

Jews in the South and West

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BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Altman, Linda Jacobs. *The Legend of Freedom Hill*. Illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu. Lee and Low, 2000.

When Rosabel's mother is captured by a catcher of runaway slaves, she is cared for by a Jewish family who have a daughter her age. Together, Rosabel and Sophie devise a way to free the captive slaves. Set in California during the Gold Rush.

Avrech, Robert. *The Hebrew Kid and the Apache Maiden*. Seraphic Press, 2005.

An observant Jewish family wanders through the untamed Arizona Territory in the late 1800's, encountering danger, adventure, and challenges to tradition. The story is narrated by twelve year old Ariel, whose relationship with the Apache girl, Lozen, is a central part of the plot. Doc Holiday also appears, convening a *minyán* to celebrate Ariel's Bar Mitzvah.

Blanc, Esther Silverstein. *Berchik*. Illus. by Tennessee Dixon. Volcano Press, 1989. Winner of a Sydney Taylor Book Award.

A heartwarming story about the special relationship between Mama and an orphan colt. Set in Wyoming at the turn of the twentieth century, a Jewish homesteading family deals with happiness, adversity, and the meaning of freedom.

Blanc, Esther Silverstein. *Long Johns for a Small Chicken*. Illus. by Tennessee Dixon. Volcano Press, 2003.

Created by the author and illustrator of the award winning *Berchik*, this delightful story is set on a Nebraska homestead in the early 1900's. Mama saves a chick who is caught outside in a hail storm, makes a pair of little long johns to cover his featherless body, and nurses him back to health. Strong values round out a wonderful story.

Ducharme, Dede Fox. **Treasure in the Little Blue Tin.** Texas Christian University Press, 1998.

In the early 1900's in Texas, a Jewish immigrant boy sets off on an adventure-filled search for his father, a peddler who has not come home for Passover. His companion is the local bully, who hates Jews! History and a story of personal growth are woven together in a wholesome way.

Hart, Jan Siegel. **Hanna, the Immigrant.** Hart Publishing, 1997.

Based on the author's grandmother, Hannah is a girl living in a Russian shtetl at the end of the nineteenth century. As the hardships imposed upon Russian Jews grow worse, Hanna decides to become part of the Galveston Movement and settles in Texas.

Hart, Jan Siegel. **The Many Adventures of Minnie.** Hart Publishing, 1997.

In a continuation of the author's story, *Hanna, the Immigrant* (above), Hanna marries and has four children. This book describes how a Jewish girl and her family learned a new way of life in Texas while continuing their ancestors' traditions. Another book about this same family is *More Adventures of Minnie*.

Hirschfelder, Arlene B. **Photo Odyssey: Solomon Carvalho's Remarkable Western Adventure, 1853-54.** Clarion, 2000.

Carvalho, a Baltimore Jew of Sephardic ancestry, was a tenderfoot when he joined an expedition across the Rocky Mountains, led by the explorer, John Charles Fremont. Illustrated with photographs, this well researched biography gives a stirring account of his adventure.

Karwoski, Gail. **Quake!** Peachtree, 2004.

A young Jewish boy is the main character in this readable historical novel set in San Francisco at the time of the 1906 earthquake and its immediate aftermath. Separated from his father and little sister and not knowing if they survived the quake, Jacob searches throughout the wreckage and refugee camps for them. He is joined by a Chinese boy searching for his family and by a stray puppy, whom he names Quake.

Kranz, Hazel. **Look to the Hills.** Jewish Publication Society, 1995.

Believing that women should be able to decide their own fates, teenage Sally takes inspiration from her suffragist aunt and mother. Woven into the story of a

burgeoning Jewish community in Denver in the late 1800's is the story of how the Jewish hospital to treat immigrants with tuberculosis was built.

Lasky, Kathryn. **Blood Secret**. HarperCollins, 2004.

Mute since she was five, when her hippie mother abandoned her, Jerry has been sent by Catholic Charities to live with her elderly great-great aunt in rural New Mexico. When she discovers a trunk in the basement filled with very old family relics, Jerry is able to time travel back to fourteenth century Spain, where the blood secret that her family has kept for over six hundred years began.

Lasky, Kathryn. **Marven of the Great North Woods**. Illus. by Kevin Hawkes. Harcourt Brace, 1997.

Large color illustrations are a stunning backdrop to this appealing story of a small Jewish boy and a huge French-Canadian lumberjack who become friends in a logging camp in the great North woods. Little Marven, a character based on the author's father, is sent to the camp to avoid the influenza epidemic raging in the city and his good head makes up for his small size.

Matas, Carol. **Rose in Los Angeles: Action!** Aladdin, 2004.

When Rosie's father moves his family from Chicago to Los Angeles, he decides to make movies starring Rosie. When she inadvertently causes an accident during the preparation for filming their first Western, injuring their best rider, Rosie sets off a chain of events from which only she could emerge with style and grace. A sequel to two other books about an immigrant girl and her family.

Matas, Carol. **The War Within**. Simon and Schuster, 2001.

