

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1850s

The first Jews arrived in Minnesota in the 1840s and 1850s. Most were from the area that would become Germany, but they had spent several years in the eastern United State, especially New York and Pennsylvania. They came as young families and as single men. Chiefly they engaged in selling liquor and taking furs in trade; later they expanded their businesses to sell clothing and other dry goods.

In spring 1856, eight of the families and several of the young men organized Mount Zion Hebrew Association. An announcement of the new congregation appeared in the American Israelite, published in Cincinnati, on July 4, 1856. It is not known why the members selected this particular name, but it does draw on tradition. During that first year, the congregation took a number of important actions. They hired Kalmon Lion to be cantor, shochet, and mohel. (His mohel kit is on display in the case in Margolis Hall.) By fall, they had bought land for a cemetery, which was located at present-day Jackson and Front Streets. And they elected officers. Unfortunately the election seems to have displeased some of the members. The result was a split of the month's old congregation as a few left to form a separate organization. The remaining members of Mount Zion persevered. In early 1857 they applied for incorporation under the laws of the territory of Minnesota. The bill passed both houses of the legislature and was signed into law by the governor on February 26, 1857. Thus Mount Zion became the first Jewish congregation in the territory and preceded Minnesota statehood by more than a year (Minnesota became a state on May 11, 1858).

In its early services, the congregation used the German language and followed Orthodox practices. From the first, they recorded the minutes of meetings. Interestingly enough, the minutes are in English. Most of the records have survived and are housed at the Minnesota Historical Society. An entry from May 1857 states that the congregation was renting a second-floor room on a building on Robert Street between Third and Fourth Streets. To meet expenses, the board assessed members dues of one dollar per month.

Mount Zion faced a new challenge in 1857. Business failures in the East set off a financial panic and brought on a depression. Nearly half the population of St. Paul, including some of the Jewish families, moved away. Over the next few years, the congregation met infrequently for services. As the nation recovered financially, people began to settle again in St. Paul. A couple of these families joined Mount Zion, helping to boost the membership.

Of those founding families, two are still present among the Mount Zion congregants. The Seesel family, including H. James Seesel, Jr., of blessed memory, Ellen Seesel, and Sarah Coleman, can trace their roots to Isidor Rose who emigrated from Germany about 1850. He went into the fur business in St. Paul with another immigrant, Joseph Ullmann. The Ullmanns later moved back to Europe, but many of their descendants remained in the United States. One of those descendants is present Mount Zion member Carolyn (Carrie) Kahn.

If you are a descendant of one of the early families or know of someone who is, please let us know so we can update the Temple list.

- Sally Rubinstein

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1860s

Mount Zion Hebrew Association had two important assets in 1860: a corporate charter and a cemetery. It was the burial ground that was instrumental in healing the split between Mount Zion and the breakaway congregation. In August 1859 two families who had left Mount Zion applied for permission to use the cemetery. Joseph and Amelia Ullmann had lost a child, and Meyer

Salomon wished to have his wife re-interred from a public cemetery. Mount Zion members granted both requests, thus paving the way for eventual reunification.

By 1862 the families who had been the leaders of the split had moved away from St. Paul. New arrivals bolstered Mount Zion's membership. One of them was Isaac N. Cardozo, a lawyer from a distinguished family who moved to the city in 1857 and joined the congregation in 1862. He was usually referred to as "Judge" because he was deputy to the United States District Judge.

More changes came in the fall of 1862. To reflect them, Mount Zion members decided to call themselves a congregation instead of an association. They also hired Emanuel Marcuson to be shochet (kosher butcher), mohel (circumcizer), hazan (cantor), and teacher. A school opened with ten students, who received instruction in Hebrew. Marcuson was paid a yearly salary of three hundred dollars.

While the little congregation was growing, its members faced other challenges. The Civil War began on April 12, 1861. Minnesota was the first state in the Union to answer President Abraham Lincoln's call for troops and mustered the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment. By the war's end, almost twenty-five thousand Minnesotans had served in the army. Although many Jews fought in the war, both for the North and for the South, none seem to have been members of Mount Zion. Some Civil War veterans moved to St. Paul after the war and joined the congregation. Their headstones can be found in the cemetery. Their names are Michael Harris, Joseph H. Smith, Bernhard Neumann and Benjamin H. Plechner.

At this point, there is a gap in the minutes of the congregation, from 1862 to 1869. Our knowledge of Mount Zion's activities through these years comes from St. Paul city directories and newspapers. We know that by 1866 the congregation numbered sixty-four men, women, and children. Services were held in a third-floor room of a building at 100 Third Street. The worship service was traditional and conservative. The prayer room was oriented toward the east and Jerusalem.

After more than a decade of meeting in rented rooms, the congregation wanted a building of its own. They established a capital fund of two thousand dollars and began looking for an appropriate site. One was found at the southwest corner of Tenth and Minnesota. Plans were then drawn up, and a bid for the building accepted on September 4, 1870. It was at this time that the last of the members of the breakaway congregation rejoined Mount Zion.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1870s

Remarkably Mount Zion Hebrew Congregation had survived a split within the membership, a national financial panic, and the Civil War. Now the members could confidently cease using rented rooms and meet in their own house of worship. The new building at Tenth and Minnesota was a simple, wood-frame structure that cost \$750.00. It was formally dedicated at Friday evening and Saturday morning ceremonies on January 12 and 13, 1871. The sermon, preached in German and English, was on the values of Judaism. There was no choir and no musical instruments.

A congregation with a temple building needed a rabbi. After a search, the members hired Dr. Leopold Wintner in December 1871. The thirty families in the congregation agreed to pay him a salary of \$1,200.00. Dr. Wintner resigned two years later. The congregation also hired A. Appelbaum as hazan, teacher, and shochet. The availability of kosher meat was an inducement for Jews to join Mount Zion.

The first steps toward Reform came in 1870. The congregation decided not to wait until sundown to hold Friday evening services and began them at 6:00 instead. At services, men and women sat together. They made alterations in the observance of the High Holy Days, deciding that Rosh Hashanah would last for one day only and to have a recess on Yom Kippur. Perhaps the most significant change came on April 6, 1872, when the congregation adopted a Reform prayer book (which was an early version of the Union Prayer Book).

Historians have attempted to answer the question of why Mount Zion began espousing Reform practices. These scholars point to the arrival of new immigrants in the community. The newcomers were from Eastern Europe and spoke Yiddish. Mount Zion members probably wanted to be identified more with other longtime St. Paul residents. Indeed, the second rabbi, Dr. J. Burgheim, who served 1874-75, called himself a minister and reader. The next rabbi, Dr. Isaac N. Cohen, through his tenure of 1875-78 wore neither tallit nor a traditional robe. These leaders of the congregation did not look much different from Protestant clergy.

