

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Magazine



August 2026

From Archives to Action by Melissa Cohen-Nickels

June 8, 2026, marked the start of the second South Texas Jewish Archives (STJA) Archival Fellowship, a hands-on program designed to introduce high school students to local Jewish history, research and archival. This year, nine students from across the Houston area, representing four different schools, came together for an immersive week of learning and discovery.

The focus of this year's program was the Jewish community of Galveston, with special attention given to the newly acquired collection from Congregation B'nai Israel of Galveston.

Founded in 1868, Congregation B'nai Israel is the second-oldest synagogue and the longest continuously operating Reform synagogue in Texas. Its most well-known leader, Rabbi Henry Cohen, z"l, served both the congregation and the broader Galveston community for more than sixty years, from 1888 to 1952.

Rabbi Cohen gained national recognition for his work as a member of the Central Relief Committee, following



*Back: William Smith, Mikayla Ejeh, Logan Burke, Benjamin Bernstein, Addison Penny, Avi Govshteyn, Rabbi Peter Kessler.
Front: Tovah Miller, Lyla Wolf, Sophie Berman, Kate Webber, Elexis Segal, Melissa Cohen-Nickels*

significant contributions to Galveston's development in business, banking, and railroads.

The new fellows dove headfirst into all things Galveston, studying artifacts related to the Galveston storm and the Galveston Movement during the first days of the program. On the first day, Wednesday, they traveled to the island for a field excursion, beginning at the Hebrew Benevolent Society Cemetery, where many of Galveston's early Jewish residents are buried. The group then visited the Texas and Galveston History Center at the Rosenberg Library to examine archival materials firsthand.

A visit with Rabbi Peter Kessler of Congregation B'nai

the Galveston storm of 1900, and for his role as an advocate and guide for nearly 10,000 Jewish immigrants who entered the United States through the Port of Galveston during the Galveston Movement (1907-1914.)

Even before Rabbi Cohen's arrival, Jewish families, such as the Kempners, Kopperls, Levys, and Blums had already made

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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
October 9-11, 2026
Board Meeting, Big Spring

November 7, 2026 - January 31, 2027
“Port of Promise: The Jewish Pioneers of Texas” —an exhibit
illuminating the Galveston Movement at the
Bryan Museum, 1315 21st St., Galveston
info@thebryanmuseum.org • 409-632-7685

Message from the President

by Sheldon Lippman



The Texas Jewish Historical Society remains strong because of its members. Today, nearly seven hundred members across Texas and beyond support our shared mission: to collect, preserve, publish, and disseminate the history of Jewish life in Texas. Membership, however, is more than a name on a list. It is a commitment to sustaining the Society's work and helping shape its future.

The Membership Committee carefully maintains our records of new and renewing members, whether dues are paid online or by check. It also follows up with members whose dues have lapsed. Recently, approximately one hundred individuals who had not renewed since 2022, 2023, or 2024 were moved to an inactive list after reminder postcards received no response. The names have not been lost, and we hope many will choose to return. Members nearing their renewal date will continue to receive a postcard reminder - a small nudge that has proven effective.

Why do dues matter? Membership dues provide a dependable foundation for the programs and services that bring the TJHS mission to life. They help support our Annual Gathering, the TJHS Magazine, historical research and publications, ed-

ucational outreach, grants, preservation efforts, and communication with members throughout the state. Every renewal is a vote of confidence in this work and helps ensure that TJHS can continue it for years to come.

Members also hold two essential responsibilities in the governance of the Society: electing the Officers and Board of Trustees and voting on amendments to the by-laws. In early September, members will receive recommendations from the Ad Hoc By-laws Committee concerning terms of office, elections, and meetings. Members will have three weeks to submit comments, followed by an electronic vote in which every member is encouraged to participate.

Yet paying dues and voting, while essential, are only part of what membership means. The true energy of TJHS comes from members who participate. Some attend Annual Gatherings. Others research Texas Jewish history, write for the TJHS Magazine, serve on committees, assist with programs, help preserve archival materials, recruit new members, or simply share an idea. Each contribution of time, talent, or perspective makes the Society stronger.

Speaker's Bureau

With fall programs being planned, keep the Speakers Bureau in mind for your meetings this year. We can provide speakers on a wide variety of Jewish topics. Let's work together to let our communities know about Texas Jewish Historical Society and the Speaker's Bureau. Send your request to tjhsspeakers@tx-jhs.org 

As TJHS looks toward its 50th anniversary in 2030, we need both longtime members and a new generation of volunteers to carry forward the momentum built over more than forty-five years. The next great program idea, committee chair, researcher, archivist, writer, or future Board member may be reading this article right now. With nearly seven hundred members, TJHS has an extraordinary reservoir of knowledge, experience, creativity, and enthusiasm waiting to be tapped.

Please renew your membership when your reminder arrives - and then take the next step. Volunteer for a committee, contribute an article, help with a program, share your expertise, or invite someone else to join. Your dues sustain TJHS. Your participation brings it to life. Together, they will carry the Texas Jewish Historical Society confidently into its next fifty years. 

