

*The Minute  
I Walked Into  
the Place, I  
Was Home*

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Recollections of  
Paula Millenthal Cantor

The Minute  
I Walked Into  
the Place, I  
Was Home



RECOLLECTIONS OF  
PAULA MILLENTHAL CANTOR

Vanishing Hoboken  
*The Hoboken Oral History Project*

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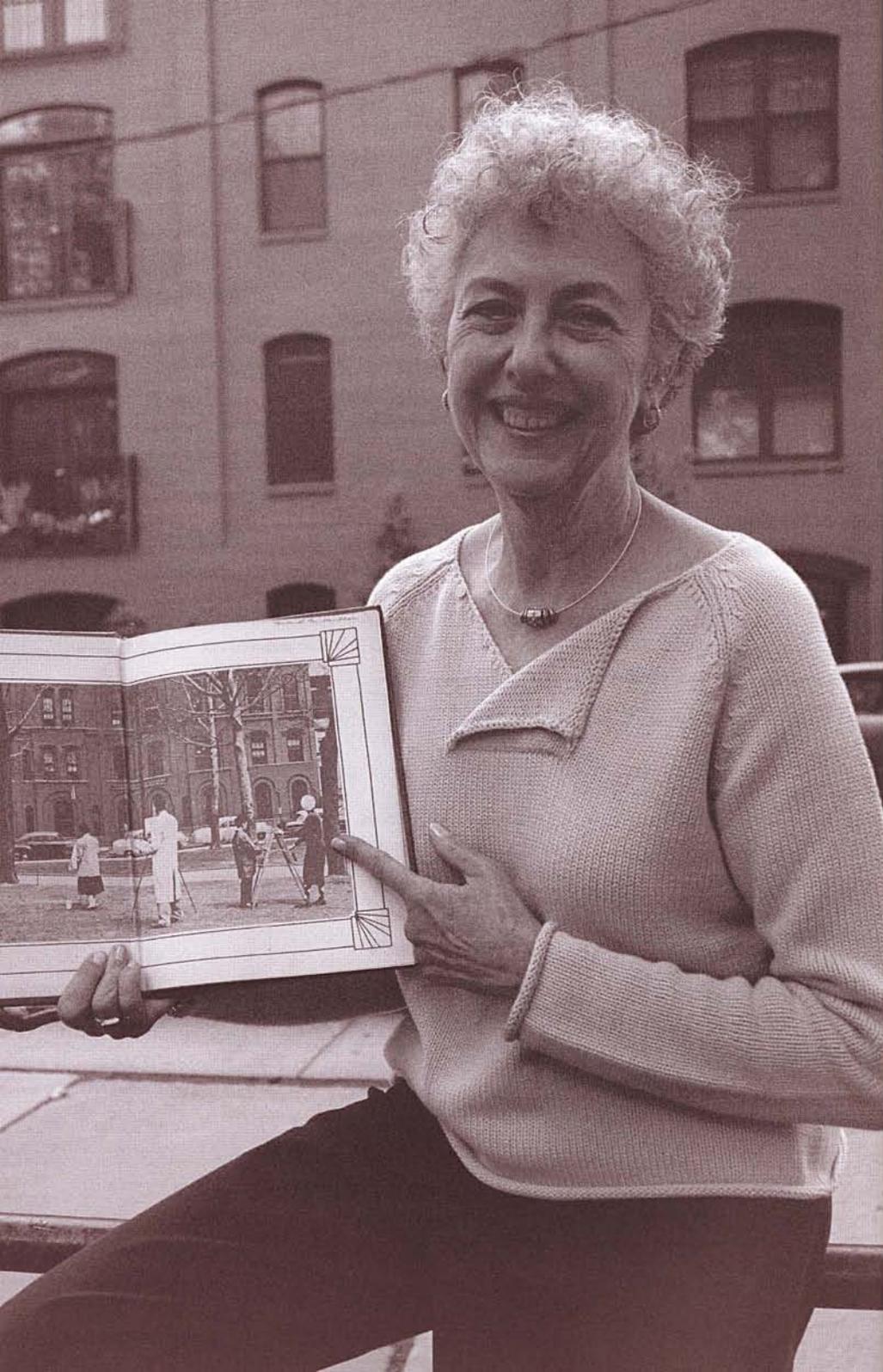
*Cover photo from the 1955 edition of the Stevens Hoboken Academy yearbook, showing students painting and photographing the school building from Church Square Park, across the street.  
Contemporary photo of Paula Millenthal Cantor by Robert Foster, 2006.  
All images courtesy of Paula Millenthal Cantor unless otherwise noted.*

*[At first] I went to public school in Union City . . . Then my family had a pow-wow, and decided to whip me out of there. They had the brilliant idea to send me to Stevens Hoboken Academy, in Hoboken, and the minute I walked into the place I was home. I loved school, loved school, from then on. I loved the learning, loved the friends, loved the teachers, loved everything about it. It was a great place.*

—PAULA MILLENTHAL CANTOR

DECEMBER 17, 2005





## Introduction

Paula Millenthal Cantor's great-grandfather, Max Konert, was one of the founders of Congregation Adas Emuno, a Reform Jewish congregation that organized in 1871 in Hoboken, New Jersey. Members built a house of worship in 1883 at 637 Garden Street, on land donated by the Stevens family. Konert, a former farmer in Prussia and a cattle dealer in Hoboken, may have been one of the earliest Jews to come to the city.

Mrs. Cantor, who lived in Union City in her early years, and then moved to Cliffside Park, often visited her extended family in Hoboken and attended Adas Emuno with them. Beginning in fifth grade in 1947, and continuing through graduation from high school, she attended Stevens Hoboken Academy at Fifth Street and Willow Avenue. Seven years earlier, the school had been created through the merger of the Hoboken Academy, founded in 1861 to provide German language and culture to area children, with the Stevens Preparatory School, established in 1870 by the Stevens Institute of Technology. At the Stevens Hoboken Academy, Paula Millenthal developed a love of learning, and had an active social life. There she

met her husband-to-be, Bill Cantor, and made many lasting friendships. Today Dr. and Mrs. Cantor live in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey.

Stevens Hoboken Academy closed in 1974 and the building was demolished in 1976 to make way for the construction of a bank. The bank building was itself demolished many years later, for the construction of luxury housing. The new, 21st-century building was modeled after the 19th-century Stevens Academy structure, with one additional story.

The Adas Emuno congregation left Hoboken for Leonia, New Jersey, in 1974, as congregants began to move out of the area and the temple could no longer sustain itself in its original location. The Hoboken building, which was converted to housing in the late 20th-century, is the oldest surviving synagogue building in the state of New Jersey.

This chapbook contains quotes from an interview conducted by Phyllis Plitch at the Hoboken Historical Museum, December 17, 2005.

## Living in Union City

I was born in 1937 in the Margaret Hague Medical Center in Jersey City, but I didn't live in Jersey City. I think I was probably brought home to Union City. [By] the time I have any memory of a home, it was Union City, a big house on the corner of Palisade Avenue and Monastery Place, across the street from the reservoir. That's my childhood home, that I remember. I lived at 2001 Monastery Place, which was the corner of Monastery Place and Palisade Avenue, across from the reservoir. We had a clear view of Manhattan because the reservoir was there. There weren't buildings in front of us, so we had this view of the skyline of New York.

I lived in Union City until I was eleven or twelve years old. I hung out there with a group of kids: we were of all different nationalities and backgrounds then—mostly Italian and Irish. They were my friends. I was the only one who was Jewish, but none of us knew



*Paula Millenthal, on her twelfth birthday, August 21, 1949.*

about any of that then. We couldn't have cared less. We would play outside in the summer nights until the streetlights would go on.

I didn't have any sense of a Jewish community [in Union City]. Our social life—social life! It wasn't a social life, as we have it now—was around the temple, a Reform temple in Hoboken. In Union City, my friends were just my little friends on the block, and I certainly didn't live in a Jewish community.

