President's Message

As the Society gets ready to celebrate its 25th anniversary next year, I take this opportunity to provide our Newsletter's readers with a brief history and an outline of the Society's many activities in support of its mission in the community. We were founded as an agency of the Federation in 1990. At that time, the scope of its mission was for the limited purpose of collecting and preserving Federation's archival records. After a little more than a decade, the Society's mission expanded. In further service to the community, it conducted oral histories, collected archives from community organizations and institutions and began to offer a series of public programs and forums concerning the history of Jewish life in the community. Most recently, the Society has taken on the responsibility of collecting and integrating Central Jersey's archival holdings with the Society's existing collections, much as it did earlier with Morris-Sussex. To locate Central's synagogue and institutional records, its history from social service agencies, gather significant photographs, locate private/personal/family collections, and make arrangements to interview and conduct video oral histories, is a substantial undertaking.

Most important, at a time when issues of Jewish identity and continuity are the subject of great concern and discussion, the Society represents a communal effort to preserve its identity and to make its history.

Continued on pg. 6

Jewish Historical Society Names Shrager to Trustee Board

At the annual membership meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey in June, members elected James J. Shrager, of Somerset, to its board of trustees. “I can’t recall ever electing a more qualified candidate to our board,” says Robert G Rose, president of the society. “Jim’s years of experience -- as a leader in the Jewish community, a president of the former Central Federation and the president of NJ State Association of Jewish Federations -- brings a level of expertise that we welcome,” Rose concluded.

Shrager has the distinction of being the first person honored by the Jewish Historical Society of NJ to join its board. When asked why he chose to become a board member, he responded, “For some reason I found myself thinking about the Jewish institutions in which I was raised, and their history. When asked to join the JHS Board, it was a no-brainer. Its mission and my interests were in line. I believe I can be helpful in finding and preserving the Jewish history of Union and Somerset Counties.”

And that says it all for Jim.

Jewish institutions have been and continue to be his life. He and his parents before him have been founding members of some of the most important Jewish institutions in Union County’s Jewish history. His mother and father founded Temple Beth El in Plainfield and, after many years of his father’s serving as its president, Jim took over as its leader. He also was a leader in the Plainfield JCC and led the campaign efforts to raise funds for the current JCC in Scotch Plains. In addition to serving as president of the Central Jewish Federation and the NJ Association of Jewish Federations, he has served as chair of New Business/Industry & Professions Division, UJA (Central) and participated in the merger of the MetroWest and Central federations to form the current Jewish Federations of Greater MetroWest NJ.

Yale Law graduate

He is a graduate of Amherst College and Yale Law School and is a trustee of their alumni Association. He then joined the former Hannoch Weisman law firm rising to partnership and then became a partner in the law firm of Norris McLaughlin & Marcus, P.A., in Bridgewater, where he concentrates his practice in commercial litigation and health care law.

He is an avid sportsman, having been a basketball star in Plainfield High School in his younger years and now is an active participant in tennis, golf and skiing.

He lives in Somerset with his wife, Bonnie. They are members of Temple Beth El in Scotch Plains. They have two children, Jennifer and Jeffrey, and two grandchildren. ♦♦

Continued on pg. 6
The JHS’ stock-in-trade is its 625 collections (and growing). They are source for inspiration from which decisions are made as to what topic would be of interest for the Society’s exhibits. In the past we have featured supermarket entrepreneurs, resort hotels, Yiddish theater, individuals “Born at the Beth,” New Jersey’s first Jewish Home for the Aged, “Treasures From the Archives,” Weequahic memories, the Jews of Morris and Sussex, and more.

Now there is “First Ladies” an exhibit intended to pay tribute to the Jewish women whose leadership continues to promote Jewish life in our Greater MetroWest community.

September 15 to November 21

The exhibit will run from September 15 to November 21, 2014 at the Atrium of the Alex Aidekman Jewish Community Campus in Whippany.

The exhibit features 45 items -- a cross section of old and the new -- including photographs, hand-crafted invitations, cookbooks, a “T” worn at JFS of MetroWest’s “Run for Rachel,” and a “Golden Book” from the Ladies Guild of Newark Beth Hospital honoring Caroline (“Carrie”) Bamberger Fuld who, according to records, was Newark’s and New Jersey’s leading female philanthropist of the twentieth century.

