

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Est. 1980



October, 2009

Join us for a meeting of the
Texas Jewish Historical Society
in conjunction with the Tulsa Genealogical Society
and the Jewish Community of Tulsa
January 15-17, 2010
in Tulsa, Oklahoma



We will stay at the Marriott across the street from the Jewish Community Center in Tulsa. The room fee is \$99 per person and they provide free shuttle service from the airport.

Tentative Schedule

Friday, January 15, 2010

6:00 PM Shabbat Dinner
7:30 PM Shabbat Service

Saturday, January 16, 2010

9:00 AM - 12:30 PM Program Speakers
12:30 - 6:30 PM Lunch and afternoon on your own to tour Tulsa
6:30 PM Dinner at the Jewish Community Center

Sunday, January 17, 2010

9:30 AM Breakfast at the JCC, followed by a Board Meeting
12:00 PM Docent-led tour of the Sherwin Miller Museum

*The registration flyer will be out in December.
Be sure to return it by the deadline to attend this
fun meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma!*

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Message from the President

by Sally Drayer

I would like to thank Davie Lou and Jack Solka, Claire and Dick Brooks, and Sheila Rosenfield for hosting the fall board meeting in Austin the weekend of September 12-13. We began our weekend with a tour of “Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America Through



Galveston Island” at the Bob Bullock State History Museum on Saturday afternoon. On Saturday evening following the Havdalah service and dinner, we listened to our guest speaker, Jay Rubin, CEO of the Jewish Community Association of Austin. His topic was “Austin Jewish Limits? Demographic Trends and Engagement

Strategies in a 21st Century Jewish Community.” Our weekend concluded with our board meeting Sunday morning. We had over 50 people attend. Thanks

again to the hosts and to everyone who attended.

Under the guidance of Mitzi Milstein, we are in the process of completing the compilation of our membership directory, which we hope to have out to you in the next month. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mitzi for undertaking chairing

this project again, Vickie Vogel, Ima Joy Gandler, Barbara Rosenberg, Marc Wormser, Alexa Kirk (Publisher-Editor), and Davie Lou Solka for all your time editing and assisting in putting the directory together—it couldn’t have happened without your help. Thanks also to those of you who responded to my email for advice and to Jack Gerrick for his help.

I would like to extend an invitation to each of you to attend our winter board meeting January 15-17, 2010, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in conjunction with the Tulsa Genealogical Society and the Jewish community of Tulsa. I, along with corresponding secretary Samylu Rubin, met in Tulsa with four dynamic leaders of the Tulsa Jewish community to finalize plans for the meeting: Arthur Feldman is the Executive Director of the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art (which holds the largest collection of Judaica in the American Southwest and has been cited by *Jewish Living Magazine* as one of the top Jewish Museums in North America, behind only the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.); Phil Goldfarb, retired business executive, volunteer, and President of the Tulsa Genealogical Society; Barry Abels, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation (formerly Executive Director of Federations in Austin and

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The Texas Jewish Historical Society August 2009 Quarterly News Magazine

The Texas Jewish Historical Society News Magazine is published four times annually. Stories about Texas Jewish history, oral histories, and requests for assistance with research are welcome, as are photographs and historical documents. Please provide color photocopies or scan at 300 dpi or greater, in .gif, .tif, or .jpg format and send electronically to Assistant Editor Davie Lou Solka at editor@txjhs.org or mail to 3808 Woodbrook Circle, Austin, TX 78759, 512-527-3799. Be sure to include your name and contact information.

Publisher-Editor Alexa Kirk
Assistant Editor Davie Lou Solka
Photographer Marvin Rich

Note: The Texas Jewish Historical Society is unable to guarantee the safe receipt and/or return of documents or photographs. It is strongly recommended that you provide color photocopies of both color and black & white documents. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Visit us on the web at www.txjhs.org.



The newsletter of the Texas Jewish Historical Society (USPS) is published four times a year by the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193, Travis County. Periodical postage paid at Houston, Texas. Postmaster: send address changes to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193.

www.txjhs.org

— Memories of Harlingen and the Valley —

by Marilyn Cohn Schwartz

I was born in Corpus Christi, Texas, on May 27, 1931. We actually lived in San Diego, Texas. However, my mother (Yetta Adele, but known as Dorothy Jacobs Cohn) wanted to have her children in a hospital, and since there was no hospital in San Diego, both my brother, Maurice Daniel (remembered as either M.D. or Sonny, born May 19, 1930) and I were born at the old Spohn Hospital in Corpus Christi.

My father, Julius Samuel Cohn, and his brother-in-law, Albert Wolf, had a store in San Diego, which was a general store with everything from clothing and piece goods to furniture. We moved from there to Harlingen in 1936.

The Valley was a wonderful place to live, but there weren't too many Jewish families there. Brownsville had its own Temple and Jewish community. Those of us who lived in Harlingen belonged to the Temple in Mercedes. I don't remember the name of it, but we were devoted mem-

bers of that congregation. My mother "ran" the religious school, which meant that my brother and I could never miss a Sunday attendance. In the late 1940s, the Harlingen Jewish families decided to build a Temple in Harlingen. I don't remember the names of all the families, but they bound together to do this project, and a small building was erected.

The congregation was truly a dedicated group of people and Friday night services were a must. My aunt, Pauline Cohn Wolf, played the piano during services every Friday night. We had a lot of covered dish dinners, and during football season, the time for services was much earlier so that everyone could go watch the Harlingen Cardinals play football.

My husband, Babe Schwartz (Aaron R. Schwartz, born and raised in Galveston), and I had the first wedding at the Harlingen Temple on July 14, 1951. Such excitement! Babe and

his best man, Melvin Maltz of Houston, and my dad set up folding chairs in the Temple so that there would be room for the crowd we expected. Rabbi Sidney Wolf from Corpus Christi came to Harlingen to perform the ceremony. Since Rabbi Wolf was a Reform Rabbi, Babe's grandfather, Oscher Bulbe from Galveston stood behind us and in a very loud voice, married us in Hebrew, so everything would be kosher and legal.

This was such a special Temple—everyone met together, and since we did not have a Rabbi, different men in the congregation led the services. The more traditional members (Conservative and Orthodox) had much more Hebrew in the services than the Reform members. My father could not speak or read Hebrew, so he would

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— Mazel Tov —

to the following

Texas Jewish Historical Society Members

Bernard Rappaport, of Waco, Texas, was honored on July 22, 2009, with the Franklin D. Roosevelt Distinguished Public Service Award in Washington, D.C.

Sylvia & Jerry Wolens, formerly of Fort Worth, and now of South Palm Beach, Florida, were selected as one of the "Top 50 Jewish Community Builders of South Palm Beach County." The award was presented to the Wolens two years ago by the Bloomingdale's/Jewish Federation Joint celebration of Israel's 50th Jubilee. They were selected because they have given their time, talent, and treasure to make South Palm Beach County the most vibrant Jewish community in America.

Please send information for this column to Davie Lou Solka at editor@txjhs.org.

— Contributions —

The following donations have been received by the Texas Jewish Historical Society since July, 2009.

In Memory of Milton Harelik From

Yetta & Marvin Leshin

Marilee Weiner

Helen & Larry Wilk

In Memory of Ruthe Weingarten's 80th birthday From *Debbie Weingarten*

A Gift Membership has been sent to the following:

Beverly & Malcom Gerber from *Ruth and Charles Nathan*

Sharon & Sonny Gerber from *Ruth and Charles Nathan*

Warren Kaman from *Tracy Robinson*

Mimi & Martin Silverberg from *Barbara & Ben Rosenberg*

Steffie & David Odle from *Ruth Nathan*

Lois & Don Rosenfield from *Ruth and Charles Nathan*

— Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Installed as Master — of Harmony Lodge #6, Galveston

On July 13, 2009, Harmony Lodge #6, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, of Galveston, Texas, installed Rabbi Jimmy Kessler as the Worshipful Master of the Lodge. Harmony Lodge is the first Masonic Lodge in the history of Texas Free Masonry to install a Rabbi as their presiding officer. An installation banquet preceded the actual ceremony.



The Most Worshipful W. David Counts, Jr., Grand Master of Masons of Texas, officiated at the installation ceremony. He was assisted by the Right Worshipful Jerry L. Martin, Grand Orator of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Texas. In addition, Past Grand Masters Thomas F. Griffin and Donny W. Broughton were in attendance.

The table decorations for the installation banquet were school supplies for the primary grades. These supplies will be donated to GISD for students who need help in acquiring such


materials. Since Texas Freemasonry was responsible for establishing public schools in Texas by offering their lodge buildings as the first classrooms, these decorations are very appropriate.

Today, there are some 122,000 Masons in Texas located in 914 Lodges throughout the state. Ancient Free and Accepted Masonry has been in Texas for 171 years. Harmony Lodge was established in Galveston in 1839 and has been a part of the very fabric of the Galveston Bay area since its creation.

