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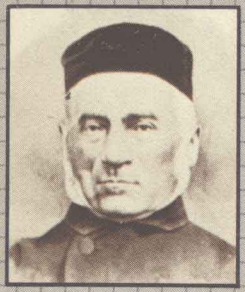
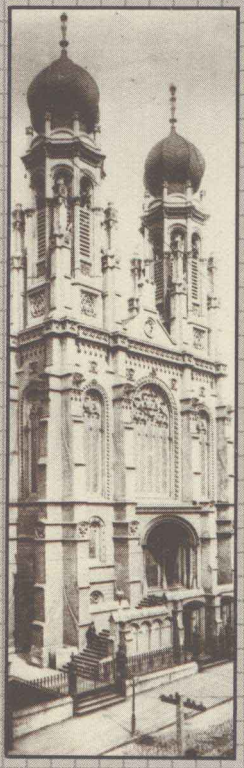
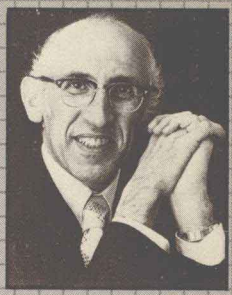
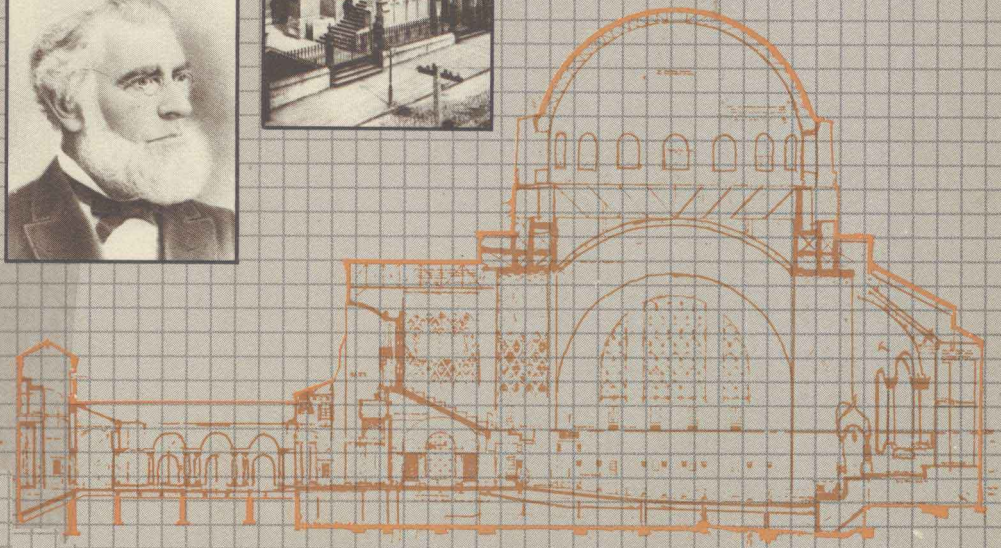
CONGREGATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP EMANU-EL OF SAN FRANCISCO, 1849-1980





BY FRED ROSENBAUM

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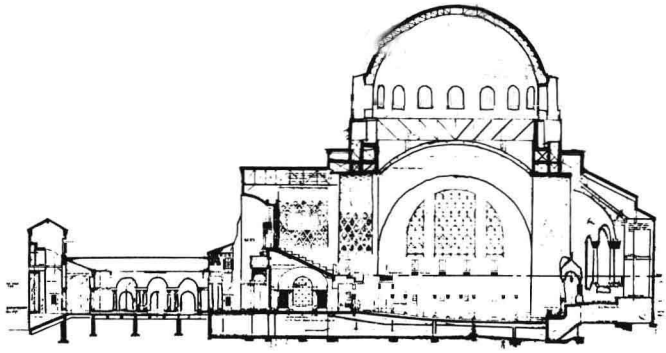

BY FRED ROSENBAUM

Western Jewish History Center
Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum
Berkeley, California

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Foreword

If the problems of the larger American and international scenes appear to defy the imaginations of men and women of good will, the highly palpable history of one congregation provides us with a singular opportunity for communal stocktaking. This is especially true of Emanu-El, whose story parallels the history of the city and region with which it has been so closely identified. There may be added comfort in the knowledge that ours is not the first generation at Temple Emanu-El to seek such intelligence.

