

From Our Archives

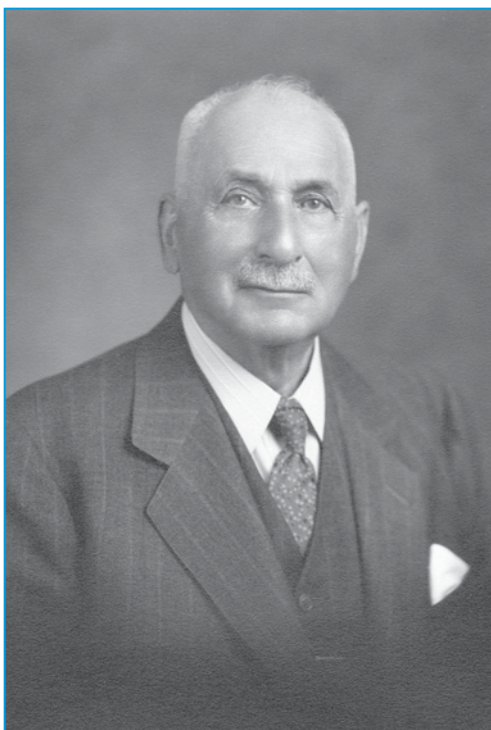
This column is based on information in the TJHS Collection, housed at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas campus in Austin. It has been supplemented with online research. If you have corrections or additions, please submit them in writing to the TJHS editor at editor@txjhs.org.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

Popular Dry Goods and the Golden Twins

by Vickie Vogel

I'm easily distracted when rooting around in our archives at the Briscoe. I ran across a form labeled "Cameraman's Dope Sheet." It was for a CBS program, telling the cameraman where to cut to and when. Who knew? I regained my focus with a folder labeled Surveys and Questionnaires 1991-1993.¹ It contains a survey of source materials, asking our members what kinds of family records and photographs they have, as well as records of clubs, organizations, businesses, events, movements, oral histories, Jewish newspapers, manuscripts, government documents, recipe books compiled by Jewish organizations, etc. I do not know if there was a follow up to collect these items, but since Don Teter was president from 1993-1995, I'm confident an effort was made. A second form in the folder asks for useful information about the member for our archives. The questions are:

1. Where and when did your family first enter the United States?
2. Give original family names and changes, if appropriate.
3. When and where did your family first settle in Texas? List cities or towns in which they resided.
4. What was life like? Was there a synagogue, a Jewish cemetery, organizations, etc?
5. How did the family earn its living?
6. Tell any unusual happenings you or a member of your family experienced in the community.



Albert Mathias. Photo courtesy of Steve Blumenthal.

I challenge you to answer these questions, and email/mail me or TJHS Archivist Sally Drayer and we will put them in the archives. We learn a bit about several families from the questionnaires that were returned. From those tidbits, more was learned from findagrave.com, Google searches, and descendants still active in TJHS. It's like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Some pieces are missing, and some seem to be from a different puzzle, but I've put them together as best I can. In most cases, information from the ques-

tionnaire was just a starting point.

In 1882 Albert Mathias of Germany landed in New York, followed by Frieda Cohen Mathias in 1892.² Albert & Frieda settled in Ysleta, then in El Paso, as did Maurice Schwartz, who arrived in Galveston in 1898 at the age of 16. His Uncle Adolf Schwartz was a merchant in Juarez prior to 1900. His store was called Tres B (for bueno, bonita, barata - good, pretty, cheap). He and his wife Fanny, also from Hungary, moved to El Paso to be with a Jewish community. Adolf opened the Fair Store, but in 1902 he fell ill, closed the store, and became a silent partner with Maurice in the Popular Dry Goods Company. The Popular was known for its clever marketing, such as double stamp days, clearances, and mark-downs. They had a large number of loyal, life-time employees, many of whom were Hispanic. The Popular was the first store in El Paso to hire African-American clerks. Maurice and Adolf often disagreed politically. Maurice gave credit to the rebel Pancho Villa, and Adolf sided with the Maderistas, i.e. the Mexican government. There were times when soldiers from both sides were shopping in the store, unbeknownst to each other.³

There was no synagogue in El Paso before 1898. The Mathias family had a wholesale dry goods, furniture

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and appliance business. Albert built (around 1930) the first high rise hotel (18 stories) for Conrad Hilton, according to the questionnaire.

Maurice, who was born in 1882 to Mayer and Fannie Blaugrund in the Czechoslovakia/Hungary area, led a rich religious and philanthropic life and was honored for his contributions to El Paso civic growth. Frances Schwartz Blumenthal was his daughter and the one who filled out the questionnaire. Albert and Frieda were her grandparents, as Schwartz had married their daughter Hedwig (d. 1981). Maurice and Hedwig had three children: Herbert, Albert (known as "Sunshine")⁴ and Frances.

