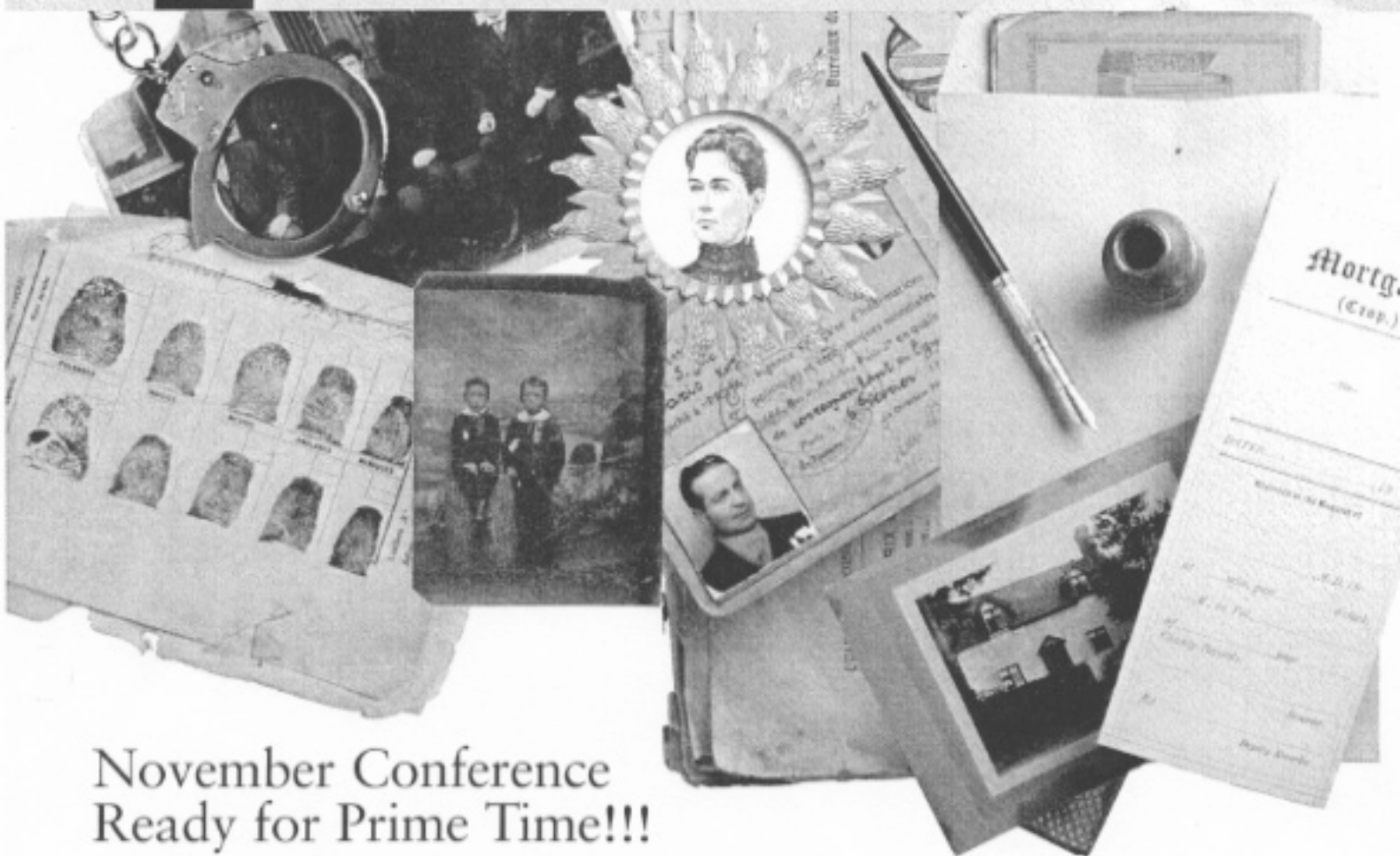




New Mexico
Jewish Historical Society

Volume 14, No. 2
October 2000

Newsletter



November Conference Ready for Prime Time!!!

