

A History of Jewish Life in Fremont and Surrounding Areas
By Austin Reid



Top: Leaders of the Beth Israel Sisterhood in 1962

Photo courtesy of *The Fremont News-Messenger*

Bottom left: Dryfoos & Bach Store, photo courtesy of Sandusky County Historical Society

Bottom right: Purim play at Beth Israel, photo gifted by Dennis Newman

Introduction: Fremont's Earliest Jewish Residents

While the closing of Temple Beth Israel in 1980 marked an end to organized Jewish life in Fremont, it did not mean that Jews ceased to live in the town. Similarly, Fremont's Jewish history does not begin on October 31, 1934, when several families came together at the home of Arthur and Dora Gilberg to discuss forming a new congregation, Beth Israel.¹ Rather, Jews are known to have lived in Fremont since the 1840s, and there is evidence to suggest that by 1856 Jewish religious services were being organized in town. During this year, *The Occident*, a Jewish newspaper published in Philadelphia, indicated that Fremont was among the cities and towns in Ohio with a Jewish congregation.² While no other references to this nascent congregation survive, its members would likely have met in private homes or rented spaces. A local newspaper, *The Fremont Journal*, did, however, begin to publish in 1855 periodic notices from Abraham Gusdorf indicating that his store would be closed on various autumn days to observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.³ Like all Jewish holidays, the dates of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are determined each year through a lunar calendar. This creates some annual variability in holiday observances when dated by the Gregorian calendar and likely contributed to the need for public notice about the dates.

Abraham and Helen Gusdorf are the oldest Jewish family known to have lived in Fremont. Abraham arrived in Fremont in 1848 and he found work as a trader dealing in a variety of products including grain, hides, textiles, and wool.⁴ It is not known with certainty, however, if Abraham was married to Helen before he arrived in Fremont. The couple was wed by 1855, and by 1860 their growing family was joined by Abraham's older brother, Moritz. Abraham, Helen, and Moritz were all natives of Central Europe and they numbered among the over one million immigrants from German-speaking regions of Europe who emigrated to the United States between 1848 and 1858.⁵ This wave of immigration had been sparked by failed political uprisings and it included among its members tens of thousands of Jews. By 1860, Abraham and Moritz had established the Gusdorf Brothers Packing Company, which dealt in grain. By 1903,

¹ "Jewish Temple is Organized," *Fremont Messenger*, June 28, 1935.

² "Congregations," *Occident (Philadelphia)*, December 01, 1856.

³ "Notice," *Fremont Journal*, September 14, 1855.

⁴ Basil Meek, *Twentieth Century History of Sandusky County, Ohio Representative Citizens*, (Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co, 1909) 928.

⁵ "The Germans in America," The Library of Congress, April 23, 2014, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/european/imde/germchro.html>.

the company was renamed the American Stock Food Company. The Gusdorf family also grew in size and its younger members included Carrie, Hattie, Isaac, Moses, Samuel, and Solomon.

In 1850, Isaac and Marcus Dryfoos arrived in Fremont and opened a store which they named I. and M. Dryfoos & Clothiers.⁶ Both brothers were immigrants from Central Europe, and by 1857, Marcus had married Rosetta Schwarzenberg, who was also born in Europe. Simon Dryfoos joined his older brothers in Fremont during 1866.⁷ Around the time of Isaac and Marcus' arrival, Henry and Lewis Oppenheimer also came to Fremont to begin a business. The Oppenheimer store sold dry goods and carried medicines among its merchandise.⁸ The Oppenheimer family would grow in Fremont and its members would also be among the first to be buried in the Jewish section of Oakwood Cemetery. While no records survive to indicate when this section was created for the Jewish community, the first burial took place in 1885 when Babetha Levy was laid to rest. In 1887, Cora Oppenheimer became the second person buried here.⁹

The Civil War and Reconstruction Period: A Time of Growth for Fremont's Jewish Community

When the Civil War broke out on April 12, 1861, Fremont's Jewish community likely numbered no more than four families. In addition to the families already discussed, it is known that a man named Feist Emrich worked with the Gusdorf Brothers by 1860. In 1870, Feist donated to the Jewish Orphan Asylum in Cleveland. This donation, along with Feist's association with the Gusdorf family, likely points to him being a Jew. No local Jews are known to have served in the Civil War. In 1875, however, a man named Mayer Frankel moved to Fremont along with his wife, Fannie, and their children Amelia, Estella, and Sarah. Mayer was a veteran of the Union Army and he was active in Fremont's Grand Army of the Republic chapter.¹⁰ Before the war, Myer lived in Philadelphia, where he settled in 1860 after immigrating from Bavaria. Fannie was also an immigrant and was born in Austria. After arriving in Fremont, the couple had two

⁶ Basil Meek, *Twentieth Century History of Sandusky County, Ohio Representative Citizens*, (Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co, 1909) 451.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Fremont Weekly Freeman*, June 14, 1851, p 4.

⁹ "Oakwood Cemetery Burial Guide and Survey Form for Non-Eastern-European Cemeteries IAJGC Cemetery Project," Toledo Lucas County Public Library Digital Collections, May 07, 2018, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p16007coll33/id/105311/rec/5>.

¹⁰ Steve Hammond, "Mayer Frankel: A Tale from the National Archives' Service and Pension Records," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 135, no. 4 (2011): 569.

additional children, Ernest, and William. One of these sons, William, would establish a women's clothing store named Frankel's.¹¹ This business would remain open until the mid-1960s.

Amelia and Mayer were only one of several new Jewish residents to arrive in Fremont by 1877. During the war, Jacob Joseph arrived in Fremont with his wife, Esther. While Jacob began his time in Fremont as a peddler, by 1864 he had obtained enough capital to build his own store, Joseph's.¹² This shop would grow to encompass three stories and become an institution on the corner of Garrison and South Front streets until it ultimately closed in 1984.¹³ Another new entrepreneur in Fremont was Louis Bach. In 1873, Louis settled in Fremont to take a position with Dryfoos Clothiers. He eventually became a full partner in the firm and in 1920 its sole owner.¹⁴ In 1882, Louis married Barbara Kahn and the couple had three children. Bach would be a familiar name in Fremont for over 50 years. By the time Bach Clothing Company was sold in 1927 to the Uhlman Company, it was Fremont's oldest clothing store. In his obituary, Louis was described as a "pioneer clothier in northern Ohio."¹⁵ Other, less famed Jewish clothing merchants in Fremont by 1870 included Henry Munk and Lewis Youngman. Peddlers included Jacob Dach, Louis Jandorf, and Moses Solomon.

