



## Eleven Million Steps: the Cohn Family Journey to Taos

by Yvette Cohn Stoor

*The following article is a condensed version of a paper presented at the 26th NMJHS Fall Conference in Taos.*

**F**or six generations, the Cohn family has lived in New Mexico and southern Colorado. Many of us were raised with the rich cultural and religious traditions that were distinctly Spanish and Catholic. However, our father emphasized that the family came to New Mexico from Breslau, Prussia, and that we were German-Jewish.

In 2009, I attended Professor Noel Pugach's presentation about German-Jewish Pioneers in New Mexico. He told a tale surprisingly similar to one passed down through our family about patriarch and pioneer Louis Cohn, my great, great grandfather, who was born December 3, 1837, in Breslau, Prussia, and came to the United States in 1864. Thus, began my research to discover more about Louis Cohn and why he took the initial step in the long journey that eventually landed the family in Taos, New Mexico, where the Cohn family still lives today.

Step back to 1790 and the village of Dyhrenfurt, Prussia, where Louis Cohn's grandparents, Jacob and Blumshen (Steinmann) Cohn, lived and worked to support their family. Dyhrenfurt was home to a synagogue, a Jewish cemetery, and a publishing house where Jacob worked and was also employed as an agent for the Prussian lottery.

The publishing house was known for publishing the works of Moses Mendelssohn, the father of the Jewish Enlightenment. Blumshen had a peddler's cart where she sold linens, and other household materials. The family strictly adhered to a Jewish life; Jacob often tested his sons', and later his grandchildren's, knowledge of Hebrew and religion. Upon Blumshen's death, Jacob relocated the family to Breslau, to the section that was formerly the Jewish ghetto, no longer separated by gates and walls.

Breslau limited the number of Jews within the city limits, so the former Jewish ghetto had become a bustling hub for new Jewish merchants. About 1820 Jacob Cohn and his sons opened the first family business, "J Cohn & Compagnie". Three known sons, Isak, Adolf, and Joseph, married and started their families in the ghetto area of Breslau.

As time passed, it was evident that Isak's firstborn son, Ferdinand, was a child prodigy and would need to relocate to Berlin in order to further his education. Isak and his wife were unable to accom-

pany their son, therefore in late 1846, younger brother Joseph with his wife Ernestine took their young family, Adolf,



*Louis Cohn*

Louis (nine years old at the time), and Malwine to Berlin to support their nephew.

Nephew Ferdinand's journal provided a glimpse of what life was like in Berlin in the late 1840s and 1850s. The negative attitude toward Jews was palpable as evidenced in his 1847 journal entry after his Aunt Ernestine left him alone at the university. He wrote, "I am alone in a city with 400,000 people that hate me, they don't like me, they hate me."

Despite these added pressures, Ferdinand endured, took exams, petitioned (a requirement for Jews) and received his

*(continued on p. 3)*

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## Message from President Naomi Sandweiss



The winter 2014 issue of *Legacy* is full of fascinating historical information. I hope that you can sit down and take

the time to enjoy it with a cup of your favorite warm beverage.

If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to renew your membership to the Society for 2014 at the same dues rate as this past year. Not only will your renewed membership enable you to continue to enjoy *Legacy*, but you will also be invited to engaging programs and give your support to historical and education projects.

Speaking of engaging programs, please join us on Sunday, February 16, for Gabe Galambos's talk on Secret Jews in Modern Day America. Galambos is

author of the new novel, *The Nation by the River*, which took him to Azorean islands to meet with historians and academics; researched New World crypto-Jews and the Inquisition that both drove them to the Azores and then chased them away; and learned much about the Portuguese Azorean culture of southeast New England. Gabe recently presented his Azorean research at a conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. Gabe served in the Israeli Defense Forces and, in 1983, assisted in the secret rescue of Ethiopian Jews.

As the board gathers in January to reflect on 2013 and make plans for the



*NMJHS President Naomi Sandweiss*

upcoming year, we are grateful for our members and your enthusiasm about New Mexico Jewish history. As always, we encourage your program ideas, suggestions and involvement. If you are on Facebook, please "like" the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society page and stay tuned for updates to our web page as well.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2014. ☆

## Volunteers Very Much Appreciated



NMJHS administrator Ruth Carter wishes to thank volunteers for their invaluable assistance in preparing for the 2013 NMJHS Fall Conference

in Taos and serving at the registration and welcome desk.

Nancy Paxton, a regular volunteer at the NMJHS office, helped Ruth prepare materials prior to the conference, joined by Dianne Layden, Karen Singer, Stu Simon, and Paula Schwartz. During the conference Nancy, Dianne, and Paula continued to volunteer at the registration desk along with Pat Carlton, Norma Libman, Sandy Brintnall, Yvette Cohn Stoor, George W. Carter, Patricia Antelles, and Lenny Katz. If we missed anyone else who volunteered, please know how much Ruth appreciated your help. Thanks to all volunteers for helping to make this a great conference.



