

MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

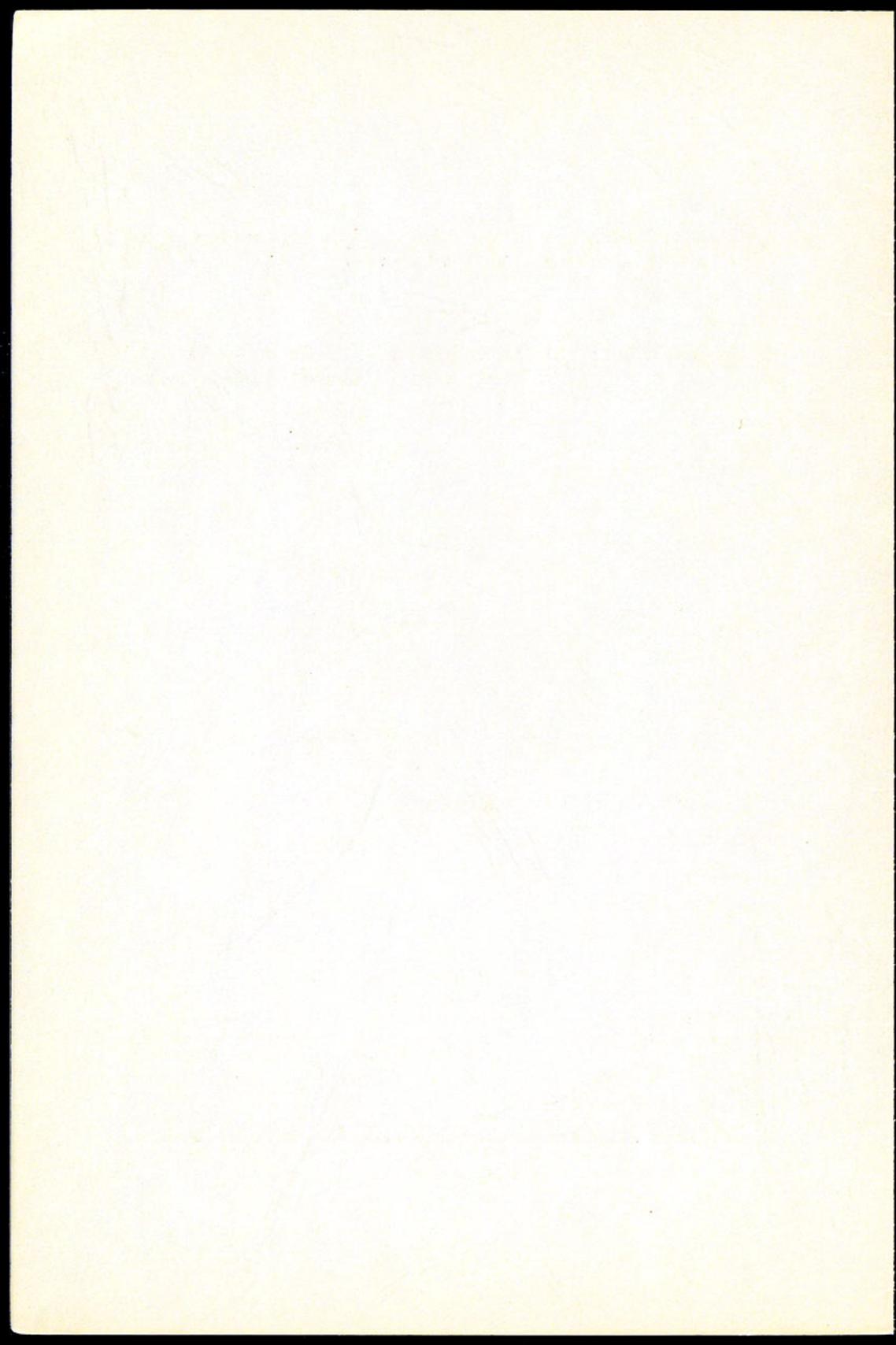


November, 1963

Heshvan, 5724

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN





MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

... אשר ישאלון בניכם מחר את אבותם ... (יהושע ד:כא)

"When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come . . ."
— Joshua 4:21

