

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Magazine



August, 2023

Congregation Agudas Achim, Laredo, Celebrates 85th Birthday and Hosts Baseball Team from Israel by David A. Blumberg



Israel baseball team with congregation after enjoying 3Hs (Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, and Hummus).

In March, 2022, David A. Blumberg was preparing a grant for Homeland Security for Congregation Agudas Achim of Laredo, and found some interesting documents. He realized that the congregation was approaching eighty-five years of Judaism in Laredo, Texas, not only serving the Jewish community but the community at large.

Congregation Agudas Achim is an unaffiliated synagogue with a conservative leaning. For Friday services they use their own prayerbook that is trilingual (Hebrew, English, and Spanish). Since the pandemic, as in many congregations, all services are held on Zoom and in person. If a member needs a minyan for a *yahrzeit*, the group

is always there.

A few years ago, the shul was part of a documentary titled, “There are Jews Here” that appeared on PBS. The congregation is still alive and well. But the number of congregants is declining. Even so, congregants’ celebrations and all the major Jewish holy days services are held.

In 1938, when the congregation was incorporated, the city’s population was about 37,000 and in 2023, the population is about 329,000. In 1980, it was estimated that there were about 420 Jews in Laredo. Today there are fewer than

[continued on page 4](#)

Content

Quarterly Magazine

The Texas Jewish Historical Society 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Texas Jewish history, oral histories, and requests for assistance with research are welcome, as are photographs and historical documents. We recommend that you provide photocopies of all documents and photographs. Please provide color photocopies or scans at 300 dpi or greater in gif, tif, or jpg format, and send electronically to editor@txjhs.org or by mail to Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas. Be sure to include your name and contact information.

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Sally Drayer, Jan Hart, Kathy Hart, L. David Vogel, Vickie Vogel

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.

Speaker's Bureau	2
Message from the President.....	3
Update on Grants from the July Board Meeting.....	3
Contributions.....	5
Notes from the Board Meeting.....	6-7
Grant Application Form.....	8
TJHS Awards Nomination Form.....	9
SJHS Annual Conference Includes TJHS Contributions by Hollace Ava Weiner.....	10
TJHS Grant Recipient Holds Movie Premiere in El Paso by Susan Novick and Joyce Davidoff.....	11
From Our Archives: The Rosenberg House - Corsicana, Texas by Vickie Vogel.....	12
The Fisher Family of Big Spring by Tammy Barrow Schrecengost with contributions by Edward Fisher	14
Meet Your Board.....	23
Welcome New Members.....	26
In Memoriam	26
Photo Exhibit.....	27

Save the Date

October 19-22, 2023


TJHS Fall Board Meeting and Southern Jewish Historical Society Annual Meeting at Rice University, in Houston

January 26-28, 2024

TJHS Board Meeting, McAllen, Texas

Speaker's Bureau by Jan Siegel Hart

The Speaker's Bureau of the Texas Jewish Historical Society functioned through Zoom during the Covid shutdown. Recently we have been meeting in person and have scheduled a speaker in Conroe in the near future. Our speakers are available to speak either on Zoom or in person.

We hope that our members will keep the Speaker's Bureau in mind when communicating with their congregations and organizations. Our speakers are available to speak on a number of subjects, including historical Jewish people and places, how to do oral histories, and facts about the Texas Jewish Historical Society and what we do. 

Message from the President

by Joan Linares



Texas Jewish Historical Society board members gathered in San Antonio in July to brainstorm action plans to meet the four goals that I announced at the Annual Gathering in April: (1) growing the organization, (2) collaborating with other organizations, (3) preserving historic synagogues and (4) encouraging participation in TJHS Grants Program. Board members had a chance to brainstorm additional topics as well. We will use the discussion results as a guide to reach TJHS goals.

Another important action taken at the Summer Board Meeting was awarding three more grants to deserving applicants. TJHS Grants Program enables recipients to carry out our

mission of preserving Texas Jewish history.

Also at the Summer Board Meeting, TJHS voted unanimously to establish the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund. We are grateful to establish this special fund that will honor the legacy of TJHS founder and first President, Rabbi Jimmy Kessler. Earlier in the year, an Ad Hoc Task Force was created to discuss uses of the Kessler Fund that would meet the criteria that Shelley Kessler, Jimmy's widow, deemed appropriate. I have appointed a TJHS Kessler Fund Committee to manage programming and other projects under the Kessler Fund.

I also appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to coordinate fundraising for the Kessler Fund with Lonnie Schooler, TJHS Past President, as chairperson. The fundraising campaign will launch in the Fall.


The Membership Committee has developed a new brochure for TJHS which will have updated information on it. The brochure will be ready for distribution in the Fall.

We want to thank Sally Drayer who has served as Meetings Chairperson for many years and has worked tirelessly in planning TJHS meetings and Annual Gatherings along with her committee. We welcome Lynda

Furgatch as the new Meetings Chairperson, along with committee members, Anita Feigenbaum and Marilyn Lippman.

Vickie Vogel is retiring from her work with Travel Committee. Vickie has put in an enormous amount of time over the years planning trips for TJHS. We appreciate her hard work and want to thank her tremendously for all that she has done. So many members benefitted from her efforts and were able to enjoy fantastic trips.


The Southern Jewish Historical Society is having its 47th Annual Conference in Houston October 20-22, 2023. The Texas Jewish Historical Society will have a contingent of members taking part in the programming. It is a great opportunity for TJHS to partner with SJHS in co-sponsoring a reception to meet and greet conference participants. TJHS will further two goals at the Conference-creating cooperative links with other organizations and growing TJHS membership. You can register for this Conference at www.txjhs.org.

As you can see, TJHS members have been very busy and will continue working hard to meet our goals. As always, if you have suggestions or questions, please contact me at president@txjhs.org. Thanks for all you do to strengthen our society. 

Update on Grants from July Board Meeting

At the July, 2023 Board Meeting in San Antonio, the TJHS Board approved three grants. Chairperson, Jane Manaster, presented the following requests: \$5,000 to the Houston Holocaust Museum for a memorial exhibit opening in September, 2023, focusing on Holocaust survivors and their families in Texas; \$5,000

to Jeff Aresty, TJHS member from Waco, for a proposed documentary about Jacob de Cordova and his place in Texas Jewish History; and \$2,500 to Tiferet Israel Congregation in Dallas, to provide identification on twenty unmarked Jewish graves in the Agudas Achim cemetery in Dallas.

It was announced that Hebrew Order of David Gravestone Project in Houston unveiled twenty-five more markers at Beth Yeshurun Post Oak Cemetery on June 25, 2023. TJHS had approved a grant for this ongoing project with this being the second group completed. 



Bishop James A. Tomayo and Los Chaporales Mariachi Band at the anniversary celebration.



Ala Ritz, Ardith Epstein, Councilwoman Melissa Cigarroa, Laura Ankilowitz, Suzie Hofman serving food at the 85th Anniversary Celebration



Attendees at the 85th Anniversary Celebration.

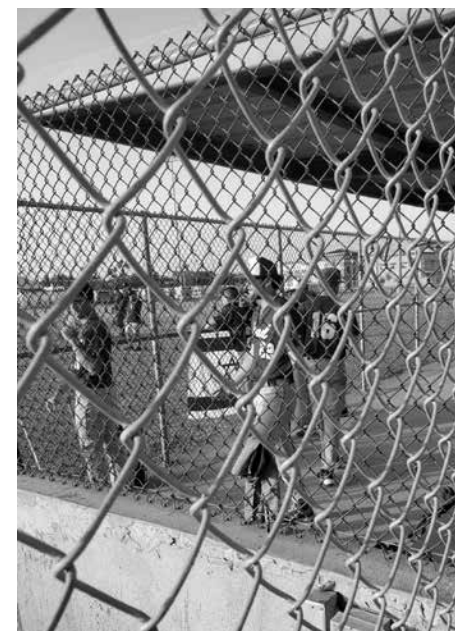
100. Despite this small number the congregation has a part-time rabbi, who comes from Mexico City. Rabbi Gabriel Frydman comes one week a month which includes the weekends (Shabbat) on both sides of that week, and provides any help that is needed.

In July 2023, the European Champions of the Under 18 Pony League from Israel competed for World Champions in Laredo. Unfor-

[continued on page 5](#)



Israel baseball shirt and kippah.




