

Jewish Families of Old Brownsville

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The Earliest Brownsville Jews

Brownsville is a young city as far as settlement and age are concerned. That means that the heritage of its citizens finds roots in other places. While the majority of its citizens have always been of Hispanic heritage, it has had its share of Northern fortune seekers and, surprisingly Jews of European origin. They settled here early and integrated well into the community even if though their foreign customs and non-Christian religion made them a very small minority. This article will touch upon early Jewish members of the Brownsville community who made a special place for themselves in a developing society.

One of the first Jews to be connected with the area was here before Brownsville even had a name. He was Simon Mussina. Mussina, who was born in 1805 in Philadelphia of Dutch Jewish parents, had a strange journey to the South. In 1821 he and his father Zachariah journeyed to Alabama on mercantile business. His father accidentally drowned while crossing a swollen creek. The family fortune was lost in the incident. Simon became the family breadwinner and created a very large mercantile business in Mobile. A fire in 1836 once again left the family destitute. Simon moved on to Matagorda, Texas and later Galveston where he edited newspapers and used them primarily to advertise land he owned in West Texas. He also owned a large drug store in Galveston.

With the onset of the Mexican War in 1845 Mussinas arrived in Matamoros, Mexico and purchased the Matamoros newspaper the *American Flag*, which moved to Brownsville in 1848. In 1846, as the Mexican-American War broke out, Mussina purchased formerly Mexican-owned land which after the war was declared part of the United States. His property was at Point Isabel and also in the area that would become the city of Brownsville. Working with Charles Stillman he helped to survey the prospective township, thus he is considered one of the city's founders.

Mussina would go on to become an astute lawyer, developer of land around East Waco, from 1870 to 1873 serve as president of the Austin State Hospital, Texas school for the Blind, and in 1871 alderman for the city of Austin. While he never married and left no descendants, he did rear his father's family.

During this same period another Jewish resident of Brownsville was John Melvin Hirsch. A friend of General Zachary Taylor, he was forced to move across the border during the conflict, as General Taylor used the Hirsch family home as a military headquarters.

Jacob Schlanger, a lumber merchant, was a member of the County Commissioners Court when Brownsville was selected as the seat for Cameron County in 1848. However, Schlanger soon moved away from Brownsville.

The first Jew to be buried in Brownsville was Joseph Moses, a New York-born merchant, who died in the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1858. His brother Benjamin had been in Brownsville in 1846, shipping cargo for General Taylor's army.

The Goldring-Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life relates: "Between the Mexican-American War and the Civil War, most Jews who moved to the area resided in Matamoros. During the Civil War, a handful of Jewish merchants from Galveston moved to Matamoros to get around the Union blockade of Confederate ports. However, with the end of the war and the decline in the cotton economy, most of these families moved either to Brownsville or elsewhere. Among those who settled in Brownsville were Arthur S. Wolff, later a city physician and quarantine officer, and Louis Wise, former Union Army surgeon and soldier."

The Bollacks

One of the more interesting stories of Jewish families in Brownsville involves the Bollacks, who had a long-standing relationship with the city. Adolph Bollack (1841-1927) came from France to Louisiana on the ship *Manchester* with his parents Joseph and Rose. Adolph was born in Germany (possibly Alsace-Lorraine which changed hands between France and Germany several times) as recorded in the 1910 census. Another source would indicate that he came to the United States in 1856 by himself at age 16. He was naturalized in 1872 as indicated in the 1910 US Census that shows him living on 13th Street Brownsville with an occupation as dry goods merchant. In 1871 he was married to Hettie Fellman, who was born 1840. She came to America in 1867 from Germany. They had three children by the 1880 Census when Adolph was listed as 40 years of age and his wife at 33. That year Louisiana-born daughter Selena was 8, son Isaac born November 7, 1874 in New Orleans was 5, and Louisiana-born Joseph, 3. Hettie would die the same year as her husband, 1927.

During the Civil War Adolph joined a Louisiana regiment and fought in the battle of Palmito Hill in 1865. He was buried in his Confederate uniform in the Hebrew Cemetery, Brownsville though his headstone does not indicate that he was a Confederate soldier. He likely went back to New Orleans before he returned to town in 1869 with the Torah his family had brought from France. Perhaps it is the same scroll which was reportedly kept in Matamoros in 1876 and in 1882 was the focus of a humorous incident in which Mexican border guards refused to touch the Torah as it was moved across the border for a Friday night service in Brownsville out of fear of touching the "Jewish god." During the period of the 1870s and until the early 1920s, there was no organized Jewish worship in Brownsville. This Torah was in use until 1933. Before any temple

was erected High Holy Day Services were held at the Bollack home in Brownsville for members of the local Jewish Community.

In 1878 Henry Bollack together with his brother Adolph opened a dry goods store in Brownsville named Bollack's. The Bollacks were also merchants in Matamoros. Henry Bollack noted by the 1880 Census to be 36, was born in 1844 in Weisenberg (French spelling Wissembourg), Alsace-Lorraine, Germany to French parents.. In the confusion over sovereignty he lists both his mother and father as having been born in France. The town is on the west side of the Rhine River north of Strasbourg. He is married to Pauline B. Wormster (Wermser) whose burial records show her birth date as February 10, 1849 and her death date April 26, 1934. She was born in Landau, Bavaria, Germany. They had departed for America from the port at Hamburg on the Elbe River. Their children at this time are noted to be Juliette E. (later Julia) born July 1878 in Texas and Joseph F., age 20, born March 19, 1880 in Texas. Henry provides his occupation as dry goods merchant.

The New York Times of September 4, 1882 had an article datelined the day before. It is headlined RAVAGES OF THE YELLOW FEVER THE DISEASE ON THE INCREASE AT BROWNSVILLE—ITS PROGRESS LAST WEEK. It goes on to state: "The fever continues to increase in this city. For the 24 hours ending at 10 o'clock this morning there were about 70 new cases and four deaths reported. F. Henry Bollack, a prominent merchant, died."

