



# NEWSLETTER

P. O. BOX 50501, AUSTIN TEXAS 78763

WINTER, 1987

## ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

During the fall of 1986, the Texas Jewish Historical Society sponsored an essay contest for students in elementary, junior high, and high school. Students could choose one of two topics: "How My Family Came to Texas" or "Growing Up Jewish In Texas".

We were overwhelmed by the responses we received. Over 50 essays were written by students from all over the state, making the task of judging and finding a winner a difficult one. All of the essays received showed initiative and hard work and we are grateful to all who participated.

The first place winner of the elementary school division is Darin Groder of the Solomon Schechter Academy of Dallas. Second prize goes to Nathalie Jonas, also of Dallas.

Honorable mention in the elementary division goes to Monique Roy of Dallas for a beautiful essay in which she gave a fictional

account of a young girl who comes to Dallas from Cracow during the Holocaust.

Honorable mention is also given to the following elementary school students who drew family trees: Yael Claire Young, Bruce Kalmin, and Joseph Ghitis, all of the Jewish Day School in San Antonio.

The first prize winners in the high school division are Emily Forland and Ellen Waldgeir, both of Agudas Achim in San Antonio.

Second prize winner in the high school division is Adam Cohen of San Antonio.

Honorable mention in the upper division goes to Grant Pector, Abby Lauterstein and Feliks Schwartz, all of San Antonio.

Congratulations to all of the winners!

First and second prize winning essays are printed in this newsletter. Honorable mentions will be printed next time.

## HOW MY GREAT-GRANDPARENTS CAME TO TEXAS

by Darin Grodin  
Fifth Grade, Dallas

I have chosen to write about my Great Bobi Kaplan who was born in Savalke, Poland and worked as a butcher there. Her husband my Great Zaydee Kaplan was drafted into the Polish army. He wanted to live a free life so he deserted the army and crossed the Polish border. He took a ship to Vera Cruz, Mexico and worked as a street vender. When he made enough money he sent two tickets to Great Bobi Kaplan and her son. Soon they too, crossed the border and took a ship to Vera Cruz. There they met Zaydee and opened up a restaurant together. Soon they decided to move on, so they moved to El Paso, Texas! They got to El Paso by crossing the Rio Grande bridge with a pushwagon. They lived in a little house in South El Paso. Great Bobi Kaplan owned a second hand clothing store in downtown called Anita's Dry Goods. She was elected for woman of the year for taking care of the Jewish soldiers in World War II. I think my Great Bobi Kaplan is a very strong and supportive woman to her children and grandchildren, and great grandchildren.



A family tree drawn by Bruce Kalmin, an elementary school student in San Antonio, is one of the many illustrations sent with essays.

## GROWING UP JEWISH IN TEXAS

by Emily Forland  
Eighth Grade, San Antonio

If I had grown up in Germany during the forties my geographic location would have had a profound impact on my life experience because of my religion. If I were now living in Russia, Israel, or in the heart of some far off Arabic country, then I would be deeply affected. Living where I do, the only way I am affected is by certain unique cross-cultural experiences that make me think "Nowhere else but Texas".

To start off with, I go to a school in San Antonio where, beside myself, there are only three to four-and-a-half other Jews. That's out of approximately 1200 students. This means I often am asked to interpret certain Jewish customs or holidays to friends and/or teachers. Because of this, one has to be careful of the impression one makes. Last year, I attended the Bat Mitzvah of one of my good friends (she is one of the four and-a-half). She chose a color scheme of pink and black which accounts for the complimentary blush-colored yarmulkes. We later learned that all of the boys who attended from our school went away thinking it is customary to wear "pink beanies" during Jewish ceremonies.

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## IN MEMORIAM

It is with great pride that we dedicate this newsletter to the memory of our beloved president, Edwin Lax, who passed away last October. It is especially appropriate that the fine work done by Jewish students for the essay contest is in this issue. Ed was a proud father and grandfather who understood the importance of preserving our history for our youth so that they could feel the pride that he felt in our heritage. The many excellent essays we received from youngsters are living proof that Ed's good work for the Texas Jewish Historical Society and Dallas Jewish Archives was meaningful and will be carried on by future generations.



## MORE ESSAYS . . .

### AROUND THE WORLD FROM SPAIN THROUGH DALLAS

by *Nathalie Jonas - Fifth Grade, Dallas*

One of my grandfathers name was Abner. He lived in Rhodes. His ancestors came from Spain. While he still lived in Rhodes, he ran a family grocery store, in poor condition. He left Rhodes when the Nazis invaded Greece. This was during World War II.

He went to the Congo, in Africa and worked as a wholesaler. They had a good life. Then the Congo became independent and changed its name to Zaire. They left Zaire because of political unrest.

My grandfather was a big Zionist amongst a strong Jewish community. Most of his brothers and sisters and his parents were killed by the Nazis. He married my grandmother, who also came from Rhodes. My grandparents and my mother left the Congo to South Africa in 1967, my mom was fifteen. She had to learn English because she only knew French and it was hard to go to a different country and to make new friends.

