

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Established 1980



January 2000

Newsletter



1882 . . . Nacogdoches, Texas – Submitted by TJHS member Idarene Glick

This photograph shows my Grandpa's (Joe Zeve's) store on the square in Nacogdoches, Texas. Actually, his first store was in the Old Stone Fort with a dirt floor. It was located on what is the campus of Stephen F. Austin University today.

My grandfather continued going to his business daily until he was unable to walk the distance of one block.

At the time of his death on October 4, 1941, he was the oldest mer-

chant in Nacogdoches. He was 86 years old and was called "Uncle Joe" by all his friends and customers who loved and admired him.

Joe and Ida Zeve's children were: Belle Zeve Kahn, Alus Zeve, Leo Zeve, and Elece Zeve Haas.

Their grandchildren were Robert W. Kahn (deceased), Edel Zeve Gainsburgh, Charlotte Zeve Davis (deceased), Betty Zeve Baccus and Idarene Haas Glick.

From the TJHS President



Fall in Corsicana provided a lovely setting for a wonderful weekend of activities that had been planned by TJHS member Babbette Samuels. Although the

Jewish presence in Corsicana is no longer over 200 families, as it was in past years, the warmth and hospitality of that community was fantastic. Our visit to Navarro College was extremely interesting. The Director of Special Collections, Dr. Darryl Beauchamp, shared information about their incredible Civil War and Native American Artifact and Art collection and we saw the collection of hand carved figures from the Hobbit series that were donated by Irvin and Babbette Samuels. They form a centerpiece of the library in their handsome glass case. We are always amazed to find so many fascinating things in each and every community we visit.

During the afternoon session, held in the almost 100 year old Temple Beth El Community Center, we heard about the history of the Jewish Community from Dr. Tommy Stringer, Dean of Students and

History Instructor at Navarro College. Sandra Palmer took us on a visual "tour" of the Temple as she does for many visitors who come to see it. She is a dedicated docent who has learned about the religious significance of the items in the Temple. Then, we sat down with TJHS members Irvin Samuels, Natalie Rosenbloom and Natalie's daughter, Joyce Sussman, to talk about growing up Jewish in Corsicana. Wonderful memories! And it is now on tape!

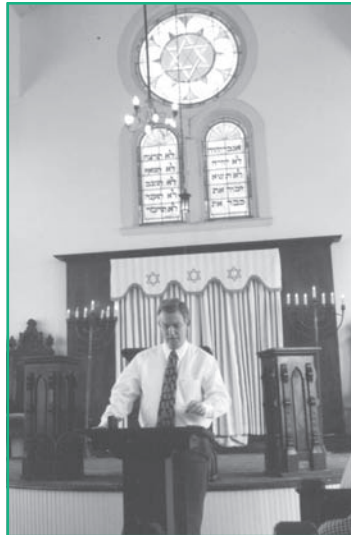


Sandra Palmer - docent of Temple Beth-El in Corsicana.

problems. He was gracious and candid as he told us how the Jewish community of Corsicana transformed him from a shipping clerk at the K. Wolen's department store to an Ordained Rabbi! He holds the distinction of having simultaneously served the Conservative AND Reform Congregations for many years. It is with great sadness that

I share with you the news that Rabbi Ernest Joseph died on November 10. What a treasure we have in the tape recording of his remarks to us. This brings special meaning to our mission of collecting and documenting the Jewish experience in Texas!

Continued on next page



Dr. Tommy Stringer speaks to TJHS at Temple Beth-El in Corsicana. Note the beautiful Tiffany glass Magen David and Ten Commandment windows.

Saturday evening, at a lovely dinner at the Kinsloe House, we heard about the Wolen's family from TJHS member, Dean Milkes. The highlight of that evening was hearing from Rabbi Ernest Joseph about his extremely interesting life. We felt most fortunate that the Rabbi was well enough to be with us, as he had just come out of a long hospital stay for multiple health



TJHS on the bimah of Temple Beth-El in Corsicana, October 16, 1999

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Newsletter

is a publication of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193



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

From the TJHS President, cont'd

Our Sunday Board meeting was productive.

We continue to be involved with new projects that help to get our message out.

Rabbi Jimmy Kessler has been gathering information for the new book project we have undertaken.

The Institute of Texan Cultures has improved our exhibit area with the addition of the Gallery of Texans photos that can be viewed on the computer screens.

They have also added several Torah readings in Hebrew with English translations. Laurie Gudzikowski, Director of Programs, has asked me to request a replacement for the Bris Gown that has been on loan to the ITC as that item has been returned to the family at their request. If you have a ceremonial object that was used during a bris and would like to loan or give it to the ITC please let me know.

Hollace Weiner's book *Jewish Stars in Texas* is now in print and she has been appearing at a number of Jewish Book Fairs around the state. We are very proud to have played a part in supporting this interesting book about several of the pioneer rabbis of Texas.

For the second year, our Board has approved offering scholarships to Texas College students to attend our Annual Gathering in Laredo in March.

We were very pleased to have initiated this during our last

Gathering in Fort Worth and we were delighted to have the winner, Greg Meyer, attend the meeting and become a member of TJHS. You will note that he has contributed to this edition of our Newsletter. Please look for the

application for the scholarship in this Newsletter and forward it to students you think might be candidates. We have sent this to all the Hillel's, and it is on our Web Site.



Babbette Samuels admires a carving which she and her husband, Irvin, donated to Navarro Junior College.

Allen & Cynthia Mondell showed us some clips from their soon to be completed film about Jewish Matchmaking *From the Garden of Eden to Matchmaker.com* and we are

eager to see this fascinating project in its final form. Another worthy project we have helped to support.

The Austin JCC has asked us to participate in a program about Texas Jewish History in their new Dell Center. Please let me know if you would like to work on this committee. We are exploring ideas and are open to suggestions.

TJHS is proud of our Board member, Jimmy Alexander, who was recently honored by the Dallas Jewish Historical Society for his many contributions to that organization. TJHS has also been the recipient of his knowledge and interest in Texas Jewish History. *Mazel Tov*, Jimmy.



TJHS toured the Library of Navarro Junior College in Corsicana.

Victoria will be the site of our January Board

meeting (Jan.14-16, 2000). Dave Lack has been working on the program, and he and his wife, Ruth, will be hosting us at a cocktail party prior to our dinner Saturday night at the Plaza Club. You should have received

the registration form in the mail. We have discontinued putting meeting registration in our Newsletters because they seem to take an extremely long time to be delivered, often after the deadline for the event has passed. We hope you will join us for this lovely weekend beginning Friday, January 14th with a dutch treat dinner at the Holiday Inn, followed by Shabbat services at Temple B'nai Israel. Guest Rabbi Sanford Shapero, visiting from California, was the first student Rabbi for this congregation 45 years ago.

Circle March 24,25,26, 2000 for the Laredo Annual Gathering. Doris Epstein and a great group of Laredoans are planning to provide a wonderful weekend of activities. Their Sisterhood will serve us a delicious, home cooked Shabbat dinner



Houston TJHS Board Meeting.

at Agudah Achim synagogue, followed by services on Friday evening. We will be staying at La Posada, once the public school that was attended

by our Historian, Blanche Sheiness! Blanche is working on the program and will be able to share lots of information about her native city.

You will receive more details on the Registration form that will be mailed to you in the near future.

Our annual TJHS tour is being planned to coordinate with the Gathering. We will be traveling from Laredo to Monterrey, Mexico in a Chartered bus. Tentative dates are Monday March 20-Thursday March 23. The Jewish Community of Monterrey has invited us to celebrate Purim with them and learn about the history of their community. Barbara Rosenberg is working with Ana Portnoy Grumberg to take us on a fascinating journey through Mexican-Jewish history. Everyone will receive a registration flyer in the mail with details of dates, plans and costs. This will be another fabulous TJHS trip. Come join us!

Allen K. Wilk

Letter From the Editor

Can you believe this is the first newsletter of the millennium? Sounds like such a long time since very few of us were around when the last century started. The Jews of the U.S. and Texas have certainly made a major impact on the lives of many people, especially in light of the fact that there are so few of us compared to the general population.

Let's hope that in the next millennium our children, grandchildren, and perhaps great-grandchildren remember what we have done in the past hundred years and continue to preserve our history through the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

As many of you know, the Society provided moral and financial support to the publishing of Hollace Weiner's book entitled *Jewish Stars in Texas*. Hollace has been getting rave reviews over the entire state and has had numerous book signings. Be sure and see the excerpt from her book in this newsletter and if possible, purchase a copy. Hollace presented a review of her book in Richmond, Virginia at the Southern Jewish Historical Society along with Sherry Zander and Kay Goldman.

