



NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 50501 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78763

FALL, 1989

DEEP IN THE HEART GOES TO PUBLISHER

The final revised text for "Deep In The Heart": *The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews* was delivered to Eakin Press on August 23, 1989. The work is the result of herculean efforts of the two authors, Ruthe Winegarten and Cathy Schechter, assisted by their consulting editor, Rabbi Jimmy Kessler.

The decision to write this book was made as a part of the commitment of TeJHaS to preserve the history of the the Texas Jewish experience. It is a tribute to those who were and are and will be Texas Jewry. In addition, this work is also a tribute to TeJHaS and the sponsors of the book. Their foresight and commitment in supporting this work reflect the highest level of devotion. The projected publication date is March, 1990. The formal book debut will be at the 1990 Gathering of TeJHaS in Austin which will be the 10th anniversary of the Society. The 1990 Gathering will be held concurrently with the Texas State Historical Association on March 2-4, at the Guest Quarters. The guest speaker for the TeJHaS Gathering will be the noted historian, Dr. Jonathan P. Siegel.

HOLD THE DATES: ANNUAL GATHERING -- MARCH 2-4, 1990.



RABBI JIMMY KESSLER, EDITOR

WAS POPEYE JEWISH?

[Courtesy of Buddy Freed]



In 1910, Sol Freed came to Laredo from his native Minsk and became a successful dry goods merchant. After a tour of duty in France during WWI, he returned to Texas where he married Rosalie Kalvorisky, the sister of a traveling salesman with whom he wagered at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio.

About 1927, the Freeds moved to Crystal City after having lived in Laredo and Dilley. In 1929, Rosalie gave birth to a son whose *bris* was celebrated by the entire town. For the next 28 years, people would remind Buddy that they clearly enjoyed his circumcision.

In 1934, John Nance Garner (later Vice President of the United States) persuaded Sol to take over the Crystal Canneries which grew to become the largest employer in Zavala county. One year later, the Spinach Festival was established and ultimately a statue of Popeye was erected in the town square. Sol placed the picture of his son Buddy on those first spinach cans. Perhaps the first Popeye!

Buddy went on to become a successful member of the local community, the youngest chair of the Soil Conservation Supervisors and president of the Zavala County Farm Bureau.

MILTON SMITH, PRESIDENT

THE PFEIFFERS AND THE TEXAS BRUSH COUNTRY

[Excerpted from Philip P. Brown, Denver, CO]

In 1883, having just been married, my maternal grandparents, John and Sophie Pfeiffer, settled in Dimmit County, Texas, in or near the small town of Carrizo Springs, which is about 45 miles northeast of Mexico in what is sometimes called the Texas "brush country".

At that time that county was just being organized and "lynch law" was in force. Prior to moving to Carrizo Springs my grandfather made an inspection trip to that town and found no men residents there. He was told by a woman to ride out to a certain ranch nearby to see the men of the town. He found a dozen or more men holding a "coroner's inquest" as to the cause of the deaths of nine men hanging from mesquite trees (the cause was cattle rustling).

My grandfather's first occupation was running a general store. He soon added three more enterprises. He drilled the first artesian well in the county which set the stage for introducing farming to the county. My grandfather told me that he had a farm about four miles from Carrizo Springs and raised the first cotton and strawberries that were ever grown in that area, as a result of irrigation from his well.

In the 1880's and 1890's there was almost no money in the county. However, most of the people there were cattle raisers. My grandfather did business with them by allowing them \$4.00 for a yearling calf and \$8.00 for an older cow, steer or bull in exchange for merchandise of similar value. He bought a section of land and fenced it to hold the cattle he got. At least once every year he hired three professional cowboys to help him drive his accumulated cattle eastward about 45 miles to the I. & G.N. Railroad, where they loaded them on a cattle train and took them to Chicago or Kansas City for sale.

The first year, however, they drove the cattle southwest about 45 miles to the Indio Ranch on the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass. He failed to make a sale there; so, they started herding the cattle back to my grandfather's land.