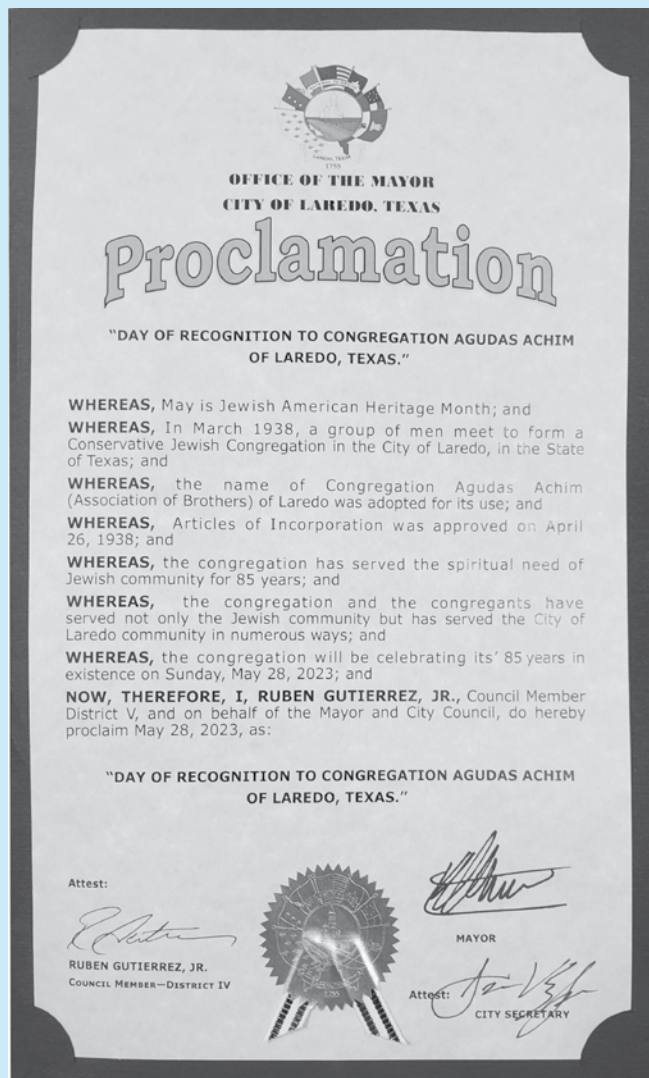
Israel baseball team during the game.

Laredo, continued from page 4

tunately, they lost two games and were eliminated, but the congregation held a cook-out for them with the 3Hs (Hamburgers, Hot dogs and Hummus!) A good time was had by all.

On Sunday, May 28, 2023, from 11:00 AM until 3:00 PM a picnic celebration was held and included the reading of a proclamation from the City of Laredo, the Los Chaporales Mariachi band, hot dogs and hamburgers, as well as bingo. In addition to members of the congregation, Laredo City Council District III Councilwoman Melissa Cigarroa and Bishop James A. Tomayo attended.

Blumberg says, "Now that we have reached 85, we are ready to continue strong!" 



Proclamation from City of Laredo.

Contributions

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

In Memory of

Mitzi Milstein

From

Marcy, Joan, & Gary Berman
Sally Drayer
Charles & Jan Hart
Pam Fischer
Chuck & Karen Fox
The Josephs Family
Bob & Susan Zach Lewis
Ruben & Joan Linares
Sheldon Lippman & John Campbell
Tammy Partch
Ben & Barbara Rosenberg
Lana & Stephen L. Royal
Bonnie & Jordie Salliman
Barry Silverman
Davie Lou Solka
David & Vickie Vogel
Hollace & Dr. Bruce Weiner

In Memory of

Betty Weiner

From

Nancy Sheinberg

In Honor of

The TJHS 44th

From

Bob and Susan Zack Lewis

Annual Gathering

In Honor of

Charles Hart on his 88th birthday and
for his service to TJHS

From

Debbie Hart

In Honor of

Paul Keeper, for his virtual tour of
Austin Jewish History
and Sites

From

Lisa Cohen Quay,
from the Vancouver,
Canada JCC


In Support of

TJHS

From

Marilyn Jorie

We Need Your Stories!

The TJHS would like to print your story if you or your family immigrated to the United States. We have received many stories from the earlier part of the twentieth century, but our beautiful Texas history is much more than those stories. Help us tell the rest of the story and contact editor@txjhs if you will include your family's history in *The TJHS Magazine*. 



Row 1 -Barbara Green Stone; John Campbell, Lydia Furgatch, & members; Sheldon Lippman; Marilyn Lippman, Sharon Gerber, John Campbell; Vickie & David Vogel
 Row 2 - Susan Novick; Joyce Davidoff; Scott Langston; Rusty Milstein
 Row 3 - Jules Frapart; Allen Mondell; Kathy Kravitz; Jane Manaster
 Row 4 - Lonnie Schooler; Hollace Weiner

Notes from the Board Meeting, April 15, 2023

- The following grants were awarded: \$5,000 to the Houston Holocaust Museum for a memorial exhibit opening in September, 2023, focusing on Holocaust survivors and their families in Texas; \$5,000 to Jeff Aresty, Waco, TJHS member, for a proposed documentary about Jacob de Cordova and his place in Texas Jewish history; and \$2,500 to Tiferet Israel Congregation, Dallas, to provide identification on twenty unmarked graves in the Agudas Achim cemetery in Dallas.
- The TJHS trip to Cuba has been cancelled. Chair Vickie Vogel said that interest in traveling has waned since COVID, and she is resigning as Travel Chair. She suggested that the Travel Committee be disbanded for now. The Board agreed.
- The Board approved the report from the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund group and created the Kessler Fund Committee. This committee will set up guidelines for the Kessler Fund and report back.
- Sally Drayer retired as Meeting Chair and was thanked for her years of service. New Chair is Lynda Furgatch, with Anita Feigenbaum and Marilyn Lippman serving as committee members.
- Davie Lou Solka announced that we had sent \$5,000 to the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History for the beginning of our three-year commitment for an intern to work with the Center to digitize our Collection.
- Membership Co-Chairs Joyce Davidoff and Barbara Green Stone said we have 560 paid members. They have made welcome calls to the new members and Nancy Hoffman continues to mail welcome packets to them. A new membership brochure is being designed, and will be ready for distribution in October.

continued on page 7

Board, continued from page 6

- Jan Hart said that there are several speakers lined up for the rest of the summer and fall. She reminded everyone that we do have speakers available for programs in their communities.
- Rusty Milstein announced that there were 481 new entries in the Cemetery Database, and 281 known cemeteries in Texas with Jewish Burials. He thanked

Kathy Kravitz for her continuing updates on the base and Herschel Sheiness for his input on Jewish veterans.

- The next Board Meeting will be in Houston October 22, 2023, at the Southern Jewish Historical Society Conference. It was announced that TJHS will co-sponsor a reception and purchase an ad in the SJHS journal.



Anita Feigenbaum, Marlene & Mel Eichelbaum

Left to right: Lynda & Michael Furgatch, Jeff Aresty, Bob Lewis, Jan Hart, Susan Lewis, Marilyn Lippman, Sonny & Sharon Gerber; Barbara Rosenberg

Board meeting Sunday morning - Sonny Gerber, Joan Linares, John Campbell.



John Campbell with his "small bowl of ice cream."

Facing: Sally Drayer, Hy Penn, Jennifer Lava, John Campbell, Joan Linares, Ruben Linares Backs: Anita Feigenbaum, Elliot and Emily Gurwitz, Davie Lou Solka





The Texas Jewish Historical Society Grant Application

The mission of the Texas Jewish Historical Society is to expand and enhance the knowledge and understanding of the Jewish presence in Texas and the history of Jews from their first arrival in the State to the present.

We solicit applications for research projects that are in this spirit.
On the form below, please show how your project meets our mission.

Application Form

The Texas Jewish Historical Society will consider applications from individuals and non-profit organizations in any written or visual media. Attach additional sheets as necessary.

Contact Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Cell: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Title and Description of project.

Briefly outline personal and professional background information that support this application.

What is the anticipated budget for the project? Are you seeking additional support from elsewhere?

Please detail the timeline of your project.

Completed project must acknowledge TJHS support. A copy or account of the completed project should be submitted to the Society's archive at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin.

*Send applications to: TJHS Grant Committee: P.O. Box 10193, Austin TX 78766-0193, or email to grantchair@txjhs.org
www.txjhs.org.*



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 Awards Committee will be presented at TJHS Spring Annual Gathering. Applications must be received by July 15, 2024 and mailed to Awards Chair, Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193 or awardchair@txjhs.org.

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: Awards Chair, Texas Jewish Historical Society,
P. O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193 or awardchair@txjhs.org.*

www.txjhs.org

Southern Jewish Historical Society Annual Conference Includes Texas Jewish Historical Society Contributions

by Hollace Ava Weiner

Country/Western singer Joe Buchanan, a veritable rabbinical troubadour, will perform a Havdalah concert when the Southern Jewish Historical Society convenes in Houston the weekend of October 20-22, 2023. Buchanan, a Conservative Jew by Choice who grew up in Clear Lake and near Eagle Pass, weaves Hebrew words and interpretations of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and even Jonah into his hit songs.

