

Texas Jewish Historical Society



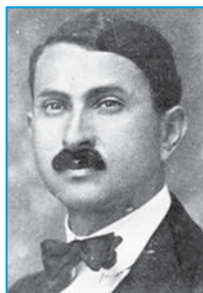
February 2016 News Magazine

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 the History Department of the ISJL for permission to do so. To see other towns, go to the TJHS website at www.txjhs.org, or the Institute's website, www.isjl.org, click on the "History Department" and look for "Encyclopedia" in the drop-down menu.

Beaumont

Jews established an influential presence in Beaumont long before the discovery of oil and the expansion of retail markets. Jewish peddlers traveled throughout the Beaumont area, selling their wares to the families that settled in East Texas. Census records indicate that a merchant named Simon Wiess arrived in Beaumont in 1838, but Wiess married a Presbyterian woman and largely gave up his ties to Judaism. Beaumont Jews credit Morris J. Loeb with laying the foundation of the Jewish community in Beaumont. Loeb moved his family from New Orleans to Beaumont in 1878 and opened a small cigar shop. Numerous other Jewish merchants moved to Beaumont in the early 1880s to take advantage of the growing saw mill economy. Henry Solinsky and Morris Hecht opened a dry goods store in 1880, and a year later Sid and Leon Levy opened their own stores. In 1881, a New Orleans newspaper identified the opening of the Jewish-owned stores as an indication of Beaumont's economic vitality,



Rabbi Samuel Rosinger, Beaumont's longtime rabbi, 1910. Photo courtesy www.isjl.org.

reporting that "a number of Israelite merchants have settled here, a precursor of the prosperity which is to follow."

Unlike in other small Texas towns in the 1880s, Jews in Beaumont engaged in many different professions besides retail trade. When Wolf Bluestein moved from Orange, Texas, to Beaumont in 1881, he went into business with Solinsky and both men turned their attention to the performing arts. In August of 1881, Solinsky purchased the newly built opera house and traveled to New York to find vaudeville acts for the new performance space in Beaumont. Bluestein and Solinsky established their new business in a brick building on the corner of Tevis and Forsythe Streets, and Bluestein converted the second floor of the building into an opera house until the Crosby Opera House was completed in 1883. Several Jews participated in the agricultural sector of East Texas. Bluestein was one of the first commercial rice growers in Orange County and continued to oversee his farm after he moved to Beaumont. The first boxcar of rice shipped from Orange County included 100 barrels of Bluestein's rice. Sam Lederer moved to Beaumont in 1886 and shortly thereafter established a rice farm south of the city.

As more Jewish settlers made their way to Beaumont,
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Message from the President

by David Beer

Dear Fellow Society Members,

As we move into 2016, I want to wish all of you the best for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. I look back on 2015, which began with my installation as your president in April at the Annual Gathering in Dallas. From there we went to Salado for a board meeting where I started “getting my feet wet” by hearing feedback from past presidents and board members about the duties and responsibilities of what it would take to lead TJHS into the future. These comments and suggestions gave me insights on what it takes to



head our organization. I learned a lot at the meeting, and we were off and running!

October came along and we went to Tyler for our fall meeting. Even though the weather wasn't ideal, we had a good turnout and learned about the

history of Jews in Smith County. In spite of rain on Saturday which caused some outdoor activities to be cancelled, a good time was had by all.

At our winter meeting in Galveston just concluded, we had one of the best weekends that I have experienced

in my eight years of membership in TJHS. Kudos must be extended to Rabbi Jimmy Kessler and his lovely wife, Shelley, who put together one helluva great weekend. We began with a wonderful Friday night Shabbat service and pot luck supper. Rabbi Marshall Klaven, who succeeded Rabbi Kessler, led services, and it is very evident that the future of Congregation B'nai Israel is in very good hands.

Saturday morning began with a visit to B'nai Israel Cemetery, and from there we went to see the original building of the congregation. We were then treated to a tour of the Masonic Lodge in downtown Galveston, a magnificent building of marble. The building has an Egyptian motif and a theatre and stage that has the ability to be transformed with a “Three D” like effect into multiple displays of hand painted scenery. The best way to describe it was magnificent!

A break for lunch afforded us the opportunity to sample some of the fresh-off-the-boat varieties of seafood along Waterfront Boulevard. We were treated to views of the port of Galveston, including docked cruise ships and commercial ships from around the world. Following lunch, we toured the Seaport Museum and went aboard

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The Texas Jewish Historical Society February 2016 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 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.

Editor Davie Lou Solka

Layout/Design Editor Alexa Kirk

Note: The Texas Jewish Historical Society is unable to guarantee the safe receipt and/or return of documents and 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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Jewish religious life began to rise. The earliest Jewish services took place in Wolf Bluestein's home, but as Jews amassed more property, services moved into larger venues. Congregation records indicate that Beaumont Jews held services in the Bluestein Opera House, Lederer's grocery store, Deuster's furniture store, and in the Harmony Club, which was located above the city's fire station. Saul Feinberg and Wolf Bluestein served as unofficial leaders of services for Rosh Hashanah and Passover, using Bluestein's Sefer Torah scroll to conduct the services.

The expansion of Jewish religious life in Beaumont also encouraged the development of Jewish philanthropy. Morris Loeb's wife, Delphine, her daughters, and Sarah Levy organized the Ladies Benevolent Society in 1895. The Society worked to provide for poor travelers passing through Beaumont and to secure a Jewish burial ground. In 1897, the Society purchased a plot of land called "Hebrew Rest" and provided for the ground's maintenance.

Although Jews in Beaumont worshipped informally for about a decade, the community decided in 1895 that it should establish an official congregation. In 1895, Lorraine-born Dr. Aaron Levy left Beth-El Temple in Austin and moved to Beaumont to take over as the rabbi of the growing congregation, braving Beaumont's muddy streets and wooden sidewalks to help the congregation in its formative years. Under the guidance of Rabbi Levy, the congregation of around fifty members chose the name Temple Emanuel and began holding services in a small wooden building near the corner of Pine and Crockett Streets. Beyond leading the Jewish community through the process of establishing an official congregation, Rabbi Levy was a strong public figure in Beaumont. Rabbi Levy increased

his small rabbinical salary by opening a Latin school on Pine Street, teaching forty students—both Jewish and Gentile—the basics of classical education. When the Spanish American War broke out in 1898, Rabbi Levy headed a committee that put on a banquet for the Beaumont National Guard in the old opera house, giving troops from Beaumont a heartfelt sendoff. As the turn of the century neared, Beaumont Jews enjoyed a more organized religious life and a greater participation in

who had owned a boarding house in town, purchased a lot on Broadway and Willow for \$1,600 and donated the land as the future site of a synagogue. With a lot on which to build a synagogue, the building committee moved ahead and hired a Mr. Spaulding to build the temple. The Ladies Benevolent Society made a \$3,000 donation to the construction of the temple, providing the necessary funds for electric lighting and attractive interior furnishings. The structure accommodated



Temple Emanuel in Beaumont, built in 1923.

civic life.