Rabbi Kessler, who has served Temple B'nai Israel since 1976, has been a member of Harmony Lodge since 1977. In addition, he is a KCCH of Scottish Rite Masons and a member of the Chapter and Council of Royal York Masons, as well as a full member of the Grand Lodge of Texas Research.

Rabbi Kessler is a graduate of San Jacinto High School in Houston, holds a BA from UT Austin and was or-

ained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio. He holds an earned doctorate in American History with a major in Texas Jewish History, and an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew Union College. He is a UTMB Chaplain, a reserve professor of Philosophy at Galveston Community College and the Chaplain of the Galveston County Sheriff's office.

The Scottish Rite Cathedral on 22nd and Church has been the home of Scottish Rite in Galveston since 1902. The original building was the Harmony Hall building designed by Nicholas Clayton and built for the Reform Jewish community of Galveston. It was deemed to have been the most beautiful of his creations. Remodeled in 1914, that building was destroyed by fire on February 5, 1928. The current building, dedicated in 1929, was designed by Alfred C. Finn to withstand fire and storms, and has done so for 80 years. The beautiful staircase in the current building comes from the Clayton building and was saved after the fire. 

WANT THIS NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?

Would you like to save paper and instead receive this newsletter by email? You would be able to read the latest TJHS news in your inbox days before it would be scheduled to arrive in your mail

box. Please send an email to alexa.kirk@gmail.com indicating that you would like to be on the email list. (The usual size of the newsletter is 2 MB.)

We need Your Stories!

We are currently looking for stories with ties to Texas Jewish history! Any kind of story about your family history or your Temple's history can fill the pages of our quarterly newsletter. Write your story, and if you have questions or need

help, call our Assistant Editor.

Everyone has a story to tell, long or short. Your history is of interest to members across Texas and the nation! And you will be able to see your family's history in print. It is a wonderful keepsake and a valuable piece

of genealogy for future generations.

So what are you waiting for? Send in your article to our assistant editor, Davie Lou Solka, at editor@txjhs.org, mail it to 3808 Woodbrook Circle, Austin, TX 78759, or call her at 512-527-3799.

TJHS Members Honored

Max Stool Honored by the State of Texas

On Tuesday, May 19, 2009, Max Stool of San Antonio and Del Rio, Texas, was honored by the State of Texas with the introduction of HR 2038, co-sponsored by Representative Pete Gallego and Representative Dr. Mark Shelton. The resolution was initially proposed by Gallego, who has known Max for over twenty years and has represented the Del Rio area for

represents a district in Fort Worth, and has been friends with the Stool family for many years.

The photo was taken by a House staff photographer on the steps leading to the Speaker's platform.

Hollace Weiner wins William E. Jary Jr. Award

The Tarrant County Historical Commission has awarded Hollace Weiner the prestigious William E. Jary

Jr. Award for "documenting and sharing the rich heritage of Fort Worth and Texas."


Weiner edited *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, the award-winning coffee-table book that the TJHS published with Brandeis University Press. She also wrote *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and their Work*, which profiles eleven rabbis who became community leaders, and *Jewish "Junior League: The Rise*

and Demise of the Fort Worth Council of Jewish Women. In addition, she authored the centennial history of Fort

Worth's Beth-El Congregation.

In her role as volunteer archivist, Hollace has built up the collections housed at the city's two synagogues, Beth-El Congregation and Ahavath Sholom. Researchers, journalists, and students studying various aspects of Fort Worth's history have utilized these archives.

The Jary Award, presented in a ceremony last fall, also recognized the Tarrant County writers and photographers who contributed to *Lone Stars of David*. Weiner received a plaque, and certificates of merit were presented to Laurie Barker James, Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger, Barry Shlachter, Jenny Solomon, and Gary Whitfield. Solomon and Whitfield, as well as Weiner, are board members of the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

William Jary, for whom the award is named, was an advertising and public relations executive who collected Fort Worth memorabilia. His scrapbooks, photographs, maps, posters, and magazine and newspaper clipping reflect the history of Fort Worth, dating to frontier times. Featured topics include aviation, business, Camp Bowie, architecture, cultural events, parks, and medical schools. Mr. Jary's papers are at the University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections archives. Mr. Jary died in 1989, and the annual award in his honor was created the following year. 



First row: Representative Pete Gallego, Sydney Friedman, and Rachel Friedman. Second Row: Elizabeth and Asher Friedman. Third Row: Representative Dr. Mark Shelton, Max Stool, Samuel Friedman, and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives Joe Strauss.

that length of time. Two years ago, Max's wife, Libbie, was honored with a similar resolution. Dr. Shelton rep-

Can You Help?

Barbara Cohen Golub and June Cohen Bentch are looking for photos or mementoes of their late brothers, Herman and Leon Cohen. They grew up in Port Arthur and both died during World War II.

Herman was born in 1919 and Leon in 1920 in Hemphill, Texas, but

the family moved to Port Arthur, Texas when the boys were young. They attended schools in Port Arthur and the sisters believe that their brothers participated in Young Judea activities in the Beaumont/Orange area. Herman attended Lamar University and was interested in the local community by

taking pictures. They were both in World War II with Leon being drafted after high school. They were killed in the war in 1943.

Please contact Barbara Golub at bcgloub@sbcglobal.net if you have any photos or mementoes of the Cohen brothers. 

From Our Archives

by Vickie Vogel

This is the third in a series of articles on materials and information that can be found in the TJHS archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas in Austin. If you would like to write an article on any of the items in the archives, please visit <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/services/using.php>.

Charles & Bertha Bender

by Vickie Vogel

While searching through the TJHS archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History for papers relating to someone else, this sentence jumped out at me. “He did much to help create the State of Israel...”¹ The news clippings can be fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle of the lives of Charles and Bertha Bender of Breckenridge, Texas.² Charles M. Bender was born May 25, 1803, in Russia, and arrived in the United States from Odessa in the early 1900s.⁴ He died on Saturday, July 23, 1970 at the age of 90. He owned and operated Bender’s Department Store in the Bender Building⁵ in Breckenridge, Texas in Stephens County, 100 miles west of Fort Worth.

Bender married Bertha Clarice Segalin on August 25, 1912, in Portsmouth, Virginia.⁶ The daughter of Moishe and Ethel Segalin,⁷ Bertha was born in Novo Alexandrovsk (Lithuania), on August 25, 1888.⁸ At the age of 10, she went to Orel to continue her studies for two years. Being Jewish, she could not attend public school, but instead had a special tutor. Her father, a small-town lawyer, decided that Russia was too dangerous and unstable at that time, so he and his wife brought their four daughters to America in 1903.⁹

Bertha studied English with her cousins’ childrens’ books when she arrived in New York City, and got a job in a neckwear factory. The family moved to Virginia in 1908. Moishe Segalin’s lack of English made adjust-

ment in New York difficult. Ethel’s brother bought a grocery store for them in Portsmouth, Virginia. Bertha joined them in 1905. In 1908, the family moved to Norfolk, Virginia.¹⁰

Bertha met Charles at a Zionist meeting where she was secretary of the Norfolk Zionist Organization. They married and moved to Dallas to open the Gayola Bottling Company,¹¹ where Charles founded the Texas Young Zionists of Dallas. In 1916-1918, they opened and operated the first ready-to-wear store in Lubbock—Bender & Grollman—with Charles’ sister and her husband. One day a week, Charles would take ladies clothing to Floydada. In gratitude, the Chamber of Commerce built for him a haberdashery, and the Benders lived in Floydada for a short time.¹² The oil boom in 1919 inspired them to move to Breckenridge. In addition to the department store there, they had a store and hotel in McCamey in Upton County, south of Midland.¹³ The hotel was air conditioned, and all rooms had a private bath.¹⁴

Bender, a successful businessman, was also an ardent Zionist and active in civic affairs. Not long before his death, he was honored for his years of



1929: Jerry (17 years old), Charles Bender, and Manny (15 years old).

Photos courtesy of Carol Slobin, granddaughter of Charles Bender, daughter of Manny.

service by the YMCA Board. He belonged to the Lions Club, the Breckenridge Masonic Lodge, the Consistory, and the Moslah Temple Shrine of Fort Worth.¹⁵

A letter to the editor from Merlon Montgomery, Jr. of Fort Worth lamented Bender’s passing, and praised him for his generosity, telling how Bender had influenced him as a young man after hiring him to help with odd jobs. For example, Bender had often given free shoes to needy children. Montgomery was with him one day

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when a grown man approached and told Bender what those shoes meant to him as a child.

“Charlie was full of meaningful advice,” said Montgomery, on everything from trimming hedges to economics to the proper evaluation of opportunities. Charlie liked to introduce him as his “Gentile grandson.” On out-of-town trips, Charlie would start the day running in place in his underwear and cowboy boots and touching his toes, reminisced Montgomery, and would ask, “Think you can do that when you’re eighty years old?”