Buchanan, who lives in Houston, will perform at 6:30 p.m., October 21, 2023, at the close of a reception co-hosted by the Texas Jewish Historical Society on the Rice University campus.



Joe Buchanan holding an SJHS tote bag and a copy of *Lone Stars of David*.

More than a dozen Texas Jewish Historical Society scholars, writers and grant recipients are on the conference agenda. The theme for the Southern Jewish Historical Society's 47th annual conference is "Space and Place in Southern Jewish History."

Bryan E. Stone, professor at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, and author of *The Chosen Folks*, will deliver the keynote address titled, "Very Small Histories in a Very Big State."

Filmmakers and TJHS grant recipients, Barbara Rosenthal and Linda Levitt, will preview their forthcoming documentary, "Grit and Trace: How Six Jewish Women Transformed Texas." The six women are cowgirl Frances Kallison; Houston school board president Dr. Ray K. Daily; Galveston's pioneer philanthropist Rosanna Dyer; Olga Kohlberg, who helped civilize El Paso; poet Fania Kruger; and Gussie Oscar, "Show Woman of Waco."

Another filmmaker and TJHS grant recipient, Jillian Glantz, will discuss "Jews in the Texas Borderlands." Photographer and oral historian Emily Williams will delve into "Jewish Race, Place and Memory in the Deep South." Gabrielle Lyle, a Texas A&M Ph.D. student, will reflect on "Jewish Oral Histories in the US/Mexico Borderlands." Williams and Lyle have also received grants from the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

New Yorker and grant recipient Samuel Gruber, always a captivating speaker, returns to Texas to describe his grandmother Flora Susnitsky's upbringing in Brenham and his mother Shirley Moskowitz Gruber's girlhood

in Houston. Another take on Houston will come from Dr. Tyina Steptoe, au-




Samuel Gruber

thor of *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City*.

Hollace Weiner, editor of *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, will moderate a panel featuring creative non-fiction writers Sandi Wisenberg author of "Holocaust Girl in Meyerland"; Suzanne Sheriff, "My Grandfather's West Texas Salvage Store"; David Biespiel "A Place of Exodus: Memory and Meyerland"; and Joshua Gottlieb-Miller, "Searching for the Dybbuk (in Texas)."

Sheriff will also moderate an archivist's roundtable. Panelists include Bryan Stone, volunteer archivist for Corpus Christi's Jewish community, and Josh Furman, the conference chair and curator at Rice's Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Jewish Archives.

For additional information and registration details, go to the Texas Jewish Historical Society's website at txjhs.org, click "Registration for Conference," and on the next screen, press the sentence with the words "conference schedule." 

TJHS Grant Recipient Holds Movie Premiere in El Paso

by Susan Novick & Joyce Davidoff



People of the Crossing—the Jews of El Paso had its world premiere on July 23, 2023 at the Plaza Classic Film Festival held at El Paso’s historic Plaza Theatre. Over 500 people attended the documentary that focuses on the array of Jews who crossed through the borderland and established their homes and lives in El Paso. The film is fifth in a series of documentaries on the Jewish Experience of the American Southwest directed by filmmaker Isaac Arstenstein and broadcast regionally and nationally on PBS.

People of the Crossing is a multi-layered portrait of a Texas Jewish community on the border with Mexico told through family stories relating the history, culture, and customs of this important gateway between continents, people, and languages. Its narrative includes El Paso’s early history as a rough and tumble town before Jewish merchants and politicians helped make it a viable place of commerce and civic life. Descendants of Jewish pioneers and community and spiritual leaders share their stories about the unique aspect of Jewish El Paso and the multicultural and multilingual nature of its Jewish congregations. Historic photographs and film footage richly illustrate the testimonials, along with compelling cinematography (from land and air) that highlights the city’s geographic location at the foot of the Franklin Mountains and on the banks of the Rio Grande.

After the film’s premiere, Arstenstein joined in a question-and-answer session with prominent local El Paso journalist Bob Moore, followed by a public reception in an historic venue of the El Paso Community Foundation. The film was supported by local families, individuals, and a grant from the Texas Jewish Historical Society. 🇺🇸

Top: People entering the Plaza Theatre for the premiere. Middle: Q&A with filmmaker Isaac Arstenstein and El Paso journalist Bob Moore. Bottom: Audience in the Kendall Kidd Performance Hall at the Plaza Theatre. Photos by Brian Kanof.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

The Rosenberg House - Corsicana, Texas

by Vickie Vogel

This column is based on information available in the TJHS archives, supplemented by some online research. If you have corrections or additions to this information, please submit them in writing to the TJHS editor at editor@txjhs.org. We want the TJHS archives to be as complete and accurate as possible.



Rosenberg house in 2023. Photo by Vickie Vogel.

Corsicana, rich in Jewish history, is in Navarro County, named for Jose Antonio Navarro, a “loyal Texan,” who played a prominent part in the struggle with Mexico and won the enduring admiration of all true Texans, according to the History of Navarro County on its Wikipedia link. The history also makes mention of the Rosenbergs as one of the pioneer families.¹

The impressive two-story home at 1200 West Fourth Avenue in Corsicana known as the Rosenberg House was completed in 1921 on three lots purchased in 1919 for \$1400. The house was built by Ben and Rachel Rosenberg. After their deaths, their son Ivan and his wife Adele lived there.² Today the house sits quietly on a tree-lined street of stately mansions, some of which are in disrepair, but not the Rosenberg House surrounded by large oaks.

Ben was born in Marionpole, Poland³ on April 24, 1862, the son of Yonkel and Fannie Rosenberg.

Around the age of twenty, he came directly to Waco where he worked for several years. Many Jews, including Ben, came to Corsicana with the railroad around 1890. The next year he started a liquor business as proprietor of Cotton Exchange Saloon at 217 Beaton St. Eleven years later he switched to the hardware and farm implement business.

In 1893, he had married Rachael Goldberg of Waco.⁴ Rachel was the daughter of A. Julius Goldberg (1850-1922) and Ida Efron Goldberg (1853-1895). The Rosenberg’s son, Ivan, was born in 1895.

Ben was a member of the Odd-fellows, B’Nai B’rith, and Temple Beth El, the beautiful Moorish revival synagogue founded in Corsicana in 1898. An Orthodox Jew, Ben was one of three trustees to charter Agudas Achim in 1915.⁵

The Rosenberg House in its original state has been written up in local histories. Many loads of topsoil were

hauled in to raise the property three feet, so that they could have a basement which was used as a workshop. A wrap-around porch of Mexican tile has a roof separate from the main house.

Entering the house, there is a wide room running the width of the structure with a chandelier purchased in Czechoslovakia made entirely of hand-rubbed crystal. The gas-burning fireplace has a marble hearth. Louvered doors close off the rest of the house, but make a wide doorway when open. Cornices with picture molding and baseboards are typical of its time. Each door has cut-crystal door knobs with solid brass hardware. Each doorway and window is bordered with six-inch-wide molding. All floors, except the kitchen, breakfast room and bathrooms are of quarter-sawed oak, then known as the Cadillac of flooring. Redwood planks, lapped together and hand plastered,

continued on page 13



*Rosenberg Family plot.
Photo by Vickie Vogel*

form the interior walls. Built-in bookcases were adorned with rounded tops. Downstairs ceilings are ten feet high and upstairs are nine feet.

The upstairs bathroom was built in the European style with a completely separate toilet area. The floors are laid with one-inch blue and white tiles; the wall is also ceramic tile. There is also a toilet built under the stairs on the first floor. It is located near the outside door so that if it was needed while one was gardening, dirt would not be tracked through the house. The downstairs is split level.

As of 1983, when this description was written, the attic remained unfinished. Raw cotton treated with a fire-retardant chemical powder was used as insulation. The main house has 4 1/2 rooms downstairs: a half bath, living room, dining room, kitchen and breakfast room. There are five rooms upstairs: main bedroom with adjoining sitting room, guest room, and main bathroom with adjoining dressing room.

Servant quarters were built behind the main house, consisting of one large room with running water and a gas outlet for a heater, and a small room containing only a toilet. This space is attached to a large garage. It was built directly on the

ground so the floorboards eventually rotted, but it still stood as of 1983.

In 1984, the Texas Historical Commission erected Marker Number 11631.

