

# Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc.



Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations

## NEWSLETTER

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### 1. ARCHIVES

Received with thanks from:

- Ilana Cohen, Falk Library, Great Synagogue, *Serials in Jewish Libraries in NSW*, which includes our collection.
- Benseon Apple - *The Bagel*, magazine of AUJS, NSW.
- Rabbi Apple - Jewish Heritage Society, Moscow booklet and information. Also *Governor George Arthur* by MCI Levy. *Shorashim va-anafim* (Roots and Branches) about the Mandelbaum and Rakover families. In Hebrew, 1996. And *Mendel Cohen 1838-1909*, unpublished biography by Robert C Spiezel, 1997.
- Sophie Caplan - lists of state archive muster and census records. Also Harry Stein, *A Glance over an old Left Shoulder*.
- Flora Davis - newspapers articles and back issues of *AJHS Journal* and *North Shore Synagogue Bulletins*. Also photo of debutantes at first Montefiore Home Ball held at David Jones in 1930 plus further information about the Jewish Girl Guides.
- Central Coast Shalom Progressive Jewish Congregation - video of their Kristallnacht commemoration "From Darkness to Light".
- Australian Archives - photocopy of passenger list from the "Johan de Witt" which arrived in Sydney 16 March 1947.
- Donald Cohen - illustrations of Cootamundra from *Cootamundra District, a photographic history*, volume II, 1994.

- George Keen - copy of essay by Shoshana Simons, *Shules and Schools* about Woolf and Myra Simons and their family connection with the Newtown and Central Synagogues.
- Helen Bersten - *Regional Histories of New South Wales*, written and published by Department of Urban Affairs and Planning.
- Andrea Humphreys, heritage consultant with Paul Davies P/L, architects - information on Hunter Street properties owned by Wangenheim family. Includes family history of Simmons and Wangenheim families.
- Report of Task Force on Jewish Continuity.
- Peter Tait of Alice Springs - family tree and records of Mitchell and Davis families.
- John Posener - family tree of the Posener family.
- Miriam Shifreen - article from *The Torch* about Bankstown synagogue foundation stone.
- David Bloomfield - *Rabaul Diary*. His war diary August 1941 to April 1942.
- Leveah Richard per Louise Rosenberg: Diaries of Alexander and Samuel Weingott, both members of the AIF killed in World War I.
- Beulah Rose-Gross. Family trees of Chaimo, Polakow, Ausbruch, Mau, Elbasov families.
- Morris Forbes - various journals and ephemera as well as MA thesis by Marjorie Newton *A History of Selected Cemeteries in Sydney in the Nineteenth Century*. Also a *Short History of the Karakatta Cemetery* by Rabbi Dr Shalom Coleman 1979.
- Mr and Mrs J Symon - following list of books:
  - BZ Abrahams, *The Jews in England*
  - WJ Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*
  - N Rosenthal, *Look back with Pride (St Kilda)*
  - N Rosenthal, *Formula for Survival (Ballarat)*
  - PB Levy, ed. *Friday Nights. A Jewish Chronicle Anthology 1841-1971*
  - QA Wynn, *Fortunes of Samuel Wynn*
  - RB Patkin, *Heritage and Tradition (Mt Scopus College)*
  - Australian Jewry Book of Honour WWII*
  - Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade. *Exhibition of Language, script and book of Yugoslav Jews* (to be passed on to AJGS)
- Purchased: *Pioneer Register* volumes 26 & 27.

## 2. RABBI JOHN LEVI

On Tuesday 26 August the Victorian AJHS held a meeting in honour of Rabbi John Levi, co-author of the definitive *Australian Genesis* and committee member of AJHS (Victoria). He is retiring as senior Rabbi of Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne.

## 3. BOOK NEWS

### *Edge of the Diaspora*

The new edition has been published and the Society has a few copies for sale at \$29.95. Please contact the office on 9518 7596.