On behalf of the TJHS, we want to wish everyone a very Happy and Healthy Holiday! Here's to the next 100 years!



Gonzales Cemetery Refurbished

by Jack Kronick

Congregation Beth Am starts the year of 5760 with a *mitzvah*. The Congregation has raised \$2,200.00 to erect a chain link fence around a 160 year old Jewish Cemetery in Gonzales, Texas. Due to a very generous donation from Alan Korsakov, a Congregation Beth Am member, we are able to put the fence up.

It is a cemetery near the train tracks that has been abandoned and is located on the land of an Amish Farmer. We do not know why the cemetery is located in such an isolated area. In 1888 a fire destroyed the County Courthouse, losing all records of land ownership, so no one knows why the Cemetery in Gonzalez is in such an isolated place. The cemetery was discovered in 1992 by Don Teter of the Texas Jewish Historical Society in his research of Jewish Cemeteries in Texas.

Shelly Evans and Jack Kronick found the cemetery again in their travels with the Congregation Beth Am Senior Travel Bus Trips. In their Gonzales trip the guide pointed out that many of the old homes in Gonzales were owned by Jewish merchants. Recognizing some of the Jewish names, they thought there should be a Jewish cemetery in the



area. The Gonzales Chamber of Commerce was very cooperative in locating the site.

When Shelly Evans and Jack Kronick found the 50 x 100 foot

cemetery it was a total mess. The wrought iron fence had fallen down and the cows and horses on the farm had gone on to the cemetery and manure was all over the monuments. Also, some of the monuments had fallen over due to ground settling.

Jack Kronick took his son Mark Kronick and Mark's wife Barbara and their three children, Aaron, Rachael and Rebecca, to cut the grass and Mark Kronick took over repairing the monuments with the help of Dennis Brown, David Krodman, and David's daughters. Of the 12 monuments on the Cemetery, seven were broken in pieces including two six-foot monuments.

With the aid of a mobile hoist they were able to put the monuments back together. Mark Kronick also pressure washed the monuments making them look almost new. The chain link fence is needed to keep the animals off the Cemetery.

Jack & Mark Kronick and Mark's family drive the two hour ride to the Cemetery every third month to cut the grass and keep the Cemetery clean. Mark was not able to weld and repair the fence so a new chain link fence was needed to protect the Cemetery.

After the fence was erected we planned to put up a wrought iron sign with the names of the donors and then Rabbi Kohn, of Congregation Beth Am, has offered to rededicate the Cemetery at a ceremony, to be announced.

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.

Corsicana Rabbi Ernest Joseph dies at 69

Editor's note: Rabbi Joseph was our keynote speaker at the Corsicana meeting. He died a few weeks after his speech to our Board.

Rabbi Ernest Joseph, the rabbi at Congregation Agudas Achim in Corsicana for 33 years, died in his sleep of congestive heart failure November 10 at Navarro Regional Hospital in Corsicana. He was 69.

Rabbi Joseph was a lay cantor and Torah reader for six years in Dallas before moving to Corsicana in 1957.

He was born in Halle an der Saale, Germany, on August 26, 1930. In 1939, a local police officer tipped the family to the impending arrest of all male Jews in the area and helped them escape to Shanghai, China. Rabbi Joseph, his parents, and an uncle fled with 40 German marks.

In Shanghai, Rabbi Joseph attended the Mirrer Yeshiva, run by Lubavitcher Hasidic Jews. His family lived in a one-room apartment with six other people. In 1947, Rabbi Joseph and his family came to the United States after the Chinese government ordered Jews to leave Shanghai. They settled in Dallas.

"He wanted us to know how wonderfully blessed we were," said his son, Rabbi Frank Joseph of Irving Havurah: The Community Synagogue of Greater Dallas. "He said the only



people who could truly appreciate America had to be born abroad. He was extremely grateful for everything this country provided and really appreciated all of the blessings."

Rabbi Ernest Joseph was once a lay cantor for Ohev Shalom in Dallas, which became Golden Acres Home for the Jewish Aged. He was also *baal korei* (Torah reader) for Congregations Shearith Israel, Tiferet Israel and Agudat Achim, which closed in the mid-1950s.

When Rabbi Joseph moved to Corsicana, he began working for K. Wolens Co., a local retailer. He was also an assistant to the rabbi at Congregation Agudas Achim. A scholar-

ship provided by the Wolens family to St. Louis Rabbinical College allowed him to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a rabbi.

He received his rabbinic ordination in 1966 and began serving full time as rabbi at Congregation Agudas Achim. He was also rabbi of Temple Beth El in Corsicana from 1968 to 1980, and served both congregations.

Rabbi Joseph earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Texas at Arlington in 1970; a master's in psychology from East Texas State University, now A&M University at Commerce, in 1973; and a doctorate of divinity from Rabbinical Assembly College in New York in 1978. He taught psychology and sociology at Navarro County Junior College from 1983 to 1986.

While visiting family in Dallas, Rabbi Joseph enjoyed chanting Torah at Congregation Shearith Israel. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish liturgy, said Rabbi Frank Joseph, and he was a frequent guest on KNON radio's *Jewish Music Hour* from 1992 to 1994.

— Dallas Morning News

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

Endowment Fund

of \$ _____

in _____ of

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.

“Lone Stars of David” Shine at Virginia Meeting

Southern Jewish Historical Society Annual Conference

Editor’s note: Our society was asked to present research on Texas to the Southern Jewish Historical Society in Richmond, Virginia.

RICHMOND, VA. – “Lone Stars of David” shone at the annual meeting of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. A scholarly gathering that often curtails its research at the Louisiana line, the SJHS conference this year featured a convention panel on Texas Jewry.

Sherry Zander, a small-town synagogue expert and TJHS board member, impressed the scholarly conference with her research into the Jewish roots of such cities as San Angelo, Brenham, and Wharton. Kay Goldman, a Ph.D. candidate at Texas A&M University, explored the Merchants and Masons of 19th Century Texas, expounding upon the many Lone Star fraternal lodges founded by Jews.

The Texas panel was moderated by TJHS member Hollace Weiner, who brought along a giant Lone Star flag that served as a backdrop for the colloquium, presented November 6 at the Richmond, Virginia meeting.

Zander noted that San Angelo was founded by Marcus Koenigheim, a cattle baron who won a parcel of West Texas land as a settlement for a bad debt. Koenigheim (pronounced *Cohen-heim*) subsequently laid out a new town and lured settlers there. San Angelo’s Temple Beth El synagogue, built in 1928, sits on land deeded over by a righteous Gentile convinced that the cohesive Jewish congregation deserved a prominent parcel for a building.

Later in her presentation, Zander flashed a photo-slide of Brenham’s 1890s Orthodox synagogue. The audience of 150 murmured in delight upon seeing the white-clapboard building, which Zander described as an example of “little white-church architecture.” Although Brenham’s B’nai Abraham

synagogue resembles a rural Baptist chapel, it was constructed with both mikvah and mehitzah – meaning ritual bath and separate sanctuary seating for men and women.

“This was an Orthodox congregation that assimilated its building into the town’s landscape,” Zander explained.

Brenham’s synagogue is today



From left to right: Kay Goldman (presenter), Ima Joy Gandler TJHS representative), Hollace Weiner (presenter), and Sherry Zander (presenter). Note the Texas flag in the background.

maintained by Leon Toubin, a descendant of the congregation’s earliest members. The building is air conditioned and used for occasional services and special events.

Wharton was the third and final Jewish community profiled by Zander. She stressed the sense of community shared by the congregation alumni who, for many years, returned annually to Wharton’s Shearith Israel campus, not for High Holiday services, but for a barbecue and reunion.

Kay Goldman’s research has unearthed the significant role Jews played in founding “egalitarian” Masonic lodges and Odd Fellows halls across Texas. “These Jewish men did not want to remain on the margins of

Texas society,” Goldman said. “They invested in endeavors which contributed to community development...They integrated themselves into the Texas culture by joining fraternal organizations and participating in political activities.”

A number of Texas’ earliest Jewish immigrants had previously lived in Mississippi and Louisiana. They, therefore had key business contacts, as well as relatives in the Deep South. High-profile examples include Dutch-born rancher David Kokernot, whose family had lived in New Orleans. Adolphus Sterne, one of the first Jews to settle in the Mexican-controlled Texas Territory, was a native of Cologne, Germany. He worked in New Orleans before settling in Nacogdoches.

