

Washington State

JEWISH

HISTORICAL

SOCIETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Lisa Kranseler

lisak@wsjhs.org

(206) 774-2277

Washington State Jewish Historical Society Celebrates Second Edition Release of *Family of Strangers* Book

Seattle, WA (May 17, 2022): The [Washington State Jewish Historical Society](http://www.wsjhs.org) is excited to announce a brand new second-edition release of its book, *Family of Strangers: Building Jewish Communities in Washington State*. A comprehensive history of Jewish life in our state, the second edition includes the original book, published in 2003, along with thought-provoking fresh content that explores more recent history.

The first-edition book was written by Molly Cone, Howard Droker, and Jacqueline Williams. The updated second edition adds a New Epilogue by Seattle writer Stuart Eskenazi that considers the past 50 years of Jewish history in Washington state, as well as a new Foreword by Tacoma historian and author Deborah Freedman. Denise Clifton provided creative direction for the second edition, and Sandy Glass designed the beautiful new cover.

Family of Strangers is the product of years of thorough archival research, interviews, writing, and editing by dedicated historians and authors. Washington State Jewish Historical Society Executive Director Lisa Kranseler instigated the project and worked as the chief motivator throughout the entire publishing process, making sure the second edition of the book came to fruition. The already stout inventory of stories and images from the Historical Society and the Washington State Jewish Archive (housed at the University of Washington Special Collections Libraries) laid the groundwork for the book update. Additional support was consistently given by the dedicated work of the Society's longstanding Archives committee.

Jewish immigrants first arrived in Washington state in the early 1850s and Jewish people ever since have made notable contributions to civic and cultural life throughout the state, the nation, and the world. The first wave of immigrants included Ashkenazim from Central and Eastern Europe, followed by Sephardim from Turkey and Rhodes. Subsequent waves consisted of European Jews escaping the Nazis and, later, Soviet Jews fleeing persecution. Following

different religious customs and speaking different languages, this “Family of Strangers” found commonality within the fabric and values of Judaism.

The book *Family of Strangers* illuminates these intergenerational stories and is an important piece of history in its own right. The 60-plus-page New Epilogue highlights an era characterized by further growth, diversity, and geographic spread. Jewish organizations and institutions have responded to this challenge by offering myriad opportunities for all Jewish people in Washington to connect to their Jewishness, no matter how they might define it or express it.

"What I hope people take away from this update to *Family of Strangers* is that our communities are on the right path in making sure that those engagement opportunities are available to anyone who self-identifies as Jewish and wishes to explore, absorb, and embrace their Judaism," Eskenazi said.

The book will be launched with a special presentation at the Washington State Jewish Historical Society’s annual gala in Seattle on June 1, 2022; registration is open at wsjhs.org/gala. *Family of Strangers* is available for purchase through [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the Washington State Jewish Historical Society. This project was generously sponsored by the Alfred & Tillie Shemanski Testamentary Trust, along with [4Culture](https://www.4culture.org), King County's arts and heritage organization.

Washington State Jewish Historical Society is dedicated to its mission to preserve and present the history of Jewish life in Washington state. The Society fosters awareness and appreciation of the experiences, the diverse culture, and the significant contributions of Jews, past and present. The Society builds bridges with communities by sharing the stories of their collective histories and serving as an educational resource.

For more information, visit wsjhs.org.

###