

A History of the Beth Israel Congregation of Corning, New York, and Its Members
Austin Reid - August 2024



Children of members of the Beth Israel Congregation of Corning gather to light a Hanukkiah (Hanukkah Menorah) in December 1952 at the Baron Steuben Hotel.

Evening Leader, December 15, 1952

Early Jewish Settlers in Corning

Corning, New York, was incorporated as a village with the State of New York in 1848, by which time the settlement was already home to organized religious congregations, including both Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches. It is likely that the first Jews passed through Corning shortly after the village's incorporation. That same year, a series of revolutions broke out across many areas of Europe, leading to a significant increase in immigration to the United States, including many Jews. While Jews have lived continuously in what is today the United States since 1654, the Revolutions of 1848 sparked the first large-scale Jewish immigration to America. The arrival of the Erie Railroad in Corning in January 1850 further facilitated access for individuals from outside Steuben County. Many Jewish immigrants in the 1850s made a living as itinerant traders, playing an important role in the economy of mid-nineteenth-century America by connecting rural areas and small settlements with larger cities. Peddlers carried semi-luxury goods that were often unavailable locally, such as jewelry, lace, needles, and toys, while also passing along news from other locations. Over time, some peddlers saved enough money to establish brick-and-mortar stores. Although it is possible that Jews lived in Corning earlier, it is not until the 1860s that it is known with certainty that Corning was home to Jewish residents, with the first known Jewish family being the Ansorges.

Mark and Morris Ansoerge, immigrants from Hamburg, are believed to have moved to Corning from Elmira in 1863. Like many German-speaking Jewish immigrants in the United States, they were involved in retail and opened a clothing store in Corning, known as Ansoerge Brothers.¹ This business was initially located on Pine Street, but in 1881, the store moved to East Main Street, where the brothers financed the construction of a three-story building.² This structure, known as the Ansoerge Block, still stands in Corning at 54-58 East Market Street, with the Ansoerge name engraved on the cornice. In 1885, Mark relocated to New York City but retained an interest in the Corning business until 1894.³ Morris, however, continued to run the store until 1908, when he sold it to Max Phillips, a Jewish immigrant from Lithuania.⁴

After arriving in Corning, both Mark and Morris married. Morris wed Fannie Tigner by 1881, and they left Corning for New York City in 1908.⁵ Mark married Jannie Bach, a native of New York City, in 1875.⁶ Jannie lived in Corning for ten years before returning to New York City with her husband. Mark and Jannie had seven sons, one of whom, Martin Ansoerge, went on to represent New York's 21st district in the United States House of Representatives from 1921 to

1923.⁷ During his time in office, Representative Anson sponsored the resolution that created the New York Port Authority and was an advocate against lynching and prohibition.⁸ He is also known for representing Henry Ford during the famous *Sapiro vs. Ford* case, in which Ford was accused of libel stemming from anti-Jewish articles published in the Michigan-based *Dearborn Independent*.⁹

The Ansones were soon followed by other Jewish families. By 1881, Addison, a village located about twelve miles west of Corning, had a growing Jewish presence. Anna and Morris Cohn headed the first Jewish family known to live in the village. Morris, who was born in Poland, had been working in Steuben County since the early 1870s. He initially lived near Canisteo and saved money while working as a traveling salesperson. After accumulating enough funds, he and his wife, Anna, who had emigrated from Germany to the United States as a child and married Morris in 1876 in New York City, moved to Addison to open a clothing store. The business, known as Morris Cohn's Clothing House, operated in Addison until 1895, when it relocated to Bath. In Bath, Morris was joined by his sons, Charles and Harry, and the business was renamed M. Cohn & Sons Clothing Store. The store served the community at 21 Liberty Street in Bath from 1909 until its closure in 1997. Anna Cohn, who lived to the age of 102, was a founding member of the Bath Mothers Club and an active participant in the town's Parent-Teacher Association.

The second Jewish family known to have lived in Corning was the Tobias household. David Tobias moved to Corning in 1884 and he operated a clothing store.¹⁰ While he left Corning in 1896, his brother, Gotlieb, had settled in town by then. Gotlieb, who lived in Steuben County by 1890, initially worked as a tailor.¹¹ He married Amelia Marcusson by 1896, and they started a family. By 1906, Gotlieb operated a tailoring shop at 45 East Main Street. That same year, he formed the Corning News Company in partnership with William Kling and Harry Sternberg, who both had prior experience in newspaper sales and distribution.¹² Around a year later, Gotlieb sold his tailoring store to his nephew, Max Milner, to devote more time to the Corning News Company.¹³ Although the Corning News Company faced challenges due to disagreements between Gotlieb and William, resulting in protracted legal cases, Gotlieb remained with the firm until 1922.¹⁴ His business interests also expanded into the theater industry. In 1911, Gotlieb partnered with Samuel Clark when the Bijou Theater moved to a new location at 35-39 West Street; previously, Samuel had operated the theater along East Market Street.¹⁵ Gotlieb was also

associated with the Princess Theater, which opened in 1913 along West Market Street. In 1914, Gotlieb sold his interest in the Bijou Theater to Samuel to focus more on the Princess Theater.¹⁶ Around this same time, Samuel had become the Princess Theater's sole owner.¹⁷ Additionally, Gotlieb leased the Corning Opera House on Pine Street from 1917 to 1920.¹⁸ Finally, it is noteworthy that Gotlieb owned the Dickinson House from 1923 until 1927, making him the hotel's final owner before its demolition to make way for the Baron Steuben Hotel.¹⁹ That same year, after decades in Corning, Amelia and Gotlieb moved to New York City.

Jews also continued to relocate to some villages near Corning. In Addison, Anna and Morris Cohn were joined by the Finkelsteins by 1892. This family, like the Ansorges, was initially represented by brothers who moved to the area for business. Harry, Max, and Philip Finkelstein were associated with the Finkelstein Brothers store in Addison. This business was part of a chain with additional locations in Galeton and Wellsboro, Pennsylvania.²⁰ The Finkelstein Brothers continued to operate their store in Addison until at least 1908. Other Jewish families that moved to the Corning area between 1890 and 1900 included Harris and Mollie Barth, Isaac Braveman, Morris Davidson, Joseph and Nathan Hornung, Anna and Max Phillips, and Louis Stone. Harris and Mollie Barth arrived in Corning around 1900 and initially operated a grocery store along Sly Avenue, known as The Penny Less.²¹ This store was later relocated to Myrtle Street, since renamed Hillvue Avenue. Before moving to Corning, the Barths, who were immigrants from Imperial Russia, lived in Elmira, where Harris worked as a carpenter and later as a presser in a tailoring shop.²² Beginning in 1905, Harris started buying and selling real estate in Corning.²³ He later became a developer, and one of his projects, the Barth Building at 10 East Main Street, still bears his surname on the façade. The Barth Building opened by 1922. Harris and Mollie were also joined in Corning by Isaac Barth, Harris' father, who arrived by 1905. Isaac worked in the scrap business.²⁴

Isaac Braveman, the next individual mentioned, was an immigrant from Latvia who arrived in the United States in 1878.²⁵ He lived in New York City and Newport, Rhode Island, before moving to Elmira in 1884 with a business partner, Morris Davidson, who also immigrated from Latvia, arriving in 1883. Reports later indicated that Morris came to the United States with just 75 cents.²⁶ Together, Isaac and Morris worked as traveling salesmen, connecting with customers across Chemung County and Tioga County in Pennsylvania. In 1890, they moved to Corning and opened The New York Bazaar, a clothing store at 55 East Market Street.²⁷ The

following year, the business, which specialized in women's clothing, relocated to 34 East Market Street, and a second branch was opened on Bridge Street. After several years, Isaac and Morris dissolved their partnership, with Isaac continuing at the Market Street store and Morris operating the Bridge Street business.²⁸ Isaac moved his store to 28 Market Street by 1914, operating under the name Braveman Dry Goods.²⁹ Braveman's expanded to Painted Post in 1919 and remained in business until 1945. Morris stayed in the clothing business for a time before transitioning to real estate in 1923, maintaining an office along Pine Street for many years.³⁰

