

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Established 1980



Summer 2003

APRIL ANNUAL GATHERING A HUGE SUCCESS

The 24th Annual Gathering of the Texas Jewish Historical Society held in Dallas April 25 – 27 was by all accounts a success. Gladys Leff and her committee did an outstanding job, and I wish to thank them again for all of their hard work.

The Hilton Hotel staff went out of their way to make our stay enjoyable. I received many favorable comments about the hotel and the high quality of food at our meals.

We attended Friday night services at Temple EmanuEl and yours truly and wife were honored to be invited to participate in the service. Saturday morning, we were happy to have Dallas Mayor Laura Miller take time out of her busy schedule to be our Breakfast Speaker. She charmed us all! She won re-election the following week, and will serve as Mayor of the City of Dallas for a four-year term.

Allan and Cynthia Mondell presented their film, "Legacy of the Zale Family." This true rags-to-riches story culminated in the Zale Foundation, which continues the philanthropy of the Zale family. Lunch was highlighted by Dr. W. David Nelson's delightful talk on the Parallels between Ancient and Modern Judaism.

(See Gathering, page 6)

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TJHS Executive Board 2003-2004, elected at the Annual Gathering in Dallas (*left to right*): Selma Mantel, Corresponding Secretary; Beverly Beck Trachtenberg, VP; Ben Pfeffer, Treasurer; Marvin Rich, VP; Blanche Sheiness, Historian; Charles B. Hart, President; Mitzi Milstein, VP; Barbara Rosenberg, Recording Secretary; Ima Joy Gandler, Archivist; Howard "Rusty" Milstein, Parliamentarian.

Turn to pages 6-7 for more details regarding the Texas Jewish Historical Society's Annual Gathering. A photo spread depicting many of the April 25-27 weekend events can be found on pages 12-13.



August 1st Is Deadline To Apply for Grants

The Southern Jewish Historical Society supports research in the field of Southern Jewish history in a variety of ways. One way is through issuing grants to individuals involved in qualifying projects. Grants are intended to facilitate the completion of projects relevant to Jewish history in the Southern United States. Projects may include publication of books or exhibit catalogs, or preparation of exhibit modules. Grants may not be used to fund research or travel. The SJHS allocates \$4,500 among grant recipients each year.

The application deadline is August 1, 2003. For more information regarding the grants program and guidelines for submitting proposals, visit the society's website at www.jewishsouth.org or contact Grants Committee Chairman Scott Langston, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Southwest Baptist University, 1600 University Ave., Bolivar, MO 65613, SLangsto@sbuniv.edu, 417-328-1742.

TJHS' HOLLACE WEINER AWARDED JEWISH WOMEN'S ARCHIVES RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

TJHS Board Member Hollace Weiner of Fort Worth is one of six recipients of the Jewish Women's Archives inaugural "Jewish Women Making Community" 2003 research fellowships. Mrs. Weiner's proposal was selected after a rigorous evaluation process conducted with the assistance of eight members of the Jewish Women's Archives Academic Advisory Council.

According to Historian in Residence Dr. Karla Goldman, Mrs. Weiner and the other five scholars awarded fellowships will form the basis for a proposed academic conference and a published volume sponsored by JWA. The conference and resulting book, illuminating the nature of women's contributions to the distinctive communities that have defined American Jewish life, are slated to be among the major scholarly contributions to emerge from the celebration of the 350th anniversary celebration of Jewish communal life in North America in 2004-2005. JWA's effort is to ensure that one legacy of the anniversary will be a historical narrative that reflects the richness and diversity of the North American Jewish experience.

Acceptance of the fellowship includes a commitment to submitting a research essay by March 15, 2004, attending any conference that JWA may plan in which such papers may be presented and discussed, and revising the paper for eventual publication. JWA will provide an additional \$500 stipend to the appropriate archive. Congratulations to Hollace Weiner for her inclusion in what promises to be an exciting community of scholars exploring the meaning of community in American Jewish life.

Have you visited the TJHS web site?

Check it out at <http://www.txjhs.org>

Email: txjhs@yahoo.com



Recipients of JWA "Making Community" Fellowships Announced May 2003

The Jewish Women's Archive received 18 full research proposals for JWA's Jewish Women Making Community fellowships focusing on topics drawn from a broad geographical range including Colorado, Maine, New Mexico, California, Canada, New York, Rhode Island, Illinois, Florida, Missouri, Oregon, Virginia and Texas.

Nine candidates already have doctorates. A number of others are experienced writers. With the help of eight members of the Academic Advisory Council, six proposals were selected for funding in 2003.

As reported on the previous page, one recipient is Mrs. Hollace Ava Weiner, writer, M.A. student, University of Texas at Arlington, "The Jewish Junior League: The 101-Year Rise and Demise of the Fort Worth, Texas Section of the NCJW, 1901-2002."

Other recipients include Dr. Jeanne Abrams, Associate Professor, Penrose Library, University of Denver Director, Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical

Society and Beck Archives, "Bountiful Ladies: How Early Jewish Women Shaped Philanthropy in Denver."

Aleisa Fishman, Ph.D. student, American University, "Jewish Women Making Community in Suburbia: Nassau County, NY 1946-1960."

Dr. Adele Hast, Scholar in Residence, The Newberry Library, A Study of Chicago's Women's Aid.

Mary Ann Irwin, Instructor, Diablo Valley College, Chabot College, "Jealous of Their Powers," The Emanu-El Sisterhood for Personal Service and the Jewish Center Movement in San Francisco.

Barb Schober, Ph.D. student, University of British Columbia, A Study of the Vancouver, British Columbia Section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

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WE APPRECIATE YOUR ARTICLES AND PHOTOS FOR INCLUSION IN THE TJHS NEWSLETTER. PLEASE SEND ARTICLES, INFORMATION, PHOTOGRAPHS, YOUR IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS TO Susan Elsner Furman at Susan@ELsnerFurman.com



A BEAUTIFUL LEGAL MIND[®]

DECADES OF EXPERIENCE HAVE EARNED PHILIP BRIN UNIVERSAL RESPECT

By Mike Elswick

(Reprinted with permission, Longview News-Journal, Feb. 2003)

As a student of law for almost eight decades, Jewish resident Philip Brin still draws the respect and admiration of his fellow attorneys.

"He's a legal icon, a lawyer's lawyer who has forgotten more law than most of us ever knew," says Peppy Blount, himself a longtime Longview attorney. "He's still very well respected by lawyers, judges and others in the profession from throughout the state and nation. On top of that, he's a marvelous person."

Brin, who soon will turn 90, arrived in Longview in 1935 in the middle of the Great Depression. He was just a few months out of the University of Texas Law School.

His original intent was to become an engineer, so he enrolled at Texas A&M University where soon he realized he could not read a slide rule or do mechanical drawing.

