

CHAPTER 1

JEWES SETTLE IN FRONTIER SAN DIEGO

By Stanley Schwartz, Ben Weinbaum and Lawrence Krause



LOUIS ROSE WAS THE FIRST JEWISH pioneer to reside in San Diego, where he was to have as profound an impact on the area as anyone of his generation. Rose was an energetic and successful entrepreneur engaged in real estate acquisition and development, ranching, agriculture and hotel proprietorships. He was a butcher, tanner, general merchandiser and brick maker, among other occupations, and he was reasonably successful at almost all of these endeavors. (Not quite all: Rose started a mattress factory using dried seaweed as the mattress filler; his fellow townsmen preferred their old lumpy mattresses.^{vii}) Rose also involved himself at times in mining gold, copper and silver in San Diego County.

Shortly after he arrived in San Diego, Rose was impaneled on the first San Diego grand jury. He was elected a city trustee in 1853, and later became treasurer of the San Diego and Gila Railroad.

In about 1866, Rose bought a tract of land and laid out Roseville on the north shore of what today is the Commercial Basin just off of San Diego Bay. He also acquired property on Point Loma facing the bay, which today is known as La Playa. Rose expected Old Town to grow in the direction of his Roseville property, and, in the meantime, he considered it a site where the employees of his enterprises would reside.

Roseville was to become a major part of greater San Diego, but not in Rose's lifetime. While Roseville was an attractive site, it was Alonzo Horton's New Town that became the next large population center.

In 1870, Rose built a wharf at La Playa, recognizing San Diego Bay's potential as one of the world's great harbors. Rose's wharf was the third to be built in the San Diego area in 18 months. At 472 feet long and 30 feet wide, Rose's wharf was larger than the two earlier wharves and extended to a depth of 12 feet of water at the spring low tide. Proudly, the press reported that the new structure was "the widest and most substantial wharf upon the Pacific coast outside of San Francisco."^{viii}

Rose also purchased ranch land in Las Yeguas Canyon, a few miles north of town on the stage road to



Louis Rose, Jewish pioneer, civic leader, entrepreneur and developer, was instrumental in the founding of Beth Israel.

Los Angeles, with ample acreage for gardens, vineyards, tobacco and pasture for his cattle, horses and mules. Today the canyon is known as Rose Canyon. As a real estate subdivider, Rose was naturally interested in building materials. He established a lumberyard near the bay for his Roseville and La Playa holdings, and he opened a brickyard in Rose Canyon.

Louis Rose was typical of the pioneer Jews of San Diego in that he enjoyed total social integration with leading non-Jewish families, and, at the same time, he and his family were part of the Jewish community. A typical social gathering of the times is reflected in an 1873 newspaper item: "A number of our large Jewish families had a pleasant picnic at Roseville Sunday afternoon. The venerable Mr. Rose accompanied the picnickers." Similar

outings at Rose’s ranch in Rose Canyon are mentioned in the 1850s diary of Victoria Jacobs (who later married Maurice A. Franklin).

According to the federal census, three Jews lived in San Diego in 1850 in addition to Louis Rose. They were Lewis Franklin, Jacob Marks and Charles Fletcher, all European immigrants recently settled in the United States. By the fall of 1851, all had become merchants doing business in the plaza area of Old Town.

Three of these men (the fourth was out of town) came together to observe Yom Kippur on October 6, 1851, in the home of Lewis Franklin. This was the first known Jewish service held in the small town, and it marked the beginning of Jewish religious life in San Diego. The *San Diego Herald* reported the simple observance in its October 9 edition:

The Israelites of San Diego, faithful to the religion of their Forefathers, observed their New Years days and Day of Atonement with due solemnity. The Day of Atonement – one of the most solemn and sacred days in the Jewish calendar – was observed by Messrs. Lewis Franklin, Jacob Marks, and Chas. A. Fletcher (the only three Hebrews in town) by their assembling in the house of the former gentleman and passing the entire day in fasting and prayers. We are glad to record such an act of religious faith under circumstances the most unfavorable.^x

The editor of the *Herald*, J. J. Ames, must have known that Louis Rose was not in town that day.

Little is known about the religious background of Charles Fletcher, but Lewis Franklin and Jacob Marks (also known as Marks Jacobs or Mark I. Jacobs) were both devout, knowledgeable Jews from Europe. These two men represented the type of Jew who would not allow his devotion to Judaism to be thwarted by “the most unfavorable circumstances” of rugged frontier life.

It was fitting that this first Jewish service in San Diego was held in Lewis Franklin’s home, because two years earlier in San Francisco – on Yom Kippur in 1849 – the first Jewish service in California had been held in Franklin’s tent room. The next year, during the High Holy Days of 1850, while still in San Francisco, Franklin had officiated and preached a sermon at an evening service at the Kearney Street Hebrew Congregation.

After this first service in San Diego, Jewish religious activity continued during the decade through 1860. This was a period during which San Diego Jews were not formally organized but did practice their Judaism together, as evidenced by newspaper reports of various religious observances.



Rabbi Ronald D. Gerson Beth Israel’s First Student to Become a Rabbi

By Lawrence Krause

RABBI RONALD D. GERSON, rabbi of Congregation Children of Israel, Athens, Georgia, was born in 1947 and raised in San Diego. His family belonged to Beth Israel, and Rabbi Gerson was Beth Israel’s first religious school student to become a rabbi. Rabbi Gerson’s family lived in Coronado and Point Loma, and he attended Point Loma High School. His undergraduate degree was from UCLA, and he holds a doctorate from Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. Rabbi Gerson and his wife, Tamra, have two children, Tziporah and Phillip.

Fortunately for the chronicling of Beth Israel’s history, Rabbi Gerson chose in 1974 to write his master’s thesis at HUC–JIR on *Jewish Religious Life in San Diego, California, 1851–1918*, for which he exhaustively studied original documents of the time.

It was quite natural for Rabbi Gerson to choose this research topic since he and his family lived part of that history. He was also able to interview many older members of Beth Israel who had memories of earlier years.

Much of this chapter and the next is from Rabbi Gerson’s work.^x

Louis Rose, a Jewish Pioneer

By Ben Weinbaum

LOUIS ROSE WAS BORN on March 24, 1807, in Newhaus, Germany. Rose must have arrived in the United States by the early 1840s, because he became a naturalized U.S. citizen on January 2, 1846, in New Orleans. He engaged in the sale of diamonds and jewelry.

Rose married Caroline Marx in 1847 in New Orleans, but the failure of his jewelry business led him to set out for Texas to arrange for the sale of land, and from there he traveled to California. His intention was to have his wife join him, but Rose's letters to Caroline from San Antonio went astray. Assuming that her husband died, Caroline took up with another man, became pregnant, and went to South Carolina, where she miscarried. Louis and Caroline Rose's marriage was dissolved in 1854, with Rose agreeing to pay for her support until she remarried.