*Registration desk at Taos conference center; left to right: Nancy Paxton, Dianne Layden, Ruth Carter, and Yvette Cohn Stoor prepare for conference attendees.*

The NMJHS Board of Directors are diligent at their various positions and work hard at keeping the tasks required of the administrative desk down to controllable levels. Ruth says the administrative desk stays busy most of the year, especially at conference time.

Volunteers are welcome during the year at the administrative office. Ruth would be happy to discuss possibilities of volunteers contributing time with office tasks from clerical to at-home computer skills. Please feel free to contact her at the office 505-348-4471 or email her at [admin@nmjhs.org](mailto:admin@nmjhs.org).

**Eleven Million Steps** *(continued from p. 1)*

Doctorate of Botany at the age of nineteen. He would remain in Prussia, have an illustrious career, and make notable contributions to the accomplishments of Louis Pasteur.

Ferdinand's younger cousin Louis completed his education, then was summoned and served a two-year conscription in the Prussian Army. Unlike Ferdinand, Louis, having witnessed the increased restrictions for Jews, made the decision to leave his family and Prussia in pursuit of freedom and opportunity in America.

Louis arrived in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1864 and quickly decided to venture west on the Santa Fe Trail. On the trail, he met another Prussian Jew, Isaac Gotthelf. They arrived in Santa Fe in September 1864, where they found work as bookkeepers and remained for two years. Louis became proficient in Spanish and English, learned the ways of business in the Territory, and saved money.

In September 1866, he and Gotthelf left Santa Fe and traveled north, 45 miles beyond Taos, to the Plaza de Los Manzanares. The Plaza served as the central hub for the small villages of Garcia, Costilla, Cerro, and Questa, which were located close to the New Mexico and Colorado territorial border. There they opened a mercantile store, the third on the Plaza, and began to connect with the community and develop their business.

During this time, Louis met Leopold Mayer, a future business partner, and Colorado banker and politician Charles John, with whom he would work closely in the Costilla County Clerk's office. He also met future political associate, William Meyer, who would become Lieutenant Governor of Colorado. Another fortunate encounter Louis had was with

renowned frontiersman and trapper, Kit Carson prior to Carson's death in 1868.



*Louis Cohn's store ca. 1868 on the Plaza de Los Manzanares north of Taos*

In 1869, Louis received an order to return to Prussia to fight in the forthcoming Franco-Prussian War. As a naturalized citizen, Louis should have been immune to this order, yet he complied. He still had family living in Prussia, the attitude "born a Prussian, die a Prussian" had been impressed upon him, and the United States was slow in establishing protection against immigrants being compelled to return to their homeland. Louis remained until the end of the conflict and an additional year as a volunteer. Perhaps he was in search of a Jewish wife or he may have had to deal with the deaths of his parents, Joseph and Ernestine.

Louis returned to the New Mexico Territory in 1872. He had left his store at the Plaza in the custodial care of Jose P. Lopez. His former partner, Gotthelf, departed the Plaza in 1869 and moved to the town of Saguache, in the Colorado Territory. Louis maintained the enterprise in the Plaza de Los Manzanares, and opened another shop in San Luis, within the border of the Colorado Territory.

Louis proceeded to buy land, water rights, mine shares, homes, ranches, livestock and other storefronts. He purchased the Colorado Hotel in Denver that served as the temporary location for the State Capitol. He entered into another partnership with Leopold Mayer, a fellow Jew, and named it L Cohn and Company. He mentored Nat Nathan, another Jewish settler; Mayer and Nathan later relocated to Saguache in search of their own fortunes.

About 1876, Louis met and started a family with Juana Ruperta Valdez. The Val-

dez Family was prominent in the area. Originally from New Mexico, Juana had a brother who served as judge and another who served as sheriff in San Luis. Louis and Juana had seven children, four of whom survived. They named their eldest daughter Josefa Ernestina Maria Luisa Cohn to honor Louis's father and mother, Joseph and Ernestine. Josefa married

Dan Romero, son of Geronimo Romero, a very respected and established family.

Louis and Juana's second daughter Estrella married Policarpio Lucero, whose family were prominent land owners at the base of Blanca Peak. Sons Adolf (deceased), Juan Pedro Ricardo, and Joseph Anastacio Ruperto Cohn were named to honor family in Prussia who had passed away.

A formal marriage record has not been found for Louis and Juana. Louis had many opportunities to relocate and leave San Luis for political and business ventures in Denver, but it appeared that his loyalty and dedication to his family kept him in the valley.



*Juana Maria Ruperta Valdez*

**Eleven Million Steps** *(continued from p. 3)*

Louis Cohn earned respect as an educated businessman, was viewed as a community leader in Costilla County, and in 1880 was selected to attend the Democratic Convention. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1884 and served in 1885 and 1886. His affiliation as a Royal Lodge Mason enabled him to stay connected and speak his native language with fellow Prussian Jews. During this time, no synagogues existed in the New Mexico Territory; the closest in Colorado was over one hundred miles away and required travel over treacherous mountain passes.