Judah Wechsler, the next rabbi, was dedicated to the Reform movement. He was enthusiastically encouraged by a Mount Zion trustee, Benjamin H. Plechner, who was also a former president of the congregation. Under their guidance, Mount Zion formally became a Reform congregation in 1878 by joining the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which had been founded in 1875. Yet some conservative practices continued. Men still covered their heads during services.

The congregation celebrated Chanukah for the first time in 1878. The following year they began confirmation study. The first confirmation occurred on Shavuot in 1880 when six boys and one girl were confirmed. Confirmation, however, did not replace bar mitzvahs.

As important as the rabbis were as spiritual leaders, much of their work would not have been possible without the efforts of the women. Hannah Austrian organized the women and founded the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society on November 12, 1871. One of the first contributions of the group was to buy an organ for the temple. Their great challenge at the end of the 1870s was to find a way to build a new temple because the congregation had outgrown the small frame structure.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1880s

The 1880s presented two major challenges to the members of Mount Zion. The congregation met the first one with resounding success as they carried out plans for a new temple building. Despite some remodeling, the wood-frame temple was too small for the growing congregation. The members reached the decision to build in April 1881, sold the old structure (which was moved to Fuller Street where it was used as a church), and laid the cornerstone on October 9, 1881. Rabbi Judah Wechsler and congregation president Julius Austrian solicited gifts from Jews throughout the United States and non-Jews in Minnesota, including Alexander Ramsey and Henry Sibley. The imposing three-story structure, which took eight months to build, had a stone foundation, brick walls, stained-glass windows, and domed cupolas. Its cost was \$11,000. The Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, under the leadership of Hannah Austrian, held a fair in 1882 to raise the final \$3,000 to pay off the mortgage. Perhaps one of the most meaningful gifts the congregation received came from former member Amelia Ullmann. In 1887, she sent a Torah scroll and pulpit cover from her home in Germany.

The congregation in the early 1880s consisted of sixty-eight families. Many lived east of Minnesota Street in the Lower Town area where their neighbors included Sibley and James J. Hill. Others resided north of Tenth Street. The temple itself was kitty-corner from the public high school and a block east of the state capitol.

In the midst of celebrating the success of the building project, the members faced a new challenge. Two hundred refugees from Russia arrived. In early July another thirty-five came, followed by an additional two hundred on July 14. They had no food or money and little clothing. The Jews of St. Paul had little advance warning from the London agency that sent the refugees. Nevertheless the Mount Zion congregants saw clearly their duty to aid their coreligionists. The members contributed what they could, but it was not enough. They then appealed to the city for help and received sufficient funds to assist the refugees.

To meet the ongoing need, Rabbi Wechsler and congregation president Austrian developed a plan to settle the refugees on farms in North Dakota. It would be an opportunity to break the Old World pattern and have Jews become land owners and farmers. Besides it would get poor families out of unhealthful city conditions. In Spring 1882 eleven families moved to the Painted Woods colony on the Missouri River south of Bismarck. By 1884 there were 312 colonists, which was the high point of the colony's population. Unfortunately the colonists, who were urban tradespeople, lacked agricultural experience, and a series of calamities: crop failure, bad weather, and prairie fire, doomed the settlement. With his scheme a failure, Rabbi Wechsler resigned. Mount Zion members had contributed almost \$35,000 to the project over five years.

In St. Paul the established community of Mount Zion and the refugees from Russia recognized the gulf between them over language, religious practices, culture, and customs. The immigrants settled across the river from downtown in the West Side Flats where housing was less expensive, and they could create a community that resembled the one they had left behind.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1890s

"The Quiet Nineties" was the phrase Rabbi Gunter Plaut used to describe Mount Zion at the end of the nineteenth century. Many of the issues that had been causes of contention ceased to be debated, in large part because the generation of the founders was passing from the scene. Rabbi Emanuel Hess (1888-99) tried to follow a middle road between modern and traditional in services, which continued to use German but also some Hebrew. Men no longer covered their heads or wore tallit. Friday evening services became shorter, and members more often attended Sunday morning lectures. Rabbi Hess supported religious education and learning Hebrew for both boys and girls. Members celebrated Chanukah and Purim (and Christmas) and increasingly ignored dietary laws. The young women's club on one occasion gave an oyster supper.

One major change concerned the cemetery. The congregation bought land at Larpenteur and Payne for a new cemetery and sold the old one. In 1889 the bodies were moved and re-interred. Headstones, which had usually been in Hebrew, were now more often in English. Following a change in policy, non-Jewish spouses were allowed to be buried in Mount Zion cemetery.

The efforts to support the needy Jews in the community continued. By 1900 the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society had assisted 462 individuals and families. Aid included buying groceries, arranging adoptions, paying for funerals, obtaining licenses for peddlers, supplying train tickets, helping with medical care, and finding housing. The women, however, felt that more should be done and launched a new far-reaching, long-lasting project.

It began simply in 1895. A few members would teach a sewing class to immigrant girls and use one of the rooms at the Temple. Other members offered instruction in home and industrial arts. The project expanded quickly, particularly among the Jews of the West Side Flats. Rabbi Hess gave the undertaking his full support, but the organizer and supervisor was Sophie Wirth, who led the Jewish Relief Society, an outgrowth of the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society. By 1897 the informal classes had become the Industrial School; it was housed in rented quarters on the West Side. The program expanded to include classes in manual training for boys as well as sewing

and needle work for girls. English-language instruction was added to the schedule and brought in adult students. The school also scheduled social gatherings, such as picnics, and encouraged Americanization and assimilation. On July 5, 1900, the school moved into its own building on the Flats at Robertson and Indiana and took on a new name-Neighborhood House.

Other residents of the West Side began to make use of the classes, and the school truly became a settlement house. In 1903 Neighborhood House was reorganized on a non-sectarian basis. Nevertheless, the women and men of Mount Zion remained involved in the program and served on the board; Eric Levinson recently served as president. When the Flats were cleared as part of flood control and urban redevelopment in the 1950s, Neighborhood House relocated to 179 Robie Street. In recognition of the work of Senator Paul Wellstone and Sheila Wellstone, a new building, which celebrated its grand opening in April 2006, was named in their honor.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1900s

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Mount Zion congregation undertook yet another building project. Two changes in the membership itself made this task necessary. In the 1890s, temple leaders realized that the building was inadequate to serve the increasing number of families, many of whom were immigrants from Eastern Europe. Just from 1899 to 1902, membership grew from 90 to 119 families. With that fact in mind, the board set up a sinking fund for new construction.

The other change involved the mobility of the congregants. Downtown St. Paul was no longer a desirable place to live because businesses were expanding in Lowertown. Families moved west to the area of St. Anthony Hill, along Summit and Dayton Avenues. Therefore, the congregation decided to leave the old location at Tenth and Minnesota and find a building site closer to where families were now living. The location selected was at the corner of Holly and Avon.

