

**Albert Wolf**  
**President: 1912-1923**

A son of Elias Wolf, Albert Wolf served as president from 1912-1923. (They were the first of two fathers and sons to become presidents, the other being Earl and Tom Perloff)



By the time Albert Wolf became president, Rodeph Shalom, Rabbi Henry Berkowitz was twenty-one years into his tenure and under his guidance, the congregation had made the full transition to a Reform synagogue, having adopted the Union Prayer Book soon after he assumed the rabbinate. He and Wolf worked together to make the congregation more egalitarian. For example, they advocated for a dues system that would have each member pay an amount based on capability, rather than having congregants express their financial and social status competing for—and putting brass plates on—premium High Holy Day seats. To their disappointment, this effort failed.

But other efforts succeeded, the most important of which was the creation the Sisterhood, which gave Rodeph Shalom's women more ways to participate in the synagogue's life, and eventually leading to three positions set aside on the board of trustees. By 1918, five years after it was formed, the Sisterhood had nearly 600 members, and during World War I, Rodeph Shalom's women organized a social service committee that, among other things, held several fundraising events, brought Jewish soldiers into homes for Shabbat.

One of their greatest accomplishments was enhancing education, for both youth and adults. With the religious school established at Broad and Jefferson Streets in its own building, enrollment grew from approximately 100 students to 369 in 1917, with confirmation and post-confirmation programs offering courses in religion, applied ethics, Jewish history and literature and, of course, Hebrew. Rabbi Berkowitz was a founder of the Jewish Chuataqua Society, a group that fostered intellectual discussion, and a number of Rodeph Shalom congregants participated in its activities and related study groups.

Like so many members of his family, Albert Wolf took an interest in community affairs. With several members of Rodeph Shalom, he established the Young Women's Union, a facility on Bainbridge Street that provided housing and vocational training for young women. Some of his siblings also went on to distinguished careers and made significant contributions to the congregation. Like Albert, brother Louis lived in a large house in Elkins Park, a home that later became Rodeph Shalom's Suburban Center.

*Written by Fred Strober*