There is an advertisement for Bollack's mercantile store, Mrs. H. Bollack, owner, on inside front cover of Chatfield's *Twin Cities of the Border 1893*. It reads:

Mrs. H. Bollack

---DEALER IN---

Dry Goods, Notions, Boots, Shoes
Hats, Trunks, Slickers
Saddlery, Clothing and Millinery

--AGENT FOR THE --

New Home Sewing Machine

Also keeps a full line of Sewing Machine
Needles

Twelfth Street, Opposite City Market

In return for purchasing the ad Chatfield also ran a short promotion within the

publication. It read: " MRS. H. BOLLACK On Twelfth Street, directly opposite the Market Place, is a large dry goods store, filled with stock of everything in that line, and also a full assortment of hats, caps, boots, shoes, and notions. Mrs. H. Bollack, the proprietress of the establishment, came from Bavaria, Germany, in 1875, first residing in Louisiana for three years and then locating in this city. [Here Chatfield confuses Hettie with her sister-in-law.] The business, which has been increased to twice its original extent, is personally managed by Mrs. Bollack, with the assistance of her son and a number of clerks. Good bargains and prompt attention always await her customers."

In an interesting aside Brownsville sports historian Rene Torres reported in the *Valley Morning Star's* October 12, 2008 edition that "Flag pole at ballpark had a French connection," He told of a story in the *Brownsville Herald* that Mrs. H. Bollack donated a flagpole on April 12, 1911 to the Brownsville Baseball Association. The story in the *Brownsville Herald* at that time reported that the flagpole had stood in front of Bollack Building after it was the French Consulate on 12th Street .The 35-foot pole would then be moved to the Bollock's new (of around 1910) building on Elizabeth Street before moving on to the ballpark. The November 1912 Robert Runyon photo of the Bollack Building shows a shorter flagpole on the front roof of the structure.

In the 1880 census Pauline volunteers that she is in the dry goods business while Joseph F. is a salesman in the same field. Pauline remained working in association with Joseph in the dry goods business at least until 1920 when she was 70.

In 1896 with business booming the Bollacks moved their store location to the corner of 12th and Elizabeth. With its 100' frontage the outlet with goods imported from both the north and Europe prospered. This encouraged the family to erect in 1910 a beautiful large three-story structure at 1223 Elizabeth. It dominated the area for decades and was to be THE store for upscale merchandise until large chain stores offered stiff competition by 1927. The quality of the goods not only attracted local residents but also military personnel and their wives from nearby Fort Brown. The latter were enticed by "the ladies apparels, sewing necessities, and hats" that were readily available.

After his mother Pauline died in 1934, Joseph F. owned and operated The Bollack Store at 1223 East Elizabeth Street, Brownsville until his death in Brownsville on January 14, 1949. His residence was 405 E. Elizabeth. The store under the Bollack name was listed in the telephone directories until 1959. The store was later occupied by the Delrey Shops, followed by the Three Sisters Inc. and then a succession of retail businesses.

The Bollack Building at 1223 Elizabeth still stands. Originally it was a handsome three-story brick and stone building with beautiful arched windows carrying a theme from the second to the top story. A cornice roof overhang lent and still lends strength to the structure's appearance. Over the middle arch engraved in stone is "Bollack". A

Brownsville Herald article dated 1/28/34 noted "The Bollack Department Store recently completed a new skylight, improving the appearance of the interior generally." By the 1960s in an effort to provide the building a more modern appearance, a simplified façade was placed over the second-story windows. The building was brought to its original façade and its attractive arches once more revealed in 2011.

Joseph F. visited his ancestral home in mid-1921 departing for Cherburg from New York City. Joe F's cousin, Joseph Bollack, son of Adolph and Hettie had a sad history. By the year 1900 he was noted to be insane. By 1910 he had been committed to the Southwestern Insane Asylum near San Antonio. At age 53, in 1930, he was still in this institution. He apparently remained there for the remainder of his life.

One of Adolph's sons-in-law was Isidore Moritz, a lifelong newsman. Moritz would work for the original owner of the *Brownsville Daily Herald* in 1907, establish the *Mercedes Enterprise* in 1909, be involved with the *Edinburg Advance*, later be owner of the *McAllen Monitor* and work for the *San Benito Light* and the *Harlingen Star*. He married Julia Bollack June 23, 1909 at the Bollock family home corner of 13th and Washington. Moritz was a Mason, and a founder of Temple Emmanuel in McAllen. There may be a historical plaque in the temple with his name on it.

The Ashheim Family

Lt. Chatfield in his 1893 publication "The Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande" introduces us to Solomon Ashheim. He writes

"Mr. Ashheim came to this country from Germany, in 1862, and located in Victoria Texas where he was clerk in a clothing house.

In 1865 he came to this city [Brownsville] and established the Star Clothing Store, which has become one of the most reliable "one-price" houses in this section. In addition to a full line of ready-made men's and boy's suits, he carries a complete stock of men's furnishings, dry goods and notions, hats and caps, boots and shoes.

Mr. Ashheim was at one time treasurer of Cameron County, but holds no public office at the present time."

The issue also carried in its inside cover a small ad for Ashheim's store. It read:

Solomon Ashheim

Star * Store

---DEALER IN---

Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots, Shoes

--AND--

FURNISHING GOODS

Washington Street

Brownsville, Texas

From the September 15, 1870 US Census of Brownsville we learn that Solomon, now 38, is already a retail dry goods dealer. He and his wife, Pauline, 34, have Matilde, 10, who had been born in New York, Emilia, 4 and Adolf, who had been born in September 1869. Solomon notes his real estate to be valued at \$300 and his personal wealth at \$1000.

When Brownsville celebrated July 4, 1876 a parade with cavalry, two floats, a band, Protection Hook and Ladder Company No.1, ending with political opponents of the Blue and Red Clubs had earlier been greeted by a 13 gun salute. This mention was noted in a newspaper "Among the pubescent beauties braving the summer sun, there were many sisters including the three Dalzell girls, Irene, Lula and Julia, the Scanlan twins Laura and Annie, Mathilda and Emilia Ashheim, Anita and Una Cowen, and Concepcion and Emilia Angelina."

From the 1880 US census we learn that both Solomon and Pauline were born in Prussia and only the two youngest ones were now at home and attending school. Emilia was listed as Mexico born, coming to the US in 1866.

By the 1900 Census Solomon has died. He was born February 2, 1832 and died November 28, 1894. Pauline, born June 17, 1833, would live to November 26, 1917. By this year 30 year-old son Adolf was at home with no occupation listed. His sister (either Emilia or Amelia) was at home with her husband, Aaron Turk, who had taken over the operation of the dry goods store.

