

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Established 1980



September 1999

Newsletter

Fall Board Meeting

October 15-17, 1999

Ramada Inn, Corsicana, Texas

See insert for details and registration form.

The Rededication of Temple Beth-El, Corsicana

by Audrey Daniels Kariel

Editor's Note: This article is a re-print from a previous issue in 1987.



Imagine a small Texas town with a Temple and Shul! I grew up in Corsicana, where we had both. Many of our families were members of both congregations. In my youth, the two congregations even shared a Rabbi!

My mother, Madelyn Daniels, was president of the Women's Auxiliary at Temple Beth-El for many, many years. My dad, George, loved the Temple, and rarely missed Friday night services. I have wonderful memories of Temple Beth-El: Sunday School, holidays, suppers, plays, all of the people and where they sat in the sanctuary, and the appearance of Rabbi Gus Falk who, with his fine intellect helped me discover my Jewish identity when I was a teenager. But my fondest memory of Temple Beth-El is of my marriage there in 1950.

March 29, 1987 was the date selected for the restored Temple Beth-El to be presented as a gift to the citizens of the City of Corsicana. March 29th just happened to be my dad's birthday. He always liked coincidences, so for his sake, as well as my own, I attended.

We sat, surrounded by freshly painted walls, deep forest green plush carpeting, gleaming furniture and fixtures, and above all, a strong sense



of brotherhood. The original chairs were on the pulpit. The old altar stands and the two candelabra were there. The brass chandelier overhead was shining. I remember counting the bulbs in that chandelier when I was a child. These were definitely the same pews! I was sitting where my family always sat, on the second row near the center. Above the Ark, light was coming through the beautiful, colorful stained glass window with the Ten Commandments written in Hebrew. Everything seemed the same, only more beautiful, yet there

was a different cast of characters.

I expected Sidney Marks, Gabe Goldberg, Ivan Schwarts, Dave Levy, Sam Brooks, or my dad to turn up at any moment. Instead, I saw Gioia Keeney, Doris Gillen, Nelwyn Reagan, Robert Buske, Leah Jones, and Marjorie Cerf. Marjorie Cerf was the only member of our congregation who participated in the ceremony. While she gave the history of Temple Beth-El, I sensed deep inside that the old guard would feel the same pride in Corsicana's Save the Temple Committee as I felt.

According to Marjorie, Temple Beth-El was established in 1898, the year of my dad's birth.

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From the TJHS President



Our Houston summer Board meeting in July was very well attended and productive. Our notice in the last Newsletter regarding the need for

storage facilities for TJHS files brought a wonderful response from one of our members. Buddy Baccus has made space available in the Scottish Rite Building located on Brompton at Braeswood in Houston. Our files will be in a private office, in air conditioned space, with a desk and table and chairs and room to work. We will have access to the files every weekday and items can be sent directly to the building. The frosting on the cake is that there will be no charge for the use of this space. Merilee Weiner will be the chair of our record storage committee and Selma Mantel, Muriel Shaw and Charles Nathan have all volunteered to help. By the time you read this we should have moved our file cabinet into place and begun the process of gathering materials. We hope to have important items from each past president's term, as well as committee reports and Board and Gathering reports to provide information for future chairs. Our next request is for additional four drawer files. If you have any and are in the Houston area we would appreciate hearing from you. We want to express our gratitude to Buddy Baccus and we hope he and Betty will join us at future

meetings.

I am also pleased to announce that the Board has decided to embark on a new book about the Texas Jewish experience. Rabbi Jimmy Kessler is chairing the committee that will begin exploring this exciting new project. TJHS has been approached by Public Broadcasting Station KLRU in Austin to work with them on a wonderful media project. They are planning a series of several films under the heading "Greetings from Texas." They will use our book, *Deep in the Heart, the Lives and legends of Texas Jews* as a resource for the film they are devoting to the Texas Jewish experience. We look forward to being a part of this terrific project.

The Board also approved the purchase of a microfilm reader that will be used by the Houston Jewish Genealogical Society for the purpose of gathering information from the early editions of The Houston Herald Voice. This data will be placed on the Internet and should prove very helpful to those doing family research.

Our meeting in Corsicana will be filled with stories about this interesting community that once had a thriving Jewish community of more than 200 families. Babbette Samuels has made the local arrangements. Please note all the details of our schedule on the registration form that is included in this Newsletter. It really helps us plan when you are prompt about registering.

Along those lines, I want to make you aware that in response to

the problems caused by late registration for our Annual Gatherings, the Board has decided to charge an additional 25% over the registration fee for late registration. This will only apply to the Gathering when room size, transportation needs and meal plans must be determined in a timely fashion. We hope this will motivate everyone to register early.

The next Gathering will be held in Laredo on March 24, 25, and 26, 2000. We will explore our Texas/Mexican connection. We are working on the program so let us know if you have any suggestions.

The Institute of Texan Cultures added some features to the video presentations in our exhibit, *Shalom Y'all-The Texas Jewish Experience*. In the near future they will add large screens above the computers for maximum viewing. We continue to provide funding as they augment our refurbished exhibit area.

Larry joins me in wishing all of you a lovely and meaningful Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur. May this new year 5760 bring us many opportunities to learn about, preserve and document the fascinating history of the Jews of Texas. It has become obvious that our Texas Jewish Historical Society provides a connection between each of us as we work together toward our common goals.

L'Shana Tova,

Helen K. Wilk

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Newsletter

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Helen Wilk (Corpus Christi).....	President
Jack Gerrick (Fort Worth).....	Managing Editor
Walter Fein (San Antonio).....	Proofreader
Nell Hall (Fort Worth).....	Proofreader
Geri Gregory (San Antonio).....	Layout, Typesetting and Distribution

Letter From the Editor

First of all, I want to thank all the members who called or dropped a note to tell us how much they enjoyed the last newsletter. It could not have been accomplished without the help of Geri Gregory, Nell Hall, Walter Fein and of course, everyone who sent in articles, and the guidance of President Helen Wilk.

Many requests have come in for additional copies of the newsletter, which has become very costly. We have had a policy in the past which has never been implemented to charge \$3.00 per issue for all additional new or back issues to help offset costs of postage, printing, and packaging. Starting with this issue, requests for additional copies will be charged \$3.00 each.

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In order for our newsletters to get out on time, we set in concrete the **deadline dates** for all issues. **The deadline for submitting articles is the 1st of September, December, March and June.**

Articles about research methods, stories of personal experience, news that affect genealogical researchers and resources, book reviews, press releases and letters are considered. Submit copy typewritten or legibly handwritten; or on a 3.5-inch IBM-compatible disk using WordPerfect or MS Word or save in ASCII file format. Articles will be edited where appropriate for purposes of clarity or space.

Jack Henrich

Seeking Information

Deana Howcomb, an Austin based free-lance writer, is seeking any relatives or persons who knew Sidney Levyson (1899-1967). He was born in Gonzales and lived in Boerne and San Antonio prior to entering the Leprosarium in Carville, LA., where his name was changed to Stanley Stein. Mainly through his efforts, this facility was changed from a virtual prison to a decent hospital for persons afflicted with Hansen's Disease. Please contact Don Teter, 5013 Glenhaven, Baytown, TX 77521 or call 281-424-5829.

An Apology



Rose Haas, fourth from left, bottom row. Weatherford High School Graduation, 1903 or 1904. She was born in Decatur, Texas in 1886 and married in 1908.

Our apologies to **Idarene Glick** of Dallas on the mis-naming of a person in the picture on the front page of the last newsletter. The correct name should be her Aunt Rose Haas Gilbert.

Please Note:

The Texas Jewish Historical Society and the editorial staff of this newsletter cannot guarantee the accuracy or authenticity of any article. This is the responsibility of each contributor, so please direct your questions, comments and/or corrections to each author directly.

Texas Jewish Historical Society Donor Cards

This card is available for anyone wishing to honor or memorialize an individual through our endowment fund. Upon receipt of your gift, the Society will respond with this acknowledgement. To the members who have sent in funds in the past, thank you on behalf of TJHS. To all those who will send funds in the future, please send your gift to:

Texas Jewish Historical Society
P.O. Box 10193
Austin, Texas 78766-0193

The Texas Jewish Historical Society

gratefully acknowledges your gift to our

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An acknowledgement has been sent to the party you specified.

