History of Home of Peace Cemetery Association

The earliest death date in the cemetery is that of Flora Kaufman, who died in Tacoma on June 12, 1886. A notation in an early cash ledger reads "Reburied from Olympia." Apparently she was moved to Tacoma after the cemetery was formed, perhaps after her husband's death in 1900. Her brother, Robert Fischer, and several other former residents of Steilacoom were not moved. According to the Tumwater Historic Preservation office, Olympia's Jewish cemetery was formed in 1874 when the First Hebrew Benevolent Society of Puget Sound purchased three acres of land in the Masonic cemetery for $50, although the first burial there was in 1872.

Tacoma's Jewish community was kept informed by the "Daily Ledger" of charitable organizations elsewhere. On January 28, 1887, the Ledger mentioned that the Hebrew Benevolent association of San Francisco had disbursed $4,000 during the prior year.

Tacoma's "Daily Ledger" on June 18, 1887, mentioned that "Myer Kaufman of Old Tacoma went to Olympia a few days ago where he had erected a fine monument, costing about $300, to the memory of his deceased wife. Mr. Kaufman was accompanied there by several of his friends from Seattle and Tacoma." Apparently Tacoma's very earliest Jewish pioneers observed the custom of waiting a year to "unveil" a tombstone.

As in many communities, the cemetery was the first official organization of Tacoma's Jewish population. Tacoma's Home of Peace Cemetery had its beginnings in the fall of 1888.

Tacoma Daily Ledger, September 18, 1888,

"BENEVOLENT HEBREWS. Organization of a Tacoma Society...
"At the celebration of the Jewish day of atonement last Saturday, a temporary organization of the Hebrew Benevolent association took place, when the following officers were elected: Colonel M. Kaufman, president; Messrs. Morris Gross and H. Cohn, vice-presidents; Louis Wallerstein, secretary; and A. Weinberg, treasurer. The executive committee consists of William Wolff, Abraham Gross, Isaac Pincus, H. Berliner and S. Gutfeld. There will be another meeting next Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock, in Masonic hall, for permanent organization, at which, it is hoped, every Hebrew in Tacoma will be present. The object of this organization is to make arrangements for erecting a synagogue in Tacoma and for purchasing grounds for a local cemetery. Heretofore it has been necessary to take the dead to Olympia or Victoria, the nearest places in which were Jewish cemeteries."

Friday, October 5, 1888, Tacoma's Daily Ledger,

"Hebrew Benevolent Society. The following officers of the Hebrew Benevolent society have been elected: M. Kaufman, president; Charles Reichenbach, vice-president; L. Wallerstein, secretary, and H. Berliner, treasurer. Isaac Pincus, Charles Langert, A. Zelinsky, M. Kaufman and W. Harris were chosen as a board of trustees, to serve for the first six months."

Probably the first burial there was Jennie Mamlok, who died on September 6, 1889 at the age of twenty-three. Born in San Francisco, her parents were William and Henrietta Mamlok. Her sisters would later become teachers in the religious school.

An article in the "Daily Ledger" on October 15, 1889, announced the first annual meeting of the "Hebrew Benevolent association of Tacoma." (This was immediately after Yom Kippur.) The meeting was held in the home of Myer Kaufman at 1606 Tacoma Avenue. The article states, "the trustees were empowered to have the society incorporated. They have purchased five acres of land southwest of town, which will be fenced, platted, etc. The members of the society expect to build a synagogue in the near future." The following officers were elected:

President, M. Kaufman
Vice-President, W. Wolff
Corresponding Secretary, L. Wallerstein
Treasurer, M. Broh
Trustees - Isaac Pincus, M. Kaufman, Charles Langert, I. Harris and David Levine.

The "First Hebrew Benevolent Society" of Tacoma, Washington, was formally incorporated on the 23rd day of April, 1891. The next day, April 24th, the new corporation completed the transactions to purchase 8.01 acres of land from Charles Wright, as president of the Tacoma Land Company, "in consideration of the sum of one dollar, lawful money." The deed was filed and recorded on May 22nd.

