Jewish Community in Owensboro

By Jerry Long
c.2026



Temple Adath Israel, 429 Daviess St., Owensboro, KY

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 5 October 2023, pp.1A & 2A:

Adath Israel
oldest synagogue
in Kentucky

Jewish community small,
but with deep roots

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Each day, thousands of cars rush by Adath Israel Cemetery, across from The Springs Health Centre on East Parrish Avenue.

Many people don't even glance at it and few of those who do know anything about it.

But more than 100 members of Owensboro's Jewish community have been buried there since 1862, when the Hebrew Benefit and Burial Society paid $75 for 3.39 acres on the Leitchfield Road several miles from town.

"The first thing Jews do when they move into a community is buy land for a cemetery," Sandra Bugay, president of Temple Adath Israel, said recently. "That's first, before they build a synagogue."

By 1876, the local Jewish community had grown to 13 families with 35 members.

And work began on Temple Adath Israel, a synagogue with miniature Moorish domes at 429 Daviess St.

It was completed in late 1877 at a cost of $4,000 — worth about $117,000 today.

At the time, the Owensboro Examiner wrote that "the city owes much of its commercial reputation to the vim and enterprise of this class of people."

Today, Temple Adath Israel is the oldest active synagogue in Kentucky and the 12th oldest in America.

When it opened in the fall of 1877, there was an overflow crowd in the 200-seat sanctuary to hear the combined Methodist and Jewish choirs perform Mozart's "The Gloria."

Bugay said the earliest Jews in Owensboro were primarily merchants who came from Germany and central Europe to escape anti-Semitism and find new opportunities.

Marcus Suntheimer and Samuel Moise were here in the 1840s.

And more followed.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the synagogue supported not only a rabbi, but a synagogue school with four classes, a Jewish social club, and a chapter of B'nai B'rith.

By 1962, there were 45 families worshipping in the synagogue.

But the numbers began to dwindle as children moved away to bigger opportunities in other cities.

Boom in the '50s and '60s"

We had a great influx of Jewish college students from New York and New Jersey in the'50s and '60s because it was cheaper to go to college here," Bugay said. "We've had converts, but they go to Evansville and Nashville to worship."

Today, there are only four Jews who regularly worship at Temple Adath Israel.

"One family from Indiana with six children comes over sometimes," Bugay said. "Some students from the colleges who are taking classes on religion come and we have some Christians who want to know more about Judaism who attend regularly."

Stewart Spindel, the synagogue's secretary, and his wife, Barbara, have started mapping the graves in Adath Israel Cemetery.

"We get people who call and want to find where their relatives are buried and we have no records," he said. "We're trying to create records now."

There are people in the cemetery like Bernhard Baer, who was born Dec. 22, 1824, in Warendorf, Germany, and was buried there in 1902.

He came to New Orleans in 1845, then moved to Hopkinsville and finally to Owensboro in the 1860s.



Stuart Spindel looks at some Hebrew writing on a Baer grave monument Tuesday at the Adath Israel Cemetery.

Baer sold dry goods, groceries and ice.

And he served 20 years on the city commission, including a term as mayor pro tem.

Baer was one of several immigrants who helped establish what is now Owensboro Health Regional Hospital.

Graves date back to the 1860s.

But the cemetery, which isn't half full, is still in use today.

The last burial was in 2020.

Bugay said the small congregation meets at Temple Adath Israel at 6:30 p.m. every Thursday.

Visitors are always welcome, she said.

<u>The Kentucky Encyclopedia</u>, John E, Kleber, editor,
(Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992) Jews p.470:

….. At one time there were Jewish congregations in Ashland, Covington, Henderson, Hopkinsville, Newport, Owensboro, and Paducah, but only those in Louisville, Lexington, Owensboro, and Paducah survive. The 1989 *American Jewish Year Book* lists Kentucky's Jewish population as 11,200, of whom two-thirds lived in Louisville. Louisville's Jewish Hospital is nationally renowned; the city's Jewish Community Federation is an umbrella organization for a broad range of community services and fundraising. Louisville has the third oldest Jewish Community Center in the nation; started in 1862**……**

<u>Owensboro Examiner</u>, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 27 October 1876, p.8:

City Council

COUNCIL HALL, Oct. 26, 1876. Council met in regular session. Present Mayor Brown and all the members except Councilman Rucker and Long. Minutes of the previous meeting read and approved. The Adath Israel were granted permit to erect a Temple. Probable cost $4,000.

<u>Owensboro Examiner</u>, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 3 November 1876, p.5:

The walls of the new Jewish Synagogue, at the corner of Fifth and Daviess streets, are going up rapidly, and with a few weeks more of favorable weather the handsome structure will be enclosed. The completion of this building will give Owensboro thirteen good church -houses.

<u>Owensboro Examiner</u>, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 17 August 1877, p.5:



"BY THEIR WORKS YE SHALL KNOW THEM."

Completion and Dedication of the Jewish Synagogue.

An Enduring Monument to the Enterprise and Liberality of Our Israelitish Citizens.

Owensboro numbers among its thrifty populace a goodly sprinkle of Israelitish people. From one end of Main street to the other their business banners will be found upon the outer walls. Indeed, the largest dry goods store in the place is owned and operated by Israelitish people--the Messrs. Rothchild. A number of other first-class dry goods and clothing houses, conducted by Jewish people, may also be found upon Main and other business thoroughfares; and it is a just compliment to say that the city owes much of its commercial reputation to the vim and enterprise of this class of people. A few of them own the buildings in which they transact their business,

others own the property in which they live, and others at t this time are putting up fine residences on Fourth street.

Some two years ago the Israelitish people made a move looking toward the erection of a synagogue in Owensboro. Accordingly, grounds were purchased, architectural plans obtained, and to-day a handsome Jewish temple occupies the site at the corner of Fifth and Daviess streets.

A fortnight or more ago active preparations began for dedicating the house. The best musical talent in the city was brought into requisition, and the programme usual upon such occasions mapped out. Friday, August 10, was the day appointed for the dedicatory ceremonies, and the hour, 4:30 p.m., found a multitude of people awaiting the inauguration of the ceremonies.

Precisely at 40 minutes past 4 the male membership, preceded by a bevy of little girls, filed down one of the aisles to the pulpit. Three of the latter – Misses Jennie Wile, Teresa Godshaw and Rosa Baer entered the pulpit and went through the formality of turning over the temple's key, each delivering in magnificent style short and appropriate addresses.

Rev. Dr. Witamer, of Evansville, to whom belonged the honor of leading in the dedicatory exercises, then read the eighth chapter of Kings, following with an earnest prayer in behalf of the membership and all others who aided by money in the construction of the house. The dedicatory sermon, which was delivered in English, and in most impressive style, was founded upon the language as contained in First Kings, 6th chapter and 12th verse. The sermon occupied about forty minutes in its delivery, and was attentively listened to throughout.

The entire exercises were of a most imposing nature, and especially interesting to those unacquainted with the Jewish mode of worship.

Very general credit will be accorded the plucky congregation, who, right in the thickest of the political and financial troubles of the country, have succeeded in building in our midst a house of divine worship hardly second to any in the city.

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Owensboro Daily Tribune. Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 8 October 1895, p.6:

The work of making improvements to the Temple Adah Israel was commenced yesterday. There will be a new galvinized iron front of modern architectural design, which, when completed will add much to the appearance of the church. It is expected to be finished in about two weeks. The interior of the church will also be refurnished with carpets and other decorations.

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 29 January 1899, p.12:

HEBREW SYNAGOGUE.

Congregation Adath Israel was organized in this city in 1863 and their present house of worship on the corner of Fifth and Daviess streets was built in 1876. They have a membership of about thirty-five and hold weekly meetings – Friday nights and Saturday mornings – but at present are without a rabbi.

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 11 September 1903, p.3:

Dr. Nathan Krasnowitz is now regularly installed as pastor of the. local Jewish Temple Adath Israel, at the corner of Fifth and Daviess streets. He will hold regular service this evening at 7:30 o'clock and on Saturday at 10 a. m. The sermon for Friday evening will be preached on "The Great Protestant." The engagement of Dr. Krasnowitz is for one year from September 1, 1903. He completed a post graduate course at the Union Hebrew college at Cincinnati last June and spent the summer with parents, who reside at Milwaukee. He succeeds the late Dr. David Feuerlicht, who died about eight years ago, the temple having been without a pastor since. The congregation now contains about thirty families and the total membership is about 100. All are pleased with Dr. Krasnowitz and a bright future for the organization seems inevitable.

Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 6 September 1914, p.1B:

Temple Adath Israel and Its Career

During the summer months the little Temple Adath Israel, where the Jews of Owensboro worship has been completely transformed. The marks that its years of service have worn upon it have been wiped off – everything bears signs of newness. Attention has been drawn to the fact that some remarkable work has been done by the congregation of this little temple. Accordingly the Inquirer prints this morning a story of the purpose, the origin and the growth of Owensboro's Temple Adath Israel.

