

L'Dor V'Dor

From Generation to Generation • The Newsletter of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society

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Abraham Diamond, The Mohel of Omaha A Butcher by Trade and Owner of Diamond's Kosher Meat Market

By: Richard Fellman

If a poll was taken today among the Jews of Omaha and one of the questions asked was "have you ever attended a "Bris?" nearly every man would blink and maybe smile and say "why yes, I was at my own, and I've also been to a number of others," and every woman would answer with a grimace of sorts and say, "I sure was, at my son's, or my grandson's, or my"naming some other male..."and I kept my eyes closed the entire time."

We all know what a 'Bris' is, and we've all been to one.

And for those who do not recognize the word "Bris" or "Brit" as it is pronounced in Israel and most synagogues today it is simply a "circumcision" and the ceremony which surrounds the actual minor bit of surgery customarily done on Jewish infant males when they are eight days old. The custom is observed by the vast majority of Jews the world over and consists of removing the foreskin from the penis of the infant male. Historically, the actual surgery was performed by a man called a "Mohel" who was usually trained as an apprentice by another mohel. A mohel was not an ordained Jewish leader, though without exception the mohel was given respect and a dignified place in Jewish society.

Still, it was with great surprise that a storage box with old, old records of the "Mohel of Omaha" was recently uncovered in the vault of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society, and this true story gives an amazing account of what was found.

During this past twenty years and for that matter for over 40 years before that nearly every Jewish boy born in Omaha was circumcised. It was usually done by a licensed physician unless the family was strictly Orthodox and observant and brought a Mohel in from another city. A brief ceremony accompanied the short surgical procedure, usually led by one of Omaha's religious leaders. The Bris included the immediate and extended family of the eight day old boy, often some friends of the family, and a simple celebration typically consisting of sponge cake and sweet red wine, maybe a bit more but customarily not much more. *Continued on page 6*



**Abraham Diamond as a young man
still in Eastern Europe**

2019

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The Importance of Donating to the NJHS Archival Collection

By: *Renee Corcoran*

The NJHS received an important donation from the family of a recently deceased member of our Jewish community. Stored in the corner of a basement was memorabilia from Hiller Liquor Company. The Carl Frohm Archival Center had no records of such a business in our area. It was very exciting to not only add the business to our collection, but to learn and explore further what was called Omaha's new up-to-date family liquor store.

The Hiller Liquor Company was established at 1309 Farnam Street, opening to the public on Saturday, August 23, 1902. It was advertised as, "the only place of the kind in the west undoubtedly the handsomest store in Omaha."

We are always grateful for these special donations that help in our mission of preserve the histories of the Jewish families who settled in Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. The NJHS is always seeking personal and family papers as well as photographs and memorabilia of synagogues, Jewish organizations and businesses of Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. Please contact the office at (402) 334-6441 or njhs@jewishomaha.org for further information. Stored away, you may also have important information regarding the history of our Jewish community.



Questions about donations?

If you have any questions about what we collect please contact us at (402) 334-6441.

UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAMS



Mark your calendars for these events!



NJHS Annual Meeting

Sunday, October 20

2:00 - 4:00 p.m. | JCC Gallery

Please mark your calendar for Sunday, October 20th at the Omaha Jewish Community Center for the NJHS annual meeting. This year we will celebrate the refurbishing of the Omaha Section of the National Council of Jewish Women exhibit, Our Story. The many photographs in the display share the recollections of Omaha's Early Jewish Community.

Special Exhibit Tour

Sunday, November 3

1:00 - 3:00 p.m. | Meet in UNO Library

*Shirley Goldstein's Immigrant Rights Legacy:
Operation Exodus in Omaha*

Witness: The Art of Samuel Bak

Renowned artist and Holocaust survivor Samuel Bak brings his work to the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). On Sunday, November 3, 2019

at 1:00 to 3:00 the NJHS membership is invited to attend a special tour of the "Shirley Goldstein's Immigrant Rights Legacy: Operation Exodus in Omaha" and the Bak exhibit, "Witness: The Art of Samuel Bak" Jeannette Gabriel, NJHS board member and the Director of the UNO Schwalb Center of Israel and Jewish Studies, has offered to give us a personal tour of both exhibits. Jeannette curated the Goldstein exhibit and the Schwalb Center is a cosponsor of the Bak exhibit. Even if you have seen one or even both displays, it will be a special experience having Jeannette explain the significance of the Goldstein materials and Bak's paintings. We will meet in the UNO Library at 1:00 p.m.

Bak's art visualizes his Holocaust experience and Jewish life through the ages. His art melds different styles, often featuring surreal imagery. The exhibit spans five decades of Bak's artistic journey, featuring pieces that have been shown in major museums and galleries in cities such as Tel Aviv, New York, Paris and Rome.

The exhibit is made possible by the UNO Sam and Frances Fried Holocaust and Genocide Academy and the Natan and Hannah Schwalb Center for Israel and Jewish Studies. "Witness: The Art of Samuel Bak" will be on display through November 14.



NJHS EVENTS & PROGRAMS



Mindy Armstrong, Kevee Kirshenbaum and Mendy Halsted.

Bus Tour of Old Jewish Omaha

NJHS and Kevee Kirshenbaum conducted a bus tour of Old Jewish Omaha with Temple Israel on Sunday, April 7, 2019. The event was coordinated by Mendy Halsted and Mindi Armstrong.

