



## The Katz Family

by Rosalia Myers Feinstein, z”l

**I**t was 1916. Forty-year-old Aaron Katz was looking for a place to settle where his asthma would not bother him so much. At the time he was living in Des Moines, Iowa, and had heard that Albuquerque might have the perfect climate for him, but he needed to make sure that he could make a living for his young family. Though he did not know a soul in Albuquerque and barely spoke English, Aaron had been warned that he would die if he did not move to a better climate.

This prognosis gave him the courage to do what he had to. He got off the train in Albuquerque and took a stroll along First Street, carrying his suitcase. He saw several stores that, by their names, seemed to be Jewish owned. He talked to the proprietors in Yiddish who told him that business was pretty good in Albuquerque and that he could make a living here.

Aaron was born in 1876 in Russia. His name was originally Aaron Witten. He had served one tour in the Tsar’s army and had been called up for a second tour. Not wanting to do so, he ran away and lived with a family named Katz as one of them and permanently kept their name although his brothers who came to the United States retained the surname Witten.

The Jewish-owned businesses were clustered around First Street, Central Avenue, and Gold Street. Nearby were Italian- and Lebanese-owned businesses. The Jewish immigrant families were very close, but they also socialized with the other immigrant families.

The Katzes started off living at 209 South Broadway, moving later to a home on Edith Blvd. A fourth child, Robert, was born in Albuquerque in 1919. Aaron still kept in touch with his family back in Europe (naturally the letters were written in Yiddish). This was the time of great dislocations in the former Russian Empire after the Bolshevik overthrow of the Tsar and the ensuing civil war. People fled from their home areas, looking for refuge.

Somehow or other Aaron’s mother Gittel and his

twenty-one-year-old sister Sarah wrote from the Far East that they had managed to get across Siberia and had made their way to Vladivostok on Russia’s northern Pacific coast. They wanted to come to the United States, but by then immigration was strictly controlled, especially from Asian ports. Aaron Katz engaged the help of New Mexico

*(continued on p. 7)*



*Albuquerque Bargain Store, 205 South First Street, circa 1920.  
Aaron Katz stands in front wearing a cap; with him are two sales clerks.  
Note the incorrect spelling of Albuquerque on the windows.*

Aaron, his wife Mollie (who had grown up in Lithuania) and daughter Ann immigrated to Iowa in 1905 because Aaron had family living there. Some of Mollie’s family lived in St. Louis, and the Katzes would visit them often over the years. The census of 1910 shows Aaron and Mollie living in Des Moines, where he worked as a peddler with three children at home – Ann, Jeanette, and David.

In 1916, Aaron Katz relocated the family to Albuquerque. He opened up a dry goods/bargain store at 205 South First Street. He kept the accounts in Yiddish, often not recording an individual’s name but some sort of unflattering descriptive phrase such as the “old lady with warts” or the “man with the lame left leg.”

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## Message from President Noel Pugach



As many of you may know, Santa Fe is in the midst of celebrating the 400th anniversary of its founding. The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society has been invited to participate in this historic event. Last summer, I gave a brief talk during Festival Santa Fe in which I offered an overview of the Pioneer Jews who settled in New Mexico in the nineteenth century.

There has long been a Jewish presence in New Mexico's capital city. It is very likely that Crypto-Jews and their descendants were among the Hispano settlers in its first century. Solomon Spiegelberg and other German Jews established mercantile enterprises soon after New Mexico was joined to the United States. From then on, Jewish-owned enterprises were a permanent feature on its famous plaza.

The Spitz clock on the corner of Palace and Lincoln serves as a reminder of the Jewish contribution to the city's commercial life. The clock stood outside Solomon Spitz's well-known jewelry store for many years. The Spitz family donated this famous signpost to the city of Santa Fe on the occasion of the United States Bicentennial. We are

delighted that Santa Fe 400 has asked NMJHS to present further programs in coordination with the quadricentennial.

A number of aspects of New Mexico's intriguing Jewish history are covered in this issue. We are very fortunate that Rosalia Myers Feinstein, z"l, (may her memory be a blessing) largely composed the lead article on the Katz family before her death. Her daughter Naomi Sandweiss lovingly completed it. You may recall that Rosalia supplied the feature article on her Meyer family in the June 2009 issue of *Legacy*. The Katz and the Meyer families became close friends in Albuquerque. Elsewhere in this issue, Naomi's column Peek into the Past, discusses some of the similarities shared by Jewish and Italian immigrants in Albuquerque's New Town in the late nineteenth century.

Our genealogy article is by Santa Fean Harriet Levine. She writes about her great-aunt Emma Boley from Fritzlar, Germany, who was murdered during the Holocaust. Professor Barry Gaines pro-

vides an insightful and delightful review of two recent productions of Robert Benjamin's play, "Parted Waters." He also gives readers helpful background information on Spanish crypto-Jewry, whose effects in present-day New Mexico Benjamin explores dramatically.



NMJHS President Noel Pugach.

Late last year, the NMJHS was given possession of beautiful panels that were a central part of the superb exhibit on New Mexico Pioneer Jews, mounted by the Museum of New Mexico and displayed at the Palace of the Governors for almost five years. The exhibit attracted widespread interest and critical acclaim. The Society is exploring the possibility of preserving the panels, at least digitally, and perhaps lending the panels to museums and libraries in New Mexico and elsewhere. A brief report follows. We invite your interest and support for this important project.

