

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL JERSEY



Spring 2011

NEWSLETTER

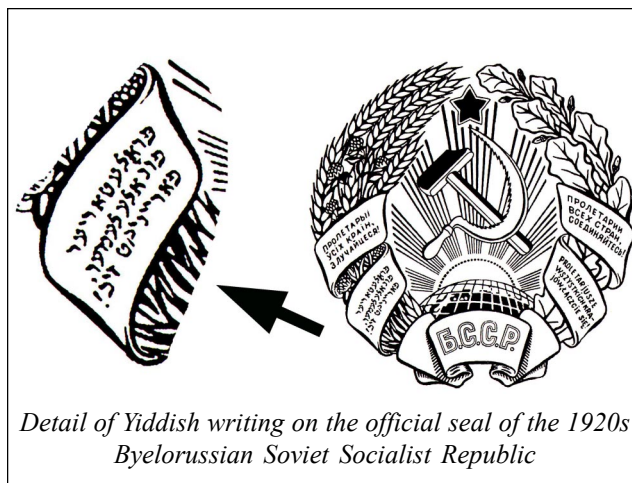
Iyar/Sivan

ANNUAL SPRING MEETING

Guest Speaker

Dr. Nathan Reiss

**TSARS, STALIN,
PERESTROIKA and
JEWISH GRAND-
MOTHERS:
Jewish Immigrants to
Central New Jersey from
the Former Soviet Union**



*Detail of Yiddish writing on the official seal of the 1920s
Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic*

Last year, the JHSCJ received a grant from the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission to chronicle the lives and experiences of recent Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union. Join us for an illustrated lecture and hear about the results of our interviews and research.

Dr. Nathan Reiss, President of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey, is a retired Rutgers professor and an acclaimed genealogist. He recently published "Some Jewish Families of Hesse and Galicia", a book that represents his extensive research of his own family roots.

Sunday, June 3, 2012

1:30 p.m.

Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple
222 Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick, New Jersey

The lecture is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

*Grant funding has been provided by
Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission,
Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
through a grant provided by
New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of Dept of State.*



 **President's Message**

We will shortly be completing the first phase of our project documenting the experiences of immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, funded by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission. The interviews have been extremely interesting and informative. We believe that the information and materials that we have gathered will become an important part of Central New Jersey's Jewish history. We are now at a point where we can disseminate the products of our research. We invite you to be present for our "debut presentation" at our Society's Spring Meeting on June 3. Thereafter, the lecture, as well as a traveling exhibit, will be available to libraries, synagogues, JCCs, etc. We hope that you'll be able to attend the Spring Meeting, and that you'll recommend the lecture and the traveling exhibit to organizations that you think will be interested in it.

The Jewish Historical Society is pleased to announce its new Facebook page, which you can find at www.facebook.com/pages/Jewish-Historical-Society-of-Central-Jersey/159700780815284. We are in the process of posting some interesting photos and other material from our extensive collection, as well as links to Jewish historical and genealogical sites that are relevant to central New Jersey. The Facebook page is also a forum for dialog concerning the Jewish history of Central Jersey. When you visit our site, please "Like" us (that is, press the "Like" button) and recommend the site to persons who you think will find it of interest. You don't need to have a Facebook account to access the page.

Dr. Nathan Reiss

American Jewish Experience Lecture Series

The American Jewish Experience Lecture series is off to a great start. *Please note that the date for the September meeting in Highland Park has been changed.*

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

**Highland Park Conservative Temple
201 South 3rd Avenue, Highland Park
Note date change for September*

June 11	Dr. Marcia Midler <i>Emma Goldman: Jewish Radical Icon</i>
July 9	Deborah Cohn <i>Eavesdropping on History: The Year 1885 as Reported by the Jewish Press</i>
August 13	Dr. Mildred Goodwin <i>Samuel Goldwyn: Hollywood's Last Tycoon</i>
Sept. 10	Harvey Hauptman <i>Jewish Radio Broadcasters</i>
*Oct. 15	Bertram Busch <i>Jewish Good Humor: Better Than Ice Cream</i>
Nov. 12	Rabbi Eliot Malomet <i>To be announced</i>