The tour took the group downtown past the first synagogue built in Nebraska by the Congregation of Temple Israel on 23rd and Harney Street. Then a drive by of the former B'nai Israel Adas Russia Synagogue on 18th and Chicago Streets and 18th and Burt Streets, the site where Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol stood. We continued north past the former Beth Hamedrosh Adas Jeshurun on 25th and Seward. Before returning back to Temple a drive past the old Dr. Sher home was included.

The Boys of AZA

Mason Quintero, 94th Grand Aleph Godol (International AZA President) from Marbelhead, Mass visited Omaha recently. NJHS was invited to share artifacts and AZA history at the recent AZA Founders Day Meeting. Mason is pictured with Jordon Raffel, Alpeh Godol, Mother Chapter AZA #1.



Mason Quintero and Jordon Raffel



The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society is deeply grateful to all those that are participating in the Life & Legacy Program. Thank you for your commitment to the future of the NJHS and our entire Jewish community.

Michael & Sheri Abramson	Janie Fox Kulakofsky
Bob Belgrade	Rochelle (Rocky) Lewis
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Debbi Josephson	Harry Weiner
Jeff Kirshenbaum	Kathy Weiner
Joe Kirshenbaum	3 Anonymous
Sharon Kirshenbaum	<i>*In blessed memory</i>

Letters of intent can be amended to include the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society in your afterlife gifts. If you wish to change your letter of intent please contact Margo Parsow at (402) 334-6432.

Welcome to the Newest NJHS Members

We gratefully acknowledge and welcome the new members of the NJHS.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

• **Trenton B. Magid**

Record Your Story

Have you recorded your oral history? It is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. The NJHS oral history interviews are a very important and valuable part of our archival collection. If you or a family member would like to record your history, contact the NJHS office at (402) 334-6442. Do it for you, for your children and grandchildren!

But for nearly 40 years, that is from the late 1920s almost to 1960, every Jewish boy born in Omaha had a Bris, always on the eighth day of the child's life unless medical circumstances required a delay, and the actual circumcision was performed by Omaha's own Mohel, Abraham Diamond.

Rev. Diamond, the title was somewhat honorary, was a quiet and unassuming man. He was a butcher, a Kosher butcher. He owned one of Omaha's Kosher Meat Markets which in later years was known as Diamond's Kosher Meat and Delicatessen located at 4415 Cuming, phone WA 5554, with its mottos on the door, "We Serve the Finest to the Finest."

In its earlier years it was located on North 24th Street in the middle of the largely Jewish commercial neighborhood of small individual enterprises operated by immigrant Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe. A few doors south of Diamond's on North 24th was Crounse's Live Fish and Grocery, and to the north was Adler's Bakery.

Across the street from Diamond's was Himelbloom's Bakery, with a deli on one side of it and a dairy store on the other. A few doors north were Shukert's Butcher Shop, then Stoler's Fish Market, then Glass the Butcher, and at Clark Street Ratner's Grocery. Up and down 24th Street on both sides were more Jewish stores of almost every imaginable type all the way to Lake Street.

In addition to running his Kosher Meat Market, Rev. Diamond, the Mohel, kept a complete set of records of each Bris he performed, including the name of the baby boy in either Hebrew or Yiddish, the child's father's name, again in Hebrew or Yiddish but never in English, the date of the Bris, often the name of the Biblical portion which was read that particular week in the synagogue, and usually the amount of money he received as a fee for performing each Bris.

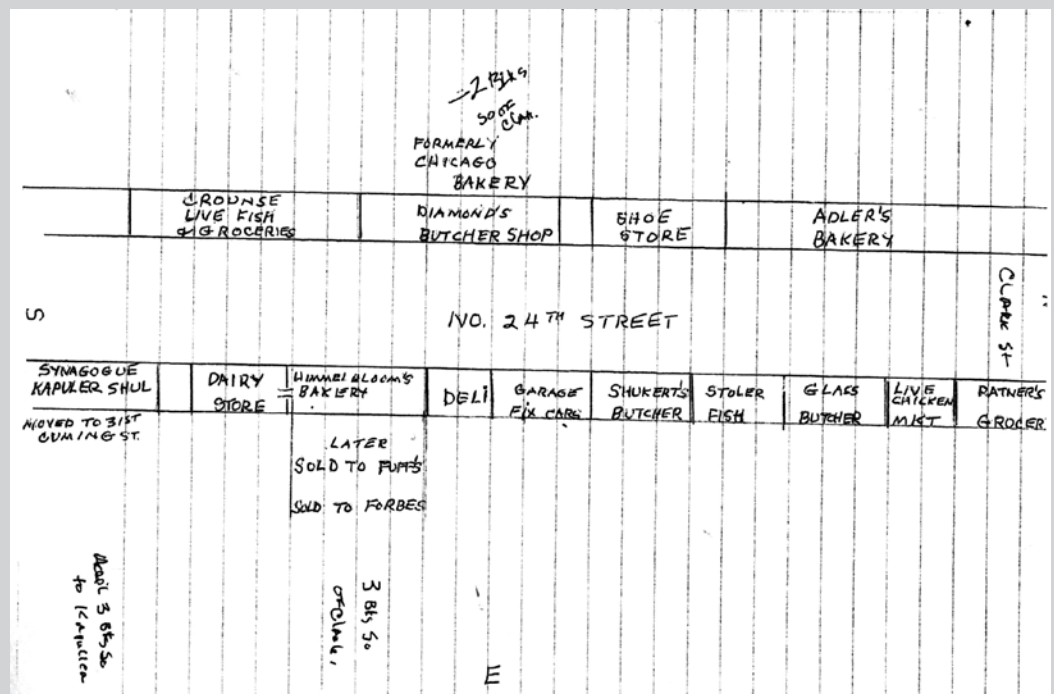
These records of Rev. Diamond were written in his own neat handwriting in small memo books, the type that for many years was commonly carried in a coat pocket or in a purse with names and phone numbers, short memo's and miscellaneous information. There were four of these memo books starting from 1926 and running through 1959 carefully stored in the vaults of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society.

