

## Sigmund Livingston (1872-1946) & Hilda Freiler Livingston (1891-1962)

Sigmund Livingston was born on December 27, 1872 in Giessen, Germany. He was one of eight children born to Mayer and Dora (Bluemenfeld) Livingston.<sup>1</sup> The Livingston family immigrated to the United States on November 12, 1881 on the *S.S. Rhine* from Bremen, Germany. Sigmund became a naturalized citizen in 1888.<sup>2</sup> Mayer and his brother, Samuel Livingston, were successful clothing merchants who owned several department stores in Bloomington; one of which was Newmarket on the corner of Center and Front streets. Mayer also owned farms and was a stock raiser in Central Illinois.<sup>3</sup>

The Livingston family were members of the Moses Montefiore Temple in Bloomington. The Moses Montefiore Temple, named after a Jewish philanthropist from England, was established on May 14, 1882 after a group of men of the Jewish faith met in Bloomington “for the purpose of forming a Congregation.” Leading members of the Jewish community including Aaron Livingston, Jacob Heldman, Wolf Griesheim, and William Friedman were among the founders of the temple.<sup>4</sup>

Services were first held in the basement of the Free Congregational Church (which later became the Unitarian Church) until the necessary funds could be raised to erect their own building. On April 6, 1884, Maik Livingston donated \$100 towards building a house of worship. After five years, the Moorish Revival edifice (designed by local architect George Miller) was constructed on the southeast corner of Jefferson and Prairie streets. The new temple was formally dedicated on Friday, May 31, 1889 and services continued to be held in that structure until 1959 when a new, larger temple was completed.<sup>5</sup>

Hilda Valerie Freiler was born on April 25, 1891 in Elgin, Illinois. Hilda’s parents were Philip and Lizzie (Ehrlich) Freiler. Hilda’s grandfather, Joseph Freiler, was extremely successful in the liquor business. Joseph originally sold liquor in Chicago, but he eventually brought the business down to Elgin where he and his son, Philip, continued to have success.<sup>6</sup> Hilda also had three sisters; older sisters Florence and Helen, and younger sister Ruth.<sup>7</sup> Hilda graduated from Elgin High School in 1908. Most notably, during her senior year, Hilda was vice president of her school’s Dramatic Society.<sup>8</sup>

Sigmund Livingston graduated from the Law School at Illinois Wesleyan University in 1894, ranking second in his class.<sup>9</sup> During the commencement, several students gave speeches, including Livingston who read “Magna Charter.”<sup>10</sup> Shortly after graduation, Livingston formed a law partnership with William R. Bach, who graduated first in their class.<sup>11</sup>

In numerous newspaper articles, Sigmund was described as extremely intelligent and well respected. One article claimed, “he gives promise of becoming one of the ablest as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> “Mayer Livingston, Veteran Merchant, Dead,” *The Pantagraph*, October 11, 1915, 6.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Passport Application for Sigmund Livingston, June 23, 1897.

<sup>3</sup> “Mayer Livingston, Veteran Merchant, Dead.”

<sup>4</sup> Torii Moré, “Summary on Moses Montefiore Temple Collection,” McLean County Museum of History.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “Philip Freiler,” *The Biographical Record of Kane County, Illinois* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1898) 250-253.

<sup>7</sup> 1900 U.S. Federal Census, Ancestry.com.

<sup>8</sup> “High School Notes: Announcements,” *Elgin High School Newspaper*, May 16, 1908.

<sup>9</sup> Wilder, William H., ed. *An Historical Sketch of the Illinois Wesleyan University, Together with a Record of Alumni: 1857-1895* (Bloomington: Illinois Wesleyan University, 1895) 196.

<sup>10</sup> “Wesleyan Week: Class Day Exercises of the Graduates of ’95 Held Yesterday Afternoon at Amie Chapel,” *The Pantagraph*, June 12, 1894.

<sup>11</sup> “William R. Bach, Attorney Here 61 Years, Dies,” *The Pantagraph*. December 27, 1955.

most prominent attorney in the state.”<sup>12</sup> However, Livingston gave a personal account in his book *Must Men Hate?* of how, outside of dear friends, he had a “general distrust to overcome” because locals had never known of a Jewish lawyer when he was beginning his career. Livingston recalled that after a few years, he had earned their trust.<sup>13</sup>

In 1895, Livingston and Bach’s office was located at 202 W. Front Street in Bloomington.<sup>14</sup> Livingston and Bach mostly took on civil work. For example, in 1894 the two represented a gentleman that was suing the Illinois Building and Loan company to recover the value of ten shares of stock.<sup>15</sup> In 1897, Livingston was the administrator to the estate of the deceased Margaret Houser. The case was taken to the McLean County court to settle all claims against it and to make sure that anyone who was indebted to her estate would make immediate payment.<sup>16</sup> In a similar case in 1900, Livingston and Bach wrote a petition for deceased James McCardle’s child Mary Lang (a minor) for the remaining of the family estate.<sup>17</sup>

