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A COMMON MEETING GROUND: HISTORIES OF THREE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Toby H. Manewith

THESIS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
1993

Referee: Ms. Karla Goldman

DEDICATION

To the Jewish Community Centers Association of St. Louis for caring for my nephew and for the future care of my niece.

To the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center of Chicago for showing my family joy and friendship.

To the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton for treating me like family.

To my family and my own personal cheerleading squad.

To Eugene Matanky and Ronny Harlow, zichronam l'vracha, for their love and for teaching me the true spirit of community.

To the two courageous young men who at the High School Leadership Conference were an inspiration to me.

My thanks for sheltering me under your wings and showing me that I could fly.

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DIGEST

The Jewish Community Center movement in the United States had its beginnings approximately 140 years ago when the Young Men's Hebrew Literary Association of Baltimore, Maryland was founded. In the many years since this organiztion was founded the Jewish Community Center Movement has grown from an association comprised of a few scattered Young Men's Hebrew Associations to an organization encompassing hundreds of YMHA's and Jewish Community Centers throughout the country.

Over the years, as the Jewish Community Center Movement has has grown and evolved, its purpose, of cultivating Jewish identity and promoting Jewish culture and knowledge, has remained fairly constant. However, its member centers have changed in areas ranging from staff to services, from philosophy to physical plant. All of these changes have been made to keep pace with an ever emerging, dynamic, Jewish community.

In my rabbinical thesis I have considered these changes from a historical perspective, looking at the ways they grew out of the communities which they served and the society at large. I have also considered the way in which these organizations have influenced the lives of the people they touched. In order to do this I have written histories of three Jewish Community Centers, focusing on the ways in these orgaizations grew and evolved in their attempts to

best meet the needs of their respective communities.

The three centers I have chosen are: The Jewish Community Centers Association in St. Loius, Missouri; the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton in East Norwalk, Connecticut; and the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center in Chicago, Illinois.

I have discussed the founding and evolution of each of these facilities by examining certain aspects of the centers as they changed through time. In doing this, I asked the following questions: What aims and ideals have guided these centers? What programs and policies have they created to meet these goals?

In addition to reviewing the structural aspects of these centers, I also examined the role these centers have played in their respective communities. Were these centers the only Jewish organizations in the area? Have the centers maintained relationships with synagogues and other similar Jewish organizations? Have the centers fulfilled any needs which were not met by the synagogues?

The three centers focused on in this study are very different. They are each situated in communities of different size. Each center serves Jews with differing levels of interest in Judaism and religious observance.

It would be impossible to reduce my findings to a few short paragraphs as each center answers the above questions in a different way. The overarching theme found throughout

all of the centers is one of Jewish continuity. Throughout their varying existences, each center stood for the promotion of Jewish values, the transmission of Jewish culture, the revival of the Jewish spirit, and the formation of the Jewish identity.

CHAPTER ONE

A COMMON MEETING GROUND:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER MOVEMENT

In the more than 300 years since Jews first arrived in what is now the United States, they have established a diverse group of organizations to support their religious and communal needs. In the mid-19th century, many Jews became dissatisfied with the range of activities found in the synagogue setting. Confronted with an ever-widening array of opportunities for cultural and intellectual fulfillment - much of it secular - they began to look beyond their synagogues for a place to congregate.

The typical Jewish community always had a synagogue. In this setting, members of the congregation could fulfill their need for communal prayer. Many locales also had mikvahs (ritual baths), Jewish cemeteries and often a shochet (to perform ritual slaughtering), affording members of the community the opportunity to satisfy their religious or ritual obligations. Further, there was often a tzedakah collective or benevolent society to which those men and women who possessed the required resources could give their time or money. In most places there was also a cheder or some other mechanism for educating the community's male children.

Though there were mechanisms for communal

identification for the very young and for those who were already married, there was little opportunity for Jewish identification, beyond synagogue attendance, for the young-adult male. Little opportunity, that is, except for the social interaction and identification which was readily accessible at the local saloons and card houses. Members of various communities felt a need to provide an alternative to socialization in establishments of questionable moral standing, and further, to foster a desire for intellectual pursuits among young men.[1]

Just such an alternative was created in 1854 when the first Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) was established in Baltimore, Maryland.[2] The founders of the organization were indeed quite young; they ranged in age from 18 to 20. According to Naomi Kelman, in an article in honor of the 130th anniversary of the founding of the Baltimore "Y", these men "met to discuss, debate and declaim on such lofty topics as patriotism, history and "Crime...Does it Pay?".[3] This first incarnation of the Baltimore YMHA lasted only six years. The organization closed its doors in 1860, most

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[1]Louis Kraft, The Development of the Jewish Community Center: Purposes, Principles and Practice, (New York City: National Association of Jewish Center Workers, 1967), 1.

[2]Louis Kraft, 1.

[3]Naomi Kelman, "The First JCC at 130," JWB Circle, (Spring, 1985), 18.

likely because of the impending threat of Civil War.[4] The Association reorganized in 1868, three years after the end of the war between the states.

In the eight years after the original founding of the Baltimore YMHA five other such associations were established throughout the country: in Augusta, Georgia; Louisville, Kentucky; Buffalo and Syracuse, New York; and Cleveland, Ohio.[5] The focus of these organizations can be seen clearly through a look into the facilities in which they operated. Often, the only room was a library or reading room, and the first paid official a librarian.[6] Young men would gather in these facilities to unwind, socialize, and to engage in intellectual pursuits.

Although the organization in Baltimore was the first one to adopt the name YMHA, it was not the first Jewish organization of its type in the nation. Historian Benjamin Rabinowitz states that in the 1840's there existed social groups for Jewish young men known as literary societies. These groups emphasized that they were not like other social clubs. They often banned drinking, card playing, and other forms of gambling. They called themselves Young Men's Hebrew Literary Societies or Young Men's Hebrew Literary

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[4]Kraft, 1.

[5]Kraft, 1.

[6]Kraft, 1.

Associations (YMHLA's).[7] Often, such associations filled a void in Jewish communal life later occupied by the YMHA's. They provided young Jewish men a comfortable - yet controlled - atmosphere in which they could relax and socialize with other young Jewish people.

Deborah Dash Moore cites a different organization which she believes to have been a precursor of the YMHA. B'nai Brith (literally "sons of the covenant") is a Jewish fraternal order which was organized in 1843. It is a secular membership organization committed to philanthropy, education and advocacy. Throughout its history, the B'nai Brith has afforded its members an opportunity for Jewish affiliation outside the synagogue. Moore called Covenant Hall, the organization's headquarters in New York, "the first American Jewish community center."[8] The B'nai Brith was not only an organizational precursor of the YMHA it can also be seen as one of its ideological precursors. Throughout its history the YMHA (and later the Jewish Community Center) movement has provided its members with an opportunity to meet and socialize with other Jews outside the synagogue setting.

The YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) has also

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[7]Kraft, 1.

[8]Deborah Dash Moore, B'nai Brith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership (Albany: State University Press, 1981), 6., as found in David Kaufman, "From Temple to Center: Classical Reform Judaism and the Synagogue Center 1883-1918", paper submitted to Brandeis University, (Waltham, MA., November, 1991), 7.

been cited as the inspiration for the YMHA in both name and spirit. Some historians disagree with this hypothesis noting that the YMCA movement was established after the YMHLA in the United States. Though this may be true, the YMCA existed in the United Kingdom before its Jewish counterpart appeared in the United States. Thus, it is possible that the YMCA served as a model for the YMHA movement even in its earliest incarnation. Further, it is clear in the similarities in the names and programmatic purposes and offerings of the two organizations that the YMHA took some of its ideas from the YMCA. The leadership of both of the associations wanted to keep members of their respective religious groups away from influences which this leadership perceived as harmful. To replace this, both provided alternative educational and recreational opportunities. The organizations differed one from the other in that the aims of the YMHA were non-theological as were the aims of the YMCA. Also, the program of the YMHA was far more comprehensive than was that of its Christian brother agency. [9]

With the beginning of the Civil War, the previous growth in the YMHA movement came to an abrupt halt. With Reconstruction, the number of YMHA's throughout the country

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[9]Maurice J. Karpf, Jewish Community Organizations in the United States, (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971), 98.

increased rapidly, especially in the Midwest and the South.[10] At this time the YMHA's were widely supported by rabbis and synagogues, most likely because they promoted Jewish learning and fraternization in a controlled atmosphere. According to Oscar Janowsky, during this period,

> the aim was to rear community wide organizations as a common meeting ground for all and especially young Jews for education and recreation purposes. The orientation and program were consciously Jewish, the attitude to Jewish affairs strongly affirmative.[11]

A section of the constitution of the Cincinnati YMHA which was established in 1867, yields further insight into the orientation of YMHA's after the Civil War. Its objectives at the time of its founding were stated as follows:

> The Association was formed for the purpose of cultivating and fostering a better knowledge of the history, literature and doctrines of Judaism; to develop and elevate our mental and moral character; to entertain and edify ourselves with such intellectual agencies as we may deem fit, finally and above all, it is our mission to promulgate the sublime and eternal principles of Judaism to the world, and when necessary to defend though honorably and peaceably, the faith of our ancestors.[12]

Those involved in the leadership of the Cincinnati YMHA were

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[10]Kraft, 2.

[11]Oscar Janowsky, The Jewish Community Center: Two Essays on Basic Purpose (New York, 1974), 11.

[12]Constitution of the YMHA of Cincinnati as found in Kraft, 2.

not simply concerned with educating those in their own community but were also interested in bringing "the sublime and eternal principles of Judaism to the world." It is clear that the leaders of this YMHA saw their organization as part of a larger movement. At the first anniversary celebration of the Cincinnati Y, Rabbi Max Lillienthal promoted this idea by suggesting that the men in such associations in various cities should correspond with one another.[13] Perhaps Lillienthal thought that through correspondence, the young men involved in local YMHA's could broaden their social and cultural horizons. Such broadening could serve only to strengthen American Judaism. Lillienthal's suggestion that Association members in different locations form alliances foreshadowed a national movement more than 20 years before the first successful attempt to form such a union was undertaken. Although some local leaders were in favor of organizing nationally, at this time such a move would have been nearly impossible. This was due mainly to the fact that there were simply too few organizations in existence at this time to support such an organization. In addition, those associations which were operational at this time were largely on the eastern seaboard. Perhaps these YMHA's could have derived support from a local federation of member organizations. However, they would have had no use for a national body, as much of

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[13]Kraft, 2.

the resources and expertise needed to run a YMHA was available in neighboring cities and states.

In 1874, a YMHA was established in New York City.[14] This event can be seen as a line of demarcation between two distinct phases of YMHA growth. Events before 1874 are referred to as having occurred during the early period of the YMHA movement; those events which took place between 1874 and 1895, are said to have occurred during the classical period.[15] This periodization, commencing with the establishment of the New York YMHA, delineates the period when like organizations began to see themselves as part of a conscious movement from the time, before 1874, when these YMHA's were viewed as nothing more than singular community organizations.

During its early period the YMHA can be seen as an innovative Jewish communal structure. However, it was not the only innovative Jewish structure established during this time period. Between 1825 and 1875 the Jewish population in America swelled from approximately 5,000, to approximately 250,000 persons.[16] This massive immigration forced the Jewish community to innovate and experiment.[17] Among some

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[14]Kraft, 1.

[15]Kaufman, 20,25.

[16]Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 236.

[17]Kaufman, 20.

of the experiments which took place during this time, we see the formation of Jewish fraternal orders such as the B'nai B'rith.

At the time of the founding of the YMHA of New York, 20 years after the first YMHA opened in Baltimore, there were more than a score of YMHA's throughout the country.[18] In the next 16 years this number grew more than 500%.[19] Though as yet unconnected by a structured movement, many YMHA's shared a common program. Among the offerings listed by each organization one might have found such things as Jewish studies, literature, fine arts, recreational games and sports, and Jewish holiday celebrations. In addition, many operated employment bureaus (some of which continued to operate until 1947 when they were integrated with community-wide vocational services).[20]

Rabbis not only supported these organizations but in many cases helped to organize YMHA's and often served as these organizations' presidents in their first years of operation.[21] In the early period of the YMHA (pre 1874), Rabbi Sabato Morais, the spiritual leader of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel Congregation, for example, served as the

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[18]Kraft, 1.

[19]Kraft, 4.

[20]Kraft, 3.

[21]Kraft, 1.

president of the YMHA of Philadelphia.[22] As noted above, Max Lillienthal, spiritual leader of Kehila Kedosha Bene Israel, in Cincinnati, was also an ardent supporter of the YMHA movement during the latter part of the 19th century. Further, a number of reform rabbis were in attendance at the first convention of the United YMHA of America, which was held in 1890. Among these were: Maurice Eisenberg, Alexander Geismar, Charles Levi, Edward S. Levy, David Philipson, M. Samfield and Joseph Silverman. This overlap in leadership was not confined to rabbis, many of the lay leaders who served on YMHA boards of directors could also be found in leadership positions in synagogues.[23] This, as will be shown in the chapter focusing on the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton, has remained the norm through the present day. Gary Tobin, in an article entitled "Who Uses the JCC's?," asserted that those people who are affiliated with synagogues are more likely to be members of Jewish Community Centers then those who are unaffiliated.[24]

With the boom in Jewish immigration starting in the 1880's, the needs of the community shifted. Organizations which had previously functioned mainly as centers for Jewish

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[22]Kaufman, 22.

[23]Kaufman, 44.

[24]Gary Tobin, "Who Uses the JCC's?," JWB Circle, (May, 1988), 4.

education and culture now saw the need to change their roles. Immigrants to America had to learn the language and customs of their new country. In many cases they also needed to be trained in new job skills. It was during this period of mass immigration that the YMHA's took on many of the characteristics of the settlement house. Not only did many YMHA's adopt many of the programmatic characteristics of settlement houses, but a number of Jewish establishments, organized as settlement houses, eventually became a part of what is known today as the Jewish Community Center movement.[25] These "houses" often sponsored by religious or ethnic groups, helped immigrants adapt to American society in an environment of shared culture.

Although Jewish culture and learning was not eliminated from the program of the refocused YMHA's, it was overshadowed by efforts on the part of these organizations to Americanize their clientele. These efforts included such things as classes in English, vocational training and lectures on citizenship.[26]

The intent of the settlement house type program was simply to serve the needs of the growing immigrant clientele. However, in many YMHA's and similar types of Jewish centers a decrease and devaluation of Jewish cultural programming occurred simultaneously. There was a feeling

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[25]Janowsky, 11.

[26]Janowsky, 11.

among some center leaders that the presentation of Jewish cultural programming (as well as the continued use of Yiddish) would serve as an obstacle to the Americanization of their clientele. It is interesting to note that even in centers where Jewish cultural programming was subjugated entirely, funding continued to come from Jewish sources and the centers continued to be both staffed and patronized by Jews.[27]

Though it was popular among center lay leaders and administrative staff, many immigrants, especially in the Northeast, were dissatisfied with the relegation of Jewish culture to the sidelines. It was difficult for new immigrants to feel welcomed in centers where their heritage was disregarded, discarded or scorned. An environment where one was discouraged from speaking Yiddish, the mother tongue, could not be seen, by immigrants, as cozy. In response to this, new centers began to sprout up - especially in the Northeast - where Jewish culture could be affirmed[28] by both the members and the professional staffs.

Some immigrants became involved in YMHA's because of the programs which they offered, such as classes in English and vocational skills. Others, dissatisfied with the movement's offerings, established their own centers. Still others rejected the YMHA movement, out of hand. Many of

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[27]Janowsky, 12.

[28]Janowsky, 12.

these people neither needed nor wanted to step off their front porches or out of their work places for socialization. Others were quite satisfied with the relationships they formed through their synagogues and through landsmenschaften - societies or groups of Jews who had emigrated from the same region or town.

Though a large number of immigrants were lost to the YMHA movement for the reasons noted above, their children were often drawn to it. Center leaders, armed with knowledge that the needs of first generation immigrants were often different from those of their parents, planned the schedules of their respective organizations according to the needs of the younger generation. In some places, the lack of an English speaking rabbi prompted some Y's to conduct their own religious services. Others sponsored schools aimed specifically at serving the children of immigrant parents. Although conducted with a modern bent, both the services and the classes were steeped in the traditions that the younger generation had inherited from their immigrant parents.[29] These, and other factors which will be discussed later, lured young, first generation immigrants into the organizations and facilities which some of their elders had scorned.

The 30 years between 1885 and 1915 were stabilizing ones for the YMHA movement. During this period, many

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[29]Janowsky, 8.

centers gained use of permanent facilities. In 1887, the Dallas YMHA became the first Y to build its own building. By 1890, 50 centers, or nearly one-third of the YMHA's in operation, had permanent quarters. By 1915, 116 "Y's" had regular quarters - this represented nearly two-thirds of the existing Associations. During this period many organizations also began hiring staff. The principal staff member after the librarian often was a secretary who did all of the administrative work. The Louisville YMHA, in 1895, was the first to hire a superintendent.[30] He did work equivalent to that of the Jewish Community Center executive director of today.

It was during this period that the earliest efforts at organizing a national movement along ideological lines were made.[31] The first such attempt occurred in 1890 when the United Young Men's Hebrew Association was formed at a meeting held in Cincinnati. The organization was made up of approximately 20 member groups from various parts of the country. The main purpose of the umbrella group was to foster the establishment of additional YMHA's. This

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[30]Kraft, 8.

[31]Although this was the first attempt at organization along ideological lines, there had been one previous attempt at unification which is worth mentioning. It was ten years earlier, in 1880, that the American Hebrew Association was formed of approximately twenty-five member organizations. Like the United YMHA, this organization lasted for only three years. Although the constituent groups in the organization were united under one name, they were not united under a single purpose. It is likely that this contributed to the organization's short life.

organization stopped activity in 1893, just three years after it was founded, due to the general economic down-turn in the country.[32]

Beginning in 1910 there was, once again, a movement toward unification. In that year, the YMHA's in New York set up inter-"Y" leagues for both debate and sports tournaments. The Pennsylvania Federation of YMHA's also held its first convention during this year. The Associated Y's of New England was formed in 1911, and in the next year the "Y's" in New Jersey followed suit.[33]

Just two years later, on November 2, 1913, the Council of Young Men's Hebrew and Kindred Associations (CYMH&KA) was formed in New York City. This national organization was formed of 65 local and 4 regional organizations.[34] As with the United YMHA, the first and most important task of this newly formed organization was the founding of new Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Associations. This activity appealed greatly to children of immigrants as it gave them an arena in which they could express their Jewishness, an anchor to which they could tie their desire for continued ethnic affiliation.[35]

The movement toward unification in which CYMH&KA and

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[32]Kraft, 11.

[33]Kraft, 11.

[34]Kraft, 11.

[35]Kraft, 12.

the regional organizations which preceded it were formed touched many other interest groups and organizations in the Jewish community. In the years between the turn of the century and the early 1920's more than half a dozen national Jewish communal agencies were founded. Arthur Goren, in The American Jews, explains, in broad strokes, the impetus for this movement. He writes: "between 1903 and 1914, crises at home and abroad interacted to spur communal undertakings on a new scale."[36] In response to a debate over the need for a central voice for American Jewry, and following two years of pogroms in Russia (triggered by the Kishinev pogrom of 1903), the American Jewish Committee (AJC) was formed in 1906 to defend Jewish interests around the world.[37] At the beginning of World War I, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) was formed to aid Jews in war torn areas of Eastern Europe.[38] Two organizations of Jewish women, Hadassah and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (of the Reform movement) were also formed in this period, in 1912[39] and 1913[40] respectively. The Anti-

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[36]Arthur A. Goren, The American Jews (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 65.

[37]Goren, 65-6.

[38]S. Ettinger, "The Modern Period," in A History of the Jewish People. H. H. Ben-Sasson, ed., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 931.

[39]Goren, 71.

[40]Meyer, 285.

Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, another organization founded for the purpose of protecting Jewish interests, was also founded in 1913.[41] The last Jewish communal organization to be established in this time period was the Jewish Welfare Board, founded in 1917. In later years this organization would play a very large role in the next galvanizing step of the Jewish Community Center movement.

In April, 1917, the United States' declaration of war on Germany posed a formidable threat to the existence of many of the YMHA's. A large portion of the members of these organizations were young men. With the induction of 225,000 Jewish young men into the armed forces, the "Y's" were threatened with losing their base of support.[42] Not willing to lose this constituency, local branches of the CYMH&KA did their best to serve the man in uniform. "Y's" all over the country opened their doors to soldiers,[43] providing them the use of library, locker room and gymnasium facilities. U.S.O-like functions were held in some YMHA buildings. Others sponsored religious services such as Passover seders for members of the armed forces stationed nearby or on leave in their communities.

Without a coordinated national effort, individual

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[41]Robert M. Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1980), 620.

[42]Kraft, 12.

[43]Kraft, 14.

YMHA's had limited success in serving the religious, educational, cultural and social needs of Jewish men in the armed forces. The CYMH&KA received some help in its efforts when the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) was formed just three days after the United States entered the war.[44] Until the end of the war the two organizations worked together, providing religious and cultural services to Jewish soldiers.

After the war, at a triennial convention of the CYMH&KA held in 1920, a plan was discussed for the continued cooperation between that organization and the Jewish Welfare Board.[45] On October 24, 1920, a merger effective the following July, was agreed upon. Unlike the earlier federations, the primary purpose of this newly formed alliance was to strengthen existing constituent organizations, not to create new ones. Throughout most of the rest of the decade YMHA's, YWHA's, settlement houses and other Jewish communal organizations united and became stronger, more representative societies. Under the guidance of JWB, many of these organizations began to call themselves Jewish Community Centers (JCC's).[46]

Immigration had slowed during the war, in the years directly before the merger between the JWB and the CYMH&KA.

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[44]Kraft, 13.

[45]Kraft, 16.

[46]Kraft, 18.

