

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
of the Upper Midwest

Generations:



One of more than 100 works of art created by Leon Sorkin donated to JHSUM.

SPRING 2018



The gift of art: Donation from Sorkin family

The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest has received a donation of more than 100 drawings and paintings from the family of the late Leon Sorkin.

Sorkin's name is recognized by many people in the community as a Hebrew and Bar Mitzvah tutor at the Minneapolis Talmud Torah for more than 30 years. Sorkin studied art at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in the 1930s. He taught

art at the Walker Art Center in the 1940s and the Wayzata Arts Center in the 1950s. If you have stories from your work with Leon Sorkin, we'd love to hear them. Please send to history@jhsุม.org.

Two exhibits planned

A showing of some of Sorkin's work is scheduled for July 23-29 at Homewood Studios in North Minneapolis. Another showing will be held Sunday, August 5 from 2-5 p.m. at the Sabes JCC.

Capturing St. Paul history, one story at a time

By Robin Doroshow

Minnesota's first Jews arrived in St. Paul around 1849 from German-speaking regions of Central Europe. At the time, St. Paul was a frontier town with the northern-most steamboat landing on the Mississippi River. In 1856, two years before Minnesota became the 32nd state admitted to the union, St. Paul Jews established Mount Zion Temple.

Today, Mount Zion member Dr. Lija Greenseid is making another mark on St. Paul history: The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest has hired her to capture oral histories of community elders with deep ties to St. Paul's Jewish communities.

Dr. Greenseid's work is part of JHSUM's efforts to record and interpret the history of St. Paul's Jewish communities from early territorial days through the large Eastern European immigration through the middle part of the 20th century.



Dr. Greenseid holds a BA in history from the University of Wisconsin and a PhD in Research Methodology from the University of Minnesota.

As JHSUM launched its St. Paul Jewish history project, StoryCorps, a national nonprofit organization with a mission of connecting people through storytelling, set up its mobile recording booth in St. Paul. The booth attracted the attention of JHSUM supporters and community members: Jerry Ingber, Richard Strimling, Elliot Kaplan, and Sam Kaplan. They each spent an afternoon in the recording booth reminiscing about life growing up in St. Paul. JHSUM will use both the StoryCorps recordings and oral histories to help create an exhibit.



Jerry Ingber and Richard Strimling telling their St. Paul stories in the StoryCorps recording booth.



Elliot Kaplan, Sylvia and Sam Kaplan outside the StoryCorps mobile recording unit.

YOU CAN BE PART OF THE STORY



SHARE

Do you have memories or materials that you think should be part of this project? Please contact JHSUM at 952-381-3360 or history@jhsum.org



DOUBLE MATCH

Thanks to generous matching grants from Oren and Sharron Steinfeldt Family Foundation and the Heilicher Family Foundation, every donation you make to the oral history project will be **TRIPLED**, up to \$5,000!



ENJOY

JHSUM plans to develop an exhibit based on the StoryCorps recordings, Dr. Greenseid's work and other artifacts. Watch for future information, and then help us celebrate St. Paul's Jewish history.



**JHSUM President
Jamie Heilicher**

SPRING CLEANING

When you're going through old boxes in the attic or basement, think about JHSUM! We are always looking to add to our archives, photo collection and artifacts, and you never know what community treasures you may find.

FIND US AT THE J-

Summer's coming, and we're excited to be launching our permanent presence at the newly renovated St. Paul JCC campus, thanks to a generous donation from the Oren and Sharron Steinfeldt Foundation. Look for our changing displays in the new Oren and Sharron Steinfeldt Family Gallery.

YOUR SUPPORT KEEPS HISTORY ALIVE

We're part of JHSUM because we believe that celebrating history is a core part of keeping future generations engaged and proud to be a part of this great community.

Please join us in realizing our mission! Every donation, no matter the size, contributes to past, present and future.

"Not for himself alone": Bernice Cowl Gordon

By Robin Doroshow and Sharron Steinfeldt

Ah mentch lebt nit far zich allein' — a person does not live for himself alone. Those were the words of Ethel Cowl, words her granddaughter Bernice Cowl Gordon clearly took to heart. In 2007, Gordon was one of ten individuals awarded the Virginia McKnight Binger Award in Human Service for demonstrating an exceptional personal commitment to helping others.

Gordon, who died last November at age 101, volunteered for numerous organizations in both the Jewish and secular communities for more than 20 years. A talented pianist and singer, she shared her gifts at senior care facilities and through the Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program. Born in North Minneapolis, she graduated as valedictorian of North High School, before marrying Moses Gordon and raising her family.

