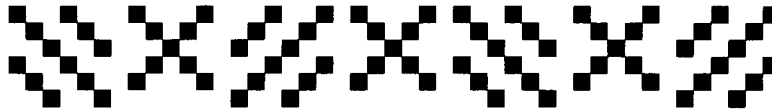


## To Be a Jew in Middletown: A Muncie Oral History Project

*Dwight W. Hoover\**



*Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (1929), the famous study of Muncie, Indiana, by Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, says very little about the town's small Jewish community. Indeed, the only specific indication that such a community even existed comes as a kind of footnote to the prevailing Protestantism in Muncie. The Lynds mention that the Jewish merchants whose stores lined Walnut Street, the major thoroughfare, faced a dilemma because the biggest shopping day of the week was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and retail stores generally closed on Sunday. The Lynds then note that there was no uniform Jewish solution to this dilemma; some owners opened on Saturday, others closed their stores on Friday afternoon for the entire weekend.

The failure to study the Jewish community is not surprising given: (1) the intent of the sponsors of the Lynds' work, the Institute of Social and Religious Research; (2) the criteria used for selecting a town to survey; and (3) the Lynds' assumptions about the nature of both American religion and society. The Institute of Social and Religious Research planned to survey an entire community's religious practices, with the long-term goal of uniting all Protestant churches in the country.<sup>1</sup> In choosing Muncie, Robert S. Lynd used criteria that specifically de-emphasized heterogeneity, revealing his interest in analyzing only older

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<sup>1</sup> Charles E. Harvey, "Robert S. Lynd, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and *Middletown*," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXIX (December, 1983), 330-54. See also the second volume (Fall-Winter, 1979-1980) of the *Journal of the History of Sociology*, which was devoted to Robert S. Lynd.

stock American Protestants. One such criterion was that the city to be studied have only a small proportion of "negro and foreign-born population."<sup>2</sup> Further, although Lynd was himself a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, he viewed traditional religion as a relic of preindustrial society, doomed to die as society modernized. He did not regard religion as significant in itself but conceived of it as a refuge for workers from the pressures of an industrial system.<sup>3</sup> Finally, to compound the problem, Lynd's model of society was almost exclusively an industrial one that slighted small retail businesses to concentrate upon large manufacturing establishments, thus overlooking that segment of the town's economy by which the majority of Muncie's Jews made a living. All of these factors contributed to the minimal coverage of Jews in *Middletown*.

An opportunity to remedy this oversight came in 1979 when a local businessman, Martin D. Schwartz, commissioned Ball State University professors Warren Vander Hill and Dwight W. Hoover to begin an oral history of Muncie's Jewish community. Schwartz was anxious to record the memories of the older members of the community since he feared these might soon be lost (a fear which was justified as already three of the interviewees have died and several memories have faded). Nineteen persons, ranging in age from sixty to ninety-three, were interviewed. The interviewers used as a guide a questionnaire devised by the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, which was modified to include more questions on social and physical mobility and family relationships. The intent was not merely to record disparate memories of individuals and their families but to find a coherent pattern, if one existed, in the total group experience. The next step was to compare this experience with that of other groups in other cities and to compare the attitudes of Jewish citizens of Muncie with those explored by the Lynds in their classic work. In order to accomplish all these goals, it was necessary to reinterview some persons and to obtain data from printed sources, such as city directories and county histories, to supplement the information originally obtained.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York, 1929), 8.

<sup>3</sup> See Dwight W. Hoover, "From Simpson's Chapel to Grace Baptist Church," in Theodore Caplow, Howard Bahr, Bruce Chadwick, et al., *All Faithful People* (Minneapolis, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Nineteen persons were interviewed. The tapes of the interviews and the transcriptions are now in The Center for Middletown Studies at Ball State University. The excerpts which appear in this paper are verbatim copies from the transcriptions, except where additional material has been added to convey the meaning better. This material is enclosed in brackets.

The most striking quality of Muncie's Jewish population was its restlessness, as individuals moved in and out of town searching for greater economic opportunity. The attraction to Muncie was usually the offer of a partnership in a scrap business or a job clerking in a clothing store; the person making the offer was often a relative, either by blood or by marriage. But the attraction was not strong enough to ensure permanent residence, as the migrant often moved out again. Neither success nor failure assured that permanence. If successful as a partner or clerk, the recently arrived migrant might open his own business in another, larger city. If unsuccessful, he might seek a more promising future elsewhere. City directories and cemetery records provide evidence of this mobility. Indicative of the restlessness of the Jewish population is the experience of the Moses Cohen family. The Cohens moved in and out of Muncie so frequently that none of them stayed long enough to be buried in the town until the death of Moses' great-grandson.<sup>5</sup> The restless movement from town to town in the nineteenth century certainly paralleled that of the typical urban migrant who, according to Stephan Thernstrom, "moved through three or more communities before he settled down around middle age."<sup>6</sup>

Although individuals came and went, businesses often remained. An entrepreneur would come to Muncie, often from a larger city such as Cincinnati with a significant Jewish population, and would establish a business. That person would then employ other members of the family who would help expand the store. The original owner might sell the store to one of these persons and move on. The name would change, reflecting the new owner, but the business would not.

This pattern of movement applied to Jewish migrants generally, regardless of national origin. While most of the early migrants to Muncie were from Western Europe, the first citizens had similar experiences and followed similar behavior patterns to those of later arrivals who were from Eastern Europe or who had been born in the United States. All worked within a narrow range of occupations and apparently moved easily in the town with little sense of discrimination, joining in the activities of the larger community.

A few examples help illustrate the beginnings of the Jewish community. The first Jewish settlers in Muncie, according to Al-

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<sup>5</sup> Frank Tick interview, Beverly Hills, California, March 1, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Stephan Thernstrom, "Reflections on the New Urban History," *Daedalus*, C (Spring, 1971), 366.

exander L. Shonfield, were Henry and Lipman Marks who had opened a dry goods and clothing store by 1850, four years before the incorporation of the town.<sup>7</sup> Natives of Alsace, the Marks had immigrated to the United States in the 1840s. The Marks brought four relatives to Muncie to work in the store; these six persons constituted almost 25 percent of the foreign-born population of Muncie, thus making these French-born residents the third most numerous immigrant group after the Irish and the Germans.<sup>8</sup> But the Marks did not remain in Muncie long. They soon moved to Cincinnati where prospects seemed brighter; however, the store remained.

A somewhat later arrival in Muncie, Frank Leon, duplicated the Marks' success in the clothing business in Muncie and Cincinnati, the former town serving as his home base. Leon had a retail store in Muncie but later expanded into clothing manufacturing in Cincinnati, supplying his retail store and others with his own products. Leon was the most spectacular example of Jewish integration into the life of the community in the nineteenth century. Among the civic groups he was instrumental in founding were the Knights of Pythias, the Muncie Choral Society, the Citizen's Enterprise Company (a forerunner of the Commercial Club and the Chamber of Commerce, designed to promote industrial and commercial development of the city), and, most remarkably, the Home Missionary Society (an organization formed to offer charitable relief and Christian education).<sup>9</sup>

By the 1870s, Jews from areas other than France began to arrive. The first was Lee Dessaur, who was American-born and who came to Muncie from Cincinnati in order to marry the daughter of a retail clothier. Dessaur, however, did not follow in his father-in-law's footsteps by taking over the store. Instead he became a wholesale liquor dealer, the first Jewish entrepreneur not in the clothing business in Muncie.<sup>10</sup> In that same decade came the first Jew from Eastern Europe. He was Polish-born Heiman Silverburg, who had lived in Natchez, Mississippi, for twenty-two

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander L. Shonfield, *Preface to the History of the Jewish People and a Sketch of Muncie, Indiana* (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1977), 28-29. Shonfield based his statement on an advertisement in the *Muncietonian* that year.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander E. Bracken, "Muncie as a Pioneer Community" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, 1978), 17.