“He brought Masonry to the territory,” Goldman said. “He was a Past Master of his Louisiana Lodge.”

In 1826, Sterne was tried for treason by Mexican authorities who condemned him to death. “A brother Mason intervened on his behalf,” Goldman recounted. “Thus, his Masonic affiliation saved his life.”

Noting the differences between Texas and the Deep South, Goldman emphasized our state’s strong German heritage in contrast to the French influence pervasive in the Mississippi Delta. One reason why Jews integrated so easily into 19th Century Texas was the fact that German literature and music, with which they were familiar, was the culture of sophisticated Texans.

“Although some Jews gave up the practice of Judaism, most Jewish immigrants to Texas embraced Juda-

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

ism and did not turn their backs on their religion,” Goldman concluded. “It would have been easy to shed their Judaism...after all, Texas had a sizable German community...These immigrants professed their Jewishness not by keeping kosher or abstaining from business on the Sabbath, but by acknowledging their Jewishness in a society that would have allowed them to shed it.”

The “Lone Star of David” panel ushered in the second day of the Southern Jewish Historical Society’s three-day meeting held November 5-7. The Texas panel was delivered at 9:00 A.M., but the Texas flag remained aloft as a convention backdrop for the entire day. Other TJHS members attending the Richmond meeting were Waco’s Ima Joy Gandler and Dallasites Ruth and Dave Andres.

– Hollace Weiner

Future TJHS Meetings

TAKE NOTE!

Board Meeting
Victoria, Texas
January 14, 15 & 16

Annual Gathering
Laredo, Texas
March 24, 25 & 26

You should have already received information on the Board Meeting in Victoria. You will receive information and the registration form for the Annual Gathering very soon.

“Mom” Claghorn’s home A specific note on Jewish Texan Philanthropy

By Greg Meyer, recipient of the 1999 TJHS Annual Gathering Scholarship

In 1957 the work of many people in the Texas Jewish community provided a Christian lady a home of her own. What provided the momentum for such an unlikely event? It all rested in the legacy of Irene Claghorn. Her legacy induced many Texas A&M students to return the love and compassion shown to them during “Mom” Claghorn’s 39 year tenure as the Texas A&M hospital’s head of staff.

“Mom” arrived at TAMC in 1918 as a Captain in the Army nursing corps and as a recent WWI widow. During her career, “Mom” Claghorn never had a house. Her work became her life, symbolized by the fact she lived in an apartment at the hospital. Because she never remarried, the students of Texas A&M became her children.

In 1956 tragedy struck. “Mom” suffered severe injuries in an auto accident near Dallas. She spent three months in the hospital due to the accident. The hospitalization cost her all her life-savings.

But the story doesn’t end here. Many of “Mom’s” students never forgot her. For example in 1939 she provided Dr. Jack Blankfield a start in the medical field during his sophomore year by giving him work in the clinic that allowed him to stay in school.

When Jack, now a dentist in Pasadena, learned of her desperate straits in 1956, he and his brother Harry, both Texas A&M alumni, sought to repay Mrs. Claghorn’s good deeds by pledging 50% for a house of her choice in Aggieland.

Another former Aggie, Jack Forman (’42) of Houston, then took it upon himself to raise the remaining

50% for Claghorn’s house. At the same time, Foreman was also heading up the Texas A&M Hillel Foundation Building Committee with the help of Billy Goldberg. The synergy of Foreman’s two projects manifested the old rabbinic saying “*mitzvah goreret mitzvah* – a mitzvah begets a mitzvah.” The contract for “Mom” Claghorn’s house stated that the house was for Mrs. Claghorn’s retirement use. Upon her leaving, the house reverted to the Hillel Building Fund. The Hillel Foundation of A&M paid the taxes and upkeep on the building for Mrs. Claghorn.

The end result of the Jewish Texans’ effort was the purchase of a 5 room red brick house in the College Hills area of College Station for their mentor, Mrs. Claghorn. The Brazos County and Houston A&M clubs then furnished the house. Other various B’nai B’rith District 7 lodges were also involved in the Claghorn house fund drive. The only people for whom specific mention can be found are Bernard Klein of Beaumont and Irving Forgotson of Gonzales.

The sources for this article were found in the scrapbooks of Esther Taubenhau, A&M Hillel founder and director from 1920-1957. The scrapbooks are now part of the TAMU Cushing Library archives.

References: Houston Chronicle, 26 Feb 1957 (D-12); Houston Post, 1 Mar 1957; Houston Press, 21 Feb 1957; Beaumont Journal, 5 Mar 1957 (unknown section and page); The Battalion (TAMC), 5 Feb 1957; The Gonzales Inquirer, 26 Feb 1957; Houston Aggie Dingbat (Volume X, #2 and #10); TAMC Hillel Foundation Press Release, 1957.

Mrs. “Tauby” and the A&M Hillel Club

By Greg Meyer

Historians report that the B’nai B’rith National Hillel movement was begun in 1923 on the University of Illinois campus. It is a little known fact that at Texas A&M three years before the National Hillel movement began, a group with the same objectives and a similar name, The Hillel Club, was formed. What caused the birth of such a group so far from the traditional centers of, not only American Jewish culture, but, also Texas Jewish culture?

The Hillel Club was an outgrowth of the Menorah Club begun at Texas A&M in 1916. It’s founders, Jacob and Esther Taubehaus, were some of the earliest known Jewish faculty and staff members. They were pioneers in many ways. They transplanted their deep Zionist roots and love of Judaism into the fertile ground of Texas’ first agricultural college.

Jacob and Esther were children of Rabbis. Their upbringing lay in pre-Zionist immigration to Eretz Israel. Jacob was born in Safed in 1884 and Esther (nee Hirschenson) was born in Jerusalem in 1885. Jacob came to America with the Hirschenson family as a teenager to obtain a scientific education. They accomplished their educational objectives. She earned an M.S. in Philosophy from Columbia University, and Jacob completed a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology at the University of Pennsylvania. 1910 was a banner year for them as they married and became American citizens.

The Taubehaus’ came to A&M in 1916 where Jacob joined the Agricultural Extension faculty. With their discovery that they were the only Jewish faculty family on campus the Taubehaus’ organized a student Menorah Club in 1916 to foster Jewish intellectual development. In 1920, they realized that the Menorah club was not

meeting the religious and everyday needs of the Jewish students. They began the Hillel Club in 1920 at their home with the officiation of Rabbi David Lefkowitz of Dallas who served as their first rabbinic advisor. Once the idea for the Texas A&M Hillel club began to sprout, the Taubehaus’ were also aided by Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston. These famous Rabbis provided guidance and spiritual nourishment for the Hillel Club.

The aim of the A&M Hillel Club was to provide a support network and religious guidance for Jewish students. Friday night services and Sunday morning coffees were held at the Taubehaus’ home for the three years following 1920.

The growth of the club paralleled that of Texas A&M. Due to this growth, Friday night services were moved in 1923 to the college library. High Holiday services were held in conjunction with the Bryan congregation at Temple Freda. Ironically, the Temple Freda torah was restored and now lives at the Texas A&M Hillel Foundation.

The B’nai B’rith National Hillel Foundation became aware of the Texas A&M Hillel Club in 1925 and vigorously lobbied for the A&M club to relinquish its name. These efforts were abandoned in 1927 and the National Hillel office and B’nai B’rith District 7 officers began a long period of wooing the TAMC Hillel Club into the B’nai B’rith fold. By 1940, Esther had seen her labor produce a Hillel Club of 130 students. Since Jacob’s death in 1937 required her to find additional employment, Esther had been managing to continue her Hillel work from her office as the TAMC Herbarium curator. The offer in 1940 of a Hillel Directorship by B’nai B’rith allowed her to do what she wanted most, continue the nourishment of Judaism on the A&M campus. With

Texas A&M club’s incorporation into the National Hillel network many new opportunities for students arose.

Esther crowned her career as the TAMC Hillel Director with a building fund drive that sought to create a permanent home for the seeds the Taubehaus’ had so carefully sewn so many years before. Those seeds had grown deep roots throughout the state of Texas and their growth bore fruit in 1958 with completion of the Ike and Fannie Sablosky Building. The A&M Hillel Foundation continues today as a strong and growing institution, nourished by the strong and thick roots provided by the Taubehaus family that extend over 80 years into the past. Many students are from across America and many nations. Some have made aliyah to Israel, returning the seeds of Judaism full circle. In this way the Taubehaus’ work of so many years has completed a spiritual cycle unforeseen in scope when it began.