The house was known for its beautiful yard. The first tulip magnolia tree in Corsicana became a mass of huge pink and white flowers in early spring. Adele was a gardener and planted azalea and camellia, and flowers bloomed year round. The home remained in the Rosenberg family for more than fifty years.⁶

Ben Rosenberg died May 4, 1929 at the age of 67 after a lingering illness. Rabbi Wolfe Macht of Waco conducted the funeral service at the Rosenberg House. Ben left many charitable bequests, including a perpetual care fund to Corsicana Hebrew Cemetery, a mile away from the house, where his family is buried. Rachel Rosenberg died in 1965, but at some earlier point, their son Ivan and his wife, Adele, became occupants of the family home.

Ivan graduated from Corsicana High School in 1913 and Tyler Community College in 1914. He married Adele Shwartz on December 26, 1918 in the home of her parents, Kalman "Mal"⁷ and Sophie Shwartz. They chose this date because it was the anniversary of their parents. Rabbi Joseph Henry Stoltz performed the ceremony. Ivan and Adele had one son who died in infancy.

Adele's brother Louis of Corsicana lived to the age of 103. A lifetime member of Temple Beth-El, Louis was prominent in cotton circles for over fifty years, and was a long-time bank director.

In 1960, Ivan had a lift elevator installed for Adele, who had Parkinson's disease. Otherwise, the house stayed as it was, except one large window located above the bathtub was removed. Adele died January 16,



Rosenberg infant son headstone. Photo by Vickie Vogel.

1978 at the age of 78. The house was donated to the Twilight Home Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, and was sold for \$31,800. In 1980, it was resold for \$55,000 to owners who tried to restore the house and yard to its original beauty.

Ivan continued to operate the implement business after Ben's death. It became the Sears Catalogue Store. In 1975, Ivan and Adele donated the property to Navarro Memorial Hospital. They auctioned it off for \$50,000, which funded the hospital's first pediatrics unit, named in the Rosenbergs' honor. Ivan named the hospital beneficiary of a \$5,000 life insurance policy.

Ivan also had a workshop on 9th Street where he made wooden toys for children. He gave many toys to the Salvation Army to distribute to needy children. Ivan was a generous man, often buying shoes, a coat, or a hot meal for a needy stranger on the street. His will directed \$10,000 to go to Navarro College for a scholarship


continued on page 14



*Rosenberg Family plot
with various headstones.
Photo by Vickie Vogel.*

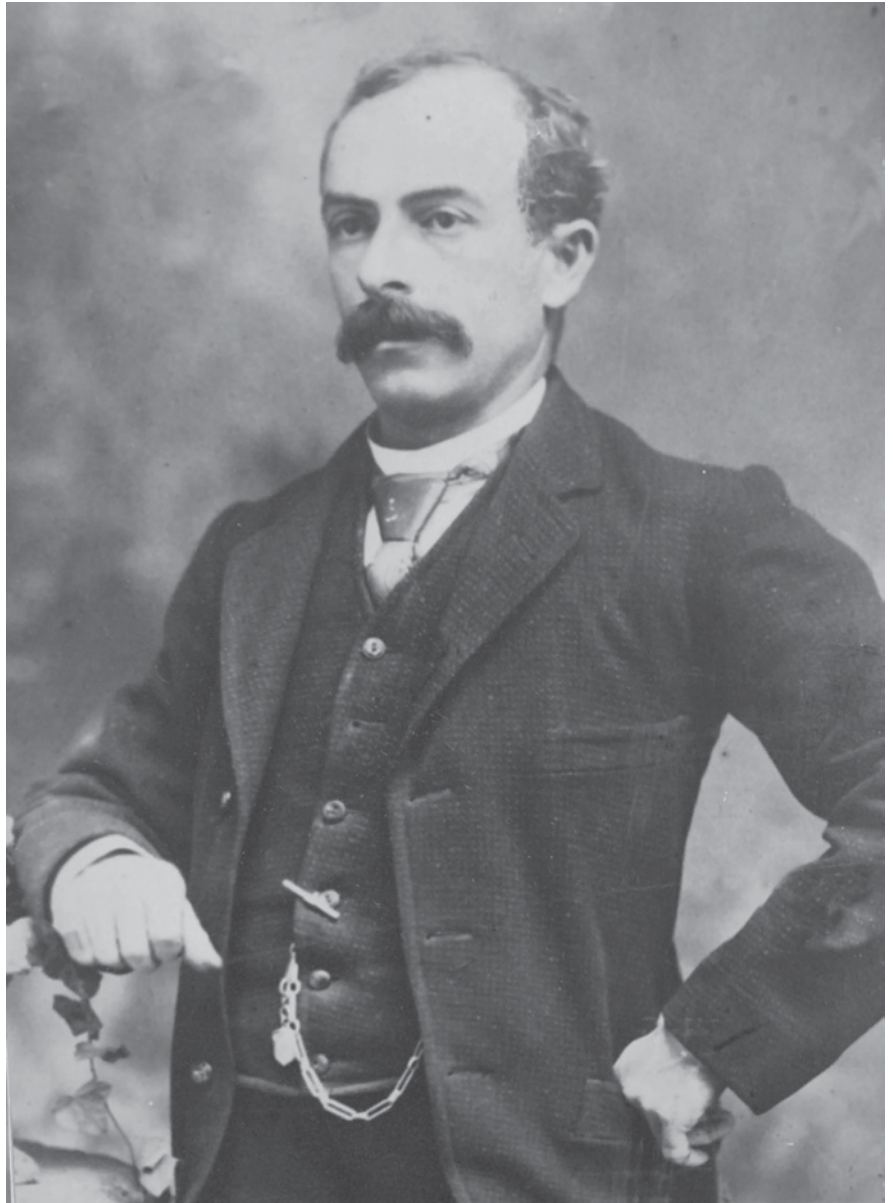
fund named for him and Adele. Private people, they did not publicize their good deeds. The Rosenbergs are gone, but the house still stands.

Endnotes

- ¹ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/50/History_of_Navarro_County_%28IA_historyofnavarro00love%29.pdf, p. 273.
- ² Unless otherwise noted, all information is from the Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Briscoe Center for American History, Box 3A170, folder Communities: Corpus Christi-Cuero. There is an unsigned typed six-page paper about the Rosenberg House: Sources: Navarro Co Historical Society, Navarro County Scroll Vol XXII p 87, Interviews with W. G. Morris 1983, longtime friend of Ivan Rosenberg, and Louis Shwartz, brother of Adele Rosenberg, March 1983.
- ³ <https://txnavarr.genealogyvillage.com/obituaries/pg90351.htm>:
- ⁴ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101750532/rachel-rosenberg> Born in Waco, died age 89 in Corsicana and buried there.
- ⁵ It dissolved in 1999. <https://tjpnnews.com/preserving-small-town-history/by/HollaceAvaWeiner>, 2017.
- ⁶ <https://txnavarr.genealogyvillage.com/obituaries/pg90351.htm>:
- ⁷ Kalman's parents were Aaron and Caroline Zander Shwartz. Kalman was a cotton buyer born in Texas. His father was born in Europe and his mother in New York. He died of cancer. 

The Fisher Family of Big Spring

by Tammy Burrow Schrecengost, Director Heritage Museum of Big Spring, Texas
with contributions by Edward Fisher



Joseph Fisher.

Ed Fisher asked his father, Albert, why he never had taken his Colt .41 caliber pistol out of the lock box at First National Bank. Albert's reply was always the same "that pistol has been shot only one time and that by your grandfather" (Joseph). The revolver was patent-

ed in 1876. Always the proper gentlemen, Joseph had an impeccable reputation not only in Big Spring, Texas, but in Terre Haute, Indiana, and back across to Orange County, California.

Joseph Fisher was born in

continued on page 15

Fisher Family, continued from page 14

Schoenlind, Bohemia, Austria, March 8, 1845, to parents Jakob and Ester. There were nine children; Joseph's only surviving brother, William, was born 10 years later in 1855. The Fisher family immigrated to the United States in 1869 from Austria. The Fisher family settled in Indiana within a close-knit sector of Jewish immigrants from Austria.

Moving to America opened another war for the Fishers. The Civil War began in 1861 when Joseph turned 16. He became a messenger boy in the battle of Chickamauga. This battle was fought in 1863 in Tennessee and Georgia and involved the second highest number of casualties after the Battle of Gettysburg. General George Thomas Wood sat around the campfire at night and told stories of the frontier forts in Texas. Joseph was fascinated by these stories, and he quietly studied the situation and made plans.

