

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas  
Est. 1980



February, 2014 News Magazine

## — B'nai Abraham Synagogue Building — in Brenham Relocating to Austin

by Davie Lou Solka

Plans are under-way for the relocation of the B'nai Abraham Synagogue building in Brenham, Texas, to the Dell Campus in Austin. B'nai Abraham is the oldest Orthodox synagogue building in the state of Texas and was dedicated in 1894. It served as the only house of Jewish worship in Brenham until early 1960.

Leon and Mitzi Toubin, longtime TJHS mem-



*B'nai Abraham Synagogue building in Brenham, Texas in 2008. Photo by Larry D. Moore.*

bers and past board members, have been the caretakers of the synagogue building since its closing. They have maintained the building and provided tours and information to groups and individuals who have come to Brenham to

visit the historic building. They have led a fund raising effort to help move the building to Austin.

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# Message from the President

by Marc Wormser

2014 started out a little chilly, to say the least, in many parts of the state, and cold in many other parts of the country. Hopefully, most of this weather is behind us.

The society began the new year with a meeting in the large community of Calvert, Texas, population 1,300. Please read Vickie Vogel's description of the weekend. What a gem we discovered! Although there are no longer any living Jews in Calvert, There were many at one time, and they contributed much to the growth and prosperity of that com-



munity in years gone by.

This observation conjures up many challenges as we go forward in 2014 and beyond. The discovering and recording of the Jewish history in Texas, as well as in the world, is so important to our survival as a people. How often have we passed through a small community or a large city and not asked the question of Jewish presence

and contributions to that town? How much more must we be involved in the preservation of this history, from oral histories where possible to photographing headstones and graves of Jewish residents?

The five-year plan that is being


developed through Hollace Weiner's committee will set TJHS on a path of expanded projects to help fulfill our mission. The plans being developed in part will endeavor to communicate more to Texas and other states the mission and activities in which TJHS is engaged.

I am delighted in the increased attendance that we are seeing at our meetings. There is too much to miss by not attending and I hope that our numbers will continue to grow. This will contribute to the growth and the participation of our membership. While we have 593 members, I can visualize a large membership growth going forward.

The slate of officers for the coming election to be held at the Annual Gathering in March in College Station is comprised of a great group of people. Thank you Rusty Milstein and your committee for excellent work.

Thanks to Vickie and Barbara for putting together a great weekend in Calvert. Those who attended left with many memories of a fascinating town.

And I would like to thank everyone who attended. I am sure that all of you left with feelings similar to mine.

I hope to see many of you in College Station in March. 

## The Texas Jewish Historical Society February 2014 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](mailto: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.

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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](http://www.txjhs.org).*



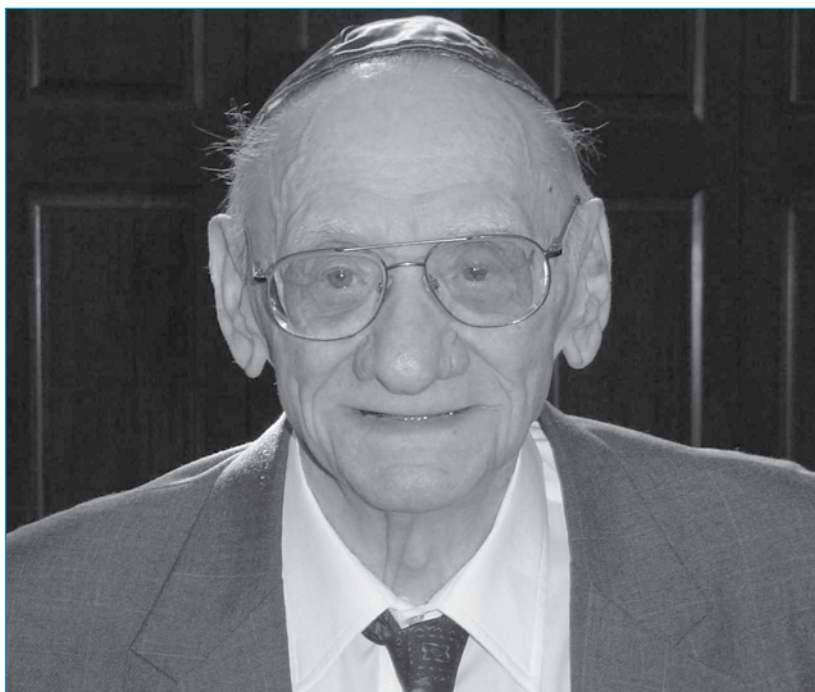
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# — Rodfei Sholom Honors Hy Friedman — on his 104th Birthday

*Photo and article reprinted with permission from the Jewish Journal of San Antonio, December, 2013 issue.*

Long-time congregant Hy Friedman turned 104 last month and celebrated with a Kiddush Luncheon in his honor, sponsored by his family. Born in Lipno, Poland, on October 12, 1909, Hy immigrated to the United States at a young age. His father was the first family member to leave Poland, arriving in the U.S. in 1912. In Hy's words, his father came "because he thought that America was filled with gold."

His father was a tailor and a furrier and eventually saved up enough money to bring the rest of the family over. Hy arrived in the U.S. with his mother and his mother's parents in 1920, and they settled in Chicago, where he lived for over 2 decades. Ultimately, he moved to San Antonio in 1946, where he has lived ever since.



