President’s Message

Our Society’s mission is to preserve our community’s remarkable history. We bring it to life through public programs, exhibitions, and publications, all with the goal of preserving our identity and continuity as a people. And the essence of that history is our “Jewishness,” not only in its religious context but in the sense of values that developed during our long history in the diaspora. In so many ways, it is remarkable that each of our families has maintained its Jewish identity through so many thousands of years of very difficult times. And, that brings me to today and a recent and very personal look at our history.

This past fall, my wife Ellen, and I, made our first trip to eastern and central Europe. We visited all of its great cities: Warsaw, Cracow, Budapest, Vienna and Prague. Today, each of those cities are vibrant, full of life and excitement. But, they are virtually without Jews. Indeed, the Jewish population of northern New Jersey is greater today than that of all those great European cities combined! We visited Auschwitz. We walked through the many synagogues that no longer function as places of worship in the absence of a Jewish population. Instead, they are now preserved as museums and memorials that tell the story of the destruction of European Jewry.

I came away from my trip feeling a very personal sense of loss and sadness that still is with me, but with a renewed sense of my Jewishness. I’ve gone back to reading the novels of Chaim Potok and the reminiscences of Eli Wiesel. And while I think of myself as an assimilated American Jew, I am reminded that others, both at home and abroad, continue to threaten us. By any measure, anti-Semitism is on the rise. For me, all of this has reinforced my determination to support our Society’s mission, and by doing so, strengthen my identity, my being a Jew. This year, as my family and I sit together for our Passover Seders, the story that we tell will have a very special meaning for me.

I wish all of you a Zissen Pesach and ask for your continued support of the Society’s work. I hope to see each of you at our upcoming May 24th Lasting Impressions Gala honoring Robert Cowen Jr.

Robert Cowen Jr. to be Honored at JHS Lasting Impressions Gala

The Jewish Historical Society of NJ will be honoring one of its own, Robert Cowen Jr., of Convent Station at the Lasting Impressions Award Gala on May 24, 2016.

Robert G. Rose, JHSNJ President, stated, “No one has been more deserving of this award than Bob who, as Financial Secretary for the last 18 years, has given of himself to the Society and its mission. He is a strongly independent person who has given back so much to the community.”

As a sign of his independence, it is told that at age 5 or 6, living nearby the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan, he visited that institution unattended. Even though the family lived in NYC they spent their summers at the New Jersey shore during his early years. Next, as he grew, came summer camps in Maine and Massachusetts. The family, to our good fortune, then moved to South Orange and Maplewood.

Marries Ilene Abramson

While serving in the US Army Signal Corps during the Korean War, Bob became engaged to the former Ilene Abramson. They were married in 1953 and, after his release from service, moved to Livingston where they lived for 31 years. They eventually moved to Convent Station where they still reside.

He is a graduate of Columbia High School and received his BA Degree from Columbia College and a BS Degree from Columbia College of Engineering. He was awarded an MA Degree from Drew University and MBA and Phd. ABD (All But Dissertation) Degrees from NYU.

Successful business executive

Bob’s business career began in 1955 when he joined the family business, A. Goodman & Sons, eventually becoming its president in 1974. When it was sold in 1977, he became President of Swenson’s Ice Cream NJ, until 1983. That was followed by President of Pollution Controlled Coal Co. until 1990 when he joined his son, Robert Cowen III, at his business, Cowen Media. There he assumed the post of CFO, where he remains today.

Community service

Bob is a former Co-President of The American Jewish Committee NJ Chapter and has served in the past as a Vice President of Congregation B’nai Jeshurun, NJ Jewish News, Print Making Council of NJ and NJ Restaurant Association. In addition, he served for many years on the board of Mountain Ridge Country Club as the Plant and Equipment Chair. He has also served as a volunteer at Morristown Medical Center.

Bob’s family has been members of Congregation B’nai Jeshurun for many decades and he still serves on various committees. In celebration of TBJ’s 150th Anniversary, Bob researched, assembled, and mounted a major exhibition.

