



We Were Prisoners, Too: A Tribute to Lewis J. Korn

by Louise Korn Waldron



We Were Prisoners, Too: The Effects of World War II is the book I authored to bring to light the World War II tragedies witnessed by Lewis J. Korn,

my father, who played two extraordinary wartime roles about which his family was left largely in the dark. The book's title expresses the sense of incarceration that my parents, my brother, and I experienced while Father was "at war."

Father, who led restoration efforts at some of the most significant Native American cultural sites in New Mexico, was assigned the job of director of the Japanese-American internment camp at Gila River in Arizona (1942-1943). There he was tasked with organizing trainloads of Japanese-Americans arriving from California, and with directing these internees to create from the hot Arizona desert farmlands that would feed the 10 "Jap camps" being set up in the United States. There he found conditions so horrific and out of his control that he joined the Army to escape.

Upon joining the Army, he was specially trained at a military intelligence school and, because of his familiarity with diverse cultures and languages, was assigned to British Intelligence in Italy. There he found some solace working as the authority for repatriation of displaced persons, mostly Jews. As commander of the Ferramonti Refugee Camp (1943-1945), Father selected and accompanied the first group of 571 Jewish refugees to Palestine. Soon after, he was in the unique position of selecting and accompanying to America the *only* group of Jewish refugees allowed on

United States soil, 916 Jewish refugees of 983 Ferramonti refugees who were interned at a camp in Fort Ontario, New York.

Father then returned to Italy to organize repatriation of all refugees in order for the Allied forces to eliminate the infiltration of Germans.

Refusing to discuss his war work with his family, he kept from us the truths about two history-making chapters of WWII, which are presented for the first time in my book, *We Were Prisoners, Too*.

Lewis J. Korn (1903-1992)

My mother, Marietta Watson Korn (Totsie), came from a wealthy Philadelphia background. Father's mother came from Russia and his father came from Latvia. They did not speak English but mainly German and other East European languages. Mother was "born Jewish" and Father was raised as a Lutheran. Both became Quakers.

My parents began dating in 1924 when they met at Swarthmore College, where they earned Bachelor's Degrees. They both went on to get Master's Degrees at the University of Pennsylvania, and Father completed the coursework for a Ph.D. in anthropology but did not write a dissertation. They married in New York City on September 12, 1932, and moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Father was drawn to the beauty of New Mexico, having worked at age 15 as a federal civil service timekeeper on the

railroad from Wyoming to Mexico with Mexican crews. He also was concerned about Mother's health. She had cystic fibrosis.



Louise Korn Waldron

How was my father able to work successfully with large groups of people during WWII?

Father always was a high achiever. He was a superior student in high school and an outstanding athlete in football, basketball, and track. Both Swarthmore and the Army offered him full scholarships. He chose Swarthmore, where he became captain of the football team in 1922-1925 and made the All-Eastern Football Team in 1925. That same year he made the All-American Lacrosse Team. Father organized the lacrosse demonstration game between Canada and the U.S. at the 1932 Olympics. At that time, he was on the U.S. Olympic

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**Fall Conference Las Cruces
November 14-15 See p. 8**

President's Column



I open my presidency with gratitude for all who have worked so hard to research, cherish, write, and teach about the unique history of Jewish New Mexico. Our leaders, from A. David Scholder, our first president, to Naomi Sandweiss, our most recent, have left a unique and precious inheritance: annual programs, archives, recorded oral histories, pioneer poster displays, school curricula, books, articles, and the *Legacy*. I stand on your shoulders, carry forward your goals and momentum, and hope to recognize you in my work on behalf of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society.



*NMJHS President
Paula Amar Schwartz*

When I was asked to take on the honor and challenge of leading NMJHS, I hesitated because I am not a historian. I admit to being a lover of historiography, which is part of my reason for joining and being a part of this organization for 24 of its 30 years. As a psychologist, I too work with differing points of view and the role that vantage point and individual perspective play in shaping our narratives.

During our 30-year history, we have brought together diverse strands of New Mexico's Jewish heritage, telling these stories to many who knew little about this abundant, diverse, and captivating legacy. Part of my task, as we move forward, is to maintain that openness and willingness to explore new trails, while rigorously researching those we already know.

This anniversary year has already begun to manifest new opportunities, from exhibits being planned in our state's museums, to programs in Las Cruces and Los Alamos, as well as Albuquerque and Santa Fe, a film in progress, and new books on the horizon, each documenting our rich and unique history. It is my profound honor to serve in this role while all of this unfolds. Thank you for the privilege.☆

Many Thanks for Your Contributions

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In Memory of Fay Blake, 1926-2015

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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.

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We Were Prisoners, Too (continued from p. 1)

Committee and was asked to be on the 1936 Committee, but he declined.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, as a federal civil service employee, his leadership roles included Director of Land Use for the United Pueblos Agency, New Mexico, in the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. He also served the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture as an administrator in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), for New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona, and as a soil conservationist.

I went with Father when he visited the CCC camps, Pueblos, and Native American ruins. As an archeologist he had the background to direct the CCC workers in repairing the main ruins of Bandelier, Puye, Pecos, Chaco Canyon, and Mesa Verde.

