

1962

Beth Israel 40th Anniversary Presentation

Frances Smith

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C. Frances Smith

Dec. 2, 1962

Shannon Howard
It seems to me ^{almost} one has to be an immigrant to understand the problems of the immigrant when he arrives in a new country. However, you get some idea of this when you travel and find yourself a foreigner in a foreign land where you do not understand a word of the language as spoken there. When you think of your own parents, grand parents or great grand parents who came to this country, without much money, with little knowledge of the life here, with hardly any understanding of the pattern of city or town living, and with virtually no knowledge of the language, you must stop and admire the courage, the fortitude and the faith of those people. I think the faith was the strongest. You may think the spirit of freedom was stronger and perhaps in our religion ~~they~~ are almost the same. The Jewish religion is supposedly the freest religion in the civilized world. You say, Hear O Isreal the Lord our God, the Lord is one. When you think of that as being our religion, it is the freest, and perhaps if you can understand all the implications and involvements, you begin to understand why the Jewish immigrant felt very free when he landed on these shores. All else that happened was commentary. He was here. He was free from the Czar, from the pogroms, from the evils of 19th century Europe; his faith was as perfect as he knew how to make it perfect, and he had no fears whatever ^{whatsoever} God was there to take care of him. You can see that his chance for survival was good. At least that is how I see it.

Now, why he came to Maine is another question. I have been told that the peddler needed no license here and a license immediately brought up the evils of the small town or even larger place from where he came. A license was not freedom. He came to Maine and in many cases, if not in most, he peddled. He did the same in the south, the west, and the north. In N. E., he did find a stern justice and a way of living, it seems to me that he could understand. *It was based closely on his own way of living. O.T.*
In discussing the early settler of Bath, I talked with Miss Sophie Mikelsky.

I doubt if any of you can think back further than she. But if any of what I say here is incorrect, please tell me, so we can amend for posterity. I want my grandchildren and their grandchildren to know about life in this city as it was. Being ~~of that~~ ^{of that people}, with some knowledge of the past, the bombs of today do not frighten me. I don't like them but I believe that life will always go on. In the observance of this 40th anniversary, let's stop for a moment and consider what Miss Sophie told me.

The first family that she recalls was not even a family as we think of it. Three brothers named Isaacson settled here and had a clothing store where the T & T is located now. None of the brothers ever brought a family here and Miss Sophie hardly remembers much about them except that after a few years they moved to Lewiston. They were here probably in the late '80's and early 90's.

In the early 90's a Mr. Goldstein came to work for the Isaacsons and later as often happened, opened a business for himself, another clothing store where Redlon is today. A Goldstein married a Lewis who had moved here and they were in the junk business.

Miss Sophie's father married in Boston in '78, a girl who had come here from Riga very young and in 1886 he took his bride to Rockland where Miss Sophie and her two older brothers were born. They left Rockland a short time after for Philadelphia to enter business with a relative which did not pan out. They returned to this area and had to stop in Bath to get the train on the ferry. At that time, Miss Sophie had a terrible attack of croup. The Bath station agent, Mr. Greenleaf went to Hallet's drug store, from the original Mr. Hallet got some ipecac and suggested to the parents they remain in Bath at least until the child was better. They took a room at the Harbavue which had a different name later, and which was situated down on the landing near the ferry sight. Later it was moved to where Drake's office is now and not too long ago was demolished. From its ashes rose what is now that small

building with the lovely view of the ~~river~~ ^{river}

The Mikelsky's as we know them, remained in Bath.

This is a pattern well known in Jewish history in USA and that is why I have written it all down as she gave it to me. The Mikelsky children were the first Jewish children to go to and graduate high school and probably some were among the first of that generation to go to and finish college. We also find this in every part of the country.

Before 1900, Miss Sophie remembers and this goes on long after 1900, that her father and the other few men here went to Portland for the high holidays and for memorial services. They - at least Mr. Mikelsky - taught the boys until 13 and then went to Portland for the Saturday service for Bar Mitzvah. What is happening today to Bar Mitzvah celebrations was unknown then. It was a very holy observance back in the early days of our people. A bar Mizvah meant a boy was old enough to be part of a religious service.

To continue from there I need your help:

Mr. Brown came here as a bachelor in ab. 1895 married a girl from Boston & as the pattern follows, brought her to Bath as a bride.

Mrs. Celia Brown as a young woman held Miss /Sophie by the hand as they both went down to the wharf to see the launching of the Ammen-Ram, a battleship which took place in December 1894, she thinks.

Mrs. Milkelsky died in 1911. Miss Sophie recalls her mother attended meetings with other Jewish women in what is now the YMCA building.

Nathan Petlock ~~family~~ came in June 1907 - family 1907

Sam Levin came as a bachelor, drove up to Bangor and found himself a bride, the vivacious Bella Wolf. In 1911

Mr. Solovich and a brother arrived in the late 90's and Mr. Abe Miller came

in 1898

~~arrived 1902~~

~~B. Gellerman~~

Kutz - 1920 - ~~map~~ came 1912

Greenblatts - 1914 zimmelman 4/1946

J. Smith 1930 - Sep.

Jake Smith - 1936 Sep

Prawers 1936 - Dec

Kramers 1938

Harold 1936 - but 1937

~~M. Porich - 1904-5~~

~~H. Porich - 1917 from B#1886~~

Lenny & Sylvia - 1946

Bob Kerene 1940

Abe 1947

~~A. Gellerman - 1922~~

Roxie & mo 3 1944

Kassas - 1954

Thruout the notes taken from the Women's Society secretary books, there is the matter of money collected and spent. ^{money was being saved systematically} This was important to the group ^{for a} ^{House} ^{of} ^{Worship} in the early days. It is still important. Their efforts to raise money ~~are~~ fantastic. They used raffles continually. Some were confined to the group and some included the outside. The meetings were very small at times; 7 or 8 attended. They were even held weekly in the beginning. This was perhaps the only contacts socially that these people had. Most of them had families and worked alongside their husbands in whatever business ~~They~~ happened to be. Everyone seemed to be on friendly terms with the other, at least at the meetings.

The women did a great deal of handwork and offered it for sale and for raffling. This included yokes for blouses or dresses, mittens, sweaters, and scarves for bureaux. Community suppers were popular and every one is accounted for down to the minutest detail. Everyone seemed to enjoy attending. The Passover orders and candle orders weave in and out of the early years like a gentle ~~persuasive~~ ^{persuasive} refrain. It almost lulls one to sleep.

Beginning with the 30's a few of another generation appeared and you notice in the secretary's books, better and clearer notes taken, though often an explanation is omitted. You can see why this is so. ^{It was a matter accepted} The newer generation had the advantage of schooling.

The 40's are concerned with the war years and stamps needed for meat purchases. The after war-years are also important as the group adjusts to a newer kind of living.

The 50's are really ours and who needs to discuss them. We are of age literally. Today, our organization is 40 years old. We are mature. We have gone thru adolescence and early years bearing all the scars but at 40 years of service to ourselves and the community, no one need feel we have missed much. We have seen a world shatter^{ed}, a people partially destroyed and a new nation born~~ed~~ and risen from the ashes of an older civilization to take its place in the world with other nations following and using ours as an example. We have seen much and I hope we all live a long time, to see more.

History of Sisterhood

7 Cong. Beth Israel of Beth M.

Compiled by Frances Smith

~~Return~~

~~to Anna Cozart~~

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Forward to Don Porich. ✓ Don, I sent
Dora Petlock a note on this. Thought it
might be housed permanently at the Public Library
or the SYRACUSE.

Best wishes!

Nathan Cozart
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[March 1983]