



Texas Jewish Historical Society

February 2020 News Magazine

Temple Beth Israel Synagogue Building in Breckenridge Catches Fire

by Davie Lou Solka

At an early morning fire on Sunday, November 24, 2019, firefighters found the former Temple Beth Israel building in Breckenridge, Texas, consumed in flames. The building was located at 302 N. Parks Street, and was built in 1929 to serve the Jewish community for its religious observances. The building was sold in 1974, and was currently used as a storage/work area.

The sixty Jews who lived in Breckenridge in 1929 dedicated the building with a celebration that included many dignitaries from the community and surrounding areas. Jewish clergy from Fort Worth and Dallas participated in the program. Weekly services were held, led by visiting rabbis and local people. The last Jew to live in Breckenridge was Marvin Socol, who left in 1987, when he closed his business, the Popular Store.

According to Breckenridge Fire Department Chief Calvin Chaney, the fire was already through the roof at midpoint of the structure when they arrived. Severe damage to the building made it structurally unstable so no official cause of the fire can be determined. See the article from the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities for history of the Jewish community on page 6 of this issue.



The main photo is of Temple Beth Israel in 1929. The insets show the building burning and its aftermath.

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Message from the President

by Susan Zack Lewis

Pay your dues, seek new members, get the kids involved, and help the Texas Jewish Historical Society continue to preserve Jewish history in Texas!

After the tragic loss of the former synagogue in Breckenridge through fire, it has become obvious that small towns are not only losing Jewish population, but also physical evidence of existence. Communities like Jefferson and Corsicana acknowledge the buildings as "former" synagogues, which at least keeps the history alive.

This knowledge makes the efforts of the members of TJHS even more meaningful. The cemetery preservation and designation project, the new efforts to get adults involved with writing about Jewish history and life in Texas through the new essay opportunities



from a bequest from the Lynna Kay Shuffield estate, our involvement with the Institute for Texan Cultures to update and expand the exhibit there, the speakers bureau and photograph exhibits offered at no charge


to organizations and congregations wishing to learn more about TJHS, are just a few of the many avenues for preservation offered through the Society.

The collection at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History on the UT campus continues to grow and becomes more important as each year, papers and history are lost when families do not know there is a place for them to be preserved. The cemetery list sadly continues to grow and Rusty Milstein has been working to incorporate the list of Jewish veterans compiled by Herschel Sheiness into a separate part

of the listing. What sounds too sad to us on first thought becomes a blessing when we realize that compiling lists of those who have gone before us might help someone discover personal history or a family connection.

It's easy to become more actively involved with TJHS. Members are always welcome at meetings and in the coming year the locations are scattered from San Antonio to Bonham and Corpus Christi. This should allow a more evenly distributed travel time for most of our members. The obligations are small when you become a board member. From personal experience, I can promise that once you begin coming to meetings, you won't want to miss any of them. The history of each community we visit is fascinating and it very often results in personal discovery and a desire to connect with those we meet. It's amazing to watch people find new connections to relatives and renew connections to old friends.

I've discovered that our children don't really understand what we're doing until they pass 50. That's when most of us want to know who we are and where we came from. So reach out to your children and grandchildren and infect them with the history bug! TJHS is a great way to discover family, whether you're related or not!

I look forward to seeing you all in San Antonio April 17-19. It's going to be marvelous! 

The Texas Jewish Historical Society February 2020 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 editor@txjhs.org or by mail to 3808 Woodbrook Circle, Austin, TX 78759, 512-527-3799. Be sure to include your name and contact information.



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Note: The Texas Jewish Historical Society is unable to guarantee the safe receipt and/or return of documents 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.

The News Magazine of the Texas Jewish Historical Society (USPS) is published four times a year by the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193, Travis County. Periodical postage paid at Houston, Texas. Postmaster, send address changes to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193. www.txjhs.org

A Tale of Tragedy and Hope

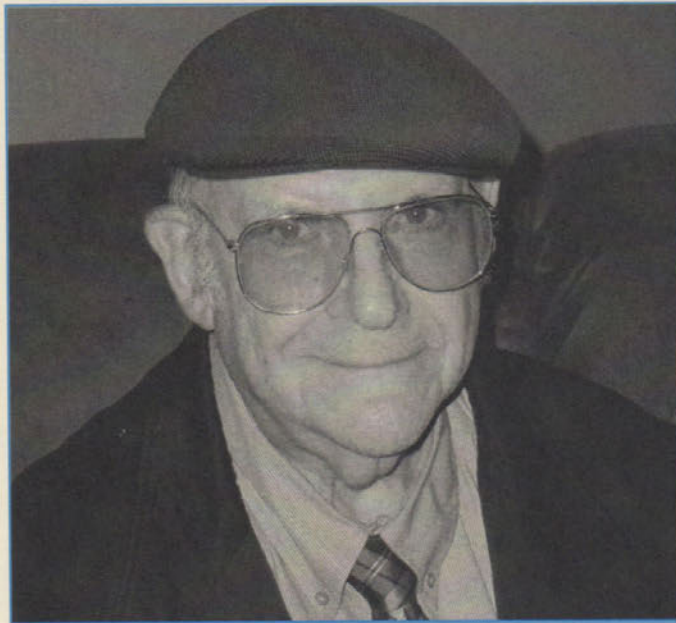
by Mel Eichelbaum

You may have heard of the children's poem about Alexander's terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Well, I was in my senior year at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, with no thought of going to law school. I was majoring in accounting and business administration, and I was looking forward to finishing up and getting on with my career. But first I would have to get past Brother Malinchak's mid-term accounting exam. It was November, 1963, and my version of Alexander's day was about to begin, and it would transform my life.

I had awakened that morning to discover that a cold front had hit San Antonio, dropping temperatures to below freezing. The windows on my VW were covered with ice. While frustratingly scraping the nuisance off, I managed to scrape my hand as well. Fearing being late, I took off for St. Mary's. On my way, I went through a school zone that I had passed numerous times before. I was only going thirty-three miles per hour when I was stopped by a policeman and managed to garner my very first speeding ticket.