Your gift will further the efforts to record, preserve, and disseminate historic information about the Jewish culture in Texas.

Special Notice on Our Mailing List

Many of you are aware that the gross negligence of the Austin Post Office resulted in a great deal of non-delivered mail that had been sent to TJHS in March. We finally got that mail in July when we became suspicious and asked about the missing mail. (It was found in a box in a back room of the Post Office!) Please be assured that I have written to the Austin Postmaster regarding this matter.

Among that mail were many dues payments, some had already been replaced, some were duplications, there were also inquiries about previous dues and other assorted items. Bonnie Cohen in Austin, Geri Gregory in San Antonio and I have all given many hours of time to cross-referencing our entire membership list and correcting all the errors. We hope we are finally at a point where our membership list is correct. Please feel free to contact me if you find any additional errors.

Thank you for your patience and understanding. This has delayed our Directory, but we all felt it was essential to have a reliable database first. We hope the Directory project will be completed in the near future.

Again, thank you for your patience and support.



Helen Wilk, President

Dear Ms. Wilk,

This letter is in response to your letter dated August 5, 1999 regarding delivery of mail to P.O. Box 10193 at Northcross Station.

Megan Stuart Ramirez, Station Manager at Northcross Station, has investigated the mail that was not picked up since March, 1999. Ms. Ramirez has instructed her clerks to be diligent in their execution of their responsibilities to the box holders. She will monitor the post office box mail on a daily basis to ensure that this does not occur in the future.

An apology does not begin to express the remorse that is felt by the employees of the Postal Service when we fall short of our customer's expectations. We have failed you and the Texas Jewish Historical Society and we are sorry.

Thank you for taking the time to bring this problem to our attention. It is the goal of the U.S. Postal Service to provide the American public with safe, reliable, and efficient mail service. We want to know when we fall short of this goal so we can act to bring about improvement.

Sincerely,



Dennis P. Walsh
Postmaster

Partial History of Jacob Deutsch Family

*(As told by Milton A. Frost, Jr.,
Houston, July 1999)*

Jacob Deutsch and his wife, Barbara (Regensberger) came to the U.S. in approximately 1860 from Vienna. She was a concert pianist and he was a physician. He spoke 13 languages and was a professor of medicine.

They came to America, landing in Galveston. Jacob set up his medical practice; once removed a bullet from a man's heart and saved his life. This was chronicled in 1872 in the Galveston news.

Jacob was appointed health officer of Galveston. The first thing he did was prohibit horses on the main streets. He further established a clean-up effort for the city.

Once, when President William McKinley happened to be in Galveston and needed a doctor, Jacob treated him. Later, Jacob was appointed by the President to be his personal traveling physician. While traveling through Little Rock with the President, his daughter, Belle, was born in 1890. (His older daughter Edie was born in Galveston in 1873.) The Deutsches settled in Little Rock. Belle, who died in 1990 at the age of 100, always remembered a childhood memory of being kissed on the cheek by President McKinley.

Note: Barbara's two brothers, Henry and Ellic, settled in Denison, Texas; their descendants are there still.

Jacob Deutsch and his wife, Barbara, were the grandparents of Milton A. Frost, Jr., and the great-grandparents of Mickey Frost. Belle was the mother of Milton A. Frost, Jr., and the grandmother of Mickey Frost.

Seeking Early Issues

TJHS is looking for copies of our early newsletters – we would like to have a complete set of newsletters that could be bound. Please send information to Davie Lou Solka at 501 Bermuda, Corpus Christi, Texas 78411.

Letter from Former Governor Dolph Briscoe

TJHS Member David Lack sent a copy of our newsletter to former Governor of Texas Dolph Briscoe. This is his response to the newsletter.

Dear Dave:

Thank you very much for sending me the issue from the Jewish Historical Society.

I enjoyed very much reading it and I am sending a copy to the Garner Library.

I had not heard that about Mr. Garner's asking Mr. Freed to take over the canning plant. I remember Mr. Freed and the canning plant very well. Mr. Freed was a good friend of my father and we used to stop by there on our way from Uvalde to my father's ranch in Catarina, and buy his Crystal City spinach by the case. It was the best canned spinach that I have ever eaten. Mr. Freed also ran a lot of cattle and was certainly highly respected. His daughter was at UT Austin with Janey and me.

I enjoyed reading all the articles in the issue. I remember the Stool family in Del Rio and also I remember very well the Schwartz family here in Uvalde. As I had heard the story, Mr. Louis Schwartz started out here in the early days with a wagon and sold supplies and merchandise to the ranchers in the area. Later he and his two sons and daughter built the largest merchandise company here in Uvalde. In addition, they operated a private bank and handled wool and mohair on a commission basis and hides and pecans and honey.

Mr. Jake Schwartz was a contemporary of my father and one of

A Carb Family Photo



This picture is Mr. and Mrs. Charles (Tillie) Carb and their four children, circa 1900. The Carbs were all born in America. They were charter members and among the founders of Temple Beth El in Fort Worth, Texas. The children standing are Erma (Mrs. William M.) Nathan and David R. Carb. Erma had four children: Charles C. Nathan, Houston; Bebe (Mrs. Carl M.) Hess, of Houston, Barbara (Mrs. Kurt) Carsch, deceased; Meyer J. Nathan, deceased. David R. Carb had one daughter, Bobby (Mrs. Jack) Meyers, deceased.

Front Row, left to right, is Sara R. (Mrs. Leo W.) Zeve and the youngest Carb child, Naomi. Sara had two daughters, Charlotte (Mrs. Lawrence) Davis, deceased; Bettye Z. Schoenfeld (Mrs. J.D. Buddy) Baccus of Houston. Naomi (Mrs. Joe) Bronstein, had three children, Bernie Bronstein of Fort Worth, Fannette (Mrs. Norman) Sonkin of Fort Worth and Mimi (Mrs. Harold) Klotz of Fort Worth. The Carb children and their children are all Texans.

my father's closest friends. He ran the Schwartz business all of his life. Right after Janey and I were married and right after the War, we moved to our ranch North of town. Janey churned butter and brought her butter and eggs into Jake Schwartz and he bought them and sold them in his grocery store. He loved to tease my father about this, and he was the only one in town who would buy them. But I think they sold well.

I thank you for your thoughtfulness in sending me the article. When you are coming this way to visit

your store, Lewis Bracy and I would like very much for you to have lunch with us here at the bank. Please let us know a few days ahead when you will be here so that we can be sure to be here and have the privilege of visiting with you.

Again, many thanks for your thoughtfulness and also for your friendship.

Sincerely,

The Schlingers - A Texas Tale

By Norma Aronoff Schlinger



It seems somewhat strange to say that the highlight of a trip to Austin was a visit to a cemetery, but that is what happened when my sister-in-law, Pauline Schlinger Frankel, and I went to Austin in June of 1990. We were there to open the Leopold Schlinger Collection at the Barker History Center in the area designated for the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

The family had always been told that Pauline's great-grandparents, Leopold and Regine Schlinger, came to Texas in the 1840s. We do know that their oldest child, Sarah, was born in San Antonio in 1851. My late husband, Henry, was in possession of many family photographs and papers, some dating back to 1833. Since the Schlinger family lived in several different Texas cities before coming to Dallas at the turn of the century, a historical archive in Austin seemed the proper permanent home for these documents.

The visit to the Austin cemetery came about as a result of a friend of Pauline. In an old section of the Oakwood Cemetery, the friend said she had seen a grave bearing the name "Regine Schlinger." Naturally, we wanted very much to find it since we had never known for certain exactly where in Austin Pauline and Henry's great-grandmother was buried.

Pauline, whose home is Fort Worth, called Ruthe Winegarten, an Austin resident, who had included the Schlinger family in her book, *Deep in the Heart*, and who had encouraged us to open the Schlinger Collection at the Barker. Ruthe gave Pauline the phone number of the Reform Temple in Austin. From that lead, we were referred to Mr. Hyman Samuelson.