JHSUM was one of the many lucky beneficiaries of Gordon's energy and generosity. She became a founder, volunteer and board member. Fellow Founder Sharron Steinfeldt remembers Gordon as an active board member and a special volunteer with passion, follow through, intelligence, and diplomacy with "a kick."

Steinfeldt remembers: "Bernice loved Judaism and was always striving to learn more. She was and still is an inspiration to all of those she touched through her volunteer experiences, and her day to day



Gordon featured in artwork in *We Spoke Jewish*.

acts of kindness. She used her knowledge of the Jewish experience to help others and was a true friend, both to me and to the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest."

Gordon's story and the artwork it inspired is featured in Susan Weinberg's book: *We Spoke Jewish*, recently published by the Jewish Historical Society and Weinberg with Minnesota Legacy Grant funding.

Gordon also made a legacy gift: The Dr. Moses and Bernice Cowl Gordon Fund at the Jewish Historical Society established the Upper Midwest Jewish History Journal, published regularly by the Society.

Todah Rabah, Bernice.

Did you know...?

It takes less funding than you think to make a legacy gift to support JHSUM. Make a lasting contribution to our community's history.

For information, contact JHSUM's Executive Director, Robin Doroshow, at rdoroshow@jhsun.org, or 952-381-3360. You can also learn more at www.jhsun.org/donate

On the road:

Unexpected discovery on the North Shore

By Robin Doroshov

You never know where Jewish history can be discovered. I certainly wasn't expecting to discover it in Grand Marais, Minnesota, over Hanukkah of 2016.

If you've ever visited Grand Marais, you know just how magical it is. As it was the quiet season, we had our hotel almost entirely to ourselves — we even lit our Hanukkah in the hotel lobby.

Two necessary stops in Grand Marais are World's Best Donuts and Drury Lane Books. Although World's Best Donuts was closed for the holiday, we got far more than we expected when we wandered into Drury Lane Books.

The kids collected possible purchases. As luck would have it, my son's choice was a book I'd already bought as a Hanukkah gift — it was waiting at the hotel for him to open.

When I whispered my dilemma to my daughter, the saleswoman overheard and wished us "Chag Sameach."

Introducing herself as Hillary Freeman, she explained that she was covering Christmas Eve day at the bookstore for her friend, bookstore owner and author, Joan Drury.

Through this serendipitous meeting, I learned about the local Jewish community: approximately eighteen individuals, including Jews and their partners. This group gets together to celebrate Jewish holidays and events. Located approximately halfway between Duluth, Minnesota and Thunder Bay, Ontario, the Grand Marais area Jews retain contacts with both of those Jewish communities.

Freeman, who had family connections in the Jewish community in Aberdeen, South Dakota, now splits her time between St. Paul and Grand Marais.

Recently, Hillary shared an article written by Gary Latz, one of the Cook County Jewish community members, and published in Boreal (www.boreal.org) — along with a photo of a recent gathering. Because history is anything that is in the rearview mirror, here is a look at some (recent) Northern Minnesota Jewish history.

With Gary's permission, that article and photo are reprinted here.



Cook County Jewish Community Celebrates Chanukah

Members of the Cook County Jewish Community celebrated the 2nd night of Chanukah on December 13th with a traditional evening at the home of Yafa Napadensky and Bob Shannon. Chanukah is a Jewish holiday commemorating a victory over a tyrant king and the re-dedication of the Temple after it's desecration. During the eight nights of Chanukah, Jews light menorah candles to symbolize the miracle of a small vial of sacred olive oil that burned for eight days, illuminating the Temple until a new supply could be made.

Chanukah follows a lunar calendar. During some years it overlaps with Christmas, thus giving the holiday a prominent role in the Christian and Jewish calendars.

Chanukah in Cook County included Menorah lighting, songs, stories and games. No celebration is complete without a meal. Latkes, fried potato pancakes, are the traditional fare. The oil used in their preparation also commemorates the miracle. Cook County Jews continued the tradition with an abundance of latkes prepared by Bob Pranis and Veronica Weadock. Guests contributed traditional toppings, along with side dishes and desserts.

The small and vibrant Jewish community of Cook County meets regularly to celebrate key Jewish holidays and traditions. They also maintain cordial relations with Temple Israel in Duluth and Shaarey Shomayim in Thunder Bay.

