

Notes & Queries

• SJHS board member Stuart Rockoff, director of the History Department of The Institute for Southern Jewish Life, has announced the completion of the first stage of the ISJL Digital History Archive. Summer history interns Amy DiBiase and Dan Margolis assisted ISJL staff in creating the website. The goal is to have capsule histories, cemetery lists, oral-history interviews, and video clips for each of the twelve southern states. The first stage focuses on Mississippi. The website may be accessed at www.isjl.org/history.

• The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta has published *Seasoned with Love: Culinary Treasures from the Breman*. The illustrated cookbook includes over 300 kosher recipes that reflect both Southern and multicultural Jewish traditions. It offers ethnically blended dishes such as beer-basted brisket or tasty apple walnut tzimmes. The recipes are spiced

with archival photographs and food memories. For information contact the Breman website at www.thebreman.org or contact Debbie James at djames@thebreman.org or 678.222.3737.

• The late historian Henry S. Marks passed away before he was able to publish his extensive research on Alabama Jewry. Marsha K. Marks, his widow, reports that the source materials for his projected multi-volume reference work "Past Jewish Life in Alabama" have been deposited in the Archives of the Birmingham Public Library. She especially invites scholars who wish to publish biographies such as her late husband envisioned to visit the archive.

Business as Unusual in Asheville

Asheville, NC, is hosting a unique project, "The Family Store: A History of Jewish Businesses in Downtown Asheville, 1800-1990," to commemorate 110 years of Jewish mercantilism. Large exhibition panels are being placed at downtown sites to mark the location of Jewish stores, which flourished from the 1880s until the 1970s when malls and generational changes put an end to them.

The project is the work of two folklorists, Sharon Fahrer and Jan Schochet, who spent four years conducting research and oral histories. Schochet's

own family dates its downtown presence to 1889. "The Jewish businessmen, and in some cases, businesswomen, were accepted into the business and civic community," said Schochet, whose own family had ten enterprises.

"The Family Store" will open in September. Some panels will appear in store and gallery windows. Others will be placed in parking lots or on sidewalks near the sites. Each panel will map the entire exhibit to direct people to each of the twelve panels. Narrated walking tours will also be avail-

able featuring Schochet and Fahrer relating the colorful stories that they have heard or gleaned from newspaper archives.

Fahrer and Schochet previously collaborated on *The Man Who Lived on Main Street: Stories by and about Sol Schulman*, a folkloric biography of a colorful merchant in Sylva, NC. For information, call 828-777-1014 or email historyathand@charter.net.

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SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Add Your Story
To Katrina's Jewish Voice
See p. 6

WINTER 2007 Volume XI, Issue 3



SJHS arrives at 1874 Pollock House

Little Rock Memories

The 31st annual conference of the SJHS in Little Rock will be remembered for the gracious hospitality and the congenial setting. Host committee chair Jim Pfeifer and the Little Rock community organized a conference that was notable for both its efficiency and its warmth.

From the Peabody Hotel, convention goers enjoyed easy walks through the historic downtown, now undergoing a revival with a market, cafes, galleries, and riverfront park. Next door was the historic state house. The street ended at the Clinton Presidential Center that houses a library, archive, and museum in an architecturally dramatic setting.

The bus tour highlighted Little Rock history. Central High School, the site of the 1957 desegregation crisis, is now both a federal Historic Site administered by the National Park Service and a functioning public high school. Welcoming SJHS members was its Jewish principal, Nancy Rousseau, who discussed the legacy of the school's civil-rights history. At the 1874 Pollock House, a descendant of its Jewish builders, Mary Simmons, graciously welcomed us to the home that she has lovingly restored. Jewish history is being played out in the downtown landscape.

Stores that Jews opened as early as antebellum days yielded to urban renewal. Now the cityscape is being renovated and redeveloped, much of it spearheaded by Jewish entrepreneurs. Little Rock's Jewish community today is largely suburban, and Temple B'nai Israel, host of the Shabbat dinner and reception, is a modernist structure set on a wooded campus.

The conference program, under chair Stuart Rockoff, included a miscellany of subjects. Here are some snapshots.

