



JEWISH AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Valor & Virtue: 370 Years of Jewish American Military Service
- The Gallant Rough Rider: Samuel Greenwald
- Jacob Wilbusky: The Myth of the Sixteen-Year-Old Rough Rider
- Jonas Phillips Levy — Naval Commander
- Henry Benjamin Nones & the Revenue-Marine
- The Four Jewish Chaplains of the Union Army
- Society Updates & Upcoming Events

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★ United States Semiquincentennial Issue ★

Celebrating 250 Years of the Nation & 372 Years of Jewish American Military Service

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Valor & Virtue: 370 Years of Jewish American Military Service	4
The Gallant Rough Rider: Samuel Greenwald	7
Jacob Wilbusky: The Myth of the Sixteen-Year-Old Rough Rider	9
Jonas Phillips Levy — Naval Commander	11
Henry Benjamin Nones & the Revenue-Marine	12
The Four Jewish Chaplains of the Union Army	14

SOCIETY UPDATES

Amusing Jews Podcast — Episode 149	16
New Interactive Exhibit — Alpert JCC	16
Valor & Virtue: Jewish American Military History #3 Comic Progress	17
Valor & Virtue: Medal of Honor Recipients Comic — Third Printing	17
Tibor Rubin War Letters — Chapman University Exhibit	18
Upcoming Collaborations	19

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the Summer 2026 edition of our quarterly journal. As we look back at 371 years of dedicated Jewish American military service — well over three centuries — and celebrate our country's semiquincentennial, our mission remains focused on preserving and sharing the profound, often overlooked narratives of Jewish American patriots. From the battlefields of San Juan Hill to the harrowing camps of the Korean War, our ancestors served with distinction, integrity, and valor.

This has been an extraordinary period for our organization. From new media appearances to an upcoming interactive museum exhibit, we continue to make major strides in our mission to preserve and share the remarkable stories of Jewish Americans who served their country with honor.

This issue highlights these remarkable individual biographies alongside key organizational milestones. We are steadily transitioning our research from the archives directly into community spaces, interactive media, and educational graphic novels.

Specifically, this issue spotlights three remarkable figures from different eras of American military history: Samuel Greenwald, who rode with Roosevelt's Rough Riders; Jonas Phillips Levy, a naval commander of the Mexican-American War era; and Henry Benjamin Nones, an early officer of the Revenue Marine. Each story reminds us that Jewish Americans have answered the call to serve since the earliest days of this nation.

We are also thrilled to share exciting updates about our new traveling interactive exhibit, the ongoing progress on our Valor & Virtue comic series, and the upcoming display of Tibor Rubin's war letters at Chapman University. Your dedication makes all of this possible.

Thank you for your continued support as we march toward our long term vision!

— *Samuel P. Yudin, Founding President*

Valor & Virtue: 370 Years of Jewish American Military Service

<https://jewishmilitary.org/articles/f/valor-virtue-370-years-of-jewish-american-military-service>



Several Jews fought at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. Jacob Cohen raised and led a cavalry company in the Virginia Continental Line, serving in multiple engagements throughout the war, including under General Lafayette at Yorktown.

For more than 370 years, Jewish Americans have served in the defense of what would become the United States. From colonial militias to modern global missions, Jewish service members have stepped forward in every era and every conflict — demonstrating patriotism, sacrifice, and a deep belief in America's ideals. Their story is not a footnote to U.S. history; it is woven directly into its fabric.

Jewish military service in America began almost immediately after Jews first arrived in New Amsterdam. In 1655, Asser Levy and Jacob Barsimson fought to be able to serve in the defense of the colony. By the 1700s, Jews were serving in militias across the colonies. In Georgia, Benjamin Sheftall helped repel Spanish forces at the Battle of Bloody Marsh. Jewish merchants supplied militias, while Jewish scouts and frontiersmen accompanied young George Washington during the French and Indian War.

