



# Family Legacies

Linking the past with the present and the future

Jewish Genealogy Society  
of Southern Nevada Inc.

Vol. 5, No. 3 Summer 2002

## Kudos to Toronto

By Marilyn Brenner

Once again the IAJGS annual conference was a success. Thanks to Garry Stein, President of the JGS Toronto, and his conference committees and volunteers, things went smoothly. With concern over Israel and Sept 11th tragedy, security was superb and the conference was comfortable.

New and interesting information was imparted along with lectures for those who are at the beginning of the journey.

Dr. Stephen Morse gave us terrific ways to make our lives less complicated when trying to get information about Ellis Island and the 1930 census. His websites were meant to dry your tears and be pleased with the results. His is a one stop searching tool that is very effective. Unfortunately, the Ellis Island Foundation thought so too and threw Dr. Morse a curved ball. Morse census- <http://home.pacbell.net/spmorse/census>.

There was a four hour beginners workshop given this time by Nancy Arbeiter, a professional genealogist and a member of the JGS Boston, which has become standard for our conferences. This was followed by individual lectures on important topics such as: Passenger Arrival Records; Unique Sources for Jewish Genealogy; Border Changes in Europe; Jewishgen; JRI Poland; Archival Holdings and Databases in the Ukraine and Eastern Europe; Sephardic Genealogy; Digital Imaging; SIG meetings; Researching Jews from Various Countries; Post Batya sources (The Search Bureau for Missing Relatives); early morning Breakfasts with the Experts; and of course the Gala Banquet.

Eight films were shown throughout the week. There were Art & Photography Exhibits at which some of the artists were available. A large vendors room and resource room were also available.

Our congratulations for an excellent conference.

### Did You Miss The Toronto Conference?

If you missed the Toronto Conference you may be interested in audiotapes of the various lectures. To browse the list of audiotapes available for purchase go to [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org). Page down to <Hosted Organizations> Select <IAJGS> Select <Toronto Conference> Select <Audio Tapes> From here you can download and print a list of tapes and order forms. Metro Media taped the sessions. They can be reached at 905-305-8706. An email address for Metro Media is also listed on this page.



## **Guidelines For Publishing Web Pages On The Internet**

*Recommended by the National Genealogical Society, May 2000*

Appreciating that publishing information through Internet web sites and web pages shares many similarities with print publishing, considerate family historians—

- apply a title identifying both the entire web site and the particular group of related pages, similar to a book-and-chapter designation, placing it both at the top of each web browser window using the <TITLE> HTML tag, and in the body of the document, on the opening home or title page and on any index pages.
- explain the purposes and objectives of their web sites, placing the explanation near the top of the title page or including a link from that page to a special page about the reason for the site.
- display a footer at the bottom of each web page which contains the web site title, page title, author's name, author's contact information, date of last revision and a copyright statement.
- provide complete contact information, including at a minimum a name and e-mail address, and preferably some means for long-term contact, like a postal address.
- assist visitors by providing on each page navigational links that lead visitors to other important pages on the web site, or return them to the home page.
- adhere to the NGS “**Standards for Sharing Information with Others**” regarding copyright, attribution, privacy, and the sharing of sensitive information.
- include unambiguous source citations for the research data provided on the site, and if not complete descriptions, offering full citations upon request.
- label photographic and scanned images within the graphic itself, with fuller explanation if required in text adjacent to the graphic.
- identify transcribed, extracted or abstracted data as such, and provide appropriate source citations.
- include identifying dates and locations when providing information about specific surnames or individuals.
- respect the rights of others who do not wish information about themselves to be published, referenced or linked on a web site.
- provide web site access to all potential visitors by avoiding enhanced technical capabilities that may not be available to all users, remembering that not all computers are created equal.
- avoid using features that distract from the productive use of the web site, like ones that reduce legibility, strain the eyes, dazzle the vision, or otherwise detract from the visitor's ability to easily read, study, comprehend or print the online publication.
- maintain their online publications at frequent intervals, changing the content to keep the information current, the links valid, and the web site in good working order.
- preserve and archive for future researchers their online publications and communications that have lasting value, using both electronic and paper duplication.