"Most of us drift in life, and I did," Brin said. But he found his calling at the UT law school. He returned to his native Terrell directly out of school, but after two months without a single paying client, he decided to move to Longview where things were happening.

"Here in Longview, they were having an oil boom," Brin said. He wrote to Angus Wynn —whom Brin called one of the greatest trial lawyers ever — to seek a job in Wynn's Longview offices. Brin's initial job was looking up information in law books for the firm's more experienced attorneys. While some might have found that research boring, Brin found a labor of love and said those oil boom years were good ones to be learning the legal profession.

"It was an exciting time," he said. "And I was able to learn a lot by observing and doing. Eventually, I got a handle on some small jobs."

Even in the Gregg County boom years of the 1930s, it was difficult to find clients with cash to pay for legal services, Brin said. "The big hope was to get a contingency on an oil lease that would do good," he said. "People just didn't have money, so damage suits, except against the railroads, weren't lucrative."

Brin got experience in the energy business learning about property titles, royalty agreements and other details tied to the oil business such as getting legal papers through the Texas Railroad Commission.

He said the oil industry provided the client base for many local attorneys over the years. As oil was discovered on the property of poor East Texans, the legal community discovered many property titles were in bad shape.

"Things were a mess," Brin said. That led to big oil companies arriving with highly paid legal staffs attempting to take advantage of the situation. In some cases a property owner's primary legal right to property they and their families had worked for for years was the simple fact that they had possession. In spite of that, Brin said their rights prevailed.

"I don't recall one old-timer that ever lost their land," Brin said. But he does recall a time when there was no air conditioning at the Gregg County Courthouse. ►

His original intent was to become an engineer, so he enrolled at Texas A&M University where he soon realized he could not read a slide rule or do mechanical drawing.



"Seersucker suits were normal attire for men in the summer, and they usually closed down and took vacation in July and August when it was the hottest," Brin said.

He practiced for several decades with Fred Erisman, an attorney whose reputation gained legendary status, according to Longview attorney B. Reagan McLemore III. "Phil has never talked about himself and has always tried to remain in the background, but he is one of the most brilliant lawyers I have ever known," McLemore said.

He also said his longtime friend has quick recall of legal details. "He has always had what I would call a photographic memory," McLemore said. "He could remember the name and citation of a case and the specific language of the court in its decision."

Brin maintains an office on the ninth floor of the Bank One Building where his advice is still sought. John C. Fisher, a former Longview attorney who is district attorney for Sabine and San Augustine counties, said when he arrived in Longview in the summer of 1966 to practice law, Brin was ready to help and proved a valuable resource.

"His ability to recall the style and citation of cases in any area of the law was nothing short of astounding," Fisher said. "He got to the office early and stayed late, the law was his passion, and no one could equal the sharpness and total recall of his wonderful mind. He was like a living, walking library."

Howard Coghlan, longtime Longview attorney, said his friendship with Brin started more than 50 years ago. "When I came to town in 1951 as a young attorney, he took me off the streets," Coghlan

said. The Bramlette Building was brand new then, Coghlan said. That was where Brin and Angus Wynn, the first president of the Texas Bar Association, shared law offices.

"At the time I was officing out of my briefcase," Coghlan said. Brin told Coghlan that Wynn was moving to the Dallas area and that he had some office space available. "He told me it was mine for \$74 a month for my half of the rent," Coghlan said. That started a career-long relationship of mutual respect between the two attorneys.

"That was one of the best moves I ever made," Coghlan said. "Over the year-and-a-half I learned more from Phil Brin about the law than I ever learned in pre-law or law school."

Coghlan said the fact that he shared offices with Brin "raised my standing in the legal community tenfold" and helped open doors that otherwise might have remained closed.

"The keen mind and legal expertise of Phil Brin is legend in legal circles throughout the United States," Coghlan said, "and is exceeded only by his highest level of ethical and moral standards exhibited down through the years in his professional and personal life."

While Brin was younger than Wynn, Coghlan said he was a quick study and offered a perfect complement to Wynn. "Wynn and Brin were truly something spectacular," Coghlan said. "The two lawyers were as different as night and day."

During a trial, Wynn was in continuous motion, always elegantly dressed and circling the jury box and lawyers' tables.

(See Brin, page 20)



The TJHS Board of Directors includes (left to right): Marvin Leshin, Elaine Albin, Ed Katten, Davie Lou Solka, Ruth Heidenheimer, Jan Hart, James Alexander, Allan Livingston, Dr. Louis Pink, Merilee Weiner, and Roy Elsner.

(Continued from Cover—A Message From The Prez...)

That afternoon, Past President and Dallasite, Ginger Jacobs took TJHS members on a bus tour of many Jewish sites in Dallas. At the Holocaust Museum, survivor Mike Jacobs spoke to the group.

Following a Havdalah service and dinner Saturday evening, Dr. Gary P. Zola from the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati presented an inspiring program, showing several videos that have been converted from aluminum disks that were made more than 70 years ago. We witnessed clips from fiery speeches by Rabbi Stephen Wise addressing issues of the day, including Nazism, Civil Rights, and Zionism. Rabbi Wise was outspoken and ahead of his time – a powerful orator – and one of the most influential Jews of his time. He courageously raised his voice in many battles against injustice. Dr. Zola impressed us all as an inspiring, educational and entertaining speaker.

A world of thanks to Beverly Beck Trachtenberg for pulling together the Summer Board Meeting, (Houston, July 13). Looking to future TJHS gatherings, the Fall Board Meeting is October 25-26 in Temple. The Winter Board Meeting, hosted by Mitzi and Rusty Milstein, will be on South Padre Island (date TBA). The Board is planning the TJHS Silver Anniversary Annual Gathering for San Antonio, where the Society held its first meeting.

You may have noticed that we have a new editor. This edition of the newsletter was edited and produced by Susan Elsner Furman. I wish to thank her for taking on this awesome task and wish her success in bringing a quality newsletter to our members.

Congratulations to the Society's new Officers and Board Members who were elected at the General Membership Meeting. Yours truly was elected to a second term. I am honored to represent you again, and will do my best to have another successful year.

