The Founding of Columbian Council

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At the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a Jewish Women's Congress, organized by Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, was part of the Parliament of Religions. It took her a year of planning and letter-writing to invite the ninety-three representatives from twenty-nine cities. As she worked she pondered:

> . . . would it have permanence, or would it be a brief bright tale . . .? In a flash my thoughts crystallized to decision: we will have a congress out of which must grow a permanent organization![1]

At the concluding session of the Jewish Women's Congress it was resolved to reconstitute the organization on a permanent basis. Various names were suggested. Mrs. Pauline Hanauer Rosenberg of Allegheny suggested the name "Columbian Union," to commemorate its beginning at the Columbian Exposition. She was voted down, and the name "National Council of Jewish Women" was accepted.[2]

When Mrs. Rosenberg returned home, she organized a local section of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). Unlike the three sections which preceded it, Chicago, Quincy, and Baltimore, the Allegheny-Pittsburgh Section was named "Columbian Council." It was to continue for more than a decade as the only section of the NCJW not named for its home city.

The constitution of the NCJW was based on four resolutions passed at the Jewish Women's Congress in 1893:

> Resolved, That the National Council of Jewish Women shall

[1] Hannah G. Solomon, *Fabric of My Life*, New York, 1946, p. 82.
[2] *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress*, Philadelphia, 1894, pp. 264-65.

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1. Seek to unite in closer relations women interested in the work of religion, philanthropy and education and shall consider practical means of solving problems in these fields.
2. Shall encourage the study of the underlying principles of Judaism, the history, literature and customs of the Jews, and their bearing upon their own and the world's history.
3. Shall apply knowledge gained in this study to the improvement of the Sabbath schools and in the work of social reform.
4. Shall secure the interest and aid of all influential persons in arousing the general sentiment against religious persecutions wherever, whenever, and against whomsoever shown, and in finding means to prevent such persecutions.[3]

Each local section was given considerable leeway in implementing these goals with

> the right to take that line of work which should seem the most useful to the conditions and environments of that section, providing, however, that the study of religion and philanthropy be not omitted and parliamentary forms adhered to.[4]

Thus, the women who met on May 2, 1894, to organize themselves officially as Columbian Council could choose whatever projects suited the Jewish community of Allegheny and Pittsburgh.

The Jewish Community of Pittsburgh

There had been Jews in the Pittsburgh area even before the city existed, but they had been transients–fur traders, suppliers of provisions to Fort Pitt, and merchants who used the Fort as a base for their ventures further west. Bernard Gratz of Philadelphia stayed in Pittsburgh from April, 1776, through the Jewish High Holy Days in the fall, negotiating with the Shawnee and Delaware tribes for the renewal of the fur trade. He requested a prayer book from his brother and worshiped by himself, in his room. "Bernard

[3] Hannah G. Solomon, "Report of the NCJW," *American Jewess*, April, 1895, p. 28. (From microfilm at the American Jewish Archives.)

[4] Fannie H. Hamburger, "Columbian Council of Jewish Women," *Jewish Criterion*, February 5, 1897. (The most complete holdings of the *Jewish Criterion* are at the New York Public Library. There are also less complete holdings at the American Jewish Archives and Rodef Shalom Congregation. All three collections were consulted.)

Gratz can almost be considered as the first local Jewish resident."[5]

From the first quarter of the nineteenth century, immigration from Germany brought with it many Jews. As many as 50% of them became peddlers who traveled westward to Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, Cleveland, and as far west as San Francisco.[6] They bypassed Pittsburgh, possibly because of the ease of traveling via the Erie Canal and then across Lake Erie to Cleveland. The first recorded Jewish community in Pittsburgh was founded by some former peddlers from Bavaria, who had plied their trade in New York, Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Kilgore and Franklin in eastern Ohio, before settling in Pittsburgh. By then they were established merchants. William Frank and his partner, David Strassburger, Ephraim Wormser (Frank's brother-in-law) and Nathan Gallinger may be considered the founding fathers of the Pittsburgh Jewish community. The first record of this community is in the purchase of a burial ground for a Jewish cemetery on Troy Hill by the Bes Almon Society in 1847.[7] By 1853,

> Pittsburgh had a total of thirty Jewish families of whom fourteen belonged to the German, i.e. Bavarian, Congregation Shaarey Shamayim. At the same time the "Polish" Congregation, Beth Israel, had twelve members. We are expressly informed that it possessed a synagogue, with all the necessary paraphernalia, and that its salaried congregational official was the hazzan, shohet, and mohel.[8]

By 1863 there were 150 Jewish families in the Pittsburgh area, of whom 103 belonged to Congregation Rodef Shalom, founded in 1854. When Rodef Shalom voted to accept a Reform affiliation, the minority who had opposed the move, mainly congregants from

[5] Jacob S. Feldman, *The Early Migration and Settlement of Jews in Pittsburgh, 1754-1894*, Pittsburgh, 1959, p. 4. (Mr. Feldman's pioneering study served as the foundation for my historical research.)