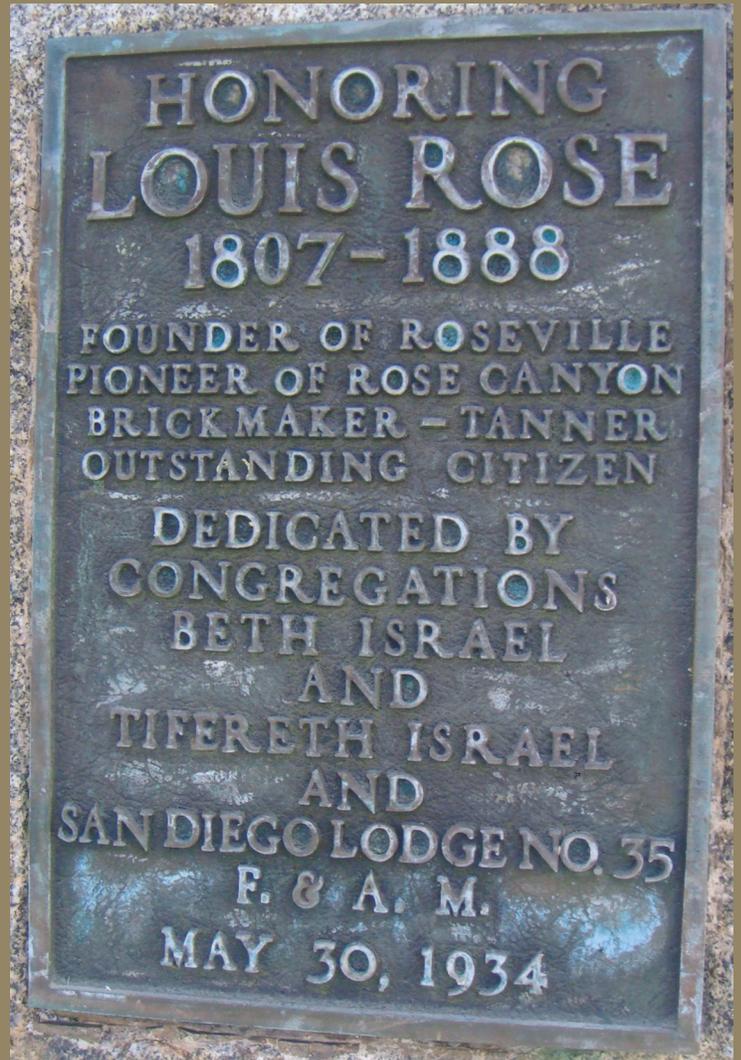
In June 1849, Rose joined a wagon train traveling from San Antonio to El Paso. For some unknown reason, he was ostracized by the military commander, Major Jefferson Van Horne, and forced to follow the wagon train by himself at a distance. Fortunately, Rose's fellow civilians disapproved of the officer's conduct and protected Rose. He survived, joined a different group, and completed the difficult overland trip to San Diego in 1850.

Rose remained unmarried for 15 years until 1869, when in May he married Matilda Newman.

Matilda was the widow of Jacob Newman, who had operated a retail store in San Diego in the early 1860s. She and Rose had two daughters, Helene, who was born on October 1, 1870 and died on March 13, 1873, and Henrietta, who was born in Old Town on May 22, 1872. Henrietta attended schools in San Diego and Los Angeles, preparing for a career as a public school teacher, which she pursued from 1894 to 1940. At the time of her retirement, Henrietta was on the staff of San Diego's Roosevelt Junior High School, having previously taught at Sherman Elementary School and elsewhere. Henrietta Rose served as Worthy Matron of the Southern Star Chapter No. 96, San Diego's first chapter of the Eastern Star. She never married.

Henrietta Rose was almost 85 when she died on February 20, 1957. Her mother, Matilda, had died at age 39 on August 4, 1875, when Henrietta was three and a half years old.

Louis Rose's passing occurred on February 12, 1888. He was almost 81. Upon his death, Rose was given the most treasured title the West could offer. His obituary bore the headline: "Death of an Argonaut."



Louis Rose is memorialized on a plaque found on the campus of the University of California, San Diego.

Building a Community

Pioneer Women of the Congregation

From research by Audrey R. Karsh, z"l

SAN DIEGO'S JEWISH pioneer women contributed significantly to Jewish communal life and provided a firm foundation for their congregation.

The first public recognition of San Diego's Jewish women appeared in the March 20, 1881, edition of the *San Diego Union*. On the social page, under the headline *The Purim Ball*, the article reported:

A large number of our Hebrew fellow citizens celebrated the Feast of Purim Monday evening by a grand supper and ball in the Academy on Ninth Street...Much credit is also due Mesdames Mannasse and Levy [sic] for active interest, work and good managing.

Typical of the time, identification appeared only through marital status and family surname.

By 1886, a growing Jewish community meant more children to educate and the need for a permanent congregational home. Marie (Mrs. Abraham) Blochman, from a prominent and well-educated French family, started a religious school for Beth Israel. Among the teachers were Celia and Laura Schiller and Celita Mannasse, daughters and niece of Marcus and Rebecca Schiller. Marcus Schiller was president of the congregation at that time. From 1893 to 1909, when Beth Israel was without a rabbi and lay leaders conducted High



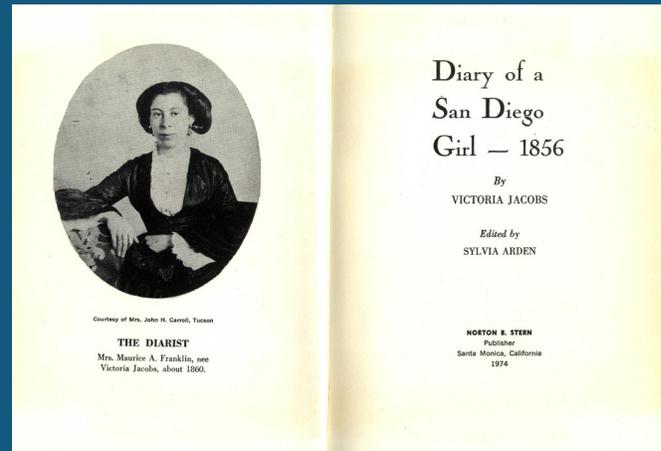
Celita Mannasse was one of the first teachers in Beth Israel's religious school and remained active in the school for many years.

Holy Days services, the religious school persevered under the direction of Mina Blochman Brust, who also helped found the San Diego Chapter of the American Red Cross.

San Diego's first Jewish singles group was founded in 1888 by Mina and Jeanne Blochman. The Clonian Society combined social and cultural interests. Its first event was a Pink Domino Ball, followed

by a Domino Purim Ball.

In 1889, the Jewish Ladies Fair for the Building Fund netted nearly \$2,000 for construction of the congregation's new synagogue. The *San Diego Sun* of January 24, 1889, reported: "The Jewish ladies of San Diego will give a grand fair commencing February 25 and ending March 2. A fine Oriental dinner will be served." President Amelia (Mrs. Charles) Wolfsheimer and treasurer Ermance (Mrs. Simon) Levi served dinner, along



The core of Jewish communal life, women founded and taught in Beth Israel's religious school, started social and philanthropic groups, and raised much-needed funds that kept the congregation afloat during difficult times.

with Rebecca (Mrs. Marcus) Schiller and her daughter Laura. The Blochman women managed the Gypsy and Oriental refreshments booths, and Celita Mannasse participated as a member of the Drill Team.

Before the Beth Israel Sisterhood was formed in 1912, an earlier group called the Mothers Club was founded in 1890 and met monthly as a temple auxiliary. The group's primary purpose was to support the religious school and the choir, but the Mothers Club also helped the congregation in other ways during difficult financial times.

In 1890, Ermance Levi organized the Ladies Hebrew Aid Society "to render relief to the sick and needy, to rehabilitate families and to aid the orphan and half-orphan." Elegant balls were held as a means to raise funds and provide social events for the entire city. This was the first Jewish social services group in San Diego, and it eventually became Jewish Family Service.

In 1895, the Ladies Pioneer Society formed. Though not a Jewish organization, many early Beth Israel members took part. Membership was limited to those who had arrived prior to 1880. Signers of the Ladies Pioneer Society constitution and bylaws included Hannah Mannasse, Amelia Wolfsheimer, Ermance Levi and Rebecca Schiller.

