



Albuquerque's Congregation B'nai Israel: The First 90 Years

by Harvey Buchalter

The early days of Congregation B'nai Israel, as well as its subsequent growth and development, are a lasting tribute to the perseverance, dedication and unflagging Jewish spirit of its founders. They were a few men and women who, despite many obstacles, visualized the need and translated into action the desire to plant their love of Judaism in the then-remote Southwest.

Early Years

In 1920, Congregation B'nai Israel was incorporated by a small Jewish community who felt the need for traditional Jewish services and Jewish community activities, as well as organizing a Hebrew School for their children. Among the charter members who worked indefatigably for the success of the congregation were D. M. Elias, Hyman Livingston, Ben Markus, David Meyer and Aaron Katz, all of blessed memory.

During the early years, without a permanent place to hold religious services,

the congregation hovered perilously on the brink of extinction. Services were held sporadically in private homes, hired halls and when the occasion demanded, even in the rear of stores. Only a fervent desire to transcend all obstacles and difficulties kept the spark of life that was "the shul" from being snuffed out.



Cornerstone from Congregation B'nai Israel's original building, erected in 1941.

In 1934, the congregation rented quarters at 116 1/2 West Central Avenue and regular services and activities were inaugurated. In 1935, Arthur Ravel assumed the presidency, holding that post for seven years. During this period the Jewish community grew steadily, and the need for permanent quarters to accommodate the increasing number of worshippers became clear. Plans were made for the construction of a synagogue, and the Ladies Auxiliary purchased a lot at Coal and Cedar Avenues in 1937. Enough money was pledged to permit the start of construction on January 15, 1941, and on February 9, the cornerstone – since reinstalled at the entryway of the current building – was laid. The handsome, California-mission style building with whitewashed walls and red-tiled roof stood until it was sold and then demolished in the late 1960s.

Jack Levick, the first president in the new structure, was elected for a two-year term in 1942, during which time plans were formulated for the purchase of land for a congregational cemetery and organization of a Chevra Kadisha. David Pincus became the first full-time rabbi of the congregation, serving until 1942. In 1944, with Ben Markus as president, the congregation burned the first mortgage on the building.

During the 1940s administrations of Jack Meyer, Gabe Block and Jack Mendelsberg, many improvements were made to the Hebrew School. Additional land for the congregation's cemetery also was purchased.

The 1940s also saw the arrival of several Holocaust-survivor families in Albuquerque. They found a welcoming home within the congregation. Fred Veston, whose memory is still cherished

by long-time members, had a studio in the rear of his jewelry shop at First and Central where he lovingly re-created Old Country scenes. Many of his works still hang in the congregation social hall.

Mid-Century Growth

The 1950s began with another burst of growth. Under the leadership of Da-

(continued on p. 2)

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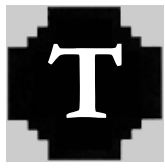
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

B'nai Israel's First 90 Years	1
President's Message.....	2
Remembering David Salman.....	3
Society Members Invited to Celebrate!..	5
Full Circle: A Farewell Letter.....	6
Genealogy Program.....	8
23rd Fall Conference.....	8
Annual Membership Meeting.....	9
Peek into the Past.....	10
Calendar of Events.....	12

Message from President Dorothy Amsden

Change is the Name of the Game



The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is 25 years old this year, an achievement that will be celebrated at the Fall Conference in Las Vegas on October 22 – 24. As the new NMJHS president I am awed by how much the Society has done over the past quarter century. I salute all the past presidents for their leadership, dedication, and foresight. In particular, I wish to acknowledge my predecessor Professor Noel Pugach, for his unwavering commitment and leadership over the past two years.

When Noel turned over the symbolic giant Bayer aspirin to me at the Annual Meeting on June 27 (no kidding, it measures 6-3/4 inches in diameter and is 2 inches thick) I had a premonition of all the exciting and demanding challenges that now face me. As he heaves a sigh of relief over a job well done, I assume the mantle of leadership from my perch in Los Alamos. I hope to inspire all of you, board members, our general membership, and readers of our newsletter to get involved in history. What better way to spend our free time than in making NMJHS a successful and stimulating organization.

In addition to changing presidents, the board has seen some turnover. Many thanks to the dedicated board members who have stepped down after unflag-

ging service to the organization: Stan Hordes, Lance Bell, Nancy Terr, Stephen Part, Norman Budow, Sheila Gershen, Gerald González, and Barbara Baker. They have said they will continue to help NMJHS as volunteers in its myriad activities.

Those remaining on the board who will carry on the corporate memory are: Harold Melnick (webmaster), Robert Gale, Anthony Amsden (corresponding secretary), Carla Freeman (vice president), David Dunmar (treasurer), Betsy Messeca, Noel Pugach, and our two devoted out-of-state members Claire Grossman and Marjorie Weinberg-Berman.

We welcome a host of new people to the board who bring new ideas and energy to the Society: Ron Duncan-Hart (programs), Sandy Brintnall (recording secretary), Anita Miller, and Naomi Sandweiss (Legacy editor). Last but not least, two dedicated non-board members serve as committee chairs: Barry Gaines (genealogy) and Pat Carlton (archives).

