

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Established 1980



A Quarterly Publication of the Texas Jewish Historical Society

April 2004

A Message From The Prez: It's Annual Gathering Time!



The Texas Jewish Historical Society makes history of its own when members gather in San Antonio April 30, May 1 and 2 to celebrate a major milestone – the 25th Annual Gathering. The first TJHS meeting was also held in the Alamo City. The Silver Anniversary Gathering will be in the historic Menger Hotel, located next to the Alamo. The Annual Gathering Planning Committee (see complete story beginning on), has organized a weekend full of interesting speakers, tours and activities.

The Society's May 2nd Annual Membership meeting will include a presentation of the slate of officers and board members and the election of a new Board and Officers. The TJHS Board of Directors' meeting will precede the General Membership Meeting.

The Fall 2003 Board meeting was held on South Padre Island the weekend of February 6-8, 2004. Many thanks to Mitzi and Rusty Milstein for organizing an entertaining, informative and fun weekend, and to Gay Greenspan, who did so much to make our winter Meeting a success. Gay organized the speaker panel and helped set up the Shabbat dinner. Unfortunately, Gay had a heart attack a couple of weeks before the event, which prevented her from attending the festivities. We are happy to report that she is feeling much better and is already back at work at Temple Beth El in Brownsville, where she has served for more than a decade. Gay promises that the timing of her illness was just coincidence. Thanks, also, to TJHS member Bernice Edelstein and her team hosted a delightful Shabbat dinner in Brownsville's Temple Beth El. Afterwards, we attended services and a wonderful Oneg Shabbat hosted by the Sisterhood. Temple Beth El members made everyone feel at home.

Saturday morning, our tour bus took us to Port Isabel, where we enjoyed shopping and lunch. Afterwards, with Temple Beth El member Larry Joki serving as our official tour guide, we saw Brownsville's original Synagogue building, old buildings that once housed Jewish businesses, and the very interesting Jewish Cemetery.

Saturday night's Banquet, held in the Radisson Hotel Ballroom, was preceded by a Havdallah service led by Temple Beth El Rabbi, Michelle Greenberg. After dinner, a panel of speakers from the South Texas Jewish community gave very interesting talks about how they came to live in South Texas. The presentations are included in this newsletter. During Sunday morning's Board meeting, reports were presented on a number of subjects.

Congratulations and thank you to Elaine Albin of Rockport, who has agreed to serve as Membership Chair. Heartfelt thanks to Fay Brachman, who has done a fantastic job in this position for many years and is now retiring. Hope to see everyone in San Antonio!

President, Texas Jewish Historical Society

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HONOR LOVED ONES WITH TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY DONOR CARDS

A card like the one below will be sent when you honor or memorialize that special person through a donation to the Texas Jewish Historical Society Endowment Fund. Upon receipt of your gift, the Society will respond with an acknowledgment. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Society through this program. To participate, please mail your gift and information to: Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, TX, 78766-0193.

THE TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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We appreciate your articles and photos for inclusion in the Texas Jewish Historical Society Newsletter. Please send only color photocopies of photographs and documents. *Do not risk* sending original photos or documents. Make sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you would like your documents returned (returns can not be guaranteed).

Send copies of articles, information and photographs to:
Davie Lou Solka, davielou@solka.net or 501 Bermuda Place, Corpus Christi, TX, 78411. Phone 361-852-5815.

We welcome your ideas, suggestions and comments regarding this newsletter. Please send your input to Susan@ElsnerFurman.com.

Corrections – The following are corrections to website and/or email addresses that appeared in the Fall 2003 newsletter: The TJHS website address is www.txjhs.org. The Texas Czech Heritage & Cultural Center email address is czech@cvtv.net. Their website address is www.czechtexas.org. Please send corrections to Assistant Editor Davie Lou Solka (see address above). Thank you for your help!

BOOK FREE TJHS TRAVELING EXHIBIT FOR YOUR NEXT PROGRAM

By Jack Gerrick

With Jews throughout the United States preparing to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of Jews Coming To America, the Texas Jewish Historical Society expects even more requests for its Traveling Exhibit. In cooperation with the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, the TJHS produced and offers at no charge a series of old photographs, stories and a look into the earliest beginnings of Texas Jewish history. Two traveling exhibits on museum-quality reproduction foam board are available. They include 25 large photos with descriptive literature, and can be displayed on easels or hung on a wall.

