

## *Our Temple History*

On the evening of July 30, 1947, a little over one hundred men and women gathered at the Jewish Community Center on Cumberland Avenue, in response to a letter sent out on July 23 to the Jewish community of Portland. The meeting was designed to answer two questions. First, did Portland Jews feel the need of a Conservative Temple; second, did they wish to hold separate High Holy Day services to inaugurate a Conservative movement that fall.

Both questions were enthusiastically answered in the affirmative. As chairman of this meeting, Louis Bernstein was quick to sense the desire for action of the group. When it came to the selection of a responsible leadership for the new movement however, there were but a few intrepid souls who were willing to assume responsibility for its success or failure. To these first four officers, and to their patient efforts during its first year, Temple Beth El must ever be grateful. These first officers were: Benjamin Lazarus, president, Harold Karl Halpert, vice-president, Arnold Potter, secretary, and Irving Stein, treasurer.



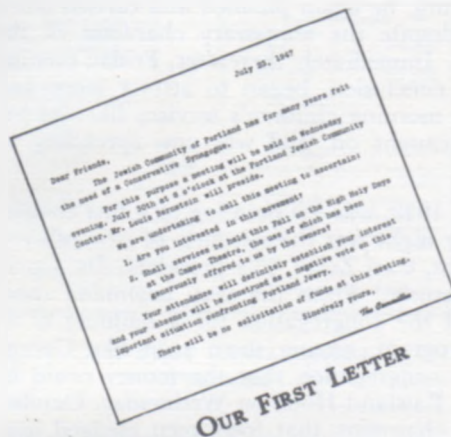
BENJAMIN LAZARUS



HAROLD K. HALPERT

The following month, representing the Seminary, Rabbi Morris V. Dembowitz came to a second meeting at the Center to discuss the ideals and practices of Conservative Judaism with this same interested group who had been present at the first meeting. It was obvious that no concepts of the principles motivating Conservative Judaism were common to the whole group. None the less, the faith of this group and its desire to explore the possibilities of the Conservative approach were undimmed. Plans were completed for the High Holiday services, and the new Temple was appropriately named Beth El, the House of God.

On September 14, 1947, in Frye Hall on Spring Street, Beth El's members and friends came to pray. Beauty and dignity, simplicity and sincerity were the keynotes of these services and those that followed. No one can forget the impact of solemnity effected by the guest rabbi, Ephraim Bennett, nor can one fail to remember the tasteful floral decorations, the unaffected chanting of Cantor Sylvan Ginsburg, and the wholehearted participation of the congregation in the services. Neither seats nor



religious honors were offered for contributions, but were assigned by a committee of ushers on a democratic basis. Families sat together. The new ideas inherent in the Conservative movement gained favor rapidly. After a model Friday evening service, between Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, an open forum was held; and at this forum it was decided to go ahead on a permanent basis.

The first officers were retained for the following year by the Board of Directors at a meeting in October. A temporary Temple was set up at 509 Forest Avenue, and there, on November 14, regular Friday evening services were established with Alfred Goldman as temporary cantor; and with visiting rabbis provided weekly by the Seminary. Attendance all the year showed how deeply meaningful these religious services were.

A few days later, on the Saturday afternoon of November 19, 1947, with the help of visiting Rabbi Joel S. Geffen, the women of Temple Beth El organized a steering committee to form a sisterhood auxiliary. Mrs. Carl P. Zolov was the first of the several monthly chairmen to conduct the business of the group. Mrs. Benjamin E. Finn was named secretary, and Mrs. Michael Field treasurer. In less than two weeks, twelve functioning committees were set up. Even though there was yet no rabbi to advise them and no by-laws to guide them, the Sisterhood faced its problems and met them resourcefully. One must mention in particular its deep interest in children's Saturday morning services early in the movement, and its constant cooperation with the visiting rabbis who conducted the services. The Sisterhood's supervision of the services and its ingenuity in providing refreshments after the services helped give momentum to the spiritual reawakening of the children of the Temple. Holiday parties gained new meaning for the youngsters, as was shown at Chanukah that year, and subsequently at Purim.