Yet another change has taken place. Our devoted and capable administrator for five years, Bobbi Jackson, has retired. We

owe her an enormous debt of gratitude for organizing the NMJHS office, located at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque, and for her dedication in handling Society business. Her outgoing personality, attention to detail, and can-do attitude have earned her a place in NMJHS history.



NMJHS President Dorothy Amsden

Our new administrator, Ruth Carter, comes to NMJHS with impressive credentials and a huge interest in the organization. She hails from the Bronx (as I do – we have been comparing notes). Ruth has some big shoes to fill; I am confident that in a short time she will be on top of the challenges posed by her new job.

Feel free to contact me with your comments and ideas at dca@unmalumni.com or 505-662-6398. I look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas for the big conference, “Adventures Along the Santa Fe Trail,” this October.

Dorothy joined the NMJHS Board in 2005 as genealogy chair. Later she served as Legacy editor and vice president. A profile about her appeared in the June 2006 issue of Legacy, posted on the NMJHS web site. ☆

The First 90 Years *(continued from p. 1)*

vid Klein, an addition to the building at Coal and Cedar was completed. The new facility provided the congregation with additional classrooms, an enlarged kitchen and a social hall that opened for extra seating during High Holy Day services.

The growth of the congregation mirrored the 1950s-era expansion of the City of Albuquerque. Jewish scientists, engineers and enlisted men with Kirtland Air Force Base and Sandia Laboratories found a spiritual home within the synagogue and broadened the congregation's mainly merchant-based membership.

Bernard Leach led the congregation from 1952 –1953; David Specter in 1954; Sol Taylor in 1955; Phil Levy from 1956 –1957, and Simon Goldman assumed the presidency in 1958. Old-time members recall synagogue dues as very affordable. Periodically, they say, the “balebattim” – the shul’s leaders, would gather to collectively pay off synagogue bills.

During these years, a building site was selected for a new, larger synagogue at Indian School Road and Washington Avenue, NE. In 1959, the presidential gavel was passed to Kurt Kubie who raised \$35,000 to purchase the corner, five-acre

property. Also during this period, Philip Pfeffer was engaged to serve as the first cantor of the congregation.

Lawrence Wayne served as the presiding officer in 1961 and was followed by Herman Bloch under whose leadership the congregation continued to grow and prosper. In 1963, Edward Seliady held office for a year.

Sam Green assumed the presidency in 1964 for a two-year term. Under his leadership, the remaining indebtedness on the second mortgage was paid, and

(continued on p.6)

Remembering David M. Salman (1936-2010)

by Noel Pugach

Earlier this year, New Mexico lost a remarkable and fascinating individual, a dedicated and caring citizen, and a significant and effective political figure. David Milton Salman died on February 28, at age 74.

Salman was born into a prominent and wealthy Jewish family in Houston. He was the middle child of Colonel William Salman and Frances Delheim Salman. His older brother, William J., and younger sister, Frances Koenig, survive him.

Salman's father, Wolf, (Americanized as William) went to Houston in 1921 via Chattanooga, from Wolkowish, a *shtetl* in Belorussia. After working briefly as a sailor and clerk on the Houston docks, he started a rail car business, but made his fortune with steamships, creating Canadian Gulf Lines. He earned the rank of Colonel by serving in the United States Army during World War II, commanding the ports of Cardiff, Wales and Le Havre, France. David's mother, Frances Delheim, was descended from a German Jewish merchant family that settled in Alabama. She was one of the first women to graduate from Rice University.

William Salman, whose own father was a privileged timber merchant, could never forget that Jews in Czarist Russia were prohibited from owning land and were restricted in international business. Salman resolved to overcome both limitations in this free country, in particular to own a vast stretch of land.

The father of three also fell in love with New Mexico. In 1942, he began acquiring the former Romero grant in Mora and by 1948 owned some 32,000 acres and the town of La Cueva, now

known as the Salman Ranch. "I want the family to be safe," Wolf wrote his wife (according to daughter Frances). "And I want to establish a tradition of an opportunity for people to gather the extended family for generations thereafter."

In 1945, when David was nine, the family moved from Texas to Las Vegas where they occupied the former Louis Ilfeld home on the corner of Eighth



David M. Salman

and Baca Streets, adjacent to a house owned by Joseph Taichert. In 1950, the family moved into the "Big House" on the ranch. David attended Las Vegas High School and played football, working the ranch during the summers. He was a brilliant student at Princeton University, graduating *magna cum laude* with a major in Art History.

While his older brother William J. worked for Canadian Gulf Lines after graduating from Princeton, David quickly discovered that the shipping business was not for him. Instead, after a few months in Houston, David moved back to the ranch and became its full-time manager. David loved the land, the environment, the physical labor, and the challenges of farming and ranching.

The Salmans viewed the ranch as a commercial and profit-making venture. But they also turned it into a laboratory for conservation and scientific land management. William Salman took the first steps, but David, using his creativity and imagination, greatly expanded on them.

The extensive Salman Ranch, some 50 square miles, had tremendous water resources. William Sr. understood the critical importance of water in the arid Southwest and carefully documented the ranch's water resources, which have stood numerous legal challenges. David tried to use the model of the Salman Ranch to encourage his neighbors to practice conservation techniques, but was largely unsuccessful.

