



CHOL – Community History On-Line

A forum for those involved in preserving the footprint of Southern African Jewish community life in digital form

CHOL: Community History On-Line Newsletter #26 March 2026

In this issue, compiled by Geraldine Auerbach:

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- The three latest stories – written by you!
- Wishing all CHOL-niks, a warm and meaningful Pesach

Dear CHOL Friends

New Communities on the CHOL Website

I am pleased to share the good news that several new websites are being created, highlighting the contribution Jewish communities have made to the progress and welfare of South Africa. We are working on **Grahamstown**, **Bloemfontein** and **Calitzdorp** – and **Durban** will not be far behind. If you have a query or story about any of these places – please get in touch.



Jeremy Hodes is the ‘driver’ for **Grahamstown**. Eli Rabinowitz has provided important information and photos which will, with Eli’s permission, move to the new CHOL site where all the information will be logically accessible - the timeline, the people who lived there, the religious life, cemeteries and activities.



Did you maybe spend time there or go to Rhodes University and would like to add your story? Write to jeremy@chol.website. Here is a sneak-peek at the Grahamstown work-in-progress site: <https://chol.website/communities/grahamstown/index.htm>

The picture of the Former Synagogue, Hill Street, Grahamstown is courtesy of Vysotsky (Wikimedia) 2018.

Other recent communities on the website are [Oudtshoorn](#) [Woodstock](#) and [Salt River](#) and [Riversdale](#)

Itamar Shein who grew up in **Bloemfontein** is going to help **Jeremy Hodes** develop a CHOL site for that city. A fascinating fact of the Bloemfontein community is that they had both an Orthodox and a Reform community, each of which designed and built beautiful synagogues in the city in 1950s and 60s.



Bloemfontein Orthodox synagogue, Fairview Street, consecrated in 1965

Not twenty years later, sadly, both communities were drastically diminishing. Then an extraordinary thing happened. The orthodox community bought the smaller Reform Synagogue, as that community had ceased to exist. They made it suitable for their needs



including building a Mikveh.

This 'new' synagogue, at no 1 Dickie Clark Street was inaugurated in 1996 by Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris. The previous Orthodox Synagogue was sold and is now the *Seventh Day Adventist Church*. Rabbi Silberhaft tells me that the community



recently sold the small synagogue also and use the conference hall of that complex for the 30 or so members that remain in Bloem in 2026.

Send any Bloemfontein stories or pictures to jeremy@chol.website

interior and exterior of the Bloemfontein Reform Synagogue – later the only synagogue

Maitland and Belville

Philip Stodel continues to add to his comprehensive site for [Maitland](#), Cape Town. Click the link to see what amazing material he has found on those that lived and worked there.

Stan Loon is always adding to his excellent CHOL website for [Bellville](#), Cape Town. He recently found a wonderful film of a day at the nursery school in 1959. You can see it on the 'Images' page.

Even more remarkable, Stan Loon and Gail Loon Lustig recently met up in Israel with the nursery school teacher, Betty Frumer. In the picture left, Betty aged 93, is flanked by Gail and Stan at a special meeting 66 years after the film was made. Stan says: Her memory is incredible. When she watched the video, she recognised many of the children saying, 'That's Allan Groll. His father was Georgie'; 'There's Raphael (Weiner)'; 'That's Irene Horowitz's daughter'; ... This was a special reunion.

<https://chol.website/communities/bellville/images.htm>



CHOL continues to bring people together. **Gail** reports that 'since that first meeting, we have met with **Betty** twice, together with **Philip Stodel**, his wife, Michelle and his father-in-law, Hymie Ehrlich who is a



contemporary of Betty's from Muizenberg where they both grew up. Betty's late husband Benny was from Maitland, Philip's 'medina'.

Two friends Betty and Hymie – now well into their 90's meeting up again for coffee!

Calitzdorp: Naomi Schamroth Rapeport wrote to us that 'Whilst being relatively housebound due to the bombardment of Israel, I decided to spend my evenings constructively and have put together a document on the Jewish families of Calitzdorp.' Naomi is now preparing this material for a CHOL website for the Jewish Community of **Calitzdorp**, a small village in the Little Karoo on the way to Oudtshoorn along the Route 62 from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth. She describes the Jewish families, including her family members, who settled there in the 1890s. It is now the port wine capital of South Africa. If you have a story about Jewish Calitzdorp get in touch with Naomi via info@chol.website.

If you want to have a CHOL website for **your own community**, get in touch with us at info@chol.website. We will be happy to help you create it.

Share Your Stories

The very reason that the CHOL website was created was to host and as it were 'publish', the amazing stories written by South Africans around the world remembering elements and anecdotes of their lives pertaining to South Africa.

Who would have believed that Gail would have collected nearly 200 stories in just a couple of years.

For your delight we are highlighting and pointing you to the three latest stories that have been posted on the website. Click the titles below to read the stories.

196 Margaret Green	Why I Write	Touches on: Second World War; Holocaust; mother /daughter relationships; Lithuania and Cape Town
195 Estelle Lewak Geva	Our Visit to the Kruger National Park	Excitements with elephants and hippos
194 David Bass	My Two Mothers	David writes about the family maid servant when he was growing up in Cape Town.

The story of 'My Two Mothers' is from a published memoir by David Bass consisting of essays, monologues and poems called; *The Day I Met Socrates*. It is available on Amazon Books via the following link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1049217268?ref>

I ordered this book and have very much enjoyed all the contents.

Read more stories here <https://chol.website/stories.htm>

We wish you a happy and meaningful Pesach with family and friends

Warm wishes from Geraldine and Gail

CHOL – Community History On-Line is a forum set up in 2020, under the auspices of the Kaplan Centre at UCT and the South African Jewish Museum – bringing together all those working on / or interested in creating an online presence relating to the **History of Jewish Communities in Southern Africa**. see www.chol.website contact info@chol.website.

Check out: www.chol.website which now has on it:

- 58 [Communities](#)
- 67 [Memoirs](#)
- 196 original [Stories](#)
- 45 Videos of [Presentations](#)
- 25 [Newsletters](#)

Feel free to browse also the **resources** and **journal articles** on the CHOL website



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