

# Time Tracs by Jim Ingram

## (Lake Orion's historic Jewish community)

In the 1920s through the mid 1930s Lake Orion had a significant Jewish population during the summer months. These Jewish families located primarily on the west side of the village, along West Flint Street and North Shore (then known as Josie A, named after Josie Axford, wife of one of Orion's first settlers).

Many owned cottages on North Shore Drive. Some stayed at Lieberman's Inn, a small Jewish hotel on the northeast corner of West Flint and Beebe Streets. This building still stands on that site and has been converted into apartments.

Other Jewish families would rent portions of houses owned by local year around residents. One of those local residents was Jess and Mable Shoup who lived at 109 North Axford.

Marie Shoup, who married their son William and still lives in the family home, relates the following story about Lake Orion's ethnic past.

Anyone in the west end of town with an empty room rented it during the summer. Jess Shoup built a porch on the south side of his house for his boys to sleep on so their bedrooms could be rented. The locals would supplement their incomes in this way.

The Jewish families, usually with no more than two children, rented these rooms with kitchen privileges. They would often rent these facilities for the entire summer season with mother and children staying during the week and father and other relatives coming out on weekends.

They patronized local businesses and swam off Cole's Dock at the foot of West Flint. Sometimes the local family would move in with relatives for the weekend.

There was a certain amount of conflict with the locals as one might expect. I can remember some of my relatives complaining about the loud and "pushy" Jews. However, Marie said the same Jewish families rented the same houses year after year and formed very good relationships with the local families.

A more upscale cottage owned by Jewish families in the 1920s still stands at 315 Clair Street and 321 Lake Street. The Clair Street address was the large main house and the small house on Lake Street the guest house.

I have a picture of this cottage probably dating to the 1930s. At that time it was called "Brodie's Inn." It was really a "club house" which like many large houses around Lake Orion were either rented or owned by a group of Detroit families as a summer residence. This one was the summer home of the parents of Harry Bannister who later married the famous actress Ann Harding.

The concentration of Jewish families on the west side of the village started declining in the mid 1930s and was largely gone by the late 1930s. This corresponded with the overall decline of Lake Orion as a resort.

The Leibshitz family was an exception. They continued to live year around on North Shore for many years.

At this same time a Jewish family named Goldman purchased a cottage on West Pine Tree then called Pine Grove. Judy Goldman Brady is my neighbor and has been living here at least part of the time since 1937.

The Goldmans were not aware the village formerly had a small Jewish enclave and Judy said they felt like Lake Orion's token Jews when they began summering here. They were later to be joined on Pine Tree in the 40s and 50s by two other Jewish families.

Judy said they became very close over the years to some of their neighbors. She tells of one year around neighbor who at first said he could never be friendly with a Jew.

He and Judy's father discovered they had

something in common. Although very different in personality, the neighbor being very verbal, animated and political, Judy's father being more reserved and not opinionated, they became good friends.

She also tells an interesting story about the Bund camp on Pine Tree in the late 1930s. The German-American Bund was a US pro-Nazi, quasi-military organization, most active in the years preceding US entry into World War II.

Military drill and related activities were provided for adults and youths at Bund-maintained camps. Anti-Semitic and pro-Hitler elements in the US generally supported the Bund.

According to Judy, the Bund camp was located at the very end of Pine Tree in the center of the cul-de-sac which at that time had no buildings on it. They erected an open pavilion and used tents for sleeping.

Judy recalls them as being adolescent boys with male leaders, wearing uniforms, doing military exercises and singing a lot of songs. She said her family did not become concerned about them and they camped there only two or three summers.



"Brodie's Inn" was at 315 Clair Street and still stands today. It was owned by the parents of Harry Bannister who married the actress Ann Harding.