In 1885, Louis entered into partnership with well-known businessman A. A. Salazar to purchase the San Luis Mills, originally built by Ceran St. Vrain and Harvey Easterday at the south end of San Luis. They retained ownership for thirteen years, and in 1898 they entered into a purchase agreement to sell the Roller Mill to Wm. Parrish. The final payment was made on August 1, 1899, the equivalent of \$44,000 in today's money. A recollection, passed down by Louis's daughter Estrella was that her father was eating strawberries and drinking champagne in celebration when he became suddenly ill. Louis Cohn died at the age of 61, on August 21, 1899, of what was said to be ptomaine poisoning. He is buried in San Luis, Colorado; his headstone is one of the oldest still visible in the cemetery.

At the time of his death, Louis's sons were in their early teens. Juan Pedro Ricardo (Dick) Cohn would become a well-established small business owner, operating several livestock-growing businesses and eventually a trucking enterprise in the San Luis Valley. Dick's grandson recalled his grandfather secluding himself for daily prayers. It is unknown what religion he practiced.

Dick was an avid writer who wrote many letters. He was prolific in expressing his opinions to newspapers in general essays and editorials. It was he who recorded his father Louis's story and family relations

and associations in Prussia. The extent of research achieved for the Cohn family is largely due to the writings of Juan Pedro Ricardo Cohn.

Louis's youngest son, Joseph Anastacio Ruperto Cohn (Joe or J.A.R.), my great-grandfather, followed a different entrepreneurial path. Despite his youth, he was knowledgeable in the business of livestock sales, ranching and horsemanship. The majority of his dealings were conducted in the New Mexico Territory. It was on his travels, at the age of twenty-



*Jose Anastacio Ruperto Cohn*

two, that he met and married Beatrice LaBelle Young. Beatrice was the only daughter of John "Jack" Hewitt Young and Francisquita Gallegos who lived in Cerro, New Mexico. Francisquita was the eldest daughter of the large Gallegos family who had settled near Abiquiu and Questa.

Jack Young, the first Postmaster in Cerro, had been active in New Mexico Territory politics, and was a personal friend and correspondent to Territorial Governor L. Bradford Prince. Politics were volatile at the time and threats eventually forced the family to leave the area. Jack Young and his son-in-law, Joe Cohn, relocated the family to a small village, El Rito de

Los Encinos, east of Abiquiu, located at the base of Perdernal Peak. The area needed a functional post office, which was just the ticket for Joe Cohn and Jack Young, who were literate in both English and Spanish, a rare asset in the area. In 1913 Joe Cohn was appointed first postmaster, and the town of El Rito de Los Encinos was renamed Youngsville, New Mexico.

The Cohns and Youngs opened a general store and boarding house; their presence provided a central hub for this rural area. Joe Cohn turned over the reins of Postmaster to his wife Beatrice so he could return to ranching. He was selected to serve on the livestock commission and appointed as an open-land law enforcement Marshal by Governor Arthur Hannett. In this role, Joe Cohn encountered some of the worst criminals in the region. He, like his father, was acknowledged as a well respected and admired leader in the local community.

Joe and Beatrice started their family in Youngsville, New Mexico. Over the years they had three daughters and five sons. The eldest a daughter, Evelyn, was followed by Louis, John Francis "Frank", Clorinda, Cordellia, Levi Enoch, Harold Amos, and Robert Abidon. Again, not much is known about the religious life of the family, but they did give their three youngest sons Hebrew names.

Joseph and Beatrice's descendants were bilingual with Spanish being the primary language spoken. Children in this rural area of northern New Mexico received only a sixth grade education.

All the Cohn children were excellent on horseback, and the sons worked the ranch at an early age. The older Cohn children helped with the general store in Youngsville, which was known to treat the locals fairly, and more often than not, merchandise was given on credit.

*(continued on p. 7)*

## Gustav and Ella Wormser

by Meredith Davidson

**C**igars, Hay, Grain, Flour, Oil, Nails and Hardware...our stock is the largest in the Southwest." So reads an advertisement for Lindauer Wormser & Co. general merchandise store. From 1885 to 1896, Gustav Wormser, a Jewish immigrant from Württemberg, Germany, operated the Deming, New Mexico, storefront on Silver Street. But it was Gustav's wife, Ella, who found a love for photography and across five years documented some of the only images of Deming's participation in the cattle industry's stock and rail yards near the height of their existence.

The Wormsers' story honors the legacy of Jewish families in New Mexico and speaks to the diversity of cowboy history that visitors can see in the current exhibit at the New Mexico History Museum, "Cowboys, Real and Imagined." Byron Price, the exhibit's guest curator, noted that the discovery of Ella's photographs during the creation of the exhibit was his "single most satisfying curatorial experience."

This statement means quite a bit because Price has likely seen more cowboy photographs and materials than most! Formerly the director of the Cowboy Hall of Fame and the Buffalo Bill Museum, and currently the director of the University of Oklahoma Press and the Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Western American Art at the University of Oklahoma, he is an accomplished author and respected authority on the history of the West and its art. His adoration of Mrs. Wormser's photographs was the catalyst for his recent article on her work published in the museum's magazine, *El Palacio*.