One of the most significant projects was the establishment of a State Wildlife Refuge on the ranch. William secured the designation and then David fulfilled their goals. As a result, the lakes on the ranch became the nesting ground for thousands of Canadian geese and ducks. David also planted winter wheat to feed the waterfowl. The rugged terrain of the ranch attracted bear, mountain lion, coyote and deer, a naturalist's delight.

For many years, the ranch was famous for its large herd of Simmental cattle. The family also entered the dairy business, under the Sierra Gold label and operated a plant and distribution center in Las Vegas. But dairying proved to be time-consuming and unprofitable, and David decided to give it up.

While looking to diversify into more profitable operations, David launched the now famous Salman Ranch raspberry crop, which draws thousands of customers every year. The idea actually came from his brother's son, David Mark Salman. The younger David

(continued on p. 4)

Remembering David M. Salman *(continued from p. 3)*

received his bachelor's degree in horticultural science at Colorado State University. In 1984, nephew David Mark Salman opened Santa Fe Greenhouses, a business that he maintains today.

Working closely with his uncle, David began cultivating raspberries on a 10-acre plot, and it proved to be highly successful. Subsequently, David Mark started a tree-growing operation on the ranch.

Meanwhile, David Milton Salman entered elective politics and successfully won a seat on the Mora School Board. In 1968, running on the Democratic ticket, he defeated Republican Milner Rudolph for the House district comprising Mora, Harding and a few precincts in San Miguel County. Mora and Harding were among the last Republican strongholds in the state by the 1960s. David won through hard campaigning, his magnetic personality, and the Salman reputation as responsible citizens. Thereafter, David retained his seat by comfortable margins until he retired from politics in 1978. Reapportionment following the 1970 census helped, for the district now included Democratic Las Vegas; but David's voting record and legislative accomplishments were the determining factors.

To some extent, his father William had again laid the groundwork for his son. William was a large contributor to the Democratic Party, a power behind the scenes, and was the first Anglo elected to the Mora School Board. But he did not enjoy the rough and tumble world of elective politics.

David, however, "thoroughly enjoyed politics," his sister Frances recalled. "He enjoyed the manipulation. He was very good at it." David had the right personality; he had charisma. Although he was a Texan by birth, had an Ivy League education, and was a Jew,

David was extremely popular with his constituents. He could talk to anyone on that person's terms. He knew enough Spanish to banter with local Hispanics; as a wealthy rancher he could communicate with the conservative "Cowboy" faction; he was well-read and a sophisticated thinker; and he developed timely and meaningful ideas. David Salman was a remarkably successful politician.

In the State House, David joined the liberal Democratic faction, known as the "Mama Lucys," consisting of a coalition of young Anglos and Hispanics eager to overcome years of conservative domination of the New Mexico legislature. Although Walter Martinez was titular leader and an effective Speaker of the House, David was considered by many in New Mexico politics as the "soul" and brains of the Mama Lucy Gang. William E. Warren, a freshman Albuquerque legislator in 1970, took David Salman as his model. It is striking that at the beginning of only his second term, Salman was selected Majority Leader in the House.

Although the Mama Lucys did not have a coherent agenda, they pushed through a variety of measures that might be termed liberal or progressive and which modernized state government. David's proudest achievements were in education, conservation and wildlife protection, and emergency medicine and rehabilitation. He inspired the school equalization funding formula, which greatly increased educational resources for Albuquerque and the poorer areas of the state. It would serve as a model for other states.

A man ahead of his time, David sponsored legislation offering incentives for solar heating in public buildings, sulfur emissions control, and radioactive materials disposal. He also supported the efforts for the state's Equal Rights

Amendment and related legislation, much of it carried by William Warren.

What influenced David's progressive outlook? He was certainly affected by his first-hand experience with poverty, poor schools, and the lack of opportunity in northern New Mexico. His nephew David Mark, who worked closely with him, believes that he "had a real passion for social issues and making things more equitable." He added, "I think he realized how much the old Spanish land grant families had been taken advantage of." David Mark also observed that *tzedakah*, the Jewish tradition of charity, righteousness, and justice pervaded David and expressed itself through his politics.

David's sister, Frances, underscored the Salman family tradition of social responsibility and action. In Russia, David's grandfather had served as an unofficial arbitrator and ombudsman in his community. His father William was a philanthropist; he had been first vice president of Houston's Congregation Beth Israel and chairman of Houston's United Jewish Appeal Drive in 1939 and 1945.

Although Salman labeled himself a "secular Jew," former governor David Cargo ascribed Salman's outlook to his Jewish background. Cargo, who was Salman's close friend, a practicing Catholic and strong supporter of Israel, teased Salman about his terminology and its meaning. Cargo also corrected Salman's use of Yiddish terms and urged him to attend Israel Bond dinners.

Sadly, David Salman was seriously injured in an auto accident in 1974. He underwent numerous operations, lived in pain, and had ongoing health problems. His auspicious political career was cut short and he did not seek reelection in 1978. Everyone I

(continued on p. 5)

Remembering David M. Salman *(continued from p. 3)*

spoke to agreed that had David not been injured, he would have been elected governor of New Mexico and probably would have been among its greatest.

Despite his exit from elected office, David remained committed to public service. He was appointed to the New Mexico Game Commission, the New Mexico Arts Commission, and the Board of Regents of Highlands University. He continued to manage the

ranch until his retirement in the late 1990s, when he left the land he loved for a home in Santa Fe.