—Charles B. Hart, President TJHS



**TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2003-2004 SLATE OF OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS**

**TJHS Members Attending the Annual Gathering General Membership Meeting on April 27, 2003 in Dallas
Elected the Board of Directors and Slate of Officers**

| <u>OFFICE</u> | <u>NAME</u> | <u>HOME CITY</u> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
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| Vice President: | Mitzi Milstein | Longview |
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| Historian: | Blanche Sheiness | Houston |
| Archivist: | Ima Joy Gandler | Waco |
| Parliamentarian: | Howard (Rusty) Milstein | Longview |

BOARD 2003-2005 NEW TERM – ELECTED APRIL 27, 2003

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>HOME CITY</u> | <u>NAME</u> | <u>HOME CITY</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Elaine Albin | Rockport | Sherman Kusin | Austin |
| Leah Burstein | San Antonio | Barbara Lack | Victoria |
| Bernice Edelstein | Brownsville | Annette Lackman | Arlington |
| Roy Elsner | Odessa | Marvin Leshin | Corpus Christi |
| Barry Green | Tyler | Alan Livingston | Houston |
| Elaine Greenberg | Houston | Louis Pink | Houston |
| Dorothy Harelik | Hamilton | Ralph Robinowitz | Dallas |
| Jan Hart | Temple | Keith Rosen | Bellaire |
| Ruth Heidenheimer | Cisco | Merilee Weiner | Houston |
| Ed Katten | Waco | Sherry Zander | Dallas |

**MANY THANKS
TO THE
NOMINATING
COMMITTEE**

**CHAIR
HELEN WILK**

**COMMITTEE
YETTA LESHIN
SHIRLEY RICH
MIMI TOUBIN
ED WINKLER**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS — CONTINUING TERM 2003 – 2004

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>HOME CITY</u> | <u>NAME</u> | <u>HOME CITY</u> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
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| James Alexander | Dallas | Berta Schlesinger | McAllen |
| Walter Fein | San Antonio | Leta Schoen | Houston |
| Buddy Freed | Austin | Louis Sokol | Houston |
| Noel Graubart | Houston | Davie Lou Solka | Corpus Christi |
| Micky Graubart | Houston | Max Stool | Del Rio/San Antonio |
| Gladys Leff | Dallas | Mimi Toubin | Brenham |
| Goldye Levi | Dallas | Hollace Weiner | Fort Worth |
| Mabel Massin | Houston | Ed Winkler | Fort Stockton |
| Allen Mondell | Dallas | | |



T SAMUEL NOAH, LEON DYER, ALBERT MOSES LEVY: TEXAS FREEDOM FIGHTERS

By Vickie Vogel

Samuel Noah was born in England in 1779. He sailed to New York City from England when he was twenty and entered West Point. He was the second Jewish cadet at West Point and, in 1807, the first to graduate. His military career took him to Mississippi and Florida.

Wearied of slow promotion, he resigned his commission in 1811 at age 32 with the rank of first lieutenant. To help a fellow cadet, Augustus W. Magee (class of 1809), Noah traveled to Texas and joined a group of adventurers hoping to set up Texas as a new country, independent of Spain.

Noah spent two years in Texas. 1811, the year of Noah's resignation, is also the year Spanish Royalists shot a Catholic priest, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla who had launched a movement to liberate Mexico of Spanish rule.

Father Hidalgo had raised money, munitions, and an army. Anyone who challenged the authorities risked being accused of Jewish ancestry and, indeed, Father Hidalgo was falsely charged with being a Jew. He was captured and shot as a rebel. His followers were hunted down and put to death where possible. The Spaniards captured a Colonel Delgado in San Antonio, executed him and exhibited his head on a pole.

Augustus W. Magee was offered command with rank of colonel of the combined forces of Mexicans and Americans at Natchitoches by a Mexican deputation from the Junta of Coahuila. Magee organized an expedition with Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara known to history as the Magee-Gutierrez Expedition.

Magee collected his friends, including Noah, and traveled on horseback more than 250 miles across Texas to Goliad, then called La Bahia, an unimposing

town and fort 100 miles downstream from San Antonio. By the time they got there on November 14, 1812, their numbers included 800 Americans, 180 Mexicans, and 325 Indians.

Years later, Noah recalled his experience in Texas: "In our battle with the Spanish Royalists before we marched on San Antonio, we were perplexed to know how we could distinguish our Mexicans from the Royalists as both wore the same uniform.

An expedient, however, was soon presented and urgently recommended by a Lapan Indian Chief, which was simply to paint the faces of our Mexicans with rouge, the same with which they painted their own which at once relieved us from our dilemma. It effectually disappointed the enemy."

Noah traveled to Texas and joined a group of adventurers hoping to set up Texas as a new country, independent of Spain.

In 1813, after holding their position for almost a month against a siege, Colonel Magee was invited to dine with the Spanish commander. Magee agreed to deliver the fort and send the Americans home.

When he presented this idea to his men, Noah and the others became indignant, striking the butts of their rifles against the ground, and voting down the treaty. Amid great confusion, Magee retired to his tent, never to return. Some say he committed suicide; others say he died from an attack of consumption. Simon Wolf says, "...poor Col. Magee sickened and died..." Col. Sam Kemper took command.

When the appointed time came for the surrender, the group sent back a flag with no reply. The angered Spanish governor vowed to kill the whole Rebel Army with his force of some 1500. They assaulted, took the town of Goliad and advanced to the walls of the fort.



The Americans drove them from the walls and then from the town. The furious fighting lasted until dark. The Spaniards retreated toward San Antonio with the rebels in pursuit. About nine miles from the city, there was a battle with many Royalists killed. The next day, Noah and the volunteers rode into San Antonio and demanded surrender, and the Spanish governor complied.

The Americans marched into the Alamo and released seventeen of their imprisoned countrymen. The spoils of victory were distributed at the Alamo. The Spanish soldiers were set free and some joined the rebels. The next day, April 1, 1813, General Gutierrez proposed sending the Spanish governor and his staff home on a vessel, then on the Gulf, and about to sail to New Orleans.

The governor began the march under command of Captain Antonio Delgado, son of the executed Colonel Delgado whose head had been displayed on a pole. Delgado marched the prisoners out of town and slit their throats.

Lt. Noah, Col. Kemper and the other officers were shocked. Having pledged their honor for the safety of the victims, they arrested Delgado. His defense was that he wanted to avenge his father and Gutierrez had given him permission. Delgado was released and Gutierrez arrested. He was found guilty of treachery and deprived of his command. The American officers were so disgusted they began to leave the field of battle. Meanwhile, 2,000 Spanish soldiers arrived to crush the rebellion, at least temporarily.

Samuel Noah left Texas to fight for the US against Britain (the War of 1812). His petition for reinstatement as an officer in the regular army was rejected by President Madison on the grounds that he had been born in England, so he fought as a private in the New York Militia in 1814-15, where "his services...were most zealous and untiring, his military education, practical knowledge and quick intelligence proving powerful auxiliaries to his patriotic devotion to duty."

Noah's later life included spending two years in England and, after his return to the United States, teaching school. He died in Illinois in 1871 at the age of 92. For several years, Noah was the senior surviving graduate of the United States Military Academy.

Simon Wolf concludes, "The romantic record of Samuel Noah's early life is full of wild adventure and thrilling incidents; his after history was a curious medley...and his declining years were an old age of poverty, with little relief even from sources upon which he confidently counted to ease his weary journey to the grave," Natalie Ornish writes, "His old age ended in poverty, a sharp contrast to his wild adventure in Texas, where he marched into the Alamo to liberate the seventeen Americans in 1813."