In addition to their business interests, both Isaac and Morris were husbands, fathers, and volunteers. Isaac married Kate Gerstein by 1905, while Morris wed Bertha Phillips in 1894. Isaac was active in the Jewish community, leading fundraising efforts to support Jews in Europe facing persecution during the 1920s.³¹ Morris was a charter member of Corning's Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club.³² He also served as Police Commissioner for eight years and chaired the fundraising committee that established Denison Park.³³ Other interests included serving on the local Civil Service Commission, working with the Community Chest (where Morris served as president for a time), supporting the Corning Hospital as a board member, contributing to the Corning Social Service Society, and participating in the local Red Cross chapter.³⁴

Joseph and Nathan Hornung, brothers and natives of Vienna, initially lived in Coudersport, Pennsylvania, where they worked in clothing retail with their uncle, Saul Dieches.³⁵ They moved to Coudersport around 1894 with their mother, Charlotte, who was a widow; Saul was Charlotte's brother.³⁶ Shortly before 1900, Nathan relocated to Corning, where he operated a clothing business with a man named Jacob Weiss under the name Weiss & Hornung.³⁷ However, their partnership was short-lived, and Nathan soon went into business with Joseph as Hornung Brothers.³⁸ This clothing store was initially located at 54 West Market Street. In 1905, the shop moved to a different location before settling at 10 West Market Street, where it remained from 1915 until 1944, when Nathan retired.³⁹ Joseph continued with the business until his death in 1938.⁴⁰ It is possible that the Hornung brothers learned of business opportunities in Corning around 1898 when Joseph married Sarah Ruttenberg, a resident of Elmira.⁴¹ Sarah, who was a mother, lived in Corning until 1944.⁴² Nathan remained unmarried until 1914, when he wed Blanche Schooler, a native of Rochester.⁴³ Blanche lived in Corning until 1959, when she relocated to Ann Arbor to reside with her son David. The Hornung brothers were quite

successful as entrepreneurs, and at one time, branches of Hornung Brothers also operated in Elmira, Hammondsport, and Wellsville.

Max Phillips, previously mentioned in this work, moved to Corning in 1899 with his wife, Anna.⁴⁴ Ten years later, in 1909, Max opened a new clothing store named Guarantee Clothing Company. This business was initially located at 28 East Market Street in the former Ansorge Brothers location. The prominence of Jews in Corning's clothing retail sector reflected a larger national trend. Technological advances in sewing and textile manufacturing resulted in the rapid expansion of clothing retail across the United States during the mid to late 1800s. This development partially coincided with the arrival of over two million Jewish immigrants between 1880 and 1924. Faced with limited job prospects, many first- and second-generation Jewish Americans sought work in the clothing and textile trades. It should also be noted that after 1880, most Jewish immigrants to the United States were born in Eastern Europe, where they faced numerous legal restrictions and repeated bouts of violence.

Louis Stone, the final individual listed above, was not involved in retail but rather worked as an optician. Louis, whose name is also spelled Lewis in some sources, began practicing in Corning in 1899, founding the Crystal Optical Company at 19 East Market Street. In 1902, he married Sarah Hurwitz, a resident of Rochester. Seven years later, however, Sarah died at the age of 28 while being treated for typhoid fever, leaving behind her husband and two children.⁴⁵ In 1912, Louis married Gladys Pond, who grew up in Corning and converted to Judaism before their wedding.⁴⁶ The couple remained in Corning for a few years before relocating to Rochester. In 1911, ownership of the Crystal Optical Company passed to Louis' brother, Solomon, who had previously practiced in Rochester. Solomon remained in Corning until 1924, when he relocated back to Monroe County.⁴⁷

The Beginnings of Beth Israel

While several Jewish families lived in Corning by 1901, no evidence of efforts to establish a formal Jewish community was found until October 1903, when *The Evening Leader and Corning Daily Democrat* reported that some local Jews had joined together to collect funds to support a local 'rabbi'.⁴⁸ This individual, Hermann Kamenske, may not have had formal ordination, but he was knowledgeable in kosher butchering and could teach religious subjects to children.⁴⁹ Married men in Corning contributed 50 cents a week to support Hermann's salary,

while single men donated 25 cents each week.⁵⁰ It is unclear how long Hermann remained in Corning, as no further references mentioning him have been found. However, it is known that Jews in Corning who wished to attend formal religious services continued to travel to Elmira, Rochester, or other locations.

Not until 1909 is there evidence of organized public holiday worship services in Corning. In September 1909, Rabbi Joseph Bauder, a resident of Buffalo, visited Corning to lead services for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.⁵¹ These services were held in the Ansorge Block.⁵² A few weeks later, in October 1909, a Sunday School was organized for Jewish children in Corning.⁵³ Rabbi Leon Album traveled from Elmira to teach the students every week from 2 to 4 in the afternoon.⁵⁴ Classes were held in the Crystal Optical Company offices at 19 East Market Street. Officers of the Sunday School included Charles Kahn, Max Phillips, and Louis Stone.⁵⁵

While Max and Louis have already been mentioned, Charles Kahn is a new name. Charles moved to Corning shortly before 1905 to work in a clothing store. In 1905, he married Ida Bauder, a resident of Buffalo and the daughter of Rabbi Joseph Bauder. After their marriage, Ida joined Charles in Corning.⁵⁶ In 1907, Charles opened a new clothing store at the corner of Cedar and Market streets. Over 30 years later, in 1938, Kahn's Clothing Store moved to 57 Bridge Street, where Charles was joined in business by his son, Bernard.⁵⁷ In 1940, Bernard and his newlywed wife, Frances, moved from Corning to Horseheads. Charles had died one year earlier in 1939. Other Jews who moved to the Corning area between 1900 and 1910 included Aaron Aronson, Harry Bretstein, Bessie and Jacob Kaplan, Jacob Lazarus, Rebecca and William Malchman, and Jacob Tobias. Aaron Aronson, an immigrant from Imperial Russia, was a peddler who traveled around Corning and its vicinity by 1903. He lived in Elmira at this time. In 1906, he moved to Addison to become a partner at the Star Clothing House. Two years later, this tailoring business was sold to Samuel Goldfried and John Riley, who renamed the store Riley and Goldfried.⁵⁸ By 1909, Aaron had moved to Canisteo, where he operated a clothing and shoe store.⁵⁹ While in Addison, Aaron also served as a volunteer firefighter with the Welles Hose Company.⁶⁰ Harry Bretstein, who moved to Corning by 1908, spent time as a traveling salesman. After peddling for 20 years, he opened a shop in 1914 called The Princess Cut Rate Store, located at 21 West Market Street.⁶¹ This business was renamed the Corning Clothing Company by September 1915. Bessie and Jacob Kaplan, the next individuals listed, likely moved to

Corning around 1909.⁶² Jacob worked in the scrap business. The couple also raised three children, one of whom, Myer Kaplan, operated Kaplan's Grocery at 111 Hillvue Ave from 1935 until 1971.⁶³

Jacob Lazarus relocated to Corning from Elmira in 1904 to work as the first professional inspector for the Corning Fire Department, which had recently been formed.⁶⁴ He also trained the first horses used by the department and served as an instructor.⁶⁵ However, by 1913, Jacob moved back to Elmira. While the exact arrival date of Rebecca and William Malchman in Corning is unclear, they were certainly living in town in 1908 when William died suddenly.⁶⁶ Rebecca, left with six children aged between 16 and four, continued the Malchman Clothing Company into the late 1910s before relocating to New York City by 1922. None of the Malchman children remained in Corning after 1925. Jacob Tobias, the final individual mentioned, lived in Berlin before moving to the United States.⁶⁷ He was the brother of Gotlieb Tobias and lived in Corning by 1909. According to one source from that year, Jacob was a rabbi in Europe and he led some religious services in Corning.⁶⁸ However, his primary profession in Steuben County was operating a cigar and newsstand at 95 East Market Street. He continued this business until 1921, when he sold the stand to Addie Sly and soon left Corning.