Katrina's Jewish Voices

The session on "Hurricane Katrina as History" was moving and memorable. The panel included both first-person accounts of those who experienced the devastation and commentary, which offered historical perspective. Moderator Stuart Rockoff noted that usually 25 years pass before events are looked upon as historic. Barry Stiefel of Tulane observed that some 350,000 Jews live in areas subject to hurricanes, and some vulnerable Jewish communities date to the eighteenth century.

Former SJHS president Catherine Kahn, archivist of Touro Infirmary, had left New Orleans for her daughter's home in New Iberia. While there, her husband Fred succumbed to heart failure. (Mary Kahn Tutwiler's telling of her parents' ordeal can be found at <http://katrina.jwa.org/object/8>.) With slides taken by Touro Infirmary staff, she told the dramatic story of the hospital's heroic rescue efforts, led by its new director Les Hirsch and a surgeon, Dr. Kevin Jordan. "Guided by the principles of Judaism," Touro was a Katrina "success story," she noted, the one hospital "which rescued itself." Even as its generators, air conditioning, and life-support systems failed, the Touro staff carried patients in hospital beds up stairways to a parking deck where they were evacuated by helicopter. After the flood, Touro was the first New Orleans hospital to reopen its emergency room. Mold-damaged Touro records have been re-bound, and a damaged portrait of Judah Touro has been restored.

Irwin Lachoff brought home to all members the depth of the personal tragedy. Newly married, Irwin and his wife saw their home inundated. Beth Israel synagogue which only months earlier was decked with flowers for their wedding now stands as a gutted ruin. A photo of the synagogue with rescuers holding Torah scrolls as they waded through flood waters



has become an iconic image of Katrina. The Orthodox congregation had to bury some 8,000 books. The Reform Gates of Prayer has offered sanctuary to the members who remain although the congregation's future is in doubt. Most heart rending of all was the story of Irwin's father, Meyer Lachoff, whom he described as "the epitome of Orthodox Judaism," a man who served as gabbai (lay spiritual leader) at Beth Israel for 35 years where he oversaw the twice daily minyanim (prayer quorums). In fragile health in a nursing home, he was unable to flee New Orleans, and, despite

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Calendar

Date	Event
Nov. 1-4, 2007	SJHS Annual Conference, Washington, DC
current	"Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia" "Minding the Store: Richmond's Jewish Merchants" "Answering the Call: Prayer, Patriots, Service, and Sacrifice" Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, 1109 W. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23220 (804.353.2668/www.bethahabah.org)
current	"Of Passover and Pilgrimage: The Natchez Jewish Experience" Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience Exhibit, Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez, MS (601.445.5407)
current	"Alsace to America: Discovering a Southern Jewish Heritage" Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, Utica, MS (601.362.6357/www.msje.org)
permanent	Creating Community: The Jews of Atlanta from 1845 to the Present" "The Legacy Project: Coming to America" William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, 1440 Spring St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30309 (404.870.7684/www.atlantajewishmuseum.org)
permanent opens March 11	"MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida" "Bonim: Jewish Developers Building Florida - Building Community" Jewish Museum of Florida, 301 Washington Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33139-6965 (305.672.5044/www.jewishmuseum.com)
current	"Cabin Fever: Jewish Camping and Jewish Commitment" "The Other Promised Land: Vacations, Identity, and the Jewish American Dream" The Jewish Museum of Maryland, 15 Lloyd St., Baltimore MD 21202 (410.732.6400/www.jewishmuseummd.org)
permanent	"The Blum House Project" Old City Park, 1717 Gano St., Dallas, TX (214.421.5141/oldcitypark.org)
current	"Through the Lens: Jeremy Goldberg's Washington" Washington Hebrew Congregation Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington (202-789-0900/info@jhsgw.org)
Jan. 15-Feb. 15	The Family Store: A History of Jewish Businesses in Downtown Asheville, 1800-1990 Reuters Center (Center for Creative Retirement) UNC-Asheville
May Summer	Pack Place Gallery Downtown Asheville, NC (828-777-1014/historyathand@charter.net)

Join the Southern Jewish Historical Society!

Your membership will help support the SJHS in its efforts to study, preserve, and present the Jewish experience in the American South. The SJHS awards prizes and research grants, publishes scholarships, supports exhibitions, and holds an annual conference. Members receive *The Rambler* newsletter, *Southern Jewish History* journal, and special conference rates.