By 1904, Livingston and Bach had moved their law office to the Livingston Building at 102 W. Washington Street.<sup>18</sup> The Livingston Building was designed by local architect George Miller, and is considered to be “the city’s first steel-frame ‘skyscraper,’” which was built by Sigmund’s uncle, Ike Livingston.<sup>19</sup>

After 23 years of practicing law together, Livingston and Bach’s partnership ended. By 1917, Livingston formed a new partnership, Sterling, Livingston, and Whitmore, and their office was located at 607 E. Washington Street.<sup>20</sup>

On December 18, 1918, Sigmund and Hilda were married at the Blackstone Hotel. Rabbi Stoltz of the South Chicago Temple was the officiant of their wedding. Sigmund was 46, while Hilda was 27. Livingston’s brother, Maurice, was his best man. *The Pantagraph* described the groom as “highly respected” and the bride as “quite a talented young woman.”<sup>21</sup> After a month-long honeymoon in California, the couple settled in a “handsome home” at 1320 E. Grove Street in Bloomington.<sup>22</sup>

Livingston was very active in politics. He was a Republican and often travelled to Chicago to make campaign speeches for Republican committees. One newspaper wrote that wherever Livingston went, there were always large, enthusiastic crowds.<sup>23</sup> Livingston also compared the 1914 Republican Party with that of Lincoln’s. He discussed Lincoln’s desire to free those who were enslaved, and said that, “the Republican party is no less alive, no less beneficent, no less masterful, no less progressive, and patriotic now than when it set its face like flint against the further spread of slavery.”<sup>24</sup> He firmly believed that Republicans would continually win elections in the United States.

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<sup>12</sup> “Mr. Sigmund Livingston,” *Bulletin*, Undated.

<sup>13</sup> Livingston, Sigmund, *Must Men Hate?* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 83.

<sup>14</sup> *Bloomington City Directory, 1895*.

<sup>15</sup> “Will Sue the Illinois,” *The Pantagraph*, September 13, 1894.

<sup>16</sup> “Legal,” *The Pantagraph*, May 22, 1897.

<sup>17</sup> “Livingston & Bach Attorneys,” *The Pantagraph*, October 6, 1900.

<sup>18</sup> *Bloomington City Directory, 1904*.

<sup>19</sup> “Bloomington Laver Led Anti-Semitism Fight,” *The Pantagraph*, July 11, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> “Freiler-Livingston Wedding,” *The Pantagraph*, December 18, 1918; “William R. Bach, Attorney Here 61 Years, Dies.”

<sup>21</sup> “Freiler-Livingston Wedding.”

<sup>22</sup> “Sigmund Livingston Buys a Handsome Home,” *The Pantagraph*, March 4, 1919, 2.

<sup>23</sup> “Campaigning in Cook County,” *The Pantagraph*. November 2, 1900.

<sup>24</sup> “Text of Resolutions: Report of the Committee Setting Forth Present and Future Standards of the Party,” *The Pantagraph*, May 30, 1914.

An active member of his community, Livingston, like many members of the Bloomington community, became very involved in the war effort on the home front during the First World War. For example, he was an ardent supporter of the work of the American Red Cross. On March 18, 1917, Livingston gave a speech in the auditorium of Bloomington High School to encourage citizens to support the good work of the Red Cross. Livingston stated, “In this state of affairs, the American nation should let its light shine forth to the world through such a humanitarian agency as the Red Cross Society rather than by an engine of conquest of oppression.”<sup>25</sup> Livingston also gave numerous speeches in Bloomington to voice his support of the war. He firmly believed that the war was essential because the United States was “not warring against any people...Our conflict is with autocratic power, with that despotism that once ruled the entire world. The issue is clear—democracy or autocracy.”<sup>26</sup>

Livingston firmly stood behind Bloomington soldiers that were being sent abroad. He participated in raising funds for the Third Liberty Loan campaign, which had the goal of raising \$4 million (which would be over \$63 million in 2021) for McLean County’s quota.<sup>27</sup> Livingston was selected as a “minute man” to speak at local theaters the week of April 8, 1918 to encourage attendees to give to the campaign. He and three other “minute men” spoke at the Castle Theater on Saturday, April 13.<sup>28</sup> In November 1918, Livingston served as the chairman of the Hundred Dollar Club, an organization that worked to identify individuals in McLean County that could contribute at least \$100 to the United War Work campaign. This club helped bring in \$17,075 (worth around \$307,232 today) that went to aid U.S. soldiers.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Livingston was the head of the American Soldiers’ and Sailors Welfare League of the B’nai B’rith, which raised funds to contribute to the welfare of Jewish men in uniform.<sup>30</sup>