[6] Rudolf Glanz, "The Immigration of German Jews up to 1880," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, Volumes 2-3, 1947/1948.

[7] Jacob Rader Marcus, "William Frank, Pilgrim Father of Pittsburgh Jewry," in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, Philadelphia, 1955. The minute books of the Bes Almon Society were acquired by the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass., in 1975.

[8] Rudolf Glanz, "The 'Bayer' and the 'Pollack,'" in Glanz, *Studies in Judaica Americana*, New York, 1970, p. 194.

Holland, Posen, and Lithuania, reorganized as Tree of Life Synagogue.[9]

The details of synagogue splits are significant, for they were mainly along regional lines. It was the German Jews, mainly from Bavaria, who set the tone. They spoke German and English and had usually lived in the United States for some time before settling in Pittsburgh. By the time of the Civil War they were solidly middle class. Many of them were also involved in local German cultural activities.[10]

The Jews who had left to form Tree of Life Synagogue were, in the main, more recent arrivals, and many had a Yiddish-speaking background. Most of them spoke German along with other languages, which made it easy for them to adapt to the desirable Germanic life style. Indeed German was taught at Tree of Life School.

> In the nineteenth century, more so than in the twentieth century, a Jew from Central Europe was generally a German or Germanized Jew . . . . Bohemian Jews, once they had left the old way of life, did not become Czechs, they became Germans, much as the Hungarians did also. Even as far east as Galicia down to the 1870's or even the 1880's, those Jews who had left the old way of life, whether the Hasidic or non-Hasidic, usually became Germanized. Moreover, if you were a Jew from Lithuania who came to America about 1865 and wanted to be an American Jew and attain 'status' the thing to do was to be Germanized. To be a respectable, accepted Jew in America was to be a Germanic American Jew.[11]

Following a cholera epidemic and famine in Lithuania in 1868,

[9] Feldman, *op. cit.* p. 18. The article "Pittsburg" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, written by J. L. L. (Rabbi J. Leonard Levy of Rodef Shalom) claims that Rodef Shalom was the first congregation in Pittsburgh. The article "Pittsburgh" in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, by Charles Homer Joseph (nephew of one of the pillars of the Tree of Life Synagogue), claims that Tree of Life was the first congregation in the city. Charles I. Cooper, in "The Story of the Jews of Pittsburgh," *Jewish Criterion*, May 31, 1918, backs the latter claim.

[10] Louis Hirsch was the secretary of the German-language newspaper *Volksblatt* in 1896. Samuel Floersheim, father of Bertha Floersheim Rauh, was a member of the Symphonic Society, founded by Carl Ritter of Munich. Most of the members of the orchestra were Germans or German Jews.

[11] Lloyd P. Gartner, "The Jewish Community in America: Transplanted and Transformed," *Conference on Acculturation*, New York, 1965, pp. 8-9.

a nucleus of Lithuanian Jews came to Pittsburgh to join the individual *landsleit* who had been there since the fifties. By 1880, of the approximately 2,000 Jews in Pittsburgh, the majority were from Eastern Europe.[12] In 1889 there were already about 5,000 Jews in Allegheny, of whom 80% lived in Pittsburgh. By 1897 that number had doubled.[13] Thus, in 1894, somewhere in between, there may have been about 7,000 Jews in Allegheny County, most of them in Pittsburgh.

The district in which they lived was one of great ethnic diversity. From a population of slightly more than 21,000[14] in 1840, it had grown to over 500,000 in 1910, more than half of which was either foreign born or had foreign born parents.[15] In 1894, the year of the founding of Columbian Council, it was the scene of great labor unrest (the Homestead Massacre of 1892 was still fresh in people's memories), corrupt politics, a police force which supported rather than suppressed vice, and a reputation for smoke, dirt, and ugliness which gave it the nickname "hell-with-the-lid-off."[16] In spite of increasing pressures of population housing, medical care, and education for immigrants were inadequate or lacking entirely.

Jewish Philanthropy

Local Jewish relief work had been carried on traditionally by a Hebrew Benevolent Society from 1854, with a Ladies' Auxiliary dating from 1856. This Auxiliary became part of the Sanitary Commission in 1861, to aid the wounded during the Civil War, and was called the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society. At the end of the Civil War it was reorganized as the *Pittsburg Israel Damen Unterstuetzung Verein*, with its most important activities the visitation of the sick and sitting up with the dead. Its founders and leaders were

[12] *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1914-1915, p. 374.