In many of the books, the fees Rev Diamond charged are written in with the details of the individual Bris, but there is also a separate memo book with more financial information. Each of these books are nearly similar in size and shape and color.

In addition to the written records kept by Rev. Diamond, the Historical Society's vault contains the actual operating instruments he used in performing each Bris. Most noticeable among the old set of instruments is the two



Abraham Diamond, age about 50, at the wedding of his son, Hy Diamond



Sketch of North 24th Street, Omaha, showing some of the commercial establishments owned by Jewish merchants including Diamond's Butcher Shop in the late 1930s.

sided surgical knife, today called a scalpel, which is sharp on both sides in case during the Bris one side is determined to be the slightest bit dull. Tradition says that each side must be sharp enough to scratch the surface of the thumb nail of the mohel.

A long time Omaha physician who during his years of practice performed many circumcisions carefully examined Rev. Diamond's instruments and found that the major differences between those now in use and those used by Rev. Diamond involved the clamp. A simpler type was historically used by a mohel compared to those currently used by physicians.

There are strong traditions connected to the ceremony surrounding the Bris.

Historically the baby boy is held during the actual surgical operation, and this honor is usually given to a grandparent or other relative. This person is called the "Sandak." The actual chair the sandak sits in during the ceremony is called "Elijah's" chair, named for the Prophet. In addition, an honor is given to the person or persons who actually carry the baby in to the room where the Bris will take place. This person is called the "K'vater" and the honor is akin to being the child's Godparent. This honor, too, is customarily given to a close relative of the baby.

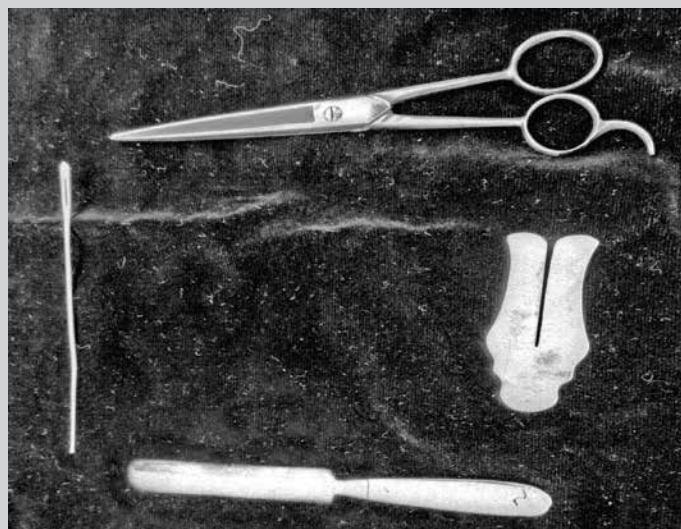
There is ancient history dealing with the Brit Melah, the Covenant of Circumcision and many traditions about the Bris. Jews the world over since the time of Abraham in the biblical Book of Genesis have circumcised all male infants when the child was eight days old. As explained the person who does this bit of minor surgery is called a "Mohel," and the ceremony itself is called a "Bris," or more correctly a "Brit Melah."

The word "brit" means "covenant" in Hebrew which explains that the act of circumcision is part of a contract between God and Abraham which through Abraham is to be carried on to all male children of Israel even to the present day. The Bris is often done in the family home though sometimes it's done in the synagogue or even in the hospital if the child is kept there for medical reasons. And unless there are health reasons to delay the bris it is always done on the eighth day, counting the day of birth as the first day. The circumcision itself is performed regardless of what else might be taking place on the eighth day of the baby boy's life, including the Sabbath and all holidays, even the holiest days of the year like Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and Rosh Hashanah, the New Year.

The importance of the Covenant made between the Lord



Memo book on the left is one of the many kept by Rev. Diamond in which he recorded each Bris he performed, including the names of the baby boy, his father, and the date of the Bris. On the right is a photo of the "Handbook" containing a complete set of prayers for all occasions routinely carried by Rev. Diamond at each Bris.



The actual instruments used by Rev. Diamond in performing a Bris including, starting on the right and then clockwise, a pair of scissors, a clip to hold the foreskin, a scalpel while was sharpened on both sides, and a probe.

and Abraham concerning the circumcision of all male babies can be understood best by the fact that directions for the Bris are written early in the Book of Genesis, preceded only by the stories of the Creation, the Garden of Eden, Noah and the Flood. After these primary episodes come the directions given to Abraham by the Lord who tells Abraham where he should live and how he should conduct his life.