General Member	\$35
Business or Corporate Member	\$35
Patron	\$50
Century Club	\$100
Life Member (\$200 X 5 years)	\$1000
Student	\$15

To support the research, scholarship, and exhibition of the Southern Jewish History, I wish to make a donation to the SJHS Endowment of \$_____ in honor/memory of _____.

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Please mark "Membership" or "Endowment" in the memo line of your check.
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A Letter from Our President



Scott Langston, President

On behalf of SJHS, let me thank Jim Pfeifer and all who assisted him in producing another wonderful annual meeting! The sessions were stimulating, at times moving, and in some cases, even provocative. I left the conference with a much greater appreciation for and understanding of the Jewish experience in the South and particularly, in Little Rock. We renewed friendships, formed new ones, and look forward to continuing the SJHS connection with Little Rock.

As I reflected on this conference, I again was reminded that southern Jewish history is both an academic discipline and a life experience. Recognizing the connection between the two, the Society strives to integrate academic insight with personal experience. This is one of our strengths. I hope you will join me and others in working this year both to preserve and illuminate the southern Jewish experience, and then come and participate in next year's conference in Washington, D.C.

Any organization is only as strong as its members, and SJHS has been fortunate to have a long succession of quality leaders. Sumner Levine, the Society's President for the last two years, continued this line of excellent leadership. The Society is better because of his guidance, and even more fortunate that he continues to assist and participate. I am personally grateful for his encouragement and enthusiasm. Thank you, Sumner!

With appreciation,

Scott Langston

Symposium Explores Florida Jews

Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton is hosting a program, "The Jews of Florida: A Rich History, an Evolving Identity" on January 14-15. The Gimelstob Symposium in Judaic Studies features two days of panels

Florida now claims 10 percent of the American Jewish population, but the state's Jewish history "has been barely explored," conference sponsors explain. Florida was home to the nation's earliest Jewish settlers, and its Jewish population has always been colorful and diverse. The state has hosted a nineteenth-century agrarian colony as well as the modern cruise industry.

SJHS members will take an active role in telling this story. Marcia Jo Zerivitz of the Jewish Museum of Florida will present a "Chronicle of

Florida's Jews" to the opening plenary session. Chris Monaco will speak on Moses Levy as a utopian and antebellum reformer, the subject of his recent book. SJHS board member Stephen J. Whitfield of Brandeis University will offer an overview, "Framing Florida Jewry."

Discussion topics include civil rights, demography, community services, retirement communities, the Miami Beach phenomenon, religious orthodoxy, and the Cuban, Yemenite, and Sephardic settlements. Speakers include Ruth Behar, Abraham Lavender, Edward Shapiro, Henry Green, and Ira Sheskin.

For information contact Frederick Greenspahn at 561.297.0645 or www.fau.edu/divdept/schmidt/judaic.

SJHS Grants

Scott Langston, chair of the 2006 Grants Committee, reported that the SJHS received six grant applications for research and travel. The committee agreed to allot the \$2000 in its annual grant fund to two of these requests.

Cristi L. Schwarz received \$755 to support research on the experiences of Jews in Washington over the past 40 years. This project will focus on oral histories.

Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett was granted \$1,245 to support her writing a biography of Harry Golden with the working title, *The Next Issue Will Be a Little Late: How Harry Golden Sold the Civil Rights Movement to America*. The biography will trace the life of the Charlotte journalist from his beginnings in New York's Lower East Side to his subsequent career as a crusading civil-rights journalist and best-selling author.

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The Rambler welcomes submissions on news relevant to Southern Jewry. Deadline for the fall issue is February 15.

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Katrina's Jewish Voice continued from page 1

assurances of his well being, Irwin learned well after the fact that he had passed away as a consequence of the storm. Irwin described with deep feeling efforts to assure a proper Jewish burial that was worthy of his father's dignity and good name in the community.

Jayne Guberman, Director of Oral History at the Jewish Women's Archive, discussed her work to preserve memories through Katrina's Jewish Voices, an on-line program to record first-person narratives. Jayne emphasized the significance of the internet as a repository of memory. During the crisis email was a primary communication tool, she noted, especially as the 504 telephone area code went down. Blogs and websites sprang up immediately for people to find each other. Katrina's Jewish Voices is part of a larger online effort to collect multiple voices and perspectives. The JWA is collaborating with the Center for History and Media at George Mason University to create a Hurricane Digital Memory Bank.

