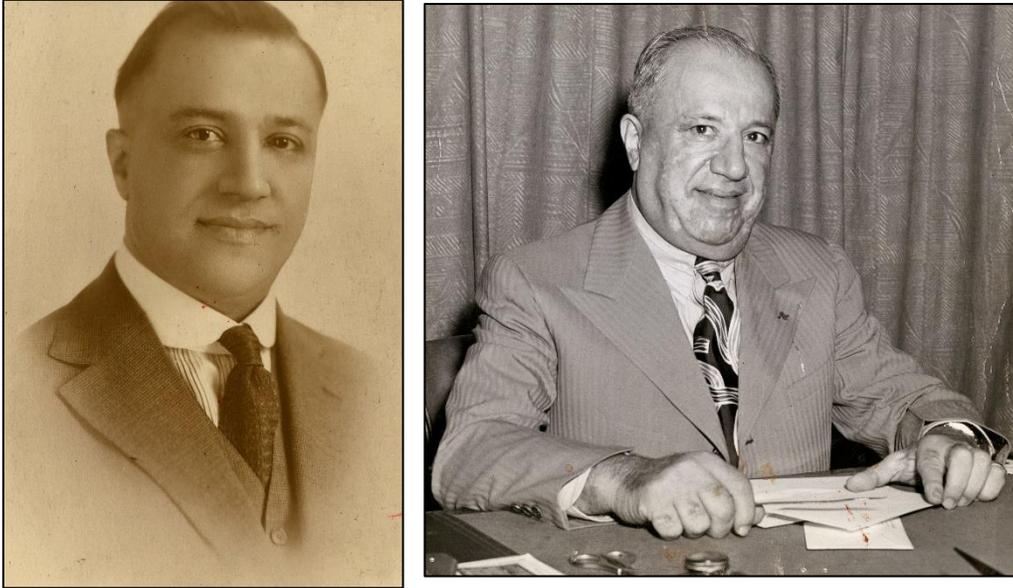


Max Rosenblum (1877-1953)

Clothier and Sports Entrepreneur



Max Rosenblum circa 1920 and 1943

Cleveland Public Library/Photograph Collection

Clothing store magnate and community leader, Max Rosenblum was the owner of the Rosenblum-Celtics professional basketball team and was also known as the father of sandlot baseball in Cleveland. He was a savvy promoter and enjoyed all types of sports.

Rosenblum married Sallie Weiss in 1900 and had a son and two daughters. After her death in 1938, he married Ann Whitney in 1943. He died in Cleveland, and is buried in Glenville Cemetery.

Rosenblum – Early Years

Born in Austria, Hungary, to Adolph and Esther Rosenblum, Max Rosenblum came to the United States with his family when he was 6, and settled in Cleveland ca. 1885. Soon afterward, he was a familiar downtown figure, selling his newspapers.

His first contact with the sports world came at that time, as he watched the athletic heroes of the era come and go. He used to tell how he would help them remove their bags from their buggies and assist them into the hotels. He would stand for hours at the scene of a sporting event, hoping for a glimpse of a favorite athlete.

For ten years, he sold papers and shined shoes at Superior Avenue N.W. and W. 3rd Street, then known as Seneca Street. He also grabbed a bunch of *Plain Dealers* at 3:30 every morning and hustled down to the Union Station, disposing of them before serving regular customers and going to school.

He left school after the 6th grade, but later enrolled in Canton Business College to study bookkeeping. He always was a firm believer in a college education, feeling that the character development alone was worth the expense.

Rosenblum -- Businessman

At 18, Rosenblum quit his career as a newsboy to become an errand boy in a credit clothing house; by 1902, he was manager of Enterprise Credit Clothing, Co., located at the corner of Ontario and Champlain, and in 1910, opened his own clothing store on Public Square. Its motto was "New Ideas, New Methods and New Policies." He had to borrow a month's rent from an uncle to have the sign erected, but from that store grew the Rosenblum company.

Rosenblum was an early adopter of ready-to-wear clothing and easy credit, advertising, "It's easy to pay the Rosenblum way" and "Clothiers to Fit the Family." Rosenblum's was known for its luxury shopping environment, customer relationships, and satisfaction.

Rosenblum's offered an extended charge account plan that enabled thousands of Clevelanders to dress well without missing the money spent. Customers arranged terms to fit their individual incomes. They paid no carrying charges for this convenience. Among the store's other amenities, alterations were free and clothes were pressed without charge at all times. Eagle and Merchant Stamps were given with all sales and payments, too.



Rosenblum's circa 1939 -- "The House of Courtesy"

Rosenblum -- Sportsman, Owner and Organizer

When Rosenblum was 15, he pitched for the Diamond Rocks, a ball team that played on the old river bed grounds.

He organized a softball team, getting the idea when he saw how rapidly a group of Jewish orphans improved when he provided them with better equipment. He recognized the value of sports for youth, and in 1917 first became a backer of athletic teams. Since that time, he sponsored numerous amateur and professional basketball teams and amateur soccer, baseball and football squads.

Rosenblum was one of the organizers of the Cleveland Amateur Baseball Association, and for a half dozen of the early years he was the organization's chief commissioner. The Rosenblum team was an annual entrant in the *Plain Dealer* Class A League, and Rosenblum always followed his boys with avid interest.