By 1938, many American Jews understood a catastrophe was looming for the Jews in Europe. Maurice and his brother Nandor Schwartz frantically tried to rescue their endangered relatives. With the help of both Texas senators, Tom Connally and W. Lee O'Daniel,⁵ they brought out

four nephews before the war. After the war, they were able to rescue four nieces who had been in concentration camps.⁶

Herbert and Albert joined the army in 1942. When Herbert died in 2009 at the age of 92, his obituary added information to the family history.⁷ Herbert served as chairman of the board of the Popular (La Popular to many of its customers), and as president of Temple Mt. Sinai, was a member of the Rotary Club, and was active with the Life-long Learning Institute at UTEP. When the El Paso Holocaust museum was being organized in the mid-1980s, Albert donated a display case



Maurice Schwartz and son Herbert Mathias Schwartz. Photo courtesy of Lee Schwartz.



from the Popular Dry Goods Company, which he co-owned.⁸

Frances married Alfred Blumenthal, who was born in Thorn, Germany in 1912. He was a millinery buyer

Photo courtesy of Dolly Golden. Left to right: Rose Antweil, Sarah Golden, Mace Golden, Morris Antweil, and Labe Golden. Child is Alan Joe Antweil. Not pictured: Bessie Antweil Golden (Labe's wife). Morris was Bessie's brother.

for one of the largest stores in Germany, but in 1933, he fled to the United States to his mother's sisters in Toledo, Ohio. After Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the army and was stationed in Fort Bliss, where he and Frances met. He served 28 months in the Pacific theater, then returned to El Paso, married Frances and went to work for his father-in-law at Albert Mathias and Company, a wholesale distributor for radios, refrigerators and appliances. Alfred and Frances had two sons: Mark and Steve. Alfred retired from the company as Chairman of the Board. He served as President of Temple Mount Sinai, the El Paso Jewish Federation, the Downtown Kiwanis, and chairman of the Conference of Christians and Jews. In retirement, he took up watercolor painting, and served as chairman of the Rio Bravo Watercolorists. He co-founded the El Paso Cancer Treatment Center.

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Caption: Fort Worth wedding of Labe and Bessie Golden. l. to r. first row: Estelle Shanblum, Marie Cohn, Ruth Gilbert, Ida Antweil, Bessie Antweil, Labe H. Golden, Lizzie Goldman, Fanny Antweil, Henrietta Wolf, and Bess Lipschitz. Second row: Melville Goldman, Mace Golden, Hannah Antweil, Dr. A. Antweil, Dr. Maurice Cohn, Sol Weinstein. Third row: Dr. M. Silverman and Eddie Gilbert. Flower girls in front are Jessonda Gilbert and Sylvia Silberman. The attendees were identified on. p. 220 of Deep in the Heart. Photo courtesy of Gary Nye.

Al developed cancer himself, and died at home surrounded by his family at the age of 94.⁹

Maurice Schwartz died in 1954 and is buried in Temple Mt. Sinai Cemetery in El Paso.

The Popular's four locations were operated by the Schwartz family until 1995 when El Paso's largest locally owned department stores closed.¹⁰

Another questionnaire is for the Golden family. The respondent does not give his/her own name, but states E. Golden arrived in Corsicana from Ellis Island in 1876 from Odessa, Russia, and then traveled by boat to Galveston in 1880. The family name

was Honigmann, but was Americanized. Golden had three children with his first wife (name unknown to the respondent): Lizzy, Pace, and Ben. After she died, he married Sarah Golden and had three children: Mace B. and Labe H. Golden (twins), and Toby Golden Schwartz (1893-1965).¹¹

Once again, findagrave comes to the rescue to fill in some gaps. E. Golden is Edward Harris Golden (1860-1930).¹² His first wife was also named Sarah, hence the confusion of the respondent. The first Sarah died in 1890.¹³ Her son Pace (1886-1926) died in Graham, TX and is buried in Corsicana.¹⁴

Edward Golden's second wife was Ida Sarah Golden (1867-1922).¹⁵ In 1894, she gave birth to twin boys—in different months! Labe was born before midnight on November 30, and Mace was born ten hours later on December 1.¹⁶ Mace used to say a young doctor delivered Labe and thought he was through. "He came back later and found me," Mace said.¹⁷ As schoolboys, the teachers put labels on them and finally put them in different classes to tell them apart. A Corsicana cigar maker named a line of cigars after them. The Golden Twins Cigars had their picture on the box. Before opening their own store, Labe and Mace clerked in different shops, sometimes giving customers the feeling they were being followed from store to store.