Rabbi Jimmy Kessler Educational Outreach Fund Contributions

Diamond

In Memory of Mitzi Milstein,
Ada Falk Milstein, and Morris
Milstein

Rusy Milstein

In Memory of Michael Wolf

Sally Drayer

Susan & Bob Lewis

Joan and Ruben Linares

Barbara and Ben Rosenberg

Davie Lou Solka

Gift Membership to TJHS for
Connie Pollon

Barbara and Ben Rosenberg

From Archives to Action, continued from page 1

Israel offered insight into the synagogue's enduring impact including the legacy of the more recent leaders such as Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, z"l.

The fellows also visited the historic Hotel Galvez, built in part by I.H. Kempner, and explored the seawall and original B'nai Israel building—all powerful reminders of the community's resilience following the devastating 1900 storm. Their day concluded at Galveston's historic seaport Ship to Shore Museum, where they learned about the journeys of immigrants who arrived through the Port of Galveston.

On Thursday, the fellows examined primary-source documents from the B'nai Israel collection using them as a foundation for their final presentation at Rice University's Fondren Library on Friday. These presentations offered a compelling glimpse into the rich stories preserved within the archives.

Sophie Berman, a sophomore at the Emer/Weiner School, explored Rabbi Cohen's creation of the Open Forum in 1928 as a space for civic dialogue and public education. Logan Burke of Stephen F. Austin High

School examined the lasting impact of the Lasker family, both locally and nationally. Lyla Wolf, an Emery/Weiner sophomore, analyzed Rabbi Cohen's role in Texas prison reform in the 1920s.

Ben Bernstein, an Emery/Weiner junior, focused on correspondence between Rabbi Cohen and Rev. Edmund Gibson, highlighting the role of religious leaders in addressing social issues and guiding community members through the justice system. Mikayla Ejeh, a senior at Kinder-HSPVA, investigated the role of the B'nai Israel Sisterhood within the broader statewide organization.

Addie Perry, an Emery/Weiner junior, researched early Jewish philanthropist Rosanna Dyer Osterman. In a timely connection to American his-



*Front: Melissa Cohen-Nickels, Avi Govshteyn, Elexis Segal, Sophia Berman, Lyla Wolf, Tovah Miller, Kate Weber
Back: Benjamin Bernstein, Logan Burke, Addison Perry, Mikayla Ejeh*

tory, Tovah Miller, a senior at Beren Academy analyzed "Ode to America," a document from B'nai Israel's 1976 bicentennial celebration.

Elexis Segal compared the life and leadership of Rabbi Cohen to that of Rabbi Jack Segal, z"l, of Congregation Beth Yeshurun. Finally, Avi Govshteyn, an Emery/Weiner sophomore, examined the evolution of the Galveston Jewish community over the past 150 years.

Reflecting on the week, Ejeh said, "Over the past few days, I found myself reflecting on the special opportunity I was given to build my knowledge of archival work, its inherent value, and the importance of its preservation. I will forever hold the experiences this program has provided me dear to my heart. It's an experience that I'll truly never forget!"

The STJA Archival Fellowship connects students with history in a meaningful way. By working directly with original documents and exploring the stories of Jewish life in South Texas, these fellows gain not only research skills but a deeper appreciation



Sitting: Mikayla Ejeh and Tovah Miller. Standing: Addison Penny; Benhamin Bernstein; Woodson Research Center Archivist, Rebecca Russell.

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My Rabbi: Charles Mantinband

by Howard "Rusty" Milstein

Rabbi Charles Mantinband was born in New York City on April 2, 1895, to Samuel and Delia Gottlieb Mantinband. Charles and his five siblings grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, where he graduated from Maury High School in 1912. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from City College of New York in 1916. He earned a Master of Arts degree from Columbia University in 1918, a Doctorate from Burton College and Seminary in 1958, and awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Lincoln University. Rabbi Mantinband received his religious training at Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City. He and his wife, Anna Kest, were married on April 4, 1918, and had two children, Carol and Bill. They also had two adopted sons, Dan and Frank Aaron, who were orphans of the Holocaust.

In 1918, Rabbi Mantinband accepted his first job as director of the Young Men's Hebrew Association in Memphis, Tennessee. Before the year was out, he was sent by the Jewish Welfare Board to Camp Forrest in Chickamauga, Georgia, where he served as a chaplain. The next year, he was transferred to Staten Island, New York. In 1920, Rabbi Mantinband began attending the Jewish Institute of Religion. In his third year at the Institute, he was offered the rabbi

position at Vassar Temple in Poughkeepsie, New York. He worked at Vassar for three years, before moving to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, in 1926. During his time in Williamsport, he wrote a weekly column entitled "Please Stand By" for the *Williamsport Sun*. From 1942 to 1946, he served as a chaplain at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

After World War II, Rabbi Mantinband requested a position with a small congregation in the south. He was sent to Alabama, where he served the tri-cities area of Florence, Sheffield, and Tusculumbia from 1946 to 1952. It was during his years in Alabama that he played an active role in the Alabama Council on Human Relations and first became involved with racial issues.

In 1952, the Mantinbands moved to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to serve Temple B'Nai Israel. While in Hattiesburg, he chaired the Mississippi Council on Human Relations and became active in civil rights activities. He maintained open friendships with African Americans, including Clyde Kennard and Vernon Dahmer. Because of his stance on race relations, he received numerous threats from people within the community, and his home was under constant surveillance. He even had trouble with members of his congregation.

