

Actual Films and Switchback Films Present

AMERICAN JERUSALEM

Jews and the Making of San Francisco



Press Kit

Contact:

Jackie Krentzman, executive producer/producer

510-524-7499

Jackie@switchbackfilms.com

About the film:

Logline:

American Jerusalem tells the story of the pioneer Jews of San Francisco, who came to California from Germany during the Gold Rush and were instrumental in building the city. The roles they were relegated to in Germany—peddler and petty merchant—were highly valued in the Gold Rush. Therefore, because of the openness of Gold Rush California, these Jews were far more assimilated into and had a greater impact on the building and defining of a major city than any other Jewish community in America. But this acceptance came at a price, as assimilation put this community in danger of losing its Jewish identity.

Storyline:

In 1850 20-year-old Adolph Sutro stepped off a steamer ship into the ragtag city of San Francisco, after an arduous journey from New York through the Panama Isthmus and up the Pacific Coast. No one made any special notice of him or his Jewish faith. For a young man who'd grown up in Germany, who had migrated to America with his mother and siblings to escape poverty and anti-Semitism, this was startling.

American Jerusalem will trace the arcs of Sutro, Isaias Hellman and Levi Strauss, from tightly constrained lives in Germany to the unprecedented opportunities of Gold Rush San Francisco, to their critical role in putting on the 1915 World's Fair—which demonstrated how thoroughly integrated the Jews were into the city's power structure.

Thousands of Jews left Germany around 1850 seeking economic and religious freedom in the United States. In 1848 San Francisco was an insignificant outpost, with barely 1,000 souls. Then James Marshall discovered gold on the American River, 120 miles east of the fledgling city. Tens of thousands of prospectors flocked to California, including many Jews. Some came from the Eastern seaboard, but more came directly from Europe, including thousands from Bavaria, fleeing draconian restrictions, such as laws forbidding any male but the firstborn from marrying.

Unlike the other 49ers, these Jewish pioneers didn't seek their mother lode in the gold mines themselves. They sought their fortune by servicing the miners. In fact, the very occupations to which they were relegated to in Germany, primarily peddlers and merchants, were the skills considered most valuable in Gold Rush California.

These newcomers sought more than just economic freedom—they came seeking the opportunity to shape a new life for their families and their people. They came to California in search of a life free of the constrictions of the "Old World"—the Old World represented both by Europe secular governments and their own rabbinical authorities.

In San Francisco they found their Promised Land. By 1870, the city was a thriving metropolis of 150,000, more than 10% Jewish—the largest Jewish population outside of New York City. By day the Jewish merchants cut backroom deal with the Crockers,

Stanfords and Huntingtons, and by night they played cards with them in their clubs—clubs that didn't exclude Jews.

In the 19th century, this level of integration could only happen in California. The new state was an “open society”—anyone (provided they were white and male), could prosper. There were no pre-existing social structures or built-in infrastructures to stratify the newcomers. Therefore, the Jews were among the city founders, and were integral in building the civic infrastructure of San Francisco.

But acceptance and success can come at a price—in this case identity. The pioneer Jews had to struggle with the timeless immigrant question of whether one can be equally Jewish and American—or must one identity win out?

The film also explores the darker side of San Francisco Jewish history, For example, the leadership of the San Francisco Jewish community, stuck by its white brethren on the issue of the Chinese, supporting the two draconian Chinese exclusion acts and often barring Chinese workers from their businesses.

Then, at the end of the 19th century, as Eastern European Jewish immigrants flooded America, The San Francisco Jewish community leadership, which was predominately comprised of German Jews, was embarrassed and even fearful of these Jews, afraid that the nirvana they built for themselves would come crashing down. These newcomers were more religious, less cultured and educated, and poor. The rabbi of Temple Emanu-el, Jacob Voorsanger referred to them as 'Yiddish mumbler.' He and the Temple board floated a (failed) plan to move the Eastern European Jews to Baja Mexico. The Eureka Benevolent Society, the primary Jewish family service agency in the city, paid to send Eastern Europeans back to New York, claiming they were “unassimilable.” In 1910 there were only 4,000 Eastern European Jews in San Francisco, far fewer than most American cities, including tiny Los Angeles, which had double the Eastern European Jewish population.

To this day, the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish community is acknowledged to be different than other Jewish communities in the United States. It is more diverse, secular and open, with a lower rate of synagogue attendance and a higher rate of intermarriage. Some consider this a crisis of identity, others consider this level of assimilation an American success story, and believe the diversity of the community—and the opportunities it offers Jews to connect to their Jewish roots—an opportunity to enlarge the tent. American Jerusalem will explore how this singular community developed, as well as its significance and place in the fabric of not only California and West, but America.

