



Growing Up Cohn in New Mexico

The following is a condensed version of a presentation at the 32nd NMJHS Fall Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in November 2018.

by Yvette Cohn Stoor

The focus of my presentation was Jewish Identities: Acculturation and Assimilation. When submitting the proposal, my desire was to share my unique experience of growing up with the last name Cohn in New Mexico. Many might say, “big deal,” and for the locals, quite frankly, it wasn’t. In our state, it is more about what family you come from: ; the Baca’s from Socorro, the Gallegos’ from Questa, the Cohn’s from Taos. It wasn’t until I was older and “transplants” from outside New Mexico would question me about my last name. Up to that time, I had experienced a few, but very impactful, incidents based on my surname.

Born in New Mexico to John Joseph Cohn and Fedelina Silva Cohn, I was raised Catholic with rich New Mexico traditions. However, my father always made a point to emphasize that we were German-Jewish. As a young girl, I never questioned what being “German-Jewish” meant. I was proud of being a German Jew, as my father and his father seemed to be. I owned my Spanish heritage also, but I found it interesting that people would proffer an argument about “Cohn.” Wanting to tell me who I was or wasn’t. It was frustrating, and I didn’t like being put in a position of explaining and, at times, defending my last name. I became determined to educate myself on my Jewish lineage and try to understand why the Jewish traditions and religion were not passed down through the generations in New Mexico and Southern Colorado.

Take a moment and think about your given last name. What does it mean to you? Is it part of your identity? Does it have deeper historical meaning to you? Does it have cultural connotations affiliated with it? I would argue that many people make assumptions when they



Max Cohn & Co. Wroclaw, Poland

hear a name. For example, when you meet a Goldberg, Levy, Feldberg, Katz, or Magid, do you think they must be a Jewish family? When you hear Baca, Sanchez, Chavez, Martinez, do you think Spanish and most likely Catholic? There are names that are more non-descript, like Smith, Anderson, Johnson and White. But, there are certain names that carry more than just the letters that comprise them. The importance and meaning of one’s name was highly emphasized and demonstrated during my time as chairperson for the Primeras Familias Project for the New Mexico

Genealogical Society, (NMGS). We were partnered with the NMGS DNA project and were verifying lineages through documents, baptismal, marriage, and death records. The effort was to confirm a lineage back to the Oñate (1598) and the de Vargas Reconquista (1693) time periods in New Mexico. Once the family lineage was confirmed, we would ask a male descendant to test their Y-DNA. With numerous documented lineages and corresponding DNA samples, our goal was to confirm a “probable” progenitor of a surname.



Yvette Cohn Stoor

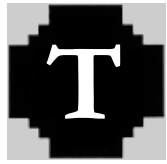
For example, if you had 20 males with documented lineages with the surname Silva, and the lineages pointed to the same ancestor, and their DNA’s matched, you could zero in on the the original Silva who settled in New Mexico. One could then say, with high probability, that the original Silva pioneer was their ancestor. However, for many families, there

(continued on p. 3)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Growing Up Cohn.....1
- President’s Column.....2
- The German Jewish Kulturbund.....6
- Society’s Annual Conference in Taos.....7
- Nooks and Crannies of New York City....8
- NMJHS Annual Business Meeting.....11
- Calendar of Upcoming Events.....12

President's Column



he “L’Chaim New Mexico Life & Legacy” program provides us with a first-time opportunity to ensure our work and mission will be shared with future generations by establishing an endowment. We have a great head start thanks to many generous member donors!

Our *Legacy* Team had a very successful first year. In fact, we were the first among the 10 participating New Mexico Jewish organizations to reach the first-year goal to obtain 18 Letters of Intent (LOIs) or pledges. L’Chaim New Mexico is a program established and supported by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Mr. Grinspoon, a major Jewish philanthropist, created the program to help Jewish organizations across the U.S., secular and non-secular, to ensure that their mission and work will continue for future generations. Life & Legacy encourages after-life gifts as well as current gifts through a variety of financial arrangements.

Because we reached our first-year goal, NMJHS will receive a \$5,000 incentive grant this summer, which may be used at our discretion determined by the board. Life & Legacy has a second-year effort to obtain an additional 18 LOIs by March 30, 2020, and if successful,

we will receive a second \$5,000 incentive grant. We are already off to a great beginning in Year 2, but we need your help and support to get us to the finish line. Won’t you please join us?



*NMJHS President
Linda Goff*

In each *Legacy* issue, we list those individuals who are supporting NMJHS in both Years 1 & 2, and we also will recognize and celebrate their participation throughout the next two years. In New Mexico, the Grinspoon Foundation is partnering with both the Federation and the Jewish Community Foundation of New Mexico.

Be sure to check out our Life and Legacy Pioneer Society participant list, to date, appearing in this as well as future issues. Please join us to realize our Year 2 of this exciting program. Call the NMJHS office for more information and to have a conversation with one of our Team members: Lance Bell, Diane Chodorow, Naomi Sandweiss, and Linda Goff.

