



## SJHS 2023: Space and Place in Southern Jewish History

The SJHS and the Program in Jewish Studies at Rice University are looking forward to the upcoming 47<sup>th</sup> annual SJHS conference, which will be held at Rice University on October 20–22, 2023.

The conference theme, “Space and Place in Southern Jewish History,” reflects on Texas’s position as the meeting point between the American South and West as well as between the U.S. and Mexico. As a borderland, Texas pushes us to reconsider the character of the American South, or what makes the South “the South.” The meeting will explore southern Jewish history in all its texture and diversity.

Several panels examine various faces of southern Jewry in Texas, while others demonstrate the rich scholarship exploring the South as a region. The schedule includes traditional historical panels alongside roundtables and presentations focusing on archives, tourism, creative writing, art, and architecture.

The SJHS welcomes two fantastic keynote speakers this year. On Friday, October 20, we will hear from historian Bryan Edward Stone, who will deliver the Beeber Family Lecture at Rice’s Hudspeth Auditorium. He is a professor of history at Del Mar College and the managing editor of *Southern Jewish History*. Shabbat services and dinner at Congregation Emanu El will conclude Friday’s program. On Saturday, October 21, historian Tyina Steptoe will deliver the Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter keynote address. She is an associate professor of history at the University of Arizona.

In addition to exciting panels and keynotes, the conference will offer two stimulating Texas-centered opportunities. On Thursday, October 19, pre-conference goers will be able to tour key Jewish sites in Galveston: the Hebrew Benevolent Cemetery; the historic Congregation B’nai Israel; and the Historic Strand District in the heart of the island. They also will learn about Galveston’s role as an immigrant port at the Ship to Shore and Texas Seaport Museum. On Saturday evening, following a reception co-sponsored by the Texas Jewish Historical Society,

conference goers will have the opportunity to hear Jewish country artist Joe Buchanan. Through the rhythms of Jewish Americana, Buchanan’s music highlights “the values, Torah, and history of the Jewish people” (see page 4).

Building on last year’s inaugural honor, SJHS will present an award to the best conference paper submitted by a graduate student. The award is underwritten by the Rabbi Allen Krause Fund and will be presented at the Saturday evening reception.

We are looking forward to an

invigorating conference in Houston this fall! See page 3 for the full conference program. For registration and hotel information, see page 6. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to email us at [southernjewish2023@gmail.com](mailto:southernjewish2023@gmail.com).

— Joshua Furman and Mark Goldberg, SJHS conference program chairs.



Top: Bryan Edward Stone will discuss Texas merchants such as Morris Riskind of Eagle Pass during his Beeber Family Lecture. *Courtesy of Bryan Stone.* Bottom left: Houston’s Meyerland neighborhood (1962) is featured in more than one conference talk. *South Texas Jewish Archives, Rice University.* Right: Historic B’nai Israel, Galveston. *Photo by Jim Evans.*



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## President's Message By Josh Parshall



I'm excited to announce that the SJHS leadership has embarked on an important initiative: a membership survey that will guide us as we build a strong future for the Society. I urge all of our members to get involved by participating in this online survey (see the link below).

We're starting this effort from a good position. Looking over the schedule for our upcoming conference at Rice University in Houston, I'm impressed with the variety of panels and sessions we'll enjoy this year. The program committee has done an excellent job selecting a theme, identifying keynote speakers, assembling panels, and figuring out how it all fits together. I'm grateful to everyone who has contributed to a fairly smooth planning process (*kinahora*\*) during my first year as SJHS president.

At the same time, we are hard at work identifying the sites for future conferences. We should have our 2024 hosts confirmed in time for an announcement in Houston. It's also time to start planning for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in 2026, where we'll salute the 1976 Richmond conference that led to the formal creation of the current SJHS. Our treasurer and immediate past president, Jay Silverberg, will head up the anniversary committee, guaranteeing that we'll celebrate the occasion appropriately.

