

# The Texas Jewish Historical Society Magazine



June 2026

## Sixth Graders from The Emery/Weiner School Share Family Histories

**Sixth graders from Melanie Weinberger's sixth grade English class at The Emery/Weiner School in Houston presented their family's Texas Jewish History to the Texas Jewish Historical Society. The stories were told at the Annual Gathering held at the Holocaust Museum Houston. The students' stories were told with pride and gratitude as they traced the struggles their families endured for them to have the lives they have today.**

### My Great-Great-Grandmother, Fania Feldman Kruger

by Andrew Kruger

"All seeds are blended in mankind:  
I am the giant, the elfin mind  
That laughs by day, that cries by night  
Be my skin red, black, or white.

I am the blessing and the curse,  
Sum-total of the universe:  
And by the power in my soul  
I break the world or make it whole."

Hi, I'm Andrew and that is the poem, *Man*, by Fania Feldman Kruger. Fania was a poet, an activist for human rights, and my great-great-grandmother. Fania was born March 8, 1893, in Sevastapol, Crimea, which is located in Ukraine along the Black Sea. During this time, it was very hard for people to thrive because there was conflict, food was scarce, and money was tight. In her early age, she was very religious because her father was a rabbi.

She was denied entrance to the gymnasias, which is a school, three times before she was allowed to enter because she was Jewish and what she believed. She was exposed to the unfairness of the world when she saw a murder committed by the Cossack troops for beating her father for his



*Jonah Rose, Kayla Steinberg,  
Andrew Kruger, Lillie Krohn*

beliefs. She was twelve when the injustices she witnessed set her and her sister on a path of social justice for discrimination against all the minority groups. In 1908, when she was fifteen, her family moved to Fort Worth, Texas, because the amount of discrimination against the Jewish population living in Sevastapol was growing to an insurmountable level.

She met a man named Sam, and they got married on March 24, 1912. In 1913, they decided to move to Wichita Falls, Texas, which is north of Dallas. Sam opened a jewelry store to make money for the family, and Fania became an active member of a Jewish women's group and local literary society. They had two children, a son named

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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.

### Editor

Davie Lou Solka

### Layout/Design Editor

Alexa Kirk

### Proof Readers

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

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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.

## Save the Date

**July 18-19, 2026**

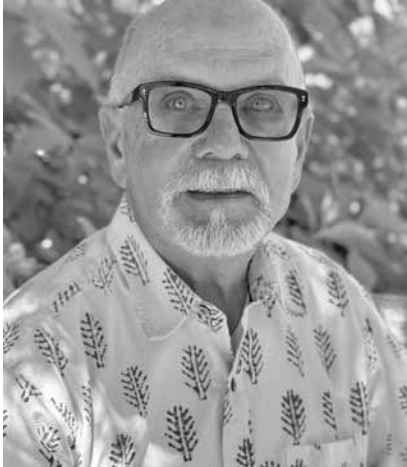
Board Meeting, San Marcos.

**October 9-11, 2026**

Board Meeting, Big Spring

# Message from the President

by Sheldon Lippman



By early April 2020, the Texas Jewish Historical Society had to adapt to the COVID pandemic. Susan Zack Lewis, TJHS President, had to make the unprecedented decision to call off the 2020 Annual Gathering and Spring TJHS Board Meeting that were pre-planned for that month. Susan presided over three Zoom Board Meetings: in June, October 2020, and January 2021.

TJHS held the first electronic balloting to elect Officers and Trustees in March, 2021, and then held the 42nd Annual Gathering via Zoom in April, 2021. It was at this Zoom Gathering that I first addressed the membership as the incoming president. All the Board Meetings for the next year were held via Zoom, including the 43rd Annual Gathering in April, 2022. I presided over my first in-person Board meeting in July 2022, in Bonham, TX, followed by two more Zoom Meetings. By April 2023, the end of my term, the pandemic had subsided well enough for TJHS to safely congregate in Austin for the 44th Annual Gathering.

I give that history because Joan Linares, my successor as president and Nominating Chair after her two years in office, kept telling me that I should serve again because I was deprived of having in-person meet-

ings. I did not really buy into that reasoning at first; but under extenuating circumstances, I did accept the nomination last year. But, to tell the truth, I agree with her. I was deprived during my first two years. I can say without conviction that the best part of being TJHS President is meeting face to face with TJHS members. And it's not just meeting, but working together to keep the Society moving forward, growing out, and inviting in.

I want to acknowledge the workings of TJHS over the past year and mention how members have contributed to building and maintaining a successful and strong State of the Society.

**Membership:** This year, TJHS Membership Committee has had an exceptional response to its dues renewal program. Committee Chair Barbara Green Stone has been hand-addressing postcard reminders to members who owe dues. She has written to some members who have neglected to pay for two or three years and are sending in their dues now after this friendly nudge. Jeff Levine, the Membership Co-chair, would be helping with this task, but he and his wife are on an around-the-world cruise. From the most recent financial report, membership dues exceeded the quarterly estimates.

When new members join, they receive a welcome letter and TJHS Magazine sent out by Bunny Edelman. And for those members who renew at the \$500 Friend level or the \$1,000 Patron level, Corresponding Secretary Susan Novick sends them a thank you note for their generous support. Susan also sends out thoughtful messages to folks who make donations and give memorial gifts.

TJHS has several news articles published in *The Jewish-Herald Voice*, *The Texas Jewish Post*, Sha-

lom Austin's *Jewish Outlook*, El Paso Federation *Jewish Voice*, and the *Rambler*, the Southern Jewish Historical Society's quarterly magazine. TJHS has also had special ads to publicize its programs, meetings, and membership in several of these publications.

In the past year, the Awards Committee, led by chair Shana Bauman, adopted new criteria for selecting the Outstanding Recognition Award recipients that reflect the evolving nature of Jewish life in Texas. The TJHS Award reflects the diverse ways Texans preserve and enrich Jewish heritage — through written or archival work, and through lived experience, cultural expression, and meaningful community engagement. Shana is joined on the Awards Committee by Nelson Chafetz, Gail Levine, Barbara Rosenberg, and Cynthia Wolf.

This breadth of Jewish experience also holds true for the TJHS Grants Program, chaired by John Campbell, and a committee including Sonny Gerber, Hollace Weiner, Jane Manaster, Michael Furgatch, and Emily Williams. In the past twelve months, TJHS has awarded \$22,500 to four grants recipients: one for graduate research of the Polish Jewish Migration to Texas and the American Southwest after the 1968 “Anti-Zionist Campaign,” one for help in funding an historical marker for the Naylor-Moses House in the Fairmount National Historic District in Fort Worth; and for a second tranche of funding for completion of the film *Grit and Grace*.

The Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund has collected upwards of \$25,000 in the past year, climbing toward the goal of \$250,000 set two and a half years ago

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## Message from the President, continued from page 3

at its inauguration. In the past year, the Kessler Fund awarded support to Josh Merwin and DreamBigBooks for its multi-educational project on Jacob de Cordova. The TJHS University Jewish Studies Fellowship gave its first fellowship to the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies at UT Austin for their research titled “A History of Longhorn Jews: From Exclusion to Activism.” And we have just heard from the Jewish Studies Program at Texas A&M that they will be developing a project that will begin this next fall semester. The Kessler Fund will continue to work with all the Jewish Studies programs at Texas universities in a continuing partnership. The Kessler Fund Committee is chaired by Joan Linares with a committee including David Brenner, Jules Frapart, Scott Langston, Jeff Levine, Robert Markman, Susan Novick, Hy Penn, Barbara Rosenberg, Ben Rosenberg and with advisories from Shelley Kessler, Bryan Stone, and Lonnie Schooler.