We invite you to help us reach our Year 2 goal—an additional 18.✧

NMJHS Officers and Board of Directors

Officers

Linda A. Goff, Ph.D., President
Naomi Sandweiss, Vice-President
Alan Chodorow, Treasurer
Sandra Dietz, Corresponding Secretary
Rae Siporin, Ph.D. Recording Secretary

Directors

Paula Amar Schwartz, Ph.D.,
Immediate Past President
Victoria Baker
Wayne Bobrick
Gordon Bronitsky, Ph.D.
Jeff Brown, Ph.D.
Diane Chodorow
Marcia Greenbaum
David London
Leba Freed Pierce
Leona Rubin
Stuart Simon
Marcia Torobin
Sarah Winger

Mission Statement

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is a secular organization that promotes greater knowledge and understanding of New Mexico’s diverse Jewish experiences within a broad cultural context.

Legacy is the quarterly newsletter of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society
5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Telephone: (505) 348-4471
Fax: (505) 821-3351
website: www.nmjhs.org
email: admin@nmjhs.org

Administrator: Claudia Bloom
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday/Thursday
9:30-1:30 PM

Editor: Estelle Miller
Copy Editor: Barbara Ruzinsky
Layout: DT Publishing, Santa Fe
Printing: Minuteman Press, Albuquerque
Mailing: Southwest Mail Center, Albuquerque

NMJHS is a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico.

Sharing Your Family History

NMJHS will continue to collect New Mexico Jewish family histories through oral interviews to share with the public and preserve in the New Mexico State Archives. If you are interested in participating, contact the NMJHS office:

5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109
505-348-4471, admin@nmjhs.org

Welcome New Members

Gordon Bronitsky
Martin & Elynn Finston
Joe Sabatini

NMJHS is on Facebook and Twitter.
Please “like” us at
[https://www.facebook.com/
NewMexicoJewishHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoJewishHistoricalSociety)
and follow us on Twitter at
<https://twitter.com/NMJewishHS>.

Growing Up Cohn in New Mexico *(continued from p. 1)*

can be exceptions. To name a few: an adoption, a child taking the name of the mother, or a buried family secret, can play havoc with a family line. What if two of the 20 male DNA testers don't match? In our experience at NMGS, the reactions were intense. So much so, that we published a collaborative three-part article about possible outcomes and preparing oneself for unexpected discoveries (New Mexico Genealogist, September 2016 Vol. 55 No. 3). It was upsetting and very emotional for some testers to find out they most likely weren't a "true blood" descendant of their family name. A person can have pride and deep emotional attachment to their roots, which is identified and indelibly linked to their last name. How would you feel if someone stated you weren't a true descendant of your surname?

The Name does Matter to Some....

Throughout my life, I had various experiences involving my last name that surprised me, and made me aware that the name I carried could provoke different reactions. At the presentation in November, I shared many, but for space considerations will share the most impactful in this article. Encounters ranged from being called a J.A.P. and not knowing what that was (Jewish-American Princess) to more biting experiences.

In the early '80s, when I was a student at the University of New Mexico, I was in a relationship with a student who was attending the University of Texas El Paso. To maintain our relationship, we wrote letters frequently (no cell

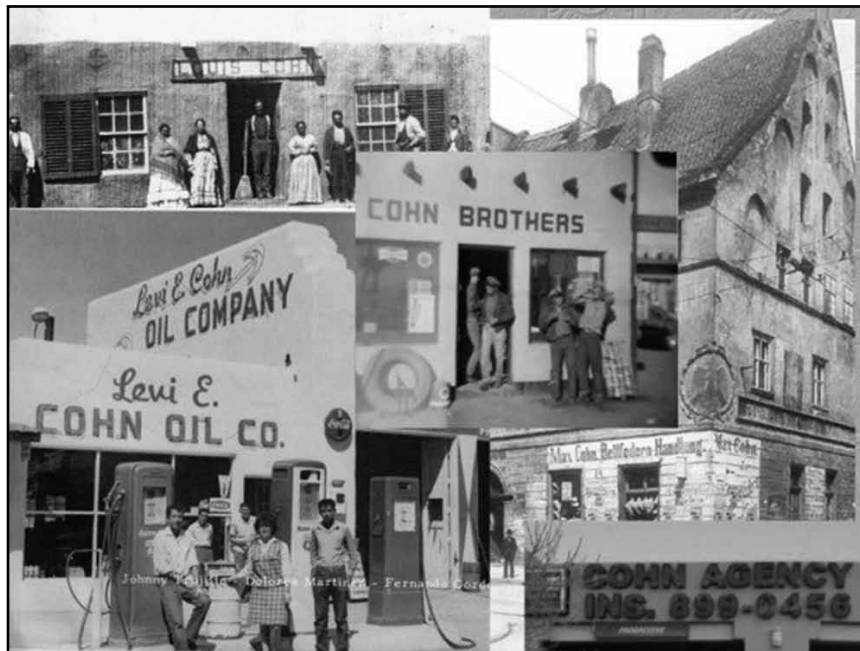
phones back then!) and we would visit each other when we could. After two years of dating, he had met my parents and stayed in their home. Upon his graduation, he invited me to meet his family in Montana. I wrote him a letter to make plans for the trip and he quickly responded. He said his mother noticed my name on the envelope and wanted to know if I was Jewish. I wrote back stating that I was a practicing Catholic, but my surname and heritage was indeed German-Jewish. I never heard from him

was and I answered "Silva." They asked if I would be willing to utilize the name Silva for all work-related purposes. I told them I didn't understand why this would be necessary. They explained that my Cohn last name was "too ethnic" and that in the climate of the time, and the locations we would be travelling, that my name could put the crew, the passengers, and me at risk. I was shocked! Isn't Silva ethnic? I reluctantly agreed to the arrangement for the name change, for work purposes only, because I badly needed the job. However, the airline soon went bankrupt and I chose to believe it was Divine intervention.

