



NEWSLETTER

1910 AVENUE K, GALVESTON, TEXAS 77550

FALL 1985-1986

MAZEL TOV TEXAS! PUT A LITTLE SIMCHA IN THE SESQUICENTENNIAL

1986 marks the 150th anniversary of Independence for the State of Texas. To commemorate this event, the State of Texas has established a special Sesquicentennial Commission to encourage celebration throughout the state. The Commission can be contacted by writing to Thad E. Sitton or Susan B. McClelland, at P.O. Box 1986, Austin, Texas 78767 or calling 512-475-1986.

The commission now boasts nearly 2,000 city and county committees and state-wide non-profit organizations which have "joined up" to celebrate.

The program manager of the Commission, Richard Franck, says that, "This is truly a grassroots celebration, because it's all individual initiative. The Commission merely sanctions these people – they're the ones that are really making the Sesquicentennial happen!"

The Texas Jewish Historical Society encourages you to celebrate 150 years of Jewry in Texas. Here's how we suggest that you get started in your Congregation:

- 1) Form an Archives Committee as a standing committee of the synagogue or temple.
- 2) Utilize the congregational bulletin to request memorabilia and artifacts as well as member family histories.
- 3) Set aside a special area of your temple or synagogue library to display these items.
- 4) Enlist the aid of your rabbi to discuss the history of the congregation and importance of family history in his or her sermons or classes.
- 5) Involve the Sisterhoods, Brotherhoods and various other organizations in your community by including their organizational histories.
- 6) Send copies of any written history to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for inclusion in the archives in Austin. Send in care of James Kessler, 1508 Northwood Road, Austin, Texas 78703.

Here are some program ideas for Sesquicentennial Celebrations:

- Rabbis of the Synagogue.
- Milestones in Congregational Histories.
- Well-known or Longstanding Members/Families in the Jewish Community.
- Census information and Congregational or Community Activities in the Past.
- Multi-Media Presentations
- A Speaker's bureau to go into the secular community and schools to discuss area Jewish history.

You may also enlist the aid of area universities or foundations to cooperate for funding or expertise in program creation. You may also consider a display of artifacts and memorabilia in your local schools or public libraries.

In smaller cities or towns, it may be helpful for Temples and Synagogues to form joint committees to plan for celebrating the Sesquicentennial.

Once your plans are made, contact your local Sesquicentennial Committee so that your celebration can be publicized in the 1986 Guidebook and in local newspapers.

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO COMMEMORATE 150 YEARS OF JEWRY IN TEXAS, OR FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT CATHY SCHECHTER, 1910 AVENUE K, GALVESTON, TEXAS 77550. WE WANT OUR MEMBERSHIP TO KNOW WHAT YOU ARE PLANNING, SO LET US PUBLICIZE YOUR EVENT IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Texas Jewish Historical Society was held March 8-10, 1985 in San Antonio.

Fifty people from around the State registered for the meeting, which began with services at Temple Beth El conducted by Rabbi Samuel Stahl. Rabbi Stahl delivered a sermon on the importance of collecting and preserving family memorabilia and artifacts. (See page 3.)

On Saturday afternoon, out of town members were treated to a program at the institute for Texas Cultures and a city tour of San Antonio conducted by Ms. Selma Weiner, the chairperson of the 1985 meeting.

The opening Session of the meeting convened on Saturday night, with Lionel M. Schooler, President, welcoming the membership and introducing the keynote speaker, Rabbi Floyd Fierman of El Paso. Rabbi Fierman is the author of several books on local Jewish history in El Paso and the West.

Rabbi Fierman urged the members to publish and stressed the importance of being thorough in relying on both primary and secondary sources of historical information.

On Sunday morning, the membership heard Dr. Jacobs speak about one of his ancestors who lived in the "Wild West" of Texas before the turn of the century. He displayed a pistol used as a necessary implement of survival in Gonzales, Texas.

Mr. Sam Eneman, a native Jewish Texan now living in Pennsylvania, presented his nationally acclaimed demonstration on the uses of multi-media to preserve family history. He showed how pictures, slides, music and motion pictures can be coordinated to present an easy, yet professional looking record of family history.

Finally, Lionel Schooler presented a video taped interview conducted at the oldest continually active Orthodox synagogue in Texas located in Brenham. The video featured interviews with Mrs. Rose Toubin, 87, of Brenham, who recounted life in turn of the century Brenham and Ms. Ricky Frankfort, the great-great granddaughter of the first rabbi of that congregation. ✪



Rabbi Floyd Fierman speaks to 6th Annual Gathering in San Antonio



Sam Eneman demonstrating uses of multi-media.