In addition to finding work as clothiers, peddlers, and dry goods merchants, some early Jewish residents of Fremont were tobacconists. In 1877 Jacob Youngman, the son of Babet and Lewis Youngman, began working at Charles Barth's tobacco store on Front Street while in high school. Seven years later, Jacob purchased the store and renamed the enterprise Youngman's Cigar and Tobacco.¹⁶ The store would remain open for 63 years. Jacob was active in the community as a member of the local Elks Lodge and a charter member of Rotary. He was also a trustee of the Birchard Public Library, which was opened in 1874.¹⁷ It is possible that Jacob's interest in the Birchard Library was inspired by his sister, Bertha, who was a teacher in Fremont from 1887 until her retirement in 1932. Bertha was also civically engaged as a charter member of the Fremont Federation of Women and a volunteer with the Women's Board of Memorial Hospital.¹⁸ The Memorial Hospital, which continues to serve patients into the 21st century, was

¹¹ "Frankel Services Scheduled Monday," *Fremont News-Messenger*, April 15, 1949.

¹² "Joseph's Department Store Legacy Goes Back 120 Years," *Fremont News-Messenger*, November 01, 1984.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Roy Wilhelm, "Dryfoos Clothiers Set the Pace for Fremont, Set Trends Before 1900," *Fremont News-Messenger*, May 20, 2015.

¹⁵ "Louis Bach, 87, Pioneer, Dies in Cleveland," *Freemont Messenger*, April 22, 1935.

¹⁶ "Jacob L. Youngman, Veteran Fremont Businessman, Succumbs," *Fremont News-Messenger*, March 09, 1939.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Retired School Teacher Taken," *Fremont News-Messenger*, November 27, 1941.

opened in 1918. It is also of note that another Jewish teacher, Samuel Wertheim lived in Fremont by 1880. Samuel was an immigrant from Germany who taught music. He was married to Rebecca, and the couple had five children.

In 1898, Jacob wed Tillie Mandelbaum, a native of Cincinnati. The couple had one child, a daughter named Hortense. Hortense married Rudolph Rosenbush in 1923, and the couple carried on the Youngman's after the death of Jacob in 1939. Another Jew who was involved in the tobacco business was Jake Dach. Jake, who was born in 1878 in Fremont, was the son of Elizabeth and Simon Dach. His parents, who had both emigrated from Central Europe, were wed in 1868. Simon was likely the brother of the older, previously referenced Jacob Dach, and similarly, he was a peddler in Fremont by 1870. Jake would work as a clerk at Youngman's for forty years.¹⁹

The Closing Years of the 19th Century and the Establishment of the Fremont Hebrew Congregation

By the early 1880s, the children of Fremont's earliest Jewish residents were reaching their mid-20s. Marcus and Rosetta Dryfoos had at least three children, Isaac, Louis, and Elenora. Isaac would work in the clothing business and go on to serve as a member of Fremont's Health Board in his later years.²⁰ Louis attended the University of Michigan and later the University of Zurich. Following his studies, Louis moved to New York City, where he worked as a chemist. He would invent a process for creating artificial rubber.²¹ Elenora lived in Fremont throughout her life, and she is buried in the Jewish section of Oakwood Cemetery. Hattie, Isaac, and Moses were the only children of Abraham and Helen Gusdorf to remain in Fremont as adults. Hattie never married and she helped her brother, Isaac manage several investment properties in Fremont. She was also active with the Memorial Hospital Board, Fremont Federation of Women, and Cosmopolitan Club, which served a literary purpose.²² Isaac continued to manage the family's business, which was known as the Fremont Storage Company by the 1920s, and he was a member of the Elks, Kiwanis, and Masons.²³ Moses attended Cornell University before

¹⁹ "Friends Mourn Sudden Death of Jacob Dach," *Fremont Messenger*, July 13, 1931.

²⁰ "Ike Dryfoos New Member of Health Board," *Fremont Daily Messenger*, January 03, 1924.

²¹ "Dr. Louis Dryfoos Dies at His Home in New York City," *Fremont Daily Messenger*, December 02, 1920.

²² "Miss Gusdorf Death Victim," *Fremont Messenger*, December 06, 1935.

²³ "I. E. Gusdorf Found Dead in Garage," *Fremont Messenger*, January 28, 1929.

returning to Fremont to work at the Gusdorf Brothers Packing Company. He also became involved with the First National Bank and was elected its vice president in 1895.²⁴

By 1885, there is evidence that Jewish residents of Fremont were organizing to form what would become known as the Fremont Hebrew Congregation.²⁵ This congregation was officially incorporated on February 16, 1891, with Leon Jandorf serving as president and Louis Bach as treasurer.²⁶ Twelve other individuals signed the Articles of Incorporation. Their names were Jacob Joseph, Isadore Cohn, Jacob Dach, Moses Solomon, Simon Wolf, Henry Munk, Simon Dach, Mayer Frankel, Samuel Wertheim, Simon Dryfoos, Simon Oppenheimer, and Henry Hayman. The group rented space inside the Knights of Honor hall located in the Dryfoos block. In 1893 a Sunday school was organized by the women of the congregation and Rabbi Emanuel Schreiber of Toledo was hired to visit Fremont once a month to teach and lead religious services.²⁷ The congregation's first president, Leon Jandorf was the son of Caroline and Louis. Caroline's maiden name was Solomon, and she was likely related to Moses Solomon. By 1931, Leon would move to Buffalo along with his sister, Cora. Another sister, Bertha, moved to Buffalo shortly after 1907 following her marriage to Adolph Block.²⁸

Moses and Minnie Solomon were especially active in supporting the Fremont Hebrew Congregation. Moses would serve for many years as the congregation's president, and he was known for his religiosity.²⁹ An additional note is that during Solomon's later life, he helped to create the A.C.S Jeavons Company, which was incorporated three years after his death in 1940. This company would become a significant contributor to the local economy and maintain a presence in Fremont until 1981.³⁰ Other known members of the Fremont Hebrew Congregation included Moses Gusdorf, Joseph and Ida Harskowitz, and Jacob and Tillie Youngman.

Joseph and Ida Harskowitz are notable for being among the first Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe to reside in Fremont. This wave of immigration began after 1880 in response to violent outbreaks of anti-Jewish persecution in the Russian Empire. By 1924, when the United

²⁴ Basil Meek, *Twentieth Century History of Sandusky County, Ohio Representative Citizens*, (Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co, 1909) 929.