The pressure eventually became too great, and in 1963, he accepted a position in Longview, Texas, to be closer to family members who lived in Shreveport, Louisiana.

In June, 1963, Rabbi Mantinband was one of over two-hundred clergymen and leaders of all religious faiths to be invited by President John F. Kennedy to attend a White House Conference on the "present aspects of the nation's civil rights problems."

Rabbi Charles Mantinband retired in 1971, after almost fifty years of service in the rabbinate. He was completely blind for the last few years of his life, including his last year of service in Longview. He died on August 3, 1974. According to his wife, Mantinband's most cherished honors were the first George Brussel Memorial Award by the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue of New York, the Southern Regional Council Life Fellowship award and Rabbi Allen Krause's dedication of his ordination thesis to him.

Rabbi and Anna Mantinband are interred in the Temple Emanu-El Cemetery in Longview.

Note by Rusty: My nephew, Michael Feldman, called Anna "Mrs. Rabbi." When Rabbi Mantinband spoke to the student body of Longview High School in 1963, he ended by inviting everyone to attend Shabbat services and said, "If you come, please bring Rusty Milstein with you!" 

From Archives to Action, continued from page 4

for the past and their place in preserving it. In doing so, they help ensure that these stories continue to be told for generations to come.

Melissa Cohen-Nickels is the curator at the Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Jewish Archives in Houston. Contact Melissa at mc220@rice.edu. 

In Memoriam

MICHAEL WOLF, former TJHS Board Member and Past Chair of Grants Committee, died in Beaumont June 17, 2026. He is survived by his wife, Cynthia (past TJHS Board Member), his children, Natalie (Brett) Barth, Sallye Wolf, Marc (Amanda), and five grandchildren.

May his memory be a blessing.



Preserving our Legacy, Shaping our Future

Highlights from TJHS Summer Board Meeting, San Marcos, July 18-19, 2026

by Marilyn Lippman

Photographers – Sally Drayer, Lynda Furgatch, Sheldon Lippmann

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Board of Trustees gathered in San Marcos, July 17-19, 2026, for the annual summer board meeting. The weekend began with an informal Friday evening dinner at the iconic Black's Barbecue, proving an opportunity for board members to reconnect before a full schedule of meetings.

Saturday's strategic planning session focused on the future of TJHS as the Society prepares to celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2030. Following an overview of nonprofit governance

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Group attending San Marcos Board Meeting.



Left to right around the table: Leslie Feigenbaum, Anita Feigenbaum, Edward Stone, Barbara Stone.



Back: John Campbell. Front: Paul Keeper, Marilyn Lippman, Sheldon Lippman.



Sonny Gerber, Sharon Gerber, Marilyn Lippman, Barbara Rosenberg, Ben Rosenberg, Joan Linares, Ruben Linares.

Summer Board Meeting, continued from page 6

and legal responsibilities, the board considered proposed by-law revision designed to strengthen the organization for the future. Topics included streamlining the leadership structure, reducing the size of the Board of Trustees, establishing term limits, clarifying officer appointments, and ensuring continuity in key positions such as treasurer and archivist/historian.

Board members also discussed ways to encourage greater participation by trustees and members, reviewed and called for updates of the TJHS committee's Procedure Manuals, and examined how committees

and the Board can work together more effectively in carrying out the organization's mission.

One proposal that generated considerable enthusiasm was filmmaker Barbara Rosenthal's vision for a documentary celebrating Jewish life in Small-town Texas. The project would preserve family stories, photographs, and artifacts from Jewish communities across the state and was viewed as fitting initiative to commemorate TJHS's 50th anniversary.

Sunday morning's Board Meeting featured reports from committees on membership growth, grants, cemetery research, website activity,

and planning for upcoming meetings. The Grants Committee highlighted the completion of Seth Crosland's Master's thesis on Polish Jewish immigration to the United States and discussed a future article in The TJHS Magazine featuring the story of TJHS charter member Mike Jacobs, whose vision and leadership helped establish the Dallas Holocaust Museum. The board also explored new ways to strengthen communications and outreach while continuing the Society's mission of preserving, documenting, and sharing the rich history of Jewish life throughout Texas. 



Nelson Chavitz, Paul Keeper, Scott Langston, Sonny Gerber, Sheldon Lippman, John Campbell, Ben Rosenberg, Robert Markman, Ruben Linares, Joan Linares.

New Exhibit at Bryan Museum in Galveston

The Bryan Museum in Galveston, Texas, announces a landmark exhibit, *Port of Promise: Jewish Pioneers of Texas*, will open November 7, 2026, and on view through January 31, 2027. This exhibition tells the inspiring story of Jewish immigrants whose courage, perseverance, and entrepreneurial spirit helped shape the economic, cultural, and civic landscape of Texas.

Spanning the early 1800s through the early twentieth century, *Port of Promise* explores the lives of Jewish pioneers who established

businesses, built thriving communities, strengthened civic institutions, and preserved their faith and traditions while forging new lives on the Texas frontier.