Bob the writer

Bob is also a published author having written An Egyptian Primer (available on the web). He is currently writing a Cowen family history and an A. Goodman & Sons, Inc. history.

He and Ilene love to travel and have visited all 50 states as well as Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. They also have visited 67 different countries around the world, most often Israel where one of their children and grandchildren reside.

They have been married for 63 years and have three children, Robby, Peggy and David and eight grandchildren.
Genealogist Adds Branches to Her Growing Family Tree

By Robert Wiener
NJN Staff Writer

Susan Lowy Lubow studies her family's extended roots

For more than 40 years, Susan Lowy Lubow of Morris-town has been determined to locate every branch of her parents' proud family trees. To do so, she has traced back 4,000 people on both sides of her lineage, some of them prior to the first ones to arrive in Newark in 1848. Among her forebears are illustrious names in local Jewish history, such as Isaac Schwarz, who served as rabbi of Temple B'nai Jeshurun and Oheb Shalom Congregation, and Herbert Abeles, who served as president of what was then the Jewish Community Council of Essex County from 1947 to 1949. “It all started when my mother was helping my six-year-old niece make a family tree as a school project. I said, ‘I want to do that,’” she told NJ Jewish News in a Feb. 3 phone interview. Lubow grew up in the Clinton Hill section of Newark surrounded by numerous family members. “Many of my grandparents’ friends were related — first cousins and first cousins once removed — before they came to the United States. Cousins married cousins,” she said.

Started over 40 years ago

In 1974, she began the daunting task of documenting the larger Schwartz family on her father's side. She completed her first of two self-published books, The History of the Schwartz Family, in time for a reunion in 2012. Lubow traced her paternal ancestors back to Isaac Schwarz’s arrival in 1848. “He was never an ordained rabbi, but he came from a family of famous rabbis,” she said. “He was very scholarly.” Shortly after he arrived in the United States, Schwarz moved to Columbus, Ga., bringing along his own Torah scroll to start a congregation there. “But it wasn’t a good fit,” Lubow said. “So two years later he moved to Newark, where he became a religious leader at Congregation B’nai Jeshurun.” Then, as part of a breakaway cohort, he helped to establish the more traditional Oheb Shalom Congregation. Many years later, both would be reestablished in the suburbs, B’nai Jeshurun in Short Hills and Oheb Shalom in South Orange. Lubow recently completed a second volume, The Abeles-Kussy Families. In late January she donated a copy to the Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey.

Executive Director’s Report

By Linda Forgosh

Several months ago I received a phone call from Warren Grover, JHS past president and co-president of the Newark History Society, who asked me to prepare a lecture to be called “Newark’s Jewish Frontier: Weequahic and its High School.” He reminded me that of all the traveling exhibits prepared by the JHS none exceeded the popularity or drew as much foot traffic as the Society’s 2008 “Weequahic Memoirs: Celebrating Newark’s Legendary Neighborhood” and that I would be a likely candidate to use what I had learned about the history of Jewish life in Weequahic as the basis of my talk. Of course, I said yes, and before I knew it, I was on the phone talking to a reporter from Radius Magazine (March 2016 issue) who asked a series of questions about what made the Weequahic neighborhood so special to those who grew up there.

Over 600 attendees

This was no ordinary event. The lecture was sponsored by the Newark History Society and the New Jersey Performing Arts Women’s Association and held in the NJPAC’s Victoria Hall. Where else can you get an estimated 650 individuals to recite the cheer, “Hey, Mikey, Jake, and Sam; we’re the boys who eat no ham,” by those who were on hand to listen to my account of growing up in Weequahic during the years 1930 through 1960? Best of all was the audience’s reaction to the sight of clothing racks on stage with well-preserved football and cheerleader’s jackets, letter sweaters, and gym suits that were held on to by former students. The New Jersey Jewish News sent reporter Robert Wiener to cover the event. (His article appears on page 5.)