<sup>9</sup> General William Harrison Kemper, ed., *A Twentieth Century History of Delaware County, Indiana* (2 vols., Chicago, 1908), I, 146-47, 152, 511; Frank D. Haimbaugh, ed., *History of Delaware County, Indiana* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1924), I, 306, 385, 462; Thomas B. Helm, *History of Delaware County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1881), 137, 184, 186-87, 196, 221-22, 300.

<sup>10</sup> Shonfield, *Preface*, 31.



years prior to moving with his family to Muncie to open a merchant tailoring business.<sup>11</sup> Both Dessaur and Silverburg signalled the expansion of vocational opportunity and the growing heterogeneity of Muncie's Jewish community.

By the 1880s other Eastern European Jews had joined Silverburg as the mass immigration from Eastern Europe began. The first to arrive was the Cohen family. The father, Moses Cohen, migrated from Poland to Indianapolis in 1874. There he married Sarah Ringolsky (later changed to Ringold), the daughter of Herschel Ringolsky, who had also migrated from Poland.<sup>12</sup> After living in Indianapolis for a time, the Cohens moved to Muncie. They were pioneers in the scrap business, becoming the first Jews in that trade. Their business was quite successful; both it and the Cohen family grew. After twenty-six years in Muncie, the family moved to Chicago to exploit the success of the older sons in the scrap business there, leaving a building they owned behind. Just after World War I a daughter, Pearl, moved back with her husband Will Freund to open a clothing store in the Cohen Building.<sup>13</sup> The Cohens switched from the scrap business to the retail clothing trade.

This progression was duplicated, only much more rapidly, by the Ringolds, the second Polish-born Jewish family to arrive in Muncie in the 1880s. The Ringolds followed the Cohens to the town. Herschel Ringold joined his son-in-law Moses Cohen in the scrap business a year after Moses opened his yard, but he left part of his family in Indianapolis. Herschel's son Samuel remained in the Circle City in order to finish his schooling. Following his graduation from high school five years later, Sam came to Muncie to enter the clothing business. His sister Rachel took even longer. She arrived in Muncie a decade later, in 1889. She married a man named Isaac Rappaport who was also Polish-born. Rappaport had clerked in his cousin's dry goods store in Texas, but when he came to Muncie he opened a wholesale liquor store.<sup>14</sup>

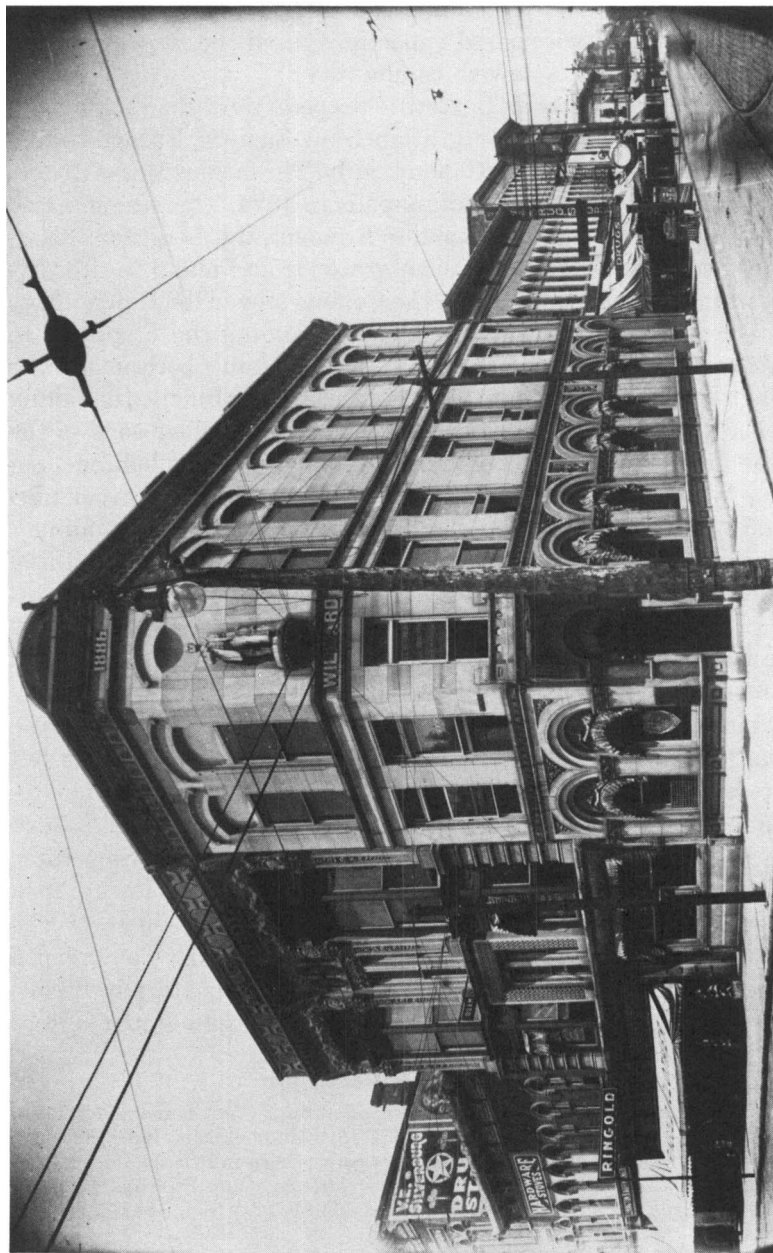
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<sup>11</sup> There are contradictions about both Silverburg's first name and place of birth. In *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1894-1895* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1895), his first name is spelled Hyman. Shonfield says he was born in Prussia, but in *Manufacturing and Mercantile Resources and Industries of the Principal Places of Indiana, Wayne, Henry, Delaware, and Randolph Counties* (n.p., 1881) it is given as Poland.

<sup>12</sup> Shonfield, *Preface*, 22-31; *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1891-1892*.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Morris, "A Focal Study of the Bernard Freund Family" (Seminar Paper, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, November, 1980); Bernard Freund interview, Muncie, Indiana, April 14, 1979; and Pearl Cohen Freund interview, Beverly Hills, California, June 3, 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Shonfield, *Preface*, 33-36; Haimbaugh, ed., *History of Delaware County*, II, 435-36.



**RINGOLD CLOTHING STORE, 109 SOUTH WALNUT STREET, LATE 1910s**

Two other Jewish names appear in this photograph. At the far left is V.E. Silverburg's Drug Store, and in the front window of the Willard Building's second floor is the law office of A. C. Silverburg.

