



*The*  
**JEWISH  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**  
OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY

**Impact Report  
2022**



## **Mission Statement**

The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County strives to build community through sharing and preserving Jewish history, heritage, and culture. We tell the story of the human experience through Jewish eyes.

The primary purpose of the Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County (JHSFC) is to be a resource for educating, discovering, explaining, preserving, and generating interest in Jewish heritage and history within our community, the greater area and around the world. We strive to partner with local organizations to amplify our efforts in telling these stories to a broader audience.

# 2022 JHSFC MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

JHSFC first documentary premieres, June 12, 2022  
**Remembering the Family Store,  
Downtown Stamford circa 1940-1965**

Community Educational program for middle  
and high school students:  
**L'Dor V'Dor Intergenerational Project**

Mann Lecture Series for 2022  
**Is Justice Possible? The history and limits of International  
War Crimes Tribunals, featuring Prof. John Q Barrett**

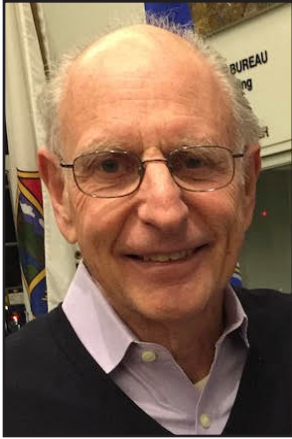
JHSFC new traveling exhibit of notable people that  
lived in Fairfield county from the early 1700's.  
**"It Happened Here!"**

A Bissel Yiddish

Monthly Book Talks

Virtual & In-Person Programs

**THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE!**



Dear Friends,

Our story does not only belong to the teller, because when shared, it becomes the story of our community. The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County has been building our shared stories for FORTY years, a remarkable achievement.

Our tradition of storytelling has continued this past year with exciting initiatives.

- *Remembering the Family Store* is a beautiful documentary showcasing the small family-owned businesses in Stamford that represented the heart of our community from 1940-1965. The documentary premiered on June 12 with showings throughout the summer at the Avon Theater with plans for further distribution.

- L'Dor V' Dor (Generation to Generation) is our highly successful program in which grandchildren interview their grandparents. We are currently working with several synagogues and our eighth graders at Bi-Cultural Day School to assist students in creating their family oral history. This program will be expanding to meet the needs of our community.

We also have continued our storytelling efforts through our many lectures, book talks, exhibits, events and public access to our extensive archives. I invite you to read about our many learning opportunities in this report.

We would like to dedicate this report to the hundreds of volunteers for their countless hours given to our organization. This dedicated and talented group of people help JHSFC continue our important work for the community. We recognize, appreciate and celebrate their many efforts and successes.

Please stay tuned for information about the JHSFC's 40th anniversary in 2023-- we look forward to celebrating with you and the community. Once again, I want to thank you for your continued support and belief in our important mission—sharing our stories for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Lilienthal".

Peter Lilienthal  
President

# THE HEART AND SOUL OF JHSFC VIVIAN AND IRWIN MILLER ARCHIVES

The JHSFC Archives endeavors to proactively collect artifacts in order to uncover the hidden stories that will have a personal connection to our community. It is our mission to reveal these stories, interpret them and provide context to make them meaningful for all. The Archives is the repository of over 426 personal histories. This includes audio tapes, video tapes, CDs, DVDs, media and digital files. These personal recollections and reminiscences provide researchers with an intimate understanding of the Jewish experience in Fairfield County. These are a unique collection of unpublished primary source materials that document the Fairfield County Jewish experience.



Sample page of JHSFC numbered copy of The Szyk Haggadah, illustrated by the Polish-Jewish artist Arthur Szyk.

Since our beginning in 1983, we have facilitated the preservation of unique unpublished primary source materials and individual and family histories of our Jewish community. Beyond collecting and preserving, we prioritize engaging with the community with our original exhibits and educational programs.



The JHSFC Archive displays a sampling of artifacts with descriptions at the *It Happened Here! Exhibit* at the Ferguson Library, downtown Stamford.

# “IT HAPPENED HERE! FROM HAVEN TO HOME TO COMMUNITY”

The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County presents a traveling exhibit, designed to explore questions about what it means to create a “home” and community through individual experiences. We used materials, artifacts and images from our Archives and additional primary sources to create eight theme-based panels. Each panel highlights selected individuals who have a strong connection to Fairfield County and have had a positive impact on our community. The exhibit partially supported by a grant from the Stamford Arts and Cultural Council opened September 18, 2022 at the Ferguson Library.