[13] Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[14] J. Cutler Andrews, "A Century of Urbanization," *Pennsylvania History*, January, 1943.

[15] Peter Roberts, "The New Pittsburghers," *Charities and the Commons*, January 2, 1909.

[16] Usually credited to Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, New York, 1904, p. 101. However, Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh*, New York, 1969, cites other writers who compared Pittsburgh to "hell."

the mothers, mothers-in-law, and aunts of the founders of Columbian Council.[17]

The Crémieux Society, founded by Rabbi Lippman Mayer of Rodef Shalom in 1874, the second branch of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in the United States, took responsibility for the handling of Jewish refugees from Russia after 1881.[18] The United Hebrew Relief Association of Allegheny County, the result of a merger in 1880 of the all-male Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Israel Damen, also involved itself in immigrant aid. The women worked as an independent auxiliary, visiting poor families with baskets of food, clothing, and other necessities, and arranging for the hospitalization of the sick.

The founders of Columbian Council were mostly American-born, middle class, with a high percentage of college graduates. As Jews they were very much aware of their responsibilities for the welfare of their fellow Jews, but as modern women they were uncomfortable with their mothers' old-fashioned approach to charity. They favored "preventive philanthropy"—teaching poor people skills which would make them self-sufficient. The first step in preventive philanthropy was, in dealing with immigrants, teaching English, civics, and other elements of American life. Columbian Council's entrance into this area is presaged by a speech made by Pauline Hanauer Rosenberg at the Columbian Exposition.

> No matter how ignorant through oppression these people are, their immediate progeny show marked signs of improvement and Americanism, and removed from the yoke of the oppressor, the third generation of the remarkable people on American soil, with their inherited powers of adaptability, will retain only their religion as an indication of Judaism.[19]

[17] Charles I. Cooper, *op. cit.*, gives 1861 as the date for the founding of the Ladies' Aid Society, as does Charlotte Heller Shapiro in "The Jewish Family Welfare Association of Pittsburgh," unpublished master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1933. However, the earlier date was reported in the *American Israelite*, May 13, 1856. Henrietta Hannauer, a trustee of the Ladies' Aid Society, was the mother of Pauline Rosenberg and Fannie Hamburger, the first two presidents of Columbian Council. Rosalie Rauh, president of the Damen from 1880-1883 and 1887-1906, was the mother of Bertha Cohen, a charter member of Columbian Council and the mother-in-law of Bertha Floersheim Rauh, president of Columbian Council, 1904-1919.

[18] Kenneth D. Roseman, "American Jewish Community Institutions in Their Historical Context," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, June, 1974; Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[19] Pauline H. Rosenberg, "Influence of the Discovery of America on the Jews," *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress*, op. cit., p. 71.

First Steps of Columbian Council

Columbian Council's first official act as an organization was in an area favored by Mrs. Rosenberg, who, although childless, had been active in the Pittsburg and Allegheny Free Kindergarten Association. At a meeting on December 4, 1894, Columbian Council undertook the raising of funds for the establishment of a new school. In honor of its supporters it was named "Columbian Kindergarten."

A week later a meeting was called for the purpose of setting up study circles. According to the national guidelines, the adult education efforts of the sections should have been structured along Jewish lines, with the study circles concentrating on the Bible and Jewish history. Members were encouraged to subscribe to the newly established Jewish Publication Society, and Hannah G. Solomon sent frequent inspirational messages to the local sections reminding them that

> The aim of the National Council of Jewish Women is to encourage its members in a deeper study of the Bible, our religion, history, and literature, and of the best means of helping our fellows.[20]

The study circles, which began to meet in 1895, were not very successful. Only seventeen members, on the average, attended study circle meetings, and an average of only thirty-five women attended meetings at which papers were read.[21] In an attempt to attract more attendance, Dr. Henry Berkowitz, Director of the Jewish Chautauqua Society, was invited to introduce his syllabus in the fall of 1896. The small study circles were consolidated into one large group, but it was disbanded in May, 1899.[22]

In contrast, the lectures which were a feature of the monthly meetings were quite popular and were often attended by immigrants who had acquired enough English to understand them. The leaders of Columbian Council considered these talks "a source of educational and intellectual training for the public spirited and progressive members of our community."[23] These lectures were,

[20] *Jewish Criterion*, September 2, 1896.
[21] *Ibid.*, May 7, 1897.
[22] *Ibid.*, May 5, 1899.
[23] *Ibid.*, February 5, 1897.

more often than not, on non-Jewish topics. The women of Columbian Council were criticized for their lack of concern for Jewish education, while they were praised for their philanthropic efforts.[24]