He also was an authority on irrigation who was familiar with the acequia systems of northern New Mexico and the prehistoric Indian canals of Arizona. Father is well known for setting up the Water and Land Conservation Districts of New Mexico during the late 1930s. Many of the old-timers remember him when we lived in Ranchos de Taos. Then came the war years and Father's assignment as Director of the Gila River camp.

Below are the positions my father held during the war that demonstrated his ability to organize and direct large groups:

- Director, Gila River Relocation Center, Sacaton, Arizona, March 1942-June 1943; about 14,000 Japanese-Americans
- Captain, U.S. Army, Office of Strategic Services (OSS), June 1943-February 1946
- Commander for the British, Ferramonti di Tarsia Internment Camp, near Naples, Italy, September 1943-February 1945; 1,952 refugees in October 1943, up to 3,800 in August 1944 (3,682 foreign born, 141 Italians)
- Commanding Officer for the British, taking the first group of 571 Jews from

Italy to Palestine, June 1944

- Selected and brought 983 refugees from Naples, Italy, to Fort Ontario, New York, for the U.S. Army, August 3, 1944 (916 were Jews)
- Repatriation Officer for the British in Italy, September 1944, witnessing about 2,000,000 displaced persons

When Paul Neal, Director of the Fort Ontario, New York, Historic Site, asked me about my father's background, I credited my father's leadership abilities to his education. Neal was interested because of his own role of working for a large governmental agency. He asked for photos of my father in uniform in order to present to the public this person who was responsible for Fort Ontario's existence today. Neal said, "Without Captain Korn, there would be no Fort Ontario."

Upon reflection, my father's success in working with large groups probably was the result of several influences. In addition to education and experience, a major factor was "connections." At Gila River, Father was familiar with the condition of the land, but it was his connections with government people in high positions that determined what happened to him. The Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, John Collier, had been Father's boss when he worked for the BIA. When the war came, Dillon Myer, an administrator with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Soil Conservation Service who knew my father, became head of the War Relocation Authority. Father was involved in planning all of the 10 large relocation camps and was familiar with locations for smaller camps because of his knowledge of the CCCs.

My parents had many interesting and influential Quaker friends. Their circle of friends also came from many backgrounds and nationalities. Father dealt in such a democratic way with large groups during the war that I assume the democratic philosophies of the Quaker

religion influenced him, although he never talked about religion.

In researching my book, I learned that Father turned to organizations to support his endeavors. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Quakers, helped the Japanese-Americans at his Gila River Camp. He involved the AFSC at Ferramonti and other Italian refugee camps, and they helped the Fort Ontario refugees. The AFSC won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for their work with refugees in World Wars I and II.

After the war, when we were back in New Mexico, through my father's influence the Soil Conservation Service helped Japanese-Americans find work in Arizona and California. I remember him visiting his Japanese-American friends in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s.

Father worked for the U.S. government until his retirement in 1963. He said he was proud to work for Civil Service. Paul Neal at Fort Ontario complimented my father's leadership abilities when he said, "Your father had a way of looking at the full picture. He was brilliant." My friend Masaji Inoshita, an internee at Gila River who is now 96 years old, described my book this way: "The brunt of the story is the inner and outer torment of your father. Because he was a Quaker is relevant . . . and leads to understanding of the torment he encountered in trying to be fair and . . . of the terrible war problems he faced, treading a path that satisfied the Army and the civilians at large. (It) shows a compassionate heart." My father regretted his role in the internment of Japanese-Americans for the rest of his life. ☆

Louise Korn Waldron lives in Carnuel. She is a painter, mostly of landscapes, and has a studio north of Taos. Louise is co-founder of the East Mountain Historical Society and a member of the Taos County Historical Society.

See p. 4: Fort Ontario Holocaust Survivor.

We Were Prisoners, Too: Eva Kaufman Dye at Fort Ontario

Dye was eight when she and her family fled from Zagreb, Yugoslavia, one day before it was invaded by the Nazis, and found safety with other European Jews at Safe Haven refugee camp in Oswego, New York. Dye and the other

refugees lived at that camp until January 1946. Some went to Oswego schools and some worked at the hospital and other businesses. Dye's family settled in Oswego after World War II and opened a photography studio.

http://www.kawvalley.k12.ks.us/schools/rjh/marneyg/archived_projects/2001Holocaust/01_holocaust_survivors_Ind.htm (adapted)



Eva Kaufman Dye and Family - Millbrae, California, 2011
Photo Credit: Louise Korn Waldron

Oswego, New York: Site of Safe Haven Refugee Camp at Fort Ontario



<http://www.oswego.edu/about/visit/maps/nysmap.html>

In Memoriam: Fay Forman Blake 1926-2015

by Stanley Hordes

Pioneer crypto-Jewish researcher Fay Blake, 89, passed away May 17, 2015, at her home in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Fay was born in 1926 in Brooklyn, New York. She studied Advertising Design at Cooper Union in New York City, and held positions in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, including Assistant Director at Shell Oil and Art Director at Coty, Inc. In the 1950s, she moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and taught art at the University of Chattanooga for two years before returning to New York to work as a freelance artist designing ads for companies such as Pepsi Cola, Ladies Home Journal, and General Electric.