Just how did Ella and Gustav come to be in Deming at such a timely moment?

Like so many New Mexican stories, this one begins with a journey across thousands of miles. Gustav Wormser, born



*Lindauer Wormser & Co. store office interior, 1889 (Courtesy of the Deming Luna Mimbres Museum and Archives)*

in 1857, was the only one of four siblings to immigrate to the United States. His uncle, Isaac, advised Gustav to join him in the booming region of northern California. So Gustav crossed the ocean in 1875 and made his way from Württemberg (sometimes written Wirtemberg or Wurtemberg) to San Francisco. Once in the city, he worked as an assistant bookkeeper for Levi Strauss. That and a position with Louis Sloss & Co., one of the largest fur traders in the region, likely gave him much of his business expertise.

He and his uncle paid close attention to the newspaper's frequent reports on the development of the railroad across the West. The two began to wonder how extensions to Mexico would find their

way into this expanding rail system. On March 9, 1881, their attention turned to events in the burgeoning town of Deming. The news reported the recently completed crossing of the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific. This junction began to deliver livestock, freight, and travelers north and west.

Gustav and his uncle followed their gut instincts, hoping Deming would be that point of entry into Mexico. They started a business in partnership with Gustav's cousin, Sigmund Lindauer, who had arrived in Deming after closing his nearby Georgetown, New Mexico, store. Initially, Gustav remained in San Francisco, but by March 1885 he had moved to Deming to manage the business in person.

The company prospered, but for reasons that are unclear, Lindauer and Wormser dissolved their partnership in 1891. Gustav continued to run the store under "Wormser & Co."

Back in California, a member of the Klauber family, Elvira – known as Ella

– was pursuing art lessons. Born in Nevada in 1863, Ella had moved with her family to San Diego as a child. The family summered in San Francisco and Ella's artistic talents as a painter gained her entry into the San Francisco School of Design. She

and Gustav likely knew each other before he left for Deming in 1885. On July 31, 1888, Gustav wrote to his cousin in San Francisco outlining his intentions to marry Ella: "When you meet her



*Ella Wormser, 1888 (Courtesy of the Wormser Family)*



*Gustav Wormser, 1888 (Courtesy of the Wormser Family)*

**Gustav and Ella Wormser** (continued from p. 5)

you'll approve of her. Ella is simple in nature, reserved, with fine character.... She's well educated and speaks German fluently, understands other languages.... She draws and paints.... The main thing always she's industrious and reliable." By October 1888, the two were married.

For a woman accustomed to the urban environment of San Francisco, the small town of Deming, with its cowpunchers and cattle drives, was surely a dramatically new sight. This change may have inspired her to pursue a new art form, photography. Ella's first photographs date to 1891. Her photographic eye looked towards her home, her

husband's business, areas surrounding Deming, and frequently to the cattle drives arriving in town. By then, Deming welcomed crews each spring and fall as they loaded cattle onto rail cars and shipped them north. An article in a March 1890 issue of the *Deming Headlight* said: "There are nearly 27 thousand head of cattle for sale and ready for market on the ranges immediately tributary to Deming."

Some of Ella's strongest work captured crews while they ate, relaxed or rode into town. Occasionally visible are the well-worn, sun-scorched faces of the men. Her training as a painter ensured that the photos obtained a cinematic quality. One of the most complete sets of prints in the collection documents the incoming crew of Jack Follansbee. A college friend of William Randolph Hearst, he managed the newspaper magnate's Mexican ranch. Like many others, this crew arrived in the fall in Deming to deliver their stock. During their stay in 1895, Ella photographed them over several encounters.

With four years of photography under her belt, Ella experimented more freely in documenting this crew. In one sequence at the stockyards, she placed the camera on a fence railing and caught the shadow of a wooden beam as cowpunchers navigated across the posts to



*Working cattle at the Deming Stockyards, Deming, New Mexico, by Ella Wormser, ca. 1895 [Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA) Neg No. 012711]*

move a herd of cattle below them in the corral. She had already photographed in previous years more local cattle crews, but the Follansbee images seem most familiar to today's viewers. It is as if they were plucked from the reels of classic Hollywood Westerns.

By 1895, it was clear that El Paso would reap the benefits the Wormsers had hoped for in Deming; the Mexican railroad extensions now ran out of El Paso and Tucson and left Deming stranded between the two. That year Gustav's uncle and business partner, Isaac, passed away back in California.

In the spring of 1896, Gustav closed the business, packed up the family – which now included three young children – and returned to San Francisco. He didn't stay out of the merchandise business for long. By late August the *Deming Headlight* congratu-

lated the former resident for opening a new business, Sussman Wormser & Co.