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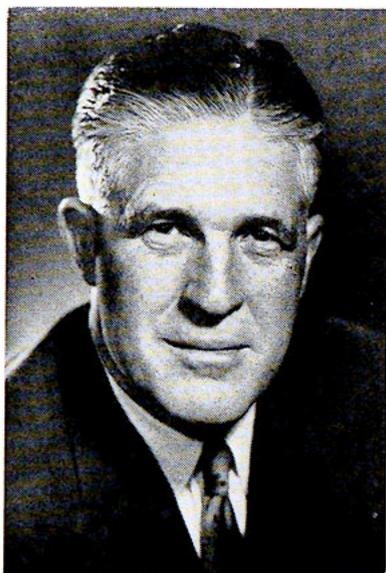
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Governor Romney Commends "Michigan Jewish History"



Rabbi Emanuel Applebaum, President of our Society, received a letter from the Honorable George Romney, Governor of the State of Michigan, in which he writes :

"Michigan Jewish History is to be commended for the outstanding way in which it is recording the rich history of the Jewish community in Michigan. The Jewish contribution to the economic, educational, cultural and religious strength of our state has been and continues to be enormous. By their active interest in community and state affairs, the Jewish people are setting an example for all residents of Michigan. Only through the voluntary action of concerned citizens can the democratic institutions which comprise the cornerstone of our republic be preserved and strengthened."

William Saulson – Michigan Pioneer

by LAWRENCE A. RUBIN
*Executive Secretary, The Mackinac Bridge Authority,
St. Ignace, Michigan*

During the dedication of the Mackinac Bridge in June of 1958, the remark was made that if all the people who now maintain they were in favor of the bridge would cross it occasionally, the bridge would never have any financial difficulties.

The underlying significance of the observation was that until the bridge became a reality and of proven physical feasibility, the woods were full of people who wouldn't have bet a plugged nickel that any structure could withstand the forces of nature—wind, ice, currents, water depths—that prevail at the Straits of Mackinac. But once the bridge was opened and operating and the foundations and towers had withstood several winters, out came the glad-handers and “knew-it-could-be-done” well wishers to bask in the bright glow of accomplishment. So be it. The bridge is big enough for lots of credit.



William Saulson

Thus it was and is that there are many more bridge boosters after the bridge than there were before. In fact the number diminishes as we recede into the past, and finally our research reveals that in the mid-1880's we come to the earliest of those imaginative and neck-sticking-out individuals who not only thought a bridge should and could be built across the Straits but had the guts to come out in big, black bold type and say so.

FIRST NEWSPAPER AD

There was a newspaper editor by the name of Tom Bates in Traverse City, who in the winter of 1884 editorialized on the need for a permanent all-weather link across the Straits if ever there was to be “a great east-west travel route through Michigan”; and there was a merchant in St. Ignace by the name of William Saulson who even more boldly ran advertisements in the local paper featuring his own likeness (just in case people could not read English) and a drawing of the recently opened Brooklyn Bridge. Across the top of the bridge rendition was the caption “A Glimpse of the Future” and below it, “The Proposed Bridge Across the Straits of Mackinac.” It did not seem to bother Mr. Saulson that the entire length of the Brooklyn Bridge was 3468 feet, while the center span alone of the Mackinac Bridge is 3800 feet.

WILLIAM SAULSON — MICHIGAN PIONEER

And thus it was that, in 1950, staring down at us from one of the dim walls in the office of the old Straits Ferry Service at St. Ignace, we encountered the bearded countenance of William Saulson, one of the very first of the Mackinac Bridge boosters, proudly predicting the proposed bridge across the Straits and proclaiming that at his People's Stores in St. Ignace and Seney, one could obtain hats, caps, boots, etc.

The advertisement was a copy of the original and not a very good one by present standards. We managed to borrow it and make a number of copies for our own use in publicizing the bridge project at the time. Of course we became intrigued with William Saulson, especially when we learned he was Jewish.

Examination of old records and newspapers revealed a wealth of information about both his personal and public life, especially the latter. It revealed that he left St. Ignace in 1892, and as a result those few individuals still living in the area who even remembered him had been children at the time. Therefore they could not throw very much light on his origin, his family, or where he went after he sold his store chain.