Being raised in New Mexico with a Catholic upbringing, church celebrations played a role in our lives; we attended fiestas for the Saints, particularly Our Lady (the Virgin Mary). My grandmother put up beautiful altars in honor of the holy days. My parents enrolled me in parochial kindergarten at age four. I was so excited to start school, having been envious of

my older sister who was in her second year. She would come home smelling of Big Chief Paper and #2 pencils, wearing the signature plaid parochial pleated skirt and suspenders. However, shortly after I started, I was put in the corner, not once, but several times. At naptime, the nun on duty would whack me on the front of my thighs; I tried so hard not to move, sometimes holding my breath, keeping my eyes shut tight so I would avoid the yardstick. I would lie on my stomach only to feel the sting on the backs of my knees. I was hesitant to tell my parents; they were strict disciplinarians and

(continued on p. 4)



Cohn Family Businesses 1800s to Present

again. I wrote again and called, but never received any response. I guess we know what his mother thought about Jews.

For the safety of our passengers....

During my third year at the university, I was offered a job by an airline to fly internationally, a goal for me, so I quickly accepted. I would attend training in Atlanta, Georgia, so in preparation for my new career, I withdrew from school and sold my furnishings. I received a phone call from the Human Resources department and they said they had to discuss a sensitive subject with me. They asked what my mother's maiden name



WWW.CHIZFILM.COM
Jonathan Chisdes

Owner & Publisher (505) 994-8470
jon1776@chizfilm.net (407) 314-7373

Joe's, celebrating and serving local farm products

casual excellence
at Breakfast
Lunch
Dinner
Saturday Brunch



OPEN DAILY
7:30 a.m. - 9 p.m.

(505) 471-3800
2801 Rodeo Rd Santa Fe
www.joesdining.com



TEMPLE BETH SHALOM
Many Voices, One Community

A Welcoming, Inclusive Community
Celebrating Reform Judaism

205 East Barcelona Road
Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87505

www.sftbs.org 505.982.1376

HOLOCAUST
&
INTOLERANCE
MUSEUM
OF
NEW MEXICO

616 Central Avenue SW
Albuquerque NM 87102
505-247-0606
info@nmholocaustmuseum.org
www.nmholocaustmuseum.org
mail: PO Box 1762
Albuquerque NM 87103-1762

Tuesday through Saturday
11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Santa Fe Jewish Film Festival



www.SantaFeJFF.org | 505.216.0672

ZAPLIN | LAMPERT GALLERY

RICHARD LAMPERT

651 Canyon Road
Santa Fe, New Mexico | 87501 | 505.982.6100
richard@zaplinlampert.com | www.zaplinlampert.com

Growing Up Cohn in New Mexico *(continued from p. 3)*

I could not give them a reason for my punishments. I wasn't doing anything wrong. When I did tell my parents, my father went to school with me and spoke with the administrator. She was at a loss for the reason for my punishment. My father withdrew me immediately. Later, he would tell me that he felt that I was singled out because of our last name. Interestingly, my sister did not endure the same treatment. *

It was a year later when my mother realized how much I identified as German-Jewish. After the first day of first grade, at dinner, she asked how my day was. She said I immediately broke down in tears, and explained that at lunch, another student had slapped me across the face. She asked, "Why?" I responded, "I told a girl she couldn't cut in the lunch line." "Was she Spanish like you hita?" my mom asked. "No", I responded, "she was German-Jewish like me". My father had a big smile on his face. She realized that I thought that every little black-haired, brown-eyed girl was German-Jewish, "like me".

When I was in 8th grade, my social studies teacher, Mrs. Vivian, asked me if I knew anything about the origin of my last name. I told her that I knew I was German-Jewish (imagine that), but hadn't learned much more. She encouraged me to write a paper about the Holocaust, which I did, centering on the horrors of Auschwitz. From then on, throughout high school and college English, I continued to focus my historical studies and papers on the Jewish experience. I had always identified myself as Spanish with German-Jewish heritage and as I learned more of the history, I soon recognized a

***Author's note: I will always respect what I learned from being raised Catholic and acknowledge that in most organized religions there may be people who assume judgment authority.**

deeper, more rooted tie to my Jewish tribe. I felt sadness, I felt anger, I felt defensiveness, and I felt pain. Alongside this research, I was also discovering my Spanish and probable Sephardic roots through my mother's lineages. The search became deeply personal for me and would provide familial parallels.

In the Winter 2013 issue of *Legacy*, I detailed my journey of researching my Jewish roots in "Eleven Million Steps, the Cohn Family Journey to Taos." That journey has continued with new discoveries, and an enriched understanding of my Jewish self. To encapsulate my Jewish heritage, my great-great Grandfather Louis Cohn emigrated from Breslau, Prussia, in 1863 and travelled the Santa Fe Trail, arriving in 1864. He partnered with a Spanish woman, Juana María Ruperta Valdez, and had seven children. Four survived and I am descendant of their youngest son, José Anastacio Ruperto Cohn. A search that began with the discovery of Louis Cohn's headstone in San Luis, Colorado, would take me all the way to Wroclaw, Poland. I was able to find rare documents in Wroclaw, confirming my third great-Grandparents identities and the locations of the family home and businesses. My Cohn family was active in the synagogue and their home was directly adjacent to the temple (Nowa Synagoga). The Nazis destroyed the temple and home in World War II; however the street locations remained intact.