²⁵ Gloria Ulmer, "Fremont Population Dwindles: Jews in Small-Town Ohio Losing Out," *Cleveland Jewish News*, September 05, 1975.

²⁶ "Beth Israel Temple Notes its Diamond Anniversary," *Fremont News-Messenger*, May 17, 1966.

²⁷ "Congregational," *Reform Advocate (Chicago)*, December 02, 1893.

²⁸ "Block-Jandorf," *Buffalo Enquirer*, March 18, 1907.

²⁹ "Moses Solomon Taken in Death Tuesday Night," *Fremont Messenger*, June 16, 1937.

³⁰ "A.C.S. JEA VONS, INC, : Ohio (US) : OpenCorporates," Accessed March 06, 2021, https://opencorporates.com/companies/us_oh/178229.

States Congress passed The Johnson-Reed Act to significantly limit further immigration, over two million Jews had immigrated to the United States. Joseph made a living in Fremont as a scrap metal dealer, and this line of work would be undertaken by several other Jewish families in Fremont during the early decades of the 20th century. Individuals supported through the scrap metal trade included Anthony and Rena Wolf, Herman and Joseph Levinger, and Bessie and Harry Linver. It is possible that the same business sold by the Harskowitz family to Joseph and Herman Levinger around 1917 was later owned by Harry Linver since he too conducted his scrap yard on Carbon Street. Several other Jewish residents in Fremont during the 1890s engaged in entrepreneurial pursuits. These individuals included Hattie and Isadore Cohn, Aaron and Irene Mahler, and Josephine and Simon Wolf. Isadore worked as a butcher alongside his father, Samuel. His mother, Maria, also lived with the family. Aaron owned the Empire Notion Store on South Front Street for many years.³¹ His two children, Estella, and Jona both moved away from Fremont as adults. Simon was a pharmacist on Croghan Street until 1899. Following his death in 1900, Josephine and her son, Louis moved to Toledo.³²

Jewish Life In and Around Fremont During the Early 20th Century

In addition to religious services, Jews in Fremont also began to organize new social and service organizations by the early 1900s. These included a sewing circle for women and a youth group that studied Jewish history and provided choral music for religious services.³³ A formal Ladies Auxiliary for the Fremont Hebrew Congregation also existed by 1907.³⁴ In this same year, Fremont's Jewish population was estimated to number approximately 45 people or about half a percent of the town's overall population.³⁵ Between 1906 and 1909 Fremont's Jewish congregation was a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.³⁶ Sunday school classes continued to be organized, and in 1903 a class of four graduated. Bertha Youngman and Hannah Mier were among the teachers.³⁷

³¹ "Aaron Mahler is Claimed in Death," *Fremont News-Messenger*, October 04, 1939.

³² "Will Bury Body of Louis Wolf in Oakwood Cemetery," *Fremont Daily Messenger*, July 07, 1919.

³³ "Fremont, Ohio," *Hebrew Standard (New York)*, January 15, 1904.

³⁴ Henrietta Szold, "Directory of Local Organizations," *The American Jewish Yearbook 5668* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1907) 361.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Membership," *Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, June 17, 1907.

³⁷ "Beth Israel Temple Notes its Diamond Anniversary," *Fremont News-Messenger*, May 17, 1966.

By the early years of the 20th century, Jewish families living in nearby towns including Fostoria, Norwalk, and Tiffin are known to have participated in some of the religious services and other communal activities organized in Fremont. Jewish families outside of Fremont would also play an important role in the later growth of Temple Beth Israel. In Fostoria there were Henry Kohn and Louis Preis. Henry, who was an immigrant from Austria, owned a dry goods store and was married to Isabelle. Louis Preis was also a businessman who had moved to Fostoria. Before the move, he had lived in Philadelphia with his wife, Pearl. The couple arrived in Fostoria around 1915 to open the Preis Store, which sold women's clothing. This store would remain in Fostoria until at least the late 1960s and would pass to Louis' relative, Jacob. In Norwalk lived Henry and Rebecca Pohl, who opened Pohl's Menswear in 1911.³⁸ This store would continue on Main Street until 1985. Louis Oppenheimer, the son of Rose Gusdorf and Simon Oppenheimer, also worked in Norwalk for a time before moving to New York.³⁹ In Tiffin, there was Bertha and Joseph Gottlieb and their relatives, Cora, and Leon Stricker. Both families supported themselves through their involvement in the clothing business. The first members of the Stricker family to live in Tiffin were Leon's parents, Amelia, and Barney, who arrived around 1852 to open Stricker's.⁴⁰ Joseph Gottlieb was related to Leon through his marriage to Bertha, and he operated a separate clothing store on Washington Street. Another Jewish couple living in Tiffin by 1909 was Isaac and Sarah Hurwitz. This couple had at least four children, and they too were supported by Isaac's work as a clothier.

By the time World War I broke out in 1914, Fremont's Jewish population had grown to 50.⁴¹ While modest in size, members of the Jewish community are recorded as doing their part to support the war effort after the United States entered the conflict in 1917. Tillie Youngman volunteered with the local Red Cross chapter and she was active in Liberty Loan Drives.⁴² Samuel Cohen, a native of Fremont, served abroad, but he may have lived in Dayton by the time of his enlistment.⁴³ Locals also worked to support refugees from the conflict. Following the war, two Jewish veterans, Louis Michles and Rudolph Rosenbush moved to Fremont. Louis owned a retail surplus store and would help his brothers, Joseph and Marcus establish the Michles

³⁸ Janet Conway, "Dean of Norwalk Businessman is 85," *Norwalk Reflector*, September 15, 1972.

³⁹ Obituary of Rosa [sic] Oppenheimer, *Jewish Review and Observer (Cleveland)*, December 05, 1913.

⁴⁰ "Local," *American Israelite*, September 24, 1914.

⁴¹ Herman Bernstein, "Statistics of Jews," *The American Jewish Yearbook* 5675 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1914), p 372.

⁴² "Mrs. J. Youngman Beloved Wife and Mother is Dead," *Fremont Daily Messenger*, June 01, 1920.

⁴³ Obituary of Samuel Cohen, *Journal Herald (Dayton)*, December 03, 1953.

