

# JEWES IN THE AMERICAS

Annotated Bibliography: Kansas Jewish History  
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This annotated bibliography was created on behalf of the 2024 Jews in the Americas Conference, hosted by the [Center for Global & International Studies](#) & the [Jewish Studies Program](#). To learn more visit: <https://kujewishstudies.ku.edu/jewsamericas>

Weissbach, Lee Shai. *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*. Yale University Press, 2005. Definitive study of small-town Jewish communities that provides a context for understanding communities in Kansas. Based on an exhaustive reading of primary sources, Jewish community histories, and memoirs, Weissbach covered small towns that had Jewish populations of 100-1,000, more numerous than most of the towns that Kansas Jews lived in. Wichita and Topeka fit Weissbach's definition of small town Jewish communities, but the very very-small communities in Kansas remain elusive.

Rabin, Shari. *Jews on the Frontier. Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

Rabin explores the role of the frontier and mobility—migration and constant movement of Jews—in the formation of identity and its impact on Judaism in the United States. She suggests a larger framework for understanding the nineteenth-century Jewish experience but her generalizations needed to be tested with quantitative data and case studies.

## August Bondi

August Bondi is the most well-known figure in Kansas Jewish history for participating in the Battles of Black Jack and Osawatomie alongside abolitionist John Brown in 1856. The year was crucial as Brown gained national notoriety after Brown's men murdered 5 pro-slavery settlers in the Pottawatomie Massacre. Often identified with John Brown's abolitionism, Bondi was among the more common free staters who opposed the extension of slavery to Kansas yet rejected Brown's advocacy of equal rights for Blacks. Bondi did not participate in any of Brown's battles outside of the state.

As a first-person witness, Bondi weighed in on a national debate in the early 1880s about the political atmosphere in Bleeding Kansas, justifying the Massacre as a necessary blow to the pro-slavery faction's confidence and violence. John Brown scholars have frequently used Bondi's narratives to reconstruct Brown's actions and frame of mind. Scholars of the 1848 uprising, Jewish history in the Civil War also draw from Bondi's writings. Bondi features prominently in Jewish American history and the history of Kansas.

## Texts by Bondi

Bondi, August. "John Brown von Osawatomie." *Kansas Freie Presse*, November 27, 1883, 11. Bondi's German-language letter to the *Kansas Freie Presse* defending Brown's character and actions during the Kansas battles of 1856. Bondi responded to David Utter, who started a national debate about Brown's legacy with an article in the *North America*

*Review.* Bondi's letter caught the attention of John Brown Jr. who remembered Bondi from his time in Kansas.

Bondi, August, "Old John Brown. The Potawatomi Executions. A New Witness Testifies--Mr. Bondy's [sic] Evidence," *Springfield Republican*, December 1883. A translation by Theodore Lauenstein, Put-In-Bay, of Bondi's letter to the *Kansas Freie Presse*, commissioned by F.B. Sanborn and John Brown Jr. The translation is reliable. A transcription of the article online:  
<https://archive.wvculture.org/history/jbexhibit/bondispringfield.html>

Bondi, August, "John Brown I," *Salina Herald*, 10 Jan 1884, Thu, Page 2.

Bondi, August, "John Brown II," *Salina Herald*, 24 Jan 1884, Thu Page 2.

Bondi, August, "John Brown III," *Salina Herald*, 28 Feb 1884, Thu Page 2.

An edited republication of Bondi's letter in three parts. Transcriptions of the articles are online: <https://archive.wvculture.org/history/jbexhibit/jbprimarydocuments.html>.

Bondi, August. "With John Brown in Kansas," *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society* 8, (1903-1904): 275-89.

Edited with footnotes and published by the Kansas Historical Society, this is Bondi's most reliable version of his three-part article previously published in the *Salina Herald* about John Brown history.

Bondi, August M. *Autobiography of August Bondi, 1833-1907*. Galesburg, Ill.: Wagoner Print Co., 1910.

Arranged and prepared by Amanda M. Dooley published privately by Bondi's children, the book consists of materials from the archived August Bondi papers at the Kansas State Historical Association, including his later added story of the Battle of Osawatomie. Though frequently cited, this version of his life's story shows inconsistencies with the original texts in narrative and tone. German-language names are often misspelled etc.

For a full copy of the Autobiography:

[https://prodstorageroster.blob.core.windows.net/documents/8690/Autobiography\\_of\\_August\\_Bondi\\_1833\\_1907.pdf](https://prodstorageroster.blob.core.windows.net/documents/8690/Autobiography_of_August_Bondi_1833_1907.pdf)

For the original text of his life story, see "Personal Reminiscences of August Bondi," 25 April 1903 (series B). August Bondi Papers, 1884-1952. Microfilm MF-1772, Manuscript Collection No. 285, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

<https://www.kshs.org/p/august-m-bondi-papers-1884-1952/13980>

### **Biographies about Bondi**

Brick, Abraham, *Oygust Bondi*. New York: Idishn Farlag-un Forshung-Komiteet. 1955.

Yiddish Book Center, Steven Spielberg Digital Yiddish Library, January 2009.