JEWISH MERCHANTS CONTINUE TO ARRIVE

San Diego's population grew slightly, from 650 persons counted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1850, to 731 in 1860, with significantly larger growth in the surrounding county. Throughout this period Old Town remained the center of San Diego. As the decade progressed, several more Jewish merchants appeared on the scene, sensing the commercial vacuum – the need for goods and supplies – that existed in the frontier town. These industrious Jews made a conscious effort to observe religious events together, despite difficult frontier conditions and lack of an organization.

Maurice Franklin came to join his brother Lewis in business. Lewis Strauss, H. L. Kohn, Marcus Katz, and J. A. Goldman were also engaged in business. The Mannasse brothers, Joseph, Hyman and Moses, arrived. Joseph Mannasse was to become a pillar in the Jewish community for many years. Like the original four Jewish residents, these men were all immigrants from Europe, and most were German.^{xi}



Joseph Mannasse, public-spirited citizen, successful businessman and developer, brought the first Torah to San Diego.

On August 24, 1853, several of these pioneer Jews gathered for San Diego's first Jewish wedding. The ceremony joined Leah Marks, daughter of Jacob and Hannah Marks, and the merchant Marcus Katz, a recent arrival in San Diego. H. L. Kohn officiated.^{xii}

Until the beginning of the 20th century, it was not uncommon for a learned individual to function as a lay rabbi. While H. L. Kohn was the first to conduct a Jewish wedding in San Diego, other non-ordained San Diego Jews also performed Jewish rituals. Jacob Marks, until he left in 1857, Louis Rose, H. Meyer, Louis

Mendelson and others assumed this responsibility. This phenomenon – of learned, non-ordained Jews serving as leaders of Jewish ritual – was extremely important in a frontier outpost like San Diego of the 1850s, for it was only through their knowledge and leadership that the Jews of San Diego were able to sustain their Jewish religious practice.

High Holy Days observances were recorded in 1854, 1855 and 1856. While it is likely that after the first Yom Kippur service in 1851, San Diego Jews met each year for the High Holy Days, written evidence of services in 1852 and 1853 is lacking. Jacob Marks, now known as Marks Jacobs, played a central role, hosting the 1854 service in his home, as Lewis Franklin had done earlier. He placed the following notice in the *Herald*:

To the Members of the Hebrew Faith in San Diego:

The approaching Sacred Festivals commencing on Friday evening next, the 22nd inst^{xiii}, will be observed with the accustomed ceremonies by assembling at my house for Religious Worship. All my Brethren in faith are invited to attend. Services will commence in the morning at 7, and evening at half past 6 o'clock.

Marks Jacobs

P.S. – On Saturday and Sunday, the 24th and 25th of September, inst, and Monday, the 2nd of October, the stores of the Israelitish faith will be closed.^{xiv}



Jacobs' postscript – and the following report in the *Herald* – indicates that San Diego Jews during this time followed the traditional practice of observing two days of Rosh Hashanah and beginning their worship early in the morning and evening. The shuttered stores of Jewish merchants were visible signs of the Jewish High Holy Days in San Diego.

In reporting on the 1855 High Holy Days observance of the small San Diego Jewish community, the *Herald* – in a humorous way – alluded to the difficult conditions under which Judaism was maintained in this small town. Referring, most likely, to the rugged frontier life of Southern California – and to the sparse Jewish population existing here – editor Ames portrayed San Diego as a “section of the ‘Vale of Tears’”:

The Jewish New Year: That portion of the family of the “Children of Israel” residing in this section of the “Vale of Tears,” have been celebrating the advent of their New Year, during the past two days, with the usual pomp and ceremonies, which will conclude this evening. We are given to understand that next Saturday will be observed as a Fast instead of a Feast Day, by the brethren of Israelitish persuasion, in commemoration of the sacrifice of atonement.^{xv}

The following year, when Judge Benjamin Hayes of Los Angeles passed through San Diego, he noted in his diary the Jewish observance of Rosh Hashanah, visibly evident by the closing of stores: “September 30, 1856, Sunday – This is the Jewish New Year; their [the Jews'] stores are all closed.”^{xvi}

Incidentally, in his diary a week earlier, Hayes had observed that only Lewis Franklin had closed his store on Saturday: “September 23, 1856, Sunday – The Jewish Sabbath yesterday was kept by only one person, Mr. L.A.F.” (Indeed, the *Herald* had pointed out a few years earlier that it had always been Franklin's custom to do so.)

That all the other Jewish stores were open on the Sabbath illustrates an important point: while San Diego Jews engaged in a good deal of religious activity, the pressures of frontier life hindered their piety. Living in the small, sparsely-populated frontier town made it very difficult for them to close shop on an important business day. In order for them – and their families – to survive economically, this was one *mitzvah*, or commandment, among others, they had to forego.

In 1857, when the Jews of San Diego gathered for another wedding, Marks Jacobs led the ritual that brought together his third daughter, Victoria, and Maurice Franklin in marriage, joining these two Jewish pioneer families:

Married: On Tuesday, March 31, at the residence of, and by the bride's father, according to Jewish rites, Maurice A. Franklin, late of London, England, to Victoria, third daughter of Marks and Hannah Jacobs, late of Manchester, England^{xvii}

JEW'S ASSERT RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

By 1859, San Diego contained “some twelve or fourteen Israelites,” according to the observation of Lewis Franklin.^{xviii} It was at this time that an unfortunate incident revealed, in a dramatic way, San Diego Jews' determination to practice Judaism freely and unharrassed.

In a long letter to editor Julius Eckman of the *Weekly Gleaner*, a San Francisco Jewish paper, Lewis Franklin described the incident. On Yom Kippur of that year, he wrote, Moses Mannasse – now engaged in grape-growing and other business in the northern part of the county – traveled some fifty miles to Old Town in order to complete the *minyan* (quorum of ten men) for services. As the Jews were worshipping together in “a room set apart by us as a temporary synagogue,” a deputy sheriff appeared and requested that Mannasse testify before the grand jury. Mannasse refused, “pleading as an excuse that he was engaged in his devotions.”

When the deputy sheriff returned within 15 minutes with a subpoena, the assembled Jews protested the interruption in their worship. They insisted that Mannasse was indispensable for the *minyan* and that it was improper to serve a subpoena in a synagogue. The Jews asserted that “force alone could convey Mr. Mannasse from our midst.” The deputy sheriff returned with a posse, rushed into the room, and took Mannasse to the grand jury.

Mannasse, standing up for his religious rights, refused to testify and was put in custody of the sheriff, who released him on his own recognizance. He returned to pray with his fellow Jews, and after sundown he went back before the grand jury to answer what turned out to be merely routine questions about a drunken brawl that had occurred in town.

Franklin, in his eloquent letter to Eckman,

expressed the outrage felt by every member of the Jewish community at this governmental interference in their religious practice:

I know not what feeling mostly activates me, in recapitulating to you the occurrences which have disgraced civilization in this our remote little town of San Diego. Were I to say that unmitigated disgust fills my bosom, I would scarcely express myself as a wrong of the nature I shall here recount to you knows no parallel in the annals of the civilized world.

An offense has been committed against all decency, and I, in common with all my coreligionists, call upon you to give publicity in the matter, so that the perpetrators may be marked with the rebuke of scorn by a free and independent press . . . although we are but few in number here, we are yet resolved to seek redress for this untoward outrage, and with this object, a full statement of facts is being forwarded to one of the most able counsels in the state, for him to represent us in any action which he, in his wisdom, thinks we can sustain in the Supreme Court of this state...^{xix}

This angry response by San Diego's Jews illustrated again their assertion of religious identity in frontier society. Moreover, through the reporting of this incident in a number of Jewish newspapers, Jews in other parts of the state and country became aware of the small but committed group of Jews in the distant outpost of San Diego.

