



**McHENRY
MUSEUM**
& Historical Society



Newsletter

April 2022

History Lesson

As winter fades and the blossoms of spring bloom, it is more than a change of season, but rather a new beginning for the year, an end to the winter hibernation. It is a time for families come together to celebrate the Easter Holiday, but let it not be forgotten that it is also the season for the Jewish holiday of Passover. For this edition of the MM&HS Newsletter we wish to tell the story of the family who owned California Auto Parts for over 70 years, the Israels.

This article is the story of a mother and son, Pauline and Louis "Lou" Israels and a daughter-in-law and wife Judy who documented their history. The Israels are wonderful examples of a family dedicated not only to their faith, business, and their community, but also to the preservation of history. Pauline Israels agreed to be interviewed for the Stanislaus Regional Oral History Project on February 1, 2004, by her daughter-in-law Judy. Lou and Judy Israels sat down with the Greater Modesto-Stanislaus Jewish History Archive (ModeStan Archive) on November 20, 2020, to be interviewed less than seven months before Lou Israels' passing. Judy Israels has agreed to let her family's history be shared with us, not only to celebrate her loved ones but in hopes to encourage everyone to document their loved ones journey.



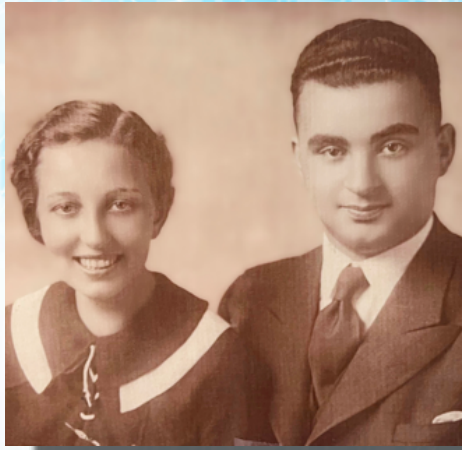
Pauline



Judy & Lou

If the Jewish community of Modesto had a matriarch, it is likely they would have chosen Pauline Israels whose family composed four generations at Congregation Beth Shalom. Pauline Spier was born in the town of Neukirchen, Germany to Siegmund and Katchen Spier on October 7, 1914. Her family owned one of the town's largest clothing stores Kaufhaus Spier. Siegmund Spier died shortly before Pauline's eleventh birthday. Pauline's idyllic childhood came to an end as the Nazi presence in Germany expanded, after being slapped and threatened by a former family friend named Karl Heinz who had joined the SS, as Pauline had to drop out of school and briefly flee to Marburg. At a resort spa in Bad Nauheim, Germany she met Richard Israelski (1907-1974) who quickly fell in love and proposed to the then eighteen-year-old, Pauline. Her mother Katchen agreed to let Richard court Pauline, though supervised. Following Katchen Spier's death in 1935, Pauline married Richard in secret in Berlin, since Jews were not allowed to gather. They settled in the independent free city of Danzig between Germany and Poland, now known as Gdańsk, Poland. Richard operated a Haberdashery called Israelski. Their first child Louis was born on May 1, 1937.

**Please call us at:
(209) 618-5387**



Pauline & Richard
Israels



Pauline & Lou
on the
Queen Mary

Richard Israelski became one of the first Jews in Danzig to face interrogation by the Nazis. Richard fled Danzig for the United States with friend Hans Frankenstein (1906-1977), leaving Pauline, Louis, and his mother Vally (1885-1965). Soon after Richard's departure, Pauline was approached by two men who confiscated her passport; she became stranded in Danzig, not being able to leave for nine months and seventeen days and paid to get her passport returned. Pauline and Louis were able to escape as she booked passage on the *Queen Mary* and entered the United States on April 4, 1938. Her visa listed her as Pauline Israels, and they family kept the name.