Thus, we are everlastingly grateful to Saul Saulson, nephew of William, and a resident of Detroit, who through a series of circuitous circumstances responded most graciously and completely to our inquiries about his uncle and benefactor. With the permission of Saul Saulson much of the material that follows is quoted directly from his letter:

FROM PEDDLER TO PROMINENT MERCHANT

"William Saulson emigrated to the United States from his birthplace, Suwalki, Poland, about 1877 at the age of sixteen. He worked westward as an itinerant peddler until he reached Alpena, where he went to work as a clerk in the general store of Samuel Rosenthal, a cousin.

"Alpena was then in the heart of the Lower Peninsula lumbering industry. When timber in the Lower Peninsula began to thin out, several large lumber companies made the jump across the Straits to cut in the Upper Peninsula. St. Ignace became a flourishing town.

"William Saulson moved to St. Ignace and opened his own store. Later, as the timber activity moved westward with the development of the Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railroad, he opened a branch store in Seney.

WILLIAM SAULSON — MICHIGAN PIONEER

"In St. Ignace he was a very active and prominent citizen, a member of the volunteer fire department, a member and master of the Masonic Lodge and the Odd Fellows Lodge."

He was a good deal more, too. He was a raw-boned youth about the same age as a college freshman, in a strange and somewhat rough country. He undoubtedly must have had some language difficulties. All his immediate relatives were far across the ocean. Nevertheless, in 1878 he struck out for himself in St. Ignace and in 1884 at the age of twenty-three was a pillar of society and a leading merchant in his adopted community.

The 1884 issues of the St. Ignace News reveal that William Saulson's People's Store was one of the best patronized emporium in this prosperous lumber mill town which had twenty-two saloons on its main street. Saulson's advertising at this period was confined mostly to liners in the local news column. Occasionally he used display space on page one, but even this was made to appear as though it were a news story about how to obtain the best quality dry goods at the lowest possible price.

During June of 1884, Mr. Saulson's name appears repeatedly as a member of the Fourth of July Celebration General Committee, and the running race scheduled for that day began and ended in front of his store with prizes of six dollars to the winner and two dollars to the runner-up.

In August of 1884 Mr. Saulson advertised that he had "dwelling houses to rent;" and in September the editor noted in the local news column that Mrs. I. Epstein and daughter of Manistique came to visit the Saulsons.

In the hotly contested election of the year 1884, William Saulson sent out photographs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates Cleveland and Hendricks, and then announced on September 16 that if those people who were aggrieved at his sending out pictures of the Democratic candidates would call at the store, he would exchange them for pictures of Blaine and Logan, the Republican candidates. In county politics Mr. Saulson was a Republican; at least the paper on October 16 reports that he was appointed a delegate to the Republican County Convention.

OBSERVANT JEW

However, the most revealing news item of this period appeared on September 19, 23 and 26 under "Local News":

"The People's Store of Wm. Saulson will be closed on the follow-

WILLIAM SAULSON — MICHIGAN PIONEER

ing days, on account of Holy Days: From Sept. 19, 6 p.m. until Monday the 22nd, 6 a.m.; on Friday, the 26th from 6 p.m. until Saturday the 27th, 6 p.m.; also on Monday the 29th until 6 p.m. No business will be transacted on those days."

All the papers examined from 1884 until 1892 when Mr. Saulson left St. Ignace contained exactly the same notice, with dates changed at the time of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur to inform patrons unabashedly that these were Jewish Holy Days and that no business would be transacted.

While there is no specific mention of Passover, it was noted that Mr. Saulson always "went out" on a buying trip to Eastern markets in the spring of the year, usually in April, and was gone from ten days to two weeks.

Apparently there was a good deal of high jinks then as there is now. One of the 1885 issues of the St. Ignace News reports that Bill Saulson visited the Rosenthals of Petoskey and tried to eat them clean out of their pantry. They retaliated by visiting St. Ignace accompanied by the Blumrosen brothers, one from Manistique and the other from Texas, and tried to eat the Saulsons out of house and home. In the days before diets and calorie counting this must have been some fun.