In 1961, Fay met and married Dr. Henry W. Blake, and they moved to Albuquerque. Fay and Henry raised their two children, Eli and Miriam, in Alber-

que, and Fay continued her freelance art work, creating designs for numerous local businesses and social/political causes. Her work was featured on the cover of *New Mexico Magazine*, the KHFEM magazine, and the Santa Fe Opera, among others. Fay was active in many Albuquerque organizations, including New Mexico Right to Choose, Planned Parenthood, and the Bernalillo County Democratic Party.

Fay was perhaps the first "outsider" to investigate the topic of crypto-Judaism in New Mexico, conducting interviews with individuals who claimed a converso heritage in the mid-1970s. She published the results of her research some

twenty years later in an article, "The Hidden Jews of New Mexico," *Journal of Progressive Judaism*, Vol. 8 (May 1997), pp. 5-26. Citing the lack of available documentary evidence, Blake eschewed any elaborate historical analysis, relying instead on contemporary observations to support her hypothesis of a Hispano Jewish presence in New Mexico.



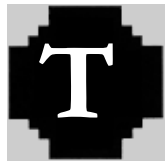
Fay Blake was a treasured colleague, always eager to share her resources with other scholars. She will be sorely missed

by her friends but always remembered for her devotion to New Mexico Jewish history. ♣

Editor's note: Fay Blake's obituary states that donations in her memory may be made to NMJHS or Planned Parenthood.

Doing Jewish History

by Mary Carter



Two important things Rabbi taught me:

"Being Jewish is not about belief; it is about action."

And:

"The moment you come up from the waters of the mikvah, all of Jewish history becomes your history."

And so, with these words in my head on the day of my mikvah, I knew that I would need to dry off, get dressed, and get going to discover my own place on that long Jewish continuum. As I considered my mikvah, I saw that I had never before summoned the courage to plunge into a whole new life. But this time I was braver. This time I was ready to change my life entirely. And I did.

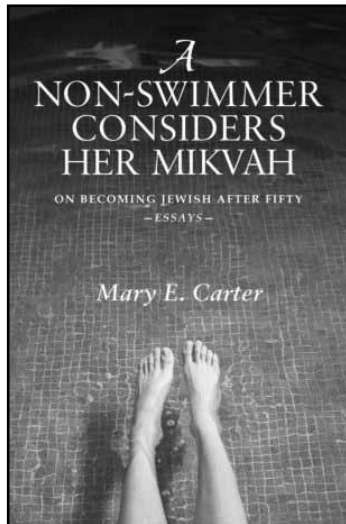
What I have discovered, now that several years have gone by since my Simchat Mikvah, is that I must not just sit passively as Jewish history flows along. I must find a way to contribute to it. I must act.

What to do? What to do?

First, I wrote my book.

I wrote it because I wanted to know how on earth I had landed on a cushion, seated on the floor of a large and airy room, listening to Rabbi David Cooper talk to us about the next 10 days which we would spend in silent Jewish meditation. Silent!? We were about a hundred in

number. I would discover later that there were several rabbis in the crowd. It was 1996 and I was 50. I had attended several yoga retreats held in this very same room at a retreat center run by an observant Hindu Sadhu, Baba Hari Das. Perched in the foothills overlooking Monterey Bay and perched on my own zafu, this time I was at a Jewish retreat. When I had seen the announcement for this event, I said



to my husband, Jewish-born, "I want to see what our tradition offers for spiritual practices." At the end of our 10 days in silence, Rabbi taught us how to do D'var Torah, how to use the fringes of the *tallit* to point to the Torah portion. That retreat was the first action I took in becoming a Jew. It was my first experience of reflection on a Torah portion. It was just the beginning.



Mary Carter

I wrote my book to discover the family, cultural, and historical events that had influenced me to seek further studies on the path to becoming Jewish. On this journey I discovered that maybe, or maybe

not, my relatives named Zimmerman were Jews. My evidence, gathered over a period of years from Ancestry.com, was tantalizing, but inconclusive. I showed my Zimmerman file to a rabbi and he reviewed it very carefully. "What you have here is interesting, but you do not have the one piece of historic evidence that would allow me to give you a return to Judaism. But, if you study and work at it, I could perhaps do a conversion for you."

I wrote my book to document my lifetime of searching. I learned that there was much in my personal history that guided me in my actions to take more Introduction to Judaism classes and to sit in on more and more Torah study groups. In writing about my life before my mikvah, before the moment of the sanctifica-

(continued on p. 10)

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Building Businesses and Community: Jewish Merchants in Albuquerque from the 1930s to the 1960s

by Harvey Buchalter

Editor's note: Harvey presented the keynote speech at the 2014 NMJHS Fall Conference at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque.

PART 1

It is a safe assumption that immigrants mirror the environment out of which they came.

Ethnic groups such as Greeks, Italians, and Poles, who came to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sometimes returned to their ancestral villages with lots of money in their pockets to begin life anew.

