

Acknowledgments

My journey from daily journalism into Jewish history began when Fay Brachman, whose grandmother was in Beth-El's first confirmation class, prodded me to write a book about Texas Jewry. That book, published in 1999 by Texas A&M University Press, is *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and their Work*. While researching deep into the heart of Texas Jewry, I visited professional writer Ann Nathan Cohen, daughter-in-law of Galveston's famous rabbi, Henry Cohen. She wrote the 1953 centennial history of Houston's Beth Israel, the state's oldest Jewish congregation. Her hardback book demonstrates the merit to future historians of a well-researched and well-written Temple history. I wanted to do the same for Fort Worth and Beth-El.

Over the past century, several local chroniclers have recorded the history of Fort Worth Jewry. I owe a

debt to my predecessors—first and foremost to Flora Weltman Schiff, a schoolteacher whose father was a charter congregant at Beth-El. Schiff wrote our first history, published in 1914 in Chicago's *Reform Advocate*. Wally Nass and Len Schweitzer produced Beth-El's 70th anniversary book, a valuable reference filled with photos and first-person recollections. In 1986, Ellen Mack worked with the local Texas Jewish Sesquicentennial Committee and began writing a book about Fort Worth Jewry. Although the project was not completed, Ellen's essays on the early Jewish community served as a foundation for the opening chapters of this book.

Barbara Rubin headed that Sesquicentennial Committee, working with Sara Blum, Judy Cohen, Marilyn Custer, Sandra Freed, Erica Hochster, Max Kaye, Liz Levine, David Luskey, Len Schweitzer, Mitch Stenzler, Sonya Stenzler, Ron Stocker, Al Wexler, Jerry Wolens, and others. They gathered primary-source materials and produced a videotaped slide-show, a bus tour of Jewish sites, and a brochure. I made use of their outlines, time lines, oral histories, photocopies, notes, photographs, and lists of Jewish merchants culled from City Directories.

To research Beth-El's history, it was necessary to gather, catalogue, and create an archive of Temple documents. Judy Cohen and Ellen Mack had made a start in this direction. In a storage closet at the Broadway synagogue was evidence of their effort: boxes of acid-free file folders, Mylar sleeves for protecting documents, and a dozen pair of white cotton gloves for handling fragile documents.



HOLLACE AVA WEINER, *archivist, author, historian, and journalist*, wrote *Jewish Stars in Texas*. She was a contributor to *Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Civil Rights*; *Jewish Women in America*; *Literary Fort Worth*; and *Celebrating 150 Years: The Pictorial History of Fort Worth, Texas*. She is president of the *Southern Jewish Historical Society*, and her research has been published in the peer-review journals *American Jewish History* and *Southern Jewish History*. As a journalist, she wrote for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Baltimore News-American*.

ESTHER WINESANKER, *assistant
archivist and Beth-El's original librarian.*



At Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger's suggestion, I recruited Esther Winesanker to help bring order to the chaos in the archival storage room. Esther, who received her on-the-job library training as a cataloguer at TCU, had previously been Beth-El's volunteer librarian. (In addition to cataloguing most of the library's books, she typed every entry

in the card catalogue, records lamentably discarded after the library system was computerized.) Esther and I became soul mates and lunch mates. We looked forward to Wednesdays at the archives, laughing at the discovery of irate correspondence and shedding a tear with soldiers who wrote touching letters to Regina Gernsbacher, for whom the Temple's original library was named. Not so incidentally, Esther paid for the shelves in the archives room, a furnishing overlooked in the new Temple's design budget. Esther and I were joined on Wednesdays by Deborah Gould, whose two-year stay in Fort Worth was too short. Deb assembled the archives shelves and helped fill them by organizing folders for several hundred local families.

Rosanne Margolis, formerly with the public library's Wedgwood branch, joined our archival team, cataloging and summarizing board minutes and rabbinical papers. Among the aides in the Temple archives is an alphabetical list of Rabbi Robert Schur's poems and invocations, all catalogued by Rosanne with an assist from her computer savvy husband, Bill. Rosanne, again with Bill's computer skills, compiled the amazing index for this centennial book.

The goal of creating an archival reference room led me back to school for graduate-level archivist training. My courses at the University of Texas at Arlington

included a six-credit internship that I performed on the premises at the Temple archives. Many thanks to Professor Gerald Saxon, director of UTA libraries, a master teacher, for allowing me to earn graduate credits while on the job at Briarhaven Road.

