President’s Message

The Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey helps define our community. Where did we come from? What did we do? Who are we today? Our community has a rich history and our archives contain a wealth of materials that help to answer those questions. This fall we will mount an exhibition entitled “What’s Old? Treasures from the Archives.” Please be sure to stop by and see it following its opening on September 15.

Dr. Victor Parsonnet will speak on the history of music in Newark on October 24. Our archives will also assist in preparation for the Federation’s upcoming celebration of its 90th anniversary.

This newsletter provides but a glimpse of the Society’s work: the enthusiasm and commitment of Linda Forgosh, our Executive Director and Curator; the wonderful work of our archivist, Jill Hershorin; and the efficiency of our administrator, Irene Segal. To continue the Society’s work, we need the support of each of you. With the payment of your Society’s dues later this year, please consider elevating your membership level and combining it with a donation. And, next time you happen to be on the Whippany campus, be sure to stop by and say hello! We are always interested in meeting with you and sharing in our passion for the history of our community.

Robert G. Rose
President

Robert G. Rose Elected President

The Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey (formerly JHS of MetroWest), at its annual membership meeting, elected Robert G. Rose as president to serve through June, 2014.

Rose served as vice president of JHS since 2006. A partner in the Day Pitney law firm since 1980, his practice focuses on complex commercial, environmental and construction litigation at both the trial and appellate levels. A life-long resident of New Jersey, Bob was born in Newark and raised in Maplewood. He was graduated from Seton Hall University School of Law in 1974 where he was Editor-in-Chief of the Seton Hall Law Review; received an M.A. in history at Columbia University; and a B.A. from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

He is a board member of Legal Services of New Jersey which provides legal services to the poor throughout the State; an appointee to the Lawyers Advisory Committee to the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey; a past president of the Seton Hall Law School Alumni Association; and a member of its Board of Visitors.

Rose has served as a board member of the MetroWest Jewish News and the MetroWest Federation. He currently serves on the boards of the Rabbinical College of America and the American Conference on Diversity.

Marcus and Manshel Elected Vice Presidents

Elected as vice presidents were Carol Marcus and Roger Manshel. Re-elected were Martin Bearg (Secretary), Robert Cowen Jr. (Financial Secretary) and Alfred Mahler (Treasurer). Also re-elected as trustees were Howard Kiesel, Jean Rich, Marc Shapiro, Robert Singer and Linda Willner.

JHSMW Now JHSNJ

To better describe its change of mission, the Jewish Historical Society recently changed its name from JHS MetroWest to JHS New Jersey. According to Robert G. Rose, JHSNJ president, the new name better reflects the influence the society holds on a state-wide level. It is the largest Jewish Historical Society in the state, supported by the largest Jewish Federation in the state, the New Jersey Historical Commission and out-of-state grantors.

Mission Expanded

Its mission has expanded with the new federation merger to include in its archives important documents from highly-populated Union County and portions of Somerset County. Statewide-covered NJ Jewish News refers regularly to materials in the Society’s archives.

In the planning stage is the “Synagogues of New Jersey” project which will include the histories of dozens of synagogues from Sussex County to Cape May County. Its officers and/or executive director have met with other historical societies throughout the state forging a closer working relationship than ever before; and the “Our Jewish Family Legacy” program, which will teach families how to record and store their histories is now under development and will be offered to Jewish families throughout the entire state when completed. The Society’s board of trustees is expected to be expanded to reflect greater statewide representation.
Executive Director’s Report

By Linda Forgosh

W hoever said that summer is a slow season isn’t tracking the number of history-related questions that have come my way over the recent months, including requests for spur of the moment tours of the archives from visitors representing the Jewish Historical Society of Northern New Jersey, participants from MetroWest’s local Friendship Circle, and local resident Matthew Snyder who set a Sunday morning aside to enjoy good history. (See photos and captions)

No sooner had Yeshiva University Museum and Rutgers University’s Alexander Library returned items on loan from the JHS collections, I turned my attention to scouring the JHS archives for items that should have, but never have been, seen by the general public. My search was done with an idea to prepare a new exhibition with items that were “old” and voila, I had the makings of “What’s Old? Treasures from the Archives.” I want to repeat that the JHS has remarkable history preserved in its archives.