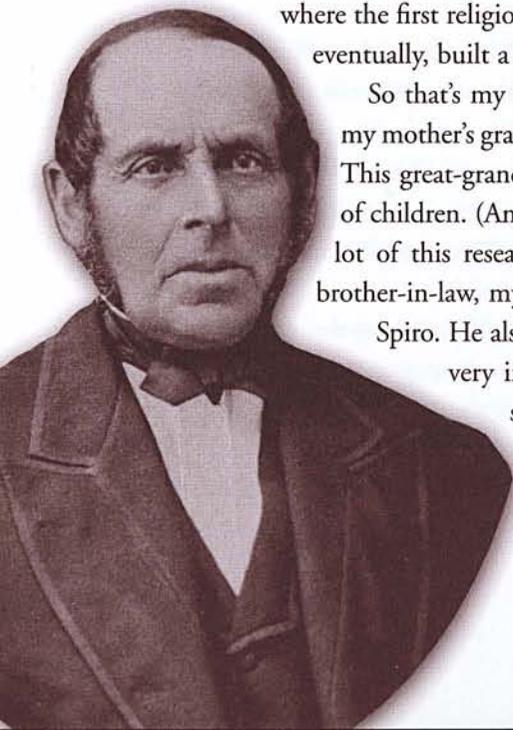
A big treat was for my mother to take me up to the monastery [St. Michael's in Union City] at Christmas time, and show me the crèche and the poinsettias, and the decorations. Oh, I used to love it. I'm sure all the Catholic people went. I don't think the other Jewish people went, but I loved it. I loved it. My mother had many Christian friends, as I did, and there wasn't a separation.

## A Synagogue in Hoboken

[I first came to Hoboken to go to the synagogue. This was] from the time I was a very little girl, because my great-grandfather, Max Konert, was one of the founding members of Congregation Adas Emuno at 637 Garden Street. The building was dedicated on April 15, 1883. The congregation was established earlier than that, and this great-grandfather of mine was one of the founders and officers.

Probably the founders would have gotten together and decided to establish this congregation; then, eventually, gotten enough money to build a building. It says here [in this article from the *Jewish Standard*, March 29, 1957]: “For ten years, starting in the early 1860s, the Jews of Hoboken worshiped in residences. On October 22, 1871, a small group met at Oddfellows Hall, then on Washington and Second Streets, to organize the first permanent congregation of Hudson County. They adopted the name of Adas Emuno, and established themselves at ‘Capps’ Hall, near the corner of Hudson and Second Streets. Shortly after the incorporation in 1872, the congregation moved to a building at the corner of Bloomfield and Fifth, where the first religious school was established, and then, eventually, built a building.”

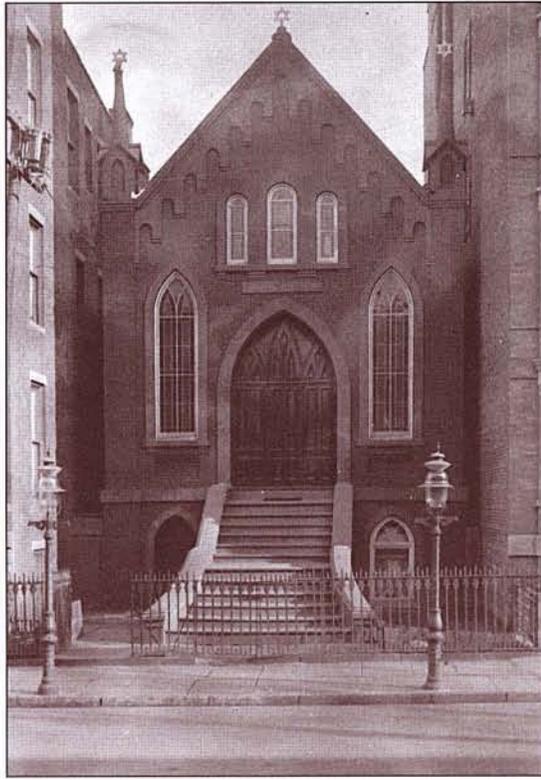
So that’s my heritage. This great-grandfather was my mother’s grandfather. My mother’s father’s father. This great-grandfather, Max Konert, had a number of children. (And I have my family trees with me. A lot of this research has actually been done by my brother-in-law, my sister’s husband. His name is Jerry Spiro. He also lived in Hoboken, and he became very interested in genealogy. ) Max had a son named Paul Konert. He had my mother, Madeleine, who had me. Paul passed away before I was born, and I’m named after him.



The family prayer book, listing the Konert siblings’ births and deaths. The third entry down on the left is Paul Konert, Paula’s grandfather, born November 23, 1856. As the entries are written in Hebrew and Yiddish, the list begins at the top of the right-hand page and moves to the left.

BOTTOM LEFT: Max Konert, one of the founders of Congregation Adas Emuno, Hoboken, ca. 1880.

It’s Jewish tradition to name a child after someone in the family who’s deceased. I’m named after my grandfather, Paul, who was the son of Max who started this temple. So the temple was very much a part of our lives. That’s where I went to my first Seder. That’s where I had most of my early (if not complete) Jewish education. I went to Sunday school there, from the time I was in kindergarten until the time I was confirmed. In those days girls did not have Bat Mitzvahs. Only boys had Bar Mitzvahs. Boys and girls, at age sixteen, I think it was, got confirmed—which meant that you were finished with your formal Jewish studies. I got out of it my last year, because they didn’t have a



*The building that  
once housed  
Congregation Adas  
Emuno, Hoboken,  
now private housing.  
Hoboken Historical  
Museum Collection.*

kindergarten teacher. So they whipped me out of my class, and let me teach the kindergarten children—which was really funny, because I don't really know too much to teach them, I assure you—at that age.

[We would go to synagogue on Friday night.] We never went on Saturday morning. In those days, Reform temples did not have Saturday morning services, or, at least ours did not. My father didn't want any part of it, really. My father did not care too much about it. But my mother—we always all went on the holidays, and my mother very often would go on a Friday night. And I, very often, would go with her.

[The women sat together with the men.] Absolutely. They sat together. In fact, in that temple, in those days, we had our own pew, with our family name on it. I guess the family made a contribution.

But I know we sat all the way up in the front, and that I didn't love so much, as a little girl, because the rabbi and the president and everybody could see everything I did, and sometimes they would frown at me, or smile at me, or whatever. I didn't like that so much. But we had our own pew, all the way up in the front on the right, with our name on it. Many of my relatives, older relatives—my mother's aunts and my mother's cousins—would be there, as well.

The building, at the time I was a little girl, I thought was rather imposing. It had a flight of stairs that went up. It had stained-glass windows, because there were memorials to a lot of my relatives in the stained-glass windows. That's what you did then.

When you went in, there was a little hallway. I think they called it the vestry. I think a lot of the terminology, in Reform Judaism, especially, in those days, was Christian. Because even in our Union prayer book, which was the Reform prayer book at the time, the very early ones didn't say "rabbi." A lot of the terminology was the American Christian terminology. I think in a lot of the Reform temples that were built then (I'm just thinking this now, and remembering this temple), while of course much was based on centuries of Jewish tradition, such as the ark, the eternal light, etc., other things, such as the stained glass windows and the organ were probably taken from American Christianity. We had stained-glass windows along the sides, and pews—a row of pews down the middle and a row on each side; a little choir loft up in the back. That was really a Reform Jewish thing, because Orthodoxy doesn't have that. Then there was the pulpit, which we call the "bema." You walked up a few stairs, and there was a lectern for the rabbi. We didn't have a cantor, so there was not—as in temples now—two lecterns, one for the rabbi and one for the cantor. There was just one lectern in the middle, in front of the ark.