For more information contact Gary Latz at 832-364-0310 or gary.bohlkeco@oplink.net

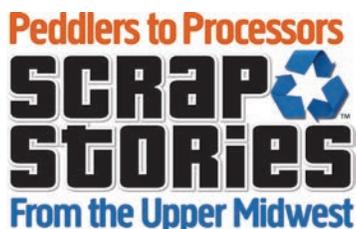
Short Take: Annual Meeting

The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest held its Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 22, 2017. The informative afternoon included the launch of a new art book, published in conjunction with JHSUM: We Spoke Jewish by author, artist and genealogist, Susan Weinberg. Susan gave a fascinating presentation on her process of researching, creating and storytelling. Representatives from the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives, Back Room Studios and the Minnesota Jewish Genealogical Society were available to highlight research and oral history resources available in the Twin Cities area.



Jewish Scrap Stories Discussion at Sholom East

Join the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest at Sholom East for a discussion on Jews and the scrap business in the Midwest facilitated by Bob Kaplan and Myrna Orensten. The Jewish people represented 90 percent of the participants in the scrap industry over the years, and recycled items such as metal, paper, rags, barrels and more. The scrap business was and still is an essential part of the economy and the people involved have wonderful stories about their experiences. The JHSUM looks forward to sharing some of these entertaining stories with you on Thursday, May 17 at 2:30 p.m. in the Mains Auditorium.



Share Your Love of the Northside: Tour Training

There's nothing like walking through the landscape of the past. JHSUM has launched a program for training guides to give walking tours of North Minneapolis. The first training for aspiring North Side Jewish Tour guides was held in October 2017 at Homewood Studios in North Minneapolis. George and Beverly Roberts, graciously opened their space to JHSUM for a morning of learning led by Professor Earl Schwartz and Richard Woldorsky, natives of the North Side and life-long friends.



Missed the October session but want to be part of it? We recorded the presentation and will provide it electronically upon request.

JHSUM is also planning a follow-up session on Sunday, May 6 at 10:00 a.m. at Homewood Studios 2400 Plymouth Ave N, Minneapolis, MN 55411. Watch your email for further information or call 952-381-3360 to reserve your spot.

Rondo Neighborhood story

The Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest is currently working on an exciting project about the history of St. Paul's Jewish community, which explores in part the intersection of Jewish history with African-American history. (See article page 2).

Jews and African-Americans have long lived and worked together in St. Paul neighborhoods. To discover and celebrate these connections, JHSUM leaders met with leaders of two other nonprofits: the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, a non-profit organization that has been serving members of the Rondo community since 1929; and Rondo



Avenue, Inc., a preservation organization headed by Marvin Roger Anderson who grew up in and still lives in the Rondo neighborhood.

Our first collaboration was in October of 2017, when elders from the Jewish and African-American communities with ties to the Rondo neighborhood came together for conversation and sharing stories.

Then on January 15, 2018, in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the communities came together again: We renewed friendships over traditional Jewish and African-American fare and a viewing of archival photos from both communities.

We're delighted that this landmark event was covered by TC Jewfolk and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Plans are in the works for another gathering later this year, for more stories, shared history and deepening friendship.

JHSUM Gallery at JCC St. Paul

JHSUM wants to make history accessible and relevant. That's why we're so excited to curate the Oren and Sharron Steinfeldt Family Gallery in the newly renovated Jewish Community Center of St. Paul — right where so many members of the community gather.

We plan to change exhibits throughout the year, starting with our kickoff exhibit featuring the history of the JCC itself.

Our new home in the Oren and Sharron Steinfeldt Family Gallery is expected to be unveiled this coming summer.

From the archives:

News from the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries

By Kate Dietrick

In 2012, JHSUM donated its archives to the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives in Elmer L. Andersen Library at the University of Minnesota. We have been busy ever since! Our collections continue to grow thanks to donors from around the country, and many researchers come to view our collection, now more accessible than ever.

We have expanded

After months of construction, we are excited to finally unveil our new space here in Andersen Library. This new public center for scholars, students, and the community is named the Maxine Houghton Wallin Special Collections Research Center and is located on the ground floor of the building. With a beautiful large new reading room, state-of-the-art classroom, and exhibit space, the Center will prove to be a better functioning space to meet the needs of our users. If you've been wanting to come research materials in the collection, make an appointment today and see the new reading room for yourself!

Highlight on collection

This past fall, we received a new donation of the papers of Kassel Abelson. The papers are now organized and ready for researchers to peruse, standing as a testament to Abelson's career as rabbi of Beth El Synagogue for forty years.