Not so with the twice-removed ancestors of most of us sitting here today, Jews from Russia, Russian Poland, Russian Ukraine, and Romania who came of age in America. Most of the Jewish immigrants who arrived in the '20s and '30s were engrossed in stories in the Yiddish press describing in vivid and horrifying detail the pogroms and expulsions devastating their *shtetlach*.

Expulsion from ancestral Jewish lands, combined with America's open-door immigration laws, had brought hundreds of thousands of these Jewish families to Ellis Island and even the port of Galveston, Texas, albeit in much smaller numbers.

Perhaps half of those who arrived on the Lower East Side of New York had already migrated to the industrializing cities in Russia and Poland for jobs in the factories. Political movements stressing the unity and struggle of the working classes surrounded them. This and other factors made many shed strict Orthodoxy, leaving secular attractions to fill the void.

But even if they traded the yarmulka for the bowler hat, close to the surface was the fact that religion and tradition had already woven a protective web around them, shielding them from the real world.

These same people carried this baggage of fears and insecurities in their *neshamas*, their very souls, when they left their villages bound for America, and they never spoke a word to us about their former lives. They were also weighted down with

additional fears: learning a new language, finding a place to live, and most importantly, finding a job.

Fear also made them resist both the blessings *and* the curses of assimilation.

The Jews who had absolutely no desire to leave New York, Philadelphia, or Chicago created a new and uniquely Jewish institution, the *landsmanshaft* society. It became the one institution they could trust for surviving in "*America gonif*," America the thief or swindler. America, to their way of thinking, was also the thief of *Yiddishkeit*.

Drawing themselves together in a sort of "misery loves company" community, they fed off each other's sense of self-denial and avoidance of risk, along with telling stories about familiar characters from the Old Country.

Landsmanshaft members literally spoke and kept their meetings' minutes in the same language, Yiddish, which was familiar and *heimish*, comforting.

The societies also had a more practical function: finding jobs and providing loans for the sick and a so-called "Society doctor," who for two dollars would make a house call. Most importantly, they provided a plot for eternal rest in the Society's cemetery.

It is hard to imagine that approximately a third of the two million Jewish immigrants in New York, from the 1920s to the late 1950s, worked in the garment trade, a trade for the trade-less, one that was rather easy to pick up.

After paying rent for a walk-up apartment in the Bronx or Brooklyn, food, clothing, and bills, little was left to buy a train ticket, let alone one on the roaring "El Capitan" to Albuquerque. And most immigrants never owned a car, so mobility for them was never an option.

Yet these same Jews, facing poverty and oppression, quotas for entry into higher

education, restrictions on farming the land and engaging in professions, actually did establish a niche for themselves in the economy of shtetl and town.

Many were tradesmen, wholesalers, or retailers, who toiled in the weekly outdoor marketplace. When they arrived stateside, they re-engaged in these same mercantile activities that sustained them in the shtetl, as their fellow émigrés who had worked in the factories became garment workers.

Immigrant merchants and tradesmen of every sort did, however, head for the American West, landing in Albuquerque. Their numbers were small, perhaps in the several dozens or low hundreds.

Henry Tobias, in his *A History of the Jews in New Mexico*, stated: "In their ethnic and occupational makeup, New Mexico's Jews probably differed more from the vast majority of American Jews in 1940 than in 1900. Minimally affected by the vast immigration from eastern Europe, marginally touched by manufacture, and far removed from many of the class, religious, and ideological distinctions that marked American Jewish life in the first forty years of the century, New Mexico's Jews still represented a relatively narrow spectrum of expression that characterized American Jewish life between 1900 and 1940. They more resembled their own forefathers in New Mexico. There were not many Orthodox Jews, Hassidim, socialists, anarchists, or trade unionists, and only a few tailors."

Furthermore, if your trade or the trade of your family was, for example, small shopkeeper in Bialystok on the Russian-Polish border, chances were good you

(continued on p. 7)



Harvey Buchalter

Building Businesses and Community *(continued from p. 6)*

could become a small shopkeeper in the American West, provided you were also a risk-taker.

Just who were the Jews in New Mexico circa 1860 to 1900? Almost all were the scions of German peddlers who, following the railroad, had arrived in Santa Fe and Las Vegas, or the extended families of the original, often-intermarried, Ilfelds, Ros-enwalds, Bibos, Staabs, Seligmans, Spiegelbergs, and others.

They were the “Pioneer Jews,” almost all of whom were connected to the mercantile trade. Back then, if a clerk was needed for the general goods store in Bernalillo, a salesman with a facility in languages was needed to go to Laguna, or a bride from Prussia, Cincinnati, or St. Louis was requested, a family member or a very close friend willing to start out in a faraway place stepped forward to take on the challenges of life in New Mexico.

By 1880, New Mexico had about 180 clearly identified Jews, with about 220 as a maximum; by 1900, although the number had risen to 403, Jews were still only two-tenths of one percent of the total population.

Living close to one another, working as merchants, clerks, salesmen on or near the plazas, they eventually became wholesalers as their businesses carried them far from Santa Fe, even to far-off Albuquerque.

