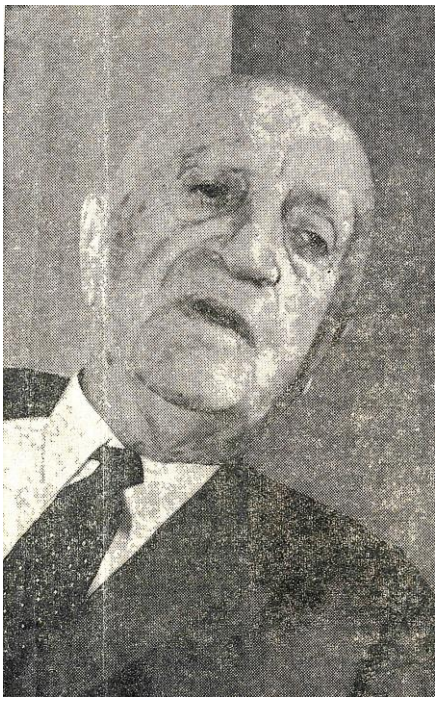

# Anselm Boskowitz:

# The Man From Union

**By Ralph Friedman**

"**UNION WAS AN** ideal town for a boy to live in. It had a railroad, plenty of fruit trees, vegetable gardens, a place to swim, mysterious places to investigate, and lovely people, all friendly and kind. Adams Avenue was full of buggies and freight wagons and stages and Indians riding up and down the street on their horses."

"My life in Portland has been tied up with the Jewish community since I came here. I have held many positions among Jewish organizations and I am now on the committee to select a new site for the Jewish Community Center. My work in behalf of Judaism is the most important element of my life.

"As a young man I became very much interested in Zionism and am now on the Israel Bond Committee. The people who can afford to buy bonds and don't—who can save lives and don't — to me they are 'The Deputy' in reverse. Put that in, I want that in! Let it be a shocker."

THE SPEAKER IS the same man—Anselm Boskowitz, the almost legendary "Anse" Boskowitz of Oregon's Jewish Community. Almost 86, he is given the reverance due a patriarch by those who know of his indefatigable labors in behalf of his brethren Jews—here, throughout the nation, and overseas. Yet he looks and talks more like a retired, stern schoolmaster than a patriarch or a prophet.

He is a bald, clean-shaven man with pale blue eyes, eyebrows that almost merge into eyelids, ears sunk into the rear of cheeks, a posture that is erect and formal, and a disposition that is polite but unbending. He speaks in a tendentious manner, mixing formula and morality in studied rhetoric. Everything has aim, everything is to the point. Even when he softens there is the bite of Prussian steel in his tone.

ANSELM BOSKOWITZ is a native son, born in 1880 of a father who emigrated in the 1860's from Bavaria and a mother who was born in Maryland and spent her girlhood in New York. His grandfather, Henry F. Bloch, was uncle of the Schwabachers,

pioneer merchants who led their burros, laden with goods, through woods and over hills and across streams to the fresh mining camps and raw settlements of Washington, Idaho, Oregon and California.

Isaac Boskowitz, who operated general stores in several Union County towns, and who was once county treasurer, fathered five children, three boys and two girls. The two older boys were born in old La Grande "up on the hill." The La Grande of today was "just a marsh." Anselm and his two sisters were born in Union. Only

## Cover Story

one of Anselm's siblings survives—80 year old Miriam B. Aiken, grandmother of ten. She and Anselm, who never married, occupy an apartment in northwest Portland.

WHEN HE WAS 12, Anselm came to Portland, to live with his grandmother in Goose Hollow, west of 12th Ave. and south of Jefferson. "Julius Meier (who later became governor) lived in Goose Hollow, too," Anselm remembers, "and I would often meet him and walk down the street with him."

It was his Bavarian-reared father whose manner he carries; it was his grandmother, Mrs. Bloch, who inculcated in him a fervor for Judaism that has never subsided.

At 16 Anselm graduated grade school and entered business college. A year and a half later he began his business career, in a cigar store at 5th and Yamhill. But for almost a third of a century his livelihood was bound up with Fleishner-Mayer, once a great name in Portland apparel manufacturing and department store merchandising. After the firm liquidated, in 1931, he became an independent jobber. In 1945 he retired. Since then his life has been committed to the welfare of Judaism and Zionism.

FOR MANY YEARS Boskowitz was an outside salesman for Fleishner-Mayer. How did you get around, he is asked. He sits formally on his sofa and frowns slightly. He would rather talk about Jewish activities—"I can talk about B'nai B'rith all day." He remembers the details of his boyhood with pinpoint clarity but the recollections do not enthuse him. Even when he talks about the Portland he knew as a youngster—"The town had a lot of beauty to it then"—it is with dry matter-of-factness. The springs run quick in his voice only when he speaks of affairs Jewish.

Still a question has been asked.

A thread of irritation from time spent in irrelevant recall knits his brow. "I will give you examples," he says.

"I WOULD TAKE the boat down to St. Helens and after I got through soliciting there I'd ask, where is the expressman to take my grips to Holton? The expressman was at the saloon, I was told, so I went there and asked him to take my grips to Holton, which was where the highway now turns off to St. Helens. His express wagon was a wheelbarrow, so we put the grips in it and we walked to Holton, through a wooded area, now a business street, and I stayed overnight at Holton. The next morning I took my smaller bag and walked down the tracks to Deer Island, where I opened a new account.

"Another time," he continues, "I took the train to Tualatin, and the next day I hired a man with a buggy team and paid him $2.50 for the day and he took me to Stafford, Rex and Middleton and I stayed overnight at Sherwood. I opened an account there and then I walked from Sherwood along the railroad tracks to Newbert and I stayed there three days and opened up another account."

IN 1910, BOSKOWITZ joined B'nai B'rith. "I'll tell you what I did," he says,

***"I worked hard to correct anti-semitism in vaudeville, magazines and newspapers."***

his words quicker now. "I worked hard to correct anti-Semitism in vaudeville, magazines and newspapers. In the local papers, when a Jew did something objectionable they identified him as a Jew. That was wrong. We campaigned to eliminate that —and we did."

But the problem of anti-Semitism spread far beyond Portland, Anselm realized. Through his suggestion and through the initiative of the Theodore S. Hirsch Lodge of the B'nai B'rith, the Anti-Defamation League No. 90 was formed.

HIS GRANDFATHER was one of the founders of Temple Beth Israel and Anselm and his sisters are life-long members of the congregation. He starts a discourse on it until his attention is diverted to a C. S. Price painting on the wall. It turns out he has seven paintings and an etching of Price, which he purchased in the 1930's and early 1940's.

"While things were somewhat difficult for me financially, as often as I could, I bought a painting."

He says, with a bit of pride, that the Price art he owns has been appraised at $16,000—"but I think they're worth $20,000."

HOW MUCH did he pay? With a rare, thin smile—"That's a minus answer I'm giving you."

At the door the man from Union resumes his role of partisan in battle. "Think about joining B'nai B'rith," he says. "It's an excellent organization."

Ralph Friedman is a Portland writer.