The process of finding an architect and constructing the building came about in an unplanned way. Two temple members, Joseph and William H. Elsinger, had proposed in 1902 to donate a chapel costing \$6,000.00 to the Mount Zion congregation. The architect they chose was Clarence H. Johnston, who had already designed a house for William Elsinger in 1898 at 701 Summit. The connections with Johnston went even deeper. The Elsinger brothers were partners with Jacob Dittenhofer in the Golden Rule Department Store; Ditttenhofer was president of Mount Zion from 1903 to 1921. Johnston had overseen remodeling of the store in 1902; he would carry out five more such projects by 1926 as well as design a house for Dittenhofer's son Samuel at 807 Summit in 1906-08. Not incidentally, Johnston worked with Leo Guiterman, a temple member and owner of another department store, on remodeling the store in 1905 and building a house at 986 Summit in 1904.

These were not the only projects Johnston undertook in the early decades of the century. He designed dozens of business buildings and residences and carried out numerous projects for the state of Minnesota, such as buildings at state hospitals, state schools, state universities, and state correctional institutions. In St. Paul his commissions included the Minnesota Club, Central High School, the Minnesota Historical Society, and buildings for St. Joseph and Miller Hospitals. For the University of Minnesota, he was the architect for Folwell and Morrill Halls, Walter Library, and Williams Arena. Elsewhere in Minnesota, he designed the Chester Congdon house in Duluth and St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester. One of his unbuilt plans was for the Minnesota State Capitol competition in 1895; he came in fourth.

The Elsingers' chapel project hit a snag when the temple board insisted on reviewing all expenditures over ten dollars. Consequently the Elsingers bowed out. The project then took on new life and became the third temple building, with Johnston remaining the architect. The building

was a classical brick and terra-cotta structure with a pillared portico and a shallow dome, which may have echoed Johnston's design for the Capitol. The cornerstone was laid on Shavous in 1903. Dedication of the new temple took place on Friday and Saturday, May 6-7, 1904. Johnston's records list the building's cost as \$48,000.00, but temple records show a sum of \$80,000.00; the larger figure probably includes furnishings and other equipment.

The old temple at Tenth and Minnesota was sold to the Sons of Abraham for \$7,500.00. It has since been razed, and a high-rise condominium occupies the site.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1910s

For its first half century, Mount Zion and its members had been largely untouched by world events, the immigration from Eastern Europe in the 1880s and 1890s being the main exception. On the whole, the congregation enjoyed a period of stability and prosperity. Membership increased to 168 in 1912 and to 195 by 1921. Congregants attended Friday and Saturday services regularly and expressed appreciation, in particular for the music and the choir. Comfortable with their place in the Reform movement, they made only a few modifications, such as adopting the new edition of the Union Prayer Book.

Two events combined to bring change. The first was Zionism. Like most Reform congregations, Mount Zion did not endorse Zionism. Indeed, the temple accepted the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's resolution: "The mission of Judaism is spiritual, not political. Its aim is not to establish a State, but to spread the truths of religion and humanity throughout the world." Rabbi Isaac Rypins openly opposed Zionism. When Henrietta Szold wanted to include a stop at Mount Zion on her speaking tour in 1913 (a year after she founded Hadassah), she was refused. The temple stated, "It is not consistent with the best interest of the congregation that the request be granted, it being a lecture in favor of Zionism." According to Rabbi Gunther Plaut, "the Board resisted all efforts to involve the Congregation in communal, political, and even philanthropic enterprises, for fear of entering into the arena of controversy."

The second event bringing change was the onset of World War I, which broke out in August 1914. The United States entered the war in April 1917. A total of 451 Jewish men from St. Paul served, of whom nine lost their lives. Several soldiers were members of Mount Zion. Of them, Maurice Katz and the brothers Leon and Norman Kahn were killed in France. Temple members were leaders in the war effort on the home front. Samuel Dittenhofer was president of the Red Cross chapter in St. Paul, and Hiram D. Frankel served on the Jewish Welfare Board. Their activities included work with soldiers at Fort Snelling, especially in response to the influenza epidemic in 1919. Rabbi Rypins in particular earned praise for spending days and nights tending ill soldiers. The JWB took the lead in looking after the needs of Jewish soldiers during the High Holy Days and Passover.

The war modified the status of Palestine. The Balfour Declaration in 1917 brought a reversal of opinion on Zionism. Rabbi Rypins expressed the change by becoming a leader of the Keren Hayesod (Palestinian Foundation Fund). As one person said, "Everyone in Saint Paul is now a Zionist." The Minnesota legislature passed a resolution in support of the aims of Zionism; it was the ninth state to do so. After the initial outburst of support, however, Zionism remained weaker in Saint Paul than in Minneapolis or other parts of the state.

The war also brought increased cooperation on relief efforts. When a devastating forest fire hit the Moose Lake-Cloquet area in 1918, Rabbi Rypins and Hiram Frankel were part of a group that toured the state raising money for the survivors. The following year Mount Zion hosted a meeting to raise funds for Jewish refugees in Eastern Europe.

In 1921, Rabbi Rypins resigned. He had been rabbi at Mount Zion since 1899. Jacob Dittenhofer, president of the temple since 1903, also resigned. They had guided Mount Zion through tumultuous times. Now it was up to their successors to deal with the postwar world.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1920s

This decade for the nation became known as the Roaring Twenties, but for Mount Zion it was both a time of turbulence and affirmation. A new rabbi and new temple leaders brought the congregation even more firmly within the Reform movement. Temple membership rose to 215. The new rabbi, appointed in 1921, was Jacob Meyerowitz. His tenure lasted only two years, but among his contributions was the reintroduction of Hebrew in the religious school curriculum.

After a national search and a review of 34 applicants, the temple board offered the rabbinate to Leonard J. Rothstein. As a condition of his acceptance, however, he insisted that the practice of "blackballing" prospective members be abolished. More changes came quickly, many suggested by the rabbi, others from the board and its president, Hiram D. Frankel. They decided it was time to have a temple budget; one was adopted and set at \$16,000.00. They began planning for remodeling and expansion of the temple building. They approved a 10 percent levy to support the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Perhaps more controversial was the policy for the religious school. The rabbi wanted an open-door approach, but he also dismissed several students who had been disruptive.