Immediately following the war, in October 1919, Livingston, alongside thirty-four other leading Bloomington citizens, launched a campaign for the Jewish Relief Fund. The funds raised by this campaign were meant to help six million starving Jewish people who lived in central Europe, including the new nations of Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary that had been completely devastated by the war. On the evening of October 16, a dinner was held at the Illinois Hotel to launch the campaign. In his speech that evening, Livingston stated that “this is a work for humanity, and we are confident that people will do it.”<sup>31</sup> By the end of November, the campaign exceeded its original goal of \$22,260 by \$2,358.70 for a total of \$24,618.70 (or approximately \$388,484 in 2021).<sup>32</sup>

In 1894, Livingston became the president of Bloomington’s local B’nai B’rith (*pronounced Buh-nay Buh-reeth*), Abraham Lincoln Lodge No. 190.<sup>33</sup> Founded on October 27, 1872, this lodge was significant because it was “the first organization that bound together the Jewish people of Central Illinois in an organic body.”<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the establishment of this organization was

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<sup>25</sup> “Red Cross Work Boosted,” *The Pantagraph*, March 19, 1917.

<sup>26</sup> “Sig. Livingston Bids Godspeed to Boys Called into U.S. Service,” *The Pantagraph*, September 4, 1917.

<sup>27</sup> “Form County Body for All War Activities,” *The Pantagraph*, March 12, 1918,

<sup>28</sup> “Four-Minute Men,” *The Pantagraph*, April 10, 1918.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com>, Accessed August 6, 2021; “Hundred Dollar Club Has 158 Members,” *The Pantagraph*, November 13, 1918.

<sup>30</sup> Postal, Bernard, “How B.B. Served in ’17,” *The National Jewish Monthly*, February 1942, 188-189.

<sup>31</sup> “Launch Campaign for Jewish Relief Fund,” *The Pantagraph*, October 17, 1919.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com>. Accessed August 11, 2021; “Report Completed Jewish Relief Fund,” *The Pantagraph*, November 22, 1919.

<sup>33</sup> “B’nai B’rith Election,” *The Pantagraph*, December 19, 1894.

<sup>34</sup> Program for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Abraham Lincoln Lodge No. 190, held at the Windsor Hotel on October 27, 1897, McLean County Museum of History Library and Archives.

particularly important at that time since there was no synagogue in Bloomington to bring members of the Jewish community together. The establishment of the local B'nai B'rith "aroused a new fervor in the faith of our fathers, promoted sociability, established Sunday school," and eventually helped to organize a Jewish congregation.<sup>35</sup> By May 1899, Livingston was elected vice-president of the 6<sup>th</sup> District of B'nai B'rith.

The B'nai B'rith is a social and charitable organization founded by Henry Jones and eleven other German-Jewish immigrants in New York City in 1843. Isaac Rosenbourg, one of B'nai B'rith's founders, stated that the organization needed to be created to confront "the deplorable condition of Jews in this, our newly adopted country."<sup>36</sup> According to the B'nai B'rith International's website, the organization's work is inspired by the following pillars: Human Rights and Public Policy, Supporting and Defending Israel, Senior Advocacy and Housing, and Helping Communities.<sup>37</sup>

As time passed, Livingston began to take more notice of the unjust treatment of Jews. Shortly after the turn of the century, he had an experience that impacted the trajectory of the rest of his life. When he was in Chicago on business, Livingston decided to drop into a vaudeville theater to while away a couple of hours before an appointment. The show began like many others with the usual trained dog acts, jugglers, and acrobats. However, when the show turned to a couple of comedians with a "routine of bum jokes, told in dialect and at the expense of Jews," Livingston had enough and walked out of the theater. It was this life changing event that made him decide then and there that he would try to do something about the prejudicial caricaturing of Jews.<sup>38</sup>

Livingston was most disgusted with the portrayal of Jewish people in vaudeville shows and films. Jewish characters were always portrayed the same: "wears a beard, hooked nose and skull cap. Actions objectionable. Movement of hands, etc. Attitude cringing, cowardly, greedy and at times savage."<sup>39</sup> When describing those who fell for the anti-Semitic caricatures, Livingston wrote, "they are the people who believe the stage Jew is the real Jew."<sup>40</sup> Following the show, Livingston spoke with the managers to make them aware of their cruel and inaccurate depictions of Jews. Surprisingly, the managers were willing to make a change despite them not being aware of their offense.<sup>41</sup>

Believing that publicity would help to alleviate prejudice, in 1908, Livingston established the Publicity Committee of the Publicity Bureau within the B'nai B'rith, which evolved into the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) five years later.<sup>42</sup> The Publicity Committee, based in Bloomington, was created to consider the problem of the defamation of Jews and named Livingston its chairman.<sup>43</sup>

Livingston's Publicity Committee's origins had a simple plan: "the solution to the problem must be publicity."<sup>44</sup> The thought was if the public record was set straight, then Americans could

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<sup>35</sup> Program for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Abraham Lincoln Lodge No. 190.