Outreach was my mantra for TJHS in my first term. It has not gone out of fashion. This year TJHS reached out through the Speakers Bureau, with seven diverse programs given in six cities (Austin, El Paso, Sun City in Georgetown, Houston, Missouri City, and San Antonio). Speakers included Nelson Chafetz, Susan Novick, Barbara Rosenberg, Marc Wormser, and Jan Hart who also serves as co-chair with Gayle Cannon.

For the second year, TJHS has been represented at Yom Limmud, held this year at Beth Israel in Houston, sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston. Yom Limmud is an event that brings together people of all backgrounds and generations to engage in meaningful learning and celebrate Jewish spiritual, social, and intellectual life. Volunteers at

the TJHS table this year were Shana Bauman, Joan Linares, Ruben Linares, Hy Penn, and Ben Rosenberg.

For the past two years, TJHS has been asked to make presentations at the Texas State Historical Association Annual Conference and the Texas Historical Commission’s Real Places Conference. Over the past couple months, Melissa Cohen-Nickels took the lead in organizing and moderating the two panels for both TSHA and THC conferences. The theme at both Conferences was titled “Memoir and Memory in the Texas Jewish Community.” Laurie Bricker, a public historian from Houston and Kenneth Taylor from the Holocaust Museum Houston, spoke at the TSHA Conference in Irving and were joined at the THC Real Places in Austin by David Brenner, faculty of Texas A&M University. The 2026 Lynna Kay Shuffield Award was presented at the TSHA Conference at the Women of Texas Awards Luncheon. This year’s recipients were Jillian Glantz for her work on the film, *Remember My Soul*; and Barbara Rosenthal for her work on *Grit and Grace: How Jewish Women Built a Better Texas*. Hollace Weiner made the presentations which acknowledged that both awardees have been recipients of a TJHS Grant for their respective film projects.

Joan Linares and I were asked to be on the Planning Committee for the 2027 TSHA Conference. TJHS will now have a place at the table in planning the whole conference, which in 2027 will be held in Abilene. We learned at the Fall 2018 Board Meeting that Abilene has a rich Jewish history and, like all Jewish stories from around the state, is Texas history.

TJHS co-sponsored two webinars this past year with our neighbors to the west, the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society: A screening and talk with filmmaker Genie Milgrom

on her documentary, *Between the Stone and the Flower*; and a screening and talk with Jillian Glantz on her documentary *Remember My Soul*. I want to thank and acknowledge Linda Goff, who has been president in New Mexico for many years, as well as a TJHS Member.

TJHS has a long well-established relationship with the Briscoe Center for American History where the TJHS Collection is permanently housed. TJHS has been paying for a dedicated archivist to work on its Collection. TJHS Archivist and Historian, Sally Drayer, has been the point person for collecting archival material and fielding questions from people who contact TJHS about their personal collection. Sally has also spent many hours documenting materials at the Cushing Library on the campus of Texas A&M regarding the history of the Texas A&M Hillel. The Hillel’s history is part of TJHS archives and cross referenced to the Cushing Library.

I did some archival digging and found in the 2008 Spring TJHS Magazine an article by Gertrude and Don Teter; it reads:

“About 20 years ago a committee was named to research and identify small, abandoned Jewish cemeteries in Texas. Many Jewish cemeteries were located; and locations that did not have Jewish cemeteries were identified... When we were asked to chair the committee to continue the project, we decided to enlarge the scope and attempt to include all Jewish burials in Texas. Six years of documenting all the burials we could locate resulted in the book *Texas Jewish Burials*. That book contained 34,000 listings.”

That project today continues to be one of the signature projects in TJHS archival history. It is managed by Rusty Milstein and Kathy Kravitz with input from Herschel Sheiness

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## Message from the President, continued from page 4

and several other TJHS members. Today, the number of listings from 339 Texas cemeteries totals 52,659 names, dates of birth and death, cemetery location, military service, cremation, and other notes. This searchable database on the TJHS website is a great resource for genealogical study. But it's also important to remember that each of these 52,000-plus individuals had their own unique Texas Jewish history and for that we remember them in this dedicated archive.

Communication is at the core of the TJHS mission to collect, preserve, publish, and disseminate. Of course, the *TJHS Magazine* has been the standard bearer for TJHS communication for the past four decades. At the helm is editor Davie Lou Solka who is joined on each issue by a team of proofreaders—Sally Drayer, Kathy Hart, Jan Hart, Joan Linares, David Vogel, and Vickie Vogel. *The Magazine* is laid out by designer Alexa Kirk who lives in Burleson, Texas. The printers are in Houston. So, this is a statewide-coordinated operation.

I'd also like to remind you that there is a Searchable Index of the Magazine on the TJHS Website. What you may not know is that Vickie Vogel painstakingly goes through each issue and prepares a spreadsheet of names, publication month, and page numbers of the names and titles that make up the online index.


Because many emails come to the president's inbox with varied information and announcements, I wanted to share some of this mail with the membership. I hope you are reading the periodically-sent TJHS Member Update with current events and information of interest sent from members and others.

As I am near the end of this State of the Society Report, I want to express gratitude and thanks to the TJHS Meetings Committee. Meeting

is not a big enough word for what this committee accomplishes. Lynda Furgatch, Anita Feigenbaum, and Marilyn Lippman have been at the controls for this Annual Gathering. And they are the first to say that a meeting like this Annual Gathering would not be possible without the local champions who contribute hugely to the logistics and content of the event. From the Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism, we must include in the event planning, Beth Fine-Nelson, Mike Kahn, and Rabbi Stephen Gross. The local champions from the Holocaust Museum Houston are Amy Frake, Melissa Martinez, Chris Henrich, Leonid Kalmanerich, Wendy Warren; the docents, Lynn Gordon, Ali Katz, and Janet Pozmantier; and Holocaust Museum CEO Gary Weisserman. And the champion of champion who really made Houston a viable host is Hy Penn.


The Committee is already thinking ahead to the upcoming 2026 summer and fall meetings, the 2027 winter meeting, and the Annual Gathering.

Last but not least I want to recognize our outgoing Treasurer, Ben Rosenberg, who began his tenure in May, 2015. Without doubt, I have had more communications with Ben than any other TJHS member in the past year and before that. He has done a spectacular job of caring for TJHS finances. He helped us establish the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund. He is meticulous in his accounting and has been a trusted advisor to me. In the early years of my presidency when I sounded out the idea of spending a healthy amount of money on updating the TJHS Website, Ben said, "That's the cost of doing business."

So, I conclude this State of the Texas Jewish Historical Society Report by declaring—Business is Good. 

## Mazel Tov

**Temple Emanu-El** in Beaumont. They have been notified that a photograph of their beautiful stained glass windows will be included in the World Jewish Congress 2027 Annual Wall Calendar. The congregation's building was built in 1923.


**Joan Linares and Sheldon Lippman**, who will be serving on the Planning Committee for annual meeting of The Texas State Historical Association. 

**Alexa Kirk**, layout editor for the *TJHS Magazine*, on the marriage of her son, Nicolai, and Lauren Kirk.

## For Your Information

Jewish Genealogy Society of Tulsa is sharing two free Jewish historical and educational sites in which you might be interested.

The Worldwide Jewish Event Calendar called JDays is the global calendar of heritage, history, and family history events, podcasts, conferences, webinars, film screenings, social meetups, and more. Sign up for monthly email delivery at JDays – L'DorV'Dor Foundation (LDVDF)

*Weekly News Nosh*, News About Jewish Genealogy, Jewish History, and Jewish Culture, is tidbits of Jewish news stories that can be delivered to your email inbox every Sunday. Go to NewsNosh – L'DorV'DorFoundation(LDVDF) for delivery. Both of these are free. 

Aaron, and another son, Julian. In 1952, Sam died and Fania decided to move to Austin where she would live the rest of life until she died at the age of eighty-four.

