

# RAUH JEWISH HISTORY PROGRAM & ARCHIVES

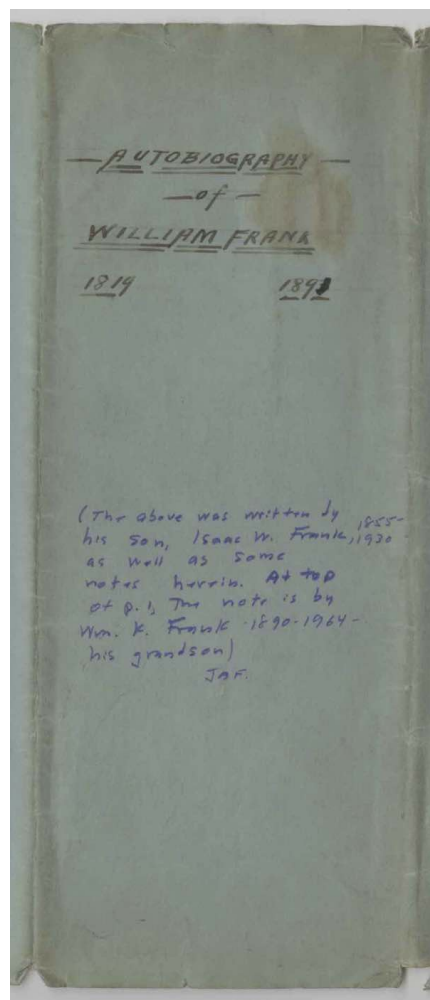
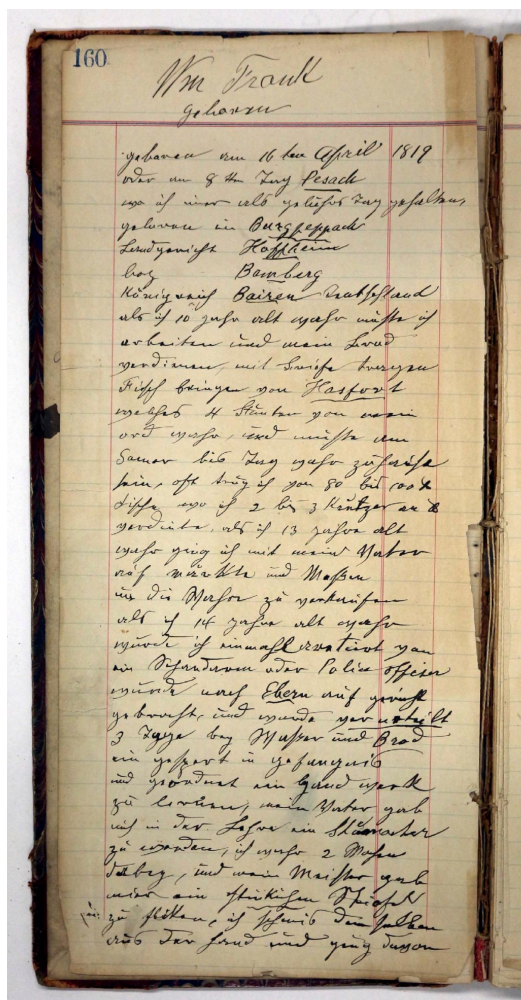
## AN ENEWSLETTER OF THE HEINZ HISTORY CENTER

### In this issue...

The Autobiography of William Frank  
 J. B. Bernstein Papers & Photographs  
**Hebrew Burial Association**  
 "Precious Jewish Cooking"  
 Events  
 Pittsburgh Jewish Newspaper Project



### Memoirs: "The Autobiography of William Frank, 1819-1891"



"The Autobiography of William Frank"  
 (manuscript)  
 —from Lehman Family Papers [MSS 1018]

"The Autobiography of William Frank"  
 (typescript)  
 —from Frank Family Papers [MSS 474]

All year, we'll be reading memoirs by Jewish people from across Western Pennsylvania. "The Autobiography of William Frank" is a good place to start.

It might be the first memoir written by a Jewish person in this region, and it certainly covers some of the earliest moments of Jewish communal life.

Frank wrote his memoir in 1889, two years before his death. He had come to Pittsburgh more than 40 years earlier and helped create its Jewish community.

