

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Magazine



December 2024

TJHS Holds Fall Meeting in Waco

by Marilyn Lippman

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Fall Meeting, held in Waco, Texas, November 15-17, 2024, blended local heritage, scholarly insight, and cultural storytelling. Temple Rodef Shalom, in collaboration with TJHS, helped make this meeting one of the most engaging and enriching weekends in recent TJHS memory.

The weekend kicked off Friday evening at Temple Rodef Shalom for Shabbat Services. A special performance of *Hanna the Immigrant* was delivered by author Jan Siegel Hart, TJHS Board Member.

Saturday's schedule was packed with compelling presentations by an esteemed lineup of speakers, each shedding light on Waco's diverse history and the significant contributions of the Jewish community.

Stephen Sloan, named the 2024 Professor of the Year from Baylor University, delved into the value of oral history in preserving local narratives, an ideal introduction to the weekend's theme of storytelling.

Fiona Bond, CEO of Creative Waco, spotlighted the remarkable life of Gussie Oscar (1875-1950) and shared insights on the city's evolving cultural landscape and the role of creativity in fostering a vibrant community.

The day also featured discussion by descendants of prominent Waco business families. Joan Sanger, representing the legacy of Sanger Bros., Ellan Freed Burke from Goldstein & Migel, and Harry Harelik spoke about Harelik's Men's Shop. Lisa Berkman Mooring from Airbnb Fannie's on 5th Street, also spoke along with Melvin Lipsitz, Jr. whose family business, M. Lipsitz & Co., dates to 1895 and is the oldest business in Waco. It is recognized as a Texas Treasure Business by the Texas Historical Commission.



Heart of Texas Storytelling Group – Vivian Rutherford, director; Quincy Moore, 11; Laredo Wynveen, 11; Kaitley Cowan, 15; Ruby Akin, 7.

A particularly moving part of the day was the performance by the Heart of Texas Storytelling Guild. Led by the Artistic Director, Vivian Rutherford, four youth members, ages seven to fifteen, delivered heartfelt narratives sourced from WacoHistory.org. The young storytellers captivated the audience, receiving a standing ovation for their passion and poise. TJHS President Joan Linares touched on the memory of TJHS founder Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, saying, "I know that our beloved founder, Rabbi Jimmy Kessler –

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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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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.

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Save the Date

January 26, 2025

TJHS Zoom Board Meeting

**The deadline for the February 2025
TJHS Magazine is Friday, January 25.**

Message from the President

by Joan Linares



It is the week of Thanksgiving as I write this column. One of the things I am thankful for is serving as the leader of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. This organization's mission of collecting, preserving, publishing, and disseminating materials having reference to the settlement and history of Jews in Texas is vital not only for the Jewish community but for the non-Jewish community as well. Knowledge of Texas Jewish history increases tolerance and understanding and reduces antisemitism.

In September a group of TJHS members joined with members from Tiferet Israel Congregation to dedicate headstones for some previously unmarked graves. Ed Jerome headed up this dedication which took place at Agudas Achim Cemetery in Dallas. Barbara Stone assisted Ed in some of the research.

In November TJHS partnered with ADL and HMH for a screening

of the Tree of Life Documentary. The screening was at the Holocaust Museum Houston and the film told about the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. A relative of one of the victims was in Houston for the event. Houston's ADL director, Mark Toubin, gave a presentation about antisemitism following the screening.

We held our quarterly meeting on Zoom prior to the Fall Meeting. This allowed us time for some additional programming on Sunday morning at the Meeting. The Fall Meeting was packed with a multitude of educational and entertaining speakers. I won't go into details as there is an article elsewhere in this issue that gives those particulars. I will give a big thank you to the Meetings Committee Anita Feigenbaum, Lynda Furgatch, and Marilyn Lippman who planned this fantastic weekend. I want to thank Tumbleweed Smith and Susan Lewis for providing the audiovisual for the speakers. There were a host of others who helped make the Meeting a success by helping with set up, registration, cookie baking, picture taking, schlepping, Havdallah, etc. Thanks to all of you.

Our grant program continues to thrive. A recent grant was approved for Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Houston to help revitalize the Heritage Room that fell victim to Hurricane Harvey. The Heritage Room is a center for educational and cultural

enrichment for Beth Yeshurun and the broader community.

By the end of 2024 TJHS will have placed ads in all major Texas Jewish publications including the *El Paso/Las Cruces Jewish Voice*, *Jewish Austin*, *Jewish Herald Voice*, the *Jewish Outlook*, and the *Texas Jewish Post*. We have also placed ads in the quarterly issues of the *New Mexico Jewish Historical Society Magazine* and the annual journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

TJHS continues to seek donations for the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund. The Kessler Fund Committee is finalizing plans for the first disbursement of funds to deserving universities. Donations are accepted online at txjhs.org or checks may be mailed to: TJHS, P O Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766.

Our January meeting will be a Zoom meeting. Please mark your calendars for Sunday, January 26, at 9:30 am. There will be some leadership roles available for the 2025-2027 term. If you are interested please let me (president@txjhs.org) or Sheldon Lippman (webmaster2@txjhs.org) know.

As you gather with families for the holidays you might consider recording some oral histories from older relatives or even of yourselves. I want to wish you and your families a peaceful, meaningful, and happy holiday season. 🇺🇸

From the Zoom Board Meeting Nov. 3, 2024

- A Grant of \$2500 was awarded to Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Houston for restoring the Heritage Room which was destroyed by Hurricane Harvey. The room is a center for educational and
- cultural enrichment for the community.
- There have been 132 burials and 450 new names added to the Burial Site.
- The Kessler Fund now has

\$179,000 in it with the expectation of reaching the goal of \$250,000 by the end of year. Mailings will be going out reminding people to donate. 🇺🇸

Fall Meeting, continued from page 1

may his memory be a blessing—would be so delighted to see a new generation keeping our stories alive and sharing them with pride.”

Saturday evening the film premiere of *The Jacob De Cordova Story* was featured. Among the audience were two great-great-great-grandchildren of Jacob De Cordova, Kirk De Cordova and David Vann De Cordova, Jr. They made the screening a powerful moment of connection between past and present.