Corrine Jacobson served as my "gofer" throughout this centennial history effort. She made phone calls, ran errands, borrowed photographs, copied pictures, brainstormed, and allowed me to vent every frustration. At Corrine's suggestion, the archives began collecting photos of past presidents, a two-year effort. My husband, Bruce, a former Temple president and a wonderful partner, assisted. Readers will never know the blood, sweat, tears, cajoling, arm-twisting, and repeated long-distance calls that went into gathering these 46 photographs which illustrate Chapter 10 and begin on page 76.

Not everything was done in-house. The American Jewish Archives awarded me a \$2,200 fellowship to spend a month doing research at the Cincinnati campus it shares with Hebrew Union College. Before departing for Cincinnati, I implored Marian Haber to spend a few Sunday mornings helping me hammer out a broad outline. Marian, a journalism professor at Texas Wesleyan University, got me organized. She also gave me what seemed an impossible assignment: to locate a photo of our first rabbi, a peripatetic fellow who renamed himself *Philo*, the Greek word for *love*. The way I tracked down his picture turned into an article for the Temple bulletin. Philo's portrait is in the rabbinical time line on page 27. Marian read every rough draft, tightening the prose and editing out improprieties. She became addicted to the project and pitched in to research and write about prominent congregants in an essay she titled, "First Things First: Spotlighting Congregants' Accomplishments During the First 100 Years." That article begins on page 85.

The first person I told about my wish to chronicle the Temple's centennial history was Michael Ross, during his presidency in 1998. He gave me carte blanche, saying he envisioned an attractive, substantial, hardback book. He asked that I write an article about Beth-El's history for each subsequent Temple bulletin throughout his term. Those articles are incorporated into this book. I thank him for his encouragement and foresight.

A million thanks to Nancy Siegel, the centennial book's managing editor, who has a cool and even disposition to balance mine. Nancy, a French textbook editor,

hired this book's graphic designer, Garry Harman, a talented, energetic, imaginative illustrator who made my research, writing, and archival work look good on the printed page.

Additional thanks to Marc Slotter who snapped group photographs of present-day descendants of Temple founders. These folks were rounded up by Corrine Jacobson. Marc and Corrine's mammoth effort began last Thanksgiving and ended at Passover. The result is a four-page photo spread that begins on page 13. Marc, a professional photographer, took many other pictures, including the cover shot, on short notice.

Buddy Freed volunteered to help, and he became the book's on-the-street photographer. The feature on page 92, "All Over the Map," demonstrates how well he carried out his assignment.

An extra-special thanks to Carmelita Beville, a professional friend from the *Star-Telegram*, who proof-read my first book and stepped in to oversee the copy-editing and proofreading on this volume. She can expect another Greenberg Smoked Turkey this Christmas!

Louise and Gordon Appleman also jumped in to help with fact checking and copy editing. They proof-read the manuscript on the eve of the High Holy Days. Louise, by the way, accompanied me on this journey into Texas Jewry many years ago when I visited Corpus Christi to research her childhood rabbi.

Special thanks to Beth-El's custodial manager, Betty Loftin, who helped squeeze every piece of furniture into the archives room, which is little more than an odd-shaped closet. Compliments to Temple secretary Debbie Bowden, who searched for eulogies among the rabbi's files. A big hug to Temple Administrator Suzie Koonsman, everyone's confidante. She knows not to throw out files or film strips without circulating them through the archives.

Many more thanks to this book's dozens of consultants. Among them were Rabbi Mecklenburger, who read rough drafts over the Internet while on summer sabbatical in New York; Kenneth Baum, who provided insights on Temple finances and Jewish community history; Margot Schwartz, my longtime literary critic; Joy Spiegel, a fellow writer and kindred spirit; Rusty Feld who rescued FWFTY files that were almost thrown away; and Beanie Weil, Leon Gachman, and Eleanor Gachman for their oral histories. Ira and Sandy Hollander gave guidance. Leon Brachman, who has an encyclopedic memory, never showed impatience when I

interrupted him at work for historical minutiae. Mack and Linda Cohn reminisced, no holds barred, even though I was a stranger. Ted Hoffman shared warm memories of FWFTY. Frances Rosenthal Kallison, whose father was a Temple founder, spilled the beans on local scandals, including the B. B. Samuels bank collapse recounted on page 77. Rosalie Ackin, Corky Freedman, Rita Hoffman, Livia Levine, and Frances Nass dug deep into family albums for vintage photos. Scott Slotter dug into his computer files.