### *Bondi in the Sinai*

This has been published in USA and is available from the author, AJHS member Dr Rodney Goultman, Faculty of Education, University of South Australia.

## 4. CONGRATULATIONS

AJHS member, Dr Sydney Levine has been awarded an OAM in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to dentistry.

AJHS member and volunteer cataloguing assistant, Les Belinfante has celebrated his Golden Wedding with his wife, Sylvia.

## 5. MUCH THANKS

To Kim Phillips (and with apologies for the omission from the last newsletter) for helping to purchase a copy of the registers of the Great Synagogue\* and for transcribing the information onto computer. This is now available for use at the Society. \* London

To Sol Halprin who produced an index of marriages by brides' names in chronological order within alphabetical lists.

To Irene and John Rothenberg who transferred Sol Halprin's marriage index lists to computer. This means we now have a computer listing and print out of marriages from 1830 to 1996 relating to Bridge Street, York Street, Macquarie Street and the Great Synagogue. The print outs are in alphabetical order, one for brides and one for bridegrooms, while Sol's bride index still provides chronological access as well.

## 6. REQUEST FOR A TREASURER

The Society is seeking someone willing to take on the position of Honorary Treasurer as after many years of sterling service, Miriam Solomon would like to hand over the position. Please contact Mrs Solomon at the Society.

## **7. ADDENDUM TO NORFOLK ISLAND ARTICLE (BY HELEN BERSTEN)**

One of the people involved in the final evacuation of Norfolk Island was Isaac Leo Lyon, who, in 1813, as clerk to Captain Reed, recorded the 28 settlers, 14 convicts, 8 women and 12 children who left as well as the tools they took with them. The last inhabitants left in February 1814.

The first letter to the Sydney synagogue dated 29 May 1840 was signed by all nine prisoners, the second by Levi Abraham as Reader and each was accompanied by a letter from Maconochie. Issac Simmons, the president, replied on behalf of the Sydney Synagogue on 1 July 1840 and sent a box containing prayer books, works of religious instruction and a Jewish almanac with festival days marked in red. The second letter from Simmons asked Maconochie to appoint one of the prisoners as Reader to officiate on Friday evenings and Saturday morning and afternoon services. The second letter from Norfolk Island signed by Levi Abraham as Reader and dated December 1840, asked for candles and matzo but stated that James Lawrence was not to be supplied. This letter was referred to in the synagogue minutes of 26 January 1841 and again on 17 February when the committee agreed to send "Passover cakes" and candles.

We now know from the letter to the Sydney Synagogue in May 1840 that Ralph Simmons was one of the English prisoners sent to Norfolk Island and we know the names of the other eight from the same letter. A variation in spelling has Sarony Solomon and Ralph Simmonds transcribed by the synagogue minute taker.

Further information from Sydney Synagogue minute book 1840-41 held at the Mitchell Library ML/MSS 3740/122 and from AJHS Journal vol 12 part 1, 1993 p 9-10.

## **8. FLORA DAVIS: ADDENDUM ON JEWISH GIRL GUIDES**

The Jewish Girl Guides were formed in 1926 by Mrs Rothfield (Captain), Rae Whitfield (Wittenburg), Edna Goulston, Esther Nathan (later Lester), Joan Goldstein (Aaron), her sister Joyce Goldstein, Flora Isaacs (Davis). Jess and Leah Phillips, Rae Schubert (Horne), Sybil Zions (Braham) and Beryl Zions (Braham), Beryll Corrick (Goldshaft), Val Currotta (Abrahams), Mavis Nathan (Simons) and a few more girls whose names I can't remember.

As Julie Morris said in her article in June 1995 we spent every Sunday afternoon at the Maccabean Hall learning knots, all about the flags, dancing, how to help other people etc. When Julie came into the company many of we older girls (16-18 years old) had just left.