Sunday’s events featured presentations by the TJHS board members Scott Langston and Jeff Aresty. Langston’s talk centered on Waco’s Native American heritage, giving attendees a deeper appreciation of the region’s rich and complex history. Aresty’s presentation offered an exciting look to the future with his proposal for a digital skills and training studio aimed at empowering Waco’s youth. These thoughts provided a fitting conclusion to a weekend that honored the past while inspiring future generations. 🇺🇸



Jan Siegel Hart as her grandmother, Annie Novit.

Melvin Lipsitz speaking about his family business, M. Lipsitz & Co.



Scott Langston speaking about Native Americans in Waco area.



Eilan Freed Burke, who talked about her family business, Goldstein & Migel.



Jeff Aresty & Ann Harder, narrators of the film. The Jacob De Cordova Story.

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Descendants of Jacob De Cordova, David Vann De Cordova, Jr., and Kirk De Cordova with film producer, Kenneth Rogers.



Havdalah with Barbara and Ben Rosenberg.



Harry Harelik talking about his family business, Harelik's Men's Store

Joan Sanger and her book, Growing Up Waco.



Lisa Beckman Mooring with photo of Fannie's on 5th Street.

Fiona Bond talks about Gussie Oscar.



Below: Attendees at showing of The Jacob De Cordova Story, at the Bosque Theatre.



Kessler Fund Update

by Sheldon Lippman

In July 2023, the Texas Jewish Historical Society established the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund to honor the late Rabbi Jimmy Kessler of Galveston, the founder of TJHS. The fund was to further his commitment to promoting and preserving the history of Jewish experiences in Texas.


The Kessler Fund set an initial target of \$250,000 to launch a viable and sustainable program. Close friends, Lonnie and Marsha Schooler, from Houston, provided a generous seed gift to kickstart the Fund. Contributions, large and small, have also come from family, friends, the TJHS Board of Trustees, and significant donations from the Kempner Fund of Galveston and the Herzstein Foundation of Houston. To date \$176,000 has been raised.

“We hope that friends and family will help us reach our goal,” said TJHS President, Joan Linares. “Our aim is to create an endowment that ensures sustainable funding for many years to come.”


This fundraising initiative coin-

cides with the recent anniversary of Rabbi Kessler’s second *yahrzeit*, marking a profound tribute to his memory. One of the first funded programs will be a TJHS-University Jewish Studies Fellowship. This program would support graduate and undergraduate students as they explore the rich traditions of Jewish heritage within diverse cultural religious, historical, and artistic framework in a Texas context. The program parameters have intentionally been kept broad by the committee, allowing students the freedom to creatively approach their Jewish studies.

“Jimmy would be thrilled to know that his legacy will continue through the educational outreach focused on Texas Jewish history, which was his passion,” wrote Shelley Kessler, Jimmy’s widow, in a message to TJHS. “I wholeheartedly support the planned uses for the fund.”

For further information, or to donate to the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund, contact president@txjhs.org or print the mail-in donation form on the TJHS website- txjhs.org 

Congregation Beth Yeshurun Receives Grant

Congregation Beth Yeshurun, Houston, Texas, received a grant from the Texas Jewish Historical Society at a Zoom Board Meeting held November 3, 2024. The \$2500 grant will allow the congregation to restore the Heritage Room that was destroyed by Hurricane Harvey. The room is for cultural and education enrichment for the Houston community. 

We Need Your Stories!

The Texas Jewish Historical Society would like to print your story if you or your family immigrated to the United States from the former Soviet Union, South Africa, India, or other countries. We realize that our beautiful Texas history is much more than those stories. Contact editor@txjhs.org if you will include your family’s history in *The TJHS Magazine*.

Welcome New Members!

Brian Alter

Beaumont, Texas

Alexis Braun

Baltimore, Maryland

Cantor Kenneth Feibush

Houston, Texas

Linda & Gordon Franklin

Sugar Land, Texas

Debbie Hart

Pflugerville, Texas

Steven Katten

Fort Worth, Texas

Marc Kleinman

Dallas, Texas

Robert Markman

Houston, Texas

Keith G. Rosen

Houston, Texas

Terri & Sheldon Schepps

Dallas, Texas

Ellen Shupak-Shaw &

Richard Shaw

Houston, Texas

Norma & Donald Stone

Dallas, Texas

Cindy Wood

Waco, Texas

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

TJHS on Facebook



TJHS on Facebook: Search *Texas Jewish Historical Society* on your device and “Like” us!

Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund Contributions

The following donations have been received in the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund:

Sapphire

Patty & Larry Falleck
Albert & Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation

Ruby

Janey & Melvin Lack

Diamond

Joan & Stanford Alexander Family Fund
Larry & Katherine Buck Fund/Houston Jewish Community Foundation

In honor Ellan Burke & Lauren Wessinger
Steven Katten

Joyce & Hershel Sheiness

In Memory of Elaine Albin

Dana Dale
BJ & Stan Friedman
Friends of Meryl Fein/Grace Weisberg
Deborah Graver
Jan Hart

Joan & Ruben Linares
Karen & David Reifler
Linda Checkly & Michael Roosth
Lynn & Todd Rovelstad
Davie Lou Solka
Cindy & Gerald Stone
Marcia Togneri

In Memory of Kinky Friedman
Shelley Kessler

In Memory of Charles B. Hart
Beverly & Harry Harelik
Deborah L. Hart
Binnie Hoffman
Barbara & Raymond Kalman
Pam & Joe Joffie
Judy Myers
Phyllis Turkell
Joyce & Marc Wormser

In Memory of Jimmy Kessler
Barbara & Raymond Kalman
Esther & Gary Polland
Hollace & Dr. Bruce Weiner
Leslie & Sanford Weiner
Rochelle & Lee Wunsch

In Memory of Larry Kuehn from Joan & Ruben Linares
In Memory of Ito Perl from Vickie and David Vogel

Contributions

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

In honor of the Waco Meeting
Anita & Leslie Feigenbaum
Joan & Ruben Linares
Rusty Milstein

In gratitude for work by TJHS in naming graves at Agudas Achim
Dan & Lee Schwimmer Donor Advised Fund of Dallas Jewish Community Foundation

In Memoriam



Elaine Kline Albin, TJHS board member, died September 10, 2024, in Austin. She is survived by her husband Philip James Albin, her children, Meryl Kline Fein, Michael Kline (Michelle Miller), David Kline (Lori),

Eugene Albin (Elizabeth), Elizabeth Albin Meza (Julio), and eleven grandchildren and spouses.



