



We're Coming from Camp Cody

by Naomi Sandweiss



've kicked and cussed and swallowed dust.... We're coming from Cody from wild and wooly, And we're going over there..."

"We're Coming from Cody" march song, Jack Yellen, 1918.

Camp Cody, a World War I training camp near Deming, New Mexico, has largely faded from memory. However, students of history may be surprised about the flourishing Jewish life that existed at the home of the 34th Sandstorm Division.

According to Jim Eckles, author of *Camp Cody*, when World War I began, the U.S. Army already had a presence in southern New Mexico. They were there to defend against Pancho Villa and other Mexican revolutionaries after they attacked Columbus, New Mexico, in 1916. When the U.S. entered World



Jack Yellen

War I, in April 1917, soldiers needed to begin training immediately. Deming, New Mexico, was selected as home to one of 16 National Guard training units and named after Buffalo Bill Cody, the performer associated with Buffalo Bill's Wild West tour.

Most of the Guard troops who trained at Camp Cody from August 1917 - August 1918 hailed from midwestern states, including Iowa, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, according to the National Archives.

Among those who found themselves training in far-southwestern New Mexico were Jewish soldiers. According to a January 1918 survey published in the camp's *Trench and Camp* weekly newspaper, of approximately 23,000 personnel, 5282 identified as Methodist, 4968 as Catholic, 3936 as Lutheran, and 113 as Jewish.

In early 1918, Rabbi Jacob H. Landau of Congregation Montefiore in Las Vegas, New Mexico, visited the camp to survey the needs of Jewish trainees. Prior to his post in New Mexico, Rabbi Landau had served a congregation in Buffalo, New York.

Less than a month later, Jack Yellen, from Buffalo, began as Camp Cody's Jewish Welfare Board representative. Born in Poland, Yellen had been a so-called "newspaper man," who covered sports for the *Buffalo Courier*. Yellen, a multi-talented individual, was also a songwriter who organized

soldiers of all faiths for musical activities. In addition to his later songwriting hits, which included "Ain't She Sweet?" and "Happy Days are Here Again," Yellen collaborated with soldiers to write and publish a Camp Cody march song in 1918 entitled "We're Coming from Cody."

By all accounts, Camp Cody was known for its rugged environment, winds, and dust, as the name "Sandstorm Division" implied. Sam Wintroub, whose family settled in Omaha, Nebraska, after immigrating from Russia, arrived at Camp Cody in

1917. He recalled in *The History of Luna County* that the tents had neither wooden floors nor sideboards, and eight men occupied each tent. Wintroub described the results of a windstorm.



Naomi Sandweiss

"Reveille sounded and I leaped out of bed, scrambled into my uniform and reached for my shoes, nowhere to be found. The sand had blown all night and somewhere buried deep in that tent were my shoes."

When they were not marching or training with artillery or bayonets in the field, soldiers at Cody played baseball, boxed, studied French, and read donated books. Religiously affiliated organizations, including the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, and Jewish Welfare Board, coordinated social and religious activities for the men. Under Yellen's leadership, the Jewish Welfare Board repurposed an officer mess hall as a clubhouse, furnished with the help of Deming merchant Sigmund Lindauer, Rabbi Landau, and El Paso Rabbi Martin Zielonka of Temple Mt. Sinai. The Welfare Board held weekly Friday night services and Jewish holiday celebrations under Yellen, and later under the leadership of L.L. Schafer and David

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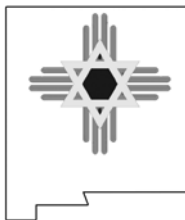
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President's Column



long road home.... This summer was an adventure and a bucket-list trip: driving to Alaska by way of British Columbia, Alberta, and of course the famous Alcan highway, with a small camper in tow. While having been to Alaska before, traveling on the Alaska State Ferry this time, we covered new territory. We went salmon fishing on the Kenai Peninsula, on a flight tour around Mt. Denali (formerly Mt. McKinley) on a crystal-clear day, on a narrow-gauge train through the Klondike area, and we did much, much more. Yes, it came with bears, caribou, and moose sightings, and, on occasion, bears up close and personal either trotting along the road with us, outside our camper door, or eating salmon at the fish weir!