By the census of April 15, 1910 Adolf had married Celina Bollack, and they had two children, Vivian, 9, and Julian 8. A son named Adolph was born February 2, 1909 but lived only to 4/28/09. Adolf was working as a cashier in a bank and by the next decade census could list himself as a banker. Julian is pictured in the 1921 Pedagog, yearbook of Southwest Texas Normal College in San Marcos, Texas, and is a freshman. By the year 1930 Adolf was a bank vice president. Vivian, at age 28, was still unwed at their Washington Street residence.

There is a humorous story told of Adolf and Harlingen founder, Lon C. Hill. In an anecdotal article we learn how tight cash flow was as Hill, in 1907, expanded his horizons and before he secured sufficient financial backing. As with many other developers in the Valley he was "land rich and cash poor." On a Saturday, Hill was reported to have shown up at the First National Bank in Brownsville. He asked the cashier, Adolph Ashheim for \$800 in fifty cent pieces, so he could pay his canal work

crew its weekly wages. Even as he volunteered to sign a note for this amount, Ashheim reminded him that he was already borrowed to the limit. When Hill remarked that his friend Sam Robertson would sign the note, Ashheim replied that Robertson owed the bank even more than Hill. When Hill was asked if he would repay the note the following Saturday, he answered that he would. The following Saturday after the bank had closed for business and drawn its shades, Hill's persistent knocking on the door was finally responded to as Ashheim peeked through the blinds, saw who it was, and anticipating repayment pulled Hill's note from his wallet as he unlocked the door. As related "Mr. Hill, covered with dust from a long trek on unpaved roads, removed his hat and revealed streams of perspiration rolling down his face and said 'My God man, what a hot and miserable trip I've had getting here. You know it's Saturday and I need another \$800 for a payroll for the canal gang.'

When Adolf died is unknown but Celina who had been born in Louisiana in 1873 lived to September 15, 1960.

The Solomon Ashheim's papers, a gift of Vivian C. Wooten, 1966 April, are in the Library at the Alamo, San Antonio of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. The collection contains legal documents, certificates, and printed material. It includes Solomon Ashheim's certificate of citizenship, militia appointment, certificates of his election as Cameron County Treasurer, funeral notice, and estate record. Also included is a partnership agreement between Ashheim's widow, Pauline Ashheim, and son-in-law, Aaron Turk, for the operation of his Brownsville mercantile business. The brief biographical note states:

Solomon Ashheim was born in Wongrowitz, Posen, Germany, on 1832 February 2 and married Pauline Hollander, born circa 1836. The couple immigrated to the United States in 1860. First working as a clerk in a clothing house in Victoria, Texas, Ashheim relocated to Brownsville, Texas, in 1865 and established the Star Clothing Store, which sold dry goods, clothing, boots and shoes, and furnishing goods. Ashheim served in the Texas Militia in 1871 and was elected treasurer of Cameron County in 1874 and 1876. Solomon and Pauline had three children: Mathilda, born in 1860 in New York; Amelia (or Emilie), born in 1866 in Mexico; and Adolph, born 1869 in Texas. Solomon Ashheim died in Brownsville on 1894 November 28.

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The Kowalski Family

The name Kowalski in Polish means blacksmith.

A History of Texas and Texans, Volume 4 (1914) by Francis White Johnson tells us:

“Bernard Kowalski, a native of Poland, was born in 1821 in Inowrazlaw, where he received excellent educational advantages. Immigrating to the United States in 1841, he located in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he became highly successful as a business man and where in 1847 he was naturalized as an American citizen. He joined the Washington Artillery, a famous military organization of New Orleans, in which he was much interested. He subsequently enlisted for service in the Mexican War, and went with General Taylor's army into Mexico, on the way passing through Brownsville, Texas. He served with gallantry throughout the war, taking part in many engagements. In 1849 he went with the gold seekers to California, making an overland journey, but not meeting with the success he anticipated in that country he returned to New Orleans in 1850, and resumed business in that city. In 1861, being burned out, he came to Cameron County, Texas, and embarked in mercantile pursuits in Brownsville. On the breaking out of the Civil war he enlisted in the Confederate army, and having been commissioned major of artillery under General Bee took an active part in the defense of Fort Brown (Brownsville) and when the fort was captured in 1864 by General Herron, Bernard Kowalski was taken prisoner and carried to New Orleans where he was kept a prisoner until the close. of the conflict. Returning then to Brownsville, he resumed his business operations in this city, and was here an honored resident until his death, June 24, 1889. While in California Mr. Kowalski was a member of Terry Vigilantes of that state and helped drive bad characters out of the state. He was intensely patriotic to the cause of the south, and was never "reconstructed." As a husband, a father, and a citizen, he was a man of the finest type, charitable and unselfish to an unusual degree, oftentimes taking greater interest in the troubles and discouragements of others than he did of his own. Beloved by all who knew him, his death was a cause of general regret. The maiden name of his wife was Sophia Bernstein. She was born at Posen, Poland, and survived him but eleven months, dying in May, 1890.”

Another source reports that the family arrived by ship at Brazos de Santiago and first settled in Matamoros before coming to Brownsville. Bernard and Sophia are noted in the Brownsville, Cameron County US Census of 9/15/1870. Both then are 49 years of age. He lists his occupation as merchant-tailor. His real estate is worth \$20,000 while his personal worth is put down as \$5000. Son Louis, age 20, still lives with them and is a clerk in a counting room while brother Benjamin, 16, attends school. By June 1880 they reside at 589 Elizabeth Street. Bernard notes that he is a dry goods merchant while 25 year-old Ben is a bookkeeper. Son Louis, now 30, had left the nest, married Emilia, now 27, and they were blessed by Rosario 3, Joseph 2 and Sarah 5 months.

When the US Census in Brownsville was taken on June 11, 1900, Ben now 44, lists his occupation as commercial merchant. At their Elizabeth Street address are Gustave (b. Oct. 12, 1886); David (b. Dec, 10, 1889); Paul O. (b. July 8, 1891); Alexander (b. Nov. 1892; and Bernard (b. March 1886).

As was common of the families at the time, a large number of children was more the norm than not. Brother Louis not only matched Ben but outdid him in family size. When the census taker arrived at his domicile on 6/7/1900 he discovered commercial merchant Louis and wife Emilia (b. June 1854 and incorrectly listed as Annalee) with these children at home: Emilio--August 1882; Freddie--June 1883; Anita--July 1886; Etta--July 1888; James--May 1889; Bernard--February 1891; Julius--April 1895; and Francis J.--March 1898. What had become of their three older siblings is not known.