The American Revolution

Though only 2,500 Jews lived in the colonies during the Revolution, their impact was substantial. Haym Salomon became essential to the Patriot cause, raising funds that helped keep the Continental Army functioning, including the crucial moment before Yorktown. In the South, Francis Salvador — often called the "Paul Revere of the South" — was the first Jewish American killed in combat for independence.

Jewish soldiers fought in many major engagements. Charleston's "Jew Company," composed largely of members from the city's Jewish community, distinguished itself at Fort Sullivan. In the North, Isaac Franks and Solomon Bush fought at Long Island, Brandywine, and Germantown; Bush survived wounds and imprisonment to continue serving.



Francis Salvador - the "Paul Revere of the South."

Early Republic & the War of 1812

Reuben Etting fought in the Whiskey Rebellion. At sea, Jewish sailors made their mark. Privateer John Ordronaux captured or destroyed more than 30 British ships during the War of 1812. Meanwhile, Uriah Phillips Levy — a bold and often controversial naval officer — rose to commodore, championed the abolition of flogging in the Navy, and preserved Jefferson's Monticello from ruin. Mordecai Myers and Isaac DeYoung fought in nearly every battle in the Niagara Campaign. Dozens of Jews defended Fort McHenry. Jean Lafitte and Judah Touro served with Major General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. Joseph B. Nones, son of Revolutionary War hero Benjamin Nones, served in the U.S. Navy alongside five of his brothers.

Jews fought valiantly in the Texas Revolution, Mexican-American War, and in the Indian Wars.

The Civil War

During the Civil War, an estimated 10,000-18,000 Jewish Americans served in uniform, far exceeding their proportion of the population. Most Northern Jews joined integrated Union regiments, where they rose to positions of leadership and distinction. Among them was Edward S. Salomon, who commanded the 82nd Illinois at Gettysburg and later became governor of Washington Territory. Chicago's Jewish community also raised Company C of the 82nd Illinois, enlisting 96 men in a single week, while the Jewish community in Syracuse organized and equipped another full company for New York's 149th Regiment.

Jewish Southerners also served prominently in the Confederacy. Colonel Abraham Myers, a West Point graduate, became Quartermaster General and managed one of the Confederate Army's largest supply bureaus. Major Adolph Proskauer led the 12th Alabama through fierce combat at Antietam and Gettysburg, while Moses Jacob Ezekiel — later a renowned sculptor — fought with the VMI cadets at the Battle of New Market. Richmond's rabbis, Max Michelbacher and George Jacobs, ministered to Confederate soldiers throughout the war.

The Civil War even produced one uniquely American story: Lt. Moritz Morris, the first known Black Jewish officer, who served first in the Confederate Louisiana Native Guard and later in its Union successor after the state disbanded its early Black regiments.

Spanish-American War through World War I

In 1898, Jewish Americans volunteered in significant numbers to fight in Cuba and the Philippines. Some served with Roosevelt's Rough Riders, present at the Battle of San Juan Hill; others joined state volunteer regiments. In Manila, First Sergeant Maurice Justh became one of the first Americans killed in the Philippines campaign, reflecting Jewish participation in America's early overseas endeavors.

More than 250,000 Jewish Americans served in World War I. General John J. Pershing publicly praised Jewish troops for their patriotism, saying: "When the time came to serve their country under arms, no class of people served with more patriotism or with higher motives than the young Jews who volunteered or were drafted and went overseas with our other young Americans to fight the enemy." One of the most celebrated heroes was Abraham Krotoshinsky, whose daring efforts helped save the "Lost Battalion" in the Argonne Forest, making national headlines.

World War II and Beyond

World War II saw the largest Jewish participation in U.S. history, with over 550,000 serving. Following WWII, Jewish Americans continued to serve in every major conflict: Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan, and numerous peacekeeping missions. The fathers of the Green Berets, the Seabees, and the Navy nuclear program were all Jewish Americans. The history of Jewish American military service spans 370 years of commitment to the defense of the United States.

