

ROCHESTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (Rochester Jewish community 1974-1975)

Interviewee Mannuel Hoffman

Interviewer Maurice Isserman

Date(s) of interview August 10, August 12, 1976

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

The interviews took place in Mr. Hoffman's home. Mr. Hoffman was friendly, and seemed justifiably proud of his many activities in the Jewish Community over the last 60 years. He was truly a goldmine of information on Jewish organizational history.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Hoffman was born in Poland in 1897 and came to Rochester in 1916. He worked as a painter, tanner and tailor, ran a coal business, a bag factory and a gas station, and was a Prudential insurance agent. He was active in a great number of organizations in Rochester, most notably the Workmen's Circle.

Interview abstract

Mr. Hoffman gave vivid accounts of his immigration to America, his work and business experiences, and his organizational activities. He offered particularly detailed accounts of his work in the Workmen's Circle, the Bureau of Jewish Education, and the Jewish Labor Committee. He also spoke extensively about his efforts on behalf of the Yiddish writer Israel Emich.

Interview index (corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassette recorder numbers)

Social history

Family

Demographic/residential

Economic

Political/civic

Zionism/Israel

Jewish community

community relations

Religious life

Jewish education

Anti-semitism

Interview log

- a) corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassette recorder nos.
- b) including references to others in the Rochester community

--see following page(s)--

Manuel Hoffman, interviewed by Maurice Isserman, August 10, 1976-Tape One

Personal background--born in Poland 1897

immigrated 1916. Family joined brothers already living in Rochester.

Settled on Braden St., then moved to Nassau St.

Learning English--#9 school, private tutor.

Worked as printer, tanner, garment worker until 1920.

Marriage, children.

Describes himself as a secular Jew, but not a religious Jew--never joined synagogue.

Began in coal business in 1921--coal business dominated by Jewish merchants.

Hoffman Bros. bag business

Small Jewish businesses flourished on Josephe Ave in 20s.

Started gas station in 1933--did well despite Depression.

Self-help in Jewish community during 30s--fared better than other groups.

Early activities in Workmen's Circle--joins group's "progressive library in 1917. Elections to American Jewish Congress, 1917, founding of Workmen's Circle school, 1918, helps purchase headquarters building on Clinton St. in 1919.

Workmen Circle membership over the years.

3 different branches--#27 was Socialist, #52 was Bundist, and a third branch was Zionist Territorialist.

1917 municipal elections--WC member Charles Messinger elected as supervisor on socialist ticket. Split in socialist movement after Russian Revolution prevents repeat of 1917 success.

Hoffman was member of SP, Jewish Socialist Federation.

Organization of Jewish Welfare Fund--Hoffman a member of its board since 1937.

Also member of Jewish Community Council, Jewish Labor Committee.

Activities of Workmen Circle Schools--merged in 1948 with Farband school, closed 1958.

Fund raising activities of Workmen's Circle.

WC cemetery--Hoffman works to get JCF to take over maintenance of cemeteries. Becomes president of Britten Road Association.

Member of Board of Directors of Jewish Home for the Aged.

WC camps--tuberculosis sanitariums, children's summer camps.

WC regional conferences, symposiums, 1928-1940.

Records of Rochester WC are in YIVO archives in NYC--some still in Rochester WC headquarters.

Tape 2--August 12, 1976

Jewish education in Rochester--founding of the Bureau of Jewish Education.

1946 organization of Rochester Yiddish Cultural Council--sponsors lectures, cultural events in Yiddish.

Growing support for Jewish education reaction to threats of intermarriage, assimilation. Problems of transportation caused closure of WC school.

I.L. Peretz literary circles.

Crisis in Yiddish culture, but believes language is not dying.

State of Israel makes Hebrew more popular than Yiddish.

Hoffman's efforts on behalf of Israel Emiot.

Organization of Jewish Welfare Fund, 1927-1937.

Aid to European Jews in WWII.

"New American" group organized among Jewish refugees in Rochester.

Holocaust--first learned of it in 1942 through Jewish Labor Committee contacts in Europe.

Jewish National Aid Society and Rochester Jewish Relief Organization.

Jewish peddlers in Rochester.

MANUEL HOFFMAN IS : CONTINUED

Growth of Zionism in Rochester. Hoffman an officer in American
Histadrut.

1924 Golda Meier visit.

Territorialists in WC.

1916--Young Zionists (later merged with Labor Zionists)

German-Russian split in Jewish community healed in recent years.

1956 visit to Israel--attitude to Israel.

Decline in anti-semitism in America, discrimination at University
of Rochester.

Interview I
Tape I
Side A

- Q. This is Maurice Isserman speaking with Manuel Hoffman on August 10, 1976.
- A. Since 1917, almost 60 years not only Workmen's Circle, but not on the. . . organizations, institutions, call it whatever you. . .
- Q. Well that's. . . we'll try and get to as much as we can today and if there's more then we can set up another interview.
- A. Yea, well any questions.
- Q. Well first of all Mr. Hoffman where were you born?
- A. I was born in Margone, Poland. It was part of Russia then.
- Q. Was that a large city or. . .?
- A. Well about 25,000 population, 20,000 Jews.
- Q. Twenty thousand Jews out of a total population of 25,000. And when was that?
- A. I was born in 1897.
- Q. So, you're now. . .
- A. 79 pretty soon.
- Q. What did your parents do for a living?
- A. Well my parent was a merchant in. . . we, you know, stuff like this, sell things and, you know, . . .
- Q. And when did you come to the United States?
- A. Well this is a long story. I came in 19. . . January 5, 1916. My city was occupied by the Germans in 1915, September. And the Russians drove them out after they'd been occupied for six days. And then the Russians told everyone to leave the city and they'll burn the city. The city was totally ruined. All you could see is chimneys. And we travelled by foot, by horse and wagon till we reached a railroad station, we got to Minsk. And there must have been a

- A. (Continued) quarter of a million refugees from small cities and towns. We were lucky to be housed in a school in one corner. The other three corners was the other families. I stayed about 24 hours in line to get a loaf of bread. My father had relatives in the Crimea, in Yalta, where he come from.
- Q. Right.
- A. And then we had whatever belonged we had already took to the railroad station, we received three tickets to go anywhere in Russia at that time. But my father came in from the railroad station and says to my mother that he heard in the street that we can go by the way of Japan to the United States. So my mother gave a holler to my father, Louie go and get the baggage packed. We are not going to Yalta, we are going to United States. We couldn't get no information. Where. . . where I had two brothers in Rochester, my mother had five brothers here in Rochester. So she wanted to come. Well, it's a long story. We travelled all over Russia, Siberia. We stopped in Yakutsk, Tabin, but we finally came by the way of the Pacific Ocean, landed in Seattle, Washington. From Seattle we came here.
- Q. So you came. . .
- A. It's a short story. I came January the 5th, 1916. The first one. The rest of the family came later because they didn't have any money to get so they waited till they got some funds from Rochester.
- Q. When had your brothers come to Rochester?
- A. One of my brothers came in 1907 and one came in 1914.
- Q. And why had they come?
- A. Hmm?
- Q. Why had they come to Rochester?
- A. Why have they come? Well, you know, the conditions in . . . first of all my oldest brother came here because he was a revolutionary, Socialist, and he

- A. (Continued) didn't have, you know, in a small city he didn't have any place, you know, for better himself. My other brother that came in 1914 was to be drafted in the Army. And he didn't want to go in the Army so he left. He left just about two months before the war broke out in 1914.
- Q. And what did they do when they came to Rochester? What kind of work?
- A. Well my oldest brother first was a tailor then start in coal business, then jewelry business, and that's where he is up till his time he died about nine years ago. And my other brother worked for my uncle in a grocery store and then he worked for a wholesale house.
- Q. And they sent the money to bring your parents over?
- A. They sent the money when we were in Carbin, you know, which is Manchuria now, part of China. Because at that time when my parents were in the old country they didn't need any assistance, they didn't get any assistance. Then we were well-provided, you know. We were eight children, we were well-provided by the parents. But everything was gone. Whatever money you had in the bank was gone, and whatever belonging we had, the merchandise and everything, was burned. So we only had a few dollars. They had, you know, one of my brothers was a AWOL so they didn't want to go to the front, so he came home. So my parents had enough money to ship him to the United States. Then they ship me because I was about to be drafted. And the rest of them stayed there. My father worked there already in Carbin, you know. And he cared. But, it was so easy to come to United States then by the way of Japan. My. . . if you go to Canada now, no problem. But later on the Russian government found out, you know, that too many people go to there so they stopped and it was hardships.
- Q. Did many other people from. . . from your city come to the United States?
- A. Quite a few.
- Q. At this same period or. . .?