Company which dealt in scrap metal.⁴⁴ This business would remain in Fremont until 1988. It is also of note that Marcus served in the United States Army from 1920 to 1924.⁴⁵ Rudolph worked at Youngman's Cigar and Tobacco after his marriage to Hortense in 1923. These men were not the only Jewish entrepreneurs to become involved in business interests in Fremont during the 1920s and early 1930s. One of the most notable businessmen of the era was Solomon Hyman, who established Fremont's S.E. Hyman Company in 1923.⁴⁶

Solomon was born in Fremont in 1886 and he was the son of Amelia and Henry Hyman, who were both German immigrants.⁴⁷ Amelia and Henry both died before Solomon's thirteenth birthday leaving him and a housekeeper, Katie Hakelz, to care for his siblings, Henrietta and Julius.⁴⁸ Katie would take the last name Hyman before her death. The S.E. Hyman Company began by crafting clothing pieces but soon shifted its production to creating upholstered coverings for car seats and other accessories. Linings for winter coats were also made. S.E. Hyman would be a significant employer in Fremont until the 1980s. At its largest, the company employed hundreds of people. After Solomon's death in 1948, his wife, Dorris, took over management of the company.⁴⁹ Later the company would pass to Richard and Nannette Newman. Nannette was the daughter of Solomon and Dorris. In addition to Solomon Hyman, Harry Krohngold and Samuel Lichtenstein also opened businesses in Fremont during the 1920s. Kronhgold sold shoes and Lichtenstein clothing.

In 1920, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Fremont Hebrew Congregation was reconstituted as the Temple Sisterhood. By 1922, the organization numbered twelve members who worked to support a variety of local and national charitable causes.⁵⁰ The Fremont Hebrew Congregation rejoined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1920. At the time it was reported that the group had 14 full members. Louis Bach was listed as the congregation's president and Jacob Youngman its secretary.⁵¹ It is possible that the lapse in Union membership was caused by a decline in the congregation's numbers during the 1910s. Some Jewish families in Fremont and surrounding areas may have chosen to affiliate themselves with larger or more traditional

⁴⁴ Obituary of Louis Michles, *Fremont News-Messenger*, February 24, 1966.

⁴⁵ Obituary of Marcus J. Michles, *Fremont News-Messenger*, May 28, 1994.

⁴⁶ Roy Wilhelm, "From Clothing to Upholstery, S.E. Hyman Served City," *Fremont News-Messenger*, April 21, 2015.

⁴⁷ Dennis Newman, "Jewish Business Persons: History of Fremont Ohio," email of text, March 11, 2021.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Obituary of Dorris L. Hyman, *Fremont News-Messenger*, August 14, 1975.

⁵⁰ "Union of American Hebrew Congregations," *Reform Advocate (Chicago)*, March 18, 1922.

⁵¹ "Register of Congregations," *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Forty-Seventh Annual Report November 1, 1919 to October 31, 1920*, July 1921.

congregations in Sandusky or Toledo rather than with the local Reform group. Others may not have affiliated with any organized religious community. Additionally, not all members of the Fremont Hebrew Congregation lived in Fremont. Households from neighboring towns, particularly Fostoria, continued to be active. Fostoria's Jewish community during the 1920s and 1930s was growing and evidence exists of a local Sunday school by 1931. In that same year, an effort was made by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to establish a more organized religious community in town affiliated with Reform Judaism.⁵² Some newer Jewish residents of Fostoria, however, were more orthodox in their observance. These residents included Myer and Wetel Shiff, who kept a kosher kitchen. Myer arrived in Fostoria from Toledo, and he established the Fostoria Iron and Metal Company in 1926. The business would grow to become a major enterprise in Fostoria lasting for decades.⁵³ Both within Fremont and the surrounding area, the Jewish community was not uniform in its religious practices. These differences in practice likely played a significant role in the establishment of Beth Israel.

Beth Israel's Early Years

On Sunday, November 24, 1935, Beth Israel was dedicated. This was the result of over a year's worth of work which had begun on October 31, 1934, when an interest meeting to discuss the formation of a new congregation was held at the home of Arthur and Dora Gilberg.⁵⁴ Five months before Beth Israel's formal dedication, a room above the Somatt clothing store, located at 108 North Front Street, began to serve as a venue for congregational activities. The space was furnished with pews and red velvet hangings. Philip and Rose Somatt were themselves recent arrivals who moved to Fremont after 1930. The dedication service for Beth Israel began with the assembled singing the Star-Spangled Banner and it ended with the Zionist anthem, Hatikvah. In total, the number of attendees was estimated at around 300.⁵⁵ Rabbi Bernard Dorfman, who ministered to congregations in both Lima and Sandusky, delivered a sermon. The main address of the day was given by Justin Sillman, a Columbus-based attorney who was a notable leader in the Jewish fraternal organization B'nai B'rith.⁵⁶ Following the dedication service, the newly formed Ladies' Auxiliary of Beth Israel served a buffet luncheon. It appears that the young

⁵² *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* 1931, p 162.

⁵³ Rick Markoff, "Fostoria Jewish Community," email of original May 13, 2020 text, March 17, 2021.

⁵⁴ "Jewish Temple is Organized," *Fremont Messenger*, June 28, 1935.

⁵⁵ "Jewish Temple was Dedicated With Ceremony," *Fremont Messenger*, November 25, 1935.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

congregation also had sufficient funds to hire its own rabbi, Samuel Zakuto.⁵⁷ Samuel was the son of Gabriel Zakuto, a rabbi in Canton, Ohio, and in 1930 he ministered to a congregation in New Castle, Pennsylvania.⁵⁸ A resident rabbi did not remain in Fremont for long, however, and by 1936 Beth Israel was served by visiting rabbis, including Allen Tarshish of Columbus and Jacob Klein of Cleveland. The first officers of Beth Israel were as follows: Samuel Zakuto, Rabbi, Philip Somatt, president, Arthur Gilberg, secretary, and Samuel Lichtenstein, treasurer.⁵⁹

The members of the Fremont Hebrew Congregation, also called the Fremont Temple by 1936, did not immediately join Beth Israel. While it appears that by the mid-1930s the group only organized religious services during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, these continued to be held separately at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Park Avenue until at least 1938. Beth Israel by contrast held weekly Shabbat services. This was likely the first time in Fremont's history that such regular Jewish services were organized in town. The merging of Beth Israel and the Fremont Hebrew Congregation likely took place in 1940. This date is chosen because it is when Fremont's formerly separate Jewish women's organizations united.⁶⁰ This united group, newly named the Beth Israel Sisterhood, would play a leading role in the development of Jewish life in Fremont.