His careers varied, beginning with his first job as a dentist's mechanical apprentice straight out of high school for a grand pay of \$7 a week. He later became a tire dealer, eventually owning his own auto mechanic shop. In San Antonio, he opened an appliance store on South Flores and later began building homes. He worked independently

as a home builder until 1967, and two years later, built a mobile home park on 25 acres of land that he owned on the south side of San Antonio. Hy lived and worked at the mobile home park until 1986 when he retired at the age of 77.

Today, at the age of 104, Hy lives with his son Gerald. He has a phenomenal memory, recalling the people, places, and events

of his life and is able to speak on virtually any subject. He has particularly vivid recollections of the war, witnessed first-hand during his young years in Poland. He recalls that his hometown of Lipno was close to the German border, and they were always surrounded by the Russians and the Germans, with the Jews inevitably caught in

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## 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 news magazine. 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 fu-

ture generations.

So what are you waiting for? Send your article to our assistant editor, Davie Lou Solka, at [davilou@solka.net](mailto:davilou@solka.net), mail it to 3808 Woodbrook Circle, Austin, TX 78759, or call her at 512-527-3799.



# TJHS Winter Meeting



*Meeting attendees in Calvert.*



*Rosenwald sponsored school.*



*Meeting attendees had lunch at Cocoamoda.*



*POW Camp Hearne Museum. German POWs were housed here 1942-1946.*



*Calvert resident Louise Grigsby was our guest speaker.*



*Oscar Building in downtown Calvert.*



# — Calvert, Texas, January 10-12, 2014 —

*Some of our members portrayed Calvert citizens at the cemetery*



*Vickie Vogel as Sarah Oscar Marx (1854-1914)*




Calvert was once home to a vibrant Jewish community. On January 10-12, the Texas Jewish Historical Society held their winter meeting there to learn more about its Jewish history. Some 40 people attended, staying at Bed and Breakfasts in Calvert, with the overflow lodging in Hearne. After dinner at The Wooden Spoon, the members gathered for a social hour at Hammond House.

Saturday included a full schedule of activities, starting with a tour of Hammond House, then a driving tour of historic homes, followed by lunch and a chocolate demonstration at Cocoamoda. The group then gathered in the Jewish cemetery to hear re-enactors describe their lives in Calvert, as seven TJHS members appeared in period dress at the grave sites.

Next on the agenda was a visit to Camp Hearne where they learned about the German POW camp's history. A tour of Calvert's Rosenwald School, now the W. D. Spigner School, followed. Rosenwald Schools were developed by Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald (a Jewish philanthropist and president of Sears, Roebuck) as a rural school building program for black youths in the early twentieth century.

Saturday evening featured a banquet at the Carousel Room at Zamykal's Bakery. The Carousel Room was once the home of the last Jew in Calvert, Marium Oscar. Her family features prominently in Calvert Jewish history. Speakers at the banquet were attorney Ty Clevenger, local historian Louise Grigsby, and Dr. Kay Goldman of Texas A & M University.

The TJHS winter board meeting was held on Sunday morning, and the conference closed at mid-day. The Society meets quarterly in different towns and cities throughout the state. For more information, visit [www.txjhs.org](http://www.txjhs.org). 



*Susan Lewis as Bertha Bedach, dry goods merchant (1846-1933).*

*Hollace Weiner as Marium Oscar, wealthy "bag lady" of Calvert.*



# — TJHS Winter Meeting, Calvert, Texas —



*Rusty Milstein as Abraham Harris, restaurant owner (1832-1886).*



*Bob Lewis as Abraham Epstein, cotton broker (1828-1891).*



*Gary Whitfield as Jake Abrams, saloon keeper (1852-1928).*



*Calvert Jewish Cemetery.*

*B'nai Abraham, continued from page 1* —

There will be major upgrades in the building once it has been moved which will include air conditioning, heating, bathrooms, and handicap accessibility. The building will retain its historic look and will continue to function as a synagogue with Congregation Tiferet Israel, a local Orthodox congregation, holding services there. When not in use for religious services, it is planned that the building will be available for meetings, study groups, classes, programming, and life-cycle events.

Although the building will lose its official historic status, it will remain a visible part of the Jewish history in Texas. The move will take place in early 2014, with plans to dedicate the building October 26, 2014, when the joint Texas Jewish Historical Society Board Meeting and the Southern Jewish Historical Society annual meeting are held. 🇺🇸

## Scholarship Opportunity



The family of **Aaron Wechter**, longtime El Paso resident and UTEP graduate, has established a scholarship to support students committed to strengthening the Jewish community in El Paso. Aaron was a well-respected real estate developer, community leader, and philanthropist. Through the accomplishments of talented UTEP students, the family feels that the Aaron Wechter Memorial Scholarship will honor and perpetuate his

life's work.

Students interested in applying may request an application via e-mail from the UTEP Scholarship Office by logging on to [www.utep.edu/scholarships](http://www.utep.edu/scholarships) and clicking on "Additional Scholarship Opportunities." 🇺🇸

*Hy Friedman, continued from page 3* —

the middle. Hy explains the different types of anti-Semitism that he grew up with: "While the Polish anti-Semitism was vocal, the Russian anti-Semitism was physical." Those harsh memories remain with him to this day. But unlike life during his formative years in Poland, today Hy is able to attend shul on a weekly basis and be part of the Shabbat service.

