



JHSD

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DIANE WOLF



DIANE WOLF

I am honored to have been nominated and elected to lead the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware (JHSD). As you can imagine, my first months as president have been busy. I've been involved with putting the finishing touches on our new home in the Delaware Center for Jewish History at the Coxe House and with planning for the future.

I'd like to tell you a little about my background. You may know me as a past president of Congregation Beth Shalom; you may not know how I came to the world of institutional history and archives.

When I was in graduate school in library science, my focus was on what was then "high tech" (audiovisuals) but my friends were always the students of rare books and archives.

A few years later, in 1974, when I was between jobs, I volunteered at a public library in western Massachusetts. I was put to work on de-acidifying historical documents. One method we used was bathing the documents in soda water and calcium carbonate—also known as Tums. It actually worked! (Kids, don't try this at home!)

Later, well into my career as a medical librarian, I spent much of my workday on a computer. It was quite a surprise when the then president of the medical center told me I was in charge of organizing the hospital archives. I gave myself a crash course in handling archives and did my best to safely preserve the materials and make them accessible.

More recently I became the volunteer archivist at Congregation Beth Shalom. It has been fascinating to see some of the original synagogue documents from the earliest years, 1922–23. This work led me to become involved in our Society.

Under the leadership of JHSD's immediate past presidents, Dr. Gerald Resnick and Rabbi Peter Grumbacher, the Society's board laid the foundation for the move into our new home. As we settle into the Coxe House, I'd like to build on their efforts. At the Annual Meeting in April, I focused on the following areas for development:

- Financial resources
- Relationships with partners

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AT THE MEZUZZAH HANGING CEREMONY ON AUGUST 17, 2021: JHSD PAST PRESIDENTS GERRY RESNICK, TONI YOUNG, AND RABBI PETER GRUMBACHER; DHS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID YOUNG; AND CURRENT JHSD PRESIDENT, DIANE WOLF..

EXCELLENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Every year, the Delaware Contractors Association (DCA) hosts the Construction Excellence Awards program that recognizes projects that bring distinction, skill, quality, and integrity to the construction industry in Delaware. This year, DCA recognized the Coxe House renovation project with the 2021 Construction Excellence Award for Historic Preservation, presented to EDiS, the project's construction management company. The Coxe House project was the result of excellent teamwork, client and design team communication, high safety standards, and efficient problem solving.

Read more on the EDiS blog here <https://bit.ly/DHS001> and here <https://bit.ly/DHS002>.



PICTURED AT THE DCA AWARDS EVENT ARE JHSD PAST PRESIDENT GERRY RESNICK, EDiS SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER MARTHA M. WHITE, DHS DIRECTOR OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS MARTHA MOFFAT, AND DHS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID YOUNG.

NATHAN RING

CHARLES SALKIN

We all know that Delawareans love to find connections to First Staters who have gained fame, however tangential the connection may be. This is surely a Jewish trait as well. This tale of a turn-of-the-last-century Sussex County shoemaker fits both bills.

Nathan (born Nuchem) Ring (ca.1875–1944) was the youngest in a family of six children in the town of Uscie Ruskie, Galicia, in Austria. (It is now in Poland and called Uscie Gorlickie.) His father was a tanner and, following his bar mitzvah, Nathan was apprenticed to a shoemaker. He was of medium height and build with brown eyes and black hair. It is reported that Nathan spoke five languages and several Slavic dialects.

Nathan Ring came to America in 1895 to join several siblings already in Baltimore. He worked there as a shoemaker for a couple of years. He then lived and worked in Seaford, Delaware, in late 1897 or early 1898. With the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898, Ring enlisted as a member of the First Delaware Volunteer Regiment, rising to the rank of Commissary Sergeant.

Following the brief war, he established a business in the small western Sussex County town of Bridgeville, manufacturing and repairing boots and shoes. In 1899, he was likely the only Jew in Bridgeville and perhaps the community's first permanent Jewish resident. In the 1900 federal census, Ring was living alone in Bridgeville in a rented house. That same year he applied for United States citizenship. During his short stay in Bridgeville, he was a regular visitor to Wilmington, Philadelphia, Lewes, Cape May, and particularly Baltimore, where he had extended family. On one of those visits to Baltimore, he met his future wife, Carolina "Carrie" Maier (ca. 1876–1953). Carrie was the sister of one of Nathan's sisters-in-law. She had arrived in 1901 from Ihringen, Breisgau, a city

near the Rhine in Germany. They married in Baltimore in early 1902.