The Cleveland Rosenblums basketball team was organized in the late 1910s, by owner Max Rosenblum. Originally known as the "Rosenblum Celtics," the 1919 team compiled a record of 18-2 and was selected by Cleveland sporting editors as "the recognized champions of Ohio." The team primarily played exhibition games against teams from other cities. During the 1922-1923 season, the team became known as "the fastest basketball aggregation in this part of the country," and consisted of "an array of former college stars," including Kelly McBride, who was the team's top scorer for several seasons.

In April 1925, Rosenblum hosted an organizational meeting at the Hotel Statler in Cleveland to establish a professional basketball league that was originally called the National Basketball League. *The Pittsburgh Press* reported at the time, "Max Rosenblum, of Cleveland, who has sponsored professional basketball on a large scale for many years, is the leading spirit in the organization." He established his own team, the Cleveland Rosenblums, which played in the American Basketball League (ABL) until 1931.

Once the ABL formed, the Rosenblums quickly emerged as one of the league's best teams, winning the league championship in its first season (1925-1926). Attendance averaged 10,000 at the two playoff games at Cleveland's Public Auditorium, with seats ranging in price from \$.75 to \$1.65.

In its second season (1926-1927), the Rosenblums returned to the championship finals, losing in three games to the Brooklyn Original Celtics. The Rosenblums reemerged as the league's dominant team in the 1928-1929 and 1929-1930 seasons, winning the championship in both of these years. Professional basketball was in its heyday under Rosenblum's guidance and his team regularly filled Public Hall in the early 1930s. Games stars - Joe Lapchick, Davey Banks, Carl Husta, Nat Hickey and the rest - remembered Rosenblum as a "square shooter and real sportsman."

During the 1930-1931 season, the Rosenblums played only twelve games before leaving the league due to declining attendance.

In its six seasons in the ABL, the team amassed 141 wins and ninety losses. The Rosenblums continued to play basketball for at least a decade after leaving the ABL, primarily playing exhibitions with teams from other communities, never joining another professional league.

Rosenblum – Community Leader and Philanthropist

Reportedly one of the proudest moments of his life was when he was made honorary president for life of the Welfare Association of Jewish children. He was active president of that organization for 15 years.

Rosenblum's office was filled with autographs of the nation's sports greats and crowded with trophies, but two of his most cherished mementos were a plaque he was presented by the Cleveland Baseball Federation on behalf of the 15,000 sandlotters in recognition for the many things he had done for amateur baseball and a tiny, tarnished cup presented to him by the caddies at Beechmont Country Club, where he at one time served as president.

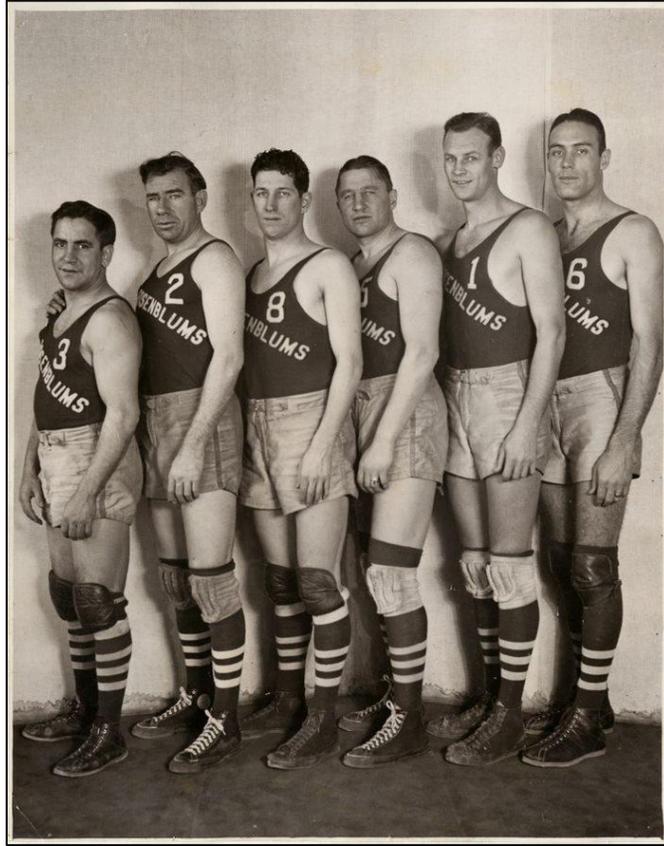
Rosenblum was remembered for helping college students get their education, something he had missed, and helped high school bands and athletic teams.

He was promoter of the annual Amateur Day, which raised funds for equipment and medical care for the sandlot players. Rosenblum had also served as a director of Mt. Sinai Hospital.

Epilogue

Persons of every race, color and creed paid a farewell tribute to Max Rosenblum at his rites on September 8, 1953. Speaking at a gathering of almost a thousand at Euclid Avenue Temple, Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner eulogized Max Rosenblum as "a fine American and a true sportsman." "Cleveland is one of the most tolerant of our cities and in no small measure it is due to the interest taken in sports by Max Rosenblum." "He saw sports as a character builder and was not attempting to develop champions, but men."

Max Rosenblum lived hoping that each day in some way or another he'd help someone.



Cleveland Rosenblums 1932

Cleveland Public Library/Photograph Collection

**More on Max Rosenblum and the Cleveland Rosenblums
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Acknowledgements

Arnold Berger, Editor and Webmaster, ClevelandJewishHistory.net
Brian Meggitt, Photograph Collection Librarian, Cleveland Public Library
Photograph Collection

Gail Greenberg 2/24/2021
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