

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Est. 1980



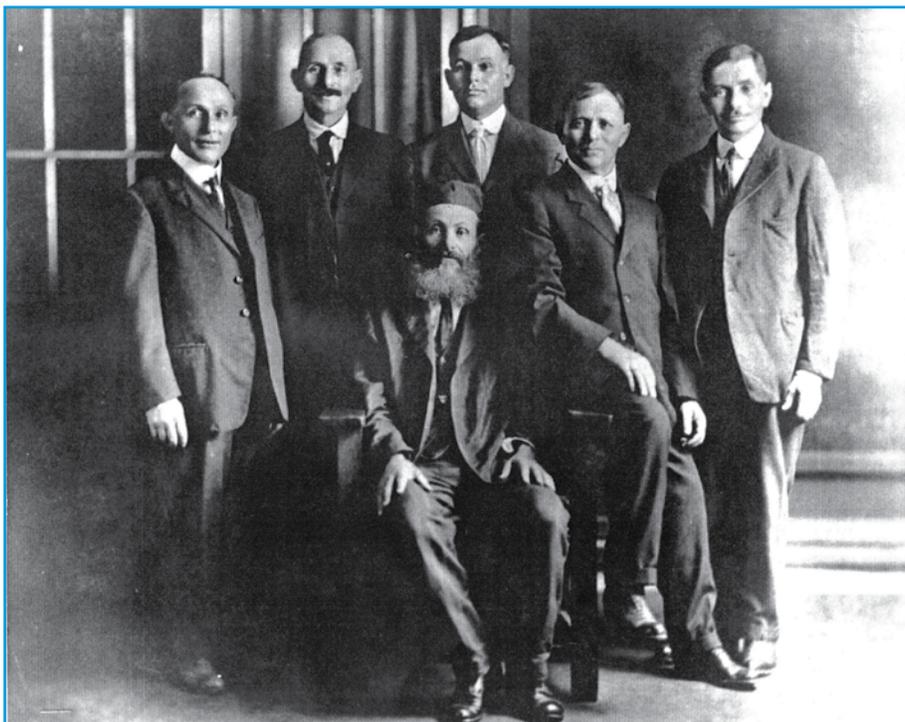
November, 2013 News Magazine

Searching for Emet (Truth) by Dede Fox

Dede Fox is a third-generation Texan whose debut poetry collection, Confessions of a Jewish Texas, came out in May, 2013. TCU Press published her historical novel, The Treasure in the Tiny Box, winner of the 8th Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition and later names a YA Honor Book by the Association of Jewish Libraries.

He was killed in a hit-and-run accident, they said. One of Houston's first. The skid marks indicated the driver had swerved off the road to hit my great-grandfather Baruch Mendel Sczupak. Although his children offered a reward, no one came forward. Some said the police department was infiltrated with KKK and that the accident was no accident at all since his beard and dark clothes marked him as an Orthodox Jew. Walking home from the synagogue, he was an easy target.

When I interviewed Great-Uncle Max and asked about his father, I learned Baruch Mendel had battled his wife over coming to the United States. My great-grandfather was certain Jews here did not keep Shabbat. They worked



Baruch Mendel and Brothers, 1918

about Baruch's varicose veins, sent him and his son, my great-Uncle Max, to a quarantine center on Pelican Island. Baruch insisted Max stay with him, because if they sent him back, he would need Max to say Kaddish over his European grave.

on Saturdays, a shanda.

My great-grandmother, however, was more concerned about the survival of her children. In the end, he agreed. They decided to land in Texas because they thought it was a shorter trip than the one to New York.

On April 6, 1914, they disembarked the Breslau from Bremen, Germany. Galveston immigration officials, concerned

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Message from the President

by Marc Wormser

It is difficult to believe that 2013 is almost over. And with Hanukah coming so early on Thanksgiving, I suspect that the remainder of the year will go faster.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society is active and growing.

The weekend in Longview, hosted by Rusty and Mitzi Milstein, was a fun-filled, educational excursion into our Jewish history in three communities—Longview, Jefferson, and Marshall. It started on Friday night at Temple Emanu-El, with dinner and services led by Rabbi Mar-



shal Klaven, the circuit rabbi from the Institute of Southern Jewish Living located in Jackson, Mississippi.

Saturday began early with a bus trip to Jefferson and Marshall. A visit to the Temple Moses Montefiore Cemetery in Marshall was very interesting, with a guided tour describing the histories of some of the Jewish families and the contributions these families made to the area.

Although the Jefferson Historical Museum was closed for repairs, we were able to visit the R. D. Moses Train Building housing the T&P Model Railroad built by R. D. Moses, a past TJHS member and board member. The HO gauge

railroad had been the work of R D, and his son, Arthur, was present to give us the history of his father and his hobby.

A stop at the Playhouse in Jefferson was very interesting. It was the original synagogue building of the Temple in Jefferson. Rabbi Klaven conducted a brief service in the Playhouse. The Torah that was in the synagogue is now in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The building, as a synagogue, is being maintained as much as possible by the Garden Club of Jefferson. The Board voted to donate \$500 to the Garden Club in Jefferson to support maintenance of the Playhouse and \$500 to the Rail Road Club to help pay off the loan for the building that houses the railroad from R D Moses.

As we continued to Marshall, we were able to visit the Jewish section of the cemetery and again pay witness to the many Jews that contributed to the development of the area. A brief stop at the Longview cemetery completed our tour of the area.

A panel presentation Saturday night was given by Rusty Milstein, Amy Milstein, Joyce Stidham, and Davie Lou Solka. This group reflected on growing up in a small East Texas town as a Jew. What was interesting to hear was the lack of anti-semitism in these communities at that time and a knowledge of being different religiously did not stop them from being just one of

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The Texas Jewish Historical Society November 2013 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 scans at 300 dpi or greater, in .gif, .tif, or .jpg format, and send electronically to Assistant Editor Davie Lou Solka at davielou@solka.net or by 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
Photographers Sally Drayer, Marvin Rich, Davie Lou Solka

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.



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Rope Walker

by Dianne Short



In the old Hebrew Cemetery in Corsicana, Texas is a headstone with only two words on it: **Rope Walker.**

Almost nothing is known of the man in the grave except the manner of his death. It is a tale of physical bravery and emotional mystery that has endured for well over a century.

What is known is that he came to Corsicana on a hot day in 1884 to perform at the grand opening of a store. The town was bustling with new stores and businesses opening, each trying to outdo the last. This one was Meyers and Henning Dry Goods Emporium.

