

COMPILED AND EDITED BY
HOLLACE AVA WEINER AND
KENNETH D. ROSEMAN

F
395
J5
L66
2007

Lone Stars of David The Jews of Texas

0211800 5770787

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Waltham, Massachusetts

In Association with the Texas Jewish Historical Society

Published by University Press of New England

Hanover and London

Introduction "I Caught the Contagion of Bragging . . ."

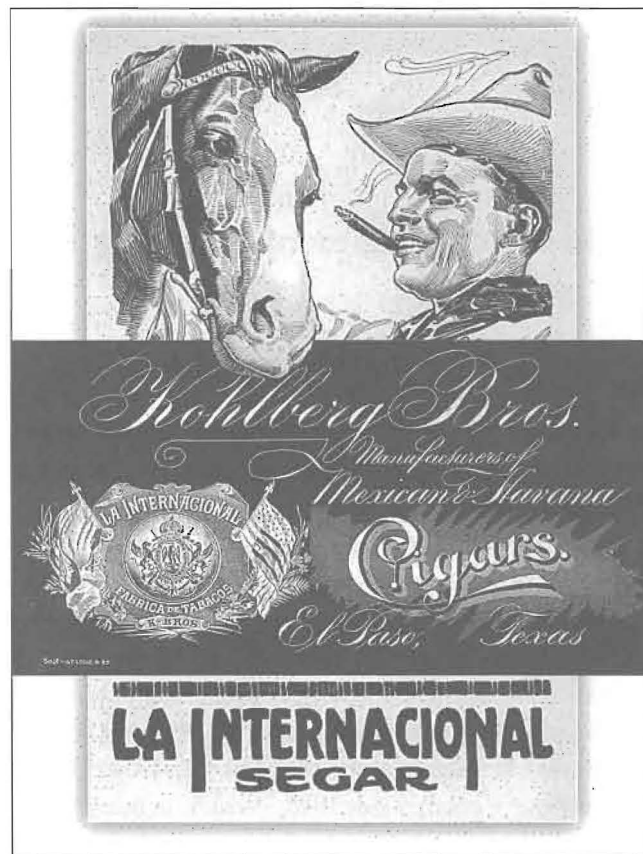
HOLLACE AVA WEINER

The stereotypical Texan stands legs apart, hands on hips, and brashly proclaims that everything is bigger (and, therefore, better) in Texas. Texas abounds in stereotypes—some that celebrate Lone Star mythology, some that denigrate it. Jews, too, are often perceived stereotypically—in positive ways as being scholarly and studious, and negatively as being weak and miserly. When Jewish identity cross-pollinates with the Texas persona, the weakling becomes strong; the Shylock turns into a generous spender with an unlimited charge account at Neiman-Marcus. Beaumont's Rabbi Samuel Rosinger, who moved to Texas in 1910, when oil wells were gushing 75,000 gallons of crude a day, noted the change in himself: "I caught the contagion of bragging about . . . my great state."¹ The Jewish Texan who revels most in the intersection of these stereotypes is Kinky Friedman, the self-proclaimed "Texas Jewboy," a country singer-songwriter, mystery novelist, and would-be governor. Friedman embodies the image of the vaudevillian Jew and the self-promoting Texan. His antics inform the world that Texans can be Jewish and that Jews most certainly live in Texas—131,000 of them, or six-tenths of one percent of the state's population.

Friedman's antics aside, what he celebrates is a frontier image, which persists, of independence, nonconformity, expansiveness, muscle, and grit.² This embrace of frontier attributes can be ascribed not only to Texas's early Jewish settlers, but to other Jewish pioneers who ventured to America's West. They deliberately left behind large concentrations of coreligionists in the urban Northeast. In newly settled Diaspora regions, acculturation—blending in without becoming absorbed—became the key to survival and Jewish continuity. "We no longer live in the Ghetto world of our own," Rabbi David Rosenbaum observed as he adjusted to Austin in 1911.³ Accommodations and adaptations had to be made. And so, Rabbi Solomon Greenberg, a farmer and *shochet*, smoked his kosher turkeys in a manner similar to the way that his neighbors in Tyler, Texas, smoked their hams.⁴ In the Texas Hill Country, Helena Landa made matzos by spinning a spur across the flat dough, because that was the best implement at hand.⁵