After my grandparents and my mom moved to South Africa and lived there for a while, my mom met my dad which was originally from South Africa. They dated for a long time, then got married. A little later my sister Colette was born two years later I was born then four years later my brother Gary was born. In 1982 we left South Africa to America. We came to Dallas, Texas. The reason we left South Africa is because there was alot of unrest going on between the blacks and whites. My father didn't think we had a future there. We chose to go to Dallas because the weather is very nice and similar to South Africa, and there were South Africans here already. We thought it would be a good place for us to go.

When we got here my father did not have a job. It was very hard because we had to get used to it, because there were no mountains or beaches just tall buildings and lots of highways. It was also hard for my sister, brother, and I to get use to the different atmosphere in school and make new friends.

We missed our family back in South Africa, and also the mountains and beaches.

A few months ago my grandparents came to live here. It is really nice that they are here. I hope my entire family can all come to live in America, not only so they could be with me, but so they can have more opportunities. I think Texas is a beautiful state and Dallas is a beautiful city! I am glad that we are here!

### HOW MY FAMILY CAME TO TEXAS

by *Adam Cohen - Eighth Grade, San Antonio*

The first members of my family to arrive in Texas were my mother's grandparents. They chose to settle in San Antonio because two sons who had come to the United States earlier were in the military

stationed in San Antonio. They had left their homeland of Kiev, Russia due to the Russian Revolution. They could not come directly to the United States and had to travel throughout Europe first. On their quest to come to San Antonio they traveled from Russia to Romania, from Romania to France, then from France to New York. All this took place in the year 1922. Upon arrival in San Antonio, they settled in the Jewish area, which at that time was near East Commerce Street. Their lives centered around Judaism and their synagogue was a house in that area.

My grandfather was 13 at that time. He had to quickly learn how to speak English and Spanish.

My grandmother was born in San Antonio. Her parents had immigrated from Poland. Like so many people who came from Eastern Europe, they realized the importance of their children learning the language of their new country and of education.

My grandmother, Sarah Shapiro, and grandfather, Israel Cohen, were married in San Antonio in 1932.

My mother was born in Corpus Christi in 1938. Following World War II, my mother's sister was born. My mother attended high school in Mission, Texas and came to San Antonio to attend business school.

A short time later, my grandparents moved back to San Antonio from Mission, Texas. In 1960, my father met my mother at a bagel and lox brunch which was held for local servicemen.

My parents dated and became engaged in 1961. My father then received orders for duty in France. Upon my fathers return from France, he and my mother were married on November 3, 1963, in San Antonio. My parents first lived in Ware, Massachusetts, my father's home town. They later moved to Springfield, Massachusetts. My father worked in a hospital in Palmer, Massachusetts which is where my oldest brother, David, was born. My parents then moved to Meriden, Connecticut where my father also worked in a hospital. Because of the cold weather and high taxation, my parents decided to move back to Texas. They moved to McAllen, Texas in 1966. While in McAllen my older brother, Jeff, was born. In 1970, my parents were able to return to San Antonio. In 1973, I was born. I was born at the Northeast Baptist Hospital where my father was chief x-ray tech.

I think there are several interesting points about my family. The first is that my mother did not have to change her last name because it was already Cohen. In checking through our family history we found that my mother's father and father's grandfather both came from the same town in Russia. This of course created a great deal of concern because there was a possibility that my mother and father were already related. It was determined that my grandfather was an Israelite and my great-grandfather was a Kohanim, therefore, they could not be related. Another interesting point is that my grandfather was from Russia and married my grandmother who's family was from Poland. My father's grandfather was from Russia and married my great-grandmother, who was from Poland. It would have been difficult to accomplish this assignment without explaining these events which was to tell how my family came to Texas.

### Growing Up continued from page 1

After the seder, during the Passover holidays, I like to bring matzo ball soup in my school lunch. The comments in response to this are rather amusing. Usually I get some strange looks from my lunch companions. Someone usually asks "What is that bizarre thing floating in your soup?" When I explain, they say "Oh! Well do you know what it looks like?" There are very few brave enough to take a taste.

Another Passover family favorite is MatzoBrei. (Fried Matzo) The thing that is unique to ours is that we enjoy it along side our picante sauce one usually puts on tacos. (You should try it, you'll like it). My uncle in Chicago considers himself a great matzobrei chef. When we visit, his sensibilities are offended when my father pulls out his nifty bottle of Pace. We really do get into family feuds about it. It is like another civil war.

Before my Bat Mitzvah, I used to go to weekly Sunday school. On our way, we would stop off for breakfast tacos. It was rather amusing to be served by a waitress named Flo who addressed us as "hon" with her heavy Texas drawl and then rush off to practice my Hebrew skills.

During these weekly Sunday School sessions we would often go to the morning minion service. What always amused me were the various forms of dress. We were led by the Rabbi who often wore a Guayabera shirt. The Cantor wore jeans and boots. Both were, of course, wrapped in tefillin. There was one man who always arrived at Minion wearing sweatpants or walking shorts. (There aren't many places where folks are that casual.) Then, of course, there was Aaron who wore a business suit along with boots and a feathered ten-gallon hat. (Of course, he was chivalrous enough to replace it with a yarmulke during the service.) I remember one time before services started he suddenly felt a burst of inspiration. He then went on to lead a rather discordant, but nonetheless spirited rendition of "The Eyes of Texas".