Organizations no longer needed be as unfailingly dedicated to the cause of Americanization as they had once been. With the war's end, service to the Jewish young man in the armed services also lost its relevance. Oscar Janowsky, in his book The Jewish Community Center: Two Essays on Basic Purpose, states that the only clear purpose under which all Jewish Community Centers functioned at this time was that of recreation.[47]

Years earlier, in 1908, Louis Marshall, a leading figure in American-Jewish communal life in the early part of the 20th century, had said in front of the National Conference on Jewish Charities: "unless our educational institutions shall create for themselves a Jewish atmosphere...they have no reason whatever for existing."[48] A guide for program planning in the Jewish Center, found in the first edition of the JWB Quarterly, took up his cry. In addition to drama classes and intramural competitions, the centers were urged to hold holiday celebrations and religious services, as well as exhibits, lectures and classes on Jewish culture. The guidelines also suggested surveying the needs of the membership and the larger community so that no program already in effect be duplicated. This survey of communal needs was an early indicator of a movement that would begin to flourish in the

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[47]Janowsky, 12.

[48]Janowsky, 13.

late teens and early twenties - that of the Synagogue-Center.

The first synagogue-centers grew up in the New York metropolitan area sometime between 1916 and 1920. With the advent of the synagogue-center, the synagogue ceased to be merely a place of worship; it became, in addition, a place of study and fellowship.[49] These institutions were founded on the principle that Judaism embodied a culture as well a religion. One of the strongest proponents of this movement was Dr. Mordecai Kaplan, who is known as the father of the Reconstructionist Movement in Judaism. Kaplan, in his first book, Judaism as a Civilization, criticized the existing Jewish movements (especially the Orthodox and Reform) for refusing to see Judaism as a totality.[50] Often referred to as a "shul with a pool" the synagogue-center offered services which exemplified this totality. They strove to meet the needs of their constituents in all of their incarnations: as Jews, as Americans, as intellectuals, as professionals and even as the connoisseurs of art. Inside the synagogue-center, members could take advantage of a full range of religious services as well as cultural, recreational and educational programming. These centers

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[49]Gluckman, The Synagogue Center, address delivered to the Rabbinic Assembly of America, (no place: no date of publication), 1.

[50]Robert M. Seltzer, Jewish People Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), 749-50.

often served as the focal point for Jewish life in the communities in which they were established.[51]

Rabbi Israel Goldstein said, in front of a meeting of the Rabbinic Assembly in 1929, "if the synagogue-center has held the effect of erasing the distinction between the sacred and the secular, it has been at the expense of the sacred."[52] His words were, more or less, on target. Though disconcerting to many rabbis, this is what the Jewish public desired in this era. It can be seen in the types of facilities built for use as Jewish Community Centers during this time.

The following ideas were stressed by the leadership of the Jewish Community Center movement for organizations that were planning to build community centers in the mid- to late 1920's. Multi-purpose rooms were encouraged. One example of this would be a gymnasium which could also serve as an auditorium. It was suggested that each center include a general lounge, the institutionalized version of a living room; an auditorium, complete with a stage and a portable ark; lodge rooms or other meeting rooms; game rooms; youth lounge; refreshment counter (a dining room was considered a luxury); a library; classrooms; and finally specialty rooms

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[51]Deborah Dash Moore, "A Synagogue Center Grows in Brooklyn," in The American Synagogue, Jack Wertheimer, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 297-99.

[52]Gluckman, 5.

for such things as ceramics and ballet.[53]

The suggested architectural plan gives some insight into the programming priorities of centers at this time. It was important that a member feel at home at the center. Further, it was the job of the center to fulfill all of his needs, whether social, cultural, educational or recreational and to do all this in a Jewish atmosphere. The inclusion of an ark in these guidelines is most likely a reflection of the popularity which the synagogue-center enjoyed at this time. Although a majority of the space in the JWB plan was to be devoted to recreational pursuits, the religious needs of the membership - though pushed to the side - were not forgotten. The guidelines for program planning which appeared in the mid- to late 1920's suggested that a center offer the following: educational classes, a glee club, drama groups, intramurals, celebrations focused around major (secular and religious) holidays, religious services, exhibits, dances and movies.[54]

As it had been affected by economic trends in past, the Jewish Community Center movement was not unscathed in the years directly following the Great Depression which began in 1929. Membership decreased drastically. To encourage affiliation many centers reduced membership fees or instituted payment plans. No center turned away interested

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[53]Kraft, 95-97.

[54]Kraft, 35-6.

participants because of their inability to pay for services. Though formal membership decreased in the Depression years, attendance, especially at informal classes and groups, increased. Many who could not afford the fees of any membership organization were able to take advantage of the low-cost and no-cost programs offered by the centers.[55] As a result of their generosity during this period, numerous Jewish Community Centers made friends of people who would come to be members in later years.

The practices spoken of above are not surprising as programs of social welfare were in vogue in the 1930's. Jewish Community Centers all over the country instituted programs of social action. Many of these were geared not simply to Jews in need of assistance but to the larger community as well. This was not always done altruistically, with the needs of the community in mind. It is important to remember that Jewish Community Centers were dependent on both local Jewish Federations and Community Chests for funding. If the centers did not serve the community, they could lose these much needed sources.

This feeling of responsibility for individuals and the community persisted as the decade wore on. The purpose of the Jewish Community Center was set forth in a 1933 address which Louis Kraft, in his post as Director of Jewish Community Center Activities for the JWB, delivered before

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[55]Kraft, 118.

the New England Association of Jewish Center Executives. In it the goal of the movement was put forth as follows:

> we maintain that the aim of the center in relationship to the individual is to help him develop a full and adjusted personality through participation in a variety of Jewish, social, cultural and recreational activities[56]

It was suggested that the center form an all encompassing program for children in which all of their extra-curricular activities, from Hebrew lessons to club participation, from dance classes to religious services, would occur at the center. In this way the center could foster bonds among the children which they hoped would continue as they become adults.[57] These statements show that the commitment to specifically Jewish pursuits evidenced by the Jewish Community Center movement in the 1920's, was heightened in the 1930's. Jewish activities were not only mentioned in the list of those things which could help a person "develop a full and adjusted personality," they were given top billing. Further, it is clear from the suggested activities for children that the movement had a stake in the continued Jewish communal life of its younger patrons.

The leadership of the movement recognized the importance of Jewish programming. They also acknowledged that Judaism centers around the family. In addition, they

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[56]Kraft, 109.

[57]Kraft, 110-11.

realized that programming at the various centers was tailored to meet the needs of the individual rather than the family unit. To address this apparent contradiction they suggested expanding family programming beyond the annual Mothers' Day tea or father\son baseball game.[58]

It was also in the 1930's that the Jewish Community Center came to be viewed by its constituents as an American institution. At the JCC Jews could fulfill their need for communal identification while remaining true Americans. This view was very important in the era of one hundred percent Americanism, an ideal whose adherents were wary of any hyphenated Americans or any person whose patriotism they doubted. It was Mordecai Kaplan who warned the Jewish community at this time saying, "Jewish movements must not lag behind the rapid development of forces which affect Jewish life."[59] With the depression and the heightened anti-Semitism that followed, this statement cautioned Jews that their organizations could not afford to be reactive but must be pro-active. With this in mind, the movement endeavored to become more positive and less defensive in the early 30's. It did not want the combat of evils to be seen as its sole purpose. To fight anti-Semitism members of Jewish Community Centers educated themselves, the purpose of this education being to lift their own spirits so that they

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[58]Kraft, 113.

[59]Kraft, 126.

could remain a proud, cohesive group even while being demeaned.[60]

Though busy trying to counter the destructive forces of anti-Semitism, the individual centers did not lose sight of their aims of encouraging individuality and personal growth. They fostered the development of the entire person. This was achieved in various programs through the use of different media and educational methods. Among these were: experiential learning, training in group living (to engender cooperation), physical education, cultural performances, and vocational training.[61]

In 1935, Mordecai Kaplan said the following at a meeting of the National Jewish Welfare Board:

> The Jewish Community Center is the resultant of two distinct factors - one factor is the Jewish will to live - or the will to live as Jews. And the other factor is the inadequacy of the synagogue to satisfy that desire or will to live as Jews.[62]

The importance of the Jewish Community Center as a tool for survival is evident in his statement. This survival was insured by the two pronged program discussed above; an attack against the forces which would destroy Judaism on the one hand, and a program for positive personal growth, Jewish education and community spirit on the other.

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[60]Kraft, 129.

[61]Kraft, 130.

[62]Kraft, 43.

It was this ability to foster community spirit which made the JCC movement unique. Although communal life, for individual Jewish groups or sects, was possible inside individual synagogues, the Jewish Community Center was the only organization which could unite the various segments of the Jewish community under the single banner of 'Am Yisrael.' The member agencies of the Jewish Community Center movement had not always been able to foster this community spirit. In their early years, many YMHA's aimed their programs predominantly at serving the needs of Reform Jews. The needs of Orthodox Jews were addressed mainly through labor bureaus and English classes. For the most part, these groups stayed in their own domains.

As the 1930's drew to a close, the movement leadership saw that their efforts of the past two decades had paid off. The movement had recognized growth in the realms of both Jewish communal spirit and personal development.

Having achieved their stated aims, these leaders wanted to extend their purpose even further by helping their constituents become useful participants in American society.[63] They had done this before, providing the immigrants of the late 19th and early 20th century with education and vocational training. They also saw the need to further cultivate Judaism and combined this with a desire that the JCC be seen as central address for Jewish communal

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[63]Kraft, 136.

life.[64] In order to fulfil these aims, many centers acted as hosts for adult groups, such as Haddassah and B'nai Brith. Through these and other organizations they encouraged democracy in a group setting.

The centers continued to see their role as helping their members live as full participants in American society. However this obligation meant something completely different than it had when it was applied to the immigrant Jewish Community Center patrons some 20 years earlier. Professional staffs provided center members with the opportunity to experience democratic ideals firsthand. Further, both lay and professional leaders were of the opinion that enhancing a person's Jewish identity would, in turn, enhance his American identity.[65]

In 1942 and 1943, news of the events of the Holocaust was beginning to hit American shores. The Jewish community was faced with the realization that the centers of Jewish culture and knowledge in Eastern Europe had been almost destroyed. There was an understanding amongst community leaders that if Judaism was to be kept alive it was the responsibility of the American Jewish community. Toward this end the JWB suggested that individual centers increase

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[64]As shall be shown in Chapter Three, for many years the primary function of what is now the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton was to serve as the central address for the Norwalk Jewish community.

[65]Kraft, 155.

both the quality and the quantity of their Jewish programming.[66] Although individual centers had expended a great deal of effort in shaping Jewish communal spirit, they had not put forth the same energy in cultivating Jewish knowledge and Jewish religious ardor.

By the mid-1940's, despite what had befallen the Jewish communities in Europe, the majority of Jews in the United States felt secure in their lives. Jews had achieved a comfortable standard of living. Individual economic status was, for the most part, good. They were able to give their time to the community. They sunk their roots deep into mainstream middle-class American society, participating in local organizations such as the community council and the Parent-Teachers Association, and in national organizations such as the American Cancer Society.[67]

The Jewish Welfare Board still maintained an interest in the preservation and promotion of Jewish culture. However, in light of the economic and social status of the majority of American Jews, its leadership felt comfortable encouraging individual centers to turn to other interests. For instance, it was at this time that the JWB suggested local centers turn their attention toward helping Jewish youth answer their "perplexing problems".[68]

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[66]Kraft, 161.

[67]Kraft, 164.

[68]Kraft, 187.

Perhaps the societal standing of the average American Jew caused the centers affiliated with the Jewish Welfare Board to become a bit too complacent. Despite its earlier call for enhanced Jewish programming, a JWB survey which was circulated between 1945 and 1947 found that 20% of Jewish community centers did not report one single activity of Jewish content. Though more than 23% reported Jewish programming for children, at least 55% reported none for youth. Only 35% reported some Jewish programming for adults.[69]

This is not surprising if one understands the nature of the staff of the Jewish Community Center movement in the post-war years. Although most center workers at that time were well educated as concerned secular studies, 20% had no Jewish education; 40% had no more than elementary or Sunday school training. As was seen at the time of the large influx of Eastern European immigrants starting in the 1880's, at this time too, some center workers were opposed to Jewish education within the center and its programs. They felt that neither the clientele nor other staff members would be interested in such programming and therefore it would have to be imposed. Nonetheless the JWB survey report suggested that prime emphasis in the coming years be on Jewish content.[70]

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[69]Janowsky, 13.

[70]Janowsky, 14.

As has been shown, the suggestion - made by the JWB in the early 1940's - that the local community centers enhance the number as well as the content of the Jewish programs offered, did not meet overwhelming enthusiasm. Thus, in 1947, the JWB wanted to impose national cultural programming on the individual branches.[71] This was just the action staff members predicted would have to occur if the proposed intensification of Jewish programming was to become a reality.

The combination of the events of the Holocaust and the results of the JWB study forced the leadership to restate the aims of the movement.[72] In 1948 the stated purpose of the Jewish Community Center movement was:

> to enrich Jewish life in America; to help Jews as individuals and as a group; to contribute to the common good of the general society; and to serve as a communal vehicle for enhancing the sense of Jewish peoplehood, based on sharing a common heritage, a common concern with the Jewish present, and a common commitment to a significant Jewish future.[73]

As might be expected, the emphasis here is placed on Jewish culture. This statement is also reminiscent of the JWB in an earlier era when Americanism and the creation of a loyal citizenry were among the movement's aims.

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was

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[71]Kraft, 194.

[72]Janowsky, 15.

[73]The JWB Circle, (April, 1970), 6.

influential on Jewish Community Center movement. Israelis won independence not only through physical force but also through strength of spirit. That spirit came from Jewish heritage - a heritage which Israeli and American Jews shared. Jewish Community Center staff started to go to Israel, as did groups of students sponsored by centers.[74]

By the 1950's and 1960's Jewish Americans were very clearly entrenched in the middle class. Middle class American Jews found themselves at odds with the lingering aims of the Jewish Community Centers. Programs left over from the era of Americanization were seen as anachronistic. Philanthropy was less urgent than it had been in any earlier period - from the immigration rush beginning in the 1880's, through the era of the great depression to the mid 1940's when survivors of the Nazi death camps and other World War II refugees flooded American shores.[75]

The aims of Americanization and philanthropy having become dated, JCC's returned to the aims with which they started - those of education, culture, and recreation.[76]

A 1965 statement on Jewish center purposes, by the National Association of Jewish Center Workers, lists a number of functional imperatives for Jewish Community Centers. According to this statement each center should

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[74]Janowsky, 16.

[75]Janowsky, 17.

[76]Janowsky, 17.

strive to: provide for the survival of Jewish group; add Jewish culture to the totality of American culture; foster the idea of the responsibility of Jews one to the other; increase Jewish knowledge; enhance self esteem both personally and regarding Jewish identification; provide a place for meeting and the exchange of ideas; promote Jewish marriages; and provide outlet for cultural expression with an emphasis on Jewish culture.[77]

In 1969 the purpose was seen in somewhat different terms. According to a report of the JWB survey committee, the mission of the Jewish Community Center movement was as follows: to enhance Jewish knowledge as well as Jewish self-definition and self-awareness among its patrons; to permeate center activity with Jewish character, strengthening and stabilizing the Jewish family as well as creating a wider range of programs for them; to respond to personal and social difficulties; to refine the role of center in detecting and dealing with these crises; to increase the feeling of community using the center to its full potential in overcoming fragmentation, form relations with other community organizations; to introduce public affairs programs relating to both Jewish and societal concerns "including action by the community as such and the education and stimulation of its members to act on significant issues in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society;" to use arts for

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[77]Janowsky, 31-2.

enrichment of the Jewish experience; to form sound policies on questions of Shabbat hours of operation and open membership in relation to the outside community; to form a better understanding of Israel and American-Israeli relations; and to develop a competent and confident lay leadership.[78]

The 1965 statement is almost exclusively concerned with the promotion of Judaism and Jewish programs. The 1969 statement shares the same concerns; however, the promotion of these two ideals are not seen as the sole aims of the Jewish Community Center movement.

There is probably not a center in the country which has escaped the issues of open membership[79] and Shabbat hours completely. It is likely that these problems came up in the 1969 statement for two reasons. It was only in the 1950's and 1960's that Jews moved into areas where they met and socialized with non-Jews. Although it is probable that the issue of open membership came up in a smattering of centers before the late 1960's, it was only at this time that the mixing of Jews and non-Jews occurred to the extent that open membership became a widely debated problem. The same is

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[78]Janowsky, 9.

[79]Open membership refers to the degree to which the membership of an organization is exclusive. An organization with open membership places no restrictions on the types of people who can become members. In the case of Jewish Community Centers a policy of open membership states that non-Jews can be members of these organizations.

true regarding the issue of Shabbat hours. For the first four decades of the 20th century at least, the majority of YMHA's and JCC's were less than welcoming to the Orthodox Jewish community.[80] The commitment to forming Shabbat policy in the 1969 statement is evidence of a shift in attitude of agency leadership toward Orthodox Jews.

In 1969 the Jewish Community Center movement was also interested in societal concerns. As before, it is likely that this was due to the level of comfort in society which Jews had achieved at this time. No longer concerned with self-defense, approximately two decades removed from easing the burden of the new immigrant, Jews, and the communal organizations with which they affiliated were able to get involved with communal affairs. Patrons of JCC's had concerned themselves with issues of societal concern before. As was shown earlier, one of the initial aims of the YMHA movement was to help in the creation of an up-standing, patriotic citizenry. As shall be shown in the following chapters on the history of the Jewish Community Centers Association in St Louis and the history of the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, JCC's have historically been concerned with public issues, insofar as these issues touched Jews or Judaism in any way. By 1969, Jews had become part of both the urban and the suburban landscapes.

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[80]There is evidence of this in the material pertaining to the individual community centers found in chapters two, three and four.

As they became more secure in their social standing, and stepped out of the isolated world of the modern ghetto, the societal problems which surrounded them became more difficult to ignore.

The 1969 statement also put a great deal of emphasis on social work. This is not surprising at the end of the turbulent 1960's. It was an enhanced focus on social work that would change the face of the Bernard Horwich JCC in the 1970's.

In 1972, Eugene Borowitz, a scholar and theologian, issued a challenge to communal leaders that they ask more from the Jewish cultural programs at their individual centers than that they be "better than nothing." He asked that they extend the reach of Jewish culture farther than the inclusion of one piece of poetry in a class presentation or one piece of art with a Jewish theme hanging in the hallways.[81]

Borowitz's call for the strengthening of Jewish culture was echoed two years later in the JWB's 1974 aims statement. In May of that year the basic aim of the Jewish community center movement was printed on the front page of the JWB Circle. This aim, the enhancement of Jewish life, was stated in the following terms:

> our constant goal must be to focus them [expertise and resources] effectively on our basic aim, the

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[81]Eugene Borowitz, "New Jewish Cultural Horizons", JWB Circle, (April/May, 1972), 9.

> enhancement of Jewish life, physical and cultural well being, values, customs and traditions that give meaning and purpose to Jewish lives[82]

In response to Borowitz's call, Jewish Community Centers broadened the spectrum of Jewish programming which they offered, especially as regarded Israel. In June, 1974, JCC's across the country responded to the deaths of Israeli children in the massacre at Ma'alot.[83] In 1973, the JWB announced that it had made an investment in Israel Bonds. Historically, the JWB and its member agencies have replied to plight of Jews all over the world, hosting walk-athons to raise money for Israel, sending money to Jewish refugees in Eastern Europe, and welcoming immigrants from the former Soviet Union with open arms.

Today, the Jewish Community Centers Association (formerly the JWB) is still committed to giving meaning and purpose to Jewish lives. In recent years this ideal has come to be known as Jewish Continuity. There are programs for Jewish continuity geared to all of the member groups (except for the Orthodox) in the Jewish Community Center movement. However, the idea of Jewish continuity is geared especially to the non-affiliated Jew and the intermarried couple. Some programs included under the broad rubric of Jewish continuity include: family holiday celebrations and

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[82]"Our Basic Aim - Enhancement of Jewish Life," JWB Circle, (May, 1974), 1.

[83]JWB Circle, (June, 1974), 3-4.

formal and informal educational experiences for both children and adults.

The idea of Jewish continuity came to the forefront of the Jewish Community Center movement in the mid-1980's. An announcement in the Summer, 1985, issue of the JWB Circle states that the theme of the upcoming biennial convention would be Jewish education. The discussion at the convention was to focus on the effectiveness of Jewish education in the community center.[84] In 1988, the JWB introduced another resource for Jewish Continuity - the Jewish Activity Resource Room. These rooms would be hands on activity centers each containing eight to ten independent learning stations. Among the goals of this project was to foster enthusiasm and confidence in one's own ability for Jewish learning.[85]

Nearly 140 years have passed since the first precursor to the modern Jewish Community Center was established in Baltimore, Maryland in 1854. Throughout the history of the JCC movement in the Unites States, centers have pledged allegiance to many different ideals and employed many different means all leading to the same end: Jewish continuity - promotion of the survival and strengthening of

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[84]"Biennial '86 to Focus on Jewish Education," JWB Circle, (Summer, 1985), 13.

[85]Linda Storfer, "Jewish Activities Rooms: An Exciting New Resource for Jewish Community "J's" and "Y's"," JWB Circle, (May, 1988), 6.

the Jewish individual and the Jewish people.

The remaining chapters are devoted to a study of three Jewish Community Centers: the St. Louis Jewish Community Centers Association in St. Louis, Missouri; the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton in Norwalk, Connecticut; and the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center in Chicago, Illinois. The centers differ in many ways. They were each founded in different eras. They have served widely varying populations. Each has distinct priorities and can be seen as serving the particular needs of the communities in which they are found.

In the next pages all of the factors which go into the operation of a Jewish Community Center - or three such centers in particular - will be explored. The way these centers have interpreted and served the needs of the Jewish communities in which they abide will be illustrated through the telling of each of their histories.