We are excited to announce the first **Alvin H. Solomon Conference In Jewish History.** Al Solomon was an active member of the Society and hailed for his role in organizing the first New Mexico Jewish Film Festival in November 1998. Al passed away in 1999. His family and close friends have created an endowment so that the annual conference can be held to honor his memory. The provocative topic for this year's event on November 17, 18, and 19 will be "Negotiating Jewish Identity in New Mexico: Open Lives, Hidden Lives." The

conference will explore both the experience of "Anglo" Jews who moved to New Mexico but chose not to identify as Jews, as well as the extraordinary story of Crypto-Jews in New Mexico past and present. The conference will be held at the Santa Fe Hilton Hotel.

The sociology of identity is a fascinating aspect of human behavior and we have gathered together many talented scholars to help us understand the dynamics of identifying with a community. For those interested in the story of both the Anglo Jews and the Crypto-Jews, of the West, this conference will answer many questions. So many

Anglo Jews chose not to identify as Jews when they settled in New Mexico, it almost seems as though Jewish pioneers wanted to hide their religious and cultural background. Much has been learned about the Crypto-Jews who have still kept the pledge of secrecy their families insisted upon.

Our conference chair is Melanie LaBorwit. Melanie is the executive director of the Rough Rider Museum in Las Vegas, New Mexico. According to Melanie, "the



Al Solomon

(Continued on page 6)

President's Message



The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is somewhat unique in the western United States. The frequency of its programs, the diversity of its topics and the hard work of its volunteers have vaulted the Society into prominence. Our web site (www.nmjewishhistory.org) has taken us to a world-wide audience.

Firstly, this year has surely been a successful one for the Society. We have raised almost \$10,000 for our endowment fund created only one year ago, and which couldn't have

been done without the wonderful generosity of our members.

Secondly, a major new effort to document the oral history of early Jewish pioneer families in New Mexico is under way. The committee in charge of this project has identified twenty descendants of families who will be featured in video presentations. We expect to have completed this body of work by January, 2002.

Thirdly, we are moving forward with our 13th Annual Conference. The topic chosen by the Conference Committee: "Negotiating Jewish Identity in New Mexico: Closed Lives, Open Lives" will draw people from around the United States. Register early so you do not miss out on

this exceptional program. The issue of Jewish identity has long been a subject of controversy and consternation. We invite you to join the experts and explore this fascinating topic.

Lastly, the Society is full of energy, ideas and action. But the ultimate success of everything we do depends on volunteers, and on the Board and its committees—those who dedicate themselves to support the day-to-day work necessary to get the job done.

If you are in a position to contribute your time to fulfilling the mission of our Society, please call us 1-877-665-3974.

A Weekend to Remember



Committee chair, Jay Samuels, welcomed an eager group for our Memorial Day weekend field trip to Phoenix on Friday, May 26th. Following a dessert reception and the video *Pioneer Jews in Arizona (1850-1920)*, Abe Chanin, Professor Emeritus of the University of Arizona and world-renowned Jewish historian, explained the surprising role that Jews played in the development of the Arizona Territory, giving their names to several small towns like Solomonville, Seligman, and Feldman, as well as contributing several mayors, governors, and legislators.

Saturday's field trip started with a tour of historic Heritage Square to visit the Victorian style Rosson House, and the Phoenix Museum of History. The Phoenix, which includes exhibits on the Goldwaters and the Rosenzweigs, pioneer families who helped shape the growing desert town. At the hotel, Professor Gordon Weiner of Arizona State University spoke about the development of the Jewish community in old-time Phoenix. Professor Chanin returned as keynote speaker following the Saturday-night banquet, regaling the group with more stories of Jews in the Arizona Territory. Abe's wife, Mildred Chanin, read from the memoirs of Rosa Katzenstein, a pio-



(Continued on page 5)

Archives Grant Announced at Annual Membership Meeting

Our annual membership meeting and dinner was held at the Radisson Hotel in Santa Fe. Our president announced ambitious goals for future programs and the members offered many exciting ideas about Society events. The Dr. Alan Hurst Award was given to Henry Tobias, Ph.D. an active board member and distinguished historian. A surprise talk by a South African author added a fascinating dimension to the story of the immigrant Jewish experience. She gave a copy of her book to the Society for its archives collection.

Membership lists were distributed during the meeting as well as posters announcing various programs. If you would like a copy of the membership list, please send your request to our PO Box.