Nathan Ring had relocated his shoemaking business from Bridgeville to Lewes, Delaware, in 1901, and the newlyweds settled there. His shop was in the Waples Block on Second Street. Ring was reportedly a woodwind player who didn't read music but was a member of the Lewes community band.

The Rings were part of a small but close Jewish community in Lewes. In January 1903, *Every Evening* reported that a ritual circumcision for their newborn son Gustave (1903–1986) was performed at their Lewes home by Rabbi Raphael Josephson of Baltimore. Josephson was a rabbi, mohel and tailor. We don't know the names of those who were at the *bris* but attendees certainly would have included the other Jewish families who also lived on Second Street: Gutowitz, Hankin, and Zerden. It is likely that Nathan's shoe stand was located in one of their Second Street shops.

The Rings moved from Lewes to Washington, DC, late in 1903. They had not been gone from Lewes long when the *Evening Journal* reported in April 1905: "The members of the local Jewish Colony are preparing to celebrate the 'Passover Feast.' They received their supplies for the season with the seal of the Rabbi affixed. The Lewes Hebrews are a good type and have the respect of their fellows."

Upon arrival in Washington, Ring was hired to work in a shoemaker shop just a block or two west of the White House. For the rest of his life, his home and work were never farther away from the President's home. It is clear that he quickly established an excellent reputation as a craftsman. In 1909, Ring produced two pairs of custom-made boots for Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt had just left office and was preparing for

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SHOEMAKER'S BENCH AND LEATHER PUNCH, CA. 1920

AT LEFT: Workbench of Nathan Ring, known as "shoemaker to the presidents." In his shop at 1623 H Street, N.W., he also repaired shoes for Supreme Court Justices and other government officials. His children remembered delivering brown-paper packages of newly-shined shoes to the front door of the White House. Capital Jewish Museum, JHSGW Collections. Gift of Sandy Blank. 2003.26.

AT RIGHT: Nathan and Carrie Ring, undated photograph provided by Phillip Ring.



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his famous safari and hunting trip to Africa. Nathan Ring set up his own shop in the same neighborhood on Pennsylvania Avenue in 1914 about the time that custom shoemaking went out of style. He now did primarily shoe repair and apparently brought the celebrity trade with him.

After moving to Washington, the Rings had three more children: Gladys (1905), Fredericka (1914), and Markus (1915). The family affiliated with the Washington Hebrew Congregation. When Markus was about seven years old, his father sent him on an errand to deliver shoes to the Hardings at the White House. After he dropped off the package at the "back door," Markus was invited to the White House kitchen for milk and cookies. Then he played with the Harding's Airedale Terrier, Laddie Boy, on the White House lawn.

Lewes-born Gustave Ring had his own brush with Presidential history in 1923. He was an employee of Western Union in Washington and handled the series of telegrams between the White House and Calvin Coolidge in Vermont that notified Coolidge of Warren Harding's death and that he was the new president. After Coolidge became president, he too began an ongoing relationship with Nathan Ring. Coolidge typically had his shoes made by a New England firm but had Ring come to his private quarters in the White House for the final fitting.

The Ring family's last move was to 1623 H Street at the northwest corner of Lafayette Square. The shoemaker's shop was on the first floor and the family lived upstairs. This is where Nathan Ring lived and worked for the rest of his life.

When Nathan Ring died in 1944, his obituary was carried in newspapers across the country. It was reported that he had made or repaired shoes for every president (and several first ladies) since Woodrow Wilson and served Supreme Court Justices and other high government officials. Up until his death, Nathan Ring did work for Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, repairing Franklin's special shoes with metal braces.

Nathan and Carrie Ring are buried in the Elesavetgrad Cemetery in Anacostia in Southeast Washington.

Noted Jewish historian Jacob Rader Marcus wrote that Nathan Ring "was a meticulous workman with a national reputation as a custom shoemaker." A cobbler with humble roots in Uscie Ruskie, Seaford, Bridgeville, and Lewes who became "Shoemaker to Presidents"—that's **our** Nathan Ring.

Principal Sources:

[Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) (with caution).

[Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).

[Capitaljewishmuseum.org](https://www.capitaljewishmuseum.org)

Phone conversations with Nathan Ring's grandson, Jeff Ring, and great-grandson, Phillip Ring, September 2021.

Unpublished family historical records of Gustave and Markus Ring.

Gladys Mayer, "Nathan Ring — Shoemaker to Presidents," in *The Record* (Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington), Vol. 9, No. 1, May 1978.

Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985*, Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1993.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- Membership and member involvement with committees and activities
- Outreach and promotion, especially online and through social media
- Cooperative projects

I'm happy to report that we've been making progress in these areas and others. To strengthen our financial resources, we've established a Finance Committee, improved recording and reporting mechanisms, and applied for grants. We have requested and received an increased allotment from the Jewish Federation of Delaware; we thank the Federation for this and for all the support the Federation provides.

We've continued our partnership with the Delaware Historical Society (DHS) and are most appreciative of the DHS personnel who assisted with the move into the Delaware Center for Jewish History at the Coxe House.

We have a committee working on expanding the

list of Delaware's Jewish veterans. You can see the current list and submit names at <https://jhsdelaware.org/veterans>.

We have established accounts on Twitter and Instagram and are posting more on Facebook.

These are just some of the projects we are working on while we settle into our new home.

Please watch for more information about our progress. Thank you for your support.

JHSD IS ONLINE!

Visit us at our website: <https://jhsdelaware.org>

Follow and engage with us on social media:



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/JHSDel/>



Twitter: <https://twitter.com/JHSDelaware>



Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/jhsdel/>

We use the hashtags #JHSD and #JewishDelaware

JHSD AWARDED DELAWARE HUMANITIES RECOVER GRANT

We are pleased to announce that JHSD received an American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act RECOVER Grant. Funding was provided from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and Delaware Humanities as part of the 2021 ARP Act. The grants were made available to organizations committed to the humanities that have faced financial hardship due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

We will use the funds for operating and administrative costs—to recover from the pandemic-imposed hardships and to be better prepared in the future. This is our second grant from Delaware Humanities; JHSD received much needed CARES Act funding to allow us to bring the humanities to the community in 2020 and 2021 despite pandemic restrictions.

We plan to continue providing remote access to the archives via our website (<https://jhsdelaware.org>) and by phone (302-655-6232). We also look forward to welcoming researchers to our facilities by appointment.

We are delighted with the increased use of our digital collections and the interest expressed within the state, across the US, and from abroad.



Delaware Humanities is Delaware's independent, non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Founded in 1973, Delaware Humanities strengthens our communities by encouraging all Delawareans to be inspired, informed, and engaged through exploring the diversity of the human experience.

Visit <https://dehumanities.org>.



**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES**

NEH was created in 1965 as an independent federal agency. NEH supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation.

Visit www.neh.gov.



TOP ROW: OUR SHELVES ARRIVED BRIGHT AND EARLY ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2021, WITH A CHEERFUL INSTALLATION CREW FROM DIVERSIFIED STORAGE SOLUTIONS READY TO MAKE MAGIC.

LEFT: ARCHIVIST GAIL PIETRZYK SURVEYS THE NEW SHELVES ON THE THIRD FLOOR.

BELOW: MOVING DAYS WERE OCTOBER 12-13, 2021. THEY WENT SMOOTHLY THANKS TO THE GREAT TEAM FROM BAYSHORE OFFICE MOVING.

BOTTOM RIGHT: OUR EXTERIOR SIGNS WERE INSTALLED BY TUPP SIGNS ON NOVEMBER 10, 2021.





DIANE WOLF, JHSD PRESIDENT



MARGARET L. LAIRD, DHS BOARD CHAIR, AND DAVID YOUNG, DHS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



SETH KATZEN, JFD PRESIDENT AND CEO



RABBI PETER GRUMBACHER AND TONI YOUNG, JHSD PAST PRESIDENTS



RABBI JACOB LIEBERMAN, DELAWARE ASSOCIATION OF RABBIS AND CANTORS

NOTES FROM OUR VIRTUAL OPENING

On Sunday, October 3, 2021, the Delaware Jewish community joined JHSD and DHS for the Virtual Opening of the Delaware Center for Jewish History at the Coxe House.

Representing JHSD: Diane Wolf, President, Richard Levin, Vice President, Toni Young, Gerald Resnick, and Rabbi Peter Grumbacher, Past Presidents, and Gail Pietrzyk, Archivist

Representing DHS: David Young, Executive Director, and Margaret L. Laird, Board Chair.

Representing the Jewish Federation of Delaware (JFD): Seth J. Katzen, President and CEO

Representing DERECH: Delaware Association of Rabbis and Cantors: Rabbi Jacob Lieberman

Inspirational quotes from the Virtual Opening:

Our founders, Rabbi David Geffen, Bill Frank, and Harry Bluestone, wanted to integrate Jewish history into Delaware history.