CHAPTER TWO

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS ASSOCIATION OF ST. LOUIS

The Jewish Community Centers Association (JCCA) of St. Louis is a relatively new organization. It was formed through the merger of several Jewish communal organizations in 1952. It is also an old organization. The beginnings of the YMHA, one of the organizations from which it was formed, can be traced back to the latter years of the 19th century.

The YMHA had a troubled beginning. Crises in both funds and membership threatened the existence of the "Y" for most of the first 30 years of its existence. Since that time the "Y", and later the JCCA, has stabilized and, with a few exceptions, has been in an almost constant state of growth and expansion. Today, the JCCA is an organization serving approximately 20,000 Jews. Its flagship center is but one of the buildings which sits on the 108 acre I.E. Millstone Jewish Communal Campus. There is also a center operated under its auspices located in University City, a suburb bordering the city of St. Louis on its west.

The JCCA in St. Louis owes its longevity to a number of factors. From the time of its earliest beginnings, the association has had the support of the local synagogues. These congregations and their leaders have served as spokespeople supporting the work of the association in word and deed throughout the years. The lay and professional

leadership also deserve some of the credit for their organization's long life. Among lay leaders one can find the names of those who dedicated more than 40 years to the JCCA and its work. Further, from the moment the opportunity was first presented, the organization sought out and accepted support from such national organizations as the Council of Young Men's Hebrew and Kindred Associations and later the Jewish Welfare Board.

A few more constants can be traced back to the organizations period of stabilization. It was at this time that the leadership first became aware of the importance of meeting the needs of ALL of the organization's members. This has helped the organization to attract and retain members. Further, many of the organization's professional staff served in the organization itself or were actively involved in the larger St. Louis Jewish community for periods of 20 to 40 years. Lastly, the association has always been seen as an entity belonging to the entire community of Jews in St. Louis rather than to Jews living in a specific community or neighborhood. As will be seen in later chapters, an organization can find itself facing problems of attrition when it draws its participants from a specific geographical area. As it is viewed as belonging to the Jewish community at large, the JCCA of St. Louis - and its precursor the YMHA - did not often face this problem.

The Jews who settled in St. Louis in the 19th century

were similar in character to the Jews who settled in many other parts of the United States at that time. They came mainly from German speaking countries. Although a large number of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe arrived in the city in the later 19th and early 20th century, the patterns of Jewish communal life nonetheless followed the trends begun by immigrants of western European descent.[86]

The first evidence of the existence of an organization for Jewish young men in St. Louis can be found in, "Reminiscences of 1879 in St. Louis Jewry," by Rabbi M. Spitz. A pencilled notation in his treatise refers to a Young Men's Literary Society. This notation is the only remaining documentary evidence that such an organization existed at that time.[87] Little is known of the group's activities save that they sponsored an entertainment on October 4, 1879,[88] the year about which Rabbi Spitz wrote.

In January of the following year, the group dropped the word "literary" from its title thus becoming the Young Men's Hebrew Association.[89] In February of 1880, a group of men applied to the circuit court for the charter of an

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[86]Daniel Elezar, Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry, (Philadelphia:The Jewish Publication Society, 1976), 78.

[87]Ruth Fischlowitz, The Y Story: A Chronicle of the Jewish Community Center Movement in St. Louis, (1964), 4.

[88]The "Y" Journal, Dedication Issue, (1927), 4.

[89]Dr. Z. Abrams, The Book Of Memories, (New York: Farlag Yidn, 1932), St. Louis Jewish Archives, 64.

organization which they called the Young Men's Hebrew Association of St. Louis. The objectives of the organization as they were put forth in the charter were: scientific, educational, social, and the protection of Hebrew interests. The charter was signed by the organization's president, treasurer and secretary.[90] The aims of the association were right in step with the aims of similar organizations throughout the country. It is interesting to note the use of the word "Hebrew". Those involved in the association at the time were predominantly Reform Jews. "Hebrew" was the word used to connote Judaism or Jewish purposes in these circles.

The association became active immediately after incorporation. Almost at once dramatic and operatic branches of the organization were founded. There were two competing factions in the association at this time. One wanted the focus of the group to be educational, the other favored a more social, recreational program.[91] Proponents of a socially and recreationally-based seem to have had the upper hand at this time.

In late 1880 and early 1881 the association seemed to be facing imminent failure. However, the cause of this projected failure cannot be found in the available

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[90]Charter of the Young Men's Hebrew Association of St. Louis Missouri as found in Fischlowitz, 5.

[91]Fischlowitz, 6.

resources. What is clear is that this would not be the last time that the organization was at risk of extinction. Organizational leaders, and leaders in the Jewish Community at large, would pronounce the organization dead or near death many more times in the next thirty years.

After this date there is a gap in the recorded history of the Association. The next date for which information is available is the year 1888, with the first issue of the Jewish Voice,[92] a St. Louis Jewish newspaper.

In the January 6, 1888, issue of the Voice there was a report that the Association had held an "entertainment at Leidenkranz Hall." Later in the month there was a notice for a 9th annual meeting.[93] Though the organization seemed to be on the brink of folding in 1881, the publicity for the ninth annual meeting proves that this did not occur. Unfortunately, due to the lack of printed records, it is impossible to know under precisely what circumstances the organization existed in the years between its initial organization and the publication of the fist Jewish Voice in 1888.

On March 6, 1888 an announcement appeared in the Voice stating the intent of the organization to consider finding permanent quarters. The requisite raise in dues needed to

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[92]Fischlowitz, 7.

[93]Fischlowitz, 7.

make this move possible was also under consideration.[94] Throughout the history of the JCC movement there has often been a tension between the needs of the membership and their ability (and in some cases, will) to pay for the services they desire. In this case not enough of the YMHA's constituents possessed either the means or the desire to make a move into a new facility viable. At the time that a call for new quarters was first raised, the YMHA met at a Reform synagogue, Temple Israel. Cooperation between the YMHA and the temple extended beyond a sharing of space. Dr. Solomon Sonnenschein, spiritual leader of Temple Israel, was a strong advocate for the YMHA. He once delivered a speech entitled "How to Solve the YMHA Problem" in the chapel of his synagogue in an attempt to raise interest in the YMHA among members of the Jewish community.[95]

The problem, alluded to in the title of Dr. Sonnenschein's speech, was a general lack of interest in the organization. This was due, in part, to the type of activities offered by the association. Though the needs of those interested in socialization and "entertainments" were being met, the intellectual needs of the Jewish community were almost wholly ignored. The Association also failed to meet the needs of St, Louis Jewry geographically. No "Y"

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[94]Fischlowitz, 7.

[95]Fischlowitz, 8.

sponsored activities were held in the southern part of the city[96] where a large number of Jewish families had settled.

In 1889, on the advice of Samuel Sale, rabbi of Shaare Emeth, the "Y" opened a labor bureau, to bolster attendance. The labor bureau looked after the needs of the growing number of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who were pouring into St. Louis (as well as the rest of the country) at this time.

1889 also brought renewed interest in the "new building" debate. It was thought that this building should be centrally located to accommodate the growing number of Jews who were settling in different parts of the city.[97] This goal was not achieved until the early 1960's when the organization moved into its present location.

The labor bureau looked after the economic needs of the new immigrants. The Jewish Educational Alliance, as is suggested by the organization's name, met their educational needs. It also provided for this group's recreational, religious, and health care necessities.[98] The "Y" supported the programs of the Alliance. During the 1891-92 winter this support was demonstrated through a donation of 50 dollars.[99]

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[96]Fischlowitz, 8.

[97]Fischlowitz, 9.

[98]Fischlowitz, 9.

[99]Fischlowitz, 10.

Soon after this donation was made the "Y" ceased to exist.[100] A call for its reorganization in 1893-94 met with failure.[101] The association was successfully reorganized in 1897. 750 members were secured.[102] The old constitution was accepted subject to amendment. 170 dollars, which remained in the treasury after the old "Y" was disbanded, was given to the new organization. The Jewish Voice began running a column on the association's activities, in order to keep the public informed.[103] Some trace the roots of the JCCA of St. Louis no farther back than this; though the organization would falter again, after 1897 it remained in existence.

In March, 1897 the association rented a house on Locust Street. The rabbis of Shaare Emeth, Temple Israel and United Hebrew Congregation, three Reform congregations, were in attendance when this announcement was made. The building opened on April 2, 1897. On April 6, 1897 the first lecture in the rented quarters was given by the St Louis Superintendent of Public Schools, Louis Soldan; ladies were allowed to attend as guests. A library was started through the donation of a book from every person who attended a

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[100]Fischlowitz, 11.

[101]Fischlowitz, 10.

[102]Abrams, 64.

[103]Fischlowitz, 11.

formal reception held in honor of the building's opening.[104]

As the turn of the century approached, the Association's programming offered something for everyone. The back cover of the program for an Association sponsored Grand Carnival of Music, Art and Industry, held in 1899, boasted a synopsis of the work of the organization. Its objectives were stated to be, "mental, moral, physical and social progress". Toward these ends the organization housed a gymnasium and sponsored classes in physical fitness for men, women and children. For those interested in intellectual pursuits, the association offered classes in subjects such as Bible, Shakespeare, and Spanish language. It also housed a library and a reading room. The "Y" had a glee club and a drama society for those interested in these arts. Musical entertainments and competitions were also held there. It also boasted of its many charitable endeavors which included a ladies' sewing circle and contributions of both time and money to local groups such as the Jewish Hospital and the United Jewish Charities.[105]

At this time the "Y" was self described with the following words:

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[104]Fischlowitz, 12.

[105]Souvenir Program from the Grand Carnival of Music, Art and Industry held under the auspices of the Young Men's Hebrew Association of St. Louis, December 11-16 1899. St Louis Jewish Archives, St. Louis, Missouri, YMHA-JCCA, box 1.

It is representative of all sections.
It is a neutral meeting ground for old and young.
It is antagonistic to no other social, benevolent, fraternal or instructive organization.
It co-operates [sic] with all such, and seeks only to unite.
It has the united co-operation [sic] and approva[l] of all the Jewish Rabbis and of the community.[106]

The YMHA was, in fact, not representative of all sections of the Jewish community. As will be shown again in the following pages, the association was not welcoming of the Orthodox community. There is evidence of this in the inclusion of an advertisement for "Xmas Presents" in the carnival program.[107]

It was at this time that "Y" members first participated in acts of tzedakah and social justice. One of their first recorded acts was to take action to relieve the plight of the Jews of Romania. Members of the association took an active part in securing jobs for Rumanian immigrants who came to St. Louis. This work was done through the labor bureau.[108]

The Owl, the first publication of the YMHA, was begun at this time.[109] Informing the public of the association's activities, it was an additional mechanism of communication

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[106]Program for the Carnival of Music, Art and Industry, December 11-16, 1899.

[107]Program of the Carnival of Music, Art, and Industry. December, 1899.

[108]Fischlowitz, 17.

[109]Fischlowitz, 17.

to the Jewish community.

Despite the apparent enthusiasm associated with the renewal begun in 1897, membership seems to have dwindled around the turn of the century. By 1902, there were only 125 members.[110] One explanation for the low attendance is that the "Y" still was not catering to everyone. Geography certainly was still at issue; the association was not convenient for all Jews. Further, the association did not attract Orthodox Jews nor did it try to do so. In 1902, the menu at a dinner marking the 5th anniversary of the reorganized center featured both milk and meat as well as oysters.[111] The place for the Orthodox, it was felt, was at the labor bureau and the Orthodox synagogues.

On October 24, 1902, the association moved into new quarters at 3137 Pine Street. This seemed to bring renewed interest in the organization once more; records show 600 members in 1903.[112] The new facilities were used by Jewish organizations such as B'nai B'rith and the United Jewish Charities.[113] The association's leadership thought about opening a downtown branch but did not as the organization

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[110]Fischlowitz, 19.

[111]Menu, Fifth Anniversary dinner of the YMHA of St. Louis, Thursday March 20, 1902, St. Louis Jewish Archives.

[112]Fischlowitz, 19.

[113]Fischlowitz, 20.

could not bear the financial burden.[114]

In 1904, activities at the "Y" were curtailed because of the World's Fair which took place in the city that summer. The "Y" did, however, offer hospitality to out of town visitors. For one dollar, guests could sleep in the gymnasium which had been converted into a dormitory.[115] This marked the first occasion in which the association opened its doors to the larger Jewish community. It would serve as host time and time again in the later years.

In the fall, the association once again provided a full schedule of programs. Classes were offered in such subjects as cooking, bookkeeping, commercial law, and the study of Shakespeare. Debates were also a popular diversion as was a center sponsored Chataqua Circle. The association also sponsored basketball and baseball teams.[116]

In 1905, delegates from the St. Louis YMHA went to a national convention of like organizations.[117] This was not the first time that representatives form the organization had attended a national gathering of this sort. In 1891 Nathan Kaufman, Sam N. Friedman, and Lewis Goodlove went the annual meeting of the Young Men's Hebrew Associations held

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[114]Fischlowitz, 20.

[115]Fischlowitz, 20.

[116]Fischlowitz, 20.

[117]Fischlowitz, 21.

in Memphis, Tennessee.[118] This early involvement with the national body is suggestive of the connection the organization would have later with the JWB. Throughout its existence the YMHA, and later the JCCA, depended on the umbrella associations with which they affiliated for guidance and support. Both the "Y" and the JCCA owe a portion of their success to the relationship each organization maintained with its parent body.

In the spring of 1905 the association was forced to move from its rented quarters on Pine Street as the building's owner wanted to sell. In the fall the organization moved into a new space, five leased rooms in the Beethoven Conservatory building.[119] Programs continued to expand. In 1906 "The Peerless Minstrels," a young men's performing group, was formed. The "YMHA Invincibles," the association's basketball team, played in a league against teams recruited from the Young People's Societies of a number of area synagogues.[120]

In the same year the organization, along with JWB, had a public seder for all young men in the area who had none to attend.[121] In 1906, the organization took charge (two years late) of the local celebration of the two-hundred and

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[118]Fischlowitz, 9.

[119]Fischlowitz, 21.

[120]Fischlowitz, 22.

[121]Fischlowitz, 21.

fiftieth anniversary of Jews in America.[122] Through these two events, the St. Louis YMHA was able to continue its fine tradition of serving not only its own members but the larger Jewish community as well.

As was noted earlier, the group was dominated by Reform Jews. At the turn of the century one of the implications of this was that association members did not place great value on religious ritual. A second annual seder was canceled due to lack of interest.[123]

The association moved again, in 1908. However, this time it was cramped quarters, not a market-wise landlord, that inspired the change of location. On October 8, 1908,[124] the new site of the St. Louis YMHA, a portion of a building on the south-west corner of Euclid and McPherson Streets, was dedicated. Like the facilites which preceeded it, this facility was also located in the middle of the Jewish community. The facilities included a gymnasium, showers, indoor handball courts, an entertainment hall with a stage and the capacity to hold six hundred persons, a library, reading rooms, and billiard and pool rooms.[125] Although some of these areas, such as the library and reading rooms demonstrated a certain devotion to cultural

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[122]Fischlowitz, 22.

[123]Fischlowitz, 23.

[124]Fischlowitz, 24.

[125]Fischlowitz, 23.

and educational pursuits, the large majority of rooms in the new facility were built with recreation in mind.

Despite the fact that leaders of the association had just signed a five year lease[126] on new facilities in 1908, as cramped quarters caused them to move, in 1909 the membership of the YMHA was diminishing once again. Sports tournaments and "entertainments" were held. Events such as a contest for five minute speeches on biblical and historical personages were held to entice the intellectual crowd. Despite these efforts, funds were depleting rapidly and were not being replenished through dues.

Despite its precarious financial situation, the organization managed to stay afloat. In January, 1911, two wealthy and influential members of the community, Moses Fraley and J. D. Goldman, joined the YMHA. Their contribution of 50 dollars apiece toward annual dues helped to defray the association's financial burden. In June, there was yet another call for reorganization.[127]

By November, 1915, the organization had purchased and refurbished facilities at 3645 Delmar Boulevard. These quarters, which would house the YMHA for a number of years, were the first such site owned, not rented, by the organization.[128]

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[126]Fischlowitz, 23.

[127]Fischlowitz, 25.

[128]Fischlowitz, 30.

The amount of time elapsed between June 1911 and November 1915, is an indicator that the reorganization process was long and arduous. The first step toward reorganization was a campaign to raise funds for a new building. This campaign was started in June 1911.[129] In 1913, the fund was increased through a bequest of 5,000 dollars from the estate of Elias Michaels.[130] This contribution boosted morale and served to heighten public interest in the YMHA. A carnival held in mid-March, 1914, with participants from almost every local Jewish organization, raised 10,000 dollars for the building fund. During the week of the carnival a religious service in honor of the "Y" was held at Shaare Emeth; every Reform rabbi in the city participated.[131] Though the carnival was a great success, it was the events of a World War - not of a local Jewish organization - which captured most people's attention.

The focus on events abroad shifted attention away from the center for only a short time. A membership campaign, ending with a rally at Temple Israel in June, 1915, garnered 1,000 members.[132] An editorial in the Modern View not only summed up the urgency of the campaign but also gave insight

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[129]Fischlowitz, 26.

[130]Fischlowitz, 27.

[131]Fischlowitz, 28.

[132]Fischlowitz, 28.

into the purpose of the organization at the time.

> We do not want our Jewish young men to grow up dice players and cocktail drinkers. We do not want them to grow up in ignorance or idle luxury. We want our young men to develop physical health and strength, mental stature, intellectual power, moral service, Jewish feeling and Democratic sociability.[133]

The ideals of the association are similar to the ideals on which the earliest Young Men's Hebrew and Young Men's Hebrew Literary Association's were formed. The primary goal seems to be negative. The editorial states first what the organization does not want: dice players and cocktail drinkers. Only after this does it mention positive goals, the developments of: "physical health and strength, mental stature, intellectual power, intellectual power, moral service, Jewish feeling, and democratic sociability." The second set of goals seem at this stage to be a means to achieving the first set of goals. Among these means, the development of Jewish feeling was placed next to last. This indicates that Judaism was not a priority, but perhaps, merely a criterion for membership.

The success of the campaign for members is not surprising. With the bequest of Elias Michaels and the carnival, the YMHA had become of interest to the larger Jewish community. Further, there was a greater potential for membership than there had been a generation earlier. The children of the Eastern European immigrants who had been

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[133]Fischlowitz, 30.

served by the educational alliance and the labor bureau moved west, as the Jewish community moved farther away from the Mississippi. They were drawn to the organization through their desire to remain connected to their Jewish roots. Further, as many of them had reached the social status achieved by the founding patrons of the "Y", they felt comfortable joining them in social activity. This broad-based membership, along with renewed economic vigor, was the foundation on which the St. Louis YMHA was able to grow into a more permanent organization.

By April, 1916, the organization boasted 1,950 members. This increase in membership is due largely to the lay leadership who competed against each other (in teams, for prizes) to bring in members.[134] These new members were for the most part young people. Many were high school and college students or young men involved in business and industry. Many others were newcomers to the city.[135]

With close to 2,000 members, the association was bursting with activity. Members could take part in any of the following groups: Talmud Club, Mandolin Club, Glee Club, Orchestra, Dramatic Society, Chess and Checkers Club, and Hikers Club. Classes were offered in Jewish history, commercial law and public speaking. For those interested in sports an athletic council was organized. The baseball

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[134]Fischlowitz, 32.

[135]Fischlowitz, 31

league became affiliated with the Municipal Amateur Baseball League; a dance was held, the proceeds of which went to buy uniforms.[136] The basketball program enjoyed a large following. Three tennis courts were constructed in back of the building and members built handball courts there, too.

In 1919, the "Y" Country Club," located at Nelson's Farms[137] in Normandy, Missouri, provided the facilities the building in the city could not offer. Members took advantage of the baseball diamond and track at the "Club" as well as the association-sponsored field meets and summer outings held there.[138] Early in the Country Club's existence members, armed with picks and dynamite, blasted an "ole swimming hole" in the sandstone soil on the new property.[139]

The growth in membership also mandated a new means of communication. On July 14, 1917, the association's first printed bulletin run solely by members was published. It was called "The Bulletin" and was an outlet for literary talent as well as a conveyor of association news. Through the years, this publication has undergone many changes of name as well as changes of format. Among the names were: "YMHA Bulletin," "The WHY," "Y Journal," and the "JCCA

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[136]Fischlowitz, 32.

[137]The "Y" Journal, Dedication Issue (1927), 5.

[138]Fischlowitz, 33.

[139]The "Y" Journal, Dedication Issue, (1927). 4.

Journal."[140] The main purpose of these publications has always been to disseminate news of the organization to its members.

Between 1917 and 1919 the association expanded its activities yet again. In the sphere of music, a Guitar and Ukelele Club, Boys and Girls Mandolin Clubs, and a Drum Corps and Brass Band were formed.[141] Classes were held in languages, and various aspects of business and salesmanship. One could also join the Sewing Circle or become part of a business and professional group for men and women. A number of social groups known as "chummy clubs" or fellowship groups were formed for boys and girls.[142] Young boys also came to the association as Boy Scouts.[143] Hashomrim, a group of young men who studied and championed Jewish heritage, culture, and ideals, was founded. Jewish culture could be found elsewhere in the association at events commemorating Jewish holidays such as Passover and Purim.

Four years after the editorial on the purpose of the "Y" had appeared in the Voice, Judaism had risen on the list of the organizational aims. The recreational drinking and gambling, which the associational leadership had opposed, was replaced by recreational sports, music, and education.

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[140]Fischlowitz, 34.

[141]Fischlowitz, 34.

[142]Fischlowitz, 36.

[143]Fischlowitz, 51.

It was also replaced by a number of groups and classes of Jewish content: Hashomrin, the Talmud Club and a class in Jewish History.