On May 10, 1948, the Sisterhood held a general meeting to install its first permanent officers. Rabbi and Mrs. Ephraim Bennett were guests of honor, and the Rabbi installed the following slate: Mrs. Lewis Bernstein, president, Mrs. Myer H. Sacknoff, first vice-president, Mrs. Benjamin E. Finn, second vice-president, Mrs. Philip Bernstein, treasurer, Mrs. Newell L. Potter, corresponding secretary, and Mrs. Maurice B. Cohen, secretary. A constitution was drawn up, presented, and accepted by the group. At once, new committees and new projects were launched to provide additional finances for Temple needs. The Sisterhood was in its full stride.



In August, 1948, Rabbi Ephraim I. Bennett, having already been engaged as Temple Beth El's first rabbi, arrived in Portland with his wife and baby daughter. With the assistance of Cantor Sylvan Ginsburg, he again planned and carried out a set of impressive High Holiday services, despite the temporary character of the Temple headquarters at 509 Forest Avenue. Immediately thereafter, Friday evening services, with educational forums at their conclusion, began to attract more and more people. The attendance at Saturday morning children's services likewise began to grow. The movement had really caught on, and was now spreading its influence throughout the entire community.

Simchah Torah evening, October 26th, 1948, was the occasion of a first congregational meeting. The main business of the night was the selection of new officers. They were as follows: James Stein, president, Carl Zolov, vice-president, Dr. David Berlowitz, secretary, and Irving Stein, treasurer. From the very beginning there was considerable discussion of the needs of the congregation for a building of its own. Fearless advocates of a building program, among them men like George I. Lewis and Lewis Bernstein, assured the congregation that the money could be raised. It was at a banquet meeting at the Eastland Hotel on Wednesday, October 6, 1948, of which Harold K. Halpert was chairman, that forty men pledged over \$100,000, and started the building program on its way. It was a joy to behold the spirit of courage and hope which permeated all the work of the Temple, in both its physical and spiritual aspects.



JAMES STEIN



CARL P. ZOLOV

The formal installation of Rabbi Bennett occasioned a series of colorful and dignified religious ceremonies on December 3 and 4, 1948, with Rabbi Leo Geiger of South Orange, N. J. officiating at the installation. The climax on December fifth was a large membership banquet at the Jewish Community Center, to which representatives of the whole city came to pay their respects to the new rabbi.

Meanwhile, the Temple had to be moved to 520 Forest Avenue. This building, the property of congregant Lewis Bernstein, was graciously loaned to the membership with one condition only; namely, that a new building be completed as soon as possible. It was to be two years before the condition would be fulfilled. To his credit, however, it must be said that although Lewis Bernstein never gave up his insistence

ORDER OF SERVICE	Program
for the Installation of Rabbi Edward C. Bennett	for the Installation of Officers and Directors
<b>MEMORIAL PRAYER SERVICE</b> <i>Installation Program</i> <b>ADDRESS OF PRAYER</b> John Doe <i>for the Rabbi</i> <b>ADDRESS FOR THE CONGREGATION</b> Rabbi Edward C. Bennett The Woodfords Congregational Church 100 Woodfords Street Portland, Oregon <b>ADDRESS OF INSTALLATION</b> Rabbi Edward C. Bennett The Woodfords Congregational Church 100 Woodfords Street Portland, Oregon <b>ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE</b> Rabbi Edward C. Bennett <b>CONSTITUTION OF OFFICERS</b> <b>INSTALLATION</b> Mr. Arthur H. Gold Mr. Myer H. Sacknoff Mrs. Benjamin E. Finn Mrs. Myer H. Sacknoff Mrs. Julius Elowitz Mrs. Lester M. Willis Mrs. Philip Bornstein Mrs. Newell L. Potter Mrs. Sidney W. Wernick	<b>STAR SPANGLER SERVICE</b> <b>INVOCATION</b> Rabbi Edward C. Bennett <b>PRAYER</b> <b>ADDRESS OF PRAYER</b> Mr. Arthur H. Gold <i>President of the Temple</i> <b>ADDRESS</b> Rabbi Edward C. Bennett The Woodfords Congregational Church 100 Woodfords Street Portland, Oregon <b>ADDRESS OF PRAYER BY OUTGOING OFFICERS &amp; DIRECTORS</b> Mrs. Benjamin E. Finn <i>President</i> <b>INTERLUDE</b> Cantor Alfred G. Goldman <b>INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS &amp; DIRECTORS</b> Rabbi Edward C. Bennett <b>ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE</b> John Doe <b>INSTALLATION</b> Rabbi Edward C. Bennett <b>INTERLUDE</b> Mrs. Sidney W. Wernick <b>DANCING TO WATE GOLD'S ORCHESTRA</b>
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1948 Rabbi's and Children's Sabbath Service, 10:30 A. M. (Invited by Rabbi Edward C. Bennett)	DANCING TO WATE GOLD'S ORCHESTRA