The highlight of the evening was the video preview of a documentary film created by Sasha Oster. For the first time ever, we heard living oral histories from the mouths of major pioneer family members. The video will be used to develop financial support for the creation of the NMJHS Video Library. Anita Miller, Chair of the Video History Committee reported that 20 people have been identified as appropriate subjects for future videos. As soon as funds become available, Sasha and her team of experts will travel around the state to record the rich and highly textured family stories which are waiting to be told.

After a wonderful buffet dinner, we enjoyed schmoozing and lively discussions about the future of the Society.



Support our society and order one of our beautiful new tote bags. In natural color with our sky blue and adobe red logo. Only \$4.95 + \$1.75 Shipping/Handling. The bag is 16" by 14.5", with 10.5" straps. To order, send a check or a money order to:

NMJHS Tote Bag Fulfillment
2677 Centinela Ave., Suite 207 • Santa Monica, CA 90405
Make Checks payable to NMJHS.

Archive Reception Draws Largest Turnout of Native New Mexicans Since Early Days of the Society

In March, Shirley Jacobson, Chair of the Archive Reception, reported record breaking attendance at this annual event. Photographs of Sephardic Jews taken by Carrie Herz and Gloria Golden were on display. Carrie's work was instrumental in discovering locations of considerable importance in the Society's effort to tell the story of Crypto-Jews. Gloria's work is new to the Society and was fascinating in its breadth and depth. In addition to the photography, the reception program included readings and songs which linked the story of Sephardic Jews to the history of New Mexico. The accompanying photos illustrate the overflow crowd.



Major Gift Benefits Society

A generous gift of \$10,000 was presented to A. David Scholder, President of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. The donors, Joan and Arnold Seidel, are trustees for the Alice and Julius Kantor Trust. Alice was truly interested in philanthropy and believed very strongly in being generous to organizations which enhance education.

According to Mr. Seidel, Alice Kantor would have been particularly excited about supporting a Jewish



historical society. Her sense of community and her devotion to constant learning were driving forces in her life. By coincidence, Mr. Seidel's family were founding citizens of Roswell, New Mexico.

Alice earned her fortune in the oil business in Texas. She built up a formidable enterprise and enjoyed tremendous success with her customers. She died at age 94 and her legacy of generosity will make a substantial contribution to both the new endowment fund which the Society created in 1999, as well as the new video history project now under way.

New Jewish Pioneer Video Project Launched

The Society has embarked on a project to film interviews with descendants of New Mexico Jewish pioneer families. According to Anita Miller, Committee Chair, when completed this video library will serve to preserve and perpetuate the history of the first Jews in New Mexico. By capturing these personal stories on video, we can best memorialize the character and spirit of these pioneering Jews who laid the foundations not only of our Jewish communities, but of our state itself.

An enthusiastic committee is in place comprised of Chairperson Anita Miller; Society directors Ned Miller and Ken Tager; renowned historians Dr. Henry Tobias and Dr. Stan Hordes; filmmaker Sasha Oster; and cultural consultant Susan Keith. They have mapped out a plan to shoot approximately 20 individual interviews over the next two years. The committee plans to digitally record still photographs and family memorabilia for the Society's archives. These will be used, along with the videotaped interviews, for public exhibitions, educational programs, and looking to the future, the production of a documentary film about the pioneer Jews of New Mexico.

Time is of the essence in securing these interviews, as they necessarily involve an aging population, i.e. those who have the most direct memories of their pioneer forbears. As a result, getting the interviews on videotape will be the project's initial goal and focus. When a sufficient number of interviews have been completed, the committee hopes to produce one or more documentary quality videos for distribution and broadcast.

Society members who attended the 1999 Annual Membership Meeting were treated to a screening of a brief pilot video, filmed and produced by Society and committee member Sasha Oster, featuring excerpts from interviews with Robert Nordhaus, Jeanette Wertheim Sparks, Carl Floersheim, Jr., and members of the Seligman family, brothers Randolph and Jack, and their cousin Milton. The pilot was made to use in raising funds for the project. The committee has identified several institutional funding sources, but individual donations will be essential in getting the project off the ground. Your support for this vital project, the recording of the last living history of the pioneer Jews of New Mexico, would be greatly appreciated.

(Weekend to Remember, continued from page 2)

neer bride who traveled by steamer and stagecoach from New York to Tucson in 1868.

