

Ezekiel Solomon Historical Marker Dedication

by LAWRENCE A. RUBIN

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The warm sunshine of a sky blue clear day was not enough to offset the chill wind that swept down from the north across the Straits over Fort Michilimackinac on Sunday, May 31, 1964.

It was definitely topcoat weather as a handful—literally a handful — of Michigan Jewish residents gathered to dedicate a historical marker to Michigan's first Jewish settler, Ezekiel Solomon. As in the days when Solomon was considerably outnumbered by non-Jews as a resident of the Straits area, so again were the Jews with a penchant for history outnumbered in the ceremony to honor a distinguished pioneer.



Left to right: Lewis Beeson, Executive Secretary, Michigan Historical Commission; Walter J. Murray, Chairman, Mackinac Island State Park Commission; Allen A. Warsen, Honorary President, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan; Dr. Eugene T. Petersen, Director of Historic Projects, Mackinac Island State Park Commission.

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According to schedule, the ceremony began at 2:00 p.m. with Dr. Eugene T. Petersen, Director of Historic Projects for the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, acting as master of ceremonies. He described rather briefly Ezekiel Solomon's role as a participant in the massacre which took place on June 2, 1763. He related some of the incidents in the life of Ezekiel Solomon which have been so brilliantly researched and written about by Mr. Irving I. Katz of Temple Beth El, Detroit.

Dr. Petersen then introduced Mr. Lewis Beeson, Executive Secretary of the Michigan Historical Commission, who described briefly the program of placing historical markers around the State and congratulated the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan for its participation in the marker program by donating the plaque describing the highlights in the life of Ezekiel Solomon.



Left to right: Leo F. Boissineau, descendant of Solomon; Walter J. Murray, Chairman, Mackinac Island State Park Commission, and son Jerome; Dr. Irving I. Edgar, President, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan; Mrs. Irving I. Edgar; Lewis Beeson, Executive Secretary, Michigan Historical Commission; Dr. Eugene T. Petersen, Director of Historic Projects, Mackinac Island State Park Commission; Jonathan D. Hyams, Treasurer, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan; Allen A. Warsen, Honorary President, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan; Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Rubin and son David, members of Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.

STATE OF MICHIGAN



Michigan Senate

Senate Resolution No. 121

Offered by Senator Charles S. Blondy

MEMORIALIZING MICHIGAN'S FIRST JEWISH SETTLER AND THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN.

WHEREAS, On Sunday, May 31, 1964 the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan will dedicate and present to the Mackinac Island State Commission for the people of Michigan an historical roadside marker commemorating Michigan's first Jewish resident and survivor of the Massacre of 1763 at Fort Michilimackinac, Mackinaw City, Ezekiel Solomon; and

WHEREAS, Ezekiel Solomon was a native of Berlin, Germany who had served with the British army, and arrived at Michilimackinac in the summer of 1761, becoming Michigan's first known resident of the Jewish faith. He was one of the most active of the Mackinac fur traders until his death, about 1808. During the Revolutionary War, he and other hard-pressed traders pooled their resources to form a general store. In 1784 he was one of an eight-member committee to regulate trade in the Mackinac area. His business took him frequently to Montreal, where he is believed to have been buried and where he was a member of Canada's first Jewish congregation, Shearith Israele. Those are substantially the facts embodied in the commemorative marker which the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan will present to the state; now therefore be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, That its members congratulate the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, Dr. George S. May, research archivist of the Michigan Historical Commission, author of the marker's text, and Mr. Allen A. Warsen whose efforts were chiefly instrumental in producing the marker commemorating Michigan's First Jewish Settler, Ezekiel Solomon, for their joint efforts and gift to enrich the wealth of Michigan's historical mementos of interest and her heritage; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.

Adopted by the Senate, May 28, 1964.

Rayl J. Kenson
Secretary of the Senate.

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Dr. Petersen then introduced Mr. Allen A. Warsen of Oak Park, Michigan, Honorary President of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, and prime mover in the successful effort to obtain a marker commemorating Michigan's first Jewish resident, pioneer fur trader and merchant of northern Michigan. Mr. Warsen then made the following remarks:

"Ezekiel Solomon, who bore the names of a prophet and a king, was a pioneer, a chalutz, as a pioneer is called in Israel. Just as the "chalutzim" have converted marshes and a wilderness into a modern, dynamic land, so have Solomon and the other European pioneers with their courage, daring and energy gradually brought about the conversion of this beautiful, God given land into the modern State of Michigan, a state famous for its great culture, great men and great institutions.

"But Solomon was also a Jew. And as a Jew he pioneered in opening new frontiers for his oppressed, persecuted and down-trodden brothers.

"It was an irony of fate that the first Jew in this new land was also one of the first victims of a pogrom, the massacre of 1763.

"This marker is not just a monument in memory of a person. It is a symbol! A symbol of a country where people of all creeds live, work and create in harmony and peace.

"And so on behalf of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan I now dedicate this historic marker to the memory of Ezekiel Solomon, and present it to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission."

The marker was then unveiled by Jerome Murray, son of Mr. Walter J. Murray who, as Chairman of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, accepted the plaque which is placed on the grounds of the restored Fort Michilimackinac, and is an installation under the jurisdiction of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission. Chairman Murray indicated his pleasure in participating in the marker dedication and highlighted the fact that in this great country of ours it was fitting and proper that on the same day that "we dedicate

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a plaque to a Jewish settler we also observe a Catholic Mass being held for the first time in nearly two centuries on the exact site where Mass was said in the original Church of Ste. Anne de Michilimackinac. This Catholic church has been completely restored as was ~~when~~ the Fort was a thriving military and trading center, and Ezekiel Solomon, although a devout Jew, urged the British Government to permit a priest to be assigned to the Fort and contributed to his support."

Members of the Historical Society attending the plaque dedication were: Dr. Irving I. Edgar, Vice-President, and Mrs. Edgar; Mr. Jonathan D. Hyams, Treasurer; Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Rubin and son, David J., of St. Ignace.