### OUR FIRST INSTALLATION PROGRAM

### ROSH HASHONAH—1949

on an uninterrupted program, he was ever patient and understanding regarding the use of his property. First services were held there on December 8, 1948. In spite of smaller quarters, attendance continued to grow, constantly reminding members how much they needed a new building. This same month saw the Temple incorporated under the laws of the state as a religious institution.

Always moving forward, and keeping pace with the progress of the Temple, the Sisterhood elected new officers in May, 1949. The following slate took over: Mrs. Benjamin E. Finn, president, Mrs. Myer H. Sacknoff, first vice-president, Mrs. Julius Elowitz, second vice-president, Mrs. Lester M. Willis, third vice-president, Mrs. Philip Bornstein, treasurer, Mrs. Newell L. Potter, corresponding secretary, and Mrs. Sidney W. Wernick, recording secretary.

In August, 1949, encouraged by the manifest potential of his new congregation, Rabbi Bennett expressed a desire to remain in Portland for an additional term, a desire which was reciprocal for both rabbi and congregation. Assisted by Cantor Alfred G. Goldman, permanent cantor for Temple Beth El, Rabbi Bennett officiated for the High Holidays in the Parish House of the Woodfords Congregational Church. This building was voluntarily loaned to the congregation, when the board of the Woodfords church learned that Temple Beth El needed a place for High Holiday services. This beautiful gesture of community brotherhood was fittingly commemorated at a subsequent ceremony at the Parish House, where Harold K. Halpert, as chairman of the Religious Services Committee, on behalf of Temple Beth El, presented a pair of candelabra to the Woodfords Congregational Church. So impressed was the community by this act of brotherhood that an editorial entitled RELIGIOUS GOOD NEIGHBORS appeared in the Evening Express for September 30, 1949, to commend it. Later, in the Woodfords Congregational Church Bulletin a full description of the presentation of the candelabra was given. The inscription on the candelabra read as follows: "Presented by Temple Beth El in appreciation of an act of profound fellowship and understanding. November, 1949." In making the presentation, Harold K. Halpert spoke as follows: "There are many reasons why we should want to remember the thoughtfulness that prompted you to offer us a place of worship. First, by taking an interest in our need last fall you fulfilled the basic meaning of religion, which from its Latin derivation means to bind together. We as Jews and you as Christians are bound together in a wholesome relationship when we recognize the needs of one another and in brotherly kindness seek to fulfill them . . . . Your act of thoughtfulness recognized our need, drew us together in brotherhood and gave us both the dignity and the unity without which all religion and all life lack meaning. In this act of love, we worship God as men. And this is always a beautiful and pleasing thing. Of this let these candelabra be a symbol and a reminder."



The Temple Beth El Hebrew School was started in September, 1949. The tireless efforts of Rabbi Bennett and an enthusiastic Board of Education, headed by Dr. Benjamin Zolov, were rewarded with an initial enrollment of 57 children. Mr. Ernest Braun was appointed as teacher; and the Rabbi gave his services as teacher

#### Religious Good Neighbors

The congregations of the Woodford Congregational Church and of the Jewish conservative Temple Beth El know about this—but it is possible that the community as a whole does not. It is a heart-warming story.

Temple Beth El's congregation lacked facilities for seating the throngs of worshippers who would observe the high Holy-day services, Rosh Hashanah, Sept. 21, Kol Nidre, Oct. 2; and Yom Kippur, Oct. 3. To that congregation the Memorial Hall of the Woodford Congregational Church was made available for the Holy-day services. Therefor—at the invitation of the church parish committee and of the pastor, the Rev. Frederick H. Thompson, D.D.