I think a lot of it was wood, and there were big, carved wood chairs, where the rabbi and the president and a few dignitaries might sit. The very, very first rabbi I remember was David Sherman. That's when I was a child. I don't know how I dredged up that name just now! There were a number of other rabbis. They kind of came and

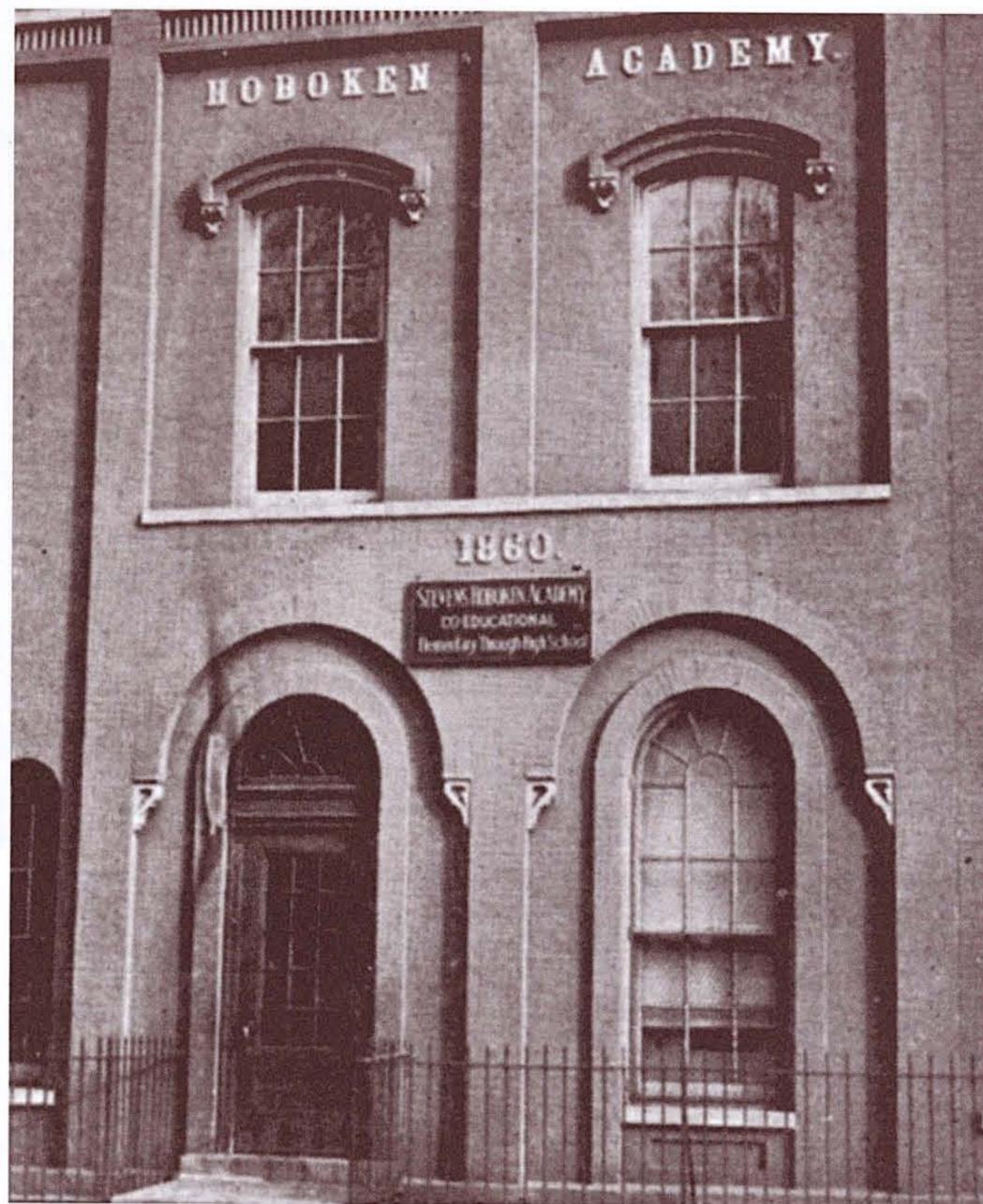
went. The one who was the rabbi when I was going to Sunday school there—in fact, I have a prayer book that was given to me at my confirmation, and it has an inscription in it by him—was J. Max Weiss. I remember the names of some of the families. There was a family named Marx. There was a family named Engel, families named Tucker, Toffler, Newman—I can remember a lot of the names. Some of the kids were in my class in school.

## On to Stevens Hoboken Academy

[At first] I went to public school in Union City, through the fourth grade. Then my family had a pow-wow, and decided to whip me out of there. They had the brilliant idea to send me to Stevens Hoboken Academy, in Hoboken, and the minute I walked into the place I was home. I loved school, loved school, from then on. I loved the learning, loved the friends, loved the teachers, loved everything about it. It was a great place.

It had been established, as far as I know, grades one through twelve, as a prep school for Stevens Institute of Technology, meaning you would go on. And originally Stevens Hoboken Academy was all boys. By the time I went there it was co-ed, but the ratio was, in a class of, say, twenty, there might be four girls and sixteen boys. It remained pretty much that way. A few more girls came in through the years, but there was always a majority of boys. By that point it was no longer considered a preparatory school for the Institute. It was just considered a good private school [with all the grades in one building].

It really didn't matter [to us that there were so many more boys than girls.] You know, when we were younger—yes, even when we were younger, there was always an awareness that they were boys and we were girls. For the girls it was pretty good. The guys were my friends, but, you know, it wasn't quite like it is now. My kids grew up and went to school—and my grandchildren, now, I see—that socially they go out in gangs of friends, and don't necessarily have boyfriends and girlfriends.



*Stevens Hoboken Academy, from a school brochure, ca. 1950.*

Their male/female relationships, at least on the surface, seem to be strictly friends. But with us, there were always romances going on, notes being passed, and that was fun. That was good.

I started there in 1947. It was a very different academic situation, and a very stimulating one. I had the good fortune, the first year I was there, to have one of the best teachers in the school. I'll never forget her. Her name was Mary Evans Koch. This is in fifth grade. It was my first year at Stevens Hoboken Academy. I went and got tested and got

SOCIAL ATTITUDES	
DEPENDABILITY	
COOPERATION	
CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS	
SELF CONTROL	
WORK HABITS	

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	
LANGUAGE ARTS	
ENGLISH	2
SPELLING	1
READING	1
WRITING	1
ARITHMETIC	1
SCIENCE	2
SOCIAL STUDIES	2
ART	1
SHOP	2
MUSIC	3
GYM	3
DAYS ABSENT	3
TIMES TARDY	

EXPLANATION OF GRADES  
 1—Very Good    2—Good    3—Average    4—Below Average

**TEACHER'S EVALUATION**

*Paula fits in quite well with the group. Her work habits are good in that she works neatly, gets to work quickly, and keeps her work well in mind.*

*Paula needs to broaden in her experiences. Would like to see her take up some project on her own, next quarter. She makes a good contribution to the group but isn't as free as she should be. Working to express herself in some individual project or projects would help her toward this freedom.*

*Mary Evans Koch*  
 Teacher  
*G. Harman*

*Paula Millenthal's student evaluation by her "strict but loving" teacher, Mary Evans Koch, 1947.*

accepted, and entered school. I guess my teachers in the public school, at least the one I had the last year I was there, probably were not great teachers. I don't know. Because I came to Stevens, and I had this teacher, Mrs. Koch, who truly knew how to be a teacher. I mean, if you could give awards, I would have given her one. She knew how to relate to the children. She was strict but loving. Remember, we had a class of about only twenty kids, so it was very intimate. The teachers knew you, very intimately, and treated you absolutely as individuals. It was just fun for me to go to school. I loved learning. (She was still there when I graduated, because I remember inviting her to my graduation up at Stevens Institute, in the auditorium. It's now called DeBaun, but it wasn't called that then.)

There were other very good teachers there, too, whom I kept up

with as I went up in the grades. There was an English teacher named Howard Bennett, Howard H. Bennett. He was quite a flamboyant character. In his class he had a platform that was sort of a stage, and sometimes you had to do what you had to do from the platform; or, if you were taking a test, the smart ones had to sit up on the platform, so nobody could copy. [And] yes, I always had to sit up there. Like a wooden platform. It was always raised about this much. I can still remember learning my punctuation from him, and the rules of grammar, and having these things drummed into us.

And Mr. Bennett [also] directed plays. In the lower school, or maybe the middle school, we had operettas. We always had performances. We had an auditorium with a stage, and that was definitely part of what we did at that school. We put on straight plays, we put on musical plays. I didn't sing. I can't carry a tune! I cannot sing—although they got me to be in them anyway, because they had no choice. When you only have four girls in a class—I was in the operetta, *Robin Hood*. I was



*Paula Millenthal in a school play, singing her role as Maid Marian in Robin Hood, 1949.*



WALTER K. ABELL

### MASTER OF FINE ARTS



"At the table down at Merry's . . ."

A beehive of activity enveloped in a hazy, pungent-smelling smoke screen was Room 26, where Dr. Walter K. Abell held Latin and German classes, displayed his library of maps and books, and held interminable "private conferences."

