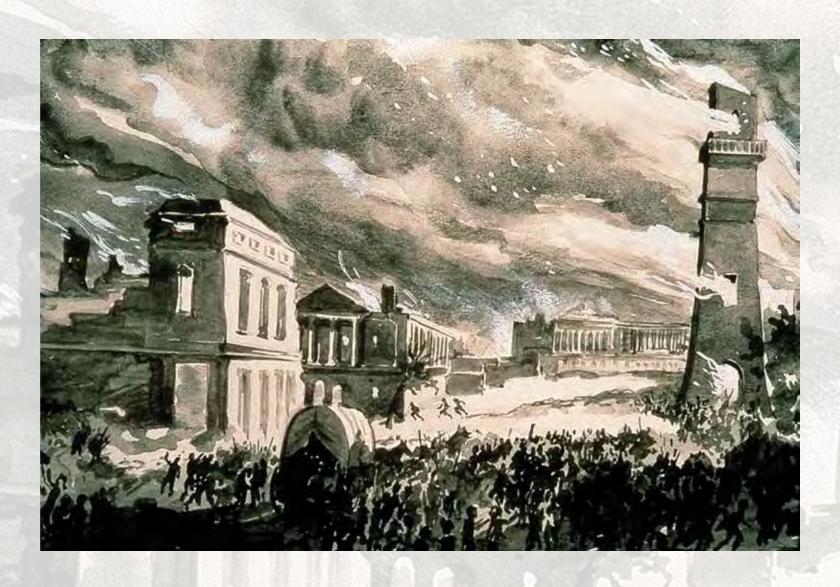
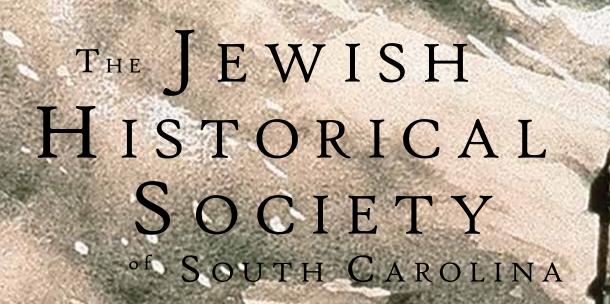
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SPRING 2011 VOLUME XVI - NUMBER 1

Register for the Spring Conference "Jews, Slavery, and the Civil War" May 24 – 26, 2011 College of Charleston Pages 11 – 13



Ann Meddin Hellman President

On the cover:

Columbia, South Carolina, surrenders to General William T. Sherman, February 17, 1865. Early the next morning, a fire breaks out and spreads, engulfing the town. The Burning of Columbia, South Carolina (1865), by William Waud for Harper's Weekly.



The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina Newsletter is published twice a year.

Dale Rosengarten, editor Alyssa Neely, asst. editor Joseph Rubin, designer

www.jhssc.org

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From the President of the JHSSC

Pillars-the Society's main support

David and Andrea Draisen from Anderson, and Lowell and

Barbara Epstein of Charleston, recently joined our illustrious

list of members who make a commitment of \$5,000, payable

over five years. Annual membership is also critical to assure the

Society's future. Sign up now or renew your support by filling

out the form on the newsletter's back cover. You also can pay

your dues online by going to www.jhssc.org and clicking on

he sesquicentennial of the Civil War begins in April and Jewish American Heritage month is celebrated in May. What better way to acknowledge both commemorations than by sponsoring a symposium on the theme of "Jews, Slavery, and the Civil War"? From May 24–26, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will join the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program in hosting a conference that features world renowned speakers, exciting field trips, and plenty of time for Q&A.

Activities begin on Tuesday afternoon, May 24, with a boat ride to Fort Sumter, an opening reception, and a screening of the film *Jewish Soldiers in Blue and Grey*. Panel presentations will be held at the College of Charleston on Wednesday and Thursday, May 25 and 26. A keynote address by Jonathan D. Sarna on Wednesday evening at

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim will be open to the public, following a banquet for conference attendees in the temple's social hall. See pages 11–13 for more information and a schedule of events.

Anderson's B'Nai Israel welcomed the JHSSC for our November meeting.

The host committee went all out to make the day a success, providing a delicious lunch, a musical interlude by diva Dina Claire, and a printed program booklet including the agenda and images of the synagogue's beautiful stained glass windows. For a copy of the booklet and a history of the synagogue, go to www.jhssc.org and click on SC Synagogues and Cemeteries.

membership.

The weekend of March 11 and 12, 2011, Aiken's Congregation Adath Yeshurun celebrated its 90th anniversary. Friday night, curator and historian Dale Rosengarten presented a slide lecture after dinner at the Woodside Plantation Country Club. On Saturday, the celebration continued at the synagogue with group pictures, Shabbat services, lunch, and an afternoon program sharing tales of founding members. A hearty mazel tov to Adath Yeshurun!

Thanks to Board Member Doris Baumgarten, who enlisted the help of Nelson Danish to take pictures of all of

the graves in Aiken's Sons of Israel Cemetery, the Society's web page has been updated with additional burials, linking names to the gravestones. You can check out the site at www.jhssc.org/Aiken_Cemetery.

Joe Wachter is processing the paperwork for the third historical marker sponsored by JHSSC. At our meeting in Anderson, the board voted to erect a marker in front of B'Nai Israel to acknowledge the congregation's century-long history. If you know of other historically significant sites, contact Joe at jhw@48th.com or submit your suggestions at www.jhssc.org on the volunteer page.

Save the dates October 28–30, 2011, for the Southern Jewish Historical Society's annual meeting, to be held at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. JHSSC and USC's Jewish Studies Program are collaborating with

the regional society to put together an exciting program which will be posted on our website events page as plans are finalized. If the SJHS meeting Max and I attended in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, last October is any indication of what Columbia will be like, we are in for a spectacular

treat. To volunteer to help the local host committee, please contact Rachel Gordin Barnett at (803) 783-1666, or via email, rgbarnett@earthlink.net.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I note the passing of Harriet Keyserling of Beaufort, South Carolina. An original board member of the Society and a steady supporter of the College's Jewish Studies Program, Harriet died on Friday, December 10, 2010. She will be sorely missed by everyone who knew her, but remembered far and wide as a political trailblazer and state legislator, and as author of the classic memoir, *Against the Tide: One Woman's Political Struggle*.

Cenn M. Hellman

Fondly,

Ann Meddin Hellman hellmana@bellsouth.net

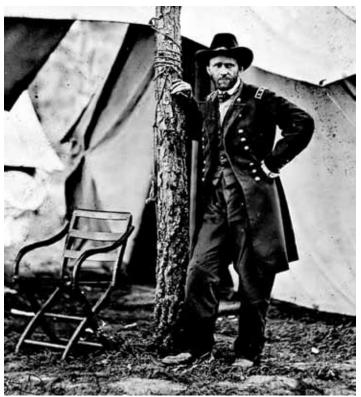
When Grant Expelled the Jews

by Jonathan D. Sarna

n December 17, 1862, as the Civil War entered its second winter, General Ulysses S. Grant issued the most notorious anti-Jewish official order in American history: "The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also department orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order." Known as General Orders No. 11, the document blamed "Jews, as a class" for the widespread smuggling and cotton speculation that affected the area under Grant's command. It required them to leave.

Just hours after the order was issued, Grant's forces at Holly Springs were raided by 3,500 Confederate troops led by Major General Earl Van Dorn. The results proved devastating, and lines of communication were disrupted for weeks. As a consequence, news of Grant's order expelling the Jews spread slowly and did not reach army headquarters in a timely fashion. This spared many Jews who might otherwise have been banished.

A copy of General Orders No. 11 finally reached Paducah, Kentucky—a city occupied by Grant's forces—11 days after it was issued. Cesar Kaskel, a staunch Union supporter, as well as all the other known Jews in the city, were handed papers ordering them "to leave the city of Paducah, Kentucky." As they prepared to abandon their homes, Kaskel and several other



General Ulysses S. Grant at his headquarters in Cold Harbor, Virginia. June 1864. Library of Congress.

Jews dashed off a telegram to President Abraham Lincoln describing their plight.

In all likelihood, Lincoln never saw that telegram. He was busy preparing to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. The irony of his freeing the slaves while Grant was expelling the Jews was not lost on some contemporaries. Some Jewish leaders feared that Jews would soon replace blacks as the nation's stigmatized minority.



Cesar Kaskel. Photograph File., PC-2210. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Kaskel decided to appeal to Abraham Lincoln in person. Paul Revere–like, he rode down to Washington, spreading news of General Orders No. 11 wherever he went. With help from a friendly congressman, he obtained an immediate interview with the president, who turned out to have no knowledge whatsoever of the order, for it had not reached Washington. According to an oft-quoted report, he resorted to biblical imagery in his interview with Kaskel, a reminder of how many 19th-century Americans linked Jews to Ancient Israel, and America to the Promised Land:

"And so," Lincoln is said to have drawled, "the children of Israel were driven from the happy land of Canaan?"

"Yes," Kaskel responded, "and that is why we have come unto Father Abraham's bosom, asking protection."

"And this protection," Lincoln declared, "they shall have at once."

General-in-Chief of the Army Henry Halleck, ordered by Lincoln to countermand General Orders No. 11, seems to have had his doubts concerning its authenticity. In writing to Grant, he chose his words carefully. "If such an order has been issued," his telegram read, "it will be immediately revoked." Two days later, several urgent telegrams went out from Grant's headquarters in obedience to that demand: "By direction of the General-in-Chief of the Army at Washington," they read, "the General Order from these Head Quarters expelling Jews from this Department is hereby revoked."

In a follow-up meeting with Jewish leaders, Lincoln reaffirmed that he knew "of no distinction between Jew and Gentile." "To condemn a class," he emphatically declared, "is, to say the least, to wrong the good with the bad. I do not like to hear a class or nationality condemned on account of a few sinners." In retrospect, we know anti-Jewish prejudices were heightened by the prominence of several Jews in the ranks of the Confederacy, notably Jefferson Davis's right-hand man and cabinet secretary, Judah P. Benjamin. But the Jewish Con-



Henry Mack. Photograph File, PC-2778. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

federates were by no means the only cause of prejudice. Smuggling, speculating, price gouging, swindling, and producing "shoddy" merchandise for the military—all were similarly laid upon the doorstep of "the Jews." Indeed, "Jews" came to personify much of wartime capitalism's ills. They bore disproportionate blame for badly produced uniforms, poorly firing weapons, inedible foodstuffs, and other

substandard merchandise that corrupt contractors supplied to the war effort and sutlers marketed to unsuspecting troops. In the eyes of many Americans (including some in the military), all traders, smugglers, sutlers, and wartime profiteers were "sharp-nosed" Jews, whether they were actually Jewish or not. The implication, echoing a perennial antisemitic canard, was that Jews preferred to benefit from war rather than fight in it.

But if that was the cause of Grant's order, it does not explain its timing. That, we now know, was linked to a visit Grant received from his 68-year-old father, Jesse R. Grant, accompanied by members of the prominent Mack family of Cincinnati, significant Jewish clothing manufacturers. The Macks, as part of an ingenious scheme, had formed a secret partnership with the elder Grant. In return for 25 percent of their profits, he agreed to accompany them to his son's Mississippi headquarters and act as their agent to "procure a permit for them to purchase cotton." According to an eyewitness, General Grant waxed indignant at his father's crass attempt to profit from his son's military status, and raged at the Jewish traders who "entrapped his old father into such an unworthy undertaking." In a classic act of displacement, he "expelled the Jews rather than his father."

Subsequently, Ulysses S. Grant never defended General Orders No. 11. In his *Personal Memoirs*, he ignored it. His wife, Julia, proved far less circumspect. In her memoirs, she characterized the order as nothing less than "obnoxious."

General Orders No. 11 came back to haunt Ulysses S. Grant when he ran for president in 1868. Thanks to his Democratic opponents, who used the episode to curry favor with Jews, the order became an important election issue. For the

first time, a Jewish issue stood front and center in a presidential contest. Jews who supported Republican policies faced a difficult conundrum: Should they vote for a party they considered bad for the country just to avoid voting for a man who had been bad to the Jews?

Grant emerged the winner by a healthy 134 electoral votes. With the election behind him, he released an unprecedented letter that told Jews what they wanted to hear: "I have no prejudice against sect or race, but want each individual to be judged by his own merit. Order No. 11 does not sustain this statement, I admit, but then I do not sustain that order."

During his eight-year presidency, Grant went out of his way to prove that his apology was genuine. Indeed, he appointed more Jews to public office than all previous presidents combined, including a governor of Washington State (Edward Salomon) and a superintendent of Indian Affairs (Herman Bendell). He was the first president to have a Jewish advisor (Simon Wolf), the first to attend a synagogue dedication (Adas Israel, D.C.), and the first to actively intervene on behalf of persecuted Jews in Russia and Romania. He actually appointed an unpaid Jewish consul to Romania, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, whose sole mission was to aid his fellow Jews "laboring under severe oppression."

Following his presidency, Grant on several occasions publicly reinforced his support for Jews. When he died in 1885, the same week as the most highly regarded Jew in the world at that time, Sir Moses Montefiore of England, the two men were linked together in the American Jewish mind as heroes and humanitarians, and they were mourned together in many synagogues.

Subsequently, of course, Grant's reputation sank like a stone. Twentieth-century historians, many of them southerners critical of his benevolent policy toward African Americans, criticized both the way he waged war and the way he forged peace. They ranked him close to the bottom among all American presidents. At one point, only Warren G. Harding ranked lower.

A reexamination of Grant's career makes clear that he deserved better. New biographies set forth many of his political achievements, especially in the area of race. Now we know that he also overcame prejudice against Jews. His transformation from enemy to friend, from a general who expelled "Jews as a class" to a president who embraced Jews as "individuals," reminds us that even great figures in history can learn from their mistakes.

In America, hatred can be overcome.

Jonathan D. Sarna, Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, based this essay on his forthcoming book, When General Grant Expelled the Jews, to be published in Spring 2012 by Schocken/Nextbook.

Diplomacy's Cruel Sword: Confederate Agents in Pursuit of Recognition

by Theodore Rosengarten

y the fourth grade, at Brooklyn's P.S. 161, I'd heard about Civil War icons Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant; in the obligatory "Great Jews in History" class in Hebrew School, I learned about the heroics of baseball player Hank Greenberg, financier Bernard Baruch, and Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin. Even as an adult, I am amused by the thought that a person from a group so unprominent in numbers and from a tribe not universally loved could rise to such dizzying heights.

More recently, I learned that one of the South's chief propagandists, a man with the thankless task of selling Confederate independence to Europe, was a Jew from Columbia, South Carolina, named Edwin De Leon. And though both he and Benjamin were committed

Confederates, they became bitter rivals, until Benjamin finally fired De Leon for failing to protect secrets and for his run-ins with the men who held official diplomatic portfolios, Benjamin appointees James Mason of Virginia and John Slidell of Louisiana.

I wondered if there was anything in the way Benjamin and De Leon practiced diplomacy that could be attributed to their being Jewish and growing up in the South. Reading their books and essays and surviving letters, I would say the quick answer is "No." Both men married Catholic women, raised their children outside of the Jewish faith, and had no contact with synagogues or Jewish organizations in their adult lives.

De Leon was the son of Sephardic Jews, Mordecai Hendricks De Leon and Rebecca Lopez. The De Leons originated in Leon, Spain, from which they took their name. Mordecai served several terms as mayor of Columbia, where he was a close friend of educator and philosopher Dr. Thomas Cooper, for whom he named a son, Edwin's brother Thomas Cooper De Leon, a famous post-war memorialist. A third brother, David Camden



Judah P. Benjamin (1811–1884), oil on canvas by Adolph Rinck (1811–1875), 1853. The Historic New Orleans Collection.

De Leon, was the first surgeon general of the Confederacy.

Benjamin had been born in the British West Indies, also the child of Sephardic Jewish parents. He spent his childhood in Charleston, South Carolina, and as a young adult, moved to New Orleans, two of the largest Jewish communities in early 19th-century America. His father was one of the original dissenters in Charleston who founded the Reformed Society of Israelites, the first Jewish Reform movement in the New World. It is likely young Judah was in the first group of boys confirmed in the new congregation, founded when he was 13 years old.

In New Orleans, Benjamin made a fortune practicing law, and eventually he bought a sugar plantation with 140 slaves. In 1852, he became the first Jew elected to the United States Senate, and was

re-elected six years later. He became close friends in Washington with a senator from Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, and through the many posts Benjamin would hold in the Confederate government, his desk was no more than five feet away from President Davis's. As overseer of the Department of State, he had a leading role in formulating Confederate diplomatic policy and telling the diplomats what to say, and what not to say.

As the diplomatic struggle followed the fortunes of the war itself, southern partisans were "burdened" by bad news from the battlefields. "Burden" is the word historian Charles Hubbard uses in *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy* (University of Tennessee Press, 1998). Southern diplomats were "burdened" by inexperience and committed, Hubbard concludes, "to the traditions of a dying past." The Confederacy was "burdened" as well by a misguided devotion to the strategy of King Cotton.

But Hubbard does not name the biggest burden of all—the South's commitment to slavery. The greatest diplomatic move of the war, the Emancipation Proclamation, initially announced in September 1862, gets relegated to three scattered lines.

Hubbard calls the Proclamation a thorny issue, when in fact it was the whole briar patch. Lincoln insisted the Proclamation would silence the southern cry for recognition. Union Secretary of State Seward called it a double-edged sword. He worried that the new law would antagonize slaveholders in the border states

who remained loyal, or encourage the enslaved to rise in insurrection. Most of all, slavery's end might weaken the American economy and delay completion of the American empire, a task that awaited the reunion of the rebellious states.

The British people took Lincoln at his word. There was jubilation in Manchester, Liverpool, London, and all towns, big and small, when he announced the slaves would be freed. Ambassador Charles Francis Adams reported that nothing had produced meetings and crowds like this "since the days of the corn laws"—are ference to the struggle, 20 years earlier, to repeal the tariffs on American grains and bring down the price of food. "The Emancipation Proclamation has done more for us here than all our former victories and all our diplomacy," wrote the ambassador's son, Henry. "It is creating an almost convulsive reaction in our favor all over the country. . . . Public opinion

is very deeply stirred here and finds its expression in meetings, addresses to President Lincoln... and all the other symptoms of a great popular movement particularly unpleasant to the upper classes here because it rests on the spontaneous action of the laboring classes."

This was their Cairo, their Tahrir Square. British leaders responded with caution and scorn. Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone called for immediate Confederate recognition to save slavery and protect future cotton crops. Dare to intervene, warned Seward, and the conflict would turn into a "war of the world." Apparently, Prime Minister Lord Palmerston agreed. "We must continue to be on-lookers," he declared, "till the war shall take on a more decided turn."

In fact, Lincoln had committed the Union to ending slavery through a war for territory. The Emancipation Proclamation provided a legal framework for freeing more than three million slaves as Union forces advanced. Hundreds, thousands of people would be liberated every day as the armies moved through the South. Emancipation would not be a one-time act

but the ongoing drama of release from captivity.

De Leon believed the only thing the South could do to counteract the Proclamation was to copy it, but he wasn't for doing that, and therefore it might be wise to call the diplomats home and use the money spent on propaganda to wage the war.

Diplomats reported to Richmond that even their friends were hostile to slavery. Benjamin shot back: stand firm. "Decline any negotiation related to slavery."

September In 1863, months after news of the northern victory at Gettysburg dampened southern hopes, De Leon wrote to Benjamin and Davis, complaining that his advice was not listened to in Richmond and that Commissioner John Slidell would not share information with him. He offered his opinion that the French were "a far more mercenary race than the English." The only way to win French opinion was to buy it, and for better or worse the French were only too willing to sell.

De Leon put the letters in the care of the blockade runner Ceres which had the misfortune of getting captured by the U.S. Navy. The letters were found and, two weeks later, published in the *New York Daily*

Tribune. Benjamin fired De Leon, telling him that President Davis's confidence in John Slidell was "undiminished" and that the president was "mortified" over De Leon's behavior. De Leon wrote back, saying he intended to come to Richmond and plead his case to Davis, who would have to choose between Benjamin and himself. But he did not make the trip, not until 1867, when he returned to the United States to campaign to end Reconstruction and to combat Ulysses S. Grant's bid to be president.

The Confederate front against discussing abolition began cracking under the strains of the military situation at home. Benjamin changed his tune. Whereas the South "was only fighting for the vindication of our right of self-government and independence," he instructed James Mason and John Slidell to put the question squarely to the British and the French: "Did Europe wish to recognize the Confederacy but was held back by objections not made known to us?"

"Not made known to us"—in whose voice is Benjamin speaking? Is this the voice of a worldly secretary of state who has



Edwin De Leon (1818–1891). Photograph File, PC-941. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

somehow blocked out the most important news from overseas? Or is it the voice of a southern Jew sensitive to being insulted behind his back? "Judas Iscariot Benjamin," "Mr. Davis's pet Jew," "the Jew Benjamin," the "Israelite with Egyptian principles"—he'd been called these and worse and reflexively learned to turn the other cheek.

Confederate newspapers began preparing the public for emancipation. "I have been surprised, both at myself and others," wrote the Swiss-born propagandist Henry Hotze, "how composedly an idea was received which two years or even one year ago would not have entered any sane man's mind." It was a "fearful price" but it had to be paid.

The British press mocked the idea as the South's "last card." The South was facing defeat, said the prime minister, and

nothing could be done about it. To recognize the Confederacy would not save the day and might bring about an unwanted war with the United States. The diplomatic game was lost.

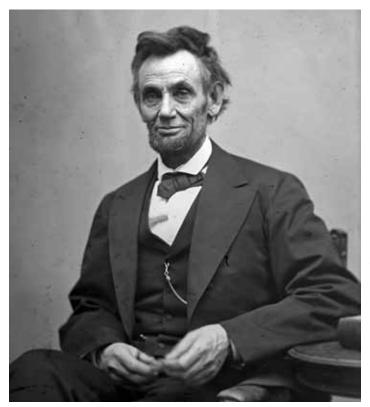
From a Jewish perspective, the significance of the South's defeat lay not in the squabbles of two southern Jewish partisans, but in the reunification of the country which turned the United States into an object of desire for millions of people around the world. For our immigrant grandparents, the passage to America was their emancipation from poverty and despotism, a great migration foreshadowed and made possible by the outcome of the Civil War.

Theodore Rosengarten, Zucker/Goldberg Chair in Jewish Studies at the College of Charleston, teaches courses in history at the College of Charleston and the University of South Carolina.

"He Was Like One of Us": The Judaization of Abraham Lincoln

by Gary Phillip Zola

ike many of their felcitizens, Jews long venerated the man often called the greatest of all American presidents. In fact, Abraham Lincoln's association with American Jews goes back to the 1840s when he was a circuit-riding lawyer in central Illinois, and the relationship has grown and flourished to the present day. Abraham Jonas (1801–1864), a prominent political activist from Quincy, Illinois, appears to have been one of Lincoln's earliest and closest associates. These two men met in 1838 and became lifelong collaborators. By the time Lincoln ran for president, he referred to Jonas as one of his "most valued friends."2



Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), February 5, 1865. Photo: Alexander Gardner (1821–1882). Library of Congress.

During the years in Springfield and when he rode the 8th District Court circuit, Lincoln patronized Jewish businesses and socialized with Jews. Samuel Huttenbauer, an 18-year-old peddler from Cincinnati, told his children and

grandchildren that during his peddling visits to Springfield, Illinois, Abraham Lincoln purchased his suspenders and collar buttons from Huttenbauer's push cart. Lincoln also frequented Julius Hammerslough's (1831-1908)Springfield haberdashery. and the two men maintained a cordial friendship. Lincoln shopped at Henry Rice's general store when he visited Jacksonville, Illinois, and, when in Athens, Illinois, he was known to lodge in the front section of Louis Salzenstein's clothing store.³

After his election to the presidency in 1860 and throughout the course of his term in office, a growing number of American Jews took note of Lincoln's sym-

pathetic responsiveness to a series of political controversies that posed genuine threats to Jewish civil equality in the United States. The actions he took in regard to three well publicized political issues convinced many of his contemporaries that Lincoln harbored no prejudice against Jews.

At the onset of the Civil War, congress authorized the U.S. military to appoint chaplains who were "ordained ministers of some Christian denomination." This restriction seemed unconstitutional to many people, and the organized Jewish community promptly appealed to Lincoln for help in changing the law. The president was responsive, and he made good on his promise to support a legislative revision of the chaplaincy bill. Once Congress passed new legislation in 1862, Lincoln appointed the nation's first Jewish military chaplain, Rabbi Jacob Frankel (1808–1887) of Philadelphia.⁴

On December 17, 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant promulgated his infamous edict, General Orders No. 11, which expelled all Jewish citizens (men, women, and children) from the Military Department of Tennessee. This order constituted the only time in all of American history when Jews, as a class, were expelled from American soil. As soon as the edict was brought to his attention, Lincoln revoked it. Again, the Jewish press took favorable note of Lincoln's decisive action.⁵

Eight months after the revocation of Grant's order, a third controversy came to a head. The newly established National Reform Association (NRA) sought to amend the U.S. Constitution to confirm Christianity as the nation's dominant religion. In February 1864, a distinguished delegation from the NRA visited Lincoln, read him the text of the proposed amendment, and solicited his political backing. Lincoln promised the delegates he would study the matter carefully, but for the remainder of his administration, he took no action whatsoever. Again, the Anglo-Jewish press delighted in Lincoln's studious indifference to the NRA's recommendations.⁶

These political decisions persuaded most Jews that Lincoln was a firm supporter of equal footing under the law. By the time of Lincoln's murder, an overwhelming majority of Jews who lived in the Union—and even some who lived in the South—had become convinced that Abraham Lincoln was a man who harbored no ill will toward any of his fellow human beings and, in particular, manifested a genuine affinity for the Jewish people.

In memorializing Lincoln after his shocking death, American Jewish leaders joined the rest of the nation in praising the fallen leader as the savior of the Union, the Great Emancipator, one of the people, a man of integrity, courage, and kindliness. Yet many of these Jewish eulogies contained an element that distinguishes them from all others: Jews eulogized Lincoln by openly projecting Jewish religious values onto him, and thereby transfigured the 16th president into a spiritual kinsman. Or, to borrow

hincoln the First Smerican.

I want this with 5 or But gentlemen to whom himseless birthday was a superior himseles and addition to the fact that he was a personal heard town arount admin ; how sainted President, it happen also that his birthday are incides with that I himseling that have birthday and a little apil was home to blive our the same day this with But through we may not have been considered or have seen our children born on himseling littleday, one patriotic American we good when, can help feeling a spiritual we hirth at the remained the little February, the day randred immental by me who have then any one clear had taught in the infinite possibilities; and himself teppinght soul, the birthday; Abraham any linearly.

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Before becoming spiritual leader of Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Rabbi Jacob Raisin served congregations in Port Gibson, Mississippi, and Butte, Montana. On February 16, 1906, the Russian-born rabbi delivered a sermon in Butte comparing Abraham Lincoln to "Abraham our Patriarch." Breaking "the yoke of slavery," Raisin argued in his address, made the 16th president "the benefactor not only of the Southern blacks but of the whites as well." Montana was a territory, not yet a state, when Lincoln, "like most of the great leaders of the people of Israel, like David, like Saul, like Moses himself ... removed all obstacles and hindrances, conquered all opposition . . . [and] succeeded in inscribing his name and enshrining his fame in the hearts of his countrymen to the remotest generation." Raisin delivered the same sermon in later years from his various pulpits, always the second week of February.

Rabbi Jacob Salmon Raisin Papers, Mss. 1075 3/9. Gift of Mordenai R. Hirsch and Rachel Raisin. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

the president's own famous turn of phrase, American Jews made Lincoln into one of the "almost chosen people." 7

Toward the end of the 19th century, when Americans experienced a renewed fascination with the Civil War and the

PAGE 10 JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

story of Lincoln's life, which had come to epitomize that dramatic chapter in the nation's history, a noteworthy number of American Jews participated in this trend. Some Jews became collectors of Lincolnalia and others contributed to the massive surge of interest in Lincoln that began to flourish at the fin-de-siècle and continued throughout the Progressive era. During this period, a few Jews—Lincoln stalwarts—began to reconstruct the history of Lincoln's Jewish associations. As the 1909 centennial anniversary of Lincoln's birth approached, American Jewry discovered anew that the Great Emancipator had been a dear friend of their forebears. As Lincoln's evenhanded treatment of the Jewish community began to resurface, American Jews, like most Americans, enthusiastically and actively participated in what one historian called "the Lincoln enterprise." Once again, Jews vigorously celebrated Lincoln as both an American icon and a true Jewish hero. In centennial addresses and commemorations, Jews made Lincoln one of their own—a spiritual and moral kinsman.8

Lincoln's mythic stature grew through the first three quarters of the 20th century, and reached its zenith in 1959, when the nation marked the sesquicentennial commemoration of Lincoln's birth. American Jews remained steadfast in their embrace of Lincoln as the symbolic intersection of Americanism's and Judaism's moral legacies, and the organized Jewish community happily participated in both the 125th and 150th anniversaries of Lincoln's birth. Jews promoted his legacy, venerated his memory and, again, preserved the now well-established assertion that Lincoln was a dear friend of American Israel.

For many American Jews, Lincoln has become much more than a great American president, a heroic cultural figure, or even a kindly friend of the Jews. Over the past century and a half, American Jews have persistently Judaized Father Abraham and honored him as an adoptive parent or fostering patron. Steadily, American Jews transfigured the 16th president into a thoroughgoing American Jewish icon. No non-Jewish American hero—no matter how beloved and revered—can rival Lincoln's enduring legacy among the Jews of America, who remain largely convinced that Abraham Lincoln was, as one rabbi declared in his 1865 eulogy for the martyred president, just "like one of us."

NOTES

1. Polls and surveys frequently name Lincoln as the nation's greatest president. For a summary, see W. Smoot Carter's paper, "Defining a Path to Greatness in the Modern Presidency" on the website of The Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress, http://www.thepresidency.org/publications/presidential-fellows-works/18/290-text-of-a-dialogue-

on-presidential-challenges-and-leadership-papers-of-the-2006-2007-center-fellows (February 25, 2011).

- 2. On Jonas and Lincoln, see Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1951), 189–94.
- 3. The best sources for information on Lincoln's Jewish associations are Isaac Markens, *Abraham Lincoln and the Jews* (New York: Isaac Markens, 1909) and Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, which is meticulously documented. On Huttenbauer, see Emilie Jane Levy's "Year Paper" for Vassar College entitled "My Family," Poughkeepsie, New York, GF 411, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio; and on Salzenstein, see letter from Robert S. Frisch titled "Salzenstein's Store: Abraham Lincoln Shopped Here," *Chicago Jewish History*, 26:1 (Winter 2002): 6–7.
- 4. For the most complete and detailed history of the "Chaplaincy Controversy," see Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 56–97, 121–55.
- 5. For an excellent treatment of Grant's General Orders No. 11, see Stephen V. Ash, "Civil War Exodus: The Jews and Grant's General Order No. 11," *Historian*, 44:4 (August 1982): 505–23.
- 6. See Steven Keith Green, "The National Reform Association and the Religious Amendments to the Constitution, 1864–1876," master's thesis (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1987). See also, Proceedings of the National Convention to Secure the Religious Amendment of the Constitution of the United States held in Cincinnati Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 1872: with an account of the Origin and Progress of the Movement (Philadelphia: Jas. B. Rodgers Co., 1872), 18–20.
- 7. In his "Address to the New Jersey State Senate," Trenton, New Jersey, February 21, 1861, Lincoln alluded to the United States of America as the Almighty's "almost chosen people." For the text of Lincoln's address, see http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/trenton1 (February 24, 2011).
- 8. Historian Merrill D. Peterson identified five core elements of the "apotheosis" of Lincoln that occurred at the time of his death: (a) Savior of the Union, (b) Great Emancipator, (c) Man of the People, (d) the First American, and (e) the Self-Made Man. See Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 26–27.
- 9. Rabbi Benjamin Szold used this expression, a quote that comes from Genesis 3:22, in a eulogy for Lincoln in German. See Emanuel Hertz, *Abraham Lincoln: The Tribute of the Synagogue* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1927), 44.

Gary Phillip Zola, Professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and executive director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, based this essay on his forthcoming book on Lincoln.

JEWS, SLAVERY, AND THE CIVIL WAR MAY 24 - MAY 26, 2011 CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA REGISTRATION FORM

Registration deadline is May 1, 2011			
Last Name	First		
Spouse/Friend			
Address			
City	State	_ Zip	
Phone	E-mail		
Name(s) on name tags			
You must arrange your own hotel accommodations (s	see recommendations below)		
PLEASE MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR THE FOL	LOWING:		
(Fees are per person; advance reservations are manda	ntory)		
Registration for FULL program, except boat and wall	king tours, \$130 per person	\$	
Tuesday, May 24, evening reception and film ONI	<i>Y</i> , \$15 per person	\$	
Wednesday, May 25, program and meals ONLY, \$	85 per person •••••••	······ \$	
Wednesday, May 25, KKBE Jonathan D. Sarna lec	ture ONLY, \$5 per person	\$	
Thursday, May 26, program and meals ONLY, \$50			
Optional boat trip to Fort Sumter, Tuesday, May 24,			
Optional walking tour, Wednesday, May 25, 3:45pm			
LATE REGISTRATION FEE (after May 1), \$25 per			
	•		
	TOTAL PAYMENT IN	CLUDED \$	
To register online: go to www.jhssc.org/events	QUESTIONS:		
MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:	Enid Idelsohn	Email: IdelsohnE@cofc.edu	
Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program	phone: 843.953.3918	fax: 843.953.7624	
College of Charleston	eston		
Charleston, SC 29424	Only dairy meals will be served. If you prefer strictly kosher meals, please check here.		
www.cofc.edu/~jwst	strictly kosner meats, p	teuse theth here.	
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 Rate: \$159
 Rate: \$149 - \$159
 Rate: \$140 - \$250

Jews, Slavery, an Conference Schedu

Unless otherwise noted, all sessions will take place in the College of Cha

Tuesday afternoon, May 24

- 1:50 Optional tour of Fort Sumter – Meet at Liberty Square
- Boat departs to Fort Sumter 2:30
- Welcome reception and registration. Join us for light appetizers, beer, and wine 6:15
- 7:30 Film screening: Jewish Soldiers in Blue and Gray

Wednesday morning, May 25

- Breakfast and registration
- Politics and Diplomacy before the War 9:00

Paul Finkelman (Albany Law School) – Judah P. Benjamin and the Swiss Treaty

Geoffrey D. Cunningham (Louisiana State University) - "A Bond of Distrust": Judah Benjamin and the Secession Crisis

Benjamin Ginsberg (Johns Hopkins University) - Jewish Marginality in the Antebellum South

10:30 Break

11:00 Borderlands

William Pencak (Penn State University) – Another Civil War: Orthodox and Reform Jews Debate a Statue of Judah Touro (1860)

Andrea Mehrländer (Checkpoint Charlie Foundation, Berlin) – Stigmatized as New Orleans's "German Jew": John Kruttschnitt (1812–1892), German Consul and Confederate Patriot

Lee Shai Weissbach (University of Louisville) – Kentucky Jewry during the Civil War: A Local History Perspective

Wednesday afternoon, May 25

12:30 Lunch

1:30 **Concurrent sessions**

Judaism at War

Leonard Greenspoon (Creighton University) – The Bible Says It's So. . . . But, It Ain't Necessarily So

David M. Cobin (Hamline University School of Law) - Made in the Image of God: Rabbinic Decisions and the Jewish Law of Slavery

Leonard Rogoff (Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina) - Who Is True Israel? Yankees, Confederates, Jews, and African Americans

Kent A. McConnell (Phillips Exeter Academy) – "The Spirit of Our Forefathers": Death and Religious Life among Jews of the Civil War Era

Confederates and Unionists

Daniel Kotzin (Medaille College) - Constructing an American Jewish Identity during the Civil War: The Letters of Marcus M. Spiegel

Gary P. Zola (American Jewish Archives) – "The Patriotic Corn Doctor": The Enigmatic Career of Dr. Isachar Zacharie Barry Stiefel (College of Charleston) – David Lopez, Jr. (1809–1884): Builder for History

Theodore Rosengarten (College of Charleston) – Diplomacy's Cruel Sword: Confederate Agents in Pursuit of Recognition

- Optional walking tours of downtown Charleston 3:30
- Dinner reception at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim 6:00
- Keynote by Jonathan D. Sarna, Sanctuary of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim "That Obnoxious Order": Ulysses S. Grant 7:30 and the Jews

and the Civil War dule, May 24–26, 2011

Charleston's Jewish Studies Center, corner of Wentworth and Glebe Streets

Thursday morning, May 26

8:00 Breakfast

8:30 Slavery and Abolition

Edward Sanders (independent scholar) – The Levys: The Story of a Jewish Slave Owner in America, His Heirs and Former Slaves

David Markus (University of Arkansas) – The Block Family of Old Washington: Faith, Slavery, and Assimilation on the Arkansas Frontier

Sarah Casteel (Carleton University) – The Port Jew in Neoslave Narratives of the Americas: Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes*

Howard N. Lupovitch (University of Western Ontario) – From Emancipation to Abolition: The Transatlantic Activism of Jewish Emigrés

10:30 Break

10:45 Concurrent sessions

Local Studies

Tobias Brinkmann (Penn State University) – Defending Emancipation: Chicago's Jews and the Civil War Mathew Semler (Hebrew Union College) – Cincinnati Jewry during the Civil War

Howard Rock (Florida International University) – "A Watershed Moment": The Jews of New York City and the Civil War

Jewish Wartime Experiences

Rachel Grossman (Florida State University) – American Civil Judaism: Dissension, Inclusion, and the Chaplaincy Controversy

Jennifer Stollman (Fort Lewis College) – "An Ardent Attachment to My Birth": Antebellum Southern Jewish Women as Confederate Ambassadors

Richard Mendelsohn (University of Cape Town) – Comparing Jewish Soldiering in the South African War (1899–1902) and the American Civil War (1861–1865)

Thursday afternoon, May 26

12:15 Lunch

1:15 Reconstruction

Anton Hieke (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg) – Going South: The Migration of Jewish Yankees to the South after Appomattox

Michael Cohen (Tulane University) – Jewish Merchants, Northern Capital, and Southern Reconstruction Stuart Rockoff (Institute of Southern Jewish Life) – The Mysterious Death of Marx Schoenberg: Jews and the Politics of Reconstruction in Ascension Parish, Louisiana

Seth Epstein (University of Minnesota) – "No American has ever paid finer tribute to the great Jewish race": Tolerance, Jews, and American Nationalism in Lost Cause Ceremonies in Asheville, North Carolina, 1926–1945

3:15 Adjourn



This program was made possible by the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project, directed by the Association for Jewish Studies. Support for the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project is generously provided by Legacy Heritage Fund Limited.



A Yiddisher Yankee in King Cotton's Court

by Billy Keyserling

In 1998, when my mother, Harriet Keyserling, was completing her book, Against the Tide: One Woman's Political Struggle, my father and I jokingly promoted "A Yiddisher Yankee in King Cotton's Court" for the title. Obviously we did not get our way and that was a good thing.

As I think about the person who was my closest ally and friend, and I hers, I am grateful for the long, healthy, and productive life of this Yiddisher Yankee and her remarkable achievements in King Cotton's court.

Like her father, Isadore Hirschfeld, the youngest of 18 children brought by his widowed mother to a three-room apartment on New York's Lower East Side, who is said to have studied under the family piano using a candle for light, Harriet had a passion for learning, for questioning, for understanding complex issues, and for seeking "truth."



Harriet Hirschfeld Keyserling (1922–2010). All photos: Keyserling family papers, Mss. 1049. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Like her father-in-law, William Keyserling, who at age 18 came alone to this country escaping tsarist Russia, Harriet believed in standing up and doing the right thing. While concerned with what others would think, she never let this hold her back.

A bright, enthusiastic, and intellectually thirsty 22-yearold moved to South Carolina to marry my dad. Their initial plan for when dad returned home after World War II was to move back to New York City, where Dr. K would do a surgical residency and mother would harness her intellect and love of art and put them to work in the big city.

Circumstances changed and mother spent 66 years in a world that was at first foreign to her. As time passed, she achieved incredible influence on the people with whom she worked and on many who did not know her but watched and were inspired from afar.

From the time she came to little Beaufort, Harriet worked for the betterment of the community, often—especially in the early days—in ways that were not understood or appreciated. She brought world-class cultural events to our small town

and hosted them on the military bases because other event venues were segregated and she did not believe that culture belonged to just one group. She championed public art and won the battle to erect, at public expense, a bust of Civil War legend Robert Smalls—the first and only such sculpture in Beaufort today.

At age 54, after raising four children and getting us off to school, Harriet ran for public office. She was the first woman elected to Beaufort County Council, previously the domain of the good old boys, thanks in large part to the legions of northerners transplanted on Hilton Head Island and my father's loyal, mainly African-American clientele.

Realizing that the issues of greatest concern to her—the natural environment, public education, cultural activities and the arts—were "handled"

in Columbia, she took a deep breath and was the first woman to run for the South Carolina House from Beaufort. Again, notwithstanding the local political establishment's opposition to electing women who "would not understand" and would likely not be a friend to business-as-usual in Columbia, she was elected. After a tough race, the election was challenged by the loser, but Harriet ultimately won and served Beaufort and South Carolina proudly for 16 years.

She led the fight to end wasteful filibusters. She became one of the nation's most knowledgeable legislators on nuclear waste. She helped engineer a state loan to the Spoleto Festival, at a moment when financial challenges were about to shut it down. She worked hard for educational reform. She crafted the state's first energy policy. She broke several glass ceilings and set an example for other women. In sum, this Yiddisher Yankee left indelible marks on King Cotton's court.

I have no doubt that the legacy of Harriet Hirschfeld Keyserling will live on in those she touched through her work, her writings, and her courage and determination to raise the bar in Beaufort and South Carolina.

Honoring Harriet Keyserling

Selected remarks from a celebration of her life, USC Beaufort, March 5, 2011

Against the Tide by Martin Perlmutter

am honored to be given the opportunity to publicly thank Harriet Keyserling for the life she led and for the inspiration and hope that she provided for ordinary people like me. Harriet had incredible courage, steely determination, and an unrivaled seriousness of purpose. She has made the world a better place, often at significant cost to herself and her family.

In Hebrew, we say of the departed, *zichronah livrocha*, that their memory should be a blessing.

Against the Tide is Harriet's memoir. The book contains serious reflections of a serious woman, and discusses in some detail her struggle for social justice—for women and for African Americans—her unrelenting pursuit of environmental conservation, and her unflagging view that the arts are a vehicle for elevating human striving and human dignity.

Against the Tide is a Jewish woman's story. My connection with Harriet has to do with the Jewish part of her life. She was a founding member of the advisory board of Jewish Studies at the College of Charleston and of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, a society established by Isadore Lourie with the help of Alex Sanders, both friends of Harriet. At the time of her passing, Harriet was still an active member of the board of both organizations. She was also a big supporter of Jewish Studies and helped us build the Jewish Studies Center. Beth Israel congregation, too, was a big part of her life, as it was for many Keyserlings before her. Her father-in-law, William Keyserling, was an anchor of that congregation.

But Harriet's story is more Jewish than Jewish Studies, the Jewish Historical Society, or Beth Israel Congregation. She recounts growing up on the West Side of Manhattan, "where about ninety percent of the people were Jewish," including all her neighborhood friends, schoolmates, and some teachers. Her life in Beaufort after she and Herbert married reversed the ratios. Reflecting particularly on race, Harriet remarks that, "It was hard to be a Jew in the South during these times, especially a Northern Jew. Religious differences intensified my feeling of being in a land of strangers and were another barrier to opening myself up."

Ever since I was asked to speak today, I kept thinking of an extended passage in Isaiah—the haftorah passage for Yom Kippur. The passage describes Harriet's Judaism and the central part it had in her life. As many of you know, Yom

Kippur is the holiest and most solemn day on the Jewish calendar—a day of fasting and reflection. Isaiah hones in on the hypocrisy of those people who fast to atone for their sins while continuing to subjugate others: "Behold, in the day of your fast you pursue your own business, and oppress all your workers." And the prophet goes on, "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; and when you see the naked, to cover him?"

Harriet found her voice with the Jewish prophets; she spoke with the prophetic voice of Judaism. Ancient Israel had kings and priests who represented the establishment, but it also had prophets—Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Micah, and many others. All of their voices railed against the tide, against establishment's values and establishment's complacency. That is always an uphill battle, often a thankless one.

At the end ofher book, Harriet reflects on autobiographies she read in preparation for writing her own. She talks about reading of Helen Suzman's valiant battle against apartheid, how as a Jewish liberal Suzman endured antisemitic slurs for her unpopular political views. Harriet says, "Swimming against the tide is a relative challenge, in time and place, and my political life in South Carolina in the recent past was a piece of cake compared to hers in South Africa in those bitter years."

Like Helen Suzman, Harriet swam against the tide, with confidence and with humility. Like Suzman and the many Jewish prophets before her, she represented justice, decency, and compassion. The prophetic battle is always against the tide. Harriet's vision was like that of Micah, whose voice is well known. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." That prophetic calling was Harriet Keyserling's Jewish voice.

Zichronah livrocha. Harriet's memory is indeed a blessing.

A Seat at the Table by Pat Conroy

never made Harriet Keyserling laugh, not once in a 50-year friendship. It was not for lack of trying. I made funny faces at her, mugged outrageously, told witty stories, stockpiled jokes, and in desperation I told her lascivious and revolting stories about our friend, Bernie Schein. Nothing.



Harriet Keyserling with author Pat Conroy.

Never a smile, a giggle, not even a wry grin. Ten years ago I figured out why. Mayor David Pam Taub and had ridden with the Keyserlings to Hilton Head from Beaufort to go to dinner, and Pam took one of these mechanical counters with her.

Every time Herbert told a joke, Pam would record it with a movement of her thumb. Herbert told 128 jokes on the way to the restaurant that night. That's when I realized the last thing Harriet needed from me was to try to make her laugh.

But Harriet's role in my life was essential and necessary. In my young manhood, she spotted me as bright, opinionated, brash, a lover of politics, and more importantly, a lover of liberal politics. When Harriet and I went out for a kayak ride on Battery Creek, we made up the entire liberal white caucus in this part of the world. Back then we were outnumbered by conservatives a hundred to one. Today, we'd be outgunned by conservatives a thousand to one. Ah! South Carolina, Harriet, South Carolina. It still astonishes me that Harriet Keyserling was a distinguished politician from this storied and brawling state. The politicians seemed finer back then, more serious, and none of them seemed to let visits to Argentina interfere with the business of this state.

Harriet was the worst cook who ever served a meal in a Beaufort kitchen. The only thing I rejoiced in when I heard of her death was I would never have to eat moussaka again in my natural life. I would estimate that I ate dinner at Harriet's house a total of a hundred times and she served moussaka at all meals—limp, tasteless, flavorless moussaka. But at these dinners, Harriet made up for the lack of savoriness in her food by the wit and spontaneity of the conversation around the table. In the nearest thing I've ever had to a salon in my life, Harriet collected the most exciting people in Beaufort on any given day to eat her terrible portion of moussaka. I ate moussaka with Robert Duvall, Blythe Danner, former ambassadors, the present-day senator from Connecticut, editors of The New York Times, world famous musicians, novelists, writers, and every CO of Parris Island. Twice I was taken by ambulance to Beaufort Memorial Hospital for treatment for advanced moussaka poisoning. But the conversation was always scintillating, inspiring, and you tried to hold your own among a lifetime of movers and shakers who

were drawn to Harriet's table.

No one was more supportive of my writing career. She was greatly disturbed when I was fired from my teaching job on Daufuskie Island, and she gave me a room in her house to write and edit *The Water Is Wide*. Because my daughter Megan was born a month after I was fired, Harriet gave me a hundred bucks on the first of each month for the next year—and so did Gene Norris, Bill Dufford, The Boo, and Ellen Harper. People like Harriet Keyserling made me keep falling in love with the town of Beaufort over and over again.

She took enormous pride in the success of *The Water Is Wide* and she wanted to introduce me into New York literary society. She arranged for her brother Lenny and his dazzling wife Phyllis to give me a dinner party with a cast of big shot dignitaries and ball-turret gunners. Phyllis became my model for Susan Lowenstein in *The Prince of Tides*. She told me to "dress casually, dear Pat, casually."

I arrived at Lenny and Phyllis's elegant Upper East Side apartment in khaki pants, a tee-shirt that said Gay Brothers Shrimp on the front, and Docksiders without socks. Phyllis greeted me at the door wearing the most beautiful dress on earth. Casual to Phyllis and Lenny meant don't wear a tux. I looked like a stowaway on the Titanic. Phyllis served an elegant dinner which included the first octopus I'd ever seen. A tentacle ran the length of my plate and it made me miss Harriet's moussaka.

Lots of writers and two editors of The New York Times were there. At the end of the meal one of the editors sitting beside me said to the editor sitting across the table, "Isn't it amazing that the South is actually turning out people who can write books?" The other guy said, "Meeting this guy, I'm amazed that anybody down there can even read them." Briefly I thought of overturning the dining room table and beating these two guys to a bloody pulp and leaving them for dead beneath the octopus. But I knew Harriet would be furious with me. I called Harriet down in Beaufort to tell her what happened. Harriet was exceptionally kind that night. She told me I could never be a real writer until I learned to play with the big boys and girls in the big city. I had to play in Yankee Stadium and learn how to take the hard knocks that the city has to offer. I had to toughen myself up and this was just the beginning of the process. I was off to a great start, Harriet Keyserling said, but it was far more important that I made sure I had a great finish.

Here is a story I've never told before that involves Harriet, the magic of synchronicity, revenge, Hollywood, Barbra Streisand, and Beaufort. I brooded over that insult from those nasty editors of *The New York Times* for many, many years. As many in this audience know, whenever I'm refused a date by a pretty young girl from Beaufort High, she appears

in one of my novels as a nose-picking, mustachioed hag who is murdered by a chainsaw. Let us return to that dinner party. There is the radiant Phyllis greeting me at her Upper East Side penthouse. Now her name is Susan Lowenstein and I am Tom Wingo and I'm writing *The Prince of Tides*. The world famous violinist, Herbert Woodruff, is married to Lowenstein and he insults the southern boy with the same vicious contempt of the men who attacked me those many long years before. Tom Wingo threatens to hurl Woodruff's Stradivarius off a 20-story building. Conroy is avenged and he is a supremely happy man.

In 1986, I am touring with *The Prince of Tides* when I receive a phone call from Harriet Keyserling. She begins bawling me out for not returning phone calls to Barbra Streisand, then tells me that Brother Lenny is Barbra Streisand's dentist. "Why haven't you returned my friend Barbra's phone calls?" Harriet demanded.

"Because it's not Barbra Streisand, it's that idiot Bernie Schein, Harriet. He does this to me every time I've got a book out. He wrote me a letter from Jimmy Carter—another from Robert Redford. He does it all the time."

"Call her right now and then call me right back. I think we can get this film done in Beaufort."

Here's the magic part: I fly out to Los Angeles to see one of the early screenings of *The Prince of Tides*. Barbra Streisand takes a seat directly behind me, staring at the back of my head for the whole movie. I come to the long-ago dinner party scene that Harriet Keyserling set up at Lenny and Phyllis Hirschfeld's apartment. In my disguise as Tom Wingo, I show up at Susan Lowenstein's, now disguised as Barbra Streisand. But I laughed out loud when the camera panned around the table and my fabulous friend, Harriet Keyserling, is a guest at the table, serene and well-coifed and because she appeared in a movie, now immortal.

Immortal. I like the sound of it. She was one of the greatest women in South Carolina's history. Her book *Against the Tide* is a seminal, landmark work. If Harriet is looking at all this today, I hope she notices that I'm still trying to make her laugh.

The Lady from Beaufort (excerpt of tribute) by Richard W. Riley

I was elected governor in 1978—a time of shifting emphasis from the power of "good ole boy" political control of state government to the power of ideas. . . . South Carolina was fortunate that Harriet Keyserling, a new kind of leader, came along during that era. She was willing to work hard to accomplish goals in which she believed. She was more given to quiet research, serious conversation, and careful



Harriet Keyserling in the South Carolina legislative chamber. She represented Beaufort in the House of Representatives from 1977 to 1993.

organization—and less to the smoke-filled-room politics of much big talk, little listening, and even less action.

It seems implausible that Harriet was elected—especially at that time, in the 1970s—to represent this small, traditional town of Beaufort in the South Carolina legislature. In addition to being a woman, she was, by her own description, "a New York Jewish liberal." So you can imagine the shock of those "good ole boys" when Representative Keyserling walked onto the floor of the House to take her seat as the "lady from Beaufort." . . .

Harriet Keyserling entered the political arena to improve education and protect the environment—which she did. But she went on to do so much more, and none of it was easy. She overcame personal and political obstacles placed by the power structure then in place. Unlike many of her colleagues, she did not oversimplify issues or appeal to emotions or engage in cronyism or political horse trading.

She was passionate about serving the public interest; she relied on rigorous research to determine the long-term public interest in any given issue; she was tireless in educating her colleagues and the citizenry about those long-term public interests. Harriet was steadfast in her principled, moral, and ethical beliefs and actions. She worked diligently behind the scenes and never sought the limelight. And she was always effective.

Her "Crazy Caucus" colleague, Bob Sheheen, put it this way. Rather than power gained from position, Bob

said, Harriet Keyserling derived power from knowledge. And, in my view—Dick Riley's view—there is nothing more powerful than that.

A Farewell to Harriet Keyserling (remarks at the funeral service, December 13, 2010) by Charles T. (Bud) Ferillo

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave
I know. But I do not approve And I am not resigned.

— Edna St. Vincent Millay

She was ours, and we loved her more than any telling of it. Harriet Keyserling was supposed to live forever, as irrational as it is. None of us ever considered a time when she would not be here: prodding, pushing, encouraging, caring, organizing, giving, working, frowning, laughing, then back to frowning. A "force of nature" does not even begin to tell the tale. Yes, she was shy, private, insecure, and modest but she never permitted these traits to keep her from embracing uphill battles, facing impossible odds, taking on long-term struggles, all the hard things that others avoided or just dropped out of sheer frustration. Against the tide, indeed. Every day, every week, every year. She detested stupid people, prejudice of any kind, violence wherever it occurred, and cruelty in any form.

In one of the most unlikely moments of our long friendship, we attended a rodeo in an enormous cattle arena in Denver, Colorado, replete with every kind of calf, cattle, and steer roping imaginable. It was the opening hospitality event



Harriet at the beach on Hunting Island with her children Paul, Beth, Judy, and Billy, ca. 1954.

at a national conference of state legislators. We had seats on the front row, a Jewish woman from New York's West Side and a city boy from Charleston trapped in a temple of genuine western Americana; we escaped in five minutes.

Nonetheless, that small, almost frail woman was the very embodiment of courage. Indefatigable courage. What kind of courage is that? Any southerner replies: Stonewall Jackson's kind of courage. What else could have powered her to go so far in public life so completely ill-equipped with the traditional skills of politicians? What else could



Herbert and Harriet Keyserling after Herbert was awarded the Silver Star for his valor at Guadalcanal, 1944.

have enabled her to achieve what she achieved in 18 years in local and state government?

What, but courage, could have moved an 88-year-old woman to risk her life for the relief of pain so that she might fight on a little longer for her heart's true causes: public education, conservation, the arts, nuclear waste, and women's issues? In the recent election, Harriet sent emails to organize 100 women to join her in a statement called "Agenda Over Gender." She worked at it day and night and inspired not 100, 200, or 500 women, but over 1,000 women in this state to join her. When the election was over, and that cause lost, she wrote these words to the army she had raised: "Remember that the journey is as important as the destination. By staying involved we can model the kind of leadership we want to see. Each time we come together we will be that much stronger."

There you have it, the essence of this good, strong, decent, smart, cultured woman, teaching the highest ideals of this nation among her last messages on earth: "Remember that the journey is as important as the destination."

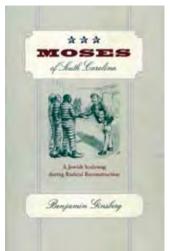
Emily Dickinson wrote "the poet lights the light and fades away. But the light goes on and on." And so, as she takes her place for eternity beside the man she loved so much who enticed her from the streets of New York to this magical, graceful place amidst Spanish moss and tideland creeks, let me give each of you this final charge from her: "Do not go gentle into that good night. Old age should rave and burn at the close of day. Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Books of Interest

Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Radical Reconstruction

by Benjamin Ginsberg

Review by Harlan Greene



Johns Hopkins University 2010. 219 pages, 6 illustrations, www. press.jhu.edu.

With the sesquicentennial of the Civil War upon us, it is only natural that books on the era begin appearing. Among the early arrivals is Benjamin Ginsberg's *Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Radical Reconstruction*. Despite all the chicanery of politicians, past and present, Franklin J. Moses, Jr., according to the author, may be our state's most hated political figure of all time. Of Jewish descent, an early defender of the Confederacy (Moses helped raise the flag on Fort Sumter after its capture), he became a Republican following the war, embraced emancipation, and was elected governor in 1872. Before dying in obscurity, he was lambasted by the press for his corrupt practices and satirized by political cartoonists like Thomas Nast. Moses was so despised that family members changed their name to avoid the taint of relationship. Ginsberg, a professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University, takes on Moses with the simple question, "Why?" Why did he inspire such unmitigated contempt?

In this, the strongest part of the book, Ginsberg analyzes Moses' radical shift and compares his policies to those of other Republican Reconstruction politicians in South Carolina. Moses may have stolen, Ginsberg frankly admits, but so did most; at least he didn't murder, or cause deaths by instigating violence, as others did. Ginsberg makes a convincing case that Moses was vilified not because of his corruption, but because of his convictions. When he supported African Americans, he really meant it—unlike others, who courted African Americans only

for their votes. Moses was hated because he believed in social equality and lived it. For this, he could never be forgiven.

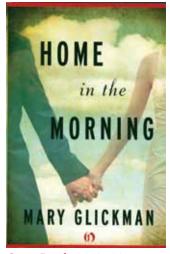
The second element Ginsberg explores, not as successfully, is the impact of what he describes as Moses' Jewishness. Though of Jewish descent, Moses was raised as a Methodist and married an Episcopalian. Ginsberg subtly deconstructs antisemitic cartoons aimed at Moses, but falls into an anachronistic view of what it meant to be Jewish in South Carolina before the Civil War. He does not seem to realize how comfortable southern Jewish families were, and how deeply, if not totally, Jews were accepted. As a challenger of stereotypes and assumptions in one part of his work, he unfortunately falls victim to them in another. Still, the book is a valuable step in the right direction, moving toward a full portrait of Franklin Moses, Jr., and the role he played in South Carolina's racial politics.

Home in the Morning

by Mary Glickman

Review by Andrea Mendelsohn

Home in the Morning traces the life of Jackson Sassaport as he struggles to find his place growing up as an awkward child in a racially segregated and charged Mississippi on the cusp of the civil rights struggle. Born into a prosperous Reform Jewish family, Jackson is socialized by his parents to fit into middle class white society, respecting the social and racial boundaries of the day and not drawing attention to the Sassaports's religious distinctiveness. Yet from an early age, his pivotal relationships with particular African Americans draw him across the boundaries of racial segregation and reinforce his own marginalization in mainstream society. Jumping between Jackson's childhood and present adulthood, Glickman has written a historical melodrama that traces the religious and racial tensions of the Deep South through a protagonist who is both an insider and outsider to white society. The narrative highlights moments of crisis in the Mississippi Jewish community during Freedom Summer as tensions with local Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klan erupt into violence. As a student at Yale during the turmoil of the Black Power Movement and the Vietnam War, Jackson is coached in northern liberalism by his future wife, Stella Godwin. This generational saga covers a vast historical territory, but too often relies on clichéd plot devices intended to highlight the full array of conflicts of the age rather than focus on individual character development. Ultimately Glickman's work feels like a chain of stereotyped characters and historical events rather than an authentic portrayal of complex individuals.



Open Road, 2010, 234 pages, www.openroadmedia.com.

SESSION

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Memoirs, Sermons, Judaica: Jewish Heritage



azel tov is in order for the Jewish Heritage Collection! Thanks to a generous grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources, the College of Charleston's Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC) has taken giant steps toward processing its "Hidden Collections" and making them accessible to the public. Over the next two years, JHC expects to catalogue over 160 manuscript collections totaling approximately 410 linear feet, as well as 26 linear feet

of rare books. Approximately 340 oral history interviews will also be made available online through the Lowcountry Digital Library (http://lowcountrydigital.library.cofc.edu). Grant funds have allowed JHC to hire, or to continue to employ, a talented crew of archivists, scholars, and interns:

Sarah Dorpinghaus, Project Archivist, M.L.I.S. (University of Iowa). Sarah was hired in September 2010 to arrange and describe unprocessed JHC collections and supervise support staff. She has previous archival experience at the Chicago History Museum and the Iowa Women's Archives. Before becoming an archivist, Sarah was a high school history teacher.

Alyssa Neely, Assistant Archivist, B.A. History (College of Charleston). In her last semester at the College of Charleston, Alyssa took Dale Rosengarten's course on Charleston's ethnic neighborhoods and became an archives maven. After graduation, she composed histories of South Carolina's Jewish communities for the Institute of Southern Jewish Life's online encyclopedia, using JHC's research files as her chief source. In 2008, she began working officially for JHC, assuming primary responsibility for editing, describing, and digitizing hundreds of oral history interviews.

Melissa Bronheim, Assistant Archivist, M.L.I.S. (University of South Carolina). Melissa processes manuscript collections for JHC as well as the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, where she has worked since 2009. She also volunteers at the Historic Charleston Foundation. Melissa's fluency in Hebrew and knowledge of Jewish culture have been great assets to the project.

Rebecca McClure, Assistant Archivist, M.L.I.S. (University of South Carolina). Rebecca

is processing JHC's Holocaust Archives—archival collections that document the experiences of Holocaust survivors and liberators. She also is expanding the Holocaust Quilt website (http://holocaustarchives.cofc.edu), which recounts the stories of Charlestonarea survivors. Rebecca previously worked as a research coordinator at the Medical University of South Carolina, an assistant



e Collection Is in Full Swing

by Sarah Dorpinghaus



archivist at the Charleston Museum, and a library assistant for the Charleston County Public Library's special collections.

Barry Stiefel, Visiting Assistant Professor, Ph.D. in Historic Preservation (Tulane University). Since coming to Charleston in 2008, Barry has served as a consulting scholar on the Rabbi William A. Rosenthall Judaica collection. An expert in the architectural history of synagogues, he has helped identify and describe images in the collection, and has recruited and supervised students from the historic preservation program to assist.

Student interns and volunteers are digitizing, describing, and rehousing images from the Rabbi Rosenthall Judaica collection. Student workers have come from the University of South Carolina's library science program, the College of Charleston's English, history, and historic preservation departments, and Columbia University in New York City.

Several collections have already been arranged and catalogued under the project: Solomon Breibart's professional papers, including his extensive research files on the history of the Jewish community in Charleston and South Carolina; records of the Southern Jewish Historical Society; the sermons of Rabbi Burton Padoll, civil rights activist and rabbi at Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE); photographs of Spartanburg's Price's Store for Men; photographs, memoirs, and other papers of Benjamin and Anna Berendt; and the papers of Rabbi William A. Rosenthall, which include his sermons, topical files on Jewish culture and history, and documents regarding his work with the Latin America Committee of the World Union for Progressive Judaism and as rabbi of KKBE.

We have also begun processing collections that are part of JHC's Holocaust Archives, such as the papers of Katherine Prevost, a survivor of Dachau; material donated by Max Freilich, who left Germany via the Kindertransport in 1939, was held in an English internment camp, attended the Nuremberg Trials, and eventually settled in Greenville, South Carolina; and the papers of Devorah "Dorothy" Urgeshevitz Radin, a native of Lithuania who fled to the United States in 1939.

This winter we began the task of rehousing and digitizing postcards, photographs, fine art prints, and other visual material from Rabbi Rosenthall's Judaica collection. So far, over 600 images of synagogues, individuals, and cemeteries have been scanned, catalogued, and made available on the Lowcountry Digital Library. For more information about the collection, please visit the Rabbi William A. Rosenthall website (http://rosenthall.library.cofc.edu).

Next in the queue to be processed are the records of the National Council of Jewish Women and the Charleston Chapter of Hadassah, photographs of Glenn Springs, and family papers and congregational records from Anderson, Beaufort, Camden, Charleston, Florence, Georgetown, Orangeburg, St. Matthews, and Sumter. For more information, contact Dale Rosengarten, curator (rosengartend@cofc.edu) or Sarah Dorpinghaus, project archivist (dorpinghaussm@cofc.edu).



Oral History Archives Goes Digital

he Jewish Heritage Collection's (JHC) Oral History Archives in Special Collections at the College of Charleston is going digital! Soon, not only will interview transcripts be available online, but the voices of interviewees as well.

In 1995, a cadre of volunteers under the supervision of project director Dale Rosengarten began recording life histories of members of Jewish families across the state of South Carolina, focusing first on capturing the memories of the oldest generation. Of particular concern was documenting stories of Jews who grew up in small towns, a rapidly disappearing demographic. The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina (JHSSC), founded in 1994, helped build a statewide network, putting out the call for volunteers and interviewees. As the idea of recording family histories caught on, the oral history project snowballed. Special Collections now houses more than 300 interviews, as well as hundreds of archival collections that document Jewish life in the American South.

The majority of JHC interviewees—like the majority of all American Jews—are descendants of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Also featured are interviews with rabbis who have served in South Carolina pulpits, as well as panel discussions recorded during congregational celebrations and JHSSC meetings. The interviews chronicle the lives of urban and rural shopkeepers and their families, entrepreneurs in textiles and other businesses, professionals, politicians, refugees from Hitler's regime, and survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust. Audio segments from selected interviews were included in the exhibition A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life, which opened at the University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum in 2002, then toured nationally for two years. These segments are currently accessible via an online version of the exhibit at http://www.lib.unc.edu/apop/.



"Growing up Jewish in the Pee Dee" in Florence's Beth Israel Synagogue on March 6, 1999. Left to right: moderator Richard Gergel, and panelists Sam Rogol, Rick Cagan, Robin Shuler, and Alexander Cohen. Recording engineer: Dale Rosengarten. Photo: Kenneth S. Kammer

by Alyssa Neely



Mindelle Seltzer and Dale Rosengarten interviewing Raymond Stern, Andrews, SC, March 1995. Photo: Norton Seltzer.

Most of the interviews were recorded on 94-minute digital audio tape, the rest on analog formats. All were dubbed onto analog tapes for back-up purposes and to provide use copies for transcribers and researchers. Despite limited funding, nearly all the interviews have been transcribed and a number of the transcripts are currently available through the College of Charleston's online catalog, http://libcat.cofc.edu.

With the inception last year of the College's Lowcountry Digital Library, however, JHC is entering a new era. The oral history project's top priority has become digitizing and providing online access to the audio recordings. With funding from the Council on Library and Information Resources, we are moving full steam ahead so that the primary source, the audio version, is available to the public. In the near future, researchers will be able to listen to the voices of the JHC's interviewees while scrolling through the transcripts from the comfort of their homes and offices. For a look at what is in store, go to http://lowcountrydigital.library.cofc.edu.

Captions for pages 20 and 21

Project staff: (top left to right) Heidi Wilson (intern), Melissa Bronheim (assistant archivist), Jocelyn Leving (intern), Josh Minor (intern).

Archival materials Page 20: (top to bottom) Nuremberg Trials tickets and program – Max Freilich papers; New York City synagogue and Spartanburg, SC, synagogue – Rosenthall Judaica collection.

Archival materials Page 21: (top to bottom): Leon, Max, and Anna Gelson – Benjamin and Anna Berendt papers; Jewish peddler in Vilnius, Lithuania, and synagogue in Mainz, Germany (this postcard was the first item Rabbi Rosenthall collected) – Rosenthall Judaica collection.

Spring Has Sprung

SPRING 2011

by Martin Perlmutter

Tpring has descended upon the Palmetto State. In Charleston we are bidding farewell to the camellias, knowing that soon enough our city will be aflame in



Azalea blossom and bumblebee, Magnolia Gardens in the spring. Photo: Joseph Rubin.

the azaleas' magenta and fuchsia hues. It is the perfect time to go for a walk, to discover and remember, to appreciate the beauty of our cities and towns, and to stand in awe of our history and how it has shaped the community today.

When I reflect on the good work that the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has done and continues to do, my mind comes up with its own version of a quote from Admiral George Anderson: "Jewish life in South Carolina has both a tradition and a future; at JHSSC we look with pride and confidence in both directions."

The Society has done a magnificent job of preserving and showcasing our history. When you go for that springtime stroll or scenic drive, keep an eye out for the historical markers we've sponsored, the burial grounds we've documented, and come have a look at the archives we've curated. Whether you see these sights on your own, on a guided walking tour, or while you're in Charleston for the conference in May, you will not be able to escape the profound impact Jews have had on our city and state.

Together with the Jewish Studies faculty and the library's Jewish Heritage Collection, JHSSC is promoting both South Carolina's Jewish history and its academic resources. Through the Center for Southern Jewish Culture, we are bringing eminent scholars from across the country to present their research on southern Jewish life. Thanks to the Society's efforts, South Carolina's Jewish influence stands out in the greater community—a community that takes to heart the significance of its past.

JHSSC is the largest statewide Jewish membership organization in South Carolina, and it is lifted up by its Pillars. Gifts and membership dues keep our operations running, but it is the generosity of our Pillars that will help us reach our goals. Become a Pillar today by pledging to contribute \$1,000 a year for five years. Help us continue to showcase South Carolina's Jewish history as a living legacy.

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> Carolee Rosen Fox, o.b.m. Harvey and Mimi Gleberman, o.b.m. Anne Oxler Krancer, o.b.m. Jerry Zucker, o.b.m.

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Yes, I/we want to become a Pillar of the JHSSC.			
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JHSSC Pillars contribute \$1,000 per year for five years. Foundational Pillars are institutions or foundations that commit \$2,000 per year for five years. Go to www.jhssc.org to become a Pillar.



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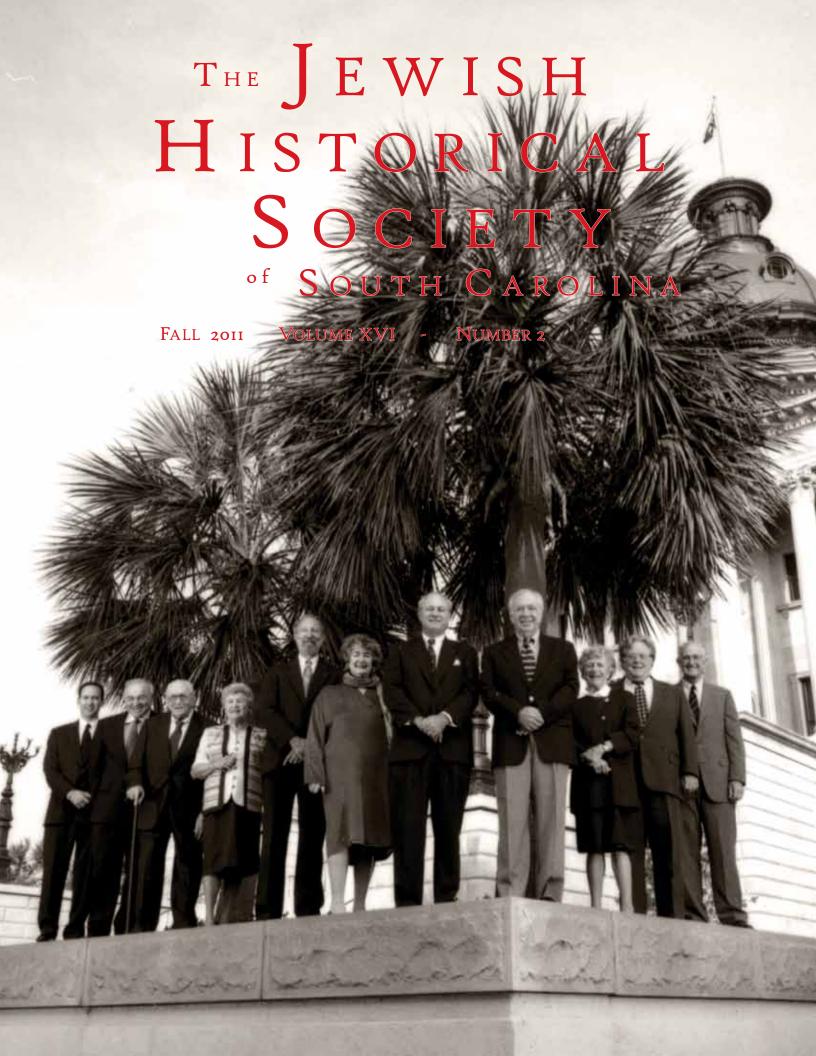
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See page 11 for more information.

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Ann Meddin Hellman President



The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina Newsletter is published twice a year.

Dale Rosengarten, editor Alyssa Neely, asst. editor Joseph Rubin, designer

www.jhssc.org

In this issue

Letter from the President

Ann Meddin Hellman	
Sights, Sounds, and Stories of the Jewish South	Ļ
This coming October the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina joins the Southern Jewish Historical Society for a stimulating weekend on the University of South Carolina campus in Columbia. Read what's in store for conference participants—tours, lectures, music, film, library and museum exhibitions, and more.	
USC Pulls Out All the Stops for Conference Weekend Four special exhibitions will be on display at the University of South Carolina this fall in conjunction with the conference. McKissick Museum will host <i>Palmetto Jews</i> , a revival of Bill Aron's 2000 photo essay, and the new Ernest F. Hollings Library will offer selections from three university archives, showcasing the lives of leading Jewish politicians and merchants, historic Haggadot, and even Joseph Heller's typewriter.	
Conference Participants 7	,
Schedule of Events	;
Registration Form)
Capital City Jews: A Legacy of Leadership Alyssa Neely From the colonial era forward, Jewish Columbians have made their mark on the city. Beginning with revolutionary leader Francis Salvador in neighboring Ninety Six District, through current city councilwoman Belinda Gergel, Jews have occupied prominent positions in politics, business, and society at large.	
Remembering My Dad, Max Heller	-

of the city. His children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren remember him as a family man and mentor, fun-loving and full of love. The state of South Carolina mourns his death.

On the cover:

Jewish legislators and mayors at the State House, Columbia, South Carolina, 2000. Left to right: Joel Lourie (House 1999–2004, Senate 2005–present), Isadore E. Lourie (House 1965–72, Senate 1973–92), Hyman Rubin (Columbia City Council 1952–66, mayor pro tem 1956–66, Senate 1967–84), Sylvia Dreyfus (House 1977–78), David Taub (mayor of Beaufort 1990–99), Irene Krugman Rudnick (House 1973–78, 1981–84, 1987–92), Arnold Goodstein (House 1971–74, Senate 1975–80), Richard Moses (mayor of Sumter 1972–76), Harriet Keyserling (House 1977–92), Billy Keyserling (House 1993–96, mayor of Beaufort 2008 to present), Leonard Krawcheck (House 1967–70). Photo: Bill Aron.