Seinwil Ito Perl, TJHS member, died November 8, 2024, in Austin. He is survived by his wife, Marian Freed Perl; his children, David (Beth) Perl, Laura (David) Weinman, Debra Perl; and four grandchildren.

May their memories be a blessing.

Save Postage:

Notify TJHS if your address changes or if you will be away from your home when *The TJHS Magazine* will be delivered. Send changes to txjhs.org.

Please Note:

If you are sending a check to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, please indicate the purpose of the check—dues, gift, contribution, etc.

Nine Generations of Texas Jews

by Robert L. Levy

In 1841, my great-great-great-great-grandfather on my mother's side of the family, Lewis (or Louis) Abraham Levy (born in Amsterdam) and his wife Mary (born in London) became the first Jews to reside in the then fledgling city of Houston, Texas which was founded in 1836 in the nascent Texas Republic. In 1843, Lewis purchased a lot to build a family home from Sam Houston.

Family lore indicates that Lewis was convinced to move from New Orleans to Texas by his brother, Dr. Albert Moses Levy, who was a member of the New Orleans Greys and served in the Texas volunteer army. Albert was wounded at the siege of Bexar. He also served the Texas Navy as its first Surgeon General.

Lewis Levy died in 1861 and is buried at the original Beth Israel Cemetery on West Dallas Street in Houston which he founded in 1854. His obituary poignantly described his life:

The Weekly Telegraph (Houston, Harris Co., TX), Tues., 19 Feb 1861, p. 3, c. 5

The death of LEWIS A. LEVY, a few days since in this city, brought a feeling of sorrow to all the people. He was one of the oldest citizens. He was universally known, and beloved by all for the good qualities of his heart. His life was that of one who knew no guilt.

Mr. Levy was a native of Amsterdam, Holland. For many years he was a citizen of Richmond, Va., and of New Orleans, La. The last twenty-five years of his life was spent in this city. He leaves a widow and a large family of grown up children to mourn his death.

Peacefully at the age of 62



Lewis A. Levy

he was gathered to his fathers, and his memory is green in the affections of those that remain. He has gone to enjoy that rest he so patiently waited for. His thoughts were at all times in communion with his God. Requiescat en Pace.

Lewis and Mary were reported to have had twenty children with only nine of them surviving into adulthood. The descendants of Lewis and Mary Levy lived in Houston and other small towns throughout East and Central Texas, including Bastrop, Brenham (where Mary is buried), Calvert, Matagorda, Corsicana, and Galveston. Much later they made their way to El Paso, Texas where I was born.

In 1836, Samuel Maas, my great-great-great-grandfather on my father's side of the family moved to Texas from Prussia (Germany) – first to Nacogdoches County and then in 1839 to Galveston. Galveston at the time was the largest Texas City having been established in 1825 by the Mexican Congress following its revolution from Spain. It was briefly the



Mary Levy

Capitol of the Texas Republic and later the site of one of the few Civil War battles to take place in Texas, the Battle of Galveston which was attacked by Confederate forces who forced out occupying Union troops.

Captain Maas (as he was referenced in a letter from Sam Houston) was a merchant and trader who apparently was descended from a prosperous family in Prussia. In 1884, Samuel traveled to what is now Cologne, Germany, and met and married Isabella Offenbach, an opera singer and sister of the composer Jacques Offenbach. They returned to Galveston and had four children. Isabella and Samuel later separated and lived in different homes in Galveston across the street from each other.

Isabella died in 1891, and Samuel Maas died in January of 1897, and both are buried in Galveston.

The descendants of Samuel and Isabella lived on the island in Galveston for many generations until the beginning of the twenty-first century. Samuel and Isabella's son, Maxwell,

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Sol Levy Confirmation Certificate, 1897

married Sarah Davis, and had a number of children (potentially as many as eleven), including a daughter, Nettie, who married Harry Levy, Sr., in 1901, at the home of Nettie's parents, Max and Sarah. Harry was born in San Antonio after his father Abraham moved there from Bavaria and his mother, Elizabeth Halff, who migrated from Lauterbourg in the Alsace region of France. Abraham later moved to Galveston, and in 1877 founded a

department store with his partner, Julius Weis, called Levy & Weis.

Abraham's son, Edward, (Harry Sr.'s brother), assumed control of the store in 1879 following Abraham's death and renamed it E.S. Levy & Co. In 1896 a new building was built which housed the store and on the top floor the offices of the National Weather Service. It was from here that Issac Cline watched the great storm of 1900 devastate the island.

In 1917, the store grew and moved to its final location on Post Office Street. The store was a fixture in Galveston for over 100 years, later stewarded by Harry Levy Jr., and after his retirement by Harry Levy III, until it closed its doors in 1979. The final Harry Levy is my brother, Harry IV, who - fortunately for his son Jake - ended the tradition of naming sons Harry.

Both of the Galveston families were very involved in the Jewish Community and members of Congregation B'nai Israel, particularly during the period when Rabbi Henry Cohen served from 1888 - 1950. Sol Levy was confirmed by Rabbi Cohen at B'nai Israel in 1897, and his daughter, my grandmother, Audrey, would tell stories of Rabbi Cohen from her youth.

In what was an interesting coincidence, my great-great-grandfather, Harry Levy Sr's home in Galveston, was on O½ Street. The home in the back faced the rear of the home of my mother's grandparents, Sol and Miriam Levy, who lived on O Street. These two Levy families were completely unrelated (other than the potential of distant ancestral connections from biblical times). They became connected when my mother, Yvonne Given, was visiting her grandparents, Mimi and Sol. There she met my father, Harry Levy III, who was visiting his grandparent's home across the alleyway.

My immediate family made its way to El Paso, Texas, through a very unusual circumstance. Charles (Shoya) Given, who was born in Poland but came to the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century, married my great-grandmother, Deborah Trogman, in Chicago in 1909. Shortly after their wedding, Charles hopped on a train to California where he was

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planning on scouting out a new home for his new family. Train travel in 1910 was a long, hot and dusty experience. The train stopped in El Paso, Texas, for water and a chance for passengers to get off the train to stretch their legs. El Paso at the time was a small border city of almost 40,000 nestled between two mountain ranges, with primary business consisting of being the largest trading post on the Mexican border. Charles walked across the street from the train station and into a department store where he saw a large crowd of shoppers from Mexico. Seeing all the customers waiting to be helped and because of his experience in selling shoes, he pitched-in and starting waiting on customers. Charles realized that this small city could be a wonderful place to open a business and raise a family. I can only imagine the surprise my great-grandmother experienced when she received her husband's telegram that said, instead of moving to California, we are going to live in El Paso. "What or Where is El Paso!?" I imagine her asking. Charles later invited his parents and brothers to join in the opportunity and they soon opened the first of many Given Brothers shoe stores located throughout the Southwest.