- A. Some. . . some people came to the City of Rochester by the same way because they learned that we came here.
- Q. Why did they. . . why did your brothers, for example, come to Rochester as opposed say to New York City?
- A. Well, because as I told you my mother had five brothers here. One of my uncles, my mother's brother, came here in 1881. One came in 1888 and one came in 1891. So naturally, you know, this was the. . . the way a lot of people settled in a city because they had relatives or they had friends from the same city, friends and so forth, so that's how they settled. Now if you ask me why my uncle came in 1881 to Rochester, I couldn't even tell you. He was. . . he came first to New York and then I suppose the story was that Rochester was a good clothing center at that time, so many people came to Rochester.
- Q. When you first came to the city when your family came where did you settle, what part of the city?
- A. When we came to. . . we settled first on Baden Street, if you know where it was. Right across Number 9 School. Then we lived on Nassau Street, and Nassau Street was quite a fine street at that time, '17, '16, '17. Then we settled in Helena Street. And then, you know, we got older, we start to get married and everyone went for themselves, you know.
- Q. When you first came here, of course, you probably couldn't speak English at that time?
- A. Naturally. But I came to Number 9 School.
- Q. That's where you learned English?
- A. That's where I learned English. In fact I remember had a teacher by the name of Taylor who was a high school teacher, not only was teaching English, you know, mathematics and so forth. He says to me after a couple of weeks, he says, you don't need anything else but English. So I had school teacher on Lake

- A. (Continued) Avenue, she was teaching night school, in school, and she tutored me for about six months or so. The first book she gave me to read was A Tale of Two Cities.
- Q. So you went to night school during that period?
- A. But not very long, I. . . I went to her house on Saturday afternoon on Lake Avenue and she tutored me, gave her a dollar.
- Q. Did your parents also learn English?
- A. No.
- Q. They never did.
- A. No, they didn't learn no English. My mother was not right and she couldn't. . . but she remembered a hundred telephone numbers. She used to get up in the morning and start calling on the telephone.
- Q. And your brothers' experience learning English was the same as yours?
- A. Well, yea about the same.
- Q. Did you. . . what did you do when you first came to the city, did you begin to work or. . .?
- A. Well, couldn't find a job at that time. Went out with my oldest brother, went about six o'clock in the morning, we took all the factory on Lyle Avenue, had a lot of factories there, no. Finally in Number 9 School when I was, you know, at school, was a fellow sitting next to me, a Jewish fellow, he came from Palestine, Israel. We started to talk, he says I came here I couldn't find nothing to do so I became a painter. He says maybe my boss'll take you. So he also took me. I worked for five dollars a week, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, from six to . . . from eight to six. Five dollars a week.
- Q. How long did you keep that job?
- A. Well I kept it till . . . till about three months, then I got nine dollars a

A. (Continued) week. But I didn't like it. I went to New York, I worked in New York. You see the city was I came from because of the war there had a lot of leather tanneries. And I had a lot of experience in leather, so I got a good position, job, there in New York in a factory where they used to make fatigues, you know, leather fatigues.

Q. Is that for the Army?

A. Well it was during the war. It wasn't war here but was in Europe, so they must have shipped it over there. But my mother started to write and cry that I should come home. So I came home, I went back to painting. And then I was getting already eight dollars a day.

Q. So how long were you a painter then?

A. Well, I was a painter till 1920 then I got married, coal business, then I went into business with my brother in the factory. And during the Depression I had a gas station which I did well. I made, considering the conditions at that time. But in 1920. . . '37 I became a Prudential agent. For Prudential I worked 25 years till I retired.

Q. I see. So you got married. . .

A. 1921.

Q. And you were 24 then?

A. About.

Q. And how old was your wife?

A. My wife was 22.

Q. And had she come over to this country also from. . . from Russia?

A. She. . . she came in 1913.

Q. And what did she do?

A. She worked in a tailor shop till we got married.

Q. And did you have children?

A. Well I had two boys, one died in 1950. I have one in New York. You know Sargent Shriver? He was a partner in his firm. But he lives in New York.

Q. When you came over did you join a . . . a local synagogue in Rochester?

A. No I didn't join a local synagogue. I'm not very religious Jew, I'm a traditional Jew. And I've been friends with all the rabbis and they never ask me to affiliate with their temple because they know my beliefs. But I joined the Workmen's Circle, it was what they call a secular group. And I'm interested all my life in Yiddish, Yiddish culture.

Q. Did you. . . Were your parents religious?

A. Yes, my father. . . they wouldn't. . . they wouldn't even have. . . answer the telephone on the Sabbath.

Q. And did they affiliate with a synagogue in Rochester?

A. Yea.

Q. Which one was that?

A. That's Beth Haknesses Hachodosh on Chadam Street, Beth Haknesses Hachodosh. Now they are on the corner of St. Regis and Monroe Avenue.

Q. So you didn't give your children a religious upbringing?

A. No.

Q. And have they. . . has your son given his children a religious upbringing?

A. No. Secular, my son went to the Workmen's Circle School, which was a secular school, you know, teaching Yiddish, Jewish history, Jewish heritage and so forth. But. . .

Q. Do you think that. . . that your own experience was in any way typical that. . . that many people gave up the religious beliefs of their parents when they came to this country?

A. Well, not necessarily. You know, I want to tell you, I want to make a confession, see? As time went on, life went on, I was sorry I was. . . because in my

- A. (Continued) younger days I was learning, you know, very well in Talmud and so forth. I was sorry later on I didn't continue. But it's too late to change. You understand what I mean?
- Q. Well I'm not sure why you're. . .
- A. My. . . if I knew what was going to happen, you see, I would give my children a. . . you know, but. . .
- Q. And when. . . when did you have your children? How old. . . how old were you when you had children?
- A. Well, I had my children. . . my oldest son I had first year we were married. The other one was five years later. My eldest son graduate Cornell, Princeton, Yale. The other one was going to a great university in Iowa, but he died there.
- Q. I see. So you started in the coal business.
- A. In 1921.
- Q. Did you start that with. . . with your brothers? Or was that something you started. . .?
- A. No.
- Q. How did you go about setting up in business?
- A. Well at that time, you see, I bought this business with one of my uncles. That time, you know, in order to be in the coal business you had to get. . . buy out the rights to get coal from Philadelphia. Really, we had railways, the others so in order to get coal we had to buy somebody out. So we bought somebody out and we paid \$5,000 for it. And I had a lot of friends, a lot of people that knew me already because I was already active in the city. So we did pretty good, but in time too many strikes. Six months after we were in business a strike broke out. No coal, there was allotment. There was a fellow by the name of. . . I still remember, Miller who was in charge of getting the allotment from. . . so many tons of coal a day, so many tons a week. Instead

A. (Continued) people used to buy coal for the winters, six ton, ten ton, eight ton. You only gave them a half a ton or a ton you see. So I didn't. . . couldn't take it anymore. So my brother was in the bag business which was started by my father, 'cause my father was in the produce, you know, wheat, oats and so forth. He had in bags. He had a lot of experience. He started a bag business.

Q. A factory?

A. No, buying bags and . . .

Q. And distributing. . .

A. You know, sorting them out and patching 'em up. He used to do a good business. In fact, my brother was there till . . . well, from 1917 to '56 when he died. Used to be in the bag business, Hoffman Brothers Bag Business.

Q. Where was that located?

A. On Gorham Street.

Q. And where was your coal business?

A. On East Main. 310 East Main.

Q. Were there many other Jewish coal merchants?

A. Oh, at that time there must have been about a dozen. Most of the coal business was in Jewish hands at that time. Even some. . . well now there was two Abramsons, there was Finklestein, there was about 12 Jewish fellows. The Cohen brothers had three places in Rochester. Fuel, the pioneer coal, in fact they just discontinued about three, four years ago. Oh it was many Jewish people in the coal.

Q. Why do you think that many people went into the garment industry? And why do you think that you did. . . did you have more ambition than other people? Or. . .?

A. Well I didn't. . . I didn't feel like being tied up in a. . . in a factory.

- A. (Continued) You see, you know, sometimes it's hard to go in you little things. I worked for. . . here in Rochester for a while at a fall factory, Crosby Sons, Lyle Avenue. And I didn't feel like working in a factory because I wanted more to be on the outside. Well, in Crosby this fellow by the name of Cornty who used to work Monday till Saturday all day. One morning I came in and had in Democrat & Chronicle that Mr. Crosby gave \$25,000 to build a library in Egypt, New York. You know, a little town near here, Egypt? So I started to talk to a few fellows that worked in the factory, he gives \$25,000 for a library, which is all right, but he doesn't give us time off even to go to Sibley's or McCurdy's to buy something, because when we get through at six o'clock the stores are closed. Why doesn't he permit us even to get a hat from New York if he's got so much money? So they signed a petition and they brought it in to him and finally he found out that it came because I started it. So he fired me.
- Q. When was that?
- A. This was 1917.
- Q. So you never went back to the garment factory after that?
- A. I never went to a factory. You know, when the painting business was six month outside work, that's what I wanted to do. The bag business was outside. I used to go out to people's stores, general stores, you know, I came to your house at that time. Working, you know, they have stores where you cut the bags and so forth and so on. It was mostly an outside job. I. . . I took care of the business side to it.
- Q. Were there a lot of small Jewish businesses in those days like your own?
- A. Oh, yes, quite a few, a lot of Jewish grocery stores, you know. In every part of the city you could find 'em on Park Avenue, Monroe Avenue, Joseph Avenue was full of Jewish businesses. I don't know if you remember.

Q. No. Before my time.

A. Yea, but Joseph Avenue was just like Main Street, all Jewish businesses.

Q. And so then you, after that. . . when. . . when did you start your gas station?

A. In 1933.

Q. And where was that located?

A. Corner of Clinton and Walt.

Q. And so you did well despite the Depression?

A. You see, at that time people didn't have too much money. They didn't buy new tires, didn't buy new batteries, they didn't buy new inner-tubes. You know, in them days you had inner-tubes. So I used to get old tires, used batteries, used tubes, patch it up and sell it. I used to go to car dealers and buy in. . . trade in like five dollars, ten dollars for a car. I used to wreck it and have metal, you know. You know, glass and carpet, what not, I used to pay \$19 for wrecking a car, cause the car cost five dollars maybe. And some of these cars that I used to buy for \$10, \$15 dollars, patch 'em up and sell 'em for \$35. I sold one man a Studebaker for \$35, he went to California and back with it. I asked him, did you have any trouble? He says well I had to buy a used tire. So I used to make. . . and you know, in them days if you didn't have to stay in line or sell apples or type, you made a living. It was hard work, you know, from seven till ten at night, but you managed to. . . to get enough to be able to carry on.

Q. Where were you living in those days?

A. I lived on Wilke Street.

Q. Was that. . . was that a Jewish neighborhood?

A. Yea.

Q. Did you own your own home?

A. No. No, I didn't own my own home until 1942.

Q. So do you think you had an easier time of it during the thirties than . . . than most people?

A. Well, yes. I worked hard, but had an easier time. I had enough to feed my kids. I had . . . a car wasn't a big item at that time, my wife had a car, I had a car. It wasn't a new car, but it was a car, kept running.

