

Roseburg, Oregon and the Star of David

By Jerry Klinger



1916 Dodge Touring Sedan

***Every journey into the past is complicated by delusions,
false memories, false namings of real events.
Adrienne Rich.***

My historical society, the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, places historical roadside markers reflecting the legitimacy of the American Jewish experience and expressing the commonality of Jews as Americans. Markers are inanimate objects yet they are living memories that shape the future.

What started out as an accidental effort has matured to date into completed programs and projects in twenty-five states and in four countries. It does not take long to read the text of a marker – perhaps 30 seconds. The average visitor to the Louvre in Paris devotes less than 8 seconds viewing a great masterpiece. Annually, 6,000,000 + people see and learn a little bit about the American Jewish story from one of our efforts, more than any Jewish museum in the world. JASHP marker projects do pretty good. And, we are free.

When people see historic markers, they know something significant happened there. Some stop and read, others zip by at 60 miles an hour, their heads whipping sideways and their mouths muttering, *WWTF, what was that for?* It is best to be careful. Even better to be mindful of the very serious acronym, WMBNH – *watch my behind not hers.*

Markers are simple. They are easy to do, especially if funding is available. Getting permission to place the marker is very hard. Placement requires local, community and, not to infrequently, city or state

involvement for permission. Markers can be done in as little as three months but almost never are. The average time is about a year and sometimes much longer if there is a *PC* consideration.

The key to a marker project is making connections on the ground, meeting, greeting and getting people involved. A simpler way of saying this is traveling to get the project going. It is not always successful, but it is essential to start the ball rolling.

Early November, I flew to Portland, Oregon. Downtown Portland is the site of the first permanent Jewish house of worship in the Northwest, Congregation Beth Israel, 1851.¹ Two hundred miles south, in a very remote, mountainous part of the state is Glendale, Oregon. Near Glendale was the site of an extraordinary Jewish communal, agricultural effort, *New Odessa*, 1882-1886.

In Portland, I connected with the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education². In Glendale, I connected with the Cow Creek Historical Society. The Jews in Portland prospered. The Jewish agricultural effort in Glendale did not.

New Odessa was located near Cow Creek outside of Glendale. There is nothing noting the Jewish presence in the logging community of Glendale. The gravesites of the Jews who died there are lost, unknown. A marker in the small town would be appropriate and a marker in a big town will get more eyeballs.

The nearest city to Glendale is Roseburg, about 40 miles back north on the I-5. Roseburg is a community of about 20,000 people. Few ever heard much about Roseburg.

October 1, 2015, a mass shooting, more like a mass execution, one at a time, took place on the Umpqua Community college campus.



Umpqua Community College

A heavily armed gunman, Christopher Harper-Mercer, entered the gun free zoned campus. He proceeded directly to a specific class room in Snyder Hall to kill. The first person he shot was Lawrence

¹ <http://www.bethisrael-pdx.org/>

² <http://www.ojmche.org/>

Levine, the teacher, a professor of history and English. Some sources identified Levine as being Jewish, because of his name. No one knows for sure.

The gunman proceeded to systematically execute students in the class but only after first asking them if they were Christians or not. If they admitted to being Christians, it was a bullet to the head. If they denied being Christians, it was a shot to the leg or torso. Levine was never asked. The killer had been a student in the class and most likely had his own ideas. Levine was the first to die.

The murders ended when police arrived. A short gun fight wounded Harper-Mercer. He immediately put a bullet in his own head. It was the worst mass shooting in Oregon history.³

Roseburg was famous with the anti-gun political cycle for a few days. Roseburg was quickly forgotten by the media as the “spontaneous” knifing terror rose in Israel and Mayor Barkat of Jerusalem ordered everyone with a legal handgun to carry it to defend themselves and the community from Palestinian murderers. According to USA Today, Prime Minister Netanyahu worried that too strong a response might anger President Obama.⁴

Roseburg⁵ is a city that logging money built. Far from the main urban center of Portland, rich with money and poor on cultural resources, Roseburg’s 19th and 20th century patricians deployed their monies to create a cultural oasis of music, theater, education and social optimism in the remoteness.

