We are excited to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest with a gala event on September 8, 2019 at Ted Mann Hall at the University of Minnesota.

Join us as we honor those who conceived of this important organization, as well as the many board members and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make JHSUM vibrant and meaningful through all the years since then.

Our program for the evening will pay tribute to the Jewish immigrant history of the Upper Midwest. Our Master of Ceremonies will be none other than Congressman Dean Phillips, and our keynote speaker is Ari Shapiro, host of All Things Considered on National Public Radio, who will speak on the theme of “Immigrants: Making a Difference”.

Without immigration, the history of Jews of the Upper Midwest, and the strength of our community today, would not exist.
Ari Shapiro will provide a historical context for the importance of immigration, drawing on his local roots as well as his journalistic talents.

Take this opportunity to explore the connections between our history as the Jewish community of the Upper Midwest and today’s headlines. What we can learn from the past shapes the way we respond to the challenges of the future.

**About our Speaker and Master of Ceremonies**

We are delighted to feature a keynote speaker and MC who both come from local roots: Ari Shapiro was born in Fargo, North Dakota in 1978, grew up in Portland, Oregon, and eventually graduated magna cum laude from Yale University. He started his career in radio journalism as an intern to Nina Totenberg at National Public Radio in 2001. Since then, he has served as NPR’s White House correspondent as well as NPR’s international correspondent based in London, before coming to All Things Considered. He has earned numerous prizes and awards for his journalism. He is also a talented vocalist — Shapiro occasionally sings with the musical group, Pink Martini. His mother is quoted in Oregon Jewish Life as remembering Ari’s singing career kicking off at the age of two, when he sang “Adon Olam” from the bimah of the Fargo Hebrew Congregation.

He lives in Washington, D.C. with his husband Michael Gottlieb.

Congressman Dean Phillips’ family goes back to Russian Jewish immigrants who settled in Sioux City, Iowa, where his grandmother Pauline Esther Friedman Phillips — better known as Dear Abby — was born.

Phillis was born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1969, to DeeDee and Artie Pfefer, who was killed in the Vietnam War when his son was an infant. DeeDee later married Eddie Phillips, of the Phillips Distilling Company, who adopted Dean and raised him to work hard and share success.

Phillips attended Brown University and earned his MBA from the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Business. He worked in a variety of startup environments before joining — and eventually leading — Phillips Distilling.

Congressman Dean Phillips won the seat in the 2018 election. Just months into his new position, Phillips is already taking on leadership roles in caucuses and committees as well as sponsoring important anti-discrimination legislation.

Phillips is the father of two daughters, the founder of Talenti, the mega-successful gelato and sorbetto company, and the great-grandson of the well-known philanthropists, Rose and Jay Phillips. He divides his time between his district in the western metropolitan suburbs of Minneapolis and Washington, D.C.

**And a Word About Our Venue**

Even our venue is named for a prominent member of the Jewish community of the Upper Midwest: Ted Mann was born in 1916 to Jewish immigrants from Wishek, North Dakota. He began his career as a movie theater usher, and eventually founded Mann Theaters. His legacy is one of generosity and philanthropy with his children and grandchildren carrying on that important tradition.
I must have been in my mid-teens before the local grocery stores finally stocked Passover foods. Needless to say, the Sisterhood concession rapidly dwindled in response. Families could now purchase locally and know they could always replenish easily mid-week if needed. At the same time, we were starting to learn that Manischewitz was not the only game in town for matzo — we could even get some imported from Israel!

I’ve lived far from Sioux Falls for a long time, but whenever we celebrate Pesach, I always remember those years when Passover foods were a major event, requiring special delivery from distant cities.
On the road:

Jewish history (not) of the upper Midwest

By Robin Doroshow

If you find yourself on the island of Nevis in the West Indies, head to the port city of Charlestown and ask any local for directions to the colonial era synagogue. Every one of them will direct you to a ruin of a cistern that served a late-eighteenth century villa, known locally as the “Jews’ school.”

In truth, most of the Jewish population of Nevis had already moved away from the island by the time this cistern and villa were constructed. The ruin is located close to the Jewish cemetery and in the section of town where the Jewish community once lived and worked, and a strong oral history maintains that it is in fact the former synagogue.