As with much of Texas history, the story of Beaumont's Jewish community followed the ebb and flow of oil. On January 10, 1901, a geyser of oil at Spindletop Field broke through the surface and continued to gush for a week. As investors and workers flocked to Beaumont, the city population doubled almost overnight to profit from the nearby oil reserves. The construction of a permanent house of worship had been in the works for some time, but the discovery of oil provided the necessary population and finances for Beaumont's Jews to achieve their goal.

Women played a crucial role in this effort. In 1900, Pauline Schwerin,

300 worshippers, a space large enough to house the sixty families and numerous young men attracted to the area by the Spindletop oil boom. The building committee staged a dedication ceremony for the new temple on December 1, 1901, and invited Rabbi Max Heller from New Orleans and Rabbi Henry Cohen from Galveston to speak at the ceremony. By 1902, Beaumont's Jewish population reached about 300, and the pews of the ambitiously large temple were filled to capacity.

The discovery of oil near Beaumont also expanded the population and the power of Jewish businessmen. Hyman Asher Perlstein came to Beaumont in 1889 with \$11.90 in his

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TJHS Winter Meeting in Galveston



Rusty Milstein, Jack Solka, Mitzi Milstein, Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, and Cynthia Wolf in the Scottish Rite Temple library.



The Henry Cohen Community House entrance.

Save the Date

April 1-3, 2016

Annual Gathering in
Beaumont, Texas

**Summer Board
Meeting**

in Rockport, Texas

**Fall Board
Meeting**

to be announced


**January 13-15,
2017**

Winter Board Meeting
in Sherman, Texas



TJHS members in the Scottish Rite Temple, the site of the first Congregation B'nai Israel.

Save Postage

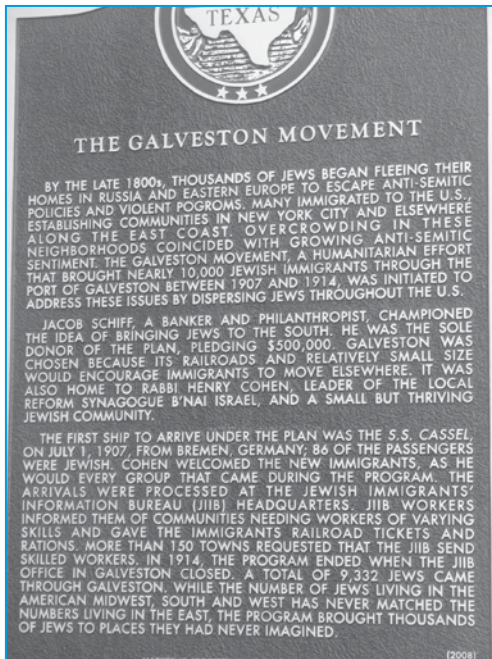
Please notify TJHS when your address has changed or if you may be temporarily away from home when the News Magazine is to be delivered. These issues are returned to us at a postage due return of \$1.52 (at printing date) per Magazine. These amounts add up—it's your money we are trying to save! 





Rabbi Marshall Klaven lead the Havdalah Service.

Vickie Vogel, Beverly Rudy, Raymond Kalmans, Barbara Kalmans, Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, and the guide in meeting room of Scottish Rite Temple.



Phyllis Turkel, Ruth Nathan, Jack Solka, Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, David Beer, and Vickie Vogel (back to camera) in Congregation B'nai Israel Cemetery.

The Galveston Movement historical monument.



Charles and Jan Hart, Gary Whitfield, Vickie Vogel, and Jack Solka in the Grand 1894 Opera House.

Photos by Jan Hart, Davie Lou Solka, and Sally Drayer.

New Mexico Jewish Historical Society Fall Conference

by Vickie Vogel

A dozen TJHS members participated in the 30th Anniversary celebration of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society at their annual conference, held this year in Las Cruces. After touring the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum, the conference headquarters, there were lectures and panel discussions from 22 historians, rabbis, and New Mexico residents. Programming covered Jewish communities of the Southwest, including Texas.

TJHS President David Beer introduced the speakers in one session, which included Board Member Jan Hart, who donned the persona of her grandmother Hannah to tell about her life "From Russia to West Texas."

Another session, "Legacies of the Jewish Communities of the Southwest," included a presentation by TJHS Past President Debra Winegarten called "A Very Brief History of

Texas Jews."

Just outside the conference hall, Past President Sally Drayer set up the TJHS Traveling Exhibit which garnered much attention. Past issues of our news magazine were available, along with membership brochures. A few New Mexicans joined our society.

One of the panel discussions included four past presidents of NMJHS, who discussed the accomplishments in their terms of office. Noel Pugach included as one of the highlights of his term the joint meeting with TJHS in El Paso in 2008, which began our friendship and cooperative activities.

Kabbalat Shabbat and Oneg at Temple Beth El,




Jan Hart presents the story of her grandmother Hannah "From Russia to West Texas."



TJHS members who attended the NMJHS Fall Conference: Debbie Winegarten, David Beer, David Vogel, Kay Goldman, Barry Russ, Vickie Vogel, Charles Hart, Sally Drayer, Jan Hart, Barbara Rosenberg, guest Lollie Scott, and Ben Rosenberg.

lunch, dinner, a bagel brunch, a large silent auction, and a walking tour of Old Mesilla rounded out the weekend activities.

Past presidents participating included Barbara Rosenberg, Charles Hart, and Vickie Vogel, along with Drayer and Winegarten. TJHS Treasurer Ben Rosenberg, Board Member L. David Vogel, Kay Goldman Russ, Barry Russ and Lolli Scott completed the TJHS contingent. David Vogel won one of the three raffle prizes, a giant basket of gourmet coffee and tea products.

In 2016, the NMJHS conference will be in Santa Fe, coinciding with a special museum exhibit which will include the original Edict of Expulsion from Spain in 1492. Visit their website, nmjhs.org, for details as they become available. 

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Port Arthur

Coming of age in the era of the Texas Oil Boom, Port Arthur sits only twenty miles southwest of Beaumont, Texas, home of Spindletop, the oil gusher that brought money-seekers to the area in droves. Port Arthur became the site of the early 20th century's largest refinery complex, an industry which still employs many in the area. However, white-flight, hurricane devastation and a pattern of economic busts-and booms have chipped away at the city center, leaving only hints of its former opulence. Port Arthur's Jewish community has followed a parallel path of decline and relocation, as the young migrate to suburbs and major urban centers, abandoning the family stores that once dominated city commerce. The synagogue Rodef Shalom now bears the name "Templo Shalom" and has been in use as a church for over ten years. Still, in its heyday, Port Arthur's Jewish community was vibrant. Existing in close proximity to the much larger Beaumont congregations, Port Arthur Jews maintained a surprising amount of independence



Downtown Port Arthur, c. 1957. Texas businesses on 547 Procter Street and Waco Avenue. Signs on the buildings identify the businesses as Boston Shoe Store, The Gem Jewelry Company, and G. W. Imhoff and Company. Photo courtesy Portal of Texas History.

from their neighbors.