Prior to her death she had published three books of poetry: *Cossack Laughter*, which was published in 1938, and had a central theme of Czarist cruelty and Jewish life. Her second book, *The Tenth Jew*, was published in 1949 and had a topic of passion and deep connection to Jewish culture. Her final book of poetry was *Selected Poems* and had a combination of poems from her previous books and was published in 1973.

I think the reason she wrote the poems was to inspire the generations to come that being a Jew is hard, but together with friends, family, and the community you can make it easier and help people by brightening their day. I think the reason she helped on the human rights front was because she didn't want to see anyone get mistreated for who they believed in or what their skin color looked like. Even a hundred years later, her words still resonate. I was told that she was no match for the Cossack soldiers, but she still found a way to fight them with her words. These words mean to me that there are different ways to fight off the bad in the world.

“Your eyes will  
Light the way  
I shall be going.”

## My Great-Grandfather, Dave Steinberg

by Kaya Steinberg

Hi, my name is Kayla Steinberg

“Memory is what shapes us. Memory is what teaches us. We must understand that's where our redemption is,” Estelle Laughlin, Holocaust

survivor.

My family history did not start in Texas. Instead, it started long ago in Poland. The history of my family includes persistence, bravery, and a reunion with a cousin that they thought had passed away in the Holocaust.

My story starts with my great-great-grandfather, Dave Steinberg, who as a teen, bravely left Poland on a boat that took him to Galveston. When Dave stepped on that boat, he stepped into a new life; not only for himself, but also for his descendants. I can only imagine the knot in his stomach as he left everything he had ever known behind. At the time, things in Poland were not looking good for the Jewish people, so Dave came to America to help save his family. It's so crazy to think about a teen having the weight of saving his family on his back. I truly can't imagine the pressure he was under. He came to Houston to be a peddler, which means to buy goods like shoes and clothing, and then sell them on the streets. He didn't know English very well, which made his job very hard since he had trouble communicating with others. On the streets he would get beat up and robbed, but this still didn't stop Dave from trying to make a better life for himself and his family. After five years of being in America, Dave finally got his American citizenship. Before he got his citizenship, he was in America under a special program that had let him come here but didn't give him citizenship. Eventually he did go back to Poland so he could find a wife, and he brought her back to America. Two years later they got a divorce. Dave went back to Poland again so he could get remarried. He fell in love with a woman named Frieda Samet, and he brought her back to Houston. In Houston, they had two kids together. While the two of them were happy in America, both

of their families were still in Poland. Things were getting worse and Hitler was rising. Dave started to send the money he had saved back to his mother and his four sisters to help them escape Poland and bring them to Houston. Finally, they had enough money for all of them to come on a boat to Galveston. Dave also saved enough money for Leon Samet, who is Frieda's brother, to come to America. Leon stayed in Dave and Frieda's house, and he actually shared a room with Dave's son, Milton, who is my great-grandfather. All of Dave's other family members passed away in the Holocaust. That is how my family came to Texas, but the best part of the story doesn't happen in Texas. The best part happens in Israel, the place of the Jewish people.

After the Holocaust and after Israel was established, Dave and Frieda Steinberg decided to visit Israel. While in Tel Aviv, Dave and Frieda were standing on a street corner waiting for a bus. From across the street Frieda recognized her first cousin. Both of them had thought that the other one had died in the Holocaust. They were both in shock, happiness, and disbelief. They ran up and hugged each other, and they reconnected. Frieda's cousin had actually gone to a concentration camp and survived. He also confirmed that the rest of their family didn't survive. For the rest of their lives, they stayed in touch.

My great-great-grandfather, Dave Steinberg, is an inspiration to me because I can learn so many valuable lessons from him. His life was so hard; he came to America by himself, didn't know English, and was beaten up. Even though he endured all of this, he still didn't give up, and he kept going. I find it hard to imagine myself as a teen who is alone in America and is trying to provide for

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## Sixth Grader Stories, continued from page 6

their family. Another lesson I can learn is to stick to my values no matter what the circumstances are. Dave was a very kind and honest person even if others around him weren't. When he was a peddler, people would rob and beat him up, but he didn't let how they acted towards him affect how he was to others.

Learning about my family history, I can tell that my ancestors had so much bravery and determination. Even though they had to endure huge challenges, they always managed to conquer them. I am extremely thankful for my relatives since without them I wouldn't be living the life I live today. Thank you for listening to my family's Texas history!

### **My Dada, Goldie Halfant**

by **Jonah Rose**

Think of the strongest woman you know. Then multiply it by one hundred. That what I think of when I think of my Great-grandma, Goldie Halfant.

Born in Galveston, Texas, in 1926 as the oldest daughter of two Austrian immigrants, Goldie had to take the reins of the family when she was twelve. Her mom died, and she took on a lot of responsibility around the house. Cooking, cleaning, you name it, she had to provide for her five siblings and working father (as a sixth grader.) She never went to college, and became a radio personality with her own show, Coffee Capers with Goldie. When she was older, she became a switchboard operator. After that, she sold furniture at Schreiber and Miller, a local store. She became the top saleswoman, and also learned to take dictation, and did that as a side job. Working with her husband, Seymour, for forty years was

how she provided for her family. She was a secretary at Beth Jacob Synagogue, doing a lot for the community. Because there was no kosher deli or butcher in Galveston, she would take orders, drive to Houston to pick them up, drive back, sort and deliver them. She sent my grandma and my great-uncle to college, debt free.

My DaDa was known for her strudel. It took two days to make, and even though she worked six days a week, she would make it upon request for any event. To this day, my family and friends make it on Rosh Hashanah, Bar Mitzvahs, Weddings, or any family event. A grandma of five and a great-grandma of eight, her impact on our family will never be forgotten.

She was very irreverent and never got mad about what people say. Her bravery is legendary. My family tells me stories about her courageous battle with cancer. When she was diagnosed with one of the most painful and deadly diseases, she simply said, "We all have to die at some point." Many people are devastated when they get a diagnosis like that, but not my DaDa. When she started chemo, she and my family went wig shopping. My mom pointed out how a wig looked really good from the back. She replied by saying that she didn't care what it looked like from the back, because she could only see the front. In other words, she doesn't care what people think about the back of her wig, since she was only getting it to please herself and no one else.

She knew her oncologist very well, and one of the things that he knew about her was that she was so put together. He knew that if he examined her and she didn't have a fresh pedicure, then it meant that she wasn't feeling well. I think that's cool, because people were literally so used to her looking the best and the most beautiful that when she didn't

do her nails, it was a tell-tale sign for something bad.

My DaDa was very determined, and goal driven. She loved diamonds, but they didn't have enough money. She told her husband not to get her another gift until it was a diamond. She was willing to wait or work for a long time in order to get what she wanted. Also, she never gave up. My mom told me that when she was a resident, something bad happened at work and she really wanted to quit. She talked to DaDa, who repeatedly said, "You can do it." My mom knew that if DaDa thought she could do it, then she could do it.

DaDa always said, "Love me while I'm here, but don't cry for me when I'm gone." I think this means a lot because it means that she lived the kind of life where she had so many people that loved her and so many people she loved. After a twenty-one-year battle on and off with cancer, she died on June 28, 2008, proving that a modest life can be the most impactful kind. I don't like to think of her as someone who has passed away. I like to think of her as someone who was so strong and courageous that she lives through all of my family, no matter the age. Who wouldn't want the qualities and characteristics of someone like her? I certainly would. These stories that I hear inspire me to try my best, no matter how hard the circumstances are.