Hy has been a member of Congregation Rodfei Sholom for over 60 years. He has been president of the B'nai B'rith Lodge and a long-time board member of the Hebrew Free Loan Association.

When asked about the secret to longevity, Hy says, "Research has found that if you drink three cups of coffee every morning for 100 years, you too will live to a ripe old age." 🇺🇸

## Roots to Boots: South African Jews in Dallas

Joan Gremont, MLS, a librarian in Dallas has spearheaded the ROOTS TO BOOTS project through the Dallas Jewish Historical Society. The two part project invites the South African Jewish community in Dallas to participate in a five-minute web survey to document the scope of the South African Jewish presence in Dallas. The second part of the project is asking for participants to record an oral history.



The survey can be reached at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/TJOZTD5](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TJOZTD5). If you would like to participate, please contact Joan Gremont at 214-697-1274, or email her at [RootsToBoots@gmail.com](mailto:RootsToBoots@gmail.com). 🇺🇸

## 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.



# 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."*

## Bryan-College Station, Texas

In 1859, Joel Bryan donated land for a town site when the railroad company planned to build a line through the Brazos Valley area. Growth was slow at first as the railroad stopped twenty miles south in Milican. Construction was suspended during the Civil War, but finally in 1867, the railroad reached Bryan and it soon

became a regional cotton shipping center and the seat of Brazos County.

Perhaps the first Jews to settle in Bryan were the Sanger Brothers, who followed the Houston and Texas Central Railroad northward, opening stores in each town the line reached. They opened their Bryan store, run by Lehman Sanger, in 1867. That same year, Bryan suffered an outbreak of yellow fever. Two Sanger brothers, Jacob, age 22, and David, age 16, died from the illness. In spite of this, Lehman remained in town with his family, operating the store even after the railroad moved north and Bryan was no longer its terminus. In 1874, the Sanger brothers decided to consolidate their retail empire and closed the Bryan store.

Other Jewish immigrants were



*Main Street in Bryan, Texas, looking south in the early 20th century. Digital: Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas*

drawn by Bryan's economic opportunities once the railroad reached the town. Prussian-born Myer Levy and Isaac Cahn, an immigrant from Bavaria, owned dry goods stores in Bryan by 1870. The following year, Isaac Mandelbaum opened a retail store. H. Cohn opened a grocery store, Horatzky & Eichenbaum was a dry goods and clothing business, and Sam Kaiser opened a dry goods store. By 1873, there were eight Jewish families and a handful of single Jewish men living in Bryan.

The Bryan Jewish community developed quickly after the coming of the railroad. The Hebrew Benevolent Society was formed in 1879 and a plot of land was acquired for use as a cemetery. The society's founders included Lehman Sanger, Isaac Cahn, D. Wolf,

Frank Moore, M. Levine and M. Mayman. A grand Purim Ball was held in 1872 and the following year, money was raised to help yellow fever victims in Shreveport, Louisiana. Land was also purchased at this time with the hope of building a synagogue. However, the lot remained vacant and it was sold in 1887 at auction for

non-payment of taxes. The Society reacquired the property, but sold it again to a Baptist congregation who quickly built a church on it. There was never a formal congregation established in Bryan, although informal services for major holidays were held. Rabbis would come from Waco, Houston or Hempstead to perform weddings and funerals.

By the early 1890s, Bryan Jews were not holding regular religious services. It was noted that many of Bryan's Jews were in neighboring towns and cities for the High Holiday services. In 1894, they began to hold High Holiday services, led by Mr. Spielman from New York. In 1897, Rabbi Bloom from Waco was coming for Rosh Hashanah, but did not

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come due to a yellow fever quarantine. However, he was able to lead services for Yom Kippur that year. For several years after that, High Holiday services were held in private homes and various halls around town. They were usually lay-led with an occasional Rabbi coming to town. In spite of small numbers, the Jewish merchants in Bryan always closed their place of business for the High Holidays.

Between 1903 and 1905, there were sixteen Jewish families living in

had no problem selling the non-kosher items. His son-in-law, A. Emden, joined the business and it was renamed G. Schwarz & Company. It remained in business until 1898.

Several Jews were involved in the liquor business in Bryan, including Heyman Rypinski, and Joe Groginsky. Groginsky owned a number of different businesses over the years, but he was best known for his saloon, The Royal Bar, which was known as the "Third National Bank of Bryan"

Jews in Bryan was the theater business. Jacob Schwarz and his brother-in-law, Heyman Rypinski, leased a space above city hall and opened the Grand Opera House. Five years later, Schwarz opened an Opera House in Waco. In 1893, Schwarz began writing and directing a comedic minstrel show and formed a twelve-person troupe that toured the state.

In 1926, Morris Schulman, who had been in the theater business in Houston, moved to Bryan and bought

the Palace Theater. He converted it to show motion pictures in addition to hosting Vaudeville shows. Schulman was very charitable and held many benefit events at the theater during the Great Depression to aid local food banks. Tragically,



*"A birdseye view of A & M College of Texas. Photo Smith Studio." Digital: Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.*

Bryan. There were many people who moved to Bryan, opened a business and sold it within a few years. This instability in the Jewish community certainly played a role in their inability to establish a permanent congregation or build a synagogue.