By 1913, the religious services organized by Jews in Corning were attracting individuals from Addison, Westfield, Pennsylvania, and other nearby areas.⁶⁹ As attendance grew, a larger space was needed; therefore, on major holidays like Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Odd Fellows Temple on Erie Avenue was rented for communal gatherings.⁷⁰ Major holiday services were also reported by *The Evening Leader and Corning Daily Democrat*, reflecting the Jewish community's visibility.⁷¹ In August 1914, it was announced that a Jewish congregation was forming in Corning.⁷² Its initial elected officers were: Max Phillips as president, Joseph Hornung as treasurer, and Max Himmelfarb as secretary.⁷³ The meeting to organize the congregation was held in Louis Stone's office. Plans were discussed to bring a rabbi to Corning and construct a synagogue; however, these plans did not materialize, possibly due to internal disagreements within the community.⁷⁴ These disagreements were referenced in a later story by *The Evening Leader* from December 1922, which reported a new effort by Jewish families in Corning to form a congregation.⁷⁵ The outbreak of World War I on July 28, 1914, may have also hindered efforts to further develop the Jewish community in Corning. While an exact figure for the size of the

local Jewish community was not found, it was estimated that around 60 people attended Rosh Hashanah services in Corning in 1915.⁷⁶

While efforts to form a congregation faced challenges, Corning's Jewish community continued to grow during the 1910s. Between 1910 and 1920, Jews in the Corning area included Joseph and Lena Alpert, Benjamin Brown, Paul and Sophia Cain, Harry Goldburg, Ceral and Harry Goodman, Max Himmelfarb, who has previously been mentioned, Abraham Monene, Abraham and Lena Serrins, and Abraham Weinstein. Joseph and Lena Alpert were in Corning by October 1914 and Joseph managed the Corning Jewelry Company at 32 West Market Street.⁷⁷ This business was renamed Alpert's Jewelry Store in 1922, and Joseph eventually expanded his operations by opening branch stores in Cortland and Elmira.⁷⁸ The couple had children and also supported Joseph's younger brother, Harry, for several years. Harry came to the United States from Poland in 1921 after their father's death following a bombing raid.⁷⁹ Despite knowing only two English words upon his arrival, Harry graduated with honors from Northside High School in just three years, achieving the highest grade point average among male students in the Class of 1925.⁸⁰ Harry went on to work with his brother at Alpert's Jewelry.

Benjamin Brown, the next individual listed, lived in Corning by 1912 and worked as a clerk for Isaac Braveman, previously mentioned. In 1919, Isaac moved to Painted Post to manage a new branch of the Braveman Dry Goods store. About four years later, Benjamin incorporated the store alongside Isaac, renaming it Benjamin Brown.⁸¹ In 1928, Benjamin bought out Isaac and continued operating the business for decades until his retirement in 1962.⁸² At that time, the Benjamin Brown store was sold to Lawrence and Leona Tallman who eventually renamed the business Tallman's Department Store. Benjamin married Mollie Phillips, the daughter of Anna and Max Phillips, in 1922.⁸³ Before her marriage, Mollie worked at the Steuben County Laboratory, and after marrying, she assisted Benjamin at the Painted Post store. Both Benjamin and Mollie were active in their community. During his life, Benjamin was a member of the Corning Chamber of Commerce, the Elks, the Masons, and the Odd Fellows. He also volunteered with Meals on Wheels and was active in the Painted Post Board of Trade.⁸⁴ Mollie was a member of the Corning Women's Club, the Order of the Eastern Star, and was involved in a Jewish women's group to be profiled later.

Paul and Sophia Cain lived in Corning by 1916, and Paul worked with Ivan Bernkopf at the Cain and Bernkopf Department Store at 27 West Market Street. Although Ivan was Jewish

and resided in Corning during portions of the 1910s and 1920s, his primary residence was in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, where he spent most of his life.⁸⁵ During his time in Corning, however, Ivan served as the first chairman of the Retail Merchants Organization and later became the president of the Corning Chamber of Commerce.⁸⁶ He was also a member of the American Legion, Lions Club, Masons, Odd Fellows, and Elks. Returning to Paul and Sophia, after working with Ivan for 18 years, Paul, alongside Sophia, opened Cain's Fashion Corner at 2 West Market Street in 1934.⁸⁷ This store specialized in women's clothing, and Paul remained with the business until his death in 1940.⁸⁸ Sophia continued to operate the store until her retirement in 1951.⁸⁹ During portions of the 1940s, she was assisted by her two children, Paul Jr. and Ruth, both of whom left Corning by 1949. In addition to operating Cain's Fashion Corner, Sophia was active in the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Corning Women's Club, and Kiwanis.

Harry Goldburg, the next person listed, worked as a jeweler and watchmaker in Corning by 1914. Around this time, he married Alice, whose religious identity is not known. By 1917, the Goldburg Jewelry Store was located at 104 Bridge Street. Harry may have moved to Corning with his father, Solomon, as early as 1884, though few available sources directly mention the Goldburgs before 1914. It is possible that Solomon operated an earlier jewelry store on East Market Street; however, the presence of the store does not confirm that he lived in Corning, as branch stores were already common by the late 1800s. Strengthening the case for Solomon's residence in Corning, however, is the fact that, in addition to Harry, at least three of his children, Ada, Benjamin, and Coleman, also lived in Corning during their childhood and young adult years. In 1920, Harry closed his Bridge Street store and moved to Buffalo with Alice. The couple returned four years later and opened a new jewelry store at 110 Bridge Street.⁹⁰ This store continued into the 1940s. Harry was a noted bowler, and for many years, Alice and Harry donated the Goldburg Trophy, awarded to the most outstanding senior athlete at Northside High School.⁹¹

Ceral and Harry Goodman moved to Corning from Elmira in 1917. Once settled, they operated a jewelry store at 26 West Market Street, where Harry became known as the "Square Deal Jeweler."⁹² In 1933, the Goodman business expanded to include women's clothing and the store moved to 18 West Market Street. Three years later, Goodman's Specialty Shop, also known as the Goodman Specialty Shop, was founded at the same location. Both Ceral and Harry were active members of the Jewish community and involved in various secular organizations. Ceral

was a member of the Business and Professional Women's Club, while Harry was an early member of the Corning Chamber of Commerce.⁹³ The next person listed, Max Himmelfarb, was a native of Buffalo and moved to Corning around 1912. At about this same time he married Ada Goldberg, previously mentioned.⁹⁴ Max was a pharmacist who worked with Victor Cole at Cole's Drug Store at 22 East Market Street. Two years later, in 1914, Max's brother, Harry, relocated to Corning to work as a clerk at the Lamb Drug Store.⁹⁵ This business was owned by Oliver Lamb and it was located at the corner of Bridge and William Street. However, by 1925, Ada, Harry, and Max had all left Corning.

Abraham Monene, an immigrant from Poland, arrived in Corning in 1918 to open Monene's Men's Wear Shop at 58 East Market Street. Shortly after, the business moved to 60 East Market Street where it remained until 1956.⁹⁶ In 1930, Abraham married Minnie Swirsky, a native of New York City. Abraham and Lena Serrins moved to Painted Post in 1911 from Canisteo, where Abraham had operated a clothing store for 13 years.⁹⁷ After selling clothing for around three years, Abraham moved to Corning in 1915 alongside Lena to open a new clothing store at 40 East Market Street. This business was taken over by Abraham and Lena's sons, Edward and Herman, in 1922 who renamed the store Brothers Clothing Shop. In later sources the name Brothers Clothes Shop is also used for the business. While Edward left the store in 1928 to move to Buffalo, selling his interest to Herman, the latter continued to run the store until his retirement in 1958.⁹⁸ Abraham Weinstein, the final individual listed as living in Corning during the 1910s, moved to Corning from Elmira in 1917 to open a new clothing store at 32 West Market Street.⁹⁹ Initially known as Weinstein's, the store was renamed E. & W. Clothes Shop in 1925 after Abraham entered into a partnership with Reynolds Everett.¹⁰⁰ This change occurred because Abraham needed to devote more time to his work with the Jacob Locks Corporation in Elmira. Jacob Locks, a wholesale clothier, was Abraham's father-in-law.¹⁰¹ While Abraham sold his interest in the E. & W. Clothes Shop to Reynolds in 1926, the store continued to operate until 1974.