A decade later (1910) some of the Ben Kowalski family are still residing in their childhood home. Bernard, 24, is now a civil engineer; Gustaval (as the census taker puts down his given name), 22 is a lawyer; David, 21, is a stenographer as is brother Alexander, 18; Paul, 20, is a bank cashier; and young brother Clarence, 12, a student.

In brother Louis' family, sons Frederick L., 26, James W., 21, and Bernard L., 19, are all grocery salesman, likely in their father's firm. Sisters Anita and Etta are yet married. Louis would serve for almost 40 years as clerk in the District Court of Cameron County, Twenty-Eight Judicial District (State). In the time of the yellow fever epidemic he served as secretary to the "Committee to Prevent Yellow Fever."

Again from *A History of Texas and Texans*, we learn:

"BENJAMIN KOWALSKI. Conspicuous in business circles and prominent in the public affairs of Brownsville, Benjamin Kowalski, an ex-mayor of the city, is a true type of the energetic and enterprising citizens who have been influential in advancing the best interests of this part of Cameron county, his enthusiastic zeal, unquestioned ability and strong personality making him a leader among men. A son of Bernard Kowalski, he was born, in 1854, in New Orleans, Louisiana, of thrifty ancestry.

Acquiring his rudimentary education in New Orleans, Benjamin Kowalski subsequently attended Soula Business College and the Brothers' College in Brownsville. At the early age of fourteen years he began his business life, becoming a clerk in his father's store, and later was engaged in mercantile pursuits on his own account. Taking an interest in local affairs from early manhood, he was for many years prominently connected with various branches of the public service in Brownsville, from 1869 until 1877 serving as assistant postmaster under Edward Downey. Nine years later, upon the death of Postmaster Hopkins, Mr. Kowalski was appointed as his successor, his commission bearing date of November 27, 1886. That was under President Cleveland's first

administration, and Mr. Kowalski has the distinction of having been the first Democratic postmaster that ever Brownsville had. He served in that capacity for four years with conspicuous efficiency, and to the satisfaction of the public.

When Mr. Kowalski left the post office the first time, in 1877, he accepted a position at Fort Brown, first as army quartermaster's clerk, and later as paymaster's clerk. Subsequently he was employed as clerk to General Sutton, United States Consul at Matamoros, Mexico. He is quite talented and accomplished, and an excellent linguist, having conversational knowledge of Spanish, French and German, as well as of English. It was almost entirely due to Mr. Kowalski that Brownsville obtained its Federal Building, his preliminary efforts in that direction having been begun through a letter to Congressman Crane in 1888, and continue until successful. He has likewise served most acceptably as United States Commissioner, and as deputy district clerk for the Southern District of Texas.

Mr. Kowalski was elected mayor of Brownsville, and served the regular term of two years with credit to himself, and to the honor of his constituents, rendering the city service of inestimable value, his achievements having been noteworthy in every respect. Among those of especial value to the community are the following named: The granting of franchise and building of spur line by the Saint Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway from West Brownsville, extending around the northeastern part of the city, to the Little Indiana Canal Company's property; the extension, improvement and enlargement of the Municipal Water and Light System, putting in entirely new machinery with double units for all motive power, including new and larger water mains, fire hydrants and street lights, also new buildings and sheds for water and light plants and boiler sheds; the building of an up-to-date Filtering Plant, water ninety-eight percent pure; the building of a new market and city hall, with sheds to Fire Department Building; the extension of water and hydrants to the City Cemetery; the building of over twenty-five blocks of street paving, and the levy of a tax of one-third on the first paving district on all streets paved, to continue the street paving; the building of more than fifteen miles of concrete sidewalks; the granting of a franchise, and the building of the Robertson Street Railway; the granting of a franchise, and building a new street railway on Twelfth street, from the International Bridge to the Rio Grande Railroad Depot; the granting of a franchise, and building a spur line of the Saint Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway on Fronton street for the business houses; the building of a drainage pipe line for surface and overflow water; the purchase of a fire wagon, and three thousand feet of fire hose; and there is still on the docket, and to be voted on, a measure for three thousand dollars for the erection of a slaughter pen. During the two years, from May, 1910, until May, 1912, that Mr. Kowalski was at the head of the municipal government, there were more buildings erected in Brownsville, both for business and

residence purposes, than at any other equal length of time in its history. The sewerage plant was also completed under his regime.

Kowalski married Miss Corinne Wilson, a daughter of Dr. A. H. Wilson, who came to Brownsville from Georgia, where she was born. A woman of culture and refinement, whose purposes are in harmony with his, Mrs. Kowalski has proved herself a worthy helpmate in every sense implied by the term, cheering him in his hours of discouragement, and aiding him by kindly words and acts in the many struggles that inevitably come to every enterprising, progressive and conscientious public servant. Six sons have blessed the union of Mr. and Mrs. Kowalski, namely: M. B., a graduate of the N. M. College, is a civil engineer in Dallas, Texas; G. L., county attorney of Kleberg county, is a university graduate; Dave, in the abstract business; Paul O., teller in the First National Bank of Brownsville, is a college graduate; Alexander, with Cooper Grocer Company of Waco, is a college graduate, and Clarence, a student.

Fraternally Mr. Kowalski is a member, and past master of Rio Grande Lodge, No. 81, Ancient Free and Accepted Order of Masons; a member, and past patron of Hope Chapter, No. 124, Order of the Eastern Star; a member of Texas Consistory, No. 1, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, of Galveston; of El Mina Temple, Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, of Galveston; a member, past chancellor and commander, of Brownsville Lodge, No. 339, Knights of Pythias; and a member, past consul, and commander of Acacia Camp, No. 690, Woodmen of the World. Mr. Kowalski is prominent and active in each of the orders to which he belongs, being especially active in Masonry, in which he has taken the thirty-second degree. All the sons are members of the Masonic Order with the exception of the youngest."

Lt. W.H. Chatfield in his 1893 "The Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande" had already compiled some of the above information from which the above was obviously used as a source. He wrote:

"Benjamin Kowalski who had direct charge of the office during the illness of Mr. Hopkins, was acting postmaster for a year., and in recognition of his able management, the community petitioned the President for his appointment as postmaster. He was commissioned, to date from November 27, 1886.