The storm was the great leveler, noted Rosalind Hinton, director of oral history for KJV. Many flood victims discussed the uniqueness of New Orleans' Jewish community, but she focused on how they were "like" the rest of America. Suddenly they were rendered homeless, without anything, not by a hurricane, which the city survived, but by the breaches of a flawed levy system. A large portion of the Jewish community lived between the two most severe breaches, the 17th Street Canal and the London Avenue Canal.

Hinton showed a video of Judge Miriam Waltzer, the first woman elected to the New Orleans Criminal District Court and the second woman elected to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Judge Waltzer, a Holocaust survivor, resettled in Dallas after her lakefront home was

destroyed. The area reminded her of Frankfort after World War II. She felt "ashamed of myself that I was going to the Jewish Family Service" and described the difficulty of taking tzedaka (charity) as a person who had always been a giver. Overwhelmed by the generosity of the Dallas Jewish community, the Judge wrote a check in payment as soon she accessed her bank account.

Miriam Latter, President of Congregation Gates of Prayer, and her husband own Tujague's Restaurant, the oldest restaurant in the French Quarter. She hoped restoration wouldn't take the ten years everyone was saying, "because we're going to be too tired by then. I'm tired of struggling." Her husband has been working seven days a week since he returned in November, 2005, and is mentally and physically exhausted. They don't have enough help, and tourist business is way down. At the community-wide Rosh Hashana service at Touro Synagogue, returning Jewish residents were joined by first responders, National Guard soldiers, and doctors and nurses who came to help. For Yom Kippur, the three Reform congregations (Gates of Prayer, Touro, and Temple Sinai) met at Gates of Prayer. Over 500 people attended. They sat in folding chairs because the synagogue had a million dollars worth of flood damage. Miriam said, "It was just an unbelievable feeling, that... We're Back!"

The Jewish community, individually, locally, nationally, and internationally has been overwhelmingly generous in their response to New Orleans, its Jewish community, and its citizens in general. Milton Grishman from the Gulf Coast commented that he had been writing those checks for years to causes for Greater Israel. Suddenly, he was the one in need, and Greater Israel was there for him.

Add Your Voice to Katrina's Jewish Voices

Jewish Women's Archive welcomes contributions about the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the Jewish communities of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and the responses of American Jewry to this vast humanitarian crisis. In addition to the stories of those who were directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina, we are interested in hearing about the experiences of members of regional Jewish communities who helped settle and care for evacuees, and individuals and

organizations across the country who participated in relief efforts. We are also interested in your memories of the community before Hurricane Katrina struck, as well as your thoughts and hopes for the future. Contributions can be submitted in a variety of forms, including emails, photos, essays, web pages, and other digital files.

Go to <http://katrina.jwa.org/contribute/>

The Southern Jewish Future

Moderator Stuart Rockoff began "The SJHS at 30: Envisioning the Future of Southern Jewish History" by noting that the Southern Jewish population has doubled since 1960. Some 120,000 Jews now live the Atlanta area, 81 per cent of whom were born outside Georgia. Dale Rosengarten observed that being a transplant is hardly unique for Jews, and feelings of exile are a part of the Jewish experience. "The construction of self," she

observed, is a "historical process." Southern children no longer begin their school days coloring Confederate flags. In view of the changes, Dana Greene raised the question as to what the regional definition now means. Eli Evans observed that his father's generation was shaped by the crises of depression, Holocaust, and world war. Today, he observed, "It's easier to be a Southerner than when I was a boy." Christian attitudes, too, are changing in their

appreciation of Jews. There is no need for Southern Jews to separate the braids in the "challah" of their interwoven identity, Evans noted. Stuart Rockoff concluded by stressing the persistence of Southern difference as the region homogenizes in the national mainstream. The South may no longer be distinct in its racial attitudes, but its evangelical Christianity still distinguishes it religiously.