Many centuries ago there stood a Temple on Mount Moriah that was called the Temple of King Solomon. It takes a flexible imagination to mentally picture the grandeur of that place. It takes a broader imagination to realize the earnestness of the service that was held in the name of God. So sincere were the ministering priests and so devout were the pious worshippers that the influence of that temple has not yet abated nor will it abate as long as a synogogue stands in the world. From that temple in Jerusalem there went forth compelling spirit of religion. A spirit not hindered but helped by the advancing step of civilization.

There is a great chasm between the years of King Solomon's temple and nineteenth century. It is a long stretch of time that links the remotest antiquity to the immediate present. Yet the influence of the ancient temple and the supplementary teaching that followed its fall, so stired the hearts of the Jews who resided in Owensboro that they too built a house of worship and like Solomon dedicated it to the service of God.

First Synogogue

The first place of worship for the Jews of Owensboro – some of whom were here in 1835 – was in the Hart school on Daviess street. This was the place of gathering as a congregation. In 1875 a plan was proposed and perfected to build a separate house of worship. Accordingly a committee, who became the charter members of the new temple built and dedicated the present

svnogogue in that year. Their intense earnestness was a factor that aided them in the usual difficulties that beset a small congregation. In 1875 the first synogogue was formally dedicated as a house of worship. The charter members were: Aaron Rosenfeld, Sol Wile, Abe Hirsch, M. Levy, Joseph Dahl, Joseph Godshaw, Max Cohn, Samuel Moise, Joseph Rothschild, Philip Rothschild, Marcus Suntheimer and Bernard Baer.

The descendants of the charter members of Adath Israel congregation are among the best known citizens of Owensboro.

Not unlike the ancient temple the synogogue of Owensboro is so situated geographically that the worshipers face the east. The tabernacle in the wilderness was placed east and west. The Temple of Solomon was so situated that the station of the high priest was in the east. The east has ever been the source of light. And so the Jews of Owensboro faithful to their tradition worship as did their fathers of old.

Early Temple

The first temple dedicated in 1875 was in its day a noble structure but from the vantage ground of 1914 it was not at all an elegant place. It. was crudely finished and furnished. Yet the wonder of it all is that so few families could have accomplished so much. As the congregation grew in numbers, and correspondingly in wealth, last year saw valuable additions to the Temple. It was not until 1912, however, that the changes were wrought that made the synagogue a modern structure.

Recent Additions

In 1912 a furnace was installed that added greatly to the comfort of the worshippers and to the beauty of the Temple.

In the same year through the efforts of the societies of the Temple a handsome new pipe organ was installed, which replaced an organ of doubtful pecuniary and musical worth.

The greatest of all improvements, however, has just been completed. Under the splendid guidance of the ladies of the Temple, the balcony, which was of no value, was removed and a single auditorium was made of the synagogue. The walls were painted in splendid harmony. The new windows in the front of the Temple replaced the darkening brick work. A new altar was built and a vestibule adds to the appearance from within and without. Owensboro can now boast of the most beautiful synagogue in the state of Kentucky with the possible exception of Temple Adath Israel of Louisville.

The Inquirer records with pardonable pride the achievements of this small band of earnest worshippers who have made a place and a name for themselves in Owensboro. It proves that there still lives the elements of that ancient faith that has produced the Holy Family, the prophets, the seers and many of those have wrought an influence for good in the world.

"There. are still those who call themselves by the name of Israel."'

The first rabbi of the Owensboro temple was Goldnamer.

Learned Rabbis

Many learned men, whose spiritual leadership and interest in the community welfare has been of a positive and uplifting nature. Many will recall the kindly Dr. Guck whose years of service wrought a lasting impression. Dr. Bansing is kindly remembered. Dr. David Feuerlicht came to Owensboro in 1894. By his zest for Juddism and his fidelity to ceremonial religion he influenced his generation and those who came after him. One of the most popular leaders that Adath Israel has ever had was Rabbi Nathan Krass now Rabbi of Temple Israel of Brooklyn, N. Y. His scholarship was of the highest order and his ministry was responsible for a thorough advance of reform Judaism.

Present Incumbent

The present incumbent is known as an organizer. Theodore J. Levy is a young man. He is a graduate of the Owensboro High school, having received his diploma with the class or '06. Since that time he has devoted himself to preparation for his ministry and to the spiritual welfare of his people. He studied during the period of '07 to '10 at the University of Cincinnati and at Hebrew Union college.

Since his return to his home in Owensboro in 1910, Rabbi Levy has through his pulpit and his addresses on public and private occasions, many of which he has been called upon to make, proven himself to be an orator. Many of his addresses in and out of Owensboro have received flattering newspaper recognition.

In an interview with the Inquirer's representative, who asked him what he considered the highest purpose of the pulpit, he replied, "I consider the highest function of the minister to be, to point out vividly the intimacy between righteousness and happiness and to get the people on speaking terms with the virtues."

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 10 February 1929, pp.1B & 7B:


JEWISH FAMILIES
WIDELY SCATTER
IN HALF CENTURY

Drop From 300 to 60;
4 in Sunday School

Owensboro history about half a century ago shows there were more than 300 Jewish people here while today there are less than sixty, living in Owensboro. When Dr. J. H. Glueck was rabbi here in 1888 there were forty-six children in the Sunday school. Today there are but four.

Among them was S. Straus, who went on a trip to Louisville by boat, as there was no railway. He, with several others, was caught by a river freeze and started home in a spring wagon. In crossing over ice in a creek near Cloverport, the ice gave way and the people were thrown into the water. All were rescued but Mr. Straus. The others threw him a rope to pull him out, but he became too excited to catch the rope and save himself. He went down with the team and wagon. His body was recovered and buried in Owensboro but afterwards was moved to Louisville when the family went there to reside. His son, Ben Straus, became a member of Kaufman-Straus & Co. Another son, Mose Straus, became a member. of Charles Rosenheim & Co., wholesale queensware firm. Both are now dead.

Alex Wile was among the older Jewish residents. He moved to Louisville with his family. His daughter, Sophia, married Henry Kaufman, head of Kaufman-Straus & Co., all of whom are now dead.

With exception of a few families, the Jewish population has sought residence elsewhere, and many have either died here, or wherever they may have sought their fortunes after leaving Owensboro. Among them may be included:

Older Residents

Sol Rothchild and Eugene Swab, both of whom moved to Chicago but are now dead; Arthur Swab, who moved to Texas, but is now dead: Myrtle Swab, who now lives 1n Paducah; A. Alexander, who lives in Kansas City; Wolf Mossort, who moved to Memphis, but is now dead; Small Bros., who moved to San Francisco, now dead; Louis Goldsmith who moved to Cincinnati, who is now dead.

Abe Cohn now lives in Columbus, Ohio; Jake Cohn, Metropolis, Ill. Sol Kahn, San Francisco: Ike Kahn, now dead; Mendel Kahn, living in Louisville; Louis Freedman, now living in Milwaukee; Gee Hexter, living in Baltimore; Robert Reese, now dead.

Max Levy moved to Memphis but is now dead; Ernest Weill, now dead; L. Laser, who moved to Milwaukee, now dead; A. Loeser, who moved to Milwaukee, also dead.

J. A. Godshaw died here; Aaron Godshaw moved to Milwaukee, but is now dead; Mark Godshaw, to Memphis, now dead; Felix Levy, to France, now dead; Joe Rothchild, Jr., died here; Joe Oppenheimer, died here; Leopold Oppenheimer, moved to Memphis, Sam Rosenfeld, to Cincinnati, now dead; Simon Wolf, to Lexington, now dead.

K. Lehrberg died in Owensboro, as did Jake Suntheimer. Abe Suntheimer lives in Cincinnati. M. Suntheimer, Philip Rothchild died here. Jake Weil moved to Calhoun, but is now dead.

Among Dead

Sol Wile, and sons Joe and Henry Wile, Samuel Moise, Abe Hirsch, A. Rosenfeld, B. Baer, I. J. Baer, E. S. Bamberger, Felix Rothchild, Aaron Wolf, Joe Levy, Henry Moise, Heilbron, Henry Meyers, Louis Cohn, Joe Heilbron, Joseph Dahl, M. Serf, Isaac LeJuene, Simon Greenbaum, Morris Kahn, J. K. Kohn, Henry Mendel, Max Cohn, Max Meyers, C. K. Lehrberg, Lee Meyers, Sam Heyman, Theodore Welder, M. Lipstein, Theodore Levy, M. Levy, Monroe Dinkelspeel, Gabe Wittelshofer, H. L. Koll, E. L. Moss are all dead.