At the heart of the exhibition is the extraordinary story of the Galveston Movement, one of the most significant immigration efforts in American history. More than 10,000 Jewish immigrants entered the United States through the Port of Galveston during this time.

The exhibit is developed in partnership with the South Texas

Jewish Archives at Rice University and descendants of Galveston Movement families. In addition to the exhibition, an educational initiative designed to introduce students to this important chapter of Texas will begin. Through the Museum's traveling Mini Museums, classroom resources and teacher programming, students across Texas will have the opportunity to explore the history and lasting impact of Jewish pioneers in their own communities. For more information, visit www.thebryanmuseum.org. 

Tumbleweed Smith, aka Bob Lewis, has had a syndicated statewide radio show, *The Sound of Texas*, and newspaper columns, *Texas Stories*, in over twenty-five newspapers for the past fifty-plus years. His subjects are interesting people, places and events in the state of Texas. Many of his interviews have been with Jews, some of whom were TJHS members. He has agreed to share some of those interviews with *The TJHS Magazine*. We will begin with the following and have more in the future.

Dismantling Aircraft Carriers

by Tumbleweed Smith

Michael Furgatch is involved in a fascinating business in Brownsville, Texas.

“It’s a scrap recycling but it’s ships dismantling,” he says. “We take government ships, private ships, commercial ships, offshore drilling rigs, barges, whatever, and we dismantle them. That means cutting them up for scrap and recycling all the materials. The government ships come from the east coast and the west coast. The private ships are all U.S. vessels. In fact, all the ships we work with are U.S. made. The reason for that has to do with hazardous materials. Asbestos is probably the most common. There’s lots of rules and regulations. Basically, we’re governed by every government agency with an acronym EPA, OSHA, and others that govern proper ways to dispose of hazardous materials. It’s illegal to import hazardous materials so any foreign made vessels that have hazardous materials on them cannot be brought into the country for dismantling.”

It’s a huge business with hundreds of employees. “There are three ship dismantling companies in Brownsville. It has become the ship dismantling capital of the world. There’s a place in Mobile, Alabama that dabbles in it, but not much,” said Michael.

He was involved in taking apart the aircraft carrier Saratoga. “The Saratoga was nearly a thousand feet long. That’s more than three football fields, and about 65,000 tons. You think your car might be a ton and a half, so you can compare that.”

The companies in Brownsville take ships apart and sell the resulting materials. “We have one that we are currently buying in San Diego, California. We’ve had a crew out there for two weeks preparing it to be towed by tugboat. Sometimes they come under their own power, but usually they are towed by tugboat. We’re preparing it to come through the Panama Canal. It will come floating through

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Magic in Medicine

by Tumbleweed Smith

Dr. Hy Penn was a pediatrician in Houston for thirty-six years and is now retired. He did magic tricks for his young patients. “I had patients who would fake illness just to be able to come to the doctor to see magic. After they got to the office, they would tell their mother, ‘I’m feeling better, now can I see some magic?’ I would always oblige. I would do card tricks, make things disappear, appear, or change. I always had to have something new because I had some patients who would always ask for a new trick to see.”

He has been doing magic tricks for a long time. His grandmother encouraged his magic. “She was living in New York when I was younger and would send me magic tricks in the mail. I would work on them, and by the fifth grade, I was performing for my brother’s friends. It became a life-long hobby.”

He saw kids in hospitals. “I walk into the room, and they are not smiling and look sad. They may have cancer with multiple IVs in them. When I leave, they will be happy, laughing, and excited. It is rewarding to see that.”

Dr. Penn is in several organizations having to do with magic. He says it is good to be a part of that fraternity and that is where he has learned new tricks. He has also written material for a seminar for doctors to be presented in a course that he calls continuing medical education with magic. “I teach them how to use magic tricks in their practice to make their patients comfortable so they will not run away.”

He performs for non-profit groups and schools and does not accept money for it. He does it for fun. Dr. Penn’s parents were Holocaust survivors. “They didn’t talk much about it when we were young, but everybody knew my mother was a survivor because she had a number tattoo on her left forearm. She was in nine different death camps. People knew her story, and she was not ashamed to talk about it when people asked about her number. She never

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Request from Graduate Student at UT-San Antonio

An undergraduate history student at the University of Texas/SA, Eric Lane, is seeking participants for his senior seminar project on the Soviet Jewry Movement in Texas. His request is as follows:

"I'm reaching out for an ambitious project, my senior thesis, where I am focusing on Texas Jews participation in the Free Soviet Jewry movement in the late 20th century, specifically in Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. I want to hear

the stories of those who took part, whether in a leadership role, simply attending an event, or anything in between. I would also like to hear from former Soviet Jews who now live in those cities. Even if you are in none of those categories, please share with your communities and network.

Most of the academic literature on the Free Soviet Jewry movement focuses on the national level or on cities considered major to the movement. This project seeks to highlight Texas cities and their Jewish communities to explore this understudied area and contribute to the scholarship on southern Jewry, social movements, and more.

Interviews may be conducted in person, via Zoom or via telephone. Recorded conversations will remain private with one copy for the interviewer (me) and one for the person being interviewed. If you are interested in being interviewed, would like

more information, or have questions or thoughts to share please reach out to me at ericmeyerlane@gmail.com or fill out the Google form at <http://forms.gle/2WHLfZPLHszT93zL8>. Any help is appreciated. Thank you."



