

= Ida Silverman =

Ida Silverman (31 October 1882 ? 1 November 1973) was a Jewish philanthropist , who with her husband helped found approximately 100 synagogues , mostly in Israel . She is the only woman to have served as vice president of the Zionist Organization of America and the American Jewish Congress .

A Russian immigrant , Silverman arrived in the United States before she was a year old . Her family settled in Providence , Rhode Island , where she completed her schooling , married and had four children . While doing relief work during the First World War , she became aware of the depth of social problems and the effects of war on refugees . Joining the Zionist movement in the 1900s , within a decade she became a motivational speaker , advocating for the establishment of a permanent Jewish home in Palestine .

Between 1925 and the late 1940s , she logged over 600 @, @ 000 air @-@ miles traveling throughout the world , speaking and fund raising for the creation of a Jewish state . Even during World War II , she received special permission to travel into war @-@ torn areas to evaluate conditions . At the war 's end , Silverman turned her efforts toward building infrastructure in the new nation of Israel , but was also involved in philanthropy in her home state of Rhode Island , raising funds for hospitals and mental health organizations .

She received many honors and awards for her philanthropy including Jewish Mother of the Year , the Mizrahi Women 's Organization of America 's " Silver Medal " for building Israel , honorary doctorates , and jointly with her husband was inducted into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 1971 .

= = Biography = =

Ida Marcia Camelhor was born on 31 October 1882 in Kovno , Russia to Mary (née Dember) and Louis Camelhor (also noted as Lieb Kamelhorn) . She was the only surviving child of a family of eight . Before her first birthday , her parents immigrated to New York and then when she was around ten years old , they moved to Providence , Rhode Island . She attended public grammar school and high school and , at sixteen years old , went to work as a bookkeeper for Archibald Silverman . Archibald , also an immigrant , had begun his career as a designer of costume jewelry . Together with his brother , Charles , he established the Silverman Brothers jewelry company in Providence in 1897 . After two years of working in the jewelry business , Camelhor agreed to marry her boss ; they wed in 1900 .

Archibald continued to work his way up and eventually became president of a bank and a philanthropist for Jewish causes . Though Ida was the spokesperson and " presence " of the causes in which the couple were involved , Archibald fully supported her participation and gave his time , moral support , and monetary contributions to further their philanthropy . He also understood and accepted that her work for others would always take precedence over her own household duties .

= = Career = =

By age 20 , Silverman had two children , and would soon have two more . She was involved in the community of Providence and social betterment programs . She founded and served as president of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island . By 1906 , she was involved in the American Zionist Movement and rose to the national position of vice president of the Hadassah Women 's Zionist Organization of America . Relief work during World War I awakened her to the broad variety of social needs and she became an advocate of health care , poverty relief , and finding a permanent solution for Jewish refugees . In 1915 , Silverman founded the second Hadassah chapter in New England in Providence . She was a " skilled propagandist " , developing a wide following between 1915 and 1919 , and was known as a vigorous leader and talented orator .

Her first acknowledgement on the national level was her appointment in 1919 to honorary vice president of the American Jewish Congress (AJC) . Traditionally , the AJC leadership were more

focused on European Jews than worldwide outreach and were of the aristocratic , wealthy , Reform tradition . By 1919 the organization had become more diverse and while not necessarily embracing the more radical aspects of Zionism , leaders allowed Zionist views to be expressed . Silverman , as an honorary official , could use the status to her advantage : while not officially speaking for the organization , she tacitly had AJC endorsement and was able to parlay that into support from the masses for causes and monetary contributions from elites .

== 1920s ==

In 1925 Silverman made her first trip to Palestine and was able to use her experiences to gain speaking engagements in a variety of venues . Throughout the remainder of the 1920s , Silverman served as vice president of the Zionist Organization of America and vice chair of the hospital building fund for the Hebrew University . In addition to her national organizational work , Silverman was vice president of the New England Zionist Region , the New England Conference of Hadassah , and an honorary president of the Hadassah Organization in Providence . She is the only woman to have served as vice president of the Zionist Organization of America and the American Jewish Congress .

Silverman was an outspoken proponent for Israeli statehood , traveling throughout the Americas and Europe advocating for a Jewish homeland . She depicted the Jews who had resettled in Palestine as simple farmers , seeking an agrarian life to alleviate the hunger they had experienced elsewhere . Silverman stressed that the settlers ' intent was not to industrialize and vie with the international powerhouse nations , but simply to provide for their basic needs . Throughout 1927 and 1928 , her itinerary included a speaking engagement in Savannah , Georgia with Sir Wyndham Deedes , prior chief secretary of Palestine ; a tour of hospitals , clinics and public health programs in the Holy Land to determine how Hadassah could improve the health of the entire region , " without regard to race or creed " ; and attendance at the World Zionist Congress in Basel , Switzerland . Silverman resigned from Hadassah in 1928 in a policy dispute over the high salaries being paid to administrators rather than using the funds for charitable works .