Q. How did the Jewish community cope with the Depression? Was there a lot of self-help or . . . ?

A. Well there was quite a few, you know, at that time they had what they call the Associated for Charity, pay to . . . you know the Jewish Family Service, family service, came about, oh, I think in forties. But that time they had Associated Charities. And they helped out people, clothes and some food, for Passover wine. And some of the organizations, you know, the Workmen's Circle at that time had about 600 members. And some of them, you know, were managing financially and they were able to get a dollar or two to help out a fellow member. There was a couple of odd organizations do the same thing. I used to go out for Passover, I give this one \$10, the other one \$15, you know from the organization Treasury. We . . . we tried our best to help out. 'Course some of them worked, you know, for the WPA, what they used to call 'em. But it was a hard time.

Q. Do you think that the Jewish community coped better than other ethnic communities?

A. Oh, absolutely.

Q. Why is that?

A. I don't know. You see, I want to tell you something. You know the Jewish community, you know, since 1937 has the United Jewish Welfare Fund solicits money. And you know what they do? Well in the forties I think, it was late in the forties or early in the fifties, the Polish grew up here in the city.

And there were more Polacks here than Jews, you know. And there are some

A. (Continued) wealthy Polish people. So they wanted to do the same thing as the Jews, you know, United Jewish Welfare Fund. Wanted to start a campaign to help their people in Poland. So they got interested, the president of the Lincoln Alliance Bank, now it's Lincoln First, and the Bishop Carney. And many prominent people in the city and they went out to raise some money. And all they could raise was \$10,000. We Jews at that time raised I think was over a million dollars. Now you see, now you know, I don't know you've been in Rochester long?

Q. Not so long, no.

A. You see the Community Chest in Rochester raises \$15 million from 750,000 people. This is Monroe County. Eastman gives a million and a half and so forth. The Jews have 20,000 people, they don't have a contributor like Eastman. Their largest contributor I think is \$300,000 last year. But they raise three million two hundred thousand dollars. Figure out the percentage.

Q. Right. Have you always been associated with Jewish benevolent activities?

A. Yes.

Q. When. . .

A. I've been active. . .As I said before I don't want to show off or anything, I've been active in the Jewish community since 1917.

Q. When. . . how. . . how did you first become active?

A. Well, I was a member of the Workmen's Circle at that time.

Q. You joined it in 1917?

A. Well, no not in 1917, but I was. . . we had a club first, you see. The Workmen's Circle had what they call a progressive library for Yiddish books.

Q. Where was that?

A. Was on corner of Joiner and Kelly Streets. And I became a member because as

- A. (Continued) I told you, I'm a lover of Yiddish. And I became a member of this progressive library, used to go with my wife, we weren't married but she used to go out and collect five cents a week for in order to keep the progressive library and buy books. I became a member of this library and I became a librarian, it was part of the Workmen's Circle. I became a member of the Workmen's Circle in 1918. But at that time the American Jewish Congress started, was organized by Rabbi Steven Weiss, and they had to elect a delegate from Rochester to the American Jewish Congress. There were several groups, you know. And as I said before I was a radical Jew, a Socialist at that time, I supported the candidate for the Labor Zionist group.
- Q. Who was that?
- A. Charles Kashkin. Charles Kashkin's son is an accountant now in the Taylor Building. I worked for him. We had meetings, you know, honor meetings. Inside meetings, we worked for the. . . he wasn't elected, but Joe Goldstein was elected and Robert Blaugh at that time. But I. . . that's when I started my activity. Then I became a member of the Workmen's Circle, and we organized the Workmen's Circle School in 1918. In 1918.
- Q. That was a school for children or. . .?
- A. Children.
- Q. Where was that located?
- A. On the corner of Joiner and Kelly. The Workmen's Circle at that time had what two small houses with the idea of building a Workmen's Circle Center, a Y. And there we had the school. 1919. . . 1919 you know when there was the Palmer. . . you probably read about when we rent a hall for labor groups or such things. I was President of the Workmen's Circle Center that time. And we bought. . . we bought the building on Clinton Street, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was later. That time I was responsible for buying the building. Bought it and

A. (Continued) we paid in \$2,000 down payment and then a mortgage ten thous. . . . twenty thousand dollars. A second mortgage of ten thousand dollars. And, you know, Joe Sutherland was the attorney for the Union Trust Company at that time. And our attorney was Jacob Rubenstein. So when we wanted to close the deal, I says I wouldn't close the deal unless we have a guarantee that first five years we wouldn't have to make payment on the second mortgage. Them days the first mortgage was no payment, no amortization, just interest, you know, it was standing only. But on the second mortgage you had to make payments. I says I wouldn't sign the paper unless we have a guarantee. Vice-president of the bank was Mr. Wolfe, 1919. He said, well, we cannot do it. I said, well, no deal. Finally Judge Sutherland, he was a Supreme Court Judge, retired, he must have been about 80 years old, asked me a question how long are you in the city. I said, Your Honor, I'm in the city about three years. I wasn't here before because I came here by choice not by accident. He says if this young fellow who's only three years in this country smart enough to have security, give it to him. Sign it. So we bought the building and we paid down \$2,000 and we put in \$28,000 in repairs. And they got in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was happy. And they bought. . . the building was too big for us, and then there was more freedom of gettin' a hall, you know. Well we sold the building to the Amalgamated. The building still stands on Clinton Street, you know they gave it to the city.

Q. Clinton and. . .

A. Clinton, opposite Handstead Building where they build the new No. 9 School.

Q. Yea, that's right.

A. Corner of Kelly.

Q. The Amalgamated gave it over to the city. What. . . what we bought the building, and then we bought another building on the corner of Solomon and

- A. (Continued) Joseph, three-story building. And our membership got older they couldn't walk up three flights, so we bought another building on Clinton Street. And we still have that building. Clinton and Avenue A.
- Q. So, how large a membership did the Workmen's Circle have in 1919?
- A. Six hundred and eighty-five.
- Q. Six hundred and eighty-five.
- A. At that time. Now they got 85.
- Q. Did . . . was that a steady decline or did it increase on the decline?
- A. Well there was. . . there was increasing because in later years we organized Young Circle members. We organized in 1929 a Young Circle Branch with about 80 members. I have pictures of that. And in 1939 we organized another Young Circle in the quest of the World War II, you know, these youngsters all go to the war. We organized what they call our own club, we used to send packages and letters and to them and so forth. But when they returned many of them . . . most of them, I would say, didn't remain in the city. And we organized trade union branches in the course of the years, but things have changed, you know. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers used to have 17,000 members in the clothing industry. I don't think they have 5,000 now.
- Q. Right. So you had. . . there was one large central organization and there were a number of different branches of the Workmen's Circle?
- A. Oh, yes. There was several different branches. The oldest one. . . the oldest one that was organized in 1903.
- Q. And what were these branches based on, on neighborhood or. . . or?
- A. No, no. No, not in the. . . mostly was on philosophy.
- Q. How. . . how was that divided then?
- A. Well the first Branch 27 was mostly a social branch. The second branch was more radical, you know, Bundtists. I don't know if you know what the Bundt was. . . ?

Q. Yes.

A. And the third one was more on Zionism, Labor Zionists. Some . . . most of them were what they call territorialists, you know? You probably. . . I don't know if you familiar with Jewish history. When the first Zionist Congress was held in 1897 and in 1903 there was a division. Some of them wanted to settle in Uganda, you see, and they became what they call territorialists. So most of the group was a group of that. Be together because of a different idealism and philosophy. They were also Socialists, but Socialists have different groups, you know, even today.

Q. Which branch did you belong to?

A. I belonged to. . . when I came over here I. . . you know, my three uncles were charter members of the Workmen's Circle, 27. So, I went and visited the three branches before I wanted to affiliate with them. So I was of the. . . the Bundtist branch, we're 52.

Q. Were you or your family involved in the Bundt back in Poland?

A. No.

Q. No, just. . .

A. I have. . . my two brothers were revolutionaries. I had one brother who in 1905, 1904, he was arrested a couple of times for revolutionary activity. And my other brother was also, the one that came here, you know. But not in the Bundt.

Q. The. . . were most of the membership drawn from, say, the garment industry?

A. Well I would say yes, most of them. Because the majority I would say about 40% of the Jewish population here in Rochester were. . . were mostly tailors.

Q. And most. . .

A. Course there were painters, carpenters. We had branches. . . I became a member of the AFL in 1916 when I was a painter, there was a Jewish branch. And the carpenters had a Jewish branch. There was many carpenters, Jewish carpenters.

- A. (Continued) There was a number of labor people in the Jewish community here besides tailors.
- Q. Did the Workmen's Circle lend its aid to, say, the Socialist campaigns, I guess the campaign for mayor in 1917?
- A. Oh, yes. Workmen's Circle was responsible in 1917 to elect two Socialist Aldermen, one of them was a member of the Workmen's Circle, Charles Messinger. And a Supervisor, Jacob Levine, and a Constable, Sam Kolosky. This was 1917.
- Q. Why do you think they were never able to repeat that electoral success?
- A. Because after the Russian Revolution, you see, after the Russian Revolution there was quite a number of Socialists, you see, that taught the philosophy and the ideal of the Russian Revolution will do good for the Jewish people and everything else. So there was this split between the Socialists groups you know. And some of them turned to the Communist Party. Some remained Socialists. And then the Socialists themselves split up into groups like the Communist Party. The Communist Party was in 1919 split in the Community Party and the Communist Labor Party, you see. So that's why they couldn't do a repeat job because there was no unity. Why did McGovern lose in 1972 because there was no unity in the Democrat Party.
- Q. Were you yourself a member of the Socialist Party?
- A. Yes.
- Q. For how long?
- A. Oh, I've been a member for many years until we were able to keep what they call a branch of the Jewish Socialist Federation here.
- Q. So, say through the Depression? And even into the Depression you were still a member?
- A. Yes. Yes we used to bring people from New York who gave lectures and, you know, we still have our publications. Our Yiddish publication get here once a month.

