

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL JERSEY



Spring 2010

NEWSLETTER

Nisan/Iyar

JHSCJ Honors Our Founder RUTH MARCUS PATT

The Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey is proud to be honoring our founder and benefactor, Ruth Marcus Patt, at a special reception and lecture on Tuesday, April 13, 2010. All members of the JHSCJ are invited to attend and thank Ruth for her many years of guidance and support of our organization.

Ruth Patt was born in New Brunswick into a family that has been deeply involved in local Jewish life for many years. As a young woman, she became involved in Hadassah, which led to an interest in local Jewish history and a career as a historian and



writer. In 1977, Ruth researched her book *The Jewish Scene in New Jersey's Raritan Valley: 1698-1948*, which is still the only book written on the history of Jews in the greater New Brunswick area. In the course of her research, she collected a lot of material, which she stored in the closet of her apartment. Once the book was published, Ruth recognized the need for a permanent home for her collection of documents. So she formed the Jewish Historical Society, which was officially incorporated on Nov. 7, 1977, as the

Jewish Historical Society of Raritan Valley.

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PLEASE PLAN TO JOIN US ON APRIL 13th !

The reception in Ruth's honor will begin at 3:00 p.m., and will be followed at 5:00 p.m. with a special lecture by Douglas Greenberg, the Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University, entitled "If You Didn't Hate Me, Would I Still Be Jewish?: The Holocaust, Anti-Semitism, and Jewish Identity in Post-War America." Before coming to Rutgers, Dr. Greenberg was a professor of history at the University of Southern California and executive director of the Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education. He also has served as president and director of the Chicago Historical Society, president and CEO of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, and is a former chair of the New Jersey Historical Commission. Admission to the reception and lecture is \$36.00. Please RSVP to the JHSCJ office.

 **President's Message**

On Tuesday, April 13, it will be our pleasure to honor our Society's founder and long-time benefactor, Ruth Marcus Patt. You should have received the announcement and your reservation form a few weeks ago. We hope that if you haven't yet made your reservation to attend this event, you'll do so immediately. While participating in arranging this function, I've become acutely aware of the very wide range, depth and duration of Ruth's community activities. We are looking forward to a joyful celebration of the vast contributions that Ruth has made over the years and is continuing to make, and we hope that as many of our Society's members as possible will be there to help make it a success.

Nathan Reiss

Archives Corner

Many of you are aware that in addition to working at the JHSCJ, I am also the president of Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple. As you will read on Page 3 of this Bulletin, AEMT is celebrating its 150th Anniversary, and throughout the year, I have been doing a lot of research into the history of the Temple and the Jews of New Brunswick. For this work, I have been completely dependent on the groundwork laid by Ruth Marcus Patt. My primary sources of information are the Jewish Archives of New Jersey, which are held by the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey, and Ruth's book, *The Jewish Scene in New Jersey's Raritan Valley: 1698-1948*, published in 1977.

Those who have spent time researching local Jewish history recognize what a valuable book Ruth has written. It covers the earliest arrival of the first Jews to our area, and details the beginnings of every synagogue and major Jewish organization in the city of New Brunswick and beyond. The book is enriched by Ruth's personal connections to almost everyone in the Jewish community, and includes personal memories of many who are no longer alive to share with us. It is packed with information, and is an incredible resource. Since its publication, no other comprehensive book of its kind has been written for our area.

Ruth Patt has made a lasting contribution to scholarship and to historians of the future. No one will research Jewish life in New Jersey without relying upon Ruth's writings, and this volume will certainly continue to be the primary source of information on the growth of the community through 1948. In addition, of course, Ruth's establishment of the Jewish Archives of New Jersey as a repository of primary source documents relating to local Jewish history will be of use to scholars for decades to come. Those of us who believe in the importance of the past owe Ruth Marcus Patt an enormous debt of gratitude for the legacy she has created.

Deborah N. Cohn

Additions to our Archives

From: Isadore Goldberg: 1965 Diamond Jubilee ad journal of now-defunct Beth Israel Congregation, Perth Amboy.