Dismantling Aircraft Carriers, continued from page 8

the canal, then come on up to Brownsville. When it's sitting on the water, we'll start taking pieces from it to make it lighter. When it gets light enough, we'll start dragging it onto dry land by ramp. We'll bring up the front of the ship and cut out a chunk and drag it up again and cut off another chunk until it's all gone. The dismantling starts on water and ends up on land."

Michael started in the dismantling business out of college in 1973. He worked dismantling two aircraft carriers, the Forrestal and the Constellation. It's a \$2,000,000 job to get a large ship from San Diego to Brownsville. When the ship dismantling business slowed down in Brownsville, Michael got a job managing a department store and was in that field for sixteen years. He decided he was missing the dismantling business, so he got back into it.

"It's the most fascinating thing in the world. No two days are alike and I like that," said Michael. 

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hid it from anyone. As we became older, they started talking more and more and I think they finally realized that if they didn't talk about it, no one would know their story and what happened during that terrible time in history. Even though they went through terrible times, they taught us it was important to not look back; to continually move forward and do the right thing in life."

Dr. Penn is a docent at the Holocaust Museum Houston. "In the world today it's important not to forget the past. That's how things repeat themselves if you don't remember what happened." 

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*. 

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 

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

Rosalee Cohen and the Cohen, Kirschbaum, Robinson Families

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.

While rummaging through our archives at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, I ran across an obituary for Rosalee Cohn Cohen, born in New Braunfels in 1920 (on Erev Yom Kippur) and living 105 years, dying in Dallas in October of 2025. Her photo shows a smiling, dignified woman with lovely silver hair. I decided to learn more about her family and the life she lived for over a century.

Rosalee's father, Jacob "Jake" Cohn (1886-1966), came to Galveston from Poland, where his parents owned a butcher shop. His birth name was different, but a Rabbi Jacob Cohn had befriended him, and when he arrived in Galveston and they asked his name, he said Jacob Cohn. In a 2013 oral history, Rosalee speculated that he was worried about the reach of the Polish army.¹ Her mother Goldie Thomashevsky (changed to Thomas) (1891-1970) was from Russia (Ukraine) and emigrated to Philadel-

phia when she was 14. Rosalee did not know how Jake and Goldie met, but they married in 1919. Jacob created a kosher home in Dallas so he could bring his mother, brother, and aunt over.

Jacob was approached by a clothing manufacturer from New

Braunfels, and the family moved there when Rosalee was four, around 1924. She recalled a neighbor telling her they were going to put her parents in a boxcar and throw them in the river. She ran home crying and the maid comforted her and told her to pay no attention.



Rosalee Cohn Cohen, photo available at several online locations, such as Rosalee Cohen Obituary (1920 - 2025) - Dallas, TX - Dallas Morning News

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The family moved back to Dallas when Rosalee was eleven years old, her sister Bernice (the family called her Baby Doll, shortened to Babe or Bebe) two years older. Jacob worked for Neiman-Marcus until there was a dispute over salary. He chased Al Neiman through the store with a pair of scissors, according to Rosalee, then went to work for Sanger Brothers before founding Cohen Garment Company on Commerce Street which lasted for over twenty years, making blouses called “Rosalee,” designed by Goldie.

Rosalee had a happy childhood in Dallas with Jewish neighbors all around. She would go with Bernice and a cousin downtown on the streetcar for three cents to see the movies. They went swimming in White Rock Lake. She attended Colonial Hill Elementary and Forest Avenue High School (which was 25% Jewish), where she enjoyed singing and acting in school plays. She recalled anti-Semitic acts of the principal, such as holding cheerleader tryouts on Yom Kippur.

Her college studies began at the University of Texas, where she and her friends pledged Delta Phi Epsilon, but when Jake had a heart attack, Rosalee returned to Dallas to help Goldie run the business. A blind date for the Texas-OU game suggested she enroll at the University of Oklahoma. Her father wanted her back in school, so she went to OU. When her boyfriend flunked out, Jake suggested she come back to Dallas and attend SMU, where she pledged Delta Rho. She began as an education major, but she was told Dallas Independent School District would not hire her unless she was an “A” student. As a “B” student, she decided to change her major to sociology. She graduated from SMU, her third university. Later on, her

husband would tease her about why didn’t she go to Texas A & M, too, and she pointed out they didn’t accept women in her day.

In 1942 Rosalee married Cyril Morton Cohen, whom she had known since she was twelve years old. He lived with his grandmother and used to bicycle to see Rosalee and “pump” her to the movies. She told her maid, “That’s the boy I’m gonna marry,” and thirteen years later she did, when he came home from the army. They married at the Melrose Hotel and honeymooned in New Orleans.

Cyril was born in Waco in 1920. He attended the Gulfport Military Academy and LSU. In Dallas, the newlyweds rented an efficiency apartment with a Murphy bed.² The first time the 86-pound bride pulled it down, she went right back up with it! They built their first house on a GI loan. After the children arrived, they moved to a larger house. When the children went off to college, they downsized to their third and final



Cyril Morton Cohen, accessed at Cyril Morton “Peepo” Cohen (1920-2004) - Find a Grave.

house.