When the Ladies Auxiliary of Beth Israel was formed on November 11, 1935, it had 18 members. By 1937, its membership had increased to 24.⁶¹ The first officers of the Auxiliary were: Rena Wolf, president, Mrs. J. Rosenblatt, vice president, Anne Bloom, secretary, and Sophia Spungen, treasurer.⁶² The Auxiliary helped to support Beth Israel financially and its members organized for other charitable causes in Fremont. The women also sponsored a Sunday school, which in 1938 had 27 students, its largest enrollment to date.⁶³ Some students such as Gloria Burger, Rudolph Cohn, and Matiel Preis, lived in Fostoria. It should also be noted that a Jewish men's organization existed in Fremont by 1938. Its members sponsored social activities, including dances and it likely merged into the Sandusky B'nai B'rith Lodge by the 1950s. Members included Arthur Gilberg, Samuel Lichtenstein, Irving Naftulin, and Anthony Wolf.

⁵⁷ "Noted Speakers at Dedication of New Temple," *Fremont Messenger*, November 20, 1935.

⁵⁸ "Cornerstone to be Placed," *Hamilton Daily News (Hamilton, OH)*, October 25, 1930.

⁵⁹ "Jewish Temple was Dedicated With Ceremony," *Fremont Messenger*, November 25, 1935.

⁶⁰ "Union Services Being Planned in New Temple," *Fremont News-Messenger*, September 01, 1942.

⁶¹ "Have Auxiliary of Beth Israel," *Fremont Messenger*, February 02, 1937.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Amy Hyman, "Fremont News," *Toledo Jewish Times*, October 21, 1938.

The growth in Fremont's Jewish life during the 1930s was possible in part because of an influx of new Jewish residents that occurred around this time. Some of these households, including Gilberg, Naftulin, Somatt, and Spungen have already been referenced. Arthur and Dora Gilberg moved to Fremont after Art took a position with Joseph's Department Store around 1933. Irving and Jean Naftulin arrived after Irv opened a dental practice on South Front Street in 1930. This practice would remain in Fremont until 1965.⁶⁴ Louis and Sophia Spungen came to Fremont from Cleveland in 1933 to open a furniture store at the corner of Croghan and Arch streets.⁶⁵ Other families who came to Fremont in the early 1930s were Irving and May Adelson, Albert and Annette Copperman, and Helen and Louis Danziger. Irving and May moved to Fremont from Cleveland to open an auto parts store. While in Fremont, Irving was active with the Chamber of Commerce and May was a member of the Beth Israel Sisterhood.⁶⁶ Like the Adelsons, Albert and Annette also moved to Fremont from Cleveland to open a business. This business, the Fruit Arcade, was first located on Front Street across from the Jackson Hotel and then on North Arch Street. The produce store opened in 1933 and was sold in 1967.⁶⁷

Similar to the Gilbergs, Louis Danziger was drawn to Fremont because of Joseph's Department Store. In 1931, he took a position as manager of the store, and he would be the leader of the company until his retirement in 1975.⁶⁸ Louis purchased Joseph's from Barney Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was the store's founder.⁶⁹ During Louis' time as head of the store, he saw the business through many years of growth and laid the groundwork for two satellite stores to open, one in Defiance and the other in Tiffin.⁷⁰ He also helped to rebuild Joseph's Fremont location after two major fires, one in 1948 and the other in 1950.⁷¹ During the 1948 fire a local firefighter, George Kettner lost his life while working to stop the flames.⁷² In 1936 Louis married Helen Rosner in Detroit. Helen would become active in the Ladies' Auxiliary of Beth

⁶⁴ Daniel Carson, "Fremont Dentist Plays Role in WWII Documentary," *Fremont News-Messenger*, October 21, 2016.

⁶⁵ "New Furniture Store Planned," *Fremont Messenger*, July 14, 1933.

⁶⁶ Obituary of Irving Adelson, *Fremont News-Messenger*, July 26, 1966.

⁶⁷ Obituary of Annette Copperman, *Fremont News-Messenger*, November 19, 1985.

⁶⁸ "Danziger Family," Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums, accessed March 09, 2021, <https://www.rbhayes.org/collection-items/local-history-collections/danziger-family/>.

⁶⁹ "Death Claims Barney Joseph at His Home," *Fremont News-Messenger*, November 13, 1943.

⁷⁰ "Joseph's Department Store Legacy Goes Back 120 Years," *News-Messenger*, November 01, 1984.

⁷¹ "Danziger Family," Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums, <https://www.rbhayes.org/collection-items/local-history-collections/danziger-family/>.

⁷² Larry and Krista Michaels, "History Spotlight: Joseph's Department Store Fire," *Fremont News-Messenger*, February 01, 2018.

Israel, and serve as the organization's president, while Louis was involved with the Chamber of Commerce. The couple also supported the local YMCA and Rotary.⁷³

As Fremont's Jewish population grew, the members of Beth Israel began to seek out a larger space for their congregation's activities. An opportunity presented itself when the Holderman property on the corner of Birchard and Park Avenue was put up for sale. The property was purchased and on Sunday, August 30, 1942, the new Temple Beth Israel was dedicated.⁷⁴ Over 200 guests attended the event at 514 Birchard Avenue including Amer Wrigley, the Mayor of Fremont, who gave an address. Louis Spungen, the president of Beth Israel, and Hortense Rosenbush, the president of the Sisterhood also spoke.⁷⁵ Rabbis Charles Freund of Toledo and Carl Miller of Elyria assisted with parts of the dedication service. Other components of the service were led by Abe Wollmen, who was a leader of B'nai B'rith in Columbus and a relative of the Danzigers.⁷⁶ At the time of its dedication, the members of Temple Beth Israel comprised 18 households.⁷⁷ Congregational leaders involved with the sale included Harold Danziger, Samuel Lichtenstein, Joseph Michles, Marcus Michles, Philip Somatt, and Louis Spungen.

Some of these congregants came from areas outside of Sandusky County. One such member was Isaac Grobman of Fostoria, who is credited with donating a Torah scroll to Beth Israel after it was founded in 1935.⁷⁸ Other members of the Grobman family, including Lillian and William, also lived in Fostoria. Both husband and wife were active members of the wider community. Lillian, who was related to the Danzigers through her sister, Ruth, was involved with the Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.⁷⁹ William was a charter member of the Fostoria Lion's Club and active with the Elks and Masons.⁸⁰ Bessie and Jack Burger along with Bertrice and Jacob Preis are examples of other couples in Fostoria affiliated with Beth Israel. In Norwalk Bess and Harry Berezin were affiliated with Beth Israel. Harry, who was recognized as Norwalk's "Man of the Year" in 1954 was the owner of The Fashion Shoppe from 1925 until his retirement in

⁷³ "Danziger Family," Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums, <https://www.rbhayes.org/collection-items/local-history-collections/danziger-family/>.