Despite the turnover, some Jews managed to establish lasting businesses in Bryan. Sam Levy came from Germany and opened a furniture store with his brother, Julius, in 1883. They remained in business until 1920, when Sam moved to Houston. In 1880 Gabriel Schwartz, who had helped form the Hempstead Jewish community, moved to Bryan and opened a fancy grocery store and oyster parlor. Even though his brother, Chayim, was an Orthodox Rabbi in Hempstead, he

because of all the money that passed through it. After prohibition was instituted, Groginsky opened a dry goods business in Bryan, saying that it attracted a "higher class of people" than his saloon. Another saloon owner, Jacob Schwartz, sold liquor without a posted permit and was fined \$1200. After a strong petition by the county judge, commissioners, and other local officials, Texas Governor James Hogg agreed to reduce the fine to \$50.

The Jews of Bryan were well integrated within the economic and political power structure of the city. John Mike and Marx Goldstein served as city alderman in the 1880s. Sam Levy also served for four years on Bryan's board of aldermen.

Another business dominated by

cally, Morris killed himself backstage at the Palace in 1935. His wife, Edna, took over the reins of the Bryan Amusement Company and in 1938, she purchased the art-deco Queen Theater across the street from the Palace. Her son, Bill Schulman, later took over the family business, which at one time controlled all the movie theaters in Bryan. As new multiplex movie theaters were built in other parts of the city, the Queen and the Palace deteriorated and eventually closed. In 1986, the roof of the empty Palace Theater collapsed and the Schulman family donated the remains to the city, and it was turned into an outdoor theater. Still standing in downtown Bryan, the Queen Theater remains closed.

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In 1912, Sam Levy helped form a B'nai B'rith Lodge, which attracted members from nearby towns. The lodge was later named for Harry Marwill, a local Jewish merchant who died in 1918. Also in 1912, J. W. English, a local gentile, donated land to the trustees of "the Jewish congregation of Bryan," with the deed stipulating that the land be used for a house of worship. Joe Gelber, Julius Levy, and Joe Groginski were listed as trustees of the congregation. They filed incorporation documents with the state as "Temple Freda Reform Congregation." The congregation was named after Benjamin Kaczer's wife, Freda, who had recently died. He was one of the founders of the congregation, though he left Bryan in 1918.

The construction of Temple Freda proceeded quickly, with local gentiles also donating money and building supplies. In February, 1913, a cornerstone-laying ceremony was held. Rabbi Maurice Faber from Tyler, who had been instrumental in convincing the Jews of Bryan to organize and build a house of worship, attended with local dignitaries. The small, classical, revival building was competed and dedicated in May, 1913. Three Reform Rabbis, Henry Barnstein from Houston, Maurice Farber from Tyler, and Henry Cohen of Galveston, spoke at the event. Local ministers also participated, which attracted a large audience of both Jews and gentiles. Because the building was located next to railroad tracks, services would be interrupted by the low rumble and piercing whistle of trains. Members would pause the service until the train passed.

By 1919, the congregation had eighteen members and \$300 in annual income. The religious school had fourteen students. Weekly Friday night services were held, with visiting rabbis brought in periodically. By

1928, the congregation had thirty-five members and was always Reform in practice; however they never joined the then Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Brothers Joe and Jake Kaplan arrived in Bryan in 1911 and 1914, respectively. They worked as house painters and wallpaper hangers. In 1914, Joe's wife and three children came from Russia through Galveston, and in 1917, Jake was able to bring his wife and two children to Bryan. According to the local newspaper, it cost him \$1,155 to bring over the rest of his family.

In the early 20th century, Bryan's Jewish businesses remained concentrated in retail trade. Dry goods stores were opened by many immigrants, including Joseph Gelber; his son, William; and August Gerson. By 1937, there were sixty-two Jews living in Bryan.

Next to Bryan is College Station, home of Texas A&M University. Jewish presence at the University goes back to its founding in 1876 when Meyer Cohen enrolled in its first class. During the school's early years, a handful of Jewish students attended Texas A&M. One of the most prominent Jews associated with the University in its early years was Jacob Taubenhau, a professor of plant biology. He was the chief of the plant pathology division of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. A national expert on plant pathology, Taubenhau helped eradicate cotton root rot in Texas. He was named to a Hebrew University advisory board and helped design the Jerusalem school's agriculture program. In 1935, he was included in the Biographical Encyclopedia of American Jews.

When Jacob Taubenhau arrived at Texas A&M, he was the only Jewish faculty member. He and his wife, Esther, were dedicated to fostering

Jewish life on campus. Their first year, they founded a Menorah Club for Jewish students, and held services



*The Bryan Daily Eagle from Saturday, February 13, 1915. Digital Images: University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu>*

and cultural programs for the students in their home. In 1920, the group became known as Hillel, the first Jewish college student group to have that name.

When the national Hillel organization was established in 1923, they tried to get the A&M group to change its name. Once they realized that both groups had the same goal of supporting college Jewish life, A&M's Hillel became a chapter in the national organization. Esther Taubenhau, affectionately known as Mrs. Tauby, was the director of the Texas A&M Hillel until 1957, when she retired. After years of meeting in campus buildings, the Texas A&M Hillel dedicated its own facility in 1958. Houston lawyer,

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Billy G Goldberg, led the statewide fundraising effort to construct the building. Shirley Reiser replaced Mrs. Tauby as Hillel director in 1957, remaining in that position until 1979. Rabbi Peter Tarlow was the director of Hillel from 1983-2013. A new building, in the same location, was dedicated in October, 2012. Rabbi Matt Rosenberg is the current director.


