



Magazine

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They have been a people for more than 5,000 years. They have been a part of Marion and Grant County for more than 130 years. In many ways, the story of the Jews has been the story of Marion — hard early times, final triumphs. C-T Staff Writer Jerry Miller writes about Marion's Jewish community — its history, its religion, its hopes, its future. He also profiles three of the most prominent Jews in today's Marion. These are stories of a people and their place in history — stories of the Jews, Marion's chosen few.



Sam Fleck in the Sinai Temple with one of the Torahs.

C-T Colorphoto by Ed Breen

Marion's chosen few

The Jew.

When he first came to Marion and Grant County over 130 years ago, he brought with him only a few personal belongings, his religious traditions and the fervent hope for success in his new home in the semi-wilderness between Indianapolis and Fort Wayne. And success he usually found.

In fact, the success of the Jews in Marion and Grant County, particularly in retail business, has been so great that a stranger stopping off in downtown Marion at almost any time during the last 80 years would have found it hard to believe that the size of Marion's Jewish community never exceeded 100 families. The prominence and influence of Jews in business, industry, the arts and civic affairs have almost always seemed to be several times greater than the actual size of the Jewish community within Marion.

The first Jew known to settle in Grant County was Jacob Newburger, who came to New Cumberland — now Matthews — in 1840. There are two versions of why the 31-year-old pack peddler chose the small, rural community for his home.

One claimed that Newburger was forced to spend a Sunday in New Cumberland for some unknown reason and came to like the town. The other reported that the wandering merchant's horse became ill and he was simply stranded there.

Either way, Newburger and his wife, Gudel, set up their home and business in New Cumberland. Newburger built a storeroom there, later turning it into a general store. He later operated a public house, or tavern, there.

By the time of his death in 1883, Newburger had accumulated an estate of more than 1,200 acres in the area. He was buried in the Rodef Sholem Cemetery in Wabash, where most Grant County Jews were buried before they purchased their own section in Marion's IOOF Cemetery in 1948.

Newburger's counterpart in Marion was Jacob Baer, a pack peddler who arrived in the early 1840s. He established a store on the west side of the town square, which he operated until his death in 1863.

When Baer died, his brother-in-law, Morris Blumenthal, came to Marion from Illinois to take over the store. Born in Germany, Blumenthal had worked as a clerk in a clothing store in Peru for several years and



had spent two years working as a barkeeper on a Mississippi River steamboat.

He was soon joined by David and Lewis Marks, who helped him expand the operations of the store that was destined to become Blumenthal's, probably the most successful department store in Marion's history. It was with the arrival of the Marks families that Marion's original Jewish community began to form.

Lewis Marks became rather successful in his own right. In addition to his partnership in Blumenthal's, he became vice president of Crystal Rice Milling Co. and a director of Estep Window Glass Works.

But it was the store's namesake, Blumenthal, who became something of a legend, even in his own time.

"A more accommodating merchant never lived in Marion than Blumenthal," one Marion resident of the period was quoted as saying.

Though he was successful and prosperous, Blumenthal lived most of his years in Marion in rented houses, adhering to an Old Testament prophecy that the Jews of the world would someday assemble again in Jerusalem. He died in 1903, with the operation of the blossoming store going over to his son, David.

It was during the last quarter of the 19th century

that many of the Jewish families who would figure in Marion's history arrived and put down roots. These included the Prins, Lyons, Sohn, Bloch, Nussbaum, Levy and Maas families, all of whom came in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

Most of the Jews who settled in Marion during that period owned businesses, mainly in the clothing trades, or worked at Blumenthal's. By the turn of the century, with the gas boom in full explosion in Grant County, Jewish interests were visible throughout the community.

Perhaps the most energetic among the Jewish businessmen of the period was Leo Nussbaum, who was born in Germany and moved to Marion from LaPorte in the 1880s. He established the Trade Palace, a dry goods store, in the Willson Block building at the southwest corner of Fourth and Washington streets.

Nussbaum sold the store in 1896 to establish the National Metallic Bedstead Co., which he operated for two years and then sold to establish the Indiana Brass and Iron Bed Co. He operated that company for two years before selling it, then organized the Pacific Oil Co. in 1902. The oil company operated 15 oil wells for Citizens Gas Co.

In 1902, Nussbaum also acquired Canton Glass Co. The glass plant, located on the south side of Spencer Avenue, a block west of Henderson Avenue, manufactured tableware, confectioner's ware and novelties.

Though its activities gradually dwindled, the Canton facility remained on the scene until 1957, when its last warehouse was shut down. Nussbaum's son, Berthold, served as president of the glass company after his father died in the early 1920s.

Nussbaum's two step-nephews, Percy and Hamilton Nussbaum, arrived in Marion shortly before the turn of the century and organized the Marion Conservatory of Music. The music school was first located in the Warner Block, 208½ S. Washington St., and later was moved to a larger building at the corner of Seventh and Washington streets.

Though born into Jewish families, the Nussbaum brothers were practicing Episcopalians when they arrived in Marion. Percy's two daughters, Mrs. Elizabeth Williamson, the widow of a Sweetser hardware store owner, and Miss Mary Nussbaum, a retired schoolteacher, both still live in Marion. His son, Lowell, was

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a columnist for the Indianapolis Star before his recent retirement.

Also gaining prominence during the gas boom days were the Missouri-born Bloch brothers, Ed and Ben. These brothers lived in Marion, but most of their business enterprises were in Gas City.