Rosalee went to work for the Corps of Engineers when the war broke out, staying there until the war ended. She became a social worker for Dallas County Welfare. Rosalee also taught Sunday School at Congregation Shearith Israel where she was a secretary. She served as Sisterhood president at Temple Emanu-El.

Rosalee and Cyril were married over 50 years and had four children. Harvey Bennett Cohen was born in 1948, but died four days later. His death certificate lists intestinal obstruction and heart failure as the causes of death. He was buried at Shearith Israel Cemetery in Dallas. There were three surviving children: Donald, a surgeon who lived in South Carolina at the time of her death, Cindy Timm who lived in Arkansas and raised greyhounds, and Lori Droppo, a teacher, of Dallas. There were many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.³ Cyril died in 2004.

As I explored Rosalee’s extended family on findagrave.com, I was struck by the fact that family members came from Poland, Russia, Manhattan, Romania, Dallas, New Jersey, and Baltimore and almost all made their way to Dallas, Texas and lived there the rest of their lives.⁴ Cyril’s father, Philip Morris Cohen (1892-1978) was born in Manhattan. He served in the army in World War I. Cyril’s mother, Freda Robinson Cohen (1894-1972) was born and died in Dallas. Freda’s parents were Rubin (1865-1952) and Sarah Fannie Shapiro Robinson (1865-1926). They were born in Russia/Poland and lived in Dallas by the time of the 1900 census. Rubin was a dry goods peddler. They died in Dallas.⁵

Freda’s brother Nathan Robinson (1903-1964) was born and died in Dallas. His wife was Alta Kronen-

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berg (1907-1960) who was born in Baltimore and died in Dallas. Freda's brother Louis R. Robinson (1887-1968), was born in Poland and died in Dallas. The 1900 census shows Louis the oldest child with four sisters.⁶ This is where the Kirschbaums enter the picture. Louis married Adeline Kirschbaum (1895-1967), born in Romania and one of at least eight children. The Kirschbaums were a Yiddish-speaking family. Her father was a carpenter. Adeline and her older sister worked in a department store as saleswoman and cashier. Their parents were both born in Romania and died in Dallas.⁷ Louis and Adeline Robinson had a daughter, Sylvia (1918-2015), who was born and died in Dallas.

Adeline's younger brother was Maurice Leon Kirschbaum (1900-1972), also born in Romania. He married Ida Berman (1901-1988) in 1922 in Sweetwater and moved to Colorado City the next year. Maurice owned Kirschbaum Appliance in Colorado City, Texas for over fifty years. He was a member of the Lions Club, the Order of Arrow for Boy Scouts, and the National Camp Fraternity for Boy Scouts. When he died after a short illness, funeral services were held at the First Baptist Church in Colorado City with Rev. Glenn Roenfeldt officiating before services in Dallas at Lefkowitz Chapel with Rabbi Gerald Klein officiating. Maurice Kirschbaum was buried at Temple Emanu-El Cemetery in Dallas.⁸

Maurice's wife, Ida, was born in New Jersey, died in Abilene where she was living in a nursing home, and was buried in Dallas. She grew up in Sweetwater. Ida was active in the business community, serving as president of the Business and Professional Women's Club for several terms. She was active in the Eastern Star, serving as Worthy Matron. She

was given lifetime memberships for service to both organizations. Memorial contributions were requested for Alzheimer disease research.⁹

Ida's father, Herman, was born in Lithuania in 1866 and came to the United States as a young man, settling in New York. He moved to Lakewood, New Jersey and then to Sweetwater where he lived for 43 years. He was in the grocery and dry goods business. He and Annie Shelsansky Berman (1873-1957) were married in Philadelphia and were together for 54 years. Annie was born in Russia. In 1953, Herman returned home from a hospital stay, and was found dead in his bed the next morning. Annie died in Big Spring four years later. They are both buried in Fort Worth.

Maurice and Ida Kirschbaum had one son, Robert Melton, born in Dallas in 1923. In 1947, he married Frances Palmer who was born in 1927 in Hamlin, Texas, a small agricultural and oil-patch community about thirty miles north of Abilene. Like Robert's parents, they lived in Colorado City. Robert was a Jaycee director and past president, and a state director. He was past Worshipful Master at the Masonic Lodge. Frances was active in Eastern Star activities and was local state director for the Jayceettes. Her family members lived in Sweetwater and Dallas. They had two children, a daughter Susan, and a son Joe.

While vacationing in Mexico in 1958, their private plane crashed and they were both killed, along with the pilot, Robert's fellow Jaycee director. The pilot's wife survived in extremely critical condition with broken arms, legs, and chest injuries. She soon succumbed to her injuries. They were on their way home from Monterrey when the plane went down in Mamulique Pass, about forty miles from Monterrey. Robert and Frances

were buried in Sweetwater. Susan and Joe (named for his great-grandfather) were aged 9 and 5, respectively, at the time of the fatal crash.⁸⁰

The Cohen-Kirschbaum-Robinson families had stories of success and tragedy, with birth, death, and/or burial in Dallas as a common thread. Because of our archives and websites like findagrave.com, we can learn a little about their lives.