Letter from the President

Listorical Society of South Carolina is coming to an end. It seems like yesterday when I accepted the position to lead this fantastic organization. I could not have done it without the help of the society's board and officers—Vice Presidents Susan Daniel Altman, Joe Wachter, and Phil Greenberg, Treasurer David J. Cohen, and Secretary Rachel Gordin Barnett. Executive Director Marty Perlmutter and Administrator Enid Idelsohn, along with Dale Rosengarten and her staff at Addlestone Library, have made it possible for us to fulfill our mission to promote "the study and preservation of the history and culture of the Jews of South Carolina."

Over the past two years we have broadened and strengthened our network across the state. In May 2010 in Bluffton, with over 100 people in attendance, we applauded

the birth and phenomenal growth of Temple Oseh Shalom. In November we were given a warm welcome at B'nai Israel in Anderson, where we announced our intention to erect an historical marker in honor of the congregation's 100^{th} anniversary.

This past May, along with the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, we co-sponsored a conference on "Jews, Slavery, and the Civil War." The meeting began with a boat ride to Fort Sumter and the screening of a new documentary, Jewish Soldiers in Blue and Grey. For two days Arnold Hall was packed with

people listening to presentations and lively debate among top historians of American Jewish history. Professor Jonathan Sarna's keynote speech on General Ulysses S. Grant, open to the public, drew an overflow crowd to the sanctuary of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim.

In the centerfold of this newsletter, you will find the program for another enticing conference, "Sights, Sounds, and Stories of the Jewish South," to be held this coming October 27–30th on the beautiful campus of the University

of South Carolina in Columbia. In partnership with the Southern Jewish Historical Society and with support from USC's Jewish Studies Program, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, School of Music, South Caroliniana Library, and McKissick Museum, and from the law firm Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP, we are able to offer three days of exciting activities and deluxe accommodations. Hats off to program co-chairs Dale Rosengarten and Phyllis Leffler and host committee chair Rachel Barnett for designing and coordinating a wonderful weekend.

JHSSC's board has accepted the nomination of two new members, Fred Glickman from Lake Wylie and Billy Keyserling from Beaufort. We also have agreed to sponsor an historical marker at Adath Yeshurun in Aiken, in celebration of the congregation's 90th year. Society members are urged to suggest other sites for us to consider as candidates for

historical markers.

On behalf of my executive board, I would like to thank all who have made JHSSC the vital organization that it is. Special thanks to our Pillars whose commitment of \$1,000 a year for five years provides much of our operating budget. We need more of you!

To register for the October conference, read back issues of the newsletter, view photographs of JHSSC events, or sign up to work on our cemetery survey, go to our site at www.jhssc.org.

While I am stepping down as president, I will continue to work as an active member and

past president of the society, and as your webmaster. I look forward to seeing you in Columbia in October when we will usher in our new officers and board.

Chin M. Hellman

Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina Slate of Officers for 2011–2013

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Fondly,

Ann Meddin Hellman hellmana@bellsouth.net





Sights, Sounds, and Sto

by Dale Rosengarten

his fall JHSSC joins with the Southern Jewish Historical Society to present a weekend of scholarship, photography, film, and music on the beautiful University of South Carolina campus in Columbia. With support from USC's Jewish Studies Program, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, School of Music, McKissick Museum, and South Caroliniana Library, we have designed a three-day immersion in the sights, sounds, and stories of the Jewish South.

The conference will kick off on Friday, October 28th, with a bus trip to Sumter, one of South Carolina's earliest Jewish settlements. There we will see Temple Sinai's spectacular stained glass windows, tour the Sumter County Museum, and visit the Levi family's historic home and garden.

On Saturday, panel sessions will convene in USC's new Hollings Library. Researchers and writers from near and far will explore the challenging terrain trod by southern Jews. The afternoon will continue with a bus tour of the capital city led by noted Columbia historians Belinda and Richard Gergel. The excursion will end at McKissick Museum, where Bill Aron's photo exhibition *Palmetto Jews* will be on view on the first and second floors.

Saturday evening attendees are invited to return to the Hollings Library for a gala reception sponsored by Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP. Guests can take behind-the-scenes tours led by the Hollings staff and browse on their own through exhibits of archival material selected from South Carolina Political Collections, the Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, and the South Caroliniana Library at USC, and from Furman University's Special Collections. Video clips from *Carvalho's Journey*, a documentary about the great 19th-century painter and photographer, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, will also be on view.

Sunday the venue switches to USC's School of Music for the conference finale. Composer Meira Warshauer will perform original work, accompanied by cellist Robert Jesselson and mezzo-soprano Janet Hopkins. Historians Bryan Stone and Jerrod Tanny will wrap up the morning by showing audiovisual evidence to answer the serious question, "What's so funny about southern Jews?" For a look at the full conference schedule and registration form, turn to pages 8–10. To

register online, please visit www.jhssc.org/events.





ries of the Jewish South

USC Pulls Out All the Stops for Conference Weekend

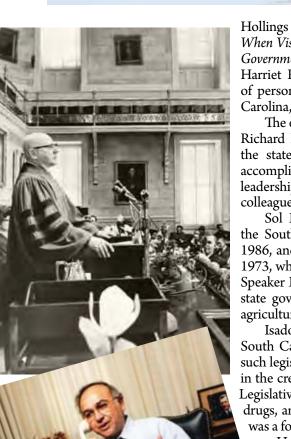
on the University of South Carolina campus this fall to complement the upcoming joint conference. This abundance of images, artifacts, and archival materials is drawn from the holdings of McKissick Museum, the South Caroliniana Library, and the South Carolina Political Collections and Irvin Rare Books and Special Collections departments housed at the new Ernest F. Hollings Library. Thanks to Jane Przybysz, Allen Stokes, Herbert Hartsook, and Jeffrey Makala, here is a preview of what's happening this fall.

In 2002, the national traveling exhibition A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life changed popular conceptions about the South's significance in American Jewish history. Created by a six-year collaboration among the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, the Jewish Heritage Collection and the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston, and McKissick Museum at USC, this landmark exhibition and catalog included a photo essay by acclaimed photographer Bill Aron featuring images of contemporary Jewish life across the state. Palmetto Jews reflects the prosperity American Jews have

enjoyed since World War II and documents the trend toward more traditional religious observance by Jewish South Carolinians. In October 2011, **McKissick Museum** will mount Bill Aron's photographs as part of a university-wide effort to set the scene for the joint conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and JHSSC.

Selections from the **South Caroliniana Library** (SCL) relating to Jewish families and businesses will be on display in the Hollings Library. Businessman and journalist August Kohn and his daughter Helen Kohn Hennig assembled a library of over 4,000 books and pamphlets dealing with the history, literature, and culture of South Carolina from the 18th to the 20th centuries. SCL has recently published a catalog of the Kohn collection and will exhibit choice titles and offer the catalog for sale. Jewish mercantile businesses established across South Carolina before the Civil War and for decades afterwards will be represented by the papers of two major firms. Simon and Leopold Strauss operated as wholesale grocers and commission merchants in Charleston and Bennettsville, employing Samuel Iseman as a traveling salesman. Wolf Rosenberg established Rosenberg & Co. in Abbeville after moving there from Chester in 1872. Rosenberg's partner, G. A. Visanska, was a longtime resident of the upcountry town. Wolf Rosenberg sold his interest in the company to his cousin Philip in 1877 and returned to his native Poland. The business subsequently operated under the name P. Rosenberg & Co.

From September 1 to November 30th, South Carolina Political Collections, in its gallery in the



Hollings Special Collections Library, will present an exhibition entitled When Vision and Strength Were Needed: Jewish Leaders in South Carolina Government, featuring the collections of Sol Blatt, Isadore Lourie, and Harriet Keyserling. Each of these three leaders left rich collections of personal papers documenting their lives, their impact on South Carolina, and their religion.

The exhibit title is taken from remarks made by former governor Richard Riley on the occasion of Lourie's 1992 retirement from the state senate. Riley noted, "Much of the major legislative accomplishments of the past quarter century is due to the leadership and caring of Isadore Lourie. He's been there, with his colleagues, when vision and strength were needed."

Sol Blatt (1895–1986) represented Barnwell County in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1933 to 1986, and served as Speaker from 1935 to 1946 and 1951 to 1973, when he gave up the office and was immediately named Speaker Emeritus. As Speaker, Blatt used his power to help modernize state government and lead South Carolina's transition from a chiefly agricultural economy to a far more industrial one.

Isadore Lourie (1932–2003) represented Richland County in the South Carolina General Assembly from 1965 to 1992. He authored such legislation as the Freedom of Information Act and bills resulting in the creation of the Commissions on Aging and the Blind and the Legislative Audit Council, the exemption of sales taxes on prescription drugs, and the establishment of public kindergartens. Lourie also was a founder of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

Harriet Keyserling (1922–2010), a Democrat and self-proclaimed "New York Jewish liberal," represented Beaufort County in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1977 until her retirement in 1992. Mrs. Keyserling was a tireless advocate of education, the arts, and protection of the environment from nuclear waste and other energy hazards.

The **Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections** will exhibit works relating to Jewish heritage drawn from its many collections and subject areas. From the core collection—the library of the antebellum South Carolina College, predecessor of the University of South Carolina—the first Hebrew Bible published in America (Philadelphia, 1814), as well as several Jewish histories dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, will be on display.

Two notable Haggadot will also be exhibited, one published in Amsterdam in 1781, and one created in a limited edition in 1974 by noted book artist and fine printer Leonard Baskin. From its extensive First World War collections, the department has selected original art, manuscripts, and rare printed editions by British poet and artist Isaac Rosenberg.

The Augusta Baker Collection of
African American children's literature and
folklore includes many works of Jewish interest
and will be represented by a volume of Isaac Bashevis
Singer's folktales originally presented by Singer to Augusta Baker,
a pioneering children's librarian and storyteller.

Finally, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, the most widely read American novel of the post–World War II period, the library will display selections from its voluminous collection of Heller's papers, including manuscripts, photographs, and the very typewriter used to write the satiric novel, which, in the words of a *New Yorker* magazine review, was "shouted onto paper."

SJHS/JHSSC Conference Participants

Rachel Bergstein is a Ph.D. candidate in Modern Jewish History at Yale University, now working on her dissertation, "From Leo Frank to Civil Rights: Jews in the New South City, 1915–1968."

Joseph Butwin is a professor of English at the University of Washington, where he has taught since 1970. He has published studies of Victorian England and has written, in collaboration with his mother, Frances Mazo Butwin, a critical biography of Sholom Aleichem (Boston, 1978). His essay "Tevye on King Street" appeared in *American Jewish History* in 2007.

Marni Davis teaches at Georgia State University in Atlanta, where she specializes in modern Jewish history and the history of ethnicity and immigration in the United States. Her book *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* is forthcoming from New York University Press.

Catherine R. Eskin is an associate professor of English at Florida Southern College and the archivist for Temple Emanuel, a Conservative synagogue founded in 1932 in Lakeland, Florida. Active in early modern English literature pedagogies and, more recently, non-fiction writing, her research interests include antisemitism, social relationships, and the politics of the American South.

Robert Gillette was a public school educator for 40 years. Nationally recognized for his high school program OTO, Opportunities to Teach Ourselves, in Fairfield, Connecticut, he also has created curricula in Jewish education. His book *The Virginia Plan: William B. Thalhimer and a Rescue from Nazi Germany* was published by the History Press in 2011.

Janet Hopkins, assistant professor of voice at the University of South Carolina, is a 16-year veteran of the Metropolitan Opera. A mezzo-soprano, she recently performed the Verdi Requiem at the Kennedy Center in Tulsa, Minnesota, in an innovative version that links the masterpiece to its defiant performance by the imprisoned musicians of Theresienstadt.

Robert Jesselson is a Carolina Distinguished Professor at the University of South Carolina where he teaches cello and plays in the American Arts Trio. He has performed in recital and with orchestras on four continents, and in music festivals in Nice, Granada, Santiago, Spoleto, Aspen, and the Grand Tetons.

Allen Krause received his ordination, master's degree, and later an honorary doctorate from Hebrew Union College and has done graduate work in American history at the University of Chicago, the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard University. He served as senior rabbi at Temple Beth El of South Orange County from 1984 to his retirement in 2008. A part-time lecturer at the State University of California since 1972, he is working on a book about the role Southern rabbis played in the civil rights movement, the subject of his master's thesis.

Steve Rivo is an award-winning filmmaker who has produced, directed, and written documentaries for PBS, MTV, TruTV/Court TV, Discovery Channel, VH1, and independently. Selected credits include co-producer of the Emmy and DuPont award-winning PBS series *New York: A Documentary Film* (directed by Ric Burns) and producer of two of Burns's Emmy-winning films for PBS's *American Experience* series, *Eugene O'Neill* and *Ansel Adams*.

Hyman Rubin III is associate professor of history at Columbia College, SC, where he has taught for 12 years. A native of Columbia, he graduated from Yale University with a B.A. in history and received his Ph.D. from Emory University in U.S. history with an emphasis on the American South. His research focus is on Reconstruction politics, and his book *South Carolina Scalawags* was published in 2006 by the University of South Carolina Press.

Edward S. Shapiro is professor of history emeritus at Seton Hall University and author of A Time for Healing: American Jews Since World War II, Crown Heights: Blacks, Jews, and the Brooklyn Riot of 1991, and We Are Many: Reflections on American Jewish History and Identity.

Ellen Solomon holds an Ed.D. from Harvard University and has taught writing and social science at Harvard and Bard College. With co-author Victoria Steinitz, she created portraits of American adolescents for *Starting Out: Class and Community in the Lives of Working-Class Youth*, which won the 1986 Robert Park award.

Bryan Edward Stone is author of *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas*, winner of SJHS's best book award for 2011. He is an associate professor of history at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas, and a visiting professor at the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Jarrod Tanny, assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina/Wilmington, received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, focusing on Russian-Jewish history. His forthcoming book *City of Rogues and Schnorrers* examines how the city of Odessa was mythologized as a Jewish city of sin, celebrated and vilified for its Jewish gangsters, pimps, bawdy musicians, and comedians.

Meira Warshauer was born in Wilmington, NC, and lives in Columbia, SC. Her southern Jewish roots informed her score for the documentary Land of Promise: The Jews of South Carolina and large scale compositions Shacharit (Morning Service) and Ahavah (Love), released on the Albany Records CD Streams in the Desert. Recipient of JHSSC's first Arts and Cultural Achievement Award, Warshauer has taught at Columbia College, the University of South Carolina, and Coastal Carolina University.

Captions clockwise from the lower left: Pages 4 and 5 – Wendell Levi, Jr. and Patti Levi Barnett, Palmetto Pigeon Plant, Sumter – Robert A. Moses, Temple Sinai, Sumter – Columbia Jewish Day School, Beth Shalom Synagogue – Jeff Zaglin, Greenville Army and Navy Store – Hy Brand, Conestee Mill – Tree of Life, Columbia – Group photo, front row: Charles C. Wilson, August and Irene Kohn, back row: unknown, Mrs. and Mr. Purdy – Rosenberg Mercantile Company account with Abbeville County chain gang, 1897. Page 6 – Amsterdam Haggadah, 1781 – SC Senator Isadore Lourie – Speaker of the SC House of Representatives Solomon Blatt, Sr. – Isaac Rosenberg's self-portrait and manuscript poem – "The Rabbis in B'nai Brak" from Leonard Baskin's Haggadah, 1974.

Sights, Sounds, and Sto Joint Conference of the Southe the Jewish Historical S

With support from the University of South Carolina's Jewish S School of Music, South Caroliniana Library, and McKissic

Thursday, October 27th

Arrivals/Registration – Inn at USC (*www.innatusc.com*), 1619 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC SJHS Board – dinner at the home of Richard and Belinda Gergel, followed by meeting at the Inn

Friday, October 28th

6:30 P.M.

8:00 A.M. Breakfast – Inn at USC (included in room rate)

DAY TRIP TO SUMTER, SOUTH CAROLINA

9:00 Buses depart for Sumter

10:00 Temple Sinai – Talk and tour of the sanctuary and its spectacular stained glass windows

by Elizabeth Moses and Robert A. Moses

Sumter County Museum – Presentation of the museum's Jewish collections

Home and garden tour led by Dr. Wendell and Katie Levi

4:00 P.M. Buses return to Columbia
6:00 Dinner at Tree of Life
7:30 Shabbat service, Tree of Life

Rabbi Daniel Sherman

Saturday, October 29th

8:00 A.M. Breakfast – Inn at USC (included in room rate)

PANEL SESSIONS

Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library (enter through Thomas Cooper Library) University of South Carolina, 1322 Greene Street, Columbia, SC

9:00 TOLERANCE AND TENSIONS – Moderator: Ellen M. Umansky

Allen Krause The Hazan, the Minister, and the Merchant: A 177-Year-Old Lesson from Charleston, SC

Hyman Rubin III South Carolina's Jewish Republicans during Radical Reconstruction Marni Davis Allies or Adversaries? Jewish and Irish Immigrants in the New South

Rachel R. Bergstein A Tale of Two Rabbis: How David Marx and Tobias Geffen Imagined Judaism in the South

11:00 THE TOPOGRAPHY OF EXCLUSION – Moderator: Lauren L. Sklaroff

Robert Gillette The Virginia Plan: William B. Thalhimer and the Resettlement of German Refugees Edward S. Shapiro Fighting the War: Southern Jewish Chaplains and the Evolution of American Jewish

Identity during World War II

Catherine R. Eskin Jewish Sacred Space in a "City of Churches": Temple Emanuel in Lakeland, Florida

12:30 P.M. Lunch

ories of the Jewish South

ern Jewish Historical Society and Society of South Carolina

Studies Program, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, ck Museum, and Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP

1 1 7	TT	3.6	3 6 1 .	D 1 D
1:15	HISTORY AND	MEMORY -	Moderator:	Dale Rosengarten

Joseph Butwin Old Countries: A Jewish Writer in the Southern Diaspora

Ellen Solomon Creating Ruchel Solomon: The Imaginatively Constructed Individual

3:00 CAPITAL CITY BUS TOUR led by Richard and Belinda Gergel

Big Apple, Beth Shalom's first synagogue – Holocaust monument, Memorial Park –

Hebrew Benevolent Society Cemetery

4:30 Open house at McKissick Museum – Bill Aron's Palmetto Jews

6:00 Reception – Hollings Library

Guided "behind the scenes" tours on the half-hour, beginning at 5:30pm

Exhibits: papers and campaign memorabilia of Isadore Lourie, Harriet Keyserling, and Sol Blatt from South Carolina Political Collections; Judaica and rare books from Hollings Special Collections and South Caroliniana Libraries; Max Heller papers from Furman University's Special Collections and Archives

Preview screening of selections from *Carvalho's Journey*, a new PBS documentary film, presented by producer/director Steve Rivo

7:30 Dinner on your own

Sunday, October 30th

8:30 A.M. Breakfast – Inn at USC (included in room rate)

Concurrent (both at the Inn): SJHS membership meeting, JHSSC board meeting

Recital Hall, School of Music

University of South Carolina, 813 Assembly Street, room 206, Columbia, SC

10:00 Sounds of the Jewish South:

THE MUSIC OF COMPOSER MEIRA WARSHAUER – Moderator: Phyllis Leffler

Performance and panel - Meira Warshauer, piano, Robert Jesselson, cello, and Janet Hopkins, mezzo-soprano

11:30 What's So Funny About Southern Jews?

Performance Inside and Outside the Tradition – Moderator: Eli N. Evans

Bryan E. Stone Havah Nagilah, Texas-Style: Christian Zionism and the Cornerstone Church

Jarrod Tanny From the Borscht Belt to the B'nei Mississippi: Jewish Humor's Encounter with the South

12:30 P.M. Box lunch and adjourn

Sights, Sounds, and Stories of the Jewish South

Joint Annual Conference

Southern Jewish Historical Society & Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina October 27–30, 2011 Columbia, SC

October 27–30	5, 2011 Columbia, SC
Registration deadline is October 15, 2011	
Last Name	First
Spouse/Friend	
Address	
City	State Zip
Phone	E-mail
Name(s) on name tags	
Please make reservations for the following:	
$Registration for {\bf FULL} {\bf program} {\bf including} {\bf all} {\bf meals}:$	\$150 per person \$
Registration for optional tour to Sumter, SC: \$50.00 pe	er person\$
Separate attendance at select events:	
Saturday events including evening reception: \$100.00	per person \$
Saturday evening program only: \$50.00 per person	\$
Sunday program with lunch: \$50.00 per person	\$
JHSSC and/or SJHS membership dues (see below)	\$
	TOTAL PAYMENT INCLUDED \$
Register online at www.jhssc.org/events with Visa or MasterCard or by check payable to JHSSC Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center College of Charleston Charleston, SC 29424	Conference hotel: Inn at USC 1619 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC 29201 Phone 803.779.7779 – mention SJHS / JHSSC Room rates: \$115.00 per night plus tax Rate includes breakfast, parking, Internet Prices valid until September 27, 2011
Questions:Enid IdelsohnEmail: IdelsohnE@cofc.eduphone: 843.953.3918fax: 843.953.7624	Kosher-style meals will be served. If you prefer strictly kosher meals, please check here.
You must be a member of JHSSC dues for 2012	f either JHSSC or SJHS to attend. SJHS dues for 2012

You must be a member of either JHSSC or SJHS to attend.				
JHSSC dues for 2012		SJHS dues for 2012		
Individual / Family membership	\$36	General member	\$36	
Joint membership in both JHSSC and SJHS	\$70	Student (individual only)	\$15	
Friend	\$200	Patron / Institutional	\$50	
Sponsor	\$350	Century Club	\$100	
Founding patron	\$1,000	Cedar	\$500	
Pillar (\$1,000.yearly / 5 years)	\$1,000	Sycamore	\$1,000	
Foundational pillar (\$2,000 yearly / 5 years)	\$2,000	Magnolia Magnolia	\$2,500	

is listed as a founding member of the Camden Protestant

Episcopal Church, though it

is unclear if he converted to

Christianity. Records reveal

that Levy owned 31 slaves in 1820, more than any other

person of Jewish descent in

the state. In 1816, one of his

enslaved workers, March, was

found guilty of "attempting

Camden.

raise an insurrection'

March

Capital City Jews: A Legacy of Leadership

by Alyssa Neely

¶uropeans began occupying South Carolina's backcountry in 1730s, lured by the colonial government's offer of 50 acres to anyone who would move to the interior. The rolling hills and rivers of the midlands promised newcomers land for farming and water power for milling. Jews were among the region's earliest colonial settlers and, from the era of the American Revolution onward, have occupied prominent positions in society and politics. Francis Salvador of London arrived in South Carolina late in 1773 and established an indigo plantation in Ninety Six, the colony's second most pop-

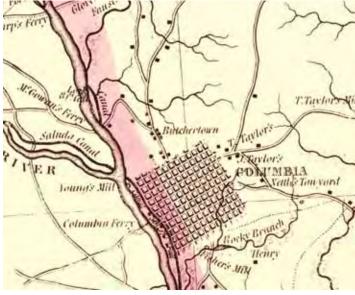
ulous district. In September 1774, he placed an ad in the *South Carolina and American General Gazette* for an overseer to "look after about thirty slaves." A devoted Patriot, he was elected to the First and Second Provincial Congresses and, when war broke out, joined the local militia. Less than three years after making South Carolina his home, Salvador was killed in an ambush by Tories and Cherokees. Besides being the first professing Jew to serve in a legislative assembly in America, he

was the first Jew known to have given his life to the revolutionary cause.

In 1786, when Columbia was designated the state capital, seven Jewish men from Charleston were among the first to invest in town lots. In 1790, the first federal census listed nearly a dozen men in the city with Jewish-sounding surnames, such as Jacobs, Meyers, and Lyons. Centrally located and the seat of state government, the new capital became a bustling crossroads and also the site of South Carolina College, the future University of South Carolina, founded in 1801 and ready for students four years later. The first Jewish students to receive their diplomas were Franklin J. Moses, Sr. (1823), Joseph Lyons (1832), and David

Camden DeLeon (1833).

Chapman Levy, a Camden native, was admitted to the Columbia bar in 1806. Legislator, soldier, landowner, proprietor of a brickyard, Mason, and expert on the practice of dueling, Levy



Map of Columbia from Robert Mills's Atlas of the State of South Carolina, 1825. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

condemned, with six other slaves, to be "hanged by the neck" for his treachery.

Levy lived in Columbia in the 1820s, but returned to his hometown later that decade. In the mid-1830s, he resettled in Mississippi, where he appears to have prospered. According to Edward Sanders, a descendant

to have prospered. According to Edward Sanders, a descendant of Levy slaves, he purchased approximately 40 Negroes from a single buyer for more than \$30,000. A year later, he sold almost all of them, with the exception of two families, back to the original owner. He made provisions for at least one of those families that the parents and children not be separated.

The Jewish population of Columbia grew with the general populace; by 1830, an estimated 70 Jews were among its residents. Fortunes were made and quickly lost in the

capital, now struggling to become a commercial hub. Jews, generally well accepted, were active in civic affairs. They served in the Richland Volunteer Rifle Company, joined

the Masons, and acted as bank officers. While credit reports reveal threads of discriminatory stereotyping running through the antebellum years, Jews

nevertheless achieved high positions in local politics. In 1827, Judah Barrett became the first Jew in Columbia to hold an elected post. He served as warden, or city councilman, for two terms, before succumbing to debt and moving to New Orleans.

Dr. Mordecai Hendricks DeLeon held the intendant, or mayoral, post for three consecutive

terms starting in 1833. He was the descendant of prestigious families on both sides. His father, Jacob DeLeon, was born into a far-flung Sephardic clan, with roots in Spain and the Netherlands. Jacob grew up in Spanish Town,



Miniature portrait of Chapman Levy (1787–1849), artist unknown, ca. 1835. Gift of Thomas W. Crockett in honor of Loraine Crockett. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Jamaica, then in 1789 married Hannah Hendricks of New York, daughter of a successful shipping family that specialized in copper. After living for a time in Kingston and New York, the DeLeons settled in Charleston, South Carolina, and in the early 1820s moved to Columbia. There Mordecai oversaw two medical facilities, an asylum for the mentally ill and a general hospital that maintained wards for blacks as well as whites. His wife, Rebecca Lopez DeLeon, headed the Ladies Benevolent Society, whose members included Columbia's social elite.

Henry Lyons, a director of the Commercial Bank of Columbia, served as warden for eight years and, in 1850, became the city's second Jewish mayor. His brother-in-law, Charlestonian Moses Cohen Mordecai, was a state representative from 1845 to 1846 and

state senator from 1855 to 1858, and in the weeks following the fire that devastated Columbia in February 1865, became the city's "food administrator."

A number of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe settled in Columbia in the mid-1800s, decades ahead of the large influx of Ashkenazim that would pour into the United States at the turn of the 20th century. Newcomers Abraham Isaac Trager, Philip Epstin, and Henry Steel did not hold government posts, but the three men, from Lithuania, Poland, and Austria, respectively, served as lay leaders for Jewish services and



Henry Lyons (1805–1858), artist unknown, ca. 1850. Gift of Sandy Luce. McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina.

rites of passage. In the years following the Civil War, while Ashkenazi families were settling in, descendants of the early Sephardic settlers were moving on and, by the 1890s, most had left Columbia.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Columbia's Jews were operating their own businesses and participating in local organizations and politics. Polish immigrant Mordecai David came to the capital from Charleston right after the Civil War. A brother-in-law of Philip Epstin, he owned a number of businesses and served on city council in the early 1900s. Restaurant owner Theodore M. Pollock ran the Wheeler House and the Pollock House, advertising "Fruits, Confectionary and dining saloon." In the early 1880s, both Pollock and David C. Peixotto, clothing merchant and auctioneer, served on Columbia's city council.

August Kohn, the son of a German immigrant who settled in Orangeburg in 1850, moved to Columbia in 1885 to attend South Carolina College. In 1892, the young journalist was hired as Columbia bureau chief of Charleston's *News and Courier*. In addition to his regular duties, Kohn reported on every session of the general assembly. Although he gave up daily reporting in 1906 to pursue business interests, he continued to contribute feature articles and provide legislative summaries to the newspaper. Soon after scaling back his work as a reporter, he opened August Kohn & Company, a real estate

and investment firm. Admired for his integrity and philanthropy, Kohn gained prominence in his community and the state. Besides acting as a trustee for the University of South Carolina, he was a Mason and a Shriner, and served as president of Tree of Life and the Hebrew Benevolent Society. His brother Sol, who came to Columbia from Orangeburg in 1918 to run Kohn's Department Store on Main Street, was a founder and the first president of the Columbia Merchants' Association.

Helen Kohn, daughter of August and Irene Goldsmith Kohn, assumed adult responsibilities in 1913 at age 17 when her mother died. She ran her father's household, watched over two younger brothers, and stepped into her mother's leadership position at Tree of Life's religious school, all the while keeping up with her college studies. Helen married Julian Hennig of Darlington and, as she raised their children, earned a master's degree in history at the University of South Carolina. The lone woman on Columbia's Sesqui-Centennial Commission, she served as chair of its History Committee, and supervised and edited Columbia: Capital City of



Board of Trustees of the University of South Carolina at the home of August Kohn, March 11, 1915. Left to right: Standing – August Kohn, David R. Coker, W. M. Hamer, Jos. A. McCullough, P. A. Wilcox, Dr. W. T. C. Bates, Jas. Q. Davis, C. E. Spencer, Huger Sinkler. Seated – J. E. Swearingen, R. I. Manning, Wm. S. Currell. Photo courtesy of South Caroliniana Library.

South Carolina, 1786–1936. She continued to write books and work with community organizations such as the Red Cross, Community Chest, the Columbia Art Museum, the USO, Town Theater, the Family Service Center, and the South Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs. Helen also devoted herself to the Tree of Life congregation, leaving an indelible impression on its members, particularly the children who attended the Sunday school. She was involved in every facet of synagogue life and served as an officer in the state and national Sisterhood organizations.

Hyman Rubin, who joined his father in his wholesale dry goods distribution business, J. Rubin & Son, had a long and distinguished career in local and state politics. He served on Columbia's city council from 1952 to 1966 and in the state senate from 1967 to 1984. A champion of social justice, particu-

larly racial integration, he founded the Columbia Luncheon Club, a forum where blacks and whites could discuss issues of mutual concern. Rubin sat on the boards of the Chamber of Commerce, the Republic National Bank, Community Chest, and the South Carolina Federation of the Blind. In 1997, he was presented with the Distinguished Service Award from the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council, an organization he had founded and served as a board member.

In 1937, the city's Jewish population was estimated at 680 and stores owned by Jewish merchants lined Assembly and Main Streets. Lourie's, "Columbia's Leading Fashion Store for Men and Women," opened in 1948, a branch of the family's St. George store. The owners, Sol and Mick, were sons of Russian immigrant Louis Lourie, who had followed a cousin south and founded stores in South Carolina and Georgia. The brothers' success enabled them to expand their business and open new locations in Columbia.

The Louries also made their mark in politics. Isadore Lourie graduated from law school at the University of South Carolina in 1956 and was practicing law in Columbia when he



Columbia's Holocaust Memorial, dedicated on June 6, 2001. Photo: Lauren Cannady.



Lourie's at night, Columbia, SC, 2000. Photo: Bill Aron.

was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1964. He served in the state senate from 1973 until he retired in 1992. He considered himself a "staunch Democrat" and fought for causes that benefited the average citizen. In 1994, he became founding director of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, leading the drive to establish an organization dedicated to exploring and preserving the state's Jewish history. Isadore's son, Joel, served from 1999 to 2004 in the house and, in 2004, was elected to the state senate, serving Kershaw and Richland Counties.

During the 20th century, a number of South Carolina Jews called Columbia home for the months when the legislature was in session. Sylvia Dreyfus of Greenville, Irene Krugman Rudnick of Aiken, Harriet Keyserling and her son Billy Keyserling of Beaufort, and Leonard Krawcheck of Charleston all served in the House of Representatives. Arnold Goodstein, also of Charleston, served in both the house and the senate, and Sol Blatt of Blackville was Speaker of the House for more than three decades.

In the 1990s, in an effort led first by Ben Stern and then his son and daughter, Bill Stern and Dr. Lilly Filler, Columbia's Jewish community worked to establish a Holocaust Memorial. The campaign was supported by the University of South Carolina and Fort Jackson, among other participants. Designed by Irwin Hyman, the memorial was dedicated in June 2001 in the city's Memorial Park.

Founding member and past president of JHSSC Belinda Gergel has been serving on Columbia's city council since July 2008. Besides promoting the idea that more women are needed in leadership positions, the retired Columbia College professor supports the city's bus system, seeks solutions to the problem of homelessness, and fights to preserve the "character and integrity" of residential neighborhoods.

For more information on Columbia's Jewish history, go to the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities at www.isjl.org/history/archive, and click on SC.

Remembering My Dad, Max Heller

by Susan Heller Moses



Paula, Leah, and Max Heller, Vienna, Austria, 1923.

t came as no surprise to anyone who knew my father that in the last two weeks of his life, he was still making plans. My sister, Francie, recalled that just days before he passed, he was planning a meeting with community members. He held my mother's hand, blew us kisses, and sang Yiddish songs in a strong voice. When he could no longer speak, as our brother, Steven, recounted, he "started singing and, finally, between labored breaths, he quietly sang himself away." Max Moses

Heller died on June 13, 2011, the way he had lived—with hope, optimism, and a belief in the goodness of others. These same qualities provided him the courage, in 1938, to risk passage to America.

I remember a story my father told me about the day he and his sister, Paula, fled Europe. He was 18 years old and knew it was time to get out of Nazi-occupied Austria. At the train station they said their goodbyes to their parents, Israel and Leah, unsure if they would see each other again. After boarding, Max and Paula pushed down the window by their seats and held tightly to their parents' hands. As the train began to move, they had to let go. Brother and

sister looked back until their beloved parents faded completely out of sight.

Thanks to the kindness of Mary Mills, a young American girl Max had met in Vienna the year before, and Shepard Saltzman, the man she asked to sponsor Max with a job in his shirt factory, he was on his way to Greenville, South Carolina. On the day he arrived, he and Saltzman went to lunch. My father had \$1.40 in his pocket. When Saltzman offered to pay, my father refused. "When I can afford to buy you lunch," he said, "then you can buy me lunch."

That same day, my father began working as a stock boy and sweeping floors at the Piedmont Shirt factory. He eventually became vice president of the business and a few years later started Maxon Shirt Company. In Trude and Max, May 1941. All photos courtesy 1940, Trude Schönthal, a beautiful of Susan Heller Moses.

Viennese girl he had met before leaving Austria, escaped to America after a harrowing trip. She and her parents moved to Greenville and, on August 2, 1942, Max and Trude were married. Luckily, Max's parents escaped and joined them. Between the Hellers and the Schönthals, they lost over 90 family members to the horrors of Hitler.

Max never forgot the kindness of the people of Greenville. After selling his successful business in 1968, he dedicated his life Max Heller at age 10, Vienna, to public service. He served 1929.



on city council for two years and, in 1971, was elected mayor of Greenville. For eight years he led the drive to revitalize downtown. As mayor, he desegregated all city departments and commissions and worked tirelessly to create affordable housing. Asked if Max Heller had bridged the cultural differences between Jew and Gentile, black and white, rich and poor, Rabbi Julie Kozlow replied, "Max was the bridge."

At his funeral service, Francie described our father as "a public person" but also "a very private person." She recalled "Sunday mornings as a child, when my parents would put Viennese waltzes on the record player and

> dance through the house. I remember dinner together each night with lively discussions."

Everyone in the synagogue knew

of the great things my dad did. When it came my time to speak, I told them some things he didn't do. He didn't envy. He didn't complain. With his body racked in pain, he sang. He never lost his sense of wonder about the world. Not long before he died, we sat outside on the terrace of the home he and my mother built 60 years ago. He looked around at the trees, at the beginning of the summer blossoms, and said, "Look at this. What more could I want?" He didn't email or text or twitter. He communicated

personally. He never took art lessons,

but in his spare time he painted

beautiful canvases that hang in our

homes.



Steven spoke next. "Dad loved to have fun and he was so absolutely funny. He would pretend to sing opera using some Italian gibberish that made no sense to us or to any Italian person. He sang Yiddish theater songs from his childhood in a comedic playful way. He wanted everyone to have the chance he had, to live in freedom as an equal. He was my mentor. He was a balanced man and a wonderful father. I asked him not long ago what were some of his favorite childhood memories. He told me about Saturdays, the Sabbath, when he was a boy in Vienna. Max Heller, mayor, and Greenville City Council, 1971. He would climb onto the family



bed with his father, mother, and sister. His mother, Leah, would tell them stories and sing songs from

the small village of her youth, sad and beautiful songs. While he was telling me about this, he began to sing those

songs and tears ran down his face."

Eldest granddaughter, Lauren Hurvitz, said that Popi was more than a grandfather to her. He was her father, someone she wanted to spend time with, laugh with, confess to, make proud, and whose opinion mattered. "Enjoy every moment for what it is and have

no regrets for what you could have done," Max counseled.

"You must be able to find humor, even in the darkest moments. Martinis are best straight up and dry, with a twist."

Granddaughter Lynne Moses Garfinkel recounted coming to Greenville on election night in 1979, when she was 11 years old. Beaten in a bitterly fought congressional campaign, Max dried her tears. Later, when she ran for class secretary and lost by six votes, it was Popi Max who comforted her and told her to hold her head high, to congratulate the winner, and look forward, not back.

Grandson Daniel Moses said a thousand words would not do justice to his grandfather, but he chose two: "instinctive and selfless."

Granddaughter Sarah Heller

Anne Frank that she and Popi Max both loved: "It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. . . . How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

of Several the greatgrandchildren described their beloved Popi. "He was kind and funny and he really cared about us. He accepted everyone for who they are. He asked about

what we were doing and really listened to our answers. I will always remember the way he raised his hands in joy when he saw me coming."

The funeral procession for my father passed through downtown Greenville on the trip between Beth Israel Synagogue and Graceland Cemetery. Scores of citizens stood with their hands on their hearts as we drove slowly down his beloved Main Street. Bouquets of flowers had been laid at the feet of the bronze sculpture dedicated on Max's 90th birthday. As we passed City Hall, we noticed the employees outside, hands on hearts, waving, blowing kisses. A black ribbon had been tied around the building. The city that had taken him in, the city that he loved and transformed, was saying a final goodbye.



read a passage from The Diary of The Heller family at Beth Israel, Greenville, on Max's 90th birthday, 2009.



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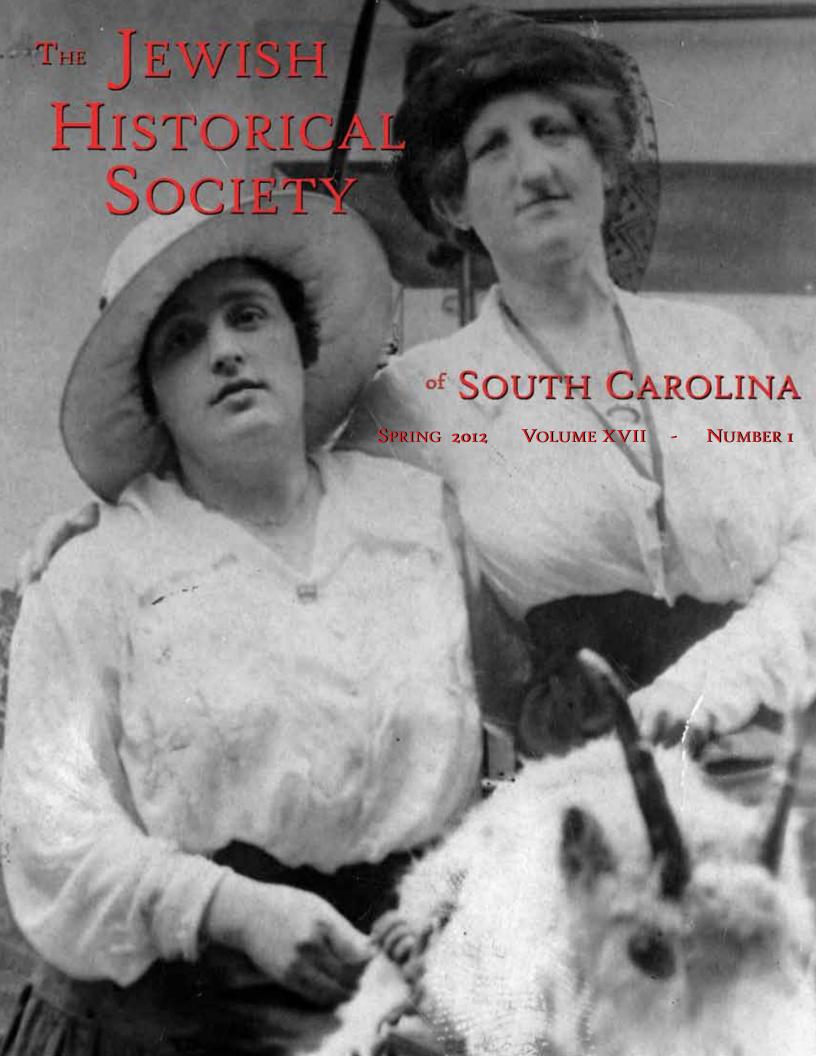
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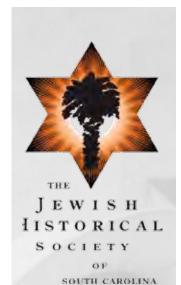
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Register now for the October 27-30, 2011 meeting in Columbia.

See pages 8-10 for more information.

Leader page to JHSSC Spring 2012 Set your Acrobat Reader to View > Page Display > Two-Up





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The JHSSC newsletter is published twice a year.

Current and back issues can be found at www.jhssc.org

On the cover: Marion ("Mary") Cohen [?] and Janie Cohen Marcus of Eutawville, SC, ca. 1915. Photo courtesy of Ronald Cohen.

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Letter from the President



In the spring of 1994, I was working at Chernoff Silver, a public relations firm in Columbia, when we were asked by Senator Isadore Lourie to assist with the launch of a new organization. Of course, we jumped to the task—you didn't say no to Isadore! The organization was the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. A preliminary meeting was held at the Capital City Club

in downtown Columbia to a packed house. I remember how exciting that gathering was—there was intense energy and excitement for this fledgling organization.

Fast forward 18 years and I now find myself the president of this well-established, well-respected society. I am honored to be at the helm and to succeed such leaders as Ann Hellman, Ed Poliakoff, Bernard Warshaw, Richard and Belinda Gergel, Robert Rosen, Jeffrey Rosenblum, and Klyde Robinson. It is somewhat daunting to follow those that I admire, but with the guidance of Executive Director Marty Perlmutter and Administrator Enid Idelsohn, and assistance and support from the Society's board and membership, I hope to bring more attention to Jewish communities in out-of-the-way places like Summerton, where I grew up. Indeed, one major impulse behind the founding of the Society was to document the dwindling Jewish populations of small towns that Senator Lourie and friends feared were in danger of disappearing.

Today the Society has more than 350 members and over 20 Pillars. Its incredibly informative website *www.jhssc. org* and its ongoing projects, including the publication of bi-annual newsletters, the placement of historical markers, developing cemetery records, and archiving the Jewish record of South Carolina, are signs of a vibrant society that is a model of public stewardship. JHSSC has put South Carolina's important Jewish history on the national map.

This past October the JHSSC and the Southern Jewish Historical Society held a joint meeting in Columbia on the campus of the University of South Carolina. "Sights, Sounds, and Stories of the Jewish South" was a weekend that appealed to all of the senses, with tours to Sumter and sites around Columbia, exhibits mounted by McKissick Museum and four different archives, insightful lectures, a program of original music, and a final session on southern Jewish humor. Thanks go to program co-chairs Dale Rosengarten and Phyllis Leffler. Their creativity, diligence, and attention to detail set a high standard for conferences to come.

I hope you will make plans now to attend our spring meeting on May 19 and 20 in Charleston. "To Heal the World: Jewish South Carolinians in Public Service" will examine the contributions modern-day Jews have made in their communities. In this issue the children of leaders of several South Carolina communities have shared their memories of growing up in a small town with a parent who was engaged in local business and/or government. We appreciate the enthusiasm and hard work of our authors. The histories of the Jewish communities of South Carolina are well documented but there is a new generation to be heard from. Those who grew up in small and mid-size towns in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s now are finding their voice.

We will continue this conversation at the meeting when we hear from this next generation, as well as from Jewish women who have held (or currently hold) elective office in our state. Our keynoter, Hollace Ava Weiner, will provide context with a talk titled "Fighting the Philistines: Southern Jews in High Places," a look at Jewish movers and shakers across the region. Our own published historians and former presidents Richard Gergel and Robert Rosen will return for an entertaining lunchtime presentation, providing an overview of Jewish public service in the Palmetto State. To register, please go to www.jhssc.org.

I hope to see you all in Charleston in May. What could be finer?!

Isadore would be very proud.

With warm regards,

Rachel Gordin Barnett

rgbarnett@earthlink.net



Schmoozing on a Sunday afternoon: Morris Gordin (center), David's father, catches up on the latest news with his brother Louis (r) of Pinewood and Herman Fox of Greeleyville (l), 1955.

was not quite ten years old in 1971 when my dad—David **▲**Gordin—won a seat on the Summerton Town Council, the first time someone Jewish served on it. On the other hand, we were the only Jewish family in our town of 1,306 people. We were defined by that as much as African Americans were by the color of their skin. Certainly we never denied who we were, nor could we even if we had wanted to. We attended the Reform temple in Sumter, 20 miles away, and I had a bar mitzvah with all my gentile friends present. Still, even as a youngster, I understood there was a certain order to our society and our place in it, and it was seemingly as fixed as the test patterns on our black-and-white television. We had a black woman, Ethel Glover, who worked for us, and we had a black yard man, Asie, who lived up the road from our house. Ethel was as much a part of my family as my own siblings. And yet, the distance that divided our worlds could not have been greater had we lived on different sides of the Atlantic. Our house stood directly across the street from an Episcopalian church, and I could say almost the same thing about the divide between us and the Episcopalians. But the times, as Bob Dylan sang, were "a-changin'." Or were they?

Dad was the town's pharmacist and a native of the community, and Mom wasn't from too far away, being Charleston born and raised. Having a local southern pedigree certainly helped solidify his electability. The community was small enough so that no formal campaigning was necessary; he had name recognition and respect among the white and the African-American communities. His was a progressive platform built around the desire to affect the kind of change that truly impacted people and their well-being, no matter one's skin color, creed, or religion.

Still, Summerton was segregated, the whites occupying one side of town and the blacks another. The majority of The Times They



Teacher Miriam Gordin leads a class in world history, Summerton High School, ca. 1970.

black people lived in dilapidated dwellings. Because of extreme poverty, most had no indoor plumbing. In fact, sewer lines did not even extend to their section. One of Dad's major accomplishments on town council was to help apply for a federal grant to change that. The grant provided funding not just for the lines but also for indoor plumbing for those who could not afford it, and the ubiquitous outhouses disappeared virtually overnight.

The Summerton council also tackled the changing local economy. Ours was a rural community based primarily on agriculture. When I was a small child, sharecroppers like Asie still drove mules and wagons in from the country to make their purchases. Farming had been labor intensive, but over time, new machinery reduced the need for farm workers. Poor education left many with little choice other than to apply for welfare. Unemployment was rampant, and the situation obviously affected the town merchants as well. In league with the governor's office, Dad and the council lured an auto parts maker to the area. The town laid water and sewer lines to the building site. The plant opened in 1983 and eventually employed 300 people. Not only did it provide



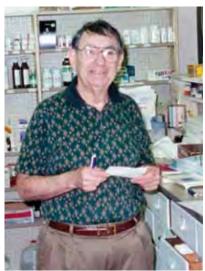
C. A. Harvin Ginnery, Summerton, SC.

Were A-Changin'

by Stephen J. Gordin

jobs, but it also increased the tax base for the county. That in turn set the stage for the eventual building of a new public school in 1998 that replaced the old one.

Color came into our house with the purchase of our first such television in 1972. However, the gray came in 1970 as Summerton's schools faced court-ordered desegregation. White par- Pharmacist David Gordin behind the ents, including my own, were concerned about the quotas



counter at Rowe-Tomlinson Drugs in Summerton, May 1996.

(Summerton was nearly 70 percent African American) that were instituted. Having been denied a track system, as was allowed in nearby Manning, they pulled their kids out of the public school and sent us to Clarendon Hall, a private school founded by Southern Baptists. My mother, a teacher at the public school, got a job at the private one. Dad served on Clarendon's school board. The motives for sending kids to the private school may have been complicated, but because of my parents and other dedicated people like them, Clarendon Hall blossomed into a school where a child could receive a quality education.

Dad retired from the town council in 1981 but did not disengage from public life. When I was a youngster, we had the traditional old country doctor who made house calls. After he retired, however, the closest physicians were ten miles away—an obvious hardship for many locals who had limited transportation. Dad spearheaded a committee to attract a physician to the town and obtain funding to open a medical clinic.



Rowe-Tomlinson drug store.



The author with (l to r) his aunt Marilyn Gordin Roth, Ethel Glover, who worked for the Gordins for 30 years, and his mother, Miriam Gordin, early 1980s.

Ironically, the new physician arrived with a friend of his, a pharmacist who opened his own drug store as a direct competitor of Dad's. Not long after that, I was in a grocery store and overheard a conversation between two women whom I knew mentioning how it would now be good to trade with "our kind." (The new pharmacist was a member of a local church.) One of the ladies then used a racial slur in reference to an African-American woman who worked for her. Such attitudes were certainly not ubiquitous, but they represented a dark undercurrent of prejudice among at least a portion of the community. And, like the nearby Santee, it ran as deep and was as unchanging as the river itself.

So maybe Bob Dylan was wrong, or maybe Aldous Huxley was more correct when he said, "The charming thing about history is that nothing changes, and yet everything is completely different." More likely, the truth is in between. Through Dad's contributions, life did improve for many in my hometown. Changing ingrained attitudes was, of course, beyond his control and remains a multi-generational task. Yet, as the Talmud says, "You are not required to finish the job, but neither are you free to desist from it altogether." For my folks, taking that advice and living by it meant not just doing their part but helping us children understand the task and its importance. By doing so, they painted a silver lining along what had once been a vast unbroken gray.

Stephen J. Gordin, M.D., is a radiologist now residing in Campobello, SC. He is also a published author and novelist, whose hometown of Summerton figures in many of his works.

All photos courtesy of the Gordin family.

The Golden Age of Temple Beth Or: The Jewish Co



Rabbi Hillel Millgram and Cantor Jacob J. Renzer of Charleston's Emanu-El arrive to conduct the once-monthly Sunday service in Kingstree, SC, 1959.



Temple Beth Or Sunday school class, Kingstree, SC, 1956. Left to right: Back row – Gail Marcus, Judy Lesselbaum, David Marcus, William Marcus, Joan Berger, Bill Dubin. Middle row – Theresa Heiden, David Grossman, Michael Cole, Douglas Bess, Jimmy Mischner, Sam Moskow. Front row – Leslie Drucker, Risa Grossman, Nancy Bess, Michael Mischner, Arthur Berger, Diane Moskow, Neil Dubin.



Rabbi Millgram and Cantor Renzer at the bimah.

Outh Carolina's first Conservative congregation, Temple Beth Or, was the heart of a vibrant Jewish community in Kingstree and surrounding towns for over 40 years. Formed on April 8, 1945, the congregation initially held services in private homes and then in various public buildings. In 1946 Harry Marcus donated a plot of land in Kingstree, and the cornerstone of the synagogue was laid on April 10, 1949.

The town of Kingstree was established in 1730. It is a farming community of approximately 3,200 townspeople, located 75 miles northwest from Charleston. It is the county seat of Williamsburg County (population 35,000). The main crops are tobacco, cotton, corn, and soybeans. While there were Jewish families in Kingstree in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the "golden age" for the Jewish community spanned 1945 to 1990. The community was actually composed of families from four nearby towns, with Kingstree as the hub. The other three towns were Lake City (16 miles away), Andrews (25 miles), and Greeleyville (13 miles).

After World War II there was an influx of young couples drawn to Kingstree by family relations and/or in search of business opportunities. This process is well described in Stella Suberman's book, *The Jew Store* (Algonquin Books: Chapel Hill, NC, 2001). These families went into a variety of businesses, including department stores, drug stores, a shoe store, building supplies, a jewelry store,

heating and plumbing, a car dealership, a record store, and appliance business. Four of the young men—Sidney Dubin, Herman Marcus (a nephew of Harry Marcus), Lenny Grossman, and Jerome Moskow—were integral to the success of the synagogue. There was a Sunday school, a men's club, a sisterhood, and monthly services conducted on a Sunday afternoon by the rabbi from Emanu-El, the Conservative synagogue in Charleston. Among the rabbis who conducted services over the years were Gerald Wolpe, Hillel Millgram, and Jordan Taxon.

These Sunday services were in addition to year-round Friday night services that always had a minyan. William Marcus, a brother of Harry Marcus, who had moved to Kingstree from Canada after escaping from Lithuania at the beginning of World War II, was the

mmunity of Kingstree, South Carolina: 1945–1990

by William R. Dubin



Students (1 to r) Douglas Bess, Sam Moskow, David Marcus, David Grossman, and Theresa Heiden study Hebrew in Millgram and Renzer's Sunday school class, 1959.



Wedding of Shelly Marcus and Alan Brenner, 1974. Photo courtesy of

lay leader and conducted the Hebrew part of the services every Friday night for almost 40 years. Market 1980 and 1980 are the Services every Friday night for almost 40 years. Different members of the congregation would rotate reading the English portion of the service. For most of Temple Beth Or's existence a student from the Conservative seminary in New York, the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), would come to Kingstree for ten days and conduct Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. Many of these students returned for several years to lead the services, and developed life-long relationships with families in the congregation.

Beth Or had a robust Sunday school, including Hebrew classes every Sunday morning. A seminary student from JTS lived in Kingstree for one summer and taught Hebrew to the children three days a week. Many of the children had their bar or bat mitzvahs and weddings in the synagogue. For almost 20 years the sisterhood held a community seder that drew all of the families from the community. The sisterhood held an eagerly anticipated and popular regional bazaar in the synagogue every fall. Each spring the entire congregation would go for a day-long Department Store's "Old Fashion Sunday picnic to Poinsett State Park near Sumter.



Dotty and David Marcus run Marcus Days," ca. 1989. Photo courtesy of Shelly Brenner.

Members of the non-Jewish community were frequently invited to events and celebrations in the synagogue and, likewise, Jewish families were often invited to events in both white and black churches. Each June Sidney Dubin would host various church Bible schools in the synagogue to explain Judaism and discuss the various symbols and practices of the religion.

The congregants of Beth Or were active participants in the fabric of the larger non-Jewish community. Jewish men and women were involved in and officers of most of the town organizations, and many served as president. Some of the men participated in sports leagues, such as Herman Marcus, who was a fixture in the church summer softball league. Other examples were:

- Sidney Dubin—Moose Lodge (a national civic organization), Parent Teacher Association, American Legion, Chamber of Commerce, and Jaycees
- Rose Heiden—Eastern Star
- Harold Lesselbaum—Lions Club and Chamber of Commerce
- Herman Marcus—Masons, Moose Lodge, Chamber of Commerce, Jaycees, and one of the founders of the Demolay chapter (an organization for high school boys sponsored by the Masons)
- Herman "Red" Mischner—Kiwanis Club and Chamber of Commerce
- Jerome Moskow (Andrews)—Fire chief, head of local Boy Scouts, president of the Lions Club, and chairman of the local school board.

PAGE 8 JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Almost all of the women from this era worked as partners in the businesses of their husbands and were essential to their success. Several women worked as substitute teachers in the school system and all played vital roles in their children's school activities.

Joseph Goldstein, M.D., who grew up in Kingstree, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1985 for his pioneering work in cholesterol metabolism. In 1992 Sidney Dubin received the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the Kingstree Chamber of Commerce. In 1993 Jerome Moskow was awarded

the Order of the Palmetto—South Carolina's highest civilian honor, recognizing lifetime achievement and contributions to the state—by Governor David M. Beasley. The same year Moskow was also inducted into the South Carolina Lions Hall of Fame.

Typically—perhaps stereotypically—Kingstree's Jewish children excelled in academics and athletics and went off to college. Also, as was typical in small southern towns, very few returned. Of those who came home, Dr. Louis Drucker and Dr. David Grossman established their dental practices in Kingstree. David Marcus and Tab Blakely returned to run the family businesses, and Sam Drucker, a pharmacist, took over the family



In 1993 Jerome Moskow was awarded *Jerry Drucker, Herman Marcus, and Sidney Dubin ham it up in downtown Kingstree. Photo courtesy of Bill Dubin.*

drug store. Melissa Moskow returned to Andrews to help with her father's accounting firm.

By the year 2005 there were only five Jewish families remaining and the synagogue was sold to the Catholic Church, as those who stayed could no longer handle the upkeep. There is a Jewish cemetery, which is still maintained and supported by a trust fund. A menorah, a kiddush cup, a tallit, a mezuzah, a yarmulke, the flag of Israel, a plaque of the temple property, and books from the religious school have been placed in the Williamsburg County Museum in Kingstree. The

local newspaper, the *News*, affectionately and respectfully profiled several Jewish businesses, including Dubin's Department Store, Marcus's Department Store, Tucker's Department Store, and Drucker's Drug Store.

As in other small southern towns, post–World War II prosperity provided for the education of the children so that it was difficult for them to return home. It was a way of life that, by and large, led to a prosperous future for most Jewish families, but has now all but vanished. It's the typical small-town story, sad, but in its way, a wonderful success story that is rarely appreciated or understood outside of the South.

William R. Dubin, M.D., chairs the department of psychiatry at Temple University School of Medicine and is Chief Medical Officer of Temple University Hospital-Episcopal in Philadelphia, PA. Thanks to contributors Neil Dubin, M.D., Cincinnati, OH; Louis Drucker, D.D.S., Kingstree, SC; Miriam Drucker, Kingstree, SC; Gail (Marcus) Genderson, Richmond, VA; Shelly (Marcus) Brenner, Cherry Hill, NJ. A special thanks to Dale Rosengarten for her thoughtful suggestions.

Unless otherwise noted, photos of Temple Beth Or were taken by Jerome Moskow in the 1950s and are provided courtesy of the Moskow family.

The Families of Temple Beth Or, 1945–2005 from The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina newsletter, 8:1 (Winter 2003), p.10

Andrews

Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Moskow Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moskow Mr. Samuel Moskow Mrs. Stella Richburg Mr. and Mrs. M. Stern Mr. Joe Weiner

Lake City

Mr. Harry Bebergal Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Berger Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Bess Mr. A. B. Brick Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Dubin Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Dubroff

Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Heiden

Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Heiden Mr. Horace Nachman Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Libbert

Greelyville

Mr. and Mrs. Herman Fox Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Grossman

Kingstree

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Adams
Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Aronson
Mr. and Mrs. Bennie Berman
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Blakely
Dr. and Mrs. Allan S. Brenner
Mr. Harry Cahn
Mrs. Bernice Cole
Mr. and Mrs. Moses Collis
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Drucker

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Drucker Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Drucker Mr. and Mrs. Louis Drucker Mr. Max Drucker Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Drucker Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Dubin Mr. and Mrs. Sam Friedman Mrs. Tillie Gershman Mr. and Mrs. Isadore Goldstein Mrs. Pauline Goldstein Dr. and Mrs. David Grossman Mrs. Sadie Isquith Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Jacobs Mr. and Mrs. Karol Kalisky Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Karesh Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lesselbaum Mr. and Mrs. David Marcus
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Mr. and Mrs. Barney Schulman
Dr. Leon Sigler
Mr. and Mrs. David Silverman
Mr. Louis Swetlitz
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Tucker
Mr. and Mrs. Lester Weinberg

Georgetown's Jews Notes of a Native Son

by Laz L. Schneider

When I graduated from Winyah High School in Georgetown, South Carolina, in 1957, I was one of two Jews in my class of 125. This might have been the highpoint of Jewish enrollment, although there were usually Jewish students at Winyah, one in some classes, from the earliest days of public education in the town.

Jews began settling in



Winyah High School, Georgetown, SC, from the 1943 yearbook. Courtesy of the Georgetown County Library.

Georgetown before the War of Independence. Abraham Cohen, appointed as the town's first U.S. postmaster in 1790, was also a Mason, a founder of the Georgetown Library Society and the Georgetown Fire Company, and a commissioner of streets and markets. Abraham's brother Solomon served as postmaster, treasurer of the Library Society, tax collector, and first sergeant of the Winyah Light Dragoons. He also belonged to the prestigious Winyah Indigo Society, was elected

intendant (mayor) of Georgetown in 1818, and became director of the Bank of the State of South Carolina in 1819. Indeed, three early $19^{\rm th}$ -century mayors were Jewish.

fact, the world's leading port for rice exports in the early 19th century—the town attracted a substantial number of Jewish merchants and professionals. In 1800 Georgetown's 80 Jews constituted ten percent of a total white population of 800. A few Jews achieved the status of plantation owners, such as Solomon Cohen Jr., who was a charter member of the

As an important port—in

Planters Club and, in 1836, married Miriam Gratz Moses, a niece of the famous Philadelphia educator Rebecca Gratz.

The Jewish business class was prominent in the economic and political life of Georgetown from its earliest days through much of the 20th century. When I grew up, many of the stores on Front Street were Jewish owned. The New Store, established in 1912, was owned first by my grandfather Albert Schneider and my great-uncle Harry Rosen, and then by my father, Philip Schneider, and his brother Harold. When the store closed in 1988, it was the oldest business in town.

My experiences in Georgetown prior to graduation were



Laz "Leffy" Schneider's bar mitzvah at Temple Beth Elohim, Georgetown, 1952. Courtesy of Laz Schneider.



Purim party at Temple Beth Elohim in 1952. Left to right: Back row – Brenda Bodian, Sandra Abrams, Larry Rosen, Leffy Schneider, Bunky Abrams, Roslyn Goldstein, Sam Abrams, Tad Fogel. Front row – Alicia Gardner, Robert Schneider, Michael Schwartz, Susan Schneider, Steven Goldstein, Sarah Baker, Sally Schneider. Courtesy of Beth Elohim, Georgetown.

typical. I do not recall a single antisemitic slur or act of discrimination, although it is certainly possible that there were both behind my back. The only incident of personal embarrassment I remember was that of a teacher saying how smart Jews were. The remark was intended benevolently, although I received it with great discomfort. My recollection of be unique. My cousin Sylvan Rosen was elected mayor and



Philip and Harold Schneider relocated The New Store to the McCrory this benevolent period cannot building on Front Street, which they purchased in 1965. Photo: Jimmy Elliott. From A Walk Down Front Street compiled by the Georgetown County Historical Society, courtesy of the Georgetown County Library.

served from 1948 to 1961, and his brother, Meyer, was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives for two terms.

As far as the broader national issues were concerned, I was mostly unconscious. Winyah, like all schools in South Carolina, was segregated. Brown v. Board of Education was decided in 1954 and had no impact before my graduation in 1957. I also was unaware of any racist actions or even statements by my friends and acquaintances. To the extent memory is an indication of exceptional incidents, I will give two examples.

The first occurred when we were driving with a teacher to a debate tournament. I told the driver to avoid the "black lady" on the side of the road. My car-mates expressed surprise at my statement. Puzzled, I inquired, "Why?" The answer I received was, "That's the first time we ever heard anyone describe a black female as a 'lady."

The other incident—or rather, nonincident—happened during civics class when I expressed agreement that taxpayer money shouldn't support discrimination, as I understood *Brown v. Board of Education* to say. The class moved on without further discussion.

My father's business had always had a large black customer base; I never heard a race-based comment in my home. My father was exceptional in all respects when it came to dealing with others. He liked everyone and it was reciprocated. He was apolitical, but voted Democratic, even against South Carolina's Senator Strom Thurmond in his third-party campaign. I worked Saturdays at my dad's store and delivered appliances and installed television antennas with the other his partner and brother-in-law Harry "boys," who were black. We drove together Rosen. Courtesy of Laz Schneider.



Closing after more than three quarters of a century in business - The New Store, civic positions for more than 200 years. incorporated in 1912, was operated by Laz's grandfather Albert Schneider and

in the same truck and did the same work, except that I was the helper. Turmoil had yet to arrive in Georgetown. In 1981 Winyah High School was burned down, whether by pro- or anti-integrationists is unknown. All of this was well after I left Georgetown for

Yale was pure serendipity. In my senior year of high school, I thought I was going to be an engineer. I had applied to Georgia Tech and

the University of South Carolina. I did not think beyond the immediate area and there was no one in school to make any other suggestions. During Christmas vacation of my senior year, after my applications had been submitted, two of my mother's brothers came to visit my grandmother who had suffered a stroke. They asked about my plans and were upset with my limited vision. (Sanford had gone to Washington University and Henry had gone to Columbia). I was read the riot act and, after looking in my encyclopedia to learn where Yale was, I requested an application. I applied elsewhere as well, but fortune smiled on me and on three others from South Carolina; we became members of the Yale Class of

Yale at the time had only a few more black students than Winyah High School—maybe ten or so in a class of 1,000. The Civil Rights Movement was just beginning and was certainly more noticeable in New Haven than in South Carolina. I was

> in a small group of future engineers and had become friendly with a black classmate from Connecticut. At some point after a couple of months, he asked where I was from. I replied, "South Carolina." He never spoke to me again.

> I have returned to South Carolina only for family visits and vacations since graduating high school and so missed the turbulent Civil Rights years, although, from what I have heard, Georgetown remained a place of relative calm and reasonableness aside from the burning of my school, and who knows who did that? I suppose one expects moderation in a town that has elected Jews to

Laz L. Schneider is an attorney with Berger Singerman in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

To Heal the World Jewish South Carolinians in Public Service

May 19-20, 2012, Charleston, SC,

Unless otherwise noted, sessions will take place at the Jewish Studies Center on the College of Charleston campus, 96 Wentworth Street.

Saturday, May 19

11:00 am Registration

12:00–1:30 pm Buffet lunch and opening remarks

Robert Rosen and Richard Gergel

2:00–3:15 Fighting the Philistines: Southern Jews in High Places

Hollace Ava Weiner

3:30–4:45 Women in Public Office

Moderator: Dale Rosengarten

Panelists: Susan Alion Brill, Dyan Cohen, Belinda Gergel

6:00 Reception

Home of Robert and Susan Rosen, 5 Water Street, Charleston, SC

(Van transportation will be available.)

Dinner on your own

Sunday, May 20

9:30–10:15 am Brunch

10:39–11:45 The Next Generation Speaks

Moderator: Adam Mendelsohn

Panelists: Billy Keyserling, Joel Lourie, Ernest Marcus, Leigh Mazursky Zaleon

11:45–12:30 pm JHSSC open board meeting

Register online at www.jhssc.org/events

Visa, MasterCard, or by check payable to JHSSC

Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center

College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424

Conference Fee: \$70 per person

Questions: Enid Idelsohn

phone: 843.953.3918 - fax: 843.953.7624

Email: IdelsohnE@cofc.edu

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Conference

Keynote - Fighting the Philistines: Southern Jews in High Places

Hollace Ava Weiner, a native of Washington, D.C., is a journalist-turned-historian. A political science major at the University of Maryland, she worked as a reporter at the *Annapolis Evening Capital* and the *Baltimore News-American*. From 1986 to 1997, she wrote for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, covering everything from police to politics. Her research into southern Jewry began with profiles of Lone Star rabbis published in her newspaper's Sunday religion section. One article, on the career of a Corpus Christi

rabbi, was expanded into a chapter for the anthology, *Quiet Voices:* Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights. Subsequent articles about trailblazing rabbis were the basis of the book *Jewish Stars in Texas*, now in its third printing. As her Fort Worth synagogue neared its



100th anniversary in 2002, Weiner went back to school, this time at the University of Texas in Arlington, to become an archivist. She realized it was time to organize materials about the Fort Worth Jewish community into a professional archives so that she could write her congregation's centennial history. The archives also furnished material for her master's thesis, which traced the rise and decline of the National Council of Jewish Women. Her most recent book, *Jewish "Junior League": The Rise & Demise of the*

Fort Worth Council of Jewish Women, was published by Texas A&M University Press in 2008. Hollace lives in Fort Worth with her husband, Bruce, a pediatric dentist. Their son is an air force officer. Their daughter, a journalist, lives in New York.

Panel 1 – Women in Public Office



Born in Columbia, South Carolina, **Susan Alion Brill** earned a B.A. in history with a minor in secondary education. In 1997 she was elected to Richland County Council, then in November 2000 was re-elected for four more years. Susan won election to the Richland County District 2 School Board in 2006 and again in 2008, and currently serves as vice-chair. She has been president

of the Historic Columbia Foundation (2008–11), the Spring Valley High School Education Foundation (1992–94), and the Columbia Medical Society Auxiliary (1986–87). A life-time member of the Tree of Life congregation, Susan and her husband, Dr. Alan Brill, have four adult children—Vanessa Kligman, Lindsey, Keith, and David—and three grandsons.



Belinda F. Gergel is a native South Carolinian with a passionate love of the history of her home state. Following graduation from Columbia College in 1972, she earned an M.Ed. and Ph.D. from Duke University, where her graduate work focused on women's higher education in the early 20thcentury South. After a short

stint teaching social studies at C. A. Johnson High School, Belinda went on to spend most of her professional career as a professor and college administrator at Columbia College. Since her retirement in 2001, she has focused her attention on

Dyan R. Cohen is a member of Darlington City Council, currently serving her third term. She received a B.A. in chemistry from Metropolitan State College of Denver and an M.A. in journalism from the University of South Carolina. She worked for nine years in the textile industry and another seven as adjunct



instructor of mass communication at Francis Marion University. Her writing has been published in periodicals and newspapers regionally. Dyan serves as a trustee of Beth Israel Congregation in Florence, South Carolina. She and her husband, Dr. Alex Cohen, have two college-age children, David and Ginny.

scholarship and civic service, culminating in her election to Columbia City Council in April 2008.

In 1996 Belinda and her husband, attorney Richard Gergel, published In Pursuit of the Tree of Life: A History of the Early Jews of Columbia, South Carolina, and the Tree of Life Congregation. More recently, she co-edited Matthew J. Perry: The Man, His Times, and His Legacy (University of South Carolina Press, 2004). She served from 2003 to 2005 as president of the board of directors of the Historic Columbia Foundation. Belinda is a devoted gardener and a member of the board of trustees of Brookgreen Gardens, the Southern Garden Historical Society, and Columbia Green. The Gergels have two sons, Richie, who is a graduate student in journalism at Columbia University, and Joseph, who is a senior at New York University.

Participants

Panel 2 – The Next Generation Speaks



Born in Beaufort, South Carolina, Billy Keyserling received a B.S. from Brandeis University and an M.S. from **Boston** University. After graduation he spent a decade and a half on and around Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., serving as an administrative legislative aide members of the U.S. Congress, coordinating an international human rights initiative, and working as a public affairs consultant.

When Billy's mother, Harriet Keyserling, left the seat in the S.C. House of Representatives that she had occupied for 16 years, Billy threw his hat in the ring and was elected to two terms (1993–96), serving as vice chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Energy and chairman of the Beaufort County Legislative Delegation. In 2000, he was elected to the Beaufort City Council and served one term. In November 2008, he was elected mayor of his home town.



Born in 1956, Ernie Marcus grew up in Eutawville, South Carolina. On his mother's side, his family's roots in the Palmetto State date back to the 1840s. Ernie graduated from George Washington University with a B.A. in finance and from American University with an MBA in real estate. Over the past 34

years, he has worked in the field of real estate development in Washington, D.C., specializing in urban housing and mixed-use projects. He has been a member of a number of non-profit boards, including community farmers' markets, educational institutions and, currently, the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington. Ernie lives in the District of Columbia with his wife, Madalyn, who is a painter. Their daughter Natanya (19) attends Union College and their son Jacob (24) is leading a new gourmet food truck operation for Think Food Group, Inc., headed by Jose Andres, a James Beard awardwinning chef.

A native of Columbia and a graduate of the University of South Carolina, Joel Lourie is the son of Susan Reiner and the late Senator Isadore Lourie. The Louries have deep roots in South Carolina. Joel's grandfather opened the first Lourie's Department Store in 1912, and the family has been involved in the civic and business life of the Midlands ever since. Following in the footsteps of his father, who



served in the South Carolina legislature for 28 years, Joel was elected to the house of representatives in 1998 and the state senate in 2004. He balances his time between his family, business, and public service. He is involved with many local boards and commissions and has been recognized for his work in education, public safety, and healthcare. Joel and his wife Becky have two children who attend the same public schools Joel attended over 30 years ago.

Leigh M. Zaleon, daughter of Morris and Marcia Mazursky, grew up in Sumter and graduated from Sumter High School. She has devoted herself to early child care and education for almost 30 years as a classroom teacher, center administrator, and child care consultant. She has provided child development expertise on numerous projects involving quality improvement, construction



of new child care centers, and renovations; and developed and led workshops and in-service training on various topics. She has taught classes in community colleges and is a lecturer in university classes. Leigh has a B.A. in early childhood education from UNC–Greensboro and a M.Ed. in special education at UNC–Chapel Hill. The focus of her master's program was early intervention and family support with a state certification in Birth–Kindergarten. Leigh operates her own consulting business and is currently the education coordinator for Orange County Head Start in Chapel Hill, NC. Leigh and her husband, Phil Zaleon, have two daughters, Alyssa (25) and Jessica (24).

Searching fo



Sarah (standing) and Mendel Cohen with their mother, ca. 1875.



Hymie and Harry Marcus, 1920s.



Harris and Blanche, children of Abe and Corinne Cohen, ca. 1930

My father, Harry Marcus, died 20 years ago. I was not so young when he passed away but there remains a yearning in me to see him more clearly. I want to understand what influenced him, his accomplishments, his thoughts. His was a life that was both unique and simple, a life largely spent in rural South Carolina. Central to his story was his tenure, from 1948 to 1971, as the first and only Jewish mayor of Eutawville, a small town in Orangeburg County. But there was more to it: the theme of connecting to "community," especially family, resonates through his whole life.



Sam Zaks and Abe Cohen, ca. 1915.

Eutaw Village was established in 1836 by coastal rice and cotton planters seeking cooler environs among the pine trees during the long, hot summer. Eutawville became an incorporated town in 1886 and until a huge sawmill in nearby Ferguson was closed in 1915, it was a pretty bustling place with over 2,000 residents. Afterwards and extending to today, the town became a sleepy farming community with a population around 500. The flooding of the nearby Santee River in 1941 to create the 200,000-acre Santee Cooper lakes was the biggest event that happened after the sawmill closed, becoming a major generator of employment for the area.

Like many small southern towns of the time, Eutawville attracted Jewish merchants. My grandfather Morris Marcus was a Lithuanian peddler who came to Eutawville in 1901 and established Marcus Department Store. By 1910 census records show that there were three stores owned by Jews, catering to the laborers, managers, and railroad men at the sawmill. One of the stores was owned by my grandmother's parents, Harris Nathan and Sarah Cohen, Russian and Polish immigrants, who moved to Eutawville sometime after 1900 from Mayesville, South Carolina, near Sumter. They brought along their eight children—Katie, Janie, Leah, Isaac, Mary, Moses, Gertie, and Abraham.

