

Texas Jewish Historical Society

2024 Fall Gathering

November 15 – 17, 2024

Springhill Suites by Marriott, 115 S. Jack Kultgen Expressway, Waco, Texas 76706

Friday, November 15, 2024

- 3:00 – 4:45 PM Welcome Table & Registration, Springhill Suites by Marriott
5:00 PM Meet in hotel lobby to carpool to dinner
5:15 PM Dinner - Georges Restaurant, 1925 Speight Avenue
7:00 PM Shabbat Services and Oneg at Temple Rodef Sholom, 1717 N. New Road
***"Hanna the Immigrant"** a special performance by Jan Siegel Hart, TJHS Member and Author*
9:00 PM Carpool returns to Springhill Suites by Marriott
9:00 - 10:00 PM Hospitality room at Springhill Suites open

Saturday, November 16, 2024

- 8:00 – 9:00 AM Registration, Springhill Suites by Marriott
9:00 – 9:15 AM Welcome – Joan Linares, President, TJHS & Cindy Wood, President, Temple Rodef Sholom
9:15 – 10:00 AM **"Preserving Voices: Exploring Local Jewish History Through Oral Histories"** with Stephen Sloan
(Break 10 minutes)
10:10 – 10:45 AM **"Youthful Voices: Youth Group Brings Waco's History to Life"** with Vivian Rutherford and the Youth Group from Heart of Texas Storytelling Guild
(Break 10 minutes)
10:55 – 12:15 PM **"Jewish Merchants, Businesses, and Landmarks: A Historical Journey Through Waco, Texas"** with Ellan Freed Burke, Harry Harelik, Melvin Lipsitz, & Joan Sanger
LUNCH *Catered Box Lunch at Springhill Suites*
1:30 – 2:15 PM **"Gussie Oscar: A Spirited Trailblazer in Waco's Cultural Scene"** with Fiona Bond
2:15 – 3:15 PM "Stories from the Waco Jewish Community" with Joan Sanger, Lisa Berkman Mooring, Melvin Lipsitz, and Harry Harelik
3:15 – 5:00 PM *Open time to visit and tour Waco*
5:00 PM *Meet in lobby to carpool to dinner*
5:15 PM Dinner - La Fiesta, 3815 Franklin Avenue; Havdalah with Ben and Barbara Rosenberg
6:35 - 6:45 PM *Carpool from Dinner to Waco Convention Center, 100 Washington Ave.*
7:00 – 8:45 PM **Film Premiere – The Jacob De Cordova Story**
Bosque Theatre, Waco Convention Center, 100 Washington Ave
9:00 – 10:00 PM Post-Film Reception – Savor and Socialize - Springhill Suites by Marriott

Sunday, November 17, 2024

- 9:15 – 9:30 AM Welcome – Joan Linares, TJHS President
9:30 – 9:50 AM **Waco's Native American Heritage** with Scott Langston
9:55 – 10:35 AM **"Waco History and Jewish Leadership: Proposal for a Youth Innovation Studio in Waco - Digital Skills & Training"** with Jeff Aresty
10:35 – 11:15 AM *Schmooze Time for Members and Guests*
11:15 – 11:30 AM Closing – Joan Linares, TJHS President

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Sessions and Presenters

"Preserving Voices: Exploring Local Jewish History Through Oral Histories"

This session will delve into the oral history holdings at Baylor University's Institute of Oral History, with a special focus on local Jewish history. Participants will have the opportunity to listen to recorded narratives from Waco's Jewish community, gaining firsthand insight into their experiences and contributions. The session will also provide an overview of best practice for recording oral histories, offering guidance on how to capture and preserve these valuable stories for future generations.

- **Stephen Sloan** leads Baylor's Institute for Oral History. He is also a professor in Baylor's Department of History, specializing in post-1941 U.S. history, environmental history, public history, and the American West. He holds a doctorate in public history and U.S. history from Arizona State University. Stephen organizes research projects, leads community oral history workshops, directs grants and contracts, and conducts field interviews. A local initiative created and developed by Stephen is [Waco History](#), a website and free mobile app on local history. A spinoff project is the [Waco History Podcast](#).

"Youthful Voices: Youth Group Brings Waco's History to Life"

The Youth Group from the Heart of Texas Storytelling Guild will take center stage in this engaging session, presenting historical narratives about Waco. Through their unique storytelling, these young historians will bring the past to life, sharing tales that reflect the rich heritage of the city. TJHS warmly welcomes the participation of these talented teens, celebrating their contribution to preserving and sharing local history in an inspiring and dynamic way.

