

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL JERSEY



Fall 2010

NEWSLETTER

Cheshvan/Kislev

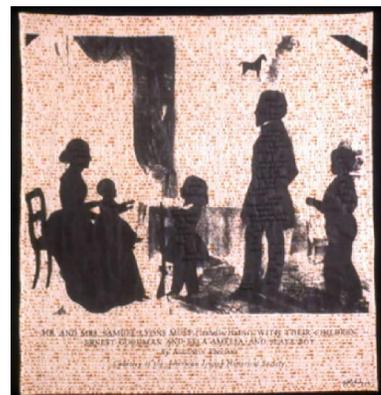
Come Aboard Our Next Jewish Heritage Trip

..... Join with other JHSCJ members on
Tuesday, November 30, 2010

Curator Laura Kruger will lead us through
a dynamic new exhibit at the Hebrew Union College

A STITCH IN JEWISH TIME: PROVOCATIVE TEXTILES

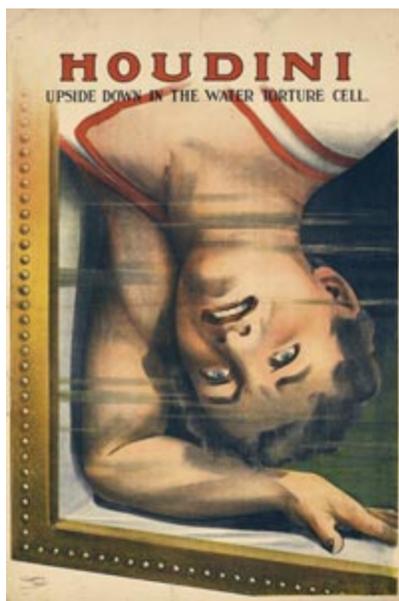
Textiles are the most varied of 'manufactured' goods. They remain to this day objects of high status, decoration, creativity, and spiritual identity. *A Stitch in Jewish Time: Provocative Textiles* explores how exceptional contemporary artists apply their skillful creativity to the ever evolving understanding of Jewish values. Individually addressing issues of memory and reflection, interpretations of history and ritual, and links between the past and present, they delve into aspects of the Holocaust, war, patriotism, celebration, prayer, feminism, and sexuality, frequently through the inclusion of Biblical texts and sometimes challenging traditional forms.



We will then travel uptown to the Jewish Museum to experience

HOUDINI: ART AND MAGIC

This first exhibition in a major American art museum on the master magician and his lasting influence in visual culture, *Houdini: Art and Magic* features magic apparatus, posters, broadsides, period photographs, archival films, and contemporary art work inspired by the great magician and escape artist.



Itinerary: Meet the bus at 8:30am in the Sears parking lot in New Brunswick or Condordia Shopping Center lot at 9:00am. We will travel to the Hebrew Union College in New York City for a curated tour of *A Stitch in Jewish Time: Provocative Textiles*. **IMPORTANT: Please bring a PHOTO ID in order to be admitted to this exhibit.** We continue on to the Jewish Museum, where we will enjoy lunch on our own at the kosher Cafe Weissman, before touring *Houdini: Art and Magic*. We will have extra time to enjoy some of the Jewish Museum's other exhibits before our departure. Arrival back to NJ at approximately 5 p.m. Cost of \$50 members, \$55 non-members includes museum admission and tours. Please fill out the reservation coupon found on page 4 and return by November 22.

 **President's Message**

Over the years, the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County has assisted the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey in numerous ways. You may recall, for example, that when our former building was demolished we found ourselves without adequate office space. The Jewish Federation stepped up and allowed us to use precious space in their small building for a year until our new quarters were completed. As of this year, the Federation considers our Society as one of its local affiliate organizations and has begun providing us with what we hope will be regular funding.