There is no evidence that Ella continued to photograph once she left New Mexico. She returned to painting and over her lifetime entered several juried exhibitions. Somehow, the Wormsers and Ella's negatives narrowly survived the San Francisco earthquake in 1906. As Ella's brother recounts in a letter to their sister, a chimney from the synagogue next door fell onto the Wormser home and destroyed one of the children's bedrooms; no one was home during the event.

As a capstone to the discovery of Ella's work at the New Mexico History Museum, the family relayed a particularly touching tale: In 1902, Gustav and the family visited his brothers in Germany. As a gift, he brought a photo album of her Deming images in an album the family called "Das Deming Buch."

In the 1950s Ella's teenage grandson was living in San Diego when he received a knock at the door. There stood one of the German family members



*Jack Follansbee's Trail Outfit near Deming, New Mexico, by Ella Wormser, ca. 1895 [Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA) Neg No. 012107]*

who explained that Gustav's niece, the visitor's mother, had escaped Nazi-occupied Germany by way of Italy in 1939. She had settled in Chicago and



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When the Depression hit in 1929, the family had little recourse to collect the debts. The drought also made it impossible to keep the livestock healthy. By 1935, the family had exhausted all its resources, selling land, livestock and Joe's prized horses. They abandoned their home and store in search of other forms of income.

The two eldest sons, Louis and Frank Cohn, ventured back toward Colorado, where they took odd jobs, from picking potatoes to working in the kitchen at the Broadmoor Resort in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The three youngest sons, despite their ages, traveled with their mother Beatrice to Price, Utah, to work in the mines. Like many, they endured the hard times.

In 1943, the brothers Frank (my grandfather), Levi, and Harold reconnected, combined their savings, and opened their first business in Taos, which they called Cohn Oil. Around this time, the brothers split on the pronunciation of Cohn. Whereas Frank maintained the "Cone" pronunciation, the remaining siblings adopted "Cahn" but retained the "Cohn" spelling. Today, most Taos locals and old timers know the family by "Cahn". The Cohn family members in southern

Colorado and Albuquerque retained the original "Cone" pronunciation used by my family.

Within a few years, the Cohn brothers expanded their enterprise and diversified into several other businesses in Taos and Questa. By the late 1940s, oldest brother Louis, who had established his own business in Colorado after serving in World War II, and youngest brother Robert would join their brothers in Taos. Between the years 1866 and the present day, despite many odds, the Cohn Family opened over thirty businesses in New Mexico and southern Colorado.

Cohn family research continues, with over thirty interviews conducted and documented thus far. The discoveries have shown our family the importance of our German-Jewish heritage and lineage. The Cohn family, in a journey spanning six generations, portrayed an inherent entrepreneurial spirit, a determination to succeed, and an undeniable link to Jewish history and its people. ☆

*Yvette Cohn Stoor, a native New Mexican, lives in Sandia Park, New Mexico, with her husband Dean and son Evan. She attended the University of New Mexico and is retired from*

*Honeywell Aerospace. An active community volunteer, she designed and implemented the Million Dollar Hole-in-One to benefit East Mountain High School and co-founded East Mountain Womenade, a non-profit organization that provides financial assistance to families in need with school-age children. She enjoys golfing and writing and hopes to publish her family research. She welcomes inquiries at yrstoor@gmail.com.*

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**Gustav and Ella Wormser** (continued from p. 6)

among her few belongings was "Das Deming Buch." Her son later took it upon himself to find the San Diego branch of the family and return the album. Although faded, the photographs were intact.

Curatorial work is often a journey of rediscovery. As Price had explored the prints in the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, pulling out images we can now attribute to Ella Wormser, he came upon one with a figure in shadow – a tripod leg extended near a full skirt. Price recounted to a group of museum guides that he thought at that moment, "Look, there is Ella!" Until the exhibit, she was unknown to the museum.

By contacting the family, still in San Diego, much of the mystery of Ella Wormser's work and her life with Gustav has been solved. We now know what she looked like, what her home and children looked like, and how "Das Deming Buch" traveled across an ocean not once, but twice. The recent finds in the Wormser story point to the fluidity of historical work; we always have something further to learn and someone new to discover.

*Meredith Davidson is curator of 19th- and 20th-century Southwest collections at the New Mexico History Museum in Santa Fe. For more information on the museum and its exhibits, log onto www.nmbhistorymuseum.org. ☆*

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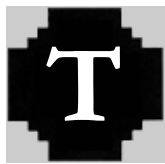
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# Don Isaac Abravanel and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492

submitted by Pat Carlton, NMJHS archivist



Those who attended the NMJHS Fall Conference in Taos on Sephardic history learned much about the Sephardic Jews of the Diaspora, many of whom landed eventually on the shores of the New World and even into New Mexico. Everyone knows of the Edict of Expulsion, declared by Ferdinand and Isabella on March 31, 1492, in the Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain. Less well known is that on the day of the edict, permission was given to one man to speak without restriction or limitation, on behalf of the Jews of the Kingdom. That man was Don Isaac Abravanel.