Charles and Deborah had three children born in El Paso and family was a central part of their lives. They created an important family tradition when they purchased a beautiful wicker bassinet/creche for their newborn children. This bassinet has withstood the test of time and has now been used by five generations of their family. Charles and Deborah's oldest son Herbert attended the University of Texas at Austin. In his senior year, he met a freshman sorority student, Audrey Levy, daughter of Miriam and Sol Levy from Galveston. Audrey's U.T. experience ended

after one year as she and Herbert were married that summer in Galveston, honeymooned in Cuba and then moved to El Paso where Herbert worked in his family business. They had two daughters, Yvonne and Charlene.

The family trees of my ancestors—who separately moved from Amsterdam, England and Germany to the Republic of Texas in 1836 and 1841 and who resided at one point only a few hundred feet apart, were joined together in 1956 through the marriage of my mother, Yvonne, and my father, Harry Levy, III. Before their divorce, my parents had three boys, Harry IV, Marc and me. [Each later had an additional child, Brian Colton and Michele (Levy) Poché after they married their second spouses.] I was born and grew up in El Paso and was very fortunate to know my great-grandparents, Oma and Opa, (Charles and Deborah Given) and Daddy Sol Levy. My oldest brother Harry was held as a baby by his great-great-grandfather, "Daddy" (Ike) Lewis, (the son of Elizabeth Levy Lewis), who died at 97 years old in 1957 in El Paso.

In a particularly odd coincidence in every other generation, a descendant of Mary Levy married a man with the surname Levy (unrelated) in every other generation: Elizabeth, the daughter of Lewis and Mary, married a man with the surname Lewis who had a son, my great-great-grandfather Ike Lewis, who married Ida and had a daughter (my great-grandmother) Miriam, who married my great-grandfather, Sol Levy. Miriam and Sol's only child, my grandmother, Audrey Levy, married my grandfather, Herbert Given. Their daughter, Yvonne Given (my mother), married my father Harry Levy III.

I married my wife, Barbara,



Gravestone of Samuel Maas

who was born in Canada and living in San Francisco, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor from what was then Czechoslovakia. Our connection was sealed following our meeting in Israel on a Jewish Federation trip. We bonded while sitting outside *Yad Vashem*, the Holocaust Memorial. I had visited *Yad Vashem* the year before and Barbara's deep connection to the *Shoah* (where almost all of her father's family was killed) was too raw and emotional for her to visit the inside of the museum. She told me stories of her father, including his growing up in Prague, and being one of the last boys to celebrate a bar mitzvah before the German occupation and onset of the Holocaust. He lived in Canada and in his later years, when asked about the numbers on his arm, he would say it was his girlfriend's phone number. For me, the experience of the Holocaust and the deep direct imprint it left on so many Jews felt distant as my family had es-

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caped that horror.

Seven months later, Barbara and I were married in California. I managed to convince her to join me in Houston where I had moved after law school and had a judicial clerkship. (She has not quite forgiven me for transplanting her from her beloved San Francisco.) We raised four wonderful children, carrying on the Jewish tradition that was solidified by attending the Robert M. Beren Academy in Houston, Jewish camps, the JCC, Jewish experience at University (including two who attended Yeshiva University) and a focus on family with Judaism at its heart.

My family is now blessed to have its newest member, Shmuel Yitzhak (Sam Issac) Saghian who was born on April 4, 2024, in Houston, the son of my daughter, Eliana Levy Saghian, and her husband, Saman (Yigal) Saghian. Yigal also brings iron-strong family values steeped in the rich Jewish Mizrahi culture from his birthplace of Tehran, Iran. He and his parents moved from Iran following the Islamic Revolution and subsequent persecution of Jews in that

country – a very different experience than what was faced by our family in Texas. We are so fortunate that Yigal and Eli live next door to us in a cul-de-sac and Yigal's wonderful mother, Esther, also lives next door to them!

Along with his five second cousins in San Antonio and Austin, Shmuel has now become the 9th generation of my family to live in Texas (from my father's line he is also an 8th generation Texan). He has the distinction of being the first of the 9th generation to live in Houston, just a few miles away from the plot of land purchased by Lewis Levy from Sam Houston 180 years ago.

Shmuel also joined his eleven second cousins and in total over eighty other relatives in sleeping in the family bassinet which has been used by the family for 110 years.

In the 187 continuous years that my family has lived in Texas and 183 years that we have had a Houston presence (with some interruptions), my ancestors battled the rough-and-tumble life across the Republic, and later the State of Texas, including the Texas War of Independence and its

aftermath, becoming a State in 1845, the Civil War, reconstruction, the rise and decline of Galveston, the rise and growth of Houston, multiple hurricanes, including the great storm of 1900, multiple economic depressions and even visits by Pancho Villa (in El Paso). Life in Texas was so much different than I or my children have experienced and I remain awed by the spirit of my ancestors who left Europe to come to a country that had just become independent with very limited medical care, almost no communication to their families back home, dangerous conditions caused by raids by American Indians as well as brigands roaming the state.

Perhaps the greatest challenge my family faced, at least with regard to our Jewish identity, was the battle of assimilation. The Jewish communities in 19th-century Texas were minuscule (it was estimated that there were 68 Jews living in Houston when the first Rabbi to come to Texas arrived in 1860 at Congregation Beth Israel). In smaller towns, the number of Jews were often counted on two hands, with fingers left over. Jewish identity remained important for these families but the tie to religion and culture waned in subsequent generations as the children and grandchildren of Jewish pioneers became accepted into local communities and often married the children of their Christian neighbors.