Personal Service

Columbian Council's first contacts, as an organization, with adult immigrants was through its Sisterhood of Personal Service, established on May 17, 1895. This group of thirty-five women took the responsibility of visiting impoverished immigrant families on a weekly basis to note ways of improvement, suggest them one at a time, and see that they took root before proposing others.[25] Mrs. Rosenberg apportioned a certain number of families to each personal service worker. She urged them to "go slowly but surely, be patient, be sympathetic, . . . do not dictate but suggest changes and improvements."[26]

The main goal of the Personal Service Workers was to help families become self-supporting. They worked in conjunction with the Hebrew Relief Society and the Hebrew Ladies Sewing Society who made "sundry garments for indigent applicants who seem to be ever growing in numbers."[27] Funds were raised by running bazaars and soliciting goods and funds from the Jewish community. Members themselves also donated materials, clothes, furniture, etc., as needed.

The Personal Service workers involved the immigrant women in production for profit. Orders were given for needlework items for which the women were paid. In the course of these visits, the Council members discovered that "ninety-nine cases out of one hundred neither speak nor understand English."[28] Some members started tutoring immigrant women who were not able to leave

[24] Editorial by Rabbi Samuel Greenfield, of Rodef Shalom, founder and editor of the *Jewish Criterion*, September 2, 1896.

[25] *American Jewess*, November, 1895, p. 180; *Jewish Criterion*, November 22, 1895, p. 11.

[26] Pauline H. Rosenberg, "A Word About Personal Service," *Jewish Criterion*, November 8, 1895.

[27] *Ibid.*, December 22, 1895.

[28] *Ibid.*, November 8, 1895.

their homes because of family responsibilities. One such woman reminisced:

> I came to Pittsburgh in 1897 from Kapulie, near Minsk. In the old country I had learned Yiddish, Russian, Polish and German, but I could not go to school in Pittsburgh because I was seventeen and I had to stay home and keep house for my widowed father. The ladies from Council came to my house and taught me English. Mrs. Rosenberg showed me how to do my hair. I did embroidery and crocheting for the members of Council. They treated me as a friend. Later, I myself joined Council and helped make dolls for the poor.[29]

This woman, and others like her, succeeded in a few years in making the transition from being recipients of aid to becoming full-fledged members of Council. Although they were a small minority during the period under study, these immigrants from Eastern Europe helped to change the composition of Columbian Council.

Columbian Council School

At the first general meeting of Columbian Council Rabbi Lippmann Mayer approached the women with the idea of setting up a religious school for the children of immigrants. He had cleared the way for such a venture by first talking to members of the Orthodox Washington Street Synagogue (Beth Hamedrash Hagadol) who had agreed to allow their children to attend.[30] Columbian Council raised funds for its Mission School by selling subscriptions to *The American Jewess*,[31] and on December 27, 1895, Mrs. A. Leo Weil announced that the Mission School would be opened in January, 1896. The name "Mission School" led to a great deal of unpleasantness and misunderstanding. The *Jewish Criterion* considered the name to be an "unfortunate" one. On March 20, 1896, the name of the school was changed to "Columbian School,"

[29] Mrs. Ida Blatt, interviewed in November, 1974. (Years later Mrs. Blatt's niece married the son of Mrs. Bertha Floersheim Rauh.)

[30] Beth Hamedrash Hagadol, organized in 1869 by Jews from Lithuania, had, by this time, a large American-born group. It was the only Orthodox synagogue whose activities were reported, to any extent, in the *Jewish Criterion* before 1900.

[31] A weekly founded and edited by Rosa Sonneschein, which lasted from April, 1895, to August, 1899.

owing to a misconception on the part of some coreligionists as to the proper use of the word "mission."[32]

Columbian School became the most successful project initiated by Columbian Council. Shortly after it opened it was decided to expand the program into that of a settlement house. The leading spirit in this campaign was Mrs. A. Leo Weil. A friend and great admirer of Jane Addams[33] and her work at Hull House, she introduced many aspects of settlement house activities. Not only did the volunteers teach the children who came to the school, but they also visited their homes, "and were received with open arms."[34] During these visits they met the parents and siblings of their pupils and attempted to introduce them to Americanization.

In the fall of 1897, the school moved into two rented rooms at 32 Townsend Street, and a few months later the entire house was taken over at $26.50 a month. Members and friends of Columbian Council were asked to donate furniture and equipment, and Mrs. Weil reported:

> The rooms have been fitted up, and we now have on the first floor two large rooms and a bath room; on the second floor two school rooms and a library; and on the third floor, one additional room. With this added space, greater and better facilities will be obtained and a correspondingly greater good will be accomplished. We expect now to be able to accommodate at least 100 additional pupils, perhaps more. . . . This school is founded upon the principles upon which the Council is built, not to give alms, but to give what is much more beneficial and much harder to supply, namely, the ability to help one's self, and thus avoid the necessity of help from others.[35]

The house on Townsend Street soon became a popular gathering place for adults, too:

> It was open all day, and soon, by request, in the evening. Anybody could stop in—and did: Poles, and Russians, and Slovaks, and old-time

[32] *Jewish Criterion*, March 20, 1896.