When I reached St. Mary's I was a nervous wreck. I was able to grab a quick cup of coffee, which I managed to partially spill on my pants as I rushed into my accounting class just in the nick of time. The mid-term exams were passed out, and I took a deep breath and settled down to completing it.

About halfway through the exam, the classroom door flew open, and a student shouted they had shot the president. The test was suspended as everyone rushed over to the student union center where we all gathered



in front of the television until Walter Cronkite, wiping a tear from his eye, announced that President Kennedy was dead.

In the days to follow, like most Americans I was transfixed by the television as the story of the assassination began to unfold. Many houses of worship had opened up their doors and were available for people to come who wanted to seek solace and pray, and Temple Beth-El was no exception.

Although raised more or less as a secular Jew, I did not truly embrace my Judaism until we settled in San Antonio. Shortly after my Bar Mitzvah, at another synagogue, a high school friend took me to Temple Beth-El as a guest for his Confirmation service. I fell in love with the place, and under the guidance of Rabbi Jacobson, the tutelage of Milton Bendiner, and the fellowship of the San Antonio Federation of Temple Youth (SAFTY) Jewish values were planted deep inside of me and blossomed and grew.

One afternoon after Kennedy's assassination, I found myself in the sanctuary of Temple Beth-El. I had felt compelled to go there. I was all

alone and spotted a prayer book left in the pew. I sat down and restlessly thumbed through it until I found the Mourner's Kaddish. I wasn't even sure if it was appropriate for me to say it alone, because traditionally one needs ten people to recite the prayer. Regardless, I felt an over-riding emotion, and softly said the prayer for President Kennedy anyhow. I then mumbled some prayers for Jackie, Caroline, and John-John and hoped that God would grant them some comfort and peace.

After that I didn't know what else to do, so I just stared at the eternal light, the ark, and the words carved above it: "THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF." Like in a hypnotic state I don't know how long I sat there, and then I experienced a "eureka moment." It was like a voice in my brain talking to me, telling me I should go to law school, become a lawyer, and dedicate myself to advocating for the poor and oppressed.

The rest of my story is contained in my book: *The Legal Aid Lawyer* and is about my journey in accomplishing the goal unveiled to me that fateful day. It is a narrative about how a young Jewish lawyer, in pursuit of justice and Tikun Olam, became the chief litigator for the Bexar County Legal Aid Association in San Antonio and undertook a number of major civil rights and poverty law reform cases. Some of these went all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court and made legal history, affecting the lives of millions of poor people and still having an ongoing impact today. For additional information, see my website at: <https://meichelbaum7.wixsite.com/mysite>.

Board Meeting in Laredo



*Left: TJHS Group in front of old Temple B'nai Israel.
Above: Hebrew Rest Cemetery, Laredo, Texas.*

*Back row: Marc Wormser, Doug Braudaway, Rubin Linares, Bruce Kravitz, Marilyn Lippman, Sheldon Lippman
Middle row: Joan Linares, Anna Guerra, John Campbell, Nelson Chafetz, Willie Braudaway, Hollace Weiner, Kathy Kravitz, Barbara Rosenberg.
Front row: Vickie Vogel, Sally Drayer.*

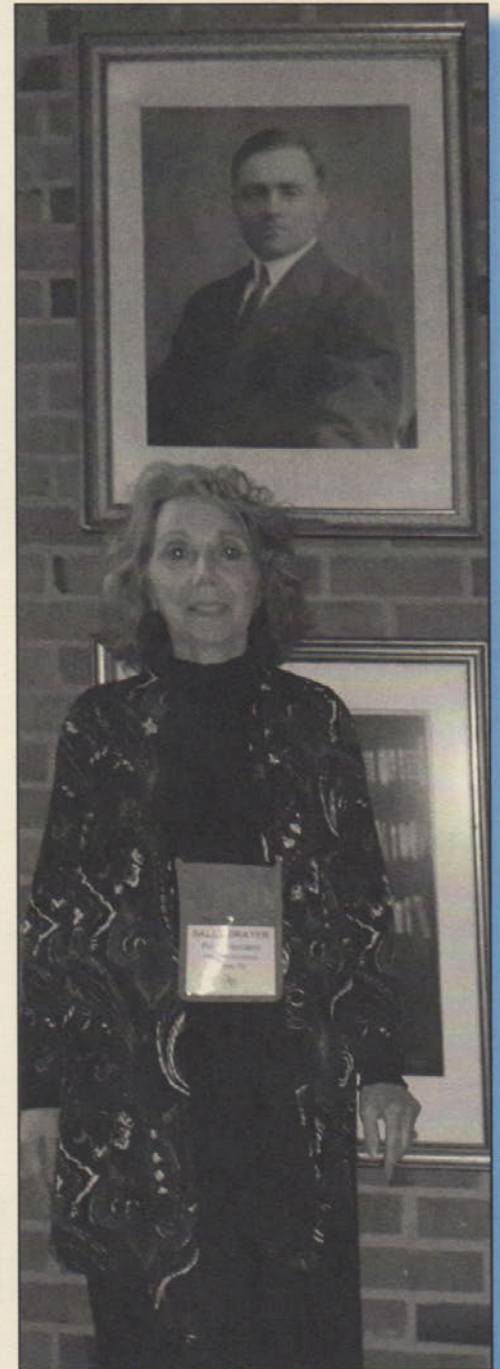


Jan Hart, Graciela Brandenburg, Rabbi Gabriel Frydman, and Wolf Hoffman recite Havdalah blessings.

Notes from the Board Meeting

From the January 2020 TJHS meeting in Laredo:

- Kathy Kravitz is continuing to update and correct information on Find-A-Grave to coordinate and link gravesite photos from the information gathered by TJHS volunteers.
- Papers have been signed authorizing inclusion into the Texas State Historical Association publication announcing the annual Lynna Kay Shuffield literary prize.
- Doug Braudaway and Sally Drayer are working on obtaining historical cemetery designation for the Bonham Jewish cemetery.
- Vickie Vogel presented the itinerary for the upcoming Poland trip in September.
- In a unanimous vote, the October meeting will be held October 23-25, 2020, in conjunction with the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Theme of the weekend is "West of Hester Street: the Galveston Movement and Jewish Immigration and Communities in the Southwest."
- Marc Wormser announced that a new directory will be published in 2020.
- The website is attracting more people.