After the war, Joseph returned north and in 1874 he migrated to Orange Co. California, where he opened the first store in town. Borax was being hauled out of the mines by 280 mule teams. The town was soon to prosper, but a malaria outbreak hit California in 1878, so Joseph left his operation in the hands of trusted employees and returned to Indiana. He could not forget the wonderful Texas tales told by General Wood and in the summer of 1878, Joseph arrived in Texas at Fort Griffith. There were still marauding bands of Indians and buffalo hunters. He found a nice place in Taylor County to raise livestock and possibly farm. However, he couldn't help but think about the influx of people arriving in West Texas. The Texas and Pacific Railroad was quickly laying track all the way to El Paso. Joseph returned to Orange Co, sold his business interest there in 1879,

and took a trip to Indiana to marry a pretty little redhead named Lillie May Rheinheimer. He had plans of bringing his new bride to the "wild west."

Joseph and Lillie married December 28, 1879, when he was 34 and his young bride was 16. The couple's first son was stillborn in 1880. Lillie quickly became pregnant with another son, Lester who was born January 29, 1881.

Joseph met H. Clay Read in Sweetwater, Texas. Read was a real estate agent and had plans of making Big Spring his new home. The two men rode a buggy to Big Spring on the graded right of way for the railroad. Fisher purchased land in Taylor, Nolan, and Howard Counties. His name appeared on Howard County's first tax rolls in 1880, just one year before the Texas Pacific arrived in 1881. He purchased one of the first town lots at the corner of First and Main Streets. He opened a store in a tent and moved his family to a tent behind the store. The store carried only the basic needs of cowhands, railroad workers, and anyone else needing grub. He had flour in barrels, canned goods, and some items of outerwear such as Levi pants and jackets. Joseph spent night and day working at the store and building his business.

While Joseph was working, Lillie was quickly growing weary. In 1881-83 men outnumbered the ladies considerably in Big Spring. The town was being built and government established but it was still a rough cowtown. It was said around town that Lillie had a liking for the gentlemen's attention. One hot evening in July 1883, Joseph closed his store and searched up and down Main Street for his missing wife. He asked several men who were gathered on the sidewalk if they had seen her. One man spoke up and said that she was



Albert Fisher, 1903.

last seen going up Second Street toward the west. Joseph made his way west to Mrs. Donovan's Boarding House, at the corner of Second and Gregg. The boarding house was a former mess tent left over from the Civil War. It had ten or so "dog tents" which would accommodate four men. Joseph asked Mrs. Donovan if she had seen Lillie and she responded that she had possibly seen her go into Mr. Webb's tent. Webb was a former buffalo hunter who had a penchant for whiskey and women.

Joseph pulled open the tent fly and found his wife and Webb on a cot "both without textiles." Joseph took the Colt .41 from his belt and fired

[continued on page 16](#)



Fisher store Christmas window, 1913.

one shot at Webb as he was tearing the rear of the tent at its seams. Fisher missed his mark, instead he shot one of Mrs. Donovan's mules. Webb was seen running toward the railroad tracks as the sun was setting. Joseph barked at Lillie to get her clothes on. He then walked back to Mrs. Donovan and apologized for killing her mule. He handed her an Eagle (\$10 gold piece) and returned to his own tent

where he found his young son, Lester, alone. Joseph was furious with Lillie and told her she was not fit to be a dance-hall girl. Lillie hired attorney F.W. Wampler. She claimed that starting in December 1882, her relationship with her husband had worsened. She accused Joseph of insulting her, having outrages, and striking her. She filed for divorce and asked for a division of the estate estimated to be

worth \$12,000. Lillie had worked on the sympathies of Wampler. He took the matter to heart, chasing Joseph down Main Street while in their buggies. Wampler caught up with Joseph and gave him a beating. Joseph stood his ground and filed assault charges on Wampler. County Attorney T.G. Andrews refused to prosecute, and he was subsequently charged with failure

continued on page 17

Fisher Family, continued from page 16

to perform his duty. Joseph charged Lillie with a long list of trysts, including the one with Webb that inevitably destroyed his marriage.

The District Judge came from Weatherford to hear the second divorce case in Big Spring. The court sustained Fisher's position, granting custody of the child, plus Lot 6, Blk 6, Original, with improvements. Lillie left town with Webb and was last seen in El Paso. In 1889, she signed a warranty deed to J.H. Hurt and then disappeared once more leaving Lester never knowing his mother.

Once Joseph's divorce from Lillie was final, he packed up little Lester and returned to Sanford, Indiana, to visit his brother, William, and his wife, Nettie. Nettie had a younger sister named Anna Kaufman. Joseph

didn't waste any time, and he and Anna were married on November 14, 1883. Anna was the same age as Lillie Fisher, but she appeared to be more mature and ready for the duties of a faithful wife and mother. The two brothers, Joseph and William, and the two sister-wives, Nettie and Anna, boarded the train on the long journey back to Big Spring. William and Nettie had their son, Bernard, age two, and Joseph had Lester who was four months younger than Bernard.

William and Joseph formed a partnership and The J.&W. Fisher Store was born. This partnership helped relieve Joseph substantially. He now had help with his younger brother. The stress of an unfaithful wife, raising a baby alone, and building a new business was taking

a toll on Joseph's health. In addition to building the business, Joseph and William continued investing in properties as their families grew. On September 17, 1885, Anna gave birth to Albert Montefier. He was born in the tent they were living in, right next to a tent that housed saddles and tack. Albert always claimed to be born in a manger!

During the same year, the Fishers enlisted a gentleman to bring stone from Mitchell County to build a two-story store which became the second permanent structure in Big Spring. (Earl's Meat Market was the first.) Both couples lived on the second floor of the mercantile until their two homes were completed at 107 and 109 Scurry Street.

[continued on page 18](#)



Lester, Joye, Albert Fisher and friends.

Fisher Family, continued from page 17

William's wife Nettie gave birth to a son, Joye, in 1887 just as they had moved into their new home. Then Anna gave birth to daughter Zadee on April 9, 1888. William and Nettie had another child, Irma, who was born on January 2, 1897.

Together, Joseph and William built a successful business serving a vast trade territory around Howard County. Customers came from more than 100 miles in all directions, and many were from central New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle. Among their customers was Col. C.C. Slaughter, of the Long S ranch empire. Slaughter ranch sprawled northwest from Big Spring to Cochran and Hockley Counties with headquarters maintained roughly 20 miles north of Big Spring at "German Springs." Slaughter would send his freight wagons for supplies, each one pulled by 16 yokes of oxen. Each freight wagon held the equivalent of a railroad box car. Sometimes it would take a month to deliver all the supplies to his various headquarters. The average ranchman's order often ran as high as \$500.00 which then was a fortune. There would often be wagons that were pulled by oxen, lined up on Front Street. They were loaded at night and left unprotected until morning. Nothing was ever stolen. The Fisher slogan was "J&W Fisher, The Store that Always Welcomes You and The Store that carries everything."

The Fishers had built their inventory to include almost anything anyone would need to survive on the plains. Leather goods of all types, coal, seed, feed, horses, mules, barbed wire, tools, hardware, lamps, rifles, ammunition, stoves, clothing, and even hides were sold. The drought of 1886-87 was so bad that cows were worth more dead than alive. The Fishers paid \$2 for a good "green hide",



Albert Fisher Co. on Main Street

as opposed to a live cow that would bring only a dollar a head. Many hides were shipped to tanneries in New England from the Fisher loading docks. Pioneer W.T. Roberts claimed to be the first customer in The Fisher Store. He purchased a spade, and the second pioneer of Big Spring, Dave Rhoton, made the second purchase of a pair of trousers.

Bernard Fisher recalled the first time thieves tried breaking into the wood-frame building. "The floor was high off the ground and one night some men crawled under the store with an auger and bit. They began boring a hole in the floor. They struck a vinegar barrel and by the time the bit pierced the vinegar its contents emptied on the would-be robbers so they called it quits." The first deliv-

ery truck for the store was a pushcart. Later, they bought a wagon for deliveries.

The railroad and ranchers paid their employees once a month, so there was a need to have large sums of money available to cash employees checks. During those paydays, the Fisher store stayed open until midnight, as many people filled their wagons with supplies, spent the night in town and left for their ranch homes at early light. Some stayed for church services on Sunday. The closest bank was in Fort Worth, some 250 miles east. The J.&W. Fisher Store had a large vault that served as Big Spring's bank for several years, until the First Bank of West Texas was established.

One warm summer Sunday

continued on page 19

Fisher Family, continued from page 18

morning, Joseph and Anna locked the door to the old store and started down the alley on Main to their home on Scurry Street. It was around 1:30 AM and the streets were dark. Joseph told the story to his son Albert, "You could hear yourself breathe as a man came out of the shadows. He yelled to Anna, 'Give me your purse!' Joseph answered 'Son, there is a lady in your presence.' They then heard the man place his pistol in his scabbard and say, 'Pardon me ma'am.'" As the Fishers finally reached their home safely, they recounted the money that was still in Anna's handbag. All \$1500 was accounted for. Joseph concluded that men of the old west respected ladies.