Before moving into the 1920s and the creation of the Beth Israel Congregation, it is important to record the impact of World War I on Corning's Jewish families. As noted previously, religious disagreements between more orthodox and more liberal Jewish groups are believed to have hindered the development of a Jewish congregation in Corning during the 1910s. Additionally, World War I likely played a role, as many community members were

enlisted or devoted their time to efforts on the home front. Like millions of Americans, members of Corning's Jewish community did their part to support the United States war effort. At least four individuals from the local Jewish community enlisted during the war: Benjamin Brown, Leon Davidson, Coleman Goldberg, and Harry Himmelfarb. Other community members contributed to volunteer efforts in Steuben County; for example, Aaron Aronson supported work organized by the Red Cross, while Rebecca Malchman aided efforts sponsored by Community Chest. Furthermore, many members of Corning's Jewish community, who were immigrants or the children of immigrants, maintained close ties with family members living in war zones and assisted their relatives when possible.

This assistance was critical as Jews in Europe continued to face persecution, particularly in Imperial Russia and areas under the control of the Russian Army. Organized attacks against Jews in Eastern Europe were not new; beginning in 1881, following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, riots known as pogroms erupted in many areas. These attacks drove over two and a half million Jews to immigrate to the United States between 1881 and 1924, when the Johnson-Reed Act was passed in part to limit further large-scale immigration from eastern and southern Europe. Evidence from as early as 1906 shows that Jews in Corning organized to support co-religionists facing persecution in Europe.¹⁰² These efforts continued in subsequent years, often in conjunction with drives organized in larger Jewish communities like Elmira. This work also helped Corning's Jewish community to develop and build other kinds of services.

The Establishment of Beth Israel

While Corning did not have an organized Jewish congregation during the late 1910s, local Jews maintained ties with co-religionists in nearby cities. By 1890, Elmira, located just 20 miles from Corning, was home to three synagogues. Many Jewish residents of Corning affiliated with either of the two oldest congregations, Temple B'nai Israel or Congregation Shomray Hadath, while some were associated with the newer Sullivan Street Synagogue. For instance, in 1925, Eva Ruttenberg, the mother of Sarah Hornung, donated a new Torah scroll to the Sullivan Street Synagogue.¹⁰³ Eva, who moved to Corning around 1905, was originally from Elmira.¹⁰⁴ Six years earlier, in 1919, several Jewish community leaders from Chemung County visited Corning to solicit support for creating a center in Elmira for the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Associations (YMHA and YWHA).¹⁰⁵ These national organizations were

established at a time when many clubs barred Jews from membership, including Elmira's City Club and the Elmira Country Club. Ties also existed with Ithaca. In 1925, leaders within Ithaca's Jewish community reached out to Corning residents for support in constructing a synagogue in Tompkins County.¹⁰⁶ This effort was primarily driven by the presence of an estimated 700 Jewish students at Cornell University who lacked sufficient space for religious services.¹⁰⁷ Cornell's overall enrollment at the time was about 5,800. Included among the Jewish students at Cornell in 1925 were the siblings Isadore and Sybil Tobias. Isadore, the son of Amelia and Gotlieb, graduated from Cornell in 1929 and he obtained a law degree from the university in 1931.¹⁰⁸ Sybil, who attended Elmira College before transferring to Cornell, graduated in 1925.¹⁰⁹ Both siblings left the Corning area after graduation. In later decades, many young Jews from Corning continued to relocate for their university studies and not return after graduation.

While Corning's close proximity to Elmira allowed local Jews to travel to religious services in Chemung County with relative ease, interest in creating a local congregation persisted. By December 1922, a Jewish Sunday school had been reestablished, with around 50 people attending the initial organizational meeting.¹¹⁰ The first lessons were offered on January 7, 1923.¹¹¹ A Jewish women's organization, the Ladies' Aid Society, was also formed in December 1922. At that time, Corning's overall Jewish population was estimated to number around 80 people.¹¹² Many of these individuals participated in the formation of Beth Israel on January 14, 1923, at the Odd Fellows Temple.¹¹³ *The Evening Leader* reported the following day that approximately 90 people attended the meeting.¹¹⁴ This figure included individuals from surrounding towns and villages. The first officers of Beth Israel were Morris Davidson as president, Benjamin Brown and Philip Weinstein as vice presidents, Harry Goodman as treasurer, and Paul Cain as secretary. Initial trustees for the congregation were Isaac Braveman, Charles Kahn, and Gotlieb Tobias.¹¹⁵ Of these individuals, only Philip Weinstein has not been previously mentioned. Philip, the brother of Abraham Weinstein, moved to Corning from Elmira in 1918 to open The Fashion, a women's clothing store at 11 East Market Street.¹¹⁶ However, the store did not remain in business for long; in 1921, Philip declared bankruptcy, and in 1923, a fire struck the shop.¹¹⁷ After the fire, Philip relocated to Pennsylvania, where he also had business interests.¹¹⁸ Returning to the new congregation, with the establishment of Beth Israel, the Ladies' Aid Society changed its name to the Ladies' Auxiliary of Beth Israel. Sarah Hornung served as

the first president of the group.¹¹⁹ Additionally, three committees were established by members of the new congregation: Membership, Publicity, and School.

On major holidays, the members of Beth Israel continued to rent space at the Odd Fellows Temple.¹²⁰ For smaller services, however, they found space in the Rogers Building, located at the corner of Pine Street and Tioga Avenue.¹²¹ Rabbis from Elmira and Rochester periodically visited Corning to speak with the members of the new congregation.¹²² In 1926, about twelve students were enrolled in the Beth Israel Sunday School, representing seven families.¹²³ The Sunday School was primarily supported by members of the Ladies' Auxiliary, which had 25 members in January 1923 and met on the first Tuesday of every month.¹²⁴ Auxiliary members raised funds for the school and supported other activities organized by Beth Israel, with rummage sales serving as a significant source of funding. In addition to their work fundraising and running the Sunday School, auxiliary members also organized social outings, including picnics.¹²⁵

During the 1920s, most members of Corning's Jewish community remained involved in retail businesses. Many of these establishments, including Alpert's Jewelry Store, Benjamin Brown, Braveman's, Brothers Clothing Shop, Cain and Bernkopf, E. & W. Clothes Shop, Hornung Brothers, Kahn's Clothing Store, Monene's Men's Wear Shop, and Phillips Clothing Store, have already been mentioned. Not all entrepreneurs, however, remained in Corning for long. For example, in 1922, two Jewish businessmen, Max Bernstein and Joseph Soppe, opened the National Variety Store, a novelties shop, at 10 East Market Street.¹²⁶ Shortly after, Abraham Altman joined the business. In 1923, however, both Abraham and Max left Corning to pursue other opportunities.¹²⁷ Joseph continued operating the National until 1925, when he moved to Hornell.¹²⁸ Two other newcomers to Corning's Jewish community were Morris and Yetta Gaby, who arrived in 1927 after Morris purchased the Plaza Theater at the corner of Bridge and William Street alongside Irving Cohen, a business partner. While Irving left for Hornell in 1930, Morris continued working at the Plaza Theater until his retirement in 1945.¹²⁹ Notably, the Plaza Theater, which opened in 1917, was the first venue in Corning to feature a film with sound. This film, *Tenderloin*, starring Conrad Nagel and Dolores Costello, was screened in April 1929.¹³⁰ While Beth Israel grew as a congregation in the mid to late 1920s, the onset of the Great Depression in late 1929 marked the beginning of a contraction for Corning's Jewish community. The following section will focus on this period, as well as the years of World War II.

Jewish Life in Corning During the Great Depression and World War II

Between 1930 and 1947, very few references to Corning's Jewish community have been located. However, it is likely that the local organized Jewish community contracted in size but never completely disbanded. This contraction mirrored a general population decline in Corning during the 1930s. Jewish women played a leading role in maintaining an organized community. From 25 members in 1923, the Jewish women's group in Corning dwindled to around eight to ten members by the mid-1930s.¹³¹ Yet the organization appears to have remained active until at least the late 1930s. The Beth Israel congregation likely disbanded, however, as some sources from the 1930s refer to the women's group as the Jewish Ladies' Aid Society or the Ladies' Aid of the Jewish Guild.¹³² While some members of Corning's Jewish community left during the 1930s, a few households, including the Kunin, Paltrowitz, and Sarner families, moved into the area, helping to maintain an organized Jewish community.