Mr. Kowalski had a thorough knowledge of postal affairs, which he had acquired from his long service under Mr. Downey from 1869 to 1877. He then became clerk for an army quartermaster at Fort Brown, and was later a paymaster's clerk. He also served as clerk for Consul General Sutton, in Matamoros. His abilities as a linguist, comprising perfect command of German, French and Spanish, as well as of the English language, made his services highly valuable in all positions named, especially so in the post office, where the Spanish language is used to a great extent. The affairs of the post office were

placed upon an excellent basis, and several changes were made which increased the convenience and the facilities for transacting business. He continued the office at the old stand on Elizabeth Street between Twelfth and Thirteen, which had been used for that purpose for twenty-five years, when he relinquished the keys in 1890.”

From the same publication we learn that "The same year 1865 brought us the third fire. Mr. Kowalski's clothing emporium was entirely destroyed."

In December 1893 Louis placed a front page ad in the *Brownsville Herald*. It indicated that he was trying to promote a local enterprise, that of the sugar mill of George Brulay. The factory south of Brownsville was the only sizeable sugar producer at the time. The ad read:

Sugar! Sugar! of the Rio Grande Plantation

For sale at from 3 7/8 cents to 4 1/8 cents a pound for first grade. Other grades as low as 2 1/2 cents per pound. Terms each, U.S. currency or its equivalent in Mexican money. Prices may change without advice. Samples will be sent by mail to interested parties. Louis Kowalski, Agent Brownsville, Tex.

In the autumn of 1911 Dr. S.K. Hallam helped to organize the Brownsville Waterways Association. Its goal was to provide the Valley the advantages of water transportation. This objective brought many of the area's leading citizens into the fold. On its board of directors was Louis Cobolini, William Kelly, S. L. Dworman, James b. Wells, R. B. Creager, W. N. Pearson, D. E. Hawkins, Jose Celaya, J. G. Fernandez, J. B. Scott, K. H. McDavitt, and Dr. Hallam. That they had a singularity of purpose was amazing, since some were political enemies. Dr. Hallam became the association's president, Benjamin Kowalski 1st vice president, and C. P. Barreta 2nd vice president.

An October 10, 1893 ad in the *Brownsville Herald* read as follows:

Benj. Kowalski

MANUFACTURERS' AGENT

and

Merchandise Broker

[1879

Established

1879]

Representing some of the leading Coffee and Sugar-
houses, Rice Mills, Flour Mills, Soap, Candle,
Starch and Leaf tobacco factories in the U.S.

Consignments Solicited

Ben was mayor of Brownsville, Texas 1910-1912. He was elected running on the Independent Party ticket. This consisted of individuals opposed to the James Wells Democratic machine. "This election marked the first local defeat for the Wells machine since its inception in the mid-1880s." Kowalski was soon being attacked in all manners by the opposition Democrats, who would gradually regain power back from the Independents. Still, as historian Evan Anders writes in his book "Boss Rule in South Texas", "Mayor Kowalski and his colleagues compiled an impressive record: the enlargement and overhaul of the municipal water and light systems, the completion of a sewerage plant, the construction of a new city hall and public market, the establishment of a streetcar system, the paving of twenty-five blocks of streets, the laying of fifteen miles of concrete sidewalks, the installation of a drainage pipeline for overflow water, and the purchase of new equipment for the fire department." Unfortunately Kowalski broke with the Independent Party and its leader Rentfro B. Creager, who had become convinced that Kowalski was an unpopular figure. A.B. Cole, the U.S. commissioner for Brownsville, was nominated in Kowalski's place and won the election. Without organized support Kowalski was able to garner only 59 out of 1,400 votes cast.

Benjamin provided some interesting history noting that the first Jewish congregation in the Rio Grande Valley was a joint Brownsville-Matamoros community. In 1876, according to a letter by Mayor Benjamin Kowalski of Brownsville, a Hebrew Benevolent Association was formed and "feast and fast days" were celebrated in Matamoros.

By 1920 at age 65 Ben had retired and moved with Corinne to Houston where three of their children had taken jobs. David B. was a bookkeeper with an oil company, Alexander A. a private secretary, and Clarence was a stenographer in an automotive factory. During the next decade Ben was to die but Corinne continued to live in Houston with her three sons.

Louis' son, Bernard L. Kowalski (Born: Bernard Louis Kowalski. August 2, 1929 in Brownsville, Texas, USA; Died: October 26, 2007 (age 78) in Los Angeles, California), rose to gain recognition in the field of television as a director, producer, second unit director, and assistant director. A Wikipedia Mini Biography reads:

Bernard Kowalski is an important figure in television with a long and impressive list of credits. To mention a select few, he directed the pilots for "Richard Diamond, Private Detective" (1957), "N.Y.P.D." (1967) and "The Monroes" (1966); executive-produced "Baretta" (1975); and was co-owner of "Mission: Impossible" (1966). Kowalski got his first job in the movie business at the age of five as an extra in several Dead End Kids pictures at Warner Brothers, as well as such Errol Flynn vehicles as Dodge City (1939) and Virginia City (1940). His experience behind the camera began at age 17 when he worked as a clerk for his father, who was an assistant director and production manager. TV provided Kowalski with his first opportunity to direct on such Western series as "Frontier" (1955) and "Boots and Saddles" (1957); he then made the transition to feature-film directing in 1958 when he was hired by Gene Corman (brother of Roger Corman) to helm the teen exploitation feature Hot Car Girl (1958).

An August 2011 online blurb relates this about the old Ben Kowalski homestead:

"The year is 1897. The house on 319 E. Elizabeth is booming with life as the Kowalski family prepares for one of its lavish parties. The smell of freshly squeezed grapefruit juice fills the evening air as Corinne Kowalski laces the surrounding trees with Japanese Lanterns. Benjamin Kowalski drives the family stagecoach down the street. He pulls into his home and disappears inside the carriage house. This would have been a typical scenario at one of Brownsville 's oldest homes, the Kowalski-Fernandez estate.

According to David Zimmerman, local historian and part owner of the Kowalski estate, the date shown on the historical home's deed is 1890.

However, it is possible the house was built before then.

Zimmerman said that Benjamin Kowalski built the home and became its first owner. The Polish Jew also served as a Brownsville mayor in the late 19 th century. His family used the carriage house as both a storage room for their carriage and as a stable for horses and other animals.

The Kowalski's owned a dry goods store and were well known for their extravagant parties, Zimmerman added.

In 1918, they sold their property to Corinne's niece, Rosalie, and her husband

Miguel Fernandez. The Fernandez family owned a hide yard and kept the tradition of throwing lavish parties. Neighbors were often invited for plentiful dinners prepared by the Fernandez's chef, a Chinese cook. Over the years, passerby became accustomed to the sounds of music as Rosalie gave piano lessons to her 18 children. The property remained within the family until the last Kowalski-Fernandez family member died in 1997. Around 2002, Zimmerman and Sandy Stillman bought the property in an effort to preserve the valuable buildings.