M & H was on Beaton Street, the main artery of downtown Corsicana. "The biggest shovels to the biggest bodices" had been written on the front of the store, whose proprietors had hired the man to perform a spectacular stunt to draw customers to their grand opening.

The Mayor of Corsicana was there and a band was playing. The stunt had been advertised widely by M & H as an "astounding, astonishing, amazing unbelievable, never seen before or ever again, act of strength, gravity, and defiance of common sense."

It was a tragically accurate description. The man would walk a rope strung across Beaton Street from the second story of M & H catty corner across the Fifth Avenue intersection to the roof of Jackson's Saloon and Gentlemen's Relaxation Salon.

What made the feat more astounding was that the man would walk the rope with a full-size cast iron stove strapped to his back. In addition, he had only one leg, the other being a homemade

wooden peg with a rope-sized slot in the bottom. Word had spread and the crowd gathered for the noon event to listen to the Mayor and the band...and to watch the death-defying entertainment.

Captain J.A. Townsend's school had been dismissed so the children could attend, which swelled the crowd even more. They all waited in the dusty streets and on the board sidewalks for the entertainment to begin.

The band struck up, the Mayor cut the red ribbon and the cheering crowd looked upwards, awaiting the unbelievable feat. The rope was tightened and the man, wearing a sky blue uniform and seemingly relaxed, bowed to the audience from the roof of M & H. After all, he had performed the trick many times before. After motioning with his hands for complete silence to aid his concentration, he waited while two strong young men hoisted the heavy stove onto his back and strapped it tight.

The crowd hushed as the walker began to gingerly test the rope with his good foot. Then he moved out, putting all the weight of man and stove on the rope. Using his peg leg on the rope for balance, he moved slowly toward the center, smiling widely to his audience from over twenty feet above them.

He had the full attention of every eye. As he reached the center of the rope, the end tied to Jackson's Salon suddenly slacked and he lost his balance and in a horrifying moment, he fell and the stove fell with him, crushing his chest.

The shocked crowd rushed toward the crumpled man and several townsmen carried him to the Malloy Hotel around the corner. Dr. Gulik was summoned to assist, but little could be done. The man asked for a Methodist minister, and Pastor Abe Mulkey came and prayed with him. The man lingered in great pain, and that evening asked for Dr. Gulik for "a Jew man". As Corsicana had no rabbi, the owner of a downtown grocery store,

Bernard Simon, came to him and the man painfully whispered prayers with him in Hebrew. He would not reveal his identity or history to Mr. Simon. The only thing he supposedly said, also in perfect Hebrew, was to ask that he be "buried with my people."

Whether he told anyone his name is unrecorded and lost to history. He was buried in Jewish tradition the next day in Hebrew Cemetery and a stone was erected saying simply "Rope Walker." Although Corsican citizens tried many times over the years to locate and inform his family, no one was ever found.

Today, both M & H and Jackson's Salon have been gone over one hundred years. The stone for the unknown acrobat, however, still stands.

Notes:

This story was compiled from three sources:

1. William Rabinowitz's 2003 retelling of the words of his grandfather, Hyman Tikvah Rabinowitz, who was a travelling salesman and claimed to be there that day.
2. A 1936 *Corsicana Daily Sun* interview with Rachel Mae London, who as a child, was an eye witness to the tragedy.
3. My own fallible memory of the story. (It is noted that many details in the first two versions differ greatly from each other and from verifiable facts.)

It is also noted that for some reason, the community recently took Mr. Rabinowitz's story at face value and added a birth date to a new stone in the cemetery for the acrobat. There seems to way to verify that the acrobat would somehow tell strangers his birth date and place of birth but NOT tell them his name. The birth date makes him 69 at the time of his death. There is no actual evidence, however, for the date. Fact or fable, the man should be remembered. 

The Storm of September 8, 1900

by Julie Blum Hirsh

The following story was sent to us by Julie Blum Hirsh's great niece, Myra Lipper. The family had not seen this story before. Julia was the daughter of Ben & Rosa Blum and had three siblings—Sol (Myra's grandfather), Hannah, and Sarah. It is in Julia's own words and no editing was done.

Well, at 12 o'clock at noon there was not a drop of water in front of our house and at 12:46 you could not see the car track, which is one foot higher than the street. At 3 o'clock the water was over the third step, almost on the front porch. We then started to put all of our nice furniture, silver-ware and bric-a-brac upstairs and proceeded to tear up the parlor carpet and got it half up, when the water rushed in like an ocean. We all rushed upstairs as the water came up so rapidly. We lit a candle and stood some half way up the stair-case, thinking that papa and Sol would come home.

At 6 o'clock the front door and windows broke in, the light went out as the wind was blowing 112 miles an hour. We were in total darkness and beginning to feel some fear and mama was alone with us five girls, besides, Will Block (a neighbor) and Nancy (our cook), there was nothing for us to do, but to wait what was coming. We saw every house on our block jump off its foundation, still we did not think that our house would fall as we always kept it in thorough repair.

We were all in mama's room (which was situated in the back wing of the house) afraid to move. We heard voices about that time and peeping out of our back window we saw Mr. and Mrs. Woodville (our neighbor) floating over to the back stairs of our house and that was then about 20 feet deep. We assisted them into our house and gave Mrs. Woodville dry clothes. It was then nearly eight o'clock and Mr. Woodville suggested that we go into the front part of the house as it was built stronger. We hardly reached the front room when our house parted and the back part

floated to parts unknown as we have never found a board of it. When the house separated Will Block and Nancy jumped, as we thought to the death, but they miraculously saved their lives.

We huddled in the back room of the front part of house on the second floor, and without a moments notice the water rose so rapidly that before we knew it we were neck deep in the water. Mama and Hanna swallowed some of the salt water, while we were trying to keep our heads above water. We heard a crash and then all of us were thrown together and we knew that our house was off its foundation. We were afraid to move about in the dark fearing that we might go deeper into the water and thus meet our death and in this manner we passed two long and weary hours, thinking of our dear ones who were not with us at this terrible hour, and we thought that each moment would be our last and the last of those whom we loved dearest and best of all, but having due faith in God's infinite Power we did not fear death.

About 8 A.M. the water commenced to recede and we then found ourselves all together in one corner of the room. We then patiently waited for daylight which we thought, would never come, and while sitting there talking of our experience, Mama made the remark that she was hungry, having had nothing to eat since noon the previous day. I said "I am not hungry, but Oh, so cold and wet and would like to have a big drink of whiskey."