When over eighty years ago a distinguished rabbi anxious to record the Temple's story before the last of the founders would be no more, Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger, compiled the *Chronicles of Emanu-El* commemorating the congregation's fiftieth anniversary, his was a singular achievement. The publication of this work less than six years before the gutting of the incomparable Sutter Street Temple and the destruction of its records during the 1906 earthquake and fire ought to make us even more thankful for the rabbi's unwitting foresight and dedication. Nonetheless, as the book's title makes apparent, the *Chronicles of Emanu-El* was largely what we today are inclined to regard as an expansive book of "begats" — a credit to *its* times but totally inadequate to our own.

Mindful of the need for an up-to-date history of Emanu-El by a professionally trained historian, in 1975 Rabbi Joseph Asher explored the possibilities of preparing a new congregational history suited to the expectations of American Jews in the final decades of the twentieth century. Appropriately, the highly regarded Bay Area Jewish historian Fred Rosenbaum was commissioned to carry out this assignment.

In perhaps the most ambitious history of an American Jewish congregation ever undertaken, Fred Rosenbaum meticulously tells the story of how a small congregation became a major institution in American Jewish life. As a matter of course, Rosenbaum gives special attention to the historical conditions that uniquely shaped the experience of Jews in the western metropolis. He also takes particular heed of the extraordinary role which the congregation's leaders and members have played in the civic, cultural and religious life of San Francisco. But his major effort is devoted to depicting the roles of the central religious personalities who successively gave substance and form to the Temple. And this is as it should be.

From its earliest beginnings, Emanu-El has been no ordinary congregation. At its inception during the Gold Rush years, it was imbued with a largeness of spirit that was borne through the Golden Gate by tens of thousands of adventurous Americans from every state in the Union and restless young immigrants from all the nations of Europe and from the world's other five continents. Together, after a few turbulent years, episodic vigilantism and recurrent anti-Chinese sentiment, they transformed tiny Yerba Buena into an instant international city with a springy cosmopolitanism and a pluralistic openness that was to become the new city's most distinctive hallmark.

When the pioneers named their congregation Emanu-El (God is With Us), they not only staked their claim to new American beginnings at the western edge of the great American continent and to the boundless horizons of the universal new Yankee nation extending from ocean to ocean, but they ardently identified themselves as well with the nation's uncontested new Atlantic metropolis. Doubtless they must have surmised that Emanu-El's namesake, founded just a few years earlier in New York by fellow Bavarian Jews, was slated to become the empire city's and the nation's cathedral synagogue, and they looked to the day when Emanu-El would become its Pacific counterpart. And indeed within less than a decade and a half after its founding and for well over half a century thereafter in "the New York of the Pacific," the twin spires of that architectural gem, the Sutter Street Temple, above all the city's splendid edifices would catch the eye of every visitor to the city.

The history of Emanu-El will interest all Americans eager to understand historic Judaism and should be particularly instructive to the congregation's members. From its founding 130 years ago, Temple Emanu-El has maintained a commanding presence and vitality in San Francisco and in Jewish life. In an era when the older major cities of the nation no longer retain their metropolitan centrality in the living and working patterns of their inhabitants, this is unusual. Emanu-El has shown a sustained capacity to bridge the generations, to keep its old members and to attract the new, and to enhance their lives. *Architects of Reform* makes evident why this has been so.

Moses Rischin

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Acknowledgments

There are many people to whom I am indebted for helping to make this book a reality. First of all, I wish to thank Mrs. Edgar M. Kahn for a generous stipend which enabled me to write the manuscript, a stipend donated in the memory of her late husband, himself a dedicated historian of Congregation Emanu-El, whose monographs broke many new paths. Additional subsidies toward the publication of this volume were made available by the Newhouse Foundation and several individuals including Mr. Walter Shorenstein.

The richest source of written material on the history of Emanu-El, and the Jews of the West in general, is the Western Jewish History Center of the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum in Berkeley. I am grateful to the archivist of the Center, Ruth Rafael, who over a period of several years located for me many key documents. I also owe a debt to two scholars in the field of American Jewish history who provided me with highly useful information pertaining to this study: Jonathan Sarna of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, and the late Robert E. Levinson of San Jose State University.