Port Arthur sprang forth from the plan of railroad magnate Arthur Stillwell, the founder of the Kansas City Suburban Belt Railway, which stretched from Kansas City, Kansas, to Independence, Missouri. His ambition was to expand the rail through to the Gulf Coast. Stillwell needed a nexus of tourism and industry to serve as the final stop on his completed track, and he selected the area that was to become Port Arthur. By 1890, the track had been renamed the Kansas City Southern Railroad, and by 1895, settlement had begun in the area. Port Arthur became incorporated by 1898.

Soon afterward the Port Arthur Channel and Dock Co. (owned by Stillwell) began digging a canal along the western side of Sabine Lake, and in 1899, the port was opened to sea-going trade. On January 10, 1901, oil was struck by Captain Anthony F. Lucas and his crew at Spindletop in Beaumont, and 100,000 barrels of oil a day shot out from the gusher. Profit-seeking migration began to boom in the

region. Gulf Oil Corporation and Texaco set up refineries along the lake by 1902, and by the late 1950s, the petrochemical industry had become the backbone of the city economy.

Jews were drawn by the opportunities Texas now had to offer to the ambitious entrepreneur. While some were attracted by the promise of working in the refineries, most Jews came with hopes of opening businesses catering to the growing number of workers in the area. Jews became synonymous with retail trade in Port Arthur. Whether it was the Bagelman family's shoe store, the Jacobs' Gem

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Jewelry Co., Goldberg's, Deuster's, The Fair, Jacobs and Lipoff, Haber's, Dover's, Roos & Forst or the Boston Shoe Store, an estimated 75% of the businesses that would thrive on Proctor Street throughout Port Arthur's history were owned and operated by Jewish merchants.

Abe Goldberg was among Port Arthur's earliest Jewish settlers. Leaving Russia in 1895, Goldberg settled initially in Hearne, Texas, where he opened a business. He later moved to Bryan and then Sabine Pass. The damage caused by the storm of 1900 all but halted business in Sabine Pass, compelling Goldberg's final move to Port Arthur. He opened up a general merchandising store on the corner of Fourth and San Antonio Streets. Through a partnership with E. Duester, the store expanded, and Goldberg gained a reputation for providing the most fashionable and up-to-date goods in town. He was able to amass a comfortable fortune, which he channeled back into the community through charitable contributions. Goldberg frequently appears in area newspapers as one of the community's most prominent philanthropists. Goldberg is perhaps best remembered as the founder of both the Texas Society for Crippled Children and the Thomas W. Hughes School for Crippled Children.

In 1911, Louis Mandel arrived in Galveston from Kretzing, Russia at the age of 13. After living with an uncle in Jefferson, Texas for a short while, he moved to Port Arthur. Another uncle, Sam Segal, already owned a furniture store on Proctor



Photograph of Port Arthur Ice Company on 101 Houston Avenue. Photo courtesy of The Portal to Texas History.

Street, and would give young Louis the experience necessary to succeed in the business. In 1933, Mandel opened his own shop on Proctor Street, dealing initially in furniture and radios. Mandel gained a reputation as a music aficionado and horse lover—even racing one of his favorite mounts down Proctor Street when it was still what one journalist called a “dusty track.” However, in the 1940s, Kretzing fell under Nazi control and all of Louis' family perished in the Holocaust except for one sister, Frieda Ellberg. Louis brought Frieda to Port Arthur, and the two would run Mandel's in partnership until 1991, when they both retired at the ages of 91 and 80.

While there is no record of exactly when formal services began in the Port Arthur Jewish community, a small congregation had been worshipping in private homes in the 1910s. By 1922, the congregation was able to rent space above the Kress building on Proctor Street, and the services were led by laymen. In 1930 the group purchased a former Congregational Christian Church on the corner of Mobile Avenue and Sixth Street. This church

had been built in the early 1900s and initially housed a Lutheran congregation. The building was then sold to the Congregational Christian Church, after which it was purchased by the Jewish community. The local Jewish community intended to use it as a community center, but the building was soon transformed into a synagogue after the group established themselves as Congregation Rodef Shalom.

While Rodef Shalom tended toward Reform Judaism, a small Orthodox group also existed. Early in the congregation's history, the two groups quarreled over questions of ritual and tradition. The record shows that, for some time, the Orthodox group met separately for services. In 1935, these two factions split completely with the Orthodox group founding Congregation Agudas Israel and holding separate meetings at Carpenter Hall on Seventh Street, only a short distance from the original synagogue. Despite the schism, Rodef Shalom was able to hire its first full time rabbi, Selwyn Ruslander, in 1936. The split was short-lived as Rodef Shalom and Congregation Agudas Israel reunited by the late 1930s. The congregation officially joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations by 1940. Renee Bennett's family was part of the Orthodox group that attended Rodef Shalom for Friday night services, but she remembers that separate Orthodox and Reform services were held for the High Holidays. The congregation's Reform rabbi wore a yarmulke when

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he visited the Orthodox service but removed it when he went to the Reform service. Whatever disputes existed between the two groups seem to have subsided by the time a new synagogue was constructed in 1951.

Membership steadily climbed as the postwar economy boomed, and the congregation soon outgrew the former church on Sixth Street. Rodef Shalom had sixty member families in 1945, growing to ninety-one families by 1962. Equally significant was the movement of many Port Arthur Jews to the area east of downtown. The location chosen for the new temple at 3948 Proctor Street reflected both the need for a larger space to house the congregation and the eastward migration of the Jewish community. The temple design was simple and functional and included more space for worship and social activities. Included in the original design was a main sanctuary, an assembly hall, a kitchen, and classrooms. An extension was later added to accommodate more students in the Sunday school. More than fifty students attended classes.

Rodef Shalom was also home to many thriving temple organizations. Sisterhood and Council of Jewish Women were active in the community, and the Zionist movement was led by Dr. Harris Hosen, a local pediatrician. Council of Jewish Women is remembered by the community for its rummage and cake sales. The Council routinely raised over \$1,000 during its rummage sales, while the matzah ball soup and deli sandwiches the women made for fundraising would draw substantial crowds. The money raised by the Council went toward the synagogue and school, but also organizations throughout the city, notably those for underprivileged women.

Like other small congregations, Rodef Shalom suffered a high degree of turnover in its rabbinic leadership. After Rabbi Ruslander left in 1939,

he was followed by Rabbi Alexander S. Kline, who stayed in Port Arthur a few years. Despite his short tenure, Kline made a significant mark on the city's cultural life, leading an art appreciation course that drew large audiences from throughout the region. In 1941, the *Port Arthur News* adver-



Rabbi Alexander
S. Kline

tised that Rabbi Kline would give a lecture on the radio station KPAC for the High Holidays. The subject was "What We Mean by Religion." While the program offered an opportunity for contemplation and reflection


to Jews during the holidays, it was also geared to the community at large. Rabbi Kline was succeeded by a series of short-term rabbis until 1966, when Rabbi Lothar Goldstein came to Port Arthur.

Rabbi Goldstein was a Holocaust survivor and had lived in Peru for ten years prior to his arrival in Port Arthur. Much of his family had been lost in the Holocaust, and the experience of those years would motivate him to become an involved social activist. He was a charter member of the International Seaman's Center. He occasionally wrote articles for various newspapers and magazines as well as several books. He lectured at the United Methodist Church and the School of Theology of the Episcopal Church in Houston on the Torah. Goldstein also held leadership positions in organizations dealing with psychoanalysis and mental health issues, as well as the Red Cross. Throughout his time at Rodef Shalom, Rabbi Goldstein supplemented his income by maintaining a practice as a clinical psychologist. His wife, Justina, held a doctorate in psychology, and spoke six languages fluently.