From the Conatser Collection, Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

The Ringolds, like the Cohens, showed a willingness to venture into different enterprises even in a community where their families were established in others.

Such was the case with two other families of Eastern European origin, the Schwartzes and the Feinbergs, who came to Muncie in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The first Schwartz to arrive was one of three brothers. A native of Lithuania, Samuel Schwartz peddled shoestrings and shoelaces, then clerked in a shoe store before opening the Economy Shoe House in Muncie. His brother Morris arrived in town about the same time to work as a salesman in a clothing store. While Samuel settled permanently in Muncie, Morris did not. He left Muncie and went to Alaska where he promoted prize fights, among other things, and then returned to Matthews, Indiana, to take advantage of the gas boom by manufacturing glass chimneys for kerosene lamps. While there he employed the third Schwartz brother, Leo, to sell the glass chimneys. When the gas supply dwindled, Morris returned to Muncie to open the Moxy Clothing Store, which specialized in expensive men's clothes. His brother Leo worked as a traveling salesman for paper companies until 1920, when he too came to Muncie to open a wholesale paper supply company. Here he remained until his death, but Morris, ever restless, left two years later for New York City, where he again changed occupations and went into the drycleaning business.<sup>15</sup>

Another Polish-born migrant in the 1890s reversed the common tendency to change from scrap dealer to clothing store owner. Abraham Feinberg moved to Muncie from Columbus, Indiana, in 1898. After selling clothes for two years, he went into the scrap business, which he used as a stepping stone to a manufacturing career. He eventually owned Muncie Cap and Set Screw Company and was reputed to be the richest Jew in Muncie.<sup>16</sup>

The history of Jewish migration and occupational choice in Muncie, while similar in some ways to the experience of other cities, is also different. On the one hand, Jewish migration to Muncie appears to resemble migration elsewhere in America as described by William Toll:

In America . . . the migrants provided the shelters and jobs for relatives, especially brothers and nephews, and in the towns of the Midwest and West seem easily to have entered social and political elites. As Robert E. Levinson has shown for

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<sup>15</sup> *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1893-1894; ibid., 1897-1898; ibid., 1899-1900*; Martin D. Schwartz interview, Muncie, Indiana, April 4, 1979; and Anna Schwartz interview, Muncie, Indiana, April 4, 1979.

<sup>16</sup> Shonfield, *Preface*, 36; *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1897-1898; ibid., 1899-1900; ibid., 1905-1906; ibid., 1921-1922.*



ACROSS-THE-TRACKS MUNCIE, APRIL, 1931



To the right of the tracks is the office of the Schwartz Paper Company, 628 South Walnut Street. The photographer is looking north toward the more prosperous part of Walnut Street.

Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

individual Jews in the California gold rush towns, and as Steven Hertzberg has more carefully analyzed in his pathbreaking study of Atlanta Jewry, the young peddlers were accustomed to continual migration through family sponsorship. Nevertheless, their persistence rates in specific towns were high compared with gentiles, in some cases even when compared with gentile merchants.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, the occupational choices of Muncie's Jews seem more diverse and less predictable than those in other, larger communities. In other cities there appears to have been greater continuity between occupations in Europe and America as well as continuity in clientele for those who were peddlers. Marc Lee Raphael, for example, has found that Jews from Eastern Europe who migrated to Columbus, Ohio, because the factory system had undercut their work as artisans and eliminated their work as peddlers, continued to perform the same type of work in Columbus as they had in the Old World.<sup>18</sup> Jews in Steelton, Pennsylvania, who had been peddlers in Russia and Poland, moved from peddling to the retail trade. By 1940, they constituted over half the shopkeepers in Steelton; however, the kind of customers in these Jewish-owned shops had not changed. They consisted of the industrializing peasants from Eastern and Central Europe and southern Italy.<sup>19</sup> In Europe these people had been served in little agricultural villages; in America they were served in industrial towns. Thus, Polish-born Jews sold work clothing to Polish-born laborers in the Old World and the New. These trends are less evident in Muncie, however.

In order to demonstrate this point, it is useful to reconstruct the structure of Jewish-owned businesses in Muncie in the heyday of the 1920s and then to consider the variety of stores and the background of the owners. These stores mainly lined Walnut Street, the major shopping street in the town, with the lower numbered stores being in a more fashionable area and the higher ones in a poorer, transitional one.

Sam Ringold's Clothing Store	109 South Walnut
The Why (Will Freund)	Seymour and Walnut
Economy Shoe Store (Samuel Schwartz)	116 North Walnut
The Moxy (Morris Schwartz)	Walnut Street between Adams and Jackson

<sup>17</sup> William Toll, "The 'New Social History' and Recent Jewish Historical Writing," *American Jewish History*, LXIX (March, 1980), 334.

<sup>18</sup> Marc Lee Raphael, *Jews and Judaism in a Midwestern Community: Columbus, Ohio, 1840-1875* (Columbus, Ohio, 1979); William Toll, "The Chosen People in the World of Choice," *Reviews in American History*, VIII (June, 1980), 173; see also Judith E. Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis, 1849 to the Present* (Bloomington, Ind., 1984).

<sup>19</sup> Toll, "The 'New Social History,'" 330.

Schwartz Paper Company (Leo Schwartz)	628 South Walnut
Marx and Kallmeyer Clothing Store (Herman Marx and David Kallmeyer)	104-106 South Walnut
Charles Indorf's Pawn Shop	608-612 South Walnut
King's Clothing Shop (Charles Indorf)	125 South Walnut
Pazol's Jewelry Store (Harry D. Pazol)	206 South Walnut
Whitcomb Garment Company (Morris Shapiro)	Second floor of Walnut and Howard
Burgauer's Office Equipment (Jack D. Burgauer)	220 North Walnut
Sam Gold's Clothing Store	512 South Walnut
Greiger Brothers Clothing Store (William F. Greiger of Michigan City and Fred B. Greiger)	401-403 South Walnut
New York Hal Company (Joseph Levy)	109 North Walnut
Elias Jenkin's Clothing Store	220 South Walnut
Moses Hene's Clothing Store	120 South Walnut
Herman Eichel's Millinery Shop	309 South Walnut
Louis Friedman's Pipe Supplies	520 Wysor Street
Alexander Shonfield's Clothing Store	112 South Walnut
Roberts Hotel (George Roberts)	Corner of High and Howard
Klein's Cloak and Suit House (Leonard M. Klein)	New Kirby Hotel
Women's Ready-to-Wear (Melville L. Altschul)	202 South Walnut
Shonfield's Clothing Store (Louis and Ray Shonfield)	100 West Main
Max Zeigler & Brothers Junk Yard (Max and Harry Zeigler)	620 East 6th Street <sup>20</sup>