PART OF A LARGER JEWISH COMMUNITY

In early 1860, the San Diego Jewish community joined a national Jewish philanthropic effort to aid destitute Jews in Morocco. To the small group of San Diego Jews, this collective act of *tzedakah* was another important way to overcome the physical distance from the centers of Jewish activity in the country and make them feel more a part of the larger American Jewish community. It also served as a manifestation of San Diego Jews' early commitment to *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, a commitment that Beth Israel holds to the current day. Both the *Weekly Gleaner* and the *San Diego Herald* reported that Heyman Mannasse, who organized the San Diego effort, contributed \$61 from the San Diego Jewish community

to the national Morocco Fund.

Thus, in this initial decade, 1851–1860, the small group of San Diego Jews – under very difficult frontier conditions and with no formal religious organization – did remarkably well in keeping Jewish religious life alive. Under the leadership of Lewis Franklin and Marks Jacobs, these Jews had sustained an interest in Jewish practice which would, in the next year, lead to the formation of an actual congregation.

By the end of 1861, both Jacobs and Franklin had left San Diego to try their business skills elsewhere. Jacobs and his family settled in San Bernardino in 1857, and Jacobs became a leader of the Jewish community there; indeed, the *Weekly Gleaner* reported that he spearheaded the Morocco Fund Drive in that town. Maurice and Victoria Franklin followed them to San Bernardino, where most of her family lived, in 1859. Lewis Franklin left San Diego in 1860 or 1861 for Baltimore, and shortly thereafter he returned to London.

WHY START A CONGREGATION IN 1861?

In 1861, the United States was in turmoil. The Civil War began in April with shots fired at Fort Sumter, and the first great battle, the battle of Bull Run, occurred in July. Yet 10 Jewish men in San Diego chose to start a congregation at precisely that time. One can only speculate why they chose that moment in history.

Of course, they were aware that Jews elsewhere had heard of them, and they may have wanted to entice relatives or other Jews to join them. A religious organization would indicate some stability and substance and might make San Diego more appealing. Furthermore, the Moses Mannasse incident may have convinced them that they needed a basis for proclaiming their legal rights. Moreover, a congregation could hold title once the Jews in San Diego established a cemetery.

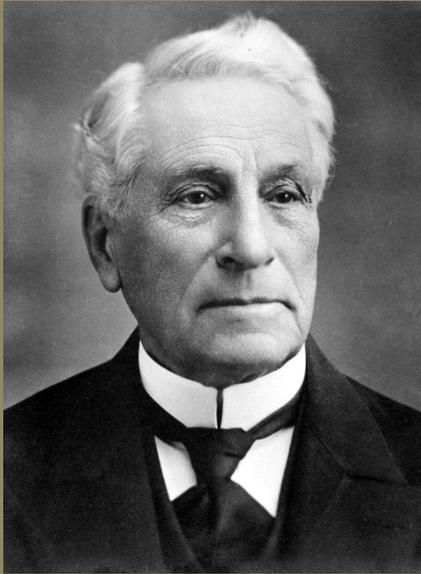
As the year 1861 unfolded, San Diego's population grew slightly. Its inhabitants were still mainly situated in Old Town, which had retained its Mexican appearance, but this would be the final decade in which that was so. The Jewish population had not changed much; according to the 1860 Federal Census, there were approximately 10 Jewish males in town, a few of them married. As was the case previously, practically all of them were German Jews, their birthplaces listed in the census as Prussia, Bavaria, Hanover and Darmstadt. As before, practically all were merchants in the Old Town plaza area.

It was at this time, with Marks Jacobs and Lewis Franklin gone, that a new leader of Jewish religious activity stepped forward. His name was Marcus Schiller, and he would retain a leadership role for more than 40 years.

Marcus Schiller, from Posen (in Prussian Poland), had come to San Diego in 1856, after spending time in New York, Alabama, Georgia and San Francisco. In partnership with Joseph Mannasse – another pillar of the Jewish community – until 1888, Schiller became one of San Diego’s most successful businessmen. With Mannasse, Schiller was involved in general merchandising, land investment, shipping, lumber and ranching. Schiller became a major force behind Jewish religious organizations in San Diego and remained so throughout his life.

Marcus Schiller, Pioneer and Philanthropist

By Ben Weinbaum



Marcus Schiller led the small group of men who gathered in Old Town in 1861 to create the congregation later known as Congregation Beth Israel.

ONE OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY’S early pioneers was Marcus Schiller, born about 1823 in Vronka, Prussia. There is some uncertainty concerning his year of birth, with historians placing it between 1820 and 1826. Schiller, himself, was probably unsure of the date. He received his early education in the public schools in Posen (or Poznan), Poland, and through extensive travel throughout Europe.

Schiller traveled through Europe to Scotland and from there, in 1840, to New York, where he became employed in a clothing and furnishings firm. After four years, he and a partner started their own clothing business. This enterprise lasted several years until Schiller moved south to engage in business in Tuscaloosa, Talladega and Marion, Alabama, and in Augusta, Georgia. It was in Talladega that he became a naturalized citizen in September 1844.

Attracted by the booming California gold rush economy, Schiller arrived in San Francisco in 1853 and again engaged in the clothing business. Then, in 1856, he came to San Diego for its warmer climate. He settled in Old Town and entered into a partnership to operate a store with fellow Prussian Moses Mannasse. At the end of the year, Schiller dropped the partnership with Moses Mannasse and formed a partnership

with Joseph S. Mannasse, Moses’ brother, in a general merchandising business that became very successful.

Schiller married Rebecca Barnert in September 1861, and they eventually had nine children, Harry, Laura, Celia, David, Hannah, Bertha, Leon, Nathan and Hattie. When, in 1861, a small group of men gathered in Old Town to create Adath Yeshurun – the original name of Congregation Beth Israel – Marcus Schiller was leader of the group. He also served as Master of the San Diego Lodge No. 35 of the Masons.

Schiller acquired ownership of many valuable county properties, including the Encinitas Rancho and a large portion of the San Dieguito Rancho. These ranchos were stocked with thousands of head of cattle, horses and mules. He also acquired large real estate holdings in Old Town, and later, when Alonzo E. Horton laid out New Town in 1867, Schiller acquired large additional holdings in New Town and in Roseville.

Marcus Schiller was one of San Diego’s most unstinting and philanthropic citizens. He contributed generously to the building of the first telegraph line into San Diego, and to the Washington, D.C. lobby formed to bring the Texas Pacific Railway to San Diego. He also contributed some 20 acres for the Tom Scott Railroad, and he was a stockholder in the Texas, Gila and San Diego Railway. Schiller was a member of the Board of Trustees of the City of San Diego, which had the vision to set aside 1,400 acres of land for City Park, now known as Balboa Park. His name, together with the names of his associates, has been memorialized in bronze in Balboa Park for this outstanding service.

Marcus Schiller died March 19, 1904, but his name endures in memory as one of San Diego’s outstanding pioneer citizens.

San Diego and the Civil War

By Lawrence Krause

SAN DIEGO HAD NEITHER a newspaper nor a telegraph during the entire Civil War. Its residents were dependent on news brought by passengers or newspapers on ships from San Francisco. It is unclear how much the residents knew or cared about the war. When the War Department put out a call to California for volunteers for the Union army, many men responded from Northern California but very few, if any, joined up from Southern California. There were small skirmishes in the West, but the life of residents was not affected.