There are numerous photos, the oldest showing members of the Hebrew Ladies Sewing Society from 1896 to photos acknowledging Federation’s first women presidents – Sylvia Braelove from Central New Jersey, Ellen Goldner for three years as president of UJC of MetroWest, Judy May, president of the Jewish Federation of Morris-Sussex, Lori Klinghoffer whose second year in office was as first woman president of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest, NJ, and the current federation president, Leslie Dannin Rosenthal.

The highlight of the exhibit is a 1950 hand-sewn tablecloth attributed to Hillside’s B’nai Brith women who sewed names of organizations and names of individuals who supported these organizations in their efforts to raise funds.

If you have an idea for an exhibit that promotes Jewish life and history in Greater MetroWest call: Linda Forgosh at: 973-929-2994 or email: lforgosh@jhs-nj.org.

(Left) Members of the Hebrew Ladies Sewing Society, who made and donated dresses to poor women in Newark in 1896.

(Below) Women honored at the 2004 “Pacesetter” event sponsored by the former Jewish Federation of Central NJ. How many can you name?
During World War II, a hand-picked group of American GI’s undertook a bizarre mission: create a traveling road show of deception on the battlefields of Europe, with the Nazi German Army as their audience. The U.S. 23rd Headquarters Special Troops used inflatable rubber tanks, sound tracks, and dazzling performance art to bluff the enemy again and again, often right along the front lines.

On November 11, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at the Alex Aidekman Jewish Community Campus in Whippany, NJ, the JHS will commemorate Veteran’s Day and the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I with a showing of the PBS documentary “The Ghost Army.” Arrangements have been made to have an actual tank used by U.S. Special Troops inflated and put in the lobby of the Atrium for all to see.

The speakers for the evening will include Monroe Township resident, Seymour Nussbaum, who will recall his role in duping the Nazis and Sandy Mayer, a local resident, whose husband Irving Mayer served in this unit will also speak. Mayer’s son Rob has contributed photographs of his father as a soldier in the “Ghost Army” for a small exhibit and generously provided funds to cover shipping expenses for the “loan” of the tank.

Admission is free.
Light refreshments will be served.
RSVP to Irene Segal 973-929-2703 or e-mail: isegal@jhs-nj.org

Irving Mayer, above, was a member of “The Ghost Army” during WWII. Shown (left) is the insignia designed by a member of the outfit. It is featured in the PBS documentary.

(Right) One of the inflatable decoy tanks used by the “Ghost Army” to deceive the enemy.
Hoffman in 1921. A tintype photograph of Saslow’s grandfather is interesting, as he is shown in his streetcar conductor’s uniform. There is a copy of South Side High School’s newsletter, The Optimist which features stories about young men signing up to fight in WW1. An 1894 program for confirmation services at Congregation B’nai Jeshurun for family member Henry Wright is included. A notable member of the family is renowned artist Stanley Marc Wright. His folder contains a gallery brochure from Stowe, VT as well as a catalog and biography about Wright’s life and work.

You may have seen Linda’s wonderful exhibit honoring 3 veterans of WWII that was in our building over the summer. The exhibit included photographs from the Martin and Carolyn Horwitz Collection and newly acquired materials from the estates of Seymour Litwack and Dinah Selvin. Included in this exhibit were Mr. Litwack’s Purple Heart medal and wonderful photos of Ms. Selvin as well as ephemera from her journeys as First Lieutenant in Europe during the war. And if you recall from the spring newsletter, I discovered a photograph in the Horwitz collection of a large group of servicemen and women standing in front of a beautiful synagogue in Bournemouth England, so we included that in the exhibit as well!

Please feel free to come by and look at any of the collections! There are many wonderful things to see here; often researchers come in looking for something specific and get distracted by other items! Our archive houses fascinating collections from the community for the community.

Research

Reference work at the JHS occurs on a consistent basis. Whether it is a phone call from a family member looking for information about a relative or a student using our materials for scholarly research, we see all walks of life enter our office.

A woman working on her Ph.D (Barbara Krasner) came to look at some collections for her work. Her research focused on the Jewish reaction to the Andover, NJ Bund camp and have relayed the information found within. The advice to contact the Chatham Historical Society was given to further his research. Another long distance researcher was looking to see if we had any documents regarding the purchase by individuals of cemetery plots through White Meadow Temple in the King Solomon Memorial Park in Clifton, NJ. While this type of material is usually rare in our archive, we did manage to locate her parent’s deeds and the exact date that these were granted!

Temple B’nai Or will be celebrating an upcoming 60th anniversary and their collection housed in our archive has provided them with pertinent photographs for their event.

