

The “Dobroczytność” [Charity] Philanthropic Society

Our city distinguished itself with its traits of good character, with its great concern for helpless, infirm and poor people.

To this aim, many essential institutions were created among us, which provided needy people with their support and protection.

These institutions were founded through the Municipality, in general, as well as by individuals who, in this fashion, commemorated their parents and families, building necessary and useful institutions in their names.

As the most prominent institution in this blessed activity in our city, the “Dobroczytność” society should be mentioned (that was its name in Polish but, in our mother-tongue it justly received the nice name “*Maasim Toivim*” [Heb.; good deeds] or more correctly - “*Gitte* [Yid.; good] *Maasim*”). (Its “*Maasim Toivim*” continued for decades, until the largest Asmodeus of all generations, Hitler, may his name and memory be obliterated, destroyed all that Częstochowa possessed, together with all its dear Jews!)

The “Dobroczytność” Society

[It] was founded on 27th March 1899 and, when in 1926 (with a certain delay) it celebrated its 25th anniversary, the Society could count among its good deeds the following:

- 1) emergency-aid to the needy;
- 2) the building of the Jewish hospital and its maintenance;
- 3) the aged care home and orphanage;
- 4) the “children’s home” [day-care centre], and
- 5) providing for the needy pregnant women.

The founder of “*Dobroczytność*” and its first Chairman was Henryk Markusfeld, who donated much of his time and money to the institution, right up until the last day of his life.

Following his passing, in 1920, Dr Eduard Kohn was elected Chairman and, after his death in 1934, that function was performed by Dr Ludwig Batawja.

The point mentioned above - “emergency-aid to the needy” - was carried out by providing loans, without interest, to the needy in order to thus ensure their existence in a constructive manner.

The outbreak of the First World War, while leading to the liberation of Poland and to its rising as an independent State, also brought great losses to this important institution. This was due to a “moratorium” and other financial reasons. [The] borrowed money had almost vanished or had lost its real value, so much so, that this activity was forced to cease.

However, a little later, the work resumed and, thanks to the great support of the American “Joint” and the energetic work of the lawyer Mieczysław Koniarski, who was [then] the leader, this branch of aid became increased greatly and brought great benefits to the different strata of the Jewish population.

The most important aspect of the activity of “Dobroczyńność”, which merits separate treatment, is:

The Jewish Hospital

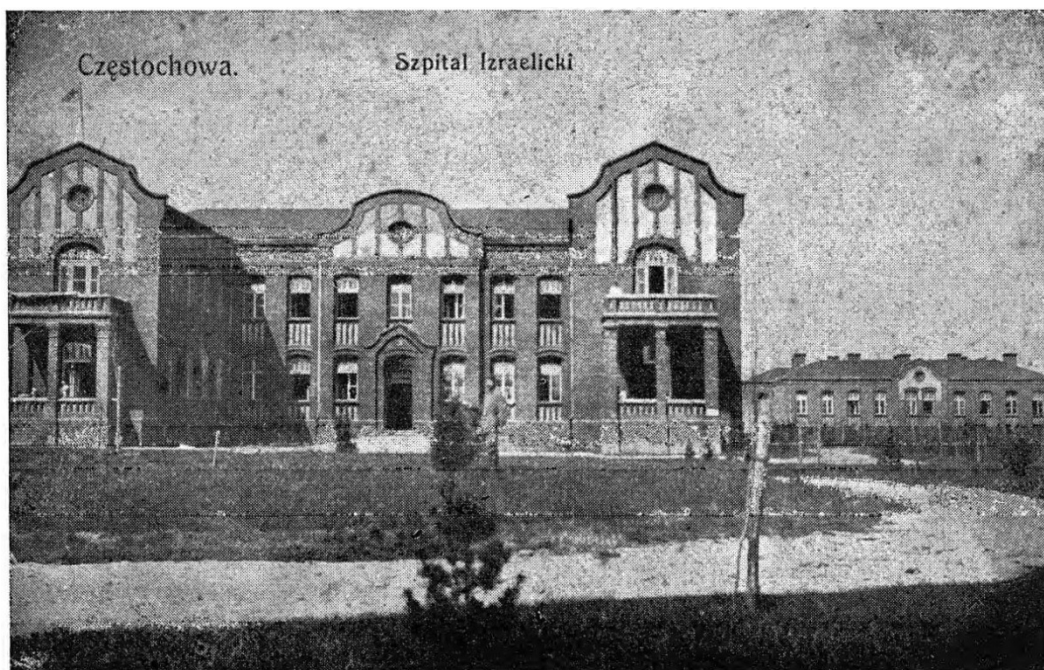
Soon after its foundation, the Society elected a special building committee, whose first task was to attend to the building of a Jewish hospital in Częstochowa.