In due course Mr. Saulson, or perhaps one of his associates, mastered the art of writing advertising copy typical of the period. In May of 1885 the promotional material changed from the news story style to honest-to-goodness display advertising. Typesetting must have been difficult and expensive in those days, because the same ad appeared for months on end. Typical of the Saulson copy is the following excerpt: "We want your trade and shall offer every inducement and devote all our energies to accomplish this end."

ELECTED MAYOR

By 1887 Mr. Saulson became an alderman representing his ward. His leadership qualities again came to the fore and we find one of the local political leaders quoted in the press as saying:

"If our present Mayor will not accept a renomination, we believe that Alderman Saulson would make the strongest man for the head of the Citizens' ticket, if he could be induced to accept the nomination."

He could not be induced — in 1887 that it. However, he was

WILLIAM SAULSON — MICHIGAN PIONEER

ready in 1888 and was handily elected to the City's highest office in the spring of that year. The preceding May he was listed as one of the more generous donors to the fund for a new bell for the Methodist-Episcopal Church. This gesture foreshadowed much of the energy and generosity he was to exhibit later on in life.

Shortly after his election as Mayor he joined with several local businessmen in establishing St. Ignace's first public bank, the First National, still going strong with the Honorable Prentiss M. Brown, chairman of the Mackinac Bridge Authority, serving as president. Faded bank records show that William Saulson owned thirty shares of stock and participated in the first meeting of the bank's directors. By 1890 he was vice-president of the institution.

Thus William Saulson prospered but did not forget what apparently was his prime purpose in coming to this land of opportunity. From the letter of Saul Saulson :

"In 1890 he brought over from Europe his mother, a younger brother, my father Shepsal Saulson, my sister and myself. He set my father up in business in St. Ignace."

Thereafter advertisements appeared regularly in the St. Ignace News offering expert watch repair service by one S. Saulson, European watchmaker. Again from the letter of Wm. Saulson's nephew :

MOVES TO DETROIT

"About 1892 he (William) sold his business and moved to Detroit where he became prominent in the business and communal life of our city. He was president of the Peerless Manufacturing Company, manufacturers of lumbermen's and workingmen's wear. Most of the colorful Mackinaws universally worn by the lumberjacks were of Peerless make, as were the kersey pants which the jack cut off below the knee with his knife as soon as he purchased them.

He remained as president of Peerless Manufacturing until ill health forced him to dispose of his interest in the company and move to California where he died in Redlands in 1916.

"William Saulson was extremely active in the many Jewish charitable and cultural organizations of Detroit, serving as president and board member of a large number of them. He left a lasting imprint on the Detroit Jewish Community.

"He was a member of the board of directors of Congregation Sha-arey Zedek and president several times. He innovated English ser-

WILLIAM SAULSON — MICHIGAN PIONEER

mons on Friday evenings and Saturday morning services when he brought Rabbi Abraham Hershman to serve Shaarey Zedek.

He was a prime mover and president of the Talmud Torah, the forerunner of the present United Hebrew Schools, and led the drive for a modern building to house it on Wilkins Street and brought Dr. Baruch to head it up. He insisted that all teachers be English scholars as well as Hebrew.

"He was one of the organizers of the United Jewish Charities, serving on the Board of Directors. In short there was no Jewish organization of whatever nature in which he was not interested and active.

"I was sent to Detroit in 1900 at the age of eleven in order to take advantage of better school facilities of the city than were then available in Grand Marais, where we then lived, and to attend the Talmud Torah. From that time until my graduation from Central High School and matriculation at U. of M., I lived at William Saulson's home, returning to Grand Marais during vacations.

"A very hospitable man, his large home was open to his relatives, friends, and even customers from up the State on their visits to the city. Many stayed there for weeks at a time.

"I had heard him say many times that some day there would be a bridge across the Straits of Mackinac, doing away with the slow, and, in winter, dangerous travel across it by boat. I do not remember his mentioning his now famous advertisement in the St. Ignace paper showing a cut of a suspension bridge with the caption, "A Glimpse of the Future." I first knew of this when I read Prentiss Brown's address on the occasion of the dedication in which he gave credit to William Saulson as being the first to advocate a Straits bridge and saw the cut of his ad in the St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce booklet on the bridge.