JHSFC featured stories beginning in the 1700’s, and continue through World Wars I and II. We profiled early immigrants, military heroes, icons in the cultural and performing arts, and community leaders. Each story is unique and powerful. All those featured shared a desire to belong to something larger than themselves and make a difference in the lives of others. Fairfield County has forever been enriched because of their commitment to their communities.

**Dahlia (Pamborsky) "Pabie" Johnston**  
b. 1922, Philadelphia, PA - d. 2017, Stamford, CT  
Pabie Johnston drew inspiration to serve her country as a daughter of immigrants who arrived in the US at an auspicious time. In 1942, at age 21, Pabie joined the newly created Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and following congressional restructuring of the Women's Army Corps, became a sergeant, processing discharges at war's end.

*Pabie Johnston: Army Sergeant*

**Estelle Feinstein**  
b. 1924, New York, NY - d. 2002, Stamford, CT  
Municipal Historian, Professor, History Department, University of Connecticut-Stamford (1967-1988)

Dr. Feinstein was Stamford's only official municipal historian, yet, was never too busy to mentor female students. She was presented the *Hester D. Hobbie, Jr. Award* by the Association for the Study of Connecticut History and a study one of the *Jenny Holman Library (JCHNL)* in Stamford is dedicated to Dr. Feinstein. *Ran Marcus of the Stamford History Center wrote, "her works introduced many individuals to Stamford's history, her books [are] of high academic standards, a rather uncommon occurrence in town and city histories."* Among her books is *Stamford from Puritan to Patriot: The Shaping of a Connecticut Community, 1641-1774*

*Estelle Feinstein: Municipal Historian*

**Betty Hollander**  
b. 1930, Stamford, CT - d. 2011, Stamford, CT  
Engineer, Industrialist, Inventor, Humanitarian

Betty gave new meaning to "multi-tasking". In 1962, at her kitchen table in Stamford, she envisioned what would become her company, *Shore Engineering, Inc.* Mrs. Hollander was teacher, chair, and CEO of the company and built it into a globally recognized and respected name in measurement and control. Betty sat on many boards and was a mentor to female entrepreneurs and community leaders. The *Library at West Hill Avenue and Howe Street* is named after Betty and Dr. Milton Hollander, the Wood Memorial and Hollander Branch (of the Ferguson Library).

*Betty Hollander: Inventor*

**Evelyn (née Wernick) Fowler**  
b. 1923, Hartford, CT - d. 2022, Stamford, CT  
Engineer, a founder of Society of Women Engineers (SWE);  
Artist, Animal Advocate, Inventor

"A women's place in society is anywhere she wants it to be."

Evelyn Fowler was denied acceptance to Columbia because she was a woman. Brooklyn Polytech denied admission because they lacked women's bathrooms (!). Ultimately, she earned a chemical engineering degree at Poly Institute where she and other women founded the SWE - now an international organization of 40,000+ members advocating for women in technology and engineering.

In the 1950s, Evelyn and husband Alan, an American Actor Corporation inventor industrial safety equipment from their basement while raising four children. This unassuming architect continues building on her 35+ years of breaking barriers, advocating for equality, and social change. And, Evelyn's letters to the local newspaper are a testament to her wit and endurance.

*Evelyn Fowler: Engineer*

**Matilda (Rabinowitz) Robbins**  
b. 1887, Lityn, Ukraine - d. 1963, Berkeley, CA

Matilda and family moved to Stamford and later Bridgeport after emigrating from Ukraine. Working in shirtless factories and department stores she became actively aware of the dreadful working conditions and decided to take action. Over the decades and around the country, Robbins was involved with industrial Workers of the World strikes at silk mills, meat mills and cigar factories. She was the only woman organizer. Robbins continued as a union activist throughout her life.