Though the war did not stop the growth of the association, its heroes and victims were not forgotten. Many members contributed to the war effort by giving to the Jewish War Sufferers Relief Fund." But giving money to a relief fund for refugees was not the only way in which members of the "Y" contributed to the war effort. In June, 1918, a miliary company of the St. Louis YMHA was formed. The association served as the recruitment office.[144]

Though it was the young men of the YMHA who volunteered to serve in the armed forces, its women were not unaffected by the war. As early as 1897, there is record of women being welcomed into YMHA activities as guests. Later, classes, clubs and even a physical education program were offered for women. With the war came a crisis in membership. As men went off to war service, women were brought into the organization in their stead. Women became active participants in association activities and for the first time were asked to serve on the board of directors.[145]

The association continued to grow after the war. On January 30, 1919, more than three years after the YMHA purchased its first building, the mortgage to 3645 Delmar

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[144]Fischlowitz, 37.

[145]Fischlowitz, 37.

was burned. On October 14, 1919, the association dedicated an annex which was located next door to the primary building.

Just as the YMHA was changing and growing so was the Jewish Educational Alliance. Its focus had shifted to include recreation. In 1919 the agency moved from Ninth and Carr to 3636 Page Boulevard, just a few blocks from the YMHA. It housed several Jewish agencies, among them the Jewish Social Service Bureau and the Jewish Federation. For this reason it came to be known as the Jewish Community Center.[146]

In 1921, the organization boasted few new activities. The most notable among them was the formation of a training program for religious school teachers.[147] Enthusiasm and interest in the association waned. A 350,000 dollar capital campaign which was announced the year before never got off the ground. These problems can in all probability be traced to a lack of professional guidance. In January, 1920, Sid Straus, the executive secretary of the YMHA resigned. A series of temporary directors followed him.[148]

Early in 1922 the "Y" was reorganized once again. A new president was elected.[149] A few months later

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[146]Fischlowitz, 38.

[147]Fischlowitz, 39.

[148]Fischlowitz, 38.

[149]Abrams, 64.

professional guidance in the form of Gilbert Harris. Harris, recommended to the association by the JWB, was the first of three executive directors each of whom would serve the association for in excess of twenty years. Under Harris' leadership, and with the assistance of the JWB, the association started a 5,000 dollar building campaign in late March. It began with a dinner which boasted Eddie Cantor as the guest of honor. The fund-drive was completed before May.[150]

In June, 1925, ground was broken at a site on Union Blvd. in the center of the Jewish section of town.[151] The decision for the location of the building had been left up to the membership.[152] This was clearly a wise public relations decision. In allowing members to chose the site of the new center, leaders were all but assured that they would attend programs there. In anticipation of the new building established groups flourished and new groups were formed. The drama group read plays and gave performances. Hashomrim was well attended, as were debates. The Liberal Club, whose discussions tended toward international relations, was formed.[153] Another discussion group, known as "the Forum," also began at this time. Members of the

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[150]Fischlowitz, 40.

[151]Fischlowitz, 41.

[152]Fischlowitz, 40.

[153]Fischlowitz, 41.

association also availed themselves of the many new athletic programs. Among them were: ping pong, boxing, billiard for girls, football, rugby.[154]

The new building was dedicated on December 12, 1926.[155] It opened its doors on January 26, 1927.[156] The quarters filled an area 150 feet square. It contained an auditorium, a library, gymnasium, swimming pool, lodge rooms, class rooms and reception rooms for both men and women.[157] It was said to have a "homelike atmosphere" and "every facility for a comprehensive program".[158] The new center also boasted a roof garden which housed summer activities for children during the day and lectures, dances, and other cultural events for adults on summer evenings.[159] Gilbert Harris gave an address around this time in which he stated his veiws as to the purpose of the YMHA. He ended this address with the following words:

> The Jewish spiritual growth of the YMHA-YWHA must be no less virile. The "H" is an integral part of the program. Here everything Jewish must be

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[154]Fischlowitz, 42.

[155]This date is found in the December, 1926, volume of the Jewish Center. In the same periodical dated March, 1927, a date of January 16, 1927 is given for the official dedication. The latter date is also found in Fischlowitz, however it is unclear where she derived her information.

[156]The "Y" Journal, Vol. 28, No. 34, (May 16, 1952), 5.

[157]Jewish Center, Vol. IV, No. 3, (September, 1926), 43.

[158]Jewish Center, vol. V, no. 1, (March 1927), 39.

[159]Jewish Center, vol. V, no. 3. (September, 1927), 40.

> welcomed and nurtured. Here should the finest urgings of a noble people be brought into life and the words of the Prophets made to live again.[160]

Gilbert's words were not empty. Under his leadership the YMHA greatly expanded the volume of Jewish content programming offered.

In 1927 and 1928, the schedule of the YMHA and YWHA boasted approximately fifty educational classes. More than 600 members signed up for such classes as psychology, advertising, journalism, shorthand and philosophy. The association also offered courses in Jewish subjects such as: Hebrew, Zionism, Jewish literature, Biblical and Prophetic Jewish History, and Jewish History Since the French Revolution. As had been the case in previous years, the sounds of music lessons and musical presentations filled the association's hallways.[161]

In 1927 the Liberal Forum was founded. It was an outgrowth of the Liberal Club and the Hashomrim and Forum groups. Speakers in its early years include such luminaries as John Haynes Holmes, Phillip LaFollette, Clarence Darrow, Sinclair Lewis, Eleanor Roosevelt, Thomas Mann, Archibald McLeish and Margaret Mead.[162] The physical education department continued to expand after the organization moved to its new quarters. The members not only swam in the

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[160]Abrams, 64.

[161]Jewish Center, Vol. V, No. 4, (December 1927), 28.

[162]Fischlowitz, 48-9.

indoor swimming pool but also availed themselves of golf classes, soccer, squash, badminton, and corkball.[163] An additional gym, made possible through a donation, was built in 1928. The new gymnasium was to be for the exclusive use of men and boys, the old facilities were to be used by women and girls. The donation (of 100,000 dollars) also afforded the association an opportunity to build additional handball courts and improve the health club facilities.[164]

The association also opened an employment bureau in 1928. This bureau took over the work of Jewish Community Center and the social service department of the Jewish hospital. Employment services were rendered free to members; a fee was required of non-members and, once employed, they were expected to join the association.[165]

Gilbert Harris surrounded himself by an enthusiastic and committed staff. Among them were a boys' worker, education director, women's worker, physical education director and women's physical education director, as well as part-time instructors and an office staff. This talented group of professionals created an inviting atmosphere at the YMHA. In 1928 the association boasted 4,000 members.[166] By

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[163]Fischlowitz, 44.

[164]Jewish Center, Vol. VII, No. 1, (March, 1929), 56.

[165]Jewish Center, Vol. V, No. 4, (December, 1927), 46.

[166]Fischlowitz, 43.

1934, this number had dropped to approximately 2,600.[167]

The drop in membership can be attributed to the economic climate in the United States in the years between 1928 and 1934. Some could not afford the dues required of "Y" members. Others moved away from St. Louis in an effort to find work.[168]

The "Y", as had become its tradition, cooperated with many other St. Louis communal organizations, both Jewish and secular. In 1937, an anniversary edition of The "Y" Journal, stated that, "Here the larger community has met the Jews of St. Louis on an equitable basis."[169] The "Y" shared space and resources with the two nearby universities as well as two local high schools. Association workers were asked to contribute their time and talents to such social service agencies as the Community Council, the Missouri Association for Social Welfare and the Missouri Social Hygeine Association.[170] In The Book of Memories, Dr Z. Abrams describes the Association in the following manner: "The "Y" is a meeting place for most of the community. Here young and old congregate. Most of the representative Jewish

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[167]Gilbert Harris, "The Membership and Attendance Record of the St. Louis YMHA-YWHA: 1927-1934," The Jewish Center, Vol. XIII, No. 3, (September, 1935), 16.

[168]Harris, "The Membership and Attendance Record of the St. Louis YMHA-YWHA: 1927-1934," 16.

[169]The "Y" Journal, Vol. XX, No. 19, (Friday, January 15, 1937).

[170]The "Y" Journal, (1927-1937), 17.

philanthropic and fraternal bodies gather for their regular business."[171] The JCCA has continued this tradition of service to the larger St. Louis community to the present day.

An oratorial contest began in 1930[172] As before, the majority of Jewish cultural programming centered around mass activities. The adult department also expanded during this period. Classes were offered in ballroom dancing, bookbinding, poster-making and psychology.[173]

In 1931, five associate board members were elected from the membership of the association,[174] This was done in the name of democracy, an important American ideal. As American institutions, in this era many YMHA's and Jewish Community Centers were devoted to any activity which promoted the ideals or characteristics seen as exemplifying the model American citizen. These ideals and characteristics ranged from democracy to proper hygeine, from cultural education to physical fitness.

When the recreation program at the Jewish Community Center closed, also in 1931, the "Y" welcomed its former participants. Though it was not formally the case, the event of one organization closing and the other opening its

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[171]Abrams, 64.

[172]Fischlowitz, 47.

[173]Fischlowitz, 50.

[174]Fischlowitz, 51.

doors to the displaced members was billed as a merger.[175] In 1934 the local National Council of Jewish Women opened a recreation center in a rented building on Page Blvd. The building was named Council House after the organization. It served primarily young children in the immediate vicinity whose age precluded them from traveling to the "Y" alone.[176]

The so called "merger" was significant to the life of the Jewish Community Centers Association of St Louis. It was through a series of mergers, that the JCCA eventually came to be what it is today. As will be seen here, and in later chapters, mergers can serve as pivotal events in the life of Jewish communal organizations. Often, this occurrence causes different centers offering varying services to specific communities to compromise and change focus.

It was at this time, during the Depression, that the "Y" was in peril of closing for the last time. Although the association was collecting membership fees, belts had tightened and consequently donations were down.[177] Though economic times were difficult, programming at the association was not curtailed. The sports program flourished. Free memberships were given out to those who requested them. In 1932, 79 people requested these

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[175]Fischlowitz, 53.

[176]Fischlowitz, 53.

[177]Fischlowitz, 53.

memberships; in 1934, 344 - more than four times the 1932 figure - requested them.[178]

Through aggressive fund-raising and the use of federal funds the organization amassed enough in donations and grants which became available with the start of the New Deal in 1933, to offer a varied schedule of classes and programs.[179]

In 1935, the YMHA participated in the Jewish Welfare Fund drive for the first time.[180] It was not uncommon for YMHA's and JCC's, which began as independently funded organizations, to turn to the local Jewish charity for assistance with operating costs. It was through this relationship that many YMHA's and JCC's were able to remain in business.

Participation in the Jewish Welfare Fund contributed to the YMHA's ability to maintain programming. The interest in music among "Y" members remained constant. As the "Y" continued to offer arts and athletic programs throughout the 1930's it also continued to offer programs in music as is seen in the Hebrew Music Pageant of 1938 and a Jewish music program in 1939.[181]

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[178]Harris, "The Membership and Attendance Record of the St Louis YMHA-YWHA," 17.

[179]Fischlowitz, 54.

[180]Fischlowitz, 54.

[181]Fischlowitz, 60.

Programs in Jewish music were just a beginning to the large range of Jewish programs which the association offered commencing at this time.[182] The increase in Jewish programming resulted from an increased interest in Jewish culture among members. As was shown in Chapter One, a generation earlier, Jews had been doing their best to forget their heritage and fit into American culture. Their children, those who used the YMHA facilities in the late 1930's were interested in recapturing the traditions and knowledge which their parents shunned. This phenomenon was not peculiar to the St. Louis community but was occurring in Jewish communities throughout the country.

Membership in the association dropped again at the beginning of World War II for much the same reason as it had during World War I. At this time, the "Y" once again served as an agency of goodwill to the larger Jewish community as it became a home to the activities of the JWB and the USO. When soldiers came back to St. Louis the association gave them each six months membership free of charge.[183] Though the "Y" was a service organization, the decision to grant soldiers free membership was a business decision. The "Y" offered these memberships in the hopes that the returning soldiers would find the services of the "Y" appealing and, therefore, become paying members after six months. This act

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[182]Fischlowitz, 60.

[183]Fischlowitz, 56.

also bolstered the "Y's" image in the highly patriotic community.

In 1944, the association built a men's health club on its premises and immediately secured 200 patrons. These people paid a fee over and above their membership in the association for use of the health club facilities. The club was built mainly for the older members of the center who did not, on the whole, participate in its other activities. Four years after it was built the health club boasted 1,000 members. Four years after that, in 1952, a women's health club was opened.[184]

Since the early 1920's, when the synagogue center became popular, pools and health clubs have been an integral, if controversial, part of YMHA's and Jewish Community Centers. The controversy stems from the way in which these organizations envision their basic purpose. Health clubs, while providing for the physical needs of Jews, do not promote Jewish education or culture. They do, however, encourage Jewish identity as their patrons actively choose to exercise with other Jews in a Jewish organization instead of choosing a YMCA or for-profit health club, thus forming social relationships and within the Jewish community. If an agency sees itself as an organ of Jewish culture, then a health club, though it brings members into the building, cannot, in itself, fulfill its purpose. If it

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[184]Fischlowitz, 57.

is an agent of Jewish identity then its purpose is fulfilled, in part, whenever Jews gather on its premises.

Just as the needs of older members were being met through the health club, the needs of younger members were being met at the Association's rooftop playground and day camp. By 1942, the rooftop activities had taken on the name Camp Suhoca (standing for summer home camp).[185] The idea of summer camp held on the site of Jewish Community Centers and YMHA's was spreading quickly throughout the movement around this time. An overnight camp, Camp Hawthorn, had been established for older children in 1938.[186]

In 1947, the organization celebrated its 20th anniversary in its Union Avenue facility with a mortgage burning. In the same year, feeling the strain on the old building, The association, along with Council House, began a capital campaign. Council House used the funds to build a combination gymnasium/auditorium. The "Y" used the funds for new club rooms and offices as well as a general rejuvenation of many of the areas facilities. The last of these improvements was completed in 1950.[187]

Even as construction was beginning on the facilities at Union Avenue and Enright Street, the Jewish population of St. Louis was on the move again. To serve the population

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[185]Fischlowitz, 58.

[186]Fischlowitz, 58.

[187]Fischlowitz, 61.

that remained in the area, a number of senior citizens' programs were established between 1945 and 1950. Of the five groups established in this time period, three met at Council House, one at the "Y" and one at Shaare Emeth synagogue. The majority of senior citizens attending the Council House groups lived within a five mile radius of this agency. Activities offered to these "Golden Age Clubs" included classes, holiday celebrations and English tutoring.[188]

Temple youth groups and young-couples' clubs were becoming popular and they were often offered closer to home. Extra-curricular activities at schools, such as sports and clubs, were also attracting more participants.[189] The population served by the YMHA of St. Louis (and the organizations with which it would ultimately move) was dwindling quickly.

In 1947, a study of the St. Louis Jewish Community was undertaken with the help of the JWB. The major finding of the study was that the population had shifted to communities westward, away from the YMHA and Council House. These organizations were now, at best, at the eastern edge of the Jewish community. Recommendations for adjusting services to

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[188]"Report on Golden Age Recreational Program, JCCA St. Louis, Period covered from October, 1953 to June, 1954," submitted by Bigford Krasner, Director Golden Age Recreational Program, (June 29, 1954), St. Louis Jewish Archives: YMHA-JCCA, Box 2.

[189]Fischlowitz, 62.

this population shift included offering more programs in outlying facilities in St. Louis county, and transporting members to and from the facilities in the old neighborhood when programming dictated the necessity of meeting there. The study suggested that the only way to implement the suggestions recommended in the study was through a "central organization and a unified staff."[190]

During this period, St. Louis' Jewish communal organizations faced two problems. Their appeal had lessened as schools and synagogues began to offer programs of interest to potential "Y" and Council House members. Perhaps more importantly, young Jews had physically moved away from these organizations. Various solutions, such as branch centers and busing, were not practical in the long-term. Therefore, "the unification of the YMHA, YWHA, Council House, Camp Hawthorn, and the Federation's Golden Age Program, was announced on May 9, 1952." The new organization was to be known as the Jewish Community Centers Association.[191] Gilbert Harris who had been the executive director of the "Y" became the professional leader of the JCCA . Leon Beck, who had been the executive director of Council House, became the center's associate director.[192] Until the various organizations could be unified under a

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[190]Fischlowitz, 62.

[191]Fischlowitz, 62.

[192]Fischlowitz, 63

single roof, each was called a branch center of the JCCA.

The years preceding the merger had been difficult. It is likely that none of the lay leaders relished the demise of their individual organizations. The merger itself was not easy. Members of the boards of directors of the various agencies were unwilling to see the needs of their organization subordinated.

Hymen Shifrin, the organization's president, thought that a move west would be included in recommendations from the study. He therefore appointed a group of men, led by I.E. Millstone, to quietly look for land in what was then still country. Following this the organization asked the Jewish Federation to conduct a population study. The findings proved Mr. Millstone right; Jews were moving west into the suburbs. Among other things the study showed: the Jewish population had increased, mainly in the under-five and over-seventy age categories; seventy percent of children, aged five to fourteen, lived in the suburbs; in the nine years between 1945 and 1954, the portion of the Jewish population in the outlying St. Louis county area had increased from forty-eight to sixty-two percent.[193]

The YMHA and Council House had officially merged in 1952. By 1954, at the time of the Jewish Federation study neither organization had given up its facilities. Milton Greenfield, the second president of the JCCA, formed a

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[193]Fischlowitz, 63.

committee whose tasks included long-range planning and program evaluation. The group proposed that a site for the new center be acquired by September of that year. In 1955, the organization would acquire an interim facility and a day camp site. Council House was also scheduled to close in this year. It was proposed that a new center be built in 1956 and that activities be curtailed at the "Y" in the same year.[194] All of these actions were taken, although not all proceeded according to the timetable which had been planned.

Before a move into new facilities was complete, the JCCA made provisions for transitional programming. A plan for the consolidation of nursery school, day camp and senior citizen programs of the "Y" and Council House was formulated. Programs for older children were held in provisional facilities such as Shaare Zedek synagogue and Congregation B'nai Amoona. Shaare Emeth co-sponsored, along with the JCCA, a Sunday morning discussion group for parents. Other than this, adult activities were only held when both need and space availability coincided.[195] As per recommendation from the JWB study, when programming called for the use of facilities such as the gymnasium, children were bused to the old neighborhood. The above arrangement served to attract some new members but in the long run was not healthy. It had been the purpose of the merger to

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[194]Fischlowitz, 64.

[195]Fischlowitz, 65.

consolidate the Jewish community and the transitional program seemed to fragment it by providing different activities in various places for disparate age groups. In 1956 Council House closed six months behind schedule.[196]

By July, 1955, the board of directors thought that they had procured land on which to build a new center. This land was a fourteen acre plot on the corner of Delmar Blvd. and Price Rd. in Olivette. The JCCA did not end up settling there. The Board of Trustees of Olivette, convinced by a number of homeowners (many of whom were Jewish) that the presence of such a building in the area could decrease property values, refused to issue a building permit to the organization on the grounds.[197]

In July, 1956, just sixteen months after the building permit for the first site had been rejected, a new site was acquired, on the corner of Lindbergh and Schuetz Roads. The 108 acre site, whose acquisition was due in large part to the efforts of I.E. Millstone, cost the organization a little more than 300,000 dollars. The board met with criticism for this decision. Some thought that such a large parcel of land was unnecessary. Others could not believe that a site that far west was practical. Concern that the JCCA could not possibly fill such a large parcel of land

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[196]Fischlowitz, 66.

[197]Fischlowitz, 65. Mrs. Fischlowitz goes on to state that this contention was false as property values have increased around centers in St. Louis county.

lessened over the years as that organization, and other Jewish communal organizations, built new facades on the land.

In 1956, Gilbert Harris, who had served a combined term of 44 years as the executive director of the "Y" and later the JCCA, was elected to the position of executive vice-president of the JCCA. His chief responsibility was fund-raising. William Kahn was chosen as his successor. Kahn had came to St. Louis as the director of teen programming for Council House. In 1952, when that agency merged with the others to form the JCCA, he became its branch director. After a brief term as the Assistant Director at the Jewish Community Center of Denver, Kahn came back to St. Louis to assume his new position at the JCCA in May, 1958.[198]

Just prior to Kahn's arrival, in January, 1958, a capital campaign was kicked off to raise money for the center. This drive raised 700,000 dollars - with the help of 100,000 dollars from David P. Wohl. The next a year, another campaign, with a goal of raising an additional two million dollars was undertaken. A new group, the Trustees, was enlisted to help with this project.[199]

On November 27, 1959, before construction on the main center was underway, ground was broken on the James Henry Yalem Branch. This branch center was located in university

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[198]Fischlowitz, 67.

[199]Fischlowitz, 68.

city.

The following year was a busy one for people involved in every facet of St Louis Jewish communal activity. The ground breaking had excited the members of the community. Jews from every walk of life participated in the fund drive.[200] With the building for one center underway, and the idea of a flagship becoming a reality, members of what were once disparate organizations began to feel as if the could unify under a single banner. Thus, the agency had truly become a Jewish Community Center.

A great deal of energy was being poured into physical growth and building during this period. However, this did not take away from the programming offered at the various branches. The association's schedule was full with Jewish cultural programs. The Jewish Cultural Committee sponsored events in honor of Jewish Book and Music Months. Jewish holiday celebrations were planned and lecturers spoke on Jewish topics. The JCCA also played host to the biennial of the National Jewish Welfare Board. The Liberal Forum continued as did programs in drama and the arts.

