



Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association NEWSLETTER

Volume XXII, Number 2

August, 2009

Presidents Message

By David H. Leach

This is my first president's message to the general membership. With it, I seek your help. The Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have met and outlined a number of initiatives. There will be a number of new and revived committees, outlined elsewhere in this newsletter. These committees are open to all members.

We will be exploring a number of partnerships to make our resources more available to the community. In the Fall, we are partnering with the Rhode Island Historical Society on a genealogy program and hoping to plan a program for the BJE's annual Renaissance evening, topic to be announced. These will be evening programs rather than Sunday afternoon. We may explore field trips as have been done in the past. The traditional Fall meeting and Spring Annual Meeting will still be on Sunday afternoon. Also, the mid winter Florida meeting will remain the same for now. We will be looking for sponsors and at charging a small amount for those non-members who wish to attend.

I will be asking the membership committee to look at ways to preserve our loyal membership while also reaching out to serve others who may be potential members. They will also look at ways to encourage donations for tributes and memorials.

If you have an interest in acquisitions and collecting our history, be sure to let your friends and relatives know that when they are cleaning out great aunt Esther's attic, keep us in mind. The collections committee will be coming up with a list of the types of materials we are looking for. If in doubt, say yes, then call Anne in the office.

Another major initiative will be the use of technology to preserve and disseminate our resources. If you have an interest in scanning documents and digitizing photographs to save on CD or DVD, let us know. The same goes for cassette tapes that need to be preserved by transferring them to CD.

Our database management needs to be improved so we can make better use of the information we have about members, donations and gifts received. Our website needs to be made more useful and interactive. I would love to see on the website a city and state map with overlays of historical Jewish sites such as shuls, neighborhoods and stores long gone. Maybe some high school kids would be interested in learning where their great grandparents lived and worked and prayed? Wouldn't it be great to have a college intern working with Anne? How about more space to increase, store and display our resources? There I go being a *lufmensch* again.

If you have ideas about programs, an interest in educating others about our history, collecting and preserving that history, or an interest in the technological side of things, we need you.

Please feel free to contact me at dhl196@aol.com with suggestions or your concerns. Contact Anne Sherman at rjha@aol.com if you wish to join a committee. Also, I encourage all of you who have email addresses to send them to Anne at rjha@aol.com so that we may move closer to an electronic newsletter and meeting announcements. It will save money and get information out more quickly. Who knows, maybe there is a Facebook page in our future?

IN OUR OFFICE AND ARCHIVES

By Anne Sherman

The office continues to be very busy this summer. Requests for information from all over the world are coming in. From Germany came an inquiry about Felix Bertrand David, who was a fencing instructor at Brown in 1891; from Australia, a request for the article on Congregation Sons of Zion, because his great grandfather was Reb Joseph Rabinowitz, who was buried at Moshassuck Cemetery in 1893; and two from Ontario both asking the article on Myer Benjamin of Newport. Two inquiries came from California and one from Wisconsin. I was even asked for recipes from the Miriam Hospital Cookbook "Simply Delicious."

Rabbi Saul Landa from New Jersey is writing a book about the Orthodox communities in the United States. He came into the office looking for old photos of the Providence and Newport Orthodox communities that depict learning and life cycles. He was thrilled at all the material we had. Jerry Foster spoke with Rabbi Landa about some of the history of the South Providence and the North End communities as well as providing background for photos he chose.

Denis Roch from the Pawtuxet Valley Historical Society called to say he found photographs from West Warwick that he thought might interest us. They were pictures of Congregation Avavath Sholom and Jewish owned stores in downtown West Warwick. He also sent the obituaries of David Frank and Max Margolis, important merchants of the Arctic community. Pages from the Pawtuxet Valley Directories dating back to 1894 with the names of Hirschfield and Shapiro were included along with Jewish store ads from the West Warwick City Directories. Mr. Roch has given us valuable information on West Warwick and has promised to continue looking for material.

Some of the other acquisitions received: Paul Nisson sent pictures he found at his father's home of his aunt and uncle, Seebert and Bonnie Goldowsky; from Linda and Jack Winkelman, the 1927 yearbook from Providence Commercial High School; from Rosanne Litchman, the Hyman Family Tree, and a poem that she wrote while working on it; from the estate of Celia Baker, 3 photos of the laying of the cornerstone of Temple Beth David in 1945, from Stephen Brown the autobiography of Rear Admiral Rabbi William Kloner, who grew up in Providence; from Irma Silverman, information and a photo of her great uncle Benjamin Levin.