A. (Continued) We used to get it every two weeks, now we get it once a month. And . . . but, this didn't stop me from being part of the Jewish community. And by 1927 when the late Doctor Saul Applebaum, then president of the Temple B'rith Kodesh, wanted to organize the United Jewish Welfare Fund, I was one with another member from the Workmen's Circle on the committee to help to organize the United Jewish Welfare Fund. And it took us ten years till 1937 to form it. And I've been on the Board since then, since 1937. First President was Henry M. Stern and we had the first campaign in 1938, I think we raised at that time \$15,000 to help Jews in Europe. And I was a member of the Jewish Community Council, the predecessor of the United Jewish Community Federation, which was organized in 1932 with Rabbi Philip Bernstein as the first President. And I was. . . because I represented the Jewish Community Council, the Jewish Labor Committee, which was. . . I was one of the organizers in New York in 1932. You probably heard of the Jewish Labor Committee? I'm still a member of the national executive board. I've attended every convention. Now in 1918, as I told you, we organized the . . .

END OF TAPE I, SIDE A

Interview I
Tape I
Side B

- A. . . . then in 1918. And well we used to teach 'em, you know, Yiddish to read and write, Jewish history, Jewish culture, celebrated labor holidays. It went on till 1958. In 19. . . I don't remember exactly the year, there was a time when we had 150 children. We had three teachers.
- Q. This was. . .
- A. We had a nursery. . .
- Q. . . . soon after it started this was?
- A. Yes. Then, you know, the City of Rochester. . . the Labor Zionists started. . . the Farbund also had a school of their own on Buchan Park. They had it for many years. In fact they begun their school before even the Workmen's Circle I think in 1916. But because of the change of the. . . of relations of different parts of the city the number of children, you know, became smaller and smaller. They merged. The Farbund school and the Workmen's Circle school merged.
- Q. When was that?
- A. Was in 1948 or '49. And it was housed in our building then, on Joseph and Solomon. And they kept it up till 1958. But, then there was a problem of. . . we even tried to get a bus to bring children to school, but we weren't able to succeed. So we gave it up in 1958.
- Q. What other sort of activities did the Workmen's Circle sponsor in Rochester?
- A. Well, the Workmen's Circle . . . the Workmen's Circle was active in every phase of the Jewish community, you know. And besides that we used to have often forums every Sunday with lectures. We raised money for the Jewish Labor Committee. Was times when we solicited clothes, you know, used clothes and we

- A. (Continued) shipped it to Europe and to Israel. And, as I said, we had the school. And we are part and parcel of the . . . every activity of the Jewish community. When the United Jewish Welfare Fund has its annual campaign, we always had a team that went out to solicit. And besides that we have our own cemetery. And many people who do not belong to a temple because of their belief and philosophy join the Workmen's Circle on account of the cemetery.
- Q. When did you acquire the cemetery?
- A. 1927.
- Q. And so how did members. . . get a free plot or. . .?
- A. The members get the plot, yes. And they also have a rule that we don't sell any plots to outsiders except to blood relatives.
- Q. Where is that located?
- A. On Britten Road.
- Q. On Britten Road, OK. Are you a member of the committee that. . . that controls it or. . .?
- A. Well this is a subject for itself, you see? In . . . if you want. . .
- Q. Fine.
- A. In 1966, you know, after reading the press, the English press and the Yiddish press, what became of the cemeteries in Europe, you know, there are no more Jewish people. And also what became of cemeteries even here in the United States where congregations or organizations have had cemetery but the organizations and congregations are not in existence anymore. And the cemeteries became jungles, nobody takes care of it. I had a feeling that something like this might happen in the City of Rochester. And it did happen because two or three congregations who had cemetery plots are not in existence anymore. So after talking with a couple of people, here a few people, we decided to go to the Jewish Community Federation and ask them to take over the maintenance of

A. (Continued) the cemeteries. They agreed. They appointed a committee. Sam Poze was Chairman, I was a member of the committee, Rabbi Bernstein, Meyer Fix, a few others. And we call a meeting of the representatives of the congregations and organizations that have cemetery plots on Britten Road and told them what we had in mind. And we had representatives of the Jewish Community Federation. And there was obstructions from a couple except. . . especially one that Beth Haknesses Hachodosh. So we couldn't accomplish anything. There was at that time two groups that had maintenance on part of the cemetery. And some organizations and congregations were members in the two groups. I. . . I was instrumental and able to get a meeting of the larger group, the Britten Road Association, and told them that the cemeteries looked bad and that the Jewish Community Federation was ready to take over and maintain it, but there was obstructions. So why not reorganize the Britten Road Cemetery Association and all of you resign from the other part, then we have one organization. They all agreed. And I became President.

Q. I see.

A. And we formed an organization, it's a corporation, with a new constitution and by-laws. And we became affiliated with the Jewish Community Federation. And they gave us in the beginning financial assistance of \$5,000 to buy equipment, to build a garage to keep the equipment. And we were able to maintain, beautify the cemetery. Even Beth Haknesses Hachodosh who was obstructing became part of it. And later on we were able to get even Stone Road. There are four cemeteries on Stone Road. On one we worked for five years, the last one became a member January the first. And all the cemeteries are now part of the Britten Road Association. I'm President and I take care of it. We have . . . during the summer we have five, six people that work. And the cemeteries became from a jungle a park. We get nothing but compliments and praise. That's

- A. (Continued) part of my activities. One. . . one part. I'm a member of the Board of Director. . . I'm not. . . as I said, I don't know, you got it all on tape? I'm a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Home of the Age. And I've been working in the Jewish Home of the Age, you know the Jewish Home of the Age, in 1933 a capital fund campaign. I was the captain at that time. They had another capital fund campaign, I think, in '52. I was also a captain to raise some money. I'm a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Family Service. I've been a member of the Board of the constitution and all the years and you have to be off for a year and then. . . So I became again a member and serving three years. So you know. I'm on the House Committee of the Jewish Community Center. I've been Vice-President of the Bureau of Jewish Education. So I made my contribution to the Jewish community for the last 60 years. Many, many ventures. You know, the Jewish Community Federation has four departments, the United Jewish Welfare Fund, Social Service, Internal Affairs, and Community Relations. And there are some that serve only on one of 'em or two. I serve on all four of them.
- Q. I'd like to return to the Workmen's Circle for a few minutes. Somebody told me about some camps that they sponsored also?
- A. Well the Workmen's Circle. . . the Workmen's Circle had its convention in Rochester in 1911 because there was many who worked in the clothing industry develop tuberculosis. So the Workmen's Circle established their own tuberculosis sanitarium in Liberty, New York. There were, as far as I can know, about five from Rochester were there. They were acute. In fact, one was the first patient and he's now a resident in the Jewish Home of the Aged. He was the first patient in 1912, which is 64 years. He's 87 years old. He lived. The Workmen's Circle Sanitorium in Liberty saved his life. We had five. There was Saltzman, there was Isaacson, there was Schaefer. I can

A. (Continued) remember the names. So this was one part. Then the Workmen's Circle had their own camp in Pauling, New York, Sterling Lake, camp is still in existence. They have accommodations for 500 children.

Q. And many Rochester children went?

A. Some. I wouldn't say many. And also for grown-ups, they have wonderful place, you see. But the . . . the camps you know, there was a time I was visiting camps from our group, you know. They must 'a had a half a dozen. The Labor Zionists started a camp, the Jewish Socialist Farbund had a camp, the Sholom Aleyhem group had a camp, the Workmen's Circle had a camp, the Communists had a camp. Now for some reason or another the camps go out of existence. The grown-ups will rather go to resort, like the Concord. So the Workmen's Circle camp is still in existence. And the Sholom Aleyhem camp, Berbreck, is still in existence. Now they're filled to capacity as far as children. The grown-ups, they only keep open on weekdays. They have over 500 children. Some stay there a whole season, some stay half a season. But they have to limit registration by January because they can't accommodate all the people. And we used to have camps. . . later on we used to have camps. . . many of our children from Rochester used to go to the camp in Toronto. They used to call it Camp Youngville from 1927 till 1945, many of them. Some used to go by boat from Rochester to Cobble. From there with a bus, some used to go by car. At one . . . we used to have quite a number go there and also grown-ups. We used to go to . . . Toronto camp from Rochester the week of fourth of July when the tailors have vacation. We used to have 50 to 60 people go to the camp from Rochester for a week or ten days.

Q. So there were camps and schools and sanitarium and classes and forums. Were there other activities?

A. Well at one time we had a region, you know, we had Workmen's Circle schools

A. (Continued) Albany, Schenectady, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo and Toronto. So we had a region organized where the children used to come to conference. They used to have symposiums and concerts. We used to . . . every year we used to go to a different city. This kept on for about . . . since 1928 till 1940 about 12 years.

Q. Where . . . are the records of the Workmen's Circle still in existence?

A. Well, yes. The records are still in existence. But, they . . . what they call the minutes book, you know, where they kept the minutes from Workmen's Circle 27 when the first organized in 1903, I kept it here till 1970. In 1970 the Yiddish Scientific Institute in New York had set up a special room for the Workmen's Circle and all materials, you know, that were minutes books and posters and photographs and so forth. So I sent it over there for safe-keeping. We have some here, you know, we used to issue a program journal, you know, with articles and advertisements and greetings since 1919. I got all the copies here.

Q. Oh, I see, you have personal copies. Is there any in any collection or any library in Rochester?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Are there any other records that you can think of that would still be in Rochester?

A. Well we have it in our center.

Q. Oh, you do?

A. Yes.

Q. What . . . what kind of things are there? Minutes . . .?

A. Well we have minutes, we have publications, you know, like with the 25 years Workmen's Circle they had a special journal with articles published. At 50 years they had the same thing.