While Hillel thrived in nearby College Station, Temple Freda in Bryan struggled to remain active in the 1930s. Jacob Taubenhauus usually led services and Sol Gerson read the Torah. In the late 1930s, Temple Freda suspended its regular services as its membership declined. After World War II, Sol and Felice Klein and Bettye and Frank Kahan moved to Bryan and revitalized the congregation. The Kleins would lead services and officiate at life cycle events. The women in the congregation founded a Jewish Women's Club in 1951.

After the A&M Hillel dedicated its building in 1958, most area Jews

began to attend services there instead of Temple Freda. By the 1960s, the Temple was no longer used regularly. Most of the old Jewish families in Bryan were gone by then, while most of the newcomers were affiliated with the university. Later, Temple Freda was rented to various Christian churches, and in 1983, it was named to the National Register of Historic Places.

The growth of Texas A&M has drawn a number of Jewish professions to the area. These newcomers had no ties to Temple Freda and little interest in reviving it. In 1968, they established Congregation Beth Shalom, and met in the Hillel building. Sol Klein was the congregation's first president. In the 1980s, the congregation had a falling out with Hillel over money, and began to hold services in the Unitarian Church and the Community Center. In 1990, Beth Shalom moved into its own building in Bryan. Always Reform, the congregation affiliated with the then Union of American Hebrew Con-

gregations in 1970. The membership remains stable with fifty plus contributing members. A rabbi has never been hired, but visiting rabbis and students from Hebrew Union College come to Bryan for services. Texas A&M Hillel remains another center of Jewish life in the area. Those preferring a more traditional service to the Reform of Beth Shalom attend Hillel services. Since 2007, Orthodox Jews have been served by a Chabad House.

About 1500 Jewish students attended Texas A&M in 2011. These students, along with the school's Jewish faculty and staff, dominate the Bryan-College Station Jewish community. Jewish professors have replaced Jewish merchants in the area. Jews continue to play active roles in the larger community. In 2010, Nancy Berry was elected the first Jewish mayor in College Station. While the Jewish community may never experience significant growth, the continued vibrancy of Texas A&M will ensure that it remains strong and active. 

## TJHS/SJHS Joint Meeting

by Hollace Weiner

The Texas Jewish Historical Society is teaming up with the Southern Jewish Historical Society for a joint conference in Austin October 24-26, 2014. TJHS will be holding their quarterly Board Meeting and the SJHS will host their annual meeting.

Already in the works is a behind-the-scenes tour of the LBJ Library and a talk by archivist Claudia Anderson about President Johnson's ties to Austin Jewry. The University's Harry Ransom Center has invited our group to view artifacts from its collection – among them the Yiddish




typewriter on which Isaac Bashevis Singer wrote his prize-winning novels. Shabbat dinner will be on the Dell Campus followed by services at Agudas Achim Congregation. The rest of the weekend will feature panels reflecting the conference theme --

Crossing Borders: Southern Jews in Global Contexts. A Sunday book-and-author panel is slated to include Kay Goldman, a TJHS board member

whose recent book, "Dressing Modern Maternity: The Frankfurt Sisters of Dallas and the Page Boy Label," has been touted in the New York Times.

Twice before, the Texas Jewish Historical Society participated in the annual meeting of the Southern. Those gatherings were in Hot Springs in 1997 and in Shreveport in 2002. The Austin conference is being coordinated through the Jewish

Community Association of Austin. The Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies is a partner in the joint conference. 



*Southern Jewish  
Historical Society*

# From Our Archives

## Telegram for Mr. Schwartz!

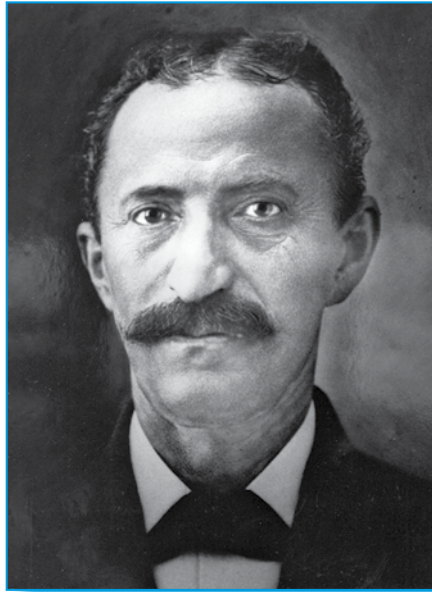
by Vickie Vogel

Never again will we see a collection of love letters or any other epistolary writings. Our thoughts are conveyed by email or text messages, ephemeral, with poor spelling and grammar. This wasn't the case on January 1, 1902 when Louis Schwarz married Rosa Levy in Galveston. Rummaging through our archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas in Austin, I stumbled across a real treasure—a bound book of congratulatory telegrams sent to the happy couple to celebrate their wedding.<sup>1</sup>

Some 200 telegrams, sent from all over the country (New York, Chicago, Pennsylvania, Boston, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky) and from cities and towns throughout Texas (Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Gainesville, Waco, Hutto, Hempstead, Lockhart, Beaumont) voice simple wishes as well as elaborate ones, composed thoughtfully and even poetically.

