

BELLEFONTE JEWISH CEMETERY INFORMATION

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EAST LOGAN STREET ISRAELITISH CEMETERY (1857-1912)

According to a 1960s *Centre Democrat* article, “East Logan Street Site of Original Jewish Burial Ground in Bellefonte,” by the late historian Hugh Manchester, the first Jewish cemetery in Bellefonte was located between two houses, the Mrs. Linn T. Love residence and the Hazel Estate properties, on the southside of East Logan Street, behind the St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church. The plot measured 89 by 89 feet and existed from approximately 1857 to 1912. Individuals, however, were more than likely only buried there between 1857 and 1874. According to the article, East Logan Street used to be known as “Cemetery Hill” because both the old Catholic and Jewish cemeteries were located there.

Anselem Loeb of Bellefonte, a Jewish butcher, purchased four acres of land on East Logan Street from John H. Morrison, a Bellefonte innkeeper, on October 10, 1855, for \$500. Morrison retained the northeast corner of the plot, which Loeb later purchased from him on October 8, 1857. This plot is what became the “Jewish Burial Ground.” In a deed from April 12, 1860, Julia Loeb, Anselem’s wife, gave the plot of land to her son Jacob Loeb and his heirs “...to be for an Israelitish Cemetery or place of burial for the Israelites resident [sic] in said town of Bellefonte or in the vicinity.”

In an 1874 atlas of Bellefonte, pictured to the right, the Loeb's East Logan Street property is shown as "J. Leob," a misspelling of Loeb, and there is a house located on the property. The cemetery, however, is not visible or marked.

According to Justin Houser, a local lawyer and genealogist, scans from an 1858 map of Bellefonte does not show Logan Street extending past Allegheny Street. He believes the area must have been under development from 1857-1861, which is around the time the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery started.

Julia Loeb, who was buried in the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery on April 26, 1880, has the only known obituary that confirms someone was buried at the cemetery. Based on the transfer internment records of both Anselem and Julia Loeb to the Mount Sinai cemetery in Philadelphia on

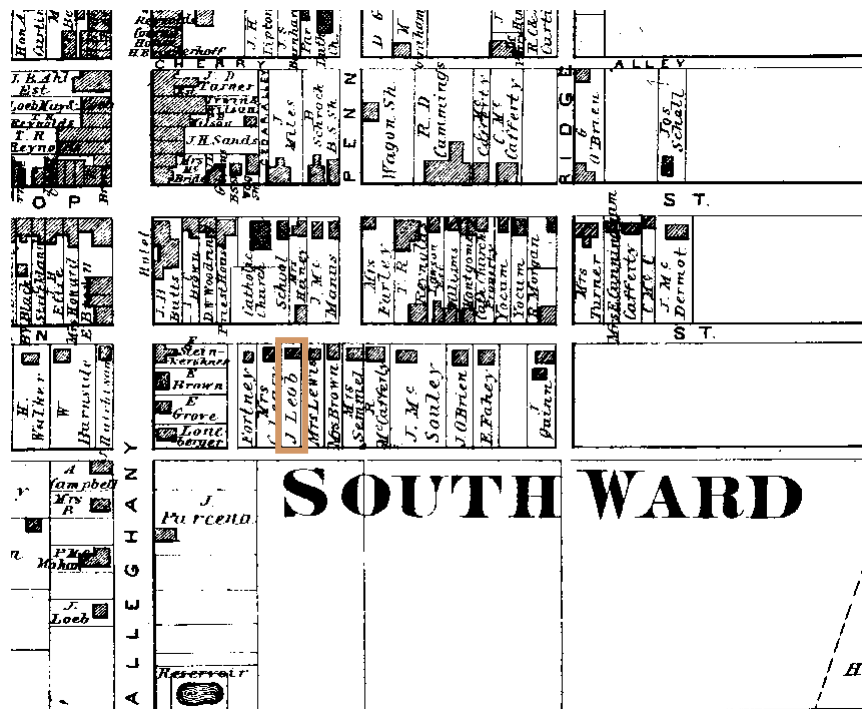


Image 1 The Loeb's East Logan Street property, the location of the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery. Via the 1874 Bellefonte Atlas.

April 25, 1900, from Bellefonte, Anselm was also buried in the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery. It is unclear exactly when Jewish residents began using the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in the Bush Addition on Water Street instead of the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery. According to the *Centre Democrat* article, Miss Shields and Mrs. Hazel were quoted remembering the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery had a high board fence around it and became overgrown over the years. According to the article, by 1912, the fence and tombstones were removed from the cemetery. Those buried at the East Logan Street Israelitish Cemetery were either transferred to the Rodef Shalom Cemetery, since some of the deaths at the Rodef Shalom Cemetery pre-date the cemetery, or elsewhere, such as the transfer of Anselm and Julia Loeb to Mount Sinai Cemetery in Philadelphia.



Image 2 The location of both the Jewish cemeteries in Bellefonte. Via the Cemeteries of Benner and Spring Township, 1996, by the Centre County Genealogical Society.

RODEF SHALOM CEMETERY (1874-PRESENT)

Abraham Sussman, a Jewish merchant in Bellefonte, is considered the founder of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery. On May 27, 1872, Sussman purchased a quarter acre of land, 200 feet by 70 feet, in Bush Addition in Spring Township, from D. G. Bush, a real estate businessman, and his wife Louisa, for \$250. (At the time, this area was not called Bush Addition. Obituaries from individuals buried at the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in the late 1800s and early 1900s commonly refer to the area as "Roopsburg.") While the purpose of the land is not listed on the deed, it might have been purchased with the idea of creating a new Jewish cemetery.

On August 26, 1874, the Hebrew Cemetery Association of Bellefonte was formed, and it was confirmed by the Court on September 18, 1874, with the purpose of purchasing a Jewish cemetery and selling burial lots. The organization had a board of five members. The first directors were Abraham Sussman, Adolph Loeb, Emil Joseph, Isaac Guggenheimer, and Simon Loeb. Together with Sigmund Joseph, these five members served as the

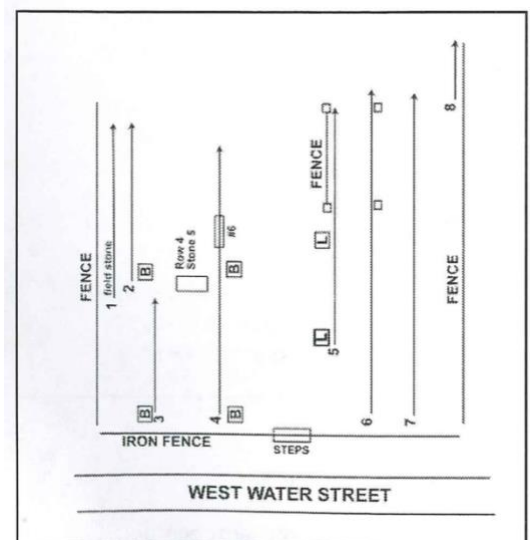


Figure 3 Layout of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery. Via the Cemeteries of Benner and Spring Township, 1996, by the Centre County Genealogical Society.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

RODEF SHOLEM CEMETERY

SPRING TWP

CENTRE COUNTY PENNA.

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According to Justin Houser, an unincorporated association is not able to own land, so while the 1874 cemetery association could manage the cemetery, the association could not own any real estate. As a result, the cemetery continued to be owned by Abraham Sussman, but was managed by the cemetery association. Sussman died on May 20, 1878, at the age of 66, in Philadelphia, and was buried in the Mount Sinai Cemetery there. In his will, he left money for a Hebrew School in Bellefonte, but his estate retained ownership of the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in Bellefonte.

After Sussman's death, the cemetery continued to be managed by the volunteer association. The cemetery association became chartered as a corporation on August 7, 1894, as the Hebrew Cemetery Association Rodef Sholem of Bellefonte, and the corporation's purpose was to maintain the cemetery. (It is unknown why the association was incorporated as Rodef Sholem, but the cemetery is currently known as Rodef Shalom.) The incorporators were M. Fauble, Sigmund Joseph, Abraham Baum, Herman Holz, William Grauer, Emil Joseph, Moyer Lyons, Samuel Lewin and A. Sternberg and the initial directors were Abraham Baum, Herman Holz, and M. Fauble. Since the cemetery association was now incorporated under Pennsylvania law, it could own real estate. On September 3, 1894, the surviving executors of Abraham Sussman, Sussman's wife, Dora Sussman, now Dora Hirsh, and Henry Lehman, deeded the cemetery to the cemetery association for \$250.

In the Democratic Watchmen, one article from April 27, 1894, pictured to the right, and another from May 4, 1894, described the forthcoming lecture of Dr. Joseph Krauskopf, a "distinguished Jewish Rabbi" of Philadelphia, in German's opera house on Wednesday, May 9. The April 27, 1894 article includes, "His [Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf's] services have been secured by the Jewish residents of the town who for the first time come before the public with any charitable entertainment of their own. While it is the duty of every-one who can possibly afford it to attend the lecture, no one need think that it is being done solely for charity, for Dr. Krauskopf is a man of worldwide repute...He is one of the most forcible writers of his religion and is known as a great reformer. It is a duty which every-one owes to himself to hear such lecturers when the opportunity presents itself." The event was organized to benefit the improvement of the Jewish cemetery and the cemetery's fund. The event focused on the topic of "Only a Jew" and encouraged all community members, both Jewish and non-Jewish to attend. The fundraiser was more than likely raising funds for the new cemetery, Rodef Shalom.

THE KRAUSKOPF LECTURE.--The distinguished Jewish Rabbi, Dr. Krauskopf, of Philadelphia, will lecture in Bellefonte on Wednesday evening, May 9th, for the benefit of the improvement of the Jewish cemetery at this place. His services have been secured by the Jewish residents of the town who for the first time come before the public with any charitable entertainment of their own. While it is the duty of every-one who can possibly afford it to attend the lecture, no one need think that it is being done solely for charity, for Dr. Krauskopf is a man of world-wide repute. His sermons are published regularly and sent broad-cast over the world. He is one of the most forcible writers of his religion and is known as a great reformer. It is a duty which every-one owes to himself to hear such lecturers when the opportunity presents itself.

Image 5 A Democratic Watchman article about the May 9, 1894, Krauskopf lecture.

Over the years, the number of people buried in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery has fluctuated. About half of the graves are from the mid to late-nineteenth century while the remaining half are largely from the early to mid-twentieth century. Since the 1950s, only two people, Rose Spiro Siemientek and her daughter, Gabriela Muller Hogg, have been buried in the cemetery. In the early 1900s, some individuals who left Bellefonte returned to move their family's burial plots elsewhere. In 1927, for example, H. J. Holtz of New York returned to Bellefonte to transport the bodies of his grandmother, aunt, uncles, and father from Rodef Shalom to the Temple Israel Cemetery in Mount Hope, New Jersey, where his mother was buried. He had their headstones removed and shipped ahead of time via freight.

As the original incorporators of the Hebrew Cemetery Association Rodef Sholem of Bellefonte died and no one replaced them, the cemetery fell into disrepair and the cemetery association became inactive. According to the "The Jewish Cemetery, PA, Bellefonte - Cemeteries" document at the PA Room, in 1953, the Pennsylvania State Highway Department sought ownership of properties adjacent to the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in preparation for reconstructing Buffalo Run Road. With no incorporators, there was no one authorized to sign for the cemetery's land. The Nittany Lodge of B'nai Brith of Bellefonte and State College began researching the cemetery association to see who the last elected trustee was. In the process, B'nai Brith discovered the existence of two trusts meant to maintain the cemetery. One was invested by the cemetery's associators in 1894 in a bank in Philadelphia and another was established in the Harrisburg Trust Company in

1948 by Ida Fauble Tausig of Harrisburg. With the money, the cemetery association was reactivated and new trustees were elected.

Alternatively, community members attribute Nathan Krauss with “finding” the Rodef Shalom Cemetery in the late 1940s, which was largely overgrown at the time. With help from the B’nai Brith of Bellefonte and State College, Nathan researched the cemetery and in 1951, he and John Miller Jr., an attorney, found three trusts at the Philadelphia National Bank entrusted by people interned in the cemetery in the late 1800s. The original trusts valued approximately \$4,5000, but over time had accumulated interest to \$40,000-50,000. With this money, they created the Rodef Shalom Cemetery Association to assure the perpetual care and maintenance of the cemetery. Nathan Krauss, Arnold Kalin, and Robert Levy became the trustees of the association. Jeff Krauss eventually took over the management of the cemetery from his father, Nathan Krauss, and he, Arnold Kalin, and Robert Levy served on the cemetery’s board. Brit Shalom in State College is now in charge of the maintenance of the cemetery and raises funds to continue the cemetery’s upkeep through the Rodef Shalom Cemetery Fund. The cemetery remains active with the last burial being of Gabriela Muller Hogg in 2019.

According to Justin Houser and interviews with local Jewish community members, the individuals buried at the Rodef Shalom Cemetery were mainly of Central European Jewish descent, who first settled in Bellefonte in the early to mid-nineteenth century. By the start of the twentieth century, Bellefonte’s Jewish community comprised of Jews of both Central European and Eastern European descent. Eastern European Jews, however, chose to be buried elsewhere, such as the Beth Yehuda Cemetery, the Jewish cemetery in Lock Haven, because they considered the Rodef Shalom Cemetery, which was established by Reform Central European Jews, as not Orthodox in nature, which Eastern European Jews were.

At least twenty-eight of the fifty people (56%) buried in the Rodef Shalom Cemetery were born outside of the U.S. Of those twenty-eight people, nineteen were born in Germany, four were born in France, two were born in Russia, one was born in Austria, one was born in Poland, and one was born in Israel. Of the nineteen people born in the U.S., nine were born in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, three were born in an unknown place in Pennsylvania, two were born in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, one was born in New York, one was born in Braddock, Pennsylvania, one was born in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, one was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and one was born in Danville, Pennsylvania. Three people were born in an unknown place, either inside or outside of the U.S. Aside from being buried in a Jewish cemetery, their religiosity is unknown.

Not all the individuals buried at the Rodef Shalom Cemetery were living in Bellefonte at the time of their death. Only twenty-three of the fifty people (46%) buried in the cemetery lived in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, at the time of their death. Regarding the twenty-seven other burials, seven people lived in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, five people lived in State College, Pennsylvania, three people lived in an unknown place in Pennsylvania, three people lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, two people lived in Houtzdale, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Atlantic City, New Jersey, one person lived in Villanova, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Detroit, Michigan, one person lived in Tylersville, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Milton, Pennsylvania, one person lived in Lawrence, Pennsylvania, and one person lived in Columbus, Ohio.

The cemetery includes the graves of a few larger families with a few unrelated couples and children. The largest family, the Baums, comprise eleven of the fifty graves (22%) in the cemetery. Those buried in the cemetery seemed to have been buried there for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, other family members being buried in the cemetery, such as the Baum family, or its proximity to their hometown, which lacked a Jewish cemetery, such as the Schmidt family who were from Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, which had no Jewish cemetery at the time. Two graves of note include Henry Tarkoff, a Penn State student who died in the early 1900s after falling down an elevator shaft on campus and whose family could not afford to send his body back to Philadelphia, so he was buried in Bellefonte instead, and Jacob and Jette Sternberg, the parents of Adolph Sternberg, the first Jewish mayor of Bellefonte.