Q. So, but it sounds like the records are still pretty much in existence?

A. Yes, we have some folders and so forth and so on.

Q. OK. Let me . . .

END OF TAPE I, SIDE B

Interview II
Tape I
Side A

Q. Isserman speaking with Manuel Hoffman on August the 12th, 1976.

A. . . . the Jewish community

Q. Well, we want both, but. . . .

A. If I am familiar with and can give you some information.

Q. Right.

A. Now, as far as Jewish education in the City of Rochester, which is a big item which hasn't been. . . in the previous book that Rabbi Rosenberg published because this became effective after 1925. Now early in 1933 the American Association for Jewish Education on an invitation from the Rochester Jewish Community Council invited one by the name of Doctor Rosen, I don't remember his first name, to come to Rochester to make a study and research about Jewish education. And his. . . after he made a study and spent quite a little time he wrote a recommendation to the then Jewish Community Council to set up a Bureau of Jewish Education in the City of Rochester, which would be helpful for all the religious schools and also the secular schools, like the Workmen's Circle School and the Farbund School. And they set up a Bureau of Jewish Education, as I said, with representatives from all the schools and also Board members at large. The first president of the Bureau of Jewish Education was Joseph Goldstein, who was very much interested in Jewish education because he was a member of the American Association for Jewish Education. And the first Executive Director for the Bureau of Jewish Education was Dr. Judea Pilch. And Dr. Judea Pilch was instrumental in. . . work hard, better system for the schools, for attendance, for curriculum, teachers and so forth. He's been in Rochester for about seven or eight years, and early 1940 Dr. Joseph Diamond

A. (Continued) came in to replace him. And the Bureau of Jewish Education was instrumental to broaden Jewish education. At that time a number of new schools came up like Temple Emanuel, Temple Beth David, and Dr. Joseph Diamond brought it out. In 1946 because he was also interested in Jewish education, supervising the Workmen's Circle School, the Farbund School, was 30 years of the passing of the great Yiddish writer, Sholom Aleyhem. And we dedicated in his memory a concert with a lector. And because the attendance was so great Dr. Diamond, myself, and a few others organized the Rochester Yiddish Culture Council, which we thought would be a good idea to bring in lectures and concerts, we needed in the City of Rochester.

Q. This was in 19. . . ?

A. This was in 1946. In fact, this year we are celebrating 30 years. Well, we brought in every two weeks we used to bring Yiddish lectures and concerts, writers, poets, social workers, and also concerts in Yiddish. The Yiddish Culture Council was also instrumental in the early fifties to start arranging meetings to dedicate the Warsaw Ghetto and the Holocaust, which were being carried on for a number of years. Later on it was taken over by the Jewish Community Center, with representatives from many folk organizations, about 10, 12. And in the later years now the . . . it's part of the Jewish Community Federation. Now this has been quite an historic event in the City of Rochester because after a while they have a study by the American Jewish Association for Jewish Education in Rochester to broaden and figure out what can be implemented. And just even last year they had another study, Dr. Pollack and Dr. Epstein from the American Association, gonna have a copy of their report, which was completed. As I say this is part of. . . that's really would be interested in. . . in the history of Rochester community. Now I. . . I don't want to show off or anything about myself, but I've been one

A. (Continued) of the first members on the Board. I was . . .

Q. The Board of the . . .?

A. Bureau of Jewish Education we are still talking about. I was a member of the Board. I've been Vice-President for about three years, and I've been Chairman of the Affiliation Committee. We worked out a constitution and we worked out regulations. In fact, we used to go to certain schools and inspect their facilities and everything else and make recommendations. Later on the . . .the purpose of the Bureau of Jewish Education was also to get funds from the Jewish Welfare Fund to subsidize the schools. And a certain formula was worked out which is still continuing, on the basis of the classes, on the basis of the teachers, on the basis of attendance and so forth. And now this formula is still being worked out. Now I don't know exactly the year that the Hillel group was set up in Rochester, which was an all day school. I think it's in existence now for about 25 years, which is also being supervised and helped by the Bureau of Jewish Education and subsidized financially. Although, at times there was a position from the Reform Jews like Temple B'rith Kodesh, they didn't believe that we have to take on a group of young children and set 'em up in a school. They should be in public school, not separated. But later on the thing was cleared up and most everybody now supports the Hillel School.

Q. What do you think made the change come about?

A. Well, you know, the certain things that happened in United States where youngster drift away, assimilation, intermarriage and so forth brought some people to understand that given a good basic Jewish education, they wouldn't. In an all day school help, you know, to eliminate problems. In fact, you know, in the United States there must be about 400 day schools, mostly by the Orthodox Jews. Now the Conservative and even the Reform Jews are taking part in setting

A. (Continued) up all day schools.

Q. Now some of the schools that you talked about, like the Workmen's Circle School itself, have disappeared over the years. Has. . . ?

A. Because, you see, because of . . . the Workmen's Circle School had problem with the neighborhood. Most of the children would come close neighborhood. Now as the Jews in the City of Rochester, like any other city, they moved out. And we had a problem of getting transportation. And it's been a costly problem. Now the congregational schools, like Temple Beth El, they now have about six or seven hundred children. They have bus transportation. Temple B'rith Kodesh the same thing, Temple Beth Sholom.

Q. Well do you think there are more children now receiving Jewish education than there were . . . ?

A. I wouldn't say more, no, I wouldn't say more. Although the Hillel School has been increasing their number of children year after year. The other schools are not been increasing. In fact, at time. . . time, you know, the. . . many of the temples or synagogues had their schools, like Beth Joseph. Was a time Beth Joseph had about 150 children, but because of the moving out they had to give up their school. You know where Beth Joseph is? On St. Paul? There was Beth Sholom School is still in existence, but their number of pupils is declining. Let's see. But the B'rith Kodesh and Beth El are still have their good attendance because their congregations have large memberships and they have bus transportation. So, now Temple Beth David and Temple Emanuel use mostly a car pool. Temple Beth David I think has about 150 children even now. Emanuel must have about 120.

Q. You spoke of the Bureau of Jewish Education aiding the local schools and help broaden the curriculum. Could you give me some specific examples of what it did to aid the local schools?

A. Well, they had. . . they have a problem they see that they secure teachers because the teachers change. And they have the teachers license to . . . they have. . . they have classes for them, you know, from time to time for the teachers, they widen the curriculum. And the director, Executive Director, of the Bureau of Jewish Education frequently visits all the schools. And they have. . . they have a community high school. When a child graduate from elementary school, not all of them but quite a number, go to the community high school. And this is also part of the activity of the Bureau of Jewish Education. Now, as I said before, they have this study, made recommendation for implementing. Some of them will be taken up in meetings, but one of them was to have an Assistant Executive Director. And one will be appointed very soon. Do you want to see a copy of the report?

Q. I think actually I've seen it. Rabbi Karp gave us copies.

A. Huh?

Q. Rabbi Karp showed us the. . .

A. Yea. I got a copy here.

Q. Now this cultural. . . what is the name of the cultural group?

A. The Rochester Yiddish Culture Council.

Q. Does that have its own office or. . .?

A. No, no. They don't have their own office. They used to have meetings in the Jewish Community Center. Now following up with this Yiddish culture, you know, they. . . the Jewish Community Center about 10 years ago they had an Executive Director, Sam Sorin, who was very much interested in Yiddish culture. And he set up a Yiddish Program Committee and started in the Jewish Community Center one with having appointed a lot of residents in the Jewish Community Center, Israel Emiot, the well-known poet, writer, book reviewer. And they organized a committee to begin Yiddish activity. And we had quite a number of affairs,

A. (Continued) lectures. I have the copy of the first meeting. I was Chairman at that time. Saturday evening we used to call it Mellave Melke. You know what Mellave Melke is? The "outgoing Shabbath" they get together and they have refreshments and lectures. And they organized at that time a literary circle with the name of I. L. Peretz, who was a great-known Yiddish poet, writer. And this I. L. Peretz group has been carrying out Yiddish activity for the last ten years during the fall and winter months. They bring in lecturers, they have speakers of their own, concerts, and singing groups. And now the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Jewish Community Center have taken over activity of the so-called Yiddish Program Committee of the Jewish Community Center. And they have it under the supervision of the Bureau of Jewish Education. And the Bureau of Jewish Education is going to subsidize and help them financially, as they did before to the Rochester Yiddish Culture Council. And the program is worked out for this year. They have a concert with the opening season, six lectures, every month, a concert at the closing season. And in the middle of the season a concert which is sponsored by Workmen's Circle, Labor Zionist group. They have a artist, you know, go to the United States in about 45, 50 cities. This is now a joint venture under the supervision of the Executive Director of the Bureau of Jewish Education.

Q. Many people have commented on the crisis in Yiddish culture, Europeans. . . ?

A. Well, yes there is a crisis, but it. . . it's not a language that has died. In fact, there is maybe today, and I have somewheres the report, about 50 to 60 universities and colleges that have Yiddish classes. In New York they have it in the Queens College, in the Columbia University during the summer they have people come in from all over the country. They call it the real wind-up, study which is sponsored by the YIVO, which is the Jewish Scientific Institute. So, that's, you know, it's. . . the number of speaking Yiddish, number of people

- A. (Continued) that read Yiddish is declining, but the language itself we still have about 150 to 200 books that are published every year by prominent writers, poets and so forth every year. And now this next week, 23rd up to the 28th, there is a conference on Yiddish in Israel, Jerusalem, which will be attended by 200 delegates from about 14 countries, mostly naturally from the United States, but will be from Russia, from France, from Australia, South Africa. I receive two publications periodically from South Africa in Yiddish, so it's. . . it's not a dying. . .
- Q. How about in Rochester itself? Do you think there's a shrinking. . .?
- A. Well, there is a shrinking, but we still have. . . we still have quite a number of people that when we have our lectures and so forth or concert, we still have a good attendance. Naturally it isn't what it used to be. I can remember days when we arranged a lecture we used to have standing room only. But, all the people have died now. But, it's declining, but it's not dying.
- Q. I think most young children if they probably learn a language, they learn Hebrew rather than Yiddish.
- A. Well, yes. But, they could get along much better with Yiddish. . .
- Q. Why is that?
- A. . . . than with Hebrew because they still have grandparents that can understand. They still have some parents that can understand Yiddish. But there is a very small percentage of grandparents, even parents, that can understand Hebrew. But because of the State of Israel, because of the language in Israel, they feel that they have to teach 'em Hebrew because the. . . the religious books, you know, you go to a synagogue to worship it's all in Hebrew. So we teach 'em Hebrew. But in the day schools, kept by the Orthodox people, mostly most of them are having Yiddish as part of their curriculum. The Workmen's Circle still has about 40 schools in New York and over the country where we teach

A. (Continued) Yiddish with Hebrew. I'm a member of the Board of the Jewish Teachers Seminary in Herslea, New York. And they are. . . their classes are in Yiddish and in Hebrew. They just established an all day high school. This is the. . . they are taking in seventh, eight, ninth grade now. And they also have part is in Yiddish, part is in Hebrew. So it's not dying off again.