David Milton Salman was a bright star in New Mexico. His glow remains in his legacy.

Noel Pugach is Professor Emeritus at the University of New Mexico and immediate Past President of NMJHS. ☆

Society Members Invited to ¡Celebrate!

¡Celebrate! The Jewish Experience in Spanish-Speaking Countries! returns for a second year from November 3-10 with a fabulous line-up of events including the U.S. premiere of Daniel Goldberg's newest film, "In The Footsteps of Abraham" on November 7th. All films at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, located at 1701 4th Street SW in Albuquerque, are free!

"We are pleased to work with our incredible partners, including the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, to bring another week of events to New Mexico" said Susan Seligman, New Mexico ADL Director and organizer of the event. "Make sure you get tickets early this year...last year many of our events were completely full."

Schedule of Events: Please note that although films are free, tickets may be required. For updated information on events, sponsors and films, please access www.adl.org/celebratefestival after October 1st.

- November 3, Opening Night Film, *The Fire Within...Jews of the Amazonian Rainforest* Documentary by Lorry Salcedo. National Hispanic Cultural Center, Bank of America Auditorium, 7:00 p.m.
- November 4, Spanish Wine Tasting and Tapas, Slate Street Café Wine Loft, 515 Slate Ave NW, 5-7:30p.m.
- November 5, Community-wide Sephardic Service, Congregation Albert, 3800 Louisiana Blvd. NE, 8:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 7, Double Feature *Tijuana Jews*. Followed by Q & A with Director/Producer Isaac Artenstein. 1:00 p.m. *In The Footsteps of Abraham*, United States Premiere! Q & A with Director Daniel Goldberg following the screening, 3:00 p.m. Both films will be screened at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Bank of American Auditorium.
- November 9, Chilean and Argentinean Wine Tasting, Slate Street Café Wine Loft, 515 Slate Ave NW, 5-7:30 p.m.
- November 10, Closing Film, *El Ultimo Sephardi/ The Last Sephardic Jew*, Documentary by Miguel Angel Nieto, National Hispanic Cultural Center, Bank of America Auditorium, 7:00 p.m.

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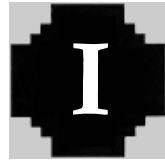
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Mission Statement

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is a secular organization that welcomes all interested people, regardless of religious affiliation. Its mission is to promote greater understanding and knowledge of New Mexico's Jewish history within a broad cultural context.

Full Circle: A Farewell Letter

by Bobbi Jackson



I have come full circle with working with the Jewish community. My first job in my working career began in 1956 in my hometown of Bridgeton, New Jersey, when I was hired as a secretary for the M. C. Schrank Company, manufacturer of women's fine lingerie. I worked my way up to Manager of my department by the time I left there in 1961 to await the birth of my second son.

When I was widowed at the age of 25 and married the second time three years later, we moved to Manalapan, New Jersey, a bedroom community of New York City where we lived in a development that was 90% Jewish. Thus began a period of learning more about Jewish traditions, with my very good friend and next door neighbor, Natalie, inviting me to many Seders, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and including me in celebrations of Chanukah and Passover. It seems apropos that I would complete my working career serving as administrator of the NMJHS.

When I was interviewed for the position in 2005 by President Lance Bell, Claire Grossman and the outgoing administrator Julie Gordon, I was intrigued to learn more about the Jewish community of New Mexico. Through the past five years, I have learned so much, met many wonderful people and shared many good experiences.

I was invited to "think outside the box", to use my own ideas, given the opportu-

nity to interview people and write articles for the newsletter and at the beginning was even editor of our newsletter, *Legacy*, for which I was completely unprepared, but did my best. The article I am most proud of is the one I researched and wrote about the past presidents of the society and the history of the founding of the society. (See the December 2009 *Legacy*) I learned so much and thank all those past presidents who worked with me. I served under three presidents: Lance Bell, Harold Melnick and Noel Pugach.

Many people made my job much easier, among them, Lance Bell, Stan Hordes, Lilo Waxman and Dorothy Amsden who helped increase my knowledge of the Society and Jewish history in New Mexico. I thank Sam Sokolove for his friendship and mentoring and making me part of the Federation Office Wing. There are others too numerous to mention here, but you know who you are.

I leave the position of administrator wiser, but with some sadness. Johnny and I are looking forward to doing a little traveling and spending more time together. Major health issues and age have convinced me that it is time to leave. Thanks for the ride – it was an exhilarating experience and one that I will treasure.

Thanks to all who attended my "retirement" party, for all the kind words said on my behalf and for Sarah Koplik who made me "princess for a day." Shalom.✧

The First 90 Years *(continued from p. 1)*

two additional classrooms were added on the Coal/Cedar site to meet the needs of the ever-growing Hebrew School enrollment.

Phil Levy was re-elected in 1966, and in 1967 the Board of Trustees launched a fund-raising campaign, chaired by Julius Wollen, to build a new structure on the recently acquired land. Construction seemed assured until the shul, responsive to Israel's plight in the Six Day War, contributed most of its substantial building fund to aid in Israel's defense.

