

from the beginning . . .

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY of Cincinnati is 140 years young this year. It is with a feeling of well-justified pride as citizens of Cincinnati that the Editors of the *Cincinnati Jewish Jubilee Yearbook* salute the anniversary of the founding of the Jewish community, as well as the anniversaries of many other significant events in its history.

Just 140 years ago a young Jew, Joseph Jonas, a native of Plymouth, England, arrived in Cincinnati. He had left Philadelphia, although his friends had tried to dissuade him from going westward: "In the wilds of America and entirely among Gentiles you will soon forget your religion and your G-d," they warned. However young Jonas insisted that "a new resting place for the sons of Israel, and a sanctuary dedicated to the Lord of Hosts, and resounding with praises to the ever loving G-d, ought to be commenced in the great West."

Soon other Jews followed him to the banks of the Ohio river. The first Jewish child was born in Cincinnati in 1821, just 135 years ago. When the number of Jewish inhabitants had reached about 20, the first place of worship was established off Broadway below Sixth Street. On the eleventh of Elul, 5590, the first permanent congregation was established and chartered by the State of Ohio.

Joseph Jonas noted in his memoirs that year: "It is already conceded to us by our neighbors, that we have the fewest drunkards, vagrants, or individuals amenable to the laws of any community according to our numbers in this city or district of the country; and we also appreciate the respect and esteem those individuals are held in, who duly conform to the principles of our religion, especially by a strict conformity to our holy Sabbath and festivals."

GROWTH OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

During the 1830-1865 period the Jewish population increased from a few hundreds souls to about 10,000. Political upheavals in Germany, Hungary and Austria were responsible for the heavy migration.

During and after the Civil War the Cincinnati Jewish community continued to grow in size, as well as stature. "Cincinnati is in the center of Jewish American life," one contemporary historian wrote. Some of the community leaders of this period included Henry Mack, Marcus Fecheimer, Jacob Seasongood, Bernard Bettman, Abe Friedlander, Max Thurnauer, Abraham Aub, Solomon Friedman and members of the Isaacs, Miller, Manischewitz, Oscherwitz and other prominent families. These names stand as beacons of civic, educational, economic and cultural leadership in our community even to this day.

The year 1881 marked the beginning of a new era in the life of the American Jewry, with the first heavy migration of Jews from Eastern Europe. As late as 1905-1908, after the Kishineff pogroms, Cincinnati received over 2,000 Jewish immigrants.

The present composition of our community was completed with the migration of the '30s and '40s, when hundreds of Jewish families found here a home in flight from Nazi persecution.

CINCINNATI JEWS IN PUBLIC LIFE

Many Cincinnati Jews reached a position of dignity and trust in the Cincinnati community. To mention only a few: Julius Fleischman served as Mayor 1901 to 1905; Frederick Spiegel, Mayor from 1904 to 1906; Murray Seasongood, Mayor from 1926 to 1930. Henry Mack, Julian Pollack, Nicholas Klein, Willis Gradison, and Walton Bachrach are among those who served in the City Council. Gilbert Bettman and Alfred M. Cohen served this city and the State for many years. Samuel Ach and William J. Shroder distinguished themselves as presidents of the Cincinnati Board of Education. Edgar Johnson, Louis Krohn, Nathan Drucker, Mrs. Henry Rosenbaum, Max Senior, Benjamin S. Schwartz, Oscar Berman and Morris Weintraub are but a few of the legion of Cincinnati Jews who, by their service, brought credit to themselves and the community.