As the SJHS approaches the half-century mark, we have a lot going for us. We have secured large gifts in the past few years. Our programs and publications continue to support new research and share it with new audiences. Impressively, our membership is larger than it was at the beginning of the pandemic. However, we do need to make some key strategic choices in the next year or so, and we are seeking your input through an online membership survey.

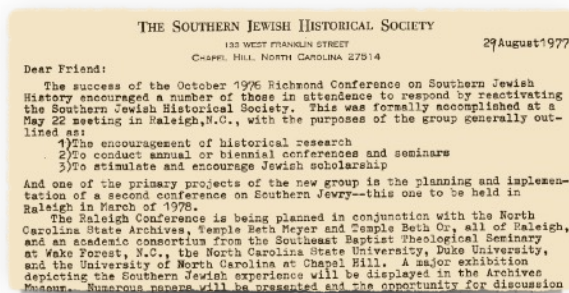
The most immediate question concerns changes to our membership rates. Dues contribute a significant portion of our annual income, but we have hardly updated the cost of a general membership since at least 2009. In addition to asking members what a reasonable rate for general membership would be, the survey asks for input on the membership structure, which we are hoping to simplify. The SJHS board will propose a new dues structure based on these survey results, and membership will have the opportunity to ratify that proposal at our Houston meeting.

The survey will also ask you about your interest in various SJHS activities and SJHS publications. We are curious, for instance, whether members would be interested in receiving either our newsletter or journal in digital formats. We are not planning any radical changes at this point, but we do want to be responsive to your preferences and reading habits.

You can find the 2023 SJHS Member Survey at [bit.ly/SJHS2023](https://bit.ly/SJHS2023) or by going to the SJHS homepage, [jewishsouth.org](https://jewishsouth.org).

I'm looking forward to hearing from as many members as possible, and I'm optimistic that the information we collect will help us chart a successful course in 2023 and beyond. As always, be in touch if you have additional ideas for the SJHS. See you in Houston!

\*A Yiddish expression meant to ward off bad luck.



Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

## SJHS 2023 Grants Awarded

The Grants Committee is thrilled to announce its new award winners.

- **Dr. Amy Weiss**, Hartford University, will use her Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter award for travel to Charlotte to do research at the Billy Graham Archives and the University of North Carolina for her project, "Realigning Faith: American Jews, Protestants and Israel, 1966-2018."

- **Dr. Heather Nathans**, Tufts University, received a Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter award for her book project "Playing in the Land of Milk and Honey: Race Performs on Southern Stages, 1787-1915." She will travel to archives in New Orleans, Atlanta, and Savannah as she maps southern Jewish identity in performance.

*continued on page 6...*

# Space and Place in Southern Jewish History

Southern Jewish Historical Society 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

Houston, Texas, October 20–22, 2023

Co-host: Program in Jewish Studies, Rice University

All events will take place at Rice University's Anderson-Clarke Center unless otherwise noted.

## Friday, October 20

**8:30–9:30 am:** Registration, Hudspeth Auditorium

**9:30–10 am:** Welcome Remarks

- ▶ Josh Parshall, Southern Jewish Historical Society
- ▶ Matthias Henze, Program in Jewish Studies, Rice University

**10–11:15 am: Outside the Archival Boxes: Art and Oral Histories Enriching Jewish Studies Scholarship**

Chair: Mark Goldberg

- ▶ Emily Williams, “We had to know who we were; we had to know who we weren’t: Jewish Race, Place, and Memory in the Deep South”
- ▶ Jillian Glantz, “Remember My Soul: Exploring the Jewish History of the Texas Borderlands Through Film”
- ▶ Gabrielle Lyle, “Conversations to Guide Us: A Reflection on Conducting Jewish Oral Histories in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands”