Labe (1894-1978)¹⁸ married Bessie Antweil Golden (1902-1981) of Fort Worth.¹⁹ One of their children, Erwin Pace Golden, was to be a camp counselor in Colorado. Arriving at camp, he jumped into the swimming pool, but it was not completely filled. He broke his neck, and although paraplegic, he had a successful career in real estate.²⁰ He died in 1992 at the age of 55.²¹ There were three other children, J. Y., Eileen, and Norene, who lives in California.²² J. Y. had a military uniform business in San Antonio.²³

The younger twin, Mace (1894-1979),²⁴ was also a lifelong resident of Corsicana, and like his brother, a veteran of World War I. He met Sarah Alterman (1898-1994)²⁵ when he was stationed in San Antonio. Mace and Sarah were the parents of TJHS member Ed Golden (1931-2018), Allen Golden (1925-2016) and Ruth Elaine Golden Miller (1922-2013).²⁶

At the end of the war, Labe and Mace opened Golden Brothers in Corsicana, a western wear and general dry goods establishment. During the

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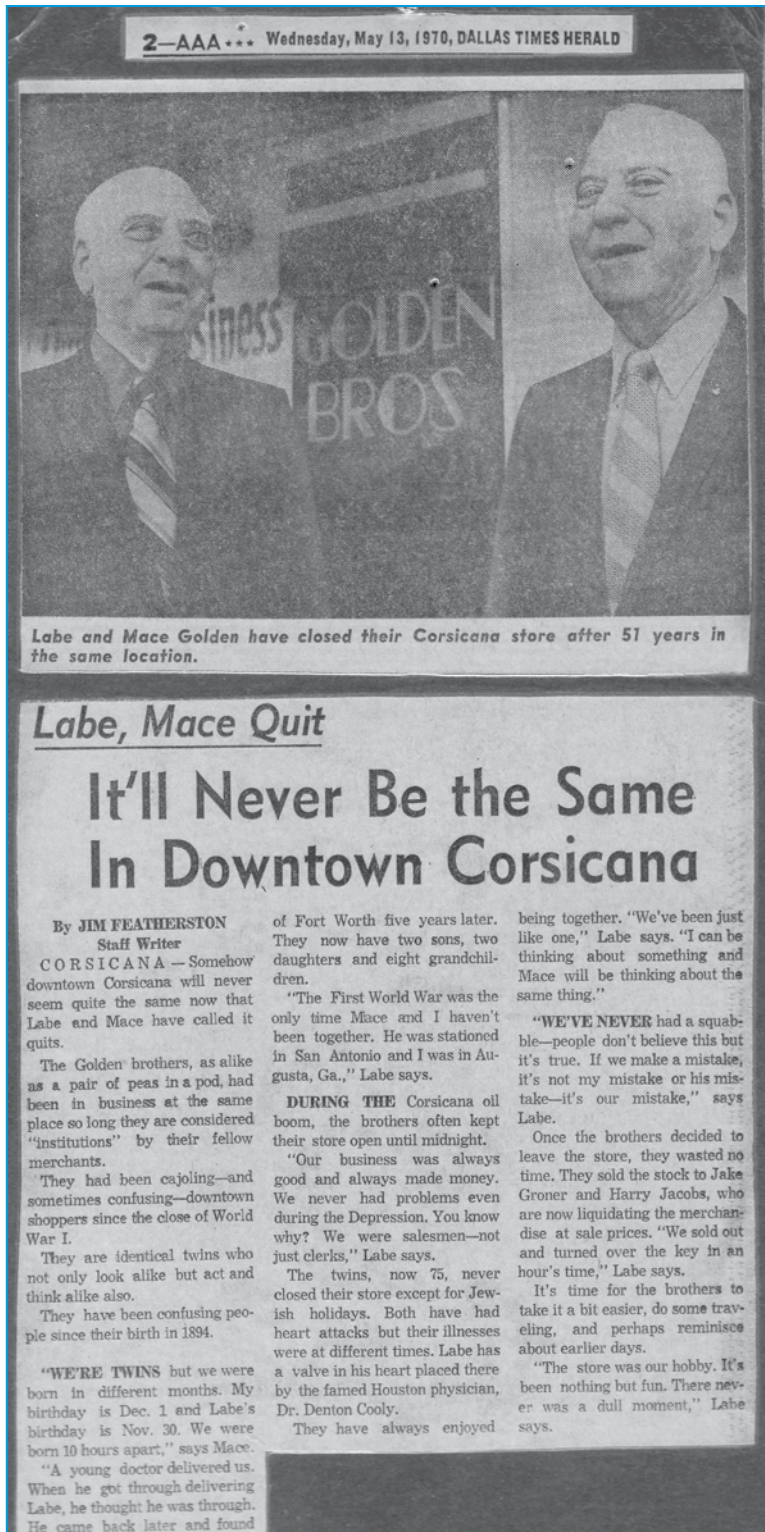


Photo courtesy of Dolly Golden.

oil boom, they often kept the store open until midnight. Business remained good even during the Depression. They only closed the store for Jewish holidays.