### **My Texas Jewish Story**

by **Lillie Krohn**

I am a 6th generation Jewish Texan! My grandfather's family is the Jewish side and goes back to the late 1800s in El Paso. My grandmother's family wasn't Jewish and also settled

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in Texas in the 1800s. There are a lot of interesting people on both sides of the family, but I'm focusing on two of my great-great-grandfathers, Albert Mathias and Baylus Wagnon. Both men came to Texas searching for new lives and became successful in their own ways.

Albert Mathias was a German Jewish immigrant who became a wealthy and powerful American businessman, after coming to the U.S. with nothing. He and Frieda Cohen Mathias had four daughters: Eleanor, Hedwig, Gertrude, and Edna (my great-great-grandmother). Albert immigrated to America in the late 1800s, on a boat to Ellis Island. He had a German cousin that lived in El Paso. So, he headed to West Texas and worked for his cousin in his family supply and convenience store.

A few months later, he traveled back to Germany and brought Frieda with him to El Paso. Soon after that, they got married. Frieda and Albert became Texans and were proud to live the rest of their lives in West Texas.

Albert created a very successful company called Albert Mathias and Company and was an excellent businessman. Albert Mathias and Company was a wholesale business with locations in El Paso,

Albuquerque, and Phoenix. The Mathias family became very wealthy and donated a lot of money to their synagogue in El Paso. Frieda and her daughters were all housewives and were very connected and involved in the Jewish community. They traveled to Germany often, but Albert did not because he was always busy with his business. Albert owned a lot of land in Albuquerque and sold some of it to Conrad Hilton. The land was turned into the first Hilton Hotel!

Baylus Earle Wagnon was a Southerner who became a West Texas rancher. He was born in 1852, in Carol County, Mississippi. When he was eight years old, he and his family moved to Louisiana. They lived there until the end of the Civil War in 1865. Sadly, both of his parents died during the war, but Baylus' many siblings took good care of him. After their parents died, Baylus and three of his siblings decided to relocate to Smith County in East Texas, and they went together on the long journey to Texas with fourteen other families.

When he was sixteen, Baylus traveled to West Texas to find work. He was hired by a group of ranchers who were getting ready to go on a cattle drive to Kansas. They hired him because he was able to play the violin, which calmed the cattle! He became well-known for his violin playing, which was very unique in the

ranching world. In 1870, he went on a cattle drive with twelve other cowboys, and together they drove 4,000 head of Longhorn steers from a ranch near Austin all the way to a market in Kansas. The drive took three months.

After that, he went to work on a ranch called Bush and Tiller. After four years of working there, two of the ranch foremen left to be sheriffs in Borden County. Baylus then became one of the ranch foremen, and he also served as the government cattle inspector in Scurry County.

Baylus married Drura Ann Morrow in 1888, in Buffalo Gap, Texas. They lived in Sierra Blanca and had seven children, but two of the children died, one of diphtheria and the other of tuberculosis. Baylus lived a full life and died in November of 1934, due to old age.


Both of my great-great-grandfathers were successful and interesting Texans, but very different from each other—one a German Jewish immigrant who became a businessman and landowner, and the other, a boy from the Deep South who became a West Texas rancher. From this project, I learned a lot about my family and how they lived in the 1800s, and I am very proud to be their descendant with such strong Texas roots.



## 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 have received many stories—and still want to include them—from families who immigrated during the earlier part of the twentieth century, but realize that 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*. 

# TJHS 47th Annual Gathering: A Weekend of History and Heart

## Houston, April 24-26, 2026

by Marilyn Lippman

*Photos by John Campbell, Sally Drayer, Lynda Furgatch, Joan Linares, Marilyn Lippman, Michael Solka, Vickie Vogel*

April 24–26, 2026, offered a weekend of history, community, and meaningful connection.

The weekend began on Friday evening with lively Shabbat services at Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism, led by Rabbi Steven Gross and Executive Director / "Cantor" Mike Kahn. The service was filled with beautiful music and warmth, setting up a welcoming and celebratory tone for the days ahead. Special remarks were also offered by Renee Wizig-Barrios, President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.

Saturday's programming at the Holocaust Museum Houston featured a series of outstanding presentations. Anita Bonanno delivered a moving account of her family's experiences during and after the Holocaust. Her heartfelt narrative resonated strongly with the audience, and her rendition of "Over the Rainbow" was especially powerful—bringing many to tears



*All Living Past Presidents! Barbara Rosenberg; Susan Zack Lewis; Sheldon Lippman in back of Vickie Vogel; Sally Drayer; Lonnie Schooler; Shelly Kessler, widow of Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, Founder and first President of TJHS; Rusty Milstein; Joan Linares; Marc Wormser; Davie Lou Solka; David Beer.*

and culminating in a well-deserved standing ovation.

Shelley Kessler and Marilyn Flick engaged attendees with their

presentation on the affectionately known "rabbinage" in Galveston, blending historical insight with hu-

[continued on page 10](#)



*TJHS Officers 2026-2027 – Vickie Vogel, Parliamentarian; Sally Drayer, Archivist/Historian; Susan Novick, Corresponding Secretary; Joan Linares, Immediate Past President; John Campbell, Recording Secretary; Michael Furgatch, 3rd Vice-President; Scott Langston, 2nd Vice-President; Sheldon Lippman, President; Rob Markman, Treasurer.*

## TJHS Annual Gathering, continued from page 9

mor and storytelling. Dr. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau and Miranda Ruzinsky from the University of Houston discussed their Jewish Studies and Religious Studies programs, emphasizing the importance of sustained support for research and education, particularly in light of potential shifts in government funding.

Melissa Cohen-Nickels, Curator of the Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Archives at Rice University, shed light on the lives of Adele Heyman and Rebecca Sakowitz Nathan, two remarkable women whose contributions were not fully recognized in their lifetimes. Through her research and presentation, their legacies were thoughtfully acknowledged and appreciated by the TJHS audience. Amy Frake, Associate Director of Education at Holocaust Museum Houston, also shared information about the museum's many educational projects and community outreach initiatives underway with area public schools and law enforcement agencies.

A particularly special component of the day was the participation of Melanie Weinberger's 6th grade students from The Emery-Weiner School. Selected students shared essays exploring the Texas connections within their own family histories, offering a perspective that underscored the importance of involving younger generations in preserving history.

Additional highlights included docent-led tours of the Holocaust Museum Houston conducted by Lynn Gordon, Janet Pozmantier, and Ali Katz, with assistance from Melissa Martinez, Head of Group Tours. A presentation by Ziggy Gruber, and a wonderful buffet dinner catered by Kenny & Ziggy's New York Delicatessen provided a perfect conclusion to a full and enriching day.

Two major highlights of the



*TJHS Trustees, 2026-2028—Hy Penn, Marilyn Lippman, Jan Siegel Hart, Sonny Gerber, Anita Feigenbaum, Lynda Furgatch, Gail Cannon, Jeff Aresty.*



*Solka Family. Standing are Liz and Michael Solka. Sitting are Gary, Shelley, Kevin, Drew, Davie Lou, and Steven Solka*



*Lynn Gordon, Holocaust Museum docent, leading tour.*

continued on page 11

**TJHS Annual Gathering, continued from page 10**

weekend included the presentation of the TJHS Extraordinary Recognition Award in the category of Major Historic Project to Davie Lou Solka. (See article on page 23.)

Another standout moment was the screening of *Grit and Grace: How Jewish Women Built a Better Texas*, a documentary supported by the TJHS Grant Program. The film explores late nineteenth and twentieth century Texas history through the lives of

**continued on page 12**



*Havdalah with Michael Furgatch, Mike Kahn, Lynda Furgatch*



*Ziggy Gruber*



*Marsha & Lonnie Schooler, Shelly Kessler*



*Shana Bauman, Awards Chair; Davie Lou Solka, recipient; Sheldon Lippman, TJHS President. Photo by Michael Solka*



*Anita Bonsanno*

TJHS Annual Gathering, continued from page 11



*Barbara Rosenthal,  
producer of Grit & Grace*



*Marilyn Flick talking about her  
childhood home in Galveston*

## Thank You

To Ben Rosenberg, who has served as TJHS Treasurer for ten years. He is retiring from that position, but not TJHS. Thank you for all your devotion and work, Ben!




five pioneering women—Olga Kohlberg, Gussie Oscar, Ray K. Daily, Fania Kruger, and Frances Kallison—whose contributions helped shape communities across the state.