Another Jewish participant in the fight for the independence of Texas was Leon Dyer. Before coming to Texas, Dyer, of a prominent Jewish family in Baltimore, had fought the Seminoles in Florida and had served as Baltimore's acting mayor during the bread riots in the economic crisis of 1834. He soon left for New Orleans to open a branch of the packing house owned by his father, John Maximilian Dyer.

Leon Dyer joined the New Orleans Greys, having been recruited in New Orleans by James Bowie and Adolphus Sterne of Nacogdoches. Dyer became a major in the army of the Lone Star Republic. The Rosenberg Library has his commission signed by David G. Burnet and Gen. Tom Green, dated May 18, 1836.

Dyer's most publicized service to Texas was to act as part of the official escort of General Santa Anna on his journey to Washington, D. C. in November 1836. Major Dyer remained in Texas after independence. ►



(Texas Freedom Fighters—continued from page 9)

He had visited Galveston and was impressed with Texas, so he advised his brother-in-law Joseph Osterman to "...try his luck in the new Republic. Osterman joined Dyer in New Orleans where Dyer had stocked a little schooner with general merchandise."

A week later, they arrived in Galveston. Joseph brought a tent along and opened for business in Galveston. The next year, 1838, his wife Rosanna joined him. Other family members moved from Baltimore to Texas, one of whom (brother Isadore Dyer) founded Union Marine Insurance Company in Galveston. Dyer's son, Dr. J. O. Dyer, came to Galveston in 1876. Besides practicing medicine, he wrote articles on the buccaneers in Laffite's camp and other adventurers for early Texas newspapers.

Leon Dyer received a land grant for 640 acres on May 16, 1846 for his service in the cause of Texas independence. A third Jewish participant in Texas' quest for sovereignty was Albert Moses Levy (1800-1848). Levy was probably born in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

The Levy family moved to Virginia where, in 1830, Levy married Maria A. Bishop, an Episcopalian, who died in 1835 leaving Levy with a young daughter. He left her with his sister in Richmond and went to Louisiana, where he, like Leon Dyer, joined the New Orleans Greys and left for Texas.

Soon he was appointed Surgeon in Chief of the volunteer army of Texas. His army career ran from October of 1835 to February of 1836, and included participation in the siege of Bexar (San Antonio) in 1835.

Since the Texans had no large artillery, they had decided on a siege, which lasted more than a month. Finally, the Texans decided to attack the town and also the Alamo, which had been fortified by the Mexican troops.

On December 4 at 4:00 a.m., the storming of the town began, with house to house fighting lasting five days ending with negotiations on the sixth day. Dr. Levy organized the battle force after Col. Ben Milam was killed. Dr. Levy's vivid account of the battle is preserved in a letter to his sister:

San Antonio de Bexar Dec. 20, 1835

Dearest Sister:

...After suffering a thousand deaths in traveling through and sleeping in the cold bleak prairies night after night without a tree or shrub to shelter us from the cold rain and wind (of which we had an abundance) we found the greatest state of confusion and dissatisfaction. Finally affairs became so bad that the army broke up in confusion, and desperate would have been the consequences for we would all have been cut by the enemy when I, insignificant I, and another individual, a citizen of Texas called Milam [Colonel Ben R. Milam], beat up for volunteers who would join us two in storming the town and fort that very night. (I should mention that from my mixing about a great deal with the soldiers and chatting and joking with them I had acquired some popularity among them).

Our company, called the Grays, [sic] immediately and to a man signed their names, and mounting one of the baggage waggons [sic] (for we, as I have observed, were just ready for a hasty retreat) I harangued them for a few minutes and thus succeeded in getting 3 hundred men.

We laid our plans, appointed our leaders, and about daylight marched up to the enemy's halls, got into some strong houses in town and after a regular storm of five days and nights duration, during the whole of which the enemy kept up an incessant firing, we forced them to surrender, thus achieving [sic] a victory perfectly unparalleled in history, a victory obtained by 225 disorganized and undisciplined men armed with muskets and bayonets in a well fortified fort...Our men fought like devils, (even



I fought). I worked in the ditches, I dressed the sick and wounded, I cheered the men, I assisted the officers in their counsels, for five days and nights I did not sleep that many hours, running about without a coat or hat, dirty and ragged but thank God escaped uninjured. I received a slight wound on the forehead the first day, which was entirely well before we took the town. I was much exposed to the fire of the enemy and all our men wondered how I escaped with my life. I have crossed a street when more than two hundred muskets were shot at me, our men begging me not to expose myself as I was a double man, being both soldier and surgeon.

Col. Francis W. Johnson, in his official account of the storming of Bexar, wrote on Dec. 14, 1835, Doctors Levy and Pollard also deserve my warmest praise, for their unremitting attention and "...assiduity." Levy received on May 27, 1838 a Donation Certificate #151 signed by General Barnard Bee, Secretary of War, for 640 acres "having fought at Bexar from the 5th to the 10th of Dec. 1835 with exemplary bravery."

Levy now left the Army and joined the Navy. In January 1836 the provisional government of Texas had authorized the purchase of four schooners. David G. Burnet, President of the Republic, signed Albert Levy's appointment as a surgeon in the Navy of the Republic on March 20, 1836.

The navy included the Independence, the Brutus, the Liberty, and the Invincible. Dr. Levy was welcomed aboard the Brutus, a ship armed with "eight port guns and one pivot nine-pounder" or nine short guns and a long eighteen-pounder swivel. In March the navy began intensive patrolling of the Texas Gulf Coast. On April 7, the Acting Secretary of War, David Thomas, sent Sam Houston a letter: Dr. Levy "has just arrived...from Galveston, brings intelligence of the arrival of the Brutus, Captain Hurd, and Independence, Captain Hawkins, in the Bay. The Brutus will proceed to New Orleans to be fitted out."

Dr. Levy transferred from the Brutus to the Independence early in 1837. On April 17, two Mexican brigs-of-war met the ship about 30 miles from Velasco. After a severe battle, the Mexicans overpowered the Independence and forced it into the port of Brazos Santiago.

All passengers and crew were transferred to Matamoros and confined. Col. John H. Wharton tried to negotiate for release of the prisoners, which included his brother William H. Wharton, the newly appointed Texas Minister to the U. S. Wharton took a flag and 30 Mexican prisoners to make an exchange.

On landing in Matamoros, however, he also was made a prisoner and confined in a dungeon. After six days, he escaped and returned to Texas. Levy and the other prisoners were on their own. Winning over their guard – Thomas Thompson of English descent, who had been in Mexican service many years – they managed to escape.

