



## The Rededication of Untermann Field

It was Homecoming Weekend 2007 and on Friday night, October 19, alumni journeyed to Untermann Field to see Weequahic play football against Morris Hills and to be part of the rededication ceremonies at halftime, featuring Newark Superintendent of Schools Marion Bolden, Principal Ron Stone, and our Co-President Hal Braff.

Recently, a \$5 million renovation of Untermann Field was completed. It included a football field with synthetic turf, additional bleachers, a new track, and new locker rooms. Since 1949 when the field opened, it had received only minor upgrades and periodic maintenance.

The next day as our Homecoming celebration continued, a facsimile plaque was placed on the "ROCK" outside of the entrance to the stadium. A permanent plaque that replaces the original one (missing for many years) will be installed this Spring by the alumni association.

## Who Was William Untermann?

Excerpts from an article by Nat Bodian, from Old Newark.com

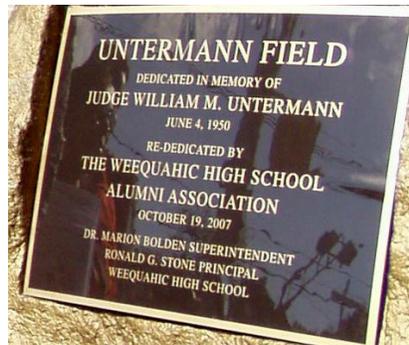


William Untermann was born in Newark on November 26, 1880. He devoted his entire life to Newark causes, such as under-privileged boys and girls, and to aid and betterment for the needy, as well as to various charities, and to civic and communal activity.

He attended Robert Treat School, Barringer High School, and New Jersey Law School.

In his youth, he was an organizer of the Newark Boys Club, and at the age of 16 as its president, he led a committee of boys who petitioned the City for the establishment of a playground system in Newark. As a result of his petition, the City's first playground was opened at Canal and Commerce Streets, the precise site where he was born.

In 1907 "Bill" Untermann was appointed director of the Prince Street Playground, where he served for four years. From 1915 to 1926, he was associated with the Children's Aid Society. In 1925, while employed with the Society, he became a member of the law profession. In 1937, he joined the Newark Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes. In 1939, he was elected President of the Newark Tax Board, a position, he held for two years until his appointment in 1941 as Judge of the Newark 2nd and 3rd Criminal Courts.



He passed away at age 54 on February 8, 1944. An editorial in the Newark Evening News, devoted to the deceased judge, said in part: *"With the sudden and untimely passing of Judge William M. Untermann, the City of Newark has lost one of its outstanding citizens. In truth has it been said: 'He loved Newark, its people, and served them well.'"*

Judge Untermann's wife, Esther, was named to take over for her husband and she held the post until her retirement from the bench four years later. At the time, she was the first woman police judge in the City of Newark and one of the few sitting female judges in the entire United States.

As a testimonial to William Untermann's life, the new sports stadium on Chancellor Avenue and Summit Avenue was dedicated on Sunday, June 4, 1950 as the William M.

Untermann Playfield. A boulder and plaque were emplaced to commemorate the event. The library in Weequahic High School was also named the William M. Untermann Library.

For many years, the Untermanns lived in Newark on 25 Chancellor Avenue.

## Where did the "ROCK" come from?

By Irwin J. Steinberg, 1947

In the 40's, my father, Benjamin Steinberg, was very upset because Weequahic High School had to play their home football games at City Stadium. On several occasions the team and the band were met with violence.

To counter this problem, he started the Weequahic Chancellor Citizens Committee. They petitioned Mayor Ralph Villani and Assistant Mayor David Kent for funds to build a stadium on the open field adjoining Chancellor Avenue School, which was used for practices for the high school teams and for amateur softball leagues.

Once the funds were received in 1948 - Untermann Field was born. It was named for Judge William Untermann, who had died a few years earlier. When the stadium was completed, an appropriate place to mount a plaque needed to be located.

One of my uncles told my father about a huge rock on Peshine Avenue. So they went to pick up the rock with a flatbed truck and a hoist. When the rock was loaded on the truck, the front end of the truck lifted off the ground. They solved the problem and brought the rock to its present location on Chancellor Avenue outside the entrance of Untermann Field. And the plaque was installed on the rock.





## The Original Dedication of Untermann Field

### From the 1949 Calumet Newsletter

On October 15, 1949, 5,500 people thronged to Untermann Field for the Weequahic-East Side football game. But of the 5,500, few knew very little of the Dedication Ceremonies planned for the day. The stadium chairman, *Mr. William Ricigliano*, was the Master of Ceremonies and introduced the distinguished personages present: *Dr. Joachim Prinz*, Rabbi of Temple B'nai Abraham, gave the Invocation.