Endnotes

- ¹ Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Box 3A168; Dallas Jewish Historical Society with Clint Reisner, 2013 accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAdu43qyM0>,
- ² A Murphy bed is hinged at one end to fold against a wall. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murphy_bed
- ³ Ibid.; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/288556814/rosalee-cohen>; <https://obits.dallasnews.com/us/obituaries/dallasmorningnews/name/rosalee-cohen-obituary?id=59940496>; https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/288569817/harvey_bennett-cohen. TJHS volunteer Kathy Kravitz added the death certificate to the site; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112248848/goldie-cohn>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112248820/jacob-cohn>; https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9710555/cyril_morton-cohen
- ⁴ Her sister Bernice married a Missouri boy and lived in the St. Louis area. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167739004/bernice-kayman>; https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167739129/melvin_jerome-kayman
- ⁵ https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/40679415/philip_morris-cohen; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/40679452/freda-cohen>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/128377470/rubin-robinson/flower>; https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/128376900/sarah_fannie-robinson

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⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115458583/nathan-joseph-robinson>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115459497/alta-robinson>; https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/40679228/louis_r-robinson

⁷ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/52719501/joseph-kirschbaum>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/52719621/lena-kirschbaum>

⁸ https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46069598/maurice_leon-kirschbaum; Colorado City Record, September 7, 1972.

⁹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46069642/ida-kirschbaum>, Colorado City Record, April 28, 1988. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/28891414/herman-berman>; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/28891599/annie-berman>

¹⁰ https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/15516190/robert_melton-kirschbaum; The Abilene Reporter, March 13, 1958; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/15516189/frances-kirschbaum>

Welcome New Members!

Marion Bell

Houston, Texas

Jack Cohen & Rose Prolet

Houston, Texas

Sharon Fisherman

Lakeway, Texas

Samantha & Glen Harris

Gun Barrel City, Texas

Connie Pollon

Houston, Texas

Martin & Karen Sosland

Houston, Texas

Tommy Stanley

Fort Worth, Texas

Meet Your Board

Marilyn Lippman, a Dallas resident with strong ties to Fayette County, serves as Treasurer of Temple Israel in Schulenberg, and is a Board Member of the Jewish Cemetery in Hallettsville. After a forty-year career as a Business Operations and Project Manager, Marilyn retired from corporate America and devotes much of her time to community service, gardening, and historical preservation. In her leisure time, Marilyn enjoys walking her Goldendoodle, Paddington, taking Tai Chi classes, and reading. Marilyn is one of the Chairs of the



TJHS Meeting Committee.

Hy Penn is a native Houstonian and the oldest child of Holocaust survivors, Linda and Morris I. Penn. He graduated from the University of Texas/Austin and the University of Texas Medical School/San Antonio, with a residency at the University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston. He is retired after thirty-five years as a pediatrician in the Kingwood-Humble area. He currently serves as a Docent at the Holocaust Museum of Houston, and serves on the Board. He is also a Board Member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston. Hy is married to Lynn Gordon Penn for thirty-eight years, and performs as the Magician, "The Great Hydini."



Lynda F. Furgatch was raised in Abilene and now lives in Brownsville. While in high school, she participated in TOFTY (now NFTY-TOR). She is married to Michael Furgatch, who is also a TJHS Board Member, and they have two children and three grandchildren. Her many activities include Sisterhood President, member of Hadassah, President of Valley Baptist Auxiliary volunteers, and helps coordinate Temple Social activities. She lived in Puerto Rico for eight months before the hurricane. Lynda has been a TV & Radio spokesperson and has been in commercials since 1975. She has worked in



Customer Service for Ford for twenty-three years and enjoys cooking, exercising and reading. Currently she helps produce and direct corporate videos and is semi-retired. Lynda is one of the Chairs for the Meeting Committee.

Amy Milstein is from Frisco, and grew up in Longview. She graduated from the University of Texas/Austin. She has been teaching for twenty-eight years – English for fifteen and now she teaches electives. Amy loves to travel and has taken several trips with TJHS. In her spare time, she likes to scrapbook, read and attend movies. She has been involved with TJHS for many years and is the daughter of Past President Rusty Milstein.



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Meet Your Board, continued from page 13

Jules Dorfman Frapart, was born in Pine Bluff, AK, and grew up in Brownsville surfing, playing music, and working in the family business. He attended the University of Texas/Austin, where he met and married his wife, Phyllis (Goldstein). They returned to Brownsville where they opened and ran a jewelry store and a children's clothing store for twenty years. He completed his bachelor's degree from University of Texas/Brownsville, and was the textbook



manager for UT/Brownsville for fifteen years. Jules taught middle school for Brownsville ISD for five years and has sold insurance policies for New York Life Insurance Company after completing his insurance certification. Jules has been active in the Jewish community of Brownsville, and is involved with the Masonic Fraternity. He is a member of the Sons of the Republic of Texas. He belongs to the Chais of Texas, a Jewish Motorcycle Alliance, Texas Club, and he made several trips a year on his motorcycle with the Free Masons Riding Club. He and Phyllis have two daughters and four grandchildren living in Boston, MA. Jules is now retired and enjoying life. He and Phyllis recently moved to Austin after forty-eight years in Brownsville.