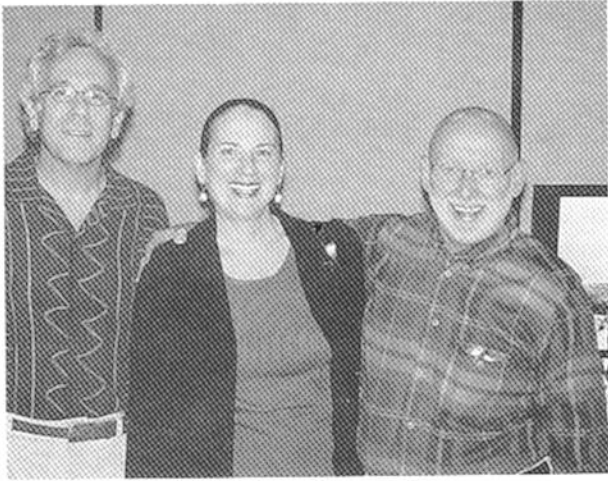
Dr. Levy swam the Rio Grande, walked back to Texas and established a medical practice in Matagorda. He had served seven years, a longer period of time than virtually any other Texan in the battles for Texas independence. On Dec 18, 1837 the Second Congress selected eleven medical men to regularize the practice of medicine in Texas. Albert M. Levy was named to the Board of Medical Censors, which outlined the qualifications necessary for physicians to be licensed to practice in the Republic of Texas and to examine a candidate for a license.

In 1838, Levy married another Episcopalian, Claudinia Olivia Gervais. They had five children who were reared as Episcopalsians. In 1840 Dr. Levy and four other doctors in Matagorda published a schedule of charges for their community: Day visits five dollars, night visits ten dollars, consultations, fifteen dollars, bleeding two dollars, labor cases thirty dollars.

(See Texas Freedom Fighters—page 21)



The Texas Jewish Historical Society Annual



Allan and Cynthia Mondell with Barry Green following the Mondell's presentation to TJHS members.

The Society's Annual Gathering culminates Sunday morning with the General Membership Meeting.



Cynthia and Allan Mondell delighted TJHS members with their new Hester Street video production.



Leon Brachman gives the membership report.



Gathering Held April 25 - 27, 2003 Dallas, Texas

Dallas Mayor Laura Miller (right), with TJHS Board Member Jan Hart, Temple. The Honorable Mayor Miller was the Keynote Speaker at the Annual Gathering Saturday Breakfast.



Shirley Rich (Houston), Yetta Leshin (Corpus Christi), and Joyce Gerrick (Fort Worth), enjoy each other's company and a well-deserved break during the tour of Dallas Jewish sites.



TJHS President Charles B. Hart and Recording Secretary Barbara Rosenberg discuss items for the Society's general membership meeting.



Barry Zale speaks to the Society about his family's Texas Jewish history.



The 28th Annual Conference of The Southern Jewish Historical Society

“A People’s Memory Is History”

October 30 – November 2, 2003

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

PARK VISTA MEMPHIS HOTEL (FORMERLY ADAMS MARK HOTEL)

Thursday – October 30, 2003

6:30 p.m.

SJHS Board Meeting

Friday – October 31, 2003

8:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Bus Tour of Memphis – Conducted by Foremost Memphis Historian, Perre Magnus

10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Tour: National Civil Rights Museum
Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights Movement

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

“Memphis: An Orthodox Oasis in the South”

Moderator: Dr. David Patterson, Director of the University of Memphis Bornblum Judaic Studies

Panelists: Senior Rabbi Lawrence Zierler, Baron Hirsch Synagogue; Rabbi Joel Finkelstein, Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth; Rabbi Levi Klein, Chabad Lubavitch; Rabbi Nossan Schreiber, Dean of Margolin Hebrew Academy / Firestone Yeshiva of the South

12:45 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch Sponsored by Marie & B. Lowenstein Foundation at the Center for Southern Folklore
Corky’s Barbecue & Old Southern Recipes

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Tour: Marilyn & Jack Belz Museum of Judaica
This diverse private collection includes paintings, sculptures, hand-decorated scrolls, and ceremonial objects made from precious metals and enamel.

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Tour: “Jewish” Memphis – Conducted by Judy Peiser, Director, Center for Southern Folklore
From the Pinch -- Memphis’ original settlement area -- to the Pyramid entertainment arena.

Friday, October 31, 2003 – continued

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat Dinner

Temple Israel Sisterhood & Brotherhood

Welcome: Senior Rabbi Micah Greenstein, Temple Israel, Memphis

7:15 p.m.

Services – Rabbi Greenstein’s Sermon:
“Why History Matters”

Followed by Oneg Shabbat and Tour of the Temple’s Museum

Saturday – November 1, 2003

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Sabbath Morning Service, Park Vista Hotel

8:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Shalom Y’all: Mid-South Jews & Medical Issues

Moderator: Rabbi Emeritus Temple Israel, Harry K. Danziger. **Panelists:** Patricia LaPointe, Curator Memphis / Shelby County Public Library; “Memphis’ Jewish Medical Community and Early Memphis Jewish Settlers,” Dr. Cornelia Wilhelm, University of Munich, Dept. of Jewish History & Culture, “Yellow Fever Diary.”

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

“Say It with Food: A Culinary Tour of the Jewish South”

Moderator: Cathy Kahn, Immediate Past President SJHS
Panelists: Marcie Cohen Ferris, oral historian and author specializing in Southern Jewish Food and cultural identity
Joan Nathan, nationally acclaimed cookbook writer, and producer and host of the PBS television series, *Jewish Cooking in America with Joan Nathan*.



“A PEOPLE’S MEMORY IS HISTORY”- Agenda Continued

Saturday, November 1, 2003 – continued

12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Lunch Featuring Special Recipes by Joan Nathan
“Cues, Blues & Jews: Southern Music & Southern Jews”

Moderator: Dr. Stephen Whitfield, Brandeis University
Panelists: David Less, writer, producer, researcher and former president of the Blues Foundation, has been published in *Rolling Stone*, *Down Beat*, and *Blues Revue*. David Loebel, director and conductor of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra; Daniel S. Mariaschian, executive VP, B'nai B'rith International and author of *Elvis and the Jews of Memphis*.

2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Parallel Lives: Growing Up Jewish & Black in Mississippi

Moderator: Stuart Rockoff, resident historian, Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, Miss.

Panelists: Clifton L. Taulbert, international lecturer, businessman, memoirist and author of several children’s books, Taulbert has written in-depth about the South, including his best seller, *Once Upon A Time We Were Colored*, which was made into a feature film. Gene Dattel, an international financier and Wall Street economist, grew up in Ruleville, Miss., working in his father’s dry goods store. He will share his experiences and insights on the Southern Jewish Experience.

3:45 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.

“What Drives Miss Daisy?”

Moderator: Dr. Phyllis Leffler, public history professor, Judaic Studies faculty, University of Virginia.

Panelists include: Dr. Mark Greenberg, director of the University of Southern Florida’s Florida Studies Center, “A Life of Meaning: Southern Jewish Women in the 19th Century.”