Beatrice and Louis Kunin moved to Corning in 1939, where Louis opened a dental practice that he operated for over 45 years before retiring in 1988.¹³³ Both Beatrice and Louis were active in the Corning Workshop Players, with Louis serving as a trope director for a time.¹³⁴ Beatrice also participated in the local Red Cross chapter and the Women's Community Club.¹³⁵ Milton Paltrowitz relocated to Corning in 1936 to work at Corning Glass Works.¹³⁶ Before this, he played semi-professional baseball with teams in Akron, Ohio, Beckley, West Virginia, and Nashville, Tennessee.¹³⁷ Milton's interest in baseball continued in Corning and he coached the Corning Glass Works baseball team. In 1939, Milton married Nettie Rosenhack of Elmira. Milton's brother, Lou, also lived in Elmira, and starting in 1946, Milton worked with him at Pal's Sporting Goods. Milton remained with the business until 1969, when Lou purchased his interest.¹³⁸ Five years later, Milton co-founded the Corning Trophy House, a sporting goods store located at 96 East Market Street, alongside Frederick Wilcox.¹³⁹ Milton was also instrumental in creating the Corning-Painted Post Sports Hall of Fame in 1974. Anna and Henry Sarner moved to Corning from Elmira in 1934 after Henry took over the Paris Millinery Store alongside his business partner, Meyer Kaplan, and his oldest son, David.¹⁴⁰ Initially, the store sold women's hats, but in 1938, the wares expanded to include other types of women's clothing and the business was renamed the Paris Shoppe. While Meyer seems to have left the business early on, David remained with the firm until he enlisted during World War II. Another son of Henry,

Irving Sarner, joined the business in 1944 after being discharged from the United States Army.¹⁴¹ The Paris Shoppe continued to be operated by the Sarner family until 1958, when the store was sold to Catherine Jusick.¹⁴²

As the Great Depression began to lessen after 1939, Corning's population started to grow again, with several Jewish families moving into the area before 1945. These households included the Elstein, Samuels, Sherman, Silver, and Wurtzman families. Irving Elstein relocated to Corning from Plattsburgh in 1940 to become the manager of the Puritan Clothing Store at 44 East Market Street. He was also a member of the Corning Auxiliary Police Association before enlisting in World War II.¹⁴³ Florence and Hymen Samuels moved to Corning from Utica in 1943 to open Alward's Juvenile and Big Sister Shop at 17 East Market Street.¹⁴⁴ This store specialized in children's clothing. In 1942, Malcolm Sherman and Max Silver arrived in Corning to operate a scrap business at 139 East Market Street. Initially called the Malcolm Sherman Company, the business was renamed Corning Waste Material Incorporated in 1948.¹⁴⁵ At that time, Malcolm stepped back from the business to devote more time to his new legal practice. He continued his legal work in Corning until his death in 1962.¹⁴⁶ Max relocated to Elmira by 1964. Marvin and Simon Wurtzman, representing the last family mentioned, moved to Corning by 1942 and operated the Novelty Smoke Shop at 36 West Market Street.¹⁴⁷ Marvin, Simon's son, soon moved to Pittsburgh after marrying Ruth Rosenberg in 1943. Simon, however, remained in Corning until the early 1950s.

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked, killing 2,335 Americans. This attack marked the entry of the United States into World War II and once again millions of Americans did their part to support the war effort. At least 11 members of Corning's Jewish community served during the war: Paul Cain Jr., Irving Elstein, Leo Fried, Sanford Hornung, Hymen Samuels, David Sarner, Irving Sarner, David Serrins, Robert Serrins, Malcolm Sherman, and Marvin Wurtzman. The list presented does not name individuals who either left Corning before 1941 or who moved to the city after 1945. Notably, David Sarner was wounded in action in 1944 near Cherbourg, France.¹⁴⁸ While recovering at Lovell General Hospital in Massachusetts, he met his future wife, Irma Distilio, and later returned to service, rising to the rank of Second Lieutenant.¹⁴⁹ While most of the family names listed are familiar, Leo Fried has not yet been profiled. Leo moved to Corning from Buffalo in 1943 and may have worked alongside Simon Wurtzman for a time. He was also active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce before leaving

Corning in 1950.¹⁵⁰ On the home front, members of Corning's Jewish community also made contributions; for example, Beatrice Kunin volunteered with the Office of Civilian Defense.¹⁵¹ Following the end of World War II on September 2, 1945, the United States entered a period of economic expansion that lasted until 1973. During this time, Corning's Jewish community reached its largest size, and Beth Israel experienced its most vibrant period of activity. This era will be explored in the next section of this work.

The Peak Years of Beth Israel Congregation

During the late 1940s, several Jewish families arrived in the Corning area, helping the community to recover and eventually surpass its size from the 1920s. Among these newcomers were Marshall Byer, Isadore Earle, Elizabeth and Robert Gerstel, Arthur Kantz, Robert Mamolen, Julie and Samuel Raichilson, Ida and Samuel Rosenberg, and Edith and Harry Treinin. Marshall Byer moved to Corning by 1949 and worked as an engineer with Corning Glass Works, remaining in the area until 1958.¹⁵² Isadore Earle, known as Izzy, began managing Dees for Diamonds in 1946. This business was also known as Dee Stores, Incorporated or Dee's Jewelers and another location existed in Olean. In 1947, Isadore married Norma Koenig in Olean, and Norma moved to Corning. In 1953, they opened Earle's Jewelers at 44 West Market Street.¹⁵³ This store, which later relocated to 30 West Market Street, operated until December 1997. Both Isadore and Norma were active in the Corning community. Isadore, a World War II veteran, was involved with the American Legion, Eagles, Elks, Masons, Moose, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.¹⁵⁴ Norma was active with the American Legion Auxiliary, Eastern Star, Women of the Moose, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary. She also volunteered with Meals on Wheels, the Red Cross, and within the local Jewish community.¹⁵⁵

Elizabeth and Robert Gerstel moved to Big Flats from Elmira in 1947 after opening Noah's Ark, a store specializing in auto parts and home goods, at 24 West Market Street in Corning. Shortly after opening, Noah's Ark relocated to East Market Street. Elizabeth and Robert's sons, Joseph and Lorenz, also worked at the store and eventually took over the business. In 1978, the brothers opened a new store, the Foto Factory, at 65 East Market Street. Joseph managed the Foto Factory, a specialty photography store, while Lorenz continued to work at Noah's Ark, located at 91 East Market Street. By this time, Noah's Ark specialized in electronics.¹⁵⁶ Arthur Kantz, also listed above, moved to Corning after marrying Frances

Goodman, the daughter of Ceral and Harry. By 1946, he had become the co-owner of Goodman's Specialty Shop. In 1961, Goodman's relocated from 18 West Market Street to 28 West Market Street.¹⁵⁷ After Arthur's death in 1975, Frances managed Goodman's until her passing in 1980.¹⁵⁸ Goodman's continued for another 11 years under new ownership before closing in 1991.¹⁵⁹ Robert Mamolen worked as a podiatrist in Corning from 1949 to 1957. His practice was located at 60 East Market Street.¹⁶⁰ Julie and Samuel Raichilson, another couple, opened the Star Plumbing Supplies Company in 1946 at 263 East Market Street.¹⁶¹ This business later expanded to include a lunch counter called Sam's Lunch. However, the Raichilsons soon left Corning in 1956.¹⁶²