The Blochs established the Golden Eagle men's clothing store on E. Main Street in Gas City in 1896. They then started the Gas City Mercantile Co. directly across the street from the Golden Eagle in 1909. They also operated a branch of the Golden Eagle in Upland.

Ed Bloch also was president of the Gas City State Bank and the Citizens Bank of Jonesboro. The older of the Bloch brothers was known to visit his business enterprises regularly in a large, chauffeur-driven limousine.

Ed Bloch was perhaps the most powerful and influential businessman of his day. Yet his gravesite in the Rodef Sholem Cemetery is almost hidden, set off to the east side of the Jewish cemetery, its small headstone facing away from the main part of the cemetery.

The sight of Bloch's grave tells the story of his fall from power and grace. Hard-hit by the Great Depression, the prominent banker ended his own life in September, 1930, by taking poison in a Muncie hotel room.

Ed Bloch was 51 years old. Because suicide is one of the cardinal sins of the Jewish religion, he was not permitted to be buried in the main part of the Jewish cemetery in Wabash, where his brother, who died of natural causes, was buried three years later.

The holdings of the Blochs and Leo Nussbaum were evidence of the flourishing of Jewish-owned businesses in Marion and Grant County during the first three decades of the 20th century. The height of that rise was reached in the early 1920s, when a trip around the courthouse square would have convinced any newcomer that the Jewish community was closer to a majority of the population than the small but successful minority it really was.

In 1923, just 20 years after Morris Blumenthal's death, Jewish-owned retail businesses were the backbone of the business activity around the square, which was the very hub of activity for the entire city.

"The square was important because it was like the Loop in Chicago," Henry Fleck, present operator of The Paris women's apparel store, recalls. "Your streetcars all came in, the farmers all brought their wagons around the square to sell produce, so that was the center of Marion."

The Jewish businesses were anchored on the west side of the square by Blumenthal's, which was at the peak of its glory then. The department store occupied three floors and was the shopping center of its day.

"It was a very fine store, with the best merchandise you could buy," Dr. Max Ganz recalls. Dr. Ganz, a Marion physician for the last 37 years, worked as a stock boy at Blumenthal's as a teenager.

The department store, which had a number of Jewish employes, flourished until December, 1926, when it was hit by a costly fire. Even though the store was rebuilt and expanded, it never recovered from the financial setback and went out of business in the mid-1930s. Its location is now occupied by the J.C. Penney Co.

South of the department store, at the northwest corner of Fourth and Washington streets, was the Farmer's Trust and Savings Co., of which Leo Nussbaum was vice president.

Moving to the south side of the square in 1923, one would find Meyer and Alexander, jewelers, at 114 E. Fourth St. The jewelry store was operated by Morris Meyer and Morris Alexander, who previously had been in business above The Paris shop.

Two doors to the east was Phil Lyons Clothing Co., operated by its namesake. And above 106 E. Fourth St. was the shop of Morris Witcoff, a tailor. One of Witcoff's children, Harold, would grow up to be vice president in charge of research for the General Mills Co.

Over on the east side of the square, in the middle of the block, was The Union Store, operated by J.M. Raskin. Next door, at 309 S. Adams St., was the Nathan Shiff men's clothing store. Then, at 303 S. Adams St., was Albert Rosenbaum's A. Rosenbaum and Co. shoe store.

At the corner was Richard Clothing Co., run by E.P. Simons. The location had previously been the home of two of Saul Hutner's enterprises, the Just-Rite and the Kin-Ko stores. Today, it is Resneck's women's clothing store.

Across Third Street, at the northeast corner, was The Paris, which had been started in 1902 by Hutner. When Hutner decided to devote his efforts to the Just-

Rodef Sholem


It's name is Rodef Sholem. It means "rest in peace." It is the final resting place for many of Grant County's early Jewish settlers, including Jacob Newburger, the first Jew to settle in Grant County.

Rodef Sholem is on the west edge of Wabash, a town that once had a thriving Jewish community. The Marion-area Jews were buried there because there was no Jewish cemetery in their home county. That, however, is no longer the case. There is a Jewish section in the Marion IOOF Cemetery.



C-T Photos by Ed Breen

The headstone of Jacob Newburger, the first Jewish settler in Grant County.



The entrance to Rodef Sholem cemetery near Wabash.



The Star of David adorns one of the markers.

Rite store 1914, the women's store was left in the hands of his son-in-law, Sam Fleck.

Heading west on Third Street to the northwest corner of Third and Adams, there was the Challenge Tire Co., operated by Mark and Myer Savesky and Joseph Kuppin. Halfway down the block, at 115 E. Third St., was the Max Bernstein clothing store, then run by the namesake's son-in-law, E.P. Simons.

Finally, at the northeast corner of Third and Washington streets was the Leon and Strauss and Co., managed by Sieg Leon.

Also within a short distance of the square were several other Jewish-owned businesses. The Queen City women's clothing store, operated by George Zimmerman, was at 116-118 W. Third St., its location from 1903 to the present. Next door, at 114 W. Third St., was Sam Levy's shoe store.

At 209 W. Third St. was The Boys Shop, run by Eli Dinkelspiel. Another clothing store, Newman's store, was operated by William Glogos and Samuel Siegel at 417 S. Adams St. Glogos also ran the Twin City Shoe Store in Gas City during the same era.

Benjamin Zimmerman operated the Zimmerman

Brothers clothing store at 514-516 S. Washington St. in 1923.