My great-grandfather Harris Cohen died in 1908, only 46 years old, the same year Morris married Janie and the year my father was born. Tragedy struck again nine years later when Morris, age 44, died of cancer at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Katie Cohen married Abe Karesh and they had six children in Eutawville—Sadie, Marie, Roy, Rita, Jeannette, and Harold. The 1920 census records show that there were 12 members of this extended family—Marcus, Cohen, and Karesh—all living together in a modest home on Porcher Avenue.

r Mayor Marcus

by Ernest L. Marcus

There were no other Jews in town except a boarder in the house, Sam Zaks, who owned a store. My research shows a Zaks family in Keidan, Lithuania, where my grandfather Morris came from, so perhaps there was a connection to the Old Country. Incidentally, the only other Jewishowned store in town in 1910 was operated by the Levines, who had left by 1920. Moses Cohen eventually also started a store in town—it's not clear when it closed. More close connections—in nearby Holly Hill, the Kalinsky family was from the same village as my great-grandmother Sarah Cohen.

The home on Porcher Avenue must have held quite a household. I'm told that Katie was the matriarch who kept the family together until she died in 1952. Memories abound of relatives coming and going through the century, returning to Eutawville from the diaspora—from nearby Charleston, Columbia, and Orangeburg to far-away New York City and Florida. Children spent their summers together at the house and working in one of the stores. For the kids there were lasting memories of the giant fig tree out back, the outhouse, baths in tin tubs in the back yard, the adults playing poker, and the spectacle of Eastern European and southern cuisine carried on platters with great flourish out of the kitchen. Passover seders were led in heavily accented English and Hebrew by Zaks, as he was called, the master of the ceremony. Cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents came from all over for the love and warmth of being with family, perhaps 50 miles from the closest sizable Jewish community. Losing his own father at nine, this

enveloping
c o m m u n i t y
must have been everything for my father.

Dad sometimes told me
stories of his life in Futawville as a kid. There

Dad sometimes told me stories of his life in Eutawville as a kid. There was an old artesian flowing well downtown which served townspeople, as well as mules and horses. The large trough was a place where everyone socialized during the day, including playing checkers made out of bottle caps, just a few steps from Marcus Department Store. At night Dad used to sneak down there with friends and, after washing the trough down with soap, they'd go for a bath. Nearby were seven natural springs in limestone rock formations next to the Santee River, called Eutaw Springs. This was a favorite watering hole for all the kids in town.

Dad spent part of his early schooling in Charleston, at Courtenay and Crafts schools, while he studied to be a bar mitzvah, and most of the rest he spent in Eutawville. After graduating from nearby Holly Hill High School, he attended the University of South Carolina for a year, before being called back to the store to earn enough to pay for his younger brother Hymie to attend college. (Hymie later studied medicine and, for 50 years, worked as a doctor in Orangeburg.)

Dad's life for the next 20 years was spent in Eutawville running the store with his mother and tending to a small farm. However, there were a couple of exceptions. During the Depression he moved to a house on Herschell Street



Marcus Department Store on Porcher Avenue, 1970s.



Eutawville's main drag, 1970s.







Harry Marcus, a member of the Army Signal Corps, in uniform during World War II. Photo courtesy of Ellen Marcus Smith.



Newlywed Harry Marcus poses by his Packard Clipper in front of the old Eutawville Hotel, ca. 1948. Photo courtesy of Ernest Marcus.

in the Bronx, which served as a way station for Cohen and Karesh relatives from the South who typically found work at Western Union on Hudson Street in New York—surviving the crushing economy by pooling family resources. At the outbreak of World War II, Dad used his skills as a telegraph operator to become a member of the Army Signal Corps, serving in New Guinea and the Philippines, and reportedly translating the message of Japan's surrender to MacArthur.

After the war, the Jewish social network that was active in the small towns of South Carolina led to Dad meeting and marrying my mother, the former Louise Levi from Abbeville, who was recently divorced and had two young boys—Arthur and Robert Berger. Mom was from an old South Carolina Jewish family with ties to the state that predated the Civil War. My sister Ellen and I came along in the '50s. Dad's mother passed away in 1962, at which point he and Mom modernized some aspects of the store, making it one of the most successful business enterprises in town. It sold everything from costume jewelry to overalls to Easter hats to Converse sneakers and patent leather children's shoes, all oriented to a primarily African-American customer base. Dad had deep ties to the area, serving three and four generations of families. His sole advertising was on the local gospel radio shows on Sunday mornings.

Throughout our childhood the house on Porcher Avenue was the center of our Jewish world, though we all went to religious school on Sundays at KKBE in Charleston. While we were in school, Dad would do

his wholesale shopping for the store at nearby Hyman's Wholesale, Dixie Shoe Company, and Hornik's Bargain House. The day would be capped with a stop at Zinn's Delicatessen or Harold's Cabin, after visiting a Karesh or Cohen family member. The car had a wonderful aroma for the drive back, arriving home in time to sit at our TV tables to watch Ed Sullivan.

By 1975 Marie Karesh, the last occupant of the house, had passed away, leaving my mom and dad, until their deaths in the early 1990s, as the last Jews in town. I graduated from high school in 1974 and settled in Washington D.C. in 1976. My father made it clear that he did not want me to take over the store or to live in Eutawville—he said it was no place for a young Jewish man to live. I think it was partly because, by then, the light of Jewish life in town was nearly extinguished. Thus ended a century of Jewish presence in the town. Still, Eutawville remains a connecting crossroads for the family. All the years I've lived in D.C., nearly every seder is spent with three groups of relatives whose great-grandparents are the same Harris Nathan and Sarah Cohen who moved to Eutawville at the turn of the 20th century.

Dad became a community leader somewhat reluctantly. He had been involved in the town government before joining the army, acting as treasurer and secretary. When he came back from the war, fellow residents asked him to throw his hat in the ring and run for mayor. Eventually he agreed to run and won, serving as mayor for 23 years. At his retirement, the local paper said, "Few have ex-mayor Marcus's drive and tenacity. Under his guidance

the town and the whole township were constantly being bettered by his optimism, far-sightedness, and dauntless efforts in building up and advertising the area. Eutawville and Eutaw Township will certainly miss him as their leader, but will gratefully extol his virtues for many years to come."

Eutawville was not a place that you expect a mayor would have a lot to do. I'll admit that as a kid, I was pretty clueless about most of Dad's accomplishments, which included:

- Installation of a 75,000-gallon water tank and six miles of water lines. Before then all homes and businesses were served by wells, which could become contaminated. The system still serves over 600 people, 26 retail businesses and gas stations, four churches, two schools with 500 students between them, and one industrial facility with 100 employees. I've heard the water tank referred to as "Harry's Monument."
- Extension of the incorporated boundaries of the town.
- Paving of the town's streets and construction of sidewalks along the main arteries and neighborhoods close to downtown, including the small commercial district on Porcher Avenue, consisting of about 20 buildings. Street lighting was added.
- The town government encouraged the sale of the local telephone company to United Telephone when they promised to provide dial-up service.
- A Trailways bus route was established.
- A new post office building was acquired, becoming a center of the community.
- A new public health center was built and operated.
- A volunteer fire department was formed.
- Regular garbage collection and disposal were instituted.
- Eutawville arranged for a deputy sheriff to live in town.
- Assisted in organizing the Swamp Fox Boat Club and its volunteer rescue squad.
- Welcomed 25,000 campers to a nearby national camper's convention held at Rocks Pond Campground on Lake Marion. My scout troop gave out Spanish moss in little bags with a story of the town as the campers came through.

Being the mayor's kid had its advantages and disadvantages. I recall wanting badly to ride my bike on the sidewalks, but when I remembered my dad yelling at cyclists doing just that, I would avoid it. While he



The extended family gathers on the festive occasion of Charles Karesh's bris, 1946.



Cohen/Karesh/Marcus ties remain strong among the cousins who gather for a reunion at Harry Marcus's house on Lake Marion in Eutawville, ca. 1990. Photo courtesy of Blanche Cohen Seifstein.

earned only about \$100 a year being the mayor, he was an important character in town, which put us in the upper echelon of power brokers. I remember being proud when my scout troop—#319—unveiled a historical marker commemorating the South Carolina tri-centennial, which was led by my father the mayor. I also remember working at a cucumber grading shed one summer and having cucumber culls—the large ones usually fed to hogs—thrown at me because my co-workers thought it was cool playing around with the mayor's boy. But then there were priceless moments—watching a civil case being heard in the shoe department when the local magistrate was out of town. My dad held court, Bible in hand, while sitting on the shoe measuring stool.

Ernest L. Marcus is president of the Marcus Asset Group, Inc., Washington D.C.

All photos courtesy of Ronald Cohen unless otherwise noted.

Growing Up with a Civic S

by Don A. Mazursky, Leigh Mazursky Zaleon, Jon E. Maz



Political activists, Morris Mazursky (l) and friend post "Your One Vote Counts!" in anticipation of the 1950 primary election.



Morris Mazursky (r) takes the oath of office for Sumter City Council.





Morris Mazursky (r), who promoted industrial development in Sumter, reviews construction plans.

Since we first could remember, our father, Morris Mazursky, served on the City Council of Sumter, South Carolina. As young children, the impact of Dad holding office seemed vague. However, with his tenure in city government lasting 29 years, we have grown up appreciating the contributions he made to our home community and his ability to balance his civic duties with both professional and family time. Looking back, we can see the lasting good he did that continues today.

Dad was born in a hospital in Columbia in 1923 and initially lived in Mayesville, South Carolina, before moving to Sumter with his family. His mother, Mary Blatt Mazursky, was a first-generation American whose parents immigrated to the United States from Austria to escape antisemitism. His father, Abraham Isaac ("Abe") Mazursky, escaped from Russia at the age of 17 by bribing border guards to allow his entire group of Jewish emigrants to leave. Abe had a driving desire to flee the oppressive conditions under which Jews lived in Russia and to settle in America with its promise of freedom and opportunity.

Abe's history—growing up in Russia and escaping from persecution, struggling to transform himself from a jobless immigrant into a successful dry goods merchant—inspired his son to give back to his community. Dad has always identified strongly with the Jewish religion and community and is extraordinarily proud of his heritage. At the same time, religion has not defined him and never caused him to segregate himself from others. In fact, both of his parents encouraged him to take part in community activities and taught him to gain respect for himself and his beliefs by respecting others.

While Dad never felt the sting of antisemitism for which much of the deep South was known, he is keenly aware of the oppression his father and other Jews suffered because of their religion. Partly because of this, he has always upheld a sense of humanity that includes respect for all races, even when such respect was not popular in his community.

Knowing that he did not want to work in the family retail clothing business, Dad completed college and law school at the

University of South Carolina, moonlighting on weekends in clothing stores in Columbia when he could not make it back to Sumter to assist Abe. Graduating in 1945, he returned to Sumter to begin his law practice, meet his wife and the love of his life, Marcia Weisbond Mazursky, and eventually raise his family.

Early in his career, Dad became active in civic life, serving as chairman of the General Election Commission, four terms as president of the Sumter Jaycees, Exalted Ruler of the Sumter Elks Club, a member of the Tuomey Hospital Board of Directors, and a founding and active member of the Optimist Club. In these roles he gained



Morris Mazursky (second from right) at the Optimist Club

ervant: Morris D. Mazursky

ursky, with contributions from Marcia W. Mazursky





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Morris Mazursky (1) attends a Sumter City Council



Sumter council members check on the progress of a building project.

exposure to Sumter's civic affairs and became convinced that local government needed to take a more energetic role in promoting industry and creating jobs. In 1958 Dad decided to run for city council. He prevailed over a crowded field, winning a runoff against a member of an established Sumter family.

During his seven four-year terms, during which he also served as mayor pro tem (that is, vice mayor), Dad was an integral part of Sumter's growth and progress. Pushing his agenda of industrial expansion, he worked with other city council members to create a new industrial park by purchasing 1,000 acres of land. This encouraged Campbell Soup Company to open a plant, which was the genesis for much of the prosperity Sumter has experienced.

As a respected leader with friends throughout the African-American community, Dad helped bridge race relations. As a proponent of racial equality even before passage of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, he played a central role in Sumter's quick adaptation to the act's requirements, which allowed the community to avoid the violent upheaval that struck many cities.

As children, we often asked Dad why he did not run for mayor. He explained that he served on city council to promote projects he believed would help the community and did not have time for the Councilman Morris Mazursky presents ceremonial duties of mayor. He also had to put food on the family's table, which required him to work tirelessly in his legal practice, which he referred to as his "jealous mistress." Working long hours seven days a week, he was and still is a very busy man. On the other hand, he never missed a family meal, breakfast, lunch, or dinner. He attended all of our school, sporting, and other events. He went on dates with Mom. He took the family on vacations. He served as president of Temple Sinai, taught Sunday school, and otherwise was and remains a great father and role model.

Dad gave selflessly of his time and talents for the good of the community. Strongly



Morris Mazursky (r), Exalted Ruler of B.P.O.E. Elks, ca. 1950.

influenced by his family's history, his upbringing, and his Jewish heritage, he performed his elected duties with a sense of commitment, respect, and humility. Our country could certainly use that approach today from its leaders in both parties.

Don A. Mazursky is senior partner with Mazursky Constantine LLC in Atlanta, GA; Leigh Mazursky Zaleon, a consultant with Orange County Head Start in Chapel Hill, NC; and Jon E. Mazursky, M.D., a neonatologist with the Pediatrix Medical Group in Austin, TX.

All photos courtesy of Leigh Mazursky Zaleon.



a plaque to Freddie Solomon.



Leigh, Morris, Don, and Marcia enjoy family time at the Elks Club pool.



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Register now for the May 19-20 meeting in Charleston.

See page 11 for more information.

Register for the Fall Meeting
see pg. 15 for details

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

of SOUTH CAROLINA

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On the cover:
I. Cohen
Department
Store in Latta,
South Carolina,
ca. 1930.
Isadore Cohen's
son, Leonard,
is sitting on
the counter.
Courtesy of
Leonard and
Mildred Cohen.

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Letter from the President



have many fond memories of Beth Israel Congregation in Florence. Living in Summerton where I was one of four Jewish kids in town (the other three being my younger siblings) made it tough to connect with Jewish kids my age. Especially in my teenage years, Temple Youth Group (TYG) became a big part of my life. Through Sumter's Temple Sinai TYG, I had opportunities to meet kids from across the region

and enjoy a Jewish social life. Florence's TYG group in the mid to late '70s was similar in makeup to Sumter's, pulling from smaller communities such as Latta, Dillon, Marion, and beyond. We had some great TYG times in the Florence temple and the friendships we forged there continue to this day.

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina will meet in Florence the weekend of November 2–4 to celebrate Beth Israel's 100th Anniversary. I will be happy to return to a community that was part of my growing-up years and that holds such good memories for me. I expect many of you have your own memories of the Florence congregation to bring to the meeting and I hope you will make plans to join us.

Speakers and panel discussions—like the essays in this newsletter—will explore the stories of Jewish families who settled in the Pee Dee, stories echoed across America. In town after town, the first generation of Jewish immigrants went into the retail trade, acquired land for a cemetery, and eventually built a synagogue. The second generation prospered and produced enough children to fill Sunday school classes and fuel TYG's lively social life. Most members of the third generation went away to college, some earning high degrees—MDs, LLDs, PhDs—and wound up settling in larger cities with more career choices.

Some native sons and daughters, however, came home and stayed. Among our authors, Alex Cohen in Darlington, Phil Greenberg in Florence, Harold Kornblut in Latta, Robin Schafer in Loris, and Evelyn Schafer Hechtkopf in Dillon, represent this contingent. But the dominant trend is one of attrition: Jewish populations in nearly all small towns have declined and their synagogues have been sold. Beth Israel stands counter to this trend, which as I say, is national. Florence has benefitted from infrastructure and commercial development and from an influx of members from congregations across the region that disbanded, such as Darlington, Dillon, Kingstree, and Bishopville.

The meeting in Florence will begin Friday night with dinner and Shabbat services at Beth Israel. Saturday afternoon will feature a full program of speakers and panel discussions, followed by a gala celebration, including a cheese and wine reception, havdallah service, and dinner. The full schedule of events and registration information is included in this newsletter and also is available online at: www.jhssc.org.

On Sunday, November 4th, the program will conclude with a JHSSC membership meeting at which the board will present a strategic plan outlining the Society's goals and objectives for the next five years. We look forward to presenting the draft document to the membership and welcome everyone's comments, questions, and suggestions.

The response of attendees to the Society's spring meeting in Charleston was unanimous—the conference was both interesting and enjoyable. From Robert Rosen and Richard Gergel's historical duet, to Hollace Weiner's keynote, to panels highlighting women in public service and the sons of prominent public servants, speakers peppered their thoughtful remarks with humor and personal insights.

Finally, thanks go to those who work tirelessly for the Society. Marty Perlmutter, Enid Idelsohn, and Dale Rosengarten are true treasures and I appreciate their commitment and dedication to JHSSC.

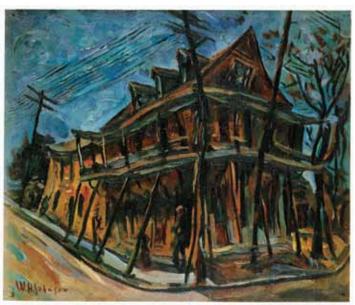
Looking forward to seeing you all in Florence in November!

Rachel Lordin Barnett

Rachel Gordin Barnett rgbarnett@earthlink.net



A History of the Jewish



Jacobia Hotel by William H. Johnson. An African American and a native of Florence, Johnson reportedly was arrested in 1930 while painting the Jacobi House, which by then had become a brothel. From Homecoming: the Art and Life of William H. Johnson by Richard Powell. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1991.

1850-1949

he town of Florence was founded in the mid-1850s as a crossroads depot for three railroad lines competing to provide service to the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. Ten miles from Darlington, the county seat of Darlington County established in 1785, Florence was named for the daughter of the president of the Northeast Railroad Company. The town was laid out between 1858 and 1860 and within a decade boasted some 700 residents, more than half of whom were railroad employees and their families.

By 1865 approximately 85 Jewish families were living in Florence and other Pee Dee towns. In 1857 Moritz Jacobi, an emigrant from Denmark, moved to the village of Florence and established a hotel on Front Street called the Jacobi House (1857–1938). Pharmacist John Kuker opened a successful store in 1866 and served as a warden (councilman) and as Florence's second intendant (mayor). Abram Weinberg moved to Florence in 1871 and launched a general merchandise store. He also served as a warden. David Sternberger arrived in 1872 and established a retail store. He and Isaac Sulzbacher, a jeweler, joined other community leaders in lobbying for the creation of Florence County—an effort that proved successful in 1888.

On October 26, 1887, David Sternberger, Julius De-Jongh, S. Elias, and Harris Joseph applied to the state of South Carolina for incorporation of the Florence Hebrew Benevolent Association "to unite the Hebrews of Florence and surrounding country into a fraternal and benevolent association, to assist needy Israelites, and to purchase and maintain a suitable burying ground." Within a month the association had purchased land for \$50.00 from the Northeast Railroad Company and the first burial had taken place—six-year-old Rebecca Sternberger of Darlington, David Sternberger's niece. In 1889 Adolphus A. Cohen made a motion to order books and establish a Sunday school for "all children of Israelite parents," whether or not they were members of the association. Thus began a religious school that continues today.

Part of the vast emigration from Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century, a small number of Orthodox Jews found their way to Florence. In 1912 Beth Israel Congregation was incorporated, with B. Patz, M. Rosenfeld, and I. Silverman named as trustees, holding services in various places around the city. The same year five women formed the Ladies Aid Society with the primary purpose of providing Sunday school classes for the chil-

dren. Within ten years it became clear that the community could not support two congregations and, in 1922, the Hebrew Benevolent Association and Beth Israel agreed to merge. Sunday school classes and Reform services were to be held once a month; High Holy Day services would follow the Orthodox tradition. Rabbi Jacob Raisin of Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim was hired to make the trip to Florence one Sunday a month and served as Beth Israel's spir-

A page from the cash book of the Florence Hebrew Benevolent Association showing payment of dues by members in 1887 and 1888. Florence Hebrew Benevolent Society Collection. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



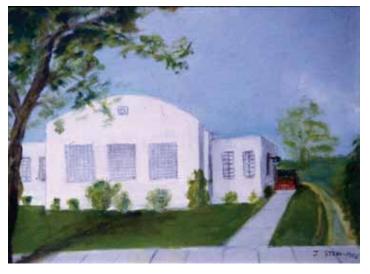
Community in Florence

compiled by Alexander H. Cohen, MD

itual leader until his death in 1946. He had been coming to Darlington since 1919 to lead Sabbath services and started splitting his day between the two communities.

Worship services were held on the second floor of Zeigler's Drug Store on the corner of Dargan and Evans streets. Sam and Hannah Semless of Philadelphia, grandparents of Nathanial Rosenfeld, donated the first Torah in honor of Nat's parents, Maurice and Mae Rosenfeld. In 1926 the Beth Israel Sisterhood, formerly the Ladies Aid Society, affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. The following year land on East Elm Street was purchased to build a temple, but was later sold to the city to build Florence High School. The congregation met in various buildings in Florence, including the Rainwater Building, the YMCA, and the Masonic Temple. In April 1931 Beth Israel affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC).

In February 1949 plans were laid to construct a new religious facility to be located on land on Park Avenue donated by Dr. Michael Morse, a pharmacist. With blueprints provided by UAHC, Dr. Morse, Dr. S. Abe Greenberg, and Isadore Stein managed construction of the temple, which was completed in July 1949. Rabbi Philip Frankel of Charlotte led the formal dedication service for the congregation, numbering about 25 families at the time.



J. Stein's rendering of Beth Israel, 1956. Photo courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

1949-1970

The small congregation could not afford to hire a full-time spiritual leader and relied on the parttime services of rabbis from Columbia, Sumter, and Charlotte. As Florence grew after World War II, the Jewish population increased and, in 1952, Beth Israel was able to hire Rabbi Tibor Fabian. The next year Rabbi Morris Clarke assumed the pulpit and added a musical dimension to services with performances by a newly organized choir.

Rabbi Avery Jonah Grossfield served the congregation from 1954 to 1958, followed by two student rabbis, Jay Krouse and Paul Kushner, both of Hebrew Union College in New York City. Every two weeks one of these young men flew to Florence to lead services and hold religious school classes. Next came Rabbi Eli Gottsman, a circuit-riding rabbi who traveled by bus among congregations in the Carolinas, Rabbi Charles B. Lesser arrived in 1961 and served the congregation as full-time rabbi until 1970.

During Lesser's tenure the congregation grew from some 50 families to 70. Over this de-



Beth Israel's Junior Choir, 1956, with Rabbi Avery J. Grossfield. Lois and Raphael Wolpert photographs of Beth Israel Congregation, 1956–1974. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

cade the Jewish community of Florence increased from 160 to around 285 and the occupational profile shifted from mercantile pursuits to the professions. The Men's Club of Beth Israel, established in 1958 and affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, agreed in 1973 to amalgamate with the Sisterhood and the Temple Affiliates was born—the first merger of its kind in the nation and a model for this type of cooperative effort.

In 1967 the growing congregation, needing room for expansion, purchased two small houses adjacent to the temple and made plans to add classrooms and a new

kitchen and to enlarge the social hall and sanctuary. Funds were raised, the small demolished, houses and in early 1969 a groundbreaking ceremony was held. Construction was completed in June 1970, and Beth Israel's new rabbi. Howard Folb. ordained only four months earlier, officiated at the dedication service in October of that year.

1970-1994

Rabbi Folb remained with Beth Isgation. Young Jewish

families moving to the area found the active congregation with its newly renovated facilities met their social as well as spiritual needs. The religious school was flourishing, offering a well-rounded Jewish education for their children. In the late 1970s Beth Israel absorbed the membership of Darlington's congregation, which had slowly been diminishing, and became a full-service congregation and the center for Judaism in the Pee Dee area. Though affiliated with the Reform movement, the congregation and its rabbis have tried to be flexible regarding tradition and practices so that everyone would be comfortable in the synagogue.

Rabbi Sidney Strome, who replaced Rabbi Folb in July 1981, was a learned scholar who gave lovely sermons. Well liked by the congregation, he and his wife enjoyed socializing and often entertained congregants at their home. His health failing, Rabbi Strome retired in July 1984, but remained in Florence until his death in 1990.

Strome's successor, Rabbi Lawrence Mahrer, remained with the congregation until January 1995. During his tenure the face of the congregation changed. Many children who were raised in Beth Israel, having graduated from college, settled out-of-state to pursue careers. Older congregants, who ran stores or worked in manufacturing, especially textiles, were outstripped by young

professionals, such as physicians, recruited by local medical centers or newer industries. Ohav Shalom, Dillon's Conservative congregation, had been slowly shrinking in size; the congregation closed its doors in 1993 and sold the building, bequeathing its artifacts and most of its congregants to Beth Israel. By the mid-1990s Florence's membership numbered over 90 families, with more than 50 children attending religious school.

Rabbi Mahrer understood what UAHC had to offer and how to utilize it for a small

rael for 11 years and A groundbreaking ceremony, held in early 1969, prepared the way for construcbrought a youthful tion of an addition to Florence's Beth Israel. Left to right: Nat Rosenfeld, Herb Levy, Ray Wolpert, Herman Insel, Arthur Siegal, Rabbi Charles Lesser, Eric spirit to the congre- Heiden. Courtesy of Beth Israel Congregation.

congregation. He encouraged congregants to become involved in regional and national committees; he pushed hard to establish Beth Israel's endowment fund, started in 1991 with seed money donated by Arthur and Shirley Siegal, interest from which now provides a significant portion of Beth Israel's operating budget. Mahrer saw the importance of endowing small congregations, as young congregants tended to move to the larger cities after their education. Recognizing the importance of lay leadership, he arranged for two congregants to be trained as "rabbinic aides" in a UAHC program, enabling them to assist the rabbi and be able to perform life-cycle events in his absence. His ten years in Florence helped stabilize the congregation.

1995-Present

Rabbi Marc Kline came to Beth Israel in the summer of 1995, introducing more Hebrew and more traditional practices, a strong commitment to social justice, and deep involvement in community activities. To boost participation he helped organize a volunteer choir and

encouraged the children to take part in worship services, some of which he wrote himself. With his departure in 2003, the congregation struggled to find a full-time rabbi willing to lead a small-town southern temple. Malcolm Cohen, a student rabbi at the Leo Baeck School in London. came to Beth Israel twice a month for a year while he took courses at Hebrew Union College in New York. Rabbi Alvin Sugarman, retired senior rabbi from The Temple in Atlanta, filled in as parttime rabbi, with lay leaders teaching in the religious school and conducting many worship services.

In 2005 Beth Israel succeeded in hiring Rabbi Jeffrey Ronald who, during his six-year tenure, brought a deep knowledge of Jewish thought, wisdom, and works to the congregation. He set a shining example in personal morals and kindness. Actively representing the congregation in community affairs, he brought a Jewish presence to interdenominational events and social justice activities.

Since 2011 Beth Israel has employed two parttime rabbis—Rabbi

Aaron Sherman of Charleston and Rabbi Leah Doberne-Schor of Columbia—both of whom were brought to their respective cities by the jobs of their spouses in the rabbinate and academia. Each rabbi comes to Florence once a month to lead services, officiate at life-cycle events, and teach in the Sunday school. Based in Jackson, Mississippi, the Institute of Southern Jewish Life supplements their leadership with periodic visits from an education fellow who conducts services and provides religious school and adult programs. When no rabbi is present, lay leaders officiate on Friday nights.



Bar mitzvah of Charles P. Levy, son of Aaron and Dean Levy of Marion, South Carolina, with Rabbi Howard Folb officiating, August 1980. Courtesy of Congregation Beth Israel.



Torahs from the ark in Beth Israel's sanctuary. Photo by Dale Rosengarten, 1998. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Beth Israel maintains affiliation with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ, formerly UAHC) and has been represented on its North American board of trustees since 1999. Synagogue members attend URJ events and the congregation continues to serve as a pilot site for the newest generation of prayer books issued by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Beth Israel also prides itself on its choir, comprised of both congregants and non-Jewish singers and musicians who offer a large repertoire of Jewish music.

Over the last decade the congregation's membership has dwindled as textile and apparel manufacturing has moved overseas and retail businesses have lost their lure among the younger generation of more highly educated Jews. The children of professionals, whose influx in the

1980s and 1990s swelled the religious school, are now grown and gone. In 2012 membership hovers just above 50 families hailing from the Pee Dee towns of Florence, Darlington, Marion, Mullins, Latta, Dillon, and Clio, as well as Laurinburg, North Carolina.

Sources:

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Jewish Settlement in

o understand the history of Jewish settlement in the Pee Dee, you need to know a bit about the history of northeastern South Carolina. My definition of the region is much like the *New Yorker* magazine cover "A New Yorker's View of the World"—that is, northeastern South Carolina is everything north of Charleston and east of Columbia. The area is divided by the Pee Dee River, which flows out of the North Carolina Yadkin River basin and accounts for the swampy topography of much of the region.

Jewish families have lived in this area from the mid-1800s through the present. I trace my own family history back to the 1840s when four brothers named Iseman (Eisenmann) emigrated from the town of Stebbach in the German region of Baden. Part of a vast migration from the German states to America in the 1840s, many especially Midlands. In

immigrants settled in South Carolina, especially in the Manuel and Sara[h] Iseman and their children, 1900. Left to right: Back row – ports included indigon, Rose, Dee [Israel DeWitt], Mike, Estelle, Myer, Isadore. Front row – Jay, Sara (her image superimposed by photographer), Emanuel, Mollie, Sam, Hannah. The photograph was taken at the time of Sara's funeral. Courtesy of Neal Gosman. Forest products, such

so many came that the Lutheran Church established a seminary and school in Columbia to serve the Protestant newcomers. This wave of immigration also included a significant number of Jews, mainly merchants and tradespeople, who were looking for business opportunities or just a new life in a freer country. Manuel and Iseman Iseman settled in Marion, South Carolina, and Isaac and Marks (or Marx) Iseman moved to Darlington, before eventually settling in Charleston around 1870.

German-Jewish immigrants generally arrived as single young men, often under the age of 25. Much of what I have been able to learn about the Iseman family was written by Joseph Seeman Iseman, an attorney in New York City and partner in the Paul Weiss Rifkind law firm, which specializes in the field of intellectual property law. I discovered Joe's history of the Iseman family in the office of Beth Israel Congregation in Florence—he had sent a copy to the temple after visiting Florence

and Marion to research family history. My wife, Susan, and I visited him in New York shortly before his death and had a lovely lunch at an exclusive club on 50th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Jewish communities in the Pee Dee towns of Georgetown, Darlington, Florence, Dillon, and Kingstree, at one time or another, all organized congregations or burial societies. Actual synagogues exist or existed in Georgetown, Florence, Dillon, and Kingstree. The Darlington Hebrew Congregation never built a synagogue

but did acquire burial grounds.

Georgetown appears to have the oldest Jewish community in the Pee Dee, probably because of its location at the intersection of two navigable rivers and its proximity to Charleston. Its seaport serviced ships from ports along the North American coast, the Caribbean, Bermuda, and South America. Major exports included indigo, rice, cotton, and as timber from the

hinterland that was floated downriver to Georgetown. Heiman Kaminski, a major timber merchant, owned a fleet of ships designed specifically for lumber transport: they opened from the bow to enable logs to be loaded directly into the hold.

A Hebrew cemetery was established in Georgetown around 1772—the second in South Carolina. For more than a century and a half, Jewish Georgetonians worshipped in private homes or at the Winyah Indigo Society. In 1904 congregation Beth Elohim, named after its colonial counterpart in Charleston, was officially organized, but not until 1949 did the community build a synagogue, still in operation on Screven Street.

As far as my family relations go, exploring Georgetown's Hebrew cemetery I discovered that the ancestors of Heiman Kaminski's first wife, Charlotte Emanuel, came from the same German town as the forebears of the Schafers of Little Rock, South Carolina. Accord-

the Pee Dee by Harold Kornblut, CPA

ing to Richard Schafer's research, Abraham Schafer was born in Obrigheim on the Main River, and his mother's maiden name was Emanuel. It therefore appears that Mrs. Kaminski was a cousin of Abraham Schafer's mother, Theresia, or Esther, which could explain why the Schafers settled in the Carolinas-Abraham in Little Rock, his brother Solomon Schafer in Timmonsville, Henrietta Schafer De-Jongh in Florence, and their nephew, Siegfried Schafer, in Mt. Airy, North Carolina.

Family legend claims that Abraham—the oldest of 12 children born in 14 years—"won the The children of Abraham and Rebecca funds to relocate his family. Perhaps the Kaminskis in Georgetown Courtesy of Harold Kornblut. helped the Schafers identify places

in the Pee Dee with economic opportunities. Abraham Schafer married Rebecca Iseman, the youngest child of Isaac and Hannah Iseman of Marion, and the couple purchased a mercantile store in Little Rock from Tom Dillon, who was relocating his business to the newly established town of Dillon.

On my paternal side, my grandfather Leon Kornblut

(originally spelled Kornbluth) emigrated from Gorcyze, Poland, in 1896 at the age of 14 to join his brother Joe Kornblut in a business in Dillon called King's Clothiers. He was sponsored by the Fass family of Dillon who were landsmen—thev came from the same town in Poland. My grandfather worked in his brother's business until Joe returned to Poland. Leon married Lizzie Schafer. daughter of Abraham and Rebecca Schafer, gave the couple as a wedding present the Latta Dry Goods Company business *Charleston*.



lottery" in Obrigheim and used the Iseman Schafer, clockwise from lower left: Fanny, Lizzie (the author's grandmother), Samuel, and Belle, ca. 1898.

and stock in trade.

Lizzie's sister Belle Schafer had married Isadore Blum and the two brothers-in-law founded the mercantile business Blum & Kornblut, at one point operating stores in Latta, Dillon, Mullins, Cheraw, Chesterfield, and Lake View, South Carolina, and Rowland and Tatum, North Carolina. The business operated on credit granted by the main supplier, the Baltimore Bargain House, as well as other suppliers who offered liberal terms. Paying in October for the entire year's credit allowed the stores to carry the accounts of their customers, mainly farmers, until the fall when the crops had been sold and land owners settled up with their tenants.

The stores accepted script issued by the landowner that allowed tenants to purchase usually specific items up to a specified amount. As long as most

accounts were paid, business thrived, but when crops failed, for example during the boll weevil infestation in 1927, many could not pay. Blum & Kornblut went bankrupt in 1928, well ahead of the Great Depression. Leon managed to hang on to the store in Latta, which was in Lizzie's name, and to the Dillon store, although he lost the building in foreclosure and had to rent the space

> from the new owner for the next 25 years.

Leon's sons, Moses (1915-2009) and Sigmond (b. 1926), operated the stores in Latta and Dillon— Moses starting right out of high school in 1932 and Sigmond after returning from The Citadel and World War II. Sigmond eventually retired, closing the Dillon store; Moses operated the Latta store until his death in January 2009, six months after losing his wife, Freda Baker Kornblut. My wife, Susan, and I kept the business going for another year, but in March 2010 we shut the doors for good.



Baltimore Bargain House invoice received by Latta Dry Goods in 1913. Kornblut family papers. Special Collections, College of

Jewish Geography: Textile and 1900-2012

In the 20th century, the center of gravity of the American textile industry shifted from the Northeast to the South. Jewish families in the Pee Dee figured prominently in both textile manufacturing and retail apparel shops. Here is a selection of businesses, past and present, from across the region.

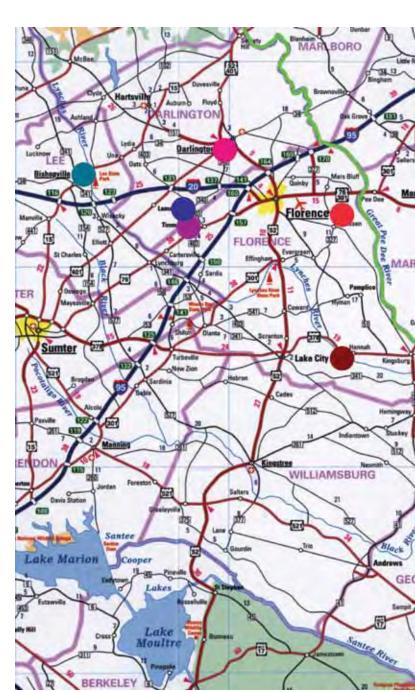
DILLON: Morris Fass settled in Dillon before the lines for the new Dillon County had been drawn in 1910. The Austrian immigrated to the United States as a child and lived in Charleston and Lake City for a time. He and Rosa Nachman of Charleston married, moved to Dillon, and opened a small store that, over the years, grew into the large **Fass Department Store** on the south side of Main Street next to the SCN bank.

The Dillon branch of **Kornblut's Department Store**, operated by Sigmond Kornblut, closed in 1999. (See p. 9 in "Jewish Settlement in the Pee Dee" for details.)

Franco Manufacturing Co., Inc., headquartered in Metuchen, New Jersey, opened a plant in Dillon in 1980. Founded in 1952 by David E. Franco and his three sons, Louis, Morris, and Jack, the company continues today to manufacture home textiles.

LATTA: Kornblut's Department Store, founded around 1900 as the Latta Dry Goods Company, originally rented space on the first floor of the Latta Hotel. In 1910 Kornblut's moved into its own building. Owner Leon Kornblut partnered with his brother-in-law Isadore Blum during the 1920s, opening as many as eight stores scattered throughout the area, staffed by Jews they hired out of Baltimore. Bankruptcy forced them to close their doors in 1928 and the two went their separate ways. Blum opened a store just across the state line in Rowland, North Carolina. Kornblut operated Kornblut's Department Store with "fashions for the entire family" in two locations, Dillon and Latta.

Isadore Cohen opened I. Cohen's Department Store in Latta in 1923. Born in Lithuania, he was 15 when he traveled from Hamburg, Germany, to Baltimore. His brother, who operated a successful store in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, sent him money to take the trip south. Izzy worked as an peddler in Dillon and Marlboro counties. He was hired by Mr. Blum, who had a department store in Latta, then fired for replacing a pair of defective shoes for a customer. To open his own

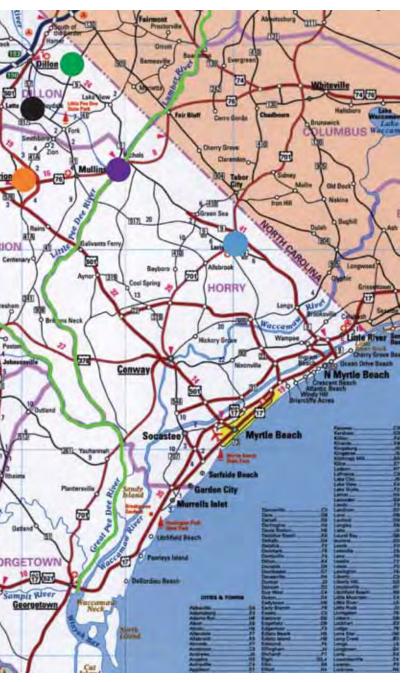


Pee Dee region of South Carolina

store, his wholesaler in Baltimore gave him a credit line of \$8,750, equivalent to \$100,000 today. After one year in business, he was able to purchase the building. His son and daughter-in-law, Leonard and Mildred Cohen, took over the store in 1965 and ran it until their retirement in 1987.

Apparel Businesses in the Pee Dee,

compiled by Sheri Misner and Dyan Cohen



Nathan and Evelyn Epstein opened **Ideal Furniture Co.** in Latta in the late 1940s, selling furniture, appliances, and, on the cusp on the TV era, installing TV antennas. They later opened an upscale clothing store, the **Village Square**, that drew a large following from the entire Pee Dee area of South Carolina. People lined

up around the block for the shop's after-Christmas sale.

Owned by Abe Cohen and later by his sons, Robert and Jack Cohen, **Craftex Creations** opened in the early 1960s. The company, which had abandoned its plant on 7th Avenue in New York, manufactured ladies and children's robes under the Gilligan & O'Malley label. In the early 1990s Craftex sold the label to Target and went out of business.

DARLINGTON: With successful stores in Timmons-ville and Lamar, Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Darlington around 1959 and, 20 years later, launched a second location in the town, Larry's Outlet Store. The Weintraubs closed all their stores ca. 1994 when Larry became ill (See pp. 23–24 in "Success of a Salesman" for details.)

Julia Leff (later Kent) ran **Julia's**, a ladies' apparel shop, during the later decades of the 20th century.

BISHOPVILLE: Ginsberg's Ladies Retail Shop, established on Main Street in Bishopville in 1929, went out of business in 2008. Owner Frances Bass Ginsberg's father-in-law ran the shop until his death, when she and her husband, Arthur, took over. After Arthur's sudden demise, Frances was on her own, later joined by her daughter Nancy Thornton. "You can't make a living," Thornton said as the store prepared for its final sale. "Mom and pop shops are a thing of the past right now and that's sad."

Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Bishopville around 1980.

LAMAR: Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Richard's Department Store** in 1952. In 1961 the name was changed to Larry's Department Store.

TIMMONSVILLE: Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Timmonsville in 1951—the first of several stores in the Pee Dee.

FLORENCE: Owned from 1930 to 1970 by Oscar Glass, then by Freddie and Morton Glass, **Furchgott's** sold fashionable ladies' clothing. The store remained open until ca. 1990 under different owners.

Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened Larry's **Department Store** in Florence ca. 1961.





From top to bottom: Kornblut's
Department Store, "The Store of Better
Values," Latta, 1956. Courtesy of Harold Kornblut •
Leon Kornblut ordered a "soft straw" hat, size seven and a half, from the Markel Bros. in New York, in June 1927. The Blum & Kornblut letterhead lists five South Carolina locations: Cheraw, Dillon, Latta, Chesterfield, and Mullins. Kornblut family papers. Special Collections, College of Charleston • Kornblut's ladies' department, Latta, 1956. Courtesy of Harold Kornblut.

Larry and Merle Arazie sold clothes in addition to a variety of other goods at **Larry's Discount Store** on Evans Street in Florence. It operated in the 1960s and '70s and maybe later. Larry Arazie was a Sephardi from Syria, in contrast to most Jewish store owners in the Pee Dee who were of East European descent.

Mi-Lady Shoppe, established in 1969 by Morris Blum and Ray Wolpert, sold ladies' apparel until its closing in 1994.

Thomas Grossman opened **PanTom Ltd**. in Florence in 1973. The plant manufactured ladies' elastic-waist slacks until its closing in 1996. He eventually became known in the business as the "pull-on pant king"—it was the '70s! PanTom was a large cut-and-sew operation employing hundreds of people over the years. **CamillApparel** and **JessiCasuals**—named for Grossman's daughters—were in business in the same period. JessiCasuals was located on North Irby Street and PanTom at 1719 South Irby until it outgrew the space and expanded. Relocated to N. B. Baroody Street, operations were shifted to one of the subsidiaries, **Century Manufacturing Co.**, which remained in business until around 2001.

MARION: In 1951 Herbert and Martha Levy moved to Marion and started a knitting operation, manufacturing men and boys' shirts and sweaters under the name of **Herbert Mills**. Signal Apparel purchased the business in 1968, changing the name to **Heritage Sportswear**.

A formidable employer in Marion County, at one time its workforce numbered 700. In 1984 women's knitwear was added under the label Joan Vass, USA. Rick and Les Levy purchased the business from Signal Apparel in 1999 with the hope of saving the jobs of some 300 employees. Between NAFTA, 9/11, and overseas competition, the business could not survive. Heritage Sportswear, LLC closed in 2005.

Ida Horinbein opened a ladies' dress shop in 1953 under the name of **Horinbein's**, located on Main Street. It closed in 1959.

Elliott and Bertha Baumrind started a men's store on Main Street in 1953 called **Baumrind's**. In 1957 they opened a ladies and children's shop next door, which remained in business until 1963.

Morris Blum opened **Diane's Dress Shop** on Main Street in 1957. The shop closed in 1968.

Sidney and Dorothy Lewis inaugurated **Lewco Mills** in 1958, manufacturing men and boys' swimwear. They later changed the name to **Sun Fun Sportswear**. The business closed in 1995.

Rick Levy and Aaron Levy opened **Glenn Sportswear** in 1965. The business produced shirts and had a

textile printing operation. Heritage Sportswear purchased Glenn Sportswear in 1972. Rick and Aaron went to work at Heritage Sportswear.

Harry Blumenthal established **Blumenthal Mills** in 1975, producing mattress ticking fabric, with an initial workforce of 90 people. At its height the company employed up to 200 people, closing in 2009.

Herbert Levy and Aaron Levy opened **Carolina Classic** in 1983. They contracted and manufactured men and boys' T-shirts. The business closed in 1996.

MULLINS: Hyman Polan's clothing store was open from the 1930s until the 1960s. Ruth Blum Epstein operated her own store in the same location into the 1980s.

Thomas Grossman, a native of Hungary who survived the Nazi camps of Theresienstadt, Birkenau, and Flossenberg, moved to South Carolina in 1968, and within two years inaugurated a dress manufacturing company in Mullins called **Skandia Fashions**, named in homage to his Scandinavian wife whom he met after World War II in Sweden, where he studied textile engineering.

LORIS: Bernard and Kate Wolpert opened **Wolpert's Department Store** in 1927 with ownership passing to their son Robert in 1964 when Bernard died. Initially the store specialized in farm clothing—durable and affordable overalls, work pants and shirts, brogan shoes, and Hanes underwear, which sold for a quarter. In the 1930s, when the streets in Loris were paved, Wolpert's moved to Main Street, next to Shorty's Grill. In 1991 Eugene Mills bought the business.

LAKE CITY: Wentworth Manufacturing, in Lake City and Florence, was founded by Ronald and Doris Sopkin, possibly with other relatives, around 1960. The first manufacturers in the Pee Dee to employ an all-black labor force, the Sopkins hired African-American managers and gave them equal pay. Wentworth manufactured house dresses until it closed ca. 1980.

Larry and Sylvia Weintraub opened **Larry's Department Store** in Lake City ca. 1980.

*If you can provide additional information about these or other Pee Dee textile and apparel businesses, please contact Dale Rosengarten by email at *rosengartend@cofc.edu* or phone, 843-953-8028.

From top to bottom: Isadore Cohen outside his department store in Latta, advertising "Crazy Days," ca. 1960. Courtesy of Donna Cohen • Mildred and Leonard Cohen pose outside Cohen's Department Store during their "Going out of business sale" in 1987. Courtesy of Leonard and Mildred Cohen • Larry's Department Store, Timmonsville, ca. 1969. Courtesy of Richard Weintraub.



Four Generations of Greenbergs in the Magic City by Phillip H. Greenberg

n 1906 Louis Greenberg, a 26-year-old Russian immigrant, moved to Florence, South Carolina, after working for four years for his cousins in Connecticut. He was a peddler, initially, and came south because selling to farmers was supposed to be a good business. He quickly found that opportunities for tanning cowhides and dealing in furs were better than selling door-to-door in the countryside. He established a tannery on North Dargan Street, complete with a railroad spur to load boxcars of tanned hides and furs to ship north to be made into leather shoes and beaver and muskrat coats.

1914, he went to Philadel-



Before he established Left to right—back row: Abe Greenberg, Murray Lovit, Ray Wolpert, Sam Rogol, Arthur Siegal, Larry Weintraub. Front row: Herb Levy, Elliot Finger, Melvin Siegel, Herman Insel, Nat Rosenfeld, Florence, L. Greenberg and Co. in South Carolina, ca. 1970. Courtesy of Beth Israel Congregation.

phia and married Fanny Horowitz, whom he brought to his home at 234 S. Dargan Street. Over the next four years, she bore three children, Sam, Stephen Abraham, and Judy. Louis was trained in the Old Country as a kosher butcher and a rabbi, and his house in Florence was the site of many religious services until the synagogue was built in the 1940s.

Florence began as a railroad crossing and during the Civil War housed the largest Confederate prison outside Andersonville. In the 1890s it developed into a "new town" with newcomers equaling or outnumbering older families. Its economy was propelled by rail yards, industry, and highway networks, and it later became a medical and commercial center, supporting hotels, restaurants, and other urban amenities. Florence was called the Magic City because it grew rapidly, especially compared to Darlington, Marion, and Kingstree, which seemed to enjoy the status quo and resist change. Many Jewish families participated in its growth, the DeJonghs, A. A. Cohens, and Jeromes, to name a few.

My father, Stephen A. Greenberg, was born in 1915 in Florence and grew up there. He went to the University of South Carolina and the Medical College in Charleston, then served as a colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in World War II. Returning home, he married my mother, Ruth Brody, from Sumter, and began his medical practice with Dr. John Bruce at a clinic that became Bruce Hospital, now Carolinas Hospital.

My brother Stuart and I are the third generation of Greenbergs in Florence. After attending prep school at Phillips Exeter, Duke University as an undergraduate, and medical school at MUSC, I came back to Florence and have practiced surgery there for 27 years. I married Patricia Barnett, of Sumter, and we have been blessed with three great children, Barnett, Andy, and Patty—the fourth generation of the family in Florence.

18th Annual Meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Beth Israel Congregation Florence, SC | November 2 - 4, 2012

All events will be held at Beth Israel, 316 Park Avenue, Florence, SC 29501. Tel: 843-669-9724

Friday, November 2

6:45 pm Shabbat dinner

8:00 Shabbat services with Oneg Shabbat following

Saturday, November 3

11:00 am	Registration
12:00 pm	Luncheon
1:00	Tribute to Ruth Greenberg
1:15	A History of the Jewish Community in Florence, Alexander H. Cohen, MD
2:00	Pee Dee Pioneers
	Moderator: Joseph H. Rubinstein, Professor Emeritus at Coker College
	Panelists: Donna Cohen, Rick Levy, Bruce Siegal, Richard Weintraub
3:30	"South of the Border and the Legend of Alan Schafer": film and discussion
	Moderator: Harold Kornblut
	Panelists: Evelyn Schafer Hetchkopf, Richard Schafer, Robin Schafer
6:30	Wine and cheese reception
7:00	Gala dinner and 100 th anniversary celebration

Sunday, November 4

9.00	am	Breakfast

10:00 Stories from the Pee Dee: short takes by community members

11:30 JHSSC open board meeting

Register online at www.jhssc.org/events

Visa, MasterCard, or by check payable to JHSSC Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424

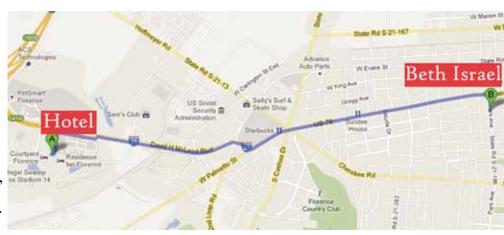
Conference fee: \$70 per person Questions:

Enid Idelsohn Email: *IdelsohnE@cofc.edu* phone: 843.953.3918 fax: 843.953.7624

Hotel Reservations

SpringHill Suites by Marriott 2670 Hospitality Boulevard Florence, SC 29501

Call 843-317-9050 for reservations. Ask for the "JHSSC 100-year Anniversary" group rate of \$89.00+tax/night.



Dillon's Ohav Shalom: A Small

This page be dicated to officers a directors 1956-57

officers

Dresident .. DILLON, S.G. PEUBEN GOLDMA VICE Pres .. DILLON, S.G. PHILLIP BERNANK, Secretary .. CLIO, S.G. -ARTHUR RIEMER Treasurer . LATTA, S.G. MOSES KORNBLUT

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LEON KORNBLUTT ... LATTA, S. HYMAN PULAN MULLINS.S.C HARRY GREENE · . . . CLID, S.C HORTIMER BERNANKE ... DILLON, S. SIGMOND KORNBLUTT ... DILLON, S.C. MRS. LEONARD COHEN. .. LATTA, S.O. MRS. NATHAN EPSTEIN. LATTA, S.C. ABF COHEN (ex. officio. pat pro) CLIO,S.

RABBI PHILLIP FRIED

nd this Torah shall not be property the of any one member but shall belong to all regardless of each individual's contribution." Thus, in 1920, a unique contract was scripted that expressed succinctly the spirit of the early 20th century worshippers in the area Dillon. around South Carolina. The vast sum of

\$300 was raised to purchase a Torah for a congregation that owned no property but in whose hearts burned a need and a memory and a hope.

first The services on record in Dillon were held in 1915 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Fass— High Holiday conducted services by Mr. Fass, assisted by local residents and guests who were

learned in the Torah and the Talmud. Three years later the small group began meeting at the home of Morris's brother, Max Fass. During this period, many out-of-towners attended, including traveling salesmen, or peddlers as they were called in those days.

What was first

known as the Dillon Hebrew Congregation was renamed for Teresa Witcover Fass in 1928, in honor of Max's wife, who died the previous year at the age of 48. Around this time an appeal for funds to build a synagogue ran in the Dillon Herald. Listed as donors were: Leah Krawitz, Morris Fass, David Fass, P. Witcover, Paul Witcover, Max Fass, Phillip Leinwand, David Fleishman, Abe Cohen (my father), H. Polan, Nathan Snyder, Ben Snyder, Sam Levine, Julius Blumberg, Max Blum, Joe Simon, Mordecai Nachman, Nathan Carliner, and David Witcover. The Dillon Sisterhood pledged \$300 and organizers expected to raise \$5,000.

With the death of Max and Morris Fass in 1935, the struggling congregation lost two faithful, founding members. Services continued to be held in the Dillon Masonic Temple, a tribute to the spirit of religious solidarity in the community. Elder members recall that the City of Dillon also offered use of city hall chambers for services.

In 1939 years of wandering came to an end. Julius Blumberg, Leon Kornblut, and Nathan Bernstein, acting as incorporators, executed a certificate of incorporation on February 14, 1939, establishing the Ohav Shalom Congregation.

A building committee was appointed and a site at 10th and Calhoun streets in a residential section of Dillon was selected, coincidentally, only one block from one of the early meeting places. The purchase price—\$400.

Fund raising became the order of the day. Progress was slow, but on February 12, 1942, Ohav Shalom held "Services for Laying of Cornerstone." The \$7,000 expenditure, plus hours spent planning and soliciting funds, paid off. Some 20-odd families had persevered to raise an altar unto the Lord—without a mortgage!—and on November 22, 1942, the synagogue was dedicated in an impressive ceremony.

Ohav Shalom's first officers were Sam Schafer, president; David Fass, vice president; Julius Blumberg, treasurer; Nathan Bernstein, secretary; and Leon Kornblut, director. All were from Dillon except Schafer, who hailed from Little Rock, South Carolina.

Over the next 25 years, the presidency was held by Leon Kornblut, Nathan Epstein, Abe Cohen, Reuben Goldman, Arthur Riemer, Harry Elfland, Phillip Bernanke, and Mortimer Bernanke. There were confirmations, bar mitzvahs, weddings, anniversary celebrations,

From top to bottom: The author, about eight years old, with her father, Abe Cohen. Courtesy of Cecile Cohen Waronker • Pages from Ohav Shalom's Golden Book and the congregation's anniversary booklet titled Twenty Five Years of Jewish Life, 1939–1964. Gift of Harold Kornblut. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Town's Dream Come True by Cecile Cohen Waronker

and testimonials. In 1956, during my father's tenure, a Jewish Community Center was added to the small synagogue. The keynote speaker for the afternoon dedication was Hyman Rubin, who at the time was mayor pro tem of Columbia, and later a state senator. For another event father invited Harry Golden, editor of the *Carolina Israelite* in Charlotte, North Carolina, as guest speaker.

Ohav Shalom means "lovers of peace." The years have borne out the truth of the name; the deeds of the members and the testimony of neighboring churches give evidence of the warm relationship between the synagogue and the community.

Sadly, this wonderful little congregation no longer exists. Like small-town Jews elsewhere in the United States, the congregants' economic mainstay was retail business and the proverbial "Jew stores" have, by and large, disappeared. When only seven Jewish families remained in the area, Ohav Shalom disbanded and the building was sold. Its members now go to Beth Israel Congregation in Florence. You can close down a building but you cannot erase memories. Those of us who are descendants of the founding members will never forget.

Biographical note

I was the only child of Abe Cohen and Betty Mark Cohen. My mother was born in Anderson, South Carolina, and grew up in Greenwood. My father was born in Lithuania and came to this country when he was four years old, settling in Baltimore. He had older brothers in Latta, South Carolina, and in Gibson and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. That's how he came south and opened his store.

My parents were introduced to each other by Hymie and Sammy Rubin's father in Columbia and married by Rabbi David Karesh. I graduated from Clio High School and the University of Georgia, then married William (Billy) L. Waronker from Atlanta in a ceremony conducted by Rabbi Karesh. We have three children and five grandchildren. Billy died in 2007.

Growing up in Clio was wonderful. We never had any problems being Jewish. I had the first bat mitzvah at the shul in Dillon. It was a close-knit Jewish family. My husband and children loved visiting the town.

I served on the Commission on Presidential Scholars under Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and presently serve on the Coca-Cola Scholarship Committee. In 2004 I was honored by the College of Education at the University of Georgia with the outstanding alumni service award. The following year the College of Education named a

scholarship in my honor and, in
2006, I received a Woman of
Achievement Award
from the Jewish
Federation of
Atlanta.

When my father died in 1969,
he was honored on
the floor of the South
Carolina House of
Representatives.

He had served as vice mayor of Clio and was well respected. My mother continued running the store for almost 30 more years. Then she moved to Atlanta and lived here for ten years before she passed away. My mother was the middle child of Yetta and Louis Mark. Her siblings all settled in South Carolina—her eldest sister, Annie Pinosky in Charleston, her brother, Bill Mark in Williamston, her sister Rose Sonenshine in Ware Shoals, and her youngest sister, Fannie Widelitz in St. George.

From top to bottom: Three-year-old Cecile Cohen with her doll sitting in front of her parents' store in Clio, South Carolina• Members of the Mark family, Ware Shoals, South Carolina, mid-1940s. Left to right: Back row — William and his wife, Fannie Zalin, storeowners in Williamston, Yetta, Louis. Front row — Rose, Betty (the author's mother, the first in her family to be born in the United States), Fannie, and Annie. Courtesy of Cecile Cohen Waronker.

***An earlier version of the article appeared in the Jewish Georgian, July-August 2000.

South of the Border

by Robin Schafer with Evelyn Schafer Hechtkopf

have been told that South of the Border—the brainchild of my uncle Alan Schafer—began in 1951, the year that LI was born. But the seeds had been planted two or three years before that, when neighboring Robeson County, in North Carolina, passed a law prohibiting the distribution of beer in stores and restaurants. Alan was the owner of Schafer Distributing Company and a Miller High Life wholesaler and was well off financially. He could no longer distribute beer north of the state line, but buyers could drive a few miles south and purchase what they pleased at the cinderblock shack Schafer built in 1949, painted pink and dubbed "South of the Border Beer Depot." It was an accident that northern tourists stopped there in droves. That was not what he was looking for but he took full advantage of it. To the six-stool beer bar he added a grill room selling hot dogs and burgers, then in 1950, a motel, and the next year, a gas station.

The Schafer family was raised in Little Rock, South Carolina, but was scattered by this time. My uncle Ray was in Manhattan and my uncle Charles was in Augusta, Georgia. Aunt Evelyn had settled in Norfolk, Virginia. My dad, Joe Schafer, had come home after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and was living in Dillon. As early as I can remember he owned the South of the Border gas station, which, at one time, was reputed to be the busiest gas station on the East Coast. I remember the first building. It was made of tin and had no insulation. My dad put it on a flatbed truck and brought it to our house where he opened it up and it became a stable for a pony named Diamond.

As a teenager I helped my dad at the gas station, and one time, when he had a helicopter ride, I ran that on the weekends. I remember South of the Border when there was nothing on the west side of Highway 301 except fields of cotton and peanuts. Uncle Alan added a zoo and a Putt-Putt golf course, and then just kept going. The fireworks outlet, I have been told, is or was the busiest in the United States. I have also been told that Alan did not believe in borrowing money. He did not build ping till be had saved the money to build it

something till he had saved the money to build it.

My uncle was very involved in politics. He was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago that nominated Hubert Humphrey—he had half a vote. At its peak South of the Border was the largest employer in Dillon County with over 600 employees, including many locals. Before there was welfare Alan fed many poor kids in the schools. Before passage of the Civil Rights Act, he hired all races—whites, Afri-

can Americans, and Lumbee Indians. In the era of Jim Crow, I can remember black people coming to the door of my dad's business and asking if it was okay for them to come inside. My dad's answer was "only if your money





is green." My dad never discriminated and I am willing to bet that Alan did not either. The county benefitted greatly from SoB being there.

Most of the customers that I remember were from the North—travelers from New York, New England, and Canada, especially Ottawa and Quebec, heading to Florida or Myrtle Beach. Traffic from Highway 501 and I-20 was big too, and the truck stop business has really picked up. Once North Carolina's prohibition against alcohol sales ended, Alan never really went after local business. My dad told me he felt that this was a mistake, that the Border could have added some things the residents of Dillon would have greatly appreciated, such as a bowling alley. As it is, the local business is not that strong, though I recall taking my high school dates there to play Putt-Putt and eat at the restaurant.

Alan's innovative approaches to advertising—the Mexican theme, the infamous highway billboards—were entirely his ideas. He was a journalism major in college and obviously very smart and creative. He never hired an advertising company though he did rent some of the billboards. The Mexican theme was a play on the name South of the Border, which really meant we have beer here because we are south of the North Carolina border, but some Mexicans who stop in expect the staff to speak Spanish and not one of them can.

South of the Border has a huge following. All you have to do is go to You Tube and look at the number of videos that have been made concerning the place. Some of the visitors were celebrities like Bert Lahr, the actor who played the cowardly lion in *The Wizard of Oz* movie. Heavyweight champion boxer Joe Frazier, born in Beaufort, South Carolina, stopped at my dad's gas station on a fairly regular basis. Lots of people come back when they are grown to see what they saw when they were kids. SoB is an amusement park, shopping mall, roadside oasis, and tourist stop rolled into one. I cannot think of any place on the interstate as entertaining as the Border. It's a perfect break from the monotony of the road on the way to more famous destinations like Disney World.

Though most people don't ask, a few of the customers know that South of the Border is a Jewish-owned business. Alan did not practice Judaism if you mean going to temple; he did practice if you mean doing the right thing, which is what he did with regard to his hiring practices at the Border. Evelyn tells me that there really was a

Klan protest at SoB during Jim Crow because her brother employed people of all races. Alan met the Klansmen armed with a rifle and told them to go away. To me that is a mitzvah on steroids.

All images courtesy of Robin Schafer.

Memories of a Congregation That

war, only a few became longtime residents.

ews began settling in Darlington well before the Civil War. In 1845 Joseph and Charles Frank from Germany made their home in the Pee Dee town and were soon followed by their cousins Isaac and Marks (or Marx) Iseman. They did business for a number of years, acquired a large amount of downtown property, and, judging from public records, were good citizens. Hyam and Henry Hymes, Samuel Marco, and August Nachman opened stores in Darlington in the mid-1850s. Hyam, at one time, served as intendant (mayor) of the town. Several Darlington Jews served in the Confederate army. Only one was reported killed, but everyone except Joseph Frank and Isaac Iseman left during the War Between the States. Among the Jews who moved to the area after the

Numbering about 50 at the turn of the 20th century, the Jews in Darlington constituted approximately one percent of the population, but their taxable property was nearly 20 percent. They were described as very active in business and were public spirited in all progressive movements for the uplifting and development of the town. In 1896 the Darlington Hebrew Cemetery Association purchased land for a burial ground and, in February 1905, a congregation called Darlington Hebrew Associationwas organized. Rabbi Jacob Klein from Temple Sinai in Sumter

came to Darlington one Sunday a month to lead Reform services, followed by Dr. Jacob Raisin of Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. In 1925 the Darlington Temple Sisterhood, formerly the Ladies Aid Society, affiliated with the state and nation-

al sisterhoods and, in league with the Darlington Hebrew Association, took over the functions of the Cemetery Association.

As the congregation grew there were thoughts of building a synagogue in Darlington. Efforts were made but the financial realities of the Great Depression halted the idea. The Jewish population of Darlington reached as high as 85 during the late 1920s, then shrank to an estimated 35 by 1937, hard times no doubt forcing many families to move. When Rabbi Raisin died in 1946, organized religious activity all but ceased. In 1953, however, the congregation reorganized as the Darlington Hebrew Congregation and hired Rabbi J. Aaron Levy of Sumter to lead monthly services.

Growing up in Darlington I have memories of Rabbi Levy coming to lead services on a Sunday afternoon. Jewish families, young and old, would gather at someone's home (usually in Mrs. Fannie Want's living room) and Rabbi Levy would lead us using the old Union prayer book. He sometimes would call on the older children to show off their reading skills. A sermon or discussion would follow, which at times seemed long and boring, but as I got older made more sense. Services were always followed by an oneg, with cookies and sweets for the

Photo of State Sisterhood Convention held in Darlington, South Carolina, 1954. • Artifacts from Temple Sisterhood conventions in New Orleans, 1937, and Darlington, 1928 and 1941. David A. Cohen, Jr. Collection. Special Collections, College of Charleston. • Darlington native Fannie Weinberg Want and her future daughter-in-law, Sadie Bogoslow, of Walterboro, South Carolina, ca. 1937. Courtesy of William Want and Robert Want.

Was: The Jews of Darlington

by Alexander H. Cohen, MD

children. But the big celebration each year was Passover. The whole congregation would gather in the meeting hall at the Masonic Lodge for a community seder. It was an evening of delightful smells as the Passover story was retold and children got restless, feeling they were starving to death, as they waited for the festive meal. After dinner came playtime and then the mad rush to find the afikomen.

As time passed I noticed the congregation was shrinking. Some people moved away, some died, and few came to replace them. The children went to religious school at Beth Israel in Florence, so their families also joined that congregation, which was growing and vibrant. When sons and daughters went to college, few returned home to live in Darlington. It was awkward at times being in school where there were only one or two Jewish children. We knew that we were different. When it came to morning devotionals, we got equal time at Hanukkah and Passover to tell the class our holiday stories. Though an occasional slur was heard, I never really encountered any antisemitism while growing up in Darlington.

As I grew older and heard the stories of members of the congrega- wanis Club, at a meeting in Darlington, South Cartion both present and deceased, I was impressed at how active a role olina, 1955. Courtesy of Alexander H. Cohen.



David A. Cohen, Sr., a charter member of the Ki-

they played in the community. Darlington Jews have worked in every phase of community life, adding up to over a century and a half of Jewish participation in local, state, and national progress. Jews have served as officers of the Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, Pee Dee Area Boy Scouts, Darlington Country Historical Society, and Darlington Country Club. They have served on the city council and as mayor. They have also headed the Red Cross, and polio, civil defense, tuberculosis, and mental health organizations in Darlington. Jews from Darlington fought in the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. This congregation has produced attorneys, judges, physicians, and even two PhDs who were professors at the University of Pennsylvania.

Darlington's Jewish organizations soldiered on until 1980, then essentially disbanded. On May 5, 1981, the four remaining members of the Darlington Temple Sisterhood met for the last time and their monies were transferred to the Darlington Hebrew Congregation. The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods was notified of the dissolution of the chapter. On June 9, 1981, the Darlington Hebrew Congregation met with seven members present. For the sum of \$14,108, perpetual care was arranged for the Jewish section of Grove Hill Cemetery. The combined

congregation and sisterhood funds were placed in savings with my father, David A. Cohen, and a sisterhood member as trustees. It was suggested that the congregation have a dinner meeting once a year, which turned out to be an annual community seder. This was the last recorded meeting of the congregation. Only a couple of families remain from a congregation that, in the 1890s, was the largest in the area. We who are left depend upon Beth Israel in Florence for weekly services and life-cycle events, but we continue to hold our community seder each spring.

A more detailed history can be found on the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life website, History Department, Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities. See "Darlington, South Carolina" by Alyssa Neely at: http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/sc/darlington.html

Additional sources:

- Eliza Cowan Ervin and Horace Fraser Rudisill, Darlingtoniana (Colum- Hennig Cohen, with their cousin Julian Hennig, Jr., bia, SC: R. L. Bryan Company, 1964)
- Minutes of the Darlington Hebrew Congregation and Darlington Temple All three served in World War II. Courtesy of Alex-Sisterhood



Hennig Cohen, air force (middle), and David A. Cohen, Jr., army (r), sons of David A. and Hilda marines, son of Julian H. and Helen Kohn Hennig. ander H. Cohen.

Success of a

n 1906, to escape being drafted into the tsar's army, Dad's father, Benjamin Weintraub, hid in a barrel on a horse cart and traveled from his native Poland (then part of the Russian empire) to Hamburg, where he boarded a ship called the Nieuw Amsterdam for America. In Brooklyn he and a brother made and sold expensive blouses. They did well enough so that Benjamin, his wife, and their three children could leave the business and Brooklyn. In the mid-1920s they moved to the more congenial town of Red Bank, New Jersey, where he opened LaRose Dress Shop, named after his wife.

One of those three children was my father, Lawrence ("Larry") Weintraub. After his discharge from the Army Air Corps in 1946, Dad and his brother, Morty, went to work with their uncle Harry Zahl as traveling salesmen based in Walterboro, South Carolina, about 50 miles from Charleston.

One of Dad's customers was a Mullins clothing store owner, Hyman Polan, who had emigrated from Lithuania about the year 1919. Shortly after landing in America, Polan worked







for relatives in West Virginia. Then he moved to Baltimore and worked for other relatives in an umbrella-manufacturing operation. Polan's daughter Sylvia was a civilian employee in the war bond department at Fort Jackson in Columbia during and after World War II. Her parents' ill health called her back to Mullins, where she and her sister, Dot, worked in the store—hence Sylvia was on duty on a cold February morning when salesman Larry arrived in town.

That very day Larry asked her if she would go out with him. After they dated for a few weeks, Dad proposed. A half century later my mother recalled her response. "I said, 'Larry, this is going to break up a beautiful friendship.'. . . [H]e didn't call me for several weeks because I had kind of discouraged him. When he called two weeks later, I cannot tell you how happy I was to hear from him. So then I knew that I liked him." That July they were married. They moved to Petersburg, Virginia, where my father managed a shoe department, but they disliked life in an army town, so they soon returned to Mullins

From top to bottom: Benjamin Weintraub in front of his store, LaRose Dress Shop in Red Bank, New Jersey, ca. 1930 • Rose and Benjamin Weintraub with their children, Larry (front), Adele, and Morty, ca. 1930 • Hyman Polan, the author's maternal grandfather, before emigrating from Lithuania, ca. 1916. • Larry and Sylvia Polan Weintraub, Reading, Pennsylvania, ca. 1950.

Salesman by Richard Weintraub

where Dad worked for his fatherin-law. In 1951 they moved some 50 miles to Timmonsville, where they opened Larry's Department Store, selling all manner of clothes for men, women, and children.

Despite its small population of roughly two thousand, Timmonsville had a thriving downtown, with perhaps five clothing stores in the 1960s. A year after opening his first store, Dad started a similar but smaller shop, Richard's Department Store, in Lamar. Like Mullins and Timmonsville, Lamar was a small town whose economy depended heavily on tobacco farms and tobacco warehouses. By the early 1960s he had added stores in the larger population centers of Darlington and Florence and, in Rose Levine and her children (left to right), Minlets in Lake City, Bishopville, and nal grandmother, ca. 1898. a second location in Darlington.

the 1970s and 1980s, launched out- nie, Sam, Joe, and Gertrude, the author's mater-

At first my mother stayed home to raise my sister and me, but at some point after my father established his first store, she hired Mary Louise, a quiet, young—possibly teenaged—African American to take care of us while she worked in the business. After we moved to Florence,

Mom hired her again, this time to clean house. That required Mom to drive back and forth to Timmonsville, which shows how much Mom liked her. Mary Louise worked for our family for, perhaps, a half dozen years and in all that time, we always pronounced her name "Mare-Louise." I didn't know her name was Mary until years later.

We moved to Florence in 1960 in order to live in a better school district, to be nearer the synagogue, and to take advantage of the livelier city life. Mom managed the Florence store for many years. Until my sister went to college, she and I Carolina, 1929. generally worked in a store on Saturdays—Gail in Florence and I in Timmonsville. During summers until I finished college, I regularly put in six days a week, unless I had a particular reason to be absent. That didn't include goofing off.

In the 1950s Dad bought some of his inventory through traveling salesmen (yes, they were all men), a fair proportion of whom were Jewish. Dad had grown up in a bilingual household, but he made a point not to speak Yiddish with the salesmen in front of employees or customers so that they wouldn't think they were talking about them. Some of the salesmen became family friends and visited our home. By the 1970s traveling salesmen were rare.

From the 1950s on, Dad traveled to New York City about four

times a year on buying trips. (In 1956 his hotel bill for ten days totaled \$53.17!) When we children were older, he and Mom went together. The heart of operating successful retail is knowing what to buy. While Dad's stores sold low-priced clothes, many customers demanded the latest fashions. Dad said that Mom was



Sylvia Polan (first on left, front row) with her class at the Mullins Graded School, Mullins, South

excellent at buying ladies' dresses. I always thought that the stores succeeded because my parents were so skilled

at picking stylish merchandise at low prices. Dad pointed out to me stores that were like his but which offered slightly out-of-date items or just missed out on the most popular items. It was risky to buy fashions that might sell for only a few months, but it was even worse business to stick to conservative styles that wouldn't sell. Dad knew when to buy and when to stop buying Nehru jackets, platform shoes, hot pants, and Converse basketball shoes.

Nearly all employees, including managers, were women. Dad was able to find capable store managers who stayed with him for many years (in two cases for decades) and who were able to find hard-working employees, many of whom also remained for years. One manager embezzled but, as far as I know, the rest were honest. Over the decades Dad Virginia Parnell managed Larry's Darling-

yers, accountants, and others.

Shipments were received at a warehouse around the corner from the Timmonsville store. Dad and I spent a lot of time there. One or two employees, mainly black teenagers, were tioned in the warehouse. Other clerks might have objected to hiring black salespeople, but Dad sneaked them in by letployees do some selling. traub.

They often personally knew customers and they knew what items had recently arrived at the warehouse, so they could be effective salesmen, making it hard for white co-workers to protest. Several warehouse employees soon worked full days in the store. Dad said that he was the first white employer to hire a black saleswoman in Timmonsville. At first she probably used the men's restroom, which all the males shared, until the white female sales clerks lost whatever concern they imagined and accepted her use of the ladies' room.

One might think that some African Americans would have objected to our not going further and fast-

> er, and that some whites would have thought we went too far, but if that happened, I never heard it.

> Some Pee Dee towns—Timmonsville for some years, Lamar always had no Jewish residents. I'm sure the employees knew our family was Jewish, and some of the customers would have known. The stores opened on Shabbat and we worked those days. By far, more sales were made on Saturdays than any other day. On Yom Kippur the stores were open but the family didn't work. When the Florence synagogue held Rosh Hashanah services for two days, we attended and let the stores run themselves. My mother's father was quite observant and I don't know whether he tried to close on Saturdays. It would have been difficult.