Please note our announcements and make an effort to attend upcoming events. We also welcome articles on New Mexico's Jewish experience from our readers. ✧

## NMJHS Considers Panels from Museum of New Mexico



In 2000 the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe placed on exhibit a remarkable assemblage of photographs, historical context, family stories, and personal items from the pioneer Jewish families in New Mexico. It ran for five years. Among the many families covered were the Spiegelbergs, Zekendorfs, Staabs, Ilfelds, Wertheims, Freudenthals, and GUSDORFS.

After the personal effects were returned to the families, what remained of the exhibit were the beautiful panels of photographs and text that explain the history of how these families came to New Mexico and what they did when

they lived here. The exhibit is not just about Santa Fe families; it includes families who settled in Taos, Albuquerque, Abiquiú, Las Vegas, Mora, Clayton, Las Cruces, and other New Mexico towns.

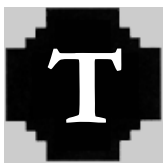
The Museum of New Mexico is no longer able to keep the panels because they take up space the museum needs, and offsite storage is costly. The director, Frances Levine, asked the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society if it would like to have the panels. NMJHS accepted the offer and rented a place to store them. This is no minor undertaking. The entire display consisting of twenty-six panels in nine crates weighs 4275 pounds. Each crate is on heavy casters and weighs from 400 to 700 pounds.

NMJHS is exploring it options. The first priority would be to photograph the panels professionally and post them on the Society's web site. Other options are to put them on rotating exhibit and to lend parts of the exhibit to libraries, museums, synagogues, and cultural centers. Several organizations throughout the state have already expressed an interest in borrowing the panels.

We will keep you advised of the status of the panels in forthcoming issues of *Legacy*. At the moment the main concern is finding a safe storage place for them and funding to pay for the rent and transport. ✧

## “Parted Waters” by Robert F. Benjamin

Review by Barry Gaines



he crypto- (hidden) Jews of New Mexico have received much attention in recent years, and their situation is thoughtfully explored in Robert F. Benjamin’s play “Parted

Waters” that was recently independently staged both in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. But — as befits this newsletter — a bit of history before I consider the play.

It has been estimated that a quarter of the Jews in Spain left the country as a result of the Decree of Expulsion issued by Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon in 1492. The Jews of Spain were nominally Christian<sup>1,2</sup> thanks to a century of pogroms and forced conversions.

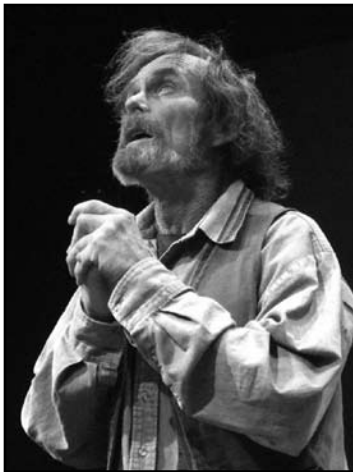
These Spaniards were called *conversos* or *nuevos cristianos* (“New Christians”). However, the nagging fear that some of the New Christians might have secretly remained Jews brought the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition to Spain. The Spanish Inquisition was then faced with vexing questions that still concern us today. What is a Jew? Are the practice of religious worship and the participation in religious rituals sufficient to define a member of a religious group? Or are racial bloodlines the defining distinction?

Indeed, the Expulsion of the unconverted Jews of Spain and the subsequent adoption of *limpieza de sangre* (“cleanliness of blood”) laws were admissions of defeat. The Inquisition — despite countless torturous interrogations and *autos de fé* — could not confidently determine the sincerity of religious convictions and conversions.

Other terms were used for the conversos that left Spain and Portugal in large numbers and settled throughout Europe, North Africa, and eventually the New World. The term *marrano*, Spanish for “pig,” was the common, derogatory term for the converts. The mistrust of the sincerity of these converts is evident in this definition in the 1611 edition of John

Florio’s Italian-English dictionary, *A World of Words*: “marrano: a nickname for Spaniards, that is, one descended from Jews or infidels and whose parents were never christened, but for to save their goods will say they are Christians.” Another term, “crypto-Jew” was coined, and that is the term used in Robert Benjamin’s play for characters who trace their ancestry to conversos who ultimately left Spain and preserved some connection with Judaism.

“Parted Waters” is a carefully constructed yet sweetly simple tale of the friction that develops between generations, especially when ethnic tradition and religious identification are threatened by assimilation. The play was commissioned by the Arizona Jewish Theatre Company of



Argos MacCallum as Reynaldo in Santa Fe production of “Parted Waters” speaks to the God of Moses.

Phoenix where it premiered last year. It has recently been produced in both Albuquerque — by The Enchanted Rose Theatre at the North Fourth Arts Center directed by Harry Zimmerman — and Santa Fe — at Teatro Paraguas under the direction of Fran Martone. A comparison of the two productions helps one to appreciate the play’s strengths and weaknesses as well as its historical perspectives.

“Parted Waters” revolves around three generations of a contemporary Hispanic New Mexico family. Paterfamilias Reynaldo maintains the family farm. We meet him clearing his *acequia* or irrigation ditch. He has named this important channel “Angelina” and often speaks to her with affection. Aged seventy and suffering from heart disease, Reynaldo is looking to preserve the family tradition of working the land. His son Javier, however, has left the homestead for the city and a career with a large company.