Q. Could you tell me about your efforts on behalf of Mr. Emiot?

A. Well, I can tell you a lot about him.

Q. OK. Why don't you do that.

A. Well, Emiot is here. . . came in 1956 I think. You know he came from a concentration camp. He came a very sick man, physically, but his mind was excellent. Well I befriended him and tried to help him in every way possible to get acclimated, you know, in the city. Started to write an article about his. . . his experience in the concentration camps in the Jewish Daily Forward. He used to write articles once a week until his name . . . and it was very well received. And we had a man here in Rochester who was very much interested and loved Yiddish. And he said this article should be published in a book. And he sponsored the book, he paid for it.

Q. Who was it?

A. Samuel Bogart. And Samuel Bogart paid for that book, and we had a reception and I was able to sell the book, receive ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five dollars. Then I was able to get him started . . . American Jewish Congress had a Yiddish publication. In English it was called the Congress Weekly. In Yiddish it was called the Vorkblat from Congress. And a prominent Yiddish writer and poet, Plotstein, got very friendly with him and got articles from him once in a while. Then he was making his contribution in the Jewish Daily Forward, reviewing books. But this wasn't enough. So I was instrumental of getting him travel over the country in many cities to give lectures.

A. (Continued) Pittsburg, Detroit, Los Angeles, even Miami Beach. I have some articles in Yiddish that I saved, you know, which . . . which reviewed his activities and very pleased and everything else. Well, he got started. Later on in 1963, I think it was, he wanted to publish another book and in Yiddish. And he needed some funds. So I appealed to Rabbi Karp for the Jewish Community Federation and asked them for some subsidy for the book. Well, they gave us \$2,000, providing myself and Dr. Karp, Dr. Rabbi Karp, I always mix up he has the title Dr. now, and Rabbi Bernstein from Temple B'rith Kodesh would raise the other \$2,000. And I was in charge of the publication group. Well, Rabbi Karp and Rabbi Bernstein were supposed to raise \$1,000 and I \$1,000. And I was instrumental in raising \$1,250, and they \$700. And the book cost about \$4,300. So the Jewish Community Federation gave us the money. Then there was the man, as I said before, that got him in in the Jewish community. Well, he always wanted to have more books published. He published one book in Argentine. And then Noah Scherr gave him money to publish another book. And then he had another fifth book I think that the Jewish Community Center promised him some help, but in the meantime they changed the Executive Director and something didn't work out. So I raised \$1,500 for him for that book was published. Because from the sale of the book he gets financial assistance. Well under the supervision of the new Executive Director he published a book in English. Previous books were all in Yiddish, but the last, the seventh book was in English, My Yesterday, which was sponsored and paid for by the Jewish Community Center. The last book that was published, now that I gave you a copy of it, Life in a Mirror, he asked me to see if I can help him to raise money for the book. So I went to the Jewish Community Federation and I asked them for \$2,000. They gave it to me. I was Chairman of the Publication Committee, and the book cost more than \$2,000 but I raised

- A. (Continued) outside about \$400 from other sources. And the book is selling so he's got some income because he's a very sick man. He's on Social Security, and he's only a part-time worker in the Jewish Community Center. I can say freely that in the 20 years that he's been here I must have helped and assisted him to the amount of \$25,000 from the sale of the books. Some people gave me \$50 many times, \$25.
- Q. In terms of publishing Yiddish books, is it the usual pattern is it usually sponsored by some group or individual?
- A. Well, mostly. . . in most cases it is because the sale of the book is, you know, a problem unless you have friends or you have people that are interested in selling the book, then you can sell it. And many times the author himself pays for the book. And they mail out. . . I get. . . there isn't a month that I don't get a book. But I never return the book. I send a check. Five dollars, ten dollars. But buy books, I send in 1956 700 books to Israel. And from 1956 up till last February I also accumulated another 500 books. So in July I send it again to Israel, nine cases. The first time I sent 14 cases, about 50 in each case. Last time it was nine cases. I send it to the help for the Jewish Labor Committee because the transportation might cost me, so I send it through that. And I put a stamp a gift from Manuel and Frieda Hoffman, Rochester, New York on each book. And they ship it. They establish now a Yiddish library in Haifa, Israel. So they send it over there.
- Q. Are there other authors in Rochester who are publishing Yiddish. . .?
- A. No.
- Q. Haven't been for some time?
- A. No. They're havin' a reception for Emiot book, the Jewish Community Federation and Jewish Community Center on Wednesday, August 25. I'm the emcee. They'll be coms greetings from the Executive Director from the Jewish Community

- A. (Continued) Center, the Executive Director of the Jewish Community Federation, Professor Francesca Gouly from Nazareth College who edited the book, and Herb Suffrin. Probably know him? Yiddish teacher. He's going to read a short story in English. Yesterday. . .not interested in my personal life, but this is for I understand for the history of the Rochester Jewish community. So whatever information I can give you, as I said, because I've been 60 years in the community and 59 years active I can remember a lot of things that some other people maybe forgot or overlooked.
- Q. Well I think you mentioned participating in the establishment of the Jewish Welfare. . .?
- A. Oh, yes. Well, as I told you, I was one. . . one with of the few representatives. Together with me was another member of the Workmen's Circle, Morris Levin. We were delegated by the Workmen's Circle to represent the Workmen's Circle in the establishment of the United Jewish Welfare Fund in 1927 with Dr. Appelbaum, who was the President at that time of the Temple B'rith Kodesh and who was very much interested in seeing that Rochester follows many other cities who had already established United Jewish Welfare Fund, United Jewish Community Federation and so on and so forth. First one I think was Boston. And it took ten years before this was established. Henry Stern from Michael-Sterns was the first President. And Dr. Cameron was the Executive Director at that time of the United Jewish Hebrew Charities. And he was responsible for the conduct of the campaign. And four years later they looked for an executive director to take over because Cameron left for Los Angeles I think. And they . . . they searched for one and finally Elmer Louis came in in 1942. I was at that time a member of the Board and had to approve the recommendation of the committee to appoint Elmer Louis. He was here for 32, 33 years.
- Q. And why. . . why was a need felt for such an organization?

- A. Why was the need felt? Because first of all . . . first of all there was to be a more organized community because the First. . . the Second World War was already in existence and the need for help Jewish people. And it was thought that because they would have an executive director and have a functional Board of Directors and everything else they would be able to do. . . to do much better. And they did. They raised I think the first year with Elmer Louis' help a million dollars. I don't remember the year, but Jack Rubens was President they raised a million and four hundred thousand dollars. In them days was a lot of money.
- Q. Was that. . . was that mainly for European relief?
- A. European relief and some for local and national, you know, groups that carry on like the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Congress and so forth. At present there is about 42 . . . 42 institutions or committees that get assistance besides the United Jewish Appeal. I've been a member of the Allocation Committee since 1943. After money has been raised we get about 75, 80 people divided in sub-committees and make recommendations about how to allocate because there is requests from maybe about 75 groups that send in letters they want some money allocated. But we don't always allocate to all groups that make requests. But there is about 42, 44 groups that get assistance, Rochester, nationally and overseas.
- Q. During the Second World War apart from raising money how did people in Rochester aide Jews in Europe?
- A. Well mostly it went to this. . . to the United Jewish Appeal the money, but there were a lot of groups, you know, like the Orthodox had set up a . . . a certain groups to save the religious people. The Jewish Labor Committee for instance had made commitments to bring over leaders of trade unions and Socialist labor leaders and so forth. And I don't know if you remember this,

- A. (Continued) but it was through the effort of David Dubinsky who was President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and William Green who was the President of the American Federation of Labor at that time because they weren't merged yet, got from President Franklin Roosevelt they had what they call a free entrance for those people and I think the Jewish Labor Committee was instrumental in bringing over almost 1,000 people.
- Q. Did any of them come to Rochester?
- A. No, no, no.
- Q. Was there any effort to bring people from Europe to Rochester?
- A. Not those labor leaders or so forth.
- Q. No, but other. . .?
- A. I was. . . I was there in 1944 I think at a meeting at Carnegie Hall where about 250 great leaders, like Adler and many others, because I was on the Executive Committee of the Jewish Labor Committee I was able to be there. Now as far as any others, well, Rochester has been a city that had maybe about 500 that came after the war to settle in Rochester.
- Q. Were there any. . .
- A. Refugees. And they have organized. . . they have organized a group called the New Americans And they organized another group under the name Mortai Anelevic Society. Mortai Analevic was the name of the leader in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. So in his. . . in his name they organized the group. So there were two groups carrying on activity and raising money and so forth. Well I think about 10 years ago they merged, they're still going on under the name the New American-Mortai Analevic Society. And Mr. Rosen, Arthur Rosen who lives on Carroll Drive is President. . . the. . . the President of the group. They still meet. They get together. They raise money even now for the United Jewish Welfare Fund, and they participate in the Warsaw Ghetto

- A. (Continued) and Holocaust affair that's being organized. You know they always elect. . . part of the ceremony is to light six candles for the six million Jews. So they always select their people who've been in concentration camps, you know, like Dachau and Auschwitz and so forth. So they always select their group to light the candles. It's an impressive ceremony.
- Q. Some people have said that knowledge of what was going on in Europe during the Holocaust came very late during the war. Do you. . . when did you first become aware of what was going on?
- A. Well I first became aware in 1942 because the. . . you see, as I told you, I'd been active in the Jewish Labor Committee, even though I'm in New York you know. But the Jewish Labor Committee had some avenues where they used to ship underground help, you know, and financial help, you know, to people over there. And they used to get secret reports, you know, which were not being published. One of them was a girl by the name of Latke Meet who was. . . had looked like an aryian and she was able to smuggle in, you know, not only funds but even ammunition and so forth. And she was instrumental of sending in through certain channels, to London and so forth, some information about this was going on. They ordered people to come, they were selected they used to call it. Mainly they used to take 'em to work, but they didn't take 'em to work, they just take 'em to Auschwitz or Bergen. And she came here in 1946. She came here in 1946, she wrote a book, On the Other Side of the Wall, in Yiddish and in English. And she's very active even now. So she was a source of getting information across.
- Q. So you think that . . . do you think that the rest of the Jewish community found out much later than. . . ?
- A. Well they. . . some found out later, some found earlier. Yea, there she is, Latke.