Newark’s 350th anniversary

It is noteworthy to remind you that Newark is celebrating its 350th anniversary and that Newark’s Jews left a lasting legacy of cultural arts and economic accomplishments for the city they called home.

There are other “iron in the fire,” such as our application for GOS funds (general operating support) from the New Jersey Historical Commission. The Society is continuously looking for corporations and/or individuals who are willing to donate funds to help us preserve the historic documents that are kept in the JHS archives. We also continue to encourage potential donors to make an appointment to take a tour of the archives.

In the meantime, I wish one and all a zeeson Pesach and Happy Spring. ♠♠
As she began an hour-long trip down the Jewish memory lane that was the Weequahic section of Newark, the executive director of the Jewish Historical Society of NJ made a confession. “I was, alas, not born at Beth Israel Hospital and did not graduate from Weequahic High School. The best I can claim is that my bat mitzva dress was purchased at Bamberger’s department store,” said Linda Forgosh, who grew up in Woodbridge.

**Newark’s Jewish Frontier**

Recently addressing an audience of more than 600 in the Victoria Theater at New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark, she described Weequahic as “the best-known Jewish neighborhood in all of America. With or without novelist Philip Roth, Weequahic’s history stands on its own.” Her anecdote-laden lecture, “Newark’s Jewish Frontier: Weequahic and its High School,” began, of course, with a bit of history via a 1913 real estate ad from the Newark Sunday Call projected onto a movie screen. It offered “cheap high-class building plots” in an area builder Frank Bock named “Weequahic” after a Native American tribe. The houses featured in the ad ranged in price from $2,500 to $3,500, with only one street allotted for commercial use. It also proclaimed in bold letters — NO SALOONS.

**Born at the Beth**

As she displayed a photograph of vintage street signs, the first in a series of collective sighs came from the audience. Many of its members were born at what was then Newark Beth Israel Hospital and graduated from Weequahic High School as far back as the 1940s. They recognized much of the vast sampling of memorabilia projected on the screen, and a seeming majority of people in the audience raised their hands when Forgosh asked how many of them had been “born at the Beth.” She showed an Art Deco apartment building on Lyons Avenue that was home to both Newark’s only Jewish mayor, Meyer Ellenstein, and its most notorious Jewish gangster, Abner “Longie” Zwillman. Among their more noble deeds, Zwillman’s colleagues provided security for Weequahic High School athletes when they traveled to away games in parts of Newark that were less hospitable to Jews, she said.

But inside their predominantly Jewish neighborhood, where upward of 35,000 people lived between the 1930s and 1960s, “there was no anonymity,” Forgosh said. “It was as if an invisible barrier was erected by the Jewish families who lived in the neighborhood with an understanding that each would keep an eye on the other’s children.” On one occasion, as Forgosh told it, eight-year-old Bobby Goldberg was spotted smoking a cigarette several blocks away from his home on Pomona Avenue. “When he arrived at the front steps of his house, he was greeted by his mother, hands on her hips, tapping her foot, and inquiring: ‘So, Bobby, when did you start smoking?’”

**All the eating places**

Food was a potent trigger for happy memories among audience members, as Forgosh scrolled through photos of Syd’s Hot Dogs, Cohen’s Knishes, Watson’s Bagels, the Weequahic Diner, and the upscale Tavern Restaurant, not to mention the original Eppes Essen — now in Livingston — and Tabatchnick’s “the Herring King.” And, of course, she showed an example of what was a staple of local Jewish life, Ming’s Chinese Restaurant. “Syd’s sold the best hot dogs,” Forgosh insisted. “Just ask the scores of young men who ran past Syd’s during high school gym class every day. It was routine to disappear into the (store), grab a hot dog, and — if the coast was clear and the coach didn’t spot them — get back into the group of runners. “If the gym teacher was too close, its owner, Morty Bratter, let the boys run out the back door to catch up with the group on the second lap around the block.”