<https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/yiddish-books/spb-nybc204099/bick-abraham-oygust-bondi>

Litvin, Martin. *The journey: the first full-length documented biography of the*

*American-Jewish freedom fighter who rode with John Brown in Kansas*. Galesburg, Ill.: Galesburg Historical Society, 1981.

Includes extensive quotes from Bondi's writings and provides detailed elaborations of Bondi's paths not included in the Bondi Papers, but reconstructed meticulously through historical and archival research, including materials from different collections, newspaper

articles. as well as personal interviews.

### **Creative Literature about Bondi**

Bondi, often viewed as a Jewish abolitionist, has been the inspiration of many Jewish literary efforts.

Alexander, Lloyd. *Border Hawk: August Bondi*. (Covenant Books).  
New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958.

A fictional biography of Bondi's life between his time in Vienna in 1848 and his return to the city for the 50th anniversary celebration of the uprising. Framed by the theme of revolution, most of the book deals with Bondi's time with John Brown in Kansas. Written for young adult readers, it glosses over the controversial Pottawatomie Massacre. The second volume in the covenant series represents Jewish contributions to U.S. history.

Bernhart, Aaron. *Firebrand*. Kansas City: Quindaro Press, 2015.

Adapted from *Border Hawk* for a more general audience of young adult readers, Bernhart sought to humanize the history of Bleeding Kansas through Bondi who did not participate in the Pottawatomie Massacre.

Gold, Michael and Michael Blankfort. *Battle Hymn*. 1936

A three-act play first staged in 1936 on Broadway as part of the Federal Theatre Project under the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Gold, AKA Itzok Isaac Granich, author of *Jews Without Money*, ties Brown's abolitionism with Depression era communist ideas. Bondi debates Brown's plans in 1859 with other figures, such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Garrison. Bondi is fictionalized as the man who influenced Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry and celebrates Bondi as a proletarian hero.

Kramer, Aaron. "The Ballad of August Bondi." *Wicked Times: Collected Poems*.

Edited by Cary Nelson and Donald Gilinger Jr.. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004. The Jewish Young Folksingers in 1955 commissioned Aaron Kramer to write *A Ballad of August Bondi*. As a leftist activist and member of the communist party, Kramer was blacklisted at the time he wrote the Ballad. The Marxist magazine *Masses & Mainstream* first published it in April 1955 under "Letters from Kansas." *Jewish Life* published it the following month. Kramer used Hühner's "Some Jewish Associates of John Brown" (New York, 1908) for his play.

### **Essays in Jewish Studies about Bondi**

Hühner, Leon. "Some Jewish Associates of John Brown." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 23. (1915): 55-78.

Classic early historical work on Bondi with the most often cited Yiddish-language conversation between Wiener and Bondi as they scaled a hill ready to fight in the Battle of Black Jack. While Bondi has narrated the same scene several times, this is the version Bondi wrote for Huehner, who served as the main source for Kramer's Ballad. This version emphasizes Bondi's Jewishness whereas the autobiography had no Yiddish language that Bondi wrote in the original.

### **Film, Video, Podcast about Bondi**

Birthingright Israel BEYOND. 2022. "Badass Jews: August Bondi: Abolitionist." YOUTUBE Video.  
<https://youtu.be/le8M1yM4M30?si=Fx9V50DfrNfFqrec>.

Bondi is the subject in the very first volume of a series of animated videos about 'tough' Jewish historical figures: soldiers, athletes, spies. Birthright Israel BEYOND is an online project slated for a Jewish audience, specifically Birthright Israel Alumni. The videos are 2-3 minutes.

Davidsburg, Andrew, host "August Bondi." *Badass Jews* (podcast) March 7, 2023. Accessed March 21, 2024, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/august-bondi-abolitionist>.

Novak, Amram. *They Came for Good: A History of Jews in the United States*. (1997). A two-part PBS documentary by Amram Nowak about Jewish American history, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewish immigration. Part 1: 1684-1820, Part 2: 1820-1880. The actor Moshe Rudin plays August Bondi in a reenactment.

### **Sigmund Schlesinger (1848-1928)**

Schlesinger participated in the 1868 Battle of Beecher Island against Plains Indians in Colorado Territory, just west of the Kansas border. The battle took place in the context of the conquest of the west. Schlesinger was memorialized for his bravery by James B. Fry in the poem "the little Jew was there," a poem that piqued the attention of Rabbi Henry Cohen, who integrated Schlesinger into standard Jewish history with his piece, "A Brave Frontiersman." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*.

The battle, also referred to as the Battle of Arikaree Fork or Fight When Roman Nose Was Killed, is enshrined as a major event in the history of Kansas. At the Topeka statehouse, the halls of the first-floor rotunda feature David H. Overmyer's eight-part murals with iconic scenes in Kansas' early western history. Visitors will see depictions of Coronado, Lewis and Clarke, the Santa Fe and Chisholm trails, a sod house, a Civil War battle, the building of the railroad, as well as the Battle of Arickaree. Rather than depicting the scouts, the wall depicts Plains Indian warriors on horseback

### **Texts by Schlesinger**

Mattes, Merrill J., and Sigmund Shlesinger. *The Beecher Island Battlefield Diary of Sigmund Shlesinger*. [Denver Colo.]: [publisher not identified], 1952.  
One of only two diaries in existence and considered relatively reliable by historians.

