

# Jean Powers Soman



Jean Powers Soman, an author and historian, researched the life of her great-great grandfather, Colonel Marcus Spiegel, a German-Jewish immigrant who fought and died for the Union during the American Civil War. Jean transcribed voluminous Civil War letters, which Colonel Marcus Spiegel wrote to his family.

Based on Colonel Spiegel's letters, Jean co-edited with Frank L. Byrne the book, *A Jewish Colonel in the Civil War, Marcus M. Spiegel of the Ohio Volunteers*, University of Nebraska Press, 1995 (first published as: *Your True Marcus, The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel*, Kent State University Press, 1985.) She has also written numerous historical articles for magazines and newspapers.

At the present time, she is researching the life of another prominent relative, her great grandfather, Samuel G. Alschuler. Mr. Alschuler, also a German-Jewish immigrant, was a professional photographer, living in Illinois in the mid-nineteenth century. Alschuler took two famous photographs of Abraham Lincoln. In one photograph Alschuler let Lincoln wear his velvet collared coat (this one was taken in Urbana, Illinois on April 25, 1858, in Alschuler's studio). The second photograph of Lincoln, taken in Chicago, Illinois on November 25, 1860 in Alschuler's studio, was the first photograph taken of Lincoln growing a beard.

Jean is a member of the Board of Directors of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation (former Acting President), a member of EZRA Consortium of The American Jewish Archives, a Fellow of The Historical Museum of South Florida, a member of the Advisory Board of the Jewish Museum of Florida, and a Life Member of the National Council of Jewish Women. She was a member of the Advisory Board of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

Jean is married to William Soman and has two daughters and three grandchildren.