©2000, 2001 by National Genealogical Society. Permission is granted to copy or publish this material provided it is reproduced in its entirety, including this notice.



## **History of Las Vegas Jews links past and present**

By Michael Green

In the movie "Bugsy," Warren Beatty stops his car, strolls around the desert, and declares that this is the place. For many Americans, that marks the beginning of Las Vegas history: a vision by a Jewish gangster.

The problem is, it isn't true. For one thing, the Jewish mobster who envisioned Las Vegas as a gambling mecca was Meyer Lansky, although his friend Benjamin Siegel agreed and helped make it happen. For another, Las Vegas already had become a force in the gaming industry before Lansky and Siegel noticed the city. They simply built – and built well—upon those who came before them.

Lansky and Siegel weren't even the first Jews to affect Las Vegas. True, the arrival of organized crime figures in Las Vegas in the 1940s marked a turning point in the city's history. Indeed, World War II changed the West by introducing a variety of military and defense projects to the region, attracting new residents as part of a boom that continues to the present.

Some of those new residents came to Las Vegas for other reasons. They were illegal gamblers, driven out of their old haunts by reform politicians. Las Vegas offered them a chance for respectability, or at least to ply their trade where it was legal.

Many of these new arrivals were the Jewish gamblers who built the Strip and downtown, from Moe Dalitz at the Desert Inn to Davie Berman and Willie Alderman at the El Cortez, the Las Vegas Club, the Flamingo, and the Riviera. They also helped build up a Jewish community. Not until World War II would there be a temple in Las Vegas; another thirty years passed before there would be a second one. But the Jewish community already was thriving, even if it was small, and its story needs to be told.

How to tell it – how to figure out who com-

prised the early Las Vegas Jewish community – is difficult. Early newspapers mention Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, and Mormon religious services, but no temple, no rabbi, no community center. Twenty families formed the Sons and Daughters of Israel in 1932. They met in the back of a store to teach their children the Torah. That was the first local Jewish organization.

Before World War II, Las Vegas was a small town. It's the only city founded in the twentieth century to reach a population of one million by the twenty-first century. Thus, while this community has a history that goes back a long way, the history of its population is largely recent.

The first settlement was religious in origin: Mormon missionaries sent from Salt Lake City in 1855. Their fort, now a state park at Las Vegas Boulevard North and Washington, survived only three years due to internal disputes, problems with neighboring Paiutes, and the heat. For the rest of the century, the valley's only occupants were the Paiutes, a few miners, and farm and ranch families and their employees.

In 1902, a Montana copper baron, Senator William A. Clark, bought 800 acres of land for \$55,000 for a railroad he planned to build between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. He and the Union Pacific later became partners in the endeavor. The tracks opened on May 1, 1905, and two weeks later, Clark's representatives held an auction of his downtown land.

By 1910, the local population had just topped 900. Of that number, about a dozen traced their ancestry to Central or Eastern Europe, but the federal census tells nothing about their religious leanings. Six Rumanians camped at the Las Vegas Ranch; the father was a laborer who did odd jobs and the mother was a fortune teller. But nothing in the census or in newspaper accounts suggests that they were Jewish.

*(Continued on page 4)*



## **History of Las Vegas Jews links past and present**

*(Continued from page 3)*

The most prominent pioneer Jewish resident of Las Vegas was merchant Adolph Levy. He was born in Prussian Poland in 1858, immigrated to the United States and was naturalized in 1883. He married in 1895; his wife Rose had been naturalized three years before. Their daughter Pauline was born in Illinois.

The front page of the weekly *Las Vegas Age* for March 10, 1906, features Levy's advertisement of his Fremont Street store. He trumpeted the demand "for a different class of merchant, one who knows the business as an engineer knows his engine, and with him comes the live and let live prices and up to date store... I will ask the hearty cooperation of everyone in Las Vegas and adjoining territory in my new enterprise and I will give you the most up to date store in the State of Nevada, where you can buy everything you want, less the high price attachments, and receive the very best of service." He also announced, "I have great faith in the future of Las Vegas and have staked my all here, and expect to see a nice thriving city of six thousand to eight thousand people here in a few years."