"Doc," home-room advisor to the Seniors for their four years of high school life, was always there when we needed him. Our problems were his; and he worried more than we did about our college entrance examinations, trips, and various other undertakings.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale University, he won many honors, including a four-year scholarship. After receiving his Ph.D., Dr. Abell studied in Italy, having been awarded the Yale Travel Fellowship. He became a member of the faculty of Stevens in 1945.

"Doc," with his little packages of terdy slips, his ever-present pipe, and the kind consideration he gives to everyone, has won a warm spot in the hearts of all his Seniors. He has seen us safely through these four years and has guided us past numerous obstacles. Here's to Dr. Abell—*not to saluamur, Magister!*

Latin teacher, Dr. Walter K. Abell, without his famous mustache, in the 1944 school yearbook.

Maid Marian. I actually had to sing a solo, and I think it must have been terrible for the audience. When I got older, they and I realized that I couldn't be in musicals. I was in most of the straight plays.

From the fifth grade on, through middle school, we all had to take Latin—in fact,

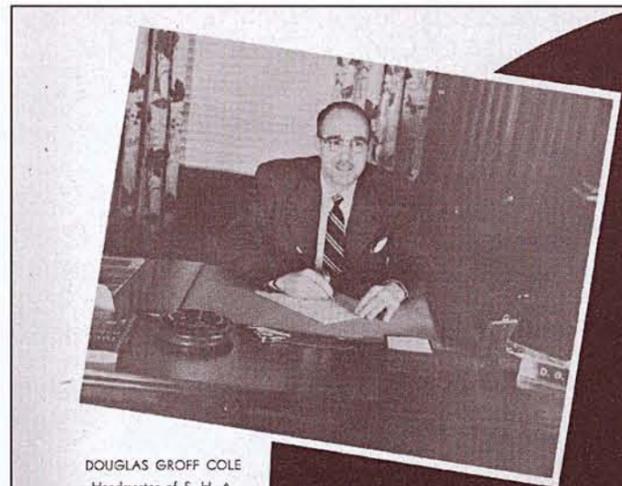
that's when I had my first crush on the guy who became my husband [Bill Cantor], because we were in Latin class together, even though he was a year ahead of me. It worked out that way.

[The Latin teacher was] Dr. Walter K. Abell. He was quite a character, too, with a mustache. He almost looked like Salvador Dali. He was a scholar of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The ancient languages. He probably was almost too scholarly for us. He would show us the roots of the words, with the Hebrew, and the Greek, and the Latin. I don't think we appreciated that so much.

In seventh and eighth grades, you had to take Latin, then you had to take another language. So I continued with Latin and took French. Bill took French and Latin, as well. They also offered German and Spanish. That was Mrs. Caroline Clinch. She was rather elderly. Poor Mrs. Clinch. Nobody really loved her. She was rather stern and humorless. I think she retired while I was still there.

But I remember every teacher very, very clearly. The science teacher

Douglas Groff Cole, Headmaster of S.H.A., from the 1954 yearbook.



DOUGLAS GROFF COLE  
Headmaster of S. H. A.

### HE HEEDS OUR PLIGHT AND STEERS US RIGHT

The man sitting behind the desk greets you with a smile and asks you to be seated. You feel that he will give you a square deal, that he will help you, and that he will be able to solve your problem. That's Douglas Groff Cole, our headmaster.

During Mr. Cole's seven years at the Academy, he has accomplished many things. He did much in the fund raising drive which made possible the building of the new laboratory. But his most important accomplishment for the benefit of the student has been the organization of our Student Council. He has also served as the Business Adviser of The Sentry. The Class of '54 will remember Mr. Cole for these and many other reasons.

### CONTROLS



To Paula:  
A wonderful girl - a fine president - a loyal, cooperative member of our student body. I certainly have enjoyed working with you during the year. As a person, please try not to be too serious all the time! + subjects should be any but boring. I. A. History. your friend, D. K.

was Simon N. Shapiro. We used to call him Uncle Sy, lovingly, behind his back.

The principal who was there as long as I was there—his name was Douglas Groff Cole. He was principal the entire time that I was there. At the time you go to school, when you're

young, you don't realize everything the adults are doing, and you don't realize the politics in a school. Only later on do you put two and two together. I learned that there were politics, and that the principal probably had his own views of the teachers that would not have coincided with mine. There was a teacher, whom I liked very, very much, who left the school—I don't even know quite what the circumstances were. I think the principal was happy that he left, so did not forward him a letter that I had written on behalf of our class, saying that we weren't happy that he left. I found out later, when I met him once, that he had never gotten the letter. So things go on with the grownups. . . We didn't really know what was going on. We just knew whether we liked our teachers or not, and I think our teachers were very dedicated. I think I learned an awful lot in that school.

## Students from the Surrounding Communities

I probably took the school bus most of those years. When I got older, we moved out of Union City to Cliffside Park. I continued to take the school bus, and probably by my junior year or senior year in high school, my father was driving me down. [Also, when] I got older, I was in a lot of after-school activities. It was either the parent driving, or public transportation. I remember taking the bus home, and to take the bus home, you had to walk up from Stevens Academy, which was at Fifth and Willow, to Fifth and Washington, wait for, I think the No. 21 bus, take that to an area called Nungessers up in Bergen County, get out, [and] wait for another bus to take me home the rest of the way.

[There were a lot of people going to Stevens Academy from other towns.] Because this private school was in Hoboken, I had no friends from where I lived. My friends came from the surrounding communities. I was almost the farthest north. One friend, Sandy Schlesinger, who was a year ahead of me, lived farther north than I did. She lived in Fort Lee. We were about at the north end of the spectrum. A lot of the kids lived in Jersey City. Some of them lived in Hoboken. Probably some lived in North Bergen, Bayonne. There was a radius. . .

## A Great Mix

[There was no Jewish group at the school, but there was] a great mix. There were some Jewish kids, but not a majority. Not a tiny minority, either—very, very mixed. If I told you some of the last names—a boy's last name was "VandenKooy." He was Dutch. There were people of many backgrounds, but not Latino. Cuban people came to Hoboken, but that was way later.

### Four Generations Aid in Adas Emuno Fete



Four generations participated in "festival of lights" ceremonies yesterday at a meeting of Temple Adas Emuno Sisterhood of Hoboken at the temple. Pictured above left to right are: Mrs. Bernard E. Marx, vice president of the Sisterhood and wife of president of the temple; Mrs. Albert Schiller, who opened doors of temple 78 years ago; Mrs. Irving Freedman, daughter of Mrs. Schiller and president of the Sisterhood; Mrs. David Fiedler, granddaughter of Mrs. Schiller and member of Sisterhood; Master Garry Fiedler, great-grandchild of Mrs. Schiller, the latter 4 representing 4 generations; Mrs. Henry Neuman, representing 3 living generations of the temple; Mrs. Benjamin B. Millenthal, and Miss Rosalie Fisher, grandchildren of late Max Konert, charter member of temple and its first vice president 78 years ago; and Mrs. Paul Mios, daughter of Samuel Neuberger, temple president 35 years ago.

Newspaper clipping from the Hudson Dispatch featuring women from the Temple Adas Emuno Sisterhood, including Paula's mother, Mrs. Benjamin B. Millenthal, third from right, circa 1940s.

I cannot say I ever experienced a moment, an incident of anti-Semitism. Absolutely not. And it was not because we were hiding our Jewishness or anything. I would take off on—in those days, schools did not give you time off for the Jewish holidays—it just wasn't done—but I would not go to school on the Jewish holidays. It was never an issue. I know a couple of the teachers were Jewish. And I was always proud of being Jewish. It was a positive; it was never a negative.

As a child, I do not remember, in the family, ever hearing any discussion of anti-Semitism. I can say that in all my years of going to school, once—once—in [the school] in Union City (and maybe that was why they whipped me out of there, I don't know. I don't even know if I came home and told), there was an epithet addressed to me by a little girl. "Dirty Jew." I don't even know if she knew what she was talking about. But it's my only memory, I have to tell you, in my whole growing up years, that I experienced anything like that.