The building committee comprised Henryk Markusfeld, Dr Ludwig Batawja, Herman Ginsberg, Leopold Werde, Leopold Kohn [and] Dr Eduard Kohn. Henryk Markusfeld was appointed its Chairman.

On 5th December 1900, the committee purchased a property for the building of the hospital and paid 7,600 roubles for it. However, it was discovered that this site was unsuitable for the purpose and the committee sold it.

Only in 1907, when the old slaughter-house was relocated to a new location and its [old] place was, in fact, suitable for the building of a Jewish hospital, the committee began lobbying with the government to have this location allocated for the building of the Jewish hospital. To the praise of the Częstochowa municipal authorities, it must be mentioned that it supported this request and on 28th September 1908, the Russian government finally gave its approval and the committee received the property entirely free of charge.

A new building-committee was appointed in order to carry the matter through. The new committee was comprised of Dr Józef Markusfeld, Dr L. Batawja, Herman Ginsberg, Markus Gradsztajn, Stanisław Herc, Dr Aleksander Wolberg, Leopold Werde, Ludwig Tempel, Izidor Freund and Eng. Karp.



The Jewish Hospital in Częstochowa

The building-committee began collecting money for the cause and also, immediately, made contact with the architect-engineer Mankowski, as well as with various contractors. It made commitments valued at 111,130 roubles, even though its fund had no more than 34,000 roubles. On the 18th Sivan [7th June] 5669 (1909), the foundation [stone] was laid for the Jewish hospital.

The Częstochowa Jews did not disappoint the committee. They contributed with a very open hand.

We should name the major donors:

- the Ginsburg brothers (Berlin), Józef W. Landau, Henryk Markusfeld, - 10,000 roubles each;
- Pawel Szpigel (in memory of Mrs Gurfinkel z''l) – 3,250 roubles;
- Izidor Gajsler, Ludwig Tempel, Szyia Landau – 3,000 roubles each;
- the heirs of Leon Oderfeld z''l – 2,500 roubles;
- the Society for Needy Lying-in Women – 2,100 roubles.

Apart from this, funds were also created for specific purposes, such as that from the “Women’s Association” (for interior furnishings) – 4,741 roubles; Mr Balabanow (for a special pharmacy at the hospital) – 7,000 roubles; Dr Józef Markusfeld (to plant a flower-garden next to the hospital, in memory of his deceased wife) – 5,000 roubles.

The building expenditures exceeded the proceeds by 20,303 roubles, but this deficit too was covered by further donations from Częstochowa Jews.

Then the question arose of how to ensure the hospital’s yearly budget. The maintenance of the hospital’s fifty beds required 30,000 roubles a year and, again, the Częstochowa Jews showed their good-heartedness and their open hands!

It was decided to create a fund, from which the interest earned would be spent on the hospital’s day-to-day needs. Here are some of the legators for this cause:

- from Szaja Landau – 10,000 roubles;
- Lazarus and Rozalia Grosman – 5000 roubles;
- Ludwig and Klara Kohn – 3000 roubles;
- Szymon and Charlotte Bergman, as well as Ludwig Tempel – 2000 roubles each.

Together, the legators brought in a total of 26,813 roubles, which yielded 1,411 roubles per year. The Jewish *Kehilla*, on its part, pledged to give the legators another 67,000 roubles and also to procure further legators, thus ensuring hospital’s annual budget.

The hospital contained four wards, which held 50 beds for the sick, [and] two operating-rooms. It contained departments for the internally ill, contagious diseases and the mentally ill.