It is interesting to rub elbows with so many different cultures. However, all of this influencing works two ways. My best friend heard me practice the blessing before my Haftorah so many times, she could chant perfectly. In fact she was prepared to do so for our Rabbi. As I said, "Where else but Texas?"





*Temple B'nai Israel, Galveston. Rabbi Henry Cohen is pictured in the upper corner.*

### TIME TO RENEW

It is 1987 and if you haven't paid your dues this year, it is time to renew. Regular membership is \$25, supporting and organizational memberships are \$50, \$100 for sponsors, and \$250 for patrons. Your check should be made payable to the Texas Jewish Historical Society and mailed to A. Robert Beer, Treasurer, Texas Jewish Historical Society, 12800 Hillcrest Rd., Suite 200, Dallas, Texas 75230. Contributions to the Texas Jewish Historical Society are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Right now, more than ever, we need your support. The *Handbook of Texas* project, this newsletter, and sponsorship of all of the important programs we have undertaken are costly. We have made great strides towards our goals of collecting, preserving, popularizing, and publishing Texas Jewish history. But we have only begun to scratch the surface.

Your time, interest and your contributions are greatly needed to continue our efforts. Please renew your membership and while you're at it, tell your friends and family about us.

### STANLEY MARCUS DONATES BOOK

Stanley Marcus, the merchandising genius of Dallas's world-famous Neiman-Marcus, has donated an autographed copy of his classic work, *Minding the Store*, to the Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection at the University of Texas Barker Center. Presentation of the book was made on November 7, 1986 by Rabbi Jimmy Kessler to Dr. Don Carleton, Barker Center Director.

Rabbi Kessler also presented a photograph of Phineas de Cordova, pioneer Austin publisher, land developer, and politician which was donated by Hamilton de Cordova, Phineas's grandson.

A videotape of the dedication of an historical marker in Waco last August, commemorating the founding of that city by Phineas's brother, Jacob, was also presented.

Additional recent acquisitions of the Texas Jewish Historical Society archives at the Barker Center include a drawing of the late Rabbi Charles Blumenthal of Waco donated by Dr. Lillian Solomon. Rabbi Blumenthal was a statewide leader of Young Judea.

A seminar paper on the life and practice of Wilford W. Naman has also been donated by Keith E. Gamel of Austin. W. W. Naman was a prominent attorney in state and local affairs from Waco.

## BARKER CENTER TREASURE

*The Henry Cohen Papers*

by Katherine J. Adams

The Henry Cohen Papers at the Barker Texas History Center of the University of Texas at Austin fully document the life, activities, interests, and contributions of Henry Cohen (1863-1952), Rabbi of Temple B'nai Israel in Galveston and nationally known humanitarian. The collection, which measures more than fifty-two linear feet, concerns his career and those of his family and includes correspondence, diaries, notebooks, financial records, sermons, poetry, lectures, photographs, scrapbooks, postcards, newsclippings, and published materials. Rabbi Cohen donated the collection to the University of Texas in 1950 with the stipulation that it remain sealed for twenty-five years. The papers were opened to the public in 1978.

The bulk of the collection, more than thirty-two feet, is personal correspondence to Rabbi Cohen from family, friends, and co-workers. Letters span the period 1880 to 1951 and document his lifelong interest in and efforts on behalf of education, immigration, refugee relief, and prison reform. Correspondents include J. Frank Dobie, Eleanor and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Texas governors Dan Moody and Oscar Branch Colquitt, Clarence Darrow, Tom Connally, John A. Lomax, Edna Ferber, Helen Keller, William Jennings Bryan, and William Howard Taft. An additional four feet of correspondence, reports, and records relate to Rabbi Cohen's work in the Texas Prison System. They document his work as a member of the Texas Prison Board, to which he was appointed in 1929 by Governor Dan Moody, and his efforts to improve medical and educational facilities for prisoners and to separate hardcore criminals from first time offenders.

Other portions of the collection contain Rabbi Cohen's financial records; assorted personal writings, including essays, themes, lectures, addresses, sermons, notes, poetry, and published materials; and family photographs. Finally, there are more than seven feet of classified files in the collection that include address and autograph books, certificates and honors, papers relating to Rabbi Cohen's son and daughter, Congregation B'nai Israel records, and extensive newspaper clippings concerning various aspects of Rabbi Cohen's life and interests.