After being reunited with Richard in Cleveland, Ohio, the family moved to Los Angeles, California due to the warmer climate. Richard worked briefly in the theatre business before Hans Frankenstein told him of a man selling his auto wrecking yard in Modesto. Though Richard had no experience in the profession, he learned quickly and starting in 1941 the Israels became the proprietors of California Auto Parts, which they owned for the next seven plus decades. Over the decade, the Israels welcomed two more sons Sidney in 1943 and Philip in 1948. Lou Israels came of age in Modesto, attending John Muir School and Thomas Downey High School. His future wife Judith "Judy" Rappaport was born in Ottawa, Canada in 1943. At the age of ten, she moved to the Los Angeles area. Judy attended UCLA and was introduced to Lou in her third year of college. She met Lou through her brother who served with Lou in the army together. Judy came to Modesto for a visit with her brother and they stopped by California Auto Parts. Pauline was excited to meet a nice Jewish girl. Soon after Lou came to Los Angeles to court her. He took her to elegant dinners and the theatre. Lou kept telling Judy "I think this is going to be significant." On their second date in the parking lot of a UCLA basketball game, Lou proposed, she accepted, and they were married four months later August 3, 1963. Judy finished her education at California, State University, Stanislaus. Together they had a daughter and son, Valli and Samuel. Lou took over California Auto Parts from his father who died in 1974 and ran it until his retirement in 2011.



Lou & Judy



Other members of the family have numerous accomplishments, to list all of them would take several articles. Pauline and Richard should be very proud. The entire Israels family was heavily involved with the local Jewish community. Pauline and Richard were a part of the first temple on fourteenth and F Street. The Israels family were instrumental in the creation of the new synagogue Congregation Beth Shalom in the 1960s. Above business and hard work was family. Pauline Israels persevered after the death of her husband remaining active in the community until her passing at age 95 on January 17, 2010. She was survived by her sons Louis, Sidney, and Phillip, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Lou Israels sold California Auto Parts a few years later and passed after a lengthy illness at age 84 on June 12, 2021. He leaves his wife Judy, his two children and five grandchildren. Modesto was home to Pauline Israels for sixty-nine years and Lou for eighty. There they rejoiced and generously contributed to the rich history of their city. In knowing the story of this mother and son and a supportive wife, we at the MM&HS are privileged to have their words preserved for posterity. Judy Israels is a true champion of history, as her family frequently tells her, she does not simply talk to people, she interviews them. We encourage everyone reading this to do the same with your loved ones.



*Information collected for this article comes from:
Interview with Pauline Israels by Judy Israels in conjunction of the *Stanislaus Regional Oral History Project*. (2004).
Interview with Louis and Judy Israels by David Seymour & Keith Highiet and recorded by Gary Matthew Condit (2020).
Interview with Judy Israels by David Seymour (2022).
Journeys...roads from there to here, Martha Loeffler (2001).
Photos from Judy Israels and *The Modesto Bee*

Updates



Marie Jewett

- The Museum Store is ready for Spring and the Easter Season, come check it out.
- On March 17, 2022, The MM&HS arranged the sale of a Virginia White original to Modesto Mayor Sue Zwahlen. It has been our pleasure to carry the originals, prints, and cards of Virginia White.
- On March 19, 2022, MM&HS Executive Director David Seymour delivered a copy of our March Newsletter to 94-year-old Marie Jewett at the home she shares with her son Mike in Fremont. We would like to thank Mrs. Jewett and her daughter and son-in-law Laura and Floyd Padgett for their generous donations to the MM&HS following the publication of our Newsletter.
- The Museum store is now carrying some amazing prints by local artist Jonathan Troxler. We hope to have an exhibit honoring his work in the upcoming months.
- As always, the MM&HS would like to thank our loyal docents and those volunteers who helped keep the Museum Store running in the month of March, Janice Lane, Nancy Norton, Athena Galexia, Richard Cato, and Leslie Thompson.
- The Board of Directors met on March 31, 2022 and discussed ideas for the McHenry Museum's fiftieth Anniversary this July.
- The Board of Directors of the MM&HS is scheduled to meet on April 26, 2022.



Virginia White & Sue Zwahlen



APRIL
Fool's
Day

HAPPY
Easter

Happy
Passover