Elsewhere in the city, other Jewish businessmen were operating successful businesses. The Goldreich family — Henry and his sons, Myer and Aaron — operated Goldreich Brothers junk and fur business, the Goldreich Fertilizer Co. and the Goldreich Tire Co. at 12th and McClure streets. The tire company, specializing in Fisk tires, was later moved to the 500 block of S. Adams Street.

Wolf Isackson, who had started in business as a street peddler around the turn of the century, had his grocery and dry goods store at 1022 S. Washington St.

In the 54 years that have passed since 1923, Jewish businesses have come and gone, more of them coming than going. Today, only seven remain on the courthouse square.

The only one remaining where it was in 1923 is The Paris, now operated by Sam Fleck's son, Henry, a former U. S. Department of Interior lawyer who returned after World War II to work in the family business.

Richard Clothing is still on the square, but at the

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C-T Photo by Greg Fisher

Jacob Weinberg

'I'm never going to retire'

If you go by the records, Jake Weinberg is retired.

But, if you look through the window of the Jacob Weinberg News Agency on E. Fourth Street in Marion around six o'clock in the morning, you'll probably see Weinberg right there behind his desk, reading the morning newspaper, checking out shipping orders or getting ready to put together a magazine display rack. He may be 72, but Marion's only newspaper, magazine and book distributor is far from retired.

"If I quit, I feel like I'd die," he says, swiveling in the office chair that sits in front of a window lined with magazines and books. "I just can't sit around and do nothing.

"I'm never going to retire. I figure if I retire, they might as well bury me."

Weinberg's retirement is only on paper. The Marion news agency that he bought in 1928 after the death of Sherman Musser is now in the names of his two sons, Lawrence and Theodore, and Harry Ray Papier.

But it is still the balding figure who began his publications career by stuffing newspapers in Fort Wayne at the age of seven who occupies the main office at the agency.

"Technically, I work for my sons, because they own the agency now," he says, with an amused smile. "At my age, I had to start getting out of things. But I still do as much work today as I did 30, 40 years ago."

Weinberg has been a Marion fixture since he took

over the news agency almost 50 years ago. His agency distributes the 25,000 newspapers, magazines and books that go onto magazine racks in Marion, Gas City, Jonesboro and Wabash each week.

He has also been one of the founders of the Marion Boys' Club and an active member of the YWCA, the Grant County Historical Society and the Senior Citizens Club. His brother, Samuel, was a physician in Marion until his death in 1975.

Except for the technical change in the agency ownership, Weinberg's routine hasn't changed very much over the years. He still keeps an eye on the incoming and outgoing publications, delivers some of them himself and manages to walk from the agency to the downtown area four or five times a day.

His days still start out the same way, too. At 6 a.m., you can usually find Weinberg beginning his daily ritual of reading six daily newspapers. He also reads four news magazines every week and two financial magazines every two weeks.

The stack of books on a file cabinet in his office that represents his personal reading library are all geared toward current events, politics and finance.

"I'd rather read a newspaper than anything," he says, smiling again. "I feel like there's something new in there every day, and I like to read the columns and editorials.

"I don't read fiction," he adds. "None at all. I just can't get interested in it."



C-T Photo by Ed Breen

Faye Newbauer

'This is our home'

The fact that Faye Newbauer wasn't born there hasn't stopped her from getting involved in Marion.

"This is our home," says the wife of Marion dentist Dr. Bernard Newbauer. "We're raising our family here.

"My husband has been involved, too, of course. We both felt this is our home and, if we can do anything to help Marion, we're going to try."

Mrs. Newbauer, 41, is a native of Nashville, Tenn., who came to Marion with her husband 13 years ago. An elementary school teacher in Indianapolis for five years before the move to Marion, she plunged into the political scene and eventually became president of the Marion Utility Service Board during some of its more controversial and significant years.

She also has been active in Girl Scout and YWCA affairs since moving to Marion.

The Marion City Council named her to the utilities board in 1973.

"I think they were looking for a woman and for a Democrat," she relates. "I guess I filled the bill on both counts."

Mrs. Newbauer then became president of the board in 1975 and headed it during debate over a water rate increase and plans for improvement and expansion of the city's sewer system.

During her presidency, the board also laid the groundwork for unifying supervision of the municipal utilities under a single manager.

"I would hope that I helped get the utilities on a more businesslike basis, and I think we did," she says.

Her political activities also include two terms as Democratic precinct committeeman for Center 12 and an unsuccessful run for Center Township trustee.

Her term on the utilities board ended July 1, but Mrs. Newbauer was already involved in the Marion scene on another front. On June 1, she opened her own stationery and gift shop on the east side of the courthouse square.

The opening of the Personally Yours shop closed out her political career, at least for awhile.

"This will pretty much take up my time, I think," she says. "I just wanted to go on to other things."



C-T Photo by Ed Breen

Frank Maidenberg

'I like to see things improved'

Frank Maidenberg denies that he is the most powerful and influential man in Marion.

"No," he says, with an emphatic laugh, "I don't look at myself as powerful and influential in any sense of the words. That's a lot of hogwash."

Maidenberg does own several pieces of business and industrial property in Marion; he runs the warehousing complex known as Warehouse City, and his son does sit in the mayor's chair. There's no denying that. But he does deny that his various business dealings since he broke away from the family business 17 years ago have been as profitable as some people think.

"I think many people would be frightened at the amount that I owe," he says, laughing again. "I've been something of an entrepreneur, which means I take chances. I get a kick out of taking something that has been sadly neglected and trying to make something out of it."