In addition to printed and hand-written sources, I relied on personal interviews and would like to thank a few of the many people who shared with me their impressions of the Congregation and of Jewish life in San Francisco: Ludwig Altman, Rabbi Joseph Asher, Eugene Block, Reynold Colvin, Rabbi Alvin Fine, Rabbi Meyer Heller, Myer Kahn, Rabbi Brian Lurie, Rabbi Arnold Magid, Cantor Joseph Portnoy, Irving Reichert, Jr., Rose Rinder, John Rothmann, G. Marvin Schoenberg,

Susan Somerville, Rabbi Joseph Weinberg and Henrietta Voorsanger. Three others whom I interviewed have since passed away and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity through this volume to have preserved some of their thoughts: Louis Freehof, Marshall Kuhn and Harold Zellerbach.

Four men in particular, each a generation older than me, have influenced this volume and helped bring it to fruition. To Rabbi Joseph Asher, a part of this project since its inception, I express the deepest thanks not only for his confidence in my abilities but also for his unflagging dedication to historical honesty. Rabbi Alvin Fine aided me immensely by providing me with a raft of important documents and photographs, as well as many hours during which he shared his deep insights into the workings of the Temple and the larger community. There is no way that I will ever be able to repay my dear friend Seymour Fromer, Director of the Magnes Museum, for the many kindnesses he has shown me over the years. His constant help and encouragement has had a great impact not only on this undertaking but on my entire career as a writer, teacher and educator.

I wish to thank above all my editorial advisor, Dr. Moses Rischin, Professor of History at San Francisco State University and Director of the Western Jewish History Center. The rigorous standards which he applied both to the style and substance of the manuscript played an indispensable role in the final product. I count our many long discussions on modern Jewish history among the most intellectually exciting experiences of my life.

In addition I profited from the suggestions of Ludwig Altman, Jack Love, Rabbi Brian Lurie and John Rothmann who read parts of the manuscript in its early stages.

My last word of thanks goes to Pat, a true partner in my work and life, for her faith in this project and in me.

F.R.
Oakland, California
September, 1980

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Instant Metropolis

WITH THE DISCOVERY of gold in Northern California early in 1848, one of the most remote and uninhabited areas on the continent was abruptly transformed into a new center of commercial activity. By the end of 1852, nearly a quarter of a million people were lured to the state. The destination for almost all of them was San Francisco, the gateway to the Mother Lode.

They descended upon the makeshift city from all parts of the country and from all over the globe. Alongside Southerners and New Englanders came Chinese and South Americans, Polynesians and Europeans, Australians and North Africans. And among this "medley of races and nationalities," described by Hubert Howe Bancroft, were "the ubiquitous Hebrews," most of them European-born, having lived on the East Coast of the United States only a few short years before undertaking the perilous trip to California. A handful had come overland, defying rugged terrain and unfriendly Indians, but most of the Jews, already veterans of one ocean voyage, chose the sea route: the harrowing, five to eight-month-long, 18,000-mile journey "around the Horn," or the preferable shorter route across the malarial swampland of Panama or Nicaragua.

They were resourceful and adventurous, disciplined and daring. A significant few were proud and reserved Sephardim whose ancestors for centuries had advised the rulers of Iberia, and who had been established in America since Colonial times. Others came from England, France and Russian Poland, but the majority by far hailed from the German-speaking lands of Central Europe. A virtual reservoir of Jewish immigration was Posen, the Prussian province which Frederick the Great had seized from Poland in 1772, and which, in the nineteenth

century, still had much in common culturally with Eastern Europe.* But those among the first generation of pioneers destined to achieve the most, particularly in the business world, came from the rural towns of Bavaria. Here, and in neighboring Baden and Wuerttemburg, the French Revolution had raised expectations among Jews that the thousand-year-old chains of persecution would finally be broken. Instead, in the wake of Napoleon's defeat, reactionaries on the German thrones crushed all hopes of legal equality, restoring medieval restrictions on occupation and residence, and even placing a quota on the annual number of Jewish marriages. The economic decline of the mid-1830s and the failed Revolution of 1848 further heightened the tide of immigration so that from 1835 to 1880 two hundred thousand Jews from the German lands arrived in the United States. While it is true that most of them remained peddlers or storekeepers their entire lives, a surprising number reached the pinnacle of wealth and status in the new land, many of these merchant-princes making their fortunes in San Francisco.