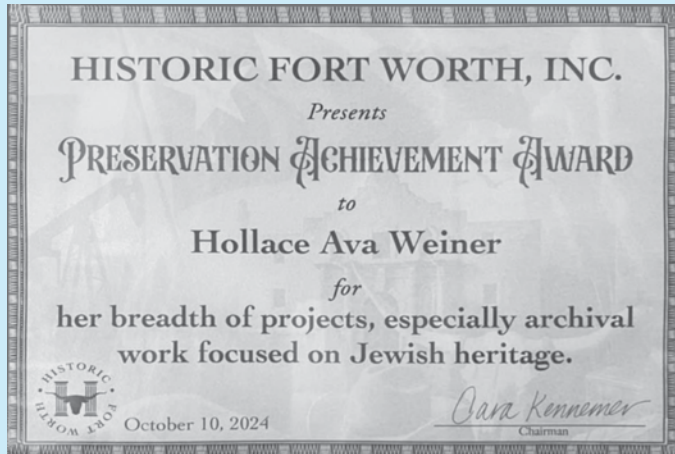
Approximately twenty years ago, a genealogist traced the descendants of the nine children of Lewis and Mary Levy who survived into adulthood and had families of their own. The descendants of five of those families had absolutely no awareness of their Jewish ancestry until the genealogist informed them of their roots. The other four families traced by the genealogist, continued to have a Jew-




Eli & Yigal (Levy) Saghain holding Sam (Shmuel), Robert & Barbara Levy, Avi Levy, Micah Levy, Chuck Levy, Akiva Levy holding Shoshana. Yvonne Colton sitting in front.

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Mazel Tov




Hollace Weiner was recognized by Historic Fort Worth, Inc. who presented her with a Preservation Award for her breadth of projects, especially archival work focused on Jewish Heritage. Included in this accomplishment was recognition as the director of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives. 

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! 

Nine Generations, continued from page 11

ish identity; however many families had significant intermarriage and a loss of a cultural connection to Judaism.


I believe that of the thousands of descendants of my ancestors who arrived in Texas in 1836 and 1841, the vast majority today have little or no connection to Judaism. It is difficult to identify how my family was able to keep Judaism alive for almost 200 years when so many other family members did not. We did not live in villages or cities with strong Jewish history and in some cases forced ghettoization. It was easy to become part of the broader society with Friday night football



9th Generation Sam Saghian & Shoshana Levy in the family bassinet.

games and movies. Somehow, through the devotion of our ancestors, our Jew-

ish identity was always a priority. I remember growing up and having Shabbat dinner every Friday at my grandparents and attending large and boisterous Pesach Seders at the home of my great-grandparents, Oma and Opa (Charles and Deborah).

We hope that Shmuel Saghian will have the same strong bonds that I had with my family. This Pesach, Shmuel came to his Oma and Opa's house (now Barbara and me) to participate in this family tradition. He will probably be a bit too young to ask the Four Questions but hopefully soon he will be an active participant in the story of Jewish survival and continuity! 

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

Pleasantville's Jewish Creator

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.

In the 1940s, redlining¹ and housing discrimination against African-Americans was in full effect. As Black veterans returned from World War II, there was no housing available for middle-class families, except for housing whites had left behind. Jewish-American veterans faced the same kinds of discrimination.

Two Jewish Houston builders, Melvin Silverman and H. M. Cohen, created a master-planned community and called it Pleasantville, where targeted groups could live, work, and play in safety. Partnering with real estate agent and community leaders Josie and Judson Robinson Sr.,² over 600 high-quality, single-family homes were built with knotty-pine kitchens, attic fans, mahogany doors, hardwood floors, and other desirable amenities. The development was on land Silverman owned north of the Houston Ship Channel. Apartments were built first to house those on the waiting list.

A wave of African-American

families moved there, eager to own their own homes. Called “the Black River Oaks,”³ it became an affluent and thriving community. Schools, laundromats, grocery stores and other businesses followed. The neighborhood boasted paved roads, closed sewers, city sanitation services, and

street lights, which were not universally available in Houston at the time and were possible because of Silverman, Cohen, and resident advocacy led by the Robinsons and others. The GI Bill and FHA-guaranteed loans made purchases possible, as the federal government’s participation less-



Taken while the Melrose Building was under construction, showing Melvin Silverman's father Joseph. Photo courtesy of Rabbi Joseph Topek.

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Pleasantville, continued from page 13

ened risks and partially offset the racist effect of redlining. The homes cost from \$6700 to \$8000, with down payments as low as a few hundred dollars. A 1953 FHA report noted there had never been a default or even delinquency.

A civic club, a garden club, and other organizations continuously worked to improve the neighborhood. Voter turnout was from 86-100%. Many elected officials, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals grew up here. It was a place where dreams could come true.⁴ In 2017, Texas Historical Marker 20156 was placed at the intersection of Ledwicke and Pattibob Streets.⁵

Silverman's partner in the Pleasantville development, Herman Michael Cohen, was born in Marquez, Texas in 1897 to Russian immigrant merchants, Abraham and Frada Cohen. Their only son had four sisters. H. M. lived in Houston from the age of four. He served in World War I and was president of his own building and lumber company. He married Bertha Danburg Cohen (1907-1959) and died of heart disease at the age of 58 in 1955.⁶

Melvin Silverman was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1908 to Joseph and Anna Unger Silverman, who were born in Russia and arrived in New York around 1878. Soon after Melvin's birth, the family moved to the Bronx where another son, Edward was born.⁷ Joseph was a real estate agent according to one source, but according to family, he was in men's retail clothing.⁸

Melvin married Lina "Lee" Brown and they had four daughters: Toby (Topek), Jane (Self), Nancy (Kottwitz), and Susan (Brady). Lee was born in 1909 on the Lower East Side of New York City to Nathan and Rebecca Brown (Brownstein). She was fluent in the immigrant family's Yiddish, while Melvin's father was more acculturated, having arrived much earlier.⁹