Schlesinger, Sigmund. "The Beecher Island Fight." *Kansas Historical Collections* 15 (1919-1922), 540. One of numerous reminiscences of the battle written by Forsyth's scouts.  
Schlesinger's is considered one of the most reliable.

### **Texts about Schlesinger**

Cohen, Henry. "A Brave Frontiersman." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 8 (1900):59-74.

Fry, James B. "The Island of Death," *Army and Navy Magazine*, August 26, 1893.  
This reprinting of General Fry's narrative about the Battle of Beecher Island includes the poem "The Little Jew was There," praising Schlesinger's unexpected bravery.  
Originally published in Fry, James B. *Army Sacrifices, Or, Briefs from Official Pigeon-holes: Sketches Based on Official Reports, Grouped Together for the Purpose of Illustrating the Services and Experiences of the Regular Army of the United States on the Indian Frontier*. New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1879.

Marcus, Jacob Rader. "The quintessential American Jew." *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (September 1968): 15-22.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23880688>

Marcus suggests that each century in the 300-year American Jewish history has one man “as its quintessential personality.” Schlesinger represents the 19th century. He emerged from “a Jewish melting pot” who “embod[ies] within himself the consensus of his people.”

Siegel, Burt A. “The Little Jew was There”: A Biographical Sketch of Sigmund Shlesinger.

*American Jewish Archives*, April, 1968. 16-32.

A biography drawing from all existing sources by and about Schlesinger, including Schlesinger’s battle diary, and his life as a businessman and active member in the Cleveland religious community.

### **Santa Fe Trail**

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O’Brien, William Patrick. “Olam Katan” (Small World): Jewish Traders on the Santa Fe Trail

*Journal of the Southwest* 48 (Summer, 2006), 211-231.

Overview of Jewish merchants and freighters on the Santa Fe trail, which led to some of Kansas’ early towns. Freighters, along with fur trading and country stores formed early important Jewish occupations. Nonetheless, the story of Jews and the Santa Fe trail is a narrative more closely associated with Mexico and the New Mexican territory.

Thompson, Alice Anne. “Having a Grand Time’: Rebecca Cohen Mayer on the Santa Fe Trail,”

“Special Issue: The Santa Fe Trail,” *Kansas History* 44 (Spring 2021), 53-65.

Experience of Mayer (1837-1930), a new Jewish bride on the Santa Fe trail through Kansas in the pre-settlement period. For the full diary, see “The memoir and diary of Rebecca Mayer on her 1852 honeymoon along the Santa Fe Trail and down El Camino Real with her merchant husband Henry Mayer, fifty men and five hundred mules,” ed. By Joy Poole, Santa Fe Trail Association....

<https://www.nps.gov/safe/learn/historyculture/upload/Mayer-Diary-and-Memoir-508.pdf>

### **Resettlement Projects 1880s-1920**

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In response to the massive immigration waves between 1880 and 1920, Jewish charitable organizations mostly on the east coast, cooperated to disperse Eastern European Jews across the interior United States. European and U.S. Jewish organizations encouraged and sponsored Jewish resettlement from larger cities to rural areas, where immigrants would be more likely to become Americanized by learning English and U.S. culture and customs. Emigrant societies educated them about places in the interior and provided some financial or material support for transportation. Hoping to alleviate the problems of Eastern European immigrants and to help destitute Jews in Russia emigrate to the United States, an early one of several projects was to establish Jewish agricultural colonies in the country’s interior.

#### **Jewish Agricultural Colonies (1880s)**

Jewish agricultural colonies are a third of the well-known and researched aspects of Kansas Jewish history. Russian Jews arrived in the 1880s as part of a larger “back to the land” movement, and Jewish emigrant societies helped Jews on farms in around 70 agricultural colonies across the United States. Eight of these colonies were in Western Kansas, and while all of them failed within a few years of their establishment, the colonies formed the vanguard of Eastern European Jewish immigration to Kansas.

Feld, Lipman Goldman. “New Light on the Lost Jewish Colony of Beersheba, Kansas, 1882–

1886.” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 60, no.2 (December 1970): 159-168.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2387794>

Lloyd David Harris. “Sod Jerusalems: Jewish Agricultural Communities in Frontier Kansas.”

MA thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1984. <https://www.kancoll.org/books/harris/index.html>  
Most thorough study of all of the known agricultural settlements. The book contains materials from private collections as well as personal interviews.

Marx, Jeffrey A. "Jewish Agricultural Colonies in Kansas," Avotayno (2011).  
<https://avotaynuonline.com/2010/07/jewish-agricultural-colonies-in-kansas-by-jeffrey-a-marx/> Brief scholarly overview of the eight colonies in Kansas. Excellent introduction.

Marx, Jeffrey A. "Jeshurun Grew Fat and Kicked: Another Look at the Touro and Lesser Kansas Colonies," *Kansas History* 43 (Spring 2020) 14-27.  
An in-depth look at two of the Kansas colonies. The most detailed study of the actual settlers. Marx argues that they did not fail economically; instead, success led to their demise as colonists could afford to move on.