Rabbi Goldstein led Rodef Shalom for two decades.

Port Arthur's Jewish community grew in the post-war years, reaching an estimated 260 people by 1960. In addition to merchants, a number of Jewish scientist, engineers, and executives moved to town to work in the local petrochemical industry. Hymie Massin was the head of research for Texaco. Several Jewish doctors also moved to Port Arthur during this time and became active in the local Jewish community.

Following a peak membership of ninety-one families in the early 1960s, Port Arthur's congregation began three decades of slow decline. Rodef Shalom was strengthened by members who came from neighboring towns, like Orange, that did not have their own Jewish congregations. By the 1980s, Port Arthur began to decline with its downtown business district largely closed. As a result, the congregation began to decline as well. Rabbi Goldstein passed away in 1985 and he was not replaced. Members of the congregation, including Rabbi Goldstein's widow, Justina, conducted services for the next decade. By 1995, Rodef Shalom had twenty-eight family members.

The congregation was able to maintain services for over a decade due to contributions from former members, including families such as the Blankfields and Rosenbergs. However, after the death of Justina Goldstein, the congregation was too small to maintain the temple and its doors were closed in 1995. Since the congregation disbanded, the building has been rented to church groups. Locally owned businesses began to shut their doors. The remaining Jews of Port Arthur joined Temple Emanuel in Beaumont and placed one of their Torahs in the Ark of that congregation. They have become active members of Temple Emanuel. 

Grant Committee to Fund Research

by Hollace Weiner, Grant Committee Chair

The TJHS Board approved a \$2,500 grant for Dr. Adriana Katzew, an associate professor at the Massachusetts College of Art & Design, who is researching an image-based book and photo exhibit about the life and Texas roots of Beatrice “Bea” Wertheimer Mallinson Elias.

Bea, who lived from 1901 to 1988, was descended from a pioneer Texas family rooted in Victoria and grew up among Dallas’s well-to-do Jews, aka the “Columbian Set.” A Dallas debutante, Bea was involved in the National Conference of Christians & Jews and many local Jewish organizations. Her first husband, Herbert Mallinson, a national Jewish leader, died in 1941 after suffering a heart attack during a Dallas Jewish Federation meeting. Her great-grandfather, Abraham Levi, came to Texas in 1848 and was the longtime bank president and temple president in Victoria. Her grandfather established the first scholarship to the University of Texas. Bea’s extended family, which also includes pioneers from Tyler and San Antonio, will provide a lens through which to view Texas-Jewish bluebloods.

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Katzew received several boxes filled with photo albums, personal correspondence, newspaper clippings, and mementos



Bea Mallinson, 1901-1988, a Dallas socialite and descendant of a pioneer Texas Jewish family, is the subject of a research study and proposed photo exhibit that received a grant from the Society. (Photo, courtesy Dr. Adriana Katzew.)

that had belonged to Bea. The contents were so intriguing that Dr. Katzew, an artist and educator, pledged to someday sort through the memorabilia and pay homage to Bea.


Each time Dr. Katzew moved—from the Harvard University campus, to Vermont, back to Massachusetts—she took Bea’s boxes with her.

Last year, as Dr. Katzew planned

a sabbatical of study, she hit on an idea, both artistic and educational. She would turn Bea’s possessions into a photography-based book and exhibit.

For the proposed exhibit and book, Dr. Katzew’s expenses include a close-up camera lens, matting and framing of photos, plus travel expenses for a research trip to Texas. She estimates total expenses of more than \$8,000 and is applying for fellowships to fund the rest of her costs. Dr. Katzew has a lengthy list of publications, art exhibits, and fellowships on her curriculum vitae. She anticipates completing the book in the fall of 2016 and mounting a traveling photo exhibit in the spring of 2017.

The TJHS Grant Committee helps underwrite projects that further the Society’s mission to disseminate information about Jewish involvement in the state’s social, economic, religious, professional, and cultural history.

The Grant Committee accepts applications year round, with quarterly deadlines on December 1, March 1, June 1, and September 1. The application form is online at www.txjhs.org. Hollace Weiner of Fort Worth chairs the Grant Committee. Serving with her are Sonny Gerber of Houston, Guy Manaster of Dallas, Jack Solka of Austin, and Michael Wolf of Beaumont. 

pocket, and landed a job working for the local blacksmith for fifty cents a day. Perlstein bought out his employer after several years and used the money he made in that business to invest in the oil boom with Jewish jewelry store owner R. M. Mothner, who had moved to Beaumont the same year as Perlstein. The success of the oil industry in Beaumont provided Perlstein with the necessary funds to build Beaumont's first skyscraper in 1907, which at the time was the largest structure between Houston and New Orleans. The oil boom also provided Beaumont residents with more disposable income than ever before, and many Jewish merchants profited in their retail endeavors. J.J. Nathan, who had moved to the area around 1900, found his niche by adding an extensive toy section to his department store. Joe and Leon Rosenthal cornered the women's fashion market, and Loeb's cigar shop did good business as men celebrated their success with fine cigars. Jake Ableman came into Beaumont in 1901 after the discovery of oil, and opened a store to provide Jefferson County's horses with the finest factory-made saddles, harnesses, and reins. Oil made Beaumont a lucrative place in the early twentieth century, and Jewish merchants claimed a spot for themselves in the cityscape of new buildings and stores.

As their community prospered, Beaumont Jews sought to integrate into Beaumont city life. In 1910, H.A. Perlstein ran an ad in the *American Israelite* looking for a "Reform Rabbi, native of America or England, agreeable to both Orthodox and Reform, good mixer." Although he would later make jokes about whether the congregation wanted a rabbi or a bartender, Dr. Samuel Rosinger understood his work as promoting a cooperative relationship between Christians and Jews in Beaumont. After hearing a trial sermon in August 1910, the congregation

hired Rosinger as its new rabbi. Rabbi Rosinger took his charge of "mixing" with Beaumont's religious groups seriously, serving as the chairman of the Red Cross and Tuberculosis Association, a director of the Round Table Conference of Christians and Jews, and as president of Beaumont High School's Parent Teacher Association. In a variety of areas—religious, medical, and educational—Rabbi Rosinger helped to integrate Beaumont's Jewish community more fully into the larger community. He also spearheaded a campaign to integrate the Jefferson County Tuberculosis Hospital, though the Ku Klux Klan thwarted his efforts. Despite being unable to integrate the clinic, Rosinger coordinated an alliance between prominent Jewish and Catholic families to take on the Beaumont Ku Klux Klan, using religious harmony as a tool against racism. While Rabbi Levy had laid the foundations of the congregation, Rosinger guided Beaumont's Reform Jewish community for forty-seven years, leading them into the mainstream through his pursuit of religious cooperation and community action.

Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe began to make their way to the area in the early 1900s, and as a result, an Orthodox congregation took shape in Beaumont. Although Rosinger was ordained as a Conservative rabbi from New York's Jewish Theological Seminary and kept kosher, some Jews in Beaumont preferred Orthodoxy to the Reform worship style at Temple Emanuel. Accordingly, several Orthodox Jews in Beaumont founded Congregation Kol Israel in 1917 and soon built a synagogue on the corner of Park and Elizabeth streets.

By 1919, Kol Israel had thirty-five members and a daily Talmud Torah that taught Hebrew and Jewish traditions to twenty-eight students. They also had a full time spiritual leader,

Morris Levin, who had come to the United States from Russia in 1905. Post-World War II conversations about Orthodox Judaism significantly influenced Kol Israel congregants, and in April of 1952, the congregation voted to switch its religious identification from Orthodoxy to Conservatism, affiliating with the United Synagogue of America. The congregation continued operating out of the west end of the building until May 17, 1955, when they moved into a new synagogue.

Rabbi Rosinger spoke to the members of Temple Emanuel about building a new temple before the outbreak of World War I, but the war's demand for resources and men put the temple building project on the backburner. After the war ended, the congregation decided to move forward with the new building project and a lot was secured near Broadway and Forrest Streets. The building committee hired S. Gottlieb from Chicago to design the new temple, and hired Herman Weber to build the structure. Gottlieb designed the building in a Byzantine architectural style, with a large copper dome inscribed with a Star of David at its summit. The dome provided good acoustics to the building and intensified the sound of the Pilcher pipe organ in the choir balcony. The building committee furnished the inside of the temple with ornate decorations with a bronze tablet made in Jerusalem and six stained-glass memorial windows. The new temple seated 600 and provided a rabbi's study, rooms in the basement for Sunday School, a stage, and a large kitchen to prepare the food for social functions. The temple was dedicated in 1923, and an article in the local newspaper claimed that the new "Temple Emanuel is one of the most complete and comfortable, as well as one of the most handsome houses of worship in the city." The ornately designed temple symbolized the prominence and acceptance Jews enjoyed

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From Our Archives

This column is based on information in the TJHS Collection, housed at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas campus in Austin. It has been supplemented with online research. If you have corrections or additions, please submit them in writing to the TJHS editor at editor@txjhs.org. We want our archives to be as complete as possible.

The Odessa Jewish Cemetery

by Vickie Vogel

As a longtime resident of Odessa, Roy Elsner served as Board Member on the Texas Jewish Historical Society for several terms. In the late 1990s, he compiled a directory of the Temple Beth El Cemetery, writing a biographical sketch of the 20 people buried there at that time. In 2007, TJHS held its Annual Gathering in Odessa. Roy took us on a tour of the cemetery and gave us copies of his directory.¹ Much of the information was collected by a questionnaire to surviving family members. Some of it was provided from Roy's memories, as he knew most of those buried there. Dr. Bob Rothstein edited the work.

Temple Beth El Cemetery was established in 1959 in a Sunset Memorial Gardens parcel large enough for fifty graves or more. Dr. Sam Fisher chaired the one-man cemetery committee for many years. Rabbi Emanuel Kumin officiated at the dedication. None but Jews are permitted to be buried there.

The first burial was Ben Sadoznick (1892-1960). Born near Kiev, he immigrated to Connecticut and thence to Louisiana and the East and West Texas oilfields. He married Sylvia Frankel in 1941. Despite his stature, he was known as Big Ben, perhaps because of his Stetson hat. His business interests included several liquor stores, a hotel, a gas station,



Roy Elsner. Photo courtesy of Susan Elsner-Furman.

and Big Ben Pipe & Supply. A charter member of Beth El, he served as its first treasurer. Although he wanted the synagogue to be Orthodox, it was finally agreed it should be chartered as Conservative.

There was another death in 1960, as well as one in 1958 and one in 1959, but the booklet clearly states Sadoznick was the first burial. Either this is an error, or the buried were re-

interred. At any rate, Morris J. Miller (1897-1958) succumbed to congestive heart failure at the Veterans Hospital in Big Spring. He was also a European emigré, fleeing with two brothers and two sisters from Germany to Latvia to New York, then Oklahoma where he married Lillian Colchansky in 1919 or 1920. Morris lived for a time in California, then Gainesville, Texas, where he operated a "trading post" before arriving in Midland/Odessa. He worked as a salesman in, among other things, oilfield equipment. His hobbies were making model ships, growing Bonsai trees, and collecting pipes (smoking). Morris believed in eating dessert first in case there was no room later.

Morris' wife Lillian "Lil" Colchansky (1901-1993) was born in Kansas. While Morris ran a pipe sales yard in Midland, Lil worked at Dunlaps Department Store. After Morris'

death, she established the Odessa Uniform Shop, selling it in 1973. Lil loved reading and games, including mah-jongg. She was active at Temple Beth El, serving as Sisterhood president among other positions. She lived with her son Sam and his wife, Pat, for several years before moving to a nursing home, first in Odessa and later in San Angelo near her son Jeff.

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Her son Sam predeceased her.

Samuel Mitchell Miller (1926-1989) was born in California and grew up in Gainesville, Texas. He served in the Navy in World War II. He worked in sales in his father's pipe business, as well as Shaw's Jewelers, Gerson's Jewelers and Zales, all in Odessa. In 1973, he established Diamonds at Dunlaps, a jewelry department in Dunlaps Department Store. He retired in 1985. Sam was married twice, to Gloralee Woken and later to Patricia Wirt. He collected coins and Craftsman tools, and enjoyed playing poker with a group of Jewish friends.

Scott Alan Miller (1957-1992) was the son of Sam and Pat Miller. He was born in Odessa and graduated from Permian High School. After studying jewelry repair, he joined his father in Dunlaps Department Store. Also like his father, he served in the Navy. He died at age 35, leaving a daughter who was raised by her grandmother, Pat Miller.

Max Winkler (1891-1959) emigrated from Austria-Hungary. He trained as a butcher in New York, marrying Lena Freirich before joining his merchant brother, Herman, in West Texas, eventually settling in Odessa. Max opened a restaurant in Monahans, then Odessa, where he was famous for his corned beef sandwiches and excellent Chinese food.

Lena Freirich Winkler (1899-1971) was born in Germany. She came to New York City, met Max Winkler, and married him in 1917. She kept the books in the family butcher business, first in New York and then at Max's Delicatessen in Odessa. Lena enjoyed playing cards, knitting and sewing. She lived her final years with her daughter and son-in-law, Dorothy and Neal Porterfield.

Herman Julian Winkler (1913-1981) was born in Fort Stockton to Nathan and Anna Winkler.² He at-

tended Kemper Military Institute and graduated in 1931 from high school in Fort Stockton. After attending Texas Christian University for three years, Herman took charge of a Winkler Department Store in Odessa that his father opened. At one time, the family had stores in Fort Stockton, Kermit, Breckenridge and Odessa. Herman served in the army during World War II. In 1945, he married Jennie Moses of Fort Worth. They had two sons, Robert and Steven, who both played high school football. Herman, an avid stamp collector, was a charter member of Temple Beth El.