He was one of the twelve men who formed the first local Jewish institution, the **Bes Almon Burial Society**, and he was also instrumental in founding the first Jewish congregation and first Jewish charity in the region. He watched the local Jewish population grow from double digits to the thousands and the communal landscape grow to include dozens of large and small organizations.

In 17 pages, **handwritten in German in an old ledger**, Frank describes his youth in Germany in the 1830s, his decision to come to America in 1840, his religious observances, his courtship with his future wife Pauline, their winding path to Pittsburgh, his early business partnerships, and his family affairs.

He also provides his recollections of the personal and communal ambitions and divisions within the small Jewish population of the city in the 1850s.

Frank is a straightforward writer. He



William Frank, undated  
—from Frank Family Photographs [MSP 474]

mostly compiles facts. As is often the case with memory, some of those facts became faded with the passage of time. He claims he founded the Hebrew Benevolent Society with "Louis Jaraslowsky" in 1847. He actually founded the organization with Leopold Jaraslowsky in June 1854, which we know thanks to **an article published that summer**.

Frank also gives an imperfect transliteration of the "Bes Almon" Society, leading to 150 years of confusion about the name of the organization.

Some time after Frank's death, his son Isaac W. Frank **translated, typed and annotated the memoir**. In the early 1950s, this translation came to the attention of Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. Marcus **requested permission** to publish an excerpt in his upcoming "Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865." The original German manuscript was missing at the time, and so Marcus reproduced the faulty transliteration. (Our manuscript was given by Ellen Lehman, a descendent of Frank.) Others later mistranslated that transliteration, leading to confusion.

For many years, there was debate among local Jewish historians. Was the society named "House of the Widower," "House of Mourning," or "House of Eternity?" Only **much later** was "House of Eternity" deemed to be closest.



Pauline Frank with three children, undated  
—from Frank Family Photographs [MSP 474]

More interesting than any facts, though, is Frank's personality.

We watch him storm out of an apprenticeship with a German shoemaker because the boots stink. "If the farmers want their boots mended they should do it themselves." We see him sitting in a saloon in Lancaster, Pa. on the afternoon of Rosh Hashana, struggling to write a marriage proposal to his future wife, Pauline Wormser. "What it was, I am too modest to say, as I had never written a love letter before, as I was 23 years old and had to provide a living since my tenth year. No love affairs entered my mind." We learn that he dissolved a business partnership with **David Strassburger** by cutting their "Strassburger & Frank" sign in half. He took "& Frank," ampersand and all.

[Read the Memoir](#)

Next week: Sandy Baskind recalls Squirrel Hill of the 1930s.

All year, the Rauh Jewish Archives is highlighting memoirs of Jewish life in Western Pennsylvania. If you would like to donate a memoir, or just chat about the stories you've read, **contact the archive** or call 412-454-6406.

---

**New Collection:**  
**J. B. Bernstein Papers and Photographs [MSS 1190]**



Zion Literary Society visiting the Heinz 57 plant, 1914.  
—from *J. B. Bernstein Papers and Photographs* [MSS 1190]

Joseph B. Bernstein (c.1894-1985) was a leader in Zionist activities in the Pittsburgh area. The **J. B. Bernstein Papers and Photographs [MSS 1190]** document his professional and philanthropic career from 1914 to 1970.

The collection is a snapshot of the local Zionist movement at two moments—one before the founding of the State of Israel and one after. Included are twelve Jewish National Fund stamps, a program from a stag smoker at the Zionist Council in 1911, two World War I-era issues of “The Zionist Bulletin,” and a receipt from Keren Hayesod in 1921. A folder of photographs documents later Zionist activities in the region, including a tribute dinner and a youth trip to Israel. A eulogy by Rabbi William Sajowitz of Temple Emanuel of South Hills serves as a useful biography of Bernstein. The collection contains two copies of the jeweler industry publication “The Tri-State,” and two Zionist speeches delivered in the 1940s by Bernstein’s son-in-law Dean Hirschfield.

[Catalog](#)

[Exhibit](#)

---

### Jewish Encyclopedia of Western Pennsylvania: Hebrew Burial Association



Gates of the first Hebrew Burial Association cemetery, located at 540 Seavey Rd.  
—United Jewish Federation Photographs [MSP 287]

The Hebrew Burial Association—also known as Chesed Shel Emes—is a Jewish burial society with two cemeteries. The original cemetery was organized by Shaare Shamayim Congregation in 1853, possibly following a dispute over the ownership of the older and independently managed **Bes Almon Cemetery**.

