

Our History

1850

The first record of Jews in the Santa Clara Valley dates to the 1850s, when the Bikur Cholim Society purchased a 3-acre plot in Pueblo Cemetery (now Home of Peace Cemetery) in San Jose. San Jose's first synagogue, Congregation Bickur Cholim, was established in 1860. In 1948 Congregation Bickur Cholim was destroyed by a fire, after which it rebuilt and changed its name to Temple Emanu-El, the name by which it is still known today.

For more information on the Jewish community's early history in San Jose, see [this video](#).

1930

The San Jose Jewish Federation was incorporated on June 2, 1930. Its first president was Philip Hammer, Sr., whose daughter-in-law Susan Hammer later served as mayor of San Jose. In 1951, the Federation changed its name to the Jewish Community Council of San Jose, and then to the Jewish Federation of Greater San Jose in 1970. Finally, it became known as the Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley in the early 1990s.

1968

The entity that eventually became the Addison-Penzak JCC began in 1968 as the "Jewish Activities Committee" of the Jewish Federation. In 1969 the community also opened a Jewish day camp, Camp Shalom. The community center expanded to running a preschool and a variety of social, cultural, and recreational programs. The JCC separated from the Federation in 1973, and received official nonprofit status in 1974.

1984

In 1984 the Addison-Penzak JCC and the Jewish Federation moved to a 9-acre campus that once was the site of Berry Elementary School. A grant from Arnie and Cookie Addison helped purchase the property. Mrs. Addison's maiden name was Penzak, hence the name Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Center.

2004

In 2004, the Jewish Federation broke ground on a new building at the site, which would include a fitness center, auditorium, cafe, classrooms, and offices. The new building opened in 2005. Funds for construction came from Gloria and Ken Levy, Eli Reinhard, and many other donors whose names can be seen on the donor wall in our main lobby. That building is now in operation as the Levy Family Campus.

2021

In February 2021 the Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley and the Addison-Penzak JCC completed a merger resulting in the new agency, Jewish Silicon Valley.