Jennie Moses Winkler (1903-1994) was born and reared in Fort Worth, the daughter of Wolf and Rachel Moses. After marrying Herman Winkler, she moved to Odessa and helped with Winkler Department Store. Before Temple Beth El existed, her home was often the meeting place for the Jewish community. She served as Sisterhood president, taught religious school, and worked with community organizations such as the Odessa Garden Club.

Steven Craig Winkler (1954-1978) was a star running back at Odessa High School, one of few Jews to play football in Midland or Odessa. Although the son of Sylvia Joiner, Steve was adopted by Herman and Jennie Winkler as an infant. He graduated college in 1976. He died under unusual circumstances, reportedly resulting from an unhappy love affair.

Nathan Rosenberg (1882-1960) was born in Poland, but came to the U.S. at an early age, living in Florida and Nebraska. Nathan became a junk dealer during the Depression, then a plumber and handyman. He worked for the Navy during World War II, then opened gas stations. He once started a trade war by selling gas for ten cents a gallon. Moving to Odessa at age 70, he owned and operated an apartment complex there.

Charlotte Rosenberg (1889-1970) joined her stepdaughter, Esther Fisher, in Odessa in the 1960s. Born in Germany, her fiancé was killed while serving in the German army in World War I. Forced out by the Nazis, she fled to China and eventually to Nebraska where she worked as an accountant. At age 65, she met and married Nathan Rosenberg. Charlotte loved classical music and the opera.

Harry Lustgarden (1916-1976) was a native of York, Pennsylvania. His parents had emigrated from Poland and Austria. Harry married Hazel Pyle in 1943 in Florida. He was a champion weightlifter in 1938. Harry served in the army in World War II. The Lustgardens moved to Odessa in 1957. Harry spent most of his life in sales.

Isser Katzman (1897-1963) was born in Russia and served in the Russian army in World War I. He and his wife, Musia Petrovsky, and their daughter, Tehilla, emigrated through Turkey to Palestine, where son Arie was born in Haifa. Isaac, as he was called, opened a mosaic factory and manufactured tiles. He was troubled throughout his life by a war injury at the hands of the Germans, who severed the fingers of his right hand with a sword. They were reattached, but he never regained full mobility. Isaac worked for the British army engineer corps, and both his children served in the British army in World War II. He was visiting his children, Arie and Tehilla, who had settled in Odessa, at the time of his death. His wife is buried in Tel Aviv.

Arie Katzmann (1923-1991) fought in North Africa as a sniper instructor in the British army during World War II. He and his wife, Zipporah Cohen, emigrated to the United States in 1956 with their two children and became citizens. A third child was born in Odessa, where Arie

owned Miller the Killer Exterminating Company after stints in rug cleaning and kosher pickle businesses. He taught Hebrew at Beth El. He loved classical music.

Zipora (Zee) Katzman (1928-1999) was born in Poland, but the family soon moved to Israel. While serving in the Israeli army, she met Arie Katzman and married him in 1949. In 1956, they moved to Odessa and after many years became U.S. citizens. The Katzmans loved to play poker with the Sam Millers and the Porterfields. Zee also enjoyed mah-jongg, canasta, and "42" and spent many hours at the Senior Center in Odessa playing these games. She worked with Meals on Wheels and was active in the Temple, teaching Hebrew. She served as president of Sisterhood. Just a few weeks before her death, she attended a hockey game in Odessa. Hers was the first funeral in the community officiated by Rabbi Sidney Zimelman.³

Abe Gerson (1905-1978) was born in Brooklyn, one of eleven children. The family moved to Houston, where Abe finished high school. In 1929, he married Leah Goldstein of Fort Worth. Abe worked at Nathan's Jewelers in San Angelo until he was sent to Odessa in 1946 to open and operate their new store. In 1949, he opened Gerson's Jewelers and operated it until its sale in 1969. An avid golfer at the Odessa Country Club, he was active in many community and cultural organizations.

Leah Gerson (1909-1997) was born in Fort Worth to Jake and Rebecca Wolff Goldstein. Her father emigrated from Russia to Dallas; her mother was born in Chicago before the family moved to Dallas. Leah met Abe Gerson at a dance, and a year later they married and moved to Houston. Her father Jake used to serve as cantor during the High Holy Days in West Texas, where the Ger-

sons had moved. They were charter members of Temple Beth El in Odessa. Leah was the first president of Sisterhood. She was an accomplished pianist and loved to dance. She was active with Gerson's Jewelers as well as many community organizations. After Abe died, Leah moved to Houston where her daughter lived.

Louis Rosenberg (1891-1982) came to America from Lithuania, arriving in Houston in the late 1960s by way of New York. He became a liquor salesman and was handed the Odessa branch for Terk Distributing Company. He married Mary, who converted to Judaism. After a few years, Lou opened Corned Beef Corner. He sold the deli and opened two liquor stores. After his death, Stanley Saikin and Harold Schneider started the Lou Rosenberg Memorial Scholarship Fund for Jewish students in the Midland/Odessa area. Lou is remembered for his dramatic shofar blowing during the High Holy Days.

Keith Jeffrey Elkin (1954-1983) was a commercial pilot whose plane crashed during a landing at Midland Air Terminal, killing all on board. He was flying a television crew home after a high school football game. Born in Colorado Springs, he lived in California and Arizona before moving to Midland when he married Patricia Ann Hardy. A memorial fund was started to send doctors to schools to tell children about heart health.

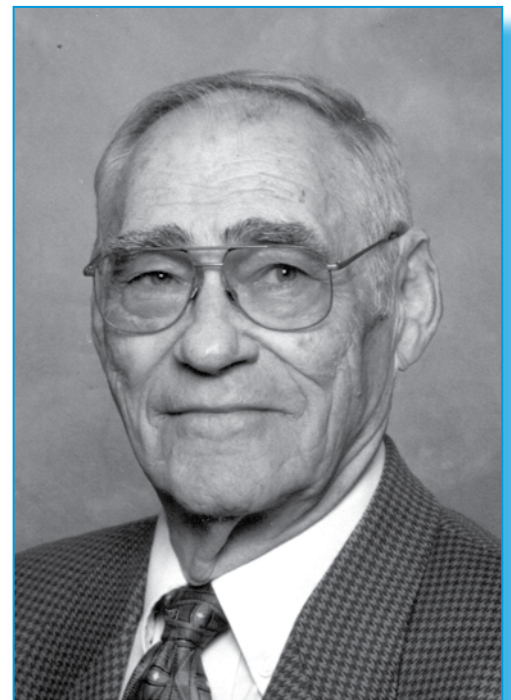
Howard Lemmons (1922-1994) was born in Ozona, south of Odessa, where his parents owned a clothing store. Since there was no synagogue nearby, Howard and his brothers attended Sunday school at the First Methodist Church. As an adult, he was active in the Temple, but not in a leadership role. His wife, Pearl, although not Jewish, often

accompanied him to services before she was diagnosed with a serious disease. Howard cared for her even after his health failed. After Pearl died, his health continued to decline, and he entered an Odessa nursing home and then one in San Angelo, where he died.