Today, Roseburg is the home to an extraordinary museum, the Douglas County History and Natural History Museum⁶. I went to the museum to meet the director, to see if the museum would be willing to sign on to a Jewish historical interpretive marker project reflecting on the Jewish history of Douglas County. Education, understanding, tolerance, diversity, community and appreciation for the natural resources of Douglas County are visible themes in the very well designed and presented interactive museum.

The suggestion to consider the inclusion of the Jewish story was very positively received.

They opened the archives of Douglas County where I found treasures of Jewish history that were shared with the Oregon Jewish Museum in Portland. As I was leaving the museum, the director asked me to follow him to an indoor/outdoor historical artifact collection on the lower level. He said there was something he wanted me to see.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umpqua_Community_College_shooting

⁴ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/10/08/israel-jerusalem-palestinians-violence/73573518/>

⁵ <http://www.cityofroseburg.org/>

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1916 Dodge Touring Car

We descended a flight of stairs to a large room filled with artifacts of Oregon agricultural life. The area contained a full sized historical tractor, equipment and a very unusual, extremely valuable addition in the middle of the room. The center piece of the floor had nothing to do with agriculture or logging. It was a 1916 black Dodge Touring Car. The car's paint shown with a gleam as bright as the day it was made almost 100 years ago. The museum director let me admire the magnificent automobile for a few moments before directing me to something very specific on the front of the car. He pointed to the medallion on the front of the engine's radiator.

It was the *Star* of David overlaid on the map of the world. The *Star* of David was apparently the emblem of the Dodge Brother's automotive empire.

I was stunned.

The intertwined triangles, the Jewish *Star* of David, as the emblem of one of the greatest car companies in American history unflinchingly stood forth. I never knew... Could the Dodge founders have been Jewish?

Thanks to former Senator, Presidential aspirant, Noble Peace Prize winner and Climate Change advocate Al Gore, remarked to Wolf Blitzer on CNN March 8, 1999, in a poorly constructed and conflated choice of words that he invented the Internet⁷, "During my service in the United States Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet", I turned to *Google* to search for truth.

Were the Dodge Brothers Jewish?

Google helped me discover, the favorite car of the Jewish nouveau riche, the *Mercedes Benz*, is really a Jewish car. The Daimler Benz museum in Stuttgart makes no apologies for the *Mercedes* Jewish roots or

⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/11/04/a-cautionary-tale-for-politicians-al-gore-and-the-invention-of-the-internet>

the fact that Adolph Hitler's favorite open car was the *Mercedes*. Chances are Hitler was not aware of the car's history. But then he was not aware of a lot of historical truth other than the ones he invented.

The Mercedes was named for the granddaughter of Adolph Jellinek. Jellinek was a noted Hungarian Rabbi and Jewish scholar. His son, Emil, was a key executive in the Daimler Automotive Company. Jellinek recognized that the Teutonic name Daimler was too harsh for marketing to French ears. He changed the car's name forever to a softer sounding French name, Mercedes, after his daughter. But that is another story....

With Google's search engine directing me, locating a historical source I could rely on was easy. The Reed Brother's Dodge dealership⁸ had formerly been located down the street from where I lived in Rockville, Maryland. Formerly because the dealership was not one of those bailed out by U.S. tax dollars in 2012 when the government picked economic winners and losers. I personally knew the dealership had been there before the building was torn down. The knowledge comforted my sense of the dealership's history's accuracy.

Today, the site is a massive high rent, high rise apartment house. The owners of the land must have made a mint.

The front page of the Reed Brother's Dodge Automotive history has a section on the *Dodge Star*. To my formerly ignorant chagrin, quite a bit has been written about the Dodge Brother's *Star*, I never knew it.

John and Horace Dodge were brothers. They were born just after the American Civil War to Daniel Rugg Dodge. Daniel Dodge ran a small machine shop and foundry in Niles, Michigan. The Dodge's made their living repairing marine engines that plied the waters of the St. Joseph River. He barely made a living, however for his two young sons, it was a major opportunity. First hand, they learned the ins and outs of machining and marine engines.