Founded in the 1850s, Western Union had a million miles of lines and cables by 1900. In 1902, there were some 21,000 Western Union offices in the United States. As the century passed, however, methods of communication changed. The telegram service was discontinued in 2006.<sup>2</sup> For the Schwarz/Levy wedding, a telegram was a method of choice to send a timely message.

Who were Louis Schwarz and Rosa Levy? Louis was born in Hempstead to Mr. and Mrs. Sam Schwarz. Gabriel and Jeanette Schwarz settled in Hempstead and



*Rosa's father, Ben Levy. Photo from Natalie Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans*. Courtesy of Texas A&M University Press. Order the book at [www.tamupress.com](http://www.tamupress.com).*

opened a store right after the Civil War. His Prussian-born<sup>3</sup> brother Sam had fought for the Confederacy and settled in South Carolina. Sam joined Gabriel in 1866 and opened a store of his own. Other family members came over from Posen to join them, including Chayim who led services in a small wooden synagogue Sam built in Hempstead. After Chayim died, Sam led the services. Sam served 20 years on the local school board and was active in the struggle for racial equality.<sup>4</sup> I could find nothing about Louis' mother, not even her name.

Louis went to New York City at age 20 and became a traveling salesman for a wholesale clothing house. A year after marriage, he and Rosa

moved to Dallas where he opened a men's wear department at the newly founded Titcher-Goettinger Department Store,<sup>5</sup> which he headed until 1914. During this time, he also organized a wholesale women's ready-to-wear business (Schwarz, Landauer & Miller), which he closed just before his death in 1914 at the age of 45. In 1912, he and Gus Roos had founded Schwarz & Roos, retail men's wear on Main Street in downtown Dallas, which Roos managed.

Louis had one brother, Julius, and four sisters: Mrs. M. Fisher and Mrs. J.<sup>6</sup> Solinsky of Beaumont, and Ida (Mrs. M.)<sup>7</sup> Galvesky or Galewsky,<sup>8</sup> and Mrs. Ben Schwarz of Hempstead.

BOI Rosa Levy, the daughter of Ben Levy (1849-1908), was of a pioneer Galveston family. Joseph Levy was the eldest of nine brothers, including Ben Levy. Joseph and Ben grew up in the livestock business in Alsace and brought a keen knowledge of horses to America. Joseph came from New York to Galveston in 1867, seeing its potential for growth, and began to send for family members. The first to arrive was Ben.<sup>9</sup> Ben married Flora Schram, a Galveston girl. Ben and his brother Joseph founded a successful livery stable business, J. Levy & Bro. Offering a horse-drawn hearse and carriages for funeral services led them to establish one of the first funeral homes in Texas (1868). Ben Levy was appointed overseer of the extraordinarily high number of burials following the 1900 hurricane. He served with Rabbi

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Cohen on the recovery committee. Ben also served as an alderman in Galveston.<sup>10</sup> The brothers' business did well until 1908 when Ben died.



*Rosa's brother; Mayor Adrian Levy. Photo from Natalie Ornish, Pioneer Jewish Texans. Courtesy of Texas A&M University Press. Order the book at [www.tamu-press.com](http://www.tamu-press.com).*

Joseph retired. His oldest son, Sam, and Ben's oldest son, Jack, took over the business and added ambulance service, then motorized hearses.<sup>11</sup>

Rosa graduated from Ball High School in 1897.<sup>12</sup> She and Louis had a large wedding at the synagogue, officiated by Rabbi Henry Cohen, followed by a reception at home. The newlyweds made their home in New York until moving to Dallas.

There are almost 200 telegrams bound in the book. A flower is pressed inside, and glued into the front cover is a brief obituary for Louis and an announcement of the nuptial details.

The most common phrase in the telegram collection is "heartiest

congratulations." There are many expressions of mazal tov, in a great variety of spellings. The shortest telegram just says congratulations, and the longest covers two pages. Here are some of the messages:

"There are three all important events in every life's history—birth, marriage and death, and the whole performance is but a rehearsal for eternity."

"Are with you body and soul. May you live long and prosper and the good things in this world come your way forever. Happy new year, happy bride, happy groom, happy day."

"Under Louis's management the starring tour with his leading lady will

Simple happiness was an often-expressed wish: "May you always be as happy as today." "May your sorrows ever grow less and your joys multiply." "May joy and happiness bind your union." "May each succeeding New Year's Day find you as happy as today. Three cheers for the new couple!"

A long, carefree life was the wish of many: "We wish you a happy journey through life." "May the sunlight of heaven shine over your lives, with the brightness that nothing can dim." "May you prolong the bliss of courting and your lives be free from care." "I wish you long life with every hour jeweled with joy." "May you both live long enough to enjoy your golden wedding." "Hirsch and family wish you long life and happiness—May your future trouble be little ones." "May a halo of happiness surround and



*Last home of Rosa Schwarz, Galveston. Photo by author.*

be big success from start to finish if our wishes are fulfilled. Heartiest congratulations."

"I congratulate on beginning so well the new year."

"Accept our best wishes on this day of all days."