When Sidney Gasser assumed the Presidency in 1968, the building fund drive was resumed, and with the cooperation of many faithful and devoted workers, successfully concluded. Bids were let and the ground-breaking ceremonies for the present synagogue, school and social hall took place on December, 1969. The old building held its last service in November 1970.

Shortly thereafter, the traditional Torah procession was made from the old building to the new, distinctive, golden-yellow

(continued on p.7)

The First 90 Years *(continued from p. 6)*

“tent,” reminiscent of Biblical lodgings. The new sanctuary made many recall the traditional Friday evening prayer, Ma Tovu:

“How goodly are your dwellings, O Jacob, Your sanctuaries, O’ Israel.”

During Sheldon Bromberg’s administration in 1970, arrangements were made for the sale of the shul’s former home at Coal and Cedar.

In the congregation’s 50th year, Irving Friedman was elected president. The congregation obtained the services of Rabbi Isaac H. Celnik in 1971, and with his leadership, attendance at services grew. The community at large was enhanced by his presence as both ritual leader and teacher for the next 28 years.

Robert Katz was president in 1973 – 1974, coinciding with the Yom Kippur War. The congregation, feeling Israel again at risk of annihilation, held rallies and raised funds to help support it.

In 1975 – 1977, during the presidency of Alan Greenfeld, the synagogue was remodeled and a handicapped-accessible ramp was installed.

Recent Years

Marilyn Reinman became president following the untimely passing of Larry Schwartz, holding office from 1978 – 1980. Marilyn, the daughter of long-time President Arthur Ravel, was one of the first women chosen to lead a Conservative congregation in the United States.

The early 1980s witnessed the start of the Pre-school, under the presidency of Brian Ivener. Under the next presidents, Charles Glass (1981–1983) and William DeBois, the congregation steadily grew and the budgets were balanced.

The 1980s were years of tremendous growth for Congregation B’nai Israel. Under the administration of Wayne Bobrick many still-memorable events were

initiated, including the beloved Shabbat Dinners, held four times a year.

With Howard Friedman as president, the endowment fund was inaugurated and a major renovation began: an enlarged social hall, two new kitchens, and additions to the education wing. Construction was completed during Burrell Ross’ time in office, 1989 – 1990. At this time, Josh Perlman was hired as Cantor and served for the next eight years, also instructing the Confirmation Class students. School enrollment skyrocketed in the 1980s; classes averaged 20 students.



B’nai Israel religious school students and teacher enjoy Lag B’Omer Picnic in 1935.

The shul continued to grow under the leadership of Al Berlin (1991 – 1993) and Judy Gardenswartz (1993 – 1995). A strong push was made to attract young families to the congregation, and the Board supported the founding of a Solomon Schechter Day School, which called the shul its home until moving to the new Jewish Community Center facility.

During the second half of the 1990s, when Madeline Dunn, Bonnie Ivener, David Berlin and Martin Sherman were presidents, plans were drawn up and funds raised to remodel the sanctuary. Congregants from those years remember the remodeling fund drives and the closed sanctuary as new carpet, seats, lights, and sound systems were installed. When Lawrence Golden became president, the new bimah – complete with the impressive Yehi Or (“Let there be Light”) sculpted letters on the cherry wood doors – became the place of

honor for the congregation’s six Torah scrolls. In 2002, Arthur Flicker became the congregation’s new rabbi, replacing Rabbi Isaac Celnik.

Harvey Buchalter became President in 2003, at which time a gala celebration was held to commemorate the first 85 years of the shul. Caitlin Bromberg, one of the first female hazzans graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary, became cantor.

Under the presidencies of Alan Chodorow and Keith Harvie the Men’s Club and Sisterhood grew and their innovative programs became models for the other synagogues nationally.

Wayne Bobrick again assumed the presidency in 2009. He leads a congregation of approximately 280 members who join him in looking forward to the shul’s next 90 years.

90th Celebration

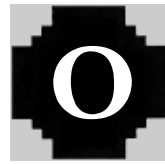
On Wednesday, November 3, a panel of life-time members of Congregation B’nai Israel will share their reminiscences.

To further commemorate the congregation’s nine decades of service to the community – and to being a bedrock of Conservative Jewish values and practices – the congregation will gather in the soon-to-be-remodeled social hall on Saturday evening, January 22, 2011, to celebrate this simcha.

The shul community would be honored with your presence at these events. Please contact Congregation B’nai Israel at (505)266-0155 or www.bnaiisrael-nm.org for additional information. ✧

Former NMJHS Board member Harvey Buchalter and his family have belonged to Congregation B’nai Israel since 1974. He served as president from 2003 – 2005, and will be president again, in 2010 – 2012. He is a retired APS teacher, owner - and sole artist - of Harvey Buchalter, Sculpture and Judaica. Harvey is grateful to Frances Katz, who assembled the congregation’s history from the early 1970s to the mid 1990s and an anonymous writer who assembled much of the congregation’s first 50 years.

Genealogy Program: Harvey Buchalter on Yizkhor Books



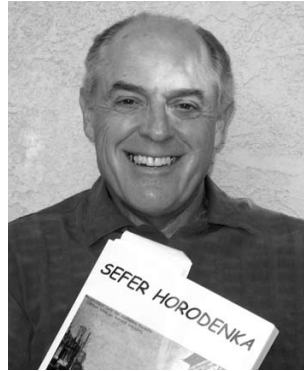
On Sunday, September 26, sculptor and Yiddish translator Harvey Buchalter will speak on Yizkhor books (yizkhor bikher) in a genealogy program sponsored by the New

Mexico Jewish Historical Society. The program is from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque.