The organization also continued to offer a comprehensive physical education program. As the old "Y" building had not yet been closed, a number of members took advantage of its gym facilities. Swim teams for younger people as well as PeeWee baseball and basketball programs

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[200]Fischlowitz, 69.

were also organized around this time.[201] Young adults participated in the center's intra-mural sports program. Sports instruction was also offered in squash, tennis, badminton and judo.[202]

At the end of 1960 the JCC Aids, a group of women who did volunteer work for the JCCA was formed.[203] This says something more about the times than it does about the center. By the beginning of the 1960's, many Jews had achieved the economic status and social relationships which allowed them to enter mainstream middle-class America. Volunteer work was a popular trend among women who did not have to contribute to the economic welfare of their families. Women, who had not yet entered the work force in great numbers, were able to give their time to charitable and non-profit organizations while their children were in school.

The Yalem Branch of the JCCA was dedicated on February 19, 1961. On May 28, 1961, a camp and an outdoor pool were dedicated. In this same month the organization announced that membership was approaching 7,500 persons, the largest number of persons which could be served comfortably in the Yalem building. Although criticized by the members the board stuck fast to this membership ceiling, knowing that to

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[201]Fischlowitz, 72.

[202]Fischlowitz, 72.

[203]Fischlowitz, 73.

accept more members would be to put an undue burden on the center's staff and facilities.[204]

Ground was broken at the Millstone Campus site on February 23, 1962.[205] On December 14, 1963, the Carlyn Wohl Center was dedicated. At this time the center boasted 12,000 members. Nine days later (December 22, 1963) this main branch of the JCCA was opened. The building, occupying 110,000 square feet, cost just under 2,500,000 dollars to build and equip. The facilities included two lounges, two game rooms, four large meeting rooms, fourteen club rooms, two arts and crafts rooms and two rooms for nursery school classes. The building also included an auditorium, a playground, two kitchens, and fifteen offices.[206]

The Association's commitment to sports is evident in the physical education facilities in the new building. They included: a large gymnasium, two exercise rooms, seventeen handball courts, two squash courts, two pools - one indoor, one outdoor, a health club, and all of the requisite locker room and shower facilities.

In 1962, the JCCA extended its services to the retarded community. On a limited basis, educably mentally retarded children were placed into classes and other group activities with other children. These children and youth were also

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[204]Fischlowitz, 76.

[205]Fischlowitz, 76.

[206]JWB Journal, Vol. XVIII, (1969), xxvi.

integrated into the summer camp program of the agency. Though a small number of parents (of normal children) had reservations about the project, the majority of children, parents, and staff felt, at the very least, that the introduction of educably mentally retarded children into center programming did not detract from it. Many of those involved in the program felt that it had a positive effect on center programs as it taught children sensitivity and caused staff to have a heightened awareness of individual needs.[207]

Throughout its existence the JCCA has shown interest in serving groups outside its regular membership. The educably mentally retarded was just one of these groups. But the JCCA did not simply develop this program to meet the needs of a previously under-served population. Organizational leaders also hoped to share their findings so that other institutions, both religiously based and secular, might benefit from them.

In 1968, the JCCA sponsored a housing project for senior citizens in University City.[208] In 1970 the JCCA offered a drug information and education program to members

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[207]Barry Schapiro, "Serving Retarded Children in Regular Center Programs: A Challenge to Jewish Centers," Conference Papers, (Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Center Workers, May, 1970).

[208]JWB Circle, (April, 1968), 5.

of the St. Louis Jewish community.[209] This was a trendy thing to do at the time.

By 1965, membership in the JCCA of St. Louis had reached 15,000.[210] By 1968, this number had dwindled slightly; the Association boasted only 14,205 members.[211] Two years later, in 1970 it had climbed to 16,366,[212] but by 1975 it dropped again, to 14,076.[213] These fluctuations in membership were most likely due to demographics. A drop in the number of Jewish school-age children or a rise in the number of deaths in the community could contribute to these fluctuations. Immigration could be another element in this equation. In the early 1970's the JCCA of St. Louis was affected by the first large wave of Russian Jewish immigrants to move into the area.

The JCCA extended services to resettled Russian immigrants as early as 1973. Though the Jewish Vocational Service assisted the immigrants in finding jobs and the Jewish Family and Children's Service helped them to find homes, the JCCA played a large role in making these immigrants feel comfortable in their new home. JCCA volunteers taught these New-Americans English, and aided

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[209]JWB Circle, (February, 1970), 4.

[210]JWB Yearbook, Vol. XVI, (1967), IV.

[211]JWB Yearbook, Vol. XIX, (1970), Appendix I:IV.

[212]JWB Yearbook, Vol. XXI, (1972), V.

[213]JWB Yearbook, Vol. XXIII, (1977), Appendix F:5

them with basic activities such as shipping and using the telephone.[214]

In 1977 a long range study found that:

> the JCCA is enormously concerned about the growing pattern of family breakup, the communication problems in the home, intermarriage patterns and a sense of isolation felt by people.

As a result of this finding, the organization established strengthening the family unit as one of its priorities. To implement programs leading to thus goal, the Family Life Education Department was established by 1974.[215] One of the course offered by the Family Life Education Department was "Practical Parenting". During this course parents were coached in understanding their child's behavior and dealing with problems.[216] The department also offered programs and classes on subjects such as depression, working parents, assertiveness training, and adolescence.[217]

As further evidence of its commitment to family, the JCCA broke ground for a day-care center in December, 1976. The organization had sponsored day care centers since 1942, first at Council House, and later at the "Y" on Union Street and at the Yalem building. The new center adjacent to the main building of JCCA was to have a capacity of 105,

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[214]JWB Circle, (October, 1974), 5.

[215]Arlene Herman and Marvin Walts, "Family Life Education at a JCC", JWB Circle, (April-May, 1978), 5.

[216]JWB Circle, (April, 1978), 8.

[217]Herman and Walts, JWB Circle.

approximately two and a half times the capacity of the previous center. The day care opened in May, 1976.[218]

During the 1970's Senior Citizen's at the JCCA participated in such activities as a political action group which exerted pressure on the governmental organizations and which fed public opinion by circulating petitions.[219]

Sports continued to be important at the JCCA. In 1979, the organization was able to boast that the number one-ranked professional racquetball player in America, Marty Hogan, learned to play at on center grounds.[220] In the spring of 1980, in commemoration of one-hundred years of commitment to physical fitness, the JCCA sponsored Missouri's first Senior Olympics.[221]

The organization also continued its commitment to Judaism and Jewish culture. In the fall of 1980, the organization sponsored a "Sukkot Extravaganza and Beersheva Bazaar". The event featured entertainment, booths where local organizations and individuals sold food and other wares, and of course the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvot of eating in the sukkah and saying the blessings over the

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[218]JWB Circle, (December, 1976), 2.

[219]Mort Goodman, "Older Adult Political Action," Conference Papers, (Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Center Workers, 1976), 133.

[220]JWB Circle, (January 1979), 9.

[221]"Seniors Go For The Gold", JWB Circle, (July, 1980), 3.

lulav and etrog.[222] In 1981, the JCCA offered informal educational programs for recently-arrived Russian-Jewish immigrants. These programs, cosponsored with the Central Agency for Jewish Education, provided adult immigrants with the opportunity to learn about the customs and history of Jewish Holidays while their children were led in holiday-related games and activities.[223] In 1983, the JCCA opened a temporary matzah bakery on organization premises with the help of the Chabad House of St. Louis. During the two weeks that the Bakery was open, more than six-hundred and fifty visitors, mainly from local synagogues and Jewish youth organizations, passed through learning how matzah is made and becoming amateur bakers.[224]

In the late 1980's, the JCCA translated its commitment to Jewish heritage and culture into trips to Israel for its teens, staff, and lay-leadership. Beginning in the summer of 1985, groups of Association affiliated teenagers spent half of their summer in Israel and the other half as counselors-in-training at Camp Sabra, the organization's resident camp. On the trip the SCIT's (Sabra Counselors in Training) learned all about the Jewish homeland. Once back

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[222]Steve Brownstein, "Sukkot in St. Louis", JWB Circle, (February 1981), 10.

[223]Sheryl L. Eisenberg, "New Americans Greet Jewish Holidays," JWB Circle, (August 1981), 6.

[224]Linda Makler, "A Visit To The Matzah Bakery", JWB Circle, (Winter, 1983-4), 9.

at camp they shared this new found knowledge with campers.[225] In October, 1986, Members of the JCCA Board of Directors and its various committees went to Israel to take part in a leadership training seminar which had been developed in cooperation with the Israel Training Consortium of the JWB. According to Stanley Ferdman, executive vice-president of the association, the goal of the trip was to teach the lay leadership about their cultural and religious heritage and help them to develop a stronger connection to it. In an article about the trip he stated, "we hoped to have a trip that was both educationally stimulating and personally enriching." He further expressed these goals saying, "We wanted our members to return to St. Louis well prepared to continue and expand the role of Jewish education here."[226] In 1987, a staff trip to Israel had much the same goals as had the earlier sojourn for lay leaders. The staff not only stopped at all of the "regular" touring spots but also participated in many educational sessions.[227]

That the JCCA would co-sponsor a program such as the above-mentioned matzah bakery with an organization such as Chabad shows just how much the religious focus of the

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[225]Barbara Langsam, "Sabra/Israel Leadership Program," JWB Circle, (Fall 1986).

[226]Carol Solomon, "Returning to the Wall: The St. Louis JCCA Board's Model Seminar in Israel," JWB Circle, (Summer 1987), 14-15.

[227]Barbara Langsam Shuman, "The St. Louis JCCA Staff Seminar in Israel," JWB Circle, (Summer, 1987), 8.

organization had changed since the turn of the century. In its early years members of the JCCA were mainly Reform. They were uninterested in welcoming their Orthodox brethren. This was clearly seen in the menu for the Fifth Anniversary Banquet in 1902, and in the advertisements for Christmas bargains in the program for the Carnival of Music, Art, and Industry in 1899. Now the organization welcomes Jews from all denominations.

In addition to offering family recreational programs and educational programs, the JCCA also offered support for the changing American-Jewish family in the 1980's. The "Dad and I" program, which had been running since the mid-seventies expanded in 1982. The program, "originally based on the YMCA Indian Guide Program", gave fathers and their school-age children the opportunity to spend time with each other.[228] The organization also offered an all-day educational conference entitled; "Fathering in the '80's" in 1983.[229]

Throughout this period the JCCA's commitment to Russian Immigrants stretched far beyond simply offering them classes in Jewish subjects. Throughout the seventies and eighties, the JCCA joined many like organizations around the country in providing education, recreation, economic guidance, and

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[228]Marci Mayer, " 'Dad and I' Fosters Togetherness", JWB Circle, (April 1982), 14.

[229]Joel B. Kaplan, "Fathering in the '80's", JWB Circle, (Late Summer, 1983), 7.

psychological support to these new immigrants. In 1984, five Russian immigrants prepared an authentic Russian dinner for 180 Russian and American senior citizens and their families.[230]

Today, The Jewish Community Centers Association of St. Louis is a frontrunner among Jewish Community Centers around the country. Its population is so vast that it consequently has the resources and the personnel to be able to offer a comprehensive program. There is truly something for everyone at the JCCA.

For the past number of years the trend at the JCCA has been a focus on Jewish continuity. This is not surprising as the JCCA has been closely linked to the national organization for Jewish Community Centers throughout its existence.

Unlike the other two centers in this study, the leaders of the JCCA of St. Louis do not have to worry that demographic changes will greatly affect the centers functioning. For this reason, it seems clear that the JCCA of St. Louis will continue to enjoy a long and full life.

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[230]JWB Circle, (Early Summer, 1984), 26.

CHAPTER THREE

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORWALK, WESTPORT, WESTON AND WILTON

> The Jewish Community of Norwalk [Connecticut] can be described as both an old and a new community. It is new, to the extent that it did not develop into a well-coordinated and homogeneous group until the early part of the twentieth century. It is old because it is well known that Jews settled here as early as the Pre-Revolutionary Period.[231]

According to a history of Beth Israel Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in Norwalk, there is evidence of Jews living in Norwalk as early as 1760,[232] although nothing is known about the identity of these early settlers or why they chose Norwalk. More is known of their fellow Jews who arrived on the scene some fifteen or sixteen years later, at the outset of the Revolutionary War. Many of those who came to Norwalk at this time fled from their homes in New York in hopes of escaping the wrath of the advancing British Army.[233]

Whether these Jews remained in Norwalk is difficult to ascertain. It is likely that they did not as there is no record of individual Jewish residents, nor any Jewish communal activity until more than 100 years later.

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[231]Rabbi Chaim G. Werner, "Beth Israel: A Historical Review" in Beth Israel Synagogue's Golden Anniversary Book, (1957, South Norwalk, Connecticut), South Norwalk Connecticut file, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

[232]Werner, 1.

[233]Werner, 1.

If the Revolutionary War serves as the centerpiece for the history of the old Norwalk Jewish Community, than the centerpiece for the new community of Jews in Norwalk is the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton. This organization, more than all others, was responsible for making Norwalk Jewry into a "well coordinated" and "homogeneous" body. This chapter concerns the history of that Jewish Community Center.

The Center is 72 years old. The communities which it serves can be considered suburban in that they lie between 45 and 55 miles from New York City. All economic classes are represented in Norwalk; the surrounding communities are peopled mainly by those in the upper-middle and upper classes. The majority of Jews in the area are also considered to be upper-middle or upper class. The Jewish Community Center, governed by a board of directors, is an independent body. That is, it is not a branch of a larger organization, as is the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center in Chicago, the subject of the next chapter. It is partly funded through fees and donations. The largest part of its budget comes in the form of support from the local United Jewish Appeal and United Way campaigns. In this way it is responsible to these agencies, in that it must present its purpose and its program in front of their boards of directors in order to receive each yearly allocation. Until recently it was affiliated with the National Jewish Welfare

Board.

The history of the Center began with the first modern Jewish immigrants into Norwalk. It was around 1880 that these first immigrants arrived in the small city on the shore of the Long Island Sound. Among the early settlers were Phillip Slomansky, Robert Joseloff and Max Tarlov[234] whose descendants would, in later years, be among the founding members of the YMHA of Norwalk, the earliest incarnation of the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk Westport, Weston and Wilton. In 1891, another group of Jewish immigrants came to the area,[235] bringing the total number of Jewish heads of household to between two and three dozen.

In 1892, this newly formed Jewish community bought a parcel for use as a Jewish cemetery.[236] Three years later the Brith Abraham Society was formed. This society made provisions for a burial society, acted as a relief fund and provided insurance benefits for the Jewish community.[237] In the fall of 1899, the Hebrew Beth Israel society was formed.[238] Seven years later Beth Israel Synagogue opened

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[234]Werner, 1.

[235]Werner, 1.

[236]Arnold M. Shevlin, "Study of Norwalk Connecticut", in A Study of Two Jewish Communities, Rabbinic Thesis, (1950, New York), p. 2.

[237]Werner, 3.

[238]Werner, 4.

its doors, holding services for the first time on the eve of Rosh Hashanah - the Jewish New Year.[239]

By 1906, the Jewish community in Norwalk was fairly well organized. It had a synagogue which held worship services and furnished religious education for the children, as well as a Brith Abraham Society which, as noted above, provided for many communal needs. During the next few years, as first generation Jewish Norwalkers came of age, they sunk their roots even further into the land on which they lived. In 1918, there were 1,000[240] Jews living in South Norwalk.[241] Further, in addition to the communal structures already mentioned, on the eve of World War I, a number of other Jewish communal forms existed. They were: a shochet employed by the synagogue, two additional kosher butchers, a Woman's Auxiliary which participated in fund raising and charitable activities, and a Zionist

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[239]Werner, 6.

[240]American Jewish Year Book, 20:344, as found in Jacob Rader Marcus, To Count A People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 40.

[241]The city of Norwalk is split into two sections: South Norwalk and East Norwalk. Throughout the body of this paper the name Norwalk will be used unless the more specific location sheds a light on the issue at hand. South Norwalk is used in this case as it was the location noted in the population study of the American Jewish Year Book. There was a large business district in South Norwalk at this time and it is likely that a majority - if not all - of the Jews living in Fairfield County at the time lived in this area.

organization.[242]

By the time the United States entered into the Great War, the community had many of the necessities of Jewish living. Although a number of these structures included a social element, the community did not have an institution whose main purpose was socialization. Further, there was no place where Jews could gather without first declaring allegiance to a specific group or purpose. Thus, it is not surprising that available documents place the first murmurings of the need for a YMHA at this time.

It is likely that the Jewish residents of Norwalk felt encouraged to organize, not simply because of their own needs for socialization, but also because of the mass movement toward organization which had occurred in the Jewish (and, one could say world) community which occurred between the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the World War I.[243]

There is some doubt, however, as to the veracity of the claim that there was interest in establishing a YMHA in

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[242]Shevlin, 2.

[243]The idea that a group of men came together, prior to World War I, to discuss the need for a central home for Norwalk's Jewish Community is brought out in two separate documents. It is likely that both garnered this information from the same source. "Norwalk Jewish Community Center", in You and the Jewish Community in Norwalk (Norwalk: Norwalk Jewish Community Council, circa. 1967), American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati OH.; and 50th Anniversary booklet of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center, p. 17, from the private collection of Ros Winer, Norwalk, CT.

Norwalk earlier than this. No written work attempting to recount the history of the Jewish Community Center documents any activity toward the establishment of such a center prior to the early 1920's. Further, a two page record, describing the beginnings of the YMHA of Norwalk, written circa 1930, places the organizational meeting for this group in 1921.[244] If the need for a central meeting place for the Jewish community was indeed recognized prior to World War I, no action was taken. If this was the case, perhaps this inaction was due to the exigencies of war.

No matter the reason, the corrected history of the Jewish Community Center should read after World War I a group of young men got together to discuss the need for a central home for Norwalk Jewry, and not prior to it. The idea was first discussed by five men: Julius Temko, Archie Terris, Barney Berman, Michael Steinberg, and Harry Meyer.[245] Together they formed the YMHA of Norwalk in 1921. At the time the organization was founded, its members were mostly young men, many of whom were single. According to one of its early supporters, "the aim of the organization was to help unite and uplift Jewish culture with one hundred

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[244]"The Y.M.H.A. of Norwalk Connecticut." (circa 1930), from the private collection of Harriet Tarlov, Norwalk, CT.

[245]Except for Meyer, these men all went on to be among the first presidents of the Y.M.H.A. The 50th Anniversary Book of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center, from the private collection of Ros Winer, Norwalk, CT., 17.

percent Americanism."[246]

One hundred percent Americanism is an ideology which came full-scale into American culture concurrent with the United States' declaration of war on Germany in 1917. The term was first used by writers and orators who, during the war years, wanted to replace the negative term "unhyphenated Americanism" with an expression that had a more positive connotation.[247] One hundred percent Americanism demanded that those who subscribed to this ideology - so-called one-hundred percenters - display complete national loyalty. One hundred percenters demanded nothing less than universal conformity from all of those people who called themselves Americans.[248]

In stating the aims of the YMHA, the author of the excerpt from the above document, entitled "The Y.M.H.A. of Norwalk Connecticut," wanted to make it clear that although the organization was committed to the promotion of Jewish culture, this did not oppose its allegiance to American nationalism. Judaism, or perhaps Jewishness, was recognized as an integral part of the YMHA at this time. However, this dedication to Jewish culture was couched in the terms of one hundred percent Americanism so as to ease any concern that

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[246]"The Y.M.H.A. of Norwalk Connecticut."

[247]John Higham, Strangers in the Land, (New York: Athenaeum, 1975), 204

[248]Higham, 205.

the organization or its patrons be viewed as anti-nationalistic.

It is not surprising that the terms "Jewish culture" and "one hundred percent Americanism" be used in a document stating the aims of a YMHA at this point in time. The leadership of the national Jewish Community Center movement had come out in support of expanded Jewish cultural programming in the local centers. It also promoted programs or activities which cultivated well-rounded citizens.

Soon after its formation, the association secured a meeting space - or club room as it has been called - on the third floor of the South Norwalk Trust Company on Washington Street. Within a very short time (approximately one year) the organization's membership grew to such a point that these quarters were no longer adequate. It is also said that the group was so raucous and rowdy that Mr. Charles E. Hoyt, president of the bank, asked them to vacate the premises.[249]

It was at this time that some of the older, more established members of the community were invited to attend a meeting of the YMHA. Once there, they were told of the organization's need for different, larger quarters.[250]

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[249]50th Anniversary book of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center, 17.

[250]One might recall that at a crucial time in the development of the St. Louis YMHA established members of the community were asked to become members of the organization. In both Norwalk and St. Louis older members of the community

Those who had been in attendance at this gathering immediately called another meeting to which they invited all those persons who were active in the Jewish community. At this meeting, those present pledged their support for the young organization. Soon thereafter a capital campaign was underway. In a short time, sufficient funds were raised for the purchase of a new home for the YMHA.[251] Thus, the established members of the community were able to assure the stability of the organization. It was with this partnership of young and old that the YMHA in Norwalk began to be a true community center.

With the money raised through this campaign, the organization was able to purchase a house on the corner of South Main and Monroe Streets in the heart of the Jewish community. The activities of the YMHA were situated in the Monroe Street building for five years until, once again, the facilities could not adequately house the number of persons and groups wishing to use it. At this time a second capital campaign, undertaken by the building committee with the help of the Jewish Welfare Board, raised 28,000 dollars, more than was needed to buy a residence on West Avenue owned by [Philip] Knapp.[252]

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accepted the invitation to participate in organization activities, thus strengthening them.

[251]"The Y.M.H.A. of Norwalk Connecticut."

[252]"The Y.M.H.A. of Norwalk Connecticut."