But this lay years in the future. When they sailed through the Golden Gate in 1849 or in the early fifties, they were very young men, often short both on capital and experience. Some went directly to the diggings, but most Jews realized from the outset that the merchant rather than the miner stood the best chance of attaining financial security. Often relying on a relative in the East who could ship dry goods — for which there was a terrific demand — they opened stores in San Francisco as well as in the Sierra mining towns. Likely to start their families sooner than their non-Jewish counterparts, and more willing to remain in the area permanently, these early Jewish tradesmen — who rarely drank to excess and usually kept within the bounds of the law — were a stabilizing, civilizing influence on frontier society.

Stability and civilization were badly needed. A sprawling jumble of tents and flimsy shacks, San Francisco during the Gold Rush years was ravaged by no less than six city-wide fires. Rats and other vermin infested the area which experienced a serious outbreak of cholera in 1850. While there were few street lamps until the mid-fifties, the town was illuminated by the light of its many saloons — centers for prostitution, gambling and brawling as well as drinking. "Sports" in this city of young men gone wild included not only horseracing and bull-fighting, but also cock-fighting and bear-baiting. The muddy streets were rife with crime, including murder, but despite the formation of vigilante committees, justice was rare.

It was in this setting that the first Jewish services on the West Coast

*It is misleading, however, to label all Posen Jews "Polish" as two writers have recently done. While religious life there approximated that of an Eastern European *shtetl*, these Jews — Prussian subjects — spoke and wrote German and not Yiddish.

were held, on Rosh Hashanah, 1849, when a group of thirty Jews, responding to a local newspaper notice, met in a wood-framed tent on Jackson Street near Kearny.* By Yom Kippur their number grew to nearly fifty. As they had no Torah, a sacred scroll made of parchment, a printed copy of the Pentateuch was used instead.

The partial list of those present reveals the diversity of the nascent town's Jewish population. At least two were American-born Sephardim: Joseph Shannon, who would soon be elected Treasurer of the County of San Francisco, and Joel Noah, thought to be the brother of the famous playwright, politician and proto-Zionist, Mordecai Manuel Noah. The Englishmen included Benjamin Davidson, soon to become an agent of the Rothschilds; Barnett Keesing, accompanied by his wife, the only woman present; and Lewis Franklin, of Polish descent, whose store occupied the temporary place of worship; Abraham Watters was a young merchant from Prussia; S. Flyshhacker was likely the brother of Aaron Fleishhacker of Bavaria, patriarch of the respected family of bankers and industrialists.

One year later High Holiday services for a much larger group were held in Masonic Hall on Kearny Street, now with "many dark-eyed daughters of Judah" present. These services were organized by a committee headed by the legendary Leon Dyer, the first leader of the San Francisco Jewish community. Born in the Rhineland, in 1807, he and his father had both become well-known in Baltimore beginning in the 1830s as butchers, real estate developers and presidents of that city's first synagogue. Before arriving in San Francisco, in the middle of 1850, he had taken part in a number of other adventures such as the Second Seminole War in Florida and the Texan struggle for independence from Mexico, in which he attained the rank of major.

The Yom Kippur sermon was delivered by the twenty-nine-year-old Lewis Franklin, who had been a business associate of Dyer in Baltimore. Like the many Christian pastors in San Francisco during the Gold Rush, whose favorite topic was the folly of greed, Franklin aptly drew upon the Book of Ecclesiastes:

> 'Vanity of vanity, verily all is vanity,' saith the preacher. Ye say wealth is to the possessor rank and life, and flattery and praise and envy salute your ears and ye are content. Ambition goads ye on, and ye would feign know no superior in the social scale. Man though art a very idiot! These shining baubles may lure the million, but they will take unto themselves wings, and flee from thee, leaving thou as naked as when thou wert first created.

On this September morning in 1850, he also challenged his audience

*Another version of the first service places the site on Montgomery Street, but recent research tends to authenticate the tent-room on Jackson.

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to construct a synagogue. But this assembly, sometimes referred to as the Kearny Street Hebrew Congregation, did not hold services beyond the Simchat Torah celebration led by Dyer on September 29. "Old Baltimore," as he was known, soon opted to return to his home in the East, and Franklin left several months later for San Diego. But an even more serious problem was the division between the Eastern and Western Europeans on matters of liturgy. Indeed, one of the two factions, probably those preferring *Minhag Polen* (traditional Polish ritual), actually walked out of the High Holiday services.

