Lazarus Bernheimer

(3,5)

1850-1852

1854-1855

Lazarus Bernheimer served two nonconsecutive terms as President of Keneseth Israel, from 1850 to 1852 and again from 1854 to 1855. During his second term as president, Keneseth Israel outgrew its rented space near Fifth and Wood Streets and purchased its first building, a small church on New Market above Noble. Under his leadership, Keneseth Israel also took one of its earliest steps towards Reform Judaism with the purchase of an organ for its new building for $250.

Bernheimer was born in Ichenhausen, Bavaria on April 18, 1808. Sources vary as to the exact time of his arrival in the United States, but he likely arrived in Philadelphia in 1834, where he worked as a jeweler. He sold his jewelry business in 1870 and became a dry goods dealer. He retired in 1877. In addition to serving as synagogue president, Bernheimer was active in secular Jewish associations. He was a founder of Joshua Lodge I.O.B.B. (Independent Order of B’nai B’rith) and a charter member of B’noth Jeshurun Lodge T.S. He was married to Theresa Heilbronner, with whom he had at least two, and possibly as many as six children. Bernheimer lived at 833 Marshall Street. He died on May 28, 1899 and is buried in Mt. Sinai Cemetery in Philadelphia.