Today, the carriage house has been transformed into an oasis for relaxation. On a recent Friday afternoon, the sound of laughter could be heard from inside The Carriage House Day Spa."

Bloomberg & Raphael

The 1870 Brownsville census has G.M. Raphael, age 30, living in a rooming house. He is a store bookkeeper whose personal value is listed at \$1000. He lists his birthplace as Prussia. His wife to be, Eugenie Salamon, was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1856 to Henry and Clarer. She was the third of six children.

An advertisement in the *Brownsville Herald* of August 6, 1892 reads:

Bloomberg and Raphael

A. J. Bloomberg
54 Worth Street, New York

G. M. Raphael,
Brownsville

Wholesale dealers in dry goods, staple goods, boots, shoes and groceries

All European goods kept in our Matamoros House

All kinds of hats, caps, shirts, and drawers

Notions and family groceries

Mail orders promptly attended to

According to Lt. W. H. Chatfield in his "The Twin Cities of the Border Brownsville and Matamoros, 1893": "In 1892 [Celestin] Jagou and Captain J.G. Tucker of Santa Maria raised a small crop of sea island cotton. "It was shipped to Liverpool by Bloomberg & Raphael, as a sample of cotton from the Lower Rio Grande Country. The English manufacturers were afraid to handle it at first as they had never heard of "Texas Sea Island Cotton", and the lot was too small to manufacture and test separately, as the consignors had requested should be done. It was bought, however, and as soon as the quality was thoroughly known, it was quoted at 22 cents per pound in the dull season, with

a subsequent offer of 30 cents per pound and an intimation that there would be a market for all that could be raised. In consequence of that offer, and induced by the prospects of a prosperous year, over a thousand acres will be planted in sea island cotton this season, and Bloomberg & Raphael have had more demands for seed than they have been able to supply. It is a wise policy to vary crops in this manner and plant less corn, as cotton is of sufficient value to stand freight charges, whereas if too much corn is raised, it becomes a drug on the market."

In his publication Chatfield also offers a more in-depth commentary on Bloomberg and Raphael. It reads:

"The extensive business of this firm places it well in the lead of commercial houses in the Lower Rio Grande country. The business was begun in 1865 by A.J. Bloomberg. In 1868 the firm was changed to Alexander & Co., composed of J. Alexander, A.J. Bloomberg and G.M. Raphael and business was conducted under that name until 1872, when, upon the death of Mr. Alexander (who was murdered [about 22 miles north of Brownsville on his way to Rio Grande City] by one of [Juan] Cortina's sub-lieutenants) while traveling through the country in his ambulance, the remaining partners associated as Bloomberg and Raphael. Mr. Bloomberg is a permanent resident of New York where he buys goods for the house and makes seasonal shipments to meet the requirements of its numerous foreign and domestic customers, and supply the wants of local retail trade; while Mr. Raphael and Mr. Louis Cowen, who is also a member of the firm, reside in Brownsville, and personally conduct the various branches of the business. The establishment in Brownsville, which confines its operations to the sale of American products and manufactures, occupies half a block of brick buildings on Elizabeth street. Three buildings are filled from cellar to the top floors with groceries and dry goods for wholesale trade, and two adjoining buildings contain retail stores for the goods, which are stocked and managed by the firm.

A branch wholesale house in Matamoros deals only in European goods. This house was closed upon the death of Mr. Alexander, in 1872, [In 1868, Charles Stillman, the (non-Jewish) founder of Brownsville, deeded a plot for a Jewish cemetery to the newly formed Hebrew Benevolent Society. One of the first people buried in the cemetery was Joseph Alexander, a prominent dry goods merchant and leader of the local Jewish community who was shot and killed by a bandit.], but was reopened in 1882. In addition to the finest fabrics from the looms of the Old World, there are stored in the capacious warehouses large quantities of notions, carpets,, etc. for the Mexican trade. Mr. Raphael spends a portion of each day in Matamoros, superintending the affairs of this branch. Bloomberg & Raphael own between 80,000 and 90,000 acres of land in

Hidalgo county, where they have several ranches well stocked with cattle and horses. An artesian well was bored in their land and a small supply of good water was obtained at a depth of 740 feet. The boring was discontinued to utilize the water during a drouth. The project to deepen the well has never been carried out, Although a good flow of water would probably result.

Mr. G. M. Raphael is of Russian [Prussian?] nativity, but came to this country so early in his life that he remembers but little of his residence in any other. He attended the public schools of New York until he was fifteen years of age, when he was employed as clerk for various firms in and near that city for a number of years, and then took a course at a business college to perfect himself in book keeping. In 1866 he accepted a position in Brownsville as book keeper for A.J. Bloomberg, and remained with him until the firm of Alexander & Co. was formed, when he was admitted as a full partner and placed in charge of the Brownsville house, Mr. Alexander being manager of the Matamoros branch.

In 1868 Mr. Raphael was elected president of the Tamaulipas Mining Company, operating silver and lead mines in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico, to which position he has been re-elected at each subsequent annual meeting of the Company, and when the First National Bank of Brownsville was organized, he was elected as one of the Board of Directors, and also the first president of the first national bank established on this border.

Mr. Raphael is a sound financier, a practical and thorough business manager, and a resolute but conservative advocate of development of this section. He moves on to a high social plane, where his many talents are appreciated at their true value.

Mr. Louis Cowen [of the Jewish faith] is an old soldier, bearing the scars of Texas Indian warfare of the early fifties, for which he was discharged with a pension. He came to the United State from Warsaw, Poland, when he was quite a young man. Upon entering the Regular Army, he was assigned to Company G, First Mounted Rifles, serving in Texas. In 1853, after two year and two months of frontier service, which had its attractions as well as its hardships, Mr. Cowen was wounded in a skirmish with Indians, and soon afterward discharged for disability. He then settled in Brownsville, and has been identified with the highest social, commercial and political circles ever since. He was deputy collector of customs at the port of Brazos Santiago in 1858-59. Upon occupation of the frontier by State forces in the Cortina war, he was appointed a sutler, and supplied the troops to a large extent with all necessary articles of clothing, subsistence, etc. From 1861 to 1867 he was assessor and collector for the county and city, after which he was in business for three years, on his own account. Close confinement indoors having impaired his health, he gave up his business in 1870, and took a position on steamboats of King, Kenedy and Co. for one year; then he entered the house of Alexander & Co. as book-keeper; remaining with the succeeding firm of Bloomberg & Raphael, he

became business manager of the Brownsville house, and in a few years was admitted to the firm. In addition to his present business interests, Mr. Cowen is a member of the School Board.