Speaking of photographs, Ken Hopkins at the Fort Worth Library's Genealogy Room scanned pictures from reference books that cannot be checked out of the library. The staff at the American Jewish Archives—mainly Kevin Proffitt and Melinda McMartin—did the same, and they answered research questions all summer long. They are all pros.

Sandra Freed headed the Centennial Committee and gathered support staff to implement all my visions of centennial displays throughout the building. Among her appointees was Phyllis Levy, whose concise writing led to monetary grants from the Southern Jewish Historical Society and the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

Last, gentle readers, please be tolerant of errors and inconsistencies in details, spellings, tense, and grammar. This volunteer project is far from perfect, but rather a touchstone to help you recall even more memories from our congregation's past.

— *Hollace Ava Weiner*

Fort Worth, Texas
September 2002

Endnotes

Quoted materials not specifically referenced in endnotes come from documents in the Beth-El Congregation Archives. Source materials include the Beth-El bulletins, minutes, annual meeting reports, fliers, founding documents, scrapbooks, correspondence, and tape-recorded oral histories. Additional information comes from U.S. Census records and personal interviews. Constraints of time and space preclude more detailed annotation. Photocopies of most documents cited below are filed in the Beth-El Archives.

1. U. M. Simon to Industrial Removal Office, Mar. 28, 1906, Box 64, Fort Worth folder, IRO collection, American Jewish Historical Society, New York; Hollace Ava Weiner, "Removal Approval: The IRO Experience in Fort Worth, Texas," *Southern Jewish History* 4 (2001): pp. 3, 6-14, 35.

2. "Purim Masquerade Ball," *Fort Worth Gazette*, Feb. 28, 1896, p. 8.

3. Flora [Weltman] Schiff, "History of the Jews of Fort Worth," [Chicago] *Reform Advocate*, Jan. 24, 1914.

4. "Fort Worth, 1849-1949: 100 Years of Progress," [Fort Worth] *Chamber of Commerce Magazine*, Summer, 1949.

5. Louis Schmier, *Reflections of Southern Jewry: The Letters of Charles Wessolowsky, 1878-1879* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1982), pp. 119-122. The teachers were Julia and Rosa Weiner and Dora Fry. Wessolowsky refers to Joseph Meyer, presumably Beth-El founder Joseph Mayer.

6. [Cincinnati] *American Israelite*, Mar. 7, 1879, p. 6; Another attempt at a Sabbath School, this time "under the auspices of Emanu-El Association" was reported in the *American Israelite*, Feb. 7, 1901, p. 6.

7. *American Israelite*, Dec. 20, 1900, p. 2.

8. [Dallas] *Southwest Jewish Sentiment*, Nov. 29, 1901.

9. Abraham Karp, "Overview: The Synagogue in America," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, Jack Wertheimer, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 12-13; William Toll, "Judaism as a Civic Religion in the American West," in *Religion and Society in the American West: Historical Essays*, Carl Guarneri, David Alvarez, eds. (New York: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 197-220.

10. The phrase *geknippt und gebinden* was suggested by assistant archivist Esther Winesanker, daughter of a Yiddish printer; to explore this theme of intertwining relationships see Robert E. Levinson, "The Use of Genealogy in Western Jewish Historical Research," photocopied article, n.d., Klau Library, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

11. Schiff, "Jews of Fort Worth," *Reform Advocate*.

12. Abraham Geiger, *The Position of Women in the Judaism of Our Time*, 1837, quoted in *Proceedings of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, First General Convention, Cincinnati*, Jan. 21-23, 1913, p. 16.

13. Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 122.

14. *Proceedings of NFTS*, Jan. 21-23, 1913, p. 37.

15. Abraham Karp, *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America* (N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1985), pp. 346-347; William Toll, "A Quiet Revolution: Jewish Women's Clubs and the Widening Female Sphere, 1870-1920," *American Jewish Archives* XLI (Spring/Summer): 1989, pp. 7-26.