"I was not surprised at this as he was always far-sighted, suggesting new things, many of which have been developed and are commonplace today.

"I have been told that a framed original of this ad hangs in the Grand Hotel."

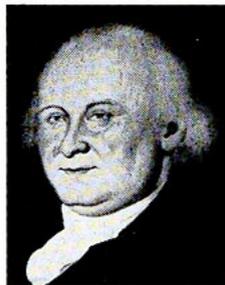
Unfortunately, on this last item Saul Saulson is in error. We have not yet located the original advertisement. The copy that hangs in the Grand Hotel was given to the owner, Mr. S. W. Woodfill, by the author as a memento of Mr. Woodfill's staunch leadership of the Citizens' Committee which in the late forties was instrumental in convincing the Legislature to establish the Mackinac Bridge Authority. Even at that time, many individuals looked upon bridge boosters as dreamers. What courage it must have required to promote a bridge across the Straits of Mackinac in the 1880's!

Jews Aided 1781 Anti-British Expedition Against Detroit

By IRVING I. KATZ
Executive Secretary, Temple Beth El, Detroit
Immediate Past-President, Jewish Historical
Society of Michigan

Barnard and Michael Gratz are well known in American Jewish history as famous Jewish merchants and communal leaders of Philadelphia in colonial times. What is not generally known, however, is that Michael, father of Rebecca Gratz, accepted as the original of the Rebecca in Sir Walter Scott's immortal novel "Ivanhoe", helped plan and supply an expedition against the British in Detroit in 1781.

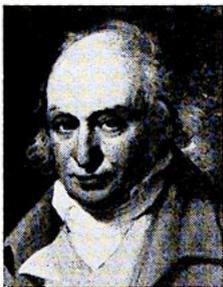
Natives of Langendorf, a village in Upper Silesia, the Gratz brothers received a good classical education and were sent to London at an early age where they acquired a good business training. In 1754 Barnard came to Philadelphia. Five years later his brother Michael joined him and they established the firm of B & M Gratz.



Barnard Gratz

SIGNED RESOLUTION

Their business took a somewhat altered character during 1765, for Michael and Bar-



Michael Gratz

nard Gratz signed the Non-Importation Resolutions. They joined in this emphatic protest against the Stamp Act, filled with patriotic ardor for their adopted land. As a result, the profitable lines previously purchased in London were discontinued; domestic articles took on a greater importance.

In 1769, Michael Gratz married Miriam, daughter of Joseph Simon, Lancaster entrepreneur. This alliance had a lasting influence on the commercial dealings of the Gratzes. Simon was involved in numerous enterprises which stretched as far west as the Mississippi. Beginning as a storekeeper, the old gentleman had entered into the Indian trade and the subsequent acquiring of great tracts of land.

JEWES AIDED 1781 ANTI-BRITISH EXPEDITION

EARLIEST FUR TRADERS

His pack trains had brought supplies to General Edward Braddock, and his agents were among the earliest fur traders at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh). A number of companies brought them into partnership with such hardy adventurers as Captain William Trent, David Franks, William Murray, George Croghan, Ross, Rumsey and others.

The brothers were already concerned with the "Illinois Country", the region north of the Ohio, when their closer alliance with Joseph Simon took place. In 1768 they participated in outfitting the expedition of Colonel John Wilkins, the new commander of the district. Their agent, William Murray, accompanied the troops from Philadelphia to the West to establish trading headquarters.

When the break with England occurred, Michael Gratz returned to the business of shipping, in which he had enjoyed considerable experience prior to the Non-Importation Resolutions of 1765. Prosperity in business commenced and Michael purchased his first ship, "The Rising Sun." Together with Robert Morris and other revolutionary leaders, he engaged in outfitting "private men-of-war" and sending them forth to prey on British commerce.

MOVE HEADQUARTERS

When the enemy entered Philadelphia after the battle of Brandywine, the Gratz Brothers removed their headquarters to Lancaster, Pa., where they found Michael's father-in-law busy manufacturing rifles for the patriot's cause, in partnership with William Henry, Revolutionary leader.