A page from the separate memo book kept by Rev. Diamond containing a record of the fees he charged. This page begins in the upper right corner in March, 1928, when his fees were wither \$10 or \$20. In 1929 his fees dropped to \$3, and even \$1. Later the fees rose to \$10.

Date (Hebrew)	Fee
1928 מרץ	10.00
1928 אפריל	20.00
1928 מאי	20.00
1928 יוני	20.00
1928 יולי	20.00
1928 אוגוסט	5.00
1928 ספטמבר	25.50
1928 אוקטובר	30.00
1928 נובמבר	30.00
1928 דצמבר	30.00
1929 ינואר	10.00
1929 פברואר	10.00
1929 מרץ	10.00
1929 אפריל	10.00
1929 מאי	10.00
1929 יוני	10.00
1929 יולי	10.00
1929 אוגוסט	10.00
1929 ספטמבר	10.00
1929 אוקטובר	10.00
1929 נובמבר	10.00
1929 דצמבר	10.00

Nearly every Jewish male child born in Omaha from the 1926 to 1959 was circumcised by Abraham Diamond. He was customarily referred to as Rev. Diamond, though the task of serving as a mohel has always been considered to be one which is performed by a technician rather than by a religious leader.

But the importance of the ceremony was never minimized. Neither was the requirement that the Mohel himself was to be expert at his skill. No one ever questioned the technical skill of Rev. Diamond nor the seriousness with which he approached each infant and each family.

Still Mr. Diamond left a long legacy which men and women of Omaha well know.

But what might surprise those Jewish men of Omaha who had a Bris performed by Rev. Diamond and the Jewish women who stood and watched, sometimes holding a hand over their eyes to block them from watching their eight day old son going through this short but painful operation as Rev. Diamond did his work, is the detailed records he kept.

These records together with the instruments Rev. Diamond used are now being held for safekeeping and for history by the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. They were left undisturbed in the Society's vaults until they were recently "discovered."

Abraham Diamond, the Mohel, earned the major part of his living as Abraham Diamond, a Kosher Butcher, with his butcher shop in the middle of the Jewish commercial neighborhood on North 24th Street, just south of Clark Street. The immigrant Jewish community's major businesses were located on North 24th Street starting near Cuming Street and extending north to Lake Street. And the Diamond butcher shop was in the middle of this area. This is where Mr. Diamond worked every day and made a living for his family.

A typical page of the Memo Book kept through the years by Rev. Diamond from the year 1937. Entry #91 in the upper right corner states: "the boy (ha-ya'led) Friedel Joseph son (ben) Eliezer Simon (Fred Simon son of Lester Simon). Bris on May 22, 1937. The entry shows that a fee of \$10 was paid.

Entry #	Date (Hebrew)	Fee
91	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ב, אייר	10.00
92	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ג, אייר	10.00
93	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ד, אייר	10.00
94	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ה, אייר	10.00
95	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ו, אייר	10.00
96	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ז, אייר	10.00
97	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ח, אייר	10.00
98	ה'תרפ"ז, כ"ט, אייר	10.00
99	ה'תרפ"ז, א', סיון	10.00
100	ה'תרפ"ז, ב', סיון	10.00

Another typical page many years later shows in the lower right corner the entry for the bro's of Robert Freeman born on January 31, 1953, with a bris on February 11, 1953, son of Menachem Mendel Freeman, known as M. Jerry Freeman.

Entry #	Date (Hebrew)	Fee
101	ה'תש"ג, י"א, שבט	10.00
102	ה'תש"ג, י"ב, שבט	10.00
103	ה'תש"ג, י"ג, שבט	10.00
104	ה'תש"ג, י"ד, שבט	10.00
105	ה'תש"ג, י"ה, שבט	10.00
106	ה'תש"ג, י"ו, שבט	10.00
107	ה'תש"ג, י"ז, שבט	10.00
108	ה'תש"ג, י"ח, שבט	10.00
109	ה'תש"ג, י"ט, שבט	10.00
110	ה'תש"ג, כ', שבט	10.00

Not as an aside yet not as an afterthought but this historical article is also the family story of Mr. Diamond and his life, his wife Ida, his five sons Hy, Meyer, Isadore, Sam, and Stan, and his daughter, Shirley Trachtenbarg,

Abraham Diamond was born in 1893 and died in 1962 at the age of 69, and his wife, Ida, was also born in 1893 but died in 1966 at the age of 73. They were each buried in Omaha in Pleasant Hill Cemetery According to the obituary printed in the Omaha World Herald they were affiliated with B'nai Jacob Synagogue, one of the traditional Orthodox shuls then in Omaha. None of their six children are now living, but they had 19 grandchildren. Years ago the Diamond family, when he was active as the Mohel of Omaha, lived at 3012 Davenport Street, an area with many Jewish families a time.

Further, his Kosher Meat Market on North 24th Street was once part of the commercial center of the immigrant Omaha Jewish community where Mr. Diamond worked every day and made a living for his family.

(On a personal note I recall as a child going to Diamond's Market with my mother and sometimes on Sunday morning with my father. When they ordered Mr. Diamond took an entire salami or tongue or bologna or corned beef, placed it in the big, silver colored hand meat slicer, and began slicing individual pieces of deli meat. The first slice he made him always took in his hand, leaned over the meat counter, and gave it to me, a child of 4 or 5 or 6. This made the trip to Diamonds exceptionally worthwhile to me.)