16. Jonathan Philo Kendall, "Philo: A Biography," rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1974; Isador E. Philo manuscript collection #253, American Jewish Archives (hereafter AJA), Cincinnati; *Southwest Jewish Sentiment*, Nov. 15, Nov. 29, Dec. 10, Dec. 27, 1901, and Jan. 24, 1902; "Biographical Sketches of Rabbis and Cantors Officiating in the United States," *American Jewish Year Book*, 1903-1904 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1904), p. 87; *New York Times*, Aug. 18, 1923, p. 9 col. 7.

17. Joseph Jasin to Max Heller, Nov. 1, 1907; Oct. 12, Oct. 27, 1909; June 22, 1910, Box 3, folder 12, Max Heller manuscript collection #33, AJA.

18. Joseph Jasin, Rabbi, "Editor's Pulpit: My J.N.F. Memories," *Beverly Hills Zionist*, Nov. 1960, p. 1-2.; "Editor's Pulpit: Memories of Henrietta Szold," *Beverly Hills Zionist*, Jan. 1961, p. 1-2.

19. "Survival of Jewry will be as Church, Rabbi George Zepin Asserts Doom as People Sealed, Dominant Figure in Hebrew Life in America Here to Promote College Scholarship," *Portland Oregonian*, Sep. 6, 1923, George Zepin manuscript collection #50, AJA.

20. Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 308.

21. G. George Fox, Rabbi, "The End of an Era," in *Lives and Voices: A Collection of American Jewish Memoirs*, Stanley F. Chyet, ed. (Phila.: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), pp. 279-281; Unedited typescript of chapter (photocopy) in Rabbis box, G. George Fox folder, Beth-El Archives.

22. Hollace Ava Weiner, "Cowtown's Front-Page Rabbi," in *Jewish Stars in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), pp. 80-101.

23. "Social Service Beckons Harry Merfeld So He Yanks Down His Lawyer's Shingle," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, n.d., 1933, Harry A.

Merfeld Box 1, News Clippings I folder, Beth-El Archives

24. Lory Friedman Goggans, interview with author, Sept., 1998.

25. Eugene J. Lipman to Julian Morgenstern, Mar. 8, 1944 and Feb 18, 1946, Box A-16, Eugene Lipman folder 15, Hebrew Union College manuscript collection #5, AJA; photocopies of Lipman-Morgenstern correspondence from 1943 to 1947 in Rabbis box, Eugene Lipman file, Beth-El Archives.

26. Samuel Soskin, *Israel Speaks*, WBAP-radio [Fort Worth], sermon, Dec. 21, 1947; copy in Rabbis box, Samuel Soskin folder, Beth-El Archives.

27. Lipman to Morgenstern, Dec. 21, 1943.

28. *Ibid*, Feb. 22, 1944.

29. "Rabbis to Protest Against ACJ," *Council News*, May, 1956, p. 7; *Council News*, June, 1956, p. 4.

30. Robert J. Schur, [Fort Worth] *Beth-El Bulletin*, Nov. 1976.

31. Bill Walker, "Years can't dull rabbi's appetite for social reform," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Feb. 28, 1982, pp. 21, 24.

32. Mary Rogers, "Rabbi Robert Schur, poet, civic trailblazer, dies at 72," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Feb. 6, 1994, pp. 1, 2;

33. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 306.

34. Wally Nass, ed., *Beth-El Congregation, Fort Worth, Texas: 70th Anniversary, 1902-1972, 5662-5732* (Fort Worth: privately printed, 1972), p. 37.

35. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 298; Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas*, p. 65.

36. Hayyim Schauss, *The Lifetime of a Jew: Throughout the Ages of Jewish History* (N.Y.: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1950), pp. 101-102.

37. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 307, 358, 377-78.

38. "Texas National Bank, B. B. Samuels, A. L. Barker," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* collection, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections.

39. Tobia Miller Ellman, oral history, interviewed by Caroline Dulle, Tarrant County Historical Commission, Aug. 30, 1978; copy in Families Box 1, Ellman family folder, Beth-El Archives.

40. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 307-308.

41. Gerry Cristol, *A Light in the Prairie: Temple Emanu-El of Dallas 1872-1997* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998), pp. 216-224.

42. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 358.