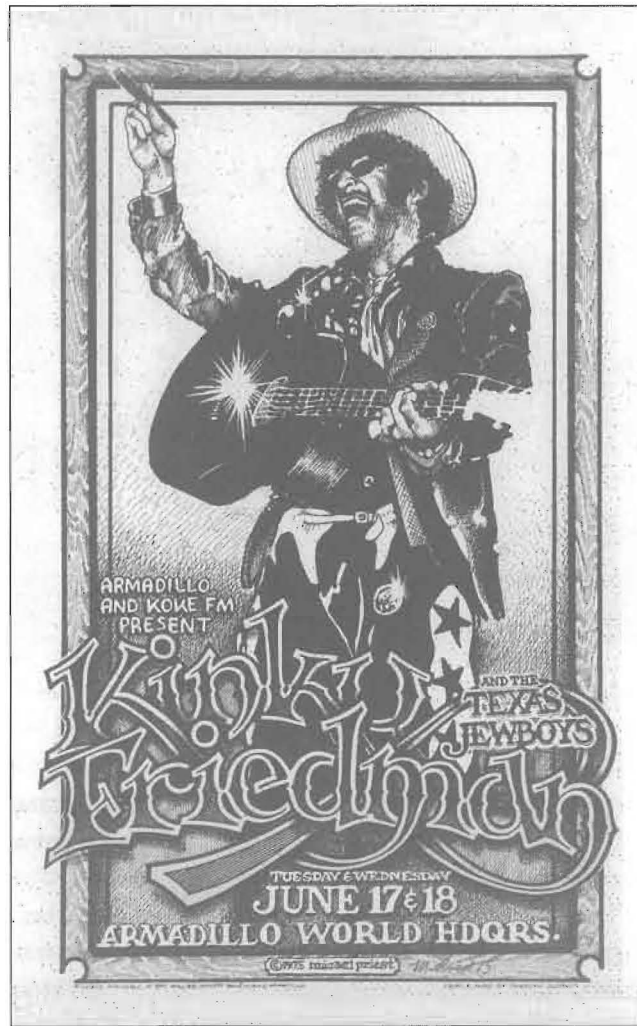
Jews like Landa, who were among the early waves of Texas settlers, found that what mattered more than religion or nationality was mettle and industriousness. The frontier welcomed newcomers, for their numbers helped guarantee safety against Indians, outlaws, and the challenges of nature. By dint of hard work and adaptability, Jews fit in. The first clergyman appointed to the University of Texas Board of Regents, for example, was a rabbi—Maurice Faber. (The certificate formalizing the appointment, however, identified him as "Father Faber," rather than "rabbi.")⁶ In 1873, German immigrant David Hirsch of Corpus Christi buried his wife, Jeannette Weil Hirsch, in the closest Jewish cemetery, 140 miles away in Gonzales. When his friend, Captain Richard King, founder

Have a "segar." The Kohlberg brothers, German-Jewish immigrants, were the Southwest's first cigar manufacturers. Their turn-of-the-century advertisements capitalized on the macho image of the Texas cowboy. University of Texas at El Paso Library, Special Collections Department, Kohlberg Family Papers MS 369.



of the legendary King Ranch, learned about Jewish burial customs, he donated land in Corpus Christi for a Hebrew cemetery, the city's first Jewish landmark.⁷ In Palestine, an East Texas city, a Jew is credited with luring the first railroad line to the town. One local resident wrote the *American Israelite* in 1873, "[We] constitute the bone and sinew of the county."⁸ These Jewish pioneers saw themselves as individuals contributing to the commonweal, rather than as members of a ghettoized group. As Seth Wolitz notes in *Jewries at the Frontier*, Jewish people came to Texas individually, not en masse, while the first Jews to arrive in New York confronted Governor Pieter Stuyvesant as a group: "The New York Jewish experience . . . starts off with a clash of wills . . . They came as a group and have maintained and functioned over the centuries with highly organized group-consciousness and solidarity. Texas Jewry has a different history and therefore a different mentality."⁹ Even the Galveston Movement, which brought ten thousand Jews to the Texas Gulf Coast over a seven-year period between 1907 and 1914, dispersed the immigrants into fifteen states and dozens of cities throughout the Midwest and Far West.

Texas, while similar to the American West and to the Deep South, distinguishes itself from the rest of the nation. Its history harks to 1836 and a war for independence from Mexico, not from Great Britain. For a decade, Texas was a nation with its own flag, establishing a strong sense of place. During the Civil War, Texas was the only Confederate state unscathed by major land battles. Yet battlefronts helped define Texas. Indian raids continued through 1875. Mexican border incursions flared until 1916. The "reverberations of this warfare . . . affect[ed] both attitudes and organization," observed Texas historian T. R. Fehrenbach. People had to be judged on their ability, not caste or class or creed, as often happened in the more status-conscious Deep South. Texans came to prize



Kinky Friedman, June 1975, Texas singer-songwriter and would-be governor. Friedman represents the cross-pollination of Jewish identity with the Texas stereotype. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, CN Number 04628, Texas Music Poster Collection.

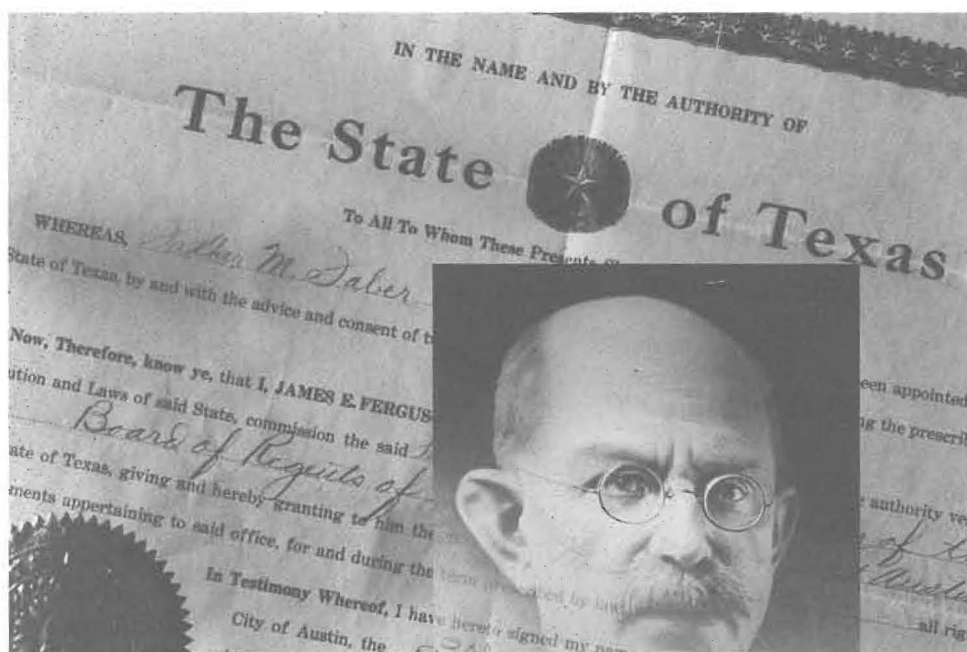
eccentricity and to mistrust conformity. The state constitution vests less power in its elected officials than any other state except California.¹⁰