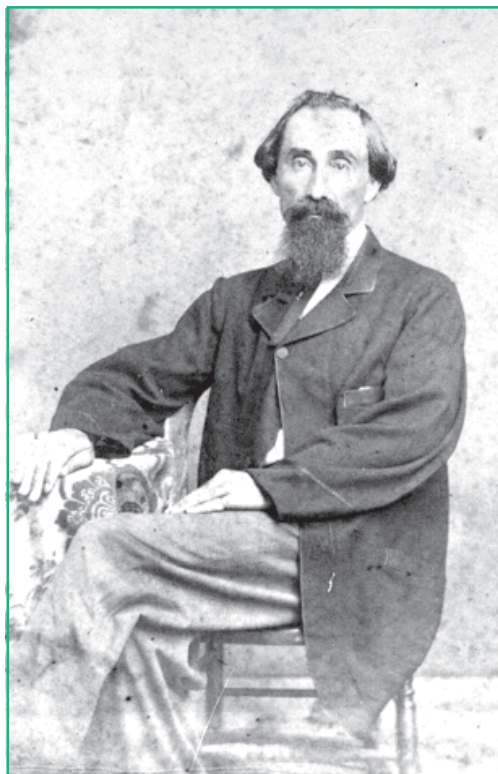
Prior to our Austin trip, Mr. Samuelson was kind enough to go to the cemetery, locate the grave and give us directions to find it. We went to the cemetery early on the morning of June 13. In a remote corner, we

found a small fenced area designated as Beth Israel Cemetery. Lo and behold, we found the rather large stone, covered top to bottom on the back in Hebrew and on the front in German. Perhaps, the most thrilling aspect of finding this gravestone was the fact that the German side was done in various styles of calligraphy, which might have meant that Regine's husband, Leopold, who survived her and was a talented calligrapher, designed and executed the stone in her memory.

We also knew that a grandchild of Regine, who had died at birth, was buried near her. Sure enough, there was a small stone, out of the ground but leaning against Regine's headstone, that bore the inscription "S.B.," which we believed must stand for Schlinger Baby. Later at the Texas State Archives, we found a record of deaths from that period. The record showed that a Regine Schlinger and a Leo Schlinger (undoubtedly named for his grandfather) had died two years apart. So the S.B. might have been for Schlinger Boy.

We took photographs of the cemetery and the stones and started looking for someone who could take a rubbing. This would allow us to have the Hebrew and German translated. Thanks to Don Teter, we got rubbings which he did himself. He also secured the translations for us. The German, translated by a woman at the Cultural Center in Houston, confirmed that

Regine Wolf Schlinger was born in 1821 in Bavaria, married on February 11, 1848, in New Orleans, and died on May 11, 1884, in Austin. The Hebrew was translated by a rabbi from Temple Emanu-El, Houston.



Leopold Schlinger

Regine's husband, Leopold, is buried in Galveston, where he moved after Regine's death to live with a daughter, Rachel Weinberger, and to be near his son, Benjamin. He survived his wife by eight years. We had seen the Galveston graves but had never seen where Regine was buried until that trip to Austin.

It took quite some time to get the translations, which delayed my writing this narrative. I decided to submit it now to the Texas Jewish Historical Society publication after hearing about the organization's meeting in Brownsville. Since so much of the early Schlinger family history took place in Brownsville (including the marriage of Leopold and Regine's oldest child, Sarah, to Ludwig Leopold Marx in 1868), I wanted to provide an accurate record of some of their South Texas history.

One reason I have always been fascinated by my husband's family history, and one reason I believe it is so important to preserve it, is that Leopold and Regine were northern sympathizers who did not believe in slavery. Because of their beliefs, they moved from Brownsville into Mexico

The Schlingers - A Texas Tale, Continued

at the beginning of the Civil War, as did others of similar persuasion. Although their relocation across the Rio Grande removed them from the Civil War, it did not remove them from civil strife and mistreatment at the hands of Mexican military, as evidenced by Leopold Schlinger's documents.

Among the 44 papers (and 23 photographs) donated to the Barker History Center is a document dated April 2, 1862, Matamoros, Mexico, in which Leopold Schlinger states that he was a citizen of the United States, having been naturalized in New Orleans on the 11th day of November, 1853, but lived in Matamoros from November 20, 1861 to February 24, 1862. This document goes on to say that, "...on or about the 21st of December, 1861, (one month after the fight between contending parties) a portion of the same Command (Carbajals) forcibly entered my store, with muskets and fixed bayonets, and thrust myself and family into the Street without permitting us to take sufficient Clothing to cover our nakedness and said troops taking from my Store merchandise to the value of Three Thousand Dollars."

This document, which Leopold called a "memorial," was one of the many documents relating to a lawsuit from which he attempted to receive compensation for his losses. These documents, in both Spanish and English, include affidavits from various people including a man named L. Pierce, Jr. from the Matamoros consulate. There is a much longer "Memorial of Leopold Schlinger" (with declarations of witnesses and an inventory of merchandise) that formed his claim for restitution. It contained more specific details of the Civil War that broke out in Mexico between the two parties known as Rojo and Crinolos, and which resulted in the pillaging and sacking of his store.

After losing his store, the Schlinger family moved back to Brownsville and, according to the following documents, reaffirmed their allegiance and their business ties to the

United States. These documents include:

- A printed General Order issued by President Abraham Lincoln (whose name is at the bottom) and Wm. H. Seward, Secretary of State, from the headquarters of the U.S. Forces on the Rio Grande, Brownsville, acknowledging the relaxation of the blockade in the interest of commerce to certain persons.

- A permit from the Headquarters Post of Brownsville dated May 31st, 1864, that states, "...having given satisfactory proof of his Loyalty to the Post Commander, he (Leopold Schlinger) is hereby permitted and authorized to trade with all Loyal persons within that portion of the State of Texas now occupied by the troops constituting and termed 'The United States Forces on the Rio Grande,' in such articles as are embodied in existing regulations and are not contraband of war," viz: clothing for citizens, etc.

- A copy of the printed Oath of Allegiance of Mrs. R. Schlinger dated June 9th, 1864, Cameron County, stating that she solemnly swears, in the presence of Almighty God, to faithfully support, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the Union of States thereunder, and abide by and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion, with reference to slaves, etc.
- The appointment of Leopold Schlinger as County Commissioner, Cameron County, Texas, by the Headquarters Fifth Military District, State of Texas, Austin, Texas, October 30th, 1868.

There were many, many more interesting papers, some of which Henry and I had copied from old records in the basement of the Brownsville City Hall around 1975-80. Much of this material was taken to Cincinnati by Rabbi Jacob Rader Marcus when he visited Dallas in 1951. Copies were made and are now included in the National Jewish Archives, and the originals were returned to us.

There is a great deal more I could write, as well as much more I need to learn about the Leopold and Regine Schlinger family. Theirs is an

early and interesting part of Texas Jewish history. Henry's grandfather, Louis, saw the last battle of the Civil War. Also, there are two graves in Ennis where two of Louis' children, a boy and a girl, are buried. The sister's name was Regine and the brother's name was Abraham Lincoln Schlinger. Anyone interested in learning more about this family should see the collection at the Barker History Center in Austin.

Although my focus here has been on my husband's family, my side of the family history also goes back to the 1800s in Texas. My grandfather, Pesach Aronoff, came to Dallas in the 1880s from Russia. My grandchildren, until they moved to New Mexico in 1997, were sixth generation residents of Texas on my husband's side and fifth generation Dallas residents on both sides.

As we quickly approach not only a new decade and century, but also a new millennium, looking back at this history has made me very aware of how long the Schlinger and Aronoff families have lived in Texas and in Dallas, when so many weren't yet in Texas to witness the last turn of the century. It is a history of which I am extremely proud.

Did you Know?

The man that some credit as being the "father" of Waco was Jewish.

Jacob de Cordova, whose family had fled Spain during the Spanish Inquisition, owned a land agency that controlled more than a million acres of land in Central and South Texas.