Allen Mondell & Cynthia Salzman Mondell

SEARCHING FOR OUR ROOTS

excerpted from a sermon delivered on March 8, 1985 by Samuel M. Stahl

If a person wants to know about his ancestors, one of the best places to gain information, surprisingly enough, is the Mormon Church. The Mormons have the best genealogical records in the world. In the Mormon faith, there is a belief that if one knows his ancestors, one can baptize them, after death, by proxy.

We have no comparable genealogical records in our Jewish community. We know that we Jews have a rich ancestral past. In our prayers, we speak about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah Rebekkah, Rachel, and Leah. We take pride in the insights of the ancient Rabbis and in the wisdom of a Maimonides.

We Jews tend to know more about our distant past than our more recent past. We do not have the sense of urgency that motivates the Mormons. If our ancestors lived incomplete or unworthy lives, there is little that we can do for them to change the character of their years after they die by proxy.

Therefore, while we may have a sense of Jewish History, we have only a vague idea about several of our Great-Grandparents and those who came before them. One of the problems is that in Eastern Europe, to which 90% of American Jews can trace their ancestry, family record-keeping was imprecise, if not non-existent.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society is interested in obtaining family histories and memorabilia for the Archives of the Historical Society House at the University of Texas in Austin.

How, then, does one go about tracing his or her Family History? Arthur Kurzweil, a noted American Jewish genealogist, offers some suggestions:

- Begin now. Our most valuable contacts are older people. We don't want to hear: "Aunt Sadie knew all that you are asking. Unfortunately, she died six months ago."

- Write down every bit of information you hear, even the least significant, seemingly irrelevant story. Genealogy is like an unsolved mystery. Evidence can be found in the least expected places. For instance, if your Great-Grandfather happened to be present at the dedication of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, we know that he was in San Francisco at a particular time. That information will lead you to records that you never knew existed.

- Be as accurate as you can. Document every name, fact, and date. Also pay attention to legends, which may be fictitious, because every legend has a kernel of truth. Also do not assume every official document is accurate in all details. We know how many name changes occurred at Ellis Island. East European Jewish immigrants and the immigration officials were not able to communicate with each other. Often names were incorrectly recorded because of the language barrier.

- Be prepared for a rejection. Some members of your family will think that you are crazy. Some will not want to give you time. Some have lived through a past which is too painful and they don't want to recall it. You may write letters and get no response. You may get a cold reaction on the telephone.

- Be patient. Genealogical research takes months, even years. Sending for information, receiving answers to inquiries, and putting all the pieces together can be very time-consuming.

- Decide whether you want to do a Family History or Genealogy. There is a distinction. A Genealogy begins with you and works backward in time. Family History starts with an ancestor and works forwards. Genealogies tend to limit one to tracing grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents, and other parentally related family units. The Family History includes cousins, aunts, and uncles. Ideally, one should do both: A Genealogy and a Family History.

- Interview properly. Start at home with parents, then grandparents. They may know very little, but they can recommend others who know more. Ask specific questions. Don't ask: "Tell me about my Great-grandfather." Rather say: "What was my great-grandfather's name? What was his occupation? Where was he born? When did he die?" Don't ask leading questions. Do not ask "Did he live in Poland?" but "Where did he live?" Some people may resent you for asking these personal questions. Don't be discouraged. The majority love center stage and the opportunity to talk about themselves. They will not regard your questions as prying. Finally, write thank-you notes to those whom you have interviewed and assure them that you'll share your findings with them.

What is it that we want to know in doing these investigations. First, what were their names. Make sure to record the maiden names of all married women. Otherwise it will be patrilineally based. Use middle names. Also Hebrew, Yiddish and English names should be used. If Great-grandfather was called Morris, Moshe, and Moishele, record all three. By examining these details, we will be able to detect many naming patterns in your family and how closely subsequent generations adhere to the original name. Pay attention to dates. The most important are dates of birth, death, marriage, and immigration from country to country, especially to the United States. Learn about the place of birth. This can be discovered by reading history books on that place at that time. Note the place of death. Gravestones give excellent information. Discover their occupations. How did they make a living. Why did they immigrate to the States? Why did some of the family remain in Europe and some come here? Why did they stagger the pattern of immigration so that the father could come first and then send for his wife and children a year or two later? What were their religious and political affiliations? Were they of the Hasidic or Mitnagid Milies? Were they religious Jews or Marxist socialists? And in Germany, were they Orthodox or Liberal? Also which language did they speak?

