

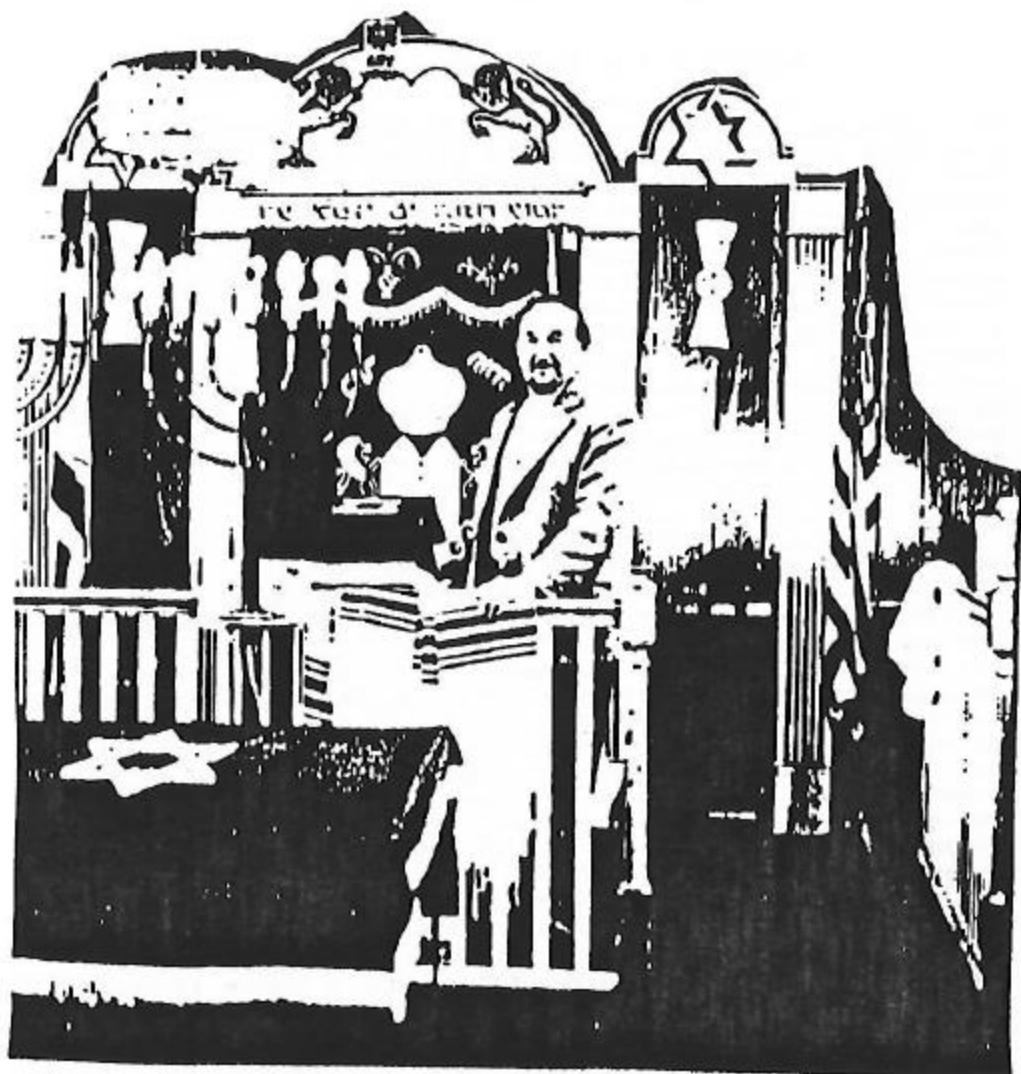
Southern New Jersey
SYNAGOGUES

A SOCIAL HISTORY

HIGHLIGHTED
BY
STORIES
OF JEWISH LIFE
FROM THE
1880'S - 1980'S

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Moyer EHRlich on the
Bima in front
of the Ark Kodesh
INSIDE the Jewish Farmer's Cong. 710

Jewish Farmer's Congregation-B'nai Israel Mc Kee City

The ability of the Jewish people to pick up their lives in one land after being persecuted in another, is part of the history of our people. A strong will to survive and then to resume a normal life is never an easy chore but the Jew has the resiliency to proceed with life in all generations. The Jew who settled in Atlantic County as displaced people would carry on this tradition.

To pick up with one's life in a strange country and to follow a strange occupation was a challenge that awaited some one hundred and fifty families in the area near Egg Harbor and the other side of May's Landing. Many Jews came as individuals initially of Polish descent to this area. They would be matched up with their spouses thru friends and relatives living mostly in New York City.