Yizkhor books were written after the Holocaust as memorials to Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust. They were usually put together by survivors from those communities and contain descriptions and histories of the shtetl, biographies of prominent people, lists of people who perished, and a host of other valuable information. They are often embellished with photos, maps, and other memorabilia. Yizkhor books are valuable to genealogists, since the books may include biographies or photographs of relatives, or may include family members in a list of people who perished. Yizkhor books also give important background information about the history and Jewish life in a particular shtetl or town.

As a group, yizkhor books offer valuable access to Jewish life and culture in communities destroyed during the Holocaust. Several hundred memorial books have been published, and your family's village may be among them.

Yizkhor books are written primarily in Yiddish and Hebrew, although Jewishgen.org has a Yizkhor Book Project with a database of Yizkhor Books identifying shtetlakh with memorial books and libraries where they may be found as well as an ongoing goal of translating these books into English. As an expert in translation from Yiddish, Harvey Buchalter will discuss the background of typical contributors and explore the first-person narratives portrayed in these unique books.



Harvey Buchalter

Mr. Buchalter will use examples from Sefer

Horodenko, and Sefer Sukhovolha, his mother's ancestral shtetl, in his talk.

The community is invited. Admission is \$10 for NMJHS members, \$15 for non-members. ☆

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The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society
 Invites you to the 23rd Fall Conference
"Adventures Along the Santa Fe Trail"
 October 22-24
 Historic Plaza Hotel, Las Vegas

Preconference tours: walking tour of historic Jewish Las Vegas, Montezuma Castle (United World College), and Montefiore Cemetery, the oldest Jewish cemetery in New Mexico.

Conference sessions include: Las Vegas: Place of Encounter, Synagogues on the Santa Fe Trail, History of Hispanic Participation in the Santa Fe Trail Trade, History of the Jews of Las Vegas, Panel Discussion: Crypto-Jews in Las Vegas and NE New Mexico, Jewish Commercial Presence in Mora County, New Mexico and a panel discussion on the Legacy of Las Vegas's Rich Past, and the Renaissance of the Las Vegas Jewish Community.

Events: Shabbat service at Congregation Montefiore, Concert of 19th century liturgical music from Congregation Montefiore.

For more information: members will receive a registration brochure by mail. Nonmembers may send an email to the NMJHS administrator at nmjhs@jewishnewmexico.org to receive a copy of the registration brochure. Conference registration materials are also posted on the NMJHS web site, www.nmjhs.org.

Annual Membership Meeting Attendees Treated to Fascinating Presentation

Staff Report

On June 27, 40 members gathered at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque for the Annual Membership Meeting of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society (NMJHS). Dr. Noel Pugach, outgoing president, convened the meeting, honoring Dr. Stan Hordes with a lifetime membership. Hordes is a founder of the society, a former president and long-time board member. Pugach was then recognized by incoming NMJHS President Dorothy Amsden, who presented him with a special gift—a Baron Wolman photograph of Beatle George Harrison.

Outgoing board members Lance Bell, Norman Budow, Sheila Gershen, Gerald González, Stan Hordes, Stephen Part and Nancy Terr were recognized for their contributions; incoming board members Sandra Brintnall, Ron Duncan-Hart, Anita Miller and Naomi Sandweiss were welcomed onto the board.

Following the official meeting, attendees heard a fascinating presentation, “In Her Own Voice: Doña Teresa and Intrigue at the Palace of the Governors,” co-presented by Dr. Frances Levine and Gerald González. Levine, Director of the New Mexico History Museum and Gerald González, J.D., former NMJHS Board Member, shared their extensive research on the wife of an early New Mexico governor, who was the only New Mexico woman tried by the Inquisition. Doña Teresa de Aguilera y Roche, born in Italy in 1623, was the daughter of a prominent Spanish diplomat and Irish-born mother. A literate and worldly woman, Doña Teresa could speak and read in several languages.

Doña Teresa and her husband, Bernard López de Mendizábal, arrived in Santa Fe in 1659 to begin his term as Governor of New Mexico. Immediately, friction began between the Mendizábals and Fran-

ciscan church leaders over matters that included increased privileges for Pueblo residents and the perceived excesses of the Governor.

The feuding continued, and in 1662 the Governor and his wife were arrested by Inquisition officials on charges of blas-



Gerald Gonzales and Dr. Frances Levine present at the Annual Meeting. Photo courtesy of Harold Melnick.

phemy, heresy and “Judaizing.” In all, 26 people testified against Doña Teresa; charges included not responding to pious greetings, bathing on Fridays with too much ceremony, changing bed and table linens on Fridays, and laughing while reading books.

The Governor and his wife were removed to an Inquisition prison in Mexico City. Gov. Mendizábal died in September 1664 before his case went to trial. Doña Teresa’s trial began four days after her husband’s death. She was not allowed to view or hear the charges against her, but Doña Teresa prepared a lengthy written defense. In seven pages, Doña Teresa described the social landscape of Santa Fe and identified those who might have testified against her to protect their own reputations and to cement their own alliances. That year, the Inquisition lost its zeal and Doña Teresa’s case was suspended in December.