Marvin Fishman (1914-1995) was born in Brooklyn. A Harvard educated attorney, he served in the Army during World War II on General MacArthur's legal staff in the Philippines. He married Rose Wirschdo in 1941. Marvin was a senior partner in a prestigious law firm. His son married a Midland girl, and late in life Marvin and Rose moved there.

Lou Hochman (1920-1997) owned Luigi's Italian Restaurant in Midland, where he wished customers *zei gezunt* and kept a sign above the register "*Se habla Yiddish*." A Russian immigrant, Lou and his wife, Zelda, were cooks, waiters, and cashiers in the restaurant. Lou grew up in Missouri until he entered the

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Roy Elsner on the occasion of his bar mitzvah, age 80. Photo courtesy of Phillip Elsner.

Army during World War II. After the war, he and Zelda moved to O'Donnell, Texas where he worked as a store manager. The family moved to Lubbock when Lou became superintendent of Martin Department Stores and later of Lubbock Sales Company. In 1958, they moved to Midland and joined Temple Beth El. He was president of the local B'nai B'rith lodge and was a member of ZOA and ADL, Masons and Shriners, and served as vice president of the Better Business Bureau and chair of the Civic Center Advisory Board. He was a president of the Texas Restaurant Association and was named Local Restaurateur of the Year in 1977. Lou loved the arts, and after the final performance of each play at Midland Community Theater, he closed the restaurant and gave a dinner party for the cast and crew.


There are three non-Jews buried adjacent to the Jewish cemetery. Denis Blankenship (1955-1994) was, according to his family, Jewish, but having no evidence of this, he was buried next to the cemetery on land also owned by the synagogue. Robert Leo Bourn (1926-1981) was raised a Christian, but attended services at Beth El for several years because of his interest in Judaism. He wanted to convert, but his wife and children objected. One of his last requests was

that he be buried in the Jewish cemetery. The congregation did its best to honor his request while keeping cemetery rules. Elbert Neal Porterfield (1917-1982) married Dorothy Winkler, daughter of Max and Lena Winkler. Neal was "handy" and quick to help out with repairing and renovating at Temple Beth El.

Roy Elsner (1924-2014) completed his cemetery book in 2000. He spent the final years of his life in Dallas, near his grown children. He died in 2014. Born in Illinois, Roy was married almost sixty years to Esther "Essie" Scherman who died in 2008. Roy was a decorated Marine in World War II, where he fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He moved to Odessa in 1947 to take a broadcasting job at a local radio station. In 1961, he founded the first FM radio station in West Texas and worked in broadcasting the rest of his life. Roy and Essie are buried in Dallas.⁴

Roy's cemetery book inspired me to create a similar booklet for the Hallettsville Cemetery. Descendants helped with some of the information, but many of those burials were in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which complicated research. Perhaps Roy's example will inspire others to create cemetery books before the information becomes more difficult to collect.

Endnotes

- ¹ Gertrude Teter recently presented Don Teter's files to our archives. President of TJHS from 1993-1995, Don compiled our first cemetery book. He and Gertrude were very active in TJHS, including chairing the Travel Committee. A copy of the Temple Beth El Cemetery booklet was in his files. All information is from this booklet unless otherwise stated. Another copy of the cemetery book can be found in Box 2L257, Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- ² Edward Winkler, longtime TJHS board member, was also born to Nathan and Anna Winkler. He died in 2010 and is buried in the same cemetery. http://www.fortstocktonpioneer.com/obituaries/article_013d23ea-137d-11e0-830a-001cc4c002e0.html; <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=winkler&GSfn=edward&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSst=46&GSctry=4&GSob=n&GRid=139162708&df=all&>.
- ³ Roy Elsner had often served as lay officiant at earlier funerals.
- ⁴ <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=elsner&GSfn=roy&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSst=46&GSctry=4&GSob=n&GRid=125780938&df=all&>; <http://www.isjl.org/texas-odessa-encyclopedia.html>. 

Mazel Tov

to the following TJHS Members

Cynthia and Allen Mondell, for receiving the 2015 Award for Excellence in Humanities and History from the Dallas Historical Society.

Lynna Kay Shuffield, for receiving the Second Prize Award for a Reference Book from the Texas State Genealogical Society for her book, *Houston, Harris County, Texas: Mayors During the Republic of Texas, 1836-1846*.

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

In Memoriam



Dr. Aaron Mintz, TJHS member, died on November 12, 2015, in Houston. His second wife, Jo, predeceased him in March, 2014. He is survived by his first wife, Helen Mintz; his children, Steve, Richard, and Beverly Mintz; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

May his memory be a blessing.

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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President's Message, continued from page 2

the Elissa, one of the remaining Tall Sailing Ships.

Saturday night dinner was held at Gaido's Seafood Restaurant, which is celebrating its one-hundredth anniversary. After dinner, we were treated to a performance by Olympia Dukakis in her one-woman show, *Rose*, at the Grand 1984 Opera House. Thanks to Shelley Kessler, who is a member of the Board of Governors of the Opera House, we were able to attend an after performance reception to meet Ms. Dukakis and have a group picture taken with her. I stood next to her with my arm around her shoulder with the magnificent theatre in the background. What a treat!


Through the years, the Opera House fell into disrepair, but some Patrons of the Arts of Galveston banded together and raised funds to have it re-

stored to its former splendor and glory. The Opera House was constructed and managed by Theatre impresario, Henry Greenwall (1832-1913), a German Jewish immigrant, who along with his brothers, Morris and Phil, operated a chain of vaudeville theatres across the south. The Grand 1984 Opera House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The weekend in Galveston concluded with the Board of Directors meeting on Sunday morning, which was held at Temple B'nai Israel. I can say without hesitation that this weekend was one of best TJHS meetings that we have had in some time. These were the words spoken to me by many of the members who were in attendance, and I do agree.

There are so many of you that I have yet to meet and the only way I

will get that opportunity is for you to attend one of our upcoming meetings. The Annual Gathering will be held April 1-3, 2016, in Beaumont, Texas. (Not an April Fool's ploy, I promise!) Please mark the date on your calendar and join us. There is not a registration form for this meeting in this issue of the News Magazine, but one will be coming your way very soon.

I hope to see you in Beaumont—as someone famous once said, and I quote, "Try it, you'll like it!" 

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

in Beaumont as the building earned a respected place among Beaumont's other houses of worship.

When the Great Depression brought hunger and scarcity to Beaumont, Jewish merchants were among those who helped the poor. Max Feinberg, who had moved to Beaumont and opened a store in 1905, established a "Depression Lunch Counter" on the second floor of his building. For a nickel, Feinberg provided local laid-off workers with a hearty meal consisting of a hot dog with chili, a glass of milk, and an ice cream cone. A black school teacher brought her class of twenty-five students to Feinberg's and bought each student an ice cream cone for only one cent each. Unlike other food providers at the time, Feinberg did not turn away black customers, though he did enforce segregation laws and sat black customers at different tables. Because Feinberg's store was considered by many in Beaumont to be one of the finest, patrons could take advantage of the low-priced food without sacrificing their pride or dignity. Jewish merchants like Feinberg made a living from the people of Beaumont but did not hesitate to give back to the community when the economic downturn struck hard.