Not all members were comfortable with the changes and the outspokenness of the rabbi. The issue came to a head in September 1924 when the rabbi publicly stated that his sermon topic would be: "Why I shall not vote for Coolidge and Dawes," referring to candidates in the upcoming presidential election. Such use of the pulpit for political purposes was too much for the board. When the rabbi reaffirmed his decision, they canceled services and placed an announcement to that effect in the newspaper. In resolving the issue of freedom of the pulpit, it was decided that the board and the congregation would determine the policy while recognizing the rabbi's right to freedom of expression. Nevertheless, the rabbi felt that it would be best if he resigned, which he did in 1925. (Sidenote: I have not found an explanation of why Rabbi Rothstein so strongly opposed Coolidge that he would use the pulpit to voice his stand. Perhaps it was because of Coolidge's hostility to the League of Nations.)

For the third time in five years, the board had to find a new rabbi. This time the search had a fortunate outcome for the congregation. They selected Harry Sterling Margolis. Under new leadership, the congregation grew to 251 members by 1930. To accommodate expanded programs, the board retained Clarence Johnston, the temple's architect, to carry out renovations, including building an assembly hall, in 1927 and 1929 at a cost of \$28,000.00. The religious school put a new emphasis on teacher training, added current events to the curriculum, and renewed a commitment to learning Hebrew. Finally after years of discussion, the men organized the Men's Club in 1925. Another long-discussed project became a reality-the temple bulletin began publication in 1926

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1930s

During the depression thirties, Mount Zion was fortunate to be guided by Rabbi Harry Sterling Margolis. He was only twenty-eight years old when he was appointed the Temple's rabbi in 1925,

but he and his wife, Clara, soon became leaders in both the religious and the secular life of the congregation. In his work, Rabbi Margolis was ably assisted by the incoming Temple president, Benjamin Wolfe.

The new administration reaffirmed that Mount Zion would, as stated in the by-laws, carry out religious activities "in accordance with the principles of Reform Judaism." Gradually this policy led to changes in ritual. In 1934 Mount Zion celebrated its first bar mitzvah in almost fifty years when Stanley Goodman was called to the Torah on May 19. The religious school expanded its program to include high school students and added current events along with Hebrew to the course of study. In 1931 there were 196 children enrolled in the school. Not coincidentally perhaps, Mount Zion established a Temple library in 1930 with Don Singerman as librarian. Temple membership, which was 251 in 1930, grew to 293 by 1938.

Women of Mount Zion Sisterhood continued their work with the cultural, educational, and charitable activities of the congregation. Women, however, still could not be members of the Temple board, a right they had been working for since 1919. Moreover, women could not vote at congregational meetings unless they were widows, unmarried, or married to men who were not members of Mount Zion.

One of the hallmarks of Rabbi Margolis's tenure was cooperation and coordination with other congregations in the Twin Cities. Mount Zion and Temple of Aaron jointly issued a statement in support of the separation of church and state; the issue at stake was Bible reading in public schools. The rabbis at that time were in favor of release time for students instead. Mount Zion and Temple Israel worked together to improve the quality of instruction in religious schools. Mount Zion also resumed holding services with Christian churches on Thanksgiving.

The Great Depression, which hit with the stock market crash of October 1929, took its toll on the congregation. Rabbi Margolis referred directly to this impact in his annual message of 1932. He said that the financial losses were not the worst part, it was the "despair philosophy which has seized our people . . . the financial depression has driven them into an agonized fear of themselves."

Political events in the state, nation, and world further contributed, if not to fear, to a sense of unease. Jews in St. Paul had been a fully integrated part of the community since the 1850s and had experienced little anti-Semitism. According to Professor Hyman Berman, anti-Semitism became "a political weapon during the 1930s" as there were attempts "to equate Jewishness with radicalism and Communism." It was especially part of the Republican effort to defeat the Farmer-Labor party in 1938. At the same time, the entire Jewish community was following the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1940s

The decade of the 1940s was marked by World War II, the Holocaust, and the founding of the state of Israel. The United States entered the war, which began in 1939, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Many members of Mount Zion served in the war. Among the casualties was Lieutenant Richard Guthmann of the air force, who was killed early in 1945.

Rabbi Harry Margolis focused several of his sermons on the war: "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" on the first Shabbat after the declaration of war, "The Jews of Africa" during the Allied sweep of North Africa, and later in the war, "Inside Germany," "Judaism and a Just and Enduring Peace," and "Is Hate Necessary to Win the War?" Mount Zion canceled Shabbat morning services for the duration of the war in response to gas rationing. This decision reflected a change in the congregation; many members now lived beyond walking distance from the Temple.

The congregation also consecrated a Sefer Torah that had been saved from Germany. Members raised a war fund of more than \$1,000.00.

Despite wartime restrictions and anxieties, Mount Zion members continued with their religious life. In 1942 the Temple observed its eighty-fifth anniversary with a campaign to add eighty-five new members. In that same year, they introduced Kiddush as part of the service. Another change involved assigned pews. Milton P. Firestone, president of the Temple from 1941 to 1946, felt that the system was undemocratic. Efforts to change the system dated from 1920. His arguments persuaded the board and the congregation, and despite misgivings they voted for a new system of unallotted pews in 1944.

Membership continued to increase, rising from 315 in 1943, to 330 in 1944, to 441 in 1945, and to 457 in 1948. The religious school experienced a similar growth with 250 students in 1944, 275 in 1945, and 287 in 1949. The budget rose correspondingly, from \$25,000 in 1944 to \$40,000 in 1948. The number attending High Holy Day services was so large that the Temple could not accommodate them, forcing a move to the St. Paul Auditorium.

In the midst of this growth period, Mount Zion suffered an unexpected blow. Rabbi Margolis fell ill and died July 21, 1946. His passing was mourned both locally and nationally. Rabbi Henry Berkowitz in speaking to the Central Conference of American Rabbis praised him as a "thoughtful preacher, as successful organizer, and inspired teacher and untiring pastor."

During the next few years, Mount Zion reintroduced bar mitzvahs and cantorial singing and began reading the Torah at Friday services. The first Yom Kippur memorial book appeared in 1947. In 1948 a long-fought campaign achieved success; the Temple board expanded to sixteen members, one of whom would be a woman. The first woman named to the board was Hattie (Mrs. B. W.) Harris, who served from 1948 to 1951. The board also introduced term limits, setting a maximum of four years.

In 1948 Mount Zion appointed a new rabbi, W. Gunther Plaut. He was a native of Germany who had immigrated to the United States and attended Hebrew Union College, where he was ordained in 1939. He had served as a chaplain in Europe during the war and at a temple in Chicago.

The postwar world in which Rabbi Plaut guided Mount Zion was fraught with challenges. As the congregation learned of the extent of the Holocaust, there was shock at the loss, guilt for not doing more to prevent the deaths of six million, and determination that it never happen again. In the fall of 1946, journalist Carey McWilliams, in an article in a national magazine, called Minneapolis "the capital of anti-Semitism in the United States." Minneapolis mayor Hubert Humphrey and Minnesota governor Luther Youngdahl appointed commissions to propose measures to prevent discrimination in employment and housing. In these efforts, they were aided by religious leaders and joint Jewish-Christian exchanges. Rabbi Plaut served on the Governor's Commission on Human Rights.