**Making a minyan**

On a more serious note, Forgosh displayed a full-page list of Newark’s synagogues from a 1962 issue of the Jewish News. “Of the 43 small neighborhood synagogues located in Newark at this time, 16 were in the Weequahic neighborhood. Synagogues occupied nearly every third corner,” she said. Forgosh said that in Weequahic, “becoming a bar mitzva took on a community responsibility as well as a religious...Continued on page 4
Bob Max

At a spry 93 years old, Bob Max, of Summit, is the first individual chosen by the JHS Newsletter, to be featured in a series honoring those for their continuing active support of the Society. He is a past-president of JHS having served for 6 years in that capacity. He was recipient of the Society’s Lasting Impressions Award in 2008.

Bob has served numerous public service organizations for more than 65 years. He was president of the New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations, president of Temple Sinai in Summit and president and co-founder of Congregation Beth Hatikvah in Summit.

Community service

Vice-president of United Jewish Federation of Metro West, NJ and vice chairman of United Jewish Appeal, he also served as associate general chair of State of Israel Bonds of MetroWest, NJ, where he and his late wife, Shirley, received the David Ben Gurion Service Award, and he was a member of the New Jersey-Israel Commission. He chaired the United Jewish Appeal campaign in Summit for 15 years, and in 1973 was instrumental in merging the seven-community campaign into what today is the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest. He is a member of the Jewish Community Foundation’s Lester Society. Endowments in the name of Robert and Shirley Max were established at Drew University and Ohio University.

In Summit, Bob chaired special gifts and allocations for United Way; was president of the Junior High PTA, and treasurer of the Free Public Library. With Shirley, he created the Max Foundation at Ohio University, their joint alma mater, to promote understanding among interfaith and ethnic groups. He had been president of Phi Epsilon Pi Fraternity and the Hillel Foundation at Ohio University.

He and Shirley were honored by Congregation Beth Hatikvah in Summit in 2009 for their roles as founders, with a dedication of the lobby of the congregation in their names. He was also vice-president of Daughters of Israel Geriatric Center and co-chaired the Union County Advisory Council on Aging and the Senior Legislative Issues Coalition.

Executive, writer, musician

Creative by nature, Bob founded and led several businesses: LR Communication Systems, Computer Action Learning, and the non-profit Retail Coalition.

Sugarman Discusses “Jews and the Mob”

The Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey recently sponsored a public program on its Whippany campus titled, “The History of Jews and the Mob,” as narrated by Myron Sugarman, who grew up in a family involved with the mob in Newark, and who became a participant himself.

In an unmistakably deep, raspy voice, Sugarman, dressed in a leather jacket and sunglasses, took command of the microphone when he spoke of famed Newark mobster Longey Zwillman and the fight against the Nazi Bund in Newark and elsewhere during the pre-WWII days. He also spoke at length concerning the clandestine supply of arms and ammunition by the Jewish mob — through it ties to mob “friends” that controlled cargo on the NYC waterfront — that was shipped to the Jewish underground in what was then Palestine during WWII and after, at the time of the fight for Israel’s independence.

Sugarman was introduced by JHS past-president, Warren Grover, a prominent historian and author of Nazis in Newark.

The audience for the program was one of the largest JHSNJ ever hosted on the Whippany campus with about 225 in attendance. Those who were unable to attend can purchase a video of the program. Cost is $10.00 per copy plus postage and handling. Contact Irene Segal 973-929-2703 or e-mail: isegal@jhsnjw.org

We like to remind our readers that the JHS brings history to life!

Historical Jewish Cemetery

Shown here is a unique gravestone at Newark’s Grove Street Cemetery, part of the paper titled No Stone Unturned, written by researcher Barbara Krasner, for a paper for her historic preservation class at William Paterson University in Wayne, NJ. She reveals details about how and when the cemetery was founded and who, among the more than 10,000 Jews, are buried there. She suggests resolutions for the long standing problems of how to preserve the existing gravestones and tombstones. Her paper can be found at: //www.jhs-nj.org.