*Matilda Robbins: Labor Organizer*

**Mary Ann Freedman Hoberman**  
Second US Children's Post Laureate (now called the Young People's Post Laureate) by the Poetry Foundation, 2003

"I made up songs and stories... long before I knew how to write!"  
Mrs. Hoberman was born during the Depression in Stamford. Majoring in history at South College, she was the first woman in her family to attend college. Before publishing her first book, *All My Dreams Come in Poems*, in 1993, Hoberman co-founded a children's creative group, "The Pocket Poet" and "Women's Voice" (dramatized poetry readings). Hoberman understands, "poetry should be read and listened to... sometimes, poetry is fun... you can go from fun, light verse and word play and segue very nicely into serious topics and tales of woe!" Mary Ann celebrates with her verses, "You Read to Me, I'll Read to You" and *Literacy Volunteers of America*.

*Mary Ann Hoberman: Post Laureate*

**Anna S. Pashin**  
Professor

Dr. Anne S. Pashin  
Professor emerita, CCNY (mathematics and math education)

Dr. Pashin sailed and resided on her 32-foot sailboat, *Ferraro Anchor*. Anne held a US Coast Guard Operator Captain's license and delivered and rescued large yachts from Mexico to Istanbul. She taught *Advanced Flying, Astronomy, and Cultural Navigation* and was the first female Commodore of the Stamford Power Squadron. Dr. Pashin was the district education officer, and Rear Commander for the United States Power Squadron. Anne served five terms as the Stamford Board of Education. Anne was the first female vice president of



# JHSFC Produces First Documentary

## *Remembering the Family Store, Downtown Stamford circa 1940-1965*

premiered on June 12, 2022 at the Avon Theater in Stamford. The JHSFC documentary film highlights 24 family businesses that prospered in the downtown Stamford during this time. These stores represented the heart and soul of the Stamford business community. The film also details the fate of these establishments when urban renewal changed the face of the downtown area and many buildings and streets disappeared.

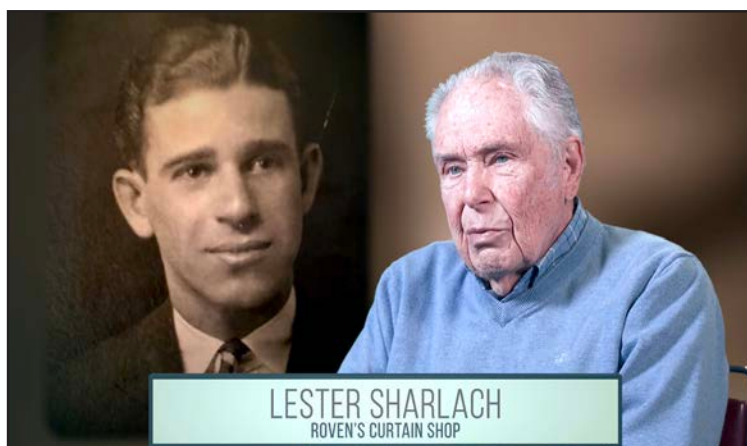
Store owners and descendants of the store owners, shared their poignant memories, successes and difficulties interspersed with wonderful family stories. The film continues to be shown at the Avon Theater with plans for further distribution.



For the JHSFC, this documentary has been a true labor of love. It began as a historic collection of still photographs curated by one of our esteemed founders, the late Lester Sharlach. The film is a culmination of his dream. Supported in part by a generous grant from Stamford Arts and Cultural Commission, as well as other corporate and private donors, a living history of Stamford took shape, complete with iconic photographs, never-before-told stories and engaging interviews. Its successful completion was led by a JHSFC board member, Gail G. Trell, producer; Margaret Stapor Costa, director; Steve Karp, scriptwriter and narrator;

Bernie Weiss, photographer; Stuart Adelberg, Avon Executive Director and numerous JHSFC volunteers.

The film is dedicated to the memory of our very own Lester Sharlach <sup>z1</sup>. This tribute to our past happened with his photography, passion and commitment to our community.



# L'DOR V'DOR INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT

L'Dor V'Dor (From Generation to Generation) provides students with interactive and experiential lessons designed to develop an appreciation for their Jewish heritage. Following a successful pilot program in 2020 at a Jewish day school in Fairfield County the program premiered in three Jewish schools with fifty 6th-8th grade students. The program has been expanded to six schools for the 2022-2023 academic year working with middle and high school students reaching over 100 students.



The L'Dor V'Dor program integrates five sessions into the religious school curriculum. The sessions consist of an overview of Jewish immigration to Fairfield County starting in the 17th century and as well as a discussion of artifacts brought from our archives. There is a capstone project where students interview their grandparent or elder-relative about their younger days and life journeys, as well as Jewish family traditions and meaningful moments. Independent research has shown that teens develop stronger identities when they connect with their grandparents and learn about their family heritage.