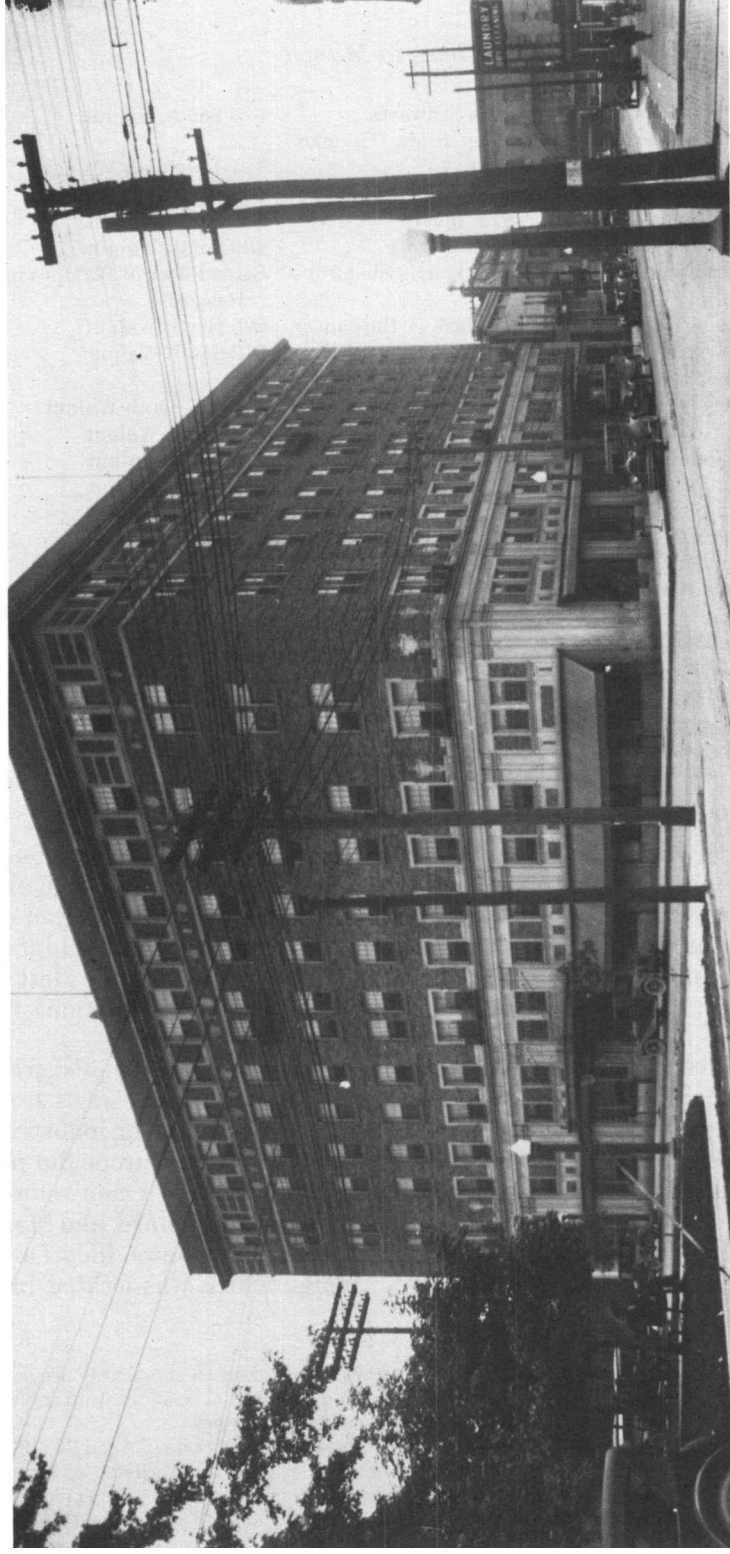
The twenty-four businesses supported an estimated eighty or ninety Jewish families in the town and, while the clothing businesses were most common, others did exist.<sup>21</sup> Both Freidman and Roberts (the owner of Roberts Hotel) made their money from oil and gas exploration. Burgauer sold typewriters; Pazol sold jewelry; and Schwartz sold paper. Indorf had a pawn shop. Most of these people had roots in Poland and were in occupations far different from those held in Europe by their ancestors.

Even the kinds of clothing stores cannot be predicted from the place of origin or the social class of the owner. Jews from Eastern Europe did not necessarily cater to farmers or industrial workers; Jews who arrived earlier from Western Europe did not necessarily sell to the business class. Of the three best men's stores in Muncie—The Moxy, Charles Indorf's Clothing Store, and Marx and Kallmeyer—two were owned by Polish-born Jews. Indorf also owned a pawn shop with poorer clients, which was located in a

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<sup>20</sup> Morris, "Focal Study." This list is not to be taken as completely accurate at any particular date because it represents ownership over at least a ten-year period when stores would often change hands several times.

<sup>21</sup> The estimate is Robert Burgauer's, given in his interview, April 25, 1979. This estimate may overstate the number. Far fewer Jews are listed as temple members in Shonfield's history, but, as we have seen, not all Jews were members. Further, the number of members included persons who lived and worked in small towns outside of Muncie.