—Toni Young

On the doorpost of this home to our Delaware past we affix this mezzuzah with the hope that our endeavors will allow those whose curiosity for our history will draw them in. We affix this mezzuzah with the expectation that generations to come will find stories of their near ancestors that will fill them with pride. We affix this mezzuzah with the promise of community cooperation so that together we may unearth our shared values that have led us to this moment. And we affix this mezzuzah as a symbol of hope that our tomorrow will bring days of mutual respect and harmony as we create the new history of the Jewish community's contributions to the First State.

—Rabbi Peter Grumbacher

Federation's tagline, "We Grow Stronger Together" is a vivid reminder of how we build community every day thanks to your generous support. We understand that we can achieve so much more working

together than any one of us can accomplish alone.

—Seth Katzen

The men and women who built this collection, from Emile Topkis and Bill Frank, Yetta Chaiken, and so many more, wanted you and future generations to use it and learn from the wisdom and insight it contains. While you may not touch the hands of those who live here, I guarantee that if you come and spend some time with them, they will touch your heart.

—Gail Pietrzyk

Visit our website, <https://jhsdelaware.org/virtual-opening/> to view the videos of the Virtual Opening Event.

THINGS OUR FATHER NEVER TOLD US

GEORGE R. GOLDEN AND TINA GOLDEN HEIMAN

First among the things that our father never shared was that in 1991 he was interviewed by Yetta Chaiken for the JHSD Oral History Project. Not telling us about it made our listening to it a delightful surprise—a gift for many (but especially for us)—24 years after he died. On the other hand, not telling us about the interview left us with even more questions and the inability to personally probe further.



DR. ABRAHAM ALBERT GOLDEN,
D.O. PHOTO COURTESY OF TINA
HEIMAN AND GEORGE GOLDEN

If you are of our generation (born in the 1940s), you know that communication with parents was not always open. It's not that they intentionally hid things from us, but they likely didn't ever let us know how world events affected their lives (World War II, perhaps, being the only exception). As close as our parents came, but without details, was that we shouldn't have to live through another depression.

After learning about this interview, we were able to get a preview of what would soon become part of JHSD's online oral history exhibit. While we listened to the interview separately—Tina in Wilmington and George in the Bronx—our reactions were the same:

"So powerful, so moving, so revealing—engendering a gut, physical, response. Much more than I ever knew—and a lot more than I have forgotten." "I am in happy tears. This interview is a treasure."

Those of you who knew our father, Abraham A. Golden, may also be moved by listening to this. The truth is, you may be moved by listening to all of these interviews as they become available. The Oral History Project is an amazing resource to be explored and expanded for years to come. Not everyone will be as fortunate as we are, having grown up together and being able to listen—almost together—to this 30-year-old interview with our father.

Encourage your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews to interview all members of the "older" generation within your families. It will be an amazing gift to leave for future generations.

See next column for details.



oral history collection

Newly released from magnetic tape
audio cassettes and now available as
digital recordings on our website



Discover the wisdom, humor, courage, and insight contained in this remarkable collection of oral history interviews of Jewish Delawareans. Our web exhibit features 19 recordings of people you remember. Listen to their stories of making a life in the Delaware Jewish community. More interviews will soon be available online.

<https://jhsdelaware.org/collections/Oral History/exhibit/>

The web-exhibit was curated by Mary Rose Fay, our summer 2021 Stewart Intern from the University of Delaware, with the newly digitized collection of oral history interviews conducted by members of JHSD between 1967 and 2006.

These analog recordings were converted to digital format by The Media Preserve, a division of Preservation Technologies. The project was partially funded by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Delaware and partially with contributions from JHSD members and supporters.

YOU CAN HELP

Digitization is just the beginning. We need volunteers to help transcribe these interviews, create indexes, and proofread them to make them fully accessible and searchable on our website.

YOUR KNOWLEDGE IS PRECIOUS



Your local
knowledge makes
transcription

and proofreading more
accurate.

HELP FROM HOME



You can volunteer
and work safely at
home at your own
pace.

WE'LL SHOW YOU THE TOOLS



We can help you
with tools to edit
transcriptions.

BECOME A MEMBER



Projects like this
are supported
by our members.
Please join today.

ARCHIVIST'S LETTER

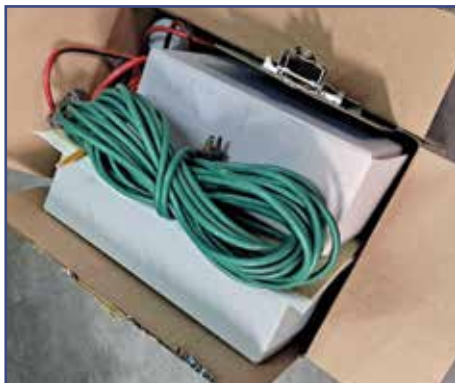
GAIL M. PIETRZYK

There have been so many momentous events in the past two years—all leading to the creation of the Delaware Center for Jewish History at the Coxe House—the new home of JHSD. After the fundraising, construction, shelving installation, and move there was one last change that signaled to me that we had indeed entered a new era for the JHSD. With Leigh Rifenburg, Chief Curator at DHS, I walked through the space where our collections had been housed for more than forty years and we removed the extension cord.