It was extremely emotional and meaningful to walk where my family lived, worshiped, and worked, knowing what would transpire. Louis Cohn immigrated to America alone when he was 26 years old. Incredibly, in late 1869 at age 33, he made the long journey back to Prussia at the call of the Emperor to participate in the Franco-Prussian War. He would return to America in 1872. This showed his allegiance to his homeland and loyalty and love for his

(continued on p. 5)

Growing Up Cohn in New Mexico *(continued from p. 4)*

family that remained there. Standing in the Rynek (Market Square) in Wroclaw, I could imagine how painful it was to say goodbye a second time, knowing that Louis, my great-great grandfather, would most likely never return, or see his family again. Restrictions were being placed on Jewish people. In the archives in Poland, I would discover a picture of a cousin's family business in the Jewish Ghetto. In front was a speaker kiosk that was used to spread propaganda. The atmosphere was thick with antisemitism. The insanity embodied by Hitler and the Third Reich would soon arrive making it a deadly liability to be Jewish.

Was this the reason Louis Cohn did not pass down his Jewish life traditions and religion to his family? Yet, he made sure he passed down the knowledge and obvious pride he had for his German-Jewish heritage. In America, Louis Cohn survived and thrived. He owned over 2000 acres of land, homes, businesses, and served as a representative in the Colorado Legislature. Impossible accomplishments if he had remained in his homeland of Breslau. He would turn a blind eye when his partner, Juana María Ruperta Valdez, baptized their children in the Catholic Church. However, a marriage record has not been found for Louis Cohn and Juana Valdez. He named Juana and his children in his Last Will & Testament, designated a guardian, and apologized for keeping his partner and children a secret from his family in Breslau. Sadly, he also states he would not marry Juana. Juana had to petition for custody of her own children. Was this due to the Catholic Church not allowing a marriage unless he converted? Or, that he would not forsake his heritage and religion and marry outside of the set restrictions of his Jewish tradition and religion. He was not alone in the large number of Jewish immigrants that came to America for a new life. They would choose freedom and opportunity and let their previous lives quietly fade into the background.

In New Mexico and Colorado, the name Cohn was not a liability and would not provoke restrictions, prejudice, or worse. I rejoiced when my cousin discovered his letterhead from 1880. It speaks volumes, the elaborate script proclaiming, without directly saying, he was free and proud of his name and identity.

After Louis Cohn's untimely death, his young sons, ages 13 and 11, would struggle to get their bearings. It is not evident what religion they practiced. The marriage records I found were civil, and/or Protestant. A note of "dispensation from mixture religions granted" is found on my great-grandparents' 1909 marriage register entry. My father was baptized, and it was very interesting to see his last name Cohn double-underlined by the priest, when no others on the page were marked in any special way. In the vastness and hardship of life in Northern New Mexico, any tradition or religion that may have been passed down disappeared. However, the constant that did exist was the pride in the name and heritage. All the businesses from Louis Cohn down to present day bear the name Cohn.

The journey of discovering my Jewish roots was filled with fortuitous encounters. I met and worked with professors who encouraged my research. I have been invited to present my discoveries and history. I acquired a rare biography of Louis Cohn's cousin, Ferdinand Julius Cohn. I travelled to Wroclaw, Poland, and walked the streets where my family lived and owned businesses. I still encounter those who question my name and ask if I know what my name means. They still ask if I have made an effort to learn more about the name and its importance. I have, and I no longer get agitated or defensive when I'm told "you aren't Jewish because your mother isn't Jewish."

(continued on p. 6)

TEMPLE AARON

Celebrates Its 130th Anniversary

June 21-23, 2019
407 S. Maple Street
Trinidad, Colorado 81082

Information to Follow

Randy Rubín 303-905-2161
Raton, New Mexico info@templeaaron.org

K'hilah K'doshah - a sacred, caring,
committed Jewish community since 1897



"Seek Me and Live"

3800 Louisiana Blvd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Phone: 505-883-1818
www.congregationalbert.org

Stefanie Beninato

A Well-Born Guide / Have Ph.D. Will Travel

Original Tour

Jewish Legacy in New Mexico

www.swguides.com info@swguides.com
P.O. Box 1601 Santa Fe, NM 87504
505.988.8022



Tim Rivera
Owner-Funeral Director



(505) 989-7032
tim@riverafh.com

417 East Rodeo Road
Santa Fe, NM 87505



RUTHIE'S bagels

Boiling at
Rhubarb & Elliott Cafe
@ The JCC

Pre-order for pick up:

www.ruthiesbagels.com

5820 Wyoming Blvd NE Albuquerque NM 87109
botted@ruthiesbagels.com 505-246-9608



**NMJHS announces its
LIFE & LEGACY
“Pioneer” Society Donors!**

The following members have made their commitment to ensure our Legacy will be passed down to the next generations by contributing to our new Endowment Fund.