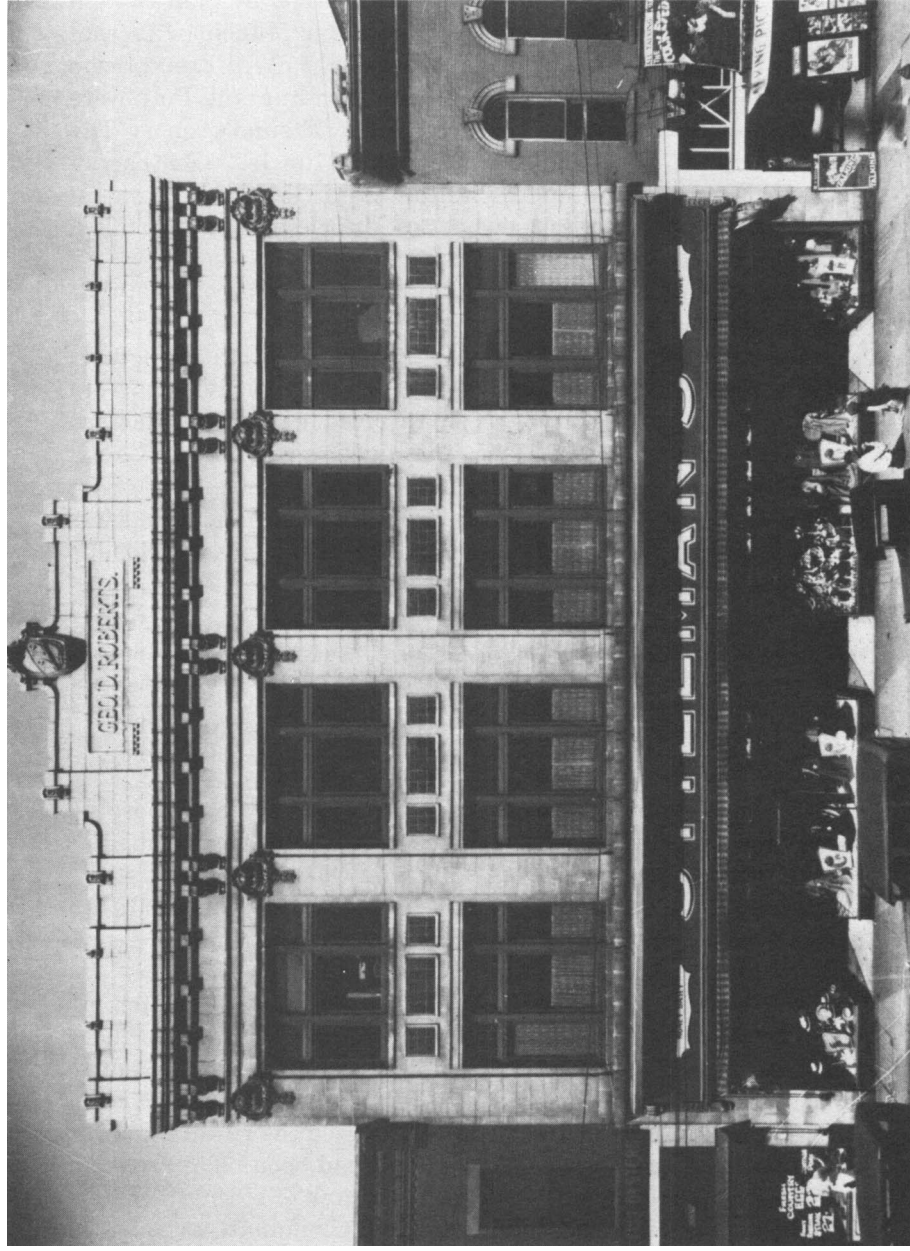


**ROBERTS HOTEL, CORNER OF HIGH AND HOWARD**

The hotel was built by George D. Roberts, who made a fortune in oil.

Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.





STILLMAN'S DEPARTMENT STORE (1919), HOUSED IN A BUILDING CONSTRUCTED BY GEORGE D. ROBERTS

From the Conatser Collection, Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

cheaper neighborhood. On the other hand, of the two leading clothing stores for workingmen, one was owned by Sam Gold, a Polish-born Jew, who began his work career in Muncie in a scrapyard in 1907; the other, *The Why*, belonged to Will Freund who was born in Illinois as the son of a German immigrant. Both were in a bad neighborhood, one characterized by Freund's son as "The Bowery District—the 'Redlight' District of Muncie."<sup>22</sup> But bad location did not mean financial failure. Sam Gold became one of the largest Jewish property owners in Muncie from the profits of an establishment described by his daughter as "a workingman's clothing store and I think it stood him in good stead to be in that type of clothing business."<sup>23</sup>

Business ownership did not guarantee social status; neither did Muncie Jewry lack social division. The deepest divisions were between the German-born Jews who arrived first and the Eastern European ones who came later. The division in Muncie was exacerbated by the fact that the most successful businessmen—Sam Gold and Abe Feinberg—were latecomers from Poland and less successful Jewish residents were embittered by the newcomer's success. Pearl Shonfield described this division:

Those people who came from those many other countries—Poland, Russia, and many others—were shrewder and smarter than those German-Jewish people who were so, so wonderful that they looked down upon these people, but they, themselves, were not money-making people. I can remember my husband's aunt and all just never thought any of the people who came there [Muncie] were good enough for them.<sup>24</sup>

This division seems typical of American Jewry which, according to William Toll, divided on social rather than ideological grounds.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, however, this division was not quite what the members of the community believed it to be. It was as much a division based on time of arrival and integration into the community as it was on country of origin.

The history of the temple best shows the division which existed in the 1920s between those who had first arrived and those who came later. There had been a Jewish congregation in Muncie since the later nineteenth century. It had always been a Reform congregation (Reform Judaism deemphasized the ritual practices of Orthodox or traditional Judaism and had been popularized in America by Rabbi Isaac M. Wise. Its center of strength in this country was at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, established

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<sup>22</sup> Bernard Freund interview.

<sup>23</sup> Edith Garfield interview, Indianapolis, Indiana, May 14, 1979.

<sup>24</sup> Pearl Shonfield interview, Indianapolis, Indiana, May 14, 1979.

<sup>25</sup> Toll, "The 'New Social History,'" 336.

in the mid-1870s). There is no written record that makes clear just why Muncie had a Reform congregation. Perhaps it was because of the close proximity to Cincinnati, which provided both business and religious connections. In the beginning, as now, Temple Beth-El relied upon student rabbis from Hebrew Union College because its size made a full-time rabbi beyond its means. Perhaps the reason for its being a Reform congregation was a conscious decision that this best suited Jews in Muncie since the situation in the town prevented practicing Jewish rituals.

When interviewed by Whitney Gordon, the members of the Jewish community in the 1960s believed that the temple was founded by "a very high calibre of German Reform members. And that only later, especially after World War II, did the Orthodox, Eastern European element intrude."<sup>26</sup> Contrary to these beliefs, there had been a considerable number of Orthodox, Eastern European Jews in Muncie at the time of founding. Further, none of the very old people who were interviewed by Vander Hill and Hoover had come from the Reform tradition; there were even four whose fathers had been Orthodox rabbis or who had studied for the rabbinate in Poland. Even the survey which Gordon made to determine the religious roots of the community belied the comments of those he interviewed. He found that 67 percent of the population had grown up in Orthodox homes, 18 percent in Reform ones, 11 percent in Conservative ones, and 1 percent from Sephardic, Christian, or nonreligious homes.<sup>27</sup> Yet the Jewish population of Muncie was a declining one in the 1960s according to the same persons; there had not been a significant population transfer which would account for the large proportion of persons who had come from Orthodox homes. The suggestion that German Reform members were solely responsible for founding the temple thus appears untrue since the Orthodox Eastern European element had such deep roots in the community.

What appears to have happened was that Jews who came to the town, whatever their origin or religious background, joined the congregation if they stayed long enough. Membership in the temple was a sign of integration into the community, both the Jewish and the larger one. This process is illustrated by the fact that when the congregation finally undertook to construct its own building in 1922, the president of the congregation was Charles Indorf, a Polish-born Jew who was the only Jew who was prominent in local municipal politics. The majority of the members had roots in Eastern Europe as well.

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<sup>26</sup> Whitney Gordon, *Community in Stress* (New York, 1964), 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

## DOWNTOWN MUNCIE, JULY, 1924

A crowd gathers to watch two Durants crash into each other as part of the production of the movie *Muncie's Hero*. In the middle of the photograph, the sign for the Marx and Kallmeyer Clothing Store is visible.



Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.