Avram Yankel (his name as it was pronounced in Yiddish) and his wife Chaiya Yentil (again, in Yiddish) came to Omaha from a small village, a shtetl, in Latvia in the early years of the 20th century. They had many relatives in Omaha, some who immigrated to Omaha about the same time as they did and some of whom came as late as the years just before World War II. The family names of relatives included, in addition to the Diamonds, the Blooms, (Lena Diamond was married to Sam Bloom), the Novaks, the Misles, and the Rubins. Abraham Diamond had two brothers, Harry and William, and a sister, Lena. Many of the families were in the automobile business and some were in real estate. Abraham alone was a butcher, and he...alone ...was a mohel.

Through the years much has been written about circumcision, Jewish practices and ceremonies about it, its meaning to the Jewish People, what it means to be a mohel and how one becomes a mohel.

One of the best and most complete definitions is that

of Rabbi Elliot Dorff who explained in "Modern Conservative Judaism," (2018, 105):

"(The Bris) is the most ancient ritual we have, dating back to Abraham and our very beginning as a people. It is also a blood ritual, and the sign of the covenant imparted on the male child is indelible. Most of all it expresses the sheer fact of continuity, of another link in the chain of the generations...a ritual that will forever transform the very body of the male Jew."

In a less serious manner, and with the humorous style he used in much of what he wrote, Leo Rosten in his classic book, *The Joys of Yiddish*, (1968, 253):

"A man passed a store window with nothing in it but a clock, stopped inside, and asked, "How long would it take to fix my watch?"

"How should I know?" shrugged the balaboss, (Yiddish for the owner, one who is in authority). I don't fix watches, I'm a mohel."

"But---in your window you have a clock!"

"So what would you put in the window?"

The serious and the humorous side of the subject, side by side, is a perfectly Jewish response.

Illustrative of the present day seriousness of the art and science of being a mohel are the similar courses of study and certification under the separate rabbinical authorization of both the Union of Reform Jews and the Conservative group, the Rabbinical Assembly, through the Jewish Theological Seminary. Each group operates its own training program and sets its own standards before it grants authorization to function under its auspices.

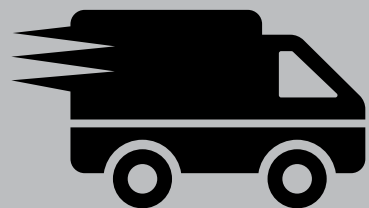
But the basic requirements are similar. One must be a licensed physician with recognized hospital privileges, have a record of performing a given number of procedures and carry adequate insurance. One must be Jewish and a member of a congregation of one of the groups and must also submit a letter of reference from the applicant's rabbi in the applicant's synagogue. The Union of Orthodox Congregations does not have a formal training program but uses instead the traditional method of certifying a new mohel by an experienced mohel as a sort of journeyman with an apprentice. Today both the Reform and the Conservative organizations provide for the training and certification of women as a mohelet. In the major cities of America, and those with large Jewish populations, there are often full time mohelim practitioners, and in those areas with smaller Jewish populations physicians who become a lay but certified mohel often function.

Does NJHS Have Your Current E-mail Address?

Is your e-mail address current? If you have a new e-mail address, or you have recently changed providers, please let us know. Send an e-mail to Kathy Weiner at kweiner@jewishomaha.org and let her know your updated information. We are going to be electronically sending e-mail from time to time, so please don't be left behind! Send us your current information today!

Are You Moving?

If you are moving residences, please notify us of your address change. Please call the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society office at (402) 334-6441 or send us an e-mail! Reach us at njhs@jewishomaha.org.



As Rev. Diamond's early records illustrate the average fee he charged during the 1930s, the years of the Depression, varied between \$10 and \$20, while in some cases it dropped to as low as \$5 or even lower. There is no way to know if some were performed without a fee. Through the years the fees Rev. Diamond charged gradually increased. Today typical fees vary from \$250 to \$500. The director of the Reform group estimated that current charges "on the coasts average about \$1,000 but in the Midwest the charges are more likely to be \$500." Rev. Diamond, it is certain, would be aghast to hear of those numbers.

The Jewish stores on North 24th Street are long gone, and the blocks where they once existed are empty, empty of everything. The homes around 30th and Davenport Street still exist, but the Jews who lived in the neighborhood have moved farther and farther to the western reaches of Omaha. The Diamond grandchildren and now great-grandchildren have moved and are now all over the country.

But still today, even though there are those who certainly do not remember their encounter with Rev. Diamond when they were eight days old, they still understand that the Covenant that the Biblical Abraham received and passed on as set forth in the Book of Genesis remains part of their body. The Bris continues as one of the strongest customs Jews in all ages throughout the world, in spite of adversity, have maintained.

Note: Assistance in the preparation of this article has been given by Professor Rami Arav of the Department of Religion and Philosophy, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and by Dr. James Wax, a long time Omaha Pediatrician. Photography of the illustrations in this article was done by Reneé Ratner Corcoran. The photo of Rev. Abraham Diamond was furnished by Steve Diamond of Denver, son of Hy Diamond, Rev. Diamond's oldest son. Family lore was contributed by Brent Bloom, grandson of Lena Bloom, and Richard Diamond, grandson of William Diamond, both of Omaha. The sketch of North 24th Street was made by Harry and Doris Alloy of Omaha. Reference material was furnished by Dr. Michael Miller, chair of the Brit Milah Board of Reform Jews, of Indianapolis, IN., Rabbi Ari Dembitzer, Beth Israel Synagogue, and Rabbi Steve Abraham, Beth El Synagogue, both of Omaha.