**11:20 am–12:30 pm:** Lunch on your own

**12:30–1:45 pm:** Concurrent Panels

**Roundtable: Documenting Jewish Alabama**

Josh Parshall, chair and moderator

- ▶ Emily Blejwas, Deborah Gurt, Amy Milligan, Margaret Norman, Dan Puckett, and Melissa Farah Young

**Documenting Texas in the Jewish Imaginary: Creative Musings on Space and Place in Southern Jewish History**

Chair: Hollace Weiner

- ▶ Joshua Gottlieb-Miller, “Searching for the Dybbuk (in Texas)”
- ▶ David Biespiel, “A Place of Exodus: Memory and Meyerland”
- ▶ Suzanne Seriff, “My Grandfather’s West Texas Salvage Story: Prophetic Musings for 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Museums”
- ▶ Sandi Wisenberg, “Holocaust Girl in Meyerland”

**2–3:15 pm:** Concurrent Panels

**Social Movements**

Chair: Catherine Eskin

- ▶ Jerome Dotson, “‘Black and White Together’: Harry Golden, Interracial Cooperation, and Civil Rights Allyship”
- ▶ Andrew Sperling, “‘A Shattered Dream’: Southern Jewish Reactions to Klan Antisemitism in the 1920s”
- ▶ Ashley Walters, “Serfs, Slaves, and Socialist-Revolutionaries: Writing the American Civil War through the Russian Revolution”
- ▶ Stephen Whitfield, “Louis Lusky and the Defense of ‘Discrete Minorities’”

**The Sephardic Diaspora: The Places Crypto-Jews Inhabited after the Expulsion**

Chair: Cengiz Sisman

- ▶ Marie-Theresa Hernández, “Memory and Identity: Traces of Converso History in the American Southwest”
- ▶ Nancy Katz, “Colonial Mexico and the Crypto-Jews: Frontier Spaces Far from the Inquisition”
- ▶ Merrill Shapiro, “The South’s First Jews?”

**3:30–4:30 pm: Beeber Family Lecture** (sponsored by the Helen Stern Fund)

Bryan Edward Stone, “Very Small Histories in a Very Big State”

**4:30–5:30 pm:** SJHS Board Meeting

**6 pm:** Shabbat Services

*Congregation Emanu El (buses leave at 5:30 pm)*

**7 pm:** Dinner and Memorial Tribute Program

*Congregation Emanu El (buses return at 8:30 pm)*

## Saturday, October 21

**9–10 am:** Shabbat services/text study

**9–10 am:** Walking tour of the Rice campus

**10:30–11:45 am:** Concurrent Panels

**Roundtable: Civil Rights Tourism in the Jewish South: Notes from the Field**

Nora Katz, chair and moderator

- ▶ Margaret Weinberg Norman, Melissa Young, Yvonne Holden, Ko Bragg, and Lance Wheeler

**Childhood**

Chair: Sarah Imhoff

- ▶ Anne Gessler, “The Sophie J. Gumbel Home for Feeble-Minded Girls and Shifting Understandings of Disability in New Orleans”
- ▶ Samuel D. Gruber, “Two Generations of Texas Jewish Girlhood: Flora Susnitsky Moskowitz (b. Brenham 1894) and Shirley Moskowitz Gruber (b. Houston 1920)”
- ▶ Pearl J. Young, “‘Month of Treason, Day of Sorrow, Year of Disunion’: A Jewish Family’s Commitment to Faith and the South”

**11:45 am–12:45 pm:** Lunch

**12:45–1:45 pm: Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter Lecture**

Tyina Steptoe, author, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City*

**2–3:15 pm:** Concurrent Panels

**Architecture, Material Culture, and Print Culture**

Chair: Samuel D. Gruber

- ▶ Laura E. Cochrane, “The Bezael Academy of Arts and Design and Defining a Jewish Space in Texas”
- ▶ Ellie Smith, “Good Bones: Tracing Nashville’s Jewish History through Architecture”
- ▶ Timothy Riggio Quevillon, “По-Русски: Louisville’s Jewish Community and Russian-Language Journalism in the Mid-South”

