

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown Area Jewish Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 749

ETTA RAND

Interviewed

by

Irving Ozer

on

January 6, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
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INTERVIEWEE: ETTA RAND
INTERVIEWER: Irving Ozer
SUBJECT: Youngstown history, Zionism, synagogues
DATE: January 6, 1986

O: This is an interview with Etta Rand for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Youngstown Area Jewish Community, by Irving Ozer, on January 6, 1986.

Etta, you were born in Youngstown?

R: Yes.

O: When was that?

R: 1884.

O: That makes you 102 years old?

R: Yes.

O: Where did your parents come from?

R: My parents emigrated from Austria-Hungary.

O: When did they come to the United States?

R: About 1878, six years before I was born.

O: Was there a particular reason why they came to Youngstown?

R: No. They probably heard what a wonderful country this was. They were followed by some more of my family, all of whom came to Youngstown.

O: Do you know whether they came by way of Ellis Island?

R: Oh sure.

O: Did they ever tell you any stories about coming?

R: Not too many.

O: When they arrived in New York City, was there any particular reason why they came to Youngstown?

R: I have no idea. Each one of the family members came to Youngstown and all remained here.

O: Where were you born in Youngstown, at home?

R: I'm sure.

O: Where was that?

R: On Front Street.

O: Were there many houses on Front Street then?

R: The lower end of Front Street.

O: Did your father have a store there?

R: Later on, as most Jewish people at that time opened a grocery store. I understand there were about a dozen Orthodox Jewish families in Youngstown at the time. There were quite a few of the German Jews from the Rodef Sholom.

O: Can you remember any of the families?

R: There were the Strouss' and the Hirshberg's.

O: How about the Orthodox Jews, do you remember any of those names?

R: Yes. There were the Frankel's, Lustig's, Friedman's.

O: Were the Goodman's here at that time?

R: Moses Goodman, Goldstein's, Rosenblum's, all had families. There was the Brenner family.

O: What about Goldstein's?

R: Yes, the two boys were the children of my uncle and aunt.

O: What was downtown Youngstown like at that time?

R: There wasn't very much to it.

O: Can you conjure up a picture in your mind and describe what downtown Youngstown was like?

R: There was Federal Street, Boardman Street.

O: Was Federal Street paved at the time?

R: I wouldn't know. There was Front Street. I do remember a large excavation on Market Street. There had been some big buildings there and a big explosion or some thing created this and I tried to find out from many people what building was there; that is where the courthouse now stands between Front Street and Boardman. Nobody remembers. Till this day I don't know what happened there.

O: What school did you go to when you were living there?

R: We better not talk about school because I didn't have very much.

O: What school did you go to?

R: Front Street School. Nobody got an education in those days.

O: What kind of building was the Front Street School?

R: It stood up until the last few years. It was right across the street from the courthouse.

O: How many grades were in that school?

R: Eight. In those eight grades they taught as much as your high schools today. The school had three floors.

O: Is that where the jail is now?

R: The jail was down on Boardman Street. I remember there was a murder of a policeman; his name was Freed. After school all of us kids ran down to look through the grating; he was in the basement.

O: How long did you live on Front Street?

R: I imagine about fifteen years.

O: Then where did you go?

R: Then we moved to Kyle Street, which was a very nice, quiet, Swedish neighborhood. We met some Swedish families who I am still in contact with to this day. They are scattered all over the country.

O: How many of them do you know still in Youngstown?

R: Youngstown has quite a large Swedish population.

O: How many of them do you know?

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R: At that time I probably knew 100 of them.

O: Were there many Jews in the neighborhood?

R: Very few.

O: Do you remember who they were?

R: Later on the Hodes family moved up there. Rothschild's were there.

O: As time went on more and more Jewish families moved into the area?

R: Yes, quite a few.

O: Who were some of them who moved in?

R: My own family was there, the Schlesinger's, Jacob's, Tamarkin's, Rome's.

O: Did that become pretty much a Jewish neighborhood after a while?

R: Yes, there were quite a few Jewish families.

O: What temple did most of them attend?

R: I think Temple Emanuel and the Children of Israel.

O: Did they walk all the way over there on Sabbath?

R: The first temple was the one that my father had a hand in, the Children of Israel Temple on Summit Avenue.

O: When was that temple founded?

R: I don't remember.

O: Who were some of the other founders along with your father?

R: I don't remember. They are all gone.