- **Vivian Rutherford**, recently retired as Children's Librarian of 20 years from the Waco Public Library. She is a founding member and president of the Heart of Texas (HOT) Storytelling Guild and an avid mentor and coach to the Guild's teens and youngest tellers. Vivian has served on the boards of the Art Center Waco, Texas Library Association/Storytelling Round Table, Historic Waco Foundation, and the Tejas Storytelling Association. She is Choir Musician and Youth Sponsor of the Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church of Downsville, Texas. In Lorena, Texas, near Waco, Vivian lives with her wonderful husband, thriving plants, and numerous teapots. Her three children and five grandkids live in Dallas and San Antonio. Vivian was once voted as "No. 15: Reasons to Love Waco"!
- **Youth Group from HOT Storytelling Guild:** Kaitley Cowan, 15; Laredo Wynveen, 11; Ruby Akin, 7; Quincy Moore, 11

"Jewish Merchants, Businesses, and Landmarks: A Historical Journey Through Waco, Texas"

This session will explore the rich history of Jewish merchants and businesses in Waco, highlighting key landmarks from both the past and present. Drawing from the extensive Texas Collection housed at Baylor University, the discussion will be enriched with rare photographs and artifacts that tell the story of Jewish contributions to Waco commerce and culture.

- **Ellan Freed Burke** grew up in Waco, where her family were active members of the community and Temple Rodef Sholom. After attending Waco schools and the University of Texas at Austin, Ellan moved to Dallas and decided to pursue the wholesale side of selling instead of returning to her family's retail business—the Goldstein Migel Company, a Waco institution. Her great-grandmother was the sister of Issac Goldstein, and also sister to the woman who married Louey Migel—founders of the store. Both her grandfather and father led this Waco institution for many years. After marrying, she lived in Houston for several years before returning to Waco in 1995, where she remains an active and integral part of the community.
- **Harry Harelik** is a native Wacoan, graduating from Waco schools and receiving a BBA in Accounting and an MPA in Taxation from the University of Texas. Harry retired from public accounting after a 30-year career as a self-employed Waco CPA and became executive director for the McLennan Community College and adjunct accounting instructor for the next 17 years, finally retiring in 2017. He has written a column for the Waco Tribune-Herald as part of its Board of Contributors for almost 23 years. He has served on the board of Congregation Agudath Jacob for over 50 years and is a past president of the synagogue as well as past president of the Jewish Federation of Waco. In addition, he serves on the board of many nonprofit organizations including the Waco Symphony Association (past president) and Oakwood Cemetery Historical Preservation Foundation and helps lead fundraising for Waco Family Medicine as well as the Symphony and Oakwood Cemetery. Harry's grandparents, Haskell and Matley Harelik came to Central Texas from Russia through the Galveston Movement settling in Hamilton, Texas in 1909. Harry's parents, Sam and Margaret Harelik moved in Waco in 1951 where they operated Harelik's Man's Shop, a fine men's clothing store for over 33 years. Harry and his wife, Beverly, have a combined family of 5 children and 7 amazing grandchildren.
- **Melvin Lipsitz, Jr.**, is a native of Waco, Texas, attending public schools, graduating from Schreiner College, Kerrville, Texas, with an Associates of Arts Degree. Melvin enrolled in The University of Texas, Austin, Texas, and graduated with a BBA degree with additional continuing education at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. Melvin and his family have been members of Temple Rodef Sholom for many generations. Melvin is a fourth generation to join the family metal recycling business, M. Lipsitz & Co., established in 1895. M. Lipsitz & Co. is the oldest business in Waco, Texas, and recognized as a Texas Treasure Business by the State of Texas Historical Commission. Melvin and his wife, Linda, between them have fourteen children and thirteen grand kids and expecting more soon. Melvin and Linda when not enjoying family will travel and find joy in many activities just being together.
- **Joan Sanger** grew up in Waco attended its public schools; she graduated from Wellesley College, and the University of Texas School of Law. She and Myron Wood received a photo grant from Waco (now the Waco Foundation) in 1978-1979 for a photography project. Those photos are at the Texas Collection at Baylor. Joan also wrote a story book, 'Growing Up Waco.' She has two sons. She and her husband reside between Ontario and California, but Joan spent recent years in Waco caring for her mom before she passed. Joan keeps coming back to Waco.