**Immigration**

Chair: Ellen M. Umansky

- ▶ Eric Goldstein, “Blazing a Trail: H.O. Gordon and the Challenges of Early Eastern European Jewish Settlement in Texas”
- ▶ Jeffrey Veidlinger, “Israel Zangwill, Jacob Schiff, and the Galveston Movement”
- ▶ Mimi Jessica Brown Wooten, “Making Space and Finding a Place in an ‘Era of Giants’: Rubin Morris Hanan and Ottoman Sephardi Migration to the U.S. South”

**3:30–4:30 pm: Documentary Film Trailer and Q&A**

Barbara Rosenthal and Linda Levitt, *Grit and Grace: How Six Jewish Women Transformed Texas*

**5:30–6:30 pm: Reception** (co-sponsored by the Texas Jewish Historical Society)  
*Outside of Duncan Recital Hall, Shepherd School of Music*

**6:30–7:30 pm: Performance and Havdallah with Joe Buchanan**

## Sunday, October 22

**8–9 am:** Breakfast

**9–10 am:** SJHS and TJHS member meetings

**10:30–11:45 am: Roundtable: Activating the Archives: Embracing the Power of Southern Jewish Collections for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Suzanne Seriff, chair and moderator

- ▶ Irene Adair Newman, David Schulz, Nora Katz, Joshua Furman, and Bryan Stone

**11:45 am:** Closing Remarks



# An Interview with Texas Jewish Country Musician Joe Buchanan

We are delighted that our Houston conference will feature a performance by Joe Buchanan on Saturday evening, sponsored by the Helen Stern Fund. Deeply grounded in a sense of place, Joe's music weaves together influences from country and folk with Jewish subjects and themes.

In 2020, conference co-chair Joshua Furman interviewed Joe about his life journey in Judaism and music. Joe grew up a spiritual searcher in southeast Texas. More than a decade into his marriage, he learned that his wife was Jewish, and this discovery set him and his family on a new path, from conversion to Judaism to becoming a recording artist, touring musician, and teacher. Joe's albums to date include *Unbroken* (2016) and *Back from Babylon* (2019).

This transcript excerpt has been edited for clarity and space considerations. To access the interview audio and full transcript, visit [scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/109772](https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/109772).

FURMAN: Joe, tell us about your childhood and your family growing up.

BUCHANAN: Yeah, you know, I had a really split childhood. It was kind of like a couple of different lives happening at the same time. I was raised by my grandparents 'til I was about six years old. [I was] born in Clear Lake, Texas. They had a family ranch down in Spofford, Texas, way, way down near the border. So I would spend a decent chunk of the year here in the Houston area and then a huge chunk down there on that ranch. So growing up in those two places, you sort of get this, like, Texas education, a massive Texas education. But you know, my grandfather really was my hero coming up, and he talked a lot about God and really instilled a basic idea about God in me as a kid. He said that you can see God in the world, you can see God in the way that people work, and I think if anything, if God wants anything from you, it's to do good stuff with your life.

FURMAN: So much of your life now is about the connection between music and faith. Did you grow up not only hearing stories from your grandfather and lessons about God, but also in a very musical family?

BUCHANAN: My mom was quite a singer, and the jukebox we had out on the ranch had a bunch of classic country music on it. And my grandmother listened to country music all the time, so it was a constant influence. It was kind of the soundtrack to everything.

FURMAN: Who taught you to play guitar? When did you start playing?

BUCHANAN: I was pretty young, self-taught. My dad bought me an electric guitar at a garage sale once. I came home, I didn't have an amplifier, so I plugged it into the microphone jack of my stereo speakers and I thought it was the coolest thing in the world, and of course I ruined my stereo when I did it. But I was hooked, you know.