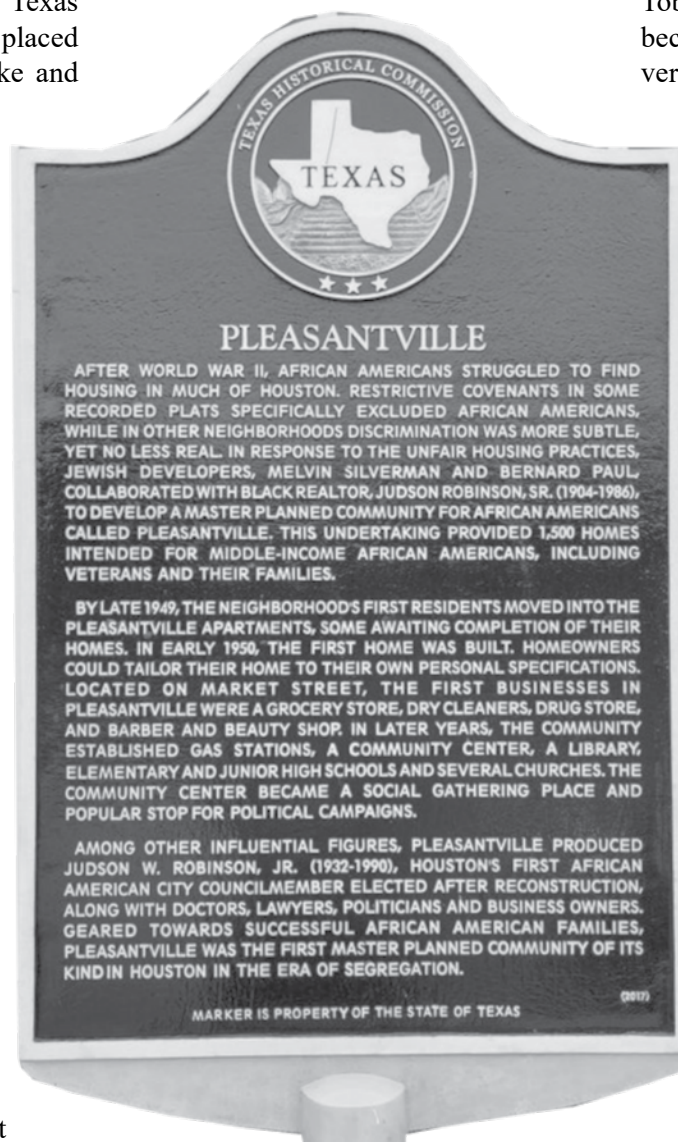
Melvin Silverman's career started in New York where he worked for an

architectural firm. When it went bankrupt during the Great Depression, he started his own renovating firm, then built naval stations during World War II in Norfolk, Virginia; Mobile, Alabama, and Texas City, Texas. By 1944, he saw that Houston would become a boom town after the war with returning GIs needing housing, so the family moved to the Bayou City. He and Lee were among the founders of Temple Emanu El, where Melvin served as president from 1956-1958.

One of Melvin and Lee's children, Toby Silverman Topek (1934-2022) became an artist, studying at the University of Houston and the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, as well as in Greece, North Africa and Turkey. Her work was featured in galleries and museums, and she received a commission for eleven ten-foot medallions on Texas Avenue walkways in downtown Houston.¹⁰

Melvin Silverman was renowned for other building projects, such as the 21-story Melrose Building downtown. His partner in this enterprise was Bennett Rose of New York. A longtime Zionist, Rose served as a Jewish Legion member with the 39th Royal Fusiliers of the British Army. After building ships during World War II, he became a builder and developer in New York and Houston.¹¹

Built in 1951, the Melrose Building at the corner of Walker and San Jacinto was called one of Houston's most important structures. Silverman and Rose requested that the design be thoroughly researched so that the most modern materials and techniques be used to



Pleasantville historical marker.
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=236111>

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Melvin Silverman. Photo courtesy of Rabbi Joseph Topek.

make a building “completely serviceable and yet of a type to command the immediate attention of the public.”¹² Designed in the International Style, it was considered unconventional, and in 2015 was called “Houston’s first Modern skyscraper” by Anna Mod, historic preservation specialist with SWCA Environmental Consultants. It was a tower marked by projecting sun shades that shielded the interior from the blazing Texas sun, and simultaneously gave definition to the exterior. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014.¹³

Silverman also built the Town and Country Apartments and Rosewood Village apartments near Texas Southern University, and the Americana Building at 811 Dallas. He was a supporter of the Technion in Israel, chaired the Houston Federation campaign, and was President of the Houston Homebuilder’s Association. He was involved in many philanthropic enterprises.

In the early 1960s, Silverman worked to establish the Jewish Institute for Medical Research at the Texas Medical Center. Members of the Jew-

ish community had wanted a presence there since the 1950s. Dr. Bernard Farfel, founding chairman of the Institute, approached Silverman after learning of matching federal funds available for research. Other prominent members of the Jewish community were involved such as architect Joseph D. Krakower, banker Irvin Shlenker, Jewish Community Council leader Albert Goldstein and *Jewish Herald-Voice* publisher David H. White. The four-story building would adjoin the M. D. Anderson Basic Science Building. Ground-breaking ceremonies were officiated by Rabbi Hyman Schachtel, Rabbi William S. Malev, and Rabbi Robert Kahn of Beth Israel, Beth Yeshuran, and Emanu El respectively. Fundraising was so successful, the building ended up being nine stories.

When the building neared completion, a dinner was held on November 13, 1962. Dr. Albert Sabin, developer of the oral polio vaccine, was the featured speaker. As he was introducing Dr. Sabin, Melvin Silverman collapsed with a massive stroke. A roomful of the best physicians at the medical center couldn’t save him. Dinner was canceled. He died later that evening at Methodist Hospital. In an editorial, the *Houston Chronicle* lauded the 54-year-old. “Few men have done so much for an adopted city as Melvin Silverman did here in less than two decades.”¹⁴ In 2013, the Institute celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.¹⁵

Lee Brown Silverman later married widower Arthur R. Freed, a family friend. She died of heart disease in 1975, and is buried next to Melvin at Emanu El Memorial Park in Houston.¹⁶

In 2018, the Melrose Building, restored as Le Meridien Hotel, received a Good Brick Award from Preservation Houston, recognizing local con-

tributions to the preservation, restoration and enhancement of Houston’s architectural and cultural heritage.¹⁷ Developer and builder Melvin Silverman left his mark on Houston.