[33] Mrs. A. Leo Weil was related by marriage to Hannah G. Solomon, founder of the NCJW who lived in Chicago. She often visited there and knew and admired Jane Addams. She hoped to model the Columbian School and Settlement on Hull House. From an interview with Ferdinand T. Weil, her son, November, 1974.

[34] *Jewish Criterion*, May 7, 1897.

[35] *Ibid.*, May 13, 1898.

> residents of the Hill whose ancestors had crossed the Alleghenies in covered wagons. Mothers came to see what their children had found that was so interesting—and stayed to plan a bake sale or a sewing group.[36]

Meanwhile, Rabbi Mayer had been discussing with Mrs. Weil the possibility of Columbian Council's taking over the "Russian School" he had organized in 1890. His school, staffed by three instructors paid by the members of his congregation, had at first held classes in ". . . the Back Room in the Basement of Temple every Sunday afternoon . . . for the Hebrew Russian refugees."[37] By November of 1891 enrollment had increased to 110 students, and the school had to move to 400 Fifth Avenue.[38] The obvious needs of these adults and of the young working people persuaded Mrs. Weil and the Columbian Council to respond to Rabbi Mayer's request. On April 14, 1899, the School announced its plans to "open evening classes for girls who cannot attend during the day."[39] On Monday, October 2, 1899, a full-fledged program of evening classes was inaugurated. Courses were offered in elementary school subjects as well as bookkeeping, stenography, and literature. The teachers were all volunteers.

Over one hundred people showed up on the first night of classes:

> There were many men advanced in years who appeared to take up the study of English. Over fifty applied to enter the stenography and typing class. The outpouring fairly took away the breath of those in charge.[40]

The Consolidation Period

Between 1900 and 1905, the Pittsburgh region experienced a strong economic upsurge, followed by a depression. The "era of steel" had arrived as far back as 1875, when Andrew Carnegie had opened the Edgar Thomson works in Braddock, but it was the

[36] Mildred W. Kreimer, "Southwestern District Religious Schools Celebrate Sixtieth Year," *Jewish Criterion*, September 11, 1953.

[37] *Minutes of Rodef Shalom Congregation*, February 2, 1891, in the American Jewish Archives.

[38] Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

[39] *Jewish Criterion*, April 14, 1899.

[40] *Ibid.*, October 6, 1899.

formation of the United States Steel Corporation in 1901 which put 50% of the nation's steelworkers under a single employer.[41]

Along with this expanded industrialization, there was an increased influx of immigrants to work in the mills and to dig the coal which provided the fuel. Very few Jews were involved directly as miners or millworkers,[42] but many found employment in the milltowns and coal patches as peddlers, storekeepers, and merchants. When the depression of 1903 created an unemployment problem, the most critically affected groups were the newly arrived immigrants, Jews and non-Jews.

Events in Europe also affected the Jewish community of Pittsburgh. A new regime of oppression in Roumania led to the arrival in America of twice as many Roumanian Jews in 1899 as in 1898; in 1900 eight times as many came, and in the following years the number was even larger.[43] The various Jewish philanthropic agencies, most of which had headquarters in New York, responded to the new immigration by attempting to direct the newcomers to other areas of the country. The Industrial Removal Office, founded in January, 1901, by the Jewish Agricultural Society, working in conjunction with local B'nai B'rith lodges, sent some thousands of immigrants westward.[44]

Pittsburgh was one of the places to which Roumanian Jews came in proportionately larger numbers than they did to other cities (excluding New York). This was due to the presence in Pittsburgh of a nucleus of Roumanian Jews, related by blood and marriage and *landsmanshaft*, from the 1880's, who kept bringing over members of their extended families. By 1903 Pittsburgh had a branch of the Industrial Removal Office, headed by Berish Chaimovitz[45] (a Roumanian Jew), which arranged for jobs for the

[41] Lubove, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[42] There were many reasons for the absence of Jews in heavy industry in Pittsburgh. See Ida Cohen Selavan, "The Jewish Wage Earner in Pittsburgh, 1890-1930." *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Spring, 1976.

[43] Samuel Joseph, *Jewish Immigration to the United States from 1881-1910*, New York, 1914; Joseph Kissman, "The Immigration of Roumanian Jews up to 1914." *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, 1947-1948.