Levy remained committed to the city's growth. He staked several mining claims in the Charleston range, near the Lucky Strike lead mine, and visited such nearby camps as Greenwater and Johnnie, looking for investments. In 1910, he sold his store to partner B.F. Boggs, but kept assorted clothing and furnishings from the store, as well as a warehouse.

Levy was far from finished with Las Vegas. He opened a lumber yard on Fremont between Second (now Casino Center) and Third in partnership with Peter Buol, Las Vegas's first mayor. He put up a two-story building on Fremont, complete with a store and meeting hall. He added more land next to it in 1913, with the *Age* reporting, "In referring to business conditions, Mr. Levy is emphatic in saying that there is no little city in the west in a more healthful and prosperous business condition than Las Vegas." He remained an investor despite a problem that often afflicted the hot and dusty railroad town: twice fires destroyed his buildings.

By then, Levy had moved with his wife and daughter to Los Angeles, while he continued in real estate while retaining his Las Vegas holdings.

Why he moved is uncertain, but Southern California had larger schools and a thriving Jewish community. When he died in 1936, the *Age* saluted him as, "...a familiar figure on our streets as he made frequent visits here," and noted that funeral services were at Home of Peace mausoleum chapel in Los Angeles.

The *Age* didn't mention whether Levy was Jewish; no such references have been found. Nor did it report that Home of Peace, located on Whittier Boulevard since 1902, is an exclusively Jewish funeral home; that information came for an internet search and a phone call.

While Levy lived in Las Vegas or invested from afar, other Jews moved here. E.A. "Ike" Bloom arrived shortly after the railroad auction, moved north to Rhyolite, returned briefly, then headed to Beatty. Other names like Berg and Hoffman suggest the possibility of a Jewish background, but nothing definite.

By the time Levy died, Las Vegas had reached the population he predicted in 1906. The Jewish community had grown, too, numbering more than twenty families, comprising perhaps one hundred residents by the mid-1930s.

Several of these newer arrivals went into the retail clothing business in one form or another: The Hechts, Sam Lipkin, and Samuel Friedan owned downtown stores – Friedman's clothing store now is the site of the Las Vegas Club – while Fanny Soss ran a dress shop whose wares are now part of the Clark County Museum in Henderson.

Louis Wiener Sr., opened a tailor's shop on Fremont Street. Born in Poland, he came to the U.S. at age nine and lived in New York and Pittsburgh before moving to Las Vegas. Why he moved here is a crucial part of Jewish history: relatives preceded him, drawn by the opportunities offered by a town growing due to federal plans to dam the Colorado River, while the rest of the county slid into the Depression.

*continued on page 5*



## History of Las Vegas Jews links past to present

*(Continued from page 4)*

chised music boxes and slot

His wife Kitty's niece was Sallie Gordon. She and her husband, Mike, came to Las Vegas about the same time and pursued several businesses. They owned liquor and grocery stores, and Mike Gordon worked as a postman, eventually becoming a Democratic party official and a director of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce. She also had the distinction of giving birth to the first Jewish baby born in Las Vegas, their daughter Roberta.

Yet others have suggested that someone else deserves this distinction. The 1920 census lists a Goldring family that reportedly sold kosher food and put up in their store a picture of a Jewish baby born in the early 1920s.

What makes that debate all the more interesting is that newspaper indices refer to Ira Goldring, a businessman who owned Desert Construction and is the namesake of a street just west of downtown. Goldring's daughter married the son of attorney Abraham J. Schur, who relocated to Las Vegas in the late 1920s — and was Sallie Gordon's father. Schur practiced law, consulted for several businesses, and invested in construction and other enterprises.

In keeping with the tradition of investing in several different businesses, the Mack brothers became key economic players in Las Vegas during the 1930s. While Louis and Harry Mack were successful businessmen, their brother Nate and his son Jerome did much to shape the city's history.

Nate Mack brought his family to Las Vegas in 1929 and opened a haberdashery. He moved to Boulder City, where he ran a restaurant, a towing service and a wrecking yard, and sold tires and batteries to the builders of Hoover Dam. By his death in 1965, he had owned salvage yards, towing services, mines, hotels, casinos, and banks. He bought property from the Union Pacific, carried freight, dealt in produce, and franchised music boxes and slot machines. He bought Friedman's clothing

store. He opened liquor stores and bars, and owned all or part of the Jackpot, the Eldorado, and the Flamingo.