Philip Roth Documentarian

Nothing was more rewarding than having an opportunity to assist in the making of a documentary that will be shown at Newark Museum on the occasion and celebration of Philip Roth’s eightieth birthday. Documentary maker, Jane Statlander-Slote, was so excited to see what the JHS had to contribute to the film that she became an instant member of the Society.

It seems that we can’t get enough of Weequahic. In an on-going effort to assist in the writing of the history of Weequahic Park and its Jewish neighborhood from 1920-1960, I arranged for JHS board member, Hal Braff, to give visiting historian, Barry Kessler, a tour of the Park, the former synagogues, Weequahic High School, Beth Israel Hospital and everything in between to give him a sense of what it was like to grow up and live in Weequahic. We will let you know when the history is finished and invite you to hear Kessler’s findings at a JHS public forum.

Magazine reporter

Don’t think that interest in early and mid twentieth century Jewish life Newark has become “ancient history.” Far from it. An entire magazine supplement in Hamodia

Central Jersey History Discovered in New Brunswick Archive

Readers of the “New Jersey Jewish News” have followed the accounts of an imminent merger between two Federations – United Jewish Communities of MetroWest and New Jersey’s Central Federation. On July 1, 2012 the merger papers were signed and we all became part of the “Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest, NJ.”

The merger has changed the JHS’ mission statement. In addition to Essex, Morris, and Sussex Counties, our archives are now obligated to acquire and preserve the history of Jewish life in Union and Somerset Counties. We only have to look back a dozen years to recall the Society’s all out push to find the history of Jewish life in Morris and Sussex Counties which resulted in the publication of “The Jews of Morris and Sussex: A Brief History and Source Guide.” The same effort will be made for towns in the former Central Federation. We have had a good start with our Central “gathering process.” This is the result of our executive director’s efforts to establish a working relationship with the archivist at the Jewish Historical Society of Central New Jersey which is located in New Brunswick. This “Central” is misleading. Their archives primarily cover Middlesex County’s history.

A new discovery

In a recent trip to New Brunswick to meet Central’s archivist, Debbie Cohen, Forgosh used the opportunity to examine the shelves. She discovered that there are significant records that were donated to the New Brunswick archives that should ideally have been housed with the former Central Federation but, as Cohen explained, they made their way to New Brunswick because this was the only Jewish archives around. Our JHS was founded in 1990.

Sure enough, an unidentified author had written an account of the “First Ten Years” of Central Federation which gives dates of incorporation, names of founders, and other per-

Continued on page 5
Michael A. Stavitsky was a prominent Jewish communal leader and successful businessman whose service to the community spanned 50 years. A contemporary of department store owners and philanthropists Louis Bamberger and Felix Fuld, Stavitsky served as president of Temple B’nai Abraham for 10 years and was responsible for bringing the renowned Rabbi Joachim Prinz to the congregation. Stavitsky first made his mark as director of field work and fund-raising for the National Jewish Welfare Board in New York City from 1916 to 1922 before he left social work to enter the real estate and insurance fields, forming his own firm and achieving success.

Devoted to Jewish Causes

As a community-oriented person, Stavitsky devoted a major part of his time and energy to Jewish causes and became one of the most effective Jewish community leaders in Newark’s history. According to Sidney M. Weinstein, now living in Brookline, Mass., who was president of the Jewish Community Council of Essex County during Stavitsky’s communal career, “He laid the foundation for the developments in our community. His wise counsel, broad vision, and warm compassion will be living and dynamic realities for us for many years to come.” What motivated the unassuming Stavitsky to face formidable challenges? Born in Russia, he was brought to this country when he was eight and lost no time in developing an unabashed love for the United States. His personality and abilities flourish in his new country’s uniquely hospitable environment. Stavitsky possessed an unusual combination of credentials — he attended officers’ training school at Yale.