<sup>36</sup> "About Us," B'nai B'rith International, Accessed July 19, 2021. <https://www.bnaibrith.org/about-us.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> "Victories in Battle Against Prejudice," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 4, 1953.

<sup>39</sup> "B'nai B'rith Stops Objectionable Film," *Chicago Sentinel*, August 25, 1916.

<sup>40</sup> "Anti-Defamation Move Becomes Nationwide," *Chicago Tribune*, November 14, 1913.

<sup>41</sup> "Victories in Battle Against Prejudice."

<sup>42</sup> "The Elite Journal," *Newspaper Archive*, April 25, 1890.

<sup>43</sup> Graybill, Elaine, "Must Men Hate: Sigmund Livingston, Class of 1894, Kept Asking the Question," *Illinois Wesleyan Magazine*. 1993.

<sup>44</sup> Belth, Nathan C., *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979). Pg. 39.

recognize Jewish slander.<sup>45</sup> An early victory of this new arm of the B'nai B'rith was the successful campaign to pressure the publisher of a travel booklet to halt the practice of including hotel and resort advertisements featuring the phrase, "No Jews Wanted."<sup>46</sup> Other issues examined were why the Associated Press only identified crime for Jews, but no other religion. President of B'nai B'rith, Adolph Kraus, wrote that if a non-Jew was accused of a crime, no one ever learned, "whether he is a Methodist, a Catholic or [of another] Christian denomination... is there any good reason for making such a distinction?"<sup>47</sup>

These depictions, amongst other wrongdoings, inspired Livingston to formally create the ADL in 1913. The organization had a fairly humble start. The ADL was established in the First National Bank building in Chicago.<sup>48</sup> Livingston started out with only a \$200 budget and two desks in his law office, but the ADL quickly grew into a nationwide organization.<sup>49</sup> Members, led by Livingston, planned to campaign along three lines of education, vigilance, and legislation. Livingston believed that hate and fear could be overcome through education and had faith in "the essential goodness of the American people."<sup>50</sup> One of the earliest issues the ADL tackled was the lynching of a Jewish man named Leo Frank in Atlanta, Georgia. Frank was wrongfully convicted for murder, and his death sentence was commuted to life in prison by the state's governor. Vigilantes kidnapped him from the jail and lynched him in front of a "gleeful mob."<sup>51</sup>

In order to aid their work, the ADL employed correspondents who would report any "scurrilous attacks on Jews" to the secretary of the ADL, Leon L. Lewis. This included motion pictures and textbooks in the schools, which would be censored if they were found to depict Jews negatively and promote prejudice.<sup>52</sup> The ADL also continued their fight against vaudevilles. In 1916, Livingston, alongside the B'nai B'rith, appointed the "Vaudeville Vigilance Committee." This committee consisted of members who attended their local vaudeville shows to confront the shows' caricatures of Jewish people. Any vaudeville show that did not comply had their names and address sent to Secretary Lewis, who would then offer suggestions for procedure and local action to the communities that reported the shows.<sup>53</sup>

The ADL constantly fought against negative depictions of Jewish people. Livingston himself was so influential that he was able to get *Roget's Thesaurus* to remove words with negative connotations like "cunning" and "extortioner" as synonyms to the word "Jew."<sup>54</sup> *Time* magazine also reported that the ADL had one of its members, Adolph S. Ochs (also a *New York Times* publisher), send out a memo that advised readers to stop using the word "Jew" as an adjective or a verb. Ochs wrote that "the use of the word Jew as a verb... is a slang survival of the medieval term of opprobrium and should be avoided altogether."<sup>55</sup> The ADL also ensured that post offices stopped sending postcards that had caricatures of Jews on them.

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<sup>45</sup> *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism*, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Kemp, Bill, "Bloomington lawyer led fight against anti-Semitism," *The Pantagraph*, July 15, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism*, 40.

<sup>48</sup> No Title, *The Jewish Voice*. September 26, 1913.

<sup>49</sup> "Our History," Today's Anti-Defamation League. The Anti-Defamation League. Accessed: July 29, 2021.

<https://www.adl.org/>.

<sup>50</sup> "Anti-Defamation Move Becomes Nationwide," *Chicago Tribune*. November 14, 1913.

<sup>51</sup> Kemp, "Bloomington Lawyer Led Anti-Semitism Fight."