Jerry Mack followed in his father's footsteps. Nate and Jerry Mack were principal figures in Bank of Las Vegas with, among others, Parry Thomas. The first bank to make loans to casino owners, it later merged into Valley Bank and Bank of America. The partnership between Thomas and Jerry Mack led to numerous hotel and land investments, and such community involvement helping start United Way and build up UNLV; their names adorn UNLV's sports arena.

One of the Runnin Rebels who played basketball there was H. Waldman, a descendant of an early Jewish family. One of the big social events to start 1935 in Las Vegas was the marriage of Herbert Waldman to Kathryn Wiener; her brother, Louis, Jr., was best man. Louis Wiener, Jr., went on to practice law — representing, among other businesses, the Flamingo, co-owned by Nate Mack.

This interconnectedness links Las Vegas Jewish history to that of other Jewish communities — indeed, many ethnic groups — across the country. Many Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe sought out relatives in eastern cities when they crossed the Atlantic, and, in turn, welcomed more relatives and friends. The need to start over economically, the quest for the familiar and anti-semitism—all bred the growth of ethnic neighborhoods around the country.

That was true in Nevada. It happened in late nineteenth-century Eureka, a mining camp. It happened in Carson City: John Marschall, a UNR professor writing a history of Nevada Jewry — and a frequent visitor to Las Vegas for research, interviews, and speeches — found that Jews from Prussian Poland congregated in one neighborhood.

For Jews in Las Vegas to urge others to join them was nothing unusual. Nor was it unusual that few cases of anti-semitism appeared.

*Continued on page 6*



## **History of Las Vegas Jews links past and present**

*(Continued from page 5)*

For one thing, the population was small; while it wasn't literally true that everyone in Las Vegas knew everyone else, it was almost true. Jerry Mack remembered, "When I was a young boy growing up in Las Vegas and Boulder City in the early 30s, we were still feeling the effects of the Depression.... The only entertainment in town was the Mormon Church, the Methodist Church, and the Boy Scouts and Sea Scouts. I joined them all .... I never felt any anti-Semitism, bigotry, or prejudice. Las Vegas was a melting pot and we were all out here surviving together."

That made Las Vegas similar to other western cities. But what was true of Las Vegas in the 1930s and 40s had been true in places like Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, and Denver, as well as more ephemeral mining camps, years before — because Las Vegas started developing later.

Historians of western Jews found general acceptance of Jews as good citizens, working like everyone else to build a community. In several areas, they became part of the political and financial elite, without any overt anti-semitism.

Jews were slow to move to Las Vegas in great numbers. Citing the paucity of southern and eastern Europeans in the 1910 census, Eugene Moehring, author of *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, the leading scholarly study of Las Vegas, wrote, "Obviously, Las Vegas's early railroad economy, combined with the areas lack of substantial farming, mining, and smelting activity discouraged the migration of these groups."

Historically Jews have tended to cluster in towns or cities, respect formal education, and engage in trade. Las Vegas was a small town with few schools, and no college classes until the 1950s.

But with the wartime and postwar boom, the Sons and Daughter of Israel evolved into a Jewish community center and Temple Beth Sholom at 13th

and Carson in the mid-1940s. From Gus Greenbaum and Moe Dalitz to Steve Wynn and Sheldon Adelson, Jews have been crucial to the growth of the Strip. From A.J. Schur's unsuccessful early campaigning for justice of the peace to the successful legal careers of Wiener, Sam Lionel, and Justice David Zenoff, and officeholders like Mayor Oscar Goodman and Representative Shelley Berkley, Jews have been key figures in local law and politics.

Today, the Las Vegas Jewish community is large and vibrant—at about 80,000, perhaps five percent of the population. They have come a long way from the twenty families who formed the Sons and Daughters of Israel, but they continue to live out Nate Mack's words: "This is the town that gave me my opportunity, and this is the town I must repay."