Ida and Samuel Rosenberg, the next couple mentioned, opened the Northside Furniture Mart at 42 West Pulteney Street in 1948.¹⁶³ Samuel passed away two years later. Their son, Arnold, along with his wife Arlene, then moved to Corning from Cortland to open Quality Home Furnishers on Ontario Street. Two years later, Arnold and Ida established the Arnold Furniture Company at 42 West Market Street. In 1955, the business relocated to 70-74 West Market Street.¹⁶⁴ Although Arlene and Arnold moved to Elmira by 1962, the Arnold Furniture Company continued to operate until at least 1983, with the store eventually moving to 76 East Market Street by 1977. Edith and Harry Treinin, the final couple listed above, moved to Corning in 1948.¹⁶⁵ Harry, who had practiced law in Wayland, New York, before relocating, opened a legal practice in Corning, with Edith working as his legal assistant. Both Edith and Harry were also active in the Corning community. Edith volunteered with Meals on Wheels, while Harry served as a board member for the Corning City School District. The Treinins were also instrumental in supporting the creation of the planetarium theater at Corning Community College, which was later named the Harry and Edith Treinin Planetarium Theater in their honor.¹⁶⁶

In November 1948, a group of Jewish women reorganized the Beth Israel Sisterhood. Norma Earle served as the first president of the reestablished community.¹⁶⁷ The inaugural meeting was attended by twenty-two individuals.¹⁶⁸ Soon after, Sisterhood members began organizing efforts to support various local charities, including the Community Chest, March of Dimes, Polio Fund, and Red Cross. Additionally, they made contributions to those in need in Israel, through their support of the United Jewish Appeal and investments in Israel Bonds.¹⁶⁹ The Sisterhood also organized religious and social events for Corning's Jewish community, and drew participants from surrounding areas such as Bath.¹⁷⁰ By 1950, the Beth Israel Sisterhood had

become a member of the local Council of Women's Clubs, and its membership had grown to over 30.¹⁷¹ In the same year, the Beth Israel Community Center was formed, succeeding the earlier Beth Israel group and providing the local Jewish community with a greater level of organization.¹⁷² Some sources refer to the Beth Israel Community Center as the Jewish Community Center of Corning.¹⁷³ Arthur Kantz served as the center's first president.¹⁷⁴ Other officers were Irving Sarner as vice president, Florence Samuels as corresponding secretary, Abraham Monene as treasurer, Max Silver as chaplain, and Edith Treinin as recording secretary.¹⁷⁵ Initially, members of the center met about once a month, and by 1953, the center had secured rented quarters at 136 Pine Street.¹⁷⁶ This location was previously home to the Frank Hewitt photography studio and later The Elite Beauty Salon.

By 1954, Corning's Jewish community had become organized enough to raise sufficient funds to bring a rabbi to the city during major Jewish holidays.¹⁷⁷ From 1954 to 1956, Rabbi Felix Leo Glaubach traveled from New York City to lead services during the High Holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.¹⁷⁸ In 1957, Stanley Coopersmith, a professor of psychology who also received religious training at Yeshiva College in New York City, was invited to Corning to lead Rosh Hashanah services.¹⁷⁹ Stanley also visited Corning in April 1957 to lead Beth Israel's community seder.¹⁸⁰ This event marked the first time a community Passover seder was organized by Beth Israel and the tradition continued until at least 1966.¹⁸¹ In 1958, members of Beth Israel revisited the idea of building a synagogue in Corning or purchasing a building to convert into one.¹⁸² A building committee was formed, consisting of Nathan Lubin as chairman, along with David Freiman, Leon Gaby, Alan Kier, Charles Levinthal, Abe Monene, Arnold Rosenberg, and Florence Samuels.¹⁸³ Notably, four of these individuals had moved to Corning after 1950, reflecting the continued growth of the Jewish population in the Corning area during the 1950s. These individuals and their families will be profiled below.

Nathan and Sally Lubin moved to Corning in 1952 after Nathan began managing Harold's Army and Navy Store.¹⁸⁴ This business, originally called the Corning Army and Navy Store when it opened in 1951 at 8 West Market Street, was owned by Nathan's brother, Harold Lubin.¹⁸⁵ Harold lived in Elmira and operated a similar store there. In 1952, the Corning store moved to 10 West Market Street and adopted the Harold's name.¹⁸⁶ Nathan continued working with the business until his retirement in 1976, and Harold's remained in operation until at least 1998. David and Eleanor Freiman moved to Corning in 1955. David worked at Corning Glass

Works, while Eleanor taught third grade at Northside Primary School.¹⁸⁷ The Freimans lived in Steuben County until around 1974.¹⁸⁸ Alan Kier and Charles Levinthal both moved to Corning after 1950. While little is known about Alan, and it seems he stayed in Corning only briefly, Charles arrived in 1951 to work at Cain's Fashion Corner at 2 West Market Street.¹⁸⁹ This business, founded by Paul and Sophia Cain, is also known in some sources as Cain's Women's Apparel Store. Charles worked with the firm until 1966, when he became a manager at the Arnold Furniture Company.¹⁹⁰ Charles was married to Muriel, who was an active member of the Beth Israel Sisterhood, the Corning Area Woman's Club, the Corning Workshop Players, and the Parent-Teacher Association. Muriel also volunteered at Corning Hospital.

During the 1950s, the Corning area Jewish community welcomed several newcomers, including Bernard and May Blutstein, Morris and Myrtle Dobromil, Stuart Frankel, Emanuel and Rose Graubard, Herbert Gross, Max Karp, Joseph Levine, Celia and Isidor Levingson, Daniel Lipp, Jacqueline and Louis Lipton, Diane and Millard Risman, Benjamin Sandberg, Herbert and Margot Schindler, Eric and Leonna Stern, Rhoda and Sherman Weidenbaum, and Janice and Stanley Weisenfeld. Many of these individuals were white-collar professionals. For example, Bernard Blutstein, Joseph Levine, Louis Lipton, and Eric Stern were medical professionals, while Stuart Frankel, Daniel Lipp, and Sherman Weidenbaum moved to the area to work at Corning Glass Works, later known as Corning Incorporated. Educators included Herbert Gross, who was among the first professors at Corning Community College, and Max Karp, who taught at Campbell High School. Other families were involved in retail or managing small businesses. In 1954, Morris and Myrtle Dobromil opened Dobromil Accounting and Tax Service at 78 Center Way. Before this, Morris, a native of New York City, had worked with the Internal Revenue Service in Corning since 1950.¹⁹¹ By 1971, the accounting firm had moved to 34 East Market Street and was operating under the name Dobromil Accounting. The business, which later relocated to 382 E 2nd St, continues to exist in Corning. In the retail sector, Diane and Millard Risman worked alongside Isadore Earle at Earle's Jewelers. The Risman family remained involved with the store until its closure in 1997. Herbert and Margot Schindler moved to Corning from Long Island in 1957 to open the Corning Fabric Center at 33 East Market Street.¹⁹² This business remained in operation until at least 1974.

Corning's Jewish community reached its peak size from the late 1950s to mid-1960s. Although the building committee formed in 1958 did not secure a location for a synagogue in

Corning, members of Beth Israel developed new ways to bring their community together, including initiating a congregational newsletter.¹⁹³ The effort to establish a synagogue likely faltered for several reasons. First, even at its largest, Corning's Jewish community comprised only around 20 families, a small base from which to raise the significant funds required to create a dedicated synagogue.¹⁹⁴ Second, the development of roadways linking Corning to Elmira during the 1950s and 1960s reduced travel time to Elmira's two Jewish congregations, Shomray Hadath and Temple B'nai Israel. Some Jews in the Corning area likely saw the benefit of supporting these existing Jewish institutions nearby rather than investing resources in creating a separate synagogue in Corning. Lastly, differing opinions within Corning's Jewish community regarding styles of worship and other aspects of Jewish tradition likely played a role in the committee's outcome. These differences, evident in the fact that some Corning Jews affiliated with Shomray Hadath while others attended Temple B'nai Israel, would have made it difficult to unite the community under a single congregation. In a larger Jewish community like Elmira, multiple synagogues could be supported, but in a smaller community like Corning, success would have depended on fully uniting as one congregation

In 1959, the members of Beth Israel once again brought a rabbi, Eugene Weiner, from New York City to Corning to lead High Holidays services.¹⁹⁵ These services were held in rented quarters at 19 Denison Parkway East.¹⁹⁶ The following year, in 1960, High Holiday services were conducted at the Odd Fellows Temple and led by Rabbi Mandell Ganchrow, who traveled from Brooklyn to Corning.¹⁹⁷ However, from 1961 onward, Beth Israel's members no longer organized services for Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur in Corning.¹⁹⁸ Jews living in Corning who wished to attend religious services on these holidays returned to traveling to Elmira or other nearby communities. During the 1960s, the largest events organized by Beth Israel were an annual Hanukkah party and Purim celebration. Other annual gatherings included a community picnic and, in most years, a community seder. By 1964, the Beth Israel Sisterhood became the primary organizer of these and other congregational activities. The presence of Jewish children in Corning likely played a significant role in the continuation of Beth Israel, even after the decision was made not to establish a synagogue in the town. In 1961, an estimated 36 Jewish children lived in Corning, and the Sisterhood continued to support their religious education.¹⁹⁹ Several years earlier, in 1953 and 1954, Sunday school classes were held at 136 Pine Street in Corning, but in 1955, the Sisterhood chartered a bus to take children to Shomray Hadath on Sundays for

religious instruction.²⁰⁰ Many Jewish children from Corning continued attending Sunday school at Shomray Hadath during the 1960s.