I always wanted to make music, I just never felt like I had a lot of things that I needed to tell people. Probably not until really

all of this happened. I struggled so hard with religion as a kid, not with God. God made total sense to me. But when I left my grandfather's house and started, you know, going to churches and stuff with friends and family members, I just kept hearing a lot of things that I struggled with, that ran counter to what I thought God was. Like concepts of original sin, like, "You're gonna pay for this crime that somebody else did that there's no way you were really involved with, but you carry the weight of it and then afterwards you're going to this horrible place of eternal torment." And, it was always like well, wait a minute, what if I do good stuff with my life? What if I commit to just being a good person? And they were like, well that's great but that's not what matters, what matters is that you accept this person. And that made no sense to me.



Photo by Steve Irwin Jr.

FURMAN: Do you have a favorite Jewish holiday?

BUCHANAN: Is it corny if I say Shabbat?

FURMAN: No, it's not corny at all.

BUCHANAN: I would definitely say—I really is my favorite. I mean, okay there's two. The fact that Shabbat rolls around every week and we have the opportunity to get it right, you know? To find a way to rest better, to lay down our loads more effectively and to kind of reconnect with ourselves, and we're not always going to get it right and we're not always going to be there. But it comes back. It comes back, and I love that. That we keep having those opportunities. And then I would definitely say, [of the] big holidays, Rosh Hashanah, hands down. The fact that you

can stop what you're doing, and start doing things differently and you can really do that at any time but we have this time of the year that we do it as a community and as a people; I think it's just absolutely beautiful. Really beautiful. I'm a fan.

FURMAN: That's really interesting because so much of your autobiography is about, your life is going in one direction and then it goes in another direction. You sort of hit the reset button. And you just named two holidays that are also kind of about pausing, and you hit the reset button. So now tell me how and why this turned to songwriting for you. Because there are many people who find Judaism and embrace it, but it seemed to inspire this creative spark in you.

BUCHANAN: Yeah, it was really wild. It was right after I had finished the conversion classes, I felt like I had a million things I wanted people to know. Judaism healed such a big hole [in me] that I didn't realize that I had. I wanted to find new ways to connect to prayer and so I started writing prayer melodies. I wanted to find new ways to share some of these stories and ideas. I started writing and it just really took off fast. I put a service together, this Americana Shabbat service, and have been touring all over the country doing that service. And we put an album out called *Unbroken* which was really about the conversion process and what it's like to join a people, what's it like when you find your home after years of searching. And it's almost like it found you.

For more on Joe and his music, visit [joebuchananmusic.com/home](https://joebuchananmusic.com/home).

## Little Rock Temple Gathering Recalls Junior League Controversy By Jim Pfeifer

Sallye Mann, lifetime member of Little Rock's Temple B'nai Israel, spoke publicly on May 21 for the first time about her 1968 rejection by the Junior League of Little Rock because of her religion. The congregation president, former Arkansas Supreme Court Judge Annabelle Imber Tuck, welcomed around 100 people to the event in B'nai Israel's Tenenbaum Center.

The Junior League, a national women's service club, carried a cache of prestige at a time when most women didn't work outside the home and volunteer activities played a major role in defining the social hierarchy. Sallye's husband was vice-president of M.M. Cohn Company, one of the three largest department stores in Arkansas. Heavily involved in charity work and a Newcomb College graduate, she was considered by some of her non-Jewish friends to be a perfect candidate for membership in the elite club's local chapter.

"Not so," said the Little Rock Junior League admissions committee. Committee members voted NO to Sallye's nomination three times despite her impeccable credentials. She was not Christian.

Eleven women resigned from the organization in protest. Rabbi Zeke Palnick of B'nai Israel broke the story to the press, and newspapers throughout the region picked it up. The Anti-Defamation League became involved.