Many ranchers settled their accounts whenever they sold their livestock. No interest was ever charged, as the customer's good will was worth more than the percent of interest. Everything in the store had a firm set price. There was no haggling allowed.

During the flood of 1902, eleven feet of water covered the railroad tracks that ran along Beals Creek and adjacent to the Fisher store. Unfortunately, a train car of salt had just arrived the day of the flood and a carload of green hides awaited the outbound train. All was destroyed. The Fishers had a livery stable across First Street. Many men stayed in the stable and always for free. The only charge was for hay and oats. The Fishers continued to grant credit to anyone that appeared to have need. Grandson Ed Fisher said, "The policy was to help others get a start in this harsh land so if they could weather out a few years, they would trade with us in the future." This faith in mankind built a steady stream of customers who could always depend on getting a fair deal.

There was no formal high school

in Big Spring so in 1896, Albert was sent to St. Matthew's Episcopal School for Boys on Turtle Creek of Dallas.

In 1896, Joseph and William decided they could no longer maintain the business. They decided to sell their Big Spring store and move back to Terre Haute, Indiana. They sold the business to local rancher, W. H. Brennand. Once they were in Indiana, Albert was enrolled in Western Military Academy in Alton, Illinois for his high school education. Albert attended the Academy with Eugenio Garza Sade, son of a wealthy industrialist from Mexico. Sade and Albert played their mandolins at the St. Louis World's Fair. (This mandolin is on display at the Heritage Museum in Big Spring.)

The Fishers were homesick and wanted to return to their friends and business life in Big Spring. W.H. Brennand had grown tired of being a merchant, so they agreed to "trade" back. The Fishers purchased the store and returned home. In 1896, the Bressie brothers joined partnership along with their brothers-in-law, the Denmarks, and built a two-story stone building across the alley north of Fisher's Mercantile. Shortly after the building was completed, the Bressies sold their store to the Fishers and left town.

At the age of sixty-one, Joseph's health continued to decline and on September 16, 1906, Joseph suffered a fatal heart attack. Dr. J.H. Hurt rushed to his side but there was nothing he could do. Joseph's son Albert was only twenty-one when he joined partnership with his Uncle William as the two continued with the J.&W. Fisher Store. By 1906, the Fisher family had amassed a sizeable estate that included more than 30 sections of land in Texas, Oklahoma, Indiana,

and Mississippi. Dunn and Bradstreet reported that in 1910 the Fishers had more than \$350,000 in assets with no liabilities. In 2022, this was equivalent to \$12 million in purchasing power. That figure is on the assets; it does not factor in the oil and mineral rights and the increased value of property.

William and Nettie moved from the two-story Scurry home to 510 Runnels. The area around their former home on Scurry was starting to deteriorate with the "free riders" on the train and the old Carter Hotel across the street. The Petroleum Building was being built and it was encroaching on the Fisher home.

The family business continued to prosper with a branch in Sweetwater, Texas, and ranching keeping their interest as an avocation. Eventually, the other family members stepped in to assume responsibilities in the Fisher Store. Joye managed the grocery department that was located in the stone building south of the alley on Main Street; Joseph's son Albert managed the dry goods, ladies ready-to-wear, and men's fashions, on the top floor of the stone building (this was torn down in 1990); Bernard was managing the windmills, hardware, and farm implements and on Johnson Street, between First and Second Streets, were the livery stable and a coal yard. There were eight clerks employed along with long-time bookkeeper, Gertrude McIntire.

In 1915, Albert married a fiery "city lady" from Chicago, Edith Creath. Edith was high spirited, and her goal was to bring society and culture to Big Spring. Edith spent her time playing bridge and getting involved in Big Spring society. Albert and Edith made their first home at 510 Runnels. Later, they designed and

[continued on page 20](#)



Nettie Fisher (Mrs. William).

built a beautiful home at 529 Hillside in the new Edwards Heights addition.

By 1922, Edith had driven a wedge in the family. She did not get along with the other Fisher wives and had bitter feuds with them. This caused the family to divide the business and the ranches.

Albert purchased a store at 208-

210 Main Street from W.J. Garrett (Dora Robert's son-in-law.) Everything was styled with elegance in mind. On February 13, 1923, the Albert M. Fisher Co opened its doors with the slogan "Quality, Fair Prices, and Service." Albert made two large trips a year to New York bringing Fifth Avenue to the unpaved streets of

West Texas. The oil boom brought a flurry of activity and AMF Company provided the necessities as well as the luxuries to oil men, ranchers, railroad workers, and all other residents of West Texas and Eastern New Mexico.

During the depression, drought, and dust bowl, Big Spring was not spared from despair. The railroad was laying off employees and many were forced to stand in food lines. There was little money left for the "luxuries" that were offered at AMF store. The expenses of maintaining the store were almost unbearable for Albert and he was considering closing the doors. Slowly the economy picked up and in 1936, Albert's store was doing so well, he decided to increase the size of his operation and update the present building. Fixtures were built in Dallas by the cabinet maker for Neiman-Marcus. The store was soon to be referred to as the Neiman-Marcus of West Texas. It carried fur neck pieces that were sold by the hundreds, silk and rayon stockings by the thousands, and Jarman Shoe Company wrote that more of their boots were sold in Big Spring than any other town. The typical Stetson hat sold for \$5; several ranchers and oilmen bought the \$100 variety. The gift department was stocked with fine crystal and china. There was a full-time lady employed in cosmetics that mixed individual facial powder for customers. However, as "fancy" as the store was, it maintained the integrity that was started by Joseph and William. Albert had a side stock room for the old railroaders who had brought "headlight overalls" from the Fishers for many generations. There was a line of red bandanas along with heavy duty gloves, all essential railroad gear. The ladies wear department had the newest fashions sent

[continued on page 21](#)

Fisher Family, continued from page 20

daily from on-the-spot buyers in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and Los Angeles. High-end women's suits sold for as much as \$200 in 1935.

In July, 1938, Albert brought Edith and their two sons, Albert Jr. and Ed, along with them on a buying trip to New York. Once they arrived in the city, Albert started feeling ill and exhausted. He stayed in the hotel room while Edith and the boys went to dinner. When they returned, they found him on the floor, he had suffered a heart attack and died at the age of fifty-three.

Lester Fisher was affected deeply when his brother, Albert, passed away in 1938. Although Lester was older, he looked up to his younger brother and even lived with Albert and his family on Hillside. Lester never married and was involved in real estate holdings. In November, 1918, Lester enlisted in the army and served as a private in World War I. His military career ran short as he was discharged at Fort Bliss, Texas, on January 25, 1919. After Albert passed away, Lester moved into the Crawford Hotel and continued to live there until his death in 1951. Lester left his estate to Albert's sons, Albert Jr. and Edward, and to their deceased sister Zadee's two children. Each were entitled to an undivided interest in one-fourth of the estate.

Albert Jr. had graduated from The University of Texas the same year his father died. At the young age of twenty-two, Albert, Jr. had to take over the reins of the AMF store alone as brother Ed was still in high school. Alice Cravens had been the business and credit manager of the store since Albert, Sr. opened it. She helped Albert, Jr. with the operations of the store until he was drafted into the Army during World War II. She then took over the management of the store until Albert, Jr. returned. Albert, Jr. had

been stationed in California and fell in love with the area. He did not want to return to operating AMF. He sold the store to Hemphill Wells of Lubbock and transferred the store building and other assets to himself from the corporation. Ed stated that Albert, Jr. took more than \$800,000 with him to California. He stated "This was in total disagreement with our father's will. It stated that his two sons were to 'share and share alike.' Albert, Jr. and his wife moved to California where they bought an olive grove, and he worked in insurance and real estate. Albert and his wife had two sons and never returned to Big Spring to live. Ed and his wife, Evelena, visited the family in California frequently and the matter of Albert, Sr's estate was never brought to court. In 1961, Albert, Jr. suffered a major heart attack and died at the age of forty-six.

William Fisher died on November 16, 1932. He was buried in Dallas next to his wife Nettie, who had passed away two years before. William's side of the family continued with their Jewish faith and honored traditions. William and Nettie's two sons, Joye and Bernard, managed the J&W Fisher Store. Daughter Irma was not involved in the family business. She married Myer Blankfield and moved to Port Arthur. Irma had a heart attack and died in September, 1938, only two months after her cousin, Albert, Sr. died. Upon William's death, a will was probated, and he named his two sons and daughter as equal executors and executrix. He left sums of \$500 to selected relatives in Indiana. He bequeathed \$250 for long-time Fisher store employee Gertrude McIntyre, and \$50 each to the Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Orphan Asylum of Cleveland. William left his daughter, Irma, \$2,000, with the stipulation that the interest from the principal be applied

to maintaining the family burial plot in Dallas. The remaining portion of his property was to be "shared and shared alike" among his three children with the stipulation that Joye and Bernard were to gain possession of the J. & W. Fisher Store.