Then Mr. Woodville, Mama and I pulled some large pieces of drift wood out and made an opening large enough for a large dog to pass through.

I suggested that Carrie go through this opening first as she is so small, but she was afraid so I went our first, under the roof with my foot deep in the mud. I spied an old negro I knew and I waved for him to come and pull me out but he would not come near me as he thought I was a ghost, but after collecting my thoughts I called him by name. He then came up and recognizing me he said "Jesus Christ, Miss Julie Blum." He assisted me out, and I told him that mama and the four girls and Mr. and Mrs. Woodville were still under there then he, with four others made the opening larger so the rest of the folks could get out.

When we looked around, imagine our feelings when we saw our lot swept as clean as the palm of our hand and that we had floated two blocks away from our lot under the roof and did not know we had moved at all. It was then 8:15 A.M. Sunday when we were all out of our prison. When we got out we went to some neighbors whose house was still standing and got a cup of hot coffee.

Just then we saw Sol and he took us to town as we never could have found our way to town down Tremont Street. It took us 1-1 1/2 hours to reach town, which ordinarily takes us about 20 minutes. You can imagine how we felt when we saw dear Papa at his store, who had been informed at 3 A.M. that morning not to go out our way as everything was gone and that we were dead. He said that if his life depended upon it, he could not have come out there. He and Sol left the store at 5 P. M. Saturday evening when they got as far as Levy's livery stable. Uncle Charles would not let him come

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Papa Chazanow

by **Marianne Goldsmith** (Oakland, CA)

*This article is reprinted with permission from the author.
It first appeared on the blog, The Jewish Writing Project*

“Eat, Don’t Talk”

I received this advice from the only grandparent I ever knew—Frank (Papa) Chazanow. The occasion was lunch at Papa’s house, when I was five and a half, old enough to manage my own fork, and tall enough to sit (avec booster) in a grown-up chair. Seated next to my younger brother, I observed my grandfather as he ate soup, wiped his moustache with his napkin, and then launched into an intense discussion with my mother across the table. “Tachter (daughter),” he would say, and proceed to speak rapidly in Yiddish.

Whenever I heard “de kinder” (the children) mentioned, I would perk up, and attempt to join the conversation. I had significant news to share. For example, I could now write my entire name. Papa responded with a waving of spoon and direct eye contact (his watery grey, mind dark brown).

“Eat, don’t talk.”

I giggled and glanced over at my mother, who nodded gently. Papa

grinned slightly and then turned to my mother. I played with my soup, stirring the noodles and carrots, smushing the peas until the broth turned a murky green, still trying to make sense out of what was being said. Forever, it seemed I would never find out.

I wanted to ask questions. Why was my older sister called the “shayna madel” (pretty girl) and I was the “guta madel (good girl) which I interpreted to mean “good tomato”?

“Eat, don’t talk” was the cruelest of punishment.

Papa was always in shul before we arrived. He was standing at his shtender against the wall near the bima, the back of his balding head covered with a black yarmulke, the cream colored tallis draped in long folds over his small, bony shoulders. He davened with dignity, swaying back and forth.

When there was a break in the service, we greeted him. He leaned over to embrace each one of us, the tallis failing over us like a curtain as we

kissed him, lips brushing against his wiry grey mustache. “Good Shabbos.” He often took part in the Torah service on the bima, reciting blessings or conferring with the Rabbi or the cantor on proper procedure. At times, he even brought the service to a halt.

“Papa’s mad. Must be a mistake,” my mother whispered with a wry smile. The whole congregation had to wait until Papa was satisfied that the liturgical error was corrected.

I knew that my grandfather arrived in Texas about the same time as the men he rebuked on the bima, escaping the pogroms of Russia, sailing from Bremen to Galveston during the early 1900’s. Members of the Jewish community helped one another to survive, and Papa was one of many who made his way peddling fruit in the country towns of central Texas. At night, he slept under his wagon.

I wonder, did he recite his prayers before sleeping under the big, flat Texas sky, gazing up at the heavens, the bright stars glinting against a black night? 🇺🇸

President’s Message, continued from page 2

the gang.

The meeting concluded on Sunday with reminders of the upcoming trip for Cuba (seats on the bus may be sold out by the time you receive this News Magazine). See page 17 for more information.

The Crypto-Judaic Symposium at College Station will be held in College Station, Texas on Monday, January 20, 2014. TJHS gave a grant of \$10,000 to support this endeavor.

Page 16 shows dates of our upcoming meetings—please write those dates on your calendar and plan to join us.

As always, I remind you to pay your 2013 dues if you have not done so. Statements for 2014 will be mailed

the end of November. While thanking everyone for their support of TJHS, it is the desire of TJHS to see a higher percentage of dues payments in the year they are due. As of the October meeting, we have 667 total members, and 235 of those have outstanding dues. I know we can do better than this.

As I look forward to 2014, I cannot help but feel and see a more active TJHS. This is due in part to the strategic planning committee, which is planning for the next five years, and suggesting goals, activities, projects, and actions to involve more members. The result will make the Texas Jewish Historical Society a more recognizable party to the history of Texas Jewry. 🇺🇸

We need Your Stories!

We need your Texas Jewish History stories! Our News Magazine is filled with interesting stories from our membership. Contact Davie Lou Solka at bavilou@solka.net or 512-527-3799 if you need any help.

If you need TJHS membership applications for an event, program, personal use, etc., please contact Rusty Milstein at hrmilstein@prodigy.net.

TJHS Fall Meeting



Mitzi & Rusty Milstein were the chairs of the weekend.



Rabbi Marshall Klaven at Playhouse/former Temple Moses Montefior, Marshall, TX



Names to be provided. At the R.D. Moses Model Train Museum.



Rabbi Marshall Klaven at Havdalah



The R.D. Moses Model Train Museum.