The Little Rock Junior League was never the same again. Years later, Sallye's daughter, Jan Alman, joined an inclusive and diverse Junior League. She sponsored the chapter's first Black member. Jennifer Ronnel, member of a longtime Temple

family, later served as president of the chapter, which today has a membership of nearly 1,000.

The May 21 program honored the 11 resigning Junior League members who fought antisemitism and changed priorities in the community. Six of the 11 are living, and four were able to attend the event. In addition, family members of the "11 courageous women" came from New York, California, Oklahoma, and Texas. Rabbi Barry Block called each of the women's names and had their family members rise as he led the group in prayer. It was an emotional experience for many in the crowd.



Top left: Little Rock's Junior League controversy hit newspapers as far away as St. Louis. Top right: Sallye Mann. Bottom: The crowd listens intently during the May 21 event.

Bill Lambright, whose mother Kathryn was one of the resigning women, spoke of the backlash faced by his family and others of the 11 after the news coverage. "My dad lost business and my parents were no longer invited to certain social events," he said, "but they never regretted what she did for a minute." Honoree Susan May retraced each step in the process of the Junior League's rejection of Sallye. "When we submitted Sallye's nomination, we really thought the community was past such prejudices, but we were wrong," she observed. "We did not consider ourselves 'brave' or 'courageous'—we just did what we thought was right." Sallye Mann gracefully described the experience of rejection she had felt as a young woman. B'nai Israel and the Little Rock community are grateful to Sallye and her family for allowing an important story to be told.

*Jim Pfeifer is a former SJHS board member and a fourth-generation member of Temple B'nai Israel, Little Rock.*

## An Evening Together: Jewish Biography in Lakeland, Florida By Catherine R. Eskin

At 8 pm on a Thursday evening in March, advanced English students at Florida Southern College in Lakeland had their moment: a public presentation based on the oral history interviews they conducted as part of their senior-level course in Creative Non-Fiction. The service partner, the Archives of Temple Emanuel in Lakeland, gained the interviews, transcripts, and images collected by the students.

In 2020, the last time I taught the course, the students were preparing for a public presentation when the world shut down. Students and their narrators remained in contact—finalizing transcripts and updating each other on their well-being. Realizing that we all needed some closure, I proposed that we take our presentation on-line. The zoom event was a well-attended success.

Back in person this year, a new group of students and their narrators gathered in a large classroom to engage in the sacred

act of storytelling. The presentations highlighted the diversity of southern Jews, from a queer behavioral therapist to a marketing executive and more. As I explained to the audience, Jews' most sacred object is a book of stories—the Torah. Storytelling is in our spiritual DNA. While many traditions stress action over words, Jewish traditions recognize the necessity of both.



Students and some narrators gather after the March presentation. *Courtesy of Cat. Eskin.*

Our world today is increasingly polarized, not least because we feel far less need to interrupt our busy lives by listening through to the end of a story. We can always swipe or scroll on to the next thing that strikes our fancy. The more isolated we become, the less capable we are of authentically showing up for those who are not part of our inner sanctum. Given current events in Florida, we all need to consider how words and actions are not mutually exclusive. The spread of hate and fear is accomplished using both, so our commitment to countering that spread must be equally multifaceted.

*continued on page 6...*

## Register NOW for the 2023 SJHS Conference!

It's not too early to register for "Space and Place in Southern Jewish History," our October 20–22 conference in Houston. Go to [jewishsouth.org/upcoming-conference](http://jewishsouth.org/upcoming-conference) for more info and the registration link, or register directly [here](#).

**Early-bird registration for SJHS members is \$240/person. A \$35/person fee will be added after the early-bird deadline, September 15.**

To qualify for this rate, you **must** be a current 2023 Society member. To become a member or renew your membership, visit: [jewishsouth.org/store/annual-membership](http://jewishsouth.org/store/annual-membership). The early-bird fee for non-members is \$275.