Ed's wife Dolly recalls the twins playing tricks on her, because she couldn't tell them apart. They enjoyed hijinks

with customers as well, pretending to be each other for a laugh. Golden Brothers was on Main Street, next to K Wolens Department Store. When Wolens dropped by Golden Brothers, the twins would joke that he was spying to get their trade secrets. Ed Golden worked in the store after school.

Labe said he and Mace never had a squabble. The only time they were apart was during World War I. They agreed it was time to sell the business in 1970. "The store was our hobby," said Labe. "It's been nothing but fun. There never was a dull moment."²⁷

Labe developed heart problems and had a valve replaced by famed Houston heart doctor, Denton Cooley. The brothers died one year apart.²⁸ In the next issue, we will examine the questionnaires from other families.

Endnotes

- ¹ Unless otherwise stated, all information is from Box 3A190, Folder 1 in the Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- ² The 1940 census indicates Albert was born about 1864, Frieda in 1870. https://www.ancestry.com/1940-census/usa/Texas/Albert-Mathias_51q059.
- ³ Ruthe Winegarten and Cathy Schechter, *Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews*. Eakin Press, 1990, p. 102.
- ⁴ <http://aronoff.com/fam946.html>.
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Senators_from_Texas
- ⁶ *Deep in the Heart*, op cit. p. 156.
- ⁷ <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/elpasotimes/obituary.aspx?n=herbert-schwartz&pid=137909465>.
- ⁸ Weiner, Hollace and Kenneth Roseman, *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, Brandeis University Press, 2007. P. 248.
- ⁹ <http://aronoff.com/fam946.html>
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Popular_department_store.
- ¹¹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48180843/toby-schwartz>
- ¹² <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101564654/edward-harris-golden>.
- ¹³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101565317/sarah-golden>.
- ¹⁴ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101565254/pace-golden>.
- ¹⁵ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101565254/pace-golden>.

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Save the Date

January 25-27, 2019

Board Meeting in Brownsville, Texas

April 7, 2019

Dedication of the Restoration of K'Nesseth Israel, 2:00 PM in Baytown, Texas

April 5-7, 2019

40th Annual Gathering in Houston

July 13-14, 2019


Board Meeting in Palestine, Texas

September 12-15, 2019

Visit Jewish Toronto

Guess This Member

Okay, we made a mistake in the last issue. It seems that the "little cutie" we presented in our last issue is really a handsome young man! Excuse our error. He, along with his wife, has been a member and very active in TJHS for so many years. So take another look and see if you can guess who this is.

Email your guess to Jack Solka at editor@txjhs.org and jack@solka.net any time beginning Monday, November 26, 2018. Entries received before that date will not be considered. Previous winners and family members are not eligible to participate. Good luck! 




President's Message, continued from page 2

Charles Hart for all his work with these two wonderful ladies.

Please see elsewhere in this News Magazine for the business that was conducted at the Board Meeting. Rusty Milstein, Cemetery Chairman, reminded us to check the web site for the burial listings and make sure your family listings are correct. Corrections are welcomed, but only you know what is

correct for your loved ones. Updates and corrections are made twice a year, and the next one is coming up soon.

We'll be travelling south for our next meeting and I hope you will be able to join us. Brownsville is our destination January 25-27, 2019. The Registration Form is now available, so look for it in this issue and on our web site. See you there! 

We need Your Stories!

We are earnestly looking for stories with ties to Texas Jewish history! Any kind of story about your family history or your Temple's history can fill the pages of our News Magazine. Everyone has a story to tell, long or short. To submit your story, or if you need help writing your story, contact Jack Solka at jack@solka.net or 512-527-3799.

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¹⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101564827/ida-sarah-golden>.

¹⁷ Phone conversation with Dolly Golden, September 12, 2018.

¹⁸ "It'll Never Be the Same in Downtown Corsicana," Jim Featherston, *Dallas Times Herald*, May 13, 1970. From Dolly Golden.

¹⁹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101565003/labe-h-golden>.

²⁰ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101564412/bessie-golden>.

²¹ Dolly Golden, op cit.

²² <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101564749/erwin-pace-golden>.

²³ Dolly Golden, op cit. Eileen Golden Raffkind died in 2012. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/88509300/eileen-raffkind>.

²⁴ Telephone conversation Jill Nye Borenstein, Norene's daughter, September 21, 2018.

²⁵ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101565082/mace-b-golden>.

²⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101565395/sarah-golden>.

²⁷ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101565082/mace-b-golden>.

²⁸ *Dallas Times Herald* op cit.