> You'd think in a highly religious environment like the Pee Dee that Judaism would be mentioned by cus-

> > tomers fairly often. Not so. The only mention I remember is when I was perhaps 14 or 15 years old: an old white farmer wearing bib overalls said he had heard that Jews were smart and asked me how many continents there are. He thought I was dodging when I said different people count them in different ways. (For example, Europe and Asia asia.) I didn't sense any



engaged Jewish and non-Jewish law- ton store from the 1960s until the 1990s.



Rose Mae Wright, shown with husband, Roland, worked in Larry's store in ting the warehouse em- Florence before becoming manager. All images courtesy of Richard Wein- can be counted as Eur-

negative feeling but only that he saw Jews as rare birds.

It was an extraordinarily unusual week if Dad did not work six days. The size of the operation was too small to allow him to hire and train someone to do what he did. While Dad would have liked the stores to continue after him, he never pressed me to take over, and I became a lawyer in North Carolina. Dad suffered a serious decline in health in 1994 and we closed all the stores. They joined the ranks of Jewish-owned businesses in the Pee Dee that have passed into history.

Growing up with Ben Bernanke

hairman of the Federal Reserve since 2006, Ben Bernanke is without doubt Dillon's most famous and influential native son. His hometown friends remember him well.

Robin Schafer

I was in college at the time Ben Bernanke worked as a waiter at South of the Border, but I have many earlier memories of him. He was one of my favorite childhood friends—three years younger than I am but only two classes behind me because he skipped the second grade. I was on the safety patrol in the fifth grade. Ben used to come to my crossing on his way to East Elementary School. I knew that he had placed ninth in a national spelling bee, so I would make him spell the largest word I knew—"encyclopedia"—before I let him cross the street. He always carried a brief case. Ben could multiply two four-digit numbers in his head as fast as you can punch the numbers into a calculator. We were in a Ben on the saxophone and me on guitar. We Courtesy of Claire Goldman Putterman. introduced rock music to the Pee Dee play-

ing "Light My Fire" by the Doors on Channel 13 in Florence. We were also in a band called the Muchachos. We played Herb Alpert music. Ben was a great guy. Everyone in town really liked him and his family. He could have become Dillon's dog catcher and I would still say that.

Claire Goldman Putterman

I remember how Ben and my brother Nathan spent every waking hour together. They were inseparable because they were both geniuses and no one else could relate to them! I remember finding millions of sheets of paper in our home with numbers written all over. It was some sort of math game they'd play.

I also remember that my mom took Ben to the South Carolina State Spelling Bee in Columbia. He lost in the finals with the word edelweiss. He also went with us to the premier showing of The Sound of Music in Columbia. That was a big deal!

We used to play baseball together. We were in band together for a number of years. Our families were best of friends so there was a lot of time spent together—synagogue, holidays, etc.

Nathan Goldman

I have so many stories about Ben. He is literally like



few bands together in Dillon High School— Ben Bernanke and Nathan Goldman, Dillon High School marching band, 1968.

a brother to me. I was ten when my father died, and the Bernankes became my second family. I am three years older than Ben, but we spent a lot of time together. I would go to his house for Shabbat lunch probably two to three times a month. They were the only family in the county that kept kosher, and we would do the full benching after lunch.

My senior year in high school, Ben would walk the four or five blocks to my house and we would walk together to the school about six or seven more blocks away. He and I played together after school most days and during the summer. We played baseball nearly ten months of the year—at the playground or in his back yard. We played football in his front yard and basketball in his driveway. Ben's father, a wonderful man, often played basketball with us. The Bernankes had a Ping-Pong table in their converted garage and we'd play there too.

I often spent the night at Ben's house. I remember one night we watched the Democratic primary returns and went to bed. Ben's father woke us in the middle of the night to tell us Robert Kennedy had been assassinated.

I can remember once when the new synagogue was built in Myrtle Beach. Ben's grandfather, Jonas Bernanke, drove Ben and me to the Beach for the dedication of the sanctuary. Another time we went to a youth convention at the Conservative shul in Charlotte, and I stayed with Ben in his Friedman grandparents' home. We used to talk baseball (our joint passion), politics, and religion. In the days before Wikipedia, it was a full-time job to find out who was Jewish—baseball players and other celebrities. One final comment, Ben was and is the smartest person I've ever known.

Harold Kornblut

My recollections of Ben are primarily from religious school—we were the only two boys in our age group at Ohav Shalom Synagogue in Dillon. I remember struggling with Hebrew to such a point that Mrs. Epstein offered to give me private lessons in the back of the family's furniture store in Latta to catch up. Ben, on the other hand, seemed to master Hebrew by the fourth grade and could read and translate the text with confidence and ease.

When we were of driving age—I had my beginner's permit at 14 and a daytime special restricted license at 15—I would drive Ben, Nathan Goldman, Claire Goldman, and Janis Kornblut to Florence to meet with the

rabbi for youth group. I remember Rabbi Howard Folb would ask a question and Ben would answer it before the rabbi could finish the sentence. In youth group functions Ben was popular and mixed well with the other teens. He was reasonably athletic, adept at pickup basketball, which I think he still plays.

As seniors in high school, Ben and I hung out at the beach with the local crowd from Dillon and Latta. While attending college at the University of Georgia, I went up to Boston with some friends and visited Ben who was living across the Charles River in Winthrop House at Harvard. I remember his three-room suite with a fireplace, kitchen, and common living area, which compared favorably to my accommodations at U.Ga. in a 20-room dorm with a lavatory at the end of the hall. I remember having a good time socializing, eating pizza, and drinking beer at local pubs, and going with Ben to the Boston Garden to watch the Celtics play. I also remember that Ben was busy working on computer modeling in microeconomics, a relatively new field at the time, so he could not go on to Montreal with us to party.

JHSSC Pillars: Keeping the Faith

Together with the College of Charleston's Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program and the Jewish Heritage Collection at the Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, JHSSC is promoting both South Carolina's Jewish history and its academic resources. Through the Center for Southern Jewish Culture we are bringing eminent scholars from across the country to present their research on southern Jewish life. Thanks to the Society's efforts, South Carolina's Jewish influence stands out in the greater community—a community that takes to heart the significance of its past. The long and important Jewish history of South Carolina has never had the statewide and national attention that it is now receiving.

Gifts and membership dues keep our operations running, but it is the generosity of our Pillars that enable us to reach our ambitious goals. Become a Pillar today by pledging to contribute \$1,000 a year for five years. Help us continue to showcase South Carolina's Jewish history as a living legacy.

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Tribute to Ruth Brody Greenberg: August 6,1920 - July 13,2012

by Rabbi Aaron Sherman

It is with sadness that we mark the passing of Ruth Brody Greenberg, a complicated and generous woman who was a leader of the Florence Jewish community and whose family was well known throughout the Carolinas. Ruth was an early Pillar of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

Ruth leaves behind a legacy of success. Her two sons, Phillip and Stuart, both are accomplished physicians. Ruth had five grandchildren: Andy and Barnett who live in Charleston, Laura who was recently married in Kiawah and currently lives in New York City, Brody who lives in Florida, and Patty who lives in Washington DC and plans to be married in Charleston next spring. Nanny, as Ruth was known to her grandchildren, taught her granddaughters to be strong, independent women. She taught them to challenge themselves and never to settle in life. She also taught her grandchildren to value family and Judaism. Ruth believed in God and Judaism. She was strongly, actively, and proudly Jewish.

Ruth's father, Hyman Brody, and his brother immigrated to the United States from Russia to escape religious persecution. Soon after Hyman brought his wife, Bessie, and their six children to America, he was ready to move from Brooklyn to a more rural location. Hyman and his family relocated to Anderson, South Carolina, where he had a friend, but soon moved to Sumter, where Ruth was born.

Hyman was a cobbler and opened a shop in Sumter. From this small shop the Brody department stores grew. Ruth's brothers opened and managed stores across the region. By the time the business was sold to Proffit's in 1998, the Brodys had stores in Kinston, Greenville, New Bern, Jacksonville, Rocky Mount, and Goldsboro, North Carolina, as well as Sumter, South Carolina. Ruth's grand-

children remember buying clothes in those stores. Ruth's brothers were instrumental in creating a medical school at East Carolina University. In 1999 the school was renamed the Brody School of Medicine.

Ruth's mother was not well, so Ruth was raised by her ten older brothers, who treated her like a princess. In these early years when the family did not have much money, her brothers worked extremely hard and would pool their funds to buy something special for their sister. They would leave Hanukkah gifts on her bed. When she woke up, she was surprised and thrilled. Later in life Ruth took care of her brothers. Whenever they needed to, they could crash at Ruth and Abe's house in Florence.

Ruth outlived all ten brothers. She was an independent woman who left home in 1938 to attend Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, graduated from Ohio State University in 1942 and, until 1945, ran the family's department store in Greenville, North Carolina, while her brothers served in World War II. In 1946 Ruth married Stephen Abraham Greenberg and moved to his hometown of Florence, where he set up practice as a general physician.

Ruth loved playing golf, eating healthily, and staying fit. She was dedicated to community service. She gave generously to the Florence Public Library, the Florence Symphony Orchestra, and the Pee Dee Coalition for Sexual Abuse, and was a multi-year member of the Florence Medical Auxiliary. An active member and sustainer of Beth Israel Congregation, Ruth took charge of a major renovation of the sanctuary. Many of the stained glass windows were donated by Ruth and her family.

The Jewish and non-Jewish communities both benefitted from Ruth's big heart and open hand. Many people turned out for her funeral on a hot summer day in Florence.

Yes, I want to be a Pillar

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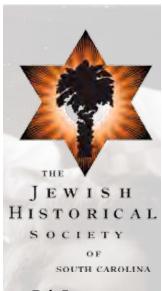
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THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

SPRING 2013

VOLUME XVIII - NUMBER I

Register for the Spring Conference
"The Past as Prologue:
Jewish Genealogy Looks to the Future"
May 18 – 19, 2013
College of Charleston
Pages 10 – 11



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On the cover: Louise Levi, Abbeville, SC, ca. 1921. Louise had just recovered from scarlet fever when the photo was taken. The fan she is holding, made of hot pink feathers, now belongs to her daughter, Ellen. Photo courtesy of Ellen Marcus Smith.

Correction

Catalogers beware!

The Fall 2012 issue of the newsletter should have been numbered Vol. XVII - No. 2.

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The Levi Family of Manning Wendell M. Levi, Jr., and Ernest L. Marcus Bavarian immigrant Moses Levi and his wife, Hannah, raised a large family and made their fortune twice in Manning. Undaunted by losses during the Civil War, they reestablished themselves in the local economy and gave their offspring the chance to succeed as lawyers, bankers, farmers, and merchants.	
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and his wife, Bertha Emanuel, became cotton buyers in Clio, South Carolina, and partners in Revolution Mills in Greensboro, North Carolina. Their niece Rosa Sternberger Hirschmann followed in her grandfather's footsteps, teaching religious school in Charleston.	
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Letter from the President



The Shabbat candlesticks always sat on the dining room sideboard. They had traveled many miles and been passed down for generations. What told and untold family stories did they hold? How many of us have heard the stories? When we were kids, did we listen? As adults we begin to search. I know that when each of my children was born, I looked into his or her face and wondered, "What relative do

you resemble?" With my daughter, Emily, the answer was clear. When my good friend Amy Rones Berger's mother, Faye Appel Rones, gave me a photo taken years ago on St. Philip Street, there was my daughter. But the photo was taken of my mother as a child. And so, we know now who Emily looks like—her Nana!

When we embark on "family stories," we want to know where we come from, who we are, and what did those who made the trek to the "new country" discover? There may be a difference between the study of genealogy and the quest for family stories, but I think the outcome is the same: we are searching for the "who and where." The articles in this issue were written by members of some of the families featured in *Family History Roadshow*, an exhibition of new treasures from the Jewish Heritage Collection that will be on view at the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library from April 1 until May 20, 2013—culminating the weekend of the Society's spring meeting.

Our upcoming program, titled *The Past as Prologue: Jewish Genealogy Looks to the Future*, promises to be an invigorating exploration into where the Jews of South Carolina have come from and how our past can potentially be a predictor for

future generations. We welcome two outstanding speakers, Steven Cohen and Karen Franklin, both prominent in their fields of research. I hope you will make plans now to attend. For the conference schedule, see page 11—then register via mail or online at www.jhssc.org.

Our meeting in Florence last fall had the feel of a family bar mitzvah. What a warm and inviting weekend Beth Israel Congregation dished up! An engaging program, delicious food, and a hilarious comedian to cap the gala evening made for an enjoyable and informative weekend.

My first year as president of JHSSC has ended. We have held two outstanding conferences and are looking forward to another stellar event in May. These meetings don't just happen. They require the work of many people. I want to thank Gail Lieb, Ann Hellman, Enid Idelsohn, Dale Rosengarten, and Marty Perlmutter for their steady support and willingness to bring together top speakers, the best panels, and the warmest hospitality for each conference. Their dedication is wonderful. Gail and Ann, both JHSSC board members—Ann as past president and webmaster—have leapt into action with the planning of the spring meeting.

We are governed by a volunteer board and I encourage any member who has an interest in serving on the board of directors or any of our committees to contact me at rgbarnett@earthlink.net.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Charleston, May 18–19!

With warm regards,

Rachel Londin Barnett

Rachel Gordin Barnett rgbarnett@earthlink.net





Meeting in the sanctuary at Beth Israel, attendees of JHSSC's fall 2012 listen to panel titled Pee Dee Pioneers. Left to right: Rick Levy, Bruce Siegal, Joseph H. Rubinstein (moderator), Donna Cohen, Richard Weintraub. Florence, SC, November 3, 2012. Photos by Max Hellman.

The Winstocks, Rosenbergs,

O. A. VISANSKA'S CASTLE

O. A. VISANSKA'S C To-Night Will be a Scene of Light and Beauty,

Intering the Victorian home of our grandmother Sarah

Irene Rosenberg Levi felt like opening a door to the pact

uring our stay, relatives both past (or so it
esent would visit the rambling 1
rolina, known as 37
rnals Lirene Rosenberg Levi felt like opening a door to the past. During our stay, relatives both past (or so it seemed) and present would visit the rambling house in Abbeville, South Carolina, known as Visanska's Castle. The shared stories, journals, objects, photographs and the like were intricately

tied to major events of the nation and state—the Civil War, Reconstruction, World Wars, the Depression but they were also about the pulse of everyday life. In our family, which was both Jewish and southern, ancestral worship was palpable.

The Winstock, Visanska, and Rosenberg families all came from the province of Suwalki

Gubernia in Poland (sometimes Lithuania), and settled in South Carolina before 1850. Over the following decades the families became increasingly intertwined through marriage, death, business in and around the Upstate town of Abbeville, where many of them resided. The complex relationships were nothing new as there were numerous intermarriages among the families in the Old Country, including the marriage of Joshua Rosenberg and Rose Halevi Visanska. Their future grandson Abraham Rosenberg married Rebecca Winstock and established a store in Greenwood, South Carolina. Another grandson, Philip Rosenberg, married Cecelia Dora Visanska and became a business



G. A. Visanska's "castle" in Abbeville was the setting for the June 1912 marriage of Irene Rosenberg, G. A.'s granddaughter, and Louis Levi.





במדינה אמיריקא צפוניה אמי ואפרנס יהיכי כהלכות נוברין יהודאין. ועביאת כורח כז נעשה כפנינו החתומים משת והכל שריד וקים:

Cecelia Dora Visanska and Philip Rosenberg, both of Abbeville, were married in 1885 in their hometown by partner in Abbeville with his father- Rev. David Levy of Charleston's Beth Elohim.

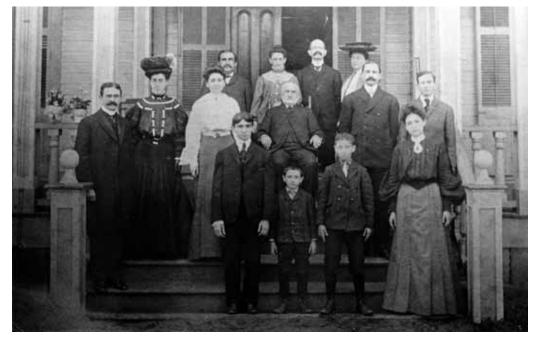
in-law, Gershon Aaron (G. A.) Visanska, eventually owning over 8,000 acres, starting banks, and establishing thriving businesses in town. Cecelia's mother and wife of G. A. was Annie Winstock, the daughter of Moses Winstock and Eva Leah Visanska. The brother of Moses, Benjamin Winstock, was the first to arrive in America, landing in 1838 in Richmond, Virginia,

with his wife, Jeannette, who was, of course, a Visanska.

Much family lore focuses on Moses Winstock, who came alone to Charleston in 1842 and established a wholesale jewelry business. It took until 1847 for Eva Leah and their first two children to arrive, having survived two shipwrecks. Moses later set up a peddlers' supply business. His customers told him the climate of the Upstate would be better for his asthma, and the family moved initially to Due West, home of Erskine College, founded by the Presbyterian Church, where Moses enjoyed translating and interpreting the Bible with faculty and students. Eventually the family settled in Abbeville, and Moses farmed the nearby "Winstock Place," a 525-acre plantation.

and Visanskas: Interlacing Lives

by Ernest L. Marcus



The Visanska-Rosenberg clangathered in Abbeville, ca. 1904. Left to right, back row: Philip Rosenberg, Cecelia Dora Visanska Rosenberg, Julius Marion Visanska, Sarah Fredericka Bentschner: middle row: Dr. Samuel Albert Visanska, Florence Mae Fuld Visanska, Florence Belle Visanska, George Albert Visanska, Walter Winstock Visanska, Ernest Leonard Visanaska; front row: Solomon Herbert Rosenberg, Arthur Philip Rosenberg, Albert Harold Rosenberg, Sarah Irene Rosenberg (Levi).

Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, several relatives, including Moses Winstock and G. A. Visanska, signed up to serve in the Confederate army. For safety Moses moved the family to Columbia, believing that Charleston would be a more likely target of Union General William Tecumseh Sherman. Instead, in 1865 Sherman pillaged Columbia, with officers arriving at the Winstock doorstep in time for Shabbat dinner. They enjoyed the meal and dessert before ordering the home burned to the ground, as were the warehouses, filled with tobacco and cotton.

In later life Moses was a merchant in Columbia and Charleston, as well as president of Charleston's Berith Shalom Congregation (his brother-in-law Zvi Hirsch Levine was the first rabbi) and Shearith Israel in Columbia. When he passed away in 1905, he was described as "Jewish patriarch of the State of S.C. and was mourned by a large circle of friends among Jews and Christians, white and negro."

The original Winstock, Visanska, and Rosenberg families and the generations that followed



Pink paper roses covered the cart carrying Sol and Irene Rosenberg in Abbeville's Floral Parade, date unknown.

served their communities as merchants, bankers, factory lawyers, owners, synagogue musicians, charity leaders, and decorated

Moses Winstock, great-grandchildren Sarah Irene, Aldoctors, bert-on Moses' lap-and Sol Rosenberg, ca. 1894. and

soldiers. They were scholars and athletes in educational settings from the College of Charleston to Yale University.

While the tangled web of relationships did not seem to hinder the success of the family, it certainly made for much puzzlement as later generations pondered the complex intersections of the family tree!

Information was drawn from many sources, including prior work by family members Evelyn Rosenberg Gross-Brein, Morton Rose, Yossi Loeb, and Hatte Anne Blejer.

ever since.

Moïse, Moïse, Moïse

By Benjamin McC. Moïse and Anita Moïse Rosefield Rosenberg

Two hundred and twenty-two years ago George Washington visited Charleston, just months before a shipload of French-speaking émigrés arrived from the Caribbean. The president, coming in the late spring, was on a tour of the nascent republic and stayed for only a week. The Moïse family disembarked later in the fall and has been in town practically

In 1791, when the 56-year-old Abraham Moïse, his young wife, Sarah, and their four boys, Cherry (Chérie), Aaron, Hyam, and Benjamin, walked across the docks of the Charleston waterfront, they carried with them only a few personal possessions and the clothes on their backs. Escaping the terrors of the revolution in Saint Domingue, they found refuge in a city with an established and supportive Jewish community and a 42-year-old congregation.

Abraham and Sarah Moïse sold cloth and tea from their home on Queen Street in Charleston. This miniature of Abraham (1736–1809), ca. 1790, mounted in gold, is one of the few objects they carried with them when they

By 1800 Abraham and Sarah Moïse fled Saint Domingue. Artist unknown. Collection of Mary Kohn Strasburger. had added five American-born children to the family, with siblings ranging in age from one year old to 20. Thus were the Moïses established in this country and in the state of South Carolina. With limited resources but limitless opportunity, parents and children found ways to make a living, some more successfully than others.

As the Moïse numbers continued to increase with their

characteristically large families, some members made their mark as painters, poets, politicians. There were Moïse lawyers, Moïse businessmen, Moïse doctors, and Moïse salesmen. Their stories show they followed their own inclinations but also kept their eyes on the main chance. Throughout, there was always a Moïse bon vivant to represent the latent "grasshopper family gene pool. On early branches of the family tree can be found the illustrious names Lazarus, Moses,

DeLeon, Harby, Nunes, and Lopez, many of whom are buried in the historic Coming Street Cemetery in Charleston.

Members of the family are now scattered the length and breadth of America and periodically come together in spirited and well attended reunions in the city where the Moïses got a new start. They come to Charleston to remember and celebrate the achievements and contributions of their forebears. They recall kin such as Benjamin Franklin Moïse, whose ghost still resides

in his home on Rutledge Avenue, and Lionel Calhoun Moïse, a newspaperman of the old rough and tumble school of journalism, acknowledged by Ernest Hemingway to have heavily influenced his writing style. Other Moïses of artistic bent include Penina Moïse, sixth child of Abraham and Sarah, whose poetry still

sings to generations of Charlestonians, and Theodore Sidney Moïse, whose luminous portraits adorn the walls of homes and museums across the country.

In 1824 Abraham Moïse II, the eighth child of Abraham and Sarah, with fellow members of Congregation Beth Elohim, including Isaac Harby and David Nunes Carvalho,

> began the movement to revise the form of worship and make the message of Judaism more comprehensible to the congregation. In 1862 Abraham's son Edwin Warren Moïse donned the uniform of a Confederate cavalry officer and fought with conspicuous bravery in northern Virginia. He served as adjutant general of the state of South Carolina during Wade Hampton's administration, which



the latent grasshopper Home of Davis DeLeon and Anita Harby Moïse, 5 Broad Street, Sumter, SC, 1909. genes" lurking in the Gift of Anita Moïse Rosefield Rosenberg. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

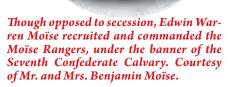


Moïse descendants gather on the piazza of the former home of Abraham Moïse II at the intersection of George and Glebe Streets on the College of Charleston campus, October 2000. Photo by Bill Aron.

brought an end to the era of Reconstruction, and henceforth was known in the family as "The General."

Some 80 years later E. W.'s namesake and great-great-grandson, Captain Edwin Warren Moïse, Jr., fought with Patton's Third Army, was killed in action, and lies buried in a military cemetery in France. Many Moïse men and women throughout the years have served in different capacities in the military, while other members of the family have contributed their time and talent to charitable, civic, spiritual, and cultural organizations, assuming leadership positions in groups such as the Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., and Boy Scouts.

The Moïse family exemplifies the American Dream—the great melting pot of America where people who recognize opportunity when it comes knocking at the door can achieve their goals and prosper. Though many Moïses have been assimilated into other faiths, they all proudly remember their Jewish roots and the family's traditions of service to the community.









Left to right: SC legislator Davis DeLeon Moïse, ca. 1899; his elder son, Marion, awarded Phi Beta Kappa from Washington and Lee University, 1927; and his daughter, Virginia, pictured in the society pages of a Long Beach, California, newspaper, 1931—most likely when Virginia was visiting her aunt Georgie Davis. Gift of Anita Moïse Rosefield Rosenberg. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Karen: What provoked your interest in Iseman family history?

Ellen: My father, Joseph Iseman, was deeply curious about his family genealogy. When we were children he talked to us a lot about his relatives and would often mention his grandfather Joseph Seeman, after whom he was named. Joey, as Dad called him, cofounded a company that was to become White Rose, the grocery firm, still extant, although now under different ownership.

Dad would engage us with tales of colorful family characters, such as his cousin Billy Seeman, who was a close friend of New York's Mayor Walker in the 1920s. James Thurber wrote a piece









Left to right: Joseph Seeman, grandfather of Joseph S. Iseman, co-founded a grocery company; Joseph S. Iseman hunted for clues to the Iseman family roots in America and Germany; Ellen M. Iseman and Frederick J. Iseman were regaled by their mother, Marjorie Frankenthaler Iseman (far right), with heartwarming tales about the Frankenthalers. Photos courtesy of Ellen M. Iseman.

about the duo in *The New Yorker* magazine.

My mother, Marjorie Frankenthaler Iseman, recounted wonderful, often amusing stories about her immediate family and several generations back, always endowing her memories with detail and affection. Mom wanted to know where the

Frankenthalers had lived in Germany, as her father, Alfred Frankenthaler, had died when she, his eldest daughter, was only 17.

I knew a fair amount about my northern cousins and heard a variety of family stories from my late aunt, the artist Helen Frankenthaler, as well as tales my father told me about his mother, Edith Seeman Iseman, a great lady whose first cousin Irma was married to Rube Goldberg. But I was completely disconnected from an earlier generation of Isemans because my great-grandfather Jay August Iseman apparently separated from his wife when his sons, one of whom was my grandfather Percy Iseman, were quite young, and the thread of the relationship was broken.

Karen: So how did you find out about your Map of Germany showing Stebbach, Baden, Iseman ancestors? Where Joseph S. Iseman conducted research

Ellen: In later years Dad traveled the S. Iseman. country and took a trip to Europe to Charleston.



Map of Germany showing Stebbach, Baden, where Joseph S. Iseman conducted research into the Iseman family origins. Gift of Joseph S. Iseman. Special Collections, College of Charleston

Seeking the Isemans:

research his Iseman roots. He always conveyed his findings to us with great color and excitement and a tinge of mystery, hinting that something further—implicitly quite interesting—was yet to be explored.

My father began serious genealogical research in the early 1980s. He used his lawyer's mind, intuitive reasoning, intellectual curiosity, and high energy both to trace the family's origins in Germany and to identify Iseman relatives in America. He

developed a series of memos for us about various family branches and noteworthy issues, and also found a number of old photographs.

Recently we learned that he deposited some of these memos in the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library. We found additional correspondence at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. Dad also was in

touch by correspondence and had numerous meetings and meals, in New York City and other sites, with new-found Iseman relatives. He relished those encounters.

Karen: As a researcher for the family, I was delighted when I visited Addlestone Library in 2008 and found the Iseman Family

Collection, which Joseph had donated some years before. The files contain a treasure trove of correspondence, photographs, research notes, and family trees.

Ellen: We had no idea until recently that Dad had left his Iseman family papers in Charleston. We also had no idea that there was such an expansive Iseman network throughout the South and across the country. We never knew that people would recognize the Iseman name in certain places in the South, nor, for example, that there was an Iseman Road in Darlington, South Carolina.

I thought the name was so rare, although I do recall my father instructing me that when I was in South Carolina, always to look in the telephone directory as I would be likely to find distant Iseman cousins listed!

Karen: One aspect of your father's research that I found fascinating was his

A Conversation between Karen S. Franklin and Ellen M. Iseman

early understanding that the key to determining the relationships among the first generation of South Carolina Isemans—which, until that time, had not been confirmed—lay in German archives. He corresponded extensively with various archives and, in 1984, traveled to Germany to visit the town of Stebbach, Baden, a small community now incorporated into the town of Gemmingen.

Because there was so much conflicting data, such as different birth years for each brother and several brothers with the same first name, sorting it out was a challenge. He returned from the trip with dozens of documents, translations, and other discoveries. His work prompted even more questions, many of which he addressed in the next decade.

work would be carried on after his

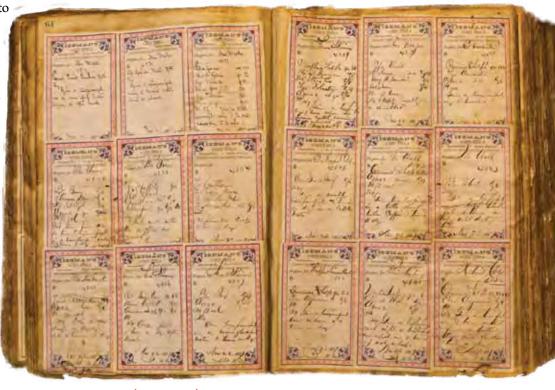
death. That came when he suffered a sudden heart attack in April 2006, when he was still a vigorous 89-year-old.

My brother, Frederick, who has my father's sharp mind, has a long-standing interest in family history and a particular interest in our German heritage. Between us, my brother and I have three children ranging in age from 14 to 20, and we can't wait for them to see the family tree that you are compiling, understand the vivid, informative text that accompanies it, and also for them to travel with us to their forebears' birthplaces in Germany.

Karen: We still have not solved some of the mysteries of the family connections. A history of the Jewish community in Darlington, composed by Henry Hennig and Sadie Want and published in



Ellen M. Iseman, a resident of New York City, is founder and president of Issues Management International, Inc., a public policy consulting firm. She has written numerous articles for publication, including memoir pieces about her family, and op-eds and feature stories for The New York Times. A widow raising a 14-yearold son, Ellen is a graduate of Yale College and has a master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.



Ellen: Yes, he was a formidable Prescription record book (1887-1889), kept by Dr. Myre St. Wald Iseman, who ran Iseman's Drug researcher. He explicitly told us in a Store on Front Street in Georgetown, South Carolina. Each handwritten prescription gives the memo dated 2000 that he hoped his patient's name, date, dosage, and the recipe for the drug prescribed. Gift of Ira Rosenberg. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Photo by Joseph Rubin.

Darlingtoniana in 1976, indicates that the brothers Manuel and Isaac Iseman were related to Darlington's first Jewish settlers, Joseph and Charles Frank. We don't yet know who the Franks were or how they were related to the Isemans, but the reference is likely correct; the families are listed together in the 1860 federal census.

The Frank name is a common one, so a connection might be found by looking first for Franks from the area of Stebbach. Some of the geographic connections among Jewish families who immigrated to South Carolina seem to have been forgotten as the distance in time from early settlers to current generations has widened. In some cases the names of original German towns were mangled years ago and are difficult to reconstruct. For example, Rebecca Iseman married Abraham Schafer of Obrigheim, but the name was misspelled as Oberheim and repeated in many secondary sources.

Ellen: Yes, there is still a lot of heavy lifting to do to explore our family's genealogy. But we have learned so much already, and it is exciting to think that one day soon the many pieces will come together. I know that my much-loved parents, now deceased, would be pleased that my brother and I are actively tracing their respective family histories. I only wish they were here to share the fruits of our labors.

The Past as Prologue: Jewish C

May 18–19, 2013

All programs take place in Arnold Hall, Jev 96 Wentworth Street, Charl

While genealogy looks to the past, the study of our families and our cultural heritage may be a reliable guide to the future. In a world that moves in forward gear with lightning speed, the conference invites us to look back at where we have come from, to marvel at the transformations of occupation, wealth, and status Jews have experienced in relatively few generations, and to imagine where this momentum will lead. The conference title alludes to novelist William Faulkner's famous quote: "The past is never dead. It's not even past"—a view of time that lies at the heart of Jewish continuity.

Guest speakers



Karen S. Franklin, an exhibit researcher for the Museum of Jewish Heritage, is co-chair of the Board of Governors of JewishGen. A past president of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies and chair of the Council of American Jewish Museums,

she is currently a vice-chair of the Memorial Museums committee of ICOM (International Council of Museums). She serves on the advisory board of the European Shoah Legacy Institute and was awarded the 2012 ICOM-US Service Citation. The citation is the highest honor of ICOM-US. Ms. Franklin is a juror for the Obermayer German Jewish History Award.

Steven M. Cohen is research professor of Jewish Social Policy at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion and director of the Berman Jewish Policy Archive at NYU Wagner. He has written or edited a dozen books and hundreds of scholarly articles and reports



on such issues as Jewish community, Jewish identity, and Jewish education. His current research interests extend to emerging forms of Jewish community and identity among younger Jews in the United States. In 2011 he was cited for the second time as one of the Forward Fifty. *Sacred Strategies*, of which he is a co-author, won a National Jewish Book Award in 2010.

Following presentations by our guest speakers, a panel representing several South Carolina families will set the stage for viewing their antiques and artifacts on exhibit in Special Collections at the College's Addlestone Library. Panelists will demonstrate how objects from everyday life are vessels of untold stories. Our forebears become our contemporaries as we discover the uses and meanings of things from the past. Mounted in conjunction with the conference, *Family History Roadshow* will be on display from the beginning of April through the third week of May.

On Sunday morning, May 19, all attendees will have a chance to try their hand at researching their own family trees in a workshop led by Karen Franklin.

Register online at www.jhssc.org/events

Visa, MasterCard, or by check payable to JHSSC Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424 **Conference Fee:** \$85 per person

Questions: Enid Idelsohn

phone: 843.953.3918 – fax: 843.953.7624

Email: IdelsohnE@cofc.edu

Genealogy Looks to the Future

3, Charleston, SC

vish Studies Center, unless otherwise noted. eston, South Carolina 29401

Saturday, May 18

11:00 am	Registration in the lobby
12:00-12:45 pm	Buffet lunch and opening remarks
12:45-1:45	Karen S. Franklin – From Whence We Came: Family Connections across Continents
2:00-3:15	Steven M. Cohen – Where We Are Heading: Recent Trends in American Jewish Life
3:30-5:00	Panel: Our Families, Our Selves – members of families featured in Family History Roadshow
	exhibit discuss what their lineage means to them.
	Moderators: Karen Franklin and Dale Rosengarten
5:15-6:45	Reception around the rotunda
	Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, Special Collections

On view: Anchored by portraits and photographs, costumes, quilts, Bibles, and business ledgers, Family History Roadshow offers a look through the archival window at the world

of southern Jews, then and now.

Dinner on your own

Sunday, May 19

9:00-10:30 am	Bagel breakfast
9:30-10:15	JHSSC board meeting
10:30-11:00	Karen Franklin – Exploring Genealogical Websites
	The group will take a short walk to a computer lab in an adjacent building.
11:15-12:30 pm	Genealogical research using <i>jewishgen.org</i> : Hands-on workshop led by Karen Franklin.
	For more information see www.jhssc.org/events.

Hotel Reservations

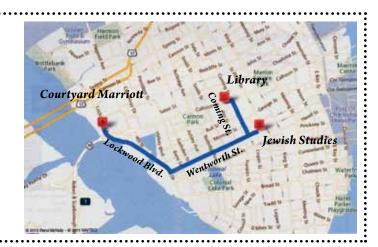
Courtyard by Marriott Charleston Waterfront 35 Lockwood Drive Charleston, SC 29401 843.722.7229

Call 800.549.8154 for reservations.

Refer to group code "JHS"

Rate is \$189.00 + tax/night for city view or \$199 + tax/

night for water view.



The Baruch Legacy

by Albert Baruch Mercer, M.D., FACC

After a merger with H. Hentz Company, Baruch

The documents and images that my wife, Robin, and I have donated to the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston center around the family of my paternal grandfather, Hartwig "Harty" Baruch. The artifacts give a glimpse into the lives of the privileged at the start of the 20th century. It is my hope that these memorabilia help to humanize the Baruchs for the researchers and students who

Our patriarch, Dr. Simon Baruch, immigrated from Schwersenz, Germany to Camden, South Carolina, in 1855. Life took him to the Medical College of South Carolina, through the Civil War, and subsequently to a medical practice in New York City. He and his wife, Belle

view the collection in years to

come.

Dr. Simon Baruch and grandson Hartwig "Harty" Nathaniel Baruch, Jr., ca. 1920.

In the 1890s, before joining his brothers in business, Hartwig Baruch, Sr., played in theaters in Boston and New York under the stage name "Nathaniel Hartwig."

Wolfe, from Winnsboro, South Carolina, raised a family of four sons. Growing up, Grandfather Harty was the oldest and was very protective of his younger siblings. As a young man he was a proficient boxer stage actor, much to his mother's chagrin. However, these skills perfectly prepared him for a life on Wall Street. The second son, Bernard, pulled Harty off the stage and into the family business: Baruch Brothers.

tion of Woodrow Wilson, all the way through the early years of the Truman administration.

The final stage of his career, his philanthropic years, will probably prove his most significant legacy. The tens of thousands of lives improved at Baruch College in New York City over the last fifty years have left an indelible mark. His pioneering gifts to the field of



Belle and Bernard Baruch, Clementine and Winston physical medicine Churchill at Hobcaw Barony, 1929. Courtesy of the bear fruit today Belle W. Baruch Foundation.

Brothers became one of the leading brokerage houses in the nation. The third son, Herman, was a Columbia University-

> trained physician who worked most of his life in the back office of the business. Saling, the fourth son,

was also in the business.

Bernard Baruch was the best known of the four sons. He was blessed with long life, surviving into his mid-90s. I think of his career in three overlapping stages. The business years were marked by the accumulation of a fortune in a time of "spirited" capitalism. He left the business when he was appointed head of the War Industries Board in World War I. Mr. Baruch's public years were a time of significant influence, beginning with the second administra-

as we work to heal wounded soldiers and people who have been injured by stroke, accident, or neurologic disease. His gifts live on daily through the work of the physicians and staff at Kershaw Medical Center, the hospital in Camden, South Carolina, that Mr. Baruch built "twice" on the orders of his mother. His legacy lives on at Hobcaw Barony in Georgetown, South Carolina, where his daughter Belle's gift of land and financial support became the Belle W. Foundation. Baruch At Hobcaw current generations of South

Hartwig Baruch, Jr., 1929, age 11.

parcel of land and water and to promote research and education aimed at protecting the environment.

Carolinians work to

preserve this historic

Unless otherwise noted, photos are the gift of Albert Baruch and Robin Mercer. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Hartwig Baruch, Sr., and the catch of the day. Date and location unknown.

The Levi Family of Manning

by Wendell M. Levi, Jr., and Ernest L. Marcus





When Moses Levi and Hannah Jacobs (Jekel) married in 1853, the groom gave his bride \$2,000 to spend, not on their home, but on herself. Moses' photo: collection of Wendell M. and Katie Levi. Hannah's portrait: artist unknown, ca. 1860. Collection of Julien and Pamela Weinberg.

The history of Manning and the endeavors of the extended Levi family have been linked since the town's founding. Established in 1855, Manning is the historic county seat of Clarendon County, South Carolina, with about 4,000 residents today.

Family patriarch Moses Levi, born in 1827, left the village of Bosenbach, Bavaria, and arrived in Charleston in 1846. In 1853 Moses married an acquaintance from the Old Country, Hannah Jekel, born in 1830. Coincidentally, the marriage was held in the Charleston home of Moses Winstock and Eva Leah Visanska, future relatives. By 1856 the couple had moved to Manning where they built the Moses Levi Emporium, the first store in the town—now on the National Historic Register—and became major landowners with several thousand acres.

Levi was soon called to serve in the Civil War, joining the Sprott Guards of the 23rd Regiment of the South Carolina Volunteers. In 1865 Moses was taken prisoner at the Battle of $Five Forks\,near\,Petersburg, Virginia, and interned\,at\,the\,Point$ Lookout POW camp. Moses managed to communicate with relatives in the North who were able to obtain goods for him to sell in the prison, helping him and his comrades survive the terrible conditions. At the end of the war, Moses walked back to Manning where he found widespread devastation. Potter's Army had passed through the town during Union General William T. Sherman's march and burned Levi's cotton warehouse and nearly all of his possessions. Over the next decades he served as intendant (mayor) of Manning and joined the town's board of wardens. By the end of the century, he had rebuilt his considerable fortune and was a central figure in the economic recovery of Clarendon County.

Moses and Hannah had nine children who lived to adulthood: David, Rosa (Weinberg), Mitchell, Ellen



Brothers—dealers in general merchandise, cotton buyers, and agents for Standard Guanos—in Sumter; Laura Davis (NY), Hobe Levi (SC), Estella D'Ancona (Chicago), and Mitchell Levi (SC) in Atlantic City, summer 1889. Courtesy of Wendell M. and Katie Levi; Moses Levi Memorial Institute 10th grade graduation program, class of 1904. Lucile Iseman is listed as one of the 13 graduates and A. Levi as chairman of the board of trustees. Gift of Joseph S. Iseman. Special Collections, College of Charleston. The Pigeon, a nearly 700-page volume by Wendell M. Levi, Sr., was first published by the Levi Publishing Company of Sumter in 1941. A reproduction of this portrait of the author by his cousin Edward A. D'Ancona, 1954, can be found in later reprints of the book. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The Sternbergers:

Merchants and Manufacturers in the Carolinas

by Judith Hirschman Rivkin and Karen S. Franklin with Andrew Cuadrado

Tistorians and genealogists **L**reconstruct family history through documentary evidence, artifacts, documents, stories, and memoirs left from generations before. The Sternberger family of South Carolina left an ample trail of "breadcrumbs" (perhaps parchment) reconstruct a colorful tale.

We can imagine Jonas Sternberger,

many in the early 19th century, arriving in Obrigheim in the Palatinate region of Germany to teach Hebrew and lead prayer services. He went on to have a long career as a teacher, but an important event happened in that town: he married a local girl, Bertha Emanuel.

In the early 1840s the couple settled in nearby Neuleiningen, where Jonas and Bertharaised their children. In all, the couple had four sons and three daughters. David, the eldest son, was the first to arrive in the United States, immigrating in 1867; the last of those who came were grandchildren of Jonas and Bertha, who fled Germany in the 1930s.

David settled in Florence, South Carolina, where he opened a mercantile store. In 1870 he returned to Germany to marry Francesca Mayer—a union likely arranged after he met the prominent Mayer family in Neuleiningen. Francesca's father, Elias Mayer, had three wives and a grand total of 20 children over 40 years. Francesca was his 19th child, born when Elias was 65 years old.

In September 1873 David returned to Florence with Francesca. His brothers Emanuel and Hermann, 15 and 24 years old, respectively, came with them. As legend goes, sometime in 1878 Emanuel returned to Germany to visit his father, who gave him \$250 to start his own business. Emanuel opened a successful general merchandise store and began a cotton-buying enterprise in Clio, South Carolina. Hermann soon joined him in







Left to right: Jonas Sternberger (b. 1809), Bertha Emanuel Sternberger (b. ca. 1808), and Elias Mayer. Charcoal drawings made from photographs by students at the Artists Union in New York. Gift of Judith teacher and a cantor like Hirschman Rivkin. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Photos by Dana Sardet.

Jewish immigrants Moses H. and Ceasar Cone invited the brothers to join them in Greensboro, North Carolina, where they founded Revolution Mills. By the 1930s the mill became the largest flannel producer in the world. Emanuel later helped establish a synagogue in Greensboro, which, in the mid-1940s, adopted the name Temple Emanuel, chosen partly to honor his contributions as a founding member.

The story of Hermann and Emanuel's business success is well known. Little public attention has been given to the story of their brother David and his wife, Francesca, or their children, Joseph, Edwin, Dora, and Rosa.

Rosa was born on January 10, 1875. She attended



Left to right, back row: Dora Sternberger, Joseph Sternberger, Rosa Sternberger Hirschmann; front row: Francesca Mayer Sternberger, David business. In 1898 Emanuel's good friends and fellow Sternberger, Edwin Sternberger. Photo courtesy of Leah Read Barkowitz.

Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and first visited Charleston as a guest of classmate Rosa Hirschmann. On this visit Rosa Sternberger met Henry Hirschmann, whom she married on June 23, 1896. Together they had five sons and two daughters: Joseph Mordecai, Edgar Sternberger, Lionel Albert, Jerold David, Victor Robert, Leah Blanche, and Edith Teresa.

nche, and Edith Teresa.

David Sternberger with grandchildren Leah Blanche Hirschmann (left) and Joseph Mordecai Hirschmann, ca. Star.

Rosa was an early, proactive,

1901. Photo courtesy of Leah Read Barkowitz.

and avid supporter of women's rights. She felt that women should receive an education—secular and religious—equal to that of men. She taught classes of young women every Sunday on the porch of her home at 11 Montagu Street—producing a cadre who called themselves "Rosa's Girls." For nearly

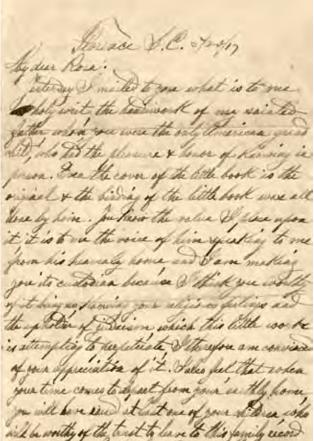
30 years Rosa was superintendent of the religious school founded by Brith Sholom's Daughters of Israel. She served as president of the KKBE Sisterhood, the South Carolina Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, the National Council of Jewish Women, local and state, and the Federation of Women's Clubs. She was also a Grand Matron in the Eastern Star.

is known in the South for leadership and philanthropy. The story of Rosa, a community organizer and educator, is less well known. Inspired perhaps by the legacy of her grandfather Jonas, she became a role model for the next generation and the heir to his shofar, Hebrew primer, and mizrah.

Rosa Sternberger Hirschmann.

Rosa Sternberger Hirschmann. Photo courtesy of Leah Read Barkowitz.

Sources: "A Family History" by Jerold Hirschman (1980) and The Sternbergers: From Peddler to Patrician by Karen S. Franklin (2008).







Letter (left) to Rosa Hirschmann from her father, David Sternberger, dated 1917, in which he tells her that as an "upholder of Judaism," she is to be the "custodian" of his father's Hebrew primer, shown here with Jonas Sternberger's shofar. Collection of Judith Hirschman Rivkin. Photos by James Ferry.

The Reenactor's Rebel:

Finding Private Edwin J. Sampson

by Hollace Ava Weiner



Battle of Gaines' Mill, Valley of the Chickahominy, Virginia, June 27, 1862. From original painting by Prince de Joinville, Army of the Potomac. Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration.

Then New Yorker Andrea Foster moved south in 1982 to work at Colonial Williamsburg, she enlisted in a Civil War reenactment battalion dubbed the Texas Brigade. To better identify with the Lost Cause, she searched for a Jewish soldier to emulate. As she flipped through the pages of American Jewry and the Civil War, she found her rebel-Private Edwin J. Sampson, a San Antonio infantryman born in Georgetown, South Carolina.

The 19-year-old was among the 2,377 casualties at the Battle of Gaines' Mill on June 27, 1862. Although many a soldier was buried where he fell, 19 days after Sampson's death, he was laid to rest in a ceremony conducted by the spiritual leader of Richmond's Kahal Kadosh Beth Shalome.

Andrea Foster did not know where her soldier was buried but was determined to unearth his story and say kaddish at his grave. Her quest was formidable. Thirty years ago the Internet did not exist. American Jewish historians focused on New York, not the Old South. That did not stop Foster from romanticizing her unknown soldier's life and Edwin Sampson, wears the mourning his death. She sewed a tallit katan slouch hat of an enlisted soldier to wear under her Confederate grays. She wondered, as she cleaned her musket and ate of Dr. Andrea Foster.

rations from a tin plate, whether her Jewish Johnny Reb had kept kosher.

She wrote to the National Archives, requesting Private Sampson's military records, enclosing a \$5 check. Three weeks later she received 17 photocopied pages detailing his date of enlistment (July 11, 1861), medical status ("sick at Canton, Miss., Sept. 11, 1861"), whereabouts ("camp near Yorktown, Va."), and battlefield engagements ("at Cold

> Harbor"). Several documents tabulated his back pay ("1 month & 27 days @ \$11 per month-\$20.90"), for which his father received reimbursement.

> Delving further, Foster wrote to several southern historians, among them Charleston's Sol Breibart. She learned that Richmond had seven Hebrew cemeteries. Samuel Werth, of Werth Associates Memorial Fund in Norfolk, aimed to re-map each graveyard. In the spring of 1985, three years after Foster launched her search, Werth located the private's grave. It was at Richmond's Hebrew Cemetery, in a hallowed hillside section reserved for rebels killed in battle. Private Sampson was among 30 soldiers buried in this place of pilgrimage, which is surrounded by a decorative wrought-iron fence that



Andrea Foster, dressed as Private during practice maneuvers, Jamestown, VA, 1984. Courtesy







Hebrew Cemetery, Richmond, VA, left to right: a view of the elaborate iron fence that encloses the graves of Jewish Confederate soldiers; Memorial Day service arranged by the Ladies Hebrew Memorial Association, 1930s, with (1 to r) Mrs. Samuel S. Rosendorf, Sr., Dr. Edward N. Calisch, Rabbi Sidney M. Lefkowitz, and Miss Florence Virginia Levy; postcard dating to 1917. Images courtesy of Congregation Beth Ahabah, Richmond, VA.

features crossed swords, laurel wreaths, furled flags with stacked muskets, and Confederate caps atop each barrel.

Although Sampson was buried in a place of honor, the cemetery's caretaker, Richmond's Congregation Beth Ahabah, knew little about him, beyond his unit—Co. F, Fourth Texas Infantry Regiment, Hood's Texas Brigade. By this juncture Foster had learned from census data that her fallen soldier was born and raised in Georgetown. He had nine siblings, all sisters. The family had resettled in San Antonio in time to be counted in the 1860 census. Following Edwin's death in 1862, his father, Samuel Sampson, 46, a gourmet grocer, enlisted in the Fourth Regiment, Texas Cavalry State Troops, and survived the war.

Werth, the cemetery buff, passed along Sampson's vital statistics to another Civil War sleuth—Mel Young, a Tennessee accountant and West Point grad whose mission was to document each Jewish soldier who perished in the Civil War. "Someone should say kaddish," was his mantra. One year later Young informed Andrea Foster that he had found an obituary of "your soldier" on the front page of the August 25, 1862, Charleston Daily Courier. Judging from the article, the Texas soldier was from a well known local family.

By the time the obituary reached Andrea Foster, six years had passed since her initial inquiries. She had packed away her Confederate grays, earned a Ph.D. in American studies, married, moved to Maryland, become a Jewish educator, and begun studying for the rabbinate, always hoping to complete the research on Private Sampson.

In 2011, 29 years after her stint in Williamsburg, Foster read a blurb in *Washington Jewish Week* announcing a talk about Confederate Jews. She saved the article and a year later tracked down the speaker—Les Bergen of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. She asked Bergen to recommend a researcher who might sift through her files and pick up the trail of her Texas Confederate.

Bergen contacted me. A journalist-turned-historian, I had edited the anthology *Lone Stars of David*, which lists 186 Texans who fought in the Civil War. Among those named are "E. J. Sampson" and "Samuel Sampson." When Bergen mentioned that Edwin Sampson was interred in the Soldiers Section of Richmond's Hebrew Cemetery, I snapped to attention. That was a human interest story worth pursuing. But how to pursue it 150 years after the fact?

The key was already in the reenactor's dusty files. It was the Sampson family tree, photocopied from the landmark book *America's First Jewish Families*. The next steps were evident: trace each name charted on the family tree, conduct word-searches of newspaper archives, utilize online census data, plug in names at *www.findagrave.com*, consult research posted online by JHSSC, and scour the indexes of a dozen recent books on southern and South Carolina Jewish history.

We now realize that this Jewish Johnny Reb's grand-father was among the 43 charter members of Charleston's Reformed Society of Israelites, which planted the seeds of Reform Judaism in American soil. His grandparents emigrated from Bury St. Edmund, England, a market town in Suffolk. His oldest sister married Charleston rabbi Joseph H. M. Chumaceira of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Congregation. His cousin Joseph Sampson, Jr., a riverboat pilot, was a favorite relative of young Bernard Baruch.

Unraveling Private Edwin Sampson's story has led to far more than a poignant Civil War narrative. The family's westward mobility is indicative of a larger pattern. It demonstrates how South Carolina's Jewish Reformers were worldly, rather than provincial; how they stretched their boundaries; how they strengthened their networks through intra-marriages and cross-country business alliances. The ongoing quest for the Sampson story shows that, despite the passage of time, the trail, though old, has not gone cold.

Legacy and Responsibility

by Martin Perlmutter, Executive Director, JHSSC

My thoughts often turn these days to the matriarchs and patriarchs of the South Carolina Jewish community who created such a warm and welcoming environment for relative newcomers like me. Perhaps it is a sign of my own aging, but I am acutely aware that a generation of leaders is passing from our midst. It is hard to think of today's Jewish South Carolina without thinking of Ruth Brody Greenberg, Stanley Karesh, Morris Mazursky, Claire Krawcheck Nussbaum, Morris Rosen, Louis Tanenbaum, Holocaust survivors Sam Greene and Gucia Markowitz, and so many more who have left us in the last year. I hesitate to check my Inbox for fear of another sad announcement and one less shoulder to lean on. All too quickly we have become the elders responsible for passing the legacy on to the generations to come.

At the inaugural meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina in April 1994, College of Charleston President Alexander Sanders—standing next to his dear friend Senator Isadore Lourie—remarked, "Jews and southerners have three things in common: a love of home, a pride in ancestry, and a never-ending search for God." Over the past 18 years, JHSSC has done an incredible job exploring the world of southern Jews with their dual inheritance—southern and Jewish. The Society has supported an ambitious program of collecting, studying, exhibiting, teaching, and promoting South Carolina's Jewish history—a story that is alive and well, and is now receiving the national and international attention it warrants.

Our Pillar memberships provide the support that has allowed our organization to thrive. Your contributions enable us to produce twice-yearly meetings and newsletters, underwrite the archival work of the Jewish Heritage Collection housed at Addlestone Library, and accomplish the administrative tasks that keep the Society running on all cylinders.

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Butterfly. Photo by Joseph Rubin.

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Register now for the May 18-19, 2013, meeting in Charleston.

See pages 10-11 for more information.

The JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of South Carolina

FALL 2013 VOLUME XVIII ~ NUMBER 2





SOUTH CAROLINA

Dale Rosengarten editor Alyssa Neely assistant editor and designer

Rebecca McClure photo editor

The IHSSC newsletter is published twice a year. Current and back issues can be found at www.jhssc.org

On the cover:

At the Young Judaean Convention, June 12–17, 1951, Camp Blue Star, Hendersonville, NC. Left to right, front row: Sonia Sokol (Chas.), Sandra Lee Kahn (Chas.), Rachiel Alhadeff (Atlanta); back row: Carol Wearb (Chas.), Elizabeth Kominers (Chas.), Louise Clein (Atlanta), and Judy Spielberger (Columbus). Gift of Sandra Garfinkel Shapiro. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

In this issue

"God First, You Second, Me Third": An Exploration of "Quiet Jewishness" at Southern **Jewish Summer Camp** ~ Marcie Cohen Ferris ~ In the early 20th century, Jewish summer camps served as retreats from city life and as sites of Americanization for children of recent immigrants. Camps with political agendas sprouted in the 1930s, followed by non-denominational Jewish camps after World War II. Designed to provide children with a safe, supportive environment, these "cultural

Do I Really Have to Go? ~ Lisa Collis Cohen ~ Tearful and homesick as a young camper, this girl from Kingstree, SC, found spirituality and lifelong friendships at TYG and SEFTY camps. 8

Magical Camp Blue Star ~ Gale Siegel Messerman ~ A Walterboro, SC, native attending Camp Blue Star experienced, for the first time, a sense of belonging that gave meaning to her life, while

A Summer to Remember: Jewish Summer Camps in the American South ~ JHSSC Meets in

Blue Star: A Family Affair ~ Maxine Solomon McLarnan ~ Every summer the Solomon clan packed up the car and headed for Hendersonville, NC. Feelings of joy and excitement grew each year as close friends reunited at Camp Blue Star. After tragedy struck, those friendships became a source

Coming of Age ~ Paul Siegel ~ For this former camper, Blue Star was "the center of the universe" where he learned to believe in himself and become a "player."......14

Fond Memories ~ Ann Meddin Hellman ~ After six decades the author recalls the pride she felt

Choosing a Summer Camp ~ Janette Rosen Krupsaw ~ This daughter of immigrants who settled in Asheville attended camps in the Blue Ridge to connect with Jewish youth and to escape a polio

BBYO ~ Rachel Lourie ~ Leadership training in BBYO summer programs broadened the horizons

Judaeans Through and Through ~ Josh Lieb and Dana Lieb ~ Josh Lieb and his cabin mates delighted in stretching, bending, and breaking the rules at Camp Judaea: "We were exactly why Jewish parents sent their boys to camp." His sister, Dana, gravitated naturally to camp life and returned to CJ

Southern Jews and Civil Rights ~ SJHS Meets in Birmingham, AL, November 1–3, 2013 . . . 18

Zola Joins Jewish Studies in Spring 2014 ~ Historian Gary P. Zola will be in residence at the

Good Works ~ Martin Perlmutter ~ As JHSSC approaches its 20th anniversary, the executive

Letter from the President

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Ty daughter just returned from Like generations of Jewish teens before her, Emily and her cohort resemble the experiences recalled in the memoirs that make up this newsletter. L'dor v'dor!

For me, summers in the early 1970s in a small southern town meant

hanging out with friends, sleepovers, parties at the lake, working in my family's stores – all the usual ways for a kid to enjoy the and Eric Singer, founding director of Camp Ramah Darom

teenage years. But many Jewish parents in small-town South Carolina looked to summer camps to alleviate the isolation their children felt as a tiny tributary in a Christian sea (in Summerton, in fact, we were the only Jewish family), and to instill in their kids a Jewish identity.

Even in middle-size towns like Walterboro and cities like Charleston and Columbia, Jewish teens often felt "different" and saw themselves as outsiders (though not outcasts) from mainstream society. This goes a long way toward explaining the profound impact summer camps had on Jewish campers, who suddenly experienced what it was like to be in the majority, instead of the minority, and to be immersed in Jewish culture in all its forms—song, dance, spirituality, etc.—described so vividly by our authors.

With all this in mind, we chose for the theme of our upcoming fall

meeting, "A Summer to Remember: Jewish Summer Camps in the American South." Beyond summer camps, we also want to consider what Jewish youth organizations have brought to the table. Whether you participated in Color Wars at Blue Star, sang "Leaving on a Jet Plane" at a SEFTY event, enjoyed a "lock-in" at the Charleston JCC or Sumter's Temple Sinai, or attended a Sweetheart Dance at a BBYO Dixie Council weekend, these activities filled a void, made us feel "the same," and helped us find friends and even partners for life.

I hope you will join us November 9-10 in Columbia y daughter just returned from I nope you will join us November 7-10 in Columbia Blue Star where she spent the for a wonderful program. Meeting on the beautiful campus summer as a Junior Girls' counselor. of the University of South Carolina, we will listen to an introductory talk by Professor Marcie Cohen Ferris and participate in a panel discussion involving former campers took part in camp rituals that closely and camp directors. We are especially happy to welcome Eli N. Evans and Rodger and Candy Popkin, who will be on hand to share their memories and insights. At Saturday evening's reception, sponsored by the Nelson Mullins law firm, we will meet and greet friends in USC's beautifully restored Spigner House. Sunday morning, Macy B. Hart, longtime director of the Henry S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi,

> in the north Georgia mountains, will describe the origins and ethos of their respective institutions.

> I want to thank Stan Dubinsky and the Jewish Studies program at USC for support and help with arrangements. I am deeply grateful to those who provided stories and photos for the newsletter, and to Gail Lieb, who has worked diligently to make this a memorable weekend. The full schedule and registration information is included in this publication and available online at www.jhssc.org.

The upcoming board meeting marks the end of my tenure as JHSSC president. I have truly enjoyed serving the Society over the past two years and, in turn, have been well served by Marty Perlmutter, Dale Rosengarten, Enid Idelsohn, and members of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. Thank you for the commitment and time

you put forth for the organization. I encourage those of you who have an interest to get involved. The nominating committee has proposed a strong slate of officers, but an active, engaged membership is essential to our continued success.

With warm regards,

Rachel Lordin Barnett

Rachel Gordin Barnett rgbarnett@earthlink.net

"God First, You Second, Me Third": An Exploration of "Quiet Jewishness" at Southern Jewish Summer Camp by Marcie Cohen Ferris



Marcie Cohen (3rd row from the front, far left) and fellow campers at Camp Sabra, St. Louis, MO, 1970. Courtesy of Marcie Cohen Ferris.

y childhood camping experience began in the late America." Jewish organizations founded the first summer camps in the early 1900s to serve both as a pastoral refuge for Missouri, on the Lake of the Ozarks—a camp for Jewish youth, but not a Jewish camp. Camp Wah-Kon-Dah was "quietly Jewish." To an unsuspecting visitor, Wah-Kon-Dah looked and sounded like any other American summer camp, except for all the Jewish campers. This was Ben Kessler's intent when he opened a private summer camp for boys in 1939. A native of St. Louis, Ben Kessler began Camp Wah-Kon-Dah in an era of wartime fear and disruption. This was an anxious important number of Jewish boarding houses, camps, kosher time for American Jews, stung by the anti-Semitic quotas and discrimination of the interwar years and the growing horror regarding the fate of

European Jewry as the Holocaust came to light in the 1940s.

Camp Wah-Kon-Dah was part of a summer camp craze in America that was shaped by the "cult of the strenuous life" (an anti-modernist ideology that sought to repair and strengthen American society through contact with the "great outdoors"), social reform movements of the Progressive Era, and "back-to-nature" work projects of the New Deal. Gary Zola describes Jewish camping as a "genuine hybrid of organized camping in needy Jewish children in the urban Northeast, and as sites of Americanization for children of recent Jewish immigrants. During the 1930s, Jewish summer camps and retreat centers with political agendas sponsored by communist, socialist, Zionist, and Yiddish organizations grew in popularity. The majority of these institutions were located near the large Jewish population centers along the East Coast. A smaller, but inns, and the summer location of the North Carolina

> B'nai B'rith Institute, Wildacres, were situated in the southern mountains.³ For the mid-South,

Camp Wah-Kon-Dah represented a different model of private Jewish camping guided by religious pluralism rather than a specific political or denominational expression

Non-denominational, private Jewish camps grew during the prosperous years after World War II and today dominate Jewish camping, North and South.5 From

Left to right: Stephen Rich, Harry, Adele, and Jerry Blumenthal, and Larry Zaglin, Camp Wah-Kon-Dah, Rocky Mount, MO, 1950. Courtesy of Stephen Rich.

the 1940s to the 1970s, a new grassroots activism reinforced Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, and American Jewish communities, including those in the South, Camp Ramah Darom (Ramah of the South) in north Georgia

through regional summer camps and year-round adult education. As a "cultural island" in an isolated setting separated from home and parents, summer camp was the perfect place for a total immersion in southernstyle Judaism.6 The combination of education, food, music, physical activity, spirituality, tradition, and Judaism brought campers back year after year to experience the camp's temporary, but powerful recurring community.

Promoting Jewish education, community, cultural life, and most Adele Blumenthal, Evelyn Zaglin, Renie Rich and children committed to their faith of Stephen Rich.

and its long-term survival—was the life work of southern state of Israel. I Jonathan Sarna describes this era as a "crucial Jewish camp directors, such as the Popkin brothers at decade in Jewish camping," in which Jewish education was both

Camp Blue Star in Hendersonville, North Carolina (1948), and Macy Hart at Camp Henry S. Jacobs in Utica, Mississippi (1970), a project affiliated with the Reform Movement in Judaism. During a regional fundraising campaign to secure property for Camp Jacobs in the 1960s, the project was touted as "The Key to a Living Judaism" and promised to send forth "young Jews proud of their faith and heritage, ready to go to college as committed Jewish Youth."7

The concept of a vital "living" Judaism remains at the philosophical core of southern Jewish camps today. Camp Blue Star's contemporary "Living Judaism" program "integrates Jewish values, culture, and traditions" that "teach as well as uplift." Southern Jewish denominational camps with similar educational missions include Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina (1960), a program of Jewish Life.



important, continuity—raising Jewish her son Stephen, Camp Wah-Kon-Dah. Courtesy

(1997), affiliated with the Conservative Movement in Judaism.9 Ramah's Center for Southern Jewry provides adult and family programs throughout the year for local Jewish families. Camp Darom in Wildersville, Tennessee, is a modern Orthodox Zionist camp supported by Baron Hirsch Congregation in Memphis, and described as "the only Orthodox sleep away camp in the entire

Camp Blue Star, the "oldest, familyowned, private, kosher Jewish camp in the southern United States," was founded in 1948 on 740 acres in the western mountains of North Carolina, the same year as the founding of the

an expression of "cultural resistance" after the Holocaust and an American promise to build and uphold the Jewish people.¹² Brothers Herman, Harry, and Ben Popkin were leaders in Atlanta-based Zionist and B'nai B'rith youth organizations who hoped to build a private Jewish summer camp in the South when they returned from World War II. While conducting research for their business venture, Herman and Ben Popkin consulted with owners of non-Jewish camps in north Georgia. Jane McConnell of Camp Cherokee was "honest and straightforward" and gave the Popkins this advice: "You boys ought to do it. There's a need for a camp like the one you propose, especially for older children. Most private camps down south won't accept Jewish children, and those that do, do so on a strict quota basis."13 As Eli Evans, a former

Blue Star camper, described in The



Campers and staff from the first summer of the Henry S. Jacobs Camp, Utica, MS, 1970. Back row: Camp Director Rabbi Sol Kaplan (second from left) was the regional rabbi for UAHC; Assistant Director Macy Hart stands third from the right. Institute of Southern

FALL 2013



Archery class at Camp Wah-Kon-Dah, Rocky Mount, MO, 1950. Courtesy of Stephen Rich.

Provincials, his classic memoir of the Jewish South, "Herman themes were perpetuated in summer camps, and Jewish and Harry Popkin . . . built a veritable camping empire in the camps embraced this celebration of Native American culture. postwar era." ¹⁴ It was a southern Jewish mountain paradise for young boys like Evans—a magical world of bonfires, hiking, Israeli folk dancing taught by actual Israelis, Jewish girls, and deep discussions about God and Jewish identity. "For the rest of our days, it seemed," wrote Evans, "one sure way that Jewish kids all over the South could start a long conversation was by asking, 'What years were you at Blue Star?'"15

Although their Jewish educational methodologies differed—Camp Blue Star's commitment to Jewish education was front and center in their daily programming, while Camp Wah-Kon-Dah's Jewish ideology was expressed in "values," rather than overt curriculum—the two camps are joined by their founders' commitment to providing the highest quality, private camping experience for Jewish children. Ben Kessler was in the business of building strong Wah-Kon-Dah for more than 30 years. Jewish youth. But Kessler did not focus on Jewish identity. Great Spirit" of the Omaha tribes—the focus was less on Judaism and more on the American frontier.

American Indian folklore and heritage that so deeply influenced American camping at the turn of the 20th century. 16 Founders of Jewish camps frequently adopted the names of startling introduction to the kosher dietary laws in which local Indian tribes for their institutions, or used initials or meat and milk never came together on a bun.

even a Hebrew word, to create an Indian-sounding name with a Jewish back-story.¹⁷ Folklorist Rayna Green argues, "One of the oldest and most pervasive forms of American cultural expression is the "performance of 'playing Indian." It began with Pocahontas rescuing Captain John Smith, the first Thanksgiving, and Squanto saving the Pilgrims. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Hiawatha (1855) helped to solidify the image of the Indian in the American imagination. Victorian-era societies like the Elks, the Lions, and the Kiwanis introduced the idea of "playing Indian" to the white middleclass. The Boy Scouts, founded in 1908, was yet another expression of "playing Indian." Indians represented the scouting ideal of manly independence. These

Ben Kessler, a child of immigrant parents, veteran of World War II, and witness to the tragic losses of the Holocaust, created a summer world where Jewish children learned confidence, team work, and respect for God. No one ever forgot Ben Kessler's motto that hung from a cross beam in the dining lodge: "God first—you second—me third." There were no Friday evening Sabbath services at Wah-Kon-Dah. Instead campers gathered at "Inspiration Point" each Sunday morning, dressed in starched "whites" for a sermon from Uncle Benny, who was a master storyteller. He wove Indian tales with lessons about team spirit, loyalty, kindness, and respect for nature. Sunday services were followed by a noon-time meal of southern fried chicken, mashed potatoes, peas, and red Jell-O. George Buckner, an African-American chef, ran the kitchen at

The Jewish Community Center of St. Louis acquired At Wah-Kon-Dah — an Indian name that referred to "the Wah-Kon-Dah in 1969 after a group of Jewish benefactors purchased the facility, re-named it Camp Sabra, and donated the camp to their community in 1970. Cabin names changed Early leaders in Jewish camping adopted the same from Osage and Kickapoo to Habonim and Golan. Israeli youth led dance workshops and song sessions. Shabbat replaced Sunday. Gone were the lunchtime pizza burgers—a

Jewish youth, staff, and parents alike experienced a profound sense of belonging at Jewish camps across the South, whether for two weeks or two months. An intricate network of southern Jewish relationships created in the summer influenced college decisions, future careers, religious involvement, romance, and the next generation of Jewish youth. Many campers and counselors grew into future leaders of the Jewish South's local and regional organizations, historical societies, museums, programs for youth, and synagogues. Campers took their summer experiences of Jewishness back home and revitalized the Jewish worlds from which they came.

NOTES

1. Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping," 29-30, and Gary P. Zola, "Jewish Camping and Its Relationship to the Organized Camping Movement in America," 2, in A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping, eds. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006); Nancy

Mykoff, "Summer Camping," Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia, eds. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1359-64; Amy L. Sales and Leonard Saxe, How Goodly Are Thy Tents: Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences (University Press of New England, 2004), 142-3.

2. Zola, "Jewish Camping," 19.

3. In the early 1930s, I. D. Blumenthal, a successful Jewish businessman from Charlotte, bought Wildacres from Thomas Dixon, who had purchased the property with film royalties from D. W. Griffith's controversial Hollywood epic, Birth of a Nation (1915), based on Dixon's novel, The Clansman. Dixon invested heavily in the property and after losing a great deal of money when the stock market crashed in 1929, was forced to sell the 1,400 acres at a much-reduced price. In his essay on the history of American Jewish camping, Jonathan Sarna notes that the availability of affordable land and real estate in this era allowed many Jewish institutions and individuals to purchase affordable land for camps and retreats. Sarna, "Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping," 37; Wildacres Retreat, "The History of Wildacres," http://wildacres.org/about/ history.html.

- 4. Sarna, "Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping," 28-31; Sales and Saxe, How Goodly Are Thy Tents, 26.
- 5. Sales and Saxe, How Goodly Are Thy Tents, 26.
- 7. Stuart Rockoff, "Henry S. Jacobs Camp, Utica, Mississippi," Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, http://www.isil.org/ *history/archive/ms/utica.htm.*
- 8. "Camp Blue Star," "Southern Jewish Summer Camp: Camps in the Region," Deep South Jewish Voice, January 2010, 28.
- 9. Jewish summer camps in the South include Camp Barney Medintz, a residential summer camp for the Marcus Jewish Community Center in Atlanta, founded in the 1960s and located in north GA; Camp Blue Star, Hendersonville, NC (1948); Camp Coleman, a program of the

Union of Reform Judaism, Cleveland, Georgia (1964); Camp Darom, a project of the Baron Hirsch Congregation, Wildersville, TN (1981); Camp Henry S. Jacobs, a program of the Union of Reform Judaism, Utica, MS (1970); Camp Judaea, a program of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, Hendersonville, NC (1960); Camp Ramah Darom (Ramah of the South), GA (1997); and Camp Sabra, a project of the St. Louis Jewish Community Center, Rocky Mount, MO

10. Camp Darom website: http://www.campdarom.com/index.html.

11. Lee J. Green, "Cold Outside But Time to Plan for Summer Camp," Deep South Jewish Voice, January 2008, 26. Today, over 750 campers and 300 staff attend Blue Star's six camps each summer. To read more about Camp Blue Star and other Jewish camps' influence on southern Jewish life, see Leonard Rogoff's important history of Jewish life in North Carolina, Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) 279–81.

12. Sarna, "Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping," 36.

13. Herman M. Popkin, Once Upon a Summer: Blue Star Camps—Fifty Years of Memories (Fort Lauderdale: Venture Press, 1997), 185.

14. Eli N. Evans, The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973/2005), 148. 15. Ibid., 150.

16. For an excellent discussion of the American camping movement's association with Native American folklore, and its expression in Jewish camping, see Gary Zola's

analysis of Progressive Era educators/writers/ camping enthusiasts, Ernest Thompson Seton and Luther and Charlotte Gulick, in "Jewish Camping,"

17. Zola, "Jewish Camping," 13-16. Zola gives examples of "American Jewish camps [that] took Native American-sounding monikers: Cayuga, Dalmagua, Jekoce, Kennebec, Kawaga, Ramapo, Seneca, Tamarack, Wakitan, Wehaha, Winadu, and others." Consider Camp CEJWIN, Port Jervis, NY-founded in 1919 by the Central Jewish Institute, and Camp Modin, founded in Belgrade, ME, in 1922 by Jewish educators Isaac and Libbie Berkson and Alexander and Julia Dushkin. Modin, located between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, is associated with the story of Hanukkah and the great heroism of the Maccabees.

18. Rayna Green, "Poor Lo and Dusky Ramona: Scenes from an Album of Indian America" in Folk completing "a course in the art of Roots, New Roots: Folklore in American Life, eds. Square Dancing," and showing Jane S. Becker and Barbara Franco (Lexington, "the Spirit of Fun, Friendliness MA: Museum of Our National Heritage, 1988) 79,



Marcie Cohen's Camp Wah-Kon-Dah diploma awarded for and Good Fellowship." Courtesy of 80, 82, 83, 93. Marcie Cohen Ferris.

> Many thanks to members of the Kessler family—Thom Lobe and Mike Kessler—who generously shared their family history and memories about Camp Wah-Kon-Dah with me. Thank you also to former Wah-Kon-Dah campers for their stories, including my sister, Jamie Cohen, and to Stephen Rich, for lending his camp photographs.

> This article was excerpted from an essay originally published: in Southern Cultures 18:1 (Spring 2012), http://: southerncultures.org/read/read-by-issue/spring-12/. Reprinted with permission.

Do I Really Have to Go?

by Lisa Collis Cohen

South Carolina, my parents sent me to Jewish summer camps early and often. In summer 1965, I went to Charleston to live with my spinster aunt so I could attend Camp Baker I had been sick, Daddy picked me up and I did not have to

at the JCC. I was not yet seven and terribly homesick. My camp day began with a bus trip from Dunneman Avenue to West Ashley. After the dreaded Instructional Swim, the day improved, but my homesickness did not. Auntie quickly tired of my pitiful sobs and sent me home midsession.



stay at Camp Blue the Jewish Community Center. Special Star where my Collections, College of Charleston. part of free time each day wiping away my tears. I still remember her

kindness and compassion 47 years later. Blue Star introduced me to hayrides, Biltmore Dairy's ice cream, salami and peanut butter sandwiches, the formidable, freezing Sliding Rock—which I have yet to conquer—and Maccabiah. My parents

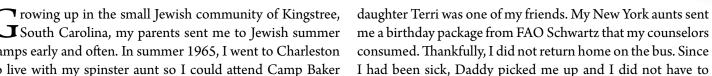
deemed the short session a success and sent me back to Blue Star the following summer for a month.