<sup>52</sup> "Anti-Defamation Move Becomes Nationwide," *The Chicago Tribune*, November 14, 1913.

<sup>53</sup> Kraus, Adolf, *Adolf Kraus to the Executive Committee of B'nai B'rith*, October 19, 1916; Letter from Adolf Kraus to Lodges of the Independent Order of the B'nai B'rith, October 19, 1916, McLean County Museum of History Library and Archives.

<sup>54</sup> "Roget's Thesaurus to Eliminate Objectionable Synonyms for 'Jew'," *The Modern View*. September 12, 1930.

<sup>55</sup> "Organizations: View from the Ten-Yard Line," *Time*, February 8, 1963.



Members of the ADL and other Jewish groups worked hard to expose anti-Semitism, especially when it was being spread by well-known and influential individuals like industrialist, developer, and founder of Ford Motor Company, Henry Ford. Ford, like many Americans, was convinced that “the Jews” were responsible for a whole range of things they didn’t like, from the World War, to short skirts, to jazz music. In January 1919, Henry Ford began publication of the *Dearborn Independent*, a small, weekly newspaper that he had purchased the year prior. The paper primarily served as a forum for Henry Ford’s views and each issue carried “Mr. Ford’s Own Page,” an editorial expressing his opinions. Had Ford’s newspaper not published a controversial series titled “The International Jew: The World’s Problem” between 1920 and 1922, his newspaper may have just been a footnote in an otherwise notable career. This series, which was based on the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, denounced all things Jewish and examined a supposed conspiracy launched by Jewish groups to achieve world domination.<sup>56</sup>

The publication of “The International Jew” caused an uproar. Citizens across the country were appalled by the series, published demands for a retraction, removed the paper from public libraries, and promoted a boycott of Ford automobiles. Ford claimed that he only sponsored the *Dearborn Independent* and never wrote a single line of it.<sup>57</sup> He did cease publication of the paper for a short time; but once again his paper began publishing conspiracy theories about Jews in 1924, the focus then being on a supposed Jewish plot to control America’s farm-food distribution system. At the center of this conspiracy was a lawyer turned farm co-op organizer, Aaron Sapiro. The articles claimed that Sapiro’s plan had “turned millions away from the pockets of the men who till the soil and into the hands of the Jews and their followers.” Sapiro fought back and issued a million-dollar libel suit at Ford for the scurrilous lies he had been spreading about Sapiro and the Jewish people in 1925.<sup>58</sup> Two years later, to avoid a very public trial, Ford agreed to issue a formal, public apology that recanted his charges against Jews. Ford agreed to write this letter upon pressure from Louis Marshall, president of the American Jewish Committee. In his letter, Ford stated, “there are black sheep in every flock, as there are among men of all races, creeds and nationalities who are at times evildoers. It is wrong, however, to judge a people by a few individuals, and I therefore join in condemning unreservedly all wholesale denunciations and attacks.”<sup>59</sup>

By the 1940s, another attempt was made to clean up Ford’s image due to his continued anti-Semitic comments and affiliations, both public and private. Ford, with the aid of Richard Gunsadt, National Director of the ADL, penned a letter to Livingston on January 7, 1942.<sup>60</sup> At the time, Livingston was the National Chairman of the ADL. In the letter, Ford claimed that he did not “subscribe to or support, directly or indirectly, any agitation which would promote antagonism against my Jewish fellow-citizens...I am convinced, further, that agitation for the

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<sup>56</sup> The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was the most notorious and widely distributed anti-Semitic publication of modern times. Published in Russia, the book was used to portray Jews as enemies of the state, “History of a Fraud,” The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-kits/special-exhibitions/protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion/history-of-a-fraud>, Accessed August 23, 2021; “Henry Ford and Anti-Semitism: A Complex Story,” The Henry Ford Museum, <https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-resources/popular-topics/henry-ford-and-anti-semitism-a-complex-story>, Accessed August 12, 2021

<sup>57</sup> Livingston, *Must Men Hate?*, 49.

<sup>58</sup> Green, David, “This Day in Jewish History | 1927: Henry Ford Says Sorry for anti-Semitic Spew,” *Haaretz*, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1927-henry-ford-says-sorry-for-anti-semitic-spew-1.5296102>, Accessed August 12, 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Livingston, *Must Men Hate?*, 46; “Statement by Henry Ford,” American Jewish Committee Archives, [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/1927\\_1928\\_9\\_FordStatement.pdf](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1927_1928_9_FordStatement.pdf), 387.