Here I'd like to say that several of us made our Debut at the Montefiore Home ball at David Jones encouraged by Mrs Harry Lesnie, President of Ladies Committee and mother of one of the scouts. I went on to help with the afternoon tea at the "Home Fetes".

Essie (Nathan) Lester was Matron-of-Honour at one Ball just after she married and I was Matron-of-Honour at the Home Ball in 1966. I still help at the Home once a fortnight. A resident of the Home still is our darling Matron-of-Honour from 1930 Marge Dempster and Lily Rothman (Sharpe). Below is a photo of the Debs.

Also I'd like to mention that we guides and the scouts, some of whom were brothers of guides, started the Maccabean Literary and Dramatic Juniors about 1927-28. Also Alf and I celebrated our wedding at the Central Synagogue and held our reception at both hall of the "Macc". The latter cost £6.60 to hire both halls and facilities.



Debutantes at the 1930 Montefiore Home Ball held at David Jones.

Top Row: Rose Goldberg, Rae Schubert, Edna Goldberg, Essie Nathan, Frances Davis, Jess Phillips, - Collins.

Front Row: Joan Goldstein, Flora Isaacs, Marge Dempster (Matron of Honour), Lily Sharpe, Nancy Rosenfield.

## 9. EARLY DAYS IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF HOBART (BY HEDI FIXEL)

After I had finished preparing the booklet dealing with the history of the Hobart Congregation, *150 Years of Survival Against All Odds*, a lot of further information came my way. The very first Minute Book turned up in a most mysterious way and it is a mine of information on events in Hobart, then still Hobartown, and the people who worked together to set up the House of Worship.

There were several family groups, and it was not surprising that when one person was more or less established in one place that he or she were joined by other family members and they helped each other by working together.

Louis Nathan, who became the first President of the Hobart Congregation, arrived in Australia in the 1830s from London. He first went to Sydney because his sister Rosetta had been living there with her husband Moses Joseph, but Louis Nathan soon moved to Hobartown which in those days was a most important port.

The history of the family of Louis Nathan has been most extensively researched, and an abbreviated report is in the Society's Journal Volume IX - Part 7 (1984) under the title of *Thirty Eight Presidents* by Lawrence D Nathan. I have heavily drawn on this report, and a descendant of this family, Justice Howard Nathan of Melbourne, attended the celebrations in Hobart in June 1995, to mark 150 years since the consecration of the Hobart Synagogue.

The family had been traced back to Hyam Nathan (1743-1824), a fancy tailor, who lived and died in London. None of his six children came to Australia, but very many grandchildren came. The first was Moses Joseph. He was transported for life in 1826, having been convicted of the theft of a trinket from the barrow of a fellow pedlar. A few years after his arrival in Sydney he obtained his ticket of leave and could set up as a tobacconist. He applied for permission to marry his bride (and cousin) Rosetta Nathan still living in London. Rosetta came out as a free settler and they married on 1 February 1832 in Sydney.

Moses Joseph soon became a jeweller and a Government approved gold buyer, gradually bought real estate and cattle stations. The couple had nine children and they returned as very well-to-do people to London in the 1860s. [Part of their success is due to their establishment of a commercial shipping business, see below on the *Rosetta Nathan* which is from a recent manuscript written by Howard Nathan.]

Naturally the success of Moses and Rosetta induced their siblings and cousins to escape the difficult living conditions in England and to try their luck in far away Australia. The first to join them was Rosetta's brother Louis Nathan (1811-1886). He married his first cousin Harriette, daughter of Uncle Henry Moses, before leaving England.

Uncle Henry Moses owned a Wholesale Clothier's business in Cannon Street, London and he trained his sons and some nephews in the business. When any of those decided to emigrate he gave each £100 worth of goods to start their own business wherever

they settled. This worked out extremely well for both sides, and goods from HE&M Moses of Cannon Street were imported to Australia and New Zealand for many years.