> I really did not want to return to camp, but my parents insisted. So, at the tender age of eight, I boarded the charter bus in Charleston for the trip to Hendersonville. And here is my WORST camp story that I have never shared. My mother-

who was older than the moms of most of my friends—insisted that I wear a navy and white dress and fishnet stockings on the bus to camp! How awful was that? To this day, I am painfully conscious of what I

wear to a significant event. I'm sure the "cool" campers thought I was

a hoot as well as a hick! My cabin was in Pioneer Village. I spent my birthday (August 3) in the camp infirmary. Hilda



"dress" for the ride back. Finally, my days at Camp Blue Star were over!

My teen years brought TYG (Temple Youth Group) and SEFTY (Southeastern Federation of Temple Youth) Leadership Camp. By this time, I had reconnected with many of my Blue Star friends and we had a blast at camp—the first year at Camp Barney Medintz and the following years at

Although very different, all the camps were similar in Shabbat observance,

counselor Paula Grossman spent kashrut, and prayer. The Hamotzi and Birkat Hamazon were sung at every meal and Shabbat was special at each camp. The chapels at Blue Star and Camp Coleman remain tranquil, spiritual spaces. I am often reminded of the special times and friends I made during the summers—our bonds of friendship rooted in Jewish camping. As for my kids, they have attended Jewish and Jew-ish camps, connecting at college with friends from both. It's a small, small camping world!



The 1973 Southeast Federation of Temple Youth meeting in Cleveland, GA, at Camp Coleman, run by the Union of American Hewbrew Congregations, now the Union for Ney was the head nurse—her Reform Judaism. Courtesy of Lisa Collis Cohen.

Magical Camp Blue Star

Timagine this. It is the Learly 1950s. An eightor nine-year-old Jewish girl from the small town of Walterboro, South Carolina, is driving with her grandfather and her mother up a long dirt road. She spots a huge freshwater lake on her right, a small white wooden building straight and several ahead. smiling adults dressed in white shorts and blue



and white tee shirts Teenage Village, Camp Blue Star, 1954. The author is in the middle row, waving the car in. This second from the right. Courtesy of Gale Siegel Messerman.

was her introduction to the magical Camp Blue Star, her first overnight "home away from home." We drove to my cabin in campfires, movies, dancing, hayrides, and singing. Pioneer Village, unloaded my "gear," snared a top bunk, met my counselors and then, all of a sudden, I was surrounded by 12 girls who were to become bunkmates and, hopefully, friends for the summer. How to condense my memories, experiences and feelings into a few paragraphs? Not sure, but here goes.

My first strong Blue Star memory was shock upon realizing that every girl in the cabin was Jewish. I remember going around the cabin asking the same question of each girl: "Are you Jewish?" As the only Jewish girl of my age in Walterboro, this was quite an eye-opener to say the least! But this was only the beginning of my many-year love affair with Camp Blue Star as a camper, a CIT (Counselor-in-Training), and a counselor.

Blue Star introduced me to the spiritual, religious, and ritualistic aspects of Judaism. I learned to love the daily singing of the Hamotzi before and the Birkat Hamazon after each "kosher" meal, the special preparations for and celebration of

services in the beautiful and ethereal outdoor chapel, the Shabbat meal with the singing of Jewish songs, the Friday night Jewish folk dancing, the special day of Sabbath observance, the walk to the lake for the Havdalah service to bid farewell to Shabbat, and then, last but not least, the Saturday night social and boys, boys!! (But that is another story.)

The typical camp day began with attention to our cabin duties, including of Lisa Collis Cohen.



Sliding Rock, near Brevard, NC, 1967. Courtesy

by Gale Siegel Messerman

waking up on time, making up our bunks, attending to our respective clean-up chores, and getting to breakfast on time. The day was packed with activities: swimming, canoeing, boating, team sports, arts and crafts, target shooting, archery, "free time," etc. I remember how helpful the counselors and instructors were and how professional the infirmary doctor and nurses were if

a camper was injured or became ill. Evenings were filled with

Nature was all around us. We studied it and we explored it with daily hikes around the camp and overnight camping adventures into the surrounding mountains where we cooked over campfires, sang songs, and slept under the stars. There were canoe trips, slides down Sliding Rock, tours of the Biltmore Estate, square dancing in Hendersonville, and memorable visits to the Cherokee Indian Reservation to learn about Indian culture and to see the wonderful outdoor pageant, "Unto These Hills."

Of course, I liked the activities and the natural beauty of the setting, but my camp summers meant so much more to me. The people I met and learned to love are still in my heart. It was the first time I had ever been surrounded by Jewish people. At Blue Star I was not an "outsider." I did not feel "different." I was comfortable with everyone I met and made lasting friends, several of whom invited me to visit them in their home cities

> across the South. As a direct result of these contacts, I was invited to bar mitzvahs and introduced to Jewish organizations. I met and dated Jewish boys, one of whom I eventually married.

> The Camp Blue Star experiences gave meaning to my life as a Jewish girl and helped me to understand, for the first time, where I came from, where I belonged in the universe, and why I can never forget. I NEVER WILL.

A Summer to Remember: Jewish Summer Camps in the American South

November 9 – 10, 2013

University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina



Marcie Cohen Ferris is an associate professor in the Department of American Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her research and teaching which provides rabbinic services interests include the American Jewish experience and southern foodways and culture. From 2006 to 2008, Ferris served as president of the board of directors of the Southern Foodways Alliance. Her first book, Matzoh

Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South (2005), was is co-editor of Jewish Roots in Southern Soil (2006). Her forthcoming work, The Edible South: Food and History in an American Region, examines the expressive power of food from the plantation era to the renaissance of local food economies in the contemporary South.



odger and Candy Niman **Popkin** met while students at Boston University and began their careers as directors of Camp Blue Star in 1971, after their marriage in the Elmore Solomon Chapel. They are both members of the American Camp Association's (ACA) Acorn Society and Pioneers

of Camping Club. Son of Blue Star founder Herman Popkin, Rodger served ten years on ACA's national board, including a association's campaign against year-round schools, led ACA's anti-bullying March on Washington in summer 1990, and worked with his and Candy's friend Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Me" anti-bullying campaign. Rodger currently serves on the board of the Foundation for Jewish Camp. Blue Star is now owned and directed by Rodger and Candy's daughter Lauren, and her husband, Seth Herschthal, who, like Rodger and Candy, were married in Solomon Chapel.

acy B. Hart is president **IV** and founder of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL), and educational and cultural programs in communities where Jewish resources are limited. Beginning in 1970, Macy served for 30 years as director of the Henry S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi. In 1986 he founded



the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, which, in nominated for a 2006 James Beard Foundation Award. She 2000, became the ISJL. From 2004 to 2008 he chaired the Council of American Jewish Museums. Macy received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Hebrew Union College, a Covenant Award for Outstanding Jewish Educators, a Jewish Cultural Achievement Award, and, in 2013, an award from the Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference.

> ric Singer was born in Columbus Lto a family with deep south-Georgia roots. The Singers moved to Atlanta during his teen years. Eric earned his B.A. in Religious Studies at Washington University in St. Louis and an M.S. in Decision Science from Georgia State University. He was an instructor at the National Outdoor Leadership School, a wilderness guide



in Alaska, and an executive in the wholesale distribution industry. He served as senior vice president of real estate three-year term as its national president. He coordinated the for Pull-A-Part, Inc., in Atlanta, and is currently a partner and senior vice president at OA Development. Eric has held leadership positions in several local and national nonprofits. His proudest role, however, is as founding president Paul, and Mary) to launch the international "Don't Laugh at of Camp Ramah Darom. In 1996, together with other volunteers from the region, he helped create a new type of institution—envisioned by his father, Sol Singer, some 40 years earlier—to provide year-round Jewish experiences for youth and adults, families and congregations from across the South and beyond.

Saturday, November 9, 2013

11:30 AM-12:45 PM Registration and box lunch in the Colloquium Café at USC

All afternoon events take place in Sloan College, room 112

at Southern Jewish Summer Camp

1:00	Opening remarks: Frederica K. Clementi, Assistant Professor, English Department, University of
	South Carolina, and Martin Perlmutter, JHSSC Executive Director
1:15	Marcie Cohen Ferris – "God First, You Second, Me Third": An Exploration of "Quiet Jewishness"

Summers to Remember: Recollections of Blue Star, Camp Coleman, and Camp Judaea 2:45

Moderator: Eli N. Evans

Panelists: Lisa Collis Cohen, Maxine Solomon McLarnan, Gale Siegel Messerman,

Candy Niman Popkin, Rodger Popkin, Lauren Rovak, Brett Serbin,

Rabbi Daniel Sherman, and Robert Steinberg

Reception at the Spigner House, sponsored by Nelson Mullins 5:30-6:30

Nelson Mullins

Dinner on your own

Sunday, November 10

All morning sessions take place in the Carolina Room, The Inn at USC

9:00 ам	Open board meeting in the Carolina Room, The Inn at USC (everyone is invited to attend!)
10:00	Macy B. Hart – B'Sheret and the Wonderful Accident That Changed My Life
11:15	Eric Singer – Re-imagining the Role of Jewish Camp in the Lives of Southern Jews

12:30 рм Adjourn

Hotel reservations

The Inn at USC, now a Wyndham Hotel 1619 Pendleton Street Columbia, SC 29201

Reservations must be made by Wednesday, October 23, 2013. For reservations, call (803) 779-7779 and mention IHSSC. Special rate is \$120 per night plus tax.

The conference packet will include a map of the USC campus.

Register online at www.jhssc.org/events

Visa, Mastercard, or by check payable to JHSSC Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424

Conference fee: \$75 per person **Questions:** Enid Idelsohn

Phone: 843.953.3918 ~ fax: 843.953.7624

Email: IdelsohnE@cofc.edu

FALL 2013

Blue Star: A Family Affair by Maxine Solomon McLarnan



Blue Star's 1958 staff and CITs. Rosalie Popkin is at the left end of the 2^{nd} row; Herman is behind her with a hand on her shoulder. Mona Popkin is at the right end of the 2^{nd} row, with her husband, Harry, behind her. Courtesy of Gale Siegel Messerman.

Thave so many memories of Camp Blue Star I could write a Charleston. Along with their brother Ben, Harry and Herman **▲**book. It's been difficult to narrow them down! First of all, those summers—stretching 8 to 15 years, depending on which did my brother, Robert, and sister, Nancy, attend camp, but Elmore) volunteered to help anywhere he was needed transportation, organizing luggage, and taking trips into town.

I remember several years when we had 12 first cousins with us. Of course, many of their children and grandchildren have also loved Blue Star, as did my daughter, Stephanie, who spent five years there making her own memories.

The Popkins are like family to us. Our relationship goes back to the 1930s when Mama and Daddy met Uncle Harry and Uncle Herman through the YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association) and AZA (Aleph Zadik Aleph) in Augusta and

founded Blue Star in 1948.

My first memories are of "helping" Daddy pack our trunks Solomon you're talking about—were a family affair. Not only in a U-Haul, then the nostalgic ride to Hendersonville on a two-lane highway. We always pulled off the road near Honea also Mama (Aunt Elsie) ran Senior Girls and Daddy (Uncle Path, South Carolina, and ate lunch at the Blue Star Café—our last civilian meal. As a special treat for Robert, Dad stopped in North Carolina to buy sparklers and little fireworks—illegal in Georgia!

> Nancy and I went crazy with excitement as we spotted and turned off on the White Horse Road exit, drove one hour into Flat Rock, then a couple of miles to Kanuga Road. Fifteen long minutes later Daddy turned left and drove slowly up the drive into camp as we sang "Welcome You to Camp Blue Star!" I felt my heart would pop out with pure joy. To this day, when visiting and attending alumni reunions, we relive the same

emotions, and as we leave camp, we still shed tears. Here are a few of my most outstanding experiences:

- Sharing life and making the best friends, most of whom remain my closest friends today
- jelly and a container of "bug juice"
- Our United Nations Project in which each cabin was a different country and, using the correct protocol, we discussed problems of the day and tried solving them. I loved using the library for background information and I loved seeing my friends acting serious and really having to think. It was a school setting, rather than camp, for a few days.
- Maccabiah Games (Color Wars) where the entire camp was divided into two teams that competed in all sports in age appropriate groups, and played games of strategy and creativity. The big closing ceremony was much like the Olympics; all the participants gathered together in friendship to salute the winners and remember a wonderful day of competition.
- Real lox and bagels on Saturday mornings after services!
- Making fires with no matches
- Three-day, two-night co-ed camping trips
- Zimreah—more friendly competition throughout the whole camp. Each cabin had to write its own camp song and choreograph a dance. Watching the boys try to be coordinated and sing without their voices cracking was such fun.
- Out-of-camp trip to the Cherokee Reservation, where the story of this brave Indian group was performed in a show called "Unto These Hills." Over the years, I know Mama saw it at least 15 times. We had to wear camp uniforms; I could not stand the beanies because they messed up one's hair. It was so cozy riding the bus back to camp, in the dark, sitting next to your boyfriend.
- Sliding Rock—we took a trip to these huge rocks you

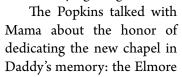
would slide down into breathtaking, freezing water. Believe me, we were carefully supervised with counselors standing on the rocks every couple of feet holding poles, which made the whole adventure even scarier, but also made you so proud of yourself. Everyone was "showing off"—I know I was.

- Uncle Harry and Uncle Herman's psychology lectures, especially Harry's talks on "the Birds and the Bees"
- I loved Shabbat—cleaning up and decorating our cabins, dressing in white, praying with your friends.

- Israeli folk dancing!
- Of course, Saturday night socials were the best!! Borrowing someone else's cute clothes and dancing to "Summer Night Love," Johnny Mathis, "Sealed with a Kiss," "In the Still of the • Raiding the dining hall at midnight for peanut butter and Night," and "Stand by Me." Sometimes the adorable cooks from the kitchen sang for us; those young men became The Tams, a very successful recording group on the college and concert circuits. They sang Doo-Wop and early Motown.
 - What can I say about the waiters? All smart, cute, talented, cool—adorable!!!
 - My CIT year was a dream come true—four cabins of girls and four of boys learning outdoor skills and the philosophy and psychology of becoming a good counselor made for a meaningful and fun summer.
 - When our co-ed CIT Israeli folk dance group entertained in Hendersonville, Asheville, and at Little Switzerland, I was so proud to be Jewish; Judaism took on a much deeper and richer meaning for me.
 - Falling in love on Day One (CIT year), lasting throughout the summer and beyond. On the last day, as the buses pulled out, your heart really hurt—part of it was on the bus.

In February 1961 Daddy unexpectedly passed away. He was only 42. I felt I could never go back to camp—not without him. It seems I saw a lot of Harry and Herman that year. They wrote inspirational letters and we had many

comforting conversations. To this day I don't know how they collected all the condolence letters and cards and had them beautifully bound in two very large monogrammed blue books. It took a while, but now we love reading them and sharing them with our children, and in a few years with Daddy's great-grands.



Solomon Chapel. Can you imagine? Never in a million years can we express the gratitude we feel. After that it was never sad returning to camp. Daddy was there.

As I remember the rain hitting the tin roofs and the wonderful storms and the rustling of the wind through the trees and the sound of the doors in the dining hall slightly slamming and George leading us in songs and Alan's bullwhip and his Sermon on the Mount and on and on, I think my mind lives at Camp Blue Star—I *know* my *heart* does.



The Elmore Solomon Chapel, Camp Blue Star, 1967. Courtesy of Lisa Collis Cohen

Coming of Age

by Paul N. Siegel

Twent to Camp Blue Star for at least five years. It was my **▲**coming of age experience and provided my first positive Ridge gave me the boost I needed toward becoming a man. Jewish memory. I almost hate to admit it because Mother and Heck, among those city slickin' Jewish boys, I could excel at

Daddy and the rather amazing Walterboro Jewish community tried valiantly to do the job, but the truth is, I was walking the cultural ledge without a zipline.

I started in cabin P-12 after the train ride from Yemassee. The train stopped for about five minutes to pick up Robbie Novit and me. If I am not mistaken, Sandra Altman (now Poliakoff) was already on board with the Charleston contingent. I recall a white bag lunch and we were away!

My saga began that day in June. A month later I returned home to the relative solitude of my rambling old home in Walterboro, a different person. For the Paul Siegel (middle row, left) and his first time, being a Jew made sense outside T-2 cabinmates at Camp Blue Star, television cameras. Not until later did I the confines of Temple Mt. Sinai and the ca. 1960. Courtesy of Paul Siegel. conflicted emotions of an apprehensive preadolescent boy. Columbia Broadcasting System, but Camp Blue Star. That

Being Jewish could mean being strong.



I must say that the subsequent summers spent in the Blue

swimming, shooting, softball, canoeing, and most importantly, leadership. I recall being shocked when my mother showed me my written camper evaluations. Was I really that exceptional? Might I merit a "superlative"? I began to believe. Camp Blue Star did that for me in an era of post-Holocaust haze.

Let me temper these comments by acknowledging that my predecessors were not meek. They were dreamers, community builders, and, when called for, had the toughest fists in town. But my summers at Blue Star were right out of Hollywood. Once the Pioneers were feted at a CBS breakfast show with realistic life-size cutout realize that the acronym did not stand for

Hey, being a kibbutznik with comrades had its rewards! place was the center of the universe while I was there and I became a "player," no longer an insecure bystander.

Fond Memories

by Ann Meddin Hellman

Twent to Blue Star for about six summers, starting when every other year. Because I started school early, my friends LI was five and a half. This may seem a little young by were a year older than I was. Blue Star changed divisions

today's standards, but my mother felt that since my older sister, Eve, was there, it would be okay. Eve wasn't the only person she knew would be looking out for me. Mama's best friend from her childhood days in Augusta, Georgia, was Elsie Tunkle Solomon, and Elsie was in charge of Blue Star—or so Mama thought.

Among my fondest memories were swimming in the lake, canoeing, archery, and horseback riding. Canoeing on the lake was great. Before you were allowed to take a canoe out by yourself, you had to pass a test which included swamping the boat and getting it back to the shore. I am proud to say I passed and was authorized to take a canoe out by myself.

for me at camp was changing divisions Meddin Hellman.



The author practicing Hebrew at The thing that was the most difficult Camp Blue Star. Courtesy of Ann

by age, not grade. I was with a different group every other year, causing difficulty in making lifelong friends.

It was my Jewish experiences at Blue Star that are truly etched in my mind. Camp was the only place I ever studied Hebrew. Shabbats were heartwarming and were carefully choreographed to set the day apart from the rest of the week. We wore all-white shorts and shirts, or blue shorts and white shirts—everything was different. Havdalah was the prettiest service ever.

More than 60 years since my first experience at camp, my granddaughter, Mia Hellman, attended Blue Star this year for her first time. No, she isn't five and a half, but she is looking forward to going back next year. As Mia says, "Camp was awesome!"

Choosing a Summer Camp

by Janette Rosen Krupsaw

Tn the 1930s I went to Rabbi Wrobel's camp near and costs, depending on where we were living, and we chose ⚠ Hendersonville, North Carolina. I was very young and schools for the same reasons. stayed in the rabbi's family unit at first. I was sent because my parents, Jacob and Bessie Rosen—who had immigrated to Asheville from Poland with my sister and oldest brother The other two also entered public school at that age. We in 1920—supplied the camp with food from their grocery

store. They wanted me to be with other Jewish children and not just with "the maid" all summer. I have few other memories about it.

My next experience was as a counselor at Blue Star-also near Hendersonville—soon after it opened. There was a polio epidemic in the area and my brother was a young doctor, so he became a volunteer at the clinic. The family did not want me to be in the house for fear of contagion. I had known Blue Star's director Herman Popkin from my days as president of the state BBYO (B'nai B'rith Youth hired me.

to leave camp grounds on our days off.

Katya Delakova (1914-1991) and Fred Berk (1911-1980) were the dance instructors. I learned the tune to sing the blessing after meals, rather than mumbling as my father had taught me. I went only the one year; the following year my mother had a heart attack and I was needed at home.

In the 1960s my three children went to Camp Judaea near Hendersonville. My mother and sister selected the camp because they were Hadassah supporters and, living in Asheville, they wanted the children to be nearby for the summer. (We were living in Worcester, Massachusetts, at the time.) Mom got to see them the weekend before and the weekend after camp, and my sister and brother-in-law visited heritage are links to something bigger than myself. I learned on visitors' day. Since my kids, who are now in their 50s, attended several other Jewish camps and day schools as well, their only special memories of Camp Judaea were that they were near Bubbe and Aunt Ida.

were 13, when they went on bar and bat mitzvah pilgrimages to Israel with the Jewish Agency—my eldest son in 1967, my daughter in 1970, and the youngest son in 1972. They attended day schools in St. Louis, Syracuse, Worcester, Staten Island, and Elizabeth, New Jersey. We selected camps by locations into the person I am today, and I could not be more thankful.

At age 14 my eldest informed us that the world was not made up totally of Jews and he needed to enter public school. moved frequently because of my husband Mike's employment.

> With the kids in public school, we did not have to worry about day school locations.

The children got a great deal of Jewish education from the day schools, but I do not recall anything of a religious nature from the camps. In fact, my son stopped putting on tefillin because no one else in his bunk did. I asked the children what they remember today of camp and they recall nothing religious. It was possibly our choices. Yet I do believe in Jewish summer camps. They have great value for young people from small communities who might not otherwise meet other Jewish youngsters. In most instances they learn a lot and live a positive Jewish experience, and take home a new and positive outlook on things Jewish.



Katya Delakova and Fred Berk, ca. 1948. Photo by Gerda Peterich. Syracuse University Archives. Between 1950 and 1979, Delakova and Berk-first together, and then just Organization). I contacted him and he Berk—taught dance at Camp Blue Star. Born in Vienna, both dancers performed with To minimize the chance of celebrated modern dancer Gertrud Kraus. In contracting polio, we were not allowed 1939 Katya fled Europe and immigrated to the United States; Fred came to America in 1941.

BBYO

by Rachel Lourie

Ty experiences at B'nai B'rith Youth Organization **IV** (BBYO) summer programs enhanced my identity as a Jew, a leader, and a member of a greater community. During my first summer at a BBYO program, I learned skills and acquired resources that would help me lead my fellow Jewish teens in the greater Columbia region. I also met Jews from around the world, and was able to understand why my culture and new leadership tactics, made new friends, heard new prayers, and came into contact with more types of Jewish people than I thought possible. It was an incredible experience.

My second summer at BBYO, as a program coordinator The kids went to camps all over the Northeast until they for 50 younger teens from across the country, I was able to put all I'd learned to the test. I was presented with an amazing opportunity to inspire these teens and help them come to terms with the importance of Judaism in their lives. My experiences at these Jewish summer camps helped shape me

Judaeans Through and Through

by Josh Lieb

T spent almost every summer after the age of eight at camp, **▲**but only the first two at Jewish camps—unless you count the time me and Eric Jablon, Brian Milman, Kyle Reeves, and others took over a cabin at a YMCA camp in Spartanburg.

I was a member of the Ofarim and Sofim—the first and second year campers—at Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina. This would have been in the summers of 1983 and 1984, thereabout. CJ is an old-fashioned, hardcore, religious, Zionist camp, overseen by Hadassah. We sang "The Star Spangled Banner" and "HaTikvah" every morning at the flagpoles. My sister, Dana, had already been attending you don't hear anymore. He used the word "freakin'" as an for several years when I first started. I think she might have adjective, probably five times a sentence. We were all pretty gone to Tel Yehudah afterwards—the camp that CJ kids "graduated" to—which was up in New Jersey somewhere. I

Helen Proser of Greenville (they owned Cancellation Shoe Mart), went to TY after CJ. There's now a "Denny Cohen Memorial Darkroom," named after Rachel's photographer father, at CJ.

Camp Judaea was fat with campers when I attended. I know because, while I was there, they had to add a new "class" of campers, the Chalutzim, whose age was between the Sofim and the older Keshers. The campers came mostly from the Southeast. The Tennessee kids seemed a lot like us South Carolinians. The Puerto Ricans seemed more sophisticated (Josh Gold taught me how to swear in Spanish). The Floridians were softer and more spoiled than those of us from South Carolina, except for Marc Braun, whose father, I

was told, owned a nightclub. Marc was tough and loud. I was always a little scared of him, until one day I found out it was important to him that I like him. He was a nice kid. After that I wasn't scared of Marc Braun.

There was a fat kid from Florida who was pretty intolerable—he'll go nameless. Mouthy, spoiled. Even worse was the skinny kid from Florida who did nothing but whine. Again, I won't name him (but I do remember), because he probably grew out of it. I don't remember any of the Florida kids having southern accents.

One year there was even this weird, absurdly skinny kid from New York. Big mop of black hair, big nose. He looked like a Jewish scarecrow. He had one of those Queens accents scandalized.

Our big joke was to ask the counselor if he wanted know my cousin Rachel Cohen, granddaughter of Carl and a lollipop, then pull down our pants and show him our

> putzim. This is exactly the kind of memory that should be preserved by the historical society. Honestly, I can't imagine a job more thankless than trying to wrangle a cabin full of smart-ass Jewish eight-year-old boys. We were horrible, horrible people. We were exactly why Jewish parents sent their boys to camp.

> CJ kept a strictly kosher kitchen. They tried to keep kids from smuggling in candy from outside, but my mom was on the board (she was a macher in Hadassah), so I pretty much got away with murder. The camp was (and I'm sure still is) Shomer Shabbes. The cabins were dark all Shabbat, with the light left on in the bathrooms. Most of us weren't so strict in our observance at home, so it took getting used to.



Randy Feinberg and Eli "Sonny" Evans at the Young Judaea Convention, Camp Blue Star, June 10-15, 1952. "Two crazies! Two of the funniest boys I know!! & I mean funny." Gift of Sandra Garfinkel Shapiro. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

We benched after every meal—it was like a big, wild, fun sing-along. I'd never benched before, really, and I remember having absolutely no clue what the hell everyone else was singing. But I caught on pretty quickly. It's amazing what sheer repetition can do. That was definitely a useful thing I took away from camp.

The Israeli folk dancing we did every afternoon was less useful, but pretty fun. Maybe we didn't do it every afternoon. It sure feels that way.

The camp is situated in the hills of Western North Carolina. It's green and wooded, all that stuff. Beautiful, I'm sure, but of course all that beauty was wasted on us. It was hot as the devil. Lots of bugs. But I think that's what summer I just decided to go home. camp is supposed to be like.

would slide down it like it was a water park. We'd strip off and

rinse clean before we came into the cabin, but our muddy clothes were generally kicked under the bunks to mildew. That smelled nice.

Maybe as a result of this kind of fun, I caught walking pneumonia at the end of my second summer at CJ. I was burning up, and this kid named Lance from Georgia felt my forehead and told me I should see the camp doctor. Man, was I sick. They pumped me full of some brutal antibiotics, and I spent about two full days puking into a bucket. My parents came to pick me up a day early. I could've gone to the final dinner—I'd asked this beautiful girl named Naomi to be my date—but by that time I felt so separate from the rest of camp,

In general, though, they're all wonderful memories, and When it rained, one of the hills turned to pure mud. We I'd gladly send my kids to such a place, when they're old

by Dana Lieb

Tattended Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina, **▲** for several years in the early 1980s. Thanks to my mom being an avid Hadassah leader and member of the Camp Committee, I was pretty much destined to attend CJ—and happy that I did. A Judaean through and through, I started as a camper and eventually returned as a counselor and arts-andcrafts assistant. As a kid I naturally gravitated to the camping experience. I loved having my own bunk space, organizing my camp clothes—with name tags written with a Sharpie—and

having a crew of friends completely separate from my life at home. That said, I will always recall with dread the nasty, mildewed showers, cabin chores, and swimming classes in CJ's freezing, black water "swimming pool."

Although as a youngster I had no interest in attending a semi-religious camp (this was an extra facet of Camp Judaea that I simply endured every summer), I now value the Jewishness of this experience. I still remember the after-dinner prayers, Hebrew songs and dances, and history lessons disguised in programs. I am not particularly observant, but I think having this knowledge helped me better identify with my religion. Camp Judaea was a bit different from other Jewish camps

in that it also had a strong Zionist component that found its way into almost all aspects of the camp. To this day I appreciate this unique facet of CJ and believe it has affected my personal and political beliefs as a proud, Zionist adult.

I am embarrassed to say, CJ was so long ago that I can't recall too many particular stories or moments (almost makes me wish I had been better at keeping a journal, growing up). No matter—memories of my Camp Judaean times will always evoke a smile.



Dancing by the campfire, Juniors, Young Judaea Conclave, December 2-4, 1966. Courtesy of Camp Judaea, Hendersonville, NC.

Southern Jews and Civil Rights

SJHS Meets in Birmingham, Alabama • November 1–3, 2013

or the first time in 25 years, the Southern Jewish Historical **■** Society (SJHS) will meet in Alabama's "Magic City" this November. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Birmingham Civil Rights Campaign of 1963, the conference Alabama, with panels titled "Alabama's Jewish Communities," will explore the relationship between Jews and African

Americans in the struggle for justice and equality.

The conference begins Friday morning, November 1st, with a guided tour led by longtime leaders of Birmingham's Jewish community. After lunch at the 16th Street Baptist Church, conferencegoers will walk across the street to tour the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, one of the nation's leading civil rights museums. In the afternoon, attendees return to the church, site of the infamous



SJHS conference-goers will visit the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau.

bombing in September 1963 that killed four young girls, "Meet the Authors" session highlighting three new books on for a roundtable discussion involving local people who southern Jewish history. For more information, go to: http:// lived through the events of the 1960s in Birmingham. After www.jewishsouth.org/upcoming-conference.

Friday night services at Temple Emanu-El, scholar and activist Iulian Bond will deliver a keynote address.

On Saturday, the conference shifts to the University of "Building Classical Reform Judaism in the South," "Jews and

> Southern Civil Rights," and a plenary session led by Mark K. Bauman, "Listening to the Quiet Voices: Allen Krause's Conversations with Southern Rabbis during the Civil Rights

> Of special interest to South Carolinians, on Sunday morning Scott M. Langston and Hollace Ava Weiner will explore "The Charleston Diaspora," focusing on families in Ohio and Texas with South Carolina connections. The conference concludes with a

Zola Joins Jewish Studies in Spring 2014

In the spring of 2014, Dr. Gary P. Zola will Let be in residence at the College of Charleston as the fifth Norman and Gerry Sue Arnold Distinguished Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies. He is executive director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) and a professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati. Founded by Professor Zola's teacher

and mentor, Rabbi Marcus, the AJA is the world's largest freestanding research center dedicated solely to the study of the Sunday morning lecture to the Charleston community. American Jewish experience.

Zola is a historian of American Jewry who specializes in the development of American Reform Judaism. Among many publications, he authored the biography Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual (1994), The Americanization of the Jewish Prayer Book and the Liturgical



Development of Congregation Ahawath Chesed (2008), and "We Called Him Rabbi Abraham": Lincoln and American Jewry (forthcoming). He edited Women Rabbis: Exploration and Celebration (1996) and A Place of Our Own: the Rise of Reform Jewish Camping (2006).

At the College of Charleston next spring, Zola will teach a full-credit course on southern Jewish history that will be available as a distance learning opportunity for HUC students in

Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and New York. He will also present a

Dr. Zola is preceded as an Arnold Visiting Professor by Gershom Gorenberg, Jeffrey Gurock, Allan Nadler, and Linda Gradstein. These individuals, each distinguished in his or her field, have had a powerful impact on College of Charleston students, on the community, and in broadening the Jewish Studies curriculum.

Good Works

by Martin Perlmutter

Text year marks the 20th anniversary of the Jewish Historical IN Society of South Carolina. The Society has a terrific track record over its first two decades, exceeding even the vision and hopes of our founding president, Isadore Lourie, o.b.m. The newsletters and meetings we produce twice a year, the historical markers we have erected across the state, the cemetery records we have collected and made available on the Internet, and the website maintained by the incomparable Ann Meddin Hellman all are evidence of a vibrant society pursuing important and ambitious projects. The Jewish Heritage Collection at the Addlestone Library, under Dale Rosengarten's energetic leadership, has amassed a treasure trove of material that provides a foundation for historical research on southern Jewish life. And the College of Charleston's regular course offerings on southern Jewish history reflect the impact the Society has had on academia. South Carolina's Jewish history has become increasingly prominent on the national and international map, and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina is a major reason for this newfound attention.

Among all the "good works" the Society has inspired, one of our most significant achievements may be at the personal level. JHSSC has encouraged scores of individuals to record their life histories, compose memoirs, and preserve family stories for future generations. Our newsletters provide constituents with an opportunity not only to write about their experiences, but to publish what they write. Some write out of a sense of duty; others are motivated by pride and nostalgia. By reflecting on the adversities and opportunities that shape who we are, we contribute to the permanent record of our time and place. We build a usable past and ease the burdens of history for our children and our children's children.

But we cannot do it alone. JHSSC needs your support. As a grassroots organization, the Society depends on your annual membership dues to underwrite its activities. Our Pillars, who commit to donate \$1,000 a year for five years, are our financial backbone. To continue and expand the work of the Society, we need to add to our list of staunch supporters. Please consider becoming a Pillar.

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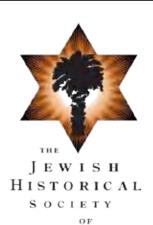
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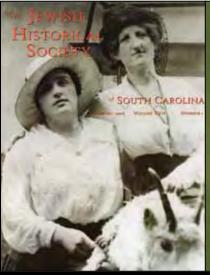
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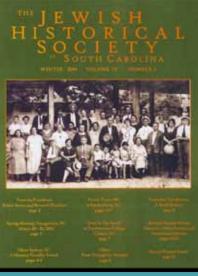
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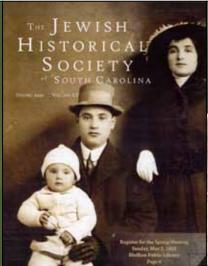
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Register now for the November 9-10, 2013 meeting in Columbia.

See pages 10-11 for more information.







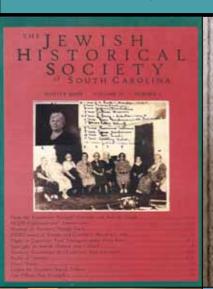


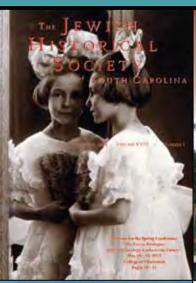


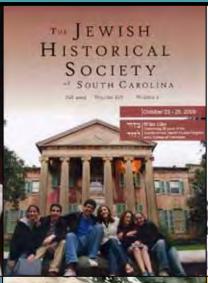
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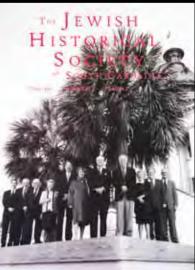
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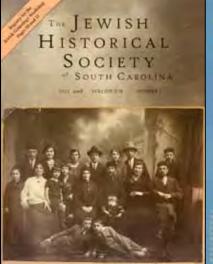
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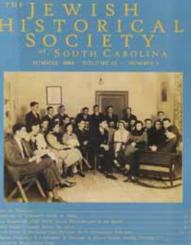


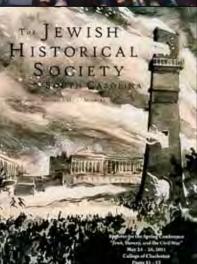


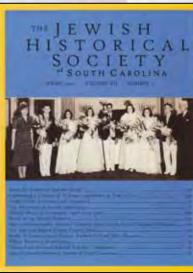














SOUTH CAROLINA

OF

Dale Rosengarten editor Alyssa Neely assistant editor and designer

The JHSSC newsletter is published twice a year.

Current and back issues can be found at jhssc.org

IHSSC Presidents TERMS IN OFFICE

Isadore Lourie 1994-95 Klyde Robinson 1996-97 Richard Gergel 1998-99 Jeffrey Rosenblum 2000-01 Robert Rosen 2002-03 Bernard Warshaw 2004-05 Belinda F. Gergel 2006-07 Edward Poliakoff 2008-09 Ann M. Hellman 2010-11 Rachel G. Barnett 2012-13 David Draisen 2014-15

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Focus on Oral History ~ Klyde Robinson ~ From a family with roots in rural South Carolina whose records were lost in the Civil War, Klyde Robinson became an early advocate of JHSSC's oral history initiative, chairing the Jewish Heritage Project and helping record interviews across the state......5

Reflections on the First Twenty Years ~ Belinda and Richard Gergel ~ Built on a strong partnership with the College of Charleston and a creative collaboration with USC's McKissick Museum, JHSSC's success, according to the authors, "demonstrates the power of great ideas and

How Far We Have Come ~ Jeffrey Rosenblum ~ This transplant from Long Island, captivated by Isadore Lourie's stories of growing up in small-town South Carolina, was proud to be at the Society's helm

The Party President ~ Robert N. Rosen ~ Author and activist in equal measure, Robert Rosen's love of history impelled him to write books about his hometown and region, and to join the effort to establish

Twentieth Anniversary Celebration ~ JHSSC meets in Charleston, SC, May 17–18, 2014......10

"A Grassroots Movement" ~ Alyssa Neely ~ The Warshaws of Walterboro typify the small-town Jewish merchants of South Carolina, just the kind of story JHSSC sought to preserve when it was formed 20 years ago. Bernard Warshaw's goal as president was to encourage organization at the

JHSSC and Family Connections ~ Edward Poliakoff ~ With far-flung family ties and a fond attachment to his hometown, Ed Poliakoff invited JHSSC to Abbeville to celebrate the 95th anniversary of D. Poliakoff's, the store his grandfather established in 1900. As president of the

Roots and Branches ~ Ann Meddin Hellman ~ A sixth-generation Charlestonian, Ann Hellman became an avid genealogist, unearthing her family's past, layer by layer. In 2003 she launched JHSSC's website, building a valuable resource for researchers, including a comprehensive database of South Carolina's Jewish burials.......14

Family Matters ~ Rachel Gordin Barnett ~ As Rachel Barnett steps down from her term as JHSSC's tenth president, she looks back to Isadore Lourie's desire to create a place for our collective memories, and she looks forward to the Center for Southern Jewish Culture as a way to further the

Center Talk: Looking Toward the Future ~ Adam Mendelsohn ~ While the center of gravity of the Jewish South has shifted from small towns to big cities, the author argues, southern Jewish life is far from dying. Indeed, the Jewish South is experiencing a period of growth and exuberance, as witnessed by the new Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture established this

JHSSC Celebrates Two Decades of Remarkable Growth ~ Martin Perlmutter ~ From the small acorn planted by Isadore Lourie and friends in 1994, a mighty oak has grown. Resting on the strong foundation of its statewide membership, JHSSC has inspired the College of Charleston to

Letter from the President



David Cohen, secretary Garry Baum, standing committees—Fundraising chaired by Susan Altman, Archives Jewish South."

and Historical Sites chaired by Barry Draisen and Ernie Marcus—I hope to have a productive year ahead. I also want and I have learned a great deal about South Carolina's to congratulate new board members Susan Brill and Sandra Conradi. Welcome aboard!

speak at the dedication ceremony of a historical marker commemorating more than 100 years of history of Beth Israel Congregation in Beaufort, South Carolina, sponsored by the Beaufort County Historical Society and Beth Israel. The ceremony, held on January 12, was well attended by local historians, longtime residents, political leaders such as Mayor Billy Keyserling, and representatives of JHSSC, Charleston. Dale outlined



including Marty Perlmutter Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling unveils a new historical marker in front Anderson. and Dale Rosengarten of Beth Israel synagogue on Sunday, January 12, 2014. The congregation from the College of was chartered in 1905; construction of the building was completed in 1908. Photo by Delayna Earley, Island Packet (Hilton Head).

at a JHSSC meeting in his hometown some 15 years ago. forward to the next 20. Lipton remembered Beaufort's main thoroughfare, Bay Street, lined with Jewish-owned stores, and High Holiday services in the very sanctuary where we were sitting, conducted entirely in Hebrew, with women sitting apart, the patriarchs on the bimah, and Max Lipsitz davening.

The Society is approaching its 20th anniversary, to be celebrated in Charleston on May 17-18, 2014.

Thank you for electing me president Please make every effort to attend the festivities marking ▲ of this great organization. With this important milestone in JHSSC's history. We are the help of our immediate past busy making the final preparations for what promises to presidents, Rachel Gordin Barnett be a very fine gala. Saturday afternoon the program will and Ann Meddin Hellman, treasurer begin with a panel of past presidents, to be followed by a dinner reception and remarks by Richard Gergel. Sunday archivist Steven Savitz, and our we will reconvene with a bagel breakfast and open board meeting. The weekend concludes with a presentation and Membership chaired by Alex by Stuart Rockoff, executive director of the Mississippi Cohen, Education and Publications Humanities Council, on "The Changing Face of the

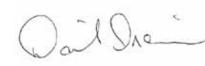
All our meetings have been highly informative, Jewish past. Last fall's conference in Columbia, titled "A Summer to Remember," brought back boyhood My first official action as the Society's president was to memories of growing up in Anderson. Even though I

attended Camp Blue Star only one year, many of my Jewish friends and relatives went there or to other Jewish camps in the area. The presentation by Macy Hart from the Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) was inspiring. I wish the great resources ISJL offers had been available when my now 25- and 27-yearold sons were attending religious school in

encourage readers of this newsletter to join us as members

the history of Jews who settled in Beaufort and vicinity at whatever level you can afford, to support the work we do, and quoted extensively from a talk Joseph J. Lipton gave and to help us pay tribute to JHSSC's past 20 years and look

See you in Charleston in May!



David Draisen ddraisen@bellsouth.net

Only in America

by Joel Lourie and Susan Lourie

nly in America"—these words were uttered by the late Isadore Lourie throughout his life. He would speak passionately about how immigrants of any persuasion could come to this country, get an education, find a job, and have an opportunity to live the "American dream." He lived and saw, firsthand, this dream become a reality.

In so many ways he would connect the American dream with the journey and success of Jews in the South. He, too, was a creation of this path. Both his parents came to this country in the early 1900s. They married and settled into a small, southern rural town in South Carolina—St. George. Like many of their kind, the Louries ran a clothing store on Main Street and lived in an apartment above their business. Isadore's parents, Louis and Ann Lourie, raised six children who all

be sent to study for their bar mitzvahs, either in Charleston, Savannah, or Columbia. Each of them went on to be successful

in medicine, business, or the law.

This small-town experience played a major part in shaping Isadore Lourie's views and principles. He once said that he never experienced any sort of prejudice until he left St. George. In St. George people of different races and faiths were trusting and helpful to one another. The barriers that exist even today were somewhat invisible there. From



this upbringing, Isadore became a pioneer leading a new generation of progressives—popularly known as the Young Turks—in the South Carolina General Assembly in the 1960s. He is recognized as one of the few legislators who could serve as a bridge between the African American and white communities during the era of the Civil Rights Movement.

Through all of his political and legal success, Isadore never forgot his small-town, Jewish roots. More than anything, that is what inspired him to help create the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. He felt it was critical to study and honor the Jewish links throughout our state. Families who had landed in South Carolina from different places, in different circumstances, overcame similar obstacles to settle here. Many started businesses, educated

were excellent students and observant Jews. The boys would their children, contributed to society, yet maintained their commitment to Judaism. It is these stories that Isadore Lourie wanted to preserve forever.



Above: Isadore Lourie and his mother, Annie Friedman Lourie, in St. George, SC, June 1950. Courtesy of the Lourie family.

Left: Becky Baum Lourie,

Joel Lourie, Susan Lourie, and Sam Strauss at the joint conference of JHSSC and the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Sights, Sounds, and Stories of the Jewish South, Ernest F. **Hollings Special Collections** Library, USC, Columbia, SC, October 29, 2011. Photo by Jeri Perlmutter.

Focus on Oral History by Klyde Robinson

Thave always loved history, in particular the history of the Jewish **L**community of Charleston, which has made such significant contributions to the state of South Carolina. I've been told that my family has been here since the early 1800s, but much of our early history was lost during the Civil War. In those years the Robinsons were farmers and lived in Round O and Cottageville,

near Walterboro. When General Sherman's Union troops appeared to be marching to destroy Charleston, Walterboro authorities moved their records to Columbia to preserve them. Sherman unexpectedly changed course and burned Columbia instead, including our family records. And that is why I feel it is so critical to document the living histories of the Jewish people in the South.

According to family legend my great-grandmother Bertha started our family business in Charleston in the 1880s. For more than a century, Robinson's Bicycle Shop was a mainstay on upper King Street. It may have been the largest bicycle store in the Southeast. My brother Rudolph (o.b.m.) designed a bicycle—the Newsboy Special—for Westfield Manufacturing Company, the maker of Columbia bicycles. At its height Robinson's carried more than 1,000 bikes in inventory.

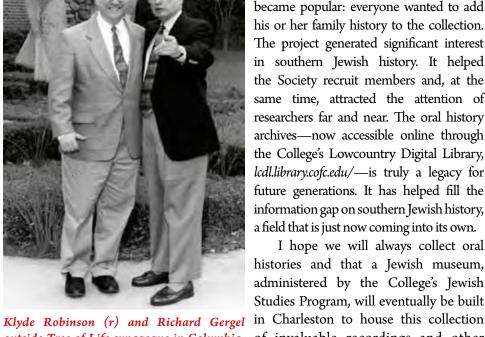
the family would work in the store, no SC, where JHSSC held its April 1998 memorabilia. matter who we were or what we were meeting. Photo by Dale Rosengarten. and when serving as a public official. On Christmas my brothers and I would deliver bicycles to customers' homes between midnight and 5:00 a.m. so the children would be surprised when they woke up. To this day my brother Melvin cannot walk downtown without being greeted by Charlestonians who remember buying their first bike from Robinson's.

Learning and preserving the history of the Jewish community has always been very important to my family. I am pleased to have played a role as the initial chairman of the Jewish Heritage Project in preserving that history. In 1995 I traveled of all 29 persons of the Jewish faith who were buried there. with Dale Rosengarten, director of the project, to communities across the state to collect oral histories, including anecdotes about what it was like to be Jewish in the South and stories about contributions Jews have made to our state. With audio

tapes donated by Itchy Sonenshine, equipment provided by McKissick Museum, and an archival home at the College of Charleston Library, the project was underway. When I was elected JHSSC president, Sandra Lee Kahn Rosenblum began accompanying Dale on these field trips, and the two continued recording interviews with great success.

By the end of my term of office, the Jewish Heritage Project had collected and preserved almost 300 oral histories of South Carolina Jews. These histories immediately became popular: everyone wanted to add his or her family history to the collection. The project generated significant interest in southern Jewish history. It helped the Society recruit members and, at the same time, attracted the attention of researchers far and near. The oral history archives-now accessible online through the College's Lowcountry Digital Library, lcdl.library.cofc.edu/—is truly a legacy for future generations. It has helped fill the information gap on southern Jewish history, a field that is just now coming into its own.

I hope we will always collect oral histories and that a Jewish museum, administered by the College's Jewish Studies Program, will eventually be built



During December every member of outside Tree of Life synagogue in Columbia, of invaluable recordings and other

Another project for the future is doing. I did this all through college, law school, practicing law, to raise the public profile of the Hanover Street Cemetery, one of Charleston's first Jewish burial grounds, predating the extant Coming Street Cemetery. My great-grandfather was buried in the cemetery in 1858, along with other family members. My aunt Rachel Robinson was also buried there after dying of cholera, following the earthquake of 1886. She was the last female born in the Robinson family until my daughter, Amy, in 1954. Although a church and another building now occupy the property, it may be possible to put a memorial marker on the site, preserving the names

> I am grateful to the Society for supporting vital efforts to discover and preserve the heritage of the Jews of South Carolina over all these years, and I am confident it will continue to do so for generations to come.

Reflections on the First Twenty Years

by Belinda and Richard Gergel

s we reflect on the first 20 years of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, we remember the tremendous energy and creative ideas of the early organizers as they fused distinct but related interests into a coherent organizational mission. First and foremost came the dream of Senator Isadore Lourie to create a statewide organization to tie together urban and small-town Jewish communities in South Carolina, replicating the role that B'nai Brith had played in an earlier era. Senator Lourie recognized that small-town Jews were becoming an endangered species and he wanted to preserve their memories. He also understood that Jewish people especially southerners—could be enticed to attend thoughtful lectures and visit interesting towns and historic sites, and would find any excuse to meet over good food and conversation. Thus, the Jewish Historical Society was born, with its twice-a-year meetings featuring noted speakers, panel discussions on local Jewish history, celebrations of historic anniversaries, and plenty of time to kibitz. Simultaneous with Senator Lourie's



efforts to start a statewide society, visionary philosophy professor Dr. Martin Perlmutter was seeking support for the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, which had been founded in 1984 with an initial pledge from Henry and Sylvia Yaschik. When Marty became director of Jewish Studies in 1992, the College leadership had yet to appreciate the program's benefits—on campus and off—though its strong community focus was already paying dividends. Together Perlmutter and Lourie sought the backing of the College's new president, Alex Sanders, who was Senator Lourie's lifelong friend and political ally. The president needed little persuading. With Sanders's unqualified support, Perlmutter's tireless efforts, and Lourie's skilled leadership, both Jewish Studies and JHSSC were soon on a firm foundation.

> Around this same time a young historian named Dale Rosengarten, who was working toward a Ph.D. degree from Harvard, approached Senator Lourie with a proposal she and her colleagues at the University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum had developed: to mount a major exhibition showcasing the state's Jewish history and culture. Lourie became a passionate advocate of the project and, at its inaugural meeting in April 1994, the fledgling Jewish Historical Society adopted the exhibit as its first venture. Recognizing talent when he saw it, Lourie also urged the College of Charleston to

> > Counterclockwise from above: Carolee Rosen Fox (Phoebe Pember), Jason Berendt (Isaac J. Levy), Jason Shaiman (J. A. Joel), and Elizabeth Moses (Eleanor Cohen Seixas), JHSSC's April 2000 meeting in Charleston, SC; Harlan Greene leading a walking tour, September 2010; garden reception at the Phoebe Pember House, April 2000; Richard and Belinda Gergel, and Susan and Isadore Lourie, Coming Street Cemetery, October 1998.



find a place for Dale to pursue her work, which included as a key element the recording of oral history interviews with Jewish South Carolinians. The College's Dean of Libraries, Dr. David Cohen, had been involved with JHSSC from its inception and within two years created a permanent, tenure-track position in Special Collections for the curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection. Elizabeth Moses soon joined the staff, splitting her time between the Heritage Collection and the Historical Society.

During the ensuing 20 years, JHSSC forged an ever stronger partnership with the College's Jewish Studies Program and Jewish Heritage Collection to pursue the mission they all share: to promote and preserve South Carolina's Jewish history and culture. The exhibition A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish

Life opened in Columbia in January 2002, and over the next two years traveled to museums in Charleston, New York City, and Charlotte, North Carolina. With help from co-curators Barbara Karesh Stender and Judith Alexander Weil Shanks, Dale and her writer/historian husband, Theodore Rosengarten, produced a big, beautiful book to accompany the exhibit. South Carolina

native Paul Keyserling created a documentary titled Land of Promise: The Jews of South Carolina, sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society with funding from the Humanities Council of South Carolina, Jerry and Sue Klein, Harriet Keyserling, and other private contributors. The video was premiered on statewide television by South Carolina ETV and traveled to each of the museum venues.

JHSSC meetings have celebrated anniversaries of congregations in Charleston, Columbia, Aiken, Beaufort, Anderson, and Florence and have held programs in Sumter, Georgetown, Greenville, Abbeville, and Spartanburg. All of this was made possible by the commitment and skill of a broad array of leaders, including Klyde Robinson, Bernard Warshaw, Jeffrey Rosenblum, Ed Poliakoff, Robert Rosen, Ann Meddin Hellman, Rachel Gordin Barnett, Sol Breibart, Harriet Keyserling, Robert Moses, and many others.

Twenty years have passed since we first sat on the porch at the College of Charleston's Philosophy Department with Professor Perlmutter and Senator Lourie and dreamed great dreams about what our efforts might produce. It is fair to say that the achievements of the Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Studies Program, and the Jewish Heritage Collection have far exceeded our expectations. This story of remarkable success in so many areas demonstrates the power of great ideas and the potential of talented people working together for a common purpose. May JHSSC continue to build on its accomplishments for the next 20 years and beyond.

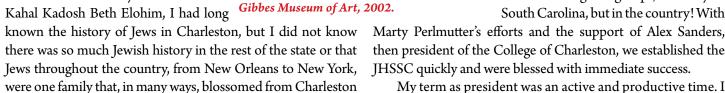
Clockwise from above: Dale Rosengarten, Judith Shanks, Lynn Robertson, and Barbara Stender at the opening of A Portion of the People at the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, September 2002; American Jewish History Scholars' Conference on an outing to Middleton Place, June 2006; Ann Meddin Hellman, Stephen P. Morse, Eve Meddin Berlinsky, and Claudia and David J. Cohen, Addlestone Library reception for Jewish genealogy conference, October 2008. Photo credits for pages 6 and 7: Michael Levkoff, Jeri Perlmutter, Dale Rosengarten, Dana Sardet.



How Far We Have Come

Tow can I forget the historic meeting with Senator Isadore Lourie when a handful of us agreed to form a Jewish historical society? To me, an immigrant from Long Island, Isadore's tales of growing up in St. George were both strange and heart-warming. Both my in-laws—Mickey Kronsberg's parents were from outside South Carolina, one from Virginia and the other from Maryland. My family was from New York. Because of my affiliation with Jeffrey and Mickey Kronsberg Rosenblum at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, I had long

and South Carolina.



an instrument of understanding my own northern roots and my wife's dual origins in a southern and a border state. My paternal grandfather, an immigrant, had a fresh fruit and vegetable pushcart on Manhattan's East Side. As times improved he graduated to a horse and buggy and later to a truck, moving into the business of supplying restaurants. My maternal grandfather was a skilled diamond cutter and jewelry designer. Both my grandmothers were primarily housewives, Upper East Side Jewish and Italian women.

JHSSC helped me comprehend my own heritage, as Jewish life in South Carolina was not so different from my family's, with one major exception. The exception was that I grew up as a member of the majority while the mid-20th century Jews beyond its borders. in South Carolina were a small minority of the population. All my grandparents came to this country during the great wave of immigration of the 1880s and '90s when the mass of America's Jewish population settled in large northern cities. Three sets of my wife's and my grandparents came from Eastern Europe (Poland and Russia), while the fourth came from Western Europe (Holland) with a distinctly different set of cultural and educational backgrounds. With this pedigree I took charge of South Carolina's relatively new Jewish Historical Society

Left to right: Samuel Steinberg, Shirley Feldman Prystowsky, and Sunny Steinberg; Harold Fox and Melvin Robinson; Charleston Mayor Joseph Riley, South Carolina Governor Jim Hodges, and IHSSC President Robert Rosen at the opening of A Portion of the People at the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, SC, September 12, 2002. Photos by Michael Levkoff.



and began to grasp the southerners' relationships with northern Jewish

families and business connections.

by Jeffrey Rosenblum

Having served as chair of Charleston's Community Relations Committee and president of the Charleston Jewish Community Center, I immediately foresaw the power of building the largest Jewish organization in the state. What an opportunity to put forth the untold history of one of the oldest religious groups, not only in South Carolina, but in the country! With

then president of the College of Charleston, we established the JHSSC quickly and were blessed with immediate success.

My term as president was an active and productive time. I was in office when A Portion of the People opened at McKissick The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina became Museum at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, and I championed Paul Keyserling's production of the companion documentary, Land of Promise: The Jews of South Carolina. My two-year term was filled with meetings and phone conversations about both of these activities. The video reached a wide audience on SC-ETV, and the exhibition gave the Society national recognition as it traveled the country to venues in Charleston, Charlotte, and New York City.

The Society has benefitted from great leadership. As I though my paternal grandmother was also a dressmaker for write this in 2014, I can look back and see how far we have come and how we have matured. I welcome all the new friends I have made because of the Society. I am proud to be the lone non-southerner who became a founding leader of this great gathering of people from across the state and



The Party President by Robert N. Rosen

Tam not sure when my love **L**of history began but I was fortunate to be a student of Sol Breibart at Rivers High School. In the 1960s I studied southern history as an undergraduate at the University of Virginia and a master's student at Harvard University. I also lived through some real history during the Civil Rights Movement in Charleston, in which my city's corporation counsel.



father, Morris D. Rosen, Robert Rosen at the JHSSC meeting at Temple Beth El, Camden, SC, played a significant role as the May 2003. Photo by Dale Rosengarten.

several books, including A Short History of Charleston (1982), Confederate Charleston (1994), and The Jewish Confederates (2000), which documents the significant role Jewish southerners played in the Civil War, as well as my most recent work, Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust (2006). My interest in South Carolina Jewish history was enhanced immeasurably by my involvement with the creation of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

Twenty years ago a remarkable group of people, led by Senator Isadore Lourie of Columbia, came together to found the Society. The timing was right for Jewish South Carolinians to begin to study, celebrate, organize, and preserve their incredibly interesting history. This was a moment in time when we all recognized that a way of life—small-town Jewish merchants and some older Jewish institutions and traditions—was fading into history in front of our eyes, and

that, as South Carolina Jews, we had an important story to tell. And what a story it is! While today the centers of Jewish population in the United States are in big cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, South Carolina played an important role in the early history of Jews in America, from colonial days to the Revolution, to the growth of Jewish institutions and the Reform Movement, to the Civil War and beyond.

I was excited to be involved with people who loved history In any event, my love of southern history led me to write and were eager to tell the story of South Carolina Jewry. We were talking, writing about, and preserving our own ethnic and religious history. We were doing something new. It was a heady and productive project. Creating archives, books, exhibitions, lectures, and documentaries are expensive and time-consuming activities but it was joyous work.

> I had the honor to be the Party President of the JHSSC. We held a black-tie gala at the Gibbes Museum of Art to introduce the greater Charleston community to our proud Jewish history. The mayor and governor attended, as did hundreds of supporters.

> Jewish American history has come a long way in the past 20 years. Once the province of amateurs remembering their ancestors, it has become a respected professional field. The JHSSC has helped create an important legacy to teach our children and our children's children, and I am proud to have participated in this worthy endeavor. Jewish history is now part of the broader American experience, exactly as it should be.





Bernard Warshaw oversees his going-out-of-business sale in 2000, in

JHSSC 20th Anniversary Celebration

May 17–18, 2014 College of Charleston ~ Charleston, South Carolina

Saturday, May 17

5:00 р.м. Past presidents panel, Arnold Hall, Jewish Studies Center

> Moderator: Martin Perlmutter, JHSSC executive director, 1994–present Participants: Rachel Gordin Barnett, Belinda Friedman Gergel, Richard Gergel, Ann Meddin Hellman, Edward Poliakoff, Klyde Robinson, Robert Rosen, and Jeffrey Rosenblum

Dinner reception, Alumni Hall, Randolph Hall, second floor Remarks by Richard Gergel, JHSSC president, 1998-99

Sunday, May 18

7:00

9:00 а.м. Bagel breakfast, Arnold Hall

Open board meeting in Arnold Hall (everyone is invited to attend!) 9:30

Stuart Rockoff ~ Looking Away from Dixie: the Changing Face of the Jewish South ~ Exploring how 10:30

southern Jewish life has changed since World War II, and what the future may hold for

Jewish communities south of the Mason-Dixon line.

12:00 р.м. Adjourn



his Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of Texas at Austin with an emphasis on immigration and American Jewish history. He has taught courses in American

and ethnic history at such schools as the University of Texas and Millsaps College. From 2002 to 2013 he served as the director of the history department at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life in Jackson, Mississippi. In November 2013 he became the executive director of the Mississippi Humanities Council, where he works to develop and support public humanities programs around the state. He lives in Jackson with his wife, Susan, and their two daughters.

Conference fee: \$100 per person **Questions:** Enid Idelsohn

Phone: (843) 953-3918 ~ fax: (843) 953-7624

Email: IdelsohnE@cofc.edu

Hotel reservations

(843) 722-0600 or (877) 756-2121 toll free

To get the special rate of \$259 per night plus tax, make your reservations by April 1 and request a room in the 'Jewish Historical Society room block."

Holiday Inn, Mount Pleasant

250 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard

Mount Pleasant, SC 29464

(843) 884-6000 or (800) 972-2513 toll free

To get the special rate of \$159 per night plus tax, make your reservations by April 16 and request a room in the "Jewish Historical Society room block."

The conference packet will include maps.

Registration

Online at *jhssc.org/events* with Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express

by check, payable to JHSSC c/o Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program 96 Wentworth Street

"A Grassroots Movement" by Alyssa Neely

rowing up in Walterboro was really just delightful. invited my daddy to come down to Charleston from New interview for the Jewish Heritage Collection, Bernard Warshaw recalled a childhood free of antisemitism, where "there was no difference" between him and his Christian friends. He was "involved in nearly everything"

as a boy, although his Saturdays belonged to his father, who insisted his son work in the family business, a clothing store in downtown Walterboro. In 2000 Warshaw's of Walterboro closed its doors for the final time, following a pattern that the founding members of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina viewed with alarm: the shrinking Jewish presence in small towns throughout the Palmetto State.

As JHSSC president in 2004 and 2005, Warshaw encouraged members to become actively involved in collecting objects and information—"photos of congregations, Jewish

artifacts, cemetery records, and information on marriages and bar and bat mitzvahs"—that tell the story of South Carolina's Jews. He sought to bring Jewish residents of the state together under an umbrella of "common history and heritage. ... My project for my term as president," he wrote in the Summer 2004 JHSSC newsletter, "is to turn the Historical Society into a grassroots movement. . . . To encourage each community to become engaged in preserving its history, I am implementing structures to coordinate local efforts."

Walterboro, SC. Photo by Bill Aron.

Warshaw's family typified the experience of Jewish immigrants of the early 20th century who became smalltown southern merchants. His dad, Murray Warshaw, emigrated from Warsaw, Poland. "My father got to Charleston at the insistence of my uncle Mr. Hyman Berlinsky, who married . . . my mother's sister. Hyman

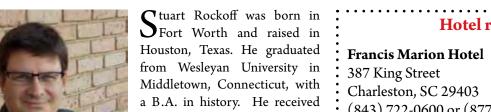
🔽. . . We've had the best of all worlds." In his 1996 York; they were friends in New York." Hyman and Murray married sisters Tillie and Dotty Bebergal, daughters of Cecilia and Abraham Bebergal. The Bebergals were from the outskirts of Warsaw, Poland, and had followed family to Charleston. In Charleston Murray Warshaw worked

for wholesale supplier Hyman Karesh in his Star Bargain House. In the spring of 1920, he got wind of an opportunity in a small city about 50 miles west of Charleston; Philip Bogoslow was selling his Walterboro store. Murray and Dotty took the leap, bought the store, and moved to the seat of Colleton County. Bernard was born that fall.

Murray and Dotty "were deeply involved in the community," coming forward to help people in need in their adopted hometown. Warshaw took their civic-mindedness to heart. Besides serving multiple terms as

president of Walterboro's Temple Mount Sinai, he dedicated his time over many decades to numerous local and state organizations, including the South Carolina State Development Board, the South Carolina Mental Health Commission, the Walterboro Chamber of Commerce, Shrine Club, Elks Club, Lions Club, Masons, Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion Post #93, and the Colleton County Literacy Council, to name just a few.

In 1973 Governor John West awarded Warshaw the Order of the Palmetto, the state's highest civilian honor, acknowledging his "extraordinary lifetime achievement and service to the state and nation." Colleton County recognized his local contributions in 1998 by naming its health and human services buildings the Bernard Warshaw Complex. The following year Governor Jim Hodges bestowed upon



Warshaw the Silver Crescent, the state's top award for community service. In November 2013 Warshaw was the second person to receive the Exchange Club of Charleston's Defender of the Constitution Award.

After graduating from The Citadel in 1942, Warshaw spent three and a half years in the U.S. Army, serving in an anti-aircraft unit in the European theater. His experiences at the end of the war profoundly affected his outlook. "I had the fortune or the misfortune of being at Dachau the day after it was taken, when the ovens were still warm and the ashes were still smoldering there were literally piles and piles of bodies, and the stench was such that you wouldn't believe. The thing that sticks in my mind the most is a little girl you see in one of the piles, about six years old, and I've seen that face since 1945."

When he joined the Society, Warshaw's goal was to foster "a more cohesive Jewish Society's accomplishments: "Most important," he wrote, community" in South Carolina. "The lifeline of the Jewish people down south, wherever you are, is word of mouth. story on the map."



Captain Bernard Warshaw outside of Frankfurt and Wiesbaden, Germany, August 1945. Gift of Bernard Warshaw. Special Collections, College of

You cannot live in a community and not become involved." The cemetery project was one example of Bernard's push for statewide involvement at the community level. In the Winter 2006 newsletter, Bernard described it as "a major work in progress . . . aimed at documenting Jewish burial sites across the state. Our most capable chairman, Stanley Farbstein, heads the project, assisted by a committee of hard-working and efficient volunteers." The initiative took off, and today information and images documenting thousands of burials in 32 Jewish cemeteries across South Carolina are readily available on the Society's website.

Not willing to rest on his laurels, Warshaw saw the need to recruit young members, increase the participation of JHSSC's board and membership, and add to the list of \$1,000-dollar-ayear donors. He was proud of the

"we have put South Carolina's long and significant Jewish



Bernard Warshaw, JHSSC's sixth president, passed away on Thursday, February 27, 2014. A proud Citadel graduate, a decorated war veteran, a pillar of the Walterboro community, and perhaps South Carolina's best known haberdasher, Bernard expanded the mission of the JHSSC. Under his leadership the Society undertook the huge task of documenting the Jewish cemeteries of South Carolina. With impeccable taste and uncompromising integrity, Bernard and his wife, Ann, helped make the JHSSC a welcoming grassroots organization. Bernard's memory is already a blessing. — Martin Perlmutter

Left: Volunteer Stéphane Grauzam photographing gravestones in KKBE's Coming Street Cemetery, the oldest extant Jewish burial ground in South Carolina, 2013. JHSSC shares its cemetery information with jewishgen.org. Photo by Randi Serrins.

JHSSC and Family Connections

by Edward Poliakoff

↑ s a longtime member and a **A**former president of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, I welcome the opportunities the Society has provided to learn more about the rich history of Jewish people in the Palmetto State. Among JHSSC's many accomplishments over 20 years is a program started during my term to co-sponsor historical markers at sites of Jewish interest across the state. I have been happy to attend marker dedications in Columbia, Sumter, and Anderson. These markers and those to come are but one example of how the Historical Society achieves the purpose stated in its bylaws: "... to promote the study and preservation of the history and culture of the Jews of South Carolina."

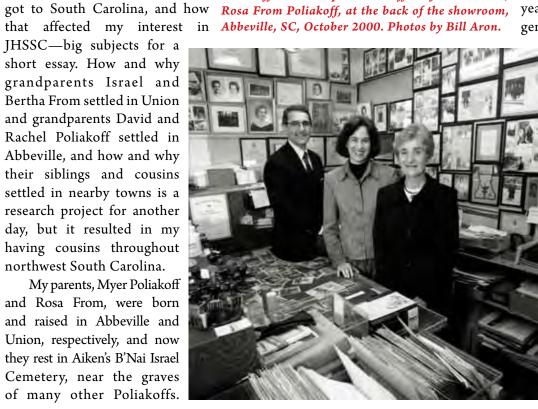
I was asked to write about my family history, how my people got to South Carolina, and how

JHSSC-big subjects for a short essay. How and why grandparents Israel and Bertha From settled in Union and grandparents David and Rachel Poliakoff settled in Abbeville, and how and why their siblings and cousins settled in nearby towns is a research project for another day, but it resulted in my having cousins throughout northwest South Carolina.

My parents, Myer Poliakoff and Rosa From, were born and raised in Abbeville and Union, respectively, and now they rest in Aiken's B'Nai Israel Cemetery, near the graves of many other Poliakoffs.



D. Poliakoff Department Store on the square, prior to renovation of the building. Below: Edward Poliakoff, Elaine Poliakoff Fenton, and Doris Poliakoff Feinsilber pose in the office of their mother,



Growing up in Abbeville, for my sisters, Doris and Elaine, and me, our childhood Jewish connections outside our extended family and observant Jewish home consisted mainly of Temple B'Nai Israel in Anderson and Camp Blue Star in North Carolina. My wonderful wife Sandra (née Altman) was a Blue Star camper from Charleston, but she is younger than I and we did not meet until years later in Washington, D.C.

David Poliakoff founded D. Poliakoff dry goods store on Abbeville's court square in 1900. He later sent for his childhood sweetheart, Rachel Axelrod, in Minsk, and they were married in Augusta by Rabbi Abraham Poliakoff, a cousin who was the first spiritual leader of Synagogue Adas Yeshurun. The D. Poliakoff store was in business for 100 years, an institution beloved by generations who shopped and

> worked there, operated in its second half-century by Myer Poliakoff and, after his passing, by Rosa Poliakoff. One of my fondest JHSSC memories was its 1995 meeting in Abbeville, led by the Society's founding president, the late Senator Isadore Lourie, to help celebrate the store's 95th anniversary. When the business closed in 2000, we renovated its National Register-listed historic building and in the process gathered cherished family objects, store documents, and legacy retail fixtures, some of which we were proud to see displayed in A Portion of the

People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life, the superb exhibit produced by JHSSC, the College of Charleston, and USC's McKissick Museum.

Another favorite JHSSC memory is the day I drove to Abbeville to meet Dale Rosengarten, founding director of the College's Jewish Heritage Collection, Lynn Robertson, executive director of McKissick Museum, and Jane Przybysz, a



Ed Poliakoff, a partner in Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP, lives in Columbia, SC, with Sandra Altman Poliakoff, his wife of 42 years. Their curator at McKissick, daughter, Beth, and son-in-law, Greg Nikolayevsky, pictured at their March who were traveling the 2012 wedding in Columbia, live in Denver with their newborn daughter, Ayla. of A Portion of the state collecting items Son Eli and daughter-in-law Robin Grossman Poliakoff live in Charleston with People. for the exhibition they daughters Sydney (r) and Anna (l). Courtesy of Ed Poliakoff.

were developing. They expressed polite interest when my hope and expectation for JHSSC is that its programs, I invited them to the town's visitors' center to see the website, and publications, plus its close connections with the collection of American Western art donated by my late Jewish Heritage Collection and the Jewish Studies Program uncle Dr. Samuel Poliakoff. But on the way to the cases at the College of Charleston, will continue to help each of where the collection was installed, we walked under a us understand how our own family narratives fit in the rich huge mural hung high on the wall depicting an event in history and culture of the Jews of South Carolina.

local history: the final meeting of the disbanding Confederate cabinet. In the painting President Jefferson Davis is addressing his military advisors, with Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin seated to his left, just below a portrait of John C. Calhoun. Any interest in the collection disappeared! McKissick convinced the city of Abbeville to lend the mural, arranged funding for its restoration, and it became a centerpiece

Looking ahead,

Roots and Branches

documentation I found of Barnett in Charleston dates

the study of family history with an emphasis on lineages—who begat whom. I began to document the history of my family and my husband's family, the Kareshes, around 1997, when I discovered jewishgen.org, a website geared to researching Jewish families around the world. I put in my mother's maiden name, Levkoff, and I found a cousin who was also researching the family. The more I discover about our forebears, the more I learn about the history of Jews in South

On my mother's side I am the sixth generation to have lived in Charleston. My greatgreat-grandfather Rev. Barnett Rubin arrived

Carolina.

y interest in southern Jewish history grew out of in the United States in 1868. His wife, Hannah Frank Rubin, and their son Abraham followed three years later. The first

by Ann Meddin Hellman

from September 16, 1873, when he performed the marriage of Mitchell A. Phillips to Miss Augusta, only daughter of Mr. H. Golliner-an event reported in the local press and duly noted in Rabbi Barnett Elzas's book Jewish Marriage Notices from the Newspaper Press of Charleston, S.C., 1775-1906. Rubin served as rabbi of Brith Sholom for 35 years, as I found out from his tombstone in Brith Sholom Congregation Cemetery, also known as Brith Sholom Magnolia Cemetery. His wife's mother—my maternal great-

Barnett Rubin, ca. 1873.

great-great-grandmother, Esther Frank—lived with Rev. Rubin and Hannah at 418 King Street.

Henry and Miriam Feintuch, my mother's great-grandparents, came to South Carolina from Warszawa, Poland, in 1877 and 1879 respectively. Miriam arrived with their daughters, Eva and Mollie. The 1880 census shows them living in St. Stephens, where Henry was a country merchant. In 1883 the Charleston city directory has Feintuch at 557 King Street. Eva eventually married Abraham

My other maternal great-Jacob Piatigorsky, left Kiev, Ukraine, in 1881, traveling with

Rubin, son of Barnett and Hannah,

and Mollie married Jacob Needle.

daughters were Hannah (Henry) Levkoff, Darby (Israel) Birlant, Betty (Meyer) Bluestein, Esther (Benjamin) Warshavsky Bercoff, and Simmie (Mordecai-Morris) Patla. Their first home in the United States was in Macon, Georgia. The enire family eventually moved to Charleston. The Levkoffs' son Shier married Rebecca Rubin, the daughter of Abraham Rubin and Eva Feintuch Rubin.

Genealogical research tells you about births, marriages, and migrations, and also about what people did for a living and

how they moved up (or down) the social ladder. In 1883 Charleston's city directory lists Henry Levkoff as a peddler. From 1886 to 1894 he was in dry goods. In 1895 he was working for Marks and Needle, and three years later moved with his family to Augusta, Georgia, where he eventually opened H. Levkoff and Sons, a clothing store. After Shier Levkoff died in 1935, his wife Rebecca, his daughter Doris (my mother), and his son Abner Harris Levkoff moved to Charleston. A second daughter, Estelle, was married and lived in Greenville.

I was deeply involved in family history when, in 2003, Marty Perlmutter asked me to do something with a batch of Jewish Historical Society photographs that he had



great-grandparents, Dvosy and Barnett Rubin's grandsons, Ben, Mitch, and Isadore Rubin, and his great-grandson Abner Levkoff in the French Boot Shop, King Street, Charleston, SC, ca. 1940.

acquired over the years. I posted these pictures of Society events and activities on a website—ihssc.org and have continued to add pages ever since. You can now look online and find back issues of our newsletter, data on South Carolina synagogues and cemeteries, a list of resources for research, links to relevant sites, and information on upcoming events.

Also available at *jhssc.org* is a database of Jewish burials in South Carolina, a project initiated by the late Stanley Farbstein, which evolved into a concerted effort by the Society, with volunteers across the state documenting and photographing Jewish cemeteries. I have integrated

their five daughters, their husbands, and children. Their this information into an online spreadsheet which lists burials by town and burial ground, and I continue to add photographs of gravestones and memorial plaques as they become available.

> In 2010, during my first spring as JHSSC president, we visited Bluffton, where a brand new congregation called Oseh Shalom had grown from 17 to 500 members in four short years. In Anderson the next fall, we listened to a panel of local people talk about what it was like being Jewish in the Upstate. In spring 2011, in partnership with the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, we

> > co-sponsored a conference on "Jews, Slavery, and the Civil War." The program, commemorating the sesquicentennial of America's bloodiest conflict, attracted academic heavyweights from far and wide, and the newsletter featured original essays by leading scholars in the field. In my last season as president, I presided over a joint meeting with the Southern Jewish Historical Society, held at the University of South Carolina, where four special exhibitions had been mounted to complement the conference.