You might have heard of Alexander Hamilton; did you know he was born on Nevis to Rachel Lavien, and received his early education at the Nevis synagogue school? There is conjecture that Hamilton’s mother may have converted to Judaism to marry Johann Michael Lavien, (sometimes spelled Levine), thought to be a Danish Jew. Could Hamilton himself be Jewish…? But that’s another story.

Let’s rewind a bit to how I got to be standing at the Charlestown ruin, at a place that was in fact NOT the site of the Colonial era synagogue of Nevis where Sephardic Jews prayed and Alexander Hamilton studied.

As I planned my travel in late 2018, I looked for books about this Caribbean island. Nevis is part of the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles and is located about 250 miles south of Puerto Rico. The Federation of Saint Christopher (widely known as St. Kitts) and Nevis were among the first to be settled by Europeans. The islands finally gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1983.

While searching the Hennepin County library website, I was surprised and delighted to find a book about the Jews of Nevis. The Jewish Community of Early Colonial Nevis: A Historical Archaeological Study (University Press of Florida, 2005), even has an Upper Midwest connection — it was written by Dr. Michelle Terrell, an archaeologist based in Shafer, Minnesota.

From Dr. Terrell’s book, written in an accessible, narrative style, I learned that Nevis was home to a Sephardic Jewish community from approximately the middle of the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century. These Jews descended from *Anusim* (“forced ones”),
who converted to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition. Many Anusim continued to practice rituals of Judaism in secret for generations.

The Jewish community of Nevis was likely founded following the expulsion of Jews from Portuguese Brazil in 1654. While the exact size of the community is not known, it was large enough to build and sustain a synagogue and cemetery. There are fewer than 20 extant marked graves in the Jewish cemetery, featuring inscriptions in Hebrew, Spanish and Portuguese, and studies indicate that there may be many others that are no longer marked.

*The Jewish Community of Early Colonial Nevis* offers a fascinating study of the story of the Jews of Nevis, as well as those who settled on other Caribbean islands. Through meticulous reconstruction of maps, Dr. Terrell identifies the locations of Jewish residences, shops, and ultimately, the synagogue of Nevis — which I did find.

If you take the copy from the Hennepin County library, don’t be surprised if you shake out some grains of Nevisian sand from the pages.
Wander the neighborhood with a guided tour

JHSUM regularly provides tours of the Northside of Minneapolis through a Jewish historical lens. With a dozen trained volunteers, we can respond when we are called upon by individuals and groups.

Recent and upcoming tours

Sylvia Fine and Jerry Ingber led a group of young leaders from the Partnership2gether program of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation. The group, including participants from Minneapolis and Israel, toured the Northside and then proceeded to view the collection at the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives at the University of Minnesota.

Ray Lazar led Australian visitors Lisa Nicholls and her husband Allan on a day long “roots tour.” They visited sites where Lisa’s mother and grandparents had lived and worked, as well as the cemeteries where her grandparents and other relatives are buried.

Cary Shaich and Sylvia Fine plan to lead a tour for members of their synagogue, Beth El, this coming spring.

If you would like a tour for yourself, a friend or relative, or a group, please contact history@jhsum.org.

Jim Crow of the North screening

Join us on May 9 for the 7 p.m. screening of Jim Crow of the North at the Elmer L. Andersen library at the University of Minnesota.

Jim Crow of the North explores the spread of racist, restrictive real estate covenants in the early 20th century in Minneapolis.

The film is based on the work of the Mapping Prejudice Project (www.mappingprejudiceproject.org) at the University of Minnesota, which charts the progression of covenants throughout the 20th century and their continuing effects on the largest metro area in the Upper Midwest.

This event is sponsored by the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives at the University of Minnesota Libraries and by the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest. Co-sponsors include the Jewish Community Relations Council, Northside Achievement Zone, the Minneapolis Urban League, TPT, and CHAIM (Children of Holocaust Survivors Association in Minnesota).

The event is free and features a panel discussion following the screening. To reserve your place, please RSVP by May 2 at http://z.umn.edu/JCOTN

Still, by Rebecca Bender

Book launch: June 3, 7 p.m. Sabes JCC

When Rebecca Bender was asked by a newspaper reporter, “Are you still Jewish?” she couldn’t have known that the question would spark a creative and historical journey to result in a book.