Javier’s son Miguel (given a Hispanic name in deference to Reynaldo) is a hydrologist and is running for the New Mexico House of Representatives on a platform of responsible individual farmers managing their own lands as opposed to government or big business making the

decisions. Managing Miguel’s campaign is Rachel Goldstein, a spirited and opinionated young woman who just happens to be the daughter of Miguel’s primary opponent, Phyllis Goldstein. And she is Jewish.

In their first scene together we learn that Miguel and Rachel share similar ideals despite their cultural differences; she explains the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, “the repair of the world,” and he agrees with that behavioral model. She had invited him to a Passover Seder where he learned and experienced more about Judaism. Rachel is in conflict with her mother and Miguel with his father. They seem destined for each other.

During a campaign debate, Miguel — frustrated with his opponent’s argumentation skills — makes an anti-Semitic slur: “The Red Sea should have closed sooner.” This outburst ruins his prospects and later prompts Reynaldo to tell his grandson of their crypto-Jewish family background. Javier had not wanted to pass this family secret to his son. The three generations present the arguments for and against the importance of their Jewish roots. Reynaldo compares his inclusive philosophy to keeping two channels of his CB radio open — one channel to the Catholic Church and the other to the God of Moses. At odds with his father, Javier is resolutely Catholic and feels neither connection to nor need for Judaism. Miguel must discover his own spiritual identity.

While the topic of crypto-Jews in New Mexico is timely, “Parted Waters” might be characterized as a well-made “problem play” such as those of Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw. The tightly constructed plot revolves around the improbable confluence of Miguel’s employing (and being attracted to) his political opponent’s daughter as his campaign manager. Audiences, however, easily accept the situation. A cleverly decorated *santo* carved by Reynaldo provides a satisfying ending to the play. The *santo* was designed and constructed by Raymond López specially for the play. Viewed one way, the figure is a colorful saint; turned upside down it depicts the parting of the Red Sea for the Children of Israel as they escape the Egyptians.

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## Welcome to New NMJHS Members

Michael Gemme  
Deborah Wakshull  
Diane Chadarow  
Kathy Buchman  
Helene & Seymour Merrin  
Sandra Brintall  
Linda Kruger

## Keeping You Up-to-Date via E-mail

NMJHS plans to inform its members of upcoming activities via e-mail. We will still mail out fliers to those who do not have e-mail addresses. However, to save on postage and to keep you informed of the latest developments, we want to make sure we have the correct e-mail address for you. If you are starting to receive NMJHS announcements electronically, there is no need to do anything. If you wish to receive our announcements electronically, please send an e-mail to [nmjhs@jewishnewmexico.org](mailto:nmjhs@jewishnewmexico.org) and ask for your address to be added to the list.

## NMJHS Annual Meeting, June 27, 2010

Meet the incoming officers of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and help us honor the recipient of the Dr. Allan and Leona Hurst Award. Dr. Frances Levine, director of the Museum of New Mexico, and Gerald González, will present "In Her Own Voice: Doña Teresa and Intrigue in the Palace of the Governors" at the NMJHS Annual Meeting. The meeting will take place in Albuquerque at the Jewish Community Center, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, from 2 to 4 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

## "Parted Waters" (continued from p. 3)

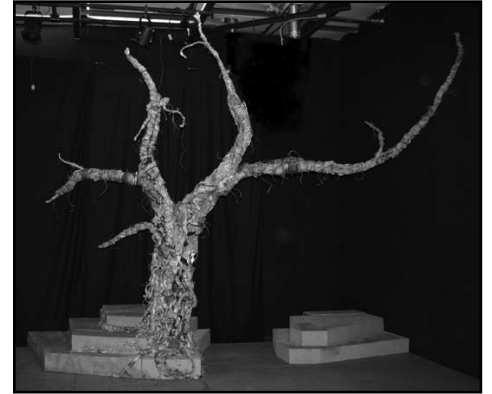
As in other problem plays, the characters espouse a variety of positions on the issues in question: assimilation, tradition, and the hidden Jew. Reynaldo, delightfully portrayed by Reuben Joe Muller in Albuquerque and Argos MacCallum in Santa Fe, is the loveable grandfather-figure. Speaking English with the rhythms and intonations of a Spanish accent, Reynaldo represents the values of family and tradition. He can be a bit cantankerous, but his humor overcomes objections. He finds comfort in both his Jewish roots and his Catholic church, although he realizes he is not fully a part of either.

Javier (Gene Ornelas and Tom Romero) represents the next generation that rejects much that their fathers value. Javier has moved into the city and works as a project manager in a factory rather than on a farm. He speaks English without an accent, and is fully committed to Catholicism. Javier keeps the family's Jewish ties a secret from his son. His often-heated discussions of religion with Reynaldo revolve around identity issues.

Grandson Miguel (Demet Vialpando and Angelo Jaramillo) has a lot to learn, and sassy Rachel (Lauren Myers and Lisa Bayta Friedland) is just the one to teach him. Their conversations swing back and forth from ecology and land management to the more personal topic of their growing mutual attraction. The key to this type of the problem play is that the playwright presents an assortment of opinions without favoring any one. It is up to audience members to make up their own minds on the issues.