The Gallant Rough Rider: The Story of Samuel Greenwald

<https://jewishmilitary.org/articles/f/the-gallant-rough-rider-the-story-of-samuel-greenwald>

In the spring of 1898, as the Spanish-American War intensified, a 37-year-old clerk stepped forward to answer his country's call. Born in Yreka, California, Samuel Greenwald had deep roots in the Siskiyou County and Humboldt County region. His father, J. Greenwald, lived in Arcata, and his sister, Mrs. M. Reyman, resided in Oroville. Having moved to Prescott, Arizona, Sam enlisted at Whipple Barracks on April 30, 1898, joining the First Arizona Cavalry. His unit was quickly integrated into the legendary 1st Regiment United States Volunteer Cavalry, forever known to history as Roosevelt's "Rough Riders."



Samuel Greenwald

Greenwald's natural capability was immediately apparent. By May 17, when the regiment was formally mustered into service in San Antonio, Texas, he held the rank of First Sergeant in Troop A.

Valor Under Fire in Cuba

Sergeant Greenwald and his company were among the very first American forces deployed to the Cuban front. He fought through the initial, brutal clash at Las Guasimas on June 24, but it was during the historic assaults on San Juan Hill and El Caney on July 1 that his actions cemented his legacy.

For two days and nights, Greenwald fought directly alongside his commander, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, under the hottest, most punishing enemy fire. In the face of imminent danger, Greenwald never wavered. His steadfast courage earned him an official honorable mention for bravery and gallantry, and he remained on the front lines through the grueling siege of Santiago.



*Col. Theodore Roosevelt
Cuba, 1898 Houghton
Library, Harvard University*

A Commander's Pride and Promotion

Greenwald's extraordinary heroism left a lasting impression on Theodore Roosevelt. Out of the hundreds of men under his command, Roosevelt singled out Greenwald as one of just five men from the ranks to be recommended for a field promotion. Roosevelt frequently spoke of Greenwald with immense pride as the most celebrated of his eight Jewish Rough Riders, personally noting how fiercely and loyally they had fought.



Roosevelt with Rough Riders recommended for promotion, Aug-Sep 1898. DeGolyer Library, SMU

To facilitate his rise through the ranks, Greenwald was honorably discharged as a private on August 31, 1898. The very next day, September 1, he officially received his "shoulder straps," commissioned by the President as a Second Lieutenant in Company I.

In His Own Words: A Letter Home

On July 12, 1898, while entrenched near Santiago de Cuba, Greenwald sat down in the mud to write a modest letter to his father. His words captured both the grim toll of the campaign and the quiet pride of a soldier who had proven himself:

"We have been since the 1st fighting our way into Santiago and some of it was pretty hot fighting... We had 1500 killed and wounded the first two days of the big fight and I expect there will be many more before we get through. I tell you war is a terrible thing, you see the dead and wounded lying all around you and never pay a particle of attention to them."

Amid the hardship, he shared news he knew would make his father proud:

"I have one thing more to tell you which I know will please you, I have been made a Lieutenant and the beauty of it, I won it on the field. I hope this will please you all as it has me. Who knows, I may come out a Captain before the war is over."

A Hero's Return

Lieutenant Greenwald's leadership was brief but distinguished. On September 15, 1898, he was mustered out with his company and honorably discharged at Camp Wikoff on Long Island, New York. He returned to civilian life, and to his proud family in California, not just as a clerk, but as a celebrated American hero who had stood shoulder-to-shoulder with a future president in the heat of battle.

Spanish War
 1 Cav. U.S. Vols.
 Samuel Greenwald
 Sergt., Co. I, 1 Reg't U.S. Vol. Cavalry.
 Appears on
 Company Muster-in Roll
 of the organization named above. Roll dated
 San Antonio, Texas, May 17, 1898.
 Mustered in May 17, 1898.
 Age 37 yrs; height 5 feet 8 inches.
 Complexion dark; eyes blue; hair black.
 Where born Greenvale, Cal.
 Occupation Clerk
 Joined for duty and enrolled:
 When Apr. 30, 1898.
 Where Whipple Barracks
 Period 2 years.
 Travel from residence to place of rendezvous:
 Residence Greenvale, Calif.
 No. of miles
 Married or single Single
 If single, name and address of parent or guardian:
 Julius Greenwald
 Greenvale, Cal.
 Remarks:
 Discharge on roll
 Sam Greenwald
 Book mark:
 (102) J. A. Foster
 Copy.