### **Industrial Removal Office 1901 and 1922**

Between 1901 and 1922, the Industrial Removal Office distributed approximately 79,000 Jewish immigrants from overcrowded quarters on the East Coast to about 1,500 communities throughout the United States and Canada. The I.R.O. matched applicants in New York with Jewish communities across the country that offered employment in the country's interior. About 40 communities in Kansas took in small numbers of placements. Most went to the Missouri side of Kansas City, Wichita and Topeka.

Glazier, Jack. *Dispersing the Ghetto: The Relocation of Jewish Immigrants Across America*. Michigan State University, 2006.  
The first study on the IRO's operations, with focus on the complex relations between established Central European immigrants and the two million Eastern European immigrants most of whom arrived in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Poverty, overcrowded "ghettos," and lack of assimilation concerned both those who were sympathetic to the sufferings of poor immigrants and those who feared that the newcomers might reflect poorly on the already established Jewish community in the United States. Glazier illuminates the internal conflicts between these motivations that were at the heart of the I.R.O.

Rockaway, Robert A. *Words of the Uprooted: Jewish Immigrants in Twentieth Century America*. NY: Cornell UP, 1998.  
An edited collection of letters from immigrants to the I.R.O. translated from the Yiddish. Several letters are from Kansas.

### **The Galveston Movement, 1907-1914**

In 1907, the IRO founded the Jewish Immigration Information Bureau (JIIB) to manage the Galveston Plan, which included several philanthropic organizations, both national and international. Between 1907 and 1914, the plan steered 10,000 immigrants through the Galveston port of entry. Most left Eastern Europe through Bremen for Galveston, then directed to communities in central and southwestern United States. The plan ended before it reached its goals. Metro-area Kansas City was the single largest destination.

Aaronson, Daniel, Jonathan Davis, and Karl Schulze. "Internal immigrant mobility in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: evidence from Galveston, Texas." *Explorations in economic history* 76 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2019.101317>.  
Analysis of Galveston immigrants' decision to move from their assigned destinations to other places. Most settled in the Midwest and Northeast, choosing destinations with religious communities and landsmen.

Furman, Joshua J. "A Good Place to Emigrate to Now': Recruiting Eastern European Jews for the Galveston Movement in 1907." *Southern Jewish History* 25, (2022): 99-137.

Analysis of a recently acquired Yiddish-language pamphlet by Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) in 1907 encouraging immigration through Galveston to destinations in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and Colorado. The Midwest as a region received the largest number of Galveston Plan immigrants. Furman illuminates the contrast between the pamphlet's idealization and the reality of immigrating through Galveston, explaining a part of the plan's failure.

Marinbach, Bernard. *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1983.  
Well-researched history of the Galveston Plan—its origins, organization, implementation and end of the movement. Suggests the importance of Kansas and Kansas City as destinations for many of the immigrants. No other city took more Galveston placements than Kansas City.

Mondell, Allen and Cynthia Salzman Mondell dir. *West of Hester Street*. United States, Media Projects Inc., 1983.

A docudrama about the Galveston movement in the context of Jewish dispersal told through a story of a young Jewish peddler who came through the port of Galveston.

Stone, Bryan Edward. "The Galveston Diaspora: A Statistical View of Jewish Immigration Through Texas, 1907–1913." *Southern Jewish History* 2018, 21, 121-176. Documents the importance of the Kansas City area as the single largest destination.

## **Cities and Communities**

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### **Kansas City**

Adler, Frank J. *Roots in a Moving Stream: The Centennial History of Congregation B'nai Jehudah of Kansas City, Missouri, 1870-1970*. The Temple, Congregation B'nai Jehudah, 1972.

Adler, long-time administrator of B'nai Jehudah, engaged in prodigious research, including interviews, institutional and community archives, local newspapers, and the Jewish press, to produce a model synagogue/community history. Though B'nai Jehudah is the focus, he places it within the context of area Jewish communities and regional and national Jewish life.

Goldstein, Gabriel M. and Elizabeth E. Greenberg (eds.) *A Perfect Fit: The Garment Industry and American Jewry 1860-1960*. Texas Tech University Press for Yeshiva University Museum, 201). Product of an exhibition at the Yeshiva University Museum, the well-illustrated volume includes a chapter, Laurel Wilson, "Kansas City's Garment Industry," pp. 163-180. The chapter focuses exclusively on garment manufacturing in Kansas City, Missouri, but in reality the industry crossed state lines. Nonetheless it is a rare recognition of garment manufacturing in the heartland.

Schultz, Joseph P. (ed.) *Mid-America's Promise: A Profile of Kansas City Jewry*. Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the American Jewish Historical Society, 1982.

The only attempt at a comprehensive history of the greater Kansas City Jewish

community. Individual contributors' chapters focus on religious life, education, welfare, journalism, philanthropy, immigrant settlement, Jewish self-government, and demographics.

### **Topeka**

Horowitz, Kay. *The Spirit Unconsumed: A History of the Topeka Jewish Community*. Temple Beth Shalom, 1979).

A substantial combination memoir and history researched and written by Temple members in a multi-year project.

### **Topeka: Menninger Foundation**

Carney, James E. "The Freudians come to Kansas. Menninger, Freud, and the émigré psychoanalysts." *Kansas History* 16 (1993): 78-93.