June 20	Dr. Marcia Midler <i>Emma Goldman: Jewish Radical Icon</i>
July 18	Deborah Cohn <i>Eavesdropping on History: The Year 1885 as Reported by the Jewish Press</i>
August 15	Harvey Hauptman <i>Jewish Radio Broadcasters</i>
Sept. 5*	Dr. Mildred Goodwin <i>Samuel Goldwyn: Hollywood's Last Tycoon</i>
Oct. 17	Bertram Busch <i>Jewish Good Humor: Better Than Ice Cream</i>
Nov. 21	Rabbi Eliot Malomet <i>To be announced</i>



**SUPPORTED BY THE
JEWISH FEDERATION
OF GREATER MIDDLESEX**

EDITORIAL STAFF

Contributors:
Marilyn Millet Goldberg
Dr. Nathan Reiss

Graphic Artist Deborah Cohn

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JHSCJ OFFICERS

President	Nathan M. Reiss
Vice President	Harvey Hauptman
Treasurer	Susan Marchand

A LABOR OF LOVE

By Marilyn Millet Goldberg

By the late 19th century, Perth Amboy, NJ was a highly industrialized city that offered excellent economic opportunities to hard-working ambitious immigrants from Denmark, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Russia, Austria, Ireland, etc. Among these diversified individuals were Eastern European Jews who settled in Perth Amboy sometime between 1885 and 1920. The Jewish community grew quickly as the city prospered.

My grandparents came to Perth Amboy from Ostryna, a village which at one time or another was part of Russia, Poland and Lithuania in about 1908. My mother was born on the Lower East Side of New York, but her sister and two brothers were born in Perth Amboy as was I. My family life and history is deeply rooted in Perth Amboy. I have wonderful memories of growing up there.

While attending a Perth Amboy High School reunion about twelve years ago, a classmate by the name of Joan Seguire LeVine approached me. She asked me if I would be willing to help her with writing a book about the Jewish Community. I became very excited about the prospect of a book being written about the community in which I was raised. We put together a group of former Perth Amboy people and began the work on the book.

I began my research at the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey, in New Brunswick, where I spent many hours going through the files and boxes of their amazing collection. While going through a folder marked 1912-1920, I came upon a typed document with the heading that the following individuals had donated money for the purchase of a motorized hearse to be used for Jewish funerals. Looking through the document, I saw my grandfather's signature donating \$1.00. Most of the donations ranged from \$1.00 to \$5.00. That was a lot of money in those days. Some of the more wealthy people donated more. Needless to say, this was an exciting find for me. The Perth Amboy Public Library, where I also spent many hours, provided me with much information.

For one reason or another, after a couple of years the project fell through, until Dr. Mona Shangold heard about it and we got back into the research. We have collected well over 600 photos through the years. People have sent us wonderful stories and photos of their grandparents and great grandparents. We have done many oral interviews with some of the 'old timers' of Perth Amboy, and families have honored their heritage by sponsoring family tribute pages. These tribute pages have been the primary fundraising for the book. We recently invited Perth Amboy businesses to sponsor business tribute pages as well.

Our author, Robert Spector, was himself raised in Perth Amboy. He is the author of several books about businesses such as "The Nordstrom Way," which was on the NY Times best seller list. He has kindly donated his time and talent to write this book. Jane Sanders Leal, Joan Sher Meister, Norma Witkin, Rhoda Reitman Juskow and others have been deeply involved in this project. Without Dr. Shangold's leadership, this book may not have been written.

After all these years of working on the book, we expect it to be published by the end of the year. We will be offering a pre-publication sale of the book shortly.

A theme that runs throughout the book manuscript is that the Perth Amboy Jewish community always generously gave their time and money to helping others. They built synagogues, a YMHA, religious schools and more, and all of their good deeds contributed to improving the quality of life in the city. It was this community spirit that inspired our group to create this book in order to memorialize the Perth Amboy Jewish community's contributions. For me, this has truly been a labor of love, and I look forward to people reading the book to enjoy the history, stories and photographs.