<sup>60</sup> “Henry Ford’s Letter,” *The B’nai B’rith Messenger*, January 23, 1942, 4.

creation of hate against the Jew or any other racial or religious group has been utilized to divide our American community and to weaken our national unity.” Ford, again, reiterated his disassociation from the anti-Semitic articles published in his newspaper.<sup>61</sup> The letter closed with Ford urging his fellow citizens to give no aid to “any movement whose purpose it is to arouse hatred against any group.”<sup>62</sup> Whether or not Livingston thought that Ford was sincere in his letter, is unknown. However, in his book *Must Men Hate?*, Livingston gave an excellent response to Ford’s letter, stating “Are there not many others like Mr. Ford who were deceived and still lend support to causes they know nothing about, and thus, unwittingly contribute to grave social problems because their pride will not permit them to acknowledge their errors?”<sup>63</sup>

Throughout his career, Livingston wrote many speeches, articles, and books. His devotion to educating the public about discrimination was exceptional. Most notably, Livingston brought attention to Nazi propaganda within the U.S. The belief that U.S. citizens were immune to the influences of Nazi propaganda was simply not true, and the public needed to be aware of it. As Livingston pointed out, there were foreign exchange students from Germany who were given Nazi propaganda to influence Americans. On top of that, Nazis had already formed organizations in both the U.S. and Canada. When discussing the rise of anti-Semitism in the U.S., Livingston noted that “when Hitler became chancellor...the American branches turned their attention to justifying Hitler’s anti-Jewish measures. They retained the services of a large New York propaganda organization and directed their fire particularly at members of Congress.”<sup>64</sup> To emphasize this point, Livingston reminded audiences that “Germany need not attack by physical warfare, our shores, or our ships if she succeeds in establishing anti-Semitism in the public mind here.”<sup>65</sup>

To further these points, Livingston dedicated a chapter in *Must Men Hate?* to expose the groups that helped spread these lies. Groups such as the KKK and the “Silver Shirts” helped spread anti-Semitism, as well as other forms of racism and prejudice. To drive his point home, Livingston made the comparison between what would happen if the United States tried to influence Germany the way Germany was able to influence the United States. Livingston said if Americans tried sending copies of the U.S. Constitution over to Germany, it would not be accepted. But, it *was* acceptable for the U.S. to take in “packages containing more than fifty printed propaganda books and brochures, inimical to our American democratic principles.”<sup>66</sup>

When Livingston’s grandson, Richard, described his grandfather, he said that Livingston “was an avid reader of history; completely absorbed in both the ideals and traditions of a democratic America; and in the bitter history of European Jewry. Livingston devoted much of his personal time researching the roots of bigotry and prejudice, for which he sought practical and rational solutions.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Logsdon, Jonathan, “Power, Ignorance, and Anti-Semitism: Henry Ford and His War on Jews,” [https://history.hanover.edu/hhr/99/hhr99\\_2.html](https://history.hanover.edu/hhr/99/hhr99_2.html), Accessed August 15, 2021.

<sup>62</sup> “Ford Repudiates: Automobile Magnate Denies Anti-Jew Bias to Anti-Defamation League,” *Chicago Sentinel*, January 15, 1942; Livingston, *Must Men Hate?*, 48.

<sup>63</sup> Livingston, *Must Men Hate?*, 49.

<sup>64</sup> “Joseph Grossman Elected President of District of B’nai B’rith.” *Chicago Sentinel*. July 6, 1933.

<sup>65</sup> “Anti-Semitism Here Called Hitler’s Aim: Livingston Asks B’nai B’rith to Fight Poison with Truth.” *The New York Times*. April 1, 1941.

<sup>66</sup> *Must Men Hate?* Pg. 116.

<sup>67</sup> Livingston, Richard S, “Tribute to Sigmund Livingston.” Speech Delivered at Annual Meeting of the National Commission. November 15, 2012.

Livingston also wanted Americans to understand the significance of international law. Jewish people were being oppressed and mistreated around the world. Livingston believed that it was the United States' responsibility to take action; not only to fight against anti-Semitism, but to ensure that the U.S. could keep its democracy. In one news article, Livingston detailed why defending Jewish people was necessary, writing that "religious persecution is a world crime, more sinful and fatuous than war."<sup>68</sup>

Like the B'nai B'rith, the ADL is still active today. The ADL's central mission has always been to fight against discrimination. According to their official website, they described Livingston's original mission as "[envisioning] an America where those who seemed different were not targets of discrimination and threats, but were equals, worthy of shared opportunity and a place in the American dream."<sup>69</sup> The ADL fights for civil rights of any kind. For example, the league filed a brief in the 1954 Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, on school integration. The ADL worked alongside the N.A.A.C.P. on this project because the league appealed for "nondiscriminatory treatment of all minorities."<sup>70</sup>

Despite all of the hurdles, Livingston had a rather ambitious future outlook. Significant changes had been made thanks to the B'nai B'rith and the ADL. As early as 1916, Livingston was making public statements about his optimism. In one interview, Livingston stated that "public opinion has become less harsh concerning the Jew and his citizenship is being more admired."<sup>71</sup> Of course, Livingston was insightful enough to realize that much change was still needed; but he believed enough change was occurring to be hopeful.