[https://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/1993summer\\_carney.pdf](https://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/1993summer_carney.pdf)

Carney explains Menninger's motivations for hiring European psychoanalysts after Freud rejected him and his view of psychoanalysis. Emigres, including many renowned Jewish analysts, would draw more patients, income and professional funding to Menninger. Offering psychoanalytic training and research opportunities helped retain students, teachers and researchers, and turned Menninger into one of the country's leading institutions of its kind.

Friedman, Lawrence J. *Menninger: The Family and the Clinic*. Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990.

Classic history of the Topeka family-run Menninger Clinic, including the impact of the Jewish *refugee community* in reshaping the clinic, bringing it closer to European psychoanalysis. Friedman reveals Menninger's anti-Semitism and their implementation of a quota

### **Topeka: Esther Brown (1917-1970)**

Katz, Milton and Susan B. Tucker, "A Pioneer in Civil Rights: Esther Brown and the South Park Desegregation Case of 1948," *Kansas History* 18 (Winter 1995), 234-247.

Brown (1917-1970), a Jewish activist, led, before *Brown v Board of Education*, with Black parents, the Black newspaper *The Call*, and the NAACP a movement that successfully integrated the South Park elementary school. A Merriam housewife, Brown was appalled by the segregated Black School her maid's children attended.

[https://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/1995winter\\_katz.pdf](https://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/1995winter_katz.pdf)

### **Topeka: Ike Gilberg (1873-1930)**

Rosenblum, Thomas. "History in the Line of Fire: The Topeka Antidraft Conspiracy during World War I," *Kansas History* 41 (Summer 2018), 106-123.

Rosenblum places Ike Gilberg (1873-1930), a tailor and socialist, as central in the federal government's prosecution in 1918 of antidraft Topeka activists. Also indicted and acquitted by a jury were a female pediatrician, a KU professor, a garage owner and an Olathe store clerk, Earl R. Browder. The article suggests Gilberg's role in the Jewish community and socialist activist. He came to Topeka in 1903, taught Sunday school, led orthodox services, organized a tailors' union, ran his own shop, became the local Zionist leader, reached out to the Pottawatomie tribe, and became a psychic.

### **Wichita**

Rothman, Hal. "Same Horse, New Wagon: Tradition and Assimilation Among the Jews of Wichita, 1865-1930," *Great Plains Quarterly* 15 (Spring 1995). 83-104.

Pioneering scholarly overview of a Kansas Jewish community. A historian of the West,



Rothman broke new ground in studying a Kansas Jewish community in the state's largest city.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2005&context=greatplainsquarterly>

Price, Jay M. "Jewish Community in Wichita, 1920-1970, Same Wagon, New Horses," *Great Plains Quarterly* 28 (Fall 2008), 293-320. Reexamines and extends Rothman's earlier study of Wichita. More thoroughly researched than Rothman, Price stresses the importance of mobility and Jewish turnover in pre-World War II Wichita, as well as Jewish diversity and the Midwest context. He notes the concentration of Jews in clothing retail, scrapyard and oil industries. Post-WW II the Jewish community grew with Wichita, Kansas's most populous city, and that many Jews stayed or returned.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2319&context=greatplainsquarterly>

*Temple Emanu-El, Wichita Kansas Centennial Celebration 1885-1985* ([Wichita: Temple Emanu-El, 1985]). Brief commemorative book celebrating the first century, focusing on organizations and leaders.

## **Family Histories**

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Scholarly **bibliographies** do not normally include family genealogies, but two such private publications—the Wollman-Bloch family of Leavenworth and Kansas City and the Abeles family of Atchison—by professional genealogists, include individual biographies based on exhaustive research, much of it including letters, diaries and documents in private hands. Their extensive quoted selections provide our only access to these documents.

Curran, Joan F. *Descendants of Salomon of Janowitz, Bohemia, and Baruch Wollman of Kempen-in-Posen, Prussia* (Baltimore: Henry W. Bloch, 1996).

The Wollmans were founders of the Leavenworth Jewish Community, and their descendant, the Blochs, remain prominent in Kansas City today.

Kramer, Julia Wood. *The House on the Hill: The story of the Abeles Family of Leavenworth, Kansas*. (Chicago, Julia Wood Kramer, 1990).

Simon Abeles, like Jonas Wollman, was among the earliest Kansas Jewish settlers. In Leavenworth. Simon Abeles played a prominent though often contentious role in the city and Jewish community. Most of the Abeles family stayed in Leavenworth. With illustrations and extensive documentation, more of a family history than genealogy, it tells the story of nineteenth and early-twentieth century Leavenworth through the experiences of a prominent Jewish family.

## **Foodways**

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Fried, Stephen. *Appetite for America: The Civilizing of the Wild West—One Meal at a Time*. Bantam Books, 2010.

A History of the Harvey Company, which pioneered chain restaurants and hotels as well as meals on rail dining cars. In the process, its waitresses were known as "Harvey Girls," and the company spurred Southwest Indian art production, especially rugs and pottery. David Benjamin, first of Leavenworth then Kansas City, was Fred Harvey's second in command, building and running the company. Fried describes Benjamin's role in the company, the Leavenworth and Kansas City Jewish communities and the brothers' roles, especially philanthropist Alfred Benjamin. See also his brief, "Frontier Jews of the Fred Harvey West," *New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, Legacy* 25 (June 2011), 1, 4-5, 11.