There are many places that one can look for this information: city directories, census records, citizenship records, birth certificates, death certificates, wills, steamship passenger lines, cemeteries, obituaries, and military records.

Why bother with all this research? It will give a sense of rootedness. We will become acquainted with our past. We will realize that we are not orphans of history. ☆

Local News . . .

Waco Jewish Community Plans Celebration

The Waco Jewish Federation Texas Sesquicentennial Committee (WJFTSC), chaired by Ima Joy Gandler, has had the following dates approved and put on the calendar of their local Sesquicentennial committee:

- April 6, 1986 - Dedication of State of Texas Historical Marker at Hebrew Rest Cemetery.
- June 6, 1986 - Dedication of statue, painting and/or State of Texas Historical Marker for Jacob de Cordova, a Jew who was the principal founder of the City of Waco.
- Sept. 7, 1986 - Public multi-media presentation on the history of Waco Jewry with exhibition of religious artifacts and memorabilia.

The WJFTSC is also publishing a brief written history of the Jews in Waco.

Mrs. Gandler has asked the membership of TJHS to note that it takes over six months to get designation for a Texas Historical Marker. If you have similiar plans in your community, PLAN NOW. ☆

Dallas Archives "MOVING & SHAKING"

The Dallas Jewish Archives, located at the Jewish Community Center of Dallas, has increased its visibility with a quarterly newsletter. The Dallas Jewish Community is not 125 years old and "has made an impact on the transition of what was a small American city to a major metropolis", says Ruth Kahn and Ginger Jacobs in the summer newsletter. "Jews have been active in every area of Dallas life and we in Archives intend to identify this activity and the activists, the 'movers and shakers' who gave their strength to enhance the general community and institutions of Jewish life."

The Dallas Jewish Archives currently has an exhibit entitled "DEEP ELLUM- A Jewish Experience" which will run until January. From January to May, they will exhibit "JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF DALLAS - From the Confederacy to Vietnam". They ask that all families and organizations gather materials for preservation in the Dallas Jewish Archives. For exhibit, they accept materials either as a gift or a loan.

The Dallas Jewish Archives also needs interviewers in an Oral History program. Archives staff will train volunteers in the use of a tape recorder as well as techniques in eliciting vivid oral histories. They also need volunteers to transcribe the recorded interviews, do general typing, labeling and filing.

For further information, call Rose Biderman at 739-2737. ☆

PLAN TO ATTEND THE 7th ANNUAL GATHERING

The 7th Annual Gathering of the Texas Jewish Historical Society is scheduled for February 7-9 in Dallas. Details regarding programs and exact locale will be available soon.

Co-chairmen for the gathering are Mr. Robert Beer and Mr. Herman Abrams. Anyone interested in working with the planning committee for the gathering should contact them.

If you are interested in attending the Gathering, please fill out the pre-registration form below and send to Robert Beer, 6573 Ridgeview Circle, Dallas, Texas 75240.

PRE-REGISTRATION FOR 7th ANNUAL GATHERING

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Enclosed is \$25.00 pre-registration fee.

I would be interested in working on the planning committee.

TJHS Projects . . .

West of Hester Street:

Embraced by a Wide Audience
by Steven Baker, Media Projects, Inc.

WEST OF HESTER STREET, the award-winning film by Allen Mondell and Cynthia Salzman Mondell, has been in release for almost two years and has proven its "legs" over the distance. Showcased in over one hundred non-theatrical screenings, previewed and purchased by universities and libraries around the country, and now showing on public television in the major markets, the film's audience strength shows no sign of ebbing.

WEST OF HESTER STREET is the docudrama about the thousands of Jewish immigrants who began new lives in America's heartland at the start of this century. The late Sam Jaffe narrates the film as the voice of an immigrant recalling his first experiences adjusting of life in America.

Completed in 1983 after five years of effort by the Mondells, the film had its world premiere at benefits for the American Jewish Committee in Houston and the National Council of Jewish Women in Dallas. So successful were these events that organizations such as Women's ORT, Jewish Community Centers and Hebrew Day Schools were encouraged to have their own benefit premieres in El Paso, Fort Worth, Tulsa, and Tuscon.

Taking off from its successful premier, WEST OF HESTER STREET went on to win awards and delight audiences in film festivals around the world. It was honored with the 1983 CINE Golden Eagle, the Red Ribbon at the 1984 American Film Festival, the Silver Ribbon at the Houston International Film Festival, first place awards at the HEMISFILM International Film Festival and the Athens International Film Festival. In non-competitive screening, it has been shown at FILMEX in Los Angeles, the USA Film Festival in Dallas, the San Francisco and Chicago Jewish Film Festivals, and at this year's Jerusalem Film Festival.