The postwar years saw a marked increase in support for Zionism. In 1948 Mount Zion and the entire Jewish community celebrated the founding of the state of Israel.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 1950s

The years following World War II brought several challenges to the members at Mount Zion. One of them had been long recognized; the congregation had outgrown the Temple building. Twice during the 1920s the building had been remodeled to accommodate increasing demands on its space. The High Holy Day services had to be held at the St. Paul Auditorium to handle the

members who wished to attend. The religious school split into Saturday and Sunday sections to enroll all the students, and children of nonmembers were no longer accepted because of lack of room.

In 1944 the board proposed and the congregation discussed retaining an architect and choosing a location for a new building. The following year the full congregation approved buying land on Summit at Hamline. In April 1948 Mount Zion bought the last parcel of land, including an area for parking, and took possession of the entire block along Summit from Hamline to Syndicate. The land was a purchase from Gloria Dei Church, which moved to a new site on Snelling.

Raising funds for building a new Temple proved to be a test of the congregation's commitment. There were requests from the new state of Israel for financial support, and the war in Korea led to inflation, which drove costs up. Soon it was apparent that the total amount needed for the new building would surpass one million dollars. The congregation conducted special fund-raising drives, and members responded with numerous bequests.

Finally the effort began to pay off. Groundbreaking for the new Mount Zion took place in 1951, and construction started in 1952. On August 16, 1953, the cornerstone was laid. According to Rabbi Plaut, the cornerstone held these items: "Partial contents of the previous building's cornerstone; pictures of the three previous Temples; pictures of the present structure in various stages of completion; programs and pictures of the cornerstone laying ceremony; tape transcript of the ceremony; sermon by Rabbi Margolis, dated Yom Kippur 1945, proposing the building of a new Temple; letters of greeting from civic and religious leaders; newspaper articles describing the event; Bulletins, Annuals, and other Congregational papers; finally, a list of all those who had contributed to the Building Fund." Among those letters was one of congratulation from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. He concluded by stating, "May your new Temple continue the stirring heritage passed on by those who, since 1856, have regularly gathered to worship as members of the Mount Zion Hebrew Congregation."

Dedication of the new building took place the weekend of December 17-19, 1954. The last service in the old building was on Friday evening. On Saturday the congregation held a banquet at the new Temple and unveiled the sanctuary for the first time. On that Sunday, which was the first night of Hanukah, the congregation carried the Torahs from the old Temple to the new Temple and lit the Ner Tamid.

The old building at Holly and Avon was sold to the Sons of Abraham, who had bought the previous Temple building at 10th and Minnesota.

The new building was not the only project or change for the Mount Zion congregation in the early 1950s. In 1953 women received "equal franchise"; from then on votes would be one per family and could be cast by either a man or woman or split between the two. The congregation hired an education director, Alan D. Bennett, in 1950; by 1954 there were four hundred students in the religious school. In 1953 Sydney Berde began his lengthy service as cantorial soloist. On December 20, the first full day after the dedication services, under the leadership of Arthur Goodman and William Blaine, Mount Zion began daily services, which have continued to this day under the guidance of Blaine's daughter Rita Grossman.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 60s and 70s

Continuing through May 2007, we will celebrate Mount Zion's sesquicentennial, our 150th birthday. Each month, Sally Rubinstein will offer a monthly column on Mount Zion's history. Each column will focus on a different decade. Anyone interested in more information should look

at Mount Zion: the First One Hundred Years, by Rabbi Gunther Plaut. Copies are available in the library. Some material is from the taped interview with Rabbi Frederick Schwartz at Mount Zion, October 29, 2005.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion in the 60s and 70s Change and growth marked the decades of the 1960s and 1970s at Mount Zion. In 1961 Rabbi Gunther Plaut announced his resignation; he moved to Toronto to become rabbi at Holy Blossom Congregation. Rabbi Bernard Martin served Mount Zion from 1961 to 1965, with Rabbi Jerrold Goldstein as assistant and associate rabbi, 1963–66. Temple membership reached 750 in 1961.

In 1966 Rabbi Frederick C. Schwartz became the rabbi at Mount Zion. In October 2005 Rabbi Schwartz returned to the Temple and took part in the activities for the 150th anniversary. He recalled that the late sixties was a time of a shift in Reform Judaism. He emphasized a commitment to “learn, develop, grow” and a pride in being a Jew without labels of Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox. He also wanted to break down barriers and build a community where people were comfortable with each other. As part of that effort, he and Arthur Goodman began a Tuesday study group in downtown where people could come together in friendship over the Torah.

To further this commitment, Mount Zion sponsored a lecture series. The first speaker was Senator Walter F. Mondale. He was followed by Dr. Benjamin Spock and then a group of physicians, who discussed the impact of cholesterol. To represent a more conservative viewpoint, the board invited William F. Buckley to speak. The support of Rabbi Schwartz was crucial to the success of this program.

Perhaps Rabbi Schwartz’s impact was most profound in the religious school. His students never fail to mention the rabbi’s predilection for bringing Martin Buber into any lesson. One former student, Louis Newman, commented that even on a Sunday morning Rabbi Schwartz could make Jewish philosophy exciting, challenging, and accessible to teenagers. The rabbi’s passion for Jewish learning made him a role model of commitment and devotion as he taught that study and action went hand in hand.

A student in Rabbi Schwartz’s confirmation class of 1967 was Debbie Friedman. While still in high school, she composed Sing Unto God: A New Approach to Sabbath Worship. She also assisted musically with temple youth groups, both at Mount Zion and with national organizations. Rabbi Schwartz, as a staunch supporter of Israel, encouraged students and congregants to visit Israel. Debbie with a scholarship from the Temple made the trip in 1969; the Temple bulletin published her letters home.

During these years, Mount Zion observed another anniversary and several “firsts.” In 1971 the Sisterhood celebrated its centennial. That same year, the Temple adopted the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew. Four years later, Holly Callen became cantorial soloist, the first female to hold this position. And the congregation began using The Gates of Prayer.

Change took place with the building itself. The Lipschultz Lounge was added in 1961 and the Melamed Board Room was finished in 1968. In 1973 the stained-glass window designed by William Salzman was installed in Margolis Hall. Entitled “Aaron, Jacob, Moses and Job Wrestling with God,” it was a donation from Rae and Bernard Druck.