Texas is big, with the largest landmass among the lower forty-eight states. It stretches 801 miles from north to south (from the environs of Amarillo's B'nai Israel to Brownsville's Temple Beth El) and 795 miles from east to west (from Texarkana's Mount Sinai and Marshall's erstwhile Moses Montefiore Congregation to El Paso's B'nai Zion). Texas's wide-open spaces, undeveloped terrain, and embryonic institutions proved an attraction for nineteenth-century Jews of diverse backgrounds who were confident enough to strike out on their own in search of economic opportunities. Some failed and went back East or returned to Europe. Those who succeeded had traits often found among settlers in frontier environments. Studying the evolution of Texas Jewish communities can lead to analysis of patterns common not only to Jews but also among other ethnic groups drawn to the frontier or to boomtowns, small towns, and early industries that followed the frontier epic.



There is a common supposition that the first Jews to come to Texas—like those who went to Oklahoma and Wyoming and California—were soldiers of fortune, true Lone Stars, mavericks who yearned to strike out on their own, leave Jewish institutions behind, and

Rabbi or priest? When Tyler's Rabbi Maurice Faber was appointed to the University of Texas Board of Regents, state officials were so unfamiliar with Jews that they inscribed the certificate to "Father" M. Faber. Collection of Hollace Weiner.



embrace the raw frontier. Unlike Jews immigrating through Ellis Island and remaining in New York, these settlers were not directly fleeing pogroms and anti-Semitism but were lured by raw, rugged opportunity.

The accuracy of this composite Texas-Jewish pioneer depends on the definition of "first" (not to mention the definition of Jew, which can be even harder). When did the "first" Jews arrive in what is now Texas? Was it in the 1820s, when Texas was part of Mexico? Or did the first Jews arrive in the 1500s with the conquistadors? The Marranos—a.k.a. conversos and crypto-Jews of Spain—were seeking religious freedom and fleeing the oppression of the Spanish Inquisition. The phenomenon of the crypto-Jew in the Southwest has spawned much mythology. Yes, Spanish Jews who were converted forcibly to Catholicism came to the Southwest. In "Jews Without Judaism" (chapter 2), Bryan Stone contends that conversos do not figure in the history of Texas Jewry. They are of negligible significance, if any, in the development of Jewish life in the Lone Star State. They did not create Jewish communities or institutions. They did not settle and most likely did not travel within the boundaries of present-day Texas. Certainly, stories abound among Hispanics along the Texas-Mexican border of families with Semitic customs. There is anecdotal evidence aplenty. No scholarly historical or anthropological study documents this in present-day Texas. Moreover, this seems more a latter-day phenomenon of recovered memory. It has been refuted by folklorist Judith Neulander, who terms crypto-Jews an "imagined community."¹¹

The first researcher to document Texas-Jewish history was Henry Cohen, a scholar, linguist, and rabbi. He came to Galveston's pulpit at B'nai Israel in 1888—only fifty-two years after the fall of the Alamo and Texas independence.¹² His research, published in the early issues of the venerable *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* and in the Jewish encyclopedias of his time, makes no mention of Marranos peopling the Southwest during the Age of Exploration. Rather, Cohen makes a strong argument that

the first Jews to reach Texas are bound up in the pantheon of Anglo-Texas heroes. Cohen paints the earliest Jews in Texas as pioneers who surveyed the terrain, publicized its potential, and brought settlers aplenty to this new Promised Land.

The Jewish Davy Crockett was A. Wolf, who brandished a sword at the Alamo and lost his life. Wolf's name is among those inscribed on a monument on the grounds of the Texas state capitol. The Jewish Sam Houston was David S. Kaufman, a Princeton University graduate and a member of Texas's first U.S. congressional delegation. Kaufman is the namesake of a city and a county. Evidence as to whether he was Jewish is conflicting. Natalie Ornish's *Pioneer Jewish Texans*, the first contemporary study of its kind, reports in a footnote that a penciled remark on Kaufman's Princeton University records states, "Hebrew extraction."¹³ (Martin Frost, who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1979 to 2005 and considers himself the state's first and only Jewish congressman, researched Kaufman and concluded that Representative Kaufman had a non-Jewish burial in a congressional cemetery.)¹⁴ Rabbi Cohen also describes men who were the Jewish equivalent of Stephen F. Austin. These include Samuel Isaacks, who settled one of empresario Stephen Austin's original three hundred tracts of land. Another was Henri Castro, who "sent to Texas . . . 5,000 emigrants from the Rhenish provinces of Germany, the first organized emigration to Texas."¹⁵

In "Jews Without Judaism," Bryan Stone questions some of Cohen's assumptions. Isaacks, he concludes, may have been distantly descended from Jews, but even this is conjecture. Castro's family had not practiced Judaism for more than two centuries. None of the colonists in Castroville, a buffer settlement that protected San Antonio from Comanche raids, was Jewish. Stone debunks an oft-repeated legend that Henri Castro put on *tefillin* and davened in the woods—for there are few woods in the arid South Texas terrain surrounding Castroville.