DeCordova hired George Erath to survey a proposed town site at a deserted Indian village along the Brazos River. He then began selling plots of land to settlers and provided other plots for schools and churches. That town became Waco.

They Came to America: A Diamond Anniversary

by Lauren Shana Schooler

Editor's Note: This article by Lauren Schooler won First Prize in this year's Genealogy Essay Contest sponsored by Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Houston for all Hillel High School Seniors. Lauren is the daughter of Marsha and Lonnie Schooler. Lonnie is a Past President of TJHS.



September, 1923. Standing on the deck of a boat on a sunny day, off in the distance a young man and his wife see a mirage. On second glance, they see a green statue of some kind. As the ship inches closer, the figure of a woman, holding up a torch with her right hand, comes into focus. It is the Statue of liberty. "I began to cry when I saw that statue," the man later told his grandson, "because I knew that I was free, that I had escaped from the Cossacks, that I was coming to America." The young couple was named Pesach and Olga. They had with them on this journey their daughter, Slava, who was about 18 months old at the time. They had journeyed all the way from Riga, in western Russia, traveling on the deck of a boat in steerage for the last three weeks.

They were coming to a new land to start a new life. This land was America. They were, as the statue said, tired and poor, and yearning to be free.

The couple, my paternal great-grandparents, became known as Paul and Ella Segal upon their arrival at Ellis Island in New York Harbor. Their daughter became known as Sylvia Segal, my grandmother. I never got the opportunity to meet Paul Segal, but my great-grandmother Ella, whom I called Nana, was a part of my life for over 14 years, before she passed away at age 95. I never really understood, however, what life was like for Nana growing up, nor about important parts of my heritage, until I did the research to prepare this paper.

Through that research, I traced back my family to Nana's maternal grandparents. I also learned about Nana's life and how it changed in America. This story is about her, but first let me introduce my family, which I have traced back five

generations. My father, Lionel Mark Schooler, and my mother, Marsha Stein Schooler, were married in September, 1974. They had me in March, 1981. Lionel's parents are Sylvia Segal Schooler and Robert Isaac Schooler, who were married in June, 1942; Marsha's were Martha Lea Rubin Stein (now deceased) and Albert W. Stein, who were married from August, 1949, until Martha Lea died in March, 1991. Martha Lea Rubin's parents were Eli and Ruth Klein Rubin, my great-grandparents, who lived to see me born; they were married in February, 1924. Albert Stein's parents were Paul and Katie Nachlas Stein, who were married in 1921. Robert Isaac Schooler's parents were Louis and Fanny Schooler, who were married in 1913; Sylvia Segal's parents were Paul and Ella Segal. Paul Stein's father was Wolf Stein; Katie Nachlas' parents were Abraham and Miriam Tartakov Nachlas. Ruth Klein Rubin's parents were Louis and Rae Daum Klein. Eli Rubin's parents were Morris and Yetta Rubin. Paul Segal's parents were Jacob and Chaye Sarah Segal.

Nana's maternal grandparents were Abba and Rachel Finger. They had three children, Shmuel (Sam), Mushe (Marsha), and Feiga (Fanny). Nana was the seventh child born to Feiga and her husband, Shlomo Lasser. She had eight siblings, Moshe, Molly, Frieda, Willie, Jack, Ethel, Rebecca, and a baby sister who died at birth. Nana and her siblings grew up in a town called Annenberg, in Latvia (near Riga), and in a town called Vitebsk in Russia. Shlomo was a shoemaker, who worked in his home making and repairing shoes and boots. Feiga worked at home looking after her children.

Nana's childhood was very different than that of a normal child today. She talked to me about her childhood during an interview my

brother and I conducted of her on her 87th birthday, February 23, 1987 (which my father videotaped). She only went to school for a short time, because usually boys were the only children who were allowed to attend, and most of the time they spent in *Cheder*, which we now call Hebrew School. When she did attend school, she walked, sometimes in snow up to her knees. The other children at the school (which was a public school) did not like Jews, so Nana spent most of her time learning German from her German teacher. While Nana knew how to speak Lettish, the language of Latvia, she also spoke fluent Yiddish, which was the language of her home.

Nana's residence was a small, two bedroom house. Her family had bought the land for the house from a gentile landlady. They also owned a cow, whose milk was used to make butter and cheese. There were no big celebrations for birthdays or holidays.

Nana did not even know exactly when she was born. She only knew it was before Purim, so she arbitrarily picked the English date of February 23 to celebrate. I also found that Paul Segal, who my father called Zeide, was an orphan by the age of five, left to be raised by his four older siblings, Zalman, Bessie, Rose, and Celia.

World War I was a turning point in my great-grandfather's life. His older brother was forced to become a soldier in the Russian army, and was not seen again once he left to fight in the war. Eventually, Zeide began spending time with Nana's brothers when he and the other children gathered at the synagogue, which was located in Nana's uncle's house. Through this, he met Nana, and they wed on May 1, 1920. Before this, however, in 1917, a communist revolution caused great turmoil in Russia. There was economic hardship, which caused Russians to blame Jews for

They Came to America: A Diamond Anniversary, Continued

their problems, which then caused pogroms. Because of this revolution against the Czar (the Russian leader), there was a great need for soldiers. Therefore, when the soldiers came again to force him to join the army, Zeide had to hide in Nana's basement to avoid going off to war. He did not know whether the soldiers pounding on the door looking for young men were from the "red" army or the "white" army, but he did know that being forced to serve in either army was not good for the Jews.

My grandmother, Slava (later Sylvia), was born on November 29, 1921. Soon after that, my great-grandfather decided he had to escape. He ran off one night with some other young men, planning to cross the border into another country, and freedom. However, when he realized that unlike the other young men, he had a wife and a small baby to take care of, he returned. The three of them, Nana, Zeide and Slava, left their home to come to America.

However, fate would put my great-grandparents in jail, in Riga. Nana was wise, though, and used her fur coat in order to bribe a guard so she could escape from jail with Zeide and my grandma.

Except for Moshe and Rebecca, who died in Russia, all the rest of Nana's siblings escaped from Russia and came to Houston. Their journey was paid for by their uncle, Sam Finger, who had come to America many years earlier and had settled in Shepherd, Texas, north of Houston. Sam Finger prospered by operating a dry goods and furniture store, which later became known as Finger Furniture store (now located on the Gulf Freeway near the University of Houston). By being successful, he accumulated enough money to pay for all of his family to escape to America. Nana's mother, Feiga, came with her children to Houston, but Shlomo died before he could escape.

Once they escaped from jail, they made their way to a port in London in 1923, where they boarded a

ship sailing for America. Nana and Zeide decided to go to New York to be with his older sisters, all of whom lived there, rather than come to Texas. Once they boarded the boat in London, they spent the next three weeks riding in steerage or on the ship's deck until they finally arrived in America. Soon after this journey, Nana, who had been

**"They were,
as the statue said,
tired and poor,
and yearning to be free."**

pregnant on the ship and experienced morning sickness, gave birth to her second child, my great aunt Helen. By the way, Nana and Zeide told my father about my great aunt's birth. Nana gave birth to her at her home, with the help of a midwife. Zeide watched for awhile, but decided he couldn't handle the stress, and went in the other room!

When they got to New York, Paul and Ella and their family went to reside in Harlem, on 126th St. and Fifth Avenue. Paul sold dolls out of a pushcart. He could not read or write English when he arrived in America. According to what he told my father, he learned how to speak English by going to the movie theater to watch the newsreels. He read constantly, and learned how to communicate in America. He eventually bought a store, and he, Ella, and their two girls lived above it. Later, Frieda, one of Nana's sisters, moved to New York and lived with them. They later moved to a better neighborhood on Kosciuszko Street in Brooklyn.

However, the Depression came in 1929. Because times were hard, and because they had Nana's family in Houston, they decided to move to Houston. The rest of Nana's family had already been living there for a while, however, her mother, Feiga, could never adjust to life in Houston.

She did not like the lack of religious observance among Jewish people living in Houston, and she died within one year after her arrival. She is buried in the Beth Yeshurun Cemetery on Allen Parkway.