Mark Levy is living in Houston, Texas, Lee Levy, in Milwaukee, Wis., Dr. Clifton Levy in Sapulpa, Okla.: Max Moss, Chicago; Marc Wile, Memphis.

Leo Rothchild, Ed Brooks and Henry Rothchild live in Chicago. J. A. Steinau lives in Louisville. Lee Levy makes his home in Minneapolis. Adolph Rosenfeld moved to New York Arthur Rosenfeld, to St. Louis; Ike Heilbron, to St. Louis; Charles Heilbron, to Memphis; Arthur Dinkelspeel, to Paducah: Harold Dinkelspeel, to Louisville. Ben Salinger lived in Owensboro for a number of years, but now lives in Cincinnati.

Dr. Goldnamer, First Rabbi

Dr. Irvin Koll and Raymond Moll moved to Chicago. Sam Friedlander moved to San Francisco: David Heilbron, to Harrisburg, Pa.; Abe Heilbron, to Chicago; Aaron Wittelshofer, to Greenwich, Kan.; Louis D. Baer, to Denver; Isaac Wittelshofer to Calhoun, now dead; Sam Oppenheimer, to Louisville: Sol Oppenheimer, Philadelphia, but now dead.

Dr. J. S. Goldnamer was the first rabbi after Temple Adath Israel was built. Dr. David Feuerlicht was rabbi for a number of years. He is now dead. Dr. Nathan Krass, now rabbi at Temple Emanuel, New York, was at one time rabbi at Temple Adath Israel.

Mike Moise and Mike Lipstein were drowned in the Ohio river at the foot of Bolivar street. Lipstein's body was not recovered. Mike Moise's body was recovered and was the first to be buried in the Jewish cemetery.

Colonel Gabriel Netter was killed in Owensboro near the old fair ground, now Paradise garden in West Second street and Hanning lane, during the Civil war, Sept. 19. 1862.

Sidney Bamberger lives in Paducah; Lester Bamberger, West Palm Beach, Fla.; Milton Bamberger, Evansville; Simon Furman, Charleston, W. Va.; Sam Lipnick, Louisville; Joe Salinger, Cleveland, O.; Charles B. Salinger, Petersburg, Ind.; Clifford Salinger, Cincinnati; Morris Wise, Nashville: Mose Levy, Louisville; Abe Levy, Mt. Vernon, Ind.

Many members of families of these Jewish people, scattered all over the United States, continue to visit relatives and friends in Owensboro.

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A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter, Daviess County Historical Society, Owensboro, KY (Montgomery, AL: Herff Jones-Paragon Publishing, 1974) pp.51 & 53:

EARLY RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Most of this chapter on the early history of religious organizations in Owensboro and Daviess County, written by the Rev. Wendell H. Rone, Sr., appeared in the 1965 *Daviess County Sesquicentennial Historical Edition of the Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer*…..

…… The first Jewish congregation, Adath Israel, made its appearance in Owensboro in 1858-1859, and still exists. [Note: Rev. Rone's source was not stated but it is likely based on the sketch of the Temple Adath Israel given in the 1883 History of Daviess County, Kentucky, page 385.]

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History of Daviess County, Kentucky, Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1883:

Pages 385-386

Temple Adath Israel (Hebrew). — The congregation was organized probably two or three years before the war, with about eighteen families; there are now thirty one. The Rabbis have been : Drs. Rosenfeld, Marcosson, Strauss, J. H. Goldhammer, Abraham Myer, Alexander Rosenspitz, and the present incumbent, J. Glueck, who has been here since February, 1881, and is just engaged for another year. The first religious services were held in the second story of Mr. Moise's store, on East Second street, and afterward in Prof Hart's school building, two years. The temple, with a seating capacity of about 200, was built in 1878; is a neat, brick structure, located on Lewis street, between Fourth and Fifth, and cost $4,000. The present Board of Trustees comprises Joe Rothschild. President; Sol. Wile, V P.; E. L. Moss, Secretary; M. Levy, Treasurer; A. Reese, J. Wittelshofer, and L. Loeser.

This church has both a Sabbath-school and a Sunday-school — the former meeting 10 to 11 a. m., and the latter 10 to 11:30 A. M. About forty-six children are enrolled, of whom Dr. Glueck is the general instructor.

Religious services in the temple are held every Friday evening, and Saturday morning at 9 a. m. The singing is led by a well-drilled choir of ladies; Mrs. Hartzfeld, Chorister.

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Asher Lodge, No. 227, I. O. B. B., is a Hebrew benevolent institution, connected with which is an endowment plan, paying, on the death of any member in good standing. $1,000 to his beneficiaries. They also pay sick benefits, and an assessment toward the maintenance of a district orphan asylum. Lodge No. 227 was organized Oct. 25, 1874, with twenty members. The first officers were: Jos. Rothchild. Sr., President; M. Moise, Vice-President; Ernest Weill. Secretary; B. Baer. Treasurer; Sol. Wile, Monitor; A. Rosenfeld, Assistant Monitor; L. Lesser, Guardian; M. Levy, Warden. Regular meetings are held the second and fourth Sundays in each month, in the room over the Jewish Temple. The lodge is in a flourishing condition, having over $500 in the treasury and a membership of twenty-eight. Its officers are: S. Moise, President; J. M. Oppenheimer, Secretary; B. Baer, Treasurer. An annual assessment of $15 is made upon each member, to pay running expenses, sick benefits, endowments. etc. They are within the jurisdiction of District No. 2, comprising the States of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado. The headquarters of the district is at Cincinnati. They have a surplus fund of $112,000, which is drawn upon to pay benefits or endowments for any lodge in the district whose per capita assessment of $15 does not cover the amount required. The order originated in 1846 or 1847, and has become one of the strongest and most popular benevolent institutions in the country.

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The Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society in Owensboro was established in 1869. It was organized by the ladies of the Jewish church. Its mission is to furnish relief to the poor of their church, and others. The fund for this purpose is obtained by an assessment of annual dues upon the members of the society. Mrs. A. Rosenfeld was the first President; Mrs. J. A. Godshaw (now deceased), the first Secretary, and Mrs. T. Moise, Treasurer. The officers for 1882 were Mrs. B. Baer, President; Mrs. A. Rosenfeld, Secretary; Mrs. T. Moise, Treasurer. Regular meetings are held quarterly. The present membership is twenty-one. None but ladies are admitted to membership. The society, though not a chartered one, is one of the fixtures of the place, and has done a great deal to alleviate suffering among the needy, and its influence for good has been felt in many ways by the members of their congregation.

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Bernhard Baer, son of Isaac and Sarah (Wanberg) Baer, was born in West Prussia, Dec. 22, 1825. He was educated in his native land. When twenty years of age, having lost both his parents, he emigrated to America; landed in New Orleans, and from there went to St. Louis, where he remained a few months; then went to Paducah, and remained nine months. In July, 1847, he went to Louisville, and two years later moved to Croft Creek Springs, Ky., where he was in business till 1852; he then removed to Hopkinsville, and remained till 1861, when he came to

Owensboro, and started a dry-goods store. Dec. 16, 1865, he lost all of his stock by fire, but started again, and continued till 1868, when he was obliged to close out his store, never having recovered from the effects of the fire. In November, 1868, he started a saloon and restaurant, which he continued six years, when he sold out, and engaged in the grocery business two years. He then went into the dry-goods business again, and was successful. After two years he sold out, and has since that time been dealing extensively in ice. He was married in 1850 to Fannie Kahn, a native of Guttenberg, Germany. They have had eight children, only six now living – Isaac, Abel, Louie, Mary, Rosa, and Tilla. Sarah and Benjamin died in infancy. Mr. Baer has been a member of the City Council four terms, the last term acting as Mayor pro tem. He is a member of the Masonic fraternity, I.O.O.F., Harigari, and B'nai Brith. Politically he is a Democrat. Mr. and Mrs. Baer are both members of the Jewish Synagogue.

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Charles K. Lehrberg, son of Kaufman and Celia (Rosenfeld) Lehrberg, was born in Albany, N.Y., April 27, 1832. At sixteen years of age he graduated at the Albany Academy, and then entered the mercantile business in his native city, and subsequently was with Stern Bros., of New York City, and at other points. October, 1876, he removed to Owensboro, where his parents had preceded him. Here he formed a partnership with his brother in the clothing business, under the firm name of C. & S. Lehrberg. They dissolved in 1879, since which date Mr. Lehrberg has been managing the gents' furnishing and hat business for J. Wily, corner of Main and Frederica streets. Mr. Lehrberg was married Oct. 17, 1876, to Miss Bertha Wily, of Vinton, Iowa. They have one child – Edna, born Oct. 8, 1877. He and wife are members of the Congregation Adath Israel. He has passed the chairs in the order of K. of P.; is a member of the Independent Order of Workingmen, and of the B'nai Brith, a Jewish organization.