“Importing relatives and friends to capitalize on retail success and expand became the norm. It was all about business and family; religion would come later,” Tobias pointed out. While New York’s immigrant Jews had immediately created and supported *landsmanshaft* societies in the thousands, self-help and community institutions were difficult to get off the ground in New Mexico, but the close-knit community was really like an extended family, especially when times were tough, providing comradeship, encouragement, and jobs.

The founding of the B’nai Brith Lodge in the 1880s preceded the cornerstone-laying of Temple Albert in 1898, thus marking the coming of age of the Jewish community of Albuquerque as a religious community. Congregation B’nai Israel, founded in 1920, with a permanent building in 1940,

grew with the Jewish population. Both congregations experienced steady growth.

Meanwhile, Jewish community-based groups in Albuquerque, such as the Jewish Welfare Fund, Hadassah, and ORT, continued to build, bolstered by membership of both affiliated and non-affiliated Jews.

Many non-temple- or non-shul-goers volunteered as fundraisers for both religious congregations and were outspoken leaders of the community in general, especially in the relief efforts of the World War II years, facilitating the rescue of our brethren from the hands of the Nazis.

In B’nai Israel’s 1994 tribute book to 50-year members, Bea Kahn, one of the later German-born immigrants to New Mexico, whose family operated a grocery on Bridge Blvd. in the South Valley, recalled her 1944 arrival when B’nai Israel played a central role in bringing people together: “Whether it was for religious services, teaching Sunday School, or organizing dinners or working at rummage sales, *everyone* participated in both the synagogue and the Temple.”

But even as the Jewish community grew, participation in the merchant-based economy was starting to shrink. It declined from a high of 47 percent from 1920 to 1940, to about 30 percent in the succeeding two decades.

In 1926 small department stores, second-hand good stores, groceries, furniture stores, and even a greenhouse were owned and run by Jewish merchants, although a new trend was becoming apparent.

Merchants’ sons and daughters gradually traded ownership of the stores along Route 66 for medicine, law, education, and other professions. Inheriting ownership of businesses both large and small was becoming a thing of the past, as new owners, even corporations such as Walgreens Drug, began purchasing established Jewish businesses. Jumping ahead to 1984, only 21 percent of the Jewish population of Albuquerque was composed of proprietors.

Nevertheless, the *minhag*, or custom, of welcoming, encouraging, and supporting new arrivals mirrored the customs of the German Jews decades earlier. Stories

abound of merchants helping one another when stores went low, lending money, rebuilding after a fire, and even extending credit to competitors.

For a moment, let’s retrace our steps. Consider immigrant Jews in the 1920s and 1930s. They mastered the sewing machine or, as previously mentioned, had become small shop owners or tradesmen.

These immigrant Jews mostly stayed put for two reasons: they had moved into established Jewish neighborhoods of pickle barrels, racks of Yiddish newspapers in Jewish-owned corner candy stores, and secular Jewish *schules* all around the neighborhood. They were engulfed by *Yiddishkeit*, and *Yiddishkeit* sustained them.

However, this feeling of relative comfort did not last very long as the double-edged sword of native and global anti-Semitism and the Great Depression appeared. Again, most Jews stayed put, in contrast to the few hundred families who packed up all their belongings and departed for Albuquerque.

It’s not hard to imagine why the Buchalter family never strayed from the Bronx and Brooklyn. My mother had visited relatives in Los Angeles and Montreal in the 1950s to investigate factory jobs for my sewing machine-operator father.

But the fear of leaving brothers and sisters, lifelong friends, and the security blanket that was *Yiddishkeit* made my father say, “Nein, do iz ver mir vellen mir bleiben.” “No, this is where we will remain.”

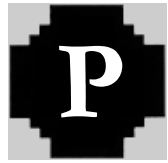
The Jews who came to Albuquerque in the ’30s and ’40s were a mixture of foreign born who had arrived on American shores as children or teenagers, and native born in their twenties, thirties and early forties. The percentage who affiliated with the two synagogues is unknown, but for those seeking a “*Yiddische punim*,” the friendly face of a *landsmann*, the temple or shul became the customary place to make friends.

PART 2

The 1994 tribute book of the United Synagogue-affiliated Congregation B’nai Israel
(continued on p. 9)

2015 Fall Conference

by Linda Goff, Conference Chair



Plans are moving ahead for an exciting Fall Conference in southern New Mexico. NMJHS will meet in Las Cruces on November 14-15 for “Legacies of

the Jewish Communities of the Southern Southwest & Celebrating 30 Years of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society” at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum.

In addition to celebrating our birthday, we will focus on the Jewish settlers and communities in the southern Southwest and cross state lines to include the rich history of Texas and Arizona.

Saturday’s optional tour of the museum will start at 9:30 AM and the buffet lunch will begin at 11:30 AM. After greetings from President Paula Amar Schwartz, New Mexico State University’s Provost Dan Howard, and Dona Ana County Historical Society President Susan Krueger, keynote speaker Rick Hendricks, New Mexico State Historian, will present “Go West Young Man: Jewish Migration to the Southwest in the 19th Century.”

Saturday afternoon’s speakers and panels will focus on New Mexico Jewish history; Jewish communities of the southern Southwest; crypto-Jews, conversos, and B’nai Anuism; and a retrospective dis-

ussion by NMJHS past presidents of milestones in the Society’s history.