ADATH YESHURUN: SAN DIEGO'S FIRST JEWISH CONGREGATION

Schiller assumed the role of leadership in San Diego's small Jewish community with the formation of the town's first Jewish congregation. After 10 years of religious activity without a formal organization, a small group of San Diego Jews decided the time was right to establish a congregation. Led by Schiller, this group of 10 men met in June 1861 in Old Town and organized congregation Adath Yeshurun ("Assembly of Israel").

In a letter to Julius Eckman, editor of the *Weekly Gleaner*, Schiller described the organizational meeting of Adath Yeshurun and sought from Eckman some written guidance for the new congregation:

To the Rev. Dr. Julius Eckman, Editor "Gleaner"

Dear Sir: I would beg you to notice a called meeting, held here these days by the small number of Israelites residing at San Diego.

San Diego, June 20, 1861

A meeting was held by us, the few Israelites at the above place. Mr. Marcus Schiller being called to occupy the chair, he opened the meeting by stating the object of the call: to be to form ourselves into a congregation. This proposition was unanimously adopted. It was further resolved (*viz*): Since we could number ten persons only, it was resolved to call our congregation by that simple name of "Adath Yeshurun," and resolved also: That we solicit the Rev. Dr. Julius Eckman, the Editor of the "Gleaner," to aid us in instructing us, by sending us a form of "Rules and Regulations" for our guide, and hereby enable us to succeed in our laudable undertaking; and, as we have heretofore

noticed "Whereas communications of this cause have always met with the liveliest interest on the part of the Editor "Gleaner"; and whereas we at this time most need your aid, we avail ourselves of the opportunity he gives out to find room in your "Gleaner" or, as the Rev. Sir may see, we seek his aid by instructing us how to found a congregation, and it would matter little in what way we receive it. Rev. Sir may use his time and convenience and we shall await his pleasure.

Respectfully your most obedient
Marcus Schiller^{xx}

The founding of the congregation received the attention of Jews in other parts of the country when America's first Jewish periodical, Rabbi Isaac Leeser's *The Occident*, reported the momentous event a few months later. In his comments, Leeser stressed the importance of the congregation as a means of unifying the Jews in the area: "We hope that the present effort may be eminently successful, as San Diego, being situated in the southern part of California, would form eminently a point of union for the many Israelites scattered in that vicinity. Mr. Marcus Schiller appears to be the principal person among the new society."^{xxi}

Schiller assumed the presidency of the new congregation in June 1861. Joseph Mannasse and Louis Rose – men who would play important roles in San Diego Jewish life for years – formed, with Schiller, the congregation's nucleus.

Adath Yeshurun was a traditional congregation that met for services mainly on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Jewish High Holy Days. There was no rabbi and no building; congregants met at private homes in Old Town, especially the home of Marcus and Rebecca

Schiller. The congregation celebrated its first wedding in June 1863. Louis Rose, acting as a lay rabbi, performed the marriage of Hyman Mannasse and Hannah Schiller, sister of Marcus Schiller.

As was typical with pioneer congregations, the first order of business was to procure land for a Jewish cemetery. In April 1862, Louis Rose donated five acres of his Roseville property for burial purposes. As a necessary formality, Rose was given the nominal sum of \$10 by Adath Yeshurun to complete the legal transfer of title for the land.

In 1864, a drought that had begun two years earlier reached its worst in San Diego County. Cattle herds on ranches were decimated, and crops were destroyed. The economy of Old Town took a sharp turn downward, and the population declined. Along with many of the overall population, a number of Jews were forced to leave Old Town. By 1868, there were only a few Jewish families left in San Diego. During these years Adath Yeshurun had a difficult time sustaining itself. In the early 1870s, though, when Jews started coming to San Diego again, Adath Yeshurun became re-energized.

REVIVAL OF ADATH YESHURUN AND COMMUNAL LIFE

The early 1870s brought a new influx of Jews to San Diego. These arrivals were part of a general increase that more than doubled the city's population from 2,305 at the beginning of the decade to 5,000 by 1873. This population expansion was the result of two major developments in the San Diego area.

First, New Town, the present downtown of San Diego, was growing rapidly. Lying south of Old Town, near the bay, this land had been purchased in 1867 by Alonzo E. Horton. Now, in the early 1870s, under Horton's leadership, New Town was quickly being built up with many new business buildings and homes. San Diego's population concentrated in New San Diego, making it a vibrant, growing town. As a result, there was much business opportunity for newcomers.

The pleasure of
your Company is
Respectfully solicited to
attend the Nuptial
Ceremony of
Hyman Mannasse
and
Hannah Schiller
at the Residence of
Marcus Schiller
San Diego
Sunday June 28. 1863.
Ceremony at 3 o'clock.
D. M. S.

The marriage of Hyman Mannasse and Hannah Schiller in 1863 united two pioneer Jewish families.

San Diego's First Jewish Cemetery

THE FIVE ACRES of land donated by Louis Rose, located in the present Midway area of San Diego, remained the Jewish cemetery for thirty years, until a new cemetery was established at Mt. Hope in 1892. Joseph Mannasse and Marcus Schiller donated the lumber to fence this original cemetery. In 1873, M. Cohn beautified the land by planting about 50 pepper trees.

In 1939, the burials from the first Jewish cemetery were removed to the Home of Peace Cemetery and reburied in an area called Pioneer Hill.

The five-acre plot on which San Diego's first Jewish cemetery was situated remained under the ownership of Congregation Beth Israel and Home of Peace Cemetery Corporation until 1965, when, during the presidency of Gerald Kobernick, it was sold to Doctor's Hospital (now Sharp Cabrillo Hospital) for \$210,000. At that time, more than 100 years after the original deed had been written, the congregation honored the spirit of the deed by using the proceeds from the land sale strictly for cemetery purposes, by purchasing 1,200 new crypts for the congregation's Cypress View mausoleum.

Freemasons and Jews

By Jo-Anne Berelowitz

SEVERAL OF BETH ISRAEL'S founders were Freemasons. Both Reform Judaism and Freemasonry developed during the Age of the Enlightenment, and both were, in a core sense, revolutionary.

Scholars give different dates for the origins of Freemasonry, but a date in the last third of the 16th century is generally accepted. Freemasonry's early leaders were philosophical radicals who pushed for social equality between classes and questioned traditional Christian doctrine. Primary centers were in England, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. Lodges were characterized by elaborate ceremonies based on artisan lore and esoteric philosophy, an ideology of [male] universalism, an egalitarian mixing of aristocrats and bourgeoisie, tolerance for religious heterodoxy, an oath of secrecy, and the convivial consumption of quantities of good food and drink.

In the middle years of the 17th century, when the ideas of the Enlightenment were gathering force, many lodges advocated for a civil religion based on state reform. Arguing that the major religions of the world share such principles as brotherly love and benevolence, they advocated religious toleration as a way to bond individuals of different faiths. Such toleration, they argued, would serve to strengthen the state and spread the doctrines of public morality.

The Masonic movement flourished in 18th-century America and helped to foster the cause of Jewish civil rights. Broadly speaking, American Masonry embraced the ideologies that drove the

American Revolution: civil religion, a capitalist work ethic, constitutional government, republican institutions, religious toleration, and natural liberties. Although by the end of the 18th century many European lodges began to discriminate against Jews by excluding them from membership or by restricting members from advancement in the Masonic hierarchy, Jews in the American colonies were, for the most part, welcomed into lodges and, in some cases, even occupied leadership positions. Lodges became vehicles for colonial Jews to achieve social acceptance, equality and assimilation. Even after the Federal Constitution granted civil rights to Jews, Masonry continued to attract American Jews for the potential it offered for meaningful relationships with non-Jews performed through elaborate bonding rituals, for intellectual stimulation, for social prestige and connections.

