

Meir Attended North High

Yearbook shows Jewish leader with freshmen of 1914

A reader of *Rocky Mountain Memories*, Bernard Bernstein of Denver, recently sent us a copy of a photograph showing North High School's freshman class of 1914.

"Two faces are circled," Bernstein wrote. "One is Golda Meir; the other is Carl Ginn. The picture was given to me by Carl Ginn who still lives in Denver.

"All the young people in that class are gone except Ginn. He has dim memories of Golda as a classmate." (Editor's note: Carl Ginn was boys' adviser at Morey Junior High School during the 1930s. He later became principal of Smedley Elementary School, and after that, principal of Smiley Junior High. He was the principal who opened Merrill Junior High in 1953, and retired there in 1965).

"It is a miracle of Colorado how many young people from our state have risen to positions of international importance," Bernstein continues. "One of them, Golda Meir, a poor Russian refugee in the freshman class at North High, became a world renowned leader as the prime minister of Israel.

"She became the prime minister in 1969, and distinguished herself with her fiery leadership and unbending courage. Her strength prompted Henry Kissinger to call her 'a woman of steel.' She led the Israeli nation through a period that included the Yom Kippur War in October of 1973.

"She set an example of fortitude to follow."

How did the woman who was to become prime minister of Israel happen to come to Denver? The story is an interesting one.

Golda Meir was born to the Mabowehz in Kiev, Russia, in 1898. The family immigrated to America in 1906 and settled in Milwaukee.

According to a newspaper article at the time of Meir's death in 1978, she was a dedicated student and was counting on attending high school in order to become a teacher. Her mother, however, had other ideas. She thought her daughter should go to work; girls didn't need high school.

Golda's older sister, Shana, suffering from tuberculosis, had been sent to National Jewish Hospital in Denver some years before. Shana recovered and married Sam Korngold, who had followed her from Russia.

Golda, then 15, wrote Shana of her desire to continue her education, and Shana offered her a home in Denver and a chance to go to high school, according to the article.



North Side
High School

Freshman Class
of 1914

Golda accepted her sister's invitation and secretly ran off to Denver, dropping her bundle of clothes out a window the night before she went off to take the train instead of going to school. Her parents learned of the runaway when they read the note Golda left behind, telling them she wanted to study.

Shana met the train and whisked her young sister away to half of a duplex the Korngolds occupied at 1606 Julian St. on Denver's North Side. (The little building where Golda lived for 2 1/2 years, was moved a few years ago to the Auraria College campus, where it has been designated a historic landmark).

Soon after her arrival in Denver, Golda enrolled in the freshman class at North High, where she completed two years, and part of her junior year. After school she worked in Korngold's cleaning and pressing shop in the 1800 block of Champa Street.

But there also was time for socializing. In the warm atmosphere of the Korngold's little home, she met many young Jewish intellectuals who came to drink tea and discuss issues of the day. One of the young men - a very special one - she met at these soirees was Morris Myerson.

Morris introduced Golda to the free band concerts in City Park, and years later she remarked:

"To this day, I associate certain pieces of music with the clear, dry air of Denver and the wonderful parks in which Morris and I walked every Sunday in the spring and summer of 1914."

Later, according to the article, Golda said: "In Denver, life really opened up for me." Those gatherings in the Korngold home shaped

her future convictions. The idea of a national homeland for the Jews appealed to her particularly, and she said she found herself "dreaming of joining the pioneers in Palestine."

After a particularly strong quarrel with her sister, complicated by a letter from her father in Milwaukee, telling her her mother was very ill, Golda returned to Wisconsin early in 1915. She finished high school in Milwaukee.

Myerson followed her to Milwaukee, and they were married there two years later.

But Golda never forgot the inspiration she had received at the nightly gatherings in the Korngold's modest home. She yearned to go to Israel, and in 1921, Golda, her husband, Shana and Shana's two children set sail for Israel. Shana's husband, Sam, joined them later.

When Golda Meir died in 1978, her obituaries carried many quotes from Denverites who had known her.

"She was a very strong person in terms of her convictions," summed up Rabbi Manuel Laderman. "She was never soft and clinging."

Norman J. Gray and Sheldon Steinhauer, both associated with the Anti-Defamation League of Denver, said in a statement:

"The story of Mrs. Meir's life was that of a Milwaukee schoolteacher who remained a teacher always - a teacher of human rights, of Jewish rights, of women's rights."