Once Nana and Zeide and their children moved to Houston, they bought a house on Truxillo Street, in the neighborhood known as the Third Ward. They operated a cigar stand for many years in front of a building called the Bankers' Mortgage Building. A very important event in Nana's life was her qualifying for citizenship in 1941.

Nana and Zeide were members of Beth El synagogue, one of the synagogues which later merged to become Congregation Beth Yeshurun. They later bought a home on Sheridan Road, near what is now the Medical Center, in 1948. They lived in that house together until Zeide died in 1973. Nana remained in that house until 1992, and eventually moved to Seven Acres Home for the Aged, where she lived until her death in 1995.

"There are moments in your life that make you, that set the course of who you're gonna be. Sometimes they're little, subtle moments; sometimes they're not ... Bottom line is, even if you see 'em coming, you're not ready for the big moments. No one asks for their life to change, not really, but it does. So, what, are we helpless? Puppets? No! The big moments are gonna come. You can't help that. It's what you do afterwards that counts. That's when you find out who you are."

More than 75 years ago, my great grandparents came to America. This past year was the diamond anniversary of their arrival. They went through one of those "big moments" and had their lives change almost completely. That to me is what family is all about. Ella and Paul Segal helped make our family what it is today. I certainly think they made it count. They made me look back on their legacy, and recognize it for the beautiful "diamond" it is.

Letters from Student Rabbi Milton Grafman

from the Rio Grande Valley to Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati

Student Rabbi Milton Grafman was assigned to officiate in Corpus Christi during the High Holy Days of 1929. Traveling by train, the journey from Cincinnati to Corpus Christi took him three days. While in South Texas, he visited other cities throughout the Rio Grande Valley, trying to organize synagogues in Brownsville, Laredo, and Victoria. His efforts and his frustrations were detailed in letters mailed to his professor, Rabbi Louis Egelson, at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. The original letters are in the private collection of Stephen Grafman of Potomac, Maryland.

October 3, 1929

Dear Rabbi Egelson,

I arrived in Corpus Christi, Texas, Friday morning. Despite the fact that Corpus is my Holy Day pulpit, I discovered that there was no Congregation and that the chances of there being one were very slim. The difficulty was the usual one.

There have been no services of any kind at Corpus for twenty-five years. The Jews have become indifferent, and will not be roused from their lethargy. The Reform Jews do not seem much concerned, . . . and their attitude as I have found it would seem to indicate that they would be just as well satisfied if this year, also, there would be no religious services. The Reform Jews, for the most part, feel that the Orthodox Jews of the community lower their prestige and social position in the community. In fact, several Reform Jews have informed me that they would be much more satisfied if the Orthodox element would hold services for themselves. . .

As Brownsville is over two hundred miles south of Corpus, I found it necessary to leave on the first train out on Saturday. . . . I got to Brownsville too late on Saturday to see anyone, but got to work immediately Sunday morning. I could not locate the party you referred me to, but I got in touch with a Mr. Z.A. Rosenthal, an excellent man and a perfect gentleman. Mr. Rosenthal assured me of his cooperation but insisted that there would be no use in calling a meeting. I persisted, and by Sunday night I had made friends with three of the leading

Jews of the community who promised their help and who made it their business to see that the Jews got together.

The situation in Brownsville was this. They had had a student in 1926 for the High Holy Days, and after that had formed a little congrega-

“At the end of the meeting, enthusiasm for the cause I was espousing characterized the group, whereas the day before, even an hour earlier, I felt very keenly the chill of the proverbial cold shoulder.”

tion which held services every Friday night at the Masonic Hall. A Sunday School was also formed, but due to the friction between Orthodox and Reform Jews over the matter of the hat [yarmulke], mainly, all efforts came to naught. The majority seemed too indifferent, anyhow, to maintain much of a religious organization. Also, the only woman in town who could run the Sunday School well, a Mrs. Grunewald, felt she was not appreciated as much as she should be, and therefore refused to cooperate. When I came to Brownsville Sunday, conditions were most discouraging. The only encouraging sign was the fact that services would be held during the High Holy Days, and that Dr. H.J. Ettlinger of the University of Texas was going to conduct them. No doubt you know of Dr. Ettlinger. He is a professor of mathematics at the U. of Texas, and just recently was made Director of

Athletics. . . . He is also a very devout Jew and is very much interested in Jewish matters. Dr. Ettlinger is very much beloved in the valley here, and all the Jews are very proud of him.

Monday night I addressed about twenty-eight Jewish residents of Brownsville and San Benito. This I considered a very fine turnout, as there are no more than forty Jewish residents in Brownsville and vicinity, and the meeting was called on such short notice. I spoke for fifteen or twenty minutes and then made the meeting an open forum, and I led a discussion of Brownsville's problems. I met all difficulties and overcame all arguments. At the end of the meeting enthusiasm for

the cause I was espousing characterized the group, whereas the day before, even an hour earlier, I felt very keenly the chill of the proverbial cold shoulder.

My visit to Brownsville was productive of the following results: I formed a permanent religious organization. A congregation was formed and officers were elected. Plans were made to have services every Friday evening, and the definite aim of the Jewish community now is to buy a lot and build a little Temple within the next few years. Had I been able to stay in Brownsville a few more days I would have made a sincere effort to secure the donation of a lot to the congregation. There is a very wealthy Jewish individual who contributes money to every religious organization in the city, but does not assist the Jews. The Jews feel that they would and could erect a little Temple if this individual

Letters from Student Rabbi Milton Grafman, Continued

would give the lot. . . .

I also organized a Sunday School after a great effort. Everyone wanted the Sunday school, but I could not secure anyone who would take charge of it. After another twenty minute plea in which I did everything but get down on my knees before Mrs. Grunewald, the woman in question finally consented to cooperate and take charge of the Sunday School, and at the same time (found) an assistant so that the Sunday School would not dissolve if she should leave town or once more feel that some display on the part of the community was necessary in order to satisfy herself that she was appreciated. . . .

Yesterday I came north to Victoria, Texas, where I immediately arranged a meeting. The situation here is much different than anywhere else. Indifference is not the trouble as much as some indescribable difficulty – at least, the Jews here will not talk about the difficulty much. They each claim they do not know what it is. In the very limited time I have been here I feel I have discovered the trouble. . . . The friction here is one of personalities and business interests, mainly the latter. There are too many Jews in the same business in this town. . . . They have a beautiful little Temple here, but very few ever take advantage of it. This situation I intend to eliminate this evening. Victoria never has had a College student (or student-rabbi), and I think I have already clinched a Holy Day position for the College. Two of the leading Jews have already assured me that they want a student, and will make every effort to get one.

Sincerely yours,
Milton L. Grafman

October 4, 1929
Victoria, Texas

Dear Rabbi Egelson:

As I informed you in my last letter, I arrived at Victoria, Texas, Wednesday afternoon. . . . Victoria has a beautiful little temple of which it may well be proud. Truly I was thrilled when I entered into it. I had anticipated nothing like it. Victoria is practically the only small town in this territory which has a house of worship. However, the services are not well attended, and the meetings of the members never amount to much. The orthodox Jews told me that they are willing to do things, but that the Reform Jews were the holdouts. Of course, the Reform Jews placed the blame on the Orthodox Jews. . . .

“They had tried to secure the services of a rabbi, but the plan fell through because the president, a doting old man of 82, too aged to be tactful or logical, insulted the Orthodox Jews who had already raised two hundred dollars as their share of the expense involved..”

The situation in Victoria is due to a clash of personalities and business interests. There are too many Jews at Victoria in the same business, and while they are friendly when they have business contacts, they let their real feelings crop out when religious matters come up. The temple organization seems to be the battle field of the financial moguls of the very flourishing town of Victoria.

When I spoke at the meeting of all Jews last night, (there were about fifty persons present out of a maximum Jewish population of seventy), I presented the difficulty as I saw it. I demanded an open discussion of any prejudices, and after forcing the Victoria Jews to air their petty, insignificant differences, I continued my little talk which roused them to a desire to bury the hatchet and try to preserve

their beautiful temple by making an honest effort to cooperate.

