

Records indicate, in the year 1844, the first Jewish settler in the Pottstown area was Jacob Hessel, a German immigrant, who operated a grocery store at Beech and Manatawny Streets. In 1859 Jewish immigrants from the Miller, Mosheim and Weitzenkorn families also settled in Pottstown; and their descendants still live in the area. Between 1882 and 1890, many other Jewish families arrived from Hungary and Russia settling in the Pottstown area with hope for a better life and to worship in freedom as Jews. As there was no official, charter established for a congregation, the families' opened their homes for services.

On March 11, 1889, the families obtained a charter to create a congregation and a Synagogue built on Hale Street. Several years passed when financial problems and personal disputes caused the congregation to dissolve and the property sold, except for the cemetery, which remains until the present day.

In May 1892, Hased Shel Emet, (Mercy and Truth) was established. The newly established Congregation purchased the Hale Street property the following year, with the treasury showing an income of \$7.43, expenses of \$12.11, leaving a deficit of \$4.68.

After years of hardship, the membership began to grow and the Synagogue became active with many organizations and clubs, which required additional space. In 1925, with the initiative of Adolf Printz, President of the Synagogue and a highly determined committee, the sixty families raised the \$110,000 to build a new Synagogue located at High and Warren Streets.

The first ordained rabbi of Mercy and Truth was Rabbi Maxwell Farber whose installation occurred in 1927. His successors included Rabbi Abraham Israelitan, Rabbi Marcus Kramer, and Rabbi Emil Schorsch installed in August 1940. In 1944 we purchased a parsonage and in 1948, the Romig property was purchased to build a school. By November 1956, the Congregation had an enrollment of 132 children and again found the need to expand. In January 1959 came the formation of a building committee. When they made plans to renovate and enlarge the High Street building, the building committee ran into opposition. They then approved a proposal to construct a new building in a different location.

The architecture of the sanctuary is tent-like and contains magnificent stained glass windows designed by Maurice Miller. There are seven on the south and seven on the north walls depicting twelve Jewish holidays, commemorative occasions and such practices as charity (tsidaka) and prayer (tefilah). The theme of the façade which measures 100 feet around, three feet three inches wide is the insignia of the twelve tribes of Israel, each named for one of the sons of Jacob.

Members of the Congregation not only served the Pottstown community but the wider community as well. We honor the following appointments:

Dr. Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (19 years)

Jennifer Schlosberg, ordained Rabbi in 2012; and currently serving in Rosalyn Heights, New York

Rabbi Johnathan A. Stein, President of the Central Committee of American Rabbis, the Movement of 2,000 Reform Rabbis from March 2011 to March 2013.

Our Synagogue's history spans 120 years; and we just celebrated 50 years in our North Keim Street home. Our ancestors saw the Synagogue as a place to gather, worship, study and care for the departed. We hope we can continue to serve our Jewish community for many years to come.