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DAVID ABRAMS, AN EARLY MASON

[From Joyce Engelson, granddaughter, NYC]

David Abrams' membership in the Masonic order dates from 1894 in San Antonio and comes through the Spanish lodges. During his teen years in Texas, he served as a translator and business manager for a circus that traveled up and down from the Southwest through Central and South America as far as Bolivia.

As a part of his responsibilities, Abrams was in contact with numerous government bureaucracies. Part of that was engendered by the need to transport animals, such as elephants and camels, across the many borders in Latin America.

Abrams eventually settled in San Antonio, at the insistence of friends, and worked for a local business man named Wolf. He became quite successful in real estate and insurance. The Wolf building in which he worked is now a part of local historical engravings of the historical downtown area.

During his life time, Abrams was very active in the cultural life of the city. He attended political and philosophical lectures and belonged to a literary society where books and poetry were discussed.

My grandfather met a young lady at one of these gatherings and fell in love. Based on some charming book inscriptions, it seems that this was reciprocated. Her family did not, however, approve. Even though both were Jewish, as my grandfather was a self made man and this lady came from a very distinguished family, the match was not acceptable. As a result, my grandfather came east to find a wife. Fortunately for me!

Abrams never returned to Texas. He remained, however, a lifelong booster for the southwest and the state in particular. Being very much the family patriarch and the one to whom the young people went in order to secure college loans, he would never lend tuition unless they first made a trip, on him, to the southwest. He wanted his nieces and nephews to know that New York was not necessarily America.

TeJHaS Board Meets in FT. Worth

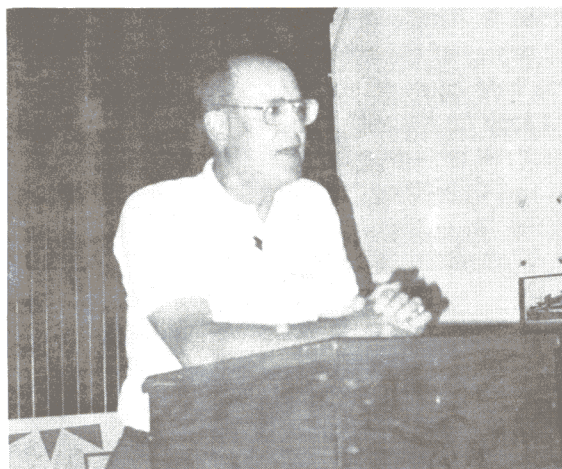
The historic "stockyards" section of Ft. Worth was the scene of the quarterly meeting of the TeJHaS Board on August 26th and 27th.

The outstanding meeting was organized by Fay Brachman and her committee consisting of Barbara Rubin, Phyllis Hirsch, Nell Hall, Karen Kaplan and Natalie Cohn. The Board and the Society are indebted to them for their wonderful efforts.

In addition to a most successful business meeting, highlights of the two days included fascinating vignettes from descendants of pioneer Fort Worth families and dinner at the original "Cattlemen's Restaurant." Some members spent Saturday night at the rodeo and country western dancing at Billy Bob's while others toured the historic district, noting sites formerly occupied by Jewish businesses.

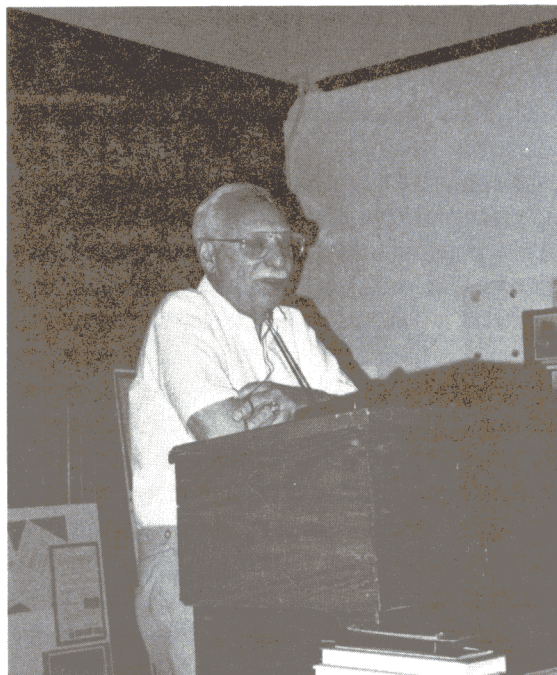


Pictured immediately below is Mr. Sam Rosen who addressed the group concerning his grandfather's real estate development (Rosen Heights) on the north side of town in the 1890's. He even built a trolley line to connect his housing project to the stock yards.



