

Louis Bomeisler
President: 1827-1831; 1841-1844

One of four presidents who served two non-contiguous terms, Louis Bomeisler (1827-31, 1841-44) was the quintessential nineteenth century immigrant who made substantial contributions in his new country to the business and communal worlds.

Born in Bavaria, he came to Philadelphia to pursue an engineering career. He is credited with several patents, including one for improving the design of a lime kiln and another for converting straw to paper. His accomplishments are highlighted in business and scientific journals of the day and not surprisingly, he was the first president of Philadelphia's Mercantile Club.

Bomeisler's terms coincided with the influx of German Jewish immigration to Philadelphia, and he devoted much of his time to finding a way to create a synagogue large enough to accommodate the growing congregation. Although the move to Juliana Street came two years after his tenure ended, he was appointed to the committee charged with overseeing the conversion of the former church into a synagogue, and he was responsible for recommending that the bimah be located in the center of the sanctuary, not on its east end. His contributions extended to religious life: during his tenure, at his insistence, the practice of selling mitzvot was ended. During his terms and for years afterward, was an advocate for strengthening religious education for youth. In 1848, following his second term, he help to found the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia, and Rodeph Shalom soon thereafter created its religious school as an integral part of the congregation.

(By the way, the other presidents with two, non-consecutive terms: Abraham Gumpert (1810-11, 1817-18); Lewis Allen (1811-17, 1818-21); and Tom Perloff (1998-2002, 2004-05.)

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