From: Stella Benzilio: Minutes of Ladies of Etz Ahaim, 1950s through 1970s.

From: William Shulman: Photos of members of Trenton athletic teams, c. 1947-1948.

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

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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JHSCJ Sponsors Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple For Historic Marker

By Deborah N. Cohn

The largest collection in the archives of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey is the collection for Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple. This is perhaps unsurprising, because Anshe Emeth is the oldest Jewish congregation in Middlesex County, and the fourth oldest congregation in the state of New Jersey. Incorporated in New Brunswick in 1859, the Temple is celebrating its Sesquicentennial Anniversary this year. The Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey has done its part to commemorate this milestone.

On October 11, 1859, representatives from five families of New Brunswick's small Jewish community applied for a charter in the name of Congregation Anshe Emeth. The members continued meeting in homes and in storefronts on Peace Street and Liberty Street before purchasing property on Albany Street. The newly built synagogue building was completed in only 6 months, at a cost of \$3,000, and was dedicated during Rosh Hashanah services in 1897. The New Brunswick Daily News (Sept. 27, 1897) described the building as having a "very neat and attractive appearance," with stained glass windows flanking the front door, hard wood floors and stairways, many side windows, and gaslight brass chandeliers. The "altar" arrangements were "very fine", including a tablet of marble containing the Ten Commandments and a white satin curtain embroidered in gold with a crown, lions, and the name of the congregation in Hebrew. Hanging from the ceiling was an Eternal Light with a globe of red glass. Only five years later, the synagogue was updated with new paint and electric light fixtures, and the formerly plain glass side windows were replaced with stained glass. The Daily News declared that "The Temple is now one of the most attractive in the State." (Sept. 4, 1902.)

Congregation Anshe Emeth had grown to about 80 families by the mid-1920's, and the congregation began looking for property on which to build a new, larger synagogue. They purchased property on Livingston Avenue in 1927, and the cornerstone was laid for the new building the following year. Despite numerous difficulties with the subcontractors responsible for finishing the work, the new Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple was completed at a cost of \$110,000. On Friday evening, June 20, 1930, the torah scrolls were brought into the sanctuary in a procession, and the ner tamid, which had been brought from the Albany Street building, was kindled. Dedication celebrations continued at Sabbath services the following morning, with the bar mitzvah of Lemuel Strauss, and on Sunday with an address by Dr. Stephen S. Wise, the President of the Jewish Institute of Religion and Rabbi of the Free Synagogue in New York.

The "vestry rooms" on the lower floor of the new Temple

included meeting space, classrooms, and a small kitchen. These rooms were sufficient for Anshe Emeth's many activities, and also provided meeting space for other Jewish groups in the New Brunswick community. But by the 1950s, the space became inadequate as the congregation grew to 350 families. The Temple purchased a house next door to provide extra classroom space for the religious school.

In 1961, the congregation mourned the untimely death of Rabbi Nathaniel Keller, who had served Anshe Emeth for 30 years. Under the subsequent dynamic leadership of Rabbi Jack Spiro, and as the "baby boom" generation swelled the ranks of the religious school population, the Temple membership continued to grow rapidly. In 1964, the congregation built the first addition to the original building, adding a new school wing with more than twenty new classrooms.

The social upheaval of the late 1960s caused many synagogues to follow the example of their congregants and relocate to the suburbs. The members of Anshe Emeth considered this idea, recognizing that most of the Temple's members no longer lived in New Brunswick, and that the Temple's physical plant



was once again becoming too small to support the members and their many activities. However, in 1974, the congregation voted to remain in New Brunswick and participate in the
(continued on Page 7)

American Jewish Experience Lecture Series 2010

Series #1

Monroe Township Jewish Center
(Etz Chaim)
11 Cornell Drive, Monroe Township

Lectures are held on the
2nd Monday of the month
10:00-11:30 a.m.