Rounding out the Saturday program will be a reception, buffet dinner, and keynote presentation by NMSU faculty member Jon Hunner, whose topic is “A Path Not Taken: J. Robert Oppenheimer.”

Sunday morning’s program will begin with a bagel brunch at 8:30 AM, followed by opening speaker Jeff Brown, NMSU faculty and longtime NMJHS member, whose topic is “Las Cruces’ Jewish Community in a National Context.” Also scheduled is a panel discussion, “A Spotlight on the Las Cruces Area Jewish Communities.” Sunday will also feature individual presentations, including colleagues from the Texas Jewish Historical Society. The final session, entitled “Writing the Next 30 Years of New Mexico Jewish History: Where Do We Go from Here?,” moderated by Rabbi Paul Citrin, will bring together Society historians.

Two optional post-conference tours are of the J. Paul Taylor House and Historic Mesilla. All tours require an advance registration and/or small fee.

We will hold a silent auction and raffle to help provide resources to preserve New Mexico Jewish history. We also will feature a book fair with works by New

Mexico Jewish authors and, notably, two new NMJHS publications – “*The Jewish Legacy in New Mexico History*,” an anthology of articles from *Legacy*, our newsletter, edited by Richard Melzer, UNM-Va-lencia faculty and NMJHS board member, and *Four Alsatian Jewish Families Shape Albuquerque* by Noel Pugach, UNM emeritus faculty.



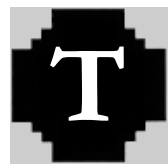
Linda Goff

NMJHS may rent a bus that will leave Albuquerque Friday morning and return after the post-conference tours. The price per person will be based on the actual number of riders, with a minimum of 25 and maximum of 55, in addition to conference registration fees. ☆

Conference registration materials will be mailed around September 1. For further information, contact Linda Goff, Conference Chair, lagoff@hotmail.com, or Judy Weinstein, NMJHS Administrator, admin@nmjhs.org, 505-348-4471.

2014 Treasurer’s Report

by Gila Yaniv



The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation, incorporated in New Mexico and operating on a cash accounting basis,

with the exception of payroll taxes. It has one part-time employee (office administrator).

This year, we closed our bank accounts with Los Alamos National Bank and transferred all banking business to U.S. Bank.

For calendar year 2014, the NMJHS had revenues of \$31,979, and expenditures of \$31,365, resulting in net income of \$614. The NMJHS Finance Committee, chaired by the treasurer, meets periodically to explore ways to enhance revenues and reduce expenses. In addition, the committee proposes to the board of directors the budget for the current fiscal year, to be approved by the board.

Major sources of revenue for 2014 were: membership dues (38%) and fall conference (37%). Other revenues were derived from contributions (16%), Jewish Fed-

eration of New Mexico (8%), and other income (1%).

Major expenses for 2014 were: payroll (32%), fall conference (22%), printing (10%), insurance (8%), programming (6%), contract services (5%), newsletter (5%), office and equipment rental (5%), postage (3%), bank charges (1%), and remaining expenses (3%). ☆



Gila Yaniv

Building Businesses and Community *(continued from p. 7)*

that honored 50-year members listed 28 couples and individuals. It was not meant to be a primary source, but it has evolved into a unique treasure trove of first-person accounts, revealing in rich detail why and how these people came to Albuquerque.

Congregation B'nai Israel was built in 1940, just east the Lead Avenue/I-25 overpass. The 28 individuals or couples were interviewed by a team of 14, including Anita Miller and Myra Gasser, with statements edited by Lisa Mager and Sharon Mayo.

Names still familiar to many of us are mentioned in the text: Blaugrund, Bloch, Bromberg, Cooper, Dreyer, Dreyfus, Gardenzwartz, Goldman, Katz, Kubie, Maisel, Mayer, Pollack, Ravel, Specter, Taylor, and Wenman.

Interestingly, only Robert Katz was actually born in Albuquerque. The remaining 27 were born in Eastern Europe and brought here as children or teenagers, or were American-born. Most were either merchants along old Route 66, or buyers and sellers of goods in towns along the Rio Grande.

The dry air of Central New Mexico brought two families who suffered from severe asthma to Albuquerque. Even a few cars, California-bound, broke down beyond repair in Albuquerque. Visits to the local shul on a Friday night – and the gracious welcome given them by the long-time shul- or temple-goers – caused them to reconsider Los Angeles as a destination, and so they put down roots in Albuquerque.

The hard times of the Great Depression brought at least two others. Estelle Bernstein said, “Times were tough and the Depression hit the Pollack and Bernstein families. We left precious belongings behind and left Denver in the Fall of 1933 and settled in Albuquerque.” These families, among others, had already been merchants in mainly Midwestern cities.

As the Depression worsened, Jennie and Phillip Friedman moved west in 1936. Phillip founded Phillips Mercantile, precursor of Value House, where Albuquerqueans were able to buy almost anything – from basketballs, to patio furniture, to beauty

supplies, to diamond rings – in multiple, cavernous, stores spread throughout the city.

