



RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope you're staying well and coping with the stresses of COVID-19. It's been quite a time. Let me call your attention to Executive Director Kate-Lynne Laroche's newsletter, which describes the extraordinary success with which she and Office Manager Jaime Walden kept RIJHA going during the months that the Alliance building was under "lockdown."

Let me also take this opportunity to update you on several initiatives that RIJHA has successfully undertaken under Kate-Lynne's highly professional oversight. The digitizing of our collection of Jewish newspapers has been successfully completed. We are now in the process of digitizing other records in our archives, along with undertaking a much-needed improvement in cataloging our holdings. Equally necessary in the past year, Kate-Lynne has overseen the redesign and maintenance of our website. The site is now more user friendly, and is accessible from anywhere in the world. Updating our website so that it is easy to navigate, appealing to look at, and contains the digital versions of the more used collections allows for our increased visibility everywhere. Crucial to the success of this project is our Office Manager, Jaime Walden, who from the moment she joined us in June of 2019 has contributed so greatly to the progress of our ongoing projects.

I consider raising the visibility and prominence of the RIJHA to be a priority, and one important Association initiative is to expand our presence out-of-state. I often point out that Tennessee has more Jews than Rhode Island. Besides being a mildly interesting factoid, it reflects the need for the RIJHA, if it is to become a top-tier organization, to connect to Jewish history and culture in neighboring states with much greater Jewish populations and resources, and with rich and vibrant Jewish histories and cultures that overlap with ours. As such, Kate-Lynne has been a part of an initiative to regionalize the Jewish historical and community resources in New England with the New England Jewish History Collaborative. This group of organizations has representation from every state in New England and provides another way for our history and resources to be shared with a larger audience.

Another of our projects, now nearing successful completion, is the Jewish Rhode Tour, a project taken on in cooperation with the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. We plan to launch later this fall.

With thanks for your membership and support, and with best wishes for a happy and healthy new year,

Mel Topf
President

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As many of you may know, the RIJHA office and archive was closed on Friday, March 13th due to the stay at home order issued by the state. Thankfully, Jaime and I were fortunate to work from home during our time self-quarantining – thanks to the ability of remoting into our computers in the office – so the RIJHA has continued to plug along through the events of these past several months. The wonderful Dwares JCC maintenance staff allowed Jaime to pick up the mail (from a safe social distance) on a once a week basis beginning in April, and we are now back in the office part time, so we have gotten the gracious donations and membership renewals that you, our faithful members, have sent in. Your contributions to the Association are what allows us to continue our work; we are so grateful for your continued support and patronage to this wonderful institution.

Because visitors are not allowed in the office right now, we have been busy at work making as many digital resources that we have available to you. If you have recently visited our website – www.rijha.org – you may have noticed that we have put up our entire 12,000+ obituary collection that we recently digitized. The obituaries are searchable, so if you'd like to search for a specific name, go to the Collections tab on the website, select Obituaries, and then the letter of the last name of the person you are searching for. Once the PDF document opens, use the search function on your keyboard (Command/CTRL and the "F" key) and type in the name. If the name doesn't come up, we may not have the obituary; you can always contact us and request some assistance if you need it, as there may be other ways of obtaining the obituary.

In addition to the Obituary Collection we have continued to upload all of the Jewish newspapers that we have in our collection to the RI Jewish Newspaper Collection on the website. They can now be found under Collections – Rhode Island Jewish Newspapers Collection. In more continued exciting news, we have digitized both editions of the *Jews of Rhode Island* and they are available for viewing under the Publications portion of our Collections. Making this digital content available to you is not only allowing the RIJHA to fulfill its mission to share Rhode Island Jewish history, but it is helping us to go through our extensive archival collections and to re-examine some of the invaluable lost treasures you and your families have entrusted to us to preserve and protect for nearly 70 years.