In 1929, the two sons moved the store location. They changed the trajectory of the store to soft goods and ready-to-wear. The store was built where the former Opera House was located in the 300 block of Main across from the courthouse. The J. & W. Fisher business was no longer a mercantile but a new and modern department store. The Fishers closed the business in 1942, and sold the building to J.C. Penney. Bernard and Joye retired but continued to manage their property and ranch holdings south of Big Spring.

Lester and Albert's sister, Zadee, married Alexander Mayer in 1914 and moved to Kentucky where she had two sons. Zadee died in 1949. As a youngster, Joye often played with the Birdwell children at the T&P Hotel. He was a favorite of John Birdwell who enjoyed laughing at Joye and his antics.

Joye Fisher received his education in Indiana along with his brother and cousins. In 1915, he married Rhea Eckhaus, of Indiana. They returned to Big Spring and moved into the Cole Hotel as they awaited the completion of their home at 707 Scurry. They filled the home with beautiful Victorian pieces that had been in the Fishers' home, including an 1850s square grand piano and Mrs. Fisher's fine bone china. Each Friday night at 7:30 PM, Jewish services were held in the Fisher home. Their only daughter, Betty Jean, was married in a Jewish ceremony at 9:30 AM on a Monday morning. After the ceremony, a break-

[continued on page 22](#)

Fisher, continued from page 21

fast was held before the couple caught a train to return to Purdue University, where the bride graduated with a degree in science. Joye died in 1957, at the age of sixty-nine from injuries he sustained in a car wreck. Rhea continued to live in the home until 1967, when she moved to Wichita, Kansas, to live with her daughter. After she moved away the home was used as a rental for several years. In 2020, The Big Spring Area Community Foundation moved into the building.

In 1919, Bernard married Rhea's sister, Frances Eckhaus, also from Indiana. They had one son, Julian, and made their home at 900 Runnels. Bernard was no different from the rest of the Fisher men as he was active in the community. He wanted to see his hometown continue to grow and prosper. The last surviving child of brothers Joseph and William Fisher died in 1964. Bernard (Bun) Fisher was eighty-four years old at the time of his death.

In 1954, no reversible error was found by the Supreme Court of Texas in the case brought by Lester's nephew, Ed Fisher. Ed filed suit contesting the execution of a trust agreement made in November, 1930 from Lester Fisher to Albert Fisher Sr. The lawsuit contended that the heirs were not made a party to the cancellation suit and that their interests as beneficiaries had not been rightfully protected. Southland Royalty acquired title to 63-64ths of the mineral interest in several sections of land. Lester had sold 1900 acres to Elmo Wasson and this interest was also questioned. Ed still retained several sections of land south of Big Spring including the area that later sold to Horace Tubb and became the Tubbs Addition and the Trinity Memorial Park Cemetery. There was farm property in the Elbow Area as well that the Fishers had mineral rights in. Ed had graduated from



Anna Fisher (Mrs. Joseph).

Big Spring High School in 1941, and graduated from Texas A&M with a business degree. He served three years in the army in World War II, often engaging in combat. He met and married Evelena Blowey in 1951. They built a home on the corner of Virginia and 19th Streets. Ed had several different and interesting careers

throughout his life.

In 1947, four former long-time AMF employees, Georgia Johnson, Friday Corbin, Grace Miller, and Alice Cravens, opened a lady's apparel shop at 210 Runnels. In 1955, Ed purchased an interest in the shop and later became a sole owner of "The Little


continued on page 23

Fisher Family, continued from page 22

Shop” at 210 Runnels. Once again, a Fisher Store was located in Big Spring. Ed changed the name of the Little Shop to The Fisher Store. Evelena retired from the VA after a successful career as head surgical nurse and she and Ed moved to San Angelo to a retirement village. They had a close and loving relationship throughout the years until Ed died on July 6, 2002, at the age of seventy-eight. Evelena died May 1, 2017, in San Angelo.

Upon her death, her nieces and nephews learned that her entire estate had been given to a Concho Retirement Community’s Assistant Executive Director, Blaine Ryan Smith. In the fifth will prepared by Evelena, Smith was named to receive interests in oil, gas and other minerals conservatively estimated at over \$9 million, plus accrued oil and gas royalty production existing prior to Evelena’s death of over \$750,000. Smith also sought millions that had accrued since Evelena’s death. Evelena’s nieces and nephews were named in the original will that she and Ed had prepared in 1995. The descendants filed suit against Smith claiming he exerted undue influence on Evelena. In her 90s, frail and suffering from macular degeneration, she had become completely blind. The lawsuit claimed that Smith had served as executor or trustee for three other residents who passed away while living at Rio Concho West.

Two years after Evelena had died, Blaine Smith had made a small gesture and offered \$400,000 to the descendants of Evelena. Attorney Jeff Chandler, who represented the original heirs, claimed the estate was worth over \$42 million by 2019. The counter proposal was for Smith to pay the original heirs \$10 million. That would leave Smith with \$21 million and \$290,000 per month in interest and royalty income forever. The family and Smith finally agreed upon a private settlement agreement. Joseph and William came to this country to make a better life for themselves and their families. They and their children and grandchildren worked hard through the years, saved, and invested their money wisely. With a stroke of a pen, Joseph’s legacy was gone.

Generations of Fishers made their fortune in Howard County. The Blowey nieces stated that the Fisher family had originally wanted to share that fortune with the Heritage Museum, the county, and the preservation of its history; however, someone else felt the money would better suit his own needs. Fortunately, The Fishers left several artifacts and Caylor paintings to the Heritage Museum of Big Spring along with pieces of their rich history. 

Meet Your Board

Cynthia Roosth Wolf was born in Galveston and grew up



in Tyler. She graduated from Newcomb College with a BA in English, and received a Bachelor of Music from Lamar University in Beaumont, where she lives with her husband, Michael, also a TJHS Board Member. She taught English and History at Randolph Air Force Base, and English

and Spanish at Central High School in Beaumont. She has been active in her community, and has served as President of Sisterhoods in Fort Smith, Arkansas and Beaumont. She has served on the board of Women of Reform Judaism at the district and international levels, and is a board member of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas and Symphony of Southeast Texas. For Congregation Temple Emanuel, she serves as President-elect and Social Justice Chair. Cynthia and Michael have three children and four grandchildren. She is 3rd Vice-President, as well as chair of the Awards Committee.

Dolly Moskowitz Golden grew up in Baytown, Texas.



She married Ed Golden from Corsicana and they settled in Austin, where she now lives. Ed passed away in 2018. Dolly is a Certified Travel Counselor. She has visited two-hundred sixteen countries and plans to visit the rest. She has two children, and one granddaughter who live in Austin.

Cindy Lindauer is a third generation Austinite. She graduated from Drake University in



Des Moines, Iowa, and earned a Master’s Degree in Learning Disabilities from the University of Miami. She has two adult children, and one grandson. She has worked as a Studio Teacher in the film industry for thirty-two years. Cindy is currently the Sisterhood President at Congregation Agudas Achim in Austin. Her interests include genealogy, volunteering, traveling, Mah Jongg, and spending time with her family.

Her interests include genealogy, volunteering, traveling, Mah Jongg, and spending time with her family.

[continued on page 24](#)

Meet Your Board, continued from page 23

Davie Lou Solka is a grandchild of Russian immigrants who were part of the Galveston Movement. She was President of TJHS 2017-2019, and she and her husband, Jack (now deceased), moved to Austin in 2007 from Corpus Christi. Davie Lou was involved in the community in Corpus Christi and was elected president of several Jewish organiza-



tions, PTAs, service clubs, and the first woman president of Temple Beth El. After her children left home, she began and taught a Jewish holiday program called *L'dor Vador* in the JCC pre-school. She retired from teaching after fourteen years just before moving to Austin. She was involved in activities in Austin pre-Covid and is a born and bred Texan. She graduated from the University of Texas before you had to add Austin. Davie Lou is editor of *The TJHS Magazine* and the liaison for the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.

Hollace Ava Weiner joined TJHS in 1996 while researching her first book, *Jewish Stars in Texas*, which focuses on legendary Lone Star rabbis. Since then, she has written and edited four books on Texas Jewish history, including the anthology *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, which was published by TJHS with Brandeis University Press in 2007. She writes a monthly column for the Fort



Worth Star-Telegram and is the director for the Fort Worth Jewish Archives. Hollace has served on the board before and we welcome her back.