The opportunity to begin life anew coupled with a roof over one's head was appealing to these hardy people. A cluster of Jews flocked to this area to set up a life style to insure the continuation of their spirit. This is the story of the Jews who came to live in May's Landing after the Holocaust took their families and cherished memories of Jewish life in just less than 15 years earlier. These Jews settled between Routes 50, 40 and 322 near Mc Kee City.

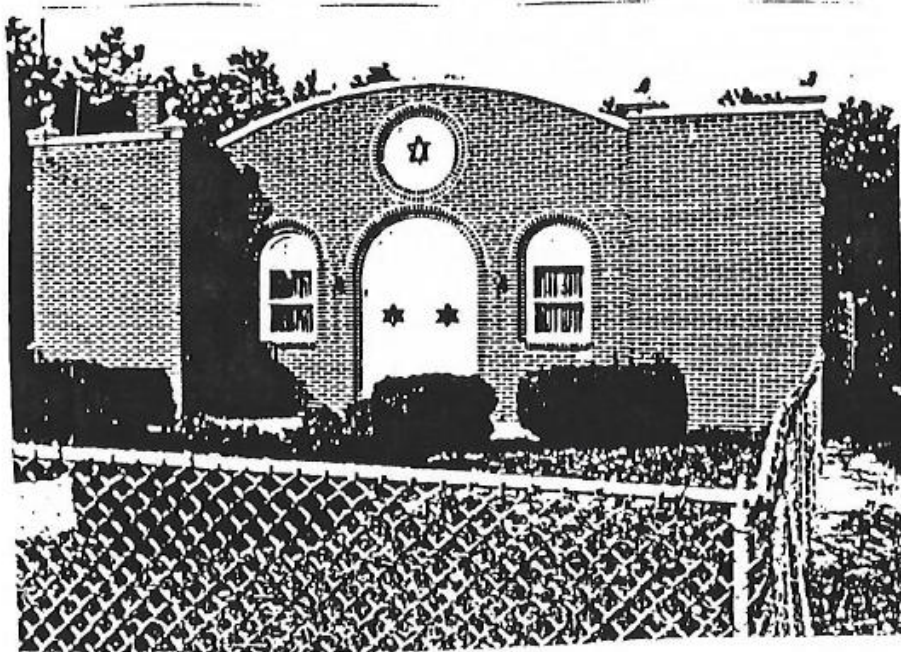
A grateful and committed Jew to lead this community would be found in Meyer Ehrlich. The re-dedication of one's life to G-d and all his glory would be found in this one man's energy. A spokesman of the group who declared that a shul was a necessary part of rebuilding one's Jewish life was essential if his family and co-religionists were to succeed.

Jews started to arrive in this area as displaced persons Lottery numbers for entry into this country became due in the late 1940's. Initially these Jews settled near Dorothy and acquired land for poultry farming. That area filled up and the new arrivals were funneled into vacant lands in Egg Harbor Township in the early 1950's.

The spark to gather and mold a Jewish community on the sandy scrub soil of this region was found in Meyer Ehrlich. Meyer arrived in America in 1952. His background was filled with adventure and realism as he left the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz. Diamonds and money were recovered after the War to begin life anew in a place other than Europe.

By word of mouth was the way in which Meyer came to May's Landing. Upon arrival in this area he met an old friend in Mr. Jacoby. Both men had a family and children at this point in time. Both men would join together in the near future to establish a Jewish community for their children to share in and enjoy as they grew older.

But first, a course of business would have to be transacted. Jack Budnick would help in finding a farm suitable for Meyer. The best area was near the Atlantic City Race track on Route 322. This area was composed of \$ 10, \$20 and \$50 per acre parcels. But the area near the main highway was \$ 500 per acre.



B'NAI ISRAEL
THE JEWISH FARMER'S CONG

Jewish Farmer's Congregation-B'nai Israel Mc Kee City

Meyer's ambition was to bring back Yiddishkeit to those Holocaust Survivors who retreated far back in the wilderness on their chicken farms. He would drive four hours three times per week to Atlantic City. Meyer believed in this endeavor to insure the continuation of the Jewish bond between the one generation and the next, i.e. the children.

Now he rekindled the inspiration and invited many Jewish families one on one to live not only a Jewish life but to live as Jews once again! This was a rehealing process as he recalls. The trips deep into the woods with a load of little Jewish children was just as much an adventure for him as it was for the children. Both would not forget these days for a long time. Meyer went door to door to invite some Jews back into the fold if only for their children's sake! The miracle would work in America. The children sang Yiddish and Nationalistic Hebrew songs. Meyer chose America just as easily as he could have Palestine. No matter the country, he was going to match hidden Jewish feelings up with activity!