Isaac ben Judah Abravanel (1437-1508) was born in Lisbon, Portugal, into one of the oldest and most distinguished Jewish Iberian families. Together with his intellectual abilities, he showed a complete mastery of financial matters, which attracted the attention of King Alfonso V of Portugal who employed him as treasurer. When the banishment of the Jews from Spain was ordered, he left nothing undone to induce the king to revoke the decree.

Following are excerpts from the speech that Don Abravanel delivered that day:

“I find it very difficult to understand how every Jewish man, woman, and child can be a threat to the Catholic faith. Very, very strong charges. *We* destroy *you*? It is indeed the very opposite. Did you not admit in this edict to having confined all Jews to restricted quarters and to having limited our legal and social privileges, not to mention forcing us to wear shameful badges?

Did you not tax us oppressively? Did you not terrorize us day and night with your diabolical Inquisition? Let me make this matter perfectly clear to all present: I will not allow the voice of Israel to be stilled on this day. On behalf of my people, the people of Israel, the chosen of God, I declare them blameless and innocent of all crimes declared in this edict.

“In your heart of hearts, you distrust the power of knowledge, and you respect only power. With us Jews it is different. We Jews cherish knowledge immensely. In our homes and in our prayer houses, learning is a lifelong passion; it is at the core of our being; it is the reason, according to our sages, for which we were created. Our fierce love of learning could have counterbalanced your excessive love of might. We could have benefited from the protection offered by your royal arms, and you could have profited the more from our community’s advancement and exchange of knowledge. I say to you we could have helped each other.



*Isaac ben Judah Abravanel*

“As we are reminded of our own powerlessness, so your own nation will suffer from the forces of disequilibrium that you have set in motion. For centuries to come, your descendants will pay dearly for your mistake of the present. As it is might of arms you most admire, you shall verily become a nation of conquerors – lusting after gold and spoils, living by the sword and ruling with a fist of mail. Yet you shall become a nation of illiterates: your institutions of learning, fearing the heretical contamination of alien ideas from other lands and other peoples, will no longer be respected. In the course of time, the once great name of Spain will

become a whispered byword among the nations: Spain, the poor ignorant has-been: Spain, the nation which showed so much promise and yet which accomplished so little ... The cause of [this] downfall will be shown to be none other than [the] revered Catholic sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, conquerors of the Moors, expellers of the Jews, founders of the Inquisition, and destroyers of the inquiring Spanish mind.

“*Woe unto you*, authors of iniquity. For generations to come, it will be told and retold how unkind was your faith and how blind your vision. But more than your acts of hatred and fanaticism, the courage of the people of Israel will be remembered for standing up to the might of imperial Spain, clinging to the religious inheritance of our fathers, resisting your enticements and your untruths. Expel us, drive us from this land that we cherish no less than you do. But we shall remember you, King and Queen of Spain, as our Holy Books remember those who sought our harm. We Jews shall haunt your accomplishments on the pages of history ... and the memories of our sufferings will inflict greater damage upon your name than anything you can ever hope to do to us. We shall remember you and your vile Edict of Expulsion forever.”

*Don Abravanel’s speech was taken from an archival copy of the Jewish Journal, and edited and abridged by archivist Patricia Carlton. A full account of this period in history can be found in the historical novel The Alhambra Decree, by Dr. David Raphael, (out-of-print, but new and used copies available from Amazon). ☆*



## From the Azores to Massachusetts

Upcoming presentation by Gabe Galambos in Albuquerque on February 16



Michael Costa's discovery that he is descended from Conversos originating in the Azores forms the plot for Gabe Galambos's new novel, *The*

*Nation by the River*. The coming of age of this young boy in contemporary Massachusetts provides the vehicle for the author to explore the phenomenon of crypto-Jewry.

Galambos, like some scholars, speculates that the practice of secrecy defines crypto-Jews, perhaps even more than the attachment to ancient Jewish practices and

traditions. Galambos will read from his novel, discuss the themes, and delve into various aspects of crypto-Jewry during his talk at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque on February 16.

Gabe Galambos was born in Hungary to Holocaust survivors. The family escaped during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and settled in the United States. After graduating from Brandeis University, Galambos made aliyah to Israel and served in the Israel Defense Force. While pursuing a Masters degree at the Hebrew University, he volunteered for a secret mission to rescue Jews flee-

ing Ethiopia. He wound up in a terrible prison in Juba City, but then managed to escape when he was transferred to house arrest. His experiences provided the material for his first novel, *Stealing Pike's Peak* (2000).

Sponsored by the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, Galambos's presentation will take place at the Jewish Community Center, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE in Albuquerque on Sunday, February 16, from 2 - 4 p.m. The event is free and open to all. ☆

## The Spoon from Minkowitz

Book launch by Judith Fein in Santa Fe on February 23



award-winning international travel journalist Judith Fein will present "Calling in the Ancestors," a program to introduce her new book, *The*

*Spoon from Minkowitz: A Bittersweet Roots Journey to Ancestral Lands* at Temple Beth Shalom, 205 E. Barcelona, Santa Fe, on February 23, from 2 to 5 p.m.