— Longview, Texas, October 4-6, 2013 —



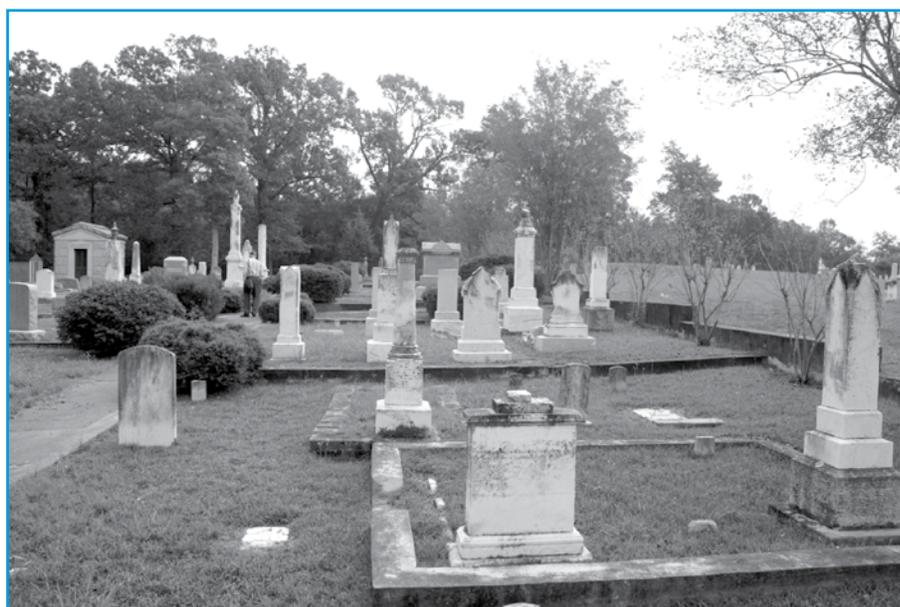
Winnie Braudaway celebrated her birthday.



The TJHS group who attended the weekend event



Vickie Vogel, Sharon Gerber, Helene Toomin, and Doug & Winnie Braudaway at the cemetery.



Temple Moses Montefiore Cemetery in Marshall, Texas



Temple Emanuel in Longview.

At the Annual Gathering in June, 2013, in Corsicana, the Board voted to give the City of Corsicana \$500 to be used for the restoration of Temple Beth-El. Babette Samuels presented the check and read the accompanying letter during the public forum of the Corsicana City Council meeting on July 3, 2013.

Encyclopedia of Texas Jewish Communities

The Texas Jewish Historical Society awarded a grant to the Institute of Southern Jewish Life to research and publish the histories of Jews in Texas towns. These histories are available on the Institute's website and are called "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities." We will adapt one of these histories in each issue of our News Magazine. Thanks to Dr. Stuart Rockoff, director of the History Department, for permission to do so. To see other towns, go to the Institute of Southern Jewish Life website and click on "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities."

Calvert

As the Houston & Texas Central Railroad crept northward after the Civil War, boomtowns sprouted up in the weeds along its route. Dreams of prosperity drew many to those instant towns, though most of these settlements soon faded as the fortune seekers moved elsewhere once the economy stalled. The story of Calvert and its Jewish community follows this same pattern.

Calvert was founded in 1868 when the railroad was built into Robertson County. The earlier settlement of Sterling moved itself two miles over to where the tracks were laid. Named after the prominent local plantation owner, Robert Calvert, the town flourished during the short time it was the northern terminus for the Houston & Texas Central Railroad. Enterprising businessmen flocked to Calvert soon after it was founded. By 1870, it had 104 businesses. Due to its location in the Brazos Valley, Calvert's economy was closely tied to cotton, the main crop of the region. The railroad greatly amplified the area's cotton production as farmers now had an efficient way to ship their crop to market. As a cotton market town, Calvert attracted various merchants who sold goods to the area's farmers.

Not surprisingly, a number of Jews were among those attracted to Calvert. The Sanger Brothers, with their policy of following the route of



Beatrice Abrams, an early Jewish settler of Calvert

the Houston & Texas Central Railroad, were probably the first to open a store in Calvert in 1868. Philip Sanger and his cousin, Asher Mandelbaum, ran the Calvert store for the brothers who had several other locations in East Texas. The Sangers were soon followed by other Jewish merchants, including H. Dreyfus, A. Hirschberg, Charles Jacobs, I. Levy, Rudolph Oscar, E.

Kefer, J. M. Pearlston, Adolph Zadeck, and several others. By 1879, an estimated sixteen Jewish-owned businesses lined Calvert's downtown streets, with most of them selling dry goods and/or clothes.

The high hopes people had for Calvert in 1879 never materialized. By 1878, many of these early fortune seekers had left, including the Sanger Brothers, who closed their Calvert store as they consolidated their retail empire. According to Dun & Company, by 1878 only fifty-two businesses remained in Calvert. The number of Jewish owned businesses also decreased and by 1878, there were only eight. A handful of Jewish families remained in Calvert for the next several decades, establishing a small but active community.

The yellow fever outbreak of 1873 was the initial impetus for these Jewish immigrant merchants to organize. During the crisis, they created the Calvert Hebrew Benevolent Society acquiring land for a cemetery. Four Jewish victims of yellow fever were the first burials in the cemetery. The Calvert Jewish community received national notice when society president Abraham Eppstein sent a letter to the AMERICAN ISRAELITE newspaper in 1873 thanking the Galveston Hebrew Benevolent Society for the assistance during the crisis.

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The Galveston society had sent physicians, nurses, and supplies to help the people of Calvert.

In 1878, Jewish educator, Leon Strauss moved to Calvert from Chicago, opening a private school in town that taught German and Hebrew, along with other subjects. Of his forty students in 1880, sixteen were Jewish. Strauss graciously shared his knowledge of Hebrew and Judaism with the local Jewish community, teaching a religious school for their children on Saturday and Sunday mornings. In 1880 Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger of Congregation Beth Israel in Houston visited Calvert as part of a state-wide circuit-riding rabbinic program. He reported his impressions in the AMERICAN ISRAELITE newspaper crediting Strauss for his teachings. While Rabbi Voorsanger was impressed with the religious school, he found a relatively informal congregation that did not hold regular services or have a permanent building. He met with the Jewish community and encouraged them to build a synagogue. Inspired by the rabbi, the group quickly formed a building committee and raised \$700 in pledges. They hoped to

convince the Houston & Texas Central Railroad to donate land for the building. Voorsanger reported, "When I left, the community was determined to push the good work until completed. I shall, please Heaven, come again to dedicate the synagogue."

Despite the enthusiastic start, the Calvert Hebrew Benevolent society never succeeded in constructing a synagogue or hiring a full time rabbi, as the Jewish community did not continue to grow. Nevertheless, they did hold services on the High Holidays in a rented room, often led by Abraham Eppstein. Eppstein was a devout Jew from Bavaria who was in the cotton trading business until his death in 1891. By 1900, the group had sixty members and continued to hold High Holiday services and religious school. By 1907, Calvert Jews had established a B'nai B'rith Lodged named in honor of Philip Sanger.