Maidenberg points to projects like the ones that transformed the old Kentucky Wildcat tavern, 300 W. Third St., and the abandoned Zirkle apartments, Second and Washington streets, into prime downtown business sites. He also cites the Warehouse City complex, which he says now produces more tax revenue for the city each year than the original purchase price of what was then a defunct catsup factory.

"I like to see things improved; it bothers me to see things neglected," he says.

Maidenberg has been developing properties in Marion since he left the running of National China and

Equipment Corp. to his brothers, Milton and Meyer, in 1960. From a small but well-furnished office on the second floor of the Iroquois Building, he and his Iroquois Corp. have bought, sold and-or managed dozens of properties, most of them in or around the downtown business area.

He has also been one of the original crusaders for creation of the Marion Housing Authority, of which he is now president. The authority has developed plans and obtained federal grants for housing projects for low-income families and senior citizens.

Maidenberg also helped organize the Grant County Mental Health Association and is president of the Marion Federation of Jewish Charities.

Rather than powerful and influential, the youngest of the four sons of the late David Maidenberg prefers to think of himself simply as optimistic.

"I have been, and always will be, an optimist," he says. "I think we have a viable, healthy, growing community here with a bright future. Name something that a community needs to grow that Marion doesn't have, except enough optimism."

Though he is now 61 and could perhaps start spending more time in his garden than in his office, Maidenberg intends to continue exerting his optimism in the future development of Marion.

"As long as I'm able, I'm going to be part and parcel to it," he says, smiling from behind his wide desk, "not because I want to make a buck, but because it's a challenge to me and I enjoy it."

The temple

On October 29, 1924, the leaders of Marion's Jewish community met in the Citizens Trust and Savings Co. building to consider the official formation of a temple.

Both segments of the Jewish community were there — the Orthodox Jews, who believed in strict adherence to the traditional rituals and observances given in the Talmud, and the Reform Jews, who wanted to modernize some aspects of the religious observances. Also attending the meeting was Rabbi Samuel Markowitz, a Reform rabbi from Fort Wayne who had helped form the B'nai B'rith lodge in Marion earlier in 1924, and Dr. Aaronson of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

By the end of the meeting, the decision had been reached. A temple would be formed in Marion.

The factional battle had been won by the Reform element, led by Ed Bloch, E. P. Simons and Joseph Kupin. The temple would be Reform.

The next day, Simons wrote a letter to Rabbi Louis Egleson of the Cincinnati seminary, advising him of the action. The local group met again November 12, 1924, and agreed to call the new congregation Sinai Temple.

A constitution was adopted and the temple board was told to select a meeting site for the new congregation.

Before the end of 1924, a Temple Sisterhood had been formed and guest rabbis were scheduled to conduct holiday services. The Marion group also began discussions with Hebrew Union College — one of the headquarters of Reform Judaism in the U. S. — to obtain the services of a part-time student rabbi to conduct regular services at Sinai Temple.

In 1925, the temple board secured a house at the southwest corner of Ninth and Adams streets to serve as headquarters for the new temple. In the fall of that year, the Cincinnati seminary sent Samuel Wolk, a senior rabbinical student, to serve as rabbi to the Marion congregation.

While the Reform temple was established, many of the Orthodox Jews continued to hold to their strict views of religious observance. That element, led by such men as Gilbert Roskin, David Maidenberg and Lawrence Klain, continued to hold its traditional religious services in a room on the second floor of the business building on the northwest corner of Third and Washington streets.

The two congregations continued to co-exist for many years, although several of the Orthodox Jews began to attend both services.

The Sinai Temple grew through the years and, in 1936, it got a new home. A temple building was constructed at the northeast corner of Sixth and Boots streets.

A few years after the building of the Marion temple, the Orthodox element agreed to hold its meetings in the new building.

"That was a hell of a concession," Lawrence Klain's son, Jason, recalls. "Oh, my, was it."

The two congregations finally merged under the Sinai Temple's roof in the mid-1950s.

Sinai Temple has, from the beginning, used the services of a part-time rabbi from Hebrew Union College. The student rabbis have conducted regular Friday night services, the special services for such traditional Jewish holidays as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succot, Hanukkah, Purim and Passover and the ceremonies for young people, like bar mitzvahs, confirmations and weddings.

Many of the student rabbis who have served Marion have gone on to prominence in Jewish affairs across the country. But none probably has reached the fame of the small, quiet young man who came to the Sinai Temple in the fall of 1936.

His name was Alexander D. Goode, a native of Brooklyn, N. Y. After spending his senior year as rabbi in Marion, he was graduated from Hebrew Union College and became rabbi at a temple in York, Pa.

When World War II broke out, Goode became an Army chaplain. In January, 1943, he was aboard the troopship Dorchester when it was torpedoed and sunk in the North Atlantic.

It was Goode and three other military chaplains who



The men of the Sinai Temple in 1948 with the Jeep and truck they bought to send to the people of Israel.

relinquished their lifejackets to soldiers, then knelt in prayer on the deck as the ship sank. Their heroic sacrifice was later commemorated on a U. S. postage stamp and in a book, "Sea of Glory" by Frances B. Thornton.

During much of its existence, the Sinai Temple has been more than a religious center for Marion's Jewish community. It has been the social and cultural center, as well.

That was particularly true during the 1930s and 1940s, when many civic and fraternal organizations in Marion were closed to Jews. Social events for both adults and children in the Jewish community were regular features of the temple calendar during those days.

"Back then, we had a very nice community here, with shindigs and parties all the time," Dr. Max Ganz recalls. "It really used to be a lot of fun."