Jack Jacoby had children, too. Both men would join to create a synagogue now that they had a ready made congregation.

Land was surveyed by Meyer Ehrlich. Mc Kee City was the central point of this gathering of Jews. He contacted Mr. Rubinfain on English Creek Road for help in this part of the plan. The parcel of land was situated about a mile South of Route 322 on an acre and half of ground. More people lived in the direction southwest of the land going toward Somers Point.

Meyer Ehrlich developed a format for pledges that helped to build the shul. During Chanukah 1955, it was decided to organize this group of Jewish Holocaust Survivors into a congregation. This was done with the help of Jules Waldman, Esquire of Atlantic City. The congregation initially chose to call itself She'arit Ha'platah or translated means the left overs.

The next few years would be crucial for the development and growth of this community. The initial members included Max Gurvitz, H. Rubinfain, M. Ehrlich, Mr. Zultak, Mr. Hertzberg, Mr. Kolbauer, Mr. Telerant, Mr. Weinthal, Mr. Szermer, Mr. Zuckerman, Wolf Ehrlich, Mr. Nunberg, Mr. Sotolan, Mr. Bauman, Mr. Greenbaum, Mr. Wolnereman, Mr. Roseblum, Mr. Zindorf, Mr. Baran, Mr. Copelman, Mr. Jacoby, Mr. Greeman, Mr. Taub, Mr. Schickman, Mr. Jacob Charny, A. Linschin, I. Schoffer, Mr. Pzerowshi, J. Livchin, Mr. Gelman, and Mr. Grunman. Twenty one more families were considered prospective members! This new Community Center would have a tremendous foundation of members!

It was during the 1957 year that the religious organization would boast a net surplus in funds. This would indicate that a building was now possible.

Jewish Farmer's Congregation-B'nai Isreal Mc Kee City

Meyer secured ten acres for his family and 10 acres for his brother, Wolf Ehrlich off of Route 322 between Route 40. An additional one and half acres were purchased for the complete straight-thru rights to both highways. Meyer had an eye for business in this area from the start especially with the help of some friends. Next, a house for each family would be built from the ground up. This was the first time houses in this area were built in many years.

Jack Budnick would help in establishing credit for baby chicks and feed. The Jewish Agricultural Society would not enter the picture for these families until the subject of a synagogue would come up. The Ehrlichs had enough funds to get started in their quest for a new life. A chicken stand was opened up on the busy Route 322 highway. An egg stand plus luncheonette for his brother was established on the other end of the property on Route 40.

The winter of 1952 was mild in this area when the Ehrlich's arrived. The new homes would be completed in March one week before the arrival of Purim. But a late layer of snow still covered the ground as they moved in to the houses.

With the essentials in order and business established now the energy to establish a Jewish community could be focused.

Meyer soon found out that his ambition was high on hope and short on facts. The connection to the Jewish community in Atlantic City was a life line in the beginning.

But home was still home! That first year of business went quickly and the High Holidays soon appeared. The nearest shul was in Pleasantville. The only way Meyer was going to get there on Yontav was to walk! With a small child on his back he started out on a mission for new found freedom to practice his religion in America. The four hour walk was worth the schlep as Meyer was free to be a Jew once again!

The following year, Meyer would rent a room in Atlantic City and have his family attend High Holiday services at Congregation Rodeph Sholom on Pacific Avenue.

The mid 1950's were upon this man of enormous strength and energy. His children were getting older and so was he! The challenge to provide a suitable environment for his children to receive a Jewish education was at hand. Could he build a Jewish community by himself? The answer was absolutely No! But there were enough Jews living miles apart in Egg Harbor Township.

Meyer rented a Jitney to bring the little Jewish children to Rabbi Moshe Sharipo for a Jewish experience in learning. The Jewish families were clustered five to ten miles in a circle around him. But they were deep in the woods. That first Yontav in America was an inspiration for him to gain the fortitude to make the rounds in the woods to pick up the children for Cheder in Atlantic City.

Jewish Farmer's Congregation-B'nai Israel Mc Kee City

But the arrangement with the home congregation of B'nai Israel is only for its facility. True is the fact that this group is more Conservative minded than the Orthodox home in which it finds itself in at the current time.

These young families are found in an area geographically and spiritually oriented many miles from the mainstream of Jewish life in Atlantic County. They are even outside the realm of the Cumberland County Jewish Federation. But they do want to provide a Jewish education for their children and a social environment of Jewish brotherhood even if they are twenty five miles from either Federation.