Now I have to explain something to you about Reform Jews at that



A Temple Adas Emuno Sisterhood dinner, circa 1940s, from the Millenthal family scrapbook.

time. Reform Jews—I'm not going to go into the whole background of what Reform is; that's a whole other thing—but they came here to be Americans, to become assimilated, really. My family, you would consider them German Jews, although in those days, the borders between Poland, Germany and Russia—all that kept changing. So I don't think they came from the Germany that we know now. It would probably have been Poland. But they probably spoke German. I know when I was very little my grandmother and my mother, if they wanted to

speak and not have me understand them, they spoke German—not Polish, not Russian, not Yiddish. I never heard a word of Yiddish. It was German.

We were very involved with the temple. As I say, my great-grandfather was a founder, and his son and the person his son married, my grandmother, Juliet, belonged to that temple. All their siblings belonged there. My parents belonged there. I belonged there. My mother was very active there, in the temple Sisterhood. My father was on the board. We had all our holidays there. We did not have our holidays at home. We didn't do what I do now, which is have a Passover Seder in my house, and have a Hanukah party, and do all these things in my home. But in those days, our Jewish life was mostly centered down here in Hoboken, at the temple, and not at home.

March 20, 1949  
 Purim Dinner  
 Chairman: Mrs. Max  
 Co-Chairman: Mrs. Millenthal  
 Menu: Grapefruit, liver, cornapes,  
 roast turkey with dressing,  
 sliced oranges with cranberry  
 jelly, potato salad, cold lamb  
 coffee, tea, cake.  
 Cost per Person: Adults \$2.50  
 Children 1:50  
 Number served: Approximately 100  
 Net Proceeds: \$175.00  
 Gifts were entertained during  
 the dinner by Mrs. Joseph Martin,  
 well-known radio singer, whose  
 beautifully rendered Jewish songs  
 were much appreciated by all. Mrs.  
 Balter accompanied Mrs. Martin on  
 the piano.  
 Mrs. Freedman, President of  
 Sisterhood, in the name of the  
 Sisterhood, presented a gift of a  
 down, banquet table and a chair  
 for five hundred dollars to the  
 Congregation. Mrs. Milton Neuman,  
 President of the Congregation, accepted  
 the gift for the Congregation.  
 Dinner was followed by  
 dancing - of the Ray 90's.  
 Weather & good. Rosalind Fisher  
 Recorder

Newspaper Clippings  
 Purim Dinner  
 Hudson Dispatch  
 March 21<sup>st</sup> March 22<sup>d</sup>  
 Gifts for Temple  
 Mrs. Evelyn Freedman, president  
 of Sisterhood of Temple Adas  
 Emuno, Hoboken, presented the  
 banquet table with 12 aluminum  
 chairs at last night's annual Purim  
 dinner of the Sisterhood at 627  
 Garden st., Hoboken. The gifts  
 were received on behalf of the con-  
 gregation by the temple president,  
 Milton Neuman.  
 About 100 attended the affair, and  
 speakers included Mrs. Bernard  
 Marx, chairman of the dinner com-  
 mittee, and Rabbi Azriel Grishman.  
 Mrs. Madeline Millenthal, Sister-  
 hood secretary, was toastmaster.  
 By Hoboken Sisterhood  
 Purim dinner was held Sunday  
 night at Temple Adas Emuno, 627  
 Garden st., Hoboken, under the  
 auspices of Sisterhood of the  
 Temple. Among the guests who  
 attended the affair were: Mrs.  
 Irving Freedman, president of Sin-  
 gler's congregation; Bernard Marx,  
 rabbi of the congregation; Milton  
 Neuman, president of congregation  
 of Temple Adas Emuno; and  
 Mrs. Bernard Marx, chairman of  
 the dinner committee. Mrs. Madeline  
 Millenthal, Sisterhood secretary,  
 was toastmaster.  
 Mrs. Freedman presented the  
 congregation with a gift of \$500  
 toward a new aluminum banquet  
 table and chairs for the Sisterhood  
 of New York City, followed  
 by Mrs. Benjamin Millenthal, who  
 presented a gift of \$100. Mrs.  
 Marx was chairman, and Mrs. Bernard  
 Marx was toastmaster.  
 Passover supper will be held  
 Apr. 14 at the Temple. Next meet-  
 ing is scheduled for Apr. 19.  
 Jerry Observer  
 March 22  
 HOLD PURIM DINNER  
 AT TEMPLE ADAS EMUNO  
 The Sisterhood of Temple Adas  
 Emuno at Garden street, held its  
 Purim dinner on Sunday evening  
 in the auditorium. Mrs. Bernard  
 Marx was chairman and Mrs. Ber-  
 nard Marx, toastmaster.  
 Speakers were Milton Neuman,  
 president of the congregation; Ber-  
 nard Marx, toastmaster; Mrs.  
 Irving Freedman, president  
 of the Sisterhood, and Rabbi Azriel  
 Grishman.  
 During the evening Mrs. Free-  
 dman presented the congregation  
 with a check for \$500 and a dozen  
 aluminum folding tables.  
 Entertainment was by Joseph  
 Martin, of New York, who sang.  
 After the dinner there was danc-  
 ing and card games were played.

Notes and newspaper clippings about a Temple Adas Emuno Sisterhood dinner celebrating Purim, March 20, 1949.

My mother's friends were mostly her friends from the Sisterhood, from the temple. There was also something called the Ladies Aid Society. There was the National Council of Jewish Women that my great-aunts were part of. So it was very comfortable there, and probably the focus of most of my mother's social life. They didn't go out on dates. My mother didn't play cards. They did get together, socially [with people from the temple], and whenever there was an event, the ladies would cook. My mother and some of her friends would be cooking in the [synagogue] kitchen for a couple of days. That was also a very social thing, it wasn't just the food. People would be honored, and they would have a special dinner honoring somebody. They would cook in the kitchen, at the temple, downstairs. I have pictures of some of them.

On the other hand, in those days, you did not make a big deal out of being Jewish. You didn't make an outward show of it. I never wore a Jewish star, never owned one. We were taught not to be blatant about being Jewish, and we were not terribly religious. You know, there's a difference, I think, between being involved and being active, caring about being Jewish, and actually being a very religious and observant family—which, I would say, we were not. So it's kind of strange. It's a dichotomy, but I don't think it's unique.

## The Hoboken Relatives

[When I came to Hoboken as a child, I had relatives here.] My grandfather was gone, [but] my grandmother, Juliet Jackson Konert, lived with us, in our house, in Union City. She had [a brother, William, and] a bunch of maiden sisters, who all lived in Hoboken: Isabel, Marian, Emma. I understand there were a few marriage proposals (to these sisters) and they were either rejected or broken off at the last minute. This was a bunch of interesting women. They were all schoolteachers.

They all lived separately. I remember going to visit all of them. As well, there were some cousins of my mother's, children of other aunts or uncles, who lived here. So except for one cousin of my mother's who lived in Union City, she had two cousins living here in Hoboken, three [unmarried] aunts and one [married] uncle.

I didn't have grandparents here, but I had all these great-aunts. They were sort of like grandmothers to me, especially one of them, of whom I was very fond, who lived on Washington Street. That was Emma Jackson; she lived at 1025 Washington Street, an Art Deco building. She lived in a front apartment overlooking Washington Street. I used to go there as a little girl, a lot. I know that my Aunt Emma (we used to call her Auntie Em), who never married and never had children but was very grandmotherly to me, would take me, sometimes, to the park—Elysian Park. She knew some people in

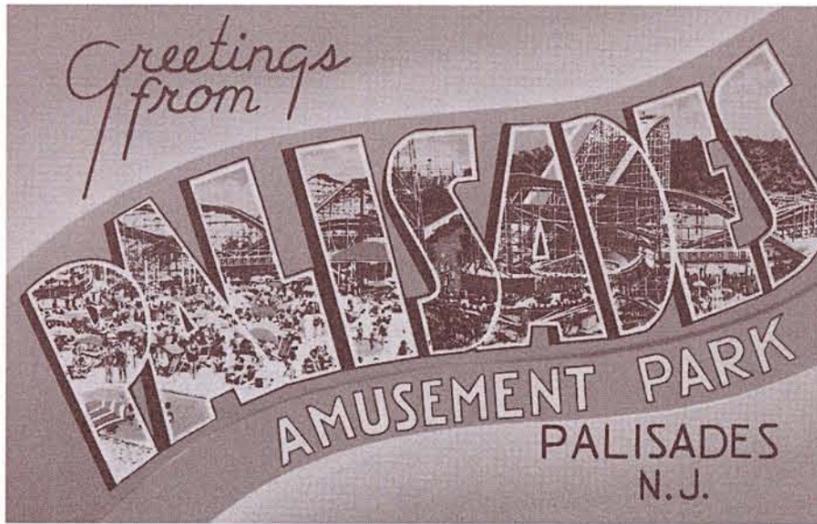


*Family photo, 1952. From left to right, Paula's mother, Madeleine Selina (Konert) Millenthal; (with the dark hair, in back) Evelyn Freedman; Madeleine's maternal aunt, Emma Jackson; and (far right) Sophie Marx. Mrs. Freedman and Mrs. Marx were both members of Congregation Adas Emuno, and ran many of the Sisterhood events together. They were friends of Madeline's.*

Hoboken who had children, and sometimes she would invite me to have dinner with them.