The pioneering spirit explicitly brought several others. In 1936, Mannie Blaugrund decided to venture out on his own from El Paso, where he had mastered English, Spanish, and the family furniture business. He chose Albuquerque over Los Angeles and Phoenix to open his store, which over the years evolved into American Home with several locations in the Southwest and with several locations in the Southwest and was family-held through the 1980s.

One of the early presidents of Congregation B'nai Israel moved to Albuquerque in 1932, also to be in the furniture business. Herman Bloch opened up Globe Furniture on Silver Street, a world away from both Minsk and the American Deep South, where family members taught the 20-year-old the family business.

A few of the stories related in the tribute book bear a strong resemblance to the life of a typical Jewish tradesman in Russia at the turn of the 20th century. Speaking of Herman Bromberg, the interviewers wrote, “He and his father went from town to town in New Mexico, bartering.” This mirrored the life of a Jewish peddler, a nicer term being “traveling salesman,” anywhere in the Jewish Pale of Settlement.

The Brombergs eventually opened El Cambio on Fourth Street and Bridge Blvd., now directly across the street from the National Hispanic Cultural Center, in Albuquerque’s largely Hispanic South Valley. In the mid-1980s, before the supermarket was closed and later demolished, I recall visiting and marveling at the hand-written ledgers in which Herman and Sheldon Bromberg kept the credit accounts of their customers. As Sheldon remarked, “I kept the sheep ranchers on the books when times were rough for them.”

I knew Walter Cohen when he became one of the directors of Walgreens Drug. He had moved to Albuquerque in 1936 and, along with his brother A. B., started Payless Drugs, which was eventually bought out by Walgreens. The 1994 B'nai Israel tribute book offers this description: “Having a

pioneering spirit and wanting to open a drug store in a rural, growing area, they moved to Albuquerque. Eventually, the brothers had five Payless stores, the first drug store in the U.S. to merchandise in a self-service style.”

Similar to the Cohens’ story is the story of the Pollacks, which also reveals risk-taking and trend-setting. Max Pollack, who already knew the flower business, saw the trend in the how customers were purchasing retail goods toward less service and lower prices. Thus, the family-operated Savon Flowers emerged with several locations and followed a “cash-and-carry” style.

The Cohen brothers’ story is also similar to that of Henry Hillson. “Shortly after his wedding to Ruth,” the tribute book says, “Henry struck out on his own. He operated out of a panel truck, with a sign reading ‘Henry Hillson and Company,’ which eventually became New Mexico’s largest privately owned wholesale dry goods company.”

From the '30s on, the term “dry goods” became synonymous with a Jewish, family-owned store selling clothing, bedding, drapes, and the like.

Albuquerque merchants such as Simon Goldman, David Cooper, and Harold Gardenzwartz first introduced the terms sporting goods and Western wear. Cook’s Sporting Goods on Sixth Street, Simon’s Western Wear, and Cooper’s illustrate the prominence of Jewish merchants in this distinctly American-branded industry.

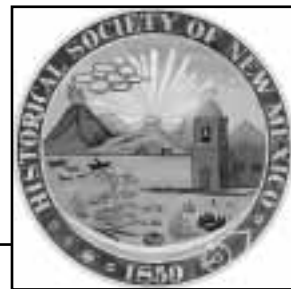
Other businesses up and down Route 66, or extending to a radius of a mile or two in all directions, became fixtures, mainly in the retail trade.

Thus, we find liquor stores, men’s fine clothing stores, florists, and camera dealers, Kurt Kubie; jewelry supplies, Saul Bell; treasures from the pueblos and reservations, the Freed Brothers and the Bobricks; even pipes and pumps, Sol Taylor; and a selection of just about everything else in the aptly named Gizmo Store, still in operation downtown.

(continued on p. 10)

Historical Society of New Mexico Call for Papers

2016 New Mexico History Conference
April 14-16, 2016
Farmington Civic Center, Farmington, New Mexico
Visit www.hsnm.org for more details



The Historical Society of New Mexico invites papers, session proposals, and presentations for the 2016 New Mexico History Conference. The deadline for submissions is September 30, 2015.

Papers on any aspect of New Mexico history, the Southwest, or Borderlands will be considered, including San Juan County, northwest New Mexico, and the “Four Corners” area; influence of the region’s ethnic groups; history of the Navajo, Jicarilla, and Ute Nations; and historic sites in the region. Proposals may be submitted by email at robertjtorrez@gmail.com or by mail to HSNM Program Committee, P.O. Box 1912, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1912.

Doing Jewish History *(continued from p. 5)*

tion of becoming a Jew, I discovered the history inside me that had propelled me to make this change. And I wanted to share my story with other adults who sit in those classes and wonder how they got there. What I discovered is that all mature adults who decide to become Jewish have a long and rich and complex history that they bring to the task. And they bring that history to existing Jewish history and it is a gift. The first act of a person as he or she emerges from the mikvah is the giving of

that gift – the gift of the self – to Jewish history.