Marilyn Millet Goldberg was born and raised in Perth Amboy, where her parents were members of Congregation Beth Israel and later of Congregation Shaarey Tefilah. She now lives in Monroe Township, where she is an editor of the monthly newsletter for The Ponds and volunteers for ORT. For more information, contact Marilyn at 609-655-2351 or jaymilyn@aol.com.

SPEAKERS BUREAU

Our thanks are extended to Phil Cantor and Mildred Goodwin, who continue to represent the JHSCJ Speakers Bureau. In the past few months, Phil has spoken to the Greater Monroe Chapter of ORT, the Monroe Township chapter of Hadassah, and the JCC of Middlesex County in Edison. Mildred Goodwin spoke in November to the National Council of Jewish Women in Clearbrook on the subject of "Famous and Infamous Jewish Characters in Literature." Contact the JHSCJ Speakers Bureau the next time *your* organization is planning a program.

TRIBUTES

From	To	Occasion
Ruth M. Patt	Hazel Rabinowitz	In memory of Daniel Lubeck
Ruth M. Patt	Ada & Lew Bloom and family	In memory of Libby Sadwith
Harvey & Flip Hauptman	Ruth Rockoff	In memory of Alvin Rockoff
Edgar Rosenberg		In memory of Estelle Rosenberg
Adelaide & Terry Brenner	Mr. A. Spitz	In memory of Joyce Spitz
Adelaide & Terry Brenner	Elizabeth Roth	In memory of Selma Eron
Irma Rockoff	Ruth M. Patt	Refuah Shelaymah
Debbie & Joe Cohn	Bernice Bernsetein & family	In memory of Dr. Eugene Bernstein
Ruth M. Patt	Bernice Bernstein & family	In memory of Dr. Eugene Bernstein
Edith Neimark	Bernice Bernstein & family	In memory of Dr. Eugene Bernstein
Jerry & Doris Kahn Gunsher	Bernice Bernstein & family	In memory of Dr. Eugene Bernstein
Gloria Cohn	Bernice Bernstein & family	In memory of Dr. Eugene Bernstein
Harvey & Flip Hauptman	Bernice Bernstein & family	In memory of Dr. Eugene Bernstein

DONATIONS

We thank the following Life Members for their continued support:

Lew & Ada Bloom	Lee & Elaine Livingston	Susan Schwirck
Joe and Debbie Cohn	Larry & Elizabeth McCandlish	Edna Sherber
Stanley & Arlene Ferman	Kurt & Barbara Nathan	Selma Shure
Sheldon & Barbara Freidenreich	Edith Neimark	Florence Stein
Vivian Goldfarb	Ruth Marcus Patt	Donald & Elaine Gordon Sulam
Jerry & Doris Kahn Gunsher	Nathan & Rose Reiss	Goldie Taub
Renee and Herman Harris	Irma Rockoff	Charles & Georgie Weiner
Karma Foundation	Ruth Rockoff	Adelaide Zagoren
	Joan Sassenoff	

THANK YOU

to Francine Derman and Carolyn and Jack Kurland for their donations to the
Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey

**The JHSCJ is grateful for the generous support of
the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation**

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to our New Member

Lillian Leifer

Thank You for Renewing at the
Patron Level

Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Shure Mrs. Bernice Bernstein

Noah's Second Landing at Ararat

In the Niagara River between Buffalo, N.Y. and Canada sits Grand Island. On a pedestal at Grand Island Town Hall sits a cornerstone engraved with the *Sh'ma* in Hebrew and the following inscription:

ARARAT
A City of Refuge for the Jews
Founded by Mordecai Manuel Noah
in the month of Tizri 5586 Sept. 1825
and in the 50th Year of American Independence

What was this place, Ararat, and who was Mordecai Manuel Noah?