Although no known records document the transfer, the cemetery was eventually overseen by a new group called Chevra Chesed Shel Emes. Chesed Shel Emes was founded in January 1906 to provide burial plots and to cover funeral expenses for Jewish families who could not afford to bury their dead.

Our entry for the Hebrew Burial Association includes maps of its cemeteries, organizational minutes from 1906-1923 and from 1958-1971, governing documents, an interment list, and a selection of articles providing a history of the organization as well as documenting major moments in its existence.

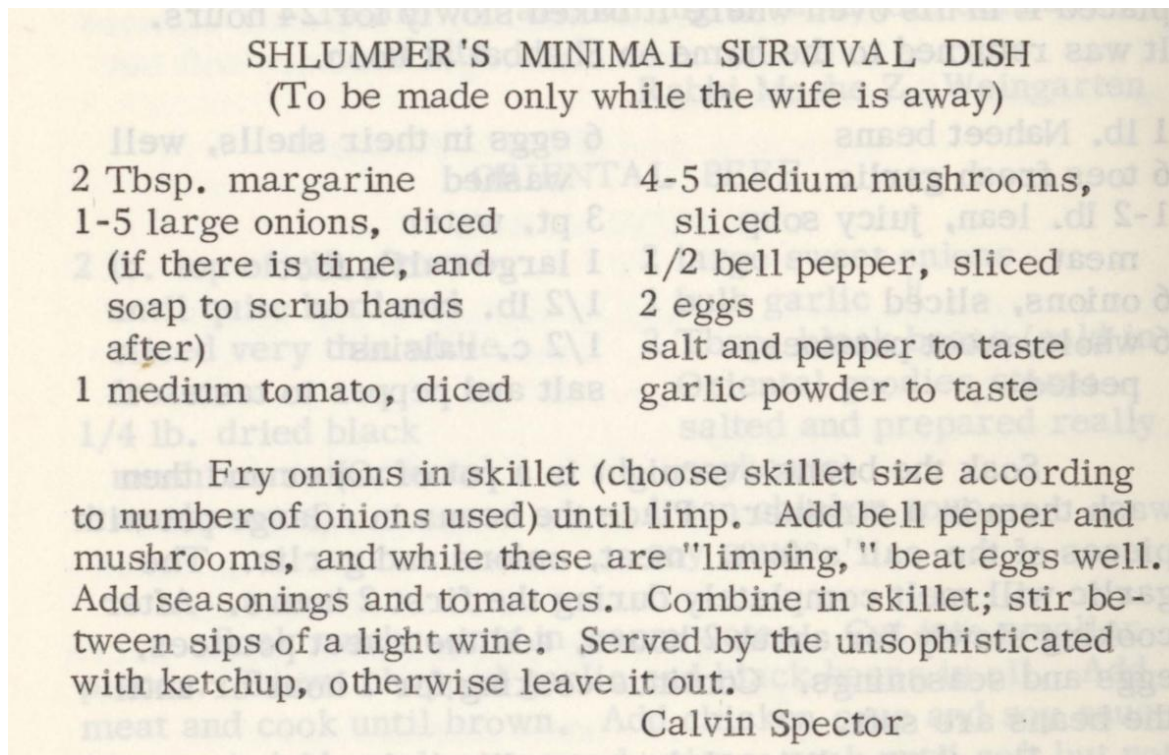
[Hebrew Burial Association](#)

---

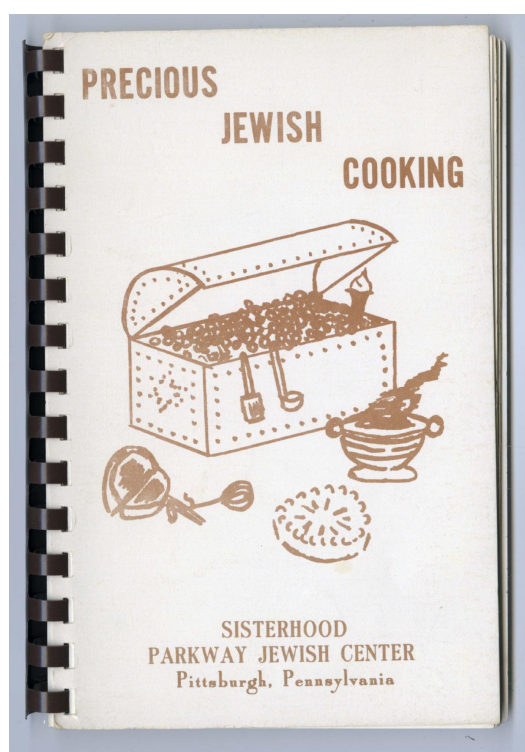
*The Jewish Encyclopedia of Western Pennsylvania brings together numerous online resources into a clearinghouse for conducting research about Jewish history in this region. As we migrate information to this new website, we'll be announcing new entries and resources in this section of the newsletter.*