A number of the Jewish pioneers heralded by Cohen and other researchers were figures like Simon Wiess—a Polish-Jewish seafarer and cotton shipper who married a Presbyterian. His offspring, who did not follow Judaism, were among the founders of the Humble Oil and Refining Company. Jews would like to claim them, and some writers have. The Wiess family, as well as David Kaufman, who had Jewish antecedents, did not involve themselves with Jewish community or continuity. To paraphrase Seth Wolitz, they nonetheless helped legitimize a Jewish role in the founding of the Texas Republic by imparting a sense of rootedness.¹⁶ Indeed, it could be argued in more than philosophical ways that every Jew—and, indeed, every hybrid-Jew—is an important side of Judaic history.

Not all of the Jewish pioneers deserted the tribe of Israel. The Sanger brothers, profiled in "Confederates Stories" (chapter 3), may not have practiced Judaism when they first opened trading posts in the antebellum Texas frontier. Yet they kept in touch with extended family and utilized their Jewish network of relatives and friends to find brides who, unbelievably, came to Texas. Furthermore, the Sangers and other Jews who fought in and survived the Civil War returned home with greater commitment to their Jewish identity. Researcher Gary Whitfield documents how these veterans were involved in forming B'nai B'rith lodges and congregations. War was a maturing experience that reinforced their identity as both Jews and as Texans. Ultimately, the more formal development of the Texas-Jewish community lies with those like the Sanger brothers, who helped start Jewish institutions in Dallas and Waco. It lies with those who balanced their dual identities—not with the crypto-Jews and their romantic stories, not with the Jews

who intermarried, no matter how much oil they drilled or how prominent their offspring may have become.

Another example of a pioneer Texan who remained committed to Jewish continuity—even as he transformed himself into an authentic cowboy—was Mayer Halff, who is profiled by Patrick Dearen in “Home on the Range” (chapter 4). Wearing leather-tooled boots and a ten-gallon hat, Halff herded cattle from the Pecos River north to Montana. His biography is titled *Halff of Texas*, a fitting pun because his cattle grazed on a large percentage of the state. Mayer Halff was also among the founders and benefactors of San Antonio’s first congregation, Beth-El, in 1874. When Halff first opened a dry goods store in Liberty, Texas, some customers paid him with cattle instead of cash. Comfortable dealing in basic, raw commodities, he herded the cattle to market.

Mayer Halff was not the only Jewish retailer to go into ranching and leave his mark on the land. Among other notable Lone Star Jewish ranchers were the Weils of Corpus Christi and the Kallisons of San Antonio. Charles Weil, an Alsatian immigrant, opened a general store in Corpus Christi in 1869, selling supplies to area ranchers. When the railroad line to Mexico was completed, his retail business dried up, and he became a full-time rancher. His son, Jonas Weil, was the subject of columns written by newspaperman Fred Gipson, author of the novel *Old Yeller*.

Nathan Kallison and his son Perry became well known among ranchers in the environs of San Antonio. The father, a Chicago saddlemaker, moved to San Antonio in 1899 for his wife’s health. In Texas, his leatherwork was far more prized. From a small workshop, he expanded his saddlery into a block-long farm-and-ranch store. With the profits from the retail business, he invested in a ranch on which his son Perry raised cham-

Back at the ranch. Saddlemaker Nathan Kallison moved his family from Chicago to San Antonio, where he opened a workshop that grew into a farm-and-ranch store. With the profits he bought a cattle ranch in 1899 and built this sturdy entrance. Photo courtesy of Southwest Collection/ Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, Frank Reeves Photographic Collection.



**"FOUNTAINHEAD
OF THE
GOLDEN NUGGETS"
KALLISON'S
RANCH**
ESTABLISHED 1899
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Cow Herd
Rich in the Bloodlines of
Orville Kallison
GOLD MINE
GOLD CROWN
DIAMOND
ALP's
BEAU' PERFECT

**We owned Golden
Nugget, sire of GOLD
MINE, and used him his
entire lifetime.**

225 HEAD OF MOTHER COWS
Herd Bulls
OF BEAU MIXER 3d
SF CHOICE MIXER 7th
MMR BEAU MIXER
PF PERFECT MIXER 26th
REAL DIAMOND GOLD

PERRY KALLISON
Owner
ROLLIE NEAL, Mgr.
Phones: MU 8-3280
TA 2-0751
CA 2-8411

Meat on the hoof. When Perry Kallison took over operations at the ranch, he raised Polled Herefords. "Polled" means that the fast-growing, beefy crossbreeds did not have horns. Texas Polled Hereford Association Directory, circa 1960s.

pionship cattle, sowed experimental crops, and made a name for himself with a daily radio show.¹⁷ First-generation immigrants, forbidden to own land in the Old Country, eagerly bought property in the New World. In Texas, the property most prized was ranchland.