On January 1, 1929, Hilda and Sigmund moved to Chicago. After working as a lawyer in Bloomington for 35 years, Sigmund went on to work with Hilda's brother-in-law, Charles Lederer, and the firm became Lederer, Livingston, Khan & Adler. Even though Livingston relocated to Chicago, he still represented several clients back in Bloomington. Livingston noted that he did not feel he was going far from home and that he would always consider Bloomington his home.<sup>72</sup>

Livingston wrote ten books. Most notably were his works *Must Men Hate?* and *Facts About Fictions Concerning the Jew*. *Must Men Hate?* had thirty editions published in three different languages from the years 1944 to 1987.<sup>73</sup> *Facts About Fictions Concerning the Jew* had seven editions and was published in 1938. Both works dove into the analysis as to why the Jewish people have been hated and vilified for centuries. Livingston's works are sophisticated pieces whose themes remain relevant today. He begs his readers to accept the difference between myth and reality. As many articles described Livingston, he was constantly looking for rational solutions for the problems that Jewish people faced on a daily basis.

In *Facts About Fictions Concerning the Jew*, Livingston did not shy away from the immoral realities of humanity. When describing the history of hatred that led to current day beliefs, Livingston noted, "Passions of hate are like tidal waves—they reach all the shores of humanity.

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<sup>68</sup> "Writes Brief on International Law," *The Pantagraph*. October 26, 1910.

<sup>69</sup> "Our Mission," Today's Anti-Defamation League, The Anti-Defamation League. Accessed: July 1, 2021. <https://www.adl.org/>.

<sup>70</sup> "Organizations: View from the Ten-Yard Line," *Time*, February 8, 1963.

<sup>71</sup> "Says Public Opinion Regarding Jews Becoming Less Harsh," *Chicago Sentinel*, October 6, 1916.

<sup>72</sup> "Sig Livingston Joins Chicago Firm Jan. 1: Attorney to Leave Bloomington Following 32 Years' Practice," *The Pantagraph*, December 29, 1928.

<sup>73</sup> "Sigmund Livingston's Books per WorldCat." WorldCat. <http://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-no95053442/>. Accessed July 19, 2021.



In these lands, truth has become an outmoded virtue.”<sup>74</sup> Livingston acknowledged that it is hard for the human mind to be freed from long-established falsehoods. However, this was not a good enough excuse to allow prejudice to continue. Livingston’s rational solution to this problem was to refrain from the emotional element and instead use education to properly unlearn these falsehoods. This would prove to be challenging for Livingston and other activists because it was not merely a few decades of myths to debunk, but rather centuries. When examining how one could move past their anti-Semitic beliefs, Livingston wrote:

*“One who will for the time being divest himself of his preconceived ideas and his emotionalism and who will honestly use his mind to determine the cause for the antipathy against the Jew and the responsibility for the same, will contribute to the removal of this prejudice. Where there is correct thinking, there can be no prejudice.”*<sup>75</sup>

*Must Men Hate?* shared many similar themes with *Facts About Fictions Concerning the Jew*. Numerous myths were debunked in this book, such as the idea that all Jews are rich. Livingston also described the many depictions of Jews in traditional plays, songs, etc. and how that influenced the public. Other issues examined included why Jewish people were historically hated, and if it could ever be fixed. In the introduction, Livingston alludes, “Superstition and bigotry have so long enslaved the mind that even today their shadows darken the truth.”<sup>76</sup>

When debunking the myth that “all Jews are rich,” Livingston pointed out that those claims had yet to be proven with any sort of statistics to back them up. Livingston argued that the myth was only believed because people knew of one successful Jewish person in their town, and thus assumed that all Jews were successful. However, the flaw in that argument was that that person would not be aware of all the Jews in the country who did not have the same privilege.<sup>77</sup> Jews were associated with running profitable local businesses, big newspapers, and overrunning the entertainment industry. Again, those assumptions were wildly inaccurate. To conclude this point, Livingston stated, “It is again an instance where the conduct of a few individuals who happen to be Jews is assumed to be characteristic of the conduct of an entire people.”<sup>78</sup>

While Livingston did not believe that people were born to hate, he did point out that at a very young age, children were being introduced to prejudiced beliefs about Jews. Livingston explained that the hatred of Jews was depicted in famous plays like William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as nursery rhymes such as Mother Goose. Even in history there were lies spread, such as Jews being the reason the Black Death occurred. With all of these falsehoods being told to young audiences, Livingston found it astonishing that there was not more widespread anti-Semitism than there already was.<sup>79</sup>

In concluding *Must Men Hate?*, Livingston did in fact believe anti-Semitism could end. To prove his point, he compiled numerous examples of institutions like witchcraft, slavery, and human sacrifice to prove that while those were once accepted in society, they were now deemed unacceptable. Besides, anti-Semitism was only part of the problem to fix, according to

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<sup>74</sup> Livingston, Sigmund, *Facts About Fiction Concerning the Jew* (Chicago: Anti-Defamation League, 1938), 5.