It was during these formative years (circa pre-1931) that the organization wrote its first constitution. Although the document is not dated, there is evidence in the text of the document which suggests that it was written during the organization's tenure in the Monroe Street building.[253]

The constitution set forth the aims of the organization as follows:

> The object and purpose of this association shall be the promotion, development, and increase of the mental, moral, social, and physical welfare of its members."[254]

It is likely that the words "mental" and "moral" signify the high intellectual pursuits which many YMHA's fostered at this time. The words "social" and "physical" describe the recreational nature of the organization. At the time this constitution was written the organization excelled at

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[253]Among this evidence: The document is titled, "The Young Men's Hebrew Association of Norwalk, Incorporated" (form the private collection of Harriet Tarlov, Norwalk Ct, circa pre-1931); as shall be shown later, the organization was known by a different name shortly after its move to the West Ave. location. Under the section titled "Quorums," the number of persons forming a quorum at association meetings is designated to be 15. When the organization was first formed, its numbers were small, but by the time it moved into quarters on Monroe Street, its membership had increased greatly. Thus, a quorum of 15 seems reasonable at the Monroe street quarters, but not before the move there. Finally, the constitution makes mention of a Hebrew school. There is neither any mention of such a Hebrew school during the organizations short tenure on Washington street, nor was there the space to provide for one in this facility.

[254]"The Young Men's Hebrew Association of Norwalk, Incorporated", 1.

recreation. Some attention was focused on intellectual pursuits. Little or no attention was given to Jewish culture. As a matter of fact, Judaism is only mentioned twice in the five page constitution: In reference to membership, it states that a man is eligible for membership if, among other things, he is "a professor of the Jewish faith."[255] That policy has since changed. Today, any person may attend any center function regardless of race or religion. Non-Jewish participants in center activities are advised of the nature of the organization.

As regards scheduling, the constitution made provision for a change in the calendar if the regular meeting of the association were to fall on a "Jewish or legal holiday or on any inconvenient time."[256] At the time that this constitution was written little attention was given to the needs of the Orthodox. It is likely that this small note on scheduling was made out of respect for religion rather than as part of an attempt at religious pluralism. In the past few years, center leaders have made strides toward welcoming the Orthodox members of the community. One of these strides was a decision that no monetary transactions would transpire at the center's snack bar on Saturdays; instead one would need to use pre-purchased coupons or buy food on account.

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[255]"The Young Men's Hebrew Association of Norwalk, Incorporated", 1.

[256]"The Young Men's Hebrew Association of Norwalk, Incorporated, 4.

The needs of the Orthodox were often overlooked as the large majority of Jews in this area affiliate with the Conservative and Reform movements.

The wording of the constitution refelcts a change in attitude toward Jewish culture among center leaders. This idea, prominent in the earlier document entitled "The Y.M.H.A. of Norwalk Connecticut," is excluded from the aims of the organization as they are set out in the constitution. It is possible that the members of the YMHA simply were uninterested in religious pursuits. It is not uncommon that a young, single person would be unaffiliated with a synagogue. It is also conceivable that some of the YMHA members wholly spurned the "old-fashioned" religious practices of their parents. Thus it is possible that the pursuit of Jewish culture or Jewish identity was omitted from the aims of the organization in its first constitution as its membership was uninterested in these pursuits. Further, it is possible that the leadership of the YMHA did not mention Judaism among the purposes that the organization would promote as they were afraid that such a statement would turn away potential members.

Once purchased, the house on West Avenue was extensively remodeled and redecorated.[257] It consisted of the following facilities: an auditorium with a capacity for seating 350 persons; a library; lounge rooms, including one

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[257]This occurred circa 1927-28.

designated for use by teenagers; a meeting room; a game room; a kitchen; and some office space. A community Hebrew school, whose affairs came under the jurisdiction of the board of directors,[258] held classes there. In 1930, it was suggested that an addition to the West Avenue site be built. This addition was to house a gymnasium, bowling alleys, lockers, a swimming pool, a billiard room and a lodge room.[259] It served as a meeting place for both the Zionist organization and the Norwalk chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, which had been formed in 1926. The center also sponsored a baseball team which competed against other teams in the area.[260]

Shortly after the move to West Avenue, the organization ceased to be known as the YMHA;[261] it was called instead the Norwalk Jewish Center.[262] The next number of years proved this to be an apt name as there was hardly an organization

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[258]"The Young Men's Hebrew Association of Norwalk, Incorporated, 4.

[259]Jewish Center, Vol. VIII, No. 1, (March, 1930), 40.

[260]Shevlin, 12.

[261]It is not known exactly when the name YMHA went out of common use in Norwalk, Connecticut. The name was still used at the time of the publication of the March/April, 1931 issue of The Jewish Center (Vol. IX, No. 1). In the directory on page 25 of this issue, the organization in Norwalk is referred to as the YMHA. Two years later in the March, 1933, issue (Vol. XI, No. 1) of the same periodical the organization is referred to as the Jewish Center.

[262]50th Anniversary book of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center, 17.

of Jewish interest or concern which did not meet or have its offices on its premises.[263] A new name was not all that the organization acquired upon moving. With the new facilities the organization hired its first paid worker, Harry Herbert. Herbert's role was to act as a "Man Friday". He purchased supplies, opened and closed the building and made sure that all facilities were maintained.

The years after the Center's move to West Avenue proved to be quiet ones for the Jewish community of Norwalk. As a result of the depression and the earlier U.S. restrictions on foreign immigration, there was little or no movement into and out of the area. In addition, only one Jewish organization was founded during that time - the Conservative synagogue Beth El. Like the majority of Jewish organizations in the area, the synagogue was based at the Jewish Center; it held services there from its founding in 1934 until it relocated to its own building in 1949.[264]

That Beth El had its beginnings in the Jewish Center is not insignificant. It was the first of three congregations (one Conservative and two Reform) to call the Center home. As the center of all Jewish life in the community, this was the logical place for these congregations to start. Because of this early partnership, the Center and the synagogues in

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[263]Shevlin, 12-13.

[264]"Temples and Synagogues" You and the Jewish Community in Norwalk

the area have historically enjoyed a reasonably cordial relationship. The differing degree of cordiality has always been dependent upon the personalities and styles of the various center directors and the local rabbis. Throughout the years, as shall be shown, the organizations have shared facilities, co-sponsored community religious observances such as Yom Hashoah commemorations, and even attempted to form inter-organizational youth groups.

As the Norwalk Jewish Center was the hub of activity for the community, its growth and change can be characterized by the growth and change of the community. The years immediately after the move to West Avenue can be characterized as stabilizing years for the center. In the 20 years between 1927 and 1947 the Jewish population in the community remained almost constant numbering approximately 2,000 persons.[265] Hebrew and Sunday school classes met, organizations gathered, and membership increased. In 1941, the organization formalized this stabilization, filing Articles of Association with the State of Connecticut on February 15th. This document stated,

> The purpose for which said corporation is formed are the following, to wit: To engage in all cultural, literary, athletic, benevolent, charitable, and ecclesiastical enterprises and purposes; to acquire, purchase, rent, mortgage, lease, maintain, and/or erect building quarters

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[265]Marcus, To Count a People, 40.

for the above enterprises and purposes.[266]

These purposes are broader than those found in its constitution. This broadening reflects the diverse needs of the larger number of groups using Center facilities. Although Judaism is not specifically mentioned the words "cultural" and "ecclesiastical" denote religious activity or program content.

The plateau or stagnation which had characterized Jewish activity in the 1930's and early 1940's ended with the end of the World War II. In the years immediately following the war's end, Norwalk saw another large influx of Jewish immigrants. Some of those who moved into the community were Holocaust survivors. Others, were laborers, taking advantage of the large number of jobs available as Norwalk became an electronics and engineering center. Still others were "commuter" families - families following the general trend of the times, the move to suburbia - in which the major breadwinner commuted on a daily basis to a job in New York City.[267]

Whereas earlier Jewish immigrants had confined themselves to the larger city of Norwalk, the newest Jewish residents of the area branched out a little bit. Jews began settling in Westport, Norwalk's neighbor to the east. In

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[266]Articles of Association for the Norwalk Jewish Center, signed by Ernst L. Josem, George L. Meyers and Harry Rubin (Feb. 15, 1941)

[267]You and the Jewish Community in Norwalk

1937 there were only 100 Jews in Westport. This number rose steadily after the war until, in 1960, there were approximately 2,000 Jews living in this town.[268] Later they would spread to other communities such as Weston, Wilton, and Darien. Even in Norwalk, Jews no longer lived in one central area. These new living patterns would go on to play a role in the life of the Center. As Jews settled in divergent areas, the organization was no longer in the center of Jewish life geographically. If it was to remain an integral part of the lives of area Jews it would have to change its focus.

The Jewish community did not merely grow in numbers in the years following World War II. During this period four new Jewish organizations were established. They were: B'nai Brith (1946), National Council of Jewish Women - Jr. division (1946), Cordials - an organization for young singles, and the Norwalk Jewish Community Council, which allocated the funds raised by the United Jewish Appeal.[269] In addition, a Reform Synagogue, Temple Israel, whose membership included residents of Norwalk and the neighboring community of Westport, was established in 1948. All of these organizations used the facilities of the Jewish Center.[270]

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[268]Marcus, To Count A People, 41.

[269]Shevlin, 3.

[270]Shevlin, 12.

By 1950, 20 organizations were utilizing space in the Jewish Center. In addition to those already mentioned, these included: the chevrah kadisha (burial society), the Independent Hebrew Society (overseers of the Jewish cemetery), boy scouts, girl scouts, Hadassah, Jewish War Veterans, and United Service for New Americans.[271] As the number of organizations utilizing the Center grew, so did the Center's repertoire of programming.

Throughout the 1950's the center continually added to the number of programs it sponsored. Among some of the scheduled offerings of the center during this time period were found: dances for young adults, an adult forum series, dance classes for young and old, a speaking course, art classes,[272] a Jewish forum series, and a number of formal dinners[273] including the annual Sports Awards dinner. In the early 1950's a nursery school was established with the co-sponsorship of the Norwalk chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women. Another synagogue, Temple Shalom, a Reform congregation which was formed in 1957 after Temple Israel relocated to Westport, also used Center facilities.

During this time, Herbert Edison served as the director of the center. Edison had started working for the center a

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[271]Shevlin, 12-13.

[272]Center News. Fall Membership Issue, (November 1954) from the files of the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk Westport Weston and Wilton.

[273]Shevlin, 15.

number of years earlier running errands. As he had only a high school education, and no formal training in social group work, his job at the center was confined to that of an administrator. Like Harry Herbert he managed the building. He also raised funds on the center's behalf. He did not participate in goal setting for the center however, nor did he motivate any new program initiatives.[274]

In an attempt to meet the ever growing demand on the Center's space, the building was expanded. However, even with the addition, the building on West Avenue proved inadequate for the community's needs. In 1957, the Jewish Center purchased the Matthew Brush estate, a large mansion located on the Long Island Sound in East Norwalk, a few miles away from the old building. After extensive remodeling, the Center opened its doors in early 1958. Later that year the car garage located on the property was remodeled for use as a youth center.[275]

As had been the case on the previous move, a name change accompanied the Center as it relocated to the Brush Estate on Shorehaven Road. Within a few years after the move, the organization added the word community to its title making it the Norwalk Jewish Community Center rather than simply the Norwalk Jewish Center. This change occurred

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[274]Mr. Stanley Swig, phone interview by author, Chicago, Illinois/Cincinnati Ohio, April 14, 1993.

[275]50th Anniversary book, 20.

on paper only. Many of the center's members, descendants of its founders, were too emotionally attached to the previous name to let it go completely. Members of the community at large who had known the organization as the Norwalk Jewish Center for approximately thirty years also had difficulty assimilating the new name. As recently as four years ago, the organization's phones were still answered with the words "Jewish Center."

The change in name reflected the change in Center direction which had occurred slowly in the decades before the move. As the period began, the main function of the organization was to serve as the central address for all of the Jewish organizations in the area. By the close of the 1950's, the Center was much more than an agency of agencies; with a full program of its own, it served the entire community - Jews and non-Jews alike.

The desire for a beach club had been an important motivating factor in the decision to buy the Brush Estate.[276] Soon after its move to the shore front, the center began concentrating on summertime activities. Jews in the community began using the center almost solely as a beach club. This was due in part to the fact that no country club on the shore which would accept Jews as members

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[276]Swig, interview, April 14, 1993.

at this time.[277] To meet the community's demand the center built a pool, and over the years added a snack bar and boat launching dock. Long time center members still refer to the pool and adjacent lawn as "the club." They often become distressed when the space is used for other purposes such as an evening concert or a camp carnival.

At the time of its implementation the focus on summertime activities was a successful combination of the desires of the membership and an efficient and full use of center property. This success was short lived. As had been the case before, overuse of the facilities left the building and its environs in an almost constant state of decay and disrepair. When the Rolling Hills Country Club opened in the mid-1960's, Jews were afforded the opportunity to join a club with larger facilities and a wider range of amenities than the center offered... and they did.

In later years, this summertime focus would prove to be detrimental. Much of the center's operating budget came from its summertime receipts. With a decline in summer enrollment, due to the condition of the facilities and opportunities for club membership elsewhere, it was imperative that the center offer other programs and services to enhance the operating budget. Stanley Swig, executive

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[277]Proposal for the Reorganization of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center (November 1989) from the files of the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton.

director of the center from 1960 to 1965, tried to evoke interest in year-round programming among the membership. However, his success was limited. Though he did manage to start a few groups for teenagers and pre-teens, the majority of center members was interested in using the facility only as a social center. For them the center was nothing more than a club. They were interested solely in the pool, the beach front, and the occasional center-sponsored dinners and banquets. As a result of this attitude, the center was in jeopardy of having to close its doors in the years surrounding 1970.[278]

Although the center was in need of added revenue, it is questionable whether Swig's attempts to expand the center's programming was reflective of the desires of the community. Swig spent many summer days pool-side talking to members about potential educational and cultural programs. He devised the above-mentioned programs for teens and preteens in hopes that the older generation would follow its children into the center.[279] Though his desires to make the center into more than a beach club and meeting facility were admirable, it does not appear that the members of the center shared these desires. Center members expressed their Jewishness through affiliation with this organization and

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[278]Les Cohen, Report to the board of directors, from the files of the J.C.C. of N.W.W.&W.

[279]Swig, interview, April 14, 1993.

perhaps a local synagogue, and with participation in any number of the Jewish interest groups which met at the center. They were not interested in enhancing their Jewish identity through programs of Jewish education and culture.

By 1960 the Jewish population of Norwalk had risen to 5,000.[280] Westport's population had grown to close to 2,500.[281] Though there was a considerable Jewish population in Westport, the majority did not join the Norwalk Jewish Community Center at this time. Swig attributes this in part to a "snob factor." Residents of the wealthier community of Westport often looked down their noses at their less prosperous neighbors. This ill will was reciprocated by many of the center members who were not particularly welcoming of members of Westport's Jewish community.[282]

In February of 1962, a disastrous fire destroyed the Jewish Center building. Miraculously, the activities of the center not only continued after the fire, they expanded. Makeshift offices were erected inside the youth center. Congregations and other community organizations were generous in lending space. A month after the fire a Senior Citizen's Club was organized to meet the needs of the aging community. A teen drama group was formed. A Young Adult Club incorporating college age and post college age young

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[280]Marcus, To Count a People, 40.

[281]Marcus, 41.

[282]Swig, interview, April, 14, 1993.

adults from the surrounding communities was formed. New classes were added to the adult programming schedule. Constrained by the limitations of space, the center offered more programs geared to small groups. In addition, the majority of the Center's regular programming continued.[283] Nursery school was a constant as was summer camp which operated during both summers that the organization was without a permanent facility. Tents which served as the camp's administrative headquarters dotted the lawn.

In the weeks and months after the fire the Board of Directors and its various committees met a number of times to try to determine the proper course of action to be taken by the organization. At one of the early board meetings the question was raised as to the interest of the Jewish community in a new building for the Jewish Center. It was decided that a survey be conducted which would determine: a) the interest of the community as regarded the need for a Jewish Center; and b) the opinion of the community as regarded the purposes and objectives of the institution. In other words, the study served to find out whether members of the community were willing to support a Jewish Community Center, and if so, what they wanted the institution to look

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[283]Press release, from the Norwalk Jewish Community Center, Stanley Swig Executive Director, to the local press, (February, 1963) from the files of the J.C.C. of N. W. W.&W.

like from a programmatic standpoint.[284]

The results of the survey were encouraging. An overwhelming eighty percent of those surveyed, stated their feelings that a Jewish center was needed for the community, for their families and for use by Jewish organizations. A majority of the respondents also said that they would support a fund drive to rebuild the center.[285] Through the survey, the Center leadership was also made aware of a number of concerns, some of which are worth mentioning here. A number of people stated that they felt excluded (mainly by an old guard) from active participation in the Center's activities. Others felt that the Center did little to integrate newcomers into the social life of the organization.[286] Although the Center did not actively set out to alienate people, it is not difficult to see how this would happen. A large portion of those affiliated with the Center came to it through a previous association with a fraternal or charitable group which was housed in the center. These groups, which were sectarian by nature, promoted cliques whose bonds would be difficult for a newcomer to rend.

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[284]Norwalk Jewish Center Parlor Meeting Draft Report. (circa 1963), 1-2

[285]Norwalk Jewish Center Parlor Meeting Draft Report, 2.

[286]Norwalk Jewish Center Parlor Meeting Draft Report, 4-5.

The survey also revealed the priorities of the community as regarded Center facilities and programming. The majority of respondents thought that the Center's activities should encompass the whole family - "from pre-school to senior citizen."[287] The importance of a gymnasium, auditorium, arts and crafts facilities, a game room, proper facilities for organizational meetings, and a banquet kitchen were also stressed.[288]

A ground breaking ceremony for the new facility was held in July of 1963 on the same ground where the old building once stood.[289] A little more than a year later, the Norwalk Jewish Community Center was dedicated by its members and by members of the community at large.[290] The new building encompassed all of the suggestions noted above, as well as small kitchen and library facilities. The new facilities also included locker rooms for gym and pool users as well as administrative offices.

Despite herculean efforts on the part of a tireless fund raising committee the organization was only able to raise two-thirds of the money needed to pay various

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[287]Norwalk Jewish Center Parlor Meeting Draft Report, 7.

[288]Norwalk Jewish Center Parlor Meeting Draft Report, 6.

[289]Stephen B. Weitz, letter to Raymond Stabinsky, (July 22, 1963), from the files of Jewish Community Center.

[290]Dedication Week Program, (August, 1964), from the private collection of Ros Winer.

contractors by the time the Center was finished in 1964. The center has suffered the consequences of this financial shortfall ever since.

Center staff tried to increase the amount of funds flowing into the building by incorporating health club facilities into the plans for the new building and offering a number of after-school classes for children. The health club was - by and large - not very successful. Many of the people who were active in the center commuted daily to jobs in New York City. They left the Norwalk area too early in the morning and arrived home too late in the evening to take advantage of the facilities. As for after-school programming, although members of the community had expressed interest in such services, the children attended such a large number of different primary schools that bus service was impossible. Further, the large majority of center patrons did not live in walking distance of the center. It was very difficult to arrange car pools among parents at this time.[291]

The 1970's were difficult years for the center. In the early part of the decade, financial trouble almost forced the organization to close its doors. The Center also went through a number of changes in the executive directorship. At least two of these directors came from the active membership of the Center. In addition to crises of

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[291]Swig, interview, April 14, 1993.

leadership and economics the center also suffered a crisis in membership. Fewer programs were offered and fewer organizations used the Center's facilities. During this period there remained some constants. The senior citizen's group continued to meet, as did summer camp and nursery school. People used the gym for basketball and played bridge in the auditorium. As it had been for years, the pool remained a social gathering place in the summer time.

In 1976 the constitution of the Center was revised.[292] At this time the purposes of the center were put forth as follows:

> a) To promote the general welfare of its members and the community as a whole;
> b) To preserve, foster and enhance the traditions, ideals values, and heritage of Judaism and democracy;
> c) To enrich cultural, educational, recreational and civic life of the Jewish Community;
> d) To promote the solidarity and unity of the Jewish community;
> e) To serve all elements of the Jewish Community and to encourage their participation in areas of common interest.[293]

Many of these goals are reminiscent of the same ideals which were held up at the time of the Center's founding. Among these are the promotion of culture and the dedication to

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[292]At the top of this constitution there is a note that reads: "As revised at Annual Meeting of March 8, 1976." It is likely that this document was revised from an earlier constitution no longer in existence. The fire in 1962, and a later one in 1983, destroyed a great deal of the Center's archival records.

[293]Constitution of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center, Inc. (as revised at Annual Meeting of March 8, 1976) from the files of the J.C.C .

unity and democracy. These goals differ greatly from those set out in the first constitution of the organization. Whereas Judaism was not mentioned among the stated purposes in the earlier document, it is found in four out of the five statements of purpose in the 1976 document. The only similarity in the documents is that they both state a commitment to the mental and physical welfare of its members.

It might seem from a cursory reading of the 1976 constitution that its authors wanted Judaism to permeate every aspect of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center. In looking at the document more closely it becomes apparent that this Judaism is not about religious spirit but rather personal and communal identity. This is no longer simply an organization for Jewish people as it was when the first constitution was written but an organization which fosters the growth of Jewish life. Its purpose was to promote Jewish life among Jewish people living in a secular community. The Jewish population of Norwalk had been 5,500 in 1968. By 1980 this number had decreased to 4,000. The Jewish population of Westport which grew from close to 2,500 in 1960 to 2,800 in 1968, remained constant through 1980.[294] Some of those who left Norwalk moved to Westport and the nearby communities of Weston, Wilton and Darien. Some Westporters also moved to these neighboring communities.

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[294]Marcus, 41.

With the number of Jews decreasing in Norwalk and increasing in the surrounding communities, it became apparent that the Norwalk Jewish Community Center would have to reach out to the Jews in the immediate area if it was truly to be a community center.

In 1981, Les Cohen, a veteran of the Jewish Community Center movement was hired as the Center's Executive Director. The early eighties were characterized by further financial crises and large fluctuations in membership. Nevertheless, old programs continued to run successfully, and new programs, such as the Center Stage which produced yearly musicals, and a community Yom Hashoah service coordinated by the center were added. Under the Cohen's able leadership, the center stabilized by the mid-eighties. After Cohen's departure in 1986, the Center suffered from mismanagement and was pushed to the brink of another crisis of both funds and membership.