On November 21, the Jewish Federation will be holding its annual Super Sunday fundraising event and needs our help as volunteers at the Federation offices on Old Bridge Turnpike in South River. This is an easy way to both improve the visibility of the JHSCJ and to thank the Federation for supporting us with Federation funding. I urge you to call the Federation at 732-432-7711 and sign up to help out. If you are already signed up to volunteer as a member of another organization or synagogue, please let everyone know that you are also a member of the JHSCJ. We want the community to know that we are here and that our members are contributing to the Jewish community in many ways.

Nathan Reiss

Be sure to visit our website at www.jewishgen.org/jhscj for an expanding list of archival materials to be found in our collection.

Archives Corner

We greatly appreciate the following contributions to our permanent collection:

From Muriel Haber: Newsletters, minutes, and other material from Raritan Valley Chapter of Hadassah

From Elaine Fromkin: much material from the Highland Park Conservative Temple-Congregation Anshe Emeth, Deborah Hospital, and the Central NJ Jewish Home for the Aged

From Renee and Herman Harris: Copies of newsletters published by New Brunswick Post 133 Jewish War Veterans of the United States and the Ladies Auxiliary “In the Interests of Our Men in the Armed Forces from New Brunswick, Highland Park, and its surrounding vicinity”, dated November 1944.

From Thelma Purdy: Ad Journal from the 25th Anniversary of the JCC of Middlesex County, Edison

From Regie Roth: Organizational Records of the Middlesex County Section of the National Council of Jewish Women

From Rachel Weintraub: 2010 Newsletters from Cong. Etz Ahaim; “Inside Torah Academy” newsletter winter 2009 and summer 2010

Deborah N. Cohn

Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey continues to build its collection of original photographs, documents, and artifacts relating to Jewish life in Central New Jersey. We also accept letters, diaries, clothing, and original works of art and music with a local connection. The Jewish Historical Society assumes full responsibility for its long-term care and storage and commits itself to making this material accessible to the community. Please call Debbie Cohn at 732-249-4894 if you have something that you think we might be interested in for our collection.

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Preserving Your Life Story: Part 1

By Dr. Nathan Reiss

About three years ago, I decided to scan some of my family's photos into my computer. Our photo collection was in a disorganized state, and it was difficult, sometimes impossible, to find a particular photo. Many of the photos were unlabeled, and many, particularly those that were in color, had deteriorated in quality. By digitizing the photos – that is, converting the printed pictures into electronic files stored on my computer – I hoped to prevent further decay of the images and be able to use the power of the computer to help me find the photos that I was looking for. As it turned out, by embarking on this task, I inadvertently opened the door to a much broader and richer experience.

My original plan was to scan only the most “important” photos, but I quickly realized that I was spending more time trying to assess pictures' importance than I was spending in actually scanning them. So I scanned them all, except the ones that were clearly useless. The actual scanning time per photo is only about two minutes. I found that the most time-consuming tasks were creating an appropriate title and, in some cases, editing the photo. Ultimately I scanned several thousand photos, and I created a simple filing system that allows me to find any photo and display it almost instantly.

This may sound like a very tedious job, but nothing could be further from the truth. It was exhilarating to revisit these old photos, even more so because I frequently was able to improve them vastly by cropping out extraneous material, adjusting the brightness and contrast, correcting colors, etc. My filing system also works well with digital photos, digital videos, audio recordings, etc. In fact, these newer media are already in an electronic format and do not require the scanning step. I was able to seamlessly add digital photos and videos to the same folders as the older ones. Older audio media (reel-to-reel or cassette tape recordings, for example) can also be transferred into computers as electronic files, as can old home movie films.

When I finished scanning and filing all the photos, videos and audio recordings that I could find, I realized that there were many other items that I could incorporate into these

files, such as news clippings, important or interesting letters, diplomas and other certificates. In fact, almost anything two-dimensional can be scanned. As I scanned many of these items, a realization struck me: the photographic material, when juxtaposed in chronological order with the written documents, could form the basis for a memoir or an autobiography.