== 1930s ==

Despite the Great Depression , Silverman 's travels expanded in the 1930s , when she began spending 6 months each year outside the U.S. As early as 1932 , land purchase programs to buy and settle refugees on permanent homes in Palestine were being pursued by Jewish organizations . Silverman not only supported the plans and raised funds for them , but she planted the first tree in the colony at Wady Havarith . With Hitler 's rise to power , Silverman 's pleas for a safe haven for Jews became more urgent and her first @-@ hand reports from Germany , Austria , Hungary , Czechoslovakia , Lithuania , and Poland contained explicit accounts of conditions . In 1938 , Silverman was working with the Youth Aliyah Movement in conjunction with Hadassah in the U.S. to relocate 10 @, @ 000 refugee children to Palestine . As a fund @-@ raiser , Silverman 's goal was to raise a quarter of a million dollars for resettlement and youth training in agricultural and vocational pursuits . In 1939 , she ended her Polish tour studying the conditions and desperation , shortly before the Polish invasion , but the effort was successful in relocating some 7 @, @ 000 young people from Poland , Germany , Czechoslovakia , and Romania to Palestine before the end of 1940 .

== 1940s ==

Because riots had broken out in the late 1930s over British proposals to partition Palestine , and U.S. diplomats including Sumner Welles proposed American alternatives , Silverman embarked on several tours of South America and the Caribbean in the early 1940s to determine if , as an alternative to Palestinian resettlement , European Jews could be established in the Dominican Republic , Peru , or Uruguay . She reported on her findings at the Inter @-@ American Conference

in Baltimore , describing the alternatives as unfavorable and the attempt in the Dominican Republic , as a " failure " . She also wrote articles under the byline Mrs. Archibald Silverman , urging the emigration of Jews to Palestine rather than to other places ? such as a Jewish colony in Sosúa , Dominican Republic , promoted by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the early 1940s ; a plan to settle Jews in the Kimberley region of Australia ; and another proposal for a Jewish colony in Paramaribo , Suriname . Her articles were filled with vitriol against what she perceived as the " schemes " of Jewish organizers opposed to Zionism ; in a 1948 article titled " The Surinam Nightmare " , she " described ' diabolical plans ' to abandon Jewish ' guinea pigs ' to ' terrifying tropical diseases ' " . Eventually the alternative emigration plans were scrapped in the wake of the 1948 declaration of independence by the State of Israel .

After the Inter @-@ American Conference in Baltimore , Silverman continued her travels in South America , and then obtained special permission to travel through England , Scotland , and Ireland to raise money . Her collections were a resounding success , which she attributed to the acute understanding of homelessness experienced by British citizens who had been displaced during bombing raids . Anticipating the war 's end , Silverman increased efforts to buy land in Palestine , believing that if Jewish organizations owned land , when the Peace Conference occurred , bargaining would be in their favor .

As the war was ending in 1945 , Silverman was on the road , traveling through all the countries of Central America , in South America , New Zealand , Australia , and South Africa on fund @-@ raising missions . Then in 1946 , she was in Europe visiting refugee camps in Sweden and Occupied Germany , before returning to Palestine . By the end of the war , she had traveled 600 @,@ 000 air @-@ miles having visited every state in the United States , each province of Canada , Mexico , all of the countries in Central and South America , the West Indies , almost all of Western Europe , parts of Eastern Europe , Australia , New Zealand , Iran , Palestine , Morocco , and South Africa .

= = = 1950s and 1960s = = =

After the State of Israel was established , Silverman recognized the diverse needs to build the nation and she and Archibald channeled funds into planting orchards , building the Sharon Hotel , and supplementing the Synagogue Centre Building Fund . The Sharon Hotel , built in Herzliya , on the Sharon Plain , was part of an effort to build infrastructure and develop tourism sites to stimulate further growth . Silverman founded and served the board of the company which created the hotel . In the Jezreel Valley , she chaired a water development company and established a mixed @-@ fruit orchard of around 70 acres of trees . She also was involved in several projects in Rhode Island . In 1955 she founded and served as president of the Friends of Butler Hospital in an attempt to reopen the health center , which had been shut down . They were successful in proving its benefit to the community and the hospital reopened . In 1957 , Silverman served as chair of the fundraising for the Rhode Island Association of Mental Health . By the early @-@ 1960s , 33 synagogues throughout Israel had been built through the synagogue fund . During the two years she lived in Israel , she helped erect around 80 additional synagogues and by the time of Silverman 's death , the number was over 100 synagogues in Israel and elsewhere .

= = = 1970s = = =

In 1971 , at the age of 89 , Silverman immigrated to Israel . She died on 1 November 1973 in Herzliya , Israel and was buried in the Mount of Olives Jewish Cemetery near Jerusalem .

= = Honors and awards = =

In 1951 Silverman was honored as Jewish Mother of the Year by the Jewish National Fund , which established a forest in Israel bearing her name . In 1953 , a village in Israel , Nachlat Ida , was named in her honor to recognize her years of financial and moral support , and in 1954 , she was

honored as Rhode Island Mother of the Year . She received an honorary doctorate from Rhode Island College in 1954 and one from Bryant College in 1960 . In 1964 , she was awarded the Mizrahi Women 's Organization of America 's " Silver Medal " for having done the most to build Israel .

Silverman and her husband (who had died in 1966) were jointly inducted into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 1971 .