This spring we obtained licensing for a digital cataloguing software called PastPerfect, and we have begun entering the data for members and the metadata – the "Who donated this", "What year was it donated", "What shelf does it reside on in the archive" – information that is important in running and maintaining an archive. Cataloguing the entire archive will take quite some time, but we are hoping that once we've entered everything in, that you will be able to access the collections online via finding aids – something entirely new for the Association!

Another completely new project that I've been working on is with the newly established New England Jewish History Collaborative. This is a group of representatives from Jewish organizations all throughout New England, and we have decided to work together to create a resource for all Jews and non-Jews alike by creating a website that shares the historical and community resources from all six New England states, as well as some regional and national organizations. We made it our mission to make this material available in one place to hopefully entice the New England Jewish community to utilize the thousands of resources available to our communities. The website www.nejhc.org will launch in early November, and keynote speaker, Michael Hoberman, will be discussing "What is New England's Jewish experience?". We will send you more information regarding this event in October, so stay tuned!

Some of you may know that last March I decided to continue my education and seek a master's degree in Public History and Archival Management. Since beginning my studies, I've come to learn that the RIJHA still has much in the way of growth to do as an institution of Public History and as an archival repository. The underlying factor that pushed me to take on such a huge commitment while still giving my family and the RIJHA the time they need, is that I am committed to this organization, and I want to see it thrive. Throughout this journey, I am learning how to care for the precious artifacts in the RIJHA's archival collections, and to better serve you, our members.

With that said, this organization cannot exist without the archival donations and monetary donations from you, our members. As you may recall, we are not sending out Membership Renewals until early December, but we certainly appreciate and welcome donations throughout the rest of the year. We thank you for helping us to continue our mission, and hope you and your families have stayed safe and healthy throughout this global pandemic.

Very truly yours,

Kate-Lynne Laroche
Executive Director

ATTENTION

You may have noticed that our website, www.rijha.org was offline last week. Thanks to the assistance of our wonderful I.T. personnel, we are now back online!

FROM THE OFFICE

Sometimes life throws you an unexpected curve ball, and I suppose we have all been thrown a big one over the last six months. I have been very fortunate to be able to continue working throughout this time. We were very lucky that Kate-Lynne's husband, Derek, was able to set us up to work remotely, giving us access to the office network and all of our files, while the office was closed. While working from home, I was able to upload and fix problems with our online newspapers, keep up with our finances, and check our voicemails and emails daily. All of this was accomplished, while helping three children continue their education on-line.

Over the last couple of weeks, life has returned to "semi-normal" as my two younger children have returned to in-person school and we dropped my oldest off at the University of Maine for his freshman year of college. We were just recently able to get back into the office on a more regular basis, which has allowed me to learn our new database, PastPerfect. The PastPerfect database will allow us to catalog our entire archive collection and track our members and donors better. Best wishes to all for continued health and happiness in the days and weeks to come!

Jaime Walden
Office Manager

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Pictures, pictures, pictures! We have thousands of pictures in the archives; Anne Sherman and Ruth Breindel spent the winter and early spring organizing and making sure we have lots of information in our lengthy photograph index. Some of these pictures go back to the late 1800s, and others are as new as last year, but they are all important for researchers now and in the future. These are pictures of historical importance, showing aspects of Jewish life in Rhode Island. Individuals, groups, businesses and synagogues are all represented. Our next step is to digitize the pictures so that we can put them up on the website for everyone to see and remember. We hope to complete this next project within the next year.

Papers, papers, papers! We have hundreds of boxes of papers in the archive that pertain to Rhode Island Jewish history, and Anne, Ruth and Jaime Walden, our Office Manager, spent a good deal of time with these also. If it's a Jewish business, then we might have time cards, record books, ledgers and pictures. If it's a Jewish organization, whether still active (Hebrew Free Loan Association, Miriam Hospital) or not (RI's chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, Hebrew Home for the Aged) we have information. If it's a temple, whether still vibrant (Temple Sinai, Temple Emanu-El, United Brothers Synagogue, to name only a few) or no longer with us (Anshe Kovno, Howell Street Shul), we have data. Families are represented too – the Fishbeins, the Becks and Temkins and many, many others who had a hand in creating the Jewish community here in our state. However, we only have these items because you, our members, have donated them. We are always looking for more Rhode Island Jewish history; if you have something of historical value that you would like to donate, please contact the office – we want to preserve your family history!