The gathering concluded on Sunday with the TJHS Board Meeting and Annual Meeting, including the induction of officers and board members, ensuring continued leadership and vision for the organization.

Altogether, the 47th Annual



*Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism.*

Gathering was a resounding success—celebrating history, honoring contributions, and strengthening the connections that sustain the mission of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. 



*Dinner Sturday night*



*Butterfly Wall at Holocaust Museum Houston*

## TJHS at Yom Limmud 2026



*Ruben Linares, Shana Bauman, Ben & Barbara Rosenberg*

On Sunday, February 15, 2026, the Texas Jewish Historical Society participated in Yom Limmud in Houston, which was held this year at Congregation Beth Israel. Yom Limmud, the Day of Learning, featured a variety of speakers to educate our Jewish community. TJHS hosted a booth to create awareness of our organization. We gave out copies of the TJHS Magazines, brochures, notepads, and pens along with candies. Many Yom Limmud participants visited our booth and showed interest in our organization. Shana Bauman, Joan Linares, Ruben Linares, Hy Penn, and Ben Rosenberg took shifts at the TJHS booth. 🇺🇸



*Joan Linares, Melissa-Cohen-Nickels*

## Welcome New Members!

**Anita Bonanno**

Houston, Texas

**Jeff Cohen & Francene Gertz**

Austin, Texas

**Cantor Diane Dorf & Rabbi**

**Steven Morgan**

Houston, Texas

**Harriet & Arnold Eisenstein**

Houston, Texas

**Judy Feder**

Houston, Texas

**Dana Freed**

Plano, Texas

**Michael Goldreyer**

Kemah, Texas

**Leonard Goodman**

El Paso, Texas

**Harriet Katzeff**

Houston, Texas

**Rabbi Saadya Kaufman**

Houston, Texas

**Ted Knowles**

Highland, Utah

**Eric Lane**

San Antonio, Texas

**Diane Eisenberg Leventhal**

Alamo, California

**Hannah Milstein**

McKinney, Texas

**Cheryl (Lewis) & Michael**

**Nussenblatt**

Houston, Texas

**Ari Rosen & Elaine Klein**

Houston, Texas

**Jordie & Bonnie Saliman**

Denver, Colorado

**Katie Webber**

Houston, Texas

**Solomon Weiner**

Austin, Texas

# Remarks to Texas Jewish Historical Society

by Gary Weisserman, CEO, Holocaust Museum Houston

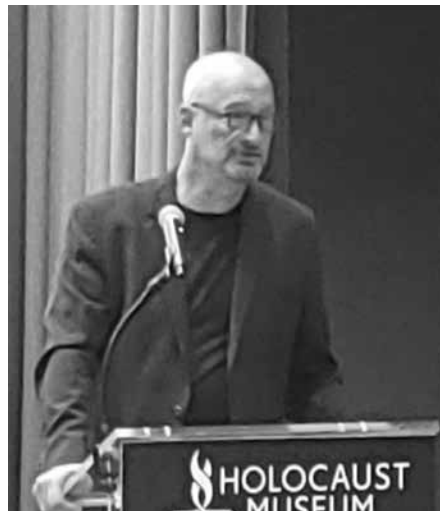
These remarks were delivered at the Annual Gathering April 25, 2026.

It is truly an honor to welcome the Texas Jewish Historical Society here at Holocaust Museum Houston, and to be with you this afternoon. My name is Gary Weisserman, and I have the privilege of serving as CEO of this institution.

You are, in so many ways, natural partners for us. What you do – researching, preserving, documenting, interpreting and telling the stories of Jewish life in Texas – is not only about history as a social science. It is also about identity. It is about continuity. And is about ensuring that the richness, complexity, and resilience of Jewish experience is neither forgotten nor flattened.

That is very much our work as well. At Holocaust Museum Houston, we are, in one sense, exactly what people expect: a museum. We preserve artifacts. We safeguard more than 4,000 hours of survivor testimony, we ground our exhibitions in rigorous scholarship and historical truth. We are guardians of memory. But that is not where our work ends. We are also a major educational institution rooted in a world-class museum. Our goal is not simply to display the past, but to help shape what people do with it. Each year we reach hundreds of thousands of people: students, educators, and visitors from across the region. By the demographics and by design, the vast majority of those we serve are not Jewish. That's because we believe the Holocaust was a uniquely Jewish tragedy, rooted in the specific history of the Jewish people. It cannot be understood apart from that context.

But if taught responsibly, its lessons extend far beyond it, and are rel-



Gary Weisserman, CEO  
Holocaust Museum Houston

evant to anyone who cares about democracy, pluralism, rule of law, and belonging to a just and compassionate society. At the center of our work are what we call the Five Universal Lessons of the Holocaust:

- That it was not inevitable; people and institutions made choices that enabled it.
- That democracy is fragile, and that without courageous leadership, can be destroyed from within.
- That every individual has agency, and that doing nothing is itself a decision.
- And that antisemitism is never just a Jewish problem, but an early warning sign of broader societal breakdown.

Those lessons only matter if they are grounded in real history. And that is why your work is so essential. Because before we can draw meaning from the past, we have to preserve it accurately, specifically, and fully. We have to understand real people, real communities, and real places—including here in Texas.

Your work ensures that Jewish history is not abstract. It is lived, rooted, and continuous. And matters, especially now. We are living in a moment when antisemitism is rising, when Holocaust denial and distortion are spreading, and where basic historical knowledge is eroding. In that environment, memory becomes fragile. And when memory becomes fragile, so does truth. That is why institutions like yours – and like ours – are not simply culture organizations. They

[continued on page 15](#)

## Contributions

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

- In Honor of Davie Lou Solka receiving the Extraordinary Recognition Award for Preservation of Texas Jewish History from TJHS  
Joan & Ruben Linares
- In Memory of Dolly Golden  
John Campbell & Sheldon Lippman  
Joan & Ruben Linares
- In Memory of Mitzi Milstein  
Bonnie & Jordie Saliman
- In Memory of Steve Wallach  
Patricia Ward
- Gift Membership to TJHS for Anita Bonanno from Hy Penn
- Gift Membership to TJHS for Judy Feder, Houston, from Joan & Ruben Linares
- Gift Membership to TJHS for Hannah Milstein, McKinney, from Rusty Milstein
- Gift Membership to TJHS for Jordie & Bonnie Saliman, Denver, from Rusty Milstein

# TJHS Committees and Members

TJHS Committees comprise volunteers from the Board of Trustees and the General Membership. Below is the list of current Program Committees (chairs and committee members) and Society Affairs Committees that help keep TJHS moving forward. If any member would like to know more about these committees and get involved, send an email to [president@txjhs.org](mailto:president@txjhs.org).

## Committee Chairs and Members

**Awards:** Hy Penn, Chair, Shana Bauman, Nelson Chafetz, Gail LeVine, Susan Novick, Barbara Rosenberg, Cynthia Wolf.

**By Laws, Ad Hoc:** Paul Keeper, Chair, Gayle Cannon, Sally Drayer, Sandy Horwitz, Scott Langston, Jeff Levine, Joan Linares.