Rabbi Schwartz ended his eight years at Mount Zion in 1975. Rabbi Leigh Lerner, who had been assistant rabbi since 1971, became senior rabbi. Rabbi Lerner marked his own set of “firsts.” In March 1976 he led the first congregational trip to Israel. Despite being ostracized by the Minnesota Rabbinical Council, he performed the Temple’s first interfaith wedding in 1977. Under his leadership, Mount Zion launched outreach programs with the African-American community, including the Black-Jewish Dialogue, the Black-Jewish Investment Group, and a Shabbat service

honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with participation by the Metropolitan Male Chorus. The latter celebration occurred before the establishment of a holiday honoring Dr. King. In 1978 Mount Zion started its own Hebrew school, began the Tot Shabbat program, and with an eye ever to the needs of tomorrow, established the Viable Futures Strategic Planning Task Force.

Historical Tidbits – Mount Zion in the 80s and 90s

The Mount Zion congregation of today was largely shaped by events and decisions of the 1980s and 1990s. Rabbi Leigh Lerner, who entered his second decade at the Temple, led the effort to reach out to groups within the congregation and in the community. He helped integrate interfaith couples and families into the congregation especially through the Mixed Doubles group, begun in 1981. His decision to officiate at weddings of interfaith couples who agreed to raise their children as Jews was a milestone for the congregation and Minnesota. Sisterhood started a complementary program called Jews by Choice. Inclusiveness gave women more recognition. Rabbi Lerner began using gender-sensitive language in services long before the gender-sensitive Gates of Prayer was adopted in 1990. The Temple elected its first female president, Judy Rose, in 1987.

Outreach took other forms. The Temple sponsored Southeast Asian families in 1980 and 1981, welcomed Russian immigrants and actively supported Soviet Jewry, openly opposed apartheid in South Africa, and undertook an outreach effort to Jews in Mexico. Closer to home, the congregation began helping women in shelters and undertaking food drives. The latter became the Mitzvah Food Shelf Program in 1987, run by the Sisterhood. The Yom Kippur food drive and fast appeal followed.

The religious school program expanded, both in staff and facilities, to accommodate the 250 students. The Temple hired a part-time educator and opened a Learning Center with books and curriculum materials in 1980. Education as a family experience was formalized two years later with the first Z. Willard Finberg Family Education Day. As an experiment, the Temple opened a Hebrew school in Eagan in 1987 to make attendance easier for students living in southern - suburbs.

Mount Zion again hired assistant rabbis in the 1980s. Rabbi Bruce Kadden joined the clergy in 1981 and Rabbi Stacy Offner, Minnesota's first female rabbi came in 1984. Both brought energy and joy to the education and life of the congregation.

A period of turmoil for the congregation occurred from 1987 through 1988. In the end, Rabbi Offner founded a new congregation Shir Tikvah with some members from Mount Zion. Though a challenging time, both congregations today are strong and work together with the other congregations in the community.

In 1989 Rabbi Lerner announced his decision to move to Montreal. He was succeeded by Rabbi Leonard Schoolman who bridged the years until 1993 when the Temple board reached a novel decision. They hired Rabbi Elka Abrahamson and Rabbi Martin (Misha) Zinkow, the first husband and wife rabbinical team to share the senior rabbi position in the country.

A growing congregation and the passage of time took its toll on the building. In 1994 Lehadlik Ner (To Light the Flame) began as a capital campaign. Five years later it reached \$10 million in capital and endowment funds. By 2000 the front entrance and restrooms had been made handicap accessible; the front lobby, Firestone Art Gallery, administrative hallway, Lipschultz Lounge, the terrace and outdoor chapel, the rabbis' offices, Harris Chapel, the board room, and

the religious school wing had been remodeled; and in a major effort the sanctuary, kitchen, and Margolis Hall were renovated. The sanctuary was rededicated on April 20, 2001.

Equally visible to members of the congregation were the innovations in the music program. In 1982 the Temple hired Dr. Jerry Brakke as organist and accompanist. Gradually the cantorial soloist began taking a greater part in Shabbat services. After thoughtful conversations about the direction of worship, the congregation decided to hire its first invested cantor in 1997. Cantor Rachel Stock Spilker came along with her husband Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker who was hired part-time to oversee youth activities, family and adult education. Under Cantor Spilker's - guidance, the congregation renewed its understanding of music for Shabbat, and our choirs for adults and children flourished. By the end of the 90s, four clergy—two couples— led our congregation without a single rebbitzin!

Sally Rubinstein

Historical Tidbits – Mount Zion from 2000-2007

As I prepared for this column, I watched the tape of the farewell celebration and tribute to Rabbi Elka Abrahamson and Rabbi Misha Zinkow from May 20, 2000. The rabbis presented the congregation with a list of seven challenges, one for each year they had been at Mount Zion. Their purpose was to continue the renewal of Jewish spirit and outreach: 1) Make Shabbat your sanctuary that it may be part of the life of every Reform Jew; 2) Light shabbat and holiday - candles in your home; 3) Go and study Torah and Talmud and continue Jewish learning throughout your adult life; 4) Engage in social action and pursue justice, which is essential to Jewish acts of loving kindness; 5) Be patient with one another; 6) Express warmth and inclusion and welcome the stranger; 7) Be proud to be a Jew, a Reform Jew, and be an observant and active Jew. These challenges were as much affirmation as challenge and expressed the soul of the congregation.

Over the last several years, Mount Zion has faced a dual quest: to address the challenges outlined by Rabbis Abrahamson and Zinkow and to prepare for its sesquicentennial celebration. To implement the former, a team of 50 people met individually with over 500 members. Those conversations developed into a Vision Statement adopted in December 2003. The statement says that Mount Zion is a welcoming and vibrant Jewish spiritual home devoted to Torah (life-long learning), Avodah (worship), and Gemilut Chasadim (acts of loving kindness and justice). The emphasis on Torah built on the Torah Restoration Project of the previous year in which four of the Temple's scrolls were restored by the congregation under the guidance of Sofer Neil Yerman. Life-long learning expanded especially with children and teens under the direction of Stephanie Fink and Amy Gavel. The changes in worship were gradual, with new kinds of music and - congregational choirs becoming a larger part of the Shabbat service. Mount Zion also celebrated fifty years of daily services, a milestone among Reform Jewish congregations. Adult programs increased to meet various interests, including a Jewish response to global warming.

The congregation further developed the work it was doing for members in need through the Caring Community. The Temple began sheltering homeless families for one month during the year. Members served meals at shelters, volunteered to build houses, responded to calls for disaster relief from Nechama, and conducted food drives. Tzedek efforts were further focused upon Neighborhood House maintaining our historic connection, Jeremiah Program, and Jewish Community Action. And in the 150th year, over 18 house parties led to a congregational focus on the health and education needs of children.