There appears to have been a semblance of unity at a series of meetings in March, 1851, to arrange for the observance of Passover, and even to begin raising funds for a synagogue. By March 16, $4,400 had been collected from 182 contributors who comprised more than half the number of Jewish households in San Francisco. But on March 30, and April 6, the group was deadlocked on the question of who was to be elected community *shochet*, or ritual butcher, with the German and Polish sides each supporting rival candidates. It was this dispute which led to the formation of two congregations in the second week of April, 1851.

One was Congregation Emanu-El (meaning "God is with us," perhaps an expression of gladness for having arrived safely on the West Coast) which prepared a charter on April 8, and filed it with the county clerk three days later. It was signed by sixteen men, mostly Bavarians, but it also counted at least three native-born Sephardim.* The other, taking the name Sherith Israel, included Poles, Englishmen (some of whom had arrived after lengthy stays in Australia) and Poseners who met on the evening of April 8, and prepared an advertisement for kosher meat which ran in the *Alta California* two days later. Emanu-El began with sixty members, Sherith Israel with forty-two.

The newly-born Congregation Emanu-El was Orthodox in orientation, for this was the form of Judaism with which most of its members had been familiar in the small towns of Central Europe. In addition to the importance attached to the office of *shochet*, the "Constitution" of 1851 decreed that services would strictly follow the *Minhag Ashkenaz* (traditional German ritual) and that members would be required to attend a *minyan* (the ancient requirement of ten to constitute a quorum for prayer

*The charter members were Philip Runkel, Abraham Watters, Abraham Labatt, Samuel Marx, Moritz Schwartz, Simon Heiter, L.A. Levy, Jr., Joseph Shannon, Rudolph Wyman, I.E. Woolf, A.H. Harris, J.J. Joseph, Jr., S. Fleishhacker, J. Honisberger, Louis Cohn, and William Seligman. The original "Articles of Incorporation" was inscribed by Abraham Labatt's son, Henry.

services) when notified. It also provided that no one married to a non-Jew was to be allowed to join and that any congregant taking a gentile wife automatically forfeited his membership.

Yet there were clear indications from the outset that the congregation would gravitate toward liberal Judaism, itself in embryo. Emanu-El's first President was the Sephardic clothier Abraham C. Labatt, born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina, where in 1824 he had been active in the founding of the nation's first Reform congregation. Along with forty-six others, he had left his traditional synagogue, Beth Elohim, and had organized The Reformed Society of Israelites which shortened the services and introduced English into the liturgy.

In San Francisco, however, Labatt, also an alderman, was concerned more with the survival of the fragile institution he headed than with engaging in theological combat, for his one-year term, and that of his successor, Joseph Shannon, were filled with adversity. Due to a sudden oversupply of goods, beginning in February, 1850, a period of recession set in which would last for the next eighteen months. Prices declined sharply and eastern banks began to deny credit. The "Great Fire" of May, 1851, wiped out ten to twelve million dollars of property, much of it belonging to Jewish retailers. During that entire year of trouble the income of the congregation, still in rented quarters on Kearny Street, was barely $1,500.

Some progress was made, however. A Torah was probably in use during the High Holiday services of 1850, probably brought west by a Mr. Tannenwald of Cincinnati, and purchased for the congregation by Benjamin Davidson. In the following year, a second one was donated to Emanu-El by the British philanthropist and guardian of threatened Jewish communities, Sir Moses Montefiore. In 1840, he had orchestrated a successful campaign to save Damascus Jewry that stood accused of ritual murder, the age-old blood libel, and several years later he journeyed to Russia where he appealed to the Czar for better treatment for the Jews. Most likely he learned of the needs of the San Francisco Jewish community through Abraham Watters, who had spent several years in London, or from Benjamin Davidson, the representative in California of Montefiore's brother-in-law, Nathan Mayer Rothschild.

A Torah reader, Cantor Max Welhof, was appointed in 1851, but at a nominal salary. The roughly one dozen children of the members were taught informally by the congregant Louis Cohn without compensation.

It was not until the spring of 1853, a few months after economic conditions had improved, that serious consideration was given to the erection of a synagogue. Emanuel Berg, the third President in as many years, appointed a committee to acquire a suitable lot.

It is possible that the thirty-five-year-old native of Bamberg was in part reacting to an outside threat in advocating a synagogue. To be sure, anti-Semitism was rare in the pioneer West, but newspapers such as the *Alta California* did print letters demanding a strict Sunday Closing Law, communications which often alleged greed as the motivation of Jewish storeowners who conducted operations on the gentile Sabbath. A flurry of these letters — often refuted by Jew and gentile alike — appeared late in 1852, while a petition, full of anti-Semitic slurs, urged the state legislature to enact a Sunday Closing Law.