I enjoyed both productions and don't want to make comparisons. There are, however, two places that deserve fuller discussion. The first is the scene of the political debate between Miguel and his opponent Phyllis Goldstein. In Santa Fe, Phyllis was presented as an offstage voice, and the impact of Miguel's anti-Semitic insult was muted by the absence of his antagonist and her reaction. In Albuquerque, the debate was shown on video on a large screen, as if on television. Phyllis was played by Robin Epstein (who starred as Golda Meir at an earlier Vortex Theatre production in Albuquerque). As Phyllis, Epstein responds with horror to the affront and leaves the stage. This reaction, along with murmurs from the stunned onscreen audience, made the scene much more powerful.

I also want to mention a marvelous component to the Teatro Paraguas set. The stage in that small theater was divided into two sections, Reynaldo's beloved ditch and Miguel's tiny campaign office. Dominating the farm side was an amazing tree sculpture by Fairley Barnes. The "Old Tree" covered almost half the stage, its graceful branches wrapped in multiple sheets of paper and string in shades of brown and tan giving it an aged and gnarly look.



"Old Tree" on the set of the Teatro Paraguas production in Santa Fe.

The tree was also symbolically powerful. Jewish tradition refers to the *Torah* as an *etz chaim*, "tree of life," and the term has kabalistic interpretations as well. The massive sculpture is also a genealogical family tree with branches and roots going backwards and forwards in time. Robert F. Benjamin's "Parted Waters" effectively explores how ancient Jewish roots can still impact present-day New Mexicans. When you have the opportunity, see it.

Editor's note: An article about the development of "Parted Waters" appeared in the December 2008 issue of *Legacy* on p. 3. This issue is available on the NMJHS website.

*Barry Gaines is Professor of English Literature at the University of New Mexico and theater critic for the Albuquerque Journal.*

## References

1. James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 14.
2. Henry Kamen, "The Mediterranean and the Expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492," *Past and Present*, 119 (May 1988), 30-55. ☆



## GENEALOGY CORNER: Emma's Rose

by Harriet Levine



'd always promised my grandmother that I would visit Fritzlar, the town in Germany where she grew up. In 2005 I fulfilled that promise. Dating from the

Middle Ages, Fritzlar is about 100 miles north of Frankfurt with a population today of about 15,000. In 1933 the town had 119 Jews out of a population of 4237, according to Paulgerhard Lohmann, a retired Lutheran minister.<sup>1</sup>

My maternal grandmother, Sophie Boley, was born in Fritzlar in 1879. At the age of 14 she came to America with an older relative. Eventually, other family members left Germany. Grandma settled in Athens, Georgia, where my mother was born; some years later, after her husband's death, Sophie moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to be closer to her children. Grandma lived to be 104. To me she was very special. I heard countless stories about the town and the house where she lived on Kaiserplatz, the main square in Fritzlar. She knew that her older sister Emma, the only family member to remain in Germany, had died at age 67 in the Holocaust.

Recently, towns in Germany have been holding memorial services for their Holocaust victims.

Herr Lohmann created a Day of Memorial for the families of the Jews who had lived in Fritzlar with planning assistance from the Cultural Center. They decided that brass stumbling stones bearing the names of the victims would be made by an artist and placed in front of the steps of the former inhabitants' doors. If the current

owners did not want a stone, it would instead be placed in front of the church or city hall. The date set for the memorial was March 7, 2005.

The upcoming memorial service moved me to visit Fritzlar. I corresponded with

my dear German friend, Ika, who had been an exchange student during my senior year in high school. We had kept in touch for over 50 years, even though we had seen each other only once during that time. On that trip 35 years ago I saw her in Munich. We had a heated discussion about my visiting Dachau concentration camp. She begged me not to go. I said I had to. (Her generation had not caused World War II and didn't want to be blamed for or even reminded of it.)

Ika and her husband Heinz, who are Lutherans, live in Brandenburg; they were shocked and saddened when they found out that my great-aunt Emma had died at the hands of the Nazis, because now they knew of an actual person who had been killed. They said it would be an honor to come to Fritzlar for the memorial. Later, Ika helped with translating parts of Herr Lohmann's book<sup>2</sup> that pertained to my family.

I traveled to Germany with my cousin Sylvia and her husband Dan. We arrived in Frankfurt on March 5 after an 8-hour flight from Atlanta. The next morn-



*Brass stumbling stones in front of a house in Fritzlar, Germany.*

ing we drove our rental car directly to Fritzlar. As we approached the town we could see the medieval skyline of old buildings with colorful red rooftops. My room at the Hotel Kaiser-Platz faced Grandma's house directly across the square. Because the roads were so narrow it felt like I could reach out and touch it from my hotel window. I used to think it would be a miracle if her old Fritz-

lar house were still standing, when her much newer house in Athens had been leveled for a parking lot.

The three of us wandered around the town's cobblestone streets. We saw the

last place that Emma had been hidden in an apartment above a bakery in 1942. She knew she was slated for deportation on September 6. At 4 a.m. that morning, in spite of the curfew, she went down to the bakery and gave her Christian friend, the woman who owned it, several coins, saying "These are for your children. Take them. I don't need them any more." At 6 a.m. she and two other women were rounded up, the last remaining Jews in Fritzlar. The three of them were deported from Fritzlar at 7:56 a.m.<sup>3</sup>



*Emma Boley.*

Herr Lohmann treated us to dinner that night. We discussed the fact that Grandma's house was for sale and wondered if there was any way to go inside. We just wanted to walk around in the house to "feel the past." Unfortunately, this could not be arranged, in spite of Ika's

efforts.