The process of integration into the community was still operative in the 1920s according to the testimony of persons interviewed by Vander Hill and Hoover. The Samuel Gold family came to Muncie from Indianapolis in 1913; both Samuel and Sadie Gold had come from Eastern Europe. The David Dobrowitz family which arrived about a decade later followed the same pattern as the Golds. Neither family joined the temple in Muncie initially. Instead, both retained their connections with Orthodox congregations in Indianapolis, returning there to worship during the High Holidays. Edith Garfield, a daughter of the Golds, attributed her parents' early refusal to become members of the temple to the fact that "they felt they didn't really fit in with the Jewish community that was there [Muncie] then."<sup>28</sup> The Dobrows (Dobrowitzes) may have been motivated primarily by religious considerations. One informant recalled that the Dobrows tried unsuccessfully to convert the congregation to Orthodox late in the 1920s.<sup>29</sup> Despite the early resistance on the part of the Golds and Dobrows, later both families joined the temple. They had become more a part of the community and no longer looked elsewhere for support. As a son-in-law of the Golds put it, they had mellowed.<sup>30</sup>

The evidence suggests that religious practice was not central to the life of the Jewish community in Muncie. Few Jews refrained from working on Saturday or kept kosher homes. Burle Plank claimed his father never worked a Saturday in his life nor did his mother violate dietary laws, but the Planks were in the scrap metal and auto parts business which was somewhat removed from the center of town and was less dependent upon Saturday business.<sup>31</sup> A Jew selling clothes on Walnut Street had more pressure to stay open on the main shopping day of the week. Similarly, keeping kosher was difficult. Those who did, the Planks, Golds, and Dobrows, had to obtain the properly killed meats from Indianapolis or Fort Wayne by interurban or car since there was no kosher butcher shop in Muncie. For most other families, the effort was not worthwhile. The experience of the Pazols, who moved to Muncie in 1920, was typical. Mort Pazol recalled his mother's experience:

There was no kosher butcher shop around, which was a shock to my mother, who, although she didn't keep kosher, insisted on kosher meat.

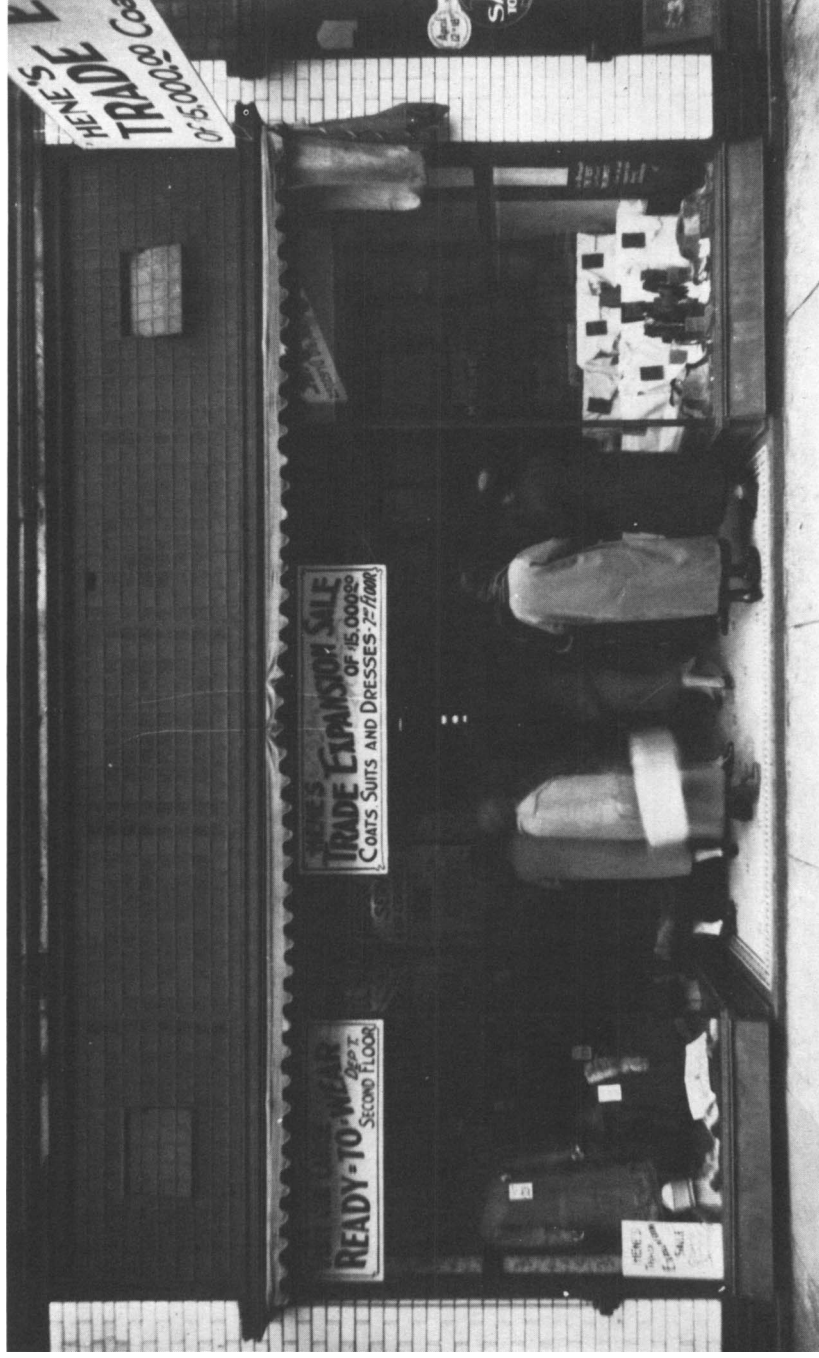
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<sup>28</sup> Garfield interview.

<sup>29</sup> Shonfield interview.

<sup>30</sup> Archie Lapin interview, Muncie, Indiana, February 27, 1979.

<sup>31</sup> Burle Plank interview, Muncie, Indiana, February 22, 1979.



CROWD GATHERING FOR A SALE, APRIL 27, 1925, AT HENE'S CLOTHING STORE, 120 SOUTH WALNUT STREET

Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.





### THE WHY, SEPTEMBER, 1922, 523 SOUTH WALNUT STREET

Will Freund owned this store which sold clothes to workingmen. (Note the jeans piled up in the window at the left.)

Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana



I remember mother's reaction at one time. She helped out in the store quite a bit, so we had somebody to take care of us, to cook and so on. She came home and saw a beautiful steak with a pat of butter soaking into it. She was shocked. It turned her stomach and she threw it out. She learned not to do that shortly, but the first time was a big shock.

Mother was the oldest in a family of six girls. She couldn't see any reason for keeping all of the dishes separate. She got away from it as fast as she could.<sup>32</sup>

Most Muncie Jews fit into the pattern of life and work in the town, although Robert Lynd noted one exception when he returned to Muncie in 1935. In reading the newspapers, he found that local Jewish businessmen had taken out an advertisement indicating their stores would be closed on "religious holidays," an advertisement which he believed would not have been made a decade earlier.<sup>33</sup> This advertising probably marks a slowing of assimilation and a recognition of ethnic and religious differences in the town.

In the 1920s anti-Semitic and exclusionary sentiments grew in Muncie as they did in Indiana and the country as a whole. Jews in the nineteenth century participated much more widely in community life than they did in the twentieth century, as Martin D. Schwartz testified:

Historically, Jews had been much more active at the turn of the century than they subsequently began to be, particularly after World War I which apparently unleashed all kinds of prejudice in this country which hadn't been overt beforehand. Jews had been members of the Elks. My father was an Elk. He had been in the Masonic Lodges and everything back around the 1900 to 1910 era. Then the restrictions began to come in and it became very difficult, if not impossible, for Jews to enter these organizations. There never was a Jew member of a service club in Muncie until the 1950s . . . . Wait a minute. What am I talking about? It was in the middle sixties.<sup>34</sup>

One of the most visible symbols of increased prejudice was the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan in Muncie in late 1921. While Jews were a distant third to Catholics and blacks on the Klan's hate list, the presence of the Klan was troubling.<sup>35</sup> According to local tradition, Republican businessmen brought the Klan to Muncie to rid the town of the influence of the corrupt mayor Rollin "Doc" Bunch, who had been convicted of mail fraud. The first

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<sup>32</sup> Mort Pazol interview, Muncie, Indiana, February 21, 1979.