This article was written by Richard Fellman of Omaha, former newspaper reporter, retired lawyer, former Nebraska State Senator, elected member of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners and its chair, nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives, and former Adjunct Professor of the Department of Political Science at University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Genealogy Corner

By: *Arnold Garson*

“How can I get started?” probably is the most frequent question in genealogy.

You begin, obviously, by assembling all of the information you already have from your own knowledge and from relatives: names, dates, places, events, documents, scrapbooks, and photos. Ask every question you can think of.

But it won't be long before you will want to begin searching on the internet. This process can be confusing and time-consuming, given that there are tens of thousands of websites pertaining to genealogy. Cyndi's List, a free online reference, contains links to more than 300,000 genealogy databases in more than 200 categories. The key is to narrow your focus, at least at first, to the websites that are likely to be the most productive.

So here's a review of several of the best genealogy websites, both free and paid-access.

You should consider using ancestry.com, which is the most useful and most comprehensive genealogy website. It contains billions of records, but you'll have to pay a fee to use it. Most of the best and most productive genealogy websites do charge a fee. Ancestry memberships start at \$45 a month and range up to \$300 or more a year. You'll easily get your money's worth; online name searches can produce a huge range of documents.

Another top website, familysearch.org, is free, maintained by the Mormon Church. One of its benefits is access to the incomparably valuable U.S. census records through 1940, available most other places only through a paid membership.

There's another free website that is easily searched, while also being particularly relevant for readers here: the extraordinarily valuable and amazingly detailed Ellis Island immigration records (libertyellisfoundation.org). Examples of things you may find in the Ellis Island ship manifests: How much money did your great-grandfather have on him when he came to America? What town did he come from, and in some cases, what was his street address in that town? With whom did he plan to live when he arrived in America?

For most readers here, yet another free website that's especially important. Jewishgen.org includes, among other things, comprehensive burial records for almost 3.5 million Jews. Of particular note in this category are 11,214 individual burial listings for nine Jewish cemeteries

in Omaha, two in Lincoln, three in Sioux City, and one each in Council Bluffs, Hastings, Grand Island, Nebraska City, Scottsbluff, and Maxwell, Nebraska; 75 percent of these grave records include tombstone photos. JewishGen also provides an unparalleled database of Jewish history and genealogy records in Eastern Europe. Included, for example, are the 1897 census of Russia, and the 1929 Polish business directory with information for most cities, towns and villages – about 34,000 locations. There are countless, powerful narratives of 19th Century and early 20th Century life and death in hundreds of shtetls. There's also a Holocaust database.

For those seeking translations of Hebrew tombstone inscriptions, the Facebook page Tracing the Tribe – Jewish Genealogy on Facebook is probably the easiest and quickest source, and it's free. Just post a photo and wait for translations to arrive, often within minutes.

After ancestry, familysearch, Ellis Island and JewishGen, my next choice would be a category of websites – historic newspaper archives.

Full disclosure: I spent my entire working career in the newspaper industry – 46 years at the Omaha World-Herald, The Des Moines Register, The San Bernardino County Sun in California, the Argus Leader in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Kentucky. I worked for about one-third of my career as a reporter, about one-third as a supervisory editor, and about one-third as a media company executive.

Among the lessons from my career is that there may be no other place where more facts and interesting details about more people have been recorded. Obituaries and wedding or engagement announcements are among the most obvious mass resource bases from newspapers, but there is so much more to be learned. Among my own discoveries:

- Inez Garson Perl, a first cousin once removed in Ithaca, New York, was an art historian. In 1957, she stunned the art world by fabricating an exhibit at Cornell University with collages made by a fictitious 19th Century artist, Estaban Xiros. The exhibit drew numerous unsuspecting visitors before being exposed as a hoax. The account of what happened and how appeared in various newspapers under an Associated Press byline.
- Solomon Greenstone, my great-grandfather, lived in Lincoln, where he operated a pawn shop, from his arrival in the early 1880s until his death in 1909. Newspaper articles gave me detailed glimpses of his life and activities. He fell on a sidewalk that was in poor repair and broke



NJHS Publications Make Great Gifts!

Looking for a special gift? We have numerous publications filled with historical photographs and recollections telling the story of our community. Our publications include:

- ***Memories of the Jewish Midwest, Council Bluffs, Iowa, History & Stories***

This 2017 publication tells stories of the Jewish history of Council Bluffs - where refugee families, small business owners and professionals made shul a hub of Jewish life.

- ***Memories of the Jewish Midwest, Mom and Pop Grocery Stores***

This 2011 publication celebrates and documents the Jewish grocery stores that operated in Omaha, Lincoln, Council Bluffs and Southwest Iowa.

- ***Memories of the Jewish Midwest, Jewish South Omaha, Founding a Neighborhood, Fostering a Community***

This 2006 publication is a collection of interviews of people with connections to South Omaha.

- ***Memories of the Jewish Midwest, WWII Veterans***

This 2003 publication is a collection of stories that describe the Omaha Jewish community's contributions to the country's victory in World War II.