Above left: Joyce and Mark Wormser at a family plot. Above: Sally Drayer with photo of her grandfather, Harry Ladabaum, first President of Congregation Agudas Achim. Left: Wolf Hoffman, Irving "Pancho" Greenblum, David Blumberg, Anna Guerra, and Sally Drayer.

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 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.

Breckenridge

Breckenridge was a small sleepy West Texas town for its first forty years. But when oil was discovered in the area in the late 1910s, Breckenridge was transformed into a classic boomtown, growing from 1,500 residents to over 30,000 within one year. During the height of the oil rush in the 1920s, two-hundred oil wells were installed within the city limits and a railroad was built. The oil boom fizzled out by the mid-1920s, but left a small but thriving commercial center and a Jewish community.

The first Jews to settle in Breckenridge were Hungarian native Nathan Winkler; his wife, Annie; and their three children. They arrived in 1920 from Fort Stockton, Texas, and opened a dry goods store. Charles and Bertha Bender* joined them, moving their dry goods business from Lubbock. Soon after, several Jewish-owned stores appeared on Walker Street in downtown, including S. Segal & Company, owned by Sam Segal and Nate Rosenbaum; Baron Brothers Department Store; Toby's Quality Store, owned by David Tobolowsky; and Alhambra Confectionary co-owned by Simon Fram and Benjamin Karelitz.

The growing number of Jews soon began to organize under the leadership of Charles and Bertha Bender. A B'nai B'rith lodge and a Hadassah chapter were formed. Bertha served as President of the Hadassah chapter, which attracted members from Cisco, Eastland, and Ranger. Services were



Temple Beth Israel in Breckenridge in March, 2013.

held in private homes, but most would travel to Fort Worth, one hundred miles away, for High Holiday services. The B'nai B'rith chapter led the way in organizing a congregation, which was established as Beth Israel in the late 1920s.

Charles Bender was the head of a synagogue building committee, which solicited donations from Jewish organizations and congregations around the country. He received donations from New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. Local non-Jews also contributed to the building fund which raised \$25,000. The synagogue was dedicated in 1929 in a public ceremony featuring Mayor Charles Clark and local Christian ministers. According to local newspaper reports, five hundred people crowded into the small synagogue for the three-hour ceremony. Rabbi Abraham Bengis of Fort Worth's Orthodox congregation was the keynote speaker and Reform and Orthodox rabbis from Dallas took part in the event. A dinner was held that night with Rabbi H. Raphael Gold of Dallas as the featured

speaker.

At the time of the synagogue dedication, about sixty Jews lived in Breckenridge. Beth Israel had fifteen member families and ten individual members, including some from surrounding towns. Friday night services were held each week, usually lay-led. Sometimes a visiting rabbi from San Antonio, Waco, or Fort Worth would lead services. Services included Hebrew and English, and men and women sat together. In practice, Beth Israel was closer to Conservative Judaism.

The Breckenridge Jewish community was strongly Zionist and Charles Bender became a colorful leader of the movement in the state, serving as President of the Texas Zionist Association in 1938. After Israel was established in 1948, he would visit the Jewish state wearing a cowboy hat and boots, leading Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to dub Bender the "Jewish Cowboy from Texas." Albert Tuck also showed his support for Zionism by taking part in the local rodeo parade, carrying an Israeli flag while riding on horseback through downtown Breckenridge. His wife, Tillie, was president of the local Hadassah chapter for several decades. Most of the focus of Breckenridge's Zionist groups was on raising money for Israel.

Once the oil boom dried up, Breckenridge lost much of its economic appeal. Its population dropped to 5,826 in 1940 and it has not grown since. Several of the founders of

*See *TJHS News Magazine*, October 2009, p. 6.

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URGENT!

Preparations are underway to publish the TJHS Directory for 2020-2022.

The mailing date of the directory is May 2020.

This message is for all members, old and new.
If you do not respond to this request, then what is in
the current directory will be put in the new directory.
Contact Marc Wormser at c2aggie@gmail.com
or 832-288-3494 if you have any changes!



Procedure:

1. Get your current directory if you have one.
2. Find your name in the alphabetical section.
3. Is the information correct?
4. Things to check:
 - Is it missing information that you want published?
 - Make sure that phone numbers and email addresses are correct.
 - Verify spellings of names and addresses, apartment numbers, etc.
5. Go to city and state listings and repeat the process.

If you are a new member and not currently in the directory, please be sure all the pertinent information is provided for the directory. Use the directory you have received as reference.

Related request:

TJHS is making an effort to have contact information available in its database in addition to the “pony express” method. Therefore, having a phone number and/or email in the database would be extremely beneficial. If you wish to be used only in the database and not published, so indicate. This would facilitate communication regarding events, dues questions, changes of information in the database, notification as when you might be away so that News Magazines do not get returned as “Non-deliverable or unable to forward.”

— Lynna Kay Shuffield Memorial — Award in Texas Jewish History

The Texas Jewish Historical Society has joined the Texas State Historical Association in offering the Lynna Kay Shuffield Memorial Award in Texas Jewish History for \$2,000. The first award will be presented at the 2021 Texas State Historical Society Annual Meeting.

Competition for the award will be open to any graduate students or lay historians who

have created a work of scholarship in Texas Jewish history, including published books, chapters in published books, articles published in scholarly journals, and post-graduate theses or dissertations.

Eligible works will have been created within the previous three years; i.e. the 2021 Award will be offered for a work created in the years 2018,

2019, and 2020. More submission details will be available on the Texas State Historical Association website at tshaonline.org

As a lay historian herself, Lynna Kay Shuffield appreciated how much work and passion it takes to preserve Texas Jewish history. Her legacy will be to reward others for doing the same.