Says Fein: "We invite you to connect to your ancestors. Please bring a family dish for a very unusual potluck, as well as a photo or object from an ancestor to create a communal work of art. It is time to

revive our ancestral stories before they are gone."

As a travel journalist, Judith Fein has contributed to more than one hundred publications, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Hadassah*, *San Diego Jewish Journal*, *National Geographic Travel*. She blogs for the *Huffington Post* and *Psychology Today*.

Fein has been an acclaimed keynote speaker for many organizations including the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, the Adventure Travel Trade Associa-

tion, A Taste of Honey (annual day of Jewish education in Albuquerque), and the Foundation for San Luis Obispo Libraries. She recently gave a TEDx talk and led four workshops for the Pennsylvania Department of Tourism. She is the author of the acclaimed book, *Life is a Trip: The Transformative Magic of Travel*. Her website is [www.GlobalAdventure.us](http://www.GlobalAdventure.us).

The program is co-sponsored by Temple Beth Shalom and the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. The \$15 admission fee includes potluck and art supplies. For more information, please contact joy.rosenberg@sftbs.org or 505-982-6161. ☆

### 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.

### Many Thanks for Your Contributions

Marlis Beier  
Drs. Nancy and Stan Handmaker  
Dr. and Mrs. Stanley Hordes  
Judith Kaplan  
Raymond and Elizabeth Laemmle  
Rabbi Martin W. Levy

### NMJHS Welcomes New Members

Kathleen Bouloy  
Roseann Davis  
Dr. Barry and Joan Glick  
Marjorie Kamine  
Spider and Joan Kedelsky  
Barbara Rubin  
Michelle Saucedo-Halliday  
Diane J. Schmidt

## Wolfgang Mueller (1919 – 2013)

**NMJHS thanks Janet Saiers and the Historical Society of New Mexico for covering the extra cost of mailing envelopes for the Winter 2013-2014 issue of Legacy.**

**We're Glad to Have you Back**  
Marlis Beier  
Sheila and Norton Bicol

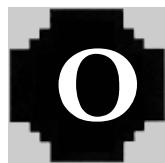
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On Monday November 25, 2013, Wolfgang Mueller passed on at his home in Bethesda, Maryland. The cause was heart disease.

He was born in Hannover, Germany, in 1919 to parents Ernst Schüler Müller and Anna Schuster Rosenthal Müller. To avoid anti-Semitic persecution by schoolmates and the Nazi regime he was sent to a boarding school in England in 1934. Barely 17 in 1936 he was sent to cousins in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he became an apprentice in the hardware business of the Charles Ifeld Company, growing into an accounts manager.

Wolfgang was drafted into the U.S. Army during 1941 and served several years in intelligence with the U.S. 8th Air Force in England and France, and then in Germany after D-Day. He returned to the United States in early 1945 and took an honorable discharge. He traveled to Albuquerque to assess reemployment opportunities with the Charles Ifeld Company but then decided to settle in Washington, D.C., near the homes of his sister and mother.

There he began with low-end jobs in the food supply industry, became accounts manager in his sister's husband's slaughterhouse and meat business. Later he branched out into his own meat brokerage with his son and son-in-law. He switched to real estate investment and management. He worked several more decades as accounts and fiscal manager for his son-in-law's fish supply company.

During that time he acquired and managed for many years a small farm in Maryland where he loved to go horseback riding. Years earlier he had learned to ride with his father as well as a maternal uncle. When Wolfgang first came to New Mexico he continued riding. Ten-

nis, another of his boyhood avocations, kept him playing through 2012. Among his other interests were family history and art patronage.

In the last decade of his life Wolfgang further developed his writing skills and published an insightful autobiography, "Wolf;" Abbot's Press, 2013.

Wolfgang was the beloved husband of Sonya Diener Aaronson Mueller for 66 years, father of Joann Mueller Pearlman, Jerry Mueller, brother Peter K. Mueller and the late Trudi Mueller Kilsheimer Edwards, brother-in-law Eddie Diener Aaronson, and father-in-law of Stanley Pearlman, Monique Mueller Hargreaves, and Linda Mueller.

He is survived by his spouse Sonya, brother Peter, two children [Joanne Pearlman and Jerry Mueller], nine grandchildren, and sixteen great-grandchildren.

His gravesite is at the King David Memorial Gardens, Falls Church, Virginia. The family requested contributions in his name to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org).

*This obituary was provided by Wolfgang's brother Peter Mueller, an NMJHS member who lives in California. Readers may remember meeting Wolfgang and Sonia as well as Peter at the 23rd NMJHS Fall Conference in Las Vegas in 2010. See the article Wolfgang Mueller wrote for the December 2010 issue of Legacy: "My Years in New Mexico," which is posted on the NMJHS website, [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org). ✧*

**NMJHS is now on Facebook and Twitter. Please "like" us at <https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoJewishHistoricalSociety> and follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/NMJewishHS>.**

## Historical Society of New Mexico Invites NMJHS Members to Annual Conference in Las Vegas May 1–3



A good time to be in Las Vegas, New Mexico, is early May for two back-to-back events: the annual conference of the Historical Society of New Mexico and the annual Montefiore Cemetery cleanup, sponsored by the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and the Montefiore Cemetery Association.