Edwin Cohen, pictured above, a descendant of the Greines family who came to Ft. Worth in 1905, described the five Greines sons' and their sister's activities which included service on the school board and free medical and legal services for patients and clients.

Pictured below is Manny Rosenthal, grandson of Abraham Rosenthal, who described the transformation of his grandfather from a *schachet* to a successful entrepreneur in the meat packing industry. A grand-uncle of Fay Brachman, Abraham became the only Jewish buyer at the Ft. Worth Stockyards.



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However, the cowboys before starting back went to Piedras Negras, Mexico, where they each got a jug of tequila. About half-way back they got drunk and went to sleep. My grandfather tried to keep the cattle together but each time he rode around one side of the herd some cattle strayed off from the other side and got lost in the brush and cactus. Finally, he gave up and went home empty handed.

One of my grandfather's other vocations was buying and selling hides of javelinas (wild hogs). There were great herds of those animals in that county and many people hunted them for money. He estimated that he handled about one million of the hides in 12 years.

My mother Carrie Pfeiffer Brown, was born in Carrizo Springs on August 8, 1886. I was born in 1912 in an old house about a mile from the Alamo, where my parents and grandparents lived.

In 1891, my grandfather opened a store at Encinal, Texas which was about 45 miles east of the I. & G. N. Railroad. He left my grandmother and his youngest brother in Carrizo Springs to operate his first store. But, because there were bandits, such as Kingfisher, and other "dangerous" men around, she loaded a couple of wagons with the merchandise and closed the store and went to Encinal. They lived in Encinal for about four years. It was even smaller than Carrizo and the population was almost entirely Mexican. In 1895, during a great drought and freeze, my grandfather, as a favor to the ranchers in the area, ordered a car load of hay. He unloaded the hay into a warehouse attached to this store and that night someone lit a match to it and burned the store and the warehouse to the ground. It was definitely arson and my grandfather thought anti-semitism was involved.

My grandfather had no fire insurance, but he did have a pharmacy degree from City College of New York. So they moved to San Antonio where he opened a pharmacy. In September, 1921, his pharmacy was washed away by the great San Antonio flood. He reopened the store but ran afoul of the KKK.

My grandfather died of poor medical care, never having regained his financial position.

The entire program entitled "Jewish Involvement in the Early North Side Ft. Worth" made for an exciting weekend. In addition to those shown, Dr. Phillip Sheinberg discussed his family who owned a dry good store on Exchange Avenue. With over 50 people in attendance, it was a most delightful meeting.

In addition to the fun part of the meeting, a number of significant issues were considered by the Board. After the approval of the minutes, President Milton Smith reported with deep regret the resignation of our Treasurer Kay Goldman. Due to family demands and educational plans, Kay felt a need to step down from the office. Upon unanimous action, Kay was elected to the Board as a new member. In her place, Shelley Kessler, of Galveston, was selected to fill Kay's current term of office. The president noted that having a CPA as Treasurer would be very helpful.

Following this action of business, the report of the Treasurer was read and accepted. Arrangements were approved for the transfer of accounts to an Austin bank and to have the financial records sent to Galveston.

A financial report was entered in the minutes concerning the TeJHaS Endowment Fund. Currently there is \$1,500 in the bank and the president indicated his intention to solicit further contributions. The Society is seeking commitments of \$1,000 or more to be paid out over a 3 to 5 year period.

Ruthe Winegarten reported on the delivery of *Deep in the Heart* to the publisher. She noted that Ed Eakin thought the book would be ready for the 1990 Gathering of the Society. In this matter, the Board authorized the president to pursue an arrangement with Rosegarden Press to handle direct requests to the Society for copies of the book. In addition, a discussion was held concerning the use of material from the book by the authors/editor. The matter was referred to Lonnie Schooler for a legal opinion.