> > When I turned over JHSSC's reins to Rachel G. Barnett, who had proven her talents organizing the Columbia meeting, I was proud of our accomplishments and happy to have more time to devote to my work as the Society's webmaster. Please visit the site and let me know if you want to get involved!



Left to right from back row: Ben Rubin, Maizie-Louise Cohen Rubin, Estelle Levkoff Poliakoff, Beck Rubin Levkoff, Evelyn Selz Rubin, Frances Rubin Rothschild, Alan Rubin, and Doris Levkoff Meddin, at the family home, 64 Pitt Street, Charleston, SC, ca. 1938. Photos gift of Ann Meddin Hellman. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Family Matters by Rachel Gordin Barnett

↑ y college-age **IV** daughter, Emily, recently sent me an email asking about her family history. I was thrilled, of course, to share what little I know about my grandparents and how they arrived in South Carolina. This got me thinking about how fortunate we are to have the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina not only as a repository for our state's history, but as a headquarters for learning and engagement now and for coming generations.

The Society's founding president, Isadore Lourie, aimed to create a place for our



The "uptown" crowd, including the author's mother's family, in their old neighborhood, St. Philip Street, Charleston, SC, 2000. Photo by Bill Aron.

collective memories. Over the past twenty years, his vision families lived in the town as well. They were all merchants, but has become a reality. Because of Izzy's foresight, Emily can now go online and hear her great-grandmother Libby Levinson reminisce about her journey from Bialystok to Charleston. She can check cemetery records at *jhssc.org* and find out who in the family was buried where and when. She can visit Special Collections at the College of Charleston and examine photographs, diaries, store records, letters, artifacts, and memorabilia relating to her forebears.

All sides of Emily's family are firmly rooted in South Carolina's Jewish community. Her dad's people include Levinsons, Louries, Kalinskys, Gergels, Lomanskys, Kligmans, Levys, and all those inter-related branches that make southern Jewish genealogy such a challenge. My lineage is more limited in scope but equally entrenched, with long tenures in Charleston and Summerton, and extended family in St. Matthews and Greeleville. Emily's step-dad's family, the Barnetts, arrived in Clarendon and Sumter counties well before the Civil War.

Both my grandfathers emigrated from Russia. My maternal grandmother left Galicia after World War I—a region that was

formerly part of Austria, then Poland. My paternal grandmother's family came a generation before and settled in Baltimore. I have yet to hear the story of how my Russianimmigrant grandfather and my American-born grandmother met, but they married and put down roots in Summerton, South Carolina. I can only imagine what my grandmother must have thought about this tiny southern town! In any case, she became a part of the community. She was an exceptionally kind person, had lots of friends, and worked in the business.

My grandfather's brothers and their

their sons and daughters, as they came of age, left Summerton to pursue college and then settled in Washington, D.C., and vicinity—Bethesda, Silver Springs, etc. My father, however, broke the pattern. Following graduation from USC's School of Pharmacy in the late 1940s, he returned to Summerton to run his father's dry goods store and to open a pharmacy. He had been only 15 when his father dropped him off at the USC Horseshoe and said, "Good luck!" As a "semihelicopter" parent, I find that really sad. When I asked Dad about this, his reply was, "Rachel, he spoke little English and he had no idea what to do!" But he did know a college education would open doors for his children that he could merely dream about.

Mom grew up in Charleston, the only child of Charlotte and Ralph Brotman. Her father died when she was 12 and for years my grandmother ran the family business, an army-navy store on King Street. Mom graduated from the College of Charleston in May 1955 and married my father that August. She moved to Summerton where they raised four children. This is where my family fits in the mosaic of South Carolina's

Jewish history. There are gaps and holes in the story I want to fill so that I can pass along a fuller picture to my children.

As kids we would tease our parents about playing "Jewish geography." They could sit for hours with friends and family and talk about who knew whom, who was related and how having a grand time while they indulged in what we now call oral history. Weaving together these family stories and relationships is what got me interested in South Carolina Jewish history and why I chose to get involved in the Society. During my two years as president, I steered our attention toward family history, genealogy, and civic life. From a program called "To Heal the World: Jewish South Carolinians in Public Service," to a two-day celebration of the 100th

anniversary of Florence's Beth Israel Congregation, to Family History Roadshow, an exhibition produced in conjunction with our May 2013 meeting, I relished the planning process and welcomed the opportunity to encourage others to share their

I hope that JHSSC will deepen the commitment of its current members and spark the interest of younger audiences. We need to find ways to inspire and engage the rising generation in meaningful ways. The new Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston provides a vehicle for us to expand our outreach both to students and to the wider world. Isadore Lourie, I feel sure, would be delighted, but not surprised, by this next chapter in our evolution.

Center Talk: Looking Toward the Future

by Adam Mendelsohn

Apast—an easier task, though scholars don't always get that right either. Whatever my limitations as a seer, I know enough to tell that the grim tidings in the Jewish and the general press about Jewish life in the South are misplaced.

Every six months or so, a journalist stumbles across a synagogue in a small town in the Mississippi Delta that is either shuttered or on its last legs. Returning to New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, the reporter pitches a story about the decline of Jewish communities in the South to the editors. The resulting copy is almost always maudlin, lamenting the imminent demise of southern Jewish life. Last year the Forward eulogized southern Jews as a "dying breed." BBC News predicted

"The end of a Deep South way of life."

Judging by these headlines, you'd think that newspaper editors are delighted to have finally found something more endangered than the newspapers themselves. If we are to believe the morbid theme that runs through these articles, southern Jews are not in



need of historians Tour of historic sites, Charleston, SC, October 1998.

↑ s a historian I don't have to predict the future, just the but morticians. A declension narrative has taken root newspaper readers now expect to find Jewish life in the South breathing its last.

> Particularly striking about this coverage is not how interested newspaper editors assume their readers will be about southern Jews, but how wrong, or at least misconceived, this narrative of doom and gloom is. Reports of the death of southern Jewry, to paraphrase Mark Twain, are greatly exaggerated. Yes, Jewish communities in the rural South are in demographic decline, as is the rural South itself. The region's economy is no longer rooted in the soil, and its people have flocked from the countryside and small towns to the cities. In 1940 only 36 percent of the South's population lived in urban areas; today

> > more than double that percentage do.

The center of gravity of the Jewish South may have shifted away from its historic pattern, but far from dying, southern Jewish life is experiencing a period of extraordinary growth and exuberance. More Jews live in the South today than at any previous point in American history, many of them in Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, and

markers and Ann Meddin Hellman built the Society's

impressive website. Rachel Gordin Barnett made my job as

executive director easy, taking charge and orchestrating our

bi-annual meetings with imagination and grace. Her focus on

worked as Dale's research assistant and JHSSC's administrative

aide for several years, before moving to Georgetown and

reviving its congregation, Beth Elohim. Stanley Farbstein

(o.b.m.) initiated a survey of Jewish burial grounds across the

state and enlisted Doris Baumgarten as his assistant; Joe Wachter

and Ann Meddin Hellman picked up where they left off. Sol

Breibart lit our path as chief historian of the tribe and keeper

of Robert's Rules of Order. Enid Idelsohn turned everyone's

ideas into events and happenings. Each of these dedicated

individuals has left an indelible mark; together they have

provided the energy and expertise to make JHSSC what it is.

expectations. It is the largest statewide Jewish membership

organization in South Carolina, with close to 500 dues-paying

members. The Jewish Heritage Collection at Addlestone

Library is a thriving archive, housing important synagogue

records, oral histories, business accounts, art, artifacts, and

family memorabilia. JHSSC has helped produce a landmark

exhibition and a nationally televised video, and continues

to document South Carolina's Jewish cemeteries, sponsor

historical markers at sites of Jewish interest, and maintain an

informative website (jhssc.org). Our biannual meetings have

surpassed B'nai Brith gatherings of years past in bringing

together people from across the state and well beyond for

enjoyable weekend get-togethers. Our newsletter, edited by

Dale and her associate Alyssa Neely, is mailed to more than

8,000 households every spring and fall. The Jewish history of

Southern Jewish Culture represents our next big step forward.

The Center establishes southern Jewish history as a priority at

the College of Charleston and promises to bolster resources

for research, teaching, and community outreach. JHSSC's

success was instrumental in launching the Center, and the

Center will assure the Society's success in the future.

The recently announced Pearlstine/Lipov Center for

South Carolina is now on the national map.

In its 20-year history, the Society has exceeded all

Others, too, played important roles. Elizabeth Moses

family history resonated with our membership.

than ever before are working to sustain Jewish life in the South.

Southern Jewish Culture, the result of a generous gift from a full slate of programs for the next two years—lectures and Edwin Pearlstine, his daughters, and their families, is a further sign of the vitality of the Jewish South, especially in the state of South Carolina. What better vote of confidence the most tireless enthusiasts busy in 2014–15. in our future than a Center devoted to exploring our roots in the region? The Center will build upon the successes of to celebrate Jewish life in the South and the foresight of those the Jewish Heritage Collection and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina to promote teaching, research, and publication on the culture and history of southern Jews. It will be a source of distinction for the College of

other cities in the Sunbelt. And more organizations and groups Charleston—no other university has anything like it—and an intellectual hub for the study of everything southern and The creation of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Jewish. Dale Rosengarten and I are in the process of planning walking tours, oral history interviews and group discussions, film screenings and cultural events—enough to keep even

> Far from breaking out the mourning rags, this is a moment who have supported the Center for Southern Jewish Culture. Never before have we had a sturdier platform to ensure that the bright future we anticipate for Jews in the region remains connected to its colorful past.

JHSSC Celebrates Two Decades of Remarkable Growth

by Martin Perlmutter

heading off to careers as professionals in the cities, he believed arguably the most important collection of its kind in the

that Jewish South Carolinians understood the value and merit of preserving the record of this changing demographic. The Jewish community in Izzy's hometown of St. Georgeas well as in places such as Kingstree, Dillon, Walterboro, Georgetown, Sumter, Camden, and Abbeville—was rapidly shrinking by the 1980s.

During a panel discussion sponsored by the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program in 1993, Jack Bass, Paul Siegel, and Izzy spoke with a sense of urgency about small towns where they grew up and, more generally, about

statewide Jewish historical society.

The seeds Senator Isadore Lourie planted for both a Jewish College library, headed by David J. Cohen, was an able and L historical society and a Jewish archives were sown in willing partner. Thanks in large measure to Sol Breibart, the fertile soil. While he was painfully aware that a mercantile library's Special Collections department had just received class of small-town Jews was aging and their children were the congregational records of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim—

> South—and David saw the virtue of building a Jewish heritage archives on this base.

Twenty years have passed since then, and JHSSC has benefitted from consistently excellent leadership, from Klyde Robinson, who had the unenviable task of following in Izzy's footsteps, to David Draisen, our vigorous current president. Under Richard Gergel and Jeffrey Rosenblum's guidance, the exhibition A Portion of the People was developed by historian and curator Dale Rosengarten in partnership with USC's McKissick Museum. Richard and Jeffrey secured financial support from the South Carolina Arts

the disappearance of the "country Jew." In 1994, two years Commission, Jerry and Sue Kline, and Harriet Keyserling after Alex Sanders, Izzy's longstanding friend and desk mate for the companion video, Land of Promise, created by Paul in the state senate, became president of the College, the Keyserling. Robert Rosen launched the pillar membership time seemed right to realize the dream of founding a new program to secure JHSSC's budget. The late Bernard Warshaw advanced the Society's agenda as a grassroots organization, The Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program, initiated supporting local initiatives such as the statewide cemetery in 1984, would be a natural home for the Society, while the survey. Belinda Gergel and Ed Poliakoff promoted historical



Left to right, standing: Saul Viener, Isadore Lourie, Klyde Robinson, Jeffrey Rosenblum, Martin Perlmutter, Sol the decline of Jewish life in the Breibart, and Richard Gergel; seated: Leah Chase, Belinda Gergel, and Janice Kahn, College of Charleston, October

Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC Ellen Arnovitz, Atlanta, GA Doris Baumgarten, Aiken, SC Betty Brody, Coral Gables, FL Harold Brody, Atanta, GA Alex and Dyan Cohen, Darlington, SC Barry and Ellen Draisen, Anderson, SC David and Andrea Draisen, Anderson, SC Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleston, SC Harold I. Fox, Charleston, SC Phillip and Patricia Greenberg, Florence, SC Ann and Max Hellman, Charleston, SC Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbia, SC Michael S. Kogan, Charleston, SC Ronald Krancer, Bryn Mawr, PA Allan and Jeanne Lieberman, Charleston, SC Susan R. Lourie, Columbia, SC Susan Pearlstine, Charleston, SC Edward and Sandra Poliakoff, Columbia, SC Benedict and Brenda Rosen, Myrtle Beach, SC Robert and Susan Rosen, Charleston, SC Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC Joseph and Edie Rubin, Charleston, SC Jeff and Walton Selig, Columbia, SC Sandra Shapiro, Wilsonville, OR Lois and Raphael Wolpert, Tampa, FL Anita Zucker, Charleston, SC

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Pillars are our backbone; without them we could not fund our operations. They enable the Society to do its work day in and day out. Pillar members commit to donating \$1,000 a year for five years. To continue and to expand the work of the Society, we need to add you to our list of staunch supporters. Please join us as a Pillar and watch the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina prosper for another 20 years. Go to jhssc.org for more information. All contributions are tax deductible.

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Register now for the May 17-18 meeting in Charleston. See page 10 for more information.

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL

SOCIETY

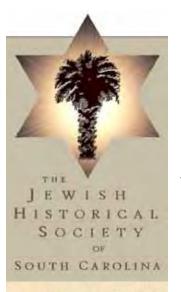
of SOUTH CAROLINA

Jewish Roots, Aiken Branches Register now for fall meeting

> Aiken, SC November 15-16

Fall 2014 Volume XIX ~ Number 2





Dale Rosengarten editor Alyssa Neely assistant editor and designer

The JHSSC newsletter is published twice a year.

Current and back issues can be found at jhssc.org



Cover: Addie R. Polier and Abe Cohen, the first Jewish couple married in Aiken, SC, 1896. Courtesy of Nelson A. Danish.

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immigrants made the transition from the Old Country to the New World and from Orthodox	y to
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Suraskys and Poliers ~ Stephen K. Surasky ~ Old World Jewish traditions mixed easily with Aiken's southern culture according to this baby-boomer, who remembers that a visit from Santa was a regular part of the winter holiday season......8

"Mr. Persky" and His Clan ~ Mordecai Persky ~ Son of Esther Surasky and Nathan Persky, the author grew up in a world populated by bubbehs, daddys, and a crowd of cousins. "Eighty years of baking in American sunshine" distanced him from the Judaism of his father, and left him

Efron Family History ~ Marvin Efron ~ Hailing from Knyszyn and Minsk, Ida Surasky and Morris Efron settled first in St. Louis, where they raised six children. After Morris's death in 1918,

Recollections of Growing Up in Aiken ~ Sondra Shanker Katzenstein ~ A great-granddaughter of Ida and Morris Efron recalls her childhood among Christian neighbors and friends, and the

Reflections of a Southern Jew ~ Samuel Wolf Ellis ~ Jacob Wolf's great-grandson remembers Adath Yeshurun Synagogue as the heart of Aiken's Jewish community, where ancient traditions

Apples of Gold ~ Irene Krugman Rudnick ~ The first Jewish woman elected to South Carolina's General Assembly, a Columbia native who made Aiken her home, reflects on lessons from a life

The Poliakoffs of Aiken ~ Stuart Fine ~ Tracing his grandparents J. S. Poliakoff and Rebecca Vigodsky from Minsk in Belarus to Aiken, South Carolina, inspired the author to organize a 2013

The Baumgarten Family ~ Linda Baumgarten, Sharon Mills, Ann Traylor, and Doris L. Baumgarten ~ Delaware transplants, the Baumgartens arrived in Aiken in the late 1970s and discovered that the small southern city and its synagogue offered abundant opportunities to get

History Is the Tie that Binds Us ~ Martin Perlmutter ~ To continue connecting generations by exploring and teaching our shared history, the Society needs to expand its membership and add

Letter from the President



r or those of us who attended JHSSC's 20th Anniversary Celebration on May 17-18, all I can say is WOW! I am so proud to be associated with this great organization. Events like this do not just happen. They come about because of the hard work of not just one person, but the work of many individuals. I am going to attempt to name them, and please forgive me if I leave anyone out.

Susan Altman, with the help of the anniversary planning committee—Ann Hellman, Marty Perlmutter, Enid Idelshohn, Rachel Barnett, Sandra Conradi, Dale Rosengarten, and Mark

Swick—orchestrated a wonderful evening of food, fellowship, and festivities. On Sunday morning, keynoter Stuart Rockoff took a hard look at "the changing face of the Jewish South," an exercise we all need to do to see where we are now and plan our direction for the coming years.

I especially want to thank

they presented before the gala on Saturday, and for their willingness to serve on a long-range planning committee. Chaired by Rachel Barnett and facilitated by David J. Cohen, the committee met twice over the summer, analyzing the Society's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to its future. To help chart our course over the next decade, they have designed a survey directed toward all members and friends of JHSSC. If you have not yet filled one out, please access the survey at jhssc.org and tell us your thoughts.

Let me take a moment to acknowledge the sad reality that, with the death of Bernard Warshaw last February and Klyde Robinson in March, we lost two past presidents in the

space of 60 days. I am all the more grateful to my predecessors who, perhaps in response to these losses, have stepped up to the plate and renewed their commitment to the Society.

Thank you, Ann, for your tireless work on our web page, cemetery and memorial plaque program, and your help when I just need to talk.

Barry Draisen and Ernie Marcus, VPs in charge of Archives and Historical Sites, are doing a great job, recently adding Greenville to the Society's online database of cemeteries and memorial plaques, and beginning to explore new territory— Orangeburg—as a potential location for an historical marker.

Plans for the fall meeting in Aiken are coming together nicely, with a dialogue Sunday morning, November 16, between Richard Gergel and Robert Rosen (popularly known as the

"Gergel and Rosen Road Show"), a panel of old-timers and newcomers following lunch, and the public dedication of Adath Yeshurun's historical marker at 2:00 P.M. Aiken is a special place for me, as many of my ancestors settled there when they came to the United States from Russia, and many of the Poliakoff branch of the family are Israel Cemetery.



the Society's past Past presidents Jeffrey Rosenblum, Robert N. Rosen, Belinda F. Gergel, Richard Gergel, presidents for the Edward Poliakoff, and Ann Meddin Hellman at the Spring 2014 meeting in Charleston. buried in the Sons of insightful panel Not shown: Rachel Gordin Barnett. Photo: Jeri Perlmutter.

Lastly, please take the time to fill out the survey and consider how you would like to get involved. The Society needs your participation and help!



We need your ideas! Please go to jhssc.org and complete the online survey. Your responses will help us evaluate past programs and determine our direction for the future.

From White Russia to Aiken County: The Kaplan Family's Story

My family's story begins in the 1880s in that part family moved to Aiken, where my grandfather ran a business hauling fruit between South Carolina and Florida. Sam and Byelorussia as it was called. Today it is called Belarus. Both of my paternal grandparents were born in that decade. My grandfather, Sam Kaplan, came to America in 1903, and my grandmother, Ida Kamenoff Kaplan, arrived in 1905.

Russia. The original family name was Tarant, not Kaplan. My grandmother was born in Lepel, in the province of Vitebsk. I should note that the name Kamenoff is derived from a village called Kamen, in the vicinity of Lepel. The Poliakoffs, another early Jewish family in Aiken, originated in Kamen, so it is likely that these two families knew each other in the Old Country.



Left to right: Raymond Kaplan, his mother, Ida Kamenoff Kaplan, and her good friend Sophie Rudnick return from the races, Aiken, circa 1937. Courtesy of Jeffrey Kaplan.

in 1908. They came to the Aiken area in 1908 or 1909, more than a hundred years ago—well before the founding of Adath Yeshurun, Aiken's synagogue. What brought them to Aiken, undoubtedly, was the fact that my grandmother's brother-inlaw and sister, Jacob and Julia Kamenoff Wolf, were already living there. The first place in South Carolina that they called home was not the town of Aiken, but rather the village of Wagener, about 25 miles from Aiken itself. My grandfather, like so many Jews before and after him, opened a country store. There had been no stores in Wagener before my grandparents arrived, so I have been told, and they were also the first Jews to settle in the town. According to Uncle Ben, my father's oldest brother, there was no more anti-Semitism in Wagener than one would find in Tel Aviv. My grandparents were the object of curiosity, but not hostility.

My father, Raymond, was the youngest of four brothers. Born in Wagener in 1927, he was three years old when the

Ida died within six weeks of each other when I was just over a year old, so I have no memories of them. However, Sam was described to me as a sweet man who was well liked.

One story that my father passed on to me about my My grandfather was born in Minsk, the capital of White grandfather is an excellent example of the contradictions of

> living in the South, particularly in an earlier era. One of Sam's close friends was active in the Ku Klux Klan in Aiken. As a Klansman, he disliked Jews in principle, but he loved Mr. Sam, as my grandfather was known.

As to my grandmother, my mother tells a revealing story she undoubtedly heard from my father. My grandmother and her best friend, Sophie Rudnick

My grandparents met in New York City and married there (mother-in-law of the Hon. Irene K. Rudnick and grandmother of Morris Rudnick, Esq.), liked to sit on one of the park benches lining Laurens Street, Aiken's main thoroughfare, and read the Yiddish paper aloud and talk to each other in Yiddish. My father and his friend Harold Rudnick (Sophie's son) would shrink in embarrassment while this was going on.

> Sophie Rudnick's husband, Morris, was as close a friend to my grandfather as his wife was to my grandmother. He was a man of great physical strength. After my grandfather became paralyzed on one side of his body, the result of a stroke, Morris would literally pick him up and put him in his car, and the two men would go for a ride.

> In the early 20th century, Aiken's Jews held religious services intermittently above stores and in places such as the Aiken Masonic hall. However, they did not formally organize as a religious community until 1921, when Congregation Adath Yeshurun obtained a charter of incorporation from the state of South Carolina.

synagogue in time for Rosh Hashanah in 1925. I remember the late Mandle Surasky, who for years was the congregation's lay leader, telling me how he, Meyer Harris, and a couple of others rushed to get the synagogue ready for High Holy Day services that year. The beautiful little synagogue of Adath Yeshurun still

stands and is still in use. I recall my mother telling me that a handful of Jews built that synagogue.

I can thank my late father—and my mother as well—for glimpses of Jewish life in Aiken before I was born or old enough to remember. Some of these early Jews were people of great piety. Jacob Wolf's father, I was told, always wore a yarmulke and liked to say his daily prayers outside at dawn with his tallis over his head, in keeping with Orthodox custom. That certainly must have attracted a lot of attention.

its founders. The sanctuary has a single center aisle, and my mother says that when she married my father and moved to Aiken in 1951, men sat on one side of the aisle and women sat on the other side, although there was no formal mechitza separating the seating for men and women. Most of the women had their own prayer books that they brought to shul. (I still have my grandmother's.) My father said that the synagogue was packed when he was growing up. There was no rabbi in Aiken, but the baal tefilah (the lay hazzan), was a man named Zushke Poliakoff, who wore a beard, a bowler hat, and a long tallis. My uncles found his reading of the prayers, which he apparently did with great speed, a source of mirth. Since none of my uncles knew Hebrew, what they told me should perhaps be taken with a grain of salt.

Of the many stories I've been told, one stands out in my mind concerning Mrs. B. M. Surasky, an outstanding figure in

The little Jewish community of Aiken opened the Aiken's Jewish community in days gone by, who, my mother recalls, took upon herself responsibility for collecting funds for various Jewish causes from Jewish businesses in town. As an elderly woman, she was driven around Aiken by an African-American man who had worked for the Surasky family for years. Everyone called him Eb; no one can remember his last

> name. Eb would go into each business to collect funds for Mrs. Surasky while she sat in the car. He would come out of one store after the other and show Mrs. Surasky how much money he had been given. If she was not satisfied, she would tell him to go back inside and let the proprietor know that he had to give a larger sum, at least as much as he had donated the year before.

Eb was a wonderful man. After my grandfather's stroke, Eb came to his house every morning and helped him bathe.

As a child, I remember synagogue. On a typical

Friday night, about two dozen people would attend services, but my mother remembers that on the High Holy Days Adath Yeshurun drew from towns smaller than Aiken, such as Barnwell, Williston, Edgefield, Johnston, Ninety-Six, and Saluda, and the sanctuary would fill with worshippers.

My parents met in Charleston, where my mother, Ruth Kirshtein Kaplan, was born and grew up. Before they were married my mother told my father that she wanted them to have a kosher household. My father agreed to this. My grandparents had tried to keep kosher when they settled in Wagener in the first decade of the last century, but they gave up the attempt. By the time they got back to Wagener with kosher meat, it was spoiled.

My supposition is that most of the first Jewish families in Aiken maintained kosher households. By the time my parents set up housekeeping, however, the only other family my mother



Services at Adath Sam Kaplan, the author's grandfather, manned the cash register at Kap's Yeshurun in the early years Restaurant on Laurens Street, owned by his son Isadore "Itch" Kaplan, Eb as caretaker of the reflected the Orthodoxy of circa 1952. Courtesy of Ruth Kirshtein Kaplan.

knows for sure was keeping kosher was that of my great-aunt Julia Kamenoff Wolf. I remember her as Tanteh Goldie. Nathan had served in World War I and been gassed in France. It My mother's uncle Rev. Alter Kirshtein was the shohet in Charleston and had a butcher shop at the time. He would cut up and package a side of kosher meat for my mother and send it to her on the Greyhound bus. After my great-uncle gave up his butcher shop and retired, we got our meat from Shapiro's, the kosher butcher in nearby Augusta. In the early years of my parents' marriage, rabbinical students who came to Aiken to conduct services for the High Holy Days would eat at their also belonged to Augusta's Orthodox synagogue (it's now house because my mother kept kosher.

By the early 1960s, Adath Yeshurun had undergone some changes. Men and women now sat together and read from a Conservative prayer book. The congregation was shrinking, including attrition in our own family, with the death of my January 1967, and one year later we moved to Charleston.

grandparents and the departure of two of their older sons, Uncle Isadore (Itch) and Uncle Abe, and their families. I don't remember the synagogue being crowded with the exception of Simhat Torah, when my brother Sam, sister Laura, and I would march around the synagogue with the other children. The procession was led by Mr. Nathan Persky, who would then gather us all on the bimah under a large tallis, held up at the corners by four men.

Nathan Persky was

Adath Yeshurun, circa 1962. Courtesy of Jeffrey Kaplan. respected, and I was privileged to have a special relationship with him. Although it wasn't widely known or appreciated, he was an outstanding Hebraist of national repute, as well as an expert on Jewish rituals and customs. My Orthodox grandparents in Charleston, Abe and Edith Kirshtein, were terribly worried that I would grow up in Aiken completely ignorant of Judaism, so Grandfather Abe arranged for Mr. shop was a well-known Aiken landmark. Persky to tutor me. I vividly recall Mr. Persky closing his store and meeting me for lessons several times a week. As a result, I learned not only prayers but conversational Hebrew, and was even exposed to modern Hebrew poetry. Another precious memory I have is of my grandparents driving to Aiken from Charleston, and my grandfather sitting in on my lessons.

Nathan and Nettie Franzblau lived directly in back of us. was said the Franzblaus settled in Aiken because they thought the climate would be good for his health. Mr. Franzblau led services in the synagogue, particularly after Mr. Persky died, and to quiet the hubbub in the sanctuary, he would slam his hand down on the reading desk a couple of times. That did get everybody's attention, at least for a little while.

Several of Aiken's Jewish families, including my own, Conservative), and the children would carpool in the afternoon to Hebrew school there. This gave us the opportunity to meet more Jewish kids and to attend bar mitzvah dances in Augusta. My bar mitzvah took place at Augusta's Adath Yeshurun in

While I did not encounter a lot of anti-Semitism growing up, I do remember kids occasionally making disparaging remarks. Certainly I was aware of belonging to a very small group—a slim minority of the population. At the same time, we had good friends who were not Jewish, and living in Aiken was a positive experience for me. I also would note that Aiken's tiny Jewish community enjoyed a profile well beyond its numbers. At least three



the religious leader of Aiken's Jewish community, hugely Jews have served on Aiken's City Council: Mandle Surasky, Steve Surasky (the current president of Adath Yeshurun), and my father, Raymond Kaplan. Irene K. Rudnick has had a distinguished career in the South Carolina legislature and as an educator. She is pictured in an exhibit on prominent women at the Aiken Museum, which also features a photograph of my great-aunt Julia Wolf, whose elegant dress

> I feel very close to Aiken and am proud to be a member of Adath Yeshurun, as were my parents and grandparents before me. It's remarkable how Aiken retains the affection of people who lived there, or whose families lived there. The number of people who came back to Aiken three years ago for Adath Yeshurun's 90th anniversary eloquently speaks to that.

Aiken's First Jewish Wedding by Nelson Arthur Danish

he citizens of Aiken enjoyed the novelty of witnessing ▲ a Jewish wedding on Sunday afternoon in the Lyceum Hall. The contracting parties were Miss Addie R. Polier, a daughter of Mr. H. L. Polier, and Mr. Abe Cohen, a merchant of Augusta."

So began the story of the first Jewish marriage in Aiken, South Carolina, celebrated on May 31, 1896, as reported in the weekly Aiken Journal & Review. H. L. Polier was Harris Louis,

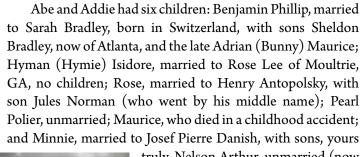
the first Jewish man to reside in Aiken, having lived there for ten years when his daughter's wedding took place. As there was no synagogue at the time— 118 years ago—the ceremony was held on the stage of the Lyceum Hall on Laurens Street. No photograph of the building, long since gone, exists.

Little is known of H. L., as most called him, but from his tombstone in Sons of Israel Cemetery, Aiken, where he was buried in 1921, this: "born Grodno, Russia." H. L. had two siblings, Morris S. and Sarah Anna, who became the second wife of Benedict Morris Surasky.

H. L.'s first wife (the mother of Addie Rebecca) was Anna Sutker, of whom nothing is known; curiously, she was not mentioned by name in the wedding story. Addie was their only child. H. L.'s second marriage and they had four children: Isadore Benjamin Philip. Courtesy of Nelson A. Danish.

(later, legally, Shad), David Solomon, Belle, and Esther. Shad a phone call: "My name is Steve [Stephen Kent] Surasky [of Justine Wise Tulin (her second marriage), daughter of Rabbi Stephen Wise of Temple Emanu-El, New York City; David to Ruth Sneider (who lived to 104, buried in the Jewish cemetery in Lancaster, PA); Belle to Harold Mittle; and Esther to Ben Engel.

Following the ceremony and reception "for about 150 guests . . . where an hour or so was spent around the tables in pleasant conversation . . . the happy couple accompanied by a number of their friends boarded the 10 P.M. train and went over to Augusta [about 17 miles away], which is to be the future home of the bride."



truly, Nelson Arthur, unmarried (now of North Augusta, SC) and Michael Barry, now living in Aberdeen, MD. His wife is Bettye A. Rabinowitz of Beaufort, SC, the daughter of Ethel Lipsitz and Henry Rabinowitz.

On May 28, 1981, the Aiken County Rambler, no longer published, reprised the story about Aiken's first Jewish wedding, marking what would have been Addie and Abe's 85th anniversary, providing this information: Addie Polier was from Kiev in the Ukraine and was brought to Aiken by her father in 1890 when she was 16. The bride was 22 and Abe was 31 when they married. Again, from the Aiken Journal story: "Rabbi A. Polikoff, of Augusta, performed the ceremony which was according to orthordox [sic] Jewish custom. He was attired in a black suit and wore a tall silk hat which he never removed."



Addie R. Polier Cohen and her children. counterclockwise from upper left: Minnie Margaret was to his son-in-law's sister—no (the author's mother), Pearl Polier, Hyman blood relationship—Fannie Cohen, Isidore, Maurice, Rose (Pearl's fraternal twin), and

Several weeks after the 1981 anniversary story appeared, I received

and David became attorneys. All the siblings married: Shad to Aiken and I saw the story of your grandparents' wedding. My mother is a Polier." A little Jewish Geography later, we realized our relationship—third cousins. His greatgrandfather was M. S.; mine, H. L.—the Aiken brothers.

> After Abe Cohen died in 1930 (he is buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Augusta), Grandmother Addie lived in Augusta with her daughters Pearl Polier and Minnie Danish, and son-in-law Joe Danish. She died in 1944 and is buried next to her husband.

> Only two things are left from this Aiken first: the couple's portrait and my grandmother's simple gold wedding band, engraved inside: "Abe to Addie May 31th 1896," which I wear, 24/7, on my right hand.

Abraham Surasky was killed in July

1903 at the age of 30, near Aiken,

Some 20 years ago while researching the case I learned

that Lee Green had been convicted of killing another

person some years later. I called one of his grandchildren,

then an elderly woman, to see if she would meet with me

and provide information on Green's life. She refused to

discuss the case or her grandfather except to tell me that

he lived out his life as a good Christian man and was now

with the Lord. I declined to ask her where she thought

my great-uncle was. Around that same time, I also located

Abraham's unmarked grave at the Magnolia Cemetery

in Augusta, GA. It is a mystery as to why there was no

gravestone. Abraham's two young daughters, Dorothy

and Mildred, were raised by their uncle Sam Surasky

and his wife, Mary. Sam moved the family to North

Carolina and Dorothy's son, Mel Cohen, is the long-

serving mayor of Morganton. Mel's daughter, Stacy, then

a high school student, was also researching the history

of her great-grandfather's murder and in 1993 organized

a reunion in Aiken of Abraham's living descendants. On

the Saturday morning of the reunion we gathered at

Abraham's gravesite for an unveiling of his tombstone,

90 years after his death. Better late than never.

Suraskys and Poliers: The Old World Meets the New

by Stephen K. Surasky

Tam 67 years old and was born and raised in Aiken, as were as peddlers, selling their wares to rural folk who would normally **▲**both my parents, Harry Surasky and Evelyn Goodman have to travel long distances into town to shop for goods. Surasky, and my mother's mother, Rebecca Polier Goodman. Her father, Morris S. Polier, had come to the town in the late on Laurens Street. The tragic exception was Abraham Surasky, 1800s or early 1900s to join his older brother, Harris Louis the youngest of the Surasky brothers. He was working his route Polier, commonly known as H. L.

H. L. had immigrated to the United States from Knyszyn, a small town near Bialystok, in the region of Grodno, Russia (now Poland), around 1880. He settled first in Philadelphia

another respiratory condition that sent him fleeing to Aiken around 1888. At the time, the town was well known as a health resort. boasted several sanitoriums, and attracted tuberculin patients from across the country.

H. L. owned a department store and M. S. opened and operated a barber shop, both downtown. There is little information on the religious life of Aiken's first Jewish families; however, I am told that the Poliers, while not particularly observant of Jewish law, were deeply proud of their Jewish heritage, helping to raise money for a Jewish cemetery (1913) and Adath Yeshurun Synagogue (1925). M. S. was learned in SC. Courtesy of Jerry Cohen.

theology and Jewish history and loved to visit and have lengthy discussions and debates with Christian ministers in Aiken, whom he counted as his friends. I am fortunate to have inherited several of my great-grandfather's books and treatises, including a multi-volume *History of the Jews* by Heinrich Graetz.

Around 1886, H. L.'s sister, Sarah Anna Polier Surasky, and her husband, Benedict Morris (B. M.) Surasky, arrived in Aiken from Knyszyn. B. M. was the oldest of five brothers, one of whom, Solomon Surasky, was my paternal grandfather. One by one the brothers and one sister, Ida Surasky Efron, immigrated to Aiken. The brothers traveled the countryside

Eventually all brothers but one were able to open stores about 15 miles from Aiken in July 1903 when a young man, Lee Green, arrived home to find Abraham helping Lee's wife carry some goods from her wagon into the house. Abraham, who was a widower with two young children, was gruesomely murdered where, according to family lore, he contracted tuberculosis or by gun and axe and his body left in his buggy in the woods. The

> primary witness as to motive was a teenage black girl, Mary Drayton, who was hired by Green and his wife to come to the scene and clean up the evidence while Green found someone to help hide Abraham's body.

> According to Mary's sworn affidavit, Green held a long-standing grudge against Jewish peddlers and had admitted to her that he shot at another peddler, Levy, three weeks prior, "only to make him drop his bundle." Green had told her that he intended to kill Surasky.1 He and his wife, Dora, disclosed to Mary the gruesome details: how Green shot Abraham with his shotgun, and as Abraham begged for his life, offering to give him "all

I have got," Green exclaimed, "Stand back, you son of a bitch, don't come on me," and shot him again. Abraham dropped to his elbows and knees and was then shot and axed twice in the head.2

Another witness testified

that Green "was going to kill ever [sic] Jew peddler that came around and get shed of them."3 According to Drayton, Green and Dora decided to tell authorities that Green had arrived home to find Surasky making a pass at his wife, and he was thus merely defending his wife's honor, as any southern gentleman would do. Green was acquitted of the murder at trial. One must assume that in 1903 the testimony of a black teenager could not match





Surasky Bros. Store, Laurens Street, Aiken, SC, circa 1914. Interior: left to right, Ernestine Murrah, clerk; Solomon Surasky; H. C. Surasky; John Henry Holmes, employee; Sam Surasky; Mandle Surasky. Courtesy of Stephen K. Surasky. Exterior: B. M. Surasky, Sam Surasky, H. C. Surasky. Esther Persky albums. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Dora Green's claim that her husband was merely protecting her virtue from the assault of a Jewish peddler.

Like many small towns—not only southern but elsewhere as well—by the 1920s downtown Aiken was populated by numerous Jewish-owned businesses, including H. L. Polier Dept. Store, B. M. Surasky's Department Store, and Surasky Bros. Department Store. M. S.'s wife, Augusta Polier, my greatgrandmother, owned a millinery shop next to her husband's barber shop, and in 1922 Ida Surasky Efron's oldest son, Jake, opened a combination dry goods and grocery store.

It is said that the arrival of B. M. and his wife, Sarah Anna, was instrumental in starting regular religious services in Aiken. For years people convened for Sabbath prayer and holidays in the local Masonic hall, which was at the time above one of the Laurens Street stores. B. M. acted as both rabbi and cantor and, until his death in the 1930s, was the lay leader of the Jewish community. His wife—Auntie B. M. as she was known—is said to have introduced kashrut to Aiken, traveling to Augusta, about 17 miles away, to bring back chickens and kosher beef.

I grew up in a synagogue populated by a substantial congregation; almost all the members were my cousins, descendants of the Poliers and Suraskys. Other prominent original Jewish families were the Wolfs, whose progenitor Jacob Wolf was one of our synagogue's founders; the Efrons, who arrived in Aiken as a result of the marriage of the one Surasky sister, Ida, to an Efron; and the Rudnicks, who were active in the congregation and in Aiken's business community.

In my youth, Adath Yeshurun was not affiliated but would have been considered Orthodox. The women sat on one side of the aisle and men on the other. No women were called to the Torah and none played a part in the services. Aiken did have, however, an active Hadassah/Sisterhood, and the ladies ran the Sunday school. Very few would have been considered especially religious or observant, but the older members were the children of Eastern European immigrants and continued to follow Old World traditions. Nathan Persky, son-in-law of one of the Surasky brothers, had inherited B. M. Surasky's duties as the community's religious leader and Hebrew teacher and occupied that unofficial post until his death in the 1960s. We held services in the synagogue only when a member had a yahrtzeit, at which time the men would receive calls that a minyan was needed and would go to the shul to say kaddish. Other than that, regular services were held only on the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Purim, and Simhat Torah, with Mr. Persky leading the services.

In 1950s and '60s Aiken's downtown remained crowded with Jewish businesses: Surasky Bros. Liquor Stores, owned by my father, Harry, and his brother, Ben, who was also an attorney with offices above the store; Nathan and Esther Persky's Department Store; Efron's Red & White Supermarket, owned and operated by Jake Efron and his wife, Helen; Sam and Minnie Shanker ran another grocery store, Sam's Supermarket; Efron's Garage and Taxi Co., operated by Isadore Efron. Ida Wolf owned and operated Aiken's finest women's store, Julia's Dress Shop, and Mandle Surasky and his partner, Manning Owen, operated Owen-Surasky, Aiken finest men's shop; Abe Wolf's Famous Brand Shoes was just down the street, and only a few blocks away was Laurel's Hardware owned by Lazar Laurel, and its next door neighbor, Franzblau's Hardware,

owned and operated by Nathan and Nettie Franzblau. Harold Rudnick sold furniture out of Rudnick's Barn. which doubled as his wife Irene's law office and campaign headquarters. On the Columbia highway was Marvin's Drive-In, owned by Marvin Rifkin and his wife, Mollie Efron Rifkin, a favorite hangout of Aiken's teens. Aiken's only movie theaters, the Patricia and the Rosemary, were named after owner Bert Ram's daughters.

Not only were Aiken's Jews leaders in the city's business community, they were also actively involved in Aiken's political and civic life. M. S. Polier was Grand Master of the Masonic lodge, B. M. Surasky, and later, his son Mandle, served on the city council and as mayor pro tem. Mr. Nathan Persky was instrumental in bringing the Boy Scouts to Aiken and was voted as Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce. Irene

Krugman Rudnick, past president of our synagogue and now father's favorite traditions during the Christmas holidays for many years.

only one other remains a member of our Jewish community— Nelson Danish, great-grandson of H. L. Polier. Julie Wolf Ellis and her kin are the last remaining descendants of the Wolf family in Aiken. Among the Rudnicks only Irene and her son, Morris, are congregants. The rest of the original families are now gone, most buried in Aiken's Sons of Israel Cemetery, and their children and grandchildren scattered worldwide. There remains not one Jewish-owned retail business in Aiken, although we are well represented in the legal, medical, and other professions. The University of South Carolina at Aiken, as well as the Savannah River nuclear facility, have attracted new Jewish families, and our synagogue continues to thrive as the center of Jewish life in Aiken, now populated mostly by newcomers from the North who have retired to the area to enjoy the weather, golf, and equestrian events.

Growing up as the only Jewish boy in my schools and among my peer group did not seem at all odd to me. I knew that in the realm of religion I was "different," but I never perceived any antagonism or anti-Semitism, at least among my friends and acquaintances. I believe you would hear the same sentiments

> from other Jews who have made Aiken their home. My family, although intensely proud of its heritage, was fully integrated into the majority southern culture. I might attend a Purim service one day and attend a "Young Life" meeting at the Presbyterian Church with my girlfriend the next. I thought there was nothing unusual about my saying ha-motzi and kiddush on Friday night and on Monday morning reciting the Lord's Prayer in homeroom. I thought it was the official school prayer, not a Christian rite.

While we did not celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday and would never have had a tree in our home, my parents, not wanting, I suppose, for my sisters and me to feel deprived, always invited Santa to visit us on Christmas morning. My friends were envious that I would receive gifts for the eight nights of Hanukkah and rack up again on their holiday. I believe the following true story illustrates the point. One of my

president emeritus, served in the South Carolina legislature was to call the homes of his gentile friends and, as Santa, speak to their children. One year he called our own home I am the last Surasky in Aiken and, from the Polier family, and asked for my little sister, Anne, then about six. "HO, HO, HO," Santa bellowed. "What's your name, little girl?" "Anne Surasky." "Have you been a good girl this year?" "Oh, yes, Sir!" "Good. What would you like Santa to bring you tomorrow morning?" Anne then ran off a long list. "Do have any brothers or sisters?" "Yes. I have an older brother, Stephen, and an older sister, Brenna." "What do you think they might want Santa to bring them?" "Oh, you don't have to worry about them—they're Jewish."

Ida Surasky Efron sitting in front of her

store on Laurens Street, Aiken. Courtesy of

Sondra Shanker Katzenstein.

- 1. Patrick Q. Mason, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob: Violence against Religious Outsiders in the U.S. South, 1865-1910" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1975), 201.
- 2. Ibid, 200, citing Drayton affidavit.
- 3. Ibid, 201, citing Parker affidavit.

"Mr. Persky" and His Clan

Ty cousin Beatrice Efron was one of the Surasky of my parents, Nathan and Esther Persky, and a student of winfolks I found very special when I was a youngster in Aiken. She was smart as a whip, and had a there-in-her-eyes kindness that I remember well a good 60 years after I last laid eyes on her, for she left us a little past age 20 to marry Morris Mink down in Louisville, Georgia, at about the same time I went off to Carolina.

Bea and I never got much beyond hello talking to each other, but I heard the sensitivity in her words and saw it in her eyes when she spoke to our mamas. I was usually in her presence because my mama, Esther, had asked if I wanted to go with her to Bea's mama Theresa's house on Fauburg Street, a few short blocks away, but in Aiken that was far enough to keep people apart.

cousins—three Payeff siblings and two Efrons, all older than I, all five possessing exceptional humor and intelligence. The Payeffs were Kivy, Mandel, and Sophie, who with Daddy Yeshuah and Mama Dora traipsed over to our house every Sunday from Chesterfield Street. A few years and a world war later, Grandma invited them to live in an apartment at her house, for the place where we lived belonged to her.

I felt close to Beatrice and her big brother, Above: Nathan and Esther Julius, who shared Kivy's gift for show-off comedy; I enjoyed that gift as it took wing in

Kivy and Julius, and envied it just as much. But why did I have such comical cousins? Was it because they were Jewish, like so many comedians of that radio age—Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, Groucho Marx, Milton Berle?

Julius and Kivy were eight years older than I, Bea and Mandel four or five years older. It was fun to be around them, but I had no reason to suppose I'd be welcome company for them. I knew a nine-year-old could only get so much attention from 14- or 17-year-olds. Mandel's friend Harold Rudnick once offered to shut my mouth for me if I interrupted them again. Harold was bigger and I shut up.

I was born into a house where it was pre-ordained that I would be a student of Yiddishkeit (Jewishness) under the tutelage

frumkeit (observant religiousness) under both Daddy and Grandma Freydl Surasky. Maybe it was my early exposure to frumkeit that makes me rebel against the automatic disbelief that's been going around for decades now.

Even at Jewishly-famous Valozhyner Yeshiva in Belarus my daddy had been no ordinary student, as the picture of his fur-hatted rebbe atop Mama's piano testified. His yeshiva

> that even Adath Yeshurun's older members seemed grateful to have him lead their services. I think they saw how good he was

years had so steeped him in the art of synagoguery

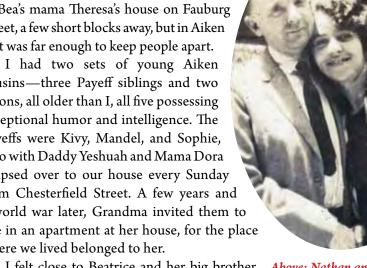
at doing it, and how modest. I saw how well he did it by attending shul later in a couple of big cities, where no rabbi made me feel as warm inside my tallis as Daddy did, so that skipping shul then became my habit.

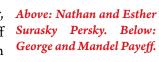
But the tongue that gilded Daddy's Torah readings could turn around on his family and hurt. For when he felt misused at home, his mouth often found a way to disgorge angry words loudly, in a mood I later thought was born decades earlier in Europe, though it was true his anger occasionally found real fuel in Aiken. His mother and wife withstood the pain; so did I and my half-sister, Eve, product of his first marriage to a Jewish Mary he found in his first port of New York. Eve would visit us in the

summer, but she grew up in the vastnesses of the great Metropolis.

We loved him through thick and thin. Every shouting incident ended with his swift departure, and we saw how ashamed he was when he came back home hours later in agonized silence.

But there were more and better Nathans inside him: 1) the warm, humorous man who would do anything for those he loved; 2) the man who charmed Aikenites of all faiths when he spoke at Rotary, Masonic, Eastern Star, and Boy Scouts meetings; and 3) the Nathan of that moment in the synagogue that was his and mine, as wonderful to me as Bea's smile, Kivy's wit, Spencer Tracy's movies, and the home runs of Hankis-Pankis Greenberg.





The moment came unpredictably in shul when he called Grandma loved our company. We understood each other, me for an aliyah. He'd look my way, take a step toward me, and end his preamble in an outflow of father-love that brought our names together, "Mordechai b'reb Nechemyeh," he said: Mordecai son of Nehemiah was called to Torah. I turned marrow, proud to withstand the anger of Jews who believe and read from the open scrolls, feeling like a prince honored by a king, forgetful of the troubled boy who had entered

that synagogue. Only in my aliyahs did he retrieve "Nehemiah" from the Ellis Island clerk who renamed him Nathan in 1909. He was 21 and "right off the boat" from Bremerhaven.

There was also the Nathan Persky who, knowing that stores must close on the Sabbath, ignored the rules in favor of making a living. But may I add to this report that when a good customer heaped up a stack of clothes for his family at the register, there was a Nathan who often added enough gifts to cut his profits below zero. When the man Nathan died in 1965, his legend said that every minister in town eulogized him, and some even rang church bells.

But only I was there to hear the love and forgiveness in the eulogy of his wife, Esther, in his hospital room a night before he died. I sat there as Mama held his head and called him, ever so softly, "Mein feygaleh, mein feygaleh," my little bird, my little bird.

Today you won't find me in shul unless something personal is happening there, and maybe not then either. In 1954 I left Aiken for good, setting South Carolina aside until my last visit, still to come.

As a little boy I was putty in Grandma's hands, and she made a game of keeping Sophie and me "legal" Friday night and Saturday, when coloring, snipping, and writing violated the Sabbath. Then at Saturday twilight, Grandma, Sophie, and I walked down Richland Avenue looking for the first star. We usually spotted the Lord's sign that Shabbos was over high in the sky over Hitchcock Clinic. Sophie and I went home to crayons and scissors again, and Meanwhile, your son soon found in the mother he brought

she told us, because we were in our first childhoods and she was in her second.

It was only much later that I became a skeptical Jew to my going to shul or loving Israel makes them more Jewish. Yes, some think fealty to our nation-state makes them upright,

> even when Israel un-Jewishly claims a Godgiven right to eject, harass, libel, and make war against people it has turned into our

> > own "others from Hell," forgetting that's just who we so recently were ourselves.

The Holocaust left us with a choice we chose not to see-Hitler's new lesson or Rabbi Hillel's ancient one. We could learn from Hitler the dubious privileges bestowed by brute strength (once we saw that such strength could be Jewish), or remember Hillel's simple "reduction" of Jewish law into a sentence: "Do not treat others in a way hateful to you."

After 80 years of baking in American sunshine, I became different, not necessarily improved or worsened brand of Jew than Mama, Daddy, and Grandma, or you, my softly wise Bubbeh Leah, mother of Nathan the scholar, who was so proud of bringing you to join him in America, telling all who'd listen that when the immigration fellow asked why he wanted you here, he said, "Because she is my mother."

Oh my Bubbeh, I felt and learned from your kind and

silent wisdom till age six, when you died in the big house's darkest room. As a little boy, I knew much of your language, Yiddish, which you never spoke to Yiddish speakers elsewhere in the house because you never left your rocker by the window overlooking the great yard and its giant magnolia trees. I learned more from your quiet nature than I did from the louder voices around me. Your feelings about life and love reached me by ear and observation.



Above: The author's grandmother Leah Persky, likely photographed with family or friends back in Belarus. Below: the H. C. Surasky house from the rear, 825 Florence Street.



was a handy target for his anger.

Bubbeh, I saw no prayer books—no siddur or mahzor like Grandma's—near your rocker. That part of my studies you left to your son, who taught them in a way unlike Grandma, his mother-in-law. When you left us, Bubbeh, they kept me two rooms away from your bed, where I hung on the

door nearest you and heard Daddy's terrible sobs from behind the front-hall mirror—a sad and scary sound I never heard again. I knew I'd come too close to the visitor Death, who outwits us all at least once.

Yes, I am your grandson too, Grandpas Chaim Surasky and Mordecai Persky, zeydehs I never knew—Nathan's father Mordecai dead in Valozhyn years before his son's bar mitzvah, but why? Zeydeh Mordecai, I bore your first name to places where it was a "kick-me" sign, and years later wondered if it was ever a burden to you. Back then, I hated being "Mordecai," which some now assure me is a beautiful name. I want to answer, but not out loud, "You didn't wear it to Aiken first grade in 1937."

Grandpa Mordecai, had you lived to join your son in America, would you and I have Hiram Charles Surasky, shared corned-beef-on-rye sandwiches and latticeknown as H. C. or Chaim. top apple pie, the reigning meycholim (taste thrills) at Furst's Bakery in Augusta, Georgia?

As for you, my other zeydeh Chaim, who died a half-year into 1932, the year Mama, Daddy, and I left Daddy's grocery store with the upstairs apartment I was born into eight months earlier, you were the reason we were leaving. For you had left us your dry goods store in Aiken. Alas, Grandpa, I never knew your sister Chayeh Rachel Efron, or your brothers Boruch (B. M.), Solomon, or Abraham. I only half-believed the story that my grandma, your wife Freydl, had pursued Solomon and never stopped loving him. But I knew Grandma asked me to bring her Bing Crosby's record of "Danny Boy" because she loved you. And I knew that in her beautiful Yiddish poem you were the sun being told how hard it was for the left-behind moon (herself, "der levonneh") to keep shining on her own.

I remember Great-uncle Solomon's face in shul, stamping itself in my memory as the face of a Hebrew prophet. Me so young watching him so old, seated across the aisle with his wife where no other men sat—his own man, without a doubt.

But Zeydeh, your brother Shaiyeh (Sam to his Carolina friends) came to see us again and again, always in a good humor, though he'd driven 212 long miles to our house from Morganton's

to America the one he left in Belarus—a faulty one who North Carolina foothills with pretty, white-haired Aunt Mary. I loved his asking me, only a few steps out of his car, if I'd had today's lokshen (noodle) soup yet. After which he asked to see my "muscle," then tapped my elbow, pronounced it harder than a muscle has any right to be, and said it gave me super-human strength—at which his face subsided into a kindly grin.

> In North Carolina, he must have put a similar brand on the muscular elbow of adopted grandson Jerry

> > Cohen, the Long Island-dwelling cousin I didn't know till we lived a medium driving distance from each other. I met Jerry and his Lubah 18 years ago, so I dialed their number while writing this, and found they had not only survived, but done so in finer fettle than I, owing to being six years younger. And incidentally, Jerry's brother, Melvin, the

only Jew in Morganton (pop. 18,000), has been re-elected its mayor without fail for the last 29 years. His 30th is just beginning.

Shaiyeh and Mary adopted the two daughters of his and Grandpa's brother Abraham—one daughter was Jerry and Melvin's mom, Dorothy—and did so shortly after Abraham, brand new to America, was killed by gun and axe while out peddling, a longshrouded Aiken horror tale recently recalled to life in Bella, a shiny new Aiken magazine. Thankfully, the "Jew-peddler" bigotry that proved

fatal to Abraham is now a much less essential part of the South's psychic furniture, though drawers remain open as they did while sharing my childhood with Adolf's death machine an ocean away.

Do Jews in the year 2014 still fear the unforgotten Jewish drumroll of death, waiting for us we never knew where, when, or why? And must the neighbors of the Israelites suffer always for living in the only land Jews feel is truly ours? (Answers now unknown in New York, Aiken, Gaza, and Jerusalem.)

All images in this article are from the Esther Libby Surasky Persky scrapbook and photo albums (1912-1925), Mss. 1106, gift of Mordecai Persky. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Our thanks to Bella Magazine publisher Kathy Urban Huff, staff writer Anna Boylston Dangerfield, and layout editor Jim Stafford, who provided digital copies of their stories and images of Aiken's Jewish families. For a look at past issues, go to: http://www.aikenbellamagazine.com/archives/, especially Dangerfield's profiles of the Wolfs (Oct. 2011), Rudnicks (Nov. 2011), Poliakoffs (April 2012), Efrons (Summer 2012), and Suraskys (Sept. 2012).



Jewish Roots, Aiken Branches: From Shtetl to Small-Town South

November 15–16, 2014 Aiken, South Carolina

Saturday, November 15

3:00 р.м. Optional tour of Aiken and sites of Jewish interest

Dinner on your own

Sunday, November 16

Meeting location: Congregation Adath Yeshurun, 154 Greenville Street, NW, Aiken

Annual meeting: Strategic plan will be presented – everyone is invited to attend! 9:30 A.M.

11:00 The Hon. Richard Gergel and Robert Rosen, Esq.:

The Remarkable Story of the Early Jews of South Carolina

12:00 NOON

12:30 р.м. Panel discussion: Aiken Pioneers, Then and Now

Moderator: Dale Rosengarten

Panelists: Doris L. Baumgarten, Nelson A. Danish, Marvin Efron, Samuel Wolf Ellis,

Judith Evans, Jeffrey Kaplan, Sondra S. Katzenstein, Ernie Levinson,

Irene K. Rudnick, and Stephen K. Surasky

2:00 Dedication of historical marker, followed by reception

Registration form
NAME(S)
ADDRESS
PHONE
EMAIL
The cost for this weekend is \$18 per person , not including hotel accomodations.

If you are not a current member of the JHSSC, please add

Total Amount Enclosed: \$

\$36 for your membership.



Deadline for registration:

November 7, 2014.

Return form to: JHSSC/Jewish Studies Program 96 Wentworth Street Charleston, SC 29424

Register online at *jhssc.org*

Hotel reservations:

Towneplace Suites 1008 Monterey Drive Aiken, SC 29803 Phone 803.641.7373 Fax 803.641.7391

Ask for special JHSSC rate for Saturday, November 15: \$119 plus tax.

Efron Family History

was Leizor (sometimes called Eleaser) Efron, born between 1830 and 1840. His first wife's name was Guillermina. They lived in both Knyszyn and Minsk, the his wife, Ida, his three sons (Jacob, age six, Max, age five, present capital of Belarus. They had two sons: Morris, born in Knyszyn in 1869, and Ari Joel, born in Minsk. Morris worked as a saddle maker in Minsk, while Ari Joel studied to be a rabbi. Morris married Ida Surasky

from Knyszyn. An unusual situation occurred because Ida's mother's second husband was Leizor Efron, Morris's father. This made Morris and Ida not only husband and wife, but also step-brother and step-sister.

Because of economic conditions, religious persecution and the threat of war, the Efrons decided to leave Russia. Some family and friends had left earlier and wrote that the Americas offered a better life. Morris and his family decided to move to the United States, while Ari

Joel and his family decided to immigrate to Argentina. In 1998, at age 100, my father told us about his family in Argentina. My wife, Sara, and I were in Buenos Aires for a medical convention and I was surprised to discover three pages of Efrons in the phone book there. A friend of mine who is bilingual called one of the Efrons at random and the recipient was excited to hear from one of the North American Efrons. He knew he had relatives here.

Morris left for the United States soon after my father Harry's birth in 1898. He left from Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, and landed at Ellis Island on September 19 under the name of Moische Efrom. He stopped first in New York City with a cousin, Sore Kaplan, and then proceeded each of her children followed her. The family prospered

The earliest Efron from our line that we have traced to St. Louis, Missouri, where another cousin, a member of the Berger family, owned a pickle factory. Morris soon found employment as a presser. He was joined two years later by and Harry, age two), and his mother-in-law, who was now divorced from his father.

> The newcomers arrived with Yiddish names but soon changed them to American-sounding names. They settled

in St. Louis and all lived together. Morris went into the recycling business. He collected burlap bags, renovated them, and sold them back to manufacturers and distributors.

In 1903, Ida's mother, whose American name was Sophia Rosa, was married for the third time to Hyman Levy. The family integrated into American culture quickly. They learned the language, found work, and made friends in their new homeland. Morris and other members of the family soon became naturalized



The Efron family, circa 1911. Seated left to right are Sophia Rose Surasky (Ida's mother), Ida, and Morris. Dena is in front of Morris. Standing: Annie, Harry, Jake, Jake's wife, Helen, Max, and Isadore. Missing is Lillian, who wasn't born until 1914. Courtesy of Marvin Efron.

citizens. After Ida arrived in the United States, she and Morris had four more children, Isadore, Annie, Dena, and Lillian. All of the children attended school, but Isadore was the first to graduate from high school.

Everything went well until in 1918, when Morris died suddenly, apparently of typhoid fever. Shortly after his death, Ida decided to move to Aiken, South Carolina, where her brothers had settled and were operating successful retail clothing businesses. She had five brothers, but one, Abram, had been murdered in 1903. When Morris died, his three oldest sons were married and his youngest child, Lillian, was only four years old. After Ida settled in Aiken,

there and multiplied. Jacob (Jake) had married Helen Kaback from St. Louis and they had three children, Mollie, Minnie, and Martin. In Aiken he opened a supermarket. Max had married Theresa Wise from Holland, Michigan, and they had two children, Julius and Bea. He operated a trucking line. Harry had married Mary Fadem from St. Louis and they had five children, Sylvia, Joe, Lyn, Marvin, and Evelyn. Isadore operated a taxi service and married three times, first to Dena Srago, then Fannie Leven, and finally Herta. Isadore and Dena had one daughter, Joann. Annie was a nurse and never married. Sister Dena assisted

her mother in retail clothing and married

Lou Lusher from Canada. They had no children. Lillian married Sol Passink from Savannah, Georgia, and they had two daughters, Phyllis and Nanci.

> As the family moved to the next generation, it grew in both numbers and diversity, boasting an extensive variety of professions and occupations. Unfortunately, the only Efrons left in Aiken are in the Sons of Israel section of Bethany Cemetery. Members of the family live in many states and in Israel and China, but 55 of them came together in Charleston, South Carolina, in July 2012, for a family reunion.

Helen, Mollie, and Jake Efron. Esther Persky albums. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Recollections of Growing Up in Aiken

y parents, Minnie and Sam Shanker, both were born never ever thought of them as anything other than people with a different color skin. In fact, I saw May or Ethel more than I Aiken where my grandparents Jake and Helen Efron had a did my own mother. grocery store. My parents opened their own grocery store

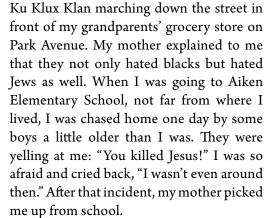
who took care of me and my two younger brothers during the day, and her mother stayed with us until my parents came home from the store at night. May and then Ethel walked to our home early in the morning to cook our breakfast and got us up for school. Mother usually drove us to school. Then she would go to the store to help my father.

The small neighborhood store was in a predominantly black area on Highway 1. Customers who lived in the housing developments nearby would stop to shop and often buy their groceries for the week. There were few supermarkets as we know of today. Our shop sold gasoline and kerosene as well as foodstuffs.

I often helped out working as a cashier or putting away merchandise. The store was not air conditioned but was cooled with fans on the ceilings. We had very nice black customers to whom my parents extended credit when needed. We were



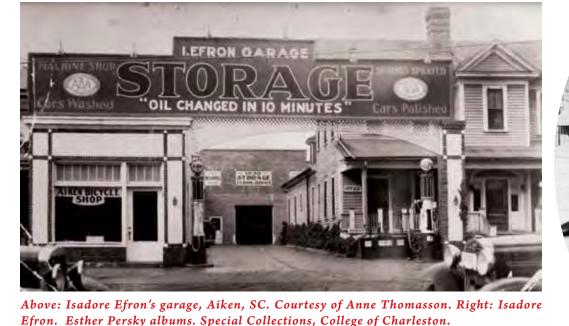
I can remember having some of the little black children and worked long hours seven days a week. They closed the come to our home to play school in the mornings. (Oddly, I store for church hours on Sunday—the only day we, as a never considered becoming a teacher, even though I thought family, ate our midday meal together. We had a "colored" lady this was a worthwhile thing to do.) I remember seeing the



Another unpleasant encounter occurred when I was handing out samples of Sealtest cottage cheese at one of the grocery stores. A customer said to me, "You

act just like a Jew." I had enough chutzpah to say back to her, "That is funny—I am Jewish and I'm proud of it!" Those were the only two episodes of anti-Semitism I can remember.

All of my friends were Christians and often invited taught at an early age that they were our "bread and butter." I me to help decorate their Christmas tree or come to their





eggnog party or go with them to midnight mass at the studied with Mr. Nathan Persky for their bar mitzvah. Catholic church. I remember spending the night with a friend on Easter eve so the Easter bunny could give me a basket. I am sure that my mother helped my friend's mother with the goodies.

When my parents sent me to Camp Tel Yehuda one summer, I didn't like it at first. I felt that I had been dropped in the middle of Israel! Everything was said in Hebrew. At meal time, we had to remember the words for the food to get served. We had to work in the garden, etc. We had

Hebrew every day but Shabbat. At the beginning of the month's stay I knew nothing, but I certainly learned a lot. Most of the campers were not from the South.

The next year, I went to Camp Blue Star and LOVED it! I didn't want to come home. My parents borrowed the money to keep me there for two months. They knew that I had a boyfriend in Aiken and they were keeping me away from him.

I feel that I got most of my Jewish education from camp. Going to synagogue in Aiken was not a good experience. Not having had any Hebrew, women sitting on one side and men on the other side, with virtually no English in the service, was Hebrew then. Only my brothers Goldberg. Courtesy of Sondra S. Katzenstein.

My cousin Rahlene Rifkin Linder and I were made to go to Augusta to the Young Judaea group. We did not feel accepted there. A few times we went to the conventions. To me, it was my camping experiences that gave me a good feeling about being Jewish.

I attended the University of Georgia for one year. The school was way too big for me. I did pledge SDT and joined the sorority. The boys at Georgia were party animals. This was not the scene for me.

> I met my husband on a blind date. He was at the navy supply school in Athens when I was a freshman. The date was arranged by a customer and friend of my parents. He was the Episcopal minister in Aiken who shopped at my parents' grocery store. His wife was a physical therapist. She asked me to help her teach adaptive swimming to handicapped children one summer.

Many years later, I went back to school at Central Piedmont Community College to become a physical therapist assistant. I had three different children in three different schools then and I was going to college in Charlotte. I am really proud to say that all three of my children have had their bar or bat mitzvah and all four grandchildren have too.



Sondra Shanker, circa 1942.



Marriage of Sondra Shanker and Charles Katzenstein. really boring. Girls were not taught February 1, 1959, conducted by Rabbi Norman

Reflections of a Southern Jew

 \mathbf{B} eing a Jew in the South is not quite Faulknerian, but there is a certain amount of quirk that goes with the territory. Sitting in Shabbat services, one is reminded of this every time the Greyhound bus pulls into the station next door, shaking the building's foundation, its engine drowning out the Hebrew song and reading of Torah.

For the Jewish people, it is often difficult to distinguish where heritage ends and faith begins. Nowhere is this more evident than in the American South, where Jews are essentially a minority of a minority. Simple survival requires a real commitment to the Jewish faith and way of life. The synagogue where I grew up, Adath Yeshurun in Aiken, South Carolina, sits as a reminder of an age that has long passed; an age where Jewish immigrants fought to make their way while refusing to shed their Jewish roots. My roots are in this synagogue; my great-grandfather Jacob Wolf was one of its founding members, along with members of the Polier, Surasky, and Poliakoff families. Like these other families, the Wolfs came here circa 1900.

I was born in 1983 and I'm not much of a historian, so my ability to tell my family history is limited. My favorite anecdote about Jacob Wolf recounts that when he struck up a correspondence with his future wife, Julia Kamenoff, who was still in Russia at the time, he sent her pictures of a much more handsome man in order to entice her to come to Aiken. Imagine her surprise when she arrived and he met her at

the train! Despite the innocent deception, they did in fact get married. Out of their union came my family, and two historic Aiken institutions, Julia's Dress Shop and the aforementioned Adath Yeshurun Synagogue.

Adath Yeshurun is a pretty building but not exactly beautiful by modern standards. What my synagogue lacks in grandiosity is made up for in sheer heart, the same type of character found in many surviving old buildings in the South. The humble two-story, two-room sanctuary resonates with the character of the men and women who scraped

together what little money they had to build their own place of worship, moving from the attic above the Masonic Temple where services were originally held. To illustrate what it was like to live as a practicing Jew in the South, there were many occasions when the Jewish businessmen who owned the clothing and shoe stores on Laurens Street, Aiken's main thoroughfare, would close up shop during business hours to make minyan.

Growing up at Adath Yeshurun, I was no different from any other child. I would dread the arrival of the High Holy Days, less because of the intensity of the liturgy and more because I could sit patiently for only

Above: Members pose on the steps of Adath Yeshurun during the congregation's 75th anniversary celebration, 1996. Photo: Todd Lista. Left: Julia and Jacob Wolf on their wedding day; Julia Kamenoff Wolf and six of her seven children: Rebecca (1903), Ann (1908), Ida (1913), Abe (1916), Sam (1914), and Sonny (1906). Courtesy of Rosalee Berger Rinehart.



by Samuel Wolf Ellis

so long. Sunday school was much the same, except that it was taught by the wonderful Mrs. Irene Rudnick, whom I admired as our synagogue president. I admired her for her unique sense of humor and for her friendship with my grandmother Evelyn Wolf. I cannot recall every Bible story told to me during Sunday school, but I can recall with pride the traits she bestowed upon me by example: kindness, fairness, and compassion. Irene's impact cannot be understated, as she tirelessly worked to keep Adath Yeshurun strong.

Although I was too young to fully appreciate the intricacies of Jewish faith and philosophy, I was intensely aware that something profound was being passed from generation to generation. It began with my great-grandfather, was passed to my grandmother and Mrs. Rudnick,

to my mother, and finally, to me. My mother and father were married in Adath Yeshurun. My bar mitzvah was held there. Our humble temple and the Jewish faith were intertwined in a complex relationship that was beyond words or reason. Mrs. Rudnick and my mother did a wonderful job instilling this in me, as I did not know my grandfather or great-grandparents, and my Mimi passed away when I was very young.

I wish that I had something more profound to say about Jewish philosophy based on my experiences growing up at Adath Yeshurun, but I have to be

honest. The things that stick out in my mind the most are the simple joys, celebrating holidays with a small but tight-knit congregation. Simhat Torah, in particular, was my favorite; parading around the sanctuary with Torah in hand, singing our hearts out, reveling in the joyous stomping that you get when a congregation is marching on hundred-year-old floorboards with an entire Sunday school in tow. Perhaps that is the ultimate testament to Jewish philosophy, this continuation of Old World pragmatism coupled with a zest for life.

Right: Wedding of Julia Wolf and Michael Ellis, 1980; Irene Rudnick teaching Sunday school, circa 1997; Wolf grandchildren at the 90th anniversary of the synagogue, 2011—all at Adath Yeshurun. Courtesy of Samuel Wolf Ellis.





Apples of Gold: My Life and Times

by Irene Krugman Rudnick

Tt is only at twilight that we can see the beauty of the day. were married on January 29, 1929. She was his star how good G-d has been to me. My tombstone will read, these words will be my favorite biblical expression: "A word fittingly spoken is as apples of gold in settings of silver." And then the added line, "Please forgive me for not getting up."

(As was said on Seinfeld, "It's our sense of humor that sustained us as a people for 3,000 years.")

Born in December 1929 to Jack and Jean Krugman, I was raised on Hampton Street in Columbia, South Carolina, where we lived with my grandfather, Harry Getter, who was a restaurateur. My mother was an only child and came to America alone after World War I from Chzortkow, Poland, to join my grandfather.

in Israel by terrorists.

My father, who had a small dry goods store on Assembly Street in Columbia, lives outside of Washington, DC. entertained policeman on the beat with coffee and doughnuts. They often asked him where he was born, and he would retort, "Zabludova, New Jersey." Zabludova lies 20 miles outside of Bialystok and is located near the border of Poland and Russia. His father was killed in 1905 at the Wailing Wall

My father's mother, Ida Krugman, came to this country from Russia with her four children and lived in New York. When her cousin, Chaim Baker, came to New York on a buying trip, he asked if he could take my father to the South with him, and she consented. Chaim Baker had ten children from class to class telling stories, and this skill has served me and my father, who was 14 or 15 when he arrived in South Carolina, worked for members of the family in three towns: Elloree, Estill, and Columbia. He was given work in exchange for shelter, food, and a small stipend, and was considered part of the Baker family. My father opened, as he called it, his laude with a double major in political science and English. "hole in the wall" on Assembly Street.

As time went by his business expanded and his store continued to prosper. My mother and father Samuel L. Prince as his secretary. Unable to find a job in a

⚠As I have grown older and look back on my life, I realize saleswoman. From both of them I learned that hard work means amassing sweat equity. The virtues and values "Wife, Mother, Teacher, and Legislator," and underneath they praised were printed on the backs of their business cards: "Square Deal Jack." By dint of their persistence and incredible work ethic, they were able to send all three of their children to college. My brother, Stanley

Krugman, was King of the BBGs [B'nai B'rith Girls and presently practices dentistry in Miami, Florida. I introduced my sister, Dorothy Krugman, to her future husband, a native Charlestonian named Jack Goldstein, who had graduated from West Point and was an army lieutenant stationed at the Savannah River Site Radar Unit in Aiken. Dorothy subsequently became a teacher and homemaker and now



Harold Rudnick (leaning on truck, front left) in Germany while serving under General Patton during World War II. Courtesy of Irene K. Rudnick.

In Columbia we were members of Beth Shalom Synagogue where my father served on the board of trustees, and we attended services and Hebrew school regularly. The Sunday school was conducted by the Reform congregation Tree of Life. My love of Judaism was influenced by my confirmation class teacher, Mrs. Helen Kohn Hennig, who wrote books on South Carolina and was in charge of the Sunday school. Her enthusiasm, intelligence, and teaching ability made a lasting impression on me.

In elementary school my teachers would ask me to go well in many capacities. In junior high school, I was president of the student body and a member of the honor society, and I was valedictorian of my senior class at Columbia High School.

I graduated from the University of South Carolina cum After graduation from USC law school, where I was one of only two or three women, I was briefly employed by Dean

students in English.

After practicing law for two years, in November 1954 I married Harold Rudnick from Aiken, South Carolina, who was introduced to me by his sister, Rose. She was married to Hyman Rubin, who served for many years as a senator from Richland County.

We moved directly to Aiken and joined Adath Yeshurun Synagogue, where Harold had grown up. Mr. Nathan Persky conducted services and Mandle Surasky was the president. As my children grew older, I became more active in the Sisterhood, supervised the Sunday school, and was a Sunday school teacher. I served as president and maintenance director of the synagogue for over 20 years. When Morris and Helen became of bar and bat mitzvah age, we traveled to Augusta, Georgia, where they were able to complete their Jewish education with Rabbi Maynard Hyman. I also taught Sunday school in Augusta.

After my marriage, I practiced law in Aiken. I shared an office over the Farmers and Merchants Bank with Benjamin Surasky. As my husband, who was the owner and operator of Rudnick Furniture, needed me in his store, I moved my office

to that location. Since 1983, I have practiced law in partnership with my son under the firm name of Rudnick & Rudnick.