Montgomery remembered Bender calling his wife Bertha “my Berta.”¹⁶ In the same issue of the paper with the obituary was a letter to the editor from Bertha enclosing a \$500 contribution towards the construction of the museum in Breckenridge. Bertha commended the building of the museum and wrote, “I regret that Mr. Bender is too ill to help along.”¹⁷ Montgomery praised Bender’s civic pride and said he was proud of being a Texan and being called “Tex” in Israel.¹⁸

Throughout his adult life, Charlie Bender was active in Zionist circles. In 1929, he attended the Zionist Congress in Zurich, and he was also a delegate to the 1931 Zionist Congress in Basil, Switzerland.¹⁹ A photocopy of his credentials badge shows that he was a delegate to the 45th Annual Southwest Region Zionist Convention in Houston, September 2-5, 1949.²⁰ He was later named Honorary President of Southwestern Region Zionist Organization of America.²¹

As a writer identified only as “D. H. W.” described Bender, “A Jewish Cowboy—he had on high boots, pant leg tucked in the tops, a checkered shirt open at the collar. Charlie Bender, ardent Zionist, was recommending a course of action and this cowboy from out on the plains of Texas knew whereof he spoke... A

Zionist for forty-five years, he attended most national conventions and many World Zionist gatherings,” and conducted overseas relief campaigns. Long past fifty, “he still can do a Russian ‘kosotzky’ with the best of them.”²² On each visit to Is-

rael, Charles and Bertha visited David Ben Gurion at his home in Sde Boker.²³ Ben Gurion dubbed Charlie the “Jewish Cowboy from Texas.”²⁴

A notice in the paper advised that Charles M. Bender “left for New York today to attend the arrival of Dr. Chaim Weizmann,” first President of Israel for a \$250/plate dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria to benefit refugees of DP camps, with President Truman to be the honored guest.²⁵

A photo from the *Jewish Herald Voice* (Houston) on July 7, 1960 captioned “Sheik and Texas Zionist Cowboy Talk It Over” shows Bender with Beduin Sheik Audeh Abu Muamer in his tent near Beersheba in connection with a Southern Regional Israel Bond delegation.²⁶

Bertha Bender was also interested in Zionism, and enjoyed international travel. She was active in civic and educational organizations while raising their growing family. A local paper describes the Study Club program at the Bender home where Bertha, program chair, served tea from a silver samovar and discussed the Jewish foods being served. “Bagle [sic]” the newspaper reports, “a hard roll, is liked by many Jewish people.”²⁷ She



Family gathering in front of their home in Breckenridge, Texas, 1929. Left to right: Manny, Charles, Bertha, Marvin, and Jerry. In front is Sybil.

also told of her trips abroad, including Israel and Russia.

A competent poet throughout her life, Bertha read some of her poems to the group, including one titled “My Home.”²⁸

Bertha Bender presented other programs, such as at the Twentieth Century Club at the Woman’s Forum. She displayed items brought back from Israel, Cairo, Palestine, and Copenhagen. According to the local paper, “Of special interest was a mesusah [sic] which is hung on the door of homes to keep out the evil spirits.” She described Paris, Rome, and Milan as well as the history of Israel. A film was shown, “Magnetic Tide,” which told of life and freedom in Israel, and she read a poem about her travels.²⁹

On another occasion, the Wednesday Study Club met at the Bender home where she told of her childhood in Russia.³⁰

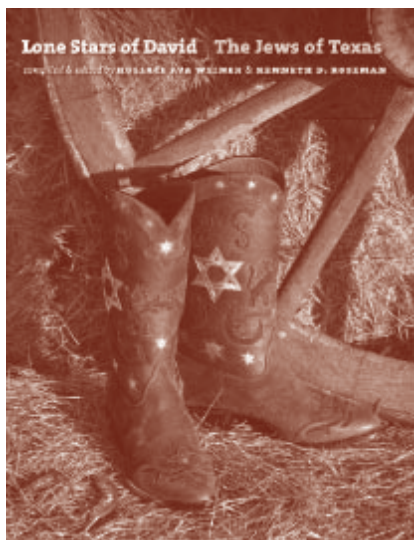
Charlie and Bertha worked jointly on many projects, such as spearheading the founding of Temple Beth Israel in Breckenridge in 1929³¹ where Charlie served as the first president.³² They also raised three sons and a daughter: Emanuel (Manny), Gerhard

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Another Great Review for

Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas

Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas has just received a fantastic review in the current issue of “American Jewish History”, the leading academic journal in the field. The reviewer, Dr. Dale Rosengarten, edited a similar award-winning coffee table anthology about the Jews of South Carolina, called *A Portion of the People*.



Almost every contributor came in for a pat on the back. Rosengarten writes, “Not only was the book designed to appeal to a broad public, it was assembled democratically, brick by brick, from the bottom up, from local sources nurtured by the Texas Jewish Historical Society. This marriage of scholarly monographs, memoirs, and images...transcends the parochialism implicit in the term ‘popular history.’ The anthology tackles major themes in American and Southern Jewish history...”

“In an enticing foreword, Robert S. Strauss...announces...the town/city dichotomy...recounting his upbringing as a member of the only Jewish family in the small West Texas town of Stamford.”

The reviewer singles out Bryan Stone’s opening essay about Jews on the frontier. “While Jews were present in Texas...Stone explains, that ‘until the 1850s there really was no Judaism.’...The task of building formal Jewish institutions awaited a critical mass...Solid citizens such as the Levys,

Dyers, Ostermans, Seeligsons, Landas, and Kempners...were the ‘real ancestors’ of Texas Jewry, not the adventurers and pioneers whose flamboyant contributions have delighted researchers and readers in the past.”

Dr. Rosengarten enjoyed the “local color” in chapters about these “founding families,” in particular Gary Whitfield’s “story of

the Sanger brothers who caught secessionist fever and signed up to fight for the Confederacy.” Also, Patrick Dearen’s “Home on the Range” which the reviewer writes, “recounts the rise of Mayer Halff, a rancher and ‘gentleman’ whose grazing lands once amounted to a million acres.”

She applauds the chapters that “smash stereotypes.”

Among them is the “memoir of Galveston’s Rabbi Henry Cohen, written by his grandson, Henry Cohen II (which) portrays the man behind the myth—a cigar-smoking, practical joker called Grandpa” who also is a “supermensch!”

She also applauds writer Stuart Rockoff for “defying conventional wisdom about Southern Jews’ resistance to Zionism.” His chapter “cites examples, beginning as early as 1897, of sustained Zionist sentiment in the Lone Star State.”

The reviewer enjoyed the “tall tales” in Part II, “The Entrepreneurial Era” because of their nuanced focus on “Texas specialties: Jews who had been haberdashers in Latvia” (from the essay by Barry Shlachter), “shoe salesmen in

Cuba, or farm boys in New Jersey who became wildcatters.” Quoting Jan Statman, the reviewer writes, “Everyone wanted to buy into a well that would make dreams come true.”

She singles out Doug Braudaway’s narrative about Max Stool, who “stops in Del Rio...to finish a card game and stays fifty years.” She is agog at Lauraine Miller’s history of the Zales who “open a jewelry store in Wichita Falls...selling diamonds on credit, making ‘luxury’ available not just to the elite, but to the masses” and in the process become a national name in jewelry.

The reviewer likes the unusual twist in Hollace Weiner’s chapter on the fabled Neiman-Marcus store. Abraham Lincoln Neiman “proceeds along a crooked path from rags to riches and back, putting an ironic twist on the Horatio Alger myth.”

Another favorite of this reviewer is Jane Guzman’s story of Levy Brothers. “Far west of Dallas,...the Levy brothers settled in Sweetwater and operated the best little department store on the 600 mile stretch of sagebrush, tumbleweed, oil wells, and feed lots between Fort Worth and El Paso.”

In Part III, the reviewer singled out the chapter co-written by Hollace Weiner and Lauraine Miller about “Little Synagogues” because it shows how recent events have “altered the Texas landscape.”

The reviewer appreciated every illustration. Dr. Rosengarten is an archivist and curator herself, and she enjoyed the “photographs and ephemera so painstakingly collected...and culled from archives and private collections across the state (to) illustrate nearly every page.” She praises Ellen Appel’s “flashy dust jacket” and the “high-gloss color plates” produced from the photos

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Honor or Memorialize a Friend or a Loved One With a Donation to the TJHS Endowment Fund

When you honor or memorialize a friend or a loved one with a donation to the Texas Jewish Historical Society's Endowment Fund, you help support important programs. Send the honoree's full name, type of honor (memorial, congratulations, and occasion—birthday, anniversary, award, new child or grandchild, etc.) and your name, along with a check in the amount of your choice to:

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

Your support of Texas Jewish Historical Society's programs is greatly appreciated and will be recognized in an issue of the quarterly news magazine. Thank you.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society gratefully acknowledges your gift to its Endowment Fund in the amount of

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In honor/memory of: _____

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Donor Information:

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

Yiddish Books, Records Needed


The National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Maine has been working for many years collecting Yiddish books in an attempt to save Yiddish culture. In addition, they have also collected Yiddish records, and the Judaica Sound Archives at Florida Atlantic University Library in Boca Raton, Florida has become the repository for these records.