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Bernhardt Rosenthal, proprietor of the Main street bottling works, Owensboro, and agent for the Main street brewery, of Louisville, Ky., was born in the city of Stolp, Pomerania, Prussia, Germany, June 22, 1851, the eldest of five children of Julius and Mary (Simon) Rosenthal. He was but eight years of age when he came with his parents to the United States; landed in New York, and located in Scranton, Pa., two years; then moved to St. Louis, and remained during the war. In 1865 they moved to Jackson, Tenn., and Bernhardt worked for his father in his bottling works. Dec. 31, 1877, they moved to Paducah, Ky. Bernhardt remained there until May, 1881, when he came to Owensboro and established his present business. He has a capacity for bottling 4,800 bottles of beer, 4,800 or 4,900 of soda, also bottles cider and ginger-ale. Mr. Rosenthal married Mary Leon in St. Louis, Mo., Dec. 3, 1876. She was born in Lorraine, France, and is a daughter of Joseph Leon. Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal have two children – Gertie and Lulu. Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal are members of the Jewish church, Adath Israel. He is a member of the Knights of Honor. In politics he is a Republican. His father is Captain of the tug Waif. His parents are living at Paducah, Ky.

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Joseph Rothchild, son of Solomon and Sophia Rothchild, was born in Nancy, France, Aug. 3, 1843. In 1858 he came to America, locating in Louisville, Ky., where he obtained a situation as clerk in a dry-goods house and remained three years. In 1861 he went into business for himself,

and remained there till the spring of 1865, when he came to Owensboro and located on Main street. After two or three years he moved his stock to Buford, and commenced dealing in tobacco with merchandise. In 1873 he returned to Owensboro and went into business with his cousin, the firm being J. & J. Rothchild. His cousin dying in June, 1881, Mr. Rothchild bought his interest of his wife and has since been in business alone. He has a large stock of general merchandise, making a specialty of his wholesale trade. His annual sales amount to over $100,000. His store is 165 feet deep. When he commenced his business life he was without capital, but by hard work and untiring energy he has increased his business to its present dimensions. He was married March 5, 1865, to Fannie Rothchild, a cousin. His wife died Feb. 7, 1882, leaving three children – Solomon, aged sixteen; Simon, aged thirteen; and Estella, aged eight years. His residence is on the corner of Fifth and Lewis streets, a two-story brick, which he owns. He also owns his business property.

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Eugene Schwab, dealer in produce, feed, hides and junk, on Frederica street, was born in Lorraine, France, Aug. 15, 1849. He attended school until 16, when he came with his brother Arthur to the United States; landed in New York City, and went to Louisville, Ky., and clerked in dry-goods stores. In 1869 Eugene came to Owensboro and traveled for his brother-in-law, T. Leser, dealer in hides and furs, for nineteen months; then went to Paducah, Ky., and clerked in a dry goods store until 1871, when he returned to Owensboro, and formed a partnership with G.M. Arnold and opened a bar-room and toy store under the firm name of Arnold & Schwab. This partnership continued until November, 1876, when he opened a saloon and restaurant on St. Ann street. In 1877 he sold out to his brother, Myrthel Schwab. Eugene then formed a partnership with his brother, Arthur Schwab, and soon after they took their brother Myrthel into partnership and opened a general store at Buford, Ohio Co., Ky. Eugene remained there until 1880, when he sold out and went to Rockport, Spencer Co., Ind., and opened a feed and fur store. In the fall of 1881 he came to Owensboro and established his present business. He married Minnie Godshaw, July 9, 1874. She was born in Louisville, Ky., and was a daughter of J.A. Godshaw. Mr. and Mrs. Schwab have four children – Maximillian, Estella, Gertie and Joseph A. Mr. and Mrs. Schwab are both members of the Jewish synagogue congregation, Adath Israel, Owensboro. Mr. Schwab is a demitted member of the Improved Order of Red Men, Kentucky Lodge, No. 4, of Louisville, and B'nai Brith, Asher Lodge, No. 227, and the Mutual Benevolent Lodge of Paducah, Ky. He is the founder of the Jewish choir of the Jewish church of Owensboro, and a charter member of Asher Lodge. In politics he is a Democrat.

Page 503

Ernest Weill, son of Leon and Matilda (Herman) Weill, was born March 26, 1848, in Rosieres aux Salines, Dept. of Meurthe, France. He attended school in his native country, and finished his education by a three years' term of school in London. From this latter place he emigrated to America, in 1868, locating in Owensboro, where he has since lived. His father died in 1862, and he left his mother in the old country. On arriving in Owensboro he engaged in clerking over a year, and then, in partnership with Mr. Hirsch, opened a clothing store and continued five years. The partnership was then dissolved, and in 1876 Mr. Weill took a trip across the water to visit his native land. When he returned, he resumed business at the corner of Main and Allen streets, the present site of the savings bank. From there he removed to his present location on Main street, between Frederica and St. Ann. He has a large clothing establishment, and does a good

manufacturing business. He was married in 1878 to Henrietta Neicam, a native of Daviess County. They have three children – Leon L., Joseph and Henry. He is a member of the A.F. & A.M., and I.O.O.F. Postoffice, Owensboro.

Pages 504-505

Sol. Wile & Sons – Solomon Wile, born June 11, 1829, in Baden, Germany, was a son of Baruch and Fannie (Heilbron) Wile. His father died in Germany, in 1854, and his mother in Owensboro, in 1868. Solomon Wile was educated in Germany, and when twenty-six years old came to the United States; landed in New York in July, 1855, and located in Breckinridge County, Ky. He, not having any great means, began business by peddling in Breckinridge and Ohio counties, with good success; after three years he opened a store in Ohio County, on the Hartford road, about seven miles from Hartford. He continued in business there four years, and when the war broke out, came to Owensboro, and located on Main street, in the east end, where he remained three years. In 1865 he built his present business block, on Main street. He bought the lot for $800, and put up a brick block on it, thirty-four foot store-room, with partitions through it, living in the rear of the store and on the second floor. His business increasing all the time, he was compelled to take out one partition after another, build additions in the rear, and move his family into a private residence. Having laid the foundation of a large trade, which was increasing all the time, Mr. Wile, in June, 1881, tore down the old building and put up entirely new his present block, at a cost of between $6,000 and $7,000. He opened in the new store Sept. 26, 1881, with a new stock of goods. He has the finest and largest stock of clothing, gents' furnishing goods, etc., in the city. His residence on Fourth street was finished in 1878, at a cost of $10,000. As a merchant, Mr. Wile has been successful in life, and by honest and fair dealings has increased his business to its present dimensions. He was married Aug. 13, 1855, to Carolina Rothchild, a daughter of Simon Rothchild. They have a family of seven children – Benjamin, Joseph, Henry, Jennie, Leon, Minnie, and Cora. Mr. Wile's sons are with him in the store, and greatly assist in the management and control of its business.

Pages 505-506

Aaron Wolf, son of Lippman and Yetta (Straus) Wolf, was born Oct. 24, 1851, in Braunsbach, Germany. He was educated in his native country. In 1869, in company with his sister, he emigrated to America, and located first in Louisville, remaining there two years in business with an uncle. He then removed to Owensboro and engaged in the produce business a little over two years, with L. Leser. Then went to Henderson and clerked for Hermann & Co., clothiers and dry-goods merchants. Returned and formed a partnership with Sol. Wile & Sons, under the firm name of Wile, Wolf & Co, dealer in clothing, hats, caps, etc. This partnership was dissolved in 1875, and Mr. Wolf started a business for himself, locating first on Main and Allen streets; he has since removed to Main, between Frederica and St. Ann. He carries a stock of dry-goods, boots and shoes, and millinery and notions. He was married Jan. 2, 1877, to Fanny Rieser, of Evansville, Ind. They have two children – Clementine and Joseph. Both Mr. and Mrs. Wolf are active members of the Jewish church. Politically he is a Democrat. P.O., Owensboro.

(Chicago – Louisville: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1928):

Pages 189-190

Mrs. Rose (Levy) Siegel, a successful business woman, fills an important place in the mercantile life of Owensboro and also figures prominently in musical, civic and social affairs. She was born May 22, 1872, in Meridian, Mississippi, and her parents were Moses and Alice (Goldnamer) Levy. Her mother was born in Bavaria, Germany, May 22, 1850, and previous to her marriage resided with her sister, Mrs. Solomon Kaufman, in Louisville, Kentucky, in which city she formed the acquaintance of Mr. Levy. Her demise occurred in Owensboro on the 16th of January, 1904. She was a daughter of Marcus and Jeannette (Greenwald) Goldnamer, who were lifelong residents of Bavaria. The father was a highly educated man and for forty years was a rabbi of one of the Jewish synagogues at Sembach.