*Please note that we do not take plaques or commemorative items, nor family albums.

Ruth Breindel

RIJHA Past President

DONATIONS, GRANTS, & NEW MEMBERS

GENERAL DONATIONS

Wendy Amblo
David and Susan Bazar
Marcia and Stanley Blacher
Melvyn and Pat Blake
Norman Bolotow
Joseph Chazan
James and Robin Engle
Barbara Feldman
Carl and Jocelyn Feldman
Helen Gates
Thomas Gleckman
The Gertrude M. and Seebert J. Goldowsky Foundation
Ruth Goldstein
Robert Hicks
Betty Jaffe
Jamestown Jewish Community Group
Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Katz
Arnold Kaufman
Ellen J. Kleinman
David and Brenda Korn
Barbara Kritz
Bruce Leach
David Leach
Lowell Lisker and Bertha Lisker
Joan Lorber
Saul Martin
Marilyn Myrow
Jane S. Nelson
Martin and Dianne Newman
Lawrence Page
Joel Plotkin
Marc Carey Port
Nancy and Arnold Rachman
Joan Ress Reeves
Alan Salk
Harold and Ellen Schein
Michael Schwartz
Philip A. Segal Jr.
Anne and Gerald Sherman
Bailey Silechnik
Joan Slafsky

IN MEMORY

Ruth Breindel in memory of Robert Berkelhammer
Lois Cohen in memory Farrel Jaffa
Matthew and Heidi Gabrilowitz in memory of Irving Gabrilowitz
Harold and Janice Gadon in memory of Renee Flink, Alvin Kurzer, and Carol Brooklyn
James Gershman in memory of Dr. Isadore & Helen Gershman
Stuart Goldblatt in memory of Judge Howard Lipsey
Sanford Gorodetsky in memory of PVT. Edward Gorodetsky, US Army
Marcia Hicks in memory of Lillian Hayvis and Meryl Woolf
Patti Kaplan in memory of Jack and Mitzi Feiner
Betty Kotlen in memory of Harvey Snyder, Renee Flink
Ken Linden in memory of his mother, Bessie Lindenbaum
Andrea Finkelstein Losben in memory of Stephen Jay Losben, M.D.
Judith Foster in memory of Alter & Surka Boyman, Beryl & Chaya Segal, and Warren Foster
Dan and Patricia O'Sullivan in memory of Peter Haidu, Ph.D.
Morris and Barbara Schwartz in memory of Alan "Bud" Frank, Banice Bazar, Dottie Lipman, Harvey Snyder, Dr. Jacob Schinzai, and Diane Goodman
Lillian Schwartz in memory of Alan Friedman, Banice Bazar, Helen Ginsberg, and Harold Schwartz
Eugene Weinberg in memory of Irwin Chase

IN HONOR

George Goodwin in honor of Arthur Robbins
Arthur Robbins in honor of George Goodwin
John Romer in honor of Ruth Breindel
The Shack Family in honor of George Goodwin
Harold and Sara Foster in honor of Rabbi Klein's retirement
Judith Foster and Mark Andres in honor of Harold Foster's birthday
James Herstoff in honor of George Goodwin
Sara Levin in honor of Leonard Levin
Jill and James Tobak in honor of Mel Zurier and Dr. George Goodwin
Ronnee Wasserman and Herb Sackett in honor of Joanne Summer's Birthday

GRANTS

Victor and Gussie Baxt Fund
Helene and Bertram Bernhardt Foundation
Bob and Wini Galkin Fund
Edwin S. Soforenko Foundation
Harold A. Winstead Charitable Foundation Trust
Janet and Melvin Zurier Endowment Fund