[44] Samuel Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund: The Americanization of the Jewish Immigrant*, Philadelphia, 1935.

[45] The Industrial Removal Office Papers at the American Jewish Historical Society contain a folder of letters written by Mr. Chaimovitz in 1907.

newcomers. A fairly substantial percentage of Jewish immigrants to Pittsburgh after 1900 were able-bodied young people, with some skills, interested in learning English and ambitious to succeed.

The Roumanian Jews were soon joined by Russian Jews, fleeing from the pogroms which had taken on the dimensions of massacres after 1903. Some of them were Socialists (of various shadings) who had been forced to leave because of the repressive measures taken by the Czar's police. Many of the Socialists planned to return to Russia "after the success of the revolution," but meanwhile they looked for jobs and studied English.[46]

The pressures of immigrants clamoring for education, the long waiting lists, and the disappointment of those turned away because of lack of space at the Townsend Street house influenced Columbian Council to find larger quarters and new sources of income. On March 7, 1900, the Columbian Council School was incorporated and became a separate legal entity.[47] The old Slagle mansion at 1835 Centre Avenue was purchased for $12,000. Additional sources of income were obtained, one of these being the Baron de Hirsch Fund, which had been founded in 1891 to provide the "adult immigrant . . . with a knowledge of the English language, and, in the interest of good government, with the customs of the country and the theory of government." It allocated to the Columbian Council School the income from $12,500 invested at 4%.[48]

On April 1, 1900, the Columbian Council School moved into its "new and commodious building."[49] Here the curriculum was expanded to include many kinds of academic subjects, from elementary to advanced. A major physical change was the addition of a $10,000 building, the Peacock Bath House.

[46] There are no statistical studies of the countries of origin of Pittsburgh's Jews from the post-Civil War period to 1938. The respondents in the Oral History Project sponsored by the Pittsburgh Section, National Council of Jewish Women, in which I served as Research Assistant, 1969-1970, provided many stories to illustrate the brief survey given above.

[47] Paper number 378, Prothonotary of the Court of Common Pleas. Only a number in a ledger could be found. The actual articles of incorporation seem to have been lost.

[48] Eugene S. Benjamin, "The Baron de Hirsch Fund," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Jewish Charities*, Philadelphia, 1906; Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund . . .*, p. 274; *Jewish Criterion*, March 1, 1900.

[49] *Ibid.*, March 22, 1900.

> Mrs. A. Leo Weil personally went to Mr. Alexander Peacock, who was one of the recently created millionaires by the formation of the United States Steel Corporation, having been an associate of Andrew Carnegie. Without too much trouble she interested him in the Settlement and he provided the money for a bath house . . . which was known as the Peacock Baths.[50]

The building was opened in February, 1903, adjoining the main building. It included a gymnasium, an assembly hall seating 300, ten showers, three bathtubs and a swimming pool. This made possible the introduction of regular gym and swimming classes which added an athletic dimension to the social clubs.

One of the most significant steps taken by Columbian Council was the hiring of a trained nurse, Miss Cherry, in 1901. She was soon replaced by Miss Anna B. Heldman, who remained with the institution until her death in 1940.[51] A member of the first graduating class of the South Side Training School for Nurses in 1897, and a veteran of the U.S. Army Medical Department in the Spanish American War, Miss Heldman (or "Heldie," as she was fondly called) was the pioneer, in Pittsburgh, of the new profession of "visiting nurse."

Miss Heldman worked together with John Anthony, principal of the Franklin School, in a pilot survey of health conditions in the public schools. Her report shocked the City Council into establishing a system of medical inspection in the city schools. She also did the preliminary research for a Children's Welfare Division of the Department of Health. She saw herself as both nurse and educator:

> The watchword is prevention, and this should be the motto of every nurse who enters a home, no matter whether rich or poor, on her responsible mission . . . the poor learn how the sick should be nursed, become acquainted with the method of disinfecting and preventing the spread of disease, and also gain some knowledge of invalid cooking and practical

[50] S. Leo Ruslander, *The Life and Times of S. Leo Ruslander,* Pittsburgh, 1964, p. 325.

[51] Six months before her death, Overhill Street, on the corner of the Irene Kaufmann Settlement, was named Heldman Street in her honor. In December, 1956, when the Irene Kaufmann Settlement was transferred to a new government body, it was renamed the Anna B. Heldman Community Center, which has since been replaced by Hill House. See Ida Cohen Selavan, "Anna B. Heldman, Angel of 'Hell-with-the-lid-off,' " *American Journal of Nursing*, in press.

lessons in cleanliness. The example is not always forgotten when the nurse's visits cease . . . . The neighborhood is always willing to learn and do anything that may be of benefit for the health of the community.[52]

The most important need at Columbian Council School during the early years was for more teachers. The students packed the rooms to overflowing, textbooks and materials were donated or improvised, but the use of volunteers as teachers made the actual running of the school dependent upon their good will and dedication. The dual nature of the School, as a non-formal adult educational institution for immigrants, and as a settlement house for the entire neighborhood, led to certain problems. When volunteer teachers did not show up for their scheduled classes, the residents were pressed into service, thus neglecting the younger people who came for club activities.