None was as colorful, perhaps, as the series of plays and musicals produced by the Temple Sisterhood in 1951 and 1952. Mrs. Mildred Roskin, who had been a pianist with the American Theater Wing during World War II, directed the productions, which began with "The Women" at Martin Boots School and was followed with a series of topical reviews performed at the temple.

"That was at a time when there were about 70 families, with 50 or 60 children between four and 15," Mrs. Roskin recalls. "So, they embarked on these productions to keep the community active. And, we also had to pay off the mortgage of the temple."

The stage productions were performed by members of the temple and the sisterhood but were open to the general public.

"They were important for several reasons," Mrs. Roskin says. "The community found out it had a lot of talent, and the shows, in a sense, helped invite the outside community in so it could know our community better."

Mrs. Roskin, a Brooklyn native and graduate of Hunter College, says the shows also helped keep a social life going for Marion Jews at a time when many doors were closed to them. The Marion woman says she has thought about reviving the productions but has had to reject the idea.

"We've thought about it because they were so much fun, but it probably wouldn't be what it was then," she says. "Besides, the community is less than a fourth of the size, with very few children, plus the fact that all the doors are open to Jews now. They have other social outlets."

If the Jewish community found little it could do outside the walls of its own temple, it could often reach beyond the borders of Marion to find projects to get involved in. That's where its two main charitable enterprises came in.

For many years, the local Jewish community has supported the drives for the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and for the annual Israel Bond sale. The UJA drive is handled by the Marion Federation of Jewish Charities, described by its chairman, Frank Maidenberg, as the Jewish United Fund.

"The Jewish community has always been a little reluctant to ask people outside the community for money," he says. "They felt it was our responsibility to take care of our own. That's how the federation evolved."

The funds raised by the federation go to help Jewish refugees and various Jewish hospitals and schools in this country.

The annual bond drive sells bonds issued by the government of Israel. They are 15-year bonds and are used primarily for industrial expansion in the Jewish state.

In addition to the Israel bonds, the Marion community also has made at least one other major contribution to the development of that country. In 1948, when the first Israeli war broke out, the members of Sinai Temple bought a truck and Jeep to send to Israel to help in the war effort.

Temple members Saul Ganz and Howard Fink drove the truck, with the Jeep loaded in its bed, to New York and onto the ship to Israel. The truck was converted into an ambulance once it reached Israel, according to local sources.

The temple also was the rallying point when the Jewish community decided to have its own cemetery plot in Marion, after using the Jewish cemetery in Wabash for so many years. A temple committee of Joseph Stiefler, Simons and William Resneck met on April 5, 1948, with three officials of the Marion IOOF Cemetery, Rollin Lloyd, William Medlin and Elgie Giltner, to set aside four lots containing three graves each for Jewish families.

The Sinai Temple has had a colorful and important history since that meeting back in 1924. The only question now, with the Jewish community in Marion losing most of its young people to the bigger cities, is its future.

There are those within the Jewish community who feel the community and the temple will soon disappear from the Marion landscape. But, Rabbi Mark Shapiro, who served the Marion congregation the past school year, doesn't think so.

"I think that Jewish communities, wherever they are, are concerned about their futures," Shapiro, who is beginning his duties as a rabbi in Toronto, Canada, says. "I think the community in Marion is stabilized now, not dwindling."

Exodus — Marion style

As a people, the Jews have survived for 5,000 years. But, as a community within Marion, they may not survive another generation.

That is the most frequent fear expressed by older members of Marion's Jewish community. With the children of the city's established Jewish families virtually scattering to the four winds, the prospects for the community surviving — at least as a permanent, close-knit group — appear dim.

"I predict that, when my generation dies out, there may not even be a temple in Marion, because our crowd is thinning out pretty fast," Jason Klain, president of Klain Steel Supply Inc., says. "Time will eliminate them, only because they're moving away or intermarrying."

"There will be a lot of Jewish people, but they'll be in cities larger than Marion. That's my opinion."

That view is shared by Milton Maidenberg, retired officer of National China and Equipment Corp.

"I see no future myself for the Marion Jewish community," he says. "There is nothing here to perpetuate it. We have people coming in, but they're transients. Over the years, it'll probably die out."

The older members of the Jewish community tend to predict that Marion will go the way of Wabash and Ligonier, two Indiana towns that once had thriving Jewish communities and now are reduced to two or three remaining families.

The impending decline of the Jewish community is tied directly to the exodus of the younger generation from Marion. Better educated than their parents and living in more prosperous times, the sons and daughters have almost all gone elsewhere to put down roots.

Klain's two sons, for example, are in Germany and California working for large corporations. Maidenberg's three children are in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and California pursuing their particular careers.

Of more than 30 young men and women who have completed their educations, only three — Tony Maidenberg, Jerry Sector and Mrs. Diane Sector Foust — have come back to Marion to live. A few others are now studying at colleges or trade schools and may return to their home town.

The rest of the younger generation, less than half of whose parents were college graduates, have headed for horizons that were not even visible for their Depression-era parents. All of the grown children of established Jewish families in Marion have completed college or are still studying.

The group is heavily weighted with professionals — doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists and psychologists. Others have ventured into areas as varied as building houses in California and meditating with a guru in India.

If the dispersion of the younger generation threatens to reduce the Marion Jewish community to a mere handful of people, it could do even more to the Jewish business community that blossomed during the first three decades of this century. Only one of the present Jewish-owned businesses appears likely to remain in the hands of the family that now owns it.