The trip's highlight came Sunday with a visit to Temple Beth Israel in Scottsdale, Phoenix's oldest and largest Reform congregation, and its Sylvia Plotkin Judaica Museum. The museum features an authentic, re-created Tunisian synagogue, complete with beautiful ceramic tiles and graceful arches. After a lox and bagel brunch, the group headed home edified and satisfied by a weekend to remember.



Sasha Oster,
Documentary
Filmmaker

Meet Our Board Member



Ken Tager is among the newest members of our board. We met Ken at our November 1999 conference in Albuquerque on *Jews and*

Native Americans on the Frontier. Ken was so enthusiastic about his experience at the conference that he offered to help, and, when a position on the board became available we tapped his enthusiasm for our mission.

An attorney in Albuquerque, Ken has worked in many areas but focuses on business and tax law, which he has taught these subjects at several universities. Ken has been active in many community organizations. Most recently, he has served in Arizona, on the boards of the Sedona Chamber Music Society and Flagstaff Festival of the Arts. The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is the first community organization with which Ken has been involved since moving to New Mexico in 1998.

When asked about his vision for the future, Ken says that he would like to see the Society attract more young people through events and publications. In particular, Ken sees the new Jewish Pioneer Video Project as essential in capturing the attention and enthusiasm of the "mouse-click" generation. "Our history may be lost if we don't make it live for those who will follow us." In addition to his work on the Video History Committee, Ken is working with other board members to rewrite the Society by-laws. You can reach Ken by e-mail at kentager@worldnet.att.net.

Albuquerque and Congregation Albert: Growing Together for 100 Years



Henry Jaffa. (Congregation Albert's first President and Albuquerque's first Mayor)

On Sunday, October 29, 2000 at 2:00 p.m. Congregation Albert will celebrate its 100th year in Albuquerque with the premiere of a video entitled "Congregation Albert: 100 Hundred Years of Community." Dr. Carlos Vasquez of the National Hispanic Cultural Center and Dr. Thomas Chavez of the Palace of the Governors will speak at this event. The Temple's photo archive will be on display, also.

This event is funded by grants from the McCune Charitable Foundation, the New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities, the Albuquerque

Community Foundation, and private contributions. It is free and all are welcome. Congregation Albert is located at 3800 Louisiana Blvd. NE, Albuquerque. Please phone 883-1818 for further information.

(Conference Ready for Primo Time, continued from page 1)

conference will speak to critical issues of identity, self definition, and spiritual community. Consider the following:

What is it like to find out you are not who you thought you were? What is it like to hide your Jewish identity through the subtle and not so subtle process of assimilation? For some, the discovery of Jewish roots confirms long held suspicions of identity. For others, it becomes a burden or an obstacle to fitting into society."

Dr. Stan Hordes, conference program chair, announced recently that this year's conference will explore these conflicts in both the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities in the Southwest. The newest data from the academic research of distinguished scholars, as well as first hand stories from people in the New Mexico Jewish community, will fill three days of conference activities. The conference brochure will be mailed out shortly.



Melanie LaBorwit, 13th Annual Conference Chair



Dr. Stan Hordes, 13th Annual Conference Program Chair



Profile of a Pioneer

The *American Israelite* published the following in its December 1904 edition: "Albert Grunfeld, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, who has held the office of member of the City Council for two terms, was appointed by Governor Otero as a member of the Bureau of Immigration, of which he was the treasurer for a term of two years, which appointment he still holds, and at the recent election was elected to the office of County Commissioner of Bernallillo County for the term of four years by the largest majority of any candidate.

He was born in Germany 41 years ago and has been a resident of Albuquerque for the last 25 years, and is the senior member of the wholesale dry goods firm of Grunfeld Brothers, one of the most successful in the Territory. Mr. Grunfeld is a Republican."

Temple Albert in Albuquerque was named to honor the memory of Albert Grunfeld.

Appeal for the Los Alamos Jewish Community

A devastating forest fire destroyed more than 400 homes in Los Alamos last May. One need think only of one's own personal library and family mementos to understand the irreplaceable losses suffered by these families.

The destruction of such a significant part of the town has left the Los Alamos Jewish community with greater needs than the synagogue and other local organizations can fulfill. A fund has been established to assist the affected Jewish families to get back on their feet. Donations may be sent to: LAJC Relief Fund, P.O. Box 1114, Los Alamos, NM 87544.