⁷⁴ "Beth Israel is Factor in City," *Fremont News-Messenger*, July 30, 1949.

⁷⁵ "Union Services Being Planned in New Temple," *Fremont News-Messenger*, September 01, 1942.

⁷⁶ "Fremont Temple Dedicated," *Jewish Independent (Cleveland)*, September 11, 1942.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Surprise Party Tendered Somatt," *Fremont News-Messenger*, December 13, 1940.

⁷⁹ Obituary of Mrs. Lillian Grobman, *Fremont News-Messenger*, February 10, 1969.

⁸⁰ Obituary of William Grobman, *Fremont News-Messenger*, July 25, 1961.

1969.⁸¹ In Tiffin lived the Rosenblatt family, who supported themselves by owning a scrap metal yard. Other contemporary Beth Israel members came from Port Clinton and Findley.⁸²

World War II and its Effects on Fremont's Jewish Community

On December 07, 1941, the United States entered World War II after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At least six Jews in Fremont are known to have served out of an estimated population of 85.⁸³ Their names are Sidney Breslow, John Gottschalk, Irving Naftulin, Emerson Reed, Richard Newman Sr., and Stuart Wolf. Sidney Breslow was a relative of the Danzingers who had worked at Joseph's since approximately 1940. Stuart Wolf was the son of Anthony and Rena Wolf and a noted student-athlete at Bowling Green State University. Irving Naftulin served as a lieutenant in the United States Army Dental Corps. During the war, he was the recipient of both the Bronze Star and the Silver Star. The Bronze Star was awarded after Naftulin saved four men after a hospital was bombed, while the Silver Star was awarded later in the war when Naftulin rescued three men who were trapped in a burning ambulance.⁸⁴ Emerson Reed worked in the shoe department of Joseph's, and his wife, Dorothy was an active member of the Beth Israel Sisterhood. John Gottschalk was the son of Ernest and Theresa, and the family had come to Fremont in 1938 as refugees from Nazi Germany. Once established in the city, Ernest opened a medical practice.⁸⁵

The Gottschalks were not the only refugees from Germany who found their way to Fremont in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Fred and Rena Davids moved to Fremont in 1941 after living in the United States for around two years. Fred would work as the manager of the Puritan Clothing Store on Front Street until 1971.⁸⁶ Rena was an active member of the Beth Israel Sisterhood. Several months later in 1942, Abraham and Mathilde Srog arrived in Fremont after spending two years in Chicago.⁸⁷ While in Fremont the couple operated Bechberger's alongside their son, Ludwig and his wife, Harriette. Ludwig and Harriette would later become involved with Rotary, and in 1964 Ludwig was elected the group's president.⁸⁸ Another refugee

⁸¹ "Longtime Merchant Dies at 76," *Norwalk Reflector*, December 12, 1971.

⁸² "Services Held for Third Day," *Fremont Messenger*, September 27, 1938.

⁸³ H. S. Linfield, *Jewish Communities of the United States: Number and Distribution of Jews of the United States in Urban Places and Rural Territory* (Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee, 1940), 257.

⁸⁴ Daniel Carson, "Fremont Dentist Plays Role in WWII Documentary," *Fremont News-Messenger*, October 21, 2016.

⁸⁵ Obituary of Ernest Gottschalk, *Fremont News-Messenger*, February 15, 1974.

⁸⁶ Obituary of Fred Davids, *Fremont News-Messenger*, January 10, 1983.

⁸⁷ "Rites Tuesday for Abraham Srog, 75," *Fremont News-Messenger*, April 01, 1950.

⁸⁸ "Ludwig Srog Becomes President of Rotary," *Fremont News-Messenger*, July 07, 1964.

who spent time in Fremont was Thaddeus Stabholz. Thaddeus, who was also known as Ted, was born in Warsaw, Poland and he attended the University of Warsaw for medical school. After the Nazis occupied the city, Ted was among the over 460,000 Jews imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. Despite the dangerous conditions in the Ghetto, Ted continued his medical studies in secret alongside other students, and he worked at the Ghetto's hospital 12 hours a day.⁸⁹ After the Ghetto was liquidated in 1942, he was sent to Treblinka, an extermination camp northeast of Warsaw. He later spent time in both Auschwitz and Dachau. By the time Dachau was liberated by the United States Army on April 29, 1945, Ted weighed only 70 pounds.⁹⁰ In 1947 Ted married Eva Weinstein and the couple arrived in Nork York City in 1948. Ted practiced medicine in Fremont from 1955 to 1966 before moving to Canton in 1966.

It should also be noted that at least one Jewish refugee from Europe settled in Fostoria. Frank Schanzer arrived in the United States in 1940 and shortly thereafter he moved to Fostoria, where he worked as a manager for the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Company for 23 years. Frank also served in the United States Army during the war as part of the 65th Infantry Division. He became an American citizen while in the service.⁹¹ It is possible that Fremont and Fostoria became places of settlement for Jewish refugees in part because of the efforts of local Jewish women. These efforts found expression in 1938 when Jewish women living in Fostoria, Fremont, and Tiffin came together to create a Hadassah chapter.⁹² Hadassah, which continues to exist as an international Jewish women's organization, works to support many charitable causes, particularly in Israel. The local Hadassah chapter, which was sometimes referred to as the Fostoria Chapter, raised money to support refugees from Europe. Members of the Jewish community also organized to support the war effort. For example, in March 1942 proceeds from the Sunday School children's Purim carnival were used to purchase a \$25 defense bond.⁹³ Purim is a festive Jewish holiday typically celebrated in February or March. Beth Israel also participated in interfaith efforts. As an example, on June 06, 1944, special services were organized by the congregation to pray for the success of the D-Day Landing.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Obituary of Thaddeus Stabholz, *Repository (Canton)*, March 24, 2009.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "Frank S. Schanzer Dies, 80; A Refugee From Nazi Regime," *Cleveland Jewish News*, January 29, 1988.

⁹² Amy Hyman, "Fremont News," *Toledo Jewish Times*, October 21, 1938.

⁹³ "Carnival by Children to Buy Defense Bond," *Fremont News-Messenger*, March 09, 1942.

⁹⁴ "Fremont Calm on Attack Day," *Fremont News-Messenger*, June 06, 1944.