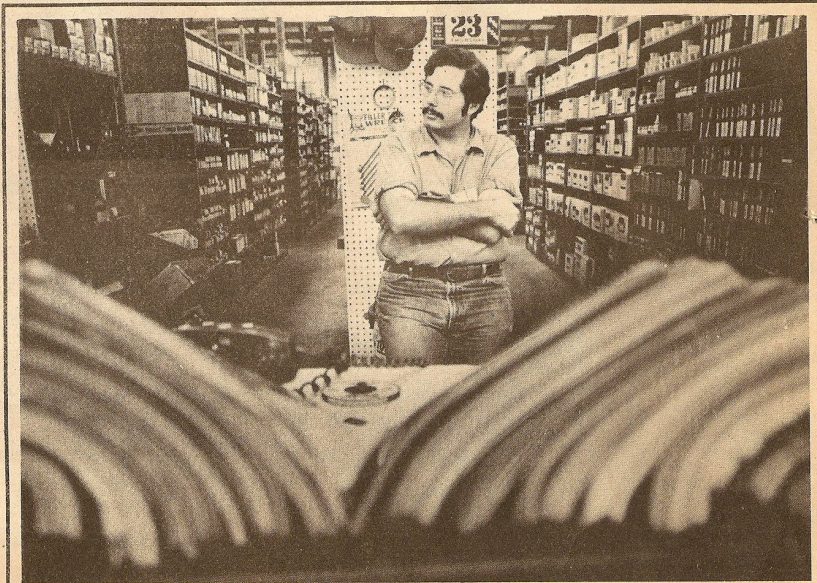
That is Gilbert Roskin Jewelers on the west side of the courthouse square, where Gary Roskin, 25, one of the sons of the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Tony Roskin, plans to return after completing jeweler's school in California. One other member of the new generation, Stuart Sector, son of Mr. and Mrs. Julian Sector, is considering returning to the family business — in this case, The Challenge Distributors Inc. — if he doesn't find the job he wants in his field of college study.

Except for those two, however, the bulk of Marion's older Jewish-owned businesses apparently will pass on to new ownership.

"The family businesses will just die," Mrs. Betty Fleck says. Mrs. Fleck is the wife of Henry Fleck, who runs one of Marion's oldest retail businesses, The Paris, at the corner of Third and Adams streets.

"In the old days, industries didn't take the Jewish people, so they started their own businesses," she says. "It's different today; the children don't go into the family businesses. They become professionals or go into big corporations."

For the young men and women who have left the family businesses and the Marion community, it has



C-T Photo by Greg Fisher

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Marion has a lot of opportunity. It doesn't have all the frills and thrills like Los Angeles, or even Indianapolis, but, in a lot of ways, it's the right kind of community to be in. It's not too big, not too small. It's the kind of community where I wouldn't mind spending the rest of my life.

”

— Stuart Sector

often been a case of going where their education takes them, not simply fleeing from their home town.

"The fundamental thing was the question of opportunity," Mike Maidenberg, 34, reports. Maidenberg, son of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Maidenberg, is assistant circulation director for the Philadelphia Daily News.

"I got into a line of work and experience where it was really beyond Marion," adds the University of Michigan and Columbia University graduate. "We were directed by our parents to look at a wider horizon. I've always regretted that I had to leave. I've always had fond feelings for Marion."

Many of the younger generation express similar sentiments toward their old home town.

"I'd consider coming back to Marion," Mrs. Sandy Plank Lotten, 27, says. "It's just that I'm not there right now."

Mrs. Lotten, whose father, Leon Plank, began Plank Auto Parts in Marion in 1952, is a special education teacher in Nashville, Ind.

"I really enjoyed growing up there," another of the generation, Mrs. Marlene Abel Calderon, 29, says.

Mrs. Calderon is married to a bank vice president and lives in Lafayette. In her case, she left Marion at the same time her parents did. Her father, Milton Abel, was president of Milton's clothing store on the east side of the square when the family moved to Indianapolis in 1965.

"Since I'd usually ended up working for my father, had he still been there, I might have come back," she says.

There is perhaps no better example of the dilemma faced by Marion's young Jews than the Sector brothers. One of them ended up back in Marion and now must decide whether or not to leave, while the other soon must make a choice between a career in his chosen field and returning to the family business, the Challenge.

Jerry Sector is 29 and teaches history at Marion High School. He didn't really plan to come back home, however.

"I looked for jobs in several different areas," he says. "It just happened that I got one in Marion."

Sector, who is working on his administrative certification and doctor's degree at Ball State University, recognizes the phenomenon that has the older generation concerned. But he says it is not an exclusively Jewish problem.

"I can't think of anyone I went to high school with, Jewish or otherwise, that went on to trade school or college who came back to Marion, with one or two exceptions," he notes. "There is nothing to attract people to the community — I'm speaking of people who are college-educated — because the job market isn't here in many instances. I sometimes think we'll go the way

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of Wabash, where there was a very large Jewish community and now it's miniscule.

"It would be a shame to lose the temple and that sort of thing, and I'm sure, as long as people can afford to support it, there'll be a temple in Marion."

Sector says he may leave his home town eventually.

"I'm not looking to get out," he says, "but if the opportunity came along to leave I don't think I would consider it a whole lot. I've enjoyed being here, but I'd enjoy being someplace else, too."

Sector reports that he never felt compelled to return and take over the family's automotive parts business.

"Whatever you wanted to do was fine, as far as our parents were concerned, and there was no pressure to go back into the business," he says. "For their generation, there was no choice because of the Depression. For us, it was just one of several options we could pursue."