April 12 Prof. Barry Seldes
Leonard Bernstein: Political Life of an American Musician

May 10 Dr. Mark Kligman
Music of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn and New Jersey

June 14 Philip Cantor
Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean

July 12 Shirley Reich
Surprising Jewish-American Connections

August 9 Mildred Goodwin
American Jewish Women and their Salons

September 13 Marilyn Mix
A Retrospective of Jewish Newark

October 11 Harvey Hauptman
Media Moguls: William S. Paley

November 8 Dr. Nathan Reiss
The Role of DNA in Jewish Genealogy

Series #2

Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple
222 Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick

Lectures are held on the
3rd Wednesday of the month
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon

April 12 Prof. Barry Seldes
Leonard Bernstein: Political Life of an American Musician

May 10 Dr. Mark Kligman
Music of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn and New Jersey

June 14 Philip Cantor
Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean

July 12 Shirley Reich
Surprising Jewish-American Connections

August 9 Mildred Goodwin
American Jewish Women and their Salons

September 13 Marilyn Mix
A Retrospective of Jewish Newark

October 11 Harvey Hauptman
Media Moguls: William S. Paley

November 8 Dr. Nathan Reiss
The Role of DNA in Jewish Genealogy



Speaker's Bureau

A list of available speakers and topics is located on our web site, www.jewishgen.org/jhscj. It can also be obtained by calling the JHSCJ office, 732-249-4894. We will gladly try to accommodate your needs. The fees for our speakers go directly to support JHSCJ.

As always, our speakers have been busy on behalf of the JHSCJ. Harvey Hauptman gave a talk at the JCC of Middlesex County on media mogul David Sarnoff, and David Greene visited the JCC in November about speak on Leonard Bernstein. Mildred Goodwin spoke to the Brandeis National Committee's Middlesex County Chapter about Jews in Reel Life. And our president, Nat Reiss, has been all over central Jersey, speaking on subjects ranging from genealogy and Jewish family names to local Sephardic Jewish history. He has traveled to Greenbriar/Whittingham's Friends Club in Monroe Township, Renaissance Community in Manchester Township, the Jewish Congregation of Concordia, and Raritan Valley Hadassah. We are very grateful to our speakers, who donate their time and knowledge on behalf of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey.

Artist-Hero of the Wild West

Born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1815, Solomon Nunes Carvalho was descended from a famous Sephardic family. Carvalho, who was devoted to fine art, literature, and the study of Judaic texts, taught himself to paint and aspired to make his living as a portrait artist. He apprenticed as a daguerreotypist under Samuel F.B. Morse and became an innovative pioneer in photography. It comes as some surprise, therefore, that this urbane, scholarly Easterner became a hero of the Wild West.

In 1853, Colonel John C. Fremont, a renowned explorer and Indian fighter, asked Carvalho to join Fremont's fifth and final expedition to map the American West. Fremont hoped to find a railroad route across the Continental Divide, one that could be crossed by transcontinental trains in the snowy depths of the Colorado winter. Fremont recruited Carvalho as the expedition's official photographer to record the route the railroad would follow. Without consulting his wife or children, Carvalho accepted.

Little did Carvalho realize the hardships he would face. His daguerreotype equipment was heavy and cumbersome. The extreme cold temperatures that sometimes dipped to 30 below zero slowed the daguerreotype process so that making one image sometimes took more than an hour. Carvalho's 21 fellow trekkers resented waiting in the frigid temperatures waiting for him to finish. Despite the challenges, Carvalho was among the first photographers of the Rockies and their Indian residents.

The rigors of the trip took their toll on the expedition. In December 1853, the party began to run out of supplies. To preserve the pack animals, Carvalho abandoned his photographic equipment. When the food was gone, the explorers slaughtered the horses and mules for food. Carvalho at first declined to consume their flesh because of his religious principles, but finally decided that Judaism required him to eat rather than die. At one point, Fremont extracted a promise from each of the men that they would not cannibalize each other. Carvalho later wrote of one harrowing night in his best-selling account of the expedition, "Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West" (1856): "One of my feet was badly frozen, and I walked with much pain and difficulty. . . I was the last man on the trail, and my energy and firmness almost deserted me. Alone, disabled, with no possible assistance from mortal man, I felt my last hour had come. . . I [finally] came into camp about ten o'clock at night.