Visit us on the web at www.txjhs.org.

Meet Your Board

Elaine Albin grew up in the Boston



area. She married a naval officer, Warren Kline, and they lived in many cities in the United

States before he retired, and they settled in Corpus Christi. Warren passed away in 1982, and in 1989, Elaine married Phil Albin. She has three children and was an educator in San Antonio and Corpus Christi before her retirement. Elaine and Phil live in Rockport. She is a member of the Award Committee.

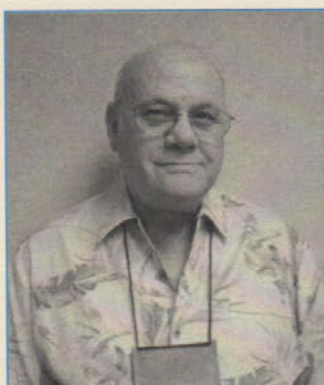
Gayle Feldman Cannon is a retired



lawyer now living in Austin. She is a transplanted Dallasite and has three children, three step-

children, sixteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She is a widow, active in the Austin Jewish community and is a strong supporter of Congregation Beth Israel in Austin. Her interests include genealogy, reading, traveling and theater. Gayle serves as co-chair of the Speaker's Bureau.

Gordon Alan Cizon was born in Kansas City, and grew up in Amarillo, Texas. He was the Librarian for the Amarillo High School Band. He attended Oklahoma University in Norman, Oklahoma, and graduated from West Texas State University with an Economics Degree in Business Admin-



istration with an emphasis on management and finance. His hobbies are photography, opera, and sailing. He now lives in Dallas and is married to Deidre, who is also a TJHS Board Member.

Dolly Moskowitz Golden grew up in Baytown, Texas. She married Ed Golden from Cor-



sicana and they settled in Austin, where she now lives.

Ed passed away in 2018. Dolly is a Certified Travel Counselor, and continues to plan trips. She has visited two-hundred sixteen countries and plans to visit the rest. She has two children and one granddaughter who live in Austin. Dolly is Chair of the Traveling Exhibit Committee.

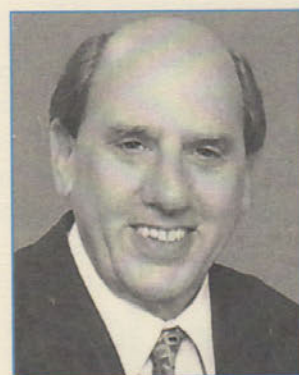
Jan Siegel Hart grew up in Dublin,



Texas and is a grandchild of immigrants from Russia that were part of the Galveston

Movement. She attended the University of Texas, Kilgore Junior College, and Lon Morris Junior College. She and Charles Hart (past TJHS President) met at Echo Hill Ranch in 1960, and were married in 1961. They have three children and six grandchildren. Jan has participated in several productions at Temple Civic Theater and sang with Sweet Adelines for over twenty-five years. She is the author of three children's books based on her family histories. For over twenty-five years she has performed a one woman show as "Hanna, the Immigrant" for groups across the nation. Her presentation was selected for Texas Commission on the Arts, Touring Program in 2001-2003. Jan has served in many positions of Texas Jewish Historical Society, and currently is co-chair of the Speaker's Bureau.

Morton "Morty" L. Herman was

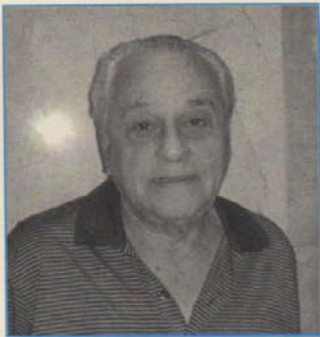


born and grew up in Fort Worth. He attended the University of Texas as an undergraduate/St. Mary's University

Law/George Washington Law. He has been President and Legal Counsel of Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Fort Worth, as well as a member of Beth-El Congregation. Morty has worked with the Chevra Kadisha in Fort Worth for thirty years, and has served on boards of various organizations. At the University of Texas, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity and the Texas Cowboys. He served in the US Army as a 1st Lieutenant, and was stationed in Japan and Viet Nam. Morty

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is a practicing attorney with the law firm of Cantey Hanger LLP, and has three years of service with the office of General Counsel, Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C. during the Watergate Era. He is married to Dr. Barbara B. Herman, and they have two adult sons.



Louis Katz retired as vice president of Wholesale Plumbing Supply

and is now a real estate investor. Louis is past president of Wholesale Distributors; member of the Texas Association of Fairs; Fort Bend County fair and Rodeo, Stafford; Missouri City Lions Club; life member of Hadassah; advisor to Loeb AZA; life member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo; Treasurer of the Stafford Historical Society; and member of Congregation Beth Yeshurun. He is married to Joan, also a TJHS Board Member.

Joan Teter Linares is a retired elementary teacher who taught for thirty-two



years at Harlem Elementary School in Baytown Texas. Joan grew up

in Baytown and learned about Texas Jewish Historical Society from her parents, Don, who was a past president of TJHS, and Gertrude Teter. She is president of Congregation K'Nesseth Israel in Baytown and treasurer of the

Baytown Chapter of Hadassah. She and her husband, Ruben, have three daughters, one son, and six grandchildren.

Ruth Nathan served as Treasurer of the Texas Jewish Historical Society for many years. Ruth is the past assistant director of the Jewish Communi-



ty Center in Houston, and has a Masters in Speech Pathology and a Masters in Social Work. Ruth teaches a social skills program, "Skills for Success." She is a docent at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.

Barbara Rosenberg, Past TJHS

President, lives in Sugar Land, Texas,



with her husband, Ben, TJHS Treasurer. She is a native Texan who was born and grew up in San Angelo,

and is a first generation American. Her family owned the Hollywood Shoppe and Boston Store in San Angelo. She attended the University of Texas, Austin and graduated at age twenty, when she married Ben. They moved to Houston and she attended University of Houston graduate school for a degree in Speech Pathology. She has worked in schools, hospitals, and has had a private practice. She and Ben

enjoy travelling. Barbara is a volunteer in Jewish Chaplaincy, a docent for the Fort Bend Museums, a member of an advisory committee (CAP) for a chemical company, and a former volunteer for the county historical commission. Barbara recently chaired the Winter Board Meeting in Gonzales for TJHS.