"I worked down at the store for 13 summers, and I enjoyed being down there. It really is, in essence, that I enjoy teaching more."

For his younger brother, Stuart, the dilemma is reversed.

"I have thought about coming back to Marion," he says. "Auto parts is not my first choice; theater is, but if I could have theater and other outside interests in addition to the auto parts business, then I think I could be happy."

The younger Sector is 25 and is now working on a master's degree in arts administration at the University of Iowa. He plans to take a look at the opportunities in that field before making a final decision on where to settle.

"I never once thought about coming back to Marion until I realized it's important to me that the Challenge is the Sector business," he says. "That's the reason I'd come back to Marion. It's the family business, and I see how I could make it better."

"If I can't find what I want in the field of arts administration, I'm going to take a crayon and put a 'P' in front of the 'Arts' on my degree and make it 'Parts Administration.'"

Unlike his brother, Stuart sees Marion as a land of possible opportunity.

"Marion has a lot of opportunity," he says. "It doesn't have all the frills and thrills like Los Angeles,

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I would guess . . . that for cities this size we probably have a few more staying than others and probably a few more coming in. I have a very good feeling about the continuing activity of the Jewish community.

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————— Tony Maidenberg



C-T Photo by Ed Breen

or even Indianapolis, but, in a lot of ways, it's the right kind of community to be in. It's not too big, not too small. It's the kind of community where I wouldn't mind spending the rest of my life."

Sector's return to the family business would not necessarily bolster the sagging Jewish community, however. The Earlham College graduate has added a strong vein of Quakerism to his Jewish beliefs — "I'll probably practice a little of both in my lifetime" — and, like two of the three young Jews who have returned to Marion, is marrying a non-Jew.

Despite the large number of young Jews straying from both their home town and some of their religious traditions, there still remains some optimism for the survival of Marion's Jewish community.

Much of it rests with Tony Maidenberg, 30, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Maidenberg, who became a lawyer in his home town and was elected its mayor two years ago.

By virtue of his election as the city's official leader, Maidenberg became the unofficial leader of whatever new Jewish community may emerge.

"I guess I never really thought of myself that way,"

he says, however. "It doesn't bother me, but I wouldn't describe myself that way. I enjoy my participation in the Jewish community. I am part of it; that's where my roots are."

Maidenberg, unlike some of the members of the older generation, sees hope for the Jewish community in Marion.

"I think, actually, we're seeing a slight resurgence here," he insists. "I would guess, and it's only a guess, that for cities this size we probably have a few more staying than others and probably a few more coming in. I have a very good feeling about the continuing activity of the Jewish community. I don't have the feeling of disintegration, from what I observe right now."

Maidenberg notes that one young Jewish couple transplanted into Marion, Mr. and Mrs. Marty Lonow, had begun to organize discussion groups and other activities for young Jews in the community. The Lonows have since left Marion, however.

"Somebody else will pick it up," says the optimistic young mayor. "It always happens."

One of the people named by Maidenberg as a possible leader for the new Jewish community is Gary Rifkin, a 36-year-old industrial engineer at the RCA plant in Marion. A native of LaCrosse, Wis., Rifkin has already been active in community affairs during his seven years in Marion, recently retiring as president of the Marion Junior Association of Commerce (JAC).

He also served on Mayor Maidenberg's merit system task force, and his wife is vice president of the Sinai Temple Sisterhood. Rifkin says he plans to become more involved in Jewish affairs, now that his work with the JAC is over.

"I think I will be taking an active part now," he says. "I've poured most of my efforts into JACs so far, but I'm out of that now. I will be getting more active in the temple now."

The relative newcomer says he sees the erosion of the Jewish community but doesn't believe it has to be fatal.

"I really have mixed emotions about it," Rifkin says. "In one way, it's kind of tapering off to the point where, unless something is done, it will go out of existence. However, I feel the young people living here and coming into Marion will jump in and revitalize it."

Rifkin, whose father is in the retail fabric business in LaCrosse and who was plant manager of a garment factory at Fond du Lac, Wis., while attending engineering school, discounts the notion that the departure of the younger Jewish generation from Marion spells the end of the community.

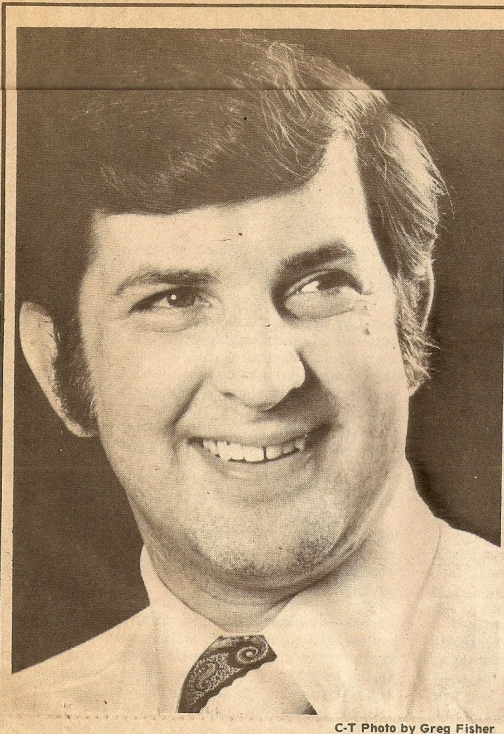
"Is that really that astounding?" he asks. "What percentage of people graduating from Marion High School who go on to school are coming back to Marion?"