Moses Levy was born June 19, 1841, in Nancy, France, and died in Owensboro, July 23, 1910. When a youth of eighteen he came to the United States and at Meridian, Mississippi, obtained a position as salesman in the establishment of Threefoot Brothers, to whom he was related. He remained with the firm until the outbreak of the Civil war, when he enlisted in the Confederate army, and at Louisville, Kentucky, he was captured by the Union forces. After the restoration of peace Mr. Levy established a business of his own in Elkton, Kentucky, and later returned to Meridian, Mississippi, resuming his association with Threefoot Brothers. In 1873 he embarked in general merchandising in Owensboro and continued in that line until 1906, when he opened the first store in the city devoted exclusively to the sale of ready-to-wear garments. This innovation at once became popular and his establishment not only attracted the local trade but also drew patrons from the neighboring towns and rural districts. He maintained a high standard of service and gained the confidence and support of the public by honest dealing and up-to-date business methods. He was a man of original ideas, endowed with the courage and vision of the true pioneer, and drew his friends from all walks of life, possessing a generous charitable nature and an affable manner. He was a zealous member of the congregation of Adath Israel, which he aided in forming, and in politics was a stanch democrat.

In the family of Moses and Alice (Goldnamer) Levy were ten children. Leon, born February 18, 1870, in Elkton, Kentucky, married Miss Era Young, of Hopkinsville, this state, and is engaged in merchandising in New York city. Rose, the widow of Bernard Siegel, is the second in order of birth. Jesse, born August 29, 1874, in Owensboro, was associated with his father in business, and on October 1, 1894, he responded to death's summons. Ida Esther was born April 2, 1877, in Owensboro, and is the wife of Benjamin J. Goldman, who is in the advertising business. Samuel was born September 27, 1879, in Owensboro and is part owner of the business founded by his father. He married Miss Anna Hirsch, of Newark, New Jersey, and they have a son, Lawrence Moses. Florence was born May 18, 1882, in Owensboro, and is the wife of Jacob F. Luft, of Columbus, Ohio. They have two children: Alice Levy and Charles Frederic Luft. Marcus G. was born February 18, 1886, in Owensboro, and is engaged in the advertising business in Chicago. Theodore J., born July 23, 1888, in Owensboro, became assistant field director of the lake division, military relief department of the Red Cross, and died at Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio, February 27, 1919, leaving a widow, Mrs. Esther (Kummer) Levy, formerly of Bloomington, Illinois. Sylvia Alice was born in Owensboro, June 25, 1891, and is the wife of Jacob Goldberg,`a member of the firm of A. Goldberg & Sons, of Cynthiana, Kentucky. Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg have become the parents of a daughter, Dorothy Rose. Dr. Clifton M. Levy, the youngest member of the family, was born in Owensboro, May 12, 1894. He was graduated in 1913 from the Still

College of Osteopathy at Kirksville, Missouri, and is now engaged in practice at Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

The public schools of Owensboro afforded Miss Rose Levy her early educational advantages, and for two seasons she was a student at the Gaines Seminary in this city, an exclusive school for girls. She received vocal instruction from Mrs. Latta, of Washington, D. C., and has sung in Temple Adath Israel and in all the churches of Owensboro. She has a beautiful voice and the true artist's appreciation of musical values. After completing her education she entered her father's store and assisted him in its conduct until December 27, 1905, when she was united in marriage to Bernard Siegel, a prominent merchant of New Orleans, Louisiana. He was born June 19, 1849, in Dahn, Rhenish Bavaria, and passed away June 10, 1910, in the Crescent city. After the death of her husband Mrs. Siegel returned to Owensboro and on July 23 of the same year lost her father. She assisted the minor children in reorganizing the business, which she now manages in association with her brother Samuel, and as a result of their combined efforts the trade of the firm has constantly increased. They are recognized leaders in the line in which they specialize and ably continue the work begun by their father.

Mrs. Siegel has a daughter, Alice Janet, who was born August 15, 1907, in New Orleans. She was graduated in 1925 from the Owensboro high school and is now attending the Chevy Chase School at Washington, D.C. Mrs. Siegel is an earnest, helpful member of Adath Israel congregation and president of the Ladies Aid Society of the temple. She is connected with the Adath Israel Sisterhood and devotes a large share of her time to religious work. She casts her ballot for the candidates of the democratic party and endeavors to promote its interests, keeping well informed on political matters. She had charge of the local Liberty Loan drives and was active in other campaigns promulgated by the government during the World war. Mrs. Siegel is a director of the Owensboro Chamber of Commerce and was the first woman in Kentucky to achieve this distinction. She is a charter member of John C. Breckinridge Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and belongs to the Country and Woman's Clubs of Owensboro. She established lunches in the Third street public school of Owensboro and was the first president of the Parent-Teacher Association of this city. Mrs. Siegel is an ardent champion of the cause of education and for a number of years has served on the board of the Welfare League. She is president of the executive board of the Anti-Tuberculosis Association and has been very successful in raising funds for the tuberculosis camp, doing all in her power to check the progress of the "white plague." She combines breadth of mind and strength of character with graciousness, tact and charm. Mrs. Siegel is a thorough believer in the doctrine of work and has generously given her services for the public good.

Pages 850-851

Joseph G. Weill has long been prominently identified with insurance interests in Kentucky and now holds the important position of special supervisor and assistant to the general agent of the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company, of Newark, New Jersey. His record with this company, embracing a period of some sixteen years, has reflected great credit on his aggressive and business-getting methods, and he has gained a high place in the confidence of its officers. Mr. Weill is descended from sterling old French stock, his paternal grandparents having been Leon and Matilda (Herman) Weill, natives of Alsace, France, and who died in Rosieres aux Salines, department of Meurthe, France. Leon Weill was employed by the French government in the buying and breeding of horses for remounts for the French army.

His son, Ernest A. Weill, was born March 26, 1848, in Rosieres aux Salines, France, where he was reared and attended the public schools, completing his education by a three year term of school in London. From the latter place he emigrated to the United States in 1868, locating in Owensboro, Kentucky, where he spent the remainder of his life, his death occurring here in October, 1887. After his arrival he was engaged in clerking for more than a year, and then, in partnership with Mr. Hirsch, opened a clothing store, which they continued for five years, when the partnership was dissolved. In 1876 Mr. Weill returned to his native land for a visit and on his return resumed business at the corner of Main and Allen streets, the present site of the Owensboro Banking Company. From there he later moved to Main street, between Frederica and St. Ann streets, where he had a large clothing establishment, and also did a tailoring business. In 1878 he was married to Miss Henrietta Neicam, a native of Daviess county and a daughter of John L. and Elizabeth (Rupprecht) Neicam, both of whom were natives of Bavaria, and both of whom died in Owensboro. In early life Mr. Neicam was a merchant in this city, later becoming one of the most prominent and wealthiest farmers in this county. He was a republican in politics and during the Civil war was a northern sympathizer, serving as a member of the Home Guards. He and his wife were affiliated with the First Presbyterian church of Owensboro, and Mrs. Neicam was very generous in her money gifts to worthy causes. Ernest A. Weill was reared in the Jewish faith, but after coming to Owensboro he affiliated with and liberally supported the First Presbyterian church. He was a member of the B'nai B'rith Society of Owensboro, and in politics was a democrat. Fraternally he was a member of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. His widow is now living in Owensboro.

Their son, Joseph G. Weill, was born in Owensboro on the 5th of October, 1880, and attended the public schools of this city, graduating from high school in 1898, after which he took a commercial course in the Bryant & Stratton Business College, in Louisville. He then entered the National Deposit Bank as a messenger and in the course of time was advanced to the position of chief bookkeeper. He was with that bank eleven years, and then accepted the position of district manager for the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company, of Newark, New Jersey. In 1913 he became supervisor of agents for western Kentucky, and in 1925 was advanced to his present position as special supervisor and assistant to the general agent. He is also vice president of the Recep-Roto Engineering Company, of Owensboro.

On June 7, 1908, in Owensboro, Mr. Weill was married to Miss Ellis Chipman, who was born May 12, 1885, in Fulton, Kentucky, a daughter of William J. and Minnie (Fleming) Chipman, the former of whom was a native of Bethpage, Tennessee, of which state his wife also was a native. Mr. Chipman was a promoter of life insurance companies. He was a member of the First Presbyterian church and supported the democratic party. His death occurred in Owensboro, and his widow is still living here. Mrs. Weill is a graduate of the Henderson (Kentucky) high school and is a member of the First Presbyterian church and its various societies. Mr. and Mrs. Weill are the parents of two children, namely: Josephine Fleming, born August 8, 1910, who is a student in the Owensboro high school; and William Chipman, born November 1, 1914.

