

History and Development of Services



Over the years Jewish Community Services has undergone quite a few changes of name and areas of outreach. Yet despite this, there is no altering the fact that it is the oldest Jewish Welfare Organisation in South Africa. Its current title is of a really recent making, dating back to a mere 1998 before which it was known as the Cape Jewish Board of Guardians.

We need to take a look at the year 1859 to see where the seed was sewn - and even then it had a different name.

According to the archives there was a body known as "The Philanthropic Society of the Cape of Good Hope" at that time, run as an adjunct of the mother Synagogue.

The basic operating premise and, indeed, the *raison d'être* for this organization is perhaps outlined most clearly in a passage from the Book of Deuteronomy which reads as flows:

"If there be among you a needy man, one of your bretheren, within thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand

from the needy brother; but thou shalt surely open thy hand and surely lend him sufficient for his need that he wanteth."



Mr. R. Weinberg (President)

Between 1875 and 1891 this Society underwent several critical phases and teetered on extinction. During these years the work was kept alive through the unstinting energy and commitment of Rev Joel Rabinowitz, Rev AF Ornstein and Mr M. Eilenberg who was elected president at the end of the period.

In 1895 Rev AP Bender was appointed minister of the mother congregation and founded the Jewish Ladies Association. A copy of Rev Bender's appeal to the Jewish Community, published in the Jewish Chronicle, April 1st, 1932, at the height of The Great Depression, makes interesting reading and displays the founding ethos of the organisation:

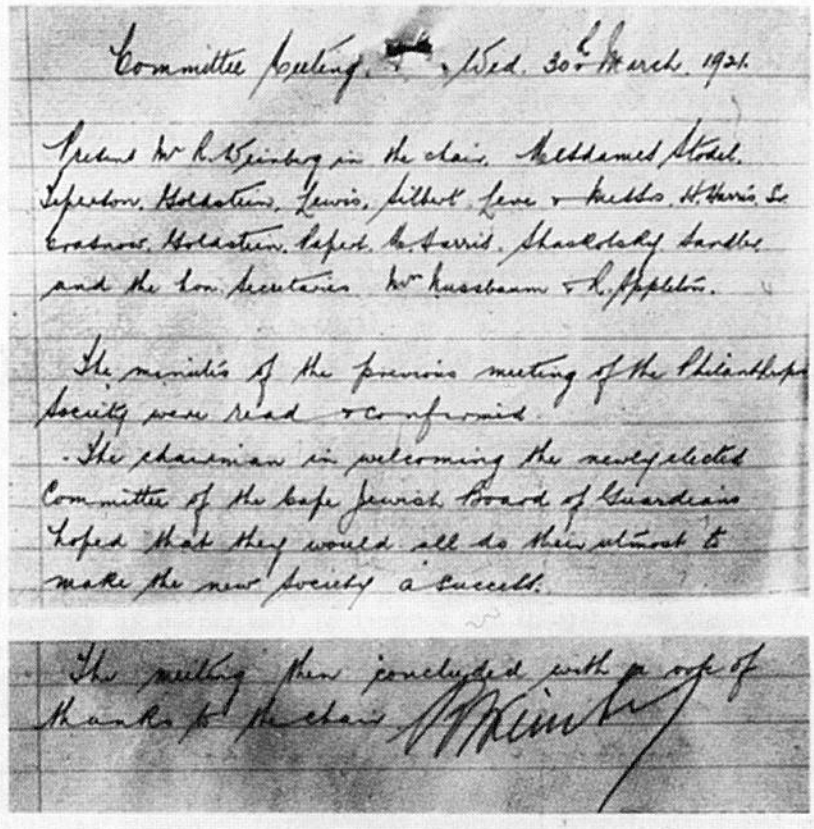
"The Cape Jewish Board of Guardians - the oldest and most widely known charitable organization of our Community - has, of late, repeatedly appealed to the Jewish citizens of the Cape Peninsula to rally to its support at this period of exceptional financial stringency in the history of our Country. But up to the present it has received, in response, barely sufficient money to relieve its most pressing cases, partially and not entirely, from day to day. It is, therefore, arranging a Mass Meeting to be held in the Zionist Hall, Cape Town, on Sunday evening next, April 3rd, in order to endeavour to bring home irresistibly to all those who have the well-being of our Community at heart, the seriousness of the present position, so that they may be lead to



Seated (left to right) L. van de Kar (past Pres.), J. Kowen (Trustee), A. Geffen R. Frankal (Asst. Chairman B.O.G. Relief), Mrs S. Gottlieb (Add. Exec. Member), B.O.G. Relief), B-Z. Surdut (Vice President) Absent - H. L. Stern (Trustee)

realize the undeniable claim which the Board has upon their united, generous and sustained moral and financial support. It is surely inconceivable that the Jewish People, whose essentially charitable spirit has been so frequently and so eloquently demonstrated in every part of the world, and not least throughout South Africa, will allow the trumpet call of the Board of Guardians to fall on unheeding ears. I appeal with all the vigour I can command to all those whom Providence has endowed with the means of rendering assistance to those who urgently need it, to give to the very utmost of their powers towards the relief of the destitute, the sick, the afflicted and the helpless within our own gates. And may He who graciously preserves us all bestow His Blessing upon each of those who will respond in the old-world Jewish spirit to the undeniable call of the Board of Guardians in this trying time."

In 1921 the Philanthropic Society and the Jewish Ladies Association, mentioned earlier, merged and Mr R. Weinberg was elected president of the



From the Minute Book

newly formed Cape Jewish Board of Guardians.

Throughout its history the mandate of the Jewish Board has maintained a constant outlook. All its activities are

centred on relief for the poor and distressed in the Jewish community - this takes the form not only of financial help, but social welfare work, counselling, guidance and rehabilitation. And although it is



(President), M. H. Goldschmidt (Trustee), Mrs P. Katzeff (Secretary) Standing (left to right) Miss S. Derman (Social Welfare Officer), L. Goldman (Hon. Treasurer), H. M. Joffe (Hon. Asst. Treasurer), M. O. Arcus (Add. Exec. Member), Dr. F. D. Dornfest (Chairman)