‘An extraordinary life’

The onset of the Depression played a major role in the development of Jewish organizational life in Newark. The German-Jewish families that had led the Conference of Jewish Charities retreated from active involvement, unwilling and/or unable to make the necessary financial and time commitments. This paved the way for a new group of leaders, of whom the two most prominent were Stavitsky and Samuel L. Kessler. Stavitsky served as president of the Essex County Council of Jewish Agencies (1931-35) during one of its most critical periods. Without his guidance, it is doubtful that the conference could have survived. In 1933, when rallies were organized in Newark to protest Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany, Stavitsky supported the city’s boycotts and agreed to take a leadership role in the creation of a Central Jewish Committee. His reign was short-lived as the enormous responsibilities of serving as president of the Newark Conference of Jewish Charities compelled him to resign.

National prominence

Stavitsky rose to national prominence serving leadership roles with the World Federation of YMHAs, United Synagogue Council of America, and National Jewish Welfare Board Committee Funds. He was also a member of the National Committee of Sponsors for the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. As a member of the UJA National Campaign Cabinet and a member of the national board and executive committee of State of Israel Bonds, Stavitsky was a member of several welfare boards in the United States. His personality and abilities enabled him to be living and dynamic realities for us for many years to come. With his guidance, it is doubtful that the conference could have survived. In 1933, when rallies were organized in Newark to protest Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany, Stavitsky supported the city’s boycotts and agreed to take a leadership role in the creation of a Central Jewish Committee. His reign was short-lived as the enormous responsibilities of serving as president of the Newark Conference of Jewish Charities compelled him to resign.

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Nephew Probes Editor’s Impact on Newark’s Jews

For Michael Newman, a history teacher at the Solomon Schechter School of Westchester in Hartsdale, NY, the name Anton Kaufman looms large in family lore.

Kaufman— who was born in Hungary and became a reporter at a Berlin newspaper called the Morgen-Zeitung— would eventually become the owner and publisher of the Newark Jewish Chronicle from 1921 until his death in 1943.

He was also Newman’s great-grandfather’s brother-in-law.

“I have been studying him and his family for the past three years,” said Newman.

That research has led him to the Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey where he could pore over the Chronicle’s yellowed pages on a microfilm monitor.

That’s where NJIN found him recently, eager to share insights into a figure JHS executive director Linda Forgosh called “a pivotal figure in the history of Newark’s Jewish life.”

Jewish Chronical influential

“If you wanted to know about Jews in Newark or the New Jersey suburbs, you read the Jewish Chronicle,” said Forgosh, who assisted Newman in his research. “It charted mutual benefit societies and every agency as it opened. It was extremely influential. It was the window to the world, and it went beyond Newark. It had a readership of 70,000 Jews.…”

“Kaufman,” Forgosh said, “had a large worldview.”

From his detailed study of Kaufman’s life, along with stories passed down from his father and grandfather, Newman has reached an assessment that dovetails with Forgosh’s.

“What comes across from my research was that Anton was a firm supporter of Jewish culture,” Newman said. “He experienced anti-Semitism firsthand as a student at the University of Berlin, where he fought a duel with a bigot and wound up with a scar above his mouth. He wore that as a mark of remembrance. A person confronted him about his Judaism and he didn’t want to accept it, so he fought back.”

Newman can date Kaufman’s struggle against American anti-Semitism to 1912, when his great-great uncle wrote President William Howard Taft to complain about discrimination, living conditions, and anti-immigrant sentiments directed at residents of the Lower East Side. His remarks were entered into the Congressional Record.

“Being an advocate in that way was a special passion of his,” said Newman.

In addition to Jewish causes, Kaufman was active in the New Jersey Press Association, the New Jersey Anti-Tuberculosis League, and the Newark Chamber of Commerce. He gradually became blind in the 1930s, toward the end of his career.

Kaufman died on New Year’s Day, 1943, at the age of 60 in what the New York Times described at the time as “a fall from his eighth-floor room in the Robert Treat Hotel” in Newark. The financially struggling Jewish Chronicle closed soon after.