Company Muster Roll Samuel Greenwald 1st Regt. U.S. Vol. Cavalry

Jacob Wilbusky: The Myth of the Sixteen-Year-Old Rough Rider

<https://jewishmilitary.org/articles/f/jacob-wilbusky-the-myth-of-the-sixteen-year-old-rough-rider>



For over a century, books, articles and history blogs have repeated the stirring tale of Jacob Wilbusky, a sixteen-year-old cowboy from Texas who allegedly enlisted in the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, under the alias Jacob Berlin and became the first trooper killed in action in Cuba. Despite its frequent appearance in secondary literature, historical records conclusively show that this narrative is a myth.

The Official Record

Neither Jacob Wilbusky nor Jacob Berlin appears in the official National Archives records. There are no muster rolls, service records, casualty reports, or burial records matching either name. Furthermore, Theodore Roosevelt's own detailed appendix in his 1899 book, *The Rough Riders*, contains a complete roster, and neither name is listed.

The Real First Casualties

The true first casualties of the regiment are well documented from the Battle of Las Guasimas on June 24, 1898. The first Rough Riders killed in action were actually Private Tilden W. Dawson and Captain Allyn K. Capron Jr.

Birth of the Myth?

The myth possibly originated during Theodore Roosevelt's 1898 campaign for Governor of New York, immediately following the Spanish-American War. To win over the massive Jewish immigrant population on Manhattan's Lower East Side, the Jewish Members of the Republican State Committee distributed Yiddish campaign handbills. These flyers framed Roosevelt's victory over Spain as a poetic act of revenge for the Spanish Inquisition of 1492.

To give this sweeping historical narrative a relatable human face, campaign speakers and local organizers likely introduced "Jacob Wilbusky" as a fictional composite character. The regiment certainly included several Jewish soldiers who served with great distinction, including Samuel Greenwald and Samuel Goldberg, both of whom are fully documented on the muster rolls.



*"The Battle of Las Guasimas, June 24
— The heroic stand of the Rough
Riders" in Harper's Pictorial History of
the War with Spain. Illustration by
W.A. Rogers.*

The Telephone Game of Jewish American Military Myths

Early Jewish American historical writers, eager to honor Jewish participation in the war, collected local oral histories and took these campaign stories at face value. By publishing the anecdote without cross-referencing official War Department records, they cemented the name into biographical sketches. Subsequent historians repeated the claim for over a century, turning a piece of clever 1898 political folklore into an enduring historical myth. Subsequent Jewish historians and organizations latched on to this myth and repeated it for over a century in another telephone game of historical myths surrounding Jewish American military history.

Jonas Phillips Levy

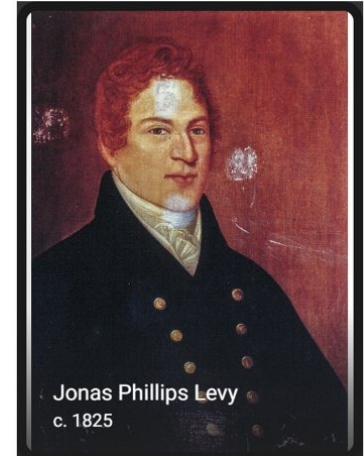
<https://jewishmilitary.org/articles/f/jonas-phillips-levy>

Jonas Phillips Levy was the youngest brother of the better-known Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy. He was born in Philadelphia on January 14, 1807, and was named for his maternal grandfather, the well-known patriarch Jonas Phillips.