---

**Cookbook:  
"Precious Jewish Cooking"**



"Shlumper's Minimal Survival Dish," by Calvin Spector.  
—from "Precious Jewish Cooking"



Cover  
—from "Precious Jewish Cooking"

The Parkway Jewish Center Sisterhood published "Precious Jewish Cooking" in 1975, around the time of the 20th anniversary of the Eastmont congregation. It was sold at the synagogue and also at the Tel Aviv Meat Market at 1716 Murray Ave.

Alongside familiar dishes from across the Jewish world and beloved family recipes compiled by the women of the congregation, the Sisterhood included something rarely found in other Jewish cookbooks of the era: a small "Men's Only" section.

Our featured recipe is the "Shlumper's Minimal Survival Dish," by Calvin Spector. As he notes in a parenthetical subtitle, it was "to be made only while the wife is away." It's essentially a messy omelet. The instructions require a glass of wine, for sipping as you stir. "Serve by the unsophisticated with ketchup," he notes, "otherwise leave it out."

"Cookbooks" was the theme of our 2020 collecting initiative. If you have a local Jewish cookbook to give the archive please **email** or call 412-454-6406.

**EVENTS**

**January 13  
Black and Jewish Histories of the Hill District**

As part of its Martin Luther King Day week of service, Repair the World is hosting a panel looking at the overlapping and diverging Black and Jewish histories of the Hill District.

The Rauh Jewish Archives will join ACH Clear Pathways Director Tyian Battle, Multimedia Producer Njaimeh Njie, and Hill District community leader Terri Baltimore to communal institutions, partnerships and tensions, migration, arts and culture, racial justice uprisings, and more. The panel will be moderated by BOOM Concepts Co-Founder D.S. Kinsel.

**Register**

**January 19  
JGS Presents: Dick Goldman**



For many of us, our family names are clues to our ancestors' careers, personalities, characteristics, towns of origin or religious practices. Learn why, how and when we received our last names and what they can reveal.

"A Rose by Any Other Name" is the first in a series of programs about Jewish surnames presented by JGS-Pittsburgh over the coming months.

The program is on **Wed., January 19 at 7:30 p.m. ET** It's free for **JGS-Pittsburgh members** and \$5 for the general public. **Please register online.**

This is a virtual program. It will be recorded, and the recording will be made available for JGS-Pittsburgh members who are current on their dues.

*This program is possible through the support of the William M. Lowenstein Genealogical Research Endowment Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation.*

[Register](#)

**Dick Goldman** is Vice President and Membership Chair for the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies (IAJGS). He is responsible for programming at the Jewish Heritage Club in Valencia Lakes (Boynton Beach, FL) and is president of the community's Genealogy group. He served as president of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Maryland for a number of years, and has lectured widely and frequently. Dick and his wife Roz relocated to Florida in 2018. Since March 2020 he has offered programs using ZOOM, and he has been seen and heard by groups locally and throughout the country.

Dick is the retired General Manager of the Pearlstone Conference & Retreat Center in Baltimore (Jewish Federation) and was Director of Jewish Life and Camping Services at its JCC. He was the founding director of Youth Activities for Women's American ORT, led multiple trips to Israel, and is an award winning Jewish educator. After retirement he served as adjunct faculty at CCBC in Maryland teaching genealogy, and he continued to lecture on Jewish topics for numerous organizations. His graduate work took place at Hebrew Union College-JIR in New York City. During his 20-year 'secular' career he was the founder and president of two high-tech companies. Dick and Roz have two children and five grandchildren.