Abelson's donated papers span one hundred years, from 1913 to 2013, with the majority of the papers dated between 1943 and 2000, and are housed in a total of 45 boxes. Materials include:

- Subject files in the form of newspaper clippings, journal articles, and magazine articles;
- Beth El administrative files including service booklets and sheet music, bulletins, prayer and reading guides, and wedding information;
- Materials related to Jewish organizations, such as United Synagogue Youth, the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, the Rabbinical Assembly, the Jewish Community Center, and more;
- Publications and writings including notes, drafts, sermons for High Holidays and weddings, and eulogies.

All of these materials and more are open and available to the public. For more information on the collection, visit z.umn.edu/abelson.



The new reading room opened March 19.



American Jewish World newspaper announces return of Abelson to Beth El Synagogue in January 1960 issue.

Black and Jewish Women in Dialogue: Communities Linked, Prejudices Challenged



Materials from the Jewish Community Relations Council records are showcased in new exhibit at Andersen Library documenting African American History.

New exhibit at Andersen Library *Digging Up The Past: Hidden African American Histories Across University of Minnesota Collections*

Digging Up the Past uncovers the diverse, delightful, difficult, provocative, and unexpected stories from University of Minnesota's Archives and Special Collections, which have been unearthed as part of Umbra Search African American History's effort to digitize nearly 500,000 African American history materials from across our collections. You'll see photographs, manuscripts, slave manifests, letters, works of art from over 160 collections and 18 collecting areas (including materials from the Upper Midwest Jewish Archives) that dramatize the ways that African-American history is found in our archives.

Some profoundly racist and others liberatory, the materials in *Digging Up the Past* demonstrate how African-American history shapes not only our archives but also an understanding of our present.

The exhibit is open through May 18 during regular building hours at Elmer L. Andersen Library. For more information, visit z.umn.edu/digging.

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.



JEWISHGEN The Place to Start Your Family History Search

By Susan Weinberg

If you are interested in Jewish genealogy the place to start is Jewishgen.org. Jewishgen is a free site, but you'll get more out of it if you create an account through registration. For a comprehensive overview on how to use this site to find answers to your questions about family history visit www.jhsum.org/collections/genealogy

You'll find sleuthing tips on getting the most out of this site, to help you with research problems like these:

"I think I know the town my family came from, but don't know where it is today. And I'm not quite sure how to spell it."

"So now that I know where they came from, how can I find more information on that town?"

"Is there a way to search for information on the country or region?"

"I found a record, but I'm told it is in Russian. How can I get that translated?"

"Who else is searching for my names? Maybe someone already figured this out."

"How can I look for family tombstones in my ancestral town without leaving home?"

BONUS TIP

Did you know that many cemeteries in the United States will take a photo of a tombstone and send it to you in exchange for a small contribution?

For more information check out the Resource page at Minnesota Jewish Genealogical Society: www.mnjgs.org. You'll find links to additional resources, and information about MJGS-hosted meetings where you can connect with others who are also involved with genealogy. MNJGS membership is \$25 per year (\$36 for families).

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

of the Upper Midwest

Eloise and Elliot Kaplan Family Jewish History Center
Jay and Rose Phillips Building | Barry Family Campus
4330 S. Cedar Lake Road | Minneapolis, MN 55416

www.jhsum.org



**Executive Director
Robin Doroshow**

Happy Spring. Through the long winter, we experienced many warm moments at JHSUM.

In this issue of Generations, we share stories about our recent acquisition of the late Leon Sorkin's art work and our volunteer training to lead tours of the North Side of Minneapolis through the lens of Jewish history. You'll also find a wonderful story about an event, held on January 15, with Hallie Q. Brown Center and Rondo Avenue, Inc., two St. Paul nonprofit organizations. We collaborated to bring together Jews and African-Americans who share history in the Rondo neighborhood. JHSUM was well-represented, including my brother — he scheduled a visit to Minnesota to coincide with the event and as a result spent time with one of his dearest friends from junior high school who he hadn't seen in more than 50 years. Find more coverage from the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* at: <https://bit.ly/2GS43Mi>

BE PART OF HISTORY — GIVE TODAY

Your donation to the oral history project will be tripled, thanks to generous matching grants, up to \$5,000. Read more on page 2.

You can leave a lasting mark on history with a legacy gift. Read about the legacy of one very special volunteer, board member and donor, on page 3.

Use the envelope included in this newsletter, or make your gift online today:
www.jhsum.org/donate

BE PART OF HISTORY: Join us at upcoming JHSUM events!