I began teaching commercial law at USC Aiken in 1961 and after 50 years was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Education by USC President Harris Pastides. My teaching has been a most rewarding experience, and I am still in the classroom.

Harold and I succeeded in instilling in our children a belief in the value of education. Our daughter, from USC magna cum laude with Courtesy of Irene K. Rudnick.

both a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree constituents, I could not have been elected. My mother often in mass communications. She also graduated from USC law school with a juris doctorate and now teaches full time as a college professor. My son, Morris, also graduated from USC with a bachelor of science in business and a juris doctorate from USC law school. I have been blessed with six grandchildren— Whitney, Jared, and Joshua Rapoport, Charles and Laura Jean Rudnick, and Kathleen Tokar and her children (my greatgrands), Michael and Ashley—who have brought me great joy and happiness.

My political career began as superintendent of education for Aiken County. (The legislative delegation later abolished the

law firm, I opened my own office. To pay my rent, I tutored position and the superintendent of education is now appointed by the Aiken County School Board.) My job entailed that I investigate and report on the physical conditions of the entire Aiken County school system. I traveled to 38 schools during the year, reported at the public meetings of the Aiken County School Board, and submitted legal descriptions of

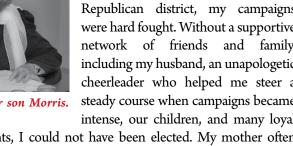
> all the school properties. While serving in this position, I brought to light many issues. For example, after reading the state's fire marshal reports I saw to it that sprinkler systems were installed in schools.



I was elected for the first time in 1973 to the South Carolina House of Representatives from District 81, in Aiken, where I served for 14 years. I was the first Jewish woman elected to the General Assembly and worked tirelessly on behalf of my constituents, priding myself on being available, accountable, and responsive to their needs. Major concerns to me were environmental safeguards, family law issues, as well as funding for public education and myriad safety issues. I addressed problems associated with highway safety, traffic lights, and cross bars and warning signals at railroad crossings. I regularly held

> public meetings where voters in my district could voice their questions and concerns. I saw that the journals of the House and Senate were made available in the library and introduced hundreds of bills while in the legislature; I was intellectually honest and sincere about reforming government.

As a Democrat in a highly Republican district, my campaigns were hard fought. Without a supportive network of friends and family, including my husband, an unapologetic cheerleader who helped me steer a steady course when campaigns became intense, our children, and many loyal



came with me to the General Assembly where she enjoyed the wonderful people and easy camaraderie of my associates. After the redistricting of my district, I lost my seat.

Today I still teach at USC Aiken, practice law, audit college classes, and am active in civic organizations. Time and again, I have learned that all of our experiences teach us resilience and patience. The most important thing that I have learned, though, is the power of a word fittingly spoken. As the novelist Henry James so aptly said: "Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind."



Helen Rudnick Rapoport, graduated Law partners Irene Rudnick and her son Morris.

Poliakoff section of the Sons of Israel Cemetery, 1996. Photo:

The Poliakoffs of Aiken

by Stuart Fine

T. S. Poliakoff was born in Minsk, Belarus, in 1867. He to avoid being conscripted into the tsar's army and to escape the pogroms that were prevalent. Many times I have imagined how intolerable life must have been for a youngster to leave his after consuming a large meal. "Acute indigestion," my mother

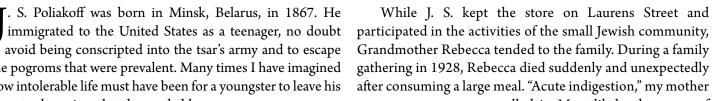
parents, knowing that he probably would not see them again, and for parents to encourage that migration. I discussed those very points with my 13-year-old grandson, Henry Fine of Newton, MA, who wrote about his great-great-grandfather for a sixthgrade genealogy project last year.

J. S. settled in Aiken likely because there were relatives in the area who were willing to provide shelter and food until he could establish himself. I suppose he peddled for a while, as did most new immigrants, until he was able to open his store on Laurens Street.

J. S. married Rebecca Vigodsky, also from Belarus, although I don't know whether they met in Aiken or in the Old Country. While my mother, Gussie, J. S.'s and Rebecca's fourth child, spoke often about the endearing personal characteristics of her parents, to whom she was devoted, she spoke little to me about their lives in Belarus. I can only imagine that life there was so unpleasant that they rarely talked

of it after settling in America, the land of opportunity.

Growing up in Aiken, all the Poliakoff children attended the Aiken Institute, as the local school was known. As I recall, the school ended with the tenth or eleventh grade. The Institute became a library some years ago and is still located across the street from The Willcox Hotel. My mother recalled socializing with the children of other Jewish families in Aiken—the Suraskys, Poliers, Wolfs, Rudnicks, and others. A gregarious person, my mother also made friends with non-Jewish classmates with whom she would walk home at the end of the school day. She made a point of telling me that mentioned overt discrimination.



called it. Most likely, the cause of death was a massive heart attack. Photos document that she was a large woman, who (I speculate) probably ate lots of fatty foods, didn't exercise much, and surely was not treated for high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

After her mother's passing, my mother remained in Aiken and helped J. S. manage the store until he retired in 1937, at which time they moved to Baltimore. Southern Jewish merchants were familiar with Baltimore because Jacob Epstein, owner of the Baltimore Bargain House, sent them "free" railroad tickets several times a year and provided "free" overnight accommodations at the Lord Baltimore Hotel. In exchange, he expected the merchants to stock their inventories with purchases made at his store. It was a successful business strategy!

Shortly after relocating to Baltimore, J. S. took a boat from Baltimore to Newport News, VA,

to visit his daughter Sadie. The boat caught fire and all passengers and crew were ordered to jump overboard into the river. J. S. was the only casualty. My mother alleged that he knew how to swim. Age 70 at the time, it's possible he suffered a heart attack; no autopsy was performed.

I visited Aiken for the first time in 1952 at age 10, stopping en route to Augusta, GA, for a family wedding. We stayed overnight at the now defunct Hotel Henderson. I have very few memories of that trip. Fifty years passed before I visited Aiken again, this time with my wife, Ellie. But before that visit, I was fortunate to make contact with they did not regularly visit in each other's houses. She never Doris Baumgarten, the unofficial historian and archivist of Jewish Aiken. Practically everything I know about my



Jacob (J. S.) Poliakoff, a founder of Sons of Israel Cemetery and Adath Yeshurun Synagogue. Courtesy of Doris L. Baumgarten.

grandfather's contributions to the Jewish community in Aiken derives from information provided by Doris.

To wit: J. S. was one of a small group of merchants who provided funds to build Adath Yeshurun and to purchase two acres for a Jewish burial ground, Sons of Israel Cemetery. Whenever I walk through that cemetery, I feel like I am visiting J. S. and Rebecca are proud of what the Poliakoffs and their my mother's friends and relatives, about whom I heard her speak so often. There are the cousins Jean and Anne Poliakoff, my mother's very good friend Dorothy Sarat (née Surasky) Scheinfeld, the Poliers, the Suraskys, the Wolfs (most of whom I met either during my 1952 visit to Aiken or when they visited us in Baltimore), and, of course, the grandparents I never met, Rebecca and J. S. Poliakoff, who had six children, born between approximately 1893 and 1908, profiled below.

After several visits to Aiken, one with our granddaughter Sarah Pranikoff, Ellie and I decided to organize a Poliakoff/ Polikoff* family reunion. In December 2013, about 30 family members gathered in Aiken for two days. It was truly wonderful watching the great-grandchildren and the greatgreat-grandchildren of J. S. and Rebecca called to the bimah for an aliyah. J. S. and Rebecca would have loved it!

At the conclusion of the service, the synagogue hosted a magnificent oneg for the family and all the congregants in the

lower level social hall. Many of the delicacies were homemade. Adath Yeshurun leaders expressed their delight at welcoming descendants of one of the founders of the congregation some 90-plus years later, while family members explained how special it was to be walking in the footsteps of the patriarch about whom they had heard so much but never met.

Dale Rosengarten. After the oneg, we visited

the Poliakoff section of the Sons of Israel Cemetery and the ancestral home on Pendleton Street, a beautiful, two-story brick house built in 1912 and now the Johnson Law Offices. We hiked in Hitchcock Woods with Dr. Harry Shealy, a retired professor of biology and former president of the Hitchcock Foundation, and enjoyed meeting new relatives and sharing several delicious meals at The Willcox. The event, reported in the Aiken Standard, was so successful that another group of 40 to 45 Poliakoffs will convene in Aiken in December 2014. (I was pleased to be recognized in the Aiken Standard article as

Most Poliakoffs include an "a." According to Gussie, when her brother Benet attended the University of South Carolina, he dropped the "a" and became Polikoff. Subsequently, his siblings followed suit.

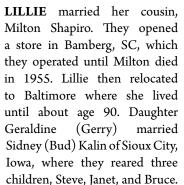
Sam Pranikoff's grandfather!) Hats off to Doris Baumgarten, Gary Poliakoff of Spartanburg, Irene Krugman Rudnick, Peppy and Stephen Surasky, and their many helpers, without whose efforts the reunion could not have occurred.

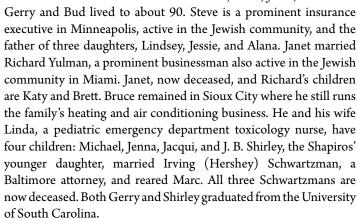
The grand, great-grand, and great-great-grandchildren of friends did for the Aiken Jewish community more than 100 years ago. I'd like to believe that J. S. and Rebecca would be proud of them as well.

Descendants of J. S. and Rebecca Poliakoff

LOUIS was a doughboy in World War I, though I don't know that he ever saw action. He started his career as a traveling salesman working out of Baltimore and eventually operated his own business, the Berkshire Sweater Company. In later years, he managed a familyowned development, Bristol Terrace Homes, near Levittown, NJ. Louis married Naomi Rombro of Baltimore. Marvin, born in 1921 and now deceased, was a practicing attorney in Baltimore who was active in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and '60s. He married Shirley Globus; their sons are Judson Casey and Adam Spence. Louis and Naomi's son Alan, born in 1929, was in the textile business. He married Dana, who worked in the fashion industry, and sired two sons: Lee, a pediatrician, and Mitchell, in the investment

> business. Both boys are married; Lee and his wife have one son.





BENET was reputed to be the scholar of the family. After graduating from the University of South Carolina School of Law, he practiced in PAGE 24

Jean Loeb and had three children.

GUSSIE, my mother, relocated to Baltimore in 1937. For three years, she worked in a ladies' dress shop as a salesperson; then, in 1940, she married my father, P. Edward Fine, a practicing attorney. She quickly persuaded him to give up his practice and join her BELLE, J. S. and Rebecca's baby, was born in 1908. She married in business. They operated a men's and boys' shop in suburban Baltimore from 1940 until retiring in 1968. I was born in 1942, married Ellen (Ellie) Himelfarb in 1964, and completed medical school in 1966. Ellie, a gifted school teacher, and I have two children, Karen and Andy. Karen is director of admissions for the Triad School in Winston-Salem, NC. Her husband, Tom Pranikoff, is chief of pediatric surgery at Wake Forest Medical Center. Their children are Sam, born 1994, and Sarah, born 1997. Andy practices pediatric emergency medicine at Boston Children's Hospital and is on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. His wife, Laura, who was his classmate at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, is an ophthalmic surgeon in Boston. Their children are Henry, born Knoxville, TN, where their daughters, Debbie and Becki, were reared.

2001, and Hannah, born 2004. I have spent my career in academic ophthalmology. From 1972 to '91, I was a full-time faculty member at the Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute at Johns Hopkins; from 1991 to 2010, I served as professor and chair of ophthalmology and director of the Scheie Eye Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. After I retired from Penn at the end of 2010, Ellie and I moved to our vacation home in the Colorado mountains, near Carbondale. I am still engaged in research and education in ophthalmology and maintain a part-time faculty appointment at the University of Colorado's Anschutz Medical Center.

SADIE married Milton Levy who spent his career with the Department of the Navy in Washington, DC. They lived in Silver Spring, MD, where they reared their children, Jay Stanley, born in 1938, and Roslyn, born in 1940. Jay, a graduate of the University of Maryland School of Engineering, married Jean; they have one daughter, Sarah, and one granddaughter. Roslyn married Lewis Godfrey and lives in Silver Spring.

Nathaniel (Ned) Badaines, a physician, and lived with him and their three children in Syracuse, NY. Their eldest child, Roberta (Bobbi, now deceased), graduated from Syracuse University, married Aaron King of Syracuse, an otolaryngologist, and had ten children. They lived in Binghamton, NY. Belle and Ned's second daughter, Eleanor (Ellie), also a graduate of Syracuse, married Gerald Schwartzberg, a physician, and moved to Phoenix, AZ, where he was in private practice and where they reared their daughters, Beth and Janet. The Badaines' son, Joel, also a Syracuse graduate, obtained a Ph.D. in psychology and eventually relocated (alone) to Sydney, Australia, where he practices psychodrama. His former wife, Leslie, lives in

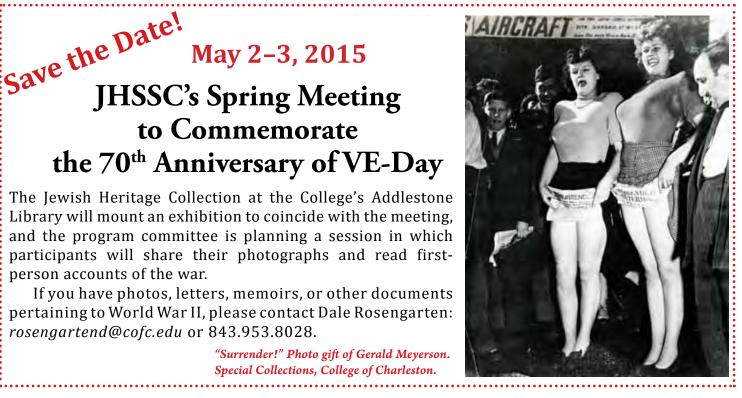
Save the Date! May 2-3, 2015

JHSSC's Spring Meeting to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of VE-Day

The Jewish Heritage Collection at the College's Addlestone Library will mount an exhibition to coincide with the meeting. and the program committee is planning a session in which participants will share their photographs and read firstperson accounts of the war.

If you have photos, letters, memoirs, or other documents pertaining to World War II, please contact Dale Rosengarten: rosengartend@cofc.edu or 843.953.8028.

> "Surrender!" Photo gift of Gerald Meyerson. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



The Baumgarten Family

by Linda Baumgarten, Sharon Mills, Ann Traylor, and Doris L. Baumgarten

oris and Pete Baumgarten and their youngest daughter transferred from Wilmington, Delaware, to Aiken, South Carolina, in August 1977, just in time to enroll Sharon for her junior year of high school. Their oldest daughter, Linda, remained in Philadelphia to finish college, and their middle daughter, Ann,

transferred to the University of Georgia the following year.

Peter, a DuPont chemical engineer, had been active in Temple Beth Emeth in Wilmington, serving as secretary and vice president of the congregation. He also served as president of the Men's Club. Pete taught religious school to teenagers for four years.

In Wilmington,



Doris was active Left to right: Doris Baumgarten, Sharon Mills, Ann Traylor, Linda Baumgarten, and a Conservative Peter Baumgarten, March 2000. Courtesy of Doris L. Baumgarten.

Aiken is a wonderful place to live. The

town provides so many opportunities

to participate in interesting activities,

stimulate your mind, keep active, and

- Doris Lerner Baumgarten

be of service to others.

serving as vice president. She chaired dinners and hospitality Allentown, Pennsylvania. The family moved several times grandsons now attend the same camp.)

After belonging to such a strong Jewish community, Doris and Pete were concerned about what Jewish life would be like in this small southern town. Remember that the World Wide Web and Google had yet to be invented.

Fortunately for the Baumgartens, a Jewish family had transferred from

Aiken to Wilmington six months before the move, and they reported that Aiken indeed had a congregation of 40 families, including numerous Jewish teenagers. Doris was pleased to find out that there was no discrimination in buying a house or joining a country club in Aiken. She and Pete were delighted to see that this small congregation had a beautiful sanctuary, three Torah scrolls, and a student rabbi brought in for High Holy Day services.

Shortly after arriving in Aiken, Pete began to help conduct Shabbat and holiday services at Adath Yeshurun. Soon he was elected to the board of directors as secretary and treasurer, and subsequently served six years as president. Doris immediately became involved in the synagogue, including arranging

hospitality schedules for student rabbis, and serving as treasurer and president of the Sisterhood. For years, she has been the first point of phone contact for the congregation, fielding random inquiries regarding Jewish life in Aiken.

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What inspired Doris and Pete to continue their Jewish involvement in their new community? Doris was born into

Jewish family in

for the Temple Youth Group multiple times. All three daughters before settling in Newport News, Virginia, where Doris were active in the Youth Group and attended programs at attended religious school and was confirmed in 1945, Kutz Camp in Warwick, New York. (Two of Pete and Doris's as World War II ended. Doris remembers being very disappointed that her brothers weren't able to attend

her confirmation a month after VE-Day, because they were both serving in the military, one in Germany and the other in Italy. Doris attended William and Mary College, where she was secretary of Hillel for more than three years, and then went to graduate school at the University of Delaware,

where she found her "nice Jewish boy," Peter Baumgarten.

Peter, who was rescued by the Kindertransport in 1939, cherished the American religious, educational, and political freedoms denied him during his childhood in Berlin, Germany. From Berlin, his family moved to Vienna, and then he and his brother were evacuated by the Kindertransport to Bournemouth, England. Since Peter turned 13 during this uprooting, he missed the anniversary in 1996, with Pete leading a rousing rendition of opportunity to have a bar mitzvah. The boys' next journey the "Little Shtetl of Aiken," based on the traditional Yiddish was to Springfield, Massachusetts, where the entire family song "Belz." More than a hundred former and current was reunited. The Baumgartens then moved to Atlanta. synagogue members attended the event. The 90th anniversary

attended University of Delaware for his masters and doctoral degrees, where he found his "nice Jewish girl," Doris Lerner.

In 1989, about the time of Hurricane Hugo, Pete and Doris joined the Southern Jewish Historical Society. When the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina was founded in the mid-1990s, they joined JHSSC and began attending meetings. Doris served on JHSSC's board of directors from 2004 to 2011. Networking with other members, Doris found the resources to locate a sofer to restore two synagogue Torahs. And after Pete's initial Sons of Israel Cemetery inventory for the Aiken-Barnwell Genealogical Society's survey, Doris, Nelson Danish, and others completed an inventory of burials for JHSSC's website.

Besides serving Aiken's Jewish community, Pete felt it was important to

protect land and water resources as a member of the boards of comforting the sick, and supporting grieving families. the Aiken Conservation Land Trust and other conservation agencies in South Carolina, while Doris continues to serve as there are volunteers to carry out its mission, Adath as a docent at the Aiken County Historical Museum and as a tour guide at the synagogue.

Congregation Adath Yeshurun celebrated its 75th

Peter attended Georgia Tech, entered the military, and was celebrated in 2011 with community tours and large

gatherings of early synagogue families, such as the Wolfs and the Efrons. Doris has also organized visits from several Jewish and Christian groups, including a tour during the city of Aiken's 175th birthday when a thousand people visited Adath Yeshurun in one day. Whew!

same functions as much

Being Jewish in Aiken hasn't always been easy. When the Baumgartens arrived, Sharon experienced the difficulty of explaining Jewish holidays to teachers and obtaining permission to attend synagogue rather than marching with the high school band on Yom Kippur. Adath Yeshurun doesn't have a rabbi or staff of teachers or administrative support. It is up to the members to answer questions, maintain the building, conduct services, and hire student rabbis. Yet this synagogue with 60 members fulfills the

contribute to the community at large. He worked to larger congregations, holding holiday and Shabbat services,

What is the future of the small congregation? As long Yeshurun will continue to serve the Jewish community and the Aiken community at large. That is our belief and our hope.



Above: Peter Baumgarten leads Congregation Adath Yeshurun in singing a rendition of "Belz," his tribute to Aiken, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the synagogue in 1996. Photo: Lowell Greenbaum. Below: an excerpt from Pete's copy of "Little Shtetl of Aiken." Courtesy of Doris L. Baumgarten.

SCHETEL OF

Aiken, my little town Aiken, My little home where I spent - my childhood years. Aiken, my little town Aiken, In the great little house, with the children I used to laugh. Every Shabos I would go running and all the boys with me. Then throw small stones into Coker Springs-

Underneath the acom tree.

SCHETEL OF

Aiken, my little tewn Aiken, My little home, where we used to have such beautiful dreams

History Is the Tie that Binds Us

by Martin Perlmutter

Bechol dor vador chayav adam lirot et atzmo keilu hu yatza mimitzvrayim

Tach year during the Passover Seder, Jews recite these Ewords, reminding them of the obligation to consider the Jewish exodus from Egypt as though it were a personal journey, not just one embarked upon by our ancestors. We are months away from Passover, yet my thoughts turn to this iconic passage from the Hagaddah when I consider JHSSC's mission of connecting one generation to the next through our shared history as Jews, and more specifically, as Jewish South Carolinians.

Whether rabbinic or academic, via conversation, a page of Talmud, or a scholarly tome, the goal of transmitting this communal narrative remains the same. For 20 years, the Society has collected, publicized, and celebrated South Carolina's Jewish history. We've done so by organizing biannual meetings featuring stimulating speakers and panel discussions, sponsoring historic markers, gathering cemetery records, promoting the landmark exhibition, A Portion of the People, and its companion video, Land of Promise, building a bountiful website, and, not least, producing this newsletter.

The work performed by the JHSSC is incredibly gratifying to those of us who do it-professional and lay leaders alike—and we hope that is also true for our members and friends. Our activities are not without financial cost, however. We are sustained, to be sure, by our annual membership dues, but at the end of the day 36 dollars goes only so far. We look to our Pillars to help us attain our most ambitious goals. With deep respect for those who support our mission, I invite you to become a Pillar today by pledging a thousand dollars a year for the next five years. Your gift will enable us to continue documenting our stories and the experiences of those who came before, so that our history may be preserved for those yet to come.

Yes, I/we want	to become a Pillar of the JHSSC.
Name(s):	
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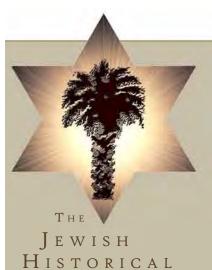
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and mail to the return address above. Register now for the November 15–16, 2014 meeting in Aiken.

Make checks payable to JHSSC

See page 14 for more information.

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of South Carolina

G| Jews: SC Goes to War

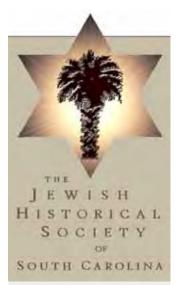
Register now for spring meeting in Charleston

May 2-3,

2015

Spring 2015 Volume XX ~ Number 1





Dale Rosengarten editor

> Alyssa Neely assistant editor and designer

The JHSSC newsletter is published twice a year.

Current and back issues can be found at jhssc.org

On the cover: Lt. Earl Mazo of Stars and Stripes. Somewhere in France, 1944. Photo courtesy of David Butwin.

Right: Dance held by the Jewish Welfare Board in the servicemen's lounge on the second floor of the Daughters of Israel Hall, Charleston, SC, gift of Nat Shulman; A Passover Hagaddah from the US Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, SC, gift of Harriet and Herbert Keyserling. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

In this issue

Report from the Front: Lt. Earl Mazo ~ Joseph Mazo Butwin ~ This aviator-journalist dropped bombs on the Germans and brought news from the front to American troops. In a letter home, dated August 6, 1945, he describes an encounter with a "displaced person" that

A Few Among Many: South Carolina's Jewish WW II Veterans ~ Jack Bass ~ The brother of two vets, one Missing in Action in the Pacific, the author relates a range of war experiences recorded through oral history programs at The Citadel and College of Charleston......6

"H" Is for Hebrew: A Jewish Combat Soldier and Prisoner of War ~ Alan J. Reyner, Jr. ~ A son discovers what his father endured as a POW captured by Germans and sent to the slave

A View from the Foxhole: Sam Siegel's Story ~ Gale Siegel Messerman and Penny Siegel Blachman ~ Sam Siegel recorded searing impressions of events leading up to the war and his experiences in the Battle of the Bulge, never forgotten over 73 years of daily diary entries. 14

Aboard the Huddleston: WW II Diaries of Dr. A. Ellis Poliakoff, Captain, US Army Medical Corps ~ Edward Poliakoff ~ The army physician's memoir of life aboard a trans-Atlantic hospital ship in late 1944 includes accounts of Jewish services and the welcome

On the Home Front: Pages from Yetta Bicoff Rosen's Scrapbook ~ Newlyweds Yetta and Nathan Rosen threw themselves into civilian defense work. Mementos of their activities are

From Strength to Strength ~ Martin Perlmutter ~ JHSSC honors Ann Meddin Hellman by presenting her with the Order of the Jewish Palmetto for her noteworthy contributions



Letter from the President

"This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny." —Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Truer words were never spoken. **▲** "The Greatest Generation"

(to borrow Tom Brokaw's phrase) did indeed save the civilized world.

Seventy years ago this May, after fighting across Europe in horrific battles beginning with D-Day at Normandy, these brave men and women liberated Europe from the hands of the Nazis. It is only fitting that we commemorate their heroism and acts of selflessness at the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina's spring meeting.

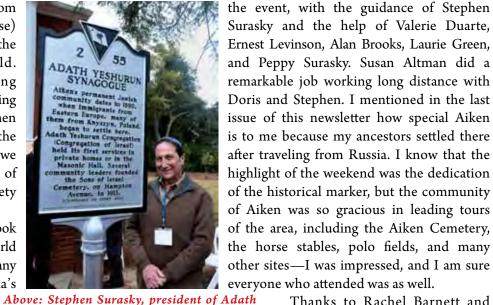
The stories in this issue provide a look inside what it meant to be a GI Jew in World War II. We are fortunate that we have many first-hand accounts from South Carolina's

veterans. Thank you to our authors who have shared their family members' diaries and letters, and who have also researched extensively, not only the experiences of their fathers, brothers, uncles, and mothers, but their long-term effects. As one writer put it, "After reading about this, no wonder they didn't want to talk about it when they came home." We owe this generation a huge debt of gratitude.

I hope you will join us May 2-3 in Charleston for "GI Jews: South Carolina Goes to War." We have a great lineup of presentations by noted historians and panelists who will share family memories and stories. We encourage those in attendance to bring photos or stories to share as well. We will conclude the weekend with two premiers: a screening of Raise the Roof, a new documentary about the reconstruction of a lost

synagogue in the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw; and the launch of a new online exhibit, The Life of the Synagogue, based on the William A. Rosenthall Judaica Collection at Addlestone Library.

The Society's fall meeting in Aiken was both memorable and fun. I want to thank Doris Baumgarten for coordinating the event, with the guidance of Stephen



Thanks to Rachel Barnett and Yeshurun in Aiken. Photo by Rob Novit. David Cohen for putting together the members' survey that has assisted JHSSC in long-range planning. The plan is complete and it will be presented at the May open board meeting.

Kudos to Ann Meddin Hellman for her tireless work on the website and the cemetery project. The Society has awarded Ann our highest honor—the Order of the Jewish Palmetto-and will recognize her outstanding service at the May 2nd reception in Charleston.

Finally, I want to welcome Sandra Lee Kahn Rosenblum, Anita Moïse Rosefield Rosenberg, and Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn to our board.

I hope to see you all in Charleston in May. The 70th anniversary of VE-Day is an important marker in our history, collectively as Americans, and also as Jews.



Courtesy of the Aiken Standard. Below: Ann

Meddin Hellman, recipient of the Order of the

Jewish Palmetto. Photo by Max B. Hellman.



David Draisen, ddraisen@bellsouth.net

round, only 27 of the

original 225 men in his wing remained. The

records show a stunning

number KIA—Killed in

Action—while others

were wounded or missing

"somewhere in France" or

Report from the Front: Lt. Earl Mazo by Joseph Mazo Butwin

Tn the first week of May 1943, Earl Mazo of Charleston, South Carolina, **L**crossed the Atlantic Ocean for the second time in his life. The first time was 20 years earlier when he left Warsaw, Poland, with his family, heading for America. He was three years old on that first crossing and apparently the life of the lower decks. On the second crossing he was 24, a second lieutenant and a trained bombardier, still lively, always pugnacious. "Nothing and nobody stands in his way," his sister Norma wrote at the time. He was ready for a remarkable 32 missions over Europe in the rickety but reliable B-17s of the era, remarkable because the standard task was 25

took his daughters for a german army brothel he said he heard somehow

eamp not far from a town outside munich he had walked 100 kilometers

mann, the way that man looked and talked made me feel that my

honestly, right there and then while that mun spoke 1 sorta

prayed inside me, thanking whoever it was responsible for giving you

neart would burst. I said to myself, "there, but for the bravery of

mama and papa 25 years ago, goes I. or historick papa himself if he

could have survived what this man had gone thru..."

that one of the daughters, 15 years old, had survived, and was in a

in three days trying to get to her-

missions. By the time Earl signed

THE STARS AND STRIPES
In the European Theater of Operations
Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces

in German prison camps. Earl stopped at 32 missions because he got the chance to do in the army what he had already set out to do at home when he joined up in the spring of '42. He was a journalist in Greenville, South Carolina, when the war began, along with his friend George Chaplin. Both men headed in the same direction when the military gave them the chance to become staff writers for *Stars and Stripes*, the newspaper published by the army in all theatres of action. George went to the Pacific; Earl was in Europe where he landed on D-Day plus 12 (12 days after D-Day) and accompanied Patton's Third Army across France into Germany.

Stars and Stripes is unlike any newspaper I know. It was written for soldiers, mostly by soldiers with

typewriters. We may know the splendid humor of Sgt. Bill Mauldin and the stirring journalism of the civilian Ernie Pyle; add Li'l Abner and Terry and the Pirates, abundant cheesecake, and a page or two of current sports. Earl traveled with Jimmy Cannon, himself already a seasoned sports writer whose style may have inspired his young friend. At the heavily contested town of Metz on the German/French border, Earl begins, "About the only obstacle the Germans didn't throw into the path of the Metz attackers was an ocean, and flood waters from the Moselle almost produced that." He could be describing what Notre

Dame threw at Army on Saturday afternoon back home, but only moments later he's talking to a soldier who wouldn't bother to change his socks during 18 hours of slogging through the waters of that wild river. Earl was there.

Earl's friends Bud Hutton and Andy Rooney wrote a

lively account of military journalism right after the war; Rooney returned to the subject 50 years later in My War (1995), where anecdotes, softened only slightly by the passage of time, describe Earl thumbing his nose at Patton, who liked publicity just a wee bit more than he disliked the irreverence of soldiers and the insistence of officers (Lt. Mazo) and enlisted men (the other writers) that they be permitted to drink together. That was Earl, ever pugnacious, ever lively.

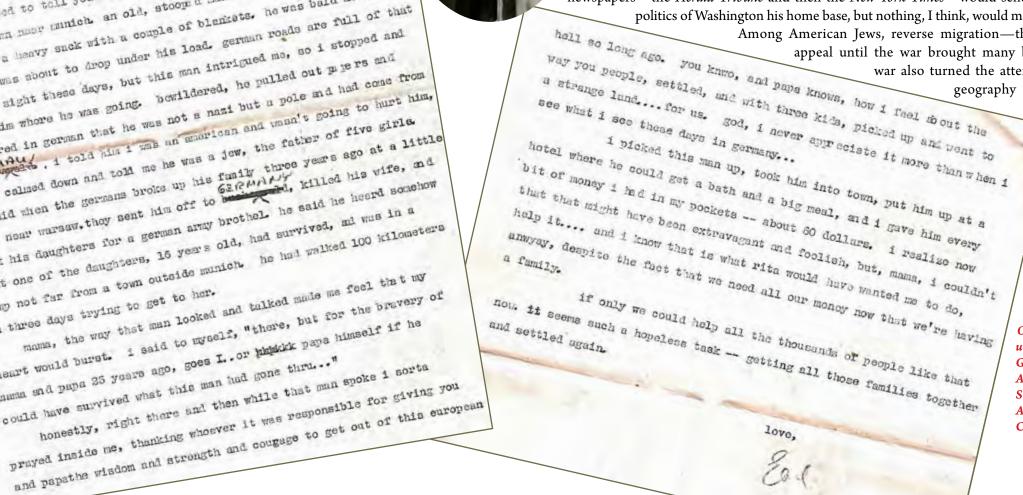
After VE-Day Earl stayed in Germany and went as far as Warsaw where he saw the rubble that replaced the neighborhood where he was born. En route he met the old man whom he describes in a letter to his mother. Earl was a tough guy in his time, not inclined to sentiment until he returned to the ruins of Eastern Europe. Later, major newspapers—the Herald Tribune and then the New York Times—would send him around the world and make the politics of Washington his home base, but nothing, I think, would match his first return to Europe in 1943.

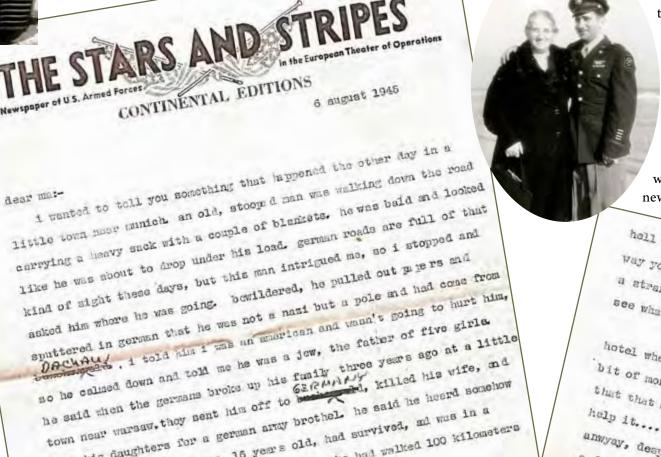
> Among American Jews, reverse migration—the return to Europe—had very little appeal until the war brought many back as soldiers. On the home front war also turned the attention of Jews to the Old Country, its

geography (on battle maps), and its culture. Earl's older sister, Frances, and her

husband, Julius Butwin, spent the same months that Earl gave to wartime journalism engaged in an imaginative return to Europe and what might be read as a tribute to its wandering remnant. They translated the Yiddish stories of Sholom Aleichem in 1945 and published them as a book, simply titled The Old Country, in 1946.

Opposite page, upper left: Earl with his uncle Dave Mazo (left) and his father, George Mazo, spring 1943. Center: Earl's August 6, 1945 letter home to his mother, Sonia Mazo, with whom he is pictured. Above: Earl Mazo (right) and a buddy. Courtesy of Joseph Mazo Butwin.





A Few Among Many: South Carolina's Jewish WWII Veterans by Jack Bass

Tn 1934, two months after I was born as the Bass family's **▲**seventh child, my oldest sibling Bernie (Samuel Bernard Bass) enrolled as a freshman at the University of South Carolina. Six years later, he had a law degree and that summer opened a law office in our hometown of North in the western part of Orangeburg County.

A year later he signed up for flight training at an army air corps base in Texas, but, like many others, washed out in advanced training at Maxwell Field in Alabama. Still determined to fly, in late 1941 he headed for

> Sacramento, California, for training as a flight navigator.

> > Meanwhile, my brother Herbie

(Herbert), two years younger than Bernie, had gotten a pilot's license as a Citadel cadet, graduated when he was 20, and reported for navy flight training at Pensacola, Florida. With a bit of time off, Bernie decided to visit his brother there on a Sunday. The day was December 7th—the day the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changed everything and my brothers would never see each other again.

Herbie's Dauntless and Tel Aviv. dive bomber was shot down late in the Battle of Guadalcanal in January 1943, killing him instantly. Like so many others, for the family back home the news was devastating. The Nelson-Bass American Legion Post in North is named for Herbie and fellow hometown Citadel graduate Manning Nelson, killed in action. Herbie's death left a permanent scar on all members of my family, especially my

> Bernie, meanwhile, had gotten his commission and was engaged in combat as

Bernard Warshaw, Fort Stewart, GA, July 1942. Gift of Bernard Warshaw. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Above: Herbie Bass. Gift of the Bass family. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Left: Herbie and Bernie Bass behind their father's store in North, SC, June 1940. Courtesy of Jack Bass.

bombardier-navigator on a B-25 middle-range bomber in North Africa. He flew many combat missions and was awarded the Air Medal for responding to an emergency in flight in October 1942 by climbing down into the plane's cramped bomb bay to tighten a set of pins that had loosened on one of the bombs. On leave he briefly visited Jerusalem

Bernard Warshaw of Walterboro graduated from The Citadel in the same 1942 class as future SC Governor and US Senator Ernest F. (Fritz) Hollings. They served in combat near each other in Europe and would remain close friends after the war.

Warshaw was an artillery officer whose unit entered Germany through the highly industrialized Saar region, often being strafed by German planes. Through all the fighting, his battery unit was credited with shooting down 15 of the battalion's total of 52 German fighters.

They had disembarked at Cassino on the Mediterranean that freezing cold January, providing artillery cover for Fifth Army infantry battling north after landing at Salerno on Italy's southern coast. Americans captured Rome on June 4th, two days before D-Day at Normandy.

Barely two months after D-Day, Warshaw and Hollings's units both joined Operation Dragoon, the massive joint amphibious assault with French and British forces that invaded southern France. From there both units made parallel movements traversing 400 miles up the eastern border of



Inmates of Dachau loading the dead onto a cart. Gift of Bernard Warshaw. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

France. They eventually joined Gen. George Patton's Third Army, linking American with British forces, now stretched from the major Allied Atlantic landing port at Antwerp, Belgium, to the Elbe River in the west.

Warshaw's most powerful experience during the war came on April 30, 1945, the day Hitler committed suicide. By now a captain, his colonel took him to the just-liberated Dachau concentration camp. It was a ghastly sight, seeing piles and piles of bodies of dead, emaciated people, Warshaw recalled. They couldn't be burned quickly enough by the Germans before they left the camp. When he opened the doors of two of the four ovens, the bones were still smoldering. The piles of bodies ran from eight to ten or eleven feet high, and the stench was absolutely horrible.

After the colonel took many photographs with his camera, he handed it to Warshaw, who took more. Years later he archived them in the College of Charleston's Jewish Heritage Collection.1

Henry Berlin of Charleston had not yet graduated from The Citadel, but he served in memorable action as a gunner's mate aboard an LST (Landing Ship, Tank) in a 12-ship flotilla that crossed the English Channel to Normandy on D-Day plus three. "We made about three trips a week landing tanks and crews," Berlin recalled. "And later we brought back several hundred POWs each trip."2

Henry Rittenberg (Citadel '38) seemed to wear a bad-luck ring that kept him from getting a commission. Short and stocky, he confronted unkind weight and height charts that twice blocked his getting a second lieutenant's brass bar. On other occasions, changes in regulations stopped him after promotion papers had been sent in.

As a Ninth Army corporal in March 1945,

Rittenberg's artillery unit crossed the Rhine River and fought in the Battle of the Ruhr Pocket. "We did surveys for placing each battery," he said. As a forward observer often stationed on a church steeple for height—he reported whether specific

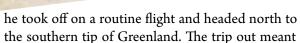
targets being fired on were hit. On VE-Day, his unit manned the west bank of the Elbe River, across from the Russians on the east bank.³

Of all of South Carolina's Jewish World War II veterans, it's likely that none could match Harold Aronson of Kingstree in terms of the most historically memorable moment. After a year in the infantry, he transferred to the army air corps and by 1944 was flying 17-hour weather reconnaissance flights from England, checking the weather along the coast of Europe and far out over the Atlantic Ocean. At midafternoon on June 5, 1944,

Upper right: Henry and Alwyn Berlin. Courtesy of Henry Berlin. Lower right: Henry Rittenberg. Courtesy of Libby Rittenberg.







flying 50 feet above the water to record surface conditions. The usual return flight was above the clouds to determine high altitude weather.

As was normal on such routine flights, Aronson turned on the radio that night after flying to the higher altitude for the return flight. He and his crew were listening to dance music from a Chicago station when, roughly two hours later, the music was interrupted and the station announced the Allied invasion of the European continent had begun. "It was news to us," Aronson recalled. "We didn't know a thing about it. There we were, sending radio messages back. I sent one message: "Go ahead, Ike. The weather is horrible, but you can do it." When they flew over the English Channel while returning to base, Aronson recalled, "Looking down, it looked like you could step from one boat to another—there were so many boats in the channel." Once landed, he said, "I went to bed."

Harold's brother Albert, also an aviator, had been shot down earlier over Romania. He spent 13 months as a prisoner of war, a period that overlapped D-Day. The first indication that he was alive and a prisoner, Harold said, came from the Vatican, which sent word to a priest in Charleston, "and the priest came from Charleston to Kingstree to inform my father."





NOTES

Kancock College of Aero

- 1. Bernard Warshaw, audio interview by Jack Bass, 01 October 2008, The Citadel Oral History Program Collection, The Citadel Archives and Museum, Charleston, SC.
- Henry Berlin, audio interview by Jack Bass, 31 October 2008,
 The Citadel Oral History Program Collection.
- 3. Henry Rittenberg, audio interview by Jack Bass, 28 November 2008, The Citadel Oral History Program Collection.
- 4. Harold Aronson, audio interview by Dale Rosengarten and Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn, 15 February 1996, Mss 1035-053, Jewish Heritage Collection, Oral History Archives, Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

Audio and transcripts of these interviews are online at *lcdl.library.cofc.edu*

Clockwise from upper left: Harold Aronson (squatting) with his fellow aviation cadets at Hancock College of Aeronautics in Santa Maria, CA; Harold's civil flying certificate, dated December 1942, recommends him for miltary flight training; Albert Maurice Aronson in Kingstree, SC; Harold Aronson in Edinburgh, Scotland, July 1944. Gift of Rhetta A. Mendelsohn. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



c/o Max's Men's Shop on King Street in Charleston, dated September

24, 1943, courtesy of Charles Bernstein.

GI Jews: South Carolina Goes to War Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of VE-Day

May 2-3, 2015, Charleston, South Carolina

Unless otherwise noted, all events will take place in Arnold Hall, Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center, 96 Wentworth Street, College of Charleston



Dan J. Puckett is a professor of history at Troy University. Author of In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust (2014), he received his Ph.D. at Mississippi State University. His work has appeared in Holocaust

and Genocide Studies, Alabama Heritage, and Southern Jewish History. Puckett has been a Starkoff Fellow at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives and a Chancellor's Fellow at Troy University. He is the chair of the Alabama Holocaust Commission, the vice-president/president-elect of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Alabama Historical Association.



Theodore Rosengarten holds the Zucker/Goldberg chair in Holocaust Studies at the College of Charleston and is Associate Scholar in Jewish Studies at the University of South Carolina. Author of All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw (1974) and Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter (1986), his essay "'Why

Does the Way of the Wicked Prosper?': Teaching the Holocaust in the Land of Jim Crow" will appear in the volume As the Witnesses Fall Silent: 21st Century Holocaust Education in Curriculum, Policy and Practice, to be published by UNESCO in spring 2015.

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Allan J. Lichtman is Distinguished Professor of History at American University in Washington, DC. He has authored or co-authored eight books, including most recently, FDR and the Jews (2013), which was a New York Times Editor's Choice Book, winner of the

National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies, and finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in History. Dr. Lichtman received the American University Scholar/ Teacher of the year award for 1992-3, the University's highest academic honor. He has been an expert witness in more than 80 voting rights and redistricting cases and has worked on numerous cases for the US Department of Justice, state and local governments, and civil rights organizations.

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To get the special rates you must make your reservations by April 1 and mention you are with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

Saturday, May 2, 2015

11:30 а.м. Registration/Lunch 12:30-1:30 P.M Southern Jews and World War II: On the Home Front and Frontlines, Dan J. Puckett, Associate Professor of History, Troy University, Montgomery, AL. Introduction by Theodore Rosengarten 1:30-1:45 Break 1:45-3:00 FDR and the Jews: The Controversy Resolved, Allan J. Lichtman, Distinguished Professor of History, American University, Washington, DC. Introduction by Robert Rosen 3:00-3:15 Break 3:15-4:45 Notes from the Battlefield and the Home Front: A Panel Discussion Moderator: Jack Bass, Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences Emeritus, College of Charleston Panelists: Joseph Mazo Butwin, Gale Siegel Messerman, Herb Novit, Edward Poliakoff, Alan Reyner, Jr. 5:00 Reception, Alumni Hall, College of Charleston, sponsored by Nelson Mullins Honoring Ann Meddin Hellman, recipient, Order of the Jewish Palmetto Nelson Mullins

Sunday, May 3

9:00-9:45 а.м. **JHSSC board meeting.** Open to the public. Everyone is invited.

Teaching the Holocaust in the Land of Jim Crow, Theodore Rosengarten, Zucker/Goldberg 9:45-10:45 Professor of Holocaust Studies, College of Charleston

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-12:30 The Next Generation Remembers: A Panel Discussion

> Moderator: David Slucki, author of In the Shadows of Memory: The Third Generation and the *Holocaust* (forthcoming in 2015)

Panelists: Lilly Stern Filler, Harlan Greene, Esther Goldberg Greenberg, David Popowski

12:30-1:30 р.м Lunch

Raise the Roof: a feature documentary by Yari and Cary Wolinsky (2015) about the reconstruction of a 1:30-3:00

lost synagogue in the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland

Introduction to The Life of the Synagogue, an online exhibit based on the William A. Rosenthall Judaica 3:15-4:30

Collection, and discussion of Raise the Roof

Commentary by Samuel D. Gruber, president of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments, and Ruth Ellen Gruber, Arnold Distinguished Visiting Chair, College of Charleston

Be sure to visit the the Levin Library, 2nd floor, for special exhibition and book sale.

"H" is for Hebrew: a Jewish Combat Soldier and Prisoner of War

Tam grateful for the opportunity at the upcoming May event Lon World War II to speak for my father, the late Alan Jay Reyner. In some ways it is an awkward situation for me as I'm not sure I am worthy to speak about a matter so personal to him that only he and others who shared his experiences could fully comprehend.

wrote shortly after the war. Like most of the men and women who went overseas it was something he simply did not talk

about. Save one memorable night in the '60s in a hotel room in Paris, he never spoke to us about his experiences and very little to close friends and fellow soldiers. Time permitting, perhaps more about that evening in Paris and its origins at our meeting the first weekend in May.

My father was a combat soldier. He was assigned to the 422nd Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division. He was a machine gunner; his rank, private first class. That's about as basic as it gets. Most of the enlisted men of the 106th were college-age boys who had never seen combat. Certainly that was my father's case—before entering the army my father led a fairly sheltered life as an 18-year-old college student at the Wharton School of Finance Alan Jay Reyner, summer 1944, was 19, my father was shipped to the front of Alan J. Reyner, Jr.

to relieve, in his words, the "ninth Infantry regiment of the crack 2nd Division." At the time of the commencement of the Battle of the Bulge at dawn on December 16, 1944, his regiment was the deepest outfit in the Siegfried Line. When the fighting began he was just outside the Belgian village of was right smack on the front lines.

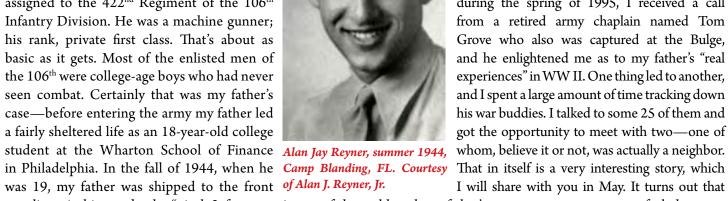
The 422nd and 423rd regiments, as well as the rest of the 106th, were vastly out-manned and out-gunned from the get-go. Combat for my dad began on the way to the front on December 9, 1944, with the most intense fighting experienced by his unit at the Bulge lasting only four days; but, by all accounts, his last day of combat, December 19th, was really hell. In my father's words: "Things were getting more and more confused by then. Our own mortars were shelling us, inflicting heavy casualties. It was then that I really saw what a bullet could do. Men were lying all around me, wounded and dying, others were shocked out of their speech capacity, others were simply walking around hollow-eyed. None of us could believe that this was happening to us."

History records the Battle of the Bulge as the greatest American loss ever on foreign soil; 19,000 Americans were killed, 47,500 wounded, and 23,000 Americans were captured or missing, my father amongst them.

When I found my father's memoirs, I can't say it really meant a lot to me other than the fact that I, of course, was After my father died in 1974, I found a nine-page memoir he understandably proud of his service and his personal conduct. As kids, my brother, Jeff, and I would find old war memorabilia in a chest in the attic, but it was something that was never really

> discussed. Unlike many of my friends' fathers, my dad never took up hunting or owned a gun. He was very uncomfortable when our uncle, an avid hunter, gave my brother and me shotguns. Simply put, my father had seen too much killing during the war.

Approximately 20 years after Dad died, during the spring of 1995, I received a call



although my father's accounts were accurate to a fault, he wrote with considerable restraint and omitted important facts. When the details were filled in by historians as well as his war buddies, a totally different picture emerged. To this day it amazes me how something so historically accurate didn't reveal anything about St. Vith, approximately 30 miles northeast of Bastogne. He the "story behind the story." Understating events pertaining to themselves seems to be the norm for his generation. The term "selfie" was simply not in their vernacular.

> As I mentioned, Dad was among the thousands of Americans captured by the Germans. They were loaded up in boxcars—68 men to a car—and sent to Stalag IX-B in Bad Orb, Germany, by all accounts, one of the worst POW camps in Europe. The boxcars were strafed by Allied planes and many men were lost en route to Bad Orb. As bad as that was, it is what happened next that made his experiences so unusual.

> He was at IX-B a little over a month when, because of his religion, he and some 350 other POWs were transferred to Berga am Elster, a sub-camp of Buchenwald. Of the 350 prisoners, 70 to 80 were Jewish. The rest had Jewish-sounding names, looked Jewish, were troublemakers, or just happened

to be selected to fill the Nazi quota of 350. Berga made IX-B look like the Ritz. It was a slave labor camp with political prisoners, in contravention of the Geneva Convention, not a POW camp. More than 20 percent of the American POWs at Berga died within a three-month period. It was simple: the prisoners walked an hour to and from the work site, where the guards forced them to labor ten hours a day digging tunnels for an underground factory, feeding them only a liter of watery soup and a piece of bread a day. Again in my father's words: "If we took one minute's rest, we were beaten with a shovel or spiked with a pick. All the foremen carried rubber hoses which they didn't mind using. I had no idea men could be so bestial. One man was struck in the head with a shovel and became blind. In trying to help him, I was hit in the hand, a blow which caused an infection which lasted many weeks.

"Conditions among our men were as bad as can be imagined. We had reached the stage of animals . . . stealing, hating, and fighting among ourselves. I still pride myself in the fact that I could maintain my honor and some sense of self-respect. It became so bad that even sick men had their food stolen from them before they could even get it."

Within a month, because of slow starvation and backbreaking work, "the deaths began." My father escaped from camp by jumping in the river at night during a black-out and floating downstream, but after six days was recaptured. His second escape—this time successful—was just seven days from liberation. I am convinced the first escape, while risky, saved his life. While trying to get back to Allied lines, he stole chickens, rabbits, eggs, milk, and vegetables from farmers. He wrote, "We really fared well." At the time of his second escape and upon his liberation he weighed less than 95 pounds.

Just before he died, the award-winning Charles Guggenheim, a member of the 106th, wrote and directed, along with his daughter Grace, a moving PBS documentary entitled "Berga: Soldiers of Another War" depicting the experiences of the combat soldiers who were captured at the Bulge and sent to Stalag IX-B and then Berga. It haunted Guggenheim, who was born into a prominent German Jewish family, that because of a severe foot infection he remained stateside and escaped combat and Berga. According to the documentary, Guggenheim "carried with him a personal and moral obligation for more than fifty years to tell this untold story for his comrades who did not return, and for those who lived with the horror of their experience."

Mitchell Bard of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) published a book titled Forgotten

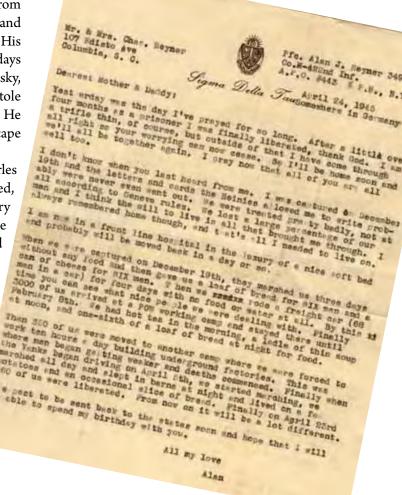
Victims: The Abandonment of Americans in Hitler's Camps, in which he references my father and a document he provided to the War Crimes Office for the prosecution of the guards for the death of Bernard Vogel. Vogel was a Jewish soldier at Berga who escaped, was recaptured, and was forced to stand outside the POW barracks in the freezing cold for two days with no food or water as punishment for trying to escape. Vogel died shortly thereafter in the arms of a fellow prisoner, an army medic.

by Alan J. Reyner, Jr.

One wonders how the United States could, in the winter of 1944, send into battle American Jewish soldiers—more than 550,000—many of whom were fighting the Nazis with an "H" on their dog tags, the "H" standing for Hebrew. Many Jewish POWs threw their dog tags away. As one prisoner in the Guggenheim documentary said to himself when asked by the Nazis if he was Jewish, "Hell I was born a Jew. I may as well die a Jew."

As mentioned, I talked to some 25 of Dad's fellow combat soldiers who were prisoners of war at Berga and most have lived wonderful, productive lives. I sensed from my phone conversations and the letters I received from them they were special people, quiet heroes and true survivors in the finest

sense of the word. That is certainly how I remember my father.



CLOSE COVER BEFORE

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YOUR MAIL, HERE. HOPE I GET HOME

TRY AND EXPLAIN ALL THIS TO

OUR FOLKS, HOPE ALL OF YOU TAKE MY WOUND AS LIGHTLY AS I. WE CAN ALL BE THANKFUL. AND AS USUAL, I

SO TIRED OF IT ALL, I'M GOING TO

SAW WHAT HAPPEN TO MY BUDDIES

A View from the Foxhole: Sam Siegel's Story by Gale Siegel Messerman and Penny Siegel Blachman

ur father, Sam Siegel, was born to Russian immigrants on February 27, 1915, in Anderson, South Carolina, the fifth of eight children. At that time Anderson was a mill town with a small Jewish population and an active Ku Klux Klan. Sam and his siblings learned to deal with anti-Semitism from early childhood.

At the age of 19, Sam started keeping a daily diary, a practice that he continued religiously for 73 years, until his death on August 27, 2007. He left his family 17 volumes that chronicle his life and times. The daily entries continued throughout his active service in the US infantry between March 1944 and December 1945, including his harrowing experience in the Battle of the Bulge.

Sam was keenly aware of the events in Europe leading up to World War II, especially those involving the Jews. On September 11, 1938, he wrote: "Europe is waiting tomorrow to hear what Hitler has to say. —What he says means either war or peace." The answer came quickly with the infamous Kristallnacht attack of November 9, 1938. On that night the Nazis broke into and pillaged Jewish shops, destroyed synagogues, demolished Jewish homes, and arrested, beat, and killed many Jews. Sam wrote: "Hitler is really giving the Jews hell, because one Jew killed one of his men. . . . The Jews are being punished all over Europe.

Something to worry you. . . . The papers are telling of things that are being done to the Jew in Europe.—God pity them. . . . 'Th' time might be near.'" On November 14th he reflected: "Hitler has turned on full power against the Jews. . . . It seems to be coming to a head.—God can't stand by for-ever."

More than five years after Kristallnacht, Sam was inducted into the US Army's 78th Division on March 29, 1944. Twenty-eight years old by then, he was married, living in Walterboro, and the father of two children. His two older brothers had already been drafted.

After eight months in basic training, the 78th was sent to Europe, arriving in England on October 25, 1944. Sam's company spent some three freezing, wet weeks engaged in rigorous physical training and weapons practice. Sam was trained to use a bazooka. In November the men were shipped to France. "Still raining like hell," he wrote, "the mud is ankle deep. . . . I haven't taken off my clothes for days. I've lost the feeling of my foot. . . . Our tents are leaking like hell." From France the troops traveled to Belgium.

On December 1st, as he neared the battlefront, Sam reported: "The buzz bombs are coming over fast, but our planes are also coming over." Five days later he "found out we are moving up to the front, we are leaving in th' morning. . . . I guess, I'm ready. . . . 'I've got to be."

Sam was in the midst of the Battle of the Bulge. "Lots of casualties are coming back," he wrote on December 13th. "Two fellows, anti-tankers, about two blocks from our truck got hit this morning by 88 fire." Five days later his anxieties increased: "We keep getting rumors about paratroopers, etc coming our way. If Courtesy of the family of Sam Siegel.

they do, we are caught like a bunch of rats in a trap. . . . Our morale is still high. But we all hope to see the end of it all."

Sam's company fought to defend against a massive German attack, often confronted by German soldiers in American uniforms invading foxholes. In January 1945 he wrote, "Our positions are going to face an attack soon. If so, will be a real battle because we are dug in for a fight and it'll be hard for us to withdraw. In fact, it might be impossible." The bitter DIFFERENCE. THEY IN FLY ME STRAIGHT cold continued: "Th' tears come from my eyes and freeze while on my TO TH' STATES ! SO I'M LIABLE TO cheeks. . . . 'If we could only see the end." By February: "I'm so sick of GET HOME MOST ANYTIME, NO VY hearing and seeing death."

Finally, the Germans began to retreat. Several days before his company entered Germany, Sam and three other men left their foxholes in an effort to bring in a wounded comrade. That is when Sam was hit. "An 88 got me in the leg," he reported on February 7, 1945. Sam was taken to a field hospital, then to a hospital in France. Over the next two weeks his daily diary entry was just one or two words, reporting only pain. On March 12th, he was flown to Atlanta and admitted to the VA Hospital. He remained there for nine months. BEFORE IT CATCHES UP WITH ME.

Repeated procedures failed and, in the end, Sam's left leg was amputated above the knee. Although his long hospitalization

> involved pain, patience, and learning to walk with a prosthetic leg, Sam continued to write in his diary and

WITH ALL MY HEART, FOR ALWAYS.

Dear Agle, & Sow you, Same to his family. Sam's younger sister, Leah, who was the first family member to visit him, wrote

to his wife, our mother, Leona: "What a wonderful husband you've got and how very proud I am of my brother. . . . Thank God he realizes how lucky he is; and he has a greater zest for life than ever. . . . He was full of jokes and stories and wants to talk about his experiences over there . . . golly, he's the life of the hospital. . . . Sam says he's going to be the best dancer in S.C., bar none and that you and he are going on an extended honeymoon. He's full of plans for the future for you, Gale, and Nancy; and he loves you all so very much. Please don't worry about him, darling, and don't be afraid of seeing him again for the first time. You'll see how easy he makes it for you. He's such a great guy."

Sam returned home to Walterboro on December 20, 1945. For the next 62 years, he operated a store and other business enterprises and was involved in community organizations and activities in his town. He not only learned to walk again, but inspired many others to do the same. Sam was devoted to his family and to his country. The war memories were always with him, but they did not haunt him. He lived a life of service, grace, love, and humility.



Counterclockwise from upper left: Sam and Leona Siegel, 1944, location unknown; matchbook cover advertising Novit's military supply department and the Lady Lafayette Hotel, Walterboro, SC; Sam Siegel, (front row, seventh from left) with his platoon at Camp Blanding, FL, August 1944; postcard from Sam to Leona, dated February 24, 1945.

Aboard the Huddleston: WW II Diaries of Dr. A. Ellis Poliakoff, Captain, US Army Medical Corps

The five sons of David and Rachel ■ Poliakoff of Abbeville, South Carolina, served their country in the World War II era like countless other Americans. All were proud University of South Carolina graduates, and from 1924 through 1940 at least one of the brothers lived in Burney College, Room 48, on the Carolina campus. Their beloved sister, Eva, graduated from Agnes Scott College. Dr. A. Ellis Poliakoff, the eldest sibling, who had established his medical practice in Abbeville before the war, was a captain in the army medical corps, and his three years-plus service included duty on trans-Atlantic hospital ships. Brothers Marion and Myer (my father) served in the SC Defense Force in Walhalla and Abbeville, respectively, where they were dry goods merchants. Arthur (Bud) Poliakoff, who after the war practiced pharmacy in Atlanta, youngest sibling, who later established an Ob-Gyn practice in Atlanta, served in the army medical corps and was dispatched to Korea in late 1945. Ellis and Samuel were graduates of what was then known as the Medical College of South Carolina.

From late August through October 1944, Captain A. Ellis Poliakoff kept a diary, adding a postscript describing his ship's return to Charleston harbor in December of that year. His entries show the importance he placed on family ties and Jewish observance. He describes the then-routine but now unimaginable complications involved in making a phone call home or catching bus connections from the Port of Charleston to Abbeville and back. It is unknown whether he kept diaries for other periods of his service.



Above: Capt. A. Ellis Poliakoff, US Army Medical Corps, aboard the hospital ship Huddleston, 1943. Below: the author's father, Sgt. Myer Poliakoff, SC Defense Force, with his served in the army pharmacy corps, daughter Doris, now Doris Feinsilber. Opposite stationed overseas for more than three page: postcard image of the Huddleston arriving years. Dr. Samuel R. Poliakoff, the at the port of embarkation, Charleston, SC; Capt. Poliakoff's trunk displaying his WW II memorabilia. Courtesy of Edward Poliakoff.



In September 1944, during an outbound voyage on the USA Hospital Ship Huddleston, Captain Poliakoff expressed his hope of somehow connecting with Brother Bud, who was then stationed at Bristol, England. By chance the Huddleston was diverted to Bristol. The diary describes various hurdles he needed to surmount to have a phone call with Bud and arrange for him to visit the ship. Imagine the brothers' delight when they reunited, and their melancholy when they parted:

Just think, I came over 3000 miles across the ocean and of all the places I could have gone, I land near enough so we can meet. . . . After talking a while, he [Bud] decided he had to get back so we bade each other farewell. I sure hated to part. Wish we could have been going back to the States together. Watched him till the car disappeared from view, then I returned slowly to the ship. A happy reunion had ended. Sure hope it is not long till we can be home and stay there.

Jewish services aboard the Huddleston are a recurring theme:

9 Sept. 1944

We had a large crowd present for services. There were about 32 present. . . . I thought the services very impressive.... I brought a Talith for the boy [a T/5, or Technical Fifth Grade, who was a passenger conducting services. There were Yarmulkes for all that needed them. We have a nice Kiddush cup. There were prayer books for all. What a strange picture this presented. Here we are hundreds of miles from land in the middle of the ocean on a deck near the water line of the ship in a room with a dim light. All seats were taken and I believe all members of the Jewish faith were present except a

by Edward Poliakoff

few. We were praying to the Almighty and I know everyone meant it. . . . We also said the prayer for a safe voyage.

17 Sept. 1944

To-night is the eve before Rosh Hashona. I have made arrangements for services. . . . What a strange place to be holding services but we want to have services. The Lord has been kind to me and I want to say my prayers especially at this time of the year.

27 Sept. 1944

Fasted all day. We had [Yom Kippur] services this morning at 10 A.M. again at 2:30 P.M., and again at 7:30 P.M. Boat drill interrupted the 2:30 service. . . . Almost every Jewish person on board came to at least one service. . . . I think we

did right well considering the circumstances and the fact that we didn't have a Chaplain.

While the Huddleston was docked at the Port of Charleston preparing for another outbound voyage, Captain Poliakoff reported:

6 Oct. 1944

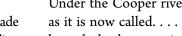
To-night, Mr. [Nat] Shulman brought four bottles of wine

for the Jewish boys for Friday services. He represents the Jewish Welfare Board in Charleston. I had to go to the gate to meet him as he wasn't allowed inside the Port unless he showed special passes. Lt. Col. O'Connor (Father O'Connor) drove me to gate and back.

Several passages describe Charleston vistas:

1 Oct. 1944 [inbound]

From the bridge deck, I could see familiar landmarks. Somehow from this view Charleston had a foreign appearance. It didn't look like other American cities. The old homes with their style of architecture makes one think of some strange city not one he has known for so many years. Be that as it may, it was a welcome sight to a native South Carolinian.



7 **Oct. 1944** [outbound]

Down the river we sailed watching the Charleston shore line. Under the Cooper river bridge or Grace Memorial Bridge as it is now called. . . . I saw many familiar landmarks that brought back memories of times I spent in Charleston as a [medical] student. The Francis Marion Hotel, Fort Sumter Hotel and Peoples Building. The steeples of many churches were visible especially the familiar ones of St. Michael's and St. Phillip's [sic]. Saw the dock of the United Fruit Company that burned the day before. . . . On we sailed out through the submarine nets and into the wide Atlantic.

Numerous entries refer to hospital ship routine,

including preparations and inspections, and rough seas that caused all those trying to rest to slide up and down in their bunk beds, and made the plates jump up and down the table in the officers' mess. There are no patient-specific passages or descriptions of injuries. That omission is consistent with patient confidentiality

considerations, and perhaps consistent, too, with a passage written while home in Abbeville during a short leave in December 1944:

One thing, I noticed which stood out to me after being around the sick and wounded, was the fact that no one seemed to be thinking of the war. It also seemed that everyone had

> somebody in the service somewhere. I suppose many had heavy hearts and were just masking their feelings. It was also at the time the Germans were pushing forward. Probably, it's best to be this way and not think too much of the war.

After the war Dr. A. Ellis Poliakoff returned to Abbeville and continued his medical practice until his death in 1970, beloved and relied upon by his patients and the entire community.



On the Home Front: Pages from Yetta Bicoff Rosen's Scrapbook

Tetta Bicoff and Nathan Rosen were **I** introduced to each other by Nathan's cousin Morris Rosen in Columbia. They were married in Greenville on May 5, 1942 at the home of Yetta's parents, Sam and Rebecca Bicoff. Rudolph Robinson of Charleston was the best man. The newlyweds spent their honeymoon at Lake Lure, North Carolina, then settled in Charleston. Because of the wartime housing shortage, they moved in with Nathan's parents, Sam and Bessie Rosen, at 55 Montagu Street, on the floor below the grandparents of Ira Berendt, the Rosens' cousins by marriage. Their son Russell was born on March 7, 1944, and Alan on June 12, 1945, at which time the

CLEMSON vs. SOUTH CAROLINA

Municipal

BUY MORE



family was living at 230 Rutledge Avenue. By 1950, when their third son, Baran, was born, the Rosens resided at 62 Smith Street.

Like many others on the home front during World War II, the young couple was involved in civilian defense work, Yetta in the Citizens Service Corp, and Nathan in the Coast Patrol. From 1940 to 1946, Nathan served in the South Carolina House of Representatives. His brothers were active duty military: Jack served in the army dental corps stateside and in England;

Louis, a naval officer, commanded a gun crew on a cargo ship in the South Pacific during the fighting for Guadalcanal.

Images from the Rosen family scrapbook, clockwise from top: Yetta and Nathan join Charleston-based naval servicemen for dinner at the Elks Club; rationing flyer; US Navy ships on the Wando River, 1946; Clemson vs. South Carolina football program, dated October 21, 1943; Gift of Yetta Bicoff Rosen. Special Collections. College of Charleston.



From Strength to Strength by Martin Perlmutter

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has thrived as a grassroots organization. Ann Meddin Hellman stands out even among many extraordinary contributors and and will be honored at the May meeting with the Order of the Jewish Palmetto. That is the only award that JHSSC offers and it has been bestowed only three times in the Society's history—to Isadore Lourie, Max Heller, and Sol Breibart. I am thrilled that Ann is joining this distinguished group. She is a joy to work with and has almost single-handedly created and maintained the JHSSC website, including its statewide cemetery survey. We will celebrate with Ann in May-a heartfelt and well-deserved mazel tov!

In its relatively short 20-year history, JHSSC has celebrated many successes, allowing us to claim the popular Jewish adage found in Psalm 84: we have moved from strength to strength. Our accomplishments include the Jewish Heritage Collection at the Addlestone Library, which, in collaboration with McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, produced the landmark exhibit and book A Portion of the People; the recording of hundreds of oral histories; a statewide survey of Jewish burial sites; the erection of several historical markers; and the bi-annual publication of this remarkable newsletter.

As I look towards the future, I am confident that JHSSC will be brought to the "next level" by its partner organization, the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. The Center will focus on research, teaching, and community outreach. It will empower the Society to continue to do what we already do well—engage the community in learning about South Carolina Jewish history through lectures, conferences, walking tours, publications, websites, and historical markers—and will assure new and exciting explorations of southern Jewish history. Our May meeting, with its outstanding program, is evidence of the infusion of new energy from the Center for Southern Jewish Culture.

As a result of our fall 2014 membership survey, the JHSSC Past Presidents Council has committed to expanding our Pillar membership—those who pledge a thousand dollars a year for five years—to 40 Pillars, and our family memberships to 500 dues-paying members. These are attainable goals, but only if you join me in renewing your membership, committing what you can, recruiting new Pillars, and imploring those who find value in our work to do the same. We need your help!

Pillars

Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC Ellen Arnovitz, Atlanta, GA Doris L. Baumgarten, Aiken, SC Eric and Candace Bergelson, Greer, SC Betty Brody, Coral Gables, FL Harold Brody, Atlanta, GA Alex and Dyan Cohen, Darlington, SC Barry and Ellen Draisen, Anderson, SC David and Andrea Draisen, Anderson, SC Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleton, SC Harold I. Fox, Charleston, SC Phillip and Patricia Greenberg, Florence, SC Ann Meddin and Max Hellman, Charleston, SC Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbia, SC Sue and Jerry Kline, Columbia, SC Michael S. Kogan, Charleston, SC Ronald Krancer, Bryn Mawr, PA Allan and Jeanne Lieberman, Charleston, SC Susan R. Lourie, Columbia, SC Susan Pearlstine, Charleston, SC Edward and Sandra Poliakoff, Columbia, SC Alan and Anne Reyner, Columbia, SC Debra C. Ritter, Columbia, SC Benedict and Brenda Rosen, Myrtle Beach, SC Robert and Susan Rosen, Charleston, SC Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC Joseph and Edie Rubin, Charleston, SC Jeff and Walton Selig, Columbia, SC Sandra G. Shapiro, Wilsonville, OR Richard Stern, Boston, MA Lois and Raphael Wolpert, Tampa, FL Anita Zucker, Charleston, SC

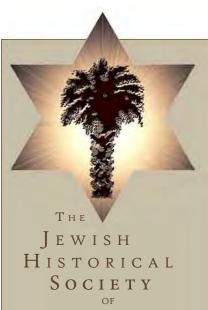
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Register now for the May 2-3 meeting in Charleston. See pages 10 and 11 for more information.







THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of South Carolina

Fall 2015 Volume XX ~ Number 2

A Tale of Two Cities (and a few small towns)

Register now for fall meeting in Columbia and Orangeburg, SC November 7-8









JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY SOUTH CAROLINA

> Dale Rosengarten editor Alyssa Neely assistant editor and designer

The JHSSC newsletter is published twice a year.

Current and back issues can be found at *ihssc.org*

Cover, clockwise from top left: Jake Kalinsky with his mother, Ida, and two sisters in Trestina, Poland, ca. 1912, courtesy of Bruce Kremer; Lipman and Henrietta Block Rich on the porch of their Ellis Avenue home in Orangeburg, ca. 1932, courtesy of Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn; Blanche Cohen, dressed for a dance recital, ca. 1938, courtesy of Ronald Cohen; Sheppard and Sara Pearlstine with sons Sam and Leo and their cook at the family home in St. Matthews, ca. 1897, courtesy of Marilyn Cohn Fine; Louis and Ida Kligman and son, Melton, at Kligman's Army Store on Assembly Street in Columbia, 1935, Kligman and Firetag family papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston; Rivkin's Cash & Carry Delicatessen, Columbia, 1936, courtesy of McKissick Museum, USC.

In this issue

Deep Roots, Lofty Branches: Perspectives on the Capital City's Early Jews ~ Belinda F. and Richard Gergel

Historians Belinda and Richard Gergel describe Columbia's early Jewish settlers as pioneers who rose to prominence in politics and society. This remarkable record of success sets the stage for the essays that follow. Jewish merchants populated Main and, later, Assembly streets in the 19th and 20th centuries. Building "something from nothing," Jewish scrap dealers who became steel magnates benefited from exceptional entrepreneurship and a network of family and business relations. After the Second World War, Columbia's small Jewish community welcomed four families of survivors of the Shoah. The Columbia section ends with Robin Waites's report on the recent launch of Historic Columbia's Jewish Heritage Initiative, dedicated to documenting the city's From Scrap to Steel: How Jewish Columbians Created an Industry A Tale of Two Cities (and a few small towns) ~ JHSSC meets in Columbia, SC,

Midlands Memories: Patches on a Fading Quilt ~ Ernest L. Marcus

Beginning in the early- to mid-19th century, a small but significant number of Jewish immigrants made their way to the rural region of South Carolina between Columbia and Charleston to start a new life. In the eight stories that follow this introduction, descendants of those who were bold enough to venture forth share their families' experiences in Orangeburg and the nearby towns of Holly Hill, St. Matthews, Elloree, Branchville, Bowman, and Eutawville. The accounts reveal strong feelings of connection to the places where the newcomers built businesses and enjoyed lives characterized by close family ties, amicable relations with non-Jewish neighbors, and concerted efforts to maintain their Jewish identity. The sense of Orangeburg: A Life Rich in Family and Friends ~ Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn ... 14

Letter from the President

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Tt has been my honor to have served as about the capital city's early Jews, continuing with a panel ■ president of JHSSC the past two years. We have enjoyed several milestones during my tenure, among them the 20th anniversary of the Society, a long-range plan brought to fruition, and a totally redesigned website. Much has been accomplished through combined efforts.

The Society continues on an upswing.

Our level of paid memberships is

high, making JHSSC the largest statewide Jewish organization in South Carolina. Our financial base is strong, thanks in large part to our Pillars, who commit to contribute \$1,000 annually for five years. The Society's close association with the Jewish Heritage Collection and the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston produces win-win relationships for all and provides access to high quality academic and administrative resources for our programs and publications.

Our meeting in Charleston in May was not only historic and meaningful, but highly educational as well. As we Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC commemorated the 70th anniversary of

VE-Day, we all were inspired by remarks from Dan Puckett, Allan Lichtman, Jack Bass, Theodore Rosengarten, David Slucki, Samuel Gruber, CofC Visiting Scholar Ruth Ellen Gruber, and our many panelists. Congratulations again to Ann Meddin Hellman, who was presented with the Order of the Jewish Palmetto at a special reception. Ann is one of only four members honored with this prestigious award. It has been a privilege to work with such an amazing individual. Thank you, Ann, for all that you have done and are still doing for our great organization.