Your contribution will be greatly appreciated by the Los Alamos Jewish community and the people of New Mexico. Questions may be directed to Rabbi Jack Shlachter of the Los Alamos Jewish Center, at 505-662-3217.

Society Seeks Archives Volunteers

The Society is in the process of reorganizing its archives under the direction of a professional archivist. Members are needed to help organize the archives and fulfill the Society's obligations under the grant funding this project. Please contact Claire Grossman to volunteer by calling our toll-free voice mail, 877-665-3974.



Training volunteers in the newest protocols used at the New Mexico State Records and Archives Center in Santa Fe.

Tell a friend to join! Who else will support our Society . . . if not you?

Membership

New Mexico

Jewish Historical Society

Voice mail: (505) 989-9900 Toll Free: 1-877-NMJESH (665-3974)
<http://www.nmjewishhistory.org>

New Renewal Former Member

Make check payable to: **New Mexico Jewish Historical Society**
 and send it to: P.O. Box 23090, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____

(fax) _____ (e-mail) _____

- Individual \$30.00
- Family \$45.00
- Individual Senior \$20.00
- Senior Couple \$30.00
- Student \$20.00

- Friend of the Society \$100 to \$249
- Nice Friend \$250 to \$999
- Good Friend \$1000 to \$4,999
- Great Friend \$5,000 to \$9,999
- Best Friend \$10,000 or more

Through my business I qualify for a **matching gift**.
 (Please include matching gift form with your payment)
 Name of Business _____

Gift memberships are available in any giving category and for any occasion. Friends and family will appreciate your thoughtfulness every time they read a newspaper article or hear a radio program related to the story of Jews of New Mexico.

I would like to give a gift membership to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Occasion (if any) _____

Category of gift membership _____

You are invited...

On October 14, 2000, for the first time ever, plaques commemorating the presence of Jews in New Mexico will be placed at two locations in Las Vegas, New Mexico. The first plaque will be affixed to the school administration building now occupying the site where the first synagogue, Congregation Montefiore, was founded in 1884 at the corner of Douglas and 9th Street. The second plaque will be placed at the current site of the synagogue building in Las Vegas, New Mexico at 8th & Columbia Streets, (now the Newman Center). The dedication ceremony will take place at 8th & Columbia Street at 12:00 p.m. Highlights will include several descendants from pioneer Jewish families and several dignitaries from New Mexico's political elite and clergy from both Jewish and Catholic organizations.

A wine and cheese reception will follow the dedication. The reception will be at the historic Plaza Hotel, 230 Old Town Plaza. A chartered bus will take people to and from Las Vegas. It will leave from 215 Lincoln Avenue in Santa

Fe at 10:30 a.m. sharp. Round trip bus tickets are available for \$10. Tickets *must be purchased in advance* with the check made payable to NMJHS. Seat reservation requests and payment must be postmarked no later than October 6, 2000.

This event is made possible through the generosity of Judy and Jerry Klinger of Rockville, Maryland. They are frequent visitors to New Mexico and realized there was no historic marker about Jewish pioneer life in any community they visited around the state. We are forever indebted to them for their enthusiastic perseverance. We are also grateful for the hard work of Ray Valdez, Executive Director of the Citizens' Committee For Historic Preservation. Mr. Valdez was instrumental in getting approval from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Most Reverend Michael J. Sheehan, Archbishop of Santa Fe and Reverend George Salazar,

Pastor, Immaculate Conception, Las Vegas.

For further information please call our voice mail at the new toll free number: 1.877.665.3974 (NMJESH). You can also send e-mail requests for information to: scholder@earthlink.net



*This is the site of the first
synagogue in New Mexico.
Congregation Montefiore,
Founded 1884.
Dedicated, October 14, 2000.*

New Mexico Jewish Historical Society



New Mexico

Jewish Historical Society

P.O. Box 23050, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502

Newsletter

Voice mail: (505) 388-9900 • Toll Free: 1-877-NMJESH (665-3974)
e-mail: scholder@earthlink.net • <http://www.nmjewishhistory.org>

Newsletter Committee:

Editorial: Daina Grossman, A. David Scholder, Ken Tager

Photography: Stan Rosen, Holly Scholder

Design: Lila Arbosa



DON'T LEAVE US HANGING!
You will soon be receiving
your membership renewal.
Please join before the
12/31/2000 anniversary of your
membership.

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 428
SANTA FE, NM