Three hotels—all located within 10 to 15 minutes' walking distance from the conference site—are offering special SJHS rates. For details and to reserve rooms, visit the conference registration page and follow the hotel link or call the phone number listed there. You need to book by September 15 to access these rates:

- Houston Marriott Medical Center / \$149 plus tax
- DoubleTree by Hilton Houston Medical Center / \$139 plus tax, guestroom with kitchen
- Hilton Houston Plaza Medical Center / \$109 plus tax

## SJHS 2023 Grants continued from page 2...

- **Teresa Robinette**, a painter, is working toward an exhibition of portraits that relay stories about blended heritages in the area of the Cumberland Gap, Virginia. She is interested in threading Jewish genetics, genealogy, and traditions of Melungeon history. Her portraits will include narratives of her subjects, and there will also be a digital component to her work.
- **Marci Darling Johnson**, Endicott College, is working on a documentary about Pirooska and Flora Gellert, two Jewish

burlesque dancers from Romania. They settled in New Orleans and blazed new gender trails in the field of dance. Eccentric recluses later in life, they died penniless. Their story traces a fascinating path for immigrant women who broke through gender barriers.

We are pleased to be able to support work from academic applicants, artists, and filmmakers: all of them are furthering our understanding of southern Jewish history.

— Phyllis Leffler, Grants Committee chair

## An Evening Together: Jewish Biography in Lakeland, Florida continued from page 5...

The semester made the predominantly Christian students more aware of Jewish traditions and the experiences of southern Jews. The class was designed to challenge them to formulate questions for strangers, strangers who have life experiences both similar to and utterly estranged from their own. Bridging a cultural divide is neither easy nor comfortable, but by venturing out into that terrifying void that increasingly seems to characterize our relationships with those who espouse different beliefs, we may be able to avoid the disasters of the past. Listening to another person, learning to be curious and still respectful, is both a great

undertaking and a simple practice. The potential of simple conversations to help expand our world is vast.

Quite frankly, we have become afraid of each other. What my students and their narrators can teach us is that we don't have to stay afraid. When they stepped outside of our classroom and into the world, the students may have been scared, but they used that fear to make the world just a little more tolerant and compassionate.

*Cat. Eskin is associate professor of English at Florida Southern College.*

## In Memoriam: Debra Polsky

Debra Polsky served as executive director of the Dallas Jewish Historical Society over the past 12 years. She was the heart and soul of the Society. We loved her and were saddened by her sudden death in May.

Debra introduced and managed many programs for the DJHS, including a remarkable and extensive oral history program (her own interview was a notable accomplishment). Her office displayed irresistible photos, aphorisms, sticky notes, books and journals, and a desk invariably covered with multiple tasks and projects.

Born in New York and raised in Tennessee, Debra gave her life to working and volunteering

in professional Jewish settings. She first taught in elementary and religious schools, developing friendships in several states before coming to Dallas as the BBYO executive regional director in 1989. Over the years, she built numerous professional relationships between DJHS and Dallas Jewish, secular, and cultural organizations.

One of her qualities demands especial mention: her great sense of humor. However busy, where others might stress, Debra was cheerful, defying her poor health in later years, rising to all challenges. We will miss her.

— Jane Manaster, Dallas Jewish Historical Society



*Dallas Jewish Historical Society.*



## NEWS AND NOTES

### Stories and Travel with the ISJL

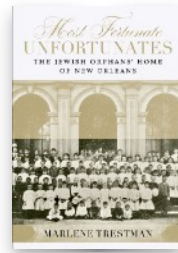


The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) is excited to announce two initiatives that provide arts, culture, and public history for and from the Jewish South. *Southern & Jewish* (formerly the ISJL Virtual Vacation) is a video podcast that shares stories of southern Jewish

history and culture featuring experts from across the region. Watch engaging episodes that explore the South's vibrant cultural heritage, the big themes of southern Jewish history, the folks working to advance social justice in the South, and our region's natural beauty, music, and food. Learn more at [isjl.org/podcast](http://isjl.org/podcast).