Out of 62 properties assessed at over \$5,000 on the Brownsville property tax rolls of 1893, Bloomberg and Raphael ranked second at \$53,150.

Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson in her book "I'd Rather Sleep in Texas" goes into detail on the subject of Bloomberg and Raphael's ranching operations. She writes:

" On October 21, 1886, Kenedy sued John McAllen over discrepancies with the title of Las Mestenas. One year earlier, Tom Kenedy, who claimed he was given the property by his father Mifflin on September 3, 1885, sold his share in Las Mestenas to the firm of A.J. Bloomberg and Gilbert (Gabriel?) Matthews Raphael, merchants and livestock traders in Brownsville. Bloomberg, a resident of New York, partnered with Raphael and Louis Cowen, in a mercantile business and as cattle raisers and agents. They operated during the Civil War in Matamoros and John McAllen had done business with the firm as well.

With the undivided interest still in dispute, John McAllen fenced most of the 36,998 acres. Bloomberg and Raphael had an agreement with Kenedy to place twenty-five hundred head of cattle on the land along with McAllen, but proceeded to place six thousand head instead, overtaxing the pasture and causing most of the cattle to die. John McAllen lost twenty-five hundred head, which he attribute to Bloomberg and Raphael's negligence. McAllen complained to Gilbert M. Raphael that the remaining stock had scattered for lack of water and the situation had created a great deal of work for Jose Angel de la Vega, the ranch administrator, to gather and brand the cattle. He presented Raphael with a bill of expenses."

The complicated matter became a Hidalgo County lawsuit initiated by McAllen in July 1890. In then moved through several jurisdictions, Cameron County, San Antonio, and even Galveston, as it dragged on for over a decade. After a 14 year court battle ending in 1908 over the land grant called Las Mestenas, Pititas y la Abra, A.J. Bloomberg and Eugenie R. Raphael were awarded 62,022 acres. On February 8, 1908 however they "conceded to McAllen and Young, all interest in over two leagues of land, or half of 13,568 acres of the Las Mestenas grant."

For reasons unclear Eugenie R. Raphael along with Mrs. Henrietta Chamberlain King, and the wife of James Wells, Mrs. Pauline Wells, were noted to be land owners of a parcel at the south end of Padre Island, a parcel whose ownership over time would become a contentious issue. The title for the 6,000 acre parcel had passed by chains of transfer from Maria Concepcion

Balli to the above individuals. Mrs. H.M. King paid two hundred dollars for the 6,000 acres.

The *Handbook of Texas Online* carries the following item:

RAPHAEL COLLECTION. The Raphael Collection in Brownsville was composed of family pieces, furniture, and artifacts from France and Scotland collected by Gabriel Matthews Raphael during his years in the import business, beginning in 1866, in Brownsville and Matamoros, Tamaulipas. The collection arrived in Brownsville in April 1960 from New York, where it had been housed, and was donated by Mrs. Gabriel Matthews Raphael and her children Alice, Angus, and Claire. The Raphael Collection is on permanent display at the Stillman House Museum, owned by the Brownsville Historical Association:

Vertical Files, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Grace Edman

A web search unearthed the following information on the daughter of G. M. Raphael:

REIS, CLAIRE RAPHAEL (1888–1978). Claire Raphael Reis, music promoter and author, daughter of Gabriel M. and Eugenie (Salamon) Raphael, was born at Brownsville, Texas, on August 4, 1888. She married Arthur M. Reis, president of Robert Reis and Company, on December 20, 1915. They had two children. Claire was educated in France, Germany, and New York and studied music under Bertha Fiering Tapper at the Institute of Musical Art. From 1912 to 1922 she worked to found the People's Music League of the People's Institute in New York, an organization that provided free concerts for immigrants and public schools. She became licensed as a kindergarten music teacher and adapted Montessori teaching methods to music. In 1914 she helped establish the Walden School.

In 1923 Mrs. Reis and several contemporary composers established the League of Composers as an alternative to the International Composers' Guild. She was the league's executive director for twenty-five years, during which time she promoted many first performances and commissioned 100 new works; among the new artists she helped was Aaron Copland. In 1955 she published *Composers, Conductors and Critics*, which describes events and people from her experience in the league. She also wrote several articles, two catalogs for

the International Society for Contemporary Music, and *American Composers of Today* (1947; revised and enlarged as *Composers in America: Biographical Sketches*, 1977). She was secretary of the board of directors of the New York City Center of Music and Drama.

A second brief biography with information from *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* and *Who's Who of American Women* provides more details on Mrs. Reis

Claire Raphael Reis (August 4, 1888 – April 11, 1978) was a music promoter and the founder of the People's Music League in New York City. The League was intended to provide free concerts for immigrants and public schools.

Born Claire Raphael in Brownsville, Texas, Claire married businessman Arthur M. Reis in 1915. She was educated in Europe and New York City. She received a teaching credential and began teaching music in New York schools, using the Montessori method. In 1914, she helped to found the Walden School.

In 1923, Claire Reis was one of the founders of the League of Composers, and served as the league's president for twenty-five years. During this time she promoted many concerts and commissioned many works. One of her proteges was Aaron Copland.

Reis was a prolific author of many articles on music, two catalogs for the International Society for Contemporary Music, and the books *Composers, Conductors and Critics* and *Composers in America: Biographical Sketches* in 1938, a valuable reference work which appeared in a second, enlarged edition in 1947 and was republished in 1977).

Reis served on the board of directors of the New York City Center of Music and Drama. She also helped to found the Women's City Club and was a member of the board of the Work Projects Administration. She was on the advisory board for music of the 1939 World's Fair.

In 1969, Reis was awarded the Handel Medallion by the City of New York for her contributions to the city's cultural life.

Mrs. Reis helped found the Women's City Club and was a member of the advisory board for New York City of the Work Projects Administration. She served on the advisory committee of music for the 1939 New York World's Fair, and she was appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt to the New York Committee on the Use of Leisure Time. Among the awards she received were the National Association of American Composers and Conductors award for

outstanding service (1945–46); the Laurel Leaf award of the American Composers Alliance (1963); a scroll from Mayor John V. Lindsay acknowledging her assistance in founding the City Center (1968); the New York City Handel Medallion for "her outstanding contributions and dedicated efforts for cultural achievement" (1969). Mrs. Reis died in New York on April 11, 1978.