Born in Philadelphia in 1785 to German-Jewish and Sephardic parents, Noah pursued simultaneous careers in journalism and politics. At age 26, Noah petitioned Secretary of State Robert Smith to grant him a consular position, with a not-so-subtle reminder that the appointment of a Jew to the diplomatic corps would favorably impress Jewish voters and “prove to foreign powers that our government is not regulated in the appointment of their officers by religious distinction.” Noah was subsequently appointed as consul to Riga and then Tunis. Later, Noah was elected sheriff of New York City, appointed surveyor of the city’s port and made a judge of its Court of General Sessions. His position as editor of six different secular New York newspapers over the years assured him of a platform.

In the Ararat project, Noah’s service to world Jewry and his personal advancement came together as he proclaimed the Zionist future. Noah declared in 1818, “Never were prospects for the restoration of the Jewish nation to their ancient rights and dominion more brilliant than they are at present. There are seven million of Jews...throughout the world...possessing more wealth, activity, influence, and talents, than any body of people of their number on earth... They will march in triumphant numbers, and possess themselves once more of [Palestine], and take their rank among the governments of the earth.” In 1820, he began private negotiations to purchase Grand Island, then completely undeveloped, as a temporary “New Jerusalem” where Jews could safely await repossession of their ancient Holy Land.

Grand Island stood where the Erie Canal, then under construction, would enter the Niagara River. Noah hoped to attract Jewish merchants and bankers from France and Germany who would see the commercial opportunities in the project and Eastern European Jews who sought farmland. After five years, Noah finally raised the funds to purchase a portion of the island for his colony.

Had Noah simply sought to re-sell land on Grand Island to his co-religionists, he would have differed little from other

land speculators of his time. However, Noah had far more grandiose ambitions than mere profit, as the inaugural ceremonies at Ararat revealed.

To accommodate the large inaugural crowd, Noah rented a Buffalo church. Cannoneers fired a salute and Seneca Chief Red Jacket arrived by boat (Noah was convinced that America’s Indians were one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.) Then Noah made his theatrical entrance. Historian Jonathan Sarna describes Noah’s dramatic garb: “Resplendent in a Richard III costume, complete with a gold medallion neck chain—all lent by the Park Theater—Noah assumed his role as [self-proclaimed] ‘Judge of Israel.’” After an ecumenical service led by a Protestant minister, Noah issued his “Proclamation to the Jews,” which established Ararat as a city of Jewish refuge, proclaimed the government of “the Jewish Nation ‘under the auspices and protection of the constitution and laws of the United States of America’ and declared Noah’s status as a “Judge of Israel.”” Noah called on each Jew in the world to be taxed “three shekels of silver” to support the government of the Jewish Nation, and for the Paris Jewish Consistory to elect a Judge of Israel every four years—after Noah had finished his self-appointed term.

Noah was convinced that America’s Indians were one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

Noah’s presumption caused a firestorm of protest and ridicule, not least from some fellow Jews. Isaac Harby, a Jewish newspaper editor in Charleston, accused Noah of arrogating the role of the authentic Messiah, who some day would “lead [the Jewish people] to New Jerusalem and not to New York.” The secular press labeled Noah an opportunistic land speculator attempting to defraud his co-religionists of their savings.

In the end, Ararat failed to attract any settlers. Apparently, in a democratic society with an open frontier, no European or American Jew felt the need to live as Noah’s colonist. Because he could not afford recruiters abroad, Noah’s colony had little chance of attracting European Jewry. Worse, the grand rabbi of Paris ridiculed Noah’s plan. Before the end of 1825, Noah was advising his friends not to invest in Ararat; in 1833, his share of unpopulated Grand Island was sold to a timber investor.

All that remains of Noah’s Zionist dream today is Ararat’s cornerstone. Despite the fiasco, Noah continued as an influential spokesperson for American Jewry. Almost 175 years later, much of his vision has come to fruition. Noah’s assertions that a Jewish nation must be reestablished in the Holy Land and that America must play a special part in that restoration foreshadowed the role of American Jewry in the twentieth-century developed of Jewish nationhood.

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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.