The bane of Texas ranching was drought. Regardless of a person's beliefs, during years without rainfall ranchers were likely to give in to superstition and voodoo science. Both Jonas Weil and Perry Kallison were active in Texas's regional rainmaking efforts—as was the non-Jewish Charles W. Post of the Post cereal empire. Kallison's rainmaking attempt, which involved seeding the clouds with silver iodide, failed to bring a drop. Weil's effort—which entailed exploding a hot air balloon filled with sulfuric acid and iron shavings—was followed by a downpour.¹⁸

Ranching was largely a masculine endeavor. Pioneer Jewish women who balanced home, community service, and religion created other role models for women of the West. Olga Kohlberg, a cultured, Westphalia-born bride, moved in 1884 to the wilds of El Paso, a lawless place of cowboys and renegades. Kohlberg, profiled in "Clubwomen Create Communal Institutions" (chapter 5), helped civilize her space by introducing kindergartens and starting a baby hospital. She was among the founders of her synagogue, Temple Mount Sinai, and an organizer of the Jewish Welfare Association of El Paso. Anna Hertzberg, a New Yorker who came to San Antonio as a bride, started a music club,

Rancher and rainmaker. When drought hit the South Texas ranching industry, Jonas Weil helped explode balloons filled with sulfuric acid into the atmosphere. Rain began before nightfall. The Cattleman, September 1940 and October 1951, Southwestern Cattle Raisers Museum Library, Fort Worth. Photos by Carolyn Cruz.



Rainmaking Nothing New to Texas Ranchers

By GRAY STILES



Jonas Weil

RAINMAKING is nothing particularly new to Texas ranchers. They were battling with the clouds 10 years ago in an effort to induce rain.

Editor's Note—Jonas Weil, member of a famous South Texas cattle-raising family, in the accompanying article recalls efforts made to bring

Finally, the big rain arrived. The low clouds were made into rain by a large quantity of sulfuric acid.

then launched a section of the Council of Jewish Women. By example, Hertzberg and Kohlberg showed Jewish women how to better the civic realm and how to build a Jewish community. These women followed a pattern established by Philadelphia's Rebecca Gratz. With her mother and sisters, Gratz was a charter member of a secular social service society. Subsequently, in 1819, the Gratz women started Philadelphia's Female Hebrew Benevolent Society. Later, Rebecca Gratz launched the first Jewish Sunday school in America. Like Gratz, the pioneer Jewish women leaders in Texas balanced general social service with Jewish community building.¹⁹

A recurring theme in Texas Jewish history is that of balancing and blending dual identities. The Marshall Sisterhood in East Texas sold hot tamales to raise money for the social hall at Congregation Moses Montefiore. The National Council of Jewish Women in Beaumont sold ham-salad sandwiches at the Jefferson County Fair. Clubwomen and professional women asserted themselves among Jews and gentiles with values of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. Those profiled in this volume include attorney Hermine Tobolowsky, mother of the Texas Equal Legal Rights Amendment (Gladys Leff's "Opening Legal Doors for Women," chapter 18); Justice Rose B. Spector, elected to the Texas Supreme Court, and State Senator Florence Shapiro ("Most Politics Is Local," chapter 16); and Dr. Ray K. Daily, a physician who stirred controversy on the Houston School Board (Lynwood Abram's "Minority Report," chapter 17). Unlike the frontiersmen, clubwomen and professional women were not often entrepreneurs, but rather crusaders patiently yet forcefully spreading Jewish values of equal justice and equal opportunity.

Another role model for Jewish continuity is the small-town entrepreneur who, owing to commercial success and civic prestige, created and led a Jewish community. Abe Levy of Sweetwater, profiled in Jane Guzman's "West of Neiman's" (chapter 13), purchased a Torah and called to worship Jews scattered within a hundred-mile radius for High Holy Day services and Passover Seders. The Riskind family in Eagle Pass hosted services in the apartment above their store. In Brownsville, Sam Perl functioned as lay rabbi for more than fifty years. Lea Donosky, whose relatives, the Stools of Del Rio, are profiled in Doug Braudaway's "On the Border: A Deck of Cards Led to Del Rio" (chapter 10), recalls that "being Jewish in a small Southern town meant hitting the road for the holidays." She writes:

"Scattered through small towns in a kind of economic Diaspora, Jews . . . drove to the nearest synagogue for services. (Orthodox Jews made the drive before sundown of the holiday.) In more isolated areas, where there weren't enough Jews to support a synagogue, they would drive to a central point for services held in a makeshift synagogue, perhaps a room above a shoe store or just someone's living room. These days were special not just because of their religious significance . . . For us, like any other minority seeking out and finding its own, there is a feeling of comfort and ease in those few hours in which we exist as a majority. The sense of separateness that minorities live with daily seems to nourish this need to gather."²⁰



Balancing and blending dual identities. El Paso's Temple Mount Sinai Church League athletes displayed Jewish stars on their uniforms while embracing Texas's "mainstream" religion—athletics. Collection of Hollace Weiner.



Kallah of Texas Rabbis, 1947. Being in remote Texas meant traveling great distances to be among Jewish peers. The Kallah, inaugurated in 1927, gave rabbis a chance to mingle, present scholarly papers, and discuss common congregational problems. In 1937 the rabbis met at Corpus Christi's Temple Beth El. Sidney Wolf, the host rabbi, stands in the first row, holding a toddler. Center for American History, UT-Austin, DI 02478, Texas Jewish Historical Society.