"Gussie Oscar: A Spirited Trailblazer in Waco's Cultural Scene"

This session will spotlight the remarkable life of Gussie Oscar (1875-1950), a pioneering woman in Waco's cultural history. Born in Calvert, Texas, and educated at a convent school in Austin despite her Jewish heritage, Gussie moved to Waco in 1905 and quickly made her mark as a pianist and conductor. She led an all-woman orchestra at the Majestic Theatre and became the controversial general manager of the Waco Auditorium in 1915. Attendees will explore her contributions to the arts in Waco and her enduring legacy, which is commemorated at her final resting place in Hebrew Rest Cemetery.

- **Fiona Bond** is founding Chief Executive Officer of Creative Waco. She came to Waco from the UK, where she directed arts and cultural initiatives in higher education, faith, and economic development. She has a BA in Theology from Durham University (UK) and an MBA (hons) from Baylor University. She is author of *The Arts in Your Church* (Piquant, 2001), serves as a panelist for Texas Commission on the Arts and National Endowment for the Arts, was named "Wacoan of the Year" in December 2020, and was elected President of Texans For The Arts in November 2021. She juggles her role as CEO of Creative Waco with family life, and plays bagpipes with her younger son for relaxation.

"Stories from the Waco Jewish Community"

This session will feature members of the Jewish community with deep roots in Waco, including both current residents and those who have moved away but maintain strong ties to the city. Participants will share personal stories and anecdotes about their experiences in Waco, offering unique perspectives on the community's history and the role it played in shaping their lives. This conversation will provide a heartfelt look at the enduring connections and memories that bind the Jewish community to Waco across generations.

"Waco's Native American Heritage"

- **Scott Langston** taught at Texas Christian University for nearly twenty years, and is the Native American Nations and Communities Liaison and Instructor in Religion. He has worked extensively with Native American communities, as well as researching and publishing widely in the fields of Southern Jewish History and the reception history of the Bible. Scott is a past president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and the current editor for the Primary Sources section of the journal Southern Jewish History. While doing graduate work in the field of ancient Near Eastern Archaeology he traveled to Israel many times, including excavating four seasons at Tel Beth Shean and Tel Batash (Timnah.) He has received the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award from TCU, and the Plume Award from TCU's Native American and Indigenous Peoples Initiative. Scott was born in Fort Worth, but grew up in Conroe, Texas. He is married with three children and one grandson, and currently lives in Weatherford, Texas. Scott is a TJHS Board Member.

"Waco History and Jewish Leadership: Proposal for a Youth Innovation Studio in Waco - Digital Skills & Training"

This session will address the proposed vision for Waco to become a hub for 21st century small businesses supporting the film industry, driving economic growth and creating opportunities for the community.

- **Jeff Aresty** is an international business and e-commerce lawyer with 45 years of experience in international cyberlaw technology transfer. He is a leading expert in online dispute resolution and the use of technology in law. Jeff is committed to promoting human rights through the use of technology and emerging online justice systems. Jeff is a TJHS Board Member.

Special Performance

"Hanna the Immigrant: A Journey from Czarist Russia to America", November 15

During the Shabbat services at Temple Rodef Sholom, Friday, November 15, author and TJHS Board Member **Jan Siegel Hart** will present an enactment of the compelling story from her book, "Hanna the Immigrant." This narrative follows the journey of Hanna, a Jewish girl growing up in Czarist Russia as she and her family move from village to village, ultimately making their way to America. Through this story, Jan will illuminate the challenges and triumphs of Jewish immigrants seeking a new life, offering a poignant reminder of the resilience and hope that define the immigrant experience.

Film Premier, The Jacob De Cordova Story, Saturday, November 16

Saturday evening, November 16, will showcase the film premier of The Jacob De Cordova Story of which TJHS was a donor. **Jacob Rafael de Cordova** (June 6, 1808 – January 26, 1868) was instrumental in the founding of Waco. A well-learned man, de Cordova also published two early Texas newspapers, managed over one-million acres of Texas land for new settlements and served in the 2nd Texas Legislature. De Cordova and two others laid out the town of Waco in 1848-49. De Cordova commissioned Robert Creuzbaur of the Texas General Land Office to work with him on what became "the most correct and authentic map of Texas ever compiled" as recommended by Sam Houston in the U.S. Senate.