Q. I see.

A. Yea, we had her here in Rochester and speaking of the Holocaust. So, and you know in 1948, I think it was 1948, the war between Russia, Soviet Russia, and Poland where the General Delokovitz, you know, was an anti-Semite and he used to cut the Jewish beards. We organized here in Rochester a protest parade. And we organized the Jewish organizations, you know, call the attention of the Mayor and the Governor and the Senators. Harry Suskind was at that time. . . . Harry Suskind from the paint store, he's still around, was then president. I was Treasurer of this committee. And we used to accumulate used clothes a lot and ship it New York to the Jewish Labor Committee. They used to ship it to Poland. At that time there was some still in Poland, not too many but some.

Q. You mentioned that you were active in the Jewish Labor Committee. Can you describe their organization and what they did in Rochester?

A. Well the Jewish Labor Committee. . . the Jewish Labor Committee is organized for defense of Jewish problems in the United States. And they're mainly. . . mainly active in the trade union movement and get support from the trade union movement. And they have been delegated last year to establish a pilot project in Louisiana and Arkansas, this is just lately. Where there is no Jewish community to great aspect and they work along trade union movement to the central trades. They're labor consul to the State Federation of Labor. And they did such a good job that this year they assign them to do another pilot project in another state, in two or three other states. As I said before, the Jewish Labor Committee was instrumental to save about 1,000 Jews. Not Jewish, but labor leaders and Socialists, who after the war went back to Germany, went back to Belgium, went back to Austria and they started again the trade union movement, the Socialist movement. And they helped in many ways, you know, the Jewish people because they befriended, you know.

Q. When did. . . when was the Jewish Labor Committee organized in Rochester?

A. In 1933.

Q. Were you. . . did you participate in that?

A. Yes.

Q. Who else did?

A. Well there was a number of. . . Sherwood Corgan was a member, Morris Levine, there was my brother, Harry Hoffman, there was Neiditch, oh I can. . . Fishman, Lestin. There was a lot of 'em. We still have. . . we still have now a section here although we don't do much.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE A

Interview with MANUEL HOFFMAN
August 12, 1976
By Maurice Isserman

Interview II
Tape I
Side B

A. The Department of Community Relations, he goes to every meeting. You know the Department. . . the Jewish Community Federation, as I told you, has four departments. One of them is the Community Relations. And Phil Gordon is a member representing the Jewish Labor Committee. I also go to that meeting.

Q. Is the Labor Committee closely associated with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers?

A. Well the Amalgamated Clothing Workers is part of the Jewish Labor Committee in New York, international union. In fact, the President of the Jewish Labor Committee now, Jacob Schenkman, he's the Secretary/Treasurer of the

- A. (Continued) Amalgamated Clothing Textile Workers Union. Now they've merged with the textile union. So they are affiliated, like many other unions, the International Ladies Garment Workers, Hatters, many unions. They have what they call a trade union consul.
- Q. Are there other organizations that we haven't yet talked about that you were close to or . . . ?
- A. Well there's only one organization that I've been. . . you see, I cannot belong to any organization if I'm not active just to be a dues-paying member. I never felt . . . The only two organizations that I did belong, and as I said I don't want to show off myself out there you know, but that it's quite interesting. There's a organization here. . . there were two organizations, one was the Jewish National Aid Society, which was organized in 1908. They are 68 years in existence. Then there is one, the Rochester Jewish Relief Organization, they call it the RJRO. Which were, what they call 'em, folks organizations. They organized because first of all to help assist their own members financially, culturally. You know, I've been reading now World of My Fathers when I came to the part where they talked about education, the way it was in the 1890's, 1900's. The same thing took place here in Rochester, although I haven't been here. But from talking to people like you talk to me I was interested what was the reason of organizing these organizations. Well the reason was to help them, assist them, to get a job, to be able to start a little business, to help them to bring over their families from the old country. Because mostly the . . . the father, the husband, came here and in order to bring over the family he had to work, raise some money. Besides that they also helped Jewish people in Europe. They take an interest and part in the people's relief, the United Jewish Welfare Fund and so on. And they also, I can remember I became a member in 1918 in the Jewish National Aid Society. I was President there, I was Financial

A. (Continued) Secretary. They are still in existence, although the membership has dwindled. At one time they had 400 members. And the Rochester Jewish Relief is still in existence. I think they have about 150 members. And they. . . they helped, you know, in the miner's strike. They used to give assistance. They were a progressive organization. They, in 1929 I think, was the Pogrome Hebron in Israel, in Palestine. So they send \$300 for the sufferers. I mean this is the kind of work they did. They used to have a lecture once in a while in Yiddish. They supported a Yiddish book, you know, and so forth and so on. This was part of this organization, which I belonged. Also they were instrumental, you know, in case somebody . . . some member dies or someone in the family, so they had their own cemetery. They still have their own cemetery, the Jewish National Aid Society and the RJO, they still have on Britten Road. This was what they call. . . they also had a loan fund, you know, where they loaned a member \$50, \$100, to help him establish business. A lot of them were hucksters at that time, you know. You don't remember those days when people used to go with a horse and wagon to market and buy produce and then sell it to the neighborhood because we didn't have supermarkets like we have now. A lot of them. . . there was a time in Rochester when they had about, I would say, about 100 Jewish junk peddlers and maybe 25 Jewish large junk dealers. They used to go out and peddle, doing a pick up old clothes, newspapers, metals, broken up stoves and so forth. They used to bring it to the junk dealer to sell it, but they had to have 25 or 50 dollars at times to . . . to buy the stuff. So this organization had what they call loan funds, they used to loan. They paid on a dollar a week, a dollar a month, so forth. There was also, and this is also interesting, and I think Joe Silverstein would be able to give you more information. That Rochester had two loan societies in Rochester. One was

- A. (Continued) supervised freely by Joe Silverstein. And they helped out a lot of people. This loan society used to loan \$100, \$200, even \$300. And they had their office in the Hebrew Charities Building on Baden Street. And every Sunday morning they used to be open to transact business, people used to come, and no charge for interest. And it helped many, many people, many Jewish people.
- Q. And was the Hebrew Credit . . . ?
- A. No, the Hebrew Credit Union was a financial institution. This is something else, you see? They had. . . they had . . . they had what they call a loan society, not loan societies, loan groups, maybe a dozen in the City of Rochester. There was one fellow, Abram Schulman, he was Secretary in five of them. There was another one also called Abe Schulman, he was Secretary in five. They used to meet Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday night. And he used to come along, but this was a private business. They used to charge interest and everything else. But these two, the Hebrew Charities Building, were, you know, free, no interest.
- Q. Where did their capital come from?
- A. Hmm?
- Q. Where did their capital come from?
- A. Well they had some benefactors that used to give 'em money. And they used to get contributions, you know. And one organi. . . one had maybe \$25,000. Mrs. Amdursky was the Treasurer for years and years. And Joe Silverstein was in the other one. He can give you more information about this, although I know about them, you see, but I wasn't active.
- Q. One area we haven't really discussed has been Zionism? Were you ever active in Zionist organizations?
- A. No, no I was never active in the Zionist organizations.
- Q. It's been suggested to me by several people I talked to that for many years,

- Q. (Continued) say till after World War II, Zionism was not really very popular, it was not very strong in the Jewish community here. Do you agree with that?
- A. I wouldn't agree with that. Because, you see, there were . . . there were, you know, three groups they called Zionist groups. There was the Zionist Organization of America what they call it, there was the Labor Zionists, there was the Hadassah, and there were the Pioneer Women. Now even. . . the Pioneer Women are in existence 51 years in Rochester. The Hadassah has been in existence over 60 years. And the Labor Zionist group has been in existence for 60 years in Rochester. Now naturally there were more groups. There were small. . . there was little activity, but there was some activity in all these groups. And after the World War the Zionist Organization of America was very popular and great in the City of Rochester, as were the Labor Zionists. In 1926 they. . . what they call the Labor Zionist Trade Union, the Histadrut, was established in New York to help the Histadrut in Israel. And they established a branch in the City of Rochester, I think, in the early thirties. And they used to raise a lot of money then because the United Jewish Welfare Fund wasn't in existence. Now they are subsidized, I think this year they gave 'em \$17,000. But up till . . . up till the fifties, you know, the United Jewish Welfare Fund did not subsidize so they used to carry on their own activities to raise money. In fact, in 1952 I think I was President of the Rochester section of the Histadrut. And in 1951 I was President of the Upstate New York group for the Histadrut. That took in all cities outside of New York City, starting from Albany, Schnectady, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo. And we used to carry on our own campaign to raise money, \$2,000; \$3,000 in Rochester. But this was. . . it was quite an activity. The Pioneer Women were active. First Golda Meir was here in Rochester in 1925, I think. She

- A. (continued) slept in the home of Fannie Atlas, I remember that like today, on Schofield. And didn't have. . . they just put up a day bed that she slept at that time 'cause they couldn't afford to take her to a hotel. And they organized a chapter under the name of Benahem Mor, the authors of the people. Then they organized another one later on in the name of Katima. Then they organized a chapter they called the Meir. And they have a chapter under name of Rochelle. They have four chapters. They've been in existence over 50 years. And the Labor Zionists used to have . . . not only because the Farbund, which is a fraternal organization, but they used to have members in their Labor Zionist group which was a party of itself, see?
- Q. One thing that confused me a little, you were talking about the Workmen's Circle earlier. You said there was a different branches for different cities.
- A. Yes.
- Q. And there was a Socialist branch and then there was also a Labor Zionist branch.
- A. Well it wasn't a Labor Zionist branch in full. There was. . . it was, you know, as I said before, in 1903 I think or 1902, you know, Zionist World Congress in Basil, Switzerland, there were a few people like Israel Zongil, you probably heard the name? Taught that there is no possibility of get Palestine for Israel, they should get another territory. And one of the territories that was proposed was Uganda, were Amin is now. But it didn't work out. But there still were a group that Labor Zionists that called them Territorialists because they felt that they had to get a territory for Jewish people someplace. So this was Labor Zionists, but not fully sympathetic to the Zionist movement.
- Q. So in other words, the people who belonged to this branch of the Workmen's Circle would not have agreed fully with the Farbund's program?
- A. They would not, no, no.
- Q. OK.