7:00 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.

Memphis Jewish Federation Cocktail Hour

At Beth Hirsch Synagogue. Klezmer Music Concert & Tour of Stained Glass Windows

8:00 p.m.

Dinner Speaker: William R. Ferris, former chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities, “Personal Reflections on the Southern Jewish Experience.”

Sunday – November 2, 2003

9:00 p.m. – 9:45 p.m.

SJHS Business Meeting

10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

See Meet the Authors, below

12:25 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Bornblum Institute of Judaic Studies

Luncheon Speaker: Ellen Frankel, CEO and Editor-in-Chief, Jewish Publication Society,

“With A Southern Accent:

The Contributions of Southern Jews to Jewish Publishing in America”

2:00 p.m.

Convention Closes

Meet The Authors

Moderator

Dr. Mark Bauman, Author and Editor

Bernard Rapoport: *Being Rapoport: Capitalist with a Conscience*, Rapoport’s memoir is the story of a second-generation immigrant in Texas who yearns to be an academic but who learns business through family-owned jewelry stores. Rapoport is legendary among Texans for his influence on state and national Democratic politics and for his commitment to philanthropy.

Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: an Early American Family*. Bingham uses family and gender, religion and ethnicity, class and culture to weave together a story of 19th century America and of an American Jewish family. An influential advocate of traditional Judaism, Jacob Mordecai founded an important school in Warrenton, Va., and a clan that struggled with acculturation in America and in the South.

Harriet Keyserling, *Against the Tide: One Woman’s Political Struggle*. Keyserling, a former South Carolina legislator, grew up in a New York Jewish family and was transplanted through marriage to Beaufort, S.C. Her memoir is the story of her transformation as a woman, a Jew, a politician, and a fighter for culture and social causes.



BEAUMONT'S FABULOUS WIESS BROTHERS: BUSINESS LEADERS OF EARLY BEAUMONT THE HISTORY OF THE RELIANCE LUMBER COMPANY

By **W. T. Block**

(Reprinted from Beaumont Enterprise, November 9, 1980)

Wiess Bluff on the Neches River, fifteen miles north of Beaumont, Texas, could be anyone of a hundred beautiful piney woods sites, where towering timber monarchs rim the banks of the stream, creating a myriad of shady nooks beneath. Less visible is its historical significance, which in three generations linked an immigrant's rustic cabin to the founding of giant Humble Oil and Refining Company (now Exxon) in 1917. The same spot also provided early Beaumont with three brothers, twins Mark and William, and Valentine Wiess, all who became an indispensable trio among the top ten lumber barons of the "Sawdust City."

Their father, Simon Wiess, became a Neches River cotton broker at Wiess Bluff, Jasper County, in December 1839, after having operated unsuccessful stores at Nacogdoches, Beaumont, and Port Neches between 1836 and 1839. One religious account of Beaumont credits Wiess with having been the first member of the Jewish faith to reside in Jefferson County. While that statement is probably true, Wiess never practiced his religion after his arrival in Texas and apparently guaranteed the demise of his faith when he married Margaret Sturrock, a Scotch Presbyterian. The twin sons, Mark and William, were born at Wiess Bluff in October 1842, followed by Valentine in July 1845. A daughter, Pauline Coffin, was the first-born child, followed by two other sons, Captain Napoleon Wiess in 1839 and Massena Wiess, born in 1849.

Simon Wiess was a shrewd cotton trader and merchant, and while yet in their teens, the business acumen of his sons was being honed to microscopic keenness over the counter of the Wiess store. In 1862, the four older brothers enlisted in cavalry Company A of Spaight's Battalion of the Confederate Army, and the brothers fought in a number of Louisiana battles, particularly

the Battles of Calcasieu Pass, Fordoche Bayou, and Bayou Bourbeau. Each survived the war, and a collection of their Civil War letters is available at the Rosenberg Library of Galveston. Pauline Coffin, the oldest, outlived all of her brothers and resided ninety of her 93-year lifespan at one residence at Wiess Bluff, dying there in 1930.

Her fondest memory was of an occasion when Gen. Sam Houston stayed overnight there while he was en route by steamboat to Sabine Pass. Capt. N. Wiess lived all of his short life of 33 years at Wiess Bluff and died there in 1872.

At various times after 1866, he owned and operated two Neches River cotton steamboats, the "Albert Gallatin" and "James L. Graham." Massena, the youngest, spent his career in business in Round Rock and Sour Lake, Texas, and died at Beaumont in 1921.

During the Reconstruction years, Mark, William, and Valentine pursued different business patterns until they united in ownership of the Reliance Lumber Company in 1881. From 1866 to 1875, Captain William Wiess was also in the cotton export business, as owner and master of the sternwheelers "Alamo" and "Adrienne," which sailed both the Neches and Sabine Rivers. He also owned a half-interest with his twin brother Mark in the store of W. Wiess and Company of Beaumont.

Mark Wiess was the first of the brothers to settle and enter business in Beaumont, founding a



general mercantile store there in 1866 in partnership with David R. Wingate. In 1867, his twin William bought out Wingate's interest. After their father's death in 1868, Val and Massena Wiess operated the family store at Wiess Bluff for the next two years. Yet it appears that both commuted back and forth to Beaumont, for Massena Wiess was treasurer of Jefferson County in 1869. He resigned in 1870 to move to Round Rock.

Mark was the only brother who showed an early interest in sawmilling. In April 1870, he and Harry Potter bought the old Otto Ruff sawmill on Brake's Bayou, which they reorganized in 1878 as the Reliance Lumber Company. Ruff had bought the small circular mill from Steadman Foundry in Aurora, Indiana, in 1859, and shipped it via steamboat and schooner to Beaumont, where it became the third steam industry in the thriving frontier hamlet. During the 1860s, the mill had a spasmodic history, being operated intermittently for short intervals by A. J. Ward, Goldsmith and Regan, and Dan. Greene.

Apparently, Mark Wiess became disillusioned with sawmilling, for in 1873 he sold his interest in the Wiess and Potter Mill to James F. Ward and James Dalton. His reasoning for selling stemmed from the relatively small output of the mills of that era, a daily cut of about 5,000 feet being about average.

Mark Wiess recognized that the production bottleneck was the friction-feed carriage, which depended on the weight of the log to feed it into the circular saw, a crude method by any comparison, and any improvement in circular or band saws would accomplish nothing until maximum efficiency of the log carriage could be perfected.

About 1876, he invented and patented a device, known as "shotgun feed," in which a cylinder, energized by steam, moved the carriage back and forth on the carriage track. The innovation doubled production and revolutionized sawmilling overnight.

In 1874 Valentine Wiess founded V. Wiess and Company at Beaumont, which within a decade became Beaumont's largest merchandising and insurance firm, representing 13 insurance underwriters. Next door to it, he began Beaumont's first private bank, which operated as a branch of the mercantile business. In 1889 he was instrumental in founding and became the first president of First National Bank, which is still in business although the name is altered.