The spread of the American railroad increased the steady decline of water as the choice of commercial commerce. The Dodge family relocated to the burgeoning town of Detroit. Economic success was not straight line. They experienced success and failure in varied businesses always related to machining and engineering until the smile of Beshert fortune filled their front door.

Early in 1903, a young automotive engineer with an idea approached the Dodge brothers. He contracted with them to produce his first car, the Ford Model A. After a few years of incredible financial success, the Dodge Brothers and Henry Ford had a serious falling out. In 1914, the Dodge Brothers went into the business of building cars on their own high quality standards. They were, again, incredibly successful.⁹

⁸ <https://reedbrothersdodgehistory.wordpress.com/2013/06/18/dodge-brothers-emblem/>

⁹ <http://biography.yourdictionary.com/dodge-brothers>

Why did the Dodge Brothers choose the *Star* of David for their new car emblem? The question is not why they chose the *Star* of David as their company's signature emblem but did they? No one will ever know for sure because the brothers both died suddenly, within weeks of each other, in 1920. They never revealed the reasons for the design of the Dodge emblem. The secret of the emblem went with them to the grave. Conjecture, speculation and assumption are all that reasonably can be offered by latter day historical snoops. Some of the arguments make lots of sense. Some of the arguments are silly, easily refuted internet stories from bloggers inventing possibilities sitting secretly in their basements smoking joints and drinking Boone's Farm's finest.

The *Star* remained the emblem of the Dodge automobile until it was finally discontinued in the late 1930's. Marketing and market identity remained central to the new owners of the Dodge brand.

A possible answer for the *Star* is that it was not a *Star* at all. The six pointed two interlocking triangles or overlaid triangles each form the Greek letter for "delta". Delta is associated with the scientific concept of change. The Dodge Brother's cars and trucks were engineered to changed, superior, standards. Interior to the Dodge Brothers *Star* are the letters "D" and "B" – Dodge Brothers.

The overlaid or interlocking triangles that form a *Star* is not new. The *Star* symbol is a common artistic design found in many cultures over thousands of years and around the world. In medieval times the *Star* was mystically associated with the joining of mind and body.



The overlaid *Star* can clearly be an abstraction of the square and compass of Freemasonry. The Freemasons strongly deny the linkage. Some Freemasons identify the *Star* as the Shield of Solomon in their iconography.¹⁰ Rabid, loose screwed anti-Semites have linked Jews – Kabbalah – Freemasons and secret plans to rule the world.¹¹ A lot about Freemasonry, from the secret handshake to mutual acknowledgement, is secret anyway. That does not help things much.

Were the Dodge's secret Freemasons? That is unknown. But to be anyone in America, from Benjamin Franklin to George Washington to modern Presidents, it was very useful to be a Freemason.

¹⁰ <http://masonic.wikidot.com/seal-of-solomon>

¹¹ <https://ehpg.wordpress.com/2008/08/08/freemasonry-is-kabbalah/>



1782 die

U.S. Great Seals



1885 die

The six pointed *Star* is not unknown in America. Many law enforcement officers used the six pointed *Star* as their badge, especially in the old West. Some still do. The first U.S. die, made in 1782, has stars arranged in what resembles a *Star of David* design. The 1885 die, the U.S. one dollar, American passports, etc., incorporate the *Star* design which harks back to English heraldic days.

Some writers have argued the Dodge Brothers looked for a way to get at Henry Ford by using the *Star* as their emblem on their cars. Ford was a vicious anti-Semite. It was Ford money that brought to America the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, written by the Russian secret police to harm Jews, as a factual manifesto for Jewish rule of the world. The Russian anti-Semitic fabrication is actively circulated in the modern Muslim world.

The Dodge Brothers and Henry Ford were aggressive business competitors. They remained close friends. The *Star* story and Ford was a fabrication. Equally false was that the *Star* was selected as the Dodge Brothers emblem to placate Jewish bankers who loaned the Dodges money. The Dodges self-funded their operations. They never borrowed money from Jewish bankers.