Memorial Hall was arranged to seat 400 persons and was equipped with a public address system to accommodate the expected capacity attendance. "We at Woodford Church are very much pleased," said Dr. Thompson, "that Temple Beth El has accepted our invitation. And the Jewish congregation's Rabbi Ephraim I. Bennett, expressing pleasure in accepting the Woodford Church invitation, observed, "It means a lot to our people to have a suitable place for the observance of our Holy days as well as to know that other churches in our area are ready and desirous of assisting us."

Both congregations, and the community at large, it seems to us, are beneficiaries when the spirit of neighborly cooperation among church groups is so well exemplified.



PORTLAND EVENING EXPRESS  
SEPT. 30TH, 1949

CANDELABRA PRESENTATION  
BY TEMPLE BETH EL

and director. An attendance record of over 90% gave evidence of the success of the school. With an enrollment which doubled itself the following year, two additional teachers were added to the staff, Mr. Joel Corn, and Cantor Ralph Sternberg. As a part of the activities of the school, Saturday morning children's services flourished; holidays were fittingly celebrated by plays, pageants and parties; and the young people in general came to feel that the Temple was as much theirs as their parents'.

After the second annual congregational meeting, the new Board of Directors selected the following officers in November, 1949: James Stein, president, David Berlowitz, chairman of the Board, Edward D. Sacknoff, vice-president, Benjamin E. Finn, secretary, and Lewis H. Kriger, treasurer. Temple activities continued to multiply. There was constant concentration on the new Temple building, the groundbreaking for which had taken place on Sunday, September 11. On that memorable afternoon, the congregation gathered for outdoor exercises before the Temple's temporary quarters. At these, Dr. Max Arzt of the Jewish Theological Seminary was the main speaker. At the conclusion of the exercises, the congregation marched to the new site for an impressive and moving ceremony. Benjamin Lazarus, as first president, cut the ribbon, which opened the land to the congregation. There was no one whose heart did not swell with pride and thanksgiving that unforgettable afternoon. Immediately, fund raising programs were developed; and committees on design and building itself operated effectively. Membership increased to 206 families, almost three times the number of the first year.



LEWIS H. KRIGER



IRVING STEIN

The third annual congregational meeting took place in May, 1950. The new officers elected were: Edward J. Berman, president, Edward D. Sacknoff, chairman of the Board, Louis E. Weiner, vice-president, Herbert Lazarus, secretary, and Lewis H. Kriger, treasurer.

During the summer the building continued to grow. Although still unfinished in September, the membership hoped they would have their High Holiday services



CUTTING THE RIBBON

<i>Ground - Breaking Program</i>	
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1949	
2:30 P. M.	
NATIONAL ANTHEM	Led by Mrs. David Levin
INVOCATION	Rabbi David Berens Rabbi Jacob, Lewinson, of Home
WELCOMING REMARKS	James Stein President Temple Beth El
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS	Jacob Berman Chairman, Program Comm.
GREETINGS	
Robert L. Getchel	Chairman of Portland (for Oregon)
Salmon W. Wernick	President Jewish Union of Portland
Mr. Richard Montgomery	Secretary to Gov. Oswald G. Taylor
Rev. Edward Nelson	Pastor, Portland Church of Christ
ADDRESS	Dr. Max Auer Jewish Theological Seminary of America
NOTE: The entire audience will now march to the new site for the	
GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY	
MAH TOVU	Cantor Al Goldstein
PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING	Rabbi Ephraim I. Bennett
RIBBON WILL BE CUT BY	Benjamin Lazarus Vice President of Temple Beth El
CONSECRATION	Rabbi Ephraim I. Bennett
GROUND WILL BE BROKEN BY	James Stein President Temple Beth El
BENEDICTION	Rabbi Edmund Hines Rabbi, St. Andrew, of Home
HATIKVAH	Led by Mrs. Lewis Kriger

GROUND-BREAKING PROGRAM





DR. DAVID BERLOWITZ



EDWARD D. SACKOFF

within its walls. The hope was realized, and a spirit of being home at long last prevailed in the congregation. These first services in the new home will never be forgotten. Although the building was in an unfinished state, the decorations and flowers concealed this, and made the interior lovely. Cantor Sternberg sang with sincerity; and took full advantage of the fine acoustics of the auditorium. In short, Temple Beth El was now a potent, live force for practical Judaism. From that point on, each member knew he must assume a personal responsibility for the continuing success of the congregation.



BENJAMIN E. FINN



HERBERT LAZARUS