The Henry Cohen Papers are available for research at the Barker Texas History Center, located adjacent to the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. A full inventory to the collection, including its photograph component, has been prepared and is available for use in the Center's Hogg Reading Room

*\*Katherine J. Adams is the Assistant Director of the Barker Texas History Center at U. T. Austin.*



*Rabbi Jimmy Kessler presented a photo of Phineas de Cordova along with an autographed copy of *Minding the Store* to Dr. Don Carleton, Director of the Barker Texas History Center, in November.*



## ANNUAL GATHERING 1987

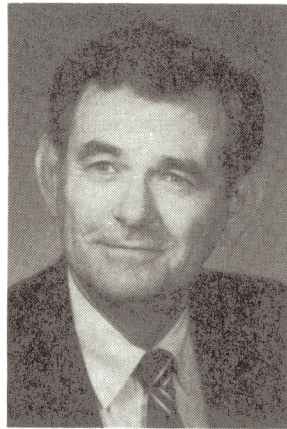
### ARCHIE McDONALD TO KEYNOTE 1987 ANNUAL GATHERING

#### Distinguished Historian Will Speak on Adolphus Sterne

Archie P. McDonald has a resume that will leave you as breathless as a leap across Texas. Born in Beaumont, he received his B.A. at Lamar University, his M.A. at Rice University, and PhD at Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge. He has been a professor at Stephen F. Austin University at Nacogdoches since 1964 and has been honored as Alumni Distinguished Professor in 1976 and was a Regent's Professor for 1985-86.

Dr. McDonald is a member of numerous professional organizations including Texas State Historical Association, East Texas Historical Association, Texas Folklore Society and Society of Civil War Historians, to name a few. He is past president of the Texas State Historical Association, and has been a member of the Texas Committee for the Humanities, counselor for Texas Folklore Society, editorial board for the Texas State Library, and a member of the Sesquicentennial Commission.

Dr. McDonald is the author of six books, five monographs, has edited 11 books, and is in the process of writing another seven books.



Dr. Archie McDonald

### HURRAH FOR TEXAS

(Eakin Press)

In Texas historiography the "Sterne Diary" is well known for its richness of material, its vividness of description, and its many incisive and human comments about the *dramatis personae* of the Republic of Texas.

The diarist, Nicholas Adolphus Sterne, was born in Cologne, Germany, on April 5, 1801, and migrated to America sixteen years later as a fugitive from the oppressions of his native land. Settling first at New Orleans, he later moved to the Texas-Mexican frontier town of Nacogdoches where he remained until his death in 1852. Here he became an urbane, sophisticated man-of-the-world who was a mover and shaker in the early period of Texas history. As a merchant, land agent, and jurist he observed the goings and comings of many of the giants of Texas history. Not only did he participate with them in shaping the events of his time, he also recorded them with a keen sense of history.

In any criteria of historical witnesses, Sterne is eminently qualified. Living in Nacogdoches during the years when it was both an important town and a port of entry, the panorama of Texas unfolded around him. He was therefore in a position to see, to understand what he saw, and his character and intelligence qualified him as a reporter who could incisively and accurately chronicle his surroundings.

*Hurrah for Texas: The Diary of Adolphus Sterne* was originally published in 1969 by Texian Press and was reprinted in 1986 by Eakin Press. It is listed in John H. Jenkins' *Basic Texas Books* as one of the 269 essential works for a research library in Texas history.

Dr. McDonald is married to Judith Barrett McDonald and has two children.

## HOW IT FEELS TO GROW UP IN TEXAS BEING JEWISH

by Ellen Waldgeir - Eighth Grade, San Antonio

Just as the football game is about to start, someone's voice comes on the loudspeaker. The voice says, "Please bow your heads for the opening prayer." You feel very uncomfortable because everyone around you is bowing their heads and saying a prayer to Jesus. You just stand there and everybody looks at you as if you're weird and don't have any respect. This type of practice is not unusual in Texas, whether it is at a PTA meeting, banquet or football game.

Growing up Jewish in Texas is not easy. The Jewish population is very small and most people do not even know what Judaism is. They know it has something to do with religion, but many think it is just another part of Christianity. Although you explain it to them a lot of times, they never understand the concept of Judaism and think that there must be something wrong with you because you believe in it.

As a young child, there is a conflict because you yourself aren't too familiar with what it is either. When you are with other non-Jewish children they treat you differently because you are not their kind. Young children seem to make big fusses about things even if they know nothing about them.

During the Christmas and Chanukah season, there is always a major conflict. You feel left out. You go to people's houses and they always have Christmas trees inside. Children come to yours and think that something is wrong with your family because you don't have a tree or stockings over the fireplace. I'm sure that every Jewish child has at one time or another wished that they could be Christians and that they could celebrate Christmas and be like all their friends instead of having a menorah and reciting Hebrew words every night of the eight days of Chanukah. Playing the dradle game and eating latkas just doesn't seem like a lot of fun, when all of your friends are doing something else.

Another crisis is when all of your friends are talking about how Jesus Christ is so wonderful and how much they believe in him. Then

they stare at you strangely when you say you don't believe in Jesus Christ. You say you only believe in God and that the Messiah hasn't come yet. You say you believe that Jesus Christ was not the Messiah. He was only a man. When this topic comes up, you can be sure that you and your friends will get into lots of arguments.

Have you ever noticed that on television they almost never show any religious programs that are about the Jewish people? Normally only the Christian religion is presented on television. Occasionally you will find a Jewish program, but that is only on a minor television station. Now a days, there are even Christian stations! Do you ever see a Jewish service on television? The answer is no. But on Sunday mornings every station has a Christian service taking place. I realize that the Christian religion is much larger in Texas, but everything is centered on the Christian religion.