William Jackson married a woman named Ella von Minden. They lived at 1212 Park Avenue in Hoboken, and had one son, William, Jr. I used to go to their house very frequently. They would take care of me. There was no such thing as baby-sitters in those days. If my mother wanted to go to temple and I didn't want to go, or she didn't want to take me someplace, she'd leave me with Aunt Ella and Uncle Willie.

My aunt Ella took me once to Palisades Amusement Park, in Cliffside Park, two blocks from where we eventually moved to and lived in Cliffside Park. For a treat, for an outing, my mother brought me down to her, and she took me down to the trolley, and we took the trolley up the trestle [to Jersey City, then] all the way up to Palisades



*Promotional postcard for Palisades Amusement Park, New Jersey, circa 1940s. COURTESY OF WWW.PALISADESPARK.COM*

Amusement Park. I remember sitting with her on the trolley, and being so excited that we were going.

There were also Isabel Jackson and Marian Jackson. Isabel Jackson lived at 106 Eleventh Street, in an apartment upstairs with a bay window. She had a rocking chair and she always sat in the bay window. Marian Jackson lived for many years at the Mayflower Hotel in New York, on Central Park West. But in her last few years, she lived at 834 Hudson Street.

I was coming to Hoboken constantly, because I got dragged along with my mother when she would visit all her relatives—which ladies did, I guess, in those days, fairly frequently. The fact that all these great aunts lived here—it wasn't because of the synagogue; it was because that's where everyone settled. It came at the same time. They probably settled here for the same reason that my great-grandfather settled here. And it wasn't that they were all so religious, or so involved in temple life. Some of these aunts never set foot in that synagogue.

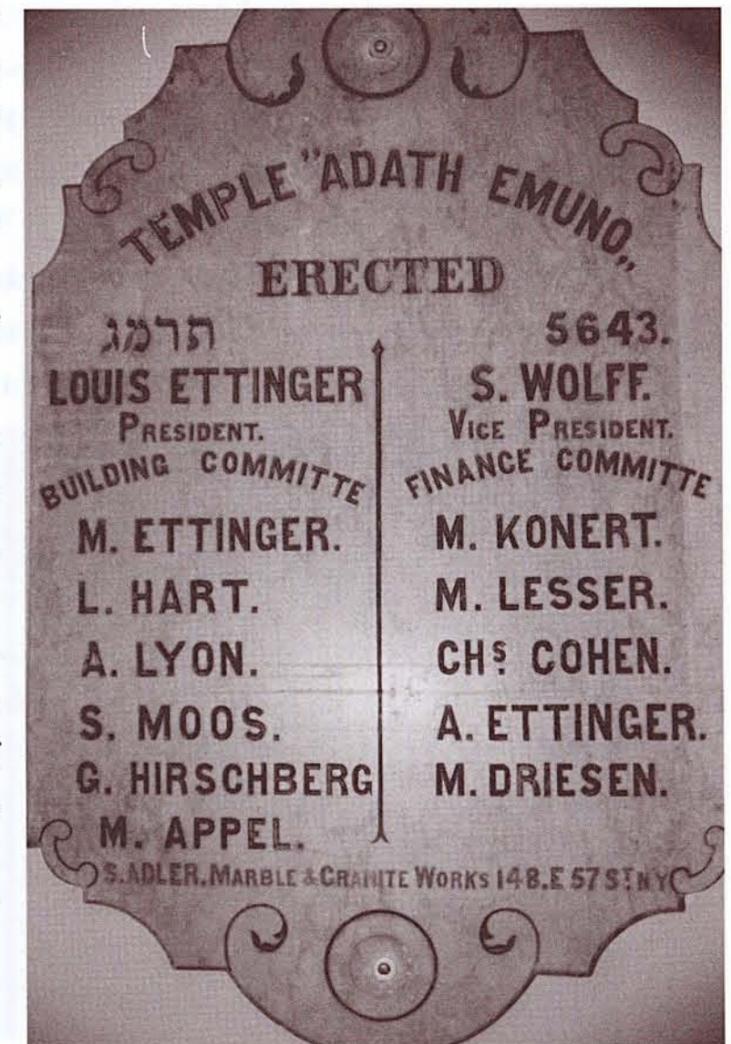
But we were coming to Hoboken constantly. Between the synagogue and the relatives, that's where our life really was. We never went out to dinner here. We didn't go to the movies. It was mostly visiting and temple. What was really funny—I just wanted to tell you, because I think it's a little piece of Hoboken—is that my one great-aunt used to sit in her rocking chair up in her bay window, and my other great aunt had a window on Washington Street. They always knew what every-

body else was doing because you know, they would sit at their windows and watch people go by. Then, when we would visit them, and my mother would be talking with whoever, they would always know everybody else's business. It was a time when people weren't watching television. They were only able to listen to the radio, and they were looking out the window. They had a different kind of leisure, and it was much more like a community. People walked places, they didn't drive. None of these ladies had cars. They walked everywhere.

[Now I don't have any relatives living in Hoboken.] They've all passed away. All gone. [And at Adas Emuno in Leonia, too], the old families are gone, and most of the children of the old families are not members. But my daughter, Juliet, after graduating from college and getting married [she became] a Jewish educator, and for quite a few years was teaching at Congregation Adas Emuno, in Leonia. She had this wonderful moment one day, toward the beginning of her years of teaching there, where they opened the Ark, and there was the Torah backdrop, dedicated by my parents in honor of her birth.

It's traditional, in many congregations, to commemorate an occasion, you would [provide] some decoration for the ark, or something [else]. Finally it got so that every temple had all of that, and I don't think they

*Marble plaque placed in the Temple when it opened. "M. Konert" is listed as a member of the finance committee.*



encourage that anymore. But in those days, a Torah cover might have the name of someone on it. You would go pick out a Torah cover, give it to the temple, and it would have someone's name embroidered into it. So here she saw this backdrop. It was very poignant. And there in the lobby is the plaque, about Max Konert. And she'd been teaching there. So talk about full circle—that was really neat.

I'm sorry that it's not in the cards for me to be continuing with that congregation, and carrying on the tradition of my great-grandfather, and my mother and everybody. But that's what happens in this modern world, where communities change.

## Snow and a Sweetheart Up the Viaduct

I have another nice memory of Hoboken. Not of Hoboken exactly, but Hoboken-involved. [In the late '40s] my sister, Janet Millenthal, was being courted by [the man who became] my brother-in-law, Jerry Spiro, who lived in Hoboken. (Jerry's father, J. Wilbur Spiro, was a dentist in town, 939 Washington Street.. His mother was Mildred Spiro.) Jerry met my sister, Janet Millenthal, at temple, at Congregation Adas Emuno. I think my great-auntie Em (Emma) fixed them up. She wanted to make that a *shiddach*, and I think she succeeded. It's a Yiddish word. It means "made a match."

[Anyway, Jerry lived in Hoboken] and we lived in Union City. And there was a big heavy snow [one day], and you couldn't drive a car. Nothing was running, and Jerry walked all the way up the viaduct to our house, to see my sister. So that's a Hoboken moment, I guess. He walked from 939 Washington Street. The viaduct goes up the hill, Fourteenth Street. I know it's still there. He walked all the way from Washington Street to the viaduct, up the viaduct, and to Palisades Avenue and Monastery Place, to come a-courting.

