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He towered over his times

May 24, 2003

By **Renee K. Gadoua**
Staff writer

Longtime Temple Society of Concord member Michael Moss likes to make sure people know their history.

So when members of his congregation take their confirmation class on a trip to New York City, they visit Temple Emanu-El, an influential Reform synagogue.

Syracuse native and Temple Concord member Louis Marshall served as president of the large New York City congregation.

"They start saying, We know who he is," Moss said. "They had some name recognition."

A ceremony June 13 during 7:30 p.m. services at Temple Society of Concord, 910 Madison St., will ensure Marshall's place in local history, Moss said. Herbert Albert will discuss Marshall's contributions and the congregation will hang a photo of the person considered to be one of Syracuse's most influential Jewish citizens.

Marshall was born to Jewish German immigrants in 1856 in Syracuse. His family lived on Cedar Street, near the first Temple Concord building, according to several newspaper accounts. He was a lawyer and participated in prominent American Jewish organizations.

He was an early advocate for the founding of the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry, where a building is named after him. He was the first president of ESF's board of trustees and was a leader in the effort to protect wilderness lands in the Adirondacks and Catskills. He is credited with creating the phrase "forever wild" clause that protects state land.

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Marshall Street, the commercial hub just beyond the Syracuse University campus, was named after him.

"He was the most fascinating man you could ever imagine," Moss said. "He spoke five or six languages. He was very smart."

One story says that when Marshall defended a priest before a church tribunal, he filed a brief and argued the case in Latin.

Marshall graduated from the former Syracuse High School, Moss said. Instead of college, he worked in a law office.

"Listen to this: He finished Columbia Law School in one year," Moss said.

"This man was recognized as being the outstanding American Jew of the 20th century," Moss said. "His name comes up all the time."

The Jewish organizations with which he was involved include the Jewish Theological Seminary, American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Relief Committee. He also was a delegate to the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference.

He donated his family's Cedar Street house to an organization that became the Jewish Community Center.

Marshall died in 1929 at 73.

A Syracuse newspaper obituary mourned his death as "the loss of one of Syracuse's greatest sons."

Thanks to Temple Concord, the community will recall his place in history, Moss said. He touched many parts of society, he said.

"After the championship basketball game and I saw the celebrating on Marshall Street, I was probably the only person thinking of Louis Marshall," Moss said. "He always stood on the side of losers."

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