During the 1870s, William and Val Wiess joined William and W. P. H. McFaddin and Dr. O.M. Kyle in founding the 60,000 acre Beaumont Pasture Company (known also as the "Mashed-O" Ranch), which operated a herd of 10,000 cattle on the 60,000 acres of the open prairie south of Beaumont. They also owned a large ranch and a few thousand steers in Greer County.

*The innovation
doubled production
and revolutionized
sawmilling overnight.*

In 1900, these partners also entered the canal business, when they built a pumping plant and system of 25 miles of canals, beginning where Dupont Chemical is currently located. In 1905 they organized the McFaddin-Wiess-Kyle Rice Milling Company. In Jan. 1901, it was upon land of the McFaddin-Wiess-Kyle Trust Company that Capt. Anthony Lucas bored the successful Spindletop gusher, thus launching the Wiess brothers into the oil business as well. The brothers were silent partners in the ranching and canal activities, which were actively run by the McFaddin family.

Also during the 1870s, each of the brothers had the misfortune to lose a young wife still in her twenties, two of them, Lou E. and Mary Wiess, being daughters of a pioneer Beaumont merchant, William Perry Herring. At later dates, each of them remarried. Mark Wiess reared six children to adulthood; William Wiess, four children; and Valentine reared two children. ►



(Beaumont's Weiss Brothers, continued from p.17)

In 1878, Mark Wiess teamed up with J. F. Ward, H. W. Potter, and W. P. H. McFaddin to found the Reliance Lumber Company, using as its nucleus the land and facilities on Brake's Bayou of the old Wiess and Potter mill. They immediately went heavily into debt to buy a \$6,000 double-circular sawmill, boilers, engine, and related equipment from E.P. Allis and Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and all of it financed by a \$10,300 loan from Val Wiess' bank. From its beginning, the Reliance mill had a cutting capacity of 50,000 feet daily, unbelievable lumber production for that era, and due solely to its "shotgun feed" steam carriage. For a time it was the only sawmill in the world that was so equipped.

In 1881, William and Valentine Wiess bought out Ward and McFaddin's interests in the company, but Val Wiess' interests in sawmilling were strictly financial thereafter (except that Val Wiess also organized the area lumbermen into an association for their mutual protection). For the next twenty years, William Wiess served as president and production genius, while Mark Wiess became sales manager and Beaumont Board of Trade's emissary to the rest of the world. For years, he maintained sales offices in such remote places as London, and he was continually on the road to the Northern states, Europe, and Latin America.

Today, it is hard to visualize the extent of national stature enjoyed by Beaumont's early timber barons. In addition to the Wiess brothers, members of the Long and Carroll families, W. A. Fletcher, John W. Keith, J. N. Gilbert and J. F. Ward were well known in every lumber market, and long biographies of them survive in several lumber trade journals. Mark Wiess was gone for eight months of every year, most of it in the mid-western and eastern states.

In every respect, he was Beaumont's "one man chamber of commerce" when actually no chamber existed, and the Galveston "News" took note of large write-ups about him in such distant cities as Chicago and Mexico City. The "News" dubbed him the

"Bishop of Beaumont," because he never ceased to extol the virtues of "sawdust city."

In February, 1888, a "News" correspondent toured the confines of the Reliance sawmill's "whirl of machinery," and upon exiting, he "was right glad to inventory as many arms and legs at the end as when he started."

By then, the Reliance facilities had grown to an annual cutting capacity of about 20,000,000 feet, while its planing mill could process 75,000 feet daily and its dry kilns, 20,000 feet daily. One of its other factories processed wood lathes, fence pickets, barrel staves, and moulding, while another manufactured windows, doors, pulpits, ballasters, stair rails, office desks, and tables.

The Reliance Lumber Company continued to expand until 1902, when the Wiess brothers sold out to J. H. Kirby, and by then its double-cutting band saws were slicing up 125,000 feet per day. In September 1891, the sawmill landed the largest lumber order ever recorded in Beaumont and perhaps anywhere else in the South.

Mark Wiess signed a contract for 100,000,000 board feet of lumber with the Omaha and Kansas Central Railroad. The footage was considerably beyond the company's ability to produce, and for two years, the Reliance mill bought up the entire output of a number of East Texas mills. During the 1890s, the Wiess brothers owned 90,000 acres of timberlands, but already they could foresee the end of Beaumont's lumber era and the rafting of logs down the Neches River.

By 1890, for economy's sake, it was already preferable in most instances to erect sawmills along the line of the Sabine and East Texas Railroad, in the vicinity of the log supply. And when John H. Kirby offered them a favorable sale price in 1902, they sold out. Another factor was the Spindletop discovery a year earlier, which had already caused the brothers' business



interests to focus on the oil-producing industry. Under Kirby, the Reliance mills continued to operate until 1920, when they were dismantled and moved inland to the Piney Woods region.

Perhaps Valentine Wiess' greatest contribution to Beaumont lumbering, in addition to financing, came with his founding in 1883 of the East Texas and Louisiana Lumbermen's Association, of which he served as president and maintained its headquarters on the second floor of his bank.

Throughout the last century, the sawmillers were plagued by perennial boxcar shortages and unfavorable freight rates, and Wiess banded them together for their mutual protection. One result was the development of a flourishing coastwise trade, wherein lumber was barged to Sabine Pass and from there, trans-shipped by schooner to all of the world's markets. Much of the Wiess lumber correspondence is preserved in the Association's "Letterbook for 1884-1886."

Although the brothers were part owners of the Spindletop gusher site, they showed no enthusiasm over the oil discovery. They had each earned a fortune already and were comfortably situated in fine mansions scattered along "Lumbermen's Row" in Beaumont. Like others of their economic status, they looked with a certain disdain on the swarm of boomers and roughnecks, lease traders, and hangers-on of every hue who surged back and forth between the depot, the hotels, and the oil field. The brothers knew that significant, and perhaps unwanted, changes would occur that might lower the quality of life in the quiet but industrious "sawmill city."

William Wiess remained perhaps the most aloof, he and his family spending the first week after January 10, 1901, cruising about aboard their yacht on the Neches River. But gradually, he too was caught up in the quest for oil, and by August, 1901, he was a member of a committee appointed to draft a uniform code of fire prevention and safety regulations for the renowned oil field.

For twenty years Valentine Wiess had owned the largest business firm in Beaumont, V. Wiess and Company consisting of a grocery firm, a dry goods firm, hardware and farm implement firm, retail lumber, banking, and insurance firm, and his payroll had begun to compare to that of the sawmill. By 1902, his interests too were beginning to focus on oil. He soon became an early stockholder of the J. M. Guffey Production Co. He invested in pipelines, and later teamed up with W. P. H. McFaddin to found the McFaddin and Wiess Oil and Gas Company, headquartered at 302 Tevis Street.