Book News

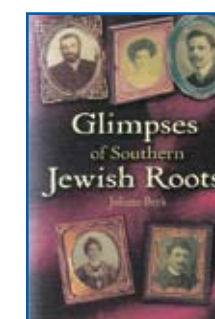


*The Family Store:
A History of Jewish
Businesses in Downtown
Asheville, 1880-1990*

Collected and Edited by Jan Schochet and Sharon Fahrer

Folklorists Jan Schochet and Sharon Fahrer have published *The Family Store: A History of Jewish Businesses in Downtown Asheville, 1880-1990*. This spiral-bound

book, printed in a large format, handsomely reproduces the exhibition panels that were part of their innovative exhibition of the same name (see calendar on p. 5). Richly illustrated with archival photographs, the book not only documents the Jewish mercantile presence in the mountain resort town, it also vividly portrays social history. To obtain copies, contact History@HandPublications.com, 333 Montford Ave., Asheville, NC 28801; call 828.777.1014 or visit www.historyathand@charter.net. Cost is \$20 plus \$5 shipping.



*Glimpses of Southern
Jewish Roots*

by Juliene Berk

Julienne Berk has published a short-story collection *Glimpses of Southern Jewish Roots*, which chronicles the immigration of the Roumanian Bercovici-Berkovitz-Berk family to Florida at the turn of the twentieth century. Included also are a series of vignettes, "Yankel in Amerikeh," written in an immigrant's distinctive narrative voice. Berk describes her work as

"creative non fiction." The character of Yankel draws on the author's own grandfather. To obtain a copy, contact www.julienberk.com or julienberk@aol.com.

Society News

Changing of the Guard

At the Sunday morning business meeting outgoing president Sumner Levine handed the gavel to Scott Langston of Weatherford, Texas. Serving on the board as new members are Les Bergen of Arlington, Virginia, and Ellen Umansky of Scarsdale, New York.

SJHS President Scott Langston, a native of Texas, has teaching experience on both the undergraduate and graduate levels at several institutions. He currently teaches Religion and American History at Texas Christian University and Tarrant County College, both in Fort Worth. He has authored essays and books on both Southern and ancient Jewish history, including *Cultic sites in the Tribe of Benjamin: Benjaminitic Prominence in the Religion of Israel and the recent Exodus Through the Centuries*. He has contributed two articles to *Southern Jewish History*. Scott is married with three children, ages 14, 11, and 9.



Les Bergen

Les Bergen, a Charlotte native, has lived in Arlington, Virginia, since 1973. He holds a B.S. in engineering from The Citadel and an MBA from George Washington. A recently retired career Army officer, Les has served as a project manager on the Washington MetroRail system and as a program analyst and engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Headquarters. In that last role, he prepared long-range plans and budgets for about half the Army's military construction. A SJHS member for some 15

years, Les also holds membership in the Jewish historical societies of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Greater Washington. At Agudas Achim Congregation in Alexandria, he leads a Rashi study group. His wife, Jane Banov Bergen, is a native of Charleston, South Carolina.

Dr. Ellen Umansky is familiar to SJHS members as a speaker and panelist. After receiving her Ph.D. in religion from Columbia University in 1981, she has taught at Vassar, Princeton, and HUC-JIR. Dr. Umansky has edited *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality, A Sourcebook and Lily Montagu: Sermons, Addresses, Letters, and Prayers* and has written *Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism: From Vision to Vocation and From Christian Science to Jewish Science, Spiritual Healing and American Jews*. A teaching fellow for the Wexner Heritage Foundation and CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, she also serves on the Academic Advisory Boards of HUC-JIR and the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Currently, Dr. Umansky is the Carl & Dorothy Bennett Professor of Judaic Studies at Fairfield University. Stephen Whitfield of Lexington, Massachusetts, will serve his second term on the board. Secretary Marcie Ferris and treasurer Bernard Wax continue in their posts also. Leonard Rogoff, editor of *The Rambler*, is president-elect.



Dr. Ellen Umansky

Silent Auction Makes Loud Splash

The SJHS's first silent auction netted \$1,100 and served as "a social mixer," auction co-chair Hollace Weiner reports. "The auction tables provided pleasure and diversion for conference goers," she observes. There was friendly competition for rare books, artwork, historic artifacts, and works by SJHS authors. Sherry Zander's photographs of small-town synagogues drew lively competition. The highest bid went for three signed books by Eli Evans. Kinky Friedman's bumper stickers—among them, "He ain't Kinky. He's my Governor!"—"brought

in a nice sum," Hollace notes, although it competed with a law review autographed by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Auction co-chairs Hollace Weiner and Sherry Zander as well as Jim Pfeifer solicited items. Little Rock co-chairs were Janet and Scott Korenblat with special assistance from Martha Alman, Peggy Jalaneck, and Deb Weiner.