The film followed its USA Film Festival screening with a special theatrical engagement in Dallas, being the highest-grossing film of the week in a three-screen complex.

There has been overwhelming demand for the film from Jewish community centers, synagogues, brotherhoods and sisterhoods. In over a hundred such screenings, the film has been incorporated into a variety of programs: from book fairs and cultural festivals, to special screenings for children and senior citizens. These screenings have brought the film to New York, Louisiana, Florida, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, New Jersey, Ohio, Georgia, Missouri, Texas, Minnesota, Virginia, Arizona, Massachusetts, Colorado, Virginia, Connecticut, California, Wisconsin, New Mexico, North Carolina, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Kansas. Jewish community centers in Canada have also been showing the film.

It was inevitable that a film of this nature would attract the attention of public television. In a special arrangement

with the Eastern Educational Television Network, WEST OF HESTER STREET has been scheduled for airing on PBS stations in such cities as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, New Orleans, Miami, San Francisco, Baltimore, Houston, Dallas, and Washington, D.C.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society was one of the organizations instrumental in the making of WEST OF HESTER STREET through its numerous contacts and resources during the research phases and its generous funding support for the actual production of the film.

The funding for the film was made possible by a substantial challenge grant from the Texas Committee for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

WEST OF HESTER STREET has been on the right track for two years and is still going strong. It has embraced a wide and growing audience and has been embraced in return. ☆

Help Needed With Cemetery Project

by Kay Goldman

Cemeteries have always evoked visions of mystery, forboding, and sadness. Yet they are useful tools for providing a great deal of information about the history of our communities.

Throughout Jewish civilization, the cemetery has been an important aspect of life. This is exemplified by the fact that when Jews settle in an area, one of the first things built is a cemetery. This tradition makes cemeteries primary sources of Jewish history, a history which *needs* to be recorded.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society is aware of the store of information Texas cemeteries hold about Jewish immigrants who moved to Texas between the Civil War and the middle of this century. Recently, however, the families of these immigrants have moved to the larger cities, leaving no one to care for the cemeteries. As a result, many are decaying, destroying the information they contain.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society is seeking information about Jewish cemetery sites located in various towns and Jewish gravesites that are part of community cemeteries. The Society also hopes to record all the information that can be extracted from the sites. Over the past few months I have gathered information about cemetery locations and history. From the responses received so far, I have compiled a list of approximately 50 cities and towns believed to have Jewish graves or cemeteries. Some of this information is vague and exact directions for all sites is needed.

I would like to make the task of recording the information on the gravestones a volunteer cause. This would be a valuable project for older Sunday School or Hebrew School students, Jewish youth groups, or any interested person.

If you are interested in helping or have information please contact Kay Goldman, P.O. Box 1508, San Marcos, Texas 78667 or phone 512 - 392-7107 or 847-9455 at night. ☆

HISTORY IN REPOSE

by Jimmy Kessler

TEXAS FAMILY TO REDEDICATE CEMETERY

The inscription on the small monument just past the gate of Hebrew Cemetary in Hempstead reads, "And God said unto Abram, 'lead thy people to a land that I will show thee.'" To Samuel Schwarz and his brothers Gabriel and Chaim when they arrived here in 1864 after immigrating from Kempen, Prussia via South Carolina, Texas was indeed the promised land. Today, many of their descendants remain in Texas and continue to prosper here.

In that spirit, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Bass of Houston have announced their plans to rededicate the Hebrew Cemetary in Hempstead where the Schwarz brothers and their families are interred. They will erect a monument in memory of Louis Gale, philanthropist and grandson of Samuel Schwarz. Phyllis Battlestein Bass is also a descendant of Samuel Schwarz.

The rededication is to occur in the spring of 1986 and will coincide with Sesquicennial celebrations around the state.

If you believe that you are a descendant of the Schwarz family, you are urged to contact Cathy Schechter for further information. ☆



In the shadow of the LBJ Presidential Library, the growing historical artifacts of the Texas Jewish experience repose in the Barker Texas History Center. Over the years, numerous major contributions by members of the Jewish community have found their way into the permanent collection of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. Housed with the preeminent depository of Texana, the TJHS collection represents a significant statement of the Jewish presence and commitment to the State of Texas.

Among the many documents found in Austin are papers of well known rabbis, records of prominent Jews, publications by Jewish Texans, as well as original research works. It is the purpose of the TJHS to provide a convenient locale for the preservation of papers representative of Jewish life in Texas, and all papers are representative and important. It is not the intent of the Society to replace local efforts. However, it is hoped that where appropriate, the Austin depository will become the home for documents of state-wide importance, as well as for those who have no regional facilities available.

