



First log cabin built in Cincinnati, 1788, on Front Street, a fair east of what is now Main. "The hardy pioneers burnt their bridges behind them by breaking up the boats in which they came, to help construct their houses." Credit: Gots.

The Jew before the First Jew

The careful historian, "Dr. Jacob R. Marcus teaches us, "soon comes to the unfailing rule that no Jew is ever the first Jew in any town: there is always one who has been there before." So it is with Cincinnati. Individual Jews may have passed through the city as early as 1814. In 1816, Dr. Jonas Horwitz, a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, came to town to set up a practice. When he advertised a vaccine for smallpox, local doctors attacked him for fear-mongering. Horwitz beat a hasty retreat.

1817

Cincinnati, in the year 1817, was a bright, beautiful, and flourishing little city. It extended from the river to Sixth street, and from Broadway to Walnut street, and not much beyond those limits. The courthouse, which stood upon the same ground as the present one, was considered to be in the country, and its location an outrage on the citizens. The houses were beautifully interspersed with vacant lots, not yet sold, which were covered with grass. The city contained about nine thousand inhabitants. These were then called girls and boys, and men and women. The fuel was wood, except in factories. The people generally had clean faces; for the men shaved, and did not allow their countenances to be covered with hair and dirt. There was an air of comfort pervading everything. In summer the women dressed as they pleased; but the men usually went to church in summer dresses. Sometimes they wore linen roundabouts and vests and woollen pants. The people were enterprising and industrious; a pedestrian could hardly walk a square without encountering a brick wagon or stone wagon, or seeing a new cellar being dug. Industrious mechanics would be met hurrying to and fro, and in their working dress. A brick-layer would not hide his trowel, nor a carpenter his hatchet, under his coat. Everything gave promise of the city's continued prosperity . . .

— George Warren quoted in Ford and Ford, *History of Cincinnati*, p. 71

Doctor Horwitz

Doctor Horwitz of Philadelphia, having brought with him GENUINE VACCINE MATTER from both the Pennsylvania Hospital and private practice of the above named city, offers his services to the citizens of Cincinnati and its vicinity. And as the small Pox is now epidemic in the cities of New York and Philadelphia, of which according to the latest accounts, the mortality of infants and adults amounted daily for two months to from 20 to 30.

It has already reached Pittsburgh, and may probably come here. It is therefore advisable that parents would have their children vaccinated before it may become epidemic in this place; for, when once the atmosphere has become contaminated and fraught as it were with the various miasmata, the vaccine may then operate but feebly.

Even adults who are doubtful of their having been vaccinated, or who have been vaccinated 15 or 20 years ago, would do well to have the operation performed again; as it has been known, that a lapse of years has destroyed the effect of vaccination when the disease is epidemic.

The POOR will be vaccinated gratis.

Dr. H will practice in the various branches of his profession, and will be ready for consultation, at all times, in his Office on Main Street, No. 40, opposite the store of Mr. J. Neave. Cincinnati, March 23.

— Liberty Hall & Cincinnati Gazette, April 8, 1816

Alfred Segal

Rabbi Haim Fishel Epstein . . . has resigned and is going to Brooklyn. Now the synagogue is seeking a new leader and in a spirit of helpfulness we suggest the following specifications:

1. The new rabbi should be fairly young.
2. He should be a man of American education.
3. He should speak English well.
4. He should be one whom the young will follow.

— *Every Friday*, November 18, 1927,
p.6.

Samuel Schmidt

What, then, is wrong with Orthodoxy in Cincinnati? Is it the emanation from the Hebrew Union College which tends to convert all those in its neighborhood and either makes them subscribers to its tenets or eliminates them altogether? What else can it be? True, there is no unity in Cincinnati's Orthodoxy, but then, there is no unity in Orthodoxy anywhere and yet it manages to hold its own and even to thrive.

— *Every Friday*, June 22, 1928, p.6.