Hithertofore one of the older members, a Mr. Kleinsmith has conducted the services. This year he will not be here for the Holy Days, and a younger man will take his place. They had tried to secure the services of a rabbi, but the plan fell thru because Mr. Simon Levy, the president, a doting old man of 82, too aged to be tactful or logical, insulted the Orthodox Jews who had already raised two hundred dollars as their share of the expense involved. . . . (Mr. Levy may have been an asset years ago, but he produces discord only at the present. There is a movement afoot to make him president emeritus and elect a younger man, which would be most advisable.). . . .

I had little difficulty with the Sunday school, as it is being conducted by a very capable young man, Dr. Jack Kahn. Last year he taught the first confirmation class that Victoria had in fifteen years. Dr. Henry Cohen was brought down from Galveston to confirm the boys and girls. . . .

Sincerely yours,
Milton L. Grafman

Corpus Christi, Texas
Oct. 11, 1929

Dear Rabbi Egelson:

I left for Laredo, Texas, late Sunday. A Mrs. I. Goodman of Laredo had come to Corpus for services, and inasmuch as I was going there anyhow, she offered to drive me there. I accepted immediately, little knowing what dire results would follow. . . . The Orthodox Jews of the community came to the conclusion that Mrs. Goodman, a Reform Jewess, had brought me to Laredo to organize

Continued on Page 12

Grafman Letters, Continued

the community, and for that reason they took an hostile attitude to anything I might have to offer.

This attitude only aggravated an already impossible situation. During our drive from Corpus to Laredo, Mrs. Goodman informed me that others had tried and failed to organize the Jews there, and that there was little hope for anything ever materializing. It was the same old story I had heard in every town, and I took it lightly . . .

When I got to Laredo I began immediately to organize a little meeting. This I found to be most difficult, more so than in any other town, despite the fact that I have had to fight for an audience everywhere. A meeting for Monday night was out of the question, as most of the Jews were going to a charity chicken dinner given by the Episcopalians. I finally secured an audience, and my meeting was held on the roof of the Hamilton Hotel. . . .

As usual, there was a rift between the Orthodox and the Reform

Jews. However, the line of demarcation was a much more distinct one, and, I am ashamed to admit it, not to be wondered at. It seems that the Rio Grande Valley has been flooded with the riff raff of all sects, and this is particularly true of the Jews. Many have come to Laredo from Mexico, and for the most part are uncouth and illiterate. These immigrant Jews have practically no religion at all, except that they call themselves Jews and will oppose any and all efforts of other Jews, who may desire to organize a religious center of any kind. They call themselves Orthodox, despite the fact that they adhere to none of the precepts, and many even kept their shops open after one o'clock on Saturday, the first day of Rosh Hashanah. They feel that they have done sufficient for themselves and for their children, religiously speaking, if they keep closed half a day on Rosh Hashanah, but smite their breasts with increased fervor and vigor. . . .

I feel I should insert a little incident that made my stay at Laredo more difficult than it should have been . . . Not long ago, Laredo was "blessed" with a spiritual leader. He answered to the name of Arthur Goldberg, and was recommended by some rabbi as a possible religious head of the community. This Goldberg proved to be an impostor. He had forged a diploma from some theological seminary, cashed worthless checks, bought suits, shoes, etc., for which he never paid and never intended to pay, and was, to be brief, a scoundrel and an impostor. . . . He did leave a very poor impression with the people to the type of individuals rabbis are or might be. . .

Respectfully yours,
Milton L. Grafman

P.S. After visiting Laredo I wonder that more rabbis do not suffer nervous breakdowns or die of ulcerated stomachs.

What is the secret of the Jewish People?

"If the statistics are right, the Jews contribute but one percent of the human race.

It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, and he has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and obtuse leaning are also way out of proportion to the weak-

ness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian races filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always



was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal, but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Mark Twain
"Concerning the Jews"
Harper's Magazine, 1897

Editors Note: From time to time a small article appears that really has nothing to do with Texas Jewry or our history, However, as Jews, I think it is very pertinent to our culture. This was written in 1897 by Mark Twain.

Texas Jewish Historical Society 1999-2000-2001

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The Letters of Charles Wessolowsky

Letter Number Seventeen

Charles Wessolowsky to Rabbi Edward B. M. Browne
Fort Worth, Dennison, and Paris, Texas June 1879

(Wessolowsky talks of twelve families in Fort Worth and reprimands the parents for their laxity in teaching their children in the ways of Judaism; twenty families live in Sherman who are well-to-do but religiously inactive; Dennison boasts of ten Jewish families as does Paris)



reached Fort Worth in due time, started out to meet our brothers, whom we found to be about one hundred in number, and perhaps about twelve Jewish families. All are industrious, hardworking and energetic people. This is somewhat of a frontier place and does a good deal of business with those residing immediately on the Mexican frontier, and all there seemed to be doing well. There is an I. O. B. B. Lodge with Bro S. L. Turk as president, and a Hebrew Educational and Charitable Society, Isaac Cohen, President. Both are seemingly now in good working order, and thriving circumstances.

Some time ago, Rev. A. Blum of Galveston, instituted a Sunday School at this place, with Joseph Meyer as Principal, and Misses Julia and Rosa Weiner and Dora Fry, as teachers. We could not visit the school, but from inquiries, found that the teachers are performing their duties faithfully; the children are progressing, but there seems to be a lack of zeal among parents, who are not very much disposed to take great interest in the education of their children in that branch of moral and religious teaching. Why is this? From nearly every section of the country the pleasing news is heralded that the Jewish children are of the brightest wits, the best scholars in the public

school, and the reason for the same is given that besides their inherent quickness of intellect, parents in their home government watch of their progress in study and learning and exhibit a greater desire and zeal for the promotion of their children and also their efforts to sustain the recommendation of their teachers and to furnish them with everything necessary and whatever is required, and keep themselves posted and advised of the progress of their children. Then we ask again why is it that Jewish parents of Fort Worth do not demonstrate that enthusiasm, and pursue with earnestness and order the object which they as parents are responsible to them, as to God and all mankind? We trust that this will give for reflection and that hereafter the indifference existing (no doubt for some cause) will be dispelled, and enthusiasm and zeal substituted. We trust that we have not wounded the feelings of any one and are only discharging our duty which is encumbered upon us.

We spent two days very agreeably in the city, and our brothers have done all in their power to make us feel at home for which we are very grateful.

We left Fort Worth for Dallas, and from there took the trains for Sherman, where we arrived Sunday noon and soon found ourselves in company of Bro. Van Ronkle, who was extremely kind to us.

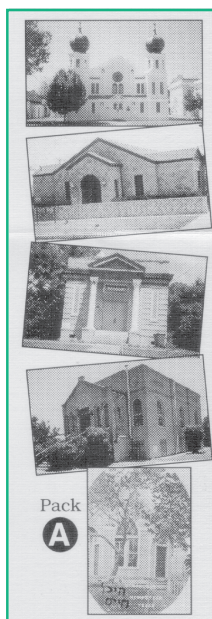
Here we formed the acquaintance of Maj. Levy, the well known

vindicator of Judaism, who has so often by his able pen, learned and logical arguments, clear and distinct reasons, hurled back the slander and defamation and false accusation brought against Jews and Judaism by some narrow-minded and bigoted man or men, and who by his talented learning, and the bold and open defense against the attacks and criticism made upon the lecture of crucifixion delivered by Dr. Browne has merited the honor and respect he so justly deserves – we were proud to meet him and be thankful to him for courtesies shown to us.

Dr. Browne was always under attack by both Jew and Gentile for venturing into “forbidden waters.” “Isaac Wise and Browne, for example, never did agree on the propriety of publishing a regional Jewish newspaper that at the same time catered to the Gentile population. On the other hand, Browne argued that by informing the Gentiles of Jewish ways and activities an understanding of the Jews and respect for their ways could be created. In this way prospective prejudice could be minimized. At the same time, many Gentile clergymen thought it was contemptuous that a Jew should speak about the crucifixion and resurrection in a rationalistic-moralistic manner. While Browne’s speech has not been found, indications of these running disputes are found throughout the Jewish South.