Samylu Michelson Rubin was born and raised in Gonzales. She attended



the University of Texas and received a BS in Education in 1955. She and Norman Rubin married in 1956, and raised their three sons in Hallettsville. Samylu has eleven grand-

children. In Hallettsville she taught first grade for eight years before opening a private kindergarten. She loves the outdoors and plants and has served the Texas Jewish Historical Society as Corresponding Secretary.

Phyllis Gerson Turkel is proud to be a "BOI"—born on the island of Gal-



veston, but has lived in Houston for many years. She has been in retail and has even sold mattresses

over the internet! She is now a program director at a retirement community, and says this is the best job she has ever had! Phyllis is a walker and has walked half marathons and marathons.

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Meet Your Board, continued from page 9

She walked Phoenix Rock and Roll with her daughter in January, 2018.

Cynthia Wolf grew up in Tyler and graduated from Newcomb College of Tulane University in 1968 with a Bachelor's degree in English. In 2000 she received a Bachelor of Music degree from Lamar University in Beaumont, where she lives with her husband, Michael. She has taught



in high schools at Randolph Air Force Base and Central High School in Beaumont. She has been active in her community, and served as co-chair of the Soviet Resettlement Project in Beaumont, in addition to President of Sisterhoods in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Beaumont. She has also served on the board of Women of Reform Judaism at the District and National level. In addition, Cynthia is a Board member of the Symphony of Southeast Texas, Catholic Charities, Memorial Resolution Chair of Rotary Club, and on the Outstanding Teacher Recognition Committee of the Beaumont A&M Club. ♣

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 Davie Lou Solka at davielou@solka.net or 512-527-3799.

**The deadline for
the May 2020 TJHS
News Magazine is
Friday, April 17.**

Breckenridge, continued from page 6

Beth Israel moved away in search of greater opportunities, though eighty Jews still lived in town in 1937. Bender's Department Store continued to flourish during the Depression years and remained in business until Charles and Bertha retired and sold it in 1953. Rae Scheinberg took over the clothing store her husband, Israel, owned after he died in 1931. She later married Jake Socol, and they opened the Popular Store in 1946. Jake's daughter and son-in-law, Mickey and Harry Shapiro, moved to Breckenridge to help run the department store and it remained open until 1987. Simon Fram and Ben Karelitz closed their confectionery store in the early 1940s, though Simon later opened Fram's, a men's clothing store.

Not all Breckenridge Jews owned retail stores. Otto Bendorf moved to Breckenridge in the 1930s and opened a successful oil field supply business. He arranged for his cousin, Werner Bendorf, and his family, to come to Breckenridge after the war and employed him in his oil field supply business. Albert Tuck ran a scrap metal business, which he later bought. His wife, Tillie, spent many years as a public-school teacher in the Breckenridge schools.

The Jews in Breckenridge were involved in the greater community, and they had a good relationship with their non-Jewish neighbors. Charles Bender served on the board of the YMCA and was active in the Lions Club and Masonic Lodge. He was noted for his charitable works, including giving shoes to needy children of all races.

During the 1950s, the Breckenridge Jewish community consisted of about ten families. Services were held infrequently, yet visiting clergy would be brought in for the High Holidays. The congregation brought back weekly Friday night services with members taking turns leading the prayers. By this time, Beth Israel was still traditional, celebrating Rosh Hashanah for two days and requiring a minyan before certain prayers and one family kept strictly kosher. There was not a regular religious school, so parents would drive their children to Fort Worth to attend religious school at Ahavath Shalom. It was a close-knit group and members would gather for dinner at the Bender house prior to Rosh Hashanah services each year.

The Jewish children raised in Breckenridge in the 1950s did not stay in town once they became older. By the 1970s, most of the Jewish-owned businesses in town had closed as the next generation decided to move elsewhere rather than stay and run the family business. The last Jew to live in Breckenridge was Marvin Socol, who ran the Popular Store until he closed it in 1987 and moved to Dallas. ♣

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 rate of \$1.52. We want to save you money! ♣

TJHS: Journey to POLAND

September 5-13, 2020

Join us as we explore Jewish Poland:

- A journey of encounters and education
- connect to the past, present, and future in Jewish Poland
- Examine and mourn the Holocaust
- Wawel Royal Castle and the Wielicka Salt Mines: two Polish gems
- Meet those responsible for breathing life into today's Jewish communities
- Shabbat in Warsaw with local Jewish community members
- Top-notch service with excellent educator

From \$2,550 - \$3,365 Land only
depending on the number of registrants



Telling the story of Israel and the Jewish World.



For more information, contact Vickie Vogel at 979-966-2493 or vickvogel@yahoo.com

Request for Information

1. The Texas Jewish Historical Society will be having a board meeting in Bonham, TX June 12-14, 2020. Although there is no longer a Jewish community in Bonham, it has a rich Jewish history. If you grew up in Bonham or know someone who did, please have them contact Sally Drayer at archivist@txjhs.org. **If you would like to make a hotel reservation for this meeting, you can contact the Holiday Inn Express at 903-486-6111. Ask for the Texas Jewish Historical Society rate. King or Queen rooms are \$89+ tax; King and Queen suites are \$99 + tax. Both rates include breakfast.** A registration form for this meeting will be in the May issue of the News Magazine.
2. A new Membership Directory will be published and mailed to members in March. Please check the current directory and if there are changes in your contact information, notify Marc Wormser at c2aggie@gmail.com. We would like to have email addresses for all members so that we may communicate with you when necessary. See form for additional information elsewhere in this issue.
3. The Institute of Texan Culture in San Antonio is revising the Jewish exhibit and is asking TJHS members for help in obtaining artifacts, papers, and other items for the exhibit. If you have any photos, books, documents, recipes, newspaper articles, etc., please send the information and a photo (if you can) to Davie Lou Solka at davielou@solka.net. **Please do not send items to the ITC.**

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.