Sonny Gerber is married to Sharon and they have been married forty years. They have six children and nine grandchildren. Sonny is retired and spends his time managing real estate investments, volunteering, and running errands. As he says "If you're married, you understand."



Joyce Davidoff, co-chair of the Membership Committee, was born in Houston and lived there until she was eight



years old. Due to health reasons, the family moved to southern Arizona where she grew up in a copper mining town near Tucson. The family moved to El Paso in the 1960s. Joyce graduated from El Paso High School, and then graduated from the University of Texas/Austin with a bachelor's degree in sociology/social work. She has worked in not-for-profit agencies in Austin; Dallas; New York; and since 1980, El Paso. In 1984, Joyce earned a Master of Public Administration from University of Texas/El Paso. She most recently worked as Grants & External Affairs Coordinator for a large social impact agency serving El Paso and far West Texas until her "retirement" in 2022. Joyce has three sons, and together with her husband of three-and-a-half years, 17 grandchildren and counting.

Hy Penn is a native Houstonian and the oldest child of Holocaust survivors Linda and Morris I. Penn. He graduated from the University of Texas/Austin and the University of Texas Medical School/San Antonio, with a residency at the University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston. He recently retired after thirty-five years as a pediatrician in the Kingwood-Humble area. He currently



serves as a docent at the Holocaust Museum of Houston, and serves on the Board. He is also a Board Member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston. Hy has been married to Lynn Gordon Penn for thirty-five years, and performs as the Magician, "The Great Hydini."

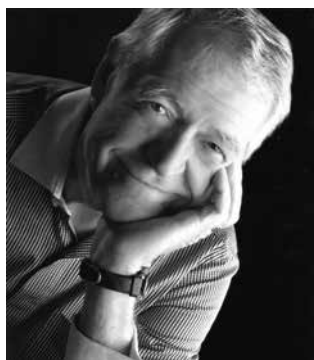
Marc Wormser, TJHS Past President, lives in Pearland and is an "Aggie at heart." He has been a traveling sales rep for Levis, C.R. Gibson, gifts, and medical sales. He owned a recruiting firm and was active in scouting and Optimist Club. He and his wife, Joyce, also a TJHS board member, travel whenever they can.



continued on page 25

Meet Your Board, continued from page 24

Bob Lewis aka Tumbleweed Smith, is from Big Spring,



Texas. He hosts a daily radio show, *Sound of Texas*, that is syndicated throughout Texas. It is a show featuring Texans talking about their interesting careers and sometimes unusual experiences. He writes a newspaper column, also syndicated in the state, and is co-owner of Multi Media Advertising, Inc. Bob taught

communications at UTPB in Odessa for thirty-four years, was District Governor of Rotary International, and has won many awards for audio and video production. One was the Gold Award for Excellence from the Communicator Awards for “Texas Jews go to Cuba,” a documentary about the first TJHS humanitarian mission trip to that country. He and his wife, TJHS Past President Susan Zack Lewis, have two children and four grandchildren. Bob is Publicity Chair for TJHS, and handles the sound for our meetings.

Susan Zack Lewis, TJHS Past President, is from Big Spring, and is married to



Bob Lewis, aka Tumbleweed Smith. They have two sons and four grandchildren. Susan is involved in many civic activities in Big Spring. She and Bob have owned Multi Media Advertising for forty years, where she serves as Technical Director when Tumbleweed has a speaking engagement.

She has a degree in Interior Design.



Joyce Wormser, Pearland, was born in Corpus Christi and is married to Marc, TJHS Past President. They have two sons and four grandchildren. She worked as Employee Relations Officer for one thousand employees at the Corpus Christi State school. In 2010 she and Marc moved to Pearland to be closer to their sons and their families.



Eric H. Nelson was born and raised in Corpus Christi. He currently lives in Houston. He attended the University of Texas/Austin for his undergraduate work, and law school at the University of Houston. He practices labor law. Eric and his wife, Carol, have two sons and five grandchildren.

Kathy Cornelson Kravitz grew up in Oklahoma City, but now lives in Austin. After graduating from the University of Oklahoma, she taught high school biology and geometry. She did graduate work in botany, then was a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia. She met her husband, Bruce, while working for AT&T/Western Electric as a Statistical Quality Control Engineer. They




moved to New Zealand, where

she was the Quality Manager for Mitel Telecommunications NZ. Their son, Scott, was born there. In 1991, they moved to Austin, where she has worked a variety of jobs, including Assistant Librarian for AISD, and volunteering for numerous organizations. Kathy currently spends most of her days working on TJHS Cemetery Committee needs, although she continues to volunteer for other organizations and tries to find time to “play” in her garden, walk in nature and occasionally travel to new places. Kathy is Chair of the Cemetery Research Committee.

Anita Feigenbaum grew up in Bastrop, Texas, graduated



from the University of Texas and received a master’s degree from Texas A&M University. She and her husband, Leslie, have been married thirty-nine years and have two children, Sarah and Ryan. They live in College Station, where Leslie is on the faculty at A&M University. Anita became involved in TJHS years ago with her parents, Dr. Neil Gurwitz, of blessed

memory, and Betty. In her free time, she loves visiting with family, traveling, attending Aggie events, and entertaining her puppy, Bella. She has been involved in retail and property management. Anita is one of the Chairs of the Meetings Committee. 

Welcome New Members!

Leah Abbate
Baytown, Texas

Dr. Jamie Alexander
Dallas, Texas

Ellen & Jeffrey Aresty
Waco, Texas

Molly & Bill Asher
Fair Oaks Ranch, Texas

Leslie & Robert Beckoff
El Paso, Texas

Donna Balderston
Bandera, Texas

Cheto Cerda
Lincoln, NE

Shana & Nossi Creeger
Austin, Texas

Bunny & Ivan Edelman
Dallas, Texas

Jeff & Ashleigh Edelstein Gross
Austin, Texas

Andrea & Bruce Holzband
Houston, Texas

Arleas Kea
Silver Spring, MD

Sandra & Joseph Kirk
Sugar Land, Texas

Felice & Edward Klein
Houston, Texas

Susie Krumholz
Austin, Texas

Alicia Leff & Dr. Stephen B. Shanfield
San Antonio, Texas

Jim Levy
El Paso, Texas

Leslie Michelson
Plano, Texas

David & Judy Mataya Moore
Vancouver, WA

Julie Muntz & Peter Johnson
Houston, Texas

Dena & Dr. Harry Sokolow
Houston, Texas

Ellen St. Clair
Fort Worth, Texas

Marlene Trestman
Baltimore, MD

Emily Williams
Oak Park, IL

Lauren Moskowitz Yenokida
Studio City, CA

Sherry & Ronald Zander
Dallas, Texas

Suzanne Seriff
Austin, Texas

If you have any changes in your information, please send them to admin@txjhs.org

In Memoriam



Sandra Freed, TJHS member, Fort Worth and Austin, died June 27, 2023, in Austin. She is survived by her daughters, Monica (Andrew) Faber, Shari (Eric) Stein, and Leslie (Jack) Frishberg, six grandchildren and spouses, and two great-grandchildren.



Hanna Goldman Lambert, TJHS member, Dallas, died May 12, 2023. She is survived by her children, Craig (Dr. Bert Sloan) Lambert and Debbie (Garry) Smith, five grandchildren and spouses, and two great-grandchildren.

Mitzi Milstein, TJHS Board Member, Longview, died June 13, 2023. She is survived by her husband, Rusty Milstein (Past TJHS President), her children, Randy, Jeff, and Amy (TJHS Corresponding Secretary), two granddaughters, cousins, nephews, and sister-in-law, Phyllis Feldman.



Betty Jean Fram Weiner, TJHS Board Member, Houston, died June 13, 2023. She is survived by her children, Larry Weiner and Julia (James) Long, two grandchildren, her sister, Tobye Joachim (Mort) and sister-in-law, Marilyn Fram.

May their memories be a blessing.

Does TJHS Have Your Current Email Address?

Is your email address current? Has it changed since the 2021-2022 directory was printed? Have you changed email providers? If so, please send an email to membership@txjhs.org so your information can be updated. To reduce postage cost and printing delays, we are going to



be electronically sending as much mail as possible, so don't be left out or behind—send your current information today!

Please put "email change" in the subject line and with your name in the text of your message, send it today!

Thank you.



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**The deadline for the November 2023
TJHS Magazine is Friday, October 13.**

TJHS Photo Exhibits

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 txjhs_exhibits@txjhs.org.

Texas Jewish Historical Society

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Texas Jewish Historical Society, Inc. is a 501(3)3 nonprofit organization. Contributions to the TJHS are tax deductible within the limits of the law. Please send this completed membership form along with a bank check to Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193