The struggle for independence had its repercussions in the West. Rival companies became united in a common cause; the Gratz Brothers became associated with their former competitors from Virginia. In 1781, the two groups concerned themselves in a venture of extreme importance, the proposed attack on Detroit.

Three years earlier, George Rogers Clark had set forth on his dangerous western expedition. Men and supplies had been assembled at Fort Pitt, and carried down the Ohio River to the present site of Louisville. From there the advance had been overland, through the lonely forests of Southern Illinois. The daring band of less than 200 had reached Kaskaskia, an old French settlement on the Mississippi, where they surprised the British garrison and claimed the settlement for Virginia.

JEWES AIDED 1781 ANTI-BRITISH EXPEDITION

REPEAT PROCEDURE

They had repeated the same procedure in Cahokia, Ill., also an old French settlement on the Mississippi, finishing by the capture of Vincennes (Indiana) on the Wabash in February, 1779. Their gallant exploit had brought to the possession of the United States nearly all the vast Northwest Territory. One important enemy stronghold remained, the strategic post at Detroit. In the summer of 1781 Clark commenced to prepare an attack against it, encouraged by Governor Thomas Jefferson of Virginia.

Michael Gratz, through his agent at Pittsburgh, advanced supplies for the proposed campaign to the value of nearly 1500 pounds. General Clark and his adjutant, Colonel Pentecost, pledged their personal credit as endorsers for Virginia. The proposed expedition failed, due largely to the inability of Pennsylvania and Virginia Partisans to get along together. Clark was forced to abandon his plans and the signing of peace in 1783 found England still holding Detroit. Michael Gratz received only a partial payment in tobacco for equipment he had furnished, and this only after the insistant urging of Colonel Pentecost. The latter had become a staunch friend of the Gratz Brothers. After hostilities had closed they formed a partnership with him for colonizing a portion of the present state of Kentucky.

Book Review

SINAI HOSPITAL AND THE NORTH END CLINIC: Reminiscences of the History of the Jewish Hospital Movement in Detroit, by Harry C. Saltzstein, M.D., Wayne State University Press, \$1.50.

Dr. Saltzstein, chief of staff of the North End Clinic from 1926 to 1936, has obviously produced a labor of love in this 71-page history of an outstanding medical development in Detroit.

The booklet contains a foreword by Rabbi Morris Adler which is in effect an excellent review of its contents and the methods and abilities of its author:

"With characteristic seriousness of purpose and thoroughness of method Dr. Saltzstein has compiled his materials. His scientifically oriented background qualifies him to draw disciplined conclusions from a careful study of the facts.

"His own sympathetic interest and personal participation in the history of medical services sponsored by the Jewish community have allowed him to gain deep insight without sacrificing an impartial evaluation. His sole concern has been to understand and properly to interpret the conditions he explores."

An author's introduction is followed by six chapters headed: Early Jewish Medical Services in Detroit, The Clinic Develops, The Depression, The Hospital Becomes a Reality, Nostalgia and Memorabilia, and Perspective.

There are 24 illustrations, mainly of great individuals in the history of medicine and of the Detroit Jewish community, and a page of notes

The work has been excellently edited by Elvin T. Gidley and designed by Edgar Frank.

Beyond its value as the history of an institution and the men and women who made it, Dr. Saltzstein in his "Perspective" chapter looks at medicine today and in the future and asks some provocative questions.

A well-planned, well-written local history.

From the Detroit News, August 4, 1963

Editor's Note: Dr. Saltzstein's book was published by the *Leonard N. Simons Fund of Temple Beth El*.

Minutes of Board Meeting

OF JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

Thursday, August 29, 1963 (Luncheon)

Fred M. Butzel Building

163 Madison Avenue

Present: Rabbi Emanuel Applebaum, Irving I. Katz, Mrs. Ettie Raphael, Jonathan D. Hyams, Dr. Irving I. Edgar, Mrs. Lila Avrin, Allen Waller, Jay Rosenshine, Charles E. Feinberg, Morris Garvett, Louis LaMed.

Meeting was called to order by the President, Rabbi Emanuel Applebaum, and greetings extended.

Minutes of the Previous meeting were read and approved.