The Postwar Years: Jewish Life in Fremont 1945 to 1968

During the late 1940s to the early 1960s Fremont's Jewish community likely reached its peak in numbers. An estimated 50 families were affiliated with Beth Israel.⁹⁵ For part of this period, Beth Israel continued to meet weekly on Fridays for a Shabbat service, and all major Jewish holidays were celebrated. Visiting student rabbis from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati or the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City continued to minister to the congregation. Student rabbis seem to have been contracted for at most two years, and they included Joseph Asher, who was in Fremont during 1948, and Sheldon Kirsch, who served from 1965 to 1966. Rabbi Asher was a native of Australia who had come to Hebrew Union College to obtain his Ph.D. Before this, he had served as a chaplain in the Australian Army and he was president of the Australian Jewish War Veterans Association.⁹⁶ Rabbi Kirsch was a native of Detroit who studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Following his time in Fremont, he became a Navy chaplain.⁹⁷ The sanctuary of Beth Israel could seat around 65 people and the Temple also had a library, study area, meeting rooms, and a kosher kitchen. Religious education classes for children continued to be offered every Sunday.

Younger members of Beth Israel also participated in activities sponsored by the Ohio Valley Federation of Temple Youth (OVFTY). This organization, which continues to exist well into the 21st century as part of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), includes in its membership Jewish youths living in many areas of Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio. OVFTY programs during the 1950s and 1960s included gatherings, called Conclaves, where children and teens could mingle across cities. Conclaves were typically held in larger cities, such as Cincinnati, and included dances, religious services and group meals.⁹⁸

The Beth Israel Sisterhood had around 40 members by the late 1940s who represented Fremont, Fostoria, Tiffin, Norwalk, and Findley. The group met monthly, and their activities included organizing an annual Chanukah party for children at Beth Israel, a yearly luncheon at the Hotel Fremont, and the production of an annual yearbook.⁹⁹ In 1945, committees for the

⁹⁵ Gloria Ulmer, "Fremont Population Dwindles: Jews in Small-Town Ohio Losing Out," *Cleveland Jewish News*, September 05, 1975.

⁹⁶ "Rites Planned at Beth Israel," *Fremont News-Messenger*, November 24, 1948.

⁹⁷ "Student Rabbi Ending Service in Fremont: To be Navy Chaplain," *Fremont News-Messenger*, June 06, 1966.

⁹⁸ Interview with Marc Eisler, March 16, 2021.

⁹⁹ "Sisterhood of Beth Israel Temple in Initial Session," *Fremont News-Messenger*, September 21, 1948.

Sisterhood were as follows: Sunday school, ways and means, sales tax, house and kitchen, telephone, membership and hospitality, war service, program, uniongrams and calendars, Jewish welfare, and cradle roll.¹⁰⁰ Some of the charitable activities organized by the Sisterhood were quite large. For example, in 1947 its members collected 20 cartons of food and 600 pounds of clothing to support overseas refugees.¹⁰¹ During the late 1940s, Fremont's Jewish community also organized itself to support the United Jewish Appeal. For the 1948 -1949 campaign year, the local quota was set at \$25,000.¹⁰²

Interfaith activities were also an important part of Temple Beth Israel. As early as 1942, the editors of the *Fremont News-Messenger* remarked, "Beth Israel congregation is ever willing to cooperate with the other churches of the city and help make Fremont a leader in the pathways of better understanding."¹⁰³ The interfaith programs organized by Beth Israel included an annual community seder and adult education opportunities. On November 26, 1948, Beth Israel organized an interfaith Shabbat service that was attended by around 100 people. Church youth groups also periodically visited Beth Israel to learn about Judaism. Some Jewish children in Fremont also attended church when invited by Christian friends.¹⁰⁴ It is of note that anti-Jewish sentiment in Fremont and surrounding towns was low. The only explicitly anti-Jewish action which has been recorded occurred in 1914 when the *Fostoria Daily Times* published an advertisement from a new town merchant that proclaimed he was "neither Hebrew nor foreigner". The ad drew condemnation from *The Jewish Independent* in Cleveland, and it seems no more ads like it were published.¹⁰⁵ Thirty years later in 1944 a vase sitting on the porch of Beth Israel was taken and smashed in front of the temple.¹⁰⁶ The particular motivation for this act, however, is not recorded.

By 1960 services at Beth Israel were being offered twice a month. In 1964 the Beth Israel Sunday School had 26 pupils enrolled.¹⁰⁷ Two years later, Beth Israel organized a dinner at the Fremont Country Club to celebrate its diamond anniversary. This shows that by this time the

¹⁰⁰ "Sisterhood of Beth Israel Temple Holds a Delightful Annual Luncheon at Hotel," *Fremont News-Messenger*, June 07, 1945.

¹⁰¹ "Sisterhood of Beth Israel Temple in Initial Session," *Fremont News-Messenger*, September 21, 1948.

¹⁰² "Drive for Jewish Relief Fund Set," *Fremont News-Messenger*, October 15, 1948.

¹⁰³ "Union Services Being Planned in New Temple," *Fremont News-Messenger*, September 01, 1942.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Marc Eisler, March 16, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ "Neither Hebrew Nor Foreigner," *Jewish Independent*, July 31, 1914.

¹⁰⁶ *Fremont News-Messenger*, October 23, 1944, p 2.

¹⁰⁷ "Beth Israel Sisterhood Pays Tribute to Mrs. S.E. Hyman as Outstanding Member for Year," *Fremont News-Messenger*, June 04, 1964.

congregation saw itself as a direct continuation of the Fremont Hebrew Temple which was founded in 1891. Guests at the anniversary celebration included Mayor Walter Zahn, Monsignor Carl Scheib of St. Joseph Catholic Church, and Reverend James Konrad of the First United Church of Christ.¹⁰⁸ Families affiliated with Beth Israel during the postwar years who have not already been mentioned included Milton and Reva Ascherman, Gerald and Gloria Dorsky, and Evelyn and Leonard Eisler. Milton and Reva operated a jewelry store on South Front Street from 1939 to 1959. Milton was an active supporter of Jaycees and the YMCA, while Reva was a member of the Beth Israel Sisterhood.¹⁰⁹ Gerald and Gloria Dorsky arrived in Fremont in 1958 after Gerald opened a new optometry practice in town. This practice would remain open until 2001 when Gerald retired.¹¹⁰ Gloria was involved with the Beth Israel Sisterhood and the Women's Auxiliary of Memorial Hospital.¹¹¹ Gerald was active in the Fremont Community Theater, Lions Club, and Toastmasters. He also served in the Navy during World War II.¹¹² Evelyn and Leonard Eisler moved to Fremont between 1935 and 1940 after Leonard took a position as manager of the Seegle Shore Store. After one year of work, Leonard purchased the store and owned it until 1971 when he moved to San Francisco with Evelyn to be near their sons Ben and Marc. During their time in Fremont, the Eislers would be active members of Beth Israel and help to create the Sandusky County School for the Retarded, which is now known as the Sandusky County Board of Developmental Disabilities.¹¹³

Joseph's Department Store also continued to draw new Jewish residents to Fremont. In 1939, Ben and Esther Pollak arrived in Fremont so that Ben could open a jewelry counter inside Joseph's. Ben's son, Bruce continued the business after his father and eventually created an independent store, Pollak Jewelers. Other Jewish employees of Joseph's during the 1950s or 1960s included Samuel Danziger, Robert Gilberg, and Dave Warsell. By the mid-1970s Joseph's was the site of some religious services in town.¹¹⁴ These services were organized when requested by members of the Jewish community. It is possible that these observances were called most frequently when individuals wished to recognize the *yahrzeit*, or anniversary of a family

¹⁰⁸ "Beth Israel Temple Notes its Diamond Anniversary," *Fremont News-Messenger*, May 17, 1966.