Doña Teresa was released, and never returned to New Mexico. She died in 1680 in Mexico; her heirs donated her remaining assets to the Catholic Church.

González and Levine differ in their assessments as to whether Doña Teresa and her husband really were practicing Judaism in secret. In Levine’s view, Doña Teresa’s worldliness and non-conforming behaviors made her an easy target for her husband’s enemies. González, a descendant of Jews from Portugal and Spain, notes that Doña Teresa’s circle of friends in Santa Fe included other families now identified as conversos or crypto-Jews.

Regardless of one’s conclusions, the story of Doña Teresa and her family provided the audience with a rich and fascinating account of the life and times of those living in both Santa Fe and Mexico during the 17th century. ✧

For further reading about Doña Teresa, please see “In Her Voice” by Gonzáles and Levine in *All Trails Lead to Santa Fe*, Sunstone Press, 2010.

Naomi Sandweiss received the 2010 Dr. Allan P. and Leona Hurst Award, which recognizes a person who has rendered outstanding



service to the Society and to New Mexico Jewish history. Twelve Hurst awards have been presented

since 1998. Naomi volunteered for the Jewish Pioneers Project, interviewing descendants and writing the NMJHS booklet on the GUSDORF family of Taos. She writes a regular column for the *Legacy* and serves as *Legacy* editor. Naomi is currently compiling *Jewish Albuquerque 1860-1960* for Arcadia Books, due out in early 2011.

PEEK INTO THE PAST

Santa Fe's Tertio-Millennial Celebration

by Naomi Sandweiss

Santa Fe is celebrating a landmark birthday this year—400 years since the Spanish settled the historic capital. Curious about how Santa Fe observed milestones in years past, I decided to take a closer look at another heavily promoted celebration—the 333rd Anniversary of Santa Fe, also known as the Tertio-Millennial Anniversary Character Celebration and Industrial Exposition of 1883.

New Mexico's Territorial capital, then home to 6,635 citizens, hadn't yet been embraced by most Americans as a tourist destination. An 1880 article in the venerable *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* describes the author's impressions of the city's citizens to East Coast and Midwest readers.

Unprogressive through isolation and climate, ignorant and superstitious through the influence of their priests, lazy through lack of motive, and poverty-stricken because there is no work offers itself, they love to gamble, to dance at the fandango, to loaf and smoke and gossip with the women, and are never so happy as when sitting on their heels in a spot neither too warm nor too cold. Peaceful and courteous to-day, they will be cruel and treacherous to-morrow; and the man who has honestly brought you ten thousand dollars from distant mines, will steal your coat and your donkey as he leaves your house....

In 1883, a group of Santa Fe business and civic leaders set out to alter such impressions and promote commerce in Santa Fe and the New Mexico Territory. Their brainchild was the Tertio-Millennial Celebration. The organizing committee, inspired by the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876,¹ included members of the three prominent New Mexico Jewish

pioneer families—the Seligmans, the Spiegelbergs and the Staabs. Solomon Spiegelberg, a merchant, played a significant leadership role, serving as the Exposition's treasurer, as a member of the executive committee, and as a director. Abraham Staab (1839-1913), Adolph Seligman (1845-1920) and Lehman Spiegelberg (1841-?) were also directors. Other key event organizers were W.W. Griffin and future New Mexico Governor L. Bradford Prince, civic leaders who undoubtedly worked and socialized with the Jewish merchants and bankers as Masons, in business affairs and in their political roles. (Lehman Seligman and Solomon Spiegelberg were active members of the Santa Fe County Commission and Board and the New Mexico Bureau of Immigration².) Seligman and Spiegelberg also had some experience organizing community events. Staab, Seligman and two members of the Spiegelberg family had served on the Santa Fe Committee on Arrangements for the U.S. Centennial in 1876.³

It should be noted that while the Exposition was to commemorate the 333rd anniversary of the settlement of Santa Fe, the 1550 date held no special significance. Most historians agree on 1610 as the year that Santa Fe was officially founded by the Spanish. Undeterred by this fact and eager to draw attention to the town, the organizing committee ambitiously planned thirty-three days of activities to take place in July and August of 1883.

Arrangements were made with the railroad to offer discounted tickets for those attending the events. Each New

Mexico county was invited to set up a display featuring its resources and investment opportunities. Daily Exposition activities were to include parades, orations, a military banquet and ball, "Indian" dances, Native American weaving exhibitions, displays of minerals and machinery and a running race with categories for humans, horses and burros.



Original brochure promoting Tertio-Millennial

The committee was not shy about promoting its celebration and had high hopes for its success. In April 1883, a Santa Fe newspaper claimed that "the Tertio-Millennial will serve to draw to New Mexico...a much larger number of visitors than were ever in the Territory before. "During that spring, L. Bradford Prince traveled to the East Coast, promoting the event along the way and refining his rhetoric about New Mexican triculturalism.⁴ The event's brochure boasted: "three distinct civilizations will be illustrated. That of the Pueblo or Village Indians; the direct descendants of the Aztecs, who were found here in 1534

by Cabeza de Vaca--tilling the soil and living under wholesome laws. Then came the Spaniards, introducing into the country their industrial systems, religious creeds and social characteristics, and finally, the American occupation, introducing all the elements of modern progress."