Hundreds mourn his death

Kaufman was honored by hundreds of mourners at Temple B’nai Jeshurun — then located in Newark — and buried in its cemetery in Hillside.

The synagogue’s rabbi, Solomon Foster, who also was the Chronicle’s chief editorial writer, delivered the eulogy.

“The partnership of realism and idealism guided him in launching the Newark Jewish Chronicle,” said the rabbi. “As a journalist, Anton Kaufman had great courage, which prompted the corrupt to fear him, the hypocrite to shun him, and the vicious to deride him.”

In 1947, the Newark Jewish federation, then known as the Jewish Community Council, brought out its own paper, The Jewish News, which evolved into today’s New Jersey Jewish News, which, said Forgosh, “continued Kaufman’s vision.”

Still in pursuit of more knowledge about Kaufman’s life, Newman is making plans to visit his great-great-uncle’s homes in Europe.

He also infuses his students at Solomon Schechter High School with interest in pursuing their own family histories.

“Hopefully, people who are interested in their backgrounds will use the records to learn what Jewish life was like,” he said.

“Sounds of Music” coming from the JHS Archives on October 24

Mark your calendar for Wednesday evening, October 24, 7:30 pm, to attend a lecture featuring Dr. Victor Parsonnet and JHS’ executive director, Linda Forgosh, side-by-side, recalling an era of world-renown musicians who performed at Newark Stadium Concerts, Fuld Hall, and the Mosque Theater. There was very little rival music in twentieth century Newark, including performances of folk singer Woody Guthrie and composer George Gershwin.

Parsonnet musical family

Many of you know Victor as a surgeon and cardiologist at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center but may not know that the Parsonnet family is steeped in Newark’s and New Jersey’s music history. His father, Eugene, was chairman of the board of the New Jersey Symphony as was Victor, who served as chairman of the orchestra’s board from 1991 until 2007. Forgosh’s expertise is the result of her research as the Society’s historian for all things Newark.

Free admission

The program will be at the Alex Aidekman Jewish Community Campus, 901 Route 10, Whippany. Admission is free. Great history is priceless. ◆◆
Notes from the Stacks, cont from page 3

Division: Jewish Community Development Corporation minutes (1970-1981)

Please feel free to come by and look at any of the processed collections! Our archive houses fascinating collections from the community for the community.

Research

We have also hosted a number of researchers to the archives for some of the following topics:

Chatham Colony Association Collection
• Assisted researcher with creating a slide presentation for Weequahic High School reunion
• Congregation Agudath Israel Collection
• Jewish Federation Towers
• Temple Beth Hatikvah
• United Jewish Appeal
• Assisted researchers with genealogy request
• Looked in high school yearbooks for NJ Star Ledger reporter
• Scanned photographs for the Brooklyn-based newspaper “Hamodia”.

New Accessions

The following is a partial list of some of the new accessions:

• Ruth Dolinko – synagogue slides
• Marlene Lupin – 1953 Confirmation Class photo (B’nai Abraham)
• Max Kleinman – Oral History interview; Copy of “Up Close and Personal”; and Family genealogy DVD
• Marilyn Weinberg – 1934 Morrell (Irvington) High School Yearbook
• Jewish Federation of Central NJ - Board and Executive Minutes, 1962-1999
• Nancy Goldband – Morristown Jewish Center Basketball Team Jacket, 1947

Other

An oral history of Max Kleinman was recorded by Roger Manshel and preservation work was done on a scrapbook of Larkey Brother’s Clothing Store for Lois Larkey.

Volunteers

And finally, I must mention the work of our volunteers. Marjorie Franzel has been working with us since 2009. Her work has been invaluable as she helps out with so many things in the archives. In addition, this summer Rina Eisenberg came in to volunteer her time. Rina is a recent graduate of Lander College for Women, a division of Touro College in New York, where she earned a BA in History. She began teaching full time at Bruriah High School for Girls in Elizabeth, NJ. ◆◆

What’s Old?