<sup>33</sup> Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York, 1937), 462.

<sup>34</sup> Martin D. Schwartz interview.

<sup>35</sup> The best general treatment of the Klan after World War I is Kenneth T. Jackson's *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York, 1967). For the Klan in Indiana see James H. Madison, *Indiana through Tradition and Change: A History of the Hoosier State and Its People, 1920-1945* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1982), 44-75.

Klavern reputedly met in the office of the local Chamber of Commerce, and the initial membership was largely middle-class. The Klan organizers soon broadened the base of membership to include members from the working class, and, by 1923, the Klan claimed a membership of thirty-five hundred, which would mean that 10 percent of the population had joined. The Klan exerted more influence than even these substantial numbers might suggest because members of the secret society held important positions in local government and law enforcement. The chairman of the Board of Public Safety, Philip W. McAbee, was a Klansman, as was the Chief of Police, Van Benbow. Other members included Delaware Circuit Court Judge Clarence W. Dearth, who was immortalized in *Middletown* for his characterization of automobiles as houses of prostitution on wheels; Frank E. Barclay, a member of the Muncie City Council; Clarence Benadum, a prominent criminal lawyer, former Delaware County prosecuting attorney, amateur novelist, and treasurer of the Klavern; and, most prominent, John Hampton, a local businessman who had been chairman of the Republican Central Committee in 1921, when the Klan first appeared in Muncie, and who became mayor in 1925.<sup>36</sup>

While membership in the Klan was supposedly secret and the power exercised by the informal network of Klansmen concealed, the Klan's presence was highly visible because of its staged public spectacles. The most spectacular of all of these was a parade of two thousand members in June, 1923. This display of strength, however, backfired when Klan members attempted to coerce bystanders into showing respect for the United States flag draped over the hindquarters of a white horse ridden by a Kamelia. Among those persons who felt physically threatened were two prominent Munsonians, a former congressman, George W. Cromer, and the then Delaware County prosecuting attorney, J. Frank Mann. The resulting altercation caused the Klan to lose its more respectable members and, along with a schism in the ranks, marked the beginning of the Klan's decline in the city.<sup>37</sup>

During its short career in Muncie, the Klan did shock the Jewish community with its overt anti-Semitism, although the threat was not taken as seriously as might be supposed. However, Jewish residents of the time had no trouble recalling Klan actions, as this quotation from Martin D. Schwartz indicates:

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<sup>36</sup> Carrolyle M. Frank, "Politics in Middletown: A Reconsideration of Municipal Government and Community Power in Muncie, Indiana, 1925-1935," (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, 1974), 58-84.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59.

O God, yes! I remember those [parades] down Walnut Street, many of them. Father always used to take me down there, and I'd sit on his shoulders because I was a little kid.

[The Klan was] anti-Catholic, yes, and anti-black. There weren't enough Jews you see, in my judgment, around Muncie to make much of a target. Most of the Jews were in the retail business on Walnut Street and most of them had very good relationships with their clientele. I don't think anybody, particularly at that time, had any great hostility to them as business people. [The citizens of Muncie] may have been prejudiced, probably were [but did not often show that bias].

But I remember some of those Klan torchlight parades and, of course, I used to comment on this. You know the [Klan's] idea of Americanism was to have a big fat gal seated on a white draft horse with the American flag draped over its rump . . . [with her] sitting on it. That was the 100 percent Americanism of the day. In retrospect, I never felt that it was any threat to my parents because [if it had been] I don't think we'd have gone up to see the parade . . . . It didn't really have strong anti-Semitic overtones in this area.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps one reason for the lack of fear was that familiar and popular persons belonged. One such individual was the much beloved Muncie Central basketball coach, Pete Jolly, whom Schwartz described as "a great guy but who didn't know much about history or teaching," his major academic responsibility. Jolly confessed to his students that he had joined the Klan but had become convinced that the organization existed only to earn money for its organizers. An even more extreme case was that of the Schwartz housekeeper, who not only joined the Klan but expected her employers to share her pride of membership.<sup>39</sup> If these two individuals had little sense of the Klan's stated message, then the organization had failed to bend its members to its purposes.

Because of the gap between professed aims and actual practice, some members of Muncie's Jewish community were not only friends of Klansmen but, in fact, used that friendship to advantage. One good example is the experience of Harry Pazol, who was both a Jew and a newcomer to Middletown. Pazol bought a jewelry store in Muncie in 1920 after failing to purchase one in his hometown of Cleveland. Friendly and outgoing, Pazol soon made friends in the town and enjoyed the reputation of being a practical joker. One night the joke was on him. He had driven downtown to meet a salesman in his store, but had taken his second car which had expired license plates. After his meeting, he discovered his car was missing from its parking place. Fearing it was stolen, he walked to the police station, two short blocks away, to report the theft. When he arrived, he learned that the police had impounded the car and were taunting him about the fact. According to his son,

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<sup>38</sup> Martin D. Schwartz interview.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



### KU KLUX KLAN MARCH, MUNCIE, JUNE 2, 1923

The marchers were passing Pazol's Jewelry Store, 206 South Walnut Street, when the photograph was taken.

Courtesy Center for Middletown Studies, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

The desk sergeant laughed at him and said, "We really got you! You didn't have the right license plate on it; it's going to cost you; and you can't have it tonight." Well, Dad got on the phone and called a friend of his whom he knew was high in the Klan and told him about it. The Klansman said, "Let me talk to the sergeant," so Dad did. I guess the sergeant really got told off because he gave my dad his car and there was no charge, no fine of any type.<sup>40</sup>

Neither was Pazol the only Jewish person who associated with Klansmen. When Archie Lapin moved to Muncie from Portland, Indiana, to enter into a law practice, he joined the firm headed by Clarence Benadum, a notorious Klansman. Lapin, however, had only the kindest memories of Benadum.

I went into the office of Mr. Benadum who had formerly been very active in the Klan [as] an organizer. The feeling was (although [I] myself have never felt anything nor did anything occur which would give me the impression he was anti-Semitic) that he went into the Klan for the money . . . . In any case, he was a benefactor.<sup>41</sup>

Still, the Jewish community reacted to the presence of the Klan in a variety of other ways. Rachel Lipp, whose family did not raise her as Jewish, was sent away to a Catholic boarding school in Terre Haute.<sup>42</sup> Sherman Zeigler, whose father owned a scrapyard, recalled that Jews joined Catholics to combat the Klan's economic boycott of both groups. Catholic automobile wreckers agreed to sell scrap only to Jewish yards. This mutual alliance actually improved business.<sup>43</sup> As a boy, Sherman benefitted from concerted action by Jewish businessmen to combat anti-Semitism that was apparently not Klan-related. Sherman applied for a paper route when he was twelve years old and was refused because he was Jewish. Sherman was heartbroken so his father decided to act. Although the Zeiglers, by Sherman's own admission, were not really accepted in the Jewish community because of their self-imposed isolation, Sherman's father succeeded in persuading Jewish businessmen who advertised in the paper to inform the Catholic publisher that they would discontinue their ads if such discrimination were not ended. As a result, the publisher visited the Zeiglers, apologized, and offered Sherman the job.<sup>44</sup>

These tactics, however, did not diminish the prevailing Christian ethos of Muncie, which permeated almost every institution down to the public schools. In the decades between the world wars, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), led by the char-

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<sup>40</sup> Mort Pazol interview.