Politically Mr. Weill is nominally a democrat, but maintains an independent attitude, voting according to the dictates of his judgment. Fraternally he is a member of Winstead Lodge, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons; Joe Daviess Chapter, No. 32, Royal Arch Masons; Owensboro Commandery, No. 15, Knights Templar; Kosair Temple of the Mystic Shrine, at Louisville, and Owensboro Lodge, No. 144, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. He belongs to the Owensboro Shrine Club, of which he was the first president, the Chamber of Commerce and the Owensboro Country Club, and is a charter member of the Indian Lake Fishing Club. During the

World war he took an active part in the Liberty loan and Red Cross drives. He is a member of the board of trustees of the First Presbyterian church. In every relation of life Mr. Weill has been true and loyal and he commands to a notable degree the confidence and esteem of the community in which he lives.

Sixty Years of Owensboro, 1883-1943, William Foster Hayes (Owensboro, KY: Messenger Job Printing Co., 1943):

TEMPLE ADATH ISRAEL (pp.212-213)

When the writer came to Owensboro in 1889 the Reverend Dr. J. Glueck was still in charge of this congregation, having begun in 1881, and according to the writer's recollection he continued for several years. The records of the congregation covering many years have been misplaced and the succession of rabbis cannot be definitely ascertained. One that the writer remembers as being here some years ago was the talented Dr. Nathan Krass. Another was the Rev. Theodore J. Levy (now deceased) of the well known Owensboro family of that name. He is mentioned in these pages as having taken the lead in founding what is now the Welfare League.

The temple or place or worship in 1889 was the same that is now in use, at the northeast corner of Fifth and Daviess Streets, having been occupied and presumably built some time between that date and 1883, when a building on Lewis Street between Fourth and Fifth was in use.

For a number of years this congregation has been served by student rabbis; that is, students from the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati. Among them have been: Burton E. Levinson, 1935; Morton A. Bauman, 1936-37; Joe Weise, 1937-38; Morton Applebaum, 1938-39; Henry Rabni, 1939-40; and Myron Rubinstein beginning with 1941 and still serving. He conducts services at the Temple every two weeks.

This congregation, apparently indicating our Jewish population, has not grown with the growth of the city. It embraces now about nineteen families or some three score persons.

The president of the congregation at this time is Sam Levy (as his father, the late M. Levy had been before him); vice-presidents, Silas Rosenfeld and Ben Koll; secretary and treasurer,- Marvin Cohen; trustees, Lee Moss, Lawrence Weill, and Lawrence Levy.

THE WELFARE LEAGUE (pp.80-82)

For more than a quarter of a century this important organization has been functioning, though in its earlier years under a different name. Early in 1915 Mr. Theodore J. Levy, realizing the need of dealing intelligently and effectively with the needs and problems of persons and families in distress or trouble, began to interest some like-minded persons in forming an association for that purpose. In February of that year this was accomplished, the Associated Charities being then formed and incorporated by the following representative citizens: Mrs. J. D. Hays, W. L. Mills, W. H. Brannon, Mrs. Margaret Brodie, Mrs. Henry S. Berry, Albert B. Oberst, Mrs. J. R. Lancaster, Mrs. Rose G. Watkins, Mrs. L. A. Owen, E. W. Smith, Mrs. W. A. Steele, Rev E. S. Moore, John S. Wright, L. Freeman Little, J. H. Hickman, J. W. Mobberly, Mrs. Henry Petit, Mrs. Phil J. Miller, Mrs. J. D. Reeves, and T. J. Levy.



Theodore J. Levy

Mr. Levy was the first president of the association, and in a short time Miss Clara Kummer, a thoroughly trained and efficient social worker, was secured as the first secretary, having active charge of the work. Working for a time alone, the work grew until she needed and was furnished an assistant. In February, 1918, the fiscal court of the county asked the association to handle the relief and social work in two districts, for a trial period of six months. The experiment was entirely successful, not only in the better attainment of the ends sought but in economy of administration, and the work of the whole county was then taken over by the Associated Charities.

The constant contact of the Association with the work of the Juvenile Court revealed the need of a Probation Officer who should be a trained social worker and able to deal with the many problems of juvenile delinquency continually arising, but, since the county felt it was not in a position to meet this obligation, the Associated Charities provided such a person in April, 1919. She and her successors have worked toward the adjustment of the boy and girl to their various social relations, not dealing with them as criminals but as human personalities in need of understanding and guidance. At that time a stenographer was also added to the office staff that the field workers might give their whole time to family work.

Having constantly in mind the aim of increasing the usefulness of the work, it was considered by those in charge, that perhaps the name Associated Charities was not a happy one, as the suggested idea of charity might deter some sensitive persons from seeking its help. In 1920 therefore the name was changed to the Welfare League of Daviess County.

The League has grown in usefulness with the rapid growth of the city. Necessarily the number of its working force also has increased, being now nine, including office and field workers. Since 1928 it has been under the capable direction of Mrs. Gertrude Weill as secretary. Mr. Terry Coleman is now the Probation Officer for the Juvenile Court.

Mrs. Weill generously and properly attributes much of the success of the work to the active and intelligent interest of the many public-spirited men and women who have served as directors and officers. After Mr. Levy the following persons have held the office of president: W. H. Brannon, E. W. Smith, W. B. Booth, Albert Oberst, E. E. Owsley, Marc Wile, S. R. Ewing, J. R. Beck, E. H. Clarke, L. E. Spring, Dr. W. L. Tyler, Tennes Verbaas, E. E. Owsley, J. O. Lewis, Dr. W. L. Tyler, Kelly Short, Judge C. W. Wells, O. C. Peavy, Mike Callas, Miller Holland, and Ralph Wible.

Mrs. Henry S. Berry has been treasurer since the organization was formed in 1915. Mr. Reid Brodie is now vice-president and other members of the board of directors in December, 1941, are: Miller Holland, Dr. W. H. Parker, J. S. Cottrell, Mrs. Will Medley, Sam Levy, Judge James R. Wilson, E. E. Owsley, Tennes Verbaas, Mayor Harry Smith, O. A. Rhodes, Judge Sidney Neal,

Preston Long, Mrs. J. T. Dixon, Mrs. Miller Haynes, Mrs. Henry Petit, Mrs. Chas. Broeker, and Dr. O. D. Wilson.

History of Owensboro Facebook Internet Site

Comments by Dale Warren, 3 February 2015

Owensboro's Jewish community has always been inordinately strong in help'n our town's disadvantaged... especially Theodore Levy. He was instrumental in starting the organization that later became The Welfare League. His family even gave up their home to help others. That gesture was the beginning of the Levy Memorial Home....

In 1903, Adath Israel hired Rabbi Nathan Krasnowetz, the first and only Hebrew Union College graduate to hold the pulpit full-time. Krasnowetz came to Owensboro right after graduating from HUC to serve the small congregation, which had about 100 souls at the time. The rabbi, who shortened his last name to Krass during his tenure in Owensboro, gave a special sermon in 1905 about the discrimination and violence Jews faced in Russia. Alsatian-born Moses Levy opened a dry goods store in 1872. Later, his children worked in the store, which remained in business for almost a century. Levy had fought for the Confederacy during the war, even though he didn't arrive in the country until 1857. In 1890, he joined the recently formed Daviess County Confederate Association. His daughter, Rose Levy Siegel, became a founding member of the local chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy. Levy's Confederate credentials did not hurt him in western Kentucky. Although it remained in the Union, Kentucky had considerable Confederate sympathies....

That night, Krass raised $300 for the Jewish Relief Fund from his congregation, and after the speech was covered in great detail by the local newspaper, many non-Jews in Owensboro also donated to the fund. Rabbi Krass left in 1907 for a pulpit in Lafayette, Indiana. Arthur Zinkin replaced Krass at Adath Israel, though he too left in 1910. The congregation then turned to Theodore Levy, who had grown up in Owensboro as the son of Moses and Allie Levy, and had "studied in a Jewish college in the North," according to the Owensboro Messenger. It's unclear if Levy was an ordained rabbi, though he also worked in his family's clothing store during his time leading Adath Israel. Levy was very involved in the larger community, organizing Owensboro's Associated Charities organization in 1915. He served as the group's first president and was also head of the Owensboro Rotary Club. Levy died tragically in 1919 at the age of 31. In 1930, his family donated his house to become a children's home. The Levy Memorial Home remained in operation until 1985.