The next day was the memorial, which started at the mayor's office, where he gave a long speech in German (translated into English), while we drank champagne with orange juice. We each signed the Golden Book of Fritzlar. Then we went to the town square to hear speeches by the mayor, someone from the cultural center, and a high school student. The students had each selected a Jewish family to study; one of them chose Emma. There were many passers-by; several stayed to listen.

A German TV crew filmed the event for the evening news. In front of the homes of the Marks family and the Boley family, we were asked: How do you feel seeing the brass stone with your relative's name on it? I spoke about Emma "getting her name back," etched on a stone, and how overwhelming it was to see these stones, one for each deported Jew, all over town. Sylvia talked about the reconciliation and the reminder to not let such atrocities happen again anywhere in the world.

*(continued on p. 6)*

**Genealogy Corner** (continued from p. 5)

Our stone read, "Here used to live Emma Boley, born 1875, deported 1942, murdered September 28, 1942, Treblinka." Each hand-crafted brass stumbling stone, made slightly taller than the surrounding cobblestones, was placed in front of the door of a house. The brass color of the stones also made them stand out from the ordinary cobblestones. There will be about 70 stones in all.

Then we all walked together to the Jewish cemetery. A nearby Jewish congregation came, including a woman cantor. She sang, and prayers were recited, first for the Jews from Fritzlar, and then some read at the memorial stone for the six million Jews who lost their lives during World War II. Ika and I were arm-in-arm, sharing yet another experience of this history in Germany.

The following morning I braved the icy March drizzle to walk about the town by myself. Then I sat on Grandma's stoop with my back leaning against the front door, the next best thing to getting inside her house. I wondered what it was like for Grandma and Emma

growing up, and for Emma waiting for deportation.

After watching the town wake up – children going to school, shopkeepers opening their stores – I felt closer to the past generations and was ready to join the others for breakfast. Herr Lohmann joined us once again. It was very hard to say goodbye to him and thank him enough for all his hard work on the books about the Jews of Fritzlar, planning the memorial, and spending so much time with us.

In July 2009 I received a letter from a woman in Wiesbaden who told me the story about Emma Boley's rose as it was passed down through generations in her family. Almut Wolf wrote, "Everyone in my family has a special connection with the plant and is aware of the historical significance." Almut's great-grandmother, who lived in Fritzlar during the 1930s, was a neighbor as well as a friend of Emma. Before Emma was deported, Almut's great-grandmother said, "I want to see you and the beautiful fragrant rose." That is when Emma dug up her red rose bush and gave it to her with the words, "We will never see each other again, but please keep this rose for me."

Almut's great-grandmother planted the rose and took it with her whenever she moved during and after the war. Later she learned that Emma had been murdered. She gave her daughters a cutting of the rose with the words, "Keep the rose for Emma Boley." Almut's grandmother gave each of her three children a cutting of the rose accompanied with the same words. And now Almut has a blooming fragrant rose in her garden.

Inspired by her friends, Almut researched Emma Boley on the Internet and came across one of Herr Lohmann's books. She contacted him and told him the story of Emma Boley's rose. In his reply, he gave her my address. In her letter to me Almut concluded, "The rose continues to bloom and thrive, in spite of, or possibly because of all the cruelties committed during the Second World War."



*The Boley house, Giessener Strasse 25, which had belonged to Sophie and Emma's parents.*

Editor's note: Emma Boley's name appears in the Yad Vashem database,<sup>4</sup> taken from several sources, among them a list of victims from Germany and a list of Theresienstadt camp inmates. Emma was deported to Treblinka on September 7, 1942, and died in Minsk in 1945.<sup>5</sup> This information conflicts with the date and place of death engraved on Emma's stumbling stone.

### References

1. Paulgerhard Lohmann, *Jewish Fellow Citizens at Fritzlar, 1933 - 1949*, published in 2006. This is a revision of Chapters 13 and 14 of his early book, which includes a year by year account of the families who lived in Fritzlar during that period. This book was written through contact with former Jewish residents of Fritzlar, only a few of whom survived the Holocaust.
2. Paulgerhard Lohmann, *Here We Were at Home – The History of the Jews of Fritzlar from 1096 – 2000*, published in April 1999, in German.

(continued on p. 7)

## International Conference on Jewish Genealogy

**If you are interested in Jewish genealogy, you won't want to miss the major conference this summer in Los Angeles. The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) will hold its 30th annual conference July 11 - 16, 2010, at the brand-new JW Marriott hotel in downtown Los Angeles. This conference has something for everyone, from beginners to seasoned professionals. Check out the conference web site at [www.JGSLA2010.com](http://www.JGSLA2010.com).**

**Genealogy Corner** (continued from p. 6)

3. Paulgerhard Lohmann, *The Anti-Semitic NS Racial Mania and the Fritztal Jews, 1933 - 1949*, p. 136, published in English in 2008. (This is a revised and expanded version of Reference 1.)