When you reach elementary school, you are outnumbered by a lot. You are lucky if there is one other Jewish person in your class. Once they find out that you are Jewish, they start to tease you and make fun of you. The truth is that they really aren't sure what the difference is, but that you are a little bit different. In the late 1800's, some people thought that if you were Jewish, you had horns on your head and that is why you wore a hat. Things have changed in the years, but unfortunately some peoples opinions haven't.

At Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when you miss school, the children ask you where you have been. When you tell them, they make a lot of accusations. For instance, they think that you just did it to skip out of school and they say that next year they are going to do it also. Others say that if the Jewish people get to miss school, why can't they miss school since the Jewish people get to miss school on the Christian holidays like Christmas. Few people understand and think that it is o.k. for you to do that.

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## BULLETIN BOARD

FT. WORTH—Max Kay, Treasurer of the Isadore Garsek Lodge of B'nai B'rith in Ft. Worth, wrote to tell us that their chapter did “considerable work looking up Jewish families and events at the Ft. Worth Public Library for use during the Texas Sesquicentennial.”

Their chapter was formed originally as the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith #269 in November, 1876. For some reason the original lodge folded, but was reformed in 1901 as the Elias Sanger Lodge #519. The lodge name changed to Isidore Strauss Lodge #519 in honor of Isidore Strauss, who perished on the Titanic.

Again, the name of the lodge changed to L. F. Shanblum Lodge #519 in honor of L. F. Shanblum, who was a “great worker in B'nai B'rith and the Jewish community.”

After the death of Rabbi Isadore Garsek, the Lodge changed its name to Isadore Garsek Lodge #269, assuming the original lodge number of 1876.

Mr. Kay's question: did we have any information about the identity of Elias Sanger?

We wrote to Mrs. Hortense Sanger of Dallas and she responded: “Elias Sanger was the father of all the Sanger brothers who came to Texas and founded the business [Sanger Bros.]. He lived in Germany—was married to Babette Sanger and fathered a large family of boys and girls. I think **all** of them came to this country beginning in the 1850s. Well, perhaps not all—the Sangers didn't always record the lives of the females.

“I have some dim remembrance that the Sanger brothers may have brought their parents to this country when they were very old. Mother doesn't remember hearing that, but I think it was told to

### How It Feels *continued from page 4*

Passover is the hardest religious holiday to abide by. Having to eat certain foods at school is murder. All the kids ask you what the funny looking cracker is. When you tell them, they make a face, and go back to eating their sandwiches. Watching them eat the bread, chips, cookies, and soda, is almost unbearable. The worst part is when you see one of your Jewish friends who has broken the Passover diet. When this happens, you wish you could forget all about Passover.

Starting middle school, or junior high school, is a little better as there are more Jewish people. You make more friends, but at the same time people really don't care what religion you are. Your years at middle school are some of your best years because nobody cares whether you are Jewish or not. You don't get made fun of or picked on. Most people enjoy this much more than their elementary school days.

When it comes time for your Bar or Bat-Mitzvah, things change a little, you give invitations to all of your friends and most of them come. The only thing is that they ask you all sorts of questions concerning your Bar or Bat-Mitzvah and then say how exciting the party afterwards will be. They don't seem to notice how important the service is to you. What really disappoints you is when they only show up for the party. It makes you feel like they don't really care about you.

Another problem is Hebrew School. You can never have a friend spend the night at your house on a Saturday night or vice versa because of Hebrew School the next morning. People look at you funny when you say you have to go to Hebrew School. They say things like, “Why do you have to go there?” and, “Do you have to go?” or, “Tell your parents to let you miss it this time.” Another thing is that if you are involved in an after school activity, you have to miss them because Hebrew School is considered more important. Going to Hebrew School has caused many problems.

Dating in high school can cause many problems because there is always the problem of mixed dating. Your parents won't allow you to, but you really like the other person. This gets you and your parents into a lot of arguments. Even if you don't agree with it you are sure to meet someone that you like that isn't Jewish. During this period of your life, when you are dating, you are going to run into a lot of problems.

Growing up Jewish in Texas is very different than growing up in an area where Jews are more abundant. Until everyone in this world realizes that Jewish people are the same inside and outside as everyone else, growing up Jewish in Texas will be difficult!

me . . . I would surmise that one or two brothers decided to honor his name when that particular chapter was founded. They started in Weatherford, as you may know . . .”

NATIONWIDE—The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods is sponsoring a history project entitled “The American Jewish Experience.” The goals of the project are to encourage the establishment of congregational archives and prepare written histories of Jewish communities throughout the country and to share the information gathered with the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati.

So far, seven Texas sisterhoods have formed committees: Emanuel Sisterhood, Houston; Beth El Sisterhood, Corpus Christi; Temple Sinai Sisterhood, Houston; Congregation Beth Israel Sisterhood, Houston; and Congregation B'nai Israel Sisterhood in Galveston.

The regional chairperson of the American Experience is Edyth Glaser of Houston.

SAN ANTONIO—James P. McGuire at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio is preparing a manuscript on Hungarians in Texas, including Hungarian Jews. He is looking for the names of prominent Hungarian Jews in Texas and would like printed materials and/or contacts for further information. He can be reached by writing P. O. Box 1226, San Antonio, Texas 78294 or by calling 512-226-7651.