After moving to Beaumont in the late 1930s, Ben Rogers and his brothers, Sol, Vic, and Nate, opened the Texas State Optical Company. The enterprise spread quickly throughout eastern Texas, and branches popped up throughout the 1940s in Houston and Austin. The Rogers brothers used the money they made in the optical business to fund the construction of Gateway Shopping City and, later, Parkdale Mall, commercial centers that brought new businesses to the Beaumont area. Like their predecessors in the Jewish merchant class, the Rogers donated substantially to the

city that made them wealthy. The Rogers brothers helped to fund the Babe Zaharias Memorial Museum in the 1970s and spearheaded a campaign to beautify Orleans Plaza with trees, benches, and old fashioned street lights. The beautification project also encouraged more businesses to move to the Beaumont commercial district. According to Charles Weinbaum, the Rogers brothers also extended their philanthropy to the Beaumont Jewish community by using their fortune to help the struggling Congregation Kol Israel.

With a position firmly established in the Beaumont mainstream, Jewish residents began to take on larger roles in local politics. Maurice Meyers served two terms as mayor of Beaumont, from 1978 to 1982 and again from 1986 to 1988. Because of the Rogers brothers careful economic planning and Meyers' political leadership, Beaumont was able to largely avoid the economic downturn in the late 1970s. In 1978, *Money Magazine* named Beaumont the city with the most potential for economic growth. One of Meyers' largest contributions to the Beaumont economy was his handling of labor strikes. Beaumont was not a cost-efficient city in which to build because union members and contractors regularly participated in strikes and walk-outs that made construction costs exorbitant. Meyers planned a meeting of thirty-six leaders from management and labor to devise ways to please both parties by negotiation and communication rather than costly strikes and walk-outs. Such efforts allowed for easier and more cost-efficient building in Beaumont and brought a new economic vitality to the city.


The influence that Beaumont's Jewish residents made on the larger community was surprising given the demographic trends affecting Beaumont's Jews. From a peak of 1,280

Jews in 1937, the city's Jewish population had fallen to 500 by 1997.

Despite the efforts of the Rogers brothers and Meyers, the economic climate of Beaumont was not as strong as it had once been, and many Jews left looking for professional careers in larger cities.

Temple Emanuel and Congregation Kol Israel decided to merge in 1971, with Kol Israel constructing a separate chapel in the Sunday School building of the Temple Emanuel complex. With this merger, Temple Emanuel grew from 175 contributing members in 1970 to 223 in 1976.

The drop in Beaumont's Jewish population was small compared to the decline in the Jewish population in Port Arthur during the 1980s and 1990s. In April, 1995, the members of Port Arthur's Rodef Shalom voted to merge with Temple Emanuel. Port Arthur congregants brought one Torah from Temple Rodef Shalom and placed it in Temple Emanuel's ark, thereby symbolizing the union of the two congregations. The merger of Kol Israel and Rodef Shalom with Temple Emanuel brought a new vitality to Temple Emanuel, and the Temple held a rededication ceremony in 2006 to highlight the one million dollar renovations of the building. While the Beaumont Jewish community is now relatively small, Temple Emanuel remains strong, with an active religious school and full-time rabbi, Joshua Taub.

At the 2006 rededication ceremony, congregants placed pieces of the old stained-glass windows and old ledger books into a time capsule and buried it near the Temple. Though fragments of Temple Emanuel's history may be entombed for 100 years, one need only observe Beaumont's landscape and economic past to uncover the many ways that Beaumont's Jewish population has shaped the city since the 1880s. 

Welcome New Members!

Bernie & Phyllis (Bumar) Berman

15523 St. Cloud
Houston, TX 77062
281-488-3122
pbberman@yahoo.com

Peter H. Eggert

2238 Colorado Bend
San Antonio, TX 78245
210-670-1616
phelaw@yahoo.com

Lilly Farb

5239 Jason St.
Houston, TX 77096

Michael & Nez Gross

P. O. Box 131745
Tyler, TX 75713
903-581-7333
Fax: 903-581-6464
nextexas@bluebonnetpartners.com

Ronnie & Janet (Russak) Horsley

1828 Tall Timber Dr.
Tyler, TX 75703
903-561-8673
horsleylaw@tyler.net

Richard E. & Edila Paz Goldberg

P. O. Box 5814
Austin, TX 78763-5814
512-329-0066

goldberg@prismnet.com

Abby Rapoport & Samuel Baker

4012 Pinckney St.
Austin, TX 78723
757-784-2256
rarapoport@gmail.com

Joan (Krafcheck) Reichstein

5719 Claridge
Houston, TX 77096
281-216-5773
reichsteinjoan@yahoo.com

Directory Changes

David Beer

815 Sherwood Dr.
Richardson, TX 75080-5906

Daniel Weinbaum


correct numbers:
409-833-2351
Cell: 508-667-7936

If you have any changes in your information, please contact

Marc Wormser

1601 S. Riviera Ct.,
Pearland, TX 77581
832-288-3494
c2aggie@gmail.com

Can You Guess This Member?

Since there was no person to guess last issue, we are giving you another TJHS member to guess—This person has been involved with TJHS for a short time but has contributed a great deal of herself to the organization. The winner will receive a year's free membership to TJHS. Email your guess to Davie Lou Solka at editor@txjhs.org any time beginning Monday, February 22. Entries received before that date will not be considered. Previous winners and family members are not eligible to participate. Good luck! 



Does TJHS Have Your Current Email Address?

Is your email address current? Has it changed since the 2015 directory was printed? If so, please send Marc Wormser an email at c2aggie@gmail.com so that he can update your information in the database. To reduce postage cost and printing delays, we electronically send as much mail as possible, so don't be left out or behind!

Please put "email change" in the subject line with your name in the text of your message.

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The deadline for the May 2016 TJHS News Magazine is Friday, April 1.



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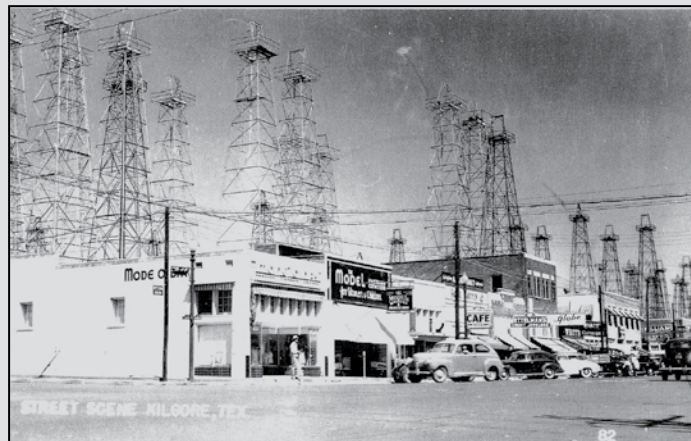
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TJHS Traveling Exhibit

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 late nineteenth 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 exhibit and they will be shipped,



prepaid freight via UPS in waterproof boxes, to your location. The only expense to the borrower will be shipping 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 Sally Drayer-

er at 972-458-7298 or sallyedraye@gmail.com or contact Marc Wormser at 832-288-3494 or c2aggie@gmail.com.

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