It requires a personal experience to appreciate the intense mental suffering which I endured that night.

Carvalho weighed 150 pounds when the expedition began; he arrived in the Mormon settlement of Parawan, Utah, in February 1854, weighing less than 100. The residents of Parawan nursed Carvalho and the others back to health, and in April Carvalho traveled north to Salt Lake City to meet Brigham Young, the Mormon leader. The highly religious Young took an immediate liking to Carvalho, a biblical scholar. Young asked Carvalho to join him at a meeting with Walkara, chief of the Ute Indians, with whom the Mormons had clashed. Carvalho sat sketching the parties as Young and Walkara debated who was responsible for the tensions. After an all-night session, the two men renounced hostilities and smoked a peace pipe together, a ceremony in which Carvalho joined.



Restored to health, Carvalho left Utah and journeyed to Los Angeles where he helped found the first Jewish organization in that city, the Los Angeles Hebrew Benevolent Society. Carvalho soon returned to his wife and family and settled

in Baltimore, where he was instrumental in founding a synagogue, Beth Israel, which was among the first in America to include prayers in English in its weekly ritual.

By 1870, Carvalho's eyesight was failing and he could no longer paint. The artist-adventurer had become an inventor and patented an innovative pressurized steam engine that reaped him great financial rewards. Carvalho lived until 1897 and is buried in the cemetery belonging to Congregation Shearith Israel in New York. His paintings and photographs are now treasured.

Ironically, the daguerreotypes from the Fremont expedition for which Carvalho and the others had sacrificed so much to make are missing, although a few were published in Carvalho's book. Fremont claimed that the originals were lost in a warehouse fire. Some experts suspect that they lie in an unopened crate in the Library of Congress. Despite Carvalho's later fame as a painter and fortune as an inventor, no period of his life compared with the excitement of his courageous months making those lost daguerreotypes.

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TRIBUTES

From	To	Occasion
Irma Rockoff	Mrs. Shirley Cobert & Family	In memory of Mac Cobert
Florence Stein	Ruth Marcus Patt	In honor of her 90th birthday
Robert Leiner		In memory of Ruth Leiner
Jerry and Doris Kahn Gunsher	Ruth Marcus Patt	In honor of her 90th birthday
Jerry and Doris Kahn Gunsher	Adelaide Zagoren	In honor of her 90th birthday
Arlene and Stanley Ferman	Ruth Marcus Patt	In honor of her 90th birthday
Ruth Marcus Patt		In memory of Milton Patt
Edna May & Harold Hirshman	Ruth Marcus Patt	In honor of Ruth Marcus Patt

THANK YOU to the following for their generous contributions to the Jewish Archives of New Jersey

<p>Jean E. Ruben Carol Carlson Jean Klerman Irwin Gumeiner Francine Durman Madeline B. Kramer Lawrence Riemer Dr. Robert Berkowitz Joan Sassenoff Mr. & Mrs. Sheldon Freidenreich Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel Goldfarb Goldie Taub Len and Barbara Littman Sam and Connie Landis</p>	<p>The Honorable Barnett and Mrs. Hoffman Adelaide Zagoren Minnie Seid Edna Sherber Elizabeth and Larry McCandlish Hans and Ruth Fisher Lee and Elaine Livingston Adelaide and Terry Brenner Doris Chilton Kahn Charles & Georgia Weiner Susan Schwirck Lew and Ada Bloom Joe and Debbie Cohn</p>
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MEMBERSHIP

