to good use after having moved to Terre Haute. Mrs. Stern was the treasurer of the State Federation of WOMCII'S Clubs and director of the State Suffrage Association.

Leopold Joseph was president of Temple Israel from 1914 to 1922. In 1904, he and his brother took over their family clothing store, *Joseph's*, and continued the business for 36 years.   He was a member of Terre Haute Lodge No. 86 F&AM, B'nai B'rith and contributed to many civic efforts.

Isaac Ades was a small child when he left Russia with his mother and three brothers to join his father in Terre Haute in 1892. He sold papers, took a road job for a theater group for ten years and then came back to Terre Haute, when he purchased a theater at 8th and Wabash Avenue. In April 1917, he purchased the *John Hanley Tent and Awning Company*, changing its name to *Terre Haute Tent and Awning Inc*. and remained the owner until his death in 1955. He was an active member of Temple Israel and B'nai B'rith.

Ben Becker was born in Germany in 1889. At age 13, he came to New York and later became a shoe salesman in Milwaukee. In 1908, he moved to Terre Haute to open his own shoe and repair store at 1105 Wabash Avenue. Then, in 1915, he opened a store at Fifth and Wabash, where his business experienced a dramatic increase. He also became involved with several local enterprises and several out-of-town shoe companies.

Ben Goldman was born in 1866 in Baltimore. In 1901, he came to Terre Haute and opened the *Terre Haute Furniture Company*. He was general manager, secretary, and treasurer it grew so much that he moved to large quarters in 1917. It was the largest retail furniture store in Vigo County. He was an active participant in the Chamber of Commerce, Business Men's Club, Retail Merchants Association, and the Phoenix Club.

Two of the Goodman family homes in Terre Haute (Vigo County).

Louis Silberman was born in New Albany, Indiana in 1869. He started a furniture business on Wabash Avenue about 1890 and, by 1915, it had grown from one floor to nine floors, plus a large warehouse. He was founder of *Superior Mattress Co.*, which became an important industry in Terre Haute. He became recognized as a fine leader in local business affairs. He was president of the Retail Merchants Association, a member of the Board of Review of the Phoenix Club, the Odd Fellows and Temple Israel.

Samuel T. Greenberg was born in Buffalo, New York in August, 1875. He went to school in Indianapolis and Terre Haute. At 15 he started to work in the clothing store of *Thorman and Schloss*. In 1901 he and his brother-in-law, Jacob R. Finkelstein, went into business; in 1907 they changed the name to *A. L. Greenberg Iron Company* with Samuel as secretary/treasurer. His holdings came to include stock in the *Linton Ice and Cold Storage Company*, the *Linton Opera Company.*, the *Southern Indiana Railroad*, the *Phoenix Building & Realty Co.*, the *Kettle Creek Coal Company.* and the *Riley Oil Company*. He was a member of the Phoenix Club and Temple Israel.

Jacob R. Finkelstein was born in Iowa in 1877. He was educated in Indianapolis, where his father was a large dealer in used iron. At age 13 he was traveling as a buyer of used iron. He became the president of *A. L. Greenberg Iron Company* in May of 1907. The offices and yards were located at the corner of Tenth and Crawford Streets.

Julian Silverstein was president of *World Wide Travel* in the 1960s. Benjamin Goldman was secretary, salesman and manager for *Terre Haute Furniture and Carpet Company*. Harry W. Cohen was the department manager for *A. Herz,* originally a notions store, but later developed into a ladies clothing store. Leo Joseph owned *M. Joseph's Sons,* a clothing store and tailor shop as early as 1906. Morris and Lena Rosenfeld

United Hebrew Congregation, a combination of all congregation in Terre Haute, now occupies Temple Israel.

owned *Rosenfeld Brothers*, a clothing store as early as 1912. Charles and Carolyn Gurman owned *I. Gurman & Sons*, a barrel dealer from the 1930s – 1960s.

Herz Park is named for Adolph Herz, who died in 1916. Parsons Hall, a building at Indiana State University, was gift by Benjamin Blumberg.

The Jewish people of Terre Haute made huge contributions to the general community compared to their numbers. They organized and contributed two benevolent associations for relief of the poor, and two associations to assist transients. They served on the boards and held offices in the Local Society for Organizing Charity, Fresh Air Mission, the Penny Lunch Movement in the schools, the Social Settlement, Hospital Boards, Day Nursery, Boys Club, Com-mercial Club, Retail Merchants Association, City Council, State Legislature, etc.

Of the 797 sites identified in Vigo County with an association to the Jewish community, 109 buildings are still in existence; all buildings were surveyed. Five were rated Outstanding (Temple Israel, the Star Building, the Sycamore building, Temple B'nai Abraham, and Highland Lawn Cemetery), two were rated Notable, 100 were rated Contributing, and 2 were rated Not Contributing.

Footnotes

[1] Robert Taylor, Errol Wayne Stevens, Mary Ann Ponder, and Paul Brockman, Indiana: A New Historical Guide (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society) http://web.indstate.edu/community/vchs/thhist.htm (accessed September 5, 2006).

[2] Herman Koren, The 150 Year History of the Jewish Community of Terre Haute, Indiana, Terre Haute, Indiana: Indiana State University, 1999, 12; Indiana Historical Society, Indiana Historical Society - Manuscripts and Archives Department, Judah-Brandon Family Papers, 1820-1950 Biographical Context, http://www.indianahistory.org/library/manuscripts/collection_guides/m0171.html#HIST (accessed September 5, 2006).

[3] Koren, 12

[4] Ibid., 14.

[5] *Ibid.,* 15.

[6] H. W. Beckwith, History of Vigo and Parke Counties, Together With Historic Notes on the Wabash Valley, (Terre Haute, Indiana: H.W. Beckwith, 1880), 243-244.