**Cemetery Burials:** Rusty Milstein

**Cemetery Research:** Kathy Kravitz, Herschel Sheiness.

**Grants:** John Campbell, Chair, Michael Furgatch, Sonny Gerber, Hollace Weiner Emily Williams.

**Kessler Fund:** Joan Linares, Chair, David Brenner, Jules Frapart, Scott Langston, Jeff Levine, Sheldon Lippman, Robert Markman, Susan Novick, Hy Penn, Barbara Rosenberg, Ben Rosenberg. Advisors: Shelley Kessler, Lonnie Schooler, Bryan Stone.

**Meetings:** Lynda Furgatch, Chair, Anita Feigenbaum, Marilyn Lippman.

**Membership/Publicity:** Jeff Levine, Barbara Green Stone, Co-Chairs, Bunny Edelman, Lila Katz, Barbara Rosenberg.

**Nominations:** Joan Linares, Chair, Susan Zach Lewis, Ellen St Clair, Joyce Wormser,

**Speakers' Bureau:** Gayle Cannon & Jan Hart

## Society Affairs Committees

**Archivist/Historian:** Sally Drayer

**Dolph Briscoe Center:** Davie Lou Solka

**Finance:** Robby Markman, Treasurer, Ben Rosenberg

**Legal:** Lonnie Schooler

**TJHS Magazine:** Davie Lou Solka, Editor

**Website/Technology:** John Campbell, Sheldon Lippman 

### Remarks to TJHS, continued from page 14


are also guardrails.

When students come through this museum, we are not asking them to inherit trauma; instead, we are asking them to take responsibility. To understand how prejudice takes root. How societies unravel. And what it means to act with courage when it matters.

Because the Holocaust was not inevitable—and neither is the future. It will be shaped by the choices we make. And that is where our work converges. Preserving history

is not an end in itself. It is how we shape who we become.

So, I want to thank you, for being here and for the work you do across this state: for preserving the story of Jewish life in Texas; and for being partners in the work at the intersection of memory and responsibility.

We are honored to welcome you. We are grateful to do this work alongside you. May your conference be productive, energizing, and meaningful! 

## In Memoriam

### Dolly Moskowitz Golden,



TJHS Board Member, died February 27, 2026, in Austin, Texas. She is survived by her children, Beth

Marsh, Jeff (Vicki) Golden; granddaughter, Sarah Marsh; several nieces and nephews, including TJHS Immediate Past President Joan Linares.

Former U.S. Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, **Arthur "Butch" Schecter**, TJHS



member, died April 13, 2026, in Houston, Texas. He is survived by his wife, Joyce;

daughters Jennifer (Alan) Rosen, Leslie (Hedley) Karpas, and five grandchildren.

### Phyllis Steinhart, TJHS mem-



ber, died in Dallas, Texas on April 7, 2026. She is survived by her husband, Ron Steinhart, her

sons, David Steinhart, Kenneth Steinhart, and Barry (Meredith) Steinhart, and five grandchildren.

*May their memories  
be a blessing.*

# From Waco's 175th to July 3rd

## How We Are Carrying Jacob De Cordova's Legacy Into the Digital Future

by Jeff Aresty

When Waco celebrated its 175th anniversary, the Texas Jewish Historical Society was already part of the story. We helped premiere the documentary *The Jacob Raphael De Cordova Story: Mapping Texas, Building Waco*. We hosted the film at our fall meeting, and his descendants were in the room. That night, we didn't just watch history—we became part of it.

Since then, our Society has done something remarkable: we have kept Jacob De Cordova's story alive, not as a museum piece, but as a living force for Waco's future.

With the very first grant from the Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund, we made the Dream Big pilot program possible. Last summer, ten local high school students became published authors. They wrote a children's book about De Cordova, created animated films, and discovered that history isn't something you read—it's something

you build.

That pilot proved a simple truth: when we invest in young people, they don't just learn the past. They carry it forward.

On July 3, 2026, Jacob De Cordova comes back. The Jacob De Cordova Society, Art Center Waco, and the Taylor Museum will host the official kickoff of America's 250th anniversary—a massive community arts event. There will be live music, a commemorative poem, the public reveal of a new De Cordova statue maquette, and a special preview of the Dream Big book.

But the heart of the evening is this: De Cordova's "voice from the past" will officially launch Waco's 200 Year Time Capsule and open the Youth Innovation Studio's Student Storytelling Sprint.

In the 19th century, De Cordova mapped the physical frontier—showing settlers where to build homes, churches, and towns. Today,

his vision guides us to map a different frontier: the digital space where nonprofits must reach younger audiences.

The Youth Innovation Studio will train students to become "trustworthy storytellers"—using cutting edge tools in video, animation, and media. They will produce real content for local organizations, gain paid internships, and build careers. De Cordova once built Waco's infrastructure. Now, through our continued support, he is helping build its digital workforce.

We made this possible. We funded the pilot. We believed in De Cordova's story. Now come see what our investment has grown into.

Let's be there as De Cordova invites the next generation to map our digital future. And bring your family—because this is a celebration of history, youth, and the community we have helped build. 🇹🇽

## The American Dream – Waco's 250th Anniversary Kickoff

July 3, 2026, 6–10 PM

Art Center of Waco

**Tickets:** <https://artcenterwaco.org/event/celebrating-250-years-of-independence-the-american-dream/>

## Does TJHS Have Your Current Email Address?

Does TJHS Membership have your current email address? You can check your Member Profile on the Members-only Dashboard for your current mailing and email addresses. Go to Website-Registered Members Login on TJHS Website. If you cannot remember your password or have other questions, send an email query to [admin@txjhs.org](mailto:admin@txjhs.org)



# TJHS at Texas Historical Commission Real Places Conference

The Texas Jewish Historical Society was represented at the Real Places Conference, sponsored by The Texas Historical Commission in Austin on April 8-10, 2026. Presenters were Kenneth Taylor, Library Services Coordinator, Holocaust Museum Houston; David Brenner, Senior Lecturer in German, International, and Jewish Studies, Texas A&M University; Laurie Bricker, Educational Consultant, Public Historian; and Melissa Cohen-Nickels, Curator, Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Jewish Archives at Rice University. The session explored the many ways memory is preserved, interpreted, and shared in the Texas Jewish Community. 🇺🇸



*Presenters at Real Places Conference: Kenneth Taylor, Laurie Bricker, Melissa Cohen-Nickels, David Brenner.*

## Honor or Memorialize a Friend or a Loved One With a Donation to TJHS

When you honor or memorialize a friend or a loved one with a donation to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, you help support important programs. Send the honoree's full name, type of honor (memorial, congratulations, or occasion—birthday, anniversary, award, new child or grandchild, etc.) and your name, along with a check in the amount of your choice, to

**Texas Jewish Historical Society**  
**P. O. Box 10193**  
**Austin, TX 78766-0193**

Your support of the Texas Jewish Historical Society's programs is greatly appreciated and will be recognized in an issue of the quarterly News Magazine. Thank you.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society gratefully acknowledges your gift in the amount of

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

In honor/memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

*Acknowledge to:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Your gift will further the efforts to record, preserve, and disseminate historic information about Texas Jewish culture.*



# FROM OUR ARCHIVES

## Artist Marlene Cohen

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](mailto:editor@txjhs.org). We want the TJHS archives to be as complete and accurate as possible.**

Marlene Joy Cohen was born in Galveston in 1934 to Beatrice and Ben Clark.<sup>1</sup> Ben was a native Texan, born in 1907. Thanks to findagrave.com, we know much of the family geneology. Ben's father, Morris Clark, was born in Poland in 1867. By the 1910 census, Morris was living in Galveston and was a shoemaker. Presumably, he arrived as part of the Galveston Movement.<sup>2</sup> His wife, Annie Shapiro Clark, was born in Latvia/Poland in 1875. They had seven children; Ben was the fifth, and the third son. Annie died in 1941 of stomach cancer, aged 66.