The sources for this article were found in the scrapbooks of Esther Taubehaus, now located in the TAMU Cushing Library Archives.

References: Article by Rabbi Robert I. Kahn, Feb. 1954(probably the Jewish Herald of Houston); B’nai B’rith Voice editorial, late 1957 or early 1958; NYT obituary, 15 Dec 1937; The National Jewish Monthly, Oct. 1940; The Jewish Herald Voice 1958 (no specific date indicated).

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.

Temple Beth-El in San Antonio Celebrates 125-Year History

San Antonio has been fortunate for 125 years that Temple Beth-El has been a source of permanence, a link to the wisdom of the Jewish faith, and, indeed, a home for its congregants.

Temple Beth-El, the oldest Jewish congregation in San Antonio, was founded in 1874. On May 31 of that year, 44 Subscribers officially met at the Odd Fellows Hall (now the Crockett Hotel) to approve by-laws, elect officers and establish a building committee.

These 44 gentlemen were prominent members of the city's Jewish population, and most of them had already been residents for some time. They were largely part of a wave of immigration from Germany dating from the early 1850s and 60s, some arriving directly and others having first settled in other American cities.

In 1870, German-Americans were the majority group in San Antonio – more than 3,000 of a total population of 8,000. The Temple's 44 founders made up an integral part of that group, joining such social organizations as the Beethoven Maennerchor, the Turnverein, the volunteer fire brigades and the Casino Club. Indeed, it was the German-Americans who brought culture to what had largely been a frontier town, isolated from the rest of the country because of its lack of railroads and its orientation toward trade with Mexico rather than the United States.

Several Jewish organizations actually preceded the founding of the Temple: a Jewish cemetery had been established as early as 1855 and continued to be expanded through the century. The Hebrew Benevolent Society was started in the

1850s and was reorganized in 1866, while Edar Lodge of B'nai B'rith was inaugurated just a few months after the charter meeting of Temple Beth-El. Many of the founders of the Temple also were



The first building of Temple Beth-El

officers in these organizations. Religious services had already begun in San Antonio a few years prior to the charter meeting, including modest services in private homes and subsequently in Ruellmann Hall from 1871. In the same

year, the Hebrew Benevolent Society purchased the future site of the first Temple Beth-El, on the corner of Travis and Jefferson Streets, from Mrs. Maury Maverick, with an eye toward establishing a Jewish congregation. On June 5, 1875, the first officers of Temple Beth-El were elected, and the first Board of Trustees, as well.

It would take more than a year for the Temple to be built. In the process, there was great effort to solicit donations, not only from the local community, but from other American cities. Funds were used to



The third and current building.

engage an architect, G. Trueleben, and a builder, A. Earhart, to erect the Temple on the site purchased by the Benevolent Society. Early on in the process (September 27, 1874), it was decided to join the Union of American Hebrew congregations.

Two temporary Rabbis were engaged for the opening ceremonies on Friday, September 10,

1875: Rabbi Gutheim, of New Orleans, and Rabbi Alexander Rosenspitz. In addition, a committee had been appointed to engage an organist to perform and to instruct the choir for the occasion. Both daily newspapers in the city, the *San Antonio Herald* and the *San Antonio Express* reported the ceremony. The *Freie Presse für San Antonio* noted that the building's interior was decorated with greenery and flowers, while the *Herald* proclaimed:

At the appointed hour, the beautiful edifice was filled by the most cultivated audience of ladies and gentlemen we have ever seen in San Antonio. There seemed to be present representatives of every nationality and religious belief. The audience paid close attention to the services, and appeared to appreciate fully the nature of the occasion.



The second building, on the site of the first.

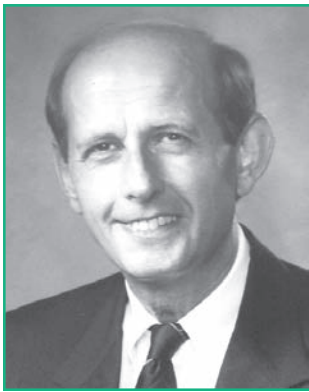
Two days after the inauguration, 37 out of the 60 pews were auctioned to Temple members and yearly dues were fixed at \$50 per family and \$25 per individual. Action was also taken to engage a permanent Rabbi, but, though numer-

ous applications were received, none was hired. Consequently, Friday night services were discontinued in February, 1876, and lay members officiated at High Holy Day observances that year.

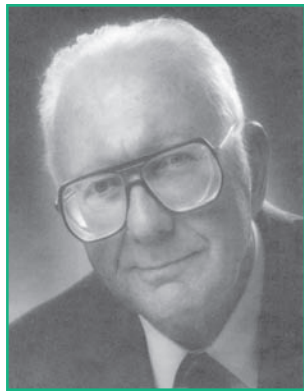
On March 6, 1892, a vote was taken as to whether "this congregation [should] continue its organization." Galvanized by the threat of the dissolution of the congregation, members of the Board voted unanimously to carry on and elected J. Hyman Elkin, of Hartford, Connecticut, as the new Rabbi.

The big turnaround came with the appointment of Rabbi Samuel Marks, of Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1897. It was a position he would occupy for 23 years, making him the congregation's longest serving Rabbi to that point. By the turn of the 20th century, Temple Beth-El had

Rabbis Currently Serving Temple Beth-El, San Antonio



Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl



Rabbi David Jacobson, Emeritus



Rabbi Barry H. Block



Rabbi B. Allison Bergman

become a mature and stable center for Jewish community and worship in San Antonio.

During the early years of this century, the Temple was replaced by a larger building on the same site.

By May, 1919, Temple membership numbered 223. Income more than covered expenditures, and the total indebtedness was greatly reduced. The congregation had sufficiently grown, so money was allotted for the selection of the Temple's first Associate Rabbi, Sidney Tedesche of Springfield, Ohio, who was elected the following month.

On December 29, 1924, the Menger Hotel was the scene of the Golden Jubilee Dinner, organized by Beth-El's Sisterhood. For that occasion, Rabbi David Lefkowitz and Rabbi Henry Cohen (the father-in-law of then Rabbi, Ephraim Frisch) were the guest speakers. This 50th anniversary not only celebrated a historic landmark, but gave impetus to the drive for a new building, which was completed in 1927.

In March, 1938, Rabbi Frisch was granted a leave of absence because of illness. In the interim, the Board examined the possibility of once again obtaining an Associate Rabbi. On May 25, Dr. David Jacobson, of Indianapolis, was elected by the Board as an Associate Rabbi, as of August 1, 1938. Dr. Jacobson remained as an associate until June 1, 1942, when at a special meeting he was elected Rabbi of Temple Beth-El, and Rabbi Frisch was elected Rabbi Emeritus.

Thirty-four members of the Temple served in the armed forces in World War II, including Rabbi Jacobson. During his period of service, William Sajowitz, a senior at the Hebrew Union College, was appointed to officiate in his place.

On August 15, 1947, on recommendation of the Religious School Committee, the Board appointed Mr. Milton Bendiner as Educational Director and Principal of Religious School, thus introducing new vitality to the Religious School.

The Temple's 75th anniversary in 1949 was a time of hope and pride. Temple Beth-El had a recently renovated synagogue; an energetic and beloved Rabbi; and a respected and highly competent Religious School Director.

Rabbi David Jacobson has served Temple Beth-El, and continues to serve the congregation, since 1938. When Rabbi Jacobson came to Temple Beth-El, B'nai Mitzvah were rare. The study of Hebrew was insignificant. The congregation lacked a youth program. The Brotherhood was moribund. Adult education was sparse. Weddings were rarely, if ever, held at the Temple.

With his customary enthusiasm, David Jacobson invigorated the study of Hebrew and made Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah common occurrences at Temple Beth-El. He crusaded for marriages to be performed at the Temple, a common occurrence today. Rabbi Jacobson helped to re-establish and reinvigorate the Brotherhood. He was one of the leaders in founding SAFTY, the San Antonio Federation of Temple Youth, and helped to sponsor a number of youth activities at the congregation, including a Sunday afternoon social hour, the Teen Canteen, the Temple School for Little Children and BEST (Beth-El Super Teens), which he founded.

In 1976, Rabbi Jacobson became Rabbi Emeritus and Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl was hired as spiritual leader of Temple Beth-El and still serves to this day. During Rabbi Stahl's tenure, the

congregation has grown from 900 to over 1,260 families, and has become one of the most prestigious congregations in the United States. Rabbi Stahl has been tireless in his efforts in the San Antonio community and within the Reform movement.