Believe it or not, the trip also allowed the opportunity to learn about the history of Jewish Alaska at the Alaska Jewish Museum in Anchorage. It's a wonderful, well-curated small museum where we had the chance to meet the curator, and we enjoyed her introduction to the museum and collection. Not only were there early Jewish settlers, but also an



Sharing Your Family History

NMJHS continues to collect New Mexico Jewish family histories through oral interviews to share with the public and preserve in the New Mexico State Archives.

If you are interested in participating, contact the NMJHS office:

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unrealized plan to bring German Jewish refugees to Alaska in 1938-39. In addition, Alaska Airlines provided the early airlifts to Israel for Yemeni Jews trying to escape the war-torn region in 1948-49. What a rich, fascinating history. I encourage you to visit their website: www.alaskajewishmuseum.com.



NMJHS President
Linda Goff

Our plan is to continue to hold a hybrid, in-person and via webinar Zoom, Fall Conference this year in Santa Fe, with the theme: "History ... and a Story to Tell: Cultural and Social Reflections of Jewish Life in New Mexico." Conference information, including online registration and conference-session sponsorship, is available. The Fall Conference is our second revenue stream, and your support by way of conference attendance and/or sponsorship is greatly appreciated. See you in Santa Fe, either in person or via Zoom webinar! ☆

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

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Teaching Judaism While Jewish in New Mexico

by Sarah Rachel Egelman

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory, wrote, “Education sustains the world.” He meant all education, of course, but also Jewish education in particular. And, it is true that Jewish education sustains, has sustained, Jews throughout time and space; exploring experience and law, passing down customs and traditions, supporting modes of being for millenia. It is both formalized and lived: formalized in various kinds of educational institutions and lived in homes and hearts, whether Jewishness is embraced or used as an accusation.

And, obviously, much can be the same for general education. It enriches the intellect; opens the mind; prepares

one for work, for travel, for co-living with those different from ourselves. The study of religion from an academic perspective—whether it is Judaism or another tradition—is beneficial for students interested in all kinds of learning and career pathways. Religious literacy makes for knowledgeable workers, compassionate citizens, and interesting dinner companions.

In my work, I participate in both these kinds of education: the Jewish and the secular. This lines up for me in interesting ways, but the needs and interests of the two groups of students is actually quite diverse. Both arenas, however, do shed some light on Jewishness in New Mexico. While not a historian, I am happy to share these ideas at this year’s

conference. What my Jewish students experience in New Mexico today becomes the history of the Jewish community in the future. And, I realize—and what history has shown us, for better or for worse—is that the perceptions of non-Jews, their understanding of Jews and Judaism, can impact Jews today and tomorrow.

An ambitious 2015 survey returned a final estimation of 24,000 Jews living in New Mexico, making Jews about 1% of the state’s population and about twice as many Jews as were thought to be living

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Sarah Rachel Egelman

We’re Coming From Camp Cody *(continued from p. 3)*

L. Slater . The organization reminded soldiers that their clubhouse was “always open to everybody, non-Jews as well as Jews.”

At Camp Cody and elsewhere, the Jewish Welfare Board mobilized to support Jewish soldiers both in the United States and commissioned overseas. In addition to recreational and religious activities, the Board provided abridged prayerbooks and collaborated with the American Library Association to provide books to soldiers in both English and Yiddish. In addition, local and regional Jewish organizations supported the trainees, as in the case of a special Passover shipment to the camp in March of 1918. The B’nai B’rith Chapter of Omaha, Nebraska, generously sent packages to the men at Camp Cody, containing salami, figs, cakes and candies, cigarettes, cigars, playing cards, handkerchiefs, and assorted other goodies. There was some conflict among the recipients about how to deal with “chametz”—food not permitted at Passover—given the upcoming holiday. An account from the