The rules and regulations for the government of the cemetery, "Givos Olom," were adopted on September 5, 1891. They were signed by "Wm. Wolff, D. Germanus, S. Posner, (Com. on Constitution and By-Laws) and D. Magnus, Sec'y." A special meeting on October 25, 1891, saw the adoption of the constitution. The society had 15 original charter members, and a total of 40 by the fall of their first year. The object of the society was to first minister relief to the distressed, and second to bury the dead - a priority which continues to this day.

Applicants who were accepted for admission were required to pay the sum of twenty-five dollars, plus 50 cents per month as dues. Dues were collected in January and July of each year. Any member who accepted an appointment on a committee and neglected the same was fined one dollar. Any member who refused to come to order when requested by the President was fined "$1 for the first offence, and $2 for the second or any following offence."

Article VIII established the allotment of burial plots in the following manner:

"Sec. 2. The ground shall be staked off into lots and numbered as many numbers as are down upon the roll in good standing, at the time of apportionment, shall be allowed to draw one lot each, the lots to be drawn from to commence with number one and end with the number of members in good standing. The manner of drawing to be determined by the committee on burial ground; provided always that the charter or original members of the society have the first choice of lots, and before the drawing for lots by the rest of the members is entered upon."

Charter Members

William Wolff   David Levin

Isaac Pincus   Meyer Kaufman

Henry Berliner

Chas. Langert

Col. M. Kaufman

Samuel Langert

Louis Wallerstein, (died Feb. 15, 1891)

Samuel Wolff

E.H. Gross

Chas. Reichenbach

Morris Gross

Albert Weinberg

D.P. Lewis

Additional Members

M. Cohn

A.S. Ash

M. Ball

A. Simon

M. Levin

Herman Zelinsky

Henry Harris

S.J. Holland

Ed. Hain

M. Moses

J.B. Mamlok

Samuel Posner

Herman Bryer

S. Jacobi

Isaac Harris

D. Germanus

D. Magnus

Sol. Zelinsky

J. Bloom

S. Rodgers

Samuel Loeb

S. Robinson

Amil Zelinsky

S. Gutfeld

A. Friedman

By 1892, many of these same men were involved with the organization of the Hebrew congregation itself. In another "Daily Ledger" article, dated March 10, 1892, the headline read, "Hebrews Organizing - A Very Prosperous Congregation Is Formed by Many of the Faith. It's Officers Are Already Elected and a Constitution and By-Laws Are Adopted." A preliminary meeting had been held on February 15, 1892, at the Odd Fellows hall. The first meeting was

organized by a committee including Sol. Jacoby, Elias Gross, William Wolf, and Archie S. Ash.
Over forty people were at this meeting. They elected a second committee consisting of William
Wolf, Abe Gross, A. Ash, M. Moses, S. Jacoby, S. Posner, Mr. Loeb and S. Martin.

By March 8th this committee had prepared a constitution and by-laws. Their work was adopted
and the following officers elected: S. Jacoby, president; D. Germanus, vice-president; D. Magnus,
secretery; A. Ash, treasurer; trustees M. Moses, M. Cohn, and William Wolf. This meeting resulted
in the appointment of a third committee "to secure a suitable location for the erection of a house of
worship." They were apparently quite successful, as an article in the "Daily Ledger" dated Monday,
September 11, 1893, announced "Dedicated to Jehovah - New Jewish Temple Formally Opened
with Beautiful Ceremony." That was Temple Beth Israel, on the corner of 10th and "I".

1908 records show that E. Heinemann was treasurer of the cemetery association, and his
bookkeeping was verified by Sam Andrews. Sam used a rubber stamp to add his initials, S. A. A.
Yearly dues were eighteen dollars. Many paid $1.50 per month. The caretaker of the property was
W. H. Dohlman, who received wages of $40 per month, and five dollars per grave opening. He
bought supplies at Poole's Seed Store.

The association continued its' philosophy of providing aid. In 1909 they contributed to a
defense fund for a Jewish boy who was being tried in Montesano. A portion of the money was
returned when the boy was sent to reform school. That same year a five dollar contribution was
made to the United Hebrew League of Cuba. Regular payments were made to the treasurer "for
charity." At the end of the year 1909, the financial records were verified by Meyer Jacob.