Emily Williams is an artist and educator interested in investigating memory, identity, and placemaking through photography, writing, and audio. She holds a BA in Fine



Arts and History from Haverford College and an MFA in photography from Louisiana State University. After earning her MFA, she served as a curatorial fellow at The Do Good Fund in Columbus, GA. Emily is currently in her second year in the American Studies PhD program at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where she is a Tau Epsilon Phi Fellow at the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies. Her work, Titled We Had to Know Who We Were: We Had to Know Who We Weren't documents Jewish communities, past and present, in the rural and small-town Deep South through photography and oral history interviews. She has received support from the Texas Jewish Historical Society, the Southern Jewish Historical Society, the LSU School of Art Graduate Student Scholarly & Creative Activity Support Fund, the Alabama Folklife Association, and the Texas State Historical Association.

Joyce Wormser, Pearland, was born in Corpus Christi and is married to Marc, TJHS Past President (2012-2014). 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.)



Sheldon Lippman, TJHS President, grew up in Schulenburg and attended the University of Texas, Austin, where he earned a Bachelor of Journalism degree. He began his communications career in Washington, D.C., working at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (1975-81). He returned to UT/Austin to get a M.A. in TV-Film and was media director for Keep Texas Beautiful (1984-87). He returned to Washington where he worked at the National Academy of Sciences on a PBS science documentary series and for the next thirty-plus years at the World Bank as a writer/editor. Sheldon returned to Austin in 2017 to "semi retire." He served TJHS as President 2021-2023.



Jeff Levine, 1st Vice-President, was born in Houston, but spent much of his life up north. He had the opportunity to return to Texas in 2017, when they moved to Austin. He and his wife, Gail, have two sons who both live in Los Angeles, CA. Jeff and Gail are musicians and enjoy fitness and the outdoors. Jeff is a retired IBM marketing manager.



Scott Langston, 2nd Vice-President, retired from Texas Christian University where he taught for nearly twenty years, and was the university's inaugural Native American Nations and Communities Liaison and Instructor in Religion. He has worked extensively with Native American communities, as well as researching and publishing widely in the fields of Southern Jewish History and the reception history of the Bible. Scott is a past president of the South-

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Meet Your Board, continued from page 14

ern Jewish Historical Society and the current editor for the Primary Sources section of the *Journal, Southern Jewish History*. While doing graduate work in the field of ancient Near Eastern Archaeology he travelled to Israel many times, including excavating four seasons at Tel Beth Shean and Tel Batash (Timnah.) The Southern Jewish Historical Society awarded him the Samuel Proctor Award for Outstanding Career Scholarship in Southern Jewish History. He received TCU's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award, and Plume Award for his work in the university's Native American and Indigenous Peoples Initiative. Scott was born in Fort Worth, but grew up in Conroe, TX. He is married with three children and two grandsons, and currently lives in Weatherford, Texas.

John P. Campbell, Recording Secretary and Chair of the Grant Committee lives in Austin. He received a B.A. from Tulane University and a M.P.A. from the LBJ School at UT-Austin. In 1984-1986 he was on the staff of the Texas Select Committee on Higher Education. In 1987-2004 he was a staff member of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC. In 2005 he became the Executive Director of the Inter-Academy Council in Amsterdam, Netherlands. He retired from this position in 2014.

Susan Goodman Novick is a fourth-generation El Pasoan, and fifth-generation Texan. She has written several books and articles about El Paso families. She holds a Master of Library Science degree from The Catholic University of America, a Master of Public Affairs degree from The University of Texas/Austin, and an A.B. in History from Smith College. She is a Certified Archivist who works with individuals, organizations, and businesses to find, save, understand, and explain their history. She is a Trustee Emerita of Smith College and mentors students in El Paso who attend Smith. She and her husband, David, are active members of Temple Mount Sinai in El Paso. Susan serves as Corresponding Secretary of TJHS.

Robert Markman is from Houston and became interested in Texas Jewish History when he discovered that his Great-Grandfather arrived in Galveston in 1907, with the assistance of Rabbi Henry Cohen. He works in the insurance industry and enjoys restoring classic cars. He also manages the historical buildings that were owned by his father, and is proud to say that his family has been in Texas for close to 125 Years.

Sally Drayer, Historian-Archivist, is from Dallas, and is a Past President of TJHS (2008-2010). She grew up in Alice, and has three children and one granddaughter. Sally is a substitute teacher at a private Jewish day school, and volunteers at the Dallas Museum of Art for the Arts and Letters Live Program. She is the Archivist for TJHS and delivers items to the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History in Austin.

Vickie Vogel, lives in Austin and is a Past President of TJHS (2006-2008). She has visited all seven continents and all fifty states. She is a retired attorney who practiced primarily criminal law. She enjoys baseball, travel, needlework, and reading, and serves as Parliamentarian.

Michael Furgatch, 3rd Vice-President, 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 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. 



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.



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.

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. • 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 and click on "Give to Kessler Fund" to make your donation on line with a credit card.

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

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Choose category of annual TJHS Membership

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

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