In 1988 the Center saw its most recent turning point. Pearl Lerner Kane, a veteran of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago, became the executive director of the center in December of that year. A few months after her arrival an acquaintance met her at the building on Shorehaven Road and commented, this looks like a place nobody loves". Kane says that the appraisal could not have been more apt. The building was physically falling apart. A visit from the fire commissioner revealed that the center was in violation of

more than 250 fire codes.[295]

Not only was the structure in terrible disrepair, it was also empty. On Monday nights a few men used the gym to shoot baskets. On Wednesday afternoons members of the community arrived for bingo, a center sponsored fund raiser. There were children in the preschool but Kane attributes this to the fact that there are no other Jewish preschools in Norwalk. Aside from these 50 or so regulars, the building was filled only with memories. Many board members who had served the organization for a number of years or weathered the most recent crisis in center leadership found it difficult to see the center in any other way then as it existed in their memories.[296]

Kane realized that the center as it existed in the memories of its long standing members was unable to meet the needs of the Jewish community in the area. If the center was ever going to be able to meet those needs it would have to be almost completely restructured from the foundation up. Thus, soon after Kane assumed leadership, the center underwent an intensive self study.

A reorganization plan was adopted in November, 1989. The plan included: ideas for capital improvements, which included the construction of a reception area and the

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[295]Pearl Lerner Kane, telephone interview by author, Westport, CT./ Cincinnati, OH., April 19, 1993.

[296]Kane, interview, April 19, 1993.

refurbishing of the auditorium; an evaluation of the camp program along with plans to build on the success of this program; some suggestions as to how to best utilize facilities and staff talents to increase membership; and a look into the possibility of increasing the appeal of the auditorium for rentals. The plan also included a budget for the following year.[297]

During the next year the board of directors and the staff worked diligently, implementing many of the ideas put forth in the proposal. The center began major renovations on its main building. Before this was able to occur, some of its old debt had to be consolidated and paid off. This accomplished, the center initiated new loans and was able to begin the building process.[298]

As has been shown, the center has been burdened with tremendous debt for approximately 30 years. Though the center was able to relieve some of this burden under the reorganization plan, it also had to incur debt. If the center leadership plans to continue making much needed improvements in the facility and the services offered in it, it will continue to be caught in a vicious circle of debt. Kane likes to call this "the hole in the bucket." She adds

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[297]"Proposal for the Reorganization of the Norwalk Jewish Community Center", Norwalk, CT., 1989, from the files of the Jewish Community Center of Norwlak, Westport, Weston and Wilton.

[298]Kane, interview, April 19, 1993.

that there is a perception among members of the community that the hole in the bucket is the facility; thus a new facility is desparately needed.[299]

As part of the reorganization plan the staff and lay leadership started a massive public relations campaign. In July, with the guidance of the Jewish Welfare Board, the organization surveyed the community in order to better serve their needs. The survey not only asked what kinds of programs and services respondents would be interested in seeing offered by the Center, it also looked into the general lifestyle of those people who were current and potential members of the Center.[300] The leadership of the organization was encouraged when they saw the large rate of return.[301] This was an indication that the center could be full if its leaders could find a way to serve the needs of the community.

The results of this survey were manifold. The process alone drummed up a lot of interest in the center.[302] In response to the stated wants of those who responded to the survey, the staff of the center has spent the last few years implementing a wide variety of new programs. Among these

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[299]Kane, interview, April 19, 1993

[300]Survey, conducted by the J.C.C. Marketing Association for the Norwalk Jewish Community Center (July, 1990).

[301]Kane, interview, April 19, 1993.

[302]Kane, interview, April 19, 1993.

were a summer family concert series, and a community forum on violence. Camp attendance has grown five-fold over the past four summers. Also, a growing cadre of enthusiastic new leaders has emerged and taken charge of a number of projects and committees, thus breathing new life into the center.

In addition to changing its image, the Center also changed its name. It officially became the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston, and Wilton. In truth, the name change was long overdue as the center had been serving members from all of these communities for years. The organization also adopted a new statement of purpose. With this statement, the organization unknowingly came full circle, focusing on some of the same ideals valued in the beginning years of the YMHA. The Center billed itself as providing for social, cultural, educational and recreational activities. It stressed Jewish identity as well as physical, mental, and emotional well being.[303]

One of the newer additions to the Jewish Community Center's repertoire, an experiential class which focuses on Jewish history, culture, and religious practice called "Connected Kids," is evidence of the organization's commitment to providing for the growth of positive Jewish

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[303]"The Statement of Purpose of the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston, and Wilton", 1990, from the files of the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton.

identity amongst its members. A few years behind the times, this is one of the center's first projects for Jewish continuity.

Since the reorganization there has been a large increase in rentals of the building. The Center is once again ready to expand. As many of the center's patrons now live outside Norwalk, a search for suitable facilities for a satellite center in Westport is currently underway. Until such a time as facilities can be found, Temple Israel has agreed to house this program.

Recently, the center broke its ties with the Jewish Community Centers Association. Unlike the JCCA of St. Louis, the Norwalk Center, with a few exceptions, never worked very closely with the national organization. The decision not renew membership in the association was fiscal rather than ideological.

The Jewish Community Center has endured many changes in its 72 years of existence. It has survived moves, name changes, and complete changes of focus, (as well as natural disasters and fiscal crises). The thread that weaves all of these changes together is a commitment to community. With each name change, the organization defined itself according to the identities of the members of its constituent community. With each move, the Center was able to serve a greater number of people. Although the Center was not always successful in its aims, each new program - and there

were many throughout the years - was implemented in the Center's continuing attempt to serve its members.

The number of people taking advantage of the facilities, resources, programs and expertise at the Jewish Community Center grows daily. As the constituency continues to move farther away from Norwalk, extending into such places as Ridgefield and Georgetown, center leaders are hard at work trying to find ways to make center services accessible. For now, the center has expanded to temporary quarters inside a Westport synagoggue. Kane believes people in the area are looking for a place to put their voice.[304] If she has her way all of these voices will be heard soon in the hallways of the Jewish Community Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton and...perhaps Ridgefield, wherever this center (or centers) will be located.

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[304]Kane, interview, April 19, 1993.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BERNARD HORWICH JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Unlike the Jewish Community Centers in St. Louis and Norwalk, the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center (BHJCC), located on the north-west tip of Chicago, is not an autonomous organization. It is one of nine branch centers maintained not only by the community in which it is located but also by a parent body, the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago. Thus, although the BHJCC is more or less autonomous as concerns its program, it must consult and depend upon the leadership of the Jewish Community Centers of Metropolitan Chicago as concerns the budget.[305] Therefore, the history of the BHJCC is inextricably bound up with the history of the Jewish Community Center movement in Chicago.

The earliest precursors of the Jewish Community Center movement in Chicago were institutions founded toward the end of the 19th century. In 1877 there were YMHA's located on the city's North, West, and South Sides.[306] In 1889 Hull House, a settlement house for immigrants from all walks of

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[305]Ted and Cynthia Berland, telephone interview by author, Chicago, IL./ Cincinnati, OH., Jan. 4, 1993.

[306]The West Side YMHA was the first of such organizations in the country to allow women to be members. This seems to have been a precedent setting decision as women were at no time excluded form the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago or the organizations from which it evolved.

life, was established by Chicagoan Jane Addams. In 1892 the Maxwell Street settlement, a sectarian settlement house modelled in part after Hull House was established in a hub of Chicago Jewish communal activity.[307]

Eleven years later, in 1903, the Chicago Hebrew Institute (CHI) was organized.[308] The CHI is important to a study of the BHJCC because this institution would eventually develop into the umbrella organization out of which the Horwich center was formed. The Institute, which was located at 1224 Blue Island Avenue, was established for the purpose of being of service to immigrants. Its goals were to help the immigrant to become a good citizen, to assist him in becoming economically self-sufficient, to support him socially and to provide an environment in which he could share his Jewish culture.[309]

In 1908, under chairmanship of Nathan D. Kaplan, with the participation of Bernard Horwich, Robert L. Halpern, and Dr. A. E. Fiskin, philanthropist Julius Rosenwald was enlisted to help procure and finance a better site for center.[310] The group purchased and converted a building on

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[307]Samuel L. Levine, "The Jewish Community Center: Training Ground for Better Citizenship," in The Sentinel's History of Chicago Jewry 1911-1961, (Chicago:Sentinel Publishing Co., 1961), 184.

[308]Samuel L. Levine, 184.

[309]Jewish Federation Review, vol. 10, no. 3, (November, 1953)

[310]Samuel L. Levine, 184.

the corner of Taylor and Lytle streets. The CHI quickly became the focal point of all Jewish social, educational and social life in the surrounding area.[311]

In 1922 the name of the organization was changed to the Jewish People's Institute (JPI).[312] Its patrons abbreviated this name referring to the Jewish People's Institute as simply the "J". In 1926, following the movement of the Jewish population, the "J" moved its headquarters to Chicago's West Side.[313] By 1927, the center was in full operation. Known all over the country for its various schools - a Hebrew high school, commercial school, and junior college - the JPI functioned not only as an educational institution but as the cultural, recreational and social center for West Side Jewry. It provided area Jews with educational forums and lectures as well as programs in drama, music, and camping. In 1939, the Jewish People's Institute affiliated with Jewish Charities, which later became the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.[314] Through this affiliation the "J" became eligible for a share of the funds raised by the Jewish philanthropy.

In 1941, the Max Straus Center was built in Albany

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[311]Jewish Federation Review

[312]Samuel L. Levine, 184.

[313]Jewish Federation Review

[314]Samuel L. Levine, 186.

Park, on the city's North Side, with money from the bequest of a businessman of the same name. The Straus Center is important to a study of the BHJCC, as it was the first branch center affiliated with the parent organization. The center, although subject to the authority of the central agency, had a board of directors which gave input on programming and policy decisions.[315]

In post-World War II Chicago, the Jews of the city were once again on the move. It is estimated that by 1950, the Jewish population on the West side had dwindled to half of what it had been at its peak.[316] In response to this movement, the JPI developed an extension department in 1945.[317] The South Side Center and the Rogers Park Club were both opened under the auspices of this department.

The Rogers Park Club was established in the late 1940's to serve the Jewish community on the North Side. The club was located in a store front on Morse Avenue. The facility was comprised of one large room suitable for dances and a number of smaller rooms. The center focused on children's programming. It sponsored boy scout troops and offered classes in such things as ballet and arts and crafts. Teenagers came to center-run dances every Sunday night.

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[315]Samuel L. Levine, 186.

[316]By 1960 there were very few Jews still living on the West Side, most of them in the Austin area.

[317]Samuel L. Levine, 186.

Although the center was located in East Rogers Park, its programs attracted Jews from nearby neighborhoods such as West Rogers Park (also known as West Ridge and North Town), and the Chicago suburb of Lincolnwood.[318]

The Rogers Park Club expanded and moved to larger facilities, inside a mansion on the corner of Greenview and Estes. The new facility housed a preschool and an outdoor playground.[319] The center's expansion occurred at the same time as the expansion of the neighborhoods to its west.

In 1946, the name Jewish Community Centers of Chicago was adopted, to describe the centers and explain their relationship one to another. All of the individual centers were considered branches of the JCC's of Chicago. Each branch had an independent board of directors and were represented on the central board. Programs not related to a specific neighborhood were called departments of the central agency.[320] This structure has remained unchanged to the present day.

As stated earlier, the 1950's saw a shift in the areas of residence of the city's Jewish population. Jews moved en masse from Edgewater and East Rogers Park on the North Side and the Austin Community on the West Side to the fast

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[318]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interveiw by author, Skokie, IL., November 1, 1992.

[319]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

[320]Samuel L. Levine, 186.

growing neighborhoods of Peterson Park, Budlong Woods and West Rogers Park and the nearby suburbs.[321]

With the change in demography of Jewish Chicago, came large changes in its Jewish Community Center movement. Throughout the early 1950's, participation in JPI activities had dropped dramatically. The Jewish residents of the West Side and its surrounding neighborhood had moved out and African-Americans had moved in. In 1955 the JPI was closed, its building sold to the Chicago Board of Education for the token sum of 300 dollars.[322] With the closing of this facility, the Chicago Jewish community lost what had been one of its leading cultural and social institutions.

In the same year that the old JPI building was sold, the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago undertook a self study with the cooperation of the Jewish Welfare Board and the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. The purpose of the self study, which took two years to complete, was twofold. One was to formulate the direction of growth for the future. The other was to determine the needs and desires of the community in relation to the resources available and the services already being provided.

In the years immediately following the study, the Jewish Community Center movement had a growth spurt. In

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[321]With this migration, Jews moved to the north, the west, and the north-west.

[322]Samuel L. Levine, 184.

1957 the JCC of Niles Township was established to serve the Jewish community in Skokie and the surrounding northern suburbs. Two years later the South Side Center moved into larger quarters.[323] In December of 1960, the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, named after one of the early leaders of the CHI, was opened in West Rogers Park.

The Horwich center was built little more than two miles away from the Rogers Park Club. Even so, the need for a new facility in the area was great. The Jewish population was growing quickly. There were approximately 60,000 Jews in the potential reach of the new facility.[324] The small Rogers Park Club could not accommodate the swell in population. Furthermore, the new Horwich Center had larger, more varied facilities than those at the other center.

When the decision was made to start Horwich, the leadership was handpicked by the administrators of the central agency. A group of men who were prominent in Jewish philanthropy and the local Jewish community were asked to serve on a planning committee.[325] Among them were Nate Kraus who had been highly involved in the Rogers Park Jewish Community Center, and Stanley Owens who was a leading

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[323]Samuel L. Levine, 184.

[324]Lenore Goldberg, "Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center: A Sociological Examination of a Sectarian Community Center", paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, Vermont College of Norwich, University, (1986).

[325]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

businessman and active volunteer in the public schools. Lawrence G. Warren, who would be the first center president, was active in North Town Community Council. Milt Falkoff was a member of both the Standard and Bryn Mawr Clubs, Jewish social groups.

The Jewish Community Centers bought the land for Horwich from the Illinois Brick Company. At the time of purchase this land was not zoned for non-residential building. However, some of those who had been asked to serve as leaders in the new venture pleaded a case in front of the local zoning board on behalf of the community as to the need for the proposed center. The land was rezoned and the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago was given permission to build.[326]

The leadership group was also given the task of providing a more in-depth assessment of the desires of the community regarding the functions of the future building. Rosalyn Kraus, one of the participants in this process, noted that one of the concerns of the community was that the new facility would serve as a type of country club[327] - as handball courts, steam rooms and a health club were part of the plan. This was not the atmosphere that the residents of the community desired. Rather, they wanted an atmosphere that spoke of their commitment to education, the arts,

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[326]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

[327]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

Jewish culture, and the Jewish people.

As architectural plans were being drawn up for the Bernard Horwich JCC, the Norwalk Jewish Center was moving into new quarters. One might compare the aims at the core of the plans to build the Horwich "J" with those at the center of the purchase of the new building in Norwalk. Both facilities were built to accommodate a larger number of people. In the case of Norwalk the membership of the center had outgrown the building on West Avenue. In Chicago, the Niles Township and East Rogers Park branch centers - the centers closest in proximity to West Rogers Park - could not provide adequate services to the large number of people moving into the new neighborhood. In Norwalk the move to the Brush Estate was motivated by a desire for a "club"-like atmosphere. This is reflected in the modifications made to the facility which included the addition of swimming and diving pools as well as an outdoor snack bar. These facilities reflected the priorities of its builders.

The aims of the Horwich "J" can similarly be seen throughout their building. The Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center occupies ten acres of land. The facilities, including the land purchase, cost a little more the 2,000,000 dollars. The center was built with the following features: a lobby, two lounges, three game rooms, five large meeting rooms, eighteen club rooms, three arts and crafts rooms, a dark room, three nursery school rooms, a

scout room, a drama workshop, a gymnasium, two exercise rooms, three handball courts, a thirty by seventy-five foot pool, a health club, two kitchens, a snack bar, a playground, a large open field, and, of course, office space. The facilities also included a paved parking lot with room for 250 cars.[328]

The number of classrooms in the center spoke of its commitment to education. The rooms devoted to dance, theater, and photography demonstrated an interest in culture and the arts. Its lounges and game rooms were evidence of the center's dedication to community building. Its large parking lot showed an expectation that this was a place that would hum with activity. The executive staff and lay leadership of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago felt it was the responsibility of the branch centers to promote Jewish knowledge and identity. Though this was not visible in the newly-built classrooms, it was evident in the art work which adorned walls such as paintings with biblical themes and the mural depicting the history of Chicago's Jewish immigrants on the western edifice of the building.[329] It could also be found in the center's printed schedule of classes.

Two other facilities shared space with the newly built center. The Mayer Kaplan Senior Adult Center utilizes space

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[328]JWB Journal, Vol. XVIII, (1969).

[329]Goldberg, 35, 66.

on the second floor of Horwich building. Although it is easily accessible from the rest of the building, it has its own separate entrance. This entrance is symbolic of its autonomy. Although this center functions inside the larger Horwich building, it has always had its own staff and governing board. The Virginia Frank Center, sponsored by the Jewish Children's Bureau - another affiliate of the Jewish Federation - is adjacent to the "J" building. It provides services to emotionally disturbed Jewish children and their families. Among these services are individual and family counseling and a preschool program. The relationship between the Horwich Center and the Virginia Frank Center stops at their common walkway.

Before the Horwich Center was opened there was outreach into the community to build interest in the center. Workers went in to the public schools and members of the planning committee held coffees in their houses for residents of the local community. As the building was being built the center set up offices in a store front across from the building site so that people could sign up for memberships and classes.[330] The first clubs and classes for children sponsored by the center were also offered at this time.

The main purpose of the BHJCC was to provide for the relaxation and enrichment needs of the Jews of the community. This is evident in the types of spaces included

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[330]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

in the design of the building. It can also be seen in a letter found in the 58th Annual Report of The Jewish Community Centers of Chicago. In this letter the following statement was made by the president and executive director of the organization:

> The opening of the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center and the Mayer Kaplan Senior Adult Center in 1960 represents a significant addition to the resources of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago for meeting the needs of people by providing for a rewarding use of their leisure.[331]

From the day that the doors of the "J" opened it was bursting with activity. In its first year of operation more than 14,000 people participated in at least one BHJCC sponsored event or program.[332] In the next few years this number rose to more than 16,000. The center was seen as "the place to be"[333] and it would remain so for approximately 15 years, until the mid-1970's.

During these years the "J" sponsored a comprehensive program for children which began with its highly respected pre-school. Elementary school children attended classes in arts and crafts, music, cooking, pottery, swimming, ballet, and various facets of physical education. For the "tween" -

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[331]58th Annual Report of the Jewish Community Centers of Metropolitan Chicago, (Thursday, January 26, 1961). Located in the library of the Chicago Historical Society.

[332]58th Annual Report of the Jewish Community Centers of Metropolitan Chicago

[333]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

an age category used to describe children in 6th through 8th grades - there were classes in more advanced subjects like woodworking, photography, typing, and bicycle repair and maintenance.[334] There were also game rooms where students could go for more informal socialization. During school vacations there were day trips and on-site programs for children of all ages. The pool and gymnasium were open to children unaccompanied by an adult on weekends. The children enjoyed the autonomy and the free play; their parents felt secure that they were sending their children to a safe, supervised setting.

The "J" also provided opportunities for older students. Teenagers had the opportunity of becoming involved in one of two theater groups: Teen Footlighters which produced one drama and one musical comedy each year, and the award winning Center Youth Theater which produced more innovative works such as original plays by the likes of such authors as David Mamet. Throughout this time the "J" also sponsored programs which afforded participants the opportunity for socialization in a loosely structured environment like its teen lounges and drop-in centers. Further, the center had a Teen Board made up of representatives from all of the local high schools and various teen organizations such as the

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[334]These classes were so popular that for a number of years the "J" sponsored bus service to and from the center from a number of schools in the neighborhood and the nearby suburbs.

B'nai Brith Girls and the American Zionist Youth Foundation.[335] In later years, the Chicago Jewish Youth Council also comprised of representatives from various Jewish teen boards met at the Jewish Community Center.

College students and those newly out of college also found a home at the "J". For the former group the center offered a weekly coffee house on Sunday evenings. For the latter group, the center sponsored singles events and events for young professionals.

Many young parents - roughly between the ages of 25 and 40 at the time of their first association with the "J", followed their children into the center. Mothers who dropped their children off at pre-school often stayed for discussion groups, book reviews, and classes in the material arts. For those unable to attend classes during the day, the same offerings were often duplicated at night. Tuesday Night Forums ranging in topics from politics to religion, from film to the environment, also attracted a great many people as did yearly election forums.[336]

In the scope of activities it offered, the BHJCC was compared to the JPI in the latter organization's heyday. In addition to its extensive educational program for adults,

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[335]Cynthia and Ted Berland, interview, January 4, 1993.

[336]The Central Board of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago, in order not to alienate anyone, suggested that every party be represented to these forums. Although all political parties were not always present, a representative was always invited.

the "J" was overflowing with cultural programming. During the time of its greatest activity, the "J" employed a music director, a dance specialist and a cultural arts coordinator. One could be a member of the organization's choral group (for which one had to try out), or its theater group. One could also view art on Jewish themes, or by Jewish artists, or belonging to Jewish collectors, in the Rosenstone gallery. At the BHJCC even the fund raisers had cultural and educational cores. Starting in the early 1960's, the "J" sponsored yearly juried art fairs. The Children's Committee organized used book and record sales.

