Jim Terr of Santa Fe assisting with the cemetery clean-up. Jim's father and grandmother are buried here.

**NMJHS Annual Montefiore Cemetery Clean-up**

Many thanks to the more than 70 people who joined us on a beautiful Sunday morning, October 6, to clean up the Jewish Cemetery in Las Vegas, NM. The group included NMJHS members, Montefiore Cemetery Assn. board members, and a hearty band of students, parents, and teachers from the religious school of Temple Beth Shalom in Santa Fe. Each class from the religious school (grades 4-7) was assigned a family plot to restore, and they worked with a vengeance: weeding, pruning, raking, planting, and scrubbing. Students, parents, teacher aides, and teachers worked together with care and honor for the Jewish pioneers. The MCF Assn. provided a wonderful lunch, which allowed the weary workers to rest and take stock of their accomplishments. All in all, it was a fabulous day. Rabbi Philip Bentley of Temple Beth Shalom lent a hand, and there was talk of making this a semi-annual event. Thanks again to all who participated. --Ellen Zieselman
FROM THE PRESIDENT: The glimpse of a young child absorbed in rubbing words from a gravestone onto paper was just one of the rewards of a day filled with laughter, tears, reminiscences, and great accomplishment as we gathered at Montefiore Cemetery to honor and celebrate those buried there. In our next newsletter, we will feature a photo essay of the festive and reflective day by Cary Herz, NMJHS board member and gifted photographer. Cary's photographs were featured in our popular book, Stones of Remembrance. (Only ten copies bearing her autograph remain available for sale.) *** While we're honored to print Marvin Taichert's letter of thanks on behalf of the Montefiore Cemetery Assn., it is we who owe him great thanks for his steadfast care of the cemetery, a commitment he shared with his father, Milton Taichert, for many years and now continues alone. Tireless MFC Assn. board member Ted Herberger of Las Vegas was everywhere at once during the clean-up, locating tools, running errands, and gently guiding our efforts. After the clean-up, Ted returned to the cemetery to right stones that had fallen. Thanks, Ted, for everything. *** Next year, we hope to involve other congregations as well; we'll be happy to work with you to plan your participation. Please call us. *** The annual conference in Taos was splendid, from the lectures and the vivid reading of Rena Down's play, "Once A Bright Fire," to the musical entertainment -- and the lox and bagel brunch provided through the heroic efforts of Sharon Niederman. Conference Chairman Stan Hordes has promised a bigger and better gathering next year (is that possible?) so the Quincentennial Year Annual Conference in Santa Fe next fall will be an event not to miss!

MARGUERITE CULP: NEW MEMBER OF OUR TEAM

You may have noticed that our annual conference in Taos had a little extra spark this year. This is due in part to a new member of our team -- Marguerite Culp, who's in charge of our publicity. Marguerite says that on a recent trip to New York, her friends' ears perked up when she told them about the event planned by the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. "Having a rich and varied conference weekend made it easy to get newspapers and even a t.v. station here in New Mexico to feature the event," she says. "My friends found the program fascinating too. I was surprised by the interest."

Stan Hordes' exciting program undoubtedly had much to do with Marguerite's success in getting people to sit up and take notice, but her well-written press releases attracted much positive attention. A freelance writer, Marguerite will have an article in the spring issue of Native Peoples magazine. She loves taking on challenges in her professional work and for that reason individuals and organizations consult with her on writing, publicity, and outreach projects. We're lucky to have her!
Montefiore Cemetery Association, Inc.
1036 Seventh Street
Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701
505-425-6843

October 17, 1991

New Mexico Jewish Historical Society
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear Members of the NMJHS:

The Board of Directors of the Montefiore Cemetery Association wish to express our sincere thanks to the Board and members of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society for their important contributions in organizing and participating in the clean up of the Montefiore Cemetery in Las Vegas on October 6, 1991.

Those of us concerned with the continuing care of the Cemetery and the remembrance of our loved ones at rest there appreciate this support from other members of the community who contributed both their time and their physical labor to preserve and beautify this historical site that has been neglected for so long.

Finally, the members of the Board recognize the tremendous turn out for the clean up event this year. We were particularly impressed with the efforts made by your organization to integrate the clean up effort with an educational program for the young people involved. It seems an extremely worthwhile endeavor to teach younger members of our community the important role of the early Jewish settlers in this part of the country.