Ben married Beatrice Abramson (1909-2001). She was born in Columbus, Ohio and died in Galveston at the age of 92. Her parents were Rabbi Maurice Abramson (1881-1971) and Ann Helen Matline Abramson (1889-1981). Rabbi Abramson was born in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1881. He died at age 90 in 1971 in Los Angeles. His mother was Stella Mofsovitch

Abramson (1856-1939), born in Belarus and died in New Hampshire. The inscription on Stella's tombstone reads: יולה ובואר ר תב עשיטש

ט"צרת נסינ זכ פנ

Translation: Here lies Shtiseh daughter of Mr. Reuven the Levite.

Ben Clark died in 1982, aged 75

and, like Morris, Annie, and Beatrice is buried at Beth Jacob Cemetery in Galveston.<sup>3</sup> Beatrice died in 2001, aged 92.<sup>4</sup>

Ben and Beatrice's daughter Marlene attended the University of Houston, receiving a degree in speech pathology. She married Louis Cohen (b.



Marlene Cohen. The Abilene Reporter-News, Abilene TX March 18, 1975

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## Cohen, continued from page 18

1924) in August, 1958 and moved to Abilene, Texas.

Louis's father, Ben Cohen, arrived in the United States from Russia in 1905 and lived in New York a short time before moving to the Dallas/Fort Worth area and then Abilene where he lived for 22 years. Louis's mother, Fannie, was born in Russia in 1889. Family lore says Ben "had ended up in Dallas somehow with a pushcart of bananas. He made his way to Abilene, liked the people, and stayed." Bananas turned into the scrap metal business as he and his brother Abe founded Texas Steel Products.<sup>1</sup> Ben Cohen died at age 44 in Abilene in 1932.<sup>6</sup> Fannie died in 1971 in Abilene, aged 82.

Marlene was a popular member of the Abilene community, making many lifelong friends. She was the first Jewish woman to be accepted into the Junior League of Abilene. There she attended McMurry College and received a Bachelor of Arts degree. Marlene studied under and was mentored by Loretta "Maisi" SiRois-Marshall, a prize-winning artist and member of the American Watercolors Society and the Texas Watercolors Society, who was known for mentoring art students.<sup>7</sup> Cohen also studied at Hardin-Simmons University.

Marlene began her own art career in 1965 and was acclaimed for her oil paintings which "whisper of the abstract" yet "capture moments of real life and real people." Her paintings captured the personality of the subject.<sup>8</sup>

Tragedy struck the Cohen family in 1966. Their five-year-old son, Brett Clark Cohen, was staying with his grandparents Ben and Bernice Clark in Galveston while his parents were on vacation. The newspaper account states the grandparents discovered the child choking and rushed



*Dancers from Houston Ballet sometimes posed for Marlene Cohen. Photo courtesy of Cori Grant.*



*Photo courtesy of Cori Grant.*

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## Cohen, continued from page 19

him to the hospital where surgery was performed, but his sister, Cori, was told the cause of death was a rapidly escalating infectious disease. In any event, Brett did not survive. His brother Scott was four-years-old at the time.<sup>9</sup>

The Cohen home in Abilene, designed by Marlene, featured a square with an outside patio/garden in the middle. There were full-length glass windows on every side, which gave light for her painting. “Her oil paints were everywhere,” recalled daughter

Cori, “and she removed them every evening so that we could have dinner at the table.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1975, Cohen accepted a commission as portrait artist for the Gittings Studio in Houston where she painted children’s portraits. Gittings hosted a solo exhibit of her work and offered the commission based on her paintings of members of six Houston families. Although Gittings was a photography studio, people often wanted an oil painting made from a photograph rather than sitting for a

portrait in oil. Cohen considered her work an impression of the subject’s personality, so she required meetings with the subjects rather than work solely from photographs.

Cohen’s work is widely known, especially in Fort Worth, Dallas, Phoenix and New Orleans. In December of 1974, Architectural Interiors of Dallas hosted a one-woman show. Gallery de Veronese of New Orleans carried her work, as well as the Carlin in Fort Worth. She received commissions in Phoenix as well, and had many clients in Abilene, Texas.<sup>11</sup> She painted portraits of Governor Mark White’s children while he was in office, as well as children in her own family.

In the mid-1990s, Marlene and Louis divorced. Marlene moved back to Houston, and opened the Marlene Cohen Gallery in the River Oaks area.<sup>12</sup> Louis remained in Abilene where he died in 2002, aged 77.<sup>13</sup>

In 2015, Cohen died peacefully at her home in the Woodlands at the age of 81. She was survived by her sister Rikki Layne, and her children Scott Cohen, Cori Grant, Brian Cohen, and nine grandchildren. She is buried in Congregation Beth Jacob Cemetery in Galveston. Rabbi Todd Doctor officiated at the funeral service.<sup>14</sup> She requested memorials to go to Young Audiences of Houston, an organization founded in 1956 dedicated to educate and inspire children through the arts.<sup>15</sup> More of Cohen’s works can be found online with a simple Google search of her name.

### *Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all information is from the Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Box 3A168, Folder Artists

<sup>2</sup> email Cori Grant, April 8, 2026.



*Photo courtesy of Cori Grant.*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/58725698/beatrice-clark>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/155716316/marlene-joy-cohen>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/58725752/ben-clark>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9575335/morris-clark>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9575331/annie-clark>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6651127/maurice-abramson>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/281045199/stella-abramson>



Shira, Beryl, and Dena Grant painted by their grandmother. Photo courtesy of Cori Grant.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/58725698/beatrice-clark>  
<sup>5</sup> email Cori Grant, April 8, 2026.  
<sup>6</sup> [https://images.findagrave.com/photos/2024/41/29329535\\_fb00630f-37f4-412b-b677-dfd457641d23.jpeg](https://images.findagrave.com/photos/2024/41/29329535_fb00630f-37f4-412b-b677-dfd457641d23.jpeg). <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29329535/ben-cohen>  
<sup>7</sup> email Cori C. Grant, March 30, 2026; <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/georgetown-tx/loretta-marshall-12568512>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.askart.com/bio/Marlene\\_Cohen/11000487/Marlene\\_Cohen](https://www.askart.com/bio/Marlene_Cohen/11000487/Marlene_Cohen); <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/houstonchronicle/name/marlene-cohen-obituary?id=18253053>

<sup>9</sup> Wishcamper, Ed N. *The Abilene Reporter-News* (Abilene, Tex.), Vol. 85, No. 355, Ed. 2 Tuesday, June 7, 1966, newspaper, June 7, 1966; Abilene, Texas. (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1815061/>; accessed April 11, 2026), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Public Library. email Cori Grant 4/23/26.