She Has a Name: It's Marie

by Vickie Vogel

A yellowed newspaper clipping from 1975 caught my eye in our archives titled "Homemaker of the Week: She Paints the Beauty of Life."¹ The article is about an artist identified only as Mrs. Jack Berger. I was surprised to reach column four without her given name being mentioned. I was angry when I completed the article and her name had still not appeared. Her husband is prominently named, as are her children, grandchildren, and a little black poodle. His name was Charlie. The dog had a name, but not Mrs. Jack Berger.

The writer is Doris E. Wilson, Lifestyle Editor. How could a woman write about another woman without naming her? After I simmered down, I thought about the difficulty for a woman to be hired by a newspaper in 1975. Perhaps she wanted to cover the news, but they made her Lifestyle Editor, which was once called the Women's Section. And what's with the "Homemaker of the Week" designation? Mrs. Jack Berger freely admitted she was more adept with a paint brush than a wooden spoon. Her recipe for chicken tetrazzini, gazpacho, shrimp creole and slaw are included in the article. Was



Marie Berger at work.

that the only way Wilson could write features about interesting women? By giving them a homemaker award? By getting their recipe for guacamole? I could find nothing online about Doris E. Wilson, a very common name. I've decided to give her the benefit of the doubt, not having walked in her shoes.

My next step was to try to discover who Mrs. Jack Berger was. I had no luck with findagrave.com until I did a search for Jack Berger. Bingo. His spouse is listed: Marie Friedman Berger. Her name is Marie.² Once I had her name, I could discover more

about her online.

Marie's paternal grandfather, Morris Friedman, was born in Hungary in 1860. He married Hannah Rosenthal (1861-1937), also born in Hungary. They had four children: Sadie Friedman Goldblatt, Bertha Friedman Golden, William Friedman and Adolph Friedman. Morris died in 1943 and is buried in Austin.³ William Friedman, who became a cotton broker, was Marie's father. He was born in 1888 in Chicago. In 1912, he married Minnie Cohen Friedman (1892-1975) and, after living in Fort Worth, they moved to Galveston, the hotbed of cotton activity, where he died at the age of 30 in the great 1918 influenza epidemic that swept the country.

Minnie (Marie's mother) was born in Kansas City, Missouri and died in Fort Worth of cancer after living there for 65 years.⁴ Minnie's parents were Moses Cohen (1855-1925), born in Germany, and Mary/Marie Chrzanowska Cohen (1863-1900), who died in Kansas. Mary had an operation on August 9, 1900 and died a few hours later, age 36.⁵ When Mary died, Moses sent eight-year-old Minnie and her brothers, Louis and Adolph, to live with Aunt Mary and Uncle Jake Chinosky in El Reno, Oklahoma.⁶ They were happy to have

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a girl, but they already had a son of their own and didn't really need two more boys.

As a child, Minnie had a pony named Sugar. She would hide sugar cubes in her hand and let the pony find them. One day she was out riding and came across a group of Indians sitting around a campfire. Sugar reared and fell over into the fire, but Minnie was thrown clear. The Indians laughed; Minnie hurried home and put butter on Sugar's burns.⁷

When William died, leaving Minnie a young widow with two daughters to raise, she got by on the insurance money her husband left. She moved to Fort Worth and lived with her mother-in-law, Hannah Friedman, until they could get their own apartment. Her father, and brother Adolph, joined them.

Minnie encouraged her daughters not to make good grades, and paid them not to make As. If a girl was too smart, she believed, she'd never catch a husband, as men didn't want wives smarter than them. By the time her

grandchildren came along, she had changed her mind to some extent.

Marie was born in 1913 in Fort Worth.⁸ Her sister, Cecile Regina "Cele" Friedman was born in 1916.⁹ Marie started painting at the age of eight or nine. She and her mother were traveling through Raton Pass on the New Mexico/Colorado border and were caught in a cloudburst. Stopping at a hotel, Minnie missed her daughter and found her out back painting the sunset. Marie graduated from Paschal High (originally Central High). She attended Washington University, St. Louis School of Fine Arts, and Texas Christian University.

After college, a distant relative with a store in Oklahoma City offered Marie a job in the advertising department of Harry Katz Inc. as a fashion illustrator. Minnie moved the whole family to Oklahoma City.

Minnie, who never remarried, worked in the ready-to-wear department of the same store.

Marie got her start in journalism with the *Oklahoma News*. When it went out of business, the editor joined the *Advertiser* and asked her to be Society Editor. She did a fashion column, a personal column, and fashion sketches, but she grew bored with all the fashion shows she had to attend.

Marie met Jack Henry¹⁰ Berger in Oklahoma City, and they eloped to Dallas in 1939.¹¹ He was born in 1914 in Detroit, the son of Henry and Florence Heim Berger. Minnie lived with the newlyweds in Oklahoma City. She was a first-rate housekeeper and a wonderful cook, and managed the house for the young couple.¹² Jack's cousin, David Herman Ritzwoller, had married Marie's sister Cele in 1938.¹³

The Bergers moved back to Fort Worth in December 1947 and opened Fashion Furniture on Camp Bowie

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Sam and Joan Rosen, Jack and Marie Berger, Susan and Stephen Kline, with grandchildren Leslie Rosen, Stacey Kline, Cheryl Rosen, and Steve Kline, Jr.



Jack and Marie Berger with Charlie.

Blvd. By 1975 when the article was written in the *Fort Worth Press*, they had been in business 22 years. They had two daughters: Joan married Fort Worth attorney Sam Rosen, and Susan married Stephen Kline, who worked with Fashion Furniture.¹⁴ Joan was active with the store; Susan had a store down the street specializing in rattan and wicker. "But she's not in competition," Marie told the *Fort Worth Press* reporter.

