

The Synagogue Journal

1856-2006

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An online publication available at
www.kanestreet.org/historical_journal.html

Issue 5

Brooklyn's First Jewish School

"Correspondence. Brooklyn, N. Y."

A newspaper clipping about the school, written circa 1880 when Julius Corn was Superintendent, was found within the pages of the Sunday School minutes book of 1864-1893. "The Synagogue Journal" reprints the article.

"Sunday School Beth Israel. Closing Examination previous to a Vacation Until the Second Sunday in September"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, August 7, 1876, Page 3

Provides details about the school and congregation.

"Beth Israel. Interesting Entertainment of the Pupils of the Jewish Sunday School"

"Counselor Michael Gruschenke"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, December 24, 1877, Page 3

Articles about the Sunday School discuss the anniversary exercises of over 150 students who range from ages three to thirteen, the details of the oral examination, and the names of honored students and teachers.

"A Hebrew Sunday School Union"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, July 7, 1884, Page 4

Baith Israel Sunday School held annual picnics attended by hundreds of people. This was the first combined picnic with students from four schools: Baith Israel, Temple Israel, the Keep Street Temple and the Hebrew Orphan Asylum.

"Hebrews Who Kept Christmas. How Baith Israel People Surprised an Old Friend"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, December 27, 1885

The Baith Israel teachers were a social lot. This appears to be a Hanukah celebration.

"Baith Israel. The Sunday School's First Entertainment"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, March 8, 1888, Page 2

Describes the program of the school, "the most orthodox Jewish school in the city," and the names of the teachers and attendees.

"For the Library Fund. An Entertainment Given by the Baith Israel Sunday School"

Credit: Brooklyn Eagle, March 14, 1890

A note about Rev. Friedlander states, "Through his efforts, Hebrew is being taught in the Bible class."

In this issue ...

We feature Brooklyn's first Jewish School, organized in 1864. Congregation Baith Israel held separate classes for boys and girls in the basement of the Boerum Place Synagogue until 1904, when the building was destroyed by a fire. The Sunday school began as a free institution with the Hebrew Free Sunday School teacher's association as volunteers. Apparently, there were two brief periods when the school separated from the congregation – while Julius Corn was superintendent and during Rabbi Marcus Friedlander's tenure. This fact might account for the Rabbi's sudden departure from the congregation, the deleted records and the lost trustee minutes. (see Issue 4)

Newspaper articles in this issue cover details about the school such as public examinations in the sanctuary, prizes for scholars, teachers' and pupils' names, confirmation services, annual school picnics and school entertainment. Archives from this period consist of: register of pupils, financial records and reports, Sunday School Teachers' Association minutes and Talmud Torah financial reports.

Outstanding personalities from the school include Aaron Copland, who was enrolled in 1904 at age four as the youngest student. Aaron's father Harris served as School board chairman; his brother Ralph taught for a number of years at the school and served as superintendent. Another notable graduate was Michael Furst, son of Baith Israel founder Solomon Furst. Michael was born in 1856, the same year as the congregation organized. He was the first Jewish boy in Brooklyn to attend college and spoke at his Yale commencement in 1876 on "The Modern Jew." With his boyhood Sunday school classmate, fellow attorney Michael Grushenske, he directed Baith Israel's Sunday school during the 1880s. Julius Corn organized the school and served as its superintendent many years. Marcus Friedlander directed it from 1888 to 1893. During Harris Copland's tenure, classes met at the Brooklyn Atheneum. Harris headed the search committee that found the church on Harrison Street -- the theme of next week's issue.

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About the Journal ...

The "Synagogue Journal" is a one-year online publication at www.kanestreet.org/historical_journal.html, designed to highlight the Kane Street Synagogue congregation's rich historical record. It will draw primarily on original source material: oral histories, minute books and financial ledgers, souvenir journals, newsletters, and stories of the nineteenth century from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online™, Brooklyn Public Library.

Each week in 2006, the Journal will explore a specific theme, related to the Congregation's experience. Articles will illustrate the three historic periods: the first fifty years as Congregation Baith Israel at both the Atlantic Street and Boerum Place sites; the middle years with Rabbi Israel Goldfarb as spiritual leader of the consolidated Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes at the present location, and the last fifty years, as the synagogue evolved to be the Congregation that we know today.

Journal readers who take in the entire series will view the panorama of our special synagogue's experience in Brooklyn, the City of Churches: the constants, the changes and the cycles. Our intention is to foster greater understanding about synagogue customs and rituals and explore the development of the oldest Conservative congregation during its proud history.

Those of you who have watched the Congregation grow over the last decades and guided its course have a treasured perspective. We welcome your reminiscences, letters and photographs to help shape the BIAE story. Special thanks to Kane Street Synagogue webmaster Dugans for putting the Journal online.