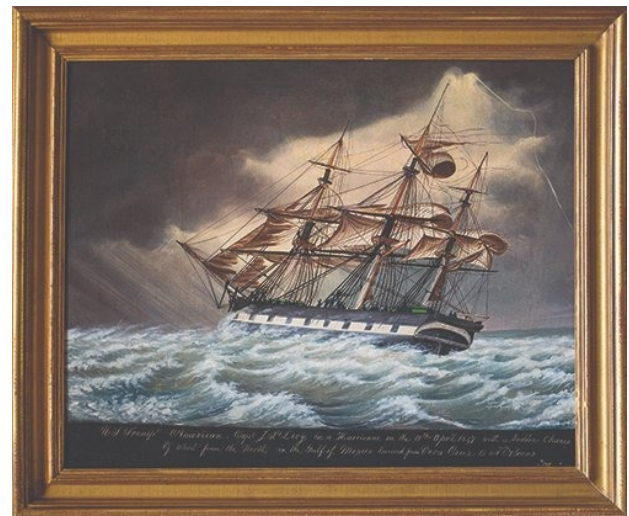
Like his brother Uriah, Jonas ran away to sea at the age of sixteen. He traveled extensively, and became involved in the political and business affairs of Latin America participating in a revolution in Peru during the 1830s.

In the 1840s, Levy and his brother Morton attempted to establish a business in Mexico but the Revolutionary disturbances and the Mexican American War brought their efforts to an end and they were forced to flee.

In late December 1846, Secretary of War William L. Marcy ordered Levy to service. He purchased the transport ship *American* and took command. Under General Winfield Scott's orders, Levy sailed to Veracruz, where his vessel ferried troops and munitions ashore. After the city's capture, Scott appointed Levy captain of the port of Veracruz, effective April 1, 1847.



Jonas Phillips Levy (Loeb Jewish Portrait Database)



Oil painting by James Guy Evans. Inscription: 'Transport the *America* under Capt. J. P. Levy off the coast of Vera Cruz on way to N.O.' This painting hung at Monticello during Jefferson Levy's ownership, 1847.

Henry Benjamin Nones of the United States Revenue Cutter Service

<https://jewishmilitary.org/articles/f/henry-benjamin-nones>

Henry Benjamin Nones, born in 1804, was one of thirteen Nones children, the son of Miriam Marks and Benjamin Nones. Nones joined the United States Revenue Cutter Service — called the Revenue-Marine, the precursor to the Coast Guard — as a Second Lieutenant on 15 June 1831.

In 1832, Nones was one of the 92 officers serving on 18 vessels of the United States Revenue-Marine, serving aboard the cutter Pulaski stationed between Mobile and Key West.

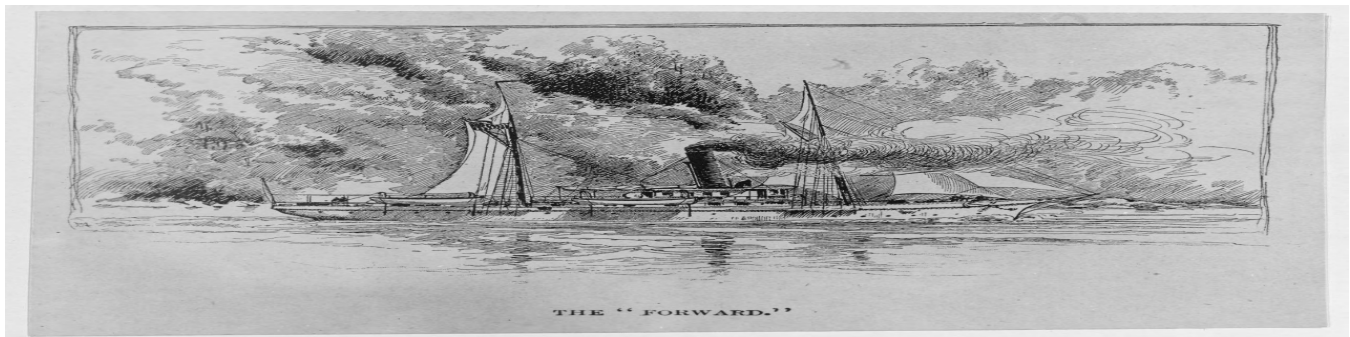
On January 24, 1838, Nones joined the USRC Andrew Jackson under Captain Philemon Gatewood as a first lieutenant. At the time, the cutter was cooperating with the U.S. Army during the Second Seminole War in the Gulf off the western coast of Florida. The ship was involved in sea rescues, discouraging smuggling operations, and scouting Indians. On December 14, 1838, he was commissioned as a captain. He was detached from the ship on March 30, 1839.