Since 2002, the Sound Archives has been collecting, cleaning, and digitizing fragile vintage

phonograph records—78s and LPS. They are creating a huge digital database of Jewish music, with the Yiddish Book Center supporting their efforts. The Center has donated their accumulated collection of over 3,000 records and continually sends additional records as they are received.

In addition, the Sound Archives are looking for Sephardic recordings—78s, LPs and CDs—some that originated in pre World War I Turkey or interwar Europe, the U. S., and Israel. These records were produced in small

runs and would be a wonderful addition to the archives.

If you have any Yiddish records, books, or other materials that you would like to donate, contact the Judaica Sound Archives at their web site, <http://faujsa.fau.edu> or the director, Nathan Tinanoff, at 561-297-2207. You may also contact the Yiddish Book Center; Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Building; 1021 West Street; Amherst, MA 01002 for additional information. 

Visit us on the web at www.txjhs.org.

www.txjhs.org

In Memoriam

A. I. Schepps, TJHS member, from Houston, died September 11, 2009. He was 100 years old.

May his memory be a blessing.

Corpus Christi); and Jim Jakubitz, Executive Director of the Tulsa Jewish Retirement and Health Care Center. WOW—wait until you see the complex grounds! The grounds house the Sherwin Miller Museum, the Federation, the Charles Shusterman JCC, (note the Texas connection to the Shusterman Center for Jewish Studies on the UT Austin campus) the Retirement Center, tennis courts, a swimming pool, and adjacent to the complex the villas (retirement homes). We will be staying directly across the street at the Marriott hotel. Arrangements have been made (if you arrive early on Friday afternoon) for TJHS members to tour the Miller Museum—keep your sticker ID which will enable you to return again on Sunday afternoon. Rabbi Charles Sherman has extended an invitation for us to join Temple Israel on Friday evening for their interfaith dinner and services with their guest rabbi, Rabbi Capers C. Fennye, Jr. of the Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation of Chicago (if his name is familiar to you, his family's guest for Passover Seder was President Barak Obama and family). What a wonderful opportunity for us to meet not only other Jewish families, but other members of the Tulsa community.

On Saturday morning, we will

have speakers from TJHS and Tulsa speaking about the history of Texas and Oklahoma Jewry, plus a session on Genealogy 101—a great way to research our family history. Saturday lunch and afternoon will be on your own to explore Tulsa, which boasts the renowned Gilcrease Museum, the Philbrook Museum of Art, the Tulsa Air and Space Museum, and much more (you will have visitor information provided by the Tulsa Convention Center with your packet upon arrival). On Saturday evening, we will continue learning about both Texas and Oklahoma Jewry from our speakers. Our weekend concludes with our board meeting on Sunday morning, also at the complex. Following the adjournment of the meeting, we will proceed directly into the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art where we will have a docent-guided tour for those not able to see the Museum early on Friday. Mr. Feldman has graciously volunteered to open the museum early for TJHS members.

The Tulsa Jewish Genealogical Society, as well as the entire Tulsa Jewish community are being invited to our Saturday sessions and are welcome to attend our board meeting on Sunday. The leaders we met with are looking forward to meeting TJHS members—you never know who you'll

meet and how much you'll have in common. As Barry Abels and I discovered while talking, he knew my mother, Blanche Sheiness, may she rest in peace, when he lived in Corpus Christi.

You can either drive (a four-hour drive from Dallas; Samylu and I thought the drive went quickly with little traffic—and think of the casinos you can stop at—we saw at least four!) or you can fly to Tulsa (American, Delta, United, Southwest, Air Trans) and the Marriott has a complimentary shuttle to pick you up—it's about 20 minutes to the hotel.

Please plan to join us for the winter board meeting in Tulsa—to meet new friends and neighbors to the “north” and have the opportunity to see a U.S. renowned Jewish Art Museum!

Our Annual Gathering will be held the weekend of April 23rd in Dallas and the host committee is diligently working on plans.

I wish each of you an early Happy Chanukah, and a Happy New Year, and I hope to see you at the winter board meeting and the Annual Gathering.



President, 2008-2010

Lone Stars of David, continued from page 8

of Jenny Solomon, Carolyn Cruz, David Hoffman, Davie Lou Solka, and Larry Rose.

Last but not least, the reviewer congratulates the co-editors. “Rabbi and historian Kenneth A. Roseman, author of a prize-winning series for young readers, was recruited early in the project and helped shape its themes and structures

Last but not least, the reviewer congratulates the co-editors. “Rabbi Kenneth A. Roseman, author of a prize-winning series for young read-

ers, was recruited early in the project and helped shape its themes and structure. Hollace Weiner writes with the ear of a journalist and the eye of a painter.” The reviewer adds that “the richness and readability of the volume is a credit to the talents of its editors.”

Everyone take a bow. We have another winner!

Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas, which retails for \$35, is in its second printing. It can be purchased at Barnes & Noble, Borders, and through www.amazon.com.

Save the Date

January 15-17, 2010
Joint Board Meeting with
Oklahoma Jewish Historical
Society in Tulsa

April 23-25, 2010
Annual Gathering in
Dallas

— Symposium on the Galveston Movement —

The Symposium on the Galveston Movement was held in conjunction with the "Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America Through Galveston Island," an exhibit at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum on September 10-11, 2009.



Bryan Stone, Sally Drayer, and Rabbi Jimmy Kessler



Dr. Robert Abzug

Helen Wilk, Elaine Albin, Ima Joy Gandler, and Barbara Rosenberg



Jan Hart



Samylu Rubin and Betty and Neil Gurwitz

Becoming American by Way of the Hebrew Institute

by **Hollace Ava Weiner**

*Excerpted from **Grace & Gumption: Stories of Fort Worth Women***

© Texas Christian University Press, 2007

A trio of Arab businessmen who moved to Fort Worth enrolled in English-language classes at a Baptist church, but quit because the teachers delivered more doctrine than diction. Instead, the Muslims attended the Council of Jewish Women's Americanization School at the Hebrew Institute and contentedly learned in a non-sectarian classroom.

Likewise, the Italian nuns running Saint Theresa's Home for children studied English at the Hebrew Institute. The sisters, who wore habits to class, learned not only the vernacular but also enough streetwise tips to pass their Texas driving tests.

Another student, a longtime Fort Worth resident from Greece, yearned to take her citizenship exam but could not comprehend America's three branches of government. At the Americanization School, her teacher compared the United States' executive, legislative, and judicial branches to an old-fashioned kitchen stove. The oven was the legislative branch; the broiler, the judiciary; and the stovetop, the chief executive. Each branch functioned separately, yet together as a unit. The metaphor helped the immigrant pass her naturalization test.

The teacher, in each instance, was Amelia Levy Rosenstein, a master of metaphor and the Americanization School's unofficial dean from the 1930s until the school's closing in 1973. Without textbooks—or tuition—Rosenstein taught year after year, first at the Hebrew Institute and later at Beth-El Congregation, using intuition and common sense to teach adults from more than a score of foreign nations. Along with a corps of changing

volunteers, she cut pictures out of grocery ads and catalogues and pasted them on construction paper to simulate a trip to the store. She hosted potluck suppers in her home to sample dishes from foreign lands. She scheduled after-school conferences to untangle bureaucratic snafus resulting from the ever-changing maze of immigration statutes and naturalization requirements.

The Council of Jewish Women opened the Americanization School in 1907, during an era when democracy's melting-pot theory prevailed. At that time, Fort Worth was a booming stockyards-and-packinghouse town, beckoning immigrant families from Greece, Poland, Mexico, and at least fifteen other nations. With the promise of jobs, foreigners arrived to work in the city's two meatpacking plants, one operated by Swift & Co. and the other by Armour & Co.

In the early twentieth century, there were few restrictions on European or Latin American immigration. However, the increasing visibility of foreigners with varying complexions led to mounting xenophobia and, by 1921, to immigration quotas based upon country of origin. The general populace believed the Anglo-Saxon heritage to be the strongest, purest, most civilized strain. Popular public speakers and best-selling books advised that instilling immigrants with



Anglo-Saxon values and customs would “convert” them to the American work ethic and turn them into patriotic citizens. The Council of Jewish Women's Americanization School met a need, both practical and psychological, helping to homogenize newcomers through lessons in language, etiquette,

and hygiene. The Americanization School also reassured the city's Jews, whose families had immigrated to the United States a generation or so before, that they too were looked upon as 100% American.