Purchase Copies at

- the NJHS office
- Nebraskajhs.com
- amazon.com

his hip. A lawsuit stemming from this case went to the Nebraska Supreme Court, which held that cities can hold property owners liable for sidewalk maintenance and for injuries stemming from broken sidewalks. Newspaper articles about Solomon also documented several specific incidents of anti-Semitism against him and his family.

My birth mother, Celia Stine Garson, died when I was nine months old, so I had limited access to information about her. Newspapers helped fill the gap as articles told me what piano pieces she played at recitals in Lincoln, who attended her 10th birthday party in Beatrice along with descriptions of the decorations and the refreshments, and what she said in 1935 as she was being tied up by gun-wielding men who robbed a men's clothing store in downtown Lincoln where she happened to be at the time. ("What is this, anyway? Are you kidding?" They weren't.)

The most complete newspaper archive website is newspapers.com, which has more than 500 million newspaper pages in its archive from 12,000 different U.S. newspapers. Of particular interest regionally are newspapers from Lincoln, Sioux City, Fremont, Beatrice, Columbus and Norfolk. Access to the complete archive is about \$100 a year. Smaller newspaper archives are available through other paid genealogy databases, including genealogybank.com.

Again, for most readers here, an important free searchable, online newspaper archive is available through the magic of an Omaha Public Library card. It's the entire Omaha World-Herald database going back to 1878. I have found scores of newspaper articles relating to my ancestors and relatives through this database:

infoweb.newsbank.com/signin/OmahaPublicLibrary/EANX-NB

Your Omaha Public Library card number is then required for access. Interestingly, the newsbank database includes a few thousand newspapers, but only more recent years are available for most titles. The World-Herald with more than 140 years in the database is an exception. This is huge for those with an interest in the history of Omaha area families and happenings.

Finally, for those who subscribe to The New York Times online, either separately or through a Sunday print subscription, there's an important genealogy-related bonus that you may not know about: You have full searchable access to The New York Times online database going back to 1851; amazing, but it's not widely known or promoted. You sort of have to know about it to get to it. Here's how to do it: Go to the NYTimes.com website and sign in as a paid subscriber. Scroll down the homepage to the very bottom. Look for the column of entries there entitled Tools & Service. Click on it, then scroll to the very bottom for TimesMachine. Click, and that's it! Happy searching.



Arnold Garson is a retired journalist and media executive. He and his wife reside in Sioux Falls, SD, where he works as a professional writer focusing on family history stories. He can be reached via email at ahgarson@gmail.com.

NJHS Board Welcomes Newest Member, Jeannette Gabriel



The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society's newest board member is Jeannette Gabriel, who is the Director of the Nate and Hannah Schwalb Center for Israel and Jewish Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. She received her Ph.D. in 2019 in Social Studies Education from University of Iowa where she wrote her dissertation on how high school history teachers thought about using images to teach racial history. Her dissertation research grew out of the ten years she spent with Smithsonian Associates training history teachers in the Teaching American History Program.

The bulk of Jeannette's work is related to American history and religion with an emphasis on issues of race and gender. She has published in anthologies with Cambridge Scholars Press and Oxford University Press. Her current research work examines collaboration and conflict between the African-American and Jewish community in Omaha.

In addition to her research, Jeannette curated a collection on Jewish Women in Iowa at the Iowa Women's Archive located at the University of Iowa. This project lasted three years and resulted in the inclusion of sixty individual and institutional collections. The Jewish Women in Iowa collections that Jeannette assembled include materials that will contribute to new and complex stories about Jewish women's experiences in the Midwest and beyond. She recently curated an exhibit for the The Leonard and Shirley Goldstein Center for Human Rights at the University of Nebraska-Omaha titled, "Shirley Goldstein's Immigrant Rights Legacy: Operation Exodus in Omaha" that examines the Omaha Jewish community's involvement in the movement that fought for the right of Soviet Jews to leave their country and resettle in Israel and the United States.

As part of her role in the Schwalb Center for Israel and Jewish Studies, Jeannette has taught courses in Judaic Studies that have been cross listed with Women's Studies, History and Black Studies.

Jeannette is deeply committed to collecting and preserving Jewish history for future generations. She believes the field of Jewish history and Judaic studies has been limited by the lack of access to rich troves of primary source materials that are stored in many families' attics. Jeannette welcomes the opportunity to become part of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Board and actively engage in the important project of documenting and preserving Nebraska's Jewish history.



Can You Help Us In Identifying This Photo?

An inevitable part of documenting history is that you end up with a few unidentified photos! If you can identify any of these photos please contact Kathy Weiner in the NJHS office at (402) 334-6441 or kweiner@jewishomaha.org. We would very much like to add all of the pictures to our collection.



Tribute Cards Donations

In Memory of ...