After General Ulysses Grant issues an order expelling all Jews from the territory under his control, teenaged Hannah Green, a southern belle in the making, begins to question many of the values she took for granted, including slavery. Set mainly in Mississippi, this is an authentic portrayal of Jewish life in the South during the period of the Civil War.

Nislick, June Levitt. **Zayda Was a Cowboy**. Jewish Publication Society, 2005.

An engaging yarn about a young Jewish boy from Russia who walks and works his way across Europe to escape the Czar's army, takes a ship to Galveston, Texas, and becomes a real cowboy, with a ten gallon hat, chaps, spurs, lariat, gun, and horse! Each chapter stresses a separate aspect of Zayda's life as a cowboy and a strong sense of Jewish identity permeates the entire story.

Oswald, Nancy. **Nothing Here But Stones**. Henry Holt, 2004.

Historical fiction about an agricultural colony of Jewish immigrants, struggling to eke out a living in Colorado in the late 1800's. Based on the Cotopaxi Jewish Colony that lasted only a few years, this portrays the hardships that the colonists faced while trying to maintain a Jewish way of life.

Rosen, Sybil. **Speed of Light**. Atheneum, 1999. Winner of a Sydney Taylor Book Award.

In a small Southern town during the 1950's, Audrey Ina's father puts his family's livelihood and safety at risk by championing the cause of a man who wants to become the town's first black policeman. The author captures the ambivalent situation of Southern Jews during the Civil Rights era and writes with insight of an young person's awakening to the existence of evil in her world.

Ruby, Lois. **The Moxie Kid**. Eakin, 2002.

There's a Texas twang to the dialogue of this mystery involving a friendship between a boy named Jonathan and an old man who may or may not be named Mr. Canto Cantiberti. Jonathan realizes soon after meeting Mr. Cantiberi that he stretches the truth but late in the story, he comes to understand that lies, or imaginative fabrications, are often the "life affirming errors" that make existence tolerable.

Ruby, Lois. **Swindletop**. Eakin, 2000.

Texas history - specifically Jewish life in Galveston after the devastating hurricane of 1901 - is presented through a plot that just doesn't stop! An immigrant family is the focal point and through them, themes of finding opportunities in a new land and of building a Jewish community are developed. There are several sub-plots involving an oil boom, a clairvoyant African-American boy, a mystery and a false accusation, and the aspirations of an independent-minded girl. The real life characters of Rabbi Henry Cohen and his wife, Molly, also make appearances.

Sasso, Sandy. **Abuelita's Secret Matzahs**. Illus. by Diane Bryer. Emmis Books, 2005

Jacobo notices that his grandmother, or abuelita, celebrates Easter a little differently from everyone else: she doesn't serve ham and makes tortillas without yeast. After he befriends a Jewish child and notices similarities between his

Seder and Abuelita's customs, he learns that his family are crypto-Jews, who adopted Christianity to escape the Inquisition centuries ago but still preserve some Jewish practices.

Schuman, Burt. **Chanukah On the Prairie**. Illus. by Rosalind Charney Kaye. UAHC Press, 2002.

The story of a Jewish immigrant family who leave Galicia and settle in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where a thriving Jewish community welcomes them. Based on real history, this is a delightful story about a little-known part of American-Jewish history.

Stanley, Jerry. **Frontier Merchants: Lionel and Barron Jacobs and the Jewish Pioneers Who Settled the West**. Crown, 1998.

Sons of a Polish merchant who settled in California, Lionel and Barron Jacobs were in their twenties when they set off for the Arizona Territory in 1867 to start a new business venture. Their adventures and accomplishments are interspersed with information about Jews in America, 19th century business development, and larger historical events.

VIDEOS

Frisco Kid. Warner Home Video, 1979, 119 minutes, color.

The hilarious story of an orthodox rabbi who travels across the West in the company of an outlaw.

Jews and the Gold Rush; Birth of a Community. Judah Magnes Museum, 1994, 42 minutes, color and b/w.

Archival photographs, paintings, still recreations and snippets of old Hollywood movies paint a fascinating account of why Jews came to California in the 1850's, what style of community they formed, and how they integrated into the free-wheeling life of the general community.

Pioneer Jews of Arizona 1850-1920. The Plotkin Judaica Museum, 1988, B&W, 28 minutes.

Jewish settlers were a vital part of Arizona's colorful history. As individuals and as families, in business, politics, mining, banking, military and law enforcement, the

early Jewish Arizonans wove themselves tightly into the fabric of the community of the Grand Canyon State.

The Way Home: Stories of Forgiveness. Faith and Values Media, 2004, 15 minutes, color.

There are three stories of personal and communal reconciliation on this film. The second story is about Postville, a quiet town in Iowa. When a kosher meat packing plant moves in, the residents and their new Hasidic neighbors struggle to understand each other and live amicably.

West of Hester Street. Media Projects Inc. 1983, 58 minutes, color.

This weaves the dramatized events of the Galveston Movement with the story of a young Jewish peddler who journeys from Russia to Texas.

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