

Brief History of Our Congregation

B'nai Moshe

By B.F. Goldman, Secretary

Copied from the May 26, 1929 synagogue dedication booklet
(References to the "Gunsberg" name have been bolded and italicized)

In the summer of 1911 a handful of men, recent arrivals from Hungary, met in a restaurant on Hastings street, then the hub of Jewish life in Detroit, and decided to organize a congregation that would enable them to worship in accordance with the traditional characteristics and customs brought with them from a land where the Jew for a half century had been emancipated and enjoyed the benefits of religious and secular education without the baneful limitations imposed upon their co-religionists living in other European countries.

Although the Hungarian-Jewish settlement of Detroit at that time consisted of hardly more than 25 or 30 families, the movement proved successful and on Sept. 2, 1911, Articles of Association were drawn up and signed by the following charter members Aaron Holland, Emil Schulman, Sam Edelheit, Henman Goldberg, Ignatz Lebowitz and Sam Greenbaum.

Holland First President

Aaron Holland was elected first president and the above named formed a board of trustees.

During the first year of its existence the congregation worshipped in a hall at Hastings and Adelaide streets. The high holidays of the second year found then in the Hannah Schloss building and the following year they rented quarters in a hall on Hastings near Brewster Street. Herman Eichner, Joseph Hartman and Sam Greenbaum were presidents during the three years. They were followed in office by Ben Schwartz and Martin Klein.

In 1915 the congregation was strong enough to purchase a modest home on Elliott street near Hastings which satisfied its purpose until the early part of 1917 when under the leadership of the late Herman Eichner the congregation, at that time embracing about 70 families, felt sufficiently strong to erect a synagogue providing a seating capacity of 600, a social hall accommodating an audience of 300 and Talmud Torah and Sunday School rooms that enabled a yearly enrollment of over 100 children in the neighborhood, regardless of their parents' affiliation. It should be recalled that in those years the United Talmud Torah schools had not as yet provided sufficient facilities for the rapidly rising number of Jewish children in the city.

Named After Morris Gunsberg

At the cornerstone laying exercises of the synagogue at Garfield and Beaubien streets, the congregation, which at the time bore the name of one of its most ardent members, Elias Einczig, acquired its present title, Congregation B'nai Moshe, Mr. Einczig donating the proceeds from said change to the new building fund. The sons and daughters of ***Morris Gunsberg***, who at the age of 81 years today, is still a source of inspiration to the membership, were the highest bidders and the congregation consequently bears the name "Sons of Moses."

The then ambitious building program guided by the magnetic personality and arduous work of President Herman Eichner, assisted by his building committee, headed by Jacob Farkas, was

carried to a successful conclusion and the congregation was in a position to exercise its religious educational, social and communal functions on a scale fully justifying the vision of its proponents.

Mr. Eichner was succeeded by **Sam Gunsberg** who occupied the presidency for three consecutive years. During his administration the congregation acquired its own burial grounds in the Oakview cemetery.

Rabbi Fischer Comes Here

During the administration of his successor, Peter Vass, who also presided for three years, the congregation, grown to a membership of over 200, felt the want of competent spiritual leadership and heeding repeated tenders, Rabbi Moses Fischer, who just then, in 1923, completed his twentieth year of ministration to the largest Hungarian Hebrew Congregation in Chicago, commenced his beneficial work with Congregation B’Nai Moshe.

In the fall of 1924, **Sam Gunsberg** was again returned to the presidency for one term and was succeeded by Harry Rosman who occupied the chair for two consecutive years.

Meanwhile the influx of colored people into the eastern part of the city became so pronounced that like other congregations of Orthodox character, B’Nai Moshe sensed the necessity of following the trend of migration of its constituents to the northwestern section and Mr. Rosman was successful in disposing of the old home and acquiring the fine corner site at Dexter boulevard and Lawrence avenue. Joseph Hirschfeld was appointed chairman of the building committee, B.F. Goldman, associate chairman; **Louis Gunsberg**, treasurer of the Building Fund.

Temporary Quarters

The present incumbent of the presidency, Robert Rosenberg, succeeded to the chair in the fall of 1927, at a time when the congregation, having left its own home in the spring of the year, occupied rented quarters at the corner of Linwood and Clairmont avenues. The large attendance of members and families on the high holidays necessitated the rental of the main auditorium of Jericho Temple for these occasions.

The initial effort of Mr. Rosman, who succeeded in securing several thousand dollars in cash donations and pledges for the new Synagogue Fund, was followed up in a very vigorous manner during Mr. Rosenberg’s first term with the result that in the fall of this year the congregation felt encouraged to proceed with the erection of its magnificent new home. Ground was broken Sunday, October 21, and on November 25 the corner-stone was placed with fitting ceremonies.

The new edifice will not only accommodate a large number of worshipers, but will also provide educational, social and recreational facilities for its members, now numbering over 300, their wives, sons and daughters.

The present executive board consists of the following: Robert Rosenberg, president; Jacob Gelbman, vice-president; B.F. Goldman, secretary; Joseph Kornfeld, treasurer; Anthony Deutsch, Sam Rosenberg, **Sam Gunsberg**, Adolph Deutsch, David Goodfriend, Armin Hartmen, Jacob Farkas, Jacob Glasel, , **Sigmund Gunsberg**, Emil Neufeld, Joseph Hirschfeld, James Sobel and Emanuel Rosman, board of directors.