Activities like chartering a bus to Elmira required funding, and the Sisterhood was the primary fundraising group for Corning's Jewish community. Two major fundraisers were the annual rummage sale and a card party. Additional funds were also raised through bake sales and other smaller events. Money raised by the Beth Israel Sisterhood not only supported the needs of Corning's Jewish community but also aided larger charitable causes in Steuben County and in Israel. The Beth Israel Sisterhood also contributed to its community in other ways. For example, beginning in 1962, Sisterhood members started sending cards and other small gifts to Jewish patients at the Willard State Hospital in Romulus.²⁰¹ These packages were timed around Jewish holidays and were sent to ten individuals in 1962.²⁰² The Sisterhood's relationship to patients at Willard continued until at least 1990.²⁰³ The Sisterhood's membership likely peaked at 37 individuals in 1954.²⁰⁴ By 1966, only 24 women remained active.²⁰⁵ This decline mirrored larger population trends in the area. Corning's overall population peaked in the 1950s, and since 1960, the city has lost approximately 38 percent of its population, according to census records. More broadly, Steuben County's population began contracting after 1970, with around 5 percent of the population lost as of 2020. Despite the shrinking Jewish population in the Corning area, Beth Israel continued to exist for another 30 years, and the closing years of the community will be detailed in the final section of this work.

The Closing Years of Beth Israel and Jewish Presence in Corning After 2000

Although Corning's Jewish community was contracting by the late 1960s, new families still moved to the area. These new arrivals were almost always white-collar professionals and primarily associated with Corning Incorporated, Steuben County's largest employer. Others, like Chaim Ben Deshan, who moved to Corning in 1968 with his wife, Sheila, were medical professionals.²⁰⁶ Jewish educators also continued to contribute to Steuben County, both at Corning Community College and in local K-12 schools. Many Jewish-owned small businesses closed in the late twentieth century, and over time, it became less common for professionals in the local Jewish community to be involved in retail work. However, some Jewish-owned businesses remained past 1980, including Earle's Jewelers, Foto Factory, Noah's Ark, and Syd Kahn's Sporting Goods. Sidney, or Syd as he was popularly known, was the son of Charles and

Ida Kahn, previously profiled in this work. At the time of his retirement in 1986, Syd was the oldest retailer on Market Street, with 54 years of experience.²⁰⁷ It's also worth noting that Goodman's continued to operate until 1991, although the store's final owner, Barbara Gouveia, was not Jewish.²⁰⁸

Some activities organized by the Beth Israel Sisterhood continued to draw large attendance. For example, in 1971, the *Leader* newspaper reported that over 100 people attended the annual Hanukkah party organized by the group.²⁰⁹ The Sisterhood also remained involved in interfaith events in Corning, supporting efforts organized by Church Women United, including collecting canned goods for migrants and partnering with other religious groups to support Trick or Treat for UNICEF.²¹⁰ After 1970, however, accessible references to the Sisterhood become less frequent. Members continued to engage in charitable causes and support holiday programs. In 1984, the Sisterhood began sponsoring an annual Purim play, which continued until at least 1992.²¹¹ It should also be noted that by 1980 the group adopted the name Corning-Painted Post Beth Israel Sisterhood to reflect where its members were living.²¹² A new partnership in the 1980s was supporting patients at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Bath.²¹³ However, after 1995, there are no further references to the Beth Israel Sisterhood, and it is likely the group faded by 2000.

The disbanding of the Beth Israel Sisterhood did not mark the end of a Jewish presence in Corning and surrounding towns. This presence has continued into the third decade of the twenty-first century. In December 2023, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, an international, not-for-profit news agency, ran a story highlighting the experiences of four Jewish teens in Corning and nearby areas.²¹⁴ The article described Corning's Jewish community as "small and largely disconnected," with the nearest synagogue being Congregation Kol Ami in Elmira.²¹⁵ Kol Ami was formed in 2011 from the merger of Congregation Shomray Hadath and Temple B'nai Israel. The report also touched on the role that some local Jewish families play in educating their non-Jewish neighbors about Judaism, the general lack of knowledge about Judaism in many small towns and rural communities, and the plans of young Jews in Corning to relocate after reaching adulthood. These plans are a continuation of the long-standing trend where most Jewish youth in Corning move away as adults. Yet, throughout its history, Corning's Jewish community has made significant contributions to the cultural and social fabric of Steuben County. Despite its small size, this community has provided leadership benefitting local business, education, and

health. Corning's Jewish community has also played an important role in promoting interfaith understanding and supporting local charitable work. Though the community has experienced contraction over the decades, the legacy of its members, through their professional achievements, community engagement, and efforts to preserve Jewish traditions, remains an integral part of Corning's history. As the community continues to evolve, the impact of those who came before will endure, shaping the experiences of future generations in the Corning area.

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94. Obituary of Mrs. Ada Goldberg [sic] Himmelfarb, *Evening Leader*, August 12, 1933.
95. "North Side," *Evening Leader*, October 28, 1914.
96. "Monene to Take Over Store Space Formerly Farrell's," *Corning Leader*, July 25, 1956.
97. "Abe Serrins Passes Away," *Evening Leader*, September 08, 1924.
98. "H. Serrins to Close Shop Started in 1914," *Corning Leader*, November 06, 1958.
99. "Young Elmira to Open Clothing Store Here," *Evening Leader*, October 26, 1917.
100. "Partnership is Announced," *Evening Leader*, February 20, 1925.
101. "Mr. Weinstein to Retire from Clothing Company," *Evening Leader*, October 25, 1926.
102. "Hebrews Unite for Self Preservation," *Evening Leader and Corning Daily Democrat*, November 13, 1906.
103. "To Present Scroll At Synagogue in Elmira," *Evening Leader*, July 31, 1925.
104. Ibid.
105. "Raising Funds for Hebrew Association," *Evening Leader*, June 12, 1919.
106. "Appeals for Jewish Aid," *Evening Leader*, September 05, 1925.
107. Ibid.
108. "Isadore Tobias, Whose Family was Active Here, Visits," *Corning Leader*, April 15, 1954.
109. "Will Graduate Monday," *Evening Leader*, June 13, 1925.
110. "Jewish Families Here to Have Congregation Pledge \$1,500 for Start," *Evening Leader*, December 12, 1922.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. "Congregation Started Here," *Evening Leader*, January 15, 1923.
114. Ibid.
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116. "P.W. Weinstein in Bankruptcy," *Evening Leader*, December 14, 1921.