## Fun After School

When I was in high school, we used to walk up to Washington Street, probably between Fifth and Sixth. There was an ice cream parlor called Umland's. I remember after the first dance I ever went to (I was only in seventh grade, [I went] with a boy in my class), some of the kids were going to go up to Umland's for ice cream. I thought I'd better call home and see if I was allowed to do this, and yes, I was allowed. We would go for great big ice-cream sundaes. We used to get these big things that you had to share. It was sort of *the* ice-cream parlor, that you would go to after a dance or something. There was a soda fountain, and booths. An old-fashioned ice-cream parlor.

Then right near the school, just the next corner, was a place called Pop's. Every school must have its "Pop's," a little hole in the wall candy store with a pinball machine (Bill used to love to play the pinball machine), and where you could go to get candy or soda or something. I didn't like to hang out there too much. It was too small to really hang out in.

[But] we didn't go that far afield, because we didn't have a lot of time. We had a very long school day. And because we had such a long



*Mrs. Persich (right),  
unintended witness to  
Bill Cantor's stated intent  
to marry Paula,  
at Stevens Hoboken  
Academy, with co-worker  
Mrs. Clisham. From the  
school yearbook, 1955.*

school day, and I was staying at the school, usually to rehearse a play or something, there wasn't much else. Everything was centered in that school. It was sort of a world unto itself. You ate lunch—they had a lunchroom. It was on line in the lunchroom that my then-to-be husband, on line in the lunchroom—so I must have been a junior in high school and he was a senior—and he said, "You know, someday I'm going to marry you." Our witness was the lunchroom lady, Mrs. Persich. She stood behind the counter, ladling out the spaghetti. Bill says she was a witness, although I don't think she heard him. I know I didn't say anything. [Did I think it would happen?] Well, he said it so assuredly that, who knows? Maybe. We were dating. We dated other people in between, after that. But, yes. We got married in '58.

## School Romances

When I started at Stevens I was in the fifth grade, and Bill was in the sixth. So it wasn't love at first sight. As a matter of fact, to look at him now, you wouldn't know that he was rather chunky. He outgrew that in his early teens. We had our first date when he turned seventeen and could drive a car—because he lived in Jersey City, and I lived in Cliffside Park. That would have been, for him, a three-bus ride—which nobody was worth. So when he got his car, a month after he got his car, we had our first date. February 21, 1954. Because it was when he had been seventeen for a month. So he was seventeen and I was sixteen. Do I remember the car? Yes. It was a Buick. It was an old, green, Buick Roadmaster.

[On our first date] we went to the movies in Fort Lee, to the Lee Theatre. It's not still there. As most of the things—our school is gone [too]. Now do you really want to hear something? We had our first date (this shouldn't even be on the tape!) We went to a movie, and after the movie—it had been raining—he carried me over a puddle. Then after we got home, he didn't kiss me goodnight. Now those two things are sure-fire winners.



*A page from Paula Millenthal's scrapbook, 1955.*

There were romances at school. We had dances. We had a lot of dances. Every holiday warranted a dance. There was a Valentine's dance, a mid-winter dance, a this dance and a that dance. As a matter of fact, I remember double-dating a few times. I went with a boy in my class, and Bill took a girl in his class, and we would hang out together. So from the time we were in the seventh grade, we were included in these dances. They really sprung this kind of social life on us pretty early. We loved it. We had a great time. We would decorate the auditorium for all these dances. The teachers would be the chaperones.

I think now, as I say, the kids all go en masse. Now I will say, being in the enviable position of being one of only four girls, I always had a date for the dances. But there were lots of kids who would just come and hang out, and dance with everybody, even then. But the scene then was much more boy-girl dating than it is now, I think.

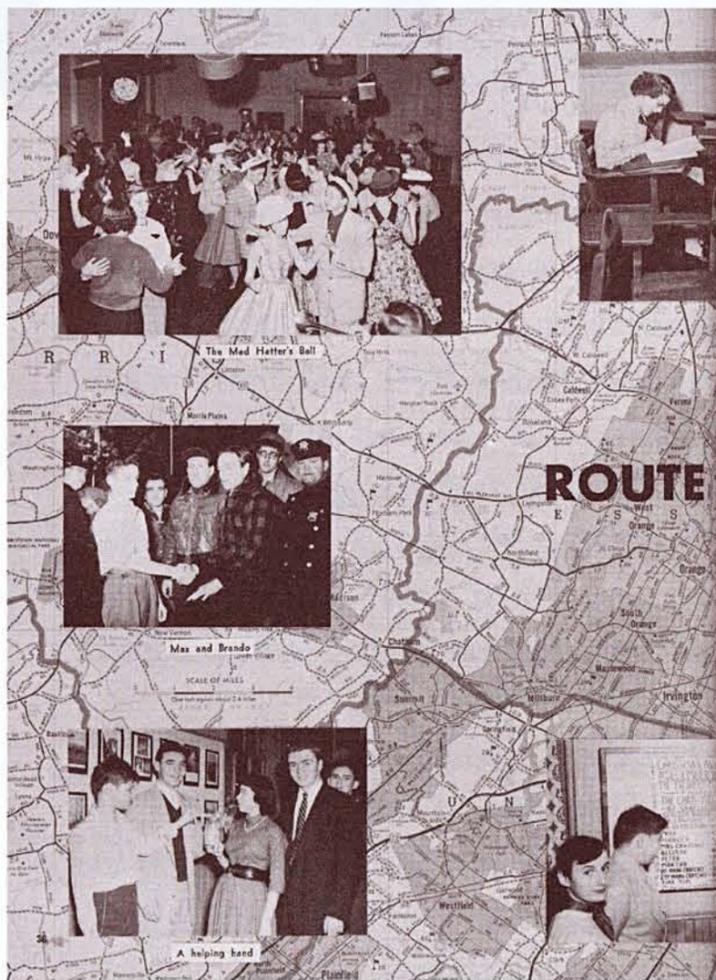
## Marlon Brando and This Guy Who Was In My Class

[When we first heard that *On the Waterfront* was going to be filmed in Hoboken, in Church Square Park,] we got very excited. It was across the street from us, in the park that we used to hang out in at lunchtime every day. (And across the street from Stevens [on Willow Avenue, where Church Towers housing was built] was a pencil factory, and in the warm weather, when the windows were open, you could smell the granite from the pencil factory. So that was a smell that we always associated with school in the Spring.)

Anyway, there's a picture in my yearbook of one of my classmates with Marlon Brando. It was the winter-spring of '54. And there's Marlon Brando, and this guy who was in my class, Max Oeschger. It

was hard to get near him [Brando], because the police and everybody were around. So it was very exciting. As I remember, it was cold weather. They tried to kind of keep us away, and this guy, Max, just kind of snuck over there and shook his hand. That was in the park.

*A page from the 1954 S.H.A. yearbook, showing one of Paula's classmates with Marlon Brando, who was in Hoboken that winter for the filming of *On the Waterfront*.*



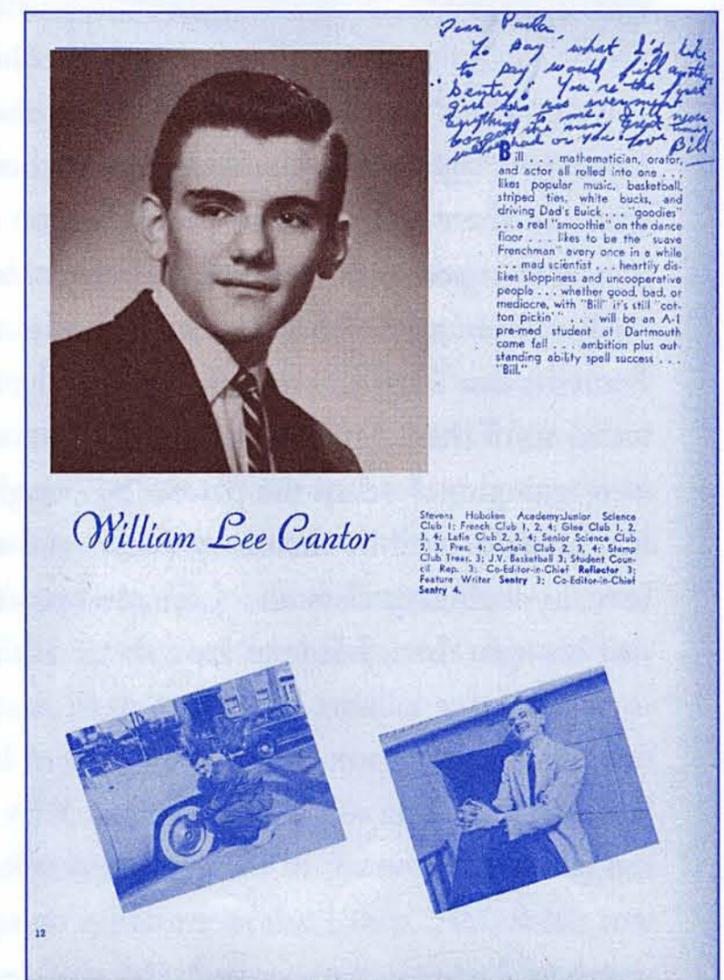
I remember seeing [Brando] from afar. I didn't get this close. I think everyone was kind of annoyed that it was Max who got his picture taken with Brando, that Max should be "representing" us, our school. But he probably had more nerve than some of the rest of us, who followed the rules. He just somehow got himself over there.