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Nathan Donsky's Legacy of Giving

by TJHS Board member, Suzanne Campbell, West Texas Collection

reprinted from the Angelo State University President's Report, July 1999

The son of Jewish immigrants, Nathan Donsky never abandoned the early lessons taught to him by his parents. Above all, they taught their son honesty and charity. Strangers were never turned away from the Donsky home.

In the Donsky home Nathan's mother kept little cans she called "pushkies." These cans held money to give to various charities and institutions. The lessons in charity were lessons learned well by young Nathan Donsky (1906-1992) who was born and reared in Dallas, Texas.

The elder Donsky was in the moving and transfer business - two large wagons, two teams of horses and a moving van. He was a hard working man who instilled within his children the value of work. Nathan Donsky told an interviewer from the University of North Texas in 1982 that he sold newspapers from the time he was six years old. At that time Dallas had three daily newspapers. He paid a half cent for the papers and sold them for a penny each. Sunday papers cost him three cents and were sold for a nickel.

In addition to his paper route, Donsky and his brothers worked at the baseball park. They started out selling cigars, cigarettes and gum. Nathan was soon promoted to selling peanuts and "soda water."

After graduation from Forest Avenue High School in 1925, Nathan



took a secretarial course from Buford Business College since he could not afford college. His first job was as secretary to Colonel Alvin M. Owsley. The Colonel was an attorney and later served as Foreign Minister to Romania.

When Red Grange came to Dallas for the first professional football game, Owsley helped Donsky get the program concession. But the day of the game was rainy, and the young businessman just about broke even on the sale of the programs.

Nathan Donsky decided to go to San Angelo and go into the concession business there. But he needed money. He refused to ask his wealthy uncles for the money, and the bank turned him down. When a family friend heard of the need, he told his son who loaned Donsky a portion of

the money. Soon, others loaned him money including his rabbi. Donsky found a partner, Abie Ray, to go in with him. Ray had lived in San Angelo prior to moving to Dallas. The two young men formed Ray Don Concessions and moved to San Angelo in January 1928. They purchased 1,000 cushions and rented them for 10¢ at sporting events. At the time San Angelo was a member of the West Texas Baseball League. Ray Don Concessions was not limited, however, to baseball. They also served wrestling matches,

rodeos, and other events. The partners expanded their business to include Brady, Mason, Ozona, and Menard.

The baseball league dissolved, and Nathan Donsky went to Forsan and then to Hobbs, New Mexico, where he ran dry goods stores. In 1930 Donsky returned to San Angelo to visit friends and check on the cushions.

While in town he was offered a chance to buy interest in a pawn shop with Max Goren. He took the offer but remained involved in sporting events. He promoted an African-American baseball team and continued his concession business at various events.

Goren & Donsky operated for seven years. During that time Nathan Donsky became friends with Leon Fine - a man Donsky said was

responsible for his success. In 1930 Fine purchased a building at 202 South Chadbourne, remodeled it and told Donsky and his partner they could pay the rent when they could afford it. This was the beginning of Nathan Donsky's career in the jewelry business.

He eventually dissolved his partnership with Goren, and on February 14, 1938, opened Nathan's Jewelry Store. Money was scarce, and most business was done on credit: 50¢ down and 50¢ a week!

Nathan Donsky met his wife, Sylvia (Babe) Frankrich of Fort Worth, at a New Year's party in Abilene where both were visiting. Nathan and Babe Donsky were married twenty-nine days later, January 29, 1939. The couple had two children: Cal and Linda.

In 1989 in an interview with the author, Donsky said that his philosophy was: All people need help. And those who knew this remarkable man will agree that he lived by this philosophy.

The Donskys believed that anything they did for youth was a good investment. When questioned about his hobbies, Nathan always listed helping 4-H and FFA kids as his favorite hobby. He attended as many as twenty-seven stock shows in the area each year. When he was unable to attend, he sent a representative to carry out his work. Prior to the sale, Donsky asked for and received from the county agent a list of poorer kids involved. It was the lambs of the kids on this list that Nathan's Jewelry Store always purchased. Nathan Donsky took great delight recounting stories of his "lamb business." He once told the *Standard Times*: "Some folks relax by playing golf. I relax by attending stock shows..." The stock shows were not the only way in which the

Donskys helped the young people of West Texas. He gave awards to outstanding athletes; he helped the Boys Ranch; he maintained scholarships at Howard Payne in Brownwood and at Angelo State University in San Angelo; he helped with St. John's Hospital, the West Texas Rehabilitation Center, and Meals for the Elderly. His name was associated with nearly every community venture in the San Angelo area.

Donsky provided scoreboards for twenty-eight football stadiums throughout West Texas. On his 75th birthday, he gave scoreboards to the San Angelo Stadium for the benefit of Central High School and Angelo State University. At the same time, he gave basketball scoreboards to ASU.

Donsky helped raise funds for San Angelo College and continued that tradition as the school grew and the name changed. In 1967 he sponsored the first "Nathan's Jewelers Ram All Sports Banquet" and presented the first of many annual scholarships to ASU at the same time. In 1975 he added a new dimension to his philanthropy by supporting athletics for women at ASU.

Nathan Donsky received numerous honors for his generous work in West Texas. In 1977 he was named Citizen of the Year by the San Angelo Chamber of Commerce. That same year he and his wife established an endowment at ASU in memory of their parents.

Donsky once said that "San Angelo is like a parent to me." And he took that kind of care of his community. To study the history of Nathan Donsky is to study a man totally dedicated to his neighbors - whether he knew them or not.

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The Texas Jewish Historical Society draws its membership from across the State of Texas, bordering states and across our great nation. TJHS supports a wide-ranging agenda. Quarterly Board Meetings are held at points of particular interest, an extensive newsletter is published regularly, and a speakers bureau is maintained. A variety of research projects are facilitated through the Jewish Archives in the Barker Library, or supported directly such as "Virtual Restoration of Small-Town Synagogues in Texas."

We are very proud of our organization and ask you to look us up and celebrate the joys of Texas history.



The Rededication of Temple Beth-El, Corsicana

Continued from page 1

They dedicated the building as a house of worship in 1900. At that time, Corsicana's Jewish population was about 500 people. In 1913 the congregation had a reorganizational meeting with 44 members. The Women's Auxiliary always worked to make the building pretty. In 1921, they improved the Rabbi's study and purchased a pipe organ. Throughout the years there were constant pleas for money and a rabbi. In 1935, the first marriage was performed. (I asked why not until 1935 and was told that in those days weddings were performed in homes.) My heart swelled when Marjorie told me my dad started a fund in memory of my mother to add a kitchen to the building. The kitchen was completed in 1965 for the total sum of \$3,500. She also told of Max Rosenbloom's effort to get the building air conditioned in later years. From 1900 until about 1970, the congregation was an active one. Then, the congregation suffered a loss of membership through deaths and migration to larger communities. The building needed repairs. By 1981, the situation was critical. Too soon, the building and lot were offered for sale.

A group of interested people who have seen Corsicana lose a hotel, a depot, and other historic sites, decided they would prevent the loss of another important landmark. The Save The Temple Committee, founded with the endorsement of the Navarro County Historical Society, purchased Temple Beth-El from the local Jewish congregation for \$30,000 in 1982. The Texas State Historical Commission, recognizing the value of the building, awarded the

Committee a \$10,000 grant toward purchase of what is thought to be the only onion-domed structure in the state.

The advanced deterioration of the building was stopped as the first step toward restoration. Rayford Stripling, a well-known restoration architect, agreed to work with this enthusiastic group. Every effort was made to be authentic in their restoration. They carefully "searched and researched." The Committee hoped that the domes would be gold, but after careful investigation, they were painted the original color, a deep forest green. As soon as they raised a little money, progress inched ahead. Members of the community did favors for the group when money was not readily available. The Save The Temple Committee raised money from local foundations, service clubs, and individuals, in addition to the grant from the Texas State Historical Commission. The Committee raised money locally in many innovative ways. They sold buttons, notepaper, and hosted dinners to small groups to raise money to preserve our Temple.