It was with its clubs that the School reached the greatest numbers of people. As members grew up, they remained loyal to the Columbian Council School and Settlement, and many of them returned as volunteers to lead new clubs. The weekly programs usually included serious lectures or debates, refreshments, and socializing. Sometimes musical presentations were included. The annual "mock trials" became special events, attended by hundreds of people.[53] The Young Folks' Civic League also conducted a series of lectures in Yiddish, "for the education of parents in civic matters."[54]

In budgeting for the School and Settlement the members of Columbian Council often drew upon the resources of wealthy Jews and non-Jews in the community. They also continued to use their traditional fundraising methods, such as bazaars, lectures, dances, cake sales, etc. With the passage of years, more business-like methods of budgeting were introduced.

Introduction of Public Evening Schools

During the first months of 1904, the crowded conditions at the Columbian Council School made it necessary to reject as many people as were accepted. The decision was made to approach the

[52] Anna B. Heldman, "As the Nurse Sees It," *Jewish Criterion*, October 5, 1906.

[53] S. Leo Ruslander, who sometimes served as judge at these mock trials, gives the humorous programs of some of them in his autobiography, *op. cit.* The name Columbian School and Settlement seems to have come into vogue between 1906 and 1907.

[54] *Jewish Criterion*, January 24, 1908.

Eighth Ward School Board for permission to use a room in its neighborhood elementary school, the Franklin School. The School Board agreed, if "they furnish their own teacher and pay for janitor's service."[55] The beginners' classes moved to the Franklin School and relieved the congestion.

In May, 1905, the Board of the Franklin School agreed to allow the Columbian Council School the use of another room. All through 1904, 1905, and 1906, efforts were made to have the Central Board of Education take over the responsibilities of conducting night schools.[56] In her report for 1906, Addie Weihl, the head resident, described these efforts:

> In desperation, I appealed once again to Mr. Jamison, one of the directors, and Mr. Anthony, principal of the Franklin School, and thanks to their efforts, it was decided at the board of directors' meeting that night, to bring the matter before the Central Board of Education.[57]

The minutes of that meeting read:

> On motion by Anglock and Amdursky that Mr. Jamison be instructed to ask for Night School in Franklin Building from Central Board of Education.[58]

This time Miss Weihl's efforts bore fruit. The Central Board of Education granted permission for such a school, with five teachers, whose salary would be paid by the Board. In January of 1907 there were 400 people enrolled in these classes. The teachers who had previously worked for the Columbian School and Settlement were retained, "on account of their knowledge of Yiddish."[59]

For a number of years, the Franklin evening school was the

[55] *Minutes of the Franklin Sub-District School Board*, April 4, 1904. In the Archives of an Industrial Society, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh.

[56] The campaign to introduce night schools for immigrants via a Central Board of Education had political implications. Until 1911 the control of the public schools was vested in 46 sub-district boards, which allowed for local politicians to use their influence. The reformers, among whom were many members of Columbian Council, sought to establish a Central Board of Education, and succeeded in doing so on November 15, 1911. See Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, October, 1964.

[57] *Yearbook of the Columbian School and Settlement*, 1906-1907. In the Pennsylvania Division, Carnegie Library.

[58] *Minutes of the Franklin Sub-District School Board*, November 6, 1906, p. 110. In the Archives of an Industrial Society.

[59] *Jewish Criterion*, February 1, 1907.

only one under public auspices in the city.[60] There were close ties between it and the Columbian School and Settlement, for, when the six-month term at the Franklin School was over, many of the students continued at the Settlement.

The response to the opening of publicly sponsored elementary classes for immigrants in 1906 led to the opening of an evening high school in 1907, called "the most important event in the history of the public schools since the establishment of the high school in 1857."[61] Edward Rynearson, principal of the Fifth Avenue High School, and Heber L. Holbrook, principal of the Evening High School, made plans for 300 students. On the opening night 1,000 people showed up, many of whom had learned their basic skills at the Columbian School and Settlement.