*Michael Green is a professor of history at CCSN and is beginning work on a history of Las Vegas Jews. He may be contacted by e-mail at [greenm1@nevada.edu](mailto:greenm1@nevada.edu).*

*This article first appeared in the Jewish Reporter, March 22, 2002 and is reprinted here with permission of Michael Green and the Jewish Reporter.*

### **New In Our Library**

JGSN Librarian, Janet Farino ([janfar@wizard.com](mailto:janfar@wizard.com)) has the following cassettes donated by Mary and Barry Barkan ready to loan out to members:

Jewish Resources in St. Louis—Sylvia Jaffee 1999  
The Khazars, Our Ancestors—Hal Bookbinder 2001  
How To Document Victims and Locate Survivors of the Holocaust—Gary Mokotoff  
Jewish Genealogy in the Greater Philadelphia Area—Leonard Markowitz  
Allyah Bet: The Clandestine Immigration to Palestine 1938-1948—Paul H. Silverstone



## IAJGS Achievement Awards

Annually since 1998, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) has issued achievement awards to recognize outstanding individual and organizational contributions to Jewish Genealogy. Potential awardees are nominated by one or more of the 70+ IAJGS member societies, and determined by a committee appointed by the IAJGS Board of Directors

The four awards granted were:

The IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award, which is to be presented to a living individual for outstanding contributions of major significance and benefit to Jewish genealogy. This year's award was made to Stanley Diamond.

The IAJGS Outstanding Contribution Award, which is to be presented to a person, persons or organization in recognition of a contribution via the Internet, print, or electronic product. This year's award was made to JewishGen for its Yizkor Book Project. Susan King, President of JewishGen and Joyce Field, Yizkor Book Project Manager accepted the award on behalf of JewishGen.

The IAJGS Outstanding Programming or Project Award, which is to be presented to a person, persons or organization either in recognition of a single program or series of programs, or in recognition of a single project or series of projects. This year's award was made to the JGS of Ottawa, Canada for its Chernivtsi Cemetery Project. Hymie Reichstein, President of the JGS of Ottawa, Canada accepted the award on behalf of the winner.

The IAJGS Outstanding Publication Award, which is to be presented to an IAJGS Member Organization in recognition of an outstanding resource that has been made available to Jewish Genealogists that furthers their research. This year's award was made to the JGS of Los Angeles, California for RootsKey, its quarterly journal. Hal Bookbinder, President of the IAJGS, and a board member of the JGS of Los Angeles, accepted the award on behalf of the winner.

## Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 Family Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 Individual Membership

Please make checks Payable to JGSSN Inc.

Mail To: JGSSN Inc.

P.O. Box 29342

Las Vegas, NV 89126

JGSSN Inc. membership runs from  
January to December

JGSSN Inc. Information:

Carole Montello at: [carmont7@juno.com](mailto:carmont7@juno.com)

**Family Legacies** is printed four times each year - Summer, Winter, Spring, and Fall. Articles, manuscripts, notable news may be submitted to: Editor Mary Barkan

JGSSN Inc.

P.O. Box 29342

Las Vegas, NV 89126

Queries are printed on a space available basis at a cost of \$2.50 for 50 words, then 25 cents for each additional word, excluding name and address.

JGSSN Inc. does not endorse or recommend any services or product advertised or mentioned in Family Legacies.

Family Legacies is exchanged with those member societies of IAJGS which provide copies to JGSSN Inc. of their newsletter. Subscriptions are \$10.00 per year. Back issues \$3.50 each.

---

**Calendar 2002**  
**JGSSN Inc. Meeting Schedule**  
Sahara West Library 9600 W. Sahara 1pm

**October 20th—Unusual Resources**  
**November 17th— Writing and Publishing**  
**Your Family History**

---

**Officers and Board of Trustees**

President - Carol e Montel I o	Trustees:
Vice-President - Henry Yel I owitz	EI I a PerI a, Janet Farino,
Secretary - Maril yn Hul nick Barkan	Jack Ol iver, Charl otte Showel
Treasurer - Sam Showel	

---

Jewish Genealogy Society of Southern Nevada Inc.  
P.O. Box 29342  
Las Vegas, NV 89126