Again, many thanks. We look forward to future cooperation in this rewarding endeavor.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Marvin Taichert,
President
FROM IMMIGRANT BRIDE TO BANK PRESIDENT:
MRS. BERTHA GUSDORF
By James A. Burns

Among the courageous women who accompanied their men to the Southwest in the 1850s and later in the 1880s were the wives, many of them young brides, of German and Jewish merchants and clerks, to whom the country was especially fearful on account of complete difference in language and customs.

Among these pioneer women who came to New Mexico with the coming of the railroads was Mrs. Bertha Gusdorf, who came to Santa Fe and a little later to Taos in 1878. At that time an immigrant girl bride of 18 years, she made the long, arduous journey from New York to Trinidad by train, by stage coach to Santa Fe and thence to Taos, over an almost impassable trail, the latter part of the journey taking four days where now an automobile makes the trip in two hours over a none-too-good road.

Bertha F. Gusdorf (Bertha Ferse) was born of Jewish parents in November 1860 in the village of Oberlistungen, near Cassel, in the Duchy of Hesse-Cassel, in the central part of Germany. She attended school in her native village, similar to our primary and grammar grades. Was married in the spring of 1878, to Alex Gusdorf, who had returned to Germany after fourteen years in America, most of which time was spent in business for himself, operating a large flour mill and other mercantile business.

The young couple came to New York on May 1, 1878, and traveled by train to El Moro, Colorado, about five miles east of Trinidad, which at that time was the terminal of the Santa Fe railroad while the contractors were boring the tunnel through the Raton Range. They then traveled by stage coach to Santa Fe where they lived for a short time and then moved on to Ranchos de Taos to make their future home.

At that time, Ranchos de Taos, even more so than at present, was almost 100% Spanish-American. About the only Anglos living at Ranchos were the teachers at the Alice Hyson Mission, a Presbyterian Institution. The Anderson Brothers with their families came to Ranchos in the same year (1878) to enter the employ of Mr. Gusdorf in his flour mill.

The young German woman was under the necessity of learning two languages; Spanish, to be able to talk to her neighbors and maids, and also English to talk to the Andersons and the few other Anglos in the village. This she accomplished mainly by the trial-and-error method, aided by Mr. Gusdorf, who had already spent about sixteen years in New Mexico. She now reads and writes English and speaks Spanish fluently.

Mrs. Gusdorf's two daughters were born and spent their childhood years in Ranchos de Taos. They are Else, wife of C. D. Weimer of Colorado Springs, born in 1884, and Mrs. Corrine Wylie, also of Colorado Springs, born in 1890.

In 1894, after the destruction of Mr. Gusdorf's flour mill at Ranchos, by fire, supposedly of incendiary origin, the family moved to Taos where Mr. Gusdorf went into business with Gerson Gusdorf and J. H. McCarthy.

They lived for some time on the lot in the rear of the store building now occupied by MacMarr's and the Taos Variety Store.
In 1909 they erected their new home on the Santa Fe road on the brow of the hill overlooking the lower Taos Valley with the north slope of Picuris Mountain in the distance. At that time, adobe houses and Pueblo architecture were not customary and the building was sheathed with steel and the interior finish was of hard wood. In later years she had installed steam heat, fired with oil burners. She and Mr. Gusdorf planted trees on the south and west sides of their lot, also apple and cherry trees, shrubs and flower and vegetable gardens, making a most attractive home site.

Here Mrs. Gusdorf lived and here her two daughters were married and here Mr. Gusdorf died in the fall of 1923, and here she still makes her home, mostly alone, except for a woman coming in to help clean house and a gardener to look after the gardens, the shrubbery, etc.

After the death of Mr. Gusdorf in 1923, Mrs. Gusdorf took charge of the business of his estate, consisting of about 12,000 acres of land in the Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant south of Taos, and surrounding the villages of Ranchos de Taos and Talpa and extending up the timbered north slope of Picuris Mountain to the summit, also other property in Taos and Taos County.

In 1924 she was elected a Director of the First State Bank of Taos, of which Mr. Gusdorf had formerly been President, and continued in that capacity until 1935, when she was elected President of the bank after the death of Dr. T. P. Martin. In all these years she has been anything but a dummy Director, visiting the bank almost daily, consulting and advising with the Cashier and other officials on loans and other business matters.

She still maintains the same routine as well as her health and advancing age permit. Mrs. Gusdorf is now one of only two women bank Presidents in the State of New Mexico, the other being Mrs. H. B. Sammons of Farmington, New Mexico.