O: Were most of them from Hungary?

R: Yes. Later on Temple Emanuel on Rayen Avenue became a big organization.

O: That was mostly Russians, right?

R: The Ozersky family was prominent.

O: How about the Altshuler's?

R: They came later, I think.

O: Did people who lived on Kyle Street walk to temple?

R: We all walked to the temple.

O: Did you stay members of that temple for a long time?

R: Yes.

O: What was your father's first name?

R: Moses.

O: Did you live on Kyle Street for the rest of the time?

R: Yes. We stayed there at least twenty years.

O: How did you travel in Youngstown?

R: By foot. Cars were just coming in.

O: How about the streetcars?

R: There were streetcars that were horse-drawn. I remember going down when electricity came into action; we all went down to Federal Street to see the sparks. It was a wonderful sight.

O: What was the Central Square like then?

R: It had a big monument on it. The streetcar started from Market Street and ran out to Park & Falls. They went all the way around the square and turned around at the bank.

O: Did the streetcars go out west too to Warren?

R: We didn't have any occasion to go back and forth to Warren in those days.

O: What were the favorite places for the young people to go?

R: The earliest I remember was when Mill Creek Park was organized and the streetcar started running there. That was quite an evening to spend there.

O: What were the movies downtown?

R: The movies started with a five cent nickelodeon.

O: Where was that?

R: That was on the corner of Hazel and Federal Street.

O: Who ran that?

R: I think the Robbins boys were backing it. Warner Brothers was the same family. Robbins or Warner's started that.

O: Can you remember some of the other stores downtown at the time?

R: McKelvey's was always there and Euwer's.

O: What about Fordyce?

R: That was on the corner of Phelps and Federal.

O: What other movies were there downtown as time went on?

R: I remember when the Warner boys first came in. They were neighbors of ours.

O: Did you know them well?

R: Very well. I think the old fellow had a butcher shop and the boys used to deliver us kosher meat.

O: How did you get started in Jewish community work?

R: My first connection was with Hadassah. While I wasn't in as a charter member, I did join at the instigation of Mrs. Kaminetsky. From that time on we were always such good friends. Mr. and Mrs. Kaminetsky were very active in all sorts of Jewish endeavors. They were wonderful people.

O: How long did you stay active in Hadassah?

R: I was still active until two or three years ago. I had every job on the Hadassah board except the presidency, which I never could accept on account of my obligation of raising two boys.

O: What memory stands out in your mind about Hadassah?

R: I remember having met the prominent man, Louis Lipsky. I saw him one evening at the Zionist meeting held in the Opera House.

O: Where was the Opera House?

R: On the square. Across the street was the Tod house.

O: Did you see many operas there?

R: No.

O: What other Jewish organizations were you active in?

R: I was a member of council.

O: What was the Lady's Shelter Organization?

R: My father used to bring home some old Jewish men on Friday nights. Knowing the necessity of taking care of those people, my mother and Mrs. Wilkoff organized an organization and we never had the problem of having to take care of these old fellows.

O: What about the first Jewish policeman?

R: His name was Jacob Kook. The newspapers used to often tell jokes about him. He was a very religious individual.

O: How did you happen to get involved at Anshe Emeth?

R: I was secretary in the office of Guttridge and Rand, the large clothiers. Mr. Rand was my brother-in-law and he urged me to take a position after the passing of my husband.

O: When was that?

R: I forget that. I must have been about twenty-five when I was secretary of Anshe Emeth then; Rabbi Burnbaum was there.

O: Who hired you?

R: Kline. He owned a liquor store with Harry Krauss.

O: They approached you and asked you to work for the temple?

R: Yes. Mr. Kline was president of the temple at the time. I remained there twelve years.

I want to mention my boys' names, Bernard and Harvey. Both of them are attorneys. Bernard is practicing in Cleveland now. I came to Cleveland because of him. I came to Cleveland in 1945. He has been a wonderful son and has taken care of me.

O: Going back to Youngstown as you were growing up, who were some of the young people who you went out with socially?

R: Darn few. (Laughter)

O: Who did you date?

R: I can't remember. I did very little socializing in those days.

O: You were quite active in USO and Red Cross, weren't you?

R: Oh yes. I was active in the USO in the First World War and in the Second.

O: In the First World War what did you do in the USO?

R: I can't remember.

O: What did you do in the Red Cross?