In 1913, the year of his death, Val Wiess was the largest taxpayer on the city's tax rolls, having invested heavily in business property and in practically every other enterprise of note within the city. In 1900, he built the first five-story brick building in Beaumont. There seems to be little doubt that, when he died, Val Wiess was the wealthiest of the three brothers, although all fiscal papers have been removed at some time in the past from his probate file and were never returned. At a later date, his daughter donated Wiess Park to the City of Beaumont.

In 1913, the year of his death, Val Wiess was the largest taxpayer on the city's tax rolls.

Mark Wiess invested heavily in oil stock and real estate as well. He was generally recognized as the "father of the deep water movement" in Beaumont. In addition to his inventions and "firsts" in sawmilling, he also owned the first typewriter and the first ice company in Beaumont. Although many of his probate papers are also missing, it is apparent that the last division of property to his heirs was in excess of \$300,000.

For one who at first was the most aloof, William Wiess ended up with the largest commitment to the oil industry. His first activity was a large investment in the fledgling Texas Company (now Texaco Inc.). In 1903 he and others founded the Paraffine Oil Company and brought in the Batson Prairie oil field, pumping about ►



(Beaumont's Weiss Brothers, cont. from p. 19)

10,000,000 barrels of oil from its depths in 1904 alone. Ultimately, William Wiess became sole owner of the Paraffine Oil and Reliance Oil companies and he bought a half-interest in the Ardmore Oil Company of Oklahoma, which brought in several fields in that state after 1908. As his health began to fail prior to his death in 1914, William transferred the presidency of these companies to his youngest son, Harry C. Wiess, who was a 1910 graduate of Princeton University.

To free themselves from the arbitrary whim of refiners, pipe line operators, and others, young Wiess joined other independent producers, among them Ross Sterling, W. S. Farish, R. L. Blaffer, W. W. Fondren, and other old Spindletop veterans, in organizing the Humble Oil and Refining Company in 1917. The immediate result was building the huge Baytown refinery, which is today a part of the huge Exxon Corporation. Harry Wiess took both of his father's oil companies and sizeable oil properties in both Texas and Louisiana into the formation of Humble. He also served as vice president of Humble for many years, and from 1936 until his death in 1948, he served as its president and guiding business genius. Mark Wiess died in 1910, and William

Wiess died four years later. William Wiess' probate papers are intact and show a net worth of \$1 million at the time of his death, an era when lumber sold for \$10 a thousand feet and oil at 30 cents a barrel. The writer would wager that the Mark Wiess estate was of equal worth, and that of Valentine Wiess was probably worth \$2 million.

In brief, these are the amazing annals of Wiess Bluff, a site that contributed three of the founding fathers of Beaumont, and another who managed the destinies of a giant national corporation. And all because their progenitor, Simon Wiess, chose to abandon the financial woes, hates, and prejudices of Europe, and seek a better life for himself and his successors among the pine forests of Southeast Texas. **TJHS**

For more information about these remarkable families, consult text and footnotes of W. T. Block, "From Cotton Bales to Black Gold: A History of The Pioneer Wiess Families of Southeast Texas," Texas Gulf Historical And Biographical Record, VIII (Nov. 1972) pp 39-61.

(Brin, continued from p. 5)

Coghlan said Wynn would distract the jury by constantly putting his monocle over one eye and then unexpectedly letting it drop only to be caught by the string to which it was attached. "Conversely, Brin sat quietly at the counsel table observing the judge and jury and watching their reactions while taking copious notes," Coghlan said.

"Just at the time Wynn was about to run out of steam, Brin would subtly hand him a note as he passed by."

Coghlan said Wynn would read Brin's note while still on the move and return to the case armed with the information his associate had provided. It was common knowledge in legal circles that Brin was the brains and the motivating force and the legal genius of the two," Coghlan said.

He said in those early years of observing Wynn and Brin working together, he developed a deep appreciation for the quiet strength of a "true gentleman and legal scholar."

"Phil is recognized as one of the preeminent lawyers around, especially with a particular emphasis on oil, gas and title work," Coghlan said. "He is, without a doubt, one of the most highly

respected lawyers I have ever known." Coghlan said Brin keeps trying to retire, but his clients will not let him.

Retired Gregg County Judge Henry Atkinson also had high praises for Brin. "When I think of Phil Brin, I think of justice," Atkinson said. "I think he's admired by every practicing attorney who's ever come in contact with him."

Atkinson called Brin an ideal role model for the legal profession. "He's probably one of the most astute attorneys I've ever known," Atkinson said. Blount said that in addition to having a keen legal mind, Brin is also a very compassionate person.

"He's on the Salvation Army board where I've had the privilege of serving with him for a number of years," Blount said. "He regularly works on the serving line for the Salvation Army's Stewpot, serving homeless people."

Blount also said Brin remains active in the Salvation Army's Christmas Kettle Drive as a bell ringer, helping collect money to fund programs. **TJHS**



(Texas Freedom Fighters, continued from p. 11)

An 1841 Texas land grant indicates Dr. A. M. Levy transferred 320 acres to Rutgersville College, which became Southwestern University at Georgetown.

Levy's gift is likely the first major endowment by an individual to a Texas university. Levy reenlisted in the Texas Navy in 1842. When Dr. Levy left Richmond after his first wife died, it had created a break in his relationship with his family, particularly his father, who had disapproved his having married out of the faith.

After Levy's second marriage, he wrote to his family asking for news of his oldest daughter and begging them to correspond. Their refusal triggered a depression that brought on his suicide in 1848. Kaddish was not recited at his funeral. He had no burial service of any kind.

On May 4, 1986 a Texas Historical Grave Marker was dedicated to Dr. Levy in the Matagorda Cemetery. Descendants from Louisiana, California, Chicago, and Florida attended along with members of the Dr. Albert Moses Levy Post of the Jewish War Veterans of Houston. April 30, 1986 was

declared Albert Moses Levy Memorial Day in Houston, to honor Jewish participants in the fight for Texas independence.

Samuel Noah, Leon Dyer, and Albert Moses Levy are but three distinguished Jewish participants in the struggle for Texas independence. **TJHS**

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Do You Have An Honorable Menschen To Share?

Do you have news to share with your fellow TJHS members? "Honorable Menschen" features tidbits of information about TJHS members and/or their families. From births and marriages, to accomplishments and degrees earned, to get well wishes and condolences, please send your "Honorable Menschen" information to Dorothy Harelik at dkharelik@htcomp.net or mail it to 602 South Bell Street, Hamilton, Texas 76531. Dorothy can also be reached at 254-386-3538. Thank you!





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The Southern Jewish Historical Society
"A People's Memory Is History"

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October 30 - November 2, 2003

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