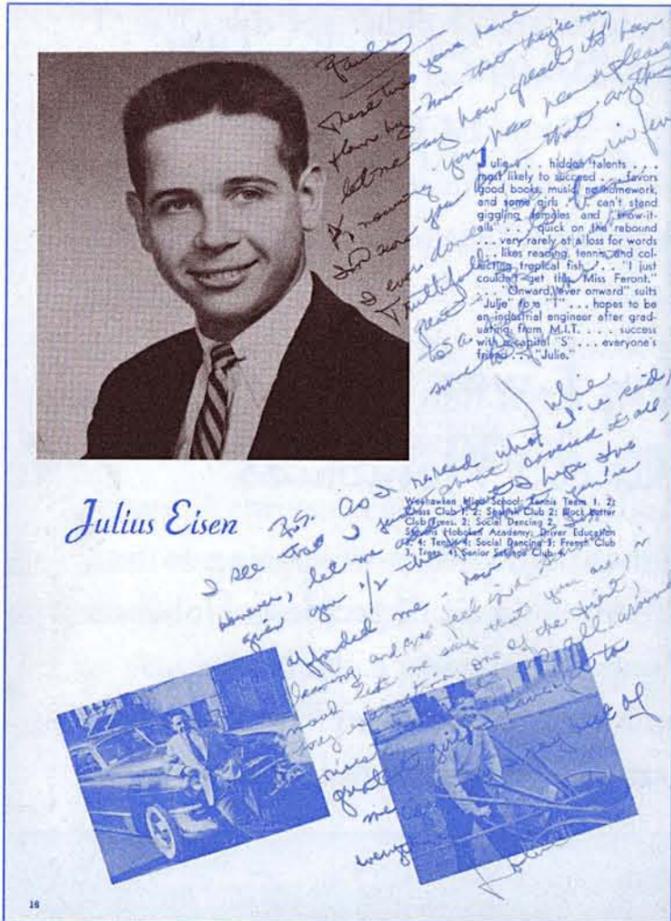
## The Academy Lives On In Friendship and Memories

I have an article here for you about when they were going to tear down the school [in 1976], and it seems a lot of people in Hoboken tried to prevent it from happening. It really was a shame, because it was at a time—a few years later, Hoboken started to have a new life, and that school would have flourished. It was really a pity. I can't go past it, I can't look and see that it's not there. I loved that place so much. I had such wonderful memories.

I really felt at the time that if they had reached out to some of us alums, who felt so warmly and strongly about the place, maybe they could have saved it. You know, a lot of relationships were established there. Not only did Bill and I meet

*Bill Cantor's page in the 1954 S.H.A. yearbook; he and Paula later married.*





*Paula and Bill Cantor's good friend, Julie Eisen, as he appeared in the 1954 S.H.A. yearbook. His family owned a furniture company in Hoboken.*

and get married, in his class Sandy Schlesinger, whose parents owned Schlesinger's, a clothing store in West New York, dated and married another classmate, Ted Moskowitz. [And friendships lasted.] Another guy in Bill's class, Julie Eisen, is, to this day, our dearest friend. (Julie Eisen's family owned the Eisen Furniture

Company, right across the street from where the Tootsie Roll factory was.) So there were a lot of people whose connections went beyond [going to school there and] maybe would have saved the place.

But Bill and I did go back [before it was torn down]. Howard Bennett, our English teacher, became the headmaster, way after we were out of there, and we went back down there when he told us they were going to close up the place, and bought a few items—a scale we had actually used in chemistry class—and some globes that they had used in chemistry class and a microscope and a few other things. We just brought them home to have them. I still have them.

## The Hoboken Oral History Project

“Vanishing Hoboken,” an oral history project, was initiated in 2000 by members of the Friends of the Hoboken Public Library and the Hoboken Historical Museum in response to dramatic physical, social, and economic changes in the city of Hoboken over the preceding twenty years, and to the consequent “vanishing” of certain aspects of public life.

For much of the last century, Hoboken was a working-class town, home to many waves of immigrant families, and to families who journeyed from the southern regions of the U.S. and from Puerto Rico—all looking for work. Hoboken, close to ports of entry in New Jersey and New York, offered a working waterfront and many factories, as well as inexpensive housing. Each new wave of arrivals—from Germany, Ireland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Puerto Rico—found work on the waterfront, at the Bethlehem Steel Shipyards, Lipton Tea, Tootsie Roll, Maxwell House, or in numerous, smaller garment factories. Then the docks closed in the 1960s; and factory jobs dwindled as Hoboken's industrial base relocated over the 1970s and '80s. Maxwell House, once the largest coffee roasting plant in the world, was the last to leave, in 1992. In the go-go economy of the 1980s, Hoboken's row houses, just across the river from Manhattan, were targeted by devel-

opers to young professionals seeking an easy commute to New York City. Historically home to ever-changing waves of struggling families—who often left when they became prosperous—Hoboken began in the mid-1980s to experience a kind of reverse migration, where affluent condominium-buyers replaced poor and working class tenants, many of whom had been forced out by fire, through condo-conversion buy-outs, or through rising rents. More recently, building construction has further altered the face of Hoboken, as modern towers are rising up alongside the late-19th century row houses that once spatially defined our densely populated, mile-square city and provided its human scale.

The Hoboken Oral History Project was inaugurated with the goal of capturing, through the recollections of longtime residents, “Vanishing Hoboken”—especially its disappearing identity as a working-class city and its tradition of multi-ethnic living. The Project focuses on collecting the oral histories of residents who can evoke Hoboken’s vanished industries through their recollections of employment in the city’s many factories and on the waterfront, and those who can capture for present and future generations the ways in which Hoboken’s rich ethnic and cultural diversity was once evident in the everyday life of the city. In 2001, with the support of the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State, the Hoboken Oral History Project transcribed and edited several oral histories to produce a series of “Vanishing Hoboken” chapbooks. Since 2002, eleven chapbooks have been published in the series, with the support of the Historical Commission and the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## Vanishing Hoboken Chapbooks

The editor of this series chose to call these small booklets “chapbooks,” a now rarely heard term for a once-common object. And so, a brief explanation is now required: A chapbook, states the most recent edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is a

. . . small, inexpensive, stitched tract formerly sold by itinerant dealers, or chapmen, in Western Europe and in North America. Most chapbooks were 5 x 4 inches in size and were made up of four pages (or multiples of four), illustrated with woodcuts. They contained tales of popular heroes, legends and folklore, jests, reports of notorious crimes, ballads, almanacs, nursery rhymes, school lessons, farces, biblical tales, dream lore, and other popular matter. The texts were mostly rough and anonymous, but they formed the major parts of secular reading and now serve as a guide to the manners and morals of their times.

Chapbooks began to appear in France at the end of the 15th century. Colonial America imported them from England but also produced them locally. These small booklets of mostly secular material

continued to be popular until inexpensive magazines began to appear during the early 19th century.

Although some of the chapbooks in the Vanishing Hoboken series are considerably longer than their earlier counterparts, others are nearly as brief. They are larger in size, to allow us to use a reader-friendly type size. But all resemble the chapbooks of yesteryear, as they contain the legends, dreams, crime reports, jokes, and folklore of our contemporaries. One day, perhaps, they might even serve as guides to the "manners and morals" of our city, during the 20th and early 21st centuries.