The vibrancy of the congregation became even more evident when Mount Zion began planning for its 150th anniversary. Members presented a wealth of ideas, even wondering about having 150 projects, one for each year. Under the dedicated guidance of co-chairs Mary Ann Barrows Wark and Steve Brand, Mount Zion carried out most of the list that many projects. Hard-working - volunteers planned programs and made celebrations go smoothly. Former rabbis, assistant rabbis, and cantorial soloists returned for weekend reunions. There were tours through historic neighborhoods and the Mount Zion Cemetery. A Sesquicentennial Soiree provided a joyful evening. Plays, an art exhibit, and a picnic rounded out the activities. At the State Capitol on February 26, 2007, a proclamation from the Governor recognized the granting of our charter 150 years ago on that date. Services on May 11, 2007, brought a memorable conclusion to the celebratory year. Mount Zion had commissioned the writing of a new Torah ably assisted by Sofer Neil Yerman and his apprentice, D. Marcos Vital (who grew up and was confirmed at Mount Zion) which was dedicated that evening. Each member of the congregation had the opportunity to write a letter in the new Torah during the preceding week. The choirs presented the first performance of a commissioned musical piece based on Psalm 150 by Cantor Stephen Richards who conducted the choirs. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, addressed the congregation.

150 Years—from a handful of members who built a small frame temple in a frontier town so that they could have a Jewish life and worship as Jews to the vigorous congregation devoted to Torah, worship, and acts of loving kindness and justice—it is a long journey but one where the members have met the challenges.

Sally Rubinstein

Historical Tidbits – Epilogue and Appendix

Over the year and a half of writing the Historical Tidbits, I have done a good deal of research into the history of Mount Zion Temple. Much of that material has been incorporated into other columns. But along the way, additional information has come to hand. Herewith, in no special order, are some of the things we have found out.

First Bat Mitzvah: Jenelle Bernstein, August 31, 1957

Who was the first girl to have a bat mitzvah and when was it? It was Jenny (Jenelle) Bernstein (now Jenny Marcus) on August 31, 1957. Jenny wrote us: "In about 1953 or 1954, the Temple began a Hebrew School on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A small number of girls enrolled. In my class there were three of us: Judy Kline, Beverly Orren, and me. I was the oldest by just weeks and months. Because there were girls attending the Hebrew School, the question of us having a Bat Mitzvah, or Bas Mitzvah as we called it then, came up. The Temple Board had to vote on it, and given that my father was a member of the Board, he presented the idea, and the motion was accepted. . . . I read from the Torah from the upper pulpit. I remember what I wore, the luncheon we had in the reception hall, how I was proud of myself that I had done it, and relieved that it was over."

Two Guns White Calf

Every history of the Temple seems to include a picture of the Joseph Ullmann fur store at Sixth and Wacouta in 1910. Isidor Rose, the store owner then, is pictured with Louis W. Hill, Sr., and a number of American Indians. We knew the names only of the white men. A journalist at the Calgary Herald saw the article about Mount Zion that ran in the Star Tribune and wrote to us. He says that the Indians are Blackfoot and that the man standing in front of Hill is Two Guns White Calf. The two men were linked through Hill's railroad, the Great Northern, and his interest in promoting tourism in Glacier National Park, the ancestral home of the Blackfoot. Two Guns White Calf was part of publicity tours for the park. Also, according to legend, he may have been one of the models for the image of the Indian on the buffalo nickel, although the artist denied that he was.

Painted Woods

One of the Temple's earliest charitable acts is well known. On a Sabbath eve in 1880s a group of penniless East European Jews got off the train in St. Paul. The congregation as well as other St. Paulites saw to the immigrants' immediate needs. Many of the new arrivals soon moved to the agricultural colony called Painted Woods. Based on these few facts, one might think that the newcomers were shipped off so they would not be a burden on the congregation. Two things we know point to a more altruistic motive. The previous year, the congregation had moved into a new Temple building, which had cost \$11,000. Yet these same families over a span of four years contributed \$35,000 to Painted Woods. In the words of Rabbi Judah Wechsler, "They are out kindred, and it is our duty. . . . Let nobody argue that we are not responsible or interested in their welfare."

With this information in mind, Mary Ann Wark made further inquiries about the colony. She discovered that an exhibit at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage on Jews in the West included material on Painted Woods. A book based on the exhibit, edited by Ava F. Kahn, contained an essay by Ellen Eisenberg on agricultural colonies. A staff member at the museum sent an excerpt from that essay. According to the author, Painted Woods was part of the "back to the soil" movement that appealed to immigrants from the Pale of Settlement in Russia. One such family was that of Joseph Nudelman, who was a leader of an immigrant group. The author notes that the group's "determination to establish an agrarian settlement was noted by the St. Paul sponsors, who found that 'nothing but land could satisfy them.'" The colony was a group endeavor, meaning that the settlers built their houses close together rather than spread out on individual claims. The colonists' neighbors failed to understand this pattern of living and lodged a complaint against them. Rabbi Wechsler visited the colony to sort out the issues and urge the colonist to comply with American homestead requirements and live on their claims.

Despite the support from the Temple and the Rabbi, the colony failed after several years. A drought that occurred at about the same time contributed to the colony's demise. Most moved on to other areas and occupations. Nudelman tried again to found colonies in California, Nevada, and Oregon. Fortunately for us, family members wrote down their story, privately published, and did an oral history, which is in the Oregon Jewish Museum. It was these materials that Eisenberg used and thus they came to our attention and filled in many details of the Painted Woods story.

Ron Simon and the New Temple

A recent oral history with attorney Ron Simon revealed that when he was a college student he sought a summer job in construction (because, as he put it, he wanted to beef up his muscles). He was assigned as a laborer with brick layers on the construction of the present Temple building on Summit Avenue. He said he worked on the semicircular brick wall at the end of the Chapel. He was thus the only Jew (and Temple member) to work on the actual construction of the building.

Kalmon Lion's shofar

Lastly, we cannot forget the serendipitous rediscovery of the shofar that belonged to Kalmon Lion, the Temple's first hazzan, shochet, and mohel. It was an inquiry from a staff member at the Minnesota Historical Society for information that brought this piece of our history back to us in time for the celebration in May 2007. We already had his mohel kit and book.

The stories do not end here. Do you have a picture, a reminiscence, a memento that tells something of Mount Zion's history? Let us know.

Eric Mendelsohn (1887 – 1953): Modernist Master Architect of Mount Zion Temple

Eric Mendelsohn was one of the outstanding modernist architects of the Twentieth Century. Mendelsohn was born in Allenstein, East Prussia (known today by its Polish name, Olsztyn) in 1887. His early architectural sketches, made while serving in the German army in World War I, reflect the emotional motifs of Expressionism then in style. The post War recession and scarcity of work prevented him from carrying out most of his schemes, with one notable

exception: the Einstein Tower (Potsdam, 1919 – 1922). This unique example of early Twentieth Century modernism resembles a space rocket. Mendelsohn used its smooth curved forms to demonstrate in physical terms Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

He subsequently designed a series of commercial projects in the 1920s and 1930s that critics sometimes disparagingly called "advertising architecture." Mendelsohn, always sensitive to his clients' needs, adapted his forms accordingly. His series of buildings for the department store magnate Schocken provided light, space, and character heretofore unseen in commercial retail structures. Broad sweeping curved facades and horizontal bands of windows characterized Mendelsohn's streamlined designs.