Affiliation with Hebrew congregations and organizations tends to be high among Texas Jews. As Elaine Maas, a historian of Houston Jewry, has observed, with regard to congregational affiliation,

Houston is still unlike the large Eastern cities but is similar to the smaller Southern communities in that most Jews feel it important to belong to a synagogue or temple. This circumstance may perhaps be explained by [Jews'] proportionately smaller numbers and their desire to affiliate for sake of identity.²¹

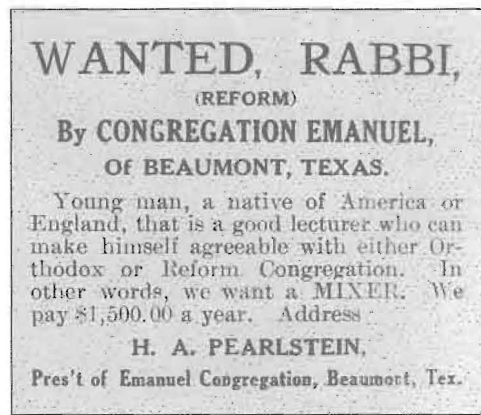
It also may be explained geographically by Texas's location in the Bible Belt—a circumstance that manifests itself in relatively high rates of church attendance among gentiles. Among Jews, religious affiliation has become an aspect of acculturation.

A common stereotype about Texas—and Southern—Jews is that, by and large, they were anti-Zionist in the years leading up to Israel's establishment. Historian Stephen J. Whitfield assumed that a 1910 classified advertisement from a Beaumont congregation looking for a rabbi who was a "good mixer" was a "disparagement of Zionism before 1948."²² (On the contrary, the rabbi hired from the ad, Samuel Rosinger, was an outspoken Zionist.) Suppositions of anti-Zionism were reinforced by the "Beth Israel revolt," during which the leadership at Texas's oldest congregation issued a set of Basic Principles disavowing Zionism and many traditional Jewish religious practices.²³ The congregation split. Bitter memories linger.²⁴

Historian Stuart Rockoff, who grew up in that congregation, chose to research Zionism and anti-Zionism in Texas. He uncovered so much grassroots Zionist activity in Texas that his essay, "Zionism: Deep in the Heart of Palestine" (chapter 7), disproves the stereotype. The Texas Zionist Association was a model for other statewide Zionist confederations. Zionist conferences were front-page news. In Austin, the mayor and governor spoke at a Zionist conference that convened at the statehouse.

Networking among teens. The teens wearing "Head Honcho" hats, seated in the first row, are leaders from Houston's Temple Emanu El Federation of Temple Youth who organized this eight-day regional summer conclave in 1979 at UAHC Greene Family Camp. The teens and their advisors, from Reform congregations in Oklahoma and Texas, gathered in the chapel at the 160-acre camp, founded in 1976 in Bruceville, Texas. Courtesy, Beth-El Congregation Archives, Fort Worth.





Wanted. The classified ad in the American Israelite, April 7, 1910, seeking a "mixer," expressed the need, acute in small towns, for a rabbi to bridge differences among Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews and to be ambassador to the larger community. The ad lured Rabbi Samuel Rosinger to Beaumont's Temple Emanuel. Collection of Hollace Weiner.

Most Jews gravitated to the state's larger cities (chapter 15, "Six-Tenths of a Percent of Texas," by Rabbi Kenneth D. Roseman); however, the small-town experience looms large. What transpired in Texas's small towns is similar to small-town experiences across the United States. The Texas experiences are crystallized in "Little Synagogues Across Texas" (chapter 14, co-authored by Hollace Weiner and Lauraine Miller), an examination of a dozen Jewish communities where synagogues are still standing, although not necessarily utilized for Jewish worship. Demographic historian Lee Shai Weissbach notes that prior to World War I, Jews often gravitated to small towns:

[S]mall communities have always been fundamental features in the American Jewish landscape. These communities played a crucial role in American Jewish settlement and mobility patterns . . . [T]he vast majority of the country's individual Jewish communities were, in fact, smaller ones in less prominent cities and towns.²⁵

In Texas, hospitality toward Jews manifested itself again during the World War II era when Nazi-era refugees began trickling into El Paso ("The Wild West Welcomes Holocaust Survivors," chapter 19). Sometimes Jews settled in a small town by chance—as with Max Stool in Del Rio. Sometimes it was due to a sudden economic boom, like the California gold rush or a gusher of oil, as explored by writer Jan Statman in "East Texas Oil Boom: From New Jersey Farm Boy to Scrap Metal King" (chapter 9). Jews, and others, rushed to fill a mercantile niche or vacuum. The Zale Jewelry Corporation, profiled by Lauraine Miller in "Diamonds for the Rough" (chapter 11), is a byproduct of the boomtown phenomenon. The Zale brothers' uncle, jeweler Sam Kruger, moved to Wichita Falls with a Hamilton watch franchise, ready to sell timepieces and diamonds to people enriched from oil discoveries. While the uncle was selling to the carriage trade, his nephews marketed to workers with grease-covered clothes for a dollar down and a dollar a week. As these small towns thrived, so too did the Jewish community. When a small town went into commercial decline, the Jewish community began migrating out.