When I first arrived at JHSD in 2003, there was no computer, no printer, and the nearest electrical outlet was behind the HVAC equipment at the end of an aisle of shelving. So I brought an extension cord from home—a long one. That extension cord was always a temporary fix, so retiring it after so many years was meaningful to me.

The DHS has been a supporter of and partner in the efforts of JHSD since its founding in 1974. DHS has housed our collections and nurtured our dreams. They have helped us plan and mount significant exhibits like *From Al's to Zutz* in 1996 and *Half A Chance: Stories of Jewish Delawareans* in 2004. But that extension cord was still there, a symbol of our temporary standing.

In October 2020, our lease and Agreement of Understanding changed that relationship. DHS and JHSD agreed that our long-time connection was official. The construction work on our “new” historic home could begin and the day would come when we would no longer need an extension cord. On October 13, 2021, we removed it.



Maybe we will need that long extension cord again—for the Hanukkah window in the Delaware History Museum or for an event on Willingtown Square—but our place now is permanent and that makes all the difference.

SMILE AND SUPPORT JHSD

Did you know your purchases on Amazon can benefit JHSD? When you select us as your charity and shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to us.

PRESERVING THE MEMORY OF WWII FALLEN

JHSD has recently had the opportunity to work with researcher Lowell Silverman, curator of the website *Delaware's World War II Fallen*. Silverman has painstakingly created detailed and exhaustively researched biographies of more than 60 Delawareans who died serving in World War II.

Among these studies are Delaware's Jewish servicemen killed in action:

Sergeant Martin Eisenman (1916–1944)

Sergeant Harry Fineman (1916–1942)

Sergeant Morton Carlis (1924–1944)

More biographies are currently being researched.

We know many families have information, letters, photographs, and more that would be invaluable in helping to tell the stories of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. If you have information to share, please contact JHSD at (302) 655-6232, or visit the website, <https://delawarewwiifallen.com/contact/> to contact Lowell Silverman directly.

ת נ צ ב ה

May their souls be bound up in the bond of life eternal.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

JHSD is grateful for the support of our generous members and donors. Since our last newsletter, we have received the following tribute gifts:

IN MEMORY

STEPHEN SEIDEL Jeffrey M. and Dianne D. Seidel

DR. RALPH TOMASES Ruth Tomases Joffe

IN HONOR OF

RABBI PETER AND SUZY GRUMBACHER Edna Chaikin

*"Who have made contributions to the
Wilmington Jewish Community above and
beyond our expectations!*

*They continue to enrich our lives
by words and deeds."*

You, too, can make a tribute gift. Just send a note along with your payment and we will print your tribute in the next newsletter.

We are also interested in donations of materials that are specific to the Jewish experience in Delaware.



JHSD
JEWISH HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF DELAWARE
515 NORTH MARKET STREET
WILMINGTON, DE 19801



I want to help preserve the link between the past, present, and future of the Jewish community in Delaware by becoming a member of the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware (JHSD).

Regular household: \$36.00 or
Senior household: \$18.00 \$ _____

(all members age 65 or older)

A household membership covers all in the household and confers one vote at the JHSD annual meeting.

I would like to add the following donation to become a contributing member:

Member Pillar of Society (minimum \$1,000) \$ _____

Member Benefactor (minimum \$500) \$ _____

Member Patron (minimum \$250) \$ _____

Member Sponsor (minimum \$100) \$ _____

Member Other amount \$ _____

(every contribution is deeply appreciated)

TOTAL: MEMBERSHIP & CONTRIBUTIONS \$ _____

Number of people in your regular or senior household:

(for internal purposes, does not affect dues amount).

Students: JHSD offers complimentary, non-voting membership to full-time students under age 25.

Please indicate your school and class here:

School: _____ Class (year): _____

COXE HOUSE ENDOWMENT FUND \$ _____

OTHER DONATION (NON-MEMBER) \$ _____

☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities.

Please make check payable to Jewish Historical Society of Delaware.

Your contribution is fully tax-deductible under IRS guidelines.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Please acknowledge my/our household as follows in publications: _____

☐ Please do not publicize my contribution.