Although the Jewish community never reached the potential foreseen by Rabbi Voorsanger, a handful of Jewish families continued to call Calvert home. Jewish businessmen played a leading role in the local economy. Julius Bedach, a native of Wollstein, Germany, came to Calvert soon after the town was founded and opened a dry goods store. His son, Gerson, remained in Calvert as a cotton buyer as late as 1930.

Rudolph Oscar left Poland in 1859 and opened a dry goods store in Calvert by 1870. He became a prominent local businessman and constructed several brick building in downtown Calvert. In the late 1880s, he built the four story Grand Central Hotel, which was the most prominent hotel in Calvert. When Rudolph died in 1905, his wife, Emma, took over the management of the hotel. Their son, Henry, served as the county tax assessor before later taking over management of the hotel. Rudolph's younger brother, Isadore, joined him in Calvert

and opened his own dry goods store. The store moved into the new Oscar Building in 1879 and still stands today. His son, Isadore, Jr., took over the business when his father died in 1901.

In 1880, a Calvert Jew wrote to the AMERICAN ISRAELITE to report that of the twenty or so Jewish families in town "nearly all of them (are) well to do and highly esteemed by their Gentile townsmen". Indeed, that year, both Rudolph Oscar and Abraham Eppstein were elected to the Calvert City Council at the same time.

In 1910, an agent for the TEXAS JEWISH HERALD visited Calvert and reported that the eighteen Jewish families who lived there were "all doing well in a material way". They still had no building or rabbi and continued to meet only twice a year on the high Holidays, bringing in people from larger cities to lead the services. The Ladies Cemetery Society looked after the Jewish cemetery. The correspondent singled out the Jewish women of Calvert to praise including a Mrs. Wise "who never fails to contribute to a worthy Jewish charity with a free hand", and Bertha Abrams and Fannie Casimir "whose interests in Jewish matters never ceases". Despite the efforts of these women, Calvert's Jewish organizations remained relatively inactive in the early 20th century.

Although they did not meet for regular religious services, the Jewish community of Calvert was very active socially. The social column of the TEXAS JEWISH HERALD details the many card parties and automobile outings held by Calvert Jews in the 1910s. When the members of B'nai B'rith held their monthly meetings, they often gathered in private homes, playing cards and serving refreshment once business was completed. During one 1910 meeting held at the Grand Central Hotel, the women visited and played cards while the men discussed

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Calvert, TX

The January, 2014 Board Meeting will be held in Calvert, Texas and will be chaired by Barbara Rosenberg and Vickie Vogel. If you or any family members lived in Calvert, have or know specific information about businesses, occupations, or community activities in which anyone in the Jewish community were involved, please contact Barbara at bcr219@aol.com or Vickie at vvogel@cvctx.com Photos are also being collected and would be appreciated.

From Our Archives

Up From Hominy by Vickie Vogel

The story of Texas Jewish merchants is repeated in so many Texas towns. A young man comes to America, makes his way to Texas, and starting with nothing, establishes a store which grows and prospers until it becomes a town institution. It often lasts two, perhaps three generations and establishes a family's reputation for honesty and generosity as family members commit themselves to helping others and playing an active role in the life of the community, usually in the Masons and other service organizations.

This issue, we look at the Rosenwasser family of Lockhart, whose story fits this pattern. Their only daughter, Gladys Rosenwasser Schaffer, wrote down her memories and deposited them with our archives.¹

Morris Rosenwasser was born in a small town in Hungary in 1874. When he was around 16 years old, he traveled alone to New York, then took a boat to Galveston. From 1890, he worked as a pack peddler in South Texas, where his wagon was always welcome at farmhouses. The farmer



On closing day, Rosenwasser's was mobbed by people crying and reminiscing.

would come in from the field, and his wife and children would examine the clothing. They would feed and water the mules, and talk of the news of the day. On one such occasion, it began to rain and water poured over the land for several days, causing two creeks around the farm to rise. Morris had no choice but to spend the week with the family. For seven days they ate nothing but hominy. He never wanted another bite of hominy the rest of his life.

In 1900, Morris settled down in Lockhart, 25 miles south of Austin. With Aaron Mendlovitz, he opened a dry goods business and named it The Red Front. The faint-hearted said there was more business of that kind already than the town could support, and pre-

dicted a poor cotton crop. Morris was optimistic and had a gala grand opening. The acre yield of cotton was better than ever, and the store thrived. After the first year, Mendlovitz spent the greater part of his time in New York where he had other interests. When he died, Rosenwasser became the sole owner of the store. He moved it to larger quarters in the Brown Building with a corner location, and changed the name to Rosenwasser Dry Goods.²

On a buying trip to New York, Morris met Annie Freedman in the home of a mutual friend. She was visiting in New York from York, Pennsylvania, where she was born in 1883, the daughter of Isaac and Rosa Joseph Freedman. They were married in Houston on August 18, 1901 and returned to Lockhart, where they raised five children: Gershon, Isidore, Jesse, Marcus, and Gladys.

When Gladys was born in 1915, her brothers ran all over town telling their friends they had a baby sister, and the friends hurried to see the new baby.

Annie was active in the store and in the community. She was a charter member of the local Order of the Eastern Star. She enjoyed gardening,

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cooking, canning, pickling and sharing recipes. Annie had a reputation as a gracious hostess whose home was always open. A group of visitors from Morris's home town in Hungary came for a visit. They didn't speak English, and they were "very religious."³ Annie was Americanized, but she welcomed them. They bought merchandise from the store and peddled it in wagons around Lockhart. These men later opened department stores in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio, but Morris believed in Lockhart. He thought it would grow and become a big city one day.

In the early 1900's, Lockhart cot-



Photo courtesy of Leslie Lewis. From left to right: back row: Gershon, Jesse, Isadore and Marcus Rosenwasser. Front row l to r: Annie, Gladys, Morris Rosenwasser.

ton farmers were devastated by the boll weevil and times were hard. Morris provided clothing at no charge and bought food for his hungry neighbors. He served as a volunteer fireman and helped those in need.

In 1918, the Williamson-Dickie Company started manufacturing at its

Fort Worth plant. A Dickie salesman took samples and headed south, stopping in towns like Cleburne, Hillsboro, Waco, Temple, Georgetown, and Austin. No one would give him a trial order, and some wouldn't even look at his samples. Discouraged, he stopped at Morris Rosenwasser's small department store in Lockhart, and received his very first order for the new factory. Dickie went on to provide uniforms in World War II, and become the largest workwear manufacturer in the world.