Rabbi Barry H. Block was engaged by the the congregation in 1992, first as Assistant Rabbi, then as Associate Rabbi, and now as Associate Rabbi-Successor.

In 1999, this 125th anniversary year, Temple Beth-El has two new firsts in its history: the engagement of a third full-time Rabbi, B. Allison Bergman, who is also the first ordained female Rabbi to serve the congregation.

Rabbis Stahl, Block and Bergman form a seamless team to minister to the many needs of an ever-growing and ever-changing congregation.

To celebrate 125 years, the congregation has enjoyed many special programs throughout 1999, including guest speakers, musical concerts, an interfaith Sabbath, an art exhibition, and a grand gala dinner dance.

The Rededication Sabbath, held December 10, was the completion of the 125th anniversary celebration for the congregation. That evening, its members rededicated themselves to the next 125 years of congregational life with special, creative worship and an original play performed by the Beth-El Players. The highlight of the evening was the dedication in the sanctuary of a four-foot tall congregational *Hanukiah* (Menorah).

— Geri Gregory, Graphic Designer and Computer Specialist of Temple Beth-El. Thanks to Temple Beth-El's 125th Anniversary Book Committee, Steven Gross, Chair. Also, a very special thanks to Frances Kallison, whose historical research proved invaluable.

A Rabbi For Cowntown

The following is an excerpt from *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and Their Work* by Hollace Ava Weiner, a former *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* staff writer. This article appeared in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* on November 28, 1999.

The red-headed rabbi's pulse shot up – again. Try as he might to distance his flock from Hell's Half Acre, in the autumn of 1913, Rabbi G. George Fox overheard ranchers downtown muttering remarks about "Jew whores." What's more, the Sisterhood at his synagogue of seventy families was scandalized at the gossip. The women – chief among them his wife Hortense, a third-generation American – wanted those tramps gone.

The Jewish prostitutes were Eastern European women who had ventured to Fort Worth's red-light district by way of Galveston, a port of entry for 8,000 fellow Jews since 1907. Fox's colleague, the saintly Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston, was being lauded from Texas to New York for greeting each refugee at the dock. But as far as Fox was concerned, the refuse was riding the rails from the Gulf Coast to North Texas, bringing social disease and dishonor to Jews in Fort Worth. "As rabbi, I could not and would not escape the responsibility that was mine in this shameful business," the rabbi declared in his memoirs. "It was a drab affair."

With the police commissioner and the mayor, Fox arranged a raid on brothels within "the Acre," a seedy neighborhood of saloons, dance halls, cathouses, and gambling dens in the blocks north of the Texas & Pacific depot. Madams were advised to surrender their Jewish girls on charges of disorderly conduct, or face a shutdown. At the jail, Fox confronted twenty women. Through a Yiddish interpreter, the American rabbi warned them to turn to legitimate pursuits – or else. In response, some tugged at the rabbi's heartstrings with sagas of children in foster homes. Others blamed hunger, violence, and deception for driving them into the "sordid" business. "One showed me a lavalier bearing a picture of her father, an old, bearded, Eastern co-



religionist," Fox recalled. "One asked me whether my rich, fat Jews would take her into their homes and give her a job...A third challenged us, in Yiddish, to give her a job in some store. Of course we were stymied ... Two of the lot married the men who were their pimps and went into legitimate business ... The rest left town."

When Christian clergymen asked the rabbi why his outrage extended only to Jewish prostitutes, he advised his brothers in the Tarrant County General Pastors Association to round up the gentile prostitutes themselves. Fox, however, had more legal ammunition at his disposal, mainly the White Slave Traffic Acts. The run-of-the-mill harlots were American-born. If arrested, they could be bailed out by pimps and madams, or fined and returned to the streets. The Jewish suspects, many masking their immigrant origins with American aliases, were subject to deportation as "alien prostitutes." And so they were. Eighteen young Jewish women were deported to Europe, months before the outbreak of World War I.

"The job made me unhappy, though I could see no other way," Fox

wrote. Although the ambivalent rabbi was chairman of the Fort Worth Charity Commission and an organizer of a state welfare conference, he found it more prudent to remove than to try and reform the women. Truth be told, "Jew whore" remarks stirred anti-Semitism among the public and insecurity among Jews who prided themselves on being law-abiding Americans with a family-centered religion. Fox and his generation of upwardly mobile Jews wanted to retain their religious identity. Yet they were eager to be seen as part of the American mainstream, not a remnant of the Old World like their unwashed cousins pouring in from the shtetls of Eastern Europe.

Prostitution among Jews – documented in muckraking magazines and a federal immigration investigation – had prompted Jewish communities nationwide to police their own. B'nai B'rith, the Jewish fraternal organization, had helped the Justice Department apprehend Jewish prostitutes who crossed state lines. Chicago rabbis had worked with the district attorney and vigilantes to round up Jewish madams in the Windy City. Prostitution was such a blot on Jewish morality that little attention was given to its causes, its social solutions, or the men involved in the business. When whispers of Jewish prostitution surfaced in Fort Worth's downtown cafes, Rabbi Fox had precedents to follow. Fox was not as bold, or grandstanding, as his ministerial colleague, the Rev. J. Frank Norris, preacher at Fort Worth's First Baptist Church. The year before, Norris had announced from the pulpit the names of leading citizens who owned brothels. This led not to arrests but retaliation, as arsonists set fire to the minister's church and parsonage. In contrast, Rabbi Fox's action in ridding the community of Jewish prostitutes was met with sighs of relief. He had distanced Fort Worth's Jewish resi-

dents from the taint of immorality. He had gingerly worked with the authorities, without upsetting the status quo. He had correctly gauged how far to stretch his moral authority in a town closer to the frontier than the Bible Belt.

Cattle Country

Fort Worth was where the West began. Named for a general who never made it to North Texas, Fort Worth traced its origins to an 1849 army outpost built to protect towns farther east from marauding Comanches. As the American West grew to symbolize the cowboy, Fort Worth was part of that culture, a watering stop for long-horns and horseback riders traveling the Chisholm Trail. Here, cowboys spent their wages on a bath, a haircut, whiskey, women, and gambling. Trail bosses stocked up on flour at Jacob Samuel's dry goods store and sampled tobacco at Eichenbaum's Cigars, establishments owned by Jewish entrepreneurs.

Despite Jewish names on a score of Main Street storefronts, organized Judaism was slow to gain a toehold in Fort Worth, much slower than elsewhere. In a cow town where drunken gamblers unloaded six-shooters into the air, law and order was more a priority than prayer. Among Fort Worth's Jewish pioneers, the suggestion of a minyan – the ten-man quorum required for a worship service – was met with ridicule. "Fort Worth Jews were beyond redemption," wrote the daughter of an early Jewish settler. The religious-minded moved forty miles east to Dallas, a commercial crossroads and more of a magnet for Jews. By the time Fort Worth's "Israelites" dedicated their first landmark – a cemetery on land donated by a non-Jew in 1879 – Dallas boasted a handsome synagogue with a choir, a Sabbath School, and a secular school. Fort Worth remained without a Jewish congregation until 1892 when twenty men, mostly Eastern European immigrants, spearheaded formation of Ahavath Sholom, a traditional syna-

gogue with a name that means love of peace. A decade later, forty-three well-assimilated Jews, many of them born in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee, organized Congregation Beth-El, a Reform synagogue with English services. Ties between the two congregations were cordial, with some Jews belonging to both. However, in a town that identified with the frontier, each congregation had a hard time attracting and keeping a rabbi.

As Fort Worth grew, cattle remained the cornerstone of the economy and "Cowtown" became its

“...the rabbi’s phone rang with people urging him not to laud Lincoln from the pulpit.”

nickname. The Chisholm Trail faded into history, supplanted by stockyards and slaughterhouses. Swift's and Armour's multistory packing houses employed several thousand workers, including immigrants from Poland, Greece, and Mexico. A dozen rail lines linked Fort Worth to the small towns and vast ranches across West Texas. Families from Abilene and Wichita Falls rode those rails to Cowtown to shop, finding high-topped shoes for the children, broad-brimmed bonnets for the ladies, and detachable collars for the gents. The leading restaurant was Joseph's Cafe, where Russian immigrant Sam Joseph and his German-born wife, Minnie, feted vaudeville stars and politicians. Fort Worth's signature haberdasher was another Jewish merchant, Memphis-born Leon Gross, a temple founder and the proprietor of Washer Brothers Clothier. Greenwall's Opera, managed by Leo Greenwall featured Sarah Bernhardt on its marquee. Fort Worth was feeling cosmopolitan by 1910, its

downtown streets no longer dirt, but red-brick. The city was home to 60,000 whites, 13,000 African Americans, 500 Jews, fifty-nine Chinese, and fourteen Native Americans.