April 4, 1918, edition of *American Israelite* noted:

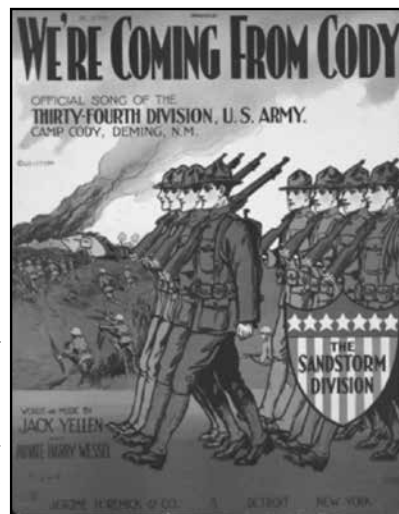
“A former ‘yeshiva bocher’ pointed out that the cakes and candies could not be legitimately kept in the building over the Passover. After some discussion, it was voted to do away with some of the chometz and the doing away process soon became an enjoyable impromptu feast.”

In addition to packages from their hometowns, Jewish soldiers received food and invitations from the local Jewish community. While there was a very small group of Jewish merchants in Deming, nearby co-religionists from Silver City regularly provided treats as well. Sam Wintroub recalled, “One Sunday afternoon I was at the Jewish Welfare Board

when six nice Jewish ladies came in bringing cakes, cookies, fruit, candies and cigarettes. The ladies were from Silver City. The next Sunday the ladies returned and this time...they brought four pretty girls—what a welcome sight. We enjoyed a nice afternoon visiting and playing checkers.”

In July of 1918, Camp Cody became home to its first rabbi, private Harry Richmond, who had left his pulpit at Trinidad, Colorado’s Congregation Aaron to enlist as a future Army Chaplain.

Camp Cody was abandoned in 1919 following the Armistice of November 11, 1918. One hundred years ago, in 1922, the U.S. Senate ordered the sale of any remaining items associated with the Camp. Today, Camp Cody only lives on in memory. ✧



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Teaching Judaism (continued from p. 3)

here. This is interesting, of course, for a number of reasons, but two are pertinent to my topic. First, there are very few Jews living in New Mexico, so very few New Mexicans have any first-hand experience with Jewish religion, culture, or ethnicity. Second, even the Jews were surprised that the number was so high, meaning Jews themselves are perhaps less visible or identifiable than in many other communities. All of this rather unscientific analysis of the data is to say that teaching about Jews and Judaism to Jews and non-Jews alike in New Mexico presents its own unique challenges, and exciting opportunities.

The exploration of what is taught about Judaism, what should be taught about Judaism, and why, in New Mexico, is fascinating. This is a state where Jews can easily hide in plain sight. It is very rare that non-Jews identify me as Jewish, despite my very obviously Ashkenazi name and other clues. It means that in my work at the college, I can do a good job of teaching all the religions in any given course without students perceiving a bias. And, that bias is something they are quite concerned about. At the start of most semesters, students ask me what religion I am. This always strikes me because 1) they assume religion as a default setting, 2) they assume that religion is essential to know about other people in a professional environment, 3) see the remark about my name above. My response as an educator is to question them about why they think it matters, which always leads to a very fruitful discussion on both the impact of religion historically and today, and the ways in which the academic study of religion is, by definition, neutral. My interior response as a Jew is, "Wait! What would telling you I am Jewish mean, really? How might it impact how you see and hear me and how you relate to me as a teacher and as a human?" And, this trickiness of balancing pride in identity with safety and suspicion is something that I try to help my teenage Jewish

students navigate as well. My stories of teaching Judaism to college students are instructive to my teenage Jewish students, who are looking ahead to college classrooms and workplaces and who, to be honest, are all too familiar with microaggressions, dog whistles, and real antisemitism already.