He states that he has already made contact with a small number of families, including the descendants of Rabbi Maurice Faber who was a Regent of the University of Texas.

“In reading the 1910 Census for Texas' major cities,” he wrote, “I was surprised to see that many Jews (with German Jewish names) claimed that they were *Hungarian Magyars*. On the other hand, Jews from Russia and Poland identified themselves as Hebrew or Yiddish.”

Any explanations to the Hungarian Jewish identification out there?

The Society has received copies of the latest newsletters from the Indiana Jewish Historical Society and the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. Anyone interested in reading either of the newsletters may write to the Society and copies will be provided.

RECOMMENDED READING—*Castro's Colony: Empresario Development in Texas, 1842-1865* by Bobby D. Weaver, Texas A&M Press, 1985.

This book is an insightful and well-documented study of the empresario phenomenon under the auspices of the Republic of Texas using Castro's Colony as a case in point.

Henri Castro was a well-connected French Jewish banker with an impressive background in finance and excellent command of the English language. Castro secured a colonization grant from the Republic and recruited more than 2000 European colonists from France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Hungary, and England to emigrate to Texas.

Weaver analyzes the internal operations of Castro's Colony in terms of economics and population and describes the pioneers' struggles, disillusionment with their new land, and the legacy to Texan culture through their customs, architecture, and religion.

He also paints a realistic portrait of Castro through letters, journals, period pamphlets, and documents. At times appearing an unethical and ambitious opportunist who led thousands of unprepared colonists to a stark and barren land for his own gain, Castro was also an unbridled and energetic optimist who risked his entire fortune to build his colony.

There was very little mention of Castro's Jewish practices and so we wrote to Dr. Weaver to see what he may have found in his research. Said Weaver, “There are no references to Judaism in Castro's journal. The journal is at the Barker Texas History Center and it is approximately 75% English and 25% French. The French has not been translated.

“In one of Dr. Henry Cohen's articles done in the 1930s he gives a detailed description of Castro's Judaic religious practices under adverse frontier conditions. That is the only reference I found to Castro's religion in all the research I did and I question the accuracy of that particular item.”

Weaver further stated that Castro's wife was a devout Catholic and that Castro received last rites from a Catholic priest and was buried in a Catholic cemetery in Monterrey, Mexico.



## KVELLING CORNER. . .

### IMA JOY GANDLER WINS PATHFINDER AWARD

Ima Joy Gandler, charter member and financial secretary of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, has received the Waco-McLennan County 1986 Pathfinders Award in the category of religion. The Pathfinders Award is presented annually to women who have made significant first contributions in their community. Mrs. Gandler was nominated for her work in establishing the Temple Rodef Sholom archives in Waco.

The Waco-McLennan County Pathfinder's Award is sponsored in large part by the YWCA, Waco Tribune Herald, and Lorena State Bank and is done in cooperation with the Governor's Commission for Women.

### TJHS HANDBOOK OF TEXAS PROJECT SURVEYS SENT TO 2,000

The Texas Jewish Historical Society's *Handbook of Texas* research project is now under way thanks to the Moshana Foundation of Austin, the Lack family of Victoria, the Estate of Bertha Cheatham of San Marcos, and Rogers Bros. Foundation of Beaumont. The generous donations of these families have enabled the Research Advisory Committee to formulate and print survey questionnaires being sent to a number of institutions and individuals around the state during January.

Three different questionnaires have been formulated to retrieve information. The first questionnaire was designed to identify the types of source materials available as well as obtain suggestions for topics for possible inclusion in the *Handbook of Texas*. This particular questionnaire will be sent to libraries, archives, county historical commissions, Jewish organizations, congregations, federations, businesses, and families which might have collections of materials.

A second questionnaire was formulated specifically for Jewish congregations, organizations, and federations. The information received from that survey will tell us the date and reasons for founding an organization as well as significant people, events, and issues shaping them.

Still a third survey was fashioned to determine the history of Jewish communities, particularly small ones or those now declining or no longer in existence. While the Jews who settled on the East Coast seemed to initially concentrate in the large cities and ultimately disperse throughout the nation, in Texas there seems to have been a reverse trend for Jews to settle in small towns initially and ultimately move to larger communities.

The Research Advisory Committee decided that a community survey was necessary to find out where these communities existed and who the families and individuals were who built their lives, businesses, and religious institutions in small Texas towns. What were their hardships and their triumphs? What was their impact on the growth and development of their communities, and finally on the State?

So far, the mailing list of those to receive the community survey questionnaire consists of individuals identified as having some interest in their local history. We have depended largely on our own contacts to tell us who those people are. Please help us identify individuals who can help with our project.

The next task of the Research Advisory Committee is to utilize a data management system for the computer to compile and analyze all of the information received.

In addition to identifying topics for possible inclusion to the *Handbook of Texas*, the committee also plans to publish a bibliography of Texas Jewish history sources for use by students and scholars of Texas history.

If you have not received a survey questionnaire and want to answer, or if you know of anyone who should receive any of the three questionnaires, please contact TJHS, P.O. Box 50501, Austin, Texas 78763 with names and addresses.

