



Frederica M. Adler

1868-1930

Morton L. Adler

1867-1940

Founders of the
Frederica M. and Morton L. Adler Trust in

The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

In 1940, the will of Morton L. Adler established the Frederica M. and Morton L. Adler Trust, to be administered by the New York Community Trust, to aid the work of charities representing all faiths, creeds, and colors, and for the infirm and aged.

The years that followed World War I were golden ones for Morton and Frederica Adler. Morton was a prosperous manufacturer of billiard and bowling equipment in New York. His wife presided over their two elegant homes — one in the city and one by the sea — which were always open to friends and relatives who came often to enjoy European-style hospitality, lively conversation, and sumptuous meals.

Morton was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1867, and his wife, Frederica (née Mayer), a year later in New York. Both prized education, and they loved to travel. Europe fascinated them, and they felt so much at home with Old World customs and traditions that they adapted many of them to their own way of life.

But essentially the Adlers were homebodies. Faithful to Jewish teachings and values, Morton and Frederica held together the family branches in Cincinnati, West Virginia, and California by letters and by reunions at their home. One of their greatest pleasures was entertaining their young relatives, for they had no children of their own. Their own baby girl had died in in-

fancy and no more children had followed. It was a happy time for the affectionate aunt and uncle when Jeanette, Fred, Oscar, and the rest filled the apartment at 970 Fifth Avenue with their eager questions and enthusiasm.

The children's awe of the chauffeur who met them at the train station and their shyness toward their handsome, debriefed uncle faded when he took them to lunch at their favorite place: the Lafayette Hotel, near Washington Square. The shyness vanished and was replaced by fascination with the pictures of the hotel manager's friend Lindbergh and his airplane that adorned the lobby. And luncheon was always delicious.

Equally elaborate were meals in the Adler apartment. The table was set European style and dinner was a full five course meal every evening. A robust gourmet, Morton Adler wore his paunch as a proud testimonial to his love of good food. He selected the table wines himself and personally ordered each dish that the cook prepared.

After dinner Uncle Morton frequently went to the library shelves to pull out a volume of Dickens or Stevenson or Kipling, on each of whom he was considered a "minor authority." The children preferred him to pull out his pockets, for out would tumble not a clutch of one dollar bills, but a roll of one *hundred* dollar bills — a very interesting sight for young eyes!

Aunt Freddie would laugh, her blue eyes shining, and chide that there were more interesting sights at museums. New York is *full* of museums, she might say, and museums are full of things for the intellect and the intellect can never be too full.

But it was Aunt Freddie, too, who remembered every birthday in the large family, and who loved to play Santa Claus to very young relatives who believed as she did that Santa is a friend to all children. Even when the children were older, she kept up her custom and wrote to a favorite niece, Jeanette, in 1925:

"A big girl like you does not believe in Santa Claus but all the same he has no right to overlook you, so let's play he dropped in on you and left the enclosed check. Use it to give pleasure. Love from Aunt Freddie."

Freddie and Morton loved their own religion, and respected the religions of all men. Especially important to them was the family, because love and unity within the home meant happy, strong individuals who could love their fellow man outside it.

Religious holidays were special occasions that signaled a general gathering of family, friends, and business associates. The Seders in particular were unforgettable. Everybody would be invited up to the summer home, "The Oaks," in Davenport Neck, New Rochelle, New York, for the annual Seder Meal, the traditional meal celebrating the Jews' release from Egyptian bondage 5,000 years before. It was a *huge* table in the Adlers' beamed dining room, which was hung with rich tapestries and carpeted with Oriental rugs. Besides the relatives from West Virginia and Ohio, there were Aunt Freddie's sister, Mrs. Klingenstein and her husband, who lived in the white house next door, Max Fink and Trudy, good friends, and some people invited from Morton Adler's firm, H. Wagner and Adler Co.

Uncle Morton loved to talk about his

trips to Africa, where he purchased ivory to make the billiard balls. He and Aunt Freddie and Mrs. Klingenstein discussed classical symphonies, to which they were devoted, dismissing the contemporary music that they disliked. After dinner, when the big meal had been digested, Uncle Morton challenged guests to tennis on the backyard courts.

One year at the Seder, Morton Adler proudly presented each member of his family with a copy of their family tree. He had traced the genealogies himself during trips to Germany.

Even when the family could not be together, Uncle Morton would not let the ties be dropped. In 1929, Aunt Freddie became ill with cancer and could not have the family up for the Jewish New Year. Morton wrote each of them a loving note. He sent this one to his brother Ammi and his family:

The high holy days are fast approaching and Rosh Hashonah is close at hand. At this season (so it has been through the many centuries of our remarkable history) every good and deserving Jew turns his thoughts to those whom he holds in affection — those for whose well-being his heart is engaged.

And so, my dears, we think of you at this time when those who can do so re-unite always. We cannot come to you but we can and do send you our affectionate good wishes.

May the New Year bring you full measure of health, happiness and peace — all precious gifts of God.

Frederica Adler died the next year, and Morton soon retired from business. For ten more years he continued to keep in

touch with dear relatives, feeling a deep loyalty to them. He also felt a loyalty to his firm. He considered his employees a part of his family and willed to them the residue of his stock in his company. In fact, he considered the world a unity despite its superficial skin or religious differences, and left his estate to people of *all* faiths and colors and creeds.

“My dear wife, during her lifetime, and I,” he wrote, “reached the belief that a Testator renders scant honor to his own church and his own relatives if he makes them his sole beneficiaries and neglects the general public from whom his wealth really came. If the expression of this belief ever becomes standard for fair-minded testators, the Brotherhood of Man will assume reality.”

Practicing what he believed, Morton Adler not only established a fund in the New York Community Trust but also left a bequest to the Community Chest of Atlanta, Georgia, where he had lived as a young man. He asked that consideration for grants from his fund be given to the NAACP, to the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, to prevention of deafness and blindness, to hospitals, to the aged and to the incurable.

But the chief bequest of the man who was born in Cincinnati and died in New York on February 19, 1940, was his love, which he left to his family of man.



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