<sup>75</sup> *Facts About Fiction Concerning the Jew*, 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Must Men Hate?*, xi.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

Livingston. “Were all Jews to be eliminated, it would not cure evil - for this hatred would then be directed against some other group.”<sup>80</sup>

The reviews for *Must Men Hate* were astounding. Kenneth C. Kaufman of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* stated that Livingston’s work was a “calm, reasonable and reasoned approach to a subject highly charged with emotion.”<sup>81</sup> In a review by Dr. Edgar De Witt Jones, he stated that Livingston lifted a “lofty appeal to his own people to make themselves worthy of their great heritage.”<sup>82</sup> In his book, *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism*, Nathan C. Belth remarked that Livingston was “no hysteric, but a thoughtful, rational mind.”<sup>83</sup>

While for some it was difficult to separate the emotions associated with anti-Semitism, Livingston excelled at keeping things practical. Livingston believed that anti-Semitism, and other forms of prejudice, came from ignorance and a lack of knowledge. Dealing with this meant that one had to be patient enough to educate those individuals through a rational process. Livingston wrote, “For an honest person, one who is not completely enslaved by his emotions, will welcome the correction of any false belief or notion.”<sup>84</sup>

On June 13, 1946, Sigmund Livingston passed away at his home in Highland Park at the age of 73.<sup>85</sup> Sigmund’s body was brought back to Bloomington for burial in the Jewish Cemetery. After his death, newspapers around the country described the great deal of work he did internationally with the ADL. His devotion to the organization and humanity were truly the highlights of his life.

After his death, Sigmund left an estate of \$647,656 (worth around \$7,890,831.60 in 2021) to his family.<sup>86</sup> Of that, \$123,282 went to Hilda, \$335,740 went to their son Richard (both of whom survived Sigmund), and the rest went to other family members.<sup>87</sup>

In 1951, Livingston was recognized by B’nai B’rith’s executive committee member Phillip Klutznick at the Central Illinois Council for his role in originating the ADL.<sup>88</sup> Livingston was certainly one of the most invigorating men of his time. He was a lawyer, author, and most importantly, a devoted activist. His work mostly centered on anti-Semitism, but Livingston fought against prejudice and discrimination of any kind.

In 2003, a historical marker was placed in honor of the founding of the Anti-Defamation League in Bloomington and in honor of Livingston’s work to fight anti-Semitism. The marker is located on the ground floor of the Livingston Building (the site of Livingston and Bach’s office) on West Washington Street in downtown Bloomington.<sup>89</sup>

Unfortunately, very little information is available on Hilda. What is known is that she participated in women’s clubs and activities in Highland Park. She was skilled at flower arranging and somewhat of an expert on early American antiques. In numerous newspaper

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>81</sup> Kaufman, Kenneth, “Race Hatred Viewed with Calm Reason,” *The Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 1944.

<sup>82</sup> De Witt Jones, Edgar. “Must We Hate?” *The Pantagraph*. November 3, 1944.

<sup>83</sup> Belth, Nathan C., *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 39.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>85</sup> “Lawyer Sigmund Livingston Dies in Highland Park,” *The Pantagraph*, June 14, 1946.

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com>.

<sup>87</sup> “S. Livingston, Lawyer, Leaves \$647,656 Estate,” May 29, 1947.

<sup>88</sup> “B’nai B’rith Lauds Sigmund Livingston: Cited for Forming anti-Defamation League in 1913,” April 30, 1951.

<sup>89</sup> Sigmund Livingston Founder of the Anti-Defamation League, Historical Marker Database, [www.hmdb.org](http://www.hmdb.org), Accessed June 7, 2021.

articles it was said that she loved to make floral arrangements for organizations such as the Sisterhood of Glencoe congregation.<sup>90</sup> There is no evidence of her being an active participant in ADL activities.

During the last ten years of Hilda's life, she was extremely ill. On February 20, 1962, Hilda passed away at her summer home in Highland Park.<sup>91</sup> Like her husband, Hilda's body was also brought back to Bloomington where she is buried next to Sigmund in the Jewish Cemetery.

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<sup>90</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, November 15, 1953.

<sup>91</sup> "Mrs. Livingston," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, March 4, 1962.