¹⁰⁹ Obituary of Milton Ascherman, *Fremont News-Messenger*, November 22, 1983.

¹¹⁰ Rick Neale, "Longtime Fremont Optometrist, Dr. Gerald Dorsky, Retiring After 53 Years of Eye Care," *Fremont News-Messenger*, November 27, 2001.

¹¹¹ "Sisterhood Promotes Judaism," *Fremont News-Messenger*, October 07, 1969.

¹¹² Obituary of Gerald Dorsky, *Cleveland Jewish News*, August 30, 2013.

¹¹³ Obituary of Leonard Eisler, *Fremont News-Messenger*, April 01, 1994.

¹¹⁴ Gloria Ulmer, "Fremont Population Dwindles: Jews in Small-Town Ohio Losing Out," *Cleveland Jewish News*, September 05, 1975.

member's death, by reciting the Kaddish prayer. Traditionally, this prayer can only be said with a gathering of ten Jews.

Around 1967 the Beth Israel Sunday School was discontinued.¹¹⁵ Any Jewish children remaining in Fremont or the surrounding area began to travel to Sandusky or Toledo for formal religious instruction. This development was a sign that Fremont's Jewish community was aging significantly by the mid-1960s as younger members moved away for university or other opportunities. Many longtime members of Fremont's Jewish community also began to retire and move away or pass on. Simultaneously the number of new Jewish residents arriving in Fremont decreased dramatically. This demographic decrease was reflected in the town overall. Between 1960 and 1970 Fremont's overall population decreased by an estimated 277 people. This population loss accelerated over the next decade and it has continued into the 21st century.

The Closing of Beth Israel

Despite the loss in membership, Beth Israel continued to be active throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. On August 02, 1970, Beth Israel was the site of its first and only wedding when Juanita Nominee and Marc Eisler were married.¹¹⁶ By 1975 it was estimated that 25 families continued to be affiliated with Beth Israel. Services were held once a month on a Friday evening and on major Jewish holidays.¹¹⁷ One of the later families to affiliate with Beth Israel was the Newmans. This family began its start in Fremont in 1940 after Nannette, the daughter of Dorris and Solomon Hyman, married Richard Newman. Richard met Nannette after moving to Fremont to take a job with the S.E. Hyman Company. He would become the Vice President and Treasurer of S.E. Hyman by 1960. The Beth Israel Sisterhood also continued to be active into the 1970s. In 1969 the group consisted of 24 members who continued to organize interfaith programs, bake sales, and rummage sales. The proceeds from these fundraisers went to support Beth Israel and community nonprofits, including the Betty Jane Memorial Rehabilitation Center in Tiffin. This center had been supported by the Sisterhood since at least 1960.¹¹⁸ The group also sent care packages to American soldiers serving in Vietnam.¹¹⁹ It is also of note that at least one member of the local Jewish community, Richard Markoff served in the United States Army

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Marc Eisler, March 16, 2021.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ "Sisterhood Informed of Progress at Betty Jane Center," *Fremont News-Messenger*, January 17, 1961.

¹¹⁹ "Sisterhood Promotes Judaism," *Fremont News-Messenger*, October 07, 1969.

during the Vietnam War. Lieutenant Markoff was a native of Fostoria and the son of Carolyn and Jack. The Markoff family was related to the Shiff family through Carolyn, who was the daughter of Myer and Wetel. Jack helped his father-in-law manage the Fostoria Iron and Metal Company.

By the late 1970s, Fremont's Jewish community had diminished further, and in 1980 the trustees of Beth Israel put their synagogue up for sale. Fifteen households were members of the congregation immediately before its closing. In 1981 the Sandusky County Historical Society purchased the property, which continues to be its center well into the 21st century. The final trustees of Beth Israel involved with the sale were as follows: Robert Gilberg, Nannette Newman, and Bruce Pollak. It is of note that Robert was the son of Arthur and Dora Gilberg who had worked to establish Beth Israel 46 years before. He would remain in Fremont with his wife, Elaine until Joseph's closed in 1984. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of Beth Israel was used to create a scholarship at Ross High School for "average students" who planned to enroll in a college or university. This component of the Beth Israel Scholarship was chosen after the observation was made that several scholarships had already been established at Ross High School for students at the top of their class.¹²⁰ Other funds from the sale were donated to Congregation B'nai Israel in Toledo and Congregation Oheb Shalom in Sandusky. Each congregation also received a Torah scroll from Beth Israel. The congregation's yahrzeit plaque was accepted by Oheb Shalom. Several of Beth Israel's remaining members also joined Oheb Shalom as a group around 1980.

While the closing of Beth Israel marked an end to organized Jewish life in Sandusky County, it did not mean that Jews ceased to live in Fremont. Families who remained in Fremont following the sale of Beth Israel included the Danzigers, Fairalls, Gilberts, Michles, Newmans, and Pollaks. Jewish families also continued to occasionally gather in private homes to celebrate Shabbat and the Jewish holidays until at least the late 1990s.¹²¹ At least three Shabbat services were organized at the Dillon House after Beth Israel closed. Several Jewish residents continued to be active in community organizations. For example, during the 1990s, Richard Newman Jr. served on the Fremont Board of Education and the board of Memorial Hospital.¹²² Many other organizations Fremont's Jewish residents helped to build continue to exist. Fremont and surrounding towns remain home to a small number of Jewish residents into the 21st century.

¹²⁰ Dennis Newman, "Brief History of the Fremont Temple," email of original January 2005 text, March 10, 2021.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "Education, Community Priorities for Newman," *Fremont News-Messenger*, August 30, 2000.

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