The Reform Movement began in Germany in the early 19th century. Like Freemasonry previously, the Reformers embraced the ideals of the European Enlightenment: they subjected traditional religious practice to rational skepticism, acknowledged eternal truths emanating from a Supreme Being, and advocated loyalty to the nation-state before that of a particularistic ethnicity or religion. Many early Reformers de-emphasized Jewish ritual practice while highlighting Judaism's moral teachings. This brought them closer to Freemasonry's ideal of a universal religion based on moral principles.

It is easy to see why several of Beth Israel's founders were active both as Freemasons and as Reform Jews, for in their purest forms these organizations shared a great deal, most notably a common parentage in the European Enlightenment.^{xxii}

Second, in 1871, there arose strong speculation in San Diego that a railroad was coming to the town. Under the planning of Col. Thomas A. Scott, San Diego was to become the western terminus of the Texas and Pacific Railway, linking the town with the east. The resulting business and real estate boom, known as the "Scott Boom," provided impetus for population growth that lasted until 1873, when plans for the railroad fell through.

Among the newcomers during this period were many Jews seeking, along with others, the economic opportunities available in growing New San Diego. By

September 1871, the Jewish population in San Diego numbered about 50 men, 14 women and 34 children, according to the San Francisco Jewish paper *The Hebrew*. As was the case previously, these were primarily German Jews, with some coming from Prussian Poland.

This increase in the number of Jewish residents led to the enhancement of Jewish communal life in San Diego. In early 1870, several members of the Jewish community attempted to form a benevolent society. A report in the *San Diego Union* announced that at a meeting in Marcus Schiller's home the following resolution was adopted:

Whereas the population of Israelites in Old and New San Diego has been and is increasing rapidly, it becomes necessary that we establish a society strictly in accordance with our faith, for the purpose of assisting the needy, attending to the sick, and burying the dead; accordingly, a committee was appointed to report at a meeting for organization to be held on the first Sunday of February 1870 at the house of M. Schiller, where all the Israelites of San Diego County are cordially invited to join us.

M. Cohn, President, pro tem.

Charles Wolfsheimer, Secretary^{xiii}

This initial attempt to form a benevolent society failed. The number of Jews was still quite small and, according to a report in *The Hebrew*, “the lack of spirit at this time prevented it.”

A year later, with more Jews having arrived in town, a second attempt to form a benevolent society was successful. This effort – which resulted in the formation of the “First Hebrew Benevolent Society of San Diego” – took place during the High Holy Days in 1871, when the Jewish community held services for the last time in Old Town. Louis Rose, an active Mason, had obtained the Masonic Hall for the service and had “fitted the same up in splendid style.”^{xxiv} During services on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the formation of a benevolent society was proposed, and on the afternoon before Yom Kippur, at Rose’s Old Town home, the society was formally organized.

Marcus Schiller assumed the presidency of the benevolent society and 40 men signed up as members. Among the officers of the society were Joseph Mannasse, Charles Wolfsheimer and Rudolph Schiller, new arrivals whose names would figure prominently in San Diego Jewish life for many years. The society employed a Rev. H. Meyer as “Reader and Teacher.” He was the first hired religious leader in the community. Meyer had originally sought a position as “Reader, Teacher, and *Shochet* (ritual butcher)” in Los Angeles, but upon failing to procure that position had come to San Diego. He officiated in 1873 at the *brit milah* of Abraham Klauber’s son, which the *San Diego Union* reported as the first ceremony of ritual circumcision in New San Diego. Strangely, the Hebrew Benevolent Society is never mentioned again.

In 1872, the Jewish community moved its High

Holy Days services to New San Diego, recognizing that New Town had now completely supplanted Old Town. The final blow to Old Town had been a devastating fire in April 1872. Holding religious services in New San Diego, that year in the Odd Fellows Hall, was a shift that would become permanent. The *San Diego Union* reported:

The Day of Atonement: The Jewish fast day known as the “Day of Atonement” was generally celebrated by the Hebrews of this city yesterday. All of their places of business were closed, and services were held at the temporary synagogue in the Odd Fellows Hall.^{xxv}

HARD TIMES RETURN

Hard times returned to San Diego in September 1873 and lasted through 1880. Plans for the railroad fell through, the business and real estate boom collapsed, and residents poured out of San Diego. In a matter of months, the population of the city dropped from 5,000 to 1,500. There was little business and industry, and severe droughts that hit San Diego in the winter and spring of 1876 made matters worse.

During these difficult years, the Jewish population was considerably lower than it had been in the prosperous early 1870s. Still, this smaller Jewish community – about 15 families – continued their communal religious activity. For the loosely organized group, without a building and without a rabbi, communal religious life took several forms.

First, the most noticeable form of religious activity was the regular High Holy Days services held in various halls. It made little difference to this small group of Jews where they met, as long as they had a room for their temporary synagogue. The form of worship was still traditional. Because Jewish merchants operated a number of stores in San Diego, the closing of these stores for the Jewish High Holy Days was evident, as illustrated in a *San Diego Union* report of 1874:

The Hebrew Fast Day of Yom Kippur was strictly observed yesterday. The town looked more lively when the numerous stores which had been closed during the day were opened last evening.^{xxvi}

Second, during this period, San Diego Jews began gathering socially to celebrate Purim, an exciting event which assumed a prominent place in the communal life of these frontier Jews. The first Purim Ball was reported by the *San Diego Union* in 1878:

The Feast of “Purim” was quietly celebrated on Tuesday by our Jewish friends. In the evening there was a full gathering at the residence of Mr. J. S. Mannasse, where an exceedingly pleasant reunion took place. The social dance kept up until nearly daylight. At midnight all marched from the dancing hall to an adjoining room, where a large table was found spread with all the delicacies of the season. All present heartily enjoyed the festival. ^{xxvii}



Joseph Mannasse and San Diego’s First Torah

By Ben Weinbaum

JOSEPH MANNASSE WAS BORN in Filehne, Prussian-occupied Poland, on August 3, 1831. After learning the trade of a furrier, he emigrated to the United States, landing in New York on October 15, 1850. There he earned a living as a cap maker until he departed for California in April 1853, sailing by way of Nicaragua on the steamer *Star of the West*. He was obliged to remain six weeks on the Isthmus, awaiting transportation. Finally the steamer *Pacific* arrived, and he started with a large company of other passengers up the coast. They entered San Diego Bay and anchored off La Playa. On Sunday, May 28, 1853, Mannasse with several others came ashore and visited Old Town, San Diego. He had little thought at the time that it would become his future home, and that evening he boarded the steamer as it continued on its way to San Francisco.

Mannasse was not as pleased with San Francisco as he had expected, and after remaining there a month he determined to return to San Diego. He left on the steamer *Goliath*, and after a four days’ voyage down the coast, calling at ports along the way, he arrived in San Diego for a second time, on June 28, 1853. He settled in Old Town, opened a dry goods store and prospered.

Marcus Schiller arrived in San Francisco about the time that Mannasse was departing that city. Schiller then migrated to San Diego in 1856 and became partners with Mannasse in a general merchandising business. The firm prospered and, in

1868, the two men started a lumberyard at the foot of Atlantic and E streets. Soon after that they bought and stocked the Encinitas Rancho with many head of cattle and horses. They built up a large business but suffered severely in the drought and hard times of the early 1870s, and also in the great fire in Old Town in April 1872.

As land developers, they subdivided and sold the Mannasse and Schiller’s Addition, one of the earliest additions to San Diego after Alonzo Horton’s New Town. In later years, Mannasse’s principal business was that of real estate broker.

Mannasse was a public-spirited citizen who served on the County Board of Supervisors in 1867 and 1871 and on the Board of Trustees of the City of San Diego for two or three terms. Mannasse, along with Schiller, was on the Board of Trustees that cleared the way for 1,400 acres of land to be set aside for the City Park, today known as Balboa Park.