Rabbi Bezalel Epstein

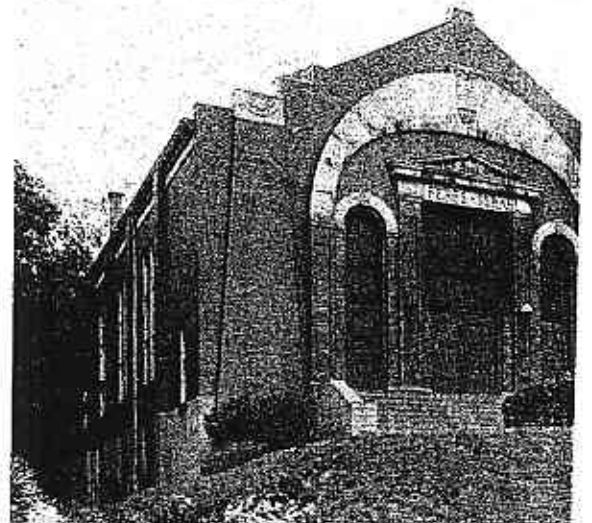
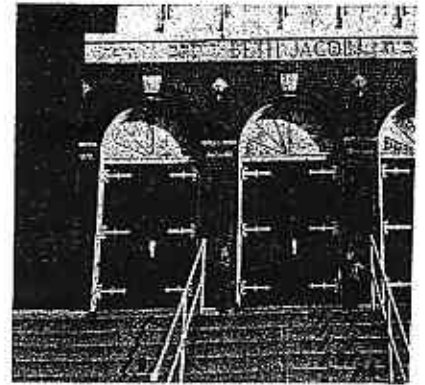
The state of Orthodox Jewry in the city of Cincinnati seems to me deplorable. Optimists point out that new orthodox synagogues are opening; they forget to note that those in existence already are empty and void of worshippers. The Orthodox here are divided into many elements and each element is intent upon its own little problems, ignoring entirely the sense of unity that should exist here.

— *Every Friday*, September 14, 1928,
p.33.

Rabbi M. M. Hochstein

The manifold failings of Cincinnati Orthodox Jewry . . . [include] their failure in the support of their rabbis, their neglect of Jewish education, their indifference to the needs of Palestine, all sins committed unknowingly through indifference, and therefore likely to continue.

— *Every Friday*, September 14, 1928,
p.37.



Top to bottom: Beth Jacob Synagogue, completed 1925, and its rabbi, Jacob Einhorn, served 800 Orthodox families in Price Hill. Credit: Mrs. Bernard Waterman (Clara Einhorn). Rabbi Mendel Hochstein of Anshe Sholom synagogue, 1921-1932. Credit: EF, September 14, 1928. Tifereth Israel Synagogue, 2524 Victory Parkway, 1918-1948. This congregation formed in 1906, is now part of North Avondale Synagogue. The building has become a Mennonite church. Credit: Christian Bang, Jr.

My friends, when you go among the crowds here, the Jewish crowds, I mean, you will often hear them refer to the Reformed Jews as "Germans." It always hurt my soul when I heard that all Jews of German background were generally considered Reformers. We have to atone for the sins of those who came here 80 and 100 years ago, who blackened the name of German Jewishness in the midst of others. In their time they acquired riches, in their time they did their share as eager citizens of the new country, but as *Jews* they should not be considered models for us. There is no need for us to throw overboard all what [*sic*] we experienced over there, what was passed down to us by our fathers and mothers, just to become good citizens. Don't let anyone tell you that you have to join a Reformed congregation, that you have to take part in their "services," "social events," and their religious instruction to become Americanized. Did not Traditional synagogues bring forth equally brave soldiers as Reformed congregations? Our specific task now must be to prove to our Jewish fellow citizens that not all Jews coming from Germany are Reformed, that there still exists another circle – and not even so small a flock – of those who are willing to lead their lives according to the rules. It shall be the task of this congregation to gather all those who consider Traditional Judaism to be the right one [BK: even if they don't personally practice all or most of its *mitzvot*] in order to form an honorable link in the chain of the older *kehilos* in the city of Cincinnati.³⁹

By conveying the message of radical religious opposition to Reform Judaism, New Hope was theoretically putting itself beyond the sphere of influence of Reform; in practice, this was not at all the case. Ties with Reform Jews and Judaism persisted, and they manifested themselves in diverse social and religious ways, both during Teitz's administration and certainly after it. First, despite Teitz, Reformers of German background did serve as models of successful integration and Americanization. The temples and their Sunday schools continued to attract some New Hope parents and particularly their children, especially as the latter entered high school age. If the children were at all active Jewishly, they wanted to join the Jewish temple activities of their Jewish peers whom they befriended in public school.⁴⁰

More significantly, ties with Reformers were cemented by personal family relationships. Having come to Cincinnati by virtue of the letters of affidavits sent to them by family members residing in the city, a