Marie's first one-woman show was in water colors at the Oklahoma Art Museum. Besides one-woman shows, she participated in many regional and national shows. She won the Benedictine Award in New York for a painting she did of Benedictine monks featuring Benedictine liqueur,¹⁵ and the Texas Fine Arts Jurors Award, the highest award given in Texas at that time. She sold paintings throughout the United States, surrealism being her favorite form of expression. She did, however, paint a portrait of her mother which hung in the garden room of the Berger townhouse at 5026 Arborlawn.¹⁶

Marie's studio was upstairs. She tried to paint three hours a day, especially in the early morning light.

As a frequent visitor to Italy with her husband, Marie Berger exhibited in the Batena La-voire Gallery in Rome, the only foreign art to show in that gallery. She also had a show in the Contemporary Gallery

in Viterbo, Italy. Her own gallery had been closed for several months at the time of the interview, but she reopened it soon after, adjacent to the furniture store. It was actually part of the building, but had a separate entrance.¹⁷

Marie Berger served as regional director for the Texas Fine Arts Association, and chaired the Citation Show in 1975. Her husband, Jack, was a hobby gardener and tropical fish fancier.

Several photos appear in the article: one in "the Jack Berger townhouse" living room: Mr. and Mrs. Sam Rosen, Mr. and Mrs. Berger, Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Kline with grandchildren Leslie Rosen, Stacey Kline, Cheryl Rosen, and Steve Kline, Jr. (Apparently, you only lose your name when you marry). There is also a photo of the artist at work on a canvas depicting motherhood to all the children of the world, based on a biblical scripture. The *Fort Worth Press* went out of business in 1975, the same year as the article appeared.¹⁸

Jack was a past president of the

Rotary Club of West Fort Worth, and was a Paul Harris Fellow.¹⁹ The Bergers were members of Congregation Beth El and the Colonial Country Club. Fashion Furniture closed in 1985.²⁰ Jack died in 2000.²¹ Jack and Marie had ten great-grandchildren.

Marie died in 2001 at the age of 88. She and Jack are buried in Greenwood Memorial Park and Mausoleum in Fort Worth. Her obituary says she was the owner of Marie Berger Art Gallery, and died peacefully at a local hospital. Her funeral was at Beth-El with Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger officiating.²²

Endnotes

- ¹ Unless otherwise cited, all information is from Box 3A168, Folder: People by Occupation, Architects - Attorneys, Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, *Fort Worth Press*, October 16, 1975 by Doris E. Wilson, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- ² <https://www.geni.com/people/Marie-Berger/6000000056229847046> lists her middle name as Janet.
- ³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/18895014/morris-friedman>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29499011/hannah-friedman>
- ⁴ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29504178/minnie-friedman>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29505436/william-louis-friedman>
- ⁵ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/79156807/mary-cohen>
- ⁶ Email Joan Rosen, December 13, 2019. In 1940, the Chinoskys were living in Fort Worth. Adolph is still listed in the census household. <https://www.archives.com/1940-census/jacob-chinosky-tx-110455817>

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The TJHS is Accepting Nominations for Two Outstanding Recognition Awards for the Preservation of Texas Jewish History

Texas Jewish Historical Society (TJHS), founded in 1980, is seeking nominations for Outstanding Recognition Awards in two areas: (1) Significant Historic Site Preservation (awarded first to Leon and Mimi Toubin for the restoration of the Orthodox Synagogue originally in Brenham and moved to Austin, in order to continue as a sacred place for Jewish worship services) and (2) Extraordinary Historic Project (awarded first to Rabbi Jimmy Kessler for the 1980 founding of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, which continues to educate, to preserve stories, and to archive Texas Jewish History).

TJHS now seeks your help to identify and honor those individuals who have made a significant and lasting impact on the preservation of Texas Jewish History. Only one award per year can be given in each category; but it is not mandated to be given yearly, only when an outstanding accomplishment merits the award. Recognitions as determined by TJHS Award Committee will be presented at TJHS Spring Annual Gathering. Applications must be received by July 15, 2020 and mailed to Cynthia Wolf, 4305 Sterling Lane, Beaumont, TX 77706.

Application Form

Date of Submission: _____

Name and Contact Information of Nominee(s): _____

Name and Contact Information of Person(s) Recommending Nominee(s) for Consideration: _____

Category of nomination:

Significant Historic Preservation

Major Historic Project

In the packet that you will return with this sheet as your cover page, please include the following:

- Complete description of the accomplishment
- Reasons that you are submitting this nomination and how you became aware of this accomplishment
- Pictures and other documentation
- Impact of this accomplishment and how it has and will continue to make a difference now and in the future on the ongoing story of the Jews of Texas
- Short bio of nominee(s)


Thank you for helping us recognize deserving individuals!

Send applications to: Cynthia Wolf, 4305 Sterling Lane, Beaumont, Texas 77706

For more information, contact

Cynthia Wolf at 409-899-4499 or cwolf@gt.rr.com.

- ⁷ Mary Ann Block, *Today I Will Not Die*, Kensington, 2001, pp 8-14. Block was Minnie Friedman's granddaughter, Cele's daughter. <https://books.google.com/books?id=A-xZd90p1w8C&pg=PA13&lpg=PA13&dq=jack+berger+fort+worth&source=bl&ots=APVHhqSSus&sig=ACfU3U33kwZLsHXBR8LERFVS14E315420w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiyqqH4zoPmAhUO26wKHfkmAUQQ6AEwCXoECAGQAQ#v=onepage&q=jack%20berger%20fort%20worth&f=false>
- ⁸ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6167356/marie-berger>
- ⁹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/154553999/cecile-regina-ritzwoller>.
- ¹⁰ <https://www.geni.com/people/Jack-Berger/6000000056230665830>
- ¹¹ <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LKQZ-PC3/marie-friedman-1913-2001>
- ¹² Mary Ann Block, *Today I Will Not Die*, op cit.
- ¹³ They had two children. David died in 2005 and Cele in 2008. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/154553999/cecile-regina-ritzwoller>.
- ¹⁴ Telephone conversation Joan Rosen, December 3, 2019.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ She also painted a portrait