The hospital also had separate buildings for the kitchen and lodgings for hospital employees, who needed to live near the hospital. It also had a morgue.

The hospital was officially opened on Sunday, 16th November 1913. Cantor Abram Ber Birnbaum and his choir sang “*Mizmor Shir Chanukas HaBayis*” [“A psalm; a song of dedication of the House”; Psalm 30], and speeches, marking the occasion were delivered city’s Rabbi, Rabbi Nuchem Asz, *Prezes* Henryk Markusfeld, Mayor Głazek, the hospital Director Dr L. Batawja and by Dr Zaks.

The curators of the hospital were, from 1913-1914 – Dr Józef Markusfeld, from 1914-1918 – Gustaw Kohn, and from 1918 – the *Kehilla Prezes* Szmul Goldsztajn.

The hospital's first director was Dr Ludwig Batawja, who died in 1939. Dr Stefan Kohn-Kolin succeeded him in heading the hospital.

The hospital constantly developed and was famous throughout Poland for its modern medical equipment.

In the last years, prior to the destruction of Częstochowa, its annual budget had reached 250,000 złotych.

Częstochowa *landsleit* in America, through their "Częstochower Aid Association" and, later, through the "Częstochower Relief", generously helped to cover such a large budget.



A group of old men from the "Dobroczytność" aged care home, in normal times



A group of old women who lived at the aged care home of the "Dobroczytność" society

The "Aged Care Home" and the "Children's Home"

The aged care home and the orphanage were established thanks to the efforts of the Werde family, in "memory of their deceased only daughter, Mina Werde z''l".

This family dedicated itself with all its might to the institutions to which they also donated all their property.

Up to thirty elderly men and women and ninety orphans were maintained here. They received the best education by certified, professional pedagogues.

Various technical workshops were also arranged there, in which orphaned boys and girls, above the age of 16, learned diverse trades, which would ensure their existence and their future.

Mrs Jozefa Sztarke headed this department.

The "Dobroczytność" "Children's Home"

At the children's home [day-care centre], a great number of the city's poorest children were educated and well-fed.

The institution also provided clothing for the children who were in need of it.

The manager of the "Children's Home" was Mrs Wierzbicka.

Providing for Poor Pregnant Women

A special women's committee of "Dobroczytność" provided for poor, pregnant, Jewish women, who were mainly from the poorest classes of the population and who lived in the worst lodgings. They mostly came from large families.

The women's committee of "Dobroczytność", first of all, arranged places for them in hospitals to give birth and they supplied clothing for their tiny new-born babies. They also looked after the other small children, until the pregnant women were able to again take care of them. They also organised

the circumcisions for the new-born boys and took care of the needy in general, giving them material and moral aid with generosity.

This essential relief-work was led by Mrs Sarna, who dedicated herself to this with all might.

(Sadly, these good deeds went up with the fire burning Polish Jewry, in the gruesome days of the Nazi invasion!)

We present, here, a short report from the 32nd Annual General Meeting of the important "Dobroczynność" institution which was, at that time, published in the Częstochowa Jewish press:

In 1935, the 32nd Annual General Assembly of "Dobroczynność" was held in the hall of the Kehilla. It began by honouring the memory of the recently deceased Prezes, Herman Ginsberg.

The session was chaired by Director S. Pruszycki, with Eng. Przysuski and Secretary Dobrzynski comprising the presidium.

Dr L. Batawja delivered the activity-report, from which it was learned that, even during the economic crisis, the institution had not decreased its activity in the hospital, the aged care home and the orphanage. The summer camps carried out their tasks in full. True, it had been necessary to struggle with great difficulties, but the public figures' sense of responsibility was sufficiently strong and the institutions were maintained. It is true that, due to lack of money, new investments were not able to be made.

Dr S. Kohn expressed his wonder at the small number of participants in the general meeting and asked representatives of the press to note this in their reports on the institution in their newspapers.

The annual budget of 313,300 złotych was approved.

J. Imich, Mrs Grosman, N. Kohn, Dr Stanisław Kohn and D. Szwarc were elected to the new Board of Management.