



HISTORIC B'NAI JACOB SYNAGOGUE

Nissley at Water Streets
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

on the National Register of Historic Places (built in 1906)

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Services Calendar

Erev Rosh Hashana (5784)

Fri. Sep. 15 - 7:00 PM

Rosh Hashana

Sat. Sep. 16 - 9:00 AM

Kol Nidre

Sun. Sep. 24 - 7:00 PM

Yom Kippur

Mon. Sep. 25 - 9:00 AM

Yizkor - 11:00 AM

Mincha - 5:00 PM

Ne'ila - 6:00 PM

Hoshana Raba Shabbos Service

Fri. Oct. 6 - 7:30 PM

Shabbos Service Honoring Veterans

Fri. Nov. 10 - 7:30 PM

Shabbos Service

Fri. Dec. 1 - 7:30 PM

Hanukah Party & Board Meeting

Sun. Dec. 10 - NOON

Completion of Social Hall Project

After many years of temporary repairs that just weren't working, it was decided to permanently repair the damaged floor in the basement of the synagogue. A contractor was hired, a structural engineer made a report, and a fundraising effort got underway. Everything was removed from the basement and most of it was stored temporarily in the sanctuary while the project proceeded for several months.

The problem was that in 1906 when the building of the synagogue was completed, the floor in the basement was just a vinyl floor supported by wood beams on top of nothing but dirt. Over the years water seeped up from underneath, rotted the beams and eventually softened the flooring to the point that people were stepping right through it.

The cost of the entire project ended up being just over \$57,000 and all of it was paid for with donations from our tremendous congregation. Amazing!

The floor now consists of 8 inches of gravel, a water vapor barrier which lead into 2 sump pumps, 4 inches of poured concrete, and then on top of that a vinyl floor. Due to the very generous donation from Alfred and Judy Singer Zernik, the "new" social hall was renamed The Singer Family Social Hall in honor of Judy's grandfather Phillip (a founder), her father Abe (president for 27 years 1960-87), and her brother Stanley (a regular at services).

Thanks to all who were patient with the construction and who were so helpful with the donations.
—Larry Kapenstein



120th Anniversary of B'Nai Jacob

A video documentary is in the works for July of 2024. Several members of our congregation have already been interviewed. Jesse Goranson, our videographer from Penn State Harrisburg, will be going over the raw footage when he returns from his marriage and honeymoon in late August. There's a possibility that a premier will be held by the Jewish studies group to view the video at Penn State before the actual anniversary.
—Larry Kapenstein

Holocaust Education in an Era of Rising Anti-Semitism

Antisemitism is an old kind of hate. However, it has been very visible in the past few years all around the US. The current visibility includes the 2018 attack on the Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue - where a gunman killed 11 Jewish worshippers, as well as the deadly rally in Charlottesville, Va. two years earlier, where extremist demonstrators chanted "Jews will not replace us." Thousands of other incidents like vandalizing Jewish schools and community centers were on the news almost daily.

"There is no doubt of an increased need to address the rising tide of antisemitism in our country" wrote Dr. Ed Beck, an advocate, and a leader of the Jewish community at large and an esteemed member of our synagogue, in his introduction to a grant application. He continued to describe a program where the synagogue will invite regional educators, clergy, community leaders, members of the community, and policy influencers in the region "to get them excited about a special Initiative and create buzz that something new is coming in Holocaust education." He also noted: "We have forgotten how to carefully teach people right and wrong, good and bad, love and hate." Thanks to Dr. Beck's efforts, in collaboration with the Penn State Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Initiative, the synagogue received a grant allocated from the Jewish Community Foundation of Central PA, Lipsett Philanthropic Fund.

"The Need for Holocaust Education in an Era of Rising Antisemitism" program, took place on Sunday afternoon, March 12, with Professor Boaz Dvir, the PSU human right's initiative Director. He discussed antisemitism and Holocaust education which is developing a state-wide curriculum to be presented and adopted by the PA Department of Education for k-12 implementation. This Initiative is achieving state and nationwide attention in terms of funding and attention in the educational community and is designed to be a standardized curriculum for public schools throughout the Commonwealth, but a template for other states as well. Some highlights from the Program:

1. One out of 10 Americans know little or nothing about the Holocaust.
2. Many educators have been shying away from difficult topics such as slavery and Holocaust. One of the reasons is lack of training.
3. Schools fail to teach the Holocaust and that may deprive students of imperative lessons on how propaganda can mislead, grow and wreak havoc on democracy.

"I'm honored to speak in such a notable place," said Dvir, at the end of his talk. "While B'nai Jacob Synagogue represents tradition, it offers an opportunity to explore innovation." Programs such as this one are direly needed. Teaching our children well, with trained teachers and supported schools will lead to truly Never Again. The program can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/QBZ5ijMTjV8>.

—Dr. Ilana De Laney

Orstein Scholarship

Daisha Holder was the winner of the synagogue's annual scholarship awarded to a graduating Middletown Area High School student who is planning on attending college, and has overcome the odds like the Jewish people who founded our synagogue were able to do in the early 1900's. The cash award this year was \$1,000. Many thanks to those who contributed to this worthy endeavor.

Daisha's father passed away in her junior year from Covid 19. In her own words, "It's been hard living from day to day without him. However, I will not let this stop me from pursuing my dreams of going to a 4-year university. His death has helped me reach for the impossible and turn it into the something that is possible. I am pursuing one of my father's greatest attributes and that's being kind to others and helping people from all backgrounds. This is the first step to getting me to helping even more people and making a positive difference like my father." —Larry Kapenstein



Seymour Cohen

Our very own congregant Seymour Cohen (a.k.a. Dr. Stephan Seymour) will be inducted posthumously into the Middletown Area High School Sports Hall of Fame this fall. A 1937 graduate of the high school, he attended our synagogue regularly before he became famous and moved to Los Angeles. He won a silver medal in the 1948 Olympic Games throwing the javelin in London, England, was a 3-time U.S. Javelin champion, was Decathlon Champion of the world in 1945, set the U.S. javelin record of 248' 10" in 1957, and held a record of swimming 21 miles in a pool for 13 hours and 45 minutes. All of this while becoming a very well known and published doctor. Unfortunately, at that time when he graduated from F&M college, there was a quota for Jewish students in medical school. That's why Seymour Cohen became Stephan Seymour in order to become a world class athlete and famous doctor. He taught the Duke of Edinburg how to throw the javelin, received the "Most Inspirational Athlete" award in 1959 from John F. Kennedy, and received the Helms Award for contributions to sports in 1960. His actual Olympic sweater sits in a shadow box in the Singer Family Social Hall at B'nai Jacob. We were able to have him inducted posthumously into the PA Sports Hall of Fame-Capital Area, and now he will be forever enshrined at Middletown Area High School. Bruce Baron and Larry Kapenstein will accept the honor for him.

—Larry Kapenstein



Historic B'nai Jacob Synagogue is located in Middletown, PA near the Harrisburg International Airport. If you have news you want to share or would like to be added to our mailing list, please send that information through the email link at bnai-jacob.org.

2023 Executive Committee Officers

President—Bruce Baron

Vice President—Larry Kapenstein

Treasurer—Larry Kapenstein

Assistant Treasurer—Ilana DeLaney

Secretary—Bruce Baron