4. To search for a name on the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names at Yad Vashem or to enter a new one, go to [www.yadvashem.org/wps/portal/IY\\_HON\\_Welcome](http://www.yadvashem.org/wps/portal/IY_HON_Welcome). The Yad Vashem database currently contains over three million names. A Page of Testimony

exists for each name submitted, recording the victim's full name, date and place of birth, place of residence before the war, profession, parents' and spouse's names, circumstances of death, and a photo where available. Millions of victims remain unidentified. Yad Vashem asks Jewish families and communities to recover those names before time runs out.

5. *Gedenkbuch – Opfer der Verfolgung der Juden unter der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltderrschaft in Deutschland 1933 – 1945*, Bunderarchiv (German National Archives), Koblenz, 1986.

*Harriet Levine is a retired Speech and Language Pathologist originally from Milwaukee. She practiced in Boston Children's Hospital before moving to Santa Fe twenty-three years ago. She works professionally as an actor and also spends time volunteering on archaeology digs and with non-profit organizations such as Kitchen Angels. ☆*

**The Katz Family** (continued from p. 1)

Senator Albert A. Fall (yes, the same person later involved in the Teapot Dome scandal) to help expedite matters, and his sister and mother were advised to make their way to Yokohama, Japan.

In January 1919, Gittel and Sarah Witten were able to travel across the Pacific on the ship *Kamu Maru*, legally enter the United States, and then take the train from the West Coast to Albuquerque. While the ship's manifest indicates that their destination was Albuquerque, they only stayed a short while and then went on to Des Moines to join other family members.

Many of the very early Jewish families in Albuquerque were of German origin who favored the establishment of a reform Jewish congregation. Temple Albert served the needs of these people well. At first Aaron Katz and his friends were members, and indeed Aaron's son Dave was bar mitzvah and confirmed at Temple Albert.

However, the Russian and Polish Jews who came in the late teens and early twenties of the twentieth century were much more comfortable with a more traditional Judaism, observing *kasbrut* with meat shipped from Denver or El Paso. Starting as early as 1920, Aaron Katz and four others, including Dave Meyer, resolved to establish an orthodox or conservative congregation, which eventually became B'nai Israel.

At first the new congregation met in people's homes and held services in

store fronts. Aaron had a lovely voice and served as the Congregation's cantor for fourteen years starting in 1920. By the mid-1930s the Congregation had a permanent home above a theater on Central Avenue. Money was tight, and it would not be until 1941 when they were able to build on Coal SE.

Aaron did not live to see the *shul* above the theater. He died, presumably of an asthma attack, at age 57 in 1934 and is buried in the Congregation Albert cemetery. (The B'nai Israel cemetery had not yet been established.)

Ann Katz, the eldest child of Aaron and Mollie, worked as a teacher. She married Jack Levick, who took over Aaron's pawnshop and ran it for many years as Reliable Pawn Shop. Their children, Nancy and Mitchell, were born in Albuquerque and attended Albuquerque public schools and B'nai Israel. Mollie Katz lived with the Levicks the rest of her life in an apartment at their home on Lafayette Street. She was a very bright woman who enjoyed a good game of bridge. Mollie died in 1959 and is buried in the B'nai Israel cemetery.

Aaron and Mollie's second child Jeanette Katz (known as Sany) moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, but came often to Albuquerque to see her family. The family pooled their resources to send the youngest child, Robert, to dental school. He and his wife Polly, with children Mark and Pamela, lived in Albuquerque where Robert practiced

dentistry. After Polly died in 1979, Robert moved to Denver, Colorado.

Dave Katz, Aaron and Mollie's third child, became the head of purchasing for the United Pueblo Tribes. He also devoted time as the treasurer of B'nai Israel, bringing in star performers such as Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington to headline fundraisers.

The Katz family was very friendly with the Meyer family, and Dave Katz was particularly friendly with Jack Meyer. In the 1930s Jack's young wife Ethel invited her grown niece Frances to visit her in Albuquerque. Dave and Frances hit it off and were soon married. While they were engaged, Dave arranged for construction of their house on Tulane NE, where they lived for fifty-two years. Frances Katz worked as a bookkeeper for the Meyer and Meyer store in the early years of her marriage until her son Murray was born.

Early in World War II, Japanese internment camps were established in the West. Dave received a promotion to work as head of purchasing for one of these camps in Colorado. Frances moved up there to be with him, and they stayed there for quite some time.

Subsequently, Dave entered the service, returning to Albuquerque after his discharge. He opened a store downtown to sell army/navy surplus and other small items and called it the

(continued on p. 8)

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**The Katz Family** (continued from p. 7)

Gizmo. It was very hard at first. He supplemented the family income by helping various government agencies and the University of New Mexico with bidding and purchasing. Frances assisted where she could by doing part of the bookkeeping for the Gizmo. The Katz store and the building in which it was located no longer exist. Today another business on Central Avenue called the Gizmo occupies the former J.C. Penney building.

Dave and Frances Katz had two sons, Murray and Michael. Murray attended Highland High School, where he met Sali Barnett, who was to be his wife for the next 45 years. Both Katz sons went on to John Hopkins University and became physicians. Murray, who passed away in November 2008, spent most of his career at the University of Arizona College of Medicine, where he was Professor of Medicine and Physiology. Michael lives in Santa Fe where he continues to practice.