The Americanization School's 1907 opening corresponded with the start of the Galveston Movement, which, over a seven-year period, brought ten thousand Yiddish-speaking refugees to Texas. From the port of Galveston, these East-European immigrants dispersed across Texas and the Middle West as far north as the Dakotas, with an average of eight refugees a month settling in Fort Worth.

The city's Americanization School opened with six teachers—three women from the Council and three men from the B'nai B'rith lodge. It enrolled around twenty students—so-called “scholars” ranging in age from 14 to 45. Evening classes initially convened in a prominent location—the Tarrant County Courthouse, a land-

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mark that symbolized the school’s importance and the women’s connections.

The Fort Worth Council of Jewish Women—along with sister sections in Detroit and New York—was among the earliest Jewish women’s groups to organize a school to “help the foreign born.” As the grassroots effort caught on, the Council’s headquarters in New York issued a policy statement in 1911 urging that every chapter help Americanize immigrants who were resettling in their cities. Eventually, Americanization Schools opened in dozens of cities, including El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio. To assist the network of adult-education schools, the Council’s national office published instruction manuals, sponsored regional institutes, and worked so closely with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service that it had its own special code number—#116—for requesting documents, tracking lost paperwork, and helping immigrants cut red tape. As the organization’s influence expanded, it added the word “National” to its name in 1923, becoming the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW).

Fort Worth’s Americanization School was well established by 1925, the year that Amelia Levy, a Houston schoolteacher, visited the city to attend the Jewish Chautauqua Society’s southwest regional meeting. Her role was to present a “model Sunday school lesson” during a program following Friday-evening worship services at Beth-El, the city’s Reform congregation. Her appearance so captivated congregant Abe Rosenstein, an auditor with the Rock Island Railroad, that a two-year courtship ensued.

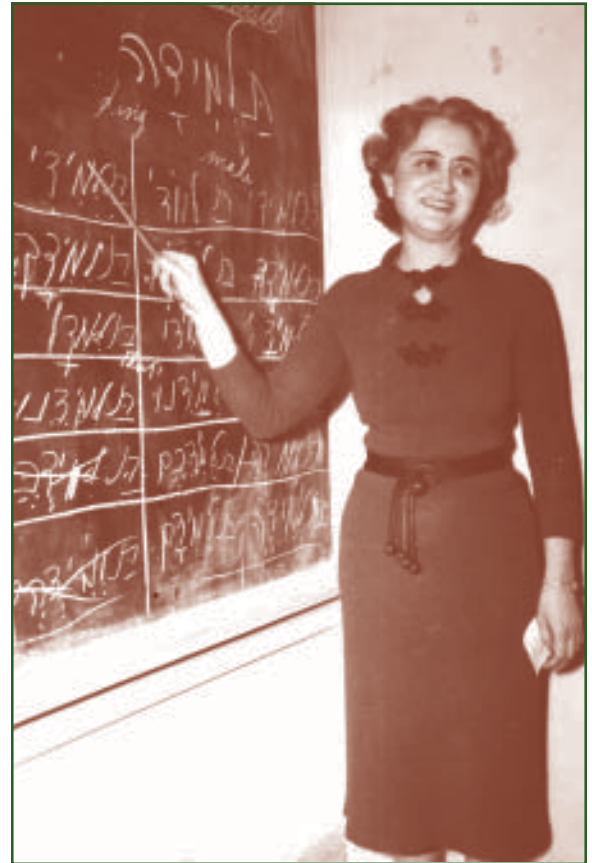
The couple married in Houston in June of 1927 and moved in with his family in a house at 2511 Fifth Avenue in Fort Worth.

In that era, marriage was deemed a fulltime role for women. Female

teachers lost their classroom positions when they wed. The Fort Worth school board, however, relaxed the rule if there was a teacher shortage—and there was. Amelia Rosenstein was hired at an annual salary of \$900 to teach first grade at Hi-Mount Elementary, a four-room, redbrick building, now a community center, at 4125 Lafayette Avenue. She later taught at Arlington Heights Elementary at 5100 Camp Bowie Boulevard. The school district’s employment policy granted exceptions to married women, but not those expecting children. Amelia Rosenstein apparently stopped teaching at the start of the 1931 school year. On December 7, 1931, Amelia and Abe Rosenstein’s only child, Bernard, was born. Since teaching was Amelia’s calling, as soon as she was able, she began to substitute in the Americanization School.

By then, the school for immigrants had experienced some ups and downs and was at a low point. Libby Simon Ginsburg, president of the Council of Jewish Women (and a cousin of Abe Rosenstein), made it her priority, according to her annual report, to restore the “school of adult education” to its prior position of prestige. This was during the Depression, and funds were scarce. Classroom space was donated by the Hebrew Institute, the three-story Jewish community center at 819 Taylor Street that was operated by Ahavath Sholom, the Orthodox synagogue next door. A recruitment drive for students went into high gear. Among the “difficulties to overcome was getting married women to attend classes.” By the end of the spring semester, however, the Americanization School once again had a reputation “as

a school of real merit.” Ginsburg reported that the Fort Worth “Board of Education became cognizant of our



excellent work . . . [and] . . . furnished us a highly qualified teacher.” Among the volunteer teachers listed in the Council’s annual report for 1934 was “Mrs. A. Rosenstein.”

The more Amelia Rosenstein volunteered at the Americanization School, the more she took charge. When the school district’s teacher moved on to another position, Rosenstein stepped in and received a small salary. In the late-1930s, the Works Progress Administration began funding English-literacy classes. The Americanization School received some of that New Deal money, funneled through the Fort Worth school board. Gradually, Rosenstein became the school’s unofficial dean.

“I went to help, and I liked it so much,” Rosenstein told the *Fort*

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Worth Press. “You just lose yourself so completely in . . . these people who come from all over the world. It’s a challenge to help.” The most challenging students were those who had never been to school and were illiterate in their native language. By contrast, students with formal schooling—whether in Japanese or Swahili—realized that there were patterns to discern, and they grasped more quickly where the teacher was headed.

The stream of students enrolling at the Americanization School throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s was mainly from Europe, where Hitler was rising to power. After World War II, the War Brides Act of 1945 facilitated immigration for spouses and families of returning American soldiers. In 1948, the Displaced Persons Act allowed admittance of many refugees uprooted by the war and unable to enter the United States under standard immigration policies. . . . The 1953 Refugee Relief Act loosened restrictions for still more. With the onset of the Cold War, the Hungarian Refugee Act of 1956 and Cuban Adjustment Program of the 1960s kept Rosenstein’s classes full and diverse. Fort Worth’s Americanization School became a veritable United Nations, a diplomatic meeting ground, which annually enrolled up to thirty students from Siberia to the South Pacific.

One rule at the school was “English only”—a trial indeed for Eulalia and Petra Zamora, sisters-in-law from south of the border who had failed their citizenship tests three times during a 19-year period. After one semester in Amelia Rosenstein’s classroom, they made the grade.

More difficult than the Zamoras was an Asian student who resisted using capital letters at the start of sentences. His native language had but one set of letters—all the equivalent of lower case. Another challenging student was a Swiss chef who needed to

learn culinary terms. Rosenstein’s students roared with laughter as she contorted her body to illustrate the word *gizzard*. “As long as we have . . . pantomime, we’re all right,” she chuckled. Rosenstein utilized Braille to assist a blind student, and speech therapy to help an adult who had so few teeth that she could not pronounce *Massachusetts*.

One year, the FBI came looking for Rosenstein. The reason: an Austrian war bride married to a Saginaw, Texas judge had heard about the school but had no idea how to locate it. Her only clue was that a woman named *Eemelia* from a Jewish organization ran the classes. Out of frustration, the war bride, Margueretha Hess Luedke, asked her husband’s chum, the Saginaw chief of police, to track down the school. He turned the request over to his friends at the FBI. One evening, a startled Amelia Rosenstein picked up the telephone receiver and heard a man’s voice announce, “Mrs. Rosenstein? This is Agent _____ with the FBI. We’ve been looking for you.” A short time later, Margueretha Luedke passed her citizenship test.

Another, much larger, success story involved a Hong Kong war bride—a former teacher who not only became an American citizen but also enrolled at Texas Wesleyan College, graduated *magna cum laude*, studied on scholarship at Texas Woman’s University, and became an East Coast research chemist.