Anyone who has ever tried writing something like this knows how much of our past eventually disappears from our memory. In perusing these chronologically-organized files – a hybrid of various media – I became acutely aware of how many important and interesting events in my life I had totally forgotten. Not only did these materials help me to recall these events, but they served as a potent tool for bringing forth even more memories. I can now write a highly-readable autobiography by using a selected portion of these materials as illustrations, and then writing additional contextual material to accompany them. The written part, which is usually the biggest stumbling block for writers of autobiographies, flows naturally from the recollections triggered by the illustrations.

Optical scanners have become commonplace consumer items and can be purchased for less than \$100. I've found that many people I know have scanners but have never used them because they feel that their technical skills are inadequate. In fact, the beginner-level software that is included with most scanners makes it possible for anyone to use a scanner. They generally come packaged with software that allows them to be used with ordinary home computers. They also usually come with photo editing software that allows for some trimming and enhancing of the photos. Most scanners now also include software that allows them to be used, in conjunction with your computer's printer, for photocopying.

In future issues of this Newsletter, I will share my simple system for naming and categorizing files to make them readily accessible. I will also write about basic photo editing, how to use Google to help identify unlabeled travel photos, and other aspects of converting your photos and documents to digital format. So start collecting and scanning your photos. Everyone has a story to tell!

SPEAKERS BUREAU

Members of our Speakers Bureau donate their time and expertise on behalf of the JHSCJ. Thanks to Harvey Hauptman for speaking to the National Council of Jewish Women in July and B'nai B'rith of Concordia in October. David Greene shared his presentation of Stephen Sondheim with the JCC of Middlesex County in September. If you would like a speaker for your organization, call the JHSCJ office, or see our website for more details.

Are you a good person? What a coincidence! We need a few good people to serve on the JHSCJ Board. As a Board member, you will provide direct input into the Society's activities, and exercise your creative abilities in many ways. We know that a huge bank of talent exists within our membership, and we look forward to discussing with you how you can become a more vital part of our Society.

So before you put this Newsletter down, please call Debbie at the JHSCJ office at 732-249-4894, or email her at info.jhscj@gmail.com. Our archives are always growing—your contributions will help our Society grow too.

TRIBUTES

From	To	Occasion
Jerry and Doris Kahn Gunsher	Eileen Kamen	Mazel Tov on her Special Birthday
Betty Saltiel	Irma Rockoff	In memory of Lillian Grant
June and Myron Woller	Irma Rockoff	In memory of Lillian Grant
Irma Rockoff	Ruth Raphaelson & Family	In memory of Arnie
Irma Rockoff	Betty Saltiel & Family	In memory of Sarah Schlesinger
Ruth Marcus Patt	Irma Rockoff	In memory of Lillian Grant
Laura Singer	Irma Rockoff	In memory of Lillian Grant
Adelaide & Terry Brenner	Betty Saltiel	In memory of Sarah Schlesinger

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome these new members:

Leona Kaufman
Rhoda Jacobs

We thank

Donald Sulam
for upgrading to Life Member

We thank these members for renewing at the Patron Level:

Beatrice Beck
Roberta Belsky
Bernice & Eugene Bernstein
Ruth Bickhardt
Irving Bussel
Lawrence & Roberta Fachler
Dr. Norman Reitman

Lawrence Riemer
Eileen Robison
Ruth Rosenthal
Betty Saltiel
Melvin & Selma Shure
Helen Solomon
Bert & Rita Wolf

DONATIONS

We thank the following members for their donations to our Endowment Fund:

Carol Carlson
Francine Derman
Bernice London

Florence Shein
Edna Sherber

RESERVATION FORM for the trip to New York City -- November 30, 2010

Return by November 22 to the JHSCJ, 222 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Enclosed is \$ _____ for _____ reservations (\$50 for members, \$55 for non-members) ***Be sure to remember to bring a PHOTO ID for admission to the A Stitch in Jewish Time exhibit.*** If you are a member of the Jewish Museum, don't forget your membership card for member discounts!