Fay Brachman reported on our membership status. As of the meeting, there were more than 250 members of the Society and increasing daily. Fay asked for assistance in obtaining additional names as well as in editing our current mailing list.

TeJHaS BOARD TO MEET IN GALVESTON, DECEMBER 9-10

The next Board meeting of the Texas Jewish Historical Society will be held in Galveston, Texas on December 10, 1989. Arrangements have been made at the **Commodore Motel** on the Sea Wall, next to **Gaido's**. If you are planning on attending, please write the motel at P. O. Drawer N, Galveston, Texas, 77552. If you indicate you are coming for the meeting, the rate will be \$35 per night.

The meetings of the Board will be held at the Commodore and at Gaido's, where lunch is being arranged for Sunday.

Plans are now being made for activities prior to the meeting. If you haven't been back to Galveston in a while, you need to come and visit. A major change has been made in the city both along the Sea Wall and down by the wharfs, on Strand Street. The numerous stores, including the world renown Strand Street Surplus owned by our member Colonel Bubbie, as well as the new trolley service, the paddle wheel river boat, the Elissa and the Battleship Texas all await your visit.

Inasmuch as there is so much to see, no presentations are planned for now. Rather, information and time will be available on what to do and what to see.

In addition to the normal concerns of the Board meeting, several significant matters will be considered relating to *Deep in the Heart* and to several grant proposals.

COME CELEBRATE JIMMY'S BIRTHDAY AND ATTEND THE DECEMBER BOARD MEETING.

TeJHaS RECEIVES DOCUMENTS

Mrs. Jessie Levy Foss, descendant of Albert Moses Levy, one of the Surgeons General of the Army of Texas, has once again provided TeJHaS with new information on her family.

Mrs. Foss, who was not raised in the Jewish faith, has done outstanding work in preserving the memory of Dr. Levy. In addition to her research and writing, she has also seen to it that a *yartzeit* plaque was placed and that *kaddish* is now said for him.

The Society is grateful to Mrs. Foss and Texas Jewry is indebted to her for her efforts.

SOCIETY LOSES CHARTER MEMBER - MRS. HELENE LEVY

On September 19, 1989 Mrs. Joseph (Helene) Levy of Galveston died after a brief illness. Helene was 78 years old and a charter member of TeJHaS.

For over two decades, Helene was the Archivist of Temple B'nai Israel. More than her official position, Helene was the repository of Texas Jewish history in the state. Regardless of where the family was from in Texas, she knew about them and their family histories.

Born in Houston, she spent most of her years on the "island." Her late husband, Joe, was the owner/director of J. Levy & Bro. Funeral Home. It was the oldest such establishment in Texas.

During her life, Helene answered thousands of requests for information on Galveston history and Jewish history in the state. She was instrumental in the publication of the work *Messenger of the Lord*, a work on the life of Rabbi Henry Cohen edited by Rabbi Stanley Dreyfus. Dr. Dreyfus served as Rabbi of Temple B'nai Israel in Galveston when the work was being produced.

Helene was of vital assistance in the acquisition of information used in the TeJHaS supported book authored by Ruthe Winegarten and Cathy Schechter.

Of the many contributors to and supporters of the Texas Jewish Historical Society and its goals, Helene Samuels Levy was of the finest and the Society has suffered a major loss with her death. Contributions in her honor can be made to the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

GALVESTON FORMS SOCIETY

The Galveston County Jewish Historical Association received its initial approval by the IRS to function as a tax exempt organization.

The Association was established through the devoted efforts of Abe Reichstein, Executive Secretary and his fellow Board members and was founded to provide for the preservation of the Jewish experience on Galveston Island.

For further information write c/o 2613 Oak St., Galveston, 77551.

Continued from page 4 - TeJHaS Board Meeting

Rabbi Jimmy Kessler reported that several articles had been received for the quarterly newsletter, which is projected to be an expanded edition. In as much as the costs for printing are high, it was suggested that three quarterly editions be limited to 4 page faces, if possible, while the 4th one be expanded to include as many articles as possible.