As far as Texans were concerned, Fort Worth was a big city – the state's fourth largest. To Rabbi Fox, however, it seemed small. When the rabbi first traveled to Fort Worth by rail from Chicago in February, 1910, he had left behind a metropolis of 1.5 million - including 111,000 Jews - for a dusty town one-twentieth its size. En route, he was disheartened by the color line crossed when the train pulled out of Cairo, Illinois, and across the Mississippi. African-American passengers filed out of the front cars and seated themselves in the back of the train. In the North, Fox had attended the University of Chicago, a racially integrated campus. By the time Fox's train pulled into Fort Worth, the twenty-five-year-old rabbi had decided that his inaugural sermon would be a Lincoln's birthday address. Within days, the young rabbi sent his photo to the local papers with an announcement of his sermon

topic.

He was stunned at the reaction. All week, the rabbi's phone rang with people urging him not to laud Lincoln from the pulpit. "Lincoln was all right up North, but this was Texas," he wrote in his memoir. Temple president Sam Levy, a wealthy cigar and liquor dealer, warned the rabbi, "I will not be responsible for what happens to you."

February was Secessionist Month in Texas, anniversary of the debate in the legislature preceding the Lone Star State's 1861 withdrawal from the Union. Confederate veterans, a number of Jews among them, bristled at the newcomer's audacity. But to the rabbi, a former Illinois schoolboy who quoted from the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln was more than the Civil War president, more than the Great Emancipator, more than a martyred leader. Lincoln was a Bible-quoting lawyer, a non-churchgoing

Continued on page 14

Christian who practiced a personal brand of religion that conveyed a touch of the cowboy. The rabbi drew religious inspiration from Honest Abe: “[Lincoln] turned to the Bible as his companion and guiding light. He knew the Bible well.” So did George Fox. Against the wishes of his congregation, on his first Sabbath in Fort Worth, the young rabbi preached a sermon titled “Lincoln’s Contribution to the Nation.”

“Nothing happened,” the rabbi reported, except that he had asserted his independence and articulated his passion for American history and ideals. The next year I did the same,” the rabbi remarked. “A northern Presbyterian minister joined me.”

This colorful rabbi, a Lincoln Republican in the land of Southern Democrats, seemed determined to proceed with candor, break some taboos, and raise the profile of the local Jewish community. Already, during his first week in Texas, he had persuaded the local ministers’ alliance to open its membership to rabbis. Although there was another rabbi in town - Charles Blumenthal, the Lithuanian-trained religious teacher at Ahavath Sholom - Fox quickly became the high-profile rabbi, particularly among the non-Jewish community.

Debonair, with a rusty mane of hair, Fox cut a fashionable figure with his dark, tailored suits, starched shirts, and a gemstone tie tack that complemented the sparkle in his eyes. The young rabbi wore rimless spectacles, a thin mustache, and projected a strong jaw that relaxed into a winsome smile. He was also a paradox: a Jew who looked like an Irishman, a minister without a clerical collar, and a Northerner comfortable backslapping with Texans.

Excerpted from *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and Their Work* by Hollace Ava Weiner, copyright 1999. Published by Texas A&M University Press. Used with permission. *Jewish Stars in Texas* is available in hardcover (\$24.95). To order, call (800) 826-8911.

History of the Texas Jewish Historical Society

Editor’s note: Due to the large number of new members in the Society, we thought the history of the TJHS would be of some interest 20 years later.

In 1980 Rabbi Jimmy Kessler of Galveston published a letter in *The Jewish Herald Voice* of Houston and in *The Texas Jewish Post* of Dallas/Fort Worth calling for the creation of a historical society to preserve the history of the Texas Jewish Experience. The first Gathering took place in San Antonio in March of 1980. The Texas Jewish Historical Society was organized with Rabbi Kessler as its first president.

Over the last 20 years, the Texas Jewish Historical Society has grown to over 750 family members and has sponsored and encouraged research as well as provided a forum for scholars and students of Texas Jewish History. The Society Board meets quarterly in cities across the state to study the Jewish history of that area and conduct its business meetings. The Annual Gathering provides an opportunity to hear scholarly presentations, learn research skills and hear stories about growing up Jewish in Texas. The quarterly Newsletter is distributed to all of our members and to many University libraries, museums and archives worldwide. A permanent TJHS archive of source materials, documents, family, community and organizational histories has been established at The University of Texas American History Center in Austin as part of the Barker Texas History Collection. Several members of TJHS contributed articles to the recently revised, six volume, *HANDBOOK of TEXAS*.

Each year the TJHS sponsors a tour that focuses on locations that are part of our Jewish history.

The TJHS has been instrumental in erecting several historical markers and has published the book, *Deep in the Heart: Lives and Legends of Texas Jews*. The Society also published a valuable book for genealogists documenting Jewish burials

throughout the state. It has also supported films and videos such as *West of Hester Street* about the Galveston Jewish immigration movement, *This Is Our Home, It Is Not For Sale* about Houston’s Riverside neighborhood, and *At Home On The Range, Jewish Life in Texas*, a video broadcast on PBS television.

Virtual Restoration of Small Town Synagogues in Texas can be viewed on the Internet, at: <http://www.Neosoft.com/~tjhs/vrsyn.html>. This unique project provides an opportunity to retrace the experience of Jewish people in a number of small communities that no longer have a Jewish presence.

The Society participates in the Texas State Historical Commission contest by sponsoring prizes for essays on Jewish history.

In partnership with the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures Museum in San Antonio, TJHS provided research materials and funding for a completely refurbished exhibit, *SHALOM Y’ALL - THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN TEXAS*. This museum is visited by thousands of school children and adults who gain a greater understanding of our culture, history and the challenges we have faced and overcome.

This Society is not just for this generation but for many generations to come who deserve to know of their Texas Jewish heritage. Writing a history is one of those acts that add to the Jewish collective memory. The Talmud records the folktale of Honi the circle drawer, who learned an important lesson from watching an elderly man plant a carob tree. “You’ll not benefit from you efforts, old man, it will be long after your death when the tree gives its fruit.” The elderly man answered, “Of course, but I do this work for my children and my students and their posterity, not for myself.”

Share the Pleasure of Historical Texas Synagogues with Someone Special!

Send Historical Texas Synagogues note cards when corresponding with friends or relatives. Each pack contains color prints, two each of five different synagogues - 10 cards and 10 envelopes.



Package A contains:

- Temple Beth-El, Corsicana
- Temple Mizpah, Abilene
- Temple Freda, Bryan
- Temple Beth Israel, San Angelo
- Schwarz Family Synagogue, Hempstead

Package B contains:

- B'nai Israel, Galveston
- Temple Emanuel, Beaumont
- B'nai Abraham Synagogue, Brenham
- Sinai Hebrew Congregation, Jefferson
- B'nai Israel, Victoria



Only \$10.85 per pack! Each pack of note-cards is cellophane wrapped. Give them to friends and family! It is a great gift at a great price! © 1998 Texas Jewish Historical Society.

Order Form



Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Quantity: ____ Pack A at \$10.85 ea. ____ Pack B @ \$10.85 ea.

Discount to shops (40%)

Shipping: 1-5 Packs \$3; 6-10 Packs, \$4, Over 10, add \$.50 per pack

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Make check or money order payable to: **The Texas Jewish Historical Society** and send with form to: TJHS, c/o Charles B. Hart 2509 Redwing Drive Temple, TX 76502 Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. Retail shops receive a 40% discount with a minimum order of any 10 packs. A Texas Resale Certificate must be included with order.

Jewish Corsicana

Editor's note: This article was written by Irvin Samuels after our Fall Board Meeting in Corsicana, Texas. It offers some insight into the lives of the people of Corsicana.

We feel quite flattered that you have chosen Corsicana for your Fall Board Meeting. How wonderful it was to see such a responsive crowd at the *schul* last night - just like it was not too many years ago! For right now, close your eyes and picture Corsicana as it was not too long ago with 200-plus families as a vibrant Jewish community. Then we open our eyes and face reality that not only small towns, but even larger cities like Tyler, Port Arthur and even Waco's Jewish communities are all moving to the larger cities as our youth seek what the larger city offers and that our smaller communities can not compete with. Who knows, some day the trend may do a complete turn-around and Judaism may return to communities like ours. I can dream can't I?