R: We did Red Cross work. I can't remember. I have citations from them from the Youngstown and Cleveland branches.

O: Do you remember the flu epidemic?

R: Yes.

O: Can you tell me any stories about that?

R: My family, without exception, I was the only one who didn't have the flu.

O: Did you know many people who died from that?

R: Yes. I remember pregnant women were very susceptible.

O: How did they treat it in those days?

R: I don't remember. My family recovered nicely.

O: How is Helen Shagrin involved with you, her family?

R: My brother-in-law and her father were brothers.

O: Going from the pleasant to the unpleasant, did you ever experience any anti-Semitism?

R: No. I remember very simple cases, nothing serious. I didn't have any problems and neither did my children in school.

O: What about the Ku Klux Klan?

R: I didn't know much about them. We knew they existed.

I want to tell you that I was in the parade of commemoration of 1492. In 1892 America had a big Pageant of America. All the kids in school participated. They're going to have it again in 1992. The parade lasted for hours and it was held all over the country.

O: How many presidents can you remember?

R: The first one I remember is McKinley. His platform was a full dinner pail because people were hungry in those days; that was during the Depression.

O: In your opinion which president was the best one?

R: I don't know. I remember during the campaigns everybody had

big pictures in their front windows. We weren't afraid to tell who we voted for.

- O: Let's go back to Youngstown. If you had to tell me the names of two or three people who made the biggest impression on you, who would they be?
- R: I know the Frankel's had the most money; they had a big cigar store. I had a very prominent nephew; his name was Dr. Sam Farkas. He and his brother Dave were prominent dentists in Youngstown. My nephew Sam was very active in organization work, Jewish as well as Gentile. He was active in the Lions Club.
- O: What were the steel mills like when you were growing up?
- R: The city was lined with steel mills. There was at least five miles of it from East Youngstown to Warren. People used to complain of the smoke. It was more or less a dirty city. We were told if it wasn't for that smoke the city would suffer, which has happened fifty years later.
- O: What do you remember about the Depression of 1929 and 1930?
- R: As I told you my father had a little grocery store and many of his customers were desperately poor. Instead of giving them amounts of money they were given bags of food, oatmeal, and things they found necessary for life. It was a very, very unhappy situation. I remember father found many of his customers who never paid up when conditions became better.
- O: This clothing factory, what happened to it?
- R: Guttridge and Rand was well-known. They went out of business after the Depression.
- O: Do you remember how the north side and the south side came to be split?
- R: The north side always had the most influential people.
- O: Moneywise?
- R: In every way. The Jewish population on the south side of town wasn't so big.
- O: There was a point where they almost hated each other. Do you remember the organizations of the Federation and the plans for a new building?
- R: I think I was already living up here.
- O: Who was Dr. Maurice Lamb?

- R: I had two brothers, Samuel and Rabbi Pinkus. When my parents immigrated to America, they left him behind because my grandparents feared this wasn't a religious country and he wouldn't be able to get an education. My father, in America, managed to have him go to the rabbinical school. He got his Ph.d. in Bern, Switzerland. He was very well-equipped to be a rabbi. He went to New York and took a job in an Orthodox synagogue where he stayed for three or four years before he died. Pinkus married in New York and raised a family. The daughter married Rabbi Maurice Lamb. He is now the head cheese of the Orthodox rabbis in America.
- O: Did you know "Bone-Setter Reese?"
- R: He lived in my neighborhood. He lived on Park Avenue. He did many miracles. People came from all parts of the country and distant lands. He fixed so many bones up. Nobody ever equalled him.
- O: He was just a mill worker, right?
- R: He has been.
- O: Do you remember a macaroni company explosion?
- R: Yes. Muldoon Macaroni had an explosion when I was about fifteen years old. Noodles and everything were hanging.
- O: Where were they located?
- R: On the corner of Boardman and Walnut Street.
- O: Who were some Jewish companies, businesses that you remember?
- R: Wilcox was a big steel company. Theobold's had a men's furnishing store. Livingston's had a big women's store.
- O: Do you remember my grandfather Altshuler?
- R: I knew of him. He taught Hébrew.
- O: How did they teach Hébrew in your day?
- R: They didn't teach it. Rodef Sholom was the only one that had a Sunday school.
- O: Let's talk about the Schwebel's.
- R: They operated the first bakery on Hazelton.
- O: I appreciate you sharing your memories with us. Thank you.