Please mark your calendars now and make plans to attend the JHSSC fall meeting, "A Tale of Two Cities," November 7–8, 2015. Historic Columbia is co-sponsoring and collaborating with us for the Columbia portion of the meeting. On Saturday November 7, we will explore Columbia's Jewish history, beginning with a presentation by Belinda and Richard Gergel

During the May 2015 meeting in Charleston, members of Sam Siegel's family pose in front of a display of the late soldier's World War II diary and memorabilia. Left to right: Herb Novit, Sam's brother-in-law, Gale Siegel Messerman, Paul Siegel, and Penny Siegel Blachman, Sam's children. Photo by Jeri Perlmutter.

marker, and a discussion about the Jewish families who settled in Orangeburg and the small towns in its orbit. I want to thank those who have served with me during the past two years. The executive committee has been engaged and productive.

discussion focused on downtown merchants, and winding up

with a walking tour to visit the sites where Jewish storekeepers

once plied their trade. On Sunday we will travel to Orangeburg

for a tour of the Jewish cemetery, the unveiling of a new historical

Thank you to Susan Altman, Ernie Marcus, Barry Draisen, Alex Cohen, David Cohen, Garry Baum, and Steve Savitz. And, many thanks to Marty Perlmutter, Dale Rosengarten, Enid Idelsohn, and Mark Swick, who keep the Society going on a daily basis. Their work and dedication is what makes us strong.

We will elect and install new members of the executive committee during the fall meeting. Please see the box to the left for the proposed slate.

In closing, I invite you to visit the renovated JHSSC website. Besides photographs of Society events, back issues of the magazine, and extensive records of Jewish burials in South Carolina, the site has a new section titled "Our Stories," as well as links to synagogues, Jewish community

centers, day schools, and other useful resources. Most important, you can click on the "Get Involved" tab and fill out the volunteer form: jhssc.org/get-involved/volunteer/. We welcome your help!

With warmest regards,



David Draisen, ddraisen@bellsouth.net



Deep Roots, Lofty Branches: Perspectives on the Capital City's Early Jews by Belinda F. and Richard Gergel

city's history from the day Columbia became the new state Hendricks de Leon, built a lucrative medical practice capital in 1786, when seven Jews purchased lots at the public in Columbia, counting among his patients Dr. Thomas auction that launched the town's development.

likely lived in the area. Moving inland from colonial Charleston, which had drawn Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews from the West Indies, England, Germany, Poland, and other parts of Europe, colonists were lured by the offer of free land for settlement and bargain real estate prices for investment. London merchant Joseph Salvador, for example, purchased one hundred thousand acres in 1755 in the Ninety Six District, an area northwest of what would later become Richland County. His nephew, Francis Salvador, represented Ninety Six in the First serve in elective office.

Early Jewish settlers found a warm reception in the frontier environment

of the new capital. Bringing much needed skills in business, trade, and the professions, they opened dry goods stores, grocery stores, auction houses, and saloons and were among the city's first doctors and lawyers. They also brought business ties to Charleston and other coastal cities, including Philadelphia, New York, and Newport. These were connections that any new town, especially a young state capital, would find desirable.

Columbia's first Jews embraced opportunities for public service that linked them intimately to the city's development. Charleston native Judah Barrett opened a dry goods store in Columbia in the late 1810s. Elected to the town council in 1828, he became the first of three Jewish public officials in Columbia before the Civil War.

Born in Spanish Town, Jamaica, Jacob de Leon was a Sephardic Jew who in 1789 married Hannah Hendricks, a member of two of New York's most prominent Jewish families. By 1799 the couple had settled in Charleston,

olumbia's Jewish roots extend deep into the soil of the and in the early 1820s they followed their sons and South Carolina Midlands. Jews have been a part of the moved to the Midlands. The younger son, Mordecai Cooper, president of the South Carolina College (now Even before Columbia was officially established, Jews University of South Carolina), and Civil War diarist

> Mary Boykin Chestnut. In 1833 he was elected to the first of three terms as Columbia's intendant or mayor. His wife, Rebecca Lopez de Leon of New York, became an early leader of the Columbia Ladies Benevolent Society, whose members included the capital's social elite and whose mission was to aid the city's poor and needy.

Isaac Lyons, a Bavarian Jew who first settled in Philadelphia and then Charleston, arrived in Columbia in the 1820s with his grown sons Henry Provincial Congress in 1774, making Above: Henry Lyons (1805-1858), ca. 1850, oil on and Jacob Cohen Lyons. His sons opened a successful grocery store. council in the 1840s and served as Columbia's second Jewish intendant

in 1850. Jacob Cohen Lyons was an early director of the Columbia Athenaeum and became the president of the Columbia Gas Works.

Chapman Levy was Columbia's first Jewish attorney. Admitted to the bar in 1806, he was a veteran of the War of 1812 who gained notoriety for his prosecution of the brother of Governor John Taylor, which ultimately led to a duel between Levy and the governor's son that Levy, a master duelist, won. An active Mason, he served as "Worshipful Master," or leader, of the Columbia Lodge #39. He owned a brickyard near the Columbia Canal, and records indicate that in 1820 he was the largest Jewish slave holder in America, owning some 31 slaves. In the late

1820s Levy returned to his hometown of Camden and formed a law partnership with his lifelong friend, William McWillie. He served in both the state house and senate from Kershaw County and took an active role as a Unionist in the Nullification Convention of 1832. In 1838 he and McWillie moved to Mississippi, where he died in 1849.



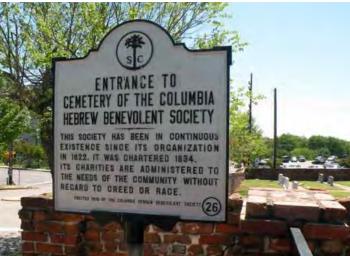
him the first Jew in the New World to canvas. Collection of Sandy Luce. Below: Chapman Levy (1787-1849), ca. 1835, watercolor on ivory. Henry Lyons was elected to town Gift of Thomas W. Crockett. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

As early as 1822 Columbia's Iews established a Hebrew Burial Society and a cemetery on Gadsden Street. Founded in 1826 by 11 men, the Columbia Hebrew Benevolent Society (CHBS) daimed 29 "Original Members." The CHBS assumed responsibility for the cemetery and

In the 1840s, when the community had grown to approximately 25 families, the CHBS spearheaded the organization of Congregation Shearith Israel, and CHBS members assumed key

provided assistance for Jews in need.

to house both a religious school and a synagogue. The religious school, forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand ... and hath given us this land."



under the direction of Boanna Wolff, the sister-in-law of Henry Lyons, was the seventh such school for Jewish youth in the country. The congregation employed a part-time rabbi who also served as cantor and taught Hebrew.

In sum, Columbia's early Jewish residents found their new hometown a place of acceptance and opportunity. As community leader Henry S. Cohen noted in an address in 1849: "In contemplating, as Israelites, our position in this land, to us truly a 'land of milk and

leadership roles. The society also erected a building on Assembly Street honey, we may justly exclaim, with Israel of old, 'the Lord brought us

Columbia's Jewish Merchants: A Storied Past

by Robert Olguin, Research Assistant, Historic Columbia

capital in 1786, bringing the seat of government within increasing as pioneers ventured inland to pursue promising with ties to Charleston. Humphrey and Frances Marks, who

opportunities. The town, a planned community located on the banks of the Congaree River, was chartered in 1805. The new settlement attracted investors from the Lowcountry, Charleston in particular. By 1822 Jews were numerous enough to organize a burial society, and four years later, to found the Columbia Hebrew Benevolent Society.1

In the first two decades of the 19th century, Columbia's business district featured several stores carrying general merchandise, including a grocery store run by one of Columbia's earliest Jewish merchants, Jacob Barrett.² Besides



Lourie's Department Store, Columbia, SC, 2000. Left to right: groceries, Barrett's employee Frank, A. M. (Mick), Joel, Isadore, and Louis Lourie. Photo Edwin J. Scott recalled selling dry by Bill Aron. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

olumbia replaced Charleston as South Carolina's goods—shoes, hats, saddles— and liquors, among other things, Columbia's growth benefited from the business skills and reach of the state's Upcountry settlers, whose numbers were commercial connections of Jewish merchants, especially those

> opened an upscale bar named Marks Porter and Relish House, and Levi Pollock and Phineas Solomon, who together ran an auction business, all moved from Charleston to Columbia.4 Another important early business was operated by the Lyons family, who had come to Charleston from Philadelphia in 1811.5 Isaac Lyons and his sons, Jacob and Henry, moved to Columbia in the early 1820s and opened a grocery store on the corner of Richardson (Main) and Gervais streets. Their establishment occupied the same location for many years and was well known among the city's residents, whose support proved crucial in electing Henry Lyons mayor in 1850.6

Columbia had become a major commercial hub by the start of the Civil War but suffered significant damage during the Union occupation. On February 17, 1865, less than two months before the war ended, nearly one-third of the city burned. The fire's destruction centered in and around Richardson Street (today's Main Street) and destroyed the heart of the business district.

During Columbia's recovery, some of the old Jewish businesses were rebuilt and new ones were established on Assembly and Main streets. Philip Epstin, a founder and president of the Tree of Life Congregation from 1899 to 1901, opened D. Epstin's Clothing Store with his brother David in 1867 on the 1500 block of Main Street. Originally from Poland, the brothers were among a handful of Jewish merchants who helped revive the business district's vitality. Other such merchants included Henry Steele, who opened a sundry store at 1328 Assembly Street, and Mordecai David, who started several different businesses including in Columbia to sell Levi's 501 jeans, 1928. Courtesy of Florence grocery and clothing stores.7



Moe Levy (left) and Morris Chaplin in Moe Levy's store, the first Hirschman Levy. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Beginning in the late 1800s, the number of Jewish businesses grew with the arrival of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Joseph Levy, one such immigrant, worked tirelessly for years as a dry goods merchant in Columbia to sponsor the rest of his family. By 1906 Joseph had saved enough money to book passage from Russia for his wife, Sarah, and his son,

> Moe, to come to Columbia. Joseph's work ethic would carry on with Moe, who started a clothing store on the corner of Assembly and Lady streets in 1920. A Columbia staple for nearly a century, Moe Levy's became an icon for Levi's jeans and a retail mainstay until 2014.8

Similarly, Gabriel Stern, who traveled from Kielce, Poland, to Columbia in 1915, opened a shoe store on Assembly Street in the early 1930s. Initially Stern's Department Store and ultimately Stern's Shoes, the business played a valuable role in the Jewish community. According to Gabriel's daughter Anne Stern Solomon, her father hired many Jewish youngsters from the neighborhood and taught them important business skills, such as how to sell merchandise and interact with customers, skills that would remain with them for the rest of their lives.9

The heyday of Columbia's Jewish merchants came in the mid-20th century with expansion into the suburbs and the development of shopping malls. Arnold Levinson, who learned the clothing business working in his parent's dry goods store in Barnwell, opened his own shop, Brittons, at 1337 Main Street in 1955. Part of Brittons success, remarked Arnold's wife, Faye, stemmed from Arnold's "eye for fashion" and his "love of fabric," which explains why Brittons was one of the first Columbia stores to sell Ralph Lauren. Thanks to his fashion sense and willingness to take risks, Arnold's establishment expanded to include four locations—Dutch Square, Richland Mall, Columbia Mall, and Main Street. Today Brittons operates one store, run by two of Arnold's children, Lucky and Stacy.¹⁰

Left, top: Brittons, 1337 Main Street, Columbia, SC, 1955. Collection of Perry Lancaster. Bottom: Berry's on Main closed its doors in 1982, after more than 40 years serving Columbia. Russell Maxey Photograph Collection, courtesy of Richland Library, Columbia, SC.



Moe Levy outside his store at the corner of Assembly and Lady streets, Columbia, SC, 1958. Courtesy of Florence Hirschman Levy. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Though one might inherit a family business, a lot of work is required to maintain its success. Ian Picow, son of Nathan Picow, who opened King's Jewelers on Main Street in 1945, remarked in a June 2015 interview about the difficulties of retail business. Not only are the hours long and the work week grueling, but merchants have to invest their entire life in the success of their enterprise, ¹¹ as exemplified by Joe Berry, owner of Berry's on Main. According to Alan Reyner, the grandson of Charles Reyner, who opened Reyner, Inc. Jewelers at 1604 Main Street in 1919, Joe "was a great merchant" and "could sell just about anything." 12

What little is left of the thriving downtown Jewish business community on Assembly and Main streets exists only in the details of the built environment and a handful of surviving businesses. Next time you are in Columbia, pay close attention to the 1600 block of Main Street. You will notice remnants of this bygone era as you pass the former location of Lourie's at 1601 Main Street, now Mast General, or the floor tiling of Reyner's jewelry store at 1604 Main Street. Continue further and you will come across the last remaining Main Street Jewish merchants: Nathan Picow of King's Jewelers, Roselen Rivkin of Marks Men's Wear, and Andy Zalkin of Zalkin's Army and Navy Store. All three fondly remember the closeknit community of merchants on Main Street. Likewise, swing by the 1300 block of Assembly Street and chat with Manny Lifchez at Star Music, Harold Rittenberg of Reliable Loan Office and Pawn Shop, or Jay Friedman of Bonded Loan Office, who, at the slightest provocation, will share their stories of Columbia's past.

Right, top: King's Jewelry Store, founded in 1946 by Nathan Picow, is one of the few remaining Jewish-owned businesses on Main Street. Photo by Robert Olguin. Middle: Reliable Loan Office and Pawn Shop., established in 1942, was managed by Moe Levy's wife, Florence Hirschman Levy. Photo by Robert Olguin. Bottom: Anne and Ted Solomon standing in front of what was once Stern's Shoes, ca. 1989. Collection of Marcie Baker.

NOTES

1. Belinda and Richard Gergel, In Pursuit of the Tree of Life: A History of the Early Jews of Columbia, South Carolina, and the Tree of Life Congregation (Tree of Life Congregation, 1996), xii; "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities - Columbia, South Carolina," Institute of Southern Jewish Life, http://www.isjl.org/south-carolina-columbia-encyclopedia.html

2. Gergel and Gergel, 3.

of a Long Life, 1806 to 1876 (Library of Congress, 1884), 19-21. 4. Belinda F. Gergel, "The Israelites of Columbia, South Carolina: The Development of an Antebellum Jewish Community," The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association (1996): 38.

3. Edwin J. Scott, Random Recollections

5. Emily Marie Ferrara, Harlan Greene, Dale Rosengarten, and Susan Wyssen, introduction to The Diary of Joseph Lyons, 1833-1835 (Charleston, SC: College of Charleston Library, 2005), 500-501.

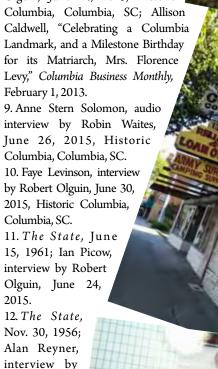
6. Gergel and Gergel, 4.

7. Ibid., 57–58. 8. Terri Hodges, interview by Robert Olguin, June 24, 2015, Historic Columbia, Columbia, SC; Allison Caldwell, "Celebrating a Columbia Landmark, and a Milestone Birthday for its Matriarch, Mrs. Florence Levy," Columbia Business Monthly,

interview by Robin Waites, June 26, 2015, Historic Columbia, Columbia, SC. 10. Faye Levinson, interview by Robert Olguin, June 30, 2015, Historic Columbia

Columbia, SC. 11. The State, June 15, 1961; Ian Picow, interview by Robert Olguin, June 24,

12. The State, Nov. 30, 1956; Alan Reyner, interview by Robert Olguin, June 24, 2015.





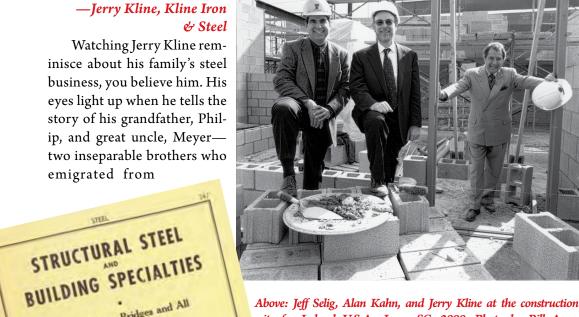
From Scrap to Steel: How Jewish Columbians Created an Industry That Built the Midlands

by Fielding Freed, Director of House Museums, Historic Columbia

Afabricated structural steel per capita than anywhere else in the country, and Jewish families owned most of those companies. Kline Iron & Metal Company, Chatham Steel, and Columbia Steel & Metal were just a few of the businesses that made the essential materials that fueled the post–World War II building boom in the Southeast. Each started as a scrap metal business founded by people who arrived in America father, Bernard, knew Kline Steel was not large enough to with virtually no material possessions, some of whom fled bid successfully on navy contracts. He spearheaded the

persecution in their home countries.

"I never saw a piece of steel I wasn't crazy about."



site for Iceland U.S.A., Irmo, SC, 2000. Photo by Bill Aron. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Left: Kline Iron & Steel Advertisement, 1950 Columbia city directory. Courtesy Walker Local and Family History Center, Richland Library, Columbia, SC.

Lithuania and found-Columbia.

> On February 23, 1923, Kline Iron & Metal Company was established on

🐧 t one time Columbia, South Carolina, produced more 🛮 the corner of Gervais and Huger streets, in an industrial and warehouse area of Columbia known for its textile mills. From 1923 to about 1935, the Klines focused on reclaiming and recycling scrap metals. When Shands Steel went out of business in 1935, the Klines bought their equipment and the fabrication of structural steel eventually became the company's focus.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Jerry's

creation of the South Carolina Steel Fabricating Company, a cooperative of several steel businesses, of which he became president. The consortium ultimately fabricated major parts for 225 Landing Ship, Tanks (LSTs) that were essential to the success of amphibious invasions in both the European and Pacific theaters.

During the 1950s Kline Iron & Steel diversified into the broadcast tower business. The pinnacle of Kline's tower building, the KVLY-TV mast in North Dakota, was completed in 1963 and still stands today. The tower is 2,063 feet high taller than the Washington Monument and the Empire State building combined. Jerry estimates that Kline built 90 percent of the broadcast towers in South Carolina.

It was not an easy decision for Jerry to sell the company ed their namesake in 2000 after three generations of family ownership, but he steel company in looks back with pride at all he and his forebears accomplished. Although he was in the business a long time, Jerry says, "We never stopped being a young company."

"There was a brotherhood in the scrap business." -Samuel J. Tenenbaum, Chatham Steel

For Samuel Tenenbaum, the story of the rise of Columbia's Jewish-owned iron and steel companies in the 20th century is one of a group of entrepreneurs who took "junk and grew that into a sophisticated, high tech, and high-end capital business with good-paying jobs in a place you would never expect."

Samuel's grandfather, also named Samuel, left Poland right before World War I and in 1915 founded Chatham Steel (named after Chatham County) in Savannah, Georgia. Tenenbaum explained that by collecting waste items like scrap metal, young Jewish men with nothing were able to turn old and castoff materials into something new and profitable.

The elder Samuel's three sons eventually joined the business, which expanded into into steel warehousing.

Over the years, Chatham Steel continually sought out and incorporated the latest technologies, eventually operating five facilities in the South, including one in South Carolina. Chatham's first location in Columbia was on Shop Road across from Owen Steel. Tenenbaum was

one of several third-generation descendants working for the company when they decided to sell to a larger corporation, Reliance Steel & Aluminum, in 1998, although Chatham still functions as a division within the company.

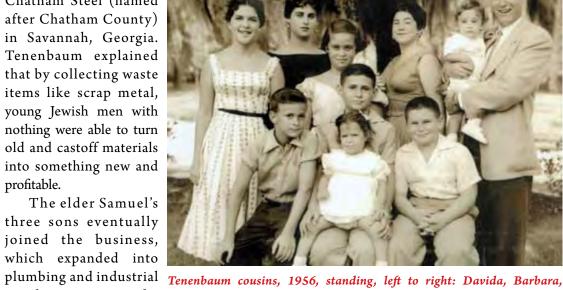
"Things are so global today... —Fred Seidenberg Columbia Steel & Metal and Mid-Carolina Steel & Recycling Company

Fred Seidenberg's Mid-Carolina Steel & Recycling Company is one of the last locally-owned scrap leaving Columbia Steel & Metal, Fred Seidenberg.

which his father, Oscar Seidenberg, started with Max Dickman and Nathan Addlestone in the late 1940s. Columbia Steel & Metal was originally located on Assembly Street across from the former Capital City baseball stadium. Oscar had gotten his start in the scrap business

> after working for distant cousins, the Katz brothers, who owned two scrapyards in Augusta, Georgia, and one in Columbia.

> As time went by, Fred noticed a trend: "Steel mills are getting more and more into scrap where 40 years ago they did not diversify." This has led to more competition, often from out of state, for local metal companies, which in turn led to more families selling their businesses. Larger companies also can deal with regulations more easily than smaller early scrapyard days.



supplies in 1937. In the Marsha, Bailee (deceased), and Bert in Arnold's arms; seated, left to businesses, regulations that late 1940s the company right: Sheldon, Samuel holding sister Karen, and Samuel Waldman, simply didn't exist in the branched out yet again whose mother was a Tenenbaum. Courtesy of Samuel Tenenbaum.

In 2000 Fred diversified his business and opened an ornamental ironwork company next door to his scrapyard. Continuing the family tradition, one of Seidenberg's three children decided to work in the field. Fred and his son Justin started a steel and scrap brokerage, American Metal Solutions, in June 2008.

When examining the history of Jewish-owned scrap metal and steel companies in Columbia, there are a few recurring themes: entrepreneurship, a network of initial support and continuous business relationships in the community, and eventually a shift away from the family business by later generations who choose to work in other fields about which they are passionate.

Speaking about his family's business, Samuel Tenenbaum concludes: "We are the great American story." The same could be said of the other Jewish scrap iron and steel businessmen who made "something from nothing" with their brains and their hands.



metal businesses in Columbia. Fred Oscar Seidenberg (left) and his son, Fred, at Columbia Steel & started the business in 1983 after Metal Company yard, Shop Road, Columbia, 1980. Courtesy of

Resettling Survivors of the Shoah by Lilly Stern Filler

That would be a robust agenda for anyone. Now imagine the minimal work skills, and were not familiar with our culture, difficulties of four immigrant families who also survived the but wanted to be a part of the American dream." Columbia's

Holocaust, enduring years of horror and uncertainty, hard labor in concentration camps, and the loss of family members and friends under Nazi brutality. Their story is an American one, set within South Carolina's capital city.

In 1949, in the aftermath of World War II, as communities across America volunteered to help resettle Holocaust refugees, Columbia prepared to welcome the

Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) sponsored three of the families United States and their apparent bewilderment associated and American relatives hosted the fourth. The sponsorship with "living in freedom." primarily covered the logistics and finances involved with

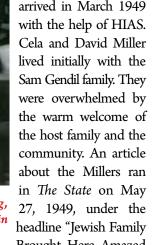
the cities would take responsibility for housing, job searching, language training, etc. At the time Columbia had only 250 Jewish families in a population of 100,000. This small contingent was ready to exhibit its civic pride and sense of duty and extend a welcome to the new arrivals. The different worlds of Holocaust refugees and American Jewish citizens were to become one, but the union would take time and perseverance.

Members of Columbia's Jewish community, including Hannah Rubin and Dena Citron Bank, were instrumental in laying the foundation for the arrival of these families. It was agreed that having only a few Holocaust refugees would be easier for the community to handle. To quote Mrs. Rubin: "We wanted

T magine leaving your home country, immigrating to a foreign to do right by these people and help them become independent as Lland, and starting a new life in the United States of America. soon as possible. These survivors spoke very little English, had

> Iews offered assistance with transportation, employment skills, housing, and English lessons.

The first family arrived in March 1949 with the help of HIAS. Cela and David Miller lived initially with the Sam Gendil family. They were overwhelmed by the warm welcome of the host family and the community. An article about the Millers ran in The State on May Brought Here Amazed



Soon after they arrived, Ray Gendil of the host family bringing the designated families to their host cities, and then found Cela quietly crying in her room; after some gentle

> coaxing they found out Cela, who was a few months pregnant, was terrified she would be sent back to Europe because she was expecting her first child. Cela and David were reassured that the pregnancy was a wonderful event and would not result in a forced return to Europe. Soon David was employed by Bob Burg of Columbia Distributors, a liquor distribution company. After a few years the Millers operated their own liquor stores, at one point owning as many as three.

> Cela's sister, Bluma Goldberg, her husband, Felix, and their young son, Henry, followed the Millers to Columbia about nine months later, again sponsored by HIAS. Although trained as a printer, Felix was hired first as a janitor for General Arts, a



Germany, ca. 1946. Below: The author's parents, Ben and Jadzia Sklar Stern, in headline "Jewish Family Munich, Germany, ca. 1946. Courtesy of Lilly Stern Filler.



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consortium of small home-supply businesses. Later he was hired by the Rothberg family to work in their company's floor-covering division. Always saving some of his hard-earned money, he was able to help his benefactors by "loaning them some money" for the business during a particularly difficult time. After a few years Company, Mr. Roebuck came to work for him. My father

he was able to buy out the Rothbergs and concentrate on selling ceramic tile. In 1960 he opened the Tile Center, a company now operated by his children. Always a jokester, he would say, "It is hard to be Jewish," but continued to successfully promote and grow his business.

The third family brought to Columbia through the assistance of HIAS, the Gorneys, relocated after a short period of time.

In June 1949 my parents, Ben and Jadzia Stern, and I arrived in Columbia, sponsored by the Gabe Stern family. After living a few weeks with the family, we moved into a small apartment, and Dad, or Tata, as I sometimes called him, began working with the Sterns in retail. However, this was not his forte and he searched for employment in carpentry or construction. One day, while hitchhiking to work, he was picked

up by Frank Roebuck. Mr. Roebuck worked in a building supply company where Dad was eager to be employed. Mr. Roebuck agreed to give him a chance in the business if families became active in Columbia's Jewish community and he could "successfully collect on some bad debt." Despite language barriers, my father was able to make the collections, got the job, and then excelled in construction. Wanting greater forces and thank God for the United States of America."

independence and thus needing a car to get to work, Dad walked into a used car dealership and purchased and drove out with a used car, never having had driving lessons.

Years later, after Dad founded Ben Stern Construction

involved himself almost immediately in the secular community and became a member of the Masons and then the Shriner's organization, becoming an active participant of the motorcycle brigade, riding in parades, dressed with hats and tassels.

It did not take long for the refugee families to become self-sufficient in their new homeland. The three that remained in Columbia prospered and grew very close because of their similar backgrounds, language, and experiences. I remember many "day trips" to Sesquicentennial Park with the Goldbergs and Millers for picnicking, swimming in the lake, relaxing, and reminiscing. They referred to themselves as the "Greeners," but did not want to hear this title used by others.

Several years later our family sponsored my mother's brother Ben Sklar from

Poland, and the Felix Goldberg family sponsored Luba and Bernard Goldberg and their two children from Israel. All of the civic affairs and contributed whatever they could to society. Often Dad would say, "Thank God for the American armed



The author with her uncle, Ben Sklar, 1948. Courtesy of Lilly Stern Filler.

Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative Is Up and Running by Robin Waites, Executive Director Historic Executive Director, Historic Columbia

fter a year of careful planning, Historic Columbia has launched the Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative, a multi-disciplinary

project that aims to document and promote awareness of local Jewish history. Partners in the initiative include the College of Charleston's Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC), housed in Special Collections in the Addlestone Library, the Jewish Community Center (JCC) and Columbia Jewish Federation (CJF), the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, and Richland County Library.

In April 2014 leadership of the JCC and CJF approached Historic Columbia (HC) about the possibility of expanding its award-winning venture, "Connecting Communities through

History," to include a thematic exploration of Jewish life and culture. From there HC and the COLUMBIA JCC/CJF invited representatives from various

state and local organizations to discuss the community's needs and the potential for collaboration. At the top of the list, constituents felt, was an urgent desire to document the stories of Holocaust survivors who settled in Columbia and whose numbers are rapidly diminishing. Participants also noted that while Columbia enjoys a long and rich history of Jewish settlement, public access to and awareness of this heritage is limited.

Based on feedback from these and other stakeholders, Historic Columbia and the JCC/CJF established the Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative (CJHI). A steering committee information to diverse audiences through print and web-based media and public programs; and 4) create an ongoing coalition to sustain the effort in the future.

With early support from a private

donor, CJHI had the resources to begin recording stories of elders in Columbia's Jewish community. After gathering a list of potential interviewees and traveling to the College of Charleston for training with Dale Rosengarten, curator of House of Peace Synagogue, at its second location on Marion places, the markers will connect archivist, CJHI volunteers Lilly Filler, Jane Kulbersh, and Gail Lieb began collecting stories. Once recorded, the interviews will be transcribed by Jewish Heritage College staff and made accessible through the Lowcountry Digital Library at http://lcdl.

A second shot in the arm came in May 2015 when the Central Carolina Community Foundation (CCCF) awarded Historic Columbia \$20,000 to support the initiative. The grant, noted CCCF President and CEO JoAnn Turnquist, "will help Historic Columbia promote a more welcoming and vibrant community by celebrating our region's rich Jewish cultural history. We are delighted to provide funding for this outstanding program."

During the upcoming fall and winter, CJHI will host panels and roundtable discussions, bringing together people with different backgrounds and life experiences to share their stories. These interactions are also designed to open the door to greater connection and understanding, giving participants an opportunity to bond on the most basic level of respecting one another's humanity.



Online at: jhssc.org/events/upcoming with Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express

By check, payable to JHSSC c/o Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program – 96 Wentworth Street, Charleston, SC 29424

Meeting fee:

library.cofc.edu/.

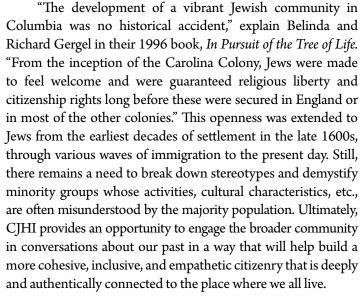
\$50 per person both days; \$30 for Saturday or Sunday only Questions: Enid Idelsohn, IdelsohnE@cofc.edu

Phone: (843) 953-3918 ~ fax: (843) 953-7624

In May 2016 CJHI will utilize the research, interviews, and images collected throughout the fall and winter to present guided and web-based tours. Participants will be able to visit historic sites in person and to experience local Jewish history virtually via the Internet. Guided tours will include the Hebrew Benevolent Society

> Cemetery, the Big Apple, and many of the Jewish-owned Main and Assembly Street stores. While including the same roster of sites, the web-based tour will incorporate historic images, as well as excerpts from audio and video interviews.

> Also in the spring, CJHI plans to install three historic markers at locations whose selection will be based on careful research. By providing historic context for these



To learn more about CJHI, go to www.historiccolumbia.org/CJHI or visit us on Facebook: Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative. To share your ideas or volunteer your time, contact Robin Waites, Executive Director, Historic Columbia at 803.252.7742 ext. 14 or rwaites@historiccolumbia.org.

Hotel reservations

Columbia Marriott 1200 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29201 (800) 593-6465

Special rate: \$119 per night plus tax

To get the special rate you must make your reservations before midnight on October 16, 2015 and mention you are with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.



the Jewish Heritage Collection, and Street, Columbia, SC, was constructed by member M. B. passers-by with familiar public spaces Alyssa Neely, JHC's oral history Kahn and dedicated in 1935. Courtesy of Richland Library. they may have overlooked before.

FALL 2015





A Tale of Two Cities (and a few small towns)

Joint Meeting of Historic Columbia the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Saturday, November 7, 2015

10:00-11:15 A.M. Pre-conference Roundtable with Ex-Pats of South Carolina's Capital City

An open-mic session moderated by Robin Rosenthal, Ph.D., Professor, Columbia College

Big Apple, 1000 Hampton Street, Columbia

11:30 Registration - Agape Senior Conference Center, 1620 Main Street, Columbia

12:00 р.м. Lunch

1:00 Deep Roots, Lofty Branches: Perspectives on the Capital City's Early Jews

Presentation by Belinda and Richard Gergel

Break 2:00

2:15-3:30 Panel discussion - Moving Merchandise and Making Memories: Contributions of

Jewish Merchants to Columbia's Downtown Commercial District

Moderator: Debbie Cohn

Panelists: Marcie Stern Baker, Harold Rittenberg, Manny Lifchez,

Anne Stern Solomon, Andrew Zalkin

Break 3:30

3:45-4:45 Walking tour - Meet Jewish Merchants, Past and Present, in Columbia's Commercial District

5:00-6:30 Reception - Big Apple, 1000 Hampton Street, Columbia

Dinner on your own

Sunday, November 8

9:30-10:15 а.м JHSSC board meeting, Big Apple, 1000 Hampton Street, Columbia

Everyone is invited.

Depart for Orangeburg 10:30

Lunch on your own

Sunnyside Hebrew Cemetery Tour, Summers Avenue, Orangeburg, SC 12:30 р.м

(entrance is across from First Presbyterian Church, 650 Summers Avenue)

Marker unveiling, 1161 Russell Street, Orangeburg 1:30

Panel discussion - Midlands Memories: Patches on a Fading Quilt 2:15-3:45

Temple Sinai, 808 Ellis Avenue, Orangeburg

Moderator: Dale Rosengarten, with introduction by David Farr

Panelists: Gene Atkinson, Blanche C. Cohen, Irvin Cohen, Ronald Cohen,

Brenda Yelman Lederman, Ernest L. Marcus, Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn, Becky R. Ulmer

The conference packet will include maps.

Midlands Memories: Patches on a Fading Quilt

by Ernest L. Marcus

ver the past century a dominant theme of Jewish life in South Carolina and elsewhere in the South has been rapid urbanization and the almost complete disappearance of Jews from small towns and rural areas. The stories that follow look at the history of Jewish families in Orangeburg and nearby towns all in the sparsely populated expanse between Charleston and Columbia. Each story is

PAGE 14



Russell Street, downtown Orangeburg, SC, 1927. Courtesy of Special Collections.

a patch in the quilt of small-town experience, an extinguished of the Jewish community to the Orangeburg area in the 20th century. life that still tugs at the hearts of those who grew up there.

First generation immigrants coming from Poland, Russia, or Germany in the late-19th and early-20th centuries became merchants in towns that in some ways resembled the shtetls they came from, often connecting with friends and relatives from the Old Country. Shopkeepers and businessmen catered to a diverse clientele and became leaders of their communities.

Religious practice varied, with observant families making the trek to synagogues in Charleston or Columbia, or organizing services in private homes with lay leaders. The founding of Temple Sinai in Orangeburg in 1955 offered Iews in isolated towns the option of a more or less central place to gather.

With few exceptions, all of our authors remember an easy relationship with the broader Christian community and a feeling of being an integral part of local life. Regional press, historians, and museums readily acknowledge the important contributions

The depth and genuineness of these accounts strike a Many common threads link the essays published here. chord. Are connections to "place" as strong for families from urban areas? Connection to family was deep as lives were lived in simplicity and with acceptance from neighbors. Intermarriage, the pull of professional opportunities in big cities, and a desire for children to grow up in proximity to other Jews all were factors in the demise of these small-town Jewish populations. By the end of the second generation, the vast majority of Jews had moved on to larger metropolitan areas. Clearly though, the memories still resonate.

Orangeburg: A Life Rich in Family and Friends



by Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn

The name Theodore Kohn looms large over Russell Street, ▲ Orangeburg's main business thoroughfare. In 1848, at the age of eight, Kohn came to Orangeburg with his parents from Bavaria. When his parents returned home, young Kohn moved in with his uncle Deopold Louis, who is considered to be the first Jewish settler in the town. Louis had arrived in the 1830s, when Orangeburg was a mere village with a few houses and little promise of growth. As a teenager Louis became the first Jewish store owner in Orangeburg, and at the time of his death in 1885, he was the oldest merchant in town and one of its most prominent and respected citizens.

Photo by Larry Hardy. Courtesy of the Times & Democrat.

Following in his uncle's footsteps, Theodore Kohn opened his own dry goods store in 1868. Eight years later the Confederate veteran built the building that bears his name. He was an alderman, a bank stockholder, a volunteer firefighter, and became known as the "father" of the Orangeburg school system. He served on the school board until shortly before his death in 1902. Every business in Orangeburg closed for his funeral.

The Jews who immigrated to Orangeburg in the 1800s were primarily from Prussia and Bavaria. German and Yiddish would have been the common language. By the time my grandmother

Henrietta Block of Camden came to Orangeburg as the bride of Lipman Philip Rich in about 1920, a number of Jewish families lived there, including the Abrams, Baums, Beckers, Furchgotts, Jareckys, Kahns, Kahnweilers, Links, Marcuses, Moseleys, Pearlstines, Walds, Sorentrues, Wilenskys, and Weatherhorns, in addition to the large Rich family that had generations earlier

until they were all gone.

by Dr. Gene Atkinson, Arcadia Publishing, 2001. with the arrival of Moritz Rich. My grandmother, although younger than many of the Jewish residents, became close friends with them and visited them with gifts of her home-cooked meals

Most of Orangeburg's Jewish families had stores on Russell Street. Some had businesses in the surrounding smaller towns. My mother, Rose Louise Rich Aronson, noted that there were 15 Jewish-owned stores when she was growing up in pre-World War II Orangeburg. When I was growing up in the 1950s and '60s, there were only a few left. I can recall the Hat Box, where Yetta Rubenstein carried the latest fashion in hats for women. I certainly remember Fink's, where Lester Finkelstein sold all the teenage girls their Villager skirts and blouses. Becker's, also a clothing store, was right next door. Barshay and Marcus dealt in apparel as well. Milton Marcus was the last Jewish merchant on and grandmother worked Russell Street. He didn't close his store until 1996.

My father, Harold Aronson, began his business on Russell Street after the Second World War, but I wouldn't consider him a typical merchant. He manufactured and sold aluminum awnings, carports, and storefronts. The people who bought

his enterprise in the 1980s kept the name, Aronson Awning Company, because of his fine reputation. That name can be seen on Highway 301 today.

For me, growing up Jewish in Orangeburg wasn't very different from growing up Presbyterian or Baptist or Episcopalian. I did everything that my non-Jewish friends did except have a Christmas tree and go to church on Sunday. I never went to school on the Jewish holidays. Sometimes I saved my Chanukah presents for Christmas day so I'd have something to show. Sometimes I went to vacation Bible school with my friends just because it was fun. I didn't sing the

hymns or kneel.

Recently I asked some of my dear friends that I grew up with what they thought about me being Iewish. None of them had an answer; it simply was not important to them. We led a typical teenage life—walking to school, worrying about what we would wear to the football game, wondering whom we would dance with at the pavilion after the football game, and fretting over our homework. Our mothers cooked three meals a day (or our

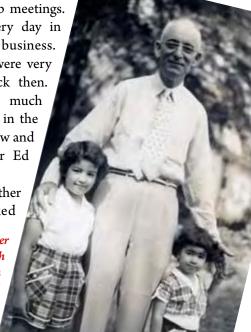


Rich's Clothing Store, with the lowered awning, was next to Feagin's Shoe Rebuilding on Russell Street, Orangeburg, SC, ca. 1928. From Images of America: Orangeburg

maids, whom we all adored), played bridge and golf at the country club, and attended garden club meetings. My mother worked every day in the office at my father's business. It seems today that we were very sheltered and naïve back then. We really didn't have much knowledge of or interest in the outside world. TV was new and we watched Bonanza or Ed Sullivan, not the news.

In the 1950s my mother

The author (left) with her grandfather Lipman P. Rich and her sister, Carol Aronson (now Kelly), 1952. Courtesy of Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn



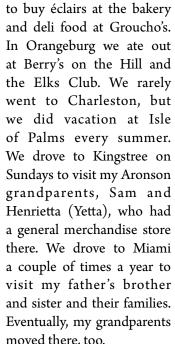
hard to found Temple Sinai. It was important to them to provide followed always by a stop at Howard Johnson's for ice cream. a Jewish education for me and my sister, Carol. So the temple My grandmother's sister Rosalie Block took me to Columbia

was built in 1955 and we had Sunday school and Friday night services. It was then that we met the Jewish kids from the surrounding towns; the Benjamins from Bowman, the Nussbaums from Branchville, and the Yelmans from St. Matthews joined me and Carol and Martin and Faye Becker in Sunday school.

I have many wonderful memories of Orangeburg, from riding my bike between my house and my grandparents' to rocking on their porch while The author's grandparents, left to right, Sam Aronson, Henrietta Rich, shelling beans or cracking Henrietta Aronson, and Lipman P. Rich, in front of Temple Sinai, pecans. My grandfather fished and my grandmother served

fish and grits. He shot and she served quail. She delivered matzo balls to Jewish and non-Jewish friends all over town every spring. She made chopped liver, as well as smothered chicken.

We traveled to Columbia for orthodontist appointments,



Sumter, SC, for the wedding of Rose Louise Rich and Harold Aronson, Eventually, my grandparents moved there, too.

My mother remained friends with her childhood playmates her entire life. Their daughters are my dear friends to this day. None of them is Jewish—that didn't matter then and it doesn't matter in our relationships now. That's a nice thing!



1944. Courtesy of Rhetta Aronson Mendelsohn.

by Ernest L. Marcus and Bruce Kremer

Three generations of the Kalinsky family lived in the small miles from the Holly Hill store, staying with relatives there. Orangeburg County. Meyer Kalinsky arrived first to establish a store in Holly Hill, emigrating from Trestina, Poland, the

> other South Carolina settlers, including the Cohen, Pearlstine, Karesh, Krawcheck, and Friedman families.

came next, in 1912, with his mother, Ida, and his sister, Lena (a second sister had died in Europe). They stopped first in Charleston where Jake learned the skills of a shohet, or kosher butcher. They soon joined his sister-in-law, Annie, in

L town of Holly Hill, located in the far eastern reaches of Aside from dry goods, Meyer went into the fur business, selling local raccoon pelts to furriers in New York.

> Old Country connections between the Kalinsky and same shtetl that was home to a number of Friedman families led to Jake's marriage to Minnie Friedman in 1921. Minnie's brothers, Sam and William, along with their father, Isaac, had preceded Minnie and her mother to South Carolina. The couple found it difficult to acquire kosher meats Meyer's son Jake Kalinsky from Charleston, some 50 miles away, so Jake's new skills proved useful. Their daughter Ethel recalled (as paraphrased in A Portion of the People): "If a chicken did not die in a certain length of time . . . they would give it away. If it was deemed kosher, her mother Minnie would pluck the bird, lay it on a big board on the kitchen sink, and rub it with salt." Jake would also perform his shohet duties for

> > Meyer in Eutawville, just seven nearby St. George.

Left: Jake and Minnie Friedman Kalinsky in Charleston on their wedding day, 1921. Right: Jake Kalinsky's shohet knife with sharpening stone and cloth. Images from the Adrian and Ethel Kalinsky Kremer Collection, courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The story of the Pearlstine family is revealed in a family memoir by Donald R. Vineburg, available on the Internet, titled, "The Vineburg Family Story." Isaac Moses (I. M.) Pearlstine arrived in the United States from Trestina, Poland, in 1854 as a child of 11. (See "Keeping Kosher in Holly Hill," page 16, for references to other immigrants from this shtetl.)

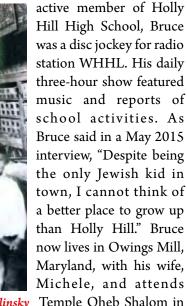
Kremer (b. 1917), originally from New York City, who married Bruce while he was serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. As an

Jake and Minnie's daughter, Ethel Kalinsky (b. 1922). The Kremers purchased goods at New York fashion houses as well as Charlotte and Charleston. Adrian was a community leader, serving on the board of the merchants association, among other organizations, and active in the Lions Club and Boy Scouts of America.

The Kremers' son, Bruce, was born in 1945 in Hendersonville, North

Holly Hill. His parents helped him maintain a strong Jewish identity, even while he made close friends at home. As a marrying Sybil Dickstein from Savannah, Georgia. There he member of Synagogue Emanu-El in Charleston, Bruce kept in touch with his Jewish buddies through AZA and summers at Camp Blue Star. This dual role was reflected at his bar mitzvah

Jake's Department Store was taken over in 1958 by Adrian from Holly Hill. Both churches also sent care packages to





Carolina, and grew up as Left to right: Ethel (Bruce Kremer's mother), Minnie, Jake, and Morris Kalinsky Temple Oheb Shalom in the only Jewish child in in Jake's Department Store, Holly Hill, ca. 1927. Courtesy of Bruce Kremer. Baltimore.

Ethel's brother, Morris Kalinsky, moved to Charleston, started Bob Ellis Shoe Store, still operating on King Street. Their son Barry is the proprietor. The Kalinskys' move to the metropolis was an indicator of a regional, perhaps even in Charleston, attended by the Methodist and Baptist ministers national, trend: the future of small-town Jews is in the city.

children. After marrying Sara and moving to St. Matthews,

The Good Sheppards of St. Matthews

by Ernest L. Marcus

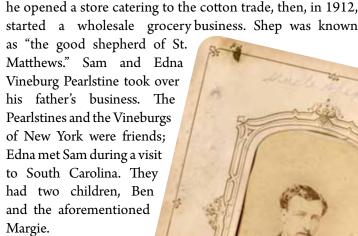
Ct. Matthews, only 13 miles from Orangeburg, is a small I. M.'s son Sheppard (Shep) was born in 1867, one of 12 town with a long history of Jewish life. In 1937, according to Jacob Rader Marcus in To Count a People, there were 34 Jews in residence, including several leading merchants. Like so many other towns in rural South Carolina, St. Matthews recently said farewell to one of its last Jewish residents, with the passing in 2013 of Margie Pearlstine Cooper, daughter of Sam and Edna Pearlstine and granddaughter of Sheppard and Sara, who moved from Charleston to the Midlands in 1896.

The Jewish presence in St. Matthews reaches back even earlier in the 19th century. In 1878 the town had 19 Jewish residents out of a total population of 524. Jewish family names included Jarecky, Loryea, Rich, Mortiz, Lewisohn, Wetherhorn, Jacobson, Elosser, Cohen, Yelman, Savitz, and Pearlstine.

to South Carolina. They had two children, Ben

Margie.

Sheppard Pearlstine. Pearlstine-Strauss family papers. Special Collections, College of Charleston.







left to right: Maurice (b. 1913), twins Isaac and Samuel (b. 1916), and Daniel (b. 1919) near the corner of F. R. Huff Drive and Bridge Street in St. Matthews, SC, 1930s. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

The Savitz family operated a store in St. Matthews from 1908 until 1992, starting with Solomon, a Latvian peddler who arrived in the United States in 1904 with his wife, Ida Read Savitz, and two small children. According to grandson Peter Savitz, Solomon bought an existing store on a handshake while visiting the town. At first it was a general store but it evolved to dry goods only. Solomon and his wife, Ida, had six sons and two daughters. Sons Maurice and Daniel ran the store after World War II and bought out their siblings in the late '50s, early '60s. The business survived the influx of big box stores to Orangeburg and elsewhere, carving out a niche with quality merchandise, catering to both African Americans and whites.

Maurice sold Savitz Department Store in 1992 and moved to Florida (Dan had died several years earlier). His children include Susan Magazine, an attorney in Bethesda, Maryland, and Peter Savitz, educated at the Wharton School of Business and a successful Atlanta businessman who started Sportime, a national mail-order business. Peter worked in the store from an early age, going on buying trips with his dad and remodeling the men's department while in college. He considered taking over the store after college but decided to move on. Susan also worked in the store, often as cashier, until she left for college at Emory University. The Savitzes belonged to Temple Sinai in Orangeburg, where Maurice was great friends with J. J. Teskey, but the family's primary membership was at the Tree of Life Congregation in Columbia, where the children received their Jewish education through confirmation. Susan and Peter were counselors at Camp Blue Star. Today, there is one remaining relative in St. Matthews from the original eight children of Solomon—Ricky Linett, grandson of Solomon.

An article in Orangeburg's Times and Democrat in May 2015 titled "Faces & Places/Day 90: Jewish Families

Contributed to Calhoun County's History" describes several Jewish families in St. Matthews. The reporter notes that Philip Rich, Sr., had one of the best stores in town in the late 1890s, based on a quote from South Carolina in the 1880s: A Gazetteer: "Sterling worth and integrity with his enterprise as a merchant make him a notable man." J. H. Loryea was president of the St. Matthews Savings & Loan and had a large business on Bridge Street. M. Jarecky had a sizable business trading in plantation supplies, hardware, furniture, hats, and groceries. Mr. Lewisohn sold fruit, hats, groceries, and dry goods. S. M. Wetherhorn, an immigrant from Germany, sold liquor and cigars. Isaac Cohen had a department store that was relocated three times, the last on Huff Drive (Isaac's father was Harris Nathan Cohen, grandfather of Ronnie Cohen, author of "Eutawville: A View from the North," and Blanche Cohen, author of "A Eutawville Table," pages 24–26). When Isaac passed away his son Harold and daughter-in-law Yetta took over, specializing in fine men's and women's clothing. In an expression of deep-seated ecumenicalism, the *Times* article closes by saying each member of the Jewish families of St. Matthews "brought a special spirit of giving, working and community. Each is remembered as a person of honor and integrity."

Gathering stories about the Jewish families who lived in small towns in the vicinity of Orangeburg and St. Matthews has been a rewarding experience for me as a native of Eutawville, as well as for my fellow "small-town" authors featured in this issue. Our connections to the past are visceral, tied as we are to a shared history and, now, shared memories. I am linked to St. Matthews through my half-brothers, Arthur and Robert Berger, the grandsons of Harry Berger. Harry, the brother of Fannie Berger Rubenstein of Elloree (see "Elloree Jews: Their Legacy Lives On," page 20), was one of the leaders of the religious community in St. Matthews; Shabbat services were held in his home. Arthur remembers that Harry's dining room was dominated by a Torah and other religious articles. (Marc Berger, Robert's son and my nephew, has lovingly embraced Torah study and prayer at Beth Shalom in Columbia over the past few years. A generational echo? – I think so.) Harry had a shoe repair business in town. Townspeople and relatives all recall a very substantial garden in his backyard. Becky Riley Ulmer noted that Mr. Berger would complain to them by waving his arms whenever she and the other children hit a ball into his beautiful garden. Hearing such vivid childhood memories made the effort of collecting stories worth its weight in gold.

For Brenda Yelman Lederman, St. Matthews elicits powerful recollections of her forebears. In her article she talks about her grandparents, Judah and Hannah Yelman, who came to St. Matthews in 1908 and established a store. Brenda's parents were Sheppard "Shep" Yelman (born in St. Matthews in 1913) and Helen Insel Yelman (born 1917 and raised in Florence). Yes, there were two "Sheps" in St. Matthews!

Lucky to Be Jewish and American

by Brenda Yelman Lederman

from Kruglovski District, Mogilyovski County, Russia, in 1904, after paying a tax of 15 rubles. His family name had that all 2,000 residents must have brought food to their

been Elman, but this was mistakenly recorded as Yelman at Ellis Island. He remained in New York City for a few years. It was there that he first learned English and became a tailor. The only possessions I know he brought with him were his beloved Torah and his tefillin, which he used every morning. He was a devout Jew and truly missed his calling of becoming a rabbi. After Granddaddy's death in 1959, the Torah was used by the congregation in Orangeburg and stayed

was no longer operating. The Torah now has a home in Charleston at Synagogue Emanu-El, its final resting place.

In 1907, at the age of 25, Judah's beloved Hannah Paisya Davidova Gorodinskaya emigrated from the community of Bobrovski, Mogilyovski County, Russia, to join him in America. She also paid a tax of 15 rubles. In 1908 they settled in St. Matthews. I have no knowledge of how they found St. Matthews. On

July 15 of that year, they welcomed their eldest child, Louis. Three years later Ida was born, followed by Shep, my father, in 1913,

Fannie in 1915, and Reva in 1917. Granddaddy opened his dry goods store on Bridge Street

and ran it until his death in 1959. He and my grandmother owned the house behind Richard Thornton's service station.



Above: Judah and Hannah Yelman in their dry goods store in St. Matthews, SC, ca. 1930. Below: the Yelman and Gordin (Gorodinskaya) families, ca. 1923. Yelman, Gordin, and Insel there even after the temple Family Papers. Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Ty grandfather Judah Movshevich Elman emigrated My grandparents were known and respected by everyone in town. When Granddaddy died suddenly, I remember thinking

> house—there were so many callers and condolences, and so much food. My precious grandmother did not live long enough after that. I think her heart was broken.

They kept chickens in the backyard. Those chickens provided eggs and dinner. When my grandmother asked for a chicken, Granddaddy went out in the yard, held one up by its throat, and gave it a nice clean slice, thereby allowing the blood to drain from the bird and make it kosher. Families from surrounding

> areas came to get their kosher chickens from my granddaddy. Grandmother would take the bird onto her back porch and place it on a big wooden table, where she would clean the chicken—quite a process. I have many fond memories of a wonderful childhood. I was able to visit my grandparents nearly every day while growing up.

> My grandparents were very proud to be in this country and

did not even want us, their grandchildren, to learn their native tongue. They wanted us to be 100 percent American. I am grateful to them, and to my maternal grandparents, Charles and Lena Insel, who settled in Florence, South Carolina, for the opportunities and freedom that are mine today because of the hardships they endured.

Elloree Jews: Their Legacy Lives On by Ernest L. Marcus

Lsouthern town that has seen better days. A closer look—a shop on Russell Street in Orangeburg, called the Hat Box, reveals a place that is embracing its past to provide a path to which was previously owned by her aunt, Mrs. Benjamin. revitalization, including a rich cultural history of connection between blacks and whites, Jews and gentiles. A visitor to the riding his bicycle to the butcher shop to pick up cowhides

turn-of-the-century commercial district will find the awardwinning Elloree Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, which features a permanent exhibition on Jewish businesses located in the town. An historical narrative is complemented by exhibit objects such as yarmulkes (skull caps), tallitot (prayer shawls), a menorah, prayer books, a sewing machine, photographs, hat boxes, overalls,



Replica of Rubenstein's Department store in the Elloree Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, Elloree, SC. Photo by Ernest L. Marcus.

Department Store.

The Rubenstein family business had the longest sustained presence in the town. Encouraged by old friends from Elloree, a descendant, Sonny Rubenstein, was one of the early backers of the museum. Many of the objects noted above were provided by descendant Anna Rubenstein. The "Underselling Store" was opened in 1911 by Wolfe Rubenstein and his wife, the former Fannie Berger from Baltimore, immigrants from Poland and Russia. While working in Baltimore Wolfe was suffering from respiratory problems and was urged to move. Their family grew to eight children, including Tillie, Anna, Mordie, Sarah, David, Bernard (Bernie), Lillian, and Morris (Sonny).

was a tough town to make a living in. It was a farm town and everybody was always broke. Only stores that didn't sell on credit could make it." Merchants who offered credit had trouble collecting what was owed. Mordie took over running the business after World War II and bought the building, naming it Rubenstein's Department Store. Wolfe passed away in 1949. Bernie helped run the store until leaving for Los Angeles in 1957. Mordie continued with the business until 1984 and

I lloree appears on the surface to be a typical small passed away three years later. His wife, Yetta, later operated

Reflecting on life in Elloree, Bernie Rubenstein remembers

(Wolfe was a tanner). With the meat side facing up, he shooed away the flies as he rode to a house behind the old bank. To start the tanning process, the hides were thrown into barrels of salt to draw out the blood.

Over the course of 31 years, at least one Rubenstein kid was enrolled in the local public school system. Sonny was likely the last Jewish child to attend Elloree High School, graduating in

and other dry goods in a faux storefront display of Rubenstein's 1950. Both Mordie and Bernie announced school ballgames and kept score. Bernie reported that throughout their childhood, he and his brothers experienced little-to-no anti-Semitic taunting, a reflection of the level of acceptance by their schoolmates and fellow residents.

> Mordie, David, and Bernard Rubenstein served in the armed forces during the Second World War. Bernie notes that his mother was one of the original founders of Temple Sinai in Orangeburg, and he served on the board of directors. He also recalls that his mother helped to land the Elloree Garment Factory, a major employer in the town for a time.

Some years before the Rubensteins showed up, another Jewish family settled in Elloree. Isaac Berger, who was 35 years old in 1920 and likely from Lithuania, arrived around 1900. In a May 2015 phone interview, Bernie said: "Elloree He married Ida Kessel, born in 1886. Children included Dora, Mordecai, Aaron, Israel, Albert, Esther, and Leonard. By 1930 the family had left for Georgia, but Isaac continued to visit his farm a couple of times a year. Isaac's sister Fannie Berger Rubenstein and her husband, Wolfe, followed Isaac to Elloree in 1911, solidifying the connection between the Bergers and the Rubensteins, which included visits to relatives in St. Matthews and Eastover for religious observance and family gatherings.

The Elloree museum is actually located in the old Berger store building, which was relocated to its present site by Mr. Berger in 1937 by rolling it on logs pulled by a team of mules. A the 1920s. Wolfe's brother Joe Rubenstein was living there in

later Berger business in the building was given to his daughter in 1963. Both the Rubensteins and Bergers lived above the store before moving to a traditional home.

Joseph J. Miller, born in 1908 in Philadelphia, worked in a Sumter shoe store before coming to Elloree to sell shoes. In leased space he expanded his business into Miller's Department Store in 1946, selling work clothes on credit. Miller was reported to be kind and generous to families that still felt through the Joseph J. Miller

Foundation, which he established to fund local churches, Joe Miller Park, a permanent exhibit at the museum, and Jewish religious and secular institutions, including Temple Sinai in Orangeburg, where he attended services, and the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston. As a publication of the museum says, "Though small in stature he is a giant to those people who are reaping the benefits of the Joseph J. Miller Foundation."



Loyns Park, named for Edgar Loyns, offers nature trails, a picnic shelter, and natural spring water. See http://www.elloreesc.com/ streets-parks.htm.

Census records and narratives provided by the museum document other Jewish residents in Elloree, particularly during



could not pay. He retired in 1973. Joe Miller Park, Elloree, SC, offers recreational facilities, such as tennis courts, walking trails, He died six years later, never having playgrounds, and a picnic shelter, and is home to some of the town's holiday celebrations as well married. His largesse in Elloree is as the annual Pork Fest. See http://www.google.com/maps.

1920, along with Alex Karesh, who emigrated from Russia in 1910. Next door to the Rubensteins resided Aaron Galloway and his wife, Helen, who were in the dry goods business. The original Galloway store was later occupied by the Rubenstein business on Cleveland Street. Aaron was 33 at the time of the 1920 census, with two children.

Nathan Levine and his wife came around 1940 and established a dry goods store next to Dantzler Drug Store, later relocating across the street from the museum. The family moved away in the early 1970s.

There was a Hymie Gordon who operated a small business near the bank but did not stay long in Elloree. Perry Krasnoff ran a liquor store next to the bank. Mr. Jacobs was in the timber business, staying in Elloree for just a short time.

Edgar Loyns, who grew up in Manning and Sumter, moved to Elloree shortly after marrying Sophie Annie Mazursky in 1922. He was a farmer and a successful cotton broker and had an office in the old Stack Company Store on Cleveland Street. Loyns was active in local politics and showed his love for Elloree when, in 1948 and '49, he donated two acres to create a nature park on the southern edge of the town, featuring an artesian well, brooks, azaleas, pine and oak trees.

Elloree's Jewish residents, though long gone, have not vanished without a trace. It is clear today that they were a part of mainstream society and they left a tangible and lasting legacy to a community that accepted them and a town that helped them to prosper.

Jewish Life in Bowman and Branchville

by Diane Benjamin Neuhaus

In the beginning... my grandparents migrated to the United States during the huge influx of immigrants between 1890 and 1910. My paternal grandmother's family came from Minsk, Russia, via New York City. Her name was Matilda Goldiner—Mattie for short. My paternal grandfather, Herman Benjamin, came from Essex, England, via Baltimore, where he had

relatives. (His family probably originated in the Iberian Peninsula.) Since I was not around when they met and married, I assume it all came about through the business world.

The B & G store (Benjamin and Goldiner) on Russell Street in Orangeburg could have been the beginning. Mattie and Herman settled in Bowman where their three sons were born— Irving (my father), Simon, and Milton. Granddaddy ran Benjamin's of Bowman, a general store with readyto-wear, fabric, etc. Both grandparents had family in Orangeburg and environs-

half-brother Harry Becker also lived in Orangeburg. Later in the 1940s, my paternal grandparents would return to Orangeburg where my grandmother opened the Hat Box on Russell Street next to the

Mattie's family included the Goldiners,

Mirmows, and Levines. Herman's

The author's grandmother Matilda Goldiner Benjamin (top) and her father, Irving Benjamin, age five (bottom).

Edisto Theater. In 1951, after she died, Granddaddy's relative Yetta Rubenstein took over the shop.

My mother's family—her name was Rachael Nussbaum—came from central Europe: Tarnopol, in Galicia, Poland; Berlin, Germany; and other places in the Hapsburg Empire. Her father, Barnie, came to America in 1906; his brother Israel arrived in the United States in the same time period. My grandfather was heading to Augusta, Georgia, but got off the train in Branchville!! There he settled down and sent for my grandmother Simmie, and their son, Morris. Once Grandmama arrived, the family multiplied fast. Mama and four of her siblings—Phillip, Sammie, Hymie, and Percy—were born in Branchville.

What is amazing to me—my parents were born ten miles apart, yet did not meet until college days, and it was at a party at Uncle Harry Becker's house in Orangeburg (Mama was with another date!!) Daddy claimed love at first sight. Daddy was at Clemson, and Mama was at Winthrop. An interesting tidbit: my mother roomed with her first cousin from Ehrhardt, Rachael (Rae) Nussbaum, one of Uncle Israel's daughters—so for a few years, around 1939 and '40, there were two Rachael Nussbaums at Winthrop.

My parents married in Augusta, Georgia. World War II had begun and Daddy was in the army at Fort Benning, Georgia, while Mama and their families were in Orangeburg County. Gas was rationed, and Augusta was in the middle. Daddy, who was planning to be a surgeon, was shipped to Anzio, Italy, as a young officer. That was the end of his professional dream. He was severely wounded and spent a year in various VA hospitals being put back together—his right hand had to be reconstructed, leaving him with three-and-a-half fingers after all that. We were so lucky to have our dad, considering what he went through. I've been told that I spent many miles sleeping on a pillow in the car as Mama followed Daddy from place to place, hospital to hospital.

Once back in Orangeburg Daddy joined the family retail business and our family grew. We stayed in Orangeburg until 1956. During those years my maternal grandmother, Simmie, who was very religious, lived with us. Mama was her only daughter, and she adored Daddy. She never missed lighting the Shabbos candles and regularly said Kaddish for the family she had lost in the Holocaust. I was 12 when she died, but she had a huge impact on my Jewish life.

In 1956 we moved to Bowman so Daddy would not have to commute, as he had the store in Bowman, as well as business ventures in other small towns. My uncle Milton had a lumber mill in Bowman, too, so people were involved in more businesses than retail. Milton ultimately moved to Philadelphia, his wife's hometown. For years before moving north, he had a house at the beach, which was a wonderful summer gathering place.

As to our Jewish life in Orangeburg and Bowman, Daddy took us to Sunday school at Beth Shalom synagogue in Columbia for years before Temple Sinai was built. I was confirmed there. My uncle Sammie had a house on Lake Murray, so in the warm weather, we'd all go to Columbia, and after Sunday school we would go water skiing, etc., at the lake. He also had a big juke box so we'd dance for hours—what fun! Also for the holidays, the Yelmans of St. Matthews brought over a Torah and built an ark, so some services were held at their home. I have wonderful, vivid memories of those times as well. They always had a minyan, as many families came together to celebrate and keep our traditions alive. For social lives as teenagers, we were put on a Greyhound bus for events in Charleston or Columbia with AZA–BBG and NFTY. During this time I made two life-long friends.

Another Jewish activity was Camp Blue Star in Hendersonville, North Carolina. My paternal grandmother loved that area and had family nearby in the furniture business. Grandmama Benjamin played a big role in my life—she bought me a piano at age seven that I still have. Music has really enriched my life, and I think she'd be happy to know that I've subscribed to and supported the San Francisco Symphony since I arrived in California more than 40 years ago.

In those early years Orangeburg County had a lot of factories and manufacturing, which brought several Jewish families to town. Jimmy Teskey came to Orangeburg and Bowman from Winnipeg, Canada, to run a clothing factory. Temple Sinai was a vibrant community then. He was the lay leader of the temple for years and sang a beautiful Kol Nidre. I remember playing duets with Jimmy—he on the violin, me at the piano.

Life was good. Daddy worked, was on the town council for decades helping improve life in Bowman, and coached Little League; Mama was active in garden and book clubs, the Temple, taking us kids to anything and everything she thought would be enriching, plus school activities; and of course, they made time for bridge and golf, attending the Master's most years. Meanwhile, Daddy took my brother Matt to Columbia to meet with the rabbi regularly for his bar mitzvah studies, a very special life cycle event that took place at Temple Sinai. Mama continued to be the glue or matriarch that kept both families together, having huge gatherings at our house.

In Branchville, my mother's brother Phillip Nussbaum stayed and took over the store that his father opened. He and his wife, Rebecca, remained in town and brought up their three children there. There was another Jewish family—the Pearlstines—but today, there are no Jews in Branchville.

As for Bowman, my parents spent the rest of their lives

in that small town. Mama finally used her teaching credentials when all of us were grown and gone. She loved it. Daddy had to retire early due to his loss of sight. Eventually Mama had to retire to help take care of him; they were together almost 56 years. My brother remained in Charleston and later Bowman, having spent some time in California. He was a wonderful son and still lives in Bowman, practicing pharmacy and farming, supporting Temple Sinai and keeping the Jewish holidays.

What I think is truly remarkable is how our parents, the only Jewish family in town, kept Judaism alive and gave us a life with these beautiful traditions to cherish and continue.

Top: The author's parents, Rachael and Irving Benjamin, on their wedding day in Augusta, GA, 1942. Bottom: The author with her grandparents Matilda and Herman Benjamin in Bowman. All images courtesy of Diane Benjamin Neuhaus.

Eutawville: A View from the North

My mother, Mary Cohen, née Cohen, was one of eight siblings raised in Eutawville, South Carolina. I grew up in

the Bronx, where my mother moved after she married my father, Louis Cohen, in 1924, but I spent most of my summers in Eutawville with my mother's family. My parents would put me on a train in New York City. When it arrived in Florence, South Carolina, a Eutawville relative would meet me. My earliest memory of a trip to the small Midlands town was in 1931 when I was five years old. My memories of the visit were especially vivid since it seemed as if I had gone to another world—the differences in activities and culture were so striking.

In New York we had a heavy wooden front door that was always locked. In Eutawville, in those days, no one bothered to lock the door. In the North blacks lived in segregated areas, such as Harlem. In the southern countryside black and white residences were interspersed, although schools and many businesses were segregated.

Most Eutawville Jews were merchants and businesspeople. I remember three Jewishowned stores—one run

by Sam Zaks, a family friend from Russia, one by my aunt Katie Cohen Karesh and her

daughter Marie, and one by Aunt Janie Cohen Marcus. Her son Harry was later elected mayor

of the town.

Above: the author's mother, Mary Cohen, 1916; Ronald Cohen, about three years old, standing in front of Marcus Department Store on Porcher Avenue in Eutawville, SC, ca. 1929. Collection of Ronald Cohen. Right: Cohen siblings standing in front of the West Store, just a few feet from Marcus Department Store in Eutawville. From left center, Moses Cohen, Katie Cohen Karesh, Katie's daughter-in-law Charlotte Sanders Karesh, and Janie Marcus. Collection of Blanche C. Cohen.

by Ronald Cohen

Janie Cohen Marcus also owned a 150-acre cotton farm, where a local black family by the name of Washington were sharecroppers. Typically, the white farm owners would take the cotton to the gin for weighing and payment. After deducting for expenses, the owner would split the remainder with the sharecroppers who, in turn, would visit the merchants in town to pay off their charge accounts.

Eutawville was a close-knit community. Every Saturday many of the children climbed into the beds of pick-up trucks to attend the Saturday matinee in Holly Hill, a small town less than ten miles to the southwest. At other times we traveled to surrounding rural communities to visit friends and relatives. The welcoming, small-town quality of the rural South was quite different from New York City where, often, you did not even know the names of your neighbors.

Another difference between the urban North and the rural South was the type of housing, though crowded living conditions were common in both regions. In New York we lived in multi-family buildings. Everyone had a tough time financially during the Depression. Many could not afford the rent, so families doubled up. In my five-room apartment we often had two or more families living together. I frequently slept on the sofa or a makeshift bed or the floor.

In Eutawville we lived in single-family homes, shared by multiple siblings and their children, and even boarders like Zaks. All lived together; all shared a common meal. The front door was always open to family and friends. Often the cooking and cleaning was done by blacks, whom the Jews regarded not just as helpers, but as friends.



Eutawville water came from a well, in contrast to the public water system we had up north. The house did not have indoor plumbing on my first few visits. When they installed his business associates in New Haven told

I remember the outhouse in the backyard, and, in particular, a comical incident when Sam Young, husband of Katie's daughter
Sadie, went into the privy and one of the children closed a lock on the door, trapping him inside. We heard his calls for help and let him out. We thought it was funny but he did not see the humor. Thinking back I wonder why there was a lock on the outhouse in addition to inside.

him not to deal with Louis Cohen. He should only deal with Al Miller, as he was honest and reliable. They warned him, "You cannot trust"

When it came to race relations, I noticed that blacks in the North seemed to feel free to express their anger, whereas their counterparts in Eutawville were afraid to speak their minds; they were always respectful to whites, being sure to say, "Yes, ma'am" and "Yes, sir." Jews got along fine with blacks in Eutawville. Perhaps it was because both groups knew what it felt like to be subjected to bigotry. I remember, as a child, on two occasions, men banging on our front door in the Bronx and yelling, "Kike—open up!" Never once did I feel the same prejudice in Eutawville.

Here's another, more subtle, example of northern prejudice: my father owned two houses in the Bronx known as 1316 and 1318 Herschel Street. He made patterns for sewing pleats in women's dresses. He sent out advertising to potential customers under two names: Louis Cohen, 1318 Herschel Street, and Al Miller, 1316 Herschel Street. One day one of my father's best customers came in from New Haven, Connecticut, to meet Louis Cohen. After they finished their business transaction, he asked if my father would introduce him to Al Miller. My father told him Al Miller and Louis Cohen were one and the same person. His client started laughing. My father asked him what was



my father that some of his business associates in New Haven told Louis Cohen. He should only deal with Al Miller, as he was honest and reliable. They warned him, "You cannot trust Louis Cohen." As a child I listened to this conversation and it made a lasting impression. I played with anyone regardless of religion. We

were just friends.

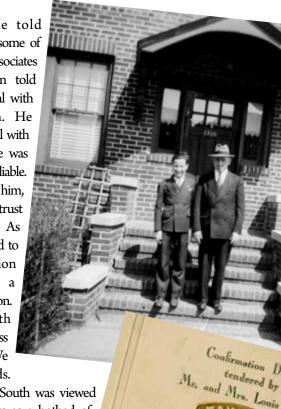
The rural South was viewed by New Yorkers as a hotbed of anti-Semitism. From what I saw and experienced, the reverse was true. As a child it was only in Eutawville that I felt safe, free of anti-Semitic hate. I was attacked and beaten up three times as a kid by gangs of anti-Semites in New York.
This never happened to me anyplace in the rural South. It is with

sadness I see
the demise of a
warm, vibrant
culture, filled
with family
and friends. The migration to

urban areas has economic advantages but the intimacy I witnessed in Eutawville is lost in the big cities.

Above: Ronald Cohen and his father, Louis, on the steps of their Herschel Street home in the Bronx; invitation to Ronald Cohen's confirmation dinner at S. & G. Restaurant, Brooklyn, NY, 1939. Left: the Cohens in the living room of the Porcher Avenue family home, Eutawville, SC. Standing, left to right: Abe, Moses, Mary (Moses' wife), Louis, and Mary (Marian, Louis's wife); seated, left to right, Corinne (Abe's wife), Raye (Isaac's wife); Katie Karesh, Abe Karesh (Katie's husband); and Janie Marcus. Collection of Ronald Cohen.

Saturday, August 26th, 1939



A Eutawville Table

by Blanche C. Cohen

Although I never lived in Eutawville, my family and I were there every other Sunday and on holidays, visiting from our home on Logan Street in Charleston. This small town holds a very special place in my heart and my memories. It was home to my daddy's family, consisting of five sisters and three brothers. We always had a feeling of belonging; it was a loving atmosphere. Attitudes in Eutawville were friendly and respectful—true Southern hospitality—among Jews and non-Jews, blacks and whites.

My relatives owned clothing stores and customers were the local farmers. Most people were paid on Friday and did their shopping on Saturday. Customers without ready cash charged merchandise on "the books," a credit plan that allowed them to make regular payments. Marcus Department Store also offered layaway to its patrons.

The Jewish storeowners traveled to Charleston on Sundays to buy goods for their stores. Before heading home, they stopped for food items that all Jewish people enjoy from Harold's Cabin, or the Mazo or Zinn delis. Labrasca's, an Italian restaurant that at one time offered Chinese food, was also a favorite place to eat.

As for the dinners served to all who came to the great house on Porcher Avenue, it was a large round table full of every type of food. Several meats were served, as well as dishes of rice, macaroni, and potatoes, and many varieties of vegetables.



A "Eutawville table" is what we called it.
There was always room for anyone needing a meal or a place to stay. Adults sat at the table and all of the young cousins were fed in another room, often sitting on the floor. We loved being together!

I am so blessed to have these memories; they gave me a love of country life—the land and its people—and I learned to respect all, regardless of name, religion, race, or circumstances.

Left: Sisters Katie Cohen Karesh (seated) and Janie Cohen Marcus (on Katie's right) viewing the Azalea Parade in Charleston, SC, 1941.

Above: Blanche Cohen and her brother Harris Cohen, ca. 1943, "clowning around" on Herschel Street, in the Bronx, where they visited their cousins; Ronald Cohen and his aunt Corinne Cohen (the author's mother). All photos collection of Ronald Cohen.



by Martin Perlmutter

It feels as if we don't agree on anything these days. The old adage of "two Jews, three opinions" is often heard—the punch line of jokes that suggest an ongoing debate, a lively conversation, punctuated by nervous laughter. Yet, in this age of intense and strident political divisions, where Facebook posts and e-mail chains broadcast personal opinions, essays, and articles to networks of persons who typically already share those opinions, the adage could be rewritten: two Jews, two intractable opinions.

But that is the view of a pessimist. In fact, we as Jews agree on a great many things. We recognize the need for a Jewish state, even if we sometimes disagree, at times strongly, with the policies of Israel's leaders. We agree that the impact Jewish organizations have on our communities is important, though we may favor one organization over the other, again with intensity. We agree on the importance of a Jewish future even if the nature of that future is in dispute. The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina unites us not only because we value the past and see it as part of who we are, but also because we want to safeguard our heritage and ensure it remains an important element of an ongoing communal story.

The work of the Society is incredibly gratifying to the dozens—and I do mean dozens—of volunteers who make its wheels turn. At the same time, it is not without financial cost. We are sustained by annual membership dues, but at the end of the day, \$36 memberships only go so far. We look to our Pillars to help us attain our most ambitious goals. With respect for our mission and for those who support it, I humbly invite you to become a Pillar today by pledging \$1,000 a year for the next five years. Your gift allows the Society to continue documenting our stories and the stories of our forebears, so that our history and even our various opinions may be preserved for those yet to come.

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See pages 12 and 13 for more information.