Murray Gereboff donated the wedding book of Caroline and Maurice Gereboff, the marriage license of Meyer and Sara Gereboff, and the wills of Meyer and Sara Gereboff. Also included a bill from Max Sugarman dated 1954 for \$375 that included the cost of the casket. Stephen Gross found in the State Archives incorporation papers from The Russian Congregation of Israel dated 1886 and gave us a photocopy.

We have acquired two new books. Nancy Bachrach wrote "The Center of the Universe," a book about her family. Her great grandfather was Rabbi David Bachrach of Ahavath Sholom (The Howell Street Shul) from 1903 – 1926 and her grandfather the famous boxer "Young Montreal" Billingskoff. Ms Bachrach spent many hours in this office doing research.

We also have a copy of the Miriam Hospital's new cookbook "More Simply Delicious." We are now members of the Rhode Island Genealogical Society and will receive their journal four times a year.

We want to thank Florence Markoff for her interesting and informative oral histories. She has given us her latest interview with Rabbi James Rosenberg.

I had a very interesting experience at Congregation Shaare Zedek. I received an email from Lenny Moise from Temple Beth Shalom regarding the sale of Shaare Zedek. If RIJHA was interested in going through the synagogue from historical material, he would open it for us. I had been there two years ago and found very little material, but this was our last chance. David Leach, my husband Jerry and I went over to the building and went through every drawer, file cabinet and the safe. We found a treasurer chest of material. I have not gone through most of the material yet, but some of what we found included membership lists, cemetery plots laid out by the four synagogues with names, yahrzeit records, seating plans for the sanctuary and minute books from board of director meetings. One of the most fascinating pieces of paper was the original contract with Rabbi Abraham Chill. I also received phone calls regarding what is going to happen to the rest of the pews, the stain glass windows and some of the plaques. Lois Cohen found the "The Golden Book" and brought it into the office. Her son Mitchell took pictures of the synagogue. We received a call from Israel in regard to the building and the Yahrzeit plaques. The building has been sold to the South Providence Help Center.

URI Hillel

The Robert L. Crothers Library on the URI Kingston campus is planning an exhibit on the history of URI Hillel to be displayed in Jan/Feb 2010 in conjunction with the opening of the Norman M Fain Center at URI. Anyone with photographs, articles, memorabilia or reminiscences of URI Hillel, please contact Amy Olson, amyolson@mail.uri.edu or 401-874-2740

New Printer

The office received a new speedy laser printer in honor of George Levine's special birthday. We want to thank his daughters, Marsha and Patricia and their families for this gift.

New Members

Rayna and Michael Botvin, Irene Backalenick, Dr. Ronald Florence

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NEWSLETTER

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RIJHA Committees

The executive committee has decided that to better carry out our mission, we will be reconstituting and starting several new committees to carry out the goals of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. The committees are described below. If you are interested in joining any of the committees, please call or email Anne at 331-1360 or rjhist@aol.com or David at dhl196@aol.com. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of us. We hope you will join one of the committees and help move the Association forward.

Membership: Acquiring new members and retaining existing members. Working with other committees to determine what types of activities or services will attract new members. The committee will also work to increase donations made in honor or in memory of persons or events.

Programs: To investigate potential programs such as genealogical training, field trips, speakers at board meetings, or other events beyond the Fall and annual meeting and anything else that might educate and engage present members and increase membership.

Education: Working with other organizations or partners to develop program educational material, teacher guides, or pamphlets using our resources to reach other groups such as Hebrew schools, Day schools, Midrasha, adult learning programs or the general community.

Technology: To work with other committees to upgrade our ability to better preserve, and communicate our collection through the use of a scanner, CD's, DVD's, email newsletters, pamphlets and a more comprehensive database and website.

Collection: To work with other committees to assess our collection, preserve it, archive it and increase it by acquisition while making use of technology to make it more easily available and accessible to scholars, researchers and the general public.

WWII Poster Exhibition in Attleboro

By Michael Fink

The moment I stepped inside the former London's Department Store in Attleboro (now an art museum) and saw

the posters on the red, white, and blue walls, I was instantly moved. And transported, transfixed, into another time. My time, and perhaps your time too. These historic American posters of the era 1942 to 1945 combine pure poetry with urgent "propaganda," if you choose to label them as such.

But the purpose of propaganda is to insist upon the idea of the super-human, the idealized hero of strength and dominance. That is not what these marvelous posters suggest. They told us that our fighting men (and women) were vulnerable, and dependent upon our support. Their survival required all our strengths and sacrifices. If they were going to protect us, we, in turn, had to protect them.

