



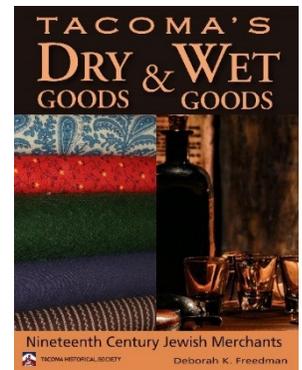
TACOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

For Immediate Release: July 6, 2016

### ***New book, exhibit bring to light forgotten history of Tacoma's Jewish pioneers***

Tacoma Historical Society Press is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of “Tacoma’s Dry Goods and Wet Goods: Nineteenth Century Jewish Pioneers,” by Deborah Freedman. The book, scheduled for release in July, will present the previously undocumented history of Tacoma’s Jewish community during the latter half of the 1800s, based on nearly two decades of the author’s primary research. Publication of the new book is funded by a generous grant from the Tacoma Jewish Community Fund. In addition, more than a dozen individual contributors have sponsored copies to be distributed free of charge to area nonprofit organizations. Proceeds from the sale of books at those locations will therefore generate 100 percent return.

“I started this research in the late 1990s,” said Freedman, “before and after my work at Tacoma Public Library. Historical newspapers provided a treasure trove of social and personal details – in part because the Jewish merchants advertised heavily. I eventually combed through every edition of Tacoma’s newspapers from the 1870s through 1900. Then I became involved in volunteer work and set the project aside. The recent hiring of a Tacoma Historical Society director and museum manager has made it possible for me to return to the book. And now improved online sources have provided new information about the lives of our pioneer merchants before and after their time in Tacoma.” Tacoma Historical Society has previously printed two elementary history curriculum books with Deb Freedman, creator of the popular “Tacoma’s Twenty-One Tales” series.



Release of the new book will coincide with an exhibit of the same name at the Tacoma Historical Society Museum, located at 919 Pacific Avenue in downtown Tacoma. Developed by the author and designed by Chris Erlich, the exhibit will run from July 26 through November 26, 2016, with free admission. Tacoma Historical Society’s 2016 exhibits are funded by a new Heritage Project Grant from the City of Tacoma’s Landmarks Preservation Commission.

“The exhibit really follows the development of Tacoma’s economy in the late 1800s,” said Bill Baarsma, president of Tacoma Historical Society. “Tacoma’s businesses grew from a few stores in Old Tacoma in the 1870s to a thriving retail district on Pacific Avenue in the 1880s. The financial panic of 1893 was disastrous for the Jewish merchants, who left the city in financial ruin, taking a slice of our city’s history with them. Deb’s research has documented well over 150 Jewish families who created a vibrant culture that has been largely unrecorded, and is consistent with the City’s goal of documenting and celebrating Tacoma’s rich diversity.”

“One of the most outstanding families were the four Gross brothers – Ellis, Dave, Morris and Abe,” said exhibit designer Chris Erlich. “When they were still very young men they outfitted a free kindergarten school for children of low-income families. For an entire school year the brothers provided teachers and two hot meals per day, all at their own personal expense.” The exhibit features several rare photos of family members and stores.

This exhibit timing coincides with the 36th annual IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Seattle August 7-12, 2016, where Deborah will be presenting a workshop on her research methodology. She will also be the Society’s featured monthly speaker on Monday, October 10, at 7 pm in the Murray Board Room at the Wheelock Student Center on the campus of the University of Puget Sound.

WHAT: Tacoma Historical Society will open its newest exhibit, “Tacoma’s Dry Goods and Wet Goods: Nineteenth Century Jewish Pioneers,” in conjunction with the release of a new book by the same title.

WHEN: Free Exhibit Opening Reception: Tuesday, July 26, 2016, 5:30-7:00 pm

WHERE: Tacoma Historical Society Museum, 919 Pacific Avenue in the historic Provident Building

DURATION: The exhibit will be on display from July 26 through November 26, 2016. Museum hours are 11 am to 4 pm, Wednesday through Saturday, or by appointment. Admission is free and donations are welcomed.

SALES: Books will be available for sale at the Tacoma Historical Society Museum beginning July 26. Retail price is \$18 for Tacoma Historical Society members and \$20 for non-members.

CONTACTS: Tacoma Historical Society: (253) 472-3738, [info@tacomahistory.org](mailto:info@tacomahistory.org)

Deb Freedman, 253-377-4157, [treasurer@tacomahistory.org](mailto:treasurer@tacomahistory.org)

Bill Baarsma, 253-759-6765, [wbaarsma@harbornet.com](mailto:wbaarsma@harbornet.com)

Beth Bestrom, [manager@tacomahistory.org](mailto:manager@tacomahistory.org)

Julie LaRue, [director@tacomahistory.org](mailto:director@tacomahistory.org)

#### ADDITIONAL EVENTS:

Sunday July 31, 3:30 pm, walking tour of Home of Peace Cemetery, 5421 Steilacoom Boulevard, Lakewood, where Tacoma’s organized Jewish history began.

Monday October 10, 7 pm, “Tacoma’s Jewish Pioneers,” presented by Deb Freedman, Murray Board Room, Wheelock Student Center, University of Puget Sound.

Other events are forthcoming.

###

About Tacoma Historical Society: Tacoma Historical Society is a community-supported volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) charitable, nonprofit corporation, and is dedicated to the preservation, promotion and presentation of the history of the City of Tacoma and its people. Tacoma Historical Society works to forge connections between past and present generations, fostering an appreciation of the past and a sense of place within our community’s history.

[www.tacomahistory.org](http://www.tacomahistory.org)