An address was then given by *Mayor Ralph A. Villani*. *Honorable Meyer C. Ellenstein* and *Honorable Leo P. Carlin* then gave speeches. *Mrs. Esther Untermann* and *Mr. John Untermann* were next on the program. *Mr. Benjamin Steinberg* of the Chancellor Avenue Men's Club, gave a short address. A moment of silence in honor of the Weequahic boys who died in World War II followed. *Msgr. M. Thimmis* of St. Peter's Orphanage gave the Benediction. Due to the restlessness in the stands the ceremonies were shortened considerably and the game began.

### From the June 1950 Yearbook By Robert Lapidus

A fanfare of trumpets, a thunderclap of drums, and the Orange and Brown stepped out on the field. Amid the brassy blare and thrills of another football season, Weequahic's colors came to a pause. On October the fifteenth, 1949, Untermann Field was solemnly dedicated, not only to the distinguished judge and citizen after whom it was named, but dedicated to and hallowed by those of Weequahic who had given their lives in the battle for freedom.

Just 18 months before, the site of the proud stadium was a wind-blown, rock-studded sand lot. But on the first Saturday of the autumn season of 1949, an overflowing crowd of six thousand exuberant spectators pressed into the grandstands as the familiar figure of *Principal Herzberg* officially opened the stadium. The multitude watched as the gridiron warriors trampled upon the virgin turf; the autumn sun splashed brightly in the stands; and the bands and cheerleaders performed studied routines.

This event signified the start of a new era for Weequahic athletics in Newark's newest and finest sports center. To the thousands who were there, to our classmates both on the playing field and in the stands, went the pride of being part of the moment, part of the thrills and groans, victories and defeats of Weequahic's new addition to the tribal grounds.

**New Plaque on “ROCK” Outside  
Entrance of Untermann Field in 2008**



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## The Untermanns: Husband and Wife Judges Who Left Their Mark on Newark

by Nat Bodian

There is probably no Newark husband and wife couple who loved Newark more, or left a greater mark on the City, than Judges William M. and Esther K. Untermann.

Their combined years of service to and within the City of Newark spanned more than six decades from their marriage on April 1, 1920 through the 1980s. This despite the fact that Judge William Untermann's life ended early in 1944.

At the time of his death at the age of 54, William Untermann was Judge of the Newark Second and Third Criminal Courts, a position he held from his appointment in 1941 until his death on February 8, 1944.<sup>1</sup>

When he died suddenly, Judge Untermann's wife, Esther, was named to take over for her husband and she held the post until her retirement from the bench four years later.

At the time, she was the first woman police judge in the City of Newark and one of the few sitting female judges in the entire United States.

### Judge Untermann's Newark Roots

William Untermann was born in Newark on November 26, 1880. He devoted his entire life to Newark causes such as underprivileged boys and girls, and the aid or betterment of needy charity, civic, or communal activity.

He attended Robert Treat School, Barringer High School, and New Jersey Law School. In his youth, he was an organizer of the Newark Boys Club, and at the age of 16 as its president, he led a committee of boys who petitioned the

City for the establishment of a playground system in Newark.

As a result of his petition, the City's first playground was opened at Canal and Commerce Streets, the precise site where he was born.

### **His Adult City Appointments**

In 1907 "Bill" Untermann was appointed director of the Prince Street Playground, where he served for four years. From 1915 to 1926, he was associated with the Children's Aid Society. In 1925, while employed with the Society, he became a member of the law profession.

In 1937, he joined the Newark Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes. In 1939, he was elected President of the Newark Tax Board, a position, he held for two years until his appointment in 1941 as Judge of the Newark Second and Third Criminal Courts.

At the time of his death in 1944, an editorial in the Newark Evening News, devoted to the deceased judge, said in part:

"With the sudden and untimely passing of Judge William M. Untermann, the City of Newark has lost one of its outstanding citizens. In truth has it been said:

'He loved Newark, its people, and served them well.'"

### **A Fiftieth Birthday Recognition**

So great was the esteem in which Judge Untermann was held, that on Tuesday, November 26, 1940, a Fiftieth Birthday Celebration Dinner-Dance was held in his honor at the Essex House on 1048 Broad Street.<sup>2</sup> It was attended by nearly 600 persons and included leaders from the judiciary, education, and Newark's political and social life. It was one of if not the biggest Newark social event in that year.

### **The William Untermann Legacy**

As a testimonial to his life, the playfield and sports stadium on Chancellor Avenue and Summit Avenue was dedicated on Sunday, June 4, 1950 as the William M.