The collection of superb and carefully preserved posters came to us via the London's, David and Toby, Providence residents with roots in Attleboro. "This is my favorite of them all," said David, pointing to a dagger thrust through a Bible, "because it showed the enemy as the foe of all our humane values, the four freedoms embodied within all our religions." He went on to promise that he would do his best to leave the rarest and finest of them to museums that might cherish them. "My wife Toby did all the research to unearth the true names of the artists who created this world of ideas and values."

Young people at the opening were surprised by the emphasis on what are now called environmental priorities. We were urged not to waste food, gas, any necessities or resources that might be useful to our men and women abroad. Others were touched by the sense of unity among all Americans, opposed to the cruelty of fascist forces upon the globe. These posters are not crude. Their patriotism is not gross. Perhaps the Great Depression had taught us sympathy for others, respect for basic good will, and the will to counter the shouting and the rhetoric of bullies.

There was a real perception, a happy sharing both of actual and of virtual memory, among the lively crowd, on a chilly evening, a touching gathering around the bygone illustrations of Norman Rockwell, who sketched the American concept of the famous Four Freedoms. From Fear and From Want. Of Religion and Of Speech. It was as tough to declare these ideas as it was to achieve them. There were those even among our allies who couldn't come around to sign them into a platform. Ah, if we could but recapture the rapture of our high hopes for a future that has come, and, perhaps, gone by. Just when we need those hopes all over again.

DONATIONS

IN HONOR OF

Sandra & Stanley Abrams's grandson's Bar Mitzvah
Marcia & Stanley Blacher's special anniversary
Jeanne & George Feldman's special anniversary
Jeanne & George Feldman's 60th anniversary
Dr. Abraham Horvitz
Robert & Betty Kotlen's grandson's wedding
Dr. Richard E. Land's special birthday
Arlene & Melvin Landesberg's 50th anniversary
Cynthia & Milton Levin's new grandchild
Samuel Usher's Bar Mitzvah
Janet & Melvin Zurier receiving VIPS Recognition Award

FROM

Janice & Harold Gadon
Anita & Mike Fine
Anita & Mike Fine
Dorothy Horowitz
Dr. & Mrs. Abraham Saltzman
Janice & Harold Gadon
Reva & Milton Lewis
Linda & Jack Winkelman
Estelle & Jack Fradin
Lee & Robert Krasner
Arlene & Eugene Weinberg

DONATIONS

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Bayla Bender
Susan Leach Deblasio
Honey Silverstein

FROM

Estelle & Jack Fradin
Estelle & Jack Fradin
Estelle & Jack Fradin

IN MEMORY OF

Arline G. Alpert
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Richard Birnbach
Miriam Bosler
Irving Chorney
Donald Cohen
Donald Cohen
Ellen Engle Connor
Freda Dworkis
Morris Feldman
Morris Feldman
Morris Feldman
David Friedman
David Friedman
David Friedman
David Friedman
Larry Friedman
Robert Goldschmidt's brother
Louis Gorodetsky
Louis Gorodetsky
Dr. Carl Jagolinzer
Sherwin Kapstein
Seymour Kirsch

FROM

Sumner Alpert
Sidney Beshunsky
Analie Sandelowski
Susan & Stephen Brown
Beverly & Morris Satloff
Maurice Cohen
Bernice & Gerald Cohen
Maxine Goldin
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Erwin Summer
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Shirley Chernick
Maurice Cohen
Bobbie & Brian Friedman
Erwin Summer
Michael Penn
Michael Penn
Dorothy Horowitz
Beverly & Morris Satloff
Geraldine & Warren Foster
Marion Goldsmith
Adele Espo
Anne & Gerald Sherman

IN MEMORY OF

Samuel & Sally Kravetz
Owen Kwasha
Sadye Logowitz
Leo Marks
Melba Meister

Stephanie Rainey
Stephanie Rainey
Stephanie Rainey

Norman Robinson
Charles Samdperil
Claire Winkelman

Elisabeth Hahn
Ruth Breindel, Eleanor Brown, Susan & Stephen Brown, Maurice Cohen, Geraldine & Warren Foster, Ruth & Herbert Gold, Betsey and George Goodwin, Anne & Gerald Sherman, Connie & Kent Wichman

FROM

Dr. Barry Herman
Adele Espo
Anita & Mike Fine
Adele Espo
Betsey and George Goodwin
Anita & Mike Fine
Maxine Goldin
Betsey and George Goodwin
Natalie Robinson
Ruth Samdperil
Linda & Jack Winkelman

ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

Norman and Rosalie Fain Family Foundation, Dr. & Mrs. Alvin Glicksman, Dorothy & Edwin Gozonsky, Alexander Hanna, Erma Leavitt, Steven Rosenwasser, Selma & Milton Stanzler, Harold Winstead Charitable Foundation Trust

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