- of her father, William. Telephone conversation Joan Rosen, December 3, 2019.
- ¹⁷ Telephone conversation Joan Rosen, December 3, 2019.
- ¹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/06/01/archives/the-fort-worth-press-goes-out-of-business.html>
- ¹⁹ The **Paul Harris Fellow** recognition acknowledges individuals who contribute, or who have contributions made in their name, of \$1,000 to The Rotary Foundation. <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=paul+harris+fellow&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>
- ²⁰ Telephone conversation Joan Rosen, December 3, 2019.
- ²¹ His obituary on findagrave, op cit, tells us granddaughter Leslie married Terry Walstrom, Cheryl married Gil Wiedermann, Steve married Julie, and Stacy married Eric Gansky. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/195007830/jack-h-berger>
- ²² <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dfw/obituary-preview.aspx?n=marie-friedman-berger&pid=165070&referrer=321> 

Your Help Needed

The Cemetery Committee needs help from many of you who live outside the major cities. If you learn of a Jewish death in Texas in your locale, please send that information to Rusty Milstein, hrmilstein@prodigy.net.

In Memoriam

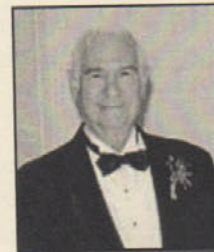
Liana Barenblat, TJHS member, died on February 26, 2019, in San Antonio. She is survived by her husband, Marvin; her children, Bruce; Brad (Shari); Scot; Melissa (Ron); Rabbi Rachel; and eleven grandchildren.



Jack Gerrick, TJHS Past President (2000-2002), died on January 15, 2020, in Fort Worth. He is survived by his wife, Joyce; children, Gayle (Bryan) Hirsch and Mark (Roberts); three grandchildren and spouses; two great-grandchildren; and his brother, Jerry.



Louis Weisman Kariel, Jr., TJHS member, died January 5, 2020, in Dallas. A resident of Marshall, Texas, he is survived by his wife, Audrey; children, Nancy Kariel; Mark (Al); two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



May their memories
be a blessing.

Contributions

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

In Honor of	From
Nelson Chafetz, on his 60th birthday	Davie Lou & Jack Solka
Memory Donation	From
to Cantor Tyrone & Ellen Bauer	Michael & Patricia Bauer

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*Nominating Committee: Davie Lou Solka, Chair;
Sally Drayer, Joan Linares, Gary Solka*

Guess This Member

We have a winner!! As Barbara Rosenberg said in her winning statement, "the adorable photo must be Sally Drayer. She still has the same big smile today!" And Barbara is correct. For that good guess, Barbara wins a year membership in TJHS.

Here's another cutie for you to identify. This dark-haired adorable girl was about four or five when this photo was taken. Good luck!

Email your guess to Davie Lou Solka at editor@txjhs.org any time beginning Wednesday, February 12. Entries received before

that date will not be considered. Family members and previous winners and their families are not eligible to participate. Good luck! If you'd like to try and stump the TJHS membership, please send your photo to davielou@solka.net 

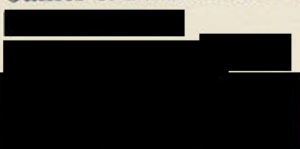


Board Member to fill unexpired one-year term 2020-2021

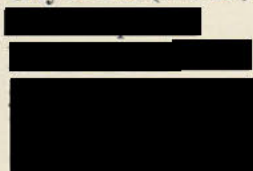
Sharon Gerber (Houston)

Welcome New Members!

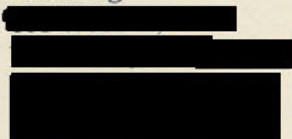
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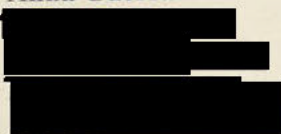
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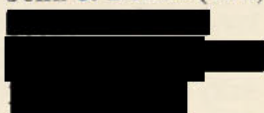
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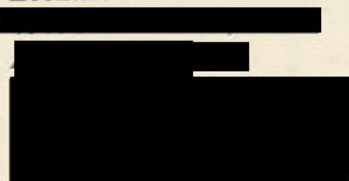
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If you have any changes in your
information, please contact

Marc Wormser, 832-288-3494,
c2aggie@gmail.com

Save the Date

April 17-19, 2020

Annual Gathering
and Board Meeting
in San Antonio

June 12-14, 2020

Board Meeting in Bonham

**September
5-13, 2020**

TJHS Trip to Poland

**October 23-25,
2020**

Board Meeting with New
Mexico Jewish Historical
Society in Las Cruces,
New Mexico. The theme
of the weekend is "West
of Hester Street: The
Galveston Movement
and Jewish Immigration
and Communities in
the Southwest."

TJHS on Facebook

Did you know that TJHS has a
Facebook page?
Like us at [https://
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pages/Texas-Jewish-
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Society/187629054741368](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Texas-Jewish-Historical-Society/187629054741368).



**Come to San
Antonio for the
40th Annual
Gathering
April 17-19, 2020**
*Registration form
in this issue.*

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

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TJHS Traveling Exhibit

The Texas Jewish Historical Society has three museum quality photo exhibits, with explanations depicting early Jewish life and contributions. The exhibits highlight the lives of Jews in Texas since the early part of the century.

Each exhibit is comprised of approximately thirty-six photographs that can either be self-standing with an easel back or hung on a wall. There is no charge for the exhibits and they will be shipped



prepaid freight via UPS in waterproof boxes to your location. There will be the expense of prepaid freight back to the shipper 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.

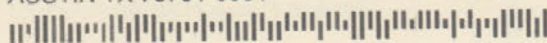
They are an excellent program for schools, congregations, and other organizations. To schedule the exhibits, please contact Dolly Golden at goldendolly81@yahoo.com or 512-453-8561.

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YES! Count me in! My dues are enclosed.

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Check the Appropriate Box(es)

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Renewing Member

Special interests, professional background, talents _____

Who suggested TJHS to you?

Name: _____

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Contributions to the Texas Jewish Historical Society are tax deductible within the limits of the law.