Untermann Playfield. A boulder and plaque was emplaced to commemorate the event.<sup>3</sup>

The library in the Weequahic High School on Chancellor Avenue was named the William M. Unterman Library, and the William M. Untermann Library was dedicated at Rutgers Hillel on the Rutgers University campus in New Brunswick.

It is perhaps a coincidence that the first two Untermann memorial namings were both on Chancellor Avenue, and that, up until his death, the Untermann's had their home in Newark on 25 Chancellor Avenue.

### **B'nai B'rith Untermann Lodge Founded**

In the year of Judge Bill Untermann's death, Newark's Essex B'nai B'rith Lodge No. 1285, of which he had been a member, was rechartered as the William M. Untermann No. 1285. It held its meetings at Abe Ellis's Essex House on Broad Street until the Lodge bought its own home at 18 Green Street in downtown Newark near City Hall. At its peak in 1951, the Untermann Lodge had 1,350 Members.

Today, the Untermann lodge exists as a 'paper' Lodge with only a few of its members still living, and with Ben Unterman as its perpetual president.

Ben Unterman (one 'n' in his name), a cousin of Bill Untermann, currently an Elizabeth resident, and nearing the age of 89, told me for this entry that he had promised Esther Untermann, before her death, that he would keep the name of Untermann alive and, he said, "I am keeping that promise."

### **About Judge Esther Untermann**

Mrs. William M. Untermann became Judge Esther K. Untermann in 1944 when she was appointed to the bench to fill her husband's unexpired term and continued to serve for four years until her retirement from the bench to pursue her varied other activities.

Of her appointment to the bench, Judge Esther Untermann recalled in a Newark Star-Ledger interview on March 18, 1971: she said "I am not a lawyer, so I was sort of an exception to the rule, but I did a darn good job.

"Do you think it was because I am a woman? It seems to me women go into more details, have more feeling possibly than men."

### **Education and Early Work**

Mrs. Untermann was graduated from Panzer College in East Orange, now part of Montclair State University, and moved to Newark in 1920 with her marriage to William M. Untermann.

From 1920 to 1944, she taught physical education and recreation in Newark schools, especially to "Special Education" children, work that ended with her appointment as Judge at age 48, following her husband's unexpected death in 1944.

### **Newark's Original Organization Woman**

A newspaper article about Judge Esther Untermann stated that she deserved the title of "Newark's original organization woman."

By the 1970s, she had already belonged to 51 different service groups, and was still active in nearly a score of them. She had founded and presided over many of them.<sup>4</sup>

She was the first woman to serve as secretary of the Newark Civil Defense Council, and she was the first and only three-term president of the Newark Business and Professional Women's Club.

She was also the first woman president of the Newark Physical Education Association, and the first president and organizer of the Cerebral Palsy League of New Jersey.

Also, she was chairwoman of the Weequahic Adult School.

### **Recognition As Writer**

In conjunction with her work for the Newark Civil Defense Council, Mrs. Untermann won international recognition for her writings, and her works were produced and broadcast on both radio and television.

### Feted on Her 75th Birthday Twice

On January 14, 1971, when she celebrated her 75th birthday, she was honored with a Diamond-Golden Jubilee Testimonial Dinner at the Short Hills Caterers.<sup>5</sup> It was attended by 325 guests. The event was a joint one commemorating both her 75th birthday and her 50th year of service to B'nai B'rith.

In Mrs. Untermann's remarks at the testimonial, she said: "Doing worthwhile things for others is a tonic. Then you don't have time to sit around and feel sorry for yourself and grow old, lonely and bitter."

The month following the Diamond-Golden Jubilee Testimonial, in February 1971, at a tribute paid to Esther Untermann at a meeting of the William M. Untermann Lodge of B'nai B'rith, commemorating the 80th anniversary of her husband's birth, as well as her recent birthday, lodge president Ben Unterman said of William M. and Esther K. Untermann in his remarks: "As his life was dedicated to the service of his fellow man, his aims and goals were shared by Esther K. Untermann."

### Passing of Esther Untermann

Esther Untermann, widowed at age 58, lived to 93, dying on February 12, 1989, at the Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.

The Star-Ledger obituary<sup>6</sup> headlined her as "First Lady of Essex."

She had lived in the Robert Treat and other Newark hotels during her post-judicial years, after selling the family residence at 25 Chancellor Avenue after the death of her husband.

Her last five years had been spent as a resident in the Daughters of Israel Geriatric Center in West Orange.

She is buried alongside her husband at the King Solomon Memorial Park in Clifton.

### Conclusion

Having absorbed myself in the lives and works of the Untermanns for this contribution to the Old Newark web site, I want to say in conclusion that William M. and Esther K. Untermann were a truly unique couple who through their life and their deeds reflected their love of the City, and their shared conviction that Newark had much to offer as one of America's great cities.