Mrs. Gandler is a native Wacoan who began to organize the Waco archives in 1972 with acquisition of names, dates and pictures of Rodef Sholom confirmation classes, and sisterhood and congregation presidents. About the same time, she discovered that the Texas Collection at Baylor University was interested in accumulating data on Waco's Jewish community.

Since that time, Mrs. Gandler has continued to collect, preserve and publish materials relating to the Waco Jewish community. She was the chairman of the Waco Jewish Federation Sesquicentennial Committee and played a major role in placing historical markers at the Hebrew Rest Cemetery and in honor of Jacob de Cordova, one of the founders of Waco who was a Jew. She also wrote a major portion of the script presented at the Community Day celebration as well as acquiring photos for a slide presentation.

Mrs. Gandler is married to Jake E. Gandler and has three children and one grandchild.

The Society congratulates her on an award well deserved.



*Pathfinder Award winner Ima Joy Gandler of Waco.*



*Historian and author Natalie Ornish.*

### NATALIE ORNISH INTERVIEWED ON T.V. SPECIAL

A thirty-minute television special on the history of the pioneer Jews in Texas had its world premiere recently with Natalie Ornish, TJHS board member and author, interviewed by the show's host, Dr. Walker Bailey.

The show covered the period from the time the first Jew set foot on Texas soil in 1590 to the present. The interview was interlaced with dozens of pictures of pioneer Texans, with narration by Stan Wessel, a descendant of the late Rabbi Wessel of Tyler.

Ginger Jacobs, President of the Texas Jewish Historical Society and the Dallas Jewish Historical Society, announced that the videotape is now available to the public for viewing on a videocassette recorder. "Those who missed the early morning show can see it now courtesy of the Dallas Jewish Archives," Jacobs explained.

Rose Biderman is archivist in charge of the tape, which is housed in the archives room in the Tycher Library at the Jewish Community Center, 7900 Northaven Road, Dallas.

The videocassette was donated to the Dallas Jewish Archives by producer Joanne Hill, historian Natalie Ornish, the editing and duplicating facility of the First United Methodist Church, and by Channel 5, KXAS-TV, the NBC station in Fort Worth. The "Faith Focus" series is videotaped in the KXAS-TV studios.

Natalie Ornish is a former Associated Press editor and writer, and a contributing editor to numerous publications. She recently has completed a history of the pioneer Jewish Texans. She attended Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, and Northwestern University in Evanston and Chicago, Ill., where she received an M.S. degree in Journalism.

Growing up in Galveston, Natalie was inspired by her rabbi, Dr. Henry Cohen, who was an elderly gentleman when she was a small child.



## LIVING HISTORY. . .

### THE IMMIGRANT:

Stage Pictures in a Hand-Tooled Album

by Jack Viertel

The American theatre has a proud history of immigrant plays, from the comic chaos of *Abie's Irish Rose* to the seething passions of *All My Sons*, yet Mark Harelik's *The Immigrant—A Hamilton County Album* doesn't really fit within this broad tradition. Americans have also produced a fair number of "folk" dramas, from *Tobacco Road* to *Green Grow the Lilacs*, yet despite its rural Texas setting, *The Immigrant* doesn't really sit comfortably with these plays either. The play, in fact, grows out of a rich tradition of genuine folk art that rarely touches the theatre at all: a hand-made story more likely to be told on a breezeless evening on the family porch than in a theatre's artificial arena.

*The Immigrant* is the story of Mark Harelik's family, and the playwright has chosen not to conform to conventional expectations built up by other American plays. Instead, he tells it as if we all were family members, which, in the larger sense—as Americans and descendants of immigrants—we are.

To be sure, the story is an odd one at the outset; Harelik's grandfather, Haskell, was a Russian Jew who arrived in the United States not through Ellis Island, as one might have expected, but at the port of Galveston, Texas. (The Galveston Plan, devised by Congress in 1907, was a shortlived attempt to solve some of the over-crowding problems of immigrants in New York and the Northeast by depositing them in Galveston with guides who would lead them to settlement in various cities and rural towns). Making his way inland, peddling bananas (his only English at the time was a simple cry which he spoke phonetically—"bananas-a-penny-a-piece!") he found sympathy in both the landscape and the people of the tiny town of Hamilton, a small town in the Central Texas plain. Ingenuous but industrious, he rose to the heights of American respectability as a purveyor of dry goods, yet remained always an outsider with an accent and some odd—to rural Texans—traditions.

Despite the peculiar circumstances of Haskell Harelik's arrival in the United States, the story of his assimilation, of the gains and losses of identity and the adjustments made and not made—is by now a familiar one. What makes *The Immigrant* unique is the personal touch. Mark Harelik plays Haskell Harelik with the determination of a man paying a personal debt of gratitude, and the event becomes a kind of gift from a grateful son back to his parents and grandparents, and finally a larger gift to the audience. Harelik opens a window on familial love that allows all of us room to feel our own profound ancestral links in ways which are strikingly simple and direct. Like the rural story songs recorded in the South by the Library of Congress in the '40s, the power of *The Immigrant* comes not from its polish, but from the extraordinary atmosphere created by sounds of real, rough-hewn voices. Dramatically, it is like the sharing of a family album. The photos, sometimes hazy or torn, or showing only a single side of an event or a face, are rarely virtuosic or "artistic" in an artificial sense; nonetheless they accumulate to create a vision of a world gone by, a homely landscape of everyday emotions that include those shared by all of us, ambition and dreams, love and loss.