Yet many months went by before the committee appointed by Berg announced that a site had been bought for the construction of a synagogue atop today's Nob Hill on California Street between Mason and Powell. The purchase price was $3,000, most of which was paid in cash. At its annual meeting on October 23, 1853, the congregation formally approved the acquisition of the lot and also elected as President the Bavarian dry goods dealer Henry Seligman. Serving until mid-1855, and again from 1857 to 1862, this member of a famous family of financeers exerted more influence on the congregation during its formative years than did any other layman.

In the late 1840s, Henry Seligman had been the last of a family of eight brothers and three sisters to immigrate to America from the tiny village of Baiersdorf. The men worked slavishly as peddlers, first in Pennsylvania, and later in the South and up-state New York. Henry was preceded on the West Coast by two of his brothers, Jesse and Leopold, who sailed to San Francisco in 1850 with $20,000 of merchandise. Leopold almost died from malaria contracted in Panama, and Jesse was nearly killed when a stray bullet from a gunfight went through his hat. But the Seligmans prospered. In order to protect their goods from fire, they rented one of the city's few brick buildings. The gold they earned from their efforts was sent to New York where the oldest brother, Joseph, traded it on the world market, laying the foundation for the mighty Seligman financial empire.

Henry and his brother William soon arrived in California as well, partly because the artistic Leopold, more interested in sketch books than ledger books, provided little help to Jesse. As in the East, the brothers did not cling to the Sabbath and dietary laws of their childhood. But they did feel an obligation to establish a congregation, even as they amassed a fortune in the chaotic boom town that was early San Francisco. Jesse and William joined Emanu-El, the latter as a charter member. Yet another brother, Abraham, later came out west and served for many years on the Board of Trustees. Henry, as President, directed efforts to construct a synagogue and engage a rabbi.

Only three weeks after his election, the congregation — still com-

posed of young men whose future was uncertain — unanimously committed itself to raise $20,000 to build a house of worship. But the group of thirty in attendance at the special meeting decided to sell the California Street parcel and look elsewhere for a suitable spot. The site, with its commanding view of the Golden Gate, would later soar in value as private mansions and fine hotels rose alongside it. But in 1853 its elevated location, half a mile from downtown, was simply considered inconvenient.

The California Street property was auctioned off, actually at a loss, but President Seligman found another piece of land early in 1854, 9,000 square feet on Broadway between Powell and Mason. Known as North Beach even then, this was a residential district in which many Jews made their homes.

A design was accepted which had been estimated to cost $30,000, but when the contractors reported that there would be a thirty-three per cent overrun, Seligman opted for the more modest plans presented by Crane and England which could be executed for the $20,000 voted upon six months earlier. In the spring of 1854, with the entire city enjoying a period of prosperity, ground was broken for the synagogue.

Seligman had also persuaded the congregation to raise Welhof's salary substantially by moving from the two-hundred-dollar-a-month Bush Street space (occupied since 1852) to yet another temporary location at the corner of Green and Stockton, cutting the rent by more than two thirds. More importantly, he convinced his fellow members, already hard-pressed by the building campaign, to pledge an additional $3,500 a year, the sum needed to retain a full-time rabbi.

Yet few rabbis were available. Most of the nation's fifty congregations were led by cantors or laymen, for the yeshiva-trained rabbi was not a likely candidate for immigration to the "American Babylon."

Only in the 1840s and fifties did a coterie of German-speaking rabbis come to the United States with the expectation that it would provide precisely the proper atmosphere for their revolutionary interpretation of Judaism strongly influenced by the Berlin Haskalah which Moses Mendelssohn had set in motion in the late eighteenth century. This movement, which crystallized in the German states during the liberal Napoleonic occupation, sought to end the ghettoized existence of Central European Jewry. It attempted to bring Jewish life more into line with that of the host country — economically, politically, socially and even religiously. Thus, the Talmud was stressed less than the universal

ethical message of the Bible, particularly the prophets. Many of the Hebrew prayers were removed from the service and often an organ was brought into the synagogue. And Jews were also urged to dress like their gentile neighbors, attend secular schools, and petition the state for equal treatment under the law.