Their hopes and desires are typical of all previous pioneer and immigrant Jews who came to Southern New Jersey. But one thing is definitely different. They are the by-products of this history and they are now forced to feel like they are not only isolated by distance but isolated from the mainstream of nearby Jewish life because of where they choose to exist.

These newly wed couples with children were just starting out and couldn't afford to support a traditional synagogue as some of their parents did in the last generation.

So Judaism is the real big loser! Forget convenience. Forget the fact that it takes money for social activities and a synagogue in the 1980's to exist. Thus in 1983, this new Jewish entity known as a new evolving Jewish congregation is defunct in Mc Kee City. You can't have a place for Jewish activities which include Social and Religious interaction without funds. Thus this new Jewish entity is stopped dead in its tracks!

The benefactors of years ago are not to be found in today's generation. The Jewish congregations of today are made up of hard working people and professionals that have different levels of interest and varying amounts of disposable funds. Jewish Federations are now looked upon to help bolster up the religious and educational aspect of growing up as a Jew in the 1980's. And rightfully so! They are the central focus of the general community to raise monies to be used internally within the communities they represent as well as to funnel funds to larger projects outside their communities in the name of World Jewry.

The spark that kindled this expression of a new era of Jewish life in Atlantic County is snuffed out and extinguished in a brief period of time. No funding for the second year of operation for an entity which involves Jewish education spells a warning. Wrong time, wrong place you might say! No, but these people were sincere about their Jewish connection and all that was needed, i.e. money was not allocated to them.

Some families in search of a continuation of a religious education traveled the distance to Margate's Beth El or Beth Judah in Ventnor. Another new synagogue on the mainland in over thirty years would still be on the drawing boards. A viable synagogue would not exist until Reform Congregation Beth Israel would build a new synagogue in Northfield/ Linwood in 1986. From Herb and Carol Brown's perspective and knowledge most of these families would go back to being a non-existent Jewish Statistic stamped Non-affiliated!

Jewish Farmer's Congregation-B'nai Israel Mc Kee City

The synagogue gained in popularity. Close to one hundred families would join and stay members for some time to come. The programing was the key to its success. The Marlin Sister were popular in this region since they were home grown and breed. They would appear at the Community Center in Atlantic City at the invitation of the Jewish Farmers Congregation.

Cantor S. Malavsky would bring a sense of community to the Jewish farming areas. His stay in Rosenhayn was a tribute to the community's ability to attract a quality person who helped in many ways. Cantor Malavsky was born in Kiev Russia and traveled to America in 1914. The choir was formed at the Rosenhayn Shul and his children were part of the decorum.

The family decided to sing professionally after World War Two. Thus Trudy and Gloria would later form the Marlin Sister and perform in many Synagogues across the nation.

The new decade of the 1960's would witness many positive events in the regional Jewish affairs. Excused Jewish holidays were granted in the Egg Harbor Township schools.

This was the era in which High Holiday tickets sold for \$ 7 in 1960's and quickly went to \$ 10 in 1961. In 1962, an addition to the synagogue for more space was built to handle the increase use of the Talmud Torah at B'nai Israel. This development would help to pace the synagogue into the eye of the Jewish Statistical Agency in 1964. Now the Jewish Farmers Congregation would be listed in the national index of synagogues and organizations.

The Holocaust Survivors lived to see the next generation but their scars would never heal. The tattooed number given to them would not go away with time. These Jews were marked for life in other ways that were carried where ever they went. This included the Jews in Mc Kee City and May's Landing, even though one generation had past since the conclusion of the Holocaust. A special ceremony dedicated to the spirit of the Holocaust victims that perished during this time was annually observed in Mc Kee City. By 1966, a new tradition would be established with the help of the Jewish community in this part of Egg Harbor Township. There are no marked graves for the Holocaust victims and there only thoughts about their existence. One of the oldest Atlantic County Jewish Cemeteries set aside a symbolic portion of ground. Congregational member of B'nai Israel, Jack Zawid would conduct prayer services at the site prior to the High Holidays. This was a traditional time for families to vist the cemeteries before the start of the new year. This was an especially difficult time for Holocaust Survivors. Their thoughts naturally turned to that of their own family! Mr. Holzcer tells of this special time. For the folklore of Eastern Europe and Germany come quietly home to the Survivors of the Holocaust even in America. Stories have evolved telling of meetings in people's dreams with deceased relatives as clear as daylight. Truly their spirits cry out for understanding and compassion.