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Mark Harelik, the playwright, is a native of Hamilton, Texas who currently lives in Denver. *The Immigrant* has had successful runs in Denver and Los Angeles.

*The Immigrant: A Hamilton County Album* will premiere in Texas at the Alley Theater in Houston on March 7, 1987 and will run through April 5. Special group rates are available. More information can be obtained by contacting June Jackson, Group Sales Manager, 615 Texas Avenue, Houston, Texas 77002, 713-228-9341.

The Jewish Community Center of Austin is sponsoring a group trip from Austin on Sunday, March 15, 1987 which will include round trip bus fare, lunch in Houston, and theater tickets. For further information about that trip, contact Sandy Sack at the JCC.

### THE NEW SOVIET IMMIGRANTS:

#### A Look at the Elderly

by Mary Ann Wolinsky, MSW

In 1974, for the first time in fifty years, the American Jewish community began receiving a transfusion of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union. Among them are the elderly, who come to be with their children or because they were required to immigrate with their family. They are a fascinating, powerful and tenacious group of people.

I first got to know them in my professional capacity as the Coordinator of Services to the Aged at the Houston Jewish Family Service. One of my roles was to help resettle elderly Soviet immigrants. I later kept contacts out of interest and respect and audiotaped a number of oral histories.

These immigrants have experienced and participated in some of the most tumultuous and far-reaching historical, social and technological events of this Century: two world wars; the destruction of monarchy through Civil War; the birth and growth of Communism in the Soviet Union; the destruction of the shtetl and its replacement with urban professionalism; and the leap in education from the study of Torah to the doctorate in engineering. Their lives have been filled with trauma, challenge, tragedy and triumph. Now, they face their last great task: the process of adjustment and absorption into the American culture.

The Soviet Jewish elderly have traditionally played a powerful role in the extended family. Three generations often live together and the older generation usually has owned the major family resources, such as the apartment, the pensions, the dacha. Retirement age is early in Russia (55) and thus, the elderly have played a pivotal role in child care and the management of the household, allowing their adult children the intensive pursuit of a career. Being at home, they became the negotiators with the system to acquire goods and services, not only for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren. Due to government repression, religious and cultural identification as Jews has been suppressed.

On resettlement to America, these traditional roles are disrupted. They now find themselves in danger of becoming a financial and social liability to the family. At first glance, it appears that they will have serious deficiencies in the ability to even care for themselves, much less to maintain their position of power within the family and carve out a niche in the Jewish community. And yet, for the most part, they have done so. They are lively and visible members of their communities, wherever they find themselves. They have, for instance, been credited with rejuvenating the community of Brighton Beach in New York as a vital Jewish neighborhood. They returned to their Jewish identity with gusto - some to the synagogue, some to Jewish community centers and other Jewish communal organizations. With some trepidation, with much joy and nostalgia, they remember, replant and cultivate their Jewish roots.

For us, they are a piece of living history. Their stories are an opportunity to understand ourselves better and to see ourselves had our forefathers chosen to remain in Europe. If we listen well, we can hear ourselves, our parents, and our grandparents in these new immigrants and understand the importance and pervasiveness of our religious and cultural heritage and its role in our long lasting survival.

*\*Mary Ann Wolinsky is a social worker in private practice in Houston. She was previously the coordinator for Services to the Aging at Jewish Family Service, Houston.*

## OTHER SOCIETY BUSINESS

The Executive Board of TJHS met in Austin in September and again in Ft. Worth in December.

In September, Milton Smith of Austin moved that research on Phineas de Cordova be initiated by Frances Kallison of San Antonio. Mrs. Kallison hopes to have a historical marker placed in Austin to honor the contributions of Phineas to the City of Austin and to Texas. The motion passed.

In December, acting president Ginger Jacobs reported that Stanley Schneider of Austin has expressed an interest on behalf of himself and his brother, Martin Schneider of Atlanta, in establishing a permanent educational fund in memory of their parents, Sarah and Harry Schneider of Dallas. The Society is exploring the possibility of using the Sarah and Harry Schneider Memorial Educational Fund to provide teacher in-service training on Texas and American Jewish History for religious school educators in the fall of 1987. Further discussion will be held during the Annual Gathering in Ft. Worth.

Lionel Schooler and Mrs. Audrey Kariel have moved that the By-Laws of TJHS be amended to add a program committee to the list of standing committees as well as defining its responsibility. All members of TJHS will vote on the issue in March. It was suggested that the program committee be appointed early in the year and report on suggested programs for the Annual Gathering at December board meetings.

Ima Joy Gandler has moved that the By-Laws be amended to abolish the job of financial secretary since the Society has access to a computer. Further discussion will be held on this at the Annual Gathering as well.

### 1986-87 Officers and Trustees

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