Travel to Mississippi with the ISJL in 2024! If you're looking for a weekend getaway with a focus on good meals and music, join the "Jews, Blues, and Food" tour of Jackson, Memphis, and the Mississippi Delta from January 31 to February 5, 2024. If you prefer a more relaxed pace, a longer trip, and want a chance to stay in luxury accommodations, join the ISJL for "Jewish Life in the Most Southern Place on Earth: Jackson, Natchez, Vicksburg, and the Mississippi Delta" from February 18 to 25, 2024. Learn more and register at [isjl.org/tours](http://isjl.org/tours).

### *Most Fortunate Unfortunates* Tells of New Orleans's Jewish Orphanage



In her new book, *Most Fortunate Unfortunates*, author and native New Orleanian Marlene Trestman presents the first comprehensive history of that city's Jewish Orphans' Home, the earliest purpose-built Jewish orphanage in the nation. Considered a "Magnificent Monument to Hebrew Benevolence," from 1856 to 1946 the Home sheltered 1,623 children from seven states while uniting and elevating the profile of Jews throughout the South.

The result of a decade of research and more than 100 interviews, *Most Fortunate Unfortunates* sheds light on institutional policies while relating stories of the Home's children and the people who cared for them—for better and for worse. Jonathan Sarna praises the book for "setting a new standard as a well-researched, well-written, warts-and-all history," while Deborah Weiner lauds its "revealing look at issues of race, class, gender, and the Jewish experience from before the Civil War to World War II." According to Mark Bauman, "*Most Fortunate Unfortunates* belongs on the reading list of everyone interested in childcare and education as well as southern, American Jewish, and general history."

Available on amazon and at [isupress.org](http://isupress.org). Trestman's *Online Supplement* offers detailed appendices, photographs, and profiles of alumni at [marlenetrestman.com](http://marlenetrestman.com).

### Capital Jewish Museum Celebrates Grand Opening

The newly opened Capital Jewish Museum attracted a big crowd to its opening celebration in June. The D.C. museum features a variety of ongoing and special exhibitions that tell the story of Jews in the nation's capital while also exploring the role Jews have played in the life of the nation through their involvement in the federal government. The museum's best-known artifact is the historic 1876 Adas Israel synagogue, which was moved to the site in 2019, where it is now attached to a modern, four-story building with three floors of gallery space.

The museum features plenty of southern Jewish history. Infamous Confederate spy Eugenia Levy Phillips makes an appearance, as does the equally infamous order by General Grant expelling Jews from Tennessee, Mississippi, and Kentucky. (As President, he attended Adas Israel's dedication.) Admission to core exhibits is free; special exhibits have a fee. Timed tickets are required for all visitors. Visit [capitaljewishmuseum.org](http://capitaljewishmuseum.org) for more information.



A docent takes "Erev Opening Bash" guests through one of the museum exhibits on the evening before the Museum's official June 9 opening. *Capital Jewish Museum*.

## REMINDER! Memoirs Sought for Journal

*Southern Jewish History*, the SJHS journal, is seeking memoirs to publish in its new memoir section. Memoirs should be previously unpublished (including self-publication) and approximately 10,000 words in length. They can be from any period in southern Jewish history. New memoirs are encouraged! For more info, contact Lance Sussman or Karen Franklin, section editors, at [lancejsussman@gmail.com](mailto:lancejsussman@gmail.com) or [karenfranklin@gmail.com](mailto:karenfranklin@gmail.com).



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## 2023 SJHS Member Survey

The SJHS Board of Directors wants to hear from you! Please click on the link below **or go to [jewishsouth.org](http://jewishsouth.org)** to complete a short survey about SJHS activities, our dues structure, and our publications. A high response rate from SJHS members will help us serve you better and plan for the organization's future. Thanks!

**[bit.ly/SJHS2023](https://bit.ly/SJHS2023)**