Learning about Judaism, from within and without Judaism itself, is imperative. For Jews and for non-Jews, lack of literacy and understanding of Judaism can have horrific results, as we know. I find myself in a strange predicament moving between my two modes of teaching. For non-Jewish learners, I want them to move beyond seeing Jews as victims, and for my teens I want to create space for them to share when and where they feel victimized. In the harmful mythology that surrounds Jews, they are perceived as at once physically and morally weak and immensely powerful and influential. These are ideas that some non-Jews I teach wrestle with, and then I see those bigotries seep into conversations at middle and high schools, where they are overheard, or hurled at, my teen students. It is important to create space to examine and challenge these ideas for the non-Jewish learners, while still moving them toward a more robust and complete understanding. As Daniella Levy wrote in *By Light of Hidden Candles*, "Our story is not only about exile and oppression and suffering. It is the story of thriving, of triumph, and of great faith. It is the story of a people that laughs in the face of deepest despair, that stubbornly clings to life and to joy even in the face of horror and death." One of my amazing professors in college warned me that the bad stuff shouldn't be the starting point for studying Judaism. The bad stuff is not, in fact, Judaism itself.

But what do non-Jews need to know about Judaism? What should they know and where can they find that information? What does this lack of Jewish

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Rabbi Jack Returns to New Mexico

by Stuart Cohen

Have you heard the one about the physicist-rabbi who left New Mexico for a job on the East coast, and ended up conducting Erev Shabbat services from a walk-in closet in a noisy apartment? No, it's not a silly joke, but the pandemic experience of Rabbi Jack Shlachter.

After two unfortunately-timed years on Long Island because of the Covid-19 pandemic for a contract position at Brookhaven National Laboratory, Rabbi Jack is back in the Land of Enchantment, and has resumed his roles as rabbi of Santa Fe's HaMakom congregation, and part-time rabbinic support of the Los Alamos Jewish Center (LAJC). And for the first time in many years, Rabbi Dr. Shlachter is not wearing the hats of both a rabbi and a physicist. He worked for more than three decades at Los Alamos National Laboratory, while simultaneously serving as lay-leader and then as ordained rabbi for the LAJC. While on Long Island these past two years, Rabbi Jack also served as part-time spiritual leader of the Jewish Center of the Moriches.

Now the rabbi is officially retired from his physics career, and he and wife Beverly are glad to be back under the wide-open skies of New Mexico. Talking about the beauty of the area, Rabbi Jack cited Psalm 121: "When you lift up your eyes out here, you see gorgeous mountains. On Long Island, the only hill we saw was the landfill." He and Beverly did, however, appreciate be-

ing able to walk to the bay, and along the Atlantic Ocean beaches during their time out East.

"HaMakom was one of the big draws for us coming back," says Rabbi Jack. He is enthusiastic about resuming his collaboration with Hazzan (Cantor) Cindy Freedman, who is in her 18th year of musical leadership at HaMakom. During the past decade,

Rabbi Jack has often traveled for the High Holidays, officiating at Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services in places as varied as Vienna, Austria and Beijing, China. As an itinerant rabbi, his strong bass singing voice enabled him to act as *kol bo* (solo prayer leader), chanting the special High Holiday liturgy as well as performing rabbinical duties.

Rabbi Jack draws on his vast personal library of Jewish books at his home in Los Alamos to mold his perspective of Judaism. "You can take a hard-line approach and follow all the rules as written, or a soft-line approach and re-interpret everything," he said. "For me, it's 'let's see if we can reframe what the tradition says, (continued on p. 6)



Stuart Cohen



Rabbi Jack Shlachter



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Rabbi Jack Returns to New Mexico *(continued from p. 5)*

so we can be contemporary.' We look at the text, try to understand it in contemporary terms, so that we can make traditional content meaningful today."

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society (NMJHS) has been the beneficiary of a number of talks by Rabbi Jack over the years. The rabbi's subject matter often touches on topics within the intersection of science and Judaism, such as "Jews in Theory," a slide-show presentation of mini-biographies of Jewish scientists at Los Alamos Laboratory during the Manhattan Project to develop an atomic bomb during World War II. For this year's NMJHS conference, Rabbi Jack is speaking on the origins of the three Torahs at the Los Alamos Jewish Center.