What prompted the Seligmans, Staabs and Spiegelbergs, long successful in their wholesale, retail and banking ventures, to invest so heavily in such an event? The families had no need to secure their reputations or fortunes. In

(continued on p. 11)

Peek Into the Past (*continued from p. 10*)

business in Santa Fe since the 1850s, the merchants dominated commerce, held alliances with key community members such as Archbishop Lamy and Governor Lew Wallace, and were deeply involved in civic projects.

In 1883, however, their adopted hometown was struggling with her identity. Bypassed by the railroad and yet to experience the art and writer's eras, the Santa Fe of 1883 was an awkward adolescent, overstating her age in order to attract the attention of admirers. Territorial communities with railroad stations, such as Albuquerque and Las Vegas, were in the midst of economic and population booms, while Santa Fe was stagnant. There may have also been concern among the city's political leaders that New Mexico's capital would be moved elsewhere. The quest for statehood was also on the minds of many leaders; attracting potential supporters from outside the Territory wouldn't hurt matters, and likely would help.

The Exposition also provided an opportunity to complete some of the infrastructure in Santa Fe. After thirty years of neglect, the building intended as a capitol (now the Santiago E. Campo U.S. courthouse) was floored and roofed. The short-lived University of New Mexico in Santa Fe was dedicated. Exposition grounds were created two blocks north of the Plaza and a racetrack was installed.⁵ Organizers were also probably hoping for a healthy return on their financial investments and promoted the same opportunities among potential investors. One newspaper reminded potential investors that "subscriptions to the Tertio Millennial are not gifts but investments that will bring a high rate of interest..." Undoubtedly, at the very least, the Jewish merchant families hoped for increased business as a result of tourists' attendance.

On Monday, July 2, 1883, Governor Lionel Sheldon opened the Exposition with an address, comparing the landscape of Santa Fe with that of Israel, a common comparison in those days.

"On this arid mesa, amid these bald and rugged peaks, the very counterpart of the Holy Land, the banner of the God man was first unfurled, and has since been maintained with unflagging zeal." There was no lack of pageantry at the celebration. Participants' outfits ranged from authentic Native American dancers to Spanish chieftains, knights and warriors. This event was of such import that a costumer, Emma Purcell, was brought in from St. Louis to dress participants.⁶

Unfortunately, the monsoons literally rained on the parade and other events. Yet coverage by the press outside of New Mexico was generally positive. A writer for *Frank Leslie's Sunday Magazine* noted that "Santa Fe is one of the quaintest places to be found anywhere in the great Republic...the Eastern visitor finds much of interest in the primitive architecture and ancient appearance of the town." Probably the biggest coup was a published letter to the Exposition's organizers from Walt Whitman. Organizers had invited him to compose and present a poem at the event. While he did not comply, he did send a commemorative letter that was printed in the *New York Times*.

While the press was favorable, unfortunately the Exposition was not the investment opportunity the organizing committee had hoped for. L. Bradford Prince conceded that "while the event was a financial failure" in his opinion, it was "well worth the cost."⁷ There were other benefits for the Jewish families involved with orchestrating the event. Willi Spiegelberg was elected mayor of Santa Fe the following year.⁸

As for Santa Fe, in the intervening 125+ years the town developed a thriving tourist industry based, in part, upon the tricultural focus inaugurated at the Tertio-Millennial celebration. In the meantime, most of the Spiegelberg family relocated. Arthur Seligman went on to serve as Santa Fe Mayor and Governor of New Mexico. Some of the Staab family's descendants are still in New Mexico.

Ultimately, Santa Fe wouldn't be rushed by the Tertio-Millennial or anything else; the capital's charms and confidence emerged on her own time.

Additional Sources of Information:

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- Library of Congress, American Memory, <http://memory.loc.gov>
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- 1. Chavez, Thomas E., *New Mexico Past and Future*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2006, p. 148.
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- 4. Wilson, Chris, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2001, p. 186.
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- 6. Wicks, Robert S. and Harrison, Roland, *Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods*, Texas Tech University Press, 1999, p. 16.
- 7. Prince, L. Bradford, *A Concise History of New Mexico*, 1911.
- 8. Pugach, Noel, *Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico--The Spiegelberg Family*, New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, 2005. ☆

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NMJHS Annual Dues

New members who join during the last four months of a year will have their membership extended through the end of the following year.

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Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

Check for more details at www.nmjhs.org.

Sunday, September 26, 2 - 4 p.m., **Genealogy Program.** Presented by noted sculptor Harvey Buchalter on the topic of *yizkor* (memory) books, which commemorate a lost town in the Old Country. Jewish Community Center, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, in Albuquerque. Admission fee is \$10 members and \$15 nonmembers.

October 22 - 24, **NMJHS Fall Conference** in Las Vegas, New Mexico, at the historic Plaza Hotel. See page 8 for additional details and the NMJHS web site for the program and registration materials.

November 3-10 **¡Celebrate! The Jewish Experience in Spanish-Speaking Countries!** Visit www.adl.org/celebratefestival after October 1st for additional information.

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