The team teaches the students interviewing skills and techniques through role playing and other interactive activities. They then create a video montage from all the recorded interviews which is shown at an end-of-session Siyyum (celebration) attended by the students, parents and grandparents.



The Jewish history and culture that the students and family members learn from listening to other families' stories in the video montage is deeply moving and meaningful for all generations. The videos and video montage are kept by the families and archived at the Jewish Historical Society.

As we go forward, we will continue to build partnerships with temples and schools throughout Fairfield County in order to expand this program.



# NORMA & MILTON MANN LECTURE SERIES

2022 - Professor John Q. Barrett

## Is Justice Possible? The history and limits of International War Crimes Tribunals

Norma and Milton Mann's legacy was one of leadership and significant life-long contributions to our community and beyond. The JHSFC continues to honor their dedication to strengthen our Jewish community with the Norma and Milton Mann Annual Lecture. Beginning in 2015, each lecture represents their commitment to high standards, global interests and connects with topics that were important to the Mann's. Renowned experts present topics with wide appeal, are historically significant, and impact our future. This is a highly anticipated annual JHSFC event.

This year was no exception. "Is Justice Possible? The History and Limits of International War Crimes Tribunals" was presented by John Q. Barrett, Benjamin M. Cardozo Professor of Law at St. John's University on Sunday, October 30, 2022 at Temple Beth El. Professor Barrett commented on the relevancy of the current Ukraine atrocities during his discussion.



June 11, 2017  
Prof. John Q. Barrett



June 17, 2018  
Dr. Jeffrey S. Passel



June 16, 2019  
Roya Hakakian



December 21, 2021  
Amy Richards

### **Nuremberg Lessons What Happened Then and Why It Matters Now**

The Trials are more relevant now than ever! That groundbreaking Tribunal was the first international court ever set up to prosecute war crimes. It riveted the world and brought 22 prominent Nazis to justice. The speaker discussed why the lessons are still critical today.

### **Immigration to US: Myth and Reality**

Dr. Passel gave us an unbiased overview of past immigration history and its contributions to the country, as well as recent trends in both legal and unauthorized immigration. He painted a picture of the future impact of immigration – social, demographic, and financial – on the US population.

### **Seeking Justice and Protecting Human Rights in a Perilous World: A Case Study**

Roya Hakakian, founder of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, speaks and writes on the issues of the Middle East and human rights. In addition to this timely topic, she spoke during the brunch about the Jewish experience in Iran.

### **We are Makers: Women Making History Celebration of a Movement**

Award winning author, documentary filmmaker, human rights activist and spokesperson for contemporary feminist issues, Richards shared stories of women from all walks of life from the early women's movement to the present day.

# JHSFC By The Numbers

2,800+

VIEWS OF THE  
RTFS TRAILER

8

THEME BASED PANELS  
HIGHLIGHTING  
FAIRFIELD COUNTY  
INDIVIDUALS

5,000+

JUDAICA BOOKS

8

FOUNDING  
MEMBERS IN 1983

100%

VOLUNTEER LED  
ORGANIZATION

24

RTFS FAMILY  
BUSINESSES  
INTERVIEWED

10,000+

PRIMARY SOURCE  
MATERIALS

350+

ATTENDEES AT  
MONTHLY BOOK TALKS

400+

ORAL HISTORIES

1,000

PEOPLE VIEWED "IT HAPPENED  
HERE!" EXHIBIT AT THE FERGUSON

1

ORIGINAL NUMBERED  
SZYK HAGGADAH

45+

EXHIBITS

5

GRANT SPONSORED  
MANN LECTURES

ENTERING

40

YEARS OF SERVICE  
IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY

1,200+

ATTENDEES OF  
RTFS AT THE AVON

1100+

RECIPIENTS OF OUR  
JHSFC NEWSLETTERS

100+

STUDENTS  
INTERVIEWED  
GRANDPARENTS

\$50,000

DONATIONS RECEIVED  
FOR RTFS DOCUMENTARY

THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE!

# Capturing Our Impactful Events



Please continue your support to help further the goals of the Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County. Visit [JHSFC-CT.org](http://JHSFC-CT.org), & click on the Donate button.



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