Endnotes

- ¹ The term refers to the presumed practice of mortgage lenders drawing red lines around portions of a map to indicate areas or neighborhoods in which they did not want to make loans. Redlining on a racial basis has been held by the courts to be an illegal practice. https://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/supmanual/cch/fair_lend_fhact.pdf
- ² Their son, Judson Robinson, Jr. became the first African-American elected to the Houston City Council, and the first African-American to hold a Burger King franchise. He was the co-owner of the first Black-oriented radio station in Texas, KCOH. <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/robinson-judson-wilbur-jr>
- ³ Often called the most expensive neighborhood in Houston. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Oaks,_Houston
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleasantville,_Houston#:~:text=8%20External%20links-,History,of%20the%20Houston%20Ship%20Channel%20and%20Mary%20Fontenot,President%20of%20Pleasantville%20Historical%20Society,https://abc13.com/pleasantville-african-americans-black-history-month/14379430/. See also <https://houstonfloodmuseum.org/timeline/single-family-homes-built/>. In 2024, HBO produced a three-part special called *God Bless Texas*. Part 2 was by Houston-born filmmaker Alex Stapleton who grew up in Pleasantville. This is where I first heard of Melvin Silverman.
- ⁵ <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=236111>. The Historical Marker Database credits Bernard Paul as a founder, but most sources cite H. M. Cohen as

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Silverman's partner. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=236111>

⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/170915610/herman-michael-cohen> and https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/170723070/bertha_cohen

⁷ Edward also moved to Houston. Email Rabbi Joseph Topek, August 5, 2024

⁸ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/171083192/melvin-a-silverman>, Topek *ibid*.

⁹ Topek, *ibid*.

¹⁰ <https://www.houstonjewishfunerals.com/obituaries/Toby-Topek#!/Obituary> Toby married Samuel Zigmund Topek and they had three children: Rabbi Joseph Topek (Susan Remick Topek), Janet Swartz (Randy), Philip Topek, seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/11/obituaries/bennett-rose.html>

¹² <http://archives.library.rice.edu/repositories/2/resources/1257>. Topek/Silverman Family papers. Identified: MS 0808

¹³ "The Melrose Building is one of Houston's important structures. Here's why," by J. R. Gonzales, *Houston Chronicle*, December 4, 2015.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

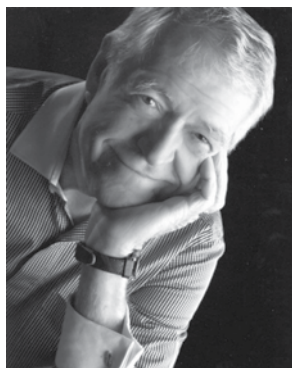
¹⁵ Topek/Silverman Family papers *op cit*. See also <https://jhvonline.com/if-you-build-it-they-will-heal-p16054-89.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/171082791/lee-freed>. Arthur died in 1979. https://www.myheritage.com/names/arthur_freed.

¹⁷ <https://www.preservationhouston.org/awards/past>. Le Meridien, a luxury hotel, was remodeled with plans to restore the exterior with its turquoise tiles. 🇺🇸

Meet Your Board

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 has a star on the Walk of Fame in the Fort Worth Stockyards. In 2024 he was honored as the Big Spring, Texas, Man of the Year. He and his wife, TJHS Past President Susan Zack Lewis, have two children, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Bob handles the sound for TJHS meetings.



Davie Lou Solka, is a grandchild of Russian immigrants who were part of the Galveston movement. She was President of TJHS 2017-2019. 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 organizations, 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.



Allen Mondell, Dallas, has worked in films and television as a writer, producer, and director for fifty years. He began his career as a newspaper reporter in Baltimore, and then went to work for Westinghouse Broadcasting in Baltimore, MD (WJZ-TV) as a writer/director of documentary films. Allen spent five years at public television station KERA-TV in Dallas. He taught in the Peace Corps in West Africa after graduating from Williams College. Together with his wife, Cynthia Salzman Mondell, they founded Media Projects, Inc., a non-profit company dedicated to producing and distributing documentary and educational films. They have pro-



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Meet Your Board, continued from page 16

duced over forty documentaries about historical subjects and social issues. Their films have won numerous national awards, are exhibited in museums and have been selected for prestigious screenings in the United States and abroad. Some have received specialized theatrical distribution and have aired nationwide on PBS and cable networks. Allen has served on the TJHS board several times in the past and we welcome him back.

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. Joyce served as Recording Secretary for three years (2017-2020).



Martin Frost served twenty-six years as a congressman from the 24th District of Texas (Dallas-Fort Worth) from 1979-2005. During that time, he served eight years in the House Democratic Leadership, four years as Chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (1995-1999) and four years as chair of the House Democratic Caucus (1999-2003). He was a member of the House Rules Committee and the House Budget Committee. Since leaving Congress he served four years as chair of the National Endowment for Democracy (2013-2017). He holds journalism and history degrees from the University of Missouri and a law degree from Georgetown University Law Center, and is a member of Hebrew Congregation Temple Beth-El in Alexandria, Virginia.



Shana Bauman lives in Mont Belvieu. This is her first year on the board, and we are very glad to have her.

Jeff Aresty and his wife live in Waco. He worked on the film, *The Jacob De Cordova Story*.

Marc Wormser, TJHS Past President (2012-1014), 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.



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.



Gayle Feldman Cannon is a retired lawyer now living in Austin. She is a transplanted Dallasite and has three children, two stepchildren, sixteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She is a widow and active in the Austin Jewish community and is a strong supporter of Congregation Beth Israel in Austin. Her interests include genealogy, bridge, reading, traveling and theater. Gayle serves as co-chair of the Speaker’s Bureau.



Michael Furgatch was born and raised in Texas. He has lived in Beaumont, Dallas, Austin, and now Brownsville for over fifty-two years. He is married to Lynda (also a TJHS Board Member), and they have two children and three grandchildren. Michael

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and Lynda were married in 1973, when he graduated from UT/Austin. They moved to Brownsville where he began working in the ship dismantling and recycling industry, which is his occupation today. He enjoys working with non-profit and service organizations, and has been involved with the Temple Beth El Board of Directors in Brownsville for almost thirty years. Michael serves on the Grants Committee.

David Vogel graduated from University of Texas/Austin



with a B.B.A. in Marketing in 1971. He served as President of Temple Israel of Schulenburg for sixteen years. David is known as Bat Man in some circles because he volunteers at the largest bat cave in Colorado, where he shows and educates people about bats. He enjoys live, original music and supports independent musicians, songwriters and independent

music venues. He is a UT basketball and baseball fan, and attends many games. He is married to TJHS Past President, Vickie Vogel for “at least forty-five years (that number keeps changing.)”