Production companies:

Actual Films and Switchback Films

Country of origin:

United States

Filming locations:

United States and Germany

Type of film:

Documentary

Length the film:

57:55 minutes

Available formats:

Exhibition format for public screening: HD cam NTSC and Bluray

Team biographies:

Jackie Krentzman Executive producer/producer

Jackie has taught at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and UC Berkeley Extension. She is also the proprietor of Krentzman Communications, a Berkeley-based publications group that specializes in print and digital communications. Krentzman earned her Masters of journalism from UC Berkeley and a BA from the University of Michigan. Jackie is currently working on two new documentary films, *The Outcast of Beauregard Parish*, a profile of a Pentecostal preacher in the Bible Belt who came out as an atheist, and a biopic of photographer Eadweard Muybridge.

Marc Shaffer, director

For more than two decades Marc Shaffer has written, directed and produced critically acclaimed documentary films and television news programs. Marc's films have unraveled many of the cutting-edge issues of the day—from the Gulf War to the gulf oil spill, American medical care to medical marijuana, the Washington Power Game to Wall Street's power grab. Recognized with many honors including three national Emmy Award nominations, six Cine Golden Eagles and a Cine Special Jury award, Marc's documentaries have appeared as national primetime specials on PBS, on PBS Frontline, on National Geographic and elsewhere. Marc was raised in Berkeley, graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz, and lives in Oakland with his wife and two children.

Bonni Cohen, Executive Producer

Bonni founded Actual Films with Jon Shenk in 1998. Their latest film, *The Island President*, won the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival for best documentary. Bonni was the writer, producer, and director of *The Rape of Europa* (2006), the documentary film adaptation of Lynn Nicholas's landmark history of the fate of art during the Third Reich and Second World War. The NEH-supported film was broadcast by PBS as a primetime special in November, 2008, and it was nominated for two Emmy Awards and for Best Documentary Screenplay by the Writers Guild of America. With director Jon Else, she produced *Wonders Are Many* (2006), a film about the making of the new John Adams and Peter Sellars opera, *Doctor Atomic*. In 2001, Bonni produced and directed *The Nobel*:

Visions of Our Century, a chronicle of 100 years of the Nobel Prize told from the perspectives of 11 Nobel laureates that was broadcast on PBS. Bonni earned a Masters degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University in 1994 and Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Tufts University in 1987.

Camille Servan-Schreiber, producer

Camille is an independent director and producer of documentary. Her latest project was "Eames: The Architect and the Painter" which was released in 2011 in theaters around the country and received critical acclaim. Other films she has worked on include *The Rape of Europa*, Alice Waters and her *Delicious Revolution* for the PBS series *American Masters*, *The secret of J. Edgar Hoover* for National Geographic, *The Nobel: Visions of a Century* for KQED as well as multiple segments for the PBS series *Frontline World* and *The New Heroes*. Camille has received several awards for her work including a Golden Spire Award from the San Francisco Film Festival.

Drew Takahashi, Animator

Drew is presently the Emperor of Funjacket Enterprises. Previously he was co-founder and Chief Creative Officer of (Colossal) Pictures. Using any and all techniques in film and video, he directed or creative directed broadcast identities (MTV, Showtime, Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, and Nickelodeon), commercials (Coca-Cola, Intel, Nike, Honda, and Levi's), music videos (Bobby McFerrin, Prince, Joe Cocker, and Kronos Quartet), and interfaces (Apple, Americast, WebTV, and Microsoft). At Funjacket Enterprises Drew has continued to design and direct over an even more diverse range of opportunities, including naming and identities (Laika Entertainment, House Special, and Nuvana), corporate communications (Apple, Intel, and Sun Microsystems), web experiences (playflashback.com, playinterrobang.com) and documentaries (The National Geographic Channel, NRDC, and Actual Pictures).

Marco d'Ambrosio Composer

Marco is a film composer, conductor-arranger, music producer, multi-instrumentalist, and all-around noise wrangler. He has scored numerous award-winning films, documentaries, and theatre projects, including the anime hit *Vampire Hunter: Bloodlust*; *Haiku Tunnel*, the Emmy winning *Blink*, *The Rape of Europa* for PBS, and *Red Diaper Baby* for the Sundance Channel. You can hear other scores of Marco's on projects released by 20th Century Fox, Sony Pictures Classics, Lucasfilm Ltd., PDI/Dreamworks, Pixar, and Columbia Pictures. Additionally, Marco co-scored the documentary feature *We Live in Public*, which was awarded the Grand Jury prize at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival.

Interviewee Biographies:

Frances Dinkelspiel, author of *Towers of Gold*, the biography of her great-great-grandfather Isaias Hellman.

Marc Dollinger, Ph.D., Richard and Rhoda Goldman Chair in Jewish Studies and Social Responsibility at San Francisco State University. Co-author , *California Jews*, with Ava Kahn.

Ava Kahn, historian and author of *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush* and former research associate at the Western Jewish History Center at the Magnes Museum.

Lynn Downey, historian, Levi Strauss & Co.

Rabbi Sidney Mintz, Temple Emmanu-El, San Francisco

Fred Rosenbaum, author, *Cosmopolitians, A Social & Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area*.