Year 1 Donors:

- Dorothy Corner Amsden
- Gloria Abella Ballen & Ron Duncan Hart
- Lance and Julia Bell
- Stuart Feen & Carol Sonnenschein
- Bill & Margrethe Feldman
- Carla Freeman, z”il
- Sheila Gershen
- Linda and Ed Goff
- Betty and Keith Harvie
- Kathleen Kahn Mahon
- Cynthia & David London
- Steve and Beth Moise
- Noel Pugach
- Bob Rosenstein
- Naomi Sandweiss
- Rae Siporin
- Anonymous

NMJHS Legacy Team:

- Lance Bell
- Diane Chodorow
- Linda Goff
- Naomi Sandweiss

Growing Up Cohn in New Mexico *(continued from p. 5)*

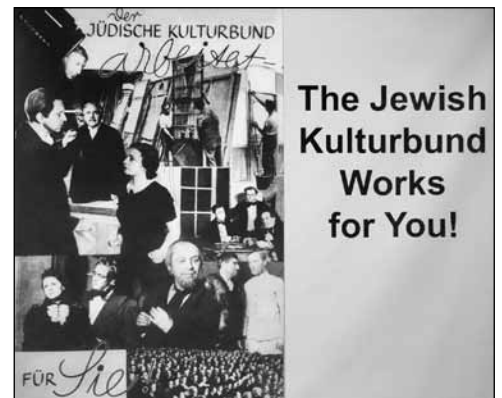
My brother and I have both tested our DNA and it confirms that our great-great grandparents were 100% Ashkenazi Jews. To our surprise, our mother tested and she has a percentage of Ashkenazi Jewish also. Like many native New Mexicans, we have a high percentage of Native American, Portuguese and Spanish, with a little Irish thrown in. I am proud of all of it and I own it, knowing more about my family’s journey than many will ever know about their own. The name Cohn comes with a rich and painful history, one

that is not only passed down through my lineage, but lives in my DNA. I am a culmination of many journeys, all of them important, and all of them a conquest of hardships and successes. For me, my confidence in my identity is strengthened and my quest to learn more will continue. My male Cohns, my tribe, carried the name through very dark and fearful times. No more debates or discussion. They survived and succeeded so that I can proudly say, “I am Cohn.”✡

“The German Jewish Kulturbund” with Steven Ovitsky May 19 at the JCC- Albuquerque



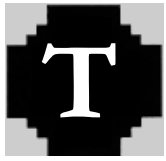
Steven Ovitsky discusses the role of the Kulturbund in Nazi Germany 1933-39



Notable figures of the Kulturbund, many of whom perished in the Holocaust.

Society's Annual Conference in Taos

by Naomi Sandweiss



The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society's annual conference will take place on November 9-10, 2019, at the Sagebrush

Hotel in Taos, New Mexico. The theme of this year's meeting is "Jewish Life in Taos and Northern New Mexico" and features lectures, art exhibits, meals and mingling.

Taos is described by many as a magical place, and it is home to several museums, the Taos Pueblo, and the Taos Jewish Center. Pre-conference activities include an optional Friday night service led by Rabbi Judith HaLevy on November 8. Conference goers can also elect to tour Taos Pueblo or the Rio Grande Gorge prior to the beginning of the official conference on Saturday, November 9.

The conference will kick off on Saturday, November 9, with a light lunch and presentation by Rabbi HaLevy who will share her story of living and worshiping in the Taos area. Other sessions include those by northern New Mexico artists and historians who will share information on their influences and the Jewish individuals who settled in Taos and founded new institutions, such as

First State Bank and the Taos Ski area. There will also be an opportunity to view artist Judy Chicago's *The Birth Project* at the Harwood Art Museum. Saturday activities will continue with an annual silent auction benefitting the Society, a reception and dinner. Artists will have their work for sale. Following dinner, we will be treated to Flamenco dancing, learn about Jewish influences within the art form, and conclude with an opportunity for everyone to learn a few moves.

On Sunday, November 10, participants will enjoy hearing from a panel of Taos residents, learning about the intersections of Jewish and other spiritual traditions in Taos and being introduced to the legendary story of Ernie Blake, z"l, and the development of the Taos ski tradition.

The Society will arrange bus transportation to Taos from Albuquerque and/or Santa Fe if there is enough interest.

Please look for registration information, which will be mailed to all current members later this summer, as well as additional information in October's *Legacy*. ☆

Many Thanks for Your Contributions

Heritage Partner

Steven Ovitsky

New Business Member

Ruth Rosenstein
d.b.a. Ruthie's Bagels/Rhubarb
and Elliott

Non-profit

Congregation B'nai Israel

New Life Member

Art Gardenswartz

Bus Transportation to Annual Conference

The society will arrange bus transportation to Taos from Albuquerque and/or Santa Fe if there is enough interest. If you want to be on a list for bus or shuttle, call Claudia, NMJHS Administrator, at 505-348-4471 during office hours 9:30-1:30 Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday, and your name will be put on a list.



NMJHS announces its LIFE & LEGACY Year 2 Campaign

Our "Pioneer" Society Donors!

The following members have made their commitment to ensure our Legacy will be passed down to the next generations by contributing to our new Endowment Fund. We reached our Year 1 goal of 18 Letters of Intent!

We are currently working hard to obtain the Year 2 goal of 18 additional Letters of Intent.

Won't you join us today?