"Wish yourself the best and know we wish it, too."

illuminate your lives." "May good fortune be ever your lot." "May long life and prosperity ever be yours." "May your future be as bright as

*continued on page 15*

## In Memoriam



**Ruth Goldberg Cohen**, TJHS member, died on September 30, 2013, in St. Louis, Missouri. She

was born on July 20, 1933, in San Antonio, Texas. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Nancy and Sam Santana; her sons and daughters-in-law, David and Miriam Cohen and Daniel and Joan Cohen; nine grandchildren; and two sisters, Shirley Tudzin and Evelyn Schwartz.

**Milton Loeb**, TJHS member, died on December 15, 2013, in Dallas, Texas. He was born on March 11, 1933 in Dallas. He is survived by his wife, Joan; his daughter and son-in-law, Jeri and Leland Dushkin; his daughter, Karen Allen; his son and daughter-in-law, Niel and Kristen Loeb; seven grandchildren; one great-granddaughter; and his sister, May Sebel.

**Joan Glassman Nussbaum**, TJHS member, died on October 3, 2013 in Greenville, Texas. She was born on September 18, 1936, in Greenville,

Texas. She is survived by her husband, Julius Nussbaum; her son, Jay Nussbaum; her daughter and son-in-law, Melanie and Howard Weisenfeld; five grandchildren; and her brother and sister-in-law, Sam and Janine Glassman.



**Barbara Goodstein Rubin**, TJHS member, died on December 16, 2013 in Fort Worth. She was born on July 23, 1932, in

Knoxville, Tennessee. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Janice Rubin and Charles Wiese; her daughter, Nina Rubin; her son and daughter-in-law, Paul and Jewel Rubin; five grandchildren, two great-grandchildren; and her sister, Marcia Menuskin.



**Sterling Samuel Neuman**, TJHS member, died on November 20, 2013, in San Antonio. He is survived by his wife, Rachelle Neuman, his daughters, Wendy Alyse (Low-

ell) Rosenthal and Pam Beth Neuman; five grandchildren; and his sister and brother-in-law, Cookie and Jack Gerson.



**Morton Allan Rudberg**, TJHS member, died on December 2, 2013. He was born on September 18, 1933 in Dallas, Texas. He is survived by his wife, Peachy

Rudberg; his sister and brother-in-law, Frances and Joel Steinberg; and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews.



**Leon Schmidt**, TJHS member, died on December 27, 2013, in Austin. He is survived by his wife, Barbara;

four children; eight grandchildren; and his sister, Edythe Kruger.



**Sylvia Schmidt Massman Schwartz**, TJHS member, died on December 14, 2013 in Dallas, Texas. She was born on March

22, 1918 in Yorktown, Texas. She is survived by her sons and daughters-in-law, Andrew and Sandra Massman and Kenneth and Shirley Massman; six grandchildren and their spouses; four great-grandchildren; and her sister, Edythe Kruger. Her brother, Leon Schmidt of Austin, died December 28, 2013.

**May their memories be a blessing.**

**The deadline for the April 2014 TJHS News Magazine is Friday, March 21.**

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the new year we have just entered.” “May your future lives be continual sunshine.” “May your future life be one long sunshiny day.” “May you never have any more troubles than you have at present.”

Some wishes included reference to material prosperity: “Hope your inventory in 1903 will grow and increase.” “May your happiness and prosperity equal your deserts which would make both without limit.” “May your new career with the new year be one of unalloyed happiness.”

A couple of telegrams used puns on the bride and groom names. “May your paths be strewn with flowers.” “Of God’s choicest flowers, you have picked the fairest Rose.” “May your future be strewn with roses and never be Schwarz.”

Originality was not lacking in these entries: “The war in the Philippines is not over we need soldiers contribute heartiest congratulations.” “May the wound that Cupid your schadchin inflicted take a lifetime to heal.”

In the back of the telegram book, there are loose telegrams that came for the 1907-1909 anniversaries. In two different years, there is an expression of hope that Rose is improving and that her illness is past.

Louis’ obituary in the telegram book says he was to be buried in

Galveston, but he is not listed in any Galveston cemetery. I could not locate Rosa’s father Ben Levy’s grave either, although surely it is in Galveston. After Louis’ death, Rosa moved back to Galveston where she died in mid-May, 1942 at her home at 3720 P1/2 in Galveston. Rabbi Henry Cohen officiated at her funeral. She was survived by two sisters, Mrs. Abe Kauffman and Mrs. Felix Weill, and three brothers, Jack M. Levy, Marion J. Levy, and Adrian F. Levy the former mayor. Mrs. Harris Kempner was her niece, and Harris Kempner served as a pallbearer.<sup>13</sup>

Louis and Rosa Schwarz were married some twelve years. I could find no evidence of Rosa’s life between the death of Louis and her own death almost thirty years later. Here’s hoping their years together were marked by the loving wishes the telegrams contain.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Box 4T140, Texas Jewish Historical Society Records, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. Unless otherwise noted, all information is found in this box.
- <sup>2</sup> Its business today involves most money transfers. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western\\_Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Union)
- <sup>3</sup> Gary Whitfield, “Confederate Stories,” *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, Hollace Ava Weiner & Kenneth D. Roseman ed., Brandeis University Press, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/tx/hempstead.html>, Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titcher-Goettinger>. A photo of the building can be found here.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph J Solinsky. As is often the case, the wife’s given name is hard to find. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSLn=solinsky&GSiman=1&GScid=2216866&GRid=40915359&>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ancestry.com/1940-census/usa/Texas/Ben-Schwarz\\_517f79](http://www.ancestry.com/1940-census/usa/Texas/Ben-Schwarz_517f79)

<sup>8</sup> <http://files.usgwarchives.net/tx/waller/cemeteries/hebrew.txt>

<sup>9</sup> Joseph then sent for his childhood sweetheart, Carolyne from Germany.