---

## January 20 Treasures in the Archives



The annual Treasures in the Archives, now in its 8th year, is a chance to dig deep into some of the most interesting collections at the Heinz History Center.

This year, Rauh Jewish Archives Project Archivist Catelyn Cocuzzi will review the Aaronel deRoy Gruber Papers and Photographs, and Rauh Jewish Archives Director Eric Lidji will give a first glimpse at the new Dr. Cyril Wecht Papers.

Attendees to this free virtual program will also see the newly processed records of Shadyside Hospital and records of beloved Oakland icon Gus Miller.

[Register](#)

---

**Pittsburgh Jewish Newspaper Project update**



CMU COLLECTIONS

## PITTSBURGH JEWISH NEWSPAPERS

[ABOUT THE COLLECTION](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS](#)

[USING THE COLLECTION](#)

[FEATURED ITEMS](#)

[VIEW THE COLLECTION](#)

### About the Collection

The history of Jews in Pittsburgh began in the 1840's with a small community of primarily German immigrants, whose first communal action was the establishment of a burial society. By the end of the Civil War, there were two congregations, Rodef Shalom and Tree of Life.

The German-Jewish community was already quite prosperous when Jews from Eastern Europe and the Russian Empire began to arrive in large numbers in the 1890s. The influx of Yiddish-speaking Jews lasted until 1920, when immigration laws became more restrictive. During this thirty-year period, the number of Jews in Pittsburgh and the region grew dramatically.

The home page of the new Pittsburgh Jewish Newspaper Project website, hosted by Carnegie Mellon University Libraries. The redesigned website is launching this month.

The Pittsburgh Jewish Newspaper Project is likely the most widely used resource for conducting research about Jewish history in this region.

Launched in 2007, and expanded over a period of years, it now includes digital reproductions of four English-language Jewish newspapers—The Jewish Criterion, The American Jewish Outlook, the Jewish Chronicle, and the Y Weekly. These searchable issues begin in 1895 and continue through 2010, creating an invaluable tool for studying Jewish history and Jewish genealogy.

Carnegie Mellon University Libraries created the website, using materials and resources from the Rauh Jewish Archives, Rodef Shalom Congregation, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle.

CMU recently moved the Pittsburgh Jewish Newspaper Project to a different online platform. As with any change, this one will require people to learn a new system: the site will look a little different and will act a little different than the one we have become accustomed to using for many years.

The new system will be an improvement in some ways. But as with any change, it will also create new quirks and shortcomings to navigate.

At this early stage in the transition, CMU is asking for help. They want you to try out the **new site** and to **let them know** what you think about it.

These transitions can be exciting, and they can also be frustrating. The Rauh Jewish Archives is currently learning the new system, in order to help researchers make the switch over the coming months. We are always available to help you troubleshoot problems, and we hope to provide training workshops in the near future. You can **contact the archive** or call 412-454-6406.

[Use the new site](#)

[Submit feedback to CMU](#)

### Tell your friends!



[IMAGE: Marian Schreiber and employees at the Schreiber Trucking Company, c.1943— from Schreiber Family Papers and Photographs, MSS 846.]

If you like this newsletter, why not forward it to a friend? We want to share the story of Western Pennsylvania Jewish history with as many people as possible.

If you've received this newsletter from a friend or neighbor, and you want to read more, just click on the link below to start receiving future editions.

[Subscribe](#)

The Rauh Jewish Archives was founded on November 1, 1988 to collect, preserve, and make accessible the documentary history of Jews and Jewish communities of Western Pennsylvania. You can help the RJHPA continue its work by **making a donation** that will directly support the work being done in Western Pa.

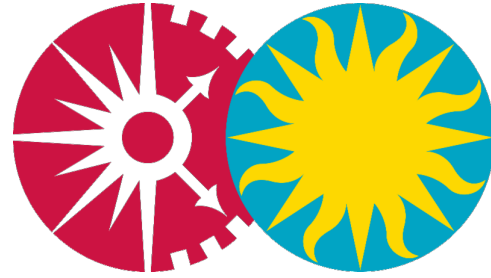
**Make a donation**



### Plan a Visit

Senator John Heinz History Center  
1212 Smallman Street  
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222  
412-454-6000

[www.heinzhistorycenter.org](http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org)



A proud affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, the **Senator John Heinz History Center** is the largest history museum in Pennsylvania and presents American history with a Western Pennsylvania connection.