Daviess County, Kentucky: Celebrating Our Heritage, 1815-2015, Daviess County Bicentennial Committee (Evansville, IN: M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., 2015) "Profiles in Strength – Women in Daviess County" by Aloma Williams Dew, pp.161-162:

One of the homefront tragedies of WWI was the Spanish Flu which decimated young soldiers and people in Daviess County as well. There were many heroines and heroes who battled at great personal risk to help those who were ill. Clementina Wolfe personifies a woman of selflessness and domesticity, but also professionalism and strength. She was a volunteer nurse during the great epidemic of 1918 which began in Daviess County in September and raged through the remainder of the year. One hundred and twelve deaths were reported by December, with 4,000-4500 cases of flu reported in Owensboro alone. There were often eight or nine cases in one family. About 736 patients were cared for in November alone. There were many volunteer nurses, including the Sisters of St. Francis Academy, who risked their own health to care for the sick. Clemmie Wolf was one of these selfless, dedicated individuals and she would eventually become a victim herself. The daughter of a Jewish merchant, she threw herself into charity work after the death of her sister and mother. She worked from morning to late night aiding the needy poor. She nursed and fed the sick when their friends and family were afraid or unwilling . After their death, she prepared their bodies for burial using her own linens and lingerie. After her death, it was discovered that she had given away all her linens to clothe the dead. She refused to give in to illness until it was too late. She represents all those nameless women who sacrifice and give their all to help the community.

[See also article "Clementine 'Clemmie' Wolf (1878-1918)" in biographies section on website, West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy, by Jerry Long]



Sol Wile building at 107 E. Second Street had a cast-iron façade with the date 1881. Clothier Solomon Wile bought the lot at Main Street (now Second Street) in 1865 for his growing clothing business. In 1881, the original brick building was torn down and the new, two story building with the galvanized iron front erected. Two new large plate glass windows showed off the expanded array of goods being sold. The new store opened on September 26, 1881 under the name of Sol Wile & Sons. The two conjoining buildings were merged in 1888 (right) and 1889 (left). When Solomon died in September 1886, his funeral procession was one of the largest seen in Owensboro. His sons Benjamin & Joseph took over the family business, renamed Wile Bros, until Benjamin's retirement in 1912. Joseph remained the primary owner until his death in 1926. By 1930, the J.J. Newberry Co. Department Store had taken over the buildings. It was saved from condemnation in 1986, and has undergone several renovations since then. The Newberry-Wile

Building is one of the only remaining examples of iron front architecture left in Owensboro, and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 6 June 1976,
Bicentennial Section Part II, p.7:

Temple formed in 1850s

Owensboro was a melting pot of cultures by the late 1850s. There were Irish, Germans, Swiss, Italians, Scots and Greeks in Daviess County.

Also among the newcomers were a number of "Israelites." In 1858-59, there were an estimated 20 Jewish families in Owensboro who joined together to form a temple congregation.

Nearly 20 years later, in 1876, they built their first house of worship – Temple Adath Israel – at Fifth and Daviess streets.

When the temple was dedicated that year, Owensboroans of all faiths attended the dedication ceremonies.

By 1881, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Gluck, formerly of Athens, Ga., was designated rabbi of the Congregation B'nai Israel here.

At that time, the congregation, second oldest Jewish congregation in Kentucky, had a Sabbath School of about 50 pupils.

In 1893, the local congregation was admitted to the national Union of Hebrew Congregations.



This is an interior view of the Adath Israel Temple, located at Fifth and Daviess Streets

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 7 September 2013, p.3D:



Parishioners follow along and read aloud from a prayer book Thursday during the Rosh Hashanah service at Temple Adath Israel.

<u>Messenger-Inquirer</u>, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 18 October 2014, pp.1C & 3C:

A few notes about Judaism

By Stuart Spindel, Member Temple Adath Israel

….. Locally, our founders were primarily immigrants from the German states of central Europe who came to Owensboro as peddlers and shopkeepers and merchants and can date our congregation back to 1858. For almost 20 years, they conducted services in several temporary locations around town and by 1877, the Jewish community of Owensboro numbered more than 200.

A house of worship was built, almost 140 years ago, at the corner of Fifth and Daviess Streets where it remains in use today and is listed on the National Registry of Historic places. Temple Adath Israel is the oldest synagogue in the Commonwealth of Kentucky that is still in continuous use.

Throughout the late 1800s, the Jewish community in Owensboro thrived. At the beginning of the 20th century, the community supported not only a rabbi but a school and social club as well.

Unfortunately, as the years progressed, the Owensboro Jewish community went into decline. The children of the merchant families grew up and left home, seeking better education and opportunities elsewhere.

After World War II, shopping malls, expressways and chain stores brought about much of the decline of those downtown shops and businesses.

Soon, from a population of more than 200, only a couple of dozen members remained.

Today, we are a small and welcoming congregation, both proud of our past and hopeful for the future.

We have Bible study at 6:30 p.m. every Friday and hold services on the first Friday night of each month where all are welcome to study together.

Stuart Spindel is a member of Temple Adath Israel. He leads Torah study and services, often in English and Hebrew.

Log of Jerry Long

Feb 8, 2013 e-mail [subject Owensboro's Jewish community] : From Dr. Stuart Rockoff (rockoff@isjl.org) to Jerry Long, Daviess County Public Library, Owensboro, KY:

Hello everyone, after several months, we have finally completed the Kentucky portion of our Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities. Thank you so much for all of your help during my research. You can see the histories here: http://isjl.org/history/archive/main_ky.htm. The great thing about publishing it online is that it is very easy to make changes. If you notice any errors or grievous omissions (or even typos), please let me know. Feel free to forward this link to others who might be interested. Best, Dr. Stuart Rockoff, Director, History Department, Goldring/ Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, P.O. Box 16528, Jackson, MS 39236, (601) 362-6357, www.isjl.org

[Note: The staff of the Kentucky Room, Daviess County Public Library, had previously sent Dr. Stuart Rockoff several articles pertaining to Owensboro's Jewish community.]

"Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities – Owensboro, Kentucky"

Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life

https://www.isjl.org/kentucky-owensboro-encyclopedia.html :

Early Settlers

Jews first settled in Owensboro in the 1840s. Among the first was Marcus Suntheimer, a German immigrant who opened a store in Owensboro. A growing number of Jewish immigrants from Alsace and the German states came to Owensboro in the 1850s. These included Max Kohn, Phillip Rothschild, Henry Mendel, Ernest Weil, Abraham Hirsch, Samuel Moise, and Simon Greenbaum. Nearly all of these early Jewish residents opened retail stores catering to the town's growing population. Several became successful. By 1860, Suntheimer owned approximately $8,000 worth of personal property and real estate. Solomon Wile, who came to the United States from Baden in 1855, moved to Owensboro just after the start of the Civil War. The business he opened on Main Street quickly grew and Wile was able to build a large new building to house the store in 1865. After the war, Wile's business kept expanding, and he became one of Owensboro's most respected and successful merchants.

Prussian-born Bernard Baer also came to Owensboro in 1861. Baer was involved with various different businesses over the years, but was especially active in local politics. Baer served several years on the city council and was mayor pro tem. He even ran for mayor in 1882, though he didn't win. Joseph Rothchild, who left France in 1858, moved to Owensboro in 1865 after spending several years in Louisville. In 1873, he opened a wholesale and retail dry goods business that eventually became the largest store in town. Like Baer, Rothchild was also a civic leader, serving on the Owensboro school board before his death in 1888. Alsatian-born Moses Levy opened a dry goods store in 1872. Later, his children worked in the store, which remained in business for almost a century. Levy had fought for the Confederacy during the war, even though he didn't arrive in the country until 1857. In 1890, he joined the recently formed Daviess County Confederate Association. His daughter, Rose Levy Siegel, became a founding member of the local chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy. Levy's Confederate credentials did not hurt him in western Kentucky. Although it remained in the Union, Kentucky had considerable Confederate sympathies.

In 1877, the local newspaper noted the proliferation of Jewish-owned stores in Owensboro, writing "from one end of Main Street to the other their business banners will be found upon the outer walls." The newspaper praised the city's Jewish merchants, claiming that "the city owes much of its commercial reputation to the vim and enterprise of this class of people." According to the 1882 city directory, Jews dominated the retail clothing business in Owensboro. Of the thirteen clothing stores in the city, eight were Jewish-owned. Jews also owned an array of other businesses. Bernhardt Rosenthal opened a bottling works in Owensboro in 1881 while the Rosenfeld family owned a whiskey distillery. Phillip Dahl lived in Owensboro by 1882, and soon opened a hide, fur, and root business with his partner George Groezinger. Groezinger, who was not Jewish, had met Dahl while they were both emigrating on the same boat from Germany. In the early 20th century, Dahl & Groezinger expanded into scrap metal. Dahl left the successful scrap business in 1927, while the Groezinger family continues to run it today.

Organized Jewish Life in Owensboro

Organized Jewish life began in Owensboro in the late 1850s, with the creation of a Hebrew Benefit and Burial Society. In 1862, the society bought land for a cemetery for $75. In 1865, the group established a formal congregation, Adath Israel, holding their first services on the second floor of Sam Moise's store. The fledgling congregation later met at a local school building. From its beginning, the congregation was Reform, joining the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873. In 1874, the group bought land on Daviess Street to build a synagogue. When the $4000 building was completed in 1877, the congregation held a large public dedication featuring a rabbi from Evansville, Indiana. The synagogue, which could seat 200 in its pews, had a Moorish revival façade, along with Gothic style windows and doors. The members of Adath Israel, who numbered only thirteen families in 1875, expected the congregation to grow and eventually fill the sanctuary, though it never really did.