Every Jew living in this wonderful country has a past that began mostly somewhere in Europe at the time of the great exodus from the Tzar, army drafts or pogroms – the great migration. I truthfully regret that I did not pay more attention to Mamma's or Pop's stories of the past, but how many children did, back then? However, I would like to relate some of their past that I can recall.

My grandfather was David Goodman and was married to Sara Mendel and they lived in London. Their family consisted of 3 very young daughters and one son, all born in England. Later another son was born in Corsicana in the latter 1800s. They lived on Thread Needle Street, which must have been the Jewish district in the 1800s.

Mama, the oldest, loved to tell this story. One day Grandpa was missing and Grandma had no word from him for six months. I asked Mama if they were worried or did they notify the police? She said Grandpa always did things like that.

Sure enough, one day out of the clear blue, a letter appeared with tickets to America and money for expenses. I remember Mama telling about Grandma traveling over the Atlantic with four small children. My,

wasn't that an experience and wasn't she brave! Several years ago we visited Ellis Island after its renovation. One of the exhibits was a huge picture of immigrants just entering the states and what caught my eye was a mother with several youngsters hanging on to her skirt with such fear, yet hope in their young eyes. Instantly, I related to my Grandma with her chicks hanging on to her. From New York, they traveled by rail to Waco, Texas. Grandpa at this time was working for an uncle there, but it didn't work out. So he packed up his family and moved to Corsicana, where he opened a second-hand shoe shop. From what I could figure out, Grandpa never was much of a merchant. His love was sitting in *schul* and studying the Talmud and Torah. So, Grandma with four youngsters to feed, opened a boarding house on east Third Ave. She made it a point to meet almost every train and bring boarders back to her boarding house. Being a good Jewish cook, needless to say, she supported Grandpa in a style that he liked very well. Now Grandpa was the original wandering Jew and from time to time he would ride the rails to St. Louis where he had lots of relatives.

Now, remember, here is Grandma with three daughters beginning to bloom, so she was keeping her eyes wide open. So let's regress to the gettos of Warsaw, Poland where Phishal Zimmel, later know as Philip Samuels, lived. Phishal was very young when his father died. His mother eventually remarried, and like Grimm's Fairy Tales, he and his stepfather did not get along, and also, he knew eventually that he would have to go into the Tzar's army. Having a good *kopf*, he decided it was time to leave Poland for the Promised Land, America. He had thought about this a long time. He knew where he wanted to go and even had started teaching himself the English language.

He left Poland and worked his way to Liverpool where he earned enough money for passage to the US. He sailed on the USS Arizona and

landed in NY. The Jewish Benevolent Society aided him as they did other Jewish immigrants and found him a job in a New Jersey hat factory. He spent his spare time reading western stories which he truly loved and decided the west was his true destiny. He saved his money and when he thought that he had enough for transportation, food and shelter, he went to the RR depot, laid his allotted money down and said, "How far west will this take me?" The agent took out his time table and said, "You will have to change trains several times, but you will end up in Corsicana, Texas."

Now can you read the writing on the wall? Well, when little five-foot-three Pop set foot on Corsicana's terra firma, there was Grandma Sarah Goodman waiting at the station with just one room unoccupied in her boarding house. Sarah Goodman, having three daughters who were growing up fast, and in her mind, becoming old maids at the age of 15, Philip Samuels, now Americanized, didn't stand a chance. I truly have no idea what Pop did when he first came to Corsicana, but eventually he met Max Cohen and they opened a men's store together. Also, Grandma was a happy woman when Philip married Esther Goodman in 1899. In 1900, my oldest brother Aaron, one of the most wonderful gentlemen in the world, was born. I would like to mention, the wandering Jew, Grandpa Goodman, came home for awhile as Grandma Sarah had Louis, in 1898. So here was Louis, an uncle, at the age of one.

In 1910, Philip Samuels bought out Max Cohen and changed the name of the business to P. Samuels. After Pop's death in 1943, we three boys operated the firm. In 1977, my youngest son Douglas and I continued in business until 1990. Douglas and I realized that the Mom and Pop stores were something of the past and it was time for Douglas to find a new career.

My story is one of the many stories of the past where Judaism

Continued on page 17

flourished in Corsicana. I wish I had the time to tell what I remember of those who lived and moved on from here - The Passing Parade. Today I do want to emphasize that at one time there were so many young Jewish children that both congregations got together and hired a man by the name of Dr. Klinger to come to Corsicana to prepare the children for Confirmation and Bar Mitzvah. Also, we had our own Boy Scout Troop, and we even had a baseball team that played other Jewish teams from Waco and Tyler. The games were played on Sundays with a picnic in the morning, a ball game in the afternoon, and a dance at night. The ball team was "The Yiddish City Nine." Corsicana was a hub of Jewish social activity. You won't believe this, but Corsicana had a YMHA. I ran across some old dance programs. I have asked around to find out more about it, and the only one left was Louis Schwartz, who was 102 at the time. I just knew he would remember it, but alas, to my regret, he did not.

Helen Wilk asked me what it was like growing up in Corsicana. It wasn't bad at all. Once in a great while, someone would take a dig at me about being Jewish, but that was rare. My folks could not join the Country Club, but who said they wanted to? That is really the only restriction that I can recall. We took part in everything we desired. Of course, as a child, I never thought that I was different from anyone else, and really, I wasn't! I played on the 1932 State Championship Team - I was just another player - not a Jewish player. There was no prejudice, but I never remember any violence. Everyone liked everyone else, and enjoyed their company. There was no television and very little radio. People sat on their front porches and visited. Automobiles were just coming into being and if anyone had a blowout, we wouldn't think what church he attended, we would get out the jack and fix the tire. If it happened in front of our house, we would always be willing to help, and Mamma would make the lemonade to cool us off. Being Jewish was being part of our town of Corsicana.

Traveling Jewish Texas

If you take Interstate 45 on your way to or from one of our meetings, you might stop to take a look around Ennis. The Ennis Historic Landmark Commission has published a brochure welcoming visitors to this "city of cultural diversity." Founded in 1872, the settlement gained a "wild west" reputation with 13 saloons and six beer halls. Immigrants from Czechoslovakia started arriving in 1873, and the city retains a strong Czech influence including hosting the National Polka Festival each May.

There must have been some civilizing influences with the coming of the railroad and the growth of the cotton industry, because many beautiful turn-of-the-century homes remain, and are pictured in the brochure of historic homes and buildings. At least two of them are of Jewish interest, the 1910 Raphael House at 500 W. Ennis Avenue and the 1915 Novy House at 401 N. Clay. The Raphael House is a classical Revival style home built by Edmond Raphael. President of the Ennis National Bank, a Jewish community leader who built this home for his family. The Novy house is an impressive structure and is considered an outstanding example of Prairie School influence on north Texas architecture. It was built by Joe Novy, a grocer in Ennis. Perhaps some of our readers could add information about these community leaders, or other information about Ennis.

This & That...

We wish TJHS Historian, Blanche Sheiness, a rapid and complete recovery from her heart attack and angioplasty, which occurred the first week of December.

Good wishes to Merilee Weiner for her recent Cataract surgery.

Address Changes

Has your address changed? What about your Area Code or phone number? Has your name changed? Do you want your name to appear differently on the TJHS mailing label? Please let us know. We'd really appreciate your help. Please send new information to Geri Gregory, 327 West Lullwood Avenue, San Antonio, TX 78212. Thank you!

NEW Texas Jewish Historical Society Website

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

Telephone - (281)276-9693

E-Mail address - tjhs@neosoft.com

Web Site address:

<http://www.geocities.com/txsynvr/tjhs.html>

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.



Glenda Alter, TJHS Board Member

This is the second article in a continuing series highlighting the life stories of TJHS Board Members and Officers

When I was born in 1929 in Hearne, Texas, our family was one of four Jewish families – all related. However, I was always the only Jewish child in school through all my school days.

My parents were Bobette Hart Lauterstein and Julian Byron Lauterstein. My maternal great-grandmother, Bobette Young, was born in Montgomery, Alabama. My grandmother, Leah Cohen, was born near Hearne in a town that does not exist today, Ingleside or Inglewood. My great-grandparents are buried in Calvert, Texas.

My maternal grandparents were Gerson and Leah (Cohen) Hart. My grandfather came to Texas from either Natchez or Osyka, Mississippi. He owned a grocery store in Hearne when my mother, Bobette, was born in 1902. She was an only child.