I will meet you at **Sears Lot at 8:30 am** _____ **Concordia Shopping Center Lot at 9:00 am** _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Meaty Legacy

In mid-May 1902, the retail price of kosher meat jumped to 18 cents a pound, up from 12 cents a pound. In the Gilded Age, such dramatic price fluctuations were common as great “trusts”, oligopolies controlled by industrial barons, cornered the markets on commodities such as beef, steel and oil. In response to the rise in beef prices, small retail kosher butchers refused to sell meat for a week. It was their way of protesting the beef monopoly’s actions.

The butchers’ boycott, however, failed to bring wholesale prices down. So Jewish homemakers on New York’s Lower east Side, influenced by the emerging labor and women’s suffrage movements, began to agitate for a strike. Fanny Levy, whose husband was a unionized cloakmaker, and Sarah Edelson, who owned a small restaurant, mobilized neighborhood women by going door-to-door to persuade them not to buy kosher beef.

On May 15, the press reported that 20,000 women on the Lower East Side broke into kosher butcher shops and rendered meat inedible by soaking it in gasoline and setting it on fire. Crowds also confiscated meat from women who had purchased it from kosher butchers and destroyed that meat as well.

As historian Paula Hyman of the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society writes, the Herald reported that “an excitable and aroused crowd [of mostly women] roamed the streets ... armed with sticks, vocabularies and well-sharpened nails” in an effort to keep other women from purchasing kosher meat. One woman complained that her husband was sick and needed to eat beef to recover. She was told by a woman in a traditional *sheitel* that “a sick man can eat *tref* meat,” so she must abide by the boycott.

By the end of the day, the police had arrested 85 persons, 70 of them Jewish women, for disorderly conduct. The Herald reported that the women “were pushed and hustled about [by the police], thrown to the pavement ... and trampled upon.” One of the women responded by slapping a police officer in the face with a moist piece of liver.

The Yiddish press supported the protest. The Forward

ran the headline, “Bravo, Bravo, Bravo, Jewish Women!” By contrast, the New York Times called for the repression of this “dangerous class ... especially the women [who] are very ignorant [and] ... mostly speak a foreign language.”

The boycott spread to the Jewish communities of Brooklyn, Harlem, Newark, Boston and Philadelphia. It also spread to the synagogues, where women asked for rabbinic endorsement. They even ascended *bimahs*, sometimes uninvited, to address men gathered in prayer. As Paula Hyman notes, “For once, urged a boycott leader, ... let the men use the power of ‘And he shall rule over her,’ to the good – by seeing to it that their wives refrain from purchasing meat.”

**“Bravo,
Bravo, Bravo,
Jewish
Women!”**

Under pressure from customers, on May 22 the Retail Butchers Association once more aligned itself with the boycotters and refused to sell kosher beef in member shops. Five days later, Orthodox religious leaders, who had mostly remained on the sidelines, formally endorsed the boycott. By June 9, the retail price of kosher beef dropped to 14 cents and the boycott

began to lose steam. The retail shops enjoyed a thriving business once again.

The kosher meat boycott of 1902 was an early demonstration of the rising political consciousness of Jewish women in New York’s ghettos. Most of the boycotters were not yet American citizens, but they had lived in America long enough to have observed the organizing strategies of the nascent labor and women’s suffrage movements. The example set by the kosher meat boycotters was later emulated in Jewish neighborhood rent strikes in 1904 and 1907 to 1908 and in food boycotts in 1907, 1912 and 1917. Many of the daughters of the kosher meat boycotters of 1902, especially those in the garment trades, would soon become the backbone of New York’s labor movement.

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New Brunswick, NJ
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For your convenience, this form is for your tributes.

TO: Name : _____
 Address : _____

FROM: Name : _____
 Address : _____

Enclosed: \$ _____

In honor of: _____

In memory of: _____ Other: _____

Major featured articles and events from this newsletter are available on our web site: www.jewishgen.org/jhscj approximately two weeks before it reaches you by mail.