The exhibits are packed in a waterproof box that can be shipped. The exhibits are available at no charge. They should be returned to the Society using prepaid freight. The TJHS will prepay the exhibit to the point of the showing.

Over the past years, the exhibits have provided insight into Jewish history, having been shown in a number of venues including schools, synagogues, Hadassah meetings and events for children. For information, contact Jack Gerrick at Texbed@aol.com or call 817-927-8765

MAY 20, 2004 IS DEADLINE TO SUBMIT INFORMATION FOR NEXT TJHS NEWSLETTER

Send your news, personal histories, Honorable Menschens, photos and more for the TJHS Newsletter by May 20, 2004 to the address in the box at left. Please do not risk sending your priceless original photos or documents. Color copies work best. We will make every attempt to return your items *if they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope*. Remember to please send copies only.

TJHS Silver Anniversary April 30, May 1 and May 2, 2004 in San Antonio, Texas Accommodations in the Historic Menger Hotel (circa 1859)



The Big San Antonio Howdy is almost here! With 25 years of accomplishments and substantial growth, members of the Texas Jewish Historical Society converge on the same city in which the first gathering was held. Silver Anniversary Annual Gathering festivities begin Friday, April 30 with registration, followed by an introduction to the historic Menger Hotel, located at 204 Alamo Plaza, San Antonio, TX, 78205. The special room rate is available to TJHS members for Thursday, April 29th through Sunday night, May 2nd.

The San Antonio Committee has planned an informative, entertaining weekend. The newly renovated, historic Menger Hotel on Alamo Plaza is the oldest continually

operating hotel west of the Mississippi. The Menger has been a public hotel since 23 years after the fall of the Alamo. Built in 1859 under the direction of owner William A. Menger and architect John Fries, the original two-story building is a part of the newly renovated hotel and is just 100 yards from the Alamo.

The Menger has hosted a number of personalities including Theodore Roosevelt, Sidney Lanier, Babe Ruth, Mae West, Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Sarah Bernhardt and Gutzon Borglum, to name a few. Much of the architecture, history, appointments, and artifacts are museum quality. Visit the Menger Hotel's website at www.historicmenger.com to learn more about this very special property.

The toll-free number is 1-800-345-9285. The Menger's local phone number is 210-223-4361.

JULIUS JOSKE (1825-1909)

A TASTE OF TEXAS JEWISH HISTORY ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE MENGER

TJHS members attending the Silver Anniversary celebration will experience Texas Jewish history simply by looking at a building across the street from the Menger Hotel. The building was once home for a department store with which many TJHS members are familiar – Joske's (Joske's has since been sold to Dillard's Department Stores.)

Julius Joske, founder of Joske's Department Store, once "the largest store in the largest state," was born in Birnbaum, East Prussia, in 1825, the son of Abraham and Rebecca Joske. His family later moved to Berlin. Julius emigrated from Germany to San Antonio in 1867 and established his first store on Military Plaza. He wanted to be near the supply depot that served military installations in Texas, Indian Territory, and Mexico.

Before the railroads reached San Antonio, the store received its merchandise by freight from Indianola, Galveston, and Corpus Christi. For six years, Joske accumulated money before selling the business in 1897, when he returned to Germany to close his house.

He brought his wife, the former Henriette Wolfsohn, and five children to San Antonio later in the year and reestablished his business in a small adobe house on Austin Street.

After sons Albert and Alexander entered the firm, it was renamed J. Joske and Sons. Two years later, the store was moved to Alamo Plaza across from the Menger Hotel site and later to a larger site on the Plaza. After Julius' retirement in 1883, the firm was renamed Joske Brothers, and in 1903, Alexander Joske purchased the interests of his father and brother. At that time, Joske's featured fans, parasols and corsets, in addition to military and outdoor equipment. Julius Joske died in 1909.

■ TJHS

Bibliography: Ellis A. Davis & Edwin H. Grobe, comps., *THE NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TEXAS*, 4 vol. Edition.; Natalie Ornish, *PIONEER JEWISH TEXANS* (Dallas: Texas Heritage, 1989); Ruthe Winegarten & Cathy Schechter, *DEEP IN THE HEART: THE LIVES AND LEGENDS OF TEXAS JEWS* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1990).