Lonnie Schooler, past president of TeJHaS, reported on several items in his capacity as legal consultant. In addition, he reminded the Board of several opportunities for funding applications which we might submit.

Doris Glasser reported that she is currently involved with selecting an individual to create the Curriculum Guide on the Texas Jewish experience. Funds are on hand and the selection process is proceeding. At the Board's direction, the final arrangements are being delayed until the new book is available as the text.

Milton Smith reviewed plans for the enhancement of the TeJHaS Endowment Fund. President Smith's immediate goal is for \$150,000. It is hoped that members will consider the Society in the annual gift plans as well as in their estate plans. Several vehicles are available for proper recognition in perpetuity.

Initial plans were unveiled for the tenth anniversary Gathering of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. The meeting will be in Austin on March 2-4, 1990. Tentative plans call for a Friday evening dinner at the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation which will be celebrating its 60th anniversary at that time.

Saturday morning plans include a *shabbat* service and the presentation of several papers. Lunch will be left open, but a display will be arranged at the Barker Texas History Center, site of the TeJHaS collection, for the afternoon.

Our guest speaker and scholar in residence will be Dr. Jonathan P. Siegel. Dr. Siegel is the immediate past president of the Washington, D.C. Jewish Historical Society which just successfully completed a major fund raising campaign. Dr. Siegel is the author of numerous articles and his newest book is already on best sellers lists. In addition to his presentations to the Society on Saturday night and Sunday morning, he will also be speaking at the University of Texas.

Saturday evening will include a banquet dinner, Dr. Siegel's presentation and the formal election of officers and trustees, all preceded by a cocktail hour. In addition, an appropriate joint celebration will be observed for the debut of *Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews* and the 10th anniversary of TeJHaS.

Sunday morning will provide an opportunity for in-depth discussions with Dr. Siegel about specific ideas on the expansion of the TeJHaS. This practicum will be preceded by a Board meeting and breakfast and followed by the annual business meeting.

The planning committee, under the able direction of Mrs. Patty Leonard and Mrs. Carolyn Turner, will report back to the Board in December concerning final plans. Transportation will be available to all events which are not held at the Gathering hotel.

President Smith reported to the Board that arrangements were near completion for the services of Ruthe Winegarten as Executive Secretary of TeJHaS. Ruthe would not begin that task until the completion of the book.

Fay Brachman reported that 3500 brochures and membership applications were about to be sent out. The Board extended its unbounded gratitude to Fay and to Phyllis and Herb Kadish. Their untiring efforts on behalf of TeJHaS are beyond all and worthy of much praise.

The meeting adjourned with a great feeling of accomplishment.

HENRY FOX'S FAMILY SOUGHT

Mrs. Harvey N. Plaut of El Paso is seeking information on her father's family. Her grandfather, Abraham Lionel Fox from Wittkowo, Posen, Prussia arrived in Texas at the close of the Civil War. His older brother Henry Fox and sister Pauline were already in Houston in 1859. According to the records, Henry Fox was a charter member of Beth Israel and served as president four times. Pauline married Joseph Rosenfield.

If anyone has any information on the family, Mrs. Plaut can be reached at 3518 O'Keefe, El Paso, 79902.

MEMOIRS OF MY FAMILY

by Marguerite Marks

In 1860, Alphonse Levy, a typical Frenchman, immigrated from Paris, France to Galveston, Texas. He arrived in time to fight in the Battle of Galveston, the strangest of all battles in the Civil War. The North held the port and when the people of Houston heard of the forthcoming battle, they rushed in their horse drawn buggies to get a viewing seat, eagerly paying twenty dollars to see the Confederates push those "damn Yankees" off the island on new year's day, 1863.

The first wholesale grocery in Texas was established by Leon H. Blum and Alphonse Levy was Vice President. An historical survey made by the Galveston News in 1935 lists Alphonse Levy as one of the twelve pioneer Jewish leaders who established the first Reform synagogue in Texas, B'nai Israel of Galveston.

Elizabeth Gaertner, daughter of Clara and John Gaertner, born July 8, 1849 in London and descended from Sephardic Jews who fled Spain at the time of the Inquisition, came to Galveston after the Civil War with her mother, sister Emma, and brothers David and Alfred. She and Alphonse were married by Rabbi Blum on July 7, 1871.