Jack Shlachter is a physicist who worked at Los Alamos Laboratory for over three decades with much briefer stints at Brookhaven National Laboratory in

New York, the Atomic Energy Agency, and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, the latter two based in Vienna, Austria. At Los Alamos, Jack proudly served as the division leader of Theoretical Division, an organization comprising over 300 scientists who pursue a broad range of research in theoretical physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics. In parallel, Jack was ordained as a rabbi in 1995. He was the rabbi and spiritual leader for the Jewish congregation in Los Alamos for many years and is again supporting that community now.

Jack was the rabbi in Center Moriches, New York during his years at Brookhaven, and his current rabbinic work is focused on serving HaMakom, a congregation in Santa Fe. He has also provided itinerant rabbinic support to far-flung Jewish communities including those in Vienna, Austria, and Beijing, China.✡

Teaching Judaism *(continued from p. 4)*

literacy mean for young Jews in New Mexico? What paths lie ahead for more knowledge and compassion, and where can positive ground be gained?

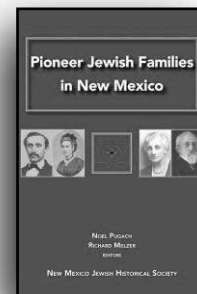
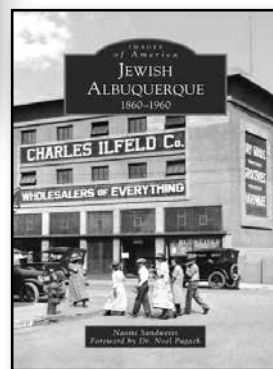
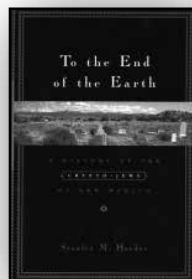
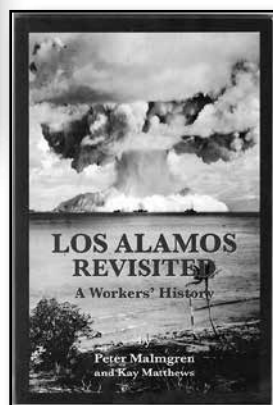
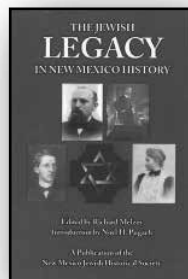
It is my job to discover the needs of my students and to assist them in meeting those needs. The wonderful thing is that religious literacy is a lifelong project so any steps we take on that path are good ones. Students are interested in Judaism; they are often shocked by how little they know, pleasantly surprised at the details, and on occasion upset by the threat Jews are thought to pose (and the challenge to that perception). It is hard and worthwhile work that they do. I hope the fruit this work bears is harvested immediately,

but once again we have to acknowledge that perhaps these efforts will only be clearly assessed as successes or failures when they, too, become history.

Sarah Rachel Egelman is a Full Time Instructor of Religion at Central New Mexico Community College, where she is also the Faculty Lead for the Mellon Humanities Grant, and currently holds a Presidential Fellowship on College Transfer. She is the Director of the Academy of Jewish Learning at Congregation B'nai Israel, where she is also the co-teacher of the Confirmation program. Sarah has worked and taught for over 25 years in the Jewish communities of Seattle and Albuquerque.✡

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A committee of at least three board members shall choose the recipient from nominations by the board and general membership. The Hurst Award is presented at the Annual Membership Meeting of the Society in the spring of each year.

Documentation of the nominee’s contribution to New Mexico Jewish history, culture and community over a substantial period of time must accompany your nomination.

Write your comments below or on the back of form or use additional paper and mail or email it to: admin@nmjhs or NMJHS Hurst Award Nomination, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109.