It was Joseph Mannasse who brought the first Torah to San Diego. On the High Holy Days, Mannasse furnished the Torah, Marcus Schiller and Louis Mendelson read the prayers, and Abraham Blochman, Simon Levi, Rudolph Schiller and others assisted.

Joseph Mannasse died on December 26, 1897. Although he was called Mannasse Chico or Mannasito on account of his small stature, Joseph Mannasse was a giant in San Diego Jewish history.

It appears that the Purim Ball became an annual affair as more of these events are reported in the early 1880s.

Finally, though isolated from the centers of Jewish intellectual activity, there is indication that the small Jewish community in San Diego tried, when possible, to enrich itself with Jewish knowledge. An 1875 report in the *San Diego Union* tells of a lecture in which a Rev. Abram Meyers, from Melbourne, Australia, came to speak on “Scripture and Science” at Horton’s Hall, the primary meeting hall in town. There may well have been other ventures of this kind.

GROWTH IN JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE, 1881–1886

In the five-year period following 1880, the economic pendulum swung upward once again, as San Diego’s long-time dream of a railroad to the east again seemed to be becoming a reality. With construction beginning in National City (between San Diego and Mexico) in 1881, the new California Southern Railroad inched its way northward until it finally reached Barstow in 1885. There it connected with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, finally linking San Diego with the east.

During this period, business and real estate investment picked up again and population grew. At the time of the railroad’s completion in November 1885, San Diego’s population had increased to 5,000. Moreover, this upward economic trend was really a prelude to the big economic boom of 1886 that resulted from the completion of the railroad.

These five years represented an important period of growth for Jewish religious life in San Diego. Because of the strong economy, more Jews arrived in San Diego, pushing the number up again to about 40 families. Moreover, some key individuals in San Diego’s Jewish history – Simon Levi, Abraham Blochman and Louis Mendelson – began to figure prominently in Jewish life, bolstering the leadership of pioneers Marcus Schiller and Joseph Mannasse.

The enthusiastic Jewish communal life of this five-year period was warmly portrayed by Lucien A. Blochman, son of Abraham and Marie Blochman, who was in his teens at the time. He had come to San Diego with his family in 1881 from San Francisco. In a 1922 reminiscence, he described San Diego’s Jewish life in the years before the “big boom” in 1886:

San Diego’s Railroad Saga

By Lawrence Krause

SAN DIEGO’S PIONEERS dreamed of a railroad link to the east that would overcome its geographic isolation. While the East-West railroad link was established for Northern California in 1869, that achievement did not connect Southern California, and for good reason. Along with the challenges of nature, the four railroad barons of California, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, Collis Huntington and Mark Hopkins, did not want any competition for San Francisco from another natural harbor in the south. They set up roadblocks to keep San Diego isolated.

One San Diegan, Frank Kimball, fought to create a terminus here. The opportunity arose when the fledgling Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad needed help in the late 1870s. Kimball put up a large amount of his land – in present day National City – for the yard and offices. In July 1881, a new company, the California Southern, began building a line from San Diego to San Bernardino. By September 1882, the connection was almost complete when Leland Stanford and the others refused to let the new line cross their tracks in Colton. Thus San Diego had a connection to Colton, then a small town in San Bernardino County, and no further. After a bitter fight, an arrangement was made and the first transcontinental train arrived in San Diego on November 26, 1885.

The next five years saw a burst of railroad activity in San Diego. Five independent lines were started, the Santa Fe was expanded, and several more lines were proposed. Then the bubble burst. The Santa Fe shifted its focus to Los Angeles, turning San Diego into a cul-de-sac railroad destination, which it remains to this day. The severe financial recession of the early 1890s, which gripped the entire nation, severely weakened the independent rail lines. What remained of their businesses was wiped out by the winter flood of 1916 when lines were washed away and were not restored. The only railroad link that remained for San Diego was to Los Angeles.^{xviii}

The Blochman Family

By Ben Weinbaum

ABRAHAM BLOCHMAN WAS BORN October 4, 1834, in Ingenheim, in Alsace, France, and arrived in San Diego in 1881, where he found commercial success in the retail and wholesale merchandise trade. Blochman brought a social awareness to San Diego and a commitment to public service for the city in general and for the Jewish community in particular. This commitment to service was shared by his wife, Marie, also a native of France, and instilled in their children. Though three children died in early childhood, five grew up in San Diego: Lucien, Jeanne, Andree, Cora and Mina.

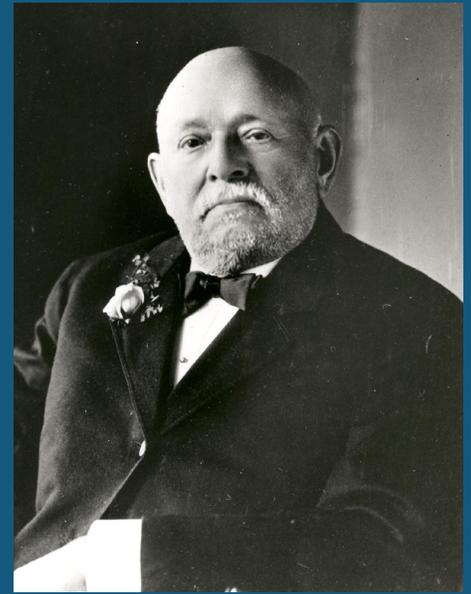
At the end of 1885, Abraham Blochman was vice president of Beth Israel. He became president following Marcus Schiller's death in 1904 and held the position until 1909 when he retired due to old age. A stained-glass window dedicated to Abraham Blochman helps light the former Beth Israel sanctuary at Third and Laurel, now home to Ohr Shalom synagogue.

Like father, like son, Lucien Blochman actively participated in social, civic and Jewish community affairs. A veteran of the Spanish-American War, Lucien Blochman received a bronze medal for 10 years of continuous service in the National Guard. He was assistant chief of the San Diego Fire Department when it was a volunteer organization, chancellor of the Knights of Pythias, president of the San Diego Parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West, first president of the Cabrillo Club, and a 32nd degree Mason. With his banking experience, he operated easily as treasurer of the American National Red Cross and treasurer of the Associated Charities, a forerunner of today's United Way.

Local historians rate Lucien Blochman's work for the Panama-California Exposition of 1915–1916 as his most important contribution to the City of San Diego. "Lucien Blochman was one of the few who served continuously as a director from the first plans until the end of San Diego's great achievement," Clarence Alan McGrew wrote in 1922.

In 1898, Lucien married Haidee Goldtree of San Francisco, who did more than merely lend support to her husband's community endeavors; she struck out on her own. During her busy lifetime in San Diego, cut short by her death in 1924, Haidee Goldtree Blochman served as president of the Children's Home, secretary of Neighborhood House, a director of the College Women's Club, a teacher in the religious school and member of the board of Beth Israel, and president of Jewish Charities, the parent organization of Jewish Federation of San Diego County.

Abraham and Marie Blochman's eldest daughter, Mina, also contributed to the welfare of the city and the enrichment of the Jewish community. The three other Blochman daughters married and moved away, but Mina married San Diegan Samuel Brust and, as a young woman, assumed her own civic responsibilities. During the difficult economic years of the early 1890s, Mina Blochman Brust helped keep alive Beth Israel's religious school, which her mother, Marie Blochman, had organized in 1886. Without a rabbi from 1893 to 1909, Beth Israel continued to hold religious school classes and even confirmation ceremonies in 1895 and 1899 thanks to the efforts of Mina Blochman Brust.