On February 3, 1910, a payment of $62.40 was paid to Charles Pfeifer, surveyor. In February of
1912 the charter was opened for a month, during which the initiation fee was reduced to $15. This
brought in over a dozen new members, including: Frank Sussman, Dave Klegman, P. B. Friedman,
Sam Friedman, Sol. Beuttendorff, Morris Hochstetter, George Simon, Ike Moses, Frank Rosenberg,
Charles Langert, A. Weinstein, S. B. Asia, B. B. Futtervick, and A. Lycus. By the end of the year 6
had been dropped for non-payment. In 1913 dues were reduced to twelve dollars.

The membership roster from the 1908-1914 cash account book follows.

1. S. Andrews   1130 Pac. Ave.
2. Morris Bloom   618 So. E St.
3. Julius Baskinski
4. Jos. Bachrach   934 Pacific
5. H. Berliner   1518 5th Ave., Seattle
6. Morris Cheim   702 6th Ave.
7. Jos. Cheim   515 N. J St.
8. Julius Friedman   1544 So. E St.
9. Theo Feist   934 Pacific
10. Dave Gross   Tac. Hotel
11. D. M. Hoffman
12. B. Hochstetter   Everett
13. S. Loeb   Independant Brew. Co., Seattle
14. Meyer Jacob   308 No. I
15. Sol. Ottenheimer   319 1/2 E. 26th

16. I. Pincus	710 N. 3rd
17. Sam Sondheim	509 S. G
18. Dave Shafer	920 S. 8th
19. S. N. Wittenberg	2552 S. E
20. H. Winkleman	1931 S. E
21. Amil Zelinsky	2311 N. 28th
22. H. Zelinsky	1818 So. K
23. Sol. Zelinsky	2421 No. 28th
24. B. Heyman	105 So. 11th
25. James Pincus	702 No. 2nd
26. M. Cohen	1802 So. G
27. A. J. Wolff	407 No. J
28. H. A. Kauffman	902 No. I (crossed out) Chehalis
29. S. B. Asia	3214 No. 29th
30. Mrs. David Levin	306 No. J
31. F. Sussman	2124 So. E
32. D. Klegman	1136 Commerce
33. P. B. Friedman	813 Pacific
34. Sam Friedman	1318 Pacific
35. George Simon	1123 Pacific
36. Ike Moses	c/o 813 Pacific
37. Frank Rosenberg	1022 So. Tac. Ave.
38. Chas. Langert	424 No. M
39. A. Weinstein	924-6 C St.
40. A. Rose	1610 So. G
41. N. Anches	1345 Commerce
42. E. Waldocks	1139 Commerce.

Spelling of names throughout the years has been inconsistent, at best. On one page of the plot books, a surname was spelled five different ways, as if the writer were experimenting - Yudelson, Judelsohn, Hudesohn, Yuddelson, and Huddesohn.

1914 ledgers list Phil. B. Friedman as secretary, R. Friedman as assistant secretary. 1915 stationery shows that the officers were Meyer Jacob president, Jakob Starin vice-president, S.A. Andrews treasurer and Herman Zelinsky secretary.

In 1920 the charter was again opened for new members, including M. Meier, E. H. Ruden, Harry Richlen, I. Rosenbaum, Nathan Bloom, Morris J. Friedman, Art C. Symon, T. Spiegel, H. M. Alexander, Herman Jacob, E. Lewis, Morris Lyon, and B. Thompson. Later the depression years forced many of these to drop their memberships. The spring of 1920 brought a new caretaker - H.M. Alexander, who received $55 per month.

During 1921 the cemetery was expanded from its original 32 blocks to forty, by adding a row of eight blocks across the back. In June of 1921 donations were received for improvement of the water system. Twenty-three members contributed approximately ten dollars each, for a total of $290. A payment of $92.15 was made on June 4, 1921, for "laying out addition."

$378.54 worth of pipe and other materials were purchased from the Tacoma Junk Company. The cemetery's payments were far from prompt.

In 1922, donations were again called for. This time 25 members combined to contribute $275. On April 11th of 1922, the society's name was officially changed to the "Home of Peace Cemetery Association." However, the name "Home of Peace Cemetery" appears on the title page of the first cash ledgers prepared by David Magnus in 1892 and on the original iron gates.

By September, the name change was causing difficulty. President at the time was Meyer Jacob, owner of the Meyer Jacob Company. Mr. Jacob had understood that because the cemetery association was a non-profit organization, no taxes needed to be paid or filed. The fledgling IRS had other ideas. Due to the cemetery's name change, correspondence went astray and by the time Mr. Jacob became aware of the problem serious penalties were threatened. Eventually the matter was resolved.