Anonymous

Patricia Carlton

Alan & Diane Chodorow

Sandy Dietz

Elliott Gerson

Marcia and Paul Greenbaum

Jessica Herzstein

Fran Levine

Marcia Torobin

Murray Tucker

Sarah Winger

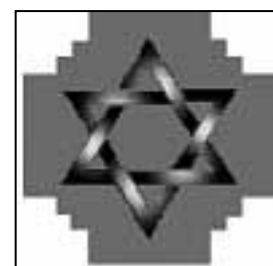
NMJHS Legacy Team:

Lance Bell

Diane Chodorow

Linda Goff

Naomi Sandweiss



Nooks and Crannies of New York City

by Justin Ferate

On behalf of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, *Nooks and Crannies of New York City*, with speaker Justin Ferate, was presented on Saturday, February 23, at Temple Beth Shalom in Santa Fe and then the following week, on Sunday, March 3, at the Albuquerque JCC.



New York City is rich with secretive delights. Waiting to be discovered are myriad offbeat landmarks, secret gardens, hidden houses, and covert byways. Take an armchair romp throughout New York and explore some of the city's great, but often overlooked treasures.

My presentation began with a classic Jewish question: *"Why did God create humankind?"* The answer is touching: *"Because God loves stories!"* It focused on countless details of New York – small and large, grand and intimate – the "worlds within worlds" that make New York City such a remarkable human enterprise.

In asking, *"What makes New York so special?"* the slide lecture began with an incredible array of details, from exotic and colorful block-long dragons in a Chinese New Year's parade to endearing and approachable sculptures by world-renowned artists, conceived to appeal to children. There were images ranging from the legendary ocean beaches of Coney Island (a community once noted for its Jewish carousel manufacturers who, back in Eastern Europe, had carved Arks of the Covenant instead of colorful and bejeweled horses, tigers, and lions) to the mid-1600s Bowne House, long affiliated with "The Flushing Remonstrance" – the internationally recognized protest that ultimately defined religious freedom for the United States.

There are perhaps surprising details for many who were unaware of the tremendous role of New York City before, during, and after the American Revolution. During the American Revolution, more lives were lost in the name of freedom in New York City than all the rest of what

would become the United States combined. As a result, New York possesses several impressive Revolutionary War monuments, such as the Fort Greene Martyrs' Monument (by architect Stanford White) that should be among the best known in the nation (but, sadly, are largely unacknowledged). It was in Staten Island, at the grand Dutch-era mansion – "Conference House" – that there was a valiant attempt to avoid the imminent American Revolution – a



Fort Greene Martyrs Monument

meeting that included Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge, on behalf of the Americans, and the brothers, Admiral Lord Richard Howe and General William Howe, on behalf of King George III of England. The attempt at resolution, as we all know, came to naught.

Buildings highlighted included the beloved Fraunces Tavern, on the waterfront where the Sons of the Revolution, dressed as "Indians," conducted the "New York Tea Party" throwing British-taxed tea into the New York

Harbor – only to be subsequently emulated a few weeks later in the Boston Harbor. Indeed, a British man-of-war shot a cannon ball through the roof of Fraunces Tavern to challenge the American patriots. At the end of the American Revolution, it was here, in the Long Room at Fraunces Tavern, that General George Washington bade farewell to his officers in the Continental Army. After the Revolution, Fraunces Tavern became the home of "The Confederation Congress" – the new nation's central government.



Justin Ferate

Since New York was this nation's first capital city, images of buildings from the inauguration of the first American President were included – especially St. Paul's Chapel, where George Washington worshiped after his inauguration. The oldest surviving public structure in Manhattan, St. Paul's Chapel was originally modeled after Sir Christopher Wren's great London Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. For the presidential inauguration, the architect Pierre L'Enfant remodeled St. Paul's Chapel in homage of the new nation. (L'Enfant would later design Washington, D.C.) Included in L'Enfant's 18th century redesign of St. Paul's Chapel is the symbol of a triangle enclosing the Tetragrammaton – the four-letter name of God in Hebrew: yud-heh-vav-heh – that can also be seen in the 19th century Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis in Santa Fe.

And what about important American documents? Since Washington was an 18th century "philosopher" of the "Age of Enlightenment," he could not take oath of office on a traditional Christian

(continued on p. 9)

Nooks and Crannies of New York City *(continued from p. 8)*

Bible. Thus, an image was included of the Masonic Bible, owned by Washington's good friend Robert Livingston, which was lent for the inauguration. "Washington's Bible" is now on display at Manhattan's Grand Lodge Masonic Temple.

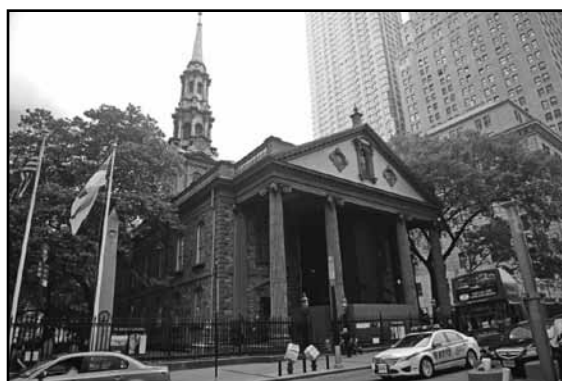
Then, there is also the Torah scroll of Shearith Israel, which British troops burned during the Revolutionary War, but remains in the possession of the congregation. The scroll has recently been placed on public display.

Also, of great interest were images of Castle Garden – a former fort from the War of 1812 that became arguably the most important immigration depot in American Jewish history. This 19th century structure – whose function would later be taken over by Ellis Island – was where many historians suggest the majority of new Jewish Americans entered the United States. (Yes, more than Ellis Island.) Because the original fort was too small to accommodate the vast numbers, new Jewish emigrants, upon arrival, would be ferried to Ward's Island in the East River, located on the eastern side of Manhattan, where they would be processed.