Expansion and Change

By 1907, the Columbian School and Settlement had become a well-known institution, visited by distinguished guests, its activities reported in the widely read *Charities and the Commons,*[62] and in Jewish periodicals. Dr. Lee K. Frankel, manager of the United Hebrew Charities of New York, 1899-1909,

> spoke in the highest terms of the work that is being done by the school. He remarked that he had come prepared to offer suggestions and criticism on the system of the Settlement, but after investigating what had been and is being done he could find no room for adverse comment.[63]

The Columbian School and Settlement was unique in having Jewish women residents serving a largely Jewish clientele. While some residents left after a year or two, usually to marry, others stayed for longer periods. The annual reports of the residents for 1906-1909 give us a picture of industrious, eager, energetic young people, immigrants and volunteers and salaried workers, working together for common goals.

[60] W. H. Laning, Principal, Franklin School, "Report on a Questionnaire Submitted to the Principals of the Pittsburgh Public Schools by the Survey Commission," unpublished ms., March 31, 1927, Statistician's Office, Pittsburgh Board of Public Education.

[61] Samuel Andrews, *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Harrisburg, 1908, p. 196.

[62] March 16, 1907; April 24, 1909.

[63] *Jewish Criterion*, February 1, 1907.

The Slagle Mansion, considered "commodious" in comparison with the house on Townsend Street, became, in the following decade, much too small for the many different activities it housed. "Our establishment is filled to overflowing.[64] Just as important as the lack of space was the breaking down of the building, whose maintenance was a major problem.[65]

The pressures upon the facilities inspired some members of the settlement to look for solutions. Rabbi J. Leonard Levy, of Rodef Shalom, and A. Leo Weil approached Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kaufmann and suggested that they donate a large sum of money to build a memorial to their only daughter, Irene, who had died in July, 1907. In April, 1909, Mr. and Mrs. Kaufmann announced that they would donate $150,000 to be used to erect, equip, and partially endow a new building to be named the Irene Kaufmann Settlement.

> The building is to be erected on the present site at 1835 Centre Avenue. . . . . Mr. Kaufmann will contribute annually to the Settlement 25% of the maintenance fund contributed by the community, which agrees to raise $10,000 annually.[66]

In June of 1909 Mrs. A. Leo Weil submitted her resignation as president of the Columbian School and Settlement. During all the years when financial support was uncertain and the women had balanced their budget with cake sales and "begging," her leadership had been unchallenged. With the arrival of large sums of money and the promise of more, the Board seemed to feel the need for male leadership of the Settlement. Mr. Nathaniel Spear was elected, the first in an unbroken chain of male presidents.

Educational Contributions

Although most of the educational innovations introduced or supported by the Columbian School and Settlement eventually became part of the public education system, its pioneering adult evening classes, begun in 1899, were its outstanding contribution. This was not a new idea in the United States, but in Pittsburgh, Columbian Council was the first institution to offer year-round

[64] Ibid., January 24, 1908.
[65] Ruslander, *op. cit.*, p. 311.
[66] *Jewish Criterion*, April 16, 1909.

free evening classes for adults. It was also the driving force behind the introduction of such courses under public sponsorship.

The importance of this contribution may be seen in the statistics for the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, where, in 1910, 460,045 immigrants over the age of 15 could not speak English, and 20.1% of these were unable to read or write any language. Of 263 urban centers with over 2,500 inhabitants, 127 had over 1,000 foreigners, more such communities than any other state in the Union.

> Only 42 communities had any evening school facilities for immigrants over the age of compulsory attendance. Only 29 of these maintained public facilities. . . . In the school term 1914-1915, the total number of foreign pupils enrolled in these evening schools aggregated less than 20,000, a remarkably small number as compared with those unable to speak English and illiterate. [67]

In Pittsburgh, for the term 1913-1914, 2,464 students were registered at the Franklin Evening School, and 1,541 students were enrolled at the Fifth Avenue Evening High School.[68] Thus, one neighborhood in Pittsburgh supplied more than 20% of all evening school pupils in the entire state.

The Settlement also sponsored the notion that "the immigrant—as well as the American workingman—should share in the mental wealth of humanity."[69] The social and athletic clubs, the debating societies, the music courses, and the plays and entertainments enriched the often humdrum lives of the immigrants. The lecture series and the art, music, and theatre classes became the province of all. This aspect of Columbian Council's innovative work was not fully integrated into the public school system. It continues as an integral feature of its successors, Hill House in the Hill District and the Jewish Community Centers of Oakland, Squirrel Hill, East Liberty and South Hills.

[67] Commissioner of Labor and Industry, *Annual Report*, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, 1916, pp. 1158-1159.

[68] *Evening Schools and Extension Work Circular*, 1913-1914, in the Pennsylvania Division, Carnegie Library.

[69] Isaac Spectorsky, "The Newcomer and the Night School," *Charities and the Commons*, 1907, p. 892.