<sup>10</sup> Grant, op. cit.  
<sup>11</sup> Arts Editor Alice Miller “Setting the Scene,” *Abilene Reporter-News*, Mar. 18, 1975 p. 3B, “Abilene artist gets Houston commission.”  
<sup>12</sup> Grant, op. cit.  
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25119210/louis-cohen>  
<sup>14</sup> *Houston Chronicle* December 6, 2015 and *Abilene Reporter-News* December 13, 2015.  
<sup>15</sup> <https://www.yahouston.org/mission>; Legacy op cit. 🇺🇸

## Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund Contributions

### Silver

Marsha & Lonnie Schooler

### Sapphire

Patty & Larry Fallek

### Ruby

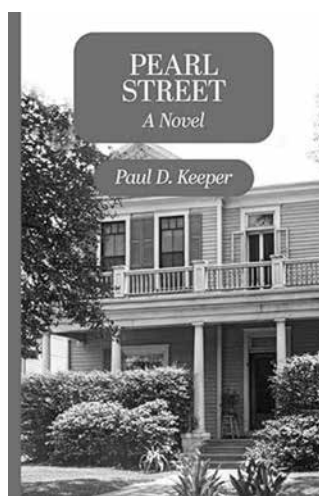
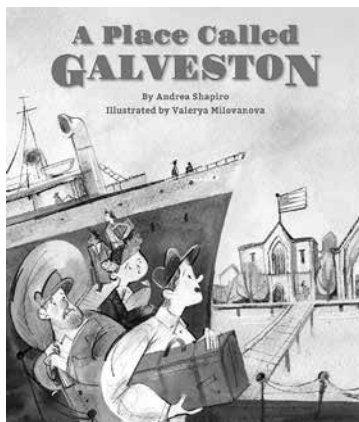
Sue Sue & Don Aron

### Diamond

Katherine & Larry Buck  
 Rowena & Steven Chodorow  
 Hazak Group, Congregation Brith Shalom, Bellaire, in honor of Marc Wormser’s presentation  
 Phyllis Hengst  
 Marilyn Jorrie in honor of Hasson & Levy families  
 Shelley Kessler  
 Saranne Kosberg  
 Frances K. Ravicz

## Books to Read

*Pearl Street: A Novel*, by Paul Keeper. A coming-of-age historical fiction novel set in 1965 Austin, Texas. Available on Amazon.



*A Place Called Galveston*, by Andrea Shapiro. Tells the story of the immigrants who came through the port of Galveston that would be interesting for 5-8 year olds. Available on Amazon. 🇺🇸

# NOW CASTING

## RURAL JEWISH INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

*All ages, backgrounds, and life experiences welcome!*

We are seeking **Jewish individuals and families living in rural or small-town America** to participate in a social media series exploring what Jewish life looks like outside major cities.

We're especially interested in people with unique, personal backstories – those living Jewish lives that may be unconventional, unexpected, or shaped by their surroundings. This includes (but is not limited to) individuals and families who are:

- In interfaith or inter-cultural relationships
- Practicing Judaism alongside other religious traditions
- Navigating Jewish identity in places with little or no Jewish infrastructure
- Creating community in creative or nontraditional ways

### **To apply, please submit:**

- A brief written description of yourself (or your family)
- A 3–5 minute self-tape (a video filmed on your phone is perfectly fine!) introducing yourself, sharing your backstory, and walking us through a day in your small-town Jewish life

We're looking for honesty, specificity, and heart – not polish. Just be yourself!

Email submissions to: **[SWCasting1@gmail.com](mailto:SWCasting1@gmail.com)**

# TJHS Award Presented at Annual Gathering

by Marilyn Lippman

The Texas Jewish Historical Society presented the TJHS Extraordinary Recognition Award in the category of Major Historic Project to Davie Lou Solka at the 2026 Annual Gathering, held in Houston. The award was presented at the Saturday night dinner with Michael, Steven, and Gary Solka providing a short roast of

their mother. In presenting the award, TJHS Awards Chair, Shana Bauman, remarked, “Perhaps no other single person has had as much influence in spreading such a broad spectrum of our history to so many people throughout our state, our country, and internationally, due to our mailing list which has such a broad reach.” 🇺🇸



Gary, Michael, Steven Solka discussing their mother, Davie Lou Solka



Davie Lou Solka with TJHS Extraordinary Recognition Award in the category of Major History Project.

## Are you benefiting from the Members-Only Dashboard on the TJHS Website?

Whether you renew your TJHS membership by writing a check or using a credit card online, if you are in the TJHS Membership Database, you can access the Members-Only Dashboard.

Easy access: Click on Website-Registered Members Login on the home page at [www.txjhs.org](http://www.txjhs.org)

- In the sign-in box, enter Email and Password
- Forgot or never had a password? Email [admin@txjhs.org](mailto:admin@txjhs.org)

## What will you find on the Members-Only Dashboard?

- View and search the *TJHS Members Directory*
- View and edit *My Member Profile* - Check your name/contact as is appears in the TJHS Directory
- View *My Membership Details* - See your history of renewal payments and next due date
- *Renew My Membership* - click to pull up renewal form for credit card use. Check writers will find a printable form under Membership on the Home Page.



# 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.

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

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

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Please detail the timeline of your project.

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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](mailto:grantchair@txjhs.org) or go to [www.txjhs.org](http://www.txjhs.org) and click on "Apply for a Grant" at the top of the page.*



# The TJHS is Accepting Nominations for 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 multiple areas: The TJHS Award reflects the diverse ways Texans preserve and enrich Jewish heritage — not only through written or archival work but also through lived experience, cultural expression, and meaningful community engagement. The award categories include: community leadership, cultural heritage and education, social impact, bridge building, historic site preservation and historic project achievement. These categories will honor individuals, groups and organizations whose contributions strengthen Jewish life, and promote Jewish culture in creative ways.

TJHS now seeks you help to identify & honor those who have made a significant and lasting impact toward the Texas Jewish Experience. Two awards can be given yearly, but is not mandated to be given yearly, as only outstanding accomplishment can merit this award. Applications must be received by July 30, and the awards will be presented at the Spring Gathering in April. Please mail the application and supporting paperwork to Awards Chair, Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193 or [awardschair@txjhs.org](mailto:awardschair@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

Cultural Heritage & Education

Community Leadership & Engagement

Major Project Achievement

Living Legacy

Social Impact & Bridge Building

Please return this sheet as cover page and 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 [awardschair@txjhs.org](mailto:awardschair@txjhs.org) • [txjhs.org](http://txjhs.org)*



# 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](http://www.txjhs.org) and click on "Give to Kessler Fund" to make your donation on line with a credit card.

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



# TJHS Board of Trustees

## Officers

### *President*

Sheldon Lippman (Austin)

### *1st Vice President*

Jeff Levine (Cedar Park)

### *2nd Vice President*

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### *3rd Vice President*

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Joyce Wormser (Pearland)

## Past Presidents

*Living Past Presidents are members of the Board of Trustees per TJHS Bylaws.*

\*Rabbi James Kessler, Galveston (1980-1982)

\*Frances Kallison, San Antonio (1982-1984)

Lionel Schooler, Houston (1984-1986)

\*Ed Lax, Dallas (1986)

\*Ginger Jacobs, Dallas (1986-1989)

\*Milton Smith, Austin (1989-1991)

\*Fay Brachman, Fort Worth (1991-1993)

\*Don Teter, Baytown (1993-1995)

Barbara Rosenberg, Sugar Land (1995-1998)

\*Helen Wilk, Corpus Christi/Houston (1998-2000)

\*Jack Gerrick, Fort Worth (2000-2002)

\*Charles B. Hart, Temple (2002-2004)

\*Marvin Rich, Houston (2004-2006)

Vickie Vogel, LaGrange/Austin (2006-2008)

Sally Drayer, Dallas (2008-2010)

Rusty Milstein, Longview (2010-2012)

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)

Joan Linares, Baytown (2023-2025)

*\*Deceased*

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

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www.txjhs.org

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## The Texas Jewish Historical Society Mail-In Membership Form with check

Your annual membership renewal date will be the month/day of your check in the following year.



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your annual membership renewal date will be the  
month/day of your check in the following year.

Check the Appropriate Box

New Member\*\*       Membership Renewal       Gift\*       Information Update

Choose category of annual TJHS Membership

\$18 Student       \$50 Supporter       \$100 Advocate  
 \$250 Champion       \$500 Friend       \$1,000 Patron

Information below is required for correct entry in TJHS Membership Database and members-only website Directory.

Member #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Email #1: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Member #2 (of couple/partnership) \_\_\_\_\_

Email #2: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Name and address of person(s) giving the Gift Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*New member? How did you hear about TJHS? Who recommended joining? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send this completed membership form along with a signed/dated bank check to  
Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193.**

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