Louis Nathan settled in Hobart in 1834 and started in business as a storekeeper, ship's provedore, and later owner of whalers and trading vessels. A few years later Samuel Jacob Moses (1807-1873) arrived and joined Louis Nathan in business. They were cousins and Moses was married to a sister of Harriette Nathan. After the return to England of Louis Nathan in 1848, Samuel Moses became President of the Hobart Congregation. His expertise as a "Mohel" to perform circumcisions was much in demand. Samuel Moses was the first Justice of Peace in Tasmania. He was presented by the Congregation with a handsome silver salver which was discovered several years ago by Rabbi Lubovsky in London and it is now in the Judaica Collection of Isi Leibler.

A very ornate board in the Synagogue is inscribed with the names of the Founders of the Synagogue and with the names of substantial donors. Several Nathan and Moses names are amongst them. The plaques below the ladies gallery honour members of the Moses and Nathan families. The parents of Samuel Moses, Jacob and Clare Moses were inscribed by Samuel as soon as it was decided that donations of £5 would qualify for this honour. Numerous other Moses and Nathan names are inscribed and even donations from Mrs Braham, Toronto, and Charles Phillip of New Orleans are shown, all members of this wide clan.

In the first Minute Book appears a Resolution to the effect that not more than a father and son, or two brothers of the same family should be at any one time serving on a Committee, and this proves that there were quite a number of families involved in this young community. At the first Committee Meeting held in the newly consecrated Synagogue on 15 July 1845, it was moved by Mr R Hart and seconded by Isaac Solomon that a letter be written to Mrs Louis Nathan, thanking her for donating the elegant "PAROCHET" and "KAPAROT" and expressing to her the best wishes for her welfare.

On 7 August 1845, Louis Nathan presented to the Synagogue on behalf of Mr Henry Moses (Uncle Henry) of London a Sepher Torah and twenty pounds, and on 28 August 1845, a Shofar. In November of the same year, Mrs Louis Nathan presented a handsome silk damask Reading Desk Cover, Mantle for the Torah Scroll and other drapery. In June 1847, Mrs Louis Nathan offered £50 to found a charitable fund for the relief of the poor, such sum not to be mixed up with the funds of the Congregation.

In October 1849, the President, Samuel Moses reported that his relative, Louis Nathan, now living in London had forwarded to the Congregation a Sepher Torah. This arrived in December and was presented to the Synagogue on Sunday 30 December 1849 at 5pm according to arrangements outlined by Rev. Cohen who was by then the resident Minister.

The first Minute Book ends with an entry for the meeting of 2 March 1851, that Mr Henry Horowitz presented a roll of Pentateuch to the Synagogue, prior to his departure for England.

## 10. SHIP'S BELL FROM THE BARQUE "ROSETTA JOSEPH" (HOWARD NATHAN)

Around midnight on 1 December 1850, the sailing ship "Rosetta Joseph" ran into an uncharted reef 150kms north of Lord Howe Island. She was returning to Sydney from San Francisco. For three days the captain, the 32 passengers and 15 crew stayed with her, before taking to the boats and setting off for Sydney. They made it to Port Macquarie without loss of life. All the survivors told the same story, "as the boats were in danger of being swamped by the huge swell and high seas, we threw overboard all our clothing and blankets, and the bags of gold dust we got in California".

This tale, planted in the "Sydney Morning Herald" was accepted with hilarity then, as it would be now. Disbelief, accounts for the salvage of the ship's bell and its possession by me today. What we know is that salvagers returned to the reef, on which the ship was still perched, to search for its gold and plunder the wreck. The bell was saved and is now one of my proud possessions.

The owner of the "Rosetta Joseph" were my forebears Moses Joseph and his wife Rosetta after whom the ship was named. In May 1850, he dispatched it to San Francisco to take advantage of the new passenger trade arising from the Californian gold rush. Diggers who had returned from California recognised the geographical similarities between NSW / Victoria with California and went in search of the metal for which local merchants had offered a reward to the first discoverers. Later Moses Joseph, as a gold buyer and exporter, eclipsed his income from shipping, merchandising and agriculture, to become one of the richest "emancipists" (a former convict).