Mr. Hyams, Treasurer, reporter a balance of \$255.76 in the treasury. He announced the gift by Mr. Charles Feinberg and others toward a State Marker in Fort Michilimackinac to commemorate the residence there of Ezekiel Solomon, the first Jew in Michigan.

Dr. Edgar, Chairman of Program Committee, announced that plans have been formulated for programs for each meeting. Rabbi Applebaum will present a paper in the near future.

Mr. Katz, Editor of the Journal, advised that future articles will include (1) Rabbi Fram's impressions of his 40 years in Detroit, (2) Rabbi Adler's impressions of his 25 years in Detroit, (3) Bernard Isaacs' impressions of his 45 years in Detroit, (4) an article by Katz on Samuel Judah, early Jewish trader in Detroit.

On membership, Mr. Katz reported the necessity of having an extensive membership campaign.

On State Markers, the Michigan Historical Commission is about to approve our applications for markers for Ezekiel Solomon in Fort Michilimackinac and the Lafayette Street Cemetery in Detroit.

The President announced that our Society was the recipient of a grant from the Louis LaMed Foundation toward the publication of the last issue of *Michigan Jewish History*.

It was reported that Dr. Kaganoff sent his report on Jewish Community Archives to the Jewish Welfare Federation. Dr. Charles Meyers will follow this up and obtain a copy of said report.

On Good and Welfare, the members present felt that future luncheon meetings in the Fred M. Butzel Building be continued.

Mr. Katz, Dr. Edgar, Mr. Rosenshine and Mrs. Avrin were appointed to communicate with the Michigan State Archives regarding their Jewish holdings.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Ettie Raphael, Secretary

State Marker for Michigan's First Jew

In pursuance of the application of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, The Michigan Historical Commission, an official state body, has approved at its meeting on October 22, 1963, the erection of a state marker at Fort Michilimackinac, Mackinaw City, with the following inscription:

MICHIGAN'S FIRST JEWISH SETTLER

Ezekiel Solomon, a native of Berlin, Germany, who had served with the British army, arrived here at Michilimackinac in the summer of 1761. He is Michigan's first known Jewish resident. Until his death around 1808, Solomon was one of those who narrowly escaped death in the massacre of 1763. During the Revolutionary War, he and other hard-pressed traders pooled their resources to form a general store, and in 1784 he was a member of a committee of eight formed to regulate the trade to the Mackinac area. His business often took him to Montreal where he was a member of Canada's first Jewish congregation and where he is believed to have been buried.

The marker will be dedicated with appropriate ceremonies by The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan at a later date. It will be the first state marker for a Jew in the history of Jews of Michigan.

Conference on Local History

The 6th Annual Conference on Local History was held on October 25 and 26 at the McGregor Memorial Conference Center at Wayne State University. Sponsored by the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, The Detroit Historical Society and Wayne State University. The two day conference featured a number of outstanding speakers. Our Society was represented at this conference by Irving I. Katz, who presented a report on the work of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.

Articles on Michigan Jewish History

The June, 1963, issue of *Michigan History*, quarterly journal of the Michigan Historical Commission, contains an article by Irving I. Katz on "*Moses David of Windsor and his family.*"

The September 27, 1963, issue of the *Detroit Jewish News* carried an article by Katz on "*History of Hannah Schloss Building recalled 60 years after opening.*"

The February, 1964, issue of the *Bulletin of the Detroit Historical Society* will contain an article by Katz on "*Jewish traders captured during 1763 Indian Uprising.*"

Jewish Historical Society of Michigan

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan was organized for the following purposes:

1. To foster the collection, preservation and publication of materials on the history of the Jews in Michigan.
2. To encourage all projects, celebrations, and other activities which tend to spread authentic information concerning Michigan Jewish History.
3. To foster all effort to create a wider interest on the part of Michigan Jews in the growth and development of their respective Jewish communities.
4. To cooperate with national Jewish historical societies.

Annual membership dues to individuals, libraries, and institutions are \$5.00 per year. Dues and contributions to the Society are deductible for income tax purposes.

Michigan Jewish History, a semi-annual journal, is sent to each member. Contributions are invited. Manuscripts should be submitted to the Editor, 8801 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, 48202.

Jewish Historical Society of Michigan

8801 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, Michigan, 48202

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