Two groups deserve credit for the extensive cultural and educational program which was offered by the BHJCC in its early years of operation. The first is the staff of the center, led by executive director Morris Levin. Levin, the "J's" first director, admired the scope of activity proffered by the 92nd Street "Y" in New York City. Aspiring to meet the level of service achieved by that organization, he often looked to the "Y" for ideas.[337] His staff supported him in this endeavor. Furthermore, they were good listeners; they offered the classes and programs that the membership had asked for. Even after Levin moved downtown in 1964,[338] he continued to inspire the staff at the "J" to

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[337]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

[338]In 1964 Levin became the Assistant to the General Director of the Jewish Community Centers of Metropolitan Chicago. He held this position until 1968 when he accepted

offer high quality cultural and educational programs. Stanley Swig, who after leaving Norwalk in 1964 worked as the Assistant Director at the 92nd Street "Y" in Manhattan, came to BHJCC in 1968. Like Levin, Swig had high standards when it came to center programming.

The other group which influenced the quality of the educational and cultural programming at the BHJCC was the center's members and lay leaders. It was "an extraordinary group of people coming together at an extraordinary time."[339] These leaders were interested in obtaining the highest quality in cultural and educational programming for themselves and their children. Further, they were willing to volunteer their time to make sure this quality was achieved.

Although the sports programs at the "J" were not as central to the organization's program as they were to that of the other two centers in this study, the facilities for physical education drew a great many people in to the center. The "J" sponsored a children's swim team for a number of years. However, the pool was not only used by children. It was also used by adults who took advantage of the facilities before and after work, and by senior citizens who used the pool for exercise or to take advantage of water

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a job with the Jewish Community Center movement in San Francisco.

[339]Ted and Cynthia Berland, interview, January 4, 1993.

aerobics which strengthened their bodies. It was always possible to hear the latest news while relaxing in the "schvitz", and one often had to reserve time in order to be assured space on the handball courts.

The "extraordinary people" who gathered at the Horwich exercised and learned and were enriched on its premises. However, the greatest function of the BHJCC during this time period was neither educational, cultural, nor even physical. It was social. The center in its prime was considered "the place to be."[340]

In 1970, the Mayer Kaplan Jewish Community Center was opened in Skokie less than five miles away from the Horwich center. Its facilities were similar to those of the BHJCC in scope. At the time of its opening, many of the lay leaders at Horwich were bitter. With another large center operating nearby, the Horwich center was no longer either the flagship of the Jewish Community Center movement of Chicago, nor even the North Side. Many board members believed that the new agency would siphon off funds, members, resources, and community focus; all of which the Horwich Center needed. The central board tried to engender good rapport between the staffs of the respective centers, so that programmatic efforts would not be duplicated. However, this rapport was never developed to the point where

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[340]This sentiment cannot be attributed to one source as it has been expressed to me by many different people.

the staffs could work well together.[341]

In 1972, Joel Carp became the fourth executive director of the BHJCC. During his tenure the face of the "J" changed. It became an organ, not of culture, but of social work. In 1953, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago, that organization broadened its statement of purpose to reflect a commitment to "social work as the principal professional method of service to individuals, groups, and the Jewish community as a whole."[342] Nearly twenty years later, in his position as the executive director at one of the branch centers, Carp was not merely a proponent of this commitment, he was its embodiment.

Carp's views as to the importance of social work in the center setting can be seen in a paper he gave in front of the National Association of Jewish Communal Workers in 1974. In this paper he stated his belief that:

> therapeutic services flow as a part of all program services, and indeed most frequently will emerge out of so-called regular or usual program contacts or services.[343]

He went on to define some standards which would insure that the atmosphere of the Jewish Community Center would be

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[341]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

[342]Sentinel History of Chicago Jewry 1911-1986, 232.

[343]Joel M. Carp, "The Social Work Function of the Jewish Community Center," in Conference Papers of the Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Communal Workers June 2-5, 1974, 19.

conducive to therapeutic social work. Among these standards are found the following:

> JCC's should require that all social workers, including the agency executive director and assistant executive director, carry ongoing direct practice responsibilities with members (Boards, committees and supervision are not direct practice!)
>
> Adequate time should be built into worker's job loads for these and other related practice responsibilities.
>
> The JCC should clearly define its social work function, identify its social work staff clearly, and project this information to the center's constituency.
>
> The center's statement of purpose should include reference to the use of social work methods in clear terms (not to be confused with character building).[344]

That the above standards were instituted at the BHJCC under Carp's leadership is undeniable. Center sponsored "rap groups" were held on different occasions in local schools. Social workers ran quasi-group therapy sessions once a week after Teen Footlighters' rehearsals. The Backdoor, a summer drop-in program for tweens with a social-work flavor was established in cooperation with the Response Center, a clinic and counseling center for Jewish teens affiliated with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Carp himself tried on more than one occasion to organize a 'group' made up of some of the women who volunteered their time at the center.

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[344]Carp, 33-4.

As social work became the focus of the agency, the cultural and educational aspects of the program suffered. Between 1977 and 1980, a majority of the center's arts staff were let go or left of their own volition. The center tried to fill gaps left by these departures on a class by class basis, This was not very successful. By 1980 the only vestiges which remained of the long running cultural programs were the yearly art fairs and the Teen Footlighters. The latter would last only two more years. The educational program consisted mainly of book reviews, political forums and occasional lectures Jewish scholars, politicians and literary figures.

At the same time that the "J" began to focus on social work, the first true attempt to involve the Orthodox community in center activities was made. The kitchen at the center had always been kosher, as was food served at agency functions. However, both the members and the staff often brought non-kosher food into the building. Due to the tireless efforts of Eugene Matanky, one of the few Orthodox members of the Board of Directors and an active participant in Center functions, the kashrut policy if the "J" was reviewed and changed to meet the needs of the Orthodox community. Individuals and groups were asked not to bring non-kosher food into the center, and a mashgiach[345] was

[345]This Hebrew term, meaning monitor or inspector, is used to describe the person who certifies that a facility is functioning within the laws of Kashrut.

brought in to inspect the premises twice a year. Before this time, the only concession which had been made to Orthodox community was the installation of liquid soap dispensers in the locker rooms. This, along with a provision for the overnight use of lockers, allowed halachic Jew, especially children, to use the pool facilities on Saturdays without having to carry anything.[346]

The next attempt to encourage the participation of the Orthodox community came in the mid-1980's. The center organized children's classes on Sundays. Although these classes were open to anyone interested in attending, they filled the needs of the Orthodox families whose children attended parochial school. Due to a lengthened school day, and in most cases a long commute, Orthodox children could not attend after school classes at any of the local neighborhood organizations.

These changes reflected an effort to meet the needs of the changing community. As older residents moved out, young, ultra-Orthodox Jews with large families moved in. In the last few years the number of Orthodox Jews using the building has increased drastically. Most take advantage of the hours which have been set aside for strictly male or strictly female use of the pool and gym facilities.[347]

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[346]Ted and Cynthia Berland, interview, January 7, 1993.

[347]Alice Segal, telephone interview by author, Chicago, IL./ Cincinnati, OH., April, 13, 1993.

In 1982, the Teen Footlighters, the last center sponsored program for teenagers produced its last play. The next year MetroTeen (standing for Metropolitan Services for Teens) was founded as a department of the Jewish Community Centers of Metropolitan Chicago. A number of other departments were opened under the auspices of the JCC's of Metropolitan Chicago in the early eighties. These departments included: Adult Services, Senior Adult Services, and a Judaica department. These departments, located in branch centers or in the downtown offices of the JCC's of Chicago, centralized services to specific groups. The effect of this centralization was a diminishing of the branch centers' responsibility to provide services for the groups an on the subject matter assigned to the departments. This action reduced the autonomy of branch centers. During this time many of the reports about the BHJCC, found in the JWB Circle, concerned the centers participation in city-wide activities. Among these were included support groups for children of Holocaust survivors and educational programs for Russian immigrants.

In the mid-eighties the BHJCC focused some of its energy on the Jewish young families that remained in the area. A day care program which served both toddlers and children of school age was established. The center also began to give more attention to programs such as"Daddy and Me" for young families.

On June 1, 1985, as the Horwich Center was celebrating its 25th anniversary, a merger with the nearby Mayer Kaplan Jewish Community Center was announced.[348] This occurred five years after predictors had said the BHJCC should have closed. The BHJCC became the Bernard Horwich/Mayer Kaplan Jewish Community Center. This action was taken by the Central Board for two basic reasons. One of these reasons was a drastic decrease in center membership. This decrease can be linked to the gradual Jewish migration to far northern suburbs which began in the late 1970's. At the Horwich center the decline can also be traced in part to the large influx of Orthodox Jews into West Rogers Park. This group was not interested in the Jewish Community Center, as they saw it as a secular institution. Further, they had neither the time nor the means to give to the JCC as they devoted all of their extra resources to their synagogues and the parochial schools attended by their children. The other reason for the merger was the financial burden that both centers placed on the system. Both centers were under-utilized. It was not cost-effective to pay two full-time staffs to serve ever dwindling populations. Both the lay leadership and the executive staff of the Jewish Community Centers of Metropolitan Chicago hoped that this merger would save money and staff resources. It was their idea that the centers could be unified under one executive director and

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[348]Goldberg, 29.

one staff. Some of the services would be provided at the Horwich site while the Kaplan site would sponsor others.[349]

The boards of directors at both of the centers were against this move.[350] They knew that, coming from different communities, the patrons of their respective centers had different needs. They did not see common ground on which the once separate organizations could meet. They were sure that such a merger would end in failure. A few short years after the centers had merged, they separated.

The merger failed for a number of reasons. One of these was the degree of anger harbored by both the patrons and the lay leadership of both centers.[351] Many Horwich board members felt as if they had been betrayed by the downtown board. It was as if the business they had built from the ground up had been captured in a hostile takeover. As members of the board of directors had perceived, the members of the different centers had widely varying needs. A unified board and professional staff could not meet the specific needs of the communities in which the facilities were located.[352] Lastly, the residents of West Rogers Park were unwilling to travel three miles to obtain services they

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[349]Segal, interview, April, 13, 1993.

[350]Ted and Cyntyhia Berland, interview, January 4, 1993.

[351]Nancy Levinsky, telephone interview by author, Chicago, IL./Cincinnati, OH., April 14, 1993.

[352]Alice Segal, interview, April 13, 1993.

had previously been able to gain in their own community.[353]

The Horwich Center now shares its building with the Council For Jewish Elderly (CJE), an organization supported by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago which provides services to the city's Jewish elderly. CJE occupies the basement of the center. The classrooms, long since unused, were transformed into offices from which the organization does the bulk of its business. Further, some of the central agency's services to Russian-Americans come out of the Horwich building.

The BHJCC shares its West Rogers park neighborhood with a large number of synagogues. Many large congregations - Reform, Conservative, and Traditional - grew up at the same time as the JCC. In addition to these synagogues there are many small orthodox "shteibels" as well as a number of home minyans. From the beginning, before the center was dedicated, there was friction between the local synagogues and the center. An agreement was drawn up with the synagogues which stated that there would be no religious services or religious education at the center. Further, under terms of the agreement the center was not allowed to lease any part of its premises to another agency for the purpose of holding religious services.[354] This rule was bent for one group of people, American Armed Forces

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[353]Levinsky, interview, April 14, 1993.

[354]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November, 1, 1992.

Personnel, for whom a Seder was held from the late sixties to the mid-seventies.

The synagogues were concerned that the center might drain people from them. Because of this they were often quite secretive about the events and programs which they sponsored. In the mid-sixties and early seventies when the JCC offered to coordinate a community calendar, the synagogues would have no part of it.

However, the organizations were forced to cooperate in some arenas. The synagogues and the community center were partners in the West Rogers Park Jewish Community Relations Council. This organization sponsored rallies and fund drives for Israel and planned annual Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebrations. Synagogues also encouraged children to participate in and provided marshals for the annual Jewish United Fund sponsored Walk With Israel which had its main focus of operation at the Horwich Center in the years following its inception.

Though the staff at the BHJCC tried to work with the synagogues which surrounded it, the center did not enter into any joint programs with the houses of worship. Just such an effort had been undertaken by the central agency in the late 1940's.

The synagogues viewed the JCC as potential competition. They were not wrong. Many of the area congregations offered lecture series' and singles events. None, however, had

either the staff or the expertise found at the "J".

Today, the roles of the center and the local synagogues have reversed. A large percentage of the Jews in the community is Orthodox. The energies of these Jews is focused on their synagogues as well as on a number of day schools and local yeshivot - schools devoted to the study of Jewish texts. The synagogues, therefore, are no longer concerned that the center will pull away their members. Rather, it is the center which must vie - along with the synagogues and day schools - for a share of this group's time.

In the first few decades of the "J's" existence, the congregations saw it as a potential membership sponge. In contrast, the "J" saw the synagogues as potential allies. Area rabbis were often invited to speak at educational forums held at the center throughout the sixties and seventies. The center also consulted local rabbis from time to time when making policy decisions such as appropriate hours of operation on Saturdays. The professional staff of the center continues to work with area rabbis to hammer out policy on religion-related issues and to boost the image of the center in the Orthodox community. This, they hope will bring more Orthodox Jews into the center.

Through the years the center has been one the leaders among the many Jewish organizations in the neighborhood. At its height it became one of the major voices for Chicago

Judaism. In 1967 during the Six Day War and in 1973 after the Yom Kippur War, "the switchboard lit up."[355] Jews called asking where and how they could show their support for Israel. Local newspapers called to get the reactions of Chicago's Jewry.

In the years directly before and during the merger, activity at the center diminished drastically. Many of those who supported the center when it was new moved to different areas in the Chicago metropolitan area. The Jewish population which remained in the area had aged. There was no longer a need for an expansive children's program like the center had sponsored in the 1960's and 1970's. Though there were a few lectures and musical presentations geared toward the adult Jewish population, these events were too few and far between to keep these people interested in the center.

It is astounding that the "J" has stayed in business through this change. This was possible for two reasons. The "J" was willing to share its space with another Jewish communal organization. The building was remodeled a few years ago when the offices of the Council for Jewish Elderly moved into its basement. In agreeing to this move, the center was able to rid itself of the burden of a number of unused classrooms, which had been used for children's classes in previous years. During this remodeling, the

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[355]Rosalyn and Nate Kraus, interview, November 1, 1992.

center was also able to change the street the main and upper levels of the building to better suit the needs of its constituency.

There is still a Jewish community in the neighborhood. As the community has aged, the senior citizen population taking advantage of the center has swelled. This surge was enhanced by the recent building of an apartment complex/resident facility for senior adults less than half a mile away from the center. As the many of the founding members of the center moved away or outgrew their need for the services provided by the center, they were replaced by two new Jewish populations who began moving into the neighborhood as early as the late 1970's. One of these groups was Russian immigrants. Many of these people use the homes and apartments in East and West Rogers Park and the surrounding areas as temporary residences when they first come to the country. After they are settled with the language and the customs of the country and begin supporting themselves, they often move to the surrounding suburbs. However, for as long as they live in the neighborhood the BHJCC provides them with recreational and educational services.

The other population now using the center is the Orthodox Jews. They use the center primarily for recreation. They are patrons of the small health club and the pool. Levinsky stated that after Shabbat is over on

Saturday evenings, "the center is bursting with activity.[356]

The BHJCC is doing its best to meet the needs of the newest members of the West Rogers Park Jewish community. Though no one can guess how long any Jewish community will remain in the area, it is certain that as long as there are Jews there will be a Jewish Community Center.

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[356]Levinsky, interview, April 14, 1993.

CHAPTER FIVE

A VISION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

A picture of a white haired woman and a pre-school age child captured in a fond embrace adorns the cover of the most recent issue of the JCC Association Circle. Beneath the picture are the two words which represent the most recent programming trend of the Jewish Community Center Movement in the United States: "Jewish Continuity."[357] As shown earlier, Jewish continuity is not a new concept, rather this "in phrase" represents the task YMHA's and Jewish Community Centers have continually accomplished for more than 100 years.

Jewish continuity represents the transmission of Jewish culture, knowledge and spirit from one generation to the next. Its programs are similar to those run by outreach committees of Reform Jewish synagogues in that they center on the transmission of basic Jewish knowledge and experience. The assumption behind many programs of Jewish continuity is that the target audience has little knowledge of Jewish culture, history or religious practice. This, it is thought, is due to the high rate of intermarriage and an overwhelming disaffection with religion felt by many young

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[357]JCC Association Circle, Vol. XLIX, No. 4, (Winter 1993), cover.

Jews.

As the 21st century approaches, the Jewish Community Center movement in the United States will continue to support programs of Jewish Continuity and family education. Perhaps, in light of the recent population study conducted under the auspices of the Council of Jewish Federations, centers will increase the quantity of outreach programs which they offer. If the dismal figures on the rate of intermarriage does not motivate this action, surely economics will. Jewish (as well as secular) not for profit agencies across the country are suffering from the effects of the economic recession. Synagogues are hiring one staff member to do the job once accomplished by two.[358] National organizations are scaling back the services which they offer and closing branch offices.

The picture on the cover of the JCCA Circle described above was taken at the Carlyn Wohl building of the Jewish Community Centers Association of St. Louis. This is not the first time an activity or program held at the center was featured in this nationally distributed magazine. That the services offered by the JCCA of St Louis are often featured in the JCCA Circle indicates the level of excellence in programming this organization achieves. Innovation will

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[358]It is not uncommon for congregations to hire rabbi-educators or cantor-educators when they can only afford to pay one professional. Some congregations hire program directors instead of assistant rabbis as the unordained professionals often command lower salaries.

most likely be the watchword of the Jewish Community Centers Association of St. Louis as it approaches the 21st century. Having achieved excellence in programs for Jewish continuity, such as the board and counselor-in-training trips to Israel, the JCCA, while continuing to provide these types of experiences, will most likely expand its horizons further. In the past few decades, the JCCA been awarded a number of research grants from various public and private institutions; one of these grants was used to establish their program for the integration of the educable mentally retarded. In the next few decades it is likely that the JCCA will continue its interest in obtaining grants through which the staff will be able to create programs to fill the needs of Jews and other members of the community.

Though Jewish continuity has been in vogue in the Jewish Community Center movement for at least the past eight years, the Jewish Center of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton has just begun to initiate programs of this type. Kane says of the organization which she directs, "we're always two or three years behind the times."[359] Though behind the times, the recently instituted programs for Jewish continuity at the center have been very successful. The "Connected Kids" class which began in January, 1993 was full in both its winter and spring sessions. Because of this success, it can be assured that the JCC will continue

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[359]Kane, interview, April 19, 1993.

to offer Connected Kids and other programs like it.

The future of the Connecticut center is uncertain. Despite the energy staff and lay leaders have expended raising enthusiasm for the organization in the community, the center is still burdened with a large - and at times unmanageable - debt. The one sure-fire way to relieve this debt would be to sell the property on which the center is presently located. Though center members are emotionally attached to the breathtaking view of the waterfront, the lay leaders of the center have agreed to sell if a buyer can be found. It is not known when, or if, this will happen.

Even if a move is not on the horizon, the center staff is committed to making services more accessible to center patrons. As mentioned earlier, a search for a satellite center in Westport has already begun. Perhaps, by the year 2000 there will also be centers in Weston and Wilton.

The concept of Jewish Continuity as it is found in the other two centers has no place in the future of the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center. The three populations which are served by the center have different needs than those provided for in programs of continuity. The aging population in the area views the center as a comfortable arena for socialization. For them the center's value comes from the recreational program which it offers them. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union appear to be prime candidates for programs in Jewish continuity. In truth this

is not the case. According to Nancy Levinsky, the present executive director of the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, "The Soviets who are becoming successful, leave. When they are at Horwich they're stressed; they hold down two and three jobs, they're trying to learn a new language and get used to a new country..."[360] In their efforts to make sense out of a new language and the customs of a new country, they are left little time for the type of Jewish education found in continuity programs. Instead they use the Horwich Center for recreation, to see friends who share their problems and to blow off a little steam. They also use the center for advice.

When Levinsky looks at these two groups she does not see the future of the BHJCC. Though she thinks it is a morbid thing to say aloud, she knows that the senior citizens who use the facility will not be a part of its future leadership. The Russian immigrants, when they are living in West Rogers Park, usually have neither the time nor the ability to serve as leaders in the center. Therefore, if the center is to survive into the 21st century, it must look to the Orthodox community for leadership.[361]

Orthodox Jews do not look to the center for Jewish

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[360]Nancy Levinsky, telephone interview by author, April 14, 1993.

[361]Levinsky, interview, April 14, 1993.

continuity as they live this idea in their daily lives. Like the other two groups they use the center for recreation. These Jews are pleased to have a venue outside of their homes, synagogues and schools where they can feel comfortable in their religion and where the specific strictures imposed by their religious beliefs are honored.

The Orthodox community in the area has developed an affection for the Horwich Center. Levinsky would like to see this population "change [their] affection to responsibility."[362]

It costs approximately 1,000,000 dollars a year to run the center. Only half of these funds come from the community in which the Horwich center is located. This money comes primarily from fees and from the small number of donations the center receives each year. The remainder of the money it costs to support the center comes from the larger Jewish community Center system in Chicago or from the city's Jewish federation.

If the center is to survive and thrive it needs to become self supporting. This support must come from the Orthodox community. All indicators say that it will. The Orthodox community is interested in putting down roots in the community. There are many day schools and synagogues within walking distance of the center. Just recently the community erected an eruv - a type of boundary line that

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[362]Nancy Levinsky, interview, April 14, 1993.

allows Orthodox Jews to Carry in the public domain in Shabbat and holidays. The Orthodox community has erected or helped to maintain many of the structures that are important to their way of life. If the center becomes important enough, they will support it also.

As is evidenced in the preceding pages, there have been times throughout the history of the Jewish Community Center Movement when branch centers throughout the country have appeared to be programming in concert. At present, this is not the case amongst the three centers focused upon in this study. As the movement nears its sesquicentennial these three organizations will continue to flourish following diverging paths in the same wood.

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