The publicity surrounding the Temple Beth-El restoration has been spread. This project took time, dedication, cooperation, and over \$100,000 from a variety of sources. Through the efforts of the Save The Temple Committee, Temple Beth-El is now a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, and in February of this year, the building was entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

The dedication ceremony recognized the many donors to the Save The Temple effort by unveiling a plaque recognizing the donations and

honoring and memorializing individuals who loved Temple Beth-El. There were beautiful tributes to love and friendship crossing all religious lines.

The Temple Beth-El building will no longer be used as a Jewish house of worship, but the congregation will not be forgotten. The building is a gift to the City of Corsicana to be used as a community center for citizens of all races and creeds. The ceremony marked the end of six years of work by a small group of dedicated individuals who were far-sighted, imaginative, and optimistic about their goal of preserving an important historic landmark for Corsicana and for Texas.

In presenting their gift to the City of Corsicana, the Save The Temple Committee stated that the people of a city make it what it is. I agree. The people of Corsicana have made it a very special place. I am honored that my roots are there.

**Audrey Daniel Kariel is mayor of Marshall, Texas, author, and previous board member of TJHS.*

From the History Book of Army Post Camp Bowie (Fort Worth), dated May 31, 1918...

"Two Jewish firms in Fort Worth have been using the trade slogan, 'The Army Man's Store.' Now let us have peace in the synagogue and call one 'The Headquarters for the Yiddish Army' and the other 'Headquarters for the Jewish Navy.' Then everyone will be happy."

Southern Jewish Historical Society Annual Conference

November 5-7, 1999

Richmond Hyatt, 6624 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230

Thursday, November 4

Hospitality Suite open at noon - Check in Hyatt 3pm
SJHS Registration Desk open 3 to 6pm
SJHS Officers & Board members: Board Meeting/Dinner

Friday, November 5

10:00am to 4:30pm Registration Desk open at Hyatt
10:00am to 5:00pm Hospitality Suite open
9:15am to 1:30pm Optional Tour of Jewish Richmond Includes lunch at Temple Beth El
2:00pm Conference Conveners - Welcome
5:30pm Depart Richmond Hyatt for Temple Beth Ahabah by bus
6:00pm Dinner at Temple Beth Ahabah
8:00pm Shabbat Service at Temple Beth Ahabah, Rabbi Martin P. Beifield, Jr.
9:45pm Oneg Shabbat
10:15pm Return to Richmond Hyatt by bus

Saturday, November 6

10:30am to 6:00pm Hospitality Suite open
8:15 to 8:45am Shabbat service at the Hyatt
9:00 to 9:50am "The Lone Star of David" - Sherry Zander: "Texas Touchstones: Small Synagogues and Their Communities." Kay Goldman: "Merchants, Masons and Politicians; Jews on the Texas Frontier." Moderator: Hollace Weiner
9:50am Break
10:10 to 11:00am "History through Fiction"
11:00am Break
11:10am to 12:00pm "Fitting In"
Noon to 12:30 Break
12:30pm Luncheon and speaker
2:45 to 4:30pm The Printed Word Panelists
4:30pm Break
6:15pm Havdalah
6:30 to 7:30pm Cash Bar
7:00pm Banquet and Keynote Speaker - Susan Stein, Curator of Monticello, The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, "The Levy Family and The Preservation of Monticello"

Sunday, November 7

8:45 to 9:30am SJHS General Membership Meeting
10:00 to 10:45am Student Prize Paper. Dr. Mark Greenberg will introduce the winner.
10:30 to 10:45am Break
10:45 to 12pm "Meet the Authors" - Edward Cohen, *The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi*; Stella Suberman, *The Jew Store: A Family Memoir*; Hollace Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and their Work*. Moderator: Marcus Rosenbaum, *Heart of a Wife: The Diary of a Southern Jewish Woman*
12:30pm Lunch; Closing remarks and Announcements; Installation of officers; Remarks; Report of the Planning Committee for 2000
2:00pm Adjournment

Conference Registration

For a reservation at the Hyatt, call (804) 285-1234. Ask for the special SJHS rate of \$103.50 per night. Registration fee: \$190 per non-member. For additional information, call Herbert Heltzer at (804) 285-2888.

SJHS Registration form

Please Print

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

of persons \$190 for non-member, \$160 for members) _____

Late registration fee is \$20 each after 10-1-99

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Make check payable to SJHS & mail with form to:

SJHS c/o Irwin Schapiro

11801 Bedfordshire Square

Richmond, VA 23233

Texas Jewish Historical Society Annual Membership

☐ YES! I am enclosing my dues payment to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for the 1999-2000 membership year. I am a ☐ New Member ☐ Renewing Member.

☐ \$36 - Annual Member

☐ \$50 - Supporting Member

☐ \$100 - Sponsor

☐ \$250 - Sustaining Member

☐ \$500 - Benefactor

☐ \$1,000 - Patron

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Name of Spouse: _____ Maiden Name: _____

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Home tel. #: _____ Fax #: _____ E-mail address: _____

Contributions to the **Texas Jewish Historical Society** are tax deductible within the limits of the law.
Please clip and send with your check to **TJHS**, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193.

This & That...

Our society will be represented at the Southern Jewish Historical Society Meeting to be held in Richmond, Virginia on November 5, 6, and 7, 1999. Three of our members will be on their agenda and be featured speakers. **Sherry Zander** of Dallas will present "Texas Touchstones: Small Synagogues and their Communities." **Kay Goldman** of College Station will speak on "Merchants, Masons and Politicians: Jews on the Texas Frontier." (moderated by **Hollace Weiner**) Hollace will then talk about her book, *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and Their Work*. Please see page 19 for further details on this meeting.

We have received a request from **The Thomashefsky Project** of San Francisco, California, asking for any information we may provide. Project President is Michael Tilson Thomas, Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony and Grandson of the Thomashefsky's. They are researching the presence of any photographs, playbills, posters, newspaper articles, and other documentation about the Thomashefsky Theater Troupe which might be found in Jewish community archives, libraries, or Historical Associations. They are also eager to contact any individuals who may have worked with, or acted in, Thomashefsky stage productions. The

Welcome New Members!

May 15, 1999 to September 15, 1999

Marilyn and. Jay Albert, *Houston*

Annette and Dr. James Cottingham, *Corpus Christi*

Elaine Greenberg, *Houston*

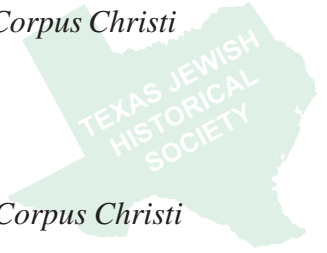
Neil Hirsch, *Houston*

Hagit and David Hoffman, *Waco*

Dan Markman, *Houston*

Katherine and Dr. Maurice D. Nast, *Corpus Christi*

Gloria Rosenkrantz, *Houston*



Thomashefsky Theater Troupe traveled throughout the U.S., Canada, South America, England, Europe, and Australia in the early decades of this century. Central to this story is the birth and development of the Yiddish Theatre as an American phenomenon and its influence on American culture. If you have any information, contact The Thomashefsky Project, 443 Lake Street, San Francisco, California, 94118 (415) 752-3565.

Also, the article on the New Orleans tour printed in the last newsletter was written by **Yetta and Marvin Leshin** of Corpus Christi.

Our condolences to TJHS members **Benjamin Kuhn** of Dallas, on the recent death of his wife, Frances; the family of **Lillian Klein** of Beaumont, on her recent death;

Lonnie Schooler of Houston, on the recent death of his father; Board member **Selma Mantel** of Houston on the death of her son, Marshall Mantel of Dallas; Board member **Annette Lackman**, on the death of her mother; and member **Dorothy Borschow** of El Paso on the death of her husband, Paul.

Future Meetings

Following are the meeting schedules and locations for future reference: **Fall Board:** Corsicana, October 15, 16 and 17, 1999.

Winter Board: Victoria, January 14, 15 and 16, 2000. **Annual Gathering:** Laredo, March 24, 25 and 26, 2000.

Texas Jewish Historical Society

P.O. Box 10193

Austin, Texas 78766-0193

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