Abraham Blochman, originally from France, brought to San Diego a commitment to public service for the city in general and the Jewish community in particular.



Marie Blochman established Beth Israel's first religious school in 1886, sharing with her husband a commitment to service and instilling that commitment in their children.

...Those were the days when all of the Jews of San Diego were united by a bond that made them one great family...no cliques, no mutual admiration bunch, not even a rabbi, but all were Jews, all were friends, everyone was ready and willing to help the other... Those Purim parties where we danced the good old waltzes and polkas, and after the dancing came the eats, and such eats: The platters piled up with turkey and duck and chicken, and those salads, and the home-made cakes that everyone vied with the other to see who could make the best... Memories of the holidays and the fast days when the Jews of the town gathered together in some hall, and Joe Mannasse furnished his Torah and Marcus Schiller and Louis Mendelson read the prayers and A. Blochman, Simon Levi, Rudolph Schiller, and others assisted, and year after year all of the Jews met together, sometimes in one hall, and sometimes in another...^{xxix}

At this time there arose a desire to beautify the Jewish cemetery, which still lay on the plot of land in Roseville donated by Louis Rose (now a man of 74) 20 years earlier. In the summer of 1882, a Jewish Cemetery Organization was established with 31 contributing members, the purpose of which was “to fix up the cemetery by fencing it, laying out avenues, setting out trees, shrubs, etc. and making it an ornament to the city.” Among the officers of the organization were Abraham Blochman, vice president, and Simon Levi, treasurer. The president of the Jewish Cemetery Organization was Abraham Klauber, a pioneer San Diego Jewish merchant.

During this period of increased Jewish population and increased communal activity, traditional worship began to lose prominence. By 1882, a more liberal approach was adopted, with New Year services held only on Erev Rosh Hashanah and on the first day of Rosh Hashanah until noon. This became the established practice, as this Rosh Hashanah format was reported again in 1885. The Jewish community of San Diego was moving in its worship practice toward Reform Judaism, which would become the form Beth Israel adopted by 1887. Indeed, a report that referred to this earlier period noted that only “a few who still retain the old-fashioned ideas” observed, privately, the second day of Rosh Hashanah.^{xxx}

Evolution of Our Name from Adath Yeshurun to Beth Israel

By Stanley Schwartz

A GROUP OF 10 men, led by Marcus Schiller, met in Old Town, San Diego, in June 1861 to organize congregation Adath Yeshurun (Assembly of Israel). At the beginning of 1886, as the congregation began to think about building its own house of worship, Adath Yeshurun was renamed Beth Israel (House of Israel) and began modifying its prayer practices from traditional to Reform. The transition to Reform was complete by January 3, 1886, when the congregation was identified as such in the *San Diego Union*. Beth Israel then had 40 member families.

In February 1887, the congregation formally incorporated as Congregation of Beth Israel. Later, when Reform congregations were frequently referred to as temples, Beth Israel was no different. In the 1970s, the entity known as Temple Beth Israel incorporated as Congregation Beth Israel.

—E. Lowenstein, Louis Linoberg and Jacob A. Cohen, Trustees of the Congregation Beth-Israel, have filed articles of incorporation for that church. Its object is to perform religious worship, and to hold property suitable therefor.

THE BEGINNING OF REFORM PRACTICE

In November 1885, Marcus Schiller, Charles Wolfsheimer, Simon Levi and Abraham Blochman called a meeting that began the transformation of religious practices at formerly traditional Adath Yeshurun into the Reform Beth Israel. This meeting was described tersely by the *San Diego Union*: “A meeting of the Hebrew Community held in Masonic Hall Sunday afternoon was largely attended. Officers were elected and a temporary organization effected.”^{xxxi} As an indication of the growing size of the Jewish community over the past five years, about 40 men were involved in this endeavor.

A second meeting scheduled for late December had to be postponed because of a funeral in the Jewish community. Then, on January 3, 1886, the congregation formally announced the following officers: Marcus Schiller, president; Abraham Blochman, vice president; Charles Wolfsheimer, secretary; and Simon Levi, treasurer.

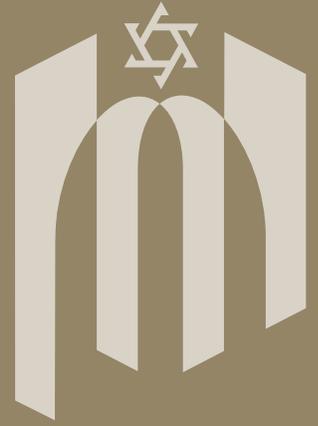
Why Beth Israel Became Reform

By Stanley Schwartz

EVEN WHEN BETH ISRAEL was the traditional synagogue known as Adath Yeshurun, Jews found it challenging to live a traditionally observant life in San Diego. Kosher food was not available. Merchants felt economic pressure to keep their stores open on Shabbat. It felt more American to become Reform. Services and prayer books were in English with little or no Hebrew, the Reform Movement encouraged music and mixed seating, and no distinguishing headcovering (*kippah*) or prayer shawl (*tallit*) were required.

Moreover, many of the pioneer Jews and those who followed came from Germany, where they had been exposed to the liberating views of Reform Judaism. Lectures by the leading Reform rabbi of Los Angeles, Emanuel Schreiber, helped provide the intellectual framework of Reform Judaism for Beth Israel members.

The shift to Reform was a gradual process, though. Several members were more traditional and received permission to retain their own second day observance of Rosh Hashanah. The extent to which Beth Israel's practices became Reform in these early years is not known. On the other hand, we also do not know how Orthodox Adath Yeshurun's original practices actually were.



Toward the end of 1886, Rev. Emanuel Schreiber of Congregation B'nai B'rith of Los Angeles spoke in San Diego on *Judaism and other Religions* and *Reform Judaism*. The second lecture explained in detail the history and ideology of Reform Judaism. By 1887, High Holy Days services conducted by Abe Spring and Abraham Blochman at the Unitarian Church revealed that Beth Israel was clearly transforming into a Reform congregation. Unlike traditional Jewish worship, the services included an organ and choir that performed hymns by Jewish composers “both ancient and modern.”^{xxxii}

Rabbi Emanuel Schreiber and Reform Judaism

By Stanley Schwartz

ONE OF THE REASONS Beth Israel changed from traditional to Reform when incorporated in 1887 is the influence of Rabbi Emanuel Schreiber, the leading Reform rabbi of Los Angeles.

Rabbi Schreiber, 1852–1932, was ordained in Frankfurt, Germany, by Abraham Geiger, the spiritual and theological leader of European Reform Judaism. As resistance to the Reform Movement rose in Germany, Schreiber's dedication to Reform Judaism led to his decision to leave Germany in 1881.

He was called to be a rabbi in Mobile, Alabama, and Denver, Colorado, prior to arriving in 1885 at Congregation B'nai B'rith of Los Angeles, which is now Wilshire Boulevard Temple. In the year 1885 the Reform Movement introduced its Pittsburgh Platform, and Schreiber introduced his own

radical Reform to Los Angeles. Rabbi Schreiber was successful as an investor in Los Angeles, and this income allowed him a measure of economic independence.

In the United States, Schreiber “was able to deliver scholarly lectures and public addresses in pure and idiomatic English and almost faultless pronunciation.”^{xxxiii} He also wrote articles for the Jewish and secular presses.

San Diego Jews were exposed to Reform Judaism when Schreiber spoke in San Diego, through Jewish newspapers from San Francisco and other parts of the country, and during men's visits to San Francisco to purchase wholesale supplies and to look for Jewish women to marry. San Francisco's Temple Emanuel, formed in 1850, was Reform and the largest and wealthiest congregation in the west.