Texas history exhibits a modest degree of anti-Semitism, although in general there seems to be more ignorance and curiosity about Judaism than prejudice. Rabbi Samuel Rosinger (the "mixer" from Beaumont) blamed the religious prejudice that he evidenced on the "anti-Jewish account of the Gospel." He wrote: "Let a Christian and a Jewish child have a falling out, the first epithet the Christian child will throw at his Jewish antagonist

"We no longer live in a ghetto world of our own." Rabbi David Rosenbaum (left) preached those words to his Austin congregation. The Chicago-raised rabbi enjoys an evening out in 1911 with another Chicago lad, Fort Worth's Rabbi G. George Fox and his wife, Texan Hortense Lewis Fox. The stylized moon and stars were popular props at traveling amusement shows. Courtesy, Beth-El Congregation Archives, Fort Worth.



is, 'You are a Christ-killer.'"²⁶ Texas Governor James "Pa" Ferguson, the son of a Methodist preacher, was not averse to declaring that a "mob" of Israelites had "lynched the Savior."²⁷ In 1922, Galveston's Rabbi Cohen wrote Rabbi Rosinger that the Women's Christian Temperance Union was determined to have New Testament Bible readings in the public schools and that "probably the K.K.K. . . . is at the bottom of it."²⁸

The Ku Klux Klan thrived in Texas during the early 1920s. Its venom was targeted primarily against Catholics, African-Americans, bootleggers, and womanizers. Rabbi Rosinger was part of a coalition of Catholics, Jews, and Rotarians who petitioned and marched against the Klan and its mob violence.²⁹ Not every rabbi stood up to the KKK. Fort Worth's Rabbi G. George Fox wrote that he knew many Klansmen, for they were among the city's elected officials. He accepted a cash gift from the Klan. Many tales are told about Jewish merchants in Texas and throughout the South who sold sheets to Klansmen for uniforms. Another oft-told story is about the merchant who recognized the masked Klansmen by their shoes—which were purchased in his store.

What this suggests is that prejudice in Texas was less blatant against Jews than against racial minorities. Observes Texas historian T. R. Fehrenbach:

Anti-Semitism was far less a Texan than a Northern American trait, which, much evidence shows, was given impetus by European immigration. No mobs in Texas ever attacked a Jew . . . The Texas violence toward blacks, which at times could be very violent, was provoked and condoned not by any desire to wipe Negroes off the earth, but to keep them conquered and in their appointed place.³⁰

Former Texas Supreme Court Justice Rose Spector contends in "Most Politics is Local" (chapter 16) that being a woman poses more political challenges in Texas than being a Jew. Former Congressman Martin Frost notes that when he grew up in Fort Worth in the

1960s, Jews played first string on his high-school football team. His parents, however, did join a short-lived Jewish country club. As Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger notes in "Comfort and Discomfort: Being Jewish in Fort Worth" (chapter 21), anti-Semitism in Texas is not overt, but subtle. Restricted clubs are evidence of the "five o'clock curtain" and lingering social separation between Jews and non-Jews. Fort Worth oilman Ted Weiner (profiled in Barry Shlachter's "West Texas Wildcatters," chapter 8) built his home and sculpture garden not in Westover Hills, the area's most exclusive enclave, but in Ridglea, a neighborhood more welcoming to Jews during the 1960s. Jewish teenagers today experience discomfort when evangelical students rally 'round the flagpole once a year in support of their faith. Although Jews adjust well to the Texas stereotype and have demonstrated since frontier days that they can herd cattle, drill for oil, boast, and build empires such as Neiman-Marcus, they know they remain different in one important aspect of identity.

This book is about some Jewish Texans. As coeditor Rabbi Kenneth D. Roseman noted in a paper read at the Texas Jewish History Symposium that served as a prelude to this anthology, this volume

attempts to examine the main themes of the development of Texas Jewry by choosing individual examples to illustrate richer and broader realities. In this task, the book applies the ancient rabbinic principle, *miktzat kekulo*, allowing a part to represent the totality. It is, admittedly, an imperfect method, but a complete and comprehensive history will never be possible.³¹

The Texas Jewish Historical Society expects that this collection will stimulate others to record and to publish their family, community, and mercantile histories, for Texas-Jewish historical research is in its early stages. Still to be studied are Jewish farm-and-ranching families' impact on agriculture in such areas as spinach production in Crystal City, wheat in arid Bexar County, and sweet onions in the Rio Grande Valley.³² Neiman-Marcus may be internationally known, but other sophisticated retailers such as Sakowitz in Houston deserve their due. Jewish leaders' impact on the Raza Unida party and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas have yet to be explored. Readers may think they are finished, but there is much more to tell. ★

NOTES

1. Samuel Rosinger, "Deep in the Heart," in *Lives and Voices: A Collection of American Jewish Memoirs*, ed. Stanley F. Chyet (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), 141.

2. See Seth L. Wolitz, "Bifocality in Jewish Identity in the Texas-Jewish Experience," in *Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict*, ed. Sander L. Gilman and Milton Shain (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 185–223; Bryan Edward Stone describes Friedman as a "living caricature of the Jewish Texan," someone with "precursors in the theater." He compares him with comedian Lester Bangs and observes that acculturation "happens locally rather than nationally." Bryan Edward Stone, "Ride 'em Jewboy': Kinky Friedman and the Texas Mystique," *Southern Jewish History* 1 (1998): 23–42.