Most Americanization students had more modest goals. Annie Rutlader, a pre-World War II immigrant, fulfilled her dream on December 1, 1940, when she smiled and raised aloft her naturalization papers for a *Star-Telegram* photographer. Polish-born Rutlader had arrived in Fort Worth in 1931 to join her husband, Sam, who had immigrated a decade before to join a brother. By 1938, de-

spite seven years in Texas, Annie’s English skills were virtually nonexistent. With her relatives, she spoke Polish and Yiddish. Her husband’s English remained rudimentary, because he operated a grocery store in a Mexican neighborhood. “He had to learn to speak Spanish because his customers weren’t going to learn to speak Yiddish!” observed his daughter, Bess Rutlader Gaines, who was born in 1932.

When Bess started first grade in the fall of 1938, her mother enrolled in the Americanization School. “We were learning to read English at the same time,” she recounted. “I would help her with some of the work. I remember so well asking her the questions that might be on her citizenship test: ‘Can anybody be a president?’ She would shake her head, ‘No,’ and say, ‘You have to be born in the United States.’”

Bess remembered riding the bus with her mother to the Hebrew Institute, where classes convened until 1951, when the building was sold. Neither of Bess’s parents ever learned to drive a car. During her mother’s afternoon classes, the child waited in the lobby on a marble bench in front of a white-marble slab inscribed with the names of 81 Jewish servicemen from Fort Worth who had fought in World War I. Bess read and re-read their names—Tony Bergman . . . David Greines . . . Leo Potishman . . . S. Sankary. “It was cold on that bench,” Bess recalled. Whenever Annie Rutlader stayed after class to confer with her teachers, Amelia Rosenstein invited the child into the classroom.

More than half a century later, Bess recalled Amelia Rosenstein as a “tiny” but commanding woman with “big, round brown eyes, like Betty Davis,” and wavy, graying hair loosely pulled back into a bun. She often wore high heels, white gloves, and a neck-

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lace that matched her dress. A cordial yet formal presence, she could communicate with anyone, whether or not they spoke the same language. Bess remembered Rosenstein especially well because her family subsequently moved into a one-story brick house with a front porch a block away from the Rosensteins' home at 2717 Hemphill Street.

The Rutladers were among the more fortunate immigrants who had departed Europe before the outbreak of World War II. Later students at the Americanization School were not as blessed.

Livia Schreiber, a survivor of the Auschwitz death camp, arrived in Fort Worth in 1945 and moved in with her first cousin, physician Eugene Steinberger. He had sponsored her immigration to America. Pretty and animated, the 20-year-old refugee picked up English with a lilting Czech accent. The NCJW nominated her as its 1947 candidate for Presentation, a Jewish debutante ball held at Thanksgiving time. Within a few years, Livia married Texan Sam Levine, enrolled in the Americanization School, and applied for U.S. citizenship. On June 19, 1950, Livia Schreiber Levine stood before a federal district judge, renounced allegiance to any "prince or potentate," and recited the oath of American citizenship. Her success turned into a front-page headline in the next morning's *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*: "Citizenship Helps Blot Out Concentration Camp." Levine's empathy and optimism led her to return to the Americanization School as a volunteer teacher. (In later years, she taught Hebrew and Holocaust studies at Beth-El.)

Each Jewish woman to graduate from the Americanization School received a year's membership in the NCJW. Amelia Rosenstein encouraged Livia Levine to attend a meeting. Following introductions, Levine was

asked to describe her wartime ordeal, from her 1939 deportation from Czechoslovakia to her seven-year trauma at the Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps. "My English was so bad, I am afraid I hit it off wrong with the women," Levine recalled. Some of the women were skeptical of her narrative. "One of the ladies said, 'You know, we had it hard too. We had to have special coupons for gasoline and tires for a car.' . . . I was talking to them about bread Some of these women really and truly did not know what had gone on under the Nazis. I was so hurt." Although the trauma of the death camps had been in the headlines, many chose to deny it or blot it out."

Americans were even less aware of Louis and Ann Kirschner Bogart's nightmare. This Polish couple—he, a textile designer from Lodz, and she, a fashion designer from Beilsko-Biala—met and married in Uzbekistan after spending much of the war in Stalinist labor camps in Siberia. "Nobody talked about people in Russia starving to death. It was never publicized," maintained Ann Bogart, who immigrated to Fort Worth in 1950. "In Siberia, we were eating grass. If we did get food, it was corn mush three times a day. I can't eat cornbread to this day. It tastes bitter to me. In Siberia, during the winter we cut down trees for fuel. In the summer, we planted potatoes. You couldn't run away. You would freeze to death."

At the outbreak of World War II, both Ann's and Louis's families had fled east to escape the advancing German army, only to be taken prisoner by the Russians. When Germany attacked Russia in 1941, the Soviets joined the Allies and eventually released Polish prisoners, many of whom journeyed by cattle wagon across the Ural Mountains to Uzbekistan. There, Ann and Louis met in January 1944 at the home of her

cousin, also a war refugee. The couple married on March 8, 1945. Post-war, the Bogarts spent five years in a displaced persons camp in the Bavarian town of Landsberg. From there, they applied to immigrate to Israel, Norway, and the United States. "We waited to see what came first," Ann Bogart explained. Visas for Norway and the United States arrived on the same day. The Bogarts chose America, "because Norway was too close to Russia."

The couple traveled by ship to New Orleans and by train to Fort Worth, where they received one month's rent for an apartment stocked with food. Once in Texas, they put the past behind them. "It's good to know where you came from," Ann Bogart acknowledged, "but you can't think about the things that happened. You have to go forward or you will just wilt away."

In Fort Worth, Louis Bogart went to work as a shipping clerk at S. Herzfeld Sportswear, a ladies'-ready-to-wear manufacturer. Owners Sello and Frieda Herzfeld, German immigrants who had fled to the U.S. in 1938, were Americanization-School graduates themselves and good friends of Amelia and Abe Rosenstein. In fact, when Sello Herzfeld passed his naturalization exam in the 1940s, he celebrated by giving the Rosensteins' son a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond.

During the months that Louis Bogart worked at S. Herzfeld Sportswear, his wife, Ann, earned extra money at home, stitching clothing alterations on her Singer sewing machine. It was Amelia Rosenstein who introduced Ann Bogart to pinking shears—the saw-toothed scissors that keep edges of fabric from easily fraying.

"I didn't go very long to the Americanization School," Ann Bogart recalled. "Because I knew more languages than one, it was easier for

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me.” At the Americanization School, Ann and Louis Bogart received instruction in U.S. history, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution. Ultimately, none of those civics lessons came to bear when Ann Bogart took her citizenship exam. “All I remember about my test is that . . . the man asked me why a woman cannot be a president of the United States.” Quizzically, she stared back at the examiner, unaware that he was teasing her with a sexist joke. “He said, ‘Because a woman won’t say her age.’ That was my test. He never asked me about history.”

Toward the end of Ann Bogart’s second year in Fort Worth, she designed a coat for a schoolteacher. A buyer with Meacham’s Department Store saw the teacher wearing the coat, asked where it was purchased, and subsequently contracted with Ann Bogart to sew for the upscale store. “I started to make skirts,” she recalled. “Louis took an order for the skirt—five dozen. He went to Dallas, where he bought leftover fabric. I sewed them.” The couple’s eye for business and fashion soon led them to apply for a loan from the Hebrew Free Loan Association—also called *Gemilus Chasodim*, Yiddish for “deeds of kindness.” This lending institution, common in Jewish communities and dating to 1907 in Fort Worth, extends interest-free business loans upon the recommendation of two co-religionists. “That’s how we started,” Ann Bogart recalled. (The Herzfeld sportswear company had also begun with a Hebrew free loan.) Bogart Industries eventually employed 1,000 people in factories in Fort Worth, Jacksboro, Cleburne, Dublin, and Mexico. Ann Bogart designed clothing for Sears, Roebuck and Co. and J.C. Penney. She sewed custom-made bathing suits and evening gowns for contestants in the Miss Texas and Miss America Pageants. For many years, the

Bogarts served on the board of directors of the Miss Texas Pageant. For Ann Bogart and many other immigrants, the Americanization School was one important step along the path toward a new life in Texas.

Rosenstein’s son Bernard, who lives in Dallas, recalled that one of his mother’s most unforgettable students was Rosie Snofsky (pronounced *Schnapfsky*). A Polish immigrant, she visited the Rosensteins’ home one day for help with filling out her citizenship application. “Mama asked, ‘Where’d you come from?’ ‘Pinsk.’ She then asked, ‘When’s your birthday?’ Rosie responded ‘*Auch Purim*,’” meaning on the Jewish holiday of Purim, which can fall in February or March, depending upon the Jewish lunar calendar. The year that Rosie Snofsky applied for U.S. citizenship, Purim fell on March 17. Therefore, Amelia Rosenstein wrote March 17, 1882, as her birth date. “It became a family joke,” Bernard recalled. “The birthday of Mrs. Snofsky”—hardly an Irish-sounding name—“was on St. Patrick’s Day.”