The Katz family celebrated most Jewish holidays with their relatives the Meyers. Frances belonged to the Sewing Circle with her Aunt Ethel. Aaron and Mollie Katz's granddaughters Nancy Katz and Margie Meyer had a double Bat Mitzvah at B'nai Israel.

The Katz family was also involved with the larger Albuquerque community, both as members of the business community and in civic organizations including the Shriners and the Masons. Dave lived until he was ninety-eight, with his mind as sharp as ever up to the end. Several members of the Katz family still reside in Albuquerque. Nancy Katz Levick lives in Albuquerque and is a member of B'nai Israel.

Frances Katz still lives near the synagogue in the apartment that she and Dave moved into after selling the house on Tulane NE. In 1994, Frances contributed to Congregation B'nai Israel's publication *L'Dor V'Dor – From Generation to Generation: A Tribute to Our 50-Year Members*, which includes a his-

tory of the congregation and interviews with thirty-seven of the congregation's founding members. Frances Katz remains a wonderful resource for stories of Jewish life in Albuquerque.

There is no doubt that Aaron Katz's 1916 decision to bring his family to Albuquerque has had many positive reverberations for both Albuquerque and its Jewish community.

*This article was written by Rosalia Feinstein during a period of remission from cancer. It is published posthumously with help from her daughter Naomi Sandweiss, who thanks Frances Katz, Nancy Levick, and Sali Katz for their contributions to this article. See the June 2009 issue of Legacy for a companion article by Mrs. Feinstein, "The Meyer Family in Albuquerque." ☆*

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## Annual Cemetery Cleanup on May 2, 2010

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and the Montefiore Cemetery Association invite you to participate in the annual cleanup of historic Montefiore cemetery starting at 10 a.m. on Sunday, May 2, 2010, in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Be sure to bring work gloves. If you have a rake and shovel, bring them. We could use a wheelbarrow for moving large stones. Following the cleanup there will be a brief program and a pic-

nic lunch provided by the Montefiore Cemetery Association.

Congregation Montefiore was established in 1884 as the first synagogue in New Mexico. Montefiore cemetery is located adjacent to the Las Vegas Masonic Cemetery. Take exit 345 from I-25. A map can be found at [www.lvjewish.org](http://www.lvjewish.org). Contact Lewis Terr for more information, 505-699-9508. Groups please RSVP to NMJHS office at 505-348-4471.



*Annual Montefiore Cemetery cleanup in Las Vegas, New Mexico, in April 2009.*

NMJHS extends its condolences to the family and friends of Santa Fe resident Dr. Louise Taichert. Louise was born and raised in Las Vegas, New Mexico, one of three daughters of successful Las Vegas businessman Joseph Taichert and his wife Annie. She practiced pediatric psychiatry in San Francisco for many years before retiring to Santa Fe with her husband Dr. Sanford Feldman, who passed away last year. Louise has been laid to rest in Montefiore Cemetery in Las Vegas next to her husband.

### Mission Statement

The mission of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is to promote greater understanding and knowledge of New Mexico's Jewish history. The Society's programs examine the state's Jewish heritage in all its diversity and strive to present this heritage within a broad cultural context. The Society is a secular organization and solicits the membership and participation of all interested people, regardless of religious affiliation.

### Check it out: [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org)

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society has a new web site address, [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org). The old one still works, [www.nmjewishhistory.org](http://www.nmjewishhistory.org). During 2010 the NMJHS web site will be undergoing some major changes. If you have photographs that you think would be appropriate for the new web site, please contact the Society administrator.

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## PEEK INTO THE PAST

### Contributions to New Town Albuquerque by Jewish and Italian Immigrants

by Naomi Sandweiss

**B**efore the railroad reached Albuquerque, the settlement, formally named La Villa de San Francisco Xavier de Albuquerque, was a sleepy agricultural town built around a central plaza. After the American military arrived in 1846, commercial operations expanded. Yet it was the arrival of the railroad in 1880, several miles east of the plaza, which led to the development of “New Town” Albuquerque, a commercial hub incorporated in 1885 and built in large part by immigrants.

Far from the urban areas of the Northeastern United States where numerous immigrants settled, turn-of-the-century Albuquerque was home to newcomers from many regions, including Greece, Lebanon, Italy, and Eastern Europe. As the city grew, newcomers – particularly those from the more populous Italian and Jewish immigrant communities – made important contributions to Albuquerque’s development.

Between 1880 and 1920, four million Italian immigrants crossed the Atlantic to the United States.<sup>1</sup> Initially, Italian migrants came to the Southwest to take jobs as miners or railroad workers. Unlike their countrymen in other Western cities, Italian immigrants to New Town Albuquerque quickly abandoned their former occupations and seized the opportunity to go into business for themselves. Between 1900 and 1930, the most common occupation of Italians in Albuquerque was business owner.<sup>2</sup> Italian-owned enterprises, such as groceries, bakeries, saloons, hotels, and apparel shops, sprang up near the rail station on First and Second streets.