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Anne McCormick & Alan Wagman
Harold Melnick, z”l
Richard Melzer
Beth Moise, z”l
Steve Moise
Beverly Post & Jack Shlachter
Noel Pugach
Fred Raznick
Erika Rimson & David Bernstein
Robert Rubenstein
Naomi Sandweiss
Rae Siporin
Paul Sklar
Robert Spitz
Marcia Torobin
Murray Tucker, z”l
Sarah Winger

NMJHS Legacy Team

Lance Bell
Linda Goff
Naomi Sandweiss

THE NEW MEXICO JEWISH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS



FALL 2022 CONFERENCE

SANTA FE OCTOBER 29-30

ATTEND IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY



*ARTHUR AND LOUIS RAVEL IN COLUMBUS, NM
COURTESY, STACEY RAVEL ABARBANEL*

**ENGAGING SESSIONS ON NEW MEXICO JEWISH HISTORY
FEATURING DIVERSE HISTORIC PERSONALITIES INCLUDING
PANCHO VILLA, RUTH BADER GINSBERG AND GOLDBLOCKS
AND THE THREE TORAH SCROLLS.**

Register at www.nmjhs.org or contact Naomi at
505-348-4471 or email admin@nmjhs.org



2023 New Mexico Jewish History Research Fellowship Call for Applications

Deadline for Applications: December 15, 2022

Who may apply?

- For this grant cycle, the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is funding one grant for a scholar pursuing research on the Jewish history of New Mexico
- Applicants enrolled in an accredited college or university and conducting research toward a graduate degree at that institution; or
- Applicants with a graduate degree in any field or discipline from an accredited college or university; or
- Independent scholars recognized as authorities in any field or discipline that advances an understanding and appreciation of New Mexico Jewish history. Independent scholars would include individuals such as community historians, etc., regardless of academic credentials.

How do I apply?

The application is composed of four parts:

1. A cover letter detailing your eligibility, research project, and time frame of project.
2. An abstract, not exceeding 300 words describing the topic of the proposed research and summarizing its purpose and objectives.
3. A research proposal, not exceeding six pages in length. The proposal should describe what you intend to accomplish during the fellowship period and what New Mexico archives and other research materials you plan to use.
4. A current curriculum vitae that does not exceed four pages. The heading should clearly include your full name and residential address, a telephone number and e-mail address where you may be easily reached. Academic and work experience should also be included.

Applications must arrive at the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society no later than 5:00 p.m. MST on December 15, 2022.

Mail to:
 NMJHS
 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE
 Albuquerque, N.M. 87109
 E-mail: admin@nmjhs.org

Congratulations!!!!
to the Las Vegas Jewish Community on the purchase of the
historic Temple Montefiore. We look forward to partnering
with them.

Legacy

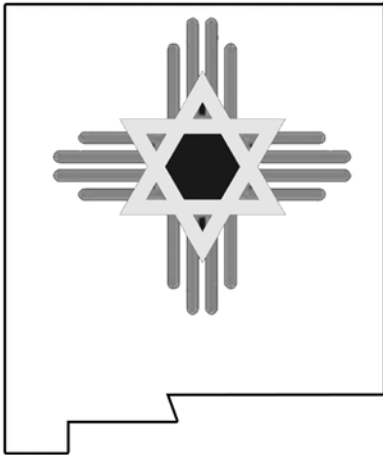
NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW MEXICO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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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



Future Events

NMJHS Annual Fall Conference: “History...and a Story to Tell, Cultural and Social Reflections of Jewish Life in New Mexico” October 29-30, 2022. Hybrid Conference In-Person and Zoom.
Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, 3347 Cerrillos Rd., Santa Fe, NM 87507

Ruth Bader Ginsburg “Notorious RBG”, Dianne Layden, Chautauqua Conference with New Mexico Humanities Council.
Date to be Confirmed

“Coexistence and Violence: Ukraine, Russia, and the Jews, 1914-2022”
Mid-April, date TBD, Dr. Michael Nutkiewicz.