Still is a unique combination of biography and memoir, co-authored with Kenneth Bender, the author’s father, prior to his passing. The event will include an author reading, refreshments and an opportunity to purchase copies of the book and have them signed. The event is free, but we request RSVPs to history@jhsum.org or 952-381-3360.

We Spoke Jewish: A Legacy in Stories, by Susan Weinberg

Mother’s Day and Father’s Day are coming up — consider gifting a copy (or two) of Susan Weinberg’s elegant book of stories, artwork and history, We Spoke Jewish: A Legacy in Stories.

Weinberg explores the experiences of three groups of Jewish immigrants to Minnesota: those who lived in early Jewish immigrant communities, Holocaust survivors who came in the 1940s and 50s, and immigrants from the former Soviet Union who came largely between 1970 and the 1990s.

Learn more about the book and speaking engagements, and purchase your copies at www.wespokejewish.com.

This project was originally developed as part of the Jewish Identity and Legacy Project in which JHSUM partnered.
News from the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries

In 1964, as part of Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, the National Council of Jewish Women turned their focus to community action programs geared towards eliminating poverty. The St. Paul chapter of NCJW took up the call and founded a program that would become a national model.

This was the topic of November’s installment in the “First Fridays” lecture series at the Elmer L. Andersen library. In keeping with the theme for this academic year of “We Are Here: Women in the Archives,” Archivist Kate Dietrick presented “The Miracle of McKinley,” telling the story and sharing archival materials found in the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives.

Under the direction of co-chairs Greta Freeman and Rhoda Redleaf, volunteers worked with the preschoolers in a structured setting to provide them with quality early childhood education and help them develop a positive self-image. By October of 1964, 64 children were enrolled. The principal of McKinley Elementary recognized the impact that the program was already having on the children’s social skills and parental involvement, due to the dedication and commitment of the volunteers.

The program soon garnered local and then national interest. Meanwhile, a group in Washington was designing what would become Head Start, which launched in 1965. Since NCJW’s program in St. Paul was one of only a handful like it in the country at the time, the chapter sent a nine-page report of their results at McKinley to Vice President Hubert Humphrey and the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Head Start launched in the state of Minnesota in 1965, while the McKinley program ran until 1967. Over the course of its existence, 150 women gave 6,000 hours of time to help the McKinley children.

If you are interested in watching “The Miracle of McKinley,” you can find it on the web at http://z.umn.edu/umjaff. The materials used for research are available and open to the public in the Archives. Please direct questions or comments to Archivist Kate Dietrick at diet0134@umn.edu or 612-625-0192.

A Partner in Genealogy

In 2015, Walter Elias attended the conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies and was dismayed that he could not pursue his passion with a Minnesota chapter. He enlisted the assistance of several local genealogists and soon discovered many in the Jewish community working quietly in isolation.

Wasting no time, Elias took the lead in founding the Minnesota Jewish Genealogical Society.

Since then, MNJGS has held a number of events to bring together Jewish genealogists around topics of shared interest. The organization has grown its membership and has recently established JHSUM as its fiscal agent, recognizing the strong connections between family history and community history.

Though based in Minnesota, the genealogical focus of the MNJGS is as wide as the many countries from which our ancestors came. Visit www.MNJGS.org or like the Facebook page to learn about genealogical resources, events and how to become involved.

VISIT

The Upper Midwest Jewish Archives are open and available to any who are interested in viewing our unique materials. To learn more about our collections, visit our website at www.lib.umn.edu/umja.
At JHSUM, we know that self-knowledge emerges from documenting and remembering our history. That’s why I’m so excited for our 35th anniversary gala keynote speaker, Ari Shapiro, speaking on the topic of “Immigrants: Making a Difference.”

The Jewish story of the Upper Midwest starts from — and often circles back to — immigration. Immigration touches every one of us, whether three generations back or more recently. Our gala celebration gives us an opportunity to reflect on this touchstone, while looking towards the future we see for our organization and our community.

Stimulating learning, excellent company, the fabulous Ted Mann Hall, and Congressman Dean Phillips serving as Master of Ceremonies...this is going to be one for the history books.

I hope you’ll join me and the rest of our JHSUM family on September 8 — it promises to be a night to remember.

From Corrine Feinberg's scrapbook, 1970.
*Courtesy of Upper Midwest Jewish Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries.*