<https://docplayer.net/49859437-Frontier-jews-of-the-fred-harvey-west.html>

Steinberg, Ellen F. and Jack H. Prost. *From the Jewish Heartland: Two Centuries of Midwest Foodways*. University of Illinois Press, 2011.

While the book does not have any specific references to Kansas, it looks at Jewish food in the Midwest and provides a context for Jewish midwestern culture and change. It is filled with recipes.

### **Kansas Jewish Cookbooks**

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Hebrew Academy of Greater Kansas City. *"B'Tayavon" [Bon Appetit] Cookbook Publishers, 1975.*

Jewish Community Women, Lawrence, KS. *The Joy of Jewish Cooking*. The World Co., 1969.

National Council of Jewish women. Greater Kansas City Section. *The Cook Book*. Inter-Collegiate Press, 1979.

Sisterhood of Ahavath Achim Hebrew Congregation. *Traditionally Ours: . . . a collection of Jewish Recipes*. Cookbook Publishers, 1992. Illustrated by David Litan.

Elsa Altshool. *When Ragtime Was Young and Grandma Did the Cooking*. Century's End Press, 1993.

Recipes from her grandmother, Clemence Kahn, whom Arthur Kahn married in 1896 when he went back to Alsace to find a bride. The four Kahn brothers ran clothing and shoe stores in small Kansas towns for more than a decade, before buying the St. Louis Clothing Co. in Sedalia in the 1890s. The recipes and memoirs reflect the Alsatian-Lorraine culture in the Heartland.

### **Community histories**

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Coleman, Richard P. and Bernice L. Neugarten. *Social Status in the City*. Jossey-Bass, 1971.

The book is the result of a decade-long (1952-1962) study of social status in the Kansas City metro area, during the Jim Crow era and at a time when the area's country and other elite clubs, and women's social service groups were closed to Jews. Using an approach similar to W. Lloyd Warner's Yankee City studies, but more statistically rigorous, Coleman and Neugarten found a divided city in which significant mixing only occurred in the civic sphere. For Jews experiencing social mobility, it meant gaining access to a Jewish country club. They quote a young Jewish lawyer summing up the Jewish status as "separate but equal—or at least, not particularly unequal" (48). The book contains two brief sections on the "The Jewish World" and "The Jewish Upper Class", but discusses Jewish status throughout.

Katzman, David M. "The Children of Abraham and Hannah: Grocer, Doctor, Entrepreneur. The Summerfields of Lawrence, Kansas," *Kansas History* 37 (Spring 2014), 20-33.

Katzman explores Kansas Jewish life through a leading nineteenth-century Eudora then Lawrence family that maintained a strong Jewish identity and kinship ties. One son was a Professor of Law—a physician and attorney—and another son, a millionaire from mining and railroads, while a daughter ran a chain of grocery stores. A grandson, first an engineer, then a lawyer, and finally a physician, became a professor of medicine. His three

female cousins all taught college, one as the first woman professor of journalism in the United States. Another grandson, following law school and managing a theater company, formed the Gotham Silk Hosiery Co. which became dominant in manufacturing silk

stockings and later, gold stripe socks. By World War I, family members had left Kansas for larger cities.

Shultz, Joseph P. and Carla L. Klausner, "Rabbi Simon Glazer and the Quest for Jewish Community in Kansas City, 1920-1923," *American Jewish Archives* 35 No. 1 (1983) 13-26. The Authors examine the tenure of Rabbi Simon Glazer, hired by a federation of 8 Orthodox synagogues to further a kehillah or federated Jewish community. Instituting his "Kansas City plan," Glazer focused on synagogues, education, kashrut, charity, and Zionism. Among his accomplishments was a free Talmud Torah school, centralized kashrut supervision and recognition of Orthodox charities by the city-wide Allied Charities. The authors attribute the short-lived results to Glazer's departure for New York in 1923 and the lack of organizational skills by his replacement, Rabbi Yehudah Braverman. They relate a top-down story at a time when the community itself was changing significantly. [https://sites.americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/1983\\_35\\_01\\_00\\_schultz\\_kla\\_usner.pdf](https://sites.americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/1983_35_01_00_schultz_kla_usner.pdf)

Wuthnow, Robert. *Red State Religion, Faith and Politics in America's Heartland*. Princeton. Princeton University Press, 2012.

A leading sociologist of American religion, Wuthnow explains Kansas' Republican political conservatism within the context of the state's history, Protestant and Catholic loyalties and traditions, small-town culture and its civic religion. In this, as in his other works, Wuthnow includes Jews and Jewish communities as a matter of course. He notes the small number of Jews historically as well as the presence of antisemitism and philosemitism while Jews were a liberalizing group with limited impact on state politics.

## **Holocaust**

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Dodd, Monroe, ed. *From the Heart: Life Before and After the Holocaust-A Mosaic of Memories*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Kansas City Star Books and the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, 2001. Profiles of 52 refugees and survivors who settled in Kansas City.