The "Rosetta Joseph" was built in 1846, by Alexander Newton, on the Manning River at Taree in northern New South Wales. She was 265 tonnes and measured 89ft by 23ft. She had three masts and was built for international trading. She probably contained cedar fittings, in order to lighten her and give her the speed to compete with the American clippers.

The body of the bell is cast iron, but the swivel is brass, and obviously made to encase the bell. Cast iron bells were usual for ocean sailing vessels, which also carried brass bells to toll the hours of day and the change of watches, but cast iron bells, which tolled at a lower and more distinctive register were used to warn in fog, and also to announce arrival and departure. The two types of bells accomplished different objectives, they had to be easily distinguished.

The words *Rosetta Joseph*, are cast in a semi-circular fashion around the face of the bell and then in different scrip are the numerals 1847, underneath is the word "Sydney". All of this is an integral part of the casting. None of it could have been applied or engraved at a later time. The shape and cast of the bell is particular to the manufacturers of that time: the top of the bell is rather flattened, but the flange around the rim is thickened so that the clapper did not fracture the shell. These features establish the bell was cast for its intended purpose.

## 11. MEMO FROM LIONEL FREDMAN

There must be thousands of Jewish households which have a Singers "Daily Prayer Book" on their shelves. One of my copies is unusual having fixed to the inside cover the bookplate of James Johnston Auchmuty and opposite, James J Auchmuty/20 Trinity College/Dublin/October 1929.

Those who have seen the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation Bicentennial booklet may recall a photo from the "Newcastle Herald" of July 1954 including David Goldring, President; Rabbi Gottshall, Minister; Frank Purdue, Lord Mayor; Max Nurock, Minister of Israel; and Dr Auchmuty, Head of the Arts Department of the then University College, who had attended Trinity College with Mr Nurock, taken on the occasion of a Mayoral reception for the Minister. Subsequently Dr Auchmuty became the Professor of History and first Vice-Chancellor (1965-74) of the University of Newcastle.

One of the fringe benefits of the History Department was taking a lunch-hour sherry with our colleague to enable him to shed administrative worries and to talk to some history. One day, I noticed a Singer's Siddur on a low shelf. Asking him why he acquired such a book he said that he had intended to be an Anglican clergyman like his father and had actually begun to learn Hebrew but circumstances led him to a doctorate and place at a University Department of Education, then Farouk University, Alexandria. James had been compelled to leave in a hurry with his patron, Farouk, and chose to travel east and take an academic chance in Australia.

Some months after he died in 1981 I wrote to his widow, Margaret, that I would deeply appreciate the Singer as a token of our mutual interests and 21 years of friendship. She graciously sent the book with a covering letter dated 3 May 1982. Inserted in this book is a letter thanking me for forwarding him my article from the "Presidential Studies Quarterly" December 1980, dated 21 August 1981, and the Order of Service held in his honour held at the Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle, on 26 November.

## 12. FREDERICK ISAAC (FROM MORRIS OCHERT)

In my article on *Darling Downs Jewry and the Toowomba Hebrew Congregation* published in the recent Journal, I mentioned one Frederick Isaac, a Jewish squatter on the Downs. The explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt, named the Isaac River after him in "recognition of Isaac's kind support".

The Brisbane Courier-Mail has recently reported that the Old Gowrie Homestead is to be auctioned and states that it was originally part of a 34,000 ha property selected in 1841 by cattle graziers Henry Hughes and the brothers Henry and Frederick Isaac. It further records that Leichhardt stopped over there during his 1844 trek to Port Essington, near where Darwin is now situated.

**Bruce Le Bransky (Newsletter Editor)**

Contributions to the Newsletter are most welcome and should be sent C/- the Society's Hon. Archivist, Mandelbaum House.