Barbara Rosenberg, TJHS Past President (1995-1998),



lives in Sugar Land, Texas, with her husband, Ben, TJHS Treasurer. She is a native-born Texan who 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 Master’s degree in Speech Pathology. She has worked in schools, hospitals, and has had a private practice. Barbara visits Jewish hospital patients as a volunteer of Houston’s Jewish Chaplaincy, is a docent for the Fort Bend Museums, and is a former member of the Ft. Bend County Historical commission. Barbara enjoys flower arranging and gardening and is the coordinator of the Cinderella Project for the Sugar Land Garden Club.

Alan Selzer was born and raised in Houston. He graduated



from Stephen F. Austin and has had a fifty-year career in the plumbing supply and manufacturing business. He is presently serving as a manufacturer representative with Alliance Manufacturer Representatives. He has been married to Laurie Pink Selzer (also a TJHS Board Member) for forty-four years, and they have three children and five grandchildren. Alan enjoys volunteer work

and staying active playing with his family, golfing, fishing and being outdoors.

Laurie Pink Selzer was born and raised in Wichita Falls,



Texas. Her parents, Gladys and Louis Pink, were long time members of TJHS. She graduated from the University of Texas/Austin, and has been married to Alan Selzer (also a TJHS Board Member) for forty-four years. They have three children and five grandchildren. Laurie is a senior marketing strategist for the Meredith Corporation (New York based) working remotely from home. Her career has encom-

passed journalism, marketing, public relations, business development, and fundraising. Her maternal grandparents migrated to the United States through Galveston and her paternal grandparents settled in Wichita Falls during the oil rush.

Sherry Zander is from Dallas, Texas.

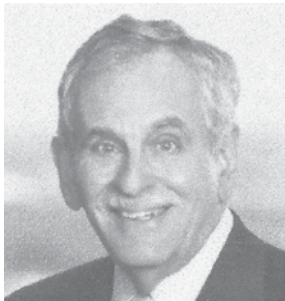


Anita Feigenbaum grew up in Bastrop, Texas, graduated from the University of Texas and received a Masters Degree from Texas A&M University. She and her husband, Leslie, have been married forty years and have two children, Sarah and Ryan. They live in College Station, where Leslie is on the faculty at A&M Uni-

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versity. 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.



Lionel "Lonnie" Schooler is one of the founding members of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. He served as President in 1984-1986, and has remained as the "official" legal counsel for the Society. He and his wife, Marsha, live in Houston.

Nelson Chafetz, Austin, is a lifelong Texas resident, who was born in San Antonio.




He attended the University of Texas/Austin, where he received a B.S.E.E. degree. He is married to another native-born Texan, Mitzi Chafetz. Nelson works for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and is a competitive swimmer. He has two children, and one grandson. Nelson is a thirty-four-year member of United


States Masters Swimming Organization, and in his spare time, is a party barge captain.

Paula Stein was born and raised in Schulenburg, Texas.




She and Rick Stein have been married for forty-nine years, and they have three children and five grandchildren. Paula's interests include traveling and her family's genealogy. She has traced her father's family's arrival to Texas around 1860, and her mother's side to New York City and Philadelphia in 1770. 

Looking for a Program for Your Organization?

Consider contacting the TJHS Speaker's Bureau. We have people who can speak on a variety of subjects with interesting, entertaining programs. Contact tjhsspeaker@txjhs.org. 


Donate Your Family Records

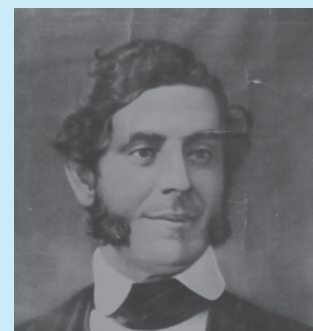
Donate your family records to our collection at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas. Items you can donate are numerous. Call the Center before you take any items and be sure to indicate that you want them included in the Texas Jewish Historical Society collection. 

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. 



For membership forms that can be printed for personal use, events, or programs, go to our website www.txjhs.org. Credit card use is available for renewals or new memberships.



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, 2025 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.*

txjhs.org



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 or online, 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 or go to www.txjhs.org and click on "Apply for a Grant" at the top of the page.



Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund

Early in his rabbinical education and career, Rabbi Kessler lamented the absence of significant records of the Texas Jewish experience in local, state, and university libraries. His frustration turned to action when in 1980 in San Antonio he organized a meeting of like-minded Texans for what became the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

TJHS continues to expand and share the understanding of the Jewish presence in Texas through education and outreach.

The Kessler Fund is an inducement to share the incredible history of Jews in Texas with a broader community through an ever-expanding scope of projects such as invitations to renowned speakers to the TJHS Annual Gatherings, research grants to university students in Jewish studies, partnering with other organizations to expand educational programs for young people, piquing the interests of people from all religions to the richness of Texas Jewish history, and more. This Fund is a long-term commitment to the legacy of Jimmy Kessler for which \$250,000 has been set as a launch goal.

TJHS appreciates all donations, at any level, to honor the legacy of Jimmy Kessler. The Texas Jewish Historical Society, Inc., is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible within limits of the law.

Suggested donation levels:

\$25,000 or above	Platinum
\$10,000 - 24,999	Gold
\$5,000 - 9,999	Silver
\$2,500 - 4,999	Sapphire
\$1,000 - 2,499	Ruby
\$18 - 999	Diamond

Date: _____

Donation Amount: \$ _____

Name of Donor(s): _____

- I give permission to use my name for publication in Kessler Fund Donor List.
- I prefer that my donation remains Anonymous.

Mailing Address of Donor(s): *(All contact information is required)*

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Option to honor or memorialize family member or friend with your Kessler Fund donation:

In honor / In memory of (Name): _____

Mailing address to send acknowledgment: _____

Please send this completed donation form, along with your bank check, to: Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193 or go to www.txjhs.org and click on "Give to Kessler Fund"

*Texas Jewish Historical Society, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.
Contributions to TJHS are tax deductible within the limits of the law.*



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*Milton Smith, Austin (1989-1991)

*Fay Brachman, Fort Worth (1991-1993)

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Marc Wormser, Corpus Christ/Pearland (2012-2014)

*Debra Winegarten, Austin (2014-2015)

David Beer, Dallas (2015-2017)

Davie Lou Solka, Corpus Christi/Austin (2017-2019)

Susan Zack Lewis, Big Spring (2019-2021)

Sheldon Lippman, Austin (2021-2023)

**Deceased*

Texas Jewish Historical Society

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