Oseste Bachechi, considered the “patron” of Albuquerque’s Italian immigrant community, arrived in Albuquerque in 1885 at age 25.<sup>3</sup> He soon established a small saloon near the railroad tracks that expanded to become a wholesale liquor business. Encouraging chain migration,

Bachechi lent money to his countrymen for passage and assisted them in finding work and housing. The 1920 Census shows eleven people living in the Bachechi household, all literate. Bachechi eventually sold his liquor business, invested in real estate, and opened the New European Hotel<sup>4</sup> before building Albuquerque’s famous Kimo theatre. The Domenici family, a name known

families such as the Jaffas, Mandells, and Dryfuses, established businesses in New Town and were instrumental in its growth. Henry Jaffa served as first mayor of New Town Albuquerque and Mike Mandell served as its second.<sup>8</sup>

As the population of Albuquerque continued to expand – from 3,785 in 1890<sup>9</sup> to 35,000 by 1940 – so did business opportunities. Through the 1920s, there was a sense of optimism within Albuquerque’s business community,<sup>10</sup> although new arrivals were curtailed by the 1924 restrictive U.S. immigration laws.

Albuquerque’s Jewish and Italian immigrants had many similarities. Merchants from both groups quickly learned English and Spanish and, in some cases, Navajo and other Native American languages. Their linguistic abilities made it easier for them to navigate established Hispano and Anglo cultures. Both Italian and Jewish immigrants were in New Mexico for the long term, the majority becoming naturalized U.S. citizens as soon as they could.<sup>11</sup>

Jewish and Italian immigrants did not isolate themselves geographically or in terms of business connections, but they did establish cultural and social organizations to meet their needs. In the case of the Jewish immigrants, Congregation Albert was founded in 1897 by already established German-Jewish families. As noted elsewhere in this issue, Jewish newcomers with more orthodox religious practices formally founded Congregation B’nai Israel in 1921, although members had been meeting in earlier years for religious observance.<sup>12</sup>

In 1892, Italian newcomers founded the Columbo Society, a mutual-assistance organization. Shortly thereafter, members built a headquarters, Columbus Hall, at 416 N. Second Street, which served as a social center for Italian immigrants and city-wide venue for entertainment and events.<sup>13</sup>



*Groundbreaking for YMCA in Albuquerque in 1915. Note both Jewish and Italian-owned businesses on First Street in background.*

well to New Mexicans, immigrated from Sorbarro, Italy, and operated an Albuquerque grocery business.<sup>5</sup>

Jewish immigrants were, of course, also drawn to Albuquerque. Following an initial migration of German Jews to New Mexico along the Santa Fe Trail, Jews from Eastern Europe sought opportunities in the Southwest after the railroad was built. Along with Albuquerque’s growth as a commercial center, its Jewish population multiplied.<sup>6</sup>

Not to be outdone by the Italians, Jewish immigrants opened small businesses in New Town Albuquerque including clothing, gift, grocery, pawn, and other shops. Jewish merchants such as the Rosenwalds, who had operated a business in Old Town Albuquerque, moved their operations to the burgeoning New Town as it became the center of business.<sup>7</sup> Jewish

*(continued on p. 11)*

**Peek Into the Past** (continued from p. 10)

While establishing organizations for their coreligionists and countrymen, members of both groups set about involving themselves in the greater Albuquerque community. In the early years, immigrant families were neighbors, often living in the same building as their businesses. Merchant's children – among them the Katzes, Bachechis, and Matteuccis – played together outside their family stores on First and Second streets.

Youngsters attended Albuquerque's public schools together. Sons were registered and drafted for military service in the First World War. Members of both groups contributed to Albuquerque's cultural and civic life, building not only businesses, but theatres and parks as well.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, friendships grew between Italian and Jewish immigrants, second generation members of each group establishing lifelong friendships.<sup>15</sup>

The opportunities that New Town Albuquerque offered ambitious immigrants between 1890 and 1930 were immeasurable. In a city without established Jewish or Italian enclaves, newcomers were free to be fully involved in the greater community, at the same time establishing institutions that served their distinct cultural or religious needs.

What accounted for the immigrants' business success and civic leadership? One historian's thoughts about why Albuquerque's Italian immigrants prospered in New Mexico probably apply to members of other immigrant groups as well. According to F. G. Lopriato y López, immigrants acted "as a bridge between society that was undergoing transition from an agricultural society to an industrial society to a business society and from a Spanish-speaking society to an English-speaking society, from one system of education to another, and from one set of state values to another."<sup>16</sup>

Not only were New Town's immigrants in the right place at the right time, they had the vision and skills to make the most of the opportunity.

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### Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

*Check online calendar of Upcoming Events for more details at [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org).*

Sunday, May 2, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Montefiore Cemetery Cleanup, Las Vegas, New Mexico. See map at [www.lvjewish.org](http://www.lvjewish.org).

Sunday, June 27, 2 - 4 p.m., NMJHS Annual Meeting, Jewish Community Center, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, Albuquerque. Introduction of incoming officers, presentation of the Dr. Allan and Leona Hurst Award, followed by a presentation by Dr. Frances Levine, director of the Museum of New Mexico, and attorney Gerald González, "In Her Own Voice: Doña Teresa and Intrigue in the Palace of the Governors."

Sunday, September 26, 2 - 4 p.m., genealogy program presented by noted sculptor Harvey Buchalter on the topic of yizkor (memory) books, which commemorate a lost town in the Old Country. To be held in Albuquerque [specific location to be announced].

October 22 - 23, NMJHS Annual Conference in Las Vegas, New Mexico, at the historic Plaza Hotel. Save the date. Details forthcoming.

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