All the Rosenwasser children earned degrees at the University of Texas. Gladys was president of Alpha Epsilon Phi⁴ and graduated summa cum laude with a degree in education. All her brothers pledged Sigma Alpha Mu. Marcus served in the army.⁵

Tragedy struck the Rosenwasser family in April of 1936, when Morris suddenly died. He was 62. Gladys was in her last year in college. Texas was celebrating its 100th birthday, and the Centennial Edition of the Lockhart Post-Register memorialized him. His compassion and business ethics were well known, and his business philosophy to stay abreast of the times had served him well. His reputation was built on fairness and goodwill.

Sons Gershon and Isadore took over the business, continuing the family's involvement in organizations such as Kiwanis, the Chamber of Commerce, the Masonic Lodge, and the Ben Hur Shrine Temple. Gershon was Vice President of the Caldwell County Centennial Association. Isadore married Helen Goldofsky, who was a scholarship student at Rice, class of 1932.

Meanwhile, Gladys had met Henry Schaffer at UT and within a month, they were going steady. Henry, a Rice

Institute graduate, received his degree in pharmacy from UT. They settled in Corpus Christi, where Gladys was very active in community organizations and Little Theatre. Gladys and Henry were married fifty years. At age 98, Gladys still lives in Corpus.

Annie Rosenwasser remained active until her death at age 94 in 1977. Rabbi Louis Firestein conducted her funeral service, and she was buried in Temple Beth Israel Cemetery in Austin, next to Morris. Sons Gershon and Isidore were still in Lockhart, Jesse lived in Houston, and Marcus in Corpus Christi. Annie's sisters, Hattie Freedman and Rebecca Edelman, lived in Tyler. Annie had six grandchildren and seven great grandchildren at the time of her death.

After eight decades in business, Rosenwasser's closed its doors in 1979. On closing day, the store was mobbed by well-wishers, some crying and some reminiscing. People recalled how they had bought their first pair of shoes or pants from the store, or fabric for a wedding dress.

Marcus and Jesse died in 1984, Gershon in 1990, and Isidore in 1996.⁶

As daughter Gladys recalled in her memoir, "We loved Lockhart, and Lockhart loved our family."

Endnotes

¹ All materials, unless otherwise noted, are from Box 4T140 in the Texas Jewish Historical Society archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin.

² Other Jewish businesses in Lockhart included L. Schwarz & Co., A. Weinbaum, L. H. Lohman & Co, Sam Joseph, and P. Glosserman, who along with Rosenwasser, put a notice in the paper when stores would be closed "on account of Jewish holiday."

<http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/tx/lockhart.html> See November 2010

continued on page 13

Max said that there was no way he was getting back on that boat. Fortunately, other family members came forward, and reassured officials they would support the “old man” (46 at the time), and they had the means to do it. That was my great-grandfather’s entry to the Texas.

Although he had been a comfortable miller and merchant in Eastern Europe, he became a store clerk and devoted most of his free time to the local synagogue. Even his name was changed; his last name Sczupak became Lewis, but my uncles never heard him called by any other name than Papa.

Over the years my curiosity grew concerning his death. I asked questions, scrolled through microfiche of old newspapers, but without an actual date of death, it proved to be an overwhelming task.

Since my uncle Bernard was born in 1927 and he had been named for his dead grandfather, we knew the hit-and-run had taken place before then, but state and local departments of statistics could find no records. I worried that officials back then simply ignored deaths they didn’t want to acknowledge.

Uncle Bernard stirred up my curiosity even more when he said that during Prohibition, only places of worship were allowed to have alcohol for religious purposes. He had heard my great-grandfather was in charge of the



Joseph Herman Louis (grandfather of Dede Fox), sitting, with unidentified man.

wine for the synagogue and may have imbibed a bit himself. Maybe he had been carrying alcohol on the night he was killed.

My next plan of attack was to visit an old Jewish cemetery in Houston. Beth Israel Cemetery, on Dallas Street just west of I-45, could not find a record of his burial, but they said that didn’t mean

he wasn’t buried there. In one hundred degree July weather, I searched through half the cemetery before, defeated, I retreated to my air-conditioned car.

Uncle Bernard came to the rescue again. He called Adath Emeth, an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, which also didn’t find any records for a Baruch Mendel Sczupak or a Bernard Mendel Lewis. My uncle then had a great idea. Knowing his grandfather would be buried next to his grandmother, who he remembered, he asked if they had a listing for Esther Lapin Lewis. They did. And her husband “B. M. Lewis” was buried right next to her.

The day after I learned this, elated that I had finally found my great-grandparents, I visited the cemetery and left stones for remembrance. Taking photographs and noting the date of “Papa’s” death, I returned to the library.

All three major Houston newspa-

pers reported the tragedy on the front page or in the first section. One article was located near an advertisement inviting readers to a KKK meeting, “Where a Spade is Called a Spade.” Clearly the KKK was active at that time. And the “accident” happened late on Easter night, April 23, 1924. He died early the next morning. B. M. Lewis had survived ten years in Texas.

All the reporters, however, showed great respect for “Ben” Lewis and his grieving family. One wrote about my grandfather, “Slender, black-haired Joe, who saw service in France, said the brothers offered a \$100 reward to anyone who would lead them to the arrest and conviction of the ‘murderer.’”

Recently we met cousins who descended from David, the oldest of Baruch Mendel’s children. Because he was already married and working in Riga, David stayed behind. The family saved money to bring his family to Texas, but World War I interrupted their plans. After the Russian Revolution, David ran a communal farm and asked the family not to contact him because it would create problems.

David’s great-granddaughter, however, married to a German, asked to visit with Houston relatives during the High Holy Days in 2012. She knew little about observing those days or that we’d spend them at synagogues praying. Immediately following Yom Kippur, however we had a wonderful reunion with her and Skyped the visit to relatives in Russia and Israel.

One thing became clear. If Baruch Mendel had insisted on his family staying in Russia and we had survived, like our Russian cousins, we would have known very little about Judaism, the very thing that Baruch Mendel feared. Even though today many of his Texas descendants do not keep kosher or Shabbat in the traditional way, most are practicing contemporary Jews.

My family will never know who

continued on page 13

killed “Papa” or why, but what I learned comforted me. My biggest fear was that in Texas, as in Russia, my great-grandfather was considered “expendable.” The sympathetic newspaper articles, however, convinced me the Houston community valued this Orthodox Jew.