According to HSNM president Janet Sayers (who is also on the board of NMJHS), the three-day conference “will be jam-packed with unique topics dealing with the history of San Miguel County, Las Vegas, Fort Union, Jewish pioneers, and much more.”

The conference will take place May 1-3 at the beautiful new Student Union on the campus of Highlands University. A short walk from campus is the historic Plaza Hotel, built in 1882, which will be the conference main lodging facility as well as where banquets and awards ceremonies will take place. The conference registration brochure will be available after February 1. For more information, check the HSNM website at [www.hsnm.org](http://www.hsnm.org). NMJHS members who wish to join HSNM qualify for a discount because NMJHS is a member organization of HSNM.

Since the Montefiore Cemetery cleanup on Sunday, May 4, this year will take place the same weekend as the HSNM conference, a visit to the cemetery is

included as a post-conference activity for conference attendees.

Several well-known NMJHS presenters will speak at the HSNM conference: Noel Pugach, Naomi Sandweiss, and Dianne Layden. Following are the topics they will speak about.

Noel Pugach, “David Salman’s Rapid Rise to Power.” In 1968, David Salman was elected to the New Mexico House of Representatives from Mora-Harding Counties. Two years later he helped to engineer the election of Walter Martinez as Speaker of the House and was himself chosen Majority Leader. He was quickly recognized as one of the leaders of the Mama Lucy faction and as one of the most influential figures in the New Mexico legislature. He was also mentioned as a likely gubernatorial candidate until he was severely injured in an auto accident. Professor Pugach will analyze how and why David Salman rose to power so quickly as well as examine how he used his power and the issues that concerned him.

Naomi Sandweiss, “Stars of David on the Santa Fe Trail: Jewish life and culture in Las Vegas, New Mexico.” The rich and varied history of Jewish New Mexico focuses on Las Vegas, New Mexico, as the epicenter of Jewish cultural life in the state prior to the turn of the twentieth century. Due to its proximity to Fort Union and the Santa Fe Trail, Las Vegas was home to the Ilfelds and

many other Jewish merchant families. New Mexico’s first synagogue, Congregation Montefiore, was chartered in Las Vegas in 1884. While the congregation is no longer in operation, the affiliated Montefiore Cemetery, a burial place for Jewish residents, is still maintained, with an annual spring cleanup performed by NMJHS volunteers.

Ms. Sandweiss’s presentation will familiarize participants with the history of Jewish New Mexico by introducing the families, businesses and religious and cultural institutions that comprised Las Vegas and other Northern New Mexico communities. Particular focus will be given to the relations between Jewish residents and members of other cultural groups.

Dianne Layden, “Juan de Oñate: Commemoration and Controversy.” Dianne Layden’s paper discusses memorials to conquistador Juan de Oñate, focusing on the statue in Alcalde, New Mexico. Oñate the brave explorer is a controversial figure because of his brutal punishment of Acoma Pueblo. The Alcalde statue was vandalized and the decision to build the El Paso statue divided the community. In Albuquerque, controversy over an Oñate statue subsided when the city approved a monumental sculpture of Oñate, a wagon, livestock, families, and plaques with family names, with a native earthwork beside the sculpture. The three artists were Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo. ☆

## 2014 Montefiore Cemetery Cleanup on May 4



The 2014 Annual Montefiore Cemetery Cleanup sponsored by the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is scheduled for May 4, from 10 to 1 p.m.

Come prepared to do some work and then stay for a talk about this historic

cemetery and a picnic lunch provided by the Montefiore Cemetery Association. Information about the cemetery and directions can be found at [nmjhs.org/montefiore-cemetery](http://nmjhs.org/montefiore-cemetery). ☆



# Legacy

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW MEXICO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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New Mexico Jewish Historical Society  
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Albuquerque, NM 87109

## 2014 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.

- Renewal     New
- Individual \$40
- Individual Senior (+55) \$35
- Family \$55
- Senior Couple \$45
- Library \$20
- Fulltime Student \$25
- Nonprofit Organization \$40
- Business \$100
- Life Membership \$1000  
(payable over two years)

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Please make your check payable to:  
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Albuquerque, NM 87109

## Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

Check for future events at [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org)

Sunday, February 16, "From the Azores to Massachusetts." Hungarian-born Gabe Galambos talks about his new novel *The Nation by the River* at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, from 2 to 4 p.m. There is no charge for this event. (see article in this issue)

Sunday, February 23, book launch by Judith Fein, who introduces her latest book, *The Spoon from Minkowitz: A Bittersweet Roots Journey to Ancestral Lands* at Temple Beth Shalom, 205 E. Barcelona, Santa Fe, from 2 to 5 p.m. Admission fee of \$15 for potluck and art supplies. (see article in this issue)

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