"I'm not sure it's too important, anyway. The Jewish people who move to Marion have only one place to go, the temple. So, the people will get involved in Jewish activities."

Among those cited by Maidenberg and others as examples of new residents who have taken root in Marion's Jewish community are Dr. and Mrs. Richard Goldberg and Dr. and Mrs. Bernard Newbauer, who have established their professional and social lives here and are raising children in the community.

One of those newcomers, Mrs. Newbauer, who grew

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C-T Photo by Greg Fisher

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The Jewish people who move to Marion have only one place to go, the temple. So, the people will get involved in Jewish activities.

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————— Gary Rifkin

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northwest corner of Fourth and Washington, operated by previous owner's son, Richard Simon. One other of the 1923 establishments, The Challenge, is still operating, but at a new location, 700 E. Third St., with Julian Spector in charge.

The later arrivals are Resneck's, founded in 1932 by A.L. Resneck and now run by his sons, Bill and Dan; Lasky's shoe store, begun in 1930 by Harry Lasky, stepfather of present manager Sidney Jacobs; Gil Roskin Jeweler, started by its namesake in 1928 and now run by his son, Tony; the Iroquois Building, managed by Frank Maidenberg, and the Personally Yours shop, opened last month by Mrs. Faye Newbauer.

In the intervening years, some new Jewish businesses were part of the Marion commercial landscape but have since disappeared. Among those were Milton's clothing store on the east side of the square, started by Adolf Abel in 1929 but later sold to non-Jewish owners, and Rogers Credit Jewelers on the south side of the square, owned by Joseph and Isador Stiefler, the uncle and aunt of Marion dentist Dr. David Stiefler.

Three businesses away from the courthouse square — in addition to the Queen City, which continues at its same location, with Zimmerman's nephew, Allan, in charge — which are still operating are Plank Auto Parts, 800 E. Third St.; the Jacob Weinberg News Agency, 610 E. Fourth St., and Klain Steel Supply Inc., 503 Lincoln Blvd.

The auto parts company was founded in 1952 by Leon Plank, who still serves as its president. The news distributing agency was acquired by Weinberg in 1928 and is now operated by Weinberg and his sons.

The Klain steel firm began as a scrapyards at 1725 W. Nelson St. in 1929. Its founder, Lawrence Klain, a Polish immigrant, had come to Marion in 1902 to work at the scrapyards owned by his nephews, Mark and Myer Savesky.

When the Savesky operation closed down with the advent of the Depression, Klain began his own business. His son, Jason, who now operates the company, joined his father's business in 1932 after a brief stint as a newspaperman in California.

Perhaps the most unusual story of business success

in Marion is that of the man who got off the train at the wrong station, David Maidenberg.

Maidenberg came from Russia. He had worked in a bakery in Odessa as a teenager and fled his homeland in 1905 to escape the persecutions of the czarist regime.

A pack peddler by trade, Maidenberg lived in Maryland and Pennsylvania before making the fateful train trip in 1916 that would alter his life and that of the community he settled in. He was going to Marion, Ohio, which was near Piqua, where he had relatives.

But, somehow, he got off in Marion, Ind., instead. "My father, being an immigrant, didn't understand things like geography," one of his sons, Ben, explains.

Rather than try to get back to his original destination, Maidenberg stayed in Marion, selling items from his pack. The pack became a horse and wagon, which in turn became a Ford truck.

Finally, his business became a store in Gas City, the Indiana Dry Goods Co.

Maidenberg and his wife, Rosa, had four sons. One, Ben, who now spells his last name Maidenburg because that's the way the Army spelled it when he was in the service, became a successful newspaperman, recently retiring as publisher of the Akron, Ohio, Beacon-Journal to become president of the Knight Foundation.

The other three sons, Meyer, Milton and Frank, all stayed in Marion and became successful businessmen; so successful in fact that, in 1977, the Maidenbergs are possibly the most prominent and influential family in the city that their father never intended to come to.

The three brothers ran National China and Equipment Co. on E. Fourth Street for many years, and Frank later broke away to go into warehousing and property management.

His son, Tony, is the present mayor of Marion. When David Maidenberg died of a heart attack in 1949, he became the first Jew to be buried in the Jewish section of Marion's IOOF Cemetery.

In its way, David Maidenberg's story is the story of all the Jews who came to Marion and made it their home. They came with only a few possessions and a 5,000-year-old faith. They came with high hopes for success in a new community.

And, like him, they fulfilled them.

Exodus — Marion style

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up in the large and thriving Jewish community of Nashville, Tenn., feels the Jewish community will endure in Marion.

"I think it's a pretty stable population," she says. "It has its ups and downs, but I don't see it dying at this point."

The predictions of the community surviving are not restricted to the younger generation or the newcomers, either. Dr. Max Ganz, whose Russian-born father came to Marion in 1924 to become a furrier, thinks it will hold on, even though the children of people like himself aren't returning.

"The younger people don't want to come to a smaller town," he says. "They feel they can do better in a larger town."

Dr. Ganz, whose three children have settled in California and Michigan to pursue careers in advertising, law and real estate, notes that times were different when he came back to Marion in 1937 to establish his medical practice.

"Number one," he says, "I knew the people in Marion for all those years, and then I felt a responsibility to my parents, who were getting up in years."

The Marion doctor thinks the Jewish community will remain on the Marion scene, though.

"My guess is that we'll always have a small Jewish community here," he says. "We always get an influx of people, like engineers at RCA and the other plants, that keep it going."