My paternal great-grandparents were Simon and Goldie Rose Lauterstein from Tilsit, East Prussia. They once lived in a small village called Stirpeiken.

My paternal grandparents were Moses (Max) and Lizzie (Rosenstein) Lauterstein. My grandmother was from Vistinich, Poland, I believe. My grandmother lived first in New York with her sister, Fanny Schlesinger, and then she and the other five children and their mother came to Columbus, Texas to be with their father.

My grandfather was born in 1856 in Tilsit, East Prussia, and came to America at the age of 17 and went to Peoria, Illinois to live with some relatives, the Finkelsteins. Mr. Finkelstein was traveling with an elderly man in a covered wagon when he was killed. The widow, Mrs. Finkelstein, was left with several small children. Her last child, William Finkelstein, was born after his father was killed.

Some of you may remember William Finkelstein, as he lived in San Antonio for many years. Another child of Mrs. Finkelstein's was Mrs. Josey. She was the mother of Mrs.



M.M. Harris, whose late husband was the editor of the *San Antonio Express* for many years. Two of her children were Mrs. Oscar Berman and Mrs. Zadek, who lived in San Antonio for many years.

My grandfather and his brother and Oscar Berman all peddled in Texas. They were well-received by the farmers who bought their merchandise. They were invited to eat with them and to spend the nights in their homes. Grandpa's other brother lived in Texas, but my father became tired of his escapades and gave him \$500.00 and told him to leave Texas. He moved to New York and later became the president of a bank in New York City.

My grandfather and grandmother married in Columbus, Texas and moved to Llano, Texas two years after the last battle with the Indians. They raised several children and lived there for 40 years. Grandpa opened a store in Llano, and they lived in the back of the store. Their oldest son was born there and people came for miles around to see the little Jewish baby – the first ever born in Llano. His name was Lewis Lauterstein. My father, Julian, was born in Llano in 1895. In 1920, they and their four children moved to San Antonio. Later, my father had a dry goods store in Hearne which was destroyed by fire in

the midst of the depression. In 1936 he opened a military uniform business in conjunction with a cleaning and pressing business in College Station, although we first lived in Bryan.

Since Bar or Bat Mitzvah were not possible in Bryan because there was no rabbi, my parents took me to Waco to meet with Rabbi Wolfe Macht. Later, I was confirmed "by correspondence." He had also married my parents in Hearne. The only young Jewish people I remember from Bryan were Morris Gelber and Alfred and Bill Schulman, whose mother owned the movie theaters there. I only had a few months of Sunday School. Although we were members of Temple Freda in Bryan, we did not celebrate Jewish holidays, except my father closed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, even if it was the first day of school at A&M. I remember attending a Seder at the Hillel and occasional Friday night services.

I attended elementary school through the fourth grade in Bryan. We built a new home in College Station, so I transferred to school there. My activities in high school included serving on the Annual staff, the newspaper, the student council, National Honor Society, and introducing speakers who came to the school. I graduated from Bryan High School in 1946.

When I was a freshman at the University of Texas, I went to Rosh Hashanah dinner at my aunt's home, where Sylvan Alter and his brother were living. It was September 16, 1946 in Austin, Texas. Sylvan and I got pinned in Dallas at the Columbian Club on New Year's Eve, 1947, and we married on December 19, 1948 at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio. My matron of honor was my big sister in my sorority, Harriet Kirsner Melitz. My bridesmaids were my future sister-in-law, Shirley Jacobs, my roommate,

Continued on page 19

Frances Perl, and my sorority sister, Hope Silber. My dear friends and sorority sisters, Shirley Evans played the piano and Beverly Mell sang. Sylvan's best man was his brother, Nelson Alter, and groomsmen were Sonny Nedler, Stanley Mindes, and his cousin, Jack Alter.

I have been active in Temple Beth-El in San Antonio, Jewish Family Service, Brandeis, Jewish Community Center, Golden Manor Home for the Aged, Temple Beth-El Sisterhood, National Council of Jewish Women, Cancer Center Council Secretary and Vice President, Library Foundation Board, Texas Library Association, Insitutional Review Board at the University of Texas Medical School, and the San Antonio Bar Auxiliary. I was a children's librarian for 21 years and am now retired.

I always valued the fact that although we lived in a small town with little Jewish life, my parents always maintained our Jewish identity. My father always closed for the high holidays at great financial loss, but with the gain of much respect and dignity.

-Edited by Jan Siegel Hart

A Letter From a Member

My uncle Sam Farb is now 93 years old. He still works several hours a day in his drug store on Broadway in Galveston, now run by his son Stuart. Sam still drives and reads constantly, and keeps his wonderful sense of humor. He was just invited by Galveston's local Historical Society to say a few words about growing up in Galveston in the first part of this century. He wrote the following article and presented it to the Historical Society's last meeting. There was great interest and many questions asked of him by the non-Jewish and Jewish audience. My husband Harold and I read each of your Newsletters and always enjoy each article. Thank you for all your efforts to keep your membership informed on our state's past Jewish history.

Sonia Farb Raizes

In 1888, my dad was 24 when he came to this country, settling in Galveston. He and my mother had already met; they were engaged before he left. When he was financially able, he would bring my mother over.

He sent for my mother in 1889 and immediately upon her arrival they were married, he being 24 and my mother 17. Neither of them could speak English, which made things difficult. They were happy in their new land and surroundings. The

synagogue became the focus of their attention. Here, my father attended services daily. Going to the synagogue gave them the opportunity of mixing with friends they had known in their village, but also with new friends whom they met here.

My dad and mother had 6 children, 3 of whom are still living. My folks being Jewish were not allowed to attend school in their country, but my dad picked up a fair knowledge of

Continued on page 20

Texas Jewish Historical Society Annual Membership

YES! I am enclosing my dues payment to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for the 2000-2001 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

Name: _____

Name of Spouse: _____ Maiden Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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.

Continued from page 19

English in his work, and was able to speak and understand it fairly well. We secured the services of an old retired school teacher to teach my mother to read and write.

The village they came from was under the rule of 3 countries since 1888. After WWI, Austria lost the territory to Poland, with whom it remained until WWII, when it was lost to Russia. I believe it remains Russian property today.

Life was difficult for them in the beginning; they were in a foreign land and it was not practical for them to attend school because my dad had to begin making a living, and my mother was fully occupied in the house. My dad began peddling fruits and vegetables to earn a living, which was what most of his friends were doing.

We children never realized that we were poor because there was always a sufficiency of food and we always wore hand-me-down clothing from the older kids. We became a very close-knit family.

Our family had many visitors who would discuss the Bible, the

Talmud, and other books of learning. I was made to go to Hebrew school every afternoon. Classes began soon after public school let out. I disliked it, but was made to go until I became a Bar Mitzvah at age 13.

After age 13, I had to say morning prayers, and then there were prayers to be said in the late afternoon. This always interfered with a baseball game which went on all the time in our neighborhood.

Sunday lunch was a regular attraction for all the family. The kids were allowed to bring friends whenever they chose, and Sunday lunch was always a delightful and enjoyable affair.

My mother started to do charity work early on; selling tickets and collecting money for some charity was a constant thing. Many times I helped her with her ticket sales and other charitable endeavors. Mother walked from place to place to do her charity work because she had no car. Collecting for charities became one of her prime interests, so much so, the noted Rabbi Henry Cohen jokingly remarked that she was a competitor.

There were some acts of anti-semitism in High School by a small

number of students. I remember being called ugly names. I decided to ignore them and hoped they would stop.

As kids of ten and over, our past time consisted of playing baseball on the corner. There were no playgrounds in those years around 1916. We used the edge of each corner as a base. Baseball was enjoyed throughout the summer. I can remember my mother calling me for supper – calling perhaps 10 times, but I never got home until it became too dark to play.

There was a drug store on our corner, and I became their youngest employee at age 14, working after school, doing odd jobs and waiting on people. The pay was \$6.00 a week, which, at that time, was pretty good wages.

My brothers and I eventually ran four of our own drug stores, Farb's Drugs in Galveston and Texas City. After large-chain stores entered the competition in Galveston, we were forced to look into other fields.

My family always impressed upon us the virtue of a good name; that we should never do anything to stain it; that honesty was absolutely necessary to have a good and rewarding life. This was their legacy.

Texas Jewish Historical Society

P.O. Box 10193
Austin, Texas 78766-0193

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



NON-PROFIT ORG. U.S. POSTAGE PAID SAN ANTONIO, TX PERMIT NO. 1868
--

* by your name indicates a paid-up membership for 2000.