CHICKIE GILINSKY

by Danny, Andrew & Nora Cohn, Beth Staenberg,
Sandra Belgrade

BEVERLY SELDIN

by Sandra Belgrade, Denise Silverman

RON BRODKEY

by Beth Staenberg, Ira & Carol Nathan,
NJHS Board & Staff

BETTY RUBIN

by Don & Marlene Dandy

DR. BEN NACHMAN

by Ben Novicoff

MARVIN AZRIEL

by Sandra Belgrade

RALPH & FRANCES KATZ

by Gordon Katz

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STANLEY PERLMETER

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BRAD FINKLE

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BEA KARP

by Annette & Leo Fettman, Harold Siporin

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VERA BERNSTEIN

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DON NOVICOFF

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ALICE BORDY

by Barbara & Jerry Cohen

SANDRA BELGRADE

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Paula Albert, Robert Osborne, Beth Staenberg,
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Suess, Harold Siporin, Phyllis Aronson, Susan &
Nancy, Margo Parsow, Debby & Larry Josephson, Ira &
Carol Nathan, Helen Rifkin, Kathy & Harry Weiner,
Renee & Dan Corcoran, Lois "Ducky" Milder, Julee
Katzman, Patricia Newman, Steve Levinger, Joanie &
Terry Bernstein, Kathy Goldstein

LARRY GRASSO

by NJHS Board & Staff

STANLEY SLOSBURG

by Kathy Goldstein, Gail Goldstein Raznick
& Phil Raznick, Charlotte Zirpursky

LARRY YAMPOLSKY

by Shelley & Skip Stern

JOAN MARTIN

by Helen Rifkin, Tootie Simon

RABBI JERRY KANE &

RUTH SILBERMAN TERMAN

by Cyrille Kane

LORRIE STEIN

by Helen & Tuffy Epstein

HARRIET SINGER

by Shelley & Skip Stern, Bob Belgrade, Rocky Stern
& Roger Suess

ESTHER KATLEMAN

by Kathy Weiner, Tootie Simon

LARRY KAVICH

by Rocky Stern and Roger Suess

ART DAVIDSON

by the NJHS Board & Staff

Would you like to make a tribute? Whatever the occasion, the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society will help you honor a friend or loved one, or acknowledge a special event. Simply fill out the form on the back page of this newsletter and return it, along with your donation.

Special Honors...

Recovery

BETH STAENBERG
by Margo Parsow, NJHS Board & Staff

JERRY HOBERMAN
by Don & Marlene Dandy

Birthday

MARGO PARSOW
by Beth Staenberg

JOE KIRSHENBAUM
by Marty & Iris Ricks

BETH STAENBERG
by Michael Staenberg

JERRY FREEMAN
by Barbara & Jerry Cohen, Beth Staenberg,
Teresa Freeman & Marc Chauche, Vicki Cohen

MARCIA KUSHNER
by Kim, Matthew Placzek & Family

BOB BELGRADE
by Doris & Harry Alloy

NANCY RIPS
by Jenny Gordon, Reneé Corcoran, Helen & Tuffy Epstein

MAXINE NOODELL
by Tootie Simon

Anniversary

RENEE & SANDY KASNER
by Sandra Belgrade

MAXINE & JACK NOODLE
by Tootie Simony

Yahrzeit

HARVEY ROFFMAN, ELLEN JOSEPH &
ESTHER CANAR
by Mark Roffman, Rick Roffman & Nancy Smith Roffman

Appreciation

BOB RIFKIN
by Helen Rifkin

MIDGE BOWERS
by John & Kay Lynn Goldner

Births

GREAT GRANDSON, SIMON
by NJHS Board & Staff

MICHAEL STAENBERG'S GRANDSON, OLLIE
by NJHS Board & Staff

Honoring

ROCKY LEWIS
for Receiving NJHS Volunteer of the Year Award
by Gail & Phil Raznick

ROBERT OSBORNE
for Receiving Teen Leadership Award
by Susie & Jim Silverman

NANCY RIPS
for Receiving the Spirit of Federation Award
by Beth Staenberg, Helen & Tuffy Epstein

LARRY KELBERG
for Receiving the Spirit of Federation Award
by Bob Belgrade



***Help us preserve
important history.***

Remember the Nebraska Jewish
Historical Society in your will.

Nebraska Jewish Historical Society Mission Statement

The mission of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society is to preserve the histories of the Jewish families who settled in Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. The NJHS will promote the acquisition, cataloging and use of the collected materials which depict this history by: participating in conferences; issuing publications to members and professionals; fostering research; and promoting museum projects and related education and cultural activities.

Contact us!

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Monday – Thursday
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Renee Ratner Corcoran
(402) 334-6442
njhs@jewishomaha.org

NJHS ASSISTANT:

Kathy Weiner
(402) 334-6441
kweiner@jewishomaha.org

Fax: (402) 334-6507

Visit us online at
www.nebraskajhs.com



The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society
333 South 132nd Street
Omaha, NE 68154

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Nebraska Jewish Historical Society Donation Form

Whatever the occasion, the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society will help you honor a friend or loved one, or acknowledge a special event.

We have available for all occasions, cards for donations of \$5, \$10 and up. We also have a \$25 packet that consists of six \$5 cards. Please use this form to make your donation.

Once we receive your donation information, a card will be sent to the family or person commemorated.

Please make your checks payable to the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. Return completed form and payment to NJHS, 333 South 132nd Street, Omaha, NE 68154.

Donations are also accepted over the phone. Call the NJHS offices Monday through Thursday, at (402) 334-6441 / 6442 between 10:00 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE THIS DONATION TO:

- ☐ The NJHS Fund
- ☐ The Mary Fellman Permanent Enrichment Fund
- ☐ The Dr. Ben Nachman Oral History Endowment Fund

MY GIFT INFORMATION:

Donation Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

I'd like to make this donation...

- ☐ On behalf of _____
- ☐ In memory of _____
- ☐ Other _____

Please send an acknowledgement of this gift to:

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Address: _____

My Information...

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Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____