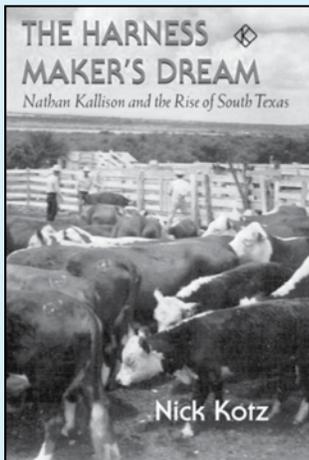
Scanned clips, photos, and comments have now circulated to descendants around the world. Since then, numerous relatives, including the Russian cousin, have left stones (and pecans) at my great-grandparents’ graves. May our memories of them serve for an eternal blessing. 🇺🇸

UNANSWERED

By Dede Fox

Tug at one thread
Then another
Some knotted
Some frayed
Some too twisted
To ever untangle

Keep picking
Maybe one
Just one
Will unravel
Enough
To tell the story



UNEXPECTED

By Dede Fox

I found them in the barrio
my great-grandparents from Valkowisk--
unexpected, their location,
near the Bolillo Bakery and Fiesta Motel.

They are buried at Adath Emeth,
Hebrew for Children of Truth,
where arched iron gates,
never close.

Fired white in Houston’s sun, gravel
covers concrete-lined crypts.
Summer green lawns vibrate
with the hum from bordering highways.

Plots label locations: Markowitz, Kohn,
and Getzlovitz pave the way for Brown,
Davis, and Lewis, families renamed
by Galveston officials on their arrival.

I place stones on their graves, hope
their spirits wander next door to Canino’s
Farmer’s Market, sampling the plumpest
bananas, juiciest mangoes, ripest melons,

gifts from the Almighty
by way of McAllen, Brownsville,
Harlingen, forbidden fruit no more,
or maybe they feast on Tampico’s carnitas

Fiddling Klezmerim drift from graves,
join the merry Mariachis. At last
Mendel and Esther dance together,
old bones rattling in eternal time.

The Harness Maker’s

Dream, by Nick Kotz, was released in October, 2013, and is now available at your bookstore. Nick spoke at the Annual Gathering in Fort Worth in 2012, and told us about the book, which is the story of the Kallison family of San Antonio and South Texas. Nick also presented the book at the Texas Book Festival in Austin.

B’nai B’rith matters. Calvert Jews were not isolated, but were part of a statewide social and kinship network of Jews. The TEXAS JEWISH HERALD reported how Calvert Jews often visited relatives and friends in other Texas towns and entertained many out-of-town Jewish guests. Although the newspaper’s Calvert report contained little or no mention of religious services or a congregation, it detailed a small, but socially close-knit Jewish community.

By the 1910s, Calvert was in serious decline. The arrival of the boll weevil and low prices severely damaged the local cotton economy. In 1938, Calvert’s big cotton gin and oil press went out of business, marking a symbolic end to the town’s economic promise. As cotton farmers’ fortunes diminished, so did those of the Calvert merchants who relied on their business. By 1937, only twenty-seven Jews still lived in Calvert, and their numbers would continue to decline over the years. Of the 125 people buried in the Calvert Jewish cemetery, two-thirds died before 1930. The town, which peaked at 3,300 in 1900, had dropped to 2,000 by the mid 1920s. This slow decline has continued, and in 2010, only 1,200 people lived in the town. The last Jew in Calvert, Marium Oscar, a descendant of the once prominent Oscar family, died in 2004. 🇺🇸

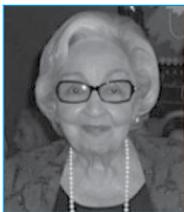
In Memoriam

Evelyn Karchmer Schlader, TJHS member, died September 15, in Houston. She is survived by her daughter and her daughter's partner, Mara Greenberg and Sammy Toys; her sons, Dr.

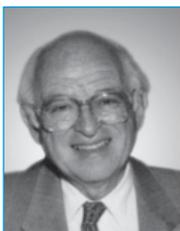


Jerry Schlader and Louis Schlader; her daughter and son-in-law, Ann and Jeff Cummins; five grandchildren and their spouses; and three great-grandchildren.

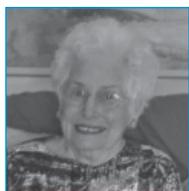
Frances Weinblatt Wolff, TJHS member, died September 9, in Houston. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Joanie and Chuck Weiner; son and daughter-in-law, David and Leslie Wolff; and four grandchildren.



Leon Weiner, TJHS member, died September 12, in Houston. He is survived by his wife, Sandra, his daughters and sons-in-law, Renee and Michael Lafair, Bayla and Richard Drubel, and Rachel & Robert Davis; his son, Andy Weiner; fourteen grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.



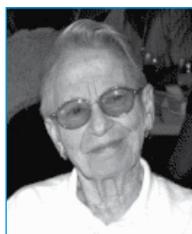
Selma Winkler, TJHS member, died September 29, in Fort Stockton, TX. She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law, Martin and Maureen Winkler; son-in-law, Bob Rhodes; and two grandsons.



Lorraine Hoppenstein, TJHS member, died on September 22, in Waco. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Marsha and Michael Lev; her son and daughter-in-law, Norman and Marcia Hoppenstein; and four grandchildren.



Claire Estelle Reingold, TJHS member, died August 11, in Houston. She is survived by her husband of 64 years, William Jake Reingold; her daughters and sons-in-law, Dana and Richard Waxler and Debra and Brian Reiss; her son, Richard Reingold; her son and daughter-in-law, Alan and Pamela Reingold; and four grandchildren.



Hilda Laura Rubel Ruttenberg, TJHS member, died June 8, in Waco. She is survived by her daughters and sons-in-law, Phyllis and M.G. Akmail and Rina Ruttenberg and Danny Holland; her daughter, Micheline Lyon; four grandchildren and their spouses; and three great-grandchildren.



May their memories be a blessing.

The Storm, continued from page 4

that night but about 9 o'clock the next morning he came out to see if he could find us. We spied him on top of debris higher than an ordinary house and when we called him he didn't know if we were altogether or not. You can picture how he looked as none of us had any too many clothes on and what we did have on was so muddy and wet and nasty. Besides being torn, many of our friends failed to recognize us. It is only the hands of God that saved us from death. We could have been so easily crushed to death under the roof, but having so much furniture in that room is what saved our lives. We thank God every day of our lives and may we all make better men and women after such a terrible experience. 

The deadline for the February 2014 TJHS News Magazine is Friday, January 3.

Up From Hominy, continued from page 11

edition of this news magazine for an article on Philip Glosserman's son Sam.