Forgosh Speaks, continued from page 3

one. It meant you could participate in a minyan.” So if teenage boys happened to be passing by a synagogue at prayer time, they might “find themselves ‘shanghaied’ off the streets for hours” by men who needed them to “make a minyan.” Asking for audience participation, Forgosh projected the words of an “unofficial” high school cheer immortalized by Roth in his Newark-based 1969 novel Portnoy’s Complaint.

Many joined in to chant: “Ike, Mikey, Jake, and Sam; we’re the boys who eat no ham. We play football, baseball, soccer. We keep matzah in our locker.”

Weequahic High School “was a neighborhood school,” said Forgosh. But for those who lived outside the area, there was one way they would be allowed to transfer — by expressing a desire to learn Hebrew in the only Newark high school where it was taught.

Judaic tradition on education

Forgosh cited statistics showing that Weequahic High School between the 1930s and ’60s — when the percentage of Jewish students was “almost 100 percent” — could boast that 90 percent of its graduates went on to institutions of higher learning and that it led the country in the number of graduates from a single school who earned doctorate degrees. She said such figures “reflected the importance that Judaic tradition places on education. Homes at this time might not have had televisions, but they always had books.”

(Her talk was followed by a 30-minute period when audience members arose to speak of their personal experiences growing up in the Weequahic section.)

Continue on page 6
By Jill Hershborin
JH Society Archivist

Collections and acquisitions
- A scrapbook of photographs, documents and letters of Sidney Leiwant generously donated by his daughter, Amy Jayson.
- Susan Lubow donated her extensive genealogical work on the Abeles/Koss families.
- Lois Larkey donated photographs and newspaper clippings related to her family’s businesses, the Larkey Department Stores.
- Mel and Marian Braverman added to the Weequahic High School collection with a championship football from the 1958 win against Hillside High, a Braves jacket and a Starlet jacket and sweater.
- We are looking to fill some gaps in our Weequahic High School yearbook collection. If you have yearbooks that you’d like to donate from 1937, 1938 and 1939 please contact us!

Research
- Federation sought items including a list of synagogue collections in our archive.
- Federation Executive VP, Dov Ben-Shimon sought historic fundraising publicity brochures and flyers to reproduce for a new lounge room in the Federation offices. (We found a UJA cartoon from 1948!)
- Many researchers contact JHSNJ as a first stop in their quest.

Exhibits and presentations
- We have had 2 exhibits in our showcases since the last newsletter. From December to February the showcases featured an exhibit titled “Musically MetroWest” and highlighted some examples of how our community has provided musical events to the public. There were photographs and documents from school and synagogue programs as well as examples from the beloved “Bits of Bits” program from the Y on High Street. Also included in this exhibit were song sheets, musical scores and advertisements.
- The most recent exhibit is titled “Handshakes and Hugs: Politicians, World Leaders and the MetroWest Community.” Displayed are photographs from local, state, national and world leaders with ties to our community. Included is a telegram inviting former Federation President Sidney Leiwant to observe the signing of the historic Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979. There are also photographs and a state dinner menu from this important day. Please come by and visit the exhibit.
- Recently the JHS was invited to make a presentation to the Iris Teen Tzedakah Advisors group. We sought funding to help purchase proper preservation boxes for the “Dolls of Democracy” collection. The dolls are replicas of famous leaders and were used in a program over 60 years ago developed by B’nai B’rith Women to teach school children about tolerance and equality. Today these dolls are still being used for display by JHS and have traveled as far as a 3rd grade classroom in Virginia.