Treasures from the Archives

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Have you ever received an invitation to have tea at Buckingham Palace with Queen Elizabeth II? Have you ever received an invitation to have lunch with first-lady Eleanor Roosevelt? Have you ever had drinks with George McGovern or been invited to have dinner with Albert Einstein? Have you ever danced the night away as a guest at an inaugural ball for the President of the United States? These history making invitations are among the treasures housed in the Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey’s archives and they are yours TO SEE if you visit the Society’s exhibit, “What’s Old? Treasures from the Archives.”

The exhibit is located at the Alex Aidekman Jewish Community Campus, 901 Route 10, Whippany, NJ. The opening date is September 15 and runs through November 12, 2012. There are weekly tours each Wednesday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. and group tours can be arranged by contacting curator Linda Forgosh at 973-929-2994 or e-mail lforgosh@jhsMW.org.

Calendar

Sept. 15 to Nov. 12, 2012
Exhibit: “What’s Old: Treasures From The Archives”

October 24, 2012 at 7:30 pm
Parsonnet/Forgosh Lecture: “Sounds of Music”

November 14, 2012 at 4 pm
Board of Trustees meeting

All events at the Aidekman Campus
901 Route 10E. Whippany, NJ

New Brunswick Archive, continued from page 2

tinent information. This was followed with the acquisition of bound copies of Central’s board minutes 1962-1999 and executive committee minutes 1977-1999. For now it is just a matter of time until the JHS starts its search for private collections, unpublished manuscripts, oral history interviews, photographs and artifacts. “Hello Central, the JHSNJ is calling.” ◆◆
Father of Jewish Community, cont. from page 3

overseas study missions. He understood the problems arising from the fragmentation of Jewish life and brought Jews together on behalf of important issues at home, in Palestine, and elsewhere. Letters signed by Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Albert Einstein (which are stored in Stavisky’s personal archive at the Jewish Historical Society) thanked him for his support of such educational institutions as The Hebrew University and the Weizmann Institute of Science and Technology.

Truman recognizes him

On the home front, President Harry Truman wrote to Stavisky in 1950 regarding his activities as president of the American Association for Jewish Education. Essex County’s Jewish Education Association, (now the Partnership for Jewish Learning and Life) was started by Stavisky. He felt the future of Jewish life was through educating youngsters and will always be remembered for his role in promoting a nationwide observance of Jewish Education Year. Although short in stature, Stavisky was a giant, according to Rabbi Prinz, who officiated and delivered the eulogy at Stavisky’s funeral service in 1967. “The life of Mike Stavisky was a very extraordinary life,” said the rabbi. “He became the father of the Jewish community in Essex County, for the motto of his life was ‘either community or death.’”

Donations

The following have donated to the JHS since our last newsletter:

Beth Judah Synagogue
Helene & Ed Brody
Miriam Broun Jody Caplan
Nancy Barrie-Chivian
Ruth Dolinko Betty Feinberg
Martin Fox
Marjorie & Michael Francis Ed Gates
Frances Goroll
Barbara Gottesman & Steven Wallach
Merle Kalishman Mildred & Samuel Klein Family Foundation
Benedict Kohl Susan Kogan Lois Larkey
Herman & Adele Lebersfeld
Sandra Newman Genie Reichman
Lois Rose Harriet Perlmutter Randee Rubenstein
Bruce Schonbraun
Helen & Harold Schwartz
Ruth Schwartz
Hattie Segal Ed Shapiro
Ronnie Weinstein
Susan Weinstock
Stanley Weiss

New Members

The following have joined the Society since our last newsletter:

Allen & Joan Bildner
Diane Denburg
Sarah and Jeff Doppelt
Herbert Fisher
Frances Goroll
Howard M. Gutman
Franklin Hannon Jr.
Alan Janoff
Audrey & Robert Kaye
Julia Latzer
Mike Newman
Leonard J. Schuman
Jane Statlander Slote

Executive Director/Curator
Jill Hershorin

Archivist
Irene Segal

Administrator
Howard Kiesel

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Martin Fox
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Rabbi Shalom D. Lubin
Susan Lubow
Kelly Marx
Dr. Victor Parsonnet
Jean Rich
Marc Shapiro

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