My Hebrew name is Tovah Miriam Bat Avraham v. Sarah. By this name you already know something about who I am. In this naming tradition, I became part of Jewish lineage, part of Jewish history. And then what happens? I set off to immerse myself in Jewish history and, if possible, to make some history myself along the way.✠

*Mary E. Carter is the author of **A Non-Swimmer Considers Her Mikvah: Becoming Jewish After Fifty**. In this volume of essays, Carter takes readers on a voyage of time travel. By moving back in time, she reviews her personal history and discovers that Jewish history now lies in front of her, waiting for her future contributions. Mary lives in Placitas with her husband, Gary Priester.*

Building Businesses and Community *(continued from p. 9)*

The Ravel Brothers, whose story transitions from the era of the Pioneer Jew to the modern era, owned a grain and feed store with garden supplies, eventually having five stores throughout Belen to the south and Albuquerque.

Commercial dealings with Native Americans, according to some researchers, are a sensitive topic. Were native artisans actually taken advantage of, or did retailers – essentially middlemen who purchased and re-sold hand-made items – actually boost the Native American economy?

If you consider the role of certain Jewish merchants whose trade was almost exclusively based on dealing in Native American arts and crafts, a few anecdotes add importance and also enlighten the conversation.

There was Morris Maisel, whose store in the heart of downtown Albuquerque featured live demonstrations of Native

Americans at work fashioning jewelry, which attracted tourists to downtown businesses and created additional markets for Native American goods. And there was Manny Goodman, whose iconic Covered Wagon on the Old Town Albuquerque Plaza brought an amazing selection of hand-crafted items to tourists with both deep and shallow pockets.

Manny never joined a synagogue but held deeply to the Jewish practice of *tzadokkah*, as evidenced by his contributions to the founding of the Albuquerque Jewish Community Center.

What was the basis of Native American-Jewish commerce? Could it be traced back to Eastern European Jews dealing with their neighbors not so much in finished goods, horses and cattle, and clothing, but with more exotic items? More research is needed to address this question, which may reveal some fascinating answers.

The dynamism of the Jewish merchants in Albuquerque and environs is matched by their zeal in building the Jewish community. Stories are still told about the women of the B’nai Israel Sisterhood taking out the trash from Shabbos onegs and kiddishes, following services in the old Rio Theater on Central Avenue, since demolished. These and other stories still resonate when long-time Albuquerque residents sit and recall the bygone days of a much smaller but no less vibrant community.

It’s also a far cry from the immigrants who formed the insular *landsmanshaft* societies long ago. The Jews who came to Albuquerque from the late 1920s on sought assimilation – on their own terms – in American life, unlike the society members who feared it and were not able or willing to take the enormous risks involved in making the move, starting a business, and rolling up their sleeves to build a community to sustain Jewish life in a far-away land. ✠

Annual Clean-up at Montefiore Cemetery

by Dianne Layden

On May 17, 2015, NMJHS held its annual clean-up of the Montefiore Cemetery in Las Vegas with members of the Montefiore Cemetery Association. Established in 1881, Montefiore is the first Jewish cemetery in New Mexico and one of the first Jewish cemeteries west of the Mississippi.

About two acres in size, the cemetery lies on sloping land rimmed by a fence and stone wall. In neat rows are the

graves of some of the first Jewish settlers in the 19th century, including young children, as well as more recent arrivals. The presence of visitors is marked by the custom of leaving stones on top of the gravestones they visit.

Larry and Diana Presser are active members of the Jewish community in Las Vegas. At the clean-up, Larry told me the moving story of the death and cremation in New York of his mother, Fanny "Fay" Presser (1918-2013), and his provision of a grave at Monte-

fiore that he could visit, complete with gravestone and marker. He said about his mother, "She worked hard."

About 15-20 people participated, according to Lewis Terr, president of the cemetery association. The group said the Kaddish for those who resided at Montefiore. Stan Hordes mentioned two Jews who passed away recently, Abe Silver of Santa Fe and Orlando Mondragon of the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. ✧

Photo Credits: Carla Freeman, Linda and Ed Goff, Diana and Larry Presser



Montefiore Cemetery



Helen Hordes, Stan Hordes, Katrina Immerman, Linda Goff



Montefiore Cemetery



Larry Presser



Grave of Fannie Presser 1918-2013

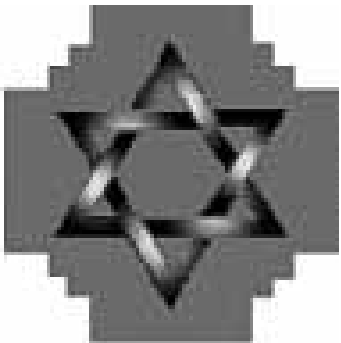


Diana Presser

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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

October 11: Santa Fe-Los Alamos member social event, Santa Fe

November 8: Jewish women's poetry readings, co-sponsored with Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe

November 14-15: Fall Conference, "Legacies of the Jewish Communities of the Southern Southwest & Celebrating 30 Years of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society," New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NMJHS.org

February 28, 2016: Genealogy program with Bennett Greenspan, morning/afternoon presentations, Jewish Community Center, Albuquerque

May 1, 2016: Annual clean-up at Montefiore Cemetery, Las Vegas

Ongoing: Santa Fe Jewish Film Festival, SFJFF.org, JewishFilm@SFJFF.org, 415-621-0523