It was at Ward's Island that, at the behest of her rabbi, a young Sephardic woman from Shearith Israel – the oldest Jewish congregation in the United States – went to assist the newly landed Jews who had escaped the murderous pogroms of Eastern Europe. Realizing the almost overwhelming needs of these impoverished people who had been forced to leave their shtetls, the young woman made addressing the needs of these emigrants her life-long mission. She wrote articles in the *New York Times*, she lectured endlessly, she solicited funds from many of her well-to-do co-religionists to build dormitories, medical faculties, and other structures on Ward's Island for the

emigrants. Indeed, the major benefactor for building new facilities and attending the needs of these new Jewish emigrants was Jacob Schiff, founder of "The Galveston Movement," which brought new Jewish-Americans to the port of Galveston, Texas, in order to introduce a Jewish population to the Western states and territories – including New Mexico.

Of course, there are grand and humble synagogues. Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel), the oldest Jewish congregation



St. Paul's Chapel

in the United States, has elegant and magisterial interiors by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The majestic Eldridge Street Synagogue (K'hal Adath Jeshurun with Anshe Lubz), was shuttered and seemingly lost to time for generations, when author Gerard Wolfe rediscovered it while writing a book, *"Synagogues of New York's Lower East Side."*

The building, by the noted architectural firm the Herter Brothers, has been magnificently restored. In its magical setting with gleaming gas and electric lamps, shimmering stained glass windows, and a dominant centrally located bimah, one can readily venture back in time. As visitors stand at the pews throughout the sanctuary, it immediately becomes clear that they are standing in the indentations made in the soft pine floors by those individuals who each davened in their own personal manner – and year after year, those repeated rocking motions created very individualistic indentations

in the floor. Standing in those historic footprints provides an immediate psychic connection with generations past.

Almost unexpectedly, there is also the unassuming Astoria Center of Israel, decorated with splendid murals by the French-Jewish artist Louis Rigal, who also designed the lobby of Park Avenue's magnificent Waldorf Astoria. Meanwhile, the Stanton Street Shul (Congregation Bnai Jacob Anshei Brzezan), a "tenement shul" built on a small tenement-sized lot on the Lower East Side, which miraculously possesses some of the few surviving synagogue "mazales" or signs of the zodiac (hence the origin of the phrase "Mazal Tov" or "Luck of the Stars") remaining in the world. Once, throughout Eastern Europe, countless wooden Orthodox synagogues boasted of these simple folk-art depictions, but with the rise of the Nazis, the synagogues – with their mazales – were destroyed.

Meanwhile, another rare survivor can be found on Allen Street on the Lower East Side. This singular treasure, Kehila Kedosha Janina (Holy Congregation of Janina) is the only surviving synagogue in the United States that observes the Romaniote nusach or rite. Tradition has it that this ancient community of Jews was being transported to Rome from the Holy Land as slaves when an unexpected storm forced the ship to the shores of Greece. The Manhattan congregation knows they are the last survivors ("remnants of Israel") of this ancient lineage, so the synagogue has also been reconceived as a museum to the heritage of these boisterous and spirited Romaniote Jews.

There are so many people and so many stories – so many sites and historical treasures to be found. There are eloquently designed romantic garden cemeteries
(continued on p. 10)

Nooks and Crannies of New York City (continued from p. 9)

that would influence the design of American suburbs. There are majestic trendsetting parks by noted landscape designers, and elegant formal gardens designed to evoke the estates of *"The Great Gatsby."* Yet, not too far distant are humble public gardens dedicated to Chinese songbirds. There are ornate Yiddish theatres, grand Hindu temples, and impressive educational institutions.

Because of the tremendous history of New York City, memorials abound. In Staten Island, here is an outdoor sculpture called simply *"Postcards"* – possibly the most elegant, intimate, and thought-provoking memorial for the World Trade Center disaster. In the Bronx, the former New York University campus houses *"The Hall of Fame for Great Americans,"* a stone colonnade that half-encircles the university library and houses 98 bronze portrait busts of noted Americans created by some of the finest sculptors in American history. For some, it was surprising to view the Yahrzeit plaque for Benjamin *"Bugsy"* Siegel at the impressive Bialystoker Shul.

That said, there is a Bialystoker *"Yahrzeit"* that is even more impressive. The family of comedian Mel Brooks (Melvin Kaminsky) hailed from near Bialystok (now in Poland). In 1939, during World War II, the city of Bialystok was annexed by the Soviet Union. Thousands fleeing the Nazis settled in Bialystok, and the city's Jewish population swelled to more than 200,000. By June of 1941, Bialystok fell under Nazi control and the Jews were massacred. The Nazis burned down the main Jewish neighborhood and the chief synagogue with more than 1,000 people inside. Those who survived were ultimately liquidated in concentration camps. In 1997, just five Jews lived in Bialystok.

Mel Brooks, to ensure that the memory of those Bialystok Jews would be main-

tained and would be repeatedly on the lips of people across the planet, named his lovable con man in *"The Producers,"* *"Max Bialystock."* On perhaps a more literary note, Max Bialystock's accountant is named *"Leo Bloom"* after the protagonist in James Joyce's *Ulysses,* Leopold Bloom.



Postcards

While the *"armchair tour"* was not devoted entirely to Jewish subject matter, New York has long had a large Jewish constituency. Food, according to Jewish tradition, is only one small step from the throne of God. As such, there are countless Jewish food legends.