By December 29, 1841, Captain Nones appears in USCR vessel movement records as the commander of USRC Levi Woodbury, transporting dispatches between New Orleans and Vera Cruz through 1842.

By 1844 he became the first Captain of the USRC Legare, which spent most of the next year off the coast of Key West with repairs in between.



*Henry Benjamin Nones
(Photo: USCG Historian's Office)*



United States Revenue Cutter "FORWARD." (Naval History and Heritage Command)

The Mexican-American War

In May of 1846, Nones had been ordered to receive repairs in Philadelphia as captain to make the USRC Forward ready for sea. On May 18, the USRC Forward was ordered to the Gulf along with 10 other revenue cutters to cooperate with the Army and Navy. On June 18th he arrived at South West Pass on the mouth of the Mississippi River where Captain Webster ordered him to proceed the following morning to the Rio Grande to communicate with General Taylor. The USRC Forward arrived at Brazos Santiago on June 23, 1846, where General Taylor instructed him to go as far south as Soto la Marina and capture all vessels supplying the enemy.

From July through September, Nones sailed back and forth along the coast of Mexico and blockaded the port of Vera Cruz supporting the U.S. Army. In September, Captain Webster suspended Nones, but two days later the Forward was transferred to Commodore Conner of the U.S. Navy, who reinstated Nones.

On October 15, 1846, Commodore Perry led his flotilla to try and enter the river past the town of Alvarado, but was unsuccessful. On the 23rd Perry successfully captured the town of Frontera at the mouth of the Tabasco River. Perry then moved up the river to San Juan Bautista, the capital of the Mexican state of Tabasco, on October 25 and 26, 1846 in what was called the "First Battle of Tabasco."

Perry initially captured the city, but when he recalled his landing party the Mexican forces reentered the town, barricaded themselves, and would not surrender. Perry's flotilla withdrew with their prizes, but when Mexican troops started firing, Perry bombarded the town as they headed back to Frontera — where he left the McLane and Forward with Nones in command of both vessels to blockade the Tabasco River. Commodore Conner deemed the mission successful as they had captured or destroyed all the enemy's vessels.

On November 21, 1846, Nones set sail for Anton Lizardo and was ordered to return to New Orleans. Captain Webster immediately removed Nones from command again, but Captain Foster and later the Secretary of the Treasury ordered him to resume command. Nones ran dispatches and personnel between ports along the Mexican and Gulf coasts until in April 1847, when he was ordered to sail the Forward to Wilmington, Delaware for repairs.

The Civil War

During the Civil War, Nones reported on November 12, 1859 as the commander of the USRC Walter Forward once again. On September 26, 1862 as the commander of the cutter USRC James Campbell. Nones reported to USRC William H. Seward on July 16, 1864 as its commander.



Disembarkation in San Juan Bautista, capital of Tabasco, during the First Battle of Tabasco, October 25-26, 1846. (Archivo Historico del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Tabasco)

The Four Jewish Chaplains of the Union Army

<https://jewishmilitary.org/articles/f/the-four-jewish-chaplains-of-the-union-army>



Col. Max Friedman, 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry (Cameron Dragoons) recruitment poster, 1861.

Colonel Max Friedman commanded the 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment, also known as the 65th Regiment Volunteers and Cameron Dragoons, named for Secretary of War Simon Cameron. Mustered in July 1861, the regiment included many Jewish soldiers who selected Friedman's business partner, Michael M. Allen — a Sephardic Jewish Hebrew teacher — as chaplain on August 31, 1861.