In November, 1935, her daughter, Mrs. Wylie, assisted by other ladies of Taos, gave a banquet to celebrate her mother's seventy-fifth birthday. This banquet was attended by about fifty of the prominent women of Taos. To the writer, who offered his congratulations and wished her seventy-five more birthdays, she remarked that she did not care to live that long, that "fifteen or twenty-five years would be plenty."

So this woman, who came to America in 1878 from Germany, a Jewish girl bride, has lived to see her children's children, and to gain the respect, love, and affection of the entire community, which when she came to it was entirely foreign in language, customs, and race prejudices.

Source of information: Mrs. Bertha Gusdorf, Taos, New Mexico.
TAOS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS DIVERSITY OF JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN NEW MEXICO

The majestic Taos Valley was the setting for the NMJHS Fourth Annual Conference, which was held at the Kachina Lodge on November 1-3. The meeting attracted almost 100 enthusiastic members from all over the state, as well as from California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and even as far away as Paris, France.

The Conference featured a variety of presentations ranging from early Taos photographers to a concert of Sephardic music. On Friday evening, November 1, Neal Poese, Director of the Kit Carson Museums of Taos, offered the keynote address on the history of the Taos area. Following the address, internationally renowned vocalist Consuelo Luz entertained the group with Ladino folk songs. Saturday morning NMJHS President Suzan Campbell shared the results of her research into the history of the Gusdorf Family of Taos. Cliff Mills then discussed the work of his great-grandfather, B.C. Randall, whose photographs serve to document life in Taos around the turn of the twentieth century.

Two dozen hardy souls braved the cold, wind and snow to accompany Char Graebner on a walking tour of Taos after lunch. Later that afternoon, noted New York playwright Rena Down presented a reading of her play, "Once a Bright Fire," based on her observations of the crypto-Jewish experience in New Mexico. After this moving performance, a lively and provocative discussion ensued.

Saturday evening, the NMJHS sponsored a book-signing reception, featuring authors Henry Tobias, Sharon Niederman, Michael Burt, Suzan Campbell and Stanley Hordes. After a wonderful banquet, the group was treated to a performance and discussion of traditional Hispanic music from Northern New Mexico by Jose Griego, who offered some provocative ideas on the links between local Hispanic and Sephardic music.

The most spontaneous event came on Sunday morning when Walter Kahn of Santa Fe, together with three Taosenos reminisced about life, Jewish and otherwise, in Taos in the early and mid-twentieth century.

Stanley Hordes, Chair of the Taos Conference, expressed the hope that the 1992 Conference, scheduled to take place in Santa Fe, will be even bigger and better. The theme of the Santa Fe Conference will be the quincentennial commemoration of the forced conversion of the Jews of Spain, and the cultural legacy of crypto-Judaism in the Hispanic world. Stay tuned for further details.

Know someone who is not a member? A friend or a relative? .......Ask that friend or relative to join the NMJHS! ....Every "old" member get busy and sign up a "new" member! Help us grow.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 18, 1992  INSTALLATION OF NMJHS BOARD MEMBER, RABBI PHILIP BENTLEY, TEMPLE BETH SHALOM, SANTA FE

JANUARY 25, 1992  ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP, ALBUQUERQUE
                 CALL 505/255-7964 FOR DETAILS

MAY 14-17, 1992  AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NATIONAL CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON, D.C. DETAILS OF THIS AND OTHER AJHS EVENTS IN NEXT NEWSLETTER

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND:  FIELD TRIP TO SILVER CITY

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APPEAL TO OUR MEMBERS

Our continued existence depends on the interest and support from our members. We need your cooperation to interest others to join our society. We need your help to obtain archive material. We urge you to please renew your membership when due. We are proud of our accomplishments but we can't rest on our laurels. It is your society- We appreciate your continued interest and support. We thank you.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New _______
Renewal ______

NAME __________________________________________

ADDRESS _______________________________________

Phone (day) ______________________ (evening) __________

AMOUNT PAID: Regular - $20.00 ______ Supporting - $50.00 ______
Sustaining - $100.00 ______ Patron - $250.00 ______
Other - $ __________________

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRING?

To see if you are one of those whose membership has expired or is about to expire, check the date which appears on the bottom of your address label. If the date is 12/91 or earlier, please renew your membership NOW. Fill out the above Renewal Form and return it to the Society with your check payable to NMJHS. In that way, you will continue to participate in the exciting and interesting work which the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is doing:

THE NEW MEXICO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 15598 Cielo Court Station.
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87506

Dorothy B. Shipman
1407 Greensboro Street
Boise ID 83706
10/92