The Dodge Brothers were *absolutely* not Jewish. It is quite probable they had no idea that the *Star* was supposed to be Jewish. It was not commonly recognized as the Jewish symbol.



Christians had their crosses. Jews needed their own identification when none had existed before.

The *Star of David* is a relatively recent popular cultural icon of Jewish identity, less than 200 years old. The *Star of David* has been found in obscure areas of Jewish culture and occasionally as a symbol of Jewish life over millennia. It was never, generally, the symbol of Jewish identity.



Emblem of the Jewish Legion, WWI

The symbol of Jewish identity with the longest, the most enduring and the commonest recognition of Jewish identity is the Menorah, not the *Star of David*.

The *Star of David* flag was aggressively adopted by the Zionist movement as a non-religious icon for Jewish identity. Herzl's original idea for a flag incorporated seven stars on a white background. It failed to garner any consensus. Zionist history credits David Wolfson with the design of the flag.

Zionists and Zionism incorporated the *Star of David* in everything they did. The hard part to acknowledge is that Zionism was not universally accepted and adopted as the solution for Jews to their problems of security and identity in 1916 when the Roseburg Dodge was built. Zionism was at best a fringe movement of the Jewish people.

The Nazis did not immediately recognize or fully utilize the *Star of David* as their universal identification for Jews, it too evolved. They did not have original thoughts but were quick to modify, develop and evolve systems, with renowned German efficiency, to accomplish their goals when something worked. The *Star* worked for them. It was a slap in the face of the Jewish movement for self-reliance, self-development and self-defense.

After the end of the Holocaust, arguments over the *Star* continued bitterly in the Jewish world. Was the *Star* the symbol of pride and renewed birth of the Jewish people or the symbol of weakness and defeat? Should the *Star* be incorporated into the flag of the new State of Israel or not was a heated subject.

True enough, there had been isolated, non-universal uses of the *Star* in Jewish flags with borders of blue to resemble tallit, such as Rishon L'Zion's 1885 flag. Morris Harris, a draper in New York, a refugee from Russia and a member of Hovevei Zion, created his own version of the *Star of David* flag along similar lines in 1897 after the First Zionist Congress. The Zionist movement does not recognize Morris Harris as the designer of the flag of Israel. Harris did not fit the narrative.

In the end, the *Star* became the official symbol of the government of Israel. The Holy City of Jerusalem does not accept the *Star of David* as their emblem. The emblem for the city of Jerusalem is the Lion of Judah.

The Dodges, good, hard drinking Midwestern boys, most likely never encountered Jews or questions of Jewish iconography... maybe yes... maybe not. Their choice of the two interlocked triangles most likely had nothing to do with Jews... maybe yes... maybe not.

In the 1930's, the Dodge brand was phasing out the *Star* emblem. It had disappeared from Dodge trucks by 1929. Some argue, to market cars to the German government, the Jewish emblem needed to be removed. It was by 1938. The *Star* had broadly reappeared in Germany with a different meaning, a different purpose.

Gene Wilder played Rabbi Avram Belinsky in the hit 1979 ethnic comedy, *The Frisco Kid*. Confronted with an evil gunslinger who was about to kill his non-Jewish cowboy friend and mentor, Tommy Lillard, Lillard was played by Harrison Ford, Rabbi Belinsky acts. Belinsky faces his moral crisis drawing down on the gun slinger and saving Tommy's life. Belinsky hates violence and guns but was willing to do what he had to to save his friend Tommy.

Belinsky orders the gunslinger out of town. He warned him never to come back. Belinsky proclaimed to all, he will take San Francisco and the cowering gunslinger can have the rest of America.

The 1916 Dodge Touring Car in the Roseburg, Oregon museum with the *Star* emblem is an American artifact of cross cultural symbols. Jews and Jewish organizations never place a *Star* of David, even symbolically for obvious reasons, superimposed on a world map. Jews do proudly place a *Star* of David over a map of tiny Israel. Israel has a land mass about the size of the State of New Jersey. Even this tiny bit of land is too much for Jew haters.

Interpret the Dodge *Star* emblem as you wish, everybody else will anyway.

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