John Rothmann, KGO radio talk show host, and frequent lecturer on American politics and political history.

Kevin Starr, California State Librarian Emeritus, University Professor (history), USC, and author of more than a half dozen books on California history, including the definitive history, the multi-volume, "America and the California Dream."

Richard White, professor of history, Stanford University

Film rating:

G

Screening history:

American Jerusalem premiered the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival before a sellout crowd of 1400 at the Castro Theater on July 31, 2013. Since, it has screened to a sellout crowds in Palo Alto, Los Angeles and Berkeley.

Upcoming screening schedule:

Vogue Theatre San Francisco (10 day theatrical run)

Napa Valley Film Festival, November 2013

Odessa (Ukraine) Jewish Film Festival, December 1, 2013

Tucson Jewish Film Festival, Jan. 2014

Atlanta Jewish Film Festival, February 2014

PBS: *American Jerusalem* will air on KQED, the San Francisco affiliate, as well as a number of other affiliates, in the summer of 2014

Press

Print:

San Francisco J Weekly

[J Weekly July 25, 2013 American Jerusalem](#)

San Francisco Chronicle

[San Francisco Chronicle July 20, 2013 American Jerusalem](#)

San Francisco Chronicle review

[American Jerusalem review San Francisco Chronicle, October 11, 2013](#)

San Francisco Magazine

<http://www.modernluxury.com/san-francisco/story/one-question-qa-jackie-krentzman-adolph-sutro>

Palo Alto Weekly

http://www.paloaltoonline.com/weekly/story.php?story_id=19222

Oakland Magazine

<http://www.oaklandmagazine.com/Oakland-Magazine/January-February-2013/The-Chosen-People-Do-The-City/>

Video:

Jewish News TV 1

http://jn1.tv/video/news?media_id=154672

Credits

Director of Photography

Jon Shenk

Editors:

Stephanie Mechura

Josh Peterson

Associate Producer

Arwen Curry

Assistant Editor

Nina Goodby

Animation and Graphic Design

Funjacket Enterprises

Drew Takahashi

Lidia Przyluska

Narrator

Carrie Fleishhacker

Consulting Director

Josh Peterson

Sound Recording

Gabriel Monts

Musical Score

Composed by Marco d'Ambrosio

Music Supervisor Terri d'Ambrosio

Score Assistant Ryan Houck

Additional Photography

Richard Ladkani

John M. Kiffmeyer

Dan Krauss

Assistant Camera

Lincoln Else

Craig Hickerson

Editorial Advisers

Frances Dinkelspiel

Ava Kahn

Audio Post Production

Berkeley Sound Artists

Sound Mixers

James LeBrecht

Dan Olmsted

Dialogue Editor

Patti Tauscher

Sound Effects Editors

Jamie Branquinho

Chase Keehn

Voiceover Recording

Adam Muñoz, Fantasy Studios

Michael Klinger, Tree Fall Sound

On Line Editor and Motion Graphic Design

Ri Crawford

Assistant On Line Editor

Michael Robinson Fleming

Colorist

Leo Hallal

Post Production Supervisor

Kim Aubry

HD Post Production

ZAP Zoetrope Aubry Productions, San Francisco

Very Special Thanks to

Doug Goldman

Warren Hellman

Anita Friedman and The Jewish Family and Children's Services of
San Francisco, The Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

David Fleishhacker

James Leventhal

Congregation Emanu-El

Goethe-Institut San Francisco

Fiscal Sponsorship

AfterImage Public Media

Additional music

"The Shofar"

Written by Jeffrey Robin and Roddy Skeaping

Courtesy of APM Music

"March of the Belgian Paratroopers"
by Pierre Leemans
and
"William Tell" overture
by Gioachino Rossini
Performed by The Golden Gate Park Band
The Musicians Union Local #6, American Federation of Musicians

Major Funding for this production was provided by

Lisa & Doug Goldman Fund
John & Marcia Goldman Foundation
Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund
Fireman's Fund Insurance Company
The Hellman Family Foundation
The Skirball Foundation
Anonymous, in honor of Warren Hellman

Additional Funding provided by

Koret Foundation
Roselyne Chroman Swig
Wells Fargo Foundation
Jim and Cathy Koshland Philanthropic Fund
Zellerbach Family Foundation
The Lucius N. Littauer Foundation
Arthur & Toni Rembe Rock
Fleishhacker Foundation
Gerson and Barbara Bakar Philanthropic Fund
David Fleishhacker
Susan Folkman
Gaia Fund
Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation
Hellman-Gibbs Family Philanthropic Fund
Jim Joseph Foundation
Laura and Gary Lauder Philanthropic Fund
John S. Osterweis Philanthropic Fund
John and Lisa Pritzker Family Fund
The Tauber Family Foundation

American Jerusalem: Jews and the Making of San Francisco
is a co-production of



and



in association with



© 2013 AfterImage Public Media All rights reserved