Other
- Please visit our website http://www.jhs-nj.org/tributes.html and click on our new tribute page to make a donation to the JHS or a contribution in someone’s honor or memory.
- Come to our facebook page where “every day is Throwback Thursday!” www.facebook.com/JewishHistoricalSocietyNJ
- 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 only to get distracted by other fascinating items! ✨

LOUIS BAMBERGER: A Prelude to His Biography

Louis Bamberger, not by his -

We are betting that the majority of you reading this newsletter are familiar with the name, Louis Bamberger. You know – the man who was the owner of the great, glamorous L. Bamberger & Co. department store located in downtown Newark — the man who built his business into the sixth largest such store in the country, who had a workforce of 5,000 employees (maybe you, a relative, or friend worked at Bambergers), and became a multimillionaire by middle age that permitted him to join the elite circle of German Jews who owned Macy’s, Bloomingdale’s, and Filene’s. But do you know why nothing has ever been written about Bamberger — not by historians or economists who write about the influence of department stores in America and how, despite his vast wealth and local prominence, managed to keep out of the limelight so much so that many didn’t believe he actually existed?

Newark’s greatest Philanthropist

And yet his achievements are manifold. He was a merchandising genius who established the culture of consumption in 20th century America. His generous giving, both within the Jewish community and beyond it, created institutions that stand today. If you are a radio listener you should know that station WOR located on 710 on your radio dial was started by Bamberger; that the first YM-YWHA, affectionately known as the High Street Y, was founded and paid for by him; that there would be no Newark Beth Israel Medical Center were it not for him and his partner, Felix Fuld; or that he was the sole donor of the Newark Museum; and toward the end of his career financed and directed the creation of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, which led to a friendship with Albert Einstein.

Finally a history of Bamberger

If you are among the individuals who recall meeting “under Bamberger’s clock” then for you, there is a full-length biography about Louis Bamberger titled “Louis Bamberger: Department Store Innovator and Philanthropist” to be released in September 2016. The publisher is Brandeis University Press. The author is JHS’ Executive Director, Linda Forgosh. For information about the Society’s plans for an exhibit featuring Bamberger photographs, memorabilia, and artifacts or if you have Bamberger items that you are willing to include in such an exhibit please contact Linda Forgosh 973-929-2994 or e-mail: lforgosh@jfegmu.org ✨
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Calendar of Events

Tuesday, May 24, 2016 • Time: 6:30 to 9:30 pm
LASTING IMPRESSIONS GALA
Honoring Robert Cowen Jr.
Place: Crystal Plaza, Livingston, NJ
Featuring Glatt Kosher Extended hors d’oeuvres,+ dessert and open bar.
Couvert is $250pp. Reservations: Irene Segal @ 973-929-2703

Friday, June 3, 2016 • Time: 11:30 am
JHS Intergenerational Program Presentation
Speaker: Linda Forgosh, JHS Exec. Director
Place: Daughters of Israel Geriatric Center, West Orange, NJ

Tuesday, June 14, 2016 • Time: 7:00 pm
JHSNJ Annual Membership Meeting
Speaker: Elaine Freed Lindenblatt
Author of “Stop at the Red Apple”— the account of Lindenblatt’s father’s
50-year restaurant the Red Apple Rest, located on NY Route 17 midway
between NYC and the Catskill Mountain vacation mecca.
All Welcome – Free Admission

Hats Off To continued from page 4
tirement to Renewal/Center for Change. He authored “Power Writing,” a training course for executives in the US, Europe, and Asia, numerous articles on his war experiences and, as an ASCAP member, popular music including music and lyrics for the official album of the Bat Masterson television program.

Distinguished WWII Veteran
A European Theater combat veteran of World War II, he was an escaped prisoner of war/slave laborer and received the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, three Campaign bronze battle stars and the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster for ground combat. He speaks frequently to schools and organizations about Nazi atrocities during his experiences in slave labor and appeared in numerous television interviews. His life story is preserved in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

Shirley passed away in 2015. Bob has a daughter Wendy B. Max, son-in-law Robert Siegel and a son, Douglas M. Max along with five grandsons, Tayson, Kyler, Zarek, Xander and Emerson. So here’s a huge Yasher Koach to Bob for his outstanding support for our society as well as all he has accomplished for the Jewish community and beyond. ♦♦