



RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

We know that time flies, but somehow it always seems a surprise. My three years as RIJHA President not only flew by quickly but was full of unexpected and sudden events. (“Life suddens upon you,” as one person recently put it.) Not least was the pandemic, and not least of RIJHA’s accomplishments has been its ability to keep operating through it all. Even when the Alliance building was in lockdown, Executive Director Kate-Lynne Laroche and Office Manager Jaime Walden did an amazing job of keeping things going.

As my third and final year as President nears its end, I want to express my appreciation to all those who worked for and contributed to RIJHA’s mission. That we are blessed with such broad and deep support has been especially important to me because it gave me the confidence to take on the role of President. “Anyone who ever gave you confidence, you owe them a lot,” says Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. Indeed the many supporters of the RIJHA have given me confidence as President. This includes the members of the Executive Committee. Ruth Breindel as Secretary was unstinting in accomplishing, without fail, the many duties she assumed. Harold Foster and Lowell Lisker as Vice Presidents were as supportive and as engaged as any president could ever wish for. Mel Blake became Treasurer as we amended the bylaws to clarify and upgrade the duties of that office. Mel has achieved remarkable success in reforming the record-keeping and monitoring of our finances.

Perhaps the single most important change at the RIJHA in recent years has been the development of the positions of Executive Director and Office Manager. The goal was to professionalize the administration and management of the RIJHA, and that goal has been successfully reached for two main reasons: Kate-Lynne and Jaime. Their dedication and competence have been simply remarkable and an important reason for the RIJHA’s many recent successes.

Among many examples is Kate-Lynne’s overseeing one of our most important ongoing projects, the organizing and digitizing of our archives. This includes updating our website and digitizing most of Rhode Island’s many iterations of Jewish newspapers since 1929, the most complete such collection, now available to researchers anywhere in the world. Kate-Lynne has also played a leading role in establishing the New England Jewish History Collaborative, bringing together Jewish historical organizations from all six New England states. The Collaborative created its own website, and it recently hosted a successful webinar on “What is the New England Jewish Experience?” This is of special importance to me since I believe that the RIJHA, if it is to become a top-tier organization, should develop its connections to, and visibility with, out-of-state organizations with interests in American Jewish History. One significant way we have done that is indeed one of RIJHA’s major accomplishments over the last two-thirds of a century—the RIJHA *Notes*. For some sixteen years George Goodwin has been editor, guiding each annual issue through the many complex and often difficult steps toward successful printing and distribution, without fail or even delay.

These are the kind of people that makes an organization work and that makes a president like me confident, and very grateful.

Mel Topf, President

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we move into the third month of 2021 I am reminded of Friday March 13, 2020; our last day of normalcy in the RIJHA office and archive, and also the last day of “normal” for most of the working world. It is hard to believe we have been working remotely and in the office (part time) for nearly a year. Thankfully now Jaime and I have been able to return to the office on a more normal schedule. Even though we are not allowed any visitors – it makes things feel a bit more normal. We have continued to stay busy throughout these past months, and will continue to do our best in making the RIJHA and its materials accessible to you, our members.

You may recall that we had some projects put on hold last year due to the pandemic. Thankfully, we have moved to the next stage of production in the Rhode Tour App project with the Rhode Island Council for Humanities, which means all of the content we wrote and gathered has been sent to a revision committee, and will then be sent to the web designers for publishing. This next multistep process includes advertising for the tour, so be on the lookout for future notices regarding the Jewish Rhode Tour. The pins included with the launch of the tour focus on Touro Cemetery, Pawtucket and Central Falls, Woonsocket, South Providence, Sons of Jacob Synagogue, and the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island. As time goes on, we will be adding more pins with other locations relevant to historic Jewish Rhode Island. If you have any ideas, or want to write a tour, please contact the office.

One project that was able to come to fruition was the webinar hosted by the new conglomerate, the New England Jewish History Collaborative also called the NEJHC. The NEJHC consists of Jewish organizations from each state in New England, and on January 24th we hosted a Zoom conference where guest speaker Michael Hoberman gave a lecture on “What is the New England Jewish experience?”. There were about two-hundred attendees, and some great inquiries came through during the panel discussion. The NEJHC hopes to continue hosting events that will be open to the public – we will update everyone as the plans for future events are made.

Many of you know that I have been working towards completing my master’s degree in public history. I am excited (and relieved!) to report that as of February 19th I completed all of my graduation requirements, and as of March 1st officially hold a master’s degree in History with a concentration in public history from Southern New Hampshire University. These past two years of learning how to better serve the RIJHA and those who utilize the resources this organization will definitely pay off as time goes on. One such way is the cataloguing of our archival collections in the online system PastPerfect, that will allow for us and researchers to have a better understanding of what exactly resides in the hundreds of archive boxes in the Segal Family Archives at the RIJHA.

Finally, as of March 12th, I will be out of the office for twelve weeks due to the birth of my second child. During my maternity leave, we are halting research requests and all of the other duties that fall under my jurisdiction. Jaime, our amazing Office Manager, will still be in the office managing her duties, should you need to get in touch with the RIJHA for any reason. I am scheduled to return the second week of June, when hopefully we will be able to plan some sort of in-person event for late summer, or at the very latest, our Fall Meeting.

Kate-Lynne Laroche, Executive Director

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE RIJHA

ANNUAL SPRING MEETING

The RIJHA is hosting a Zoom Annual Spring Meeting on **Sunday, May 23rd from 2-3pm.**

We are inducting new board members, as well as a new president. To do this, we need you, our members, to send Jaime your email addresses to officially vote these new appointees in.

Please send your name and email address to Office Manager, Jaime Walden at **office@rijha.org** to be put on the attendance list.