*Survivor Testimonies: Witness to the Holocaust Archive*.

Archive of testimonials from Holocaust survivors living in the Kansas City Area. The Midwest Center for Holocaust Education collected, archived, and published videos from 1994 of interviews with survivors. Many testimonies are accompanied by a transcript of the interviews. The physical archives at MCHE contain the full length interviews, including voice recordings. <https://mchekc.org/survivors/>

Soliday, Todd, and Leah Warshawski, dir. *Big Sonia*. Brooklyn, NY: Argot Pictures, 2017. A documentary about one of Kansas City's last Holocaust survivors, Sonia Warshawski.

Miriam-Goldberg, Caryn. *Needle in the Bone: How a Holocaust Survivor and a Polish Resistance Fighter Beat the Odds and Found Each Other*. Potomac Books, 2012. She tells the story of two professors at the University of Kansas, one an Auschwitz survivor, the other a Polish resistance fighter, which includes the stories of Jane Frydman and Maura Piekalkiewicz. The two couples' paths cross in Poland, and **they return** to Kansas, entwining their lives. The work of Miriam-Goldberg, Kansas Poet Laureate 2009-13, is imbued with the Kansas landscape and Jewish identity. She has woven into the dual biography her own story which

further enhances our understanding of Jewish lives in Kansas.

## **Fiction**

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Lerner, Ben. *The Topeka School: A Novel*. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2019.

Final volume of a trilogy, Ben (b1979) explores his teenage years in a Jewish family in Topeka, giving voice to his psychologist parents. A foremost American poet, McArthur Foundation and Guggenheim Fellow, he pushes his poetic prose in new directions. His secular Jewish parents escaped coastal life for Midwestern Topeka while he later returned to the East Coast, but in his self-referential writing—poetry, novels, essays—he reveals himself as a Midwestern Jew.

Sherman, Eileen Bluestone. *Independence Avenue*. Jewish Publication Society, 1990.

Written for 9 to 12 year-olds, Sherman tells the story of fourteen-year old Elias Chervonovsky, who arrives in Kansas City's immigrant portal in 1907 via Galveston.

## **Autobiographies and Biographies**

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Asher, Carol. *Afterimages: A Family Memoir*. Holmes & Meier, 2008.

In the first part of her two-part autobiography, Asher reflects on her childhood in 1950s Topeka feeling disconnected. Her parents were part of a tight-knit German-speaking Jewish, psychiatric community of Holocaust survivors working at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka. Among non-religious Jewish professionals who still struggled to speak English, Asher felt distant from her Jewish identity as well as from mainstream culture. Her parents' community seemed isolated from the institutional community as well as from the local Topeka religious community.

Asner, Ed., Samuel Warren Joseph, et al. [\*Son of a Junkman: My Life from the West Bottoms of Kansas City to the Bright Lights of Hollywood\*](#), Quincessential, Inc. 2019.

Includes Asner's early life in an Orthodox, Russian immigrant family in Kansas City's West Bottoms. His mother immigrated through Galveston. His father started a junk yard in 1903 with horse and wagon that became Asner Iron & Metal Co., still in existence. The Asners lived in a railroad flat on the Kansas side of the bottoms, across from a meatpacking house while most of the Jewish community lived on the Missouri side. *"Kansas City had a very good support system for its Jews, which surprises everybody."* Actor Paul Rudd, Asner's friend and fellow Jewish Kansan wrote the introduction.

Bloch, Thomas. *Many Happy Returns: The Story of Henry Bloch, America's Tax Man*. John Wiley and Sons, 2011.

A chatty personal and business biography of the cofounder of H & R Bloch by his son and one-time CEO of the family firm. With roots in territorial Kansas, the Bloch family based the company in the Kansas City area in establishing the nation-wide tax service.

Francis, Carol Buhler. *The House Building: My Search for Its Foundations*. TransomWorks, 1990.

Her husband's sporting goods store in Lawrence's House Building led her to uncover the history of the structure, which survived Quantrill's 1863 sack of Lawrence. The House family's clothing store occupied part of the building from the 1860s until 1935. Through the history of the building, Francis tells the story of Jacob House, one of the two prominent

Jewish clothiers in Lawrence, and two generations of the family.

Glickman, Dan. *Laughing at Myself: My Education in Congress, on the Farm, and at the Movies*. University Press of Kansas, 2022.

An autobiography by the nine-term Jewish congressman from Wichita, later Secretary of Agriculture and head of the Motion Picture Association. A self-described “Jewish kid from Kansas,” Glickman relates his family history—immigrants, salvage and scrap dealers, and owners of the Wichita minor league baseball club--and his growing up Jewish in Wichita.

Green, Kathy [Held]. *Sailing in Kansas; An American Jewish Memoir*. White Poppy Press, 2012). Green, born in 1944 to Jewish parents, her father a German refugee, her mother from a third-Generation Leavenworth family, recalls growing up in Leavenworth until she went to college. She was “both a participant in the life of Leavenworth and an alienated observer....” (29). She remembers the synagogue as the center of Jewish life as the Jewish community was disappearing, and also tells her family history in nineteenth century Leavenworth.