If you have materials that might be contributed or if you know of others who might have such documents, please contact Jimmy Kessler at 1508 Northwood Road, Austin, Texas, 78703, 512-476-8215.

Do take the time to search for materials. Do take the time to solicit donations. Do take the time to visit the Archives. It is your collection and well worth the effort. ☆



NEW TJHS STAFF MEMBER

During the Sixth Annual Meeting, the officers and Board of Trustees approved the employment of Cathy Schechter as staff coordinator and principal contact person for the Society. Ms. Schechter is a native of Waco. She currently resides in Galveston and can be contacted at 1910 Avenue K, Galveston, Texas 77550, 409-763-3735.

If you have items to submit for the newsletter or wish to contact the society for information or disseminating material, please contact Cathy. The deadline for articles or publication of events for the next newsletter is December 15.

Jewish organizations have played a key role in Texas Jewish history by uniting the Jewish community and representing Jews in the secular world. Organizational minutes and records are excellent sources of historical data. The Texas Jewish Historical Society urges organizations to submit their materials for preservation in the Archives as well as articles and photographs for the TJHS Newsletter.
Items for the Newsletter should be sent to Cathy Schechter no later than December 15, 1985. Materials for the archives should be sent to Jimmy Kessler.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL? A COLORFUL ANCESTOR, FAVORITE ANECDOTE OR PLACE OF INTEREST RELATING TO TEXAS JEWRY? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR LOST FAMILY MEMBERS? SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FAMILY OR IDENTIFICATION OF A PHOTO FROM AN OLD FAMILY ALBUM? WE ARE INTERESTED! PUT YOUR ITEMS ON THE TJHS BULLETIN BOARD BY DECEMBER 15, 1985 FOR THE WINTER NEWSLETTER BY WRITING TO CATHY SCHECHTER, 1910 AVENUE K, GALVESTON, TEXAS 77550.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society was founded to collect, preserve, publish and popularize materials having reference to the settlement and history of the Jewish people in Texas and their participation in its social, economic, religious, political, professional and cultural growth.

Please join us and help preserve Texas Jewish History for the coming generations.

Membership Application For 1986

THE TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

M _____ NEW MEMBERSHIP _____ MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL
 E
 I am enclosing my contribution of \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 other
 A M to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for the year 19 _____
 N B \$25.00 of which is for my annual dues.
 U R CLASSIFICATION OF MEMBERSHIP:
 A S _____ \$25 Regular _____ \$25 Gift _____ \$50 Supporting
 L H _____ \$50 Minimum — Organizational _____ \$100 Sponsor
 I
 P _____ \$250 Patron _____ \$10 Student (under 21)

Please Make checks payable to the Texas Jewish Historical Society.
 Contributions to the Texas Jewish Historical Society are tax
 deductible within the limits of the law.

First Names (Husband & Wife) _____ Last Name _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 TELEPHONE () _____
 DATE _____

FAMILY HISTORY IN TEXAS

Our family Texas history began in _____ year with my _____ Name _____
 _____ Relationship _____ who first settled in _____ City _____

Please furnish additional family Texas history on separate sheet.
 (Please notify us on any change of address, supplying both old and new addresses and zip codes.)

Send To: A. ROBERT BEER, *Treasurer*
Texas Jewish Historical Society
12800 Hilcrest Rd., Suite 200
Dallas, Texas 75230

TJHS WILL HAVE REGIONAL MEETINGS

During the Annual Meeting, the Executive Committee approved the concept of Regional Meetings. Members of the Board will be meeting between annual gatherings to maintain contact and keep pace with varying ongoing projects.

The first regional meeting was held in Houston on September 9, 1985. The board members decided that the next annual meeting of TJHS would be held in Dallas on February 8 & 9, 1986.

The next regional meeting is slated for December 15, 1985 in Austin. The board has invited Don Carlton, Director of Barker Library at the University of Texas, to attend to discuss criteria for submitting materials to the archives.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Cathy Schechter or Jimmy Kessler for details.

The editor wishes to thank Frank Kaplan of Speedy's Kwik Kopy Printing in Galveston for his enthusiastic and valuable assistance and Dr. Jaron Winston for his love and support.

1985 Officers and Board Members of TJHS

Officers:

President	<i>Lionel M. Schooler</i>
First Vice-President	<i>Edwin Lax</i>
Second Vice-President	<i>Ginger Jacobs</i>
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Recording Secretary	<i>Selma Weiner</i>
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