Allen conducted nondenominational services outside Washington, D.C., becoming the first known Jewish chaplain in the United States Army.

At the time, federal law required chaplains to be ordained Christian ministers. Under pressure from the U.S. Christian Commission, Allen was forced to resign in September 1861.



MICHAEL M. ALLEN

Michael M. Allen, first known Jewish chaplain in the U.S. Army.

Rabbi Arnold Fischel & the Fight to Change the Law



Rabbi Arnold Fischel

The regiment then nominated Rabbi Arnold Fischel, but Cameron rejected the appointment under the same religious restriction. The Board of Delegates of American Israelites supported Fischel in successfully lobbying President Abraham Lincoln to amend the law by replacing 'Christian' with 'religious.' Although Fischel served briefly as a civilian chaplain, financial constraints forced his return to Europe in 1862.



Rabbi Jacob Frankel

The first officially commissioned Jewish military chaplain was Jacob Frankel, appointed as a hospital chaplain in Philadelphia in September 1862. After a lapse due to lack of Senate confirmation, Lincoln renewed Frankel's commission in April 1863, and he served until July 1865.

Rev. Ferdinand Leopold Sarner — First Jewish Regimental Chaplain

In April 1863, Rev. Ferdinand Leopold Sarner became chaplain of the 54th New York Volunteer Infantry, making him the first Jewish regimental chaplain officially elected by his unit. He served for eighteen months before his discharge in October 1864.



FERDINAND L. SARNER

Ferdinand L. Sarner, first Jewish regimental chaplain.

SOCIETY UPDATES

Amusing Jews Podcast — Episode 149

The Jewish American Military Historical Society was recently featured on the *Amusing Jews* podcast (Episode 149). Founding president Samuel P. Yudin discusses the Society's origins, mission, and research. It is an excellent introduction to our work spanning from the Revolutionary War to today for both long-time and new supporters.

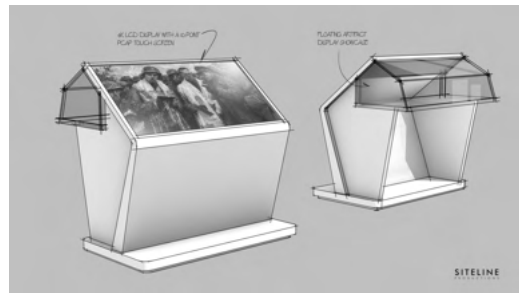
Available on YouTube: youtube.com/watch?v=l_Dq8bgYBLA



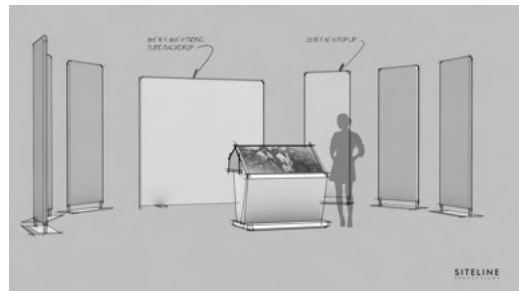
Ep. 149: The Jewish American Military Historical... ⋮

New Interactive Exhibit — Alpert JCC

This Fall 2026, our new interactive traveling exhibit debuts at the Alpert Jewish Community Center. Showcasing 372 years of Jewish American military history, this exhibit serves as a traveling preview of our future permanent museum. Visitors of all ages will enjoy interactive touchscreens, archival photographs, beautiful pop-up displays and artifacts.



Interactive kiosk



Full booth layout

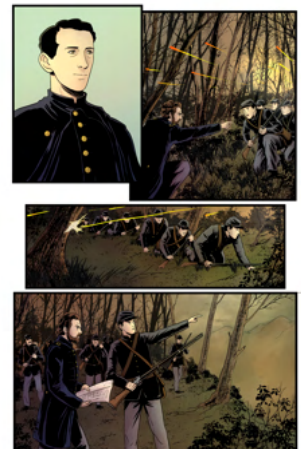
Valor & Virtue: Jewish American Military History #3 Comic Progress

Valor & Virtue: Jewish American Military History #3 is on track for release by the end of Summer 2026. This volume covers the Texas Revolution and the Mexican-American War. Following the success of our first two volumes and the Medal of Honor issue, Volume 3 marks the first serious academic effort to unearth, collect, and connect archival records of Jewish American military participation from this misunderstood era of American expansion.