### **Emanuel Haldeman-Julius (1889-1951)**

Socialist, atheist, iconoclast, relating in a two-part autobiography, his path as a journalist to Kansas and to his political and social philosophy. He came to Girard, Kansas as editor of the *Appeal to Reason* in 1915. As editor and publisher of various journals and the popular “Blue Books,” –whose 2,000 titles sold over 100 million at 5 cents each– he made Girard a center of radical publishing in the United States.

Haldeman-Julius, E. *My First 25 Years Instead of a Footnote: An Autobiography*. Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1949.

<https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=hjbbband>

Haldeman-Julius, E. *My Second 25 Years: The Autobiography of E. Haldeman-Julius*. Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1949.

[https://www.bankofwisdom.com/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&products\\_id=97](https://www.bankofwisdom.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=97)

Lee, R. Alton. *Publisher for the Masses: E. Haldeman-Julius*. University of Nebraska Press, 2017. A scholarly biography of Haldeman-Julius, and the role of his wife, Marcet, who was a niece of Jane Addams and originally financed their publishing enterprise.

Koenigsberg, Sol. *Challenges and Growth: The Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City, 1968-1989: A Memoir*. Self-published, 2012).

Sol Koenigsberg, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City from 1968 to 1989, has written a memoir of his professional career as the leading Jewish civil servant in the Kansas City area, of the movers and shakers in the Jewish community in the late twentieth century, and a guide through Jewish institutional and organizational life in the metro area. Noteworthy, he led (or followed) the move of Jewish institutions to the Kansas side of the line to the new Overland Park Jewish Community campus, housing federation, the Jewish Community Foundation and the Hyman Brand Jewish Academy.

McComas, Annette Pelz. *Kansas and Me: Memories of a Jewish Childhood*. The Borgo Press, 1995. Studies in Judaica and The Holocaust, No. 10.

McComas (1911-1994) recalls her years growing up in Hutchinson, Kansas, 1916-1929; afterwards her family returned to California. Her immigrant parents moved to Kansas to be near relatives after financial failure in California. McComas writes of the small tight-knit,

mostly Yiddish-speaking Jewish community. She often felt as an outsider as she remembers incidents of anti-semitism. Hutchinson had no synagogue; occasionally visiting rabbis from nearby Wichita taught Sunday school and led services.

Molk, Isador. *The Making of an Oilman*. 1st.ed. Citadel Press, 1958.

The autobiography of Isador Molk, a prominent member of the El Dorado Jewish and oil business communities. Molk started as a menial laborer in the supply business and became a wealthy oil man, president of Cosmic Oil and the Molk Pipe and Supply Company.

Trillin, Calvin. "Messages From My Father," *New Yorker*, June 20, 1994, 56-78, republished 1996 as *Messages From My Father: A Memoir*. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.

Memoir of growing up in Kansas City in the 1940s and 1950s. His father, an immigrant, came to St. Joseph then to Kansas City via Galveston. From a lower middle-class family—grocers—his mother was proud that they were not from "Independence Avenue", where poor Jewish immigrants lived. He was raised to be an American, and he fulfilled his father's aspiration that Calvin go to Yale University.

Weichselbaum, Theodore, "Statement of Theodore Weichselbaum of Ogden, Riley County, July 17, 1908," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1909-1910 11 (1910), 561-571.

A year after immigrating in 1856 Weichselbaum (1834-1914) moved to Ogden, Kansas, freighting on the Santa Fe and Mormon trails, first with oxen then mule teams, ran a country store for 57 years, traded at army posts and with Native-Americans, and ran a brewery until Kansas imposed a form of prohibition in 1881. He served as mayor of Ogden, treasurer of the township for decades and ran unsuccessfully for state treasurer in 1880. Packing a pistol, he had a reputation for brawling and pushing the boundaries of the law. <https://ia801303.us.archive.org/10/items/statementoftheod00weic/statementoftheod00weic.pdf>

## **NEWSPAPERS**

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*Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, 1920-present. Independently owned weekly Jewish newspaper carrying mostly local news of regional Jewish activities and Jewish communities. Publishes an annual guide to Jewish organizations and institutions. <https://www.kcjc.com> Through the 1920s, the national *American Israelite* served as a regional Midwestern Jewish newspaper and carried columns on community social events submitted by mostly anonymous community members. Kansas correspondents were active, sometimes even from the smallest of Jewish communities. *The Jewish Voice*, St. Louis), 1888-1933 and the *Intermountain Jewish News* (Denver), 1913-present, <https://www.ijn.com> also carried news of Kansas Jewry.

### **Misc.**

Leavenworth, Kansas. Recognition of Jewish community as part of local tourism.

Wayside Tour #8: The Landing Retail District - "Our Jewish Heritage" Map for self-tour of the nineteenth-century Leavenworth Jewish merchant community. <https://www.leavenworthks.org/visitors/page/wayside-tour-8-landing-retail-district-our-jewish-heritage>

### **Art**

Litan, Robert E. *Having Faith: The Collected Art of David Israel Litan*. Robert E. Litan, 2011. Litan (1912-2011), a McPherson and Wichita Jewish visual artist, depicted in various

media scenes of Kansas portraits of family members, and Jewish life. Includes a section, "Art with a Jewish theme."