YOUR EMAIL IS REQUIRED IF YOU WANT TO JOIN THE ZOOM MEETING!!

Official notice including the slate of officers and board members will be sent in early May

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

For those of you who have not renewed your membership to the RIJHA for 2021:

You will need to renew your membership for this year if you want to join the Zoom Annual Spring Meeting.

Please include your email address on the line provided on your membership renewal card.

FROM THE OFFICE

In the last newsletter I reported that we had just purchased a new database, PastPerfect. This software allows us to catalog the entire archive collection and to track members and donors more efficiently. Over the past few months, I have entered all current membership data and all donations and paid membership fees into PastPerfect. I have also been working on assessing our archive collections, and have entered over 2,000 records into an excel spreadsheet from past records. The next step is to cross-reference those records with what is currently in the archive and then begin entering those into PastPerfect. This is a huge undertaking, but will provide all of us a better understanding of the contents of archive. Ultimately, this will allow both office staff and researchers an improved ability to perform research.

Jaime Walden

DONATIONS, GRANTS, AND NEW MEMBERS

In Memory

Elaine Auger in memory of Morris Schwartz
Mel and Patricia Blake in memory of Bertha Lisker
Norman J. Bolotow in memory of Charles Bolotow
Lois Cohen in memory of Shirley Wasser, David Fishman, and Rachelle Principe
Bonnie and Donald Dwares in memory of David Gold
Mrs. Rith Eisenberg in memory of Morris Schwartz
Alan Flink in memory of Morris Schwartz
Harold and Janice Gadon in memory of Morris Schwartz, Arthur Fixler, and Donald Horowitz
Norbert and Bette Ann Fessel in memory of Morris Schwartz
Geraldine Foster in memory of Norman Shack
Larry and Susan Ginsberg in memory of Helen Ginsberg
Maxine Goldin in memory of Arthur Fixler
Marcia Woolf Hicks and Bob Hicks in memory of Howard Nachbar
Aaron Kahn in memory of Morris Schwartz
Patricia Kaplan in memory of her grandparents, Jack and Mitzi Feiner
Herbert and Deborah Katz in memory of Estelle Klemer, Maureen Krasnow, Mildred Waldman Gurwitz and Marilyn Ehrenhaus
Greta Kessler in memory of Irving Kessler and Gertrude Rosen Gluckman
Leonard and Linda Levin in memory of their parents
Carrie Levine in memory of Morris Schwartz
Judith Litchman in memory of Henry M. Litchman
Ronald Markoff in memory of Florence Markoff
Matthew Millen in memory of Shirley Swartz Millen
Diane and Marty Newman in memory of Joshua Rubin
Kenneth and Lucita Prager Family Charitable Fund in memory of Morris Schwartz
Alan and Laurie Salk in memory of Norton Salk
Susan Sandler in memory of Morris Schwartz
Helaine M. Schupack in memory of Mark Schupack
Barbara Schwartz in memory of Donald Horowitz
Norman Shack Charitable Foundation trust in memory of Norman Shack
Anne and Gerald Sherman in memory of Bertha Lisker, Sydney Paull, Norman Shack
Shalom Memorial Chapel in memory of Cantor Jacob S. Smith and Edith Smith
Steven and Dana Sholes in memory of Marc L. Sholes
Jim and Laurie Silverstein in memory of Morris Schwartz
Arthur D. Strauss in memory of Miriam and Charles A. Strauss and Donald M. Yaras
Karen and Ronald Tuber in memory of Morris Schwartz
Ellis and Debbie Waldman in memory of Lenore Gray Rakatansky
Eugene Weinberg in memory of Morris Schwartz and Arthur Fixler
Susan Weinman in memory of Morris Schwartz
Marilyn and James Winoker in memory of Morris Schwartz
Shirley Wolpert in memory of Morris Schwartz

DONATIONS, GRANTS, AND NEW MEMBERS

General Donations

Anonymous	Joan Lorber
David and Susan Bazar	Marilyn Myrow
Mr. and Mrs. Stanley P. Blacher	Milton and Rona Nachbar
Ruth Breindel	Simon and Jacqueline Nemzow Fund
Joseph Chazan	Anne and Gerald Sherman
Cornelius and Katheryn de Boer	Bailey Silechnik
Robin and Jim Engle	Daniel and Patricia O'Sullivan
Maxine Goldin	Larry and Ruth Page
George Goodwin	Judy and Arthur Robbins
James Herstoff	Ms. Ruth Ross
Kane Berrengos Foundation by Diana Cohen	Nancy Rachman
Herbert and Deborah Katz	Alvin and Barbara Rubin
Arnold Kaufman	Kenath Shamir
Rabbi Alan and Mrs. Marcia Kaunfer	Jerrold Salmonson
W. Robert and Lois A. Kemp	Steven Sholes
James and Debra Krasnow	Joan Slafsky
David and Brenda Korn	The Weisberg Family Foundation.
Bernard Labush	
Bruce Leach	
Alan and Marianne Litwin	

In honor

Lois Cohen in honor of Selma Aronson's 100th Birthday
Fred J. Franklin in honor of George Goodwin
Marcia and Bobby Hicks in honor of the Woolf and Wexler Families of Rhode Island
Matthew Millen in honor of Reesa Millen Belin's Birthday
Joan Ress Reeves in honor of George Goodwin
Norman Shack in honor of George Goodwin
Anne and Gerald Sherman in honor of Benjamin Henry

Life Members

Joseph Fox, Steve and Linn Freidman, Helene Gates, Charles Kahn, MD., Ellen Kleinman, David Katzen and Barbara Binder, Kenath Shamir, Samuel Swetchenbaum and Deborah Carr.