The leader of this movement in America — which soon overshadowed the lay experiment of Charleston begun two decades earlier — was Dr. Isaac Mayer Wise of Bohemia who had arrived in New York in 1846. After four years as the rabbi of Congregation Beth El in Albany, the President of the synagogue attempted to have him dismissed because of his outspoken Reform views. When Wise ignored him, and continued to perform his duties, the President punched him in the face during Rosh Hashanah services, instigating a riot among the worshippers. Wise was sustained in Albany but it proved too small a stage for him and by 1854 he was firmly ensconsed at B'nai Jeshurun in Cincinnati, an expanding, young city which became the national headquarters of the burgeoning Reform movement.

It was Wise's friend and like-minded colleague, Rabbi James Gutheim of Westphalia, whom Seligman invited to assume the Emanu-El pulpit. Gutheim had preceded Wise as the spritual leader of B'nai Jeshurun where he had brought in a choir and eliminated part of the liturgy, amidst a violent controversy not unlike the incident in Albany.

By the time of Seligman's invitation, however, Gutheim had been serving the Jewish community of New Orleans for several years, and he chose to remain at his post. For the Emanu-El pulpit he suggested Dr. David Steinberg, his former classmate at the seminary of Muenster, who also taught at that institution and stood in line to become its director. Seligman sent funds to Gutheim, to book Steinberg's passage from Europe, but he, too, declined to come. Steinberg was aware that another German rabbi, already in America, was much interested in the Emanu-El position, and he felt it undignified to compete with him.

That was the scholarly Julius Eckman who would become San Francisco's first congregational rabbi. He arrived in July, 1854, just in time to perform the ceremonies of laying the cornerstone both for Emanu-El and, two weeks later, nearby Sherith Israel.

Eckman wrote and spoke fluent English, and was dedicated to the education of the young, but he was far from ideally suited for the Emanu-El post, and it is clear that Seligman and the Board of Trustees had serious reservations about him from the beginning. He was not engaged until late October, after he had consecrated the handsome Broadway Synagogue (on September 14) and led High Holiday services, all on a trial basis. Even then he was selected in large part because the congregation felt that no one else was available; neither Gutheim nor the

traditional Isaac Leeser, a respected rabbi in Philadelphia with whom Seligman corresponded, could put forward any other name. The substantial new house of worship, meanwhile, seemed to demand a full-time rabbi. A solid, brick structure, with an attractive neo-Gothic facade, including buttresses and pointed windows and portals, it had a seating capacity of eight hundred.

Eckman lived on the West Coast until his death in 1874, but he remained at Emanu-El for only one year. Perhaps his main drawback was that he was not a member of Wise's camp. Although he had earned a doctorate in classics at the University of Berlin, and had been ordained by "the father of modern Jewish scholarship," Leopold Zunz, he had played but a tangential role in the development of liberal Judaism in his native land. His pious childhood in a village in Posen evidently influenced him much more than his secular studies in later life.

He saw the logic of some reforms but, on the whole, practiced and preached Orthodox Judaism at Emanu-El, despite the fact that most of the membership — which kept its businesses open on the Sabbath — was leaning in the opposite direction. A choir of both men and women had been organized before Eckman's election, but in almost every other respect the services appear to have been traditional. "There are no innovations," a perceptive Alsatian observer wrote in 1855, "the synagogue services are more or less as still found in our humble villages," including a "gallery for the ladies."

Eckman's temperament also clashed with his new surroundings. In a city of frenetic young men seeking quick profits, his manner was calm and ascetic. Past fifty and without a family, the solitary Eckman lived in a garret on the most meager rations of food and water. The only possession he ever prized was his outstanding library, comprised of books in the many languages he read, and studded with illuminated Hebrew manuscripts. He was a New Testament scholar as well as an expert on the Hebrew Bible, but his lonely life of austerity and introspection brings to mind the great religions of the Orient; perhaps it is not surprising that in the 1860s he volunteered to spend several years among the Jews of Kai Fung Fu, China.

The gentle rabbi, rarely without a black velvet cap on his head, related best to small children. He opened a Jewish school shortly after his arrival, the first on the Pacific Coast, which he headed while rabbi of Emanu-El and for many years after his ties to the congregation were severed. Known as Hefzibah (a term in Isaiah referring to the people of Israel), the popular school required its students to attend four class sessions per week for instruction primarily in Jewish texts. Eckman wrote and published his own *Prayer-book for Children* and *Vocabulary of The Hebrew Tongue.* But his lack of administrative and business expertise,

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