117. "\$5,000 Damage in Store Blaze," *Evening Leader*, January 22, 1923.
118. "Philip Weinstein will Leave City," *Evening Leader*, February 14, 1923.
119. "Beth Israel Body Formed," *Evening Leader*, January 26, 1923.
120. "New Year for Jews Sept 28," *Evening Leader*, September 27, 1924.
121. "Jewish Feast Opens Sunday," *Evening Leader*, December 20, 1924.
122. "Rabbi Dr. Eckstein Talks on Synagogue," *Evening Leader*, January 23, 1923.
123. "Carl and Ruth Cain are Entertained by Friends," *Evening Leader*, May 20, 1926.
124. "Beth Israel Body Formed," *Evening Leader*, January 26, 1923.
125. "Picnic is Enjoyed," *Evening Leader*, June 27, 1924.
126. "To Open Store in Barth Block," *Evening Leader*, March 25, 1922.
127. "Notice of Dissolution," *Evening Leader*, June 06, 1923.
128. "Moving to Hornell," *Evening Leader*, April 01, 1925.
129. "Morris Gaby, Former Theater Owner Here, Dies," *Leader*, November 17, 1971.
130. "Sound Pictures are Introduced," *Evening Leader*, April 18, 1929.
131. "Mrs. Monene Hostess," *Evening Leader*, May 24, 1935.
132. "Jewish Guild is Entertained Here," *Evening Leader*, November 29, 1933.
133. Obituary of Dr. Louis L. Kunin, *Leader*, June 30, 1996.
134. Ibid.
135. Obituary of Beatrice L. Kunin, *Leader*, September 03, 1999.
136. "Area Sports Hall of Fame Founder Dies," *Leader*, June 18, 1983.
137. Ibid.
138. "Business News," *Leader*, April 03, 1980.
139. "Area Sports Hall of Fame Founder Dies," *Leader*, June 18, 1983.
140. "Paris Millinery Opens Doors Today," *Evening Leader*, August 31, 1934.

141. "Stories of Businesses That Make up Corning," *Evening Leader*, September 11, 1948.
142. "Paris Shoppe is Sold to Mrs. W. M. Jusick," *Corning Leader*, October 14, 1958.
143. "Lt. Sarner Tells of Power of Weapons," *Evening Leader*, February 03, 1944.
144. "Children's Wear Shop to be Addition to Business Section About September 1," *Evening Leader*, August 19, 1943.
145. "Firm Announces Change in Name; Plans Expansion," *Evening Leader*, September 02, 1948.
146. "Rites Held for Malcolm Sherman, Local Attorney," *Corning Leader*, March 26, 1962.
147. "Corning and Elmira Men Open New Novelty Shop," *Evening Leader*, April 16, 1942.
148. "Sarner Wounded Near Cherbourg," *Evening Leader*, July 18, 1944.
149. "Lt. Sarner to Wed New Hampshire Girl," *Evening Leader*, August 05, 1946.
150. "Sisterhood Fetes Two at Farewell," *Evening Leader*, November 07, 1950.
151. Obituary of Beatrice L. Kunin, *Leader*, September 03, 1999.
152. "Byers Leave Post for New Home, Quits Reserve Unit," *Corning Leader*, November 12, 1958.
153. "Isadore Earle to Open New Jewelry Store in 2 Weeks," *Evening Leader*, February 10, 1953.
154. Obituary of Isadore 'Izzy' Earle, *Leader*, December 19, 1994.
155. Obituary of Norma R. Earle, *Leader*, October 19, 2002.
156. Darrin Youker, "Noah's Ark Remains Plugged into Needs of Electronics Customers," *Leader*, August 10, 1998.
157. "Goodman's New Shop to Open Wednesday," *Corning Leader*, April 18, 1961.
158. "Corning Businesswoman Frances Collins Dies," *Leader*, September 03, 1980.
159. "Goodman's Closing Soon," *Leader*, January 04, 1991.
160. "Dr. R. Mamolen, Podiatrist, to Open Office in Corning," *Evening Leader*, October 20, 1949.
161. "Plumbing Supply Store Opened Here," *Evening Leader*, April 16, 1946.

162. "Millers Buy Commerce Street Home," *Corning Leader*, September 14, 1956.
163. "Furniture Store Opening Announced by S. Rosenberg, *Evening Leader*, September 07, 1948.
164. "Arnolds to Open Furniture Store in New Site Thursday," *Corning Leader*, June 07, 1955.
165. "Atty. Harry Treinin Takes Up Practice in Law Offices of Late Judge George King," *Evening Leader*, August 18, 1948.
166. Obituary of Harry Treinin, *Star-Gazette (Elmira)*, November 30, 2006.
167. "Mrs. Earle Heads New Sisterhood," *Evening Leader*, December 01, 1948.
168. Ibid.
169. "Beth Israel Gives \$200 to Jewish Appeal, Buys Bond," *Evening Leader*, June 09, 1951.
170. "Jewish Unit Plans Meet December 5," *Evening Leader*, November 08, 1949.
171. "Mrs. Kunin to Head Nominating Group for Beth Israel," *Evening Leader*, December 07, 1950.
172. "Elect Arthur Kantz Head Beth Israel Community Center," *Evening Leader*, November 01, 1950.
173. "Mrs. Goodman New Beth Israel Sisterhood Head," *Evening Leader*, January 09, 1951.
174. "Elect Arthur Kantz Head Beth Israel Community Center," *Evening Leader*, November 01, 1950.
175. Ibid.
176. "Beth Israel to Hold Session on Sunday Evening," *Evening Leader*, May 23, 1953.
177. "Jewish New Year Services to Begin Here on Monday," *Corning Leader*, September 25, 1954.
178. "Rosh Hashanah Celebration Opens with Service Tonight," *Corning Leader*, September 05, 1956.
179. "Corning Jewish Population to Observe Rosh Hashana [sic] Tonight, Start of Year 5718," *Corning Leader*, September 25, 1957.
180. "Beth Israel has 1st Community Seder in Corning," *Corning Leader*, April 19, 1957.
181. "Open Passover at Supper," *Leader*, April 05, 1966.

182. "Beth-Israel Plans for Building Here," *Corning Leader*, June 17, 1958.
183. Ibid.
184. Obituary of Nathan Lubin, *Leader*, May 06, 1986.
185. "Former Corning Army-Navy Store in New Quarters," *Evening Leader*, August 21, 1952.
186. Ibid.
187. "51 New Teachers Begin Duties in Corning District Sept. 7th," *Corning Leader*, August 25, 1955.
188. Obituary of David Freiman, *Leader*, December 05, 1994.
189. Obituary of Charles I. Levinthal, *Leader*, December 07, 1985.
190. Ibid.
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192. "Herbert Schindler Dies; Operated Fabric Center," *Leader*, August 07, 1973.
193. "Satisfaction in Judaic Moral Traditions Stressed at Beth-Israel Panel Discussion, *Corning Leader*, May 20, 1958.
194. "Beth Israel Group has Outing," *Corning Leader*, July 01, 1964.
195. "Jewish New Year Services to Begin Friday Evening," *Corning Leader*, September 30, 1959.
196. "Yom Kippur Services Start Here on Sunday," *Corning Leader*, October 09, 1959.
197. "Jewish New Year Opens Rosh Hashanah Wed," *Corning Leader*, September 19, 1960.
198. "Jewish New Year to be Observed Here Starting at Sunday Sunday," *Corning Leader*, September 06, 1961.
199. "Jewish Holiday Opens at Sunday Here Today," *Corning Leader*, December 02, 1961.
200. "Send Beth Israel Children to Sunday School at Elmira," *Corning Leader*, October 04, 1955.
201. "Beth Israel 'Adopts' 10 Patients," *Corning Leader*, October 13, 1962.
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203. "Beth Israel Offers Purim Celebration March 17," *Leader*, March 06, 1990.
204. "Has 37 Members," *Evening Leader*, September 16, 1954.
205. "Sisterhood Plans for Hanukah [sic]," *Leader*, October 07, 1966.
206. "Services Held for Dr. Chaim Ben-Dashan, Corning Physician," *Leader*, August 15, 1983.
207. Dick Peer, "Syd Kahn Senior Businessman Leaves 'The Street'", *Leader*, September 15, 1986.
208. "Goodman's Closing Soon," *Leader*, January 04, 1991.
209. "Hanukah [sic] Marked by Sisterhood," *Leader*, December 13, 1971.
210. "UNICEF Drive Hits \$1,231," *Leader*, November 06, 1969.
211. "Players Tell Purim Story," *Leader*, March 24, 1992.
212. "Sisterhood to Open Season Monday Night," *Leader*, September 06, 1980.
213. "Myra Togut Leads Beth Israel Sisterhood," *Leader*, June 04, 1985.
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