In 1920, Joel Russ opened an appetizing shop at the current location of 179 East Houston Street. (No, that's not a typo. *"Appetizing,"* as a noun, consists of the kinds of foods you eat with bagels. Cream cheese, smoked salmon, gravlax, and homemade salads are all mainstays on the appetizing table. Delicatessen is meat and may not be served at an appetizing shop.) 1933, Joel Russ renamed the business *"Russ and Daughters"* after making his three daughters, Hattie, Anne, and Ida, partners in the store. Tradition has

it that this was at Joel Russ' wife's insistence. Russ was reputedly such a grouch that he was driving away business and who wouldn't be charmed by a *"shayna maide!"* behind the counter? Whatever the truth of that legend may be, all the daughters met their husbands-to-be while working behind the Appetizing counter. Russ and Daughters is still a major New York destination and Mark Russ Federman (son of Anne Russ Federman, who met her husband while working behind the counter) recently published a well-received book, *"Russ & Daughters: Reflections and Recipes from the House That Herring Built."*

Some were charmed by Borough Park's kosher response to McDonald's Hamburgers: a restaurant named, *"McFleischig's."* (Fleischig means *"meat."*) Still others reveled in the tales of Schapiro's Kosher Winery, whose slogan was, *"The Wine You Can Almost Cut with a Knife!"* Owner Norman Schapiro added a whimsical marketing touch to the company's offerings and tried to broaden its appeal to non-Jews. One poster depicted a gaucho swigging a bottle of Schapiro's kosher sangria and offering the toast *"L'Chaim: El Schapiro's!"* Another featured a nun under the slogan *"I've converted!"* A third read: *"This deal is too good to Pass Over."*



Postcards 911 Memorial, Staten Island.

One of my favorite annual New York events is the Yahrzeit for the beloved Yiddish writer and New York resident, Solomon Naumovich Rabinovich, more popularly known as *"Sholom Aleichem."* His *"Tevye the Dairyman"* stories became even more

(continued on p. 11)

Nooks and Crannies of New York City *(continued from p. 10)*

popular when transformed into the Broadway musical, “Fiddler on the Roof.” In his will, Sholom Aleichem specified to his friends and family that, at his Yahrzeit, they should all gather, “read my will, and also select one of my stories, one of the very merry ones, and recite it

in whatever language is most intelligible to you.” “Let my name be recalled with laughter,” he added, “or not at all.”

Finally, this magnanimous beneficence captures it all. The City of New York is ultimately an ever-ongoing love affair of

humanity – embracing countless generations of people with strong and often wildly varying ideals who made indelible marks on our universe.

But then, of course, God has always loved stories!✡



Clinton Castle



Bailytoker Shul



Shearith Israel Interior



Eldridge Street Synagogue Facade



Russ & Daughters



Shearith Israel Synagogue



NMJHS Annual Business Meeting and Speakers Program June 2 at Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe



Program Speaker, Norma Libman, discusses her new book “The Story of the Story: What I wrote and Why”



Ron Duncan Hart presents the 2019 NMJHS Distinguished Service posthumously to Carla Freeman and accepted by Don Percious



Dorothy Amsden presents the Hurst Award to NMJHS President, Linda Goff

Legacy

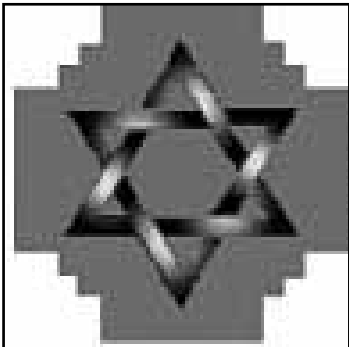
NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW MEXICO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ALBUQUERQUE, NM
PERMIT NO. 1888

New Mexico Jewish Historical Society
5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, Suite B
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Membership in NMJHS

For information contact the NMJHS office at 505-348-4471 or admin@nmjhs.org to request a membership brochure. Alternatively, you can download a membership application from the NMJHS website, www.NMJHS.org



Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

Check for future events at www.nmjhs.org

Sunday July 14 - Sunday July 28: 6th Annual Albuquerque Jewish Film Festival
Check AbqJew.com for complete listings of film titles, show times, and locations

August 4: Anne Frank Remembrance Day, Professor Deborah Lipstadt: Anti-Semitism Here and Now. James A. Little Theatre, New Mexico School for the Deaf, 1060 Cerrillos Rd., Santa Fe, 3 p.m.

August 17: 2019 New Mexico Humanitarian Awards Dinner, Sandia Resort, 30 Rainbow Rd., Albuquerque, 5:30 p.m.

August 25: Left vs. Right, The Battle for Israel's Soul. J.J. Goldberg, liberal editor of *The Forward*, and Jonathan Tobin, conservative editor of the Jewish News Syndicate will debate. Temple Beth Shalom, 205 East Barcelona Rd., Santa Fe, 4 p.m.

October 19: To Life – Fundraiser for the Holocaust Museum, Embassy Suites Hotel, 1000 Woodward Pl. NE, Albuquerque, 6 p.m.

November. 8 – 10: 2019 NMJHS Fall Conference
“Jewish Life in Taos and Northern New Mexico: Past, Present and Future”
Sagebrush Inn, 1508 Paseo del Pueblo Sur, Taos, New Mexico.