Continued on page 5
An author and historian named Michael Gabriel contacted us in January. He recently published a book titled “The History of Diners in New Jersey.” His new research project brought him to us once again. In May he emailed us as he was trying to pin down the precise date of a December 1949 concert by the famous folk singer, Woody Guthrie, which was held at the old YM-YWHA, located at High and Kinney streets in Newark. The concert took place in the center’s Fuld Hall. Finding this date would help not only Mr. Gabriel, but also the folks at the Guthrie Center, who were licensing a few photos of Fuld Hall from us and they also didn’t know the precise date.

My search began in the YM-YWHA newsletter collection, The Bulletin. Sadly, we do not have issues of the entire year of 1949! I searched the “Y” minutes, photographs and then explored within the “Events” category which holds flyers and pamphlets from special events. So I gave it a rest for a bit and continued with my daily work.

Some months later, Mr. Gabriel contacted me again, to see if I had any further luck and suggested looking in the Jewish News. I went to the December editions and I found that Guthrie played on Dec. 3rd at the Young Israel Canteen. But that wasn’t the performance we were trying to find. I knew he was in the community, so I decided to go back a few months in the paper and found an entire article about his appearance at the YM-YWHA! As we discovered, the article about Guthrie’s appearance at the YM-YWHA was also shared with the Guthrie Center, who is working on an exhibit about the recently discovered Wire Recordings and it will go up this December. They will add the article to the exhibit.

I love doing this detective work and I am honored to be the caretaker for the valuable primary source materials of our community!

Please let us know if you have any edition of the 1949 YM-YWHA Bulletin!

**Other**

Finally it was our pleasure to host Jen Wachtel at the JHS in the summer for her internship. Jen is in her junior year at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Jennifer is studying history, Judaic Studies, art history, museum studies, and German.

She assisted us with research, processing collections, website and Facebook development and a variety of other jobs in the office! We wish her well and hope that she can visit us on her breaks from school! We have a new website: [www.jhs-nj.com](http://www.jhs-nj.com)

With the help of Pam Friedman, Marvin Slatkin, Howie Kiesel and Jen Wachtel the site is up and running. We will be adding new items to the pages and constantly have a photo slideshow on one of the pages. Please visit the site and look around.

In addition we have launched our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/JewishHistoricalSocietyofNJ](http://www.facebook.com/JewishHistoricalSocietyofNJ)

Come to our Facebook page where “every day is Throwback Thursday!”

Our collections continue to be used for vital projects within our community and beyond – please stop by and visit the history of our region. 💡
New Members
The following have joined since last issue:

Tom Beck, JFS of Central New Jersey
Ruth Brewster
Elaine B. D’Avella
Howard and Marion Medow
Liza Miller
Lee Saal
Sherry and Henry Stein
Temple B’Nai Or
Judith Horwitz Wolff

Calendar

Sept. 15—Nov. 21, 2014
The JHS exhibition “First Ladies” at the JCC in Whippany
November 11 at 7 pm “the Ghost Army” At the JCC in Whippany

May, 2015 TBA
Intergenerational Oral History Program at Daughters of Israel
West Orange

May—July, 2015
Jewish Heritage Month Showcase Exhibit At JCC in Whippany

THANKS!
This JHSNJ newsletter is funded by a generous donation from the Klein/Fien Philanthropic Fund which enables the Society to publish its biannual newsletters. The fund is managed by Judie Fien-Helfman and Mark Fien, children of the Society's founders, Ruth and Jerome Fien.

President’ Message Continued from pg.1

tory available to future generations. The Society is proud of its accomplishments in preserving that history and in bringing it to life to the community. The Society has promoted the history in its archives by making it relevant to those who live in Greater MetroWest and beyond. The Society offers a newly-revamped worldwide web site at www.jhs-nj.org. Take a look at it. We think you’ll be impressed! We publish a biannual newsletter, plus “Jottings,” (a quarterly email-blast), as well as regular feature stories in the New Jersey Jewish News, and a growing presence on the social network links of Facebook (“like” us) to bring us to a younger demographic, all of which keep the Society in the public spotlight and doing what it does best – outreach to the community.

We need your continued support if we are to succeed in our mission. With the New Year upon us, please consider making a donation to the Society. That would be greatly appreciated.

And finally, from myself and the officers and board members of the Society, I wish you l’shana tova – a happy and healthy New Year!! ◆◆◆

Thanks!