Besides teaching English, helping immigrants fill out forms, training volunteers, and leading the Council of Jewish Women, Amelia Rosenstein also taught first-grade Sunday School at Beth-El Congregation for forty years.

The first-grade curriculum began with the creation of the world. “Children love and enjoy the ‘in the beginning,’” Rosenstein told the *Fort Worth Press*. Rosenstein’s creation-story lessons culminated with the celebration of the Sabbath, with several Sundays devoted to a Sabbath Table program. Over and over, the first graders rehearsed Hebrew blessings for lighting candles, sipping the fruit of the vine, and breaking bread until they had internalized the sanctity of the seventh day. They baked challah in the Temple kitchen. The course of study

ended with an annual Model Sabbath Table Demonstration—a Sunday morning when each first grader set his or her place at an elegant table covered with fine linen. From home, the students brought a setting of china, silver, and crystal, as well as fresh flowers, candlesticks, and a *Kiddush* cup. The children’s beaming parents attended, as did the rabbi. One parent sent her son with a paper plate instead of fine china and received an admonishment from the teacher.

Rosenstein’s final Model Sabbath Table Demonstration was celebrated in the fall of 1972. That November, she turned 75. By the end of the school year, her sister-in-law Millie had died, and her husband Abe was in declining health. Amelia Rosenstein announced her retirement.

Rosenstein’s adult students begged her to continue. The NCJW looked for a successor. The school’s top two volunteers were Clara Levy, a Beth-El congregant who worked at General Dynamics, and her close friend Pat Riddell, an Episcopalian. “They asked me if I would take over the school,” recalled Riddell, whose volunteer work had earned her “honorary membership” in the NCJW. Riddell declined the job because she was unfamiliar with the labyrinth of rules governing immigration and naturalization. That was Rosenstein’s area of expertise.

Thus, Amelia Rosenstein’s 1973 retirement brought to a close the Americanization School, which, under her guidance, had graduated more than 600 students. By then, area public schools offered adult-education classes to help foreigners transition to life in Texas. The NCJW’s Americanization School no longer filled an unmet community need.

At a Sabbath service honoring Amelia Rosenstein on September 7, 1973, several generations of worshippers gathered to praise the beloved

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Life in Needville, Texas

by H. P. Erlichman

When my parents took me home from St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston in June, 1929, it was to a street that ran off the two blocks of Needville's main street. During the nine years Needville was my home, the sign as one entered the town indicated a population of 400. There were no street names then, but now the street our house was on is called Richmond Street.

A car mechanic's garage was at the corner of the main street, and next to it were three houses. When I was brought there, the families occupying those houses were the Schaeffers, the Steins, and the Erlichmans, the only Jewish inhabitants of the town. The Schaeffers moved before I have any memories of them as neighbors, but I do remember many times stopping in to the drug store they ran in Rosenberg, eleven miles away. Mr. Stein and my father both ran general stores on the main street.

Trying to keep a kosher home was a challenge that faced my mother. Fairly regular trips into Houston made it possible to get kosher meat. I recall the shops which were run by the Lewis and Lidsky families. There was a solution at hand for chicken for Friday night Shabbat dinner. Our neighbor, Mr. Stein, was capable of killing a chicken so that it was kosher. I observed the routine many times.

He would gather the wings to the fowl's side so that he could tuck the bird under his left arm. Then, he would bend its neck back so that he could pluck a few feathers before performing a single stroke with his straight razor and then, released the chicken to do its dance of death. My mother would pluck the feathers and eviscerate the bird so that she could complete the process of making it kosher. I had none of the illusions about


food that neatly packaged parts allow young people today to entertain.

On the whole, my memory is that although we were viewed as different, people were friendly. My brother and I had regular playmates. There was evidence, however, that some people held prejudices against us. More than once "Christ-killer" was shouted at me by one of my playmates when we had some disagreement. At first I let it pass with no particular bad feelings. But an important incident in my childhood revealed to me that it had affected me quite deeply.

One of my playmates, a girl named Hilda, the older daughter of the car mechanic, was a frail child. She was one of my favorite classmates. Some congenital problem probably accounted for her dying when she was about six or seven. That in itself was frightening to me. I heard that her funeral would be at a church a few blocks away. It was a relatively small, white building with double doors a few steps up. When I was about to enter, I saw at the far end a large crucifix. It hung at an angle so that it seemed to be floating toward me. I was terrified, recalling the epithet my playmates had flung at me. I turned and ran home crying all the way.

An incident that I recall somewhat from experiencing it but probably more from hearing my parents tell of it, involved a visit from a hobo. This was in the thirties when there were many riding the rails. A hobo had appeared in town on a Friday and asked if there were any Jewish people who might take him in for a Shabbat dinner. Someone in town referred him to my parents. The idea of a Jewish hobo was, in itself, somewhat astonishing, but there was something that made him even more unique. When he first appeared, I was frightened by the


large bundle he had flung over his shoulder. I had been aware of the abduction of the Lindbergh baby and considered myself a potential victim. But my parents were very welcoming and in return, the hobo shared some of the valuables in his bundle. They were newspaper clippings that declared him to be the King of the Hobos. He hit the road the next day with the address of my maternal aunt and her family of twelve children in Cleveland, Ohio. Sometime later, he paid them a Shabbat visit, too.

Although I soon lived in places with much larger Jewish populations, I value my childhood in Needville for making me aware of both the positive and negative aspects of being a member of a minority and for teaching me to question the degree of acceptance from the population as a whole. 

Please Note:

If you are sending a check to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, please indicate the purpose of the check—dues, gift, contribution, etc.

Becoming American, continued from page 16.

Sunday school teacher and Americanization coach. When the legendary educator died a decade later, on December 19, 1983, Rabbi Robert Schur noted in his graveside eulogy that Amelia Rosenstein had taught students from Vietnam to Venezuela and from first grade to retirement age. Her lessons would live on. 

TJHS Fall Board Meeting



Top left photo: Babe Schwartz and Barbara Rosenberg. Top right photo: Jan and Charles Hart. Photo to left: Gary and Michael Solka.



Dick and Claire Brooks



Davie Lou Solka

Austin, September 12-13, 2009



*Clockwise from top left
photo: Dr. Robert Abzug;
Vickie and David Vogel;
Rusty and Mitzi Milstein;
Marvin and Yetta Leshin,
Raye Brown and David Leff.*



Charles and Bertha Bender at their son Marvin's wedding.

(Jerry), Marvin, and Sybil.³³ Manny, Jerry, and Sybil attended the University of Texas; Marvin went to Texas A & M.³⁴

In 1953, Charles retired from the department store³⁵ and sold it. It burned later that summer and was never reopened.³⁶ He stayed active into his eighties. His obituary read that he had been in failing health for several years and a patient at Breckenridge Nursing Home during the final seven weeks of his life. He was buried in Ahavath Sholom Cemetery in Fort Worth.³⁷

After Charles' death, Bertha moved to Houston to be near her sons.³⁸ She enjoyed a very long, active life, and wrote a memoir booklet for her grandchildren. She was a member of Congregation Beth Yeshurun, JCC's Tuesday Club, the Yiddish Club, Golden Age Club, Hadassah, O.R.T., and Pioneer Women.³⁹

On her ninety-ninth birthday, the JCC gave Bertha a lifetime membership⁴⁰ and a special proclamation came from Mayor Kathy Whitmire.⁴¹ Bertha walked to McDonald's each morning for coffee with friends, even on

days when it was difficult to do so.⁴²

For her 100th birthday, she was honored by the American Society for Technion, Houston Chapter, at Stouffer Greenway Plaza. The Benders had donated funds in the late 1950s to build Bender Laboratory of Aeronautical Engineering at the Technion, which was instrumental in developing the aeronautical advances and avionics for which the IDF is known worldwide.⁴³ Two of their sons had studied at the Technion in 1930.⁴⁴ Among the Bender gifts were a high pressure jet and a supersonic wind tunnel.⁴⁵

Other honors for her milestone birthday included being made a charter member of the Mental Health Association of Houston and Harris County 100 Club.⁴⁶ Bertha was honored by Congregation Beth Yeshurun in a celebration that Rabbi Jack Segal invited all to attend.

"Once you hit a hundred," Bertha said, "there's nothing to it. When I turned seventy, I thought I was old, and then, strangely enough, every ten years after that I felt younger."⁴⁷

Bertha Bender died January 4, 1990 at the age of 101. Rabbi Paul Kaplan and Cantor Robert Gerber officiated at her funeral. She was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery on January 7, 1990.⁴⁸ As she ended one of her poems,

*It matters not, I've had my day,
I wouldn't turn back the clock of
time,*

*As in the night, I grope my way
to my allotted line.⁴⁹*

I'm sure many more stories could be told of Charlie and Bertha Bender of Breckenridge, Texas, and I would love to hear them, but these are the memories preserved in newspaper clippings in our archives.⁵⁰

References

¹ *Abilene Reporter News*, July 23, 1970 obituary of Charles Bender.