A. Although there were, you know, they were Zionists but they called themselves Territorialists. In fact some small groups still exist here in the United States. And they. . . they have a publication which I get once in three months, Dr. Israel Steinbaum was one of the leaders. We still have a professor, I forgot his name, who is still editing their paper. There's still activity. They don't want to give up, although there is a country and everything else. But this was called a Territorialist group. But they had a good . . . says movement of the Zionist Organization of America years ago. They must 'a had in Rochester 2,000 members.

Q. When was that?

A. In the fifties.

Q. OK.

A. They. . . they still have some organized in the Zionist Federation they call it here, Louie Rosenstein is the Chairman now. Julia Berlove before. But they have quite an active. . . When I came to Rochester they had. . . they even had their own library on Chadam Street, which is now owned by the Great Lakes. The building is still there. We had a. . . we used to have a lot of activity. This was in 1916. There was a group called themselves the Young Zionists, in Hebrew they'd say Yidi Zion, which later Amalgamated merged with the Labor Zionists. But in 1916 they called themselves the Young Zionists and they were. . . they had their own library, they a clubhouse on Chadam Street at that time. It was called . . . they used to have many affairs there, you know like Saturday night.

Q. Do you think that . . . that there was a . . . a steady growth in Zionist sentiment or did it shoot up at any one point?

A. Well, there was a great sentiment, you know, naturally after the . . . the United Nations, you know, established the partition of Palestine and set up

- A. (Continued) the State of Israel, naturally there was an upswing. Many who didn't. . . mostly the Reform Jews were not only not Zionists, but they were anti-Zionists most. . . most of 'em. But as time went along, although they had some leaders, great leaders, like Rabbi Steven Weiss, Rabbi Silver in Cleveland who was instrumental in helping, you know, get the U.N. to vote for. . . But the majority of the Reform Jews and the leaders, the rabbis, were anti-Zionists.
- Q. That reminds me of another point. Some people have told me of a . . . a division in the Jewish community in earlier years between German Jews and Russian or Eastern European. . .?
- A. Oh, that was. . . oh, there was a great division. They wouldn't let me in in Temple B'rith Kodesh.
- Q. They wouldn't?
- A. No.
- Q. Be. . . because you were from a Russian Jewish. . .?
- A. Yes, right.
- Q. And did they tell you that?
- A. Hmm?
- Q. Did they tell you that in so many words?
- A. No, they didn't tell me that, but you see this was. . . this was not only in Rochester but was all over the United States. I say if you read that book, you can find it there. There was such a great division. In fact I was once to a Bar Mitzvah in Temple B'rith Kodesh on Gibbs Street with Joe Goldstein says to me, you see these people, they all come from Joseph Avenue. Ten years ago they wouldn't let 'em in here. Now they all come here, they all become members.
- Q. Right.

A. But this was in the late forties or . . . or . . . or even fifty. Early 1900's they wouldn't let Russian or a Polish Jew in.

Q. Do you think that that split has been healed?

A. Oh, yes, sure. There's no . . . there's no problem now. We all work together because the majority of the old-timers are gone and the young ones is mixed in, you know. They . . . they intermarry, not because of non-Jews but I mean Western Europe Jews and German Jews and so forth and so on. I want to, you know, Arthur Lowenthal who is also probably the third generation of German Jewish Rochester, he is a very fine fellow but maybe in thirties he wouldn't . . . he wouldn't eat, you know, with us. But, the late forties or fifties, he went to Israel. He took me around, he says Manny, I got to give you a report what happened on my trip. He became so involved, so interested and everything else. And not only him, that was Forman, Fred Forman. That was . . . I can name. . . Henry Stern, as I said he was also a second or third generation. And many others.

Q. Related to Michael Stern, Henry Stern?

A. Yea, he was one of his sons of the organizer of the Stern family.

Q. That's sort of an interesting point. Do you think that this German/Russian split followed class lines in any sense, that maybe a lot of the German Jews owned the garment factories and the Russian Jews worked in them?

A. Well, not because of that. You see, they were . . . they were trying. . . they were trying their best to help the immigrants, especially in New York on the East Side, to get them out of the, you know what they call it, you know, to have manners, to get education. But their philosophy was different than those of the philosophy of the Russian or Polish Jew, or the Galician Jew or the Rumanian Jew, you know. They still talk to their Yiddish kite, you know, to their religious feeling and everything else in a different way than the German

A. (Continued) Jews. But I . . . I don't think that the German Jews was snobs or anything, they didn't feel like brethren. They tried their best. In New York, you know, Jacob Schief did everything to help the Russian Jews early in . . . in the . . . as early as in 1890 and in early in 1900. Or Hester, you know, these other people, Lillian Wolk, you know, and so forth. I can remember these because I was interested to read in the Forward especially what, you know, Jacob Schief didn't feel that all the Jewish immigrants that come to the United States should settle in New York City. You probably know this story, so he organized and did financial help to settle them in Texas, in Galveston and so forth. And many of them did go and they did well, they prospered and everything else. But, as I said the feeling, you know, was a different feeling. Than I forgot the name of the rabbi who here before Rabbi Wolfe. . . Rabbi Wolfe came in to Temple B'rith Kodesh there was a different situation already. He fraternized with . . . was, you know, friendly to many of our people. And naturally I don't have to say anything about Rabbi Bernstein, he was a prince of a fellow. As I think I told you, I had a gas station. He used to come in every Saturday to buy gas from me.

Q. You . . . you've been to Israel yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you go?

A. I was in Israel in April, 1966.

Q. And have you been since then or. . . ?

A. No, I . . . I hope to go in November. I hope to.

Q. I take it. . .

A. You see I have a problem now, my wife doesn't feel very well and she don't want to go with me. And she even hates me to go away for about two, three weeks myself. But I plan to. . . Histadrut is going to have a conference

- A. (Continued) there in November so I think I plan to go then.
- Q. Your . . . obviously your feelings towards Israel are very positive?
- A. Oh, yea.
- Q. Do you feel that Israel is essential to Jewish survival. . . ?
- A. Naturally it's. . . there's been a change in the United States since the establishment. They don't. . . they don't tell you, you know, now go to Palestine when they used to tell you.
- Q. Do you think there's been a decline in anti-Semitism in the United States because of Israel?
- A. Well, it's been a decline, it's been a decline. But there is still, you know, what it takes to the organizations, community relations organizations like the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Veterans, War Veterans, Jewish Labor Committee, which is helping quite a bit, you know.
- Q. Were you ever aware of any anti-Semitism in Rochester?
- A. I wasn't aware of any anti-Semitism here in Rochester except, you know, at one time part of the Jewish Community Council, predecessor to the Jewish Community Federation, they have several committees. And one of the . . . Manhattan Restaurant, I don't want you to have this published. . .
- Q. No, it won't be, it'll be on the tape, these aren't going to be published.
- A. Was a Marx and he said something that felt that was anti-Semitic. I don't remember exactly the story and this committee interviewed the . . . he apologized and everything else. But otherwise I haven't heard. Rochester's been blessed with a community that had no feeling of any anti-Semitism. In fact, in 1933 when the Jewish Community Center, you know, the old one was built they didn't have enough money to furnish it, you know. So they built up and closed up the building, they built up the windows and everything else

A. (Continued) for two years. Then Rabbi Bernstein got a committee, the President of Lincoln Alliance Bank at that time, Bishop Kearney, and one. . . I think it was Gannett, that they went on a campaign. And it was Depression years, they raised \$275,000 to open up. And many, many people, Christian people, gave funds in the campaign to open up the old JY. So there was never any feeling of anti-Semitism in the City of Rochester. Even there. . . some said that in the factory, you know, somebody made a nasty remark. But for. . . I never paid any attention to it. Had a fellow that came here from, you know, from Sweden. He was a Polish Jew and during the war he went to Sweden then he came here and he settled. And he had. . . I helped him out in many ways and he had a job in Delco's. Quite often he used to come and tell me he hears nasty remarks because he. . . he has got a better position, because you're a Jew, so forth but I never paid any attention. Somebody here and there makes a. . . but open activity of anti-Semitic groups. . . Even during the. . . the Second World War when the. . . where the Nazis had what they call their Bundt groups, you know, not to mix it up with the Bundtists, but they had their Bundt groups, you know, like in many other cities. Wasn't as strong as it was in New York City, but because of United States going in the war they had to give up all their activity. But it wasn't much in Rochester, not to my recollection.

Q. One concrete example someone mentioned to me was at the University of Rochester there used to be a quota of the number of Jewish students. . . ?

A. Well the. . . the quota was not only the University of Rochester. The quota was in many universities. I have a friend, Sherman Isaacson, who tried very hard to get in in a medical school, University of Rochester. He couldn't get in. Because he had high grades and everything else. But it wasn't on the open, you know. Although my nephew, Dr. Marvin Hoffman, was a student in the University of Rochester and now he's teaching a class there. There's no

A. (Continued) quotas now.

Q. No, that's for sure.

A. But there's been and not only Rochester, in many universities. Not openly. They used to tell you a different reason. Like the landlord here wouldn't rent to a colored person, this is the . . . I have no openings. I have no vacancies. But it wasn't in the open, but it's not only been in Rochester, it's been in all the universities. But now. . .now I think the number of Jewish students as far as the Jewish population in the United States or in the City of Rochester is way high.

Q. Disproportionate.

A. Disproportionate, many.

Q. All right, I have actually gone through most of the questions that I have written down. Can you think of any area which we haven't covered that would be useful for someone writing the history of the Rochester Jewish community?

A. Well I don't know. I think we covered. . . we covered education, we covered community, we covered quite a bit.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE B