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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

With reference to the request from Mr. Alfred M. Cohen of the B'nai Brith, Mrs. Kass does not think he will go to the trouble of reading through our literature. She suggests that we send him a copy of the information below which was prepared by Mrs. Minkin a few years ago. Does it meet with your approval?

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In January 1917 at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, Mrs. Solomon Schechter organized the Women's League of the United Synagogue of America. She was undoubtedly prompted by the noble example of her illustrious husband, the late Professor Solomon Schechter, who had founded the United Synagogue of America.

But she had especially recognized the need of a united effort to successfully spread Jewish ideals among our women. She therefore invited representatives from the Sisterhoods and other women's groups engaged in religious or educational work, as well as certain women interested in the preservation of Traditional Judaism in this country. A large and most representative group of women answered the call, rallying to the banner unfurled by the founder. Thus was launched The Women's League of the United Synagogue of America. Among the original founders and officers were Mesdames Cyrus Adler, Samuel Cohen, Benjamin Davis (of Chicago), J. Eisenberg, Joseph Herzog, Heyman, Charles I. Hoffman, O. Hyams, Jacob Kohn, Jacob S. Minkin, Samuel Spiegel and Miss Sarah Kussy.

The original purpose of this organization was to advance Traditional Judaism, to further Jewish education among the women, to foster Jewish sentiment in the home, to publish books of special concern to women and also juvenile literature for our children. Whereas, there were many women's organizations engaged in philanthropic and in general uplift work among the poor and needy, this pilgrimage for the inspiration of our own members who needed neither financial nor social aid, was an original innovation in the women's field of endeavor in 1917.

Adding to the original plan, the Women's League not only published books,

pamphlets and prayer and blessing cards of value and interest to the mothers and children, but have also become vitally interested in the Jewish youth of this country. Students Houses, expressing the Jewish sense of hospitality, offer to the college students a home where they can enjoy the atmosphere and environment that they miss when away from their parental roof.

The New York City Students' House was opened in time to serve first as a canteen for the Columbia Students in training and during the years that followed the war, provided a meeting place, a social center, restaurant and even offered dormitory accommodations for numerous Jewish students who came from different parts of this country and Canada. The new building of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America now meets those needs in New York City, But in Philadelphia the Students House activity has proven so successfully that the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania has recognized its merit and is cooperating in a very satisfactory manner. Another Student House at Temple University is also thought of most highly by the faculty of the Temple.

Bible classes have for the first time been introduced in the non-denominational centers where many Jewish children have had no other means of Jewish education. Hundreds of Jewish children have been thus inspired and influenced to learn the history of their people and to become imbued with the principles of their faith.

Cultural Programs have been made a part of the monthly meetings of the constituent groups. Most women meetings in those days concerned themselves only with business details. The Women's League succeeded in introducing a new interest. Speakers or papers and articles of interest and educational value are now brought to the attention of the women in connection with their work. The range of subjects treated by such organizations is very wide. It includes talks or papers on Art, Music, Literature, The Peace Movement, the Falashas, The Reform Calendar, Development of National and International Women's Organizations.

The Women's League was the first Jewish Women's organization to enjoy the

privilege of broadcasting. We broadcast over WEAJ and also extend the courtesy of our radio period to all other organizations who wish to take advantage of this privilege.

To establish a closer contact between the various groups in the metropolitan City, all of which are striving for the same purpose, the New York City Branch was organized in 1921 to act as a link to closer bind the sisterhoods of Greater New York.

Other regions finding the advantages of such close contact have also formed similar Branches and we now have a Connecticut Branch, Chicago Branch, New York State Branch, a New Jersey Branch, a New England Branch, Philadelphia, Western Pennsylvania, Mid-west and also Toronto and Montreal, Canada.

The Regional Conferences arranged by these Branches have proven of educational and inspirational value to all those it attracts and interests.

The Women's League is affiliated with and is represented on the following national organizations: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America; the Conference Committee of National Jewish Women's Organizations; American Jewish Committee; The Falashes; the League for Safeguarding the Fixity of the Sabbath; the National Conference of Jews and Christians; National Council of Women of the United States; National Women's Radio Committee. The Women's League also contributes to the Beth Jacob Movement; The Council for the Amelioration of the Legal Status of the Jewess, etc. The Women's League is affiliated with all these organizations, national and international, having the common purpose of advancing or safeguarding some Jewish principle.

For financial support the Women's League depends upon dues from individual members and the per capita tax from its constituent groups. The publications, too, provide a source of income. The Women's League is planning more publications and expects to extend its cultural activities and to provide advisors on campuses of women's colleges. It has introduced Jewish book shelves in women's colleges.

Mathilde Schechter, founder of the Women's League and President from 1917 to 1919, the wife of Professor Solomon Schechter, was born in Breslau, Germany. She was educated in Germany and in England. To further her cultural interests in literature, art and music, she left her home when a young girl and went to live in London,

England. There she became intimate with a group of Jewish literati which included Israel Zangwil, Lucien Wolf, Israel Abrahams and Solomon Schechter, whom she later married. A woman of fine taste, keen understanding and deep sympathies, she was beloved and honored by all who were privileged to know her. She is remembered, however, not only as a cultured, brilliant and inspired leader, but especially as a mother in Israel who was concerned in the fate of her sisters.

Mrs. Charles I Hoffman, daughter of Isador and Elizabeth Sophia Binswanger, was born in 1862 in Philadelphia, Penna. There she was educated in public and private schools. Reared as an observant Jewess, she spared no effort and participated in every undertaking to foster Jewish ideals among the modern woman. She organized the Young Women's Union, as well as other women's social agencies in Philadelphia. She was one of the founders of the Philadelphia Council of Jewish Women and was its President for one year. Training in social service has qualified Mrs. Hoffman to adequately meet the duties incumbent upon the wife of a Rabbi. She has always participated and assisted in the communal activities of Rabbi Charles I. Hoffman of Newark, New Jersey. Following the late Mrs. Solomon Schechter, Mrs. Hoffman served for eight years from 1919 to 1927 as President of the Women's League of the United Synagogue of America of which she was one of the organizers. Now Honorary President, she is one of the active and interested members of the Women's League.

Mrs. Samuel Spiegel, President of the Women's League, was born in Hungary. Her parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Rosenberg, migrated to the United States when she was still a baby. Mrs. Spiegel received even her elementary education in the public schools in New York. She also had our extensive education in music and art as well as in Hebrew. Mrs. Spiegel received her B.S. degree from the Teachers' College Columbia University in 1914 where she specialized in English and Psychology. She also holds an M.A. degree and a special diploma as Advisor to Women. These, she received in 1920 also from Columbia. By preparation and inclination, she is a leader. Her experience as teacher and club leader qualify her excellently for the leadership of the Women's League of the United Synagogue, where she has held office as President since 1927.