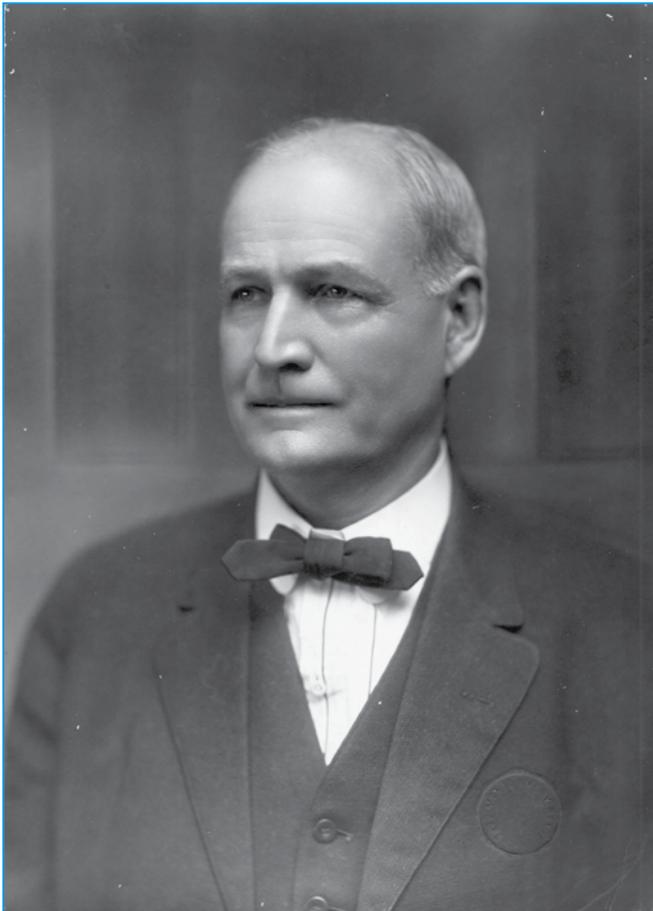
³ Gladys Schaffer memoirs, *ibid*.

⁴ See this publication, May 2002, page 10, for a photo of her sorority. http://www.txjhs.org/sites/default/files/2002_may.pdf.

⁵ <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=rosenwasser&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSst=46&GSctry=4&GSob=n&GRid=99890596&df=all&>

⁶ www.txjhs.org/sites/default/files/burials_o_r_0.xls. 

Can You Identify This Man?



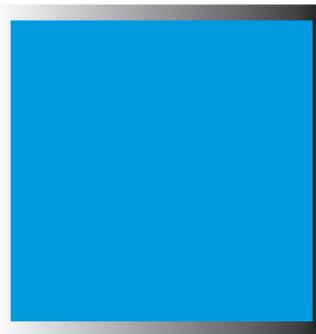
This man's photo was in an album that came from the London family in Corsicana. There is a circular imprint in the lower right corner that says 'Montgomery Corsicana, Texas.' The London family says that it is not Max London. If you can identify this man, please email editor@txjhs.org.

— Can You Guess — This Member?

Thank you to **Jimmy Toubin** from San Antonio who guessed last issue's picture of his roommate at UT, **Bob Gindler**. There were several guesses, including some before the deadline, which were not eligible for consideration. Please note deadline for this issue.



This member of TJHS has been an active board member almost from the day she joined. You can always count on her to know the correct answer to your question. Email your guess to Davie Lou Solka at editor@txjhs.org any



time beginning **Wednesday, November 6**. Entries received before that date will not be considered. Previous winners and family members are not eligible to participate. Good luck! 🇺🇸

Grant Requests

Sonny Gerber is chair of the Grant Committee. All requests for grants should be directed to Sonny at 5610 Grape, Houston, TX 77096. Sonny can be reached at 713-817-6290.

Does TJHS Have Your Current Email Address?

Is your email address current? Has it changed since the 2012-2014 directory was printed? Have you changed email providers? If so, please send Marc Wormser an email at marc.wormser@att.net so that he can update your information in the database. To reduce postage costs and printing delays, we are going to



be electronically sending as much mail as possible, so don't be left out or behind—send your current information today!

Please put "email change" in the subject line and with your name in the text of your message, and send it today! Thank you. 🇺🇸

Save the Date

January 10-12, 2014

Board meeting - Calvert, TX

January 20, 2014

Crypto Jewish Program—
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lege Station, TX

April 28-May 5, 2014

TJHS trip to Cuba

Save Postage

Please notify TJHS when your address has changed or you may be temporarily away from home when the News Magazine is to be delivered. These issues are returned to us at a postage due return of \$1.52 (at printing date) per Magazine. These amounts do add up—it's your money we are trying to save! Thank you. 

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.

Mazel Tov

to the following

Texas Jewish Historical Society Members

Sally Drayer, who has been elected president of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra Guild for 2013-14. The Guild is a support group for the Dallas Symphony and raises money for the Symphony.

Bob Lewis (AKA **Tumbleweed Smith**), who was honored with a bronze star on the Texas Trail of Fame in the Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District. The Trail of Fame recognizes “significant contributions to the preservation of the history and grandeur of the Western way of life.”

Marvin Rich, who received a Centennial Citation from the Southwest Regional Board of the Anti-Defamation League. He was also recognized as a Centennial Champion by the ADL..

*Please send information for this column to
Davie Lou Solka at davielou@solka.net.*

Contributions

The following donations have been received by the Texas Jewish Historical Society:

In Honor of

Rabbi Murray Berger and Dr. Roberta Berger,
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Vickie Vogel—the Sleuth

Joyce and Marc Wormser, on their 50th
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In Memory of

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



TJHS Trip to Cuba

**Join us for a mission to the Jewish Communities of
 La Habana, Cuba**

April 28 through May 5, 2014

Join your fellow members, family, and friends on a uniquely insightful trip of cultural discovery and humanitarian effort. We will have experiences offered to few travelers to this tropical island nation. You will get to know Cuba while helping and meeting the Jewish Community.

This will be a great mitzvah, a unique experience, and a fun trip. For a detailed itinerary and reservation form, visit www.txjhs.org. For more information, contact TJHS Travel Chair Vickie Vogel at 979-247-4504, 979-699-2493, or vickvogel@yahoo.com.

This mission is pursuant to a General License issued to the Texas Jewish Historical Society by the US Department of the Treasury.

Deadline for registration is November 5, 2013.

Welcome New Members!

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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 be either 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@charter.net.



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