Forced to leave Germany in 1933, Mendelsohn immigrated to England where he built a few projects during the depths of the Depression. Beginning in 1934, Mendelsohn received commissions in Palestine and eventually moved there. He adapted his designs to the hot climate as well as the Jewish and Arab cultures surrounding him. His most noteworthy work during his days in Palestine was the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital (1938) on Mount Scopus. He achieved dramatic effects with a cantilevered chapel and projecting cupolas.

World War II brought Mendelsohn's commissions in Palestine to a close. He and his wife settled in San Francisco. At first his immigration status limited his work to university teaching jobs. In a final burst of energy, however, Mendelsohn designed and built four synagogues and community centers: B'Nai Amoona, St. Louis (1946 – 1950); Park Synagogue, Cleveland (1946 – 1953); Temple Emmanuel, Grand Rapids, (1953); and Mount Zion Temple, St. Paul, (1950 – 1954).

The Synagogues of Eric Mendelsohn

Responding to the specific needs of Jewish congregations, Mendelsohn created elemental buildings that reflected the realities of the Twentieth Century. One of the basic requirements of Jewish houses of worship was accommodating two-to-three times more worshipers during the High Holidays than the rest of the year. Mendelsohn solved this mandate brilliantly by connecting the synagogues' sanctuaries, social halls, and entrance foyers with disappearing walls and folding doors. His solution, while not a completely new concept, has since become nearly standard.

A second major necessity was the inclusion of class and meeting rooms to enable synagogues to serve their traditional function as the people's meetinghouses. Mendelsohn's community centers are just that—centers. Whether the site is small or spacious . . . the synagogue, school, social and administrative units combine into an integrated design. They relate to each other . . . and unite for a total, religious purpose. ¹

For Mount Zion, Mendelsohn's original plans called for a series of triangular arches for the sanctuary and chapel. He intended these forms to recall the tent of worship in the wilderness. The board rejected the concept. Mendelsohn used rectangular shapes instead.

The symbolism used in the forms of the sanctuaries and chapels is rich and meaningful. For more information, refer to Rabbi Gunther Plaut's *Mount Zion: 1856 – 1956*. ²

The eminent architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock sums up the importance of the structure where we worship and learn as well as the architect who designed it.

Recognized from the early 1920s as one of the four or five most important modern architects in Germany, Mendelsohn – like his contemporaries Gropius and Mies van der Rohe – contributed as much or more to world architecture as to the architecture of his homeland. His reputation rose and fell with tides of taste, and to these tides he was not unresponsive. Yet always his work had, as he intended it should, a strongly personal character, and his finest buildings will remain among the landmarks of 20th Century architecture.

Herbert Scherer

1 W. von Eckardt, *Eric Mendelsohn*, New York, 1960

2 W. Gunther Plaut, *MountZion: 1856–1956*, St. Paul, 1956.

Historical Tidbits - Mount Zion's 100th Anniversary

As the Mount Zion congregation reached its centennial, it truly had much to celebrate. The members had constructed a new Temple building designed by the world-renown architect Erich Mendelsohn. One hundred years encompassing four generations of Temple membership deserved a year's worth of celebration. A Centennial Committee, with Benno Wolff as chairman and H. James Seesel, Jr., as vice chairman, undertook to plan the events.

Over the year, there were a series of religious, cultural, and social events "open to the entire community." These included "lectures, forums, art exhibits and musical festivals." The first Centennial Sabbath occurred on October 5, 1956, with guest speaker Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn of Temple Israel in Boston. He had served on the President's Commission on Civil Rights and had given the address at the dedication of the military cemetery at Iwo Jima. His topic was Reform Judaism. Rabbi Dudley Weinberg of Milwaukee spoke at the second Centennial Sabbath on November 2.

The social event of the celebration was a dinner dance on December 1 at the Saint Paul Hotel. The evening began with Chanukah blessings before proceeding to a meal that included shrimp cocktail and lobster with the steak.

One of the most important decisions the Centennial Committee made was to proceed with a history of the Temple. Rabbi Gunther Plaut undertook the task. The resulting book, *Mount Zion, 1856–1956: The First Hundred Years*, is a well-written, well-researched gem. The print run was 3,000 copies, which were distributed to Mount Zion members, religious congregations of other denominations, libraries, and historical societies.

Cultural events included a Festival of Jewish Music on January 13, 1957, featuring the music of Max Janowski and his compositions, such as "Avinu Malkeinu," which the congregation had recently begun to use. The next event in the cultural series, on February 24, was a lecture on the Dead Sea Scrolls. A month later, on March 24, the presidents of the University of Minnesota, Hamline, Macalester, and Augsburg took part in a symposium on education. The final speaker, on May 16, was Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review*. Throughout the year, there were exhibits of art in the Firestone Gallery.

On the 100th anniversary of the granting of the congregation's charter, the Minnesota Legislature passed a resolution congratulating Mount Zion. Senator Elmer L. Andersen stated that Mount Zion "helped in building the state's moral and spiritual foundation and has thereby contributed greatly to strengthening our state." Representative Peter Popovich said that Mount Zion "has contributed greatly to St. Paul and also to the Jewish life in Minnesota." The *St. Paul Dispatch* on February 19 reported on the resolution.

In the midst of the retrospective, Mount Zion appointed a Centennial Committee of Ten to tackle questions about the future. The purpose was fourfold: to look at where Mount Zion had come from, to examine the meaning of growth to date, to discuss the meaning of Reform Judaism in the world of the 1950s, to recommend where the congregation should go in the next 100 years.

The year wound up with special Shabbats and the annual meeting. The Charter Sabbath on March 1 commemorated the granting of the charter by the territorial legislature. Israel Bettan, president of the Central Congregation of American Rabbis, presented a sermon on the "Task of Reform Judaism Today." The following month at the Founder's Day Sabbath on April 12, Mount Zion held a joint service with Temple Israel "honoring the memory of Isaac Mayer Wise." The 100th annual meeting on April 23 (a Tuesday) was attended by about 180 persons, well above the quorum of 75. Besides presenting the usual reports, the board noted that Mount Zion had 720 adult members and 71 junior members, that there were 584 students in the religious school attending 27 classes, and that the average attendance at daily services was 19.

The year concluded with a Centennial Service of Confirmation on Wednesday, June 5, at 10:30 a.m.