Valor & Virtue: Jewish American Medal of Honor Recipients Comic Third Printing

The third printing of our inaugural comic will be off to the publisher in the next week. This edition will make minor formatting changes and add Eugene Jacobson as the 19th Jewish American Medal of Honor Recipient.

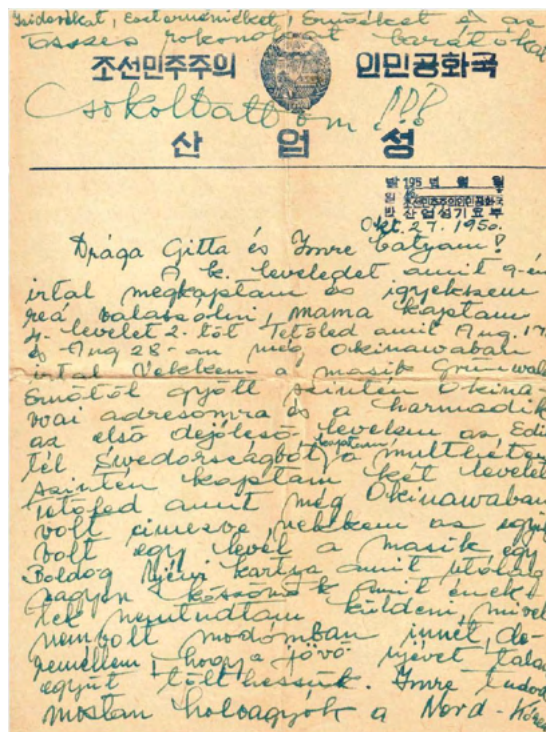


Tibor Rubin War Letters — Chapman University Exhibit

We are honored to announce that an exhibit of Tibor Rubin's wartime letters is on track to debut this fall at the Center for American War Letters (CAWL) at Chapman University in Orange, California. As home to one of the world's most significant collections of wartime correspondence, CAWL is the ideal venue for these extraordinary documents.

Born in Hungary in 1929, Tibor "Teddy" Rubin survived the Holocaust as a teenager before emigrating to the United States and serving with the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He spent 30 months as a prisoner of war after being captured by Chinese forces. His extraordinary courage and self-sacrifice, including saving the lives of fellow American POWs, earned him the Medal of Honor from President George W. Bush in 2005.

These letters offer a rare, deeply personal window into Rubin's wartime experience. The family correspondence featured below was written in Hungarian on official North Korean Ministry of the Interior paper just days before his capture.



First page of a Tibor Rubin wartime letter, dated October 27, 1950, written on official North Korean government stationery. Collection of the Jewish American Military Historical Society.

Upcoming Collaborations

The Society is pleased to announce that several exciting collaborations with partner organizations are in development for the coming year. While details are still being finalized, these partnerships will expand our educational reach and help us present Jewish American military history to new audiences across the country.

We look forward to sharing more details in our Fall 2026 issue. Stay connected through our website at jewishmilitary.org and our Facebook page for the latest announcements.

ABOUT THE JEWISH AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Jewish American Military Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and educating the public about Jewish American military history. From the colonial era to the present day, Jewish Americans have served in every branch of the armed forces and in every major conflict in American history.

The Society maintains collections of artifacts, letters, photographs, and documents; produces educational materials including our acclaimed Valor & Virtue comic book series; operates a growing digital archive at jewishmilitary.org; and develops traveling exhibits for schools, JCCs, museums, and community organizations.

Our Tibor Rubin Collection is currently on loan at the National Medal of Honor Museum through 2030.

Contact & Connect	Support Our Mission
jewishmilitary.org	The Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
jewishmilitary@gmail.com	EIN: 85-2238923
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