² Box 3A169 (all clippings cited are from this box unless otherwise noted),

Texas Jewish Historical Society Archives, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, containing photocopies and newspaper clippings (many unlabeled and undated) and unlabeled notes about Charles and Bertha Bender from *Deep in the Heart*, by Ruthe Winegarten and Cathy Schechter, Eakin Press, 1990.

³ *Abilene Reporter News*, op cit.

⁴ Unidentified biographical sheet.

⁵ Box 3A164, Betty Ewing, "A Delight at 101," *Houston Chronicle*, September 6, 1989.

⁶ *Abilene Reporter News*, op cit.

⁷ Box 3A169, Jeanne F. Samuels, undated.

⁸ Box 3A164, Bertha Bender, "Early Influences on my Life," 1983 NCJW Houston, Oral history.

⁹ *Breckenridge American*, February 10, 1963, and Ewing op cit.

¹⁰ Box 3A164, Bertha Bender, "I Remember When," November, 1983, NCJW Houston.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Ewing, op cit.

¹³ Unlabeled biographical information, apparently notes for *Deep in the Heart*.

¹⁴ Ewing, op cit.

¹⁵ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 19, 1970.

¹⁶ *Breckenridge American*, August 4, 1970.

¹⁷ *Breckenridge American?*, undated (August 4, 1970?).

¹⁸ *Breckenridge American*, op cit.

¹⁹ *Abilene Reporter News*, July 23, 1970 obituary of Charles Bender.

²⁰ Box 3A169.

²¹ *Abilene Reporter News*, July 23, 1970.

²² Unlabeled, undated newspaper article authored by "D.H.W."

²³ Photo of the Benders with Ben Gurion in *Deep in the Heart*, p. 163.

²⁴ Unlabeled, undated newspaper article; Ewing op cit.

²⁵ Unlabeled, undated newspaper

continued on page 21

Cemetery Book Update

The Cemetery Book that was published by the Texas Jewish Historical Society in 1997 is being updated. If you know of any deaths that have occurred since 1997 and the burial was in a non-Jewish cemetery, please contact Charles Hart at 254-778-2676 or cbhart635@sbcglobal.net



The Nominating Committee has begun selecting nominees for 2010-2011. If you or anyone you know is interested in serving on the board of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, please contact Vickie Vogel, chair, at vvogel@cvctx.net.

TJHS Traveling Exhibit

The Texas Jewish Historical Society has compiled two museum quality photo exhibits with explanations depicting early Jewish life and contributions. Both exhibits highlight the lives of Jews in Texas since the early part of the century.

Each exhibit is comprised of approximately thirty-six photographs that can either be self-standing with an easel back or hung on a wall. There is no charge for the exhibits and they will be shipped prepaid freight via

UPS in waterproof boxes to your location. The only expense to the borrower will be the shipping of the exhibit back via UPS ground.

The exhibits have been displayed in various locations in Texas and other parts of the United States, including Rhode Island and California. They are an excellent program for schools, congregations and other organizations. To schedule the exhibits, please contact Jack Gerrick at 817-927-8765 or email him at texbed@aol.com.

The deadline for the February, 2009 TJHS Newsletter is January 8.

Charles & Bertha Bender, continued from page 20

article.

²⁶ *Jewish Herald Voice*, July 7, 1960.

Photo can be found in *Deep in the Heart*, p. 163.

²⁷ Unlabeled, undated newspaper article.

²⁸ Unlabeled, undated newspaper article.

²⁹ *Breckenridge American*, November 21, 1954.

³⁰ *Breckenridge American*, February 10, 1963.

³¹ See Hollace Ava Weiner and Lauraine Miller, "Little synagogues across Texas," in *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, ed. by Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman, Brandeis University Press, 2007, pp. 189-190. Photo of the Benders and the Temple in 1929. Another version of this photo can be found in *Deep in the Heart*, p. 126.

³² *Breckenridge American*, 1929.

(Founded in 1929 as the *Daily American*, according to Rob Durham, managing editor, email August 11, 2009.) In 1974, Temple Beth Israel was sold to a church. Unidentified clipping.

³³ Unlabeled, undated newspaper obituary, and photo in Box 3Z290.

³⁴ Ewing op cit; photo in Box 3Z290.

³⁵ Unlabeled, undated article.

³⁶ unidentified biographical sheet.

³⁷ *Abilene Reporter News*, July 23, 1970.

³⁸ Unlabeled biographical information, apparently notes for *Deep in the Heart*.

³⁹ Unlabeled obituary.

⁴⁰ *Jewish Herald Voice*, undated.

⁴¹ Presumably *Jewish Herald Voice*, undated.

⁴² Jeanne F. Samuels, 1988 Passover edition of the *Jewish Herald Voice*, according to Rabbi Jack Segal. The clipping is not dated or identified in the archive box.

⁴³ Unlabeled, undated.

⁴⁴ Unlabeled, undated.


⁴⁵ Ewing, op cit.

⁴⁶ Unlabeled, undated.

⁴⁷ Ewing, op cit.

⁴⁸ Unlabeled obituary.

⁴⁹ From unlabeled obituary.

⁵⁰ Remember to include the name of the publication and date when you keep news clippings, to help future researchers! 

— Modernism Exhibit at Johns Hopkins — Features Work of Fort Worth Synagogue Designer

by Hollace Weiner

Czech architect and designer Erno Fabry, a Holocaust-era immigrant, left his imprint on a Texas synagogue. The ark doors he designed in 1948 for Fort Worth's Beth-El Congregation stayed with the Temple when it moved into a new building in 2000. What's more, the door's design—a sunburst of metal rays emanating from a central Jewish Star—is replicated in four gates at the entrance to the congregation's twenty-first century synagogue.

The appeal of Fabry's designs is underscored in a retrospective of his work, on display through October 25 at Johns Hopkins University's Evergreen Museum of Modernism in Baltimore. The exhibit catalogue, titled *Modernism at Evergreen: Erno Fabry (1906-1984)*, includes three photographs from the Fort Worth synagogue as well as examples of the designer's furniture, wall paper, murals, and buildings.

Erno Fabry (formerly Erno Fay Friedmann) was an architect, furniture designer, and "tastemaker" from Kosice, now part of the Czech Republic. He left Europe on a temporary visa in 1938 to work with the American Wood Council. When his ship, a Hamburg-Amerika liner, reached France, it was called back to Germany because Hitler had annexed Austria and planned to outfit all German ships for the war effort.

Erno's first instinct was to return to his hometown. But a brother advised him to continue to the U.S.A. The situation in Eastern Europe was dire. Most of his family perished.

In the United States, Fabry worked under Norman Bel Geddes, a famed theatrical and industrial designer. As the U.S. mobilized for war,

Erno designed airplane struts. He enlisted in the Army and fought in Normandy, North Africa, and Italy. In 1943, he legally changed his surname from Friedmann to Fabry.

After the war, his design business flourished. Postwar Americans, eager to move beyond classical and traditional designs, embraced Fabry's contemporary ideas. He often traveled from his New York office to El Paso to work with the American Furniture Company, owned by Mannie Blaugrund, a Czech-born Jew.

About that time, two El Paso brothers, Milton and Seymour Amstater, bought Fort Worth's Meacham's Department Store. They recruited Fabry to redesign the interior. The Amstater brothers were affiliated with Beth-El, which was gutted by fire in August of 1946. Beth-El's leaders admired Fabry's work and hired him to transform their 1920s shell of a building into a synagogue with a contemporary interior.

Fabry not only designed the ark doors, but also the stained-glass windows and the backdrop of marble and

travertine. The most striking feature in the redesigned sanctuary was the ceiling—with its recessed lighting and a floating Jewish star suspended from a kidney-shaped field.

Ringling the sanctuary walls were Fabry-designed menorahs fashioned from flat aluminum rods, bent perpendicular into art deco candelabrum. Like the ark door, these too were moved from the old synagogue to the new building and its Hall of Remembrance. The Beth-El Congregation Archives has correspondence with Fabry



Beth-El's sanctuary, 1948. (Courtesy W.D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.)

as well as blueprints for the menorahs and the Magen-David door.

Info: Evergreen Museum & Library, 4545 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland (410-516-0341; evergreenmuseum@jhu.edu; www.museums.jhu.edu). The exhibit runs through October 25. 🇺🇸



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Memories of Harlingen, continued from page 3

get help from some of the other members of the congregation. The beauty of this whole congregation was that it was a mixture of people and the different ways they practiced Judaism. It was, indeed, one Jewish community with absolute respect for each member and the way he or she wanted to practice his faith—true tolerance.

Some of the Harlingen Jewish families that I remember were Cohn, Wolf, Sondock, Levine, Messmer, and Kirsh.

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