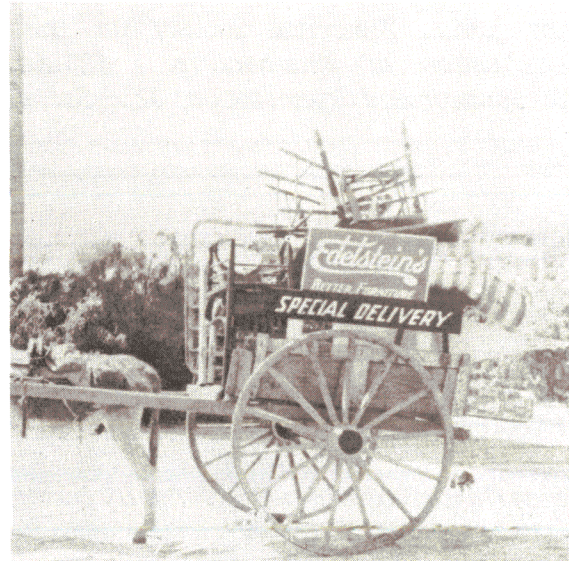
Elizabeth and Alphonse were active in the Temple, the Harmonu Club and other parts of the cultural and business life of the fast growing Galveston community. They had three girls and three boys - Estelle, Leon, Irene, Emmanuel, Tinye and Ashley. All of the youngsters attended religious school and were confirmed in the Temple. Estelle Levy Meyer was the mother of the author.

Elizabeth Levy practiced the "Lady Bountiful" method of social welfare as it was done in those days, by taking baskets of goods to the poor and nursing the indigent sick. She was among the first women in Texas to receive a formal teachers certificate. She established the first Mother's Club in the Galveston elementary schools. Through her efforts, the school board added hot lunches, serving classes and manual training to the elementary school program.

[The entire work, Memoirs of My Family, is in the Rosenberg Library in Galveston. Excerpts by permission of author.]

EDELSTEIN'S BETTER FURNITURE

Information Courtesy of Ruben Edelstein



When Ruben Edelstein's ancestors fled Toledo, Spain as a result of the Inquisition and traveled to Innsbruck, Austria and Lithuania, they probably never imagined their progeny would become Mayor of Brownsville, Texas. Yet from the delivery cart above used in the early 1900's, Edelstein's Better Furniture grew to thirteen branches in four counties of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

In addition to his elected public office and business, Ruben has served as president of Temple Beth El, chair of the Public Utilities Board, on the Gladys Porter Zoo Board, and has received numerous awards and recognitions.

Ruben Edelstein is a credit to Texas Jewry and a blessing to the Brownsville/Beeville communities.

A POTPOURRI

Mazal tov to Temple Beth El of Brownsville on the dedication of their new building.

Congratulations to the Dallas Jewish Historical Society for their recent program on growing up in South Dallas. Over 100 people were in attendance.

Congratulations to Jan Hart on her forthcoming children's book, *Hanna, The Immigrant*.

[If you know of any news items, please send them to the editor.]

TeJHaS
ANNUAL MEMEBERSHIP

I am enclosing my contribution of \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for the 1989 membership year.

Classification of Membership: \$25-Annual Member; \$50-Supporting Member; \$100-Sponsor and Organization; \$250-Sustaining Member; \$500-Benefactor; \$1000-Patron.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

I am interested in serving on a TeJHaS committee.

My areas of interest are: _____

Please furnish us with a brief family history for our archives.

Contributions to TeJHaS are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Please Clip Application and Send To
Texas Jewish Historical Society
P. O. Box 50501
Austin, Texas 78763



Texas Jewish Historical Society
TeJHaS
P. O. Box 50501
Austin, Texas 78763

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

2355 95
Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence H Wilk
260 Cape Aron
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

DATED MATERIAL

**COME CELEBRATE JIMMY'S BIRTHDAY AND ATTEND THE WINTER BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 10, 1989 - GALVESTON - COMMODORE MOTEL/GAIDO'S**