By 1925, Home of Peace membership dues were eighteen dollars per year. During the thirties Meyer Jacob moved on to California and S. Nathan Witenberg began his long term as president, with Sam Friedman as treasurer. Perhaps partially due to the division of the membership, perhaps due to the nation's economy, the association fell upon difficult financial times during 1934. A 90-day note was borrowed from the Bank of Tacoma on Feb. 20th for $180. "Onion skin" copies of correspondence show repeated pleas to members for payment of past-due accounts. By the fall of 1934 the treasury was still in dire straits. One letter, dated Nov. 6, stated that "current expenses have been greatly increased due to damage caused by the recent storm, our treasury being nearly depleted, we insist that these notes be given your immediate attention."

By 1935 the cost of "perpetual care" was negotiated at $300. January 12, 1938, saw the amendment of the constitution to allow the president and treasurer to be authorized to borrow or receive funds up to $1000. The Puget Sound Power and Light Company charged the association an average of two dollars per month that year for utilities.

In May of 1940, the president was Hy Mandles, treasurer Samuel Friedman, and the trustees were Harris Warnick, Mrs. Lucie Bachrach, and Bene Benjamin. The initiation fee was $50. Negotiations were completed with several families to bring their past-due accounts up-to-date by making a lump sum payment.

In June of 1940, an entry was made in the cash account books which affected the cemetery association greatly over the next twenty years. It read "This closes Mr. Mandles account. Hereafter reports by Mr. M. Kleiner."

Morris Kleiner began organizing the records. He typed index cards for each grave and typed expense accounts for each year. He mounted a large map of the cemetery on a wooden "book" which would be used for the next 65 years.

During 1963 improvements were made to the entrance of the cemetery, including improving the entrance circle and installing a new fence along Steilacoom Boulevard. The officers in 1964 were President William J. Sherman, Treasurer Favius Witenberg, Financial Secretary Kenneth Farber, and Recording Secretary Mrs. A. Friedman.

In 1977 the unimproved section behind the existing cemetery was plotted and filed with the Pierce County Auditor. The 1978 officers were William Sherman, Simon Rose, Kenneth Farber, Herman Kleiner, and Fav Witenberg. By 1988 Fanchon Rosen and Stan Sigel were included. Also that year, the sprinkler system was extended to include the entire cemetery. Nearly $18,000 worth of improvements were completed, funded mostly by pledges from the community. Membership dues were increased from $50 to $60 per year in 1994, which included a husband and wife and their dependant children. In 1998 the driveway through the cemetery was paved.

During the summer of 2000 the members of Tacoma's community again stepped forward with donations for improvements. Tacoma Monumental donated 73 pieces of granite. Donated funds paid for inscribing and placing them. On the eve of Yom Kippur, those 73 headstones were dedicated on graves which had formerly been unmarked. Herman Kleiner, son of Morris Kleiner, read the following:

"Our God did not need these beautiful new stones to be placed here in order to know who occupied the 73 unmarked grave sites. No. Because we are a loving community, this community needed to make a reality, the dream of these monuments for each unmarked grave. You answered the call for funds and this day of dedication has arrived. I think of this beautiful place as a wonderful picture album. Each engraved name conjures up the image of the person I knew, and for a moment I am lost in the warm memory of a voice or an event. Always, there were 73 pictures missing from our album. From today on, thanks to all of you, our album is up to date.

What we do here this morning is truly momentous. From this day forward, be it a thousand years, all those who visit this magnificent, peaceful place will now know that these 73 men, women, and children were among us. Whether for an hour, a day, or 3 score years and ten, you, beloved, were a member of this Jewish community; we will visit you and you will share the love that we have for all who reside here... our beloved, our neighbor, or the stranger. Now, no one is alone. We have completed the circle for ourselves."

Unlike other cemeteries which sell plots, Home of Peace still functions today as it began in 1888 – as an association of members. It is separate from Tacoma's Temple Beth El and all who promote the Jewish faith may belong. The perpetual upkeep of the cemetery is funded through membership dues, investments, burial fees of non-members, and donations from the community. Currently there are over 135 members.