The Stein Family

Jacob Morris Stein is a hard man to trace, namely because he traveled far afield over the years. He was born in Jamestown, Tennessee on January 14, 1889. His parents were Lewis and Anise Stein. Both, according to the 1920 census information offered by Morris, were born in Kovno, Lithuania, then part of Russia. Lewis was born in 1856 and came to the United States in 1876 while Anise was born in 1867 and came to America in 1888. Because of their origin, Jewish people would then characterize them with the Yiddish term "litvaks."

By the year 1900 Morris, the oldest child in the family, would have two siblings. They were Solomon born in Texas in December 1894 and then 5; and Bessie, born in Alabama April 2, 1898 and two when the census was collected. Listed as a produce dealer, this may explain why Lewis and his family moved around.

Javier R. Garcia in his article "Adolph Dittman and Brownsville's First Motion Picture Theaters" that appears in *Ongoing Studies in Rio Grande Valley History Vol. 10* touches on Morris Stein. Garcia recounts an exciting and daring adventure undertaken by Adolph Dittman and Stein, then an Associated Press reporter. It was in May 1913 as the Mexican Revolution edged its way to the Texas border south of Brownsville. The two accompanied by local attorney Frank C. Pierce crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico and with considerable *chutzpa* shot motion picture film of Constitutionalist General Blanco's army about to march on Matamoros. The general himself wined and dined the unusual intruders. The unique footage was later released by Pathe News as "The Battle of Matamoros" and was exhibited in theaters across the southwest.

In 1920 J.M. Stein was a single man living as a roomer at 920 Charles Street, Brownsville. He was employed as the editor of the *Brownsville Herald* while residing with young 23-year old newspaper printer Bishop Clements and his family.

By the 1930 census Stein, as newspapermen often do, had moved on. He was in Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia near the Alabama border. He and his

wife Mae R., 39, had a five year old son Lewis A., who had been born in Texas. Louisiana-born Mae's parents were immigrants from France and Germany.

Morris was either working as publisher of the morning *Columbus Enquirer* or the evening *Columbus Ledger*. They would jointly publish the Sunday edition and in later years merge into the *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*. Both papers had a long history reaching back into the early 1800s. The Enquirer was established in 1828 by none other than Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar who would be elected the third president of the Republic of Texas.

In 1926 the *Enquirer-Sun* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. Its commendation reads: For the service which it rendered in its brave and energetic fight against the Ku Klux Klan; against the enactment of a law barring the teaching of evolution; against dishonest and incompetent public officials and for justice to the Negro and against lynching.

The Stein family had strong love for the Brownsville community as attested to by the following. This is from a chapter in Ruben Edlestein's self-published book "Ruben Edelstein: A Life and History" of which the BHA, UTB/TSC library and Brownsville public library has a copy. Chapter 6 on Temple Beth-El mentions Morris' widow:

"Temple Beth-El was constructed in West Brownsville on a corner residential lot donated by Mr. Ben Freudenstein.

The present Temple Beth-El building at 24 Coveway Drive, was dedicated in 1989. The principal funding for this project came from a legacy from Mrs. Mae Rose Stein, a charter member of Temple Beth-El Sisterhood, in whose will she left a substantial sum of money to Temple Beth-El for the construction of a Sunday School building in honor and memory of her only son, Lewis Albert Stein, a former pupil and teacher of the Sunday School, mentioned above who was killed in action during World War II. Above the door to the school wing is a plaque that reads: A Legacy of Mae Rose and J. Morris Stein, in Remembrance of their son, Lewis Albert Stein - The Lewis Albert Stein, Memorial Religious School, 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children' - Deuteronomy VI, 7. There were sufficient funds in this legacy to also cover other aspects of the new building, including the kitchen and a part of the sanctuary."

A further example of the Stein's generosity is provided in this article.

Putegnatt, of pioneer family, dies at 94

By EMMA PEREZ-TREVINO, The Brownsville Herald

2011-01-07 21:07:27

Barry B. Putegnat Sr. was a man who kept his dear family and his good friends as close to his heart as he kept his faith in God.

“It gave meaning to his life,” his wife, Alicia, said.

Putegnat, the descendant of a Brownsville pioneer family, passed away Thursday, Jan. 6, at his residence surrounded by his loved ones — just days after his 94th birthday.

“I thank God every day for my wonderful husband,” Alicia Putegnat said.

Putegnat’s childhood was not easy.

He lost both his parents to influenza when he was just 2½ years old.

His grandmother raised him in San Antonio, but he soon returned to Brownsville where he graduated from high school and junior college.

His wife recalled the story of a \$20,000 loan that Morris Stein, then owner of Brownsville’s local newspaper, provided to her husband and his twin brother, Bill, enabling them to take over a laundry business and hardware store that their father had left them.

It was after the Depression and Stein’s kind and generous act enabled the Putegnats to ultimately expand the laundry business into a successful enterprise here, in Corpus Christi, then in San Antonio, followed by New Mexico and Denver.

“I will always be grateful to Mr. Stein and his wife for helping my wonderful husband and for the confidence that they had in him,” Mrs. Putegnat said.

She described her husband as a gentleman and a good citizen who was an avid reader, loved to travel, and liked to go fishing with his friends. He also loved the cooking of his caretaker, Carlota Banda.

“We have been so blessed,” Mrs. Putegnat said.

The Edelstein Family

The Edelstein family is not documented here because several older members of the family, namely Ben and Ruben, have written memoirs that cover this family's history. Norman Rozeff, utilizing material compiled by Ben Edelstein, has also written an article titled "A Jewish Immigrant and Spanish Proverbs of South Texas" that touches on Morris Edelstein.

The Goldring-Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life concludes its Encyclopedia of Southern Communities article on Brownsville with these remarks: “ In his 1876 letter to the editor of *The American Israelite*, future Brownsville mayor and then-acting-postmaster Benjamin Kowalski

reported on the progress of the small Jewish community on the edge of the south Texas frontier. He concluded his letter with the hope that he had “shown the outside world that there is a small spot in Texas called Brownsville where Jews and Judaism still wave.” Through the vicissitudes of almost 170 years of history, Kowalski’s words still ring true today.”