<sup>41</sup> Lapin interview.

<sup>42</sup> Rachel Lipp interview, Fort Wayne, Indiana, March 2, 1979.

<sup>43</sup> Sherman Zeigler interview, Muncie, Indiana, February 26, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

ismatic director Herbert A. Pettijohn, sponsored Bible study in the schools and won several national awards for the large numbers of students enrolled. Part of the attraction for boys was the chance to win a week's stay at Camp Crosley, a summer camp built by the YMCA in the 1920s with funds donated by the Ball family.

The camp attracted Jewish boys who succeeded in winning scholarships. Alan Burgauer testified as to his experiences at Camp Crosley:

Well, I got interested [in community affairs] by going to a Christian camp. I was eight years old [when I first went], and I was supposed to be nine. I learned to swim there.

This is a peculiar circumstance as the school had what was called Bible study. When I was in school, maybe a Freshman or Sophomore, I signed up for that [course]. I didn't know what it was but . . . it had a lot to do with Christianity. Course, I guess we didn't believe in that, but I took a test and won. Bernard Freund did, too, a week to Camp Crosley free. We got a 100 on the test.<sup>45</sup>

Surprisingly enough, there was little parental objection to either participation in the course or to the week at camp. Morton D. "Bud" Roth described his parent's reaction:

My parents were a little bit concerned . . . as to whether I should be studying the New Testament. I always got great marks in it whenever they had the examination. I won three trips to Camp Crosley. They [my parents] thought that was terrific even though they were a little dubious about it at first. Three years in a row I won a free week at Camp Crosley when I was in Emerson School, as a matter of fact. My folks were so poor at the time that my Uncle George saw to it that if I won the first week, he would pay for me to go a second week.<sup>46</sup>

Part of the reason for lack of concern over participation in Christian exercises was the perception that the values taught were close to those held in Jewish homes, or so Martin D. Schwartz thought.

I would say that our home values were basically middle-class American. Great stress was placed on the virtues of thrift and of work; the work ethic was extremely strong [as was emphasis on learning]. The latter may or may not have been a middle-class value, maybe that was where Jewish values came in. That was very important. . . . There was a lot of emphasis on bodily cleanliness and mental cleanliness. A lot of this I suppose, if I think about it, could have been Protestant or Puritanical. Yes, I'd say some of these values were Jewish, but there was an enormous emphasis in my family on personal integrity, that you didn't lie, that you were morally straight, the kind of things that H. A. Pettijohn used to teach us at the YMCA.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Alan Burgauer interview, Muncie, Indiana, March 20, 1979.

<sup>46</sup> Morton D. Roth interview, Muncie, Indiana, February 27, 1979.

<sup>47</sup> Martin D. Schwartz interview.

The sense of shared values between the Jewish and Christian communities was heightened by the lack of interest in traditional religious practice among Muncie's Jewish families. Schwartz's family was not untypical in this regard. His mother, Anna Winick Schwartz, was born in Boston, the daughter of a rabbi who had migrated from Lithuania to Boston before moving to South Africa. She did not share his religious conviction and described herself as never being very religious. Because she was orphaned at an early age and forced to go to work, she may have been so preoccupied with the struggle to survive that religion seemed unimportant.<sup>48</sup> Leo Schwartz also was not concerned about religious matters. He discouraged Martin from learning Hebrew and, according to his son, practiced Judaism perfunctorily.

I would say that we observed the major Jewish holidays. My father, steeped in this, had a reasonable respect for them, yet was not particularly observant. His main observances were of Yahrzeits, or the anniversaries of the deaths of his parents, and then, of course, on the High Holy Days we would always be in the temple and also during Passover. Those were mainly the kinds of observances we had; but we were not, I would say, particularly religiously observant.<sup>49</sup>

The case of Harry Pazol paralleled that of Anna Winick. His father, like hers, was a rabbi who migrated from Lithuania to the United States and who lived in strict accordance with Talmudic rules. His life was so exemplary that his son could not imagine anyone being more religious. To Harry, though, this goodness appeared to go unrewarded. In his old age Harry's father journeyed back to the Old World with the intention of visiting his birthplace, as well as Palestine: he died aboard ship before he even got ashore in Lithuania. Based on his father's experience, Harry concluded that religion was of little use and that he should invest little in it.<sup>50</sup>

A third, similar example is that of the Zeigler family. Sherman Zeigler's father, who was also born in Lithuania, aspired to the rabbinate before he migrated to the United States to escape service in the Czar's army. By that time he had reacted strongly against religious life, actively discouraging his children from participation as well. Sherman Zeigler described his own upbringing this way:

I was never confirmed. I never had a Bar Mitzvah. I never had a religious education as far as the temple was concerned, but my dad was very religious philosophically. In fact, my dad in the old country studied to be a Jewish rabbi and rebelled against

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<sup>48</sup> Anna Schwartz interview.

<sup>49</sup> Martin D. Schwartz interview.

<sup>50</sup> Harry Pazol interview, Louisville, Kentucky, May 31, 1979.

it as a young man, but he was very learned in Jewish history, Jewish religion, and Jewish background. Of course, as I grew up a lot of this was passed on to me, and my values are based on the religion, philosophically, which isn't really all that much different from any other religion.<sup>51</sup>

The later arrivals from Eastern Europe were not the only Jews for whom religion had a low priority. Those from Western Europe were equally secular. Rachel Lipp characterized her family in this fashion: "Well, we were not Orthodox Jews. The background was completely German on my father's side, and my mother's was a French background. No, I hate to say it, but, very honestly, no, Jewish values were not important in my home."<sup>52</sup> Ann Kallmeyer Seltzer had a less strong reaction, but her evaluation was not unlike Rachel Lipp's: "The [Jewish] values were there; my parents observed them; and I think my father had a deeper sense of the meaning [of Jewishness], more so than mother at the time. But it was never predominant. I never felt any different than anyone else."<sup>53</sup>

To be a Jew in Muncie in the age of the Lynds was to live in a community of flux, one characterized by physical mobility, where status and religious affiliation often depended less on country of origin than on time of arrival, where opportunities to participate fully in community life had shrunk, and where anti-Semitism was openly articulated by the Ku Klux Klan. It meant residing in a community permeated by Christian values, although these values did not appear completely alien. Despite the discrimination and the pressures, Jewish Munsonians regarded themselves as little different from their non-Jewish neighbors. Perhaps, in the end, the Lynds were partially justified in excluding the Jewish community from *Middletown*. Clearly the values of that community, which were oriented around business success, paralleled those of the larger one.

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<sup>51</sup> Zeigler interview.

<sup>52</sup> Lipp interview.

<sup>53</sup> Ann Kallmeyer Seltzer interview, Marion, Indiana, April 2, 1979.