We thank these members for renewing at the Patron Level

Beatrice Beck	Lola Kamp	Sally Shure
Bernice & Eugene Bernstein	Norman Reitman	Helen Solomon
Ruth Bickhardt	Lawrence Riemer	Murray Sternberg
Irving Bussel	Eileen Robison	Mr. & Mrs. Bert Wolf
Lawrence Fachler	Ruth Rosenthal	Victoria Zagorin
William Gorelick	Betty Saltiel	

We welcome the following new members

Bernice Rosen
Robert Leiner
Barbara Chernak
Richard Diamond

(Ruth Marcus Patt, continued from Page 1)

In May of 1982, the collection was outgrowing Ruth's closet. The Society moved to The Central New Jersey Jewish Home for the Aged in Somerset, which offered the use of a larger closet and the use of some of their facilities. At that time the Jewish Historical Society also expanded to cover all of Middlesex, Union, Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren counties. Expenses such as paper, postage and archiving supplies were partially paid for by the sales of Ruth's book, which was sold for \$5 and was available in several bookstores in New Brunswick.

The Society continued to grow through the 1980's, with much of our current material being donated through those years and being diligently archived by our volunteers. Ruth used the personal resources and recollections of many of our Society members to research and write another book, *The Jewish Experience at Rutgers*. That book was released in the spring of 1987, and garnered enthusi-

astic reviews from nationally-known reviewers such as Jonathan Sarna. Seven years later, Ruth published *Uncommon Lives: Eighteen Extraordinary Jews from New Jersey*. All royalties from the book were given to the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey. Ruth has also written several historical brochures covering subjects such as the Sephardim of New Jersey and the Workmen's Circle.

In addition to her devoted support of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey, Ruth has volunteered for many other organizations in central New Jersey. She chaired the celebration of New Brunswick's 300th Birthday in 1980, is a past president of the local chapter of Hadassah, and was a long-time member of the board of the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation. Ruth was named Woman of the Year by the Raritan Valley Jewish Federation, Citizen of the Year by the City of New Brunswick, and received the Crown of Torah Award from Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple.

**The Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey thanks the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation
for a generous contribution in honor of Ruth Marcus Patt**

(Historical Marker, continued from Page 3)

ongoing revival of the city. The house next door was torn down, and another new wing was added to the Temple, consisting of expanded administrative offices and a large, new social hall.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Bennett Miller, who arrived as Assistant Rabbi in 1974 and became Senior Rabbi in 1977, the Temple's programming continued to expand, as did the membership. The congregation established a satellite religious school location in East Brunswick from 1974-1980 to accommodate the large student population. By 1984 the Temple had more than 600 member families, and more than 500 children in the religious school. Despite a number of renovations and redecorating projects through the years, the extensive programming and heavy usage took its toll on the building. The congregation purchased the last privately-owned house on the block in 1987 with an eye toward the possibility of future expansion. In 1990, the first floor of the house was rented to the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey.

That time arrived in 2001, when a renovation committee was formed to review the future physical needs of the Temple. After lengthy discussions, the congregation once again confirmed their decision to remain in New Brunswick, and began to plan for one more addition to the building. In 2004,

major construction began, with the addition of a new wing housing a small social hall and an amphitheater seating 200 people. The large social hall, which had been built in 1977, was reconfigured and refurbished, as was the religious school wing. The small social hall was recreated as a modern media center, with adult classrooms, computer access, and a large library and meeting area. The historic sanctuary, which was built in 1930, was completely renovated. The bimah was lowered and reconstructed, the original pews were refinished, and then entire interior was repainted in a style which harmonized with its Moorish Revival architecture. Finally, offices and a temperature-controlled archive room were built to the specifications of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey, which moved into its new offices in 2005.

In early 2009, as Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple approached its 150th birthday, the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey nominated the Temple to receive a Historic Marker as part of a program sponsored by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and administered by the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission. The marker was officially presented to Dr. Nathan Reiss, President of the JHSCJ, and Deborah Cohn, President of Anshe Emeth, in October, 2009. Thanks to the JHSCJ, the marker now stands in front of the Temple on Livingston Avenue to commemorate the Temple's Sesquicentennial.

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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.