<sup>10</sup> Rosa’s brother Adrian F. Levy served as mayor of Galveston from 1932 to 1936. Adrian was known for his effort to crack down on gambling. He and wife Pearl Kahn Levy built a home in 1923 at 3111 Ave. 0, still standing. <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/13376367/>

<sup>11</sup> Sam was killed in an auto accident in 1930. His widow Aline Lion and son Joe operated the business until 1969 when it was sold.

<sup>12</sup> Natalie Ornish, Pioneer Jewish Texans, <http://www.msje.org/history/archive/tx/galveston.html>, [http://www.9key.com/markers/marker\\_detail.asp?atlas\\_number=5167007517](http://www.9key.com/markers/marker_detail.asp?atlas_number=5167007517), <http://www.texas-almanac.com/topics/history/galvestons-response-hurricane-1900>, <http://www.jlevyfuneralhome.com/AboutUs/History/tabid/68/Default.aspx>, <http://www.natchezbelle.org/galveston/students.htm>

<sup>13</sup> *Galveston Daily News*, May 19, 1942, courtesy of the Rosenberg Library, Galveston.

## 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](mailto: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.

## Mazel Tov

to the following

### Texas Jewish Historical Society Members

**Cynthia and Allen Mondell**, for the Emmy from Lone Star for their film, *A Reason to Live*.

**Babbette Samuels**, for receiving the Preservation Award in Corsicana, Texas, for her work with the Jewish Cemetery in Corsicana. Babbette has been caring for the cemetery since 2000 where she has recorded each of the grave sites, helped in acquiring a state historical marker for the cemetery, and made sure that the artifacts were returned to Temple Beth-El.

*Please send information for this column to  
Davie Lou Solka at [davielou@solka.net](mailto:davielou@solka.net).*

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

*The registration form to attend any TJHS meeting is on the TJHS website. In case you misplace your News Magazine or do not want to cut the form out, you can download it at the TJHS website, at [www.txjhs.org](http://www.txjhs.org). Click on the "Meeting Registration Form."*

## Ketubah Signing



Ketubah Signing at the Wedding of Martha Harelik and Seymour Pomerantz August 30, 1953 at Agudath Jacob Congregation in Waco, Texas. Left to right: Cantor Joseph Marton; Rabbi Abraham Herson; Martha Harelik Pomerantz; David Harelik of Hamilton, Texas; Elconan Saulson, then director of Hillel at University of Texas; and signing Ketubah is Frank Chazanow.



# 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, or occasion—birthday, anniversary, award, new child or grandchild, etc.) and your name, along with a check in the amount of your choice, to

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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.

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

## Save the Date

**March 21-23, 2014**

Annual Gathering—  
College Station, TX

**April 28-May 5, 2014**

TJHS trip to Cuba


**June, 2014**

Board meeting—  
Place to be determined

**October 24-26, 2014**

Board meeting held jointly with the  
Southern Jewish Historical Society's  
annual meeting—Austin, TX

## 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 that we are trying to save! Thank you. 

## Contributions

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

### **In Memory of**

Hildegard (Bugger) Levy Cohn

### **From**

Susan and  
Dr. Ed Septimus

## 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.*

## Welcome New Members!

### Brad Falk

1111 Tiffany Lane  
Longview, TX 75604  
903-297-2750  
903-238-6233 Cell

### Dennis and Gaye Halpin

15823 Parksley  
Houston, TX 77059  
runtexas@juno.com

### Frederick Isaac

1836 San Antonio  
Berkeley, CA 94707

### Ray and Barbara Kalmans

5511 Wigton  
Houston, TX 77096  
713-723-0731

### Alan and Betsy (Huff) Morgan

2607 Valley Field Dr.  
Sugar Land, TX 77479  
713-805-6851  
amorgan1@flash.net

## Directory Changes

### Marion Bernstein

2819 Whisper Fawn  
San Antonio, TX 78230

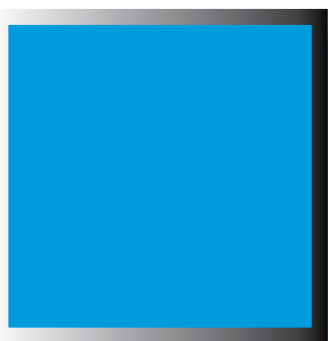
### Harris and Joy Jacobs

P. O. Box 27186  
Houston, TX 77227

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If you have any changes in your information, please send them to: **Marc Wormser, 1601 S. Riviera Ct., Pearland, TX 77581, 832-288-3494, or marc.wormser@att.net.**

## Can You Guess This Member?



Since we did not have a winner for last issue's member, we are running the picture again to give you a second look! In addition to the first clue—actually two—here is another one: she loves to travel. This member of TJHS has been an active board mem-

ber 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](mailto:editor@txjhs.org) any time beginning Friday, February 14. Entries received before that date will not be considered. Previous winners and family members are not eligible to participate. Good luck!

## Proposed Slate of Officers, TJHS 2014-2015

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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](mailto:texbed@charter.net).



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