Despite its small size, Adath Israel was able to employ a series of full-time rabbis during its early years. Between 1865 and 1881, seven different rabbis led the congregation. In 1881, Adath Israel hired Rabbi Joseph Glueck, who would be Adath Israel's longest serving spiritual leader. During his 13-year tenure, the congregation flourished, growing to 31 families with 46 children in its religious school by the mid-1880s. When Glueck left in 1894, he was replaced by David Feuerlicht, who only served for two years before dying in 1896. After Feuerlicht's death, the congregation would bring in student rabbis from Hebrew Union College to lead High Holiday

services while relying on lay leaders the rest of the year. Most of these early rabbis were not formally ordained and did not belong to the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

While the congregation was undoubtedly Reform, with a female choir singing during services, they still followed some traditional practices. During Rabbi Glueck's tenure, boys were bar mitzvahed at Adath Israel. By 1900, the congregation had 18 members and 33 children in its religious school. Even though they did not have a rabbi at the time, the congregation still held weekly Shabbat services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings.

In 1903, Adath Israel hired Rabbi Nathan Krasnowetz, the first and only Hebrew Union College graduate to hold the pulpit full-time. Krasnowetz came to Owensboro right after graduating from HUC to serve the small congregation, which had about 100 souls at the time. The rabbi, who shortened his last name to Krass during his tenure in Owensboro, gave a special sermon in 1905 about the discrimination and violence Jews faced in Russia. That night, Krass raised $300 for the Jewish Relief Fund from his congregation, and after the speech was covered in great detail by the local newspaper, many non-Jews in Owensboro also donated to the fund. Rabbi Krass left in 1907 for a pulpit in Lafayette, Indiana. Arthur Zinkin replaced Krass at Adath Israel, though he too left in 1910. The congregation then turned to Theodore Levy, the son of Moses and Allie Levy, who had grown up in Owensboro and had "studied in a Jewish college in the North," according to the Owensboro Messenger. It's unclear if Levy was an ordained rabbi, though he also worked in his family's clothing store during his time leading Adath Israel. Levy was very involved in the larger community, organizing Owensboro's Associated Charities organization in 1915. He served as the group's first president and was also head of the Owensboro Rotary Club. Levy died tragically in 1919 at the age of 31. In 1930, his family donated his house to become a children's home. The Levy Memorial Home remained in operation until 1985.

Adath Israel was not the only Jewish organization in Owensboro. A B'nai B'rith lodge was founded in 1874. Adath Israel had a Ladies Aid Society, which later became the Sisterhood. In 1907, there was also the Adeline Rosenfeld Sewing Society, which made clothes for the needy. In 1889, Owensboro Jews established the Standard Club, which according to the local newspaper was "chartered for the purpose of literary and social enjoyment." The group, led by its first president Emanuel Bamberger, rented space and outfitted a library and a gymnasium. In 1890, the club held an elegant ball that drew young Jews from Evansville, Indiana, Louisville, Chicago, and several small towns in Kentucky. The Owensboro Messenger ran a long story about the event, including a listing of all of the attendees along with a detailed description of each woman's dress and accessories. As the paper noted, "there are no people who enjoy a festive occasion or dispense a more lavish hospitality than the Hebrews."

By 1900, the Standard Club had 20 members, mostly young men. Although it was a purely social organization, the Standard Club was closely tied to Adath Israel. In 1900, its president, Phillip Dahl, was also treasurer of the congregation. By 1901, the Standard Club was meeting at the Temple Theater. The group remained active as late as 1919, but eventually disbanded in the 1920s when the Owensboro Jewish community declined significantly.

The Community Declines

According to estimates in the American Jewish Year Book, Owensboro's Jewish population dropped from 230 people in 1919 to only 49 in 1927. While the actual decline was probably not as steep as these estimates suggest, since Adath Israel had 23 families in 1925, the Owensboro Jewish community had clearly begun to shrink by the 1920s. After the early 1920s, Adath Israel was no longer able to afford a full-time rabbi, and relied on student rabbis from HUC

for the next seven decades. While most Owensboro Jews remained merchants, their numbers declined during the early 20th century. In 1901, there were at least 14 Jewish owned businesses in town, although they no longer dominated the clothing and dry goods industries as they had in the 1880s. By 1918, there were fewer Jewish-owned businesses in town as the Eastern European wave of Jewish immigration did not have a significant impact on Owensboro.

Despite this overall decline, several Jewish-owned businesses flourished in Owensboro in the early 20th century, in many cases led by the children of their founders. Solomon Wile's sons Joe, Henry, and Ben took over their father's store after he died in 1886, renaming it Wile Brothers. Ben Wile left the business in 1913 and helped to establish the Farmers' and Traders' Bank, later serving as its president. Henry's son Mark Wile later ran the store. Sam Levy took over his father Moses' store. When Sam died in 1951, his son Lawrence ran Levy's, which sold high-end clothing. Lawrence and his mother Anna operated the store until they closed it in 1971. Alex Feuerlicht owned the Fair Store in 1901. By 1918, his sisters Hattie and Jennie Feuerlicht, both of whom were single, owned the millinery store. The sisters ran the business until it closed in the early 1940s. Robert Kaplan moved to Owensboro from Louisville in the 1930s and opened the Interstate Department Store. Kaplan hired other Jews, including Harry and Lena Goldstein, to work in the store. Kaplan ran the business until he closed it in 1986. Interstate was the last Jewish-owned clothing store in Owensboro.

Civic Engagement

Although Owensboro's Jewish population was small, numbering just 65 people in 1937, they had a significant impact on the larger community. Clemie Wolf was very involved in local charity work. During the 1918 flu epidemic, she was a Red Cross worker who dedicated herself to nursing the sick. When patients died, she used her own linens to prepare and dress their bodies. Wolf's dedication to nursing ultimately cost her life when she too succumbed to the disease. After her death, Owensboro Jews equipped and named a city hospital room in her honor. Gertrude Weill was also involved in local charity work, serving as the longtime director of the Welfare League of Daviess County. Joseph Weill spent many years on the Owensboro School Board, serving as its president in 1943. Sam Levy headed the local Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club.

Mid-Century Growth

In 1942, Adath Israel built a small addition to its synagogue which included meeting rooms that could be used for religious school. After World War II, the congregation grew from 19 families in 1945 to a peak of 45 in 1962. Much of this growth was fueled by the arrival of Jewish professionals. General Electric built a radio vacuum tube plant in Owensboro after the war, which drew Jewish engineers and executives. Nathan Cornfield, a patent lawyer for G.E., moved to Owensboro to work for the company. Other Jewish lawyers in town included Nathan Cooper and Paul Bugay, who moved to Owensboro in 1954. In the 1950s, there was even a Hadassah chapter in Owensboro, which held various fundraisers to support the national organization's efforts in Israel. There was also an Owensboro Federated Jewish Charities that raised money to support various Jewish causes. In 1973, it raised over $4200, twice as much as the previous year, due to the response to Israel's Yom Kippur War. Over 90% of the money was donated to the United Jewish Appeal, with the remainder being given to various Jewish charities in Israel and the U.S.

The Jewish Community in Owensboro Today

By 1972, Adath Israel had shrunk back to 19 families; 13 lived in Owensboro, while the rest lived in surrounding towns. Despite these small numbers, the congregation persevered. In 1983, they still had about a dozen children in their religious school. HUC student rabbis came to Owensboro every other week to lead Shabbat services. But as these children grew up, they moved away to larger cities as the Owensboro Jewish community grew elderly. By 1996, Adath Israel was only receiving monthly visits from their student rabbi and the religious school had closed. After 1999, the congregation was too small to support a student rabbi and Dr. Robert Taxman then served as lay leader for services.

In 2012, Adath Israel had about 12 individual members. Sandy Bugay and Stuart Spindel lead the High Holiday and monthly Shabbat services. While they only meet on the first Friday night of each month for services, the congregation holds a weekly Friday night Torah study at the temple. Gentiles often outnumber the Jews at services and Torah study. The congregation regularly holds interfaith events which bring non-Jews into the synagogue to learn about Judaism.

Adath Israel continues to meet in its original 1877 temple, making it one of the oldest synagogues still in use in America. The congregation remains in its beautiful synagogue, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, because they never outgrew it. This will likely never happen as the decline in Adath Israel's membership over the last few decades has put the future of the congregation in doubt. Nevertheless, the remaining members are committed to maintaining Jewish life in Owensboro for as long as they can.

Pictures from History of Owensboro, KY Facebook Internet site:



Temple Adath Israel in Owensboro was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on 28 March, 1986.