3. David Rosenbaum, "The Rabbi as Ambassador to the Gentiles. Chips from a Rabbinical Workshop," n.d., David Rosenbaum papers, box 1, folder 1, Spertus College Archives, Chicago.

4. Hollace Weiner, "A Tale of Turkeys," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 28, 1996.

5. Harry Landa, *As I Remember* (San Antonio: Carleton, 1945), 26.

6. Hollace Ava Weiner, "The Mixers: The Role of Rabbis Deep in the Heart of Texas Jewry," *American Jewish History* 85, no. 3 (September 1997): 326.

7. Fanny Weil Alexander, "Charles and Sarah Weil," booklet distributed to descendants, July 1959, collection of author.
8. *American Israelite*, April 18, 1873.
9. Wolitz, "Bifocality in the Texas-Jewish Experience," 187.
10. Weiner, "The Mixers," 290–91; T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 654.
11. Judith Neulander, "Crypto-Jews of the Southwest: An Imagined Community," *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): 64–68; Judith Neulander, "The New Mexican Crypto-Jewish Canon: Choosing to be 'Chosen' in Millennial Tradition," *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 18, no. 1–2 (1996): 19–58; Barbara Ferry and Debbie Nathan, "Mistaken Identity? The Case of New Mexico's 'Hidden Jews,'" *Atlantic Monthly*, December 2000, 85–96.
12. Henry Cohen, "Settlement of the Jews in Texas," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 2 (1894): 139–56; Henry Cohen, "The Jews in Texas," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 4 (1896): 9–19; Henry Cohen, "Texas," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York and London, 1906), 12:121–22; Henry Cohen, "Texas," *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1943), 10:205; Rabbis Henry Cohen, Ephraim Frisch, and David Lefkowitz, "One Hundred Years of Jewry in Texas, the Original Researches of Dr. Henry Cohen," booklet (Austin: Jewish Advisory Committee for the Texas Centennial Religious Program, 1936).
13. Natalie Ornish, *Pioneer Jewish Texans: Their Impact on Texas and American History for Four Hundred Years, 1590–1990* (Dallas: Texas Heritage Press, 1989), 289n3.
14. Martin Frost, telephone interview with author, December 11, 2005, notes in possession of author.
15. Cohen, "Texas," *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, 10:203.
16. Wolitz, "Bifocality in the Texas-Jewish Experience," 202.
17. "Nathan Kallison [obituary]," *The Cattleman* 31, no. 8 (January 1945): 90; Doug Perkins, "Meeting and Greeting at Kallison's," *The Cattleman* 61, no. 5 (October 1974): 38, 186.
18. Grady Stiler, "Rainmaking Nothing New to Texas Ranchers," *The Cattleman* 38, no. 5 (October 1951): 34–35.
19. Dianne Ashton, "Gratz, Rebecca," in *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1:547–50.
20. Lea Donosky, "True South, Small-town Jews, For the few and far between, holiday crowd is miles away," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Dixie Living section, September 15, 1991. Reprinted in "Southern Jews," in *True South: Travel through a Land of White Columns, Black-eyed Peas and Redneck Bars*, ed. Jim Auchmuty and Lea Donosky (Athens, Ga.: Longstreet Press, 1994), 170–71.
21. Elaine H. Maas, "The Jews of Houston Today," *169 Years of Historic Houston*, <http://www.houstonhistory.com/erhnic/history2jews.htm> (accessed Dec. 26, 2005).
22. Stephen J. Whitfield, "Jews and Other Southerners: Counterpoint and Paradox," in *Turn to the South: Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia with American Jewish Historical Society, 1979), 90; the original "mixer" advertisement appeared in the *American Israelite*, April 7, 1910.
23. Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 465n111.
24. Malcolm H. Stern, "Role of the Rabbi in the South," in *Turn to the South*, 28.
25. Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 4–5.
26. Samuel Rosinger, *My Life and My Message* (Beaumont: Privately published, 1958), 281–82.
27. James Ferguson, "The Cloven Foot of the Dallas Jews," *Ferguson Forum*, reprinted in *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly*, March 24, 1923.
28. Henry Cohen to Samuel Rosinger (December 7, 1922), Cohen, Henry collection, correspondence files, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; May Nelson Paulissen and Carl Randall McQueary, *Miriam: The Southern Belle* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1995), 111.

29. Thomas E. Kroutter, Jr., "The Ku Klux Klan in Jefferson County Texas, 1921-1924," Master's thesis, Lamar University, Beaumont, 1972, 39-41.
30. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 654.
31. Kenneth D. Roseman, "Introduction," read at "Lone Stars of David: A Texas Jewish History Symposium," Austin, Texas, April 9, 2005.
32. I. L. "Buddy" Freed, "Jews in Small Texas Towns," *Texas Jewish Historical Society newsletter*, June 1999, 6-7; Sharon Katz, "The Story of Abe Katz," *Texas Jewish Historical Society newsletter*, February 2002, 13-14, 23; Harold M. Hyman, *Oleander Odyssey: The Kempners of Galveston, Texas, 1854-1980s* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1990), is a business history documenting the Kempner family's enterprises including the Imperial Sugar Company of Texas.